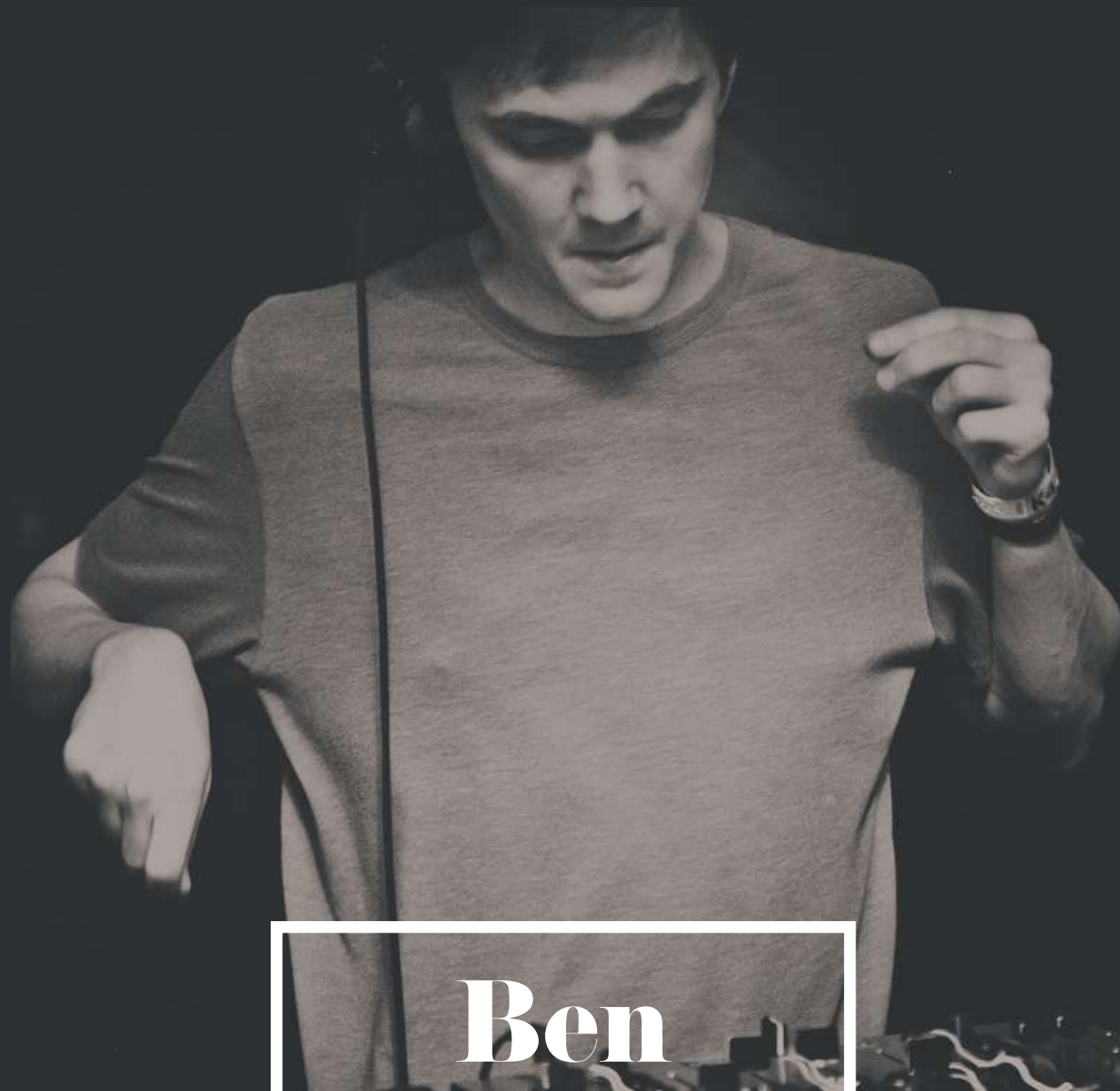


# In The Middle

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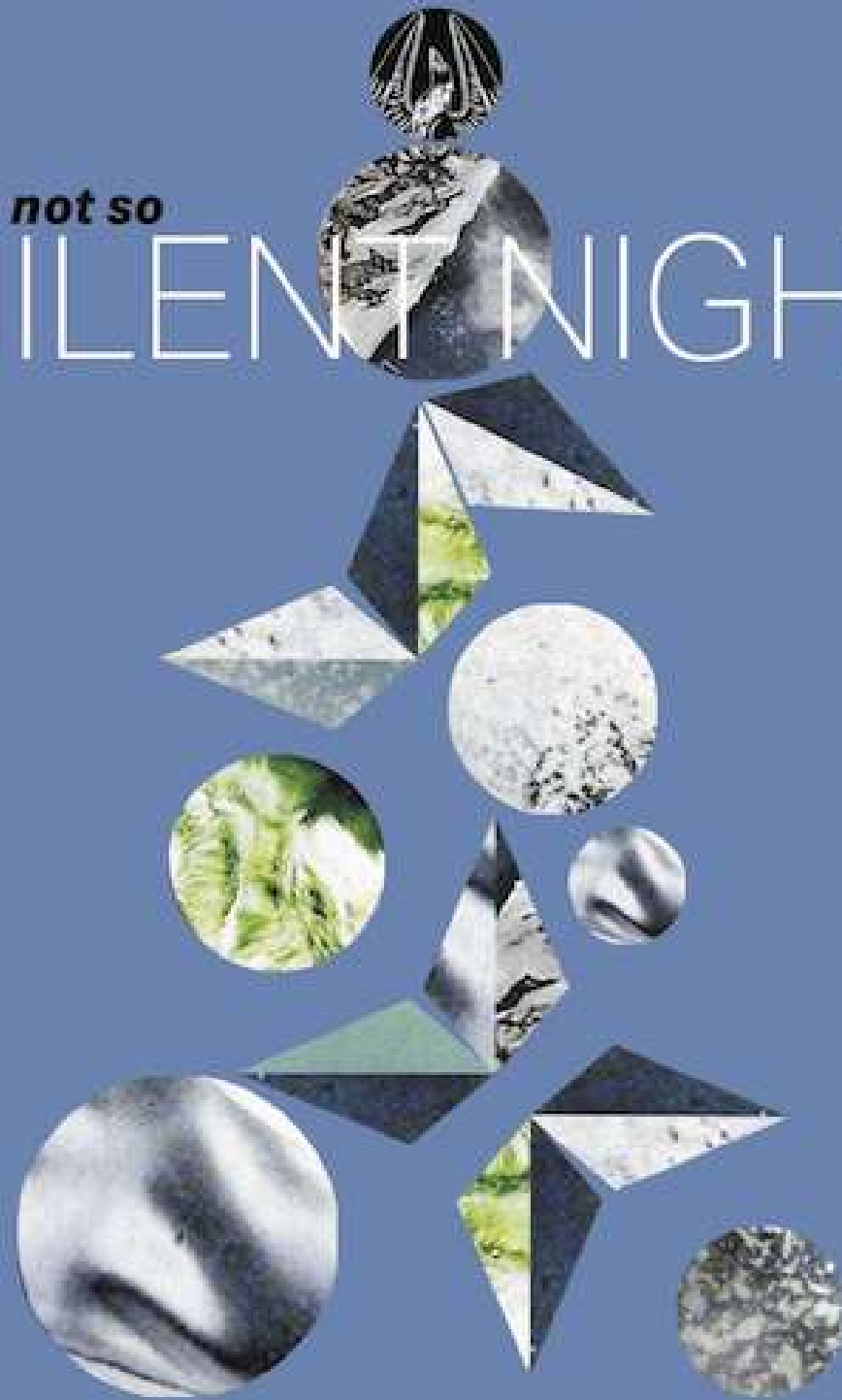


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# Musical Moments

## Editors' picks of 2014

### Oli

15th August 2014. The Green Man Festival in Glanusk Park, Wales.

I had travelled to the festival, as usual, expecting to frolic around in the whimsy of the folk tradition. In truth, I did enjoy seeing First Aid Kit and Jonathan Wilson. But, watching The 2 Bears, Luke Abbot and Ben UFO in the Far Out Tent (After Dark), opened up a brave new electronic world far removed from the acoustic, pastoral one I was used to.

Specifically, when The 2 Bears were joined on stage by a troupe of transvestites performing mad dance routines to *Finally by Kings of Tomorrow* was the moment at which I fell in love with House, and became aware of its close relation to disco.

My return to Leeds a month later (around the time that I was enjoying techno for the first time) was incredibly auspicious as my eyes were finally opened to the city's bounty of club nights.

### Maddie

My favourite musical moment of 2014 is, without a doubt, Gilles Peterson's set at the last ever Dilation in May. The event was held during the exam period and was a welcome break from pretending to revise for my exams, at Beaverworks, a venue I had grown to associate with the best nights of my first year.

I learnt about his passion for World Music from his show on BBC Radio 6, but only truly started to appreciate his skill as a DJ when he started to give such focus to Latin influenced music. His set featured an incredible selection of Samba-inspired tracks, mixed with an impressive technical skill. It was such a refreshing event to witness: fun in its purest, least pretentious form.

### Andrew

It was the last after-party at Dekmantel, and I was struggling. I'd been up more than forty hours, I'd lost my wallet in the queue and it was at least four hours until the first bus back to the campsite would transport my broken body back to a place of potential rest. Floating aimlessly around Trouw, I came upon a thing of magnificence; a thing of unquestionable beauty. Entranced for a good while, I finally broke from the stare I'd fixed and pulled bravely on the sleeve of the figure that had so generously bestowed on me such wonder.

"That's a very aesthetically pleasing sticker arrangement you've got on your backpack", I nodded at him enthusiastically, no doubt perfectly in time with the techno rhythms deployed by Klock and Dettmann behind me.

More of a life moment than a music moment, I'll admit, but I'll never forget the minutes/hours/days that I was lost staring into those glow-in-the-dark dinosaur stickers, nodding absently to Berlin's finest musical exports.

### Emily

It was early May when I found myself deep in the belly of Brudenell Social Club. I'd spent all day talking myself into giving up my ticket and yet here I was, clutching my drink so tightly I could feel the glass biting into my skin. As the growling melodies of Badbadnotgood's 'Earl' ruptured through the quiet of the crowd, I felt the entire room inhale.

For the rest of the evening we were silent – too intent on immersing ourselves in every sound, too lost in the suddenly cavernous Brudenell to remember to breathe. Around us, intricate improvisation spiralled into hip-hop, into electronica, before falling uncontrollably into jarring, fragmented jazz. BB-NG's set was chaotic, at times frightening in its intensity, but in the eye of the storm we were safe. And for the first time in a long time, I had a feeling that everything would be ok.

### Daoud

Have you ever been in water for a while and thought about where you end and the water begins? There isn't a clear disconnect, and though it soon becomes obvious once you start moving about, as long as you're still, it's easy to lose yourself.

This was how I felt when I was at Le Guess Who? watching Ben Frost. Thanks to the genius of the sound engineer that night, Frost's music became something I existed within. As long as I focused on just the music, it seemed as if there was absolutely zero disconnect between me and this embodiment of clarity perfected.

For most of the set Frost was playing material from his latest album, which though mighty had nothing on the moment when he dropped his infamous wolf snarls. For those minutes snarls were my life. I wanted to be snarled to sleep, I wanted snarls to wake me.

Now that I think about it, that seems like an unrealistic expectation.

### Harriet

However cliché it may be, Massive Attack's Glastonbury set has to be the best live performance I've seen ever, let alone in 2014. The Bristol dub-electronic duo brought a truly unparalleled stage presence and proved how effectively electronic music can be translated live with powerful drums and hypnotic bass complimenting their brooding melodies. Flashing anti-war slogans, political disinformation and personal testimonies from Guantanamo Bay inmates provided the sensational, yet sinister visuals, making for a particularly poignant and menacing set. Martina Topley-Bird sung over Paradise Circus' intoxicating percussion; the bass sounds 10x better live. The duo were also joined by Horrace Andy's powerful, haunting vocals for *Girl I Love You* and the iconic *Angel*. Closing the set with the euphoric *Unfinished Symphony*, Deborah Miller's vocals brought me close to tears.

# Under the influence

## Stephanie Uwalaka discusses musical originality

The rise of popular music in the past sixty years has caused an overlapping of influences upon artists and even our own musical tastes. Take the music your parents listen to, or music you listened to growing up, how much has this affected your taste in music today? There are a host of possible things that could influence your musical preferences, such as upbringing, culture, when you grew up or even the amount of music you could access growing up; the same goes for artists and the music they produce, the unique balance of factors play a crucial part in the music they go on to produce causing exceptional and original music to be created.

Music has changed a lot in the last couple of decades, as has the way we access it. This change is primarily at the hands of the internet, which has smashed the music world right open in more ways than one, giving artists and listeners access to a whole host of new sounds and potential influences.

So the question is how much of an impact do these musical influences have on artists today? We often see bands and artists being asked what their main influences are on their music and their music career, as it gives their audience a unique insight into the direction they are going to take.

The importance of influences is also shown by the frequency with which artists are compared to previous artists with a similar sound to them. This gives the listener a sense of familiarity, in knowing that they will probably like the band on the basis they sound like one they already know. In some sense, even when we look for something new we hope for a hint of the old, a sense of continuity. Having said this, for a new band or artist to be referred to as similar to a more successful, established artist in music is almost complimentary, and is respectful of previous artists as it further cements their place in music, as their music has breathed life into newer artists.

*In The Middle* spoke to Dr Simon Warner, specialising in the field of Popular Music Studies and lecturer in the School of Music at the University of Leeds for his perspectives

on the impact of musical influences upon artists today.

'Broadly speaking, earlier artists have a huge impact upon contemporary artists; artists like Louis Armstrong, The Sex Pistols, and The Beatles. Newer artists grow from earlier influences and build on the past, and in a sense pay homage to artists before them.'

In light of the mixing of influences and even genres in contemporary music, *In The Middle* also asked Dr Warner for his views on how music is staying fresh.

'There is no doubt that music genres are becoming more fluid due the internet changing music consumption, but the post mid-eighties club scene has brought about the most fertile area of music making; also, hip-hop has been the biggest, most recent change in music stylistically. We are also more likely to see in future a greater influence from non-western music such as Latino, African and Caribbean music upon pop music.'

These influences can manifest themselves in the creation of something new or something more straight forward. Recently, Bruno Mars' 'Uptown Funk' cleverly incorporates funk, soul, pop and even some Latin percussion elements. This rather fitting combination pays tribute to older artists like James Brown, Prince and Michael Jackson which is clear from both the song and the music video. When newer songs like this feature funk, which is not so prominent in today's popular music scene, it can summon nostalgia in pre-existing fans of the genre, while also introducing it a new generation of fans. This displays some of the impact of musical influences on artists and its wider effects on listeners today.

As with many things, there's a cyclicality to music in the sense that there is a continuity in the changes we hear. No matter their influences, music that is created from an organic place of creativity must be regarded as original. There are only twelve notes in music so overlap is inevitable, however there are enough other factors that when balanced, can produce something new.

# Gig Guide

**Saturday 6th December**  
**Randomer & Alex Smoke at Belgrave Music Hall, £5**  
 IN/ON/UP/DOWN bring Randomer and Alex Smoke for another night of rowdy techno.

**Monday 8th December**  
**Human League, O2 Academy £29.50**  
 80s legends. Don't you want [to] baby?

**Wednesday 10th December**  
**The Gryphon Presents: A Not So Silent Night at The Faversham, £5**  
 Event of the year. Cosmic Slop, IN/ON/UP/DOWN and Audio Chronicles provide the goods, we provide the smiles.

**Thursday 11th December**  
**Wild Beasts at Canal Mills, £19.25**  
 Wild Beasts' spectacular live show is sandwiched by party sets from Forest Swords, Evian Christ and Nathan Fake, among others.

**Friday 12th December**  
**Eagulls at Temple of Boom, £6**  
 Leeds favourites' sounds will soar.





## **pom pom** by Ariel Pink

It's never wise to judge a book by its cover but with Ariel Pink's *Pom Pom*, you at least have a good inkling of what you are letting yourself in for. Usually when the cover of an album is baby pink with song names such as 'Plastic Raincoats in the Pig Parade' and 'Dinosaur Carebears', you have a subconscious voice that tells you to steer well clear- and I would gently urge you to head in that direction.

There's no doubt that Ariel is a talented musician; he's a one man band with an insatiate taste for diverse and peculiar sounds. Unfortunately, these sounds don't always complement each other so you end up with an alchemy of bizarre noises and sound effects- some of which sound like they have come from a child's toy keyboard.

There's an obvious 80s influence with the synth driven tracks on the album and even hints of Lou Reed and David Bowie at times. 'Four Shadows' is a particularly Bowie-esque number boasting dramatic vocals and a distorted overdriven guitar solo, but that's really as far as it gets towards an album highlight. The lead single 'Put Your Number in My Phone' and 'Dayzed Inn Daydreams' fill second and third place in resembling actual songs, yet the average is let well down by 'Jell-o'. It's the kind of track that leaves you thinking where the last two minutes went and how you could have spent the time doing something much more productive.

You can't blame Pink for being experimental and adventurous, but you can blame him for inflicting us with his latest double-album effort. Perhaps it would have been wiser to release a shorter, more nuanced piece of work simply for the sake of being listenable. To sum up in a few words: awkward and off-putting. [Alex Paddock]



## **Storytone** by Neil Young

If all music could sound as crystal clear as this, it makes you wonder whether Young's Pono portable music player was such a ridiculous idea. For *Storytone*, Young recruited a John Williams sized orchestra – 92 musicians to be exact.

Anyone who knows Young might think there would be a weird contrast between Young's thin, nasally voice and luscious strings. Actually though, it works incredibly well. Tracks such as opener "Plastic Flowers" are operatic and breath-taking, and it really makes you wonder how Young hasn't been snapped up to do film scores. Whilst the tunes might not be gruff and brutal as those that made his name, the whole album is so awe-inspiring in its clean and detailed production that it more than makes up for it. Tracks like "Glimmer" and "Tumbleweed" are as warm, delicate and nostalgic as the soundtrack to that old children's film you forgot you loved.

The band pieces like "I Want to Drive My Car" that intersperse the orchestral pieces seem a bit outdated. They're enjoyable, but not as emotive as their orchestral counterparts and sometimes the transition is a bit jarring. "Tumbleweed" soothes and envelops the reader before "Like I Used To" launches into a 50's throwback rock song. The last three tracks on the album are arguably the best Young has produced in many years. More subdued in their use of orchestra, delicate piano lines and acoustic strumming dominate and are supplemented only by the occasional surge of strings.

The deluxe edition of *Storytone* comes with solo versions of each song. The gap between the two albums was always going to be massive. Yet Young's ineffable ability to keep writing songs capable of astounding audiences and critics 45 years since his debut, maintains the mirroring album into a different yet still magnificent whole. [Alex Fowler]



## **Bazaar** by Wampire

Unsurprisingly, indie-rock enthusiasts Wampire have yet again produced a seemingly preppy, playful and hypnotic album with their combination of murky vocals and electronic guitars taking prominence in *Bazaar*. 'The Amazing Heart Attack' is indeed an energetic way to start the album, yet tracks such as 'Wizard Staff' and 'Life of Luxury' are somewhat softer and slower in pace, offering a brilliant contrast that highlights Wampire's effortless ability to produce an album of both upbeat and intensified melodies.

Potentially, it is this juxtaposition which makes *Bazaar* so interesting and hard to put down in the sense that each song keeps you enticed right until the end. The album is arguably less dull than their latter album, *Curiosity*, which can appeal to a greater range of listeners who desire more from Wampire than their predictable dark indie-pop. The second track of the album 'Bad Attitude' is charmingly mischievous and would force even the most reserved listeners to resist the compelling urge to dance. However the ultimate track 'People of Earth' takes on a much drearier tone and is perhaps even anti-climactic to an overall fantastic album. Of course, Wampire can be renowned for adopting a psyche of gloominess to their music, so the song is not completely unfitting, but perhaps does not represent the general quality and quirkiness of the album in its entirety.

With *Curiosity* receiving such positive reviews, the task of producing an even greater album was always going to be challenging for Wampire. For many however, *Bazaar* will tick nearly all the boxes as it effectively comprises both their celebrated sombre tones with buzzing vibes that help to keep this album current and exciting. [Ellie Cartwright]



## Gold Sounds Festival Brudenell Social Club 23/11/14



[Photo: Sam Lewis]

Under overcast skies, the Brudenell Social Club began to fill up with people eager for Gold Sounds: a festival only in its second incarnation, that still brought in some of the most interesting acts in the alternative and DIY scene at the moment. Headlined by stateside heavyweights Merchandise, with appearances from emo twiddlers turned pop shredders Nai Harvest (pictured above), and the up-and-coming Cheatahs in possession of enough fuzz to fry anyone's brain, Gold Sounds was full of moments to prove not just that punk ain't dead, but that it's kicking your front door down demanding to be let in, demanding to be heard.

Trust Fund, the stage name of Bristol's Ellis Jones, stepped on stage like the friend your mum wants you to marry; like he wasn't about to rip your heart out with his voice, like he didn't know. Accompanied by a drummer and a bassist, the lo-fi songs cover heartbreak, awkward break-ups and walks on the beach. Unashamedly vulnerable, Jones' voice soars and sweetens, keening "I'm scared I'm scared I'm scared", and just as everything threatens to crack and fall into Elliott Smith levels of misery, the thumping bass drum and soft guitars bring the songs back onto the right side of melancholy. Salt-soaked and breathless, Trust Fund leave you gasping for more.

Straight from that, Girlpool came smashing into the Brudenell like a two woman juggernaut. Hailing from Los Angeles, their running basslines and bluesy, unsympathetic guitar riffs serve as a background for Cleo and Harmony's voices that croon, scream and holler. "Jane" is a highlight: lyrics that encourage young women to "put your fists up", with blood-curdling scream in the background. Girlpool sing about the anger and confusion entailed with being a teenage girl, but also with just being human. In an industry that so often casts female musicians as shrill or screeching, Girlpool are too loud to be dismissed. They are brave and raw-bone strong and you had better sit back and listen.

A final highlight of the festival was the Spanish four-piece Deers, all female but never to be called a "girl band". Shifting tempos and joyful shouts characterise their songs, and an infectious energy combined with pure sex appeal spread out into the audience.

Gold Sounds was a day of shuttling between rooms full of passionate, screaming, eager noise that showed there is still space for guitar music to convey authentic emotion, and that a four chord song can still hit you in the centre of your chest and leave you reeling, even days later. [Naomi Baguley]

## The Ting Tings Belgrave 28/11/14

Does anyone remember the Ting Tings? Of course you do! They're the duo that brought us the nationally celebrated 'That's Not My Name' back in May 2008. But has anyone heard from them since? The albums following their acclaimed debut album never managed to reach the same standard as their first and my - let's say interesting - experience, seeing the band live illustrates why.

The audience was possibly, of all the gigs I have attended, one of the strangest bunches I've come across. The two-hundred capacity venue, Belgrave Music Hall, was less than half full, and the audience consisted of far more middle aged people than one would presume to be at a Ting Tings gig. I found myself caught between a middle-aged man who was undoubtedly the master of dad dancing and a couple who really didn't mind publically displaying their affection for one another. All in all, a rather strange mix.

Once the Ting Tings finally took to the stage, I again found myself with mixed feelings. No one can deny that Katie White does not give you a performance, her hair and style verging on a toned down Lady Gaga and her bouncing around the stage making everyone in the room nod their heads to the beat. But this energy was displayed with a petulant punk edge; the singer, rather uncomfortably for the audience, threw her instruments across the stage at multiple points during the night, leaving the poor backstage man frantically catching the expensive instruments that she so carelessly threw to the ground. One would expect this kind of behavior from an acclaimed pop or punk artist, not one who's playing a half-filled venue.

The music only delivered when the duo performed well known tracks such as 'That's Not My Name' and 'Shut Up and Let Me Go'. The new sound just didn't have the audience up and dancing like these old time classics did. Why this is, is hard to pinpoint. Perhaps the census is that the new sound just isn't of the same standard as the old sound. Perhaps the throwing of the drum by White across the stage was just too uncomfortable for the mums and dads of the audience. Or perhaps, as I concluded at the gig, the Ting Tings are just well past their sell by date. [Stasi Roe]



# Ben UFO

## The ever-popular Hesse Audio man talks touring, influences and Leeds

The rise of Hesse Audio has been a dramatic one. Set up in the midst of dubstep's storming of the UK circuit, under the stewardship of Ben Thomson (Ben UFO), David Kennedy (Pearson Sound, formerly Ramadanman) and Kevin McAuley (Pangaea) the label has become synonymous with both the trio's technical prowess as DJs and their shared disregard for the boundaries of contemporary dance music. *In The Middle* spoke to Ben UFO to find out more about the label's journey from humble beginnings on Hesse Avenue to a position as one of Europe's most influential clubbing institutions.

"From our perspective it's been a gradual transformation, and there's never been a moment where

we've made a conscious decision to change direction." Ben explains. "Our approach to Hesse Audio and our collective DJ sets has always been fuelled by a desire to find what unites our tastes as individuals, and that's as true now as it was when we were sat in me and Kev's front room seven years ago trying to think of a name for the label. It can be a struggle, as our interests are often quite divergent, but I think that's what makes the project satisfying and gives it character when it works."

Whilst the mid-late noughties saw dubstep take the reigns of the UK clubbing, techno imported from the continent has become a defining sound in UK cities over the last four or five years, with UK audiences developing new tastes very much in line with the musical direction that Hesse releases have demonstrated. "To me, it feels as though there's a clear line between what we were releasing in the first few years of running the label through to the music that we're releasing now. House and techno are now our main reference points, but that scene has always been a source of inspiration, and our records have always been played by DJs in that context too."

Ben's influence on the wider scene is well versed among his peers, as evidenced by the glowing reports given by the likes of Jackmaster, Joy Orbison and Gerd Janson in a recent Crack Magazine feature. "The scene around us changed, as did we, but I hope that we had a part to play in that

change, and I hope that the inspiration we've taken from the people around us is mutual."

Whilst on year abroad last year I was lucky enough to catch the Hesse Audio trio play a b2b2b in Shanghai, a rare reminder of the dance scene back home in a nation where clubbing culture is still in its infancy. One of the things that struck me was the sheer size of the label as a brand; not many DJs are able to do an East Asian tour and receive the kind of welcome that they received, and it is hard to imagine the distance that they've come since the first release in 2007.

**"There are moments which feel so surreal"**

"There are occasionally moments which feel so surreal, and so far outside of my comfort zone that I'm forced to acknowledge how

much has happened to us since our time in Leeds. That trip to China was full of those moments. Like I said before, the progress we've made has been incremental and relatively slow, and we've never released a huge amount of music either - hopefully we'll be able to continue at our own pace for the foreseeable future."

With new audiences come new tastes and understandings, and it interests me to hear how the Hesse crew have dealt with the difference in clubbing cultures between nations. "This was something that I thought about a lot when I first started playing in Europe, particularly as so much of the dance music I'd grown up listening to was UK-centric - drum 'n' bass, dubstep, grime, garage... UK dance music has had a tendency to be quite self-referential, even down to the specific sounds used, and I spent a lot of time worrying that the music I was playing wouldn't translate well when I started to travel more regularly. I've always enjoyed that challenge though, and one of the things I love about DJing is when you're able to introduce unfamiliar music to people in a way that feels natural and unforced."

His first time playing in Berlin was a perfect example of this challenge. "The promoters told me explicitly that UK garage 'didn't work' in Germany, and that it would be brave of me to play any; I enjoyed trying to figure out the best way to test that boundary and prove them wrong.

We're starting to travel further afield more regularly now though, and I guess that our trips to SE Asia have been the first times that any of us experienced playing to audiences from such different cultural backgrounds. It's something that'll continue to educate and challenge us."

A further development in the Hesse Audio story came with the announcement of Pearson Sound's forthcoming LP, the first single-artist album that the label has put out. "People have been speculating as to when David might release an album for years now, but I'm glad we waited - it's only now that the idea seems to make sense. We don't tend to plan particularly far ahead so I couldn't say for sure [if further LP releases will follow], but I'd certainly be open to it."

Alongside the LP announcement were the dates for another extensive tour, which will see Ben, David and Kevin hit Wire in January. I ask whether the often gruelling life of a touring DJ ever catches up with him, and if he is ever tempted to follow the likes of Motor City Drum Ensemble in limiting the amount of time that he spends playing out. "It's been great these past few years! I feel really lucky for so many reasons, and I never imagined I'd be able to do this for a living. It does get tiring, and there are occasional moments where I feel as though I've taken on too much, but they tend to be fleeting."

After starting last month at Warehouse Project, November saw Ben grace stages in Japan, Italy and Germany on top of a variety of cities during a North American tour with Joy Orbison. "It helps that my bookings are across such a broad spectrum. If I have three gigs across any given weekend, chances are that the line-ups will be completely different at each one and I'll be forced to prepare differently for each set." The chance to play with such a variety of talented artists ensures that there isn't room for complacency; this time round, Joy O, Sunil Sharpe and DJ Nobu were some of the big names to share the booth. "It keeps things interesting, and as long as DJing is something I find interesting and fun then I'll continue for as long as people want to hear me."

If this is the rule that his career will follow, it seems inconceivable that Ben UFO will ever be allowed to retire. *[Andrew Kemp]*





# Weekly Chart



**Mia Dora**  
*Raw Kiss*  
[Optimo Trax]

Infectious disco/ house featuring sexy, soulful vocals and mesmeric bass. An all-round great release by Mia Dora.



**Floating Points**  
*Nuits Sonores*  
[Eglo Records]

Classic Floating Points; jazz-influenced melodic house, due for release on 8th December.



**Takuya Matsumoto**  
*Galactic Dance Part 1*  
[Clone Royal Oak]

Spaced out, upbeat house with soothing synths and steady drums.



**Armand Van Helden**  
*The Funk Phenomena (Original Mix)*[Henry Street]

Nostalgic reissue of classic Armand Van Helden.



**Theo Parrish**  
*Footwork*  
[Sound Signature]

Hugely anticipated genius from Theo Parrish.

[Harriet Shepherd]

[All images: Anze Kokalj]

# It's a kind of (metallic) Magic

When the festive season arrives, the sheer number of sequins on display can become overwhelming. Gunmetal metallics shine at us from inside shop windows and it's hard not to get swept up in a sea of sparkles. However, don't be tempted to confuse party clothing with tinsel; a transformation into a Christmas tree is not so chic.

Opt for an understated monochrome palette, then vamp things up by blending textures, bold cuts and metallic details. Ethnic chokers are the ideal way to style a quirky twist into a classic velvet number or revive boxy tees with marble swirls. Peruse our style guide for the perfect party outfit whatever the occasion.



Modelled by Pamela Lee, Styled by Tiffany Grous and Claire McQue, Photographed by Erika Sykes

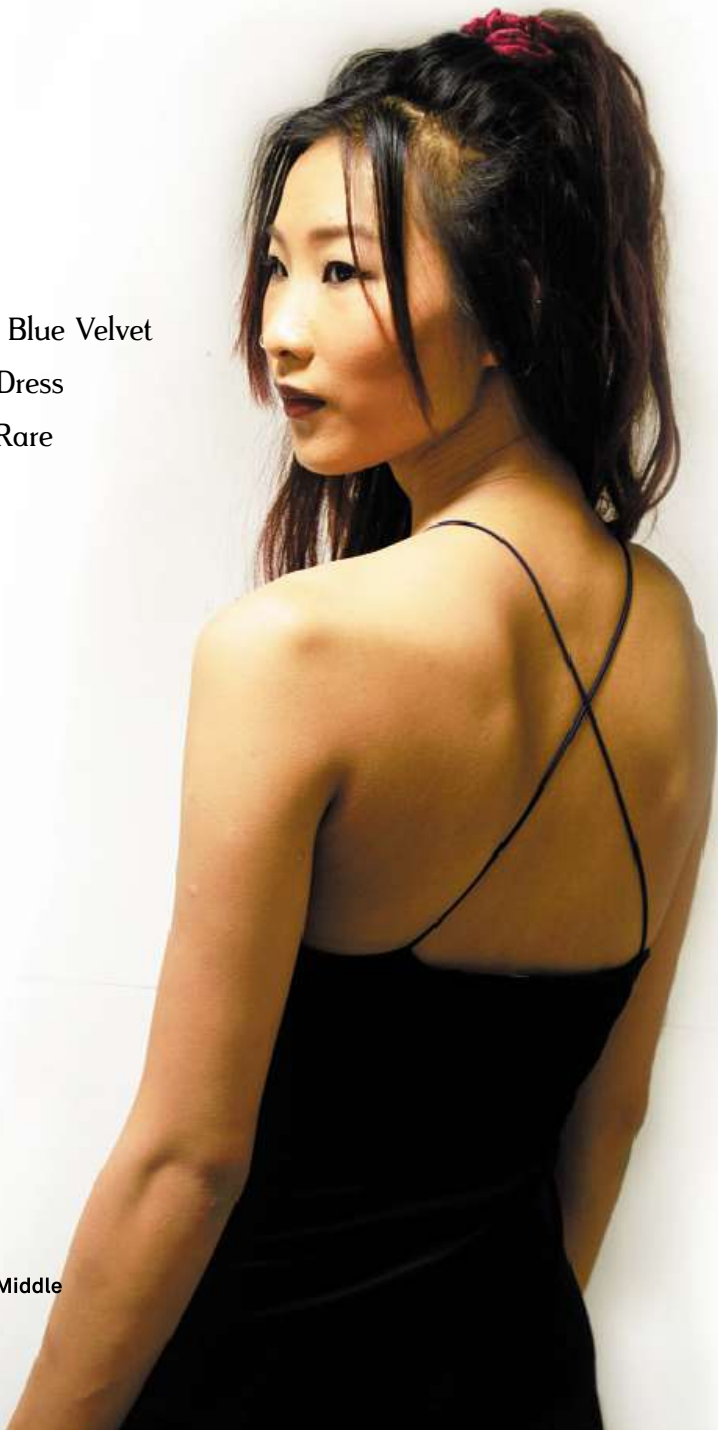




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[Photo: Pukka Films]

# Kajaki: The True Story

## Film Review

With the recent centenary, the gravity of the First World War has, yet again, been impressed on all of us. The poppies at the Tower of London, the war poetry and history lessons have all contributed to an awareness of the suffering endured by so many. In cinema, there are a plethora of fantastic films giving both fictional and factual accounts of First and Second World War stories: *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Great Escape*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. But where is the modern British war film, depicting the bravery of soldiers fighting in Afghanistan? The answer – *Kajaki: The True Story*.

The film tells of horrific events which took place one day in Afghanistan only eight years ago. A three-man patrol sets out to disable a Taliban road-block. One wrong foot and chaos descends; an explosion leads to the discovery that the ground under their boots is an old Soviet mine-field. Corporal Stuart Hale's leg is blown apart below the knee, and the horrifyingly convincing prosthetics are sadly not the last you'll see. The rescue mission that follows forms a nail-biting, tension-filled narrative, and one of the

most incredible stories of heroism to grace the silver screen this year.

What is striking about this film is the film-making team's passion and commitment to authenticity. At the question-and-answer session following the screening, writer Tom Williams and Director Paul Katis described how upon discovering the story, they immediately contacted the veterans and based the script entirely on their first-hand accounts – from the terrifying realism of the detonations and injuries, to the banter and brotherhood which keeps the film so endearing. The combination of respect and sobriety with humour and light-heartedness was masterfully executed.

'Entertaining' would however be a problematic description for this film. *Kajaki* is not an easy watch; the clever omission of a musical score has each crunch of gravel and audible breath increasing tension levels to an excruciating height, keeping audience adrenaline pumping throughout. Williams described the story as 'delightfully apolitical' in that there were no Taliban to contend with, so the story

centres entirely on the soldiers' daily bravery and not the reasons for their presence in Afghanistan in the first place.

Present at the screening were both the actor playing Tug Hartley (*Game of Thrones*' Mark Stanley) and the man himself, the medic in the field responsible for saving the lives of the injured soldiers. Witnessing his humility after watching *Kajaki*'s account of his unbelievable bravery was a humbling experience. When explaining his reaction to two men turning up on his doorstep wanting to make a film about the day, he said 'People don't make films about people like us.' And they don't. They haven't. That is why *Kajaki* is a film everyone should see. It's not about the politics – it's about the men, the bravery and the brotherhood, and *Kajaki* depicts them all in the most truthful and heart-wrenching light. [Chess Carnell]





[Photo: Sovereignty Productions]

## Human Rights Week

# Vessel: the film about the abortion ship

*As part of Human Rights Week, Ellie Tiplady reviews Vessel, a largely unknown but hugely important documentary about a team of brave women who have taken to the high seas to provide abortions for women in need around the world.*

The right to have a safe abortion, and to have control over what happens to your body as a woman, is something most of us feel to be within our reach in the UK, but *Vessel* examines the parts of the world where this isn't commonplace.

Whilst legal in some parts of the world, many fervently disagree that abortion is a right in the first place. However, criminalising the right to choose to have an abortion doesn't prevent them from happening; they still occur, just in far more dangerous circumstances for women who are often desperate enough to take the risk. *Vessel* follows the remarkable - literal - journey undertaken by a group of real women trying to bring hope to those threatened by anti-abortion enforcement all over the world.

But how can you help women have safe abortions in countries where abortion is illegal? 'Women on Waves', is a non-profit organisation that travels on a small ship from Holland to places from where pregnant women have contacted them, places like Morocco and Ireland, urgently seeking a safe abortion for many different reasons. These include fear of religious persecution, because they are victims of rape or face being ousted by their families. They then receive the abortion pill on an installed clinic on the boat. 'Women on Waves' are able to do this because in international waters, the

ship is accountable to Dutch law, and in the Netherlands, abortion is legal.

This combination of innovation and care that breathes life into this almost wild operation mirrors the nature of its orchestrator, doctor and artist, Rebecca Gomperts. One of the things I liked most about *Vessel* was how it follows Gomperts's unwavering spirit and determination towards the campaign since 1999. The documentary-style of the film means we see Gomperts being surrounded by crowds of shouting protestors, refused entry into ports and personally challenged on television, but she remains positive and often light-hearted and funny too. The film also gives an insight into why the women continue to remain so individually passionate about this cause. Interviewing telephone operators and those recruited along the way, *Vessel* displays the courage of both the women seeking abortions but also that of the campaigners helping them to do so. One particularly poignant moment is when a woman reflects on what it means to have an abortion after taking the abortion pill.

Defending herself as not a "monster", it reiterated for me that abortion always involves at least two lives but whilst you might identify as pro-choice yourself, this doesn't mean that you don't appreciate the graveness of the situation. *Vessel* provides us with straightforward medical advice surrounding abortion too, and this coupled with footage of Gomperts and her team's perseverance parallels the fact that 'Women on Waves' has managed to help so many women through simple information and sheer dedication.

The film highlights how courage and determination can go a long way and mistakes can be major lessons towards success. *Vessel* has won numerous awards at various film festivals, including at the prestigious SXSW festival in Texas, and I feel that this is justly so.

*Vessel is available on video on demand at <http://vesselthefilm.com> from January 13th and LUU's Amnesty International Society is running a campaign on reproductive rights during Human Rights Week for more information.*





## Human Rights Week Reframing Disaster

**The University of Leeds plays host to a series of events regarding cultural perceptions of global disaster.**

We've all done it; watched the news reports, read the stories and shaken our heads at 'those poor people' whose lives are ripped apart when disaster strikes. We may all read the news, hold bake sales and collections, but slowly but surely the stories stop. The tagline of the Reframing Disaster conference held in Leeds last weekend was 'disaster is not an event', and the conference focused on perspectives on the aftermath of catastrophe – the rebuilding of lives and not just their destruction.

Academics from across the globe had travelled to deliver papers, providing a diverse spectrum of topics and interests which spanned a number of worldwide catastrophes. On the Ebola outbreak, an engaging and entertaining presentation detailed the numerous reasons why Band Aid 30 was so wildly outdated and inappropriate, and ridiculed Geldof and Bono's 'messianic' complexes. There were thought-provoking pieces on the continuing effects of colonialism despite it having supposedly ended, focusing on the Arab Spring as a socio-economic revolution against western dominance in North Africa, and examining the effects of America's previous colonial presence on the Haitian earthquake and subsequent cholera outbreak.

There were also presentations which focused on literary and cultural responses to crisis. Minoli Salgado, a writer who was in Sri Lanka on the day of the tsunami spoke of the paradox of speech and silence in response to crisis, the need for emotional outlet and yet it's 'unspeakability'. Her poem 'The Waves', narrating an encounter with a family who had lost two daughters, was written only five days after disaster struck. Salgado told of how she was unhappy with the poem, as despite its hauntingly beautiful depictions of grief, there is something problematic in painting the family as victims – she went on to say how the family were today surviving and thriving. This reconstruction was a focus of the evening event on the Friday, which also included the photography of Francesca Moore around the people living in the aftermath of Bhopal gas disaster. One commentator remarked that in photographing their portraits, Moore had 'given the Bhopalis their sense of dignity', after being discarded as almost worthless by Union Carbide, whose irresponsibility disastrously affects the lives of people in the area even now, thirty years on.

The conference was a triumph in many ways. The fact that there were so many high profile speakers is impressive in itself, but the fact that all the presentations were accessible and engaging made the conference attractive to all; academics, undergraduates and members of the public alike. The event was interesting, informative and at times moving – an impressive and memorable combination. The conference succeeded in 'reframing disaster' in many different ways, and perhaps in future we won't be so quick turn the page on catastrophe. *[Chess Carnell]*



# The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

What makes a Christmas classic?

[Photo: New Line Cinema]

It's that time of year again - the fairy lights are on, the mulled wine is flowing, and it's finally acceptable to start blasting out Christmassy tunes before that 9am lecture. The festivities are getting into swing, which means that, love them or loathe them, the plethora of Christmas films on Channel 4 can't be far behind. Every year, cinemas are full to bursting with new releases trying to claim their place in the canon, but it takes a certain something to make one stick. What is it that makes these films Christmas classics? And why do we watch them every year, without fail?

Firstly, there's the feel-good factor. Maybe I'm just a relentless optimist, but I'm definitely partial to a Christmas film with a happy (if ever-so-slightly cheesy) ending. I'd say that - judging by the stellar success of films such as Richard Curtis' *Love Actually* - British people as a whole are possibly a little more sentimental and soppy than they might like to admit, especially around Christmas. The mix of characters and situations in this heart-warming comedy, coupled with its quotability and star-studded cast make it an obvious hit, not to mention the excellent soundtrack (and Hugh Grant's fabulous dad dancing to The Pointer Sisters' 'Jump (For my Love)').

Secondly, the majority of Christmas films seem to share a kind of magical or fantastical undertone, reflecting the prevalence of the surreal elements of the season - Father Christmas, flying sledges, and elves' workshops don't come without some acceptance of fantasy. That being said, a Christmas classic doesn't necessarily need to be overly ebullient; films like *It's A Wonderful Life* and *Scrooge* depict incredibly unhappy characters who have their views on life turned around by spirits, perpetuating Christmas hopes of changes for the better, and reiterating the importance of family and friends.

There seems to be a sort of cultish fervour around Christmas films, especially the ones which have been popular with audiences worldwide for years. Chris Columbus' *Home Alone* is, perhaps, the ultimate Christmas film: Slapstick humour, adventure, and a strong (if a little dysfunctional) family bond, wrapped up in the package of a jovial seasonal comedy. This formula is clearly effective, as *Home Alone* is the highest grossing comedy film of all time, and is still shown worldwide every Christmas, every year, twenty-four years after its release in 1990.

Watching the same Christmas films every year adds to the sense of tradition surrounding the whole season; you wouldn't go through Christmas without decorations or mince pies, so why should our favourite films be any different? The films that have stood the test of time, year after year, perhaps now act as cultural additions to, and signifiers of, the Christmas season, being shown on television almost daily in the few weeks running up to Christmas day. They announce the arrival of Christmas, and provide the perfect excuse to lounge on the sofa after one too many mince pies, all while getting you in a festive mood with their (generally) cheery plots and catchy Christmas songs - what more could you ask for? The classics have a well-deserved place in our hearts, and the ones that are lodged tightest will remain Christmas favourites for years to come. [Hannah Tommes]





[Photo: ITV/Rex Features]

# A Matter of Class

## Television

Class war, it's finally upon us. Battle lines are being drawn, levies raised, we're going over the top, and all because Mitchell yelled pleb at someone, Emily Thornberry hates transit vans, and Red Ed wants private schools to do something mildly productive for society. That's if you believe the papers, and why wouldn't you? It's hard to say that we've evolved beyond class divisions when the men leading the country are a cousin of Queen Elizabeth II, and the heir to the Osborne baronetcy, both descended from Kings of England. All this even before the BBC's *Posh People* went toe to toe with Channel 4's *Skint*.

Channel 4 have come under a lot of pressure for the likes of *Benefits Street* and *Skint* over the last year. "It's exploitative, poverty porn" declares the Left, the Right, and everyone in between. In truth, to label *Skint* as merely poverty porn shows an ongoing disconnection between the poorest in our society and those who claim to stand for them. *Skint* offers us a view into the lives of the community of the day - the white working class. Only it's not really the working class, because they can't find work. *Skint* focuses on the residents of Grimsby's East Marsh - according to the Telegraph, the worst place to live in the country - a community ravaged by the dissolution of the fishing industry, alcoholism, crime and drug addiction. Played out before us is the creation of an underclass, and I suppose in a way that does make *Skint* pornographic because there's nothing British society loves more than sadistically crafting an underclass to revile. Benefit scroungers, immigrants, chavs, we lump them all into a pit and let the Daily Mail whip us into a frenzy because we love to know that no matter how hard the recession hits, there's someone even worse off than we are.

But that's not what's most worrying about *Skint*. Over the course of the series you're introduced to the residents of East Marsh, who to our horror, are actually human beings. Human beings who can be in turn charming, romantic, amusing, and frustrating. Admittedly they're not perfect, some of their choices are questionable, some criminal, but the descent into the cycle of substance abuse and crime in this corner of Grimsby does not

make demons of the residents of East Marsh. Even the least observant will recognise that these are people trapped in a hell not of their own making. At risk of sounding like a good, old-fashioned Bolshevik, this is the fallout of modern capitalism, people fallen by the wayside with no way back in. It's much more comforting for us to think of the white, working class in the abstract, that way we can still dismiss the rise of UKIP as being due to a lunatic fringe. I don't suggest that the racism you can sense bubbling away beneath the surface of East Marsh is in any way legitimate, but it is important to recognise that the tide of racism rising in our society comes from fear and uncertainty. When communities are legitimately aggrieved by their abandonment by Whitehall and the rest of the country, it becomes easy to scapegoat an "other". *Skint*'s real crime isn't exploiting the working class, it's giving them a human face. If the failure of the Left in this country is a betrayal of the working poor, then to dismiss *Skint* as nothing more than "poverty porn" demonstrates nothing but a repeat of that naivety.

If the likes of *Skint* and *Benefits Street* is the porn we whack one out to, *Posh People*, *Made In Chelsea* and *Downton Abbey* are the intense feelings of guilt and self-loathing that inevitably follow. The BBC's succinctly titled documentary, *Posh People*, follows the staff of Tatler, the world's oldest magazine, which for three hundred years has been reporting on posh people not doing much. "It would be ghastly if everything in life was relevant" stresses feature writer, Matthew Bell. We're not in Grimsby anymore. In a way, *Made In Chelsea* is a Tatler for modern times. Both work upon a similar premise, covering the vapid lives of people who we're convinced aren't boring because they went to Eton. In a society in which most would identify, or seek to identify themselves, as middle class, we find ourselves stuck in a dance that's been going on for centuries. An affluent middle class looks up to an upper class that they can never hope to enter due to a lack of "innate breeding", dejected they instead turn to the working class, safe in the knowledge they shall never be as "vulgar". Only now we've entered into a bizarre, postmodernist world of class struggle. *Skint* proves that the working class remains vulgar to us, but *Made In Chelsea* and *Posh People* show us that the lives of the upper classes are never truly "real" - everything instead seems to be delivered to us with a nod and a wink. Even social class has its cash value now, everything can be commodified. These shows package up and sell us a lifestyle and attitude we expect from the gentry. Nothing is genuine in the Royal Borough. It's a staged reality that gives us what we want, a culture we could never know. One of the residents of the Royal Borough recently criticised Napoleon for being "Nouveau". If the man who conquered Europe couldn't worm his way into the upper class, what hope have you got when all you can do is buy a detached house in Sevenoaks? [Benjamin Cook]



## Video Games

# Trivial Pursuits?

Who gets the TV? A question that has divided families since pixels popped into our lives. With the Christmas break coming up you can say goodbye to the casual team death match as dad is secretly desperate to find out what is going to happen in Hollyoaks. So here's a list of five-star games that your family might actually enjoy watching and may even want to join in with.

### FEZ

You play as a character called Gomez living in a 2D world, until you are blessed with a reality changing Fez. Gomez now has the ability to rotate the scene making the 2D landscape into a 3D adventure playground. A creative take on the traditional platform-game *FEZ* is fun to watch as well as puzzle ponderer which you and your family can theorise about.

### The Walking Dead Series 1 & 2

In Telltale's adaptation of *The Walking Dead* you find yourself in the shoes of ex-professor Lee Everett. Focused on narrative and character development rather than game mechanics, gameplay is restricted to quick-time events and dialogue choices. There are no wrong choices but you will always question whether you made the right ones. Arguably as compelling as the TV series, your parents will be glued to the sofa, maybe even let them take the reins.

### Thomas Was Alone

Thomas was alone, then Thomas was not. You play as a rectangle named Thomas and you need to get from A to B. Along the way Thomas meets other rectangles and squares who also need to get from A to B. A game with a very simple concept excels on every front. Simple enough to play with the younger members of your family but complex enough for you to enjoy too.

### Guacamelee

Colourful, fast and cheery. Help the Luchador save his village and his childhood sweetheart from the clutches of the evil Carlos Calaca. This side scroller never forgets to be fun and can be played two player. Perfect to play with the younger members of your family while getting just as much enjoyment out of it. *[Lauren Natalie Emina-Bougaard]*



## Books

*[Photo: The Independent]*

# The Republic of Imagination

We live in an age where the value of arts are constantly being questioned and doubted. As an English Literature student, I have been challenged on countless occasions as to why I'm studying a subject with such insubstantial rewards and a lack of clear career path. This is symptomatic of a decline in reading in society in general, a highly worrying trend for modern culture.

Azar Nafisi's latest book challenges modern Western society's increasing alienation from literature, and champions the benefits of being a citizen of *The Republic of Imagination*. Requirements for entry being 'an open mind, a restless desire to know and an indefinable urge to escape the mundane'.

Nafisi is most famous for her 2003 book, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, in which she shares her experiences of reading and teaching literature during the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Given her prior success, there was always going to be pressure on this latest offering to live up to expectations. However, in contrast to the painfully authentic account of life under a totalitarian regime, *The Republic of the Imagination* explores the necessity of literature in a liberal and free democracy. Needless to say the subject matter isn't quite as gripping and absorbing.

Nevertheless, Nafisi mixes her literary criticism with humanising narrative, so it never becomes too tedious or academic. The whole book centres around the comment of a fellow Iranian she met at a book signing in America, who said, 'These people are different from us – they're from another world. They don't care about books and such things.' In a way, he's right. Most Westerners are more concerned about checking their Facebook feeds than reading books; and it's largely because we live in such a free and liberal society. In a totalitarian state where the basic right of reading and writing is censored, the value of literature becomes all the more apparent. Just think of Malala Yousafzai, shot by the Taliban for desiring an education, who has since gone on to become a Nobel Prize winning advocate for education and women's rights.

Nafisi takes us through three American novels, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt* and Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, interweaving biography and social critique along the way. She tells us about Farah, her childhood friend from Iran, who is forced to flee her home country due to her political and revolutionary attitudes. She also goes on to critique the American Common Core programme for education, designed to strip back 'airy-fairy' imagination and analyse literary texts through facts-based critical thinking. Despite the book firmly placing itself within an American cultural and literary context, many of the assertions Nafisi draws can be equally applied to the state of British society.

She is undoubtedly a compelling story teller, and to an extent, an astute literary critic. She pulls together so many sources, novels and a wealth of personal experience to create a broad, expansive text that is an admirable achievement. However, I feel that her weaving together of the different aspects of her narrative isn't quite seamless. Although her literary criticism was mainly insightful and thought-provoking, it dipped in to blandness at times, and read too much like an uninspired English essay.

*The Republic of Imagination* will be of special interest to literature lovers and arts students, although when held up to the likes of Martha Nussbaum's works, it doesn't have quite the same merit. However, this is a book that should be read by all; it reaffirms the value of literature in our current complacent and passive society, it inspires a passion to read and to learn, and teaches a valuable and timeless lesson. *[Jessica Murray]*



## Food Gastronaut: Almost Famous

Forget being “Almost Famous”, this place is about to be the word on everyone’s lips. The guys at Almost Famous know gluttony, and they do it well. Before we tucked in, we grilled them about everything from burgers to booze and all that’s in between.

**How was it for you guys settling in over summer? With no students around, it must have been nice and calm?**

It was perfect, it was sort of like a soft launch. With no students around we could get all the teething problems out of the way and build a good reputation with Leeds locals. We’ve not got a sign at the moment, so we’re looking forward to our huge, neon-yellow, flying burger coming to put outside, so everyone knows where we are.

**How’s the reaction been so far in Leeds?**

People have responded really positively. We pride ourselves on really good, personal service and we love big groups. It’s a great vibe in here; all the staff are really happy and it rubs off on customers. We’re a good bridge between somewhere cheap and something totally high end. We have such a broad range of customer support as well – just the other week, we had a 103 year old lady in here eating a burger.

**So have you got a favourite thing on the menu?**

I love everything. There’s something for everyone on our menu – whether it’s a standard burger, or something more fancy like our ‘Butter, Blood and Bleu’ which has got steak, chorizo and loads of stuff. Our fries are also amazing – ‘bacon bacon’ fries are so popular that people ask for t-shirts with that slogan on.

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After our chat we dug in. I went for the ‘John Bender’ breakfast burger, with a fried egg, an extra pork patty and a hash brown – it was delicious. My companion went for a spicier option with the ‘Triple Chilli Cheeseburger’, containing the hottest but most delicious beef chilli. We had to order some of the ‘Bacon Bacon’ fries, which were doused in baconnaise and topped off with crispy bacon bits. We also grabbed two of the boozy shakes. Luckily for us, the special that night was a ‘Blueball Screwball’, created by the bar manager. Its exact ingredients escaped us, but we do know there was a bubble-gum ball at the base, and it was topped with whipped cream and a sprinkling of bubble-gum millions. Truly mind blowing. Both my companion and I left fuller than we’ve ever felt before. The only question now is, how do we keep them to ourselves and stop them from becoming more than ‘Almost Famous’? *[Dominique Alexander]*

Travel

# Winter Sun in Morocco

It’s getting to that time of year when leaving the warmth of your duvet in the morning is one of the hardest tasks of the day; let alone the walk home in total darkness. Given the dark nights and cold mornings, daydreaming about next year’s summer holiday is hard to avoid.

If you can’t wait that long, then Morocco is the perfect place to escape the cold British weather. If you head there in the summer, you’ll be faced with almost unbearable 35–45 degree Celsius heat; in the winter months it’s a much more moderate 15–20 degrees. With its magnificent desert landscapes, rocky mountains and the vibrancy of Marrakesh, it provides a welcome contrast to the bleakness of British wintertime – and the fact that it’s only a couple of hours away on a plane means flights are a bargain.

Once you arrive you’ll be overwhelmed with things to keep you busy, and the prices are startlingly cheap. The life and soul of Marrakesh revolves around the main market square, a general hub of noise, sound and tantalising smells. Behind the square is a labyrinthine maze of souks selling beautiful and elaborate Moroccan objects; ornate mirrors, brightly coloured ceramics, silver plated tea sets, beaded cushion covers and masses of jewellery. It’s a paradise of exotic finds, but you’ll need to develop tough haggling skills to bag the best bargains.

Beyond the city centre is a wealth of historical sites to explore. The Koutoubia Mosque towers over the city in stunning Moroccan architectural style, and there is also a selection of fantastic palaces, including the Bahia Palace, with its beautiful carved stucco ceilings and luscious gardens. The Saadian tombs, built to bury Saadian rulers in the 16th century, are also a popular site of interest, due to the stunning Islamic architecture.

Although Marrakesh contains a wealth of exciting tourist spots and cultural sights, it’s definitely worth taking some excursions and exploring Morocco as a whole. It’s home to the second largest waterfalls in Africa, the Ouzoud Waterfalls, 150km north of the city. You can take a raft right up to the waterfalls themselves, and have lunch on a crag overlooking the impressive scene. If you trek a little further downstream, you can swim in the lagoons and mini-waterfalls at your own pleasure – if you can brave the cool water temperatures. Be careful to avoid getting dragged in to a costly guided tour, heading off the beaten track and finding your own little spot of paradise is part of the fun.

A must-do activity on any trip to Morocco is a trip to the Western Sahara. Don’t let the nine-hour coach trip through the Atlas Mountains put you off; you’ll get to visit a Berber village used as a set for *Gladiator* and *Game of Thrones*, and take in the stunning scenery en route. Once you arrive, you’ll be given your own camel to ride out in to the sandy plains at sunset, and a cosy, welcoming tent on arrival at camp. The Berber tribe will treat you to a chicken tagine with cous-cous – a Moroccan staple – before playing traditional music under the starry, night sky. If you wake up early enough, you can watch the sun rise over the Sahara – a truly incredible and unforgettable experience.

For an affordable and truly memorable winter break, Morocco is the perfect choice. A culture worlds away from our own, yet only a short flight away, it provides a welcome escape without costing a fortune. With amazing food, a rich historical culture, beautiful scenery and that most important of factors – heat – Morocco has all the necessary components for a perfect winter break. *[Jessica Murray]*



# Recipe of the Week

## 3D Chocolate Christmas Tree

This festive recipe will be the showstopper at any Christmas dinner party and is not as hard as it looks. You can put your own spin on it with biscuits, maltesers or anything else you fancy.

### Ingredients

- 500g dark chocolate
- 100g whole almonds peeled
- 100g hazelnuts peeled
- 50g raisins
- 75-110g extra dark chocolate for assembling
- Icing sugar to decorate



[Photo: Emily Patterson]

### Method

**1** Spread the almonds onto a tray bake in an oven on 180 °C until dry and golden, around 15 minutes. Do the same for the hazelnuts, except keep them in for maybe an extra five minutes until golden. Prepare the trays to make the branches of the tree by covering three baking trays or large swiss roll tins with tin foil.

**2** Draw (in a line) out the following crosses with a pencil on the foil leaving 2 or 3 inches between each cross. The measurements of the crosses should be the following (one cross of each measurement): 7cm, 9cm, 11cm, 13 cm, 14cm, 15cm, 16cm, 17cm, 18cm.

**3** Prepare a serving plate for the tree - one that is rigid and strong enough and absolutely flat so that it will support the tree and cover it with tin foil. Mark one of the 18cm crosses on this base.

**4** When the nuts are all golden allow to cool and chop roughly then mix in with the raisins. Melt the chocolate very carefully in a Pyrex bowl over simmering water. When melted stir in the nuts and raisins.

**5** Using a teaspoon drop this mixture onto the cross you have drawn on the base first and put it straight into the freezer to harden the quickest while you do the others in order of size from biggest to smallest.

**6** When all the crosses have set absolutely firmly (30mins approx..) melt the remaining chocolate over a low heat. Put a teaspoon of melted chocolate onto the centre of the cross on the base board and stick the next largest cross on top so that the points are in between the points of the previous cross.

**7** While that is setting (supported with a matchbox if necessary) drop another teaspoon of chocolate on top of the second cross to form the basis for the next layer for a few minutes. Continue this method with the remaining crosses, using the melted chocolate to stick each layer together making sure to go from the largest crosses to the smallest and angling them so the branches are arranged alternatively. Assemble the tree gradually as it is essential that each section is completely set before topping with another layer.

**8** To serve decorate the board with Christmas decorations and dust the tree lightly with sieved icing sugar and other edible balls.

[Emily Patterson]



Sam Broadley



Chris Nunn



Sam Broadley

## Step Into Christmas with RAG

Get in the Christmas Spirit as RAG take over the Faversham's pop-up ski lodge. The alpine hideaway is the perfect place to sip on mulled wine or mulled cider and start feeling festive. The event is running on the 8th December from 8pm.

Leeds RAG President, Sarah Calvert, said: "This event is for everyone, from our oldest members to anyone wanting to get to know the society outside of directly volunteering. The money raised will go directly to the Community Fund which gives grants to small charities in Leeds. I'm really excited to celebrate what we have already achieved and look forward to next semester"

RAG have also been involved with Charitrees as they try to raise money for the Make A Wish foundation. Buying a Christmas tree for charity to decorate your house with goodwill. *[Maddy Keating]*

## Gymnastics Win Big at First Competition

Gymnastics really raised the bar at the first university competition of the academic year, the Birmingham Open, winning Best Team. Ten different universities from all over the country competed over two days.

Steph Burbidge, President of the club, said: "We did really well, especially Kate who made up her floor routine in the car on the way down."

Leeds won an amazing twelve medals in different events, including three gold medals. Tim Pritchard wowed the judges, winning the Mens Intermediate Competition and receiving a gold, a silver and a bronze on his three apparatus. This was a huge achievement for the society as it was the first time the majority of the team had ever competed.

Steph added: "This weekend has been the biggest achievement the society has had. Especially considering when I first competed 4 years ago there were only four gymnasts and this year we had seventeen competing." *[Carina Derhalli]*

# Society Profiles

## Cancer Awareness

Cancer Awareness aims to fundraise and raise awareness about a variety of national and local cancer charities. They want as many students as possible to get involved to make a difference to the lives of people with cancer.

The group work closely with the Emma Maltby Memorial Fund, who help people to continue their education whilst undergoing cancer treatment. The charity has also helped University students.

The society recently worked with student Natasha who ran ten mini-marathons to raise money for her grandmother.

Membership: £3

The group intend to create regular meetings next term for members to try to keep a strong fundraising momentum for the year. Check the facebook page or twitter @LeedsCAS for more info.

Future events: They'll be doing a bucket collection at Panto Soc's Christmas Pantomime. Next term there will be a Comedy Night, Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, Live Music Night and a Macmillan Info Bus.

Contact the society at [president.lcas@gmail.com](mailto:president.lcas@gmail.com) *[Maddy Keating]*

## Gymnastics

If you've wished that you could do the splits or do a backflip on the spot now's the time to learn. Gymnastics Society is run by a group of friends who, as it says on the tin, love gymnastics.

The society provides coaches that train all levels, claiming the hook will kick in after learning one trick. Their training sessions are very relaxed but they also participate in competitions (see the article across the page for their most recent achievement).

The society has been attempting to break down stereotypes this year and become more inclusive. There are lots of male members and they welcome beginners. Society membership has increased from 25 members last year to 75 this year.

Why join: 'Because we're the most fun and rewarding society.'

Membership: £50 for the year

Where: Seacroft Centre on Sundays  
Michael Sadler Dance Studio on Thursdays

Contact [leedsuniversitygymnastics@gmail.com](mailto:leedsuniversitygymnastics@gmail.com) for more information on how to get involved. *[Carina Derhalli]*

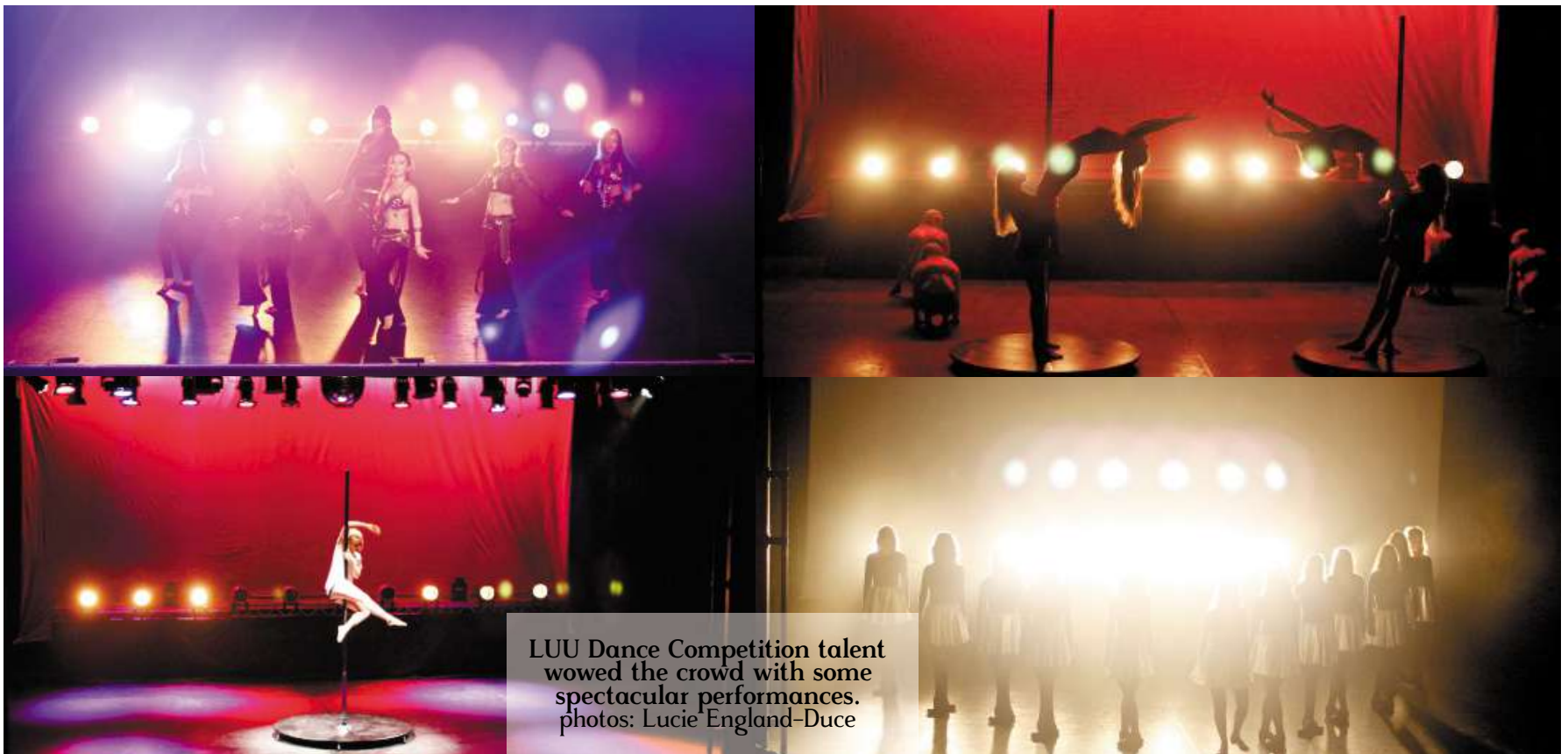


# Calendar Events

5th December	6th December	7th December	8th December	9th December	10th December	11th December
4-5:30pm	12-2pm	8:45am-6:30pm	5:30-7:30 pm	6-8:30pm	7-11pm	From 6:30pm
Question time with Hilary Benn. Union Foyer, free. Find out what the Labour party plans for Leeds and how it may affect you.	Dodgeball with Mind Matters. The Edge, £3, teams of 6. Dodge, dip, dive and duck away any exam stress.	ACTION: Sundown Adventure Land trip. Meet at Parkinson steps, free. Make a child's day and relive your childhood at his great theme park.	Global Cafe Christmas Special. The Lounge and Treehouse. Gobble some mince pies with good company.	Child Protection Training with ACTION. Baines Wing 1.13, free. Compulsory training for ACTION volunteers.	Christmas Meal at the Food Academy, £20. For the foodies. Enjoy 4 courses of fancy food.	UML presents Social of the Year. LUU Little House. Enjoy some good tunes, good food and a few board games.
From 6pm	From 7:30pm	7pm-1am	7-12pm	6:30-7:30pm	From 11pm	From 7:30
Nativity Otley Run, starting at Woodeys. Shepherds, sheep, the three kings? Get inventive for this Christmas pub crawl.	Acapella Christmas Showcase. Holy Trinity Church, £4.50 for students. Bring your friends and enjoy some Christmas singing.	PCI Christmas Ball, Marriott Hotel, £32 non members. Don't forget your bowtie, it's time to get all dressed up for one night only.	EngSoc Christmas Ball. Queens Hotel, £40 for non-members. Enjoy good food and good company in style at this swanky venue.	Regeneration Project: Care Home Fun. Headingley Hall, free. Entertain the Elderly and get your granny on playing some board games and bingo.	The Gryphon presents (the not so) Silent Night. The Faversham, £5 for non-membes. Featuring Cosmic Slop, dance the night away to some smooth beats.	Pleasure Island by LUU Pantomime Society. Riley Smith Hall, £5.50 concessions. Running from 10th-13th Dec. Prepare for innuendo's, puns and a bit of debauchery.

[Carina Derhalli and Maddy Keating]

# Society Snaps: Dance Comp



LUU Dance Competition talent wowed the crowd with some spectacular performances. photos: Lucie England-Duce

# Columns



Jen Pritchard

Over summer, our neighbours opposite baked us a lovely loaf of bread and brought it over in a wicker basket with a little pot of jam and butter. It was so kind and thoughtful and a wonderful gesture.

Needless to say, five months on, we've yet to properly speak to them, have failed to bake them anything adorable in return, and we've still got their basket.

## Everybody needs good neighbours

I'm useless with neighbours. I've always wanted neighbour chums, make every effort to wave enthusiastically and shout HELLO HEY HI I'M YOUR NEIGHBOUR whenever I see them, and have a beautiful tea set ready to go if they were ever to pop round.

The problem is, when I'm at home, I'm rarely in the mood for getting to know people. As soon as I'm through the front door, the hair goes up, the bra comes off, and the manky pants which I deem appropriate "loungewear" come out. My charm and charisma plummets and I'm basically just a vessel for eating, sleeping, and laughing too loudly at *The Simpsons*. Nobody wants to be friends with that. Not even my actual friends want to be friends with that.

Back at my parents' house we basically had an ongoing war with the neighbours which peaked at Christmastime. Those opposite had masses upon masses of Christmas lights that kept my sister up until 1am every night like a tacky, Santa-shaped aurora borealis. There was also the Christmas card stalemate, where my mum couldn't give them one until we'd received ours, because every year without fail she'd forget the husband's name. "From Jacqui and Neil. Bloody NEIL! Quick Jen fill in the blank and post it through their letter box."

Those next door with whom we shared a wall were doing perpetual renovations on their house. Not only did this mean that they seemed to be drilling and hammering for 24 hours a day, but their house was also exactly like ours but

slightly better: proactive D.I.Y dicks. Plus their young daughters loved nothing more than listening to Hannah Montana and Justin Bieber when they woke up in the morning, and before they went to bed. And pretty much consistently throughout the day.

I just don't know how to communicate with neighbours, and it worries me deeply. How am I going to get on in life? Who is going to oversee the feeding of and inevitable death of my pet fish while I'm on holiday? Who will provide the ladder when I lock myself out and have to climb through a bathroom window? Who can I dump my kids with at the last minute when I need to go to the pub? Whatever happened to community spirit? I need it so I can use it to serve myself.

Our Christmas card from our wonderful bread neighbours arrived over the weekend. It was addressed "To our lovely neighbours" with a pleasant message which made us all sigh at their kind-heartedness and excellent seasonal organisation, reminding us of what terrible neighbours we are.

On the back it read "Give us our basket back, you shits." Something tells me I might have found the first neighbours I'll truly get on with.



Ellie Parkes

We all know that anyone who outwardly acknowledges the meaning of 'cool' is immediately uncool. So I'm beginning this article on the premise of my total acceptance of loserdom.

But recently, the act of admitting and accepting your own uncoolness seems to be redemptive and actually kind of cool. So I'll just leave that with you...

'Cool' is difficult to define. As well as denoting attractiveness and self-assurance, it is accepted that elusiveness is one of the most intrinsic elements of the meaning. Which aptly accounts for why definitions of the word 'cool' are so difficult to pin

## The Rules of Cool

down.

'Geek Chic' is the clearest example of the flip – where the antithesis of cool suddenly reversed – put the thesis in antithesis and ran with it. I'm not sure if the end of that sentence made sense, which I think serves to emphasise my point about the intangibility of cool.

As a side note, whoever said that horn-rimmed glasses were for losers in the first place, clearly had no taste anyway. I fear the day those really narrow frames we wore in 2001 come back in fashion – and they will, I'm sure of it. They make me look like a spy. And by spy, I mean Spy Kids.

A piece in the *New Yorker* called 'The Coolhunt' claimed that "[Cool] can only be observed by those who are themselves cool", which probably means the legitimacy of this article has been negated from the outset. Oh well, I'm already halfway through...

'The Coolhunt' outlines the stages of cool by making a parallel to diffusion research analysing the spread of Hybrid seed corn in Iowa between 1928 and 1941. Why hybrid seed – what? I was confused too. But read, it totally makes sense – an analogy that works when charting a trend as it goes through the various stages of hipster:

"the handful of farmers who started trying hybrid seed corn at the very beginning of the thirties were the "innovators," the adventurous ones. The slightly larger group that followed them was the "early adopters." They were the opinion leaders in the community, the respected, thoughtful people who watched and analyzed what those wild innovators were doing and then did it themselves. Then came the big bulge of farmers – the "early majority" and the "late majority," which is to say the deliberate and the sceptical masses, who would never try anything until the most respected farmers had tried it. Only

after they had been converted did the "laggards," the most traditional of all, follow suit."

Cool, huh? I'm going to start calling people laggards. "You just bought a Now CD? You are a laggard."

It also shows the evolution of the timescale of cool – the fact that the writer of 'The Coolhunt', back in 1997, thought 13 years seemed an accurate timespan for the life of a trend is crazy to us. In the 20th century, trends did seem to go in decades. But since the millennium and t' internet and what not, it's been an ever-changing mess of throwbacks and revivals – something is cool and you blink and suddenly it's desperately uncool. Man, it's hard to keep track.

But I think that is exactly the key to the roots of cool, to the "innovators, the adventurous ones", the Charlie Parkers and the James Deans of history – and 'that' is the maverick, going against the grain. It's what psychologists Hansen and Dar-Nimrod and Missy Elliot would call 'contrarian cool': we say "is it worth it?", then we work it – we put the thing down, flip it and reverse it.

And repeat.





**“I’ve found what I want to do, it uses the idea of music and development. Music is used to help people with HIV, it’s used to help the homeless, its used to stop domestic violence, so what I hope to do is piece together these things and hopefully some good will come out of it.” - Rosie**

Humans of Leeds  
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