



Felix

The Student Newspaper of Imperial College London

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The gender pay gap exists across the entire Russell Group // Felix

Russell Group gender pay gap nearly twice national average

NEWS

Fred Fyles
Editor-in-Chief

While Imperial has one of the lowest gaps in the Russell Group, men dominate the highest-paid positions.

Data released last month show the Russell Group has a gender pay gap nearly twice that of the national average.

Across the 24 universities making up the Russell

Group, the median gender pay gap was 16.7%, slightly larger than the average for higher education institutions (HEIs) as a whole, and significantly higher than the national average of 9.7%.

While Imperial has one of the lowest pay gaps in the Russell Group, with women earning on average 9.4% less per hour than male staff, men dominate the highest paid positions. Male staff occupy over 70% of the highest-paying quartile of jobs – the highest proportion in the entire Russell Group – and 56% of the second highest-paying quartile. Professor

James Stirling, Imperial's Provost, said the statistics were not acceptable.

On average, men occupy just over 60% of the highest-paying quartile of jobs in all Russell Group universities. Women occupy over 60% of the lowest-paying quartile of jobs in the group. Furthermore, men were found to be slightly more likely to be granted bonus pay, which was over 40% higher than that awarded to women.

At Imperial, men were paid bonuses 50% larger on average than women. The College say this gap is because “we have fewer women in senior

positions, and bonus payments are proportionate to individuals' salaries.”

These data come after the government mandated all companies and public bodies that employ more than 250 people to release information on their pay gap.

The Russell Group university with the highest gender pay gap is Durham University, which reported a median gap of nearly 30%. Professor Stuart Corbridge, the vice-chancellor of Durham, said “We recognise that the gender pay gap is a serious issue for Durham University, as it is for society as a whole

and the higher education sector in particular.” The university has outlined a series of moves to address the gap, including pay review policies.

The data released by Russell Group universities highlights the difficulties women have in attaining the highest-ranking roles within HEIs – a factor that is one of the key causes of the gender pay gap. For all universities within the Russell Group, the proportion of women decrease further up the pay scale.

While overall Imperial employs more men than women – with 44% of all

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Guess who's back...



And we're back. Yes, we know – term hasn't quite started yet (for those early-birds reading this on a Friday morning), but we felt so sad about being apart from our readers we arranged to get an issue in a week early, just for you! Also, let's be real, pretty much everyone is already back on campus, desperately cramming in the library, and getting frustrated by people leaving their stuff on spare desks while they go on three-hour-long breaks. Well, there's no better procrastination material than Felix (well, maybe Sporcle), so feel free to dive straight back into this week's issue!

This week our main story is about something that's been in the news a lot recently: the gender pay gap. For those of you who haven't been following the news, a while ago the government announced their plans to have all large companies and public institutions publish data on the average wage gap between male and female employees, with a deadline of the end of March/beginning of April.

Before we dive into what happened, a quick note: yes, the term

'gender pay gap' can seem misleading – it doesn't refer to women being paid less than men for the same work (although this does still happen), but rather the average earnings of women compared to men. It therefore gives you an idea about whether or not women are in highly-paid positions – the fewer women there are at the top (or the more at the bottom), the greater the gap.

The results threw up some interesting findings, particularly within the university sector. For the Russell Group universi-

ties, the average gender pay gap was nearly twice the national average, indicating top positions at universities are often filled by men. At Imperial, the gap was lower than the Russell Group average – in fact, it was one of the lowest in the Group. But while this is good news, it doesn't tell the whole story – men were disproportionately overrepresented at the highest levels, occupying over 70% of the top-paying jobs, which was the highest rate in the Russell Group.

While a lack of representation is important

across all industries, it is particularly important in the university sector. These data help highlights some of the challenges women face within academia; we need to look at why women aren't occupying the highest positions, not merely state the fact. People we spoke to highlighted a number of barriers for women – key stages of their career tend to coincide with the time many people want to start a family; the need to take on research at sites around the globe prevents a sense of stability; they're far more likely to get negative feedback from students for teaching compared to men. The list goes on.

Imperial has already put some initiatives in place to address these – personalised development, help with childcare, selecting the widest pool of candidates for interviews. These are all fantastic, but the gender pay gap results show there is a still a long way to go. We always hear about how Imperial wants to be the best at everything; here's one area to focus on.

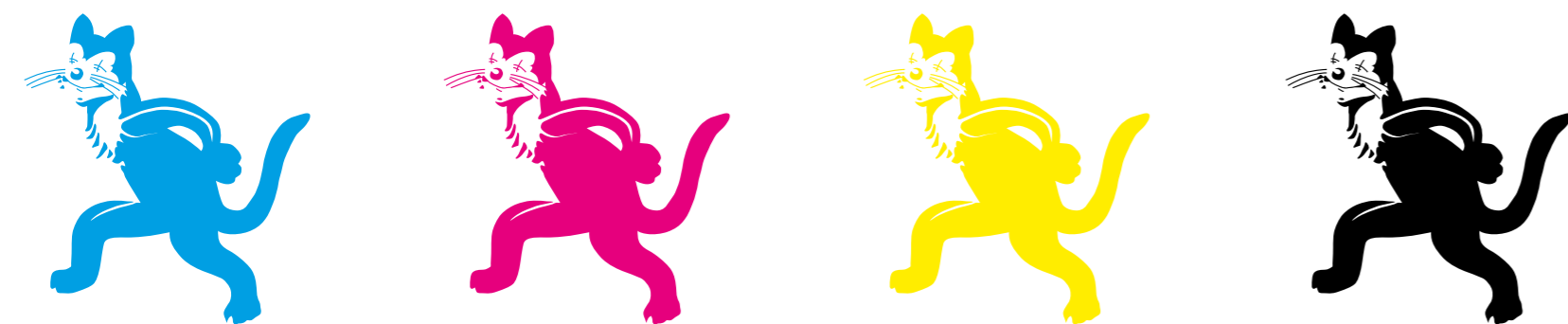


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Printed by Mortons Media
Group, Boston Road,
Horncastle, Lincolnshire
Registered Newspaper
ISSN 1040-0711
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Felix is recruiting!



We want you – yes, you! We're looking for writers, photographers, editors, illustrators, reporters, computer experts and grammar nerds to join our team. No experience needed – we'll teach you everything you need to know. If you're interested, send us an email on felix@ic.ac.uk

NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Men occupy over 70% of the top-paid jobs at Imperial

NEWS

Cont. from front

staff across the College identifying as female – the number of women drops significantly within research and academic settings: the most recent publicly-available Equality and Diversity Committee (E&DC) report, from July 2016, showed only 38% of research staff and 20% of academic staff were women.

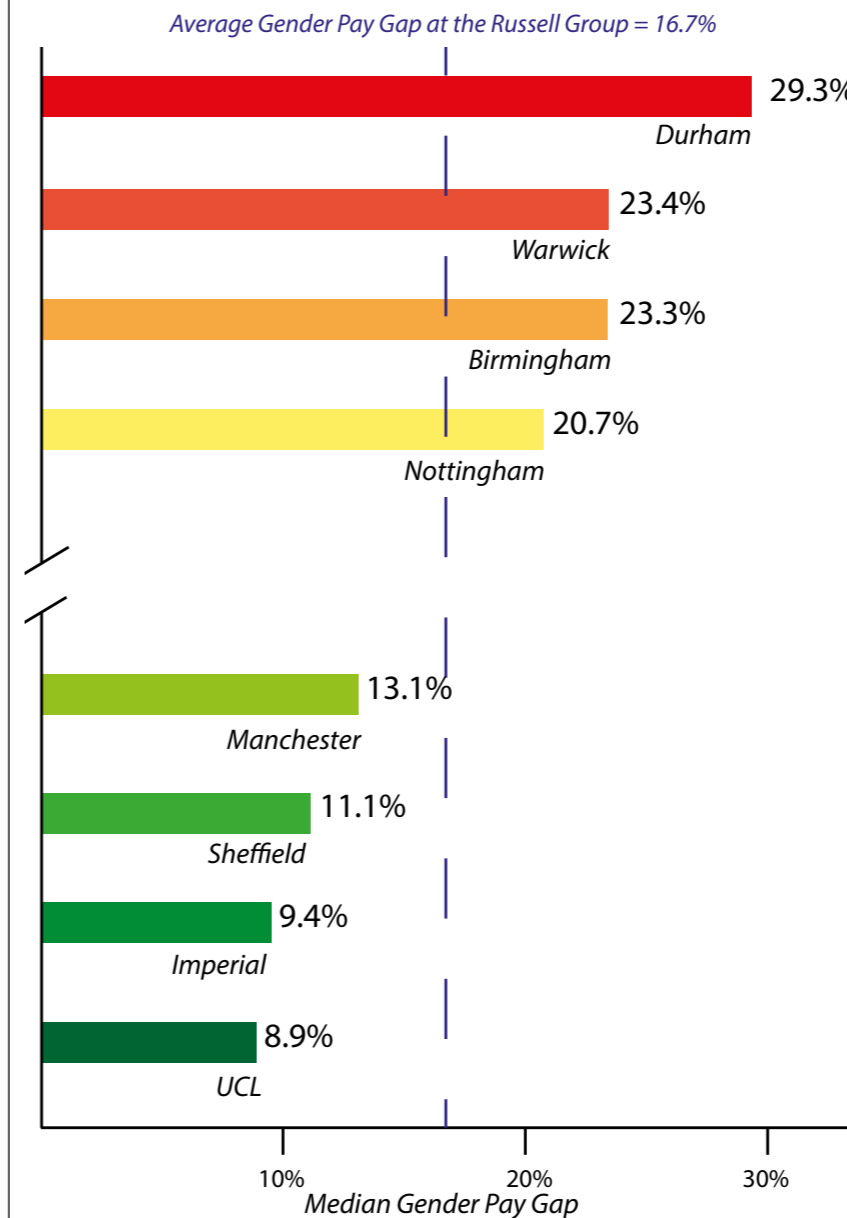
This gap widens as staff progress through the ranks of employment: as of 2016, there were 533 male professors compared to 94 female ones, with the data showing a progressive attrition of women as they progress through pay grades.

Out of the 20 heads of departments, only three are women – Professor Dame Amanda Fisher of the Institute of Clinical Sciences, Professor Anne Dell of the Department of Life Sciences, and Professor Michele Dougherty, the newly-installed Head of the Department of Physics. None of the four faculty deans are women.

A number of staff and early-career academics *Felix* spoke to said this lack of representation had knock-on impacts for their learning experience.

One postdoctoral academic, who has recently finished her PhD at Imperial, told *Felix*: "I think visibility makes a difference. I feel so empowered by the amazing women I've worked with at Imperial, and those who most impacted me personally from an academic standpoint were women. I think that's because they were all people who were making a deliberate point to build up women and empower them."

She went on to discuss some of the reasoning behind the disparity: "As a postdoc you're at



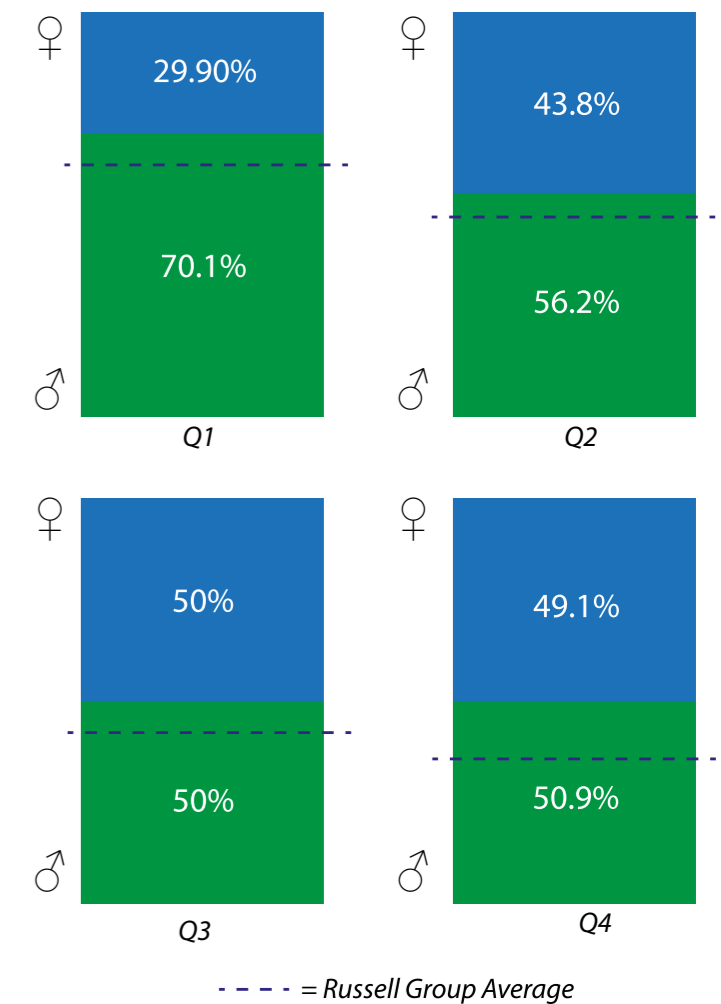
"One postdoc told Felix they felt visibility of women in academia made a big difference"

a massive disadvantage, because it's the time most people are looking to have kids, but it's also the worst time to take a year out of research." While she highlighted the support available at Imperial, she said "Taking time off can really affect your academic career, and

unfortunately for whatever reason women seem to suffer from that." "At stages above postdoc", she added, "it's a leadership role, and there will be a bias towards hiring men."

A recent study published in Research Policy that followed 20,000 doctoral students found female students were more likely to gain an academic job if their supervisor was a woman. They were also more likely to publish in a high-impact journal. Another recent study reported gender parity in STEM subjects was still a way off, with men likely to outnumber women in publishing in scientific fields until the end of the century.

While Imperial has a lower gender pay gap than the Russell Group average, and one of the lowest gaps within the Group, men dominate the highest-paying positions. Over 70% of the top-paying quartile of jobs at Imperial are occupied by men – the highest of the Russell Group



What is the Gender Pay Gap?

The term 'gender pay gap', as used by the UK government, is slightly misleading. The term refers the difference in hourly pay of all men and all women across a workforce, and occurs when women occupy lower paying jobs, while men occupy higher paying jobs. The term does not refer to women being paid less than men for the same work – although this may happen, this is termed 'unequal pay', and has been illegal in the UK since 1970. From 2017, all large employers are legally obliged to publish the gender pay gap data on their website, and on the government portal. Last week it was reported that one in ten companies still had not released their data, despite the deadline being the 4th April.

UCU call off further strike action, as debates around tuition fee refunds continue

NEWS

Fred Fyles
Editor-in-Chief

Strike action has been called off as UCU and UUK reach agreement, but pressure is mounting for fee refunds.

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) earlier this month voted to accept proposals from Universities UK (UUK), cancelling strike action scheduled for later this term.

In a ballot, whose results were revealed on the 13th April, 64% of members voted to accept the pensions offer from UUK, with 36% voting to reject the offer. Overall turnout from members was 63.5%.

The proposal put forward by UUK, the regulator of universities in the UK, included maintenance of the current pension scheme until at least April 2019, continued discussion between parties, and establishment of a Joint Expert Panel. The Panel, which would be composed of academics and actuarial experts, would report on valuation of the current pension scheme.

The agreement came shortly after 14 days of industrial action by UCU members came to an end. The strikes were called over changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), which UCU said would mean members of the scheme would lose out on £10,000 per year in pension

funds. As a result of the action, students across 65 universities lost out on scheduled teaching time. At Imperial, students have been assured they will not be examined on missed content, with the College saying they were “committed to putting measures in place that will safeguard [students’] ability to progress or graduate.”

UCU had originally planned a further 14 days of strike action, timed to coincide with the examination period of many universities. This has been postponed following the agreement.

The development was welcomed by the College, with Professor Alice Gast, President, and Professor James Stirling, Provost, telling staff it was “a welcome step forward, and in line with our call in February to convene an expert group.”

Roddy Slorach, Imperial College UCU’s Diversity Officer, told Felix “The UUK offer removed the immediate threat of the drastic change to our pensions, although it provided few other guarantees. A large majority of UCU members voted Yes in the hope the Independent Expert Panel could sort out the valuation and reduce the ‘deficit’”

However, he cautioned the vote was “absolutely not a vote of confidence in UUK”, saying if the panel recommended pension cuts, another ballot on further industrial action would need to be called.

He highlighted the relation these strikes have with general developments in higher education: “It’s important to recognise the broader issues that have driven this dispute. The attacks on our pensions can be traced back to the



Students and staff on the march last term // Ansh Bhatnagar

creation of tuition fees and a market in education. Since then, universities have increasingly seen themselves as competitors, with students seen as customers and staff as costs to be cut.”

Dr Michael McGarvey, President of Imperial College UCU, told Felix UCU membership at Imperial had increased by 60% over the dispute period. “Management should be under no illusion that this decision is a sign of weakness,” he said. “We expect the university employers at Imperial and throughout the UK to act in good faith. However, if there is no acceptable outcome from the Panel then UCU can resume strike action.”

Fee Refunds

While an agreement has been reached between UUK and UCU, disagreements about whether or not to refund tuition fees

to students affected by last term’s strikes are ongoing. A petition that circulated at the end of last terms asking for a refund of tuition fees in light of missed teaching was signed by over 3,000 Imperial students. It was delivered to senior management at the College, who have thus far refused to confirm whether they will be refunding fees.

A statement on the College website, which was also sent out to several students by Professor Gast, says: “your fees cover all aspects of your time at Imperial, and are based on the delivery of overall outcomes, rather than being payments for specific contact hours. Through our mitigation plans, we are aiming to ensure the impact of the strike on these outcomes is kept to a minimum.”

Some students have felt the response is insufficient. One postgraduate student told Felix: “We

education suffered”.

In a statement released on social media earlier this week, Alex Chippy Compton, President of Imperial College Union, and Luke McCrone, President of the Graduate Students’ Union, said the response from senior management was “unsatisfactory, and failed to address many students’ concerns.” They called on students to continue to pressure the College for refunds on any teaching missed and not rescheduled.

Speaking to Felix, Compton said “We’re glad to see that collective action by UCU members has resulted in fresh discussions about the future of their pensions. Current students will be glad to see the end of the strikes that interrupted their education, and future students are less likely to be taught by demoralised, precariously-employed academics. Imperial College Union will continue to press College to make it up to students who missed out on the education they paid for.”

Other universities have also seen demands for refunds of tuition fees. Earlier this week a class action lawsuit organised by law firm Asserson passed a legal milestone, with more than 1,000 students signing up. The group claim now has enough people to qualify for a group litigation order. Asserson predict it could cost universities millions in compensation. Shimon Goldwater, a senior solicitor at Asserson, told *Times Higher Education*: “No other service provider would get away with charging for 25 weeks of a service and cutting that to 22 with no price reduction.”

“The Union said the College’s response ‘failed to address many students’ concerns”

value our education and the interaction we have with our lecturers highly. To be told that 14 days of strike has not had an impact on the outcomes of our degrees makes me sad and angry. Sad because the management at Imperial does not seem to be putting as high a value on my education as I am, and angry that they think it is acceptable to fob me off with a standard reply that does not address my genuine request for a refund because my

Union launches ethical investment survey

NEWS

Frank Leggett
News Writer

Imperial College Union have launched a survey asking respondents give their opinion on the ethics of different investments proposed.

The survey, launched online, has allowed respondents to voice their opinion on whether the Union should invest in industries considered ethically problematic such as pornography, fossil fuels, and the armament sector. The Union will invest its reserves and part of the Clubs, Societies and Projects funding account, stating the money would only lose in value if left untouched, due to inflation.

The responses have been taken into consideration by the Union’s Finance and Risk

Committee, who will be discussing the potential ethical dilemmas, as well as the risks and returns that each option brings. Matt Blackett, Deputy President (Finance & Services) told Felix: “A staff and student panel met all of the shortlisted fund managers on Tuesday and, guided by student input throughout, they have reached a decision. Once the paperwork is done, we look forward to telling our members how we’re putting our reserves to work so we can fund even more activities and events”.

In a statement, Divest Imperial – a student-run campaign pressuring the Union and College to withdraw investments from fossil fuels – has accused the survey of being misleading, factually incorrect, and undermining student campaigning and democracy. They stated: “The survey directly equates the exclusion of fossil fuels, armaments, alcohol, gambling, pornography and tobacco from a portfolio with a ‘severe risk’, which is misleading and

clearly lends itself to bias. There was also no attempt to explain the arguments, including financial, in favour of moving investments away from fossil fuels, potentially undermining the Union’s existing commitments to divestment and support for the campaign. Although we expressed our concerns to the DPFS directly following the survey launch, we are yet to receive a response. We hope the Union will fulfil its original resolution to fully divest from fossil fuels, communicate more effectively with students in future, and work with us in holding university management to account on this issue”.

Last year the Union made the commitment to no longer invest in fossil fuel and to implement alternative responsible investment strategies. The Council paper implementing the decision, brought forward by Rhidian Thomas (Ethics & Environment Officer) and supported by the Divest Imperial campaign, has estimated that the college directly invested £5.4



A protest at the University of Oxford over divestment // Flickr/Kamyar Adl

million in fossil fuel companies with further investments been made by externally managed funds. It was believed that Imperial was one of the top investors among UK universities.

The paper also highlighted that the increase in global temperatures is due largely to burning of fossil fuels, that some of these companies have been implicated in cases of human rights abuses, and their overall image did not fit in with the Union’s values.

Imperial College London has been found to

be one of the least ethical investors within higher education in the People and Planet University league table, ranking at the 141st place – the lowest amongst the Russell Group. An investigation by Felix earlier this year showed the College was investing £3.5 million in the tobacco industry, nearly £9 million in the fossil fuel industry, £3.1 million in the arms industry, and over £16 million in pharmaceuticals, out of a total fund of over £266 million.

Companies that

received investment from the College, such as Exxon and Shell, have been accused of burying evidence of global warming and committing crimes against humanity.

One academic told Felix: “The world looks to us to set the agenda of research; how can we lead from the front when our eyes are still squarely focused on the past and its former cash cows – fossil fuels”.

The survey can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/2HuOGGE>

Imperial computing professor detained in Iran

NEWS

Fred Fyles
Editor-in-Chief

Professor Abbas Edalat, a British-Iranian academic, is being held in Iran, according to officials.

A professor from Imperial College London is believed to have been detained in Iran last week.

Professor Abbas Edalat,

who is based at Imperial’s Department of Computing, was arrested by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards on the 15th April, according to a human rights group.

The Centre for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI), a US-based non-profit, reported Professor Edalat refused to post bail this Wednesday, leading to him being taken into custody. A source told the CGHI Professor Edalat’s home was raided, and his belongings seized.

The Foreign Office this week stated they were “urgently seeking

information from the Iranian authorities” about Professor Edalat.

In a statement, the College said: “We are understandably concerned for his welfare following

“Professor Edalat is one of a number of high-profile arrests of dual nationals”

reports of his arrest, and we are urgently seeking further information.”

Professor Edalat is believed to have been in Iran to attend an academic workshop.

As well as his academic career, Professor Edalat is the founder of the Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI), which campaigns against foreign interventions in Iran. He previously told Times Higher Education he would not be submitting research papers to US-based conferences

in protest to President Donald Trump’s restrictions on visas.

Professor Edalat is one of a number of high-profile arrests of Iranian dual nationals. Since 2015, the Revolutionary Guards have arrested 30 dual nationals; the majority have been accused of espionage.

Earlier this year Dr Kaveh Madani, a Reader at Imperial’s Centre for Environmental Policy, was detained for 72 hours in Iran. Dr Madani had been made Deputy Head of Iran’s Department of

Environment last year, a position from which he resigned last week.

Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the CHRI, said of the arrest: “Iran’s continued arbitrary arrests of dual nationals without transparency and lack of due process is extremely concerning.” The International Observatory of Human Rights accused the Iranian government of using dual-nationals as “bargaining chips in Tehran’s ongoing negotiations with the West.”

NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Higher education rife with sexual misconduct, study finds

NEWS

Frank Leggett

News Writer

A study organised by the NUS and the 1752 Group found widespread sexual misconduct, inadequate support.

Over 40% of respondents to a survey recently carried out by the 1752 Group reported experiencing sexual misconduct by a member of higher education (HE) staff on at least one occasion.

The online survey, carried out by the National Union of Students (NUS) and the 1752 Group, which campaigns to end sexual misconduct in higher education, collected 1839 responses from current and former students around the UK. One in eight respondents reported being touched in a manner that made them uncomfortable, while 65 current and former students have had

non-consensual sex with a staff member. 15 respondents reported being sexually assaulted or raped by a staff member.

The survey found the perpetrators of these acts were mostly academics rather than other staff members. Around 60% of reported perpetrators were men and 13% women; these gender ratios were also seen with victims, with women being more likely than men to experience sexual misconduct. Nearly 15% of postgraduate respondents reported being made to take part in sexualised discussions, compared to 6% of undergraduates.

A lack of boundaries within student-staff relationships were also highlighted in the report. 80% of respondents felt staff having sexual relationships with students made them 'somewhat' to 'very uncomfortable', while 40% felt uncomfortable about getting drunk with staff members.

Misconduct had a notable effect on victims, ranging from loss of confidence to a change in degree course or career

path. Reporting of such incidents was found to be lacking, with only 10% of respondents reporting misconduct to their institution, the major reason being that victims are unsure if the behaviour was serious enough to warrant complaint.

Where incidents are reported, 90% of respondents felt institutions failed to adequately respond, with some saying institutions rendered the process difficult or even denied the incident altogether. Only one in four respondents found that their University or College took proactive steps to prevent misconduct.

Dr Emma Chapman, a research fellow at Imperial who is a member of the 1752 Group told *Felix*: "This research rightly placed accountability not just on the perpetrators but also on the university frameworks which protect them. Inadequate reporting pathways and opaque and discriminatory disciplinary processes keep higher education a gendered experience and prevent true equal access to education."



Universities have been hit by the recent sexual misconduct scandal // CC

Last month *Felix* reported on their college-wide survey investigating sexism at Imperial. It found that 40% of respondents had faced misogyny, and 70% had experienced derogatory comments from peers. Only one in three respondents agreed enough support was given to discrimination victims.

Commenting on the report, the College stated: "Imperial is committed to promoting an environment where everyone feels safe,

supported, and respected. Any kind of sexual assault or harassment is entirely unacceptable and has no place within our community".

Professor Stephen Curry, Assistant Provost for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, who spoke to *Felix* last month, said: "One of the major pieces of work we're starting is a working group dealing with sexual harassment at the university. It will look across the board at staff and student experiences,

and come up with a unified set of policies and procedures that create a credible reporting system".

Dr Chapman said: "Universities need to urgently invest in tackling this issue and I am happy to say that Imperial is one of the universities leading this charge with their newly convened sexual harassment policy reform working group. I hope to see courage to admit fault and commitment to invest from Imperial and the sector as a whole."

QTR Restaurant to close through summer term

NEWS

Fred Fyles

Editor-in-Chief

The restaurant will close to allow it to be used as an examination venue, with students told to use the Senior Common Room restaurant instead.

The Queen's Tower Rooms Restaurant will be closed throughout the entire summer term, Imperial College London has announced, as the space is to be used as a venue for examinations.

The move, which comes following a trial in January, will see the outlet – which is usually open for lunch on weekdays for all students and staff – filled with students taking

summer exams. It will be closed throughout the summer break, and will not reopen until October 2018.

In a statement, the College said the change was "part of longer term efforts to improve facility-related student examination experiences", saying it was "directly linked to over 500 individual pieces of student feedback about what constitutes an acceptable examination venue."

Students are invited to use the Senior Common Room restaurant during this period, which is usually only open to

"Students cited concerns over longer queuing times as a result"

postgraduate students and staff.

However, students and staff *Felix* spoke to cited long-running concerns over the length of queues at Imperial-owned outlets, which could be exacerbated by the decision to temporarily close the Queen's Tower Rooms Restaurant.

Following the launch of the Campus Services Survey by Imperial College Union earlier this year, one academic reported receiving complaints

from students about long waiting times. "They usually only get one hour to eat between lectures, and are not happy to spend their lunch break in a queue or finding a seat," they said, "They do not have time to eat or relax."

The survey was triggered, in part, by wide ranging changes to campus services that went into effect last summer, including removal of cooked SCR breakfasts.

COMMENT

comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk



It's time to be online honestly

The ICSMSU campaign to get more people to share their true feelings online highlighted the powerful effects social media can have on wellbeing.

COMMENT

Stephen Naulls

ICSMSU Welfare Officer

In a modern world, our interactions with one another are often shaped by the explosive and revolutionary impact of social media. For most of us, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter can be a pleasant escape – a way to keep in contact with our friends, or share fond memories of good times in good places. But there is a darker side of social media which is beginning to emerge. And it deserves more attention.

The backlash from the Cambridge Analytica scandal provides a stark warning to those of us who share our information online – we cannot be certain who is accessing it, or how we are being targeted

through what we share. Meanwhile, a look back on the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election and the eruption of 'FAKE NEWS' demonstrates that external interference with social media platforms has the potential to literally change the direction of an entire country. In March, ICSMSU Welfare's Campaigns Team decided to tackle another issue with social media: the effect it is having on the mental health of young people.

Undoubtedly, social media can have a harmful effect on our self-esteem and wellbeing. Designed in a manner which mimics the process of addiction – both psychologically and physiologically – social media keeps us constantly refreshing for new content; receiving a 'like' can act as a form

of social validation – a validation to which we aspire whenever we post. In doing so, we all too often filter out the imperfections in our lives, only sharing the positives while neglecting to mention our daily struggles, failures, or worries.

This creates a harmful cycle, whereby we constantly compare ourselves to the perfect projections we witness online; we think we cannot be honest about our difficulties because that is not something worthy of 'likes'. As such, we create an environment where only success and perfection is talked about. ICSMSU Welfare sought to tackle this by encouraging students to not just be online, but #Online-Honestly.

For two weeks in March, we asked people

to repost old pictures from social media unedited and unfiltered, with a new caption honest to the situation they were actually facing. By the fifth day, we were overwhelmed by the level of engagement and support from students, not just in ICSM, but across all of our Constituent Unions and even from students as far away as LSE and Manchester. A senior member of Faculty even decided to participate by making a post as part of the campaign – resulting in a flurry of posts, totalling 80 across all of social media by the close of the campaign.

When we planned it, we didn't dream of the School of Medicine embracing it with such warmth so quickly, nor did we anticipate how brave so many of students would be

to share their deeply personal reflections on previous social media posts and how many of them would relate to the message behind the campaign.

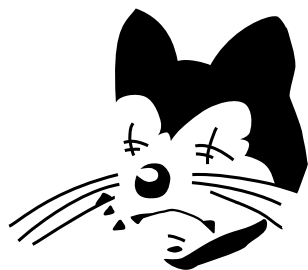
Whilst this campaign is over for now, we hope all of Imperial recognises every one of us is more than our online image. We all have our unique problems and challenges we face every day. We don't always present that image of ourselves online because we think we're alone: this campaign has proved that we are not.

Let's all go that extra mile to ask our friends how they're doing. Let's be more willing to open up and start a dialogue about the issues some of us are struggling with day to day. Let's make it okay to be honest with ourselves and our peers about the challenges we

face.

The Online Honestly campaign has shown we have a deeply compassionate community at Imperial. I am very proud to be a part of it, and you should be too. Social media can enhance our lives, but we can't let it take over. Our online image is exactly that: an image. A funny or witty caption might be masking an intense personal struggle, but we all have our unique issues. We shouldn't be afraid to be honest about them.

If you saw the Online Honestly campaign or were affected by any of the posts and are looking for support, please reach out to your Personal Tutor, the Union Advice Centre, or contact your Wellbeing Representative for other useful support services.



Grumpy Bastard hates marathons

How anyone can enjoy running as a hobby is a mystery to our resident misanthrope.

COMMENT

Grumpy Bastard

Comment Writer

It's exam season again. I hope you're all excited for the downs that accompany it. At the moment, the main stress for me does not come from exams, but from the fact that as of Monday we

have welcomed a new scaly skinned overlord into our midst. Nearly 1500 years after a lizard was slain on the 23rd of April by St. George Michael, the scaly bastards have been waiting to reclaim the date for their own kind. As soon as the human baby was plucked from Kate Middleton's uterus, the newly formed foetus was devoured and its skin used for the latest addition to the Royal Brood.

In a lighter vein, this

week around 30,000 idiots decided to test their physical endurance - and the NHS - by running the London Marathon.

I'm unsure if you're aware of the original fable that spawned the sporting event known as the marathon, but it involved a lot of Persians being slaughtered on a beach by significantly fewer Greeks. and then some Athenian runner named Pheidippides jogged back to Athens to proclaim victory. Unfortunately for this particular herald,

he was so overcome on arrival that his heart burst in his chest, dying just after climatically delivering his message.

A part of me wished he never ran the 26 miles to so the marathon didn't exist. A larger part of me wishes that all those that ran the London Marathon actually have a similarly-important task, rather than simply wanting to brag about their achievements to the rest of us.

If I'm perfectly honest, I don't understand the point of the exercise.

People that run purport to do it for two reasons, the first being fitness, and the second being the moralistic goal of raising money for charity. I resent the first reason mostly because I believe it contributes to the superficial nature of our society, but also because running is so fucking boring. At least do a sport that you can do with other people and involves more than meaninglessly putting one foot in front of the other like a toddler learning to walk.

As for the second

excuse, I'm just as likely to donate to charity for someone running 26+ miles as I am to someone not doing any running at all – just ask the shits in the RSPCA. Essentially, it's just yet another way of people proving their innate superiority over the rest of us mere mortals incapable of performing the same feat without mechanical assistance, or severe alcoholism.

I wish that they would go the extra mile and remove this irritating hobby from my sight.

COMMENT

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Catalonia's new democracy – where can we go from here?

Comment writer Aida Manzano-Kharman makes the argument that Catalonia will continue to resist until it is given the right to vote legally on its independence.

COMMENT

Aida Manzano-Kharman

Comment Writer

Article 1.2 of the preliminary title of the Spanish Constitution states: “National sovereignty resides in the Spanish people, from whom the powers of the State emanate.” In essence, the distribution of power in Spain is dictated from the bottom upwards, in accordance to the will of the Spanish people. This is a very important fact to highlight, since many articles of the Spanish constitution are being pointed out and activated, and perhaps the most fundamental ones – the ones that define Spain as a democracy – are being overlooked by the central government.

On the 10th October 2017, the Catalan government proclaimed and annulled its independence, triggering the activation of article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. This article requires the autonomous communities of Spain to comply with the Spanish constitution, and allows the government to take any necessary measures in order for compliance to be ensured. In 2017, these measures consisted of Spanish vice-president Mariano Rajoy dissolving the Catalan parliament and calling for new elections; an act that effectively left the Catalan government destitute



One man was happy at the protests // Flickr

The referendum carried out on the 1st October was unquestionably illegal: aside from the many irregularities that occurred during voting, which have been corroborated by multiple delegations of international observers, it was deemed anti-constitutional mainly because of the fact that it was announced to be legally binding; and such legally binding referendums can only be called by the central government.

Why then, are there claims that the central government is overlooking the rights of the Catalan people for

self-determination? Simply put, the central government has offered no legal way for the Catalan people to decide if they want to be part of Spain or not. The central government is fully aware of the independence movement that has arisen in Cataluña. There is a considerable proportion of the Catalan demographic that has been asking to be heard for years now, who have been overlooked by the central government one too many times. Whilst some may argue that acknowledging this movement would show a sign of weakness, it is clear that this argument

lacks critical thinking, since this movement has arisen from the discontent of how the central government has been managing the country. This discontent should not come as a surprise, given the multiple corruption scandals that have been uncovered, or the drastic decline in standards of public healthcare, schools, and services across Catalonia, the reduction in worker's rights and protections, and overall the very poor performance of the Spanish economy.

If Mariano Rajoy's government is fully aware that only they can legally call a referendum

regarding the sovereignty of Cataluña, and it is also aware that there is a sizeable portion of the population that have expressed their will to be heard, how can the Catalan government be condemned for not following the constitution, when the central government is not following democracy? If, as the central government claims, they truly represent all the people of Spain, including the Catalans, then why hasn't a nation-wide referendum been called to ask all of Spain and Cataluña their opinion on this matter?

But perhaps the most

“The central government has offered no legal way for the Catalan people to make a choice”

shameful and damaging outcome of this situation is the witch-hunt that has stemmed from it. As people take to the streets in Cataluña, in frustration and anger for having their voices ignored over and over, leaders of these protests are being charged with sedition and rebellion. Sedition is defined in the Spanish legal code as the tumultuous and public uprising to avoid the enforcement of law. Rebellion, in turn, is

defined as public and violent uprising for a series of reasons, which includes declaring the independence of a national territory. These charges to leaders such as Charles Puigdemont, the president of the Catalan government, would be valid were there any other legal alternatives given to holding the referendum. However, there aren't.

Puigdemont has a duty to represent the Catalan people as their elected president, so charging him with rebellion, sedition, and even embezzlement is the central government's way of making it clear that they do not intend on listening to or sitting down at a negotiations table with the Catalan government in order to offer a viable alternative. The charge of embezzlement is particularly ridiculous, as the reason of the charge is that the Catalan government used public funds to finance the referendum; because of this they are being accused of misuse of funds. Does the central government really expect Puigdemont to pay for the ballot boxes and the civil servants from his very own pocket? Wouldn't it be more suitable for them to investigate the 121, 756 million Euros that have been stolen due to corruption to date by the current party in power?

Perhaps the most important question is the following: is democracy really democracy, if only a few have the right vote?

SCIENCE

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Galaxies far, far away: The problem of spinning stars

SCIENCE

Maya Kaushik

Science Writer

Princess Leia was a feminist icon of the 1980s that many of us grew up with. When Carrie Fisher passed away just over a year ago, social media was filled with people mourning her death. Two days before, however, on Christmas Day 2016, Vera Rubin quietly passed away in the USA. Rubin may not have travelled through the galaxy in the same way as the Jedi Princess, but her impact on our understanding of the stars has been profound.

In the 1970s, Rubin and her colleague Kent Ford at the Carnegie Institution of Washington used an image tube spectrograph to observe the stars of the Andromeda Galaxy. They expected to see the stars on the outer edge of the galaxy moving slower rate than the stars in the centre, as would be predicted by our known laws of physics: think of a siphon, or the planets surrounding the sun in our solar system. Instead, they found the outer stars were in fact moving at

the same rate as the stars in the centre: a much faster rate than expected. This soon became known as the “galaxy rotation problem”. There were a few theories as to why this might have been the case, ranging from outer stars having different light absorption properties, to different orbital dynamics unexplained by the current mathematical equations. But gradually, scientists started developing a theory that seemed to fit: the presence of an invisible matter surrounding the galaxy – dark matter.

Initial thoughts were that these might be anomalies found in just one or two galaxies. But, as Rubin carried on her investigations, she found that this phenomenon was widespread. She began plotting the galactic rotation curves of a large number of galaxies, as well as collecting data on the orbital velocities of stars from the galaxy centres to their outer edges. Her findings showed clearly that the unexplained speed of the outer stars was typical of most galaxies in the universe. The dark matter hypothesis seemed to explain these findings – Rubin had indirectly found the first observa-

tional evidence for dark matter, an invisible matter found throughout our universe, which does not interact with light or our known electromagnetic spectrum.

Dark matter is currently thought to make up somewhere around 84% of the total matter in the universe. However, our knowledge is limited on what dark matter is, the type of particles it is comprised of, and its relationship with dark energy (also now thought to constitute much of the universe). Increasing evidence for dark matter is building upon Rubin’s discoveries, such as the light distortion of distant galaxies into arcs when their light passes through a gravitational lens caused by the unseen matter.

Vera Rubin made her career in astronomy at a time when gender discrimination was rife. In 1948, she was turned down from a graduate programme at Princeton University based on her gender, and many believe she was unfairly not awarded the Nobel Prize for her work due to sexism. Despite these setbacks, she went on to become a real inspiration and advocate for numerous women in physics.



Vape Nation! // Flickr/SmokeTastic

The dangers of vaping

SCIENCE

Ignatius-Roy Hillcoat-Nalletamby

Science Writer

E-cigarettes, often advertised as an aid for smoking cessation, may actually encourage young adults to take up smoking, new research suggests.

E-cigarettes are growing in popularity, both in the US and UK, with vaping shops opening on every other street corner. E-cigarettes provide the same smoking experience as traditional cigarettes, but with fewer toxins. First introduced in the US in 2007, it was hoped they would help many of the country’s 40 million smokers quit. However, they have become clouded in controversy, as scientists haven’t been able to determine their benefits and drawbacks when used on a large scale.

The new research, conducted by the Norris Cotton Cancer Centre in America’s Dartmouth University, alongside many other partners, uses the most up-to-date evidence to quantify the scientific grounding of the benefits and drawbacks of large scale e-cigarette use.

The scientists found

that, based on 2014 data, e-cigarettes did more harm than good on the whole population level. Dr. Samir Soneji, the study’s principal investigator from the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice said: “Although the tobacco industry markets e-cigarettes as a tool to help adult smokers quit smoking [they] only marginally increase the number of adult cigarette smokers who are able to successfully quit”. He added: “E-cigarettes may facilitate cigarette smoking initiation and confer substantial harm to adolescents and young adults once they are introduced to nicotine.”

Researchers used census counts, national health tobacco-use surveys, and published literature to create a model estimating the number of years of life expectancy lost by adolescents who had never smoked, and who used e-cigarettes before eventually becoming daily cigarette smokers by the age of around 35-39. The scientists specifically compared the additional number of people who quit thanks to e-cigarettes against those who quit without, with successful quitting defined as constant abstinence for seven years.

The current 2014 data show that 3,490,000 current smokers used e-cigarettes to quit, whilst 3,640,000 young adults started using e-cigarettes despite previously not smoking. The model estimated that, in 2015, an additional 2,070 individuals would quit smoking using e-cigarettes compared to those who did not use them. In contrast, it predicted that 168,000 young adults who did not smoke in 2014 would begin smoking by the next year, eventually becoming full-time smokers by the age of 35 compared to those who never used e-cigarettes.

Alarmingly, the model also estimated that e-cigarette usage in 2014 caused about 1.5 million years of life to be lost by adolescents who had never smoked before.

The researchers warn that more needs to be done on a national and local scale to make e-cigarette beneficial on the large scale. Soneji argued: “E-cigarettes will likely cause more public health harm...unless ways can be found to substantially decrease the number of adolescents and young adults who vape and increase the number of smokers who use e-cigarettes to successfully quit smoking”



Vera Rubin with fellow scientists (second from left) // Wikimedia

SCIENCE

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Quickening: Why you need that kick

SCIENCE

Sarah Wong

Science Writer

I am not a mother myself, but I imagine having a tiny human kicking and moving around in your womb can feel quite uncomfortable. At some point, you may, out of frustration, wonder: why do they move around so much?!

A research group co-led by Paula Murphy from Trinity College Dublin has been able to provide the answer: to develop the joints. Based on observing clinical conditions where movement is restricted or limited, scientists postulate that movement and mechanical forces are required for joint development and maintenance in adults. However, little is known about the

molecular details of how this works. This group in Dublin is the first to identify key pathways involved in the mechanosensing aspect of joint development.

These findings do not just concern expecting parents or science enthusiasts. With an ageing population and an ever-increasing number of individuals suffering from joint diseases, regenerative medicine offers an attractive option to treat joint problems. By identifying key molecular developmental cues, we could be a step closer to bringing this technology to the clinic.

Regenerative medicine, namely the use of stem cells, is used to regenerate or repair damaged tissues. Following cell development, they turn into a specific cell type, for example cartilage.

Scientists have been able to do just this by mimicking the natural process of development.

During development, the embryo matures and undergoes a process called differentiation, meaning the cells become specialised into different types, which carry out a particular function. In the process of differentiation – whether it is during development or in the lab – cells require precise and accurate communication with each other. Imagine the game of Telephone, where the objective of the game is to pass a message along the entire group without distorting it. As a child, the final statements are often hilariously divergent due to the accumulation of errors. However, if this happens to differentiating cells, a deformed body can result. Comparative-

ly, cells perform much better than us, as multiple complex communication systems are used to ensure the right cell receives the right message.

Humans use words and

“Why do foetuses move so much? To develop their joints!”

body language to communicate, whereas cells use signals. Molecular signals and mechanical stress can be perceived by a cell such that they respond accordingly. As mentioned, in the case of cartilage cells, which are fundamental building blocks that makes up your joints, mechanical stimulation

is important. In previous research, mouse and chick embryos that had their movement restricted had an abnormal distribution of cartilage cells across the joint region. With this new research, the molecular pathway that responded to this mechanical stress has now been identified.

By studying gene expression profiles of animals that were immobilised in the embryo during the developmental stage, a few molecular pathways – namely the canonical Wnt and BMP signalling – were highlighted to be instrumental. In particular, the regulation of these pathways modulates expression of genes that allow cells to sense the mechanical stimuli around them, and/or drive differentiation to a cartilage lineage. For instance, Smurf1 is shown to create

a permissive environment for appropriate cartilage differentiation. Furthermore, genetic knockout studies have shown the activation of canonical Wnt is essential for normal joint development. This evidence reported that along with the reduction of Wnt signalling, the lack of movement causes the ectopic activation of BMP signalling via the down-regulation of Smurf1/2, and is pivotal to joint development.

While the study was conducted on chickens and mice, it is likely that this mechanism is evolutionarily conserved across vertebrates. Consequently, there is a high probability that such findings are applicable to humans, both in terms of understanding congenital defects and developing regenerative therapies for joint diseases.

Flagship species – putting the con in conservation

SCIENCE

Steve Allain

Science Writer

For those unaware of what a flagship species is: it is a species selected by a conservation organisation, such as the World Wide Fund (WWF), to act as an icon or symbol for a defined issue or environmental problem. This being said, you are all probably thinking of one of the best-known flagship species: the giant panda. By focusing on such a species and working towards its conservation, the status of other species within the same habitat, or species exposed to

similar levels of threats, may also benefit.

That all sounds well and good, but there are a few issues: one thing you may have already realised is that flagship species are disproportionately

“Flagship species are skewed toward animals considered charismatic”

skewed towards animals that are relatively large and considered to be charismatic. You rarely see a flagship species that

is a plain brown snail, or an extremely rare plant species – a dilemma most likely playing out on the island of Hawaii.

This is because drabber and relatively boring species are unlikely to grab the attention of potential donors, despite the fact that they may need just as much protection as, for example, elephants. Some modern conservation organisations have exercised different approaches to rectify this bias seen towards large mammals by looking at endangered species in a new light. Examples of these include the EDGE project, run by the Zoological Society of London, and Hotspots, run by Conservation International.

EDGE aims to conserve

one-of-a-kind species that are facing extinction, and have scored different groups of the world’s animals on how evolutionarily distinct and globally endangered they currently are. Similarly, Hotspots is a scheme that takes a more landscape-based approach, raising both awareness and funds for regions of the world identified to have more endemic species also under the threat of disappearing. Both of these schemes are moving away from the flagship species concept as we have known it, and trying to use the limited funds available more effectively.

The emphasis on a particular species may be detrimental in the long run, as the public look past the



Pandas may be cute, but we can't forget about other animals // Wikimedia

threats and impacts affecting certain habitats. It is vitally important that education, action, and policy extend past the flagship species to less attractive species and prevent this public complacency from

forming. 21st century conservation needs to move forward, away from flagship species, and take a more holistic approach.

Your Union events

Friday 27 April



CSP WEDNESDAY

EVERY WEDNESDAY FIVESIXEIGHT AND METRIC

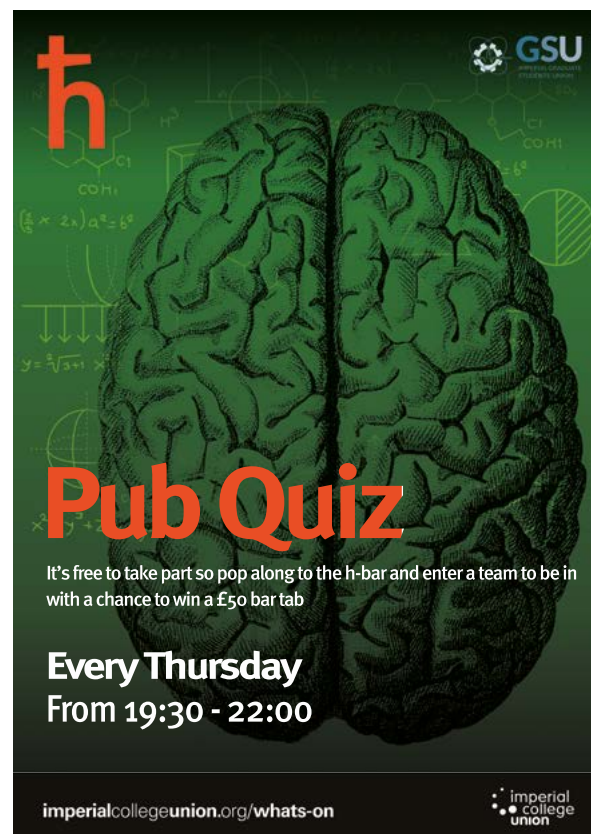
Your weekly night featuring sport and music, open to all!

19:00 - 01:00

Free before 21:30, £2.00 entry after £1.00 Facebook Guestlist

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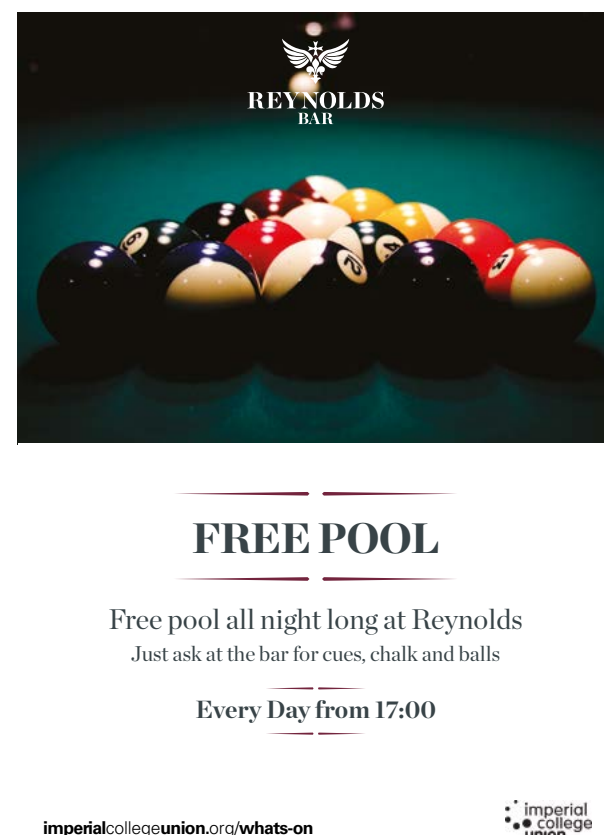
Pub Quiz

It's free to take part so pop along to the h-bar and enter a team to be in with a chance to win a £50 bar tab

Every Thursday
From 19:30 - 22:00

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REYNOLDS BAR

FREE POOL

Free pool all night long at Reynolds
Just ask at the bar for cues, chalk and balls

Every Day from 17:00

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20:00 - 22:00

Cocktail Night

Every Tuesday
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CSP Wednesday

Every Wednesday
19:00 - 01:00

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Cocktail Club

Every Tuesday
19:30 - 23:00

Pub Quiz

Every Thursday
19:30 - 23:00

PGI Friday

Every Friday
16:00 - 23:00

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Every Day
17:00-23:00

Pub Quiz

Every Tuesday
18:30-23:00

Sports Night

Every Wednesday
18:00 onwards

Cocktail Night

Every Friday
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ARTS

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Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*: a reimagining at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

Gyre & Gimble effortlessly fuse cutting-edge puppetry with Max Richter's beautifully recomposed rendition of *The Four Seasons*.

ARTS

THE FOUR SEASONS



Where? Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

When? Finished 21st April

Anmol Patel

Arts Writer

The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse offers an intimate setting for the most recent works of Gyre & Gimble's collaboration with contemporary composer Max Richter. This creative alchemy was inspired by the traditional Japanese form of Bunraku, where half-life-size dolls act out a chanted dramatic narrative. Emma Rice, Artistic Director, describes the production as a combination of "virtuosity from so many disciplines: composition and re-composition, adaption, musicianship, puppetry, performance, and design." All these mediums come together synergistically to create an astonishing production.

Sitting in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse is an absolute delight. The candle-lit chandeliers, hanging from the painted ceiling, reflect warm light on the gold foil wallpaper and illuminate the landscape for Gyre & Gimble's puppeteers. The playhouse, opened in 2014, was inspired by 17th century architecture and based on drawings by John Webb from 1660. Candle expert John Russell was consulted for the 72 candles held in six metal chandeliers, hoisted

on pulleys up to eight feet above the stage.

The show begins with a brief prelude of pieces from works by Vivaldi, Geminiani, and Purcell. Whether you are a classical music enthusiast or not, this short repertoire is thoroughly enjoyable for all. The chamber orchestra, composed of six musicians, is placed in the balcony above the stage, filling the cavern-

"Puppeteers exhibit obvious skill and poise as they manipulate their charges"

ous theatre with clear, unamplified tones. First violinist Jorge Jimenez falters at times, but the technically challenging score is otherwise handled well by all.

Alongside the beautiful music, Gyre & Gimble's co-directors, Finn Caldwell and Toby Olié, bring to stage a striking display of puppetry at its very best. The puppeteers move around the stage dressed in black without detracting attention from the wooden mannequins. They exhibit obvious skill and poise as they meticulously manipulate the puppets, yet flawlessly capture the very essence of the human form with each movement. From the impetuous leap of a child, to the deep breaths



Everybody loves puppets! // Steve Tanner

of a mother surrendering to death, the five outrageously talented puppeteers breathe life into their wooden puppets, encapsulating the human condition in a more profound way than many actors on stage. The puppets' design is simplistic, with a neutral face, showing no emotion, and a body that allows for finer control of movements. Despite – or maybe because of – the blank mannequin-like faces, each spectator can project their own emotion onto the blank canvas, creating their own unique perception of the story, allowing the audience to partake in creating and defining the narrative.

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* offers the perfect template for a cyclical narrative, where life, death, and renewal all take place. At times, the cyclical theme of love and loss creates a sense of platitude, but

these moments are quickly overshadowed by the raw emotion on stage. The emotional colour of the music feeds the mood of the story and creates the peaks and troughs of the storyline. At times, there appears to be a deliberately ironic contrast between mournful melodies and optimistic scenes, which accurately captures the complexity of human emotion.

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* is heard far too often as jingles in elevators or on hold on the phone, making us all a bit disenchanted by the melodies. In spite of this, Max Richter boldly reclaims and re-envisioned the piece, infusing life back into it. Originally composed for four separate parts within a string orchestra, Max Richter's re-composition includes the addition of a synthesiser and a harpsichord. I am unconvinced

by the incorporation of a classically baroque instrument like the harpsichord woven into Vivaldi's cannons, as it does little to enhance the piece, and seems to conform Vivaldi's fluttering cannons into a more rigid

"The production has more in common with ballet than traditional theatre"

form. Although Richter's passion for Bach and Baroque-esque motifs is easily identifiable in his reconstruction, it feels out of place. Typical of Vivaldi, energetic

cheerful cannons gradually become synchronised and later transition to solemn melodies. Richter does well to preserve this.

The production has more in common with ballet than traditional theatre, owing to the fact that the narrative is portrayed visually through the medium of puppetry, without a spoken script. Like dance, the movements of the puppets are free-flowing and complementing of the music.

There are honestly not enough words to describe how captivating and entralling this production is. It oozes charm with elegant simplicity. The puppets are most mesmerising; the fluidity of their motions and the uncanny resemblance to our own movements make them endlessly intriguing and entertaining even if the narrative were removed.

ARTS

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Ballet Black: glorious and achingly beautiful

The quietly revolutionary dance company returns to London with a haunting tale of an affair and a queer retelling of *A Midsummer's Night Dream*.

ARTS

BALLET BLACK



Where? Barbican

When? 17th March

Simran Kukran

Arts Writer

This March, Ballet Black, the company consisting entirely of BAME performers, returned to the Barbican with a double bill. Their offering was a show in two halves; neither of these were traditional performances, but rather a showcase of the power of modern ballet.

The first half, choreographed by Cathy Marston, inspired by Can Themba's short story *The Suit* was slow, sad, and achingly beautiful. With little else but a couple of chairs, a sheet, and a hanger, the scene of a happy household was set smoothly, with Cira Robinson's Matilda and Jose Alvarez's Philemon getting ready for the day. Around them the impressive corps dance with well-honed skills; beginning as furniture, they transfigure themselves into reflections of Philemon and Matilda in the mirror as they mime washing their faces and brushing their teeth. Perfectly in sync, their movements are nothing short of mesmerising. As Philemon left for work and the corps followed, fluidly morphing into passers by in the street, Mthuzuzeli November's Simon took his place alongside Matilda in bed. As Alvarez danced stage left, Robinson and November



Cira Robinson as Titania // Bill Cooper

performed a sensual pas de deux, bodies moving with captivating slinkiness to the whine of the strings. When Philemon returns to pick up his forgotten briefcase he is greeted with the evidence of his wife's betrayal. In a hurry to leave, Simon leaves behind his suit. The shock of Philemon's discovery of the affair is followed by an poignant attempt at reconciliation, but the suit, the manifestation of Matilda's betrayal, lingers. It haunts the couple, taking the place of an extra guest at dinner, Philemon, unable to forgive, pushes Matilda to dance with the suit at a party as he watches sullenly from the sidelines. The story quickly moves towards tragedy: Matilda, tortured by Philemon's

intransigence, desperate to make amends, attempts but fails to destroy the suit. In an heartwrenching conclusion to the allegorical tale, in the end, the suit destroys her.

In contrast, the second half of the show, Arthur Pita's *Dream Within a Midsummer's Night Dream* was delightfully light hearted. Borrowing from the Shakespeare classic, at the outset it seems to be deeply traditional: three couples in sumptuous tutus begin a routine to Handel. Slowly however the music grinds to a halt and, frozen in place, the dancers succumb to sleep, lit in flickers by a lazily gliding disco ball, as Puck (a magnificent Isabela Coarcy) dressed as a boy scout comes to spirit them away. In an

instant the stereotypical, tidy ballet is cut short. When the dancers awake they are in a fantasy realm. The remainder of the performance in which the dancers navigate their new surroundings is accompanied by a chaotic soundtrack. Eartha Kitt's 'Let's Do It' opens proceedings. Then Marie Astrid Mence's Hermia snorts Puck's fairy dust and sambas to the jaunty tunes of Yma Sumac's 'Malambo No. 1,' pairing off with Sakaya Ichikawa's Helena in the process. The choreography is quick – with fast footwork and fluid movements. Ebony Thomas's Lysander and Mthuzuzeli November's Demetrius seem unconcerned by their loss of former partners and seem perfectly

happy in each other's arms. Jose Alvarez's Oberon is left pining after them. Meanwhile in an unexpectedly tender segment Titania dances with Bottom to the Barbara Streisand cover of 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered'. A huge-headed Salvador Dali pops up to add to the surreal feel of the colours and eclectic music. Pita's ode and subversion of to classicism is glorious and ridiculous in equal measure.

In a post-show talk, the founder of the company, the lead of the show, and a host discussed some of the motivations behind putting the company together and the difficulties it has faced. The traditional pink ballet shoe was compared to salmon coloured

plasters – a 'nude' shade designed to deliver a purpose to the mainstream and simply be put up with by people of colour – the abnormal afterthought. Ballet Black's rainbow of different nude shades is quietly revolutionary, and illustrates the diversity they are bringing to the industry. Founder Cassa Pancho spoke about her idea to set up the platform for BAME dancers after failing to find a single ballet dancer who was a person of colour in the UK to interview for her university dissertation. That platform now exists, and the company and its dancers are critically acclaimed. The company aims to be obsolete – the aim is its dancers will be role models and encourage more people of colour to get involved in ballet. Once the whole industry is more diverse, a specific platform to give BAME dancer's an opportunity will not be necessary, opportunities will be provided by all companies.

Despite the company's progressive mission statement, one particular question in the Q&A about Eurocentric beauty ideals in ballet showed the art has further to go before it can truly be described as inclusive. Ballet Black has unequivocally done wonders for diversifying casts in term of race, but it seems requirements to be a certain height and body shape to be casted are still present. Ballerinas still need to fit a mould, albeit a slightly looser one.

Ballet Black begun their nationwide tour earlier this month, for full schedule see balletblack.co.uk

ARTS

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Picasso 1932: the man's pivotal year in paintings

The Tate Modern take us through one of the most important years of Picasso's life, examining how he reacted to the world around him through his work.

ARTS

PICASSO 1932



Where? Tate Modern
When? Until 9th September
How Much? £22 adults; £5 for under-25s

Jingjie Cheng
Arts Editor

How do you measure a year? In paintings, of course – at least for Picasso. 1932 was a pivotal year for Picasso in more ways than one. By this point in time he was a celebrated artist, but critics were beginning to speak of him in the past tense, rather than as a visionary of the future. Feeling increasingly restless, he had bought an 18th century mansion in the Norman countryside where he experimented with sculpture. He was also in a clandestine relationship with a twenty-two year old woman, while his marriage fell apart behind a sheen of bourgeois respectability. While all this was going on, he was getting ready for his first major retrospective in June.

Tate Modern's exhibition *Picasso 1932* measures this colourful year against the works he produced, providing us a glimpse into the various events that shaped the artist's life in that year, and his responses to them. It is a detailed visual diary of how Picasso thought and felt during the year. Although it is unusual for an entire exhibition to be dedicated to the paintings done in a single year by one man, the tight narrative that the boundaries



Le Reve (The Dream), Pablo Picasso, 1932 // The Penrose Collection; Succession Picasso/DACS London, 2018

of a year necessitates makes the show more interesting. The stories that link the paintings of this year together become more personal, and we get a more intimate picture of who the man was.

The exhibition is arranged chronologically, displaying works as they were made through the year. In January, with his impending retrospective in mind, Picasso produced a series of portrait paintings. These are all of a female figure seated in an armchair, reading, sleeping, or in apparent bliss after sex. Across these paintings and across the other works in the show, it is interesting to

note his variations across themes – with the same female subject, Picasso moves from saturated colour harmonies to abstract linework, exploring emotions from the hysteria and pain in *Beauty and Terror* to the peaceful serenity of *Rest*.

The inspiration for most of these figures was Marie-Therese Walter, his twenty-two year old mistress. A good swimmer with an athletic figure, she would be a significant part of Picasso's life that year, serving as his muse and model and injecting a new sensuality to his figures. In his chateau in Normandy, Picasso experimented with sculpture,

transforming Walter's strong features into solid volumes and bulbous shapes. These sculptures were captured for the first time and published at the end of 1932, and are shown here. Displayed next to his paintings, we can see the clear relationship between the two media, reflecting each other in their curves and strong lines.

In March, Picasso painted a group of large canvases that experimented with rich colours and compositions. *Girl Before a Mirror*, for example, stands out for its use of strong, black lines and riotous colours, giving a sense that the painting

works. While the frequent appearance of Walter's features suggested to the public that a new woman had entered Picasso's life, there was also a group of paintings of his family that was displayed prominently in the show. Interestingly, these paintings were from his Blue period in the early 1900s, and were markedly different from this more contemporary, vibrant work, which also suggested their datedness.

After his retrospective, Picasso continued to experiment, painting a series of *Reclining Nudes* that explored the perspectives one can take with a body. He painted both the front and back on a nude on the same plane, fully expressing the curves of both breasts and buttocks. These variations, like the octopus-nudes and the women in armchairs, reinforce the experimental nature of Picasso's paintings in this time, as each painting in the series pushes more boundaries in perspective, colours and representation.

It is incredible to see what can be produced in the space of one year, and this exhibition allows us to see the patterns in his paintings that recur throughout the year, as well as the incremental pushing of boundaries and the limits of how far a particular theme or composition can go. It offers a meaningful story that brings us through one of the most significant years in Picasso's life – a story that is entertaining and enlightening, and definitely worth a visit.

His new play, *The Inheritance*, is Lopez'

ARTS

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The Inheritance: the new Angels in America?

Matthew Lopez' reimagining of Howard's End attempts to be present a grand unified theory of what it means to be gay in America today.

ARTS

THE INHERITANCE



Where? The Young Vic
When? 2nd March – 19th May
How Much? from £10

Indira Mallik
Arts Editor

E.M. Forster's 1910 novel *Howard's End* is a tale of Dickensian proportions about the dangers of materialism, and the importance of the responsibilities we owe each other. In it, the altruistic Schlegel siblings clash with the wealthy Wilcoxes: properties are bequeathed in secret; orphans become heirs; misjudged moments of violence and others of well-intentioned kindness lead to tragedy; the formerly miserly, selfish, and cruel see the error of their ways. It is a quintessential turn-of-the-century romp, but it holds a kernel of universality that has rung true decades after its initial publication, leading to numerous screen and stage adaptations. Of these the 1989 film adaptation starring Emma Thompson remains the most acclaimed. It was this production that playwright Matthew Lopez saw as a teen: he was transfixed. The novel would go on to have a profound effect on the young Lopez – a young gay man growing up in the small town, to whom it seemed E.M. Forster, himself closeted, was a directly speaking.

His new play, *The Inheritance*, is Lopez'

homage to the novel and the author who meant so much to him growing up. In this sprawling two part work that cumulatively is more than six hours long, Lopez reimagines the characters of *Howard's End* as gay men living in contemporary New York. The eldest Schlegel sister becomes Eric Glass (Kyle Soller), a kind-hearted and thoughtful lawyer who is soon to be evicted from the only home he's ever known; his ambitious and insecure boyfriend is Toby (Andrew Burnap) who is writing a play. Their chance encounter with Adam (Samuel H Levine), a charismatic young actor who upturns their lives, eventually leads Eric and Toby to part ways. When this relationship implodes, Eric is drawn to the wealthy real estate developer Henry Wilcox (John Benjamin Hickey) whose partner of many decades, Walter (Paul Hilton) has just died. Henry and Eric's burgeoning relationship, balanced on the cusp of

friendship and romance, is the fulcrum around which

"The action unfolds with soapy flourishes; it is immensely watchable"

the drama of the second act revolves.

An added conceit is that these characters are performing the play within a play: they have been conjured up by a young university student, Jasper, who is led by Morgan (Paul Hilton) – a thinly veiled Forster who shifts the narrative at intervals to probe further into a character's motives, or to offer pearls of wisdom.

In collecting a group of characters that represent both the past and present Lopez attempts to construct a grand unified theory what it means to

be a gay man in America today. In this regard, *The Inheritance* attempts to be a successor to the great gay American plays of the 20th century: *Angels in America* and *The Normal Heart*. Conceptually it is a melding of the two: epic in scope, like *Angels*, with just a hint of magical realism, and a generous dose of philosophizing for good measure; while also domestic like *The Normal Heart*, less angry perhaps, but just as specific. It is a shame then that *The Inheritance* never quite measures up to either.

When dealing with the main elements of the plot, Lopez is excellent, and the action unfolds with soapy flourishes. The cast, all immensely capable, with Burnap as its most charismatic star, are cheered (and sometimes, jeered) on by the audience. Although immensely long, the play, like the gossipiest of Netflix dramas, is immensely watchable. When it comes to the politics, however, the play flags.

The normally chirpy dialogue dissolves into stifled prose. In these awkward scenes the characters that elsewhere seem so vital and fully realised lose their voices, collapsing into two-dimensional vehicles for Lopez' proletizing. Paul Hilton alone is able to carry the weight of the words and make them his own; as a result, Hilton is

"Paul Hilton is wonderful throughout, delivering his performance with understated grace"

wonderful throughout, delivering his performance with understated grace.

The direction by Stephen Daldry, supported by Bob Crowley's

fantastic design and Jon Clark's lighting is similarly understated – but, in moments, transcendent. In one particularly memorable, incredibly moving scene, Eric visits Walter's home to find the place haunted. The ghosts of the young men who came there to die as the city was ravaged by the AIDS crisis descend from the Circle. In their dozens, actors scramble over the mesmerised audience, greeting each other and Eric as they reach the stage that becomes suffused with golden light.

There are a couple of other such truly beautiful scenes but more often than not these are undermined by Lopez's unfortunate tendency to over-egg his writing and compulsively add just another phrase to underscore how emotional a scene truly is. Once or twice this can be excused but by the second half I wanted to climb on stage and clap my hand over the mouths of the actors, and implore them to please hold their lines, to let a moment simply be.

Lopez' ambition is impressive but *The Inheritance's* desperation to be capital-I-important is conspicuously effortful. It would've benefited from a ruthless edit, I wish more than anything that he had crafted this work with more trust in his audience and understood the power of a well placed pause.

This is the world premiere and previews were rife with script changes, but we can but hope that Lopez finds it within himself to pare down this gargantuan work – consider it as knocking the edges of an uncut diamond, the brilliance is in there, the light just needs to get in.



The cast gather around Morgan (Paul Hilton) // Simon Annand

Only one person in this photo did not do a year abroad...



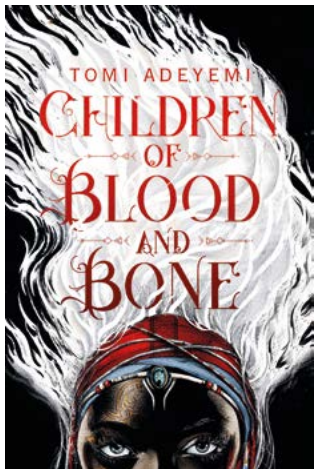
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BOOKS

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Children of Blood and Bone takes a step forward for representation, but is stuck in YA romance

Tomi Adeyemi's host of characters could inspire a generation of under-represented teens, but hopefully their relationships won't have such an impact.



BOOKS CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE

by Tomi Adeyemi

Macmillan. 544 pp.

Alice Peberdy
Books Editor

Young Adult books can get a lot of bad rap. In some ways, I can see why, but then releases like Tomi Adeyemi's debut *Children of Blood and Bone* make me question the stigma.

Zélie should have magical abilities, but a ruthless king destroyed magic and killed anyone with powers before she could develop them. When an ancient artefact is found which seems to be reconnecting diviners with the gods, igniting their abilities, Zélie has a chance to improve the lives of her people.

It's not the most unique take on magic or the 'Chosen One' trope, but that's not the appeal. Adeyemi's rich world is inspired by West African mythology, with some modern politics thrown in. It's a vivid representa-

tion of a land and its culture which can be both beautiful and cruel. It would often force me into moments of contemplation, either in admiration or sombre silence. The atrocities committed against the diviners are hard enough on the reader, let alone when considered in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement.

In the Author's Note at the end of the book, parallels are drawn between real people and characters of the book – children, mothers, and innocents. It drags the reader back into a harsh reality; all the emotions felt throughout the novel are forced onto stories you've seen on the news.

“The book would often force me into moments of contemplation or sombre silence”

Still, it's not all about sorrow. Adeyemi has discussed her desire give a young readership protagonists in whom they could see themselves, something she had never found for herself. On the author's YouTube channel, there is a video of her holding the book in her hands for the first time which shows her passion. Through her tears, you can see how important it is to her, and it will be to countless others.



Adeyemi's debut takes on modern politics and West African mythology // Elena Seibert

Children of Blood and Bone is drawing lots of attention. It may not have exploded in the media as *Black Panther* did, but both stories are starting many a discussion. It has held its place on the *New York Times* bestsellers list for the last six weeks. A deal for not one but three films was announced before the book was even released. Pretty impressive for a 24-year-old debut author.

If it wasn't branded YA, and if the cast wasn't filled with teens, it may have been even more popular. But it doesn't seem to be the age of the target audience that makes many recoil – you don't see anyone shying away from *Harry Potter* for being a kid's book. The problem is much more specific to YA itself. Many people are put off by a reputation of re-hashed plots, clichéd writing, and the same bland girls falling for bad boys.

Sadly, not all of those problems are resolved by Adeyemi.

Her writing style isn't necessarily one to sing about. It's easy to read, which isn't a bad thing – there isn't an elaborate style which could disorientate or distract from the plot. Anyone could read it, and that's good – this book should reach as many people as possible.

What did irk me about the writing was the incessant use of interruption. So many times, the narrator would be cut short mid wor-

“Only for their train of thought to be completed,” by another character.

Sure, it's fine once, but it's annoying as soon as it becomes noticeable. This forced effort to be quirky is found too often in books of this kind.

It's annoying, but at least it's not problematic, unlike the romance shoehorned into *Children of Blood and Bone*, and

many other YA books. Why do they all need the protagonist to fall in love? And why are the love interests so often terrible people?

It's happened ever since *Twilight* popularised YA books – maybe that's what started the trend of unhealthy relationships. In this case, Adeyemi tries to convince the reader that a villain is good boyfriend material. Some of his acts are justified, and he has a little hero in him, but who wants to be with someone they've seen commit murder and arson?

For a book with a young target audience, it is not appropriate. It's not even required for the story; the same outcome could be reached with friendship instead of romance.

This isn't the only offence, but it is the worst. At least the other relationship that's toyed with is between two good, wholesome characters. Still, for a book focussing on four

teenagers, it's a little too neat to have two couples. I'm thankful there isn't a love triangle.

“Why do all YA books need the protagonist to fall in love? And why are the love interests so terrible?”

Children of Blood and Bone deserves all the hype it's receiving and more, but it's by no means perfect. The diversity that it brings to YA should be celebrated, its legacy continued. The dysfunctional relationships between the characters should not.

MUSIC

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KOD – Rushed execution holds J. Cole back

Following on from his critically-acclaimed *4 Your Eyez Only*, J. Cole's latest release, *KOD*, is marked by mature lyrical content, but is hampered by sloppy technique.

MUSIC

KOD



Artist: J. Cole. **Label:** Dreamville. **Top Tracks:** ATM; Kevin's Heart; Window Pain. **For Fans Of:** Kendrick Lamar; Joey Bada\$\$, Jay-Z. *42 minutes*

Ben Tenmann

Music Writer

North Carolina rapper, J. Cole, famous for his poetically colourful and hard-hitting lyricism, as well as his smooth charisma, comes through on *KOD* to tell his tales of addiction and drug abuse. In contrast to his previous release – the critically-acclaimed, commercially successful, and highly political *4 Your Eyez Only* – J. Cole focuses a lot more on personal stories, experiences, and life lessons, putting his politics on the

back seat. This change in thematic focus is reflected in the instrumental and vocal arrangements of the album: the vocals are often subdued and distant; the samples are calm and atmospheric; the beats feel more laid back. On some tracks he makes use of a female narrator, who brings the deeper concepts of the album to the forefront, elucidating ideas about life, suffering, and how it is important to 'choose wisely' when deciding on how to deal with this suffering.

The only listed features on this album are from kiLL edward, performing on the songs 'The Cut Off' and 'FRIENDS'. He generally does the songs justice, especially his part in 'FRIENDS', which is outstanding, but his delivery of the hook on 'The Cut Off' does come off a little awkward, and the performance is also a bit messy at times.

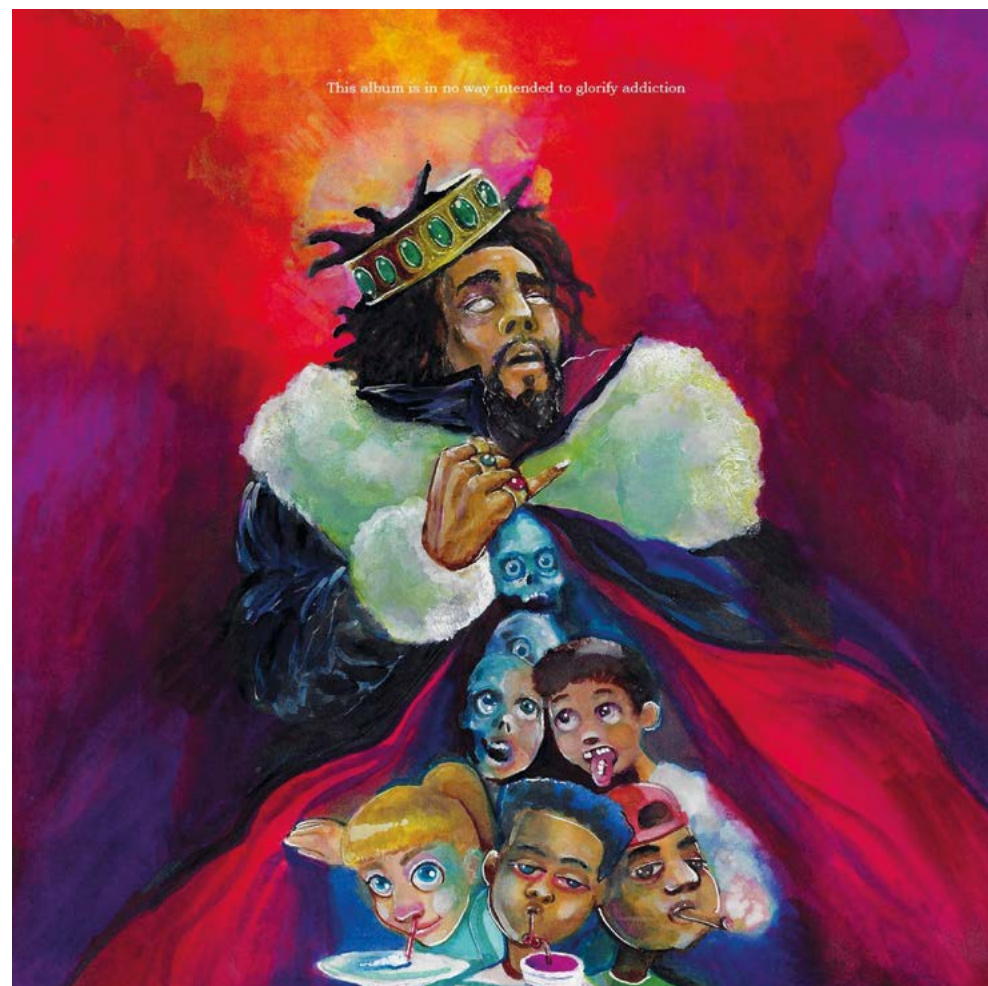
This actually seems to be a pervasive problem

with this album: the recording of the vocals feels rushed. The lyricism and production are as strong as ever, and, in my opinion, the themes are the best J. Cole has ever touched upon. Unfortunately, however, there are a few moments in which immersion into the world J. Cole is trying to create becomes nearly impossible. Vocal performances which are way off key and/or sloppy ruin the moody atmosphere that the songs are trying to convey.

"There are moments where immersion into J. Cole's world is nearly impossible"

A good example of this would be 'Once an Addict (Interlude)': muffled electric pianos playing moody chords open the song, instantaneously immersing you. But then, out of nowhere, a vocal line, so off key it would even make your drunk friends at the karaoke bar cringe, pulls you right out of that immersion. "Something's got a hold on me", Cole croons in a pitch that sounds way too high for his register.

Another problem this album suffers from is that none of the songs are particularly memorable. There is a severe lack of strong hooks throughout this record, save for one track, 'ATM', which stands out quite clearly as the strongest song. It is,



Alice in Wonderland had taken a dark turn // Dreamville

unsurprisingly, the only one that has gotten the video treatment so far. There are no songs like 'Deja Vu', 'Neighbours', or 'No Role Modelz' on this record.

Cole's bars are as powerful as ever and his charm still shines through, and this saves a lot of the record, in my opinion. But none of this really matters when the songs are fundamentally uninteresting and unmemorable. Were it not for the themes he touches upon and the relevance of these to the culture we live in at the moment, I would have to give him a much lower score. The surface stories about drug addiction and social media romances serve as a gateway to much deeper philosophical ideas about life.

Also, rather surprisingly, J. Cole heavily censors his own words on this record, using tape stop effects to blur out profanities. At first this put me off, but I now think it was done for a good reason: Cole tries to portray himself as a father-figure in the hip-hop scene on this record, even more so than on *4 Your Eyez Only*. By removing the profanity he can avoid the 'parental advisory' sticker on his album cover and thus reach a younger audience. In a culture of increasing nihilism and a greater sense of aimlessness, young people will look for strong father figures to point them in the right direction.

The last track on the album, '1985', is a sort of diss track aimed at all

the new, up-and-coming SoundCloud rappers (Lil' Pump, 6ix9ine etc.). I call it a 'sort of diss track' because it isn't aimed at anyone specifically, but rather sees J. Cole trying to mentor younger artists in the ways of the music industry, warning them about the dangers of excess and chasing trends.

I have very mixed feelings about this album. While the subject matter and the lyrics, as well as J. Cole's personality, are as great as ever, there are sore spots on this record which cannot be ignored. Artists of Cole's caliber shouldn't make the kinds of mistakes that he makes on this release. Apparently he recorded this album within a timespan of two weeks. It shows.



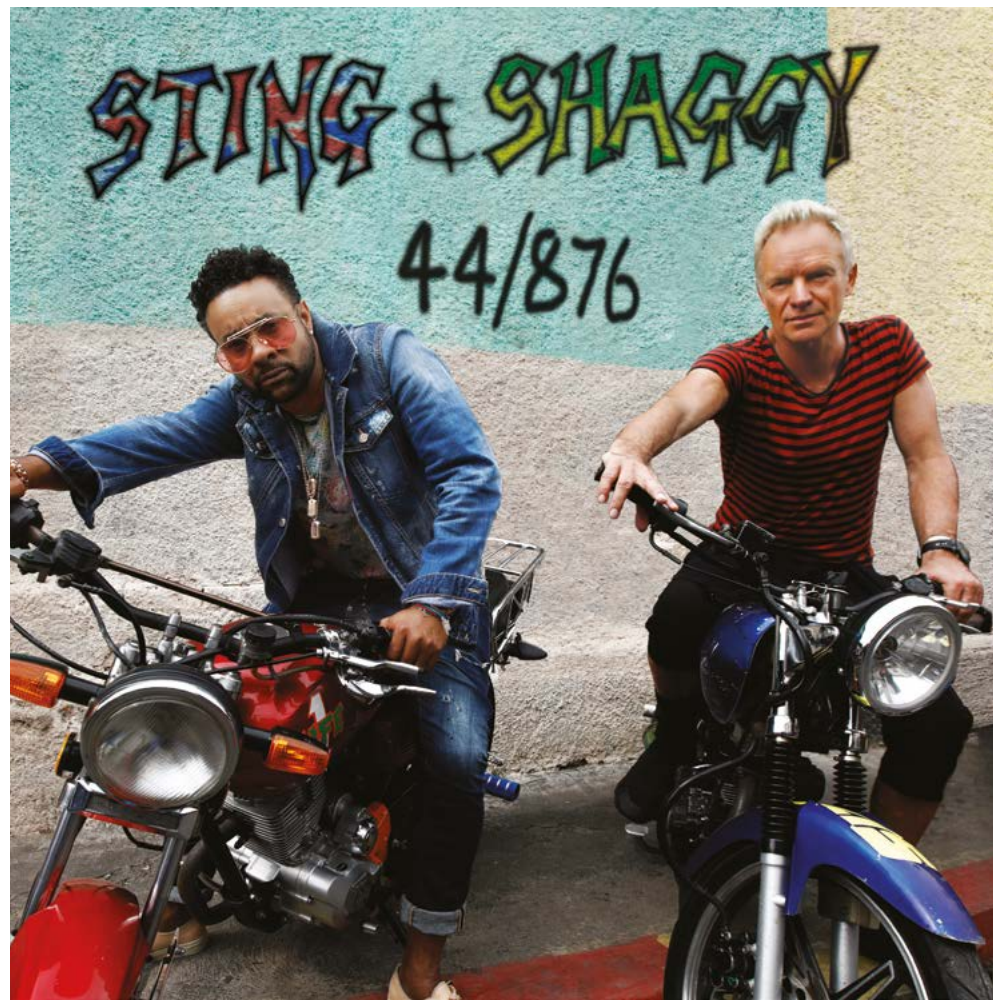
J. Cole's feeling broody // Wikimedia

MUSIC

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When Sting met Shaggy

Despite sounding like a bad April fool's joke, the collaborative album between Sting and Shaggy is actually surprisingly decent collision between artistry and meme.



This is... not a joke... // Interscope

MUSIC

44/876



Artist: Sting and Shaggy.
Label: Interscope. **Top Tracks:** Sad Trombone; Just One Lifetime; Morning is Coming. **For Fans Of:** Reggae. 42 minutes

Sabina Nowakowska
Music Writer

Yep, that happened. You read it correctly. It's not a misprint. The former frontman of '80s pop-rock group The Police really did make an album with Mr. Boombastic himself, and they really did release it on 4/20. Honestly, I'm still in as much disbelief

as you. It all sounds like a joke. In accordance, I thought this review would be something of a joke as well, but, surprisingly, the album is not actually as terrible as you'd expect. Don't get me wrong, it's far from amazing, but there are certainly some good songs to be found.

So how did the most unexpected collaboration of the century come about? Well, Sting and Shaggy claim they have a lot in common. Somehow I doubt that, but one thing they definitely do share is mutual friend Martin Kirszenbaum (a.k.a. Cherry Cherry Boom Boom) – founder of Cherrytree Records and Sting's manager. He happened to be working in the studio with Shaggy and asked Sting to sing a chorus on

'Don't Make Me Wait'.

That in itself isn't so weird. Such things are common in show business.

"The artists' collaboration is a bit too much for the world – or at least for Sting fans, who are asking for 'Shaggyless' mixes"

But, the guys apparently enjoyed working together so much that they decided

to record a whole album. That turned out to be a bit too much for the world – or at least for Sting fans. Over the years we got used to his experiments, such as *Songs from the Labyrinth*, a collection of renaissance songs written by John Dowland, or, more recently, *The Last Ship*, a musical about the collapse of Newcastle's shipbuilding industry. Seemingly unlikely collaborations aren't even that rare anymore (think Elton John and Eminem, Paul McCartney and Kanye). But still, I'm not sure anyone was prepared for this head-on collision of artist and meme.

Whiplash runs through the record. The point of such collaborations is to step out of your comfort zone, try new things, and adapt to a different environment and partner. Sting was heavily influenced by reggae in his Police days, so perhaps it wasn't completely new territory for him, but he's never made a straight reggae album like *44/876*. It does, however, serve as a reminder of how versatile a musician he is, another instance of him taking an alien genre and seamlessly integrating into it. It's also worth pointing out his spotless vocals on the album. Decades of rigorous practice has allowed Sting to perfect and maintain his voice in spite of aging. Obviously it has changed, but in a good way – it sounds strong, mature, and still absolutely flawless.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Shaggy. He seems stuck in his dancehall manner throughout, either unable or unwilling to leave his comfort zone. Both

musicians have argued that their voices nicely complement each other. I disagree. I'm not sure if it's just a preference or because I can't detach from 'Mr. Boombastic', but I find his vocals irritating. And I'm not the only one. While some Sting fans accept his new friend, many others are desperately trying to get 'Shaggyless' mixes and album covers. Not a great sign.

"Over the years Sting has experimented, but I'm not sure anyone was prepared for this head-on collision"

Perhaps this is a bit harsh. At the end of the day, Shaggy is a good entertainer – he was the only artist who really got the crowd going at the Queen's birthday party last Saturday. And if it wasn't for him we would probably never have heard the Newcastle rockman singing 'It wasn't me' (check it out on YouTube, you won't regret it).

If you do give *44/876* a go, don't be put off by the opener, a typical dancehall track akin to Shaggy's earlier work with introductory lyrics – by far the worst on the record. This unimaginative start is followed by the optimistic, Marley-esque 'Morning is coming'.

Once ignited, this warm reggae flame burns soothingly throughout

most of the album. Slight pop-leaning are seen in 'Gotta Get Back My Baby' and 'Don't Make Me Wait', but not at the expense of more reflective tunes.

The great American Dream (or lack thereof) has been the subject of many recent releases (see: LCD Soundsystem, David Byrne). Sting & Shaggy offer their take from the perspective of migrants in Police-like 'Dreaming in the USA'. The lyrics are a conversation between singers, each presenting their own views. This thread runs through other tracks such 'Just One Lifetime' and 'Crooked Tree'.

The best is saved until last. The highlight of the album is undoubtedly 'Sad Trombone' – a nostalgia-tinged slow groover with minimal Shaggyisms, a jazzy flavour, and touching lyrics about unhappiness in love. Rounding off is 'Night Shift', which emulates a similar vibe (although lyrically different), bringing the LP to a neat end.

To summarise, the idea of Sting recording a reggae album was definitely a hit, but his choice of collaborator perhaps missed the mark somewhat. If he'd teamed up with somebody more flexible and imaginative, such as Horace Andy, he could've ended up with something far more interesting than nice reggae. Although, Sting has often said in interviews that the most important thing in music for him is the element of surprise. Well it's safe to say that everyone was astonished by this collaboration. If that was the goal, mission accomplished.

FILM

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A tale of two women

Let the *Sunshine In* and *Funny Cow* offer the audience the choice between two portraits of emotionally-complex women, while eschewing a sense of resolution.

FILM

FUNNY COW



Dir: Adrian Shergold. **Script:** Tony Pitts. **Starring:** Maxine Peake, Paddy Considine, Tony Pitts. 103 minutes

LET THE SUNSHINE IN



Dir: Claire Denis. **Script:** Claire Denis, Christine Angot. **Starring:** Juliette Binoche, Gérard Depardieu. 94 minutes

Fred Fyles
Editor-in-Chief

Filmgoers looking for stories of complex women struggling to succeed in a man's world, which simultaneously serve as an exploration and critique of a particular cultural moment are this week, surprisingly, spoiled for choice. *Funny Cow* (Dir: Adrian Shergold) and *Let the Sunshine In* (Dir: Claire Denis) – which came out last week – are two films about emotionally-complex women, played by Maxine Peake and Juliette Binoche respectively, with a focus on conversation and language, and a deep understanding of time and place.

In *Let the Sunshine In*, the time is now, and the place is France. Or Paris, to be more precise – the Paris of aesthetes and lovers, who tend towards the philosophical and dress chicly, with nary a banlieue in sight. Binoche plays Isabelle, a divorced artist looking for her true love and crying herself

to sleep at night. We follow Isabelle as she passes through the arms of a number of unsuitable men – unsuitable, in some cases, because they are possessive and boorish, while in others Isabelle makes herself unsuitable by locking herself away in her upper-class bubble.

The whole film – which was based on Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, and written by Denis and collaborator Christine Angot – is meditative and slow-moving; to say it veers into indulgence would be an understatement. Most of the film is taken up by conversations between Isabelle and the men in her life, during which Denis' camera languidly swings between

“Binoche is – as usual – resplendent in *Let the Sunshine In*”

the two sets of faces like a ponderous metronome. These sequences are enjoyable, up to a point, but heavy dialogue masks a sense that little of real value is being said.

Binoche, is – as usual – resplendent in the role, giving a performance that is imbued with a blinding glow. Despite the dialogue-heavy nature of the script, Binoche displays the most affecting aspects of her performance when she relies solely on her expression to sell the story: staring out of a train window, lost for words.

Peake is *Funny Cow* – she plays the titular



Maxine making 'em laugh // Entertainment One/Curiosa Films

character, who is never afforded a name – always manages to find the right words. Set in the North of England in the 1970s and 80s, the film charts the life of *Funny Cow*, a working class woman trying to break into the male-dominated comedy circuit. The funniest thing about *Funny Cow*, is, surprisingly, the lack of humour. Instead, Shergold has taken the opportunity to explore the limitations and strictures placed upon women by society.

As with Binoche, Peake is by far the best thing about *Funny Cow*. With an exceptional ear for dialogue, Peake delivers each line to perfection, often reverting to the deadpan sarcasm that served as an emotional shield for her while growing up. It's the cumulative effect of small details that really sell her performance – the range of emotions Peake's face goes through as she struggles through an abortive audition, filmed

in relentless close-up, or the fact her hands remain trembling even when she manages to blast through in her first live set.

In both films, the lead actors' abilities mean their support tends to fade into the background a little bit; *Let the Sunshine In* ends with a memorable exchange between Binoche and Gerard Depardieu, who plays a fortune-teller, and in *Funny Cow* Peake is ably supported by Paddy Considine as Angus, who plays her middle-class lover, but both films serve as showcases for an individual talent.

Both films excel in exploring a particular social class. In *Let the Sunshine In*, it's the upper-class world of bankers and art dealers; a metropolitan elite, sipping champagne, who probably haunt Nigel Farage's nightmares. *Funny Cow* explores the polar opposite: working class Northern communities who were decimated by Thatcherism through-

out the 1980s, and have yet to recover. *Funny Cow* explores, in affecting, depressing detail, the way cycles of poverty and violence are passed down through generations – *Funny Cow*'s abusive father dies when she is young, but it's not long before she too is trapped in a relationship with a violent man, from whom she manages to escape. In a lesser film, Considine's Angus would act as a corrective for *Funny Cow*, introducing her to a world of culture and class, but she recognises this, too, can be a form of violence.

But while both films show the protagonist at the mercy of men, *Funny Cow* creates a well-rounded, realistic character, who has her own lived experience and vitality. Isabelle, on the other hand, exists solely in relation to the men around her. We are told, or must presume, she is a successful artist, yet she is only seen working on a canvas once, and we know next to nothing

about her life outside of its romances. Her character is like a ghost, and the film has a hollowness at its centre that does not satisfy. While *Funny Cow* can often feel overly-structured or fragmented – a result, perhaps, of the director's ample experience in television – it is much more satisfying than the naturalism Denis offers up.

Both films are marked by a lack of resolution: Isabelle and *Funny Cow* both have futures left wide open. While *Funny Cow* is more triumphant, it refuses an easy ending – instead of having *Funny Cow* beat the male comics at their own game, or transcend an arena of comedy so reliant on racism, sexism, and homophobia, she joins them in punching down. *Funny Cow* and *Let the Sunshine In* both end with things still in play: Peake and Binoche deserve nothing less.

FILM

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Isle of Dogs: A cute tail that lacks some bite

Wes Anderson shows us how much he loves dogs and Japan in his latest film.

FILM

ISLE OF DOGS



Dir: Wes Anderson. **Script:** Wes Anderson. **Starring:** Bryan Cranston, Edward Norton, Bill Murray, Jeff Goldblum. *101 minutes*

Sung Soo Moon

Film Writer

It's been four years since the release of *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, a commercial and critical success for director Wes Anderson. It's a tough act to follow, but *Isle of Dogs* is a delightful addition to Anderson's body of work – his offbeat filmmaking style translates impressively to animation, which captures his playfully childish world with wonder.

It's 20 years in the future, and in Japan's Megasaki City's authoritarian leader Mayor Kobayashi exiles all dogs to Trash Island due to an outbreak of canine flu virus. Six months later, Atari, the nephew of the Mayor, crash lands on Trash Island in search of his dog, Spots, who was the first dog banished by the decree. Atari is aided by a trusty band of five dogs, who are now given a purpose: to search for Spots, and ultimately rekindle the companionship between man and dogs.

Firstly, the film is a visual treat. The puppets and the sets are masterfully made, and there is pure joy in observing just how everything moves and interacts. The animation is beautiful and there is endless pleasure in the details that breathe life into this world and its characters. In the scenes



Who let the dogs out? // Twentieth Century Fox

on Trash Island, the visual style is greasy and gritty: it coherently captures an apocalyptic landscape, with mountains of debris, overgrown fields, smoggy skies, and rusty colour palettes. There is plenty for hardcore Anderson fans to fetishize, as the film is full of title cards, symmetrical shots, maps, deadpan dialogue, and almost everyone in the film is a complete introvert. Anderson obsesses over the framing, and his attention to detail in his composition is exactly what you would expect. It's nothing new from Anderson; he does the thing he does best, and there is some comfort to that.

Like Anderson's other films, *Isle of Dogs* has a darkly comic streak that has a sharp bite to it. Just ten minutes in, a brawl between dogs ends with an ear being chewed off and thrown away where rats nibble at it; Mayor

Kobayashi's moustached face is plastered onto a giant screen invoking images of Big Brother from 1984; there are scenes of dogs being rounded up into cages to be gassed; a young boy has bits of metal piping sticking out of the side of his head for an unhealthy amount of time. Moments of unexpected violence or dark themes become almost an antidote to the relentless kookiness. The abstract world that Anderson creates gets instantly grounded in reality and its consequences.

This undercurrent of violence is an important characteristic to Anderson's storytelling style, as it reinforces the importance of the characters' motives. In *Isle of Dogs* this is underplayed. As a result, the film sits awkwardly between the boundary of being an "animated kids' film" or being a full-throttle Anderson film, and never

quite decides which. With all the juggling of heavy ideas, Anderson fails to reach a satisfying conclusion. The narrative goes through several diversions that seem to swirl aimlessly around the point it wants to make.

While the film is clear in its stance against oppression and injustice, the primary voice of reason comes from Tracy, an American foreign exchange student with a hunch. This clouds the intentions of the film, and is at conflict with the socio-political subtext it tries to retain.

Many debates have been sparked on whether the film itself is racist: its touristy portrayal of Japan and the blissful ignorance of the majority of the Japanese people is somewhat problematic, but Anderson sets the film in Japan for largely aesthetic reasons, and shows that he is (at least superficially) in love with

Japanese culture. There is a fantastical and celebratory air in the marriage between modern Western and ancient Asian traditions in Megasaki.

Does *Isle of Dogs* trivialise Japanese culture? I feel like Anderson would not have made a different film in light of these concerns, as his whole filmmaking style is based on an unbounded and childish creativity. The Japanese dialogue is not subtitled but translated through different characters or inferred through the voice acting and animation. This pushes for more sympathy towards the dogs who all speak English but don't understand the Japanese. I didn't find it offensive or racist, but I wonder how a Japanese speaking audience would view the film.

The film is successful in working on a number of different levels: a story about a boy finding his

lost dog; a stance against corruption, xenophobia, and oppression; even as an advert for Japanese tourism. The film's internal politics weren't too concerning while I was watching it, but becomes more problematic as I think about it in retrospect.

Isle of Dogs is the longest stop-motion animated film ever made, and it certainly feels it. The charm of the eccentric dialogue quickly wears off when it teters into overindulgence, especially in the final third. It isn't as funny as it ought to be, and partly to blame is its ambiguity in whether it really wants to accommodate for younger audiences and portray a sugar-coated version of Anderson's dark universe. Anderson may not be at his best, but *Isle of Dogs* brings joy as a visually arresting film that has flourishes of his signature tropes.

CLUBS & SOCIETIES

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INNOVATION FORUM: HEALTHCARE THROUGH A DIGITAL EYE

Innovation Forum Imperial College London (IFICL) is a student society – part of a non-profit global organisation, with more than 10,000 members in over nine countries – that seeks to build bridges between academia, industry, and policy makers. We focus on the future and evolution of today's technologies, ranging from the nascent stage to the cusp of commercial application.

Innovation is a multi-disciplinary activity that is key to any country's growth model. It brings together engineers, business professionals, economists, doctors, scientists, and policy makers. The Innovation Forum exists to facilitate this multidisciplinary structure by fostering synergy between academia, industry, and the public sector.

On the 9th May 2018, we are hosting an event at Imperial's South Kensington campus – "Healthcare through a Digital Eye". The event aims to host 200 attendees, including students, academics, industry professionals, and entrepreneurs, and

increase public knowledge about digital healthcare. Our goal is to provide insights to anyone who is keen to get on board on digital healthcare, from various perspectives provided by the policy makers, corporates, startups, academia, investors or accelerators, focusing on future and evolution of digital healthcare.

Speakers from a range of backgrounds will be attending the conference, including:

- Hak Salih: Digital Health Lead – MedCity. Salih has over 20 years' experience as an investor and supporter of innovation, and is an award-winning mentor. As Digital Health Lead at MedCity, his focus is on supporting, connecting and growing the digital health eco-system – from mentoring early stage ideas and signposting further help, to connecting innovators and clinicians with corporates looking to collaborate. He also works with stakeholders looking to commercialise their ideas in digital health. He was included in the inaugural Maserati 100 list, published in *The Sunday Times*, honouring those who have given back by helping and supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs.

- Dr. ir. Isabel Van De Keere: Founder and CEO of Immersive Rehab, a Virtual Reality digital health startup that focuses on the creation and development of physical & neuro-rehabilitation programmes in Virtual Reality that improve patient recovery. The goal is to increase the effectiveness of physical & neuro-rehabilitation, reduce referral times, make rehab fun and engaging, and have a better patient outcome. Following a long physical rehab period Dr Van De Keere herself went through due to a work accident, she decided to start Immersive Rehab in September 2016. Isabel is passionate about immersive technologies (VR/AR) and their applications in healthcare, social entrepreneurship, and promoting women in tech.

- Dr Ulf Hengstamann: Digital Health Innovation Manager, G4A, Bayer. Addicted to Digital Transformation, with 30 years' experience in Biology, Genomics, Market Intelligence, and program, project and line management, Ulf got his PhD in Microbiology at the Max-Planck-Institute for terrestrial Microbiology. He joined Bayer in 2002, and since 2015 has been their Digital Innova-



Dr Nicolaus Henke (Senior Partner at McKinsey & Company), and Dr ir. Isabel Ven De Keere (Founder and CEO of Immersive Rehab) will both be attending the forum next month

tion Manager, supporting Bayer's path in Digital Transformation.

- Prof. Paul Leeson: Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at the University of Oxford and Consultant Cardiologist at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. He is also Head of the Oxford Cardiovascular Clinical Research Facility and leads a research group that combines machine learning with cardiovascular imaging to identify novel biomarkers of early disease. The findings are being turned into software applications for use in the clinic by the University of Oxford spin out, Ultromics.

- Dr. Nicolaus Henke: Dr Henke is a Senior Partner at McKinsey & Company. He advises leading companies on how to improve decision making and performance through advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and end-to-end data enabled transformations. He is a

global leader of McKinsey Analytics overseeing partnerships between McKinsey and the wider artificial intelligence, data and computing ecosystem. He is also the Chairman of QuantumBlack, a company operating at the intersection of strategy, technology, and design.

- Dr Lawrence Petalidis: As Head of Innovation and Impact at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, Dr Petalidis supports a grants programme that funds digital health quality improvement projects. Recent projects include heart failure patient monitoring, medical device development, and AR in surgery. Lawrence is a NICE specialist advisor, a NHS Navigator for the Digital Health London Accelerator, a partner for the Microsoft Accelerator, and digital health advisor for West London CCG. Dr Petalidis has 13 years of experience across business, commercial, knowledge transfer, digital change and innovation roles.

- Dr. Eduardo Aguilar Pelaez: Dr Pelaez's career has spanned academia, startups, and global companies in the technology space. As Head of Technology at Helix Centre Imperial College London, he guides the engineering roadmap, and works with our designers and clinicians to bring innovations to life. Prior to Helix, he was a Product Manager at one-finestay, covering mobile, enterprise software and IoT systems, including the Sherlock smart lock product. Prior to that he worked on high performance computing, and earlier was a co-founder of Ervitech, a medical technology company focused on a miniature wearable breathing.

For more information and tickets, visit: <https://healthcarethroughadigitaleye.eventbrite.co.uk>

- Innovation Forum
Imperial College London



TRAVEL

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From Imperial to the Amazon jungle

Instead of going into industry or staying in academia, recent maths BSc graduate **Charlotte Pickering** has chosen to move across the world to the Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest to work on a permaculture fruit farm, where she's living her best life. Here are some of her exciting adventures and the first challenges encountered in the tropics.

TRAVEL

Charlotte Pickering
Travel Writer

Oh God, where am I? All these trees look the same. The way up was easy (it was just, well, up). But now every direction is down, I can't hear the stream anymore and I can't see anything through these trees."

Sometimes in life, you find yourself someplace odd and you struggle to understand how you came to be there. This was one of those times for me – I was at the top of a mountain in the Amazon rainforest, completely alone, with a bag of cherimoya seeds in one hand and a machete in the other. The trees were thick; that place might even be primary rainforest – a rare thing to come across where

I was staying, an area previously used for cattle farming, with neighbours who are digging for gold and planting cash crops. But our plans for the land, in comparison, were a little more 'out there', according to Ecuadorian standards.

Let me start from the beginning: I had arrived in Ecuador four weeks earlier – my plane landed in Cuenca, a city popular with American expats. I was headed to a community called Terra Frutis, who are trying to create a vegan permaculture fruit forest in the Amazon rainforest. Not wanting to waste time anywhere too 'Americanised', the next day I took a scenic yet frightening 4.5 hour bus journey from Cuenca to Gualaquiza in Morona Santiago province, a town at the edge of the Amazon rainforest. I passed over 20 places labelled

'*peligro*' – the Spanish word for 'danger' – as the bus wound around mountains across the Andes on roads that were yet to be completed. Back home I don't take buses, only trains – not because I'm stuck up or frightened of buses, but rather because if the bus ride is over an hour long, I will throw up. And yet I somehow managed to survive this 4.5 hour bus journey featuring some harrowing drops. After a taxi ride from the bus station, I arrived at a house I had only seen in YouTube videos. I was immediately greeted by one of the men who had started the Terra Frutis community three years before, wandering through Peru and Ecuador until he eventually settled in this area.

My trip wasn't a holiday as such, more like a summer internship. Most people have internships



In the jungle, the mighty jungle... // Charlotte Pickering

in a bank or some other soul-sucking company, but that's not the direction I want to take with my life. I used to love watching *The Good Life*, where the townies try to become self-sufficient, converting their gardens into veggie plots and making their own clothes, and the show inspired me to do the same – but better. I'm a big fruit lover, but the fruit in the UK is only passable, so I decided to move to Ecuador (which has a great climate for all sorts of fruit) and start a fruit forest. Thankfully for my bank account and sanity, it didn't come to that because someone else had already started a fruit forest there, so I decided to join their community for a trial month.

So now back to Ecuador. I had just arrived in Tambo Viejo, where the headquarters for Terra

"The rainforest is unforgiving – if you have any weakness, it will find it and make you suffer"

Frutis are situated. I spent the first week and a half at the headquarters, a smaller scale version of the main project, only with electricity and the internet (coming soon to the farm!). Their 'yard' is full of fruit trees, sugarcane, and palms, backing onto a river suitable for bathing in. I spent a lot of my time weeding, which in Ecuador often involves cutting shoulder-height grass with a machete.

The grass is then used as mulch for the plants. I also planted many pineapples and harvested noni, ugly lemons, and maracuyas.

Tambo is a nice place but the real project is the farm, known as Mount Frutis because of its location on the side of a mountain, previously used for grazing cattle and not much else. There are a few ongoing jobs there: building bungalows and a community kitchen in preparation for the upcoming fruit festival; planting trees and seeds gathered from all over the world; clearing areas of grass; weeding and looking after existing plants; and maintaining the waterline that brings water from the stream to the kitchen. The community is trying to become self-sufficient and aims to avoid buying new things where possible,

TRAVEL

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Halfway up the mountain – the rainforest ain't no joke // Charlotte Pickering

opting to make the things they need in most cases. Tools include a long pole with a plunger on top for harvesting papayas, a long pole with a sharp knife on the end for harvesting rollinias, and branches that bend back like a scythe for collecting the grass and other potential mulch.

So finally, we went to the farm – we needed to take a half hour taxi ride, then a boat journey, and an uphill walk through deep mud. This was the beginning of the dry season but the moisture from the rainy season hadn't managed to escape yet. I got to the cabin (one of the seven buildings there) exhausted, had a short break, and then started planting some mangoes. At that point, my body was done, and I spent the next few days feeling faint and unable to stomach any food. The rainforest is unforgiving – if you have any weakness, it will find it and make you suffer. I somehow got back to Tambo, where I got some rest, managed to recover, and then spent my days eating cherimoya bought in town.

Cherimoya trees can grow in this climate but are unlikely to fruit – I

wasn't satisfied with this. I wanted to grow them at the farm, and so did others. However, the problem with growing cherimoyas out there is that the altitude isn't high enough. So I decided that I would plant the seeds at the highest point of the farm – the top of the mountain. This area of the farm was not developed at all, there were no easy paths to walk around and only a handful of people living at the farm had been up there previously. It was an early morning, and, having soaked the seeds for four days beforehand, I scarified them against a rock to improve their chances of sprouting, and started my way up the mountain alone. I walked through tall grass, crossed a river, and then climbed through the thick rainforest. The trees were densely packed but I kept heading up. After a while, there seemed to be no more up – the ground was flat, and because of the densely packed trees I couldn't see whether it was going up or down in any direction. I seemed to be able to see small pieces of sky in every direction however, so I stopped to have a rest. A member of the community had given

"When they said a maths degree from Imperial can take you anywhere, I could have never imagined it would take me here"

me a granadilla so that I could spread the seeds once I got to the top. I was hungry so I opened it up and ate the flesh, spitting the seeds into holes at the base of the trees around – that's how you plant the fruit here! Granadillas grow on vines, so they need to be planted places with opportunities to climb up things.

As I was walking around, I realised that in one direction the ground seemed to go down and then up again in the distance – perhaps I wasn't at the summit yet? So I picked up my things

and started moving there. It was difficult – that area was even more densely populated by trees. I got higher than I had been, before fallen trees blocked my path. Beyond them, I could see the ground evening off again so I assumed it to be the real summit.

I planted the cherimoya seeds all around and started to head downhill. I got to the place I was before, but I couldn't remember which direction I had come from. I headed left, but with hindsight left was completely the wrong way to go – it began to take me away from the farm and into a neighbour's property. Fortunately, I realised that partway down as I hit a stream flowing in the opposite direction to what I was expecting. And so I headed back up a little and then started to make my way around the peak. I couldn't hear the incorrect stream anymore so I kept walking until I heard water... It was flowing the correct way, I must be in the right place! I headed straight for the stream, climbed down to cross it, and, upon realising that there was no easy way back up on the other side, I started walking down the stream. After a little while, I found a place to pull myself up the other side. Quickly, the trees turned

to grass but I couldn't recognise this place – had I ended up at a neighbour's place anyhow? I recited "*lo siento, estoy perdida*" ("sorry, I am lost") in my head and kept walking. I walked past a few banana palms until I started seeing buildings – I had made it back! I was higher up than when I first crossed the stream so I still had a decent victory walk back down to the kitchen. I arrived back triumphant, I had survived the Amazon rainforest!

The rest of the trip was more relaxed, mostly weeding at Tambo and spending time with the friends I've made. After getting used to this tropical paradise, I was dreading returning to England. But fast forward five months and I'm back! Not for a visit but to live. When they said a maths degree from Imperial can take you anywhere, I could have never imagined it would take me here.

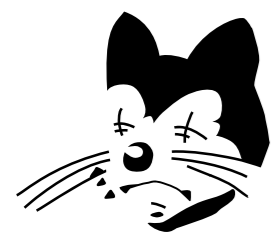
If you're also a fruit lover interested in volunteering in the Amazon, or a vegan with an interest in raw food and permaculture looking for a community to join after graduation, check out Terra Frutis at www.terrafrutis.com. For more information about the upcoming fruit festival, go to www.amazonianfruitfestival.com



Delicious fruit of the Terra Frutis farm // Charlotte Pickering



Farm life allows time for travelling (Manta, Ecuador) // Charlotte Pickering



Hangman



Scenes at the library last week (artist's impression) // Imperial/Layton Thompson

Armed police called to Central Library as riot breaks out over desk space

HANGMAN

Negafelix
Editor-in-Chief

The altercation broke out amid simmering tensions, as students look for ever-more inventive ways to procrastinate

Armed police had to be called to Central Library earlier this week, as arguments over desk allocations escalated into a full-scale riot.

At around 4pm last

Wednesday, shortly following the mid-afternoon caffeine slump, an altercation broke out on Level 4 of the Central Library. This quickly developed into a mass brawl, spreading to adjacent floors, as students took out their revision frustrations by setting fire to textbooks and occupying the Library Cafe.

Speculations abound over the cause of the violence. *Hangman* spoke to a number of students who reported different triggers for the brawl. Some eyewitnesses said students were "left mad with rage and unsated hunger" after the Library Cafe ran out

of jacket potatoes by 12.30pm; others say the high temperatures in the Library earlier in the week – described as "categorically unsafe for human habitation" – aggravated existing tensions.

Several students identified the original instigator as Susan Hillbury, a third year chemistry student. Hillbury, who is now in police custody, denied any wrongdoing: "In my eyes, my behaviour was completely justified. The twat next to me had dropped off his stuff on a desk at 9am, and didn't come back until after lunch. He then spent three hours watching episodes of *The*

Big Bang Theory and laughing along. I couldn't stand it any more, and eventually just bottled the guy. Things kind of escalated from there."

"Students took out their revision frustrations by occupying Library Cafe"

One student, who spent much of the riot hiding in the thermodynamics

section of the Library and attempting to fashion Molotov cocktails, described the riot as "frightening, but pretty good procrastination material."

"I'd really had just about enough of going through my mechanics lectures," he told *Hangman*, "I needed a break. It was either go on Facebook and stalk my ex's profile, or headbutt the guy next to me."

In a statement for *Hangman*, police forces said: "We were called to Imperial College London's Central Library at 15:56 on Wednesday to deal with what had been described as a

'procrastination-induced riot'. Our officers were on the scene within 20 minutes. They managed to control the situation with no injuries to our officers, and minimal fatalities among students – mostly material students."

The library will remain closed for the remainder of this week. Mark Halley, Vice-Provost (Sporadic Acts of Random Violence) emailed students earlier today regarding the closure, advising them to "remember to respect others when using the library", "avoid using up more space than you need", and "just generally get a fucking grip."

HANGMAN

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Imperial confirm sunny weather is acceptable extenuating circumstance for exams

HANGMAN

Negafelix
Editor-in-Chief

The announcement came after numerous reports of students who didn't know what the large orb in the sky was.

Imperial College London have confirmed that the short appearance of summer weather last week can be used by students wishing to apply for extenuating circumstances

in upcoming exams.

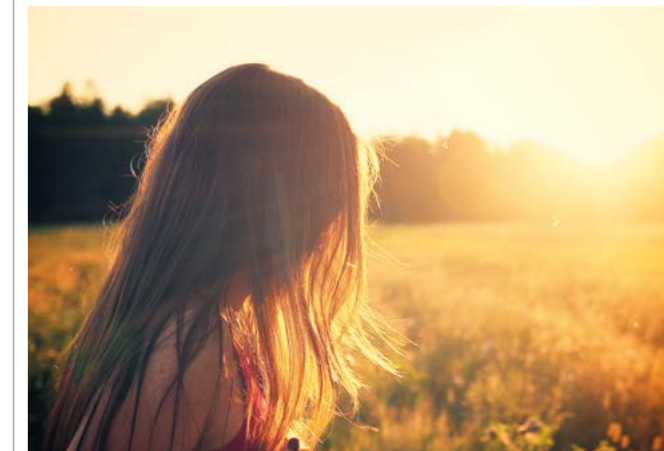
In an email sent out to all Imperial students, Larry Popovich, Vice-Provost (Have You Put On Sunscreen?), said the "exceptional weather" experienced over the previous weekend had caused "distress and harm" to many Imperial students who were not used to going outside or generally interacting with the world. "Senior management have been informed by personal tutors of many students emailing with concerns over the weather," Popovich wrote, "these concerns have ranged from the potential of heatstroke

in Central Library, through to fears about what exactly the glowing orb in the sky was, and whether it would hurt us." "Our mitigating circumstances policy includes a clause about distressing meteorological phenomena," he went on to say, "something that certainly includes bright sunshine in April."

It is believed a number of students have suffered as a result of the weather. One student Hangman spoke to reported the dangers of sun exposure: "I saw people posting about the weather on Facebook, so I thought I'd take

a break from revision and head to Queen's Lawn. Unfortunately, I'd been revising in SAF for past three weeks, and hadn't seen any proper sunlight. As soon as I went outside I was blinded by the glare; I stumbled into the middle of an ultimate frisbee game and managed to break my collarbone."

Upon hearing the reports of students being exposed to above-ambient temperature, Felicity Connolly, Imperial College Union's Deputy President (Fun in the Sun), placed an immediate order for £13,000



The strange orb burns my eyes // CC

worth of sun-visors – in Union-approved shades of cyan and magenta – and hypoallergenic sunscreen. By the time the order arrived, however, the sun

had disappeared behind cloud cover. It is predicted the sun will re-emerge some time in mid-July, for a couple of hours, before retreating again.



ARIES

This week you're the *Felix* Editor, and it was your birthday! One year closer to the sweet release of death.



TAURUS

This week you forgot to set your alarm before the marathon, and completely miss it. You tell everyone the guy in the giant bumblebee suit was you – they'll never know.



GEMINI

This week, between the heatwave in the library, and all the crying you've been doing over revision, you're taken to ChelWest A&E with severe dehydration.



CANCER

This week you're that one guy who keeps coughing in the library, oh my god, will you just shut the fuck up and have some lemsip already.



LEO

This week you go to Queen's Tower Rooms to get some lunch, and end up accidentally sitting a final-year Business School exam. You get a first.



VIRGO

This week you're feeling pretty stressed about your exams, and decide to go for counselling. You should get seen by next year.



LIBRA

This week it's a brand new term! A brand new start! Same old disappointing you!



SCORPIO

This week you find out the strikes for this term have been cancelled. Now you've got no excuse about that third you're going to get.



SAGITTARIUS

This week you're excited by the addition of pastries to the Union Shop. You really don't have much going for you, do you?



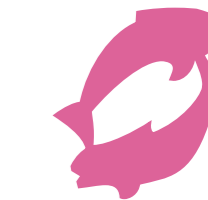
CAPRICORN

This week you purposefully leave your stuff spread across several library tables. People asking you to move it is the only social interaction you're gonna have for the next couple of months.



AQUARIUS

This week you spend the last of your student loan sponsoring your friend in the marathon. But it's for a good cause, and he ran it in a giant bumblebee suit! What a great guy!



PISCES

This week you're the Horoscopes Writer, and you realise you've put more work into these than anything else you've done all year. Worth it? Yes.

advice centre

Good luck with
exams



Help with exams #icuHereForYou

If you can't sit an exam, you're having trouble revising, or you need to appeal an exam result, our Advice caseworkers can help. We'll assist with mitigating circumstances, appeals, money issues or anything that may affect you during the exam period.

**Come have a chat: 08:00 -16:00, Monday - Friday
Level 2, Imperial College Union**

We know this period can be stressful and we're here for you with tips and tools to help you cope. The Union will be giving our helpful goodies on select days during exams. We'll also share tips online. Learn more at imperialcollegeunion.org/exams, or get in touch with the Advice team at advice@imperial.ac.uk.



Last chance to get tickets

It's almost time for Summer Ball 2018 and if you don't have tickets, you're risking serious regret. We're celebrating the biggest party of the year on Saturday 23 June with a 1920s theme, headliners Blonde and James Hype, and loads of fun activities.

The party starts at 19:00 and runs until 02:00 on South Kensington Campus, with an after party at Beit Quad until 06:00. There'll be fireworks, a fun fair, live performances, facepainting, photobooth and more.

Get the last of the tickets at imperialcollegeunion.org/summerball



Nominations open

Nominations are open for The Union Awards 2018. Reward someone who's done amazing work in the Union this year by submitting their name for consideration. Nominations opened Monday 23 April, and are set to close on Monday 21 May. The awards will be held on Monday 11 June at Imperial College Union.

The Union Awards celebrate the huge impact and hard work of our volunteers and are an annual showcase of the best of Imperial College Union and our membership. There are 14 categories and the winners are decided by students.

Nominate someone amazing at imperialcollegeunion.org/awards



Get a life membership

If you're coming to the end of your course, you may be feeling bitter sweet. But the fun doesn't have to stop - become a life member of Imperial College Union and enjoy the perks forever!

For only £40, you'll be able to join any CSP, access our bars, book spaces at student prices, and attend flagship events with guests at student prices after you graduate. It'll be like you never left! What's more, £30 of your joining fee will go towards any CSP of your choice.

Become a life member now at imperialcollegeunion.org/lifemembership

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

2nd team posing after eviscerating their opponents (and their division) // Zonghao Guo

IC badminton men's 2nd team celebrate promotion by maintaining perfect run

SPORTS

Beng Tan
IC Badminton Player

Having won all eight of their league matches prior to this one, IC badminton men's 2nd team have effectively won the South Eastern 2A division, and secured a promotion to the division above. However, apart from us social members witnessing a gif of 2nd Team Captain Noah Semonin dabbing his beanie off during the club's AGM, news of that achievement has probably stayed within the IC teams for the most part, so Club President Joseph Kim invited me to cover the 2nd team's home match against Surrey's 2nd team at Ethos last Wednesday.

I had time to have a chat with the IC team before the matches, and it

was great to see a relaxed atmosphere within the team, with cheerful faces all around. Unsurprisingly, they took it very well when I told them not to lose the tie so I didn't have to report that!

The Surrey team eventually arrived 45 minutes late, and – to make matters worse in what I imagine must've been an already tiring trip to London – they weren't able to field a full team, effectively giving us a two point lead in the tie before it even started.

Matchday started with the singles matches, and Matthew Cotton got IC off to a good start, taking the 1st game 21-11 with a convincing performance. His opponent upped his game to win 21-17 and level the match, but any alarm bells that might've raised were silenced when he sealed the match with a 21-13 win in the rubber game. Concurrently,

Ranul Pallemulle — our other singles player — endured a slower start to his day. He won a number of points from his sturdy defence, forcing his opponent to aim for the sidelines, but he never quite settled into his match and lost it 13-21, 14-21.

Up next was Jeremy Lou and team captain Noah in the doubles, and they too endured a rather slow start, improving as the game went on but ultimately losing a close first game 17-21. The pressure was on in the 2nd game, and they responded by turning up the heat. But perhaps the tension got to them as they made some unforced errors here and there, losing the next game 20-22.

It now came down to Edward Liu and Joseph to deliver a point from the doubles, and they did so emphatically, taking their match 21-11, 21-13

with a dominant performance. Their smashes and netplay paid dividends, but crucially it was their tight serves which made the telling difference compared to Jeremy and Noah, giving their opponents no room to apply pressure right from the off.

While I turned my attention to the doubles, it was a Matt vs Matt affair on the other court; unfortunately it was Surrey's who took the match with a 21-16 22-20 victory. Ranul, however, made amends for his earlier loss to Surrey's Matt, winning his 2nd match 21-13, 21-17. That sealed the tie for IC, and preserved the team's perfect run.

Of course, no match is complete without interviews of sort, so I asked Noah for a comment on the team's performance this season:

"The key things this year are the consistency

of the guys playing week in week out, building chemistry as a team and supporting each other on and off court. Everything that's been achieved is because of the team playing their hardest and delivering the performances needed. As much as being the captain is important, doing this well relies on the players being willing to play, travel, and put in the performances, so I owe massive thanks to everyone that's played over the course of this year."

"The initial aim for next year is to hold our own within the league, and if things go well enough then pushing again for a win in that league too!"

I then asked Joseph for comment about the club:

"It's really great to see all that the society has achieved this year. None of our other teams were relegated and have all shown massive im-

provements, meaning we can push for promotions next academic year. This year's committee has also improved the quality of badminton events and socials. The popular Friday coaching sessions has seen large turnouts with several players improving greatly over the past two terms."

"Furthermore, we've successfully hosted two London-wide tournaments this year thanks to our partnership with Yonex. With the next committee decided, I really hope the society can continue to blossom."

We followed this up with our last match, against Chichester – we drew the tie 4-4, so lost our perfect record, but still finished the season unbeaten. All the best guys. Congratulations and keep flying the flag for IC!

SPORTS

sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Cracking open a cold run with the boys

ICXCAC trail team defy the mini-beast from the East for the EnduranceLife Coastal Trail Series Sussex.

SPORTS

Henry Maynard
ICXCAC Member

Last month, with the 'mini-beast' from the East spreading its frosty tendrils over the North Sea, the Met Office issued amber warnings for wind, ice, and snow across much of the UK. The same time, a detachment of hardy (foolish?) ICXCAC trail runners left London with their sights set on a very long run along the barren, wind-beaten cliff-tops of the Sussex coast. This is their story...

Those of us tackling the ultra- and marathon-distance races stayed overnight at club member Remy's house (huge thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Shaieb!), whilst those with later start times took early trains on the Saturday morning. With all involved hunkering

down for the night, the cold closed in...

05:30 AM – Good morning, this is your wake-up call! After last-minute kit checks (Leggings or shorts? Definitely leggings) and industrial quantities of porridge, the team pile into cars and head to the start line.

8:00 AM – Standing in a field waiting for the ultra race briefing, we realise it is definitely cold.

8:30 AM – Ultra-marathon start. 130 hardy endurance runners set off clad in multiple layers of fluorescent Gore-Tex. Ahead of them is 55km of challenging, but varied and beautiful terrain. It's still really cold.

9:00 AM – Marathon start. A similar number of waterproof wardrobes on display here, although Richard 'Paleo' Thompson isn't wearing any shoes. He assures us this is deliberate, and he's got some crocs in

case it gets too rocky. So this is what goes on in the Physics department? I think it's getting colder.

10:00 AM – At 10-20km in, our ultra and marathon runners are all in good spirits, taking in local landmarks including the Litlington white horse, and the Long Man of Wilmington. Interestingly, these hill carvings aren't half as ancient as you might imagine, being cut in the 19th and 17th centuries respectively. I digress. Is this blossom or snow?

10:30 AM – Half-marathon start. Despite a far less extensive mandatory kit list, the 370 starters are wearing a lot of clothes for a spring half marathon. The starter's gun is fired. Meanwhile, marathoners are beginning to catch the tail end of the ultra race, providing much needed company and morale boosts. It's definitely snowing now. The pretty fluffy kind. Still cold.

11:00 AM – This is now a real life actual blizzard. In late March. What's going on?

11:30 AM – 10k start. 200 brave and speedy souls tear away from the start line and into the storm, wearing little more than shorts and a t-shirt. They the real MVPs. At least they're all wearing shoes. I hope Richard Hobbitson still has all his toes.

12:00 PM – As the leading half-marathoners hit the final descent from the magnificent Beachy Head towards home (and warmth), the 10k runners approach the halfway mark and join the ultra-marathon route. Being passed after three hours of running by a stream of sprightly 10k runners (who are going twice your pace and making it look easy) brings up conflicting and fairly toxic emotions, but it's all part of the fun. I'm told -7°C wind chill is part of the fun too.

12:30 PM – 30mph wind now driving horizontal snow into the faces of runners in all categories running up Beachy Head. ???PM – To be honest, this is where things get a little hazy for me. At some point the snow stopped, but I'm pretty sure it was still cold. Meanwhile the 10k and Half marathon runners head to the pub for a free (!) pint.

After a long day of running, the key stats were as follows: 17 Imperial runners braved the elements, and made it home safely. Ultra runners climbed 1750m (Courchevel), and took home two Ultra-Trail Du Mont-Blanc qualification points on the way. Marathoners scaled 1350m (Ben Nevis), the half marathon squad made 650m look easy (it's not), and the 10k speed demons smashed 430m (2820 vertical pints.) As usual there was plenty of ICXCAC representation

at the front of the field, with Jess Eichel and Mark Pollock taking under-20 titles in the half marathon, and trail captain Henry Hart posting a winning 10k time of 50'47", only to be disqualified for an unlucky checkpoint 'dibbing' error.

Most importantly, everyone finished despite very challenging conditions (30 DNFs in the ultra alone.) Even Richard 'Bilbo' Thompson made it through the day without frostbite. We saw many fantastic personal performances, including first trail races, first marathons, and longest ultras. This is a side of the club that is going from strength to strength.

Finally, huge thanks to Remy and family for hosting us, trail captain Henry for organising the trip, Luis for supporting, and the race organisers for keeping everyone safe in spite of completely horrendous conditions.

Fencing Men's Second Team finish a triumphant year

SPORTS

Jake Reynolds
Fencing Men's 2nd Captain

In terms of BUCS points scored, fencing remains the most successful club at Imperial, and it has been an especially incredible season for the Men's Second team. Remaining undefeated throughout our fourteen matches has led to promotion to a tier one league; a level never before reached by the team.

The year started with a strong home victory against Portsmouth, 135-50, spurring on

support. Our now eight match clean sheet was threatened whilst fencing Portsmouth again, this time away, and a nail biting result of 135-124 taught us not to get complacent. Both Niklas and Cosmin were crucial team members during first term, especially for these close league matches.

The team also claimed the South Eastern Conference Cup. We quickly progressed to the quarter-finals, where we beat our closest league competitors, Brunel, 129-111.

The home semi-final match against LSE gathered a huge crowd, both fencers and non-fencers alike, who enjoyed

supporting with some appropriately-coloured blue pompoms. Using some strategic planning, we won the highly anticipated match with hits to spare.

Eight of us, armed with two supporters, travelled to Kent for the final. The support continued at home, with nearly 3000 views on the Facebook live stream. With the score set at 71-70, it all came down to the final weapon, épée. The score switched in favour of both teams three times, and the match concluded, 116-102, with three decisive wins from each of the epeeist, Rob, Jake and finally, performing under immense

pressure, Noah. From Rob's consistent flicks and David's signature spin, to Javier's incredible ability to fence all three weapons, and Péter's scare tactics, each member brought a different style to our matches.

A number of memories deserve a special mention: Hugo's liberating party performance; the christening of David's kitchen; the multiple occasions where we were unable to stop for a service break; celebrating with magnums; and, of course, most of us enjoying ACC events (some more than others).

Many thanks must go to team members Noah and Javier as our designated



Do you even lift? //IC Fencing

drives, and David Guo, our in-team photographer, as well as Sports Imperial, particularly Yasmin, for all of the support and organisation.

Both Javier and Cosmin have fenced their final season at Imperial. We wish them good luck,

and hope they return to support for years to come.

The team will be in great hands next year with the newly elected captain, Hugo. We hope to continue our successes in our new league, and have more to celebrate next year.

SPORTS

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Imperial Wolverines hold onto southern dodgeball title and unbeaten first team record

At the end of last term Imperial's dodgeball teams competed in their final league matches. The first team remain undefeated, retaining the Southern title, while the second team come a very respectable 2nd place.

SPORTS

Filip Šebest

1st Team Captain

The University Dodgeball League concluded this weekend with Imperial Wolverines 1s retaining the University League South title. Wolverines 1s managed to finish the season unbeaten. They overpowered everyone along the way, including: Hertfordshire A with their Dodgeball World Cup finalist import; UCL Pumas with their stretching of the rules both on and off the court; and UEA Falcons 1s with their microscopic player who is literally impossible to hit. Imperial now venture to Leicester next month to compete at the University League Finals, a final showdown of every regional league

winner to competing to be dodgeball's Crème de la Crème.

Until Sunday, the League still had not been fully decided. A poor Imperial effort could have allowed Hertfordshire A to snatch the league victory, regardless of Imperial's two victories over them already. Wolverines 1s versus UCL Pumas would prove a pivotal game in the ultimate league result. Bidding for third place, UCL needed this win just as much as the league leaders did.

The fixture began, and Imperial were quick to assert their dominance over the initial sets. UCL were very keen to pressure Steve Ndumbe into the corner, but quick counter attacks from Nithin Thoppuram helped equalise any deficits. A quick dominance turned into a hard slog of having to earn every point to the



Imperial Wolverines 2s player preparing to strike //IC Wolverines

bitter end. The scoreboard read 8-4 to Imperial just before the last set of the first half. Both teams gave everything and with only ten seconds remaining, UCL found themselves a player up after some ferocious throwing. However, a magical short distance catch by Lochlann Allison that forced him to the floor just before the blow

of the whistle turned what would have been a nerve-wrecking 8-6 half time score into a slightly more comfortable 10-4 lead.

However, UCL was far from done, and after the teams traded games in the second half, a chaotic set with a number of questionable ref calls, including a catch by next year's club captain Leo Haigh that was not acknowledged, saw our rivals reduce the lead to 12-8. At this point Imperial stepped up their game and employed the tactic they are best at – systematic and organised play, aimed at maximising the time each set lasts, slowly (in the case of UCL rather quickly) infuriating the opponent and forcing them to make silly mistakes.

Getting the last Wolverine off the court proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for the UCL team and with a series of catch-and-outs by Vinolan Arulananthan, Filip Šebest, and George Fish, only three more games were played in the second half, two of which

went to Imperial for a final score of 16-10. This match secured the league victory for the Imperial 1s regardless of the last game against UEA 1s, which for completion ended in favour of Imperial with the score of 19-5. UCL were destined for 4th place as a consequence.

However, it wasn't just the 1s celebrating – our 2s had a very successful season too, finishing 2nd out of all second teams, with a strong last weekend epitomised by MVP Yan Jin and her remarkable catching. Nonetheless, it wasn't all plain sailing, and they had their fair share of adversity to overcome: an absent captain, a player with literally no concept of time, and a yogurt with ridiculous on-court antics.

The final match of the league between Imperial 2s and Southampton 2s was to decide who would take the 2nd place amongst all the second teams. Intelligent calling and powerful throwing by Nifemi Adejumobi saw the 2s take an early 7-1 lead. The Southampton team would have none of

that and with a couple of organised games targeting our wingmen, they quickly caught up to 7-5 and had hope at half time.

Luckily, the second half was more convincing from our 2s, with an eye-catching diving dodge by Mink Ratanajiravong, a pirouette dodge by Jinay Patel, and multiple catches coming from Yan Jin and James Mellor-Rice. Great team effort saw the 2s pull out an overall 17-9 victory over a spirited and friendly Southampton 2nd team.

The excitement is not just contained to the court however, with AGM promises of a tour, extra socials, and Hugo Boss kit, next year is shaping to be another great year for Imperial Dodgeball, as we seek to maintain the title and establish our inaugural women's team. So if you want to get involved in our competitive mixed teams next year, or want to join one of our many social members, look out for the Wolverine sign at Fresher's Fair. And remember: Throw Together, Dodge Alone.



Imperial Wolverines 1st team posing with their trophies //IC Wolverines