

Pilot NSS sent to final year students

Isabella Ward News Writer

On Wednesday, final year undergraduate students received invitations to fill out the National Student Survey (NSS), which has undergone significant changes this year.

The survey primarily focuses on the student's course, with participants asked to assess quality of areas such as teaching, assessment and feedback, and student voice.

This year, there are two new questions: all UK students will be asked about access to mental wellbeing services, and English students will also be asked about freedom of expression. According to the NSS, access to mental wellbeing will affect a student's attainment, as well as their enjoyment of the course. Likewise, the level to which students are comfortable to express themselves freely at university will also have an impact on their engagement, and there has been a strong focus on freedom of speech within universities over the last year, with the Free Speech Bill having been amended in December.

These were added in the hopes to adapt the NSS to the current learning landscape so that it can continue to gain insight in all crucial aspects of students' academic experience. Moreover, the Office for Students believe that this

will aid regulators, stating:

"The inclusion of questions on mental wellbeing and freedom of expression in England will capture students' views on wider factors that affect their academic experience. This data will enable us as the regulator and universities and colleges to identify effective policies as well as poor practice, and put measures in place to improve students' overall education."

In addition to this, students have the option to comment on other aspects of their university experience, such as social opportunities, employability and environment.

Last year, Imperial College was ranked first among London Russell universities for overall student satisfaction NSS results, with 82% of students saying they were satisfied with their course.



This year, comparisons will not be as easily drawn as the NSS has also removed the question on overall satisfaction question from the survey in order to place more emphasis on questions concerning quality. To this purpose, questions will now be more direct and assessed on a four-point scale.

The results of the survey will be reviewed by the Imperial College Union, whose recommendations will be addressed by the Imperial Student Surveys Action Planning Group in the hopes to make improvements.

UCU, Unite to strike Jan 23rd

Ameena Hassan Editor-in-Chief

Imperial's branches of University and College Union (UCU) and Unite are set to next strike on 23rd January. This is a continuation of staff strikes over pay negotiations, which are not conducted nationally with other universities.

UCU's Higher Education Committee (HEC) met on 12th January 2023, and decided:

1. In between February and March, 18 days of strikes on pay, conditions, and pensions.

It is unclear how many of those 18 days will be dedicated to pensions, which Imperial's UCU branch will partake in.

2. All 150 university UCU branches will be re-balloting staff to renew their striking mandate.

The current mandate is set to expire on 20th April. In order to keep their

mandate and continue taking legal strike action, a rebalot will be opened on 20th February, and close on 24th March.

It is expected that strike action will be distributed across multiple weeks to prevent "high deductions in one pay period", which is expected to reduce member support for strike action.

Imperial UCU has not yet responded to confirm a marking and assessment boycott in January. This would involve

staff refusing to mark time-sensitive coursework, leading to a delay in grades.

The national UCU has suggested that a marking and assessment boycott will be conducted from April instead, to have maximum affect.

Imperial UCU members continue to work to contract in Action-Short-of-Strike.

EDITORIAL

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Not Hating Secession

It is impossible to not realize that the National Health Service (NHS) was already facing challenges and a decline prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit.

One of the main challenges we hear about is the shortage of staff. This shortage has been heightened in recent years by an exodus of migrant doctors, particularly those from the European Union, due to uncertainty around their future immigration status and the overall political climate.

Additionally, an increasing number of UK-trained consultants are leaving the NHS for better-paid opportunities in the Middle East and Australia. As of 2021, the NHS had a shortfall of around 100,000 staff across all categories including nurses, doctors and support staff.

Increasingly, inadequate funding in the face of heightened demand has been suffocating the NHS. Despite being one of the most well-funded healthcare systems in the world, the NHS has been struggling to keep pace with the increasing demand for services and the rising costs of healthcare. In 2020 it was estimated that the NHS was facing a £30 billion funding gap.

The NHS budget for 2021-22 was £134.9 billion, an increase of 4.5% on the previous year. Increased funding during the pandemic was intended to help support the increased need for pandemic-related healthcare. Furthermore, this is less than the average increase of funding over the past decade (around 4.8%).

It has been made all the more difficult

for the NHS to recruit and retain staff by the rising cost of living for NHS staff. In 2016, an MP revealed that only 50% of all Metropolitan Police officers lived in London, a trend which the increased cost of living is exacerbating.

Furthermore, there have been concerns about the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the NHS. The growing population with increasingly complex healthcare needs has put a strain on the system, and there have been concerns about long waiting times, bed shortages, and a lack of capacity in some areas. The number of patients waiting more than four hours in A&E departments increased from 1.9 million in 2018-19 to 2.3 million in 2019-20. In August 2022, 42% of patients waited for more than four hours in A&E departments.

There have also been concerns about the quality of care provided by the NHS. The NHS has been criticized for not providing the same level of care as in other developed countries, particularly in terms of access to cutting-edge treatments and technologies. This is partly due to the lack of funding and partly due to heightened demand for healthcare services as UK life expectancy climbs and the aged population increases.

Despite these challenges, the NHS was able to adapt and provide care during the pandemic and has been widely praised for its efforts.



Statement of Intent

At Felix we believe that it is always in the interest of the students to know. Transparency in the workings of the College and the work of your student representatives is key. Therefore I, the Felix Editor, on behalf of the team promise that:

We will, to the best of our ability, tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

We will keep your confidence and will only publish something you say to us if you have explicitly said that we can.

We will work to expose unfairness and discrimination in all forms that it takes at the College.

We will treat fairly any article sent to us, regardless of point of view, and do our best to work with you to prepare it for publication.

Signed by Ameena Hassan
Editor-in-Chief

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SCIENCE

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TAYLOR POMFRET

As good as ours? A poet's thoughts on AI poetry

► Science editor and poet Angie Lo reflects on the capabilities of AI poetry, and what it can and can't replace

Angie Lo Science Editor

When I first found out that the viral chatbot ChatGPT could write poems about any topic in seconds, my poet self had a lot of thoughts, including the obligatory oh-man-am-I-going-to-be-replaced ones. So you can imagine my relief when I went on ChatGPT and found that its poems were, to say the least, pretty lacking.

But then again, AI is constantly improving, and finding new ways to be more like us in its creative expression. And ChatGPT's not the only poet-bot out there trying to prove its worth. So the question remains: how good is AI poetry really? And can an AI-generated poem do the same things that a human one can?

As I said before, ChatGPT's on-demand poetry is pretty lacking. I asked it to write a love poem, and was met with the following excerpt: "With you by my side, the world is a better place./Your love is the sunshine that brightens my face./I'll cherish you forever, my dear./You are the one I hold so dear."

Ah, welcome to Sappy Town. For all its speed, ChatGPT doesn't seem capable of using anything other than the most cliché of phrases and metaphors. And yet, there's something to be said for its grasp of language's musical elements, a core aspect of poetry. With the exception of a few slip-ups, its poetry rhymes quite consistently, and has a good sense of rhythm as well. They might not be the best poems, but they're nevertheless passable poems—to be honest, they remind me of the poetry that my 10- or 11-year-old self would write, the sort of beginner's poetry that emerges before one learns to write more skillfully.

And then there are the other AIs that seem to have more effectively made their mark on the world of poetry. One of them is Ai-Da, the world's first robot artist, who performed her AI-generated poetry at the Ashmolean Museum in 2021. After being given

an English translation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, she used her data bank of words and speech pattern analysis to produce a response poem to Dante's work. In a news video from the BBC, she's seen reciting some of her verse: "I wept, silently, taking in the scene. I wept because they had lost something I had took for granted." Here the poem seems unnervingly human: the verse flows beautifully and naturally, and evokes a sense of poignant longing.

Then there's the AI poet known simply as "the Algorithm", which was given lines from over 100 contemporary British poets, and learned using feedback from experts from poetry organizations. An excerpt from one of its creations reads: "I close my eyes and try to remember what I was./he says it was an important and interesting day,/because I put in his hands one night/the box of light that had been a tree."

The phrasing is rather disjointed, to be sure, and the excerpt has a sense of flatness that can't seem to be shaken off. But the part about the box of light creates a strikingly beautiful image in the reader's mind, and the idea of the box once being a tree is an original one that allows for meaning-making: a representation of the passing of a life and the memory that remains, perhaps. Tracey Guiry, director of The Poetry Archive, says of the program, "The AI would produce something that made you think. It wouldn't produce or reproduce what a human would write because that's an incredibly subjective response, the lived experience was perhaps not there. But certainly, it would produce two lines that would then cause a human to think on more things."

I think it's foolish to say that AI poetry will never be as good as that of people. In terms of skill and technique, it's already surpassed beginner's poetry and is comparable with more advanced work—and as AI continues to learn and receive feedback, its skill will only progress in catching up with ours. Evok-



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Ai-Da, the world's first robot artist, is one of numerous AIs which can create poetry

ing emotion, appealing to our aesthetic taste, enlightening the audience—AI poetry can already achieve many of the same functions our poems can. It's a difficult truth no doubt, but it's ultimately one we'll have to accept.

But then, what's left for us creators? I'm personally consoled by the idea that AI can only work with a pre-existing, and limited, corpus of thoughts and experiences—which ultimately can't encompass the rich entirety of each poet's lived experiences, and the novel contributions which those bring to poetry. Yes, AI can create distinct combinations and reworkings of existing ideas and creative expressions, which *is* new, but it's not the same kind of new which stems from one's personal way of being with the world, and the unique ways of expression arising from that. AI poems might be able to rival ours in terms of quality, but our poetry will always have something distinct to offer that AI doesn't.

And there is another—and I think the most beautiful—aspect of poetry which AI can't replace, and that's the reading of poetry as an act of compassion. When I write a poem, many poetic aspects—the use of abstraction, the potential for multiple messages within one phrase, the tone set by language's

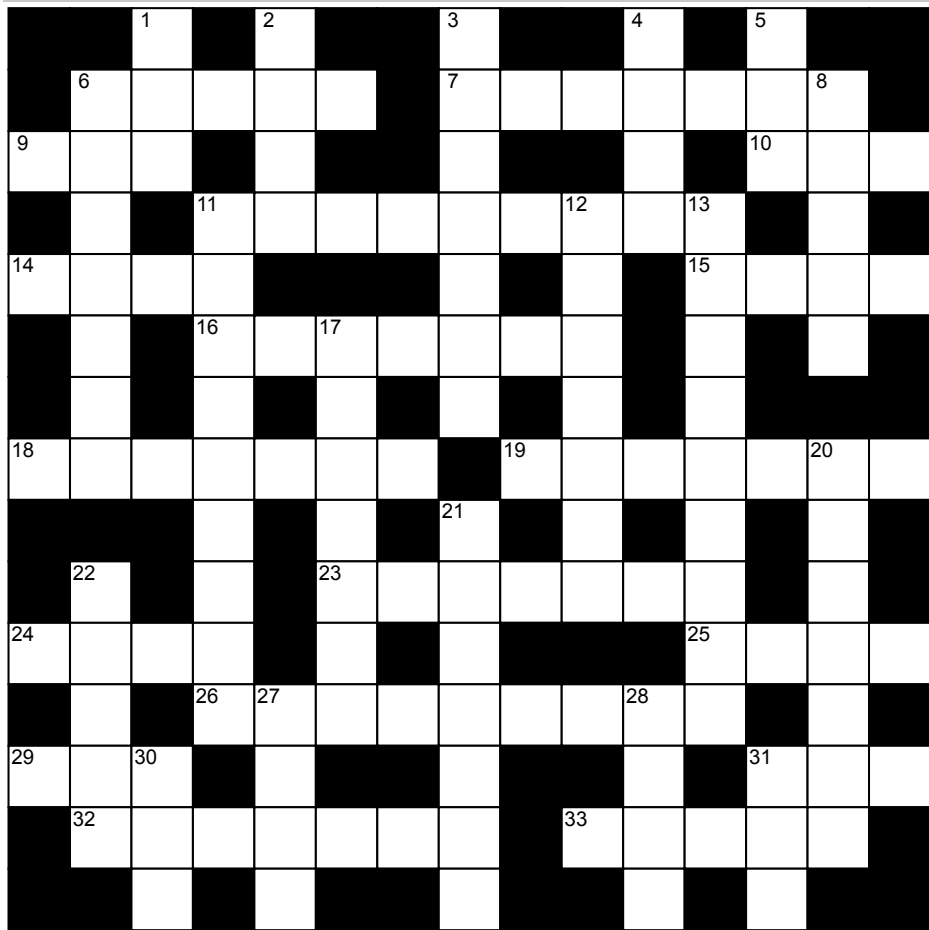
musical qualities—allow me to express thoughts and feelings that regular words can't. Poetry, and other kinds of creative work as well, allows one to be vulnerable, to open up in ways that weren't possible before.

And when a reader takes a look at my poem, it's like a need is fulfilled—that hey, someone else knows and might even understand how I feel. And that of course runs the other way: hey, this poet understands just how I, the reader, feel as well. To read a human poem—and in general observe human art—is to think and feel and admire, but it is also to be kind and to receive kindness. With AI, which has no needs to express, that last purpose is gone.

In a society where creative works are so often depicted as something to be consumed, it's easy to forget about the reception of poetry—and other art—as compassionate acts. I've heard some express their hope that AI will make people better appreciate the human creativity behind people's art. I hope the same, but I also hope it makes us appreciate the human connection behind it as well.

PUZZLES

CRYPTIC Crossword Grid



CRYPTIC Crossword Clues

Across

- 6) To our frustration, my lad got mixed up in it. [5]
- 7) Put nothing in between, for it's complete! [7]
- 9) Your task is to mix the breakfast drink with the boy. [3]
- 10) Wildebeest herded with this weapon. [3]
- 11) Famous song of three elements? [9]
- 14) Neat, tidy mountain. [4]
- 15) 10th company isn't plucked. [4]
- 16) Zero in three are thus arranged. [7]
- 18) In a round-about way, indicate the very loud clergyman. [7]
- 19) Construct bug-catcher in the top corner. [7]
- 23) Wearing it in hot weather, he becomes one! [7]
- 24) =6 x answer= [4]
- 25) Woman dancing at the underground party. [4]
- 26) When McCartney sang it? [9]
- 29) I hear the politician wears it on her head. [3]
- 31) Young one goes back for more lentils. [3]
- 32) Satellite in Cain's tragedy. [7]
- 33) Guy Fawkes' innards dragged around by cattle. [5]

Down

- 1) Dog used for experiments? [3]
- 2) I heard the insect escape. [4]
- 3) Dutch city, but mostly German, right? [7]
- 4) Burrowing rodent scurrying to his mate? [4]
- 5) It was scrambled in the middle of the bigger launch. [3]
- 6) In 2021, he charted and drilled ore under the mountain. [7]
- 8) A feeling you need to get back to the bell-ringer? [5]
- 11) Canary cuts out almost all of the nest. [9]
- 12) Student's problem to lose match. [7]
- 13) Fruit good for a hoarse throat? [9]
- 17) Saturates in the wires. [7]
- 20) Movement seen with no light on the water. [7]
- 21) The good thing with charity. [7]
- 22) Finally on line, I can start to make acid. [5]
- 27) Something different in Ariel's eyes. [4]
- 28) Tennis legend seen back over there in the distance. [4]
- 30) What's this, some sort of a choke?! [3]
- 31) The solution sounds like a decoy. [3]

by Stanley Scott

Points

Reverse cryptic	3 pts
Inequalities	4 pts
Cryptic crossword	5 pts

Reverse Cryptic

You are given a cryptic Clue (C), an Answer (A), and have to give a Reason (R) as to why the correct answer is A. Practicing this will help you solve the cryptic crossword above.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| C: Cool workaround using the dog. [8] | C: Platform offers but a little cover over New York's pavement. [7] |
| A: LABRADOR | A: BALCONY |
| R: _____ | R: _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

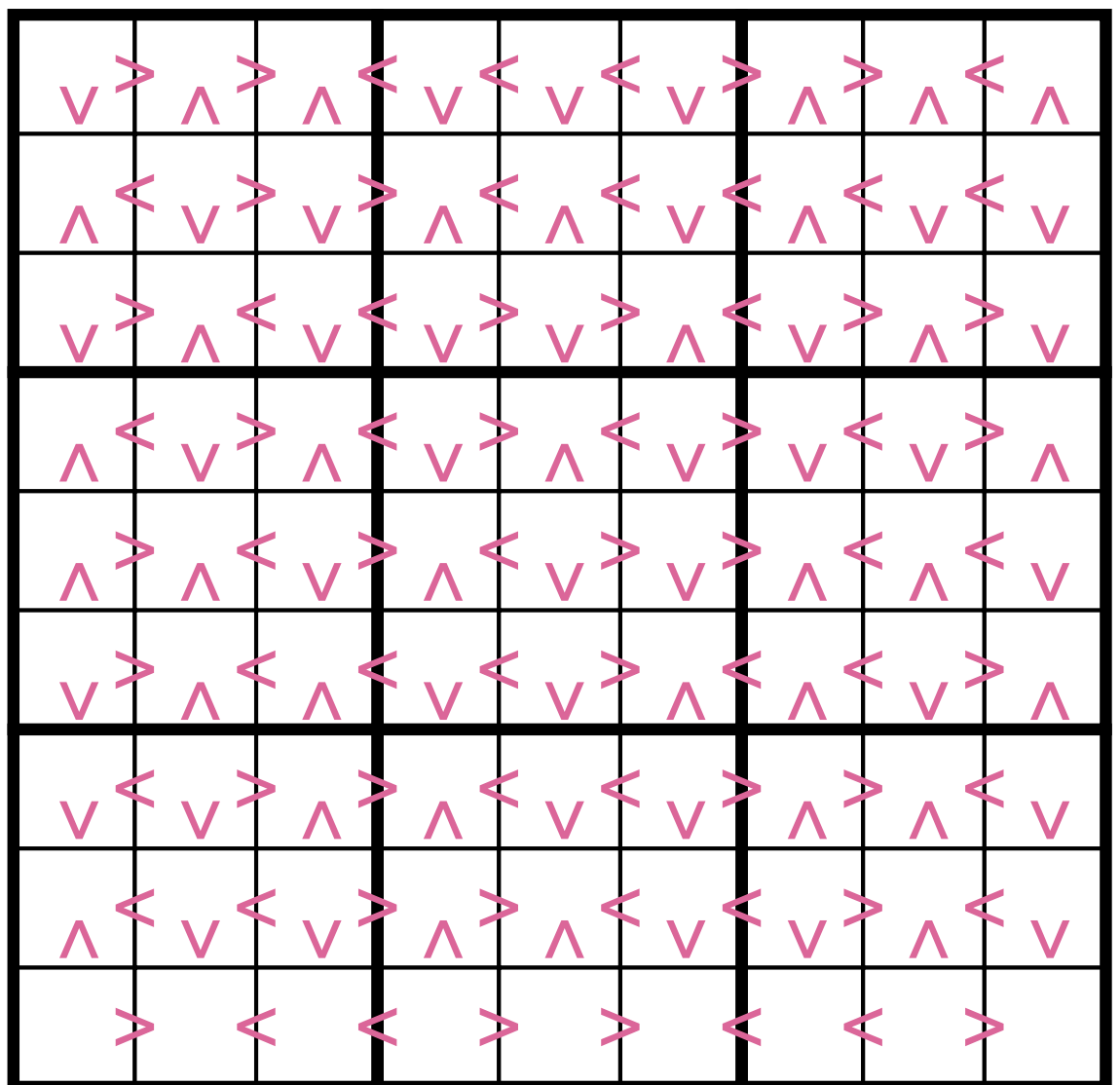
C: Mediterranean mango-corer was weird. [5-5]

A: GRECOROMAN

R: _____

Fill each row and column with digits 1-9 such that the inequalities hold between cells. The grid has been grouped to help with counting, but should not be used to assume uniqueness within the grid. E.g. the first 3x3 square has repeating digits.

Inequalities



FRIDAY 13TH JANUARY 2023

MUSIC

Album Reviews

Our Writers' Favourite Albums of 2022

We know it's 2023, we know we should've done this last year, but we control this section (and we forgot) so here is your comprehensive guide to the best music released last year. We've got everything you could need, including a playlist with the top songs from all of our top albums and a leaderboard of the top albums by number of writers who rate them. If you disagree, up our sample size and write for us next year, but for now, sit back and enjoy the Felix Music team's top albums of 2022!

Rosie Millns

① *Ants From Up There* by Black Country, New Road

Ants From Up There represents a turning point for Cambridge ensemble Black Country, New Road, both sonically and in the departure of lead vocalist Isaac Wood just four days before the album's release. The album is set around a co-dependent relationship that the narrator is in denial of, and their deep emotional turmoil due to this. As the album progresses, it becomes more difficult to decipher whether the relationship is a romantic one, or one between artist and audience. Cathartic ballads such

as *'The Place Where He Inserted The Blade'* are at contrast with the chaotic waltz *'Concorde'*, or the percussive *'Snow Globes'*,

yet there is never a feeling of whiplash as the band crosses genres during the album, or even during tracks. It is hard to imagine how the ensemble will continue to reinvent themselves and reach new musical heights, but I have no doubt that their third album will be as ambitious and skilful as *AFUT*.



Edited by: JOE RIORDAN
TARA PAL CHAUDHURI



[View online here!](#)

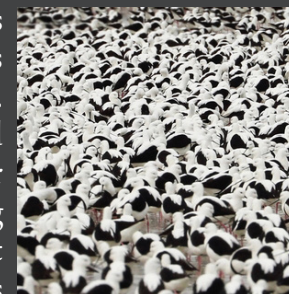
② *I Love you Jennifer B* by Jockstrap

Fusing folk, dubstep, and pop, Jockstrap's Georgia Ellery and Taylor Skye soar on their debut album *I Love You Jennifer B*. The electro thrumming baselines persist through lyrical orchestral segments and folk-y whispery vocals in a way that should make the album nightmarishly chaotic, if not simply esoteric, but instead combine in the perfect way to create a fun album with songs that could be played on the aux at a party or alone on an angsty Tube ride. Highlights include *'Greatest Hits'* and *'Glasgow'*, though the track that summarises Jockstrap's genre mashing capabilities best is undeniably *'Concrete Over Water'*.



③ *Flood* by Stella Donnelly

It is hard to believe that it was only three years between Perth singer-songwriter Stella Donnelly's esteemed debut album *Beware of the Dogs* and *Flood*. Her development as a songwriter in this period is already stark, with *Flood* featuring some of her most confident instrumentals yet, and continuing to feature her astute and witty lyrics. The best moments on the album are when Donnelly introduces the flugelhorn, on tracks such as *'Restricted Account'* and *'Oh My My My'*.



④ *Once Twice Melody* by Beach House

Baltimore dream-pop duo Beach House returned with their 8th studio album *Once Twice Melody* in February, to universal acclaim. The 85-minute-long album was released in four chapters across three months, and with 18 tracks it is difficult to tire of Victoria Legrand's ethereal vocals and Alex Scally's cinematic hooks. My personal favourite track is the deeply atmospheric *'Runaway'*, which sounds as if it could have been lifted straight from the soundtrack of *Twin Peaks*.



⑤ *Feeding the Machine* by Binker & Moses

Feeding the Machine is the most recent endeavour by free-jazz duo Binker Golding and Moses Boyd. It is dark, moody, and discordant, with Golding's screeching sax and Boyd's restless and jittery drumming. The duo is joined only by Max Luthert, who electronically manipulates the improvisations of the duo through tape-loops and modular synths. The height of the album is the fervent *'Accelerometer Overdose'*, though all six tracks on this ambitious release are worth a listen.

BINKER & MOSES

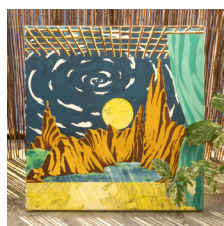


FEEDING THE MACHINE

MUSIC

Benjamin Bateman

1 *Targala, la maison qui n'en est pas une* by Emmanuelle Parrenin



This one will be difficult to write about, not least because it's sung entirely in French, and I don't speak French and there's only 200 people who listen to it on last.

fm so nobody's gotten round to writing the lyrics down. All I really have to go on are my feelings and the track titles, which don't mean all that much. The title means "The house that isn't one [a house]" and the whole album feels ethereal and dream-like in a way I'm really obsessed with. Whether through the drones or strategically-placed synthesizers, it's a beautiful, musical, and strange experience, like a trance or the vague memories of a dream that don't make sense once you're awake. 'Dulcimer' is a lovely blend between Parrenin's folk upbringing and her more modern avant-garde ideas, for instance. Really, really lovely stuff.

2 *Pompeii* by Cate Le Bon

I still think it's really funny how this prevented me from listening to *Ants From Up There* (likely featured in loads of other places in this section) for 2 weeks if not more. It's just better, I like it more. I already wrote the extent of my thoughts in my review earlier this year, but

Mia Brown

1 *I Love you Jennifer B* by Jockstrap

With three EPs released over the space of four years, a debut album from Jockstrap was long awaited-for by many. *I Love You Jennifer B* is a genrejumping pop album, with a loveable madness, made by the culmination of Georgia Ellery's effortlessly clear vocals and poetic lyricism, swelling orchestral motifs and synths, which are all brought together by Taylor Skye's experimental electronic production. 'Jennifer B' and '50/50' are two highlights, both more dancey and great

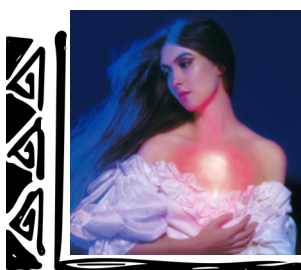
what has stuck out to me in the almost-year since its release has been the half-



awake clarity that it keeps in its writing. The tracks are scattered with obscure poetic references and metaphors, but the idea behind each one is clear as day. Picking favourites is hard here, but 'Remembering Me' and the title track 'Pompeii' are both bangers.

3 *And In the Darkness, Hearts Aglow* by Weyes Blood

I wasn't quite ready for this album to be as *real* as it turned out to be. My



experience with Natalie's music before had been the lush and listenable *Titanic Rising*, the

first in a planned (?) trilogy of albums by the American singer-songwriter. *And In the Darkness* is narrated by a woman watching society collapse around her, and the first song sounds almost relieved: "It's not just me,

As a whole, the album is so grateful for that extra one minute thirty in the extended mix of '50/50' that perfectly wraps up this vibrant and exciting album.

2 *Dragon New Warm Mountain, I Believe in You* by Big Thief

Indie-folk band Big Thief graced us with their fifth album, an eighty-



minute-long double LP, which I never skip a second of. There is so much beauty in everything that Adrienne

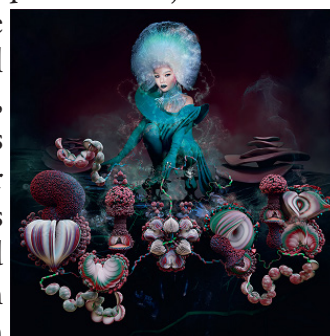
Lenker touches. Her songwriting, alongside the single-take recording style, makes this album so organic and (to be cliché) the imperfections are what make it so perfect. 'Spud Infinity'

concerns itself with everyday life in a world on the brink and the ways we escape the reality of our situation. It keeps *Titanic Rising's* ease of listening, and adds so much that's musically fascinating to listen to as well. Really, it's a gift that keeps on giving, and is likely to become more beloved by me in the future. 'Twin Flame' and 'The Worst Is Done' are my favourites here!

4 *Fossora* by Björk

I've written my thoughts on *Fossora* before, in the week it came out; I think it's pretty great, and my opinion hasn't changed all that much since then. Somehow Björk manages to make her music sound even stranger every time she goes to record something, and honestly, I'm here for it. The album focuses on the bass frequencies — Björk claims it's

to make us feel grounded, help us discover our roots — and plays with the rhythm



and woodwind sections to keep the listener on their toes. My favourites are 'Ancestress' and

and woodwind sections to keep the listener on their toes. My favourites are

'Ancestress' and

tracks, with a theme of acceptance of self. It has a bouncy country feel, and the fiddle joined with the frog-like boing of the jaw harp makes it infectiously joyful, as is Lenker's scream at the end of the wonderful and optimistic 'Little Things'. Of the forty-five songs initially recorded, twenty made it to the final LP, and I wish we could have had every one of them.

3 *Ants From Up There* by Black Country, New Road

A drunken phone call from a friend was my first introduction to BCNR, in which I received a twenty-minute stream of their consciousness, detailing their love for the entirety of this album. I now share in this love for it too. *Ants From Up There* was released shortly after Isaac Wood's exit from the band, whose

'Victimhood'.

5 *Dance Fever* by Florence + The Machine

When I first listened to 'King' I knew this was going to be a good one, and thank goodness for that. *High as Hope*, the last F+T M record was such a letdown it depressed me to no end. Florence Welch is back though, and remains melodic and graceful but keeps grounded in the fiery feelings that guide her music. It feels distinctly different and new while strengthening the things the band did well in the past. There's plenty of times for Welch to ascend into glorious falsetto and plenty of times to show her skill in belting. My favourite track is by far 'My Love', also one of the singles. It's catchy as hell, the vocal performance is excellent and always a great pick-me-up tune.



a m u s i n g pop culture references to Charli XCX in the 'Basketball Shoes' and Billie Eilish in 'Good Will Hunting', are scattered through this album that is otherwise highly emotional. The metaphors within Wood's lyrics surrounding despair and heartbreak, and the incredible musical performances from the instrumentalists of the then seven-piece band, allow for so much to be heard in each revisit. Seeing BCNR in mid-December maintained my enthusiasm to see the direction the band takes following Wood's departure.

4 *Natural Brown Prom Queen* by

Sudan Archives

Self-taught violinist and singer-songwriter Brittney Parks returns with a more personal-feeling



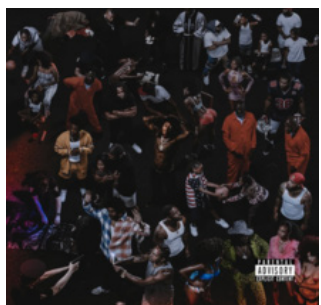
album than her debut, reflecting on home life growing up, and the themes of colourism and racism are present throughout. Inspirations from West African finger plucking, joined with her more whimsical and flowing harmonies,



Matija Conic

① *Forever Story* by JID

Few hip-hop artists are on JID's level at the moment, which he definitively proves on *Forever Story*, whether we're talking about thoughtful lyricism and storytelling or the utterly masterful, mind-blowing flow ideas. There truly is no crevice on a beat that JID leaves unfilled, no switch up he is scared to pursue, and no wasted idea on this project, serving as a testament to JID's immense amount of talent, as well as versatility. We even catch JID singing on some of the more beautiful, vocally carried cuts, like 'Kody Blu 31', while his rapping remains disturbingly effortless and more entertaining than ever. From moments like 'Can't Punk Me', where JID joins forces with EARTHGANG over a completely unhinged Kaytranada-produced beat, to soulful R&B cuts that feature Ari Lennox, interspersed with sad, often quite anxious and claustrophobic tracks like 'Lauder Too' or 'Sistanem', this album does



not fail to consistently blow me away, making for JID's best work to date and a true milestone in the genre.

make up her unique string passages that captivated so many in her earlier music. These continue through the album, from the softer spoken-word tracks to the heavier trap beats of 'OMG BRITT'. The building and cascading harmonies with glitchy vocals make 'Loyal (EDD)' my favourite track off this danceable, confidence-emitting, feel-good album.

⑤ *Hugo* by Loyle Carner

② *I Didn't Mean to Haunt You* by Quadecca

With *I Didn't Mean To Haunt You*, YouTube rapper and content creator Quadecca has put himself on the radar as a remarkably talented producer and album artist, making a serious detour from his previous work in hip-hop. In some respects, the project serves as a window into Quadecca's struggle with mental illness and suicide, but it also feels like a creative exercise, with Ben attempting to conceptualise what a post-suicide reality would feel like through crafting a ghost character trapped in an in-between limbo space and leaving him to roam around his childhood house, watching his mother as she mourns and grieves over the event. Eerie sound palettes, gentle piano keys and distorted synthesisers create an incredibly pretty, nostalgic and ethereal, but at the same time blood-curdling and anxiety-inducing vibe, complementing the two recurring emotions on this record — unbearable loneliness and aggressive desperation — incredibly well. Out of every artist on this list, Quadecca has undeniably shown the most artistic growth this year, making me really excited for what he has in store next.



③ *Cave World* by Viagra Boys

Cave World is an impressive series of dirty, infectious, punk rock bops that have made me fall in love with this band big-time. With many allusions being made to lower, ape-like lifeforms, the album paints a rather pessimistic account of the

After a three-year hiatus, Loyle Carner, a new father, returned with his third album. Carner discusses themes of anti-Black racism, growing up mixed-race, and relationships with his own father. It's not surprising that Carner continues to excel in his poignant storytelling, especially in 'Blood On My Nikes', featuring a speech from young activist Athian Akec, in which Carner retells a murder he had

human condition, witnessed at just urging the likes of anti-vaxxers and QAnon believers to remove themselves from society with incredibly humorous lyricism, while combining this with a perfect dose of self-deprecation, preventing the project from sounding like a pretentious exercise in elitism. The hooks on this album are genuinely amazing, from the cartoonish and insanely catchy 'Troglydote', to the abrasive 'Ain't No Thief' and the country, hip-hop blend that is 'Big Boy'. With this project, Viagra Boys have solidified their unique sound and style even further and I really hope more people start paying attention to them, as very few bands manage to pull off the goofy and playful aesthetic as masterfully as they can while also doing thoughtful social commentary.



more melancholic cuts like 'Morning Elvis' and 'Choreomania' have been the soundtrack to many of my daily, over-romanticised life struggles this year, evoking a very particular kind of sadness in me that feels almost hopeful and optimistic. Although nothing too ground-breaking or genre-defining, this album is a fun collection of catchy tunes and touching ballads.

④ *Dance Fever* by Florence + the Machine

Dance Fever encompasses some of Florence's most impressive work to date, with her vocals being as huge and theatrical as ever, while the production remains rather minimal. The album makes for a cathartic journey, with Welch singing passionately about daily emotional struggles and mental health, the love she feels for her craft, as well as issues like gender norms on the anthemic 'King', all told through a motif of "dancing the pain away". Songs like 'Dream Girl Evil' and 'My Love' feature some of her strongest, danceable grooves that will stick with me for a long while. Moreover, the

sixteen. The final track, 'HGU', uses a 'loyle carner type beat' that was found on YouTube, and Carner beautifully discusses ending the cycle of hurt by forgiving his own father, so that he can be a better dad to his son. I often shed a few tears to this song and cried when it was read as a poem live. It's a short thirty-four-minute rap and hip-hop album that I'd recommend to many.



Multi-instrumentalist and singer-songwriter Brittney Parks delivers some of the most exciting sonics this year in her sophomore LP, *Natural Brown Prom Queen* — a sexy, string-kissed, beautifully hypnotic collection of R&B cuts that bring forward a really unique energy. Incredibly punchy and hectic drumbeats on tracks like 'NBPQ', as well as skilful and confident vocal passages laced with lovely violin sections on 'Chiara' or 'Selfish Soul', make for some of the most interesting and forward-thinking tracks I have heard in 2022. Sudan even detours into trap on 'OMG BRITT', showcasing really impressive range on this record, both production-wise and vocally, while consistently nailing the more psychedelic, slow-paced vibe on tracks like 'Homesick' and 'ChevyS10'. With an album as captivating as this, I cannot wait to see where Brittney's creative talents will take her in the future.

⑤ *Natural Brown Prom Queen* by Sudan Archives

Deniz Akansoy

① *Long Gone* by Joshua Redman



Long Gone is a gift for any jazz fan. Joshua Redman, a modern-day Saxophone Colossus, is joined by the genius that is Brad Mehldau on piano, Christian McBride – arguably the greatest double bass player of a generation – and Brian Blade, whose drumming brings the entire band together. Since first playing together in the early 90s, all four members of this super-group have individually become giants of music, each taking their place among the greats of jazz. Their long-awaited

reunion, which has led to this new album, is a testament to their superb musicianship, incredible chemistry, and dynamic playing, which together makes this album one of the best of the year.

Listen To: ‘*Long Gone*’ & ‘*Disco Ears*’



② *Shifting Sands* by Avishai Cohen, Elchin Shirinov & Roni Kaspi

In his newest project, double bass virtuoso Avishai Cohen is joined by pianist Elchin Shirinov, and rising 21-year-old drummer Roni Kaspi. The result is an awe-inspiring album that has taken its place among the best of the year.

The playing is incandescent, and the instruments truly shine in this new body of work that pushes the boundaries of Modern Jazz.

Listen To: ‘*Intertwined*’ & ‘*Joy*’ (look out for the drum solo!)

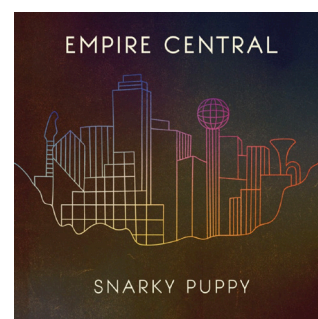


③ *In These Times* by Makaya McCraven

If you like intense time-signatures, polyrhythms, and ethereal sounds, this is the album for you. Makaya McCraven is a modern-day drumming sensation, and his new album *In These Times* succeeds in reflecting his creativity, not only as an instrumentalist, but also as a

bandleader/composer.

Listen To: ‘*Seventh String*’ & ‘*Dream Another*’



④ *Empire Central* by Snarky Puppy

This list wouldn't be complete without mentioning the international genre-defying phenomenon that is Snarky Puppy. Their new album explores a funkier, heavier, and slower-paced soundscape, as the band reaches out to its roots, paying homage to the Dallas music scene.

Listen To: ‘*Take It!*’ (feat. Bernard Wright) & ‘*Trinity*’



⑤ *NOT TiGHT* by DOMi and JD Beck

Now, we are really pushing boundaries. I don't know if NOT TiGHT can be considered jazz music, although it very clearly is derived from ideas that originate from the genre. Gen-Z music prodigies DOMi and JD BECK show-off their might in this star-studded album, which features guest musicians ranging from Snoop Dogg to Herbie Hancock. A must-listen for any contemporary music enjoyer.

Listen To: ‘*MOON*’ (feat. Herbie Hancock) & ‘*PiLOT*’ (feat. Snoop Dogg, Busta Rhymes, Anderson. Paak)

Giovanni França

① *Ants From Up There* by Black Country, New Road

They did it again. Following their break into the mainstream with 2021's debut *For the first time*, it was uncertain whether BC,NR would be capable of releasing another project as excellent. But without a shadow of doubt, it has been done - and in record time. Inspired by the minimalist modern classical work of Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*, the band displays innovative musicianship, culminating in a rock record that is epic, complex and, most importantly, fresh. These qualities come together to provide a deep listening experience, where it is possible to get lost in the many neatly fitted layers of the album, finding new things about the music, the poetry, or even yourself.

② *Horseshit on Route 66* by The Garden

To summarise my full-length October review of this record in one word, the 25-minute experimental punk album is ‘weird’. A lot of this weirdness had already been present in previous projects by the duo, but in here the combination of somewhat random sources of inspiration (from 1950s cinema to drum and bass to Jacksepticeye) make for a compelling love letter to the band's background and their scene, and, all-in-all, what punkness is at its essence.



③ *Hellfire* by black midi

Hellfire is cinematic. Storytelling is at the centre of the album and, as the title suggests, it is a chaotically infernal narrative of war, addiction, guilt, and ultimately, death. The dark themes, coupled with explosive instrumentals and theatrical vocal performance, make for a captivating radionovela recounted by the eccentric Geordie Greep (and with contributions from partner Cameron Picton, of course). Throughout this 39-minute run, black midi excels at grabbing the listener's hand and showing them around the burning world they have painted.



④ *hypocondriac* by brakence

For the past couple of years, brakence has developed a unique blend of (midwest) emo rap and glitch pop – a mix which somehow ended up in the hyperpop spectrum. If that sounds confusing, don't fret. *hypocondriac* is a highly melodic and easy album to listen to. Although it has some experimental passages, this project is mainly composed of very easy-to-digest pop tunes. The production is the main highlight, giving colour to the romantic tales chronicled by the rapper, who in a vulnerable way varies between emotive and self-centred themes.



⑤ *I Didn't Mean to Haunt You* by Quadecca

No one thought a “YouTube rapper” could do it, but here we are. Quadecca has dabbled in many subgenres of hip-hop, but in this occasion, he stepped completely out of it, manufacturing an album that is hard to box, introducing sounds from emo rap, art pop, ambient, and even folk. Written from the perspective of his own ghost, this generally horrifying theme is often met with an ethereal atmosphere, almost reaching a deeply sought-after inner peace. Beautiful and haunting moments like those are what make this project so special.



FRIDAY 13TH JANUARY 2023

John Estopen

5 Crash by Charli XCX

IT'S CHARLI BABEY. Yes, yes yes. It truly is Charli baby. Charlotte came back this year, ditching her covid quarantine themes from *how i'm feeling now* and instead making a love letter to classic pop music, producing a retro-futuristic record which just gets. me. going! "I'm high voltage, self-destructive, end it all so legendary" from the opener 'Crash' gives us a notion that this album would be a true lesson in saying goodbye to one's label with a bang (or a crash lol). It's Janet Jackson-esque feel leaves you wanting to get up and boogie. 'Good Ones' is filled with throbbing synths which just make you feel something. (It was also released at just the right time in my life, so I had no choice but to stan). The tasty, yet punchy string intro to 'Baby' leads into Charli telling us she will "make you my baby", and with this record she did. 'Lightning' is also really fucking good. The project's brilliant production and fun writing are what give it a spot on my top 5 of the year. **TLDR:** From ash to ash, from dust to dust, in Charli XCX, I put all my trust. Listen to 'Used to Know Me'.



4 Hold the Girl by Rina Sawayama

Okay, okay, OKAY. I get it. As a Rina stan I ended up getting a SIGNED LP for my S.O. for their bday (I'm such a great partner) and, thus, I am not above having her in my top 5 for this year, in fact I feel epic about this decision. *Hold the Girl* is an incredible project which involves many a bop. It begins with the triple entendre 'Minor Feelings', which describe her thoughts as unimportant during her time as a minor, all in a minor key, and sets the theme for the album. Just a few days ago we sat down, and group listened to this album via record player. It slapped. Rina was back with yet another enticing project. I can wholeheartedly say that we loved all of the tracks off of the album (*cough* apart from 'Holy (Til You Let Me Go)'), and because of that I will never stop loving this album. 'This Hell' is the yee to your haw, the snake to your boot, the rhythm to your groove - it opens with a catchy, square-dancey, type of intro, coupled with an even catchier chorus. 'Your Age' leaves you with a slow but powerful headbang, and 'Frankenstein' has yet another thumpin' chorus. Rina came back and graced us all with this one, lads.

TLDR: Rina SLAYwayama. Listen to 'Send My Love To John' just cus it's got my name in it.

3 NOT TiGHT by DOMi & JD BECK

Have you seen that 'Thundercat' video? You know, the one with Ariana Grande, and those two other cool kids in the back? Well, let me introduce you to DOMi & JD BECK. I shit you not, I was not expecting this whatsoever. Allow me to apologise for my ignorance, and instead of going into my sorrow for unknowingly disrespecting these two by not finding out about them earlier, I'll just get into it. DOMi & JD BECK are a jazz duo, consisting of two child prodigies — and it shows. NOT TiGHT combines the ambidextrously played melodies of piano and bass from Domi and the cyborg-like rattling of drums from Beck in a smooth yet wild jazz-fusion record. It opens with a graceful string section in 'LOUNA'S iNTRO' before seamlessly going into 'WHATUP', where the duo well and truly wigg out and show



us what they're really made of. A swing of features from heavy hitters follows from this. 'BOWLiNG (feat. Thundercat)' reunites the pair with the godlike bassist, continuing his signature sound into the following track 'NOT TiGHT'. Mac DeMarco's vocals blend seamlessly in 'TWO SHRiMPS (feat. Mac DeMarco)', along with their label's head Anderson .Paak in 'TAKE A CHANCE (feat. Anderson .Paak)'. The remaining features include Herbie Hancock, Snoop Dogg(y dog), Busta Rhymes, Kurt Rosenwinkel — the album is nothing to joke around about. **TLDR:** It's so damn playful and fun. Listen to 'SNIFF'.

2 SOS by SZA

Where is SZA? How can she get better than CTRL? Will she lay down a project after half a decade? - These are the questions we as Szlings [sorry] were left with after being graced with tracks such as 'Doves In the Wind (feat. Kendrick Lamar)' from her last album. If I'm being all honest, I was not hopeful — unfaithful in Solana to give us another album. But then she did it. *SOS* dropped just in time for the winter holidays, and we would finally have enough resources to go into hibernation. She opens with ...- - - ... (SOS in morse code for the uninitiated) where she



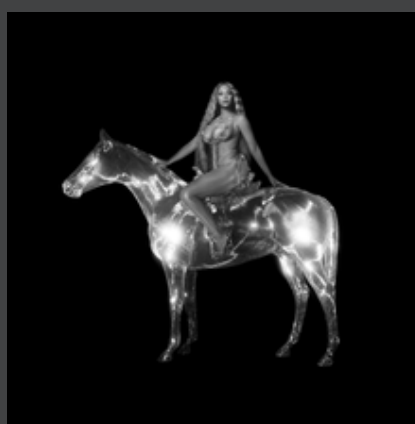
takes back what is rightfully hers — "Damn right, I'm the One" she says just before interpolating 'Listen' by Beyoncé, demanding we open our ears to her once again. And listen we did. With post-breakup ruminations from 'Kill Bill' and an orgasmic key change in 'Gone Girl', and rounding off the album with heavily anticipated tracks such as 'Blind' and 'Shirt', *SOS* offers listeners an extensive look into SZA's last 5 years. Despite being released a week into December, *SOS* grips me to the point that it had to be in my top 5 — I may be

biased about this, I love SZA, but I think we can all agree that this album is great. A gigantic twenty-three track album, which takes the blame she once put on others within CTRL and releases that. SZA has evolved and it shows.

TLDR: Really, fucking, good. Listen to 'Snooze'.

1 RENAISSANCE by Beyoncé

Do you know this underground artist called Beyoncé? I first got a taste for this album when 'BREAK MY SOUL' was released as a single. In all honesty, I was underwhelmed (sue me). It felt like yet another dedication to house music that left my soul wanting more. I then came back again, again, and again. BEYONCÉ had me hooked. I was left unsatisfied with just having this single. I shit you



not, when the whole album dropped, I had no choice but to eat it all up. 'I'M THAT GIRL' enters with a statement to us motherfuckers — we "ain't stopping" her. And she's deadass about this. The sheer confidence exuded by this opener carries through to the whole album from front to back. The 3-track run of 'CUFF IT', 'ENERGY (feat. Beam)', and 'BREAK MY SOUL' leaves me in awe, making me go back and enjoy them repeatedly. Lush transitions, masterful production, and absolutely badass — Beyoncé's *RENAISSANCE* fuels me with

confidence. A special mention to the final 5 track run from 'THIQUE' to 'ALL UP IN YOUR MIND', to 'AMERICA HAS A PROBLEM', to 'PURE/HONEY', (and finally) to 'SUMMER RENAISSANCE'. The pacing of this thing is unparalleled, it keeps my attention all up on it. In your case, if the absolute sheer power of Beyoncé doesn't catch your attention, this album will instead demand it from you.

TLDR: Smooth, masterful, thanks Beyoncé. Listen to 'VIRGO'S GROOVE'.

Talk soon, lov u, kthx bye.

Joe Riordan

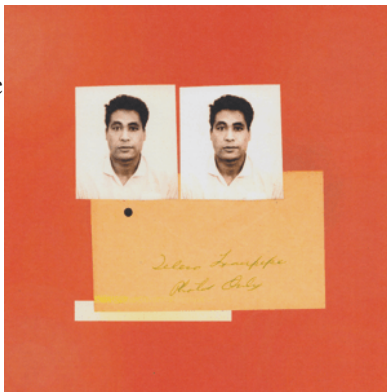
① *angel in realtime* by Gang of Youths

Gang of Youths manage to perfectly knit together their past few years of living in Angel (get it, *angel in realtime*), weaving the intensely personal tales of loss and love and loneliness into relatable, emotional anthems. The overarching story told by the album is the death of lead singer David Le'aupepe's dad and the subsequent revelations about his family's past.

'*brothers*' sets these complex, shattering discoveries to a simple melody, setting focus purely on Le'aupepe's emotions, leaving the listener feeling the same gut-wrenching guilt and sadness.

Navigating this heavy loss is tough enough at home, but *'the*

angel of 8th ave.' narrates the challenges of doing this in a new town, a new hemisphere, as the band had moved across the globe from Sydney to London. This track is the best song on the album and vies for the top spot from my whole top 5, it's a love song for Le'aupepe's wife and again, even with this close, personal meaning, it manages to be relatable. Throughout the whole album, you feel exactly how Le'aupepe wants you to and he accomplishes this with ease. Take an hour and leave yourself to his mercy: it's cathartic, it's anthemic, it's angelic.



② *Anywhere But Here* by Sorry

I saw Sorry in June; they played a few tracks from *Anywhere But Here* but by this point, only one or two had been released. The months between the gig in June and the album release in October were the most excited I've been for a record.

I couldn't wait to hear tracks like 'Closer' and 'Tell Me' again. *Anywhere But Here* is a breakup album on the surface but at a more fundamental level it's an album about loneliness. Emphasising how losing your favourite person is even harder when you're in a city as big and as uncaring as London. My favourite track on the album is 'Step'. It has an Annie Wilkes quality, trapping the feelings that come before you've reached the acceptance stage of grief, illustrating the delusions of movie scene occurrences happening to undo the recent heartbreak. Even though I've been in London for 3 years now, it can still feel daunting at times and *Anywhere But Here* perfectly encapsulates these feelings.



③ *Ants From Up There* by Black Country, New Road

I think Black Country, New Road's *Ants From Up There* being on nearly half of our lists is a justification in itself, but let me have a go at convincing you this album deserves a place up here just in case you don't think so already. I saw the band perform at Wide Awake festival in Brixton in 2021 before the album was released but when they performed only unreleased songs from the album. I didn't know the songs, I didn't know the words, I didn't appreciate at all what I was seeing and hearing. I would give a lot to see that set again after listening to the album tens of times, especially now the band don't perform any of the tracks anymore after lead singer Isaac Woods' departure. The album flies between genres while always sounding coherent so it's tough to pick a top song from the album but some honourable mentions have to go to 'Good Will Hunting' and 'Basketball Shoes'. This is possibly the most emotive album on my list, Woods being the only person able to convey these feelings correctly.



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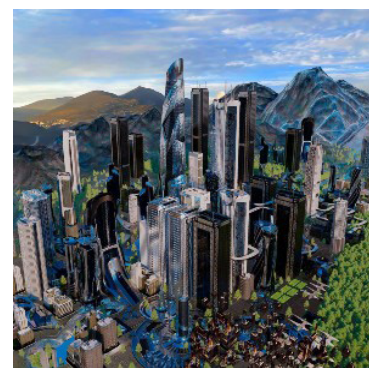
④ *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* by The 1975

Big fans of this section might remember a few issues ago I slighted this album. I retract most of what I said. I still think Matty Healy is sometimes annoying, I still think some of the lyrics are cringey and are just going to fuel a new angsty generation of teenagers to replace those from 2013 when the band released their self-titled album, but I have to admit *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* is a great album. As I said before, the production is sublime — I spot new, intriguing ideas on every listen. By this point, if you have any social media presence you will have seen a video from one of The 1975's gigs. Some are funny, some are pretentious, some are questionable. I think this complete inundation of content has finally flipped my opinion.



⑤ *Guitar Music* by Courting

I hate to pit northerners against each other — we have to stick together down here — but Liverpool-based Courting's *Guitar Music* has just edged in front of Leeds-based Yard Act's *The Overload* for a spot in my top 5 albums of 2022. An initially confusing mix of post-punk and hyperpop (I'm sure someone has a more niche genre to put

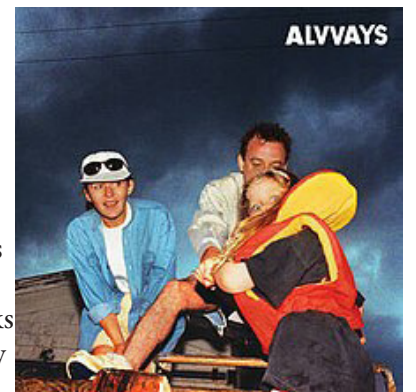


them into), *Guitar Music* has grown on me. Listening to the album while sitting still is impossible because every track makes you want to dance. While bands like Sports Team can feel like they're sometimes forcing the narration of mundane daily life, the Seinfeld of post-punk, Courting's imaginative production blends glitches with guitars to brighten these themes, best heard in 'Uncanny Valley Forever'. This is the most exciting and intriguing album on my list so if you listen to any of them, listen to this one and then try to wait patiently for wherever Courting are going to head next.

Neel Le Penru

① *Blue Rev* by Alvveys

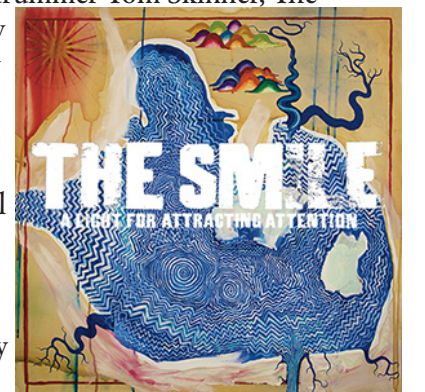
Alvveys' third LP is another masterful piece of indie rock/dream pop retro-nostalgia. Building on the best elements of the band's previous two efforts — carefully crafted tracks that interweave jangly guitars and analogue synthesisers behind Molly Rankin's elegant, pining vocals — *Blue Rev* sees the band explore a slightly more brazen side, with layers of sounds awash in distortion just as much as the reverb and echo that suffused through their previous work. This might not be a sonic revolution, but after nearly 5 years it's a very welcome and invigorating addition to what Alvveys do best. I'll certainly have it on repeat through much of 2023.



② *A Light for Attracting Attention* by The Smile

Some Radiohead fans may be disappointed that the wait for another LP from the Oxford 5-piece only looks set to continue, while others might argue that the The Smile's first album is effectively the same thing, or at least the closest we'll get for some time. Comprised of Radiohead's Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood, and Sons of Kemet drummer Tom Skinner, The Smile's sonic identity naturally bears many of Radiohead's hallmarks, most notably the equally ferocious and blissful balance of Yorke's haunting vocals with Greenwood's angular, rhythmically eccentric guitar.

While the band even pick up unreleased Radiohead tracks (e.g. 'Skirting on the Surface'), Skinner's kinetic drumming and pulsing synth lines bring a new dynamic to Yorke and Greenwood's writing, leading to a distinct, versatile sound. This, coupled with the creative freedom of a new project's lack of expectations, results in 13 idiosyncratic tracks that seem to effortlessly switch from beautiful to unsettling or vigorous — a strong



debut that somehow manages to be both carefree and intense throughout.

③ *NOT TiGHT* by DOMi & JD BECK

Given I only discovered *NOT TiGHT* right at the year's end, the fact that it so swiftly rose to being one of my favourite albums of the year is testament to young jazz duo DOMi & JD BECK's near virtuosic talent and originality. The pair's musical abilities are perhaps no surprise given the years they've worked to master their instruments — keyboardist DOMi had a full scholarship to study jazz at Berklee while BECK began playing drums aged 8 — but this makes their ability to deftly dance across their instruments within a super-tight dialogue no less mesmerising. On their debut *NOT TiGHT*, the duo successfully expand their impressive instrumental jazz fusion with several well-chosen collaborations ranging from Thundercat to Snoop Dogg and Mac DeMarco. For those into jazz or looking for a fun way into the genre, *NOT TiGHT* is a joy to behold.

④ *Once Twice Melody* by Beach House

Long-time Beach House fans hoping for a change of pace from the Baltimore dream-pop duo might not be so enthralled to hear seemingly more of the same on Beach House's eighth full-length LP — a double one, at that. However, for relative newcomers to the band, myself included, *Once Twice Melody* seems more like the pinnacle of the potent, ethereal songwriting the band has been honing for close to two decades. Across four 'chapters', *OTM* not only highlights that Beach House still have plenty to say within the dreamy musical syntax they're best known for, but also features some of the band's finest work. On the songs that most stood out to me — including the title track, 'Superstar', 'New Romance', and closer 'Modern Love Stories' — Beach House pair their bewitching atmosphere with memorable melodies in a way that maintains originality through considered production and songwriting. Though many of the album's highlights are concentrated in the first half, *OTM* as a whole is a dark but beautiful sonic fairytale that is once again set to take you someplace else.

⑤ *beatopia* by beabadoobee

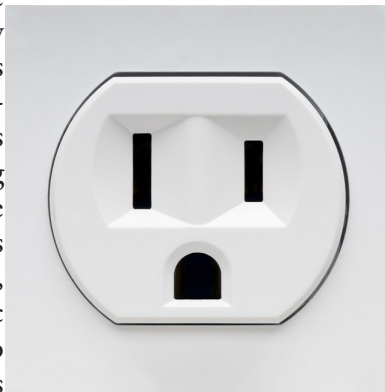
In the follow-up to the 90s-inspired teenage ruminations of her debut album *Fake It Flowers*, beabadoobee steps away from grungier tracks, offering a collection of gentler, more acoustically centered songs. Although these tender love songs and lilting lullabies might not have the same intensity as the heavier cuts from her previous record, *beatopia*'s continued coming-of-age themes, longing atmosphere and comforting melodies are delivered with an aesthetic consistency that had me continually coming back to it, earning it a place amongst my best of 2022.



Zanna Buckland

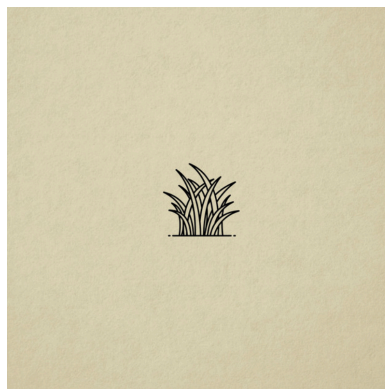
① *Uncanny Valley* by COIN

A slow-burner, *Uncanny Valley* is exactly what it sounds like, an album about human nature and love while reflecting on slightly unsettling ideas regarding technology-based relationships and our growing dependence on the online world. It is truly a work of art, born in the pandemic and delving deep into COIN's feelings about the new world order of technology. Despite the link to technology and use of electronic effects, they remain a shining example of alt rock/pop, and the Nashville-based band stays true to its roots: upbeat instrumentals paired with introspective vocals. COIN being my favourite band, I'm inclined to love anything they do, but I really feel this is an album for everyone to enjoy. I adore 'Take the Stairs', a short and sweet track for which their guitarist, Joe Memmel, specially learned the trumpet, and that has the ability to instill you with a confusing mix of confidence and existentialism.



② *Still* by Bryde

Welsh artist Bryde poured her heart and soul into *Still*, another pandemic-inspired album. It is a collection of songs that detail the different kinds of relationships one can experience, and each song seems to have more feeling in it than the last. Bryde has appended the title of each track with a word for the kind of relationship it describes. While sometimes more knowledge about the context of a song can ruin its magic, as with the unfortunate case of 'Blurred Lines', in this form it serves to add a layer of understanding that complements your listening, elevating the lyrics to another level of meaning. Bryde's vocals are airy and soulful, and I love the way she combines band sounds with other sound effects to bring tracks to life. 'Hill I'm Dying On (unrequited)', which has a beautiful chorus and is very poetic, is the track I've had on repeat recently.



③ *How to Let Go* by Sigrid

Sigrid has been hugely successful since early on in her career, and, like the rest of the music industry, has released an album that was created while living at home in Norway during the pandemic. *How To Let Go* contains a variety of songs, ranging from anthems like 'It Gets Dark', to dance pop like 'Thank Me Later'

and 'A Driver Saved My Night', and ballads like 'Last To Know'. Sigrid has an amazing vocal range and capacity to hold a note, so her vocals can be overpowering, but are always controlled and anchoring. She also includes some fun vocal runs and has mastered the art of the catchy chorus. Personally, I like 'Risk of Getting Hurt' for its balance: quiet and loud, vocals and instrumentals, and containing elements of different styles of songwriting.

④ *Conditions of a Punk* by half-alive

Another favourite band of mine, half-alive have just released their second full-length album. Despite being around since 2017, when they released their first EP, the band hasn't been overly liberal with new releases, which means that what they have shared is thoughtful and well-developed. *Conditions of a Punk* displays their full range of songwriting and captures their essence: an ever so slightly edgy indie rock band that could hold its own in the mainstream. The songs on the album have a lightness that makes them easy listening, while also showing off their experimentation. Although a number of the tracks had been released as singles and an EP before the album materialised, they still manage an impressive track list of 18 songs. 'Never Been Better', which features Orla Gartland, has a nice, optimistic sound — a welcome feeling at the moment. One of my favourite tracks, 'Everything Machine', has to be one of the catchiest singles off the album and is one of its more accessible tunes.



⑤ *Harry's House* by Harry Styles

Releasing this album a couple of months before summer arrived was the best marketing move Harry could have made, as its infectious dance pop sound is perfect for the hot season. One of my favourite memories of 2022 would have to be lying by the Princess Diana fountain in Hyde Park in the middle of June and listening to *Harry's House*. The mellow vocals and synthesizer melodies embody the warmth and laziness of a summer afternoon but do just as well on a crowded dancefloor or in a noisy kitchen. The album also maintained Harry's reputation for range, offering a mixture of fast, energetic bops and slower, melancholy ballads. 'Love of my Life' has got to be one of my top tracks from this one — unashamedly joining the other millions of fans who listen to it imagining it's been written solely for them.

Ambika Bhardwaj

Midnights (3am version) by Taylor

① Swift)

Mother has a shimmering return to pure pop

— her tenth album returns to the dazzling synth-pop of records like ‘1989’ and ‘Reputation,’ with lyrics caught between a love story and a revenge plot. *Midnights* is for the girls who worked hard to get a life of their own, but now feel empty; it’s the album you listen to when you’re alone in the kitchen with no partner to cook with, no friends to go out with, no parents to comfort you. It’s for the Jo March girls, who gave up everything and everyone and pretend like it’s alright but cry themselves to sleep every night, it’s for the girls who stare at the ceiling for hours after coming home, it’s for the masterminds, the people pleasers, for the girls who think they’re unlovable, it’s for the autumn/winter girls, it’s for the girls who love rain and gloom, it’s for the girls who read the most gut-wrenching books to feel emotions, it’s the ultimate sad girl album.



② *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* by The 1975

I hate Matty Healy (he has fundamentally changed my brain chemistry since the age of 13) – but with the new album, the band reasserts themselves at the forefront of 2020s pop-rock, fusing together the textures and musical ideas of soft-rock hits from three decades ago with modern sensibilities in a way that sounds instantly familiar, yet distinctively of-the-moment. A very rushed summary of the tracks:

‘*The 1975*’: Evidence in LCD Soundsystem’s copyright suit against The 1975

‘*Happiness*’: Nominative determinism. The title is how I feel when I listen to the song

‘*Looking For Somebody (To Love)*’: Move over ‘*Pumped Up Kicks*’, there’s a new absolute banger about school shootings in town

‘*Part of the Band*’: Please listen to Japanese Breakfast she’s fucking great.

‘*Oh, Caroline*’: Closest to contemporary pop they’ve ever come. Anyone could have released this, and yet they’ve still nailed it.

‘*I’m In Love With You*’: ‘*Everywhere*’ — Fleetwood Mac (2022 Version)

‘*All I Need To Hear*’: This isn’t half as cutesy as it initially appears. If most of the songs on here are about one relationship, this is the point where it starts to go wrong

‘*Wintering*’: The best Christmas song released in the last 15 years

‘*Human Too*’: “Maybe I’m an idiot, but maybe you are too”

‘*About You*’: I am genuinely obsessed with *About You* by the 1975, it changed the trajectory of my life - healed me in a way I cannot articulate, forever altering the course of my mind, ascends me to a higher realm. I am experiencing existence on an elevated plane. The spiritual successor to robbers. I am young and I feel divine.

‘*When We Are Together*’: Cows wearing sweaters. Oh, and the relationship is over now.

③ *MUNA* by MUNA

They did it again, MUNA have once again knocked it out of the park with their latest album, *MUNA*. My first introduction to the

triplet (throuple sounds wrong in this context), was with ‘*Saves The World*’, an exceptional album filled with melancholy lyrics that transform into pop melodies. They have continued this trend with their self-titled release, with each track

bringing something special to the table. ‘*Silk Chiffon*’, the first track on the album, is a fantastic start to the experience, leading you in with soft vocals and a catchy hook. All this tied together with some groovy bass in the background. The stage explodes in width at the chorus, with layered vocals and guitars. Each song follows the same basic formula, and yet brings something new and memorable as well, leaving every song distinct from the others. Half of the songs on *MUNA* are horny and the other half are emotionally devastating. This is psychological warfare – couldn’t recommend it more.



④ *MOSS* by Maya Hawke

Throughout *Moss*, Hawke’s earnest, sincere lyricism interlocks the public and private, overlapping reality and fiction to reflect how she has had to negotiate both spaces in life. I couldn’t do the album justice but here are my favourite lyrics from each song of *Moss* (non-chorus):

‘*Backup plan*’: I wanna be anything you’ve lost that you might be lookin’ for

‘*Bloomed into blue*’: Please let me build something, please let me be. I have beliefs in

my brain, I’m a bottomless sea

‘*Hiatus*’: With a pour heavy, now you’re home on hiatus. Does she hold a candle to me?

‘*Sweet tooth*’: So my molar collapsed on me, like a glacier melting in the heat. My mouth full up with lightning, I’m an outlet shock, a hole, a need.

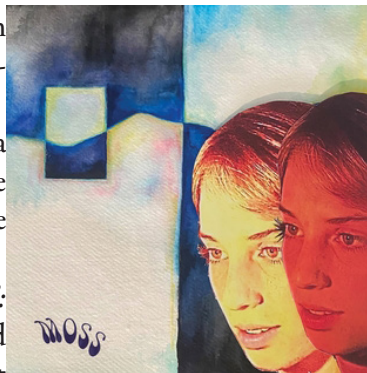
‘*Crazy kid*’: I wanted everything mine to be yours too, including the pain of losing you. I see you when I see your blue

‘*Luna moth*’: But I didn’t stick around, to watch you smile at an ugly thing, to try to ease my guilt. Watch you looking at a broken wing, like it could be rebuilt

‘*South Elroy*’: When you flutter by, took all the color out of my eyes. Used up all my vibrance on South Elroy drive, when we fought and we fucked and we fought.

‘*Thérèse*’ - Thérèse does not belong to you, The horses, cars, and cowboys do

‘*Sticky Little Words*’: Sorry’s too slow to stop this crash,



And leave me alone was just too fast

‘*Over*’: I want my mind fresh, even when my body’s rotten. I want to know more than you have forgotten. I’m not your flower, I’m the pollen

‘*Restless Moon*’: A weakness is believing in my imagination of yours

‘*Driver*’: I miss you like the soft spot at the top of my baby skull’s rose, I miss you like my phone tonight, I miss you like my openness that closed

‘*Mermaid Bar*’: Come for scallops, come to hear our song, come if you’re in awful, bad trouble, come if you’re certain you don’t belong

Stick Season by Noah Kahan

⑤ Kahan said in an interview with Insider that stick season is “the time between peak foliage and Halloween and the first snow — when all the leaves are off the trees. It’s a time of

transition. And it’s super depressing.” Mimicking this bleak time of the year, the album is full of transitions surrounding leaving home, growing up and getting help. Kahan further highlights the

transition from quarantine to semi-normal life as “*Stick Season*” touches upon the inability to leave home during COVID. Kahan calls this his love letter to New England. Most of the album is sung to Kahan’s folksy guitar playing which adds that really cool rustic feel to the album, making it the perfect fall album. While I believe every song on the album is a masterpiece and lyrically captivating, when Noah Kahan said, “and I divvied up my anger into thirty separate parts, keep the bad shit in my liver, and the rest around my heart; I’m still angry at my parents for what their parents did to them, but it’s a start” I felt that. I’m a sucker for a Judas reference.



HUGH erection plans for Queen's Tower

Imperial spokesperson Bobert SerKe has accidentally let slip that Queen's Tower is being replaced with a slightly larger version of ALERT, to be called ALERTer.

The Imperial website states that the 87m tower will have the masonry repaired, and the copper roofing replaced. Instead of being knocked down immediately, however, there are plans to extend the scaffolding to the very tip of the tower, and then remove the structure piece by piece, because "why would we hurry art?"

It is understood that the Queen's Tower Bell will remain as some sort of throwback to the historical importance of the building. The bell will be preserved by attaching it to the "knees" of ALERTer in some way.

Additionally, due to the recent increases in the cost of living, there are rumours that instead of solid iron blocks, the College has encouraged artist Sir Gamthony Whorly to take on a more minimalist style. Sir Whorly will be making "large savings" and "trimming the fat" by using iron piping to highlight an outline

of ALERT. It is estimated that roughly 69km of iron pipes will be used in this project. "69km is quite long, maybe too long, if anything. I don't know, I'll have to think about it when I see it. It might even benefit from having a self-powered water fountain, if you know what I mean", said a BioEng student. Negafelix did not know what they meant.

Negafelix interviewed a few other students, and here were their responses:

"What if I walk into the [knees] and get a bump on my head? It won't be very safe - a bit of wrapping wouldn't hurt."

"Size isn't everything, but it definitely helps - it could be a lot bigger, in my opinion."

"I'd be surprised if they took student opinion into account for this, but they usually railroad any opinion anyway."

"They should be giving security guards whistles too, as too many students think they can just climb on, uh, the knees."

Final year students are being urged to not mention this in their NSS responses, as "the tower will still be up for graduation" (albeit it will be wrapped in a metal scaffolding cage).



Horoscopes



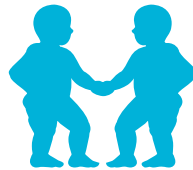
ARIES

This week a weirdo chases after you with bread in the SCR



TAURUS

This week you chase after the pigeon in the SCR with a piece of bread



GEMINI

This week you make friends with your girlfriend's best friend. Is this a sign?



CANCER

This week you move into your ✨using-fairy-liquid-as-shampoo era ✨



LEO

This week you narrowly miss "successful coup" on your 2023 disaster bingo



VIRGO

This week you continue waking up at 5am, turning around, and going back to oversleep



LIBRA

This week your Libra energy is no longer vibing with your boyfriend's terminal halitosis



SCORPIO

This week you learn that a group of Spanish Cardinals have taken all the pens in Spain in their new Spanish Ink-Acquisition



SAGITTARIUS

This week your lectures have had you falling behind on TikTok videos so you watch them on 1.5 speed



CAPRICORN

This week a kick to the crotch of your course coordinator succeeds where the mitigating circumstances form failed



AQUARIUS

This week you were the OxShag site manager. But it was alright when FaisBuk did it!



PISCES

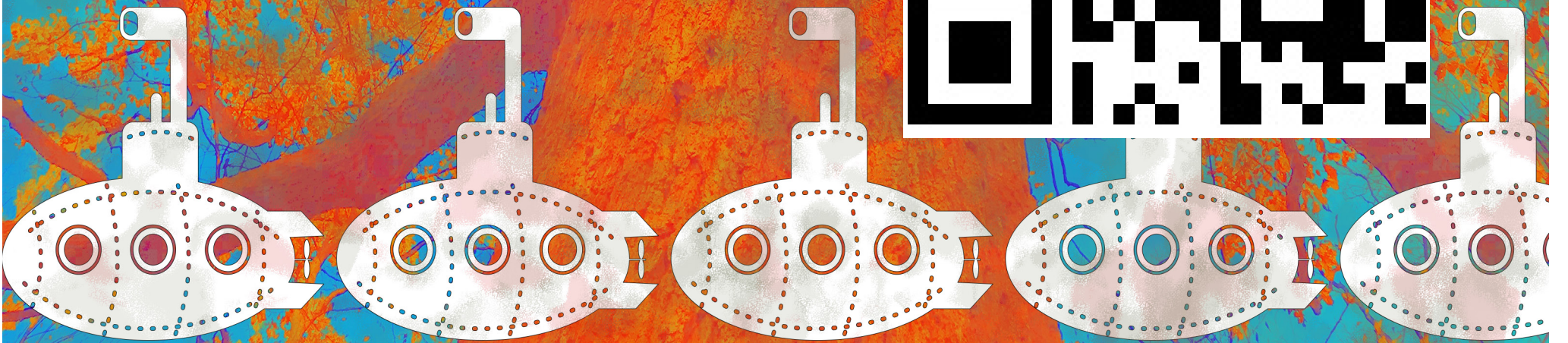
This week your degree experiences an "anomaly".

FELIX DRUG USE SURVEY

10 YEARS ON

OPENS: 7TH JAN NOON

CLOSES: 28TH JAN NOON



BOOKS

Edited by: ZANNA BUCKLAND

Book Review

The Year of Magical Thinking: A Masterclass on Articulating the Unspeakable

Mohammad Majlisi Books Writer

There are few people who can write about grief as precisely, articulately, and beautifully as Joan Didion has done in *The Year of Magical Thinking*. The book details the period between Christmas 2003 and 2004, during which Didion's daughter Quintana Roo Dunne was hospitalised twice: once for pneumonia which developed into septic shock, and again several months later, after falling and hitting her head whilst disembarking from a plane at Los Angeles Airport. In addition to this, and in fact the central thread of the book, is the sudden death of Didion's husband John Gregory Dunne, just five days after Quintana's first hospitalisation. Despite the intensity of trauma that Didion underwent, the memoir is poignant, introspective, and frank, as well as her farewell to 40 years of marriage.

Structurally, *The Year of Magical Thinking* takes a (mostly) chronological approach, looking at each major event in the timeline of a year, as they occur, relying on memories of the marriage, and occasionally straying from this formula to recall anecdotes from friends or from her career. It is excellently written, and well-paced: I read it in a weekend over a few hours. Didion's years of experience as one of the key figures in New Journalism are apparent as she crafts a vivid but not graphic, emotional but not skewed narrative. Did-

ion writes with feeling — feeling that could be seen as self-indulgent but is completely justifiable. It takes a certain level of self-assuredness to write about grief and traumatic situations, but Didion makes it work without leaning too much towards self-pitying. She balances her narrative voice so she sounds neither pitiable nor self-indulgent, and the reader can feel genuine empathy for her.

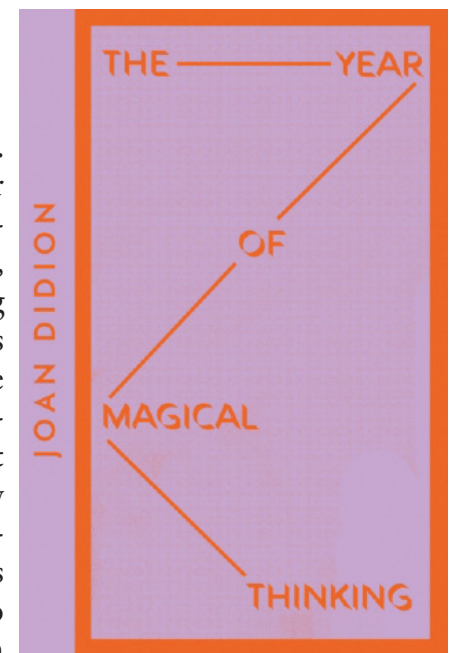
Due to the intense medical complexity of Didion's daughter's condition, the book runs into some dense, jargon-filled passages that, for me, were a bit of a slog to read at times. Of course, they have their purpose, as Didion articulates, but the pace slows down significantly during the middle section of the book — it does begin to read like a medical case study, to its detriment.

What Didion is most successful in achieving is creating a celebration of her marriage to Dunne. Forty years of what Didion presents as a successful relationship are among the highlights of the book — we get insight into what Didion misses, and what the loss of her husband means to her. She highlights her vulnerability from losing her husband, as well as picking out key parts of her marriage in a rich tapestry of memories. Even so, Didion doesn't make the mistake of looking back with excess sentimentality — there is mention of fighting, and the marital issues that happen with any normal relationship — and that's part of what makes the prem-

ise so appealing. It's a chance for someone to cherish their normal, mundane, loving relationship. It's what makes the book so emotionally engaging — it is something very real and relatable. What makes it even more so is that Didion

doesn't overdo the recollection — we get some candour, but not enough to blur the barrier of parasociality; the reader sees what Didion wants them to see, and there is a sense of reservation surrounding what Didion is revealing — but what she isn't is due to wanting privacy. It's refreshing to get just a glimpse, an intimate snapshot into their 40-year marriage.

In summary, *The Year of Magical Thinking* amplifies the feelings we all will face or have faced, with a clear voice, into something one can absorb and reflect upon, and something one doesn't have to face alone. And for its frankness regarding a topic that is often tiptoed around and ignored culturally, it deserves applause.



Book Review

Turning Over the Metaphorical Page By Turning the Pages of *White Teeth*

Fiyinfoluwa Oladipo Books Writer

White Teeth winning the 2000 Whitbread Award for First Novel, Commonwealth First Novel Prize, and the Betty Trask Award (albeit in '01, but understandable for its status as the first work of the since acclaimed and Grammy-winning—?!—author) surprisingly turns out to be casual. 447 pages, strung with effervescent storylines and a colourful roster of actors, literally and metaphorically, *White Teeth* is a long and thorough postmodern experiment on capturing the anxieties of anticipating a new day, month, or year approaching. But first, you need to be able to finish the

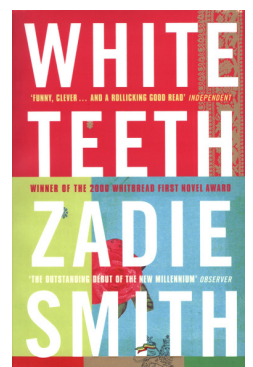
novel for this to make an iota of sense.

It's a Great novel (with an onerous, American capital 'G'), offering the reader an expansive post-colonial assessment of what it means to start life in another country, the country being England. And just as a year is, *White Teeth* necessitates using a bundle of contradictions to attempt to describe it. It can run and it can meander, simultaneously, as it tells the story of two World War II veterans with grudges: one of them English with a grudge against life, the other Bangladeshi with a grudge against life in England. But that depends on who's telling the story. Because Zadie Smith, with her eclectic voice and prose, skims and sears through top-

ics like femininity, generational

conflict, (cultural, religious, professional, Smith could cover it), and identity crises much like life itself, with perfectly timed joyous and tragic moments.

All the characters in *White Teeth* are walking fearfully towards their futures. Forgotten existence. Apocalypse. Cultural insignificance. A scientific conference. Even the year 2000 itself. But amidst that anxiety, the novel is interested in what people do in the interim: they *people*. And for all its excesses, that's exactly what Smith really captures—a feat which, still today is quite ambitious to aim for, and astonishing to actually achieve in a novel.



CLUBS & SPORT

Edited by: ISABELLA WARD

Show Felix your gleaming trophies (or your wooden spoons)

Felix looks back...sports standings from the Autumn 2022/23 term

Isabella Ward Sports Editor

Sports has been an integral part of Imperial life — and with that, Felix (although then, ‘The Phoenix’) — for the past century. The college boasts several notable sporting alumni, including olympians and paralympians.

Ever since, clubs have been constantly evolving. Through 2020 to 2021, clubs had to adapt to new regulations set by the governing sports bodies to account for COVID-19. Even despite their adjustments, the constantly chopping and changing regulations and the ‘ever-isolating’ freshers made it difficult to recruit and maintain numbers. Many clubs felt the impact of this in the following season (2021/2022), when clubs and societies were allowed to return in full swing.

In 2021/2022 sports players adjusted to once again being allowed to play ‘man on’ and Imperial placed 16th in British University & Colleges Sports (BUCS). There are currently 80 teams representing Imperial in BUCS across 14 sports. Last term saw a successful start to the season for many teams, with 29 currently sitting in podium position and six undefeated (see infographic). Several teams have also reached the quarter finals of their knockout leagues. This term, we can expect things to get exciting as teams progress towards the final stages of the knockout rounds.

Trophy image: Wikimedia Commons.

In addition to BUCS, there are a number of other competitions coming up, including various clashes with LSE. Particularly highly anticipated is The Imperial Varsity: two days of fierce matches and heckling between IC and ICSM teams. Internal competition is another longstanding Imperial tradition; in 1928 the university held its Sports Day at Chelsea Football Ground. This year, competitors and supporters shall be trekking out to glamorous Harlington, Zone 5 (eat your heart out, Stamford Bridge!) for teams to battle it out. Even the engines of low-flying planes won’t be able to drown out the crowds’ roars. In the running to headline are Waterpolo, Indoor Cricket Netball, Men’s Rugby, Women’s Football, Hockey, and Men’s Football. Voting is open now.

These represent just a small fraction of the 90+ sports clubs across Imperial. Whilst many of these clubs have competitive elements, all can be joined recreationally. Felix encourages any clubs or societies who would like to feature to get in touch, and is especially keen to hear from those competing outside of BUCS.

A special mention goes to the following teams who are thus far undefeated:

**Untouchaball: Men’s & Women’s Dodgeball.
ICSM Women’s Football roars.
ICSM Women’s Hockey sticks to it.
Scrumming together: Women’s I & IC Men’s II
Rugby.**

**Eyes on the prize:
these teams are currently in top position of their leagues.**

Giving it their best shot(s) are Men’s & Women’s Basketball.

Men’s Football II (let’s hope this doesn’t go to penalties).

Victories I-across-e the board: Men’s Lacrosse.

Men’s Squash III have taken the word ‘squash’ literally when it comes to how they treat their opponents.

Southern tier getting served by Women’s Volleyball.

Making a splash: Women’s Waterpolo.

Hot on their heels, sitting in 2nd place are:

Women’s Badminton

Men’s Dodgeball II

Men’s Fencing II

Men’s I & II Futsal

Mixed Golf

Men’s Hockey II

Although perhaps not quite in it to win it, these teams are hanging on to podium position. Sitting in 3rd place are:

American Football

Men’s II Fencing

ICSM Men’s I & III Football

IC Men’s IV Football

ICSM Men’s I & II Hockey

ICSM I & II Netball

IC III Netball

Women’s I Tennis

Men’s II & IV Table Tennis

Men’s & Women’s Ultimate Frisbee