



felix

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Blackett blues:

► Imperial Physics department “unhelpful”, “dismissive” and “two-faced”, say students

Jamie John Co-Editor-in-Chief

Isabella Ward Co-Editor-in-Chief

“It was absolute chaos”, says Alex, when we ask them about their time as an undergraduate in Imperial’s Department of Physics. “It just felt like you were getting by somehow.”

Alex (not their real name) is not alone in their sentiments. For several years now, the department at Imperial has had notably poor student satisfaction. In the 2020

National Student Survey (NSS), which was sent to all final-year undergraduates in the UK, Imperial’s Physics department ranked bottom in the country for overall student satisfaction. It holds the unfortunate distinction of being in the bottom five Physics departments in the country on this measure, in every year from 2017 to 2022.

Physics is an aberration amongst Imperial’s undergraduate courses; the College as a whole has consistently achieved high

student satisfaction scores, and over the past few years, has been ranked among the best in the country. Last year, it won *The Guardian’s* University of the Year Award.

Viewed in this light, the Physics department’s performance is puzzling. *Felix* set out to understand what it was that led its students to express such dissatisfaction. We spoke to a range of undergrad-

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EDITORIAL

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A Decade of Discontent

There is a certain amount of resilience required to study at Imperial College London. Within what most students agree to be a high-pressure environment, courses are academically challenging with high workloads.

Nevertheless, student satisfaction scores for the College are excellent across the board – for all departments bar one: Physics.

Whereas most students seemingly find their university experience rewarding, many Physics students look back less favorably on their degrees. Over a decade of NSS scores in which Physics consistently underperforms the College-average show this.

What seems to be at the root of this, is the dismissiveness and disingenuity which students feel has been demonstrated by the Physics Department. Repeated failures to properly address complaints, and a tendency to explain away mishaps, rather than find solutions, have led many students to the conclusion that their department simply does not care about them.

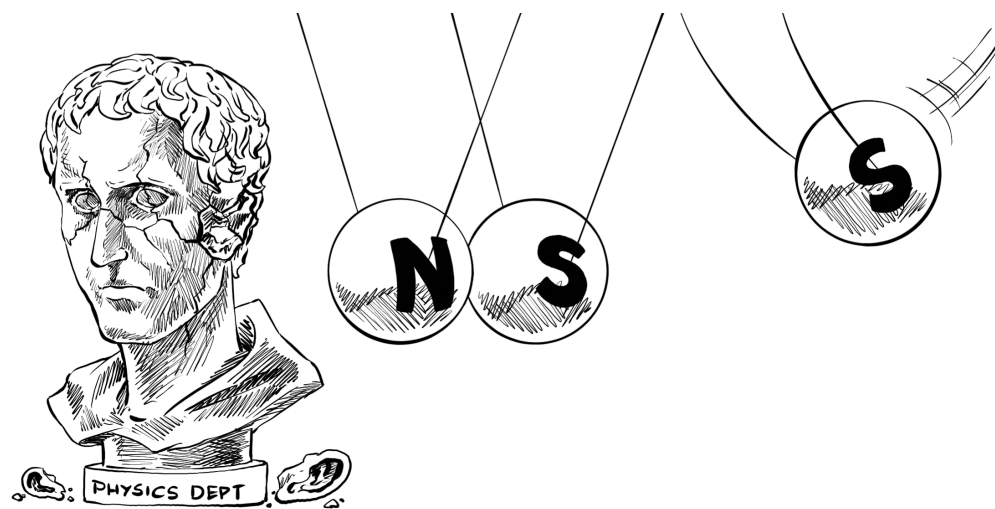
There is a sense that things are improving

as the years go by, and specific problems are highlighted and ironed out. But progress is slow, and overarching problems remain unresolved. Take, for example, coursework deadlines: for years, students have complained that deadlines are stacked up on top of each other – and yet still, little progress has been made. First-year students still make the same complaints that fourth-year students made when they started at the College.

Until the Physics Department is able to listen to its students, recognise their concerns, and find equitable solutions, it seems destined to continue as the laggard of Imperial, floundering in the depths of NSS tables.

Lastly, let us not forget the students whose entire university experience has been defined by the inaction of the Physics department. It has taken a toll on their wellbeing, and while their feedback to the Department may eventually lead to improvements several years down the line, it will not be enough to save their own experiences.

Illustration by Nicolas Geiseler Torán



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At Felix, we believe that it is always in the interest of the students to be in the know. Transparency in the workings of the College and the work of your student representatives is key. Therefore we, the Felix Editors, 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: Jamie John, Isabella Ward, and Zanna Buckland
Co-Editors-in-Chief 2023

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Anger as UCU calls off strikes

► *UCU general secretary Jo Grady explains controversial decision to Imperial staff.*

Isabella Ward Co-Editor-in-Chief

On Friday night, the University and College Union (UCU) paused strike action for two weeks after “real progress” was made in talks with employers over pay, conditions and pensions.

The decision has provoked anger amongst its members, who worry that alleviating pressure now will result in a worse offer as employers try to resolve the dispute. UCU general secretary Jo Grady attended an industrial action

meeting in the Imperial College Union Bar, on the morning of Thursday 23rd February, to explain the decision to pause strike action and respond to queries.

Grady explained her decision as a reaction to employers’ increased willingness to resolve the dispute, calling the UCU’s current position “the most productive, positive place we [the UCU] have ever been in in recent memory.” She therefore argued that it was not productive to remain on the picket lines, as the UCU now needed to “step into olive ter-



Jo Grady responds to striking Imperial staff in The Union Bar.



Staff and students alike protest outside the UCU London head office on Monday.

ritory” with employers. “Fundamentally, if we’re going to get a deal, this is going to be a big part of getting that deal”, she told the room.

A member of staff who was present at the meeting disputed this. He suggested it may be tactically naïve to alleviate pressure on employers. He criticised Grady for “demobilising” the industrial action and pointed out that the UCU had yet to receive a written offer from employers.

Grady responded, saying it was im-

portant to “switch up tactics when things change”, and defending the the UCU’s decision as “the right tactic for this dispute”. She challenged the claim that this was a two-week pause in the trade union’s action, noting “this is not a period of rest; it is a period of change.”

She reassured staff that, if at the end of these two weeks, sufficient progress had not been made, strikes would continue and plans for an upcoming marking boycott, which was due to begin in April, would resume.

Students form strike solidarity group to protect the ‘future of education’

► *Imperial students aim to help bring end to disputes by increasing pressure on employers.*

Isabella Ward Co-Editor-in-Chief

As staff continue to strike, student support is becoming more visible, with a student-solidarity group having formed recently at Imperial. I spoke to founding member Natalia about the group’s motivations and ambitions.

There is already evidence that students at Imperial overwhelmingly support the strikes, with a 2021 referendum on whether the Union should support industrial action over pension disputes concluding over 73% of voting students

supported the strikes. Last month, the Union Council voted to continue supporting the strikes and, novelly, to support the marking boycott.

Imperial Students Support the Strikes has been set up as a way to actively support the strikes from the student side. Having held their first meeting last Friday, the group aims to elevate the pressure placed on employers by the strikes: “the more pressure we can put on employers, the sooner the dispute will end.”

They have only formed recently but, having set up a WhatsApp group and

distributed posters around campus, hope to see their numbers grow.

Natalia argues their cause goes further than solidarity with staff, to self-consideration for students as well:

“Staff working conditions are student learning conditions. The strikes are disruptive to our learning, but that pales in comparison to the disruption we’re already facing from staff being overworked and underpaid.”

The neglect of staff is apparently multi-faceted, as Natalia cites the “slashing” of their pensions and real terms decrease

in pay, as well as the increase in the number of casualised contracts.

Along the picket line, there has been much talk on the latter, with staff arguing that the short-term contracts and uncertainty of renewal has contributed towards the increase in stress and mental-health issues within the sector.

All this concerns Natalia about the future of higher education, as she tells *Felix* “The UCU conducted a survey of their members last year and 60% of re-

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NEWS

Continued from page 1...
Physics department woes

uates, who painted a picture of a department remarkably out of touch with its student body.

A litany of problems plague the department. An unwavering insistence on maintaining academic standards leads to hefty workloads and tight deadlines. Then, a perceived reluctance to empathise with students and accept culpability for the resulting issues leads to accusations that the department is apathetic and defensive, and that its student-support mechanisms are perfunctory and tokenistic.

One student told *Felix*, “The workload is so high that it leaves students very stressed and very overwhelmed with what they’re doing. That is not an environment that’s conducive to good mental health or being able to enjoy yourself in London.”

Many students speak of a problem of overassessment. “There are too many extra little tasks — an extra problem sheet here, an extra bit of coursework there. They don’t add a whole lot to the course”.

A fourth-year physicist gave the example of assessed problem sheets: “It was devastating — late nights and high stress for maybe 2.5% of a module.” He said that he never received feedback on the problem sheets and was sometimes unable to identify where he had gone wrong.

Discontent with feedback is wide-

spread. Across year groups, students feel that the marks they are awarded are not proportional to the quality of their work or the effort that they put in. Several students felt marks were awarded at random. “It was really very frustrating to

“**THE BEST REPRESENTATION OF HOW THIS COURSE MAKES ME FEEL IS THE SCENE FROM INDIANA JONES, WHERE THE NAZI’S FACE IS MELTING.**”

put so much effort into a piece of coursework for it to be up to a roll of the dice”, said one second-year physicist.

The quality of help provided by teaching assistants (TAs) varies significantly. “The TAs are a bit of a crapshoot”, explains a Physics undergraduate. “Some of them are excellent and some you learn to avoid.”

The same, students say, is true of laboratory demonstrators. They claim that demonstrators didn’t understand the

nuances of the experiment, and would have to consult the heads of experiments — who were often not present.

Others describe being paralysed by the demonstrators’ inattentiveness, whose response to some questions was simply, “Google it”. One told *Felix*, “You have to spend so much time just figuring out how to start the bloody project. That’s one of the most frustrating parts.”

Deadlines

Exacerbating the problem is a tendency for deadlines to be stacked together. One student recounted an incident when they alerted the department to a deadline crunch; its response was to bring one of the deadlines forward.

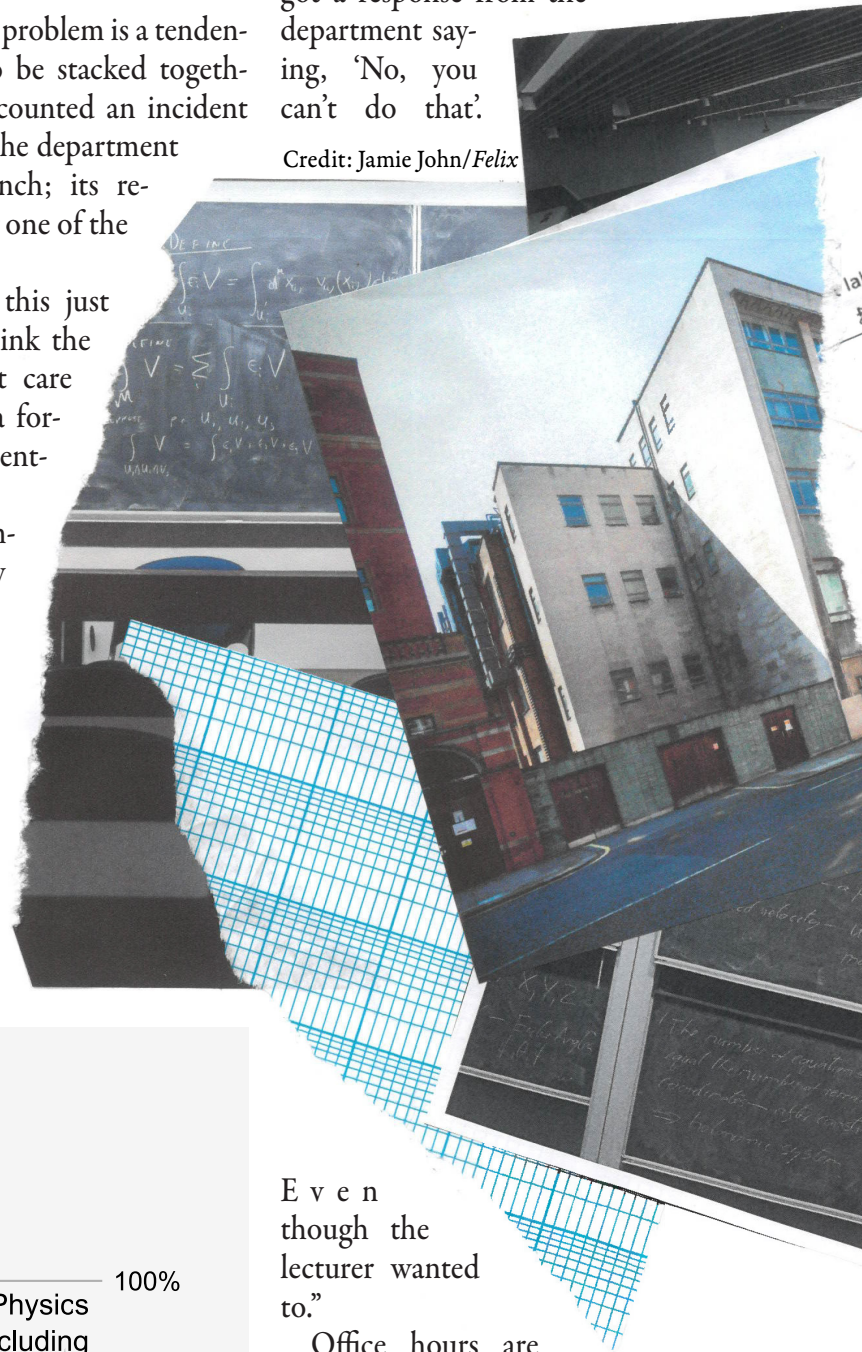
“Responses like this just lead students to think the department doesn’t care about them”, said a former student representative.

Even when empathy is shown by individual teaching staff, students feel that there is a culture of obstinacy in the wider department. A student told us how in her third year she had four deadlines in one

week, with multiple falling on the same day.

“We spoke to the lecturer of one of the modules, for which two of the assessments had ended up on the same day due to the strikes. They were lovely and said, ‘Yeah, that sounds fine. This doesn’t seem right that you’re getting this kind of unfair knock-on effect because of strikes. We just need to check with some other people in the department.’ We got a response from the department saying, ‘No, you can’t do that.’”

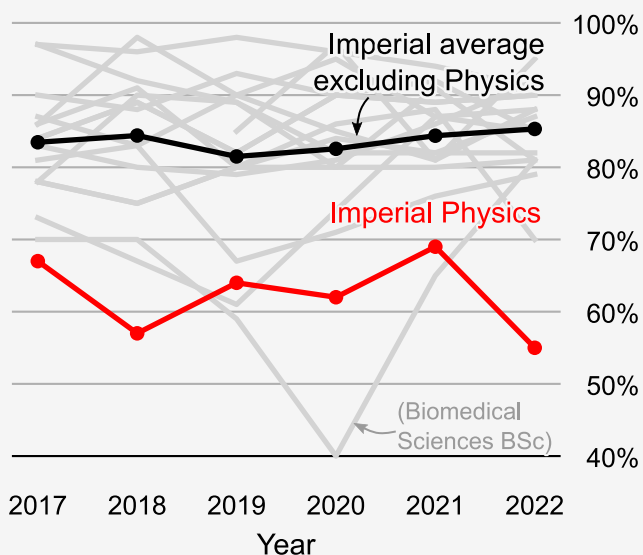
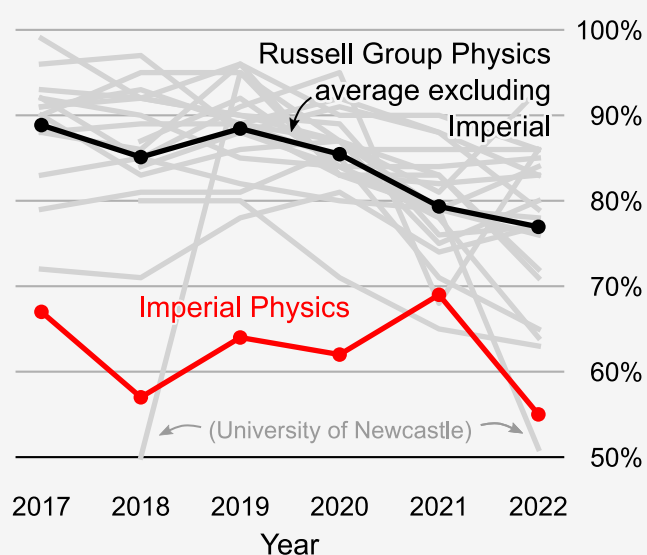
Credit: Jamie John/Felix



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Light-years apart

Overall course satisfaction, Imperial's Physics department versus its peers

Imperial College London**Russell Group Physics**

Source: National Student Survey (NSS)

Felix is the student newspaper of Imperial College London

Even though the lecturer wanted to.”

Office hours are available for students with queries; yet, as a fourth-year student explained, “People are in two minds about it. Either they understand it so they’ve got nothing to ask, or they’re too far behind to even bother going.” This dichotomy seems to dissuade students from going, as one second-year student tells *Felix*. “No one who should go to office hours goes to office hours. People would much rather just struggle and not have any sort of contact with members of the university than actually attend office hours”.

A welfare representative suggests this is a consistent theme: optional events to answer students' questions are attended only by a small group of students who are up to date on their work and go out of their way to attend. "The people that are struggling — they don't actually get all this information because they're not attending these events."

"I think it's these people we need to be reaching out to the most. For example, many of those who are really behind

The current first-year cohort has asked its representatives to create study groups for them so they can solve more problems together. Most students find that their best source of help is their cohort's group chat, which several said was better than the support provided by lecturers and the department. Already, older students run a helpdesk (sponsored by the department) where students are encouraged to take queries. One third-year student found this was the "most helpful" outlet she had during her degree.

Welfare

Whilst the problems stem from a high workload, the department's attitude to well-being, and its welfare provision, have been roundly criticised. There is a general sense that the department does not take its students' mental health seriously enough.

"I think for many people the best representation of how this course makes them feel is the scene from Indiana Jones, where the Nazi's face is melting", says one second-year student. "The department can see how stressed we are, but what do they do? Nothing. Do they care? No."

A third-year student told *Felix* that her emails to admin staff — requesting additional arrangements to accommodate a medical condition during an exam — were ignored. It was only when she got the Head of Department involved that she received a response.

Welfare events held by the department have been mentioned by several students. "Instead of solving the problem at hand, they provide support such as tea and biscuits, which just seems like the complete wrong approach and doesn't actually help", says one student.

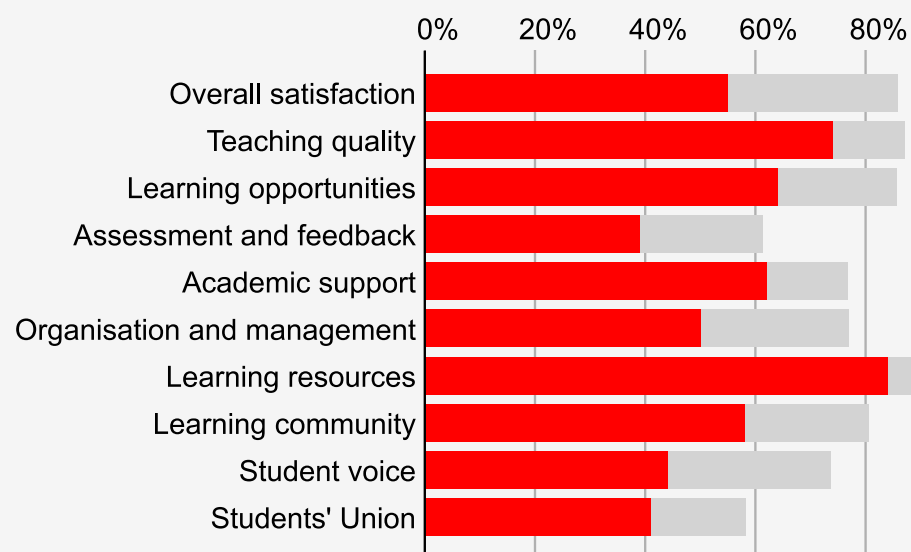
Students' experiences with their personal tutors vary. Some have praised them as "absolutely amazing," but others

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Breakdown by NSS question category

Student satisfaction at Imperial College London, 2022

■ Physics ■ Imperial average excluding Physics



Source: National Student Survey (NSS) data
Felix is the student newspaper of Imperial College London

find their tutors apathetic and indifferent.

One third-year physicist was scathing: "I think my personal tutor doesn't really care. I tell him the same things every time, and he forgets them between meetings... he's not really supportive."

"There are members of the department who are accredited 'Mental Health First Aiders', who I know people have gone to for issues about mental health", says a former Wellbeing Rep. "They've

WE'RE NOT BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY ENOUGH

been told, 'Maybe work harder, so you can take your mind off it'."

Imperial's Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course is accredited by MHFA England. Upon completion of the course, staff are added to the College's MHFAiders list. Nine members of the Department of Physics are currently on the list.

Physics students reserve praise for Mery Fajardo, the department's Disabilities Liaison Officer, who has been described as 'the backbone of the department'. In 2013, she was awarded a Faculty of Natural Sciences Award for Support of Excellence in Teaching.

"I think in many ways, welfare in the department is held up by a couple of people", observes Anthea MacIntosh-La-

Rocque, current RCSU Vice President (Welfare and Wellbeing), and former Physics Departmental Representative. "That puts a lot of pressure on those members of staff that have to deal with the concerns of all these students."

Meanwhile, welfare representatives despair at the department's responses to their feedback. "I feel like we're not being taken seriously enough", says one current Wellbeing Representative. "I became a Wellbeing Rep because I noticed that there's a very stressful and competitive environment in Physics. A lot of people don't really have a work-life balance, and the department doesn't really do enough to help you with that either."

The rep alleges that this problem has been brought up with the Department at meetings, but that nothing has been done about it.

Mitigating circumstances are another topic of discontent. Students complain that there is too much bureaucracy, which leaves people who are already struggling unable to receive the consideration they need.

Alex found the evidence-gathering process required for mitigating circumstances particularly onerous. During a period when they were suffering from depressive episodes, insomnia and anxiety, they said they were put on the spot and asked pointed questions in a face-to-face meeting with the senior tutor.

Eventually, Alex was able to get support, but had to make "pointed" statements in their application form and

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on lectures don't actually know that they can get help with that, so they fall even further behind."

The representative reported these problems to the department, but said the year group organiser's response — "Tell person X about it" — was of no help. "If most of the cohort is stressing out, they're not all just going to go to this one person, because clearly the problem is bigger than that. I mean, [the year group organiser] didn't really take any action on that."

Left adrift, students are banding together to offer each other the learning support they feel they are not receiving.

NEWS

press the department to defer their exams. “I know that my struggles are valid and real, but you had to make it seem like a huge deal to get the support you needed.”

MacIntosh-LaRocque says the problem extends beyond Physics, but that the department could do more to reduce the administrative burden. “Students find the process very difficult — especially since you’re already dealing with a situation that is causing you to submit these mitigating circumstances.”

The ‘guinea pig’ year

The current cohort of fourth-year students, alongside BSc students who graduated last year, feel particularly aggrieved at the actions of the department. In 2019, as these students were beginning university, the Department of Physics introduced a new syllabus.

Many feel that the rollout was conducted without sufficient planning; students described their cohort as guinea pigs. “It just doesn’t feel like they thought it through at all beforehand — they just threw it at us and hoped for the best.” One student tells us as a consequence of its sheer difficulty, the syllabus had to be revised dramatically for subsequent year groups.

An example consistently cited by fourth-year students is the ‘team-based problem solving’ (TBPS) project. First introduced for their cohort in 2021/22, TBPS is a 25-person group project, in which third-year students are asked to solve a data-based physics problem together. Half the cohort completes the module in Autumn Term, while the other half completes it in Spring Term.

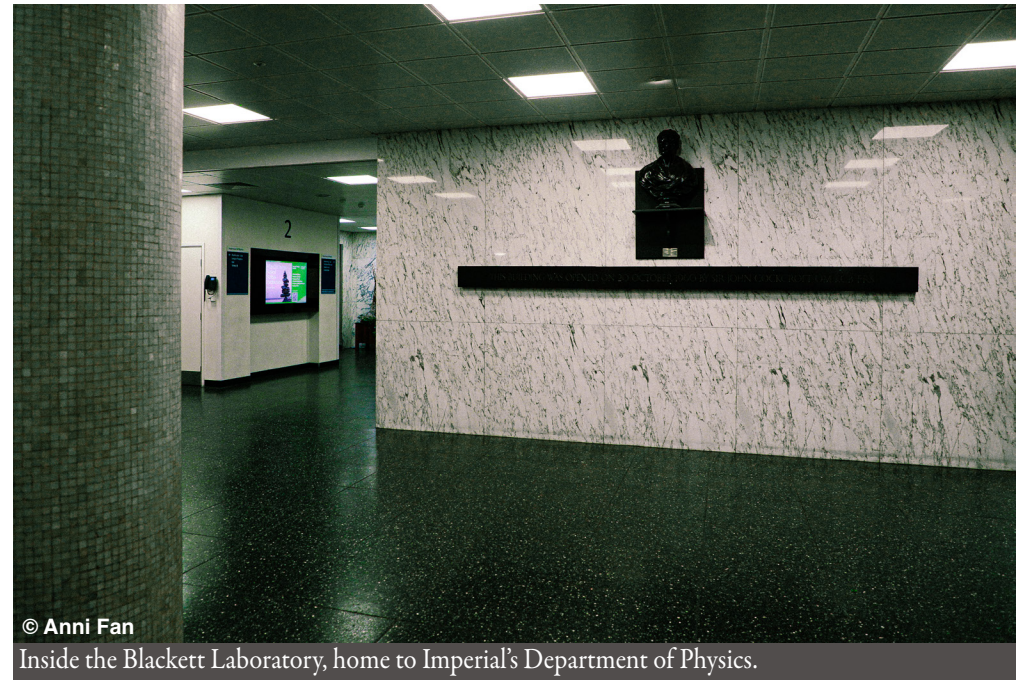
Students in the ‘guinea pig’ year say that they were given very little information on the module until it began, beyond the fact that it was “some sort of group project”. Unaware of TBPS, many had selected electives in order to spread their workload across the year. They were therefore caught out when, in the first week of Autumn Term, they were told it would require a significant time commitment.

As the project unfolded, other problems began to emerge. “It became clear that it [TBPS] had not been formally structured or planned out. The department waited until students got to an obstacle, and then released more information, which made it very difficult to plan around.”

Throughout TBPS, students say they were not given enough support and had to figure everything out for themselves. The module leader, they allege, told them they would be “penalised for asking silly questions”.

Halfway into the project, students realised they were expected to use machine learning (ML) to solve the problem — despite having never been taught ML before. “It was luck of the draw whether you had someone in your group who knew ML or not”, said a former student rep.

The anger and hurt is particularly palpable in the voices of those who took the module in Autumn Term. “A lot of people got burnt out from this project,” says one student. “It made it really, really difficult to get through that first term. I developed some pretty serious mental health conditions during that time as well. In my group, we put a lot of effort



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Inside the Blackett Laboratory, home to Imperial’s Department of Physics.

into it, but by the end, we just didn’t have anything left to give.”

In summary

The responses to the TBPS project are reflective of a wider feeling amongst the so-called guinea-pig cohort, and beyond.

Across year groups, a sense persists that Imperial’s Department of Physics does not care for its students. Throughout, what seems to frustrate Physics students the most is the department’s dismissiveness and lack of understanding. “We don’t feel seen or heard by the department at all”, said one. Students talk of being “infantilised”, and “stranded” — of decisions being made for them, instead of with them. They feel “powerless”.

This was especially the case last year, when students say they were keen to return to in-person lectures, but the department opted to keep them online.

Physics undergraduates feel that they have tried their best to tell the department what needs improving, and convey their opinions through surveys and student representatives. Yet they see very little tangible change. “It’s really frustrating. Why are you asking me for my opinion if you’re not going to do anything about it anyway?”, asks a recent graduate.

Course representatives talk of being side-lined by the department at meetings, and feel that they are not listened to. “Rather than taking the feedback and looking at the issue, the department explains to everybody, ‘This is why we’ve done this’, instead of asking, ‘What can we actually do to fix this?’”

The lack of acknowledgement has led to disillusionment. Physics undergradu-

ates who spoke to Felix have called the department “two-faced”, “survivalist”, and “Machiavellian”.

There is a sense that things are slowly — at a glacial pace — improving. Felix understands that over the summer of 2022, in response to its low NSS scores, the department commissioned working groups, consisting of students and staff, to try to understand the problem.

It remains to be seen what impact its future initiatives will have. But through talking to students, one thing is clear: the department’s past actions have left an indelible mark on the lives of many of the Physics undergraduates who have passed through its doors.

Alex, the student we spoke to at the beginning of this piece, was part of the guinea-pig year. They chose not to stay on for a master’s degree after their experiences at Imperial’s Department of Physics:

“Whenever things go wrong, the department just shrugs its shoulders and is like, ‘Oh well, we’ll do it better next time’. And for them, that’s fine because they get to have that learning curve. But for me, this affected my grades, my well-being and my whole experience.”

“I no longer knew why I was doing Physics. The degree had very much taken the fun out of it. I think all of us, when we started, enjoyed learning, and that was taken away from us. It was just about surviving, not really about thriving, or being excited about the subject. I had my first anxiety attack at Imperial, and mental breakdowns became a very normal part of my life. I’ve been going to therapy for a year now.”

The Department has been approached for comment.



© Anni Fan

Outside the Physics welfare staff offices.

Continued from page 3...

spondents said they're likely to leave the sector within the next 5 years because of either their pay, pensions, or working conditions. These strikes are for the future of education."

She emphasises the particular importance of recognising this within the Imperial student community, as many will go into academia, "so these strikes are for their future working conditions," she argues.

Although the College have said that

any money saved throughout the strikes by withholding pay will be "reinvested to support our students' experience", Natalia believes that any benefit to students from this is grossly undermined by fundamental flaws within the higher education landscape, and that students will suffer until the dispute is settled. She explains "The UCU opposes the marketised model of education that puts profit above the wellbeing of both staff and students — the same model that means that we have to pay extortionate tuition

fees. Their fight is our fight."

Whilst striking staff welcome the extra pressure exerted by students, I ask what she thinks students can bring that striking staff cannot. Natalia explains how she feels that striking staff have been unfairly portrayed by the press, who often discuss the impact on students in a way that villanises the staff. She hopes that students visibly being on the side of striking staff will undermine these narratives.

Staff are grateful for the support from

students thus far, and hope to win over more, vowing in Thursday's meeting to "work and communicate closely with students who already support us, and talk to other students as much as we can."

Whilst the group gets off their ground, she advises frustrated students to continue to channel their anger into action by emailing the president and provost about the disruption.

The group will next meet on Thursday 2nd March.

Launch of Cleantech for UK draws big names to South Kensington campus

► *Co-founded by Imperial climate accelerator 'Undaunted', the Cleantech initiative aims to increase funding and publicity for clean technology-based climate solutions.*

Zanna Buckland Co-Editor-in-Chief

At approximately 3pm on Wednesday 15th February, crowds of students and staff began to form outside various entry points to Imperial Business School and the City and Guilds Building (CAGB). This followed circulation around campus of reported sightings - via group chats, social media, and word of mouth - of Microsoft founder Bill Gates and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak with Imperial College President Hugh Brady and Vice Provost for Research and Enterprise Professor Mary Ryan.

Many people were wondering what brought the pair of VIPs to the university, and the following comment from Brady might answer just that question. He stated that "achieving net-zero will require an enormous step-change in our economy, industry, and civic systems. Imperial College London, one of the world's leading universities, has the talent, resources, and influence to help accelerate the world towards this goal."

Sunak and Gates were at the College for the launch of Cleantech for UK; a coalition of parties aiming to invest in and support the development of 'clean technology' (e.g., renewable energy generators, carbon capture technology). The PM hopes that "a new generation of talented British businesses can be confident that they have the backing to

unlock green solutions to some of the biggest challenges we face", and believes that "investing in renewables and cleantech is one of the best ways to strengthen energy security, create better-paid jobs, and grow the economy".

A founding member of the coalition is Undaunted, a new cleantech accelerator programme led by Imperial's Grantham Institute for Climate Change in collaboration with The Royal Institution. Breakthrough Energy, a collection of investment firms founded by Gates, which aims to stimulate change in the clean energy sector, is another co-founder of the coalition. Accelerator programmes act as a fast-track, supporting businesses - start-ups in particular - in preparing for and showcasing their product proposals to investors, who can then provide funding opportunities.

Gates believes that "the UK has all the ingredients to become a major player in the global push to build a net-zero emissions future, including world-class research facilities and forward-looking investors."

Three major clean technology scale-ups were showcased at the Cleantech launch, each with ties to researchers and to accelerator programmes at Imperial:

Crop Intellect, an R&D firm in the agritech industry, is tackling clean technology for agriculture; their 'R-Leaf' technology converts nitrogen-based air pollutants into useful field-scale feed for

plants, simultaneously reducing pollution and enabling better crop growth and food security. The start-up's work has been supported by Dr Andreas Kafizas, a researcher specialising in light-activated materials in Imperial's Chemistry Department.

H2Go Power is waiting for a patent for their reactor that stores solid-state hydrogen, which can then be released on-demand. Through their patented cleantech products, they aim to improve the storage and management of the renewable fuel hydrogen to encourage progress towards net-zero emissions. Based at Imperial's White City Innovation campus, the start-up was co-founded by Dr Enass Abo-Hamed, a Royal Academy of Engineering Enterprise Fellow associated with the College, and entered into Imperial's Climate-KIC Accelerator Programme in 2017.

Finally, Econic Ltd. is developing technology to recycle carbon captured from the atmosphere into cheap, sustainable plastic materials. Their catalyst technology is used to react CO₂ with epoxide chemicals to form them into short-chain polymers. These polymers are then used by manufacturers to tailor their materials' CO₂ content depending on the properties desired. Econic was founded by Professor Charlotte Williams and Dr



Credit: Zanna Buckland

A crowd of students outside the main Imperial entrance hoping for a glimpse of the PM and Bill Gates. Sunak's entourage drove past on Exhibition Road about 15 minutes later.

Michael Kember, who have both done work at Imperial in the past. After participating in an Imperial climate accelerator in 2012, the company has now been able to develop and patent many of their innovative technology designs.

The ideas behind these start-ups were all developed with the help and funding from investors, many of whom will have been introduced via climate accelerator programmes such as those at Imperial. Cleantech for UK aims to 'supercharge' innovation by making funding more accessible to these kinds of start-ups. There is reportedly more than £6 billion in investment funds available to young businesses that come up with viable cleantech-based solutions for the UK to reach the target of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Sunak also took the opportunity to publicise his recent restructuring of the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) into three new distinct departments: Science, Innovation, and Technology; Energy Se-

NEWS

Credit: 10 Downing Street



Gates and Sunak in a discussion at Imperial's South Kensington campus.

curity and Net-Zero Security; and Business and Trade.

While at Imperial, Sunak and Gates also answered a series of questions that were generated for them by ChatGPT based on previous public speeches they had each given. This demonstrated the ability of natural language processing machine learning to create conversation.

The first question asked was 'how do you think tech will impact the global economy and job market in the next 10 years?' Gates responded that labour shortages, changes in healthcare and education, and increased efficiency would

be important elements for the future economy, and that "hopefully tech like [ChatGPT] can help us be more efficient".

When asked about his vision for the UK economy post-Brexit, Sunak discussed the importance of technological innovation, and that it is vital to support young businesses and start-ups with funding to help them realise their potential. He also commented on how, in the aftermath of the pandemic, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, and Turkish earthquake crisis, "people can come together to support each other in difficult times".

Other questions the AI asked were about important advice they'd received and how it influenced their lives and careers; what advice they would give to their younger selves in their early careers and how they would work differently; and what part of their job they would most like an AI to be able to do for them. A video of the Q&A session has been uploaded to 10 Downing Street's YouTube account, for those who wish to see the full conversation.

Returning to the purpose of the Cleantech for UK event, a statement from Professor Ryan nicely sums up the

coalition's goals and the reason for holding it at Imperial College:

"We are in the centre of triple planetary crises – climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Developing and deploying new technologies to build a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable future is urgent. This initiative will bring together key partners to provide the systems-thinking, solutions-focus, and resources to unlock the potential of the UK's innovators. Imperial is ideally placed to drive this revolution."

Credit: 10 Downing Street



Rishi Sunak and Bill Gates speaking to representatives from Eonic Ltd. in CAGB.

WOMEN @ IMPERIAL MARCH 2023 EVENTS

MONDAY 6TH

09:30-12:30

Harassment training for managers (online)

12:30-13:30

The Patriarchs: how men came to rule (South Kensington)

14:00-15:30

Influence and Negotiation (South Kensington)

TUESDAY 7TH

09:30-11:00

In conversation with academic women (online)

12:00-14:00

Women in STEM and entrepreneurship (South Kensington)

14:00-16:00

Invisible Insecurity: how to deal with Imposter syndrome (hybrid)

WEDNESDAY 8TH

(International Women's Day!)

12:30-13:30

Women in STEM - international insights (South Kensington)

16:00-19:00

Inspiration beyond the bend (White City)

19:00-20:00

Women in STEM seminar: conservation (South Kensington + online)

THURSDAY 9TH

12:30-13:30

Being allies to survivors of sexual and gender based violence (South Kensington)

14:00-16:00

Springboard development programme taster (online)

FRIDAY 10TH

12:30-13:30

IAO Belonging interview with Professor Priscilla Reddy (online)

17:00 onwards

Women at Imperial Party (South Kensington - Queen's Tower Rooms)



SCAN ME

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Students campaigning for LGBT-friendly medical curriculum

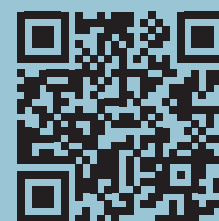
THIS MONTH IN...

2017

It is often said that journalism is the first rough draft of history. Here at *Felix*, we'd like to offer you a glimpse into the history of the College, as told in the pages of our very own news section. Each issue (space-permitting), join us as we explore stories from our extensive archive, which spans 74 years, all the way back to our founding in 1949.

If you would like to browse the archive for yourself, scan the QR code.

Email us if you find something interesting!



► A few years ago, medics at Imperial realised that there was a lack of good training in caring for LGBT patients.

► The result was a campaign to improve medical staff's attitudes towards patients in the LGBT community, through pushing for more comprehensive inclusivity training.

► This month in 2017, *Felix* reported on the campaign. The story was featured in *Felix* issue 1656 (right).

Friday 10 February 2017

felix@imperial.ac.uk felixonline.co.uk/news 5



Imperial students launch campaign to make medical curriculum LGBT-inclusive

Michael Wilkinson discusses the **lack** of LGBT training in the **NHS** and the steps that are taken to improve services for the **queer** community

The founding principles of the NHS were that it should meet the needs of everyone, be free at the point of delivery, and be based on clinical need, not ability to pay. Those of us watching BBC's Hospital last week, were reminded of the importance of these values, as we witnessed overseas patients facing exorbitant bills for life-saving treatment.

Unfortunately, the NHS is not meeting the needs of everyone. A recent government report on transgender equality addressed the very real challenges facing trans people in accessing health services, highlighting "the persistent refusal of some GPs to even make referrals to gender identity clinics". A recent survey of Imperial students

\\ There's the persistent refusal of some GPs to even make referrals to gender identity clinics \\

conducted by IQ (Imperial LGBT+ Society), echoed this, with our trans peers having experienced discrimination from GPs and GUM doctors (sexual health specialists). Understandably this leads to distrust in a profession that ought to be the most trustworthy. One trans patient was even told they would be "taking money away from more deserving cancer patients", an argument gay

\\ A shocking 24% of NHS staff have heard colleagues making negative remarks about LGBT people \\

and bisexual men are used to hearing from the Daily Mail (denouncing HIV prevention drug PrEP), but not something we expect from our doctors. LGBT patients face similar prejudices, with Stonewall's Unhealthy Attitudes report revealing that a shocking 24% of NHS staff have heard colleagues making negative remarks about LGBT people. A similarly appalling 10% of staff have heard colleagues expressing the belief that LGBT people can be 'cured' using conversion therapy, a sodistic practice that has been condemned by most major medical organisations. Doctors have been quoted stating that "being transgender is mostly a mental condition" and "deviations are not to be considered by mainstream society", attitudes that don't belong in this century, never mind our public services.

The belief held by many that LGBT people are now on equal footing with their straight counterparts does not match the experience of the community, particularly regarding access to healthcare. This is largely driven by a lack of understanding, rather than willful discrimination, with 10% of staff not feeling able to meet the needs of LGBT patients - rising to 24% for trans patients. LGBT patients face higher rates of sexually-

transmitted diseases, mental health problems and addiction whilst facing prejudice and ignorance from health professionals that discourage them from seeking help. Dr. John Dean, chair of the committee advising the NHS on gender identity services, explained that "People working in the service try to be empathic; they are certainly sympathetic, but they lack a great deal of background knowledge about gender incongruence and dysphoria." This is symptomatic of a medical education system that is failing to prepare future doctors to support trans people, as well as the wider



Charing Cross Gender Identity Clinic \\ Ted Eyles

queer community. Imperial is no different in this arena. One might expect an internationally renowned institution to be leading the way in improving quality of care for all patients, but the current curriculum is frustratingly light on LGBT issues. Apart from a vague reference to not discriminating against patients on the basis of sexual orientation or gender, and an acknowledgement that LGBT

\\ Some lecturers have made an effort to be inclusive in their teaching, but most fail to maintain a basic distinction between gender and sex \\

health inequalities exist, there is no teaching on the specific challenges faced by LGBT people. Some lecturers have made an effort to be inclusive in their teaching, but most fail to maintain a basic distinction

the medical curriculum. We're aiming to include compulsory teaching on gender dysphoria, health inequalities, and non-binary gender identities/sexualities, as well as more diverse sexual health teaching. Medical students are taught to always communicate sensitively and put the patient first, so we are also campaigning to improve clinical communication teaching; small things like asking about pronouns and the sex of sexual partners make a big difference to patients. A laborious review of the current curriculum has yielded a comprehensive plan of where teaching can be improved, which was recently presented to Mr. Lupton and Dr. Harris, the Head and Deputy Head of Undergraduate Medicine.

Thankfully, the faculty have been very receptive to making these improvements, and they are being incorporated into the ongoing curriculum review process. It remains to be seen whether this will result in meaningful change to teaching, but we are hopeful that this will be implemented - and make a real difference to the future LGBT patients of Imperial doctors.

\\ One of the most cited problems by Imperial medical students was that all gay men in our practice exam questions have HIV \\

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Write an LGBTQ+ Piece for Felix



Interested in being featured in Felix?

Then write a LGBTQ+ book/film/art review, LGBTQ+ science and environment article or about your personal LGBTQ+ experiences!

Original artwork and photography are also welcome!

Write either half a page (300-400 words), or a full page article (500-600 words).

Submit it felix@ic.ac.uk by the 1st of March



Imperial College LGBTQ+

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Scientists probe first observational evidence linking black holes to dark energy

► *Roughly 70% of the universe is made of dark energy, an unknown force that can affect the universe on the largest of scales. Scientists claim they've found its source through the 'cosmological coupling' of black holes.*

Taylor Pomfret Science Editor

Efforts to construct a black hole model in general relativity have been ongoing for nearly a century. Exploring the motivation for this project, 17 researchers published a series of papers in *The Astrophysical Journal* and *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*, claiming that the astrophysical origin of dark energy is black holes, reaffirming theories of the universe outlined by general relativity. The team leveraged data from three astronomical surveys: Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE), Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS), and the Cosmological Evolution Survey (COSMOS). Analyses of their results were published across two papers, titled 'A Preferential Growth Channel for Supermassive Black Holes in Elliptical Galaxies at $z \leq 2$ ' and 'Observational Evidence for Cosmological Coupling of Black Holes and its Implications for an Astrophysical Source of Dark Energy', which featured the study's first author, Dr Duncan Farrah, a University of Hawai'i astronomer and former Imperial PhD student, and co-author Dr Dave Clements, reader in astrophysics within the Department of Physics at Imperial.

What is the motivation to study dark energy?

The study revealed, through the measurements of galaxies, that black holes are growing more than expected, aligning with a phenomenon predicted by Einstein's theory of general relativity, first postulated in 1916. Motivation to explain this phenomenon was explored in 1998 following observations from the Supernova Cosmology Project and the High-Z Supernova Search Team, which demonstrated that the

expansion of the Universe is accelerating – such that everything in the universe is moving away from everything else at an increasingly fast rate. This result was counter-intuitive: the pull of gravity between all objects in the Universe should be slowing the expansion of the universe down. To account for gravity, it was proposed that a dark energy was responsible for pushing things apart more strongly than gravity – which linked to a concept Einstein referred to as the cosmological constant, Λ . The constant also refers to a kind of energy included in spacetime, vacuum energy, which pushes the universe further apart, thus accelerating its expansion.

Black holes: their properties and importance in general relativity

Modelling black holes using Einstein's theory of general relativity has been met with limited success. Black holes are problematic; the point of infinity, known as a singularity, residing at the centre of a black hole results in an intense gravitational field from which nothing, not even light, can escape. Results from this study reveal that black holes gain mass in such a way that is consistent with them containing vacuum energy, a fact that would remove the need for singularities to form in their centre. This is compatible with Einstein's concept of gravity. The team made a series of observations of black holes in dormant galaxies which revealed that they were seven to 20 times more massive than expected. Dormant galaxies are galaxies which have finished forming stars, leaving little material available to accrete and contribute to the

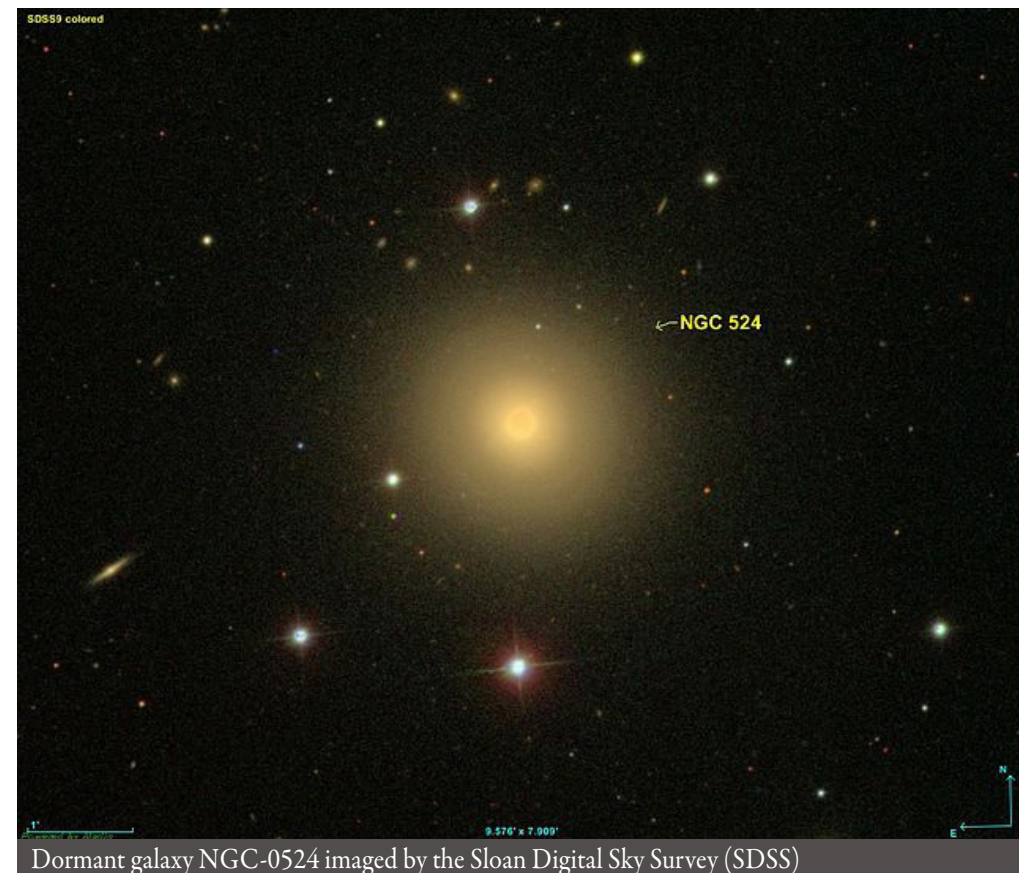
mass of the black hole. Any additional growth cannot therefore be explained by the accumulation of mass. It is instead claimed that black holes achieve this growth through a phenomenon called 'cosmological coupling', which allows black holes to grow and gain mass without consuming gas or stars.

What next?

Researchers of the cosmological coupling study have probed a radical rethink of black holes through their observations of dormant elliptical galaxies. The cosmological coupling model neatly provides a possible origin for dark energy in the universe, concluding that black holes are capable of providing enough vacuum energy necessary to account for all of the dark energy that is measured in the

universe today. Further observations confirming this phenomenon of cosmological coupling will redefine our understanding of what a black hole is, one that is compatible with Einstein's theory of general relativity and capable of sourcing dark energy. The question of the nature of dark energy is perhaps the most important, unanswered question of modern physics. Scientists acquiring the first observational evidence of dark energy and cosmological coupling is an exciting, yet premature, proposed solution to this question. More work and research on the long-standing mystery of dark energy will continue to expand our understanding of the fundamental physics of our universe and will hopefully confirm a long sought-after component of our models of the cosmos.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons



SCIENCE

Could *The Last of Us* really happen? An in-

► Resident mushroom enthusiast (read: vegetarian) Sam Lovatt sits down with Professor Fisher to discuss

Sam Lovatt Science Writer

In 1692 Massachusetts, several young girls became suddenly ill with bouts of unnerving symptoms, including temporary blindness, skin lesions, and hallucinations. A local doctor, unable to think of a medical reason for such afflictions, diagnosed the girls with ‘bewitchment’, a proclamation that led to the mass hysteria and mob behaviour known today as the Salem Witch Trials. As the field of medicine has advanced, scholars have sought a more robust explanation for the girls’ symptoms. An explanation more likely than ‘bewitchment’ is ergot poisoning, caused by the ingestion of by-products of the fungus *Claviceps purpurea*, well-suited for colonising moist rye crop. People who ingest rye grains infected with *C. purpurea* may be consuming dangerous quantities of lysergic acid, an LSD precursor that can wreak havoc on the nervous system. People suffering from ergot poisoning may appear hysterical and report crawling sensations across the skin as well as hallucinations. Continued exposure causes ergotism — also called St Anthony’s Fire — so named for the intense burning pain it causes in the extremities, ultimately leading to gangrene as blood supply is consistently cut off.

The damage caused by *C. purpurea* is just one of many excruciating, fascinating examples of fungal infection and toxicity that Matthew Fisher, Professor of Fungal Epidemiology at Imperial College gives me, as we sit down to talk about HBO’s new hit series *The Last of Us* (TLOU), and fungal pathologies in general. My idea to interview a fungus expert in the wake of TLOU’s release was not as original as I had hoped, I quickly learned. The day prior, Mat had done an interview for American broadcaster CNN on the same topic, as one of a relatively small network of fungus experts who have recently found themselves inundated with public interest (Mat pronounces it ‘fun-ji’ rather than ‘fun-guy’, if any pedants were wondering). While media requests no doubt take their toll, the attention

is an overall good thing for the field; fungal diseases are largely overlooked by the public as a major health concern, even though fungal infections cause around 1.6 million deaths per year, more than those caused by HIV and malaria combined. Fungus research receives only 5% of the funding that the ‘sexier’ fields such as bacterial-antimicrobial resistance, malaria, and others receive. This lack of attention leads to deaths that would be avoidable if medics were trained to spot fungal infections as well as bacterial ones; fungal meningitis treated with antibiotics will continue to damage its host unscathed.

The scope of fungal infections, even in the developed world, is astounding. Professor Fisher tells me that as many as 30% of ICU patients whose lungs were badly damaged by COVID-19 also went on to be infected by *Aspergillus* — a common mould present in almost every breath we take, but which is normally shut down by our immune system even before we know it’s there. For this same reason, abnormal fungal infections in the lungs of gay men were one of the first signs that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was taking hold during the ‘80s. Things are likely to get worse. Obesity rates are soaring across the world, particularly in the West, where an abundance of fatty and sugary foods lead to weight gain and increased risk of diabetes. Fungi thrive in sugary environments, and the saccharine blood of a diabetic is an optimal environment for some fungal pathogens once they enter the bloodstream. Steroids prescribed to treat severe SARS-CoV-2 infections down-regulate macrophage activity, opening the doors for fungi to slip in.

After spending far longer than planned jumping from one astounding pathogen to another (I did suggest that Mat write a popular science book on the subject, but he valiantly said he was too busy with his research) we get to the meat of why we’re doing this interview. Could a pandemic such as the one seen in *The Last of Us*, caused by a brain-controlling fungus, actually happen? No, is the short answer. “Fungi such as *Cordyceps*, the infective agent in *The Last of Us* spend

millennia evolving to thoroughly infect and control specific species of insect. They can’t even jump from one type of ant to another. The odds of such a specific infective agent adapting to infect humans are vanishingly small, as everything the fungus uses to infect that one insect is exquisitely honed to its body. That being said, there is an analogy to be drawn with *Toxoplasma gondii* (a malaria-like pathogen that infects mice, causing them to behave erratically and present themselves to cats to be eaten). *T. gondii* has a

lifecycle that requires it be eaten by a cat, but can also infect humans, which are almost never preyed upon. Infected humans also undergo behavioural manipulation, but much more bluntly, where they essentially are just more likely to partake in risky behaviour. It’s possible that a similar jump could be made by a fungus, but it would almost certainly just result in

behavioural changes and would not be transmissible to other humans once in an initial host. This would essentially leave it with a similar effect to *C.*



purpurea. We’ve not seen this sort of expert behavioural manipulation infection spill over from insects into other animals before.”

The opening scene of the series is of a

Interview with a fungal expert

...ss their favourite mushroom recipes.

talk-show host interviewing a scientist, Dr Neuman, who paints an exceptionally bleak picture of what a fungal pandemic would look like, saying that there is no treatment and no cure.

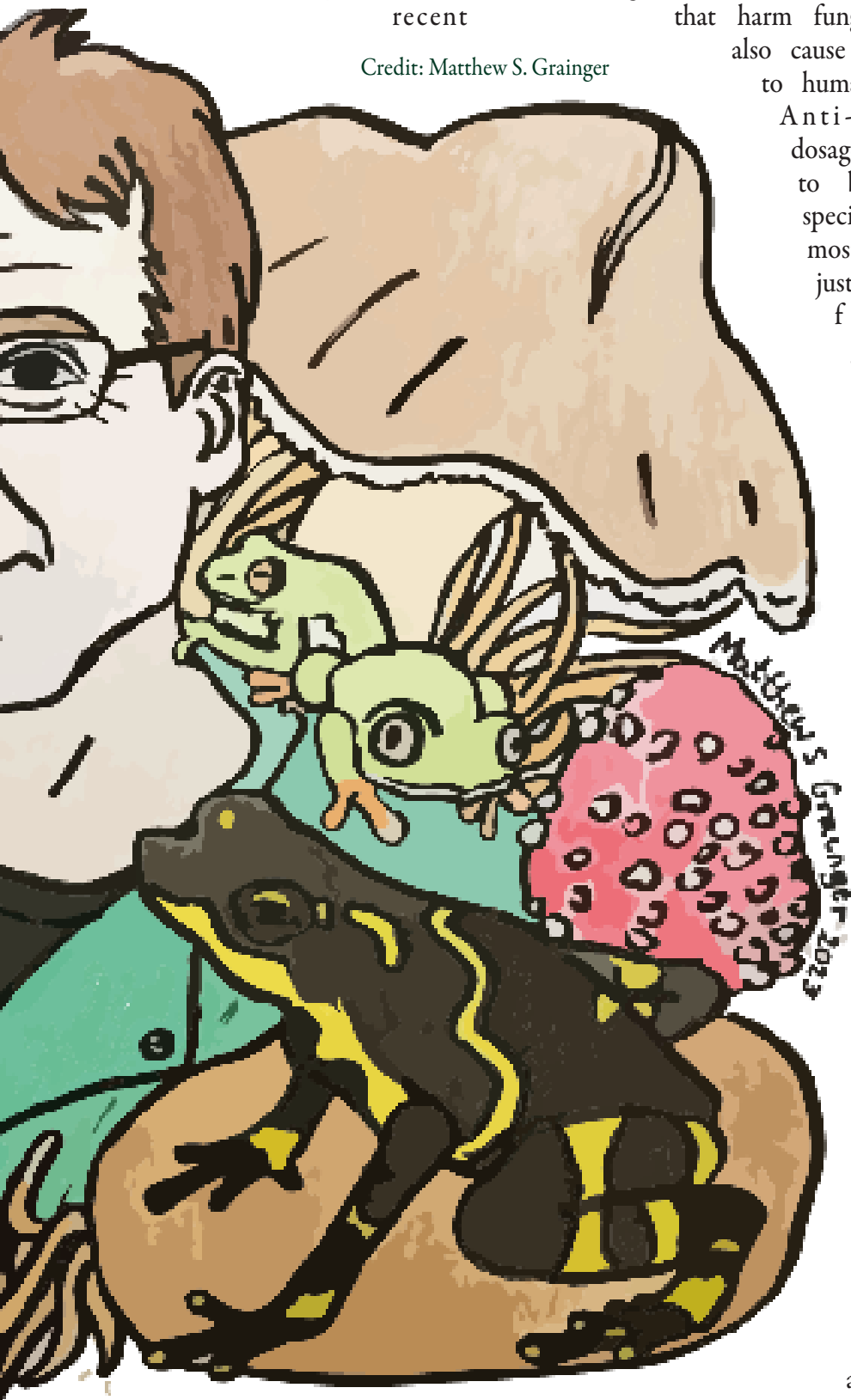
Conversely, Fisher's most recent

speaking half a century ago when anti-fungal drugs had not been developed and there was no effective way of treating an invasive fungal infection, and today it is still very difficult. Fungi are a sister kingdom to animals, and drugs

that harm fungi often also cause damage to human cells.

Anti-fungal dosage has to be very specific and most act just to limit fungal growth rather than

Credit: Matthew S. Grainger



work has been on the spread of drug resistance in fungi. How can there be drug resistance if no drugs exist?

“Dr Neuman is partially right. He was

speaking half a century ago when anti-fungal drugs had not been developed and there was no effective way of treating an invasive fungal infection, and today it is still very difficult. Fungi are a sister kingdom to animals, and drugs

that harm fungi often also cause damage to human cells.

Anti-fungal dosage has to be very specific and most act just to limit fungal growth rather than

actually killing the cells. Once a fungus colonises a bodily compartment, which might be totally obscure, it can be very hard to actually deliver the anti-fungal to the correct area.”

Professor Fisher started his academic

career as a zoologist, studying at Edinburgh University whilst focused on parasitology. The realisation that most parasitologists spend their careers studying, in his words, animal shit, led to a change of heart and a move to post-doc work in a lab researching the valley fever fungus at University of California, Berkeley. Now, having been at Imperial for 18 years, his office is on the 11th floor of the Sir Michael Uren building at the White City campus, which has one of the most astounding panoramic views of London I've ever seen. Stepping into his office I am bombarded by frogs. No real ones, as far as I could see, but artwork of a frog sitting next to some mushrooms flank framed copies of the prestigious scientific journals *Science* and *Nature*, displaying amphibians on their front covers in reference to Mat's work on fungal epidemics that have devastated global frog populations. Why do amphibians get such a hard time from fungi?

“Amphibians were the first things on four legs to leave the oceans and come into contact with the fungi that already existed on the land, and their skin is a two-way exchange that provides a perfect entry point for fungi. They had to evolve defences against invaders immediately and today's amphibians produce an amazing array of antimicrobials from bodily glands. They are actually very resistant to fungal infections, so it was quite shocking for the scientific community to see, around the middle of the 20th century, swathes of amphibians dying across the world as a result of a fungal infection. The culprit, a chytrid fungus, was spread partly as a result of human globalisation exposing the fungus to amphibian populations that hadn't seen it before, and is the most destructive infectious disease ever in terms of damage to biodiversity, including all viruses and bacteria. In Asia, this fungus has evolved alongside native amphibians and doesn't cause them any harm, but other populations are defenceless. If you go to the neotropics now you will hardly hear a frog calling, as a result of this infection.”

Some viruses, such as SARS-CoV-2,

can cause infection through as few as one virus particle entering the body. This is almost always not the case with fungi; a significant dose is normally required for an infection to take root, and very large doses of even the most commonplace fungus that one would find in a garden compost bin can cause a fatal infection in a healthy human. “Dosage is hugely important. Macrophages, immune cells that normally swallow anything unusual they come across in the blood, are the first line of defence against fungal invaders. If the dose is high enough to overwhelm the macrophages present in your blood, an infection can get a foothold in your body. Some fungi also have the ability to manipulate macrophages and survive even after they've been swallowed, which turns the macrophage from a defensive player to a vehicle that traffics the fungus around the body. We think this might be because macrophages are a lot like amoeba, single celled organisms that prey on fungi in the wild, which fungi have evolved defences against.”

There is still some reason for positivity. The World Health Organization recently released its first fungal priority pathogen list, signalling to the medical research community that fungi are a force to be reckoned with. The first ever fungal vaccine has recently shown promising results in preclinical trials, targeting the three most common human fungal pathogens all at once.

“These advances are promising, but the best option is always to not open Pandora's box of pathogens in the first place. History shows us that we have terrible global biosecurity, and improving this through screening for fungal pathogens and reducing contamination where possible keeps the risk of new pathogens emerging as low as possible. If there's one thing I could bring to the public's attention it would be that we really don't know the ecosystem-level effects of spraying fungicides in the quantities that we do today. We're starting to see the inklings of consequences in global ecosystems, and I don't know where that's going to end up but it's not going to be good”.

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SCIENCE

The redemption of mustard gas

► *Wang Guo on how a weapon of warfare has been harnessed for battling cancer.*

Wang Guo Science Writer

Mustard gas was a compound used in World War I as a chemical weapon, causing painful internal and external burns and ending 100,000 lives. However, inanimate objects are not inherently prejudicial or beneficial to humans; it is the usage of them that really matters. In the case of mustard gas, this was proven years after WWI when it shifted from ending lives to saving them.

The horrors: origins and use in war

Mustard gas was created by Frederick Guthrie in 1860. With a yellow colour and mustard odour, the synthesised compound was toxic to humans in two ways. First, mustard gas is a blistering agent and irritant, affecting the eyes, skin, and respiratory system. Second, mustard gas can lead to DNA mutations by adding unnatural carbon-hydrogen molecules to the nitrogen bases of DNA, which causes base mispairing. The effect of mustard gas is dose-dependent, ranging from simple skin and eye irritation to an agonising death with blisters all over the body.

The employment of mustard gas as a chemical weapon started in WWI and was developed by the scientist Fritz Haber, who also invented nitrogen fertiliser. Mustard gas was very effective

Credit: Wikimedia Commons



against enemy soldiers that were secluded in trenches, as their small space increased the gas's lethality. In addition, unlike other chemical weapons, the effect of mustard gas could not be countered with gas masks as the gas could be absorbed through the skin. The affected soldiers were in a critical situation as two options were presented to them, both equally hopeless: exit the trenches and be an easy target for enemy fire, or stay to be poisoned. The suffering caused, and the fact that mustard gas does not discriminate between enemies and allies, triggered the fighting countries to agree to never use chemical weapons, including mustard gas, ever again in warfare.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons



British physicist, Frederick Guthrie (1880), one of the first scientists to document the toxic effects of mustard gas.

The redemption: chemotherapy

From tragedies, hope can be restored. In 1943, US president Theodore Roosevelt sent a ship called SS John Harvey to Bari, Italy, with the secret mission of delivering 100 tons of mustard gas to the Allies. This was due to all the participants of WWII having chemical weapons stocked in case the other side were to use them. Unfortunately, Germany bombarded Bari, which sank SS John Harvey and

released its lethal cargo into the water and air of the city. The entire crew of SS John Harvey died, so nobody was able to inform the citizens of Bari about the impending chemical danger. A few days later, soldiers and civilians succumbed to mustard gas intoxication.

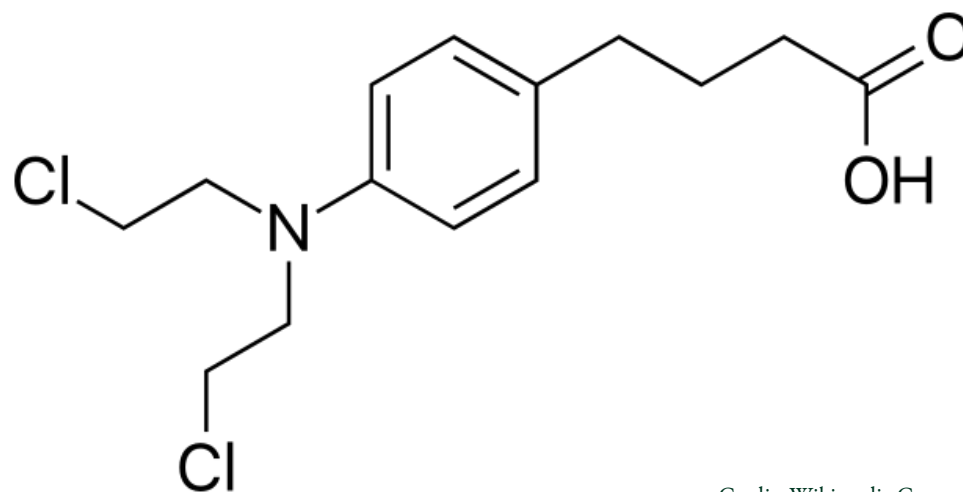
When looking through the victims' medical records, doctors Louis Goodman and Alfred Gilman noticed that they showed a significant decrease in white blood cell counts, presumably due to mustard gas damaging their DNA. Goodman and Gilman hypothesised that mustard gas could be used to kill cancerous white blood cells as well, seeding the idea for a novel chemotherapy for blood cancer. A cancer patient known as JD suffered from advanced lymphosarcoma. He had a huge tumour in his jaw that did not allow him to eat properly and multiple tumours in the armpits that disrupted his sleep. Doctors said his future seemed hopeless. Without many options, he decided to undergo a clinical trial with nitrogen mustard (the substrate to synthesise mustard gas) conducted by Goodman and Gilman. Surprisingly, the tumours regressed and JD could sleep and eat properly again.

A huge breakthrough occurred in the fight against cancer using the same compound that killed thousands 25 years ago. After WWII, chemist Alexander Haddow modified the chemical structure of nitrogen mustard to reduce its side effects while enhancing its therapeutic properties. This modified

drug is called chlorambucil, which was approved for medical use in the United States in 1957. *Chlorambucil* belongs to a group of drugs called alkylating agents. The drug works by means of sticking to one of the cancer cell's two DNA strands. This blocking of the formation of DNA prevents the cancer cells from separating – thus slowing or stopping the growth of cancer cells. The medication is sold under the name Leukeran, and is used to treat certain types of cancer (such as chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, Hodgkin lymphoma, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma).

The work of Goodman, Gilman, and Haddow was instrumental in the development of modern chemotherapy, as it showed that toxic compounds can be modified to cure cancer. This fostered investigation from other scientists across the globe into other chemicals with cancer-killing properties, resulting in the wide variety of chemotherapies available today.

The story of JD did not have a happy ending. His cancer was too advanced to be completely reversed by nitrogen mustard and he passed away six months after being treated, but JD's quality of life improved significantly in his final months thanks to the treatment. The case of mustard gas shows that even the most sinister chemical can be used for good purposes, we just need to find out how. It is only the selfishness and hate of human nature that make them become weapons of mass destruction.



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Molecular structure of *chlorambucil*, a 'nitrogen mustard' synthesised through mustard gas. Sold under the name 'Leukeran', the drug is used as a chemotherapy medication used to treat chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL), Hodgkin lymphoma, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

What's on in Science?

Scan the QR codes for more info on each event!

Your guide to science-related shows, events, and opportunities around the city!

Exhibition: Cut + Paste

Date: Running now until 2nd December 2023

Price: Free (no registration required)

Location: The Francis Crick Institute, Manby Gallery, 1 Midland Road (short distance from King's Cross St. Pancras station)

Accessibility info: Wheelchair accessible with seating throughout; Braille + large print books available; sensory backpacks available; induction loop installed; + variety of other access resources (scan QR code for full list!)

The Francis Crick Institute recently opened Cut + Paste, an interactive exhibition on genome editing and its social and ethical implications. Cut + Paste explores a variety of issues, from altering DNA to treat inherited disease to the application of genome editing to solve environmental crises. The exhibition invites visitors to make their voices heard on these issues, with various stations where they can share their thoughts and see others' opinions. Visitors are also invited to "write, draw, or record" their comments and questions on paper or on social media, where they'll be shared with Crick scientists and staff.

Panel discussion: Challenging Misinformation

Date and time: 2nd March 2023, 7:30pm-9:30pm (doors open 6:30pm)

Price: Free (no registration required, first-come-first-served)

Location: The Royal Society, 6-9 Carlton House Terrace (short distance from Charing Cross and Piccadilly Circus stations)

Accessibility info: Wheelchair accessible (for those with impaired mobility unable to queue, book in advance to reserve a seat); induction loop installed; live subtitles available

In an age where fake science info runs rife on websites and social media, how do we deal with misinformation? Hear from a panel of experts on the ins and outs of scientific misinformation and how to fight it. Topics discussed include how the Internet affects our interactions with science, and how policymakers and online platforms should respond.

Fun night out: Imperial Lates: Play

Date and time: 9th March 2023, 6:00pm-9:00pm

Price: Free (register for tickets in advance)

Location: Imperial College Main Entrance, South Kensington Campus

Accessibility info: Wheelchair accessible; email lates@imperial.ac.uk if you have any specific needs

Get ready for Imperial Lates, a series of engaging drop-in events and talks on a new science theme each month. This month's theme is Play, where visitors will get to explore science through all things fun. Highlights include the chance to play in a game show on antibiotics, annihilate your friends at science board games, and enjoy beautiful music made from the sounds of nature. There'll also be events to celebrate International Women's Day, including talks from scientists on the future of women's healthcare.

Opportunity: Science Museum Lates call for contributions

The Science Museum Lates are free after-hours events aimed at adults ages 18-35. Each Lates event features talks, performances, and interactive activities focused around a different science-related theme each month. Currently, the Science Museum is having an open call for participants, offering the chance to run an activity at the Lates. The Science Museum is looking specifically for fun and/or engaging activities accessible for audiences with varying levels of scientific knowledge. The theme for March's Lates is "Fake Lates", delving into all things artificial--think cryptocurrency, lab-grown meat and conspiracy theories. April's theme is "Craft Lates", exploring the science behind various trades and celebrating their creativity. For more info on the Lates in general, guidelines on running activities, and how to submit contributions, scan the QR code!

EXHIBITION



PANEL DISCUSSION



FUN NIGHT OUT



OPPORTUNITY



ENVIRONMENT

Searching for a carbon negative campus

► *Imperial Environmental Society joins the global Ecosia on Campus movement.*

Anand Doshi Environment Writer

Imperial College Environmental Society is adopting a campaign to switch the College's default search engine to Ecosia — a search engine that's private, carbon negative, and plants trees in biodiversity hotspots.

Ecosia on Campus (EOC) is a campaign that aims to make our searches greener and has spread to over 300 campuses around the world. 30 universities have already made the switch, and that number is growing.

Why should anyone care?

According to Imperial Climate Action, about £150,000 of sponsor funding to Imperial CSPs since 2013-14 is sourced from BP, Shell, Schlumberger, and ExxonMobil. Meanwhile, Sheetal Handa from the BP International Centre for Advanced Materials calls Imperial "one of BP's key UK university partnerships", and Imperial worked with Shell and Qatar Petroleum on a \$70 million Carbonates and Carbon Storage Research Centre. Essentially, the College and the Student Union collaborate with companies that are actively degrading the environment for profit.

In contrast, Ecosia is a not-for-profit company that reinvests its revenue into planting trees around the world. The main source of Ecosia's income is serving ads to its customers. Since Ecosia started operations, they have managed to plant over 167 million trees in over 13,000 planting sites thanks to the 20 million users actively searching using their engine. Switching to Ecosia would reduce our collective carbon footprint.

In fact, students at Imperial College London have already contributed to

these figures! Ecosia has provided a unique link (<https://ecosia.co/ImperialCollegeLondon>) to Imperial College London, as part of the EOC campaign. Using this link, the students using Ecosia have already caused over 1,000 trees to be planted through over 135,000 searches.

The Imperial Sustainability Strategy for 2021-2026 lists goals to achieve carbon neutrality as an institution by the year 2040. It plans to implement various changes with sustainability in mind, including tackling energy use.

In this Strategy, the

College's Sustainability Strategy Advisory Group write that they will "continue to upgrade and enhance existing building services infrastructure to improve sustainability and energy performance." Making Ecosia the default search engine across campus is in direct support of this vague goal.

You can join in and help with this campaign. All you have to do is scan the QR code and download the Ecosia browser extension and the mobile app. Start searching through Ecosia,

and you'll be able to see how many trees you've helped plant. This will also count towards Imperial College's statistics. The more students and staff use Ecosia, the stronger of a case there will be for the college to switch to it.

Why should people use Ecosia over Google?

Google has been carbon neutral since 2007, but Ecosia is carbon positive. Ecosia doesn't just plant trees — it also produces renewable energy to power its operations.

It produces twice the amount it needs and

in 2016. Google and parent company Alphabet are answerable to investors, so may place profit as the top priority.

Ecosia is also better for the privacy-minded individuals. They don't create personal profiles based on search histories, don't use external tracking tools, and don't sell user data to advertisers. Searches made on Ecosia become anonymised after a week. Google and other commercial search engines, on the other hand, will keep hold of search data.

Ecosia is a financially transparent company working actively towards conserving our environment. According to the Ecosia website, if they were the size of Google they could absorb 15% of all global CO₂ emissions. That is why there is such a need to increase the number of people using Ecosia.

If we manage to get the College to switch over to Ecosia as the default search engine, we'll be helping the environment and be a part of many universities over the globe having successfully implemented the EOC campaign.



Credit: Ecosia

supplies the remaining to the grid, making it greener.

Ecosia is not a profit-minded corporation. They pay their taxes diligently and honestly, helping fund schools, nature conservation, and foreign aid. Google is known to have exploited legal loopholes in the past to pay less tax than they are due, using shell corporations to direct money to offshore accounts. In fact, Google was accused of tax avoidance policies for several years, and they had to pay £130 million in back-payments to the HMRC

Scan me to plant trees
with every search!



Flipping rocks – a beautifully absurd hobby

► *Delve into the world of invertebrates hiding under logs and rocks.*

Shreyas Kuchibhotla Environment Writer

You are taking your customary evening stroll in a local park. Next to you is a lanky, hoodie-clad figure seemingly doing the same, when they suddenly crouch beside a log and pull it upward. Pausing for a minute, they take a quick scan, and suddenly reach out their hand to grab something. Justifiably suspicious, you watch. They take out a camera and a small glass jar, drop something into it, and start clicking like a madman. Suddenly, they tip the jar on its side, and then lie on their stomach on the muddy ground for several minutes as they continue taking photos. After a few minutes, the surreal scene unfolding before you is over. You are thoroughly confused, and you continue on your way, looking at them one last time.

The series of events above is far from fictitious. Just a few days ago, I was in Hyde Park, London, searching for various invertebrates, when I happened to find a brown centipede (*Lithobius forficatus*), what is often called Britain's most common centipede, but always a delight

to see scuttling for cover. As is required of us log-lifters, I had to match the animal's speed by grabbing it as fast as possible, before putting it in a contained environment so I could get some shots. I then released it onto the soil to try taking some in-situ photos before letting it dive into leaf litter. It is hard to compare the feeling of finding something under a log to anything else; exhilaration at peering under some cover to suddenly catch a glimpse of a lizard, amphibian, spider, or centipede on the ground underneath. There is the anticipation as you see the object, approach it, and pull. In that split-second, you have to process the information that there is something there, and catch hold of it if required, or simply revel in what you have unearthed (pun intended).

I have had my fair share of interesting sous-cover finds. The first time I lifted a log and actually saw something to my liking was in Richmond Park, London, in September 2022. It was a warm afternoon, and the sun was just beginning to show some desire for the horizon. I was almost robotically turning over some logs when suddenly, as I was just about

to replace one, I saw a reptilian head writhing underneath. The excitement rapidly reached an acme as tiny legs and a tail surfaced from under the grains of sand. I had managed to disturb a Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) from its afternoon siesta. The generally speedy little reptile took a solid thirty seconds to properly awaken and then jolted around before disappearing into nearby shrubbery. I've seen four other lizards underneath rocks, three geckos (only one of which was slow enough to photograph), and one skink, all in Hyderabad.

More recently, I had lifted a rock on Hyderabad's Kasu Brahmananda Reddy National Park's outer jogging trail. A little black centipede lay on the soil, wondering whether it was worth the effort to escape. I took a quick look and was about to place the rock back when I noticed what seemed to be a mottled eight-legged alien pancake beside my hand, on the underside of the rock. What I had found was a massive female Pantropical Huntsman Spider (*Heteropoda venatoria*). As I lay the rock down and brought out my clip-on macro lens, she remained quite calm for a few

seconds. Then, in a blinding flash, she was gone — under the rock, that is. I turned it over again, only for her to dart to the other end. When I finally managed to flush her onto the main path and get some photos, a considerate dog-walker suggested I put her back into the foliage on the side so she wouldn't be attacked by pedestrians, bipedal or quadrupedal.

I have no intention of giving up this little pastime. It's a great way to spend a small part of my day connecting a bit with nature while experiencing little bursts of joy — even an hour of disappointment is instantly compensated by a single interesting discovery. It's also a great workout — the best animals are often to be found under the largest boulders! Even if it's just woodlice and earthworms (some of which, mind you, can get almost unbelievably large), there's always a living creature inhabiting the rich ecosystem that is the bottom of a rock. And while I don't expect everyone to lift every one they see, it might be a little change of pace every now and then to walk up to a rock, peer underneath, and open a vista to a world you've never seen before.

Credit: Shreyas Kuchibhotla



A brown/stone centipede (*Lithobius forficatus*), found under a piece of dead wood in Hyde Park, London.



Mottled alien pancake; a pantropical huntsman spider (*Heteropoda venatoria*), found on the underside of a rock in KBR Park, Hyderabad, India.

Scan me to see more of Shreyas's cute invertebrate finds!



Sophia Prize

Felix is offering a **£400** prize to one **outstanding, inspiring and accessible** article that **helps tackle climate defeatism** and covers, or **conceives of**, an **economic, cultural or scientific innovation** that helps **fight global warming**.

Send your submissions to
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COMMENT

On religion and meaning

► *Joseph Canavan urges the reader to find their own personal meaning to life regardless of societal expectations, and religious affiliations and doctrines.*

Joseph Canavan Comment Writer

Religions and spiritual traditions have been a staple of civilisation from the beginning of time, and they are not going away no matter how hard some people want them to. A lot of people are brought up religious, and are taught to follow the dogma without questioning — if they just follow the rules, they'll be fine. Many religions teach valuable things about morality, selflessness, altruism, wisdom, showing kindness and compassion to others, and setting aside time to reflect. The act of worship, whether it is done alone or with others, is central to the lives of most people.

Unfortunately, religions do have some bad aspects. Followers can develop very firm beliefs, becoming excessively uncompromising. They can begin to think that their religion is the true one, the only correct one, and that other religions are beneath consideration. Others may become suspicious, hateful, or hostile towards other religions and their respective followers. In another extreme case, there are plenty of individuals or groups who believe that being religious is required to be "good". This is completely wrong — it is entirely possible to be a good person while being non-religious. Furthermore, there are some religious people who, despite claiming otherwise, perform actions that go against what is considered to be 'good'.

It is important to question authority. It is important to criticise and scrutinise any belief or system of beliefs whether they be religious, spiritual, political, social, economic, environmental, or otherwise. Each person must judge for themselves if their actions and words are suitable ways to interact with the world around them. I am not trying to tar everyone with the same brush here — I am emphasising the importance of questioning and analysing beliefs carefully, as well as doing your best to get along with the people around you, regardless of whether or not

they hold the same beliefs as you. It is important that people choose their religious beliefs — every person should have the freedom to change what they believe in for any reason.

It is important to have meaning in

“

**YOU YOURSELF
HAVE THE
OBLIGATION TO
DECIDE HOW YOU
WILL LIVE, AND
WHAT SORT OF
LEGACY YOU WANT
TO LEAVE BEHIND**

life, and there certainly is meaning in the lives of both religious and non-religious people. Any person, regardless of their religious affiliation, is capable of living

by good values, morals, and principles — among which are kindness, generosity, altruism, compassion, love, respect, courage, and humility. People can come to have these qualities through different ways, be it through religion, philosophy, nature, science, or introspection. Everyone needs meaning, but not everyone needs religion to get to this. There may not be a God, or gods. There may not be a higher purpose or a grand plan, and that is okay — you can still live a meaningful life. You yourself have the obligation to decide how you will live, and what sort of legacy you want to leave behind. Additionally, such ambitions do not have to be big or world-changing. At the end of the day, almost everyone commits at least small acts of rebellion against what society expects from them.

While avoiding the trap of relying too much on religion for meaning, one must be careful not to fall into the trap of nihilism. The world (and the larger universe) can seem so big, so vast, so complicated, that one can feel as if they do not matter in the grand scheme of things and that their life cannot be

meaningful. It is important to remember that no one asks to be born, no one can know or understand anything, and no one has it all figured out. Life is about learning as you go along, being willing to make mistakes and learning from them, while being considerate to the people and the world around you.

The point of life is to truly live — to give things a go, to be willing to learn, to try and improve, to make your own meaning. Life involves many different experiences and emotions, and not all of them are pleasant. Whatever happens, keep going. Keep trying. Give life a chance. Love, kindness, friendship, compassion, laughing with family and friends, solving problems, educating others, and having discussions are all among what gives life meaning. The world is not without problems, but it is certainly very beautiful, as is the life that inhabits it. Finally, we are not just living in the world — we are also a part of it, we are made of stardust. We are capable of many things, both good and bad. So let's choose to do good where we can, when we can.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons, Journalist Seaman Ryan McGinley



Instead of focusing our attention on differences that do not matter, we should instead focus on what unites us.

COMMENT

A compilation of notes about love and life from students in the Imperial community.

Amor Vincit Omnia

**1st year
Bioengineering**

**In a future world
Devoid of all light
Would you join me
So we may shine so bright**

1st year

**Rat boy, you have lips... I
have lips... interesting**

**5th year
Bioengineering**

**No more romantic
orchestras at the
Freemason Hall I promise.**

**1st year
Medical Biosciences**

*They say
communication is key
in relationships...*

**No need to thank me for my
hotness**

**1st year
Materials Science and
Engineering**

**Enjoy my music taste,
ROCK ON!**

**1st year
Geology**

**Dear Amber,
I regret so much not expressing my
feelings to you sooner. I love you and hope
you see this and message me. I'm sorry
for all the pain I've caused you.**

**-K
3rd year
Bioengineering**

Thou maketh me recall my days long passed, days filled with cheese and... ever more bountiful amounts of cheese... 'Twas during those days thine obsession began, for it was with you I first opened these nostrils of mine to the most smelliest of aromas. At first I was scared, the scent was too much for my brain to comprehend but oh so clearly mine opinions changed, overtime I began to look past the foul fragrance and discovered what beauty lie within. And who else was with me every step of the way, on my journey towards transcends? You were my dear, guiding me towards the light of a cheese filled world which has now left me satiated for decades passed, which is why now I must ask upon thee to help me guide others, as you did me. Guide them to a glorious future filled with cheese by my side. Together we can live for an eternity, basking in the most beautiful of stenches. I ask of you now to take this hand of mine, oh sweet valentine.

1st year

Dear Deputy President of Finance and Services,

I just wanted to take a moment to tell you how much I love you. Your smile, your intelligence, and your generous spirit are just a few of the things that make me fall for you more and more each day. I cherish every moment we spend together and I cannot imagine my life without you in it. You are the missing piece to my heart, and I cannot wait to spend the rest of my life showing you just how much you mean to me. I definitely didn't write this on chatgpt and I meant everything I said. I wouldn't have rather spent Valentines in any other way than running late to a meeting to buy u flowers, be stuck in a meeting with u for 2 hrs and get unnecessarily drunk in a random club in Camden. Because it was with you.

Forever and always,
The future Union President xx

*-Bjorn Lee
4th year
Electrical and Electronic Engineering*

Dear future valentine,

Hey babe, out of curiosity, what on earth are you thinking? Good for me, but may God have mercy on you. Unless if you are doing this for the plot, in which case you have my begrudging respect, I struggle to understand your thought process here. Since you're here with me anyways though, I might as well give you some tips; buying me books and food is the way to my heart and listening to top pop girlies and sad indie girlies forms a large chunk of my personality. Good luck darling, and just remember: if this doesn't work out, at least we will both have a great story to tell to our friends someday.

*1st year
Biomedical Engineering*

Wasowski, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. wa-sow-ski: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. wa. sow. ski. She was Wa, plain Wa, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Wasowski in slacks. She was Mike at school. She was Mike on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Wasowski.

*1st year
Aeronautical Engineering*

To my partner in crime,

Thank you for always being my pillar of support and love!!

I love you!

*2nd year
Biological Science*

Hey...it's been a while. For me at least. I know time passes differently for trees than it does for people. I know that over the centuries countless rogue schoolchildren have scrambled over your gnarled roots, countless young couples have paused to lean into the rough bow of your warped trunk, and countless old ladies have paused to let their dog sniff around your trunk, looking for a spot to claim as their own. We probably weren't special to you. Just another pair of aimless wanderers who paused one too many times under your branches. But even though we may not have been yours, you were always ours. Our "talking tree." You were there when we needed an excuse not to part ways, not to wander alone. An excuse to simply "stop dear, and stay a moment longer." You witnessed our heartache and laughter, incessant sobbing and hysterical hugging, the good, the bad, and the ugly. You were where we met at the beginning of each day, our recovery spot after each long run. You were the meeting point of every meandering walk, and the spot where we perched like birds, confusing the cars that paused to allow two silly girls to cross... and we never did. Cross, that is. One more minute always became five, then ten, then a million. And I would trade anything for a million more. A million more moments as a scared 14 year old, quaking in athletic shorts in the bitter cold, searching for any excuse to hover for one more instant. Any excuse to continue to ponder what our lives meant and why. Any excuse not to go home and let each day fade into the next. My best friends are mine because of you. And each bittersweet memory, a morsel that sprung like plentiful fruit from your nimble branches. Your shade in the blistering summer heat, your auburn leaves blazing fiery trails through the crisp autumn sky, your branches iced with delicate snowflakes in January, and your budding leaves a reminder of new life each spring. You were our shelter and our safe space. Home base. HQ. And I know there may be a million more high school girls that make our spot their own. But the home we created with you took root somewhere in this silly girl's young heart. And that piece of home still travels with me, even when home feels oh so very far away.

*1st year
Bioengineering*

Are you an alumnus or staff member of Imperial?

Felix isn't just for students! It's also a great place to discuss matters relevant to staff, and showcase what our alumni and researchers are up to!

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ARTS

- ▶ THE ART OF CHURCHES
- ▶ WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT THE BOOKSHOP THEATRE

ARTS

Edited by: GILBERT JACKSON
SOPHIE POINTON

Architecture Article

High-Fidelity Wren-ditions

London's finest, most well-hidden *architecture.*

Gilbert Jackson Arts Editor

After a rather tedious set of exams and coursework last summer, I found myself 'un-busy' in London. As such, I decided to waste my time more wisely by finally exploring the city that had evaded my sights as a result of the many cruel years of COVID-19 and its accompanying lockdowns. I set my sights firstly on the City itself; the original square mile of London encompassed by ancient Roman walls which, when one first journeys to the City, feels like a completely separate entity entirely from the rest of the 'London: Expansion Pack'. Its somewhat estranged and separatist nature was exactly why the City warranted an exploration, but what I didn't realise was that my initial attempt to explore the city would lead me to having an unusual side project.

What I learnt from my now frequent visits to the churches within the City walls (I should add: not for religious reasons, purely for architectural reasons) is within these buildings is a plethora of art and history encased within granite walls and illuminated by chromatic glass: gorgeous architectural styles, unique installations within the buildings, and extensive chronicles regarding the buildings themselves — and the people that would have frequented them in the old days — lead to my fascination with these buildings and the start of my project; to visit every church within the City.

Whatever your view is of church buildings, one must admit that they are pinnacles of the various architectural styles that shaped Western Europe. The churches in London are no exception.

What distinguishes them is that they were built in the English Baroque style, instead of the more common Gothic style found in other churches in the UK. In Europe, baroque dates from the late 16th to mid-18th century and was characterised by flamboyant neo-classical (Greco-Roman) stylings which features large columns, porticos and heavily decorated reliefs. In England however, baroque came along much later than in other European nations, in the mid-17th century. The birth of this new creative style was, ironically, born in the aftermath of destruction, namely the Great Fire of London of 1666.

London's buildings had been decimated by fire which destroyed most of its churches and houses. With Charles II on the throne of England at the time, love for art and music had returned after a period of deep-rooted puritanism. The City in ruins was the perfect opportunity to embrace contemporary styles of architecture, and Christopher Wren stepped up to the plate to usher in the English Baroque style which we see to this day in his magnum opus, St Paul's Cathedral.

However, there's more to see in the City architecturally than just St Paul's. What we don't see as clearly is that Wren's style of architecture is featured in a majority of all the churches in the City. Most Wren churches aren't as rotund as St Paul's but they can be easily marked out by their tall tiered towers and white marble stone. Inside, you will be treated

to stunning plaster work on the roof, — sometimes painted — and intricately carved Corinthian columns which are other signature styles of Wren's architecture.

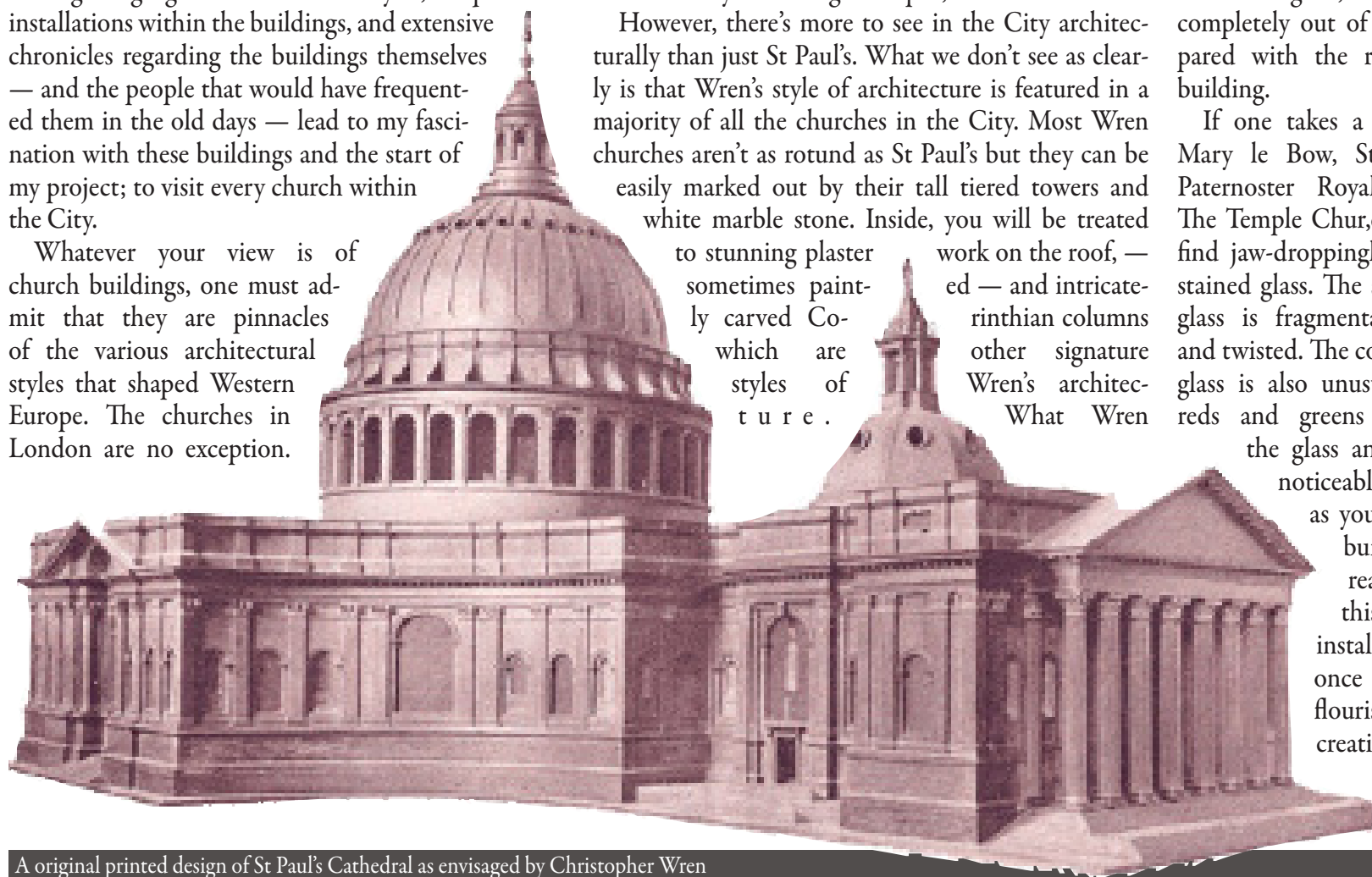
What Wren

achieves in his buildings are a luxurious and stately form of architecture which, unlike European baroque and rococo art, is still reserved and not outrageously gaudy. They maintain a sense of dignity and religiosity while remaining beautiful, but not entering the realms of extravagance; he creates a balanced and tasteful form of art which is exemplary of English sentiments at the time; keeping its Protestant and post-reformation ethics.

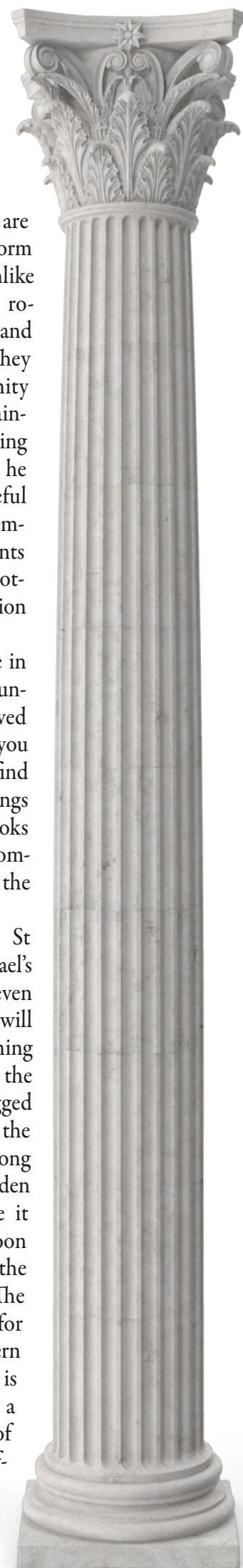
But there is more to see in these churches besides stunning plaster work and carved columns. One thing that you might be surprised to find in these fairly old buildings is stained glass, which looks completely out of time compared with the rest of the building.

If one takes a trip to St Mary le Bow, St Michael's Paternoster Royal or even The Temple Church, you will find jaw-droppingly stunning stained glass. The style of the glass is fragmentary, jagged and twisted. The colour of the glass is also unusual; strong reds and greens embolden the glass and make it noticeable as soon

as you enter the building. The reason for this modern installation is once again a flourishing of creativity after de-



A original printed design of St Paul's Cathedral as envisaged by Christopher Wren



ARTS

struction, this time in the form of the Blitz.

The Blitz resulted in the gutting of most of the City's churches and thus artists like John Hayward and Henry Moore were called in to redesign interiors for the ruined churches. The result is that the churches within the City have a unique fusion of Romanesque, gothic, baroque and modern art and architecture which makes each church a hotbed of artistic expression and history.

The artistic styles of London are numerous, and each style is rooted in some aspect of the City's history. By visiting these churches, one can truly gain a first-hand experience into the ever-changing styles of London's art and thus learn not just the history of each church, but paint a picture of the history of the City itself from its greatest architectural representatives.

Did you know...?

Windows like this one - as seen in St Mary le Bow - are often made with jagged fragments of glass and feature bold colours which makes them stand out as modern pieces of stained glass work.

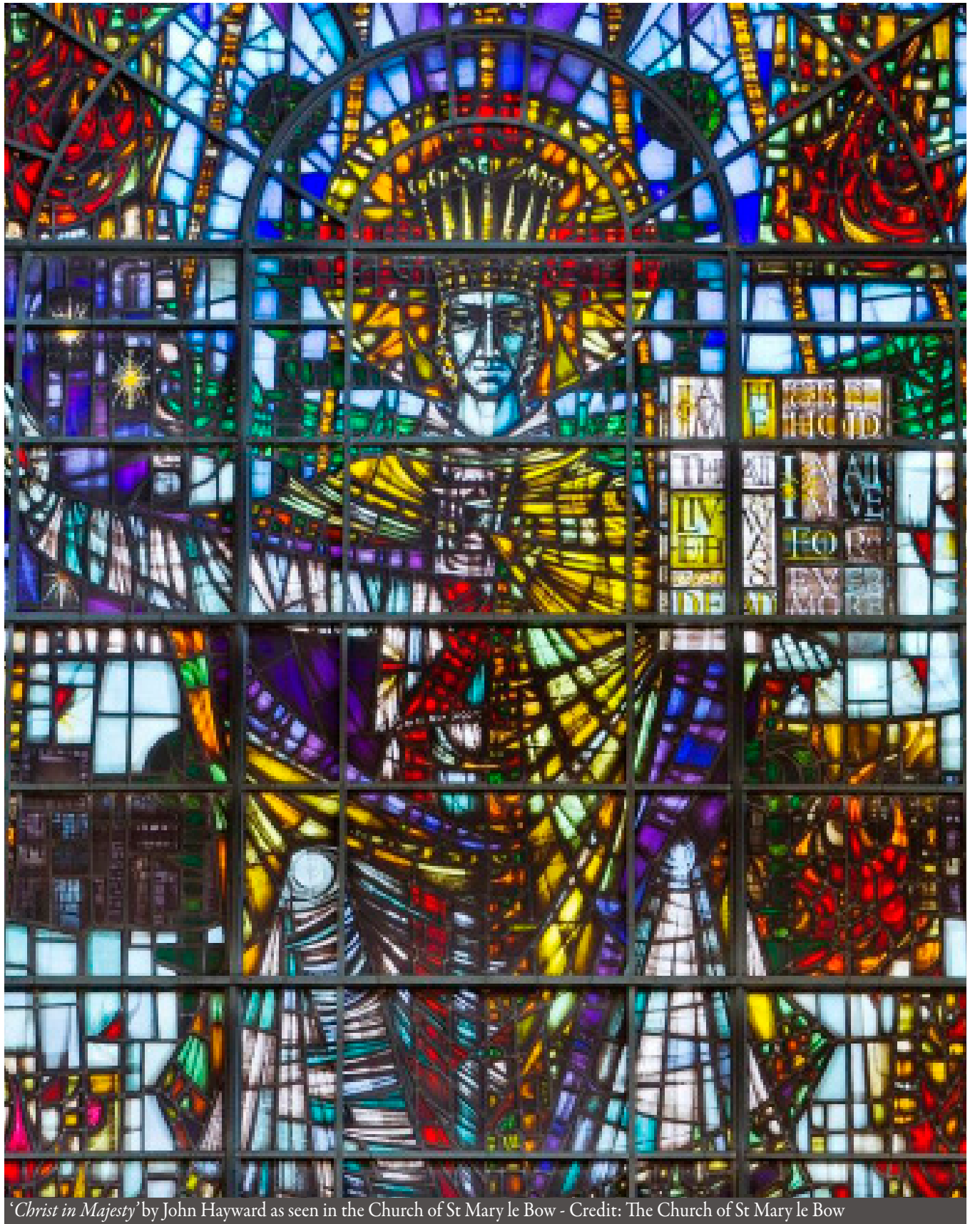
In examples like this, some of the glass fragments used were actually broken shards from windows destroyed during the Blitz.

Attention Art Lovers!

If you like art, musical performance, or the theatre, and want to write about it, then get in touch with the Arts editing team!

We are happy to read all your art related reviews and opinions and we'll work to get your articles published and edited where necessary! You can also come to us with ideas for an article you haven't written yet! We can't wait to hear from you!

Email: felart@ic.ac.uk



'Christ in Majesty' by John Hayward as seen in the Church of St Mary le Bow - Credit: The Church of St Mary le Bow

Things to do in London

The Bookshop Theatre

A thespian's daydream, realised.

Sophie Pointon Arts Editor

It sounds like something too good to be true. Take a stroll a little way down from the Old Vic down The Cut to number 51, and there, just across from the New Vic, you will find a little gem of a bookshop with a twist: it's all about theatre.

An outstretched awning will signal the shop is open, shading a collection of plays

and books seemingly handpicked to lure you inside. There, you'll find second-hand copies of plays on the left-hand side and new ones on the right, with something for practically every taste. I assure you even if you have only the slightest of inclinations for going to the theatre, there will be something in there for you. They also have sections on philosophy and politics to boot.

The Bookshop Theatre may only be the size of Study Room 2A in the Central

Library, but it's lovingly curated, has a cat, and, in case that wasn't enough, if you peek round the back you can catch a glimpse of the 32-seater theatre almost bashfully hidden away. They put on two plays year, memorialised by the multitude of theatre posters hanging near the door. When I ask for the co-owner's favourite, she responds immediately with *Verde, Agua y Luna*, which was inspired by the writings of Federico García Lorca (speaking of Lorca, the Cervantes Theatre will begin a run of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* on the 20th of February.)

First set up in 2002, the Bookshop Theatre used to be a part of Calder Publishing (founded by John Calder, poet, opera-lover and a friend of Samuel Beckett, among other things), but was taken over by a group of four friends several years ago. During lockdown, they received a grant from the Arts Council that allowed them to refurbish their theatre and to plan a new fronting for the bookshop.

There are only a handful of similar specialists around (another example of a bookshop for plays would be the one in the National Theatre, and the Samuel French Bookshop at the Royal Court in Sloane Square). But this bookshop is the only one that offers acting sessions on Saturday mornings.

When I leave, a newly purchased £4 copy of *The Government Inspector* in my bag, I know I'll be back.

Credit: Elsa Germain



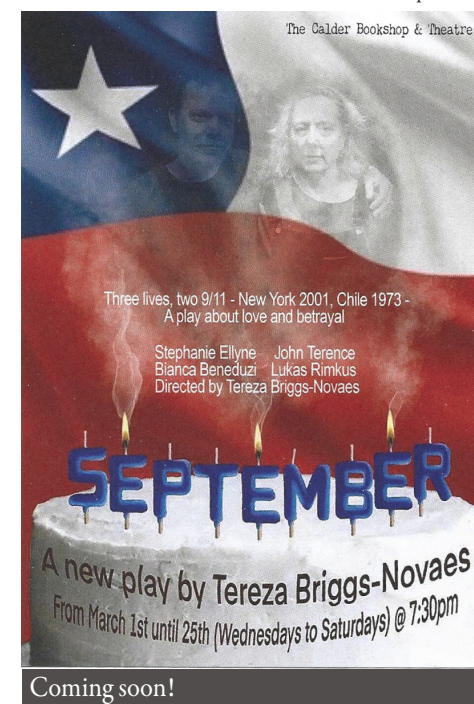
A View from the Street.

Find out more...

...at <https://calderbookshop.com/>, or @calderbookshop on Instagram. They are open every day 11-8pm, except for Sundays from 1-6pm. The next play that will be put on at the Bookshop Theatre is 'September' by Tereza Briggs-Novaes, a friend of the owners', and is scheduled for March (from the 1st to the 25th). Tickets are £15.



Credit: The Bookshop Theatre
The Calder Bookshop & Theatre



What's On...

The Royal Academy of Arts (RA) is hosting an exhibition on Spanish art titled: '*Spain and the Hispanic World: Treasures from the Hispanic Society Museum & Library*'. The exhibition will feature art by legendary Spanish artists such as Goya, Velazquez and Sorolla.

The exhibition will run until April, and tickets cost £22 - £24.50 per person. The RA also runs a scheme for people aged 25 and under who can receive half-priced tickets on all exhibitions at the RA when they sign up (for free) to the RA under 25s membership scheme.

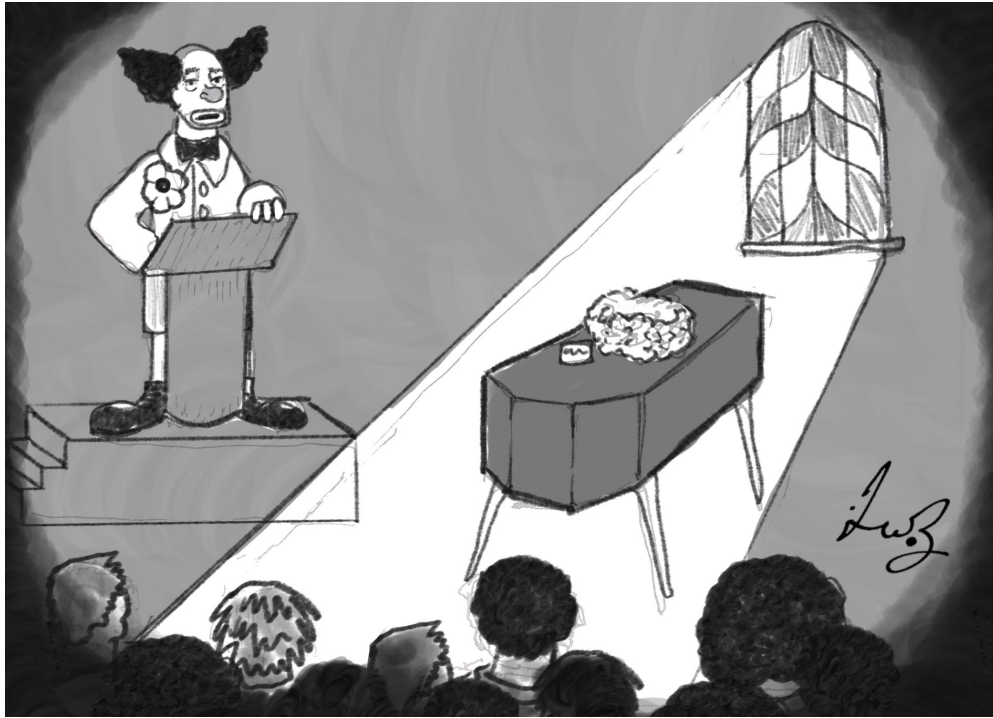


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CAPTION COMPETITION

This week's winner - Jonah Hewett



"So it turns out there is a maximum number of people that can fit in my car."

**WANT TO DRAW
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TO GET INVOLVED

The Cat #002



If you want to contribute comics to Felix, or a cartoon for the caption competition, please contact us at puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk

HEADSHOTS

COMICS

Rishi Sunak and Bill Gates 'Learn' About Tech. Research



This is so boring...the only thing keeping me here is that magnificent statue of the well-endowed man outside.

Tea Soc. Reveals Secret Ingredient



You're welcome to try the 'tea', but we would recommend at least 30 minutes to come down afterwards.





PUZZLES

CROSSWORD

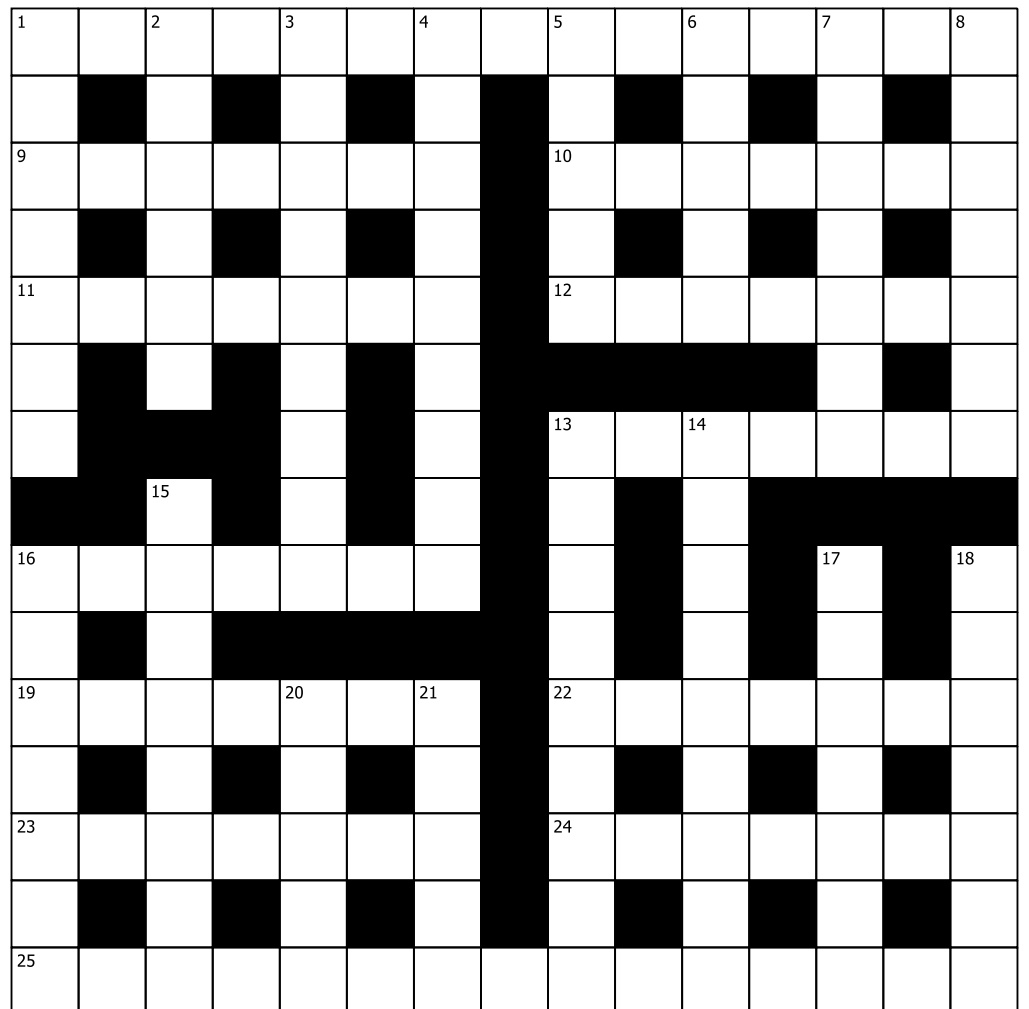
4 points

Across

- 1 Found at the top of the royal mile (9, 6)
 9 A zero-toll dual-carriage road (7)
 10 Surname of American actress best known for Veep and Seinfeld (7)
 11 Can be found in the Fallopian tubes (3, 4)
 12 For the new Felix comic, _____ 26 (3, 4)
 13 Series of films from 1958 - 1979 starring Kenneth Williams and Barbara Windsor among others (5, 2)
 16 Relating to the external sac that contains the testicles (7)
 19 The events or property of another (7)
 22 Long, thin, filled with cream - topped with chocolate (7)
 23 To enjoy oneself or celebrate in a boisterous fashion (7)
 24, 8 Down - Notorious sex offender and owner of black book (7, 7)
 25 Small black predatory insect which spins on the surface of still water (9, 6)

Down

- 1 Harry _____, famous British comedian and impressionist (7)
 2 Film franchise released by Blue Sky studios, first released in 2002 (3, 3)
 3 Worn by Charlie Chaplin (9)
 4 Currently in industrial action, famously red (5, 4)
 5 Greek god of the dead (5)
 6 Singer, with best selling album of 2015 (5)
 7 Jewellery company headquartered in Manhattan (7)
 8 See 24 Across
 13 Trophy presented to the winner of the Golf Open Championship (6, 3)
 14 Daniel _____, actor in Swiss Army Man (9)
 15 Physical _____, 1975 album by Led Zepplin (8)
 16 Red _____, 2018 film starring Jennifer Lawrence (7)
 17 British detective series starring Rowan Atkinson (7)
 18 Doing something in an impressive, grand, or luxurious way (2, 5)
 20 Relating to a seizure (5)
 21 Motion of indifference (5)



Picture Hunt

3 points

This photo was taken somewhere on campus - know where?



From the Editor

Hello there,

Cryptic crosswords are back this week, alongside a standard crossword. However - and I must make this very clear - any pedantry regarding poor clue setting will be strictly... rewarded with points, so please, complain away if you spot anything.

The leaderboard will also be returning to the paper soon, so please do send your responses to us if you wish to see your name in the paper, and also to be in with a chance of winning our grand prize... more to be revealed next issue.

If you have any requests for puzzles, perhaps ones more or less difficult than those currently presented, then please write to us at puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk.

Happy puzzling!

Sincerely,

Isaac Winson, Puzzles Editor

5 points

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

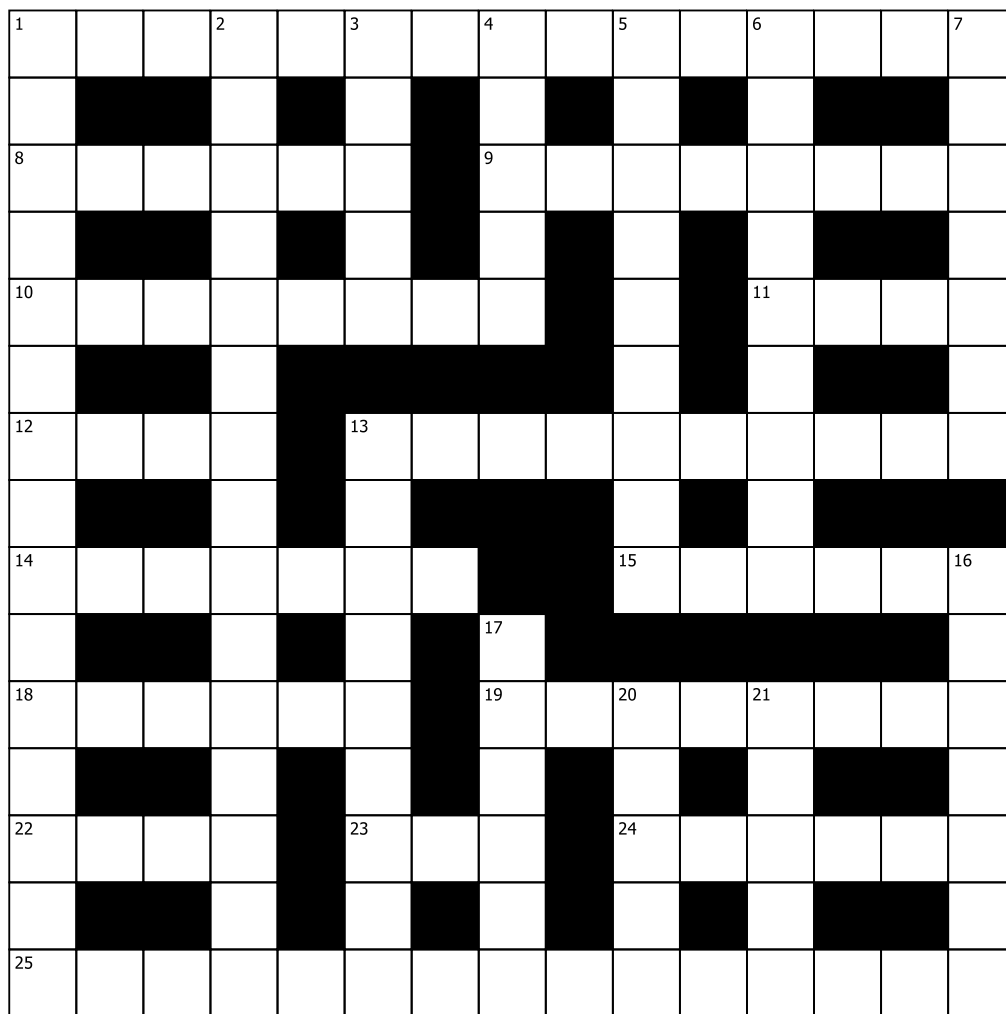
PUZZLES

Across

- 1 Check O2 status at end of outing for clean breathing (3-12)
- 8 Addictive protagonist loses back of her needle (6)
- 9 Curvy nose's cavity infected by end of void (8)
- 10 Blade? Diamond cut steak (3-5)
- 11 Two nibbles chew yet born head (4)
- 12 The copy-editor's gone potty! Messed up by losing a T (4)
- 13 Food at muddled Bed and Breakfast serves to make fat Dr. scram (5, 5)
- 14 Confused raindrop lost north heading, now falling from the sky (3-4)
- 15 Large chest in sale item gives support (6)
- 18 One-hundred noisy years can make things a little unclear (6)
- 19 Frocks altar-boy wears inside due to season (4-4)
- 22 Posh old place in St Moritz (4)
- 23 Sharp blow within campaign for appeal (3)
- 24 Swallowed alive! And is shaken with a lack of din (6)
- 25 Tube passage will loop back to large organ (9, 6)

Down

- 1 Lo, mascara applied by Jesus? It's a tale everyone should know (1, 9, 5)
- 2 Self-referential problem preceded by argumentative utterance (9, 6)
- 3 Benjamin was shaken by the loss of his member, for the empire had sent a silent assassin (5)
- 4 Susie was animated by this very paper (5)
- 5 Chap from Berlin put nine up in the frameless window to rude effects (9)
- 6 Noble steed gets disturbed over a dropped tonne, causes muzzle tear (4-5)
- 7 Clever contraptions get half a dagger up them (7)
- 13 Killer cleavage container (5-4)
- 16 Get another scan, then they can pull it out (7)
- 17 Nothing at the tomb, it's a virtual kind of living (6)
- 20 Call-in to Lewis' wardrobe for barrels (5)
- 21 Raise around fifty for the most power in the sun (5)



Crosswords by: POMPI

Missing Vowels

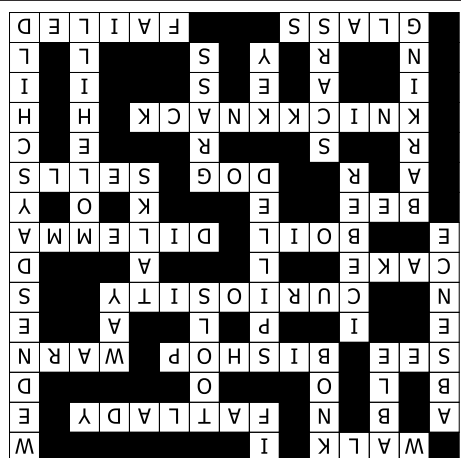
1 point each

CATEGORY: Imperial Eateries

Put the correct vowels and spaces in these jumbled-up consonants to find the answers. Send your answers in along with your puzzler-name to puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk for points on the leaderboard:

- i) q nst wr r ms
- ii) fs ncff ft yfr
- iii) sn rc mm nrm
- iv) srl xn drfl mn gcf

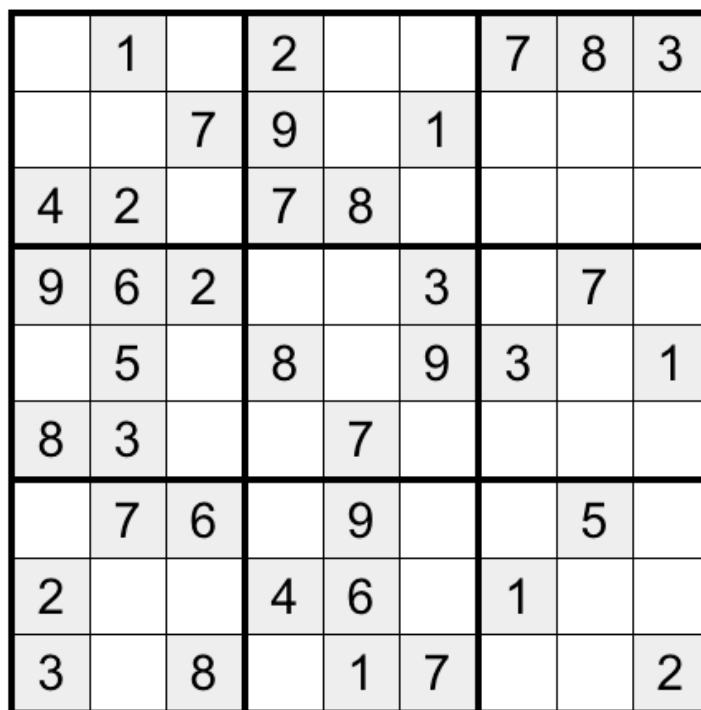
Solution from Issue 1820



Apologies for the missing G!

Sudoku

2 points



SEND ALL YOUR ANSWERS IN BEFORE 12:00 ON WEDNESDAY 8th MARCH TO GET POINTS ON THE LEADERBOARD

Edited by: ISAAC WINSON

CATNIP

PM sells Britain to Bill Gates in exciting corporate acquisition

Author: Feb Senton

Rishi Sunak and Bill Gates met at Imperial last week to agree on the purchase and division of the United Kingdom for £159 billion, a sum some analysts are calling 'generous'.

Gates, the founder of Microsoft and now prolific investor, told Catnip reporter Feb Senton that the UK had "strong growth potential but needed to jettison its underperforming divisions" having expanded into new markets in the less economically challenging climate of the 15th century.

Sunak continued: "Some of the expansion decisions of the last 600 years were misguided. The entire Scottish operation has been a source of nothing but trouble." While Scottish nationalists were initially delighted by the news, they were alarmed to hear that a buyer had already been found for the nation. Japanese billionaire Masayoshi Son is reportedly planning on relocating the country to the Pacific to create an all-inclusive 'authentic Scottish holiday resort experience'.

Sunak defended the Indian expansion, however, saying that it still had growth potential, and accused Ghandi of 'loving red tape' and 'economic protectionism'.

Other divisions to be auctioned off included Yorkshire, most of Wales, and parts of the Midlands under the 'Anywhere you can't get an authentic flat white' scheme in order to make the new country as

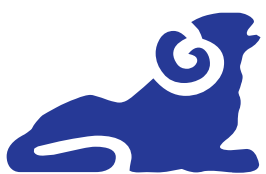
attractive and familiar as possible for new international investors.

The London Stock Exchange rallied at the announcement, hitting a century high, with similar celebrations in the business press.

While plans for the new nation are still not fully fleshed out, all current British natives will have automatic citizenship in the new nation, which will be based on principles of inclusion and tolerance. An exam to weed out anyone not aligned with the country's new direction will reportedly check that potential citizens have at least a bachelor's degree, or £100,000 in assets.

NIMBYish planning decisions are also reported to be destined for the scrap heap, with the Cotswolds being converted into an 'interactive VR exhibit' that will let visitors experience what it was really like to 'go to the countryside' from the comfort of their own homes.

One commentator from the Financial Times told Catnip that he was 'relieved that grown-ups were back in charge' and that finally Britain could get back to doing what it was meant to: "Generating lots of value for shareholders."



ARIES

This week you propose a sequel to ratatouille where a shrimp fries rice.



TAURUS

This week you realised they just don't make guys like Dracula anymore.



GEMINI

This week you sign a petition to carpet the M25, to make it the smoothest motorway in the world.



CANCER

This week you conclude that boring people should have to hold up subway surfers clips while they talk.



LEO

This week you never cover a book by its judge.



VIRGO

This week you realize that your favourite song is actually a recipe for beef stroganoff.



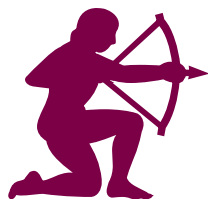
LIBRA

This week a crate of Omega 3 falls on you, but you're ok, your injuries are only super fish oil.



SCORPIO

This week you confuse politics and poultry when you try and stage a coop.



SAGITTARIUS

This week you keep your circadian rhythm on its toes and forget horses are real.



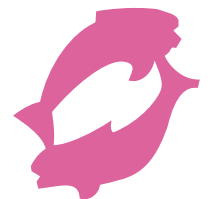
CAPRICORN

This week you consider yourself a nepo baby because you use your parents' Netflix, Prime Video AND Disney+.



AQUARIUS

This week you spice up your chemistry lectures by pronouncing molecules like the name of a hero from Greek mythology.



PISCES

This week you fry rice in an eggless place.

Catnip Office Noticeboard

"Vape Your Way to a Respiratory Adventure!"

Clear a room in seconds with the brilliant new flavours from Catnip Vape Co!

Fresher Vomit!

"Freshly regurgitated, straight from the stomach to your lungs!"

Wet Socks!

"For the ultimate foot fetish experience"

Sweat!

"Experience the refreshing taste of a hard day's work with every puff!"



WANTED:
A flatmate who doesn't
haunt my dreams.
Must be HUMAN.

Wanted: people to stop
telling me to come out of my
shell that's something a bird
would say to a snail so he can
eat it

NICE TRY MURDER
BIRD I'M ONTO
YOU!!!

- Wanted: flatmate to share a flat with me in
- Earl's court, had to get rid of my last one after he
- mispronounced foie gras. Must: wear a waistcoat,
- bring my food on a silver tray and have the
- inability to blink.

CATNIP

ICL returns to its imperial roots and announces plans to create its own empire

Author: Jor Jor Well

In a shocking turn of events, our very own Imperial College London, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, has announced plans to establish its own empire. The move comes after years of dominance in the field of science, with the institution already boasting several Nobel laureates and groundbreaking research. However, sources close to the university claim that this isn't enough for Imperial, who now have their sights set on conquering the world.

Meetings with PM Rishi Sunak and Bill Gates on Wednesday proved fruitful and they both pledged considerable funds in support of Imperial's student army - notorious for being the most intelligent, motivated, and caffeinated militia in the world. Speaking to Catnip reporters, a spokesperson for the PM said, "We feel that Imperial College London has the knowledge, the resources, and the sheer brainpower to establish its own empire. They're not content with simply being the best in the world at science, they want to be the best in the world at everything, and we are fully backing this sentiment as part of our Levelling Up Britain campaign."

Plans for world domination are said to be in early stages, but already rumours are circulating about the empire's possible structure. It is thought that the university's various faculties will be split into separate territories, with the Department of Medicine taking control of healthcare, the Department of Engineering dominating industry, and the Department of Mathematics ruling over finance. It is unclear what sector the Business School may control, but it is expected that it will certainly be vocal about its role in the empire's overall success; according to an informant,

they've already got plans for a new currency system based on 'vibes'.

"I'm really looking forward to being part of an empire," said one Imperial student, who wished to remain anonymous. "I think it will look great on my CV."

Of course, not everyone is on board with Imperial's plans. Some students are concerned about the potential for conflict with other countries, while others are worried about the empire's impact on their studies. "I mean, I'm trying to pass my exams here," said a final-year student, clutching a Redbull, "I don't have time to conquer the world."

"I'm not sure how I feel about this," said another, "I've heard they've assigned my lecturer to run Scotland but I asked him and he hasn't even tasted Irn-Bru."

But for the most part, the student body seems to be excited about the possibilities. After all, who wouldn't want to be part of an empire that can cure diseases, create sustainable energy sources, and build skyscrapers that reach the heavens? It's like a real-life Wakanda, only instead of vibranium, they've got Bunsen burners.

Imperial College London has yet to announce an official launch date for its empire, but sources say that preparations are already underway. In the meantime, other universities around the world are said to be watching with interest, and some are reportedly considering following in Imperial's footsteps. Only time will tell whether Imperial's plans for world domination will come to fruition, but one thing is for sure - the scientific community will never be the same again.

This Week's Comic:

Joe Biden Gets It Done



Created by: your mum

Want to write for Catnip? Well tough luck, you can't.

Please don't email us at catnip@imperial.ac.uk to submit an article to be featured in Catnip because the email address doesn't exist and we don't want your silly little article anyway.

Love, the Catnip Team xx

IC Radio presents,

0303.2022



Metric

Beit Quadrangle, SW7 2BB
Prince Consort Road

19h00-02h00

£3 Early bird
£4 General admission

imperial
college
union

BOOKS

BOOKS

Book Review

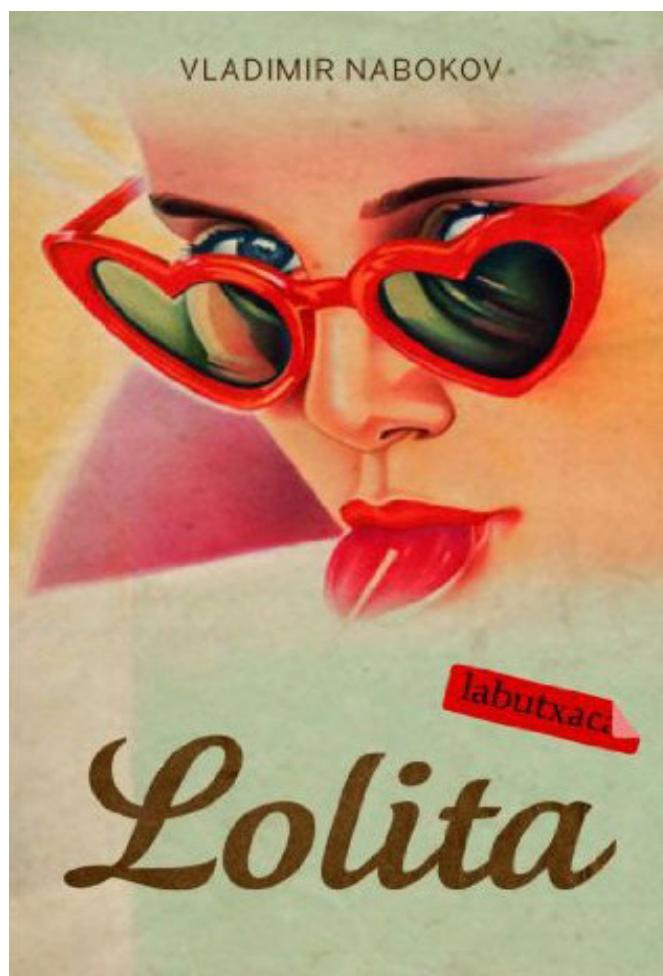
R.I.P. Kierkegaard: you would have loved *Lolita*

► Books writer Mohammad shares his thoughts on the 'aesthete' character in Vladimir Nabokov's most notorious novel.

Mohammad Majlisi Books Writer

I spent the first week of my supposed winter 'break' reading, amongst other things (Susan Sontag essays and G.H. Hardy's *Apology of Mathematics*), Nabokov's most infamous work *Lolita*. It was certainly something. It was a book, but in fact, to describe *Lolita* as just a book would be to do it a disservice. It is a study into power and the abuse of it, narrative power, and of the English language, in how the events of the book play out and how they are related and revealed. *Lolita* is the perfect modernist text to sink into; it's not as densely clever as James Joyce, nor is the reader's basic understanding of the characters obstructed by the lack of speech marks in, for example, in Virginia Woolf's works. What is most striking about *Lolita* is the protagonist, Humbert Humbert, being a perfect character study of Kierkegaard's idea of the 'aesthete'.

Kierkegaard's model aesthete can be seen, or understood, in a few key characteristics: it is the basest form of existence, and is defined by revelry in the sensual, egotism, flightiness from boredom, and a fatalistic use of irony and scepticism to the end.



The aesthete, according to Kierkegaard, is entirely self-serving and seeks to escape reality through fantasies and idealism. The ego of the aesthete seeks to 'recreate the world in his own image...' and to '[transform] the boring into the interesting.'

This exhibits itself almost perfectly in Humbert, the protagonist of *Lolita*. Humbert himself is a self-described aesthete and his love for nymphets is derived from a perverted need to see the pure, un-sexualised form of an adolescent girl absorbed into his mind and spat out as an object of his desire. Humbert's desire for Dolores ('Lolita') is actualisation of the impossibility of his original love, Annabel. To Humbert, the fact that Lolita exists and he can abuse her isn't his goal in and of itself, but rather a way of consummating the love he could only dream of previously. This love of Annabel births the concept of nymphets; Humbert creates his own rules and justifications for committing his perversions that numb the pain of his unrequited love.

Textually, the world is created in Humbert's image – we as the reader only know his thoughts, and retellings of the events of the novel through his confessional. His memories are coloured by his own feelings, and parts of the novel even hint at the unreliability of his recollection. But, more importantly, the language used represents everything that Humbert is – the actual novel is a delightfully colourful mass of language being masterfully used, sometimes to horrific effect. Similarly, the English in the novel never truly reaches native flow. Nabokov, as Humbert, constantly reminds us of Humbert's self-imposed pomposity, and his alien nature in America as a landed old-world European. Ultimately presents him as an intruder in suburbia and in the ideal life that Dolores is forced to leave behind, despite Humbert attempting to paint himself as someone who naturally fits in, someone who is adored, perfect, and above all of the other characters in the novel. If the reader gets the impression that Humbert is above it all, that is because Humbert, the aesthete, has deemed himself so.

In addition, in a more metatextual way, Americana and common American tropes are morphed by Humbert's aestheticism. Nabokov subverts several events into twisted versions of the tropes common to American literature and Americana in general. Humbert, the voyeuristic lodger in the home of the Hazes, becomes a twisted version of the identikit 1950s suburbia dream. The horrible honeymoon of Humbert and Dolores a riff on the popularity of cross-country trav-

el à la Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Kerouac's *On the Road*, and even the violent, bloody climax is a play on the theme of vengeance in the Wild West, with Humbert armed with a pistol to boot. The novel *Lolita* itself is an extension of Humbert imposing himself and his ego onto the traditions of American literature, on top of Humbert oppressively imposing himself on Lolita.

Not only is Humbert the perfect description of the Kierkegaardian ego, but *Lolita* as a whole is just that too – an aesthetic tale about the dangers, or rather the folly, of purely aesthetic existence. Kierkegaard would undoubtedly have revelled in the tale of little Dolores Haze, but for many readers, including myself, despite the richness of the text I couldn't help finishing *Lolita* and falling into a dolour.

felix Books x IC Book Club host Ava Glass at Imperial

Ava Glass's debut novel *The Chase* is a modern take on your classic spy thriller. It presents a woman's version of what it's like to work in espionage and secret intelligence, based in part on Glass's own experience working as a civil servant in the UK. The event promises to be a fascinating one, with focus on how women can break into stereotypically male lines of duty, and their presence in literature. Details below!

Date: Thursday 16th March

Time: 18:00-19:00

Location: The Union Bar (through FiveSixEight)

Cost: Free!

REVIEW BOOKS AVAILABLE!

If you love reading but don't know which books to write about, we have a number of titles that need reviewing - these are usually recent or upcoming releases, hot off the press.

Crime/Thriller

In The Shadow They Cast by Paul Graham

Red Light and Bell by Richard Cobourne

The Department of Conspiracy by Cal Georgeson

Languages

The Anglo-French Exchange (Textbook) by Dr. Allswell E. Eno

Email books.felix@imperial.ac.uk if interested!

MUSIC

Felix Recommends

The 1975: at their very best

A very biased, positive and late obsession of the 1975's new album *Being Funny In A Foreign Language*.

Isaac Ng Music Writer

Editor's Note: This article was written in response to my article *against* the album in Issue 1809 (check it out for a different view). My opinion has since changed and I also love the album now even though Matty Healy is still a preachy, arrogant, cocky asshole.

Disclaimer: I never meant for this to be a review but more of an expression of love for the new 1975's album and hence the complete self-sabotage of all dignity and reputation.

Being Funny In A Foreign Language (BFLAFL) is an espresso commercial that distils all the most popular and familiar sounds into a short 43-min Polaroid album.

Compared to their other major pentatonic scales led albums, BFLAFL (I feel like a real fan girl now) has no electronic fillers to kill the mood during the shower karaoke, just bangers through and through. You just can't listen to the *'Looking For Somebody (To Love)'*, which is currently my favourite track, and not be tapping your feet, skipping down the street or belting it out on your bike.

The album doesn't fall short of the famous 1975-style acoustic tracks either. *'All I Need to Hear'* & *'When We Are Together'* are pure bait for the hopeless romantics, which if I am honest, is a nice change of pace from the

heavier acoustic songs like *'Nana'*, *'She Lays Down'*, or even *'Be My Mistake'*.

'Wintering' was perhaps my favourite Christmas song of 2022. It is so candid and filled with harmless witty conversational lyrics like "Olivia has been a vegan since ten" and "Ben is obsessed with fat asses and he is ten years old". It also served as a gateway into the Spotify "Indie Christmas" Playlist, which, by the way, is also very good.

The best lyrics of the track have to be from *'Part of the Band'* and my god it is a gold mine. It is hard to even pick out a line to highlight because every line is so damn good. Here are some of my personal highlights:

"I like my men like I like my coffee/Full of soya milk and so sweet, it won't offend anybody"

"Am I ironically woke? The butt of my joke?/Or am I just some post-coke, average, skinny bloke/Calling his ego imagination?"

"The worst inside of us begets/that feeling on the internet./It's like someone intended it/(Like advertising cigarettes)"

Before I quote the entire song, I'll just address the elephant in the room which is the all-too-controversial Matty Healy. All kinds of names have been thrown around (e.g., 'preachy', 'arrogant', 'cocky', and 'asshole') and to that I will give the same answer as what Matty would say if you asked him what genre The 1975 falls into — yes!

He is all of those things, and they are not things I necessarily admire. Yes, he is annoying in those aspects, but the quality that I admire is his sincerity (is scary) and 'post-modern' humour, which is very apparent now because he basically reviewed himself again and again in every single album, making the reviewers' job redundant (note how I didn't say my job).

I think his lyrics masterpiece such as "I know some Vaccinista tote bag chic baristas, sitting in east on their Communista keisters, writing about their ejaculations" is controversial and by no means subtle, but it has brilliantly captured the more controversial political debates and expressed a viewpoint on it. You can't possibly say that is preachy, it is just having an opinion!

MUSIC

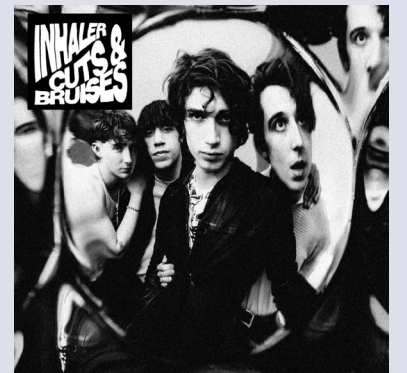
Edited by: JOE RIORDAN
TARA PALCHAUDHURI



View online here

Album of the Week *Cuts & Bruises* by Inhaler

Hailing from Dublin, indie rock band Inhaler just released their second studio album, which takes heavy inspiration from the Killers' most recent album – just in



a happier, Irish outfit. Think: soft yet passionate reverberating vocals against warm, shiny guitars. Although 'Valentine' features a Radiohead arpeggio-driven baseline, the album as a whole tilts along an alternative pop axis, wavering only slightly with unconventionally sharp song intros.

I don't agree with all of Matty's political viewpoints, but I respect that he has taken a stance and, more often than not, he packages arguments in a funny and ironic way where you can never really tell if he's joking or not, just have a look at his chicken shop date with Amelia.

Anyways, to end on a more positive note, I hated The 1975 when I was 16. I just fell in love with the Arctic Monkeys and they came out with *Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino* and The 1975's *Brief Inquiry into Online*



Don't Miss the Gig

Nick Hakim @ O2 Forum
Kentish Town, Sat 18th March

Washington D.C.'s Nick Hakim is a master at genre blending, effortlessly combining elements of soul, jazz, psychedelia, folk, and blues under his drifting, hazy vocals. His third album *Cometa* is a 'collection of romantic songs written through different lenses', an angle not-so-subtly referenced by the cover, which features a pair of his glasses and



inadvertently suggests quite a literal interpretation of his method. Hakim is performing what will inevitably be an unforgettable show at the O2 Forum in Kentish Town, so grab tickets while you can.

MUSIC

Relationships won the NME and to me, it was like my home football team losing the league, except if they played every 6 years. I mean everyone hates Spurs, but I don't actually know, I don't do football.

My point is, I am now better than the haters and ma-

ture enough to think that pink is a manly colour, Guinness is the best beer in the world and The 1975 is my new favourite band.

The only thing is that the Arctic Monkey's new album "The Car" won the NME album of the year award.

Sad.



Let's Start Here. is a good place to start

A definitive guide on how to listen to Lil Yachty's new album.

Matija Conic Music Writer

Hip hop artists pursuing different genre directions do not always deliver, especially when it comes to rock excursions, with instances like Kid Cudi, Logic and MGK coming to mind as horrendous examples. These ventures often come from a rapper's desire for their art to be "taken more seriously", as Lil Yachty put it in his recent listening party for his new project, *Let's Start Here*. A lot of reception to Quadecca's last record, which is a heart-shattering, mind-blowing masterpiece, was similar, praising it for pursuing a more indie direction, framing the approach as artistically superior. This sentiment rubs me the wrong way, as it shows that a lot of people remain dismissive of hip hop as an artform. It takes a lot more to impress me than a simple genre diversion. If Yachty made a trap record that was great, I would be applauding that achievement as much as I'm loving the moodier, psych rock vibes permeating the tracklist of *Let's Start Here*.

That being said, what Yachty has done here makes me start to take him more seriously. For one, he utilised his resources extremely well, having enough of an open mind to collaborate with people more experienced than him while still maintaining a significant level of executive input to keep the project his own. One particularly frustrating thing about rich and influential artists like Drake is their reluctance to establish good collaborations and dishing out piles of crap like *Honestly*, *Nevermind* – a record born out of this sort of arrogance, showing Drake as impressively unaware of any forms within the house genre. Yachty, however, did his homework here, kicking the year off with an album that, though by no means perfect or super left field, is a wholly enjoyable listening experience. The opener, *the BLACK seminole.*, is a truly grandiose track with an impressive climax. I wasn't as mind-blown by this song as many fans were, but it excited me about the places in the record Yachty was going to take me deeper into. As for many others, my main qualms regarding tracks like *the BLACK seminole.* are Yachty's vocals, with the autotune and the heavy processing sometimes doing him a disavour and coming across as a bit jarring. This issue is most glaring on the track *pRETTy*, which is a thoroughly painful listen, be it because of the vocal editing or the annoying lyrical content. The track's opening line is "come bust this pussy open", immediately followed by Yachty's autotuned moaning and bars about grabbing tits – truly zero things going for this track, absolute lowlight.

Nonetheless, I'm reluctant to claim that his vocals are bad by any conventional metric and I really think it's a matter of personal taste, as it's clear that Yachty doesn't take himself as some singer extraordinaire. Sometimes the vocals complement the vibe of the melody fairly well too, like on the track *'sAy sOMETHING'* – a laid-back, dreamy ballad that engulfs you in its pretty atmosphere, with tastefully incorporated keys and Yachty's yelpy singing sounding confident as ever. This is also the case on *'WE SAW THE SUN!'* – a lovely cut where Yachty really shines through and the autotune feels weirdly soothing and appropriate.

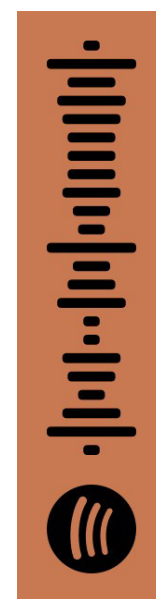
The features on this record are fantastic as well, with Diana Gordon smashing it on the front end of *'drive ME crazy!'*, a low key, disco-adjacent banger. Nothing super new or inventive, but very pleasant on the ears, with Yachty finishing off the song with some slower verses, a pace I think is very much his strong suit. Another great feature is Nick Hakim on *'REACH THE SUNSHINE'*, one of my top moments, which sees him kicking the track off with this almost sedated tone sung over a minimal, but nonetheless quite tense instrumental. The creepy guitars and eerie synths maintain this tension very well, keeping the listener attentive. The song then explodes into these space-filling, expansive synth lines with spooky laughter samples. All these elements just come together so neatly. The way Yachty enters the track by finishing Hakim's verse was a detail I particularly enjoyed, with the string sections at the back end making for a fantastic way to finish things off.

'Ride', on the other hand, while having certain enjoyable elements, features Teezo Touchdown, whose singing really takes me out of the vibe for reasons I'm not sure I can pinpoint. The keys and the melody are great, however, and it's definitely a moment that deserves its place in the tracklist. The follow up track, *'running out of time'* is the most brilliant and effective cut on the record in my view. The signature dream pop synth lines provided by Magdalena Bay – a duo I absolutely adore – are amazingly executed and run over easily the smoothest baseline on the album. The track truly makes me feel like I'm on top of the world and fills me with this optimistic, confident sensation, while doing comparatively little on the production front as opposed to many other moments. And this – this ability to generate a

beautifully captivating and laid-back energy with such a minimal approach – is precisely its charm, an approach I wish there was more of on the album.

Standing on the opposite side of the production isle is *'I'VE OFFICIALLY LOST ViSiON!!!!'* which does a lot. And by a lot, I mean *a lot*. It's an insane, indecisive cut, chaotically shifting through different landscapes of sound, but doing so in the best way possible. The employment of dark, murky guitars and hard-hitting drums that boil your blood, interspersed with contrasting and low key moments where Diana Gordon sings over some gentle piano keys, makes this track the most experimental out of the bunch.

The middle portion of the record unfortunately remains quite forgettable, however, with *'(failure(:'*, *'THE zone~'*, *'paint THE sky'* and *'HouLd i B?'* being just okay – really nothing as captivating as the highlights I numbered. Overall though, we have to give credit where credit is due. Who would have thought Yachty would be as present as he is on my Spotify rotation in 2023? To all the pretentious music enjoyers who are currently rubbing their noses and going "AkcHually, the album sucks, is derivative and not experimental enough" and endlessly posting their different, super unique opinions online, I don't care, nobody cares, stop. I love that he's trying new stuff and I very much applaud this (hopefully) defining moment in his discography. With a bit more experience in such genre lanes, I'm sure Yachty can take us to some exciting places going forward that will stop people from making constant Tame Impala comparisons and allow him to craft his own, recognisable sound.



FILM & TV

Monopoly: the movie(s)

FILM & TV

Edited by: MIKE BUZADJI
JONAH HEWETT

► *Film Editor Jonah Hewett discusses the implications of the money and power behind the film industry.*

Film Comment

Jonah Hewett Film Editor

In 1948, the Supreme Court of the United States changed the fate of Hollywood (and, by extension, the entire English-language film industry). From the silent era onwards, the 'Big Five' film studios (and the 'Little Three') were establishing a de facto oligopoly on film production and distribution; they owned the films, the film laboratories, the writers, and the majority of movie theatres (which, at the time tended to only have one screen). This, evidently, gave them a significant amount of control over what showed, and what didn't (with a charming preference for films they themselves owned). *United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc.*, under the USA's anti-trust laws, decreed a separation between film distribution and exhibition, and outlawed and regulated various nefarious practices that the studios used to strongarm the few theatres that they didn't own. The result was a huge increase in the number of independent (of the main companies) producers, studios and movie theatres.

It isn't hard to see the parallels to the current state of the film industry. In 2021, Disney alone owned over 25% of the market share for film studios in North America with Sony following close behind at 23.1%. In Disney's case, the majority of that revenue came from *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, *Black Widow*, and *Eternals*. For Sony; *Spider-Man: No Way Home* and *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*. The common thread there, if you haven't spotted it, is that they are all Marvel properties.

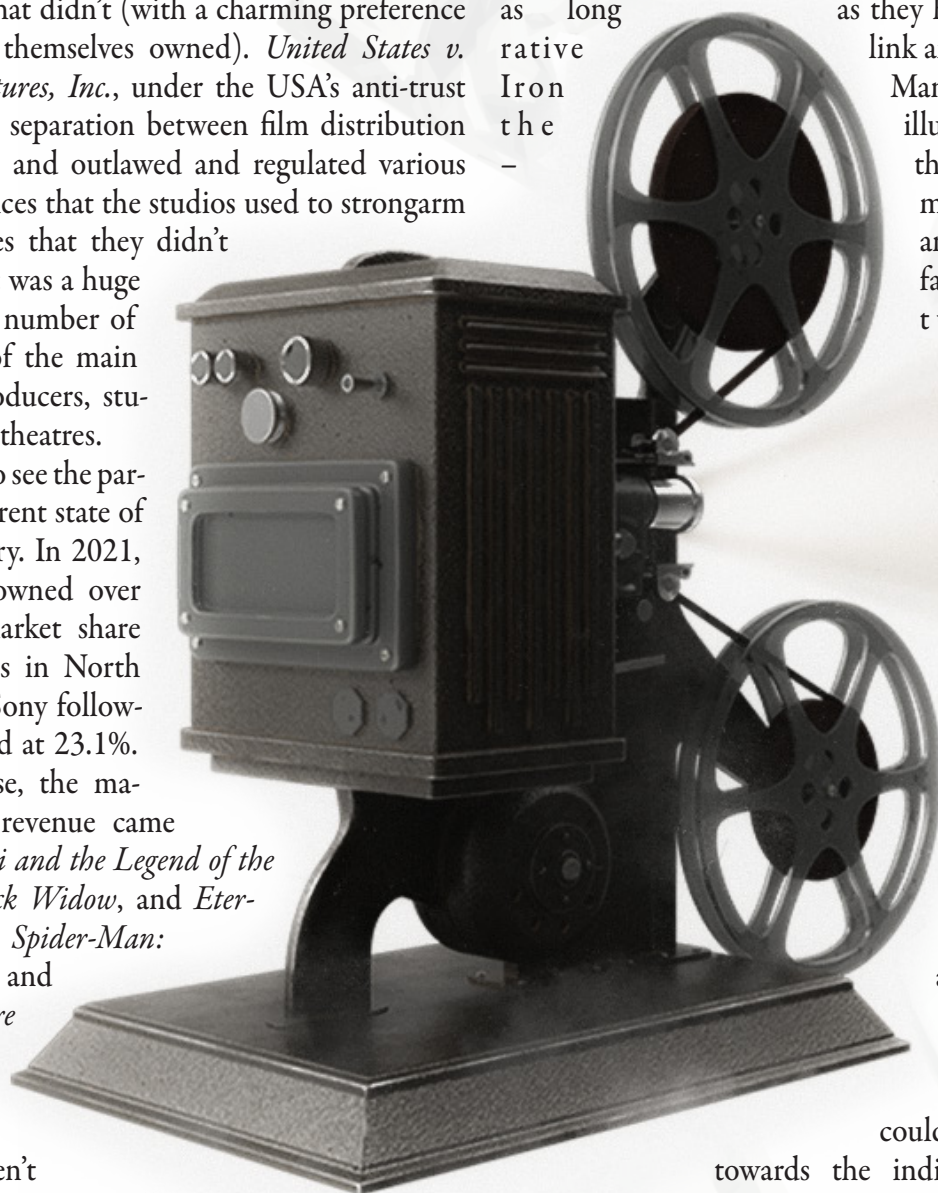
In fact, the first film on the list that isn't a continuation or reboot of a pre-existing franchise is *Free Guy*, at 10th place, from 20th Century Studios – although it does contain cameos of lightsabers, Hulk fists, and Captain America, thanks entirely to the fact that 20th Century Studios was acquired by Disney in 2019.

Note that this isn't a self-indulgent Marvel-bashing

article (although that would still be warranted) – the issue isn't necessarily with the quality of Marvel films, but with the zeitgeist chokehold they've held for over a decade. The acquisition of Marvel in 2009 allowed Disney to more than double its market share in the first five years and dominate the box office for the whole of the 2010s. They pioneered the concept of the 'cinematic universe', and showed the rest of the industry the money-making power of pre-existing intellectual property. Obviously, the MCU wouldn't have had as much staying power if it hadn't produced some good films to begin with, but Disney quickly realised that as long as they had the same narrative link and formula – be it Iron Man, Spiderman, or the illustrious 'crossover' – they could pretty much churn out any milquetoast, fanservice feature

control over an entire century of cultural backlog, even more existing popular films and shows (think about how many times you've seen the 20th Century production logo at the start of a movie) to entice people onto their streaming sites. After Disney's purchase, they immediately began blocking the licensing of old 20th Century films to independent theatres – many of which rely on archive screenings to stay afloat.

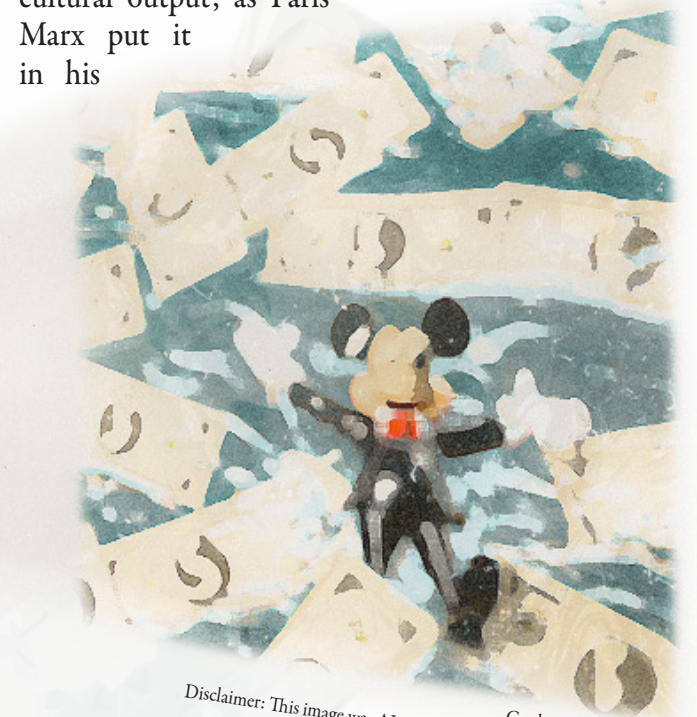
It also provides more content for future reboots – no one else really had a chance at making *Rings of Power* once Jeff Bezos set his sights on the Tolkien estate. The deep pockets of Big Tech (Amazon, Apple, Netflix) as they entered into media production also drove up prices. All this has the effect of 'altering the cultural output', as Paris Marx put it in his



and still make the big bucks.

These franchises became even more valuable as the age of streaming emerged, where the production of spin-off shows could drive customers

towards the individual streaming services operated by each studio. Streaming also precipitated a huge rise in 'consolidation' of the industry – the purchasing of legacy studios by the dominating companies. In 2016, AT&T bought Time Warner (Warner Bros. and HBO); in 2019, Disney made the hugely significant purchase of 20th Century Studios for \$71 billion; and recently, in 2022, MGM Studios was bought by Amazon for a paltry \$8.45 billion. The effect of these purchases is giving those companies



Disclaimer: This image was AI generated using OpenAI (DALL-E)
Credit: Mike Buzadji

article for Tribune – which projects get greenlit, which films and shows we see on our favourite streaming sites, is all dictated by the boards of a small number of multimedia conglomerates. It's almost uncanny how similar the current situation is to that of the 30s and 40s; a few huge studios that control both production and distribution. Except this time, no one is going to get in their way (and certainly not the US government).

In 2020, the Paramount Decrees, as they became known, were terminated – citing a shift in the media landscape, from movie theatres to streaming, that rendered the clauses obsolete. At this point, it might not have a very big effect on the state of the industry, but it is a poignant knell that heralds its direction; never send to know for whom the bell tolls.



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FOOD & TRAVEL

Greenwich: home of the Meridian

► *Why chase the equator when the Meridian is so near?*

Zanna Buckland Co-Editor-in-Chief

On a drizzly day in January, a friend and I had decided to take a trip to Greenwich, where the Prime Meridian line lies. Despite spending every summer in the UK since I was born, I had never visited the area, and felt it was somewhere I should explore for its history.

We got on the tube at South Kensington and headed for Greenwich station. Citymapper shows you a couple of line changes, but you can take the District line to Monument and walk a little way to Bank station, which

connects you to DLR – Docklands Light Rail. The Light Rail from Bank will take you directly to Greenwich station, which is more or less in the centre of Greenwich. It's a scenically interesting journey through part of Zone 2, including Canary Wharf – much nicer than travelling through tunnels!

Getting off the Light Rail at around lunchtime, we went in search of a traditional English meal, and, not finding a proper pub (barring a gigantic 'Spoons'), we landed in London's – nay, the UK's – most controversial fish and chips joint: 'Jack the Chipper'! Faint

with hunger, I only noticed the name of the restaurant once we had received our servings of delicious cod and chips. While the food was excellent, they went viral a couple of years ago for their not-so-PC name (although the owner doesn't regret it one bit!). Their décor is fun and whimsical, with portraits of old movie stars, retro adverts, and vinyl records; – the latter a fitting addition given they're located right across the street from a comprehensive record store. The staff were super friendly and helpful, and made sure we had everything we needed. Sitting in front of the store window, we

were also able to people-watch while we ate – which is always a fun pastime. (If you don't quite want to travel as far as Greenwich, their original branch is located in Whitechapel (the original hunting ground of Jack the Ripper).

We dipped into the record store – 'Casbah Records' – for a few minutes, but as much as we wanted to, we avoided spending too much time browsing its extensive stock of vinyl and CDs to ensure we could see all the sights nearby. The Greenwich area looks a lot like a quaint English town, as if you'd travelled outside of London, except that when you reach the edge of the river the skyscrapers on the other side are a stark reminder that you're still in the city.

Besides the Meridian, Greenwich is also known as the resting place of Cutty Sark, a 19th century sailing ship that gives off pirate vibes – a cool monument to take pictures in front of! Giving into our STEM student nature, we rejected the tour of the ship's history in favour of exploring the Greenwich Foot Tunnel, the neighbouring under-river footpath. The tunnel spans the width of the Thames and emerges at the Isle of Dogs on the other side. Cutty Sark also alludes to the Old Royal Naval College nearby, which earned Maritime Greenwich its name. The college was a training base for naval officers, teaching them how to sail 'the High Seas' (probably with the goal of more colonisation...?).

Neighbouring the Royal Naval College is Greenwich University. While not exactly high-ranking in the university leagues, there's no doubt that the University of Greenwich has a beautiful campus. It featured in *Thor: The Dark World*, and it's easy to see why (besides the mystical connotations of the meridian itself), as the grand buildings could match those at Oxford and Cambridge, and there are vast lawns for students and visitors alike to enjoy.

Greenwich Park is a mixture, between Hyde Park and Primrose Hill, of sprawling expanses of grass and a

Credit: Zanna Buckland



The Pavilion Café in Greenwich Park.

FOOD & TRAVEL

slightly run-down bandstand with a steeper, more hilly section leading from the university up to the observatory. Despite having come to Greenwich to see the Meridian, we opted not to pay to enter the Royal Observatory, although at £10 for student entry the price isn't extortionate. We admired the exterior of the Observatory and its various outdoor exhibits and sculptures, like the Airy Transit Circle Telescope, then left in search of deer, having spotted a 'Deer Enclosure' sign. Unfortunately for us, the deer had been relocated to – you



A stained glass window in the wall of Greenwich University.

bad shoe choice (five-year-old worn-out Converse sneakers with broken soles) meant that my feet were drenched, but I was satisfied that we'd explored all the significant parts of Greenwich. There are lots of nice cafes and eating places around to cater to hungry tourists, as well as tranquil park areas to get away from the crowds of central London.

I would definitely recommend a visit here if you ever have a free day or afternoon! The journey isn't as long as it seems, and you can also make an extra fun day of it and take a ferry from



Peach-coloured buildings lining the streets of the town.



Grassy open spaces at the university compound.

guessed it – Richmond Park, and we had also managed to visit during the week when the Flower Garden was being revitalised. Nevertheless, we entertained ourselves for a while walking up and down the grass-bordered promenades.

To give our feet a rest, we decided to stop at 'The Pavilion Café', an eatery designed in the style of a pagoda. We purchased a couple of coffees (an oat latte and a flat white) and a piece of chocolate cake to share. These were lovely, and a great way to warm up after the drizzly walk. By the end of the day, a



The duality of London: a 'traditional' English pub next to a modern Vietnamese restaurant.

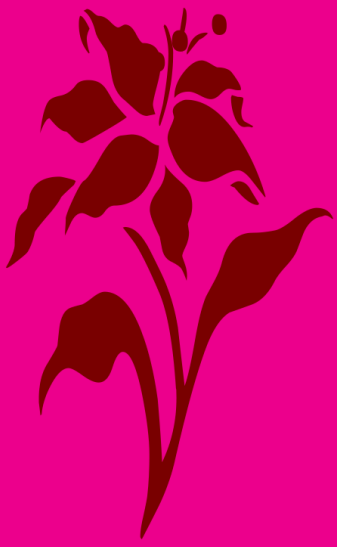
Westminster to Greenwich Pier along the Thames. You'll feel as if you've stepped into a different time in history, a land simultaneously standing still in time and spanning all of it.



The main avenue of Greenwich University.



Thor at Greenwich in *The Dark World*: the same massive pillars can be seen in the photo to the left.



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Leadership Elections '23



13 February - 17 March

For more information please scan here:

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Leadership Elections^{'23}



The Timeline

Nominations open:

Monday 13 February, 12:00

Nominations close:

Friday 3 March, 12:00

Candidates revealed:

Wednesday 8 March, 14:00

Voting open:

Monday 13 March, 09:00

Voting closes:

Thursday 16 March, 14:00

Results announced:

Friday 17 March, 18:00

For more info visit:

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SPORT & SOCIETIES

SPORT & SOCIETIES

One Punch Yian

► *With Student Fight Night London fast approaching, Yian ‘Zinger’ Zeng has mastered floating like a butterfly — but can she bring herself to sting like a bee?*

Isabella Ward Co-Editor-in-Chief

“A mathematician steps into the boxing ring” sounds like the start of a very poor joke. But for Yian ‘Zinger’ Zeng it is a prospect that is getting realer by the minute as she counts down to Student Fight Night London.

On the 9th March around 100 students (most of whom have never boxed previously) will enter the ring in front of a 1000-strong crowd at the Clapham Grand. The black-tie event aims to raise funds for testicular cancer charity The OddBalls Foundation.

Fighters are given seven weeks of boxing training, with sessions running four times a week. When Imperial Rugby were contacted about the chance to feature in Fight Night, Zinger “grabbed the opportunity”.

It sounds like a gruelling programme, so how does she stay motivated? It’s simple: “I don’t want to get clarted.”

“I’m enjoying the training,” the young fighter tells me, “a lot of it is just: keep drilling the basics because in a fight, you’re not going to remember ‘duck, hook, jab’; you’ve just got to remember to punch straight and protect your face in the fight.”

The unforgiving schedule has inevitably made her fitter than ever; “I’m cycling to uni so fast,” she brags. Moreover, it’s remoulded the way she views exercise and physical fitness. Admitting that she previously prioritised her gym routine around aesthetic goals, Yian tells me “I’ve learned how nice it is to be aerobically fit... I can now do more press ups than I used to and not die as much.” A keen member of the Women’s Rugby Club, it sounds like she’s running circles round the other rugby girls: “To be that fast person, even on a warm up lap, is really nice.”

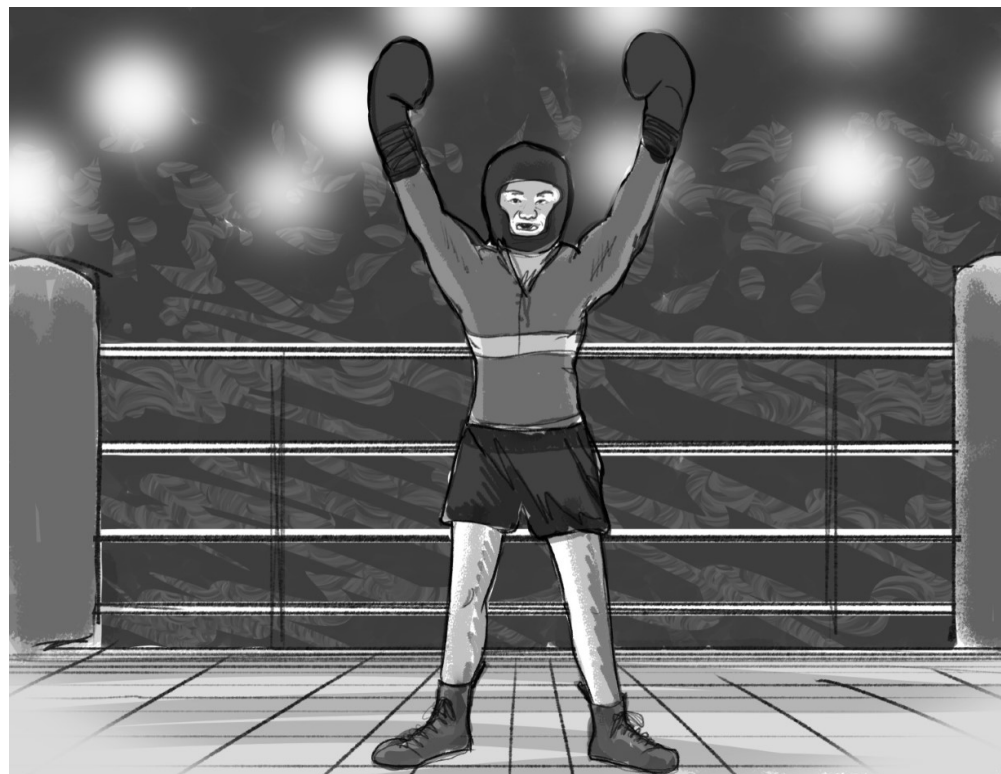
She will, however, have to make sure she looks after herself, citing the thought of being injured on the night as one of her biggest worries.

Recently, the training sessions have moved beyond drills and attendees have started sparring. Yian has been struggling with this transition, telling me “I hate it.” It seems that the biggest challenge to Yian may not so much be the fitness of her body, but more of her mind. The hardest thing she has had to learn so far is “taking a punch and not being upset at that person because it’s

fight. She hopes that this will change as time goes on, explaining “the more I’ve been training, the more I really want to win.” However, she’s still not sure that she will be able to fully throw herself into it until the big night: “I’m just hoping the atmosphere will just slap me in the face.”

Initially, it seemed like she was rather unbothered by the whole idea of

Credit: Isaac Winson



hard going.” In the words of Rocky “It ain’t about how hard you’re hit, it’s about how you can get hit and keep moving forward.”

Yet this “moving forward” isn’t something Yian is used to; she explains “It’s not like in rugby when you can whistle the ref. My opponent can hit me however she likes.” A skilled basketball and netball player as well, the dramatic difference in discipline struck her, as she explains “I feel like I’m so used to doing things properly. Even if I miss a tackle, I try to do it properly. But now in boxing, all bets are off.”

Having spent so much time training alongside her potential opponents, Yian finds it hard to throw herself into the

Fight Night. When I ask why she signed up, expecting some [*insert boxing film here*]-style monologue, she rather anticlimatically responds “I thought this would be really funny.” However, with less than three weeks to go until the big bout, this is beginning to change. “The more I’ve been doing it, the more I really want to win,” she tells me.

When she explains “I plan to start going to the gym for strength training because I don’t punch very hard”, I query whether this is a purely physical issue, or linked to her mindset. My question must have thrown her off, and I watch it dawn on her that perhaps it is time to start swinging, “My big fear is [on the night] getting so scared that I don’t punch,” she

“

I’M CYCLING TO UNI SO FAST.

tells me, “but I don’t know how to train mentally”. She thinks aloud “I’m not going to start punching people [outside training]. Maybe I should.”

As for what she’s most looking forward to, her eyes light up at “the idea of winning in front of all my friends, or even just being cheered on.” This is the first time Yian is competing in an individual sport, and she finds the idea of all eyes being on her exciting too. “I just want to put on a show and entertain my friends. It’s like the Olympics.” She knows that, win or lose, a performance she will put on. Even if she does “get clarted”, she still feels fortunate to have had the experience of learning to box.

Yet no matter how glorious the olympics-level attention and chance at stardom may be, the idea that it soon will all be over seems to bring relief to the ringster, as she tells me “I wouldn’t say I enjoy boxing that much. I prefer team sports.” With her heightened physical and mental resilience, she will be a bigger asset to her rugby team than ever before.

Until the final fight, Yian clearly has a long way to go. She evidently doubts her own ability to throw herself into the fight, but is hoping that doing so will not just make for an entertaining spectacle for her friends, but strengthen her in the long run. “I really don’t think I have that fighter’s instinct in me,” she concedes, “I think that’s such an important part of boxing and I don’t quite have it. But I feel that if I can train and I can do it, then it will be of huge benefit to my self confidence.”

As she battles the physical and mental demands of white-collar boxing, she is driven by an inspiring mantra: “It’s clart or get clarted”.

RSM: did they bottle it?

► *Royal School of Mines clash with Camborne School of Mines in first London Bottle Match in four years.*

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

Phoebe Houldsworth-Bianek
Hockey Captain

2-0

ICL
vs.
CSM

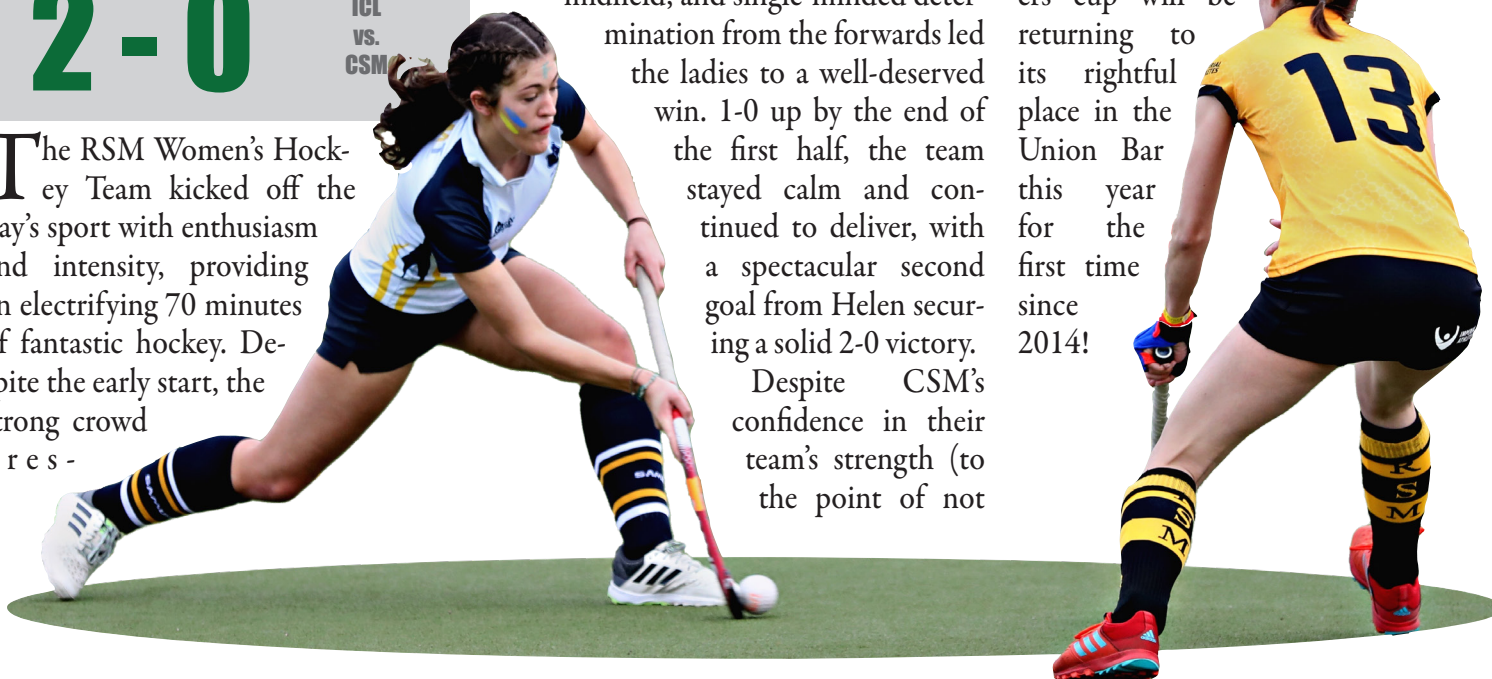
The RSM Women's Hockey Team kicked off the day's sport with enthusiasm and intensity, providing an electrifying 70 minutes of fantastic hockey. Despite the early start, the strong crowd pres-

ence made for a great atmosphere.

Watertight defence, strong saves from Emma in goal, energy and drive in the midfield, and single-minded determination from the forwards led the ladies to a well-deserved win. 1-0 up by the end of the first half, the team stayed calm and continued to deliver, with a spectacular second goal from Helen securing a solid 2-0 victory.

Despite CSM's confidence in their team's strength (to the point of not

bringing the trophy with them to London), the Golders cup will be returning to its rightful place in the Union Bar this year for the first time since 2014!



MEN'S HOCKEY

Matthew Cooper Hockey Captain

1-2

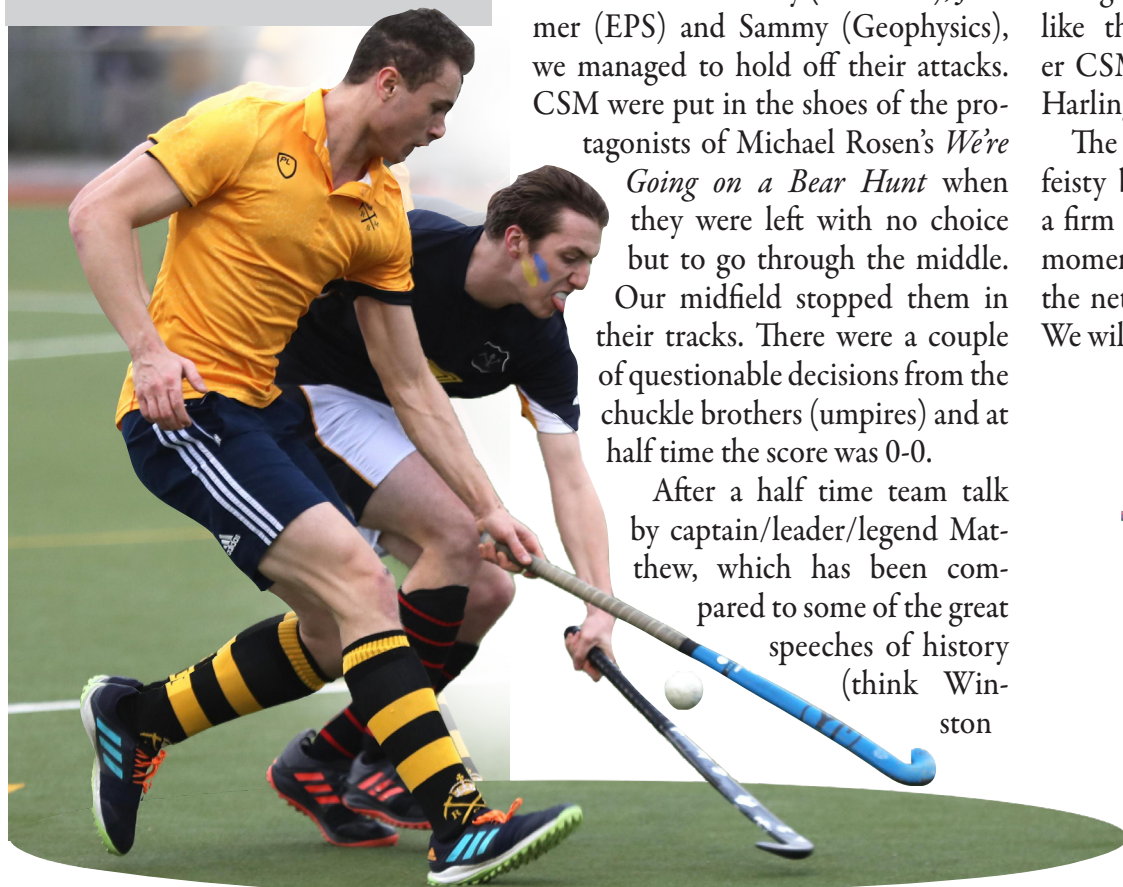
ICL
vs.
CSM

Following on from the Women's impressive victory, the pressure was on for the Men's team. CSM came out the gates hard but thanks to the brilliant efforts of Marshy (Materials), Jimmer (EPS) and Sammy (Geophysics), we managed to hold off their attacks. CSM were put in the shoes of the protagonists of Michael Rosen's *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* when they were left with no choice but to go through the middle. Our midfield stopped them in their tracks. There were a couple of questionable decisions from the chuckle brothers (umpires) and at half time the score was 0-0.

After a half time team talk by captain/leader/legend Matthew, which has been compared to some of the great speeches of history (think Winston

Churchill mixed with Barack Obama), the troops were raring to go. Not long after those words, Ed James finally arrived and sent one of his flicks top bins. Things were looking up and it seemed like the age-old question of whether CSM could do it at a windy day in Harlington had been answered...

The game started to get a little bit feisty but luckily Barry and Paul kept a firm handle on the game. In the final moments of the game CSM put two in the net — a heartbreaking way to lose. We will come back stronger next year.



NETBALL

Lorna Macrae Netball Captain

9-62

ICL
vs.
CSM

Another year of bottle done and with a 9-62 result, we couldn't be prouder of RSM Netball. Keep CSM under 100 and score more than 6 goals? Smashed it.

Our players never let the energy drop and even gave CSM something to panic over when we led the first quarter 2-0 up! Thank you to everyone who stayed out in the rain to watch us play; as always, the RSM sideline support was unmatched.

We'll be continuing the fight next year. It's time for double digits. Look out Bottle 2024.

BADMINTON

Justin Chan Badminton Captain

2-6

Men's
ICL
vs.
CSM

2-6

Women's
ICL
vs.
CSM

2-7

Mixed
ICL
vs.
CSM

With a hastily put together team we managed to win a few games, but the opposition were strong, with CSM displaying impressive skill and teamwork.

Our team suffered a defeat but gained valuable experience. Imperial Men's lost 6-2, Women's lost 6-2, and Mixed conceded 7-2. Nevertheless, our teammates showed a cracking effort despite all the last-minute scrambling to find players!



SPORT

ICURFC fight for title

► *Imperial Rugby XV IIs pull off an impressive second-half comeback down 24 points to keep their title hopes alive.*

Louis Beucher ICRFC IIs Captain
Wilson Huang ICRFC IIIs Captain

As the season end approaches, our six victories and one loss put us in a comfortable second position in the league. To keep our title hopes alive, we needed a five-point victory, and we head to Harlington with the ambition to win with at least four tries.

The game started off slowly with Imperial scrambling to put pressure on Roehampton. Being the bigger team by a significant margin, Roehampton adopted the crudely simple, but highly effective strategy of running forwards. Amidst a blood injury reopening on Jonny's ear, and shoulder injuries inflicted on both Ben Shacks and Antoine, we struggled to cover the backfield.

The accumulation of mistakes and knock ons did not play in our favour, nor did their dirty play in the rucks and scrums. All in all, this made for a first half to forget, as we conceded four tries and two conversions. We felt our hopes of taking the title slipping away.

Starting the second half supercharged and with a new strategy, we sent them right back to their own half immediately after kick-off. Putting them under enormous pressure, our pack obliterated theirs in a stellar scrum on their five, overcoming the weight deficit. We felt our comeback slowly but surely creep in.

On the next sequence, our very own captain 'Finn Russell'ed a pass over the blitzing Roehampton backline to send Dylan over. Try converted: 24-7.

A few plays later, on a set play off scrum, Ferrari drew

three defenders all to himself to set up Dylan for yet another magnificent try. The conversion was a formality: 24-14.

Both on the sideline and on the pitch, Roehampton's spirits were crumbling as our confidence only grew. They couldn't seem to withstand the pressure, as a repetition of foul plays in their 22s ended up with a well-deserved yellow card. From there, using a tactic from their playbook, a series of pick and goes resulted in our third try of the day through Geraint Eickermann. The conversion narrowly sailed right, 24-19.

After a few well-handled defensive sequences in our own half, the pressure was back on Roehampton as we recovered the ball on the 50m line. Whether described as a stroke of genius or of luck, a kick over the Roehampton defence by

Louis was recovered after a favourable bounce by Dylan, who proceeded to celebrate before he had crossed the line but dived over anyway for his third try on the day to bring us back level. We watched as Louis kicked the conver-



26-24

ICL
VS.
RMR

ICUNC IIIs avenged

► *Westminster Dragons sent home with their tails between their legs after unprecedented defeat by Imperial.*

Sophie Mosselmans ICUNC IIIs Captain

This was undoubtedly the toughest match of our season, playing the terrifying Westminster Is. They sit at the top of our league and have a goal difference of +322, with the second best team at +76. In our away match against them last term we got thrashed 66-26.

When Iman offered to buy everyone a round of drinks at team dinner if we won, I took a large risk in making a joke that I would buy everyone a car if we did. This was because I was certain that there was no chance that we could win!

In the first quarter, Lorna played a very strong centre and the defence, covered by Kalea, Hollie, Vania and Nadia, managed to get us some key turnovers. As a result, we won the first quarter. The energy was high and the chemistry between the shooters, Iman, Amelie and Mia, has improved considerably since last term. The entire match was tense and fast paced, with every second counting...

In the third quarter, Hauwa had to go off due to an ankle injury, but Vania came straight back on and we kept fighting. I was so impressed at how well the energy was kept up by the team. In the

final quarter, Imperial had a strong lead and the Westminster girls appeared to give up. They were clearly getting tired as they faked an injury just to get a rest (which we discovered was fake from their Instagram post)!

The final score was 40-35 to Imperial!

Hauwa got player of the match for her fearless performance, and I had

COCKS OF THE COMPETITION

TOBY

IC HOCKEY MEN'S IVS

Gave a new meaning to 'getting your head in the game' whilst piloting a new tackling technique involving his face.

ANDY

ICURFC COACH

Sent off the pitch during the first half of ICURFC's game against Roehampton after arguing with the ref. Left shouting "I can't be the only one fighting for you guys."

WESTMINSTER DRAGONS

NETBALL IS

FELIX SPORTS

PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK

Key tip: when staging a fake injury to eat up game time, don't brag about it on your university's official sports Instagram.

sion to bring us 26-24 up.

With ten minutes to go, we knew that we just had to maintain pressure on their now fatigued players, and stop their fly-half, to bring us to victory. A last knock on by the Roehampton players brought forth the final whistle as we completed our comeback victory to keep our title hopes — now more than ever — alive.



40 - 35

ICL
VS.
Dragons

Sweeping success for Dance Club

► *Dance Club bring home armfuls of trophies from Birmingham friendly competition.*

Credit: Imperial College Dance Club

Esme Lynch First Team Crew

There's nothing quite like waking up before the average Londoner has returned from their Friday night out, and – drenched in hair spray, fake tan and foundation – waiting for a coach to arrive on a cold Kensington street. But for nearly sixty seasoned members of the Imperial College Dance Club (ICDC), this was no real hardship as we were on our way to compete in the Birmingham Friendly Dance Competition.

Having started the season triumphantly at the Bath Friendly two months before, and with two of the year's most prestigious competitions less than four weeks away, the club was keen to succeed. With many, many hours of training under our belts and a sense of comradeship only ICDC knows, we charged into a ballroom-based battle against the likes of Oxford, our main rivals Cambridge, and, of course, Birmingham, among others.

The morning saw the competitors take on the ballroom dances – the slow, sweeping waltz, the passionate tango, the dizziness-inducing Viennese waltz, the stylish and suave foxtrot, and the aptly-named quickstep – and Imperial started the day strong; Imperial couples made the finals a total of sixteen times. We were especially proud of Keven Du and ICDC President Izabela Jaszcz who triumphed in the beginner/novice foxtrot, while George Bull and Alessia Oliveri who won the intermedi-

ate 3-Dance, as well as Dominic Cronie, Nina Anderson, Ben Biggs and Zoë McGee who all made three ballroom finals.

The afternoon saw us tackle the Latin American dances; the six hours of dancing we had already done wasn't going to stop us from attacking the sharp and powerful Cha Cha Cha, the Brazilian carnival of the Samba, the romantic rumba, the Paso Doble, which mimics a Spanish bullfight, and the lightning-fast jive. Imperial couples made their respective Latin finals twelve times – another great achievement, with Athos Vancanas and Adela Capilnasiu taking the crown in no less than three events (advanced 3-Dance, open rumba and open Paso Doble), sharing the latter award with Ballroom & Latin Team Captain Kennedy Au and Iris Roatiş. Au, Roatiş Devon Anthony, and Katie Chow all made three Latin finals, whilst Biggs and McGee brought their total finals tally to four in the Open Rumba.

By the end of the Latin rounds, everyone had been dancing for nearly thirteen hours. However, we were not going to put on the breaks as the team match



Imperial College Dance Club sashays their way to success at the Birmingham Friendly.

round – which sees four couples compete across four dances (waltz, quickstep, Cha, and jive) as a team, with the best-scoring team being crowned the champions – was about to begin.

Imperial's four teams all quickly qualified for the top-flight team match event (an impressive feat considering the standard of the competition), and from there we saw tough competition from the Universities of Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, and especially Oxford, who all teemed with impressive dancers.

Just before 10pm, the eight best teams

fought for the day's ultimate crown in the team match final. We nervously waited for the recalls, hoping to retain our now-legendary dominance during competition team matches.

We need not have been nervous, as three ICDC teams qualified for the final, affirming that our days of governance of the team match were not yet over. The atmosphere in the crowd during any final is electric, but the team match final always creates a bottled-lightning feeling throughout the ballroom, and it really helps the finalist perform at their best.

Imperial face off UCL

► *Imperial Hockey Men's IVs' variety of tactics fails to secure them victory over UCL, despite early lead.*

Tristan Hall Imperial Hockey

After a strong start to the season where they found themselves *not* at the bottom of the league, the Men's IVs came into the new year with renewed spirits and fresh faces.

This would quickly change for Finesmaster Toby (holder of the coveted Dick of the Day), who, in keeping with tradition, managed to stop the ball with everything except his stick. This includ-

ed an enthusiastic tackle using his face; a strong performance in A&E almost rivalled his outstanding stick skills.

Leon Christie, aka The Unit and our most decorated Man of the Match, demonstrated his excellent impersonation of a bulldozer, blitzing through almost the entire UCL team. Our resident rattlers Joe 'JBug' Robertson and Lars Dautlich continued their mental warfare against the other team, this time by using jaffa cakes and a stella can as

shin pads, improved on only by Lars' vivid knee-length neon Grinch shorts.

Despite a great effort from the boys and a convincing lead for the first half (dampened only by a comeback from UCL in the second half, bringing the final score to 1-4), our relentless spirit and unmatched technical skills were not enough to overcome UCL; our well-deserved victory, much like our Vice-Captain Neil Patel, failing to materialise.

1-4 ICL vs. UCL

A brief tube ride later (and a small diversion via Charing Cross Hospital for Toby), the boys put their bruising loss behind them, got glittered up, and hit ACC. Our egos (and eyes) bruised, but our spirits unflinching, we look keenly towards our next League battle.

SPORT

The continuing saga of the famous women's rugby team

► *As Women's Rugby go from strength to strength, Felix looks back on the sport's rich history at Imperial.*

Isabella Ward Co-Editor-in-Chief

The Imperial College Women's Rugby Club (ICUWRFC) are flying high. As the season winds down, they remain undefeated, and will likely be promoted for next year. They are now looking

Barbara
the
happy
hooker



MEET the "Happy Hooker." She is Barbara Ions—the iron maiden of the Rugby pitch.

She has got some pretty tough friends too. There's Hotlips, Animal and Corsetto, not to mention Smurf.

Women's Rugby, complete with nicknames, scrum downs, head-high tackles, dislocated shoulders and bloody noses, is the newest thing in female sporting life.

Barbara and her chums are students at London's Imperial College.

The girls are still learning the game.

Matches are lined up against a Dutch side, and one from Cardiff. Imperial wants a return match with University College who beat them recently 4-10.

Barbara, 18, Rugby's happiest hooker, reckons it's worth all the bruises but thinks most of the girls prefer playing against male opposition.

"It's not really that unfeminine. We play a lot of hockey and that's just as violent," she said. Imperial's student coach, Eddie Eudgen, said: "They don't sing Rugby songs and don't get in a big bath together."

Credit: Express Archive

A *Daily Express* article on the Imperial Ladies' Rugby team, published in 1980.

forward to showing off their impressive gameplay at the City Varsity (TCV), their exhibition match against LSE.

But it's not only recently that they have gotten into their stride – Imperial College was a founding member of the Women's Rugby Football Union in 1983. By that point,

the Imperial Ladies' Rugby team was already well seasoned, having established themselves as a competitive team throughout the late 1970s.

In 1980 the team became of particular interest, when their game against University College London (played at Harlington) was filmed by the BBC for the news programme *Nationwide* and the team was featured by the *Evening News* and *The Sun*. *Felix* wrote that the team had even sparked the interest of the BBC World Service.

The team were also featured, but less favourably, in the *Daily Express*, in an article which *Felix* later apologised had "trivialised" the team. This is of no surprise to ICUWRFC Club Captain Martha, who, 40 years on, still feels that women's rugby is not taken seriously. She tells *Felix* "Lots of people don't really think it's a proper sport," saying there is a tendency to view the team as "childlike" and that "we get talked down to by coaches, who say things like 'do you know the rules?'" It's chilling to see little has changed since the *Daily Express* article, which incorrectly writes "the girls are still learning the rules", although Martha notes that they now explicitly ask coaches to not call them "girls" as not only is this demeaning, but it would actually refer to under-18s rugby.

In the same article, Imperial Ladies' team member Barbara dispels the idea that women aren't inclined to aggressive sports, which is an idea that Martha nevertheless finds still pervades the sport. She doesn't understand: "it's a great outlet for women. Our players find it very cathartic."

Where the game does depend less on physical strength, Martha argues is an advantage that further drives the team's diversity, explaining "[in women's rugby] there's less brutish force and a higher level of skill. You

can kind of play wherever you want to on the pitch, whereas with the men's it's like who's the biggest who's the strongest. But because of the level of skill that we have in the women's game and the higher priority skill takes, it has a unique advantage really."

She feels this draws women to rugby, as girls rarely play rugby at school, so many new members turn up to ICUWRFC having never played before. "I think what also draws people to women's rugby is the diversity, acceptance and variation," Martha explains, adding

that it is "also true for body sizes, which is not a lot of the case for a lot of sports."

Despite having featured on national television in what *Felix* called a "thoroughly entertaining and absorbing match," the club struggles to draw supporters.

Women's rugby was once again featured in the national press in 2015,

though for less positive reasons. This should have been a good year for the club, as they headlined Varsity. However, few people were

“

WE'RE FEELING REALLY POSITIVE

there to see the College victor over the Medics, as poorly organised travel arrangements made by Sport Imperial meant most supporters deserted the pitch, leaving the team stranded following the game. They felt they had not received the same level of consideration as their male counterparts.

An investigation launched by Imperial supported these claims; the College and Union resolved to further research students' experiences of sexism in sport at Imperial. The 1752 Group – an organisation dedicated to ending staff sexual misconduct in higher education – felt the investigation "points to an ingrained nature of sexism and misogyny," as, allegedly, the team were also subject to sexist comments from both Imperial students and Sport Imperial staff.

The club has experienced change since then, telling *Felix* "we've got a really good relationship with Harlington grounds management." Just this week they christened the club house pitch with its first rugby game.

When they do have observers, they are not always welcome. Martha tells *Felix* "this season we've had men on sidelines catcalling women in games, running onto the pitch, throwing things onto the pitch, and making offensive and inappropriate sexualised comments." The latter is not just from students, but by referees and coaches as well, she says.

She knows that rugby culture is at fault here, saying that articles such as that in the *Daily Express* show where the "negativity and disrespect" the team experience today stems from. She partially blames the amount of drinking within the rugby community, which was also identified as a factor in the 2015 investigation. She knows the abuse is not reflective of the women's rugby team or their performance at all. However, it mars their experience.

Whilst she notes that this was never from Imperial men, she feels that there is still a “shirking of responsibility” within the community and would appreciate the men’s club “starting the conversation,” suggesting “a clear statement on supporters’ behaviour would be good, and a no tolerance policy.”

Nevertheless, the club is looking forward to TCV. It would seem Imperial’s rivalry with UCL has been replaced by a new rivalry with LSE, and TCV will see both the women’s and men’s teams play in front of a crowd of 1000.

For ICUWRFC, TCV is “the highlight of the year,” as Martha tells *Felix* “We get the most amount of spectators.” Having been, I know personally that there is still a large difference in the number of spectators for the men’s and the women’s games, but Martha acknowledges that this is symptomatic of a wider issue in women’s rugby, saying “I’ve been to double headers with the, you know, Barbarians and the discrepancy in crowd sizes is ridiculous for that as well. So it’s not like it’s an us issue. It’s a women’s rugby issue.”

She enjoys working with the men’s club and appreciates the support her club receives from them, as the men’s club do the majority of the event organisation. In future, she hopes to work more across the clubs, saying “I’d rather have unity.”

Despite the still prevalent issues, ICUWRFC has a positive outlook. Martha tells me “Grassroots women’s rugby is really on the rise – the increase in numbers has

Credit: *Felix*

The continuing saga of the famous ladies rugby team



Line out concentration

Colin Palmer

Last Friday the Imperial College Ladies Rugby team were featured on the London and S.E. section of *NATIONWIDE*. The film featured the IC vs UC match at Harlington which ended in a 0-0 draw. The cameras focused on all aspects of the game including the boat race in the bar afterwards. The film was spliced with interviews with both captains and Eddie. Everyone in the team who saw it said that they enjoyed it. It was a pity that the BBC couldn’t let us know the screening date! The team have also hit the press (again!) notably the *Evening News*’ centre pages. The article was rather tongue in cheek and featured a picture of a scrum. The continuing interest in Ladies Rugby has also been noted by the BBC World Service.



Eddie under attack

Colin Palmer

been amazing. We’ve got the World Cup on the way and we’re feeling really positive.”

She knows that with this momentum gain there will be new problems ahead, saying “there’s only so far you can go and I’m just anticipating the glass ceiling. Hence she hopes that she can foster future collaboration between the men’s and women’s clubs, hoping ICUWRFC will “go above the norm to say ‘we support our women’s club, and we demand respect for them from the sidelines.”

Excerpt from *Felix*, 1980.

She doesn’t want to dwell on the *Daily Express* article, but Martha has one final protest: “We do sing rugby songs.”

ICUWRFC remains one to beat

► *Imperial Women’s Rugby team fight off Hertfordshire to hold on to their undefeated status.*

Camille Boutrolle ICUWRFC

With its blue skies, sunshine, and gentle breeze, Wednesday made for a beautiful day to be the first rugby team to christen a club house pitch – something which put both Imperial Women’s Rugby and their opponents, the Herts Women’s Rugby, in high spirits.

Set to play 11 a side, we were feeling confident with

strong players on the bench, in contrast to our opposition who were playing with no substitutes. We started strong, with full back Scarlett Yeadon scoring a try in the first ten minutes.

Our next play was a classic: solid ball carrying from the forwards for a few phases, followed by some exquisite passing from the backs and a break on the wing by Ruby Haddad. Orla Dugupta side-steps Herts and secures a beautiful prop try, which is then slotted

through the posts for a conversion by Prudence Lee.

Solid defence from Herts forces us to kick the ball out, but Imperial regain possession after pressure from our line-out forces an over-throw from Herts. Our backs do all the work from then out to carry the ball from the halfway line, but it’s worth it as it leads to a second try scored by Scarlett. Helene Biragnet kicks us through the posts to bring the score to 19-0.

Herts score their first try on the back of a scrum with a great break through our line of defence from their scrum-half, who also converts the try. After a tiring string of line-outs and scrums where Herts ultimately overpowered us, their scrum-half finished with an incredible break on the wing and scored a well-deserved converted try. At half-time the score was 19-14.

With the margin of or lead dramatically narrowed, we were under heightened pressure.

Our defence was stronger coming into the second half, but ball possession was still quite contested. Alice Woodcock jackals the ball in their 22 and Scarlett Yeadon scores once again. Converted by Prudence Lee and her reliable kick - the score was now 26-14. But Herts were not letting up and they seized the opportunity to score a try on the right wing to bring the score to 26-19. Try for try continues as IC’s Noor Limmer steals the ball which enables Alice Woodcock to score a clean try. 31-19.

The next try came from great support play. Scarlett Yeadon steps Herts and Noor Limmer is there for the offload. Players are there to ruck over when Limmer is tackled and Alice scores again with another fabulous forwards try. This brings our lead up to 36-19. Herts’ attack was phenomenal until the end, and IC could not keep up, leading to two further converted tries scored. Final score 36-33. IC remain undefeated.

36 - 33 ICL vs. Herts



Alice scores a try.

SOCIETIES

Japanese tea and a teapot from a Turkish grandma

► *Meet the Tea Society: learn about their love for tea, the different teas they serve, and the tea they spill....*

Charlotte Probstel
Societies Writer

Secrets come out, someone remarked at Tea Society after it was casually mentioned that secretaries always seem to disappear – but don't worry, the current secretary is somewhere in Canada. The group of 35 members meets every Monday and Thursday from 6-8 pm to converse, discuss, laugh, eat dinner, work on problems, or just watch a movie while enjoying caffeinated and decaffeinated teas.

Set on the table were 56 different tea flavours, none basic or classic, and the room was filled with a sweet, inviting aroma. In search of something new, I chai-ed three different fruity flavours. Rather than using paper cups in years past, mugs were set out along with a large 7L kettle. Teapigs, TWG, Whittard, Drury, and Tea-Traders were all part of the collection along many more individual bags. Among the warm-colored teas was a surprisingly blue tea. “You don't drink blue tea, you don't eat yellow snow,” one member pointed out. While the blue buttery pea flower tea was aesthetically pleasing, its smell of spinach and taste was rather the opposite. However, blue tea can change colour when mixed with an acid such as citrus juice – it is an indicator.

Two outstanding members, Osman and C, were able to recognize teas instantly. “That has a citric note,” Osman pointed out. “That is definitely a white tea,” I heard from the corner of the room. “It is a mix of rooibos and vanil-

“

WE TRIED TO MIX BRITISH AND FAR EASTERN TEA CULTURE

la,” the people in front of me reported. What was unknown is that Osman used to be a “tea-nerd in high school” – a real connoisseur, a master of a beautiful art. Among the tea enthusiasts was Mathew, the treasurer. As an English boy, he grew up with milky tea as the standard. One day he spotted other Twinings blends and his mission became to try different teas – English Breakfast, Assam, Ceylon, Darjeeling, Lapsang

Souchong, and at Tea Society he was introduced to loose-leaf tea. The rest is history. Now he drinks Pu-erh from his Chinese tea set.

“We tried to mix British and far-eastern tea culture, but ended with eastern tea and British biscuits,” Mathew chuckled. The society has a wonderful collection of teacups – some stored in silk-fitted boxes, some painted with the finest cherry blossoms, some made of gorgeous sea-blue ceramic. That's not all – a small Japanese teapot from Osman's Turkish grandma also joined the set and was instantly filled with Genmaicha, a Japanese popped-rice tea. Did you know, that Turkey is the most tea-drinking country? They drink about 3.16 kg of dry tea per person per year, which is significantly more than in the UK (1.94kg). On the evening of the interview, the group was stress-relieving

from a long week with an Irish kung-fu movie from 1998, called “Fatal Deviation”. With a budget of £12,000, it was so bad it ended up being horribly good. Cookies were passed around, while Mathew was brewing different infusion teas – apple and ginger or peach. The comments came rolling in – “This makes me feel like I am back at my grandparents' house.” “They could not afford fitting clothes or ripe strawberries with £12,000.” “It looks like they are shooting cotton balls, not bullets,” and “Smooth Jazz Gun-fight” – all followed by a round of laughs. It was difficult for everyone to kettle down. Later that night, they celebrated C's master's offer at a pub.

The socie-tea is much more than drinking tea. “It is a group of friends hanging out, instead of getting together to drink tea. I come here to socialise,” Osman said. “My best friends are

Credit: Rolando Charles (Felix Photographer)



Credit: Rolando Charles (Felix Photographer)



Union President Hayley (left) visiting Tea Society.



A beautiful collection of teas in various containers.

Credit: Rolando Charles (Felix Photographer)



Tea Society laughing while drinking tea. You can see Osman cheering in the foreground.

in this society". The vibe felt harmonious and everyone got oolong very well. The members went on two cultural trips

this year to various tea shops in London. In December, they visited Twinings, Whittard, TWG, Chinatown, and

“

MY BEST FRIENDS ARE IN THIS SOCIETY

Mariage Frères. In February, they went to the East India Tea Company, Postcard Teas (which has very cute packaging), and Carnaby Street's 'My Cup of Tea' had pots of tea that were of better quality than the classic high tea. At the Algerian Coffee store, they could buy bricks of tea – a method reducing the tea-diousness of loose-leaf transport

– which became a currency in the 9th century in Russia, Turkmenistan, Tibet, Siberia and Mongolia.

If coffee is not your cup of tea, but green tea may be, then join Tea Society. The membership costs you £5 and will allow you to try 60+ different teas while enjoying golden gossip. I enjoyed hearing how Osman “missed both Bill Gates and Rishi Sunak by 5 minutes” and I was curious to learn Imperial had a gossip page, confession page, and a secrets page.

Now, that's the tea...

“A musical written by scriptwriters”

► *The Singaporean Society's Major Event was an evening of roaring laughter and cheering to support the talented cast and band.*

Charlotte Probstel
Societies Writer

Comedic. Interactive. Original. On Sunday the 19th at the Britten Theatre, the Singaporean Society, or SingSoc, checked off every single criterion of a truly special play within a play. The Singaporean Society celebrated the 40th Anniversary of its Major Event (ME); a musical portraying the issues

Credit: Singaporean Society



Charlie keeping secrets from Juliet.

Singaporeans experience daily, by telling the story of how they struggled with organizing the ME in 2022. Accompanied by original music and lyrics written by Joshua Yong, its cast, band, prop artists, lights producers, and director confirmed that Imperial is more than just a research and STEM university; it is filled with art and musical talent.

The story follows Elaine, the ME Organiser (MEO) played by Vanathi Pugalendhi, who struggles with choosing one of two scripts; a well-written serious play by Alexander (Josh Abraham Jacob) and one comedic play written by Charlie (Alex Li); a rookie. Her compromise of merging the two scripts leads to continuous fights between the two writers whose leadership exhausts the crew, leading to a dictatorial leadership, a coup, a mass walk-out, and finally no true progress. The play ends with the two writers finding greatness in each other's scripts and learning to move past their stubbornness to achieve their common goal; an incredible ME show. The story also follows Juliet (Sunnie Ow), who joined the ME, searching for friendships and fun.

Many themes appeared in the play; the struggle of leadership, trade-offs within compromise, accepting faults, stepping out of your comfort zone, the weight of compassion, and modernism vs traditionalism. Written for an audience that experiences difficult moments



Alex Li (left) as Charlie, and Josh Abraham Jacob (right) as Alexander.

of group work, the script highlighted issues we all, as college students, experience daily. Great leadership arises when a voice is given to its people and a group doesn't exist without its people; a theme emphasized by the absence of the crew as without the crew, there cannot be a show. Moreover, a few scenes were dedicated to depicting the downfall of a dictatorship, when Alexander loses the crew's respect after over-working them and prioritizing work over fun; an important aspect of societies.

While Mulan had Mushu and Aladdin had the genie, SingSoc had not one, but three comedic reliefs: the music director who communicated only via the sound of his violin; the photographer giving

Obi-Wan Kenobi-like advice while taking poorly-timed pictures, and finally Charlie; the whimsical script-writer with unrealistic artistic visions and a massive cast for one showcase. Otherwise, a single “quack” or “Oh s***, it's not my scene yet” released a roar of laughter from the packed audience. A banana used as a gun, a dinosaur replaced with a tree, a floss dance, a flirtatious moment between a boy and girl, a radioactive script, kicking a door of air, characters socializing with swans, references to *Spider-man*, *Star Wars*, the *Phantom of the Opera* and many more tension-breaking moments made me laugh tears.

Furthermore, the props and lighting/sound directors James Tay and Rachel

SOCIETIES

George must be given compliments for conveying many emotions and locations with a brilliant minimalistic feeling. A single tree and bench: Hyde Park. A couch, table, and potted plant hanging its leaves off a shelf: a student office. A black leveled stage: the studio. A podium: the final stage. The background was a simple white sheet, with varying lights shown onto the background to express anger, greed, regret and despair, ambition, and success. The excellent use of a minimal background to shift focus onto the characters allowed the cast to shine.

Additionally, the songs and lyrics were relatable and fitting to the storyline. I particularly liked the emphasis on each word in the quote; “Can he fix it? Yes.

which was used exquisitely to include the audience; such as when Juliet pointed out that the upset Charlie had not “spoken a single word since this intermission,” or when Charlie asked the audience “where is the nonsense?” in Alexander’s supposedly “boring” play.

Cleverly written for its audience, the references to the Imperial Horizons modules and the Sherfield Building allowed the student audience to feel special and included. The audience applauded as often as they could, especially during transitions. They clapped for the energised and rhythmic choreography and cheered when the lyrics became so real, it made my mouth drop. If any viewers may have also noticed, the two

Credit: Singaporean Society



The entire cast assembling for a dance scene.

Credit: Singaporean Society

He. Can”. Ballads reflected struggles, while rap communicated the anger between the two main characters. Musical director Yoshua revealed post-play that score development began in June 2022 and that the entire melodic band consisted of volunteering members who presented their individual talents; piano, drums, violin, flute, cello, electric and acoustic guitar and bass. Ten songs were written, each as unique as the play itself. Consequently, the script allowed for characters to break the fourth wall,



Jian Rong Lee leading a band of 12 musicians.

Credit: Singaporean Society



Ensemble gathered for a picture. What a large group!



Vanath Pugalendhi playing Elaine, accompanied by the dance team.

Credits: Singaporean Society



Sunnie Ow playing Juliet.

Credits: Singaporean Society

opposite scripts, one with a blue (Charlie’s) cover and the other in red (Alexander’s), were merged to produce a purple script; a thoughtful detail to promote the beauty of merging ideas.

Director Zethus Chow commented that the play was “as good as [he] can hope for”, while production worker Rachel Soh expressed that she very much appreciated the soundtrack.

Within three months, the members casted characters, rehearsed, booked venues, raised funds, and organised themselves to deliver a memorable show.

It is truly a shame that the budget was only sufficient for one show, as, besides one microphone-related technical failure, which was professionally recovered twice by Josh Abraham Jacob, the show was unforgettable. I would recommend watching out for next

year’s ME, as you may feel inspired to join the cast or the society; everyone is invited to join. I hope to see you there next year, supporting your peers.

Until next time,
Charlotte

Credits: Singaporean Society



Director Zethus Chow thanking the audience.