

Higher Education Funding

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Cricket Powers Up

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FELIX

"Keep the Cat Free"



06/06/14
Issue 1579
felixonline.co.uk

College holds North Acton Consultation with students

Maciej Matuszewski
News Editor

A consultation meeting concerning the new Imperial hall of residence was held last Wednesday. The plans for the hall, currently called One Victoria Road and located in North Acton, some five miles away from the South Kensington Campus, were first announced early last year. The outer shells of the buildings have now been built and, when fully completed in 2015, the hall will provide accommodation for 693 undergraduates in 659 en-suite rooms. However, the initial reaction to the new hall was broadly negative, focusing mainly on the distance from the new site to South Kensington. The Student Union launched a large scale 'Against Acton' campaign, which prompted a direct reply from the College Management Board aimed at reassuring students.

Since then, the College has tried to be more open about its decision making, and incorporate more student feedback into its plans; with Wednesday's meeting being the latest step in this new consultation process. The meeting was led by Toni Byrne-Price, Project Director from Berkeley First, the company responsible for building the new hall. Also attending from the College were Professor Debra Humphris, Vice Provost (Education); Jane Neary, Director of Campus Services and Paul Noke, Head of Residential Services. The Student Union was represented by the Sabbaticals and a number of staff members. Despite **Continued on page 3...**

Imperial Students Find Success at Mayor's Low Carbon Entrepreneur 2014 Competition



JOE LETTS / FELIX

Joe Letts
Editor-In-Chief

On Wednesday, Imperial students James Winfield and Dominic Jacobson won the Mayor of London's Low Carbon Entrepreneur 2014 award. Sharing the prize money with SolarBox (created by two students from LSE), Winfield and Jacobson's idea, called Crowd Power Plant impressed the judges enough to win £15,000 in prize money. The team was one of four Imperial teams (Blocks, Light-Fi, the Energy Defenders and Crowd Power Plant) to make the shortlist, along with five other teams that were also selected from hundreds of carbon-cutting entries.

The award, presented at the

ceremony by Mayor of London Boris Johnson, was hosted Siemens at the Siemens Crystal at the Royal Victoria Docks. During the ceremony the CEO of Siemens (the award sponsors) Roland Aurich, said, "We are proud to be associated with the Low Carbon prize for the second year in a row... that really ties the bands together with the city and Siemens on what we are doing here in London. It is a good showcase for the rest of the globe."

The students had to submit a business plan and successfully pitch to a panel of 8 expert judges (including Deborah Meaden (Dragons Den), Richard Reed (Innocent Smoothies) and Zach Goldsmith (Environmental journalist, MP)) in order to reach the shortlist, and are also eligible for 6 Siemens internships at "the Crystal".

Mayor of London Boris Johnson said, "The incredible students behind these green innovations are the

future leaders who will be powering London's booming green economy. I look forward to seeing these students develop and succeed, whether through a fantastic internship at Siemens or by turning their ideas into thriving new businesses, they will help shape London's economic future."

Winfield (Environmental Technology MSc) and Jacobson (Green Chemistry MRes) embarked on Crowd Power Plant six months ago after exploring the crowdfunding scene and realizing the potential for the application of crowdfunding to the energy industry. Speaking to Felix, Winfield explained that the aim of the idea was to buy export tariffs (excess electricity) produced by solar panels on residential properties and then sell the electricity in bulk on the market. Further discussion revealed the progress of the project so far: **continued on page 2...**

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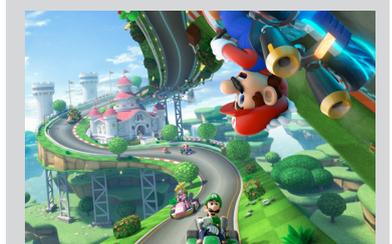
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NEWS

Editors: **Nida Mahmud, Maciej Matuszewski, Aamna Mohdin, Aemun Reza, Kunal Wagle**
news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

RCSU provides UROP Bursary for student from lower income backgrounds

Nida Mahmud
News Editor

The RCSU UROP bursary has been awarded to an undergraduate student from the Department of Chemistry. This is a new initiative where the funding will be from the RCSU for students from lower income backgrounds.

Plabon Saha commented: "We also understand that one bursary might not make a huge difference but this is seen as a symbolic gesture that we hope will encourage the faculty to look into this issue and increase funding. We also hope that some provision can be set up for students from lower income backgrounds to undertake UROP placements. In the future, it was decided that the RCSU will look towards pitching the idea of an UROP Bursary to our sponsors and hopefully replicate the BP awards that currently exist in Engineering."

The student receiving the funding said: "I was delighted when I received

the news that I had been awarded the RCSU UROP bursary. Without it, my summer project may not have been able to go ahead. Bursaries such as these go a very long way in ensuring nobody is denied a valuable research opportunity purely on financial grounds and therefore allow the recipient to gain essential research experience without having to worry about how living costs are going to be met. I strongly recommend to anybody taking part in a summer project worried about the financial side apply for a UROP bursary - it really does help!"

RCSU President Plabon Saha said, "UROP represents a great opportunity for students to explore a career in research. It plays a vital role in encouraging students into scientific careers and I believe more should be done to encourage students into science careers. I hope the steps the RCSU has taken this year is the start of a new push towards encouraging more UROP opportunities and increase funding for this programme. I am glad I played a role in this."

... continued from page 1 - Low Carbon Entrepreneur 2014



JOE LETTS / FELIX

James Winfield and Dominic Jacobson receiving the award from Boris Johnson

an exploration of the legal barriers to entry to the energy markets. By acquiring a large amount of electricity from lots of individual suppliers the team should be able to play a substantial role in the electricity market.

The team plans to develop their web presence and liaise with the Greater London Authority and the Mayor's office in the coming months, with a hope to begin in the new year.

£5000 of the £20,000 prize went to

Kirsty Kenney and Harold Craston (SolarBox) from LSE who plan to turn unused telephone boxes in London into public phone charging outlets powered by solar panels.

Blocks, created by Imperial students Omer El Fakir, Serge Vasylechko, Alireza Tahmaseb Zadeh, Karl Taylor, Hakeem Javaid and Andrey Antyufeev, was also shortlisted for the award. The team devised the concept of a modular smartwatch (as reviewed by Felix in March) that can evolve to

meet the changing expectations of consumers.

Meanwhile, Dr. Michele Serri (Materials) and Physics PhD student from Imperial were also in the shortlist. Their idea, Light-Fi, "integrates the lighting infrastructure to the intranet within an office to fully automate the lighting environment."

The automation will be able to turn off lights when all colleagues have left the office for the night, thereby saving energy."

Another Imperial group, the Energy Defenders formulated their idea due to a desire to "inspire the next generation, the way in which the road safety hedgehog did, but for reducing carbon emissions". The team is formed of 3rd year Aeronautical engineers Emma Dixon, Madeleine Alexander, Oliver Bauer, Ravina Bains and 3rd year Mechanical engineers Jonathan Crawford, Mo Alemohammed, Ewan Armstrong.

They started the idea at the start of the year and are hoping to continue after graduation. Hoping to market the concept to children, parents, teachers and government, the team are "a system of services developed around a brand, the Energy Defenders". The brand will "create interest in energy saving, through activity days, interactive apps, engaging websites... and an animated cartoon series".

Topping Out the Halls at North Acton

Philip Kent
Benjamin Fernando
Reporters

Sir Keith O'Nions, President and Rector of Imperial College, conducted the topping out ceremony of the College's new North Acton halls this past Thursday in an event attended by College staff, representatives from Imperial College Union, and staff from Berkeley First; the firm building the hall. From the top floor of one of the skyscrapers, Sir Keith performed the ceremonial planting of a Yew tree, preceded by a brief speech hinting that this is the first of many undergraduate accommodation projects.

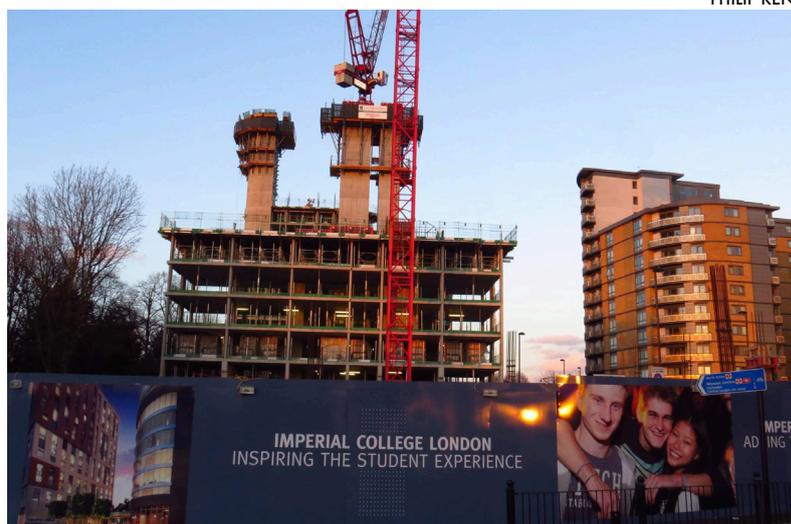
The "One Victoria Road" project, which until recently had been marketed as W3, involves the construction of four towers near North Acton tube station in Ealing. Once opened to students, it will feature space for 650 residents, along with a gym, study and tutorial rooms, and social areas. The project is currently on schedule and is expected to open in October 2015; pricing is yet to be announced. This is College's third project with Berkeley First, with the two GradPad projects in Fulham (Orient House) and Battersea being the other two.



BEN FERNANDO



PHILIP KENT



BEN FERNANDO



PHILIP KENT



Editors: Nida Mahmud, Maciej Matuszewski, Aamna Mohdin, Aemun Reza, Kunal Wagle

NEWS

... continued from page 1 – College holds North Acton Consultation



Artist's drawing of the new One Victoria Road Hall

IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

the event being well advertised by email, and on the Union website, only some half a dozen students attended.

Toni Byrne-Price began by outlining the current state of the project and the plans for the future. The site of the hall is located 200 metres away from North Acton tube station and across the road from The Costume Store – a hall of residence for the University of Arts London that was also developed by Berkley First. Byrne-Price stressed how the experience of developing The Costume Store had taught Berkley First many lessons relevant to its work on One Victoria Road.

He also said that he hoped that the two halls could potentially share services, with Imperial students using The Costume Store's arts facilities and University of Arts students using the bar and restaurant that are planned for One Victoria Road.

As per the requirements of the planning permission obtained by the College, one of buildings of the Imperial development, designated Building A, will consist of commercial facilities, including the restaurant and the bar, as well as offices that will be let out to private companies. A number of other, connected buildings, ranging in height from 7 to 19 stories, will house the hall itself. The upper floors will house the student bedrooms while the ground floor consist of communal facilities. These will include music practice rooms; a gym; a dance and martial arts training studio; study spaces and a 259 square metre common room – which will be more than twice as large as the Southside common room. The College hopes that these facilities will enable students staying in Acton to have the same experience as those living in South Kensington. Jane Neary was keen to point out

how a lot of effort had been put into ensuring that the hall would develop into "a wider community", stressing in particular the importance of the wardening system. The hall will have two wardens and twelve sub-wardens. A dedicated wardens' office on the ground floor would give residents a private, safe space to meet members of the wardening team and it is envisaged that wardens would hold drop in surgery sessions. Paul Noke also stressed that the hall would operate a "freedom of movement" system – with residents being able to move around the entire complex and visit friends in other buildings and on other floors, thereby bolstering the community feel.

The meeting was then opened to questions and feedback. While the opinions about the design were generally positive Alex Savell, incoming Deputy President (Finance & Services), raised the concern that access to the common room would be primarily through an external covered colonnade. Neary and Byrne-Price replied that it might be possible to consider having glazing put in along the walkway.

Others raised the concern that, at 140 square metres, the planned gym might be too small. Neary and Byrne-Price replied that the College is considering moving the gym to a larger space on the first floor of Building A, thereby also freeing up more space on the ground floor of the other buildings for a larger dance studio and more study rooms. The terms of the planning permission, however, would then mean that the gym would have to be open to the public, not just hall residents.

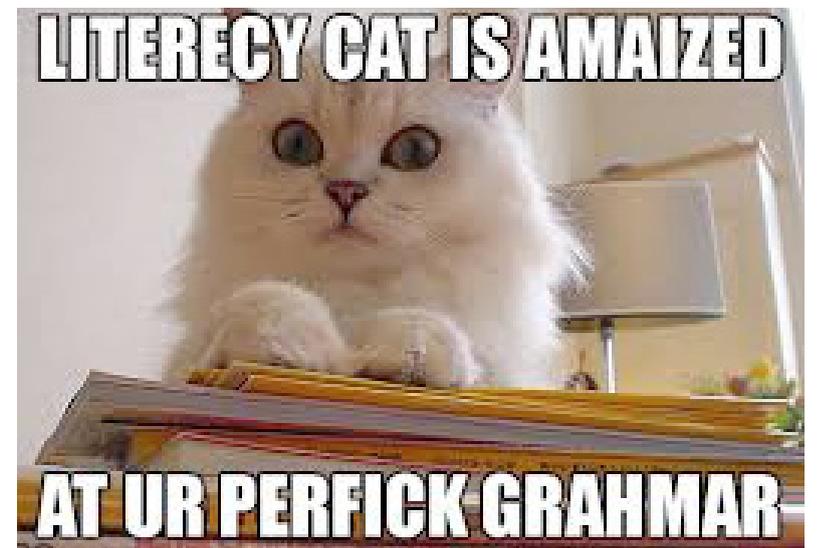
The Union Central Services Manager, and Yas Edwards, current Deputy Presidents (Clubs & Societies), also asked if it would be possible to open up the shared, ground floor spaces to clubs and

societies, and to individual students who were not residents. The College representatives confirmed that this was an option that they were actively looking at.

Neither Jane Neary nor Professor Humphris were able to confirm exactly how much the rooms would cost, explaining that the final decision on this would be made in the coming fortnight. However, previous indications suggest that twin rooms will cost in the region of £125 per week while single rooms will cost in the region of £150 per week. Alex Savell suggested that this price might be excessive given that students could easily find single rooms at £125 per week on the private market, while Kieron Creagh, current Deputy President (Finance & Services), indicated that such high prices might put off less well off freshers. Jane Neary replied that the additional cost accounts for the pastoral support and communal facilities that living in halls provides. Professor Humphris added that the College's dedication to transparency meant that it would publish a full breakdown of how the rent paid by students is used and reminded those present of the College's generous bursary scheme for lower income students. The College representatives concluded that, while the price might appear to be high, it was fair and realistic given the location and facilities.

In general, the meeting was productive, with Neary and Byrne-Price promising to incorporate many of the student suggestions into the plan for the development. They will also be launching a online student survey about the plans. All the College staff members present stressed how important student feedback was to them and how they hoped as many people as possible would fill in the survey.

LOLCAT OF THE WEEK: More from teh Lolcat editor



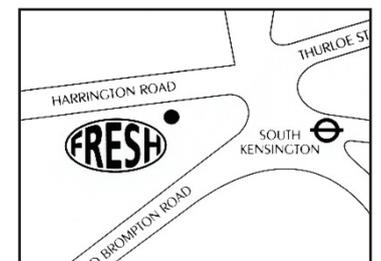
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Imperial Innovations in bid to raise £150 million via investment

Kunal Wagle
News Editor

Imperial Innovations, a company based at Imperial College, is planning to issue new shares on the stock market in a bid to raise up to £150 million. The firm, which is listed on the AIM stock market (a sub market of the London Stock Exchange), intends to use the money to fund future investments in fledgling companies. Innovations has close ties with Imperial College London, Oxford, Cambridge and UCL, and has arrangements in place with these universities that allows it to invest in fledgling companies as they start out.

Some of these ventures can prove very successful – for example, earlier this year Circassia, a maker of pet allergy treatments, made over £200 million at the stock market. Innovations, who currently own 14% of the company, raised over £80 million from the venture.

Imperial Innovations intends to split the money that is raised between investing in companies that it already owns a share in, and for investing in new companies. Russell Cummings, the Chief Executive, has already rubber stamped Veryan as a company that could do with extra investment. The business, which makes stents, needs £12 million to gain regulatory approval in the US.

According to the press release from Imperial Innovations, nearly 90% of shareholders have already agreed to the additional placing. They have also agreed to the placing being “non-pre-emptive”, meaning that new investors can buy the shares. The company says that the minimum price for each share will be £4. The current price on the AIM market is 442.50 - a rise of 6% the day after the news was announced.

Martin Knight, the Chairman of Imperial Innovations, said, “The Board believes that strengthening the Group’s balance sheet through the Placing would greatly enhance its ability to attract high quality investment opportunities. It would also improve the Group’s ability to support portfolio companies from inception until their full development, as illustrated by the recent successful IPO of Circassia Pharmaceuticals.

“We have identified opportunities to increase the capital deployed in a number of our leading portfolio companies, which, in aggregate, are seeking to raise over £100 million from investors over the next twelve months.

“It is gratifying that our core shareholders have evidenced their support for this proposed fundraising by giving irrevocable undertakings to vote in favour of the resolutions needed to enable the Placing to proceed.”

Last week *Felix* reported that Yoyo had secured \$5 million in funding, the majority coming from Imperial Innovations.

College improves in Guardian League Tables

Imperial College have moved up four places to 5th in the latest Guardian University League Table. The college overtook Universities such as Surrey, London School of Economics, University College London and Durham. The Guardian’s league table is based on numerous factors, including Student to staff ratio, average spending per student, average grades required for attendance and graduate prospects. The College’s graduate prospects were ranked highest in the country, but the College’s average student satisfaction was lower than those of its closest rivals. The College’s “average entry tariff”, which is a ranking that the Guardian gives based on a university’s average minimum exam grades for entry was ranked as third in the country, behind Oxford and Cambridge.

This new league table is the latest in a string of tables that suggest that Cambridge has not only consolidated, but is now increasing the gap between it and the chasing pack. Cambridge registered first, with Oxford second and St Andrew’s third. Bath jumped from seventh to fourth, whilst Surrey (sixth), Warwick (ninth) and Lancaster (tenth) all registered improvements. Durham (eighth) and the London School of Economics (seventh) fell in the table. UCL was the biggest casualty in the list, as it lost its top ten place and now sits in lowly eleventh in the table, a drop of six places.

Centre for Doctoral Training Festival of Science next week

Nida Mahmud
News Editor

The annual Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) Festival of Science will be happening on Friday 13th June 2014 in the SAF lecture theatres. It is a chance for CDT students to come together to organise and present a showcase of current science and scientific issues to the Imperial College London research community.

The 2014 festival focuses on the theme of “Science and the Media”. Featuring speakers from a number of disciplines and positions within the scientific world, we hope to bring you a range of perspectives on working with the media and engaging the public as a scientist.

The day is also an opportunity for the four CDTs to communicate with each other and gain a more detailed understanding of the work that is carried out in each field. This year we will have presentations of the achievements and aspirations of the outgoing cohorts of each CDT, this being the graduation year of the first cohort for many CDTs.

Speakers will include Johnjo McFadden, Brian Fuchs and Lewis Darnell. There is a poster competition with a £250 prize for the best poster as well as prizes for other entrants. Find out more at: <http://www.cdtfestival.co.uk>

IMPERIAL HORIZONS 2014/15



On-line enrolment for current undergraduates entering their 2nd, 3rd and 4th years in October 2014 will soon be open.

Enrolment for current 2nd and 3rd years opens on Monday 19 May 2014 at 14.00
Enrolment for current 1st years opens on Tuesday 10 June 2014 at 14.00

Find out more:

www.imperial.ac.uk/horizons



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COMMENT

Editors: Eoghan J. Totten, Tessa Davey, Kunal Wagle
comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk



Higher Education Fees Debate

Alex Savell

So, I am the poor schmuck who has to try to sell Tuition fees to the people already most disenfranchised with them. It's my job to tell you all why running up a debt of £9000 per year on tuition fees (alongside other costs) is the best idea out there... oh, and I get 750 words to make that sale, 60 of which I've already used. So, it's a good day to be me. That said, as I look at it more it seems more and more of a sensible standpoint. Why? Well let's see.

I don't think anyone would really disagree that free University education for anyone is a laudable goal, that would be brilliant, but it's not a viable or even vaguely realistic standpoint. The fact is someone always pays. 'Free' education really just means that the taxpayer foots the bill. I think this is obviously unfair for a number of reasons; for one that's a huge extra expense to the tax payer, approximately £12 billion¹ per year which isn't affordable. Secondly, I don't think University is like healthcare: we all contribute so that everyone can receive it, but it is never likely that everyone will get a University education; even if it were, that would vastly increase the cost. I honestly believe that until such time as free university education puts no material pressure on the nations finances all students should be required to contribute something to an optional education that adds an estimated lifetime value on the order of £200,000². I think that seems fair.

But why tuition fees? A graduate tax is just as good a method at avoiding asking the tax payer to shell out for our degrees isn't it? And if you have that system you never feel quite like you have the £9000 per year debt albatross (as it currently stands) around your neck. That must be a good thing, surely. Except that the level you have to pay back over the years after University is the same or more; you do still have that debt in every way that matters, and yet the system encourages you to act like you don't. Can anyone else think of an example where ignoring spiralling debt has been an issue? Perhaps that's overly pessimistic, but a graduate tax also completely divides society into graduates and non-graduates until retirement. Tuition fees don't do that in nearly so profound a fashion. Equally, tuition fees offer a lot more freedom: want to pay them yourself rather than get a loan? It's much easier than if there's a graduate tax. Also, loans are regulated (perhaps not well, but they are) and there is only so much that can be done to force you to accept a higher rate of interest or change payment terms. A lot of those barriers are removed with a graduate tax. If it were set at 9% and the government decided they wanted 10% instead, or 20,

OUR CURRENT SYSTEM

“ free University education for anyone is a laudable goal... but it's not a viable standpoint or even vaguely realistic standpoint ”

or 30%? Then what's to stop them applying that to people already committed to paying the tax? I can think of only two things: the opposition and elections. I'm not sure either is one I'd want to bet my financial future on. A friend of mine also pointed out, that to some extent a graduate tax means the government owns 9% of you... which is a vaguely terrifying thought.

So I think that tuition fees are the most sensible of the three proposed ideas by some margin. They are fairer to the general public, they are more flexible than other payment options and more regulated and secure and while many of us have not enjoyed paying them, whatever scheme we've dealt with, they have not had a notable effect on overall university applications. So why risk moving to a system that could?

There is also a broader argument to be had here about how the funding model affects the education we receive. Tuition fees are the only model where students choose which university gets what money. Your fees are paid directly to them. Both the graduate tax and the free models pay a set amount to each university for a certain number of places each year. So tuition fees are the only proposed way to inspire competition and guarantee that universities have to prove they give students the best education and experience every single year. And don't we want to push universities to offer the best education and experience for students? Isn't that sort of what it's all about?

¹ Based on Higher Education Statistics Agency Estimates of current student numbers

² Based on BIS research paper 112



Marissa Lewis

Graduate Tax is a model of higher education funding that shockingly involves students paying a tax in line with their income after graduation. Some models of graduate tax involve graduates paying a rate of tax until retirement, or for a certain number of years after graduation or until the cost of the degree is paid. For the sake of distinguishing this from a simple rebrand of our current model, I'll argue for a rate of taxation until retirement to be sporting.

Although it seems counter-intuitive to want to pay back student loans for the rest of your working life when the current system offers the faintest glimmer of hope of paying off your student debt before retirement, doing so addresses a current inequality in the system. As a loan, it accrues interest over time which means students who pay their fees up front or soon after graduation essentially buy their way out of paying interest. Assuming that some students do work long enough to pay off their loans, plus interest, in their entirety, it means that students from higher incomes pay less for their education than other students.

One of the major benefits to a graduate tax is that education remains free at the point of delivery and removes the stigma around debt and loans. 'Tax' is not perceived the same way as 'debt' which is a concern for current applicants and their parents - hearing you will be 40k in debt after leaving university is not the same as hearing you will be required to pay an additional tax on your income.

A graduate tax also removes the market economy of higher education. Raising the cap on fees to £9,000 led to many universities raising their tuition fees in line with the cap to preserve the perceived value of their degrees i.e. charging less than £9,000 would make their degrees seem cheap compared to other institutions. To put this in perspective, although universities may vary widely across the league tables, the average tuition fee for 2013-14 was £8,507 suggesting many institutions have fallen into this trap. Although it can be argued that raising the cap meant universities had to improve their offer to make it worth £9,000 a year, this is arguably not true as our job market values 'having a degree' often from a 'good university', which will be true regardless of the quality of teaching. Equally, it creates a system where students aren't just deciding their course based on the institution's merit but also on their perceived debt after graduation. Arguably, removing the economic component of degrees would force universities to compete on merit, rather than rely on undercutting the tui-

GRADUATE TAX

tion fee market to attract students.

I'll now talk briefly about my esteemed opponents. Free education sounds grand and seems like the obvious choice for a student body. Still, there are two ways of achieving this system - either you massively increase general taxation or you massively decrease university places. These very different approaches reflect the diverse nature of free education supporters, namely the NUS, UKIP and the Green Party - three groups

“ ...this historic wrong must be redressed ”

you don't normally put in the same sentence.

The option of increasing general taxation means that the model leans heavily on people who haven't gone to university (72.8% of the population) paying for students to have a privilege they themselves haven't enjoyed. Although you can argue the net benefit of some degrees to society (STEM, Medicine, Nursing, etc) and therefore that the general population will confer some benefit from free education, this isn't as great as the benefit to the individuals who attend i.e. vast impact on income, social mobility, etc. This is why I'd be reluctant to support a scheme which relied on general taxation.

The option of restricting places may sound appealing to all of those who scoff at so-called 'Mickey Mouse' degrees, but I wonder about the effect it would have on access arrangements for students from poorer backgrounds. A degree is so much more than a piece of paper, it is access to completely different employment prospects, it is one of the few methods of social mobility we have in this country. Restricting places would ultimately deny students these opportunities.

That leaves us with the current system and the argument that if it isn't broken that we shouldn't try to fix it. Well, I'd argue the system is broken. People much more qualified than me have argued that we are approaching a point where repayment of loans is so low that £9,000 fees are unsustainable. The number of applications to university have dropped. Personally, I attended the big fees protest which led to me being hit around the head with a placard when things got violent. For my welfare alone, this historic wrong must be redressed.

Okay, you can ignore the last part.

I'm not saying a graduate tax will solve the sector's problems - higher education funding is incredibly complex and frankly a bit of a mess. Still, I hope this article has convinced you it's the best hope we have.



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COMMENT

Introduction - Nat Kempston, Deputy President (Education)

Imperial College Union's Policy on fees and funding in Higher Education is expiring, so we need to write a new one! The three main funding models are free education, graduate tax, and the tuition fee loan system we currently have. We need to decide which of these models we think is best, and which one we as a Union will support and campaign for. We want you to get involved in the debate, so members have written these 3 articles to get started! Have a read, and come along to Council on Tuesday 10 June where we will be debating the issue.

Andrew Tranter

The debate about higher education funding is not about what the country can or cannot afford. The current forecasts suggest that 45% of student loan income will be written off. This is rapidly approaching the figure of 48.6%, where the current tuition fees system will cost the state more than it did four years ago, before tuition fees were trebled. So let's be clear: this is an ideological debate about what universities are, and who they should serve.

It's often argued that fees allow for more money for universities, to spend on bursaries or better teaching. But that's not true – fees have instead been used to offset budget cuts. The current teaching grant provided by the state to universities is about 29% of what it was in 2009. What we're seeing is an end to the concept of the university as a publicly funded body. In other words, we're seeing the privatisation and marketisation of the higher education sector. Markets might be good for some things, but managing public services in a fair and democratic way is not one of them. Increasingly universities are ceasing to serve the public good, instead focusing on research that can easily be commercialised.

We are no longer really students, but instead passive consumers. Our role is limited to being customers paying for a service. That's not how we should have to see our lecturers and colleagues – the people we work alongside. Only by taking tuition fees out of the equation can we interact in a meaningful way without academics having to worry about balancing the books.

At the same time as all this, by the way, we've seen a huge increase in managerial pay packets. Our own Rector was paid about £364,000 in 2011/12, which, incidentally, is about 23 times the standard stipend for EPSRC-funded PhD students in London. Meanwhile, lecturers' pay has been slashed 13% nationally in the last four years. Students struggle to pay rent. And yet tuition fees reliably increase every few years, and sooner or later will be completely uncapped. It is clear that universities are no longer run for the benefit of all of us, but solely those who can claw their way to the top of the hierarchy.

Some claim that free education would require cuts to maintenance loans and grants, or a reduction in student numbers. But the higher education budget is not fixed, as we've seen by the way successive governments keep cutting it. The higher education teaching block grant for 2014/15 is £1.582 billion. In contrast, the government currently plans on spending £25 billion on four shiny new nuclear submarines. A relatively small increase in higher education funding would allow us to provide free, funded education for anyone who has sufficient academic ability.

Our Union shouldn't be afraid of calling for greater investment in education. Even if free

“

It is clear that universities are no longer run for the benefit of all of us, but solely those who can claw their way to the top of the hierarchy.

”

education is impossible (it isn't), having a principled, progressive policy doesn't prevent us from negotiating pragmatically in the short term – if anything, it strengthens us by showing our integrity and willingness to stand up for students. With the government having repeatedly ignored us, it is clear that the weaker strategies previously used (including support for a “graduate tax” or maintaining fees at the current level) are pathetically ineffectual.

On that point, nothing would be improved by patronisingly relabeling fees as a “graduate tax”. Indeed, such a system would only introduce the problem of being completely unenforceable abroad, leading to the emigration of the few who can afford to pay the tax.

We wouldn't be alone in re-adopting free education. Much of Europe has no tuition fees, or at worst token ones. To name only a few, this includes France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Scotland. Free education is supported by student unions across the country, including even the usually shit NUS. It's supported by the lecturers' union, UCU. If our own lecturers are calling for free education, why are we holding ourselves back?

At the end of the day, we're a students' union. We should be calling for the best option for students, not one that leaves the average graduate in almost £60,000 of debt. That means an end to the commercialisation and privatisation of higher education. Free education is the only way that we can ensure that everyone in society has the opportunity to access university education without fear of crippling debt. It is fair, economically sensible, and the only progressive option.

Calling for anything less only gives the government an excuse to screw us over again.

Racism in Northern Ireland

Rory Fenton

Columnist
@roryfenton



To say that Northern Ireland has come a long way since its sectarian civil war is a cliché but it's worth saying: we've come a long way. The soldiers no longer patrol the streets. The curfews no longer empty the streets at night. The bombs no longer tear through shopping centres and flesh. The Northern Ireland of my childhood has rebranded as the land of the *Titanic* and *Game of Thrones*, Liam Neeson and Snow Patrol. But a look at headlines coming out of the country today gives good reason to doubt things really did change for good.

Would you trust a Muslim to do your shopping for you? That's a genuine source of debate right now as the First Minister Peter Robinson publicly defends comments by an evangelical pastor who said that Islam was “the spawn of the devil” and “satanic” and that when it came to Muslims, “I don't trust them”. Fine, let the Good Reverend say that. We've heard this bigotry echo in holy walls before, only it was about Catholics, or it was Jews, or, still today, homosexuals. If you don't like his recycled message of hate, don't attend his services. A very different problem is the First Minister's defence of the pastor. Unlike the church, I can't just up and leave the country; I'm stuck here and I'm stuck being represented by this man, whether I like it or not. A politician can never represent every one of his constituents' political views but he must surely give them equal moral value as human beings. When our First Minister vilifies an already vilified minority as untrustworthy, we all do.

As she spoke out in defence of Northern Ireland's Muslims on local TV, Anna Lo, an Alliance Party politician, choked back tears. Lo, the first East-Asia-born politician ever elected in the UK, had just announced that morning that she would not seek reelection because of the racist abuse she had suffered in the past year. The abuse came about because she supported Belfast City Council's decision to fly the Union Flag only on royal occasions and not everyday at the City Hall. The decision provoked mass protest and rioting and Lo, one of many politicians to support the flag decision,

was singled out for vicious racial abuse on social media and her party's offices were petrol bombed. She was, she said, scared to walk in the streets for fear of racial taunting or worse.

Perhaps the only strange thing in all of this is that we bother to act surprised. In a country built on petty division between Catholic and Protestant, is more division really that unexpected? We are sending a message to our children from birth that what really matters in this world is your tribe and those who share your tribe.

We do more than send them this message; we scream it at them. We scream it at them in their tribal schools that tell them “it's best to keep away from those Others”. We scream it at them from the violent murals and tattered flags on their streets that tell them “from here to there is ours but go no further”. We scream it at them with their very names that mark them as “ours” or as “theirs”, that brand Pádraig and William like cattle from rival farms. We scream it at them until we are blue in the face and then we act surprised that they actually listened. We scream it at them until their hearts turn deaf.

Behind the racial abuse of Lo, behind the mistrust of Muslims, lies the ugly truth that, while the civil war may have ended, the divisions and mutual suspicions that fuelled it live toxically on. We must ask ourselves; did we stop the killing because it wasn't getting us anywhere or did we stop the killing because we learnt to value the lives of others as we do our own? Is peace, if that's what we have, simply more convenient than war or is it a precious flame to be sheltered and fed daily? To look at many of our leaders today is to see a class who think that reverting to the rhetoric of the past is a useful tactic to have to hand, not a moral regression.

Following #IStandWithAnna on social media is to see the countless many who do understand peace. The many who understand that peace is not merely the absence of war but the constant rejection of tribal division and the building of friendships across divides. It is they who must scream back even louder at the sirens of division and wage peace. It is they who know that to fail to stand for Anna or for our Muslim friends is to pave a path to the past. The real line-in-the-sand in Northern Ireland is not between Catholic and Protestant or Nationalist and Unionist but between those who see tribes and those who see shared humanity.

It's time we get louder.





BLOGGERS CORNER

Joel Auterson talks about *Shame*

"Put your hands in the air. Now put them down if you've never done anything you regret."

As every hand in the room remains aloft, John Berkavitch is joined onstage by three men holding umbrellas.

"Don't worry about them," he says, "They're just my imagination."

So begins *Shame*, a show combining poetry, storytelling, movement, music and clever use of projection to create something truly unique. The tagline of the show is "What is the worst thing you've ever done?" and in 70 minutes Berkavitch relates five different events, from his early childhood to his mid-twenties.

The narrative is complex without being convoluted, with the five different plots being interwoven in a non-linear fashion. Although incredibly raw and personal throughout, it still manages to be full of John's characteristic wit, and these five stories are all curiously uplifting. His words feel meticulously crafted, shifting in and out of different rhymes and rhythms with seeming effortlessness, creating intensely vivid imagery and a feeling of movement – and that's before the dancers have even started doing their thing.

Shame is a technical marvel. Berkavitch is joined by three pioneering break dancers, who provide a dynamism to the stories as well as acting as John's stage props. I don't want to spoil too much – however, one particularly stand-out moment was the three together playing the part of a coffee machine. This had John treating the front row like the queue in the coffee shop he was working in, asking for drinks orders and chatting about Christmas shopping. I'm not normally a massive fan of audience participation, but this was done so fluidly, and tied in so well to the plot, that it was nearly impossible not to buy into it. Suffice to say, I have never been so grateful to be handed an invisible toastie that's just been pulled out of someone's bum. Honestly.

Not content to let these three do all the hard work, Berkavitch is just as involved with the movements; frequently diving between and over limbs, being lifted and carried, being restrained by the others and many more besides. The result is stunning – as the movement is all in relation to the story being told, it never feels disjointed or detracts from John's words.

The stage itself is minimalistic – a white floor and a white backdrop. It's the addition of several projectors – at least five, I think – that allow images to be placed on the floor, the wall and even on the bodies of the actors. This is used in some incredibly inventive ways, while, again, never feeling out of place or providing unnecessary distraction. I was surprised (and amazed) to see that the lighting and music are all controlled from a laptop off to the side. This is started at the beginning of the show and then never again touched – the whole 70 minutes are choreographed with military precision. The sheer amount of practice that must have gone into this production is staggering.

The show ends with John asking the audience if anyone has a story they'd like to share. This feels rather sudden – though I suppose we should have expected it, especially given something similar was mentioned at the beginning. Unfortunately nobody did, though I'd be interested to know if this is the norm or if we were just a particularly shy crowd.

Shame pulls together elements from across the artistic spectrum into one incredibly polished production, which is an achievement in itself. However, it's the inventiveness of the movement and animation, the unwavering attention to detail and, of course, John Berkavitch's incredible talent for storytelling that really make it stand out. I fully intend to go and see it again – you should come too.

I saw *Shame* at the Roundhouse in Camden. It's nearing the end of its current tour – there's more information on John Berkavitch's website, www.berkavitch.com.

What A Testament

Fred Fyles is blown away at the Barbican



© BRIGITTE LACOMBE

Who was Mary? From biblical sources we know that she was the mother of Jesus; from them on it gets a little fuzzy, depending on which line of Christianity you're following.

But who was Mary *really*? Was she a saint, who ascended to heaven during the Assumption? Or was she just an ordinary woman, who happened to raise one of the most influential men in history? It is this question that Irish writer Colm Toibin is attempting to answer with *The Testament of Mary*, a radical reinterpretation of Mary's life that veers away from the accepted dogma. Nominated for the Booker Prize in 2013, *Testament* has since been adapted for the stage by Toibin himself, who cuts down his slim novella, which comes in at under 100 pages, to an even more slimline monologue, delivered over the course of 80 minutes by fellow countrywoman Fiona Shaw.

Shaw's Mary rejects the accepted view of Christ as saviour; holed up in a small house in Ephesus, she is regularly visited by followers of her son, who want to write up her story, but she isn't telling them what they want to hear. In a voice laced with cynicism, she decries her son and his apostles as "a bunch of misfits". Picking up his story from childhood, through to his crucifixion, Mary makes it clear that she has no time for her son's so-called 'miracles'. Preferring to live in 'the cold light of day', she explains how stories of his healings were passed along like Chinese whispers, how Lazarus' miraculous resurrection was anything but, and how even his turning water into wine – an event she was there to witness – was unconvincing. Overall, this is a stark rejection of the accepted Christian dogma, and it is perhaps no surprise that the play met with protests when it opening in America last year.

Shaw pulls no punches in her portrayal of Mary, and brings an intense physicality to the stage,

which she stalks like a caged animal, pacing up and down. In a clear, strong voice, which has at its core a sense of anguish, she recounts how her only son grew away from her, and was eventually murdered in front of her eyes. This Mary is not heroic. She is a deeply scarred woman, who fled the crucifixion for fear of her life, and now harbours an anger at the outside world, and an even deeper anger at herself. "Nothing escapes me" Shaw intones, her voice heavy with world-weariness, "except sleep".

While Shaw's performance is electrifying, and captures our attention to such an extent that the minutes slip by like seconds, the emotional core of the piece seems somewhat lacking. While the script progresses through the life of her son, there never seems to be an emotional climax, and the peak that is reached as Shaw describes the crucifixion is somewhat tempered by the intrusive sound design. At the end of the play there is no catharsis for Mary, and none for the audience either; all we have is a tired old woman, exhausted, and at the end of her rope. However, while keeping in mind that this lack of release may be intentional, it is nigh-on impossible to criticise Shaw's performance, which I am sure will be remembered for years to come as one of her best.

When exploring the question of Mary's identity, it is necessary to look at how she has been portrayed in the visual arts. A recurring motif throughout Western art, depictions of Mary can be found in nearly every European culture over the last millennium; but director Deborah Warner gives little concession to these images, donning her Mary in stark black peasant garbs, emphasising her normality. However, Warner does bookend the production with two classic depictions of Mary: for twenty or so minutes before the play begins, the audience is invited to come up onto a stage littered with props, the most popular of which is an enormous live vulture, which is

instagrammed passionately by the crowd. But the most striking feature is a glass tank, in which Shaw sits, surrounded by candles. Dressed in sumptuous robes of red and blue, she bears an uncanny resemblance to a Renaissance *Madonna of Humility*. Similarly, towards the end of the play, she picks up a bundle of robes, and assumes the classic image of the *Pieta*, in which Mary is shown cradling the body of her dead son.

While both of these images are striking, what gives them more impact is the fact that neither pose includes the figure of Jesus, making us acutely more aware of what Mary is missing. There is a gaping hole at the centre of her life, a child who died before his mother, which no amount of time can fix.

Aside from these two moments, the play seems to take its cues much more from 20th century art; Tom Pye's stage design includes a massive, Richard-Serra-esque sheet of metal at one end, and the shifting light that forms the horizon is reminiscent of a desert dreamscape by Dali. In fact, the entire production has the air of a dream about it, with Pye's Ephesus seeming to be removed from both time and space. This raises issues about the veracity of the literature we are presented; how accurate is the Biblical story? And for that matter, how accurate is Mary's telling?

The answer to both questions is unknowable, and Warner makes these points with a lightness of touch. In our modern, image-obsessed world, the only testament that matters is what people can capture with their iPhones and place a retro filter over (#testamentofmary).

Once the production finishes, and the house lights go up however, one thing is certain: Shaw has given a performance of a lifetime, and this groundbreaking production, which owes innumerable amounts to Warner and Pye, deserves to go down in the artistic canon, as one of the most brilliant portrayals of the Virgin Mary ever told.



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ARTS

Delight your inner Barbie doll

Clara Clark Nevola
Writer

What: Wedding Dresses 1775-2014
Where: Victoria & Albert Museum, SW7
When: Until 15th March 2015
Price: £12, £8 students

Wedding days: they're everyone's opportunity to live out their fairy tale. And, of course, the best way to feel like a princess is to look like a princess – cue the ever-fascinating obsession of the wedding dress. The V&A exhibition walks us through almost 250 years of bridal fashion and explains changes in sociocultural wedding fashion by displaying a considerable number of outfits.

Lace, silk, patterns, brocade, tiaras, trains and shoes – if as a child you ever enjoyed making clothes for your dolls or dressing up with older relatives' clothes, you'll get comparable gratification out of filing past the displays of lavish dresses, veils and petticoats. From Jane Bailey's romantic cream outfit for a 1780's rural wedding to Mary Charteris' skin-revealing silk dress from her recent wedding, the exhibition has plenty to

coo about.

It starts with late 18th century dresses, with a good mix of dresses originating from different areas and different social backgrounds. At this point wedding dresses, whatever their value, were intended to be worn again and often came with clever adjustments to allow them to make the transition from church-wear to party-wear. At that stage in bridal fashion only wealthier brides would wear white, while women with smaller budgets would opt for coloured or patterned dresses which could more easily be washed and worn again. Bridal wear then started to become exclusively white (at least for young, first-time brides) and adopted well-known wedding accessories such as veils, trains and lace embroidery. A notable exception is a smart purple skirt-suit, which stands out amidst the sea of cream and white lace. At the age of 35 Harriet Joyce considered herself too old to dress in white, and sewed herself this wedding outfit in 1899.

The war-time wedding dress displays some imaginative pieces which worked round the cloth rationing. Wedding dresses consisted of clothes made out of un-rationed materials, such as curtain netting, upholstery cloths and even parachute silk. Many women also chose to use their serving uniform, generally a smart-looking affair, as their wedding clothes. This trend gave rise to what are probably the most gender-empowered garments



© ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS LTD/MARY EVANS

in bridal-wear history, exemplified by a deep-red knee length dress with a thick black belt worn by an electrical engineer on her wedding day.

By the time the exhibition reaches the early 20th century it has abandoned all pretences of giving a global view of wedding-wear, showcasing exclusively celebrity weddings: royalty, nobility, socialites and later on models, actresses and big-shots from the music industry too. You can sit down and watch all the royal weddings for the last 100 years, projected on wall on repeat. You can

ogle at Gwen Stefani's wedding dress or speculate on the cost of a Christian Lacroix dress from a recent bridal catwalk. You'll unwittingly (and quite possibly unwillingly) be transported into a museum version of OK! magazine, passing from one celebrity wedding to another to coo or shudder at as you see fit.

This exhibition is a treat for the eye and a delight to the Barbie doll that surely lurks inside every one of us. But it is little more than a glorified Wedding Show, lacking any commentary on

what wedding fashion means for society and how it has changed to reflect it in the last two centuries. It also represents a very small portion of British bridal fashion, giving us an idea only of what rich, culturally Christian brides are wearing. The few items which represent other marital customs present in Britain are inadequate and unintegrated, a side story that remains unexplained.

So, yes – it's girly, it's pretty and it's showy. But aren't weddings so much more than that?

Moriarty gets messy with money

Birdland is thought-provoking but mainly just confusing, says **Chris Witham**



It is a strange quirk of the human condition that we can enjoy being uncomfortable. Simon Stephens' new play *Birdland* at the Royal Court Theatre manages to captivate an audience whilst remaining incredibly painful to watch.

Andrew Scott (best known as Moriarty on BBC's *Sherlock*) plays pop megastar Paul towards the end of

a lengthy world tour. As he goes from city to city, we see the effect that the months of late nights, illicit substances and, above all, money have had on his mind. It is the latter of these which Stephens' piece explores, with Paul not only going on spur of the moment spending sprees, but taking time to wax lyrical about how everything can be quantified and given a value.

In part it is this which will jar with the audience. For the first hour and a half, Scott makes it very difficult to connect with the character, and it works wonderfully. But even when we finally see Paul in more familiar surroundings the conversation quickly turns to cash, and although perfectly sensible in the context of the play, it gives the audience very little to cling on to as they are taken through the play.

The uncomfortable situations would be enough to make you turn away and hide were it not for Carrie Cracknell's inventive direction. Although many of the metaphors that Cracknell attempts fall flat, and are bizarre enough that they wouldn't have felt misplaced in Rupert Goold's production of *ENRON* in 2009, it does enough to keep you transfixed on the action onstage. The play is relentless, and with no interval it would be easy to find yourself looking at your watch, but a great ensemble cast deliver a performance that elevates the play to another level.

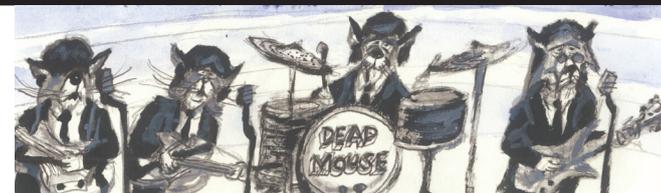
However, I left the theatre confused

about what I was meant to be feeling. On one hand it is a simple tragedy, telling of a man destroyed by his success, a warning of the dangers that too much money can pose. But I always felt that there was another level, a deeper message that was getting lost amongst blackened champagne and flooded stages. If that deeper meaning isn't supposed to be there then the direction was simply going too far and adding disorder.

That isn't to say the play is not enjoyable. It is incredibly funny in places, and anyone with an interest in theatre will love watching a theatre being pushed to its limits. The story is solid, if not the most original, and it is paced well. It's just a little bit muddled, and frankly I expected more clarity from a writer/director partnership who are leading lights in the Royal Court Theatre's mission to showcase new theatre.



TRISTRAM KENTON / THE GUARDIAN



Music & Drugs aka How MDMA Ruins It

Our Man in 'Dam asks if E really stimulates an improved live experience

This week marks the passing of a great; a true hero of our time. I am of course referring to Alexander "Sasha" Shulgin (pictured), the Godfather of psychedelics. Whilst I personally will remember him as the man who put the broadening of human knowledge, and consciousness ahead of any other priority, and achieving this by synthesising and personally ingesting over two hundred new psychedelic drugs, history will primarily remember him as the first individual to discover the effects of MDMA.

Shulgin had great respect for the substance on account of its potential use in psychotherapy. He often quoted a psychiatrist, whom too was an advocate of the drug, by saying it was "penicillin for the soul". Along with cases being made of MDMA being a great aid for the talking therapies, another argument which is intriguingly contrarian from even a counter culture point of view is that of how MDMA affects one's appreciation of music. Far from being an enhancer, ecstasy is perhaps the far most damaging of all drugs for how it affects the user's enjoyment of music.

At first, this seems like a completely absurd suggestion and one I would have dismissed a few years ago myself. Nevertheless, as time went by and my usage persisted, I have come to the conclusion that



this may actually be the case.

The first instance that pointed me towards this epiphany was when an acquaintance of mine told me that he didn't really do drugs that much; just every now and again at gigs. That statement was interesting enough in isolation as it got me thinking: why do people feel a particular need to reach a certain level of intoxication when going to see live music? What would clubbing be without drugs? How on earth could you even go to a festival without getting fucked up? Another thing that was interesting was that this guy was referring to MDMA, which was also something I hadn't really ever considered doing specifically at a gig. I've always preached that every drug has its context and with mandy it was a

grimy club or a fucked up house party, not some rock'n'rock show, but I am always open to expand my mind; no pun intended.

A few months later I found myself in precisely the aforementioned situation; some good chums and I were at a Deerhunter concert and, to say the least, many a pill had been popped. The band in question are a group who I hold dearly in my heart and everyone else seemed amazed by the set, yet the magic, both of the ecstasy and music, seemed to be lost on me. Somehow it didn't seem right and I squarely blame the MDMA.

After years of abuse, I had finally realised the truth behind what too many students proclaim to be a wonderdrug. MDMA has pretty much the same effect on your appreciation of music as weed does to your hunger; you don't care what you're getting so long as they're big fat juicy beats. The artistic scope of a piece of music is no longer interesting, and nor are any touching subtleties. It's simply the case that the DJ is a fuckin' genius if he puts on a track with some phat bass to it.

This is an issue no longer confined to those grinding their teeth to dust in plastic people. A worrying number of people, even when sober, now believe that the quality of a piece of music, if ever that were an appropriate metric for an art piece, simply depends on how hard the kick is. Whilst I am as guilty of this as the people I deride, I do believe that a significant proportion of those in our generation who like EDM only do so because of ecstasy.

It doesn't have to be like this though. There are other drugs out there that do actually boost one's appreciation of music. By this I mean that they allow a far deeper interpretation from numerous perspectives than you would ever

attain either sober or on MDMA. LSD is the obvious champion of this, though unless you dropped acid every weekend for a decade, you would be a nutter to take it in a club, or any public environment for that matter. Instead I am going to make a novel recommendation as the take home point of this piece: next time you go to a night club, get stoned.

The key is moderation. Have two or three beers and then a cheeky joint with your friends. Too much and you'll become overly tired or paranoid. But just the right amount is pretty great, plus who's cooler? Some sweaty candied raver proclaiming that this night is so 'it' whilst giving you the hug of death

or some dude that's actually able to articulate themselves well enough to give an honest critique of the evening's proceedings (as much as that would also be insufferable)? Also, you won't have to deal with an existential crisis for the following seventy two hours whilst not being able to face solid foods.

Despite it being mostly cack, there is a fair bit of good dance music out there. You just have to ask yourself: are you going out trying to find it or do you simply go to a club because it's the only acceptable place outside a festival to be gurned up?

All views expressed in this article are solely the opinion of the author. Felix in no way condones illicit drug use.

Mika Vainio's tour Deforce

Riaz Agahi
 Music Editor

To eliminate any ambiguity coming from my punning title for this review, *Hephaestus* is a collaboration from Finnish experimental electronic legend **Mika Vainio** and Cellist **Arne Deforce** which was released courtesy of the inimitable **Editions Mego**, an Austrian label run by **Peter Rehberg** and known for releasing some amazing music in the world of glitch, noise, ambient and other experimental electronic disciplines.

The album is a chimera of sorts, consisting of distorted cello courtesy of Deforce, who has been associated with productions of the music of influential and challenging composers such as **Iannis Xenakis**, and more transparently electronic elements from Vainio, who's been associated with rhythmic noise or power noise throughout his career, not least in his work in pioneering experimental duo **Pan Sonic**. Of course, Vainio has dabbled in his fair share of collaborations, with his work with **Joachim Nordwall** standing out for me; in fact I even named it album of 2013 in a December issue.

The album, with all the tracks themed around Greek mythology, opens with pure, bare, distorted cello tones and gradually builds into a positively face-melting attack of noise that proves highly compelling. The second track, 'Cocytus (River of Lamentation)' is a much quieter event, with a simmering ominous feel to it. A seemingly persistent drone provides the background for contrasting tones



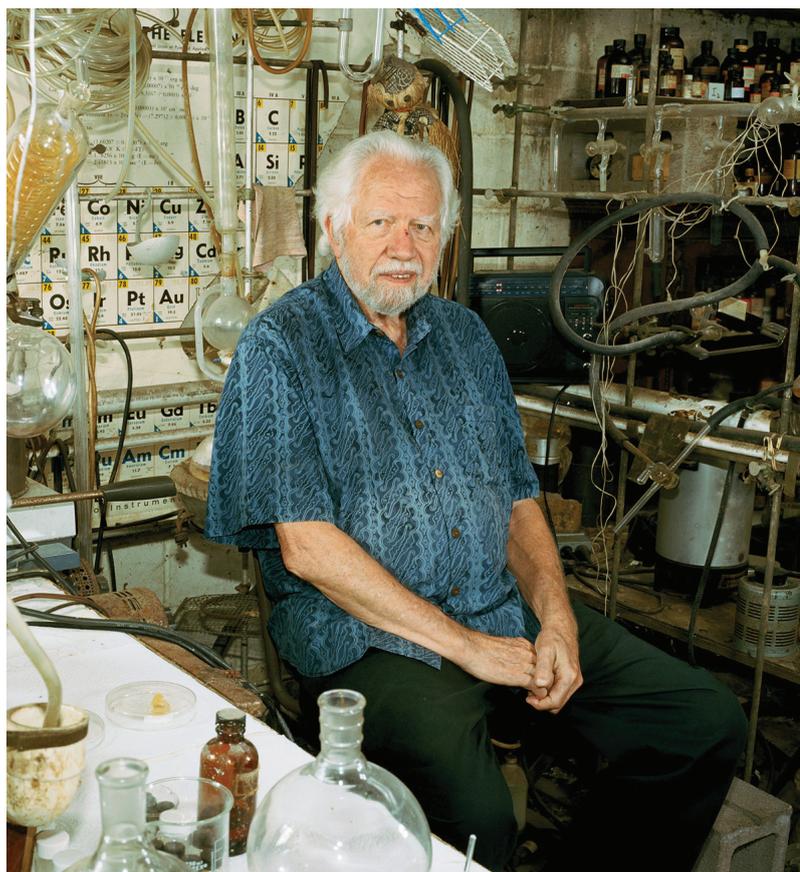
Arne Deforce & Mika Vainio
 Hephaestus

to emerge. In a way, it reminds me of the hybrid approach of **Dentistry**, at once abrasive and muted. 'Acheron (River of Woe)' is a short piece which really demonstrates the versatility of Deforce's cello skills, mutating from sounds reminiscent of birdsong into an assault of frenetic bow strokes.

The album is amazing in the volatility of the music, which is endlessly compelling in its ability to transform from quiet and disconcerting to aggressive and harsh.

These elements are undoubtedly improved by the conceptual nature of the work, with many of the tracks named after rivers in the Greek underworld, and the music brilliantly expresses the emotions stated in the title. It should come as no surprise, then, that the most aggressive and claustrophobic track is 'Styx (River of Rage)'. This is certainly my personal highlight, but there is a rich variety in the music that goes beyond simply aiming for the jugular.

Hephaestus expresses both brutality and brains, and every moment feels considered and measured, making this truly essential listening.





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MUSIC

Oren Ambarchi: Two Years On

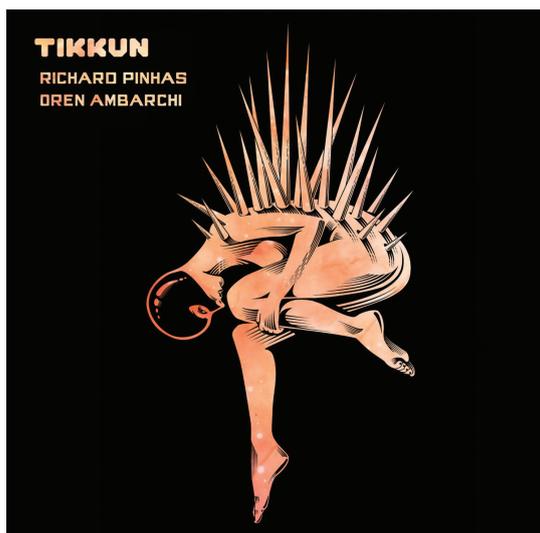
Riaz Agahi looks at the latest releases from the prolific guitarist

Two years ago I wrote a review that examined three of the excellent releases by Oren Ambarchi in 2012; *Audience of One*, *Imikuzushi* (with Keiji Haino and Jim O'Rourke), and *In the Mouth – A Hand* (with Fire!). The guitarist, drummer, and electroacoustic improviser who started his career as a Jazz drummer in his native Australia has since continued in the same vein. Numerous other releases have since come out, including the excellent *Connected*, a collaborative effort with Robin Fox which was commissioned as a soundtrack for a dance piece. Ambarchi's music touches on ambient, jazz, rock, krautrock, and, of course, noise.

He has a long history of collaborating with some of the most accomplished artists in experimental music (see the names dropped above or last year's collaboration with Japanese legend Merzbow for a few examples).

Two years later, I find myself once again staring down the barrel of a review of another impressive trio of albums, this time all collaborative efforts.

Tikkun (Above, left) is a collaborative effort with the hugely influential Richard Pinhas. Pinhas, a Frenchman, is the man behind influential space rock group Heldon. Since then, he's continued to release excellent work under his own name, dabbling in tape loops and delays, collaborating with many noise musicians and making music which, for my money, stands somewhere between Heldon's sound, which had so much influence on industrial music, and something



more raw and experimental. This is hardly a surprise, I suppose, due to Pinhas' work being intertwined with some of the biggest names in noise, for example 2010's *Metal/Crystal*, which featured both Merzbow and Wolf Eyes, who are the biggest name in US noise.

Like *Metal/Crystal*, the six tracks of which sprawl over a two hour double disc feature, *Tikkun* consists of three jams, two of which are over twenty minutes, with the other clocking in at fifteen. It's hard not to look at the album as anything other than kindred spirits working together. Both musicians have similar approaches to collaboration and sounds which blend together seamlessly, with the mind altering kaliedoscopic sounds of space rock and exploratory forays into noise and ambient complementing each other.

Both artists' work has featured elements of both of these at one

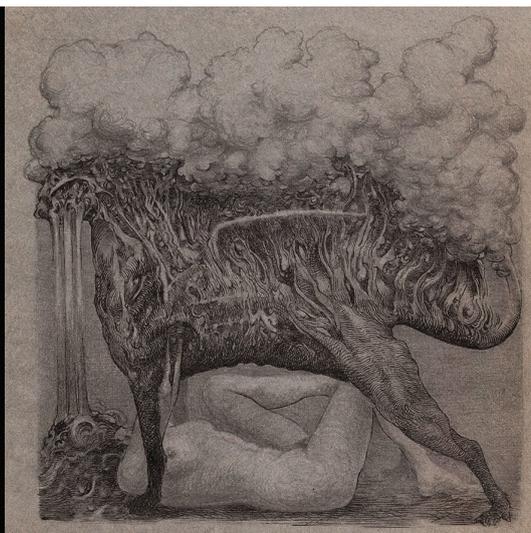
time or another.

To my ear, the album immediately seemed more focused and well constructed than *Crystal/Metal* and one of the first things I noticed was the distinctive drumming style of Joe Talia (interviewed in Felix last year), which has been a fixture in Ambarchi's live shows and many studio works for the last few years. His drumming style is incredibly well suited to this work and really drives it along, one example when the drums join in with some classic Ambarchi guitar work at the beginning of 'San Francisco - T2V2'.

The aforementioned guitar work is of course Ambarchi's favoured scratchy abrasive tone, although the word tone may not be the best to describe the abrasive atonality of Ambarchi's guitar assaults. Other than these elements and, of course, the classic Pinhas sound, it's hard to pick out distinct elements and attribute them to sources. It should be noted that Merzbow is also involved, contributing some electronics to the amorphous cacophony this excellent effort often creates.

Shade Themes from Kairos, released on Drag City on May 27th sees Ambarchi working with Stephen O'Malley (of Sunn O))) fame) and producer and Master Musicians of Bukkake founder Randall Dunn.

The album was intended as a score for *Kairos*, a film by Belgian filmmaker Alexis Destoop. In a



sense it's hard to review the album without watching the film, but the album presents an eerie foreboding sense that all isn't quite well from the start. Opening track 'That Space Between' comes across like Neurosis style dirge, but expansive rather than claustrophobic and more acoustic than metallic, before some melodic chimes add a sense of comfort to the piece. 'Temporal, Eponymous' starts off similarly and gradually evolves pretty formidable jam, as a wide array of instruments are added to the mix.

While these tracks are all very well and good, I'm sure I wasn't alone in wondering at this point where the drone and experimentalism was. It need not be mentioned to any Sunn O))) or Ambarchi fans that the nature of the artists' work often involves a more abstract take on music and this is somewhat realised on 'Circumstances of Faith,' which opens with five minutes of restrained feedback and drones which creep along menacingly until they are punctuated by a rousing drum beat and bassline.

The mellow and relaxing 'Sometimes' adds to the meditative aspect to the album with its use of acoustic instrumentation and persistent rhythms. "Sometimes" has a very static quality to it, and a comforting melody is achieved with vocals from Japanese singer-songwriter Ai Aso. The final track on the album, 'Ebony Pagoda,' is the twenty minute culmination of the album.

It certainly satisfies any hunger for drone that may have built up over the course of the album (it certainly did for me). Waves of contrasting drones, sounding at times disconcerting and harsh, and at other times melodic and comforting give the track a sort of cleansing feeling which is a perfect way to close the album.

Certainly this track will satisfy any drone cravings and comprises a rather exhausting musical journey, tossed one way and another by the interplay of diverse droning sounds.

Overall, the album is great at creating a meditative yet sinister atmosphere, but admittedly, the album could be even more varied and, for my money, misses the explosive outburst of noise driven energy which would really send it over the top.

Fifteen minute EP *Stacte Karaoke* is definitely the biggest surprise of the lot. An initial listen had me scrambling to the internet in an attempt to confirm that this was actually a new Ambarchi release and not some elaborate hoax.

Further inspection revealed, much to my surprise, that the album's classic rock n'roll boogie feel is due to a rhythm section comprised of famously bearded Southern rockers ZZ Top. I have to admit that this wasn't a collaboration I could have foreseen at the start of the year.

As far as I can tell, opener 'Milk a Cow with a Monkey Wrench' is more or less a classic 12-bar blues pattern and, similarly, the second track 'Park It Where the Sun Don't Shine' is based on a repetitive catchy riff. In both cases, we are treated to explosive shredding blasts from the aforementioned cathartic guitar tone and other extra layers from Ambarchi.

While Ambarchi's *Black Truffle* label is often home to some of his most experimental work, what makes this EP stand out is the element of whimsy and humour surrounding the work, a rare moment of frivolity and simple rock in experimental music.

Beyond that, however, it's simply relentlessly catchy and the short length makes it hard to avoid repeatedly playing these two great tracks.



FILM

Editor: John Park
film.felix@imperial.ac.uk



Revolution Girl Style Now!

The Punk Singer

Director: Sini Anderson
Starring: Kathleen Hanna
Runtime: 81 minutes
Certification: 15

Fred Fyles
Treasured Writer

Is it true? Have we reached 'peak feminism'? It seems that barely a day goes past without feminism popping up in mainstream culture; with this mass-media saturation, it seems natural to pose the question: is it still radical to call oneself a Feminist? It was certainly a radical statement in 1913, when suffragette Emily Davison stepped in front of the king's horse; it was radical when Gloria Steinem campaigned for the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1960s; and looking at vicious bile spewed by anti-feminists in response to the #yesallwomen campaign, which reveals day-to-day misogyny that women face, it seems that even today, identifying as a feminist is a radical thing to do. But in 1990, when 22-year old Kathleen Hanna got a group of friends together and formed *Bikini Kill*, it wasn't just radical - it was revolutionary.

Hanna is the focus of *The Punk Singer*, a documentary which charts the rise of *Bikini Kill*, and the subsequent crystallisation of the 'Riot Grrrl' movement. The film begins in the late 1980s, allowing us to see the origins of the group that infiltrated the American consciousness. Numerous college student, including Hanna, had un-

voiced frustrations with the antipathy towards feminism; as its second wave crested and subsided, many people were under the impression that feminism was no longer relevant. This did not seem to compute in the minds of Hanna and her compatriots, who faced misogyny and abuse on a daily basis. And so they decided to act.

Getting together with fellow Olympia residents Billy Karren, Kathi Wilcox, and Tobi Vail, Hanna formed *Bikini Kill* in 1990, and the band released their first cassette *Revolution Girl Style Now!* the following year. With lyrics such as 'Daddy's girl don't wanna be/His whore no more' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38qHttXnYf4>), the band burst onto the Olympia scene, and began attracting an immense amount of attention, in no small part thanks to their homemade zines. Seemingly inevitably, they also attracted ire from men who disliked seeing women speaking out; Hanna recalls one gig when she was touched to hear the audience screaming her lyrics, only to realise it was to drown out the cries of 'cunt' and 'bitch' from men who attended the shows to try and silence Hanna's outspoken brand of politics.

The documentary then covers the emergence of the 'Riot Grrrl' movement, which encompassed a punk, DIY attitude to making music; all-women bands began to pop up, innumerable zines were produced, and a discourse on gender and sexuality was initiated. Rather than simply jumping on the success of *Bikini Kill*, it is clear that this explosion in popularity was due to a widespread sentiment among young women. As Carrie Brownstein, singer for *Sleater-Kinney*, explains: 'Music was supposed to be

escapist; Hanna's music was groundbreaking'. Understandably the film focusses mainly on *Bikini Kill*, but this is regrettable, since it relegates other bands in the movement, such as *Sleater-Kinney* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_37YRkp4hIQ) and *Huggy Bear* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfP5HNvsWAo>), to the sidelines.

We follow Hanna and *Bikini Kill* through the 90s, as they enact a media black-out in response to misinterpretation ('when a man tells the truth it's the Truth' says Hanna 'as a woman, I must always be aware of how I might be perceived'), and eventually disband in 1997; following this Hanna released a solo album *Julie Ruin*, and formed a new band called *Le Tigre*, allowing her to continue her brand of outspoken identity politics, albeit in a different musical style. She left the band in 2005, due to health reasons, and didn't perform again until 2010. After around 6 years of illness, she was diagnosed with late-stage Lyme disease, which is notoriously difficult to treat unless seen to promptly; aside from those closest to her, many did not know about this diagnosis until the release of the film.

While this is the basic premise, what the film manages to do magnificently it capture the importance of *Bikini Kill* and the whole Riot Grrrl movement in kickstarting Third Wave Feminism. It may be easy to dismiss them - as much of the establishment did - as a group of middle-class, combat-boot-wearing college girls, but some of the ideas they put forward were revolutionary. At their concerts, Hanna encouraged women to come to the front, forming an environment built by women, for women. This concept, one of a 'safe

space', in which women can discuss issues and problems without feeling threatened, remains a goal for feminism today; how many times have you read a news story about a high-profile woman receiving death threats on twitter? How many times have men refused to take the back-seat in feminist discussions, rather than shouting cries of 'not all men!?' Even the hashtag #yesallwomen is not immune; at the time of writing, a select group were trying to get #yesallmen trending, elbowing their way into a conversation about women.

Another revolutionary concept of the Riot Grrrl movement was its DIY attitude: women founded the bands; women spread new chapters of the movement in different cities; women compiled the fanzines which aimed to educate fellow women on feminist issues. It was an 'Each One Teach One' of the feminist generation, if you will. Riot Grrrl may be synonymous with the 1990s, but its ideas are still very much alive and kicking today, with bands such as *Savages* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FulB8HEmnoY>), *Perfect Pussy* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_R4YuekVuNY), and *Childbirth* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0u4tpZFf5xI>) making waves in both the music and feminist communities. One only needs to look at the worldwide support received by members of Pussy Riot following their sham trial in 2012 to see how relevant the Riot Grrrl movement remains today. As a side note, *The Punk Singer* features a killer scene in which Hanna is interviewed wearing a neon ski mask - sorry *Pussy Riot*, Ms Hanna got there first.

While the film does touch on some of Hanna's flaws, it seems to gloss over

several points that have become a source of embarrassment for the Riot Grrrl community: Hanna speaks of how she regrets trying to make herself some kind of 'leader' of the movement, but the filmmakers seem reluctant to discuss its accessibility issues. While the Riot Grrrl movement entered into the American consciousness, it often ignored the issues facing women of colour and those of a lower socioeconomic status in the US. Hanna is well aware of this fact; '[I should have made sure] the movement was more accessible to women of colour who wanted to be involved' Hanna stated in a 2013 issue of *Dazed and Confused*, 'that always really bothers me'. It seems strange therefore, that the documentary doesn't even touch on this idea of intersectionality. Furthermore, the issue of transphobia within the Riot Grrrl community is absent, specifically the decision of *Le Tigre* to play at *Michigan Womyn's Music Festival*, an event for 'womyn born womyn' only - i.e. specifically excluding trans* people. While Hannah and the band came under a lot of fire for this decision, which seems at odds with the queer-friendly foundation of Riot Grrrl, the film does not even mention it.

The Punk Singer is an ambitious film, which seems to place Kathleen Hanna on a pedestal, glossing over some of the unsavory aspects of her career; however, with someone as charismatic and revolutionary as Hanna it is understandable that the filmmakers were keen to idolise her. *The Punk Singer* provides an inspirational retrospective of the band that sparked a movement, and changed the face of feminism forever; it should be essential viewing for anyone interested in music, feminism, or just general bad-assery.





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FILM

The edge of glory



Edge of Tomorrow

Director: Doug Liman

Writer: Christopher McQuarrie, Jez Butterworth, John-Henry Butterworth, Hiroshi Sakurazaka (novel)

Starring: Tom Cruise, Emily Blunt, Brendan Gleeson, Bill Paxton

Runtime: 113 minutes

Certification: 12A



Jack Steadman

Treasured Writer

To say too many words on *Edge of Tomorrow* would be to likely end up spoiling the whole thing. Which is probably a good excuse for why my notes on this film say, quite simply, "OH MY GOD I LOVE THIS MOVIE" in block capitals. And nothing else. I feel this is an adequate review of the film.

Oh, I have to give reasons? Oh. Okay.

Edge of Tomorrow – formerly titled *All You Need is Kill* (the title of the book upon which it is based) – has a plot that reads like *Source Code*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Groundhog Day* and *Starship Troopers* all got a little too

drunk one night and ended up doing something with *Looper* that they all regretted the next morning, before *Edge of Tomorrow* popped out several months later. It's one of those films, really: one with influences so inescapably obvious it opts to simply wear them on its sleeve, embracing them whole-heartedly and becoming all the better for it. It's just glorious, really. *Source Code* was one of my favourite films of 2011 (and it remains criminally under-watched), becoming the source of a need to watch and re-watch it endlessly in some kind of meta-watching of a film about time looping on itself, and *Edge of Tomorrow* achieves exactly the same thing. The reason for the time-loop is clearly stated, and makes sense in the context of the universe the film creates (yes, it requires suspension of disbelief/a willingness to accept the logic it gives out, but it's a film about time loops, for crying out loud, there had to be a logic leap somewhere), and it's endlessly re-watchable.

It helps that the script and director Doug Liman find continually inventive ways to reset the day – with the loop being linked to Major William Cage (Tom Cruise)'s death, there was always an inherent comedy in how it restarts, the film never fails to seek out new ways to brutally kill him off – with whiplash-inducing (in a good way) editing and Liman's trademark direction (this is the man who made

The Bourne Identity, after all) combining with the film's *Saving Private Ryan*-esque beach setup to create fantastic, comic action beats that are still deeply rooted in the story.

I feel like I could keep throwing superlatives and throw-backs to the influences on this film all day, but for the sake of clarity (and not spoiling anything, like I said) I'll restrain myself. The cast are fantastic – Cruise carries his role perfectly, in an interesting spin on his 'traditional' character journey, while Emily Blunt remains one of the most under-rated actresses working in Hollywood today, possibly outshining Cruise in terms of performance power. The supporting cast are impeccable – Paxton and Gleeson as a war-loving sergeant with a passion for (thematically resonant) idioms and a no-nonsense general in particular are great – and the alien design is great, taking the standard design and making them just different enough from all that's come before.

The cinematography's great, the visual effects are superb, the score isn't anything to write home about but it does the job, and beyond a few unnecessary romantic beats (the film had the chance to 'do a *Pacific Rim*', as I'm calling it from now on, and dodge the romance almost entirely, but doesn't) the script is genuinely perfect.

I can't enthuse about it enough. "OH MY GOD I LOVE THIS MOVIE" indeed.





Once upon a dream

Maleficent

Director: Robert Stromberg
Writer: Linda Woolverton
Starring: Angelina Jolie, Elle Fanning, Charlto Copley, Sam Riley
Runtime: 97 minutes
Certification: PG



Jack Steadman
Treasured Writer

You're probably aware by now that *Maleficent* is what could be called an act of historical revisionism for the Disney universe, a re-telling of the Sleeping Beauty story from the perspective of the villain (similar to last year's *Oz the Great and Powerful* and its explanation of how Mila Kunis' Theodora became the Wicked Witch of the West, albeit with the film actually being name for said villain this time 'round). You're probably also aware that Angelina Jolie takes the title role, all viciously sharp cheekbones and simmering malevolence.

What you're probably not aware of is the fact that the first ten to twenty minutes of the film (up to a fifth of the running time, I hasten to point out) is utterly, utterly terrible. Saddled with a clunky script that knows exactly what it wants to set up, but can't see any way to do it beyond the horrifically obvious, it's an exercise in boredom and the occasional splurge of painfully on-the-nose dialogue.

The voiceover, which runs through-

out the entire film but is particularly concentrated here, is a continued grievance that bogs the film down, never allowing it to just show when it could tell in fifty words or more, preventing the whole thing from ever escaping its simplistic roots to become something greater. The acting is mostly found lacking – I'm loath to criticise child actors, but the talent on display in *Super 8* three years ago (talent which includes Elle Fanning, who appears here as Aurora) showed how good children could be with a good script and the right director, and the scenes of a young Maleficent and Stefan appear to have neither. Former visual effects supervisor Robert Stromberg directs like a visual effects supervisor, and the performances get lost in the mess of colours and pretty CGI, especially in that opening.

The frustrations are only furthered when Maleficent and Stefan finally grow up, with Charlto Copley feeling completely wasted in a role that is mostly ham, while Jolie's first appearance is all shouty shouty scenery-chewing, followed promptly by a big CGI fight that feels nothing but lifeless and dull.

The PG rating – a requirement, obviously, for such a retelling – hampers the fight scenes and the film's attempts to feel dark and ominous, with its live-action nature far more restrictive than the old animation (seriously, watch some of the early Disney films and tell me they don't get away with far more). At times it manages to feel like an even-more hamstrung *Snow White and the Huntsman*, another loser in the 'trying to make fairy tales feel modern and gritty' stakes. And no, that's not a compliment.

What is a compliment is the fact that the film manages to escape this terrible opening to become something that's not only fun but actively enjoyable (even if the climactic fight does slip back into that semi-dark mood again, before the ending recovers from that stumble). Jolie's performance taken as a whole is easily the best thing in the film, as she dominates the role, with her first non-shouty line a beautiful balance of terror-inducing and alluring. The curse sequence is just perfect (although the curse itself slides temporarily into hammy again, but what do you expect?), and her relationship with Aurora as she grows is both tender and hilarious (the only source of humour). Elle Fanning is pretty much spot-on as the grown Aurora (although a little stilted), and Sam Riley is endearing as Maleficent's side-kick, but the rest of the cast are either wasted or completely shafted by the script (the voice modulator used on the three fairies' voices is irritating more than anything else, while the choice of a quasi-Scottish accent for the humans simply results in a mixture of equally terrible – but in different ways – attempts at imitation).

Maleficent always looked like just being a vehicle for Jolie's performance, and it ultimately is just that – it's just such an unworthy one it feels like an enormous shame. Jolie is – on the most part – pitch-perfect, but the script never quite rises to meet her, and the visuals are sumptuous but lifeless.

It's mostly enjoyable outside of the opening, and worth a watch just for how it dares to toy with the original story, but it's too restrained by its many flaws to be anything more.



Offensive Western

A Million Ways to Die in the West

Director: Seth MacFarlane
Writers: Seth MacFarlane, Alec Sulkin, Wellesley Wild
Starring: Seth MacFarlane, Charlize Theron, Liam Neeson, Amanda Seyfried, Neil Patrick Harris, Sarah Silverman
Runtime: 116 minutes
Certification: 15



Jack Steadman
Treasured Writer

Seth MacFarlane's first feature film, *Ted*, was one of the bigger comedies of 2012, managing to package up his work on the likes of *Family Guy* and *American Dad* into the live-action story of a foul-mouthed teddy bear come to life, taking the highest box-office for an R-rated comedy in the process.

The second feature from MacFarlane keeps that live-action side of things, but replaces the teddy bear with MacFarlane himself as cowardly sheep-farmer Albert Stark.

It's an initially disconcerting feeling with MacFarlane's distinctive voice actually coming out of the mouth of a real person (Ted felt oddly real, but was still inescapably a talking teddy – that's not really the sort of thing you can overlook), and it's hard to say with confidence that his physical acting is quite up to the task. He's so earnest he gets away with it (it's certainly the kind of performance the role seems to call for, at least in terms of the comedy), but most of his emotional beats fall slightly flat and it's hard to buy into quite why anyone would fall for Stark.

Buying into the rest of the world is a far easier prospect, mostly thanks to the film's commitment to its title (MacFarlane's monologue on the whole thing runs through the majority of the million ways to die, even managing to find a decent excuse for one of his trademark cut-away gags)

and to MacFarlane's commitment to surrounding himself with a big-name supporting cast. Charlize Theron in particular has a ball, while Neil Patrick Harris plays scene-stealer in his every appearance. A few of the cast get slightly shafted by their characters, with Liam Neeson's violent outlaw being particularly one-note, and Amanda Seyfried being given sod-all to do beyond looking pretty.

This lack of things for actors to do probably derives from the general lack of anything really resembling a subplot in the script; a few running jokes (especially the relationship of Sarah Silverman's Christian prostitute and her boyfriend) come close but aren't really fleshed out enough beyond joke status to earn anything more. The whole film is essentially one fairly basic plot extended to a 'normal' running time by an excess of jokes (some of which fall a little flat in the world of live-action, with the cutaway gags not always working quite as well as their animated counterparts).

Fortunately, for the most part the humour works (assuming, of course, that you're going into this expecting and wanting MacFarlane's particular brand of adult-rated juvenile humour), helped along by a general refusal to let up the pace. The weaker moments are immediately followed by something stronger (although there is a strong whiff of 'the best jokes were in the trailer' about the whole thing), and the barrage is so close to unrelenting that it's impossible not to catch yourself laughing, whether from shock at the sheer audacity of some of the visual gags (mostly centred around Silverman) or because of the brilliant, brilliant deployment of two of the most logical yet completely unexpected cameos possible that neatly reference two of the biggest 'comedy' Westerns of the past few decades.

A Million Ways to Die feels like an attention-seeking teenage boy with a Western fixation – it tries desperately hard to be offensive, and to get noticed, and it's almost endearing in how unsubtle it is in its affections. It's ultimately more hit than miss on the joke front, but that relies heavy on a willingness to embrace the obscenity – and it's still a far less rewatchable or enjoyable prospect than *Ted* was.





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FILM

And then there were three

Devil's Knot

Director: Atom Egoyan
Writers: Paul Harris Boardman, Scott Derrickson, Mara Leveritt (book)
Starring: Reese Witherspoon, Colin Firth, Mireille Enos
Runtime: 114 minutes
Certification: 15



John Park Film Editor

Here's the thing: the entirety of Atom Egoyan's film *Devil's Knot* is covered in a lot more detail and brilliance in award-winning documentary, *West of Memphis*. What Reese Witherspoon's character has to say in her final monologue in her encounter with Colin Firth nicely sums up all the disorganised, structurally hectic facts laid out throughout this film, a dramatic fiction based on real events surrounding the cases of West Memphis Three. The film then proceeds to quit just as it is about to get exciting. But by this point around 100 minutes have already been spent and only a few written lines of the closing scene are given to the real key events of the real life story. *Devil's Knot* is not just a bad film: it's also a wholly unnecessary, boring, and somewhat confusing film.

The plot is this: starting with a terrible 'what on earth were they thinking' type of voiceover, in which a young boy narrates how he's the only one who knows what happened to him, we soon find the three murdered and

butchered bodies of three young boys. Never mind what their individual names are because the film will never make the time to properly develop any of the characters. And look, there's Reese Witherspoon weeping for her lost son. Despite that she's a capable actress who can convincingly cry her heart out, what holds back her performance is that she looks far too good doing it. As a grieving mother affected by this unthinkable tragedy, the emotion she conveys is, quite understandably, uncontrollable sadness. But what was the hair/make-up department thinking? What is displayed on the outside clashes so evidently with what Witherspoon is going for, that as a top-billed star with the most amount of screen time, unintentional hilarity ensues in the most critical, dramatic moments that brings down the overall film's impact.

Suspects are quickly apprehended and tried, with flimsy evidence to connect them to the scene of the crime, and immediate prejudice clouding people's judgment of character. The big scandal of the West Memphis Three case is how there was a complete failure in the judicial system, both in the courtroom and in the police precincts,

that sent three innocent youngsters to jail, making them spend almost two decades there, before eventually being granted freedom. What the film chooses to focus on is the early part of this fiasco, where the media circus and improper investigations all lead to them painted as cold-hearted, brutal Satan-worshipping killers, whilst the actual perpetrators were free to walk. Whilst everyone is wrongly convinced that these three were responsible, we get a private detective, Ron Lax (Colin Firth, doing his very best Southern accent possible), gathering evidence for the defence which slowly reveals that the accused actually had nothing to do with the crime. This aspect of course, is a fine area to delve into, although there is not a lot of deep exploration worthy of the film's running time.

The process through which we are shown the gathering of information on Ron's part, as well as the controversial trials themselves, is done so hastily and clumsily, that anyone not familiar with the case and the many specific names involved will no doubt have difficulty grasping the full picture. What we get here are fleeting snapshots put together that provide neither enough information nor dramatic tension to

make any of it worthwhile.

Yes, Witherspoon is the Academy Award winner who is pushed to the very front of the film's marketing, but by focusing solely on her as one of the victims' mother, is there anything particularly special that comes out of her subplot? Absolutely not. Or what of another Academy Award winner, Colin Firth's role? He merely serves as a dull narrative tool, voicing some exposition to explain things the film itself is unable to do so.

And what of the other significant characters? There are witnesses who contribute to the cast, some reliable, others not so much, but this constant back-and-forth between police investigation, courtroom, and family drama is never contained within any proper structure, which makes it virtually impossible to become properly invested in such complex cases. And without this crucial way in to enjoy the film, no cast of ultimate talent that can ever be assembled could have salvaged such a mess of a project.

It is not surprising the film was given its death sentence with a video on demand release without experiencing the wide release in cinemas. A cheap download is what the film deserves.

Imperial College Cinema

We have a real cinematic treat in store for you this week as the critically acclaimed Noah arrives in Beit Quad.

Noah

Director: Darren Aronofsky
Writers: Darren Aronofsky, Ari Handel, God (book)
Starring: Russell Crowe, Jennifer Connelly, Emma Watson, Anthony Hopkins, Logan Lerman
Runtime: 138 minutes
Certification: 12A

The sweeping, captioned opening of Darren Aronofsky's *Noah* is reminiscent of its cinematic heritage, the Biblical epics of years past, all elegantly flowing cursive script and delicately composed shots, until it promptly swoops down to the dark brutality of humanity. It's a fantastic opening that sets the tone wonderfully, leaving a sense of ominous foreboding of everything that follows, while also making the statement that this is a Biblical epic, yes, but it's Aronofsky's Biblical epic. It's his vision.

And what a vision it is – from Noah's (suitably terrifying) vision of the Earth underwater to the Watchers, the fallen angels who lost their wings for simply trying to help, to the breath-taking expanses that make up this world, it's never anything less than eye-catching. The influences of *Paradise Lost* can be felt, here and there, (no bad thing, of course), and the changes in scenery are more dramatic than most globe-trotting films – barren wastelands, lush green forests, misty mountains, a globe-spanning flood (obviously) and desert islands, they're all here and all fully realised. Every single element of the art design, the environments, all of it, lives up to that 'epic' tag.

Tuesday 19:00 10th June
 Thursday 19:00 12th June



Oscar Grant's final day

Fruitvale Station

Director: Ryan Coogler
Writer: Ryan Coogler
Starring: Michael B. Jordan, Melonie Diaz, Octavia Spencer
Runtime: 85 minutes
Certification: 15



John Park Film Editor

Based on the real-life tragedy of Oscar Grant (Michael B. Jordan), who was

accidentally shot dead by the police on New Year's Day 2009, *Fruitvale Station* is a touching dramatisation of 22-year-old Oscar's last day on Earth.

He is a young man with relatable everyday problems, and the film makes no grand attempts to paint him as some sort of unconvincing saint. He had been in and out of prison in the past, his mother (Octavia Spencer) had given him an ultimatum, but he was slowly working towards cleaning up his act (there is even the cliched shot of him dumping his marijuana stash). Although not everything is going quite according to plan: he did recently lose his job at a grocery store, and it appears he has some making up to do with his girlfriend/mother of his child, after straying in the wrong

direction.

Getting mixed up with the loud, rowdy crowd in the midst of all the New Year's excitement is when the fatal tragedy occurs, a sequence of events shown through the shaky camera lenses of various people's phones, as well as later in the film, the director's take on the event with closer focus from Oscar's point of view. Both the opening and closing scenes show restraint but are by no means short on powerful delivery of the shocking, senseless loss of a life.

Michael B. Jordan's effortlessly natural performance makes for a highly watchable lead, and as his potential significant other, Melonie Diaz gives a warm, sympathetic portrayal.

But the real standout here is from

Academy Award winning Octavia Spencer, in a role that is far from the comedy genre she is most famous for. Instead she is the hard-working mother who expects the same from her son. She is a tough but loving mother, character traits that have, of course, been done before, but Spencer brings something even more memorable to her several brief but significant scenes.

In the end it is an undeniably heart-breaking tale, and the film does the infamous story justice. Such shocking gun crimes may seem more relevant over in the States rather than here in the UK, but Oscar's story, what he experiences, feels and learns, on his very last day of existence, could be a useful lesson for us all.



Mario Kart Gr8 - Best Mario Kart Ever?

Calum Skene
Games Editor

As a fan of the series ever since Mario Kart SNES I can truly say that, in my opinion, this is the best Mario Kart to date. Mario Kart, like many Nintendo games, has mostly retained the same formula for each game. You still race or battle whilst picking up items to aid yourself or knock out your enemies. Nintendo however has yet again managed to take an old series and keep it fresh, new and exciting.

Firstly for those who have never played the series before, Mario Kart is a go-kart racing game involving characters from the Mario franchise. On the tracks are item blocks that give you a random item depending on your place in the race. If you are near the front you will get items such as banana peels which can be dropped to trip up the other karts or shells to throw at people, and if you are further back you get more powerful power-ups like the ability to turn into a bullet and zoom a few places further whilst knocking out everything in your path. This is not a racing game where you can win just by sitting in first place (although that helps) as players will constantly be throwing shells at you including the deadly blue shell which seeks out with 100% accuracy the player in first place. Features like this are what make Mario Kart the exciting

game that it is. Races are fast pace battles in which you can be in first place right up to the end and then hit with a shell at the last second and end up fourth or conversely in last place and then zoom right to the front by relentlessly using items in your final lap. Literally anything can happen in this action packed game and this is what has secured its place as one of

interesting backgrounds that make it so you discover something new each time you race. In fact sometimes there is so much going on in the levels that it's easy to take the wrong path when first playing them. Not only has Mario Kart never looked so good but it has also never sounded so great either! From the slap bass intro to the country violin of Moo Moo

retro track selection is excellent and truly is a greatest hits of all the Mario Karts. Mario Kart 8 of course offers 16 totally new tracks and this is where the game really shines. This game includes the water levels from Mario Kart Wii and the flying sections from Mario Kart 7 but also adds antigravity sections. With this feature you can now race upside down, up waterfalls

into other players, and this changes the race tactics. Bikes are back and together with Kart customisation you can really make your go-kart personal to your play style. Nintendo also shows support for its newer games by adding new playable characters from New Super Mario Bros U.

This game is perhaps best enjoyed with other players. Mario Kart 8 offers split screen 4 player racing which is a great feature but also a bit disappointing. The extra screen of the gamepad means that there could have been multiplayer that isn't split screen (one player using the TV screen and another using the gamepad screen) and also that the multiplayer could have been up to 5 players but both of these aren't features of the game. In fact the gamepad screen only offers a map, a horn or motion controlled gameplay that can also be done with a Wii remote. You can play multiplayer whilst looking at the gamepad screen but that also shows split screen which is a shame. The game offers pretty much the same online play as we saw with 7 but this is nothing bad. It's free great online racing. Nintendo has added a chat feature which can be used in the pre-game lobby and also Mii verse messages make an appearance and can be made special with stamps you earn while racing.

Overall this is a great game that is only let down by its limited gamepad usage. If you're a fan of racing games or just want a fun game to enjoy with friends and family, Mario Kart 8 is the perfect game to get this summer.



STEALTHYBOX.COM

Nintendo's bestselling and most iconic games. But what exactly makes Mario Kart 8 stand out from the rest?

First of all it looks amazing. Being a Wii U release it's the first opportunity that the series has had to be shown in its HD glory. All the tracks are vibrant, colourful and filled with

Meadows this game has an amazing soundtrack. The game has 16 retro tracks that have all been upgraded to the new HD look. It's quite amazing how some of the SNES levels look and have been re-modelled to include some of the new features of Mario Kart 8 that will be discussed later. The

and on the sides of a room. When in antigravity sections the games camera seamlessly turns to avoid confusing you and to let you continue the fast paced races unimpeded. A new and initially confusing game mechanic is that whilst in antigravity mode you gain speed boosts by bumping

Grand Theft Goat

Two seriously groat games you should go for!

Calum Skene
Games Editor

Wondering what games to play this summer? Here's two great and perhaps unusual suggestions to get you started.

The first of the two games is Grand Theft Auto Four. Yes, four not five! Whilst five is the new better looking, bigger, better GTA there are reasons why four should not be forgotten. The main thing is the story. GTA 5

has an impressive and long story to complete but often times I felt it was easy and too cinematic. A great story but once I'd played through it there was no rush to replay the missions other than to get gold rating. GTA 4 also has a long story mode with the missions being less cinematic on the most part and harder. The story isn't the beautiful piece of cinema that five offers but it is still very strong and is worth a replay to people who already played it. Through the two excellent expansions the game actually offers three stories, each giving Liberty city a whole new feel. It's not the character switching madness of five but it is three characters each with their own personality and mission themes. If you really want something

to do this summer you could go for GTA4 100% which is an impressive feat and will take much longer than GTA5 100% which doesn't actually require you to complete everything in the game.

In all honesty both games, or any GTA game, would make an entertaining summer playthrough and I just wanted to remind people that GTA4 exists. GTA5 does have GTA online and planes going for it both of which are loads of fun and will keep you entertained all summer.

My second recommendation is the fantastic game Goat Simulator. After playing a variety of simulator games this year from Euro Bus Simulator 2 to Surgeon Simulator I have finally

found the greatest Simulator game of them all! Goat Simulator strays away from traditional simulator games such as Euro Bus and more towards the comedy side. The world of goat simulator reminds me of a level from a Tony Hawk game except your goal is just to destroy everything in your path. The mechanics of the game are simple, you are a goat who can attach yourself to things with your infinitely long, flexible,

strong tongue. You can jump and change your orientation in the air to perform backflips and such. With such easy controls we get a game that is suitable for all ages and all levels of gaming ability. Whether you just want to waste twenty minutes destroying the world as a goat or if you are a completionist who will find every secret, complete every quest and achieve every achievement Goat Simulator will not disappoint.



HEY GUYS, LET'S PLAY A GAME!

COFFEESTAINSTUDIOS.COM

Union Page

Last week of Stress Less



Next week is the final week of the Stress Less campaign. Enjoy yourself at our fun games day on Queen's lawn with a bouncy castle, garden games and more. Finished exams and coursework? Don't forget to book your place at Brompton cemetery to get out into the sunshine.

▲ Giant Bouncy Castle & Outdoor Games. Monday 9 June, 12:00 – 16:00, Queen's Lawn, South Kensington Campus.

Bounce away your woes with our giant bouncy castle. Play supersized outdoor games including Jenga, Connect Four and croquet.

▲ Brompton Cemetery. Wednesday 11 June, 12:00 - 16:00, Brompton Cemetery (Fulham Road).

Get some fresh air and make a difference. Join other students for a picnic lunch and some gardening in one of London's most magnificent cemeteries just down the road from Imperial. No gardening experience required. Instructions and tools will be provided. Numbers are limited. Book your place online. In conjunction with Imperial Hub.

For a full list of events, relaxation tips, our cute animal of the day and more please visit imperialcollegeunion.org/stressless.

imperialcollegeunion.org/stressless

Free Sexual Health Clinic Next Week



Imperial College Union will be hosting a free sexual health clinic run by the Terrence Higgins Trust on Tuesday 10 June, from 11:00 until 16:00. The clinic will be run from the Activities Spaces in Beit Quad. Appointments are held in private rooms and all services are confidential.

If you're sexually active make sure you get tested regularly. Many STIs are symptomless but have serious consequences for your health. 1 in 10 sexually active people under 25 have Chlamydia, an STI which can lead to infertility. Services available include rapid HIV testing, chlamydia testing, gonorrhoea testing, condoms, lube and advice. Condom grab-packs and pregnancy tests are also available.

The clinic welcomes all students regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, study type or country of origin. Appointments can be booked in advance and a walk-in service is also available. To book an appointment or get more information about the clinic e-mail Andrew Keenan, Education & Welfare Manager, at a.keenan@imperial.ac.uk.

imperialcollegeunion.org/sticlinic

World Cup 2014



World Cup 2014, held in Brazil, begins on Thursday 12 June. To celebrate the return of football's biggest competition, we will be showing almost every game in the Union; either in Metric or FiveSixEight, starting with the opening game of Brazil v Croatia at 21:00.

Want to know which matches we're showing when? Have a look at the website for all fixture details!

imperialcollegeunion.org/worldcup

Pizza Poll



Have your say and vote for which pizza you want to see in the Union this month. Options include Pizza Bolognese, Miami Beach, Pizza Jamaica and Oriental Express. Last month's winner, Pizza Pomodoro, is currently on sale in FiveSixEight.

imperialcollegeunion.org/pizza

Editors: **John Park,**
Emily Fulham
television.felix@imperial.ac.uk



Long may she reign

Reign: Season 1



John Park
Television Editor

History buffs, look away now. Avert your eyes and don't be a buzzkill to ruin television's top guilty pleasure, the CW's interpretation of the life of Mary, Queen of Scots. It must have been a rather bold decision, choosing to base an entire series around the English period drama concept, focusing on an individual who clearly is not someone who comes up as a daily conversation topic across the Atlantic, let alone here in the U.K. And yet the channel whose main audience target is teenagers, has done remarkably well. Giving the tale a suitable twist, *Reign* is a deceptively well-polished drama that makes it okay to have the well-worn-out storytelling mechanism of a love triangle, because the stakes here are not just about broken hearts and hurting someone's feelings, but it also concerns whether someone's head gets chopped off or not.

The French Court is never a safe place to be, and yet poor Mary (Adele Kane) has already been betrothed to wed Francis (Toby Regbo), the future King of France, from a very early age. Love counts for very little around here, as stable alliances between powerful countries to stand united against a threat are what every monarch is after. Mary, as her title suggests, is the Queen of Scotland, although being of such a young age, her mother Mary de Guise (Amy Brenneman) rules as acting regent in her place. Francis brings with him France of course, and this union is supposed to deter the English army from getting too feisty.

But danger lurks around the many corners of the palace, with everyone up to something to further their gains. The series opens with an assassination attempt, and that is in no way the last you'll see of someone trying desperately to end another's life. The current King Henry II of France not only keeps his wife Queen Catherine de' Medici (Megan Follows) around, but also his mistress, Diane de Poitiers (Anna Wolton), with whom he fathered a bastard, Sebastian (Torrance Coombs). Sexual tension runs high as both Sebastian and Francis become potential candidates for Mary, and the two women surrounding Henry II are ready to spill blood at any moment for further control and power.

Treachery, plotting, scheming, are

all what you can expect from *Reign*. Even for a CW show the series is not without taking its risks, both in terms of how much blood is shown but also with how much flesh. Violence and sex go hand in hand particularly in a costume drama such as this one, and while it may not be as raunchy as some of the cable greats *The Tudors* or *Rome*, it certainly gets its job done in suggesting away. There was reportedly a masturbation scene that had to be trimmed for the fear of angering concerned parents.

Mary is thrown into the deep end from episode 1, having to deal with the complexities of being a part of a royal court, and how not to be killed by one of the many, many who want her Catholic head. She has support from her four ladies in waiting, Lola (Anna Popplewell), Greer (Celina Sinden), Kenna (Caitlin Stasey) and Aylee (Jenna Grant), all of whom are somewhat based on real-life counterparts. Like most women in those days, their number one priority is to become someone's wife - hopefully a man of high standing, good income, and noble background. *Reign* has a way of skillfully juggling the highly soapy nature of the plotlines, and once again, the premise and medieval setting helps enormously. These aren't some lovestruck high school girls looking to get laid. Whether they get married or not makes or breaks their lives, and their future safety depends on it. They can think of love later, affection can be worked on, but their potential husbands' social standing? Not so much.

The performances are uniformly outstanding. Kane, Regbo and Coombs deliver their often corny lines in regards to their love triangle without flinching and backing them all with serious emotion, an admirable skill of course. And they excel too exerting their authority - Mary in particular is the one having to undergo the most significant change in personality - at first she is just a shy, clueless girl, but as the first season wraps up, there are many scenes the audience is treated to the young Mary standing up for her rights, fighting for her interests, plotting and scheming for her benefit.



It's a gradual change and maturation shown well through Kane's steadily diversifying performance, getting us all excited for what she has to show in the next season.

But the one performance that truly stands out among everyone else is Megan Follows as Queen Catherine who is simply perfection in every scene she is in. She out-acts everyone just by standing in the frame, and it's game-over whenever she opens her venomous mouth to speak, twist and manipulate words to get her way. She is loyal only to herself and her son, and this means she makes lots of friends, then enemies, then friends again, and so on, throughout the series. It's head-spinning to try to keep up with where everyone's loyalty lies, and it's safe to assume that it's a deadly game of free-for-all, and the only person one can truly trust is oneself.

Speaking of an older generation actress out-acting everyone else in the cast, the best episode of season 1 comes when the equally ruthless and scheming Mary de Guise drops by. Amy Brenneman only shows up for one episode to play the mother of the Queen of Scots, but she has a lot of fun and stirs up a lot of trouble in

the designated 40-minute slot of her single appearance. Here is hoping she will be further utilised in the upcoming season, although nothing has confirmed this yet.

Being a historical drama there is heavy emphasis on what the characters are wearing, where they are standing, and what kind of grand event they are attending. No female character wears the same dress twice, and the same can be said for the men in a higher class. The exquisite range of costumes on display here is an amazing one, and although not all of the shiny, over-the-top garments may fit into the period this show is depicting, it hardly matters as they all look stunning in them.

When it comes to the soundtrack, the series makes no apologies for shamelessly using songs from the charts, as many backing tracks are from the likes of The Lumineers, Bastille, London Grammar, Gabrielle Aplin, there is even a string orchestra's rendition of Lorde's song *Royals* subtly playing in the background of a ballroom scene.

Human threats are not the only ones that plague the palace. Dark, supernatural forces that hide within the deep, dark woods surrounding the French Court also have a part to play, further adding to the sense of paranoia and unsettling fear.

Of course, it's a show that is not supposed to be taken too seriously, certainly not within the historical context anyway. But it remains a highly entertaining period romp, with some killer performances to attract even the snobbiest of viewers. Mary Queen of Scots lived a complicated, colourful life, this should provide more than enough source material for the show. Long may she reign indeed.

Nicholas Farmer
Television Writer



Bergerac

This 80s gem comes to us from the scenic island of Jersey and stars good old Cornish boy John Nettles (now better known for top German TV hit, *Midsummer Murders*) as recovering alcoholic Jim Bergerac. Jersey native Bergerac rails against his island's transformation from a tight knit pastoral fishing community to the arch-Thatcherite tax haven where Dave Cameron's dad hid all of his money, all the time driving around in his trademark vintage sports car solving the palest of white collar crime.

Now, all good detectives have demons, and Bergerac's comes in the classic form of a drink problem that resulted in the break-up of his marriage and a serious accident that is partially revealed through flashbacks in the course of the first series. Unlike most TV detectives, Bergerac beats his alcoholism, demonstrated well by a particularly strong 3rd series episode in which he is kidnapped and forced to neck a bottle of whisky.

Bergerac is also joined by a host of recurring characters, the most notable of which is his ex-father in law, the delightfully dodgy tax exile Charlie Hungerford, who manages to be instrumental in all but one of Bergerac's 91 cases. We also meet a string of 80s-haired girlfriends, the first of which he seems to have stolen off his dead best friend (best not judge); his annoying ex-wife and adolescent daughter; and his police colleagues, led by the combative Inspector Crozier.

Bergerac's cases, first as a Detective Sergeant of the absurdly titled and completely fictional 'bureau des étrangers' of the Jersey police and then as a private detective, span the full 80s gauntlet of shady financiers with giant beige computers, crooked arms dealers supplying apartheid era South Africa, the New York mafia (yes, they make the Jersey/New Jersey joke, they go there), shady sheikhs, and the usual common villains.

Even though some of the storylines may seem corny to the discerning 21st century viewer (because they really are), Nettles' likeability and light comic touch carries the series, and makes Bergerac prime 80s TV viewing. Just don't let the sax nightmare of a theme tune put you off!

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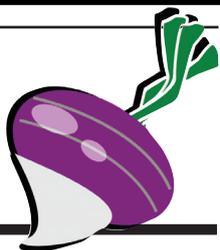
HANGMAN

hangman.felix@imperial.ac.uk



the turnip

Hangman's Finest College News Source



Octogenarian makes unusually important speech

Media listen with rapt attention

This week an elderly lady was allowed out of her home to make a speech to a nationwide audience.



FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

The octogenarian, dressed in a dazzling, yet sensibly warm white shawl gave attentive listeners rather sensible advice about a wide range of topics, ranging from employment in small businesses, the simplification of National Insurance Contributions collection, the state of infrastructure 'these days,' and general state of pensions.

Surprisingly these proved popular and relevant topics for the engrossed audience who proceeded to blog in great depth about the subjects chosen, and the effect they may have on the country in the next year.

The speech took place after the 88 year old grandmother opened a

building, which was also seen to be an important occasion.

During the course of the day, the woman was followed by a significantly large number of carers, dressed in an array of uniforms. Some carers even rode horses while wearing protective armour and metal helmets, a sign of expected violent outbursts from the lady herself.

The woman was transported to and from her home by an archaic minibus boasting a full two horsepower engine while being escorted by several carers.

Godzilla defeated by puns

Critics destroy film's credibility with puny epithets

After an earth shattering box office take, critics reviewing the recent Godzilla film have taken to using monstrous puns to describe the films amazing success.

We spoke to one critic and asked them what had sparked of the worrying trend. They replied: "It was something about a monster that made huge profits. Get it? That's the joke."

While the film did trample rivals and demolished hostages it is the opinion of this paper that film reviews should be written in a serious and professional manner.

Much like the manner in which Miley Cyrus' "Wrecking Ball" smashed into the charts, if critics are not careful, their causal use of amusing words could spell doom for the film's viewing figures over the next few months.

"SECRET" APP BRANCHES OUT INTO PAPER FORMAT



College to Create New Drama Course

Decision based on the importance of wordplay

Following recent communications about 'One Victoria Road,' that new hall in Acton that most of you don't care about (NIMBY), College has taken one step further and decided to create a new drama course.

"We simply couldn't pass up the opportunity, it was staring us right in the face", A College spokesperson said. "Well, the new hall will be based in North Acton, so we decided to create an acting course! Geddit? As a part of our 2015-2020 strategy College has decided to diversify the range of courses we offer in order to capitalise on this opportunity. Another advantage of this decision will be a large influx of female students that can be objectified by male students who blindly complain about 'the ratio' almost every day of the week"

The new acting course will be based at Imperial West, with the incoming acting students being provided with a practise studio next door to the dance studio being built in 'One Victoria Road'.



ARIES

This week you discover that you are the offspring of RAMBO.

Deciding that being bad ass will get you success, fame and the attention of the potential partners, you enter your exam with a bandana, your best fatigues and facepaint.

The inviolator fails you for your douchy fashion sense.



TAURUS

This week, after reading the Felix Sex Survey you are inspired to try and collect all the buildings on campus before you graduate. After getting Huxley and Sheffield, you are killed by rabid crickets in the SAF labs. And because you didn't finish you can't even tick that one off the list.



GEMINI

This week you are mugged by a fellow student on your way home from the library. They pin you up again a wall, and threaten you at set square point, ignoring the expensive phone in your pocket and instead taking off with your most prized possession, the half eaten hamburger in your hand.



CANCER

This week you finally lose your virginity! Unfortunately you decide to use the free condoms the Union provides as protection, and it splits halfway through, impregnating your girlfriend. Nine months later you name your beautiful baby after the supplier of said contraception, Marissa.



LEO

This week, after spending a bit too much money on Red Bull and pro-plus during exams you run out of cash. Rather than having to face the embarrassment of asking your parents for help, you decide turn to a life of crime. After a botched bank job, you get arrested and send to prison. Oh well, at least they feed you in there.



VIRGO

This week you decide to learn how to drive. Taking time off from revision, you decide that the best way to learn is to play Grand Theft Auto in the lounge while your last mates look on despairingly. You arrive at your driving test with a sawn-off shotgun and are automatically failed.



LIBRA

This week you finally go on a hunt for the strange smell that always seems to emanate from your cupboard. After clearing away months' worth of out of date biscuits and mouldy vegetables, you discover an entire family of mice. You're so lonely you decide to keep them as pets rather than calling pest control.



SCORPIO

This week you decide to throw in your degree and run away to pursue your dream of becoming a sheep farmer. Amazingly, you are incredibly successful, becoming famed across the land for your sheep farming prowess. I... I have no words. Well done?



SAGITTARIUS

This week that thing you did last week (you know, the thing. Yeah, that one) comes back to haunt you. How deeply this affects you probably depends on what the thing was. Hey, no one said I had to be specific.



CAPRICORN

This week, inspired by the latest episode of Game of Thrones, you challenge your examiners to trial by combat in lieu of taking the paper. This backfires when your examiner turns out to be an expert in Krav Maga. You lose, fail your degree and are kicked out. And the video goes on YouTube.



AQUARIUS

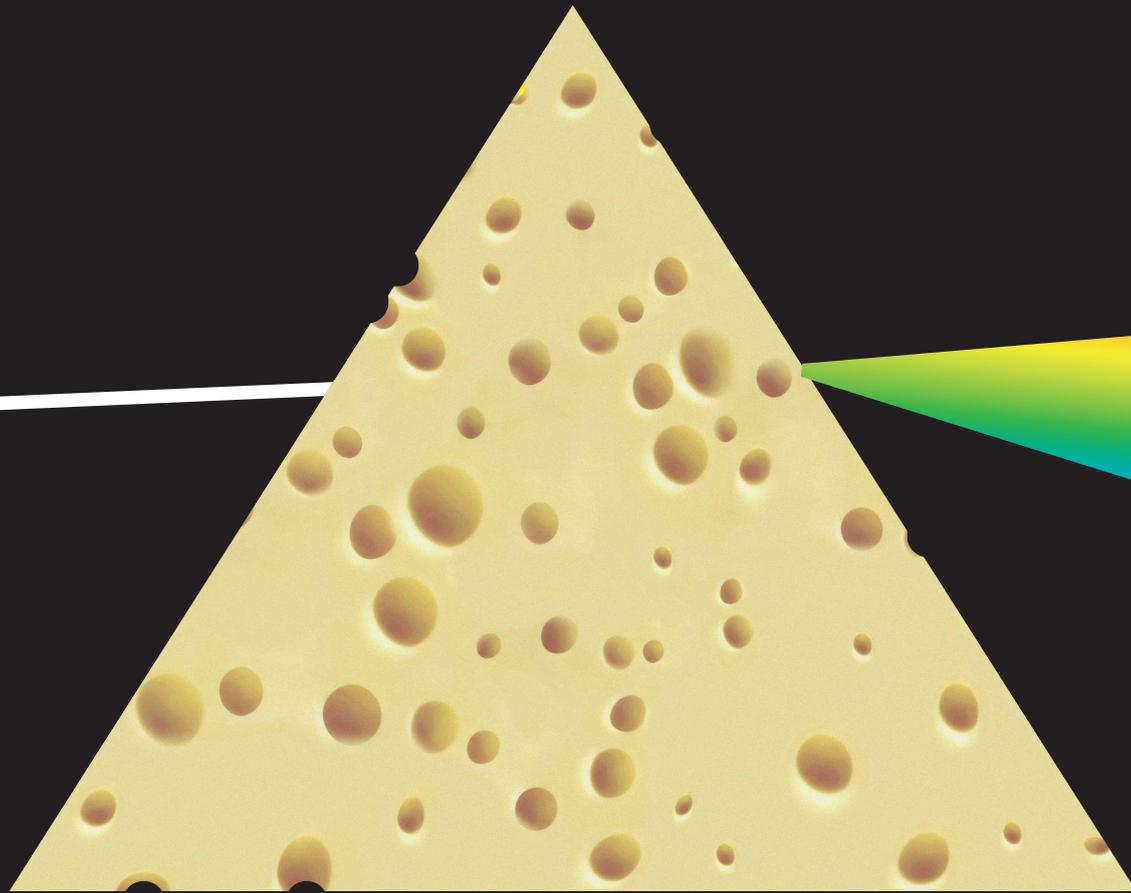
This week you meet a tall, dark handsome stranger in Metric. After some terrible dancing and few too many Jägerbombs, you end up vomiting on his shoes when he goes to kiss you. During your exam the next morning you discover that he is actually the guy who marks your exams. Oh well, retakes might be fun.



PISCES

This week, you make the mistake of taking dating advice from the voices in your head. Needless to say, your date is unimpressed when you attempt to pay for the meal with live chickens. What can I say, the voices in your head are weird.

ROQUEFORT



Rock out to all the classics in Metric

Your DJs on the night will be Alexandru Crisan and Antz in the Jam.

Friday 6 June, 20:00 - 02:00

Metric

Free before 20:00, £2.50 after

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SPORT

Cricket 1st XI record two more wins

Zain Rizvi
IC Cricket

vs Portsmouth, 21st May

Wednesday 21st May saw Imperial 1st XI travel to Portsmouth to play in a BUCS fixture against Portsmouth University. This week saw the return of Messrs. Jayanth, Viggys and Mohit to the 1st XI side, a source of great inspiration for those of us who had battled it out over the previous weeks. Imperial won the toss and elected to field first, and started well with Jayanth and Shaival picking up 3 wickets in their opening spells. Matt Knights then came into the attack and immediately struck twice (special mention to ginger Chris who took a spectacular catch off Matt's bowling – Jayanth gratefully repaid Chris by accidentally stepping on his Rayban's after the game) and Zain then followed this up by proceeding to send the incoming batsman's off stump cartwheeling after he shouldered arms to a vicious delivery bowled at supersonic speed.

A couple of bouncers, yorkers

and edges later, Portsmouth were left reeling at 90-6. However, having played and missed their way up until this point, the batsmen decided to consolidate and rebuild. A combination of sensible batting and missed chances meant that Portsmouth eventually reached 140-6 until Matt and Jayanth picked off the next 3 wickets, with a run-out – effected by Zain's calling of keepers end and Darshan's bullet arm – closing proceedings. An impressive bowling effort (Viggy finished with 8-3-16-0, Jayanth 8.4-1-30-3 and Matt 6-1-14-3) combined with plenty of energy in the field meant that Imperial had the upper hand going into the chase.

Mohit and Juhin opened up for Imperial, and fought well early on when the ball was moving around, but both soon fell leaving Imperial 28-2. Matt Knights and Jayanth then dropped anchor and began consolidating, until Matt was unfortunately caught for 24 with the score now 69-3. This wicket brought Zain to the crease, who together with Jayanth, batted effortlessly to see Imperial through to a WIN by 7 wickets. Jayanth scored a brilliant 54 not out and Zain scored a chanceless 30.* Despite copping

a mountain-load of abuse from Portsmouth for not walking, DRS can now confirm that Zain did in fact snick off early on, but his acting skills were deserving of an Oscar as the umpire seemed convinced by the shaking of the batsman's head, scratching at the crease and occasional tapping of the bat on cracks in the wicket that Zain was not out. Rumour has it that Portsmouth's coach has told the crowd to get 'stuck into' Mr. Rizvi in the return fixture, but we can neither confirm nor deny this.

Transferwise Man of the Match: Jayanth for his 3fer and 54*.

vs King's College, 25th May

On Sunday 25th May, Imperial 1st XI reluctantly travelled to play Kings College 1st XI away. After losing the toss, and (strangely) being put into bat by the Kings Captain on a flat deck, Imperial started aggressively, with opener Lomas anchoring the innings, scoring 46, and cameos down the order from Vishal (27), Jayanth (33) and Zain (22).

But the highlight of the innings came from Captain Viggy who strode

into bat with the score on 158-5 off 25 overs. He started in true Imperial fashion, with a stylish Chinese cut for 4, before really settling in and taking the attack to the bowlers. Whilst Kings' fielders couldn't catch a cold if they'd tried to, Viggy gave little/no chances during his superb knock of 60*. Our very own Dhoni even managed to connect a reverse sweep for 4 off one of their seamers at the death. Thanks to Viggy's finishing, and the general aggressive approach taken by the Imperial batsmen, we finished with an imposing 232 off 40 overs.

Kings' tea was PHENOMENAL but, unfortunately, bowling to them was also a piece of cake...

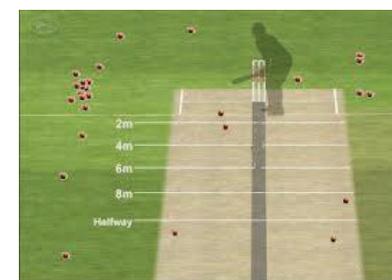
Apart from a shaky start from Matt Knights (see his pitch map attached) Imperial's bowlers stuck to their lines, and had Kings in trouble early on with Dave Nielson-Scott ripping through the top order, taking 3-36 off his 7 overs. Zain and Viggy then came on first change, and immediately put the pressure on the batsmen, Viggy finished with a tidy 1 for 25 off 8 overs, and unfortunately due to questionable catching in the slip cordon, Zain (despite bowling absolute heat) finished with 1 (should've been 3) for

31 off 8 overs.

As soon as Kings began to up their run rate, Imperial brought Nick into the attack, who kept the pressure on, finishing with 1 for 32 off 8 overs despite Kings' set batsman trying to launch the ball into the stands (which he did, smashing the windscreen of a Mercedes Benz). But just like the windscreen, Kings' hopes were shattered as they fell short of Imperial's mammoth total.

Definitely some improvements to be made in the field, but overall a convincing win, and a great batting effort from Viggy, whose ego is now almost as big as the six he got launched for when bowling. Well played Imperial.

Come to the Cricket Varsity in Regent's Park on June 10th @ the Hub!



IC CRICKET

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Water Polo? How do the players teach the horses to swim?

IC Water Polo: Review of the Year

Adinda de Wit
IC Water Polo

After losing most of last year's players (half the team were MSc students) the IC ladies water polo team had their fingers crossed for lots of girls to turn up to the first couple of training sessions of the year. They didn't right from the start, but after a few weeks we got there. With two national league players, two girls newly transferred from swimming to water polo, a few people who'd played before and a good partnership with two of the girls from the Medics water polo team, we embarked upon our training for this year's BUCS competition. At our annual tour to Germany in November we even managed to win a match, which had never happened before. Extremely happy about this great start to the season, nobody could have known that this was only the beginning...

After having come 3rd in our league last year, we had stayed in the same division, only facing UCL and Southampton in a home – and away league. On the 26th of January we played the first mini-tournament at Ethos. In the first match, we narrowly managed to overtake Southampton 7-5. The match afterwards was even tighter with us beating UCL by 7-6. The week after, in the second mini-tournament at a pool with two deep ends, Southampton and UCL were both more convincingly beaten 7-3, meaning we'd won the league. Because the BUCS competition structure had changed this year, winning our league did not mean automatic promotion to the "Premier South" league – it merely meant we'd qualified for taking part in playoffs against the number 6 of the premier league and the winner of Western division 2.

Needless to say, we were happy to have won the league – even though there was so much more to come. Alongside the league, there was a (nationwide) knockout-path in the fight for the Trophy. Our first match in the first round of this was against UCL at their home pool which is reasonably deep, but narrow, so we'd lucked out. We all put up a good fight and after a stressful four quarters we'd beaten UCL once again, this time by 10-6.

Onwards and upwards, our next match in the knockout tournament was another away fixture, against UEA in Norwich. We had some trouble getting our full team out and so we turned up to Norwich with just one substitute, only to find that UEA had none. It was a special match for us, because each of our players scored at least one goal (even the goalie, who



SPORT IMPERIAL

was swapped for a field player in the final quarter just so that she could get a goal). The final score? 25-2 to us, which meant we'd made it through the first two rounds of the Trophy championship, qualifying for the semifinals.

In the semifinals we met Southampton once again, alongside UWE and Warwick. We thought the latter was going to be our strongest opponent, as did coach Adam who got stuck elsewhere in the country and ended up missing the first match of the tournament. Thankfully this year we were blessed with a second coach, and so after the necessary amounts of shouting from coach Joe's side we managed to win from Southampton a third time with the final score coming to 7-5. This didn't fill us with confidence, but all worries were unfounded as the game ended in a smashing 13-4 win for us. The last semifinal game against UWE, who were playing in BUCS for the first time this year and as such had a fair number of players who barely knew how to pick up a ball, was a real breeze with us obliterating them in a 16-2 game. The three wins meant we'd won the semifinals and so we'd qualified for the Trophy finals, which were to take place during Trophy Tuesday. At the time of playing this day was only 10 days away, but there was hardly any time to celebrate, because our playoff fixtures against Bath (bottom of Premier South) and Gloucestershire university (top of Western division 2) were just around the corner.

BUCS had randomly assigned our home playoff fixture to be against Gloucestershire and our away fixture to be against Bath, with some random playing dates that in water polo nobody adheres to. Except for the University of Bath – who insisted we play them on a Wednesday that we could only make with exactly enough players for a team. Substituteless, we skived off class and work and got on a train to Bath. They were clearly expecting to claim an easy victory over our 7-woman team, asking us to rate ourselves against some of the

other teams they'd played before while we were getting changed for the game. It, therefore, didn't come as a surprise that their captain refused to shake our hands after losing to us 18-5, with Sophie scoring more goals by herself (7) than Bath did in total.

The next playoff game against Gloucestershire saw us turning up with one substitute. We had clearly done so before, but after having played 10 matches in 9 weeks we were all getting a little tired. In what felt like a very stressful match we comfortably hammered them 12-5, thus gaining us promotion to the Premier South league for next year. This amazing result did not quite sink in, as our last match, the final of the Trophy against Liverpool, was just days away.

On the 25th of March, we all headed down to Guildford for "Trophy Tuesday". With support from Paula and Jackson representing the club, Hannah, Anthony and Neil from Sport Imperial, and Klara's and Jo's mothers we embarked upon this last task of beating Liverpool. We knew it wasn't going to be easy, although a day or so before the match we found out that we were the only ones in division 2 who had so far remained unbeaten – Liverpool had lost one game during the league stages at the beginning of the season.

The match started off with all of us feeling very nervous, and as a result making a good few mistakes. Each team scored alternately and by half time we were 2-1 down. The third quarter saw similarly tight scores, but in the last half of the fourth quarter we managed to score 4 goals in a row, putting us to an 8-5 lead that eventually culminated in a 10-6 win to us, securing that hard earned gold medal to end what has been an amazing season of 12 matches, 139 goals (and 52 conceded, but we'll ignore that), no lost games, lots of travelling and amazing performances from everyone. And with that, I think it's safe to say we're all very much looking forward to take on the opponents in the premier league next year!

Imperial thump Chichester Zain Rizvi reports as IC record big win



ICU CRICKET

On Wednesday 28th May, Imperial 1st XI travelled to Chichester to play their 1st XI in a BUCS fixture. Chichester were top of our league with 3 wins from 3, so we went into this game determined to get a good result. We got off to the perfect start by missing our train to Chichester, but were soon back on track (excuse the pun) and raring to go.

Upon arrival, it seemed God had decided to take a lavatory break and interrupt proceedings as the ground was softer than Vicky's excuse for being late. Nevertheless, looking forward to taking advantage of the wet conditions and bowling first, we were promptly informed that we were indeed batting.

Juhin and Lomas opened up for Imperial and batted solidly – a 50 run opening stand, with some beautiful shots down the ground from Juhin in particular. Unfortunately their left arm spinner managed to turn one in the end, bowling Juhin for 18.

Enter the Mohit. Having banded on for the past few weeks in these incisive journalistic masterpieces about the IC 1st XI batsmen batting as if they've had their arms removed, our very own Rahul Dravid, set up (corner) shop and anchored the innings by building partnerships with Lomas and Jayanth (after Lomas was caught for 25). Having negotiated a very tricky period with a moving ball, and with the score at 117-2 off 30 overs, Jayanth decided to turn militant and started launching the ball to all parts of the ground bringing up another fine 50, after which the opposition's token ginger was heard remarking "that was the worst 50 I've ever seen..." (he conceded 14 runs off his next over... Just saying).

Whilst Jayanth was batting like a crack addict, Vishal was calmly building his innings, ready to set off some fireworks near the end. Jayanth was soon caught for what, in all seriousness, was a match defining knock of 58, which meant that last week's hero, the magician, the entertainer, the captain himself, Vicky Venkateswaren strode to the wicket and got ready to face his first delivery. Rumour has it that

Vicky had recently acquired tickets to see 'One Direction' (his favourite boyband) in London, and indeed there was only "One Direction" he was heading, when he was out LBW for a golden duck - walking back to the pavilion. I personally thought it was a quacking knock.

Imperial's best looking cricketer then walked out to bat, looking to make an impact with the bat before he takes an exam break from cricket. Together Zain and Vishal saw Imperial past 200, until Vishal holed out to deep square leg (he hasn't been to the gym much recently) for a well made 41. Zain then ran Nick out without facing a ball, and Dave proved to us that Karma does in fact exist, as he ran Zain out soon after. Whilst an asthmatic sloth could have run better than those two, Imperial finished on a steady 212 -8 off 50 overs, a more than competitive score on a horrible wicket.

Correct me if I'm wrong (Arvind I'm looking at you) but a nephropathy is defined as a disease of the kidney, similarly a neuropathy is a disease of the nervous system.

Well it seemed that Chichester were suffering from a Ganapathy, because Jayanth opened the bowling and was all over them like a rash, picking up 3 early wickets for just 17 runs off his 7 overs. Similarly Simon kept the pressure on bowling 10 overs for 28 runs. The notorious V.I.G. (gy) then picked up 3 for 18 to send Chichester on their way, as IC 1st XI beat Chichester 1st XI by 102 runs.

Imperial – 212-8. Chichester – 110 all out.

Aside from the landslide victory, there was a fair amount of "chat" between the two teams during the match, which culminated in Chichester refusing to change the scoreboard, and then placing a "caution wet floor" sign near the boundary where a couple of our fielders had slipped.

We promptly shook hands, and left for London, but not after Jayanth had the last laugh (see picture).

Imperial have now got two out of three wins, and can be considered real title contenders this season.