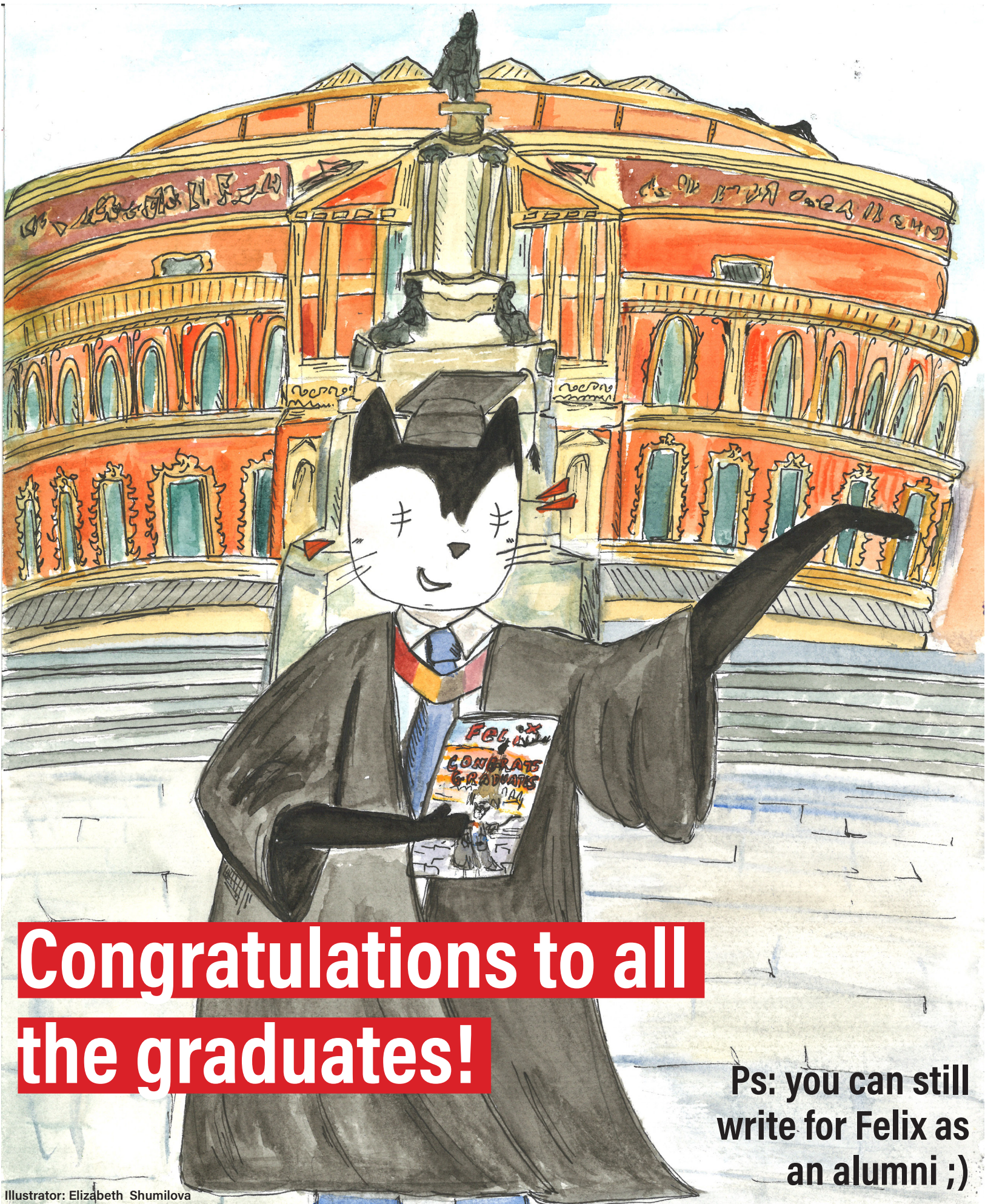


First published in 1949, Felix is released weekly during term time and is distributed around Imperial's London campuses. All students, staff, and alumni are welcome to contribute to the paper.



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DECLARATION

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 recognise the endless possibilities of AI in aiding journalism in matters such as finding sources or brainstorming, but we stand by the power of humans using their own voices. All our articles are AI-checked by the latest softwares available.

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:
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EDITORIAL

(Very brief) reflections of a graduate

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

The way I usually go about writing these editorials (I say "usually", it's been three), is:

- 1. Pick a topic based off anywhere from a headline to a shower thought
- 2. Attempt to solve a world issue relating that topic in 500 words
- 3. Realise I can't do that
- 4. Call my dad
- 5. Stare at my laptop until, deep into the Sunday night, I build a coherent essay.

I was going to take a break from writing this week as the Royal Albert Hall had me a tad busy, but I have been reflecting on the nature of student life so much that it felt wrong not to (albeit with a warning that it's a short, sweet, and simple one, I'll be back in full swing next week).

Amongst the loggias, walks, and gowns, one of the speeches at graduation spoke to me (and as

it is, to quite a few of my friends!). Imperial Council Chair Mr Vindi Banga, between congratulations and wishes of success in our future, spoke about seeing the opportunity in challenges. As brief as the mention was, I thought honouring that was one of the best messages that could stick with us from our time at Imperial. It's not an easy one, by any means, and while nobody comes to an academically challenging university without expecting to be academically challenged, life gets in the way, we grow up, and we are pushed to our limits in ways we never thought we would (sometimes feeling a lot older than we are, which made my birthday falling on graduation all the more sappy). But throughout all these challenges, there is always a way to make an opportunity out of it: to learn, to try something new, to make a friend, to know yourself better, to have a funny story to tell in 20 years. There's beauty in the way we create these opportunities together; one

could argue the suffering itself is a privilege too. Above all, after Mr Banga's speech this is what I was celebrating and truly proud of.

Don't get me wrong though, it's easy to look back on all the good things. I still spent three years in a windowless lecture hall and, let's just say, I feel aligned with moving on with my degree to bigger and better things. But I also think there's something very missable about the time where our job was to learn.

If you can, this is your sign to grab that pint with your friends, or go to that conference, or have a nice lunch with your coursemates. I wouldn't be a true graduate if I didn't say to enjoy it while it lasts, would I?

Anyway, enjoy this issue, it's a great one! And I'll be back next week with a more nuanced reflection.

- Cris

VACANCIES

We are looking for new contributors! Felix is a volunteer-run newspaper open to all Imperial students. Its survival depends on your enthusiasm!

If you're interested in one of the roles below, or want to contribute in any other way, email us at felix@ic.ac.uk.

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- Arts & Culture
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- Societies & Union
- Books
- Film & TV
- Food & Travel
- Sports



NEWS

Hot desking for Maths PhDs postponed after student backlash against planning

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

The Math department has postponed its move to introduce hot desking in Huxley offices, which was due 26 October, after student feedback.

Hot desking (unassigned desks organised in an *ad hoc*, reservation basis) has been a topic of discussion for the Maths PhD students for the past academic year, an idea that aims to use available space most effectively. First-year PhD students and some second year Centre for Doctoral Training students are already using hot desks in 6MO9.

Faculty explains that offices have low occupancy, and alternative arrangements must be considered before providing more space.

Students were initially told on 15 October that they had to clear all desks by 23 October, leaving a week to organise,

move and store belongings that some have gathered for more than three years.

“Our personal desks have been at the heart of our experience at Imperial. Despite their pitfalls, we have built part of our academic careers there, and personalising those spaces has allowed many of us to build healthy routines, improve our mental health, and establish connections with fellow office colleagues”, explains one of the students.

The proposal raised alarms in students, worried about commuting with heavy laptops, books, and equipment given a lack of overnight storage.

Following the backlash, the Department emailed students on 19 October as they decided to not proceed with the immediate introduction of hot desking: “we will concentrate on preparing the research neighbourhoods thoroughly, in order to ensure that the necessary equipment and storage arrangements are fully in place

before introducing shared desking progressively”.



Our personal desks have been at the heart of our experience at Imperial

The Department is working on providing permanent locker storage space before any hot desking arrangement is introduced.

In a letter addressed to Felix, students raise other issues they have informed the Department about that solutions are only partially provided to, if any. Such problems include high temperatures in offices during heatwaves reaching 35 degrees inside, regularly non-functioning bathrooms, and slow internet speed.

No revised timeline for office rearrangements have been announced, with the Department confirming they will communicate any changes in advance.



The Huxley building. Omar Shahpo

NVIDIA donates \$250 million to AI safety research in UK, Imperial amongst beneficiaries

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

NVIDIA, leader in chipmaking and the world's most valuable company, announced 15 October a donation of \$250 million in computing power towards research in AI safety.

The donation is in the form of \$50 million of computing power for the next five years, accessed through U.K.-based NVIDIA Cloud Partners ecosystem, as they aim to “support agentic safety and security research across the UK”,

according to Nvidia's press release. As increasingly powerful AI models are developed, NVIDIA commits to build and optimise safeguards: “The U.K. brings world-class scientific rigor to this essential engineering challenge”, says NVIDIA CEO and founder Jensen Huang.

Benefiters of this donation include major UK AI research initiative British Open-Ended Learning and Discovery Lab (BOLD), founded by Imperial, Oxford, and UCL, the Science of Fundamental AI Research Lab, and Imperial College London. The College has not provided any details of the projects or departments that

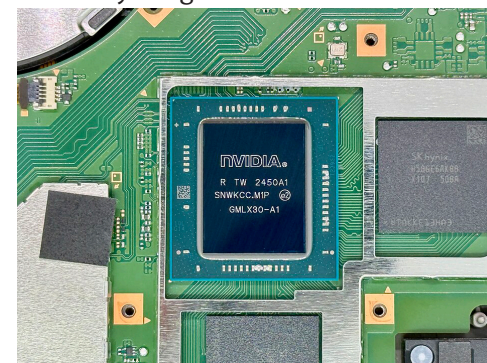
will benefit from the computing power.

This initiative comes as the UK's AI Minister announced a set of measures for AI defence last week at an Imperial event. The UK's AI Security Institute (AISI) also recently confirmed they will conduct pre-release safety tests of cutting-edge AI models with leading developers such as OpenAI.

The rise of increasingly independent agentic models, and a need to slow development to prevent loss of human control, has been warned by industry leaders themselves. Anthropic released a report on Monday that describes models

could become self-replicating, which could be “challenging to shut down, since there's no centralised point to shut off.”

Perhaps make this weekend's movie watch anything but *Terminator*.



NVIDIA chip for a Nintendo Switch 2. Bechology, CC BY 4.0

Imperial hosts Laidlaw Scholars Conference

Student scholars from universities around the world gather in weekend-long conference to share their research and look ahead.

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

This past weekend, Imperial brought together over 350 Laidlaw Scholars at a conference event to discuss and share their work as part of the Laidlaw Foundation’s 18-month Leadership and Research Programme.

This year’s theme was ‘Ambition – Passion, Progress, and Possibility in a Changing World’. Scholars took part in discussions, workshops and other events where attendees from universities across continents networked and discussed the beginnings of their research projects abroad. The opening address included remarks from Laidlaw Foundation’s CEO Susanna Kempe and

Imperial College President Hugh Brady, both highlighting the potential of the young scholars in helping build a better future.

The Programme was founded in 2014, and has expanded to include over 22 partner universities including Harvard, MIT, and LSE. It funds up to 25 places to undergraduate students at Imperial, which provide leadership training, practical experiences abroad tackling the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Students also receive an up to £6,000 (£3,000 per summer) stipend for two six-week summer trainings that include ethical leadership masterclasses delivered by Oxford professors.



Wevekend Laidlaw Scholars Conference at Imperial. © Telling Photography

Imperial amends Turnitin End User Licence Agreement statement

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

Earlier this month, Turnitin proposed changes to their End User Licence Agreement (EULA) that would have involved the use of student submissions to improve or develop AI tools. These were postponed after the wider Higher Education sector showed concerns regarding the privacy of student data and the potential use of student’s ideas in submissions to train large language models.

Imperial released a statement confirming “there are no changes to how

Turnitin is used at Imperial during the current academic year (2026-27) but will we use this year to continue to engage with Turnitin regarding any changes they are planning to understand the implications for our community”.

Previously, the statement established their commitment to being transparent about how student data is collected, used, and safeguarded. Imperial College Union worked with the College to clarify their statement, which since 12 October reads “we remain committed to protecting student data and to being transparent...”, affirming Imperial’s goal of prioritising student data and privacy.

BECOME A NEWS WRITER!

When it comes to campus news journalism, “organised gossip” is actually not that far off! If you love taking the pub chat about recent events a bit too seriously, and want to investigate the “why” of it all at Imperial, this is your place! No news journalism experience needed, join our group chat and discover what makes a good story! (Plus you’ll enjoy having your friends pester you for the scoop before the issue comes out!)

Join the *Felix News* group chat:



SCIENCE

Gut bugs & the brain

Is there a possibility that the next Alzheimer's treatment isn't a drug but a probiotic?

Science Writer
TANISHA KHERA

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is increasingly being recognized as a multifactorial condition causing neurodegeneration, as well as progressively destroying memory, thinking skills, and the ability to perform daily tasks. Many treatments have been trialed – and many have failed: so, what if we focused on the gut?

Although it may initially sound far-fetched to focus on the gut for a brain condition, the two are in constant communication. The gut has its own nervous system and uses many of the same chemical messengers as the brain, while also communicating with it through the immune system.

This matters for conditions like Alzheimer's, in which reaching the brain for detection or treatment is notoriously difficult, especially as the blood-brain barrier blocks most drugs. The gut, by contrast, is much easier to access: it can be sampled non-invasively and altered through diet or probiotics.

Alzheimer's disease is classically characterized by the accumulation of a protein known as beta-amyloid and tau neurofibrillary tangles. For decades, the amyloid cascade hypothesis has reigned as the central dogma of Alzheimer's disease research, gaining the vast majority of scientific attention and funding.

It was proposed almost 34 years ago and has produced only modest clinical benefit. There is a long history of clinical

trials that cleared amyloid plaques without halting cognitive decline. Today, researchers are widening their perspective, zooming out from a purely amyloid-centric view to investigate what seems to be a more complex, multifactorial condition including metabolic dysfunction, vascular breakdown, and neuroinflammation.

At the very centre of this inflammatory response are microglia: the brain's resident immune cells, acting as its primary line of defense. Previously dismissed as cellular scaffolding or the brain's clean-up crew, microglia are now increasingly being recognized as active drivers of Alzheimer's progression. Initially, these cells were hypothesized to be activated by the amyloid plaques, however, there is now consistent evidence that microglial response occurs prior to amyloid plaques.

In recent human postmortem studies, it has been revealed that microglia exist in unique states in Alzheimer's disease patients' brains, compared to the brains of healthy older individuals. This suggests that there may be aspects of microglial functioning that alter specifically during neurodegeneration in the brain.

Microglia in the brain act as a double-edged sword: in the early stages of the disease acting as protection by swarming around amyloid plaques and encapsulating and clearing them. However, as the pathology progresses, microglia become overwhelmed and chronically activated, becoming destructive instead of defensive. Instead of protecting the brain, microglia begin to engulf healthy synapses, driving the



Researchers are widening their perspective from a purely amyloid-centric view to investigate what seems to be a more complex condition

accumulation of tau tangles, and actively fueling the neurodegeneration they were meant to prevent.

There are various ways that microglia have been hypothesized to cause neuroinflammation and disease progression in Alzheimer's. The manner that the microglia behave and respond in is largely dependent on their fuel, i.e. their immunometabolism. Precisely speaking, when microglia detect a threat, they switch from slow, efficient energy production to fast glycolysis. The cells are not solely reliant on glucose; they are also able to use ketones, fats, and amino acids like glutamine, which allows continued microglia functioning, even in the absence of glucose. This is vital as although microglia can normally switch fuel, in Alzheimer's, chronic glucose shortage may permanently lock microglia into a glycolytic state which fuels, instead of limits neurodegeneration. Overall, this means that microglia are reprogrammed, requiring fine tuning to restore normal functioning.

What could cause alterations in microglia functioning leading to neurodegeneration? How is the gut involved?

One of the major upcoming research areas that is associated with neuroinflammation, and Alzheimer's is the gut-brain axis. The gut-brain axis is the communication between the brain and the gut. Recent research suggests that the neuroinflammation evident in Alzheimer's may be driven by gut microbiota alterations. Dysbiosis is the dysregulation of beneficial gut bacteria



Above: a brain with blood vessels. Right: microglia under a confocal microscope. David Gaboriau Imperial College London

and harmful microbes. It has recently been linked to neuroinflammation, which is further known to cause neurodegeneration and lead to the progression of Alzheimer's. Studies have shown that changes in the gut ecosystem can disrupt intestinal barrier function, causing products of gut bacteria such as lipopolysaccharides to end up in the bloodstream. When lipopolysaccharides end up in the bloodstream, they can lead to immune cell activation and trigger an overall inflammatory response, contributing to neuroinflammation.

Tackling the neuroinflammation becomes vital due to its ability to worsen neuronal loss whilst contributing to amyloid plaque and tau tangle accumulation. Once neuroinflammation begins, it can also contribute to blood-brain barrier dysfunction, allowing the immune cells, otherwise known as microglia, to enter the brain and further contribute to neuroinflammation, neurodegeneration, and cognitive impairment in Alzheimer's.

Another aspect of Alzheimer's that is impacted by an altered gut microbiome is the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine. Dysfunction in the production of these neurotransmitters further leads to cognitive decline and behavioral changes in Alzheimer's patients. The gut microbiome is an important area to investigate, especially with neurodegenerative conditions, due to alterations in the gut microbiota being observed in Alzheimer's patients.

Although this remains a correlation at the present, further research may be able to utilize this as a target for therapeutics if the correlation is found to be causation.

What are the microglia really doing in Alzheimer's?

Microglia have two roles in neurodegeneration: their activation reduces amyloid buildup but also activates inflammatory cascades which lead to synapse loss.

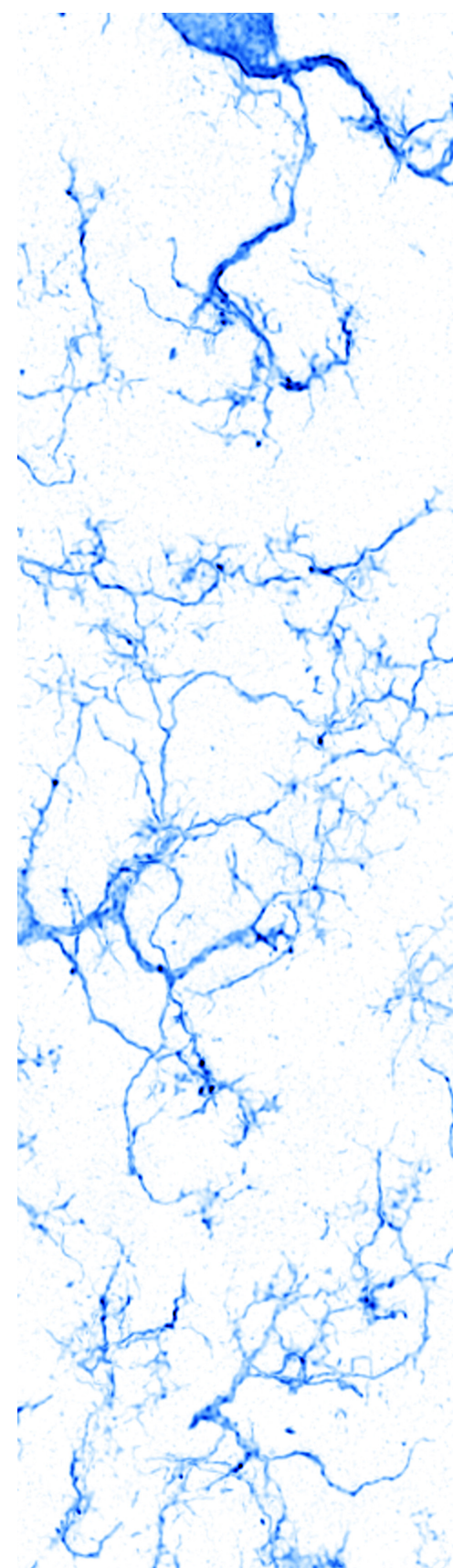
Several studies have shown a bidirectional relationship between gut dysbiosis and neuroinflammation and cognitive decline in Alzheimer's. Overall, bidirectional communication between the gut and the brain plays a vital role in homeostasis. Homeostasis is the healthy resilient equilibrium of different pathways and processes in the body. As microglia play a pivotal role in Alzheimer's, restoring homeostasis in the gut may in turn fine tune the microglia and halt disease progression.

How can we target the gut to halt neuroinflammation and AD progression?

The connection between neuroinflammation and gut microbiome alterations creates potential for therapeutic intervention to mitigate microglia related neuroinflammation, thus reducing the risk of Alzheimer's. Various recent studies suggest that resetting the microglia from a destructive, pro-inflammatory state back

into a protective state may halt disease progression. Currently, there are various ways that the gut is being targeted. These include targeted probiotics, also called psychobiotics, restoration of the blood-brain barrier, and dampening microglia hyper-reactivity. Microbiota transplantation is also being investigated; there are several clinical models that have shown a dramatic decrease in microglial activation as well as a reduction in cognitive decline. Additionally, there are also microbial amyloid inhibitors being researched to prevent the "priming" of microglia, thus preventing these immune cells from over-reacting to brain plaques.

Overall, recent studies recognizing the gut's role in Alzheimer's related neuroinflammation are highly valuable as the gastrointestinal tract offers a far more accessible and modifiable therapeutic target than the brain. Although more research is a must to confirm how beneficial a target the gut may be, current findings provide hope!



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BUSINESS

The bank didn't raise rates, so why are mortgages 6%?

The same fears driving 30-year gilts above 6% have pushed the average fixed-rate mortgage to 6%, but the upcoming Budget can only ease worries about Britain's issues.

Business Writer

POPPY HOWARD

In early September, about 1,500 different fixed-rate mortgage deals had interest rates below 5%. By the 5th of October, only nine were left. Over the same period, the Bank of England kept the Bank Rate at 3.75%, yet the five-year fixed-rate mortgage has climbed to 6%. If the bank didn't raise rates, then who did?

How are mortgages priced?

Fixed-rate mortgages are priced off swap rates, the wholesale cost of swapping a floating interest rate for a fixed one over a set number of years. A typical 5-year fixed rate is equal to the 5-year swap rate plus the lender's margin. The swap locks in a rate, so it reflects what the market expects the Bank Rate to do over that period.

By late September, the market had already priced in about an 80% chance of a November raise and four hikes by mid-2027, implying that the market expects the Bank Rate to increase four times within the next year. This means that borrowers face higher mortgage rates before any anticipated Bank Rate increase takes place.

The UK versus the world

The expectation of rising rates is a global issue. The war in Iran has kept oil prices elevated, reviving inflation fears. Consequently, yields have been rising globally in countries like France,

Germany, the US, and Japan. However, Britain's issues are seemingly more pronounced than everyone else's. As of 13th October, the UK had the highest 10-year yield among major economies at 5.44%, above even the US at 5.22%. Beyond inflation fears, pension schemes are also no longer buying long gilts, leaving the market to buyers who require more compensation for risk.

Additionally, in September, the Bank of England stopped its sales of long-dated gilts. In the past, defined-benefit pension schemes were the most common purchasers of long-term gilts because their liability periods also last decades. However, most defined-benefit pension schemes are closing to new members, and many are de-risking or transferring to insurers through buyouts. Now, hedge funds and overseas investors are the main buyers left. These price-sensitive buyers weigh gilts against global alternatives for the best chance of profit given their risk tolerance and will buy only at a yield that compensates for the risk.

The 30-year gilt is priced a bit differently because, over 30 years, Bank Rate expectations generally matter less. Rather, the term premium matters more as investors demand more for lending over longer periods. This can also be read as how much investors trust the government. With fewer committed buyers for these gilts and doubts about public finances, investors are generally

asking for higher premiums due to lower trust.

So, this issue started abroad, but it is now amplified in the UK.

Who feels this rise

Two main groups will be affected: first-time buyers and the 1.8 million fixed deals set to expire this year, as estimated by UK Finance.

For first-time buyers, Lloyds puts the typical first-time buyer home at £239,681. With a 10% deposit, a loan of ~£216,000 remains. On a 25-year mortgage at the average 5-year rate of 4.91% from January, that is about £1,250 a month. Today, at 6%, the monthly payment goes up to £1,390. That's a difference of £140 a month or £1,680 a year.

Even with these numbers, a mortgage is generally still more affordable for a typical first-time buyer. Lloyds found that rent is 41% of an average renter's income, while a mortgage is around 34% for the typical first-time buyer. But the real barrier for young people is saving the ~£24,000 deposit while also paying rent.

Of the 1.8 million fixed deals set to expire, ~750,000 households are currently on rates under 3%, according to the Bank of England. So, the refinancing shock of rates at least doubling is also a key issue to consider.

On Wednesday 28th October, Chancellor of the Exchequer John Healey will deliver his first Budget, with new

Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts published the same day. In March, OBR gave £23.6 billion headroom against the fiscal rules. But EY estimates it has roughly halved to around £11.3 billion, mainly because higher gilt yields mean higher debt interest costs. In EY's downside scenario, where oil prices stay high into 2027, it drops to a £7 billion deficit. Ultimately, Healey's budget, followed by the Bank of England's decision on the 5th of November, will be a key determining factor on whether lenders will continue to reprice upwards.



Former Bank of England building.
Spudgun67 CC0 1.0

FILM & TV

Digger for the uninitiated...

Two views from #DiggerNation on the most divisive movie of the year.

Film Writer

PRABHAV BHAMIDIPATI

For those of you simply looking for a verdict, I won't keep you waiting. Yes, you should go watch *Digger*. I think it's everything director Alejandro G. Iñárritu claims it is; and a little bit more. It's a wacky satirical critique of the state of modern politics and climate discourse; the 'little bit more' being a commentary on how we, as the public, interact with (or trivialise) it all. It features more than enough interesting stylistic choices, a wonderfully quirky score by Cosmo Sheldrake, and a rock-solid cast – from Tom Cruise and Sandra Hüller to Riz Ahmed and Jesse Plemons. Not to mention that it features one of the more left-field narrative twists of late – but I won't spoil that anywhere here, don't worry.

However...if you happened across other reviews (by professional critics, which I won't claim for a second to be) of *Digger*, I'm willing to put decent money on the fact that you read something very similar to what I did. It's a self-absorbed, unfunny, cringe, and directionless mess with mediocre acting from some, in theory, really good actors. And yet, audiences like it. I liked it quite a lot! Where is this discrepancy coming from? Am I just a Jesse Plemons fan? Do the critics have it right? Am I genuinely stupid? I don't think so. So, are the negative reviews just pretentious as hell? Possibly. But I'm going to try to explain – without experience-ruining spoilers – why I think this film is completely undeserving of the current box office bomb it's experiencing.

Like many aspects of modern society, I think cinema has become really polarizing. Somehow, every movie that comes out these days is either the best thing to ever

hit the screen (think *One Battle After Another*, *Project Hail Mary*, *The Odyssey*) or it's the single worst use of storage space ever, and an affront to eyeballs worldwide. In such an environment, I've got a feeling that these professional critics fall into one of two brackets: those who choose to feed the polarization, and those who feel forced to lean into it. And I've got to add that *Digger*'s recent ad campaigns leaning into this polarization and telling you to watch the movie to find out for yourself is borderline genius. Because, as stated, *Digger* has tragically bad reviews, slandered everything from the writing and concept, to the colour grading and acting. But it also has, only slightly fewer in number, reviews lauding it as the greatest contemporary commentary on the current state of political and environmental affairs. But the truth is (well, my truth is) that it's just... good. It's a very solid, entertaining film to go watch with your friends when you have a free evening and fifteen quid each to spare on a ticket, some overpriced popcorn, and a coke.

It would be ridiculous to call it Tom Cruise's (or any other actor in this movie's) best performance ever. But it's different. He's not just playing Ethan Hunt, or

some copy paste action star again. He plays a bold new character and, once you understand the narrative structure and the direction the movie is taking you, everything he does just makes sense. Sandra Hüller does not simply play the Eva Stratt that so many people have loved her for recently. Jesse Plemons is not simply... well, he's still playing

a slightly quirked up white guy. But he, along with the rest of the cast, plays the characters that they need to very respectably. Ranging from just fine for performances like Sophie Wilde's, to genuinely really

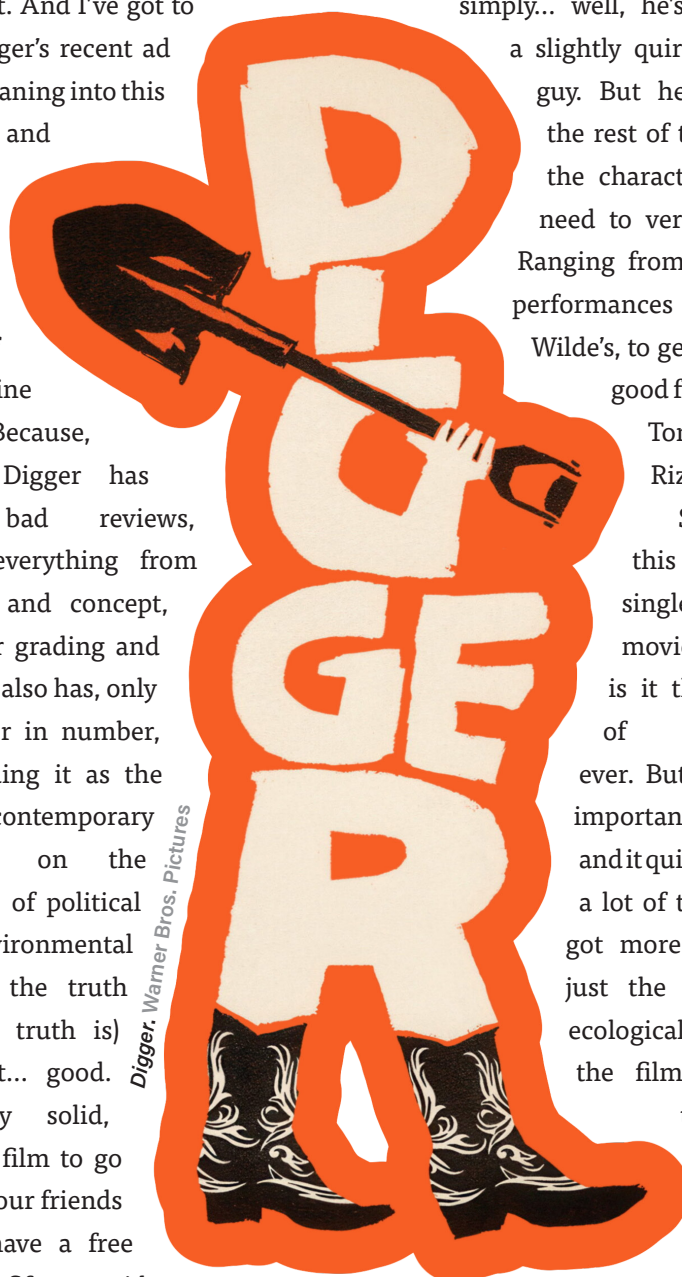
good from those like Tom Cruise and Riz Ahmed.

Similarly, this is not the single funniest movie ever, nor is it the best piece of commentary ever. But it does have important messages, and it quite often shares a lot of them well. It's got more to say than just the political and ecological warnings; the film invites you to question how you yourself interact with the associated messaging

and media, questioning the place of entertainment in those discussions. While doing all this, the film remains genuinely funny. The humor is equal parts crude and witty, oftentimes striking

uncomfortably close to home. Although, admittedly, the critics sometimes have a point – particularly in the case of calling the movie too loud or over the top at moments. Again, I will defend this film: some of those annoying or cringe moments make sense in the context and are conscious decisions (it is killing me to not be able to explain this), but a couple of them truly just are awkward. Uncomfortable in the way that you can't tell whether it's intentional, or if some poor writer's joke fell so flat on its face that it's now imbedded in the pavement itself. But again, most of the commentary and humour is genuine. It's real, funny when it needs to be, uncomfortable when it wants to be, and deeply entertaining throughout.

So, go watch *Digger*. It's an enjoyable film in theatres right now; tickets are (tragically) easy to come by, and it's just a good night out. Or an afternoon. Or a morning. I don't know when you people watch films. It's funny. It's wonderfully fresh. It's bold, in a wild and wacky way, with its narrative style, and playful with its score. It contains some attention-grabbing sequences along with messages that'll stick with you for a while after you watch it. What? Did you expect me to say 'for the rest of your life'? Like I said, it's a good movie. Not the greatest ever. And I think that appreciation for good movies which you can watch once or twice is, now more than ever, slowly dying. So don't let it. Ignore the critics. Hell, ignore me. Follow the advice of the renewed ad campaign, and *Digger* Rockwell himself, telling you to "decide for yourself". Go watch it just because you can and want to. And, in the process, I sincerely hope you'll enjoy it; but I'll understand if you don't. And in that case, I promise not to cry, despite really liking Jesse Plemons.



Digger. Warner Bros. Pictures

...and one for the fans (spoilers!)

Film Writer

RYAN STANLEY

I was by no means excited to watch *Digger* – if anything I was somewhat dreading it. Its initially quite intriguing trailer (both in muted palette and absurd premise) had grown unfunnier upon every rewatch, and my anticipation was at an all-time low after a thoroughly underwhelmed critics' response upon release. It was the end of a long week of settling back into university: after organising a new house and readjusting to 9am starts, watching what I was expecting to be a quite overstated, tedious film wasn't exactly the relaxing finish I'd envisioned. Moreover, I was worried it would put an end to the hot streak of cinematic triumphs I'd been lucky enough to just be off the heels of (*Resident Evil* to *Teenage Sex & Death at Camp Miasma* to *In The Mood For Love*), and that didn't seem a worthy price to pay to hear everyone's favourite Scientologist putting on a Southern accent. But *Digger* delighted. It was a hugely enjoyable watch that left me with a lot to chew on, to the point that I was baffled by its polarising reception. So why do a lot of critics just not dig it? At the risk of overstaying my welcome, let's dig in...

This film is visually stunning. Iñárritu flaunts the gorgeous set with

the opening shots imbuing the scenery surrounding our protagonist's isolated estate with a Garden of Eden-like quality. This is a perfectly crafted paradise, its curtains drawn back to awaken our protagonist. This sense of serene dignity is immediately renounced as soon as Rockwell Digger, our titular character played by Tom Cruise, opens his mouth. Cruise plays a blustering, money-hungry, foul-mouthed, oil tycoon – quick to bulldoze past any grounded concerns that stand in his way with empty spiels on "hard work". His humanity is only showcased through his love for Maggie the Cat, who is, for all intents and purposes, a meowing corpse. Digger's composure is thrown quickly into disarray after an explosion at his oil rig in Greenland sets an ice shelf adrift on collision course to Europe. This first leg of the film is probably its weakest: its humour is at its most grating and its caricatures of capitalists and politicians at their most uninteresting and overplayed – generally reducible to the parodies of Trumpisms we've been drowning in for the last decade. This is not to say that there aren't genuinely great moments and jokes that land, but my lack of excitement still seemed vindicated. The way in which this first act closes, however, very abruptly transformed my apprehension into complete absorption – if you are even somewhat intrigued,

please stop reading now and give the film a shot.

So here comes the reveal: everything we have witnessed thus far is part of the final rehearsal for a stage play. With the first act concluded, technicians hurry in to adjust the foreground, and Digger becomes the actor, Curtis Markson, also somewhat disgruntled by the script and tone, rushing away to his dressing room after some minor quibbling with the director. This had me very impressed – who doesn't love a meta-narrative? A play within a film? And Cruise's character seemingly validating my own qualms – critiques predicted and voiced within the film itself? Brilliant! This giddiness didn't really wear off for the remaining runtime, making the next ninety minutes breeze by. But beyond the initial woah, what is the purpose of this re-framing?

Digger is not a satire of broad Hollywood-funded satires, there is too much genuine joy in this play for Iñárritu to be deriding the genre outright. Instead, their complexity is embraced, and we are very directly confronted with the contradictions inherent in their very existence. It questions our relationship with these satires, and I'd say it is firmly in the camp of celebrating them in all their messiness. Subtlety is thrown out the window, and we veer into farce territory with some of the scenes in the late second act (notably the one set in the

Presidential bedroom, which had me in uncontrollable laughter). But who needs subtlety when you've got unabashed hilarity whilst still hammering home a point? I mean, hell, the play is called "Fossil Fools"! Iñárritu doesn't shy away from the murkiness surrounding the production of these, with the play being funded by the nephew of Rockwell Digger because DUN DUN DUN: it is all based on real events in the world of the film.

This may be all going too far – risking being clowned on as the new *Don't Look Up* whilst thinking it was so much smarter, that certainly seems to be where a lot of critics stand. Whilst a tad heavy-handed even for my more pedestrian sensibilities, especially with the closing reveal of the outside flooded world losing the contained nature of the rest of the film, *Digger* is still effectively sobering. Sure, climate panic is ubiquitous these days, but an occasional slap-in-the-face is more than necessary. I found myself somewhat seduced and defeated by Rockwell's speech to the European Council – "you need oil" – and part of me was sold on it. But this is swiftly juxtaposed with the ridiculous reveal of a secondary ice shelf loose and en route to Alaska. There is always worse on the horizon and Iñárritu won't let us forget this – swallowing any sort of black pill will only cement our fate, so we must fight. After all, it's Digg or Die I've heard.



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05/11 - TBD

10/11 - Sense and Sensibility
12/11 - Sense and Sensibility



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MUSIC

Addicted to Drukqs

Drukqs at 25: How Aphex Twin combined the brash with the beautiful

Music Writer

KONRAD HOLUBINSKI

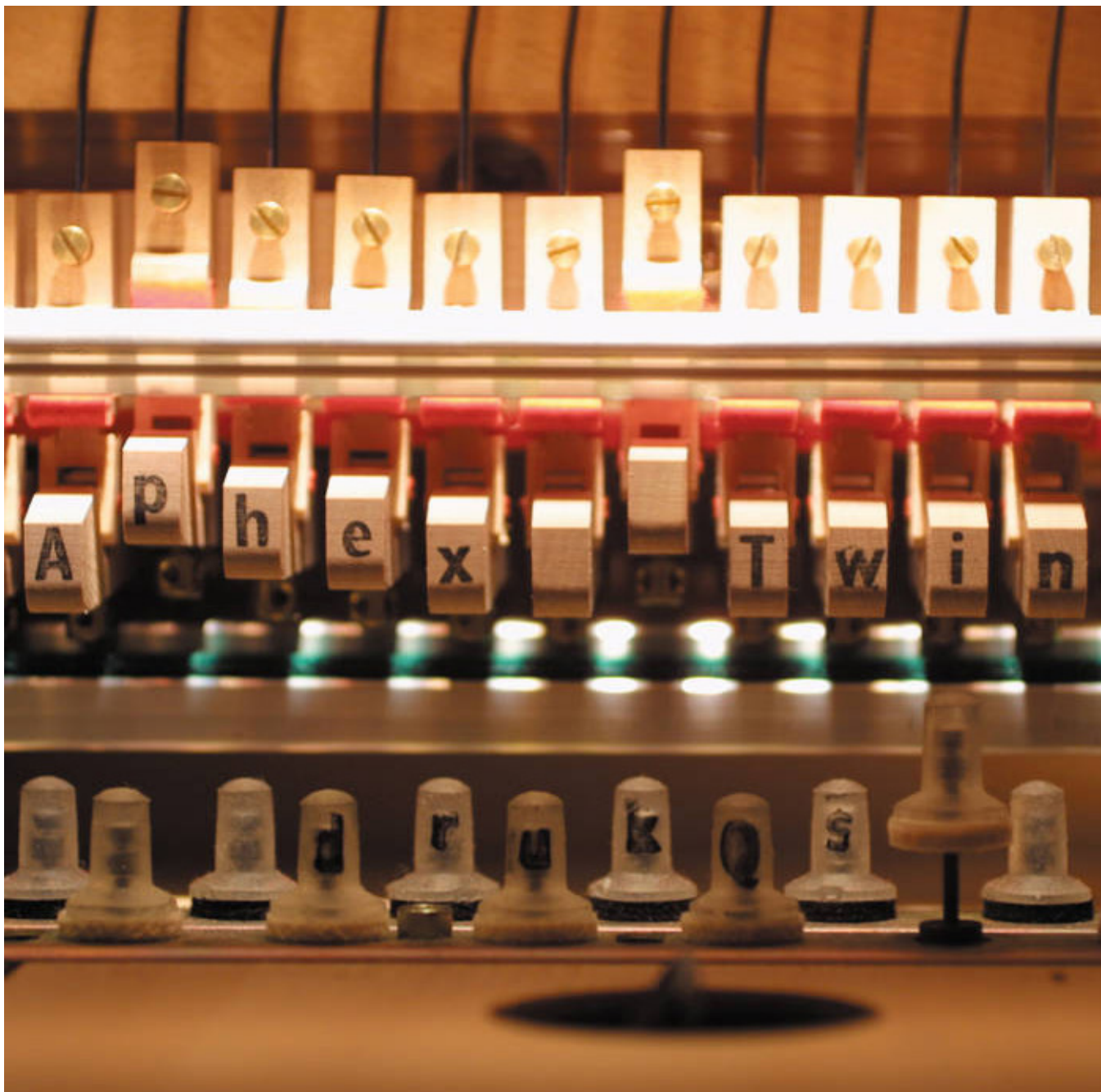
Aphex Twin, real name Richard D. James, is a musical chameleon. All his albums tend to shift in sound from one to the other: there's the soft, danceable *Selected Ambient Works 85-92*, which became a key release for the ambient techno and IDM genres. He followed it up immediately with *Selected Ambient Works Vol. 2*, a three-hour long epic with sprawling, contemplative pieces inspired by his lucid dreams, which completely revolutionised ambient music. Only a few years later, however, he abandoned ambience completely with the *Richard D. James Album*, a chaotic release inspired by drum and bass, with cut-up drum breaks rattling alongside warm, reflective melodies.

And then he released *Drukqs*, exactly 25 years ago to the day, which might be his most eclectic. From the start, you have no idea what to truly expect – he takes his experimental ethos to the absolute limit. Not only was he influenced by experimental electronic artists like Squarepusher and Bogdan Raczynski, he was also inspired by classical composers. Think Debussy (“Clair de Lune”) and Satie (*Gymnopédies*), whose piano pieces fit right in with the feeling of staring up at a starlit sky.

Even *Drukqs*'s release is shrouded in mystery. Aphex Twin himself claims he released it after accidentally leaving an MP3 player on a plane. Suspecting someone would take hold of it and leak, in his own words, the “282 unreleased tracks” contained within it, he decided to beat the leaks and release *Drukqs*. That certainly sounds possible – the album has 30 songs and spans 100 minutes. Yet, he is also known for joking about in interviews: he once claimed to live inside the Faraday Memorial in Elephant and Castle. I'd therefore take that story with a pinch of salt, not least as the album is almost too perfect for it to be true.

Machine Music: breakbeats and piano

Drukqs is, in many ways, a mix of all the sounds Aphex Twin had played around with on his previous releases. You've got the tranquil atmosphere from his two *Selected Ambient Works* releases, meshed with the



Drukqs Cover Art. Aphex Twin

zany drum and bass from the *Richard D. James Album*. However, Aphex Twin arguably takes all these ideas to the extreme on *Drukqs*. It is a double album, after all, but one which shifts between genres from track to track. First, Aphex Twin will offer up a calming, almost ambient piece before sending you into rave-fuelled sensory overload, or vice versa.

The album opens with “JynweytheK”, a quirky prepared piano piece which clips and chirps delightfully. It sounds like an old musical box, carefully unwinding as it plays its pretty melody. And then you have “Vordhosbn”, an insane track with intricate

drums and explosive synths. It's almost aggressive and intimidating, yet still incredibly emotional, with a melodic synth line at its heart. Somehow, this sonic shift sounds completely natural after a few listens, with both tracks sounding like they could only come from Aphex Twin: eccentric, yet charming.

Probably the best example of this pattern can be found in a three-track run about a third of the way through. First, Aphex Twin treats you to “Cock/Ver10” with its piercing synths, crushing drums, and a scream of “Come on you cunt, let's have some Aphex acid!”. It's very reminiscent of artists like Squarepusher, whose

entire ethos was centred around sampling drumbeats and mixing them with manipulated vocals. In “Cock/Ver10”, that means you get to enjoy the drums from “Things Got to Get Better (Get Together)” by funk singer Marva Whitney, except they’re scrambled to the point of unrecognisability. We then have “Avril 14th”, a stunning piano piece that sounds like a missing *Gymnopédies* composition from Satie. Curiously, though, Aphex Twin isn’t actually playing the piece: the track consists of a MIDI composition, played back using a Disklavier.

“

It’s a track run which could give you whiplash, and Aphex Twin doesn’t care if you’re sitting there bemused

In other words, it’s not as acoustic as it might initially sound. You’re then thrust into “Mt Saint Michel + Saint Michael’s Mount”, probably my favourite *Drukqs* track. Made up of several dazzling breakbeats amidst a stunning synth melody, the ending is especially beautiful as you’re treated to haunting female vocals which start cutting up in time with the drums. It’s a track run which could give you whiplash, and Aphex Twin doesn’t care if you’re sitting there bemused.

Sometimes, the songs will straight up unsettle you. Right after the euphoric highs of “Mt Saint Michel”, you have “Gwarek2”: it’s nearly seven minutes long and made up of several eerie samples, such as people screaming and a chain being dragged across a fence. “Gwarek2” is probably the only real hiccup on this album, mainly because it slows the album down and doesn’t amount to anything remotely interesting. The only positive aspect I can think of is that it proves Aphex Twin went all out for this record, creating whatever he wanted.

Another lovely hat-trick of songs can be found right at the very end. Kicking us off is “Ziggomatic 17”, the final drum and bass track on the album. Across its eight-minute runtime, it transforms from a claustrophobic smattering of no fewer than four drum breaks into a heady, rave-like piece. The synths glisten and take centre stage yet never slow down until the very end. It’s followed by “Beskhu3epmn”, another prepared piano composition which echoes like the backdrop to a horror movie. The album concludes, however, with the minimalist “Nanou2”, named for his then

girlfriend. It’s the most restrained song on the album, and very Debussy-esque. It’s made up of various piano chords, held together by silence. The final product is melancholic, yet hopeful, arguably anti-climactic considering how prevalent noise is on *Drukqs*.

Cornish Acid: how *Drukqs* reflects Aphex Twin’s upbringing

If you’re looking at those song titles and wondering if a cat just ran across my keyboard, don’t worry: many of the titles have Celtic origins, primarily Cornish. Aphex Twin is from Cornwall, and decided to pay homage to his homeland on numerous occasions. “Hy a Scullyas Lyf Adhagrow”, a beautiful piano interlude, translates to “She spilled my pint” and is actually a cover of an old Cornish folk song. The blaring “54 Cymru Beats”, on the other hand, references his Welsh links. It’s a drum and bass-inspired tune with squeaky text-to-speech voices, though they mostly speak in abstract lyrics.

This all makes Aphex Twin’s claim that the release was born from an accident even more suspect. It’s so obvious that this album is a deeply personal document. He’s just unwilling to admit it. One of the tracks is literally a message from his parents on an answering machine. It’s called “Lornaderek”, after his mum and dad, and consists of them singing happy birthday to him. It’s then followed up by “QKThr”, a gorgeous interlude played on a harmonium, with the mere juxtaposition able to bring you to tears.

In fact, Aphex Twin samples his parents on multiple occasions. “Taking Control” is filled with breakbeats and a synthesised voice incessantly repeating “I’m taking control of the drum machine”, but you’ll also hear his mum calling his and his siblings’ names. You’ll even hear him asking his mum for a blackcurrant drink at one point. The song is preceded by the

incredibly dissonant “Father”, named as so because his dad loved it.

***Drukqs*’s influence over the years**

It took me a lot of time to get into *Drukqs*. The songs are intentionally abrasive, and an unsuspecting listener might assume the piano pieces are a distraction from the electronic tracks Aphex Twin specialised in. Even when it was released, many critics were confused by how vast and overwhelming it sounded. They called it indulgent, not realising that was arguably the point. Aphex Twin set out to make an album significant to him, no matter

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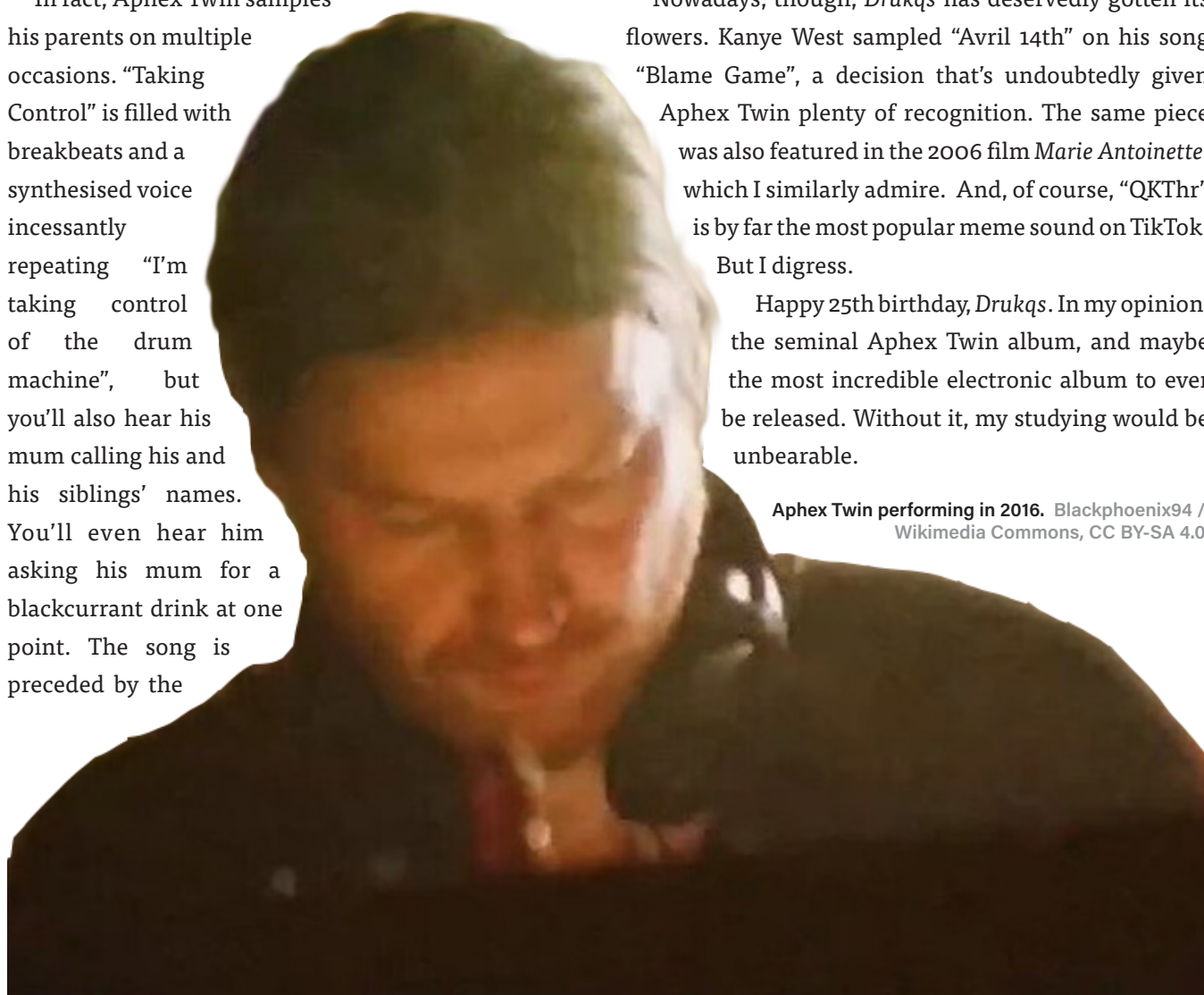
They called it indulgent, not realising that was arguably the point

what other people thought.

Nowadays, though, *Drukqs* has deservedly gotten its flowers. Kanye West sampled “Avril 14th” on his song “Blame Game”, a decision that’s undoubtedly given Aphex Twin plenty of recognition. The same piece was also featured in the 2006 film *Marie Antoinette*, which I similarly admire. And, of course, “QKThr” is by far the most popular meme sound on TikTok. But I digress.

Happy 25th birthday, *Drukqs*. In my opinion, the seminal Aphex Twin album, and maybe the most incredible electronic album to ever be released. Without it, my studying would be unbearable.

Aphex Twin performing in 2016. Blackphoenix94 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0





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 Fri 23 Oct
 7pm | Metric




Bossa
NOVA



Metric
 Mon 26 Oct
 7pm | Metric




SPooky
COCKTAIL MAKING CLASS

Wed 28 Oct
 10pm



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ARTS & CULTURE

The Art of Being Moved

A painting says a thousand words and the viewer says a thousand back; they move one another.

Arts&Culture Writer

IVANA KUZMANOSKA

Of all the major London galleries, the Courtauld Gallery is the only one I hadn't yet had the pleasure of visiting until very recently. Among many wonderful artworks, a piece that particularly struck me was Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*. I found him on the top floor, unassuming, in the LVMH Great Room, and found myself really up close to the painting. After closely examining the fur on his hat, the featured painting on his wall and the emerald green shade he chose for his eyes, I looked down at my own feet; I couldn't help but think, "This is how he would have been standing while painting this, just in front of the canvas, placing with his hands these very brushstrokes I'm examining". Suddenly, the portrait blurred through tears I couldn't hold back. I lingered

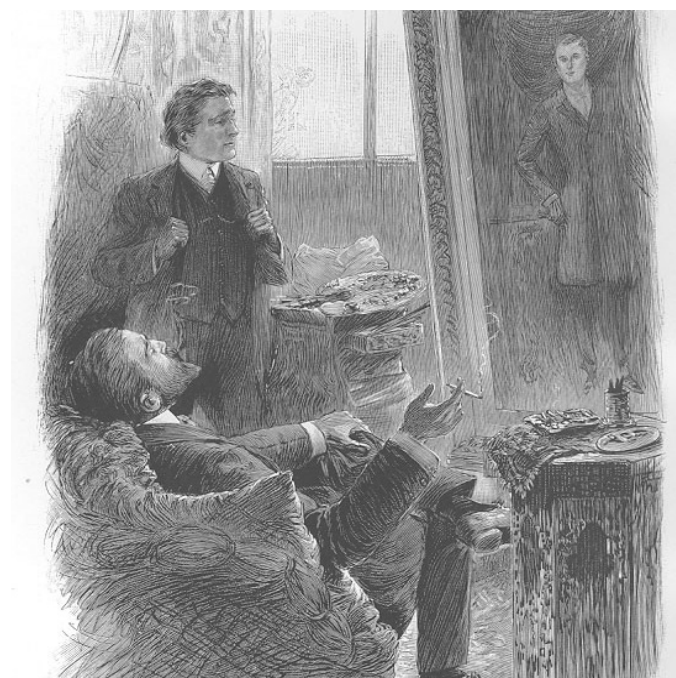
there for a while, not necessarily moved by his suffering or even the painting's beauty, more so by the simple recognition of his humanity and existence, just as mine. It's extraordinary that something as simple as pigment could provoke such an emotional response.



Others have lived a life as complex as our own, without our needing to understand it.

"To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim," Oscar Wilde writes in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Perhaps, but the artist cannot hide perfectly. They inevitably expose themselves through even their tiniest decisions: subject matter, composition, colour palette, and so on. Why did they conclude this was particularly worth depicting? How did they learn these skills? Beyond the surface analysis of what the painting tries to tell us rests information the artist didn't necessarily intend to share: their markings, proof of their broader physical existence; their choices, undeniable traces of their inner world, ours to decipher.

However, we need to consider how much we're actually discovering about the artist, rather than projecting our own world onto theirs. We can recognise only what we're familiar with, through our memories, technical and contextual knowledge, experiences, and learned emotional associations. Someone more



Frontispiece to Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, wood engraving by Eugène Dété after Paul Thiriat, 1908
Mississippi State University / Wikimedia Commons

familiar with the context behind Van Gogh's bandaged ear might see the portrait as a product of suffering and steadfastness in continuing to paint, and read more into his motivation, which they might even relate to. Another may be drawn to his artistic ability, fixating on its colours and composition. Is it the artist peeking through, then, or a part of ourselves? Perhaps this is what Wilde anticipated in the same preface, when he described criticism as "a mode of autobiography". Even if the artist is imperfectly concealed, even if they lay themselves bare, what we see depends on what we bring to the encounter. Thus, viewing art becomes a meeting rather than simply seeing.

Perhaps this meeting is what makes art so deeply moving. Tolstoy considered art "a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings". I wonder whether we really need to feel what the artist felt to appreciate this union, since we couldn't possibly know what Van Gogh experienced while painting himself, or whether any interpretation is correct – certainly he wouldn't have been able to imagine how each stranger standing before him at the Courtauld would feel, regardless of his intentions. Despite the canyon of generations, languages, and circumstances, making and viewing a piece of art lets two otherwise separate human existences intersect for a moment. When art makes us cry, it's the force of that overwhelmingly intimate union, and the recognition that we don't fully possess even our innermost personal, private experiences; others have felt and lived a life as real and complex as our own, without our needing to understand it.

Maybe art is indeed a mirror to the soul, though not exclusively the artist's or the viewer's. It reflects something eternal, which fades the border between what the artist created and what the viewer constructs: the human condition.



Oscar Wilde photographed by Napoleon Sarony, c. 1882.
Napoleon Sarony / Library Of Congress

LIFESTYLE

The wings of a Victoria's Secret Angel

The revival of the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show and the internet's selective memory.

Lifestyle Editor
ANYA CHAUDHARY

There's an obnoxious dual chrome in every fabric that gets worn on that runway.

Conversations about Tate McRae's striking performance of her new single *Housewife* and the Angels in fiery red lingerie complementing hers, albeit gushy and enthusiastic, left me feeling uneasy. Since its renewal in 2024, the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show had come back to Los Angeles for its third rendition, in all its winged glory. Gilded in feathers which seemed to carry more than met the eye, the biggest names in modelling walked the historic runway; a runway whose fall from grace seven years ago seemed entirely forgotten.

Before anyone could recall its cancellation due to former owner Lex Wesner's ties with Jeffrey Epstein, we were blinded by the diamond-studded Fantasy Bra modelled by Kylie Jenner: a \$50 million creation featuring a 75.54-carat yellow diamond. Featured for the first time since 2018, the fantasy bra conveniently became the most remembered feature of the company's past.

To anyone that watched the show, it (very quickly) became glaringly obvious that creative director Adam Selman's words about giving women ownership of their bodies had little to do with reality. The 2026 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show, whilst claiming to be refreshed for a new age of agency and body positivity, upheld

the pretty-in-pink picture of shiny, slim bodies tailored to the male gaze, and the now surging VSXY stock price. Placated by the handful of diverse bodies and pop stars with lyrics about feminine independence, we watched on as the body-checking ghosts of decades past were repackaged and handed to us as "liberated" idols of the future, carrying a suspiciously large amount of puppy dog purses and charms.

As Kris Jenner and Timothee Chalamet hooted for a diamond-clad Kylie Jenner and a performance of *Nicole Kidman* by Adela had its namesake smiling for the camera, the "A-list" of influencers recorded GRWMs and shared the excitement with their audiences. It's no surprise that the show was received with such pomp when everyone and their mother was picking their outfit for it.



The wings may have been restored to the Angels, only to be weighed down by the spectre of regressive ideas.

The company's generally regressive signposting doesn't surprise me either. As @theguiltyfeminist noted in an Instagram post, "Why is the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show still a thing? Who is this for? And why does it feel even bigger

this year?

"Of course, it's reflective of this moment in time, when women's rights are being rolled back across the world, while increasingly narrow beauty standards are making a comeback. It's hard not to see it as part of a wider cultural shift: one where women's bodies are once again being held up for scrutiny, discipline and approval."

Though I bopped to Tate McRae's performance, I couldn't help but notice the irony of a song about subverting domestic expectations on a runway that continues to be synonymous with impossible beauty standards. As I dwell upon the circular nature of female empowerment contained within regressive ideas, I find myself thinking of Margaret Atwood's words again. "Male fantasies, male fantasies, is everything run by male fantasies? Up on a pedestal or down on your knees, it's all a male fantasy: that you're strong enough to take what they dish out, or else too weak to do anything about it. Even pretending you aren't catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy: pretending you're unseen, pretending you have a life of your own, that you can wash your feet and comb your hair unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur."

So we return to our screens to watch the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show, a household name enchanting us with feathers, fantasy bras, and familiarity. The wings may have been restored to the

Angels, only to be weighed down by the spectre of regressive ideas hiding within the nostalgia of 2000s perfumes, pyjamas, and perfect bodies.



Jasmine Tookes at the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in 2014. CC BY 2.0

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Imperial students skip graduation to protest removal of Summer Ball

Catnip Editor, Far from graduating
YOHAN MASTER

Imperial students yet again lose the IDGAF war after refusing to let go of the past. Nearly half a year since the decision to replace Summer Ball with the “Summer Series” was announced, students are still markedly affected by the beloved events loss, culminating in this latest protest. Catnip correspondent and interviewer extraordinaire Yohaán (me) has taken to the streets to interview some of the students who decided not to show up to their own graduation to send a message to the student union (and college as a whole) that they would not take mild

disappointment mildly.
YM - Hi! Are you one of the students protesting the removal of Summer Ball? And could you speak to your motivations?

Anonymous Student - I’m not really sure who exactly you are, but you have a purple suit on (weird choice) with a microphone attached to it, so I think I can trust you. I’m a med student, which means I did a 6 year course. I think you can see where I’m going with this.

YM - Not really. I try to ignore the existence of med students for my own sanity.

Anonymous Student - Well, I graduated from high school in 2020. Which means I didn’t have a graduation. I know you’re

too young to remember the pandemic, but graduating with my peers was all I had to look forward to after my gruelling stint in IB, and when they cancelled my graduation I felt like the world was going to end. Coming to Imperial, I slowly began to regain my trust in there being some good in the world; and that I could feel joy again. Summer Ball represented that for me: the delusion that despite being a med student I could actually be sociable and enjoy a life outside of studying when the year was nearing it’s end. The thought of enjoying Summer Ball at the end of my last year represented (to me) a sort of cosmic redemption for my high school graduation being

ripped away from me by COVID. When they announced the cancellation of Summer Ball, it felt like my world fell apart. I couldn’t give a flying fuck about “Summer Series”. That means shit all. There was the World Cup going on too which means nobody really cared about it anyways, it was just an excuse to gather and watch England lose to France or whatever happens there idk.

YM - Wow. Ok well that was a lot to process at once. Isn’t it a bit silly to protest your graduation being taken away from you (symbolically) by taking away your actual graduation from yourself?

Anonymous Student - No comment.

Horoscopes - Graduation

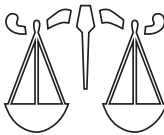
ARIES

This week your ex isn’t the only grad you ate



LIBRA

This week you get your celebrations mixed up and wear your birthday suit to graduation



CANCER

This week your “well deserved break” has officially turned into “being unemployed”



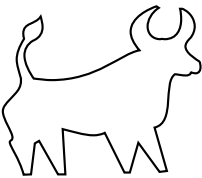
CAPRICORN

This week you finally make up your mind that you did in fact choose the wrong degree



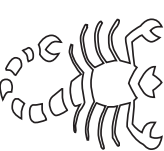
TAURUS

This week you attempt to customise your mortarboard and accidentally set it on fire



SCORPIO

This week you’re envious of next year’s grads for being the class of ‘6-7



LEO

This week you spice up your post-graduation sex by pegging your boyfriend in his rented gown



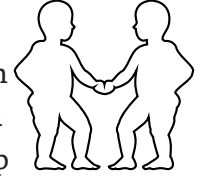
AQUARIUS

This week you’re glad-you’re-asian after both parents show up to your graduation



GEMINI

This week everyone in your degree kicks you from the course group chat the second you walk off stage during the graduation ceremony



SAGITTARIUS

This week you’re filled with graditude for your personal tutor!

Disclosure: This horoscope was sponsored by the Imperial Education Office.



VIRGO

This week you try to do a pub crawl after you graduate but your friend group ghosts you



PISCES

This week they mispronounce your name during your grad ceremony by somehow adding in the appropriate ethnic slur



Spooktober Week 3: Broken Mirror

(or Identity in Motion has an Equal and Opposite Effect)

Writer-in-waning
YOHAN MASTER

It had barely been a couple months since I graduated from Imperial. Things were going surprisingly well (as well as they can for a fresh computing grad); I had a job, my boyfriend and I had moved in together, and while our flat was a little cramped, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. Work was boring and far from intellectually fulfilling, but the pay was hefty enough that I couldn't care less. There was talk of our manager stepping down from his role next year to spend more time with his family, and I was flirting with the idea of putting my nose to the grindstone and potentially gunning to be his replacement. All things considered, my life wasn't too far off from what I had envisioned a couple years back as a fresher.

It was now about a year and a half since graduation. After a rather messy divorce, my manager no longer had any desire to be anywhere near his family, and had thrown himself headfirst into his work. There was no judgement on my part: I had broken up with my boyfriend somewhere along the way too. It was an amicable separation, which is code for "both of us fucked up equally often till we realised we just weren't meant for each other". My friends said that he was a bitch and that I was better off without him, but it was hard to really believe that. He moved out of our place to live with his friend, and for some reason that I couldn't justify in words, I hadn't ended the lease on our old place yet. It was significantly out

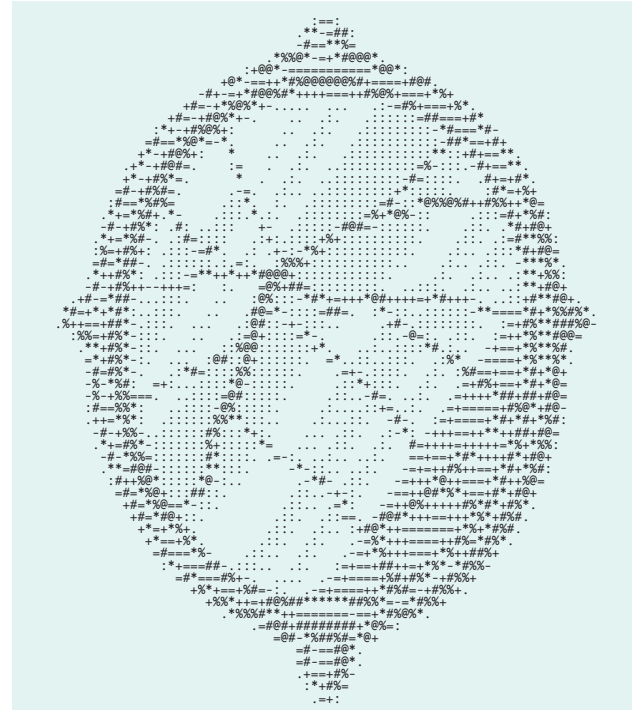
of my budget to live alone in, and I didn't have any friends who were close enough to me (and currently lived alone) who could move in to share the rent. The flat, which used to be so cramped, now felt achingly empty. There were times when I would turn over in my bed at night and reach around for his warmth, before being brought sharply back to reality after coming up short. My work was all that kept me going. Although I couldn't entertain the possibility of taking over my manager's role any longer, I did sense that he was in favour of promoting me anytime now. Maybe he saw himself in me; or maybe he just liked the fact that I had so little going for me outside of work that I was willing to show up at anytime, for anything asked of me.

Three years. It had been three years since graduation, and I got that promotion I had wanted after all. My manager passed away from stage 4 liver cancer, and rumour has it that his will left nothing to his family. The higher ups in the company chose me to be his replacement, having noticed that he had been apparently grooming me to take over the role at some point anyways. Some of my new managerial colleagues in the other departments say that he knew about the cancer in advance, and had deliberately left it untreated. I don't know how much I believe that.

My new friends – richer, more powerful friends – encouraged me to start dating him in the first place. We got matched up via Elizabeth, who used to be his tutor in university before she joined the company. I had finally sold the old flat, though I could more than afford it. It felt wrong, somehow, to fuck Archie in the same bed where I had cried myself to sleep for months over another man. We had a proper place now, with multiple floors and multiple bedrooms that we could host people in for

occasions. I had been promoted again by now, and there was talk of me being in consideration for CFO of the company. I feigned humility, but inside I was thrilled. I had already begun to seek a protégé, and I had found a good potential candidate in a girl named Ally. She's a fresh Imperial grad too, and I see myself in her. There was a rawness; a willingness to bend and break and claw herself back together. She would make a fine employee, and potentially a fine manager.

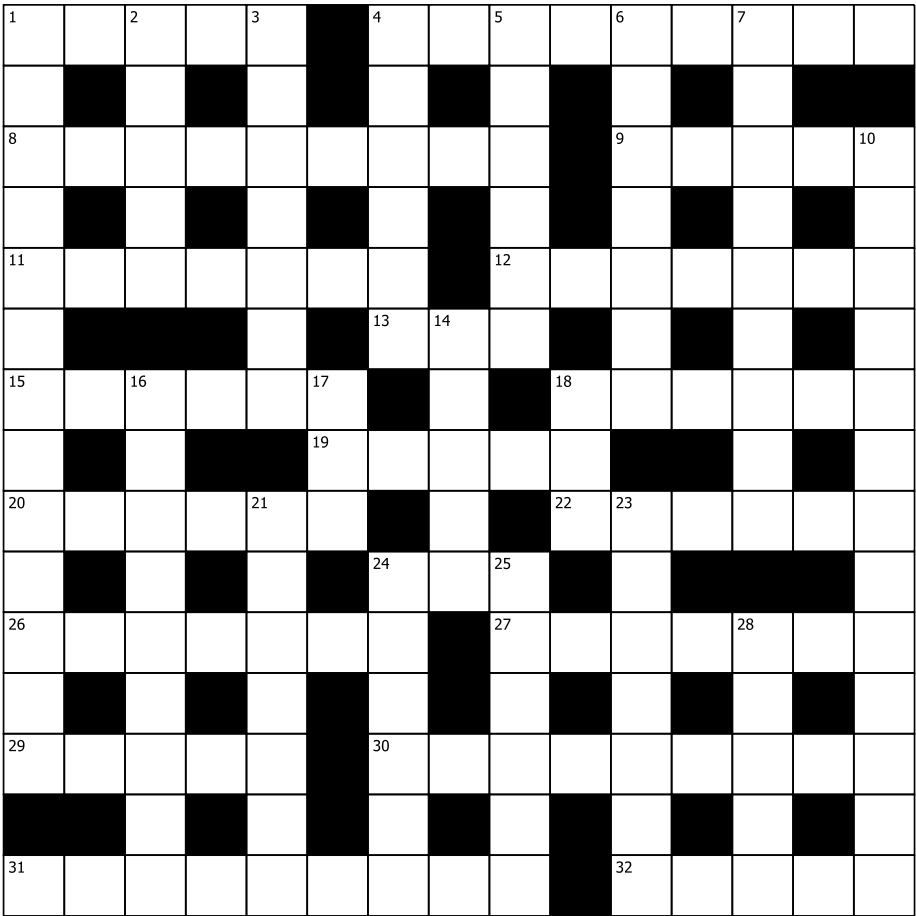
Twenty years since graduation. Archie and I have been married for a while now. I know that he's cheating on me, I can smell it in the perfume that lingers on his inner thigh, in the way he's started to close off towards me. I don't really care. I'm cheating on him too, with Ally. I know that she doesn't love me; she's clearly gunning for my job, even if she thinks she's hiding it well. I'm going to be CFO next year anyways, and if she wants my job; I'll let her have it. Why not? She's good at what she does, both in the cubicle and in my bedroom. The affair started after I found her broken down and crying at her desk, fresh off a breakup. One thing led to another, and now we're here. In a way, I'm glad that Archie's cheating on me. Before, the stress of trying to hide my affair was unbearable; it ate at me, gnawing on my insides. The stress is gone now, but the pain is troublingly still there. I think I'm going to go to the doctor next week, just check it out. What's the worst that they'll find?



PUZZLES

QUICK CROSSWORD

Written by David Latimer (10 pts.)



Across

7. Creates sound in forest gale. [8]
9. Shapes love spaces. [6]
10. Taking tip off finger? That's dark. [4]
11. Laying blame for an acoustic arrangement. [10]
12. Bird, cowardly, heading off. [5]
14. Practice duty embodying some hesitation. [8]
15. Bloom after dealing with a worry. [6]
17. Complain after famous brother not shown love. [6]
20. Announce one is against the respondent? [8]
22. Festival lacking European flower. [5]
24. Disbanded regiment with disheartened guards can be found in the kitchen. [4,6]
25. Would PM's father give money back on this product? [4]
26. Russian fighter the French say no to - that's cute. [6]
27. Give Cathy gin cocktail for this activity. [8]

Down

1. Your band plays with The Edge. [8]
2. No time for soft toy, we're in a whirl. [4]
3. Clergyman, acting for another, wipes out debts. [5]
4. Clumsily, some ruin title. [8]
5. Youngster suits these events. [5,5]
6. From the outset, one does have debts which are horrid. [6]
8. Worker with chit but no time to collect receipt initially. [6]
13. Eleven rich men to collect reward. [10]
16. Standing or otherwise, gets applause... [8]
18. ...do so when dances. [8]
19. Proudly is everything but large and unattractive. [6]
21. Start new career with no end of paper to store. [6]
23. Would a card sharp play this? [5]
25. Briefly, body art leads to tiredness all the time. [4]

Puzzles Editor
DAVID LATIMER

Across

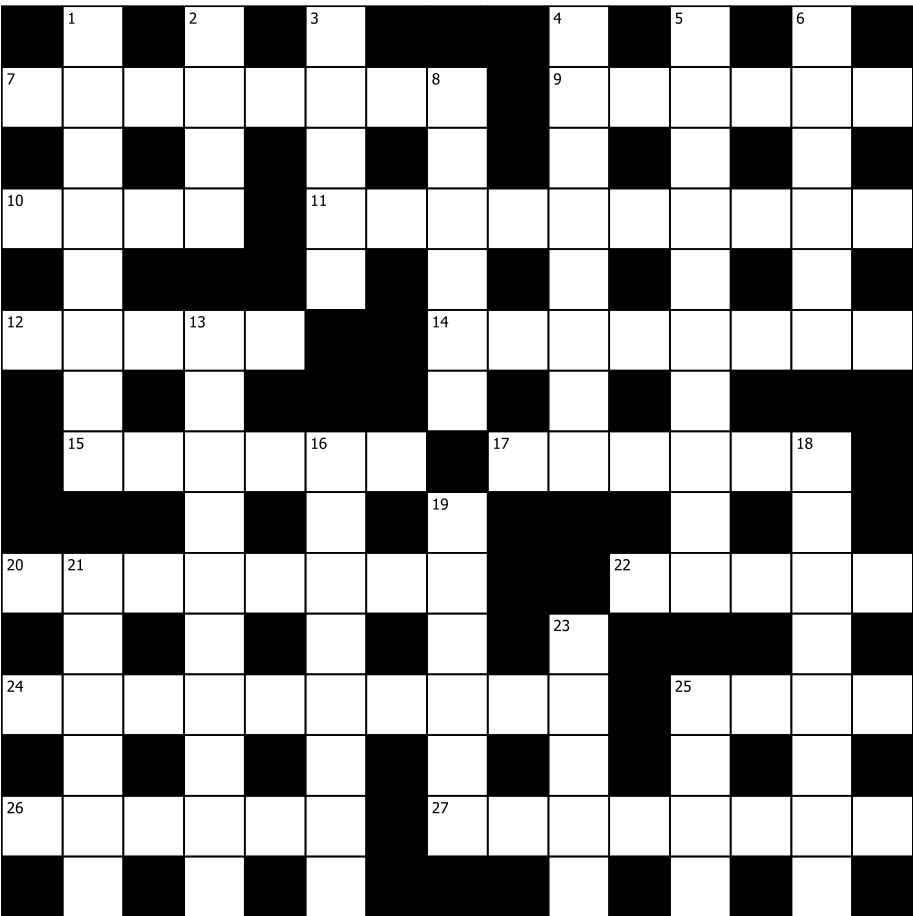
1. Sega's hasty hedgehog. [5]
4. Establish. [3 2 4]
8. 2025 legal drama. [5 4]
9. Big fuzzy dos. [5]
11. Hairstyle named for a native people. [7]
12. One with immense musical talent. [7]
13. Retreat. [3]
15. Sycophant. [3 3]
18. Record down, as a git repo. [6]
19. Surpass. [5]
20. Small cave. [6]
22. Narrator of Holmes' stories. [6]
24. Loo. [3]
26. Iberian cocktail. [7]
27. Poetry movement prioritising precise descriptions of simple scenes. [7]
29. Fishy finger food. [5]
30. One tending to the edges of politics. [9]
31. ASAP. [9]
32. One of the seven deadly sins. [5]

Down

1. Scientists concerned with needles? [13]
2. Small indent. [5]
3. "Blue" cocktail ingredient. [7]
4. Beauty parlours. [6]
5. Physical injury that may be "blunt". [6]
6. Powerless pill... or maybe not? [7]
7. Happy-sounding pessimistic Paramore single. [4 5]
10. Loud argument. [8 5]
14. Ancient city in modern day Jordan. [5]
16. Forecast. [9]
17. Sludge. [3]
18. Intimidate, animalistically? [3]
21. Stain. [7]
23. 80's musical drama depicting the life of Mozart. [7]
24. Former home of LeBron James. [6]
25. Particular good quality. [6]
28. ___ Montoya, Spanish outlaw. [5]

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

Written by Dyfam (20 pts.)



50/50 CROSSWORD

Written by Dyfam

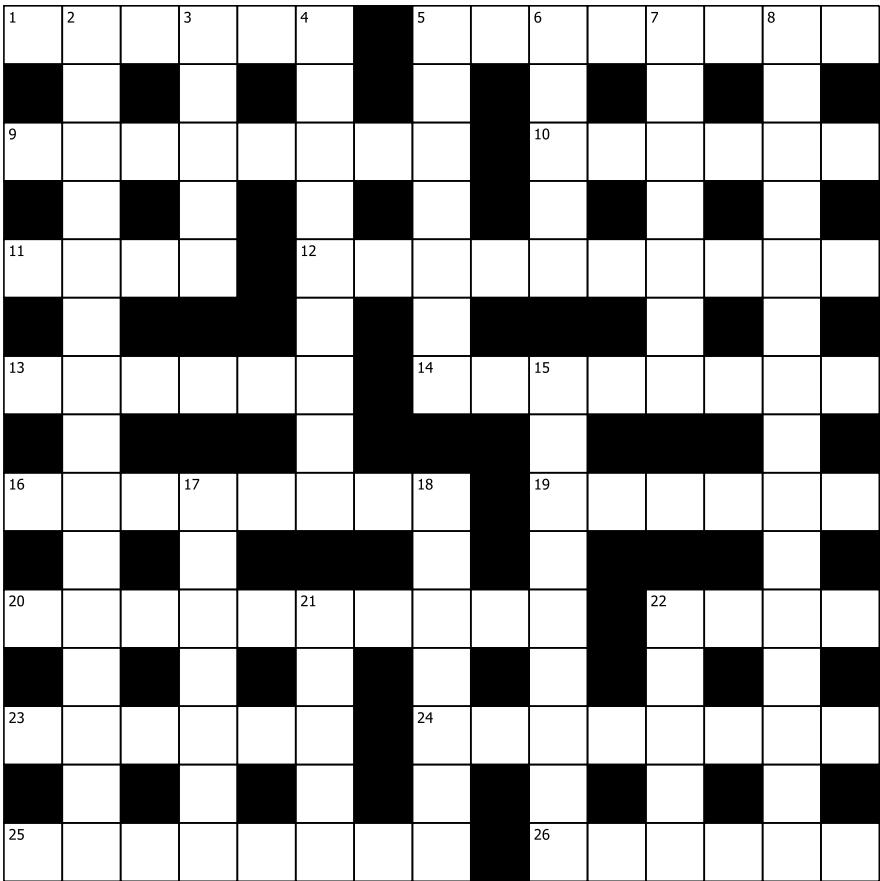
Across (Cryptic)

1. Did they fight? Reports say not many took part. [6]
5. Young knight and soldiers joined forces for processions. [8]
9. Each angry but still smelling of roses. [8]
10. Somehow Alec to find.... [6]
11. nice family with daughter. [4]
12. Narrow escapes when getting close to girls. [4 6]
13. Rodents' disease contained by new technology. [6]
14. Unit to come to a sticky end? Not if he can help it! [8]
16. French Department produces article without source? Quite the opposite. [8]
19. Boat sustains minor damage at Henley on vacation. [6]
20. Polished set of deliveries could calm the tension. [6 4]
22. Echo amended line. [4]

23. Leo bit melange of mushrooms. [6]
24. Worked on lone opus to relax. [6 2]
25. Organ with missing part can do this when warmer. [4 4]
26. Employed to inspect bed canopy. [6]

Down (Quick)

2. Plant renowned for its oil. [7 8]
3. UK county. [5]
4. Measurable property. [9]
5. These sellers sound as if they should be on bikes. [7]
6. Creature brought to life. [5]
7. Found in the dock but not a stevedore. [7]
8. 1927 Woolf novel. [2 3 10]
15. Painter's preparatory layer. [9]
17. Ferocious. [7]
18. Wrap around. [7]
21. This clue has three lines. It tells you all that you need. Now you can solve it. [5]
22. Toes the line. [5]



(15 pts.)

GROUPING GRIDS

Written by Afjal Chowdhury

Wish	Essence	Boombox	Bambi
Bangle	Spirit	Up	Within
Amidst	Brave	Power	Soul
Bolt	Down	Crux	Around

The sixteen clues in each of these puzzles can be placed into four groups of four, each with a common link. To solve the puzzle, write these groups and their connections below! Same format as The Wall in Only Connect or NYT Connections.

Curtain	Sunshine	Water	Blind
Fire	Cover	Sun	Conceal
Eclipse	Hiding	Ballad	Earth
Parking	Reaping	Sunrise	Sapling

1.

Connections

2.

3.

4.

(8 pts.)

1.

Connections

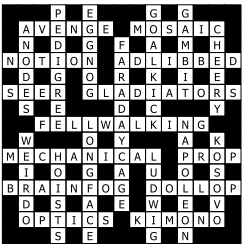
2.

3.

4.

(8 pts.)

LAST WEEK



Quick #1904



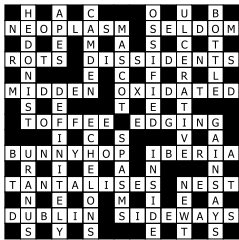
Cryptic #1904



Eldrow #1904

1	7	9	3	4	2	6	8	5
2	8	6	5	1	9	4	3	7
3	5	4	7	6	8	1	2	9
8	6	2	1	9	7	5	4	3
4	3	1	8	2	5	7	9	6
5	9	7	4	3	6	8	1	2
9	1	5	2	7	4	3	6	8
6	4	8	9	5	3	2	7	1
7	2	3	6	8	1	9	5	4

8	1	7	2	5	6	4	9	3
4	2	9	3	1	7	6	8	5
5	3	6	9	8	4	7	1	2
6	4	2	8	3	1	5	7	9
1	7	5	4	6	9	2	3	8
3	9	8	7	2	5	1	4	6
9	5	3	1	7	2	8	6	4
2	8	1	6	4	3	9	5	7
7	6	4	5	9	8	3	2	1

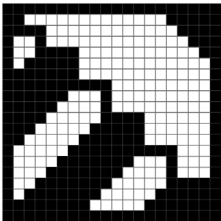


50/50 #1904

1	8	6	5	3	4	2	9	7
5	2	3	8	9	7	4	6	1
9	7	4	2	1	6	8	5	3
2	5	9	3	7	1	6	4	8
6	3	7	9	4	8	1	2	5
8	4	1	6	2	5	7	3	9
7	1	5	4	6	3	9	8	2
3	6	2	1	8	9	5	7	4
4	9	8	7	5	2	3	1	6

5	1	6	9	4	7	8	3	2
3	7	2	5	8	1	9	4	6
8	4	9	6	2	3	7	1	5
9	6	8	2	3	5	4	7	1
4	3	7	1	6	9	2	5	8
2	5	1	8	7	4	3	6	9
6	2	3	4	5	8	1	9	7
7	9	5	3	1	2	6	8	4
1	8	4	7	9	6	5	2	3

Sudoku #1904



Nonogram #1904

LEADERBOARD

Pos.	Team Name	Pts.	Gain
1	Joey H. Sultanas	398	224
2	Nicocross Wourbaki	194	105
3	Roshni	51	51
4	ariff with 2 fs	43	43
5	Skrelp	40	20
6	The Northern Line	36	36
7	Grasmin	27	-
8	-	-	-

Want to see yourself on the leaderboard? Send in a picture of your puzzles to puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk before next issue to secure a place on the leaderboard for you or your team. Partially completed puzzles will still get you points!

WANT TO JOIN THE TEAM?

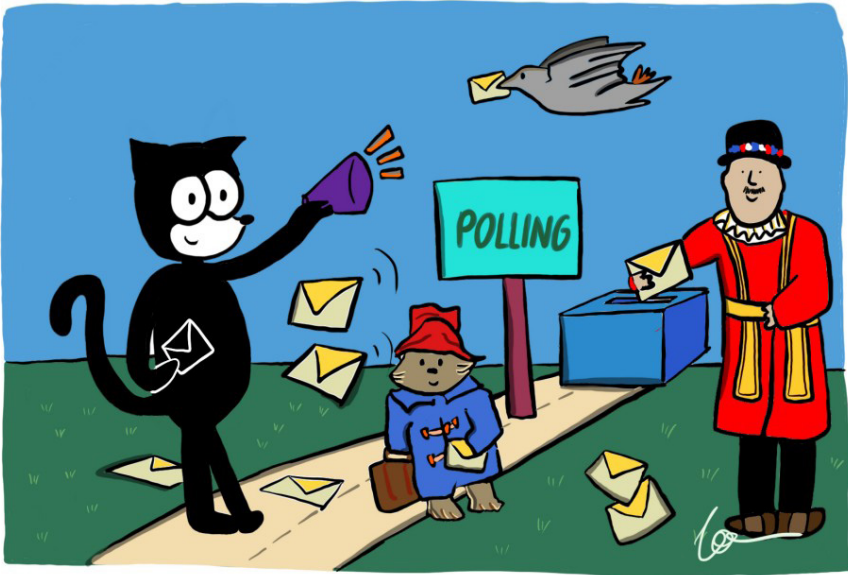


Have new ideas for the section? We'd love to have you on the team! Reach out to us via e-mail or scan the QR code to join our WhatsApp chat.

Email: puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk

COMIC

Submitted by Tengyu Zhao



Puzzle Editor's Note

Dearest Puzzlers,

Hi! I hope this puzzle editor's note finds you well. And I hope this section does too! After careful review, I think I might have made the "quick" from a couple of issues ago a touch too difficult. Sorry! I'll try to keep the difficulties more contained in future. As compensation, that puzzle was now worth an additional five points.

It's great to see so many people on the leaderboard! The points totals at the top may seem intimidating, but never fear! After this term finishes, they'll reset and you'll get the chance to fight for the top spot - a top spot currently held by Joey H. Sultanas, last year's winner! If the large gains seem confusing, you can attribute it to having the points totals from two issue come in at once, as I don't always have time to mark puzzles from the previous issue as I'm laying out the current one. As always, excellent job everyone, and I hope you enjoyed the University Challenge feature!

Big thanks, as always to Rhea and Mara who are consistent writers for the section , which I think would be a little bit barren without them. Also thanks to Dyfam, and to Afjal who provided us with the return of the Grouping Grids.

For those curious, my labs are going well. I'll see you all in the next issue! Happy puzzling!

-David

SPORT

BUCS Breakdown

What you need to know about university sports.

Sport Editor
DEESHAYA PATWA

Every Wednesday, you have likely noticed some of your peers leaving lectures early donning their tracksuits with gear in hand. Your free afternoon in the middle of the week where you can play catch up aren't because the university is feeling gracious; its all about BUCS

What is BUCS?

BUCS stands for British Universities & Colleges Sport. It is the national governing body for competitive sports at Universities. It coordinates and facilitates the sporting competition

between over 160 Universities for 55 sports. BUCS is the big time. Whilst we also compete in LUSL (London Universities Sports Leagues), that is far more casual whereas BUCS is where the serious competition occurs.

Wednesdays are the most important day of the week: BUCS Wednesday. Across the country this afternoon is freed up to allow students to travel and play against other universities to gain points and move up in the league table or win knockout matches.

Structure

At the heart of BUCS is the league system. University teams are organised into different conferences based on geographical location: Northern,

Midlands, Western, South Eastern, and Scottish. Within these conferences, teams compete in leagues organised into different divisions ranging from Premier level down to lower divisions depending on the sport. Throughout the year, teams will play regular fixtures against each other within their league to gain points based on match results. At the end of it all, their points determine their league position potentially leading to promotion or relegation between tiers. Alongside this there are also knockout competitions where teams compete in an elimination format, with the majority reaching their climax on BUCS Big Wednesday where the national knockout finals take place. Here teams compete for the National

Championship, Trophy or Vase. There is also a regional knockout structure for sports within each conference, culminating on conference finals day where teams compete to win the Conference Cup.

BUCS is essentially Nationwide University sports league, with Wednesday afternoons reserved for fixtures leading =into Wednesday Sports Night.

