



Felix

The Student Newspaper of Imperial College London

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Health Centre may have to cut mental health services

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Strikes will start from next week // Flickr/Rob Wells

Imperial College Union to support strikes

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

Imperial College Union Council largely voted in favour of a motion to support the upcoming strike, which is due to start this week.

Imperial College Union (ICU) Council this week voted to support the upcoming strike action being taken by the University and College Union (UCU) over changes to the pension scheme.

In a secret ballot, 76% of Council members in attendance voted to pass a paper that called on “elected representatives of ICU to support the UCU position in meetings with

College”, and “disseminate material publicising the strike and UCU’s position on the dispute.”

The paper was raised by Abhijay Sood, Academic Affairs Officer for the Royal College of Science Union (RCSU), and seconded by a number of representatives across four constituent unions, ahead of next week’s strike action. Members of UCU have scheduled 14 days of escalating strike action over a four-week period, in response to a dispute with Universities UK (UUK) over pension scheme changes.

Currently UUK are planning a change to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), which would take it from a defined benefit scheme, in which the employer pays in contributions up to a salary of £55,000, to a defined contribution scheme, in which the

pension value is linked to the performance of the stock market.

Students at Council raised concerns over the impact the strike would have to education, particularly to exams and major coursework deadlines. They also expressed concern over potential tuition fees lost as a result of the strikes. Sood stated that there were a number of things representatives could do to mitigate the impact the strikes would have on major coursework and exams – a position stated in the paper. Since external invigilators are not part of UCU, exams scheduled for the strike period should not be affected.

The approach to the strike will depend department by department, but it is likely that teaching missed would not be retaught and will be examined in full. Full sets

of lecture notes should be made available, however. Sood stated that Union representatives should “ensure no student is disadvantaged, in the short or the long run.”

Members of Council also cited a number of cuts to campus services, suggesting the changes to the pension scheme was the latest in a series of cost-cutting measures. In a meeting with UCU earlier this month, College management conceded they could afford to continue the defined benefit scheme, which would cost at most 10% of the College’s operating surplus. Last year the College made a total surplus of nearly £120 million.

Students in support of the paper argued the strikes were necessary for the long-term sustainability of teaching. Ariana Sadr-Hashemi, Mental Health Liberation

Officer, said “a lecturer who is invested in their lecturing and gives the best teaching experience to their students is not one who is financially insecure.” Stephen Naulls, Imperial College School of Medicine Students’ Union (ICSMSU) Welfare Officer, told Council “I don’t think anyone who is sitting here as a Union representative can contradict the main purpose of a Union: to collectively bargain for the betterment of their members. That is exactly what the UCU is doing, and I don’t think anybody could sit here and genuinely vote against that as a Union representative.”

In total, 24 members of Council voted for the paper, six voted against, and two abstained.

Sood told *Felix*: “I’m immensely pleased with this result, but this is only the start. The Union

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On standing together

Fred Fyles – Felix Editor



After six months, we’ve finally got there: a Union Council session that was actually exciting! This week saw another meeting of Union Council, which opened with a long discussion about the upcoming strikes, which are set to take place later this week. For those of you not in the know – obviously first-time readers of *Felix* – these strikes are the culmination of long-running debates around pension pay for university workers.

Previously, most people working at a university were guaranteed a certain amount for their pension fund. However, under new plans from Universities UK (UUK), who cite unsustainable costs, the scheme will be changed. As a result, some estimates state that workers could lose up to 60% of their pension fund, and, as a result, people have been up in arms. The Universities and College Union (UCU) have planned 14 days of strike action, starting this week, and then slowly escalating before a full week of strike action in March.

That’s the summary

version. If you want to find out more about it, then I’d recommend speaking to some of your lecturers – I’m sure they’ll have a lot to say about the potential changes. But what came out of the discussion at Council was a vote for the Union to officially support the strikes. While acknowledging that the strikes would cause disruption – what else would be the point of them? – and that this should be minimised as far as possible, Union representatives will back the UCU in discussions with senior management.

There were a few im-

portant points raised in the Council session, which I’ve been pondering over for a few days. One representative said that he didn’t feel he could support something that would cause disruption to the students we are supposed to represent, and – while it’s fair to feel concerned about the impact it could have on students – I think refusing to support the strikers would cause much more of a disruption to all of our education. This debate is not about the next few weeks, or even about the next few years; it’s about the long-term future of

our education. How can we expect to have lecturers who are motivated if they’re worried about what’s going to happen when they retire? How will we attract the best and the brightest if we can’t guarantee them a future? When talking about salaries in excess of £100k, the College always say they are needed to get the highest quality people in – why doesn’t that apply to everyone?

We’re facing the thin end of a short wedge. If things aren’t done now, and by us, the future of education looks bleak.

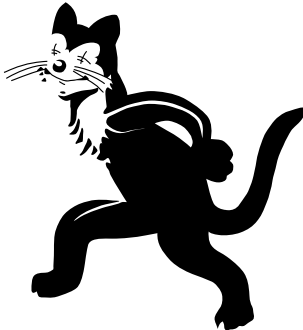
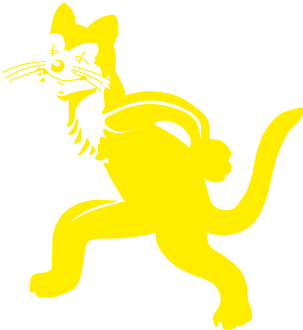
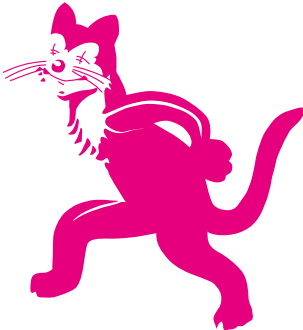
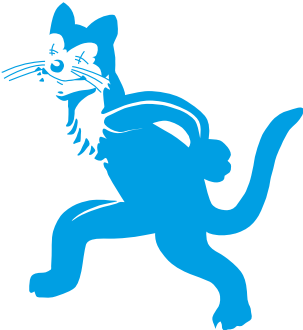
Another important point was raised by someone else in Council, regarding the nature of a Union. It can be easy to forget, among all the debates around room space or Bud Light, that a students’ union is, at its heart, a collective. It’s even in the name: union. As a student, a representative of the student body, and as an employee of Imperial College Union, I think it’s vitally important to stand together, as a collective, and encourage Imperial, and other UK universities, to go back to the negotiating table. I hope you do too.



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NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Imperial psychotherapy services to be potentially cut

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

Imperial College Health Centre could see the psychotherapy services on offer cut by up to 60% later this year.

Imperial College Health Centre (ICHC) is set to lose funding for psychotherapy services later this year under new NHS plans.

Under current proposals from the NHS Central London Clinical Commissioning Group, the body responsible for commissioning health services, primary care centres across Westminster may see their budgets for psychotherapy cut at the end of June. Psychotherapies would instead be delivered through a centralised service, as part

of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme. However the CCG is undergoing further consultation with practices and therapists, due to the outcry generated by the initial proposal.

ICHC, which is located in Prince's Gardens, is one of a number of practices that has raised concerns over the changes, which were initially set to take effect in March. Under the new system, ICHC could see the amount of psychotherapy it can offer cut by 60%. Students and staff, who make up the majority of ICHC's patient cohort, along with local residents, may have to go elsewhere to access psychotherapy services.

Under the new proposals, ICHC would only be able to offer Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and would have to cut the psychodynamic therapy they offer – a loss of three days a week. This reduction would likely

have a knock-on effect on Imperial's in-house counselling service, which has been struggling with student demand over the last few years.

The rationale from the Clinical Commissioning Group is that the change would improve borough-wide accessibility – since not all GP surgeries currently offer psychotherapy sessions – and make it easier to assess treatment outcomes and ensure good clinical governance.

However, clinicians at ICHC have cited potential barriers to accessibility, as patients may have to travel further to reach their appointments. Concerns have also been raised over the potential impact that the loss of psychotherapy services will have on the multi-disciplinary team approach offered by the Health Centre. This currently enables them to support, in-house, many of those with more complex mental health



Imperial College Health Centre could see its services cut // Imperial

needs.

This move comes as psychiatry services in the NHS are coming under increasing pressure. The number of patients seeking help for mental health problems like eating disorders or substance abuse problems has hit a record high, while a lack of services has meant an increasing number of

patients are having to get sectioned before they can access treatment. A recent report from the King's Fund showed mental health budgets were expanding at a much slower rate than physical therapy services, prompting concerns that patients were receiving poorer quality care as a result.

Psychotherapy, a broad

term covering a range of non-pharmaceutical therapies, is widely used as a treatment for a number of mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. CBT is one of the most well-known forms, but other types include psychodynamic psychotherapy and Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT).

ICU supports UCU in upcoming strike over pensions

NEWS

(cont.)

must now follow through by supporting the UCU with more than just kind words, both by putting pressure on College to resolve the dispute and in its communication with students on this issue."

Roddy Slorach, a representative of UCU who spoke at the Council meeting, told *Felix* "I was very pleased to be invited to speak on behalf of the UCU branch. I was made very welcome, and was particularly impressed by the recognition by all those who contributed to the discussion that the UCU has been forced to

resort to strike action due to the hard line taken by our employers."

"I emphasised how far the pension changes would impact on staff security and living standards, and that management informed the joint trade unions that they could afford to pay additional contributions, but have chosen not to. We are immensely grateful to the Union Council for so overwhelmingly agreeing to support us in our action, and hope that together we can help ensure that management reconsider, avoiding the disruption for which we agree they, and they alone, should be held responsible."

The move from Council comes in the same week a large number of staff from the Department of Physics wrote to Professor James Stirling, Provost of Imperial, expressing their "profound dismay at the way in which Imperial College is handling the proposed changes to our pension scheme". The letter, which has been signed by nearly 80 staff members – over half the academic staff in the department – says the changes are "a very shabby reward for the hard-working academics who have created the world-class reputation Imperial College currently enjoys."

The letter goes on

to argue the proposed changes would leave staff worse off, and that the changes are "neither necessary nor well-motivated." It urges management to "stand up for the Imperial College staff for whom you are responsible."

Dr Michael McGarvey, President of Imperial College UCU, told *Felix*: "Imperial's management are telling students that massive cuts to staff pensions of up to 60% are essential. The reality is quite different. Independent analysis has shown the basis for making these cuts is false."

He said "any disruption to students lies squarely

with the senior management who could instruct their representatives to return to the negotiation. We urge students to support the staff."

In a statement for *Felix*, Alex Chippy Compton, ICU President, said: "Union Council voted overwhelmingly to support the position of UCU in their upcoming strike, meaning ICU will be writing to the Provost and making the case where we can to encourage Imperial, and universities across the UK, to return to the negotiating table."

"While we will do what we can to minimise the impact on students, our elected student

representatives believe the potential long-term impact on quality of teaching and job security of academics is serious enough that the students should support their lecturers as they take strike action on this issue."

A College spokesperson told *Felix*: "We appreciate students may have concerns about potential disruption but the College will be open as usual and departments are working hard to ensure that teaching and assessment activities continue as normal. Any changes to schedules will be communicated by Departments. Advice for students is available online."

NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Union to put new petition in place for members

NEWS

Fred Fyles
Editor-in-Chief

A paper proposing the establishment of a Union petition system passed at Council, among other papers.

Imperial College Union will start looking into creating an online petition system, following the success of a paper at this week's Union Council meeting.

The paper, which was proposed by Ansh Bhatnagar, Undergraduate Ordinary Member for the Faculty of Natural Sciences, was raised following a number of popular petitions relating to Imperial issues that had been opened this year on other platforms.

The paper argued that, while such petitions

can be an effective way of drawing attention to certain problems, "anyone with an email address can sign these external petitions, meaning there is no guarantee that everyone who has signed is a student at Imperial."

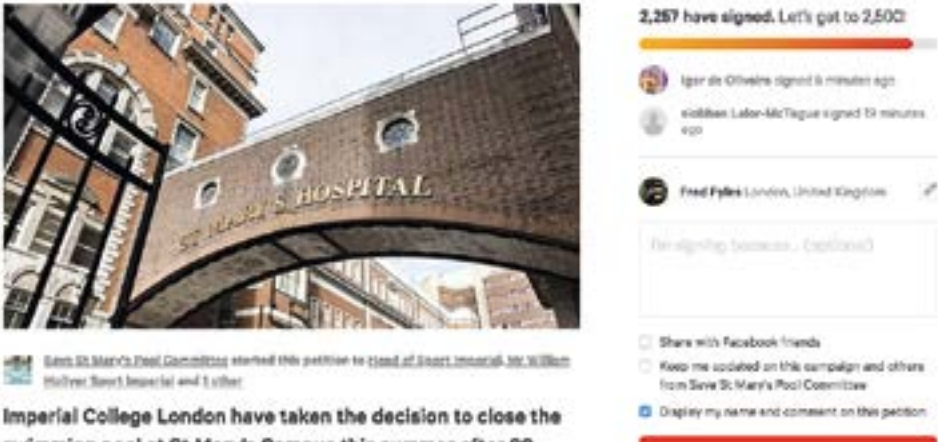
"A number of other students' unions already have petition systems in place"

A number of other students' unions already have petition systems in place, including UCL and Sussex. As part of ICU's 2017-20 Strategy, they have promised to "support students to ensure their voice is heard". The paper passed overwhelmingly, with 94% of those present voting in favour of the

change.org

Start a petition · Browse · Subscription

Save St Mary's pool, Imperial College London



2,257 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!

Igor de Oliveira signed 6 minutes ago

William Lator-McTague signed 10 minutes ago

Fred Fyles London, United Kingdom

Don't sign this petition. (Optional)

☐ Share with Facebook friends

☐ Keep me updated on this campaign and others from Save St Mary's Pool Committee

☐ Display my name and comment on this petition

Less of this, more eActivities // Felix

proposal.

There was not enough time in Council to discuss the finer details of what form such a petition system would take; Alex Chippy Compton, ICU President, will be meeting with Bhatnagar and other students to discuss the overall structure of the system, and will return to Council with a proposal later this academic year.

Bhatnagar told *Felix*: "I'm glad to see Council have approved the proposal for a petitions system. The vast majority of students do not wish to be involved in the bureaucracy of the Union, so a petitions system that puts power directly into the hands of students would be a powerful tool."

This academic year alone has seen a number of popular petitions relating to topics at Imperial, including ones asking to expand Ethos gym, and to bring Stella 4% back to Union bars – something that was done at the beginning of this term. The most recent petition is to stop the closure of St. Mary's Swimming Pool

at the end of the academic year. It has been signed by more than 2,000 people.

Fintan O'Connor, Deputy President (Welfare), told *Felix*: "Petitions and campaigns are growing in number every year at Imperial, and a new and accessible petitions system will only help channel the energy and ideas of our members. We were already thinking about introducing one as part of our review of our democracy and governance, and we're glad that Union Council has now thrown their weight behind the idea."

A number of other papers were also discussed at Union Council. As well as the petitions paper, Council passed papers in support of the UCU strike, as well as ones relating to tankard policy and minuting of ICU meetings. A paper on use of Union space was moved to a future Council meeting.

SACAs see record-breaking number of nominations

NEWS

Fred Fyles
Editor-in-Chief

Nearly 2,000 nominations made this year, more than double the previous record.

This year's Student Academic Choice Awards (SACAs) have received the highest number of nominations since their inception.

Imperial College Union, who organise the SACAs, received 1868 nominations for the awards, across a

range of areas. The previous highest number of nominations was 831, which was achieved last academic year. In total 935 staff members were nominated, including support staff, tutors, and lecturers – again, the highest number in the award's five year history.

This year saw a shift in the strategy used to communicate the SACAs nominations process, with the campaign shortened to a three week period, following a 'soft launch' at the end of last term. Nick Burstow, Deputy President (Education), who is responsible for the award process, also worked with constituent unions (CUs) on communicating

the nominations to students, with increased involvement from the Faculty of Medicine. The nominations process was also simplified, to reduce the time it took to submit nominations.

Michael Edwards, President of the Royal College of Science Union (RCSU), told *Felix*: "Nick's new grassroots method of achieving this excellent batch of SACAs submissions is to be applauded, and hopefully this signifies a major change in the way that Officer Trustees and staff engage critically with Union volunteers."

Claudia Caravello, President of City and Guilds College Union,

told *Felix*: "I think it was great to get the CUs involved, asking them to help advertise and also put in their weekly emails. I think that the Union would benefit greatly in actively asking us for help on more things, which in turn would strengthen the links between CUs and ICU."

The Union has targeted 1000 nominations for the past few years, but has always fallen short of this target. Burstow told *Felix*: "The SACAs give our students the chance to recognise and reward excellence among College staff. This huge number of SACAs nominations reflects just how much students value excellent staff,



SACAs ceremony last year // ICU

and allows our students to showcase this excellence to the College."

This is the sixth cycle of the SACAs. Staff can be nominated across eight areas, including Best Supervision, Best Innovation, and Best Feedback, among others. All staff members who are nominated for an award will receive a mug, and shortlisted staff will attend the prize ceremony in May.

NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Union apologise after calling Disabilities Officer 'Disabled Officer'

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

The Union has apologised for the misprint in the Leadership Elections 2018 material.

Imperial College Union has apologised after referring to the Disabilities Officer as the 'Disabled Officer' in some of the Leadership Elections 2018 promotional material.

The mistake occurred across the booklet outlining the positions students could run for, adverts in Issue 1684 of Felix, and emails sent out to all students. The Union has since apologised for "the inappropriate and unacceptable terminology."

The Disabilities Officer is one of eight Liberation Officer roles that students can run for in this year's Leadership Elections.



Uh-oh // Felix

They "represent the needs of all students with disabilities at Imperial, whether diagnosed or not, and work to improve the experience for these students during their time at Imperial". They work with the College and the Union to promote inclusivity and lobby for increased support.

Hisham Abdel Aty, the current Disabilities Officer, told *Felix*: "The Disabilities Officer misprint in the promotional material of the leadership elections shows a complete lack of either care or understanding from the Union about the role, and disabilities in general. Not only is it offensive, but it is simply embarrassing

for the Union and those represented by it, especially when the purpose was to promote the role."

Fintan O'Connor, the Union's Deputy President (Welfare), told *Felix*: "We have apologised to representatives of our disabled community, moved swiftly to withdraw all offensive promotional content, and will tackle this mistake head on in communication to our members. Inclusivity is one of our four core values, and to prevent such errors happening again, we will be supporting staff and officers to understand the activities and objectives of our Liberation & Community Officers better."

Russell Group respond to Office for Students

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

Russell Group respond to Office for Students proposals about fining universities.

The Russell Group has responded to the Office for Students' (OfS) proposals to place financial penalties on universities that breach registration conditions.

The Russell Group – a group of 24 universities in the UK, including Imperial College London, who are 'committed to maintaining the very best research – cited concerns that "the proposed maximum monetary penalty [for breach of conditions] does not represent a proportionate response."

Later this year, OfS will have the power to punish institutions that breach registration conditions, including student outcomes dipping below an acceptable baseline

or non-compliance with statutory regulations.

Under current plans, universities would either pay 2% or 5% of "qualifying income", or £500,000 – whichever is higher. The Russell Group states that a 2% charge would equate to £5.7 million for their average institution – equal to tuition fees from 615 students. The 5% charge, meanwhile, would equate to £14.3 million – more than the total annual spend on access and participation for the average Russell Group university.

"The proposals may 'affect course viability and quality'"

In their response, they argue that such fines could mean "difficult decisions would need to be made about resource allocation with the potential to affect course viability and quality for students."

They also raised concerns that fines could affect the net liquidity

of higher education institutions. By the end of 2019/20, the average university is predicted to only have enough liquid capital to run for 81 days.

OfS was formed in January of this year, and will receive its statutory powers in April. As well as financial penalties, it will be able to suspend providers that fail to comply with regulations.

Last December, the Russell Group responded to a number of other proposals from the OfS, saying plans to have universities publish detailed information on staff earning above £100,000 per annum "risk undermining the ability of institutions to compete in an international market".

High-pay at university has come under increased scrutiny this year. A recent investigation by the University and College Union (UCU) found that nearly half of university vice-chancellors are involved in setting their own pay. Alice Gast, Imperial's president, is not on her own remuneration committee, but is allowed to attend their meetings.

Imperial academic believed to have been detained in Iran

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

Dr Kaveh Madani, a Reader at the Imperial Centre for Environmental Policy, is believed to have been detained for 72 hours last weekend.

An Imperial academic is believed to have been detained in Iran for 72 hours last weekend.

Dr Kaveh Madani, a Reader at the Centre for Environmental Policy, was made Deputy Head of Iran's Department of Environment last year. There was confusion over his whereabouts throughout last weekend, following

the death of Iranian-Canadian environmentalist and academic Professor Kavous Seyed Emami in police custody.

On Sunday, Iranian MP Mahmoud Sadeghi posted on Twitter that Dr Madani had been one of a number of environmentalists detained over the weekend, who were being held by intelligence agents associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Dr Madani's social media accounts were also suspended.

On Monday, Dr Madani's Twitter account was restored, and he posted a tweet that asked for "an end to narrow-mindedness". While some took this to mean he had been released, other sources say Dr Madani is still under surveillance.

Professor Emami's death was ruled as a

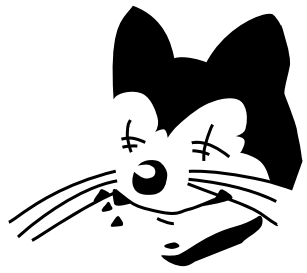
suicide by the Iranian government, but highlights increasing tensions between the Iranian government and environmentalists, who are often dual-nationals.

The UN this week asked the Iranian government to allow environmental activists to work without being targeted. UN Environment head, Erik Solheim, issued a statement saying

"Environmental rights are human rights, and we all have an obligation to protect them. We are closely following these cases in Iran, and urge that the work of environment defenders – both in Iran and around the world – be promoted and respected."

POLITICS

felix@imperial.ac.uk



No Olive Branch for Rojava – what happens after the Turkish intervention in Syria?

Politics writer Juan Rubio Gorrochategui argues that the conflict in Syria is going to become more complex and more violent following the Turkish intervention.

POLITICS

**Juan Rubio
Gorrochategui**
Politics Writer

While Western audiences were being entertained by the latest Trump antics and the recent developments in the seemingly interminable process that is Brexit, the last three weeks saw the beginning of a new phase in the Syrian Civil War. Now ISIS has lost its territorial power base and has disappeared as a state entity, it seems Syria has taken the place of Rwanda and Sudan, places ravaged by misery and death but soon left in the dustbin of permanent instability and chaos. It is a sad fact that the relative lack of interest that the war generates in our media is missing the big picture, the events that could have far reaching implications in history. And this new phase, triggered by operation Olive Branch, is one of them.

On the 20th of January, the Turkish army and allied Syrian opposition militias invaded Efrin canton, one of the three autonomous regions that form the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, colloquially known as Rojava. To understand why, we need to go back to a time before the civil war, when the Kurdish peoples were being slaughtered in the four countries where they form a significant minority of the population: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. While the gassing of Kurdish civil-



Kurdistan has always been a major battleground// Flickr/Jan Sefti

ians by Saddam Hussein and the measures taken against this ethnicity by the Turkish state (which I shall expand upon later) remain in collective memory as nefarious actions, the treatment the Kurds faced by the regime of Hafez al-Assad (father of Bashar) in Syria is almost universally unknown, if equally despicable. Imitating the other Ba'athist dictatorships of the area, the Syrian state stripped the Kurds from their nationality, and forced them to undergo a process of Arabization that amounted to sheer cultural genocide.

When in 2011 the Arab Spring protests reached Syria, the oppressed Kurdish minority took advantage of the general unrest and seized control of the areas where it formed a majority of the population, as the Syrian army was recalled to Damascus to fight in more important fronts. The main Kurdish group throughout the war has been the People Protection Units (YPG), an organization which has an ideology that combines libertarian socialism, gender equality, respect for ethnic

minorities, secularism and green politics. These ideas set them apart from every other participant in the war and indeed from any other Middle Eastern entity. It is therefore not surprising that Rojava soon came under attack by the radical Islamist forces of ISIS, which ended in total failure for the latter entity as the YPG, now organized into a wider coalition known as Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), launched a successful counterattack that resulted in the liberation of the bulk of the areas terrorized by ISIS, including the capital of the so called caliphate, Raqqa, in 2017. The relationship of Rojava with the other two main factions of the war, the Islamist Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Syrian Arab Army (SAA, military branch of the Assad regime) fluctuates from periods of convenient alliance to full-out war. In another sign of the convoluted mess that is the Syrian Civil War, the SDF have received both American (otherwise FSA supporting) and Russian (main Bashar ally) air support in its

offensive against ISIS. In the meantime, Rojava has continued to implement its policies on the territories it controls, including direct democratization, cooperatives, the banning of honour killings and child marriages, mandatory women quotas and integration of the Arab, Kurdish, Assyrian and Armenian ethnicities in a multinational state.

The crucial position of Syria in the Middle East map, in the centre of a region desired by ambitious powers like Qatar, Iran and Israel, has made foreign involvement a common staple of the war. Readers with a good knowledge of geography have probably noticed already that northern Syria shares a long border with a rising power of its own kind, Turkey. The events that have unfolded in Rojava have set off all the alarms in Ankara, and have awoken the anger of the Turkish dictator, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

It is interesting to compare the political evolution of Rojava and Turkey during the last few years. While Rojava has moved towards a society

based on progressive values, Erdoğan has used the once legitimate power he obtained from the ballot box to create a Frankenstein monster of a country, a state that combines the worst aspects of Kemalism and Islamism to persecute political opponents and curtail freedoms. Using the excuse of the 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan has cracked down on civil liberties, jailing teachers, civil servants and journalists alike, while women's rights are increasingly threatened as the country is forced to become less and less secular. The repression against the Kurdish minority in Turkey (estimated to be around 20% of the population) has grown as the government pursues policies that silence the Kurdish activists that are brave enough to raise their voices against it.

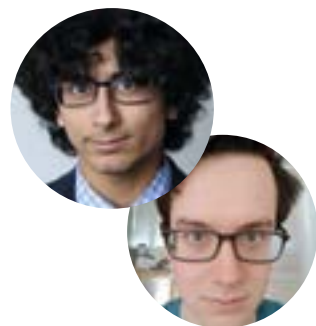
These factors, combined with a foreign policy that has been described as neo-Ottomanist (seeking to regain the influence lost by Turkey after the disbandment of the Ottoman Empire a few years after the end of the First World War), explain why the Turkish army is entering the fields of Rojava with fire and fury. Turkey cannot risk the spread of the Rojava project to its Kurdish inhabited areas, and fears a reactivation of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a guerrilla group that has been waging war against the Turkish state for decades and that shares similar ideologies to Rojava. Indeed, while the YPG was born inde-

pendently in Syria, portraits of Abdullah 'Apo' Öcalan are common in northern Syria. However, the one key difference between both groups is that while the PKK fights for a united Kurdistan, Rojava aspires to become one of the federal states that would be set up in a future, Assad free democratic Syria.

None of this matters to Erdoğan. In recent declarations, he has vowed to expel the Kurdish terrorists from the cantons, accusing them of collaborating with ISIS. The main aim of Turkey is the establishment of a puppet state over the border, controlled by military personnel and ruled along the lines of Erdoğanist Turkey. Something similar happened in Cyprus during the 70s, and 40 years later Turkish troops still occupy the Northern third of the island. In their advance through Rojava territory, the Turkish allied militias have already carried out war crimes, including the mutilation and beheading of a young Kurdish female fighter. It is outrageous that a country that is both a NATO member and candidate state for membership in the EU is allowed to commit these atrocities. Western governments have already turned a blind eye to the human rights abuses taking place in Turkey itself. Don't allow them to spread the terror elsewhere. Write to your MP, demonstrate, join organisations like Amnesty International that are denouncing this madness. Because in these dark times, Rojava needs your help.

POLITICS

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Students need to support the strikes – here's what you can do to help

Next week the University and College Union begin their strike over changes to pensions. It's up to students to make sure we support them.

POLITICS

Abhijay Sood
Lloyd James
Politics Writers

After two months of failed negotiations, with university management proposing huge cuts to pensions, university staff will be taking the only action available to them: striking. The staff walkout will begin next Thursday, February 22nd, and will escalate over a four-week period.

You might be worried about the effect this will have on your education. You're right to be; strikes are disruptive. Rest assured that this is at the front of the minds of both Union volunteers (including the authors of this article) and departmental staff. In the short term, we will be working to minimise the impact on students' results for exams and major coursework that take place during the strike period. We will also be looking at ways of limiting the impact this will have on end-of-year exams, such as by lobbying departments to amend exam questions.

In spite of these concerns being at the forefront of the debate, last Tuesday the Union voted overwhelmingly in support of our staff in this dispute. While the reasons behind this decision were deeply pragmatic, with the long term interests of students in focus, it's no wonder that students empathise with the staff on this matter. We too have been at the rough end of



UCU members demonstrating back in 2011 // Flickr/Dun.can

College cuts – cuts to operating hours, price hikes, and failure to invest in underperforming essential services such as the Counselling service. This sort of penny-pinching (SCR Breakfast, anyone?), which hugely contributes to Imperial's poor student and staff satisfaction ratings, is done in spite of a huge annual operating surplus of around £100 million. So whose side could we possibly take: that of College management, for whom profit comes first, or of the staff members who actually deliver our education?

The decision of the Union is a welcome move, as it adds to the mounting pressure on College management to encourage their national body to return to negoti-

ations. However, there is more that students can do.

If, like us, you feel the staff are being treated unfairly, that their action is more than justified, and that you want to do more than just send your #thoughtsandprayers, here are some concrete steps you can take.

Talk to your friends

Explain why this action is taking place [*Ed.: See page 3 of this week's issue, as well as issue 1683*], and encourage them to support the staff position.

Talk to your lecturers

If you can ask them whether they are taking part in this action, and even encourage them to do so, then that'd be

fantastic. Short of this, it would be worth conveying that you support their right to strike, and that while there are short term drawbacks, this action is in the long term interest of both staff and students. If you recognise people on the picket line, make sure to talk to them.

Join us for a show of support

Students will be assembling with staff on the first day of action, **Thursday February 22nd at 10 am**, at the corner of Imperial College Road and Exhibition Road (near the end of the tunnel from South Kensington station, and Skempton). For more details see the Facebook event at: tiny.cc/stand-withstaff

"If you feel staff are being treated unfairly, there are steps you can take"

Help out with picketing

Staff will be picketing all major entrances to College from 7:30am every day of strike action. If you are able to help out even for a short amount of time, whether by standing at the picket line or assisting with student-organised coffee/tea runs, please do so. If in doubt on the day, head to the corner

of Imperial College and Exhibition Roads. Please bear in mind that pickets are strictly non-violent, and must adhere to a stringent set of laws.

Write to the Provost

The Provost, James Stirling, is already receiving letters from staff, the UCU, and our Union President on this issue. Help pile on the pressure by dropping him an email that expresses your frustration and your support for our staff members. Students at some other universities have requested partial refunds of tuition fees for the duration of the strike, which you may wish to consider. Urge College to support our staff and get Universities UK to compromise. A letter template can be found at: www.ucu.org.uk/studentvoice.

Get your parents/guardians to write

Letters to the Provost will be even more impactful coming from our parents/guardians, particularly if you have to pay international fees.

Share this article!

Finally, sharing this article, either with friends in person or on social media, would go a long way to helping spread the message. This is a significant moment for both staff and students; let's make sure Imperial does its bit.

If you have any queries, or would like to help out further, please email rcsu.aao@ic.ac.uk

COMMENT

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Valentine's day isn't just about traditional romance

Kink Klub Queen Alexandra Dakin has some non-traditional suggestions for your Valentine's weekend...

COMMENT

Alexandra Dakin
Comment Writer

So, it's that time of year again and you are looking for a little bit of romance. Roses and chocolates are seen in every shop window, the nights are cold, and all you really want are cuddles, kisses and... rough animalistic sex. Now the question is, can you have both? Can you go from holding hands and looking lovingly into each other's eyes to then suddenly being pinned down and slapped by your partner? When you start looking at the more extreme sides of BDSM, the idea of romance fitting into that seems less and less likely. But let's try and break it down.

Let's go for an extreme example: let's take a power play relationship where one of you takes the dominant role (dom) and the other the submissive (sub). This kind of relationship can have as little or as many boundaries as you like. For a sub dom pair to work they must communicate all the time, telling each other what they like and what they don't; making sure they are both comfortable with the more experimental stuff they are trying.

Now quite a lot of people think that being a sub is lazy or weak, but as a matter of fact it is a very brave thing to do. To give yourself completely to another person needs a lot of confidence and more importantly trust. The trust between a sub dom



Valentine's day doesn't just have to be about chocolates and roses // Flickr

pair is very strong and rightfully so; if you are going to have someone tie you down you need to trust them enough not to abuse the power you have given them. This level of trust is not usually needed in standard relationship dynamics, but romance is all about trusting each other with your feelings and emotions so in a way the trust between a sub and a dom intensifies the romantic aspect of the relationship.

Rough, kinky sex can involve a lot of things but one thing that must happen every single time is 'After Care'. When the sex is done, and the panting ceases the dom must then take on the role of carer, kissing, stroking and cuddling the sub; this is what is meant by After Care. After Care is a way of showing the sub that

everything the dom had done to them no matter how aggressive was not real, and that it was just an act. It is there to reassure both parties that the sex was enjoyable on both sides. It lets the sub feel safe and secure and allows the dom to be more affectionate and express a softer side. After Care is essentially when the couple stop being rough with each other and start being romantic. This has to be done every time rough kinky sex happens which means the more kinky sex you have the more romantic cuddles you will be having, which automatically increases your romance level.

Romance is usually associated with calm, slow-paced dates such as candle lit dinners, making out under the stars, and leaving flowers at each

other's door. Kinky activities tend to be the opposite of this, being hard,

energetic and fast-paced. Sure, candle lit dinners are romantic – it requires planning, dressing up and choosing the best wine. But suppose you get turned on by something a little outside the norm – furies, for example (you can look that up on your

“Romantic and kinky relationships are two sides of the same coin. They enhance one another”

own). Your partner may not be into it as much as you and yet is still ok with dressing up as one

because they know how much you enjoy it. If that isn't love I don't know what is!

Romantic and kinky relationships are opposite sides of the same coin. They enhance one another, both contributing to the flourishing of your relationship. Romance keeps it caring and affectionate while the kinky part allows you both to experiment and learn more about each other bringing you closer together than you ever were before. Romance will always be needed because everyone likes to receive roses every once in a while. But for me without the choking, the biting and the scratching... well then its all rather boring. So, my advice would be next time you want to give your partner flowers, ask them if that is what they really want...



Getting kinky, 15th century style // Flickr

COMMENT

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We are taking way too many pictures

By considering the perspective of both photographers and travellers, you can find that there's real benefit in taking a break from our shooting-obsessed culture

COMMENT

Yan Kee

Comment Writer

With the advancement of smartphones and digital photography, an absurd number of pictures are taken by people every single day – whether for Instagram, Facebook, or just for personal collection.

This New Year's Eve, I spent the last few hours of 2017 patiently waiting for the annual fireworks display in London. The fireworks only lasted 15 minutes, and to update my friends and family I took one series of burst pictures

and picked one out at the end. But what I realised is that a lot of people were recording videos for the whole show, as if they are going to see those amazing fireworks better on their 5-inch smartphone screens rather than with their own bare eyes. It made me realise that all of us need to reflect more on our obsession with photo-taking, instead of blindly following what the crowd around us does.

What are the benefits of reducing the number of pictures taken, when digital storage means we're completely free to take more? To answer this question, let's look at this problem from different perspectives: those of a traveller, a photographer, and – most importantly – someone like me and

you, who merely wants to record memories in the form of pictures.

To clarify, my own definition of a traveller is someone who chooses travelling as a lifestyle, rather than a break from their normal life routine. From a traveller's perspective, then, the main preference is to live in the moment. To have a smartphone or camera standing in between your eye and the event occurring is to live in a different world, outside of the real one. That could mean something different for different people, but for most it's the social media world.

Our lives are heavily interconnected through social media, especially with family and friends, and the boundaries between the real world and that of social media have become heavily blurred. Once we see something interesting, our addiction to 'share' it gives us that oxytocin boost, stimulating that 'good-feeling' whenever we receive a notification, like, or comment. Why not take a break from it? Take a break from social media for a week, a month or even a year and experience the traveller's ideal of remaining within the real world, being mindful, living in the moment, whichever term you'd like to use.

From a photographer's perspective, on the other hand, taking more pictures is good in the sense that you'll have a better chance of capturing a good one. However, it's actually a limitation that can allow you to fully utilise your creativity. On my last day-trip to



The only well-exposed polaroid I took in York // Yan Kee

“Soak it in with your own eyes. Experience the moment before taking that picture”

York, I took exactly seven pictures with my polaroid camera: I was forced to 'try out' the shots first using my phone camera and judge the composition before carefully taking limited pictures. At the end, you not only end up a better photographer, but the memories also stick as efforts and thoughts that were behind those beautiful shots.

Now, let's part from those two extremes and look from the perspective of someone who takes pictures for the sake of memories. The problem is not taking pictures, nor the intention behind it, but rather the process of taking them – it's so easy and quick, as if the meaning behind those pictures was long gone, and what's left is a hollow, digital format photo filled with colours and lines no one is familiar with. Let's take some time before taking the image: soak it in with your own eyes, experience the moment before taking that picture. For me personally, it's very hard to indulge in memories looking at pictures taken with little effort and time. That's why some people

still prefer methods such as sketching or journal writing to record past events – when thoughts are being put into it, the details are described so well that it feels like you are time travelling when you revisit those works.

All in all, whatever the perspective we choose, all of us could gain real benefits taking a break from these frantic photo-taking sessions. I hope next time you're deciding to let the convenience of picture-taking get the better of you, think about this article; try and experience the moment fully with your senses, look at the distinct colours of a rainbow, smell the rain, touch the wet soil and listen to the sounds of the forest.



Londoners filming the NYE firework display // Yan Kee

COMMENT

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College need to come clean with their investments

The College told Divest Imperial they felt investing money into fossil fuel companies was good for the environment. They need to take a long, hard look at themselves.

COMMENT

Divest Imperial

Comment Writers

It was less than a year ago that Divest Imperial was formed, with previous divestment campaigns at Imperial having withered away and been forgotten. Ten months on, our petition calling on College to divest from fossil fuels has over 1700 signatures, and Imperial College Union voted overwhelmingly to divest their own investment fund. The stage was set for a discussion with College itself – to present our arguments and learn why College remains reluctant to engage with them – which took place last month.

In meetings with previous divestment campaigns at Imperial many years ago, the College claimed to prefer to engage with companies as shareholders than to publicly denounce their actions. Shareholder engagement seeks to change companies by voting at shareholder meetings: the more shares you have, the more your vote counts. In the environmental movement, it predates divestment as a tactic by decades, but has sadly met with very limited success. We were surprised that College chose to pursue this strategy, and our instincts proved correct: in an embarrassing climb-down, Imperial has now rejected shareholder activism, saying that “our influence is stronger as one of the world’s great research universities

rather than a mid-sized endowment fund”.

So what about divestment, then? A depressingly common misunderstanding of divestment is to expect that it will bankrupt fossil fuel companies overnight. It won’t, and it isn’t intended to: after all, shares sold by Imperial can just as easily be bought by a third party.

“College said they believed giving money to fossil fuel companies was a net positive for the climate”

The point is exactly what Imperial recognised – if we are serious about making a change, then our name and reputation carries far more weight than any amount of shares we might own. When a university with the clout that Imperial has takes a stance on something, people and industry alike pay attention; when 60 other universities do the same, it really begins to turn heads. Changing the public’s perceptions of fossil fuels is crucial if we are to change their consumption habits, and divestment is one of the only tactics that aims squarely at that target. Removing investments from fossil fuels is simply the means; the end itself is to afford universities a chance to call on fossil fuel companies to change



So much for smoke-free Imperial! // Flickr/CECAR

their reckless business models, standing shoulder to shoulder with countless other public institutions in doing so.

Moreover, given the frightening scale of climate change and the research going on here to mitigate it, is it even morally right for a university like ours to be generating income from fossil fuel extraction? After all, we already have a policy preventing direct investment in tobacco, and quite rightly too [Ed.: *hardly watertight*]; perhaps College would care to apply the same logic to other ethically questionable investments? Alas, it seems not. College were reticent to discuss tobacco at all, and (comparing the cases of tobacco and fossil fuels) said that they “did not find them similar”, though refused to explain why.

With only a bit more probing, the truth eventually emerged: College “doesn’t think it’s immoral to receive funds” from these companies, and, when pressed, revealed that they believed giving money to fossil fuel companies was actually *a net positive* for the climate. There we had it, at last – not that divestment was idealistic, or financially unfeasible, or any of the other diversionary arguments thrown our way initially. At the heart of it, Imperial College believe that the best way to fight emissions from fossil fuels...is with more fossil fuels. We look forward to College’s imminent proposal to cure insomnia with caffeine tablets, and to hearing how what the library actually needed was a few furnaces to really cool it down.

Fossil fuel companies

will not change voluntarily. No amount of publicity stunts or toothless pledges to trim carbon emissions will change the fact that fossil fuel companies are there to extract and process fossil fuels. Any serious analysis of the figures pledged by fossil fuel companies towards renewable energy reveals them for what they are: cynical marketing ploys, and nothing more. That’s how Shell, supposedly the industry leader in sustainability (some achievement), can double their investments in clean energy, while in the same breath invest 5 times as much in risky deepwater drilling for new reserves.

Debates over tactics are one thing. Divestment seems to us to be the best and easiest way to effect change in this area, but we’re open to other suggestions; the last thing we

want to do is to waste our own spare time on tactics that don’t work.

What we heard from Imperial was quite different. Imperial College, home of the Grantham Institute and funder of world-leading research in climate science, believes that we ought to be giving our money to fossil fuel companies *because* of climate change, not in spite of it. Though at pains to stress that it really does believe in climate change, the truth is that College is quite comfortable in the company of those that don’t, and ends up funding the damn thing anyway. If the choice is between an honest climate-denier on the one hand, and College’s contorted doublethink on the other... well, with a friend like this, who needs enemies?

COMMENT

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The state of the Union: to consult or not to consult...

The Union has a history of making changes without properly consulting with students. If it is supposed to represent us, it needs to change.

COMMENT

Ansh Bhatnagar

Comment Writer

Three weeks ago, a motion to create a liberation officer to represent economically disadvantaged students was shot down at Union Council with a 50/50 vote. The Deputy President (Welfare) spoke out vociferously against the idea, arguing that “it was setting up a role to fail” and “the relevant students haven’t been consulted”. It was this last point that I found ironic coming from a senior Union official. Time and time again, those in power at the Union have shown that they prefer to act first and worry about students’ concerns later.

This is exemplified most strongly by a report from the DPW to the Trustee Board (the Union’s most senior committee), regarding the Wellbeing Representation Network (WBRN) [Ed.: see *Felix 1684*]. The report states: “there was not enough time to consult effectively with College staff and students” and “Officer Trustees were assigned to lead consultation between February and June, which failed because of a lack of clarity of the network’s purpose”.

The WBRN idea was first announced in January 2017, yet the Union felt it was appropriate to rush through the biggest expansion of the rep network in recent years, aiming for implementation in October. No College staff were consulted ahead of

planning for development, and the 17 students who were consulted in dedicated sessions were all existing elected volunteers, meaning no normal students or College staff had the opportunity to voice their concerns before the WBRN was set in motion. Mental health and wellbeing are incredibly sensitive issues that should be handled with delicate and careful planning, yet the Union rushed this idea to meet a deadline, akin to bulls in a china shop.

Departmental staff were not satisfied with this either. The report said “some departments made requests for changes to the Network that were not possible due to the timing and progress of implementation”, showing that at least someone in the Union understood the

issues associated with rushing through such a big change. However, when students raised their concerns about the network with departmental staff, they were met with antagonism: “students that opposed the implementation of the Network met with departments before the Union, which led to biases and uncertainty from departmental staff and discredited the work that had been completed”. It is shameful that the Union could not be bothered to reach staff before students took the initiative – shouldn’t this have been done before the idea was even announced? Not one of these people thought to delay the implementation until consultation was thoroughly complete, and all concerns addressed.

The report is a damning

indictment of the Union – it shows that concerns were ignored due to the rushed implementation, that concerned students were dismissed, and that the Union did not address the requests of staff. Most

“I hope next year’s sabbs realise the importance of student voice and input”

importantly, it showed that the Union does not care about consulting the students it claims to represent. It appears that, to the minds of the senior Union officials, consultation is a task to be given to student

volunteers who propose ideas that they are not in favour of. It isn’t something that they themselves feel the need to do.

This isn’t just a one-off issue. Student consultation is something that the Union has failed to do time and time again. Most recently, the timetable for the Leadership Elections was altered, with the usual week’s campaigning period being removed. Governance Committee minutes reveal that this was an idea suggested by the Union President, in order to decrease the stress on candidates, but ended up being implemented without any formal input from student volunteers outside Trustee Board. While the President had good intentions when suggesting the idea, the new timetable means that voters have

no opportunity to find out who is running and what platform each candidate is running on. The Union encourages people to vote as soon as voting opens, which coincides with the start of campaigning, giving an inherent advantage to those who are well known on campus. Just imagine if you were running for a position against an existing sabbatical officer... With this new election timetable, you would be decimated simply because you weren’t given the chance to get your name out. This is yet another drastic change the Union have made where students were not consulted.

Although I have been critical of the Union in this article, that’s not to say that the Union hasn’t consulted students at all. Last year, the end of zero-tolerance deadlines and the smoking ban were achieved by consulting students through online polls. But consultation needs to be done on all the big changes made and stances taken by the Union – after all, the sole purpose for its existence is to represent students. The DPW has given the green light for consultation regarding the Social Mobility Officer, and the Union President is working with myself to look into a petitions system on the Union website. These are welcome developments that show a positive attitude to student engagement; I hope that next year’s sabbatical officers take note and realise the importance of student voice and input.



Thinking of being an OT next year? Make sure to consult students! // Imperial College Union

SCIENCE

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Crossing the blood-brain barrier: the final frontier

SCIENCE

Varshit Dusad

Science Writer

Gene therapy serves as a means to introduce artificial DNA into cells, which can then be transcribed and translated into proteins in order to treat various medical conditions. However, there remain many limitations for treating medical conditions associated with the central nervous system. Gene therapy works by packaging genes into specific carriers – often made from the outer shell of viruses, and capable of breaking into cells – which are then injected into the bloodstream.



The famed blood-brain barrier // Wikimedia

Once they reach and migrate into cells, they unload their genetic material. However, to reach the brain the carriers must cross the highly selective membrane called the blood-brain barrier. This barrier restricts most substances in the blood from passing into the brain,

and, consequently, has rendered many drugs and therapies ineffective for use in the brain. A recent study, however, published in *Molecular Medicine*, examined and identified potential virus capsid structures which are able to cross the blood-brain barrier, thereby improving

the reach of gene therapy.

This study examined adeno-associated viruses (a group of non-pathogenic viruses) for their ability to potentially improve transmission through the blood-brain barrier, and to enhance specificity for brain cells. Scientists compared the capsid features of two type of adenoviruses which differed by their ability to pass through the blood-brain barrier, and subsequently generated a library consisting of the individual parts of the capsid structure from the former virus. Using the library, they swapped out the corresponding parts in the capsid of the latter virus one-by-one. The result of each individual swap was noted, and the parts responsible for the

change in their ability were identified, with their properties characterised.

The results of this study prove useful, since they show the capability we have to control movement through the blood-brain barrier. This provides the possibility of developing novel therapies which can target the diseases associated with brain and spinal cord – such as brain tumours – which have not proved an easy target due to this barrier. The current strategy involves providing a high dosage of the therapy, but this causes side effects by infecting non-target cells. By improving the specificity of crossing the blood-brain barrier, one can reduce the dose amounts and also the cost of therapy.

The study is promis-

ing, but requires further research to ensure the robustness for the proof of concept. As mice were the subjects of this study, it is likely that the findings may not be representative of human conditions, and thus the effectiveness of the study in human samples needs to be established. Furthermore, this study has only accounted for the challenges associated with crossing the blood-brain barrier, but the final gene therapy might still be limited by further complications such as improper dosage and possible side effects. Nonetheless, it kindles hope we may be able to target the brain-associated diseases which have for so long eluded the reach of medicine.

Connect with conservation – Imperilled Pangolins

SCIENCE

Steve Allain

Science Writer

The group of the most trafficked animal is one that you may not have even heard of, the pangolin. There are eight extant species of pangolin found across the Old World in Africa and south-east Asia; they relatively unassuming animals, they are also known as scaly anteaters due to the fact that they are covered in hard scales and predate on ants and termites. Pangolins essentially fill the same niche as the anteaters of the New World, but due to their unique scales' they are the most hunted and trafficked animal on the face of the planet. Their

defence mechanism, when faced with a threat, is to curl up into a ball and to let their scales do all the work. But while this is great if the adversary is a big cat, it makes it easier for poachers to round

“Their defence mechanism – curling up in a ball – makes it easy for poachers to catch them”

them up in the millions. They are predominantly nocturnal and elusive animals with poor eyesight, making their capture that much easier as new methods for their detention are

developed.

Their scales are used in traditional Chinese medicine and, once dried, it is believed they can be used to alleviate a number of symptoms. The scales are made of keratin – the same material as our hair and nails – but there is no scientific evidence that there is any benefit of their use. As a result of the high demand of pangolin scales, they can sell on the black market for over \$3,000 a kilogram. They are also traded for their meat, which is a delicacy in some cultures. To supply a growing market in Asia, it is estimated that up to 100,000 pangolins are captured every year from across Africa and Asia, with most being shipped and sold in China and Vietnam.

In 2016, all eight species of pangolin were given CITES Appendix I



A pangolin in the defensive position // Wikimedia

listing – the highest level of international legal protection – to help combat the illegal trade of the animals. However, these measure may have come a little too late for the four Asian species which have unfortunately been decimated by illegal poaching. Part of the problem stems from the fact that pango-

lins breed slowly meaning the population takes time to recover. This international protection may be a step forward in the right direction, but as with all illegal trade (such as that in ivory and rhino horns), criminal organisations always find ways around the legislation. It has become increasingly clear

that as the Asian species have declined, their African counterparts are now being targeted more heavily. Enforcement of the legislation and cooperation from all parties is needed if we are going to work together to prevent the extinction of one of the most unusual groups of mammals.

SCIENCE

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Work hard, play harder – how playing can improve STEM subjects

Next time you're called out for playing video games when you're meant to be revising, just remember that such games can improve your spatial reasoning skills.

SCIENCE

Sarah Wong
Science Writer

Imperial College London is a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) focused university with, sadly, an uneven male to female ratio. However, the imbalance of gender in STEM subjects is not localised to Imperial – this trend can be seen across the globe. Whilst efforts had been made to steer more women into STEM, a new study in the U.S. may hold the key to such a problem.

Simply put, the potential solution is playing games!

A study involving 345 undergraduate students showed that spatial skills are significantly higher in students who played action, construction, or sports video games – the same skills that are relatively higher in STEM graduates.

Such statistically significant results are unsurprising, as STEM subjects often require visualisation and interpretation of graphs, diagrams, and maps. However, a high spatial reasoning score could also be explained by general intelligence. In this study, standardised test scores were used as a proxy for intelligence. Furthermore, each spatial test evaluates a different aspect of the perception of spatiality – for instance mental rotation of objects, and finding hidden items in a large pattern. Thus, the association of intelligence with STEM subjects can

be minimised.

When inspecting the data, researchers discovered that females presented with weaker spatial skills than males overall. Conversely, after adjusting for the frequency at which the students played construction games, the differences disappeared. This implies that women and men are equally good at spatial reasoning on a biological level. However, males tend to have an increased interest in action-based games, thereby developing better spatial skills.

Given the results, the research group suggested that schools should introduce more spatial reasoning training in the classroom to encourage students to take up STEM

“The group suggested schools should introduce more spatial reasoning training to encourage uptake of STEM subjects”

subjects. Since childhood play has such an important role in developing spatial skills, informal training such as video games and construction-based toys, e.g. Lego, at a young age could be introduced to reduce the gender disparities seen with STEM

subjects.

Rest assured, not all hope is lost for grown-ups, as adulthood training can still impact on spatial training. Not only can video games or Lego will help; photography, chess, and origami can also boost visual-spatial abilities!

Nonetheless, while it is common to assume causality, it is unclear of the connection of these events – consequently, we cannot be entirely certain that STEM subjects cause

high spatial reasoning, not vice-versa. Nevertheless, it is a cheap and relatively easy implementable intervention that may increase the number of female and male students progressing into STEM subjects. Additionally, next time when you ought to be studying but are side-tracked by gaming, you can claim that you are training your spatial reasoning to ease the guilt!



Will Lego make you better at chemistry? // Wikimedia

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Falcon Heavy: looking past a brilliant publicity stunt



Falcon Heavy lifted off last Tuesday, becoming the world's most powerful rocket // Brandon Thonen

TECH

Tom Mrazek
Tech Editor

Finally. There's late, and then there's this rocket. Conceived in 2004, Falcon Heavy was in the works before I could ride a bike or reliably spell the word "rocket". Sure, expecting a timely release from Elon Musk would be simply ludicrous, but this is a bit much even by future-leader-of-Mars' standards. Why did the world's most ambitious aerospace venture find it so hard to do little more than tape three Falcon 9 rockets to each other?

In a presentation in 2011, Elon Musk announced the Falcon Heavy would fly in 2013. But come around 2013 and the world's most powerful rocket seemingly became stuck being "just six months away", staying that way

for nearly five years. As SpaceX engineers quickly found out, duct tape just wasn't going to do the job. But gluing two boosters to a Falcon 9 core wasn't the only challenge SpaceX faced. Each time it seemed like we'd finally see the Falcon Heavy fly, the Falcon 9 team would bring about a newer, more powerful version of the rocket. Back to the drawing board it was for the Falcon Heavy then, as the concept based around the now-deprecated Falcon 9 version fell apart like a Jenga tower.

Rather critically, though, SpaceX had little reason to rush with the Heavy. Throughout its development, it became increasingly unclear why the world needed the rocket at all. Its lifting power, while impressive, wasn't taking anyone to Mars anytime soon. In fact, by 2017 the cheaper Falcon 9 had nearly matched the 25,000kg payload capacity Falcon

Heavy had originally been designed for. By then, however, Falcon Heavy was far enough in its development to stick around, and with upgraded engines from its little brother had the power to become a super-heavy launcher – a rocket capable of launching more than 50,000kg to low earth orbit.

"It became increasingly unclear why the world needed Falcon Heavy at all"

As it rolled out to Launch Complex 39A at Cape Canaveral, the same one Apollo 11 took off from in 1969, the Falcon Heavy could carry up to 63,800kg to low earth orbit – the mass of 23 elephants or a single

small space station. Yet in what must be the maddest display of opulence in human history, Elon Musk didn't choose to launch a space station or scientific experiments but rather his very own midnight cherry Tesla Roadster. With a figurine of a man in the driver's seat. With a little model of a Tesla Roadster on the dashboard and its very own tiny passenger in its tiny seat. All while the convertible's stereo

played David Bowie's 'Space Oddity' in the one medium through which sound can't travel. Which was a great idea. No, really, I'm being serious. True to their original purpose as ballistic missiles, rockets go kaboom pretty damn often, especially the first time they're launched. In fact, the only rocket to fire this many engines at once was the Soviet N1 which wasn't particularly successful (to put it

mildly). In four launches, it spectacularly failed four times, creating the most powerful non-nuclear explosion ever registered in the process.

The odds were against the Falcon taking flight, so whatever was going up that day had to be okay with going down equally as quickly should things go south. Luckily, a Tesla Roadster was as affordable as rocket payloads get, much cheaper than



There's now a car floating through space and it's not as crazy as it sounds // SpaceX

TECH

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The BFR is the real deal and aspires to get us to Mars. Also, I'll eat my hat if it flies in 2019.// SpaceX

a satellite or just about anything else that might be useful. Expressed in FiveSixEight's curly fries, blowing up a Tesla Roadster would have cost Musk only about 50,000 portions of this overrated snack compared to the over 300 million plates a proper satellite is worth. Incredible as it may sound, launching a convertible into space appears to have been a wise and economical decision.

Crispy metaphors aside, the Falcon Heavy test flight was the perfect publicity stunt not only for SpaceX, but space travel as a whole. The footage of the entire launch has seen nearly 20 million views, far more than any other space-related video on YouTube. Even the most sceptical and ambivalent observers admit that seeing a car soaring through space is just awe-inspiring.

Rather disappointingly, this launch appears to have saturated the market

for sports cars in space, so the Falcon Heavy will now need to find a different purpose. Despite countless doubts surrounding its actual usefulness, the heavy lifter has proven itself to be pretty capable. In theory, we should see it compete with the likes of the Delta IV Heavy or the Space Launch System, but in practice it dominates both ULA's and NASA's (respectively) entries. The Delta IV Heavy costs \$435 million per launch while the SLS is projected to swallow half a billion of taxpayers' money every time it lifts off. No matter what crunchy treat you convert that to, it's just bloody gluttony. What's worse yet, the SLS isn't even a real rocket, but rather just a series of very, very, very expensive blueprints. An astronomical \$18 billion worth of blueprints to be exact. With a launch cost of just \$150 million (\$90 million when reused) and double the Delta IV Heavy's

payload, does the Falcon Heavy render the above rockets obsolete? Not quite. Especially the SLS is here to stay, its only purpose being to utilize spare parts from the Space Shuttle in an attempt to convince America that a fragile, overpriced space-plane wasn't a terrible idea.

Impressive as it may

"Blowing up a Tesla would be worth about 50,000 portions of curly fries"

be, the Falcon Heavy won't shake up the launch market nearly as much as the Falcon 9 did. Instead, it gives SpaceX a much needed confidence boost after a mysterious satellite failure last month cast a

shadow of doubt over its Hawthorne headquarters. After the launch of the ZUMA satellite, a piece of tech so classified it's unclear who even purchased the launch, speculation arose that the \$1 billion, taxpayer-funded satellite had been lost to a failure. No evidence pointed to SpaceX being at fault, but a billion dollars is a billion dollars (or 1.7 billion Cadbury Cream Eggs if you will) and even after COO Gwynne Shotwell and Gen. John Thompson claimed that Falcon 9 performed nominally and the public was enraged. Due to the secretive nature of the mission, the fault could lie with payload adapter manufacturer Northrop Grumman or even no one at all – ZUMA could be just fully operational, and we'd be none the wiser.

Nevertheless, after the down that was the ZUMA mission, confidence was restored with the Falcon Heavy and it is the press

conference after that very test flight that featured a very important quote from Musk. Commenting on the successful launch, the clearly intoxicated (though that could just be his normal self) supervillain stated that he is now confident "that BFR is really quite workable".

The BFR, to clarify, is the real deal. After the powerful yet limited stepping stone that is the Falcon Heavy, it is the BFR that aspires to take mankind to Mars. Its acronym stands for none other than the "Big Fucking Rocket" (a reference to the "Big Fucking Gun", a weapon from the 90s videogame *Doom*), or as SpaceX's boring legal team chose to call it – the "Big Falcon Rocket". The BFR is expected to first fly next year, with a cargo flight to Mars expected as early as 2022. Of course, these dates are to be taken with a Big Fucking Pile of Salt, as it is commonly known that Musk's

estimates are given in Martian years (the conversion rate to Earth years is approximately 1.88:1). When it does finally take flight, the BFR will be a fully reusable monster of a ship with 150 tons of payload capacity, thirty-one engines, and a cabin comparable to that of an Airbus A380.

With the Falcon Heavy test flight, we've witnessed without a doubt the most impressive feat of engineering in the past few decades. The fact that a hypersonic flying machine split into three and then landed (well, two for three on the landings due to an issue on one of the boosters) with fantastic precision while taking an electric car and a sci-fi spacesuit to the asteroid belt is hard to take in. Best of all, if this is just a preface to the commercial space age, we're in for one hell of a ride.

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19:00 - 23:00

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Friday 23 February
20:00-02:00

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19:00-23:00

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Get my good side, Van Dyck // Royal Collection Trust

Van Dyck, Rubens, and Raphael from Charles I's collection reunited

Our writer is blown away by the power of the vast riches once owned by the 17th century monarch

ARTS

CHARLES I: KING AND COLLECTOR



Where? Royal Academy
When? 27th Jan – 15th April
How Much? £20; £12 Students

Pauline Ronnet
Arts Writer

Charles I left an astonishing artistic legacy as one of the most knowledgeable and distinguished art patrons in the history of Europe: “the greatest amateur of paintings among the princes of the world”, according to Rubens. He displayed little in the way of political artistry, however, and the tumultuous times he lived in caused him to pay with his life. Soon

after his decapitation, the hard-acquired objects of power and wealth in his collection were dispersed around the continent.

Now, more than three centuries later, an ambitious project has reassembled one of the greatest art collections in history. Walking through rooms hung with enormous tapestries and painted masterpieces – human achievements of powerful and marvellous beauty and detail – it is difficult to imagine that such vast riches were brought together under the possession of one man, and yet, they represent only a fraction of the collection.

The long-gone king hangs amongst his Raphaels, Mantegnas, and Rembrandts, remembering the glorious years of his ambitious past, but his belief in his own infallibility is frozen in time by the genius of Van Dyck.

‘The Supper at

Emmaus’ by Titian is the work which moved me most in the gallery. Jesus has just revealed his identity to two disciples after his resurrection; he sits between them, half of his face in shadow, and his gaze goes out to eternity. The body of the man on the left is thrown back in an expression of astonishment: the realisation of his fellow pilgrim’s true identity hits him with physical force and he is filled with awe. But the man on the right is suddenly filled with the instinct to venerate; already his hands are joined in worship and his eyes downcast, his own sense of self cast off by the spiritual intensity of the scene.

The most spectacular rooms are those which host the monarch’s family portraits, which are some of the most iconic of all British royalty. The royal couple exchanging tokens

side by side, Henrietta Maria dressed in the latest fashion of the day with her white hand rustling the fabric of her dress; the restrained attitudes of the royal children in their silk and satin finery... There history breathes, and past splendour awakens to daze modern eyes.

Dukes and court ladies who once sat for Holbein find themselves exposed to the inquisitive looks of visitors; the light that once shone in an eye, the curve of someone’s nose or chin – the flesh that once was – is immortalised in two dimensions by a precise, almost omniscient, stroke. In the same darkly lit room are miniatures, equestrian statuettes, precious medallions.

Elsewhere, the loose, swirling brush strokes of Rubens and Gentileschi cast an atmosphere of baroque sensuality into the room. Enormous canvases hang bursting

with flesh, draperies and pearls, the vivid lustres of the colours delighting in the parting of anguished lips or in a lover’s touch.

Throughout his life Charles believed in the divine right of kings. This spiritual belief found expression in magnificent displays by court painters such as Rubens and Mytens, which at the same time served the king’s ambition of creating an authoritarian, God-like image of himself that would be looked upon with fearful respect. But it was Van Dyck who served his patron’s image the best out of all the others, and whose portraits say to you: you are not worthy of the impassive eyes which gaze past you in assurance; the king is too certain of the order of the world, and of his place in it – an expression which is not easy to forget.

The power of art as a diplomatic weapon

and the role it played in Charles’ reign can be seen in representational paintings such as Rubens’ ‘Landscape with St George and the Dragon’, where the features of St George are none other than those of King Charles, the saviour of his people. The painting served to symbolically project Charles’ authority and legitimacy through the chivalrous ideals of virtue and martial prowess, using the allegory of St George slaying the dragon.

The exhibition contains great works by prestigious masters but what is predominantly striking is their historical allure seen through Charles’ reign, whose artistic legacy remains to impress us today – all the more so through Van Dyck’s deeply psychological portraits that bring the personality of the man so vividly to the present.

ARTS

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Portraits of the Obamas unveiled in Washington

Kehinde Wiley and Amy Sherald are the first African-American artists selected to paint the presidential portraits

ARTS

Indira Malik

Arts Editor

On Monday, portraits of the former American President Barack Obama, and the former First Lady Michelle Obama were unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC. They were painted by Kehinde Wiley and Amy Sherald, who were selected by the Obamas after interviews at the White House; they are the first ever African-American artists to paint the presidential portraits.

Wiley has depicted Obama sitting forward in a carved wooden chair in a dark, tie-less suit; he is frowning, deep in thought. The space around the

former president is richly verdant: glossy leaves lie against a dark field amongst a scattering of delicate blooms. The background recalls the finely detailed illuminations on medieval manuscripts. The parallels with western canon are no accident: the 40 year-old New York-Based artist Kehinde Wiley is best known for his large scale paintings of African-American subjects, often found on the streets of Harlem, in the roles of figures of power. In one painting for example, a young black man is portrayed riding a rearing horse, golden cape swirling around him in a pose lifted from the 19th century painting *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* by Jacques-Louis David.

Before the unveiling, Barack Obama joked that

he had to dissuade Wiley from painting him with a crown, saying "I had to explain that I've got enough political problems without you making me look like Napoleon!". For a painting of the first black president, no mere allusion to power is needed, but there are layers of meaning in Wiley's portrait: the flowers around Obama detail his heritage: African blue lilies represent his Kenyan father, the jasmine is for Hawaii where Obama grew up, and the chrysanthemum, the official flower of Chicago, honours the city where he met Michelle, and where his political career started.

Sherald's painting of the former first lady depicts her against a periwinkle blue field in a white gown by the designer Michelle

Smith. Michelle Obama praised Sherald's work and said she was thinking of the girls, particularly the girls of colour, "who in years ahead will come to this place and... see an image of someone who looks like them hanging on the wall of this great American institution. And I know the kind of impact that will have on their lives because I was one of those girls, and when I think about those future generations and generations past, I think wow, what an incredible journey we are on together in this country."

The portraits of the Obamas will remain on display at the gallery, where the former president's likeness will join the ranks of presidential portraits through the ages, including that of George Washington.



Barack Obama by Kehinde Wiley // Mark Gulezian/NPG

A pared-down Carmen falls flat at the ROH

ARTS

CARMEN



Where? Royal Opera House
When? 6th Feb - 16th March
How Much? £18 - £182

Anmol Patel

Arts Writer

Barrie Kosky's take on Bizet's much-loved Opera, *Carmen*, is a confused mash-up of grand opera and spirited West End musical. The director, known for his wacky, quirky productions, in his pursuit of a break from convention – and in a bid to adopt a radically postmodern take on the traditionally heady

romance – discards the Spanish exoticism that forms an integral part of *Carmen*. What remains are brief glimpses of Seville – made apparent only by Matador uniforms and Latin frocks in otherwise trite scenes. Even then, the over-confident, cabaret-style exhibition feels brash and tawdry. The stage, consumed by a wide staircase, with stunning lighting, appears grand and alive. However, once the initial glamour fades, the unchanging concrete staging becomes heartless, dreary, and lacklustre. The audience is asked to imagine the fountain in the foreground and the bridge above the stairs, with no props on stage.

Czech conductor, Jakub



Francesco Meli and Anna Goryachova // Bill Cooper

Hrusa, well known for the highly acclaimed adaptation of *Carmen* at Glyndebourne in 2015, makes his Royal Opera debut. His orchestra brings life and vigour to the edited score of *Carmen*. Nevertheless, his brilliance can only carry the production so

far. Towards the end of the second act, there is less new music to keep the audience engaged, and our attention regrettably returns to the stage.

Anna Goryachova's full-bodied mezzo soprano adds edge and a sense of danger to her sultry

Carmen. First appearing in a pink toreador outfit, she captures her audience instantly. She exudes sensuality and passion, adding much needed strokes of colour to the otherwise soulless stage. Despite this, Goryachova and her co-star Franceso Meli, playing Don José, present an unconvincing relationship sorely lacking in lust and sexual chemistry. Kristina Mkhitarian dazzles as Micaëla, Don José's other love interest, with her flawless voice, although is occasionally an awkward presence on stage.

The last scene however, is refreshingly dramatic. *Carmen*'s sumptuous gown, designed by Katrin Lea Tag, juxtaposed with the barren stage, is almost

iconic. *Carmen* and Don José finally capture the passion missing earlier and although slightly prolonged, the finale offers a taste of what could have been a remarkable performance.

As a whole, the production is very stilted, with an obvious lack of coherency. A string of awkwardly transitioning scenes is brought together by an off-stage voice that narrates large chunks of the narrative, leaving the audience to fill in the gaps. Kosky's *Carmen* falls short in almost all respects, but those willing to sit through the dross are rewarded with some moments of striking directorial and musical talent.

ARTS

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Surround yourself with supportive friends // Tezuka Productions

Pluto: a manga come to life

A production that is a feast for the eyes explores artificial intelligence and what it means to be human

ARTS

PLUTO



Where? Barbican
When? 8th - 11th Feb

Olly Dove
Arts Writer

Pluto, in summary, is the most visually impressive play you've likely never heard of. Before seeing the show, all I knew was that it involved Astro Boy, a character I vaguely recalled from my childhood. What I now know is that my interest in the ethical questions underpinning artificial intelligence has grown tenfold.

In essence, *Pluto* is a sci-fi mystery: the world's most powerful robots are being murdered, and a detective, who happens to be a robot himself, is attempting to solve the case. The pro-

duction, which is the culmination of seventy years of sci-fi history, explores the question of what it is to be human.

In 1951, Osamu Tezuka, a cartoonist working hard on creating light-hearted yet meaningful comic strips in post-war Japan, created the character of Captain Atom (later to become just Atom, aka Astro Boy): a child-like robot working for peace. In 2003, Naoki Urusawa and Takashi Nagasaki worked together to write a new manga, in honour of Atom's fictional birth date, April the 7th 2003.

The story created was *Pluto*, which is now passed on into the hands of director-choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. Cherkaoui's background in dance and theatre blend together in *Pluto* – it is clearly the work of a mind skilled at using movement to represent thought, emotion, and time. One of the more striking uses of dance – and there are

several to choose from – is the depiction of a robot's inner process by the actions of four or five dancers around it. When the detective, Gesicht, acts out his usual morning routine, dancers surrounding him convey his every thought with little gestures which, upon first glance, appear busy and overwhelming. Upon further glances, it becomes clear that the impeccably timed hand movements signal each of Gesicht's thought processes as they happen.

Many of the movements of the performers throughout the show were blink-and-you've-missed-it, but the one that affected me the most was a simple movement of Gesicht sitting on a chair and being pushed (by the dancers) through a white frame. The simple enough movement was to signify his leaving the dressing room and entering the dining room where his wife awaited him. I only caught the end of the swift

and elegant movement, and was left with a strong desire to press rewind to see the action again. I had the opportunity later in the show when the same action was repeated but, as I was reading surtitles at the time, missed it once again.

Which brings us on to the defining feature of the show: surtitles. Used at times synonymously with subtitles, surtitles have a similar meaning: the translation of the script is projected for the audience's benefit, but do not include the usual descriptions of sounds that would be provided for deaf and hard of hearing audiences.

Pluto was performed completely in Japanese by the Bunkamura Theatre Cocoon, a theatre company based in Japan, which meant that the surtitles were necessary, and indeed did become a part of the show. Rather than restricting the surtitles to above or below the action, the surtitles were project-

ed within the show itself, adding to the overall effect of an integrated manga comic. The two-tiered stage design constantly changed shape with the aid of background dancers who continuously moved white blocks and borders. The surtitles were projected within the black spaces created and on the white borders and blocks, sometimes alongside manga illustrations. The impression intended on the audience was that of reading a gigantic comic book. And it worked.

The downside to surtitles, as frequently is the case with subtitles, is the opportunity for mistakes. Occasionally, the words were displayed too early or too quickly for the audience to read but, given how infrequent the mistakes were and how many were possible – the location of the projections changed with every other sentence – the mistakes were not bad enough to be irritating. The only

other problem of having to read a translation was a general weakness of the play altogether: the sheer amount of action to watch was, at times, a little too much. Yet, it is impossible not to be in awe of how Cherkaoui coordinated the timing of everything.

Robot puppeteers, dancers, and minor characters all worked seamlessly throughout the show and it was startling to realise at the end that it was a cast of fifteen, not fifty. Tao Tsuchiya should be especially praised for her performance as both of the lead female roles, something I hadn't realised until I noticed one of her characters missing from the curtain call.

Tsuchiya and the rest of the *Pluto* cast were spectacular, and deserved far more than a mere four days in London. With any luck, they'll return to our shores again soon.

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BOOKS

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The essential rainbow reading list

Arts Editor **Indira Mallik** brings us on a journey of queer literature that forms her 'rainbow reading list', as part of LGBT History Month here in the UK.

BOOKS

Indira Mallik
Arts Editor

A lengthy reading list, I think, is a quintessential part of the coming out story of every bookish queer person. From tentative forays into Sarah Waters's debauched Victoriana to focused study of Virginia Woolf's fabulously winding sentences, we use books to try and find ourselves, to build a roadmap of how to be in the world.

One of the first queer books I discovered, and one that remains one of my absolute favourites is Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*. Spanning forty years, it tells the story of Celie, a girl married off to a man many years her senior, who is forced to live a life of abuse, drudgery, and quiet desperation. Celie's misery is interrupted by

the arrival of Shug Avery, a glamorous singer who is the object of Celie's husband's affections. Shug and Celie improbably begin an affair, marking a turn in both their fortunes. In a story otherwise full of heartbreak, the relationship between the women is a bright spark of joy. Written largely in the first person in the form of Celie's confessional letters to God, Walker's

"Maggie Nelson's writing on life and death sings on the page in her *The Argonauts*"

novel covers faith, racial injustice, and the power of female solidarity.

In many ways, queer-

ness is incidental to *The Colour Purple*, taking a backseat to the humanist philosophy that Walker wants to convey; this is not the case in Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, which places the complexities of queer life at its heart. Part-essay on queer politics and the patriarchy, and part memoir, in this magnificent book Nelson describes the period in her life where her partner Harry came out as trans and began testosterone treatment. By examining her struggle to square her identity as a lesbian woman with Harry's journey, Nelson explores the confines of a heteronormative society. It is a fascinating look at gender and sexuality and how little both matter in the face of individual, personal attraction. Some of the most powerful passages in the book come later on: as Nelson falls pregnant after a lengthy IVF process, Harry's mother becomes terminal-



Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* was made into a film in 2009 // TWC

ly ill, and Nelson's writing on life and death sings on the page. Addressed to Harry throughout, who appears as the ubiquitous 'you', *The Argonauts* is an erudite, lyrical, and deeply moving love letter.

Hailed as a pioneer of queer literature, and certainly one of the first to weave a trans narrative, few novels explore evolving relationships and a life in flux with greater verve than Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (which is also incidentally considered a love letter – Woolf wrote the novel with Vita Sackville-West in mind). *Orlando* follows the life of an Elizabethan courtier born a man who then wakes up a woman and goes on to charm her way through 300 years of English history. Written in Woolf's characteristic gorgeous, sweeping prose, *Orlando*, quite apart from having a plot filled with twists, is a joy to read.

Patricia Highsmith is known for her sparse, detached writing as much as Woolf is known for her generous turn of phrase. Yet in *The Price of Salt*, the book later adapted by

Todd Haynes as the movie *Carol*, Highsmith's arch, incisive writing is winningly romantic – "happiness was like a green vine spreading through her, stretching fine tendrils, bearing flowers through her flesh." It tells the story of young shop assistant Therese, and the love that develops between her and an older woman, Carol, whom she encounters by chance at a department store. *The Price of Salt* is one of the rare breed of queer novels that ends happily.

Certainly there is no such comfort in reading Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* in which George, a gay Englishman living in Los Angeles, struggles with depression after the death of his partner. Isherwood's prose is heart wrenchingly poignant in its simplicity: "think of two people, living together day after day... in this small space... bumping against each other's bodies by mistake or on purpose... in rage or in love – think what deep though invisible tracks they must leave, everywhere, behind them!"

A Single Man became a film of the same name in 2009, and indeed thanks to Hollywood many of the best of the queer canon have found critical acclaim on the big screen, from Annie Proulx's short story *Brokeback Mountain*, originally published in the *New Yorker*

"Many of the best of the queer canon have found critical acclaim on the big screen"

in 1997, to Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith*, which was transposed to Korea in *The Handmaid's Tale*, all the way to André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*, hearteningly, queer stories are becoming more and more accessible. There has never been a better time to discover and fall in love with LGBTQ literature.



Is a reading list essential for forging LGBTQ+ identity? // Flickr/bjpcorp

FILM

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Loveless: Andrey Zvyagintsev gets under the skin of modern Russia

Following on from the success of Leviathan, the Russian director returns with another masterful film in which a missing child serves to highlight one couple's breakdown.

FILM

LOVELESS



★★★★★

Dir: Andrey Zvyagintsev.
Script: Olig Negin, Andrey Zvyagintsev. **Starring:** Maryana Spivak, Aleksey Rozin, Matvey Novikov, Marina Vasilyeva. 128 minutes

Fred Fyles
 Editor-in-Chief

Andrey Zvyagintsev's *Loveless*, his follow up to his 2014 *Leviathan*, features one of the most haunting images I've encountered in cinema: Shenya (Maryana Spivak) and Boris (Aleksey Rozin), a middle-class couple in the throes of an ugly divorce, argue about what they should do with their son Alexey (Matvey Novikov), a child who neither of them really wanted; as Zhenya storms around their small, unassuming apartment, she slams a door shut, revealing the tormented face of Alexey, his face locked in a silent cry of anguish. He has heard the whole thing.

It is this impactful event that drives forward the rest of Zvyagintsev's film, which serves as a precise and damning analysis of the current state of Russia. Zvyagintsev wields his camera like a surgeon's knife, delicately lifting up the thin skin of modern society and revealing the darkness that festers underneath.

While Alexey's presence in the film is – by virtue of the plot's design



Loveless is a chilling exploration of modern Russia // Altitude

– limited, it is this image that lingers throughout its duration. Shortly after the argument, Alexey goes missing, last seen running from their Moscow apartment block on CCTV. These tower blocks break up an undulating landscape of trees and snow, forming a liminal space on the outskirts of Moscow. Zvyagintsev manages to master the psychology of space, and the use of architecture is just one tool in this brutal and harrowing account of both the divides between the parents, and the hypocrisy of modern Russian culture.

While in other films a missing child might serve to bring couples together in mutual anguish, in *Loveless*, as the name suggests, it only serves to drive more of a wedge

between them. Boris, working in a company whose religious policy means everyone there is happily married, has already moved on from Zhenya, and has a heavily-pregnant girlfriend. Zhenya, meanwhile, has also taken on a lover, and cut herself off from her battle-axe of a mother – a Soviet relic who lives alone off a highway to Kiev, like someone you might encounter in the work of Svetlana Alexievich.

Just as in *Leviathan*, Zvyagintsev takes aim at Russian officialdom, with the police inspector assigned to the case explaining to Zhenya that there's nothing much they can do about missing children, when there are murderers and rapists to worry about; instead, he

recommends she get in touch with a volunteer organisation, who prove themselves to be much more effective than any official body, scrupulously combing the surrounding area.

"Zvyagintsev takes aim at Russian officialdom"

While the themes explored in *Loveless* are more engaging than in *Leviathan*, with the main marital conflict playing out against a backdrop of the Russian annexation of Crimea, there are areas where the writing becomes didactic. The

ubiquitous inclusion of smartphones, for example, is – I guess – supposed to show us the shallowness of modern life, but the extent to which Zvyagintsev hammers home his point reduces the impact of the message.

Despite this, Zvyagintsev's direction remains sublime, with his camera moving consistently, albeit glacially, through doorways and around corners; in one impressive long-shot at the start of the film, reminiscent of the unnerving work of Michael Haneke, we linger outside a school as children run out, before the lens picks out Alexey, following him dutifully down the street. When the team are combing an abandoned Soviet-era complex near the apartment, the film becomes an

exploration of the architecture of decay, no doubt inspired by the ruin porn photographic movement.

Pointed remarks turn to arguments turn to physical violence, as the disparity and incompatibility of Boris and Zhenya comes to the fore. The couple go from blaming each other for Alexey's disappearance to making a trip to the morgue to identify the body of a child, but throughout it all there remains an undercurrent of mutual resentment, negating any possibility of a happy conclusion. *Loveless*' name sounds out like a warning: this is not a film with a warming message, or a beating heart; it is a cold abyss of a film, one that completely drags you under, and traps you in its power.

MUSIC

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Franz Ferdinand take an unprecedented sidestep

Their latest effort brings a host of sonic experimentation and a new, dancier sound from a band that no longer has anything to prove.

MUSIC

ALWAYS ASCENDING



★★★★★

Artist: Franz Ferdinand.
Label: Domino. **Top Tracks:** Always Ascending; Lazy Boy; The Academy Award; Glimpse of Love.
For Fans Of: Arctic Monkeys; The Strokes; Sparks. *40 minutes*

Neel Le Penru
Music Writer

Always Ascending might be Franz Ferdinand's most technically accomplished LP to date. Their first studio album since 2013, it is the most distinct evolution of their sound since 2009's *Tonight*. Driving this is the addition of two new members to the band, Julian Corrie (who has released albums as Miaoux Miaoux) on keyboards and backing vocals, and Dino Bardot on guitar and backing vocals. Together they take the place of co-founder of the band, Nick McCarthy, who left in 2016.

On *Always Ascending*, Franz Ferdinand take McCarthy's replacement as something of a fresh start – though that's not to say they've stopped sounding like Franz Ferdinand. Like their previous work, this is still an indie rock album whose punchy basslines and funky rhythm guitar parts show a clear intention to get listeners dancing. But *Always Ascending* also features some of the band's most inventive songwriting.

Sonically, Corrie's meandering and spacey keyboard parts take a

central role. Elements of disco and production from Philippe Zdar (of French house group Cassius) lend distinct sound throughout. Influence from Sparks, with whom Franz Ferdinand recorded an album in 2015, is especially evident on tracks such as 'Lois Lane' and 'Huck and Jim', which slickly transition through multiple parts, from soaring choruses to aggressively marching verses. Sifting through the unconventional structures on these songs, frontman

"It's a care-free approach to songwriting that sounds like the band is genuinely enjoying trying new things"

Alex Kapranos' sardonic lyrics push towards the ridiculous ("At the over-30s singles night it's bleak", "We're going to America / we're gonna tell them about the NHS"). It's an ambitious and care-free approach to songwriting that sounds like the band is genuinely enjoying trying new things.

That approach is evident elsewhere. 'Lazy Boy', perhaps the most typically Franz Ferdinand track on the record, grooves to a 10/4 time signature. Many of the melodies on *Always Ascending* were written using a keyboard that pushes the player's fingers to unanticipated notes. The title track borrows

from a practice in traditional Ethiopian music to have chord progressions that never return to their root note but instead constantly evolve. Kapranos and co. found the sonic equivalent of this in the Shepard Tone, an aural illusion of constantly increasing pitch (which you may have heard of most recently for its use in Christopher Nolan's film *Dunkirk* for both the score, and as an influence on the narrative structure).

The band translate this idea of ascension into a meandering chord progression played over the Shepard Tone, and Kapranos' meta, punning lyrics "The shepherd misleads so you think you're transcending." In this instance, Kapranos veers dangerously close to trying *too hard* to sound clever, but, as with several other tracks on the album, is spared by the plucky instrumentation that reminds us that this is pop, not poetry.

That said, two of the best tracks on the album, 'The Academy Award' and 'Glimpse of Love' are those in which the lyrics' social commentary is most astute. The first, a gentle acoustic ballad that appears midway through the album, sees Kapranos mocking self-obsessed, social-media culture: "There's a camera held in every hand / The glamour of applause in every mind / but the Academy Award for good times goes to you."

The lyrics to 'Glimpse of Love' juxtapose lines from tabloid papers' comments about female celebrities' bodies over a wonderfully retro, catchy synth riff ("A glimpse of perfect abs / In a flimsy



I think I used to have a screensaver like that // Domino

floral dress / Shows off her slender frame / Enjoys a private stroll"). In doing so, Kapranos exposes the predatory nature of such comments as the product of a search for some true emotion, a glimpse of love: "Love is gonna come as a photographer."

Kapranos claims that the lyrics on this album emerged from trying to write from the emotional state of detailed characters

"The title track borrows from a practice in traditional Ethiopian music"

he created with bassist Bob Hardy. As he steps into these personas, he further plays the character of frontman, perhaps due to McCarthy's absence, and ventures lower into his vocal range, in which he is arguably now more comfortable, with perceptible confidence.

Yet for all that is new on this album, some of the best songs are those in which the band's newfound adventurousness is contained. Equally there are a few tracks which are somewhat lackluster, like 'Paper Cages', 'Finally' and closer 'Slow Don't Kill Me Slow'. These are not bad songs, but are the clearest representation of *Always Ascending*'s biggest flaw: while offering refreshing song ideas and proving

that they are technically able to execute them, Franz Ferdinand fail to nail the razor-sharp tightness and ability to self-edit that made their earliest material such great pop-rock. At the other extreme, the experimentation on this album is rarely sufficiently seen through in terms of captivating, thought-provoking or emotional lyrics. A number of the cuts on this record simply feel a little too drawn out or unremarkable for it to be truly excellent. That might not be as disappointing as sounds, though, as *Always Ascending* remains a solid album that will add some of the most interesting material to Franz Ferdinand's excellent live back-catalogue.

MUSIC

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New GoGo Penguin: *A Humdrum Star* is anything but

MUSIC

A HUMDRUM STAR



Artist: GoGo Penguin. **Label:** Blue Note. **Top Tracks:** Raven, Transient State, Window. **For Fans Of:** Snarky Puppy, Bent Knee, BADBADNOTGOOD. **51 minutes**

Henry Eshbaugh
Music Editor

Manchester-based jazztronica band GoGo Penguin has made more jazztronica. The group, noted especially for previous efforts *Man Made Object* and the Mercury-nominated *v2.0*, have continued to refine their unique sound on the latest effort. Not too much

changes in the way of tone or songwriting; you can expect to come across the same break-beats and arching piano harmonies present on earlier works. And yet, the group feels fresh and progressive; new rhythmic corners are explored, new techniques are exploited, new tones are produced. And they all sound *fantastic*.

The group remains ridiculously tight. The track “Transient State” showcases their incredible ability to cram into the pocket as a group, melding a dynamically-expressive drumline with a heavily-syncopated double bass riff and stacks of glitchy keyboard chords on top, weaving from idea to idea with an uncanny sharpness of purpose and a next-level virtuosity.

The band pushes forward with strange new ideas. “Strid” has some

“Strid’s absolutely wavy double bass harmonics have an unreal, ethereal timbre”

absolutely wavy double bass harmonics at the end - the timbre of which is unreal. There’s crunchy, compressed piano on “Reactor” that hits just the right spot. On the aforementioned “Transient State”, there’s a break 4 minutes or so in, where the (fuzzed) bassline takes up a single tone in a polyrhythmic fashion - it sounds like they’ve drawn influence from fellow

Manchester act Tesseract in particular (new album out in April who up), and the whole djent movement as a whole, which caught me quite by surprise (djent’s delicious, y’all). Ideas and themes from traditional African drumming to video game music are explored on this album, in great detail.

But there is a special kind of minimalism to GoGo Penguin compositions, wherein each instrument will pick up a refrain and slowly nurture it, creating an intricate interplay between each band member, and through minute variations builds incredibly dense harmony in the no-mans-land between the performers. Inclined to be mercurial, glitches and breaks will often set a bandmember off, and the old refrain is ditched in favor of something newer, spicier,



Quite literally a wavy album cover. Nice. // Blue Note

sharper. And so the band propels itself through piece after piece, stunning block chords relenting to the pull of a driving bassline of squirly drum fill, always coherent, always with harmony as the foremost goal.

The new album is a fresh and welcome addition to the GoGo Penguin discography, complementing the previous work with new ideas and sounds that do nothing but enhance the band. See y’all for the next one, everyone.

An album from one of our own: *21 Steps Forward*

MUSIC

21 STEPS FORWARD



Artist: S-Jay. **Label:** Self-released. **Top Tracks:** Time Passing, Old Times, Forward. **For Fans Of:** Wu-Tang Clan, Will Smith. **37 minutes**

Felix Music
Music Editors

Our very own Suraj (of EEE) has delivered his freshman project: *21 Steps Forward*, a retrospective on his life thus far, expressing an ambitious and hustling worldview. And if I can be quite frank, this album surpassed my expectations.

Big-band jazz backings and honky-tonk piano funk are the M.O. on this tape; the samples are well-picked and translate quite nicely to the rhythm section. On top of these fat beats comes the man, the myth, the legend himself, dropping mad bars and flowing competently.

The production is on-point throughout the LP. Suraj is well-mic’d and the samples fit well (cop “Caravan” on track 1). There are no glaring errors; in general, the album (and S-Jay’s Belfast accent) sound good.

The album gets close and personal, and quite effectively. Track 3 gives a frank perspective of S-Jay’s youth, identifying faults in his younger self and earnestly analyzing them from the perspective

of his present (perhaps newfound) maturity. Though perhaps lost in the verse, there is a discernible sense of pathos imparted by these

few well-executed bars. S-Jay executes enough well to hook the listener effectively, showing off a budding musicality with a neat bar here and a clever



Don’t take the steps there bub, it’s dangerous. // S-Jay

production trick there.

There are rough patches, though. While the flows are generally good, there’s the occasional stray syllable, trying to work its way into the beat and missing. Though S-Jay covers pretty nicely, they still feel extra. In general, the flow (while competent) is not quite to the level of technicality that success in the rap game requires - a more precise control over the flow and the emoting alongside. To be honest, S-Jay sounds a bit like Will Smith, fostering an outlook that prioritizes idealist positivity over a more ruminating perspective that interacts with his character and actions in a more teleologically nuanced way. That is, he sounds cheesy sometimes.

For one, S-Jay should have drawn clearer lines between cartoon characters (“I have a jet”) and deeper cuts that explore his personality (“Why’d I do things that made my mom cry?”). As an other example, I found the bars of “London Town” to be over-emoted; a slightly colder and more technically impressive flow would hook the listener more effectively, differentiate the verse from the chorus, and have him come across as less cheesy. How much do you need to play up a proclamation of love for the Tate Britain?

Then again, there are always rough spots on the first album. S-Jay has potential; I’m looking forward to the sophomore effort.

MUSIC

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Left my heart in Hackney, down in the Peach Pit

MUSIC

PEACH PIT



Support Artist: Blackaby.
Venue: Moth Club. **Date:**
7th February 2018. **Ticket**
Price: £10.

Maryna Voloshyna
Music Writer

After the release of their LP *Being So Normal*, the Vancouver-bred indie pop band Peach Pit embarked on a European tour early this year. With several dates around the country, the glitzy nightspot in the heart of Hackney, Moth Club, was their London pit stop of choice. Opening up for them was a three-piece, Blackaby, rumoured to have performed live only once

before their appearance as Peach Pit's supporting act. Fronted by William Blackaby, the band's haunting, whispery, Elliot Smith-stained sound of their first hit track 'My Paula' transfixed the teen crowd and induced a mass hipster head bob across the entire venue. The set continued with 'Hairstyle' and 'Pinky' (originally titled 'Punky', before it was inevitably autocorrected in the lead singer's phone notes) being the prime crowd-pleasers.

When the opening act came to a close, each of the Peach Pit members filed out in quick succession and began to set up their equipment. A short, profound, silence pervaded the room as vocalist Neil Smith tuned the final string on his guitar before kicking off the show with the album's opening track 'Drop

the Guillotine'. Written about Smith's much better looking high school best friend metaphorically slitting his throat with a guillotine when stealing Smith's crushes, the track is characterised by soft, lazy vocals and intricate guitar licks, creating a timeless retro pop sound with a hint of classic rock. Like 'Drop the Guillotine', most tracks on the album revolve around teenage angst, the feeling of which was unintentionally intensified by the 80s prom décor on the Moth Club stage.

The self-titled infamous track 'Peach Pit' followed, sending the crowd back into trance which, evidently, only lifted on the journey back home. The chewed bubble-gum pop sound, as the band put it, continued with the lyrically blunt and groovy 'Techno Show',



After the gig they posed for photos with fans // Maryna Voloshyna

Greek imagery infused 'Alrighty Aphrodite', mellow 'Tommy's Party' and 'Private Presley', after which everyone grew withdrawn and introspective. They closed the show with a rendition of Chuck Berry's 'Johnny

B. Goode' to reenergise and pump up the crowd.

The boys were so genuine and down-to-earth, staying back after the show to greet, have a chat and take photos with fans. From a failed attempt at crowd surfing

by guitarist Christopher Vanderkooy, to the conversation and kiss I shared with bassist Peter Wilton, I had an unforgettable time and I am excited to follow all that Peach Pit has in store.

An album from the entire London jazz community

MUSIC

WE OUT HERE



Artist: Various. **Label:** Brownswood. **Top Tracks:** Pure Shade, Walls, The Balance. **For Fans Of:** Jussef Kamaal, Blue Lab Beats, Binker Moses. 56 minutes

Alex Montgomerie-Corcoran
Jazz Man

A whole scene captured in a brief moment, Brownswood Recordings' 'We Out Here' showcases the best of London's young, growing jazz movement. Crossing the sounds of hip hop, jazz, neo soul, and afrobeat (and even



I, a fox, am out here. Alone. Not 'we'. I. Me. // Brownswood

slight acid house vibes on Moses Boyd's track), this album brings together a carefully curated collection of diverse sounds, with an underlying 'London-ness' inherent across all of them. Within

only three days of recording, Shabaka Hutchings (musical director for the project) was able to put a spotlight on the musicians that are driving this scene, capturing perfectly this pivotal time for the

musicians as artists.

The album opens with a dark, melancholy rumble on piano joined by bass-clarinet and flute to form a harmonically empty, slow moving build into a beautiful cacophony of horns and percussion, with heavy, impacting cadences thrown in also. This piece sets the tone for the album; a mysterious introduction to an eclectic yet harmonious collection of songs.

The next tune, 'Pure Shade' by Ezra Collective, draws heavily on afrobeat influence, although without the same sort of anguish in its sound. Introduced by the mellow tone of the keys and soft-spoken voice of horns, the song is set. The rich, modal harmonies of the keys provide warmth amongst the blue horn

"A whole scene captured in a brief moment"

melodies and persistent droning bassline, all moving independently. Everything is kept within the delicate touch of the drummer, who dictates the vibe of the song. Halfway through, these standalone voices are united, with everyone moving together in a subdued fanfare.

Triforce's 'Walls' is introduced by the clean, soft swells of Mansur Brown's guitar (a musician who you should seriously keep an eye on), with bass and keys soon mimicking after. The guitar then comes in with an abrasive, distorted melody ramping

up this almost rock-like ballad which, after a thunderous crescendo, breaks through into a tranquil, slow groove. A relaxed, lazy melody comes in from the synth with an abrasiveness that compliments the previous guitar melody.

Overall, this collection is possibly the best description of London's jazz scene currently, and a marker for future success. Even with great variation across each track, this album still holds a common sound that's so indicative of this movement. 'We Out Here' is an announcement for these musicians, showing their ever growing presence in the industry, and a statement to let people know what jazz is within London's culture.

TELEVISION

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American Vandal: A detective mockumentary that goes beyond dick jokes

American Vandal, one of Netflix's latest offerings, has flown under the radar of many viewers, but it deserves to be watched for its smart writing, bold narrative, and excellent acting

TELEVISION

AMERICAN VANDAL



Creators: Dan Perrault, Tony Yacenda. **Starring:** Tyler Alvarez, Griffin Gluck, Jimmy Tatro, Camille Hyde.

Saad Ahmed
Games Editor

With so much TV hitting our screens nowadays, *American Vandal* will probably fly under a lot of radars due to its lack of big names and its 'mockumentary' label. I am here to convince you that this show is, without a doubt, a masterpiece and well worth a place on the top of your watchlist.

Essentially, this show revolves around a single drawn out dick joke. The crime centred on this show is all the teachers' cars at a high school being spray painted with dicks. A troublemaking student, Dylan Maxwell, is accused and expelled, solely based on his past antics. Two students from the same high school, Peter and Sam, begin a documentary not too long after to find out the truth of what really happened.

As this show somewhat parodies other crime documentaries like *Serial* and *Making a Murderer*, this show could have easily been a dumb comedy, making fun of the situation and the documentary format. Instead, the show embraces its roots and goes out of its way to be as professional and serious

as possible. A saving point for Dylan is the fact that the dicks he has drawn in the past don't match the ones from the vandalism. Even though this sounds like a stupid argument on the surface, the show – or, to be more specific, Peter and Sam – treats this as a serious piece of evidence that helps the case. Throughout all the episodes, we're treated to in-depth analysis of unusual and seemingly dumb pieces of evidence and to see how they build towards the bigger picture.

No investigation is perfect, and Peter and Sam hit several roadblocks and dead ends on their way to find out the truth. But for every hypothesis and piece of evidence that's investigated, we find out

"We see the social dynamics of the school, instead of it being used as a backdrop"

more and more about the high school and the people. We see the social dynamics of school, how the teachers are looked at from the eyes of the students and other teachers, and what dirty secrets people have been hiding. This makes the high school environment feel more involved and relevant in a unique way, in stark contrast from other forms of media



Who drew those dicks? // Netflix

where it is typically used as a backdrop for other plotlines.

Another thing unique about this documentary is that it is 'filmed' by students of the school. This adds an extra layer of complexity as the students are investigating their own teachers and their fellow peers. In a more realistic depiction to previous shows in the past, we see how the documentary leads to repercussions in the real world as, amongst other things, a teacher gets fired and a relationship is broken up. Peter and Sam indulge in a lot of shady journalism practises like sharing private conversations and messages, as well as secretly recording conversations. To the show's credit, we see them get called out on a lot of their actions and directions multiple times. It's interesting to see a

documentary affecting the lives of the creators and those around them.

This show is even able to convey a message to its viewers if you read between the lines. High school is ultimately a turbulent and uncertain time for many. A lot of people have their futures written off, solely based on what a teacher marks down as well as what the people around may think of them. Even though it may seem like a lot of effort to prove the innocence of an already morally dubious student, it raises the question of whether we really can or deserve to just write people off so easily. A truly heartening moment in the series is when Dylan tries to turn over a new leaf and become a model student. But once he hears what his teacher and his peers think of him, he descends

back into his old antics, venting his frustration and wondering whether it'd be easier to just be the delinquent everyone assumes he already is.

It's not just the quality and production level of the show which is so high, but also the skill and performance of the actors. Even though most are relatively small-scale or unknown, they are all able to give very powerful and believable performances. One highlight for me was when Dylan's girlfriend was being grilled on where exactly she was during the vandalism. She says no lines while being questioned but the way the actress' expressions change and her eyes well up is comparable to any emotionally-intense scene in Hollywood today.

American Vandal is exceptionally intense and addictive. As the investi-

gation proceeds forward in both the most serious and ludicrous ways, you'll find yourself invested in everyone's lives, appreci-

"The fact that all the footage is 'filmed' by students adds a layer of complexity to the plot"

ating all the big and small moments the show has to offer. At the end of the day, it provides an earnest and emotional look at high school through the eyes of someone written off as a joke.

American Vandal is available on Netflix now.

GAMES

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Visual novels – A unique form of storytelling

An examination of an arguably less popular genre of gaming but one equally as entertaining as the others.

GAMES

Saad Ahmed

Games Editor

A few years ago, you wouldn't have been able to find more than one or two games on Steam categorised under the 'visual novel' format. In recent years however, their popularity has been growing; now there are a number of visual novels that are considered mainstream. In spite of that, visual novels are largely dismissed by some members of the gaming community as not being 'real' games and having little value as games.

Before we can discuss visual novels and why dismissing them is wrong, we need to answer one question: are visual novels really games? This question is one which has infuriated several people and has been a source of heated debate. To get a clear answer to this question, it'll help to introduce some game designer lingo we can play around with.

To describe video games from a more academic perspective,

there are two different terms that are used, narratology and ludology. The narratology approach states that games are fundamentally another medium of narrative and storytelling, in a similar fashion to novels and films, and should therefore be approached in such a fashion. The ludology approach, however, states that games are fundamentally interactive systems and any story they're trying to tell is of secondary importance to the gameplay itself.

"As the market and popularity of these games grew, so did their variety and accessibility"

From these definitions, it is obvious to see visual novels fall into the narratological approach to video games. They are, at the end of day, novels with art, music, and a text heavy narrative. Any

mini-games or gameplay aspects they have usually serve to add to the plot as opposed to standing alongside it. However, some visual novels have a more ludological approach as well.

There are some visual novels which have more classic video game elements such as those of RPG games. You get to control the characters in the story and can get involved in sequences requiring fine hand-eye coordination. At the end of the day, however, while visual novels should technically be considered games, there will always be people who will argue against this and pick something like *Call of Duty* over *Phoenix Wright*.

One could ask how visual novels became so popular in the first place. When they started out, they were a bit more niche; they were predominantly popular in Japan and mostly consisted of 'dating simulators'. People made their own translations and imported them online where the demand for these types of games grew from other players around the world. The developers then made more versions of these



Your choices: beat up or beat up a lot // Telltale Games

games, translated and dubbed, to help cater to this niche market. As the market and popularity of these games grew, so did their variety and accessibility.

They grew to encompass more than just dating simulators and began overlapping with quite a few genres. It's gotten to the point where even western developers are also joining the market and making their own visual novels. Telltale Games are an especially popular studio, having produced several critically acclaimed series like *The Walking Dead*. Even some indie studios are getting in on the action with recent hits like *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator* and *Doki Doki Literature Club*.

A large reason for their popularity boom and success is the fact that visual novels are very flexible. While they are a genre in and of themselves, they can also overlap with other types of games with regards to story or gameplay. Cross-genre visual novels contain other aspects of games such as dramatic survival horror with *The Walking Dead* and puzzle

solving with *Professor Layton*. These types of visual novels are usually more appealing to the casual audience and are the ones that, at the end of the day, are the most mainstream. In fact, these particular games are more than just interactive novels with pretty pictures and nice music: they are damn awesome games in their own right.

What's the real selling point of visual novels? As the name might imply, they are just very good at telling stories. In fact, you could consider them the middle ground between reading a book or watching a movie and using VR or roleplaying to experience a story yourself. Visual novels can act as 'choose' your own adventure games, where you control the characters and can choose which direction you want the story to go. Granted, this is arguably limited, as for all intents and purposes, you can only really stick to the the story and direction specified by the developers (something players of Telltale games are often frustrated by). But in their defence, programming stories which can take multiple

directions and endings are a lot of work and are usually left for games which are also heavy on gameplay and length to really get a fulfilling experience. Having said that, the choices you make in most visual novels feel impactful in the moment and if nothing else, get the player personally invested at that time. At the end of the day, you can always get emotionally invested in the story and cry your eyes out at select

"Cross-genre visual novels contain other aspects of games"

moments.

Ultimately, visual novels are a genre unlike any other in that they are focused on storytelling but with a different presentation and interaction than what you'd get from a book or film. Just make sure you can tolerate reading: if not, you might as well stick to shooting down enemy soldiers.



Objection! // Capcom



Information Sessions

If you're standing for a position in The Leadership Elections 2018 or thinking about it, there is a series of information sessions being planned to help you prepare your campaign, write a manifesto, find out how Imperial College Union is run, and the part each role plays.

Information sessions run from Monday 19 - Friday 23 February. The sessions will be interactive and vary according to the role, so check imperialcollegeunion.org/elections for the schedule and make an effort to attend the ones relevant to you. Candidates are also asked to attend a briefing during the week of Monday 26 February.

Nominations close midnight, 25 February. Stand for a position now at imperialcollegeunion.org/elections.



Got your ticket yet?

Book your ticket now and witness the action when Imperial Medics do battle with Imperial College London in the 16th instalment of VarsityFest. This year's rivalry comprises 14 sports with Netball and Kabbadi as the headline and showcase events respectively.

The first big event will be Water Polo at Ethos on Friday 23 February, followed by Hockey at Harlington on Wednesday 28 February. Saturday 3 March at Heston will be massive, with a full day of fixtures.

Between games, there'll be live entertainment, face painting and food stalls. Book now at imperialcollegeunion.org/varsityfest.



Student Volunteering Week 2018

Student Volunteering Week kicks off on Monday and we're taking the time to celebrate all Imperial students who do good throughout the year! SVW18 is a national celebration of volunteering, run by students' unions up and down the country.

From Monday 19 - Sunday 25 February, we'll be recognising all the hard work our volunteers do across the Union, encouraging others to get involved, and having discussions on how Volunteering should be run. There may be free ice cream involved!

For a list of all the activities and events you can get involved in during Student Volunteering Week, visit imperialcollegeunion.org/svw.



Under Pressure 2018

The Under Pressure campaign is back with loads of stress busting activities and events to help everyone take a load off. Check out our calendar of events from Monday 26 February - Friday 2 March.

Stress is unavoidable, but there are ways to manage it. This campaign aims to give you strategies to cope during periods of heightened pressure.

Come and find us at the JCR on South Kensington Campus 12:00-14:00 throughout the week. We have events running every day so take a break and relax! Go to imperialcollegeunion.org/under-pressure to find out more.

FOOD

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Temple of Seitan: The ultimate vegan fried chicken?

FOOD

Chloe Foo

Food Writer

If you haven't heard of Temple of Seitan, let me give you a rundown. Vegan fried chicken.

The cries of outrage in response to the word 'vegan' that aligns to the reaction towards the word 'feminism' is to be addressed in another article. For now, it is sufficient to say that in my opinion, the myths that veganism immediately equates to healthy, expensive and impossible, are just that – myths.

With a current rating of 4.6 from 617 reviews on Google, this Hackney-based vegan takeout place is undoubtedly a well-regarded and popular one. Ironically located

next to a butchery, the small fast food-esque establishment often has lines of people queuing out the door. The no frills menu is based around their signature fried chicken which constitutes of seitan – a gluten, wheat based protein source that has a meaty texture and accommodates whatever flavours are introduced to it. A couple of sides and off-menu dessert items are also offered.

I got the Spicy Temple Burger – a steal at £6 or make it a meal with a side of fries and a cola as I did for an additional £2.

With the tantalizing smell of fried food in the air, the American diner-inspired store was crowded with people ordering food and waiting for it to be prepared. Every so often the cashier would call out a name that corresponded to the brown paper bag

she held up, and the sea of heads would all turn towards her in hopeful excitement.

After what seemed like a tormentous time waiting (be patient McDonald's frequenters!), my name was finally hollered. And there it was – a vegan burger that truly lives up to its rep. One bite in and I was taken. The chicken was the most realistic mock meat I've had with a texture vaguely

"One bite in and I was taken"

resembling that of cheap childhood nuggets. The myriad of flavours were strong, salty with a spicy kick and did not shy away from the label 'junk food' in the best possible way.

The bun too was impressive, soft with slight sweetness like brioche, complementing the 'chicken' well. The fries were standard (but good) and a generous portion, skinny and crunchy with just the lightest pinch of salt. Needless to say, the burger was savoured and gone within minutes and I left Hackney feeling very much fulfilled considering my wearing and hazardous journey there through the miserable English rain.

This place is a must try for vegans that are looking to explore the various culinary indulgences that modern plant-based technology can offer, for curious meat-eaters and especially sceptics. Plant-based foods need not be dubbed as 'just salad' – you can easily enjoy the same foods you experienced as a meat-eater as a vegan or vegetarian;



Almost looks like real chicken // Chloe Foo

various restaurants have already introduced vegan versions of foods such as pizza, Bolognese, fish and chips, and now, fried chicken!

Note: Hackney is far from Central London

– *blessedly, a second store has opened up its doors in Camden – hailed Temple of Camden, with the same offerings plus new beef-inspired burgers on the menu. I suppose it's about time for another indulgence!*

Eat Tokyo: Budget-friendly Japanese Delights

FOOD

Alice Davage

Food Editor

I've been meaning to rave about this small chain that boasts authentic Japanese food for a while, but my degree has unfortunately been distracting me. Although Eat Tokyo has locations throughout London and Japan, I have only visited

the Holborn restaurant so far. The Hammersmith and Notting Hill branches are probably more conveniently located for Imperial students if you are keen to give the food a try for yourselves, which you really should, go on, treat yourself.

After ducking under the precariously low banner hanging above the front entrance – who said wasabi was the most dangerous aspect of Japanese

food – you are initially struck by the liveliness of the entrance, filled with eager customers waiting for a table and sushi being expertly crafted behind the counter to your right. With the exception of the ornate wooden booths placed in the first room that you come across, the décor within the maze of following rooms is considerably more basic, but no matter, you are here for the food.

My first experience of Eat Tokyo's menu was simply overwhelming. Upon opening the novella-sized booklet filled with enticing glossy pictures, I started to panic at the prospect of making a decision. If you are as indecisive as me, I would recommend a bento box, which is essentially a few mini meals in one.

My favourite comes with chicken teriyaki, salmon, sushi, rice and salad, which somehow, they also make taste amazing. Although I haven't tried it myself, I've been told that the Tokyo Dragon is, and quote, "life-changing" – quite an endorsement. For this dish, sushi is arranged in a row with a prawn mimicking the head of the dragon. It certainly looks impressive.

What's more, Eat Tokyo is surprisingly affordable. You can easily dine out here for under a tenner (as long as you steer clear of the drinks). Fans of the katsu curry will rejoice; you can order a massive, and I mean massive, portion to share for only £9. Meaning, you can eat out in London for under a fiver – miracles do happen.



Even the soy sauce pot is cute // Alice Davage



Artily-arranged sushimi with miso soup // Alice Davage

TRAVEL

travel.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Further adventures on the toughest trail in Europe

*Our last issue featured the story of a group of geologists who completed GR20, the toughest trail in Europe. This week **Georgios Chatzitheoklitos** shares more of their unforgettable experiences and the challenges they faced whilst on the trip.*

TRAVEL

Georgios Chatzitheoklitos
Travel Writer

Day One: Stage 1A

On the first day we began early, waking up at 5:15am. Kindly driven to our starting point in a small town named Calenzana by our host from the night before, we were nervous but eager to set off. We were all very silent during that drive, contemplating what lay ahead of us.

Setting off at 6:45am, we quickly climbed up, reaching our first peak at 10am. Our spirits were high, and we thought we were in for an easy day. But with 1550 metres of ascent, the next part of the stage ramped up the incline, and several sections of scrambling followed, with infrequent assistance from chains.

Upon arriving at our second peak, the D'Ortu Di U Piobbu refuge was in sight, and it proceeded to taunt us for the next hour as we contoured our way around the edge of the valley towards it. From the distance, the refuge appeared to sit impossibly on the mountainside – as though perpetually sliding into the valley far below.

Everything we needed was on offer. Once we'd had a biting cold shower followed by a hearty dinner of mushroom soup and lentils, we felt more than ready to sleep. That is everyone except Harry, who felt the need to stand vigilant, wearing nothing but his underwear as the



2712m of pure joy!! // Georgios Chatzitheoklitos

freezing mountain air washed over him. It was our first evening on the trail, and we were treated to a stunning sunset, overlooking the small village we'd left behind earlier that morning.

“The 5am alarms were worth it, as, due to minimal light, we could see the most stars we had ever seen, and we caught a full moon rising between the peaks we were about to climb”

Day Two: Stage 2B

After a luxurious lie-in, we awoke to the ringing of our alarms at 6:30am. After the girls had finally got a grip on how to disassemble their tent, and we had dealt with the complex task of hunting down Georgios, whose porridge decided to take all morning to cook, we were ready for the set-off, only half an hour later than planned. Having previously tackled a day of relentless climbing, Max selected a low-level route for day two not to exert ourselves too much for the gruelling days ahead. The route wound its way through the forest to the valley floor, where we were to ford what we'd read was a raging torrent. It turned out to be a dry river bed, with the trail having not seen rain in over four months.

After lunch, we began the climb up a stony trail which frequently opened up onto ledges with stunning views. The

shortly after, the Refuge de Carozzu, our accommodation for the night. On arrival to the refuge, we proceeded to finish the cognac bottle Georgios had been carrying with him. One of the French hikers promptly commented “Euh, you English people with your cognac...” Upon speaking to the other trekkers, we were somewhat horrified to hear about a painful journey over the top of the mountain involving many chains and scrambles, and were relieved we'd chosen the lower route on this occasion.

Day Three: Stage 3

On day three, the guardian of the refuge told us a storm was imminent and recommended that we had a 6am start for the hike to Ascu Stagnu. So we packed up in the dark and set off with our head-torches. The 5am alarms were worth it, as due to minimal light

pollution we could see the most stars we had ever seen, and we caught a full moon rising between the peaks we were about to climb. The day involved some technical climbs, and a large fraction of the 860 metre ascent involved climbing and scrambling as well as big rock slabs and chains that we used to hoist ourselves up. We made good time on the way up, stopping only when we came across a couple of British hikers who told us excitedly that there was signal where they were stood. Glad for a break, we took the opportunity to tell our families all was well before plodding onwards to the top. Here, for the first time, we met a hiker walking in the opposite direction, from south to north, and eagerly asked him how his legs were as he was nearing the end of his GR20 experience. His reply was rather discouraging: “Fucked, absolutely fucked!”



Signal in Corsica? Surely not... // Georgios Chatzitheoklitos

TRAVEL

travel.felix@imperial.ac.uk



The most beautiful team photo // Georgios Chatzitheoklitos

The descent was just as steep, if not steeper, than the ascent – hard on our knees and slow moving. But with the entire day being only 6km in total, we were at the refuge before midday and had all afternoon and evening to get to know our fellow hikers from all over Europe. The storm we’d been warned about hit in the evening, just as we were heading to bed, so we opted for a dry night in a refuge dormitory.

Day Four: Rest day

When we woke up at 5am, we were disappointed to discover that there was another storm due and it wouldn’t be wise to hike that day. Given that this stage was the one in which seven hikers were killed in a thunderstorm in 2015, we respected the mountains and stayed at Ascu Stagnu for another day, resting our legs. A military medical vehicle arrived in the evening and, at first, we wondered whether something had happened to the small

group of hikers that had ignored the warnings and headed out anyway. But shortly after about 80 military personnel poured into the showers, which tremendously increased the time it took the girls to brush their teeth. We discovered that they were Belgian paratroopers hiking in the Northern GR20 as part of their physical training.

“We had a stroke of luck: just before we were about to descend, the clouds opened up, and the scenery was even more spectacular than we’d hoped!”

Day Five: Stage 4

We were very disappointed to wake up to yet more rain that morning but, with a good forecast

for later, we set off at 6am, getting an hour’s head start on the Belgian paratroopers. It was a very miserable ascent: although we thought the rain would stop fairly promptly, it taunted us all the way up, making the rock slippery and harder to climb. Fog descended, obscuring our view to only ten metres, and, at the maximum height of 2607 metres, we were cold and lost the feeling in our hands, even with all our layers on.

At times, we doubted whether we should be hiking in these conditions but just before 11am we reached the shoulder of Monte Cinto – the highest point on the GR20 trail. We sheltered from the wind for a quick break, disappointed that the clouds were obscuring the beautiful view that we’d been promised. However, we had a stroke of luck: just before we were about to start the descent, the clouds suddenly opened up, and the scenery was even more spectacular than we’d hoped! As the sun came out, Georgios, Diane, Carla, and Harry

couldn’t help but be tempted to summit Monte Cinto – not strictly a part of the GR20 trail but an additional 2-hour excursion that our guidebook recommended to reach the highest peak in Corsica.

We left our mark on the summit by signing the book at the top as ‘RSM miners 2017’ and shouting the RSM chant at the tops of our voices. We were on top of the world!

Unfortunately, Max was too cold from the wet ascent, so he decided to start the descent to the refuge whilst the rest

of us left our bags and continued climbing up. It was well worth the extra climbing! The views from the summit (2706m) were truly spectacular, and we couldn’t help thinking that this would be the best moment of the expedition. We left our mark on the summit by signing the book at the top as ‘RSM miners 2017’ and shouting the RSM chant at the tops of our voices. We were on top of the world!

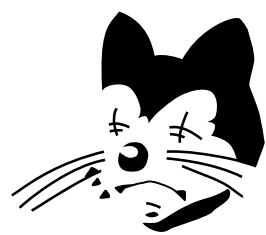
By the time we’d re-joined the GR20 for the descent, the Belgian paratroopers had caught up, but proved to be rather unimpressively slow and caused traffic jams on the otherwise quiet route down. So much for them walking around topless in camp and showing off their muscles, which made our boys feel insecure...

Further adventures

In the next article: the members split up, and the reason behind Diane’s heavy rucksack is revealed! So stay tuned.



Carla and Granite // Georgios Chatzitheoklitos



Hangman



Are curly fries the most extraordinary thing about Imperial? // Imperial/YouTube

Imperial advertisement slammed as “incredibly misleading”

HANGMAN
Negafelix
Editor-in-Chief

The ‘A Day in the Life of Imperial’ video was slammed as a misleading representation of Imperial.

Imperial College London has come under fire from the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) this week, after one of their promotional videos was labelled ‘misleading’.

The video, ‘A Day in the Life of Imperial’, which was published at the end of last term, was

described by the ASA as ‘painting a misleading picture of what it was like to study at Imperial’. They have recommended that Imperial remove the video as soon as possible.

The two-minute long video shows an ‘average’ day at Imperial, in a series of well-choreographed shots around the South Kensington campus. It ends with the message “the extraordinary every day”

Julia Kirby, Director of the ASA, told *Hangman*: “The advert released by Imperial College London was one of the least representative promotional videos we’ve seen for a higher education institution. By making Imperial seem like a fun and exciting place to study, the

College are instilling false expectations of glamour in their applicants, who will only realise how soul-emptying Imperial is when it’s too late. I mean, what other reason would

“Studying at Imperial is crushing. Why else would people be so obsessed with curly fries?”

there be for Imperial students to be so obsessed about curly fries all the time. It’s really fucking sad.”

Hangman spoke to Larry Opal, the College’s Vice Provost (Ministry of Truth), about the ASA decision: “naturally we’re disappointed by the recommendation made by the ASA, but we want to make it clear: advertising is meant to be aspirational, and we never meant to imply that this video was anything other than our dream of what the College could look like in the future. Why else would there be so few students in so many of the shots? Once we ship them all off to White City we’ll have the campus to ourselves.”

The College has informed *Hangman* that they intend to place an addendum at the end of the video reading “the persons and events in

this advert are fictitious. Any similarity to actual persons, events, or places is unintentional.”

Students have generally agreed with the ASA decision. One student *Hangman* spoke to felt

“Imperial said the video was meant to be ‘aspirational’ and not a realistic depiction of campus”

that the advert was misleading: “I don’t know

where they found so many students looking happy at Imperial – I’ve been here three years and never seen that.”

Another student thought the College had used CGI to make the campus seem more attractive: “how else could they have made Blackett look like in inviting place to study, rather than a place where I regularly consider whether or not I have the will to go on living?” asked Matthew Harding, a third-year physicist, “Green screen, innit.” Harding went on to argue the video had missed out on the most important aspects of College life: “where the fuck were the shots of curly fries?”

HANGMAN

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Student stumbles upon huge pile of College money

HANGMAN

Negafelix
Editor-in-Chief

Over £13 million was found in a broom cupboard in Blackett by a Computing fresher.

Students were left surprised this week, after an Imperial undergraduate found a large pile of money belonging to Imperial College London stashed away in a broom closet.

Imogen Thibalt, a first-year Computing

student, was lost in the Blackett building when she stumbled upon a pile of £50 notes, stacked in piles in a cupboard. She told campus security, who investigated the

“The College said the money may go toward student housing, or a new coffee machine for the Faculty Building”

incident, and found the money – which totalled £13.2 million – belonged to College.

Thibalt told *Hangman*: “I was trying to find my way to one of my lectures, when I stumbled upon this room filled with money. I knew a lot of Imperial students were fucking minted, but this seemed a bit odd, so I got in touch with security and they dealt with it from there.”

Andrew Yates, the College’s Vice Provost (Where’s the Wonga) told *Hangman*: “Ah, yes, that’s where that all went. We’d been wondering for quite a while, and – to tell you the truth – it was beginning to get a little embarrassing. The College would like to

thank the student who returned this money safely to us, who will receive a £10 Amazon voucher as a reward.”

One student *Hangman* spoke to seemed surprised by the find: “I always thought the College were saying they had no money available to fund things like pensions, or increasing the space available for counselling, so to have this much just lying around seems very strange. I’m sure no matter what happens, however, the College will use this money sensibly and responsibly, investing back into the student body. I trust them.”

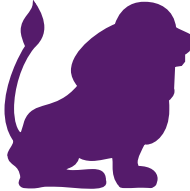
Yates was evasive about where the money



Dosh, cash, dollar, wonga // Wikimedia

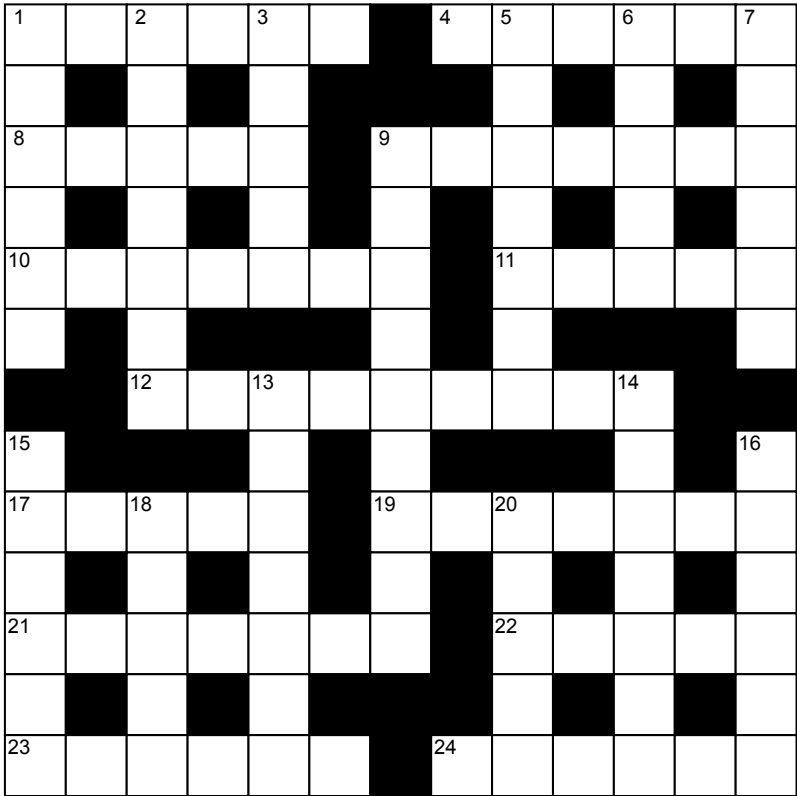
would go to: “well, we’re not quite sure what we might spend it on yet. A group of students have put forward suggestions for more affordable student housing, but Imperial

College Union have also been asking for the funds for a new desk, and we need new coffee beans here in the Blue Cube Building... we’ll let you know what we decide.”

 <p>ARIES</p> <p>This week you’re the <i>Felix</i> Editor, and you’re desperately trying to teach yourself Persian to work out what’s happened to the Imperial academic arrested in Iran.</p>	 <p>TAURUS</p> <p>This week you’re the Deputy President (Education), and the record number of SACA nominations means purchasing mugs has bankrupted the Union. Everyone now hates you.</p>	 <p>GEMINI</p> <p>This week you’re Union Council, and you manage to get something done. Finally. Go you!</p>	 <p>CANCER</p> <p>This week you’re loving the rainy weather, which means nobody can see your tears</p>	 <p>LEO</p> <p>This week you’ve made it halfway through the year! Summer never seemed further away.</p>	 <p>VIRGO</p> <p>This week you don’t turn up to labs, since you presume they’re cancelled in the strike. Turns out your demonstrator isn’t part of UCU. You get a third.</p>
 <p>LIBRA</p> <p>This week you get referred to senior staff after someone calls the Valentine’s Day poem you wrote them ‘creepy af’.</p>	 <p>SCORPIO</p> <p>This week you hope nominating yourself for a sabbatical position distracts from your terminal lack of personality!</p>	 <p>SAGITTARIUS</p> <p>This week you’re on a health kick. You supplement your Union burrito with sweet potato fries.</p>	 <p>CAPRICORN</p> <p>This week you’re looking forward for the Union petition system to get up and running. Boaty McBoatface is gonna make a comeback.</p>	 <p>AQUARIUS</p> <p>This week you decide to take some time to appreciate the little things in life a bit more. You’re an insufferable wanker.</p>	 <p>PISCES</p> <p>This week you’re the Horoscope Writer, and you’re not paid enough for this shit. Here, have a filler one.</p>

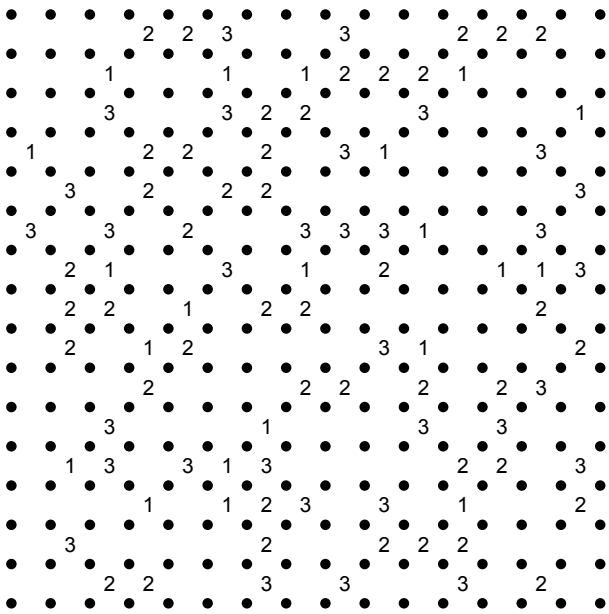
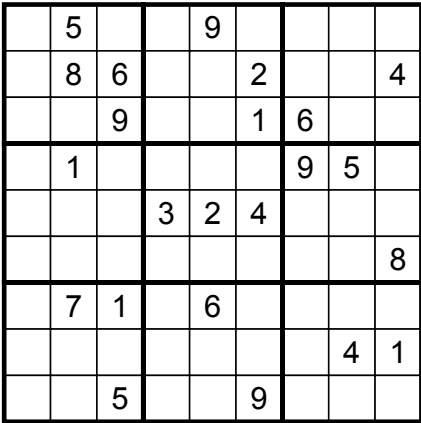
PUZZLES

fsudoku@imperial.ac.uk



- Across**
- 1. Shade of meaning (6)
 - 4. Not so fast (6)
 - 8. Eye shield (5)
 - 9. Food dispensary (7)
 - 10. Link (7)
 - 11. Awry (5)
 - 12. Cheese to be baked (9)
 - 17. Carver (5)
 - 19. Malicious retaliation (7)
 - 21. Abbreviate (7)
 - 22. Requirements (5)
 - 23. Quiet, modest and well behaved (6)
 - 24. Soldier on watch (6)

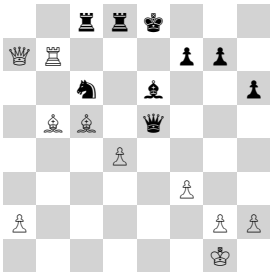
- Down**
- 1. Tyro (6)
 - 2. Element from “yellow” (7)
 - 3. Slice a joint (5)
 - 5. Leaking (anag.) (7)
 - 6. Edible mollusc (5)
 - 7. Fame (6)
 - 9. Boat with two hulls (9)
 - 13. Watch carefully (7)
 - 14. Trig ratio (7)
 - 15. Entertained (6)
 - 16. River with a side (6)
 - 18. To assault (5)
 - 20. Meeting place (5)



FUCWIT		
1	Nonogram of Ketamine	257
2	Q	198
3	Puzzle Snuggle Cuddle Couple	188
4	TioUdin	181
5	OK	155
10	Abelian Grapes	103
16	Straight outta Skempton	59
21	Snails	29
22	Konmai	28
28	Maxiane	8

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

Points Available	
Crossword	4
Sudoku	2
Slitehrlink	4
Chess	6
Nonogram	4
Total	20



Chess

White to move first in both problems. Forced checkmate in 2 moves for the top problem and 3 for the bottom.

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.

Solutions



SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

IC Squash storms World Championships

The squash team head to Manchester for the World Championships in a day of excellent high-class sporting drama

SPORTS

Patrick Brandl
David Newman

Men's First team

IC Squash took the train up North and stormed the Quarter-Finals and Finals of the World Championship held in Manchester – nothing short of high-class squash drama.

IC Squash was greeted by the MC as “the rowdy crowd in the back,” at the start of Quarter-Finals day, immediately characterising our presence at the event. We were treated to a sublime performance from the ‘French General’ Gregory Gaultier, who saw off Paul ‘Superman’ Coll from New Zealand in a dominant 3/0 win. Overcoming our British reserve, we pleaded for and secured a post-match group picture with the former World Champion.

The women’s draw was dominated by the Egyptians; number one seed Nour ElSherbini

showed her ambitions to retain her title with a clear 3/0 against Nouran Gohar. Tesnie Evans from Wales, who dispatched England’s number one Laura Massaro in the second round, faced Nour ElTayeb. Despite the crowd getting behind her, she lost her tightly contested Quarter-Final. While the majority of the IC Squash players asked for pictures and autographs with the players, IC squash’s No 1 Pamela Hathway, a former German national player, got the chance for a catch up with her old friends and former rivals, now at the very top of the women’s international rankings.

The day ended with England’s No1 Nick Matthew’s last appearance at a World Championship. He faced the tournament favourite – and arguably the best player over the past twelve months – Mohamed ElShorbagy. The ‘Beast from Alexandria’ got off to a better start and forced Matthew into long and testing

rallies, knowing that the 37-year old struggled with age and injuries. ElShorbagy threatened to march through to the Semi-Finals, but Matthew dug deep and with massive support on home soil as well as the odd rowdy chant from the IC gang (“Matthew’s on fire, ElShorbagy’s terrified”) he won the 3rd game. However, ElShorbagy regrouped, won the 4th game and denied Matthew a famous comeback. Unfortunately we weren’t able to catch both of them for selfies as we had to storm off to the station in order to catch the last train back to London – it turned out to be late anyway.

IC Squash returned to rainy Manchester for the Finals. While most contented themselves with the front wall view, four lucky members enjoyed the best seats in the house, flanked by the players’ coaches, partners, and parents. With England’s former World No 1 James ‘Jimbo’ Willstrop sat two rows behind them,

they witnessed the drama unfold in two all-Egyptian finals.

“IC Squash’s No1 Pamela Hathway got the chance for a catch up with her old friends and former rivals”

The women’s final saw the top-seeded players Nour ElSherbini and Raneem ElWelily compete for the most prestigious title in squash. The reigning Champion ElSherbini had played a testing five-gamer with Nour ElTayeb the day before the finals, while Raneem ElWelily had dropped just two games in the whole tournament. Surprisingly, ElSherbini started as if she were completely fresh legged and stormed off to a one game lead. With former World No 1 Karim Darwish in her corner, ElWelily introduced subtle holds in her swing and managed to stop ElSherbini’s movement. ElSherbini could find no answer to ElWelily’s error-free squash and ElWelily deservedly won the match and was crowned World Champion for the first time.

The men’s final saw two brothers, Mohamed and Marwan ElShorbagy, go head to head for the first time in a championship final, with their parents both in the crowd. Both ElShorbagys are based in Bristol, occasionally competing at BUCS events.



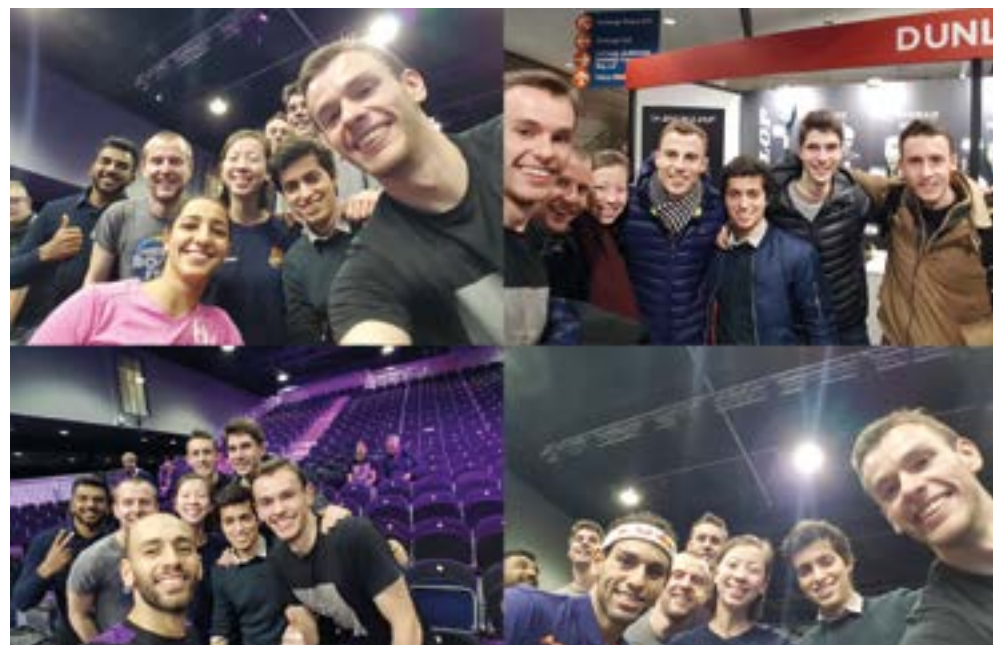
Former Squash World Champion Gregory Gaultier with IC Squash members after his Quarter Final // IC Squash

Marwan overcame Ali Farag in the Semi-Finals in a tight encounter that went the full distance, which should have drained his tank for the final, whereas Mohamed dropped only one game to Nick Matthew on his way to the final and was the bookies’ favourite.

The match started with high octane rallies, and Mohamed played with better accuracy, finishing the rallies in style. At 2-0 down to his brother in the World Championship final, Marwan gave everything he had left, producing mega-rallies and shot of the month contenders. Marwan managed to get the large crowd behind him, which frenetically celebrated every rally he won. He took the third and fourth game to wipe out Mohamed’s lead. The deciding game saw the momentum swing back and forth and the audience were treated to a match fully worth every penny.

The atmosphere was palpably tense and Manchester Central was now in the throes of high drama. At 3-6 down, Mohamed increased the pace and, with accurate length and relentless hitting, forced Marwan into making errors. Mohamed regained his concentration while Marwan seemed to lose faith. Having drawn level, he then pulled away to clinch the game and trophy for the first time.

After the prize giving ceremony, we were able to take selfies with the finalists and even with Nick Matthew, whom we had missed on the day of the Quarters. Overall, IC Squash was treated to two highly spectacular finals and thoroughly enjoyed the trips to Manchester. Tempted to see world class squash or try squash out? Get in contact with IC Squash (or drop us an email squash@imperial.ac.uk) and give it a go!



Selfie game strong: Members of IC Squash with World Champion Raneem ElWelily, English legend Nick Matthew, Runner-Up Marwan ElShorbagy and World Champion Mohamed ElShorbagy (from left top to right bottom) // IC Squash

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

1st team unable to finish

SPORTS

Nick Ustaran-Anderegg
ICURFC Press Officer

28	25
RUMS 1 st team	Imperial 1 st team
V	

The Imperial 1st team travelled to north London last Wednesday to take on UCL’s silly medics, RUMS. We were there for revenge, after losing earlier in the year to RUMS by just three points. The match started with lots of kicking, and both teams were trying to play for territory. Quick hands from Oliver Duffy allowed Josh Pope to make a break down the wing and exert some attacking pressure on RUMS. From a scrum on their five-metre line, Will Aynsley picked, ran ten metres sideways, and

scored – 0-5 to Imperial. This was the strong start that we needed. However, RUMS came back fighting and were able to score after a couple of missed tackles, making the score 5-5. RUMS continued to attack and made a line break from a scrum in our 22, scoring under the posts. We were now 12-5 down. Fortunately, Amin Omarouyache had been watching the Six Nations over the weekend and had been inspired by Jonny Sexton’s drop goal against France. Using the skills he had acquired from Harry Allingham’s ‘free lessons’ on kicking, Amin slotted one over himself. Unfortunately, we gave away a penalty in our half and RUMS capitalised, making the score 15-8, just before half time. The second half was just as tense as the first. Our forwards were dominant and made lots of yards by mauling the ball from lineouts (when the referee allowed us

to anyway). The pack mauled the ball over the line and Ali Zaboronsky, playing in the second row, nabbed his first try of the game. Amin added the extras, meaning we were now drawing 15-15. Back defending in our own half, we were caught offside and RUMS scored an easy penalty. Another massive lineout maul from our forwards led to Ali scoring another try. 18-20 to Imperial. I can only conclude that Ali’s talents are wasted playing at number eight. RUMS were awarded multiple penalties from people complaining to the referee when decisions went against us, and this killed a lot of the momentum we had in the match. RUMS scored another penalty and went ahead by one point. Duffy and Pope once again linked up nicely down the wing, and some beautiful offloads allowed Duffy to score. The adulation he received from his teammates after scoring unfortunately



The 1st team in action against RUMS // ICURFC

gave Duffy some false confidence, and would he foolishly later shave half his head whilst Fiesta Dashing, wrongly believing he could pull off the half-mullet-Skrillex-hairstyle he now has. Imperial defended hard for the last ten minutes of the game, and RUMS were relentless in attack. Poor discipline led to easy-target Nathan being sin binned after an accumulation of penalties. RUMS came close to scoring on a number of occasions, but our defence held strong. The clock went red and RUMS were in possession of the ball inside our 22. This was the last play of the game. We defended desperately as RUMS spread the ball from touchline to touchline, but in the end, there was nothing we could do to stop them scoring. They made good use of their greater numbers and scored from an overlap out wide. RUMS kicked the conversion to make the final score 28-25. Another three-point loss. Luckily, Fiesta Dash was exactly what the team needed to mend their broken hearts. So close, yet so far; *Sylvia* remains in hibernation.

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

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

ICURFC 2s take the city



The lads were victorious (ponchos not pictured)//ICURFC

SPORTS

Jack Fraser
Imperial 2nd XV

50	0
Imperial	City Uni
2 nd XV	1 st XV
V	

With ponchos packed, sombreros worn, and moustaches attempted, the boys made their way to their fixture. Fortress Harlington was the setting for yet another league game for the mighty Imperial Los Dos Fifteenos. The boys were greeted with perfect conditions: a premature warm-up from the ref

and a late City team (Los Banditos). An early game against this side had proven to be too much for them to handle, as the match was postponed – most likely due to their fear of facing another 59 – 0 loss at the hands of the undefeated Imperial side. Nonetheless, the game kicked off, and, with several strong carries, fresher Sorrell Cowen proved why he is a prime

poaching target for the first XV as he sliced through the defence to bag the first try of the match. Several minutes after the restart, a penalty awarded deep in the opposition 22 allowed for an exquisite back’s move straight off the training paddock to send Andy Lumb over for a meat pie. A similar try was scored just minutes later, with Andy making real use of that caterpillar warm-up to squirm over for his hat-trick avoidance. However, Los Banditos did not roll over. A strong restart, played deep into the Imperial 22, was taken up by our very own Matthieu Jalibert (Gustave Roux de Bezieux) who sent a beautiful kick over the halfway line and straight into touch – too bad he had already travelled ten metres outside of the 22 and had lost Imperial a dangerous attacking opportunity. He was subsequently sent for a Head Injury Assessment. Nevertheless, the strong defensive work displayed

by Imperial proved to be impenetrable and, a quick turnover ball – beautiful structured play interlinking forwards and backs – sent Vice-Captain Ifan Dafydd over the white-wash for two fine tries putting him in contention for hat-trick avoidance. With the points racking up in quick succession and the bonus point already achieved, concentration dipped ever so slightly, evidenced by the fact that ‘Questions Beckman?’ managed to sneak over in the corner after a move fresh out of Ethos on a Tuesday morning came to fruition. Halftime came and went with a number of substitutions, including Michael Rudman, who impressed with his snaky runs followed by questionable offloads. However, snaky run of the day was awarded to Captain Jack Wheaton who left a trail of bodies not dissimilar to that of a runway in Amsterdam to score beneath the sticks. Other notable moments

included Tom Johnston making a fine break only not to have the pace to finish it off (he later attributed this lack of pace to his un-aerodynamic-like lid which is now suspected missing). Luckily for him Ifan (who clearly has some pace) was there in support to cross over for his third of the day, how he didn’t get man of the match and is not writing this report right now I will never know. With Fraser adding the extras, the match was coming to a close. Late on, Sam Ha made an appearance on to the pitch, although due to the absolute dominance of the Imperial side the match was called off early, leaving Sam desperate for some action. After some fine dashing, he made what can only be described as the most dominant tackle ever made... on a wall. Fine form. All in all, an excellent outing for the 2nd XV with a 50 – 0 win to keep their undefeated streak going. *Sylvia* was sung, and fiestas were dashed.

Immortals send Cambridge into the relegation zone

SPORTS

Francisco Costa
Immortals Publicity Officer

20	0
Imperial	Cambridge
Immortals	Pythons
V	

The Imperial Immortals capitalized on their new-found momentum by punishing a tired Cambridge team to a 20-0 defeat, and sending them into the relegation zone. The Imperial Immortals came out looking strong

with a big turnout for this game after nearly losing the last face-off against the Cambridge Pythons due to an injury-stricken team. All players were rested and hungry for a second victory against the Pythons after such a close call last time the two teams met. The game had a slow start with both offenses taking heavy penalties and making unforced errors, while both defences made sure to keep the other team humble. There were several close calls for the Immortals in the first three quarters of play with running back Song “more fumbles than MVPs” Zhai making incredible

yardage and leaving the Cambridge defence stunned on many offensive plays. As the Immortals headed into the fourth quarter with the game tied up at 0-0, mother Harling-

ton brought about a surge of vigour and determination to defend the runway with hail and snow. As the hail carried on so did Ben “no daddy issues” O’Brien making plays all the way from our 20-yard line to the Pythons end zone (plays which landed him the offensive MVP for the game). He sure picked a good game to come down and watch. With this drive putting the Immortals 6-0 up, hope for a Pythons victory was withering away. As the quarter continued, another brilliant drive by the offense left the immortals at 1st and goal against the Pythons. The immortals

capitalised on this with the O-line led by Dan “4 more years 1 less groin” Grumberg paving the way for Ben to score another touchdown. As the offense powered through the fourth quarter so did the defence. The Python’s offense crumbled under the pressure from our defensive line with Deji “0 trainings, 1 girlfriend, 4 sacs” Adeboye making great plays against their quarter back. The Immortals defence also saw stellar plays all game from Ben “new phone who dis” Retter who impressed coaches on his first game appearance, landing him the defensive MVP. As the defensive

pressure increased, the Pythons fumbled the ball into the end zone for a late quarter touchdown by Harry “stop winning MVPs I’m running out of bant” Lawrence. Harry then capitalized on this defensive play by scoring the two-point conversion with the offense on the same drive. Executions such as this landed Harry his 7th Overall MVP of the season. Become Immortal today and come play American Football for the best university team in London. Contact Immortals at american_football@imperial.ac.uk

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Imperial College Sailing Club take on the BUCS South-Central Qualifiers

The IC Blue team make it through to the finals, in a closely-contested series of races on the choppy waters of Spinnaker Lake

SPORTS

Krystal Law
ICSC Commodore

5.30am, 3rd February: The alarm went off, and twelve sleepy Imperial sailors crammed into a minibus for the journey to the BUCS South-Central regional qualifiers held at Spinnaker Lake, Southampton. Three hours later, 20 teams began the battle to determine who would progress through to the national finals. With only the top four teams qualifying straight through – and the teams in 5th-7th going to the next heat (playoffs) –, the competition was fierce, and the tense atmosphere was exacerbated by each team sizing up their opposition.

Armed with stage make up, the Imperial Blue and White teams

daubed on their war paint in the respective colours (despite the judgement of the other universities present) and prepared to sail to victory. The wind conditions were initially shifty, with postponement

“The tense atmosphere was exacerbated by teams sizing up the opposition”

in every region due to the lack of wind. However, poor weather did not deter the tenacious race committee, who managed to get through 54 races in the rain. Special mention to the teams in the Northern region who had to face



Imperial Blue and Imperial White pose for a team photo //ICSC

regionals in the snow! Imperial Blue finished the day with five wins out of six, and Imperial White won one out of five.

True to the Imperial work ethic, the teams

ventured out to spoons but followed it up by... settling down to work. Such was Cobi's dedication to work that he cracked out his laptop to work during the day whilst waiting for the next races! Shoutout to the 1st year Biomedical Engineering lecturer who set a maths question hard enough to stump the Aero tutors...

8.30am: Races began swiftly in cut down sails, with the wind forecasted to build throughout the day. The determination of the race committee paid off as 106 races were completed, bringing the total up to 160. The wind was incredibly shifty but everyone gritted their teeth and grimly continued on. As the teams racked up multiple wins, they began the calculations to determine whether or not they would qualify. The tension began to build upon the discovery that

everyone had lost at least two races.

“Races began swiftly in cut down sails, with the wind forecasted to build throughout the day”

Congratulations to IC White (Helms: Oliver Kidd, Cobi Allen, Toby Freeland; Crews: Ariane de Saint Victor, Michal Wojnowski, Marta Nunes de Abreu) who sailed extremely well in a difficult region, ending with seven wins from 16 and just missed out on a place for playoffs. Special commendation goes to

Oliver who capsized (again), dropping his crew in the drink, but valiantly remained bone dry himself.

IC Blue (Helms: Joe Burgin, Gabriel Ing, Felix Crowther; Crews: Calvin Chan, Caroline Boule, Krystal Law) successfully won 14 out of 16 races and qualified in first place with the lowest overall points. Congratulations to the other teams that also qualified: Southampton Red, Southampton Green and Oxford Blue. We wish them all the best of luck at the finals, to be held in Glasgow over the Easter holidays. Huge thanks to race officers Ella Stoggall and Martin Smethers, their team of Solent-University volunteers and the umpires for running a great event. Thanks also goes to Southampton's Peter Ballantine who graciously hosted our teams for the weekend.



Joe Burgin and Calvin Chan working hard to help Imperial Blue achieve a first place finish. //ICSC