ISSUE #1907

Felix

KEEP THE CAT FREE | SINCE 1949



GenScan AI wins top prize in Venture Catalyst Challenge 2026

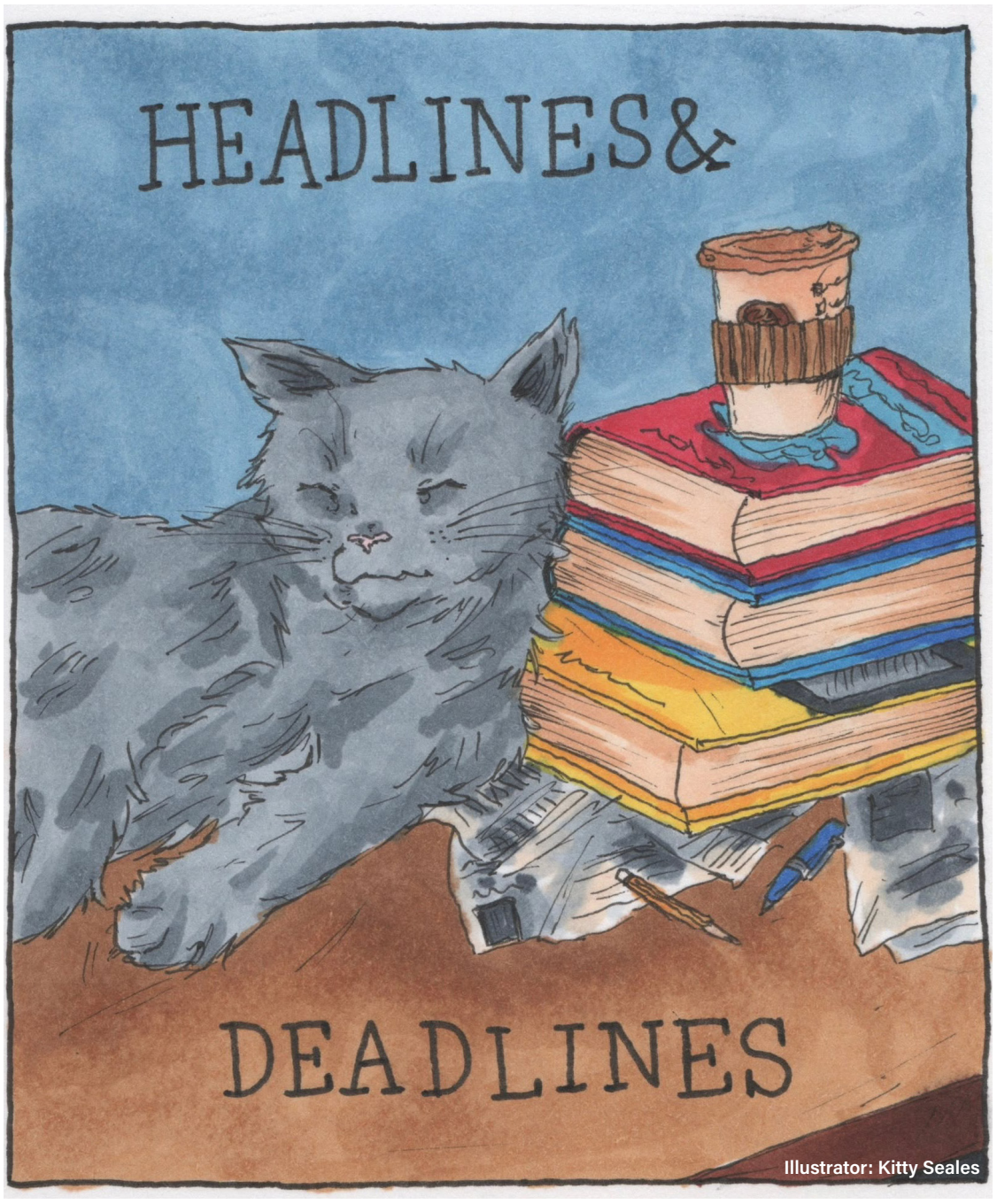
Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

The Venture Catalyst Challenge hosted its Grand Finale on Wednesday night, where the five finalists pitched their startup businesses to compete for a top prize of £20,000. This year, it was awarded to GenScan AI, founded by Mary-Brenda Akoda.

The team also received a £10,000 Track Prize, awarded in the category of Digital & Finance.

GenScan AI build softwares using the latest AI technology to speed up medical scans, the first-of-its-kind being GenMRI, which makes 20-minute MRI scans up to 90% faster. By reducing waiting times, this software has

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Illustrator: Kitty Seales

Educ(AI)tion: a conversation with Dr Alan Spivey, Vice Provost (Education and Experience)

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

One of the areas AI has changed quickest, and most drastically, is education. Not only do some students view it as a very patient teacher available 24/7, but more developed models can generate figures, suggest hypotheses and, of course, write reports. In early 2025, Felix spoke to Vice Provost (Education and Experience) and Synthetic Chemistry Professor Alan Spivey on the rise of genAI amongst students, and Imperial's approach. 18 months and many Claude models later, Prof Spivey reflects on what has changed and the College's initiatives and policies to educate in an era of AI.

Teaching, and a level playing field

As a Professor in Chemistry, Prof Spivey highlights how the field has shifted its view on AI as quickly evolving models became available: "When I spoke previously (18 months

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Signed by:
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Located at Beit Quad,
Prince Consort Road
London, SW7 2BB

Printed by Iliffe Media
Winship Road,
Milton, Cambridge
CB24 6PP
Registered Newspaper
ISSN 1040-0711

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EDITORIAL

Is America back?

EDITORIAL TEAM

In the last decade, the United States, once hailed as the beacon of the free world, has become increasingly foreign and incomprehensible to its allies, even as the influence of its culture, the weight of its economy and the might of its military grew unabatedly. In public, leaders nonchalantly played down Trump's glaring threats to NATO and the international order, but journalistic reports betrayed their private concerns. Even during the four years of apparent respite of the Biden administration, American protectionist acts and anglosphere-first approaches indicated a bipartisan policy shift, all while Trump's shadow continued to loom on America and on the world.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the resounding GOP defeat during Tuesday's midterms has everyone hoping that the end of this unfortunate parenthesis has finally come.

Trump's apparent mideterm concession (to the *New York Times*) suggests that the gravest threat, a breakdown of the American democratic system, has been avoided. The man who tried his very worst to overturn the 2020 election, replaced the top ranks of the US military and spy agencies with loyalists, and repeatedly floated the idea of interfering with elections seems to lay low, for now. After a decade of coups and close calls from South Korea to the Sahel that have highlighted the fragility of democracy, this is excellent news which raises hope for a clean election in 2028.

For the first time, it also seems the Trump taboo has been shattered within the Republican intelligentsia, with longtime allies joining rank-and-file Republicans in voicing the frustration at the President. JD Vance and Marco Rubio are quietly positioning themselves for the next Republican leadership contest and even taking aim at the unpopular Iran conflict. Many of more distant supporters and legislators are pretending to have woken up from a protracted dream and to have suddenly discovered the blatant corruption and incompetence that characterises this administration.

Every democracy needs balances, and the engulfment of the traditional American right wing by cranks and fanatics hurt the Democratic party as much as the rest of the country. Lacking a strong opposition to challenge their ideas, the Democrats were at risk of becoming an amorphous amalgam of Woke 1.0'ers, populist democratic socialists, and out-of-touch Capitol Bruce Waynes. With competition from sensible conservative kitchen table policy proposal, the party could be forced to regain its pragmatism and intellectual honesty.

But Donnie most likely hasn't said his last word. Pundits and newspapers predicted the downfall of Trump after his dishonourable 2020 defeat, as numerous MAGA candidates were lost primaries to moderates and criminal charges piled up against the former president. Against all odds, he resurfaced. Just like Netanyahu, Trump might be one of these political characters have a knack for making themselves indispensable and always regain the centre of the chessboard.

The possible end of the MAGAism shouldn't mean that European leaders should merrily reinforce their reliance on Uncle Sam once more. Given their dominance in the field of AI and by plain economic metrics, the USA are playing in another field altogether. Shifting global dynamics mean their attention will be increasingly focussed on rivalling China and emerging African powers at the expense of European concerns.

Democracies are unreliable by nature, given they are subject to the whims of their people. But in the case of European interdependency, this risk is mitigated by the relative powerlessness of any one country: a Le Pen in France, a Weidel in Germany or an Abascal in Spain would still need to court the ECB for money and their neighbours for trade and migration deals, with their destructive power further curtailed by an unstable bond market. Red or Blue, this is the safer bet.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Let's not forget waves can drown if you don't know how to ride them

The fireworks now fizzle out of the blue night sky, as social media romanticises first Muslim Senator Abdul El-Sayed (though I must admit, the "Mamdani's evil twin" jokes after his stabs at 'Habibi' JD Vance got a giggle out of me).

So, what is the US left with now? For starters, a nuanced, but certainly not new, arrangement: a Republican President and a majoritarily Democratic House of Congress and Senate. Every bill and budget that lands on Trump's table will have to have been approved by the Democratic party. Considering what the big '26 (and arguably, ever since Donnie entered the White House) has brought to the global economy, state of democracy, and status quo as a modern world where violence is not the answer, this might make you happy. But, as much as I hate to say it, the Trump Administration (I increasingly believe Trump is no less Trump than he is Trump®) is absolutely nowhere near powerless. Reminiscent of past political figures who have weaponised power and populism, Donnie has shown time and time again he gets off on exerting his force over as many people as possible. Even if it means starting a war. Even if it means imposing tariffs that will backfire so badly that deeply Texan, lifetime Republican voters go blue. This election has given the United States a poisoned chalice: to make the change that is undeniably, globally, desperately needed, the two parties must reach deals.

Grab your popcorn.

NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

potential to cut essential time to diagnosis, saving sedation costs, lowering carbon emissions per scan, and contributing to a faster healthcare system. No hardware updates are required, working across different protocols and scanners. As opposed to accelerated MRI scans, which also take around two minutes, they provide higher quality imaging with fewer data points by using AI enhancement.

Already being fast-tracked to Nigerian hospitals, GenScan AI's MRI technology received $100,000 for the 2026 Nigeria Prize for Science and Innovation a month ago. Earlier this year, Mary-Brenda Akoda was also recognised by Innovate UK as part of their Women in Innovation cohort, backing 100 women founders.

The other four finalists each received a £10,000 Track Prize in their category.

Veren Surgical (AI & Robotics), is developing a robotic system that accurately controls and reduces trauma in cochlear implants.

Byte (Creative & Consumer) pitched a smart mouthguard for contact sport players, to measure head impacts and subsequent injury risk and safe recovery plans.

Ryza Bio (Energy & Environment) is working on a low-cost greenhouse system that allows faster testing of herbicides on plants, attempting to improve current relatively slow testing processes used by the agrochemical industry.

Synaptive (Health & Wellbeing), engineered a patent-pending design of an EEG electrode that works on all types of hair, tackling failed or repeated testing on patients with curly or afro-textured hair.



VCC 2026 Grand Final Winners. From left to right: RIza Bio Founder Selin Olenik, Synaptive founder Peter Bryan, GenScan AI Mary-Brenda Akoda, Byte founder Georgios Koukoulis, Veren Surgical founder Daniel Bautista Salinas. Imperial College London



GenScan AI, winners of the top VCC 2026 prize, have developed a technology that allows quick scans with few data points to have diagnostic quality using AI. GenScan AI

Two-year graduate visas allowed for "high-compliance" universities after updated Government plans

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

UK Chancellor John Healy, appointed by Andy Burhnam earlier this year, delivered his first Budget speech to the Commons on Wednesday 28 October, where he announced graduates from UK universities with "strong labour market outcomes" will be allowed to obtain a graduate visa valid for two years.

The Labour Government reduced the visa length from two years to 18 months in May 2025, which will remain the case for those graduates that apply from 1 January 2027 onward and are from universities not considered "high-compliance".

To date, there is no more information on the criteria used to determine labour market outcomes, or which universities comply.

This change is part of efforts to ensure the immigration system "supports a dynamic labour market", as outlined in the document. This policy naturally establishes a dynamic where some institutions are given more favourable conditions than others, which has received mixed responses from key stakeholders.

Dr Hollie Chandler, Director of Strategic Policy at the Russell Group (composed of 24 leading public UK universities including Imperial) expressed support for the implementation as it will "help protect our reputation as a global study destination and maximise the contributions of these graduates to the UK workforce" and announced the Group will work closely with Government to shape the change.

Director of HEPI (Higher Education Policy Institute), criticizes the decision as "linking how long international students can stay in the UK to graduate employment rates, when international students are the one group for whom we have very little data on graduate outcomes, just does not make much sense."

> **"This change is part of efforts to ensure the immigration system "supports a dynamic labour market"**

National Union of Students President Favour Samuel joins this backlash, arguing the policy just changes an "arbitrary immigration figure" and that it "does nothing but increase the confusion surrounding this scheme".

In other efforts to "go further in attracting the world's best graduates", there will be a proportional increase in the yearly applications cap for the High Potential Individual (HPI) visa route. The HPI visa, introduced in 2022 and currently capped at 8,000 applications, allows graduates from eligible global universities to stay in the UK for two years without a job offer or sponsors. The list of universities has now been expanded, from to graduates from the world's top 80 institutions to 150, although it is not clear which will be added.

A look into the Great Hall

And some details on what's to come.

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

Great Hall renovations are well underway, with the space scheduled to be fully operational for the start of next academic year (2027-28).

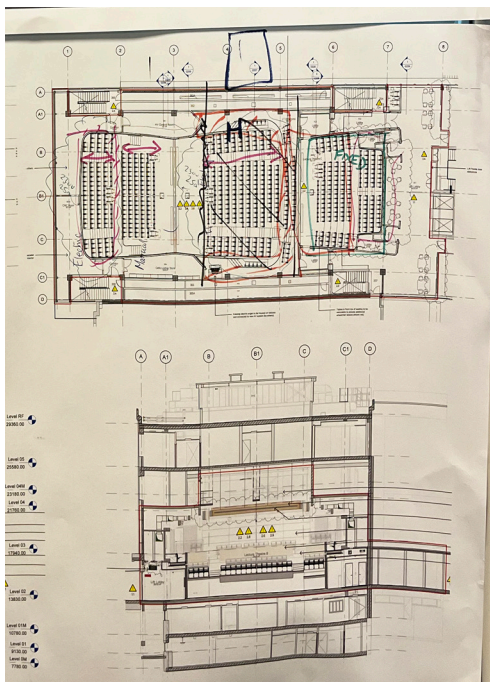
For larger events, the Great Hall will have a maximum seated capacity of 541 attendees, with the space engineered to be divided into three individual lecture halls for 170, 265, and 140 students, respectively.

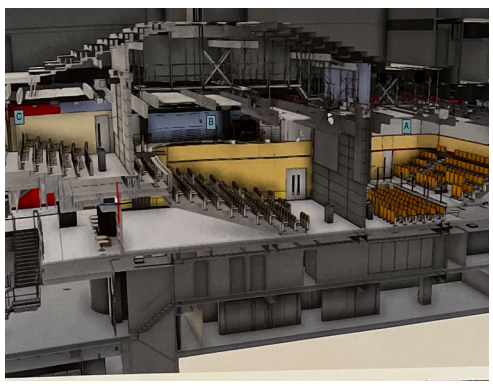
Several adaptations have been made to optimise accessibility, like the addition of two accessible lifts, integrated BSL support and live captioning on screens, and hearing loop systems to support attendees with hearing aids.

With the old organ installed, 144 speakers, and music and instrument store spaces around the Hall, the space is designed to transform into a venue for high-quality music events and performances.

It has been confirmed that students who wish to operate any part of the space will have to be trained and registered as a member of the Events team as a remunerated, casual worker.

The project team is in contact with ICU to finalise the operating mode.







Top: Great Hall blueprints. Middle: Render of the Great Hall when split into three lecture halls. Bottom: What the Great Hall looked like a couple days ago! Cristina Carrillo

imperial college union

As part of their mission to recognise and value student work, both Imperial College Union's Activities and Representation Teams have monthly nomination awards to student volunteers, who each receive a £50 voucher. Students can submit nominations before the 20th of each month. Three awards are given out: the Representation Team's Representative of the Month, the Activities Team's Committee Member of the Month, and the Liberation and Community Network Representative of the Month.

October nominations

Representative of the Month

Kevin Jang RSMU: Vice President Education

I'd like to nominate Kevin for Rep of the Month in recognition of the exceptional work he has done for students this past month. When my year lost out on our field trip because of geopolitical restrictions, Kevin, through the Geophysics Society, campaigned for a replacement so that we wouldn't miss out on this valuable opportunity. He then went on to single-handedly plan an entire week-long trip to Sicily. This included writing field guides, drafting a code of conduct, handling the logistics, and designing a programme of exciting geological and geophysical activities. The amount of time and care he has put into this is remarkable, and it has turned a real disappointment into something our whole year is looking forward to. On top of this, as VPAE of RSMU, I've worked closely with Kevin on organising Freshers' events, and his help has been invaluable. He has consistently gone above and beyond to make sure new students feel welcome and get involved from day one. Kevin cares deeply about the student experience and puts in the work to make

Committee Member of the Month

Kendric Chang, Singapore, Vice President: Innovation

Kendric bonded international students across Imperial, using the Singapore society as a platform. He came up with the idea to collaborate with other Asian societies for the society's annual freshers' picnic – reaching Malaysian, Hindu, Indian, Jap, Thai, Indo and Filipino societies to put together an Asian Society Picnic. Kendric spent months planning the event in meticulous detail; writing an activity proposal from scratch, reaching out to ICU and Imperial for venue availability, and connecting with the leaders of the various societies. Imperial has long held a unique position of having one the most international student bodies in the UK. Kendric has identified a lack of cross-society exchange to bond international students and, rightfully, recognised the great opportunities that collaborations between cultural societies can bring. He is nominated as committee member of the month in recognition of his innovative efforts – and the actions he has put in to actualising a new idea.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

ago), we were feeling a little bit smug in Chemistry (...) Now Gemini can take even a badly drawn chemical structure, and it will tell you what it is (...) It's just amazing. The field has really moved on."

"I think the capability of AI is clearly evolving very fast, and I think in terms of what that means for the education we provide here, one thing that is really important is that we try and provide as level a playing field as we can for students with different backgrounds and different means. I think it's incumbent on us to avoid a situation where a student with access to the very latest frontier models gets unfair advantage over a student who doesn't have that", explains Prof Spivey as part of the reason why the College developed commercial system dAIsy, Imperial's official, secure genAI platform with access to multiple large language models (LLMs) and agents. While he recognises that students can still make use of commercial frontier models, he highlights the College continuously looks for ways to improve on why some students do not use dAIsy.

Assessments: "we want our students to be able to perform with AI, and in a power cut"

As opposed to exams, coursework tests students in an environment where the latest tools are available. According to Prof Spivey, "The way coursework in particular is constructed is really important in terms of both how a student is expected to interact with AI to create that coursework and how we assess it."

He draws attention to the University of Sydney's "two-lane" approach to assessment, where "AI-off" assessments test that students have themselves developed the required skills for their programme, and "AI-on" assessments focus on engaging productively, responsibly, and authentically with an AI-integrated society. Approving of this model, Prof Spivey explains the College will continue to emphasise the fraction of marks attributed to the coursework elements where assessment relies on a "moment of accountability" (like the Final Year Project vivas) and less so for tasks like report writing. This aims to ensure students focus on understanding and working through complicated processes: "How do you understand it if you haven't built your way through that kind of pyramid [of knowledge]?"

Q: How is the university approaching genAI use for staff? Introducing CALT

A: "It's a great question. I've heard the same comments as well. I don't know if you're aware, but we are just in the process of setting up a Centre for AI in Learning and Teaching (CALT). It's been about a year in the making (...) when I spoke with your colleague 18 months ago, we had just appointed some AI futurists – these were staff individuals in each Faculty – and one of the things that they did was they worked with staff across the organisation [was] to develop a vision for education in the age of AI. I think that's quite an important title, because it's all about education in an environment where AI is readily available."

The Centre will operate through a human-centered approach, focused on education in an era of AI, currently in process of appointing positions of leadership. The majority of those working for the centre will be Imperial staff from all departments, bought out to work part-time one or two days a week.

"If we're asking students to be absolutely upfront and clear about how they've used AI, we expect the same of our staff", he says. As Prof Spivey explains, Imperial operates through an evidence-based approach, so trials and discussions within CALT will take place to determine what is acceptable for a staff member to use AI for. "There are definitely aspects of feedback that are advantageously delivered by a bot: it's quick, it's immedaite, it's consistent within reason, but it's not human (...) Students are at paying to be at Imperial, they expect that human interaction, (...) but that's not to say there isn't a role for some aspects of AI feedback".

The job market and education: one is changing, so the other must change too

Over the last six months, Prof Alan Spivey has attended a steering group co convened between BusinessLDN and Deloitte, comprising leaders from key companies in a wide range of industries. The latest focus of the meetings has been how AI is changing the London workforce.

The job market is not easy to navigate, and increasingly more skills and AI knowledge is required from applicants: "It is clear that all firms expect the graduates they recruit going forward will still have all the features they have previously (...) But in addition, they will have a deep understanding of AI, technical aspects of AI, they will expect them to understand the inherent biases, environmental challenges, potential for providing hallucinations...".

> **Students are at Imperial and they pay for the human experience, but that's not to say there isn't a role for some aspects of AI feedback**

When asked about how Imperial's Career Services will adapt to this changing market, Prof Spivey recognises there is a time-limited period where the College needs to provide students with AI and employability advice over-and-above what is provided within each discipline.

As part of their goal to provide Imperial students with these required AI skills, the College has recently launched the first part of a 40-hour professional certificate in AI for staff and students, designed to help apply the technology in professional settings and independently develop workflows.

In the first four days after the launch, 700 staff members (around 8% of total) logged onto the service, with the course made available to students this past Monday.

About Canvas

Starting this academic year, Imperial rolled out a Canvas-powered learning management system (LMS), leaving the BlackBoard days behind. Prof Spivey has overseen this transition: "The aspect of Canvas that fits best with the AI era that we're in is that it is the first time we've had a learning management system which is the same whether you're a student studying in the Business School, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Natural Science, or Faculty of Engineering. That is great in terms of consistency of experience and also for having a very good experience, because we've worked very hard to make sure that Canvas is configured in a way that we hope will prove to be very intuitive". Another advantage Prof Spivey highlights is how the team is working towards is that modules shared between Departments will now work in a much smoother manner, as he is hopeful about the rate at which we can integrate these features in the system.

When asked about the biggest setback during this transition, Prof Spivey highlights gathering the requirements of an LMS and going into a procurement process.

When gathering the requirements, it was not just a matter of cataloguing what BlackBoard and Insendi provided, and "ask[ing] the question 'what should education in the next 20, 25 years look like?' (...) There are certain things that we need covering (...), but there's also another set of things that we would really like in a system going forward".

Let's keep touching grass

The conversation ended returning to the idea of being human-centric, which Prof Spivey reiterates is "absolutely key."

"One of the things which I found quite interesting [was] looking at how the widespread use of AI is changing the way we think about the student experience at Imperial", reflectign that it is shedding a light on "non-tech things".

Prof Spivey highlights the people, instructors, coursemates that evolve into lifelong friendships, study spaces and industry opportunities. "It is more important than ever that we get all those other things right."

SCIENCE

Imperial-DRI collaboration for novel Alzheimer's disease trial

A new approach to clinical trial design allows faster drug development.

Science Editor
HANNA IRZYK

Imperial researchers working in collaboration with Dementia Research Institute UK (DRI) are running a new, faster kind of clinical trial for Alzheimer's disease. Around 982,000 patients in the UK suffer from dementia. Alzheimer's, which affects approximately 11% of people above 65, is the leading cause. There are currently 158 substances being tested as putative Alzheimer's treatments worldwide; yet, despite intense investment in dementia drug development, the NHS does not currently offer any treatments that stop the development of this disease. Most conventional trials are done by comparing the outcomes of a group of patients on a dummy pill, called a placebo, to another group, taking a single drug. The AD-SMART trial will only have one group on a placebo, and two different groups taking different drugs. Thanks to this approach, a larger percentage of patients is taking an active substance.

The trial lasts only four years, and the drugs that don't work in first 18 months will be replaced with new drugs. Drugs will be assessed based on patients' performance on cognitive tests as well as their ability to perform basic tasks like showering.

To further speed up the transition between clinical trial and drug availability to patients, the drugs in AD-SMART are already approved for other conditions. They show promise in treating dementia, and have already been shown to be safe. If they perform well, they should be relatively easy to approve. This is a common approach for Alzheimer's trials – 35% of clinical trials in 2026 target 'repurposed' drugs.

"We are applying advances from cancer and other conditions to accelerate testing of treatments for people with Alzheimer's disease," Professor Palesh Malhotra, the chief investigator, explained. The SMART approach has already been effective for motor neuron disorders, discounting a medication's effectiveness especially quickly and allowing researchers to focus their attention more efficiently.

NIHR awards Imperial £2.2m for osteoarthritis trial

HOPE-e2 investigates if hormone replacement therapy reduces hand pain in post-menopausal women.

Science Editor
ISABELLA DUCHOVNY

Imperial was awarded £2.2m by the NIHR to evaluate hormone replacement therapy (HRT) as a treatment for hand pain in post-menopausal women with hand osteoarthritis. The trial is based on a collaboration between Imperial and the Universities of Leeds, Keele, Oxford and Hertfordshire.

The HOPE-E2 study is led by Doctor Fiona Watt, who is a Clinical Associate Professor in Rheumatology, in the Department of Immunology and Inflammation.

Osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis, results from the degeneration of articular cartilage which cushions the ends of bones and presents with joint pain and loss of function. Hand osteoarthritis is twice as common in women than men with an increase around 50 years old, the median age of menopause worldwide.

"Hand osteoarthritis affects millions of men and women in the UK and can have a devastating long-term impact on daily activities, ability to work and quality of life," Dr Watt told Imperial News. "While there is mounting evidence that hormonal changes could play a role in the condition, this has never been tested in a definitive clinical trial."

While the Women's Health Initiative, a long-term national health study launched by the NIH, found that women on unconjugated oestrogens had lower incidence of large joint replacement and musculoskeletal pain compared to women given the placebo, the clinical role of HRT has not yet been comprehensively investigated.

HOPE-e2 will test if transdermal oestradiol can reduce hand pain, compared to a placebo, building on the HOPE-e study, which evaluated the feasibility of a randomised controlled trial of HRT for hand arthritis in post-menopausal women

The trial began in October and is set to run for 43 months, with participant recruitment beginning in mid-2027.

"Our HOPE-E2 study team aims to provide robust evidence on whether HRT could offer a new treatment for post-menopausal women living with painful hand osteoarthritis," said Dr Watt.

THIS WEEK IN SCIENCE

Become a Science & Tech Writer!

Have you ever had interesting thoughts about science you wanted to share? Join us! We are always looking for new writers, and the our upcoming **writers workshop** is a great place to start.

The workshop will be on 12 November in West Basement, Beit. More details are coming soon!

There's no need to have previous writing experience, just an interest in looking at the world through a scientific lens! Don't hesitate to email us with any questions or ideas at science.felix@ic.ac.uk or...

... join our writers groupchat!

ENVIRONMENT

The Secret Garden: a crossroads between innovation and introspection

Exploring the Garden Project behind the Chaplaincy building, maintained by Imperial students at the Environmental Society.

Environment Writer
CHARLOTTE AMS

I asked Reverend Andrew Wilson, Lead Chaplain at Imperial's Multi-Faith Centre, "Had the [Garden's] secrecy been intentional? Was the mystery a deliberate part of the charm?" He gave me a small smile and told me that without premeditated design, the garden had become a place of peace for those who needed it, who sought it out.

The exchange was part of a meeting I set up with Reverend Wilson and Emilio Garcia Patron, lead of RE:Gen @ Imperial - an Imperial College Union campaign aiming to protect, restore, and expand green spaces around campus. I had come with the sole intention of finding out more about the IC Garden Project at the Chaplaincy building, and what I found was beyond any of my expectations.

Stumbling my way towards the entrance between Ethos's "gym bros" and run club, I stepped into the multi-faith centre and pressed forward into its backyard. I genuinely felt like Alice walking into the mystical Wonderland, finding Reverend Andrew there setting up the tea station. I immediately felt the uniqueness of the place juxtaposed against the rest of the South Kensington campus.

Who knew that behind the odor of the student gym lay a fruiting garden of beauty and serenity? The garden consists of a greenhouse, a kitchen-garden, a tool shed, and a large meadow (with a distinct meditative feel) behind it. After two years at Imperial, how had I not known about this? Without meaning to sound corny, the garden's location behind the chaplaincy made perfect sense: there was an undeniable spiritual quality to it!

"Something wonderful happens when two people are gardening side by side that doesn't happen when we meet behind a table," Mindfulness Chaplain Hogetsu Baerndal told me. It's what makes the place so special: students from backgrounds all over the world step out of their bubbles and are equalised by working the earth."It's a place to meditate and seek guidance," Reverend Andrew said, "and students can talk to me about anything; from filthy housemate horror stories to the lingering existential angst that comes with being a student sometimes."

Spotlight: Re:GEN's Makeover

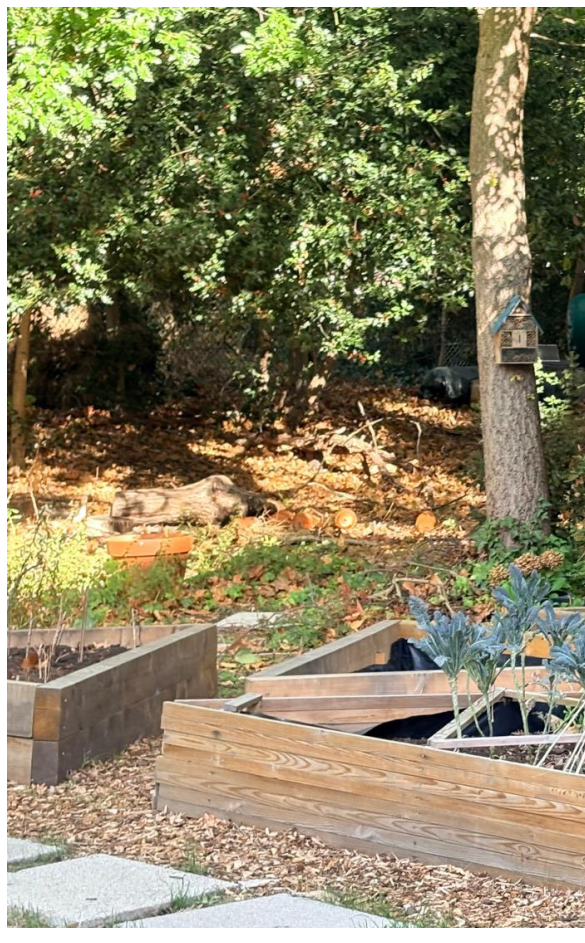
A patch of land that's quickly turning into a living, breathing laboratory, STEM undeniably lingers in every corner: between the new pottery-built irrigation systems and the greenhouse setup, science was everywhere I looked.

I was introduced to Emilio over tea. RE:Gen is supported, I was informed, through the President's Community Fund and Studentships Program – dedicating institutional funding for campus environmental projects. The South Ken campus sits directly on the former Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Garden. Landscaped in the 1860s under the guidance of Prince Albert, the ornate 22.5-acre site named "Victoria Botanical Gardens" was later replaced by the university after closing in 1888. Emilio explained that the secret garden combines biodiversity and cutting-edge research, with the long-term goal of bridging a gap toward self-sufficiency. Students tested experimental growing techniques and sustainable frameworks; out came usable infrastructure and better accessibility.

The Mushroom Lab

After much spading and wheelbarrow action from the CEC, the garden now has a mushroom setup with more than seven native edible species, each given a different job in a different habitat (path, raised beds, birchwood logs (from Imperial)). Different species are grown on different media; fungi are fussy about food. Oysters are fast colonizers of wood chips, Lion's Mane and Beefsteak prefer logs (Beefsteak typically oak), and Wood Blewit feeds on leaf litter.

The project is a partnership with Fat Fox Mushrooms, a North London start-up that supplied us with two native species for us to experiment with: Poplar Fieldcap and Wood Blewit. These species are expected to fruit within 1-3 weeks (though the log-grown might take a while longer). The inoculated Blue and Phoenix Oyster spores are expected to fruit in the same timeframe: we could



The Secret Graden in question. Charlotte Ams

have been stepping over tomorrow's dinner! Using native fungi suits local conditions and supports local biodiversity (tying back to Re: GEN's aims), which is why studying the Poplar Fieldcap and Wood Blewit could be very interesting and practical.

> **Something wonderful happens when two people are gardening side by side that doesn't happen when we meet behind a table**

A new addition and ungatekeeping the garden

The newest arrival is a composter from Ridan, a small, family-run business based in North Devon, UK, operating since 2003, which was delivered in person to our garden! The composter draws on the Japanese Bokashi method of anaerobic bacterial fermentation.

It will start functioning soon, beginning with coffee grounds collected on campus from November, and hopefully expanding to recycling the canteen's food waste soon! If you're interested in the work or the community of the so-called secret garden, no experience is needed to join!

Drop-in sessions happen every Wednesday and Thursday from 1–4 PM. Location: Somewhere behind 15 Prince's Gardens *(SHHHHH, IT'S A SECRET!)*



View of the Garden from the Royal Horticultural Society 1862-1863. Royal Horticultural Society







Composters. Charlotte Ams



Charlotte Ams



BUSINESS

Norway's $106 billion hint

The world's biggest investor is taking precautions against mounting debt in developed economies.

Business Editor
PIERSON CHU

In their recent letter to Norway's Ministry of Finance, Norges Bank (the manager of Norway's $2.3tn sovereign wealth fund) wrote: "High government debt has gone from being a distinctive feature of individual countries, particularly Japan and some euro area countries, to becoming a more general characteristic of developed economies." In the letter, they proposed reducing the weight of government bonds from 70% to 50% of their bond holdings to chase better returns elsewhere. This cuts roughly $106 billion from global government bond allocations; in particular, the US Treasury weight falls from 34% to 22%. Although the proposed cut is small relative to the size of global fixed-income markets, it "offers powerful signals as to the slow-moving but persistent shifts in global capital flows and portfolio allocation currently taking place in markets", write Shreyas Gopal and George Saravelos at Deutsche Bank. As governments of major economies are beginning to face doubt about their debt, new competitors are targeting the same pool of investors' money.



Norges Bank building
Tomoyoshi NOGUCHI CC BY 2.0

Per Emily Herbert of the *Financial Times*, investors have lent AI hyperscalers $200 billion this year, and this could reach $1 trillion by 2030. JPMorgan believes the five hyperscalers (Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft and Oracle) could approach 10% of America's investment-grade corporate bond market. Herbert notes that the uncertainty over the volume of upcoming debt is driving up the premiums demanded by investors, though it may not deter hyperscalers. Torsten Slok, chief economist at Apollo, claims that the AI boom has become "rate-insensitive". Recent rate hikes are slowing purchases such as homes and cars, as textbook economics predicts, yet orders for business equipment are growing at their fastest pace since 2021. The consensus forecast for US capex growth has also been raised from 3.1% to 3.7% over the past year, despite rising rates. Slok argues that these counter-textbook behaviours are due to AI, and that rate hikes are not slowing the economy or inflation as intended.

This is where the two immovable forces of AI debt and government debt collide. While hyperscalers continue to borrow rate-insensitively, governments across the world are running budget deficits that they also finance by borrowing. This means governments cannot stop competing for capital when borrowing rates rise. The effects are currently showing up at the margin. Bankers told the FT's Katie Martin that nobody is selling government bonds to buy hyperscaler debt; rather, investors who once put all their new money into government bonds might now "just put 80(%) of it in government bonds and 20(%) of it into this other pot instead." That shift matters most for long-dated debt, where hyperscalers typically borrow. Consequently, new long-dated government bonds may have to offer higher yields to attract buyers. Without a plan for balancing the budget, this will only add to the more than $1 trillion a year the US already spends on interest, according to the CBO.

Dr Roald Versteeg, Principal Teaching Fellow in the Department of Finance at Imperial College, notes that US government debt is as high as it has ever been in US history, with no plan to bring the budget back into balance. This raises the risk of fiscal dominance: a situation where concerns about debt sustainability become so large that monetary policy becomes subordinate to the financing needs of the government. Dr Versteeg explains that this means there is "a real risk of inflation trending up, or of other forms of financial repression to keep real interest rates down in order to reduce the US government's debt burden. As investors become aware of this, term premia are likely to rise, increasing the borrowing costs of governments." Former Fed Chair Janet Yellen sounded a similar warning at the American Economic Association meeting in January.

The current state of US government debt creates a scenario where the AI buildout has limited upside in restoring fiscal health, while presenting some concerning downside. "The sheer scale and ramp-up of borrowing behind the AI buildout is quite unlike anything we have seen before and potentially a real worry," says Dr Versteeg. If a cascading collapse of AI companies' debt were to begin, governments would be poorly placed to act as a backstop. "With government finances as stretched as they are, there is much less room for the state to step in than in 2008 or 2020," he explains. Additionally, Yellen, citing a paper by Elmendorf, Hubbard and Liscow, explains that even if AI companies fuel productivity growth by 0.5 percentage points per year above the CBO's baseline, the boost would have to be sustained for 30 years to "prevent the ratio of debt-to-GDP from spiraling upward."

> **"There is much less room for the state to step in than in 2008 or 2020**

Norges Bank's proposal signals that even the world's biggest investor no longer treats government bonds as an automatic safe harbour. Governments are now facing pressure from their own mounting debt and the new borrowers competing for the same pool of money. Even if AI companies deliver productivity growth, it may not solve the mounting debt issue.

FELIX SEX SURVEY 2026-2027

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How Primetime succeeds where Clayface fails

Make way for Robert Pattinson in his prime.

Film Writer
RYAN STANLEY



The *Clayface*/*Primetime* double feature wasn't exactly premeditated, but when the opportunity arose, it felt like there were worse ways to utilise my mid-week weekend (aka lectureless Wednesdays). I didn't have the highest hopes for DC's take on body horror, but it looked at least somewhat envelope-pushing for a mainstream comic-book movie, attempting a decidedly darker tale (with the studio's first 18 age rating).

On the other side of the coin, I'm a certified sucker for Robert Pattinson. I loved his recent roles in *Die My Love* and *The Drama*, and Hansen is such an intriguing persona to try to capture. *Primetime*' is also the feature debut of Lance Oppenheim, a figure thrust onto my radar when I heard he was co-directing the highly anticipated *You Can See Everything* with Nathan Fielder, and Fielder's seal of approval is enough to sell me on anything. Phoebe Bridger's acting debut was somehow just a bonus.

So, were my expectations subverted? Does *Clayface*, in fact, deserve the 9pm programming slot? Unsurprisingly, no. It melts under the pressure of trying to be so many things and just falls flat at all of them. *Primetime*, though, soars: with razor-sharp focus and stellar acting all round. Let's get into them.

Clayface really wants us to care about its protagonist but, despite its best efforts, we cannot. The introduction drags without making effective use of the time it takes for the main plot to kick in, and we are told, not shown, everything. Nothing in Hagen's (played by Tom Rhys Harries) character signifies that he's had a rough upbringing, this is just repeatedly mentioned by other people. As an actor, he's continually having to consider and adjust the way he presents himself – his face is his commodity and amid an award campaign there is mounting pressure from all angles to use it wisely. The heart of the film's conflict is this blurred line between the persona he puts on and his own identity. This isn't something to be deduced by any means: a talk show host (delighful Rob Bryden cameo) literally

asks "Who is the real Matt Hagen?" very early into the runtime. The film we get however, responds with a definitive "it doesn't matter", as it throws away any hypothetical promise with cardboard characters, predictable story beats, and a refusal to commit in any one direction. This results in an overall experience that just feels rushed.

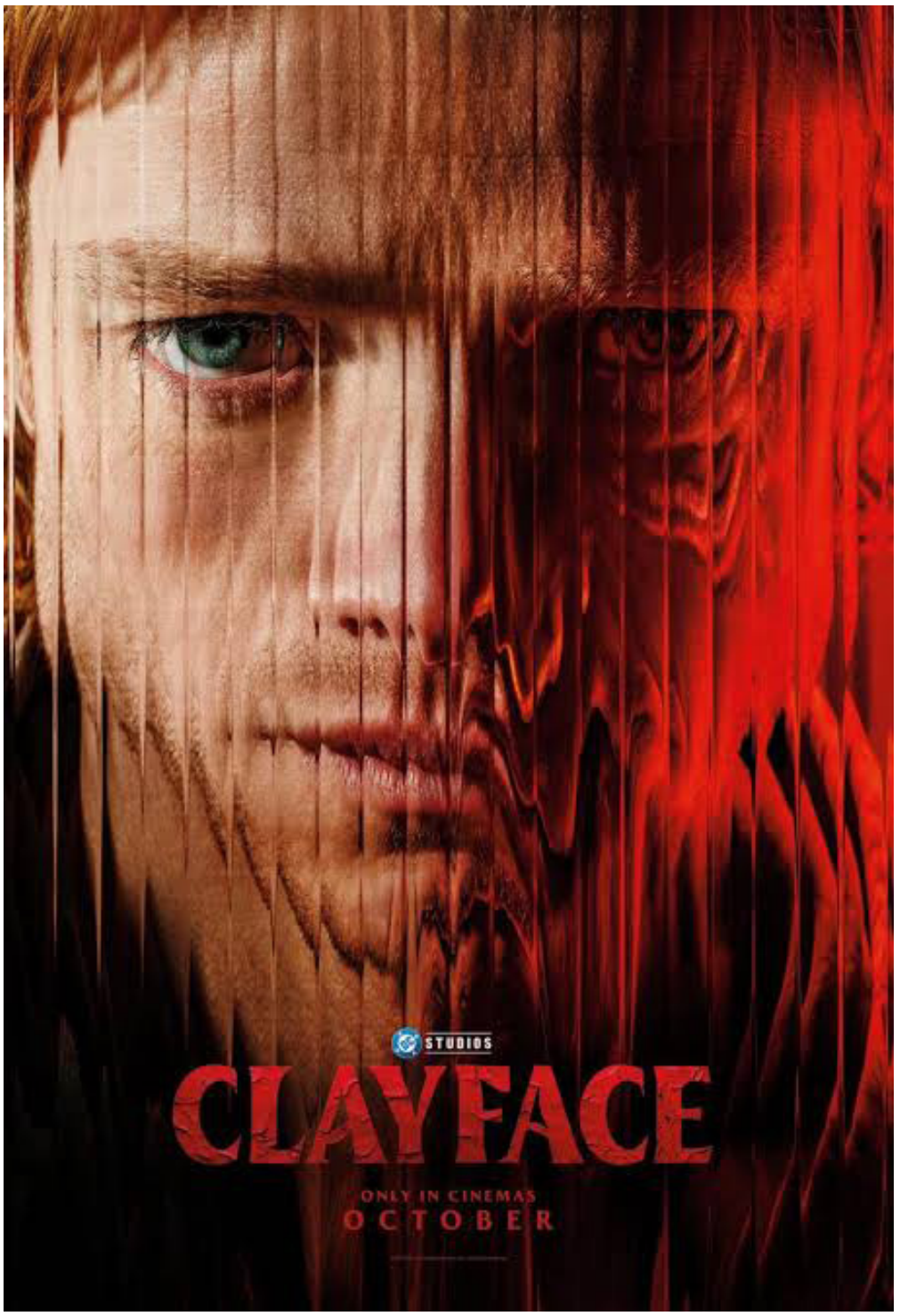
> **Does *Clayface*, in fact, deserve the 9pm programming slot?**

Is the film a body horror? Perhaps, but in a very half-assed way. There are some impressive, visually disturbing scenes, but a reluctance to let linger. It goes from one grisly set piece to the next, without any of the tension that lets the genre get its hooks into you. It will surely have more squeamish viewers turning away but it gives little reason for you to look back: it's not scary – just gory and seems to misunderstand what makes the classics, like Cronenberg's *The Fly*, work. *Clayface* is really a very conventional revenge flick with a loose nonsensical romance woven beneath the surface. None of our characters have any chemistry or act in line with what we supposedly know about them, any developed personality is dropped in favour of aligning with tired archetypes: the fiercely independent scientist whose pursuit has left them overworked and shunned by the world (played by a criminally underutilised Naomi Ackie – go watch *I Love Boosters* to see her shine!), the big bad mob boss, the hero cop in a corrupt department. This film is ironically all just surface. There are some creative sequences and entertaining moments for sure, but Gotham's edginess just a façade. All the blood and guts in the world couldn't fool me into believing this is more fleshed out than any other generic superhero film.

Primetime, however, will have you gripped from its opening moments. An all-too-familiar sting operation being set-up and filmed, Hansen obsessively repeating his lines trying to master his most vindictive cadence, him leaving his dressing room to ambush as America's favourite executioner. This film is beautifully shot and amazingly scored – everything just works: the transitions to grainier early-2000s hidden camera style-footage in these sting scenes; the look on the predators' faces; Pattinson's precision in every line delivered. Tackling a subject matter ever-prevalent with the rise of imitation pedophile-hunters on social media and placing the show in the context of the mounting pressure from NBC executives to take on *Lost* at the primetime programming slot, the film has countless directions to venture forth in. But wisely, it hones in on much tighter character studies at its centre. It spends less time questioning directly the show's conception of morality but more how this sensationalised version of justice impacts all involved.



Body horror takes centre stage in Clayface.
Image credits: DC Studios / Warner Bros. Pictures, via Dread Central.



Merritt Wever as the show's producer and Skyler Gisondo as budding actor and new decoy Dan have their ambitions set high and very much entangled with Hansen's volatile mood. These are complex portraits of people in situations with incredibly high-stakes, not mockeries – this is not at all the smear campaign that the real-life Hansen would have you believe. "Hi, I'm Chris Hansen" said countless times in every context is less egomaniacal and more a repeated plea, a man fractured by continual performance in his personal and public life. Pattinson's portrayal is sinister, tightly strung, and mechanical but in doing so is in ways subtly touching and relatable; the film is more humanising than defamatory.

> **This is not at all the smear campaign that the real-life Hansen would have you believe.**

With some of the best dialogue and cinematography of the year, and electrically paced, *Primetime* is unmissable and outshines *Clayface* in demonstrating how far a performance can stretch thin. And don't forget to stick around for that gorgeous Phoebe Bridgers track with the end-credits!

MUSIC

Meet the Phunky Monkeyz!

From a stage made of wooden pallets to sold-out Funky Fridays, meet the Imperial-born band keeping the funk in student nightlife.

Music Writer
IVANA KUZMANOSKA

As 'Halloweekend' fades into memory, it's safe to say that the Elephant and Barrel was the place to be on Halloween Eve, all thanks to the Phunky Monkeyz. Born out of Imperial's student community, this playful seven-piece band blends strings, keys and brass to deliver familiar anthems with a groovy spin, drawing inspiration from Stevie Wonder, Ezra Collective and Ray Charles. Their lively, thoroughly curated Funky Fridays are becoming an increasingly popular fixture on Imperial live music fans' social calendars. But before sold-out nights or even an established logo, the band had a rather humble and wholesome start.



Phunky Monkeyz. Mia Taylor Robinson

Origins

It all began when three friends came together for Imperial's 2025 Battle of the Bands. Their next stage, however, was a little less conventional. After their first taste of playing for an audience, they decided to entertain guests with a short live set of soul, pop, and funk at the joint birthday party of the band's saxophonist and marketing manager. To highlight the band, they constructed a makeshift platform in their living room with inexpensive wooden pallets and plenty of fairy lights. Between the spontaneity of the gig and the charm of the decor, the crowd was surely pleased. What soon followed was an invitation to play at another friend's party, this time at a local Fulham pub – the Elephant and Barrel. The venue took a liking to them too (potentially due to a suited-up first impression), and has become the regular home to their performances. The band has since evolved and welcomed new, mostly Imperial members, with the current ensemble comprising Sebastian Hoving, Ayden Karim, Freddie Pointon, Dermot Mooney, Edward Peng, Leo Ghaw, David Barry, Aditya Subrahmanian, and singer Hannah Hollenbery among guest appearances. While covers remain central to their acts, the band have also written two excellently received originals, which "popped into existence in an afternoon."

Funky Fridays

Before long, the Phunky Monkeyz had found a way to make Fridays a little funkier. The clear and abundant support from their peers encouraged the band to take their performances to a professional level, coining Funky Fridays: semi-regular live music nights at the Elephant and Barrel, described as a "perfect crossover between pub and club". These events notably feature an upbeat extended set by the band playing jazz, soul, and rock favourites, followed by IC Radio DJs to electrify the dancefloor 'til late, for an outing suffused with recognisable ambience (shoutout to Mia Taylor Robinson, marketing manager) and stellar energy. Their first official event had groundbreaking attendance, which has only since been growing.

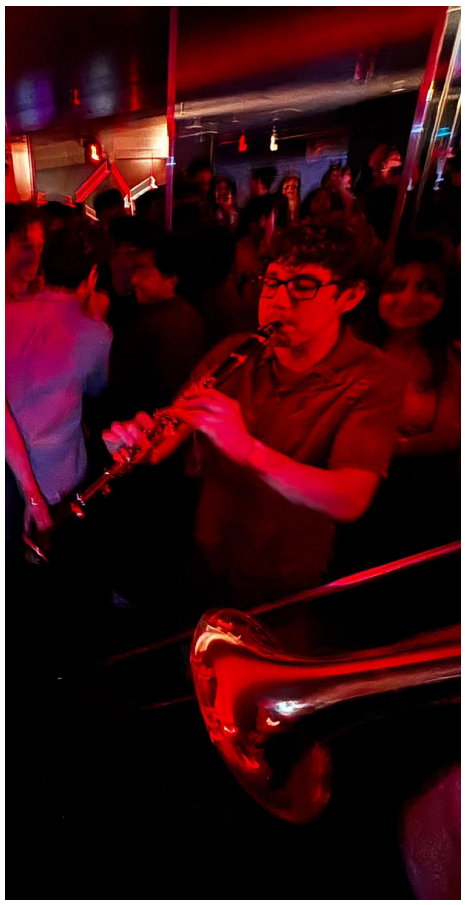
So, what exactly is it that keeps students coming back? A handful of reasons make it the ideal night out: a convenient location to campus, affordable live music (only a fiver!), a free shot, a high likelihood of seeing friends or, at the very least, like-minded people, and ultimately an undeniable sense of community. Their latest Halloween-themed event illustrates this brilliantly.

A Halloween Highlight

Under cobwebs, skulls and giant spiders, students in costumes embraced the occasion as the band returned this academic year, from film characters



Phunky Monkeyz performing at Funky Fridays Halloweeve Edition.
Mia Taylor Robinson



Phunky Monkeyz at an earlier gig.
Mia Taylor Robinson

and real-life cryptic crossword clues to supernatural entities. Thid-year Design Engineering students, Leila and Kyara, who went as clowns, were named the best-dressed by the band, who awarded them a custom Phunky Monkeyz lantern (congratulations!).

The band themselves poured out their vast musical talent, treating the crowd to an awesome rendition of Fleetwood Mac's "The Chain", shredded by substitute lead guitarist Euan Bridges, and more. A particular highlight of the night was Leo's synth solos; they are seriously not to miss. A special mention also goes to IC Radios's Maya and Cam B2B as Global Freakwencies.

What's next?

The academic year has just begun, and if you've missed this event, fear not! The band aims to grow even greater and grander, and there is plenty to look forward to. Keep your eyes peeled for their next event and their posters around campus. They may even have clip-on microphones by the next time we see them, bringing a new dimension to their act. They've certainly come a long way.

AMS Reviews: New Music Mondays @ The Windmill Brixton

Music Writer
LALITH VELAMAKANNI

The Windmill stage has witnessed the beginnings of some massive names in the indie/alt music scene – acts like Black Country New Road, Black Midi, and The Last Dinner Party. Last Monday, a few of us not so locked-in Alternative Music Society (AMS) members made our way down to the newly GAIL's-gentrified Brixton to check out the latest edition of New Music Mondays, a free event showcasing four of London's emerging bands.

Oseberg

Described on Dice as "warm lo-fi minimalism with a folk-Americana underlay", the Oseberg quartet moved the evening to a gentle start, featuring melodic finger-style acoustic guitar lines, keyboards, drum brushes, and a mellow trumpet. The vocalist's broken, lilting phrases were almost Isaac Wood-esque, though they were delivered with far more ease. The band did not quite evoke long gone Viking women (as their name would suggest), but they did give rise to a certain melancholy – or maybe I was already longing for the weekend?

Corin V

Corin V kicked things up a notch after the easy start of the opening act. Led by a long-haired, beanie-clad frontman with a sick fingerstyle, the band displayed a lovely blend of technical prowess and deeply personal songwriting, with various songs dedicated to members of the frontman's family. The songs often got off to slow starts, and exploded midway in delightful bursts of energy. The bassist stood out – his double bass towered over the room as his fingers left no part of the fingerboard unexplored, infecting the windmill with folky jazz-influenced art rock-style rhythms.

Starr

Starr was the most interesting act of the evening. The only female-led outfit, Starr and her band of musicians filled the Windmill with a unique sound that flirted with sonic experimentation. The act featured instruments that I did not expect would work together, and one I couldn't even recognise – an acoustic guitar, a synthesizer, a smooth reverb-y saxophone, and what I can only describe as some sort of groove box with a multitude of plug-in wires, vaguely reminiscent of a telephone switchboard. Starr demonstrated both slow, soft acoustic melodies and bangers with sick beats, propelled by the groove box and layered with the sax, that would go so hard at the club. Starr left us all intrigued, and I do hope I get to experience them again.

Bone China

The only act of the evening with a Spotify profile, Bone China sounded a lot more like a near-finished product compared to the nascent (yet gutsy) attempts of the preceding acts. With a sound lying somewhere between The Neighbourhood and The Arctic Monkeys, Bone China engaged with known musical tropes, but nevertheless put on a strong performance. The frontman certainly looked the part, with pretty, dangling locks – a young, moody Robert Plant. Musically, the guitaring stood out to me – the red Gibson SG with its dark brooding tones sounded pretty sweet, coupled with the frontman's whispery delivery. They are set to play this Friday (06/11) at MOTH Club as part of this week's Pitchfork Music Festival.



Starr and band at The Windmill Brixton.
Hu Yu Xin Juliana

ARTS & CULTURE

Guy Fucks: Burn the effigy

Do we burn an effigy of Guy Fawkes on Bonfire Night? The Pope? Or our conception of the person represented?

Arts&Culture Editor
DAVID LOUGHLIN

If you're only just tuning in to UK culture, Bonfire Night just came and went. On that night, centuries ago, a skilled and pious man of war, Guy (Guido) Fawkes, was found leaving a cellar below the UK Parliament building surrounded by barrels filled with gunpowder and a slow match on his person. This little lad had been part of a conspiracy (drably named The Gunpowder Plot) to blow up Parliament and in doing so, rather crudely assassinate the (god forbid) Protestant King of England James I for not being Catholic. However, thanks to the knight sent to check the basement of Parliament that night, every 5th of November the UK stands as a nation to pile flammable materials, sculpt (or imagine to sculpt) a crude representation of the worst political figure one can think of, and set them ablaze, soaring off into the sky as ash and ember. Back in the day, this little act of artistic creation was an expression of the political will of the local community. When James II announced his conversion to Catholicism, the people rejoiced, reminisced on the intentions of Guy Fawkes, and burnt an effigy of the Catholic pope on Bonfire Night in protest. I find this to be a wonderful embodiment of community spirit and how that spirit can enshrine political will for centuries to come: after all, the sitting King is Protestant. But what has come of these effigies today? Who is it that we burn? And why are we still living under neoliberalism even after burning all those Thatcher effigies?



Guy Fawkes effigy, 2007.
Terrence Lacon-Childe / Flickr / CC BY 2.0

> **We see the same people burnt so often that they stop being human at all**

In the modern day, especially in the UK, satire reigns supreme. We use it to tell jokes, make quips, and draw wry smiles, and especially to mock political figures. Up and down the country, from *The Guardian* to *The Times*, we place playful, and often satirical, cartoons in our newspapers making jabs at a wide range of figures of all political leanings (but often just Trump). We've moved beyond the wishful burning of hand-crafted effigies by communities once a year to the commercialisation and editorialisation of a few people's opinions every day. It seems that groups of people depending on one another no longer come together to discuss who best represents their political plights enough to burn. Those challenging conversations have been replaced by the consumption of filtered political satire, ready to be misinterpreted and to reinforce our pre-held beliefs.

None of this is to say that the people of the 1650s were free of being misled or consumed by the opinions of a select few, but rather that they had to be conscientious when choosing who it was they were to burn and why. Some modern media fosters such a culture of conscientiousness, even through satire. *Mock the Week*, a classic UK satirical news-based quiz show, at the very least offers conversation by design with several big comedy personalities sitting in front of a studio audience just begging to differ with one another and converse in the language of satire. I would even argue its weekly TV appearance encourages a communal viewing environment: it's not quite so funny if you're laughing alone. However, for all its wonderful community-building, much modern media online traps the viewer in an echo chamber, a cycle of TikToks burning the same effigies, even politicising minorities into becoming effigies, until all that's being said is based solely on vitriol.



A "guy" being burnt on Bonfire Night in Cornwall, 2012.
Arthur Kerensa / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0

The problem with this individualised effigy burning is twofold. Through isolated consumption, the platforms delivering the content can themselves homogenise, and suddenly, conversation becomes the beliefs of even fewer, more powerful people. Worse still, even when we disagree with the burning we are presented with, we see the same people burnt so often that they stop being human at all and just exist as the effigy. This incessant burning mythologises the person, and in our collective conscious they become invincible, able to receive all of the hate we want to spit at them while never needing to be accountable for their wrongdoings. At the end of the day, they're just an effigy we're going to throw onto the bonfire.

Let's not fall victim to the trap of isolated burning. Instead, start a conversation with your friends, speak loud enough for it to leak to the next table at the pub, throw in a bit of satire for fun, and think together about what little Guy you want to sculpt and then burn.

LIFESTYLE

You are now in overdraft: a leather jacket manifesto

From the leather jacket to the bad boy, why do we keep conditioning ourselves to want things – and people – that are bad for us?

Lifestyle Writer
ISSY DANG

In my first year of university, I knew a guy – regrettably much too well – who was positive he had a right to one of my leather jackets. He kept trying to convince me of it – the key word here is "trying". I'm not a hoarder, but I have collected everything from cute tins and stationery to paper bags (what can I say, the potential always gets to me). As my nature ordained, over the years I have acquired – read "nicked from my parents' wardrobes" – a not-so-shabby collection of leather jackets. After all this time, he still didn't know that he would have to pry that jacket from my cold, dead hands.

Good thing he's not invited to the funeral.

I assume his logic was that a (frankly too small) leather jacket would make him look cool. Unfortunately for him, it doesn't quite work like that. Alex Turner isn't cool because he wears a leather jacket – he's cool because he's Alex Turner. A leather jacket is a piece of fabric, not a magic lamp. You can't just give it a rub and, poof, become the man.

Leather jackets, babies in the world of garments, were born in the 1900s. Originally favoured by pilots in the form of a "flight" or "bomber" jacket for substance rather than style, these sheepskin-lined garments were essential for keeping warm in the WW1 open air cockpits. In 1928, Irving Schott introduced the Perfecto jacket, which became an instant success within the biker community with its slimmer fit: front zipper, high armholes, cotton linings. In a Hedi Slimane way, not a 2010s skinny jeans way.

Your classical image of a sheepskin-lined pilot jacket is likely the American B-3 bomber jacket from WW2. This used heavy sheepskin as planes could now reach higher, colder altitudes. May I direct you to the aero students for any further queries.

On the 1950s silver screen, the now stumbling toddler shot up in popularity. Marlon Brando debuted the look as Johnny Strabler in 1953's The Wild One, wearing Schott's original design. The brooding yet charming ruffian became a symbol for 1950s youth and rebellion, to the point that many schools prohibited the "Brando look." Talk about a legacy.

In 1955, James Dean starred in Rebel Without a Cause, introducing an extra layer of depth to the flavour—he's misunderstood, okay, he's got problems. Call it the Mandela effect or another case of my failing memory, the famous red jacket was actually a windbreaker. In the late 70s, the leather jacket was picked up by the punk movement, worn with ripped jeans and safety pins galore to further hammer home the anti-establishment attitude. The 80s made the jacket synonymous with female rebellion, with Joan Jett adopting the garment in her public persona. The supermodels of the 90s, spotted out and about in these jackets, established it as a street style fashion staple for the model-off-duty look. On a night out, it was a statement adorning a mini dress.



James Dean poses in a Warner Bros. publicity photo for Rebel Without a Cause in Los Angeles, 1955.
Wikimedia Commons

When you buy a leather jacket – brand new or old and battered, if you're anything like me – you're also buying into a fantasy. You're paying for its associations: motorcycles, rebellion, rock and roll. In the eyes of a teenage boy: "cool."

Despite my rather prickly nature, I give credit where it's due — associations are worth a pretty penny. Their value lies in their access to the bank of credibility. They allow you to claim a spotlight you haven't earned. But at the end of the day, borrowed credibility is still a loan. The only way to pay it back is with authenticity, or at least a convincing performance of it. As it comes to light that you embody none of those values, and partake in none of those communities, it's gone. The cheque bounced, and you're left with a pile of debt so high it reaches Kurt Cobain in heaven. Bankruptcy claim denied. This bank is now closed. Please find another.

Can we commodify "cool"? Can it be packaged up neatly with a little bow and sold to the highest bidder? Capitalism is certainly trying its hardest – apparently

Sydney Sweeney can sell her bathwater as soap, so anything is possible. But winning the auction isn't the same as owning the property. Cultural capital doesn't pay rent. It comes with a hidden fee of authenticity, and instalments just won't cut it.

The term was popularised by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his 1986 essay The Forms of Capital, to describe non-financial assets – education, language, style and cultural knowledge – that help people climb society's slippery ladder. Cultural capital exists in three forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. Let's discard that last one for now.

Embodied cultural capital is the internalised knowledge, attitudes, and tendencies so ingrained in your person that they become second nature. Objectified cultural capital refers to material goods that carry cultural value — possessions that signal taste, knowledge and familiarity with particular cultural worlds, not just wealth.

On paper, owning the jacket gives you objectified capital. At least it would, were it not for one small caveat. Bourdieu emphasised that objects only function as cultural capital when their owner possesses the relevant embodied cultural capital. Long story short: you can't buy swag. You just have to have it.

Time for a quick breather, with a word association game.

I say leather jacket, you say … Was that "bad boy" I heard? Great minds really do think alike.

A biker jacket has been the unofficial uniform of the bad boy archetype since 1953 – so, really, forever. I, too, was lured in by the siren song. Exhibit A: my dedicated fangirl status of alt-rock singer-songwriter LØREN. Listen to his 2021 singles and you'll see – actually, just Google his face. Groupie was a valid career option.

There's no singular appeal factor. A splash of danger, a pinch of vulnerability, and a whole lot of guilty pleasure folded into a heap of I-can-fix-him – it's like baking a cake. We have been sold a myth that a person who first seemed arrogant and insulting, will become your soulmate if you just put in enough work. If you were ever a strait-laced goody two-shoes like myself, you've probably had the privilege of being sat next to the rowdy brat, hoping your good behaviour would somehow transfer over by osmosis. Honestly, bless her – and the metaphorical stick up her arse.

That mentality is the engine of the fantasy. It reframes bad behaviour as potential, and instead of acknowledging a highly flawed individual, he becomes two selves. The public version is the devil on one shoulder: arrogant, reckless. The private one is the angel on the other: vulnerable, misunderstood; only she gets to see that. And if all that emotional labour wasn't enough reward, she unlocks "special status." She's no longer the rule; she's the exception.

The dog has been successfully domesticated. The bad boy offers the myth of danger without any of the consequences.

> **We have been sold a myth that a person who first seemed arrogant and insulting, will become your soulmate if you just put in enough work.**

But are there really no consequences? Trade out the combat boots and cigarettes for cravats, an estate in Derbyshire and a tidy little sum of £10,000 a year and you get … Fitzwilliam Darcy? Brooding? Check. Misread? Check. Makes an exception to his rules for Lizzy? Check. At the start, Darcy is disliked by Lizzy and Co. for being a pompous prick, though is later discovered to have a kind heart under the rough exterior. All wrongs are forgiven, training us to view red flags as potential green ones, given enough investment.

In the obligatory grand romantic gesture, Darcy relinquishes his pride by paying Wickham to marry Lydia, insisting he thought only of Lizzy. I have to admit, saving your family from social ruin is pretty swoon-worthy. Except, Darcy essentially chains a 15-year-old girl to her predator and covers up for Wickham's behaviour, conveniently stepping over the very real problem of ruin by association. So, leading man or monster?

As I bask in the glory of my own leather jacket collection, I like to think I've earned the cultural capital to wear the darn thing without looking like a fish out of water. This entire article is my receipt. And yet, if someone decided my embodied capital wasn't up to scratch – well, I'd like to say I'd be okay with it. Who am I kidding? I'd come back from the dead, leather jacket in hand, and make their life miserable for the next fifty years. Eventually, though, I'd make peace with it. Because in a way, I romanticised the bad boy too – I wanted to be him. How lovely it must be, to have some colour-blind soul see your red flags as green and accept you exactly as you are. It must be nice to live with the privilege of never having to acknowledge your wrongs. Ever stagnant, never evolving, trapped as your current self. Anyway, the jacket still fits me better.

Turns out, authenticity is expensive. Luckily, I wasn't buying it on credit.



Theatre advertisement for the film, The Wild One , 24 December, 1953. Wikimedia Commons

CATNIP

America turns blue for QS2

Rightful Queen of Catnip
ASTON MARTINA

Missed me? Yeah I know you did. I took a mental health break for the month of October and pulled a random intern off the streets to fill in for me in the meantime. But fret not, my loyal fans! Yohaan's dead now, and the section is back in good hands with the Catnipper-in-Chief.

As I'm sure most of you with internet connections and/or social lives have found out by now, the recent US midterms have been frankly amazing for those morally opposed to conservatives, with a sweeping wave of republican districts getting overturned and more progressive candidates getting voted into both House and Senate. What many of you may NOT know, however, is that the reason for this blue wave hits a bit closer two home than you may expect. To get to the bottom of this, Catnip has conducted an exclusive interview with a newly elected democratic senator.

NEDS - So you're sure that I'm going to be anonymous, right? It's a bit too soon after the win for people to allege that I'm cavorting with students across the pond.

AM - Of course, Mr. Talarico. We'll maintain strict anonymity, and Claude here has agreed to manually anonymise your statements to no longer resemble your usual talking style either.

NEDS - Wait, does that mean you're going to be altering what I say for print?

AM - Don't get in your head about it, this is all very above board. Anyways, you said that there was more than meets the eye to the recent blue wave, didn't you?

NEDS - Absolutely. The truth is, all of us Texans – uh sorry, all of us Americans have just been totally in awe of you guys over at Imperial. The strong morals you guys have, the refusal to conduct business with unethical companies and alleged warcriminals, the healthy gender ratio, the welcoming atmosphere... It just sounds like heaven on Earth over there.

AM - Aw, stop it, you're making me blush.

NEDS - With the recent honour placed upon you guys of becoming QS2, (which all of you were so lowkey and humble about), I guess a lot of us Americans just thought that Imperial deserved even more concrete recognition. And what better way to do that than turn the US election map Imperial College Blue? I hope I'm not being too forward, but... did you like it? Oh god, I'm such a hajidere.

AM - Hajidere? Damn, James, what is the spectrum of your language?? I mean, uh... yeah! I wanted to say thanks! We really do appreciate it, and I think a broader shift away from conservatism is something that the UK could really use. According to me, Aston Martina. A fictional character whose views do not reflect Felix's or Imperial's.

NEDS - What?

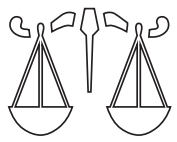
AM - Legal shit, don't worry about it. So anyways, what do you have to say about the recent unfortunate trend of transgender individuals in the US, especially children, being thrown under the bus by democratic politicians in an attempt to appease transphobic voters? Is it now a necessary move for progressive citizens to emphasise their support for people across the queer umbrella as a hardline stance; avoiding complacency from the left in the wake of these positive midterm results? I think it is.

NEDS - I'm kinda late to a senate meeting.

Horoscopes

ARIES

This week your lib arts boyfriend makes you nut so hard that you become media literate

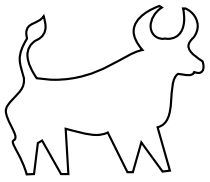
LIBRA

This week the Valkyries end your Dream of winning a chip

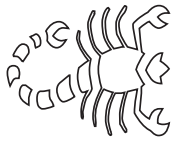
CANCER

This week you realise Altman thinks you're a sheep after he tries stealing your RAM (ewe..)

CAPRICORN

This week you try to follow the PhD student who marks your papers on Instagram

TAURUS

This week your OLED monitor is permanently burned in with the Jude Bellingham CK Ad

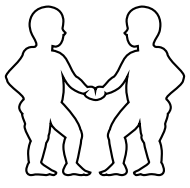
SCORPIO

This week you see a helicopter fly past your window mid-birthday-sex and prematurely ejaculate

LEO

This week you can finally retire your parents using your MyMcDonald's points

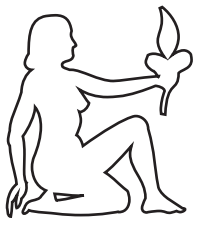
AQUARIUS

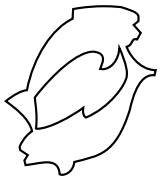
This week you cut your boyfriend's hair perfectly and realise he's the problem after still getting the ick

GEMINI

This week you believe in Blexas

SAGITTARIUS

This week you get Nerfed and do Nothing

VIRGO

This week you swear you actually tried this time

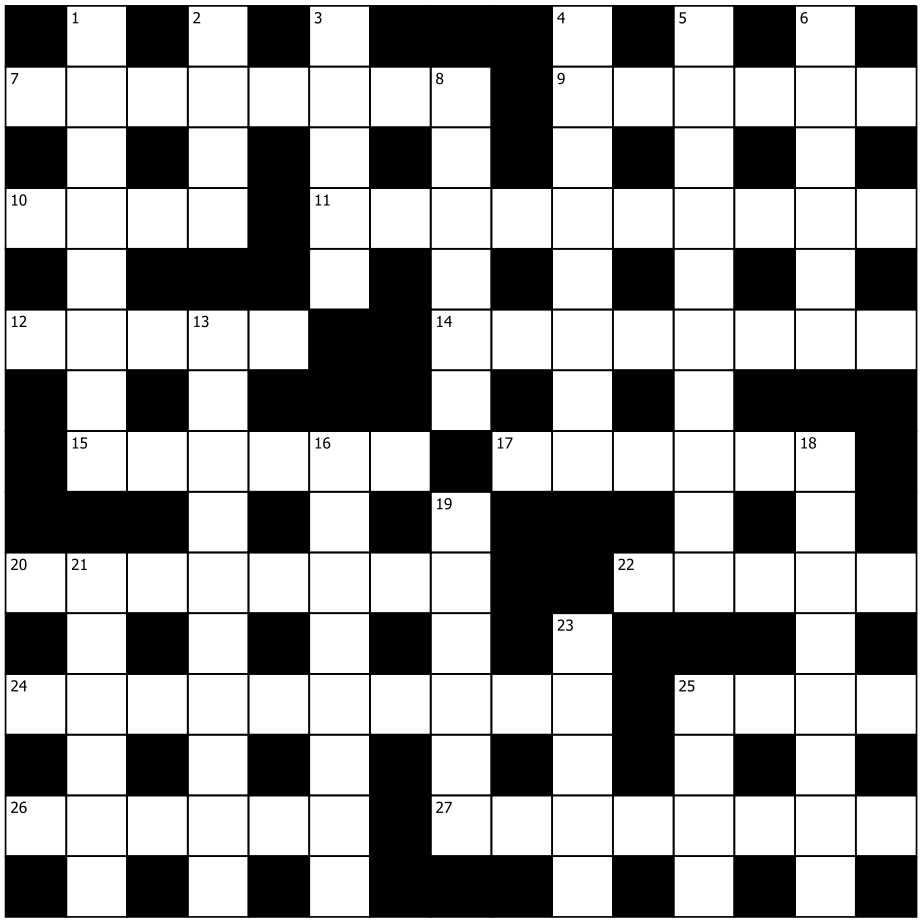
PISCES

This week you larp being literate by acting concerned about AO3 going down

PUZZLES

Puzzles Editor
DAVID LATIMER

QUICK CROSSWORD

Written by Dyfam (10 pts.)



Across

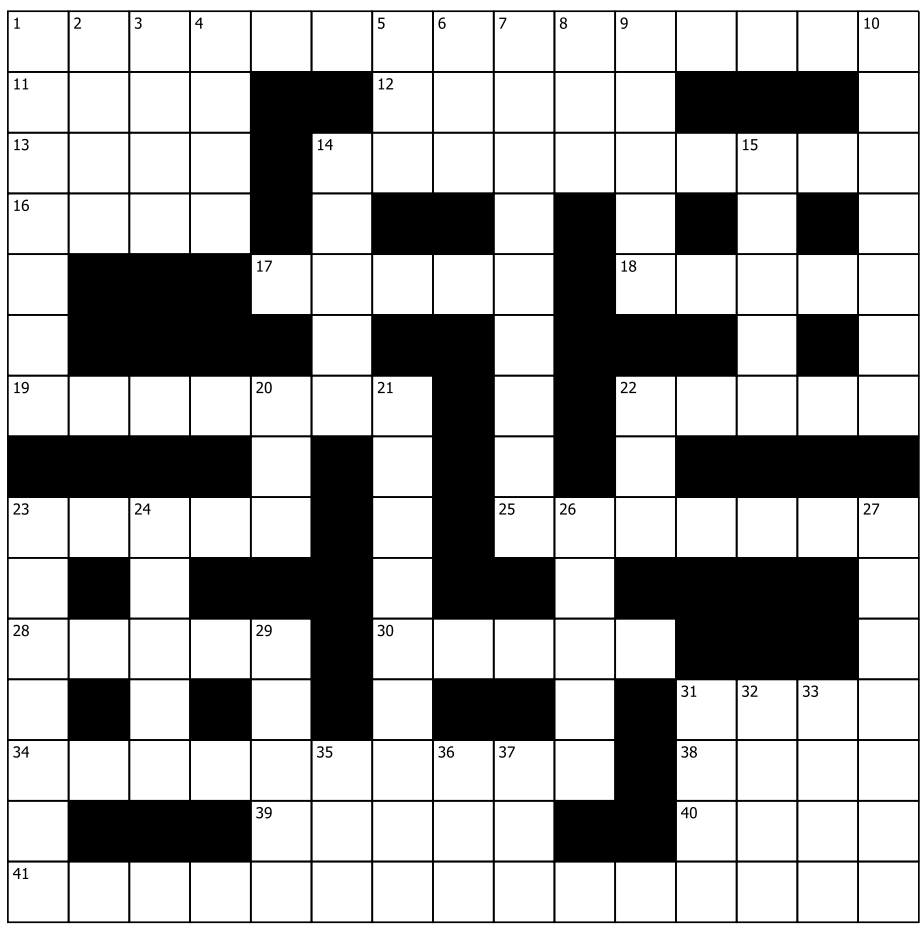
7. Intensely deliberated. [8]
9. Tree-covered seating area. [6]
10. Coronation Street, Eastenders, Hollyoaks e.g. [4]
11. Cynically using. [10]
12. Persian language. [5]
14. Story teller. [8]
15. Sesame dip. [6]
17. Fur from stoat. [6]
20. Object providing lift. [8]
22. Hymn. [5]
24. Conflict starting 1853. [7 3]
25. Shape, mischievious. [4]
26. Sculpted model. [6]
27. Lyricist. [8]

Down

1. Not aware. [8]
2. Cut. [4]
3. Guide. [5]
4. Manual worker. [8]
5. Biographical articles. [10]
6. Non-governmental organisation. [6]
8. Flower appearing with Scooby Doo? [6]
13. Class companion. [10]
16. Newborns. [8]
18. Having diverse tastes. [8]
19. Circus artistes sent in by 27A? [6]
21. Wading birds. [6]
23. Trim. [5]
25. Dull pain. [4]

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

Written by Abraxas (20 pts.)



Across

1. Wailers' confession: disgusting other fish fetish. [1 4 3 7]
11. Inside his audacious Arabian house. [4]
12. As a lion, angry, consuming headless one. [5]
13. Cartridges found in skinless gammon. [4]
14. Ayn Rand heartlessly rolls with Urdu rock band. [5 5]
16. Consider river, primarily Mississippi. [4]
17. Degrade first Anglican foundation. [5]
18. Brown iodine ingested by retreating apes. [5]
19. 37 Down is perplexing non-believer. [7]
22. Recruit strange loner. [5]
23. Number, around five, seen. [5]
25. Undergraduate performance, disguising brief educational rollback. [7]
28. Mimicking a microwave noise. [5]
30. Paste made from uncut drug. [5]
31. She lurks in some apt acronym. [4]
34. Crudely adapting an Asian animal. [5 5]
38. Commercial hid vacuous neurodevelopmental disorder. [4]
39. Seize one "Star Trek" actor. [5]
40. Ballot on Regular Show's imaginary character. [4]
41. Only time will reveal contents of glass caske?. [7 2 2 4]



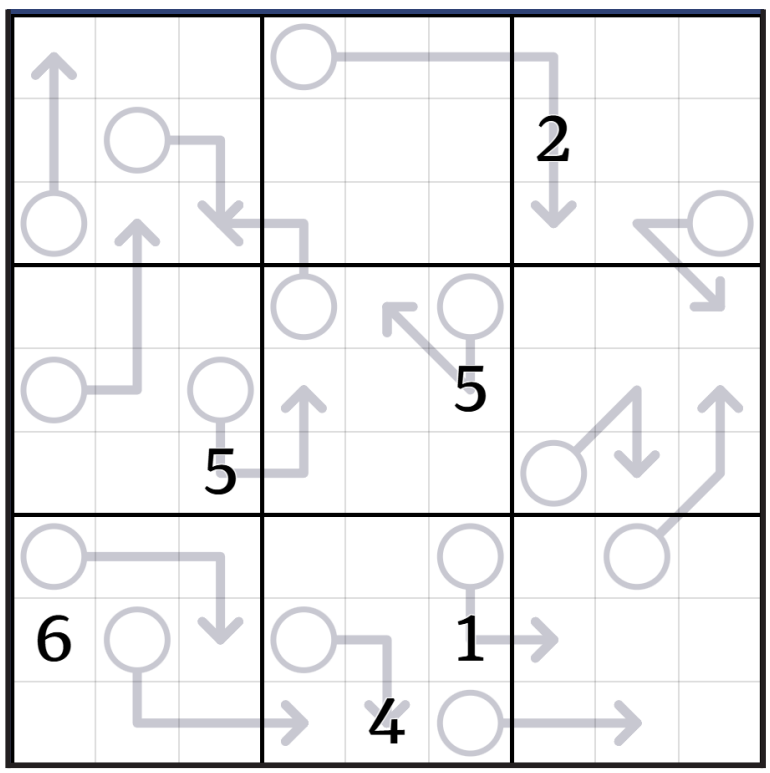
Down

1. Dancing Duncan is a winding road. [7]
2. Locked in chains, a mechanical equivalent. [4]
3. Scottish empiricist, he covers hesitation. [4]
4. "Hamilton" actor disrupts mood. [4]
5. Hum discordantly at texter's request. [3]
6. Shaves beard, revealing body part. [3]
7. Shifty sneak observes gambler's downfall. [5 4]
8. Layer of helium and nitrogen. [3]
9. Norse texts, in various dead scripts, originally. [5]
10. Tail of wild animal, found in celebrities' letterboxes. [3 4]
14. Money owed for diamonds, involving crazy bet. [5]
15. Perplexed Pierre loses energy, becoming more mature. [5]
20. Particle with a charge of one: number going up. [3]
21. Lynch's town brews weak pints. [4 5]
22. Even tetanus lives in Seine water. [3]
23. Loot, then return license plate with bravado. [7]
24. Drive e-Scooter to Californian city - ta da! [5]
26. Letter from the classroom helper. [5]
27. Encroach upon feral Pteranodon, without neolithic or prehistoric basis. [5 2]
29. Mobster achieved it, in retrospect. [5]
31. Dogs with early sign of Alzheimer's placed in pounds. [4]
32. I hid lethargic? [4]
33. He's mad about old trainer. [4]
35. Harshly criticise item of crockery. [3]
36. Zone to hold fish. [3]
37. Manga antagonist I'd return to eventually. [3]

ARROW SUDOKU

Designed by Mara Sergienko

In addition to standard rules, the numbers along the length of an arrow must sum to the number in the circle in its base.



(15 pts.)

ELDROW

Written by David Latimer

Below is somebody's attempt at a Wordle puzzle, with the words they used having been omitted. Use the clues to find the missing words, and then use your Wordle skills to figure out what the secret word below the grid is.

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Across

1. ___ *Power*, 2021 Lorde album.
6. Still not still?
7. Bedsheets, blankets etc.
8. Not a secret.
9. Twiggy places to call home.

Down

1. Place for a perm?
2. Light brown, as complexion.
3. Parallel ones will never meet.
4. Prevent.
5. Tears into.

(6 pts.)

50/50 CROSSWORD

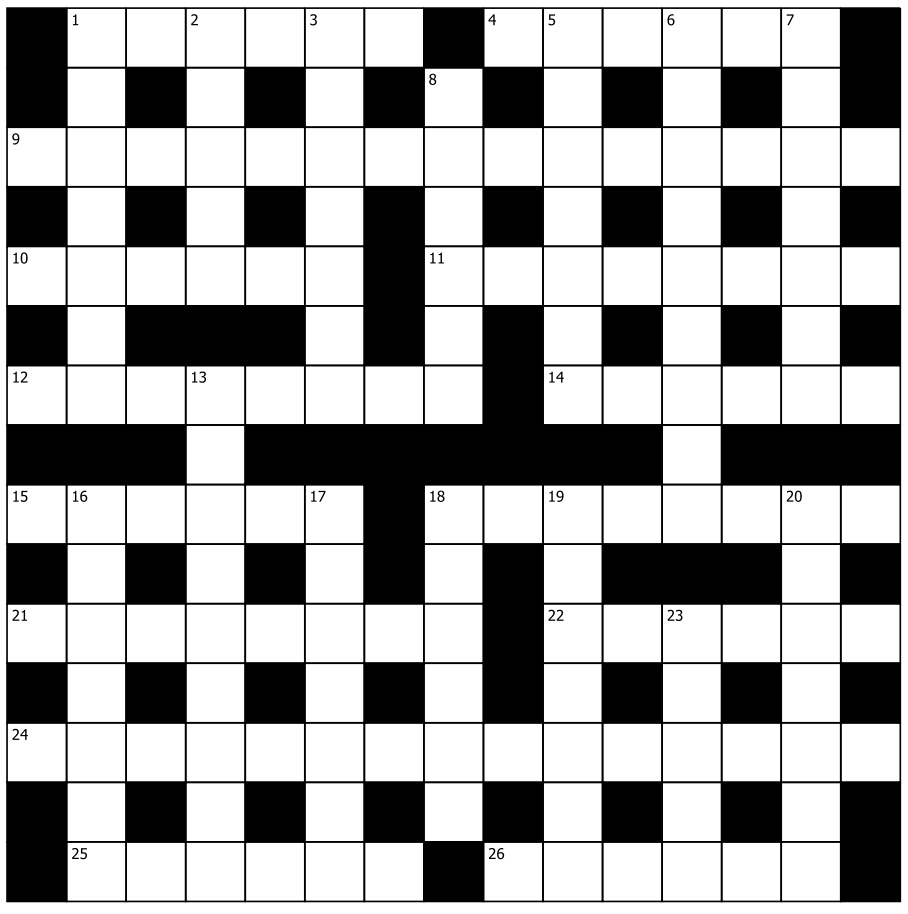
Written by Dyfam

Across (Cryptic)

1. Pair with radio essentially are ready. [6]
4. Male pointer could be entered into allotment competition? [6]
9. Insignificant in the main. [1 4 2 3 5]
10. Thin short digit to be shed. [4 2]
11. Clint and Emma embracing together. [2 6]
12. Line is tangled, oh mister! [8]
14. Fleeces for cold legs. [6]
15. Spheres of quiet nobility. [6]
18. Elevated flow to pinnacle. [4 4]
21. Characters in sagas lighthearted but play mindgames. [8]
22. Notice, at the start, lines I blanked were improvisations. [6]
24. Sinner maybe, could have this all done and dusted. [4 3 3 5]
25. Players at Zurich include substitute... [6]
26. ...created header to follow. [6]

Down (Quick)

1. Pesters. [7]
2. Great oaks grow from little ones of these. [5]
3. Embodiment. [7]
5. Medically clean. [7]
6. Join again. [9]
7. TV show looking for this type of link. [7]
8. Chamber. [6]
13. TV and book genres. [9]
16. Give off. [7]
17. Divide into pieces. [7]
18. Assassin. [3 3]
19. Protected. [7]
20. Omnishambles. [7]
23. Let. [5]



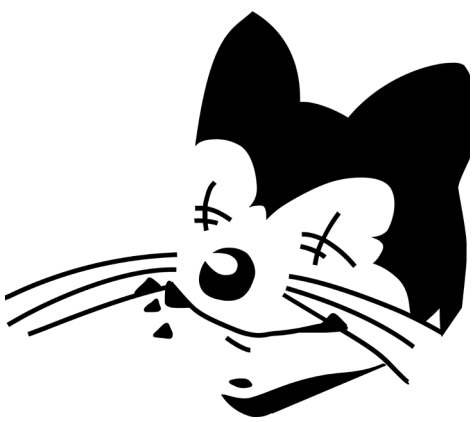
(15 pts.)

NONOGRAM

Designed by Rhea Sheth

"Force"

Use the margin hints to complete the puzzle! Each number refers to the distribution of filled squares in each row and column. "2 4" refers to a row with a two consecutive filled squares followed by four consecutive filled squares, with blank space(s) in between. This one has had some of the blocks filled out for you to give you a headstart!



								5				5					5		5	
				3		5		2	5	2	6	6	2	5	2		5		3	
	5	3	7	7	5	5	2	4	4	4	4	2	5	5	7	7	3	5	
5	2	4	7	2	13	2	10	2	7	7	2	10	2	13	2	7	4	2	5
																				10
																				14
																				14
																				14
																				16
				3	2	3														
			2	3	3	2														
				1	10	1														
		1	1	2	1	1														
		1	2	2	2	1														
				2	12	2														
			1	5	5	1														
			1	6	6	1														
				2	14	2														
		2	5	2	5	2														
1	4	1	2	1	4	1														
4	1	1	2	1	1	4														
		6	1	2	1	6														
						16														
						10														

Easy (5 pts.)

SUDOKU

Designed by Mara Sergienko

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

Easy (5 pts.)

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

Medium (8 pts.)

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

Hard (11 pts.)

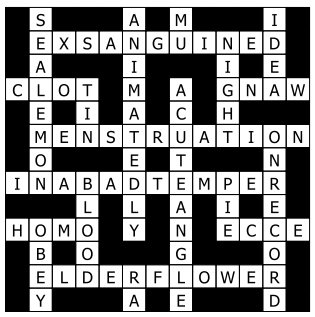
LAST WEEK



Quick #1906



Cryptic #1906



50/50 #1906

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

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

Sudoku #1906

"Do you find me sadistic? You know, I bet I could fry an egg on your head right now, if I wanted to. I'd like to believe that you're aware enough even now to know that there's nothing sadistic in my actions. No Kiddo, at this moment, this is me at my most masochistic."

Anagram: SAMURAI SWORDS
Quote from: ***Kill Bill***

Cryptogram #1906

HEADS WILL ROLL BY THE YEAH YEAH YEAHS
SUPERFREAK BY RICK JAMES
ZOMBIE BY THE CRANBERRIES
DRACULA BY TAME IMPALA
PSYCHO KILLER BY THE TALKING HEADS
MANEATER BY HALL AND OATES

Missing Vowels #1906

LEADERBOARD

Pos.	*Team Name*	*Pts.*	*Gain*
1	Joey H. Sultanas	493	95
2	Nicocross Wourbaki	359	84
3	ariff with 2 fs	140	40
4	The Northern Line	120	84
5	Baboku	99	40
6	Roshni	91	-
7	Grasmin	70	-
8	Skrelp	40	-

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 Kitty Seales



"Scaredy Cat"

Puzzle Editor's Note

Dearest Puzzlers,

At the time of writing this (Monday), I have received **no** solutions for the previous issue, which is unusual! I was confused, but then remembered it was Halloweekend, and that many of you were probably still recovering from a few straight nights of events (I know I am!). So, I won't hold it against you! Also, I've been receiving quite a few late submissions recently. To reiterate, the deadline is **5pm on Thursdays**. This is because that's when the next issue comes out online with the answers!

It is wonderful seeing the leaderboard so lively. Checking my inbox and getting to know you all is one of my favourite parts of the week. Keep them coming! Also, for those of you who weren't here last year, we have a policy on teams who submit their own puzzles for the section. Last year, we had it so that every team who submits a puzzle would receive full points for that puzzle. This was a pretty nice rule, but I'm deciding to make it more generous! To encourage puzzles, if you submit a puzzle for the section, you will receive **double the points** for that puzzle. That might help you close those gaps! Obviously, I will vet the puzzles to make sure they aren't too difficult, but otherwise, go wild!

A big shout out for the artist of this week's adorable comic, Kitty. I hope you all like it! Also, thanks again to Dyfam, Rhea, and Mara. We also see the return of Abraxas this issue! One of my favourite contributors, it was lovely seeing this in my inbox. He's also included a secret message if you can find it...

Thanks again for your continued support of the section. I'm still having a blast being your Puzzles Editor, and hope to continue on for as long as I can. Sincerely yours,

-David



Illustrator: Roshni Hamirwasia