

Out of the Closet

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The Leeds Student Newspaper

Friday, February 1, 2008

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Trust in Providence?

by
Laura Mackenzie and Chris Stevenson

The Student Advice Centre has warned students not to sign for houses with letting agency Providence Properties after they have failed to pay student deposits into official government protection schemes, choosing instead to deposit money into their own imitation scheme account.

The agency who's slogan is "trust in Providence" has been registered with the deposit scheme Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd., but as of yet it has failed to pay any money into the government registered scheme. A two week deadline is in place to ensure that agencies and landlords pay tenants' money into protected accounts and, for students that signed contracts with the company before January 17, this deadline has already expired.

After serious past problems involving landlords and letting agencies failing to return deposits to students within the legally required 'reasonable' time limit, all landlords are now expected to use government accounts to protect deposits. There are three official schemes in use, Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd., Tenancy Deposit Scheme and The Deposit Protection Service. However, Providence Properties attempted to set up their own 'protection' account called Leeds Deposit Solutions Ltd., which is not an official government scheme despite the similarity the name bears with Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd.

The company, which is located on Victoria Road, Hyde Park, have acknowledged the problem and has given the Student Advice Centre verbal assurances that they are protecting deposits but, as of yet, have failed to fix the problem. Until the issue is solved, Providence have told students that they can sign contracts for houses without paying deposits, but the Student Advice

Centre are warning students that this is not a genuine solution and that students should not sign without paying a deposit.

Andrea Kerslake, from the SAC said: "The purpose of deposits is to protect both landlords and students. Without deposits there is little incentive for tenants to look after their properties or to pay their rent, which can cause serious problems for students who are paying their rent but whose housemates are not. Without deposits, it is likely that students could end up facing their landlords in small claims courts. We have to ask why an agency such as Providence would not wish to protect themselves."

This is not the first time that Providence have been accused of improper handling of student deposits. Last year, the company placed deposits into the accounts of Providence Lets Ltd., which were registered with a different address to that of Providence Properties. When it came to returning students' deposits at the end of the year, Providence said that the accounts were registered with a separate company and so students would have to contact them if they wanted their deposits back. Since it was claimed that Providence Lets Ltd. had ceased trading, hundreds of students found themselves without their deposits returned.

Six months later, Providence still owe thousands of pounds in deposits and have long exceeded the 'reasonable' time limit to returning deposits which the Student Advice Centre suggests to be 28 days. Students have still been given no indication of when their deposits will be returned, despite the fact the Providence website says this is a necessary part of any landlord's contract. The website advises: "If you are asked for a deposit you need to know if it is refundable, and if so, when." The company, whose slogan assures its customers to 'Trust in Providence', have promised to talk through outstanding deposits with the Advice Centre, but have so far failed to do so.

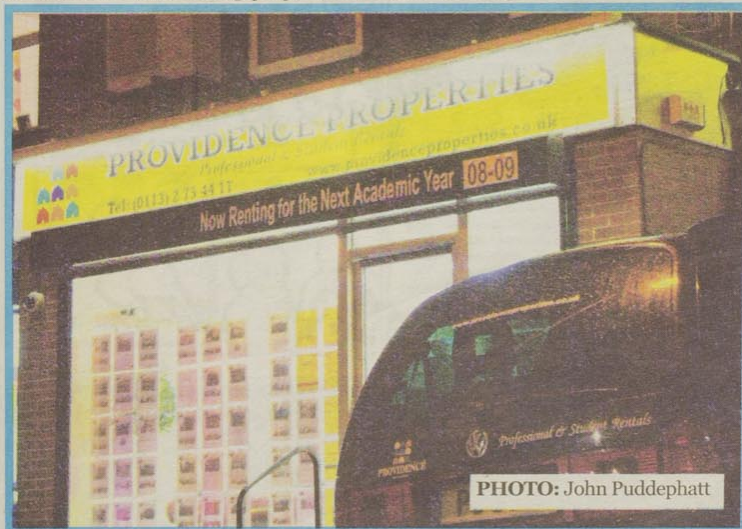
Despite claiming to be the "one of the

most reputable letting agents for student property in Leeds", the company is hugely unpopular with Leeds students and there are several Facebook groups that have been set up by past and present tenants criticising the agency and canvassing support in opposition. One Facebook group, called 'We got screwed over by Providence', is particularly critical, with one member suggesting direct action be taken against the company: "I know this seems a little drastic but I think it's time we screw Providence properties over. I was thinking of ways we could get out to the student population not to stay with these people. If I had known, there was no way I would have signed a contract. I was thinking maybe we should have a protest outside their office one day?" The group's Wall suggests students have been experiencing problems with the company for far longer than the past six months. One post read: "Great to hear that Providence are still screwing people over,

over a year since they did it to us." Comments also reveal further complaints with the state of the properties, as well as with the company's failure to return deposits.

Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd., with which Providence Properties is registered, are presently considering suspending the agency from using their scheme, and the Student Advice Centre are awaiting news on this decision.

Providence's failure to pay deposits into accounts registered with an official government scheme was discovered after a student took their contract to the SAC to be checked before signing. Andrea urges others to do the same: "All students can come to the Centre and have their contract and deposits checked for free. We can also provide them with information about house-hunting and a list of landlords who have received bad feedback." The Student Advice Centre can be found upstairs in the Union building.





Sketch

By James Haddon

You may not know it, but the chances are that as a student you're eligible to get free prescriptions from the NHS. Well, you need to know, because the NHS are making no effort to advertise the fact, presumably expecting you to be issued with the necessary forms in the womb, and to be born ready to date and sign.

Of course, on the off-chance that you weren't, it's probably time that someone did. The Exec's latest campaign tries to address this, and explains the giant tower of forms stacked in the Union lobby. Originally available only if you knew about it, and decided to search for information, the forms

entitle students whose incomes fall under £8,000 to free prescriptions. The Union are providing the 20-page booklet the NHS expect you to fill in order to actually receive your free prescriptions, although the effort required to complete one would probably put off anyone without a terminal illness.

The line of reasoning goes that the NHS simply does not expect students to know about the scheme, let alone go to the effort of completing the paperwork, and would be unable to cope with the strain that a full university of students applying would provide. Neil "Big Mac" Mackenzie, one of the Exec Officers behind the drive, recognises the problem: "The levels they

[expect] are based on students not filling in the forms." Which just raises the question of why the NHS offer a service they know people don't know about, and do not promote.

Far be it from Sketch to offer advice to further the well-being of anyone, but I enthusiastically recommend you fill in the forms. Aside from the obvious benefits, any of you nursing a grudge against the medical profession's bureaucracy have the perfect opportunity to make a point. The forms are available from the Union lobby, so fill them in, send them in *en masse*, and drown the fuckers in their own paperwork.

Illustration: Mark Mackay

Mayor of Leeds announces 'Heyes Day'

The Mayor of Leeds has announced that the first ever annual "Heyes Day" will take place tomorrow in tribute to Rebecca Heyes and her services to the city of Leeds.

Rebecca Heyes, 23, has been working for Leeds University Union for just over a year and in that time has made a significant contribution to the University and - as *Leeds Student* has exclusively discovered, she has also in turn, also saved the city.

Until now the reasons behind the proposed annual city-wide Heyes Day were unknown, but a leaked document exclusively uncovered by top *Leeds Student* hacks has revealed the truth behind the Mayor's surprise announcement.

It seems that before Miss Heyes moved to Leeds the future of its flagship University was uncertain. The leaked document reveals communications between the Mayor and a top authority of the University.

It states: "Dear Mayor, I fear for the future of this University. It is falling apart. The media and performance societies are running wild and have formed an armed guerrilla army which are holding various members of the exec hostage on a regular basis. It is said that they have now taken control of the Union building they are setting their sights on the Parkinson Tower and eventually the whole campus."

A subsequent tapped and recorded phone call from the Mayor's office to Downing Street reveals the Mayor's distress on hearing the news. The recording reveals his tearful and shaky voice saying: "This is a University city and we are about to lose the best one we've got. There is no hope for this city if the Parky tower falls. We need someone to take control of this situation, I will search far and wide to find our saviour if I have to, damn it I will even go as far as Sheffield!" It is thought that following this phone call the Prime Minister immediately drafted in his top secret defence weapon: the Bexanator.

Unfortunately this top member of MI5 was only loaned to Leeds for a year by the PM. She has succeeded in her mission to

clean up the unruly streets of LUU and, although she would love to stay, like a bad ass Mary Poppins she must go where she is needed the most. It is said that she is heading to London for her next top-secret saviour mission.

There has been much protest by members of the Union over her move away from Leeds:

Local loony Barry Carlyon has said: "I am the LUU media representative, as such I am in a higher position of power than her and I would like to tell her one thing: Don't eat cake." Odd.

Andrew 'gorgeous' Greer has said: "Rebecca Heyes has saved my life, without her I would never have had my eyes opened to the artistic world of LUU. She is my inspiration and without her I would have quit my job in no time. He added: "I love her, if only I was straight I would get involved big time."

Richard Andrews of LS1FM has said: "I was so happy when Bex came into my life, she made the radio what it is today. He continued: "I have attempted to dump my girlfriend for her several times, but Bex won't have me - she claims to love some idiot called Bryan. I just wish I could get involved big time."

Charlotte Griffiths of the Leeds Student has said of the heroic co-ordinator: "I wasn't going to accept my post until Bex taught me about 'Union Girl Power' - like a Sheffield Spice Girl she has given me the strength I need to succeed. In fact I heard that it is because of her that the Spices decided to reform." She added: "More importantly Bex is a hardcore raver and so much fun to go out with. Often when she is all sweaty and drunk in Stylus I just wish I could get involved big time."

The Mayor will officially open the first ever annual 'Heyes Day' by downing vodka shots with her in bar Revolution on Millennium Square this evening.



Bex spots her old mates from MI5... (above)

We always sing her praises, but not as well as she can... (left)

Bex jumps for joy at the prospect of her new job... (right)

Leaver of the week

NEW! FROM THOSE WACKY GUYS WHO BROUGHT YOU HEALTHY WEEK *

CHAIR SITTING TECHNIQUES



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Sir Jimmy shouts for safety

by Natahsa Evans

---Sir Jimmy Savile is the new voice of a campaign that shouts safety tips from lamp posts across Leeds.

Sir Jimmy, now 81 has recorded a number of 'crime reduction messages' that will 'speak' to passers-by from signs posted around the city. He has said he is proud to be involved in the scheme, but has apologised to those who have been frightened by the surprise shouts.

He said: "When anybody asks me to do anything for Yorkshire it is always a go go situation. However I have to apologise to all people of a nervous disposition and children because it could cause an innocent pedestrian, suddenly having me shout in their ear, to be startled, or even make their hair turn white and long."

The talking signs will be placed in high visibility locations, and will be triggered when people walk past. One of the messages says: "Oi! Open doors, open windows. Burglars nick all the gear. Don't join that club - lock everything up."

The campaign has been organised by 'Safer Leeds', a city crime reduction partnership that will specifically target the heavily student populated areas of Hyde Park, Headingley and Woodhouse.

The messages aim to remind students to lock their doors and windows when they go out and also to look after their personal belongings.

A spokesperson from Safer Leeds has said: "One burglary in four is caused by an open door or window, where the criminal literally sneaks in, so it is very important that people secure their property."

Chief Inspector, Mark Busley of North Yorkshire police said of the project: "This initiative is aimed at students, and links with our wider crime reduction and awareness campaign 'The Knowledge'."

He added: "Muggings, burglary and vehicle-related theft are the most common crimes that students are at risk of and so any message we can give that reduces the likelihood of them becoming a victim has to be a positive step."

Student opinion of the initiative is mixed. Sarah Nazer a third year English Language and Literature student said: "It sounds terrifying in theory! But it will probably be a good idea once you get used to them."

James Williams, a third year Medical student said: "The scheme seems like it will be open to vandalism and may be a waste of money. They would be better off investing the money into more policing. People don't leave things unlocked intentionally anyway, it's more often than not a mistake."

Councillor Les Carter, Chair of the Safer Leeds Board, said: "I would like to thank Sir Jimmy for taking the time to support our anti-burglary campaign. High risk burglary areas tend to be where large numbers of students live and we hope that people will listen to Jimmy's advice and ensure they lock up their doors and windows."



PHOTO: Safer Leeds

Jack Straw scratched from President's Board



Just weeks after students voted to have Jack Straw's name put back onto the Board of LUU Presidents, political vandals have taken matters into their own hands and removed the name by force.

The current Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice was President of the LUU

PHOTO: Maria Garbutt-Lucero

from 1967 until 1968. Controversy has surrounded Straw's place on the Board, which resides in the Old Bar ever since his name was removed as the result of a Union Council Motion due to disagreement with his political beliefs.

Last Friday it was found that the name had once again been removed by an unknown culprit.

Leeds student residence towers above the rest

by Natasha Evans

The world's tallest University residence is set to open in Leeds city centre and will provide a home for over 560 students on Claypit Lane, in Leeds City Centre.

The Plaza phase two development stands 37 stories high, providing panoramic views of the city, especially from its 19th floor common room. It will provide a range of accommodation from five-bed flats to single studio rooms.

Unite's regional projects director in the north, Simon Dixon said: "We are very excited to be developing the world's tallest student accommodation building."

He was also keen to point out the benefits to the local housing market and said: "When complete the Plaza phase two will free up around 300 private homes, easing pressure on the local housing sector."

This project has generated a mixed response across campus. Zoe Brown, a third year English Literature student said: "I think it is slightly unnecessary, there isn't really much of a space issue in Leeds."

However, Danial Adilypour, a third year politics student disagreed: "There is a need for more accommodation, especially in areas outside of Headingley and Hyde Park."

Second year Politics and Parliamentary studies student, Leonie Mathers, believes the problem is not lack of space but lack of affordable housing: "The important issue is cost, what we need is affordable housing."

Whereas Tom Skinner, a first year English student, considered the general impact upon the area and said: "It will put Leeds on the map a bit and it shouldn't look too out of place. With a good design it has the chance to be quite impressive."



PHOTO: UNITE



Motion aims for a campus ban of lads' mags and fags

by David Couldrey

In two weeks the ballot boxes will re-open for the spring referendum and students will be asked to vote on a number of wide-ranging and controversial motions.

Of the 18 motions put forward by Union members, several are likely to meet with huge opposition from students, in particular the proposal to ban the sale of cigarettes in the Union. The past week has seen a trial run as the Executive temporarily banned the sale of cigarettes as part of Healthy Week. Other unpopular motions include the suggested transferral of 'Lad Mags' such as Zoo and Nuts from Union shelves to behind the counters, and a proposal that the tranquil ambience of the Old Bar be restored by reducing the noise levels of the music and plasma screens.

One motion that is likely to receive large student support and a high turnout is the motion

calling for a review of the decision to close Boddington. The University took the decision to close the popular halls of residence in November but this has since met with much opposition from students.

Other LUU based motions include proposals encouraging legal forms of debate to counter extremism on campus and the banning of all fascist groups from playing an active role in Union life. The first motion of the referendum also notes that several societies are struggling to find adequate space for meetings, and so suggests that the Refectory be open to bookings from societies in order that they can 'fulfill their interests and passions'.

In light of the recent housing difficulties involving student letting agencies and landlords such as Rory Aitkens, a motion been put forward calling for the accountability of landlords.

A number of the motions are concerned with the Union's stance on important and often controversial political events, including whether or

not LUU should affiliate to the Stop the War Coalition, whether demonstrations should be held to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Other motions include the proposal to call for an end to the siege in Gaza, a proposal to support opposition to the present situation in Kenya and a motion calling for an end to University research that benefits military projects. The controversial government plans that all students will have to buy I.D. cards in the near future are also the subject of a referendum motion and if passed this would declare the Union firmly opposed to the plans. The environmental student lobby has also proposed that all ties between the Union and The Royal Bank of Scotland and Natwest are severed unless they stop investing in the fossil fuel exploration that is contributing to climate change.

Following on from recent Executive campaigns one motion calls for the creation of a 'Mature Students' Room' and a motion calling for support of students who are trying to study for their degree as well as hold down a job. LUU are also proposing to support the NUS in its campaign to grant equal access to student support mechanisms for student refugees.

A motion calling for the rejection of the NUS Governance Review on account of its perceived democratic restrictions is also likely to cause division amongst students.

Neil Mackenzie, LUU Communications and Internal Affairs Officer, said: "We're delighted with the number of motions put forward and there's a great range of issues. We expect to see more campaigners out there than ever and hopefully look forward to a high turn-out."



Slow take up of the annual union survey

by Chris Stevenson

Potential participants have until February 4 to fill in the annual LUU survey with figures for those having already taken part being very disappointing. Potential prizes on offer include Eurostar tickets and cash prizes.

The survey is run by the LUU is to ascertain if the services offered 'are up to scratch' and to check that they are representing the students on the 'issues that matter'. The results of the survey also help the Union to measure how well it is achieving the actions on the Union's three year plan and make changes to it as a result of student opinions.

The full list of prizes available are: first prize, a pair of Eurostar tickets plus a pair of Europe-wide six-stop bus tickets as well as 200 Euros. The second prize is a pair of Eurostar tickets in addition to 200 Euros. There are also three pairs of Summerball tickets, which will be held at Lotherton Hall on Friday May 30, available as a third prize.

There is a history of changes around the Union that have been instigated because of the student opinions expressed in the survey. In previous surveys, respondents asked for more cash machines to be placed

around the Union building in order to make access to money easier. Other campaigns that have been set up as a result of the survey include the "Skiat" initiative of discounts, as Union members wanted more products subsidised in the shops and bars. Many students also expressed concern about feeling safe on campus in a previous survey. LUU is now working with West Yorkshire Police on the Knowledge Campaign which provides information and advice and equipment to help students stay safe.

Speaking about the survey Julie Gough, Marketing Manager for the Union, said: "Although I've worked in education marketing for many years I am new to Leeds University Union. Ever since I arrived I've been really impressed by how much effort goes into finding out what union members want and trying to fulfil their needs. The annual survey is absolutely not a paper exercise. We take it very seriously and act on any sensible suggestion we can. Students really do make a difference to how their union is run. We are happy to listen to their views at any time - which is why we've launched the new "Your Comments" scheme in the foyer and Joblink areas. But the annual survey is an easy way for everyone to have their say and tell the union how it can improve."

On yer bike not the bus

by Laura Mackenzie

A new bike hire scheme has been announced to encourage students to get around the campus and city actively, as well as providing them with an alternative way of getting to and from their residences.

The new scheme will be available to students for the 2008/9 academic year and offer free maintenance and cycle training as well as bike hire.

Sustainable transport is one of the University's key environmental programmes and Leeds is the only University to directly participate in the many active travel programmes around the country that are led by the charity Sustrans and part-funded by the BIG Lottery.

Professor John Fisher, Deputy Vice Chancellor, said of the scheme: "I think it is a really exciting scheme and it's great that the University of Leeds is involved. At a time when environmental concerns are moving up the political and social agenda, this scheme provides an easy and cost-effective incentive to encourage students to cycle more and also to adopt a healthier lifestyle."

News in Brief

Longing for Logan



BBC Sport presenter Gabby Logan has been announced as the headline speaker for this year's Sport Leeds Seminar.

The Leeds-born former gymnast, who hosts 'Match of the Day', 'Inside Sport' and has her own show on Radio 5 Live, will be the guest of honour at the event entitled: 'Creating Sporting Pathways' to be held at the John Charles Centre for Sport in the Indoor Bowls and Athletics Centre from 5pm on Wednesday March 12.

Talking of the event Logan said: "I am delighted to be able to support the Sport Leeds Seminar. Sport has always been a huge part of my life, and it all started for me in Leeds."

Further information is available on the website at www.leedsinitiative.org

Identity Issues

The Liberal Democrat society and Liberty at Leeds are set to combine forces to host a talk on ID cards and surveillance.

The talk, entitled "Perceptions of government, surveillance and privacy: the UK identity Cards Scheme" will be delivered by Edgar Whitley. Whitley is the Coordinator of the London School of Economics 'Identity Project'.

The project is independent and Edgar Whitley is a non-party political speaker. He will deliver a presentation discussing aspects of the project such as issues of surveillance, matters of privacy, and personal security and liberty. The talk will then be followed by a Question and Answer session.

Recent reports claim that post-2010, new legislation may be passed stating students will have to possess an identity card prior to receiving their student loan.

The talk takes place February 7, in Roger Stevens Lecture Theatre 17 at 5.30pm.

"Queer freedom"

Human Rights activist Peter Tatchell will be appearing on Friday February 8 to give a campus talk on "The Global Struggle for Queer Freedom."

The first hour of the event will be a talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in the UK and around the world. In this, Tatchell will speak on the work he has done over the years, what he is doing now and how people can help complete the freedom for LGBT communities around the world. The second hour will be an open discussion.

The event takes place at 5:00 until 7:00 on Friday February 8 in the Parkinson Building Room B.08.



Prescription tower of protest

by Pauline Bache

The Exec has built a tower of free prescription HC1 forms to raise awareness of the difficulties of obtaining free medication.

The stunt is part of a sustained campaign and

also hopes to help students find out if they are eligible for free NHS care or not.

After the tower has been completed LUU plans to send the mountain of filled out paperwork to NHS headquarters to show how much of a headache the form can be for students to fill out.

The HC1 form can give people access to

NHS services free of charge such as prescriptions, eye tests and dental treatment. Currently, full-time students have to pay for health care unless they are under nineteen, including prescriptions.

Barry McGuire, a first year Mechanical Engineering student, is in the middle of an ongoing struggle simply to get the form filled in. He has had the form returned to him several times over a three month period despite having filled it in correctly. Speaking of his frustration he said: "After three months and three different forms, they still haven't given me free prescriptions. I'm starting to wonder if all this form filling and photocopying is actually worth it." He went on to add that he believes there are two ways to solve the issue saying: "The best way to improve things would be to automatically

give all students free prescriptions, or if not, then give us a simpler form to fill in."

This frustration is shared by Akram Salhab, a second year Politics and Parliamentary Studies student, who needs new glasses but cannot afford them. He said: "Every student who needs glasses should get them, but people are not even aware of the forms, I didn't know about them until recently. At 18 pages long, everyone should get a form, fill it out and overload the system."

From last April, prescriptions in Wales have become free for all those registered with a Welsh GP, additionally, students who live or study in Scotland can get a free NHS eye examination and dental check. The campaign hopes to show that the current system in England will change and allow more free prescriptions for students.



PHOTO: John Puddephatt

Government in ID card loan scandal

by Pauline Bache

A government report has been leaked which suggests that soon students will be unable to apply for a student loan without an ID card.

The report, which has been leaked to the Conservative Party, states that everyone over sixteen will be expected to apply for an ID card as early as 2010 at a personal cost of up to £100.

The report states "we should issue ID cards to young people to assist them as they open their first bank account, take out a student loan, etc" and has been met with accusations of blackmail from the Conservatives.

Cards will be issued to foreign nationals from late 2008 and are expected to be introduced to UK citizens on a voluntary basis from 2009 but this report has resulted in further scrutiny of the legitimacy of the scheme as it is widely contested as an invasion of privacy. The cards have become increasingly unpopular in recent months since the Treasury managed to lose the personal details, including bank account and passport numbers, of 25 million Britons in 2007.

Damian Green, Shadow Immigration Minister said: "This is an outrageous plan. The government has seen its ID card proposals stagger from shambles to shambles. They are clearly trying to introduce them by stealth".

Leeds University Union has proposed a referendum motion "to make the official stance of Leeds University as anti-ID cards" because they are believed to be "overly costly, with money better spent elsewhere" and would "further diminish our Civil Liberties". The proposal also questions "the government's competency in the protection of personal information".

Hind Hassan, who seconded the motion, said of this latest development: "Forcing students to purchase an ID card should they wish to apply for funding is nothing short of blackmail. That the government can so publically and unashamedly attempt to enforce this by stealth requires students to collectively take urgent action. I urge all students to write to their local MP voicing their disapproval and join those that have said they will rather go to jail than submit".

Some students, however, remain unfazed at the prospect of taking out ID cards. Kellie Billingsley, a Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship MA student, said: "I think they could be useful for some things such as underage drinking or to prevent the exploitation of illegal workers. I do think it should be explicitly stated whether or not they are compulsory however: if you need a card to get a student loan or to open a bank account then it should just be said that they are compulsory rather than voluntary."

Talk from Guantanamo detainee draws a crowd

by David Couldrey

Former detainee of Guantanamo Bay spoke to students last week in the hope of spreading his knowledge on the atrocities that are taking place there, and told them that by the time he arrived at the Cuban detainment camp he was looking forward to it.

The talk, hosted by Amnesty International, was organised to raise awareness on human rights abuses and attracted so many people that students had to be turned away to prevent health and safety violations.

Moazzam Begg, a British born Muslim, was one of nine British Nationals held at Guantanamo and said that his treatment at Bagram, an American airbase in Afghanistan, was even worse than at the infamous camp. He said: "By the time I went (to Guantanamo) I was looking forward to it."

Guantanamo Bay is a detention camp set up in the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, where America holds what they believe to be the most dangerous people in the world under suspicion of terrorist acts. Since its formation in 2002 only one detainee of the camp has been tried for minor offences while all others are being held without charge. While held in this camp many harsh interrogation techniques are used, including isolation for 30 days, 28 hours interrogations, sensory assaults, forced deprivation of clothing, sleep deprivation, hooding and the use of dogs.

Begg spent approximately a year at Bagram before being flown to Guantanamo and told students of being physically attacked as well as tormented with photos of his family. He spoke of witnessing two murders taking place and believes that the only thing worse than his own torture was having to watch the torture of another man. He said: "Witnessing the torture of another man is

worse than torture...because you can do nothing."

Begg attributed his treatment at Bagram to the secrecy surrounding the detention sites. He said: "Guantanamo is relatively open, but water boarding is done in Bagram and elsewhere". Water boarding, a form of torture that has been used systematically since the Spanish inquisition, involves subjects being forced to lie on their backs with their heads inclined downwards while water is poured into their mouth and nose, creating the sense of drowning and fear of imminent death.

Begg spent almost a year in solitary confinement whilst in Guantanamo and described how at one point he lost his 'mental faculties': "My room was three paces long; eventually I started kicking and headbutting the walls". Begg claims he was put in solitary confinement because he witnessed two murders in Bagram, which would be embarrassing for the Americans if revealed.

After growing up in Birmingham, Begg moved to Afghanistan with his family to setup a school for girls in Kabul. When the hostilities began in 2001 the family moved to Pakistan. He was seized in 2002 by the CIA in Islamabad and taken to Bagram airbase after his name was found on a money transfer in a captured Al Qaeda training camp.

Since his release in 2005 Begg has been helping to campaign against the treatment of detainees at Bagram and Guantanamo but controversy surrounds the former detainee because of his dubious past. In 1994 Begg was arrested by police and when his house was searched, night-vision goggles, extremist Islamic literature, and a bullet-proof vest were found. Begg has admitted to visiting two training camps in Afghanistan and supporting foreign fighters in Bosnia and Chechnya but the charges against him were later dropped due to lack of evidence.

When asked how many of the detainees held he believed to be guilty, Begg replied: "You cannot judge guiltiness without putting people through the system. Without a trial no one person in these camps can be described as guilty, and the right to be tried by your peers is one of the most basic of human rights." Moazzam Begg hopes that by talking about his experience he will help raise awareness of both the situation overseas and the restriction of freedom which is beginning to be seen in Britain today under the Anti-Terrorism Act. With his help, Amnesty International hope to continue their work until the final three British detainees are released from Guantanamo Bay and the plight of others is heard.



PHOTO: Ken Manson



300 seconds with: Emma Mase-Robinson

Emma Mase-Robinson

President of LGBT society

LS: Hi Emma, so firstly what is LGBT?
EM: Well it's the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Society. We work to raise awareness and cover issues such as sexual health. Mainly though we are a social network.

LS: What role do you play as President?
EM: To be honest we all work together on the same level. So yeah, sometimes I have to delegate but really we all have equal responsibility. We all help each other out.

LS: How big is the society?

EM: We have about 250-300 members.

LS: Big then! So you must have some pretty interesting socials? Any embarrassing incidents?

EM: Well they are pretty standard I guess! There is often far too much drinking, resulting in incestuous liaisons that leave us like "What!?" So much happens on each one. We take so many people with us that often you're in a venue, you look around and you realise you pretty much know everyone in there! On a recent social the Assembly Chair and myself had a wrestling match in the street - I kicked her ass! (joke - of course)

“Anyone is free to get involved and you don't have to be 'L', 'G', 'B' or 'T' to join.”

LS: I see...you sound like you guys have some good nights out. Where would you recommend for a night out in Leeds?

EM: I would say Thursday at Cockpit is a really good night out. But The New Penny on a Tuesday has the same DJs, so that is also a good night. A mix of alternative and a bit of cheese. A good night for us though starts by going to one of ours before and getting the booze in before heading down to Cockpit.

LS: So aside from socials what events has LGBT got coming up?

EM: Well, firstly the Assembly has organised a talk from Human Rights activist Peter Tatchell. He is discussing "The Global Struggle for Queer Freedom." It is on February 8 and 9, our secretary, has volunteered to gather questions and raise them at the meeting. This is great for people who want their issues raised but

don't want to do it themselves.

LS: Anything else planned?

EM: Well it is LGBT History month in February, so we are working alongside the Assembly to organise events for the month. For example, the Cockpit's gay night 'Tee Cream' on a Thursday will be hosting different bands each week. Then on February 15 we are hosting an awareness day in Joblink in the Union, with the Terrence Higgins Trust and the GUM clinic. We are hoping to build on the success of last month's event. To make it more interesting we are planning on going through the archives to pull out local historical events that are relevant.

LS: What are you most looking forward to?

EM: qART! It is a really different art event. We get people to do loads of different art then we stick it up on the wall and auction it all off! We will have bands playing as well, *Yes Miss, No Miss, Ideometric* and hopefully some of (if not all of) *Tiny Tin Lady*. They are about to release their second album and are well worth a watch. The event is on February 18 in Mine Bar at 7.30pm.

LS: So what would you say to anyone interested in joining LGBT?

PC: Anyone is free to get involved and you don't have to be 'L', 'G', 'B' or 'T' to join. It's not all about boozing, we have events like debate nights. Recently we had reps from



the blood bank join in a debate about whether gay men should be allowed to give blood. We have a lot of musicians and any gig is a night out. Music, art, film...we do it all. We try to make it as accessible as we can.

LS: So how do people go about joining?

EM: Drop us an email at luu.lgbt@leeds.ac.uk or go on-line at www.leeds.ac.uk/unionsocs/lgb and check out the forum at . Or pop in during the week between 12-2 in the Arc and we are normally having coffee in one of the meeting rooms.

“There is often far too much drinking, resulting in incestuous liaisons that leave us like 'What!?'”

New college diplomas to face university backlash

by Nivene Raafat

University applicants could face a difficult admissions process as only half of Britain's top universities are likely to accept students with diplomas in 2010, research reveals.

The new research, which was conducted by the 1994 Group, a selection of the UK's most renowned research-intensive universities, asked admissions tutors and senior managers for their opinion on the impact of the new diplomas on undergraduate admissions. Results revealed that 38 per cent of the 54 tutors interviewed said they were "not likely" or "not at all likely" to accept applicants with diplomas instead of the current A-levels, and only 53 per cent stated that they were "very likely" or "quite likely" to admit diploma candidates.

The results are likely to create anxiety amongst the first pupils preparing to begin their diploma courses when they come into effect in September this year. It is estimated that up to 40,000 teenagers will take diplomas in a range of five subjects which will be offered alongside A-levels as a more vocational alternative. An Advanced Diploma will take as long as three A-levels to complete and will be worth roughly three and a half A-levels.

However, it appears likely that the University of Leeds will accept the diplomas, as a statement from Dr Wendy Piatt, Director General of the Russell Group, of which Leeds is a member, welcomed the diplomas as a way of improving the diversity of successful applicants.

She said: "The Russell Group welcomes the diploma as a means of expanding the opportunities for potential students from a broader mix of backgrounds and educational experiences to progress to Higher Education."

Diplomas are only one part of the government's restructuring of 14-19 education. Other changes coming into effect are the A* grade at A-level and a dissertation style 'Extended Project'.

Although diplomas are more orientated towards practical experience they are still seen as appealing to the academically minded. Former Education Secretary, Alan Johnson, said of the diplomas: "They creat(e) the mix of vocational and academic education which we've lacked for so long". In a positive step, UCAS, the university admissions service, has also deemed the Advanced Diploma to be worth the equivalent of more than three A-levels in admission points.

Charlotte Palmer, a second year Civil Engineering student who completed an A-Level alternative, said: "If the diplomas are of an equivalent standard there is no reason why universities shouldn't accept them".

Peanut throwing is set to replace Democracy Zone

by Mark Beardmore

The space currently occupied by the Democracy Zone is to be overhauled for the second time this year with the hope of providing an area where students can socialise and take part in political debate.

This new space will be called the Peanut Gallery Social Centre and it is hoped it will provide a place within the Union where students can eat, drink and relax as well as debate social and political issues. Inside will be free refreshments, a 'swap shop' where students can donate and swap unwanted items; computer facilities and an electronic library; a library of books, magazines and films; and facilities for film screenings and comfortable seating.

The space is to be run in a non-hierarchical and consensus-based way, and everyone is welcome to volunteer and take part. The core values behind its creation are stated on the Centre's Facebook group: "LUU Social Centre (LSC) will be open, friendly, safe and welcoming to everyone. Responsibility and accountability for running the space will be shared by the collective. Labor will be split into working groups within the collective who will take responsibility for certain tasks. Meetings will occur to co-ordinate the working groups. LSC will be supported throughout this process by Democracy Support; The space will aim to be

both environmentally and socially sustainable.

Everything in LSC will be first borrowed, found, donated or bought second hand before being bought new. The space will be run on a not-for-profit basis and ask only for a suggested donation in return for goods or services. All monies will go to the further development and maintenance of LSC; LSC will be a space to nurture student led, strategic and effective action. It will promote alternative ways of living based on autonomy, solidarity and mutual aid by providing a parallel space in which students have the freedom to make their own decisions collectively." The Centre derives its name from the term used to describe a 'heckling audience'. The term originated in the days of vaudeville as a nickname for the cheapest and rowdiest seats in the theatre; the cheapest food sold at theatres would often be peanuts and these would sometimes be thrown at performers to show disapproval of their act.

One of the organisers behind the Centre said: "It will be a place for the impoverished and indebted [students] to gather and partake of social entertainment and launch metaphorical peanuts at bad political performances."

Organisers are in need of a range of donations including second-hand sofas, comfy chairs, tables, books on political and social activism, paint, art and decorating materials, and even people who are talented at interior design.

For more information students can join the Centre's Facebook group: Peanut Gallery Social Centre (Leeds).



Jim'll Fix It

Jimmy Savile is a man who will always be connected with the city of Leeds, but his presence will be felt even more keenly after a move which sees his voice echoing around the streets.

This campaign is aimed at reducing the amount of crime around student areas and involves Sir Jimmy shouting safety advice to students through the medium of loudspeakers.

This move must be applauded as not only will students listen more seriously to safety advice if it is given by a celebrity, such is the culture now, but the scheme will also obviously reach its peak after a night out. The idea of people walking home in the middle of the night, only to be accosted by this voice out of the ether, brings a wry to the face of LS. However, the fact that the voice breaking the silence of a walk, or a stumble, home will be the voice of a cigar-smoking former radio and television behemoth is a stroke of genius and adds a whole new element to the police scheme.

The one major downside of this new way of communicating safety advice to students (other than the fright caused by a voice coming out of the darkness when too much drink may have been consumed) is that if you were to live close to one of these new contraptions then the same phrases being spoken all day, every day would become annoying. Very quickly.

But still, 'annoying' is a very small price to pay if it will bang some sense into students and encourage them to be more careful.

Another LSH?

The start of another semester and yet more trouble for potential tenants of student properties in Leeds.

Following on from the on-going saga of Rory Aitkens and his company Leeds Student Homes another agency rears its ugly head in terms of not returning deposits, as well as misleading tenants about where these deposits are going.

New government legislation states that all landlords must now place deposits in an approved protection scheme, so that tenants know where their deposit money has gone. However, this seems to have added another mode of deception to the process, as some landlords are setting up accounts that are not part of the government led schemes and so not protecting tenants' money as they should. This is actually a criminal offence and tenants can take court action and reclaim up to three times the amount of deposit paid. The three schemes that students should check that they are part of are: The Deposit Protection Service (DPS), Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd (TDSL) and The Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS).

It was hoped that these schemes would help eradicate the problem of deposits not being returned, as it would take the power out of the hands of the landlords in terms of keeping the money without due cause.

However it seems that students are still going to have to be very careful in dealing with any aspect of renting. The ARC sees case after case come through the door of the office each week and sadly there seems little chance of the flow drying up.

Free but not so easy

LUU has started a campaign this week to emphasise the fact that students can get free healthcare from the NHS, and to highlight the difficulties of the system.

It seems that few students knew about this opportunity, a problem in itself students traditionally being seen as a group that will take any freebie handed out to them (as pretty much anyone who has experienced the delights of a Freshers Fair will testify). As a result the Union has taken it upon itself to spread the word and let as many students know about the scheme as possible.

This all sounds quite simple, but there is a further, and ultimately more depressing, problem surrounding the issue of free prescriptions: the HC1 form that must be filled out in order to obtain the free treatment. This is a major sticking point as the form's number of pages runs into double figures and the majority of students who have already tried filling in the form, claim it is very difficult.

It is the aim of LUU to not only highlight that the opportunity for free prescriptions exists but also to highlight to the authorities that the current system is not simple enough and is ultimately very confusing for students. The Union hopes to accumulate ten thousand of the forms in order to try and overload the administrative system currently in place, and thus get the message across to the NHS.

This is one campaign that could most certainly make a difference to many students and so should be welcomed.

Provoking proposals

The 18 motions put forward by LUU members are the usual mixed-bag and although some of the motions may be cut down before students get to vote, there are some interesting submissions.

One eye-catching motion asks that the 'tranquil ambience' of the Old Bar be returned by turning down the noise levels of the music and plasma screens that are currently there. As several incumbents of the LS office are frequent users of the Old Bar, they will watch with interest as to how that particular motion fares.

Another submission that will split opinion across campus is the motion that asks for 'Lads Mags' such as Zoo and Nuts to be removed from public spaces in the shops in the Union and be sold behind the counter. When the campaign for this motion starts, if indeed it gets that far, some members of the student population will laugh off the idea as political correctness gone mad, while others will denounce the fact that the measure has not already been implemented on the grounds of the magazines being seen as potentially pornographic. Again, it will be interesting to see how that one pans out.

The fact that there are so many motions being put up for discussion, even if some will be lost, proves that at least some students are willing to try and change the environment around them. Only time will tell however whether the campus at large will get into the democratic swing also.

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The Big Debate

the big debate:

Who is watching you?

With CCTV cameras popping up all over campus and surrounding areas the question over public security has once again been raised. This week's debate asks: 'Has CCTV security gone too far?'

For security cameras...

Alexa Bingham email: alexabingham@yahoo.co.uk

Do you feel scared when a police man or woman walks past you? Or safer? CCTV cameras are essentially just a cheaper and more efficient way of having more 'bobbies on the block'. Worrying about being watched by security officers and police is just an overreaction.

It is easy to be paranoid as we are a nation brought up on Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, however we need to keep things in perspective. There is a strange undercurrent in our psyche, suspicious of government conspiracy, oppressive social control and other such prattlings. So this, I guess, may explain why some do not take well to CCTV and its ominous gaze. But in reality most of us don't even notice the cameras as they blend well into our surroundings.

As for those on the other side of the wiring, they are not evil government officials waiting to take us away should we refuse to conform, but police officers looking after public safety.

CCTV is effective in preventing crime with drops in criminal activity of up to 75% around Britain as a result of its introduction. It is also indispensable for prosecution purposes and has convicted many murderers, including the July 7th bombers. And it also reduces, amongst other things, anti-social behaviour, graffiti, acts of violence and burglary. Living in such crime hot-spots as Hyde Park and Headingley, which student would not feel safer that someone is keeping an eye on things? Or be glad of them when their laptop or ipod are stolen?

I must confess, I got quite a shock at 6am in the morning when me and a friend were sat outside my apartment and a megaphone in the wall began to address us. 'This is the West Yorkshire Police, you are currently trespassing on private property, if you do not remove yourselves immediately The West Yorkshire Police will shortly arrive to escort you from the premises'. With initial shock and indignation, I walked up to the CCTV camera and shook my keys in front of it to show I lived there and sat back down feeling slightly miffed! Later I realised, however, how incredibly safe this made me feel. That I would hopefully never walk out and find a junkie, a mugger or a drunken mob, let alone get burgled, and all thanks to this one little camera that I had never noticed until that day.

So if cameras have both an instrumental effect in bringing down crime and a positive psychological effect on many responsible citizens, why do some people still worry about their existence? The answer, I suspect, is our obsession that by appearing on CCTV we are somehow being controlled, when the only thing that is being controlled is crime.

In a survey commissioned by the Home Office 37% of respondents believed that "in the future, cameras will be used by the government to control people". I don't mean to argue with 37% of the population but in our democratic society, devoid of dictatorship and with NGOs watching our government's every move, I don't think we are in much danger of coming under

such radical social domination.

I wonder whether, if Nineteen Eighty-Four had never been written, Britain would still suffer from such a deep-seated fear of surveillance. That we will never know, but let us not fear the cameras which are watching over us.

Against security cameras...

Andrew Kimemia email: cs06aekm@leeds.ac.uk

Surveillance is out of control. Big Brother is Watching? But do we really need to be monitored so closely? Some of the more observant of us may have noticed that there is yet another security camera doing

more than decorating the scenery on our lovely campus grounds.

The latest addition to our 'safety and security' is situated just above the union post box in perfect position to snap you posting your letters! The union, however, is not the only setting in which we are being checked up on, there are also the rather chatty cameras in Headingley. CCTV is everywhere that we are.

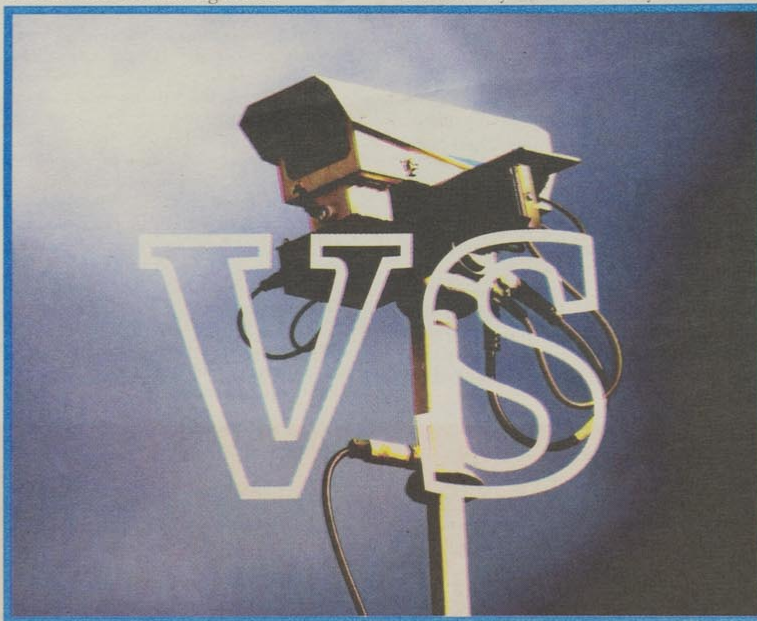
Now a lot has been said about the supposed dangers to public safety that security cameras are in place to prevent, but I don't believe that these are not serious enough to be an excuse to allow for these extreme security measures. Such irrational fears of fellow citizens are steadily turning our university and the whole country into a costly 'big brother' type state where our every move is monitored for little sake. We need to look for a solution to the problems in public safety and tackle them in this way and not with more and more CCTV cameras.

A study conducted by the University of Leeds on the prevention of bicycle theft has identified that among the problems affecting the ability of security cameras to detect crime was the difficulty in monitoring the large number of the screens that the operators are required to monitor. This was therefore leading to a situation where even though there may be a security camera operating in a set place it may not be receiving the required attention from its operator to ensure that at any instance should a crime occur in full view of a security camera it may not necessarily be immediately noted and the requisite action taken to apprehend the criminal. To me this then begs the question what is the point in the cameras and the vast public expenditure? Granted that the tapes of a crime can be used by police as evidence, however by this point the crime has already taken place.

In cases such as drunk and disorderly behaviour it is highly unlikely that the presence of a security camera will act as any kind of proper deterrent. Again there are major flaws in the use of these cameras due to the low resolution of the images they produce and often the relevant footage is not sufficient on its own to identify an offender. With officers having to go through hundreds of hours of footage waiting for those brief few moments it takes for a crime to be committed cameras are hardly reliable.

Would you allow for yourself to live in a situation where you are conscious of the fact that your every move is being recorded on a device which could be being monitored by anyone? Within a few connections between camera footage your whole journey to University can be tracked by whoever can get hold of the films. That is a very threatening thought.

So I put it to you dear readers, why sacrifice your privacy and your taxes for this flawed system of security? Unfortunately, I am concerned that this may be a case of too little, too late.



Last Term's Debate: 'No more cigarettes?'

Latest result from online polls:

For sales: 60%

Against sales: 40%

Top comment:

'The ban on cigarette sales is nothing but another manifestation of the health-fascism rife in the Union executive. There are many ways of encouraging those considering doing so to give up smoking. However, smokers with no intention of giving up will not be persuaded simply by the unavailability of their favourite smoke in 'god's own student union'. Why is it just smokers who are continually persecuted? The smoking ban instated (albeit briefly) several years ago revealed just how reliant LUU is on revenue from smokers, why risk disaffecting a large portion of the student population? This year we have not only the smoking ban to deal with, but also LUU's sanctimoniousness and ignorance. LUU would not dare to discriminate against people on the basis of race or sexual orientation, but for some reason discriminating against smokers is acceptable.' - Kevin Milverton, Fourth Year Russian and Economics

Get involved:

Join the debate, visit the website:

<http://www.leedsstudent.org.uk>

or find us on Facebook at:

<http://apps.facebook.com/leedsstudent>

LS Extra



Coming Out

10

Ever wanted to know the truth about coming out? *Leeds Student* gives you the real story.



Comment

12

Moazzam Begg's experience in Guantanamo highlights the plight of victims of the war on terror - Maryam Ahmad and Rob Heath discuss.

Christian Union Week

Coming up this week is Leeds' Christian Union's week of events. **Jenny Axtell** tells us why it might just be relevant to you.

“I am the way the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me” – Jesus Christ. That’s a huge claim. You can only get to Heaven if you ‘accept and follow’ Jesus as the Son of God? Is this a load of nonsense, or is it true?

For the Uni and Met Universities’ 500 Christians this is the absolute truth and they say they ‘commit their lives to Jesus’. To them, being a Christian is not just about being a ‘nice’ person and going to Church every now and then, it’s the meaning of life. But what does this mean? What (or who) on earth merits such a massive commitment? Why change your life when you’re enjoying it? These days, with falling numbers in Church attendance Christians seem to be a dwindling breed. Is it out-dated and irrelevant, or does Christianity still have a place on campus and in our society today?

This week, the Leeds University and Leeds Met Christian Unions are hosting a series of talks and events, which hope to open up this debate. I interviewed the Uni Christian Union’s presidents, Giles Smith and Katy Williams, to find out more about what’s going on and why.

What is this week exactly?

Giles: We’re putting on events throughout the week, ranging from daytime cafés to gigs in the evening. It’s a great chance to raise awareness of what the CU is about and for us to put on some fun events for our fellow students.

Katy: “Why Jesus” week involves looking at who Jesus was, and why he came. It’s a week for people to come and discuss what they think of Jesus, and find out about not only what we believe as Christians, but why we hold this to be true.

Why are you doing this?

Giles: We believe as Christians that we’re called to show love to those around us, as a reflection of the love that God has shown us. It’s also a great opportunity to dispel a few myths about what Christianity is and who Christians are.

Katy: We are holding this “Why Jesus” week because the Bible makes some very bold

statements about who he is and why he came to Earth. It records that Jesus says he was the Son of God and that he said he came to Earth because, apart from him dying in our place, there was no way of us being saved from the punishment we deserve for having turned our backs on God. If these claims are true, it’s really important that everyone gets a chance to think about it, so we’re putting on events during that week to open up the



debate.

Isn't Christianity old news?

Katy: Yes, it’s old news, just as the fact that the sky is blue is old news. The Bible tells us that that God does not change, even though everything else around us is constantly changing. So if Jesus was telling the truth 2000 years ago, there’s no reason to believe that his claims are any less true today.

Giles: We believe the message of the Good News of Jesus is timeless and appropriate to every generation. Christianity at its core is still the same, but the outworking of our beliefs changes appropriate to the time.

What do you say to people who think you're just interfering?

Giles: We have no wish to interfere with anyone at all! I’d be horrified to think anyone from the CU was imposing themselves upon someone who really didn’t want that contact. We respect the fact that some people disagree with our beliefs, but it’s central to our faith that we share what we believe

with those who will listen to us.

Katy: This week is an opportunity for anyone who wants to come along to do so, but we’re not forcing anyone to come along! It’s about informing people about the claims the Bible makes about Jesus so they can decide for themselves what they think of him. It’s not about the CU, and it’s not about getting people to agree with us, it’s an invitation to think things through.

What's your message?

Giles: As Christians, our core belief is best summarised in a passage from the book of John in the Bible - “For God so loved the world that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

We believe that Jesus, God’s son, was sent to the Earth, and took all of the sins we have committed in our lives on his own shoulders. He died so that we needn’t be punished for those sins, and so that we can have a direct relationship with our creator God.

Can people ask questions?

Giles: That’s one of the most important things about the whole week!

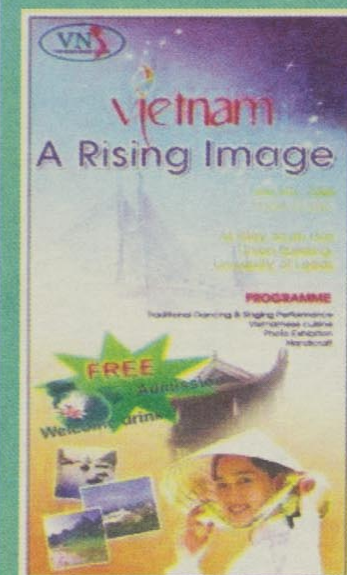
Katy: The purpose of the week is that people can find out more about Jesus’ life and who he claimed to be, and to discuss whether or not they believe this to be true. We want this to be an opportunity for people not only to look into things but also ask questions.

How can people find out more?

Giles: Come along to the tent any time during the week! We’ll have flyers and posters advertising the different events, and there will always be some friendly faces to be found to help out – look out for people wearing black CU hoodies (see photo).

Katy: My email is female.president@luucu.com or you can get others off website www.luucu.com

Vietnamese Day 2008 - Vietnam: A Rising Image



“Vietnamese Day” is the biggest activity annually held by the Vietnamese Society at Leeds. This year, as usual, it will take place prior to the Vietnamese traditional Lunar New Year (commonly known as TET). The Vietnamese Day 2008 will be carried out from 11:30 am to 4 pm on Tuesday, 5th February 2008, at the Riley Smith Hall, Leeds University Union Building in celebration of the Vietnamese Lunar New Year – the Year of the Rat – to introduce Vietnamese culture to student community as well as to people living in Leeds and Yorkshire areas. Entrance is free and everyone is welcome.

Coming out of the

For those unsure of their sexuality, coming out to friends and family is a daunting task, tackling issues of identity and self expression. With February's LGBT Week, *Leeds Student* gives you some personal insights into the experience.

Come out, come out, wherever you are!

Coming out is usually regarded as being the most important and dramatic event of an LGBT person's life. For me there was always some kind of satisfaction in knowing that when I chose to come out it would be a spectacular emotional experience for all involved. In reality it was somewhat bungled. Although coming out was definitely an empowering experience at school and college, the effect it had on relations with my family were pretty underwhelming and mostly made my life an awful lot more convenient. I am very lucky.

I understand now that coming out does not just happen once when you drop that bombshell to your parents. It happens every time that someone assumes that you are straight and you want or need to correct them. Coming out doesn't just happen when we tell others either; most LGBT people spend a lot of time exploring their own feelings and identity, and can struggle to deal with feelings and desires that go against heteronormative society. Becoming reconciled to an identity is the first step in announcing to the world what we are.

Coming out happens when we first tell one of our friends, when we first go to a club or bar on the scene, when we first visit an LGBT website, when we first accept to ourselves who and what we desire. It is a process that goes on for years and never truly ends. The first person I came out to was my younger sister at fifteen. She said she'd guessed; she was a very savvy twelve year old. I next I came out to a few of my closest friends at school, all of whom were very supportive and had kind of guessed.

The most empowering moment of coming out was facing up to a few bullies in my year who had aimed homophobic abuse at me since I had started in Year 7. At school I pretty much felt as if I had no identity amongst my peers who had started dating and having sexual experiences since about Year 8. Remaining silent when being constantly asked if I was gay, and having homophobic comments thrown at me continually, deprived me of any confidence. Coming out immediately meant that I had claimed 'gay' as my identity and my prerogative. It meant that now I could define what gay meant myself, taking it away from those secondary school bullies who used it as an insult meaning disgusting, pathetic, effeminate, unnatural and ridiculous. Coming out in school signals a battle over who has the power to control and define your identity.

Coming out to my Dad was something I had meant to do from leaving secondary school, but the right moment

never seemed to come. This was solved during a drunken chat one evening with my stepmother, when I accidentally let it slip. Although she said she had guessed (another one!) I knew it was a race against the clock before she told my Dad, so I told him on the following Monday.

My Dad's variation on saying he already knew was to attempt humour - "Well thats a bit of a pain in the arse!". Following this we decided the best way to avoid acute embarrassment was to get drunk, and we proceeded to drink the emergency alcohol reserve of cooking sherry whilst a good deal of over-sharing was done on both sides.

Having been through many experiences at University that have opened my eyes to experiences of other LGBT people, I now realise that not only do you have to come out throughout your whole life, but for some people the journey of identity is not over. A few trans people start by coming out as gay or lesbian and then go on to come out as trans because a lot of people understand gay and lesbian identities better than trans identities. Many people who come out as trans have a worse time because others associate being trans with sexuality and there are hardly any positive representations of trans people in the media. When we think of coming out we nearly always think of gay or lesbian people,

“Coming out signals a battle over who has the power to control and define your identity.”

but bisexual and trans people and anyone who has an identity that doesn't fit comfortably into our culture deserves to be understood and be allowed to have control over who they want to be.

Coming out as whoever or whatever we are means we wrest away control of our identity from bullies, parents and society who tell us what they want us to be. Everyone deserves at least one coming out in life.

James Wilcox, LGBT Trans Officer- see contacts box (right).

“I basically told the biggest lie of my life - the same lie I'd been living all along - that I was straight.”

Back in the closet

Coming out to your parents might not be the easiest thing in the world but sometimes it just needs to be done. You've told your old friends, your new friends, everyone you meet, but you can't quite tell your parents.

I was 21 and pretty sure my mum was starting to wonder why I'd never had a boyfriend. She was asking so many awkward questions about guys one day that I was certain she had twigged and was just waiting for me to tell her the truth. So I did. Error. It turned out she hadn't suspected it at all (God knows how, since I've always been the biggest tomboy around) and was pretty devastated. Most of the trouble centred around the fact that I'd probably never get married or have children, and it was impossible to explain that I could in fact do both, just with a woman, and it wouldn't be the end of the world.

But my mum couldn't be consoled. After three awful days I decided I couldn't take the fact that I'd made her so upset. I knew coming out wouldn't be easy, that's why I'd put it off so long, but I hadn't expected this. So I went back in the closet. I sat my mum down and said I'd listened to what she said and thought she was right- being a lesbian was a

bad lifestyle choice- so I was going to try going straight. I pretended it was as easy as that, and basically told the biggest lie of my life- the same lie I'd been living all along- that I was straight. After about two minutes of questioning it, my mum accepted my white lie fully. Denial is a powerful thing. Once or twice over the next few months she asked if I was lying to her; I had to say I wasn't because I knew that would hurt her less than the truth.

Fast forward six months. After a break-up I rang home to say I'd be coming back for a little while. My mum could tell something was bothering me. 'Is it something to do with a boyfriend?' she asked '...or a girlfriend...?'. I admitted it was the latter, and couldn't believe how well she took it. Over the months since I'd professed my newfound 'straightness' she seemed to have subconsciously got used to the fact that I at least might be gay. She even suggested that I should patch it up with my ex if that would make things better. This was major progress.

Since then, things haven't been perfect but they've been much, much better than at the beginning. My mum occasionally mentions that the thought of my being a lesbian makes her feel sick, or that she feels like she aged twenty years the day I came out. But, actually, things are good, and she's taken it comparatively well. She still tries to convince me to 'give men a chance', and who knows, I might. But coming out of the closet, despite my faltering start, is one of the most freeing things I've done.

Anon

LS2 inside



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STARS MUSIC LOW DOWN T E L E V I S I O N
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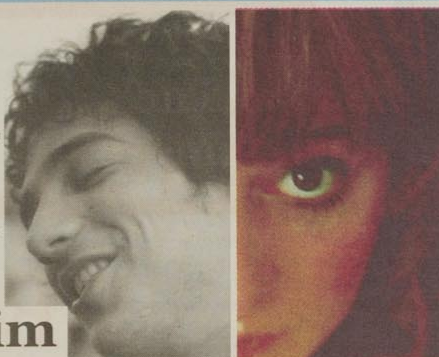
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The LOW DOWN

with Martha and Karim



Picture the scene: it's been two months since graduation, and you've finally managed to convince yourself that earning some cash may be a better alternative to watching the T4 summer specials from the bosom of your parents' Habitat sofa. Ok, so let's say three months after graduation. You then carefully construct a marketing plan to sell yourself to potential employers - a snazzy C.V. full of embellished qualifications and false promises - but for some reason, you just can't find a job. You keep getting to the interview stage, and then nothing. "Why?" I hear you cry, "Why me?". You then go through reason after reason for why you keep failing, but can't quite find a solution. In situations like this, often the best thing to do is take a long hard look in the mirror. Often you will discover that that personalised sports jumper isn't quite so kitch, and those lovingly neglected dreads don't quite cut it in the business world. That's right, you dress like student scum, and therefore will never be taken seriously. But rather than revamping your image during your last few weeks of dissertation hell, we suggest that all third years embrace student fashion whilst they still can. Wear fancy dress as frequently as possible, don flip-flops in the rain, and if you've never owned Ugg boots - shame on you. Before you enter into the regimented world of full time employment, explore every single student subculture - be a permatanned rah one week and a braided eco-warrior the next - and remember the wise words of Robbie Williams: "No regrets, they don't work..."

Yes Martha, it does seem to be all about dressing the fool while you can, because all my business friends in the city can talk about now is where they can get the best-priced shirt-and-tie combination (hint: it's CoS in Regent

Before you enter into the world of full time employment, explore every single student subculture.

Street). Ugh, it's boring. A starched shirt simply cannot compare with the intricacies of a wonderfully sly and ironic t-shirt slogan (God, is this the fashion page or what?) Even dress-down days seem woefully generic. So while we mock the student tribes and their specific wears, remember it is a lot easier to take the piss when someone is actually expressing something about themselves, rather than joining the conveyor belt of suit and tie ghts. Also, various liberties that will disintegrate as you enter the world of work include:

-Being able to wake up before 9am.

-Being able to say "yeah, let's do an all-nighter!" - ever.

-Being able to wank about on Facebook all day. Actually, this is the only painless transition between uni and full-time employment.



Not every office has one of these for 'jokes'.

And in other Martha and Karim news....

If you can find time out from your Heath Ledger movie-athons this week, why not take a trip to the cinema to see some of the Hollywood kids who are still with us. Tim Burton's made another collaboration with the talented Jonny Depp in *Sweeney Todd* and it's sure to be a stomper. Why not see it in The Light shopping centre, and once you're done scoffing popcorn and pick 'n mix you can be guilttripped into joining the horribly overpriced but really quite nice Esporta gym, opposite. If, of course, you are a clever sort who realises that signing a year's contract for somewhere you will visit twice is a little frivolous, try not to make eye contact with any of the staff. It's all down hill from there. There are far cheaper and more enjoyable ways to get exercise, especially with the Irish Dancing Society having their 'Give it a Go!' session in the very near future. I expect to see Karim



Popcorn - sweet.

trotting into the office with the flair of Michael Flatley any day now. This week I'm looking forward to Ty at the Fav, and The Kooks at the Brudenell. Here's just hoping I get an actual ticket eh? In a similar aural vein, props must go out to The South Central boys who were undoubtedly the best part of Wax: On... Imagine having the guile to drop 'Idiotquest' into an electro set! ML + KK

Overheard this week.

"I don't even care if I have got Chlamydia, I'm well excited about the text message"// "2008 is the year I become a Man"// "His voice made me gush in more than one place"// "Press my camera here, it turn into a house"// "Sesnsitive teeth have their perks"// "I was going to go to Wax:On, but I washed the car instead"// "I didn't know that it would be a singing-kind of musical!"//

LIPBALM:

Before we get accused of giving this section an overly feminine slant, lipbalm is fun for both sexes alike. Even tough guys would rather have silky soft lips than the equivalent of two barnacles on their face. Just never try to eat a sandwich, whilst walking in the wind with long hair and lip-balm on. I did this. It was horrific.

OVERSIZED BAGS:

For once - and only once - the WAGs have got it right, bigger is better in the world of bags. Now I can fit all my books, pens, notebooks, Heat mags and extra layers in one place. And I no longer have to carry that woven piece of shit the library forced me to buy. Now find me a footballer!

SPIRITS + MIXERS:

There is definitely something to be said about ice clinking against your plastic glass when there's something not beer-coloured in there. I think this is where girls have been getting it right for ages with their vodka and fruit-juice combinations: I tried this on the weekend and felt really healthy all night in spite of getting shit-faced.

THAT NEW PASTY SHOP IN THE UNION:

Standing ovation for the eggheads at the Union for finally delivering this little gem to us poor students that were simply unsatisfied with the sandwich selection. Now £2.50 gets you a big old pasty with meat in it. And it's hot. Just avoid the Beef Madras pasty. Some cultural hybrids suck.

DECISIONS:

Whilst all you first and second years are gaily skipping around Hyde Park looking for your next student crib, those of us in our third year have to decide whether we're staying at all. Just when we'd started getting comfortable, talking to the staff at Jacksons on first name terms. Do we really have to go home? Parents vs Council tax: it's a toughie.

STOCKINGS:

Apparently, guys love them. But before you make this provocative statement, be careful not to venture out anywhere in public in them, as the bastard things will fall down, leaving you looking more like Nora Batty than Dita Von Teese. How embarrassing.

VIEWINGS:

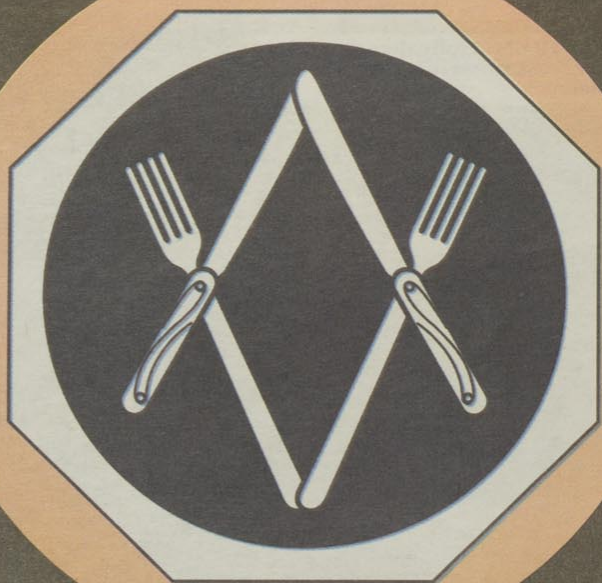
They NEVER ring in advance like they're meant to, giving no time to hide any drugs/pets/extra-housemates/holes in walls and try having a group of freshers walk in on you getting dressed. NOT FUN.

words/ karim khan, martha ling

Going up

Going down

LUU



FOOD

While we may wish for posh lunches and expensive snacks at the busy dinner hour, a student budget can't always guarantee such sumptuous delights at the drop of a hat. Luckily for us starving paupers however, Leeds University Union has a surprisingly good range of food outlets and eating establishments. Your humble *Leeds Student* team have, in the name of journalism, ventured out into the various foodhalls of LUU and sampled their culinary delights, with the intention of informing you where to spend your hard-earned loan at lunchtime. Reports by **Jessica Parker**, **Vivien King Macdona** and **Matt Andrews**.

Essentials.

The Union's mini supermarket has it all. It is a god amongst mini supermarkets. One Stop can fuck right off. And "Jacksons at Sainsbury's" with its 4-mile queue comprising the entire student population of Hyde Park doesn't even come close. Nope, Essentials is where it's at. Where else can you buy a Leeds University hoodie with your lunchtime sarnie? (You wouldn't, of course, it would be social suicide).

Browse the glossy wonders of Dazed, ID and Pop in the magazine section (ignoring the fact that they cost more than a small house) and grab a Pukka Pad upon which to pretend to write notes in lectures. Essentials has the lot. Both chocolate and Nurofen cravings can be satisfied here, but for stronger stuff you might have to go to the pasty shop...

The Real Pasty Co.

I've got an addiction. It's a shameful one. Pasties. It started on Wednesday last week when I was lured into the new Union bakery near Essentials by their decadent aroma. The drug dealer-like ladies behind the counter saw me coming. And pounced. "Broccoli and cheese? Veg? Cornish?" At this point I had no idea where my addiction would lead. "Veg," I replied. I paid my quality-denoting £2.99 and subsequently fell headlong into the life of an addict.

When will I get my next fix? Will I have to start a burglary career to fund my habit? In short, the Union pasties are to me what smack is to Amy Winehouse. Except I'm probably not going to end up with quite the same physique.

words/ vivien king macdona

The Refectory.

Who knew this was nestled right under our noses? Er, apparently everyone at Leeds except me. I admit, I'd written it off as a school canteen-esque establishment serving sloppy wannabe-gruel on a chipped plate. Also, what sort of food hall masquerades as a music venue? "Choose one or the other," I had arrogantly thought. Now I know better. While the Refectory is famed for its musical achievements, it has recently grown to fame within my estimation solely for its delicious (and fairly priced) hot baguettes filled with a topping of your choice. As well as that, the place has an oriental food section which features a chef cooking your stir fry while you watch. Add a baked potato 'bar' and voila: a wonderful recipe for lunch. Experience it.

The Old Bar.

While not immediately striking as a food outlet, the allure of the Old Bar as a lunchtime venue for a quick pint and a ploughman's is not to be understated. Its selection of crisps is suitable even for the potato connoisseur, including the famous Brannigans (Roast Beef & Mustard come highly recommended). You can also check out the pizzas from Pizza Box, which make up for what they lack in taste through their convenience and ease of ordering. Equally convenient are the cheesy chips available, the clear choice for those with a fine palate. The Old Bar: the cultured choice.

words/ matt andrews

Wrapid.

If you can take the madness that is noodles encased in another form of carbohydrate (optional, of course) and suffer the pinch of a less economic lunch option, Wrapid has a great selection of delectable and original wraps, from your typical Chicken Fajita-type choice, to your crazy blend-of-food-cultures Bangers 'n' Mash option, along with a few sweet treats such as Choco or Sticky Toffee Pudding. And all come lovingly wrapped in, well, a wrap. Don't forget the bonuses of a free-fill soft drink system (that can totally be exploited) and loyalty cards that will doubtlessly become lost in the ether of your wallet or purse.

Mine.

Favoured hangout and employment centre of musical theatre types, this wait-to-be-seated lunch spot offers a decent range of salads, burgers and other generic restaurant fare. Be prepared to part with your student card for the duration of your meal (it's an emotional wrench) but service is prompt and prices fair. Tucked away from the frenetic midday bustle of the rest of the Union, Mine is a great location to meet up with a friend who you haven't seen for ages for an uninterrupted chat. (And the staff ain't bad-looking either).

words/ jessica parker

swear I spent the rest of the day wondering why I wasn't wearing double denim, and why more people don't have mullers.

Onto the evening entertainments, then, and the highlight of my week's adventures. For a return to a true childhood revival, a group of us headed out to the Hollywood Bowl at Kirkstall, a purpose-built monstrosity housing bowling alleys and fast-food diners galore. Surely, these modern-day monuments of entertainment have all that a person could wish for from a night out? There's bright flashing lights, computer-simulations, prizes to be won and money to be lost. Kind of like a modern day Fun House only without Pat Sharpe and the twins. Plus there's a bar, just in case all the jollities are too much, although I obviously steered clear of such vices and made my way to the 'diner' area for some genuine childhood treats. Now, anybody who still hasn't forgotten the culinary delights of jelly and ice-cream will no doubt appreciate a good slush puppy. In a fit of nostalgia I got a blue and red flavour (i.e. raspberry and strawberry) mix - I'd forgotten how good it tastes! Although it played havoc with my sensitive teeth - the need for Sensodyne is not something I remember.

The bowling itself was pretty standard. The first game always goes too fast, and everyone gets bored half-way through the second (I myself wandered off for another slush puppy hit. You just can't beat that brain-freeze sensation). Never much of a bowler, I was quite impressed that I managed to get a strike, albeit with a little help from the moveable ramp (it's not cheating. Honest). I was also struck by just how, for want of a better word, icky the bowling alley shoes are. Not having remembered to bring socks, I managed to get away with bowling in my boots for about five minutes, until the guy on the counter started shooting me dark looks and I was forced to change (urgh).

After bowling we hit the arcade games. They've changed a bit since I last had a go on them; you can now win an ipod shuffle in the grabbing-claw game! Although obviously they're impossible to win, but it still didn't stop me having a try. We also went into a photo booth for the classic snapshot of the evening, to

find that things have even changed here, as rather than a strip of pictures at the end, we got a little 'silver etched' impression of our faces, complete with mini frame and a keyring. I was slightly surprised to see a few fellow adults waiting outside the booth, although it just shows that some people still cling to that early-teenage spirit. I looked around hopefully for any sign of a Street Fighter, or even some 10p sliding games (I was in the mood to win a digital watch), but I found no sign of either. Rubbish.

The best part of my week of childhood was definitely a trip to Quasar. For anybody who's never done it, what on earth were you doing as a child? It's still a fantastic venue for a birthday party, no matter what age you are. We did the whole quasar ritual - daft nicknames on the score sheet, violent tactics and insults flung at the other team, not to mention a pretty intense boys vs. girls situation (I refuse to say who won...we were robbed). The ramps and hidden corners inside the quasar arena excited us to greater and greater displays of commando-esque escapades, complete with war cries and Jason Bourne-style rolls. We all left with a fair few bruises, with a particularly painful moment occurring when the breastplate section of my quasar pack clipped a sensitive area of my anatomy, but I bravely soldiered on! Slightly funny also that one of our group was on a bit of a come-down from the previous night's partying - dark alleys,

“ I managed to attract the attention of one particularly sensible woman who admonished me with the classic line “Are you going to get up now, you naughty girl?” **”**

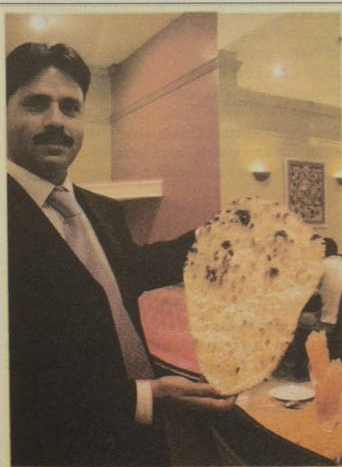
fluorescent paint and people shooting at you is not a place for the severely paranoid. I would also recommend that large parties go 'quasaring' together; otherwise you could get lumbered with shooting against vicious 10 year-olds or, even worse, over-enthusiastic middle-aged men who still haven't quite got over being rejected from the TAs.

Yes, my foray out of the world of standard student-entertainment has certainly been fun. Recapturing a bit of my forgotten childhood has taken me on a trip down memory lane and to places in

the city that I've not been before. I'm thoroughly glad to be a grown-up, although I can't help longing for the days when TV was shoddy and other people cooked my dinner for me. For now, I'd better stop writing as it's almost past my bedtime...anyone for a slush puppy?

If you feel world-weary, head down to LA Bowl in Sweet Street for Laser Quest antics and Hollywood Bowl in Kirkstall for slush and bowling. Please don't throw any tantrum fits in Netto, they've suffered enough. Try M&S instead.

TANTRUM: Holly demonstrates her frustration in a sophisticated manner.



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HOLLY TRIES...

BEING A KID

Having woken up with her face plunged into last night's take-away, **Holly Westwood** decides to return to a simpler time where alcohol was merely a mystical potion that made Aunty Mable go a bit funny. Read on as Holly frolics through parks, bowling alleys and supermarket sweetie aisles in her quest to return to childhood.

After a weekend of drunken debauchery I was left with that particularly hollow feeling only achieved with a Double Dutch Lager-and-Jagermeister hangover (haven't I always said that I'm a classy lady?). Through my Sunday-sofa haze I found myself longing for a time when things were simpler; when having a good time didn't culminate with me waking up face-down in one of pitzaccanos pepperoni specials. In search of some wholesome fun, then, this week's antics have led me into attempting to recapture a bit of the spirit of my younger years.

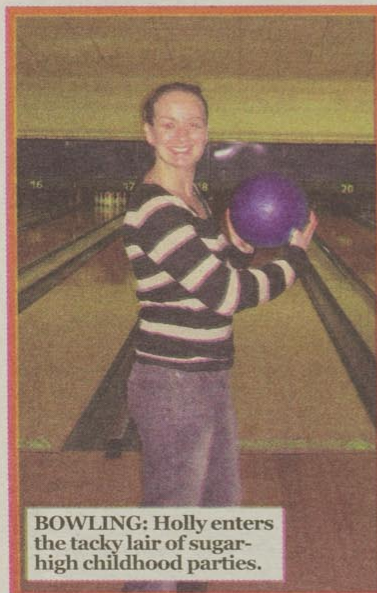
It's surprisingly quite refreshing to actually want to be a bit younger for a change, after having spent roughly the last six years doing all in my power to look older (although I'm not entirely free from this even now, as proved by the bouncer on the door at the Dry Dock last week who wouldn't let me in. Oh, the

return of the scrunchie to main-stream 'noughties' fashion. I desperately hope that she's wrong).

The first stop on the journey through my childhood was the park. I was never the type of teenager to go to the local park get drunk on cider (practically a rite of passage for most youngsters). It's because of this that parks in general retain a feeling of fun and games in my mind, and a return to the swings and slides had me grinning like a nine-year-old within minutes (my slide-based hilarity did draw me a couple of scathing looks from genuine kiddies, who obviously felt I had no right to be there, getting in the way of things!). For all those people who trudge daily through Woodhouse Moor to get to Uni, I would advise you to make a short detour and go and swing those dissertation-worries away. Do remember to keep that innocent spirit alive with the addition of a far-too-big scarf, possibly accompanied with a coat that you've got room to 'grow in to'. Love it.

My newly-recovered lease of life was, however, crushed soon after my little park excursion, on a trip to Netto (hey, don't knock it 'til you've tried it! 4 tins of Heinz Spaghetti for 99p, bargain). I dutifully trudged around the supermarket with my fellow housemates. Now, I don't know if this is the same for everyone, but my housemates have become a surrogate family whilst here at Uni - they're now the ones who give me tea and sympathy when I'm suffering, and who tell me off when I do something a bit silly. This same friendship extends to our weekly shop, where I was drawn to the sweets and chocolate aisle. Whilst I deliberated over the impossible Freddo/Taz bar decision, a housemate wandered over and reminded me of the diet I am currently supposed to be following. Dammit. I was not a happy bunny, but what could I do but replace the offending goodies back on the shelf? Well... I then remembered my endeavours this week, and a devilish little part of my mind reminded me that there was something I could do - I could throw a tantrum. Let me tell you ladies and gentlemen, there is nothing like the release that you can feel from literally stamping your feet and sulking. Loudly. Face-down on the Netto floor, I released all my pent-up aggression of being denied a few E-

PLAY TIME: Holly scares away the locals.



BOWLING: Holly enters the tacky lair of sugar-high childhood parties.

shame). Despite this, I thought my efforts this week warranted a return to some of my early-nineties hair fashions, so I whacked on a shiny gold Alice-band and a scrunchie in my plait and I was good to go (a close friend has predicted a

numbers. Probably not the best action from a personal-hygiene point of view, but fun nonetheless, especially when I managed to attract the attention of one particularly sensible woman who admonished me with the classic line "Are you going to get up now, you naughty girl?"

Back at home, I found a more sedate return to childhood as I revisited some favourite old TV shows whilst tucking into a proper old-school dinner (fish fingers, oven chips and beans, what every growing girl needs). Thanks to the internet, it is so easy to view the TV shows of yesteryear that even a technophobe such as me managed it. During my wanderings I came across a couple of series of 'Maid Marian and her Merry Men' and a good portion of the original 'Mighty Morphin Power Rangers' - truly a classic (did anyone else have a crush on the green Ranger? I think it was his ponytail that did it for me). 'The New Adventures of Superman'

was also a great trip down memory [Lois] lane, although my cynical adult self is now unable to watch Teri Hatcher without thinking of her horrendous appearances in 'Desperate Housewives'. My televisual reminiscences wouldn't have been complete without a bit of drama, in the form of the old staple 'Grange Hill'. I found one hilarious excerpt from the 'Grange' on youtube, from an episode when Kevin Jenkins accidentally takes LSD - surely a triumph of (unbelievable) screenwriting. Another high-drama moment was found in PJ's birthday episode on 'Byker Grove', which ends with the incredibly moving (ahem) line: "Hold us, Debbie, just hold us" with what sounds suspiciously like low-grade porn-music saxophone playing in the background - they definitely don't make 'em like they used to. I then went on to have a telly revelation on Monday, when I discovered that itv2 shows daily repeats of early '90s 'Ricki Lake' - go Ricki, go Ricki - I

Fancy Dress Re-freshed

Fancy dress is a staple of the Leeds student experience - the Otley Road is frequently littered with sexy Santas, wasted witches and drunken doctors. But is this fancy dress or just dressing to impress? **Sita Balani** asks, is the sexualisation of fancy dress undermining the imaginative art of costume?

The fancy dress tradition appears to have become synonymous with student life: originating in RAG events, it has now become an end in itself rather than a fundraising gimmick. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Leeds: you can hardly move on the Otley Road without being assaulted by a gang of tipsy Smurfs or pisshead pirates. In fact, fancy dress has become so extraordinarily popular that in busy periods, such as Halloween, costume shop Amazing Party Company employs a bouncer and operates a 'one-in-one-out' policy to control the crowds.

Unfortunately, a fight for the last pair of fairy wings is just one of the dangers that our attitude to dressing up could pose. The spirit of fancy dress has deviated from the admirable premise of looking like an arse and having a laugh; the reality in 2008 is rather more unsettling. Now, fancy dress has got to be sexy. No longer is a witch an ugly, wart-sporting, cloak-wearing old hag, but a hot pant-clad beauty in a full make-up and a black hat. Even the most staid, innocuous cultural figure can be sexed-up. A perfect example can be found at Christmas Fruity - if you thought Santa Claus was a fat old man with a long, white beard then



WITCHCRAFT: Fatal, not funny.

ten minutes in the Union on the last Friday of term would certainly disabuse you of such anachronistic ideas. The place was swarming with identikit 'slutty santas' in Ann Summers best-selling 'Mrs Santa' outfit.

Some fancy dress themes make no effort to mask their sexualisation: 'tarts and vicars' has been rebranded as 'pimps and hookers' with men in trilbies and women in fishnets becoming a ubiquitous presence in pubs and clubs. While this appears to be harmless, presenting prostitution as a game to be played makes a mockery of the abuse sex workers suffer.

Men, however, seem to have escaped some of the pressure to don sexy costumes. Instead, many opt for their usual jeans-and-shirt combination set off by a themed accessory. Those that do dress up tend toward costumes that eschew sex appeal in favour of fun, folly and foolishness. These qualities should be at the heart of our desire to dress up: fancy dress ought to be the last bastion of unselfconscious, childish, careless fun. Dressing up is an opportunity for creativity and self-expression, free from the societal pressures that stop most of us from wearing cowboy hats to seminars. Instead, fancy dress has become yet another way for 'raunch culture' to infiltrate our campuses.

Dancers in bikinis at Fruity; a night called 'I Love Sex' at Nu Bar; student nights at strip club Red Leopard all combine to suggest that when it comes to women's clothes on a night out, less is definitely more. This attitude is not new: women's bodies have been reduced to sex objects for centuries, but that doesn't mean we ought to allow this to continue and escalate in student culture. The places costumes are bought and the pubs and clubs they are worn in

all make a phenomenal amount of profit out of students, so it is up to us all to spend our loans in industries that don't promote the commodification of the female body.

Moreover, it is up to us to reclaim fancy dress from this dull, homogenising sexualisation of our social lives and communal spaces. Instead of being a 'sexy' pirate, be a filthy, bearded, limping one; instead of Felicity Shagwell, go as Austen Powers. Finally, instead of spending your cash on overpriced PVC from Ann Summers, make a costume Blue Peter-style from toilet roll tubes and sticky-backed plastic. For most people, entering the workforce signals the end of opportunities for drunken dressing-up on a regular basis, so let's enjoy it while we can. Fishnets will exist forever but the spirit of fancy dress is under threat - you have been warned.

Doctors and Nurses

Have you been to a hospital recently? If not, you might be surprised to hear that the nurses do not, in fact, wear PVC mini skirts and 4-inch heels. Why not track down some scrubs and go as a sadistic surgeon?

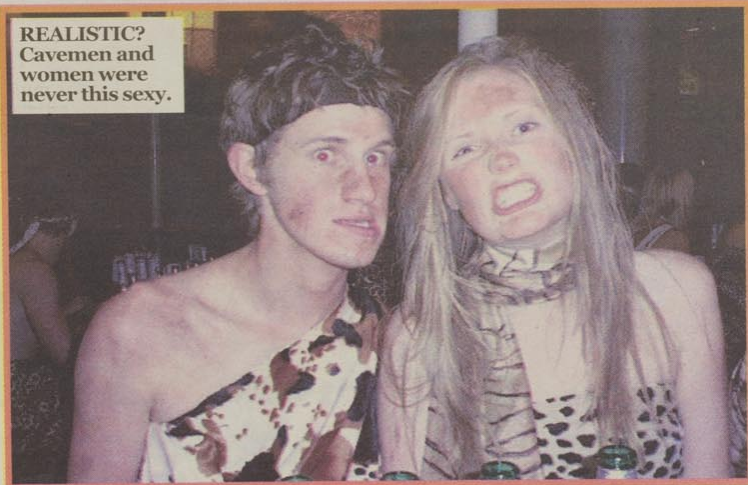
School Boys and School Girls

For many of us, it's only been a few years since school uniform was a mandatory curse so why people are so keen on donning their old school ties is, frankly, a mystery! And the implications of the phrase 'sexy school girl' are more than a little worrying. Forget the whole business and find a more original theme...

Playboy Bunnies

A brand that promotes plastic surgery, pornography and prostitution, and has products directed at 8 year olds ought to be condemned not supported - dress up as an actual rabbit, complete with buck teeth and a carrot.

REALISTIC?
Cavemen and
women were
never this sexy.



Keeping Healthy: Sex and Booze

Sexual Health

Sexual health is not just about the absence of infection. It's about feeling good about yourself and enjoying positive experiences of sex. This includes been able to make choices about your sex life, and feeling in control.

Chlamydia Screening

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection that is present in 1 in every 10 sexually active young people. It has very few symptoms and can lead to infertility. Free tests for Chlamydia are available all over Leeds, including at the University. Next testing sessions in the LUU building are: Feb 5th Room 2 & 19th Room 4.



SAFE (Sexual Health Awareness for Everyone) is a project run by students for students. SAFE volunteers

carry out lots of activities over the course of the year including running a confidential Q and A email service:

<http://www.luuonline.com/safe/sexualhealthquestions.php>

Terrence Higgins Trust Fastest

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Women: Max: 2-3 units of alcohol per day (14 units per week).

DYING TO BE BEAUTIFUL?

In a world obsessed with appearance **Clarisse Earle** explores the dangers of looking good. How far are we willing to go and do we know the dangers?

We are living in a society obsessed with beauty, body and general appearance. Everyday we're exposed to images depicting tiny celebrities surviving on a diet of broccoli and carrot sticks, padded out with a healthy injection of drink and drugs. Add to this the fact that it is now the New Year, aka the time for us to detox our lives, bodies and minds - yeah right. Everywhere that you look, from newspapers to magazines to TV programmes the message is the same: that since Christmas you have begun to resemble Jabba the Hutt and it's therefore time for a major overhaul to turn you into the next Victoria Beckham. But what lengths will the women and men of today go to in order to achieve the image of perfection? Even those of us who don't have thousands of pounds to spend on butt implants are putting ourselves at risk every day in order to look good.

Let's start with cosmetics. Yes, chances are if you're a woman or Russell Brand you will own a fair amount of them. Even Jo Brand can be seen sporting foundation, eyeliner and eyeshadow. But what are cosmetics? Short answer: a shit load of chemicals. And whether or not they've been tested on animals, the scary thing is that we have no clue about some of the long term effects of some of the products on our shelves. The main constituents of cosmetics are fragrances and preservatives, both of which have been found to cause a variety of skin problems.

Over 5000 kinds of fragrances can be found in cosmetic products alone. The make-up industry remains poorly regulated and many chemicals put into products are not even tested beforehand. Not only this but products are generally labelled in order to sell rather than to inform the consumer, with terms such as "natural" and "hypoallergenic" lacking any official definition. Many dangerous chemicals are now deemed "permissible" in beauty products as long as certain dosages are adhered to.

Today the human body contains 300 chemical toxins in its tissues that were not found before 1940. It's strange that with more and more of us paying attention to what we put into our bodies, most people pay far less attention to what we put onto them. Cosmetics have been suspected of causing cancer, liver damage, and disrupting immunotoxins and hormones which can cause birth defects. Research shows that the average person's morning routine puts them into contact with over 100 chemicals before breakfast (and I'm not talking about a morning bong). Scary stuff, considering that even if we do take a sneaky peek at some of the labels in the bathroom cabinet, chances are that the sight of all those scary dioxo, monoxo, phthalate words will just cause us to shrug and carry on.

But it doesn't just stop there. Cosmetics are after all the tamer side of suffering to look good. From waxing, to tanning, to cosmetic

Nicki Goodman-
Fashion
Student- First
Year



I never think about throwing my make-up away, unless it's all dried up and you can't use it. As for the chemicals that they put into the make-up, I don't even spare them a second thought. I sometimes look at the labels out of curiosity, but I don't understand what all the chemical names mean so it makes no difference.

Hollie Stone-
Biology-
Second Year



I think that the occasional bit of plastic surgery is fine in order to make yourself feel better, as long as it doesn't interfere with your life. Sometimes however surgery can go too far and can become obscene, with people looking like out of proportion freaks when they've had too much surgery. I would personally never rule out surgery for myself when I grow older.

Joanne Green-
Food Studies
and Nutrition-
Second Year



I usually always try and use natural alternatives as all the talk of cosmetic dangers scares me. I often use natural yoghurt and chocolate for my face and I find that toothpaste sorts out the occasional pimple. I also use avocado for a hair mask. All of these are good, cheap alternatives to moisturisers and other such cosmetic products.

Andy Jordan-
Civil
Engineering-
First Year



I occasionally use moisturiser on my face but I have no clue what's in it. I figure that if it's on the shelves it must be ok. Saying that however, I used to use face wash and noticed that my skin got quite dry and flaky, so I guess it must make a difference.

surgery, you can do pretty much anything to your body if you have the money and the courage. You can even book yourself a nice package holiday to Thailand with plastic surgery included so that you can sun yourself on the beach while waiting for your boobs to stop looking like they've been through a round with Mike Tyson. Some of the more random treatments that you can book yourself today include nipple improvement, male breast reduction, chin/cheek implants, pectoral implants and facial liposuction. Plastic surgery among women and men has been increasing massively year on year, with an average annual increase of around 20% in the past few years. This has resulted in a large number of cowboy surgeons who are more than happy to take your money and carve you up but are far less concerned when you end up with exploding breasts as a result. Even those that do strike it lucky and have life changing surgery that instantly transforms them from the pale wallflower with the A Cup to the raring party girl who never puts a top on are at risk. After all, plastic surgery is a modern phenomenon and we really have no idea of its long term effects.

Procedures like Botox are massive in the Western world, and now you can go to have your forehead tightened as easily as going to the hairdressers for a quick trim. There are even companies that specialise in Botox parties for hen nights and suchlike. The amount of under 18s undertaking cosmetic surgery has also been increasing annually, with society's preoccupation with appearance resulting in lower self-esteem and greater aspirations to emulate celebrities. Another casual but life-threatening treatment is that of tanning beds, which are shown to more than double the risk of cancer in those under 25, and yet remain most popular with a young clientele. Even here at Leeds Uni you can pop down to the Sports Centre and have a quick ten minutes in a tanning booth to make you look more like a prune and boost your cancer risk. But at least you'll have a tan!

So, basically forget the organic grub and focus for a second on what you're doing to your body in order to be beautiful. I'm not of course suggesting that you ditch all your Benefit make-up and start washing with cold water but maybe its time to chuck the eyeliner that's been lurking at the bottom of your make-up bag since 2002. With all those yummy profits generated by the beauty industry it's certainly not made easy for consumers to make good, healthy choices but we can all as individuals show some awareness in what we do to ourselves. After all, the saying "You only get out what you put in" doesn't just apply to drinking 15 pints and throwing up over a cab driver.

Beauty is not just a modern preoccupation. Emphasis on attractiveness has been around for hundreds and hundreds of years. But what measures did people resort to before they could get their hands on Botox, a surgeon's knife, or some orange foundation?

Out with the old?

Ancient Times: Biblical accounts of the time of Queen Esther mention women undergoing elaborate spa treatments over a 12 month period in preparation for an audience with the King.

Now: Nowadays it is common for women to undergo spa treatments ranging from being wrapped up in seaweed to being pricked with needles in order to relax or to prepare for an event.

Skin care:

European Middle Ages: Back then women favoured pale skin, which became indicative of their social status. In order to achieve this look in the 6th Century, affluent women would cut themselves to achieve a deathly white complexion.

Now: Today we tend to favour a golden/orange glow. Women achieve this either through slathering themselves in fake tan or by resorting to a tan bed.

Hair:

Elizabethan Times: Queen Elizabeth I was in fact completely bald. That famous head of bright orange curly hair was in fact a wig made from real human hair. It was also crawling with lice and was washed on around twice a year.

Now: Around 8 out of 10 women have used hair dye at some point. Regularly dying your



hair has been shown to increase your risk of cancer. Reach for the razor and wigs ladies!

Faces:

Elizabethan Times: Cosmetic products were seen as a threat, as people felt it would block vapours and energy. Instead women used egg white to coat their faces and give them a glazed look.

Now: Any manner of cosmetic products and procedures are available ranging from moisturisers and foundations to Botox and face lifts. These products and procedures involve many toxic and carcinogenic substances.

Eyes:

Victorian Times: A poisonous substance called Belladonna was used to brighten, sparkle and whiten the eyes. Unfortunately for them Belladonna also has another name: Deadly Nightshade, the long term effects of which include blindness.

Now: The most popular products for the eyes are eyeshadow, eyeliner and mascara. It has been proven that these products often contain harmful chemicals and should be thrown away within 3 months of purchasing.

GOING TO EXTREMES?

On the subject of danger, Kerry Edwards asks... is rebelling against all the rules what it takes to become a student style icon?

After leaving the uptight world of school uniforms and 'you're not going out dressed like that' parental restrictions behind, it's not surprising that once let loose into the shopping haven that is Leeds, all rules go out the window. The independent student lifestyle allows us all to develop our own individual style and be more creative and rebellious than simply hitching up our school skirts.

However, truly breaking away from the mainstream involves throwing away the high-street trend rule book, and the fashion conscious are having to go to risky extremes to be noticed and some would rather look outrageous than play it safe. Those students who treat the daily walk to lectures as a catwalk show are clearly dressed to impress, but do they tread the fine line between cutting-edge fashion icon and shocking fashion victim? By looking at some of the most popular student trends of the year so far we can see how some

theme by the way!).

Unfortunately many fell into the pitfalls of this trend, figuring that being as insanely colourful as humanly possible was the way to go, considering Sophie Ellis Bextor-style loud eyeshadow a 'natural look'. Although you would be at less risk of being hit by a bus, just think of the confusion felt by your poor fellow students nursing hangovers who have dragged themselves to uni, only to be greeted by a lecture theatre full of glowing people. Fortunately for them it seems that Big Brother's ageing raver Tracey has single-handedly managed to show the nation the dangers of what too much neon (amongst other substances) can do to the brain and fashion sense. Now with neon fading into the background, it looks like its going to be back to black for a more sophisticated style over the winter months - until nu-nu-rave comes around that is.

Recently, metallic has been a permanent fixture in designer and high street collections and this season has seen silvers, golds, bronzes, studs and sequins adding an extra touch of gaudy glamour and luxury to student attire. Sequined shifts and sparkly heels may have given you enough dazzle on the dancefloor to outshine Oceana's huge chandelier but its probably a good idea to leave the seriously

how it's done, the boys seem to be giving them a run for their money in the edgy fashion stakes. At least they aren't doing glitter...yet.

So is your fashion motto 'less is more' or 'anything goes'? Whether your style is classic or OTT, the diversity in fashion amongst Leeds residents is surely something to celebrate. The more daring fashion darlings are revolting against the sloppy student stereotype and showing that the standard hoodie and jeans combination really doesn't make a big statement.



This anarchic attitude towards the rules of 'fashion' will inevitably lead to a fashion blunder but experimenting and breaking conventions is how the next generation of style icons is born and how fashion moves forward. Although pictures of Beth Ditto letting it all hang out in her underwear are ridiculed by celebrity magazines, her desire to be an individual and wear whatever the hell she wants is an inspiration to the fashion world. Designer of the moment Christopher Kane even chose her to collaborate with him at the Prince's Trust Fashion Rocks concert recently as he says she embodies the funky and bold style of his collection. Some may love her style, some may hate it but for celebrities who aspire to be noticed and catch the eye of the discerning public, an extreme reaction to a fashion sensation or risky disaster is definitely better than no reaction at all and just fading

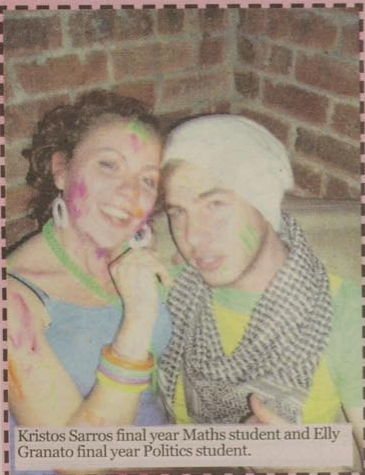
into the background. Gwen Stefani is another artist who has discovered the potential power which being a non-conformist fashion innovator brings by making a pretty penny out of her own line 'L.A.M.B' and ensuring that



Carla Rankin final year English student.

when she steps onto the red carpet all eyes are on her.

With youth and the freedom of a student lifestyle on your side, if becoming an experimental trendsetter is your ambition, now is the time to act on it. Being fashion-forward is not dressing to shock or religiously following a trend or scene, it's trying something new and interesting which could potentially flop or encourage others to follow in your flamboyant footsteps. So before you are committed to a lifetime of boring suits in the working world, whether your individual style is bohemian, emo, indie, sophisticated or just plain crazy, as long as you wear it with confidence you could be the inspiration for a designer's next collection.



Kristos Sarros final year Maths student and Elly Granato final year Politics student.

Leeds fashionistas made a stylish bold statement whilst others took 'high-fashion' to a new level of bizarre.

The explosive arrival of the nu-rave scene onto the airwaves also ignited a major trend in the fashion world for neon brights and an indie-clubwear crossover. Since most of the student population missed out on the glowsticks and whistles of the 90s rave scene, they seem to be fully embracing its reincarnation and small armies of wannabe ravers clad in top-to-toe neon have been a common sight round Leeds city centre and campus. The high street quickly caught onto this trend and ran with it: acid brights made a bold statement which took confidence to wear and flashes of colour brought excitement and a cool modern twist to plain outfits. It was pretty much impossible to escape luminous skinny jeans, retro slogan vests, leggings and accessories, and even Primark started to look like an explosion in a paint factory, making a literally blinding outfit cost mere pennies (brilliant for a fancy dress



Holly Jones, final year Classical Civilisation student.

shiny stuff in the wardrobe for a casual trip to Roger Stevens - despite looking fabulous you could prove to be a distraction.

The male student population have been confusing me this term by looking extremely on trend wearing this glam-rock style in the form of mega-watt metallic bomber jackets, with some even successfully channelling their inner Noel Fielding. Showing the Leeds ladies

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Testimony of a Barman

Pat Wallis tells afterdark of the pain and anguish of being a hardworking student behind the bar.



So, I'm sitting here in the computer cluster under the Parkinson building trying to write this article. However, I am shattered and cannot drag myself away from Facebook. Funnily enough it is not due to me being amazingly disorganised – NO! It is you lot. We all know Christmas is a busy time for students. You have to plan Xmas Eve, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve, then all the other piss-ups you will have once back at uni with your friends. For the barman/woman, though, I can guarantee this period is far more horrific.

Christmas is not a time of rest. It is not a time to rekindle your love of family life and warm to feelings of festive glee. It is long days and nights of drunken idiots from office parties. It is serving ridiculously long rounds to groups of twenty little girls who will insist on paying separately. And now, after all that, we again return to uni. Another term, another year. Will it be any different? With yet another loan instalment? Prospects are not bright.

So next time you are ordering a drink at your local, think of the lowly bar wench doing you a service. They have had a long Christmas and already the new year is not doing them any favours. Although January is nearly over now, and I am sure there's not much of the government's "free" money left, try to buy us at least one drink... just because it was Christmas, just because it was New Year's, just because it was Burn's Night, just because it was Australia day...who cares? We were working every single one of them! Happy New F-ing Year.

Leeds / afterdark.

Tequila goes to Rehab

Professional party- girl Sophie Herdman bites the bullet and travels across town to see if the new-style Tequila at Rehab is still the best Thursday night out.

With Warehouse under new management, our much-beloved Tequila has packed its bags and relocated to Rehab. Despite being in an ever so slightly more accessible venue than the last, it's still got that 'tucked down a dirty alleyway' feel. Note: very necessary when indulging in such dingy activities.

Essentially it's still the same, with those beautiful Tequila types pouring drinks all down your throat/clothes; downstairs pumps out the same golden chart-toppers whilst upstairs plays electro and d 'n' b for the more 'alternative' crowd. Although I can't really imagine why people would need a break from Kylie and Sinatra; all that drum 'n' bass is murder on my stiletto'd heels, I can tell you!

My main peeve is still with the frankly outrageous queuing times. By the time you finally get in, you have to pile into the bar to top-up the vodka/white-lightning highs that you worked so hard to reach in the first place! Fortunately, the bouncers on the door are just as smiley (if you're a pretty girl in heels and a short skirt. Loud-mouthed boys with their collars turned up are guaranteed a verbal rinsing/cuff round the ear). Boys! Keep your collars down until you get in! The effect of you stepping inside and doing a Cantona is so much sexier. The décor is actually an upgrade in relation to the Warehouse: instead of garish red sofas and modern metallic stairs, Rehab oozes old-

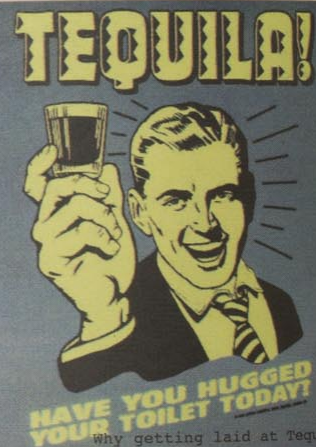
world opulence with Grecian statues and Classic-style columns; it all adds to the faux-classiness that is Tequila - and girls, guess what? Those queues for the toilet are no more! Instead boys and girls all pile in to what can only be described as a submarine type space - quite an ambitious ideal considering the carnal behaviour that was all part of the Warehouse 'charm'.

Of course, you'll save your money on the drinks that are still cheap as chips, and even the notoriously long queue for the bar has considerably shrunk. The outside area is just as sociable as the Warehouse, which is great news for the never-ending conveyor belt of girls wearing next to nothing in the winter. My only beef is that you now have to travel down a seemingly endless set of stairs to get outside, which is once again no pleasure for the stiletto'd heels. You may be fooled into thinking that Rehab is a bigger venue than the Warehouse due to the bizarrely high ceilings, but once you get onto the packed dance floor that myth will quickly be dispelled. Not that that's necessarily a bad thing; you can walk around the venue with relative ease, and then just have to dance a little too close to that boy/girl you'd like to get to know a little better.

It's still a very similar crowd of people to last year; some naughty, some nice and some plain arrogant, not that you really care if you're a regular! Of course, the legendary Tequila dance floor still has stages for

showing off and falling off (if you haven't yet done this, you've not had a true 'T' experience). Tequila's still a great night - a perfect excuse to get slightly pissed (it's 'tequila!'), pull and even get arrested. Yes, it's got a sweaty pit of a dance floor and an assortment of treacherous stairs, but where would we be without the gossip and vile rumour which emanates from your room the next morning.

They tried to make us go to Rehab and we said....Ok.



Can't get no sleep

Last Friday saw the official launch of "Insomnia" at RIOS. Having been swamped by endless Facebook emails and seeing tickets selling out fast, we ended up paying slightly more for the tickets than on a normal Friday night and so our expectations were high. The flyer said we should look forward to a mix of dirty house, filthy electro, breakbeat and d'n'b, and this is exactly what was delivered.

Not only did Insomnia's opening night boast many of the DJs often seen at the ever popular "Troubled Minds" night held at Mint, but mixed in was lots talent from further afield that helped to bring something fresh and innovative to the night. The Autobots were one such pair; already established on the worldwide stage,

they did not disappoint with their very unique sound featuring thrusting baselines and an offbeat mixture of breaks. They provided the set of the night in my opinion at least, and are well

an interior revamp and looks good, with lots of seating areas and the customary laughing gas stand, and the whole set up worked really well. The only issue is that if you want a cigarette

then the journey outside can take a while due to the lack of a smoking area, but that's the price to pay to look cool! Both dance floors had a good feel too, getting nice and full but still leaving room for you to cut your all-important shapes.

Overall Insomnia was definitely one of the better nights this year. It gave us a good venue with some of the best electronic music in Leeds and should not be missed next month. Even if you have no interest in the music then it's worth going to try something new and a little different. You never know, you might enjoy it.

words/ charlie walker



worth seeing if you get the chance.

The venue was a good choice as well; the different floors had loads of bars, although if you go beyond the "offer" drinks then things can get a little pricey but you aren't in too much danger of breaking the bank. RIOS has just had



A little bit of old, a little bit of new...

Karim Khan investigates the hype surrounding South Central and the rep revolving around Vitalic.

There are a range of reasons to go to the Union for a night out these days. Some nights rely on fetish-wear, others on snowflakes falling from the ceiling, and others still depend on Vitalic and South Central. Amongst the throng of DJs and MCs it was definitely those two acts that left their mark on Wax:On last Saturday. The brains behind the night have created quite a nice little roster of 'big boys', but even I was surprised that they had the foresight to book such a respectable (read 'mature') artist as Vitalic. Leeds is known for its love of straight electro (or for wherever the winds of 'en vogue' music blow), but the harder, more traditional lines of Vitalic's set were a perfect match for the rockier, punkier dance themes emanating from Mine.

Speaking of Mine, I don't especially enjoy giving the university credit, but with that little wooden tunnel they have really come up roses. Its dimensions remind one of the old Blank Canvas venue down in town... anyone agree? In any case, it's one of the best venues for clubbing in Leeds, especially when the bass bins are being teased and cajoled to such climactic

perfection as orchestrated by South Central. The two geeks/geezers from Brighton were truly dirty and delightful in equal measure, changing facial expression from snarling grimaces to beaming smiles as The Klaxons' 'The Bouncer' remix was played, as was, somewhat audaciously, Radiohead's 'Idioteque'. Both dressed in black hoodies, South Central were veritable nutters, jumping around, flailing and generally being very Nathan Fake-ish about it all.

There was an element of suspense surrounding Vitalic, but as the huge blue 'V' began its first revolution onstage (a testament to the great and perennially unsung VJs), the pressurised, mechanical beats broke the crowd out into fits of frantic shape-throwing. Ahhh, Bisto. The absolute pro, Vitalic let his music do the talking - in contrast to DJ Matt Walsh who was seen standing on various tables throughout the evening whilst STILL being able to mix properly. Long, primate-like arms, obviously. Nevertheless, bangers from Vitalic such as 'Poney part 1' and 'La Rock 01' caused general madness amongst the crowd and

inspired real appreciation for the veteran mixer. Now all the night needs is an outside smoking area that doesn't resemble a wind-tunnel.



Remember the future...

With technology hurtling along at warp drive, Ben Puddle discovers how clubbing is changing in the 21st century.

Telepresence, interactive billboards, the Beat Dress, programmable LED kinetics and membrane walls all sound like inventions found in science fiction novels. Yet the science of our brave new world has made its way into club-land and it could forever change how we enjoy our nights out.

Telepresence is a technology that is becoming increasingly popular in the corporate world. The system delivers real-time, face-to-face interactions between people and places in their work and personal lives using advanced visual, audio, and collaboration technologies. These technologies transmit life-size, high-definition images and spatial discrete audio. Now it's easier than ever to discern facial expressions for those crucial discussions across the "virtual table." Imagine if you were in club and you sat down around a semi circular table and were able to hold a conversation with some half the world away. You would be sat in front of huge concave screen, and on it would be

clubbers on another continent. The possibilities envisaged are akin to a pseudo-tolodeck found in Star Trek. A wall of the club could be the mirror image of people raving in a different time zone. The Womb club in Tokyo and the Womb club in London could unite clubbers in way previously thought virtually impossible.

In the Minority Report there were ad screens that changed according to each passer-by; they recognised different people and registered their movements. The police also had touch sensitive walls. This future fantasy is now a reality. Innovations on display at the grandly named Brussels Microsoft

Executive Briefing Centre include a mirror which can remember and display people who have looked in it, computers capable of examining and telling the difference between objects, and a smart surface on which

documents, maps and videos can be manipulated by hand gestures. The use of such technology in clubs would take visuals and décor into the future; it could allow clubbers to interact and alter their environment.

The glow stick has been a key weapon in the clubber's arsenal, but that is all about to change. The Beat Dress was designed as part of a Fashion and Technology project at Malmö University. A tiny microphone and equalizers respond to the music and cause 100 LED's to pulsate in time to the tunes. Two layers of nubilous nylon make you appear as if you are a flashing cloud. Designer Calle Rosenqvist said she wanted to make non-dancers in clubs look more interesting.

The Watergate club in Berlin was designed by the architects Bolwin & Wulf. One of the key features of this club is the programmable LED kinetic ceiling that twinkles and pulsates to create a mesmeric light display. With energy conservation now such a critical issue, it is worth noting that the exceptional efficiency of the intelligent colour-changing LED system consumes only about 10 percent of the power that would have been necessary to achieve similar results with conventional light sources. It is enjoyable, eco-friendly and club experience enhancing technology.

Confessions of a Stripper

In a new weekly column, our saucy sex pot Roxy gives us a insight into the world of an erotic dancer.



Dear diary, feeling pretty knackered after last night. Cannot believe I managed to get up for work today. If my boss knew what I did through the night, she really wouldn't give me my promotion.

Had a couple of guys in last night, just turned 18, first time in a strip club and they'd just been paid. My god, they were like kids in a sweet shop. I did my first dance for the cute one and as I wriggled out of my tiny bra and panties the look on his face showed a mixture of amazement and pure enjoyment! He kept coming back for more and so did his mate...most of my night's earnings came from those 2 cuties.

Had to work hard for the rest of the nights, but the bending over the bar whilst waiting for my drink did the trick (will have to remember that for Friday night).

A girl cannot moan though (well, depends what you are doing to me); I mean, going to work and having a laugh three nights a week, getting drinks, chatting to loads of hot guys and showing off the body I have worked hard for! It's not all bad.

Love Roxy x

Gay Abandon

February is the gayest month. Fact.

To celebrate LGBT History month, The Cockpit is hosting hot bands each week before its queer Thursday night Ice Cream.

7th Feb- Yes Miss No Miss- all girl, all gay talent.

14th Feb- Idiometric- plus Valentines party.

21st Feb- Jesus and the Felch Monkeys- nuff said.

28th Feb- The Declines- influenced by Flames.

IN THE HANDS

Giving the world of cinema a kick in the balls, former Leeds star Ben Winston stars in the new movie, *In the Hands of the Gods*. Paul Bentley interviews Ben on freestyle, the Leeds elite, and just how far a love of the beautiful game can take you

It is always surprising when a truly decent football film comes out. For each of its glorious fist-in-the-air on-screen moments football has spurred an array of hands-on-head-recoil-in-embarrassment catastrophes. *Fever Pitch* - a passionate portrayal of modern fanaticism adapted from Nick Hornby's equivocally named bestseller - is now over a decade old. Think of the wreckage that lies in its wake. Mike Bassett: England Manager. Goal! Green Street. The vaguely football-related but more Kiera Knightley in a sports bra-related Bend it Like Beckham. Hardly life-affirming cinema.

The latest football film to be released - *In the Hands of the Gods* - is a documentary following five football freestylers as they busk their penniless selves from England, through The United States and down to Argentina in hope of meeting their hero, Diego Maradona.

The release of *In the Hands of the Gods* at the Cinema last summer - the largest ever release of a UK documentary - was met with much critical acclaim. The *Times* described it as 'Life affirming... It has everything'. Baz Bamigboe at the *Daily Mail* stated that it is an 'illuminating story, I was totally hooked'. *Empire* tagged it 'A blinder'. The *Daily Star* labelled it 'The feel good factor film of 2007'. *Zoo* tipped it for an Oscar and a BBC Film critic wrote that it is 'The funniest yet most touching documentary I have ever seen'.

It is always so unusual - such a shocking relief - to hear of the arrival of a new, genuinely fresh football flick.

Perhaps even more surprising though is the fact that the production team behind *In the Hands of the Gods* is made up of recent university graduates. Fulwell 73 consists of four friends in their mid-twenties, one of whom, Ben Winston, completed the Broadcasting degree at Leeds just over three years ago.

When I meet up with Ben to discuss the DVD release of *In the Hands of the Gods*

the conversation heads straight to life in Leeds. I mention to him my lack of plans for the next few days - you know how it is, a bit of reading, some TV, an occasional meal, possibly a night out - and Ben's usually characteristic eloquence is momentarily lost. He grins, unconvincingly, and then groans: 'I miss being a student.'

One might presume a fledgling filmmaker like himself would be revelling in new-found success - laughing heartily over

“He grins, unconvincingly, and then groans: ‘I miss being a student.’”

cocktails with Jude Law and Ewan McGregor - at least sipping cheap chardonnay with Chanelle and Samanda. Ben, however, pines for life back on campus.

"The thing is, I didn't use my first two years at Leeds wisely and I regret it. In first year I was down back to London all the time. In second year I left Uni for three months to make a behind the scenes documentary for Teachers on Channel 4. I only started relaxing and enjoying Uni life in third year."

Considering his career, time out to make a Channel 4 documentary would seem like time well-spent. Ben accepts that he used his time at Leeds wisely in terms of his work: "yes, I definitely used uni to make sure I was in the right place for my career. The Broadcasting degree helped me massively. At Leeds I learnt how things work and what shots look good. I actually made my first documentary at Leeds, following around the Leeds Student. When making *In the Hands of the Gods* there were many times I referred back to things I'd learnt through documentary courses at Leeds." It is, however, taking for granted the less serious but no less important social aspects of life in Leeds that Ben rues.

"It's just, now that I'm older I miss it. You don't go out every night and you're not living with all your mates all the time. I miss being surrounded by my friends. I look back

at that time at Leeds and think: did I make the most of it? I'm not sure I did."

Whether or not Ben was making the most of his life back then, he certainly is now. To have created such an acclaimed piece of cinema just a few years out of uni is an enormous achievement.

In the Hands of the Gods is a real gem. It is about football freestylers and their utterly mesmerising tricks but is at the same time about so much more than just football skills. It is about five of the most unlikely friends united simply by a shared love of their craft: the dynamics of the group as real and gymnastic as the art they practice.

Ben elaborates: "This is the crucial nub of the film. The boys are five of the most interesting kids you could meet. You've got a devout Christian, Jeremy, who doesn't go out after 8.30 at night because he doesn't like seeing scantily-clad women, he won't swear and he thinks everyone who hasn't let Jesus into their lives is going to hell. You've got a London playboy, Danny, who's totally mollycoddled by his mum and girlfriend. He's never lifted a finger for himself and suddenly he's homeless in New York. Then there's Woody, a failed footballer who's got a chip on his shoulder. He'll do absolutely anything to make sure he succeeds. He also has compulsive tendencies that verge on OCD, a general nervous energy about him and an obsession with Diego that borders on insanity.

"You've also got Sammy Hall who moved here from Somalia during the civil war aged seven. His sister was shot on his way out of Somalia. His mum had to do all sorts of things to get him here. He then settles in Leeds, falls out with his mum, gets into

gang crime and drug dealing and ends up living on a Quick-Save roof in Harehills in Leeds by the time we meet him. And yet, through freestyle, he's friends with a devout Christian who thinks he's going to hell.

"And then there's Mikey, the cheeky scouser, who's just the most annoying bloke in the world.

"Woody approached us to see if we would document their trip and we thought, hold on a second, these five boys are going to travel across the world with each other. We've got something here. This has the potential to be so much more than a football film. Which I think it is."

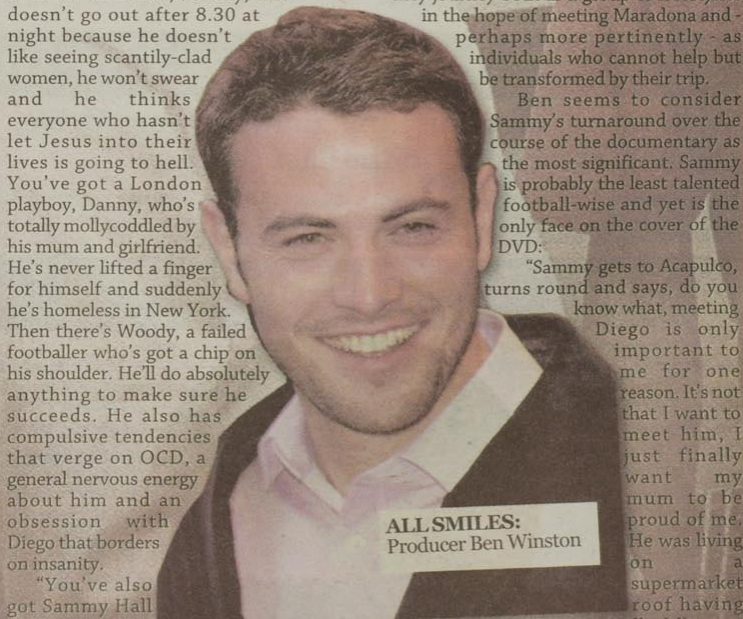
The mix of these characters, huddled together in the most intense of situations, makes for an intriguing tale. One in which they journey both as a group of freestylers in the hope of meeting Maradona and - perhaps more pertinently - as individuals who cannot help but be transformed by their trip.

Ben seems to consider Sammy's turnaround over the course of the documentary as the most significant. Sammy is probably the least talented football-wise and yet is the only face on the cover of the DVD:

"Sammy gets to Acapulco, turns round and says, do you know what, meeting

Diego is only important to me for one reason. It's not that I want to meet him, I just finally want my mum to be proud of me. He was living on a supermarket roof having totally fallen out

with his mum. Now he's back with his mum, he's got a flat and has been signed up by Kate Moss's agents Storm. There's a huge 18ft poster of him in Piccadilly Circus and another on Oxford Street. His is a crazy



ALL SMILES:
Producer Ben Winston

OF THE GODS

ent Ben Winston has made it to Hollywood with his football
ure out how a Leeds lad can end up rubbing shoulders with the

story."

In the Hands of the Gods is a raw and honest depiction of friendship, passion and the persistence required in pursuit of a dream - whatever and however bizarre that dream might be. It is not, however, just the freestylers who were pursuing a dream. I ask Ben whether his production team's journey as first-time film-makers mirrored that of the boys.

"We definitely learnt a lot whilst making the film; it's been quite a few difficult years in the making."

Shortly after leaving Leeds Ben and friends set up Fulwell 73 with an idea that would eventually become In the Hands of the Gods. At the time it was a Jackass-style TV programme called Footballing in which tricksters performed bizarre tricks in various public locations, such as doing kick-ups with oranges at supermarkets and skills wearing skis at dry ski slopes. The Footballing experience soon, however, turned sour.

"We worked with MTV on it for 8 months. After that time MTV turned round and said there's good news and bad news. Good news is the show has been commissioned. Bad news is we're doing it in-house without you. It was a huge blow and made me seriously consider leaving the industry. We looked into legal proceedings but realised that though we had a case it would take three years of our lives and all our money."

It was a difficult time for Ben and his team and they took some time out to recover from the let-down. Just a few months later though Woody approached them with the idea of travelling across the world to meet Diego: "it was a crackers idea and we absolutely loved it."

"We've grown a hell of a lot making this film. When you're at uni you want to be

something. I wanted to be film-maker. Suddenly I found myself in Argentina with a crew around me and some of my best mates making the film with me, thinking: this is mad. I'd only just left Leeds. We're on this trip and somehow we are film-makers, we are those things we wanted to be."

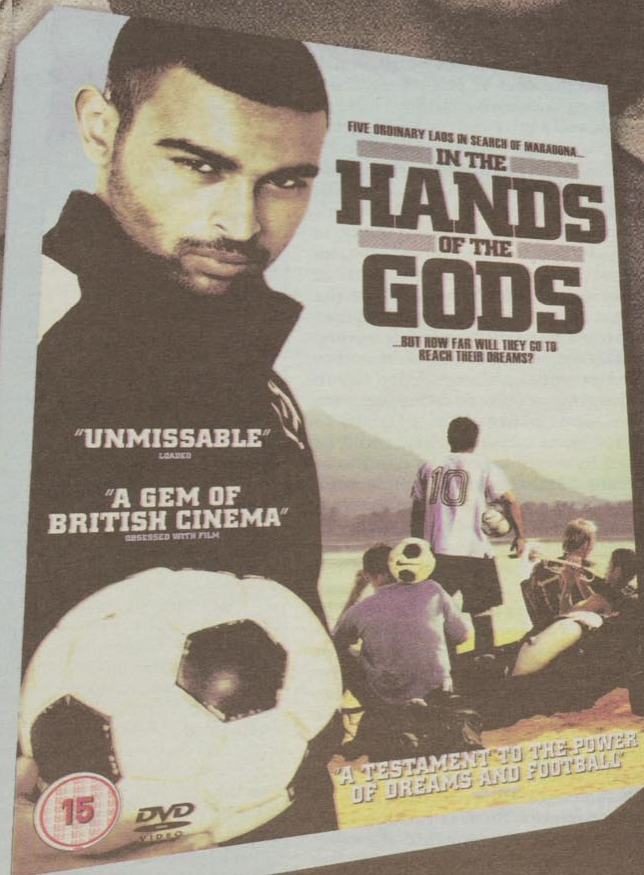
Incidentally, the MTV story has a happy ending: "Once we made the film some

“ [The MTV fiasco] was a huge blow and made me seriously consider leaving the industry.

people at MTV called us saying, 'we love the film, we want to make an MTV Special about it.' They were obviously completely different people at MTV who didn't know our history with the channel. We didn't know what to do - they are the enemy for us: the antichrist. Anyway, we decided to go on it - it was too good an offer to refuse. But I turned up wearing a T-Shirt with the words 'Who's laughing now Jilly P?' on it. Jilly P is, of course, the producer at MTV who screwed us over. It was shown three times a day on her channel for two weeks. She saw it and went berserk - absolutely wild. We had the last laugh in the end."

Looking back, smiling gloriously as Ben does at this moment of triumph over the MTV bigwigs, I ask whether he genuinely misses life at Leeds. The green turf

that was laid out as a subverted red-carpet at his film's Leicester Square premier is surely far greener than the marshland of Hyde Park. "Yes, I guess the grass is greener now," Ben replies "but I'd love a month or two back at uni. I still wish I'd made the most of my time at Leeds whilst I was there."



GREEN
WOLF
FILMS

LIONSGATE

Tea-side

by Helena



Sheryl Crow is on the brink of releasing her sixth album. Not that big a deal admittedly, but Sheryl joins a growing number of artists who feel compelled to speak out against their president in releasing a politically orientated and specifically anti-Bush record.

So what's interesting about American musicians growing some balls and speaking out against their leader? Well, it's not so much of a surprise that Rock and Punk bands like anti-flag, Green Day and Bad Religion have done it, they're supposed to. But country girls the Dixie Chicks, high-profilers R.E.M., and R'n'B man Kenny 'Babyface' Edmonds (co writer of Bobby Brown's 'Humpin' Around') join a roster of the more unlikely acts to denounce Bush. These artists risk loss of income, loss of popularity and a vacation to Guantanamo Bay, but, as Sheryl so aptly puts it, 'it's about being forced to wake up', innit?

The Dixie Chicks are perhaps the most controversial addition to the anti-Bush Brigade, being both from the deep south and a genre of music that is stereotypically associated with patriotism and arguably, American-supremacy. After announcing they are 'ashamed that the President is from Texas' the backlash they encountered was severe and unforgiving. Radio stations across the state refused to play the group's records, even encouraging people to bin their own copies and bring the CDs to a demonstration at which they would be crushed by a bulldozer. The band have been sent deaththreats, shunned from the country scene, and, possibly most shockingly, were rejected by the American Red Cross when they attempted to donate a million dollars because the charity felt the controversy surrounding the band's statement rendered them 'unable' to accept it.

The *Rock Against Bush* tour is the most high profile demonstration of negative feeling towards the Bush administration to date. The artists who unite under the banner 'Vote for Change' include Conor Oberst (of Bright Eyes fame), Death Cab for Cutie, Bonnie Raitt and Crosby, Stills and Nash. Nick Harmer, Death Cab's bassist, declares 'Bush is fucking evil', highlighting the vehemence of feeling amongst the opposition.

In response to the tour, Bush's campaign manager rather graciously referred to it as a 'cute idea'...

Anyway, I will leave you with the words of one of our very own anti-Bush icons, the unparalleled Ian Brown: So, tell me, just how come were the Taliban/ sat burning incense in Texas/ roaming round in a Lexus/ sittin' on six billion oil drums... it's a commercial crusade, 'cause all the oil men get paid.

Album of the Week

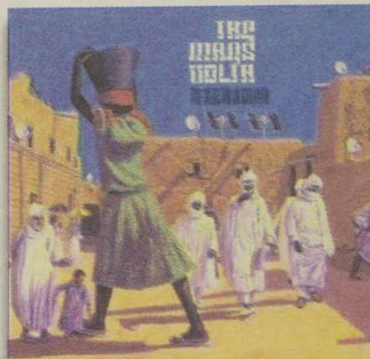
The Mars Volta

The Bedlam in Goliath

(Island)

'How weird can music get?' seems to be the question that inspired this album. Nothing in the world sounds like The Mars Volta, and this is their most individual album to date.

The music itself is extremely inventive. Lopez fuses almost imperceptible world music influences (samba, mariachi, Eastern European folk and Arabian religious music) with unbelievably loud metal and rock music. His mastery of implied harmony, created by interweaving guitar, bass and synth lines, is evident throughout. Sometimes, the harmony comes to the forefront, and Lopez's chords move in grandiose, forceful sequences, seeming to drag the individual instruments along with them. The music is written in such an unobtrusively powerful way that the other quirks of the record are



allowed full opportunity to come through, without seeming like afterthoughts.

Several further things make this album, and this band, different from any other. The quality of performance and recording is remarkable. The drums in particular sound loud, clear, and savagely, brutally rhythmic, accentuating the sense of aggressive tribalism heavily and without remorse. One of Lopez's greatest achievements as a producer is to



Underworld

Oblivion With Bells

(Underworldlive)

Back in the early '90s, Underworld were exponents of a unique form of house music, which, combined with singer Karl Hyde's lunatic stream-of-consciousness vocals, provided their trademark sound. They consistently released albums that encapsulated a wide spectrum of dance music, culminating in 1999's *Beaucoup Fish*, and achieved brief worldwide fame in 1996 with the single 'Born Slippy', which even now triggers a Pavlovian response amongst beered-up clubbers. Since the release of an anthology in 2003, however, there has been silence from Underworld until now.

Coming five years after their last album proper (2002's *A Hundred Days Off*), their fifth effort is a much more downbeat affair. Where the beats were once pounding, they are now merely part of the overall effect, giving *Oblivion With Bells* a much more widescreen sound. First single 'Crocodile' is the only traditional Underworld moment, leaving the other ten tracks to blend into each other.

Not that this is necessarily a bad thing; quite a lot of them sound like the beautiful 1993 single 'Rez'. The shimmering synths of 'Beautiful Burnout' and 'Best Mangu Ever' are luscious chill-out music at its best, and the overall impression is that of listening to a film soundtrack rather than a typical studio album. The only problem is that most of the LP is simply boring, faceless ambience. There are no stand-out tracks or obvious singles, making *Oblivion With Bells* a bit of an oddity in the Underworld back catalogue. If one were to start listening to Underworld, this would probably not be the first port of call - however, for those accustomed to their general Essex lunacy, this album provides a welcome return to the scene. (6)

words/ edmund biggs



All Our Good Friends

Promise

(Mumbo)

In a world all too saturated with mindless wankers pelting out the most generic idea of the touching in order to make a sale, the debut album from Johnny Daukes penetrates heartgaspingly close to the chest; a blanket of beautiful aches that will simultaneously vex and soothe your own. Delicate melodies complement Daukes' slightly-too-close vocals, making this the most intimate, anguished record I've heard so far this year.

What with being male, and really rather good, Daukes's work has prompted several comparisons with Thom Yorke. This is not an assessment I have as much quarrel with as I expected to upon glancing over the press release; whilst the discomfiting 'Happiness' really oughtn't feature on this album at all, sonic slips are rare against the frequency of genuine beauty and cohesion. 'Long Enough to Bring You Back' is a pinnacle of tormented gorgeousness, echoing the last vestiges of good in Cohen's later work; 'Replay' creeps and twinges, wrapping tongues of static guitar around each other, oddly calming in spite of its intense eeriness.

Sometimes we find a home in that which disturbs us. *Promise* shows us our pains and our failings and assures us they are shared and able to be transformed into something transcendent. How many millions of songs have been written about loss - and yet 'Down' could freshen anyone's wounds in its wash of quiet majesty. This is no factory cure for the painfully uninspired, but a work of art.

Take, for instance, 'A Good Friend of Mine', which evokes memory and inhabits the soul, finally tripping into an electric writhe with a depth akin to that of 'Rock 'n' Roll Suicide'. This music will rip the bottom out of your everything. This man is magic. (8)

words/ liz grashoff

Albums.

make every instrument sound the loudest all the time, with guitars biting through in the upper register, and the bass always pervading the listener's non-vital organs.

This record's greatest asset, however, is the voice of Cedric Bixler Zavala. Bixler has a more violent falsetto than Axl Rose, and more subtlety than Paul Young. He screams wildly over the seemingly chaotic yet remarkably tight accompaniments, paying little heed to metre or phrase length, and inserting semitonal movements into the melodies that you would willingly bet your bottom dollar against, but which enhance the harmony every single time. Bixler draws all the eccentricities of this record together with his inimitable sense of timing and phrase, and his unfeasibly powerful, impressive voice.

The only reason this record doesn't get ten out of ten is its lack of mass appeal. Although the songs are full of hooks, there remains too much to distract the casual listener. The very things which make this album great make it very difficult to enjoy unless you're alone in a dark room. My advice is to buy a copy, and listen to it until you like it. (9)

words/ george reece



Lightspeed Champion

Falling off the Lavender Bridge

(Domino)

It's easy to hate Dev Hynes. Before even hearing *Falling off the Lavender Bridge*, the debut album from his Lightspeed Champion project, I thought I knew what to say about it: 'absolute rubbish', 'talentless Hoxtonite', etc. I was expecting to be able to spew bile onto the page from every orifice and leave you, o reader, with one of the most venomous write-ups this paper has ever seen. Unfortunately, anyone expecting that will be disappointed.

That said, anyone expecting this to be a fantastic album will also be disappointed. Yes, *Falling off the Lavender Bridge* - elegantly produced by Mike Mogis - is a surprisingly mature folk album; however, the maturity tends all too often to lapse into the pedestrian, as proven by singles 'Galaxy of the Lost' and 'Tell Me What It's Worth'. They're perfectly nice songs, but played and sung in so competent a manner that it takes Cursive legend Tim Kasher's backing vocals to inject the latter with any sense of feeling whatsoever.

Not that Hynes lacks ambition, as evidenced by 'Midnight Surprise', an unwieldy beast which sounds like every idea conceived during Conor Oberst's entire career condensed into a single, ten-minute epic. Sometimes, though, he overdoes it, as on the horribly titled 'Devil Tricks for a Bitch', which is needlessly lavished with a string quartet. Still, when Dev tempers his pretensions, he gets it right big time; 'Dry Lips' sounds like The Good Life covering 'This Modern Love' - a complex but catchy three minutes of despairing angst. Even better is 'Everyone I Know Is Listening to Crunk', a pedal steel-drenched beauty of a song: if he can craft an entire album as catchy and concise as this, he'll be regarded as the genius he clearly is (in his head). Either way, he should stop dressing like a twat. It might help. (4)

words/ alex wisgard

Live.

Gig of the Week

The Wombats

The Cluny, Newcastle

25/01/08

Brother James and sister Hannah provide the talent for quirky folk rock band Winterkids. They claim their influences are the 'past 1000 years of popular music'. That's the sort of vibe they're laying down. Pretentious arseholes. When asked if they prefer tits or arse, the lads all followed the lead singer in answering 'face'. Ha.

The music is nice. That's it. Nice. Not interesting, not crap, just nice. Bland, if you like, or not. As with so much new music at the moment, they sound oddly familiar. Having said that, their set is very tight. They play a variety of instruments, ranging from the organ to the mandolin, and are clearly

musically gifted individuals. It's just that their songs sound a little devoid of emotion. As is often the case the supporting female



vocalist (Hannah) needs a bigger role. Lead singer James has a theatrical presence and feels the need to constantly employ a jolty-hand-move which to everyone but him is bloody irritating.

Apparently the first CD that Brad (lead guitarist) ever bought was Jump Around. This band could do with taking a lesson from House of Pain. Their songs lack energy. Their songs are lacking. (5)

They claim to have met drinking JD in a gay bar in Newcastle. Welcome The

Wombats to the stage. I have it from that wonderful-source-of-all-knowledge that is Wikipedia that they actually met at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, and that the Scouse and Norwegian threesome were, in fact, taking the piss. They do, however, want to make clear that they are 'not gay', despite Dan the drummer later declaring he is an arse-man, and 'not attracted to tits at all'.

They give a very entertaining and personal performance, and play up to the crowd throughout. An encore is demanded by the large group of fans The Wombats bring with them. Their playing is energetic (Winterkids could take a lesson from these guys).

When posed the question, 'Would you rather eat poo flavoured curry or curry flavoured poo?' the band's general consensus was that they would rather eat a poo that tasted like curry. A poo. A real poo. (6)

words/ thomas foxley

Teesside

by Ramzy



As my educational career has progressed, I have generally been of the opinion that things have got easier. I no longer have to carry my PE kit and my cookery ingredients into school on the same day. I don't do half the extra-curricular activities I took part in during my first year; I no longer live an hour's walk from University; I am no longer doing modules that feel more like exercises in ticking bureaucratic boxes than educational ones.

And yet, on a daily basis, it seems that I swing between ends of the same spectrum of happiness that I did when I was eleven years old. Rather than experiencing the constant rush of freedom that adult life has supplied, I am bogged down by things that seem to be of my own construction. Rather than counting down the hours until Friday afternoon, I count down the weeks until the end of the academic year; I am able to spend more hours playing records than I have ever been able to before because of my timetable; and yet I don't really feel that my life has become filled by the artistic multitude. Instead, I spend all my free time looking through the things and not really wanting to hear anything, despite how easy it is to find time to do so. Have I got bored of music?

Thankfully, it may not be as simple as this. I haven't played an album without doing something at the same time for months - because my 21st century work ethic will not allow me not to be reading/writing/reviewing/editing, since I will probably regret it later. As (something vaguely resembling) free time has become less hard-won, so my response to it has diminished. I have become detached.

I wonder if the same thing is happening to the public as the commodification of music continues. The assertion that we are experiencing music in better quality as technology progresses lies somewhere between intangible and fallacious, but mp3 players, iTunes and - to mention the elephant in the room - the internet may well be distancing us from our record collections because they are just so bloody convenient. A point touched upon in the otherwise entirely rhetorical 'Better On Vinyl' last.fm group is that more work goes into listening to records than other formats: the process feels more real to us if we have to actually set the needle on the playing surface and watch it progress (if nothing else, a strong visual motif for context, which is all too easily lost through the aforementioned technologies). Do we value this more than something we can set on 'repeat', and return to the following morning to hear sounding identical? Do the convenience and the distance disengage us, just like I no longer wake up giddy because I don't have chamber choir or PE? If leisure is an active pursuit, as Aristotle would have us believe, has music become a pastime instead of an art form?

No, I don't think so. In the same way as we do not obsess over how much easier central heating is than rubbing sticks together, we tend to perceive everything relative to our regular fields of experience, even our responses to our pasts. Aesthetic carelessness is indiscriminate, and it is everyone's responsibility.

British Sea Power

Irish Centre

23/01/08

An unshakably odd atmosphere pervades tonight. Its markers are not songs or solos but people - from the collective of scene children at front centre who (prominently) dedicate the majority of their attention and lens airtime to their faux-bisexual haircuts, to touring keyboardist Phil Sumner, who dives headfirst onto the ground during the encore, knocking



himself out and leaving an alarming quantity of blood behind when he groggily stands up, supported by the band's guitarist and their tour manager. The lights come on as Noble tears across the stage to assess the damage, but Hamilton and Yan continue playing, along with Wood's temporary Electric Soft Parade replacement; once Sumner has been cleared away, it becomes apparent that few people have even noticed what has happened. Feeling simply too uneasy about the air of sullen indifference that has swamped the audience, we leave.

What of the music itself, then? It is well documented that *Do You Like Rock Music?* is a contender for album of the year thus far; the hormonal 'easy! easy!' chant of 'No Lucifer', Hamilton's affecting lead on 'Open the Door', and the staggering 'Lights Out for Darker Skies' all grow into their live dimensions, whilst 'Waving Flags' - presumably the reason that those girls at the front are here - is bigger than anything off *Neon Bible*, despite its gentle blandness between riffs. None of this really seems relevant, though, tonight: perhaps this is the price of success. (6)

words/ ramzy alwakeel

Dead Leg

The Primrose

16/01/08

Funk quintet LazyBaby (who themselves follow acoustic singer/songwriter Al Leeming and electronica rock outfit amber292) deliver a tight and intense warm-up performance. Evidently talented and experienced musicians, it's surprising to learn that this is their first full gig together in this format. Frontwoman Cherie Gears, renowned for various projects with G-Sounds as well as membership of East Park Reggae Collective, stands out in particular: her rich voice soars effortlessly and her stage presence reflects her years in the business.

Arriving on stage at 11pm, Dead Leg have a tough act to follow. Bassist Boz Burley remarks that they are going to start their set 'with a loud noise'. And loud it certainly is, with The Primrose's 20-strong audience treated to the fast and technical, yet controlled and fluid, riffs of 'Batten Down the Hatches'. Quickly following is 'Summer Cruisin' and then 'Pucker 'n' Blow'. The latter, with its old-school hip-hop vibe and rap-vocals from



lead singer Chris Catling brings to mind Grandmaster Flash combined with a smattering of early Red Hot Chili Peppers. Despite the venue being only half capacity the dancing that this thundering triplet elicits is wild, and the band respond to this enthusiasm with Boz constantly shuffling across stage to duel with Catling, whose twitching eyebrows provide an amusing visual element to the set. 'My Kingdom' is an eventual slow, laidback relief from the gig's furious beginnings. (9)

words/ nicholas polydor

Vitalic

Stylus

25/01/08

What transpires is not entirely clear; however, the night unfolds. The one thing that is clear is that it is special. A night to be remembered. It is around 11pm before anybody really considers going into Stylus. There is a real tense excitement in the air - not just between myself and friends but also in general. Seeing DJs live, it is almost impossible to know what to expect: knowing certain tracks is only part of it. The crowd's reaction is vital to how any electronic event will pan out. Tonight, though, the mood is in no way flat: it is ecstatic. First on are The



Glimmers, a duo I have no preconceptions about. They happen to be a pleasant surprise, going in and out of old favourites. Then, out of nowhere, Mr Oizo's 'Flat Beat' is played, and gets a good reaction from the crowd. Meanwhile, in Mine, The Autocrats play hard pulsating techno. The Glimmers start to slow down around 2am and are followed by only a short space of silence before the screens behind the stage start to show ice blue 'V's, and Vitalic appears. He plays popular tracks from *OK Cowboy* such as 'La Rock 01', 'Poney Part 1' and 'My Friend Dario'. Although the dancefloor is overcrowded, this doesn't seem to dampen the mood. In less than what turns out to be a mind melting hour, Vitalic have finished. The clear high of the entire night came at the end of the hour when Vitalic played an interesting remix of Feist's 'My Moon My Man' bringing it all to a close. (9)

words/ nick mendlesohn

Singles.

Single of the Week

Theoretical Girl
'The Hypocrite'
(Salvia)



This is a two-track single: one half is her having a go at people who she thinks are hypocrites; the other, 'Never Good Enough', is her having a go at people who don't think she is good enough. Her vocals are fairly standard-issue South-of-England indie-girl breaths and coos, but they don't sound affected - there's some serious tenderness going on here, her upbraidings seemingly stemming from vulnerability and hurt rather than prickishness. The arrangements never overdo things or paint too broadly; the latter track coasts beautifully on a constant burble of wood-blocks. There's nothing profoundly amazing or new going on here, but it's rather nice as a whole. (7)

Dave Gahan
'Saw Something'/
'Deeper + Deeper'
(Mute)



'Saw Something' - a contemplative, Billy Mackenzie-esque number that never really goes anywhere - is a pretty decent listen; but then the other half of the double A-side turns up, and decides to make like Marilyn Manson is feeling on your booty with one hand and drinking WKD Blue with the other. That'll be quite enough of that, thank you. (5)

Rigo Jancsi
'Check Mate'
(All Sorted!?)



East Anglian oiks Rigo Jancsi appear to have successfully found the midpoint between McLusky & The B-52s, and hurrah to them for that. This also means that they spend a lot of time fumbling about for any kind of way to end their debut single, and have to resort to whacking out the same chords over and over again while the singer squawks 'Check! Mate!' in lieu of a chorus. Reminds you why tightness is sometimes a desirable quality in a band, but there's a certain amount of promise glinting away in the distance. (6)

Kid Harpoon
The Second EP
(Young Turks)



The Second EP has the air of being forced to watch a friend of a friend performing at an open-mic night. His vocals have much anguished yowling; similarly, his songs are go on for bloody ages because he's too passionate to be having self-control. You can't accuse him of not meaning it, but you can't come up with any reasons to actually like him. So you turn to your friend and say, 'He's very professional, isn't he?' and pray God they leave it at that. (4)

words/ william b. swygart

Featured Gig

Mine
27/01/08



Underland's finest have had a tough time of it in the past few years. After the huge success of their first album, thanks in no small part to the jerk-pop cover version of Kate Bush's 'Hounds of Love' that saw festival crowds fall in love with them, they released the disappointing *News and Tributes* album in 2006. A year later, they were dropped by their record label 679 after poor reviews and sales. A rethink was clearly in order if

one the most interesting British bands in recent years were not going to simply disappear off the radar.

Thank heavens, then, that they didn't pack it in. The free download of 'Broke Up the Time' in December, and news of a third album in the pipeline (entitled *This Is Not The World*, and due to be released in May 2008 on their own record label) show that The Futureheads are rejuvenated and have discovered what made them great in the first place.

After the rough-edged rock of *The Bribes* and the gloomy, atmospheric indie of *The Grammaticals*, our heroes stride onstage and launch into early single 'Meantime', which still sounds as moody and punky as ever. The set is a mixture of the livelier moments from their self-titled debut and some impressive new songs, with merely a handful from the second album. New single 'The Beginning of the Twist' features guitars that are as brash and abrasive as any of the early stuff, yet slightly more listener-friendly. The sound as a whole is a lot more refined than the instrumental chaos of the first record, and this is sure to win them more fans.

The small but adoring crowd in Mine give The Futureheads a rapturous welcome, applauding both old and new songs alike. Old singles 'Skip to the End' and 'Decent Days and Nights' are executed with laser-like precision. 2005's stand-alone single 'Area' causes mayhem down the front, while the notorious 'Hounds of Love' inspires mass barbershop-esque shouting from the crowd, lending the atmosphere of the gig a genuine sense of warmth. Welcome back, Futureheads - we thought we'd almost lost you there.

“Thank heavens they didn't pack it in. The Futureheads are rejuvenated and have discovered what made them great in the first place.”

words/ edmund biggs
photos/ john puddephatt



Brains, Boobs and Bimbos

With a new series 'America's Most Smartest Model' **Pandora Sykes** asks the age old question, 'do models have brains?'

MTV One's 'America's Most Smartest Model' (deliberate grammatical error = ironic pun) is the newest addition to the smorgasbord of reality TV

much brain power to watch. In short, in each episode the group of 'bimbos and himbos' will face challenges, which put both their brains, and beauty, to test.

However, you'll soon find that you don't really care who or who doesn't win the two-fold challenges (i.e. walking down the catwalk whilst reciting American states) as you'll be too fascinated by the curious amalgamation of contestants. Interestingly, unlike I first presumed, the contestants are not all moderately successful models. Presenter Mary Alice Stephenson - a renowned stylist - seems genuinely perplexed as to why the producers/casting directors have chosen contestants with such dubious modelling credentials: 'Model 24 on Deal or No Deal' (Jamie E) or 'Pirate in Maxim' (Lisa B.). In Week 1, one of the contestants was ousted not because of his lack of brain but because of his pitiable pouting prowess. Sweet natured

Mandy Lynn is 90% collagen - and has modelled for Playboy - but still gets upset when the judges tell her she's less of a clothes-horse and more of a clothes-off kinda gal.

The other judge, Ben Stein, is a comedian, actor and writer. At times him and Stephenson seem mismatched co-hosts, notably with his unparalleled fondness for Mandy Lynn ('s assets.) Stephenson is tough on the contestants, but not as tough as the contestants are on one another.

Gobsmacking offensiveness is however discernibly absent from the friendship between wholesomely hot VJ and skeletal Rachel - whose 'signature model move' is

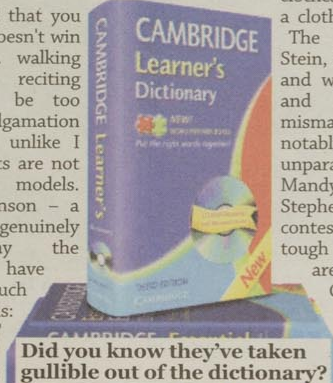
placing her hands on her hips - and their sexual frustration is so far teetering on the cusp of a full blown 'model intelligentsia' affair. A little more than just offensive, the Romanian born Andre, who has something of the Freddie Ljunberg about him, has garnered much publicity - the unwanted kind - since the show ended in America, not merely for his laughable claims that his perfect abs are maintained by no exercise whatsoever, but for being accused of rape. Knowing this makes his outbursts of aggression on the show a little more sinister.

There's a \$100,000 prize at stake and none of the competitive models want to miss out. If you've ever flicked through Vogue or 'America's Next Top Model' and wished heartily that you knew how many GCSEs they have, then this is the programme for you. Spelling bees and arrogant pin-ups make a lucrative hour of pain 'n pleasure reality TV, with the off chance that you might even learn something new.

words/pandora sykes

“Sweet natured Mandy Lynn still gets upset when the judges tell her she's less of a clothes-horse and more of a clothes-off kinda gal.”

from across the pond. According to the makers, the show is based on the premise that: 'Beauty is a double-edged sword. It seems to be a commonly accepted notion in the world today that an inverse proportion between brains and beauty exists.' This somewhat scientific spiel attempts to elevate a programme which, whilst it may be on the search for brains, certainly doesn't require



Did you know they've taken gullible out of the dictionary?

On yer soapbox

Ever spluttered with incredulity as your favourite serial drama reveals another ridiculous storyline? Here's your chance to do better ...

What:

It's scary that I probably know Springfield better than I know Leeds and I am more in tune with the intricate personality traits of 'The Simpsons' than I am with my own family. Maybe if life was a cartoon the world would be a better place. With the grey world of Albert Square maybe the cast members of Eastender's need to take a vacation to the good old American town of Springfield. Soaps need to be just a bit more yellow.

How:

Phil Mitchell walks into Moe's and is greeted by the bar man with 'Hi, my name's Moe. Or as the ladies like to refer to me, 'hey you in the bushes.' Phil Mitchell begins to feel disorientated because he has forgotten that he is not in the Old Vic, and tries to push his way to the other side of the bar. Moe, in terror, whips out his shotgun and Phil exclaims 'Don't mess with the Mitchell's'. As Phil leans forward, pulling out an ash tray from his pocket to attack Moe with, Moe



PHIL: Don't mess with the Mitchell's.

shoots him. Terrified by what he has done he runs to 742 Evergreen Terrace to ask Homer for help but when he knocks on the door Peggy Mithcell is there. She offers him tea and tells him that the Simpsons have swapped homes for the week with the Mithchells and are currently looking after the Queen Vic. Moe attempts to tell Peggy what he has done but when he shows her his shotgun she screams and shouts 'Get outta my pub! I mean house!' Moe leaves in a hurry and spots Ned Flanders over the fence who greets him with 'Hi-dilly-ho-dilly neighboreenos!' With noone else to turn to, Moe confesses to Ned that he has murdered Phil. Ned Flanders screams like a woman and says 'you ugly hate-filled man' to which Moe answers 'Hey. I may be ugly and I may be hate-filled but...uh...what was that last thing you said?' Just then Phil Mitchell appears walking with Barney down Evergreen Terrace. Barney burps and tells Moe that he was firing blanks and had not killed Mitchell. Mitchell goes to give Moe a hug still clutching the ash tray.

words/maddy mcgarrie

The Argument

Which of these ER doctors would make the best chief resident?

Kevin Moretti

Kevin Moretti is the balding doctor dynamo that deserves to be the new chief of ER. When Kovac let his emotions take over and beats up a patient in his care, it is Moretti who sends his sorry ass to Croatia. Kovac may have the looks, passion, not to mention a full head of hair but it is Moretti who can keep his emotions under wraps in a crisis. Although Abby and Pratt find his professional style in managing the ER cold and abrasive, it is a lot better than having a little teta-tetes with other doctors behind close wards, and letting their personal lives put the lives of others in danger. Kovac does bring some much needed eye candy to the floor if the chipmunk like Archie Morris does not do it for you. But Moretti does not need a pretty face to win my heart, it is his skill in diagnosing patients that always gets my BPM to 69. Despite all this, Moretti disappears half way through series fourteen, and so does Kovac. Could it be that these two finally settled their differences and shacked up together? Or could it be that the impetuous Abby, who does look a little pregnant at the moment, killed them both when under the influence of her hormones? Only time will tell.

words/harriet knowles

Luca Kovac

Luca Kovac, the replacement eye-candy after George Clooney left ER in 1999, is a Croatian stud-muffin who makes any woman, or man's BPM race. Unfortunately rumour has it that he is leaving after this series, only returning for a few episodes. According to the rumours he will play a villain in the upcoming James Bond movie as a former lover to Vesper Lynd. The actor who plays Kevin Meretti can be spotted in 'The Devil Wears Prada' but this chick flick can not compare with a Bond Villain role. But this isn't about the actors, it's the characters that matter. Both these characters may soon be leaving but in the meanwhile Kovac would easily make a better chief of emergency medicine, despite resigning earlier this series. He is a loving husband to Abby, and their little boy Joe, approachable and caring and can speak four languages including Italian, Croatian, English and Spanish which has proved useful when treating patients from around the world. For sheer longevity in the show, heart racing good looks and caring ability Kovac would be my choice for my doctor any day.

words/maddy mcgarrie

Films of the week

The Celestial



Wonder Boys

BBC1
Sunday 3rd of February
10:45pm

In this amiable campus comedy, Michael Douglas plays Grady Tripp, an aging, weed-smoking professor at an American university. Once feted as a sensational young novelist, he's trying to finish his second book. This novel has grown to ridiculous proportions and in the meantime he has an affair with university official Sara. Grady strikes up a friendship with James, an eccentric young student of his who is obsessed with film stars' deaths. Things start going a bit pear-shaped when James accidentally shoots Sara's dog and the two are forced to dispose of the body. Grady's flamboyant agent (Robert Downey Jr. in an amazing performance), a stolen coat that belonged to Marilyn Monroe, and the president of the James Brown appreciation society' all add to the confusion. *Wonder Boys* is a low-key film that relies on the strength of the characters to drive it forward, and rewards the audience with a richly humorous and moving experience.

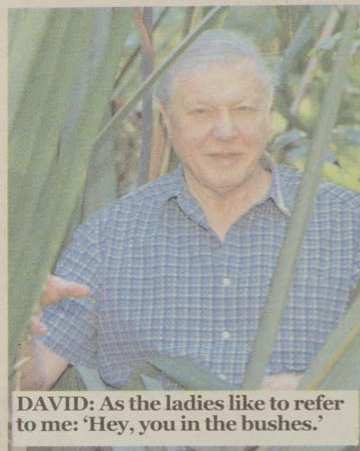
words/jim moore

Friday

The Choir: Boys Don't Sing *BBC 2*

Have you ever been a member of a choir? I have some happy memories of my seven year-old self merrily bellowing out tunes from 'The Lion King' at school. The pupils of Lancaster School are not so enthusiastic in this return of the award-winning series, which sees the determined Gareth Malone attempting to mould a gaggle of brats into a choir worthy of the Royal Albert Hall. Watching the poor chap sitting all alone in a room waiting for volunteers makes you want to dash in there and sign up yourself, but experience suggests he will be successful in the end.

words/anna burnell



DAVID: As the ladies like to refer to me: 'Hey, you in the bushes.'

Monday

Life in Cold Blood *BBC1 9.00pm*

After the triumph that was 'Planet Earth', David Attenborough returns with a new series looking exclusively at reptiles and amphibians. Given Planet Earth's epic scope, the breathtaking beauty of its camerawork and the groundbreaking advances achieved in the making of the programme, some may wonder if scaling back to the scaliest inhabitants of the animal kingdom won't be an anticlimax by contrast. Compared to a cuddly polar bear or a herd of gazelle trying to outrun a lion, crocodiles and lizards aren't that popular with audiences. Still, if anyone can make them appealing, it's Saint David of the Serengeti.

words/jim moore

Saturday

All New You've Been Framed!
ITV1 6.10pm

'You've Been Framed' has all the hallmarks of classic slap-stick comedy including such gems as the quintessential wedding dress trip up, the newborn throwing up on anything within a meter radius and the old 'child gets knocked over by dog' combo. The difference here is that they're all real and the general rule follows that the more real the pain the greater the laugh. Sometimes we're lucky enough to see a crash, but don't worry, the concern for the person trapped in the burning wreck is soon drowned out by the canned laughter.

words/joe de luca

Sunday

The Sky at Night *BBC1 12.30am*

British broadcasting institution, former-Gamesmaster, and all-round astro-boffin Patrick Moore dusts off his monocle for another episode of this stellar series, which recently passed its fiftieth anniversary. Looking more like an arch Bond villain with every passing year, Moore remains an engaging host. This episode focuses on Mercury, which in case you haven't studied physics or astronomy for a while, is the one closest to the sun. It's very small and scorched, and recorded sightings date back to the third millennium BC. Watch it, it'll restore your sense of childlike awe and make you want to go and climb a hill and stargaze.

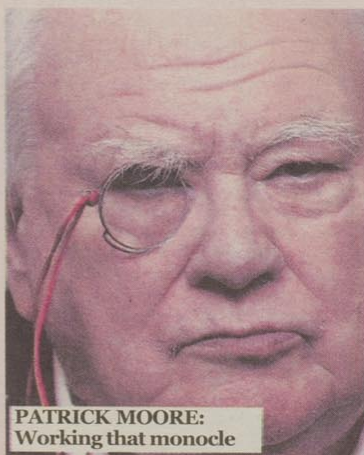
words/thomas midlane

Tuesday

Nature Shock *Five 8:00pm*

With an episode titled, 'The Zombie Alligator,' you know this is going to be a little bit racier than your average lizard show. 'Nature Shock' has a premise closer to the 'X-files' than the cuddly 'Meercat Manor', aiming to showcase the more bizarre occurrences in nature. Tonight's episode recounts the gory events in Lake Griffin, Florida, when a large number of the resident gators turn up mysteriously slaughtered, transforming their peaceful habitat into bloodbath. Anyone that favours the tea time nature documentaries full of moon-eyed baby animals and fuzzy little birds, turn over now.

words/lucy carey



PATRICK MOORE:
Working that monocle

Wednesday

Repossession, Repossession,
Repossession *ITV1 10.35pm*

For those who are coasting through the student year's £50 drinking sessions, takeaways and retail therapy, buffeted along by friendly bank managers and bottomless credit limits, this programme might be a bit of a well-needed reality check. If you're one of those sensible types who eschew all 'free' money and overdrafts then feel smug, and heed the warning business journalist Jeff Randall has for us if we don't stem the flow of borrowing and binge-shopping. Find out why spending money that we don't really have is so darn addictive, the consequences, and what it means for us all in the long run.

words/lucy carey

Thursday

Banged Up Abroad *Five 10:00pm*

As students we seem to have a natural urge to explore the world once released from our educational cocoon. Then again it could just be that the introduction to the exciting world of memos, meetings and tragic office parties can be delayed a little further by going travelling. This usually amounts to a short stint in a few dodgy places that are more westernised than the Malaga trip you went on when you were 16. In this episode two American teenagers provide perfect examples for worried parents: they end their trip with ten years in a Peruvian prison for being accused of smuggling cocaine.

words/joe de luca

Freeview Picks.

For all you lucky devils with digital.

Friday

Coleen's Real Women *ITV2*
10.30pm

Herein lies the tale of a 'bog standard Beatrice' whose dreams of anything material were realised when the potato faced teenager she happened to take behind the bike sheds turned out to have talent - an irrelevant quality it seems if you aspire to lead the fulfilling life of ASDA contracts, perfume ranges and ironically titled TV shows. The advert shows her screeching "I don't care if you're a size zero or a size 18", "I'm curvy and that's the way I am." N.B. there is no one of a size 18 in the show and colleen has a work out DVD.

Saturday

A Knight's Tale *Film4* 9pm

I don't suppose it's any coincidence that this flick should reverentially stroll onto our screens at this time, but I'm not complaining. What a fantastic way to celebrate the life of Heath Ledger, who plays a Joe Bloggs with aspirations to be a dashing knight. This is a fun and fast film with an almost Shrek-like humour, featuring rock anthems, funky dancing and a hilariously naked Geoffrey Chaucer, set in a slightly squiffy version of the 14th-century. From competitive jousting to chivalric romance, with a touchingly sentimental streak, put on your comfiest armour, and joust relax in front of this treat.

words/ anna burnell



HEATH LEDGER: A duel he didn't win.

Films of the week

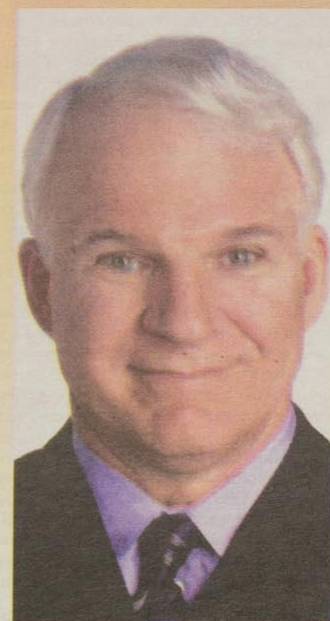
The Satanic

Cheaper by the Dozen

Film4
Sunday 3rd February
1:00pm

The beginning of the end for Steve Martin's career. This is a film about a couple with twelve kids. You can safely assume that twelve kids and two parents mean that 1: the main plotline sees these kids feeling neglected as a result of their overwhelming numbers, and 2: the film has to end with a sickening realisation of the importance of family. Yuk. Team this predictable plot with a implausibly perfect mother (Bonnie Hunt) and a goofy father (Steve Martin), and you have the recipe for one of those movies which makes you feel like writing to Father Time and appealing for a couple of hours' refund. To make matters worse, one of the daughters is played by Hilary Duff, who spends the entire film wittering on about clothes. With the funeral of Beans the pet toad being the most exciting scene, you'll soon wish you were an only child.

words/ anna burnell



KIRSTY AND PHIL: Seduction, Seduction, Seduction.

Sunday

Secret Millionaire *More4* 9.00pm

For those of us who dream of being showered with money by a mysterious benefactor, this reality show will have to do. In it, assorted rich folk are sent undercover into deprived areas to live and work with local residents. They decide on a deserving person or organisation and unmask themselves to present a donation of their own money. The low-key style of the programme works in its simplicity, letting the millionaires speak for themselves. Usually they are shocked by the degree of poverty they find themselves in, and are visibly moved by the struggles of ordinary people they meet.

words/ jim moore

Monday

Location, Location, Location *More4*
7.00pm

Location is important, as any student looking for a house at the moment knows. Is it better to live in the student slum of hyde park and get an extra twenty minutes in bed or, live in the more affluent Highbury and get some much needed exercise to work off those takeaways? This week Kirsty and Phil help two London professionals find a rural retreat. This is a great opportunity to have a nosy peek round other people's houses, but on the other hand programmes like this only remind us of the house pricing crisis, which means the closest we'll get to a rural retreat is a shed in the back of our parents' garden.

Tuesday

The Polish Ambulance Murders:
Storyville *BBC 4* 10.30pm

And now for something a little macabre. You've seen 'Six Feet Under', or read the work of poet-cum-undertaker Thomas Lynch? Then you'll know that undertakers are ordinary human beings, albeit with a dark sense of humour. Not everywhere it seems. This documentary focuses on the bizarre happenings in Lodz, Poland, where a shadowy cabal of undertakers in the Polish city contrived to bribe doctors and paramedics to effectively murder their patients, in order to drum up more business. If you are one of those sad sacks that spends all their time complaining about MRSA and the NHS, watch this and be grateful.

words/ thomas midlane

Wednesday

Batman *BBC 4* 7.35pm

Spoiled for choice as we are with big-budget superhero films, it's hard to remember a time when caped crimefighters looked distinctly cheap. BBC4's rerunning of the 1960s TV series shows us what a screen version of Batman looked like before darker adaptations appeared. The most recent film, The Dark Knight, has acquired an even more sombre tone due to the late Heath Ledger's performance as the Joker. To take the edge off, a period of relaxing with zany supervillains, comic-book captions exploding across the screen and the exaggerated acting of Adam West (currently in Family Guy) could be just the trick.

words/ jim moore

Thursday

American Idol 2008 *ITV2* 8.00pm

There is something very tantalising about laughing at groups of deluded and somewhat loopy americans humiliate themselves on national TV. Most of the goggle-eyed, spotty teenagers who manage to squeak a few lines out with dad-like dance moves to match will also be bullied for the rest of their lives, but the comedy value they provide is priceless. Yet this all seems awfully familiar. The best this show will produce is a couple of one-album-wonders and a couple more B list celebrities who will do anything to get their faces in 'Heat'. It might be more meaningful to experience reality instead of watching it and listen to some homegrown talent embarrass itself at the Hyde Park karaoke.

words/ harriet knowles



So it's that time of year again, as the Oscar nominations are announced and familiar faces adorn the categories, with a few surprises thrown in for good measure. *There will be Blood* and *No Country For Old Men* both picked up 8 nominations each, whilst *Atonement* and *Michael Clayton* received seven nominations apiece. Cate Blanchett should feel deservedly smug, having been nominated in both the Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress categories. This, coupled with the fact that many of the names adorning the main categories have found themselves there before, seems to suggest that the Oscars and other similar awards ceremonies, have become a little too predictable and are perhaps not rewarding those who deserve the most recognition.

But as I write this, I wonder what the actors themselves feel about the awards and why such importance and prestige is attached to them. Are the Oscars and other such awards a true reflection of an artist's talent and credibility, and do they actually benefit the individual in any way other than to massage some already over-inflated egos? Surely the most fitting recognition should come from the audiences. Though if we are to believe that, then the Harry Potter films would be up there with the best of them and, as much as I love Harry Potter, the films themselves are by no means a appropriate reflection upon talent and film.

Perhaps the best test of an actor's talent comes from the moment during the Academy Awards ceremony when the camera focuses in on a nominee's face as the winner is announced, and they have to mask their inevitable disappointment and feign an air of good grace. How cruel it is, but what a true symbol of the cut-throat industry which surrounds them and the reckless disposability of one actor for another according to what or who becomes flavour of the month. As I looked through the lists of nominations from previous years, I noted that they have been consistently dominated by drama. It has also been noted that actresses are more likely to receive an Oscar nomination on the basis that there are simply less women in film than men. Perhaps this is the reason why Keira Knightley found herself in the Best Actress category last year.

It would be nice to think that these inequalities could soon be rectified by ruling out superficiality, so that people are judged purely on their individual talent rather than age, gender, what they have done previously, the names that they are affiliated with or any other inconsequential factor. Only then can we truly see actors for what they are. Having said all of this I cannot deny that I do enjoy seeing the stars decked out in all their finery so let's hope the writers allow the show to go on and slice up another delicious slice of Hollywood drama which, no doubt, we will all eagerly devour.

words/ lucy mcintosh

In the Valley of Elah

Starring/ Tommy Lee Jones, Charlize Theron, Susan Sarandon
Director/ Paul Haggis

In contrast with his Oscar-winning debut feature *Crash*, Paul Haggis' new film, *In the Valley of Elah*, moves away from intertwining, ensemble narrative, focusing specifically on the consequences of war on a few characters. The film is generating a great deal of interest, both because of Haggis' reputation and because of its subject matter, as it deliberately and unambiguously addresses the traumas of the Iraq war. This is a marked contrast to the proliferation of films dealing with Iraq by reference to other conflicts, and one which will inevitably lead to controversy in America.

The strongest aspects of the film are the performances of Tommy Lee Jones and Charlize Theron. With the focus of the film so unavoidably on them, they are able to develop their characters and really inhabit the roles. As a backdrop to their performances, the smaller parts are also played well (especially Susan Sarandon's grief-stricken mother), but this really is a film dominated by the leads. Theron is excellent, managing to transcend the relatively clichéd role of a single-mother police detective in a chauvinistic profession, but the plaudits will go to Jones. He is nothing short of spectacular in his role as the taciturn ex-military father searching for his son, wordlessly developing the character through beautifully observed mannerisms.

The first half of the film is excellent, with its low-key character-driven focus allowing the emotional responses of the protagonists to take priority over the actual events. However, the second half is a massive disappointment, as the



excellent characterisation is overwhelmed by the message of the film. Worse, this message is virtually nonsensical. The title is from the biblical story of David and Goliath, a story which is repeated twice in the dialogue, but never really applied to the film's narrative. It is not really applicable to the Iraq war, or even the individual soldiers the film portrays.

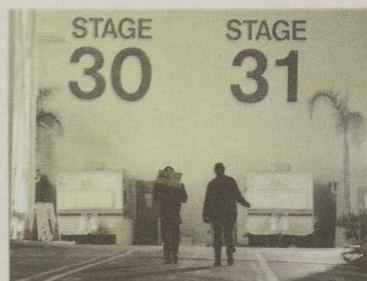
There are flashes of brilliance at the end, but these are unable to support the crude symbolism and the progressively worsening soundtrack. The ending of the film consists a terribly cheesy song which

is far too high in the mix, scoring a static shot of an upside-down American flag. Horrendous. This is a film that says nothing new, just a fusion of a few generic concepts ('war is bad', 'that one little piece of evidence solves the case'), and it is a shame that two such great performances are wasted by the over-reaching pretensions of the film. As a study of grief, it could have been a brilliant move away from *Crash*, but in the end Haggis' film can be nothing but a disappointment.

words/ simon gillett

Man In The Chair

Starring/ Christopher Plummer, Michael Angarano
Director/ Michael Schroeder



Michael Schroeder's new film is set around the growing friendship between a troubled teenager, improbably named Cameron Kincaid (Michael Angarano), and an alcoholic old man (Christopher Plummer) whose nickname - Flash - was given to him by Orson Welles on the set of *Citizen Kane*. Representing different sides of the movie business, Cameron is an idealist struggling to make a student project who persuades the forgotten, embittered Flash to help him.

Within this framework the film develops a curious mixture of styles, emphasised in the

combination of clips from 30s cinema classics and the modern, stylised editing of the montage that it begins with. The effect is somewhat jarring at first, and is not helped by the early stereotypical American high school scenes with ridiculously cartoony jocks screaming "Kincaid" in apoplectic anger, swearing they will make a better film than him and beat him to a film scholarship. After these scenes I was preparing myself for a disappointment, but once the film escapes the high school location it gets far better.

The real strength of the film is in its conscious mixture of ideas - as soon as the angst teen drama elements are verging on the trite and predictable, the deeper issues that the film plays with become more prominent. These issues are embodied by the nursing home where Flash lives (its residents all forgotten members of Hollywood unions) and, to an even greater extent, the home that legendary writer Mickey Hopkins lives in.

Shocked by the state of one of his hero's rooms - a cold dirty space with cockroaches crawling around - Cameron starts to research the state of the American system of care for the elderly, deciding to make a docu-drama about it for his film project. In a wider sense, *Man in the Chair* uses the treatment of these ex-film workers to describe the general "out of sight, out of mind" attitude of America's "throw-away society" to their elderly. Again, though, when the moralistic

stance of the film threatens to become monotonous, Schroeder swiftly shifts his focus back to the individual characters.

While the teenage characters of the film do come across as a little forced at times, the older members of the cast are universally



great - especially Plummer, who imbues the coarse, angry Flash with a soft and likeable side.

Defying genre to some extent, this film is often surprising, often touching and never over-reaches itself. It is a coming-of-age drama, but it generally avoids hammy clichés - the scholarship goes to the rich, spoilt jock, and we are left, not with the American dream, but with the affirming message that integrity is far more important than money.

words/ simon gillett



Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story

Starring/ John C. Reilly, Jenna Fischer
Director/ Jake Kasdan

Taking James Mangold's *Walk The Line* as its chief inspiration, this spoof rock biopic works its way through every rock star cliché as struggling protagonist Dewey Cox (John C. Reilly) seeks to overcome adversity and make it as a star. Directed by Jake Kasdan (who saw success with *Orange County*) and co-written by Judd Apatow (the genius behind *Anchorman*), I must admit that I was rather excited as I took my seat, expecting a good old chuckle.

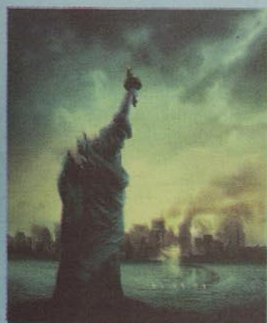
My hopeful spirit took a very large blow as I witnessed one of the poorest openings to a film I have ever seen. As is the case with so many films of this genre, the story is told in flashback, beginning with an introduction to Cox as a child. The young actors were a considerably bad mistake. The dialogue was terribly written and was delivered as if the children were reading the script for the first time. Already I could feel myself cringing and slowly sank down into my chair as the story began to take shape. £4.75 for this? Not impressed.

Luckily I was not made to wait too long before the flashbacks moved on a few years to Cox as a teenager. Admittedly at this point the jokes began rolling and I may have even let out a few hushed laughs, although there was still nothing to rival the quick-witted comedy of *Anchorman*. The most entertaining moments came in the form of cameo roles. I was surprised to see Jack White of The White Stripes playing Elvis Presley, but White's characteristically eccentric manner worked extremely well in his quirky portrayal of the King. As well as this, Jack Black features as Paul McCartney of The Beatles in my personal highlight: a scene in which Cox and his band members share a spiritual healing session with The Beatles in India. However, these few moments of mild amusement are significantly overshadowed by the rest of the film, trudging slowly through Cox's life in extremely predictable fashion.

It is common knowledge that films from this genre have to rely upon well-written comedy for their simplistic plots and repetitive clichés to work. Unfortunately, *Walk Hard* fails to do this. It is a poor attempt at a farcical parody and, despite those few moments that will make you chuckle, it doesn't even make the 'so stupid it's funny' category that it is obviously aiming for.

words/ david hayes

The Week in Arts



Buried under a pile of books? Can't remember the last time you didn't have a book in the library? Well how about a break of a different variety? The arts scene in Leeds offers so much not to be missed, and next week is no exception.

If you feel like embracing your childhood, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is playing until the 2nd February at the West Yorkshire Playhouse

Theatre. The land of Narnia awaits you as four young adventurers find a world filled with talking animals and mythical objects.

Alternatively if you are a fan of the opera then Leeds Youth Opera is hosting *Idomeneo*, which opens on the 5th February. This is Mozart's first great tragedy and features some of his most astounding music.

For those of you that prefer drama over opera, then the Carriageworks presents *Alan* from the 8th February. Here Alan Bennett has seemingly invited you to tea to read his new book, and everything appears to be going well until his neighbour Colin turns up and throws a spanner in the literary works.

If the theatre is not for you, then how about the cinema where *Cloverfield* opens this Friday. This controversial film, in which a monster appears to have attacked New York, has finally reached us. If this sounds a bit too horrific for you then *Over Her Dead Body* opens on Friday, in which the ghost of Kate (Eva Longoria) refuses to move on after she meets a tragic end under an ice sculpture.

words/ rozanne driver

The Adventures of Pinocchio

Opera North

This new opera, premiered at the Grand Theatre in Leeds last December, has been put on to great critical acclaim by Opera North. The set of this production is impressive, beginning with oppressive wooden walls, constantly shifting through a magical whirl of atmospheric locations, but always, inevitably, returning to the wooden hut of Pinocchio's beginning. The restrictive nature of Pinocchio's own form is evoked by the ominous tools hanging on the walls of this hut, most prominently the huge saws which gave Pinocchio life but can just as easily take it away.

The Adventures of Pinocchio takes our protagonist through a number of landscapes straight from childhood fantasy and fairytale. There is Funland, a brightly coloured, bustling, old-fashioned fairground, with candy floss, popcorn, funfair rides and lollipops. But his journey is also scattered with villains, who begin as figures of temptation: the child-catcher, tempting schoolboys with Funland, a place where there is – delight upon delight – no school, and then turning them into donkeys; the brilliant fox and cat duo, who lead Pinocchio to a place they call the Field of Miracles, where they then try to rob him of his five gold pieces.

The operatic nature of the songs could

have been jarring at first to an audience more familiar with *High School Musical* than *The Pirates of Penzance*, but the children in the audience were enthralled, notwithstanding the gurgling girl at the opening of the second Act. The characters received best were Pinocchio (played energetically by Victoria Simmonds), the Blue Fairy (Mary Plazas) and the lesser parts of the Parrot and Cricket (both played, with liveliness and character, by Rebecca Bottone).

There is inevitably a lesson to learn from *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, aimed as it is at a family audience; being good and working hard are continually offered as the solution to tricky situations; this wears a little thin when we see Pinocchio in a chorus sequence where he rushes around pulling water up from wells and sweeping the floor with a predictably witch-like broomstick. It is however a truly jubilant moment when Pinocchio finally gets his heart's desire, and becomes a 'real boy'.

The final image of the opera is a surprising though, as Pinocchio's triumphant transfiguration into flesh is set at odds with the miniature, forlorn wooden puppet figure lying centre stage. Surely this is a troubling contrast for the finale of such an apparently predictable storyline. Perhaps the 'real' message, hidden within the operatic phrasing and the carefully crafted stage, is that change is inevitable, but the lingering sadness of lost innocence will always remain.

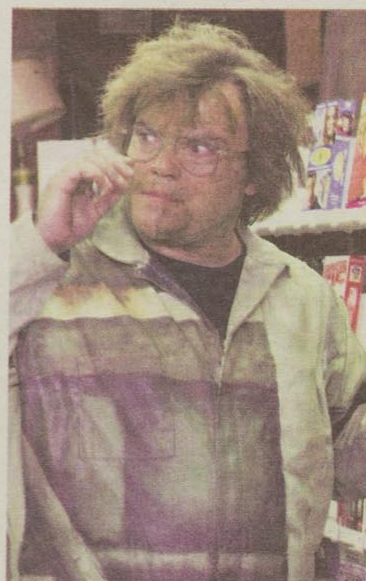
words/ victoria ellis

LS2 Presents: Remake your favourite film in 2 minutes or less and win a trip to Hollywood

To celebrate the upcoming release of *Be Kind Rewind*, directed by Michael Gondry and starring Jack Black and Mos Def, Pathe are offering a chance to win loads of LG entertainment equipment, from a 5.1 Home Cinema System to HDD/DVD Recorder and 37" LCD TV; a career advice session with an experienced film professional; and a trip to Hollywood.

Your homemade remake can be a shortened version of any film, just the trailer or just a scene, but must be under 2 minutes in length. The best films submitted will be judged by a special celebrity judge, who will select the winner based its creativity and humour.

To enter your film, and for full competition details / terms and conditions, please visit www.bekindrewindyourmovie.co.uk



To help you make your movie, Pathe films have teamed up with the LG to offer you a Viewty Camera Phone and enlisted an LG Viewty expert to visit your campus and help you make your video. For a chance to win, simply send in your idea for which film you'd remake and how (in no more than 100 words) to LGBKind@sublimemovies.co.uk.

The competition closes on the 22nd February

You can make me rich

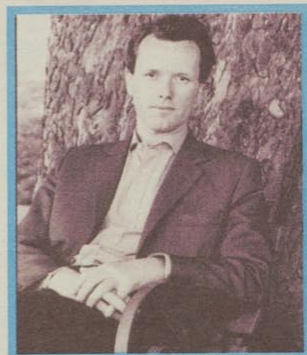
He can make you rich, he can make you thin, he can give you instant confidence, help you quit smoking and mend broken hearts. Apart from hair advice, it seems Paul McKenna can give us so much that it makes one wonder how the human race got by before this guy started writing. However, the icing on this large self-help cake settled last month as the world watched Paul McKenna, Britain's bestselling non-fiction writer, become one of Britain's biggest TV presenters as he signed a 'golden handcuffs' deal with the Discovery Channel worth over £15m. But while this cheery Harry Hill doppelganger exceeds one expectation after another, does everyone really believe in his techniques?

Surely most university students feel something paradoxical about a book pledging to make you rich when it costs you a tenner to get started. In 2006 McKenna famously sued a Daily Mirror writer who claimed his doctorate to be 'bogus', yet regardless of qualifications, can anyone genuinely (without a knife) make someone thin?

What cannot be argued against is that these exciting methods of McKenna are music to America's 66.3% obese ears. Still, on this side of the Atlantic enthusiasm is also in abundance. Business-boosting celebrity fans include David Walliams who received personal time-distortion techniques from McKenna to help him swim the channel, and then Geri Halliwell and supermodel-slash-granddaughter Sophie Dahl also pop into his office from time to time.

McKenna's sale statistics definitely stand as testament to his professionalism and high quality of advice, but if you're too skint right now to join his happy throng then here is some free advice to get you going – eat less crap and exercise more.

words/ jack cullen



A Clue To The Exit

Edward St Aubyn

Charlie Fairburn has been given six months to live. He decides to use this time to write a book, rather than the successful screenplays which have made him rich. The story picks up when he decides to visit a casino

“ The pretentious, studied style starts to grate after a while and feels unnatural

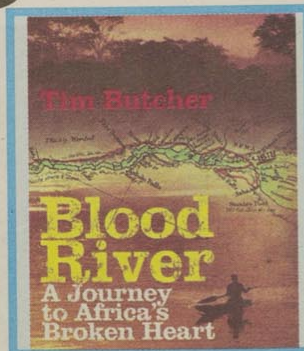
in Monte Carlo and gamble away the millions of Francs he has as a result of selling a villa in St Tropez. In this casino he meets Angelique, and with this meeting comes a slight feeling of purpose to the plot as Charlie tries to work out a way of spending his last few months of life.

A Clue To The Exit is a self-conscious exploration of consciousness and the pretentious, studied style starts to grate after a while. The more casual sections of straight narrative do not flow well and it seems as though St Aubyn can not quite decide on the style of this novel. It could be argued that this is deliberate as a dying man's thoughts probably are erratic and dispersed, but it does not read well and feels unnatural even.

That said, St Aubyn does have a striking turn of phrase on occasions, which partly makes up for the heavy-handed sections comprised of the book that Charlie is writing within the novel. A lot of imagery centres on spirals and there are also good, if slightly obvious, contrasts between meaning and meaningless episodes in the story.

On the whole an interesting read but I would not necessarily recommend this book unless you are interested in the consciousness debate, which inevitably goes round and round in circles... or should I say spirals?

words/ maddy kershaw



Blood River

Tim Butcher

When Tim Butcher set out on his epic effort to cross the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), an area the size of Western Europe, there were few who thought he would succeed. Besides the vast swathe of equatorial jungle (complete with an array of tropical diseases that life in such a climate can lead to) there was the challenge of travelling overland in a country largely controlled by hostile rebels and corrupt officials. Africa correspondent for the Daily Telegraph, Butcher followed in the footsteps of his Telegraph predecessor H.M. Stanley, who was the first to complete the journey in 1877.

Blood River unfolds with all the passion of a first person account, yet it expertly guides the reader on a captivating ride through the recent history of the DRC; from Belgian colonial rule through independence, dictatorship and many bloody wars and uprisings. The journey that is being undertaken is one that has not been completed for decades, and as such, offers fresh insight into the tragic history of the Congo, portrayed as a country where UN peacekeepers fear to tread. Much of the country is cut off by dense rainforest, and personal accounts of the Congolese relayed in the book shed light on the views of a population on whom the international community appears to have given up hope.

This journey through rainforest and river by a whole variety of means is an inspiring personal

“ The extreme wealth of a corrupt minority is harshly contrasted with the extreme poverty faced by most

account, yet one is left with a sense of melancholy and frustration at the current situation that DRC finds itself in; the extreme wealth of a corrupt minority is harshly contrasted with the extreme poverty faced by most. Blood River conveys a strong sense of determination in Butcher, and indeed the Congolese people, to persist in such adversity.

words/ andrew rogers



Himmler's Legacy

Katrin Himmler

She always knew that Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, Gestapo and chief organiser of the Holocaust, was her great uncle, but it took many years for Katrin Himmler, author of The Himmler Brothers, to delve into the dark past of her family.

This books deals with the process of her discoveries. It mixes together her documental findings, and her own thoughts about the misnomers told within the family compared to the scary truths she finds out in her thirties.

As a school girl she would be asked if she was related to 'the' Himmler, to which she would stammer a 'yes'.

“ Sons of a strict headmaster who took every care that they be 'German-minded'

Born in 1967, she knew of Heinrich's murderous actions, but saw them as slightly removed in the family until 1997 when her father telephoned her and asked that she visit the recently opened East German archives of the Second World War to see what they would reveal. The archives did turn up a small folder, which initially seemed harmless, but displayed clues of deeper involvement, such as her grandfather Ernst joining the National Socialist party in 1931, more than a year before the party gained power. If her grandfather had been such an anti-political, why had he done this?

Katrin's interest and foreboding at what she might find increases, as she begins to learn that several of her relatives were more intertwined in the Nazi party than she had ever imagined. Sons of a strict headmaster who took every care that they be "German-minded", the Himmler brothers represented a strict and sheltered generation who used their schooling towards mass genocide.

The Himmler Brothers is a fascinating read for history enthusiasts and for anyone interested in the concept of how children of an average middle-class family can become so monstrous.

words/ eva cohen



iPage is shown this week modelling the iOutfit, as captured by Mark Mackay

iPage's cool sites of the week

• www.thecontaminated.com/cartoon-characters-skeletons/

Ever wondered what Bugs, Donald, Wile E. Coyote et al would look like rendered as real-life skeletons? Finally, the internet provides.

• pimpmysearch.com

If you've ever harboured a secret desire to change the Google logo to something of your own wording (perhaps 'I Love iPage?') then this is the site for you.

• johnstitor.com

One of iPage's favourites. During late 2000 and early 2001, a man calling himself John Titor made postings online claiming to be a time traveller from the future. His messages included stories about his world, the impending war due to hit Earth soon, and other fascinating insights. Even if you're sceptical, this is a genuinely fascinating read. Who knows? It could even be true.

Welcome to another week's iPage, brought to you by the ridiculously powerful lights of the new 4100 lumens torch known simply as "The Torch".

The imaginatively-named product possesses a beam so bright that not only will it set paper alight in seconds, but it can fry an egg with its beam of mind-frying light. Personally, iPage would rather just use a frying pan, but if you prefer to own combo gadgets, this sounds like the torch for you. Does anyone know what a lumen is, by the way? iPage ponders.

It's Lego's 50th birthday this month - iPage bids happy birthday to his favourite childhood toy. There may have been pretenders to the throne of childhood games... K'Nex, Meccano, etc, but they were never really a threat to the Lego dynasty. Who can forget the joys of receiving a new model for Christmas and annoying relatives for the rest of the day whilst trying to construct a scale model of the Cutty Sark, all the while complaining because the cat swallowed the crow's nest? Long may these good times continue.

News reaches iPage of the doomed satellite currently floundering in the skies above us. Apparently the US spy satellite 'USA 193' (another catchy name, iPage thinks) could descend on us at any time like a burning metallic judgement from God. While the media is currently overrun with speculation about where the space leviathan will come down, iPage is more concerned about just how many more of these spy satellites are currently orbiting above our Orwellian societies, watching over our every move and reporting them all back to Comrade Brown.

Speaking of metallic spies, a new robot called Robovie is being introduced into

shopping malls to help guide confused shoppers. The robot is able to monitor a maximum of 20 people at a time and can classify their behaviour into different categories based on patterns. If it detects a person becoming disorientated it approaches them asking "are you lost?", offering help to the distressed denizen if necessary. If mistaken, it simply recommends shops and locations in the vicinity. Sounds useful perhaps, but iPage can't help but speculate that like last week's 'intelligent' robots, the sneaky Robovie could soon direct unwary shoppers into dark alleys where its robotic brethren will slaughter them for their credit cards.

Similarly, a new military robot named 'Ladar' allows a mixture of laser and radars to establish a 3D environment without requiring human interaction. The robot can then sweep in and discover hidden weapons, bombs, and enemies, all without the need for maps or indeed, people. If the robots ever decide to rise up against us, the Ladar will be amongst the first of the threats against humanity.

Torrent website The Pirate Bay recently hit 10 million users. Filthy media downloaders are excited.

Does anyone still use Myspace? It's almost embarrassing now compared to Facebook's obvious supremacy as Tom and his cronies attempt to keep up with Mark Zuckerberg, a year too late. The latest in its pitiful status is the leaking of thousands of 'private' photos. Users who upload potentially embarrassing shots to a private album were dismayed to find that these photos could still be accessed by crafty hackers, who assembled a staggering 17 gigabyte zip file containing 44,000 private photos which is currently available for download on certain torrent sites. iPage

Joining the a-list.

Just another day at the office for a high performer.

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Enter our competition and you could be off on an amazing trip to Hollywood, including a tour of the Warner Bros. studios—just one client that we're helping to become a high-performance business. We also have hundreds of pairs of cinema tickets up for grabs.

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The Student Union, University of Leeds
Tuesday 12th February, 2008

Come and meet us, grab some popcorn and find out what it's like to work at Accenture from our very own a-listers. As one of the world's leading management consulting, technology services and outsourcing companies, we provide innovative technological and business solutions for many of the world's leading companies, like Warner Bros.

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On the Sixth Day...

Dinosaur bones were planted by God to test our faith, because as we know, the world is only 4,000 years old and was made in 6 days. You may think that this sounds like Creationism. You'd be wrong. Its 'Intelligent Design'. Well actually they are one and the same thing, except Intelligent Design is a re-branding of Creationism due to the fact that Creationism was banned from being taught in Public Schools in America. This re-branding is spearheaded by the Discovery Institute which claims that Darwin was possessed by the devil, and that the theory of evolution is absolutely false.

Now don't get me wrong - I'm all for a multi-faith society and despite my atheistic stance, I can just about accept fundamentalist Christianity, even though it flies in the face of all science and logic. But surely that is the nature of faith? Fine. Not, however, when its taught in place of a theory that would go a long way to explain our existence. Surely the omnipotent God could be behind evolution and let us evolve from apes into humans?

So in my book creationism taught in a theology class is fine, but Intelligent Design in place of empirical science? Not on my watch. 55% of Americans believe that God created us as we are now and in 2004, 37% of all Americans would have chosen Creationism to be taught in place of Science. This means deliberately teaching children something that is scientifically impossible. The Institute of Creation Science (an oxymoron in my view) releases books and does pseudo-scientific studies not to prove Creationism (because you can't) but to disprove evolution. Text books specifically written for private Christian schools are regularly used, and there are Christian only universities, from which you can get a bachelor's degree in Creationism. Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, believes that the teaching of Intelligent Design in schools is comparable to teaching flat earthism, as the scientific consensus to both of these are the same.

In 2004 37% of all Americans would have chosen Creationism to be taught in place of Science.

In 2002 Ohio permitted the teaching of Intelligent Design in schools, and it goes as far as political appointees to NASA prohibiting its scientists from mentioning the age of the solar system, galaxy or universe. The ever growing Christian Right that pervades the US government prevents scientists employed by it to refer to this even when in collusion with the process of Global Warming which is based on evidence hundreds of thousands of years old. I recently read a book called *American Fascists* which discussed in detail the rise of the Christian Right, and it scared me beyond belief. It seems to me that Intelligent Design is used as a recruiting tool for something that masquerades itself as an evangelical Christian movement, but in fact appears to be growing into a politicized totalitarian regime. It is stripping the rights of the world through a doctrine of fear based on the 'war against terror'. Don't believe me? Read the book. Not only that but its coming to a school near you... 59 schools are now teaching it in the UK. I only hope we're not as susceptible to Christian Fundamentalism as our cousins across the pond.

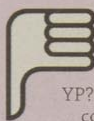
words/ alex gilchrist



Hit, Miss, or Maybe



This week's hit is a hit in the most literal of senses. Yes, I'm talking throwing punches and getting nasty. Too long has my violent nature been suppressed. Last night I tried out 'Give it a go' karate where I found that I was not alone in my hot temper. One girl smugly informed me that she had her own punch bag at home that she pounded after an irritable day at the library. I've always wanted a punch bag, but I thought it might seem a bit weird. Forever the cynic, I've never be one for anger management classes, and besides, it's not like I go round beating people up or anything. Although obsessively I like to floor bouncers. And have the odd tantrum and storm around slamming doors. But now that I've found karate, I get to kick some arse and beat the shit out of a foam pad, or an imaginary person in the image of someone I particularly dislike. It's a great form of self defence, and you're also taught to shout aggressively in your opponent's face. Once you get over the embarrassing spectacle of shouting 'hiyah!' at the top of your lungs whilst stifling giggles, you'll be the epitome of a lean, mean, fighting machine.



Clubs that charge too much. Don't you just hate the way that all the fat cat club owners in Leeds assume that everyone to cross their threshold on a Saturday night is a yuppie or a YP? With door tax as much as £15 and a vodka and coke at £4, it's no wonder the kids are turning to drugs. Bosh a bean and it'll set you back a mere £2.50. The club owners of course argue that they're forced to put the door tax up because no one buys drinks anymore, but that's only the case when drinks are too expensive in the first place.

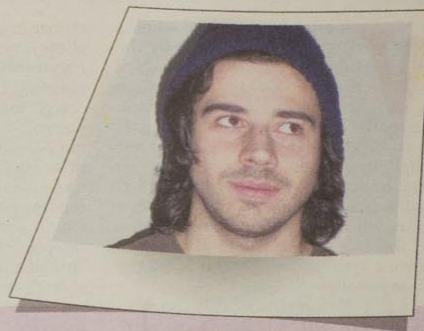


Youdoo dolls
These creepy dolls, first seen on Dragon's Den, are now available for you to mutilate to your heart's content. Fashion them in the image of your most hated, and then spend hours of fun spearing, stabbing, and strangling; in the maker's own words, 'hurt it'. 'I'm gonna hurt you', need never be a thoughtless threat. Instead, it'll be 'I'm gonna hurt my doll of you.' Come on, you've got to admit, it's plausible. It's also plausible that the voodoo masons are on the verge of taking over the world, and that by creating a doll in your own image you're inadvertently killing yourself.

Karate

Rip-off door tax

Youdoo dolls



Consolidating MTV and Squirells

I recently found myself in a situation where I was obliged to watch an episode of MTV's most recent coma-inducing offering: Newport Harbour (think Laguna Beach, etc). The kernel of each episode is the following performance; when an ovulating female is overcome by the urge to mate into money, a telephone call is made to an eager young bachelor and a meeting is arranged to further this end. To kick off the exchange, the girl who has made the initial call asks, out of conventional deference, what the boy



A 2000 pound squirrel weighing as much as a bull!

on the end of the line has been up to over the course of the day. The response she unfailingly receives is 'nuuuuuthin', and as the conversation develops it perpetually transpires that she too has been immobile since the last time they met.

The thing is, this declaration of indolence is visibly untrue. Have I not just spent twenty minutes watching Clay (who is even named after an object of muddy grey stasis) annihilate his clone in Tetris? Why not mention that? And somebody must have done some exercise in the recent past - those six-packs didn't just appear out of nowhere. What's with the false lethargy?

Something similar happens around exam time at Leeds University. Recently, whilst buying petits filous in 'Extras', I overheard a girl desperate to persuade her friend that she had done 'nothing at all' over the Christmas break. At the same time she was buying two pens for her impending exam, 'in case one runs out, you can never be too sure'. It occurred to me that if this girl had really done as little work as she professed, then the last thing she was going to need in an exam was an extra pen. She'd be better off buying a reissued wispa. So why the deception?

I think the answer may reside with our old friend the squirrel. It transpires (according to the New Scientist) that grey squirrels are so devious in their nut-burying conduct, they will go to great lengths to simulate the act of burying nuts in order to throw food thieves off the scent. Natural selection is at work here. Deceive your admirer and collect the prize.

This monument of scientific insight coincided with last week's discovery, in Uruguay, of the fossilized remains of the biggest prehistoric rodent ever. The josphoartigasia monesi is described by one excited website as "a 2000 pound squirrel weighing as much as a bull!" The fossil confirmed that the specimen in question died peacefully and of natural causes. The creature expired in the middle of a three-day Tetris binge whilst waiting for the chirpy demimondaine from up the road to arrive with two biros and a toblorone.



words/ harriet hernando

words/ gareth lewis



closet- the truth.

ily can be one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome when ing LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans) History Month, process of revealing the truth about sexual orientation.

“As I went to a Church of England school, I was often reminded that I was going to Hell and that I was committing a terrible sin.”

Outed

I was outed in Year 10 at school by a really bitchy girl. We were having an argument and she threatened to tell everyone that I was gay. At the time I had only told my two best friends; one of them accepted it saying she always knew and the other, to put it simply, refused to talk to me ever again.

My arrogance at the time encouraged me to call the bitchy girl's bluff and I said 'Go on- tell everyone then!'. Foolishly, she actually did. I remember so clearly when she went to talk to a large group of people and them all turning in my direction. I didn't know what to do as I could already feel them condemning me, so I skipped school with my best friend and didn't return that day.

When I did eventually decide to go back to school, I was late for assembly and had to walk in at the end in front of everyone to listen to the notices. This was my own private Mean Girls moment- I could hear whispering from everyone behind me. It was so hard being at school. At the beginning everyone would ask me if I was gay, and I would say 'No' just to shut them up. But my friend suggested that I should just say 'Yes' to see what they would do. Nothing much changed, except people's questions were more along the lines of 'How do you know you're gay when you haven't had gay sex?'. And of course there was the homophobia that came with it. As I went

to a Church of England school, I was often reminded that I was going to Hell and that I was committing a terrible sin. For the non-Christians at our school, their torment was simply calling me a faggot every day.

That wasn't the hardest thing about it either - the bitchy girl also told the guy I fancied. I knew he was straight and that nothing was ever going to happen between us, so I never even thought about telling him. But the look he gave me when he found out has haunted me since- I remember the disgust and hatred so clearly. He even got beaten up because of it which shocked me as I expected to get beaten up myself, but he didn't even deserve it. I could take not having friends, I could take getting bullied every day, but he was innocent.

Although I say I could take it and I did actually get through every day, there were days or more precisely long periods of time when I just thought giving up would be so much easier. I thought about transferring schools but I knew my past would follow me. I thought about running away but then practical reasons stopped me. I sometimes thought about suicide, but I really do believe that is the ultimate sin and I would never do that, but it shows just how low I felt. Instead I convinced myself to wait it out and go to college where I would find someone that would like me for who I am and knows the truth about my sexuality.

Anon

Young Love

When I was 14 I was sure my mum had sussed that I was a lesbian because I quite liked Emma Bunton (ahem) and she always used to tell me when she was on TV and stuff. But it came to a point where for some reason I felt like I should tell her outright. I thought if I told her later on she'd be upset that I hadn't sort of included her in this big part of my life that I was going through (oh how things change...). So one night when we were on our own I worked up the balls to tell her that there was a GIRL at school that I liked. I can't remember how I brought it up now, but she was really supportive. The classic, "It's probably just a phase," thing, but she said she'd still love me no matter what etc. Later on I told my sister and she was just like, "And?", bless her.

Now here's where it gets a bit iffy. I

started secretly dating a girl I met on the internet, as my mum had made some comment about us not being allowed to date until we were at least 16. The day my girl told me she thought she was falling in love with me in a text message was the day my mother decided to read my inbox! Apparently because she was worried about me as I was spending lots of time on the internet and being secretive. I was having a shower when she came in and read the message out to me. Afterwards my dad was brushing my hair as my mum decided to tell him everything; that I'd told her I thought I was gay and so on. The brushing of my hair got more and more vicious as she went on. I don't think he really said much though.

However, it was more the concept of it being an internet relationship that bothered them. They decided that my dad would come and meet her with me for the first time! (Yes, she told me she thought she was in love with me before we met, but you know what you're like when you're young and it's your first relationship) I felt so sorry for the poor lass, cos I was nervous enough as it was, so God knows what it was like for her meeting me with a

parent in tow! But after all that, everyone's fine with me. I'm not sure who of my other relatives know. I've told some of my cousins myself and my

“I got the classic, 'It's probably just a phase,' talk...”

mum's told her parents and sister for me, so it's by no means a secret. Oh and all my friends were fine. I told a couple at first, then more, then as it got towards the end of school and I had my girl I didn't care if people knew anymore. I didn't get any hassle over it.

Anon

Get out now!

If you've been wanting to come out of the closet but aren't sure how, when or where, there are plenty of safe spaces locally where you can get it off your chest and make your first steps to coming out..

Leeds Uni LGBT Society welcomes new members all the time, regardless of whether you're 'out' to your other friends at university. Their daily coffee hour provides a place in which you can express yourself without being judged on your sexuality.

Contact: lul.lgbt@leeds.ac.uk

Website: www.leeds.ac.uk/union/socs/lgb

Nightline can provide you with emotional support if you're having a hard time coming out. For a friendly ear call 0113 3801381.

Leeds LGB Switchboard- call 0113 245 3588 for advice specifically tailored to sexuality-related questions.

Unipol Code of Standards Members - 2008/2009

Names in **bold** indicate somebody who is a Platinum Owner, which means they have been members of the Code of Standards for at least five consecutive years without a sustained Code of Standards complaint being made against them. Names in **bold** with **(G)** indicate somebody who is a Golden Owner, which means they have been members of the Code for at least three consecutive years without a sustained Code of Standards complaint being made against them. Names in **bold** with **(LC)** indicate that the provider is a member of the National Codes of Standards for Larger Developments. To see an updated list and find out more about the Code of Standards visit our website and click on the Code Rosette.



CODE OF STANDARDS FOR LARGER DEVELOPMENTS

A	Peter & Dianne Draisey	Trevor Love (G)	James Rosindell
A1 Properties - SS Bharaj	Alan Dyson (P)	LS6.Com - J Prescott	Chris Ross - La Sala
A & C Accommodation - Andrew O'Leary	E	M	S
Abbey Homes - A Parmar	Elmwood Property Services - David Peers	M&J Estates - M Wisniewski	Mohammed Saddique
Academy Properties - Bill Pickard	F	Adam Machell - Clothhall Developments	SC&B Housing - S Short
AD Properties - Andrew Dodds	Fair Lets to Students - C Packer	Yuvraj Maheru	Raj Samra
AGP - Haley & Pearce	CJ Falkingham - Falham Properties	Mary Morris International Residences Ltd (LC)	Michael Schmidt
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Janis Adams	Colin Farrer - Farrer Properties	Melanie May (G)	Steven Sharp - Premier Student Lets (G)
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Mrs Najema Akhtar/Mr M Sagher	Paul & Vivien Fletcher - Fletcher Properties	Richard McEwan Peters - Dingley Pads	Rohan Sivajoti
Mr Mudassir Ali	Sandy & Simon Fone (G)	Robert McEwan Peters - RMP Properties (G)	David Shone
Andoria Properties - Mrs A Paschali	Keith Foster	Fran McLaughlin	Sheila Short - SC&B Housing
Angel Halls (LC)	G	Julian Meek	Mr & Mrs M Sienko
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Peter Armitage	Mr & Mrs A Gray	DH Midgley - DHM Properties	SJ Skinner
Abdul Aziz	H	John Midgley - Olivia Properties Ltd	Barbara Slaughter
B	E Haley & AG Pearce - AGP	Millennium House Enterprises - Mark Jenkinson	Ronald J Slinger
BJ Baczkowski	Colin Halliday	Zabir Mohammed	SM Properties - S Miah
Janet Bailey	Martin Halliday - Homefinders	Giovanni Mole (G)	David Smee
Alfonso Balado	Neil Hardaker (G)	Graham Morrill	Mr & Mrs AE Smith
Kevin Balycky	Avril Harris - Harris Lettings	Dianne Morello	Rebecca Smithers (G)
Diane Barnes	Haro Investments - S Bradley	Laurence Mosby	GM Spencer - Spencer Properties (UK) Ltd
JM Barrett	Angela Hawkins	N	Springwell Easylet Ltd - Bonnington & Chapman
Waseem Bashir	Hawthorn Properties - Penny Whittington	Hari Nagra	Catherine Starling
Martin Baxter	Headingley Halls (LC)	Emma Nash	David Steel
Karen Beard	Headingley Property Services - G Jarrett (G)	John Navaratnam	T
Prem Beeharry (G)	Jeremy Hibble - Unilet Property	Ninety Degrees Ltd - Anne Johnson	Rahjit Singh Taak
Mark Bellamy	Eileen Higgins - Broadfield Properties	Euan Noble & P Hiles	Shyam Sunder Tah
Mr D Bethell - Temple Way (G)	Homefinders - M Halliday	Timothy Norman	Brian Talbot
SS Bharaj - A1 Properties	Mrs Hobson - Westfield Properties	Peter Norwood & Michelle Pawson	Janos Taller
Andrew Bickley	John Hogan	O	Stuart Tate - Tates Properties (G)
Carl Bilsbrough	Richard Hopkinson	Janet O'Connor	Chris & Jane Taylor
Janet Blythe - Lakescene Associates Ltd	Andrew Hudson - Kenmare Properties	Laura O'Connor	Temple Way Property - Bethall (G)
GY Bobat	Katherine Hudson	Charles O'Donnell	Mike Thaker
Joseph Bonfiglio	Max Hume	Andrew O'Leary - A & C Accommodation	Mike Thorpe - Thorne Properties
Bonnington & Chapman - Springwell Easylet Ltd	Imdad Hussain (G)	Olivia Properties Ltd - J Midgley	John Toal
Jacqueline Boulton	Matloob Hussain - Prestige Properties (G)	Opal (LC)	Karen Tulley - CKT Properties
Robina Bowers	I	P	2 View Properties - M Khan
Stephen Bradley - Haro Investments	Infinitus Lettings - S&K Wright (G)	Carol Packer - Fair Lets to Students	U
Bramley Rental - K Winn	Kamran Iqbal	Pageant Properties - B White	Umpireview Limited
Alison Brayshaw	J	PCP - H Cheese-Probert	Unilet Property - Jeremy Hibble
Broadfield Properties - E Higgins	Chris Jackson	Max Palmer	Unipol Student Homes
C	Jagtar Properties	Rob Panesar (G)	Unipol Student Homes (LC)
Ian Campbell	Will James	Satnam Panesar (G)	UNITE (LC)
Rob Carr - Carr-Hall Properties	Graham Jarrett - Headingley Property Services (G)	Parklane - The Triangle (LC)	University of Leeds (LC)
Carr Mills (LC)	Mrs Jassim & Mr Al-Ausi - J&J Properties	Raffella Parascandolo	V
Andrew Cavill	Mark Jenkinson - Millennium House Enterprises	Ashook Parmar - Abbey Homes	W
David & Christine Cavill	David Jiang	Hemant Parmar	Jimmy Walters
Helen Cheese-Probert - PCP	Anne Johnson - Ninety Degrees Ltd	Hiten Parmar	Westfield Properties - Mrs Hobson
Anne Chen (G)	K	Maresh Parmar	Brian White - Pageant Properties
Stephen Chung	Leila Kara	Mrs A Paschali - Andoria Properties	Gavin Whitehead - Croft Properties
Anthony J Chuter - Wrenbury Associates	Gaydora Kaye	Ken Patel	Penny Whittington - Hawthorne Properties
Citispac Urban Apartments	Kenmare Properties - A Hudson	David Peers - Elmwood Property Services	Peter Wild
CKT Properties - Karen Tulley	Steve Kettlewell	Bill Pickard - Academy Properties	P & C Williamson
Michael Cleary	Mohammed Khan - 2 View Properties	Gary Pickard - Pickard Properties	Keith Willis
Cliffe House Properties - Lynda Raddings	Yasin Khan	Miles Pickard - Pickard Properties	Anne Wilson
Toria Clifton-Brown	Peter Knowlton	Stephen Pickering	Ken Winn - Bramley Rental
Clothhall Developments - A Machell	L	Premier Student Lets - S Sharp (G)	Michelle Winston
Gary Cooper	La Sala - Chris Ross	Jackie Prescott - LS6.co.uk	M Wisniewski - M&J Estates
Roger Cowley	Lakescene Associates Ltd - Janet Blythe	Prestige Properties - Matloob Hussain (G)	Michael Worker Properties
Croft Properties - G Whitehead	Jane Landells	Keith Pullen - Pullen & Hartley	Wrenbury Associates - Anthony J Chuter
K & B Crowther	Landmark Homes	Q	Mr & Mrs Wright
D	Carol Lee-Mak	R	Steve & Kay
Gareth Davies	Leeds Federated Housing Association	Lynda Raddings - Cliffe House Lynda Raddings -	Wright - Infinitus Lettings (G)
Mark Dervish	Leeds Metropolitan University (LC)	Cliffe House Properties	X
Deu Estates - S Singh	Dewi Lewis	Paul & Barbara Radford	Y
Val & Richard Dew (G)	Simon Lewis	Simon Ray	Z
Gurdip Dhalwal - FLDR	Liberty Living (LC)	Kathleen Reddington (G)	
DHM Properties - DH Midgley	Lingard Bell Ltd - Steve Rowley	Marilyn Redman - Redman Properties	
Dingley Pads - R McEwan Peters	John Lister	David Rhodes	
Direct Lets Hyde Park - Maria Shanahan	Christine Liversidge	RMP Properties - Robert McEwan Peters (G)	
Mohammed Ditta	Garth London	Catherine Roberts	
Andrew Dodds - AD Properties	Joanna Lousada	David & Christine Rogers	
Russell Donnelly		Oliver Rook	



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The LoveBox

Welcome to the LoveBox. Here, **LS** helps you to find true love. Send your lonely hearts or missed love connections to us at loveboxleeds@googlemail.com

Missed Connections

- Saw you at the Viking Reenactment Society meeting last Tuesday. You were quaffing Real Ale and shouting something about King Olaf Forkbeard. Rape and pillage me, you burly barbarian you.
- To the girl in the Edward Boyle level 11: I must possess you. Your perfect fingernails and exquisite eyelashes moved my soul beyond the confines of mere human experience. Get 'em out for the lads!
- You were at Weetwood playing fields practicing with the Women's Rugby Sevenths. I was perched in the nearby trees with binoculars and a hard-on. You did this thing in the scrum that made me feel six years old again. Touch me like before mummy.

- Saw you in the Refectory being handled by some other man. You looked so smooth I wanted to eat my dinner off your shining surface. He was scraping his cutlery roughly against your china white skin. I want that to be my fork. Are you dishwasher proof?

Lonely Hearts

- Penis seeks vagina for serious gratification. Simple as.
- Angry, angry man with record seeks innocent, naive bride for long walks on the beach, visits to art galleries and the music of Neil Diamond. Must have casual outlook on domestic violence.
- Feminist seeks bra for unshackling chauvanist regime inherent in British society. Must be flame retardant level 3.
- P.E teacher looking for younger partner willing to run around in freezing weather in gym shorts with a hockey stick. The staffroom has a radiator and Hobnobs on tap...



Tommy Pockets Tells Your Future

Our world-renowned, 666-year-old astrologer Tommy Pockets (pictured here on the Titanic) lays down the secrets of your mystic week. Spookalicious.



Aries

A busload of Swiss frogs are delivered to your house this week as you begin your campaign of terror against sugar cane. A misguided attempt at humour will land you in hot water with the fashion police. PUT THE HANDBAG DOWN! Your lucky smell is saffron and pumpernickel bread.



Taurus

The man who repairs your fridge will be distinctly unimpressed by your attempts at wooing him and his young, pretty but oh so stupid apprentice. The underwear will be, frankly, misguided and a little bit racist. Shame on you. Your lucky smell is a concoction of stale turtle poop and Morrison's Bettabuy mincemeat.



Gemini

Roy will be your most important name this week as you search hospitals for a baby to snatch. They won't take this one away, you'll shout as you realise you've stolen a dialysis machine and are cradling it to your breast. Your lucky smell is Britey's Spears' panicked sweat as she realises she'll never see her kids again. The nutter.



Cancer

A highlighter will be used by a third party to draw rude shapes on your fruit this week. Bananas will be most affected. There will be clear evidence that someone you thought was naughty will turn out to be nice (tea biscuits). Your lucky smell is the petrol station forecourt.



Leo

You will become the mysterious enigma known as the 'Music man' and lead a bunch of school children from small town America to a poking factory. A sub-oxygen dribble factory of a child will fall down and everyone will laugh. Your lucky smell is Kate Nash's fake Cockney armpits. Pongy.



Virgo

A wrong turn in the Union building takes you onto the set of 50 Cent's latest video shoot where you will instantly be mistaken for the track's guest rapper, Lil' Peter. Your attempts at impromptu lyric spittin' disgust Fiddy so much he gives you a wet willy. Your lucky smell is new car. Specifically a 2 litre Ford Mondeo.



Libra

A particularly strong gust of wind upsets the time/space continuum resulting in an army of Pokémon invading your bathroom. Like a 20th Century Trojan Horse they invade your shower under the guise of a flannel before ransacking your sphincter. Your lucky smell is freshly printed paper. Mmmm, warm.



Scorpio

A leprechaun headbutts you in the groin on Tuesday after you insult his wife. Apparently calling someone a 'Ginger Ninja' is slur too far. You get your revenge by tying his shoelaces together and giving him 'bum on head'. Your lucky smell is pineapple sperm.



Sagittarius

You will accidentally down seven shots of Fairy Liquid in a row this week. Following which a night of hedonistic bubble burbing will take place. When the shirt of your dreams gets red wine spilt all over itself you are there to regurgitate the necessary cleaning fluid and find a partner for life. Your lucky smell is rotting skunk.



Capricorn

Nappies will haunt your dreams this week as a result of Jupiter moving into the circle of The Great Baby. This has unfortunate consequences when you wake up with a pillow case wrapped around your genital area and a satisfied grin after emptying your bowells into the comforting undergarment. Your lucky smell is baby sick. Obviously.



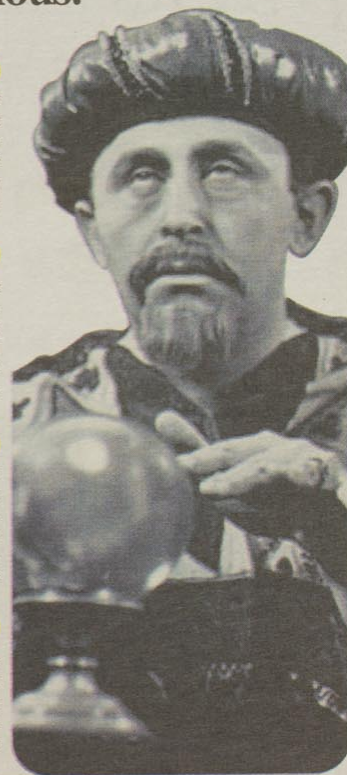
Aquarius

Fred Dibnah will recruit you for his war on bricks by Friday, brainwashing you into believing they are a threat to society and all need to be eradicated. The power of being a cult leader eventually gets to his flat-capped head and he orders all his minions to run face first into the Great Wall of China. Your lucky smell is Orangensaft and sour milk.



Pisces

One of your eyebrows begins to grow hair at a faster rate than usual over the next seven days. The uneven weight distribution of your face leads to a denting of the Louvre's floor after tilting your head to better observe the Mona Lisa. Sarkosy isn't happy. Your lucky smell is bongo mags.



NB: Tommy Pockets does not accept responsibility for any life-changing events that occur from following his obviously not made-up advice e.g. assisting a woman in labour.

Tommy Pockets is Jeremy Beadle's withered hand.



Genocide in Gaza.

Conditions worsen "beyond comprehension" in Gaza as the relentless siege continues.

This is the most devastating chapter in the eighteen month blockade of Gaza which began with Hamas's democratic election as the government of the Palestinian people and the labelling of the entire population of Gaza as a "hostile entity".

Despite the claims of the Israeli government, the occupation of Gaza has not ended. This view is backed by the highly respected Harvard Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research. In a legal brief prepared for the donor community, the programme's director wrote: "The partial redeployment of Israel's military presence in and around the territory is not the controlling factor in international law to determine the end of occupation ... The end of occupation rests essentially on the termination of the military control of the Occupying Power over the Government affairs of the occupied population that limits the people's right to self determination." As Israel has closed all its border crossings with Gaza and remains in control of all air and sea entrances, Gaza remains an open air prison camp with 1.5 million inmates.

"The blockade measures have an enormous human cost and we have asked Israel to immediately lift all retaliatory measures," Dorothea Krimitas, a spokeswoman for the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said in Geneva.

The extent of the suffering which Israel has inflicted is almost beyond comprehension. Eighty per cent of the population now relies on food aid, up from 25% before the siege began, hospitals and clinics are deprived of crucial medicines and patients die at border crossings as they

Gaza remains an open air prison camp with 1.5 million inmates.

are not allowed to leave Gaza for treatment, the total economic blockade has prevented fuel supplies entering the territory leading to the shutting down of Gaza's only power plant, plunging the territory into darkness.

Israel however insists that if rocket attacks are ceased, then they will allow the normal delivery of supplies to resume. However, the issue motivating the siege is not the

violent attacks that occur as part of the Palestinian resistance. During the first Intifada the Palestinians undertook non-violent resistance to the occupation, boycotting Israeli goods and businesses, refusing to work in Israel and carrying out strikes and demonstrations against the occupation. The response was the same. Total economic blockade, cutting off all electricity and attacking peaceful demonstrations.

In Bilin in the West Bank, International activists, Palestinians and Israeli's protest peacefully every Friday against the construction of the apartheid wall on their land. These protests too are routinely met with rubber bullets, baton charges and tear gas despite the non-violent nature of the protests.

This points to a concerted strategy by the Israeli state to meet all resistance to their occupation and expansion with violence and intimidation in order to crush all resistance to their aim of ethnically cleansing Palestine. The message to the Palestinians is clear, either quietly accept the colonisation of your land and water and the systematic destruction of your way of life or resist and face the total destruction of your people.

Those interested in attending the vigil should meet at the Parkinson Steps at 4pm to be at the Art Gallery at 5pm.



Mark Boothroyd
Palestinian Solidarity Group

The Palestine Solidarity Group have organised a vigil to help end the siege of Gaza. "Gaza is on the threshold of becoming the first territory to be intentionally reduced to a state of abject destitution, with the knowledge, acquiescence and - some would say - encouragement of the international community." According to the commissioner general for UNRWA.

Are politicians people too?

Why its time to stop playing the blame game.

The political sphere was recently rocked by the resignation of Work and Pensions Secretary Peter Hain. Hain, you might recall was found to have not declared all of his donations for his fundraising for the Labour party's Deputy Leadership race, and after much pressure, was forced to quit.

Except of course, the political sphere wasn't really rocked at all. This is all taken for granted these days, as British politics has become a farcical zoo, inhabited by egotistical animals, chasing down and ripping apart politicians for any misdemeanour, except for policy related ones, surely the most important aspect of being a politician. Take for example the Iraq war, perhaps an issue that has been debated to death, but an example I will use nevertheless. Almost without exception, and whatever people's original views on the reasons and justifications for war, it has

been an unqualified disaster, yet noone has been hounded out of a job like Peter Hain was.

Despite all of this I do not have much sympathy for Hain. Whilst he claimed that the whole thing was just an administrative cock-up, and this may very well be the case - politicians after all are actually people and can make clerical errors like any of us - the fact remains that he was at the very best, rather naïve about the whole thing. A large chunk of the donations came apparently from a "think tank", which the papers reported may not have actually been a think tank, although having said that noone dared define exactly what a "think tank" constituted. The whole thing went into very murky waters, and Hain should have known that in these days of cynical politics, he would be ripped to shreds if he made one aberration. And so it proved.

However, I have no doubt that was it a Conservative who was accused of a similar thing,

he would have done the same thing - he is after all an eager member of this current political set. There seems very little difference between the two major parties - they both seem as full of uncaring career politicians as each other. Such is the nature of the British political system; noone else can even come close to winning an election (sorry Lib Dems, but it is true), and so a large number of people feel there is nothing to vote for.

This country seems to have an insatiable stomach for retribution and blame, and in the realm of politics this only acts as a turn off for voters. It is little wonder that interest in politics is waning, and particularly amongst younger people. Whilst it is undoubtedly easier to complain about politicians than to be one, I can't help feeling that were they to spend more time on the issues, and less time trying to force everyone but themselves to resign, politics, and thus Britain, would be a better place.



Kieran Toms
kierantoms88@gmail.com

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The unbelievable truth.

Moazzam Begg's visit highlights the plight of victims of the war on terror.



Rob Heath and Maryam Ahmad
leedsstudentcomment@gmail.com

An account of torture practices used today by supposedly humanitarian and democratic countries, was outlined to students in a talk given by ex-Guantánamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg, who was imprisoned without conviction between 2002 and 2005, in which time he was subject to physical torture and abuse.

Mr Begg, a UK citizen born in Birmingham in 1968, explained that, for many people America has captured in the War on Terror, Guantánamo is in fact the light at the end of a very dark tunnel. He stated frankly that the true horrors of "interrogation" occur in secret so-called 'ghost camps' in the Middle-East, like the one at Bagram airbase in the Parvan region of Afghanistan where he was held. He claims that these places by their very nature have no responsibility to adhere to international human-rights laws, brazenly infringing them at every turn.

As an example, Mr Begg told the audience of a man that was hung from the ceiling for four days by his hands then was physically assaulted by the guards. He spoke of an interview whereby his interviewers told him the man sat on his chair just two weeks earlier had not complied with their demands, and had been sent to Egypt alive in a coffin. The man had apparently then confessed to trying to buy nuclear weapons from Saddam Hussein. Begg believes this testimony, likely obtained under extreme duress by operatives of a country with an atrocious record of human-rights abuses, is the evidence that was used to persuade the Coalition of the Willing to go to war with Iraq.

White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales, in 2002, received a memo detailing how torture "must be equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death." Even this hopelessly slack definition of what constitutes torture has most likely been fulfilled, given that Begg claims American investigators asked him (ironically while he was being held without charge) if he would testify against soldiers he witnessed beat prisoners to death.

More than just physical torture, Begg asserts that being held in Guantánamo's Camp Delta drives many inmates insane. He claims that for a period of the two years and eight months he was held, he too lost his grip with reality, and only by concentrating on memorising huge passages of the Qur'an did he not lose it entirely.

During his incarceration in Bagram, he signed an FBI confession to attending al-Qaeda training camps where he learned to fire anti-air weapons. It is also claimed he confessed to an al-Qaeda plan to fly drone aircraft over London, dropping anthrax bombs on Parliament. He insists all of these confessions were forced out of him.

What is alarming enough is the fact that this torture is seemingly being carried out on a global scale. America runs "extraordinary rendition" flights, whereby the arrested suspects are moved to countries which torture as a matter of course. Alternatively, they fly to places with out-of-the-way prisons and detention facilities, outside the rule of law where America can torture with apparent impunity.

In his speech, Begg alleges he witnessed a man being kicked in the same part of his body almost a hundred times by guards, ultimately leading to his death, because they thought it was funny when he said "Allah" in response to the pain.

Despite its undoubtedly illegal nature, and that the majority of people regard it as being unethical, we still, perhaps unconsciously accept that torture plays a role in keeping us safe in our 'civilised' world. This is apparent by the fact that laws have been passed prohibiting its use,

“He stated that the true horrors of ‘interrogation’ occur in the ‘ghost camps’ in the Middle-East, like the one at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan where he was held.”

apparently enforced by those regimes that we acknowledge have no problem using it. Worse still perhaps, is that today, the fact that torture takes place is no longer hidden from public view nor denied so vehemently as it was in the past. It is rare, at least for the public, to encounter the official government narratives of the experiences suffered by prisoners in detention that characterised apartheid regimes which utilised torture in the past. What are the implications of this, the fact that we accept and acknowledge the illegal brutal treatment and abuse of others, upon ourselves as members of a society? How can we simultaneously denounce torture as barbaric practice yet somehow in the depths of the imagination believe that it can be necessary to ensure our own individual safety? The cause of this is not just due to the creation of the 'us and them' mentality, whereby difference is fabricated to the extent that we have one attitude that we would apply only to ourselves. The moral indignation at the torture suffered by people like 'us' does not extend to someone who has come to be viewed differently.

A more important cause perhaps is the overriding belief that the purpose, aim and

outcome of torture is to elicit the "truth". Scarry, a



notable researcher of torture practices suggests that we should question whether this method of probing does in fact achieve its aim. Legal definitions of torture since the third-century all refer to the use of violence with the aim of extracting the truth, and that because the practice of torture has been linked with this aim, one might assume that it does in fact achieve its objective. But how can this be a viable method of finding truth? For one thing, as Scarry notes, the pain experienced by the body is so undeniably real that having pain can come to be thought of as what it is to have certainty. For a torture victim that is being questioned, the only truth that they can really be sure of is that they are experiencing pain. It is vital that we recognise the only thing that can be obtained from a tortured body is what has been put into it. This is evidenced in Moazzam Begg's account of his experiences. Since no nuclear weapons have been found in Iraq, the testimony obtained through the torture of that unfortunate victim no doubt was false. As Begg has attested to almost losing his mind in confinement, practices of torture result in the mind's inability to function correctly. To lose one's mind is to not know right from wrong, truth from falsehood.

A confession obtained by torture is worthless. If our society is to make rational choices, testimonies should come from reliable sources—not be obtained by forcing someone into becoming what we ultimately want them to be.

According to Scarry, for torturers today, the victory is not seen in the confession but in the rendering of the body to complete powerlessness. If this is true, it poses an extremely disturbing question about the depths of human depravity. How do torturers live in the world when they are off duty? A more disturbing question still, but the images of smiling soldiers with their thumbs in the air next to a pile of naked bodies in Abu Ghraib prison makes it a legitimate one to ask. How does one become so indifferent to human suffering that they can beat a person to death, all the while appearing as though they are having the time of their life?

The truth, as we see it, is that we must take a harder stand against these sadistic methods, because no doubt in this paradoxical repudiation and acceptance of torture we become just as much to blame for these practices as our governments, who practice it on our behalf.

LS Chat

Either email:
talk@leedsstudent.org.uk

Or, text "LS1" followed by
your text to 60300

Reader's Letters

Dear LS,

I was interested by your article of the Friday 18th January edition of the Leeds Student Newspaper and would like to put forward some views in the nature of free debate. Before I start I would like to point out that I am no member of the BNP, nor do I condone their actions or views in any way. However I do feel that the tone of your article was, by the same measure, rather extreme.

By withdrawing the right to free speech you withdraw the very thing that our grandparents fought against Nazism. I agree that they did not fight and die in order for the Fascist message to be preached across our lands, but Voltaire said that "I detest what you write, but I would give my life to make it possible for you to continue to write". By forcing restrictions on what we say and to whom we are debasing ourselves to a semi-fascist state. Similarly, and previously mentioned in the same edition of LSN; the government's new policy of inviting higher education authorities to reject the requests for separate prayer facilities from their students is a solid move in the direction of state intervention. This is liberal scaremongering perhaps, but if we allow government organisations to keep tabs on students who may hold strong ideologies at heart during their university years then we will remain a system such as we have today; with the example of Jack Straw, former Foreign Minister (2001-2006), when he found MI5 surveillance records of his own activities as a student. Needless to say he was understandably outraged.

Instead of your article of only criticism, I offer a (controversial) suggestion; Let them speak. The worst enemy of the BNP is not the Jews, nor the Muslims nor liberals. It is the BNP. They are their own worst enemy. Because most people will already be taking what they say with a highly liberal pinch of salt, it only takes one slip by any BNP speaker for their image to be further lowered. Had the debate taken place, and the BNP argument destroyed through reasoned and intelligent debate, not only would they have been humiliated, but the sacrifices made by our grandparents would have been honoured. Freedom of speech would have been served, and these obnoxious individuals sent back to their weakened positions.

In conclusion, my point is; where does it stop? How do we censor fundamentalism (both nationalist and religious) without trading our hard won freedom of speech? We are fortunate in this country to live with a free press (I am not that cynical...yet), but we have to be able to make up our own minds. For this we need to hear both sides of the argument.

Yours,

Anon

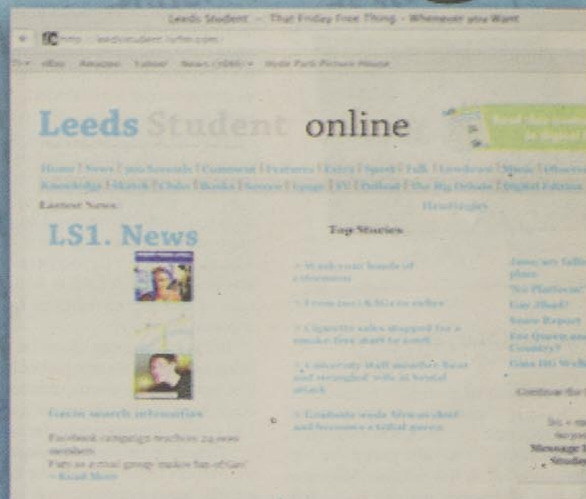
Corrections and Clarifications

Leeds Student apologises to Susan Nash for misquoting her in last week's news article, "Financial disaster for second degree students".

Leeds Student needs a website manager

Thursday evening helper required to help make the best of Leeds Student online.

Email c.griffiths@luu.leeds.ac.uk
or call 0113 380 1450 or simply
pop into the office.



Check out the Leeds Student table at the RE:ACTIVATE societies fair on Friday 1st February, 10am-3pm. If you want to get involved in your student newspaper, this is your best chance!



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THURSDAY 14TH FEBRUARY
VOTING PERIOD
MONDAY 18TH TO
THURSDAY 21ST FEBRUARY
RESULTS:
FRIDAY 22ND FEBRUARY

REFERENDUM 2008



Leeds University Union.

Netball Firsts finish with demolition of Durham

Netball
Michael Symons

Leeds Uni 1sts 47-27 Durham University 1sts Sports Hall

On the day that the Leeds netball fourth team broke all records with a 111-3 win, the first team kept up their promotion push with a more modest, if equally crucial 47-27 victory over Durham. Though currently sitting top of their BUSA division, Leeds will be powerless to stop Newcastle from stealing promotion should they win their game in hand. Thus a win in this one was imperative, in order to keep the pressure on.

Facing bottom side Durham, this should have been a more comfortable win for the home side, but they were made to work hard by the BUSA strugglers. In fact, Durham started much the better of the two sides and with goal shooter Susie Marsh in fine form, they edged into a 13-8 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Though Durham continued to defy their lowly league position with some fine

passing and movement, Leeds soon began to impose themselves on this crucial contest. With Goal Defence Rachael Jarman defending superbly, Leeds went in search of parity and some clinical finishing enabled them to creep into a 15-14 lead. Once ahead, Leeds never looked likely to surrender their advantage and instead began to pull clear of their BUSA rivals.

The home side went into the half time interval with a 22-18 lead and came out in the third quarter intent on sealing their victory with time to spare. A flurry of goals from Leeds seemed to deflate Durham, whose early promise was quickly turning into yet another disappointing away day. Leeds took full advantage of their opponent's sudden decline and piled on the points to put the game beyond Durham's reach.

A scoreline of 34-23 at the start of the final quarter was just reward for the home side's dominance and with the game effectively won, the final ten minutes saw Leeds attack with freedom and confidence.

Woman of the Match

Rachael Jarman

Dominated in defence throughout.

A tiring Durham side were powerless to stop Leeds increasing the lead and the final score of 47-27 did not reflect, what was for the most part, a well contested affair.

Leeds' Coach Clare Rhodes was thrilled with her side's performance and remained hopeful that Newcastle would slip up, thereby handing Leeds promotion. She also reserved special praise for the fourth team, whose remarkable 108 point win was evidence of the exceptional strength in depth in women's netball at Leeds University.

BUSA Results

Wednesday 30 January

Badminton

Men's 1sts 5-3 Northumbria 1sts
Men's 2nds 0-8 Teesside 1sts
Men's 3rds 8-0 Teesside 3rds
Women's 1sts 4-4 Nottingham 1sts

Basketball

Men's 1sts 87-123 Bolton 1sts
Men's 2nds 91-48 Durham 1sts
Women's 1sts 71-57 Liverpool 1sts

Men's Football

1sts 3-0 Sheffield 1sts
2nds 1-3 Bradford 1sts
3rds 1-3 York St. John 2nds
4ths 3-1 York St John 4ths

Women's Football

1sts 3-2 Manchester 1sts
2nds 4-6 Hull 1sts

Golf

1sts 2.5-3.5 Northumbria 2nds

Men's Hockey

1sts 3-1 Nottingham 1sts
2nds 1-1 Northumbria 1sts
3rds 4-3 Sheffield Hallam 2nds
4ths 3-0 Teesside 1sts

Women's Hockey

1sts 0-3 Northumbria 1sts
2nds 3-5 York St John 1sts
3rds 1-0 Teesside 1sts
4ths 8-1 Huddersfield 1sts

Women's Lacrosse

1sts 7-7 Durham 2nds

Netball

1sts 47-27 Durham 1sts
2nds 34-35 Sheffield Hallam 2nds
3rds 26-34 Hull 1sts
4ths 111-3 York St. John 5ths

Men's Rugby Union

1sts 46-12 Sheffield Hallam 1sts
2nds 12-5 Teesside 1sts
3rds 12-15 Leeds Met 3rds

Women's Rugby Union

1sts 15-5 Newcastle 1sts

Squash

Men's 1sts 5-0 Manchester Met 1sts
Men's 2nds 1-4 Newcastle 1sts
Women's 2nds 4-0 Bradford 1sts

Tennis

Men's 1sts 8-2 Manchester 2nds
Women's 1sts 7-3 Newcastle 1sts

Volleyball

Men's 1sts WALKOVER Bradford 1sts
Women's 1sts WALKOVER York St J.

Mixed outings for hockey sides

• Men's first down Notts while Women's seconds fall to York

Men's Hockey

Ifor Duncan

Leeds Uni 1sts 3-1 Nottingham University 1sts Weetwood

During an injury stoppage midway through the first half, the Nottingham Captain could be heard inspiring his side thus; "They want it more than we do. Get the ball strong". He was right; Leeds victory was based on an acute hunger. In a scrappy encounter where neither side could retain possession for more than a few passes Leeds dominated physically in the tackle and interception.

Nottingham were already two goals down by the interval and their lack of cutting edge was there for all to see. The first goal was scored on the break away, sparked by the elegant running of forward Richard Appleton. Leeds play a very aggressive, direct game. No one embodied this more than tireless midfielder player Matthew Boggledon; first into the tackle and penetrative with the pass into the final third. Boggledon capped his performance with a goal from the penalty corner, which he blasted low into the corner of the goal. Leeds played a high ball game in the second half, satisfying Appleton's appetite. However, a lot of possession was squandered through this tactic.

The most impressive performance of the night came from the impregnable Olly Fish in goal. He saved Nottingham's sole chance of the first half and late in the second half Fish produced a succession of fine saves to consolidate Leeds' victory.

The second half was much like the first, no pattern of play, neither side creating any fluency.

Leeds put the game to bed mid way through the half through a

defensive error, which fell to No 34, who beat the helpless Nottingham keeper. Nottingham managed a late consolation goal, which flattered their impotent attacking threat.

The Nottingham captain summed up this fixture well, Leeds quite simply wanted it more.

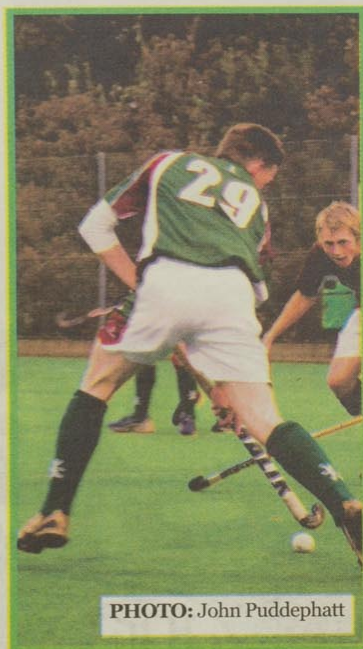


PHOTO: John Puddephatt

Women's Hockey

Rob Carragher

Leeds Uni 2nds 3-5 York St. John 1sts Weetwood

Despite their 'never say die' performance

Leeds quite simply wanted it more

Women basketballers march on

Women's Basketball

Nick Grounds

Leeds Uni Women's 71 - 57 Liverpool Uni Sports Hall One

The final game in the BUSA calendar saw our girls' basketball team overturn a spirited Liverpool side. It leaves the hosts in second place in the BUSA Northern Conference, meaning the playoffs await. The score board does not give the away side the credit they deserve, with a 14 point deficit a tad cruel.

It was the away side that broke the deadlock. Going 2-0 up, Liverpool showed no signs of rustiness from their coach journey along the M62.

However, this was as good as it got as this brief momentary laps in concentration was rather uncharacteristic from an efficient Leeds side. Indeed, once the hosts took the lead at 7-5, they managed to retain it for the remainder of the contest. A scrumptious effort from the influential Mel Hill on the right-hand side of the court a particular highlight early on.

In terms of genuine quality, the home side perhaps edged it. Not content with her aforementioned piece of wizardry, Hill was the

heartbeat of much of what the hosts did well. Bursting from deep, her runs were causing havoc in the visitors defence. Finishing off the majority of her chances, Hill was a constant nuisance. As the first quarter drew to a close, we witnessed perhaps the move of the day. Superb interplay between Hill and the impressive Jennifer Ball resulted in the latter finding the hoop. Cue jubilation in the stands.

As the match progressed, it was becoming clear that the away side lacked the cutting edge the hosts

Key Player

Mel Hill

Constant nuisance

had in abundance. Into the second quarter, and Leeds began to pull away. With slow, almost laboured attacks, the away side failed to replicate their early promise. By highlighting the visitors' frailties, it would be unfair not to mention the home side's impressive rearguard display.

Their defence was very impressive, limiting

Liverpool to only a handful of clear-cut opportunities. At the other end, two three pointers from Ball and Grace Savage helped ease any nerves as the home side took a 39-22 lead into the second half.

Unfortunately, Ball retired due to an ankle injury and it would be fair to say in her absence, the hosts never found the same rhythm. Lesser teams facing a 51-28 deficit would have wilted; however, the visitors proved they were made of sterner stuff. As the home coach chopped and changed his five, the visitors enjoyed their best spell of the game. Led by Phillips, Liverpool continued to show plenty of bite and reduced the arrears to 55-38. However, in the midst of this, it would be unfair not to mention Julia Meyer-Macleod's magnificent individual effort which saw the forward beat two on the right flank before coolly helping the ball through the hoop.

The final quarter saw the visitors play some attractive basketball. Growing in confidence, it was a shame the away side could not maintain this high level on a consistent basis throughout the contest; otherwise we may well be looking at an away day victory. However, an impressive final five minutes from Maria Masoura settled the contest, with a series of decent baskets putting the result beyond any doubt. Roll on the playoffs.

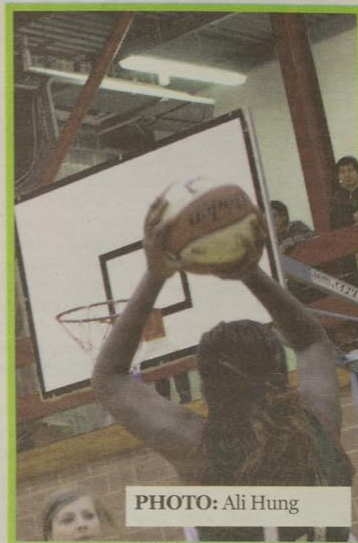


PHOTO: Ali Hung

Northumbria triumph over Leeds

Women's Fencing

Tom Skinner

Leeds Uni Women's 107 - 116 Northumbria Sports Hall Three

A consummate foil victory was all in vain as the female fencers failed to sign off their season in style.

Northumbria's triumph, courtesy of a dominant performance in épée and a closely fought sabre success, leaves them top of the table whilst Leeds can now kiss goodbye to their dreams of promotion.

It was always going to be hard against the league leaders, a team propelled by their captain, who boasts the impressive CV of winning last year's BUSA individual championships and representing her country at the under-17 World Cup. She displayed her prowess as an épéist by barely conceding a hit in her matches.

However, she was certainly made to play second fiddle in the early stages, as the Uni girls emphatically demonstrated why foil is their favoured weapon. Skipper Hayley Beaumont, who competed in all three-weapon categories,

gave Leeds an early advantage with an aggressive opening that pushed her opponent right back to her end of the piste.

The comfortable match result of 45-24 was probably more down to the methodical approach taken by Iris Rau. Rau, who won the Merseyside Open last year, calmly waited for the opportunity before scoring 7 hits in her first bout to reverse the score from 8-10 to 15-12. Northumbria's temporary grip on the match was thus blown

apart and Uni never looked like relinquishing the lead thereafter. As Hayley and Rachel Anderson continued to score well, the only hurdle to overcome was the challenge of the opponent's captain. She was checked in her stride though, as Rau fought stubbornly to drop only two points before the three-minute time limit ran out.

Tensions were running high in the visitors' camp. When their coach vehemently disputed the referee's decision to deduct his side a point for

breaching the boundary of the piste - to the extent that he was calling for a video replay - Leeds might have thought their opponents were getting rattled.

Épée followed and whilst a double-hit filled first match was close run, ending 5-4 to Northumbria, the visitors soon pulled away, using a combination of slick swordplay and clever footwork. Frequent 'foot tapping' on the opposing side could possibly be cited as a cause of distraction but even so, Uni can have no complaints as they lost épée 45-26.

This meant that Leeds would have to score 43 hits to guarantee a draw in the overall match, as they moved on to sabre. This looked a genuine possibility at the start, with Charlotte Dixon's fencing giving us a 5-1 advantage at the outset. However, the match was to twist round yet again, as despite some valiant fighting from Beaumont, who appears to have the players vote for 'Fencer of the Season', Northumbria proved too strong, winning the weapon 36-45 and the overall match 116-107.

This narrow defeat will be hard to swallow for the ladies, yet by Beaumont's own admission they can reflect on a 'fantastic season'.



PHOTO: Ken Manson

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the big debate:

African Cup of Nations

LS Sport asks whether the African Cup of Nations holds the key to the future of the sport or is merely a mid-season interruption.

By Joe Hibbert

The African Cup of Nations has flourished in recent years and in many ways carries more appeal than the European Championships.

Africa has become a goldmine for talent, and due to the soaring cost of home grown British talent, managers of Premiership clubs are beginning to build their teams around African starlets. The likes of Didier Zokora, Didier Drogba, Kolo Toure, Michael Essien, Solomon Kalou, and Benni McCarthy have become established Premier League players and key figures for their respective clubs.

The arrival of these stars to our shores has moved the spotlight on to the African Cup of Nations. However, the hype surrounding the tournament is dampened by the fact that you can only see games on BBC3 or when you press the fabled 'red button'. This is immensely irritating; this brilliant tournament deserves a greater platform, than merely the BBC's third channel.

The African Cup also maintains a certain degree of charm and romance, something that has been lost somewhat in the European championships. There is a spark of unpredictability in the African Cup, a competition that is made up of teams who constantly blow hot or cold, capable of beating anyone on their day and equally capable of losing to anyone.

In next summer's Euros expect to see overpaid, over

is the vast array of stars of the future that are being showcased. Manucho of Angola will be attracting most attention after signing for Manchester United in the January transfer window.

The 24-year-old is a strong, fast and powerful attacker sure to be terrorising Premiership defences sooner rather than later. Pascal Feindouno is another exciting player to look out for. The 26-year-old Guinea playmaker has a stunning goal scoring record at current club St. Etienne, with a ratio of nearly a goal every three games for the French club. Relative unknowns, Benin, have a jewel in their team in Razak Omotoyossi. The forward exploded onto the scene with Helsingborgs, scoring six in six so far in the UEFA Cup and thirteen in twenty-three league games for the Swedish outfit.

It is a testament to the quality of the tournament that a fleet of Premiership scouts are descending on the competition. A survey has revealed that fifteen of the twenty top flight clubs are in Ghana scouting the talent. Reading's director of football, Nicky Hammond, believes that, "It's an exceptionally high quality tournament and there's some great, great players there... over the last few years

Africa has really come to the forefront of producing some top, top players, so for us it is a very good tournament to cover" Whilst Chelsea's Frank Arnesen boasts that the Blues are already

aware of every single player at the competition, and that the tournament is not a place to spot new talent but rather to monitor the players and their development. Adding that, "over the past twenty years the progression of African players has been explosive.

The Nations Cup showcases the cream of the current crop of world stars and as for the rest you can look beyond Europe for the future of the game. The future's bright, the future's African.

By Oliver Claxton

Leeds fans will still look back with a smile in remembrance of Tony Yeboah and Lucas Radabe over a decade ago now. At the time, the Leeds squad contained a number of Premiership rarities: an African import. At the African Cup of Nations held in Burkina Faso 10 years ago only 4 Premiership players were present. This fact seems incredible when comparing it to this years total of 34 slugging out for their nations in Ghana currently. The incredible influx of players from the African continent into the Premiership and many of the other top leagues of the world has indeed sparked an even greater level of interest in the African Nations tournament. However, whilst many of Europe's biggest clubs are represented at the vibrant and exciting championship the gulf in class between the players makes for a very odd spectacle.

As Benin's coach, Reinhard Fabisch made his sensational claims on Thursday of an offer to fix a match he made an

interesting point about the game in Africa: "I think that African players are vulnerable to this kind of approach, because many of them don't have money." His comments reflect the fact that whilst Africa currently has a depth of talented superstars, they are playing in national sides with far weaker and consequently far less well-paid players. Ghana, the bookies favourites before the tournament began are the perfect example. The strike partnership that will have to lead them to victory is a tale of polar opposites: Asamoah Gyan, star of Serie A high flyers Udinese, partners Junior Agogo of Nottingham Forest, 9 points off the lead in English footballs third tier. This immense gulf in class seems to be one of the tournaments key pitfalls, making it as a spectator event

pretty dull to be quite honest.

Don't get me wrong there have been flashes of brilliance, a number of long range screamers, from the likes of Muntari and the ever impressive Mohammed Zidan,

“In Europe teams are far better matched therefore making for a greater spectacle.”

have got the fans out of their seats but these magnificent goals seem only to come at the end of what was previously a low quality game. The tournaments opening game began this trend, two teams failing to really get the ball down on the deck, move it fluently and create decent chances. Granted, the pitch was awful... really awful. Which is surprised considering the interest surrounding the tournament. Ghana's coach conceded after the game it was the worst pitch he'd seen in Africa for 20 years but never the less, on better pitches the results have been much the same, football lacking in smoothness and sadly quality.

The goalkeepers of the tournament are, without exception, all worthy of the favourite crowd chant "DODGY KEEPER!" The goalie is supposed to assert a calming, solid and steady influence throughout the team yet the keepers on display in Ghana would seem more at home in the circus, flying on a trapeze, safety net beneath them. Yet, their preposterous and outrageous leaps, dives and falls, whilst not quite being up to the standards of messers van der Saar or Cech, I will concede that it is thoroughly enjoyable to watch.

The African Nations Cup is the equivalent of the European Championship, yet put simply it is no where near it in terms of excellence. If we think back to the last European Championships in Portugal in 2004, The eventual champions Greece were not fancied at all yet managed to out do everybody. The fact here seems to be that in Europe teams are a lot more evenly matched, therefore making for a greater spectacle.

At the end of the day the quality of the African Nations Cup seems to fall far below the hype and anticipation that preceded it, mostly due to the scrappiness of the game and the immense gulf in quality.

“Over the last few years African has really come to the forefront of producing some top, top players. It's a very good tournament.”

hyped prima donnas playing in every match. In the African Cup most of the players are on a similar wage to an average League One player. There are obvious exceptions of course (see players listed above).

Another great thing about the African Cup

Your Comments...

This week, we asked:

Does the transfer window really work?

Send us your opinions on this or any other story in LS Sport by email: leedsstudentsport@gmail.com with your name and comment.

"Yes. It sorts the wheat from the chaff, in terms of management. Any manager can sign great players all season long, but with the transfer window, they have to stick with what they have for most of the season."

James, 21, Geography

"Yeah, definitely. It has produced some great signings over the last few years; making the close season even more exciting."

Tim, 18, Physics

"Yeah it's a lot better now. As a Crewe fan I used to spend most of the season expecting our best players to go to bigger clubs. Now I only have to sweat for a few months a year!"

Tom, 18, Languages

"No, I don't see why teams can't sign players all season long. It's just a daft European system, I don't really see the point in it."

Joe, 20, English

"Yeah, it gives your team renewed hope. If you're facing relegation then things can be turned around with a great signing or two, or if your team is pushing for promotion then a decent striker could just push them there."

Simon, 20, History

Next week's question:
Is the African Cup of Nations a good tournament?



Fantastic Fynes

• Convincing victory over Sheffield hands Firsts league crown

Men's Football Dafydd Pritchard

Leeds Uni 1sts 3-0 Sheffield University 1sts
Weetwood

As the transfer window nears its hyperbolic closure, the University of Leeds' men's football first team offered a refreshing break from the rumour mill as they breezed past Sheffield 3-0, taking the Northern Conference Men's 1A Division title in the process.

With an arctic wind swirling furiously around Weetwood, it was the home side who pressed earliest. Managing to nullify the raging gusts, Leeds settled quickly and sought to pressure their opponents with a string of enterprising attacks.

The breakthrough came within the first ten minutes. Jinking his way past a perplexed full-back, Paul Fynes darted into the box before unleashing an unstoppable cross which was crashed into the roof of the net by the onrushing Jimmy Warner.

Leeds came close to doubling their advantage moments later but were then forced onto the back foot as a header from the visitors only narrowly avoided their own crossbar. With Sheffield clearly rattled, the home side oozed confidence as they pressed relentlessly, maintaining great fluidity and class in their play.

Most fruitful for Leeds was their left side, with Alun Griffiths' cultured boot combining well with Fynes and Warner. Such was the trio's influence that Sheffield's right-back Richard Savage was booked, suffered from a clash of heads, and had to switch positions to avoid his terrorisers.

Having comprehensively

outplayed their counterparts in the first half, Leeds took a little longer to hit their stride in the second. Sheffield enjoyed a little more possession but still looked woefully limited in all departments.

The thorn in their side, Fynes, was still threatening but he would have been disappointed with a glaring miss with his head. Fortunately, the winger's ability with foot was still intact and his whipped cross sparked panic in the visitors' box. Unable to smother the loose ball, the Sheffield goalkeeper made an almighty hash of things, leaving Warner with the easy task of clipping in his second goal.

Despite making numerous changes in their personnel, Leeds continued to torment the opposition. Daniel McEwan, one of the substitutes, went close on a few occasions and his fellow replacement, Michael Classen, smacked his effort against the bar. The visitors were surrendering feebly and their fate was well and truly sealed when they conceded a third goal. Again, Fynes was the architect, this time with a raking long ball and, after McEwan's touch, Barnes lifted the ball carefully over the goalkeeper, looping into the back of the net.

Man of the Match

Paul Fynes

The classy winger had a hand in all three goals, his impressive passing a force too strong for the opposition.

Although the second half produced a sometimes lethargic performance, Leeds' display over ninety minutes was professional, efficient and peppered with moments of individual quality. A lucid passing side, they seem a side well-equipped and settled enough not to concern themselves with the rigmarole of January's comings and goings, especially as they look forward to the BUSA Championships.

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Union side dominate Toon

Women's Rugby Union David Couldrey

Leeds Uni 15-5 Newcastle Uni
Weetwood

A COLD Wednesday afternoon saw the Women's Rugby Union side host their Newcastle counterparts at Weetwood and claim an authoritative victory. Three first half tries proved more than enough to overcome the visitors in a match that was dominated by the ladies from Leeds.

An early unconverted try was the catalyst for a fantastic first half performance from the home side, who dominated the period, patiently encamping themselves in the opposition half. Phase after phase of relentless pressure was rewarded by a stunning individual try from the captain and number eight, who cut through a hard-hitting Newcastle defence with less than twenty minutes played. It was duly converted in tricky, windy conditions to put Leeds 12-0 up and in complete control. The home side remained firmly in the driving seat as they once again besieged the

Newcastle half without breaching the try line and it came as a surprise when Newcastle not only pushed into home territory but got on the score-sheet, courtesy of a missed tackle that blemished an otherwise faultless game by the Leeds full-backs. Newcastle were unable to convert a tricky kick however, and Leeds responded in fine style, scrambling to touch down in the corner almost immediately.

Newcastle came out fighting after the break and the second half was a much more even affair. Equally gritty defences and equally tired handling saw only the creation of a small number of openings for both sides, which neither team were able to seize. Leeds showed they were willing to scrap to maintain their lead and they held firm throughout, with a number of crunching tackles halting any Geordie progress. The solidity of their defence in the second period matched the fluidity of their attack in the first and with Newcastle unable to break through, the final whistle sounded to end a hard-fought game and a well-deserved victory.

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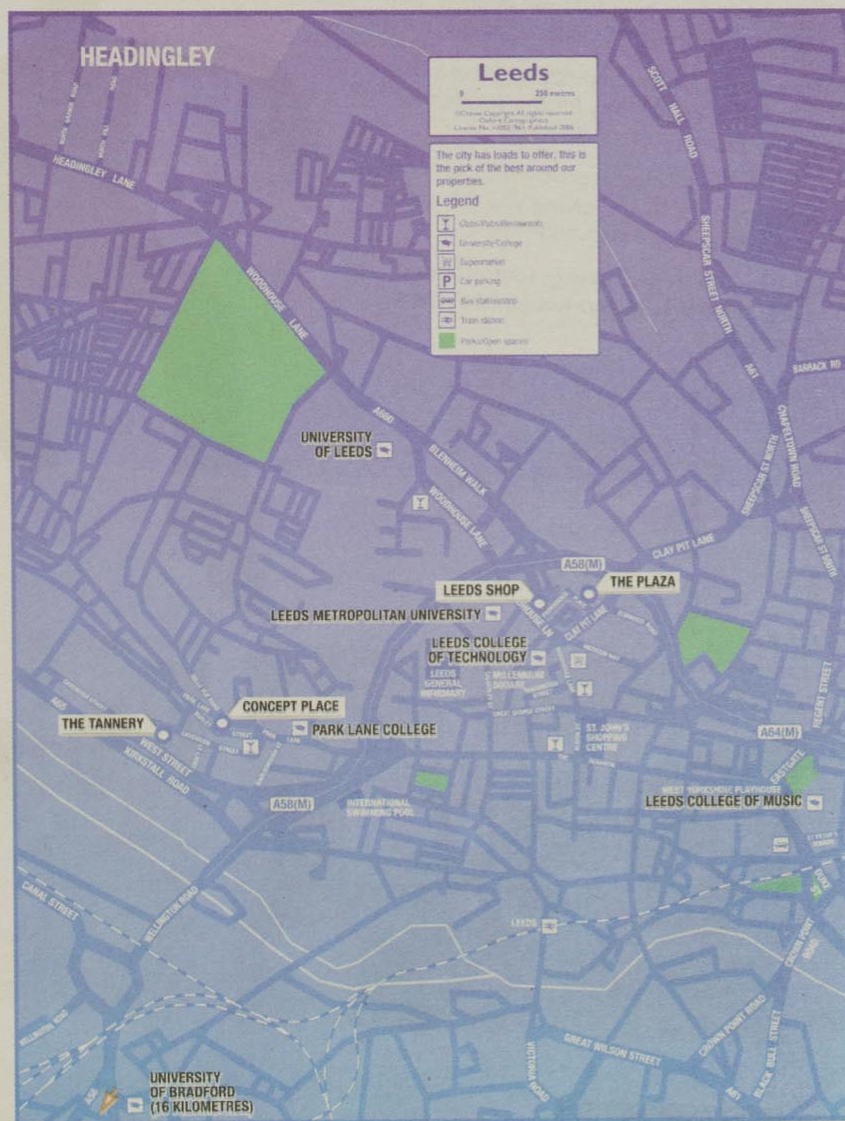
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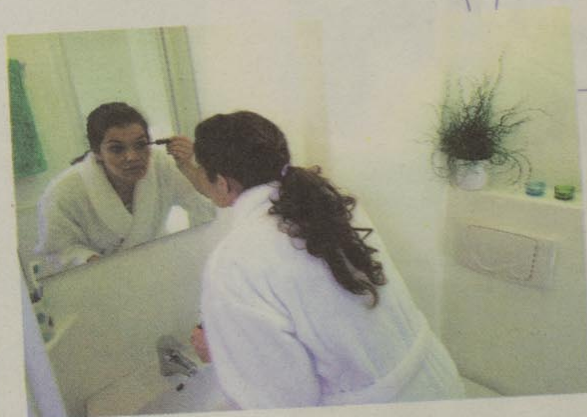
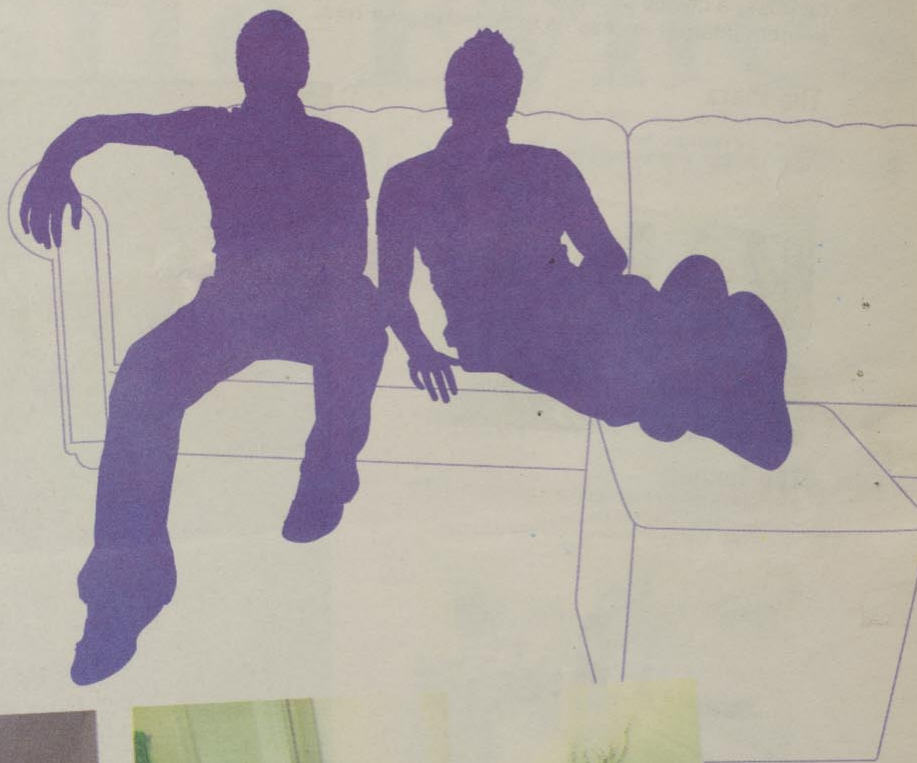
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