



Felix

The Student Newspaper of Imperial College London

NEWS



Petition to save St. Mary's swimming pool
PAGE 5

TECH



Should you be trusting the government with your face?
PAGE 15

MUSIC



NeighbourHOOD Grammys return for another year
PAGE 30

TRAVEL



Around America in a fire truck
PAGE 38



UCU members on the march a couple of years ago // Flickr/dun.can

Strike dates set across UK universities

NEWS

Fred Fyles
Editor-in-Chief

Strikes are set to take place in 61 UK universities in February and March, after discussions failed to reach a resolution on pension schemes.

Members of the University and College

Union (UCU) have announced a wave of strike dates, after discussions with Universities UK (UUK) over pensions ended without an agreement.

Strikes are set to take place over 14 days at 61 universities in the UK, including Imperial. The strikes will occur in escalating waves, with the first week seeing strikes from 22nd-23rd February and the second week from 26th-28th February; there will then be a week's break, before a four-day strike

from 5th-8th March, and finishing with a five-day walkout from 12th-16th

"UCU members voted in favour of industrial action, with 88% of those balloted supporting a strike"

March.

Universities that have reading weeks across these dates will postpone the strike for maximum impact.

UCU members voted largely in favour of industrial action, with 88% of those balloted backing a strike. 58.5% of UCU Imperial members voted, in line with the national average of 58%. UCU secretary general Sally Hunt said: "[The results] provide a very strong mandate for UCU to continue the fight for a decent,

guaranteed pension."

Talks were held last week between UCU and UUK – the group representing UK universities – but ended without an agreement being reached. Hunt said they were "disappointed at how talks ended", and said "staff will feel utterly betrayed by their leaders."

Dr Michael McGarvey, President of Imperial College UCU, told *Felix*: "This morning at the meeting of the Academic

Cont. pg 3

EDITORIAL

CONTENTS	
EDITORIAL	2
NEWS	3-5
POLITICS	6-8
COMMENT	9-11
SCIENCE	12-14
TECH	15-16
ARTS	18-22
MUSIC	27-31
FILM	33-35
BOOKS	36-37
TRAVEL	38
C&S	40-41
HANGMAN	42-43
PUZZLES	44
SPORTS	45-48

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What we mean when we talk about democracy

Crikey! That's come around quickly. It seems like only a few months ago that we were all gearing up for last year's Leadership Elections, and here we are already with a whole new set. Well, when I say we were all gearing up... more like those who were running and assorted Union hacks, but when you're running a campaign it can be hard to see anything outside of it. Imperial College Union regularly prides itself on having 'the biggest student democracy in the country', but what does that really mean? Is there any way you can really measure a value as abstract as democracy? The Union has traditionally done so by looking at metrics like the number of candidates running, and the turnout at elections, with completing an online ballot standing in as a proxy for democratic engagement. And, to be sure, having people turn up to the polls is a hugely vital part of any democratic process –



just look at what happened with the general election last year, where high youth turnout swung a number of constituencies, not least our own Kensington constituency, which turned to Labour despite all odds. But democracy is not a coat you can shrug on and off as you feel like it; it's a living, breathing being that needs continual renewal and engagement. If I seem to be in a bit of a pensive mood, that's because this election marks something of a turning point in my year as *Felix* Editor: all the sabbatical officers are now about six months into the job, and soon we'll know who'll be taking our places (don't worry, there's no chance I'll be running again). The time for us to make change is quickly running out, and we all need to think hard about what we're going to do as we serve the remain-

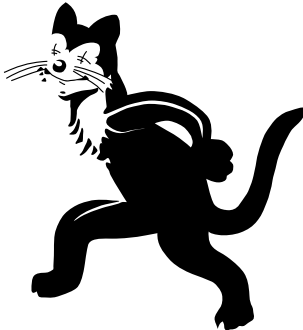
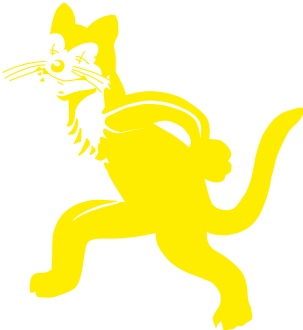
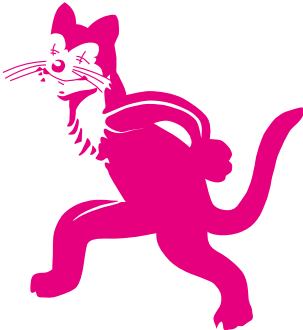
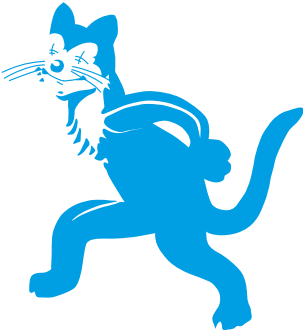
der of our year. It's with this in mind that I turn to the Union itself. While nominations are open from this week, they don't close until the end of February, so we have an entire month before the big election roadshow is kicked off. It's more than enough time to sit back, reflect, and ponder on the state of the Union. What has been done well? What should we focus on for next year? Or should we just scrap the whole damn system and start again? These are the kind of questions *Felix* will be examining over the next few weeks. I know some of you might find all this talk of Union politics awfully dull – you just want to skip through to the centrefold (two this week!), Hangman, and the puzzles section. It's cool, I get you. But if you've had enough of pontificating about the nature of democracy, I have one suggestion: run for *Felix* Editor yourself.



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NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Imperial among 61 universities to face strike action over pensions in coming months

NEWS
Cont.

and Related Staff Joint UCU Management Committee, management finally conceded they could pay increased contributions in order to fund the continuation of defined benefit USS

“Imperial UCU said the refusal to fund the pension scheme was ‘another disappointing indication of the value amnagement place on staff’”

pensions, but have chosen not to.

“At a time when real pay has fallen by around 20% since 2009 and staff facilities are being withdrawn (the latest being the swimming pool at the St. Mary’s Campus), this is another disappointing indication of the value management place on staff at Imperial.”

A College spokesperson informed *Felix* that UCU notified them of 522 members at Imperial, of whom 276 are academic staff, 102 are research staff, and the remainder are postgraduate students, or administrative and managerial staff. A College spokesperson said they were “disappointed” by the industrial action, telling *Felix*: “We appreciate students may have concerns about



The strike is the latest in the dispute over pensions // flickr/dun.can

disruption to their education, and we will work with departments and the students’ union to discuss and implement mitigation plans. We hope to keep disruption to a minimum.”

The National Union of Students (NUS) this week issued a joint statement with UCU, saying they were “sister organisations committed to promoting the interests of our members and defending education”. The unions said they were “proud of our work together in calling for a better deal for students and staff”, and the NUS asked its members to “continue to call for the university employers to recognise the seriousness

of the situation”.

A spokesperson for Imperial College Union, which is not affiliated with the NUS, told *Felix*: “Imperial College Union will soon meet Imperial UCU to discuss their view on the strikes. We will

“The National Union of Students issued a joint statement in support of the strikes”

also ask Imperial UCU and College to let us know what impact they believe the strikes will have on our students, so we can keep you as informed as possible of how your studies may be affected.”

UCU will be offering strike pay to their members, saying they will “look to prioritise help for those most in need”.

The UCU has recently produced a video explaining the rationale behind the strikes to students, which claims a typical lecturer would lose £10,000 per year in retirement benefits. They say “without the security of a decent pension, staff will simply leave”.

What is the debate about?

The debate centres around proposed changes to pension schemes for university staff. The current pension scheme used in higher education is the University Superannuation Scheme (USS) – a defined benefit pensions scheme in which the employer is responsible for contributions up to a salary of £55,550. Beyond this, the USS switches to a defined contribution scheme, where pension value is linked to the performance of the stock market.

UUK proposes to end the defined benefit scheme and switch to a fully defined contribution scheme – a move UCU general secretary Sally Hunt called “the worst proposal I have received in twenty years of representing university staff”. Alistair Jarvis, the chief executive of UUK, has said the changes are necessary to “ensure the scheme remains sustainable.” Sam Gyimah, the new universities minister, however, last month wrote to Ellie Rees MP saying the USS pension scheme was “strong and stable”.

Dr Michael McGarvey, President of Imperial College UCU, told *Felix*: “Depending on calculations – which are highly contested – the increased contributions required to fund the defined benefit USS pensions might be very little, or – at the very most – 10% of Imperial’s annual operating surplus”

There are concerns this could leave pension funds at the mercy of fluctuations of the stock market in the future. Last year Professor Michael Otsuka, of the London School of Economics, estimated for some staff switching to the new scheme would lead to a reduction in the value of their pension of 60%. An Imperial working group, which was commissioned by College management, produced a critique of the basis upon which UUK is recommending changes, saying “lack of transparency remains a key issue” in the debate.

NEWS

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Nominations open in Union Leadership Elections

NEWS

Fred Fyles*Editor-in-Chief*

Nominations for this year's elections, which will have a reduced campaigning period, close at the end of the month.

Nominations for Imperial College Union's Leadership Elections opened this week, with eligible students able to stand for over 400 roles, including Council Chair, Liberation and Community Officers, and CSP Committee positions. This year's elections see a number of changes, including reduced campaigning periods.

Seven paid sabbatical roles will also be elected: Union President, the four Officer Trustees – Deputy President (Education), Deputy President (Welfare), Deputy President (Clubs & Societies), and Deputy President (Finance & Services) – ICSMSU President, and *Felix* Editor.

The nomination period opened last Wednesday, and will run until midday, Monday 26th February. There will then be a week of candidate training, before candidates are revealed and voting begins on Friday 2nd March. Voting will run for a week, until Friday 9th March.

A spokesperson from Imperial College Union told *Felix*: "In the Leadership Elections 2018, Britain's biggest student elections, there are roles to suit every interest – our members can nominate themselves now, and take part in the country's strongest student democracy."

This year a number of changes may affect the election process. Last October, it was announced the President of the Graduate Students' Union (GSU) – one of Imperial's six Constituent Unions, representing taught and research postgraduates – would become a paid, part-time role. The role will take up two working days a week, and the GSU President will receive a stipend of £10,000. Luke McCrone, the current GSU President, told *Felix* at the time: "I am certain

the position will be more hotly contested in future, hopefully helping to attract better quality candidates."

This year will also see the traditional two week campaigning period – one week of campaigning before voting opened, and then a further week of campaigning while voting took place – replaced with a single week of voting and campaigning.

A spokesperson for the

"A number of changes may affect this year's election process"

Union told *Felix*: "We're willing to experiment as we achieve our aim of remaining Britain's strongest student democracy. Feedback from candidates has highlighted the negative impact two full weeks of campaigning can have on their studies and wellbeing. We also wanted to try a 'big bang' approach, in which candidates are revealed, campaigning



I can't remember the last time all the OTs looked this happy // ICU

begins, and voting opens at the same time.' They also cited the new week of training as providing more support for candidates.

Reaction to the new voting period has been mixed. Claudia Caravello, President of the City and Guilds College Union (CGCU), told *Felix*: "I think students having to spend only one week campaigning will be better for their studies and wellbeing, but it will require candidates to plan their campaigns a lot more. The campaign period will intensify, and the week will go by pretty quickly."

Others cited concerns over the advantage it might give some students. Abhijay Sood, Academic Affairs Officer for the Royal College of Science Union (RCSU) told *Felix*: "By eliminating the pre-voting campaign period, the Union are denying those who are less well known on campus the change to get their names out there, and giving others an unfair advantage. The right to all students to participate in a fair election should trump that of those who find the two week period inconvenient."

Imperial College Union

will be hoping to achieve a high voter turnout, after a reduction in voters from 2016 to 2017. In the 2016 Elections, Imperial achieved the highest turnout in the country: 45.47% of eligible voters turned out, with over 60% of undergraduates voting; in last year's elections, however, the turnout dropped more than eight points, to 36.78%, with a significant fall in turnout of taught postgraduates.

Nominations are open until 26th February. Voting opens on 2nd March. You can nominate yourself here: vote.union.ic.ac.uk

More students' unions call for NSS boycott

NEWS

Fred Fyles*Editor-in-Chief*

Cambridge and Manchester will be boycotting the National Student Survey.

More universities have joined a boycott of the National Student

Survey (NSS) over concerns it could be linked to future rises in tuition.

Manchester University Students' Union (MUSU) and Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU) have both announced they will be boycotting the NSS. Durham Students' Union (DSU), while not boycotting the NSS, have refused to actively promote the survey.

Last week CUSU joined Oxford University Students' Union in boycotting the NSS, following

a vote in CUSU Council. The CUSU stated: "many of the objections to participation in the NSS that stood last year still stand", and said there was "no guarantee the temporary freeze on tuition fees would continue."

MUSU has also asked students not to fill in the NSS, citing concerns the data could still be used to raise fees in the future. "Fees are frozen for now," MUSU said in a statement, "but the TEF uses a 3-year average of students' NSS

data. So if you fill it in this year, it will be used in 2020 when fees could be unfrozen."

In an email sent out to Imperial students earlier this year, Professor Simone Buitendijk, Imperial's Vice-Provost (Education), and Nick Burstow, Imperial College Union's Deputy President (Education), asked final years to complete the survey. They said the results would "help the College see both where it is excelling, but also

where it can improve", and they "hoped to beat" the 2017 participation rate of 74%.

Last year Cambridge and Manchester were among the twelve universities that successfully led a boycott of the NSS, with a turnout of under 50% leading to invalidation of the data.

The boycott was driven by the link the NSS would have with the controversial Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was previously supposed

to be linked to rises in tuition fees. While Theresa May announced in October that tuition fees would be frozen for the upcoming year, a number of student groups continue to have concerns over the link between TEF and marketisation of higher education.

The NSS is sent out each year to final year undergraduates at higher education institutions in the UK. It is undertaken by Ipsos MORI.

NEWS

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Petition launched to save St. Mary's swimming pool

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

The petition, which is on more than 700 signatures at the time of writing, calls the decision "deeply disappointing".

A petition has been launched following Imperial College London's announcement to close the swimming pool at the St. Mary's campus.

The swimming pool is scheduled to close from the 16th July, 2018, at the end of this academic year. College faculty have cited concerns over cost effectiveness, saying College students and staff only make up 15% of users of the pool, which is run by Sport Imperial.

The petition, which has more than 700 signatures at time of writing, says the closure was made "with no prior warning or consultation", calling

the decision "deeply disappointing, short-sighted, and unjust". It also argues that it goes against Sport Imperial's "current strategy of promoting mental and physical wellbeing".

The St. Mary's Hospital Association (SMHA), the alumnus organisation for the St. Mary's medical school graduates, also cited concerns over communication. They said they "deplore the lack of consultation that appears to have occurred prior to the closure of the pool being announced."

In a statement to *Felix*, representatives of the SMHA said: "In financially constrained times, we fully recognise the need for tough decisions to be made regarding facilities for students and staff. It may be the case that the pool has been underused in recent years, but this may be because of poor marketing and under-investment. Talking to colleagues in the hospital, very few are even aware of the existence of a pool in the medical school."

"We strongly back the need for open, thoughtful consultation



The pool is to be closed, after concerns over low use // Imperial

and publication of the facts relating to usage of the pool and efforts at income-generation that have been tried before a final decision is made."

A College spokesperson said "the costs of required maintenance mean it is not sustainable to continue running this facility", and that the pool's closure "is part of the College's wider cost savings which are designed to allow for reinvestment of funds into the academic mission."

The petition refers to the long history of St. Mary's pool, which has been open for 80 years. Kevin Brown, Trust Archivist for Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Curator of the Alexander Fleming Museum Laboratory, told *Felix* of the pool's historical pedigree:

"Alexander Fleming was one of the first users of the swimming pool when it opened in the early 1930s. Water sports

had in a way brought him to St. Mary's. He had played water polo for the London Scottish Regiment against a team from St. Mary's and had been so impressed by their esprit de corps and friendliness that when he came to apply to medical school in 1901 he chose St. Mary's rather than any of the other medical schools in London at that time."

The petition also highlights the role the pool

plays currently, saying it benefits "a wide cross section of students, staff, sports groups, and the wider local community", and "boasts developing the talent of international sporting stars, including Emma Watson, cross-Channel swimmer."

The decision was announced at the beginning of last month on Imperial College's website. The 20-meter pool, which will remain open throughout the rest of the year, is open to students, Imperial staff, NHS staff, and members of the public.

A College spokesperson told *Felix*: "Imperial is committed to providing sports facilities of the highest standard for its staff and student community, and we know the facility has been a valued part of the St. Mary's Campus for many years. The pool will continue to be open as normal for the first half of 2018, and the swimming pool at Ethos on the South Kensington Campus is available for all College students and staff."

Netball to headline 2018 Varsity

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

The team won a public vote, and Kabaddi will play the Showcase match.

Imperial College Union Netball 1st team and Imperial College School of Medicine (ICSM) Netball 1st team are set to battle it out in VarsityFest's Headline match

this year, after winning a public vote.

The vote, which ran until Friday 26th January, asked students to pick between Netball (1st Team), Men's Rugby (1st Team), and Kabaddi for the Headline and Showcase matches. Netball gained 40% of the vote, with 216 students choosing the 1st team for the Headline match. Kabaddi achieved 32% of the vote, and Men's Rugby (1st Team) gained 29%. This means that IC Kabaddi will be playing the Showcase match; they played

their first match as part of VarsityFest only last year.

The choice of Netball for the Headline match comes after they previously played the Showcase match at VarsityFest 2017. In their application, they said the team were well suited to headline VarsityFest due to the "fast-paced and high-scoring nature of the game", and promised to "offer a competitive match that is unlikely to be one-sided".

Ellen Fletcher, Club Captain of Imperial College Netball, told *Felix*: "The 1s have had

an incredible start to 2018, and haven't lost a match yet – despite some initial nerves, the team are now working hard to keep their winning streak going through to Varsity! It's an exciting change that a women's sport will be headlining, and I think it shows how much people enjoyed the Showcase last year, and how far both clubs have come."

A Union representative told *Felix*: "The student poll on Varsity's Headline and Showcase has really opened up the event to include a spotlight on

newer and developing sports, while highlighting Imperial's inclusive sporting community. Netball's successful Showcase in 2017 continues to be supported by students, pushing them on to achieve 2018's Headline."

This year is the first time the Headline match has been a women's team since 2015, when Women's Rugby were the centrepiece. Their game was overshadowed by a number of issues, including transport mix-ups meaning coaches left early, and allegations of

verbal abuse from staff members. The captain of the club said at the time that the events "highlighted the sexism that is unfortunately very present at Imperial."

VarsityFest is in its 16th year, and will see ICSM teams competing against Imperial College teams across 11 sports. The matches will take place across three dates: water polo on Friday 23rd February; Hockey VarsityFest on Wednesday 28th March; and the main VarsityFest on Saturday 3rd March.

POLITICS

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The trial of Winston Churchill and the British Empire he helped to build

In films like Darkest Hour, Winston Churchill is whitewashed as an elder statesman whose warnings were ignored. It's time we examine his imperialist legacy.

POLITICS

Avirup Banerjee

Politics Editor

Carthage must be destroyed, the Roman Senator Cato the Elder decreed at the end of all his speeches, irrespective of the original topic at hand. As a result of the tenacity of the war-mongering Roman elite, a once mighty civilization was reduced to rubble. Thus, if history teaches us anything, it is that consensus can be achieved by merely reinforcing any viewpoint repeatedly. The white-washing of the crimes and odious views of Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill has been very successful due to the barrage of bipartisan and universal reverence given to him. This is a dangerous example of history being rewritten by the tide of adulation presented by numerous books and films – most recently Joe Wright's *Darkest Hour*, in which Gary Oldman plays Churchill.

After watching *Darkest Hour*, one can not help but be impressed by Oldman's performance and consequently fall prey to the reluctant hero image of Churchill that has been cultivated since 1945. The true legacy of Churchill, however, is far more complicated and requires honest introspection.

One the most inaccurate scenes from the film shows Churchill riding the tube on his way to Parliament, and in the process, by talking to the average Brit, he gains the courage

to oppose any notion of surrender. This would have been uncharacteristic of the man who once said, "the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter". While this harmless scene was added for cinematic effect, it nonetheless contained a dangerous rewriting of history, especially since one of the "average Brits" that Churchill interacted with was a black man of African descent. The real Churchill was a white-supremacist who fervently opposed any immigration

to the UK by people of colour, making it unlikely that real Churchill would have ever treated a black man as an equal constituent, to whom he was accountable.

The purpose of this article is to bring forth an indictment of the high crimes and misdemeanours of one of history's worst imperialists. Genocide, use of 'weapons of mass-destruction' against civilians, and being an ardent believer in racial superiority are only the tip of the iceberg.

However, before any of the lesser known travesties are examined, we need to address the biggest myth of all: Churchill having the foresight regarding the need to combat the evil of totalitarianism. While it is true that Churchill had come to realise the danger Hitler posed from the early years of the Third Reich, his zealot-like opposition to socialism meant he was a strong advocate for British neutrality during the Spanish Civil War. Because of this morally bankrupt policy, the fascist coalition of Mussolini

and Hitler strengthened and propelled Franco to power. The silence towards the Blitzkrieg perpetrated on Barcelona and the other great cities of Spain was deafening. In fact, in the late 1920s, Churchill openly admired Mussolini's brutal crackdown on communists by praising how "fascism has rendered a service to the entire world".

"The Bengal famine killed over 3 million loyal citizens as a result of Churchill's racist views"

Churchill, as displayed by the political positions he took throughout his life, opposed Nazism not out of any consistent moral compass but instead to preserve the tyranny of the British Empire. While Churchill was waging war on behalf of the Poles and Czechs to restore their trampled rights, he was also systematically denying those very rights to the colonised world.

The aura of Churchill stems from the image of the underdog status Britain unfortunately gained when it stood alone in Europe fighting against the Nazis. However, the truth couldn't be further from the fictitious image of little Britain standing alone. Britain was never alone during the war. The prime-ministers of

"white" commonwealth nations of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and Rhodesia pledged their continued support even after the fall of France. However, the most astonishing acts of solidarity are found among those who were not privileged with the rights of equality and universal suffrage; those who were not the masters of their destinies, yet still volunteered to fight for democracy and freedom in Europe (those very rights which were denied to them). India alone contributed over 2.5 million volunteers to fight in the war, who were accompanied by their comrades from the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, and South East Asia.

The likes of Mao and Stalin are correctly placed in the pantheon of brutal dictators alongside Hitler and Mussolini, for the mass-starvation they inflicted on their people. The legacy of the British Raj was catastrophic famines, none more so than the Bengal famine of 1943-44. These were not natural events, but direct consequences of callous policies. The Bengal famine killed over 3 million loyal citizens as a result of Churchill's racist views regarding Indians – he ordered the export of more than 70,000 tonnes of grain out of India in July of 1943 to shore up reserves in Britain and for a disastrous campaign in Greece. In Churchill's own words, "starvation of anyhow under-fed Bengalis is less serious than sturdy Greeks". Churchill's ambivalence



It's time we stopped avoiding examining Churchill's crimes // Wikimedia

POLITICS

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towards the suffering of Indians was considered extreme, even by his contemporaries. When ardent imperialists like Leopold Amery – secretary of state for India – implored Churchill to act, his only response was “Indians breed like rabbits”, that they “are beastly people”, and asking “why isn’t Gandhi dead yet?” More troublingly, when conscience stricken leaders in Canada, Australia, and America offered to send grain to relieve the famine, Churchill declined in the fear that they may be sunk by Japanese submarines. How was this any different to Stalin’s Holodomor in the Ukraine?

“Churchill showed no remorse towards the historical injustices suffered by Native American people”

It wasn’t just Indians that Churchill despised. He referred to Palestinian Arabs as “dogs” and showed no remorse towards the historical injustices suffered by Native-American and Aboriginal-Australian people. Churchill’s obscene racial views would be abhorrent to any fair-minded individual – yet they are always omitted in his countless portrayals in the media. The Atlantic Charter, which cemented the Anglo-American alliance, was signed with wildly different interpretation. To Franklin Roosevelt the commitment of “right to self-determination” extended to all of humanity, serving as the final nail in the coffin

for the age of empire. However, Churchill maintained to his cabinet that this pledge only extended to the citizens of Europe, proclaiming “I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.”

Even if one were to be charitable and not level the charge of genocide but instead the milder accusation of criminal negligence in handling the Bengal famine, the Mau-Mau rebellion does not leave any room for ambiguity. After Churchill’s return to power in 1951, his government oversaw the suspension of habeas-corpus and the forced detention of 150,000 Kenyans – men, women and children – into concentration camps in which rape, castration, and electric shock torture were the norm. All this was done to protect the colonial apartheid regime. What was promised to have been left behind in Nuremburg continued under Churchill’s supervision. However, it should not have come as a surprise: after all Churchill was mightily impressed by the first ever concentration camps during the Boer War.

The Geneva Protocol of 1928 which outlawed the use of chemical and biological weapons did not materialise in a vacuum. Poison gas continued to be in use in warfare after the First World War, once again with Churchill’s approval. Whilst serving as the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1921 he expressed his desire to use “poisoned gas against the uncivilized tribes” and to provoke “terror” in order to subdue any resistance to British rule in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq).

Churchill’s contempt for the people of the Middle East was groomed in his early years as a soldier in the Anglo-Afghan War in the late

19th century. He would later write with a proud boast of how the British “destroyed the houses, filled up the wells, burned the crops, and broke the reservoirs in punitive devastation” to unleash terror on the native Pashtun tribes.

“Many of the problems facing the Middle East can be traced back as products of British Imperialism from Palestine to Iran”

Many of the problems facing the Middle East are still a direct product of British imperialism, from Palestine to Iran. After Churchill returned to power in 1951, the disastrous policies he advocated would ultimately produce the unintended consequence of establishing a rogue theocratic regime a generation later. In order to protect the interests of private British oil corporations, the CIA, with the urgings of British government, orchestrated the return to power of the brutal Shah of Iran in a coup against the secular and democratically elected leader of Iran, Mohammad Mosaddegh.

Churchill was consistently on the wrong side of history for most of the important issues of his time – his fierce opposition to the women’s suffrage movement, for example, was exemplified by him saying “nothing would induce me to vote for giving women the franchise”.

“History will be kind to me,” Churchill remarked



Churchill should be held in the same regard as colonialists like Cecil Rhodes // CC

to his war-time ally Joseph Stalin, “because I intend to write it”. Unlike the other two leaders of allied coalition, Roosevelt – who died in office weeks before the war would end – and Stalin, Churchill’s six volume, Nobel prize winning account of WWII would shape his enduring image as a wartime leader. And so Churchill was right: history has been very kind to him. Very little is ever written about the disastrous Norwegian Campaign of 1940, which was planned and executed by Churchill, but would result in Neville Chamberlain losing support and ironically propel Churchill’s rise to power.

It is important to note that, to his contemporaries, Churchill wasn’t particularly popular. Throughout the 1930s, due to his

racist opposition to the Government of India Act, he was relegated as

“The reality remains that in many of the former British colonies, Churchill is not revered as a liberator but derided as an unrepentant imperialist”

a political pariah. Had Churchill had a more enlightened view towards

people of colour, his early warnings on Hitler might not have fallen on deaf ears. Interestingly, even after “leading” Britain to victory, he was given the “order of the boot” by the public in an overwhelming defeat in the 1945 general election. Churchill was a not a reconciliatory figure. He never expressed regret about his treatment of people of colour within the British empire. The universal admiration given to Churchill is synonymous with what Noam Chomsky calls the “manufacture of consent”. The reality remains that in many of the former British colonies, Churchill is not revered as a liberator, but is derided as a gross hypocrite, racist, and an unrepentant imperialist.

POLITICS

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We are all Hadiza

Why the case against Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba is having repercussions throughout the medical community.

POLITICS

Theo Farah
Politics Writer

In the days following the successful appeal by the General Medical Council (GMC) to have Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba struck off the medical register, meaning she is not able to return to practice for at least five years, a crowd-funding campaign has raised over £200, 000 to fund further legal counsel for the paediatrician. The money will be used to pay for independent legal review of the ruling and potentially a legal challenge to the High Court decision, as well as the original ruling of manslaughter by gross negligence.

The swell of support from doctors across the UK was triggered by concerns over patient safety following the ruling and perceived scapegoating by Dr Bawa-Garba’s trust and the GMC to cover up systemic failings in the run up to the tragic death of six-year-old Jack Adcock in February 2011. These concerns were shared by health secretary Jeremy Hunt, who tweeted that he was “deeply concerned” by the potential implications of the ruling. Worries were voiced by Hunt and doctors over the damage done to transparency in medical education following the use of Dr Bawa-Garba’s portfolio reflections in the trial, which were submitted by her defence. Thousands of doctors have penned a letter warning of the potential consequences, such as more defensive medicine and less expressive reflection, which could contribute to similar mistakes in the future



Dr Bawa-Garba’s trial has serious implications for the medical industry in the UK // CC

and subsequent harm to patients. Jack Adcock was admitted to the Leicester Royal Infirmary Hospital at around 10:30am after being sent there by his GP. He presented with dehydration secondary to vomiting and diarrhoea, shallow breathing, and blue lips. When admitted he was unresponsive and limp. Initially treated with fluids and oxygen, after a chest x-ray revealed pneumonia, he was prescribed antibiotics. Jack seemed to recover initially, but at 7.45pm he went into cardiac arrest as a complication of sepsis, which had been missed by the medical team. Around an hour previously, he had been given an unprescribed dose of enalapril, a regular medication he was prescribed following heart surgery in early life. Jack died 90 minutes later, after resuscitation failed

to revive him. The original ruling of gross negligence manslaughter is grounded on the failings of Dr Bawa-Garba having hastened the death of Jack. Several mistakes were made, which were given in the evidence of Dr Cadel, expert witness of the prosecution and were admitted by Dr Bawa-Garba herself. These included missing signs of sepsis on admission, failing to ask for consultant review by phone or in handover at 4.30pm, and a three hour delay in reading the chest radiograph. Several key mitigating factors were found to have contributed to the day’s events by an internal trust report, yet were not included in the original trial. The extent of their contribution was such that the report concluded that no single cause for the death was able to be

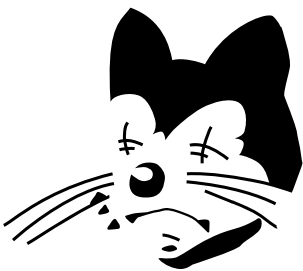
identified. These were outlined in an account written by several consultant paediatricians in support of Dr Bawa-Garba. They included the fact that she was doing the work of three doctors that day, as her consultant and the other registrar were away on leave. Due to IT failure, her House Officer was having to phone for results in the afternoon, making them unable to assist in care. In addition, the agency nurse caring for Jack was not trained in paediatrics. Despite all of this, Justice Ouseley, of the GMC appeal, ruled that these conditions were not “something she had not been trained to cope with or was something wholly out of the ordinary for a year 6 trainee”. This speaks volumes about the current state of the NHS, that a trainee working without supervision is

expected to do the job of three doctors without making any mistakes. Hence, empathy for Dr Bawa-Garba is strong, with the hashtag #weareallhadiza cropping up on Twitter. Many doctors have experienced similar working conditions in their careers, especially in recent years within a buckling, chronically underfunded NHS. Dr Wilmshurst, Consultant Cardiologist at Royal Stoke University Hospital has asked the GMC to investigate his 40 years of clinical practice, admitting to clinical errors leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment. Writing to the BMJ, he stated “it is clear that the High Court agreed with the GMC that honest errors should be career ending mistakes”. The tremors from the case have reached medical students here at Imperial, who fear what the decision

of the GMC means for their training. One student commented that they are “terrified” that doctors are expected to cope without adequate resources and not only do one job, but that of two other doctors. Another said that they are “hesitant” to engage with the reflective process for learning purposes if it can be used as evidence against them. Perhaps most worrying is the GMC’s move to strike Dr Bawa-Garba off, despite the previous ruling of the Medical Practitioners Tribunal to suspend her for 12 months. Supposedly this was done in the public interest, to restore confidence in the profession. To many, however, the decision seems to be an act of political and public appeasement, and will do nothing to prevent similar deaths in the future.

COMMENT

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Grumpy Bastard on Cycling

Grumpy Bastard turns his gaze to cycling in the big smoke. And he now hates more people than ever before.

COMMENT

Grumpy Bastard
Comment Writer

This week, I have begun to cycle more. I'm a big fan of cycling because one of my favourite people in the whole of the UK is a large advocate of it. Yes, he might break ranks in the Tory cabinet and tell outright lies, but at least his hair looks fantastic perched on top of his head, like immaculate thatch on a traditional British cottage. I could almost write dedicated love poetry for Bo Jo, but I'd certainly feel like I was cheating on the King of the Tories, or as he would prefer it, *Rex Cuntz*. Rees-Mogg and his charmingly elitist outlook is what gets me out of bed in the morning – if only to realise that my parents aren't wealthy enough for me to ever

get a better bed or indeed even aspire to a better bed. However, it is not for me to question the wisdom of the class system, as it did spawn the greatest Empire that humanity has ever witnessed, on which the Sun Never Set and the Screaming Never Stopped. It definitely had a net positive effect on humanity in general, unless of course you count the poor bastards that were busy being exploited/murdered/enslaved for the good of the mother country, and, somehow, they are conveniently easy to ignore. It is also critical to remember that inequality is only real when we talk about it: the less it's mentioned, the more likely it is that the dumb fuckers that make up the modern-day peasantry will continue rutting in the dirt without a care in the world. Best to keep it on the low down, otherwise they might do something

about it and that would be disastrous. No one wants another 1917. Anyway, to return from my eulogy to those greatest of men and woman that make up our ruling aristocracy, I have started cycling more, and I have only one observation to report. The bane of cyclists is not left turning buses or pedestrians that fail to hear you approaching and simply step out into the middle of the road with all the care of a Samurai charging Gatling guns. It is instead people that drive very large cars. For some reason, probably a superiority complex, these people drive these vessels without paying attention to their surroundings, and when their surroundings rudely intrude on their serene progress throughout the cramped streets of London, their sole response is to gesticulate violently, before headbut-

ting the horn and volubly exclaiming, "get off the road, you wanker." My reasoning for this response is that they are not used to having to interact with poor people such as myself except when my person is being crushed between their Land Rover with four-wheel drive and some railings. I am almost convinced that the only reason that they fail to go through with crushing me to death is that they don't want to have to clean the blood off their car. As a defence mechanism, it's not much, but it certainly beats being forced to become some sort of human mashed potato. In fact, it's almost like that lizard that squirts blood out of their eyes to confuse their enemy. That is my final defence mechanism: stay away or I'll bleed on you. Therefore, I'd like to offer some upgrades that could make this defence



For some, cycling is a lonely pastime //Flickr

mechanism completely obsolete. As far as I'm aware, there are not very many options, as the whole idea is to minimise the risk of mess. My first idea is to attach heated Boadicea blades that would instantaneously cauterise the wound. Yes, it would make the car a little wider, but I don't think that has ever been a consideration that has put you off before. Secondly, similarly to the red flag

men that walked in front of the car, you could utilise some plebs of your own to run alongside and beat any unwanted cyclists to death. Minimise the mess to yourself and further the cause of the class system by setting the Third Estate against one another. What's not to like?

This article may not really be about cycling. Ha ha got you.

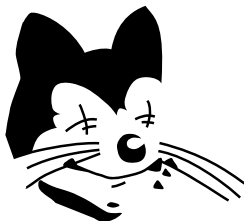
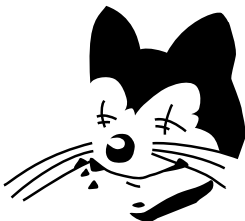
New Year, New News!

Felix are setting up a weekly newsletter, delivered straight to your inbox. Get all the best news, culture and sports every week.

Get the cat on the go!



Felix
WEEKLY



COMMENT

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Imperial is now the most unequal university in the UK – it doesn't have to be

While there are several ways to tackle this issue, moving our campuses out of Central London seems like a good start.

COMMENT

Alan Perfect
Comment Editor

What a great time to be an Imperial student. We have finally beaten Oxbridge at some ranking! What is it? Student satisfaction? Employability? Innovation? It doesn't matter! We beat them!

Except it does matter. Enormously. According to a UCAS report, we have overtaken Oxford and Cambridge to become the UK's most unequal university. We have the lowest proportion of students coming from low-income areas in the UK compared to any other university in the country.

Let's be honest, though. This was never a secret. We all study or work here, we don't need any report to tell us what we already know. Imperial is a bastion of privileged education.

And funnily enough, if I understand the data correctly, the report only focuses on UK students, sorting them from low-income to high-income based on the areas where they went to school. It would be interesting to publish some sort of Gini coefficient based on data from Home, EU and overseas students, even if the results are more than predictable: if Imperial is the most international university in the UK, and considering the fees paid by overseas students, it's easy to infer how much more unequal this university might be. And it might get worse in the



Moving to areas like White City might help with the issue// Imperial College

future. Brexit is coming very soon, meaning EU students will probably start to classify as general overseas students, jacking up their fees and removing their Student Finance.

I don't have a problem with studying surrounded by rich people. That's not an issue in itself. It can bring up some side issues, like the fact that if you grow up in a wealthy bubble you can end up out of touch with the rest of society's problems. But this is always avoidable if your intentions are good enough and you put in a bit of effort.

The real issue is providing society with equal opportunities for students from every background to have a shot at studying at a world class university.

An interesting thought to consider is how the average graduate job destination would change if Imperial weren't that wealthy. We already know banking is the top industry of choice for Imperial undergraduates,

after health and social work (because, you know, medics). Would this fact stay the same? On the one hand, one would think that students from high-income families are, at least stereotypically, more pressured to succeed – the expectations they have to fulfil are higher compared to someone who's the first in her family to attend university. Their definition of success is shaped by their surroundings (so maybe earning less than £40k just after graduating won't feel like enough).

On the other hand, coming from a higher-income family can provide you a more effective safety net after you graduate, which means it's easier to refuse jobs you don't want and be a bit more vocational, while a lower-income student might feel pressured to take the first job they come across.

These are all generalisations of the choices individuals make under different circumstances,

but it's always interesting to consider what forces are at play regarding career decisions when you come from different backgrounds.

But going back to the issue of equal opportunities, we hear a lot of talk referring to the high grades needed to enter Imperial, and the fact that, on average, schools from poorer areas tend to achieve lower grades. This is the problem with the data: it's hard to decouple the problem of inequality at Imperial with the problem of lower grades from poorer backgrounds. At first, it feels like the solution lies in trying to improve the conditions for poorer students and come up with strategies that will improve their grades during high-school. And this is true to a certain extent. But we can't ignore two facts: firstly, that it's harder to focus on your grades when your family is having a hard time; secondly, that part of the value proposition

of private schools is better performance. As long as A-levels remain a competition, private schools will fight to the death to get their students up in the performance charts.

It makes sense to consider asking for different grade requirements depending on your background. But it's not the only option we have to consider, and there is a large debate to be had over the fairness and effectiveness of such an approach.

"The cost of life in central London has to be driving some of this inequality"

For Imperial, however, there are other approaches that might help with the issue which don't involve grades at all. Because it's not only a grades problem. Imperial's main campus is in Kensington, which is arguably one of the most expensive neighbourhoods in all of Europe. There is no way that's not a large deterrent when low-income students consider their applications. To go to lectures, most undergraduates will have to be happy paying their £175/week or paying a bit less, or alternately, commuting for hours and blowing all the money on transport anyway. The cost of life in central London has to be driving some of this inequality. OK, some

brave souls get a part time job to support the cost of living. If they are able to, for example, work at the Union bars and not have their performance at university being affected by it, they are absolute heroes. Just overcoming the accumulation of lack of sleep after working night shifts and being able to finish their coursework is a huge feat in itself.

And yet, most students wouldn't welcome a big campus move to a more suburban area. The move is already arguably happening for some parts – postgraduates are being moved in great numbers to the White City campus, and halls in Acton have been up and running for three years now. It does seem like the longer-term strategy involves moving as much as we can out of central London.

But we don't want to move. OK, I get it. It's nice to be in South Kensington, surrounded by museums and Hyde Park. Gazing at a lit up Natural History Museum every night when I come home from the library is a beautiful sight I still can't get used to. But we have to face the hard facts. The price to pay for all these privileges is studying in the UK's most unequal university. And without an eventual move of all the campuses out of Central London and into areas such as Acton and White City, Imperial's inequality will keep increasing. The choice is hard, but a more inclusive community with equal opportunities is something worth giving up your privilege for.

COMMENT

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All the President's pigs – why we can't ignore the issue of free choice

There is no doubt the male attendants of the President's dinner were engaged in lewd behaviour. But treating the hostesses as victims ignores the reality of their free choice to attend.

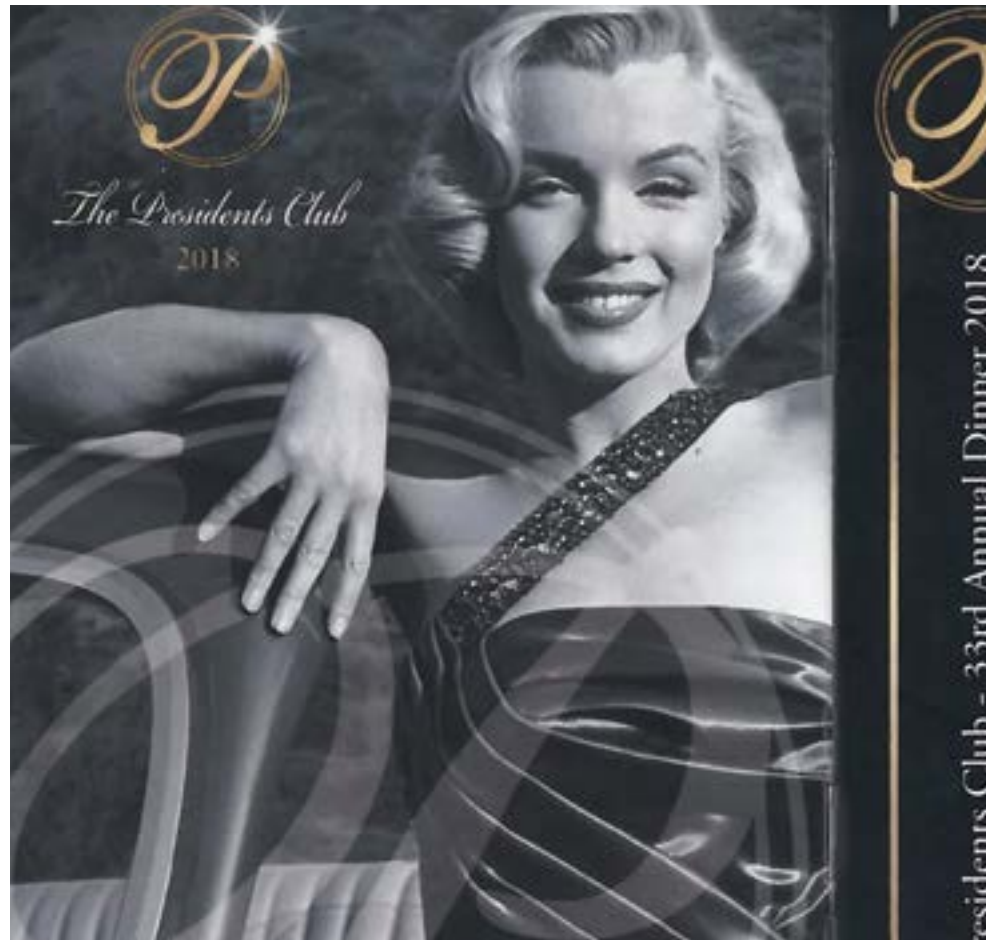
COMMENT

Shaul Rosten

Comment Writer

Picture the scene: you, a hot young 20-something in university, are invited to a dinner party by a few members of the opposite sex. They instruct you to wear something revealing and tight, and even go so far as to specify what sort of underwear you should have on. You go, and, predictably, they are flirtatious; propositioning you, touching you, and generally revelling in lewd hedonism. Are you surprised? Unless you were brought up under a rock, I would imagine not.

This is the preface to the now infamous Annual Presidents Club charity dinner, that took place on the evening of Thursday 18th at the plush Dorchester hotel. It was a male-only event, at which 130 'hostesses' – young, pretty girls – were given instructions to dress in a manner identical to those in our hypothetical scenario: they were told to wear "skimpy black outfits with matching underwear and high heels.... black sexy shoes". The Financial Times went in undercover, exposing bawdy male behaviour, with roaming hands, outrageous comments, and multiple propositions to spend the night. Rightly, there was a sentiment of disgust at this behaviour. Oddly, in my opinion, there was also an attitude of shock, and an overall



We're just raising charity money // Wikimedia

tone of victimisation on the part of the women involved.

Yes, the male guests largely behaved like pigs – but that doesn't mean that the women were victims. Caroline Dandridge, the woman responsible for recruiting the hostesses, informed them in advance of the nature of the evening, banning them from bringing phones, advising them to lie to boyfriends about whereabouts, and telling them in advance about the "annoying" men after relaying the aforementioned dress code. Gross, I know – but warning nonetheless. These women knew what they were doing, and chose to do it anyway. Some of them have done

the event for multiple years, and the FT itself admitted that some hostesses interviewed viewed the night as "fun". Even for those who didn't, it is absurd to want to believe that they had absolutely no idea what they were going to be there for. They were obviously and sickeningly invited as pieces of meat, and were treated accordingly. I think that this behaviour, a seedy underbelly of human (mostly male) nature, is despicable, and ever since I first encountered people with these attitudes at school, I was revolted, and I kept my distance.

But the rhetoric of victimisation on the part of the women is misplaced and exaggerated; it jumps on to the recent

bandwagon of lurid men abusing innocent women, and ignores the reality of the choices these women – rightly or wrongly – made. Consider a different scenario: a man going to visit an escort, or going into a strip club. Are the men who generally do this boorish and lascivious? Absolutely. Is the woman in question a victim? Of course not. She made a choice to participate, and her actions are her own. I see no reason why these hostesses, who, by all accounts, were well informed, should be treated as victims.

I was also puzzled by the general attitude of surprise; that this behaviour is deplorable is immutably true, but that it is uncommon is not,

and I expect most of us know it. It is an attitude that pervades many societies, especially Western society, which considers itself enlightened and progressive. Lauded establishments such as the Cafe De Paris, where women dance half-naked but it is called cabaret, rather than stripping, are considered artsy, chic, and any other word people like to use to justify their attendance, and to substitute 'salacious'.

People – mostly

"The male guests largely behaved like pigs – that doesn't mean the women were victims"

men – all over the world behave like this, and many institutions in our society fuel them. Advertising encourages us to think about people solely as objects, and we call someone who takes their clothes off to be objectified a 'model', cementing our justification of their presence as non-human gratification machines; television is rampant with over-exaggerated nudity and an obsession with the way people look; magazines show off shirtless men and bikini-clad women, using the word 'empowered' to make us forget that, choice or no, they are presenting people as objects for viewing

pleasure. The adult entertainment industry, scavenging on the liberal rhetoric of freedom of expression, instructs its patrons from a young age that people are objects for your pleasure. Whilst I am disgusted by this, and the culture of objectification taken to an extreme by those attendants at the Presidents Club, I have been disgusted by it for some time. That a bunch of rich men get together to be gross is not a surprise – it's strange that people keep pretending it is. There are consequences of the choices made by society, of the things it deems appropriate and the boundaries it considers acceptable to cross. Western culture has no problem with pictures of half-naked women on the walls of the tube, or the front of a magazine. And yet, it seems shocked to discover that, predictably, this encourages a culture of objectification and lewdness.

The Presidents Club Dinner was an unfortunate event, demonstrating that there are a good proportion of men who are gross, objectifying, badly behaved and lecherous – but this is not news. And yes, the men are horrid, but that doesn't make the women victims, and if they choose to engage in this sort of work, they sit in the same boat with a society that inculcates objectification. If people are genuinely shocked, and genuinely want this attitude to change, perhaps an introspective look at the practices and values of their society would be prudent.

SCIENCE

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How do you solve a problem like planetary mass?

SCIENCE

Varshit Dusad

Science Writer

When Pluto was downgraded from being called a planet, it made you ponder over the criteria for the classification of a planetary object. In reality, the proper definition of a planet is more important than just the semantics. It can provide astronomers finding new celestial objects with a basis of classification, thus making it easier to identify if the object under investigation is a planet or not. This distinction is important for scientists as it provides indirect ways of inferring properties of those “planets” by using



RIP Pluto // Wikimedia

ideal comparisons with closer, and easier to observe, planets.

Kevin Schlaufman, an astrophysicist at Johns Hopkins University, has proposed an upper limit on the mass of space objects that qualify as a “planet”. According to his most recent study, this upper bound of a mass should

be between four and ten times the mass of Jupiter. However, this is only an exclusionary criterion, disqualifying anything heavier than that as a planet. Anything lower in weight would need further investigation in order to classify. This finding is significant because it helps to distinguish a

very large planet from a brown dwarf – an object whose mass lies between that of a very large planet and a star. These are self-luminescent, and hotter than a planet due to deuterium and lithium fusion, but they are not massive enough to support the nuclear fusion of protium (hydrogen). According to Schlaufman, the current classification is insufficient and leaves ambiguity in results.

He proposed another criterion to settle the debate: the chemical make-up of the closest stars. This argument roots from the process of the formation of stars. The giant planets such as Jupiter form from a bottom-up process – a rocky base is built, which is then enveloped by a gaseous atmosphere. Since planets

cannot support the fusion process, they depend on their neighbouring sun to provide these rocks to form the heavy elements.

“Another criterion for deciding class is the chemical make-up of closest stars”

But the brown dwarf forms due to gravitational instability which leads to the mass of clouds to collapse over itself. This process is like the formation of a star.

So how do the planetary limits become relevant? Well, Schlaufman

analysed 146 planetary systems and inferred a few facts about space objects: those greater than ten times the size of Jupiter are seldom found near these heavy metal enriched stars who provide resources for their development. Thus, any celestial object lying above the upper limit identified should be categorised as a brown dwarf as opposed to a planet. Though this may end up opening a fierce debate – similar to the exclusion of Pluto as a planet from our solar system – but the development of a robust definition eases the identification of new planets and their study. As our picture of the universe gets bigger, a more methodical definition is required to help provide a clearer view.

Connect with conservation – Visiting Venom

SCIENCE

Steve Allain

Science Writer

Snakes, spiders and scorpions are probably some of the animals that come to mind when you think of the word venom. There is a wide range of other venomous animals too – including the platypus, jellyfish, and, surprisingly, two species of frogs! To be clear, venom is a toxin that requires a delivery system such as a stinger or a fang. Venoms are often confused with poisons which conversely have to be ingested for their effects to be deadly.

The paradox with venom is that while it can cause harm, it can also do some good! Recent research has shown it

may provide a potential cure to diseases such as cancer. As someone who has been fascinated with venomous animals since a young age, I took the opportunity to visit an exhibition at the Natural

“Recent research has shown that venom may provide a potential cure for cancer”

History Museum recently, titled ‘Venom: killer and cure’ to learn more.

The exhibit covers many different groups of animals and how they have evolved venom for

different purposes. For example, snakes and cone shells share the use of venom as a tool for predation; bees and wasps use it as a defensive mechanism; and it also allows for easier blood feeding for vampire bats! There are numerous diverse delivery mechanisms and functions of venom within the animal kingdom, and many of these were highlighted in the exhibit. As much as I enjoyed the initial hall, where you are introduced to different animal groups and how their venoms differ, I feel that plants were left out for the single reason that they do not generate much interest. Yet plants are venomous! Just think about stinging nettles and their Australian cousin the ‘gympie-gympie’ – a nettle on steroids! Although plant venom cannot kill you, it can



If you don't like snakes, please look away now // CC

cause you intense pain, so much so that you to wish it had.

Other halls looked at the effects on the human body, and the cures for venom. This is an area I find interesting, particularly how our understanding of venom has changed over time, as well as the treatment! I would recom-

mend visiting the exhibition if you, like me, have an interest in the natural world and the world of venom systems. The fact that the museum is only a couple of doors down from the South Kensington campus makes it particularly inviting! If you are planning on going, it does cost to enter – but

fear not: the National History Museum has a special discount for Imperial College students, so make sure to show your student card on entry. The exhibition is only around until the 13th May, so do not leave it too long to visit if you intend to!

SCIENCE

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A novel tool for the future of heart repair

Biomechanical mapping provides useful information for regenerating lost heart tissue due to heart attack.

SCIENCE

Caroline Wolfe
Science Writer

Heart attacks cause the heart to be temporarily starved of blood flow and oxygen due to a blockage in the coronary arteries, which deliver oxygen-rich blood to the heart. This blockage leads to scar tissue within the heart. As we age, this damage is often deemed irreversible due to the heart’s inability to replace damaged tissue with regenerated healthy tissue. The irreversibility of this tissue damage affects the daily life of heart attack survivors, reducing the heart’s efficiency in pumping blood to the rest of the body. When muscles do not receive enough oxygenated blood, heart attack survivors can feel fatigue or shortness of breath, among other unfavourable sensations. More seriously, scar tissue in the heart can lead to congestive heart failure or dilated cardiomyopathy – both of which are fatal conditions. For the researchers at the University of Houston – in collaboration with the Baylor College of Medicine and the Texas Heart Institute – finding a method to reverse damage to the heart tissue following a heart attack has been their primary aim. They have recently gotten one step closer to their goal by using an optical technique to compare the mechanical properties of healthy heart tissue with damaged heart tissue in mice models, which they plan to use to test the effectiveness of regeneration techniques.

In the first study of its kind, Kirill V. Larin of the University of Houston

and James F. Martin of the Baylor College of Medicine used a technique known as OCE – optical coherence elastography, developed in Larin’s lab – to map the mechanical properties of the heart. OCE is based on optical coherence tomography, a high-resolution biomedical imaging technique. As MRI and ultrasound both provide information about tissue mechanics on a larger scale than necessary to image mice hearts, OCE was deemed most appropriate for use. OCE has nanoscale sensitivity, and its resolution is ideal in determining if healthy tissues begin replacing scar tissue due to therapy.

“Irreversible tissue damage affects the daily life of heart attack survivors, causing shortness of breath”

OCE is made up of an imaging unit and an air-pulse delivery unit which involves very small mechanical waves applied to the heart tissue in the form of low-pressure air pulses. The amplitude of the waves must be kept very small in order to not damage the cells, and in this case small-scale, specialised equipment appropriate for the fragile nature of the mouse heart was built and used. The cells react to the mechanical waves applied with a characteristic response, and different types of

tissue exhibit different responses to the mechanical stimulation. Based on the responses of healthy tissue versus damaged tissue, the researchers were able to develop mathematical models to represent the biomechanical properties of the cells.

Larin and Martin induced heart attacks in mice, then waited six weeks for scar tissue to form before excising the hearts to perform OCE. This enabled them to gather information regarding the mechanical properties of healthy tissue versus scar tissue. During the ex-vivo study,

the hearts were soaked in potassium chloride to ensure a uniform

“Researchers were able to develop mathematical models to represent biochemical properties”

relaxed state, and the researchers determined

that the muscle fibres in the damaged tissue were stiffer and more disorganised than the fibres in the healthy tissue. This was deduced from the decrease in elastic wave velocity, natural frequency, and anisotropy (directionality dependent) reaction to the wave propagation in the damaged cells, respectively.

Both researchers hope to continue using OCE to gather mechanical properties of regenerated tissue in order to develop a cure for scar tissue in the heart. The scarring in the mouse hearts is believed to be similar to the scarring

that humans incur due to heart attack, making this method of mechanical mapping applicable to the over 75,000 people that suffer a heart attack in the UK every year.

“This research could help the 75,000 people that suffer a heart attack every year in the UK”

Imperial College London



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SCIENCE

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The hidden side of psychedelics: an interview with Professor David Nutt

SCIENCE

Sebastian Gonzato
Science Writer

Professor David Nutt has been at Imperial since 2008, and has long been a well-known figure in the world of neuropsychopharmacology. He is the head of Imperial College's own Neuropsychopharmacology Unit, of which the Psychedelic Research Group is a part. Sebastian Gonzato caught up with him to find out more about what this group does.

What does the Psychedelic Research Group study and to what end?

The group has been around since even before I arrived at Imperial, and it has two aims – to investigate the possible therapeutic uses of psychedelics, as well as to understand the experience of psychedelia. The latter is a very old question indeed. William James, a 19th century American philosopher and psychologist, famously wrote that “no

account of the universe in its totality can exist that leaves these [alterations of consciousness] disregarded”. The question then is how to do so? Today we have brain imaging so we are able to, in a way, ‘look inside people’s heads’ and find out what’s happening.

And what effect do psychedelics have on the brain then?

All the psychedelics we’ve investigated – psilocybin, LSD and now DMT – they all induce what we’ve called ‘the entropic state of the brain’. The process of learning involves your brain becoming more rigid, more constrained, but psychedelics disrupts our normal thought patterns by making connections in the brain that aren’t usually there. It’s this entropic state of the brain that we believe give psychedelics their therapeutic value.

How so?

Take a disorder like depression. People who are depressed ruminate over the same depressing thoughts over and over

again, but psychedelics can break these patterns. We recently published a study in October where we gave 20 patients with treatment-resistant depression psilocybin in a therapeutic setting. They all experienced a single trip, and all of

“Psychedelics disrupt our normal thought patterns, making connections that aren’t usually there”

them experienced some improvement in well-being immediately after. We followed them up after and found that about half of them stayed better after six months, while others relapsed, so we are interested in finding out if a prolonged treatment could help them stay better.



David Nutt chats LSD with Seb // Imperial/Wikimedia

What are the challenges you face in carrying out your studies?

The psilocybin study was in fact a safety study, but we’re unable to do any further studies because psilocybin is illegal. We’ve had the study approved by an ethics committee, but it’s very difficult in the UK to obtain the drug. In other countries, as you may know, this is not the case. Psilocybin is legal (in truffle form) in Holland

for example, and there’s a huge industry in illegal treatments using it.

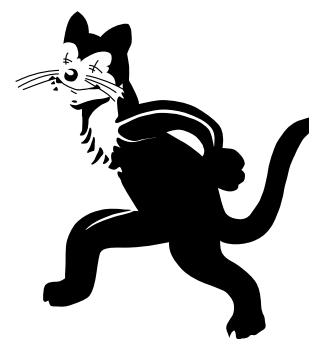
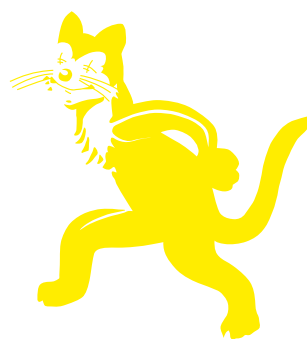
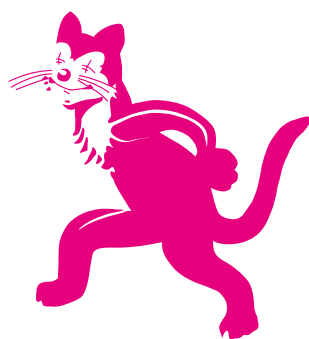
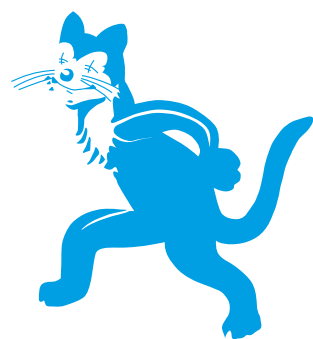
That most psychedelics are illegal is a real shame, because we know from our study and others that they could be of therapeutic use. There’s a great amount of historical research into LSD for example. The US government funded 140 medical studies into the drug, but then this was stopped due to the hippie movement in the ‘60s when it was made illegal. In fact, LSD is the only drug which

was banned because it changed the way people voted, and the Republican party was afraid of this.

We’ve started seeing decriminalisation of drug possession in some countries such as Portugal, but we really need policies that allow these drugs to be studied and allow doctors to decide whether they should be prescribed or not.

To listen to a longer version of the interview, visit <http://bit.ly/2nmDw-vI>

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Should we trust governments with our faces?

Why the latest developments in facial recognition should leave us worried.

TECH
Robert Kaluzny
Tech Writer

London is one of the world's most surveilled cities. Recently, China has begun using facial recognition to keep track of one of their district's Muslim populations. Ethically speaking, I believe we can all agree that, this is one of the worst uses of modern technology we have seen to date. At the beginning of this year, I have decided to get an iPhone X: one of its flagship features was Face ID. It is a great feature and works flawlessly, allowing me to use my phone immediately after raising it up from the table. However, one might ask: how are companies and governments going to use my data?

Practically speaking this is quite an easy question to answer; ethically, not so much. We can discuss examples of

the uses of facial recognition software and judge whether they're right or wrong. Does the law of this country, and of all

"However, one might ask: how are companies and governments going to use my data?"

others, allow for the recognition of the difference between these right and wrong cases? As a computing student who enjoys development in his spare time, this is a question I ask myself often – most recently at ICHack 18, this year's edition of the Imperial College Hackathon organised by DoCSoc.

One instance of application of facial recognition software is Microsoft's



Apple's Face ID uses infrared scanning to let you sign in using just a snap of your face // Bloomberg

Azure platform. Microsoft was one of many sponsors behind ICHack, providing a whole suite of solutions for application development – ranging from facial recognition to judging a person's emotions from their expression. Now this all sounds great in theory, and I have nothing against Microsoft or its platform; I believe everyone should

have access to great technology. However, it's easy to forget in this excitement about how these services can be manipulated. Almost all ideas using these services would work best when we recorded the user without their attention; after all it's best to see how someone is feeling without them posing for a selfie. If you were on the app-store and saw an app that would record you all the time, would you download it? Regardless of how much of an improvement it would make, would you say yes? How can you be sure that the company or individual behind it won't misuse your data?

In a perfect world we would not have to resort to tracking every person, however in this broken world we might just have to. A lot of good can come of it, we can stop terrorist attacks, burglaries and violent attacks to name a few by ensuring the location of dangerous individuals are known to the authorities. Once again though, we are coming to a cross-roads where we

must decide if this good is coming at the cost of too much of our privacy. Furthermore, we must ask ourselves whether the grainy CCTV pictures we always see on our TV are good enough for an artificial intelligence to judge whether someone was there or not. Ultimately, at any point in this debate, we can not resort to tracking minorities and vulnerable groups, as limiting as it may be to

"The actions taken in China are worthy of condemnation and we must never go down a similar path"

the scope of the mass-surveillance taking place. The actions in China are worthy of condemnation and we must never go down a similar path.

One of the greatest

privacy concerns of facial recognition is that it is able to collect its data in just a fraction of a second. In Russia, this technology is already at large, with an app called 'FindFace' which allows you to find a person on Russia's leading social media network, VKontakte. With our personalities and pictures increasingly out there, it will only become easier to find who we are and what we are like.

In one way we're already giving this power to our governments. A lot of people get emotional about privacy, but no one acts like it's of any importance. Surely, it's not as easy as: 'If you've got nothing to hide you have nothing to worry about'? This is definitely something to think about, especially as cognitive-enabled applications are created. Artificial intelligence is causing a massive stir-up in our society, from robots taking over our jobs, to the weaponization of it to end the lives of other human beings more effectively.



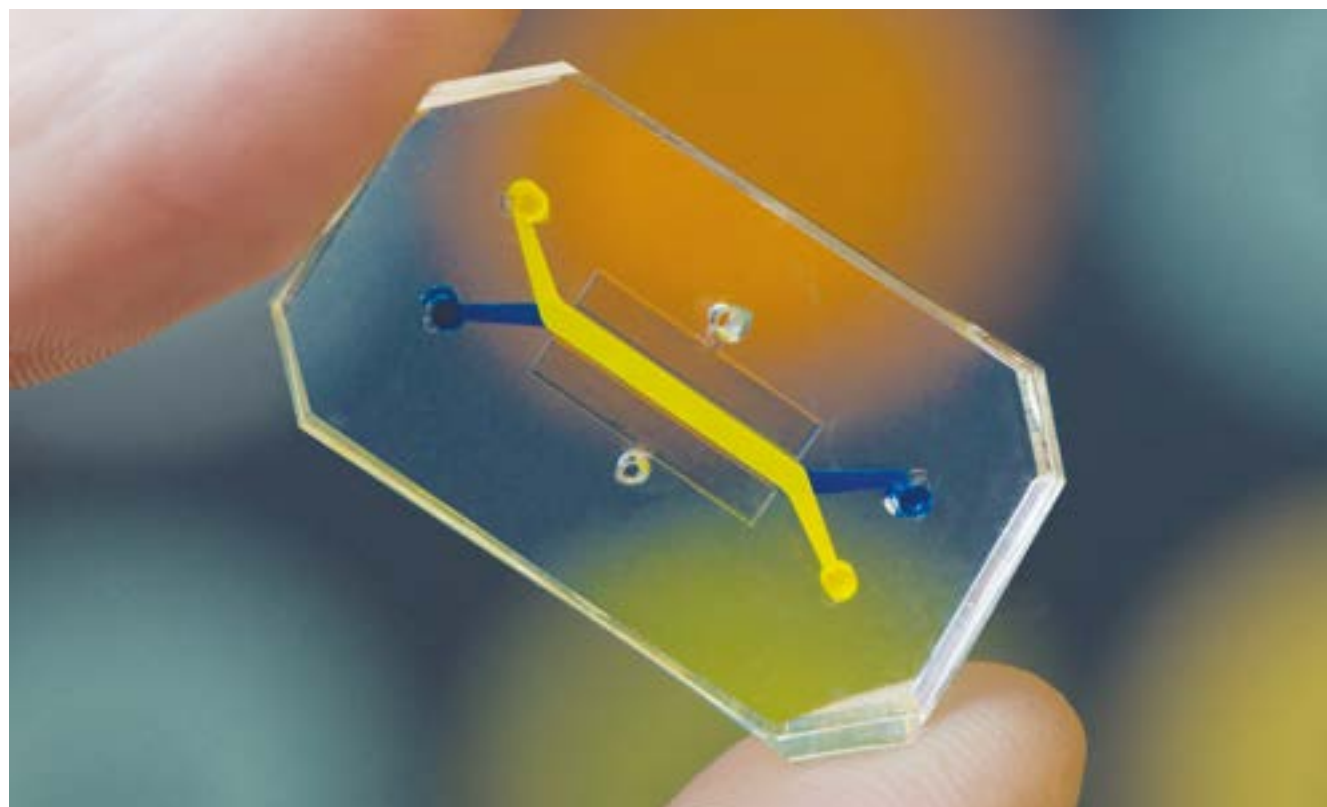
Algorithms can now recognize far more than just age or gender // Mac Observer

TECH

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Organs-on-Chips – A catalyst for drug testing?

The FDA and research groups collaborate with Emulate Inc. to evaluate the ability of Organs-on-Chips to speed up the drug testing process.



Yes, that's an organ // Harvard

TECH

Krithika Balaji

Tech Writer

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), antibiotic resistance in bacteria is one of the biggest threats to global health today. Bacteria gaining resistance is a natural process, but this has been accelerated by the misuse of medicines. The consequence of this is that bacteria remain unaffected by our current medications, leading to longer stays in the hospital, greater medical costs and increased mortality. The way to combat antibiotic resistance in bacteria is to develop new drugs that can kill them. The drug development process set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is a long and costly process, coupled with uncertainty

on whether a new drug will actually succeed to the next stage.

While this ensures the medicines you use are safe, the downside is that it can take decades for a drug to finally reach the shelf of your local pharmacy. To accelerate the process, scientists and engineers across disci-

“Antibiotic resistance in bacteria is one of the biggest threats to global health”

plines are collaborating to find new drugs and drug testing methods. One such group is Emulate Inc., a Wyss Institute (from Harvard University) start-up.

In April of last year, the

FDA announced that they are entering a multi-year research and development agreement with Emulate Inc. They will be evaluating their Organs-on-Chips (OOCs) technology to check if they can be used in the drug testing process. There are three components to OOCs: Organ-chips, instrumentation and apps.

The organ-chips are the size of an AA battery. They are lined with living human cells and have microfluidic channels that can allow the flow of air or blood, just like in the human body. The chips are flexible, allowing motions like breathing or muscle contraction to be simulated. They are also transparent, allowing researchers to analyse the organ's functionality, behavior and response at a cellular level. Some examples of OOCs include: Blood-vessel-chips, liver-chips, lung-chips, etc.

OOCs are placed

inside a research system similar to a computer. The instrument is designed to recreate the environment of the human body, such as airflow. Medicines,

“It can take decades for a drug to finally reach the shelf of your local pharmacy”

chemicals and other toxins can be introduced into the chip via the instrument and the effect of them on the cells lining the chip can be analysed due to the modular nature of the system. OOCs can also be connected together using the instrument to better understand the interactions between different organs and the effect of foreign substances on

them.

Apps help provide precise control of an OOC's living microenvironment and configure the cell architecture amongst other functions.

Recently, a team of researchers from the Division of Hemostasis and Thrombosis at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) collaborated with the Wyss Institute and discovered, using a blood-vessel-on-a-chip, small molecules called parmodulins. They provide anti-inflammatory and antithrombotic protection to endothelial cells without interfering with the blood clotting process. This property makes parmodulins good candidates for new drugs. Through this study, one can see how OOCs can accelerate the safer development and evaluation of drugs.

Wyss Institute founding director Dr Donald Ingber also proposed that OOCs can replace animal testing early in the drug development process to ensure greater efficacy and safety. One of the main problems with animal testing is that the drugs are tested in cells that don't function exactly like those in the human body. Hence, researchers need to do extensive experiments to check for potential side-effects in humans, which can take many months. According to the Nature journal, 85% of drugs fail in early clinical trials due to this. Dr Ingber proposed that by injecting drugs into an OOC, researchers can analyse the effects of the drug on human tissue itself at an early stage without potentially harming humans. However, while animals can shed light on how the

drug can affect behavior, OOCs only show physiological effects of the drug on a small group of cells.

If OOCs are to become the next-generation method of drug development and research in various industries, they need to be able to be mass-manufactured and automated, ensuring that they are produced continuously with quality control. Up till now, they have been manufactured in small batches to be used in academic research.

Earlier this month, Harvard published a study in the journal *Biofabrication* that described a new, faster method for manufacturing hearts-on-chips. Dr Lisa Scudder, co-lead author of the study, said: “Our new heart-on-a-chip fabrication method uses a UV laser to pattern the hydrogel, employing riboflavin to sensitise the gel for optical ablation... [This] creates features on the gel much faster, but with the same resolution and reproducibility, as traditional moulding techniques.”

Dr Janna Nawroth, the co-lead author, added that the process is scalable, 60% faster than the old process, and gives uniformity without altering the hydrogel properties. This makes the technology a step closer to mass production and use by pharmaceutical companies.

Though OOCs are not yet ready to be mass-produced and distributed, good progress has been made in showcasing its potential in drug-testing, suggesting a more efficient future for the process.

Your Union events

Friday 2 February



Coming up in our bars



Super Quiz

Every Tuesday
20:00-22:00

Cocktail Night

Every Tuesday
18:00-23:00

CSP Wednesday

Every Wednesday
19:00-02:00

iPOP

Friday 2 February
20:00-02:00

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Every Tuesday
19:30-23:00

We love Wine Special Edition

Wednesday 14 February
17:30-20:00

Pub Quiz

Every Thursday
19:30-23:00

PGI Friday

Every Friday
16:00-23:00

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Every Day
17:00-23:00

Pub Quiz

Every Tuesday
18:30-23:00

Sports Night

Every Wednesday
18:00 onwards

Battle of the Bands

Thursday 8 February
19:00-23:00

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Wear your face mask: the air in the Underworld is like, really, really bad // Maximilian Webster

Dance and acrobatics save the plot in this immersive Underworld

Part theatre, part circus, Becoming Shades isn't perfect, but it's an experience that will leave you in awe.

ARTS

BECOMING SHADES



Where? The Vaults

When? Until 18th March

How Much? From £22.50

Vaishnavi Nathan

Arts Writer

Becoming Shades is one of several shows headlining VAULT Festival 2018. Billed as London's answer to Edinburgh Fringe this festival showcases performances from new and emerging artists and is a veritable hotbed of alternative theatre. From 24th January to 18th March it takes over the labyrinth of tunnels below Waterloo station every Wednesday to Sunday with a program packed with theatre, film and comedy.

Created by London-based contemporary

circus team, Chivaree Circus, this show is a mix of circus and theatre, featuring fire-breathing, acrobatics and aerialists.

It's loosely based on the myth of Persephone and her abduction by Hades, God of the Underworld. The audience is greeted by a masked figure, Charon, and invited to journey into the underworld with Charon and the three 'Furies', performers wearing dog-like headgear, representing the three-headed dog Cerberus. It's a far cry from the standard seated show you might expect though: the audience are guided through the vast, open space that is the Forge, the Vaults' largest venue, as the performance takes place around us, the cast gently shepherding us from place to place. We gather around Rebecca Rennison as Persephone for a contemporary dance sequence, the three Furies enthrall with juggling and fire-breathing – a

representation of Hades – and we are led across the Forge in a journey that mimics Persephone's on the river Styx, here represented by ropes pulled by the cast.

This is where the performance begins to

"Performers are so strong that, even when it's confusing, Becoming Shades is still amazing"

stray from the story it is supposed to be telling. For the bulk of the performance, the links to the myth are loose and the references to it are often hard to grasp beyond the overall themes and aesthetic; this is a show

focused less on storytelling and more on awe and spectacle. However, this focus doesn't always play to its strength – in many parts it feels more like a sequence of separate acts than a story as a whole and many seemingly key aspects are easily lost on the audience. The cast clearly represent Persephone, Hades and other inhabitants of the underworld, but the details of who they are get easily lost.

In a lesser show, this might have been performance-ruining, but the strength of the performers is such that, even when it's confusing, *Becoming Shades* is still somehow amazing. At one point we are invited to encircle a lonesome figure dancing on a pole, taunted by the other performers around her. Her dance is amazing and the claustrophobia of the audience and other cast members encircling her only adds to the sense of palpable distress. This

is far from the only impressive routine; there's more amazing acrobatic work, with elaborate acrobatic performances using only ribbons and rings suspended from the ceiling.

This isn't to say that the entire show is flawless. A brief comic interlude on 'how to train your hellhound' is jarring – it makes little sense and the tone is so completely out of keeping with the rest of the performance that it seems hardly part of the same show.

The all-female cast are without a doubt the best part of *Becoming Shades*. Rebecca Rennison as Persephone really leaves an impression; as does Alfa Marks as Hades. Rosie Bartley, Jessica Pearce and Isobel Midnight are brilliant as the 'Furies'. They drive the performance, forming the bridge between the beautiful aerial solos of the two stars. They don't rest and, even during the

interval, they remain in character, interacting with the audience in a way that prevents the mood of Hades from dissipating.

The other stand-out aspect of the performance is the music. The original score, created by Sam West, captures Persephone's tragic melancholy and the darkness and terror of Hades. It's rendered all the more effective by the live performance from West and fellow performer Becks Johnstone, whose operatic voice perfectly captures the eerie melancholy of this particular version of Hades.

Despite its flaws, there is a lot to be said for *Becoming Shades*: it's certainly different from standard theatre or circus and there is a uniqueness to the experience that can't be overstated. If you fancy an immersive performance and want to try something different, it's a show that won't leave you feeling disappointed.

ARTS

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ISIS, 4Chan, and WhatsApp: Theatre for the Lulz

For a play examining the radicalisation of young men, Javaad Alipoor's production finds an innovative way to bring its audience together.

ARTS

THE BELIEVERS ARE BUT BROTHERS



Where? Bush Theatre
When? Until 10th Feb
How Much? From £10

Adam Gellatly
Arts Editor

The *Believers Are But Brothers* opens at the Bush Theatre, after an award-winning run at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017. It tells the stories of three young men who, through their encounters online, become exposed to and enveloped by the murky waters of extremism. Two of the stories follow young British Muslims; Atif from the south coast who travels to Syria to join ISIS and Marwan, from the 'post-industrial North', who volunteers to join an aid convoy to Syria. The third story follows Ethan, a 21-year old white man from California, obsessed with 4Chan and the alt-right.

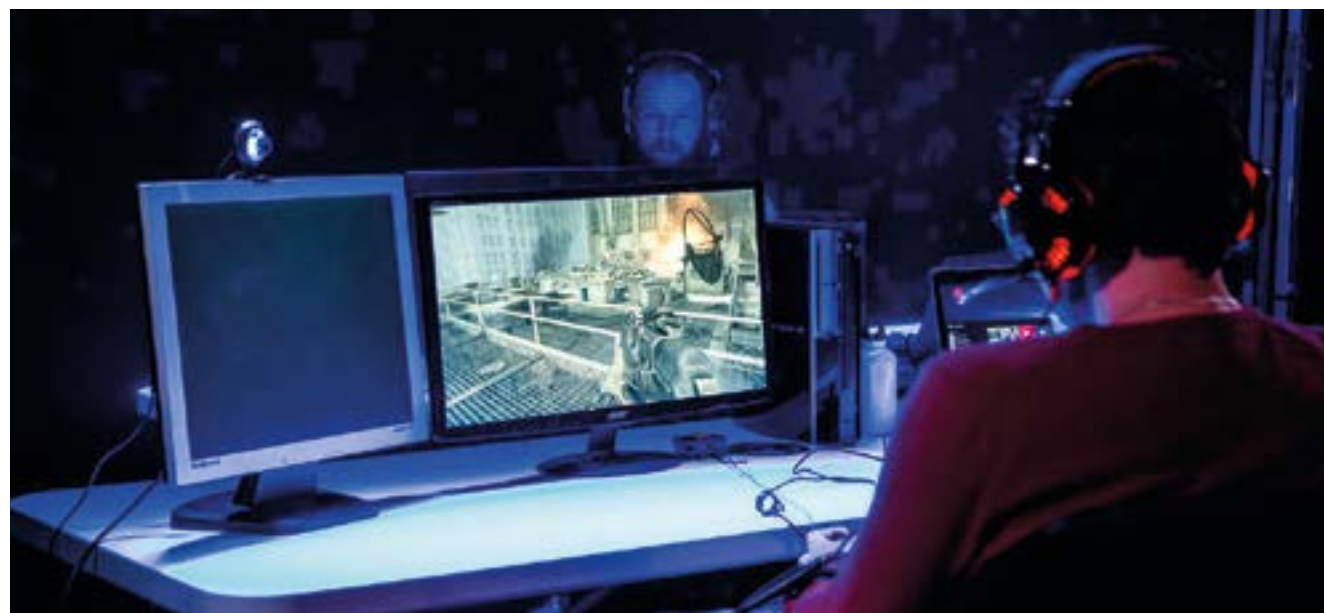
The Believers is undoubtedly timely though strangely one of the only pieces of theatre willing to tackle radicalisation in all forms head-on. But what makes the play truly unique, is its use of WhatsApp. Prior to the show-day, an email was sent out to attendees, encouraging them to sign up to a WhatsApp group to 'enhance your experience'. On the outset, this appeared to be a small quirk of the show, perhaps even a gimmick. But as the play progressed, it became clear that being a member of the group

was not only essential to follow the narrative, but allowed for the audience to engage with a piece of theatre in a completely new and exciting manner.

Billed as a one-man play, the production actually features two actors, both of whom are critical to its success. The first – the 'Performer' – is Javaad Alipoor, the play's writer and co-director. It is Alipoor alone that speaks to the audience and recites the stories of *The Believers*. The second – the 'Operator' – is a mute at a keyboard, lingering in the murk of cold-blue computer light at the back of the stage, played by Luke Emery. His role is operate the technical aspects of *The Believers*; which primarily involves sending WhatsApp messages to the *Believers* group.

It would be easy for this play to take aim at social media and the role of the internet in radicalising young men, and had the play been written by an outsider to internet culture looking in, I fear the play may have hit such a dud note.

Thankfully, Alipoor is as qualified a playwright for *The Believers* as one could hope for: by his own admission, a fan of encryption-based messaging and a young man who has connected with numerous new people online. Alipoor is also a British Muslim, frustrated by the media narrative surrounding his community, a narrative that he: a. does not recognise and b. is not allowed to partake in. He is a Bradford native, serving as Artistic Director for the Northern Lines theatre company that works with communities in the city who do not normally



One-v-one me on Rust, n00b // *The Other Richard*

engage with theatre.

Alipoor delivers each story in segments, alternating his position on-stage for each and regularly breaking the fourth wall during transitions, to comment on the proceedings or provide background to the peculiarities of 4Chan. Although never quite acting per se, Alipoor is a truly excellent storyteller. His recounting of the characters' tales is delivered with such emboldened conviction that each story takes on a life of its own, distinct from others not just in its content, but in the Alipoor who tells it. On their own, the stories are compelling. At the play's climax, however, Alipoor ties the lives of Atif, Marwan, and Ethan together in a spectacular sequence fitting for such a bold piece of work.

Fitting too, that in a play that discusses meme culture and the serious issues of racism and misogyny that stem from it, the play is able to switch from humour to sombreness on a dime. Midway through the play, Alipoor asks the WhatsApp group, 'What's the weirdest thing you've

seen on the internet?'. Cue the chorus of notification pings and audience chuckles as the accounts of witnessing strange porn flow in. Then, a user by the name of 'Forthelulz' chimes in, "Fucking whiney feminists...." he begins, and proceeds to message half a dozen grotesque paragraphs about rape and murder, drawing gasps from the crowd. Of course, the account is under the control of Emery and despite most, one imagines, in the crowd being aware of this it puts an immediate end to the audience's messages and laughter.

So too, the play's comparison of the radicalisation processes of ISIS and the alt-right is poignant, not because of their differences but because of their shocking similarity. To quote one of Alipoor's online acquaintances, a gay Rabbi from Alabama, "If you're a bigot when you pick the book up you'll be a bigot when you put the book down."

Interspersed between the stories and audience engagement, Alipoor delivers a fourth

narrative; the conception of ISIS from its roots in 1950s Egypt, through to Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Ladin, and eventually its founder and leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Although these stories are delivered with the same distinctive Alipoor flair, they fail to add anything significant to the overall plot of the play, and time would have been better spent with the 'brothers'.

In the play's final act, Alipoor sends a speech to the WhatsApp group, one sentence at a time, the goal being that a random member of the audience will read the line aloud for the room to hear before the next is sent. Ironic, then, that in a play focusing entirely on young men, the vast majority of voices to read aloud are those of women.

In his Foreword to the play's script, Madani Younis, Artistic Director at the Bush Theatre comments that "This is not an echo chamber play." Sure, Alipoor has written a play focusing on two tiny subsections of society, but they're two subsections that

have a disproportionate impact on the news and content that everyone in the western world – men, women, Muslim, secular – engages with and reacts to online. And away from the play's portrayal of the most extreme of extreme groups, it provides a commentary on the larger role of social media in society; its ability accelerate the transfer of ideas – good and bad – and bring total strangers together.

The theatre is normally a reserved environment; audiences sit in reverence and pitch blackness, honouring the work of the actors before them. *The Believers* shows that it is possible to appreciate and engage with a performance in spite of a cacophony of phones and constant flaring of screens. Never have I felt so connected to those around me during a play. Rare is it that a play can prove to be as thought-provoking for its means of delivery as its story, acting and message. Rarer still is it to find a play that, although not perfect, is unequivocally a must-see.

ARTS

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The new Yeezy season takes a colourful turn // Ji Qiao

If you could live a beautiful dream, why would you wake up to reality?

Tang Xianzu's classic Ming dynasty opera ponders this very question, in a new adaptation by the Guangzhou Dramatic Arts Centre.

ARTS

THE HANDAN DREAM



Where? Hackney Empire

When? Jan 25th - 27th

How Much? £10 - £35

Jingjie Cheng

Arts Editor

I have never enjoyed Chinese opera. Chinese opera to Chinese youth nowadays is a bit like what Shakespeare is to English-speaking youth – something confined to the realm of literary studies. And if they are popularly enjoyed, often it is only in some form of modern adaptation.

For just three nights last week, The Guangzhou Dramatic Arts Centre brought their production of the Chinese opera *The Handan Dream* to the UK stage at the Hackney Empire. Despite my reser-

vations, I was pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed it. For starters, I could understand what they were saying – traditional Chinese opera is often sung in a shrill dialect, which is difficult for the untrained ear to fully make out.

The Handan Dream was written by Tang Xianzu, a poet and dramatist in the later years of the Ming Dynasty in China. Although separated by geography and culture, Tang and Shakespeare happened to live at the same time, and even died in the same year, 1616. Both playwrights produced work that explored the timeless aspects of human nature – expressions of life that transcended time and space. It is no wonder that both thus left significant legacies in their respective cultures.

The 'Handan Road' refers to the road en route to the state exams, which

passes through the city of Handan. Over the years it has acquired a metaphorical meaning, referring to the journey one takes to officialdom. In ancient China, an intellectual's foremost goal is to study hard, pass these official exams, and become an official.

The Handan Dream follows the protagonist Lu, an intellectual who has spent his whole life studying the classical works with the aim of walking the Handan road and passing the state exams with flying colours. However, we see him on his fourth journey, after having failed the exam three times before. On the way, he stops by an inn where a Taoist priest gives him a magic pillow, on which he falls asleep while waiting for his millet meal to cook. Lu is whisked into a parallel life where he meets and marries a lady of wealth, bribes the officials and passes

the exams. He becomes a decorated official only to fall into the traps of fame and wealth, and after a life of ups and downs he settles to celebrate his 80th birthday – only to wake up from the dream.

The Taoist priest suggests that perhaps this vision of an 'ideal' life is trapping his reality, and that perhaps, happiness is within reach as long as Lu can let this vision go, as in a dream. Lu refuses, and keeps the magic pillow, preferring instead to live his dream.

The central idea of this play can be summed up in the Taoist priest's poetic verse: "I look back, smile and pass Handan without a rest". This idea of 'looking back with a smile' is a particularly Chinese expression of letting things go. Indeed, director Wang Xiaodi wanted this adaptation to focus on this philosophical attitude of Tang Xianzu, basing her script

adaptation, set, costumes and other aspects on this idea – rather than the more typical interpretation of the play as a criticism of officialdom.

And indeed, when it comes down to it, what is an 'ideal life'? Is it what society has conditioned us to believe is the ideal path for us, or is it what we really want? It is difficult to say why Lu is so bent on the Handan road, and whether he had stopped to explore his own motivations. And if it is something external – people often pass the exams by bribing – what does it take to shake the dreams off with a laugh? Perhaps the ideal life is simply an illusion, a red herring, only as real as the dream Lu had.

Although Tang originally wrote *The Handan Dream* as a traditional Chinese opera, this adaptation presented it as a 'ci ju', or 'poetic drama', which is a similar style to

how Shakespeare writes in verse. It retains the beauty of the poetic language while being more accessible to modern audiences. This production also made use of what is known as 'freehand stage design', a feature of Chinese opera where the stage is split into two layers, one representing reality while the other the dream. During the performance, the separation between the two shifts and overlaps, representing the arbitrary separation and Lu's movement between the two.

The protagonist Lu is a typical member of the ancient Chinese intellectual community. This play makes use of fantastical elements to explore their outlook towards life, motivations and understanding of their fate, while at the same time expanding into a wider discussion on human nature and the examined life.

ARTS

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Try a Little Tenderness: *The Brothers Size* at the Young Vic

Magical, lyrical, life-affirming – the revival of a tale of brotherly love by the writer of Moonlight is necessary viewing

ARTS THE BROTHERS SIZE



Where? The Globe Theatre
When? Until 13th February
How Much? £10 - £38

Indira Mallik
Arts Editor

Plays and movies don't often get written about young, working class, black men; in the rare instances that they are the focus, the light in which they are shown can be less than flattering. Portrayals are often one-dimensional, heavy on aggression and toxic masculinity. In this landscape of facile stereotypes which are dismissive at best and openly racist at worst, playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney's work is an oasis of richly layered, tender writing.

Much like *Moonlight*, for which McCraney won an Oscar last year, *The Brothers Size* explores the bonds between black men and the complexities of Southern masculinity. The play, back at the Young Vic after a decade, is steeped in allusions to Yoruba mythology. It follows two brothers in Louisiana. Oshoosi, who is younger, has just been released from the State Penitentiary and is living with his older brother whilst on parole. Ogun, named for the Yoruba god of hard labour, wants Oshoosi to clean up his act and get back into work. Straight-laced Ogun and happy-go-lucky Oshoosi clash as long-buried emotions rise to the surface, and the two

attempt to negotiate the bittersweet path to reconciliation despite being haunted by Oshoosi's time in prison. Entangled in this family tension is Oshoosi's prison-mate and erstwhile lover, the charming Elegba, who Ogun does not trust.

From a relatively simple narrative of reunion McCraney weaves a script that feels Anne Carson-esque, on the cusp between poetry and prose. The naturalistic quickfire dialogue is peppered with lyrical monologues periodically, the characters slip into song, recalling memories that seem inextricably linked with the melodies. Unusually at times the actors pause to announce their stage directions. This is a consciously modernist approach and it takes

"It would be easy for the play to fall apart, but the sheer charisma of the three leads make McCraney's writing soar"

some getting used to, but on the whole it works – adding comic flair to some scenes, and conjuring up a woozy, dream-like atmosphere in others.

It is an arresting and often profound piece of writing, but a script as idiosyncratic as McCraney's stands or falls on the skill



Jonathan Ajayi and Sope Dirisu as *The Brothers Size* // Marc Brenner

of the actors. In director Bijan Sheibani's production, there is nowhere to hide: there are no props, no scenery, and no stage. Encircled on all sides by the audience, the actors perform inside a white chalk circle. It would be easy for the play to fall apart, choked by its own intricacies, but the sheer blinding charisma of the three leads – Jonathan Ajayi, Sope Dirisu, and Anthony Welsh – make McCraney's writing soar.

Sheibani, who was lauded for his work on *The Barbershop Chronicles*, along with choreographer Aline David, directs the trio to move together in sublime harmony. With lithe, muscular grace, they tumble, sway, and dance around each other, palms, arms, face becoming covered in scattered red chalk, all the while speaking in a Southern patois – at once colloquial and lyrical. Each delivers a performance that is

emotionally resonant and seems deeply real. Jonathan Ajayi who is yet to leave stage school plays Oshoosi with deftness, his care-free facade cracking as the play progresses. Sope Dirisu is exceptional as Ogun: the scene in which he confronts Oshoosi for his selfishness, voice cracking as he absolves himself of the crushing responsibility he has felt for his young brother his whole life, is perhaps the most moving performance I've seen on the London stage.

"To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time" James Baldwin wrote of the African American experience. *The Brothers Size* is a play brimming with anger – anger at poverty, at racism, at the prison-industrial complex that obstructs any meaningful rehabilitation. Where lesser playwrights might double down on

heartbreak, McCraney is unafraid to let in the light – this is a play full of laughter, love and music, all of which sharpen the anger and poignancy.

In a minimalist pro-

"This is a play full of love and music, all of which serve to sharpen the anger"

duction, music is the vehicle by which the stage is transformed from Ogun's auto-shop in the oppressive Louisiana heat to empty motorways at night, chill with Gulf air. For the most part Manuel Pinheiro accompanies the actors with a steady thrum of percussion heavy with Yoruba beats. In one electrifying scene towards the

end however, the drums stop and a slightly tinny recording of *Try a Little Tenderness* takes over as Ogun and Oshoosi sing along to the Otis Redding classic. Ogun chided for having an awful voice, mimes along to the instrumentals, sliding smoothly from keyboard to oboe, face beaming with joy as his younger brother croons out the chorus. It is a scene worthy of the sappiest romantic comedy, encapsulating the deep bond of love and childlike playfulness that remains between siblings even after hard times.

Packed into an unforgettable 90 minutes, this is a production that crackles with energy. In the days since I watched it, I haven't been able to get it off my mind. January has barely ended but I'm pining my colours to the Young Vic's revival: *The Brothers Size* is, and is very much likely to remain, the play of 2018.

ARTS

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Tom Mothersdale and Anneika Rose in Annie Baker's *John* // Stephen Cummiskey

Amazing grace: *John* thrills at the National Theatre

The story of a failing relationship in a possibly haunted B&B is a showcase of playwright Annie Baker's genius.

ARTS

JOHN



Where? Natioanl Theatre-
When? Until 3rd March
How Much? £24 - £55

Indira Mallik
Arts Editor

We are introduced to Pulitzer-winning playwright Annie Baker's new play, *John*, by Mertis. Playing the aging proprietor of an Gettysburg bed & breakfast, Marylouise Burke, whose sense of comedic timing is impeccable, draws back the red velvet stage curtains with slow arthritic movements. In a scene that faintly recalls the infamous Victoria Wood sketch in which Julie Walters plays a elderly waitress unable to balance soup, we watch Mertis light various table lamps, dust

her vast collection of knick-knacks and make her way up the stairs to the rooms on the first floor, all in preparation for the guests who will soon arrive. The scene, which is several minutes long, is a masterclass in naturalistic acting, and ingenious writing – it takes place in near silence, and for a good portion of the time the stage is empty, save for dozens of dolls that stare out into the audience with unblinking glass eyes – we can only guess at Burke's movements by the sound of her footsteps in the rafters. From these first moments, in a cast of immensely capable actors, Burke is the runaway star. She commands the stage with her soft spoken voice and deliberate, quiet grace.

Eventually we meet Eli (Tom Mothersdale) and Jenny (Anneika Rose), a New York couple that come to stay at Mertis' B&B. Though at first they seemingly appear happy and in love, we soon see

that their relationship is on the rocks, despite their best efforts. We hear snatches of arguments floating down the stairs on their first night, and then rapidly their disagreements spill out into the public. Just as the heating in their room will not switch on, the chill in their relationship refuses to thaw. Hamfisted attempts by the two to draw the other out lead to escalations: when at his behest Jenny tries to be candid about her disgust at Eli slurping cereal, he accuses her of anti-semitism: "Like, oh Jesus, the big loud hairy Jew is like smacking his lips again and chewing with his mouth open and it's totally repulsive." Nothing will convince him that that is not what she meant. At times it feels claustrophobic watching these desperate, intimate arguments on the cluttered stage because they sound so real. Bakers has such an uncanny talent for writing dialogue, her characters

stop and start when they go to talk, bumble through what they say, the writing is so precise it sounds improvised: it is easy to wonder what these real-life people are doing up on stage.

Baker's writing is clever in other ways: "have you ever felt watched?" Mertis asks Jenny over a glass of wine towards the end of the second act. Jenny looks out into the audience where hundreds of pairs of eyes intently look back. "No," she says "I don't think so." After a pause, she revises her answer, admitting that she had always felt judged by a childhood doll who to her seemed furious at her. To Mertis' friend, Genevieve, played by a fantastic June Watson, this seems entirely natural. "Of course she was angry!" she exclaims, "to be a piece of plastic... to be shaped into a human form and trapped! People manhandling you. And then put in a dress. Put in an itchy little dress!"

This scene in which the three exceptional female leads sit around a table discussing their lives reveals *John* as quietly feminist – of course these women know what it is to be angry at being objectified, how could they not?

Baker's frequent allusions to being watched echoes Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride*, in which Atwood writes that that everything a woman does, "including not catering to male fantasies, is a male fantasy: ...pretending you have a life of your own... unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else". Atwood's words "you are a woman with a man inside watching a woman" are never truer than in the case of Genevieve, an elderly blind woman who for many years had felt her ex-husband had control of her mind and was dictating her every action.

Baker's writing finds a perfect partner in director James MacDonald, whose approach is considered and cinematic. Over the course of nearly three and a half hours, he allows Baker's characters to evolve gradually, occupying the stage at the edges, or sometimes not at all, making the events that much closer, more real.

Baker's meditations on loneliness, and our power to acutely and precisely hurt those we know the best are powerful. The only missteps she makes are in her conscious effort to be spooky: Christmas lights flicker ominously, there are references to quasi-sentient rooms; all of this is unnecessary, *John* is haunting enough without the addition of actual ghosts. This singular, brilliant play cements Baker's position as one of the best, most interesting playwrights working today.

21:00:23

03-02-2018

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IC Swim Polo take over Metric: 9pm Saturday, all welcome!

South East Pole Dance
Competition

Saturday 10th Feb at ICU
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MUSIC

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One man records himself many times over

Garage-dwelling Ty Segall is back with another rock-your-socks-off album, a Pollock-esque splatter-painting of genres that's money-back guaranteed to amuse and delight fans of psych rock everywhere.

MUSIC

FREEDOM'S GOBLIN



Artist: Ty Segall. **Label:** Drag City. **Top Tracks:** Despoiler of Cadaver; My Lady's On Fire; And, Goodnight. **For Fans Of:** Thee Oh Sees, Black Lips. *75 minutes*

Callum Ritchie

Music Writer, @_crill

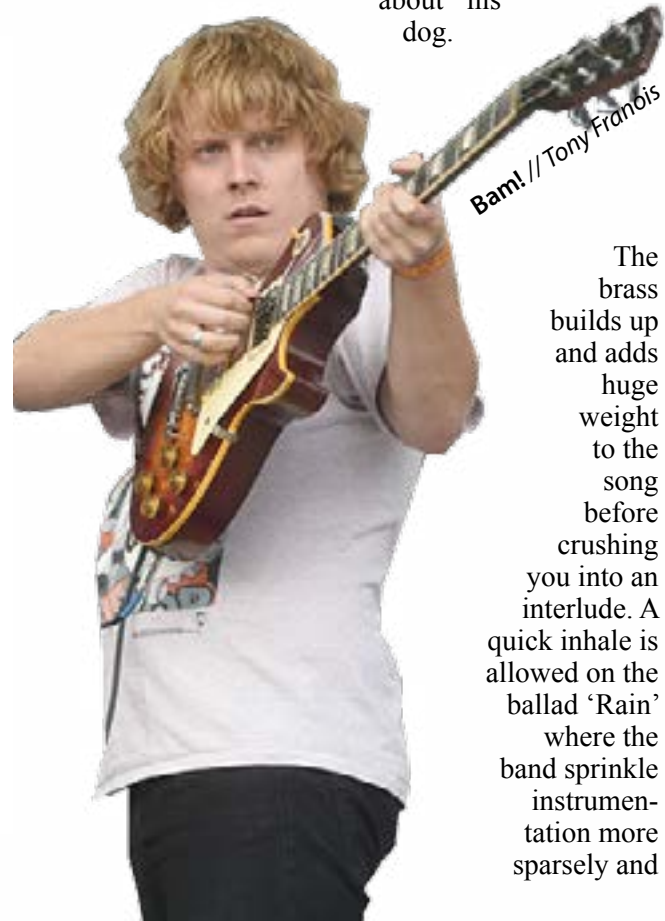
There's no denying Ty Segall is a prodigy, but his new (tenth) full length album, *Freedom's Goblin*, cements his place as the father of modern psych rock. Segall had been hinting at an album for a while, dropping numerous promising singles, but nothing could prepare us for the project that followed. The Californian mastermind lets

his wide range of influences bleed through into his music, allowing a multi-coloured stream of punk, rock, psych, folk and funk to shine through, showing huge freedom in style and utilising the double album format to its full experimental capacity. The result is a project that's passionately funny, expansive, violent and concise all at the same

"The album is a symbiotic mix of the messy and the crisp"

time.

'Fanny Dog' opens the album; as heavy layered guitar beatings ensue, Ty allows his raw vocals to lead you through a goofy song about his dog.



The brass builds up and adds huge weight to the song before crushing you into an interlude. A quick inhale is allowed on the ballad 'Rain' where the band sprinkle instrumentation more sparsely and

introduce some piano into the mix. Ty comes off as melancholic and contemplative, sounding almost like Thom Yorke in places on this track. These songs set the tone for the rest of the album as Segall flirts with a whole range of emotions and personality traits - which is in part what makes him such an interesting and relatable performer.

The albums then takes a disco funk detour into a cover of Hot Chocolate's 1978 track 'Every 1's a Winner'. The band act as tutors, demonstrating a masterclass in distorted fuzz riffs, enlisting the help of actor and long-time friend Fred Armisen on percussion. 'Despoiler of Cadaver' catches the wave and continues riding the bubbling juicy funk for all its worth. The conversation over this song is indulgently sexy, weird and sinister, in the best kind of way possible.

'When Mommy Kills You' leaves you chasing the thread of the album as chords and distortion continue to bewilderingly jump around, never leaving you quite enough time to grasp the song, while the high backing vocals taunt you. 'My Lady's On Fire' treads on some common ground, drawing influence from T. Rex and shows off Ty's songwriting skills, resulting in an optimistic and lively but equally sad song. The melodies of the song get under your skin, and the hornlines on top blow them throughout, scattering and irrevocably entwining them with you. This Marc Bolan influence is made clearer on 'The Main Pretender,' which throws a sax into the mix, heavily referencing T.



I mean, it's not *The Life of Pablo*, but for a collage, it still stands out. // Drag City

"Ty Segall is a great example of a true genius who effortlessly employs the DIY experimental attitude associated with modern garage rock"

Rex's 1973 LP *Tanx*. It's no wonder Segall released a cover album of their material - 2015's *Ty Rex*.

No one is ready for what comes next. 'Meaning'

kicks up some percussive bangs and guitar screeches before charging head first into a fem-punk distortion onslaught dragging you along in the dirt and wake of its carnage. Ty Segall's wife Denée shouts "I see fear in freedom!" while Ty steers the bull around the pen and right out the fucking gates. Abruptly, the band slides to the other end of the spectrum with 'Cry Cry Cry,' a Beatles-esque ballad with tropical swinging psychedelic twangs. *Freedom's Goblin* is truly released at this point; the band's guitarists battle doom riffs on 'She' and spiral into yet more sax-infused madness, this time going full psychobilly on 'Talkin 3'. Finally, instead of fading out, the band throw down 'And, Goodnight', a sprawling twelve

minute electrified cover of their surreal 2013 single 'Sleeper'. The album had already blown my mind and this song serves as the perfect head-fuck into a comedown.

The album is a symbiotic mix of the beautifully messy and the overpoweringly crisp, owed to the outstanding nature of anything Steve Albini touches. Ty Segall is a great example of a true genius who effortlessly employs the DIY experimental attitude associated with modern garage rock. Despite the album spanning 19 songs and clocking in at an hour and fifteen minutes, *Freedom's Goblin* doesn't feel drawn out in the slightest, and leaves the listener with a taste for more that only Segall can satisfy - and I have no doubt he will.

MUSIC

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Django Django venture into new territories

Always ones to be ambitious and experimental, Marble Skies sees the electro-rock outfit trying their hands at a variety of new styles. The result is an eclectic jumble that oozes colour.

MUSIC
MARBLE SKIES

★★★★

Artist: Django Django.
Label: Ribbon Music **Top**
Tracks: Beam Me Up;
Sundials. **For Fans Of:**
LCD Soundsystem; Jagwar
Ma. *40 minutes*

Adrian LaMoury
Music Editor

It would've been a good name for a marbled paper collage I made about four years ago – or at least a better one than whatever hedonistic tripe I presumably came up with. *Marble Skies*, British art-rock quartet Django Django's third album, actually bears something of a resemblance to my teenage artistic endeavours. Though a patchwork of shapes, styles, and moods, each piece fits together with surprising coherence, and the whole thing is coated in a vibrant, psychedelic, spacey glaze.

The opening and titular track immediately indicates a clear departure from the feel of their previous album. *Born Under Saturn* was very much dominated by big sounds, pounding and plodding through steady beats and muscular riffs. 'Marble Skies' conveys a new sense of urgency, an assured charge that sees them deftly sweeping through layers of Kraftwerk-esque retrofuturism, punctuated by fast-paced verses. "Take us as we are", the chorus boldly declares – they've never sounded more confident in their style.

Something previously alien to Django Django's discography comes with second track 'Surface to Air', in the form of guest vocals from Slow Club's Rebecca Taylor, reincarnated as her new solo project, Self Esteem. The tempo drops a bit for this one, and it feels somewhat limp in comparison to its predecessor. Usual progress is soon resumed, however, with 'Champagne', which is reminis-

"An assured charge that sees them deftly sweeping through layers of Kraftwerk-esque retrofuturism"

cent of their first album. Staccato guitars, whirling synths, and a faint background of elevator music make this a pleasant but largely forgettable track.

Next up is energetic lead single 'Tic Tac Toe'. Behind its throbbing bassline and chugging drumbeat, the lyrics draw on themes of nihilism and the banal repetitiveness of modern, consumerist life ("Lately, have you ever wondered why we're put here / playing each and every game / day by day?"). As always, the sounds are texturally rich and the production immaculate, and though it may initially sound like something of a throw-away, closer inspection reveals evidence of their meticulous studio craftsmanship.

After a short burst of space rock in the form of 'Further', with its jangly riffs and spiralling mellotron, the album really starts to take shape. The understated and wistful 'Sundials' is perhaps their most tender moment to date. With a naked piano riff taking centre stage, shy Beach Boys harmonies glide ethereally over distant

The original *Marble Skies* // Yung Adrian

reverb and sublime saxophone interludes. The serenity is soon disturbed, however, by the syncopated intro of 'Beam Me Up'. This dark and brooding track is a real standout. The sound is industrial and bleak; the familiar falsetto niceties are dropped in favour of a chilling but purposeful delivery, laid over an undulating bass and a progressive synth accompaniment. It wouldn't be out of place on a Horrors album, or alongside some of Alt-J's more lively work. Double-tracked vocals and dense sonic layers give it a very intense, full-bodied flavour that makes for an impressive auditory experience.

"Is it a bit superficial? Potentially. Is it enjoyable? Inarguably"

Pulling a tight hairpin once again, 'In your Beat' is a straight up pop banger. With an uplifting sing-along chorus about dancing, you'd be forgiven for mistaking it for a Calvin Harris record. There are hyperbolic builds, even a *drop*. Perhaps this is their attempt to break out into the mainstream, or maybe they just wanted to take a rest from being opaque and artsy to make a fun feel-good song. Either way, it's perfect for radio play, indie disco playlists and sun-soaked festival sets. Is it a bit superficial? Potentially. Is it enjoyable? Inarguably.

Laser guns and bouncy beats fill the extended intro of 'Real Gone' with a very LCD Soundsystem feel, before switching to a Jagwar Ma style electronic piece. Eventually, the high octane drum machine gives way to a gentle tinkle and fade into 'Fountains'. German electronic and krautrock pioneers Kraftwerk are channelled once again,

this time via panpipes that could've been lifted straight from 'Autobahn'. Frontman Vincent Neff shows his vocal prowess here, with delicate, sustained high notes and buoyant transitions, not dissimilar to that on Jungle's eponymous 2014 record. Despite the recurring nihilistic themes, the LP closes on a note of optimistic agnosticism and acceptance.

Over ten short and reasonably disconnected tracks, Django Django dabble in a variety of genres, but wholly commit to none. There's a distinct shift towards pop, but not at the expense of artistic integrity. It's extremely playable and only gets more infectious upon repetition. While *Marble Skies* likely won't be held in as high regard as their mercury prize nominated debut, it serves as an important stepping stone that secures their position as ones to watch and keep watching.



Mark Rothko eat your heart out // Ribbon Music

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Mark E. Smith passed away on January 24th. His Legacy, however, lives on. // Flickr/ neate photos

Hit the North – In tribute to Mark E. Smith

In light of the passing of legendary The Fall frontman Mark E. Smith, Felix's hottest new music writer offers his own profound and earth-shattering insights into an artist he knew too little about.

MUSIC

Jack O'Brien
Music Writer

To pretend that the clamorous and lengthy discography of The Fall, the fabled post punk band spearheaded by the imperious and now deceased Mark E. Smith, has shaped and defined my musical tastes would be a lie. I cannot claim that the fractious frontman served, as he has to so many others, as a particularly important influence on my musical inclination up until his death, or at least not consciously. Instead, the influence of his now silent raspy Mancunian voice, best heard conjuring up bizarre and uncouth imagery over repetitive guitar riffs, had been a wayward one in my life. Smith existed to me as the man behind such belters as 'Hit the North',

'Totally Wired' and 'Hard life in the Country'. He was the notoriously acerbic delinquent with the famously quick temper and tendency towards physical violence. He was the endlessly endorsed and recommended artist's artist, upheld and written about at length by journalists far trendier and more talented than I. He existed as a spectre; a wraith whose work I never fully indulged, a cultural behemoth I never fully absorbed.

It is for this reason that it seemed weird that after the announcement of his passing on 24th January, I felt a sense of loss usually reserved for artists who have held a more significant sway on my tastes. Even after the death of Prince or Bowie, artists who by the brute force of radio-friendly osmosis I had imbibed almost endlessly, I didn't feel as bothered as when I heard the news of Smith's

passing. This led me to wondering as to why an artist who had existed only in my periphery had

"He was the pioneer of a band sealed into legend not by the mass act of popular idolisation, but instead by the intense adoration of a few"

elicited such a peculiarly strong response. Am I so sentimental as to mourn the loss of those I barely knew, especially in the

case of an obscurity like Smith?

An answer, at least in part, emerged a few days later when the comedian Stewart Lee, an apparent Fall mega fan, appeared on Radio 6. Lee commented that whereas everyone had some connection to the deaths of Bowie and Prince, Mark E. Smith remained unique as having a deep and fruitful connection with a minority. He was the pioneer of a band sealed into legend not by the mass act of popular idolisation, but instead by the intense adoration of a few. The Fall was the most famously unknown band of all time - an ever shifting ensemble of musicians bundled together by its leader. They were only loved by those for whom the penny had dropped, those who had, at the least, made the effort to discover them in depth.

The upset I felt at his

death has been realised as the knowledge that I would have loved his music while he lived, that, for me, the penny did not drop while he was alive. He was not the wraith I thought he was, a grumbling ghost on the fringes of my tastes, but a staunchly northern poet who domineered a scene with such relentless temerity that I feel ashamed to remark that it is only now that I have begun to explore his work. I have cruelly learned what I was missing. In the past few days, I have revelled and nourished my soul on the cold northern abstraction of his cryptic lyrics. I have hijacked speakers so that I may belt out his Godly tunes for my own indulgence in the presence of gentiles, and even dozed off into violent dreams at the behest of his eclectically angry music. I am sure the commentariat who held Mark E. Smith as a

pinnacle of creativity are envious of the freshness with which I now tuck into iconic old albums and performances. I am sure that they too share the selfish glee I now take in getting to know the well curated museum of Mark E. Smith, with its varied and seemingly endless list of quirks.

I lament never seeing him live, as I was urged to do by my annoyingly prescient brother. Instead, I can only take solace in the poetry of an artist I have come to late, an artist I missed before I even knew it, who said things I wish I could have.

"Yell down nights in hysterical breath / Those Northern Lights, so pretty / Those big big big wide streets / Those useless MPs / Savages"

RIP Mark E. Smith.

MUSIC

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3rd Annual NeighbourHOOD Grammys

The Grammys went ahead and got it wrong again but fear not: the NeighbourHOOD Grammys Committee are back at it again for a third year! Music Editor **Andy Djaba** is joined by **Isaac Freeling**, **Lé Osikomaiya**, **Jamell Samuels** and **Jamil Wallace-Williams** to restore balance to the streets and ensure credit goes where credit is due.

MUSIC

Andy Djaba
Music Editor

Album of the Year **DAMN.**

Kendrick Lamar
[aka Kung-Fu Kenny]
“Sit down (lil’ bitch), be humble”



Wikimedia

Nominations | *Flower Boy*, Tyler the Creator | *More Life*, Drake | *Laila’s Wisdom*, Rapsody | *Big Fish Theory*, Vince Staples

2017 had a plethora of amazing hip-hop albums, which only made it more difficult for us to choose a single album to give this award to. Vince Staples came through with an electro-inspired sound, further pushing the boundaries of the genre. Drake’s *More Life* only served to remind us of the versatility of his artistry while delivering the bangers we’ve come to expect. Tyler, the Creator delivered a surprisingly mature album, discussing themes including depression, loneliness, and his sexuality on this smooth, introspective, self-produced album.

Rapsody cemented her position as a top rapper irrespective of gender with a carefully curated album that vibrated positivity, enabling listeners to empathise with Rapsody’s pride and encourages those who struggle with being “black and ugly”, to do the same. However, the winner has to be Kendrick Lamar with *DAMN.*, which is the only word suitable to describe this album after giving it a listen. K.Dot always finds a new way to reinvent his sound, not being shy to take risks or experiment and it’s yet to fail him, delivering another strong album that is not only sonically pleasing, but lyrically intriguing.

Honourable Shoutouts | 4:44, Jay Z | *Culture*, Migos | *Wins and Losses*, Meek Mill | *Pretty Girls Like Trap Music*, 2 Chainz | *ALL-AMERIKKKAN BADA\$\$*, Joey Bada\$\$ | 508-507-2209, Joyner Lucas | *Process*, Sampha

We haven’t seen honesty this real and a flow as versatile as that on Joyner Lucas’ 508-507-2209 since *good kid m.A.A.d. city*.

Song of the Year **‘Bodak Yellow’** Cardi B

“Said little bitch, you can’t fuck with me, if you wanted to”

Nominations | ‘Chanel’ [Frank Ocean] | ‘T-Shirt’ [Migos, *Culture*] | ‘Live up to my name’ [Baka Not Nice] | ‘Im so Groovy’ [Future, *Future*]



InstrumentalFx

There was no shortage of tunes to pick from in 2017. There were the bangers, from Baka’s ‘Live up to my name’, a clear product of the OVO sweatshop, to Migos’ ‘T-Shirt’, a trap anthem released in what will probably go down as the best year of their career. ‘Chanel’ is one of Frank’s best solo performances and strongest expression of his sexuality to date on a song. It also features the hard bar that rappers hadn’t clocked despite the years they been talking about buying chicks Chanel bags: “See both sides like Chanel”. Future’s unique flow on ‘I’m so Groovy’ makes it such a fun song to vibe to, but there was one clear winner for song of the year. Cardi B’s remix of ‘No Flockin’, ‘Bodak Yellow’, took the music industry by storm, like a Caribbean hurricane in January, and stood head and shoulders above the rest.. The song has almost become synonymous with female empowerment and we’re lowkey starting to get tired of women pointing at us and screaming “Said little bitch, you can’t fuck with me, if you wanted to”.

Honourable Shoutout | ‘Do not Disturb’ [Drake, *More Life*]

The 6 God ends his *More Life* escapade with an open and honest look back at his thoughts and feelings as he was writing *Views*. Snoh Allegra’s ‘Time’, was heavily sampled in the production and gives the track a level of vulnerability that is rare, even for Drake. “I was an angry yout’ when I was writin’ *Views*, saw a side of myself that I just never knew, I’ll probably self destruct if I ever lose but I never do”.

R&B Album of the Year **CTRL** SZA

“My man is my man is your man, heard it’s her man too”



Wikimedia

Nominations | *Process*, Sampha | *Freudian*, Daniel Caesar | *Morning After*, dvsn | *Sonder Son*, Brent Faiyaz

It could be argued that 2017 was a better year for R&B than it was for hip-hop, with a sudden resurgence of new and creative sounds for what was thought to be an already matured genre. Brent Faiyaz’s *Sonder Son* managed to bring the old school ‘90s R&B sound new into a new age.

Daniel Caesar’s *Freudian* is sure to have been played at weddings around the world. dvsn managed to encapsulate everybody’s relationship problems into a single album with *Morning After*, containing situations so specific I thought my ex had personally phoned them to complain. Sampha’s *Process* was iconic, expressing the emotions of loss, love, and growth within multiple tracks. He uses his unique voice to tell the story of his mother passing away and only served to prove why Drake has him involved in all his projects. However, there could only be one winner. SZA takes the award with her debut album, *CTRL*, an astounding album written almost entirely from the perspective of a sidechick. For too long, the women on the side have been neglected in the music industry and *CTRL* plays a pivotal role in shining a light onto their plight, raising awareness and starting a necessary dialogue on proper mistress management.

UK Album of the Year **Gang Signs and Prayer** Stormzy

“I phone Flipz then I tell him that he got this/ This is God’s plan, they can never stop this”

Nominations | *Common Sense*, J Hus | *FR32*, Wretch 32 | *NO BULLSHIT*, Avelino | *Leage of my Own II*, Chip

The UK Music scene has recently been thrust into



Wikimedia

the global limelight and, therefore, great bodies of work were essential to maintain momentum and show the world the best of what UK rap and grime could deliver. Fortunately, they did deliver with some stellar projects, from Avelino’s *NO BULLSHIT*, to Chip’s extensive *League of my Own II*, where he proves yet again that he doesn’t run out of bars. Wretch produced another solid album with *FR32*, but the discussion for best UK album had two clear frontrunners. J Hus’ *Common Sense* and Stormzy’s *Gang Signs And Prayer* are both spectacular bodies of work, especially considering they are both debut albums. *Common Sense* has a song for every mood and vibe and is such an enjoyable and easy listen, ranging from AfroBeat inspired bangers to suprising introspective moments about Hus’ life and upbringing. Stormzy took the streets of the UK to church with big momets such as ‘Blinded by your Grace’, ‘21 Gun Salute’ and ‘100 Bags’. This was probably the hardest decision that the Committee had to make and, althought we still aren’t entirely sure that we’ve got it right, we have decided that Stormzy is the winner.

MUSIC

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Collab Track of the Year
‘Biking’

Frank Ocean ft. Tyler the Creator & Jay Z

“God gave you what you could handle / (Gave you what you could handle)”



Genius

Nominations | ‘Slide’ [Calvin Harris ft. Migos & Frank Ocean] | ‘It’s a Vibe’ [2 Chainz ft. Ty Dolla \$ign, Trey Songz & Jhené Aiko] | ‘Raf’ [A\$AP Mob ft. Quavo, Lil Uzi Vert, Playboi Carti & Frank Ocean] | ‘Crew’ [Goldlink ft. Brent Faiyaz & Shy Glizzy]

Collab Tracks are always surrounded by a lot of anticipation and, in 2017, it was no different. ‘Crew’ deserves nominations for 2016, 2017, and 2018 – the song just oozes sauce. ‘Slide’ was probably the summer banger, bringing only good vibes. ‘Raf’ marked the triumphant return of the Mob. ‘It’s a Vibe’ featured our hippy bae Jhené, whose sultry vocals helped 2 Chainz knock this song out of the park. However, ‘Biking’ was our winner. ‘Biking’ is the return of the Jay Z and Frank Ocean combo with the addition of Odd Future partner, Tyler. Never have all three been on a track together, but ‘Biking’ shows the chemistry we’ve seen on songs like ‘She’ and numerous tracks from Jay and Ocean. The theme of bikes is held throughout

a song full of double entendres. Jay comes through with a standout prelude to the vocals of Frank, which deliver on the lush production. The hook is a stand out for the track along with Tyler coming through with one of his best verses to date, enabling him to add ‘Killed Jay on a Track’ to his CV.

Honourable Shoutout | ‘Bahamas’ [A\$AP Mob ft. Lil Yachty, ScHoolboy Q, Smooky MarGielaa, KEY!]

‘Bahamas’ deserves its honourable shoutout off the basis of three absolutely amazing lines: “Your wife wanna throw me vagina / I fuck on your aunt, ya mama”, A\$AP Rocky, “New Shades, Gosha / Got me looking like a Beatle”, A\$AP Ferg and, finally, quite possibly our favourite line ever, ‘Let a Groovy nigga in it’, ScHoolboy Q.

UK Newcomer of the Year
Not3s

“I am so fly like Aladdin/ I steer the ship, I’m the captain”

Nominations | Jorja Smith | Ray Blk | Mabel | Hardy Caprio

Plenty of new names surfaced in the UK in 2017. Mabel had a sleeper hit with ‘Finders Keepers’ which shot her from being unknown even in the underground to being one of the top prospects for the UK. Ray Blk won the BBC’s sound of 2017 award and Hardy Caprio had an absolute banger with ‘Super Soaker’. However, the top two contenders for the Committee were Jorja Smith, whose recent work with Drake and Preditah have catapulted her into the mainstream and Not3s who has had a succession of strong singles followed by a very solid EP. In

the end, the decision was made to award Not3s, while we eagerly anticipate Jorja’s debut album.

Feature Verse of the Year

Dave- ‘Peligro’
[Giggs, Wamp 2 Dem]

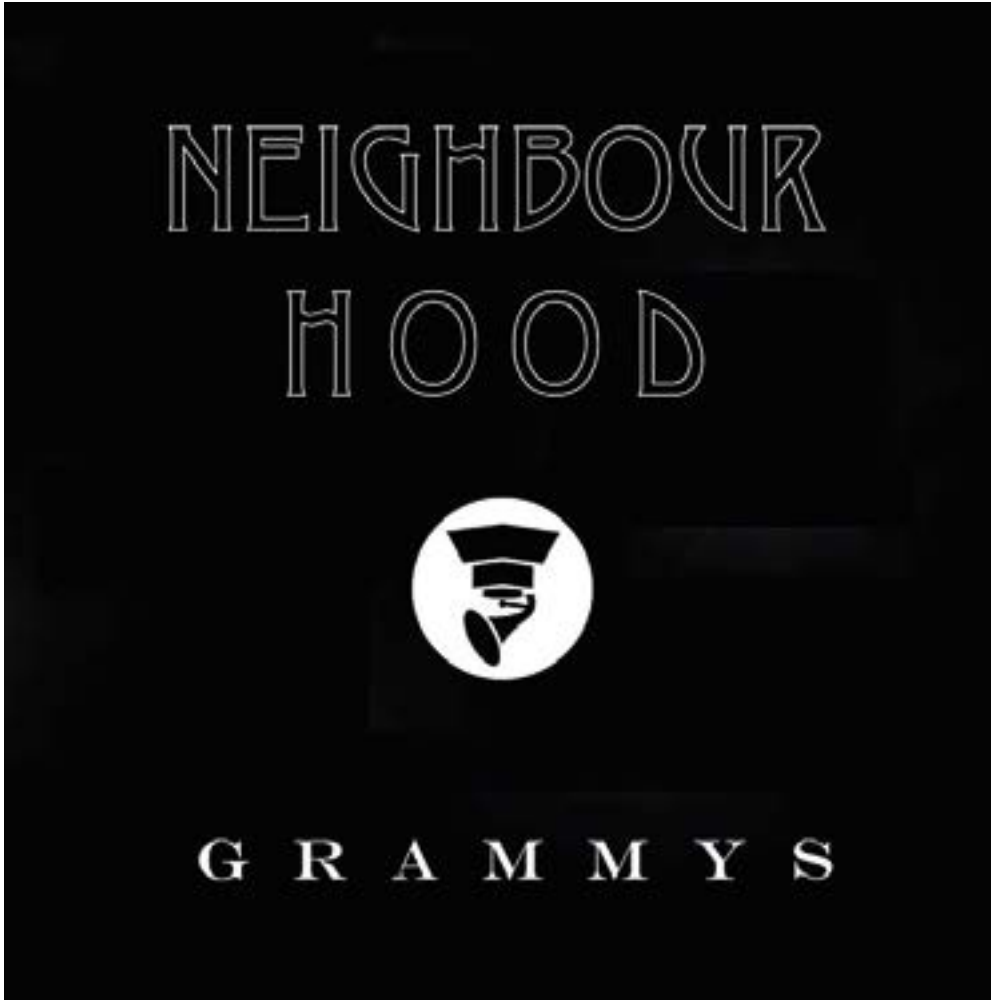
“Big cougar ting on all fours/ Man, it feels like I’ve got a tiger tryna tackle me”

Nominations | Young Thug- ‘Sacrifices’ [Drake, More Life] | XXXTENTACION- ‘Roll in Peace’ [Kodack Black, Project Baby 2] | Kendrick Lamar- ‘Mask Off Remix’ [Future] | Rihanna- ‘Lemon’ [N.E.R.D., No One Ever Really Dies]

Rappers seem to save their best verses for other people’s songs for some reason, and this year was no different, with lots of big verses being spat from guest appearances. You’re probably wondering what Rihanna is doing on this list. Well, although she is a singer, bad gal Riri came harder than most rappers on N.E.R.D.’s ‘Lemon’. As he eloquently put it, Young Thug was “talking neat like a geek” on Drake’s ‘Sacrifices’. Kendrick Lamar killed it as per and XXX spat a hype verse. However we decided to award Dave, one of the artists to watch in 2018, for completely killing Giggs on ‘Peligro’.

Honourable Shoutouts | Tyler the Creator- ‘Biking’ [Frank Ocean] | Cardi B- ‘No Limit’ [G-Eazy, The Beautiful & Damned] | Mostack

Mostack killed features in 2017, linking up with J Hus, Mist, Not3s, Dave and more to drop banger after banger (‘Fisherman’, ‘Mash Up’ and ‘No Words’ to name but a few).



Producer of the Year

Metro Boomin
[aka Young Metro]
“If young Metro don’t trust you, I’m gon’ shoot you”

Nominations | Murda Beatz | Southside | Zaytoven | Boi1da

In hip-jop, production is just as important, if not more so than the lyrics. In the words of Committee member and Metro stan, Jamell, “Metro can do no wrong. Metro goes in every single time. Every single beat is just fire, straight fire, consistently.” There’s nothing more to be said, really.

Honourable Shoutouts | Steelbanglez | Jae5

The wavy afro-swing sub-genre blossomed and flourished in 2017 and these two producers have been at the forefront of this wave, battling it out for the title of UK Metro Boomin.

Debut Album of the Year

No Dope on Sundays
Cyhi the Prince
[aka Kanye’s ghost writer]

2017 was full of plenty of standout debut projects. Sampha, Stormzy and J Hus held it down for the UK with their stellar albums. SZA’s CTRL, Khalid’s American Teen, 6LACK’s FREE 6LACK and Daniel Caesar’s Freudian were all smooth R&B offerings. On the hip-hop front, Jaden Smith and XXXTENTACION produced surprisingly impressive debut albums in the cinematic SYRE and the short but potent 17, respectively. While Lil Yachty and Lil Uzi Vert disappointed with their trash projects, Teenage Emotions and Luv is Rage 2, respectively, the Committee decided to award Cyhi the Prynce for his effort on the excellent No Dope on Sundays.

Viral Song of the Year

‘Man’s Not Hot’
Big Shaq
“The ting go skrrappp”

Although tracks like Lil Uzi Vert’s ‘XO Tour Llif3’, Future’s ‘Mask Off’ and Lil Pump’s ‘Gucci Gang’ sparked online hysteria with memes littered across social media, Playboi Carti’s ‘Magnolia’ and Kodak Black’s ‘Tunnel Vision’ sparked dance crazes, and Jay Z’s ‘The Story of OJ’ sparked a much-needed dialogue and social commentary, two tracks stand out as the most viral of 2017. Cardi B’s ‘Bodak Yellow’ became an anthem for female empowerment but the NeighbourHOOD Grammys Committee has to award Big Shaq’s ‘Man’s Not Hot’. Michael Daapah [aka Big Shaq] was the man of the year in 2017 and everybody from my 4 year old cousin to my grandma knows “the ting go SKRRAP”.



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Last Flag Flying: Linklater's latest

Fred Fyles dives deep into Linklater's wisecrack fueled road trip drama, starring Steve Carell, Bryan Cranston, and Laurence Fishburne, and does not like what he finds...

FILM

LAST FLAG FLYING



Dir: Richard Linklater.
Script: Richard Linklater; Darryl Ponicsan. **Starring:** Steve Carell; Bryan Cranston; Laurence Fishburne. 124 minutes

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

If looking back teaches us one thing, it is that the past is a strange and foreign land. If we are to ascribe to the films of Richard Linklater a mission statement, however, it would be to make that land familiar. Or rather, familiar enough.

Linklater is a director who trades in nostalgia, an emotion generated by images and objects that are tantalisingly familiar, and yet achingly inaccessible. From capturing the memories that will later be tinted with a rose-coloured nostalgia – as in *Before Sunrise*, or *Everybody Wants Some!* – or having characters watch events play out and turn into memories before their very eyes – as in Patricia Arquette's matriarch in *Boyhood* – Linklater is at his most comfortable when bringing the past within touching distance of an audience.

In theory, then, *Last Flag Flying*, his sequel to Hal Ashby's 1973 film *The Last Detail*, should see him on home territory. We follow three Vietnam veterans, reuniting in the near past of 2003, and reflecting on the experiences that shaped them thirty years before, thus generating a form of memory



Steve didn't get the memo about the dress code // Amazon/Lionsgate

that is twice-removed from the viewer. With the audience re-engaging

“With *Last Flag Flying*, Linklater is too concerned with wallowing in the past, rather than reflecting on it”

with their experiences of nearly 15 years ago, and the characters reaching further back into decades gone by, Linklater is on familiar territory. What a pity, then, that the film remains little more than a by-the-numbers affair, which quickly becomes sentimental, losing any political clout in a maudlin

sensibility.

Steve Carell plays ‘Doc’, who was court-martialed and imprisoned as a young man serving in the military. Now, thirty years later, an America still reeling from the shock of 9/11 has embarked on another seemingly-pointless war, which has resulted in Doc's son's death in Baghdad. With the narrative thrust justly provided, Doc seeks out his old marine buddies – Sal (Bryan Cranston) and Mueller (Laurence Fishburne) – to help him escort his son's body back home.

Naturally this is easier said than done, and – amid some terse conversations with Colonel Willetts, an anaemic attempt at an antagonist played by Yul Vazquez – the men are forced to take the train through the Eastern states, accompanying the young man's body. Lo and behold – another buddy movie.

As usual, Linklater delivers punchy dialogue, with the cracks coming thick and fast, but there is a sense that he is abandoning the naturalistic approach he took with *Boyhood* for a more contrived script. The three characters have clearly-defined roles within the narrative: Carell's performance is the most impressive, with a willfully-restrained embodiment of Doc, who stands quietly at the periphery of most scenes. It's a welcome contrast to Cranston, who ratchets up his wise-cracking boozehound to the n-th degree, until Sal is little more than a caricature of what war does to the individual. Linklater indulges this character far too much, and it quickly becomes tiresome. Fishburne delivers his lines with his usual gravitas – fitting since Mueller has reformed since his old days, and is now an

ordained minister – but there is little out of the ordinary in his performance.

Where the film really disappoints, however, is in its attempts to form a critique of the political environment of the early-noughties, in particular American foreign policy. The action occurs against the backdrop of Saddam Hussein's capture, less than a year into a war in Iraq that would leave hundreds of thousands dead. Characters begin to make motions towards criticism of the state, but Linklater always has them pull back, segueing instead to discussions about Eminem or the rapidly-developing cell phone technology.

It has been more than 14 years since the beginning of the Iraq War, and 16 years since September 11th – we are now further away from that point in time than the characters in the film are from the

fall of the Berlin Wall. It's more than enough time for a director to take on the challenge of critical reflection, to engage with our own recent past, but sadly Linklater fails to deliver. His characters

“As usual, Linklater delivers punchy dialogue, with the cracks coming thick and fast”

always stop short of saying anything outright, and – as a result – they don't say anything at all. With *Last Flag Flying*, he is too concerned with wallowing in the past, rather than reflecting on it.

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On Directing Film

A politically-charged Best Director race influenced by a younger voting pool has made us question what it really means to direct a film.



That framing, tho // Focus

FILM

Ashley Luckyrām
Film Editor

The announcement of the Academy Award nominations last week saw the usual surprises and snubs roll in. One particular category has continued to be the source of much debate throughout awards season, with commentators and voters alike unable to come to agreement. Across the Golden Globes, BAFTAs, and Academy Awards this year we have had ten different people nominated for Best Director, an unprecedented total, and a somewhat welcome change from seeing the same five directors compete from January to March. In the end we

wound up with four first time nominees, including two making their directorial debuts, joined by a man who has been widely lauded as our greatest working director.

There has been mounting pressure on the Academy in recent years to reward a more diverse range of performers and artists. Suggestions that the largely older, white, male voting pool lean towards voting for films made by their peers have caused the Academy to take measures to drastically alter the demographics of its voters, increasing the number of women and ethnic minorities, and lowering the average age. 683 new members were invited to join the Academy in 2016. Prior to this, the voting membership was by the Academy's own count

94% white and 76% male. After, it is 89% white and 73% male. While still a far cry from equality, the shake-up was a step in the right direction. This has undoubtedly influenced this year's nominations, with older stalwarts Ridley Scott and Steven Spielberg – who received Golden Globe nods – shut out for the younger Greta Gerwig and Jordan Peele, both making films from perspectives that are not seen nearly enough on the big screen. There is still a huge amount of work that needs to be done to ensure that studios, production companies, and independent financiers invest more in women and ethnic minority filmmakers (only 11% of films in 2017 were directed by women, a figure that has not increased since 2000), but this is a start.

Call me old-fashioned though, but I for one would like to see the actual five best directorial efforts of the past year be nominated in the five Best Director slots. Crazy thought: maybe the category should do what it says on the tin. Of course, the Academy is allergic to lower budget, avant garde fair, and has consistently displayed a quality akin to xenophobia in its unswerving exclusion of foreign-language directors from the race. The likes of Sean Baker and Shane Carruth will likely never come close to Academy recognition, nor David Lowery for last year's astonishing *A Ghost Story*; meanwhile, the Michel Hazanavicius's and Michael Haneke's of this world come once in a blue moon. Even if we accept these limitations, the

inclusion of Gerwig and Peele is still somewhat contentious. Were they really part of the best five English-language mainstream film directors last year?

To answer that question, we need to really think about what it means to direct a film. At a basic level, we can go with David Mamet's definition: the director has two main duties – to know where to put the camera, and to communicate with the actors. This is rudimentary, and does not encompass the auteur theory of cinema, of which each of this year's five nominees is an exponent, with all of them serving as writer-director-producers (bar Gerwig, who is merely a writer-director). However, to assess this year's candidates for arguably the most prestigious prize in

cinema, let us go along with Mamet's ideology.

First up, Guillermo Del Toro. Though never nominated for Best Director before, he won the Golden Globe and Critics Choice Award, and is widely expected to follow this up with victories at the BAFTAs and Oscars. Del Toro's career has largely been focused on stories about mythical beasts, and he has a knack for tying in these narratives with important periods in history. On this occasion he weaves a romance between a mute janitor and a merman-like aquatic creature from the Amazon with the masculine toxicity of the Cold War. Del Toro's work is jaw-dropping, particularly the beautiful underwater shots and a wonderful black and white musical segment that harks back

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to the Classic Hollywood era. There is more than a little Douglas Sirk in this picture, and Sally Hawkins' is mesmeric in the lead, ably supported by Octavia Spencer, Richard Jenkins, Michael Shannon, Michael Stuhlbarg, and Doug Jones in heavy suiting and make-up. Does he know where to put the camera? Check. Does he get great performances out of his actors? Check. If as expected Del Toro is victorious, he will be the fourth Mexican winner in the past five years. Other directors would be wishing Trump's wall had been erected a few years ago.

"There is more than a little Douglas Sirk in Guillermo Del Toro's *The Shape of Water*"

Greta Gerwig is one of the most versatile actors of her generation, and has shown herself to be a dab hand as a writer, co-penning *Frances Ha* and *Mistress America*. Last year she was given the opportunity to step into the director's chair for the first time. Her film, while not including any actual events from Gerwig's life, "has a core truth that resonates with what I know", to use her own words. The aesthetic, in the costumes and the production design, are extremely true to the early noughties. Gerwig told her cinematographer Sam Levy that she wanted the end product to feel like a memory, and they have gone some way to achieving this. Gerwig's shot selection is simple, but serviceable, and she has undeniably used her own experience as an actor to aid Saoirse Ronan and Laurie Metcalf in

giving two of the best performances of the year. In that respect she certainly fulfils her duty as a director assuredly. On the other hand, one has to question whether her task in directing *Lady Bird* was really as difficult as the grand scale of Denis Villeneuve's triumph with *Blade Runner 2049*, or whether her choice of shots had anywhere near the subtext of Luca Guadagnino's sensual *Call Me by Your Name*. Gerwig passes the test with *Lady Bird*, but her test is like Key Stage 1 mathematics compared to the University level work Villeneuve and Guadagnino have attempted and pulled off. There is no doubt that Gerwig is riding a wave of momentum with the #MeToo and Time's Up movements. It is insensitive to compare the suppression of female directors to the sexual violence against women that has led to these uprisings, and yet that is exactly what has happened. Society is rightly demanding women be treated fairly and equally in all aspects of life, but this may have pushed Gerwig into a position she does not necessarily deserve over others. The strength of her film is in the honesty of its script, and while her direction is adequate, it is not comparable to some of the others who have been left out.

Get Out was a gargantuan financial hit. Jordan Peele's social commentary certainly seemed to align with the current zeitgeist, and while initially well reviewed – but not acclaimed to the extent of the likes of *Dunkirk*, *Call Me by Your Name*, *The Florida Project*, or *Phantom Thread* – it has since gone on to top more year end lists than any other film. Peele draws decent performances from young talents like Daniel Kaluuya, Lakeith Stanfield, and Caleb Landry Jones, and the always excellent Catherine Keener

and Bradley Whitford. However, Allison Williams is simply dire, and Lil Rel Howery's moments are jarring, and not in a good way. This is surely Peele casting a throwback to his sketch show acting days, and not a particularly welcome one. Comparison with *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* is useful, as Yorgos Lanthimos' ability to create suspense through motivated and careful camera movement and a staccato score is far more effective than anything Peele is able to conjure up, evidencing Peele's directorial shortcomings. Peele's concept, particularly that of the sunken place, is insightful, but again, like Gerwig, one cannot help but feel that the strength of this film is in the script (which arguably comes loose in the third act anyway) and not in the direction. Still, Peele becomes only the fifth black person nominated for Best Director, following recent nominations for Barry Jenkins and Steve McQueen. One would be hard pressed to find anyone that considers Peele's directorial achievements on a par with the elegiac lyricism of Jenkins or the gritty expressionism of McQueen.

Steven Spielberg. James Cameron. Quentin Tarantino. There are but a handful of directors who have been able to transform themselves into a brand, but Christopher Nolan can surely count himself in this elite company. Considering the popularity of the likes of *Inception* and *The Dark Knight*, it will have been of surprise to many to learn that *Dunkirk* was in fact Nolan's first Oscar nomination for Best Director. In reality, this is the first time Nolan has really deserved it. *Dunkirk* is his best film, playing to his strengths while cutting out his tortured leading men with dying wives and cringe-worthy dialogue. Nolan has stripped down

cinema to its foundations – sight and sound – and pushed those elements to the limit. *Dunkirk* does falter in the sense that the emotional beats, such as the death of Barry Keoghan's young volunteer George Mills and the capture of Tom Hardy's spitfire pilot Farrier, do not truly resonate. Undeniably though, Nolan delivered cinema in its purest form, and deserved his nod for Best Director.

"The younger, diverse voting pool has been credited for Gerwig and Peele's nominations"

While the younger, more diverse voting pool has been credited for Gerwig and Peele's nominations, what many commentators did not count on is that the likes of Anderson and Nolan, who are idolised by young filmmakers, would benefit too. A man who has earned praise from the likes of

Bergman, Scorsese, and Kubrick, superb scores, beautiful cinematography, richly unique characters, and tremendous acting performances are all hallmarks of Anderson's work, particularly as he has matured and moved into a more refined and less wild mode of filmmaking. Perhaps the three greatest male acting performances of the century came in Anderson films – Daniel Day-Lewis in *There Will Be Blood* and Joaquin Phoenix and Phillip Seymour Hoffman in *The Master*. This highlights his extraordinary abilities as a director, and, alongside his sumptuously framed shots (which he composed entirely on his own this time round, serving as his own cinematographer), showcase him as the finest filmmaker of his generation. *Phantom Thread* is not another step on the ladder to greatness for Paul Thomas Anderson; he has already long resided in the pantheon of the greats.

It may be controversial to suggest that Gerwig and Peele have received their nominations on the basis of politics, but it certainly seems to be the case that their inclusion has been

driven by the desire to include more women and ethnic minorities, especially when their work is stacked up against that of Del Toro, Anderson and Nolan. Their nominations have certainly caused debate, and prompted questions on how we should judge the quality of directing. At this year's Oscars, many of the Best Picture nominees will also be competing in other categories. Were films akin to mathematical equations, once one removes the acting, writing, and technical elements of the film, then Best Picture should equal Best Director. Sadly that is not the case, and it is incredibly hard to separate the director from the rest of the production, more so than any other category. Filmmaking is the most collaborative of processes, and the lines between individual disciplines are so often blurred. It is the director's job to bring all these elements together into a cohesive vision. When they all do come together it can yield spectacular results. That is what good directing is, and that is what good filmmaking is.



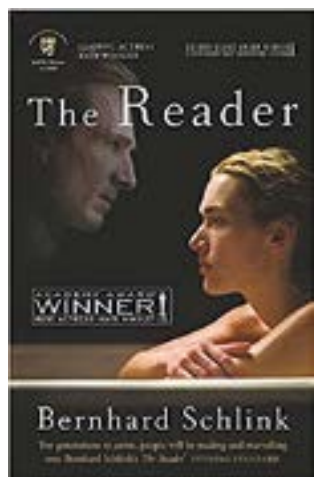
Del Toro's beauty-drenched shots // Fox Searchlight

BOOKS

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“What would you have done?”

German lawyer Bernhard Schlink's international bestseller The Reader asks this question of a post-war nation healing from guilt and trauma.



BOOKS

Bayan Al-Bulushi

Books Writer

This is one of those books that one can discuss at length and would make a good choice for a book club, but I'll try to keep it short though I have much to say.

The story is told from the first person perspective of Michael Berg and begins with him having contracted hepatitis at the age of fifteen. After vomiting on the sidewalk he is helped by a woman, Frau Hanna Schmitz, in her thirties. Once he has recovered, he decides to thank her for her help. What began as a gesture of gratitude, with dubious intentions, led to a love affair between the two.

After a few months into this affair, Schmitz inexplicably leaves town and Michael, leaving him to question their relationship and whether she ever shared his feelings for her. Fast forward a few years and Michael, a student studying Law at university, joins a Professor's seminar dealing with the trials of people with links to the Nazi regime, whether facilitating it in

the form of prison guards at concentration camps or turning a blind eye to it. Observing one of these trials, Michael recognises one of the defendants: Hanna Schmitz.

He becomes engrossed with this trial, never missing a day. He starts to feel numb towards her, condemning her actions with all of his being, only to recant those condemnations when reminiscing about their relationship. He finds himself in the turmoil of trying to come to terms with his country's recent history which seems to clash directly with his own adolescence.

This novel explores a range of issues and handles them extremely well given its relatively short length. The writing is stark, bare of any superfluous descriptions, enabling the reader to assume a position of detachedness from the characters.

This, I believe, allowed me to objectively judge the characters and the situations they were involved in without the author invoking those judgements through in-depth descriptions of the characters' thoughts and feelings. It permits the reader to arrive at their own conclusions without being nudged there by the author, which is something I really appreciated given the topics that were dealt with.

It would have been so easy for the author to make Michael condemn and disown his own memories of Hanna once he realises the atrocities she has committed, a position that many people would sympathise with. Yet he deliberately allows Michael to return to those memories

to question Hanna's guilt and whether she deserves his denouncement.

Schlink also deals with how a country tries to reconcile and confront its recent past, in an effort to heal itself. How easy it is for the generation that came into adulthood after the end of the war to condemn and judge those they perceived to have been complicit, almost to the point of making them feel good, a prototype of what we term political correctness today.

While some undoubtedly deserve those condemnations, whether those who kept silent do is a different matter. 'What would you have done?' - a

“Schlink also deals with how a country tries to reconcile with its recent past, in an effort to heal itself”

question Hanna puts to the judge during her trial is one this new generation has not contemplated carefully in their frenzy to assume a higher moral ground, but is one which Michael grapples with. Whether he would have, were it not for his personal involvement with one of those defendants, is a question left to the reader, and one I would have to answer with a resounding no.

The novel has been criticised for trying to invoke sympathy to Nazi crimi-

Bernhard Schlink, author of *The Reader* // Wikimedia

nals, questioning Hanna's true extent of participation in those crimes and, by extension, her guilt. I cannot disagree more; the novel does not shirk away from deconstructing how guilt is handed around and shared, painting a grey picture of how humans deal with morality in such circumstances, rather than the black and white one people seem to want it to.

The questions that Michael grapples with are quite philosophical and posed in such a way that

they demand the reader to at least ponder them

“The novel does not shirk away from deconstructing how guilt is handed around and shared”

before moving on to the next sentence. Despite being mostly ignorant of philosophy, I found these questions very accessible and posed in a way that makes the reader want to think about them and form their own opinion rather than an exercise in highlighting the author's great intellect. These questions retain the beauty, or some might argue the frustrating aspect, of philosophy: there is no right answer.

BOOKS

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Contemplating troubled pasts in the City of Literature

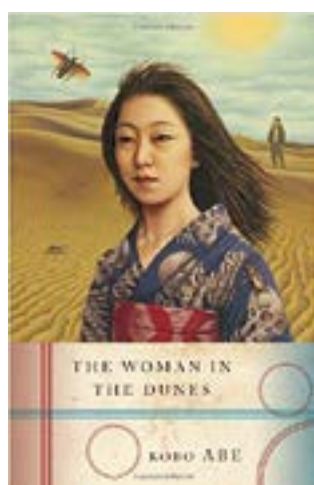
Travelling to places with a rich history is the perfect backdrop for exploring books that might have an enlightening cultural connection

BOOKS

Pavan Inguva
Books Writer

The seeds of this article were sowed over December break, during a weekend I spent in Hamburg, Germany and a visit to Lubeck (Birthplace of Thomas Mann), followed by a week in Poland.

I only found out when in Krakow, that it is designated a UNESCO city of literature. This made more sense after learning about Krakow's literary culture such as the large number of bookstores, literary festivals and famous authors associated with the city. Having finished the first book, *The Woman of the Dunes* by Kobo Abe, I picked a second book by Polish Author Czeslaw Milosz whilst in Krakow for the rest of my trip, reviews of which will be



the subject of this article.

Kobo Abe's *The Woman of the Dunes*

This story starts off with Niki Junpei, a slightly socially awkward, avid insect collector who decides to take a weekend trip to some sand dunes in a rural part of Japan, in hopes of finding rare or even new species of beetles. He is subsequently trapped and enslaved by the villagers in a sand dune approximately 60ft

underground together with an initially cold woman who houses him. Kobo Abe skilfully shows how a person's inner monologue and the praxis into outward action (both personally and in how he relates to other people) changes during such a dark period of capture, from initial resistance to bargaining and blackmail and finally, the loss of the desire to escape.

The man first tries to reason with his captors to no avail. His efforts to escape escalate further till he finally succeeds one day only to horribly fail by accidentally falling into a quicksand pit. He is humiliatingly lowered back into the pit. Following his recapture, he slowly loses the will to escape.

His interaction with the woman who has been trapped for much longer than him yields further insight into the psyche in relation to her predicament and the outer world.

At the end, the man has a workable plan of escape but decides to postpone it indefinitely, indicating his loss of the will to

"This book served as an excellent backdrop to my visit to Poland"

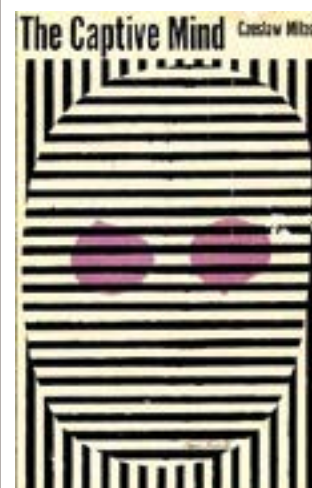
escape. This ending has been compared to George Orwell's *1984* which bears remarkable similarities.

On a literal reading, Kobo Abe does a great job in showing how a person responds to an externally imposed state of imprisonment and throughout this read, the very injustice imposed onto both the man and woman partially triggered me. This served as an excellent backdrop to my visit to Poland which in the 20th century was profoundly affected by both great wars and the rise and fall of the Soviet Union.

However, it is also possible to consider this story from a metaphysical standpoint of Zen Buddhism, almost as a sort of Sisyphean task, and view the man's ensnarement as the mechanism to which humans are bound to the Maya of the material world.

Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind*

Czeslaw Milosz, the Polish author and poet was the recipient of the 1980 Nobel prize in Literature. His life story involves



several major events of the 20th century, (un) fortunately giving him a first-hand experience to paradigm-altering events such as the rise of Hitler, the Holocaust and the rise and fall of the Soviet Union to name a few.

This placed Milosz in a position to shed light on the history and psyche of Poland and its people and on the nature of oppression and totalitarianism, which he did so exceedingly well in *The Captive Mind*. Despite this book being contextualised to Stalinism in Eastern

"This placed Milosz in a position to shed light on the history and psyche of Poland and its people"

European countries, the analysis remains relevant and applicable.

The first three chapters set up the psychological, philosophical and

social context in which a person's mind becomes captive whilst living under totalitarian rule. The first chapter describes how and why Stalinist ideology, particularly Dialectic Materialism is stomached by a person. This is done by using the metaphor of the 'Pill of Murti-Bing' based on another book written by Stanislaw Witkiewicz.

The second chapter details the nature of Central and Eastern European people's perception of the free western states and its associated historical and psychological tensions and how this sets the context to which eastern-bloc intellectuals may not be drawn to the west.

The third chapter describes the practice of Ketman, where an individual hides his true beliefs from others, in doing so, derives a sense of satisfaction for such deceit. This partially robs him of the will to outwardly reject that ideology.

Milosz then goes on to describe how four Polish intellectuals responded to this paradigm with outcomes ranging from successful adaptation, the loss of the creative spark or even rejection of the new system. To end the book, Milosz describes the Soviet's analysis and approach to controlling Polish society and its brutalising of the Baltic states.

Despite the fact that I was originally hoping to pick up a fictional work by a Polish author, the strength of Milosz's writing and the insights he provides made it a thoroughly enjoyable read and a great way to learn more about Poland.



Krakow was designated a UNESCO City of Literature in 2013 // UNESCO

TRAVEL

travel.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Travelling the Americas in an old fire engine

*Recent Imperial graduate **Konstantin Holzner** took travelling to the next level by converting an old fire truck into a camper van and shipping it all the way to Canada for an unforgettable roadtrip across the Americas.*

TRAVEL

Konstantin Holzner

Travel Writer

About three days into our trip, I found myself sitting on a beach in St. Vincent's Bay, Newfoundland. It's pretty stunning in general, but for about six weeks every summer it becomes a particularly breath-taking place to be. Humpback whales are abundant in these waters during that time, and this beach is the perfect spot for land-based whale watching, with humpbacks coming within ten meters of the spectators on the beach. The sea here is teeming with little fish that the whales are feeding on, and the odd bigger wave washes a handful of them ashore – easiest fish BBQ ever.

As I sat there, in awe of these majestic creatures, it occurred to me that this was the first time I had been completely relaxed in a good long while. The previous months had been a crazy frenzy. In preparation for our big trip, my wife and I had bought an old German fire engine. The week I was trying to finish my PhD (a relatively stressful feat in itself) and weekends were spent toiling away on the fire engine to build the perfect campervan. Although we were busy seven days a week, there was something incredibly satisfying about swapping the lab for a real hands-on job with guaranteed progress every weekend.

Most of the rest of our time was spent planning the trip, trying to sort out the logistics of shipping our van to Canada, and



The Rocky Mountains, one of the most stunning parts of the trip // Konstantin Holzner

insurance for ourselves and the camper. Just two weeks before our departure date I passed my viva. Somehow we also found time to throw in a surprise wedding at our leaving party just ten days before our flight to St. John's, Newfoundland (at only 5.5 hours flight time from London, this amazing little town should be on everyone's bucket list!).

We'd been planning this trip for a very long time, and we had both dreamt about driving the Pan-American highway before we'd even met. Now it was finally happening! We had shipped our old fire truck from Liverpool to Halifax on the east coast of Canada.

"We could easily spend our entire trip in Canada and still wouldn't be able to explore all its breath-taking wilderness"

From there we drove across Canada to the west coast and up to Alaska. The plan is to follow the west coast from there until, about 18 months later, we hit Ushuaia in Argentina, the southernmost city in the world.

It's easy to think you understand that Canada is a big country by looking at the map, but we've now realised that only by driving from one coast to the other can you really appreciate just how big

it really is. We've taken about three months to drive coast to coast and put about 18,000 extra kilometres on the clock of our trusty van. In between, we've often felt that we could easily spend our entire trip in this amazing country and still wouldn't be able to explore all its breath-taking wilderness. There are some great cities too, but it's the end-of-the-road communities and sitting by a campfire (many

lit with pages from my thesis, very therapeutic) in the middle of nowhere in the Yukon that have left the biggest impressions on us. We've met a lot of amazing people too, and travelling in an old fire truck definitely helps. It's a great conversation starter.

Late in October, on our way south from Alaska along the west coast, we hit black ice in northern BC and tipped over the van in a ditch. Dream over? Unfortunately, the damage to the vehicle was pretty substantial. We had crashed in the middle of nowhere and needed to get towed about 700 km to the nearest garage that could help. Two months later we're still waiting for spare parts from Germany.

Fed up with the relentless rain in Vancouver, we hired a car to explore the west coast of the USA whilst we're waiting. The trip must go on! We're very sad not to be in our van for this part of our

"We've met a lot of amazing people too, and travelling in an old fire truck definitely helps. It's a great conversation starter"

trip, but once it's back on the road, we'll head down to Mexico and pick up our trip from there. For now we're just excited to explore some more of America's great National Parks.

If you're interested to find out whether we're back in our fire truck or want to hear some more stories from on the road, check out @guidiary on facebook and Instagram.



Looking down on Dawson City from the Dome // Konstantin Holzner



STAND

imperialcollegeunion.org/elections

#leadthechange

Nominations are rolling in for The Leadership Elections 2018 with strong interest being shown in a range of positions. If you haven't already seen the options available for you to run in this election, visit

imperialcollegeunion.org/elections, read about each role, and choose the one that's right for you. You have until midnight, Sunday 25 February to stand.

Nudge a Friend

If you know someone who'd be great for a particular role, let them know using our Send a Nudge feature. It's an online form that notifies another student that you think they are suited for a position and should run. You can even do it anonymously. Just go to imperialcollegeunion.org/nudge.

Timetable

Nominations close: 23:59, Sunday 25 February

Candidates meeting: Noon, Monday 26 February

Training for candidates: 26 February - 2 March

Manifesto deadline: 17:00, Thursday 1 March

Candidates revealed and campaigning begins: Noon, Friday 2 March

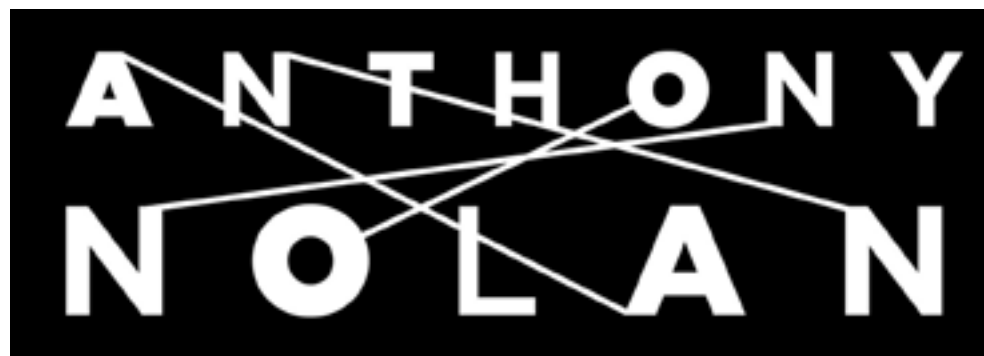
Voting opens: Noon, Friday 2 March

Voting closes: Noon, Friday 9 March

Results Party: Evening, Friday 9 March

Stand for a position now at imperialcollegeunion.org/elections.

Volunteering Opportunity



We're looking for student volunteers to help people sign up to a stem cell register on Friday 23 February. The Union is teaming up with blood cancer charity, Anthony Nolan, as part of Student Volunteering Week which runs from 19 - 23 February.

You'll be helping to run stalls throughout the day, swabbing people's cheeks, promoting the charity and encouraging sign-ups. We only require a few hours of your time so volunteers will not need to stay all day (unless you want to!).

Every 20 minutes, someone in the UK is diagnosed with blood cancer. By helping people sign up to the Anthony Nolan register, you may be able to save someone's life! You can sign up at imperialcollegeunion.org/volunteering or send us an email at volunteering@imperial.ac.uk.

Inaugural Lecture



The Union is launching a lecture series, with the inaugural event set for Tuesday 20 February 2018 at the Pippard Lecture Theatre, Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus.

International Risk Expert, Lloyd Figgins, will be hosting a talk and Q&A on the secrets of safe travel. The event is free but ticketed, so go to imperialcollegeunion.org/whats-on to book your space.

Lloyd Figgins is a former police officer, soldier and expedition leader who has worked in over 80 countries, including some of the world's more hostile and remote regions. For more information, contact Tom Bacarese-Hamilton, Deputy President (Clubs & Societies) at dpcs@imperial.ac.uk.

CLUBS & SOCIETIES

felix.clubsandsocieties@imperial.ac.uk

IRISH SOCIETY – DID SOMEONE SAY CEILIDH?

Last Friday, Irish Society went to The Ceilidh Club in Camden. It was an amazing night filled with dancing, alcohol, and sweat.

So, what is a ceilidh/céilí? (I'll get on to the different spellings later) The easiest definition is that it's the most fun you can have on a Friday night while still getting a decent amount of sleep! It's a traditional form of dance where you dance in either a pair or small group with a "caller" on the stage telling you how to do the moves. You'll start off slow, with the music getting faster and faster and everyone getting very sweaty! There's always a real mix of abilities, but the dances are easy enough that even if you have two left feet you can easily follow. And even if you do mess up, so many other people will also be making mistakes that it won't even matter. Besides, most of the time you're fairly tipsy (or

very tipsy if you have an alcohol tolerance like mine) from going to the pub beforehand or visiting the bar downstairs for sustenance, and most of the other dancers will be the same, so no one cares if you mess up – really, we recommend a bit of freestyling.

For those of you who don't know, this fun event is found in both Irish and Scottish traditions, with the Irish spelling céilí and the Scots ceilidh. Technically speaking the one in Camden is a Scottish version with kilts and free shortbread at the end, but the actual dancing and music is pretty much the same. And who doesn't want free shortbread?

Admittedly, most students aren't initially excited at the prospect of attending a folk dancing event. Which is fair enough – many of our members who had never been to a ceilidh before were incredibly sceptical and took a lot of convincing to attend our first ceilidh last term. But all of those who were uncertain yet still came to our first

one, were among the first to buy tickets when we went again this second time – and I think that speaks for itself!

If you're currently feeling sad because you've missed out on such an amazing event – there's no need to worry, because Irish Society will be going to another ceilidh soon! All the details are on our Facebook page, and next time we'll be going to one in South Kensington. To add to all this excitement, it will also be St Patrick's Day so this is an extra excuse to join us for drinks and dancing. Everyone is welcome to come along, whether you're Irish, Scottish, or just looking to have a great night! (But seriously, half of our members aren't even Irish at all.)

Emily Daborn

§

KINKY KLUB – IMPERIAL'S NEWEST CSP

With more than 350 student clubs at Imperial, it might seem that there

aren't any interests not catered to by a CSP. This isn't the case, however, and each year sees the creation of a number of clubs, driven by passionate individuals who guide their club from conception to fruition. One of the newest clubs to be placed in the New Activities Incubator is Kinky Klub, described as "a non-judgemental place where you can ask questions about the kinky world we live in". We sat down with Chair Alexandra Dakin to chat about the story behind Kinky Klub, and its increasing popularity on campus:

What was the driving motivation behind the creation of Kinky Klub?

Well I am a very open person by nature, so talking about sex comes very naturally to me. But lately I came to realise that there isn't a place where people can go and ask questions about what goes on behind closed doors in a safe environment. I have found that

once you start talking to someone about what they like and what they dislike the conversation becomes easy very quickly – it's just about getting over that first hurdle of embarrassment or shyness. So I decided to create a society where that first hurdle no longer exists – where people can express themselves freely without the fear of judgement.

How have you found the process of creating the club? Was it an easy journey, or did you feel you had to justify yourself quite a lot?

The waiting period after sending in the application was quite long, and things seemed to keep getting pushed back. I honestly never thought the Union would allow it in the first place but when the second stage came around the only thing they were concerned about was how much money the society might make! They never asked for any special justification – in fact they got excited by it!

What are the main activities of Kinky Klub going to be this year?

Well our first big event will be a Sex Shop Crawl around Soho. We also want to get speakers in to do talks, as well as introducing people to the alternative nightlife of London. I have also had many requests to do a kinky tour to Amsterdam, so hopefully that will go ahead too.

What do you think the main challenges will be for Kinky Klub?

The main challenge I think will be to not get a name for ourselves as being the 'orgy club' – obviously if people want to have an orgy that's up to them but that's not what our society is exclusively for. I can give you tips for sure, but I ain't organising one!

You've already got over 70 members – are you surprised at the Klub's popularity?

I have to say I was really surprised by the support the society received from the get go. I thought I would at least hit a little bit of resistance, as nothing like this has ever been done at Imperial before, but instead people have been so excited by our societies creation. It just goes to show that everyone is a little kinky on the inside!

Tom Bacarese-Hamilton, Deputy President (Clubs and Societies), told *Felix*: We're an inclusive community at the Union, we have all kinds of different student groups and we're happy to support students to explore their interests. We look forward to reading their risk assessment, and helping them have an impact on the student body."



Irish Soc having a ball – make sure to catch their next ceilidh/céilí soon! // Irish Society

CLUBS & SOCIETIES

felix.clubsandsocieties@imperial.ac.uk

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY – IT’S EASY BEE-ING GREEN

Being Green should be something you strive to do all year round, but if you don’t know how then Imperial’s Green Week is a good place to start! The Environmental Society has an exciting calendar of activities planned from the 12th to the 18th of February aiming to inform and help you to lead a more sustainable lifestyle. With bike workshops, vegan food tastings, clothes swaps, and film screenings you’ll be sure to find something to do.

On Monday and Thursday we’ll be running bike repair workshops so you can fix your bike (for free!) and also learn how to do it yourself. If painting is your thing, we’re also organising an art workshop with LeoSoc. Tuesday will see a film screening of *Black Ice* about Greenpeace activists protesting the first-ever oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean. In addition to having members of Greenpeace joining us on the evening, we are extremely lucky to have one

of the Arctic 30 with us to answer your questions following the film!

On Wednesday there will be a Marine Conservation Society information stall during the day followed by a film screening of *Chasing Corals*, in the evening.

On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday we’ll be running various workshops in our Secret Garden. Our Secret Garden is where we keep our bees and plant our vegetables, and we’re always looking for people who want to help maintaining it. It’s also a wonderful place to escape the regular hustle and bustle of London!

Finally, Friday we’ll be holding a clothes swap in Metric. If you’re looking to unload some of those jumpers you’ve outgrown, or want to look fresh but without the pain of making your wallet lighter then come and find us there!

Aside from Green Week, we have a number of campaigns running with the aim of making Imperial a more sustainable and green campus. Fashion Friendly is our



Green Green Green! // Environmental Society

campaign to raise awareness about the pollution associated with clothes production, and also the human exploitation involved. Our campaign Chasing Corals is inspired by the film of the same name and encourages people to reduce their plastic consumption to avoid it going into our	oceans.	Many people associate being green with being vegetarian or vegan, and for good reason: animal husbandry has significant detrimental impacts to the environment. Our Less Meat Less Methane campaign teaches people about these by organising a Less Meat Awareness	week and petitioning the Union for Meat Free Mondays. We also run a Food Co-op where you can buy locally sourced food with little markup.	You can find the Facebook page for the Green Week at www.facebook.com/Imperialgreenweek/ . We’re looking for volunteers, so if you want to help us out with any of the events contact us at esoc@ic.ac.uk .
			In short, there’s a lots of ways of getting involved with us and helping to make Imperial a university you can be proud of having attended!	

Seb Gonzato

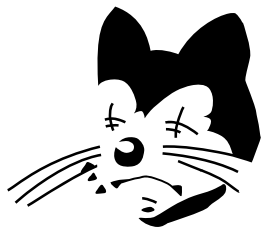
PHOENIX

Imperial’s arts magazine returns!

We are interested in:

- Poetry
- Prose
- Photography
- Fine arts
- And more...

If you’re interested, please email phoenix@imperial.ac.uk



Hangman



"That's over. It's cancelled" // Imperial College/ICU

Imperial College Union bans student elections

HANGMAN

Negafelix
Editor-in-Chief

The Union hopes the move will outrage students enough that they actually demand to vote this year.

Imperial College Union have launched this year's leadership elections by banning all forms of democratic process.

The move, which came as a surprise to the few students who pay attention to elections, follows a report commissioned by the Union earlier this year on how they can increase election participation. The

publication – entitled *The Ballot or the Bullet: Why the best thing we can do for democracy is destroy it* – argued that student demand for democracy would only increase if elections were banned.

Professor Mark McGrath, Chair of European History at the University of Leicester, was the lead author of the study. He told *Hangman*: "In putting together the report, we did a great deal of research into students. We found a clear pattern of behaviour: students would never use a service that was on offer, but as soon as you decided to withdraw it, they'd all suddenly start bitching. We therefore felt that banning student elections would mean everyone would suddenly pay

attention to them".

Hedwig Grantly, Imperial College Union's 'Deeper Democracy Deliverer', told *Hangman*

"Students have threatened to start a change.org petition if the elections are not reinstated"

that the move, though "bold", would "ensure a greater participation than ever": "If Joni Mitchell has taught us anything, it's that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.

By banning democratic engagement, we believe students will suddenly start demanding the right to vote."

"Already this morning we've been inundated with complaints from Union Council members, who say we're undermining the fundamental principles of student democracy. Once this outrage trickles down to the students at large, and riots break out in Metric, we'll reopen nominations and watch them flock to the ballot box."

The move has already provoked a fierce reaction from students. Julius Putnam, a final year chemistry undergraduate, told *Hangman*: "I've never really cared about the Union, and I don't think I've actually ever voted

in previous elections. But not they're trying to remove something I don't even use I'm going to fight to the death until elections

"As Joni Mitchell teaches us, you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone"

are reinstated."

Louise Prufrock, head of Imperial Labour Society, called the move an "outrage for democracy". "As a student political group, we are in disbelief

at this clear trampling of democratic rights," she told *Hangman*, "we're going to use every tool at our disposal to reverse the decision. We'll even start a change.org petition if we have to"

Hangman expected the decision to be welcomed by members of FashSoc, but one of their representatives told us "for the last time, we're fashion society, not the alt-right."

Other students seemed less affected by the decision, however: when *Hangman* spoke to students in the College Cafe about the move, who said "what's the Union? Is it the same as the College?", "I don't know what a DPFS is", and "please leave me alone."

HANGMAN

negafelix@imperial.ac.uk

Pensions to be directly tied to SACAs nominations

HANGMAN

Negafelix

Editor-in-Chief

The staff members with the greatest number of SACAs nominations will get to keep their pensions

Staff members with the most nominations in the Student Academic Choice Awards (SACAs) will see their pensions reinstated, in the latest development over staff pensions.

Academic staff up and down the country are set to go on strike later this

month and in March, following disputes about pension pay. Following deadlocked talks between the trade unions and senior College management last week, Imperial College Union have been working with the College to try and come up with a solution.

Earlier this week, Kyle Fandergoose, Vice Provost (Scab Employment), announced the changes. In an email sent out to all Imperial staff, Fandergoose said that the changes were “a fair solution to the drawn out negotiations”. He told *Hangman*: “at Imperial, we pride ourselves on world-class research and cutting edge technological developments. However,

as a staff member pointed out to me the other day, we’ve also got students who need teaching. I don’t know if this is a new thing or not... nevertheless, this new method means that some staff will get to keep their pensions, while those who students don’t like or know will bear the brunt of costs. It seems very fair.”

Neil Babcock, the Union’s Deputy President (Edutainment), told *Hangman* “for the past half-decade we’ve been giving out our famous mugs to those who are nominated for SACAs – so well known now that they’re almost an Imperial institution. This year, however, we wanted to

do a bit more to recognise our wonderful staff – as well as a mug, those who receive the most nominations will also have the added benefit of a sense of financial security post-retirement.”

One staff member was unhappy with the changes, telling *Hangman*: “it’s bad enough that I have to deal with students complaining about their late feedback and unclear marking guidance, but now I have to be actively nice to them? Screw that.” Other reactions ranged from “students, what students?” to “wait, I’ve been supposed to be teaching?”

Some staff seemed happy with the changes, however. Dr Jess Syntess,



Mugs mugs mugs // ICU

from the Department of Materials, told *Hangman*: “these changes make perfect sense. It’s about time we recognised how central teaching is to our roles, and how much we enjoy spending time with our students. I really value all my wonderful

students, and hope they’re reading this. If any of them wanted to make a SACAs nomination for me, it only take a couple of minutes. Please. I’m only a few months away from retirement. Please. I need this.”



ARIES

This week you’re Ipsos MORI, and for the love of God just leave me alone I’m not going to fill out the fucking NSS.



TAURUS

This week you achieve peace in the Middle East, all through a Facebook live debate you organised that was watched by 30 people. That’s all they were waiting for.



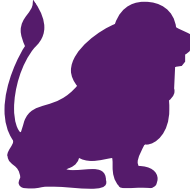
GEMINI

This week you’re upset that foosball wasn’t picked to be the headliner at Varsity. There’s always next year I guess.



CANCER

This week you have a curly-fries-induced fever dream and nominate yourself for all the Union roles. You’ll probably still get RON-ed for all of them.



LEO

This week you’re RON, and you can’t wait for your time in the spotlight!



VIRGO

This week you take a leaf from Bruno Mars’ book in the hope that your crushing mediocrity with be unduly rewarded. You get a third.



LIBRA

This week a DMC after ACC night leads you to make some fascinating insights about how you can finally take control of your own life. You then pass out and forget them.



SCORPIO

This week the last shred of enthusiasm you had for 2018 has finally faded away. Welcome to reality.



SAGITTARIUS

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Morbi a metus ipsum. Pellentesque et accumsan enim. (Horoscope brought to you by Imperial College Union).



CAPRICORN

This week you steal the patty from your friend’s post-ACC Burger King when her back is turned. You absolute monster.



AQUARIUS

This week you’re the horoscopes writer, and you’ve only managed to write eleven of these fuckers before ACC night.

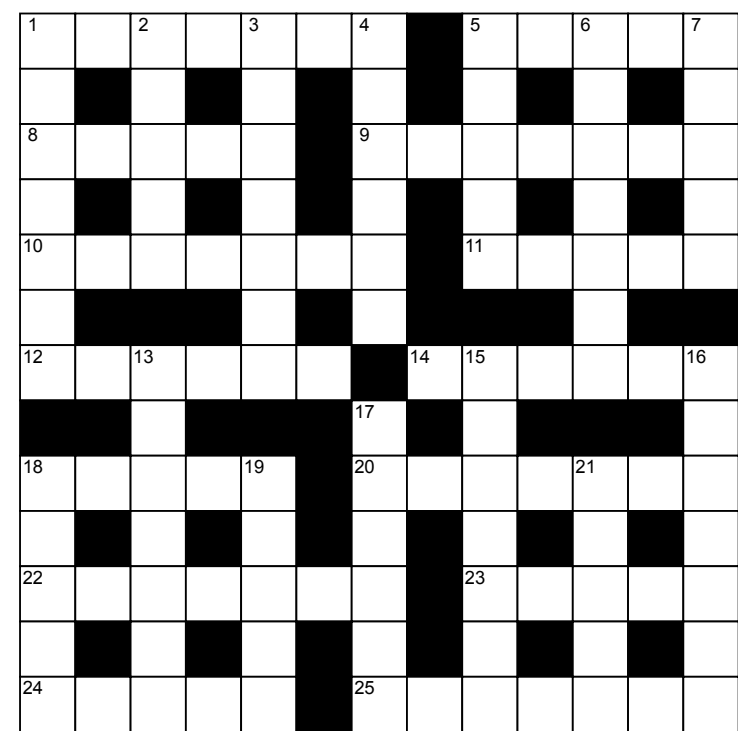


PISCES

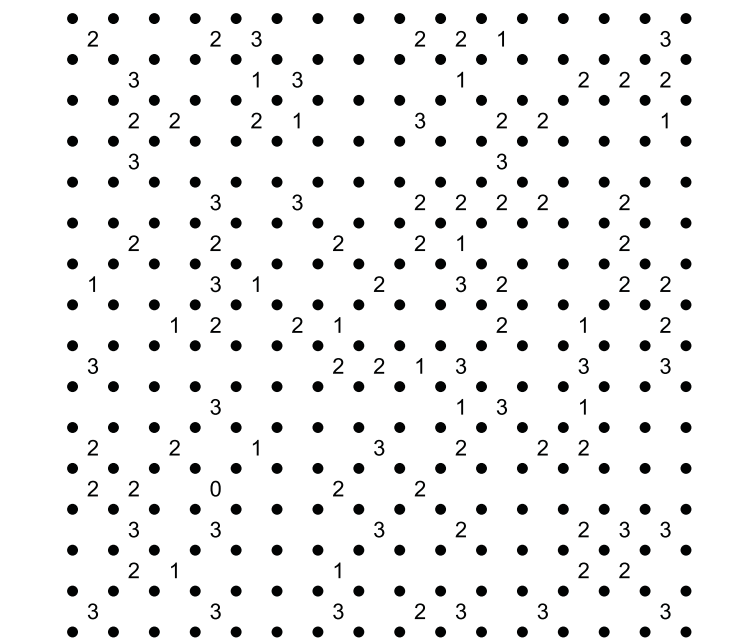
This week the lunar eclipse will have a knock-on effect on your work life, while Mercury’s retrograde means big plans should be put on hold. Perhaps put off asking for that promotion.

PUZZLES

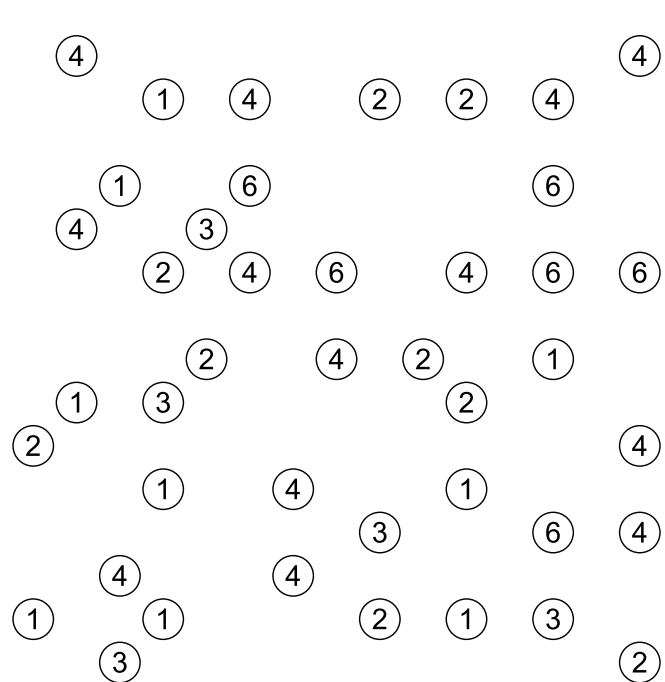
fsudoku@imperial.ac.uk



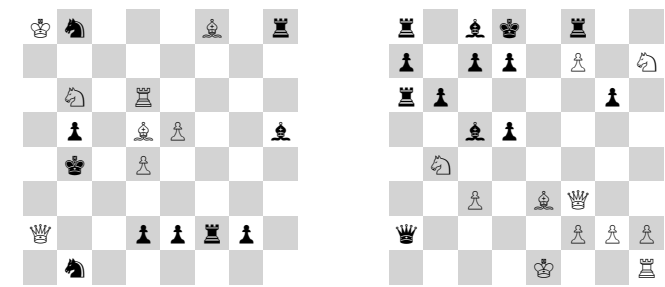
- Across**
1. Gratified (7)
5. Criminal (5)
8. 200 yards (5)
9. Canada bordering state (7)
10. Brought about (7)
11. Scottish economist (5)
12. Breathe in (6)
14. Affix (6)
18. Entice (5)
20. Garments (7)
22. Dry umbrella (7)
23. Modify (5)
24. Snug (5)
25. Greatly feared (7)
- Down**
1. *Tosca* composer (7)
2. Waned (5)
3. Clients (anag.) (7)
4. Apportion (6)
5. Shapes (5)
6. Pride-ful (7)
7. Bedpost scar (5)
13. Monotonous (7)
15. Desecrate (7)
16. Wished for (7)
17. Climbed (6)
18. French chocolate bar (5)
19. 18d (5)
21. Not 16 (5)



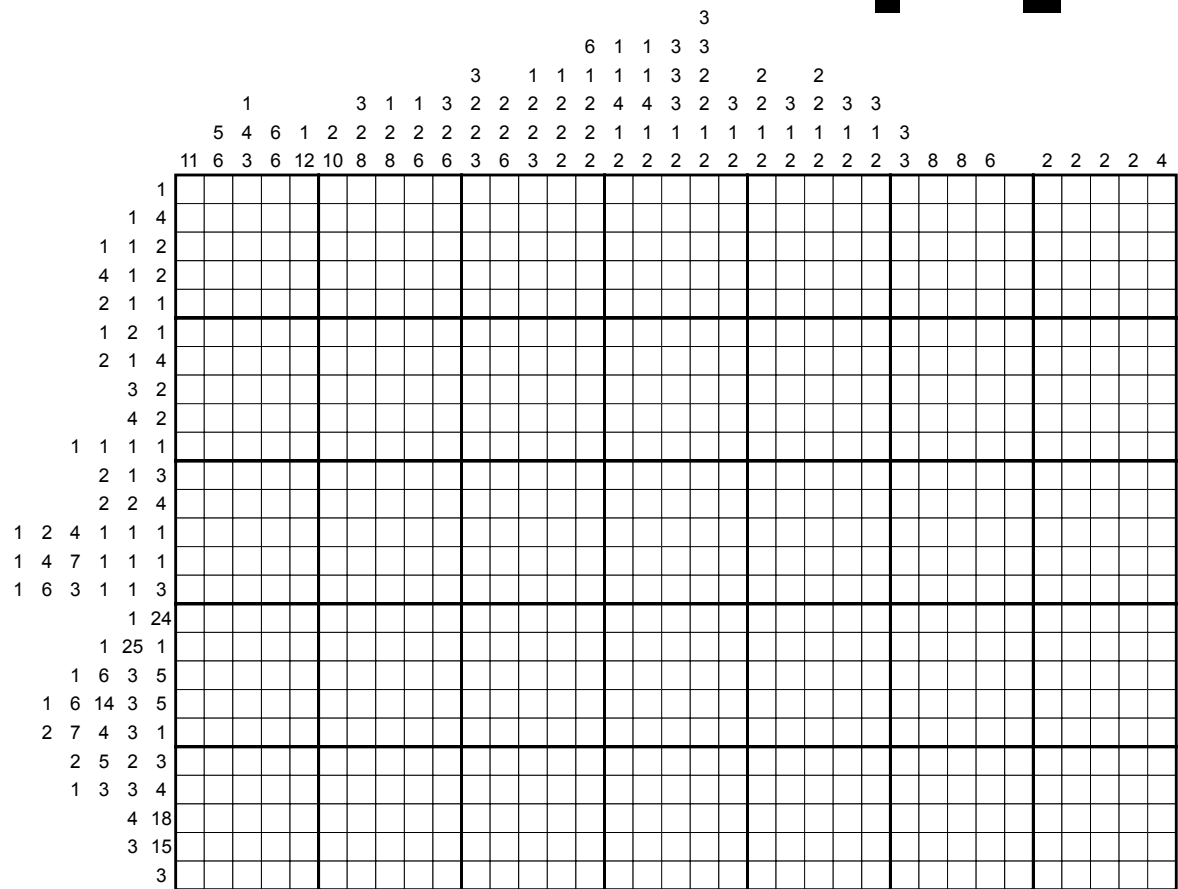
- Slitherlink**
Draw a single, non-crossing loop by connecting adjacent points. The number in each cell indicates how many sides are closed.
- Nonogram**
Fill in neighbouring cells in each row/column to make blocks. Each block is separated by one or more empty cells. The numbers indicate the ordered lengths of the blocks to appear in that row/column.



Bridges
Connect all the circles with single or double bridges. The numbers indicate how many lines leave each circle. No lines can cross and all circles must have a path between them.



Chess
White to move first in both problems. Forced checkmate in 2 moves, left, and 3 moves, right.

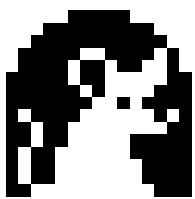


FUCWIT		
1	Nonogram of Ketamine	224
2	Q	164
3	Puzzle Snuggle Cuddle Couple	159
4	TioUdin	154
7	OK	118
8	Doctor Sudokwho	116
9	Luncheon Pals	112
13	Abelian Grapes	72
17	25Bee	48
25	Konmai	24
26	yHt	15
27	Snails	14

Send in your solutions to fsudoku@imperial.ac.uk before midday Wednesday!

Points Available	
Crossword	4
Bridges	3
Chess	6
Slitherlink	4
Nonogram	4
Total	21

Solutions



SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Netflix and Hill

Cross Country & Athletics go for a mud bath at Ally Pally (no video streaming was involved).

SPORTS

Jack McKeon
ICXCAC Writer

On Wednesday 24th January, it was LSE's turn to host the 4th (and penultimate) LUCA XC race of the year at Alexandra Palace. Leaving a rainy Beit at 1pm, 30+ dishevelled Imperial students took the Piccadilly line to Wood Green before ascending the long hill up to the café at Ally Pally. Their journey saw a long jump over a deep puddle, some serious elevation, and a spectacular view of London.

After the standard pre-race bathroom trip and wait for weather to improve, the team descended to the start line where a mud bath awaited them. Plastic bags were immediately deployed in

an attempt to keep their belongings dry. Alternatively, belongings were covered by jackets and hung on trees; any attempt to fight the harsh weather conditions. Following a

“Following a quick ‘warm up’, lots of optimism, and a beaming team photo, they joined over 100 other students”

quick ‘warm up’, lots of optimism, and a beaming team photo, they joined 100+ other students also ready to tackle the tough course which was approximately three laps/6.6km

for Men and two laps/4.4km for Women. Each lap saw a flat start, a gradual incline, and a rapid decline towards the finish. The course contained trail, concrete, and grass but was mostly mucky water.

It was classic XC. For most of the runners this was a tough and lonely mental battle, with little support along the way, but this didn't stop them looking on the bright side. There were comical face-plants on show and despite the somewhat dangerous finish, students managed to slide down the hill greeted by roaring cheers of delight.

First home for the Imperial Men was 3rd placed Oliver Newton in a time of 24:29, followed by 6th placed Harry Scriven in 25:23 and Henry Hart in 7th with a time of 25:34. Some other impressive male performances included Fergus Johnson

(26:39), Kyrill Mikhaylov (26:55), Charlie McFadzean (26:59), and Men's Captain Lewis Jackson (27:13), leaving

“It was a successful day for Imperial's Women, with them retaining their position at the top of the league”

them second in the LUCA league just behind UCL. It was a successful day for Imperial's Women too, with them retaining their position at the top of the league but their lead over UCL was cut from 9 points to just 4 with one race to go! They had 4 strong top 10 finishers:



Less clean: Rahul finishes the race after adopting an unconventional technique for descending hills – belly-sliding // Oliver Siddons

5th Sarah Johnson (18:37), 6th Kate Olding (18:50), 8th Women's Captain Anna Lawson (19:15) and 9th Club Captain Alex Mundell (19:20).

Following the success, there was an impressive mudslide performance, compulsory cake consumption and attempts to clean up in dirty puddles from Imperial's athletes. For some, a well-deserved cheeky Nandos was in order followed by an uncomfortable tube ride back to South Kensington with lots of funny looks from rather less muddy members of the general public. After quick but soothing shower, the runners continued the celebrations for Karaoke at the Chelsea Pensioner with some quality singing on display. Rumour has it that there was an impressive (and exclusive) 30-minute performance from

a recently formed Oasis tribute band – they are set to release their cover album soon.

“Following the success, there was an impressive mudslide performance and cake consumption”

Finally, the jovial atmosphere diffused to the Slug (where else?) – it was a pleasure as always. A day to remember for ICXC. For more information about Cross Country & Athletics, email run@ic.ac.uk.



Clean: the relatively mud/doping-free ICXC team pre-race // Oliver Siddons

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

ICSM Water Polo hit the streets (and pools) of Lisbon

In their largest tour to date, the team take on matches, sangria, and bubble football.



ICSMWP hit the pool // ICSMWP

SPORTS

Rebecca Ward

ICSMWP Vice Captain

On Friday 19th January 42 members of ICSM Water Polo met at West Brompton Station giddy with excitement for our 2018 international tour to Lisbon. The journey to Lisbon was long, and not without hiccups, but eventually we found ourselves in our natural habitat – poolside, ready to face what Lisbon’s university had to offer. Despite this being a friendly match, intended to be just a warm up for the competitive one we had planned for the Saturday, we were faced by Lisbon’s finest water polo players. Our social team stood poolside; intrepid with fear as Lisbon’s ‘friendly’ team rolled out their gym mats and pulled out their resistance bands for a warm-up our 2nd team would consider a full-on workout. Nonetheless our

social members pulled through and played their best. As this was a friendly match – intended as just a preliminary training session for Saturday – the score for this match was not recorded. As the social members played our first team trained on the other end of the pool.

After training we ventured back to our hostel, where we greeted by some lovely staff who gave us pizza and sangria which was much needed! We then ventured as a team to the bars as a team social in exploring some of Lisbon’s famous nightlife.

The team awoke on the Saturday excited to play, the hostel provided a large complimentary breakfast and our first team took the opportunity to carb load. We then had a few hours before we needed to travel back to the pool. Many members of the team took the opportunity to go for a short walk and explore the local area, while others napped and prepared for the game.

The game commenced

shortly after 1pm and we played in running quarters. Despite a strong lead of 2-0 in the first five minutes of the game we soon realised our team was exhausting quickly and that subbing in and out was crucial to ensure our team didn’t tire too much. Despite the change in tactics by the end of the first quarter the score was a draw at 2-2.

A quick team chat in between quarters about subbing tactics and ensuring we swam back quickly when the ball changed hands helped to change the game around for a minute or two as we scored and were playing well; however the Lisbon team were strong and were putting up a good fight so by the halfway mark the game had turned around with a score of 7-3 to Lisbon.

The social team from the sidelines began to cheer, and their support kept the morale high. One of our alumni, Laurence Suckling, then made a surprise appearance in the viewing area and we knew

we then had to give our best and not lose hope.

The first few minutes of the third quarter were uneventful with neither team scoring or conceding. Then in our possession Laurence began to chant “Leo.. Leo” and Leo, spurred on by the support, swam up and was passed the ball, making an amazing goal to win title of man of the

match. The excitement was short lived as we finished the quarter with a score of 10-4 to Lisbon.

The final quarter we were determined to put up a strong fight and we played strong until the end. Even though the final score was 15-9 to Lisbon we ended the game in high spirits as we knew we had played really well against a very strong and prepared team.

Following a photo the social team were keen to jump in and play from where we left off the previous day; the first teams were exhausted and keen to shower for our evening social with Lisbon.

Later that evening we met the Lisbon team at a restaurant where we enjoyed a three course meal and wine with the team. We discussed water polo – and of course less serious matters – before heading back to the bars with Lisbon’s team as our guide. We returned in the early hours and enjoyed a long and much needed lie in on the Sunday.

On Sunday we had

originally planned some land-based training. However as many of our team were feeling worse for wear we decided to do a long walk as a team and stretch out our muscles from the previous days. We walked from the hostel to Lisbon’s famous Oceanarium.

In the evening we had planned a team bonding activity – Bubble Football!

This was really fun and a great opportunity for our social team and our firsts team to bond and play in mixed groups. It involved us playing football while in a Zorbing ball. It was incredibly tiring and definitely compensated for our failed gym set in the morning.

On Monday morning, we packed up and got prepared to leave. We travelled to the Lisbon Time Out market and enjoyed a large meal together where we could discuss the events of tour – the biggest tour we have ever been on, and our most successful to date!



ICSMWP looking fly on the short // ICSMWP

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Women’s 1st Team Fencing: Always on point

Women’s 1st Team Fencing come second in the Southern Premier League winning four out of five matches .

SPORTS

Ella Rice
ICU Fencing President

On the 27th/28th January, the Imperial Women’s 1st Team Fencing, travelled to Hampstead Heath to fence for over 15 hours in the Southern Premier League weekend. We competed against the 1st teams from Oxford , Cambridge , UCL , Surrey and Bristol. We unfortunately started with our only loss of the weekend – to Oxford. Despite a close match in epee and a win in sabre, their strong foil team managed to swing the match to an overall win. That loss motivated



The women’s team fenced their way to the top //ICU Fencing

us to work even harder in the next match against Cambridge. Giulia Mandelli managed to secure the final point in a hard fought foil match to

secure a win of 45-44, and despite a close loss in the epee, Niamh Spence led the sabre team to a large lead win, resulting in a comfortable victory over

Cambridge

The last match on Saturday extending into our 9th continuous hour of fencing was against Bristol. Undeterred by

narrowly losing the first match we went on to smash the rest of the matches, gaining a wide lead and finishing with a strong win. Sunday brought about the closest match of the weekend against Surrey, where after some sneaky tactics from Surrey, we were at a draw entering the final round of epee. The match was extremely nerve-racking, however the experience and determination of Francesca Cavallo brought an emotional win home for the Imperial Women’s 1s. Our final match of the weekend was against UCL and we entered the match exhausted yet determined. Although starting out as a close match, we finished with a comfortable win of 130-123.

Overall we won four out of five matches placing us 2nd in the Southern Premier League and putting us in a commanding position for the upcoming knockout Championship rounds. Despite being one of the youngest teams on the circuit, we truly pushed ourselves to the absolute limit and produced a fantastic result. Over my four years on Women’s 1s, this is the best that a team has achieved. The whole team showed incredible determination, endurance and performance. Finally, thank you to Sherry Xu for being an incredible Womens 1s captain with unparalleled motivational team talks, tactics, and support.

Mens 1st display a rapier wit

SPORTS

Michael Gillan
Mens 1st Captain

Like the Women’s team, the Men’s 1st Team Fencing also spent the weekend fencing in Hampstead Heath. Our league consisted of Oxford 1s, Cambridge 1s, UCL 1s, Bristol 1s, and us. Our first match of the weekend was against UCL, a match we needed to win if we were to avoid being in the relegation spot. Firstly, our incredibly strong foil team anchored by Guillermo Delberque carried us to an easy lead of 45-24. This was followed by UCL winning epee by a single point but an exceptional performance by Matei

Grama lead the team to a win overall. Imperial 128 – UCL 114. Our next match was against Cambridge. Just as we were about to start, an old injury of James Odger’s, our strongest epeeist, put him out of the match. We persevered, achieving a close win in epee, and a close loss in foil. In the final round of sabre, we were cursed with injury again when Chris Erickson suffered a hand injury that rendered him unable to fence, and with no substitute available, we conceded the bout. Two injuries making what could’ve been a decisive win into a very close defeat. Imperial 120 - Cambridge 125. Our final match of the Saturday was against Bristol. We began with foil again, with the skill of

our foil team giving us a 7 point lead going into epee. With Guillermo filling in for James, we struggled against an experienced team, losing epee. Despite an incredible performance from Guillermo filling in for Chris this time, sabre was no better. Imperial 103 - Bristol 128. We all arrived Sunday morning refreshed and hopeful. We had only one match against Oxford, and we were confident we could win, despite being 3 fencers short of our full team. We began with foil, and a strong showing from all fencers: we foil with a 5 point lead. Sabre was next, where we pulled it back and closed the gap to 10 points. The final match of foil was close the entire way through, interrupted only briefly by one of Oxford fencers ripping



Fencey McFenceFence //ICU Fencing

his mask off to throw up. We entered the final bout leading 40-37 and needed to get to 45 before they get to 41. It now all lies on Filip Anies who takes it to an excruciatingly close

44-40 but just missed the crucial last point. The final score: Imperial 125 - Oxford 127. We finished 5th in the league, ahead of UCL, and considering the

injuries we faced and the fencers we were missing, we are incredibly proud of our performance. Time to prepare ourselves for the Cup!

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Immortals squeeze past the Pythons

American Football take an injury-affected squad to Cambridge, but still manage to come out on top

SPORTS

Ben Heath
Imperial Immortals Coach

12

Imperial Immortals

V

6

Cambridge Pythons

The Immortals reignited their season in a thrilling contest at Cambridge that went to double-overtime, condemning their hosts to a fourth straight defeat.

In a sport where rosters frequently have 30+ players at university level, an injury-ravaged Imperial took a squad of 19 to Cambridge, soon reduced to 18 with an unfortunate injury in warmups.

Unfazed by being outnumbered, Imperial dominated on both sides of the ball in the opening half. The Immortals defense stifled the Python's running game,

with Jacob "more MVPs than socials" Lamb and Dom "have you heard my mixtape?" DeSilva giving the opposing running backs no room to breathe.

The revamped offense also took the game to Cambridge, with Ben "skips first and goes for the home run" O'Brien, Harry "NaCl" Lawrence and Tom "Mr chripse your ex" Smith consistently carving through. Lawrence would find the

"The revamped offense took the game to Cambridge"

end zone with a scramble for a 6-0 lead, and only uncharacteristic errors would stop the Immortals from going into halftime winning by a greater margin.

The offensive and de-



Squad goals // Imperial Immortals

fensive line were winning the battle in the trenches, with veteran Daniel "4 more years" Grumberg leading the way.

The second half saw the Pythons bite back, however. An error on special teams lead to excellent field position for Cambridge for the opening drive of the third quarter, who duly converted it into a touchdown of their own to tie the game

at 6-6.

The Immortals would reply with a big drive of their own, driving the ball to the Pythons' goal line. To their credit, Cambridge stepped up their game, and a big goal line stand would keep the scores even as the Imperial offense failed to punch it in.

Inexperience and a lack of numbers began to take its toll on Imperial as the game wore on, however

the desire to win was still there as the Immortals continued to make big plays. One highlight was Anuj "loses to green boi" Mehra putting a crunching hit on their key player, a move that rejuvenated the whole Immortals squad.

And it was in double-overtime where the Immortals would strike. Lawrence connecting with Lukas "nickname not appropriate for Felix"

Hann to send the Imperial side line into rapture.

The teams will meet again at Harlington in two weeks' time.

Become Immortal today and come play American Football for the best university team in London.

Contact Immortals at american.football@ic.ac.uk

Imperial 1st XV lose to Brunel in tough contest

SPORTS

Nick Ustaran-Anderegg
ICURFC Press Officer

12

ICURFC 1st XV

V

15

Brunel 1st XV

Last Wednesday marked the return of ICURFC 1st XV to rugby after Christmas, in which they took on Brunel University. Following

a close loss to Brunel in November, last time these teams met, Imperial were determined not to let history repeat itself. The cold, windy and wet conditions at Harlington couldn't dampen our spirits. We started strongly, and our forwards were able to truck the ball up into Brunel's 22. Quick hands from flyhalf Harry Allingham allowed Alex Amato to run over for an easy try. With James Field's conversion we were 7-0 up early in the game. Dropped balls and poor discipline prevented us from gaining attacking

momentum for the rest of the first half. Brunel kept

"The wet and windy conditions didn't dampen our spirits"

us busy in defence and made effective use of the strong winds when kicking for touch. A dangerous Brunel attack was stopped by fresher Nick Ustaran-Anderegg, who quickly

got up and turned over the ball after making a tackle. Brunel's talkative inside centre was also soon introduced to the ground when he tried to run through Isaac Bailey and was, less than politely, made to sit down. Unfortunately, our eager defence gave away a penalty for being offside and Brunel made the score 7-3 from the tee.

The second half started exactly how the first half hadn't. The team had switched off. Holes in defence started to appear and IC failed to keep possession of the ball. This allowed Brunel to

score two tries in quick succession, making the score 7-15. However, all hope was not yet lost. Line breaks and Big Carries from Big T, Big Nate and Big Shuz inspired the team to turn the game around. Connor Gilligan came off the bench and made an immediate impact by picking up one of Brunel's players and dangling him off the floor like a child, legs flailing and all. After many, many phases of play, five metres from Brunel's try line, Toby was finally able to penetrate Brunel and score a try. The score was now

12-15 with five minutes left to play. Momentum started to build for us and Brunel were tiring, but ultimately, we had left it too late. The final whistle blew, and a tired Imperial team left Harlington knowing they could have done more. Fortunately, the weather cleared up in evening, and the entirety of ICURFC was able to tee off for a round of pub golf in some of London's finest drinking holes. By the time we reached The Slug, the afternoon's bad memories had almost been forgotten.