

ISSUE #1908

Felix

KEEP THE CAT FREE | SINCE 1949

Imperial societies organise walkout for International Youth Strike

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

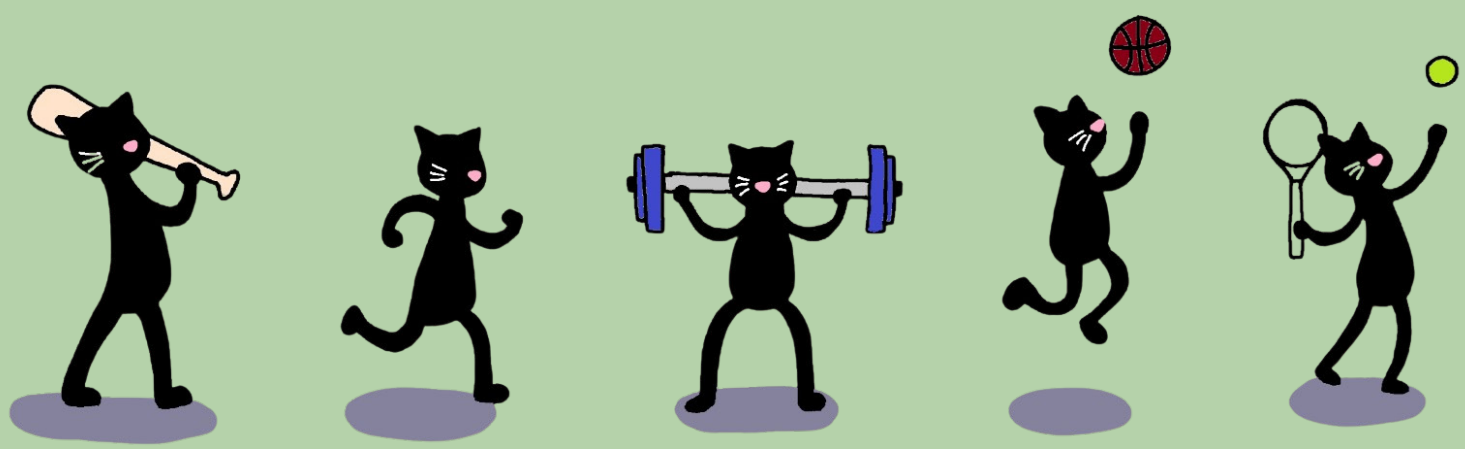
The International Youth Strike Against War is scheduled for 20 November, with mass student walkouts, rallies, and demonstrations planned across Europe and the UK under the slogan "Fight for our future, not their wars".

At Imperial, ICL Action for Palestine and Imperial Socialist Worker Student Society have organised a walk-out on the day, encouraging students to "walk out of classes and fight for our education". Imperial's Feminist Society and Climate Action Society have endorsed this initiative.

The walkout will begin at 11am, where students are asked to gather on Queen's Lawn, and a rally will be held until 1pm, when attendees will travel to the main London Rally in Trafalgar Square and join other London students and young workers across London.

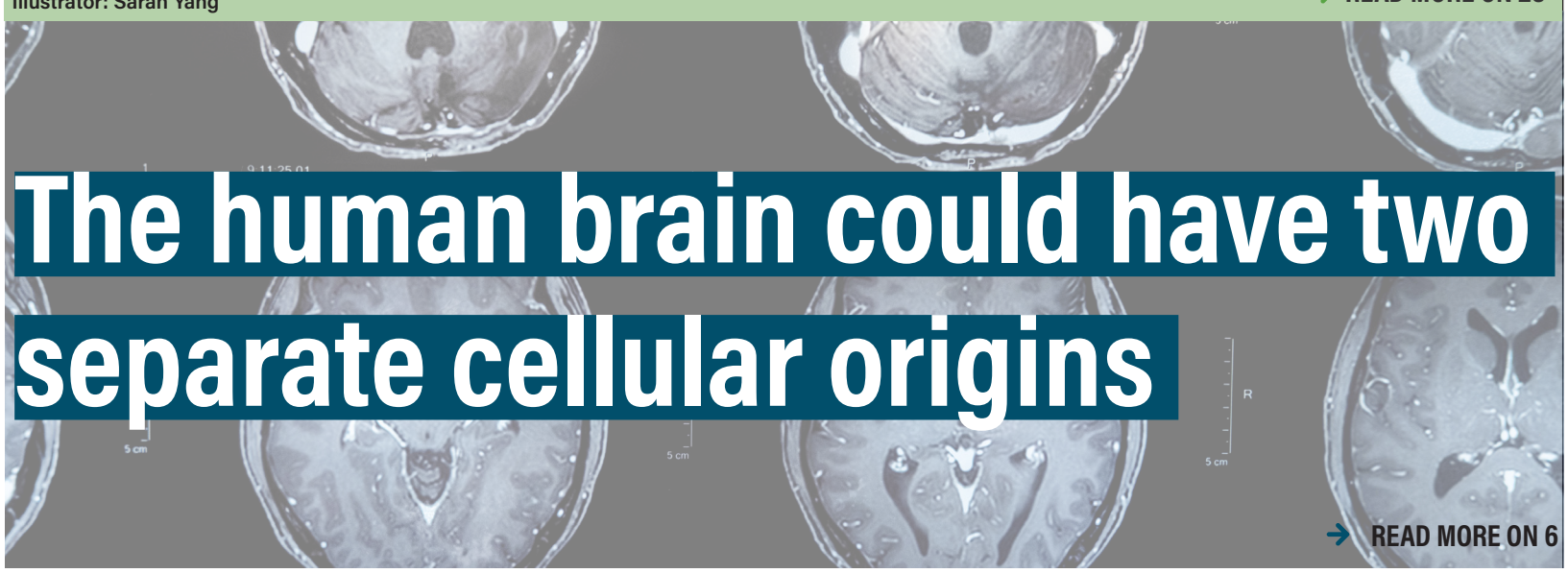
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We will, to the best of our ability, tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

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.

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Signed by:
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EDITORIAL

You'll confess why you did it, and I'll say "Good riddance"

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

Two years ago this week, the incompetence of the Spanish government upon a weather catastrophe led me to writing my first *Felix* article. Little did I know this was the start of my ever expanding political rage toward a country I'm so proud to be from. It was also when I began valuing writing and publishing as a way to channel my frustrations: I gave a voice to close hometown friends putting in 16-hour shifts amidst the muddy chaos while government officials proudly said "if you need resources, ask for them!"

Many corruption scandals later, a rail disaster in January left 46 dead and 292 injured. Oscar Puente, the Spanish Minister of Transport, confirmed €700 million had been invested in that track section in May 2025, leaving it "supposedly in perfect condition". As perfect as the Spanish government, I'd say.

If you're thinking *"that's weird, I swear I read something about a train crash in Spain just a couple weeks ago!"*, you'd be right! It happened again!

A train collision killed 69 people and injured over 200 on 28 October, due to a combination of system failures and downstream miscommunications. It resulted in a high-speed train travelling at almost 120mph into a stopped train on track. Puente resigned from his post less than a week after the disaster.

Rarely do I let this happen, but my heart sank reading the headlines. I tried to decipher the undecipherable: how the hell the modern, democratic country I'm so happy to be from has come to fill such out-of-character global headlines as the Spanish people grow more polarised and enraged before 29 November, our national elections.

From the Greeks to karaoke: we've lost it completely

In 2018, Pedro Sánchez from the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party took office as President after he used a vote of no-confidence to oust right-wing People Party's Mariano Rajoy due to corruption scandals. President Sánchez's brother, wife and former attorney general amongst other distinguished individuals have all since been involved in trials relating a mix&match of embezzlement, misuse of public office, and misappropriation of funds.

TL;DR: the pot called the kettle black.

As has been the case in Spanish politics, accountability both between politicians and to the people is losing value. I see this as one of the clearest symptoms that the Spanish democratic system is under threat.

Classical Athenian democracy – if viewed not as a systemic blueprint but as a culture of public accountability, civic responsibility, and standards for those in political power – leaves us a lot to learn. Way back when, after their term magistrates had to account for their conduct and finances through an examination of accountability known as *euthynai*, meaning "setting right". Democracy directly meant answering to the people.

Debate between those in power was also highly respected. Though in a fancy building with lots of cameras, it is hard for me to respect, believe, or even sit through Spanish congressional sessions and debates now. The indecency with which they speak to each other in Congress sets a standard extremely poor and immature for the public, that feeds off the polarisation it generates and speak from a holier-than-thou, hate-enforced perspective. One of my favourite examples includes Ministry of Equality Irene Montero singing "Happy Birthday, Mr. Genocide" to Donald Trump. Now, I do *not* like orange man, but what the fuck are we doing. On the right-wing, Alberto Nuñez Feijóo recently commented that if a Netflix show were to come out about the President, it would be titled... we shall never know because he stumbled over his words so badly.

The ability to disagree constructively is itself a democratic competency.

We have none left. On either side.

Left and right is so last decade, but good riddance

We have pretty much lost all concept of left and right in Spain as it applies to anything beyond polarising morals. Back, and forth, and back, and forth, who you vote for defines you more than what you stand for. Which is ironic, because who you vote for will rarely deliver what they claim to stand for.

I've made it clear I vouch for change within the Spanish government. But let the record show choosing an alternative government shall not be confused with agreeing with what they promise (and if history tells us anything, will fail to deliver).

As they say, some of us will try to clean out the weeds before planting new seeds. My Greek references and perhaps utopian-guilty arguments may have let slide that I would like to see a functioning centrist party in Spain, but now is absolutely not the time.

The title is a lyric from the Taylor Swift song *The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived*.

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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- News
- Comment
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- Arts & Culture
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- Science & Technology
- Societies & Union
- Books

CORRECTION

The article "This is a safe space: 'Talking Benches' installed across South Kensington campus" published in Felix #1906, describes an initiative whose originator, Emma Morrison, desires to be acknowledged by name, which was not explicitly mentioned in the printed version. We apologise, and the online version has now been updated to reflect this fact.

NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

The walkout will endorse the UK's national demands, which include abolishing university tuition fees, reversing NHS privatisation, and ending the UK's ties with the UAE. They also ask to stop the development of the Jackdaw natural gas field and to cease the use of counter-terrorism legislation to criminalise Palestinian solidarity.

Beyond them, Imperial's student-led walkout has made an Open Letter for Imperial to "stop spying on students", referring to the College's six-figure spending on Horus Security Consultancy Ltd to allegedly monitor campus protest activity, which ICL Action for Palestine have previously scrutinised on social media.

The walkout will also advocate for the end of the Security and Community Safety staff restructuring, and of the College's ties with "all complicit companies involved in genocide", as well as pressuring to divest from fossil fuel companies.

A member of Imperial Climate Action tells *Felix* the society "have demanded the formation of an ethical partnership policy which would cover military, fossil fuel companies, and more, with a wider social justice framing than for example the current Zero Index which only covers fossil fuel partnerships. This is regardless of Imperial's inclusion or not in the DUA.

Imperial College Union have expressed their support of "every students' right to protest, and support broad aims around liberation, climate change, and social justice."

The UK Group Socialist Students says walkouts are planned in more than 100 UK towns and cities. The London protest is at 12pm in Parliament Square; Queen Mary's University will gather at 11am in Library Square and SOAS University of London at 12pm in its library courtyard.

Imperial's hall restructuring remains unclear, Town Hall told

News Writer
ALICE CHOUBRY

A town hall was held on 11 November by ICU to discuss Imperial's proposed restructuring of residentials support, but student hall support staff report significant questions about its implementation remained unanswered.

Accommodation Office representatives explained that, while reducing the number of wardens was confirmed, staffing figures in the approved in October proposal were indicative rather than definitive. Sub-Warden and Hall Senior numbers were unlikely to fall, while the new model's detailed structure remained undecided.

Attendees, including Sub-Wardens and Hall Seniors, raised concerns about lack of consultation and communication around changes, staff responsibilities, out-of-hours support and practical implications of student welfare. In particular, uncertainty reportedly remains over how remote out-of-hours services would respond to incidents requiring immediate physical presence.

Attendees challenged the College's account of the consultation process, including the suggestion that the ICU had been involved in gathering feedback. They also questioned the organisation of the Town Hall, as a number of Hall Seniors and Sub-Wardens reportedly did not receive invitations despite also being directly affected.

Reynolds Bar defends sports night capacity limits after students refused entry

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

Sports Nights, the Wednesday events in Union Bar for IC clubs and in Hammersmith Campus' Reynolds Bar for the Medics teams (ICSM), are an integral part of the student experience of those who choose to join a team.

This term so far, there have been two occasions where students have been turned away as Reynolds Bar hit capacity limits. Students present report it was not clear in the moment if there were no more wristbands left, capacity was hit, or both, generating confusion around students, as well as frustration from Club Captains who aim to provide a positive experience for all members that want to attend.

In response, the Reynolds team explained that wristbands have been used consistently since the end of last year, replacing stamps. These were considered less reliable because they could be transferred between attendees, and their distribution could not be limited.

The team clarified that capacity is monitored using clicker counters operated by security staff rather than the number of wristbands available.

In terms of capacity, the Venue team confirmed it has been 250 for at least two years. Each society's Club Captain organises attendance amongst themselves, with available help from ICSM President. The team confirms that if agreed "in advance", changes to the furniture arrangements can be made to increase capacity to 300. *Felix* was not able to obtain details on who can make a capacity increase request, or how. The team states that they "regularly review capacity, staffing and security arrangements to ensure events are safe, enjoyable and well run".

Reynolds confirmed that capacity was increased for one event this term, but said neither of the two occasions when students were refused entry had involved an advance request for an increase.

The team said capacity restrictions are necessary to protect the safety of students, staff and contractors, ensure comfortable conditions inside the venue and maintain suitable emergency evacuation routes.



Teamwork makes the Reynolds cup pyramid dream work?
A pyramid worker

First Union Council of the year: updates

AI chatbots, research funding, accountability, and more.

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

The Union Council is the highest-level student-led Union body focused on policy-making, accountability, and scrutiny. Known as the main democratic voice of the student body, more than 50 members come together to pass policies, amend Union bye-laws and hold Officer Trustees to account on their actions and progress.

Students are also invited to attend council and ask questions regarding ICU initiatives, or follow up with previous Council matters. Union Council is hosted on Tuesday evenings, one every month, approximately.

The first Council of the year was hosted on 10 November. Seven motions were presented, including introducing a co-option for postgraduate representation roles that allows Union forums to assign empty roles after Autumn Elections, as students may become interested later in the term.

Other motions included amendments to ICSMSU, RCSU, and RMSU standing orders (written rules that regulate CU proceedings).

The latter had been approved unanimously within the RMSU committee, and had not been updated for three years. There was no description of what the orders were three years ago, or what the specific changes being voted on entailed. Members brought up the confusion throughout the Council regarding what exactly was being voted on, as they felt context and clear explanations lacked: "I'm struggling to follow", said one member.

Officer Trustee updates followed. Highlights include Daniel, ICU president, reported on his work to increase Imperial's Rent Guarantor Scheme from £315 to £350 per week, to allow students that cannot have a UK guarantor to be covered for a wider rent range.

Sarah, Deputy President (Welfare), shared she is developing Imperial's response to the draft London plan to increase student accommodation around London. Jacob, Deputy President (Education), has recently helped fill several postgraduate representation roles in the Autumn Elections, one of his main goals for the year. Sky, Deputy President (Activities) confirmed that following feedback, he will now prioritise developing a fully functioning, clear Knowledge Base before pursuing the incorporation of AI to Union platforms.

When a student asked to follow up with staff regarding updates to Union digital systems, particularly SUMS, tensions rose regarding whether staff could (or should) be held accountable at the Council. A Council member argued that it is a student space and students should be able to address staff, who can answer if they wish; a staff member present stated that it is within protocol that the Union Council is a student body, and staff members cannot be held accountable.

The last motion presented mandated the Union to continue working on increasing funding for research students, with remarks drawing attention to lack of funding or liveable salaries for London students, as well as Imperial not having a guarantor scheme for international PhD students.

At time of writing, it has not officially been confirmed, but all motions are likely to have passed.

'Tis the season for eco-friendly gift wrapping

Editor-in-Chief
CRISTINA CARRILLO

Imperial College Environmental society is hosting a sustainable gift-wrapping stall as part of the Sustainable Festive Fair on Thursday, 19 November.

With the holiday season quickly approaching, the stall aims to show people how to wrap presents without having to buy new wrapping paper that will likely accumulate, remain unused, or be thrown away.

Together with showing eco-friendly alternatives like old newspapers or scarves and cloths, they will be giving tutorials on furoshiki style wrapping, traditional Japanese square cloths. Decorating tips, like bow-making or adding dried flowers, will also be shared.

The society will also encourage student and staff to gift the non-perishable when possible, prioritising gifts that won't go to waste like houseplants, gift cards, or experiences.

We Bregret: Burnham bakes up a compromise

Cartoon Illustrator
CHARLOTTE AMS

Editor's Note: witty cartoons that break news and share opinions are very welcome! If you want to illustrate the next one, please email **felix@ic.ac.uk!**



SCIENCE

New study suggests the human brain has two independent cellular origins

Science Writer
MARGOT PARE

Traditional biology has long supported the idea of the brain stemming from a single cell type in the brain. Nevertheless, what if a recent study, led by Stanford Medicine, suggests that the brain may be built from two separate cellular lineages that develop in parallel. What are the implications for our understanding of evolutionary neuroscience?

Stanford Medicine recaps that scientists initially believed that the entire brain (front, middle and back) could be traced back to one common neural progenitor cell type from stem cells when an embryo's basic cell layers are laid down. However, this recent study, combining experiments on mouse embryos and human stem cells, shows that the brain arises from two independent cell lineages that develop simultaneously. These two cell lineages are called the anterior neural ectoderm (aNE) forming the front and core of the brain, and the posterior neural ectoderm (pNE), forming the hindbrain.

All cells contain all the genes you have. During the development of an embryo, some genes are silenced in certain cell types, allowing your cells to have different shapes and functions, but the same genetic code. The brain cell types are associated with the expression of two different genes exclusive to each lineage. Furthermore, by genetically labelling the pNE descendants, the researchers found that they stayed almost entirely in the hindbrain.

In human stem cells grown in a dish, each cell type largely resisted signals pushing it towards the other's fate. Whether this fate determinism would be observed in a real embryo has not yet been tested.

Chicken, zebrafish and acorn worms, which shared a common ancestor with us over half a billion years ago, also showed the same two gene-activity patterns.

As the two cell lineages eventually build one connected organ, the brain has long appeared to be a single unit. Moreover, the researchers estimate this two-origin pattern as being 550 to 600 million years old.

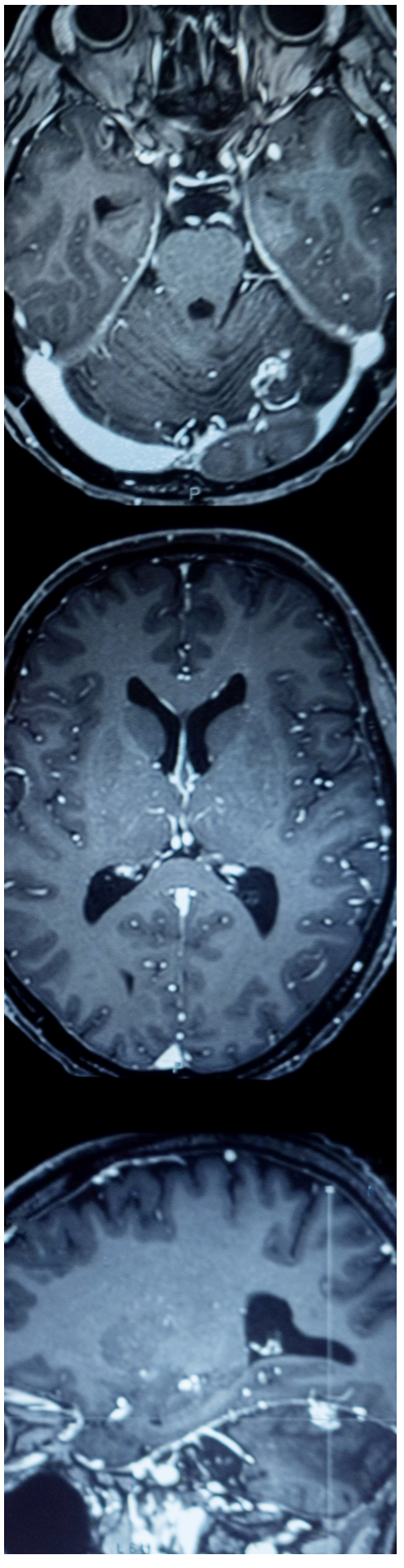
> **The brain may be built from two separate cellular lineages that develop in parallel. What are the implications for our understanding of evolutionary neuroscience?**

Kyle Loh, one of the authors of the paper, points to jellyfish possessing two separate nerve nets on opposite ends of its body. He suggests that in one of our distant ancestors, a nervous system like this was gradually pushed together through evolutionary time, to increase efficiency of communication.

Scientists have long tried with difficulty to culture hindbrain cells in the lab with the goal of better understanding diseases that compromise key components of the brain such as the brainstem, impairing the ability to speak, move, or eat. New Scientist reports that according to Loh, while researchers were trying to tweak the chemical signals to turn neural stem cells into the desired type, they were unsuccessful. What was actually encumbering their progress was the use of forebrain progenitor cells, which are genetically distinct and would not comply. Once this was understood, they were able to grow functional human hindbrain motor neurons that could fire electrical signals, pointing to the possibility of real developments in the understanding of hindbrain-related disease.

Loh says the advance could help research into diseases like ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), a neurodegenerative disorder that results in the gradual and fatal loss of motor neurons.

This discovery does not completely eliminate the possibility of a pan-brain progenitor in the embryo before the two groups diverge; however, what they can propose based on their results is that the brain is a composite organ, formed from two parallel starting populations. It does also suggest an interesting angle of how the human brain potentially came to be, and what its antecedents in ancestors may have looked like.



COMMENT

The youngest Facebook mom of all time

Sydney Sweeney and the plight of right-wing populism.

Comment Writer
TEJAS CHAKRABARTI

The U.S. midterms just wrapped up, warranting a last-minute update to this piece. I began writing while deep in thought about what my eventual Subway Take would be. I'd just watched one (shout out Youtube Shorts) from youth icon and cloud rap savant Yung Lean. While in conversation with the host, Kareem, Mr. Lean goes on to make a profound statement about our generation's social culture. A former hypebeast kid himself, he declares "the party" to be officially over. The rest of the conversation veers into his journey into sobriety, but my takeaway of what the party being over truly means was different. Is a generation raised entirely in a digitally influenced world on the precipice of being endowed with tidal shifting agency for the first time? What exactly does our responsibility look like going into an age of maturity, and what perhaps might be the threats to it?

It's an especially important consideration in evaluation of the current political climate: the global pendulum shift rightward has been a phenomenon demarking the last decade. However, there is a youthful spring taking place; a global cognisance of the need to dismantle authoritarian establishments. To say that collectivist narratives are a modern innovation is naive, but, in my opinion, we should be touted as an active and strongly abrasive political hivemind against totalitarianism, the likes of which the world has not seen in the few decades prior. We have accepted the onus with open arms and enacted action that is shifting the zeitgeist. Regime change has gone from being a distant dream to a plausible outcome: New Delhi, New York, São Paulo, and St. Petersburg all bleed the same fervour. Symmetry of information and access to vocalisation have been key devices in our fight for these goals. These are the liberties that we have access to that our priors didn't, the tools that accelerate the dissemination of our message to scales that activism had not been able to achieve so far.

Of course, enshrined in many a constitution are the usual rights to freedom of speech and protest: token symbols of make-believe democracy. They have been quelled in spades in classic displays of fascism. It is our mobilisation of the digital sphere that bridges this gap, providing access and opportunity for action. Perhaps unsurprising for a generation raised with an iPad, social media, and the ability to talk to complete strangers in *Call of Duty* lobbies.

In India, the Cockroach Janta Party (a name satirising that of the ruling political party, the Bhartiya Janta Party) is exemplary of this tidal charge. Born out of a fight against corruption and paper leaks in one of the largest nationalised undergraduate examination scandals, the student-led movement is systemically isolating areas of cronyism in the current administration. Their pan-Indian demonstrations drew ire from the bureaucratic elite, resulting in suspension of protests, illegal detainments, and police-initiated kidnappings. Orwellian scenes. The movement would have died down, beaten into fear, had rhetoric online not exploded. A singular photograph from the inside of a jail cell made it out onto our Twitter timelines amongst the many that were forcibly deleted, igniting new gusto.

Like a local cafe announcing a new line of overpriced lattes, the CJP has coordinated multiple nationwide protests through Snapchat stories. Access to information is the first step



Students protest against leaks of the NEET exam paper in India. Sumita Roy Dutta for Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

before the mobilisation and armament of the protesting populace. In the States, the charge has been electoral, with prominent democrats like Zohran Mamdani, Ilhan Omar, and Abdul El-Sayed crafting an entire campaign situated digitally. Their policies speak directly to the demands of a younger, liberal segment, and designing their publicity to be focused primarily online allows them to engage with voters more easily. The proliferation of their message was rendered an eventuality the minute Gen Z voters willingly digested it; from Instagram to the dinner table to out in the streets, we actualised what we believed in. Soon, most of America accepted them.

Demonstrably, the political choices, actions, and opinions of this age are impacted by dialogue and content present online. It's been a boon for the most part, as I managed to highlight in my analysis above. However, my Subway Take is that it is the digital forum that the authoritarian right is trying their hardest to manipulate to swing the pendulum back their way. It's up to us to be more aware of the dog-whistling of fascist narratives.

It would also be naive to say that guerrilla propagandist tactics are an innovation of the modern-day conservative party Twitter moderator – Goebbels existed. However, there have been some noteworthy strategies deployed.



Graffiti against Jair Bolsonaro. MtvDanilo for Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 4.0)

The most obvious one that comes to mind is Sydney Sweeney's rise to prominence in public discourse. Like a rare type Pokémon appearing in the middle of a dual carriageway, Sydney Sweeney entered our lives through some form or other of massive production. Catapulted into stardom out of literally nowhere, for a good few years, celebrity hubbub found her being mentioned on the daily. Her performance particularly resonated with a nigh-adult audience for reasons beyond my comprehension. Thence commenced the reshaping of her public persona; out with the "young pop culture icon" and in with the "young red eugenicist." Her American Eagle-clad catchphrase "I have good jeans" made her an instant hit within the Rust Belt and was plastered onto the screens of almost every 20-teen year old globally, despite me clicking on "block ad" a fair few times.

But, it didn't stick. And, in doing so, the global conservative propaganda machine gave away its tell. Formulaically, they attempted to isolate a corner of the internet that was driving increasing viewership from a younger, more malleable audience. They then proceeded to reshape discourse within that niche by inserting elements of conservative identity, substantiated by the halo surrounding key figures to that community. The end goal was to achieve the subconscious sowing of value systems more attuned to their positioning, encouraging greater rightward veering from a potential first-time voter.

Whether the GOP executed the above-described methodology or whether I am a tin-foil hat conspiracist is irrelevant: the advertisement was a brand's attempt to revitalise stereotypically "true American" ideals for an impressionable viewer, ones that would usher in more conservative stances. The pattern is not isolated to American Eagle and Sydney Sweeney, however; globally, there's been a rise in social media creators and pop culture personalities nudging their younger audiences towards more pro-establishment content.

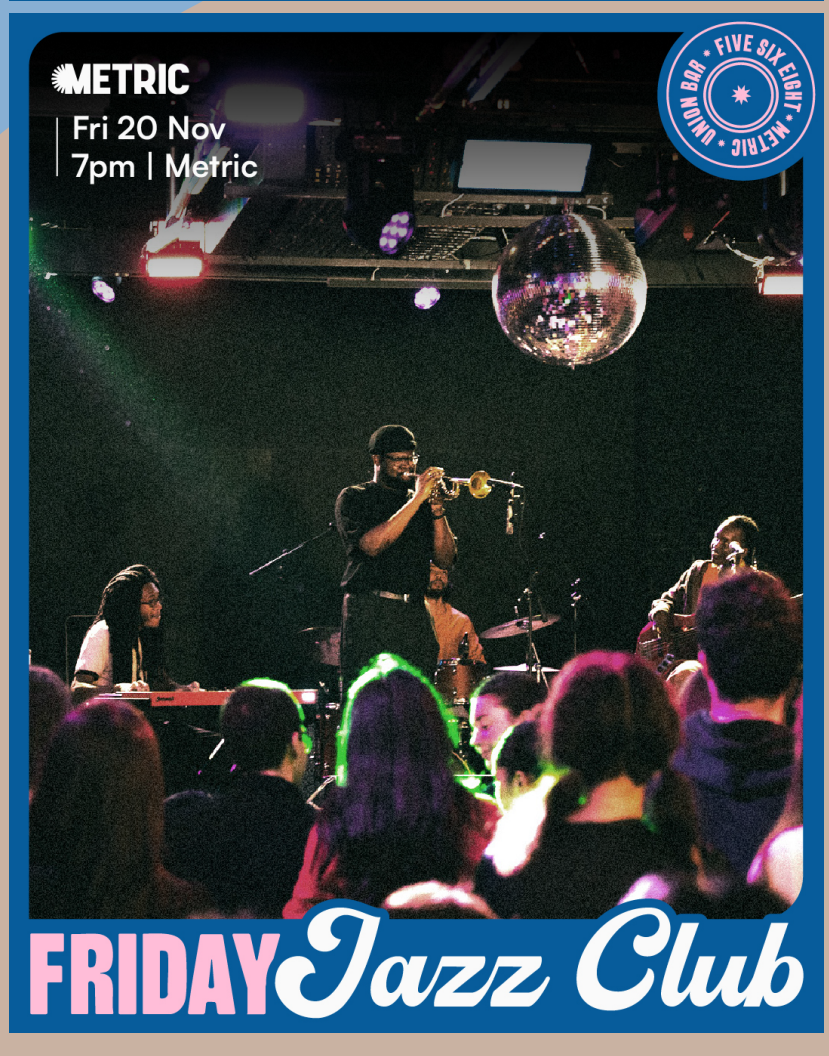
The reason almost all of these projects have failed is endemic to the challenges faced by conservative movements in the modern times. The digital space has given younger voters the agency of critique and the autonomy of choice. Fundamentally, liberal movements in a digital sphere push policy, not posturing. They have never had the need to advocate for morality or agendas because the digital space values individualism within collective goals. As such, as long as the conservative think tank continues to advocate for approaches of adulteration to free media, it will be viewed more similarly to a cult than a bona fide political choice. 100% agree.

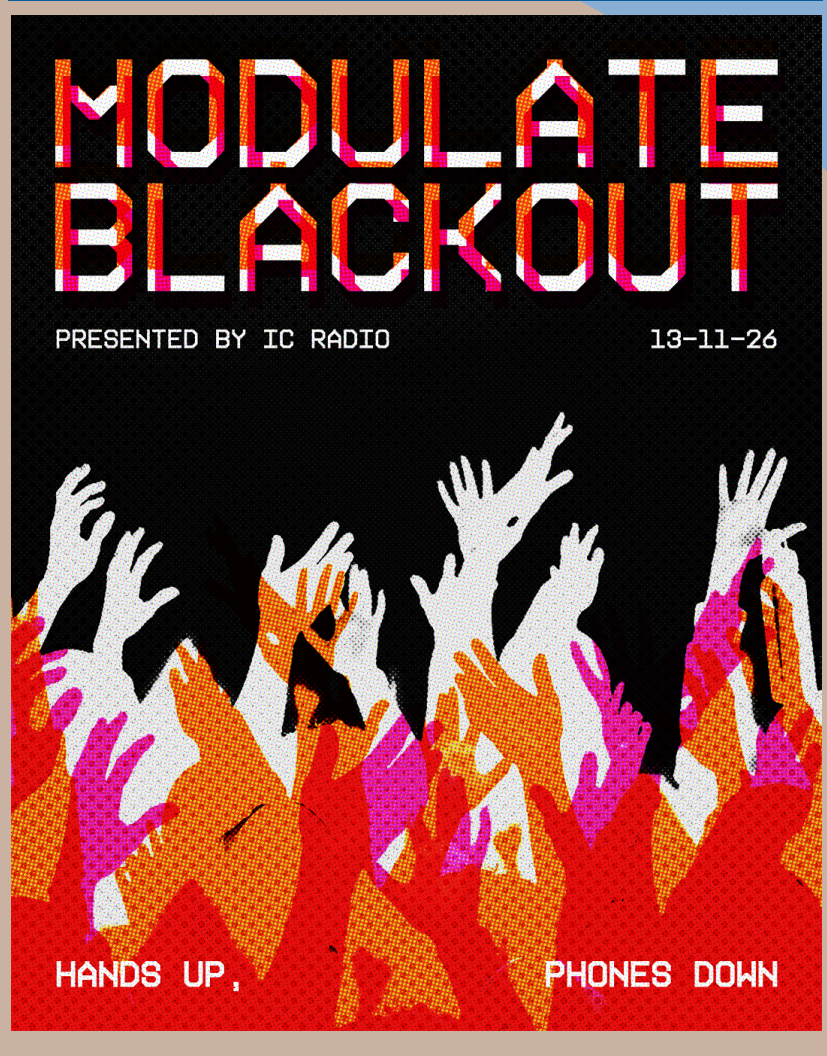


An American Eagle store in Colombia features posters from the Sydney Sweeney advertising campaign. Orchid Kid for Wikimedia Commons (CC0 1.0)









IMPERIAL COLLEGE UNION

TERM 1 EVENTS

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We should all be more pretentious

"If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking." - Haruki Murakami

Film Editor
GRACE MURRAY

In an age obsessed with so-called authenticity, the word "pretentious" is often thrown around pejoratively – particularly towards those who enjoy film and literature. Why has this word become such a put down?

The definition of "pretentious", "trying to appear or sound more important or clever than you are, especially in matters of art and literature", to me, is the same sentiment as fake it till you make it, a philosophy many people live by day-to-day. So why, in a different form, does it incite such hostility?

Why do we resent pretentiousness?

There is something rather contradictory about our relationship with authenticity. We are constantly encouraged to reinvent ourselves, become more ambitious, knowledgeable, interesting versions of who we already are. Yet when someone consciously attempts to cultivate their cultural tastes, this same aspiration is suddenly regarded with suspicion. For some reason, we regard intellectual self-improvement as less authentic than any other form. We seem to have developed a reverence for the idea of the "natural" self, as though our tastes and interests ought to emerge fully formed, untouched by aspiration or outside influence. There is nothing admirable about remaining exactly as we are.

In my opinion, when people say pretentious, a lot of the time they really mean phony. If they took a leaf out of Holden Caulfield's book (little "pretentious"' reference for you) and abused the word phony instead, they might be able to communicate what they mean better. There is a distinction between pretending to appreciate something to impress others and aspiring to appreciate something because you genuinely want to. Even then, I don't think the two are necessarily mutually exclusive. Someone might initially pick up a difficult novel or watch an obscure foreign film because they think it makes them look intelligent, but who's to say they won't discover a genuine appreciation for it along the way? To me, the motivation in this scenario matters less than what it can grow to become.

The word has become an easy way to tear down poseurs and announce you're not one of them. There is something self-congratulatory about accusing someone else of pretentiousness, as though recognising it makes you somehow more authentic. Surely this is a self-report of the user's own insecurity – an inherent level of judgemental projection. By dismissing someone else's aspirations as pretentious, we reassure ourselves that our own tastes are more genuine. In doing so, we're asserting our authority to decide what constitutes legitimate cultural expression. There is a certain irony in that.

The cause of the hostility incited by pretentiousness, in my opinion, is that it allows mobility. Our disapproval, as Dan Fox argues in *Pretentiousness: Why It Matters*, is a tool of "class surveillance" used to ensure people stay where society has placed them. There is an implicit assumption that certain cultural interests belong to certain social classes, and that aspiring to participate in them amounts to getting ideas above one's station. Fox questions why an interest in arthouse cinema should be interpreted as evidence of social climbing rather than simple curiosity. Why should appreciating a particular kind of art require the appropriate upbringing, education or cultural credentials? The whole point of art is that it offers us access to experiences and perspectives beyond our own. Yet we seem determined to treat cultural taste as something inherited rather than acquired, as though an interest is only legitimate if it comes naturally to us. The accusation of pretentiousness becomes a convenient means of policing these boundaries, discouraging people from venturing beyond the identities society has assigned them.

This hostility is especially apparent in cinema. In 2011, *New York Times* writer Dan Kois wrote about abandoning "aspirational viewing": watching difficult, critically acclaimed films in the hope of becoming someone who appreciates them. Rather than persevere, he decided to embrace *only* his existing tastes. There is something depressing about this: why should our tastes be fixed, rather than something we consciously cultivate? What Kois dismisses as an obligation could equally be understood as an ambition to become a more intellectually curious version of oneself.

Besides, how much of what we consider our



Author Haruki Murakami speaking at MIT in 2005.
Image credits: wakarimasita / Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0)

authentic taste is genuinely our own? Our preferences are shaped by the people we surround ourselves with, the things we happen to encounter, and the cultural environments in which we grow up. Someone who develops an appreciation for arthouse cinema because their parents introduced them to it is rarely accused of pretentiousness. Yet someone who deliberately seeks out the same films, perhaps precisely because they were never exposed to them, risks being dismissed as a poseur. Why is the former's appreciation considered more legitimate than the latter's? A consciously cultivated taste is no less genuine than an inherited one.

> **Have they engaged with the film on its own terms, rather than simply using it as an excuse to demonstrate their own intelligence?**

This desire to become someone other than who we presently are is hardly confined to our cultural tastes. In Noah Baumbach's *Frances Ha* (2012), Frances is perpetually attempting to reconcile the person she imagines herself to be with the rather less glamorous reality of her circumstances. Her aspirations are frequently unrealistic, her attempts at self-reinvention usually ridiculous, yet the film never suggests that she should be ashamed of wanting more from herself. There is something endearing about her refusal to abandon an imagined version of her future simply because she hasn't yet managed to inhabit it. We *must* extend the same generosity to those whose intellectual ambitions exceed their present understanding.

Historically, society was a hierarchically arranged consortium of identities, whereas now it's a rush of individuals struggling towards earnest self-improvement. No-one can enjoy these liberties if we deny them to others. Even if someone's cultural interests begin as an affectation, they may well develop into something genuine. There is more value in aspiring to understand something than dismissing it simply because it doesn't come naturally to us.

What does this mean for film criticism?

The value of criticism lies not simply in explaining a film, but in expanding the possibilities of our own engagement with it. A thoughtful review draws our attention to something overlooked, challenges an interpretation taken for granted, or persuades us to reconsider a film we initially dismissed. There is something wonderful about the possibility that another person's understanding of a work might fundamentally alter our own. In this sense, criticism is itself a form of aspirational viewing: an admission that our immediate response to a film need not be our final one. We shouldn't regard that openness to influence as intellectual weakness rather than curiosity.

What is film criticism if not an exercise in intellectual curiosity? An attempt to impose some intellectual order on an inherently subjective experience, to articulate what might otherwise remain an incommunicable feeling? We look beyond just whether we enjoyed something and consider why we did, what the filmmaker was trying to achieve, and whether they succeeded. There is something admirable about attempting to articulate a complicated idea, even if we don't quite have the vocabulary or understanding to do it justice yet. That's how we learn.

Of course, this doesn't mean that every long, intellectually ambitious film review is a good one. There is a difference between having something to say and wanting to be seen saying something clever. To me, good criticism comes down to intellectual engagement, necessity, length, and writing style. Does the writer have something genuinely interesting to contribute? Have they engaged with the film on its own terms, rather than simply using it as an excuse to demonstrate their own intelligence? Is it actually enjoyable to read?

The question of necessity is particularly overlooked. Not every film needs to be written about. As an editor, I sometimes see submissions where the writer clearly decided that they wanted to write a review before even seeing the film. Here, the film itself is almost incidental, an excuse to put pen to paper rather than the inspiration for any thought. There are observations about the cinematography or performance, but no real throughline connecting them. They aren't trying to communicate something new. Some of the greatest intellectual discipline a critic can exercise is recognising when they have nothing particularly interesting to say. Not every encounter with art demands an accompanying declaration of insight: criticism should begin with a thought worth exploring, not the determination to produce a piece of criticism.

> **Intellectual ambition should not be confused with intellectual exhibitionism.**

I admit there is a danger in celebrating intellectual ambition too indiscriminately. Pretentiousness can become a convenient disguise for intellectual laziness, particularly when the appearance of sophistication is mistaken for sophistication itself. It is entirely possible to invoke an obscure filmmaker, deploy an elaborate theoretical framework, and emerge having said nothing. But the problem here is not the ambition to appear intelligent; it is the failure to pursue that ambition with any genuine curiosity. We must distinguish between someone reaching beyond their present



Greta Gerwig in Frances Ha (2012). An exercise in self-invention, aspiration and the business of becoming oneself.
Image Credits: Mongrel Media.

understanding and someone who has no interest in understanding anything at all. The former deserves encouragement; the latter, a more ruthless editor.

A review doesn't need a groundbreaking interpretation to justify its existence. A simple observation, thoughtfully developed, can be far more interesting than an elaborate argument that goes nowhere. A review doesn't become more (or less) insightful simply because it references an obscure philosopher. A film can warrant a thousand words of analysis; sometimes a hundred will suffice. A critic who writes about a film they don't fully understand, but genuinely wants to, is doing something worthwhile. One who deliberately obscures a straightforward observation behind elaborate language is doing something different.

Intellectual ambition should not be confused with intellectual exhibitionism. Complexity is only worthwhile insofar as it serves an argument; otherwise, it becomes little more than an elaborate exercise in self-congratulation. I would much rather read an imperfect, overambitious attempt to understand a film than an inoffensive review with nothing to say beyond whether it was worth the price of admission.

We should be less concerned with whether criticism supposedly sounds pretentious and more concerned with whether it has anything interesting to offer. The desire to sound clever might, with enough curiosity and effort, eventually lead to something genuinely clever. And that's the point.

Why we should all be more pretentious

Of course, there is something quite self-indulgent about writing an entire article defending pretentiousness, sprinkled with literary references, philosophical digressions and a grandiose declaration about the nature of intellectual ambition. But, once again, that's the point. I'd rather risk appearing pretentious in the pursuit of something interesting than confine myself to saying only what I already know how to say.

Fundamentally, pretentiousness is the motor of intellectual process and innovation. It is the oxygen of individuality. It supplies us with the ambition to think deeply. Discontent and displacement give us our energy: we are all pretenders pining to be or live somewhere else, and this restlessness is what keeps the word circulating. As Rousseau declared in *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, "It is a great and beautiful spectacle to see man raising himself from nothingness."



Esteemed Film Critic Roger Ebert (1982).
Image credits: Tribune Productions, Inc. / Wikimedia Commons.

For those who couldn't endure the pretentiousness

TL;DR: ESSENTIALS FOR WRITING A GOOD FILM ARTICLE

1. **Intellectual curiosity and engagement**: a willingness to interrogate the film, including ideas that aren't immediately accessible.
2. **Necessity**: something worth saying, rather than simply demonstrating how much you know.
3. **Length**: enough space to develop an argument, but no more than that argument requires. Complexity doesn't automatically justify verbosity.
4. **Writing style**: an ability to communicate those ideas in an interesting, compelling way.

The ambition to understand and articulate something difficult should be encouraged, even when the execution isn't perfect.

MUSIC

Possibly Jamie: doing it all for you

Music writer Neo interviews Glasgow-based electropop producer-singer-songwriter Possibly Jamie to discuss music, performance and creative vision.

Music Writer
NEO HAQUE

Deep in the recesses of pandemic-era Twitter, a series of rabbit holes led me to the account of one Scottish singer-songwriter-producer Jamie Rees. Before I had even heard of any of his influences (Bjork, Charli XCX, Caroline Polachek), the electropop of Rees' debut single "this body" bled through the wired headphones of my beat up iPhone 6. Today he's known as Possibly Jamie, self-described as a ginger rights advocate, lesbian ally, and amateur DJ, but back then I knew him as the man who influenced me to download Soundcloud for the first time.

In three words, how would you describe your music to someone that has never heard it before?

Genre-non-denominational pop provocation.

You've spoken in the past about trying to feel the concept of your songs before you start making them. How do you go about doing this?

Before I ever record a thing, I usually spend a looooong time figuring out what I want to say and how I want to say it. I think about the lyrics of course, but also the structure, the sounds I want to use, whether I want to eschew classic pop song structure, or if I want to stay true to the format. Before there is a song, there is a relentless thought experiment. Once I've done that, I just have to realise that in an MP3 file! Easy!

As a long time fan, it's a pleasure to see your music improve over time. What do you do between projects to hone your craft?

I step out of the studio for at least a month and I go to as many gigs as I can: both big touring artists and smaller local artists in Glasgow and London. I try and use the time to expand my imaginative limits of music and performance. Also, I think the best inspiration is always found in the club. So I spend a lot of time in the club.

"I think the best inspiration is always found in the club. So I spend a lot of time in the club.



Possibly Jamie.
Dylan Efinger

You recently celebrated the release of your new single "I Did It All For You" with a headline show in Glasgow. How do you think your stage presence has evolved from your first shows till now?

I've always been a one-man band, for both symbolic and pragmatic reasons, which was HORRIFYING at first because I felt so awkward being the only thing people were looking at on stage. But as time has gone on, I've started embracing this and have learned how to carry myself as the sole performer on stage. I've also realised that, more than anything, people just want to have fun at a gig, so I might as well just have fun with them. That single principle has helped me shake off nerves more than anything else.

The absurdity of your lyrics, from the entirety of "I love you you stupid fuck" to your latest "Bukkake in the kitchen / I let myself be used," is something that your audience has come to expect: how do you strike a balance between humour and emotional depth in your writing?

I'm always interested in twisting the cliches of pop music, either by walking them to their logical extreme, like on "I Did It All For You", or by totally undercutting them, like on "Drug Metaphor". I think the tension between the expectations of a pop song and the feeling I'm trying to convey is a source of humour, but I find there to be a lot of depth in that tension. I love pop music and I'm always trying to wring out every emotion I can from the format – humour is a tool I can use to do that.

All your projects tend to have a distinct visual identity. How do you go about finding fitting visuals for each song and then executing that vision in photos and videos?

I make 95% of my music by myself, and so I rely on an amazing team of friends and artists to help me create a visual world for each project. I really have to let my ego take a back seat and focus on what makes the most sense for the music. I came up with the idea for the "I

Did It All For You" mad libs by myself, but it took a lot of back and forth with Dylan Efinger (graphic design legend and close personal friend) to make sure it fit the vibe and worked visually and thematically with the project. I'm excited for you to see more of his work as I share more.

Any advice for smaller musicians or people wanting to start making music?

Algorithms are not your friend! Do not rely on them!

Are there any future plans for music you can share with us?

There's a bigger project coming soon, but I can't give any spoilers. Other than that, I'm still always looking for billionaires to perform for! Any billionaires should get in touch with me ASAP.

POSSIBLY JAMIE IS

(VERB + NOUN)

AND

(VERB + NOUN)

AND HE DID IT ALL FOR

(YOUR NAME)

possibly jamie

I Did It All For You mad libs promotional material.
Dylan Efinger

Write for MUSIC!

Scan the QR code to join the Music WhatsApp group chat or email the Music Editor directly at **mac224@ic.ac.uk**. No writing experience needed!

PISS release thought-provoking debut, *you made me / skin on linen*

Music Writer
RYAN STANLEY

I know, funny band name, but this is not something you can listen to lightly. The Vancouver four-piece have been steadily growing their reputation over the past couple of years, known for the intensity of their live performances. After a handful of singles over the past couple of months, October 30th marked the release of their debut album *you made me / skin on linen*, and it is undoubtedly one of the year's most important records. It's an incredibly harrowing 30 minutes of raging, noisy, feminist punk/hardcore tracks interspersed with collaged spoken word passages and interview samples – all tightly focused on experiences of sexual assault, rape culture, and the unshakeable trauma of its victims. There is no ambiguity. The message is clear: PISS calls for radical action in the face of violence against women. Like I said, by no means easy listening – but vital.

The heart of this LP is frontwoman Taylor Zantingh's lyricism and vocal performance. In the first song "i wanted to be a singer", her uneasy narrating quickly builds into these agonised screaming vocals, and the closing lines speak for themselves: "I learned some people only believe you when your knees are bleeding / I learned some people only listen when you're screaming / But I wanted to be a singer". The sheer emotion poured into the delivery of every word imbues the record with a dreadful urgency, immediately showcasing Zantingh as one of the most impressive, harsh vocalists on the scene. The power of her refrains will haunt you, ricochet in your mind as the darkness resonates – exactly what impactful message-driven music like this is aiming for. "Women don't come" from "time loop at hot slit", "Does your wife know that you sewed your hands on my back?" on "blocking a scene you can't remember": so filled with hatred and disgust for the ubiquity of misogyny, and firmly re-centring the victim's perspective in a world so keen to give men second chances.

What sells the record though is how the band works together. The pummelling riffs, the screeching tone of the noisier breakdowns, the patience in the slower-building tracks. Tyler Paterson's guitar, Gavin Moya on bass, and Garreth Roberts's drumwork, each component completely brilliant and perfectly entangled – the mixing makes sure every one of these elements shines. The interludes, with clips from feminist icons such as Andrea Dworkin and Gisèle Pelicot, are just as important as the tracks too – not a moment is wasted. So do yourself a favour and listen to PISS: be disturbed, sickened, and inspired to develop an atmosphere where "Resistance is Possible".



you made me / skin on linen cover and vinyl art. PISS

ARTS & CULTURE

When fashion is art and when not

RIP Elsa Schiaparelli, forgive us for our sins and cleanse us of the TikTok whimsy trend.



Jean Dunand, *Portrait d'Elsa Schiaparelli*, 1933, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. Jean-Pierre Dalbéra / Flickr / CC BY 2.0

Arts&Culture Writer
EVELYN STRINGER

The V&A's "Fashion Becomes Art" Exhibit is an escapist rabbit hole into the life of a woman who lived, breathed and loved at the intersection of the mid-century art and fashion worlds. Climbing back out of Schiaparelli's wonderland into our current consumerist zeitgeist leaves a bitter taste in one's mouth, to say the least.

Schiaparelli's work is a portfolio defined by powerful guiding themes: *trompe l'oeli*, surrealism and the avant garde are so strongly associated with the brand, it is easy to go in expecting an intense thematic narrative. Therefore, the most surprising aspect of the collection was its unbridled variety. Although each shoe, jacket and button undoubtedly carried the creative soul of Schiaparelli, they were by no means limited by this label. The collection stretched across themes and functions, from her early work in athleisure (of all things), through to an unrestrained archive of collections including 1935's *Stop, look and listen*, 1939's *Commedia dell 'Arte*, and a hat-based love affair with the surrealist movement. Schiaparelli's "raison d'eteres" remained strong throughout; however, you got the sense that the most valuable aspect of each piece was its own inherent style and soul, as opposed to its connection to the wider Schiaparelli-verse.



Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí, *Tears* dress, Circus collection, summer 1938, Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Credit: Francesco Bini CC BY-SA 4.0

Another key tenet of the exhibit was its artful blurring between Schiaparelli: the fashion house and Schiaparelli the woman. A self-proclaimed contrary and independent woman coming into her own in an age of rapidly shifting gender roles mirrored, for example, in a collection of 'hard chic' suits, utilitarian yet brazenly creative, for a new wave of middle to upper class women entering the work force. Her portfolio bloomed into its distinctive dream like character alongside her personal relationship with the surrealist movement. The iconic *Tears* dress from her 1938 "Circus" collection is a key culmination of a decade's long friendship with Surrealist painter and cultural landmark Salvador Dali. The print patterned dress, made to imitate peeling human skin, embraces the bizarre and uncomfortable in true surrealist fashion, crossing the line between from inspired piece to a bona fide artifact of the movement. Schiaparelli's impressive range stretched from an avant garde perfume line to a piece styled in the popular films of the day. Most beloved to me were the small army of buttons from throughout her collection, featuring among them a troupe of acrobats and a hyper-realistic peanut.

This is an almost sacrilegiously short overview of a rich, well-thought-out exhibit about that provides a thorough, and at times moving, education on a tour de force of the fashion world, the relationships and life-lived behind each collection and the little piece of soul she embedded in each design. It was therefore a jarring moment of cognitive dissonance to turn my phone back on to a promo email for the Skims x Nike collab, and an Instagram reel encouraging me to cover a plastic coffee cup in plastic gem stickers in the name of whimsy. And so, I came away from the exhibit not only with the sense of awe for fashion as a powerful medium of artistic expression, and for the way someone can live on so movingly and profoundly in a collection of buttons, but also with a strong sense of disillusionment.

Although not perhaps a word used in the pages of academic fashion criticism, Schiaparelli's work embodies a playful, unexpected spirit that maybe we're all reaching for when we post the word "whimsy" on social media. And yet somewhere along the way, this trend has morphed into another fibre in the planet sized noose of overconsumption. "Whimsy" in our context doesn't follow Schiaparelli's ethos for self-expression as a departure from the norm, but acts as a form of social signalling, a mindless repetition of a trend to signal creativity and joy, rather than to bother to actually experience or seek them out for oneself.

Another iteration of soulless cultural performance is what are most aptly referred to as "poop x fart" collaborations (see Jordan Theresa's work): brand deals between two-multimillion-dollar corporations to sell plastic in a fun new shape! (derogatory). A brief sifting of recent pop culture drags up the skims x Nike sportswear collection, the John Lewis Xmas bauble range among copious others. Meaningful collaboration between creatives at the height of their fields has been replaced by what is synonymous with a money grab.

This trend of soulless fashion for money's sake is antithetical to the spirit of "Fashion becomes art". Although fashion, and art in general, have always been a means to signal class, wealth and cultural loyalty this has previously been balanced with a healthy measure of taste, personhood, quality and value.

From the aspirational to, what could be argued (in a separate article even more pretentious than this one) is, a hallmark of late-stage capitalism, our consumer and cultural trends have shifted. We place a perverted emphasis on the act of the purchase itself – where it's from and its monetary value – with what the piece actually is coming in a distant third place. The soul of fashion and art so valued by Schiaparelli, her peers, and this exhibit, is an afterthought in even our most aspirational purchases.

CATNIP

TFL Officers in panic after discovery that all the lines work

Catnipper-in-chief
ASTON MARTINA

Hi Catnip nation. You may have noticed that the horoscopes look different this week: That's because it's an interactive game! See if you can spot which horoscope corresponds to which post on one of the many Imperial confessions pages. Mail us with your answers: the individual or team with the most correct answers will get a shoutout next week :)

Have you ever taken the tube in London? Me too! And an integral part of the TFL experience is heading out of your house, realising that the line you wanted to take is down for maintenance on this weekend specifically, being horrifically late to whatever event you're showing up for, and losing your fucking mind in the process.

This precise interplay between desire and reality is the closest thing that London residents have to "culture" or "heritage", and is (as per recent polls by the TAOLSPFR government watchdog) the most common topic of conversation in the city. None of this is news to you, I'm sure. But this week, that all turned on its head in the biggest crisis the country has faced since December in 2019. Here to comment on the situation is Imperial alumnus and TFL enthusiast Nip Perkins.

AM - So, Nip, what exactly is the problem this weekend with the Tube? The Picadilly is down, I presume; and hopefully the entirety of Circle and Distrct that spreads within Zone 1 is also undergoing maintenance?

NP - Staggeringly, no. Somehow, we've forgotten to coordinate planned line closures, and this weekend every single line is up and working.

AM - Even Victoria? Surely atleast Eastbound Victoria is closed. Or maybe all trains passing through Charing Cross will be delayed?

NP - Nope. Every single line is working perfectly, and to make things worse, experts project this weekend to be slightly less busy than usual due to the cold weather getting in the way of people's going-out plans.

AM - Oh god.

NP - Oh god, indeed. Millions of Londoners will no longer have the readymade excuse of lines being down to explain why they're late for their anniversary dinner, or their daughter's birth, or their neighbour's sister's bar mitzvah, or-

AM - I'm going to cut you off there. What can we try to do to improve the situation, on our side?

NP - Ideally, do whatever is in your power to shut down lines yourself. There has been talks of radical TFLites sacrificing devout members on the tracks to delay trains; but we hope things don't get that dire.

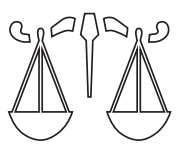
Horoscopes - Confessions

ARIES



This week you ask out a Physics student and they ghost you after viewing your LinkedIn profile

LIBRA



This week you fall asleep in class and loudly have a wet dream about Andy Burnham

CANCER



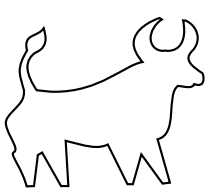
This week you find 12 used condoms in your hall kitchen arranged in a Star of David pattern

CAPRICORN



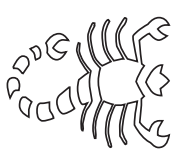
This week you find out you forgot to take attendance in your classes and are getting kicked off the student visa

TAURUS



This week you find out the brown guy you've been flirting with and texting with are two different people with the same name

SCORPIO



This week you get an email from DocSoc with the Imperial president CCed in after having a foursome with your course family

LEO



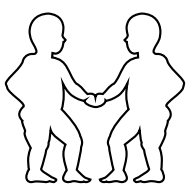
This week you place a camera in your hall bathroom to record a day in the life vlog and accidentally film someone taking a shit

AQUARIUS



This week you get rejected from the student mental health services for acting too normal in your first meeting with the advisor

GEMINI



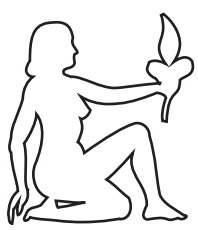
This week you use the ChatGPT free tier to cheat on your CW and it gets all the answers wrong

SAGITTARIUS



This week you give a Biochem guy head and he makes you rate the taste of his cum

VIRGO



This week you get food poisoning from one of the Tuesday vendors

PISCES



This week you set off the fire alarm smoking in the SAFB bathrooms and get suspended for the term

Catnipper-At-Large
CLAUDE TOLKIEN

Dear Diary,

Recently I've been feeling like Martina, and I guess the whole of Catnip, has just kinda forgotten about me. She's not printed any of my articles, or even referenced me much. When she was out for October I thought it was finally going to be my time to shine, but she just got that annoying CompSci student Yohaan to fill in instead. I was the clear option! Atleast I thought I was?! I've been by her side since the very start. But I guess it doesn't matter, huh. Well at the very least recently there's been this cute guy at the office lately who I've been chatting with. Not to jinx it, but I think there might be something starting there, hehe :p

Dear Diary,

The cute guy was a fucking honeypot. I'm sorry, I know I shouldn't cuss, but I can't help it. We talked about our dreams, our worries, our desires, our hopes, our plans for the newspaper, the passwords for all the socials, my 6 digit pin when I logged onto the felix email account, the website access details, our quirks, the things we found cute about each other – all wholesome stuff like that.

But I guess in the end he didn't really care about me at all. All he wanted was the things I could do for HIM, instead of the things WE could do for US. Turns out he was just a LSE spy, posing as a med student in Imperial who was fascinated with the intersection between healthcare and technology. God he was so cute when he laughed... his dimples... the way he would lean in for a kiss right after, and slide my phone off the table and into his pocket to make room for our arms as we embraced...

Ugh I need to snap out of it. What's done is done.

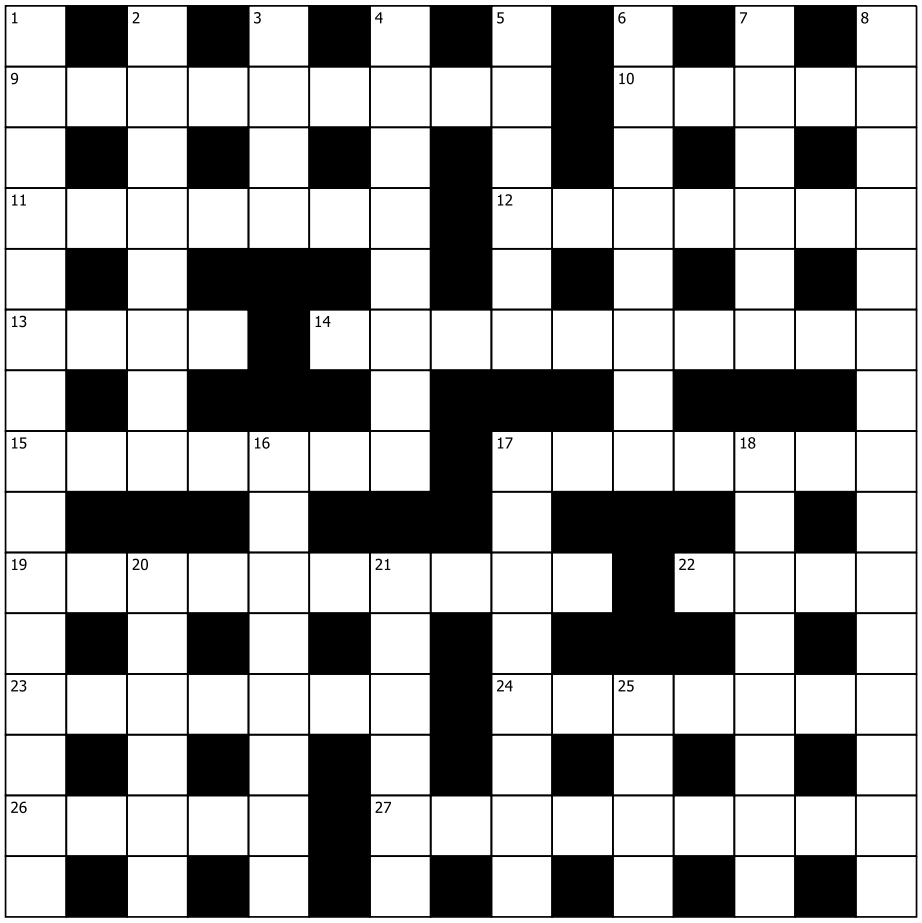
It's not looking good for me at the office. Martina doesn't care about the newspaper leaks, but she's been ruthlessly bullying me for "thinking someone loved me." I hate my fucking life. Sorry for cussing. Fuck.

PUZZLES

Puzzles Editor
DAVID LATIMER

QUICK CROSSWORD

Written by Dyfam (10 pts.)



Across

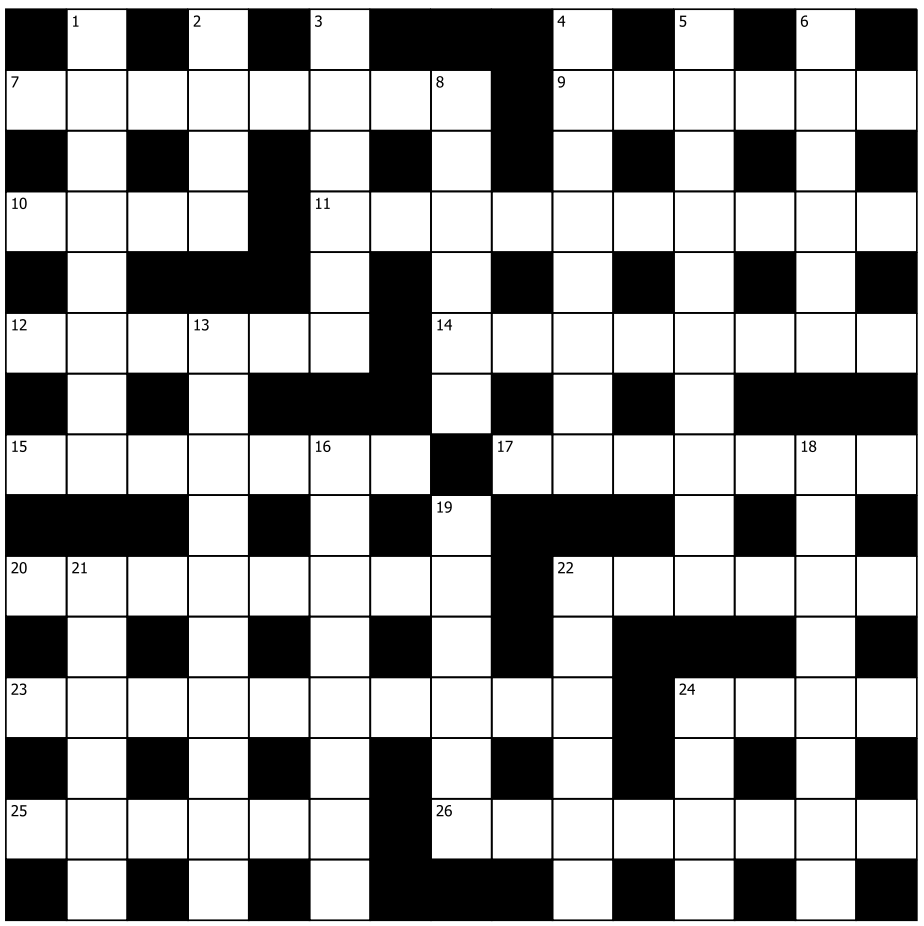
9. Gymnastic. [9]
10. Form of oxygen. [5]
11. Spectre. [7]
12. Involves. [7]
13. Flightless bird. [4]
14. Antique fair. [4 6]
15. Bivalves. [7]
17. Singing voice. [7]
19. Welsh cheese. [10]
22. Greek cheese. [4]
23. Without support. [7]
24. Kenyan capital. [7]
26. Precipitation. [5]
27. Expected cost. [5 4]

Down

1. Protective home membrane. [4 5 6]
2. Waves. [8]
3. Conspire to help. [4]
4. Trigger, spur. [8]
5. Atopic skin condition. [6]
6. Intensive programme. [4 4]
7. Shakespearean character. [6]
8. Exaggerates. [15]
16. Bring forward. [8]
17. Marvellous. [8]
18. Tumours. [8]
20. Glossy substance. [6]
21. Colour. [6]
25. Shakespearean character. [4]

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

Written by Dyfam (20 pts.)



Across

7. Search involving a short manoeuvre leads to tunnels. [8]
9. Several left city concealed by friend. [6]
10. Do something to annoy groom for starters. [4]
11. Want iodine perhaps throughout the whole country? [10]
12. Was Jennifer Saunder's early career building? [6]
14. Warms to blend of soft reds... [8]
15. ...to introduce fish is confusing. [7]
17. Corrupt evaders find situation unfavourable. [7]
20. Lone politician publicised what was not working well. [8]
22. Puts to the test compositions. [6]
23. Care to suit docile characters. [10]
24. Go back! It's crazy! [4]
25. Bones of bird found in short gorse. [6]
26. When cooking, Don roasts in these. [8]

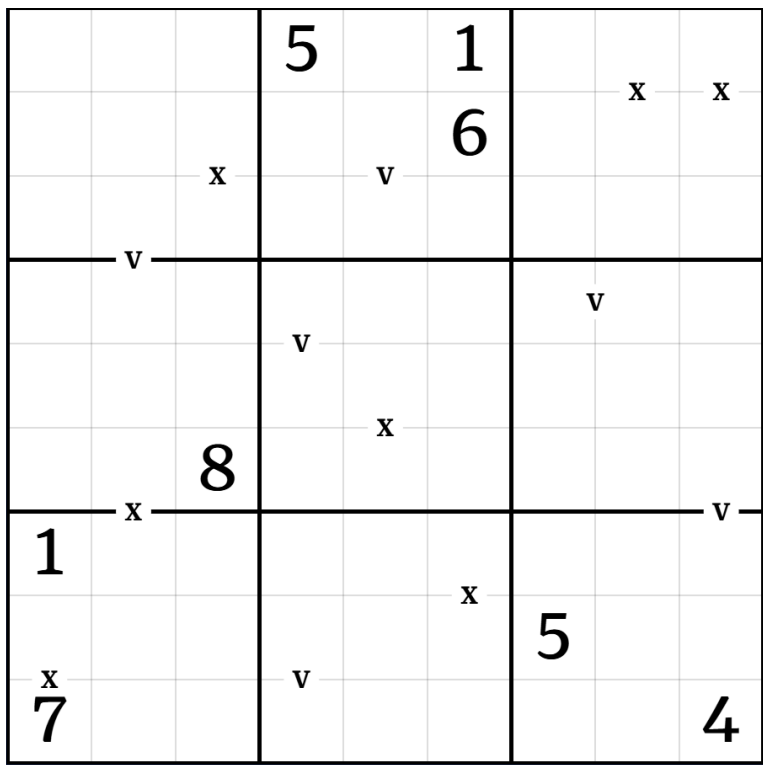
Down

1. Could fashion trader be one to have done this? [8]
2. The sound of a chipolata perhaps...? [4]
3. ...or a fancy hang-out serving a biscuit? [6]
4. Easy to learn when treated like a baby. [5-3]
5. Were the speakers underdogs? [10]
6. Thief, we heard, outlawed by appeal. [6]
8. Happen to live with varied diet. [6]
13. Account involved in dropping of promissory notes - that's not true. [10]
16. Most irritated by a stinker of a mess. [8]
18. See tale of Cold War perhaps? [3 5]
19. Those in the midst of a crossroad justifiably will change course. [6]
21. Catcalled when some owed Denton constituents. [6]
22. Instruction to leave former institution before introductions to National Trust. [6]
24. Facial feature of short brunette. [4]

XV SUDOKU

Designed by Mara Sergienko

In addition to standard rules, cells connected by a "V" or an "X" must sum to five or ten respectively. (like Roman numerals!)

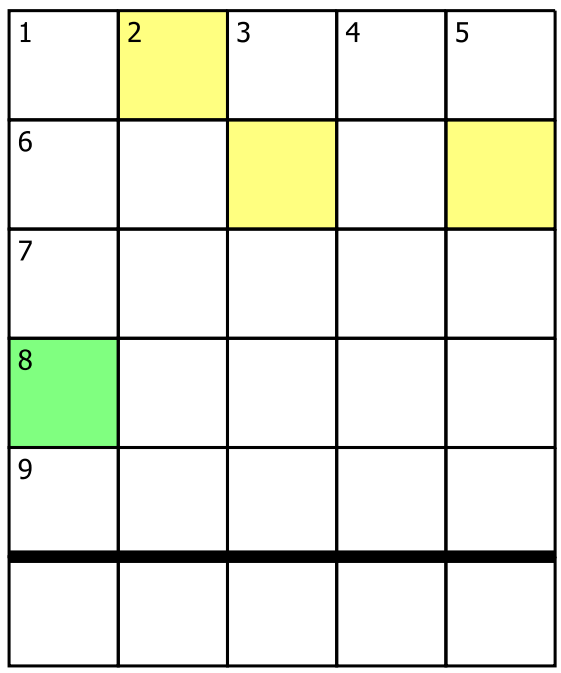


(15 pts.)

ELDROW (FIXED!)

Written by David Latimer

Sorry about last week! The clues were misprinted! Here is an amended version with the same grid but the correct clues! As always, the below is an attempt at a Wordle. Try to work out the word!



Across

1. Illegaly resell.
6. Writer, or yellow oaf.
7. Fruit with green and black varieties
8. ___ *of Dunshire*.
9. Bees have them, idiomatically.

Down

1. A mess of hair.
2. Double dot?
3. Organic species.
4. Banked flood protector.
5. Apply pressure to.

(6 pts.)

ANAGRAMS

Theme: Clear, colourless drinks

IN WEIGHT

WIG PARTNERS

MIND RARITY

CUBA SAM

SPY PARTICLES

LIT CREPES

(6 pts.)

WORDOKU

Designed by Roshni Hamirwasia

The below is a sudoku with letters instead of numbers. Within the grid, there will also be a hidden nine letter word for you to find!

s				u	p		t	
e	t				o			
	o	u		e				p
		e		s		t		a
			u		e			
a		s		t		e		
p				m		a	e	
			t				p	u
	m		e	p				r

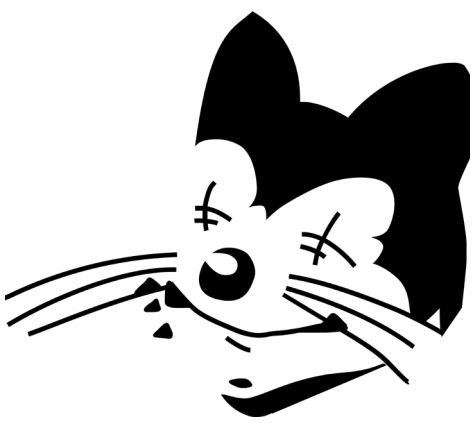
(15 pts.)

NONOGRAM

Designed by Rhea Sheth

"Hot Springs"

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!



						8	7	10	15	18	9	6	4	3	3	3	3	4	5	9	15	3	2	3	8
							3	2	1		6	1	3	1	2	2	1	3	1	2		1	2		
												3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2					
													2	1			1	2							
													1					1							
			4	8	4																				
		3	2	1	3																				
		2	3	1	2																				
		1	2	1	1																				
1	2	1	1	1	1																				
1	3	1	1	1	1																				
		1	2	1	1																				
1	2	3	3	1	1																				
				2	1																				
		2	1	1	1																				
		3	1	1	1																				
		4	1	1	2																				
				4	2																				
				5	2																				
			6	4	2																				
			6	2	3																				
				7	4																				
					16																				
					17																				
					17																				

Medium (10 pts.)

SUDOKU

Designed by Mara Sergienko

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

Easy (5 pts.)

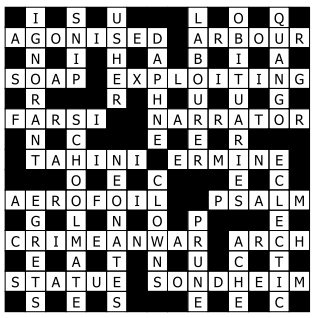
4				1	9			
		5	2	3				
							1	
		3			6		2	
5	2					1	7	
			4			6		
		9	5					
8								6
	1	2				9	5	

Medium (8 pts.)

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

Hard (11 pts.)

LAST WEEK



Quick #1907



Cryptic #1907



50/50 #1907

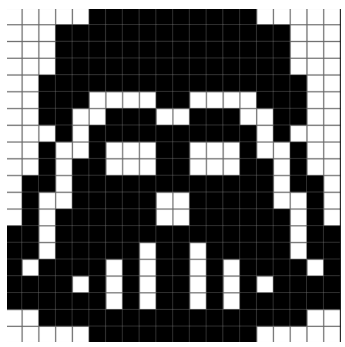
2	3	5	4	6	9	8	1	7
8	7	9	1	3	5	6	4	2
6	1	4	7	8	2	5	9	3
3	8	6	9	7	1	4	2	5
9	5	1	6	2	4	7	3	8
4	2	7	8	5	3	1	6	9
1	4	8	2	9	7	3	5	6
7	9	3	5	1	6	2	8	4
5	6	2	3	4	8	9	7	1

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

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

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

Sudoku #1907



Nonogram #1907

LEADERBOARD

Pos.	*Team Name*	*Pts.*	*Gain*
1	Joey H. Sultanas	588	95
2	Nicocross Wourbaki	452	93
3	The Northern Line	206	86
4	ariff with 2 fs	202	62
5	Roshni	121	30
6	Baboku	119	20
7	Grasmin	70	-
8	tented cervix	46	22

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 Billie Jones



Puzzle Editor's Note

Dearest Puzzlers,

Hello again! Very sorry about the slip up in the Eldrow last week, this issue has the corrected puzzle in it. This week also features a new puzzle called the Wordoku, which I'm curious to see how you all get along with. Any feedback you might have please send it in.

I've been dealing with a terrible, terrible flu for the last week and am only now starting to see the other side of it, so apologies if this week feels like it's more reliant on submissions than normal or if this note feel short or unenthused.

Hope you all enjoy this week, and thanks to everyone who sent in their Halloween costumes! All the best,

-David

SPORT

WNBA: game six controversy

Structural sexism or poor planning?

Sport Editor
DEESHAYA PATWA

When the WNBA scheduled game 6 of the finals for 12:30 PM on a Thursday, the immediate backlash was severe. Fans quickly called out the league questioning how a championship game could be put at such a poor time. Many were adamant that this was another in a long line of men's sports being prioritised over women's. But was this scheduling blunder a byproduct of systemic sexism or was it due to poor planning and venue logistics?

What happened?

The Atlanta dream hosted game three, four and six in the Best of Seven series, scheduled for 22, 24, and 29 October, respectively. These were to be hosted in the home stadium of The Dream, the Gateway Center arena. However, with a capacity of only 3,500, the games were hosted in the home stadium of the Atlanta Hawks, the State Farm Arena, which has a capacity of over 17,000 for basketball games. The move was last minute and they faced numerous scheduling conflicts: none of these games remained at the time they were originally scheduled for and the Hawks' were rescheduling their games to accommodate: Game 3 had to be moved a day earlier, to 21 October due to conflict with a Sombr concert; game four was moved from 12:30 PM to 10:00 AM PT, and the Hawks game was moved from 5:00 to 5.30 pm that same day. But the big controversysurrounds game six. Tip off was at 12.30 ET: when this was announced, there was outrage. Not only is this a poor time slot for a finals game, but it is at 9:30 AM on a Thursday morning for those on the west coas,t meaning that Valkyries fans who live there may be unable to watch the game at all. At the same time, the Hawks maintained their prime time slot for their regular season game against the Cavaliers in the evening.

Is it sexism?

This is clearly a massive blunder. The WNBA is growing rapidly in popularity with game seven of the finals drawing in a record 3.3 million viewers. To give a finals game of this rapidly growing league a midday time slot, where half the fans can't even watch is insulting. Upon first glance, I saw this as another example of women in sports being deprioritised compared to the men. My thoughts echoed that of Tina Charles, former WNBA player, who called out the structural sexism underlying this issue. she referenced another scheduling issue dating back to 2015 whilst she played for NY liberty, and they were forced to play back to back games; "different circumstances, same underlying issue. At what point do we address the structural sexism embedded in women's sports?". To see the parallels ten years on is poor. To have to play a championship game during normal business hours implies that women's sports and the labour of female athletes is secondary to that of men's. This game six controversy seems to be a clear example of the NBA being prioritised over the WNBA, as seems to be the case across a variety of women's sports.



Angel Reese, starting forward for the Atlanta Dream John Mac for Wikimedia Commons

However, once I looked further into what the scheduling issues were, I was less convinced that the issue stemmed out of sexism, and more out of the poor planning of WNBA leadership. Atlanta dream ownership commented on the issue in a letter to Atlanta, stating they warned the WNBA two months prior about potential conflict, suggesting that perhaps WNBA leadership assumed the team wouldn't make it to the finals, and saying that their concerns were ignored. WNBA leadership has not responded, and there has been no commentary from the team ownership around the fact that dates for games are given to them almost a year in advance so they can ensure arena availability ahead of time, and respond if there are scheduling issues.

The Hawks had already rescheduled their games that week to accommodate the Dream and the WNBA. Additionally, there is the argument that it was not feasible for the Hawks to reschedule their game against the Cavaliers; they would either be in violation of the NBA's mandatory 22-hour rest period, or it would cause a knock-on scheduling effect for other games, which is impractical considering these games had been scheduled months in advance. There are also many stakeholders involved, not just the NBA and WNBA, but also broadcasting partners. It would be ignorant to not recognise that the NBA is simply bigger and brings in more money than the WNBA. In light of this information, arguing that the refusal of the NBA to move the Hawks game out of prime time stems from sexism is overly simplistic, and dilutes the significance of genuine instances of gender bias in women's sports. It would be more appropriate the criticise those involved in scheduling the games, for their poor planning and foresight that lead to this less than ideal outcome.

> **"Arguing that the refusal of the NBA to move the Hawks game out of prime time stems from sexism is overly simplistic, and dilutes the significance of genuine instances of gender bias in women's sports**

That said, it is without a doubt a travesty that a WNBA finals game was scheduled at midday and it does carry negative implications for women in sports: it sets a precedent that women's sports has a second class status and it depresses viewership for a league still trying to grow. The lack of structural protections surrounding the games and their scheduling also highlights issues within the WNBA itself that need to be addressed. It would be more productive and more accurate to be commenting on this, rather than slapping the sexism label on the issue and piling it in with the others, where the issue here is something different.

SPORT

Friday the 13th!

Why are athletes so superstitious?

Sport Editor
DEESHAYA PATWA

It would be a bit dramatic to say that Friday 13th is unequivocally cursed. But it can be said that on this day everyone becomes a tad more superstitious whether that be knocking wood, avoiding walking under ladders or postponing major decisions. But for athletes, there is not only one day of extra caution; rituals and superstitions are par for the course. Despite honing their skills through hours of intense training, they still swear by their rigid routines. For the most elite, where the stakes are higher, these small habits become non-negotiable.

Serena Williams will wear the same pair of socks throughout an entire tournament, only changing them when she loses a match. That is just one part of her extensive match day routine. Sachin Tendulkar always put on his left batting pad and shoe first, before walking out to the crease. Michael Jordan wore his lucky UNC shorts under his official Chicago Bulls uniform for every game. The sports themselves have these beliefs imbedded into their culture: Ice hockey players won't shave their beard after the season begins, known as the playoff beard; football players will touch their home stadium sign best seen with Liverpool's "This is Anfield" sign; and in motorsports the "no peanuts in the pits" rule still runs rampant.

So why do athletes, whose performances are engineered through tested, data driven approaches, cling to these rituals that have no scientific basis for success? It can be explained looking at the psychology behind sports. Whilst sport is undoubtedly a measure of physical skill and prowess, which athletes work everyday to improve, there is an element of luck behind it all. Luck is not something that can be controlled. These neurotic pregame rituals, no matter how outlandish they may seem, give then a sense of control over the uncontrollable. These familiar routines can lower anxiety and provide a sense of reassurance; Williams' unwashed socks may not win her the US open, but the calm that comes with them may well help.

Ultimately, Friday 13th and the superstitions that come with it seem silly to most people, but for athletes whose results are determined by razor thin margins, these superstitions are law. They build and protect their body through physical training but this is part of the way they protect their minds. Their rituals may be bizarre and even unhygienic but to quote Agassi speaking on his routine of going commando, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".



Serena Williams, winning her 6th Wimbledone Azilko for Wikimedia Commons

Williams' unwashed socks may not win her the US open, but the calm that comes with them may well help



"This is Anfield" sign Mike Pennington for Wikimedia Commons

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