

In The Middle

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Love is
Love



Music • Clubs • Fashion • Arts • Lifestyle and Culture • Society

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Interview: Jack Savoretti

It's 11am and the phone is ringing. I am surviving on four hours sleep from the previous night, but I am immediately woken by a soft, friendly, Italian voice on the other end of the phone, belonging to the extremely talented Jack Savoretti.

Savoretti, now releasing his 4th album, *Written in Scars*, has taken a completely different approach to prior albums. Co-written and co-produced with Samuel Dixon, Adele's musical director, and rhythm

and blues expert, all songs have developed from "rhythm upwards". Though Savoretti states "100%, lyrics are equal to music," this emphasis on rhythm shines through in a motivated sense of purpose in each track, accompanied by soulful, husky vocals. Tribal sounds and a

rooted feel are evident in songs like 'Home' and 'Written in Scars,' and the recurrence of "revolution" and "fight" through the songs' lyrics, demonstrate the artist's full presence with the listener. This makes sense when I am told that while the first three albums were written in the midst of experiences, even pre-emptive of situations, *Written in Scars* is "post the fight," a retrospective account of "local and global events". He is "channelling an idea rather than making it",

and such reflection of rawness is what any listener is looking for.

This honest sound is reflected in the production process. Each song on the album was written in a single day. Savoretti's openness is refreshing and very engaging. I have to remind myself that we are not old friends, and yet I feel I can understand his entire musical journey.

"When you write a song, you go into your subconscious."

"When you write a song, you go into your subconscious", it's about "here and now". This immediacy draws me further into the conversation and it is clear that music is what Savoretti calls a form of "craftsmanship". With influences like Simon and Garfunkel, and lead singer of Sublime, Bradley Nole, it is emotion that Savoretti connects to and creates.

He tells me he is very excited about his upcoming tour, especially his biggest headline show in London, 4th March at Shepherd's Bush Empire. Jack Savoretti will be playing at the Brudenell Social Club, 15th February.

[Nina Fine]

Gig Guide

Friday 13th February
The Twilight Sad at Jumbo Records, Free
A healthy dose of Scottish melancholy delivered through the medium of loud guitars.

Saturday 14th February
Django Django at The Wardrobe, £15
Django Django bring a tidy side-helping of spice to guitar music's staple ingredients.

Sunday 15th February
LUU Music Society Charity Concert at Leeds Town Hall, £10
Beautiful music for a beautiful cause. A LUUMS ensemble showcase that shouldn't be missed.

Ten at Wharf Chambers, £4
Warm ambient music in a warm ambient setting.

Monday 16th February
Dope Body at Brudenell Social Club, £7
Power punk with bulging muscles.

Tuesday 17th February
Gruff Rhys at Brudenell Social Club, £16
Everyone's favourite Super Furry Animal will sing, purr, growl and howl.

Wednesday 18th February
Arrested Development at Stylus, £20
The band, not the TV show. Still good though.



In The Middle with Perc

"I never really had a plan for the label", says Ali Wells. Discontented by how long it was taking smaller labels to put his music out, Wells found himself with spare cash due to a redundancy package and a question; "What better way to spend your spare redundancy money than to press up some records and see what happens?" The result is Perc Trax; initially created to put out tracks under his Perc alias, it is now celebrating its 10th anniversary as one of the UK's most endearingly abrasive techno labels.

Though he now regularly puts out music by other artists, the label has always maintained its core intention, of providing Wells with ammunition for his DJing. This meant that initially releases were "all over the place" but as time has worn on, "things have solidified and become clearer." This clarity comes through in the releases, but is considerably more lucid when you listen to Wells' own material. Defined by "huge powerful drums" and a brutalist attachment to abrasion, the Perc sound is nothing if not recognisable. Wells puts this down to his experiences as a teen in a rock band that instead of a drummer had a "little Yamaha drum machine" that "lacked any sort of power in the drums". Being teenagers, those fortunate bands who did have drums took the piss out of them, which Wells reckons must have scarred him psychologically. "It's just something that comes out of me [because] I don't want to go back to people laughing at me".

Wells has also developed a very singular aesthetic for his label visually, though once again this was something that came with time. "In the beginning I had this idea that it didn't matter and... it's all about the music." As with most things, this changed with a wider dependence on the internet as it became evident that artwork that stands out is almost a necessity. Now, working closely with designer Jonny Costello, Wells is trying to move away from the "black and white dystopian Berlin warehouse type of look" by "slowly introducing more colour", something immediately apparent if you look at the

artwork for the Perc Trax 10th Anniversary Slowly Exploding vinyl releases.

Wells' music also manages to be distinct by virtue of how head on he can be politically. His latest album, *The Power and The Glory* features a track called "David and George". "The political side of things is definitely something I'd like to expand," Wells states. "I would never ruin a track with sloganeering vocals. There's nothing worse than a really politically outspoken track where the music isn't strong." He is definitely aware of the danger musicians face by introducing political elements to their

**"What better way
to spend your spare
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music, but ultimately he thinks you should. "Especially if it's something you believe in. If you lose a couple of people then so what? You'll probably gain a few people at the same time."

This belief that the music is what should come first and foremost is also part of what appears to be a marked shift in everything Wells has done to date. *The Power and The Glory* featured the likes of Factory Floor's Nik Void and Dan Chandler of the late Dethscalator and Sex Swing contributing the sort of abstract and abrasive vocals befitting Wells' releases. But last year he also released a remix of East India Youth's 'Heaven, How Long?', signalling a change in interests that seems likely to impact the next fully fledged Perc album. "[East India Youth] is the sort of thing I'm looking for, solid vocals. I'm much more interested in remixing a singer/songwriter or some sort of band rather than being given a techno tracks and being asked

to turn it into a slightly harder techno track. I'm over that."

Wells has also pursued a change in terms of performance, playing more shows outside of the club space that has long defined him. He recently graced Shipley's Golden Cabinet for a stunning show where he followed on from noisy drum therapists Sly & the Family Drone, who are decidedly not on the deeper spectrum of techno that Wells usually follows. Looking back at the gig, Wells considers this a challenge navigated successfully. This bodes well, especially having recently announced a show at London's Birthdays with friend Dan Chandler, whose anti-club attitude has influenced the shift between this sort of show and standard club nights.

Fundamentally however, some things will stay the same. The future of Perc and Perc Trax is about staying the course as well as trying new things as typified by Slowly Exploding. It was important to him to have "a mixture of the close or established Perc Trax family like Forward Strategy Group, Truss and Sawf" while also covering newer artists like Happa and those to whom he is indebted to, like Berlin's Kareem.

Wells will continue his partnership with fellow techno musician Truss, creating releases and DJing together. As for the new, Wells seems content to enjoy the position he's in at the moment. Financially Perc Trax is in a good place, allowing for his recent forays into even more experimental territories via his Submit imprint. As far as future collaboration, Wells is open minded. Gazelle Twin is a new discovery he really admires though nothing is planned, and perhaps, he might even follow Surgeon's footsteps in his work with Lady Gaga tour mate Lady Starlight. "Techno music is supposedly future music and is always pushing forwards but there's a lot of people who are quite stuck in their ways and they love this sort of classic techno sound coming off vinyl. As long as it's something that feels true and honest, an opportunity like that will be a lot of fun". [Daoud Al-Janabi]

Hyperview by Title Fight



On their third album, Title Fight are striding confidently away from their DIY punk roots and embracing a more melancholic tone similar to that of 90s alt-rock outfits like Dinosaur Jr. and Slowdive.

Opener 'Murder Your Memory' immediately displays stark contrast to Title Fight's previous work. Co-singer Jamie Rhoden's vocals fits beautifully over ambient guitars and provide perfect insight into the work of a band far more concerned with evolution than re-hashing the abrasive rhythms and dual-vocal attack of their first two albums. The mid-paced groove of 'Liar's Love' further emphasises the foursome's new change of direction. The resonant chorus riff sounds more like The Cure than any of their punk contemporaries.

There is one obvious disappointment when listening to *Hyperview*. The teeth gritting punk that made Title Fight a household name on the US punk scene has almost completely departed. This will likely go some way to alienating fans of their previous two albums and may make the band's riotous live shows of previous tours hard to replicate.

Lead singles 'Chlorine' and 'Rose of Sharon' are the closest fans will get to hearing riffs that are reminiscent of 2012's *Floral Green*. However, both tracks' middle sections present a cleaner and more fluid guitar tone that is a staple feature of the foursome's new studio direction. Fourth track 'Mrahc' is also livelier, and the faster pace of this track will please older Title Fight fans.

Despite any potential dissatisfaction from members of Title Fight's older fanbase the album makes a remarkable contribution to a progression in sound that has made Title Fight one of the most exciting bands on the US punk circuit. [Adam Moher]

Bonxie by Stornoway



Drawing on captivatingly vivid imagery of humanity and nature, Stornoway's third long player, *Bonxie* is laced with droplets of birdsong, crashing waves, crooning guitar amongst a myriad of strings, and subtle electronic undertones.

Actually trying to decipher where Stornoway's vast range of clever samples originally come from is one of the more enjoyable elements of *Bonxie*. 'Man On Wire' is full of coastal echoes, reflecting Stornoway's consistent maritime fascination, whilst 'Lost Youth' features idyllic birdsong, which make the lyrics "we are lost" seem like nothing but a declaration of elation and freedom.

Bonxie, is the seamless incorporation of underlying electronic themes to Stornoway's already distinctive folk arrangement. Stylistic progression is always something to be wary of in many respects, especially when it involves a band like Stornoway with such a recognizable sound. However, this subtle shift really shows the growing maturity of the group. This comes across particularly during 'Get Low', where summery folk meets 8-bit synths more typical of early Metronomy than the Watch Listen Tell alumni. But despite this progression, Stornoway definitely stay true to the roots that have earned them so much critical acclaim. 'The Road You Didn't Take' is one of the more obvious nods to their previous work and also encompasses a lot that is great about this record, which culminates in Fleet Foxes-like vocals and harmonies from Brian Briggs & co.

Bonxie is record full of surprises, which could captivate both old and new Stornoway fans alike, although it certainly begs the question as to how they progress from here. [Joshua Bayat]

Though what's really impressive about

Uptown Special by Mark Ronson



It seems Mark Ronson has once again reinvented himself. With his fourth studio album, *Uptown Special*, Ronson turns away from the electro-pop sounds of *Record Collection*, cruising down the avenue of American blues, funk and soul.

Capturing snapshots of an extraordinarily diverse culture, Ronson produces a fluid concoction of meandering melodies and off-beat bass riffs to create an album that is original yet grounded in a rich musical tradition. The infectious and swaggering quality of Ronson's latest soundtrack is, therefore, truly admirable. However, accompanying these electric vibes is a fear that *Uptown Special*, like its predecessors, will be overshadowed by the astronomical

success of its incredible lead singles – in this case 'Uptown Funk' and 'Feel Right'. Yet Ronson masterfully manages to hold our attention until the final synth notes of 'Crack in the Pearl, Pt. II' die away, teasing us to repeat this forty minute funk-filled joy ride. Appearances from Bruno Mars, Andrew Wyatt and Stevie Wonder add to the unique authenticity that *Uptown Special* parades with deserved arrogance.

Uptown Special challenges us to the impossible: to stay static for more than five seconds. As Mystikal aggressively states "It's exercise with thighs and hip muscles", the music invades your body and controls the beat of your heart with unparalleled ease until your every bone dances with uncontrolled ecstasy. Few modern albums carry this persuasive ability to inspire movement, a testimony to the nostalgic brilliance of Ronson's song writing. In short, *Uptown Special* funks you up. [Robert Cairns]



[Photo: Paul Hudson]

The Staves

City Varieties Hall

05/02/2015

Alvvays

Brudenell Social Club

22/01/15

Returning to a sold out Brudenell Social Club, shortly after their prelude supporting Real Estate, Toronto five-piece Alvvays have a tremendously distinctive sound. Built upon layers of reverb, dashes of surf guitar and front woman Molly Rankin's almost effortlessly melancholic vocals. This was more than enough to justify their slot at the top of the bill this time around. They were supported by the also impressive Moon King, who offer a significantly dreamier, ethereal sound to that of Alvvays.

Despite this being the first gig I've ever attended by myself, I immediately settled in during Rankin's exceedingly sweet on-stage chit-chat full of Chumbawumba references and understated anecdotes. The opener, 'Your Type', was a boisterous two minute track in which Rankin showcased the jagged side to her vocal range accompanied by guitar that wouldn't sound out of place on a Best Coast record. However, as expected 'Archie, Marry Me' was one of the highlights of the set; an infectious, blissfully simple pop song full of sentiment which had all members of the audience, young and old, crying out the chorus. Shortly after, an equally notable rendition of Deerhunter's 'Nosebleed' rang out before Rankin charmingly clarified to some confused audience members that it "wasn't even one of our songs."

After listening to Alvvays on many a grim commute to university, it was genuinely such a pleasure to know that when it comes to performing live, they rise above all expectations. Their eclectic array of heartbreakingly sincere lyrics, unexpected covers, and idyllic guitars made for an exceedingly impressive set which leaves me, amongst many others, eagerly anticipating their next tour. [Josh Bayat]

Imagine that feeling when everything is slotting into place, producing the finest of outcomes beyond anything you could hope for. Well that feeling is the same one that filled City Varieties Music Hall when power sisters The Staves graced its stage and lavished song after song of their incredibly performed music upon us. The theatre was a brilliantly suited venue for their peacefully intimate feel. Where else would you get ushered to your seat to see fellow audience members in bow-ties sat gazing in wonder alongside you?

Emily, Jessica and Camilla Staveley-Taylor have been around for a good few years now, and despite only having had one album *Dead & Born & Grown* under their belt, they've already supported the likes of Bon Iver. Currently on their 'If I Was' tour ahead of the new album, they delivered new material from the forthcoming release, songs that had evidently been meticulously crafted with such passion for their art.

'Blood I Bled' opened the set, mesmerizing the crowd, before moving into the tracks drenched in seduction like 'Black & White', putting the 'rock' into folk-rock. The distant drums of 'Steady', akin to a war cry, built to the exquisitely articulated melodic lines interweaving flawlessly between the trio. Between songs, the sisters joked awkwardly with the audience, with a Zooey Deschanel-type humour that charmed them completely. "I bloody love eagles" declared Emily after 'Eagle Song', only to be humoured by the other two. Clearly touring together and sharing in their music brings these sisters so much joy.

An EP with two tracks 'Blood I Bled' and 'Steady' from forthcoming album was released earlier this month, and after such a stunning show, the anticipation for *If I Was* could not be any higher. This flawless performance gave a glimpse of the rightful excitement for what 2015 has in store for The Staves.

[Hannah Taylor]

Weekly Chart



Perbec
Chaser
[Autoreply Music]

Acid-based Detroit House from Mark Broom & Baby Ford with deep vocals and main-room Chicago-style piano chords.



Octo Octa
More Times
[Running Back]

Heady, heavy house with an 'electronic spritz'.



Roman Flügel
Sliced Africa
[Dial Recordings]

Long-awaited release of this dancefloor favourite from Frankfurt's favourite producer.



Point G
Underwater
[Apollonia]

Re-release of DJ Gregory's mesmeric and ambient deep house which evolves through a punchy bassline.



Opuswerk/ The Artist Formerly Known As 19.454.18.5.25.5.18
Spare Matrix
[Krill Music]

Magnificent, classic-sounding techno forthcoming on Krill Music.

[Harriet Shepherd]

Preview: Flux 4th Birthday 21/02

Injecting new life into club nights which have become Leeds institutions is perhaps one of the hardest tasks for promoters in this city. Students decide en masse which nights are their favourites and flock to them, but eventually interest wanes and new nights take their place. Flux, however, are overcoming this difficulty next week with their much-anticipated 4th birthday party.

The night will be held in the infamous Temple Works, an Egyptian-styled former Victorian flax mill which houses 'the largest room in the world'. Now a mixed mode cultural venue, this Grade 1 building is opened to club nights for a very limited time each year as part of the Temple Time series, making use of the other rooms adjacent to the 2 acre main space.

Yet perhaps even more excitingly, Flux is inviting live bands to perform alongside the DJs for this occasion. In the past, the Leeds collective have featured live electronic acts Session Victim and Skinnerbox, however this is the first time live bands will take the stage. The Flux boys have always intended live music to be represented alongside the House, Disco and Techno artists that punters have come to love, and their choice of bands will certainly not disappoint. If Noya Rao's electric set at Hifi last year is anything to go by, the band's smooth electronic sound will fit perfectly alongside Flux residents and headliners. The same can be said for Leeds based Kalyan; if you were one of the lucky few to have caught the Jazzy collective at the 'Artonomy Fundraiser' event last year then you will be excited to catch their more instrumental, upbeat set.

Nevertheless, electronic music is certainly not being overlooked at this event. Flux have pulled out all the stops with their DJs by inviting Volcov, an artist renowned within the Italian clubbing scene, who will be playing alongside Murat Tepelli, resident at the Cologne based 'Pulstar' night. It is great to see such an international representation of music juxtaposed with the Leeds Flux residents and new live bands.

[Maddie Davison]



House Comes Out Again

[Photo: dancityfestival.com]

Going out is like a social experiment — people put themselves on display, ruffle their feathers, strut their stuff and ogle at everyone and everything around them. Often the last addition and least concerning factor in the cocktail of clubbing is the music, so why should we notice if it is produced by a male, female, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

“There’s a historic connection between queerness and deep house”
Terre Thaemlitz

Terre Thaemlitz, AKA DJ Sprinkles is a transgender club-land renegade, seeking to remove this passive listening and limb-shaking routine we all adopt in a club. The vapid, pounding drone of most of today’s so-called ‘deep house’, that has the genre’s forefathers turning in their graves, provides a

suitable soundscape, but appreciation and intrigue is often lost as we bop to the beat. The roots of house and dance music have also been neglected: the style was primarily developed as a platform for social change; a means of escapism, but most importantly, expression for queers. (Being ‘queer’ is an umbrella term coined as a means to define individuals who don’t confine themselves to gender or sexual boundaries).

It all started in 1970s Chicago, where pioneers of the genre toyed with tunes, giving rise to an experimental mishmash of dance and euro-pop music — house. ‘The Warehouse’ club — sounds familiar doesn’t it? — was opened by the Godfather of House himself, Frankie Knuckles, whose reinvention and reconstruction of songs into this bizarre ‘must-dance’ genre saw him as an artist, an architect and one of the leading DJs of the time. Larry Levan was a fellow forerunner, further developing the genre in New York, acting as inspiration for many younger DJs. More importantly, Knuckles was gay. He didn’t use the genre to display his sexuality, but merely produced the music to allow people to gather under a mirror ball ‘the one thing that keeps us sane... the one thing that calms people down’.

House music itself is a pick and mix bag of sweets: sometimes sexy, sometimes sentimental, erratically aggressive and often euphoric — the variety and blurred definition perhaps a representation of its curators’ sexuality. The uniqueness and ‘queerness’ of it, amalgamating English electro-pop, Italian disco and the US gay scene, meant that its popularity spread exponentially, in conjunction with the flourish of gay rights campaigns. However, as is often the way with these things, it began to turn ugly. Drug-infused bouts of violence and the onset of AIDS saw the scene cower under an androgynous, asexual umbrella, a more generic sound being heard across the globe as quickly as the 90s. 1997 brought the closure of Palladium, a New York mecca of gay nightlife. The same year The Prodigy released ‘Smack My Bitch Up’, and any inkling of dance music’s queer roots

were all but erased: the style commodifying faster than you can say Hot Since 82. Arguably the asexual tone of the genre has done better at keeping it afloat than the gay community, the difference lying between culture conservation and radical creation.

Despite the loss of the fun, fear and fascination associated with house, the genre never died; something about the spangling titivation of timeless disco caught the attention of many. Nowadays, artists like Thaemlitz are fundamental in the reactivation of house music with meaning, incorporating lyrics addressing her own lack of sexual or gender association. Take the 2 Bears as well, a DJ duo consisting of two lumpy, straight cockneys, who rhythmically slur over techno twangs. A suitable recipe for a good groove, but combine their live shows with a troupe of scantily clad, glitter engulfed cross-dressers, and it becomes spellbinding. The 2 Bears can trade on this overt campness nowadays, but in the past it was all part of the package.

Other modern day pioneers like Beth Ditto, Laura Jane Grace and Lady Gaga are helping us revisit the adventurous queer beginnings, and remind us that not all of the curators are male. The world of the female DJ is very select, with only a few names of note. Throw in homosexuality and the pickings are slim. Paris is a forerunner for queer female DJs and Philadelphia is also recognized as a hotspot, but a unique style or revolution has not emerged as in the male gay scene. Similar to the demise of the male queer music scene, ‘Le Pulp’ — a Parisian club, fundamental in the lesbian DJ scene — was closed in 2007. However, rather than sheltering, the lesbian scene has only grown and strengthened, collectives forming to continue music production.

Many of these DJs and musicians that identify as LGBTQ have had past struggles, be it personal or societal. The music acts as a voice for these issues, or merely as an expression of freedom, voice and ritual release, as Knuckles found it. Andy Butler of Hercules and Love Affair found childhood refuge in music — first tinkling on the ivories of a piano, and then stumbling across a Yazoo record, sparking a fascination with dance music, playing his first DJ set at 15. He is an openly gay man, and is also important in the revamp of queer roots, featuring vocals from transgender singer Antony Hegarty. A totally unique sound, perhaps this is the next stage of the morphing of house music?

Let 2015 instill wonderment and inspiration into the club world again.

[Flora Tiley]

“As house turns into acid-house turns into techno and all of the other sub-genres, somehow queer folks slip out of the established narrative and disappear”
Joshua Glazer



Bored Of Boundaries

The age of androgynous fashion

Gender boundaries are becoming increasingly flexible; females are channelling masculine influences while males also seek opportunity to expand their identity with more feminine qualities. As we enter the New Year, fashion walks hand in hand with understanding sexuality and style, confirming that strict gender should be becoming a thing of the past.

A role reversal in the conventions of society has led to a dreamy ambiguity in fashion putting LGBT and feminist conversations at the heart of runway. We recognise the androgyny of woman as a past revelation that shuns shapeliness and feminine accents and celebrates masculine references — such as pinstripe trousers, looser and boxy silhouettes, high water hemlines and brogues.

However the concept of 'The New Man' is a fairly contemporary one. From the emergence of the "Dandy", the embodiment of androgynous beauty through David Bowie, Jean Paul Gaultier's man skirt and then the rise of the term "metrosexual", masculinity is still in the process of being redefined. Through the appropriations of female fashion codes, contemporary menswear designs are being transformed with floral embellishments, handbags and off the shoulder silhouettes to name a few.

Beauty trends especially have seen an interchange in attitudes, with editorial spreads increasingly sporting short haired and barefaced woman and longhaired lean men with softer features. The inability to define the sexes is something that has been readily incorporated by designers. JW Anderson, a pioneer in androgynous clothing stated that "masculine" and "feminine" elements of fashion have become irrelevant' with many other designers following suit by putting forth identical looks on both sexes.

We can readily appreciate how unisex clothing is becoming a larger trend, with individuals advertently buying clothing that puts their individual style and persona over the restrictions of their gender. Whether it's masculine, feminine or something in-between...does it really matter? *[Sarah Shaik]*

Fashion reacts to, inspires and defines social and political change. The industry faces criticism as a marketplace that highlights our obsession with wealth, image and the body. However it is truly leading the way and proving the immense power of the community in releasing the archaic iron-clad gender rules that still exist in society.

JW Anderson and Alexander Wang have forged careers on androgynous shapes. Women in well tailored suits have graced the catwalks at Burberry, Marni and Gucci proving even the power houses of fashion are willing to accept that gender-rules should no longer exist. Menswear is following suit with more feminine patterns; florals, bright colours and mixed fabrics now regularly appearing along with collections showing off skirts and looser shapes. Notably we can look to Rick Owens over-sized tunic tees and loose fitting shorts clearly exhibiting the new relaxed feminine-masculinity.

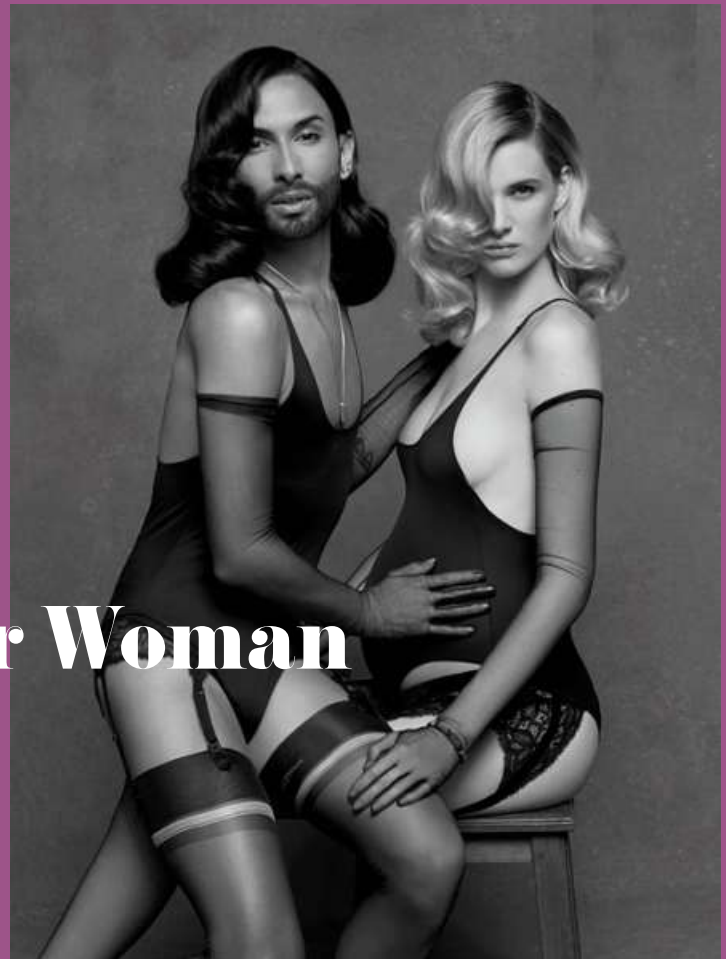
It's not just the catwalks embracing the movement. February sees the release of the collaboration between Vivien Westwood and Opening Ceremony, a 20 piece unisex collection, and additionally, Selfridges are creating a gender neutral pop-up department that will run from March till April. "We want to take our customers on a journey where they can shop and dress without limitations or stereotypes," they stated "A space where clothing is no longer imbued with directive gender values, enabling fashion to exist as a purer expression of 'self'."

Not all designers acknowledge the breakthrough in gender-neutralising fashion. Meadham Kirchhoff's shows break all kinds of fashion rules. However, on the issue of freedom of gender expression after having faced personal attacks, Ed Meadham still asserts that "Everybody sort or exists in this fucking sick way and culture where it's still ok to harass people like me constantly". It is saddening that a designer whom is a forerunner for the movement, creating pieces the next generation can use to assert their sense of self, still feels so personally restricted.

Fashion is innovative and forward moving, the key to expressing ones personal style, and it's clear it now allows for a more liberated sense of expression when it comes to gender. *[Isla Tweed]*

Conchita Wurst - Trans-Model and Power Woman

“I thought there was something wrong with me — being gay is not the norm, you’re not allowed to do that.”



The fashion industry is one of the most influential of all platforms; its creativity allows it to explore the uncharted and express new notions and ideas from a visual standpoint to be appreciated in their own right. The celebration of transgender models is one of the most highly anticipated movements and is now finally in the midst of its explosion.



“The main topic I’m always talking about is equality, and I get that it’s politics, but it shouldn’t be. It should be the most normal thing ever.”

Rising to fame from last year’s Eurovision, Conchita Wurst now stands as an icon for trans- people, and is shattering boundaries and wearing away the trans-taboo. Global celebration of this is being encouraged by the high fashion industry with Conchita modelling the closing look in Jean Paul Gautier’s catwalk, along with being shot purely in suspenders in a black and white editorial by Karl Lagerfeld, presenting a prevailing depiction of her with pregnant model, Ashleigh Good, both with barely anything to depend on but their womanhood.

However, Conchita’s negative reception strayed further than just ‘Anti-Conchita’ Facebook pages; many Russian and Belarusian politicians called for their state television networks to edit her from their transmissions and even pushed to boycott the competition entirely. Church leaders called her ‘dangerous’, men shaved their beards in a social media protest, and she was even blamed for fatal Balkan floods. These projections of such outdated and ignorant opinions are recognisably destructive, but such powerful views in combination with online social networks undoubtedly gain misled followers.

Nonetheless, transgender people are leading a cultural shift — and it’s refreshing to see this debate internalized into the world of fashion. Could this be a shift in the elitism or fashion?



The 'It' Girl

Fashion's current 'It-Girl' Cara Delevingne made headlines in 2014 for more than her statement brows.

By her own admission, Ms Delevingne prefers the company of women and is often snapped in lip-lock with several famous friends, such as Rita Ora and Miley Cyrus. However, a blasé outlook towards critics of her sexuality confirms the cool confidence she is admired for: "People can say what they want, but I'm having a good time."

So the crux of the matter is the question of whether this is even of unique significance. Should a revelation of someone defying the heteronormative be headline news?

The Fashion World is breaking boundaries. Boyish-figured models are doing more than showing off their lithe bodies. The androgynous look is ever-popular where it may have only previously been a novelty, a niche filled by a select few.

Cara Delevingne is again a prime example, front-and-centre in DKNY's Spring 2015 Menswear advertorial, fitting in seamlessly amongst the male models. This collection is themed around the 'real New Yorkers', with the hashtag #WeAreNYC showcasing a collective ideology – gender is not a differential factor.

Delevingne also showed support for the spectrum of sexualities by uploading a photograph of herself to Instagram wearing a t-shirt from the Self Evident Truths Project, which aims to humanise and conceptualise the mass of faces that identify with sexualities and gender identities that challenge the expected. As Cara assuredly stated herself, "Don't be scared to be who you are." *[Sophie Learman]*



Death of a Stereotype

In past years any male who showed a degree of interest in fashion was automatically assumed to be a homophobic caricature. Made into a prancing, turtleneck wearing and overly groomed version of himself. Although not appearing substantially harmful on the surface, such generalisations did cause deep-rooted damage. Not only was this damaging to the gay community as people made sweeping assumptions about their demographic, but it also marginalised both fashionable men as well as those who worked in the industry. Fortunately for the former, the gay stereotype is slowly dying.

The typecast for the trendy male has been heavily blunted in recent years, primarily due to our consumer habits. Men now invest in more tailored clothing, pay a little extra for their haircuts and spend a lot more time in front of the mirror with their grooming products. Even in pop culture, society's inclination towards fashion is apparent. GQ is viewed as the epitome of classy and cool whilst models like David Gandy are considered suave, sophisticated and the archetype of 'manly'. So, even though we might not be aware of it, we all now indulge in the fashion world one way or another. The stereotype for the sartorially obsessed man is therefore dead.

Unfortunately, society doesn't like to step out of its comfort zone too much. Whilst the well-dressed male is no longer mocked, a man who makes a living out of fashion journalism is, on the whole, still subject to having his sexuality questioned. It is often a case of his topic of interest. Providing commentary on three-piece suits for Esquire may be considered gentlemanly but doing a feature on CBDs in Vogue is considered to be perpetuating the gay and feminine cliché. As a result, despite the masses having accepted their indulgence in fashion they still continue to degrade those working in the industry. It is clear such standards need to be dismantled and society must realise that gender roles are no longer relevant in today's world. David Beckham has overcome the pejorative 'metrosexual' image. Cracks have appeared in the glass ceiling of the corporate world. It is now time for men in the fashion industry to break their own barriers. *[Josh Lee]*



[Photo: Pathe]

The Big Picture: LGBTQ & The Silver Screen

The past twelve months have been impressive for cinema, and this month's Oscar judges will have some big decisions to make in order to rightfully reward the cinematic talent displayed on the big screen this year. However, is the season's hype really as deserved as we think? February is also – and more importantly – LGBT history month, which means that now is the perfect time to call into question how fairly the LGBTQ community are being represented in film and entertainment media as a whole.

My initial response to this would be: poorly. The portrayal of LGBTQ in film has been feeble throughout cinema history, especially in the awards arena. There are some notable exceptions including *Philadelphia* and *Brokeback Mountain*, but when was the last time you saw a transsexual in the lead role of a Hollywood movie? This is especially annoying when you consider how regularly studios and directors present us with horrific acts of violence and abuse such as rape and torture – yet cringe at the thought of conveying consensual adults enjoying same-sex romance. Am I crazy, or is there something seriously wrong going on here?

Last year GLAAD – Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation – carried out research into how the top film studios present LGBT in their films. They found that only 17 of the 102 key films studied featured LGBT characters and that the majority of these representations were offensive or unflattering. Take one of the biggest movie events of last year for example, *The Wolf of Wall Street*; the gay butler's 'orgy scene' serves absolutely no purpose to the narrative of the film other than to glamourize Jordan Belford's shameless homophobia. What is equally disheartening is that even works that receive critical praise struggle to allow characters to transcend their sexual identity.

It's not all bad though. There has been some commendable effort from cinema in its endeavours towards a fairer representation of society, such as *Pride* by Matthew Warchus which hilariously but sensitively illustrates the struggles homosexuals had to face in 1980s Britain. For me though, the main breakthrough for LGBTQ cinema this past year has to be Morten Tyldum's *The Imitation Game*. Benedict Cumberbatch interprets the role of code breaker Alan Turing wonderfully, and for the first time I was able to witness a gay protagonist who was not entirely defined or limited by his sexuality. Also, the film itself has sparked a massive movement to pardon 49,000 men who fell victim to the Gross Indecency charge that targeted homosexuals in the mid-20th Century. The petition wears both Tyldum and Cumberbatch's signatures alongside many others who have been moved by the film's depiction of such an injustice.

So, film is improving –even if it's at snail's pace– but it is still miles behind television in terms of providing a true reflection of society's fabric. Television has offered a platform for LGBTQ characters for a while in some much loved programs such as, *Brooklyn Nine Nine*, *Glee* and *Modern Family* which all include essential gay/lesbian characters. However, I will by no means suggest that TV is 'there' with its representation of the LGBTQ community because there are still some gaping holes in their idea of equality. We are still subjected to a few uncomfortable homophobic slurs – the 'gay prank' pulled on Jamie on *Made in Chelsea NYC* springs to mind. Casting is skewed towards white, non-disabled males in gay roles, making it more difficult to achieve lesbian, bisexual and transgender visibility.

Having said this, Netflix sensation, *Orange Is The New Black* includes all of the above in its cast. Piper's experiences in a women's prison provide for some hilarious scenarios and the quality of this series is only further enhanced by its colourful sexual palette. Still, I would say that one program waves the flag more vigorously than the rest and that is Russell T Davies' exciting new *Cucumber, Banana, Tofu* series. It has been described as "dead funny and very, very human" by *The Guardian* and in my opinion is one of the first examples of a non-hetero relationships comedy to which people of all sexualities can relate. The most recent instalment to the *Banana* series was a personal favourite of mine. It followed the story of Scotty – a young black lesbian who falls hard in love with a married woman twice her age. It was definitely a heartfelt 'tilt-of-the-cap' to all those who have ever loved without being loved in return.

Do I think that the LGBTQ community are getting the voice they deserve on the entertainment media platform? No. Do I think their reflection in film/TV is improving? Yes, slowly, and I applaud the actors and directors dedicated to increasing LGBTQ visibility. I eagerly anticipate the day when every member of modern society can sit in front of the box, or the big screen, and see someone relatable. It is sad that our society prides itself on being so open-minded and progressive yet we have only just begun to turn the stage lights towards LGBTQ. Once the audio-visual industries begin to explore LGBTQ a whole new spectrum of creative possibility will be revealed.

[Cameron Tallant]



Oscar Round-Up: Best Actor/Actress

[Image: Twentieth Century Fox]

Once again a great year in film is reduced to a rather bland set of Oscar nominees, to the surprise of absolutely no one. All ten are white, all are European or American, and any hopes film fans had for even a smidgeon of diversity went out the window with the baffling snub of David Oyelowo for his portrayal of Martin Luther King in *Selma*. But let's dive in anyway and cross-examine this year's Oscar hopefuls anyway.

The five nominees this year are Steve Carrell (*Foxcatcher*), Bradley Cooper (*American Sniper*), Benedict Cumberbatch (*The Imitation Game*), Michael Keaton (*Birdman*) and Eddie Redmayne (*The Theory of Everything*). Whilst it's nice to see British actors representing forty per cent of the nominees, noticeably absent as well as David Oyelowo is Jake Gyllenhaal, who gave the performance of his career in *Nightcrawler*.

Having already won a slew of awards for his portrayal of Professor Stephen Hawking, Eddie Redmayne is the odds-on favourite to win on the night. Whilst his performance carried an otherwise rather trite and clichéd script, it was nonetheless reminiscent of a part Daniel Day Lewis played more than twenty years earlier; he won the Oscar in 1990 for his outstanding performance in *My Left Foot*. Whilst it is undeniable Redmayne is a fine actor and he worked exceptionally hard on the film, it's got exactly the same 'Oscar factor' as *The King's Speech* or *Shine*. The Academy loves a good old fashioned melodrama though, so his win is all but secured.

If it wasn't for Redmayne's performance Benedict Cumberbatch might have had more of a look-in. His performance as Alan Turing in *The Imitation Game* has been applauded, but the film itself was rather formulaic, and it's really the truth behind the story that makes it compelling rather than anything the film does. Benedict Cumberbatch has forged a career out of playing upper-class Brits battling personal demons, and one has to wonder how much of a challenge the performance really was for him.

Bradley Cooper receives his third Oscar nomination for his portrayal of Chris Kyle in *American Sniper*. Anyone familiar with Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* will remember the 'film within a film', *Nation's Pride*, a German propaganda piece celebrating a sniper who shot down over two hundred soldiers. Apparently Clint Eastwood was rather taken with this idea, because that's pretty much exactly what *American Sniper* is; a bona fide piece of American propaganda about the war on terror. Cooper's performance is downright cringeworthy at times and certainly his inclusion in the nominees at the expense of Gyllenhaal or Oyelowo is baffling.

Michael Keaton undoubtedly gave the most original and nuanced performance of the five in *Birdman*, portraying a washed-up actor trying to revive his career and mend his broken relationship with his daughter. If there's anyone that can beat Redmayne it's Keaton, but given that the Academy don't tend to be big fans of comedies, don't hold your breath for Beetlejuice to take home the statuette on the night.

When Steve Carrell was announced for *Foxcatcher*, many were surprised, and the transformation of the actor from beloved Michael Scott of *The Office* to beak-nosed eccentric millionaire John DuPont in Bennett Miller's film was incredible. His performance in *Foxcatcher* is unnerving and subtle, staying with the audience long after the film's finished. Sadly the film's award buzz has died down considerably, with a lot of viewers losing patience with the film's pace and Carrell's heavy breathing. It's a real shame though because Carrell was downright chilling; perhaps at least this role marks the start of a new era for his career, one that will see him never have to play Brick Tamlin again.

Over in the Best Actress category Julianne Moore is the frontrunner to take home

the award for her performance in *Still Alice*. Having picked up just about every other award going this season including the Bafta last week, it will be a bit of an upset if she doesn't take home the big award on the night for her portrayal of a woman coming to terms with her diagnosis of early-onset Alzheimer's.

Joining her in the category are Felicity Jones (*The Theory of Everything*), Rosamund Pike (*Gone Girl*), Reese Witherspoon (*Wild*) and Marion Cotillard (*Two Days One Night*). Again two British talents are present and Cotillard's nomination was a pleasant surprise given the fact *Two Days One Night* has been largely ignored this awards season. The consensus in the media is that the biggest snub this year was Jennifer Aniston for *Cake*, but given Aniston's track record and the snobbish politics of the Academy, as well as the fact there is often only room for one inspirational true story in the nominations and Witherspoon was a shoe-in, it's not a big surprise that she wasn't shortlisted.

Felicity Jones is fast becoming a household name and *The Theory of Everything* has cemented her Hollywood credentials. Whilst she did her best with a rather weak script her performance was ultimately forgettable and, however unavoidable it may be, overshadowed by Redmayne, and is definitely the weakest out of the five nominees.

In interesting film trivia, eagle-eyed viewers may have spotted Reese Witherspoon's name in the credits of *Gone Girl*. She was instrumental in bringing the novel to the big screen and had her eye on the lead role until David Fincher signed on to direct and decided she wasn't right for the part. Instead she took the role of Cheryl Stayed in *Wild*. Undoubtedly this is Witherspoon's best role since *Walk the Line* - for which she won an Oscar back in 2005 - and the film is a damn sight more inspirational than *Eat, Pray, Love*, but it just doesn't have the gravitas to rival the other nominees.

The other Brit in the running is Rosamund Pike, who beat Witherspoon for the lead role in *Gone Girl*. As Amy Dunne she was mesmerising, pulling off both cool girl and terrifying homicidal hell-hath-no-fury girl. Pike has come a long way since starring opposite Rowan Atkinson in *Johnny English* and *Gone Girl* is by far her most accomplished role to date. It's hard to imagine any other actress embodying the sociopathic spirit of Amy Dunne so well and her performance invoked memories of bygone Hollywood talent such as Lauren Bacall and Bette Davis.

Rounding up the group is Marion Cotillard in *Two Days One Night*, and one has to wonder if the film would have garnered more attention had it been American, because Cotillard's performance as a woman struggling against depression and the threat of redundancy was topical as well as understated and believable. Sadly the film has gone largely unrecognised this awards season, failing to even pick up a nomination for Best Film Not in the English Language. This is Cotillard's second Oscar nomination after winning in 2007 for her magnificent turn as Edith Piaf in *La Vie en Rose*, and given that her career continues to go from strength to strength, it's unlikely to be her last.

All things said and done, Julianne Moore is all but certain to win the Best Actress accolade. It's about time considering this is her fifth nomination, and between her performances in *Still Alice* and *Maps to the Stars*, she is certainly one of the most deserving candidates this year. However, Rosamund Pike definitely gave the most interesting and daring performance out of the five nominated, and if the Oscars are any sort of celebration of innovative and risk-taking performances, then she is equally worthy of taking home the title. Eddie Redmayne is as certain as Moore for the corresponding Actor award, though Michael Keaton would be a more original choice if the Academy cared one iota for rewarding innovation and creativity in filmmaking.

A Study of Modern Japanese Sculpture

This small collection, currently housed in a single exhibition room at the Henry Moore, poses several questions about the nature of sculpture. What is the difference, these works ask, between a sculpture made to be looked at and an object made for touching? What relationship is there between the material used and the material depicted – wooden stone, bronze skin?

These quandaries are best articulated by Heihachi Hashimoto's 1928 work 'About the Stone'. Like all of the pieces in this exhibition, 'About the Stone' sits in a glass case suspended above a mirror, so that we can see the detailed underside of the shape. As the title suggests, this is a sculpture of a stone. But it is a stone made out of wood – a lump of wood used to depict a lump of rock. Although presumably translated out of the Japanese, the English form of the sculpture's title gives us two ways in which the sculpture might be understood: as a story in sculpture on the subject of a stone, and – being seen from all angles – as a meditation on everything surrounding the stone. That is, the entire universe.

The Henry Moore's commentary on the exhibition tells us that this three-hundred-and-sixty degree view of the pieces meant that they "read as 'objects' rather than as 'sculptures'", asking to be handled and turned to be fully appreciated." The concept brings to mind the 'netsuke' – much smaller Japanese sculptures made of wood or ivory explicitly intended to be held and touched. With this exhibition there is certainly an eerie frustration in not being able to stroke the smooth contours of a hibernating toad, or place your own palm against that of Kotaro Takamura's oversized bronze 'Hand'.

For all its modesty, this small interlude in the Henry Moore's winter/spring season offers something which, though deceptively straightforward, reveals more and more depth the longer it is appreciated.

[Rachel Grocock]



[Image: Twentieth Century Fox]

Kingsman: The Secret Service

Matthew Vaughn has never directed a franchise. Of his films that have spawned sequels, *Kick-Ass* and *X-Men: First Class*, he has been only a writer or producer, seemingly having no desire to do the same thing again. If there's anything to gather from his career, it's that he likes taking risks; and we're not talking normal studio 'risks,' we're talking mortgaging his house to independently fund *Kick-Ass* risks. Like, are-you-crazy-you-have-children-to-feed risks. But that gamble paid off; *Kick-Ass* was a huge success, and making these films that are antidotes to the entrenched genres out there seems to be turning Vaughn into one of the most consistently excellent directors around.

Taron Egerton plays Eggsy, a young hoodie recruited by Colin Firth's Harry Hart to train and hopefully win a place in the elitist Kingsman Secret Service, following in his late father's footsteps. He is one of ten potential candidates for the job, and goes to the training ground where Michael Caine sits behind a desk a lot and Mark Strong is Scottish and has a clipboard. There are brief discussions about social privilege and characters being handed their lifestyle on a silver spoon, and Eggsy suffers prejudice at the hands of candidates who look down their nose at him – one boy genuinely shouts 'my father will hear about this!' – but it's never explored much further than that, perhaps to the film's shame.

However, a social message isn't high on the agenda here; the purpose is to have fun, and boy do they. The fight scenes are sublimely shot, the camera ducking and weaving in and out of the action, often slipping into slo-mo for a brief moment to capture the strange elegance of a punch being thrown before speeding up into the next move.

There's not much in terms of Eggsy's training; Vaughn forsakes any sort of cheesy training montage, and within a single scene ten candidates are whittled down to six, keeping the focus very much on Eggsy himself and the plot, which involves Samuel L. Jackson's Valentine, a lisping villain who very much adds to the sense that Kingsman is an anti-James Bond in the best possible way. He states early on that he can't stand the sight of blood, and he's not lying – some spectacular projectile vomiting occurs, which I somehow doubt would ever happen in a Bond film.

The film gives nods to its source material when appropriate, but the inclusion of meta comments like 'this isn't that kind of movie,' means the characters practically wink at the camera before throwing in some left-field set piece or comment that'll make you gasp and then cry with laughter. Case in point, be sure to watch out for some fantastic head exploding set to patriotic music at the end, and a comment by a Swedish Princess I promise you won't see coming.

[Beth Galey]



Library Fest 2015: Stamping out the Shhh...

I know what you're thinking. Library and festival – not two words you would usually put together. For us students libraries are stressful places, dark, dusty, silent, and for some reason always cold. They're where you go in your darkest hours, those leading up to an exam or a deadline, to write, cram, or simply panic. Festival on the other hand means fun, sunshine, daytime drinking, food and music. So a combination of the two? Dark, cold, stressful, day time drinking? Not exactly.

Library fest consists of a series of events intended to dispel these skewed perceptions of what libraries are all about. For many, trips to the library aren't tense, or boring, or in fact at all unpleasant. There are those for whom libraries constitute a mine of entertainment, information, interaction, and dare I say it, fun, and you could be one of them. Over the next nine days, there'll be opportunities to discover it all, relive your childhood, enjoy home-grown literary talent or even exhibit your own. We want to stamp out the shh, and show you what you're missing out on.

And there is so much. Much more than getting access to a book that's perhaps unavailable from the University libraries – although that certainly could come in handy. Not only is Leeds Central Library a beautiful Victorian building, it houses an incredible collection of city records, fiction, non-fiction, and film, with dedicated drama, art, and music libraries. If you haven't explored it yet, it's definitely a Leeds must-do. But why not with a magical twist?

On Tuesday 17th February, Leeds Central Library is turning itself into Hogwarts, providing enchanted tours around the grand old building, complete with Quidditch, bewitched creatures come to life, and magical moving pictures. Sadly, nearly all this year's letters have already flown, but look out for yours later on in the year. If you still fancy discovering a little magic at the Library, special tours of Central Library's most precious muggle artefacts are taking place on Wednesday 18th, Friday 20th, and Saturday 21st.

Ok, so it's Valentine's Day and you forgot the present. Fear not, library staff will be at the Belgrave Feast at Belgrave Music Hall, handing out personalised book recommendations – cue perfect gift, though I'm afraid the logistics of executing this subtly are down to you – amongst all the yumminess. A slap-up meal and a personal, thoughtful, oh-so-intelligent present, well done you. Perhaps even a good enough prezzie to make your better half sign up for more for free? Alternatively, it will allow you to spend the evening reading, much better than all that hyped-up commercial, lovey-dovey-ness.

Fancy something a little more cultural, artsy, and off-the-wall? Chapel Allerton Library are hosting a poetry open-mic night from 7pm on Wednesday 18th February. While these kinds of events do happen in the centre, this one would be a great chance to show off the work you're perhaps a little more coy about in a community setting, and who knows, maybe you'll find some crazy local talent who you can discuss it with at one of Leeds Libraries' writing groups. Holt Park Library, 2-3pm on Monday 16th perhaps? Or even a Creative Writing Workshop with published writer Paul Magrs at Central Library on Sunday 22nd at 12.30, tickets are available for £4. If you're not feeling flush enough for that, a 50p Library take-over pub quiz at The White Swan in town, with all the proceeds going to charity, may make you and your wallet feel all warm and fuzzy.

But Libraries aren't just for the literary amongst you. Leeds Central Library has specific drama, art and music libraries, and on Sunday 22nd February the music library swings open its doors and gets all jazzed up for you. Here lies the live music portion of the earlier festival/library comparison, with the chance to explore the thousands of CDs, sheet music, journals and books that the music library has to offer, and what's more, tell them what it is you'd like to hear from them, pop in with a question and rock the boat.

Really, these events are just the tip of the iceberg. Go to one, go to them all, just get yourself involved and help us stamp out the shhh.

For more information, go to <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/leisure/Pages/libraryfest.aspx>

[Chess Carnell]

The Weather Machine

'A Tiny Light In The Fog – A Hidden Message On The Wind' – The message on the front of the leaflet is as obscure as the play itself. Surrounded in secrecy and presented only with an 'observation card' for a ticket, and a Field Guide to aid understanding, the audience was sent into David Shearing and Company's immersive, multimedia performance installation.

The purpose of the show is for the audience to appreciate and understand how the weather works to connect us together and ultimately shapes our lives. It uses a combination of set, lighting, sound, and audience belief to work, and providing the audience goes in with a clear head, you should prepare to be blown away – literally.

It's fair to say that *The Weather Machine* is an experience and a half. The audience is actively part of the show and has to be willing to get involved. It's essential that you go to this exhibition with an open mind and the willingness to be introduced to a new way of thinking. Shearing and Company certainly expects the audience to be well educated and use their imagination when entering the set. Those who are expecting a relaxing experience will not appreciate this, nor will anyone with a low level of maturity. If you're not interested in learning or taking in culture, then don't bother.

The show does have its confusing points. The purpose of some features and whether they are actually necessary to include is unclear. But the show is nevertheless thought provoking and makes you consider the world and everyday things we just take for granted in a new way. I wouldn't say this show is for everyone, but if you do feel inspired to look at the weather for the incredible force of nature it is, while laying back in the grassy landscapes, imagining the world in whatever way your mind takes you, give it a go.

[Emily Willson]



TV

Banana and Cucumber

A refreshing look into the LGBTQ community

[Photo: Channel 4]

Russell T Davies has brought TV to life with his new comedy series, Channel 4's *Banana*, *Cucumber* on E4, and *Tofu*, a 4oD online documentary series focusing on sex. *Cucumber* is not the first drama written by T. Davies to follow the lives of gay men; his drama *Queer as Folk*, aired sixteen years ago, was a revolutionary portrayal of the LGBTQ community.

Davies' inspiration for the three-component series came from a scientific study by research in Switzerland into the four stages of erection, each category being represented by a food. The first and softest stage is tofu, the second, peeled banana, the third, banana, and finally, the hardest of the stages, cucumber. This research, as you might have realised, determined the names of the programme, with the innuendo acting as a hint to its content.

Cucumber, aired on Thursdays at 9pm on Channel 4, follows the life of Henry, played by Vincent Franklin, a middle-aged man in the midst of a domestic crisis with his partner Lance. The start of the series presents Henry as a typical middle-aged businessman, stuck in a routine of working, socialising and complaining about his humdrum day-to-day existence. Henry's life is turned upside down when a date with his partner goes drastically wrong, resulting in police intervention, and Henry running away from home to live with two other gay men half his age.

Banana, centred on a young group of friends, focuses on many aspects of LGBTQ life concerning a younger generation. Each episode focuses on a different character, the first of which introduces us to Dean (Fisayo Akinade), a sexually active and adventurous office messenger. The second, introducing us to Scotty (Letitia Wright), whose crush on an older woman turns into a dangerous obsession.

The two series seamlessly intermingle, with a selection of characters featuring in both *Banana* and *Cucumber*. This aspect of the series allows audiences get to see two representations of LGBTQ lifestyle in conversation, .

Interestingly, homophobia is not a central concern in either *Banana* or *Cucumber*. Dean raises the issue in the first episode of *Banana*, when he lies to his friends that his parents kicked him out due to his sexuality, yet the issue does not seem to go any further. Instead, Davies focuses on the struggles of modern life from the perspective of LGBTQ men and women in a way that is amusing, intriguing and refreshing. [Anna Jenkins]

TV

10,000 BC

Unrealistic Stone Age experience

So, here we are, one year after Channel 4's Bear Gryll's *The Island*, and Channel 5 has brought the British public the immensely original *10,000 BC*. In this female inclusive version of *The Island* we see a bunch of twenty Brits dumped in a Bulgarian forest and left to 'fend for themselves' for a total of two months. Well, kind of anyway.

Having shown up complete with heels, sunglasses and smart-phones, all twenty volunteers begin their new lives as stone age people by sacrificing modernity and changing into 'authentic' Stone Age clothing. All except 65-year-old Caroline, who fainted a few hours in and never got the chance to change into her holiday clothes and feast her eyes on the all-inclusive perks of the Stone Age wilderness.

Of course, there were many hardships for the group of volunteers, including lost flints, flies on their complementary meat and the inability to navigate from camp fire to tent in the dark. Despite this, the real suffering came when their fur bedding became infested with fly larvae. Tension built, dramatic music was played and action was taken. Soon the group leader was informed of the tragedy and, as with any Stone Age tribe, real blankets were provided. Even Klint, their expert survival guy, left them all alone with the 24 hour safety and medical team.

For Paul, the lorry driver who believes he 'was born 10,000 years too late', this new life should not only have been expected but enjoyed right? Sure, some of us wish we were alive for the 20's, maybe even the 60's or 70's but the Stone Age leaves the audience unconvinced. I'm not convinced. Though Paul did seem to enjoy playing alpha male whilst leading the skinning of the deer, I think his longing for central heating 30 hours in to the 62 day trip may be fuelling my disbelief.

After watching the first episode of this series I can almost certainly confirm there will be screaming, there will be bickering, there will be a few alpha male show downs, and there most definitely will be tears - lots of tears.

If you enjoyed Bear Gryll's *The Island*, then I guess it's great that Channel 5 have put together an almost-replica. This time around at least someone has acknowledged that women, too, might just be able to survive in the wilderness. At least this wilderness is complete with fresh water, provided tools, food and a stricter health and swafety team than a school field trip. [Megan Swailes]

Time to Shine

TV and transgender representation

In the years after the first transgender actress appeared on television in a transgender role in 2005, the presence of transsexuals on TV remained minimal. Confined to surgical documentaries or painfully mocked, constantly being either the butt of a joke or in hospital beds, perverting a public understanding of the transgender community. Thankfully, following the success of prison-based comedy-drama *Orange is the New Black* and the nomination of transwoman Harmony Santana for an Independent Spirit Award, attitudes, understanding and representation have finally started to change.

For a community that has been grossly underrepresented on screen, the last four or five years have been a welcome change for trans* people. Laverne Cox has been the driving force behind much of this, with her role as Sophia in *Orange is the New Black* paving the way for more transgender roles to be played by people with first hand experience. The wide-reaching impact that Laverne and other openly transgender figures, such as Carmen Carrera, Candis Cayne and Isis King, have had has been gradually forcing US television to move away from outdated, offensive stereotypes.

Slowly, things are starting to change in Britain too. 2015 will see the BBC launch the UK's first transgender sitcom, *Boy Meets Girl*, a romcom about a transgender woman, played by the transgender actress Rebecca Root. This is a huge breakthrough for the British transgender community, adding to the success of Bethany Black, who was the first transgender actress to have a recurring transgender role in Channel 4's comedies *Banana* and *Cucumber*. These recent advances mean that bit by bit the

transgender community are gaining a positive voice and a visual presence in UK television.

Unfortunately, this progress has not come without opposition. Transgender actors and actresses still face horrendous prejudice and abuse from audiences and social media around the world, often being subjected to probing questions about surgery and hormones rather than being judged on the basis of their talents. Pronoun misuse and confusion over the difference between drag acts and transgender people means that there is rife misrepresentation of trans* communities in the media, with the stigma that this generates running the risk of transgender people only ever playing transgender roles. Care is needed to ensure that misunderstanding and ignorance does not create a glass ceiling for these actors and actresses in the future.

Transgender people aspiring to work in television are not without hope. Audiences are now more than ever embracing transgender roles and supporting the programmes that give transgender people a voice. What's more, we as the audience have much more power than we believe – ultimately it is us as consumers who decide which endeavours succeed and which do not. It is only when writers and directors see that their audiences support transgender communities that the role of transgender people in television will change and start sending out the message that transgender people are simply people; no different from everybody else. *[Natalie Cherry]*

Breaking the stereotype

Is the gaming world ready to stand up for LGBTQ rights?

It is a truth universally acknowledged that to be anything other than a straight, white male in the world of video games will at some point wind up working against you, and as Gamergate continues to rumble on unabated, it would appear that there's not much chance of things improving any time soon. But while Gamergate has noticeably focused on the misogyny rampant in the gaming community, homophobia and transphobia has a powerful grip too.

The issue with homophobia and transphobia in the video games industry is that it pervades every level of the community. The virulent abuse often hurled across online servers is well documented, and casual homophobia is often used throughout video games to attempt to make cheap laughs, a trend it shares with most television sitcoms. However, the issue goes right to the top of the gaming community with figures such as Mike Krahulik – artist of the popular webcomic *Penny Arcade*, and a hugely influential figure in the gaming industry – repeatedly making transphobic remarks. Despite this all-pervading cultural bigotry, there are a number of video game studios who have realised not only their social responsibility, but the huge potential video games could have in changing social attitudes.

No studio has done more for the normalisation of the representation of LGBTQ characters than Bioware, creators of hugely successful franchises such as *Knights of the Old Republic* and *Mass Effect*. Friendships with other characters, and potential romances has always been a key element of Bioware games and the option to engage in a homosexual relationship has always been present. Last year, Maneev Heir, a developer for Bioware, delivered a talk he called 'Misogyny, Racism and Homophobia: Where do Video Games Stand?'. He attacked the widespread tendency of games such

as *Grand Theft Auto V* to perpetuate harmful stereotypes of women, non-whites, homosexuals, and transsexuals. He rightfully recognised the social responsibility of the video game industry; it's an industry that reaches millions of primarily young people every year, influencing their minds and decisions in the real world. To break down these stereotypes at every opportunity is a duty and an obligation. To not only portray, but have players actively engage with social issues through the unprecedented interactivity of the video game medium means video games are a powerful educational tool.

Bioware are obviously committed to creating video games inclusive of people of all backgrounds and identities, but this has never been done with a tick-box attitude; these are complex people not stock characters. The latest *Dragon Age* game is full of characters of various sexualities, but really this has little impact on the main story of the game. The challenges that may face your companions due to their sexuality can be explored through romantic relationships, or platonic friendships, and these stories are often eye-opening and heart-breaking, but ultimately it is left to the player's discretion to pursue these stories. A perfect example of this is the transgender character Krem, who identifies as a man. That he was born a woman is not discovered until the player has sunk forty hours into the game, and even then it can be missed. The response of Krem's companions to his decision to live his life as a man is typical of Bioware's approach to their LGBTQ characters: Krem's gender identity is nobody's business but his own, if he wishes to be a man then he is, besides, what's it got to do with fighting dragons? *[Benjamin Cook]*

Food

Valentine's Day Recipe

The fastest way to the heart

Valentine's Day is coming, and that means you should probably do lovey-dovey things like feed your loved one pudding. Alternatively, you can just feed yourself pudding. In fact, the latter might be better, as it means you don't have to share. In any case, this raspberry and white chocolate ripple cake will fit the bill – moist and fruity and filled with silky white chocolate buttercream.

Ingredients

For the cake:
170g self-raising flour
170g caster sugar
170g margarine
3 eggs
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon vanilla essence
200g fresh or frozen raspberries

For the buttercream:
200g white chocolate
250g icing sugar
250g butter

To decorate:
A handful of raspberries
2 tablespoons raspberry jam

Method

1 Preheat the oven to 160°, or gas mark 3, and grease a cake tin of your choice. Put your raspberries in a heavy bottomed pan over a low heat, and cook down until most of the juice has evaporated and you have a fairly thick raspberry paste. Put aside to cool.

2 Sift the flour, sugar and baking powder into a large bowl. Add the margarine, crack in the eggs and pour in the vanilla essence. With a handheld mixer, beat until light and fluffy.

3 Take a third of the mix and put in a separate bowl. Add the raspberry paste to this mix and beat again.

4 Pour the plain mix into the tin and level out. Drop spoonfuls of the raspberry mix on top of the plain mix, and with a spoon ripple it through, marbling the two mixes together.

5 Bake for half an hour, or until an inserted skewer comes out clean. Leave to cool completely.

6 Melt the chocolate, either in a bain marie or slowly in a microwave on a low temperature. Put to one side to cool.

7 Cube the butter into a bowl, and then slowly sift in the icing sugar. Cream the two together until smooth. Stir in the white chocolate and leave in the fridge for an hour to firm up a bit.

8 Split the sponge in half, and then spread your cooled buttercream over the bottom half. Leave some aside to decorate with. Spread some jam over the top if you like for an extra hit of raspberry.

9 Put the top layer back on, and pipe on the remaining the white chocolate and some raspberry jam. Scatter some raspberries over and enjoy!



Travel

A day in Harrogate

Ramble, relax and drink tea

Located just 30 minutes from Leeds, Harrogate is a perfect destination for a day trip. The beautiful spa town has preserved all of its old-fashioned charm and the true essence of Yorkshire.

The cobbled roads, the intricate arcades and the abundance of impressive architecture makes Harrogate one of the top UK towns to visit. Whilst it is a relatively small town, it is packed with history and culture, and offers a variety of shops and restaurants for any kind of retail or gastronomical therapy.

One of the top things on your Harrogate to-do-list should be visiting the famous Betty's Tearooms. Being one of the most popular tourist attractions, Betty's is always quite busy, so be prepared to wait a little. With an incredible selection of teas and coffees, and a vast array of fresh cakes and deserts, it is a treat that everyone should allow themselves. They also offer the traditional high tea, with a selection of miniature pastries, scones and sandwiches for £18. Whilst it may be a little on the pricier side, what you get is more than just tea – it's an all around wonderful experience. Not for your average day trip, perhaps, but sometimes we deem ourselves worthy of self-indulgence.

Harrogate is also known for its Turkish baths and Health spa. With a session costing as little as £17 on weekdays, it could be a lovely treat for yourself or your loved ones. They also offer a variety of treatments as well as package deals, for those who want to fully unwind and get well and truly pampered.

For those wanting a cultural insight into the history of the town, there is a number of museums on offer. The Royal Pump Room museum will send you back in time, allowing you to discover the history behind the spa town that is Harrogate. There are also a number of ancient castles in the area, some of which date as far back as the 11th century – definitely worth a visit for those interested in British history.

The town has so much to offer, and with return train tickets being as cheap as £8, your student budget won't be eaten into so drastically. So, go check it out for yourself, bring some friends and make a day of it. It may be cold outside, but that all adds to a day out in the heart of Yorkshire. *[Sofia Dedyukhina]*



Food

Get Baked Presents: The Joint

Satisfy post-lecture munchies

A glorious, magnificent eatery has just opened, serving up filthy, fatty goodness from twelve till late. One of Leeds' most popular take-aways, Get Baked, has expanded. In what was formerly Halo's second room, The Quilted Llama, beautiful burgers, crafty cocktails and drool-inducing piles of American pancakes now call out to the students of our fair city, begging to be devoured.

The Joint is still in its infancy, yet the crowds are already forming. When we arrived, hordes of hungry customers buzzed around the bar, waiting to be taken to their tables. Music boomed from the sound system, a neon all-seeing eye glared from behind the bar and the walls were virtually crawling with a bizarre collage of faces from film and television alike. Weird, perhaps, but the place feels like the coolest students' union in town.

Their menu is a masterpiece, and it was near impossible to choose what to have. Deciding on a drink was hard enough, with a multitude of masterful cocktails and some tempting milkshakes to choose from. Eventually, we settled on 'Ghost Stories' milkshakes, a creamy concoction packed with Oreos and silky ice-cream, topped with oodles of freshly whipped cream. The bar is so well stocked, that if you dream it, they should have it. Cocktails start at £7, so may pull on the student purse strings, but after a long day in the library, an alcoholic kick is certainly in order.

Priding themselves on local, quality ingredients, their burgers looked to be things of beauty. The owner told us that everything is made on site, including the patties, which are crafted by the gods that work in the kitchen. With plates of sumptuous goodness drifting past our heads, we had to decide. Our stomachs demanded they be satisfied, and so we ordered two of their burgers – it was only right. The Heisenburger, trademarked by The

Joint, was divine and could not possibly be topped by any other beef and bun combination. Succulent beef topped with crisp, mouth-watering maple bacon and smothered with blue cheese, providing a salty, grown-up punch. On the side, we enjoyed a basket brimming with skin-on fries, triple fried and smothered with a spicy homemade seasoning. If burgers aren't your thing there are some cracking chicken options, all with a spicy Korean kick.

This was not the end. Though we had begun to drift into a food induced coma, desert was still on the cards. 'You'll have to speak up, I'm wearing a towel' was what we ordered; no, we haven't gone crazy, their puds just happen to share their names with soem choice Simpsons' quotes. Chocolate and pistachio ice-cream, handmade brownie pieces and lashings of cream are masterfully united to make this glorious sundae, which is topped off with pieces of Fry's peppermint cream. Beware: these cannot be defeated alone. Get Baked's roots can be seen in their dessert menu, with a selection of American-inspired cheesecakes and sundaes to choose from.

The Joint is not just a restaurant. After twelve, food stops leaving the kitchen, and the tables begin to be cleared away. Don't be fooled, though, they are not closing; the bar remains open, serving alcoholic goodness till late. We were promised there is a lot more to come, though it seems everyone's lips are remaining very much sealed. There are whispers that the rest of Halo may be taken over, and that the restaurant side of things will only be a small part of this establishment. Live music, a small cinema and bowling are all rumoured to be on the cards, so you'd better watch this space. In the meantime, fill your boots with some Americana goodness. *[Katie Dawtry]*

LGBT Society - Here to Help

LGBT Society are one of the most socially-active on campus. Membership costs £8 for students and entitles members to a range of discounts, including cheaper or free entry to some clubs on Lower Briggate, as well as to LGBT Society events. The society runs both social and welfare events to cater for students in the hope of providing a place for them to 'let their hair down'.

LGBT Society host meetings every weekday during term-time, from 12-2pm in either Room 2 or 4, upstairs in the Union. These can be identified by the rainbow flag above the door.

LGBT Society have remained consistent in memberships. There are currently around 120 members who are active, although their Facebook group boasts over 1000.

The society has a number of welfare officers accessible via email to support students and give advice. The purpose of this is to help LGBT members, whether they're open and confident about their sexuality or not, in a confidential and safe space. There are specific officers to contact for men's welfare, women's welfare, bi-sexual welfare and trans welfare. Support is available

to "provide a safe space in which LGBT students can feel comfortable to be themselves and express themselves without fear of any consequences".

LGBT Society promises to make sure "no member feels isolated or unable to attend our events because of their identity" and "to create an inclusive environment where all views and opinions are respected".

Throughout LGBT history month, there are a series of social and non-social events surrounding welfare and sexuality. This includes a trip to Manchester on the 17th February and one of the three 'Curious?' nights of the year.

Gemma Turner, LUU Equality and Diversity Officer, said "We've got a really exciting line up for LGBT History Month and it's been great to work with both the LGBT society and the LGBT* liberation coordinators planning it. As always, the Parkinson building will be lit purple in awareness for the month so watch out for that when you walk by."

Dance Expose's out to perform

Turn the Page: A Dancee Chronicle

Dance Expose's new show 'Turn The Page: A Dance Chronicle' journeys through the headlines of the past, exploring key events and eras from the past century. There will be an array of different dance styles, from contemporary and street to ballet. The society said their show is "an evening of totally unique entertainment so is not one to be missed!"

Dance Expose is the only dance society to put on an annual show outside of the LUU Dance Show. 'Turn the Page' is Dance Expose's four-night 'sell out show' that has been produced and promoted by the society.

Dance Expose's show 'Exposed' in November gave a sneak peak of what can be expected from the show next week. Performed in Mine, around 200 people were able to experience the intimate event that featured snippets of the upcoming showcase.

The show runs from the 18th-21st February in Riley Smith Hall. Tickets are £6 for students in advance. There is an extra charge of £1 for tickets bought on the door. There are also a limited number of VIP tickets available. Doors open at 7pm for a 7:30pm start.

Tickets are on sale now and available from the LUU Helpdesk. Don't forget to take your student card.



Will Stanley

Calendar Events

13th February	14th Febraury	15th February	16th February	17th February	18th February	19th February
5-6pm	9am-9pm	9am-7pm	6-8pm	5-7pm	6-8pm	5-7pm
Japanese for Beginners, Worsley Building SR 8.20L. Learn the skills to enjoy anime without relying on subtitles.	Caving in the Yorkshire Dales. Meet outside The Edge. £30. No experience required. Enjoy the arenaline rush as you travel underground.	RAG Skydive, £35 to register. Got what it takes to throw yourself out of a plane? Then do it for charity.	Chess GIAG, Parkinson Building SR bB.22. Try your hand and see if you've got the intellectual skills to master the game.	Stich n Bitch GIAG, Hidden Cafe, £4. Join Stich n Bitch and learn how to crochet for the warmer weather.	Vertical fitness GIAG, Mine, £3. Join the exercise revolution and try this unique sport that mixes flexibility and strength.	Bunting making, LUU Room 4, £3. Decorate your uni rooms to brighten up the second semester.
6:30-8:30pm	8-11pm	11am-4pm	6-7pm	7:30-10:30pm	7-9pm	4-6pm
Chinese New Year with Hong Kong Soc, LUU Common Room, £2. Join in with the traditional celebrations of Chinese culture.	Vegas with Arabic Society. LUU Room 6, £4. A night to remember with Vegas games, etertainment and refreshments.	World Unite Cup, Weetwood, £15 per team. Create a five-a-side team and battle for footballing glory.	Indian Students GIAG, LUU Common Room. Enjoy food, games and learn what the society is all about.	Red wine central, LUU Room 4, £9 non-members. Learn the difference between red wines, and taste a whole spectrum of shades.	SwingSoc Giag. Luu Room 6. Learn the dances of the 1920's and see how styles have changed.	GIAG; Climate Change Negotiations. Earth/ Environment Seminar Rooms 1,2 and 3. Navigate the mine field that is climate change strategy.

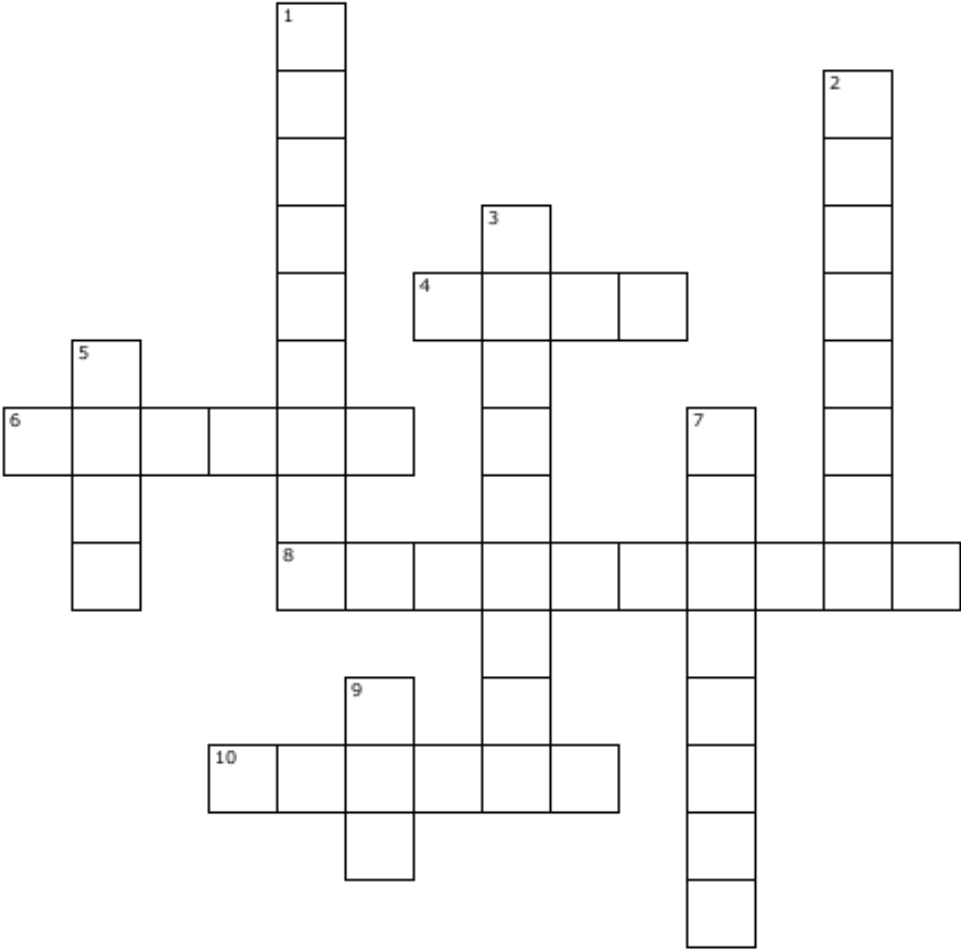
Crossword

Across

- 4. Colombian guerilla group that recently invited Miss Universe to peace talks with the government.
- 6. This painter's work recently became the most expensive painting sold at auction.
- 8. This West African nation finally won the African Cup of Nations on Sunday.
- 10. The second white rapper in a row to win the Grammy for Best Rap Album.

Down

- 1. Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon star recently wooed by her fiance's drone proposal.
- 2. NBC news anchor recently resigned in disgrace, Brian...
- 3. Writer whose second novel, Go Set a Wathcman, is due to be released later this year.
- 5. Chingford born football player, brother of Abel.
- 7. British playwright, his works include The Hard Problem and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Tom...
- 9. Kardashian sister whose recent haircut shocked the world.



Columns



Ellie Parkes

There was no question of skiving this lecture. You had already missed Wednesday morning, as you hadn't managed to drag your carcass out of its horrible maggot hole and into Uni. You have no one to blame but your self. It was due entirely to the spontaneous and reckless decision you and your housemate had made the night before – to make your way through a bottle of Chardonnay each, and then go to the pub.

Digital dream or dystopia?

This meant it was crucial that you synced-in today, otherwise you would have had to attend another desperately awkward "disciplinary cyber conference". You look at the big powerpoint. Running vertically down the right-hand side of the screen is a long line of dots, some grey and some green.

The moment you slump into your chair a tiny bell noise chimes in your earpiece and one of the grey dots turns green. Breathing a sigh of relief, you check the time in the corner of your eye. Got in with one minute to spare. Excellent – maximum efficiency and longest possible sleep-time achieved. Flashing up in front of your eyes on your Google Glasses, suddenly, is the translucent notification: "Romantic Literature, Lecture 6 – Attendance Acknowledged". You relax. You quickly check Facebook. No one loves you.

You've probably heard of the Internet of Things (IoT). It's one of those web buzz-terms that I'm sure a real techy will tell me is now so 2014. The idea is, the way that technology is developing, soon everything will be synced to the internet. So, not just your phone or personal device, but your home, your environment – your body even – all will be linked up to smart technology.

We will all have our favourite health and lifestyle apps linked to our Edge gym memberships, our smart wristbands, our fridges. Every step we take will be recorded. Any environment we enter will immediately take note of our presence. When you walk into the Union your earpiece connected to your smart glasses will pester you to vote in the student elections or try and sell you a discount meal-deal at lunchtime. Then we'll be especially thankful for Chrome's Ad Blocker.

I started to think about what University would be like – an IoT Leeds (hence

my weird intro). It's not too far down the line – I'd say maybe ten years? But as if I really know about these things.

But, for real – since they started recording lectures, I feel like it's a slippery slope. Students will start to kick up a fuss that they are paying such inordinate sums in tuition fees for a course that can be completed, almost entirely, from the comfort of their own beds. People will argue that they might as well exist only virtually, via a series of online courses. In order to justify their existence in the real world, Universities will be forced to develop their campus tech, and to keep track of physical attendance.

Then again, maybe they won't. Maybe after the next election, the cost of fees will come back down again and instead, to avoid costs, Universities will start to exist entirely online. Maybe 'virtual learning' will become literal. Maybe there will be no IoT Leeds, but instead future students will be pasty, mole-like creatures with SAD, dwelling in dark basements, slipping on their virtual reality goggles for their 11am lecture.

I suppose, at least they won't have to worry about being late.



Jen Pritchard

Let me be clear. This isn't some sort of tirade against basic bitches who want to enjoy Valentine's Day in all its pink and red heart-shaped glory. And I use basic bitch here as a mightily reclaimed compliment. I adore basic-ness. In my house we have a sort of Cold War situation going on regarding scented candles: we take it in turns to raid TK Maxx, investing in bigger, better, more expensive scented candles until, one day, we'll inevitably consume ourselves in pine-scented mutually assured destruction. Similarly, my addiction to scatter cushions has driven a wedge between my boyfriend

I want a steak and a blow job

and I. Literally. At night, we don't get to touch each other any more because of the blockade of miniature pillows that has overtaken the bed. But they're so damn pretty.

This goes doubly for Valentine's Day. I love flowers. I love boxes of chocolates. I love teddy bears. Especially those five-foot ones which are bought exclusively for the 14th February. Because nothing says I love you like an adorable, extravagantly large inconvenience which made you look like a tit as you carried it home on the train.

What I have an issue with is the way all this glorious tat is characterised as What Women Want. The whole of Valentine's Day in the popular consciousness is based on the bullshit reasoning that it's a day where men are forced to be nice their women against their will.

Not only does this idea clumsily erase the whole concept of a relationship which isn't a man and a woman, it's also not what most heterosexual couples are about either. If a relationship is just a series of one-sided, begrudging acts of courtesy, then there are bigger issues than the fact that you feel £20 is a bit steep for a bunch of wilting roses.

Why are these things gendered anyway? There are plenty of women who don't like flowers, chocolate or teddy bears. And SURPRISE! there are also loads of men who do like these things. It's like gender-based predilections are SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED or something! Whodathunkit.

The thing that most pisses me off is the Reddit bro concept of Steak and Blow

Job Day on the 14th March. For starters the whole thing has a nasty ring to it: as I did something for you last month, you now owe me sexual favours. It also riffs off the whole "all men need is a ad animal and someone to suck their dicks" reduction which REALLY isn't helping anybody. Also, bro, if you try and take eating steak and getting head away from me and act like it's a men-only domain, I'll fucking destroy you.

So how's about people just be pleasant to other people this Saturday. Even more so if you're in a relationship with one or more of those people. Eat what you want, buy whatever gifts you want, have enthusiastic consensual sexual relations with your partner(s) or others, within your agreed parameters. And do that regularly, not just on a nationally recognised date once a year. And while all that might not be particularly snappy and marketable, it's a lot more exciting than a resentful, expensive set meal for two.



“Most creative thing I’ve done? I had a poem published once, it was part of a national press competition and I got runner-up.” - Tabatha

Humans of Leeds

www.facebook.com/humansofleeds