

In The Middle

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Salad

Days



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

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In The Middle with Hudson Taylor

After dropping out of education to pursue a career in music, brothers Harry and Alfie Hudson-Taylor have succeeded in accumulating an impressive following and are about to release their debut album in the UK. Taking inspiration from busking and performing songs on Youtube, the suitably titled *Singing For Strangers* is a collection from the last three years of older EP tracks and a selection of the band's more recent compositions, most famously 'Battles' which achieved a lot of radio play and attention online.

The journey that the band has been on can be traced back to the moment they first performed to the public. Whilst on a family holiday, they were asked by a small group of people to play them a song. "That's how we started, that was the first time we played together when we actually wanted to", says Alfie. "It's a lovely feeling to be able to go into a room of people who you've never met before and play some songs."

After playing to a larger crowd of people each night, Hudson Taylor continued to develop, taking inspiration from family and relationships as well as the experiences of living in both Dublin and London. They insist that, despite the progression of the last few years, musically their songs are "the same thing at the core". The involvement of record labels has had an impact but they always stayed true to themselves.

"We never needed to be shined or popped up to be something that we're not. We are who we are and essentially at the end of the day if you see us playing live, that's what we wanted it to be all along."

The music has also been influenced by the music from a variety of eras, describing the eighties as providing "some really interesting changes", most importantly by Duran Duran and Genesis after being introduced to their music by a friend of theirs. Harry says "prior to that we'd never experienced really delving into the eighties stuff because we were very much focused on our singer-songwriter guys

from the sixties and seventies". They mention gaining inspiration from their musical peers and a variety of genres, stating "It's never like stealing their ideas, it's more like getting inspired by it".

The fact that Harry and Alfie have been working towards the album for so many years means that it feels autobiographical to them. "We can listen to a song or play a song live and go back to that particular point. The re-recording of tracks that feature on previous EPs means that the earlier selection of the discography of the band still remains a part of their live show and the album, so this sense of nostalgia surrounding past songs continues to exist."

"We never needed to be shined or popped up to be something that we're not"

The band's direction has been heavily decided by their live shows, by letting the success of these define various aspects of the album such as which songs make the final cut and the order of the tracklisting. Describing this process, they say "Luckily it hasn't been difficult, it's kind of been no-brainers for us".

The debut album has already been released in Ireland, and they describe the response as "amazing". In addition to being able to spend time with family, the pair have sold out a show at the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, where they first began busking and have always looked up to. Alfie talks about this with obvious joy: "We got told on the day our album came out there and it was just a dream".

This tour brings them back to playing venues where it all began for them. Despite most of the venues being bigger than on previous tours, they enjoy the intimacy of smaller venues. "It looks a bit more like everyone's closer. We like to play on that, tonight maybe we'll plug out and do something acoustic without mics as it's a nice room." However, the difference in their shows between now and a year ago is noticeable, with the additions of more crew, production, and even a tour bus. "It sort of feels like moving up, going up in the world."

[Nina Fine]

Gig Guide

Friday 20th February
Wire at Unity Works (Wakefield), £17
Legendary (post) punks continue to defy any and all expectations.

Saturday 21st February
Marlo Eggplant, Chrissie Caulfield, Mcwatt, Inverted Nepal and Melting at The Fenton, £4
4pm start to fit in avant-garde delights from harsh noise to minimal chamber music.

Sunday 22nd February
Earth at Brudenell Social Club, £13
Drone metal played slowly enough so you can count the chords on your fingers.

Wednesday 25th February
UML Presents: Strange Parade at Wharf Chambers, £2
Night of DJs and bands from members of the society; surf-punk to Björk.

Deerhoof at Brudenell Social Club, £12
Internationally renowned nicest band in the world bring their surreal brand of pop and surrealer brand of banter.

Thursday 26th February
The War on Drugs at O2 Academy, £20
Kurt Vile alumni still riding high after releasing one of the best loved albums of 2015.

In The Middle with Flo Morrissey



Paris, poetry and yoga; Flo Morrissey seems far more mature than your average 20-year old, sixth-form dropout. When she started putting up self-made videos of her music online at the tender age of fourteen, little did she realise that this would be the start of her music career.

“You can get pigeon holed into a genre or group of people and I think for me I have a more timeless vision of music”

Flo explains how she was scouted by her managers from a repost on a Japanese blog. “The internet is really powerful. I’ve been lucky, it’s definitely helped me out”. It’s clear that she cuts through the obscene amount of teen selfie music videos desperately posted online. She offers something natural, with a quality far outweighing social media’s restrictions and self important fads.

Always knowing that she wanted to be a performer, Morrissey decided to skip out on further education. “I dropped out as I wanted to be doing it in the real world”. When asked if she feels that she’s missed out, she seemed not to be phased at all. Having been exposed to the business side by choosing to carve out the career for herself, she’s taken the independent route in her stride. Fresh into her twenties, it’s clear that she’s been steadily refining her artistic process for a few years already. “I find that it’s not like a job, but you have to see it in that way sometimes rather than the novelty of when you first started.”

Learning guitar and piano in order to accompany herself, Flo reminisced about a time where the novelty of instruments would

make everything sound good. Instead, she now looks to other sources of inspiration in the ordinary things. Not relationships, breakups or such clichés you might expect, but family, poetry and art are the stimuli for her creativity. “I start with a line or title that I like and then go from there. Sometimes it will come together really quickly, but other times it’s a harder thing to actually work at.”

When talking about her musical influences, she has clear assurance in her own unique sound, illustrating that “guitar playing myself is more inspiring than listening to someone else and copying them”. But by being immersed from an early age in the likes of Billie Holiday and Bob Dylan who have paved a way to the foundations of her music, you can clearly hear the effects these greats have had in her effortlessly timeless sound. “You can get pigeon holed into a genre or group of people and I think for me I have a more timeless vision of music”. She rotates listening to older artists with newer influences too; currently James Blake, Tobias Jesso Jr and French/Cuban duo Ibeyi, all delivering a common thread in a vocal-centred, intimate sound, despite spanning across multiple genres.

Flo admits that she hasn’t done many live shows before now, where she is currently embarking on her first tour supporting folk trio The Staves around the UK. Heading into the second night of the tour, she is already learning a lot from the band. “Seeing The Staves play is inspiring, how they’ve mastered their craft. I was hearing them do all their vocal exercises and I realised I don’t do that. I’m more into yoga and meditation.”

Feeling privileged to be alongside such supportive musicians, Morrissey is embracing the touring roller-coaster; “they’ve got a tour van, but I don’t fit in it. So I’ve been getting the train, but that’s been quite good because I get to see a bit of England.” Despite being born and raised in London, Flo describes herself as feeling “more European” having played more shows abroad than in this

country. She spent two and a half months recording in LA and graced the stages of SXSW last year; “I would play but then I couldn’t get into anything as you had to be over 21.” But her fondest memory is in Paris where she has already played a couple of intimate festivals and spontaneous performances. “I’ve always had an adoration for Paris. I learned French from a young age. I’m still not fluent!”

In terms of what lies ahead for Flo Morrissey, it is refreshing to see such a carefree attitude. Whilst currently just a solo performer, she alludes to finding musicians to accompany her.

“I’m one of nine children. I might one day bring them as backing singers. My brother could do an introduction in Arabic, and my little brother plays trumpet so he could do an outro!” For such a young artist, it is unbelievably refreshing to see a playful yet mature approach so seamlessly combined. Her timeless sound resonates with an enchanting tone, and mellow songs delivered in such a humble way that you cannot help but be fixated on her voice.

“I’m one of nine children [...] my brother could do an introduction in Arabic”

Her forthcoming album is due out in Spring this year, and after The Staves tour, festival season quickly approaches for Flo (kicking off with Live at Leeds in the beginning of May). Flo Morrissey is an artist we should be proud of, and the music she delivers is testament to such inspirational attitude. *[Hannah Taylor]*

Chromatics by Diagrams



Still flirting with the boundaries of the innocuous folktronica genre, Sam Genders returns with *Chromatics*. Revisiting debut release *Black Light* again shows how much the last couple of years have improved Genders as a songwriter: the tracks here are brooding, thoughtful and more than just its surface-level sounds.

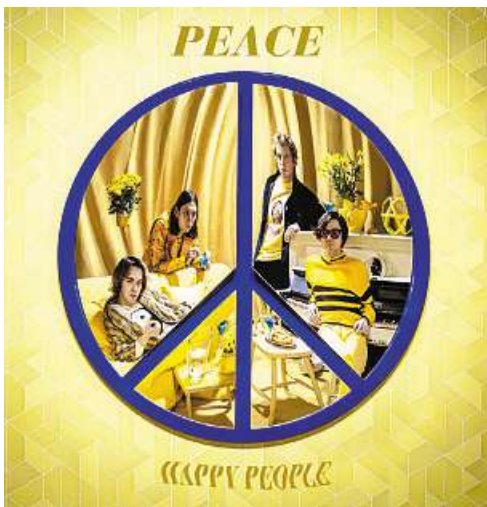
Chromatics' songs are lyrically much richer, delving into murky, personal realms and questioning a sense of human purpose on its title and standout track. A self-enquiry takes place here, accompanied by quiet soft piano arpeggios which could definitely be louder and more prominent within the instrumentation – they're absolutely gorgeous, with Genders pining away over it all asking if "this is all we've got". It's

powerful stuff and when it's combined with a strong melody, it makes for one of the most beautifully constructed tracks of the year so far.

As the album progresses there is a noticeable lean to personal folk: the simple 'Just A Hair's Breadth' is arguably more striking than the percussion and synth-laden lead single and opener 'Phantom Power'. Not many artists can successfully use the line "little ripples like CGI waves deconstructing reality day-by-day" but it's effortless here, and it's an honest observation that makes *Diagrams* a warm and welcoming musical project.

There are a couple of weaker tracks that lack any real staying power, though: the heavier instrumentation of 'The Light And The Noise' doesn't fit brilliantly with Genders' vocal style and 'Serpent' disrupts the upbeat, catchy groove from 'Dirty Broken Bliss' before it. In terms of this album they seem like a step backwards, jarring with the beautiful sound that has been crafted by the rest of *Chromatics*. [Carl White]

Happy People by Peace



The wonderful and wacky Peace are back with their second album *Happy People*. Since debut *In Love* they have been touring endlessly supporting names such as The Libertines and Bombay Bicycle Club. Over this time they have refined and developed their sound, evident in the anthem-filled new album *Happy People*.

Opener 'O You' sets the scene of annoyingly catchy guitar progressions and thrilling song endings. But this is different to debut album *In Love*. Violins feature heavily throughout and the mashed up endings are defined and purposeful. The album is chock full of bursting anthems like 'Gen Strange' and 'Lost On Me' which are sure to bring down the house when played live. Tracks such as 'I'm A Girl' and 'Money' have clear

and poignant messages behind them – 'I'm A Girl' being written about the stereotypes of masculinity. 'Money' is a moody track, hurling hate at the business world where "bitcoins pay for beatings and diamonds pay for girls". Attitude and character are entwined throughout the album.

'Someday' is a pleasant change of tempo with a simple tune which shows an honest and heartfelt side to Harry's writing; a really moving and beautiful song which is a welcome break in between all the chaos. Finale 'World Pleasure' is an absolute gem, a six minute frenzy of incredible bass lines provided by Sam Koisser and fantastic droning guitars. Again this song has been worked to perfection, and honestly it pretty much is, but the album does seem to stagnate nearer the end, 'Under The Moon' feels wedged in like a typical album filler.

Ultimately, though, this is one hell of an album, showing a refined and mature sound whilst still boasting a charm and attitude that Peace are synonymous with. [Luke Humphrey]

Another Eternity by Purity Ring



Another Eternity is the dazzling album from Canadian duo Purity Ring. The record simultaneously transports you to two realms, clearly illustrated in the album sleeve. It strikes you limp as you gaze into the intricacy of space, yet at the same time submerges you into the deepest of waters leaving you to peacefully suspend there in its equilibrium.

The second album from the pair opens with what sounds like the intro to a magical movie, leaving your mouth gaping wide like a child entering Disneyland for the very first time. It is the vocals of 'Heartsigh' amidst both twinkling and dark synths that is reminiscent of Ellie Goulding, especially of her more dreamy electro tracks seen on album *Halcyon*.

A mid point on the album, 'Stranger Than Earth' sees darker synths closing to the sky of Purity Ring's childlike soundscapes, giving the essence of the calm before the storm. Megan sings "I wasn't thinking bout you" in such an uncannily similar way to Frank Ocean's 'Thinking About You' that you almost feel like filling in the "yeah, yeah, yeahs" that follow.

The other half of the album, opening with 'Begin Again', leaves you in a tranquil sea of synths, where you find dark bass synths and tapestries of textures. Crevasses of harmonic colour and bursts of lighter textures are found in 'Stillness In Woe', raising us to the surface of reality to conclude the album.

Another Eternity does what it says on the tin, flinging you far into the mysterious oceans of music Purity Ring have discovered. Having worked on this release in the same room, as opposed to their debut album which was done across Skype, and self-recorded all the tracks, it is clear that this critically acclaimed pair have produced something worthy of a listen. [Hannah Taylor]



Django Django The Wardrobe 14/02/2015

After an agonising year and a half wait, Django Django are back. At this, their first gig since the end of 2013, the boys came out as if they had never been away. All sporting vintage football jerseys they swung straight back into things with hit 'Hail Bop' setting off dancing, boogieing and yes, bopping.

New single 'First Light' was a Valentine's delight as Django Django reached the midpoint of the night, showing no signs of letting up. This was quickly followed by another new track, specifically not named by front man Vincent Neff, which was great, no matter what it's called. Crowd pleasers 'Waveforms' and 'Default' quickly followed, causing feet thumps and hand claps. For all their complex and unorthodox sounds, these four can definitely set a stage alight.

Eventually ending with fantastic single 'WOR', they were met with inevitable cries for more. This prompted their return and a slightly odd but wonderful sing-a-long anthem moment with "silver rays, ricochet, silver rays, you can stay" bursting out over and over as the crowd repeated the lyrics back.

It seems incredibly hard not to at least appreciate Django Django: whether it's their matching outfits, weird and funky sounds, crazy album covers or Neff's thick Scottish accent, there is something indisputably likeable about the band. All in all it was a fantastic gig, definitely better than a Nando's Valentine's blind date or ice cream alone with (500) Days of Summer, and one that kicks off what is set to be a great year for Django Django.

[Luke Humphrey]

Preview: LUUMS Tribute to Richard Mayne 22/02/15

Seven months after the horror of the MH17 plane tragedy, LUUMS will take over the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall to commemorate the tragic loss of University of Leeds student, Richard Mayne, one of the 298 civilians to lose their lives on the fatal voyage.

Under the conduction of Stephen Chung, the concert will showcase some of the best musical talent the university has to offer in an emotionally charged and extremely unique evening of remembrance. The music on display will attempt to mirror the fantastic energy and passion that Richard, in his tragically short life, dedicated to the cause of various charities.

Featuring the LUUMS orchestra with Ben Palmer (Mozart Clarinet Concerto) and soloist singers Morgana Warren-Jones, Calum MacGregor, Ashley Jacobs and Hannah Elkins, the full programme also includes operatic highlights by Puccini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi and Mozart and will triumphantly conclude with Brahms Symphony No.4 in E minor.

All proceeds from the concert will go towards the Richard Mayne Foundation, an organisation established by family and friends in order to provide diabetes sufferers - Mayne was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at the age of eight - with the funds and opportunities to experience life in the way Richard did.

The power of Richard's story has continued to inspire both those who had the pleasure of knowing him and those that did not, with a total £14,556.71 being donated to his JustGiving page, a 2040% increase on his original target of £680.

The concert takes place from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm and tickets will cost you only £5. The money goes to a great cause, with the majesty of the music on offer more than justifying the entry fee.

So join LUUMS as they honour the memory of a truly fantastic and hardworking student. *[Robert Cairns]*

Weekly Chart



Leroy & The Drivers
Rainy Night in Georgia
[Tramp Germany]

Melancholic, effortless-sounding jazz-funk which immediately invokes images of rain and streetlights at night. Backed with an equally tight, straight funk track.



Wilson das Neves
Pick Up the Pieces
[Mr Bongo]

Mr Bongo's onslaught of obscure Brazilian 45 reissues continues with this shuffling cover of a classic, injecting some much-needed actual funk into the track.



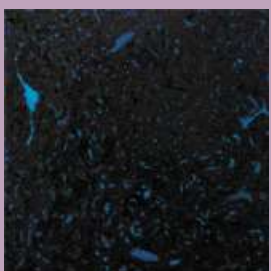
Diamond Ortiz
Pretty Please
[Eddie Pendergrass Presents]

Smooth and restrained piece of vocoder-led boogie, crisp drums and rubbery synth bass driving it forward with an irresistible swing.



Perseus Traxx
Grey Skies
[Photic Fields]

Driving yet reserved Chicago-inspired house track from Yorkshire-based don, warehouse-style drums fitting nicely alongside pulsating pads and a shimmering bassline.



Zenker Brothers
Phing
[Ilian Tapes]

Underwater-sounding electro cut from the Munich duo's LP on their ever-impressive Ilian Tape imprint, rough pads and skittering percussion used to dizzying effect.

[Laurence Huntingdon]

Review: Daniel Avery @ Wire 14/02


Leeds' Rinse FM invited Daniel Avery down to Wire last weekend to play a sevenhour set in the city's home of techno. It goes without saying that any techno DJ with a following as extensive as Avery's gets booked to play the intimate underground club, and because of this there is a danger of them blending into one.

Yet Daniel Avery, unsurprisingly, managed to stand out from the crowd. The Bournemouth native managed to maintain a high level of excitement all night long with his solid techno constructions. Arriving late to hear 'Need Electric' was the perfect way to start the evening, the tracks' consistent bassline occasionally interrupted by synth sounds got everyone dancing from when the first note was heard. Later on in the evening the crowd's energy was lifted again to the sounds of 'Water Jump', another track off Avery's incredible 'Drone Logic' album.

A highpoint of the evening was Avery dropping the Roman Flügel remix of 'All I Need'. The remix flattens out the synth tone of the original song and includes some skittering keys to liven it up, sending the crowd into a fervent frenzy.

The one let down of the evening was probably the crowd. Even if the event was not officially over-sold, it certainly felt much too full. The audience did not seem to feature the cult following that Wire tends to attract and instead included many individuals who did not seem to actually be enjoying themselves at all. Maybe it was Valentines' Day blues, but it was a shame that Avery's incredible set was received a little flatly. Maybe the heart shaped decorations hanging from the ceiling were a bad idea.

[Maddie Davison]



A scientist in the field of ass-shakery

[Photo: Juno]

The last ten years have seen Levon Vincent become one of the most revered names in electronic music. A self-professed 'scientist working in the field of ass-shakery', Vincent's theoretical music training and intelligent production sees him live up to this title. His early productions drew heavily upon music theory to create masterful and accomplished electronic music, instantly setting him apart from other producers in the field. Much of his earlier work relies on principles such as the golden mean and is informed by the training he undertook in New York. Today he claims to have internalised the theory to an extent where they become instinctively engrained into his music. "I really do respect the smith", he told Angus Finlayson of *The Quietus*, "the blacksmith, the wordsmith - you know, learn the entire body of knowledge pertaining to your field that you possibly can in one lifetime...I think you find your field and then you obsess over it until you're gone." 'Obsessive' is one word for it, but this dedication to understanding the principles of music demonstrates Vincent's genuine infatuation with and willingness to absorb every aspect of his field. With this considered, it's no wonder he's achieved such success.

Vincent began DJing in early adolescence after moving to the East Coast in the 80's, and became a successful New York DJ in the 90's. A deep love of New York House music has persisted throughout his professional career. A 90's mixing style is something he is still renowned for, favouring long blends and moderate paced track changes as opposed to the modern fast-paced blends. 90's New York was an odd time for dance music. Mayor Rudy Giuliani re-enforced the 1926 Cabaret Law, which meant that, without a valid license, dancing was prohibited across the city. The law hadn't been enforced for over 50 years, so the only venues holding a license were old bars. No nightclubs, nowhere deriving from the disco era and nowhere representative of the new house and techno scene was permitted to thrive. The NYC club scene was stunted and DJing was no longer viable for Vincent, so he began his music theory training.

Vincent's productions from hereon out continued to excel, and a move to Berlin expanded his musical range and taste. Angus Finlayson describes his music as "pull[ing] the sonic signatures of his adopted home of Berlin into

the sensual orbit of New York house in a way few could hope to imitate." It is this experimental innovation and seamless blending of influences that give his productions such an edge. With structures built around disorientation, Vincent is known for his somewhat odd, dubbed out beats, owing to a re-contextualisation of Roland's Space Echo sounds. "He gets you to accept the strange as normal", says Todd L. Burns, editor of *Resident Advisor*. These oddities in his music - organs, panting breaths, a malfunctioning air raid siren - makes it ultimately so compelling. The simplicity of the music's constituent parts creates a paradox with the intriguing and diverse sounds offered up in his repertoire. Dubbed "one of the most impressive and idiosyncratic house and techno producers of the half decade plus", Vincent has most certainly made his mark.

Levon founded label Deconstruct with fellow New York deep house master, Antony Parasole, in 2008 which boasts releases from Mike Denhart, Ryan Elliott, Henning Baer and Nick Höppner. His solo-label project Novel Sound was also launched the same year - it was the year that marked his upward spiral into the world of electronic music. The UK was one of the first places to embrace the techno pioneer, and his 2009 *Resident Advisor* podcast acted as a platform to contextualise his work, which has since found an audience around the world.

It's Levon Vincent's name that graces the cover of *Fabric's 63rd* mix CD. The 2012 album exemplifies Vincent's passion for new music and commitment to sharing it. Renowned for letting tracks play out to the end, the album fittingly opens with Joey Anderson's full 7 minute track *Earth Calls*. Anderson is an artist Vincent has been truly impressed by, and has been dedicated to earning him the attention he deserves.

The last few years have brought Vincent to international attention, seeing him grace the stages of festivals and clubs across the globe. His debut album has been long-anticipated, and teaming up with visual artist, Thomas Bernich, each and every single copy of Vincent's LP offers its own individually created artwork. Once again going the extra mile, it's no wonder Levon Vincent continues to be one of the most exciting things in techno. [Harriet Shepherd]

Review: Levon Vincent LP

Compared to his early work, Levon Vincent's first LP - released for 24 hours last tuesday as a free download - is an unexpectedly light listen. The devil woman has been exorcised. His wild, industrial hammer-blows have been softened. But the eeriness that has come to characterise Vincent's sets remains, mainly as a product of wild experimentation.

When the genre of the album appears as 'blue synth pop-rooted disco-technoid, smart club anthems' on iTunes, you know that things are being shaken up. Vincent is doing to American house what bands such as *The Soft Machine* did for jazz when they forged the Canterbury sound in the 60's by adding the weird and the wonderful. Moreover, this album emulates the *William Burroughs* novel after which *The Soft Machine* are named. It is a prose work that cuts and pastes phrases at random to create a psychedelic, schizophrenic and sublime reading experience. Comparably, Vincent's album achieves all of these effects with the pure sonic scope he exhibits. Seemingly unrelated noises from urbanity are woven to create a terrifying and gorgeous electro tapestry. 'The

Beginning' - a quirky, metallic nod to 80s electro - might get launched late on in the night when delirium kicks in, its twisted melodies worming their way into your subconscious, while 'Launch Ramp to tha Sky' is an eleven-minute African-tinged techno odyssey that will blow your cap off in the club.

Knocking together a floor-filler has become run of the mill for Vincent, so it's great to see him purvey some bona fide artistry with this self-titled debut, an album that deserves spins at home as well as in the club.

Basically, what Vincent embodies is deviance. He is giving zero fucks, and making some of the kookiest 'Anti-Corporate' music of the year. Listen out for it in the club.

[Oliver Walkden]

LRFS

Next Thursday the Leeds RAG fashion show promises to take us on a whirlwind journey of high fashion as it considers fashion through the looking glass.

From the Gothic dimension of Hansel and Gretel to the Magician's hat of Lewis Carroll's wonderland adventures, we are set to re-live our favourite fairytales with a twist.



Photography Lucie England-Duce
RAG Fashion Show models Bjorn Tan Wei Ho, Dom Murray,
Emma Katz, Eleanor Gomes and Xavier Mama
Stylists Claire McQue and Tiffany Grous

“Apart from offering a little something for everyone I think it’s the glamour of the event that draws so many people in. Something our student lives rarely see and for such fantastic causes why not splash out a little to see the incredible spectacle that is Leeds RAG Fashion Show 2015”



This year the show supports two prominent Leeds charities; Leeds Mind and The Richard Mayne Foundation. This charity was established in memory of Leeds University student Richard Franklin Mayne who tragically died last year on Flight MH17.

We caught up charity founders Piers Cottee and Rob Clack. Richard lived with his diabetes for 12 years and had always wished that monies raised should be distributed to local good causes clearly connected with childhood Type 1 Diabetes. Richard was an incredible friend to so many people and I think the foundation is a way people can honour the memory of someone that meant a huge amount to all of us and ensuring his legacy lives on.

This year the fashion will focus on independent global designers such as Carlo Volpi and AnHa, plus an exclusive collaboration with George Styler's debut collection shown at this seasons London Fashion Week.



H&M Black Coat £64.99,
White Shirt £29.99
Desert Boots £50, both River Island

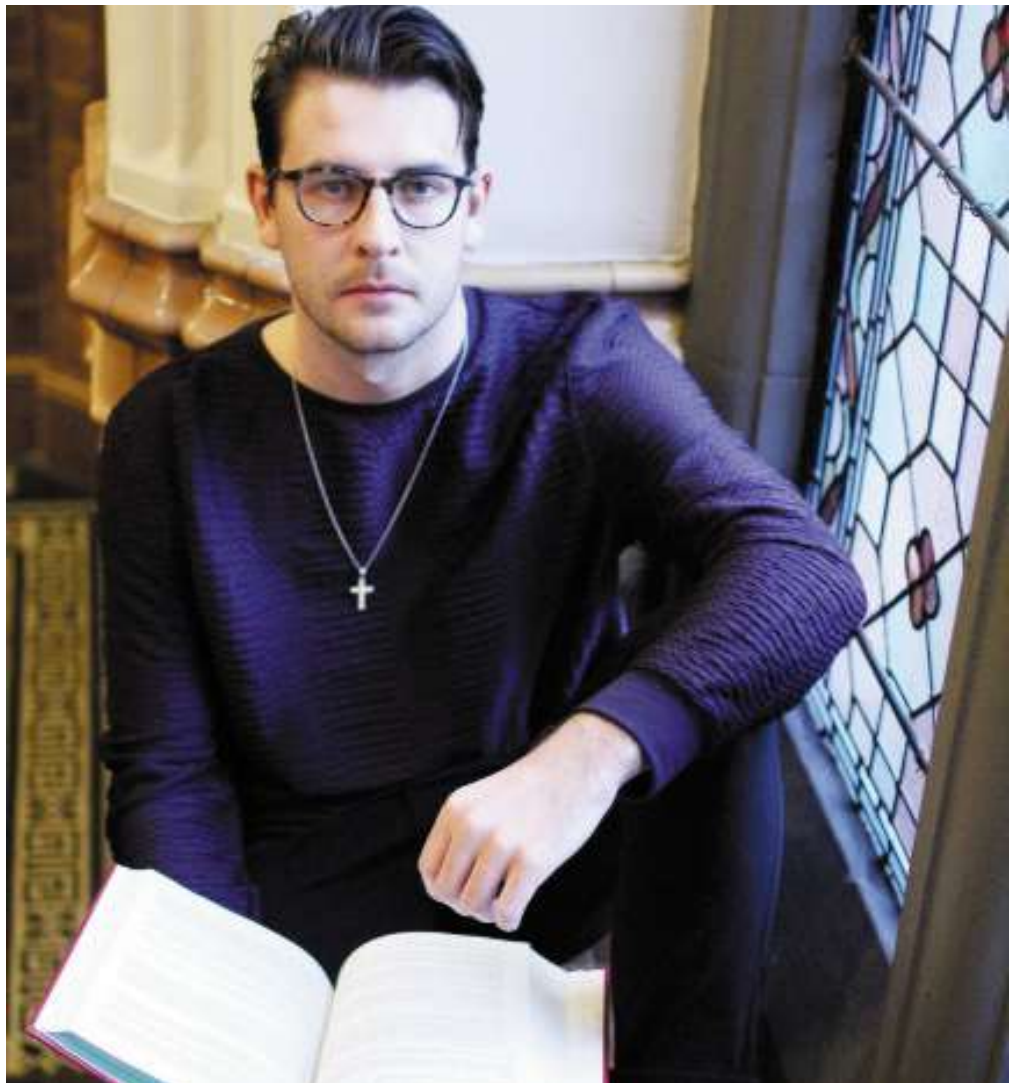
Dom:
Sweater £15
Topman, Next Brogues £55,
Model's own necklace

In George Styler's just two year long fashion career, he is firmly on High-End fashion circuits. Having won four awards for Contribution to Fashion, his collections have graced the front covers of prominent international fashion publications and his catwalk created a storm at A/W '14 shows.

Now based in London, George graduated from the Belgrade College of Textile Design in Serbia.

His clothes speak for themselves. High impact, ethno-knit designs replace words to communicate the designer's own convictions on freedom: to speak, to move and to dress.

Exclusively donated to this year's show, keep an eye out for George Styler's head-turning





'Theres a massive team behind it and everyone works really hard and professionally- the detail they go into is amazing. I'm very excited to see it all come together.'

Model: Eleanor Gomes

Studies Philosophy

Ellie:

Topshop Boutique

Dress £85, Necklace

£6.50 and Heels

£20, both New Look

'The show is such a big event because it gives people a glamorous and exciting way to enrich their own community. What's better than fashion for a good cause?'

Model: Emma Katze, studying in Leeds on her year abroad



Emma Katz:
Coast Playsuit £115,
Topshop Heels £20,
H&M Necklace £14.99



Image: Fox Searchlight Pictures

Oscar Watch 2015: Best Director & Best Picture

What makes the perfect Best Picture winner at the Oscars? If recent history is anything to go by, it's a film which has once in a generation levels of originality (*The Artist*), gripping technical proficiency (*Argo*) and a courageous, beautiful and haunting emotional and historical relevance (*12 Years A Slave*). Amongst this year's nominees you'll find all of these boxes ticked, and arguably in more extreme portions than any other year. *Boyhood* (directed by Austinite auteur Richard Linklater) lives and dies on the premise that its central concept, to take a life lived over a period of over a decade and commit it to film, has never been seen before and likely never will be again (although given the Hollywood model of imitation, we wouldn't be surprised if some studio boss somewhere was already planning a whole franchise of films about a boy growing up, although they'd probably ruin it by putting in silly things like magic and wizards). Likewise, the second frontrunner – Alejandro G. Iñárritu's *Birdman* – has a similarly attention-grabbing trick in that the whole film is framed to look like one long shot. There is more to love about these films than just their surface 'gimmicks', but in a ceremony rarely known for its nuance and subtlety their party tricks could be the factor that puts the odds in their favour.

Boyhood and *Birdman* may be the favourites, but the other nominees show too much promise to be drowned out from the discussion. The film may have lost a significant amount of its hype momentum on account of the fact that it came out in March last year, but *The Grand Budapest Hotel* demonstrates Wes Anderson's progression from the quirky indie niche to powerhouse mainstream, and admirably unlike comparable filmmakers he's lost none of his original voice while making the long transition (looking at you Tim Burton). For long-time fans of the Andersonverse, *Grand Budapest* represents the pinnacle of a careers' worth of growth. For all that's said about the distinctive style of all Anderson's films, he has clearly matured as a director. Yes, Ralph Fiennes' Gustav is another suave-but-secretly-hapless and morally dubious

protagonist, but Anderson tackles bigger themes with *Grand Budapest* than he's ever done before, examining the rapid changes the face of the Europe was subjected to throughout the twentieth century and what might really lie behind all the nostalgia and loss. Like a kind of David Lynch after too many Smarties, Anderson has a growing talent for surreally juxtaposing the darkness that lurks behind seeming ideals.

This is Anderson's first nomination for Best Picture and as Best Director. If the stars align, this could be Wes' moment. If *Budapest Hotel* is his masterwork, the culmination of a truly one-of-a-kind career, it would be heartbreaking to see the pinnacle work of one of the most original American filmmakers of this generation get all but overlooked.

“It's hard to shake the feeling that whoever wins, Wes loses.”

Elsewhere among the nominees there's plenty of flair on display in *Whiplash*, the second feature of director

Damien Chazelle (who missed out on a Best Director nod in favour of *Foxcatcher*'s Bennett Miller, the only nominee without a film in the Best Picture category) which is effectively the greatest sports movie to ever not feature any sports playing at all and instead be entirely about drums. The film is anchored by two tremendous performances from the oft overlooked Miles Teller and the tempestuous J.K. Simmons (surely his Supporting Actor nomination is the most surething shoo in in the entire race).

Then there's Clint Eastwood's controversial, politically problematic *American Sniper*. If the Oscars want to pursue courting controversy as a method of boosting publicity, as seems to have been the case in recent years (cf: *The Lego Movie* snub, Seth Macfarlane's hosting, James Franco's hosting), then where better to go than the tornado around *American Sniper*. While the film is a technically proficient effort – nothing less than what you'd expect from a man who has been directing for 44 years – it's difficult to warm to a film in which the

term “savages” is used, Conrad-style, without a hint of irony or selfawareness.

Rounding off the nominees are *Selma*, which in another world might have made a clean sweep of the major categories but here is unusually given Best Picture as it's only nod, and Brit biopics *The Imitation Game* and *The Theory Of Everything* – notable primarily for the central performances from public school heartthrobs Benedict Cumberbatch and Eddie Redmayne.

Traditional wisdom would dictate that director of the Best Picture winner would be the obvious shoo-in for the Best Director gong, but in recent years Mr. Oscar seems to be deliberately moving away from that trend, with Alfonso Cuarón and Ang Lee picking up the big prize these past two years for Best Picture winners *Gravity* and *Life Of Pi* respectively. Those two in particular would seem to suggest more of a focus on technical achievements in the Director category of late. Both *Gravity* and *Pi* are visually stunning, and on that front the obvious candidates among this year's crop of nominations would be either *Grand Budapest* or *Birdman* (which shares a Director of Photography with *Gravity* in the form of Emmanuel Lubezki – a man who presumably has a phobia of clapperboards). Those two are also unique for being the only two films in the category to also receive a Best Cinematography nomination (last year *Gravity* was also the only film in both the Directing and Cinematography, while the year before that *Life of Pi* was also one of only two films nominated in both categories).

Ultimately, though, the overriding general feeling is that the major awards will belong to either *Boyhood* or *Birdman*. In some ways, both have equal claim although as films they couldn't be more different. The warm, lightly melancholic *Boyhood* is actually a kind of antidote to the jetblack, cynical *Birdman* or to give it its full title *Birdman* or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance). Both represent filmmaking at its best in terms of pure ideasmanship and technical mastery. But it's still hard to shake the feeling that whoever wins, Wes loses. [Sean Hayes]



Image: Universal Pictures

Behind the Veil: Sam Taylor-Johnson's *Fifty Shades of Grey*

The notorious bonk buster's troublesome take on BDSM has got audiences debating the boundary between kink and domestic violence, but the real bondage is all on the director.

When it was announced that artist-turned-director Sam Taylor-Johnson had been hired to direct the much publicised *Fifty Shades of Grey* film adaptation, audiences couldn't be blamed for a sense of raised expectations. A screen version of E.L. James' ludicrously popular "mummy porn" trilogy (which began life as online *Twilight* fan fiction) seemed destined to happen as soon as the sales figures for the books began to make headlines, but when Taylor-Johnson took the helm a screen version equally as appalling as the books didn't seem so inevitable. Not only did the Turner Prize nominated artist have one very commendable feature length directorial credit (*Nowhere Boy*) under her belt, she had also earned her credentials on the adult film scene with the tastefully explicit short piece *Death Valley*. If anyone could conjure a decent movie out of E.L. James' ghastly erotic prose, surely it was this woman?

Were it not for an ironic extension of the film's controversial themes into the movie's production, the answer may well have been yes.

As most will know by now, *Fifty Shades of Grey* tells the story of Anastasia Steele (Dakota Johnson on screen) a virginal college student who falls under the spell of Byronic business magnate Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan). He's equally taken with her, but there's a catch: Christian is exclusively interested in BDSM relationships, meaning that young Ana is forced to contemplate floggers and genital clamps before she's even so much as popped her cherry. Kinky adventures in the Red Room of Pain

ensue, while Ana must weigh up whether or not it is worth surrendering her autonomy and sexual freedom to become her beloved Christian's dedicated 'submissive.'

However, whilst the R rated film (an 18 certificate here in the UK) has disappointed fans and film critics alike with its preference for sensual

"Book Ana is not submissive, she's a victim of abuse."

facial closeups over candid depictions of bondage and sadomasochism, Taylor-Johnson was forced to play a far more hardcore submissive to E.L. James' dominant behind the camera. During the film's much-reported production period, it transpired that James had maintained significant creative control over the project. This meant that despite the laudable efforts of Taylor-Johnson, screenwriter Kelly Marcel (*Saving Mr. Banks*) and the two cannily cast leads, *Fifty Shades* remains a one-woman creative mess. Taylor-Johnson tried to perform some damage control by having playwright and past collaborator Patrick Marber craft something more subtle out of the novel's toecurling dialogue, but Ms James stamped her foot and threatened to deliver a sharp spanking to the director in the form of a Twitter scandal if Taylor-Johnson didn't preserve the exchanges that the book's fans apparently so adore. Thus, immortal lines such as "I'm fifty shades of fucked up" remain, and whatever salvage work Marber might have done is relegated to the land of 'what if?'

The film is so blighted by the fallout of this conflict that it almost overshadows that other major debate surrounding the movie: whether the story's version of a BDSM relationship constitutes abuse. In the novel, it

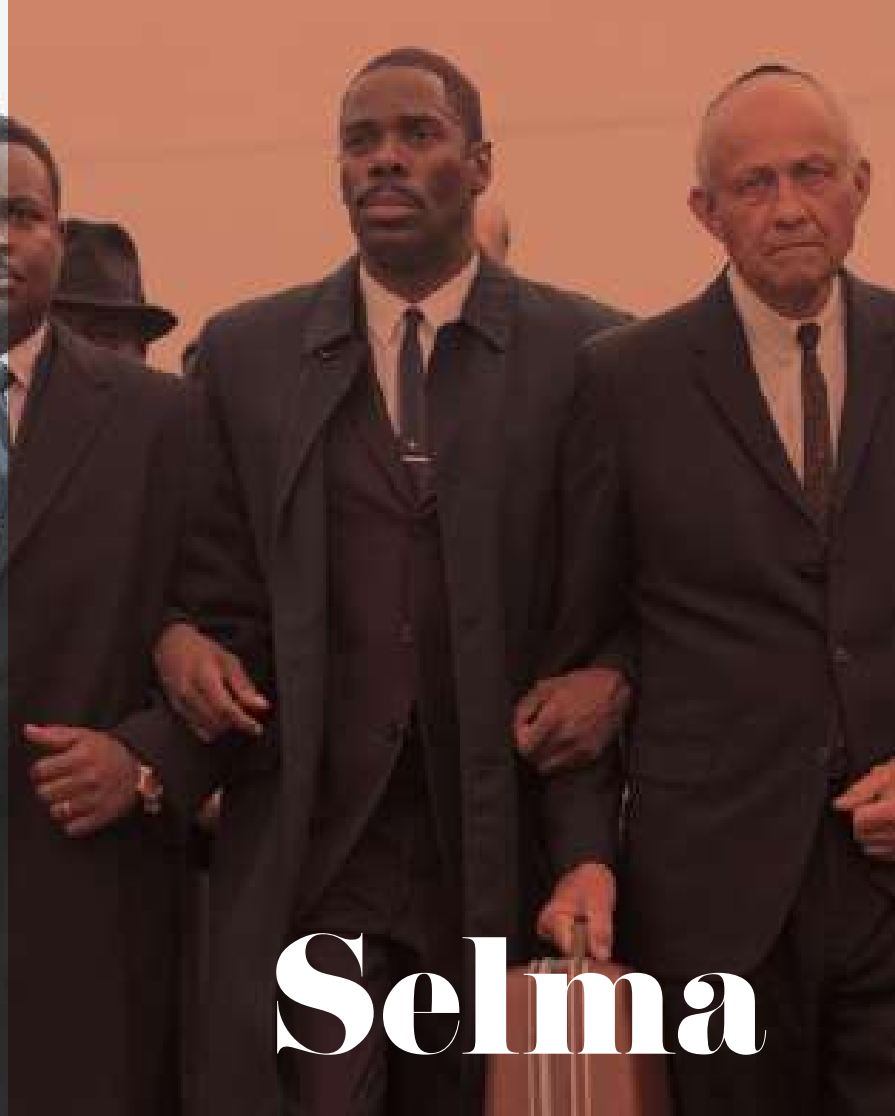
unequivocally does. Book Ana tolerates rather than enjoys many of Christian's predilections, and the BDSM community have been quick to point out the hypocrisy. Real life fans of this kind of activity have repeatedly stressed in the wake of the *Fifty Shades* phenomenon that BDSM practises are founded on communication, enthusiastic consent, and communication. Moreover, it's the submissive who's really in control, setting the limits and having 'safe words' at their disposal which they can use to scale down the intensity of an action, or make it stop completely. In the novel, Ana is not turned on by Christian's Dominant/Submissive contract. She is also frequently passive in the negotiation of its boundaries, and when she uses her safe word she is ignored. Book Ana is not a submissive, she's a victim of abuse.

But what about on screen? Taylor-Johnson and actress Dakota Johnson (no relation, instead daughter of Melanie Griffith and granddaughter of Tippi Hedren from *The Birds*) have insisted all along that their portrayal of Ana is empowering to women. Their success is the film's most pleasant surprise. Much of this comes down to Dakota Johnson's performance. Liberated from the "oh my's" and "holy crap's" used to convey Ana's shock and arousal in the books, Johnson is free to give us an endearing heroine, flustered and naive, yes, but also quick-witted, adaptive, and not afraid to stand her ground. The best scene of the film arrives when Ana insists upon a formal 'business meeting' at Christian's office to discuss the terms of their proposed contract. Lit in moody reds by cinematographer Seamus McGarvey, it's one of the film's few genuinely sexy sequences, because this is where Ana and the audience both realise that, despite appearances, she's the one who holds all the power.

If only E.L. James' submissive, Taylor-Johnson, had been allowed to do the same. [*Rachel Grocock*]



Image: Paramount Pictures



Selma

Fifty Shades: The Review

Fifty Shades of Grey was always going to be better as a film for the simple reason that the story is told in pictures rather than with words. Specifically, E.L. James' words, which purport that 'Holy cow!' is an appropriately sensual response to seeing the naked body of the man you love, and compare the female orgasm to the spin-cycle on a washing machine. Liberated from the dire inner monologue of James' Bella Swan-inspired heroine, the story is automatically more palatable.

For those of you who have been living under a rock for the past three years, that story concerns the romance between virginal English student Ana Steele, and BDSM-loving entrepreneur Christian Grey. There isn't a plot as such, just a lot of "don't come near me/I can't leave you alone" mind games, some fretting over the particulars of a sadomasochistic sexual contract, and a couple of erotic sessions in Christian's 'playroom', complete with whips, paddles and red velvet decor.

Rumours that U.S. multiplexes would be putting plastic covers on cinema seats in anticipation of the playroom scenes wildly overplay their actual erotic value. Universal Studios insisted that the film have an 'R' rating, which means the camera never lingers upon any particular sex act - sadomasochistic or otherwise - for more than a couple of seconds. The result is a montage sequence played out to a heavy remix of Beyoncé's *Crazy in Love*, the overall effect of which is more reminiscent of *Team America* than *Last Tango in Paris*. So surprisingly tame is the whole endeavour that director Sam Taylor-Johnson's adult-film credentials prove all but redundant.

Taylor-Johnson makes smart choices elsewhere however, first and foremost in the casting of her two leads. Jamie Dornan (last seen tying women up for far more sinister purposes in Irish crime drama *The Fall*) does his level best with creepy Christian, who gets the film's stinkiest lines of dialogue, while Dakota Johnson is a revelation as Ana. Johnson is beautiful in a real-life way, rather than a Hollywood sense, and her Anastasia is much stronger and more relatable than her book counterpart. She holds the story together even as the tongue-in-cheek humour and romantic flutterings of the superior first half fizzle out into a troubling portrayal of something far less healthy.

Fifty Shades of Grey is not the erotic masterpiece fans may have been hoping for, but it isn't the aberration its detractors were expecting either. It is an admirable exercise in the art of improvement.

[Rachel Grocock]

Biopics tend to follow two paths: turn the lives of complex individuals into simplified, crowd pleasing narratives (think *Braveheart*) or provide an honest portrayal of their subject: flaws in tact.

Much to its credit, *Selma* falls into the latter camp. For a film with Dr Martin Luther King as its protagonist, the film is remarkably candid about its focus, making abundantly clear that the Civil Rights icon was far from perfect. David Oyelowo as Dr King exemplifies this in one scene, when accused of infidelity by his wife, his response is a pathetic, shamed silence. Rather than turning the audience against King, this choice to show his weaknesses only makes his achievements all the more remarkable.

The film isn't just about Dr King however. Taking as its focus the 1964 civil rights march from Selma to Birmingham, the seat of power for notorious racist state governor George Wallace, the violence enacted by police against the protestors is powerfully shown, staying within a 12a certificate through brutal sound design as truncheons thud and bones break.

Throughout all this it's hard to ignore *Selma*'s prescience in 2015. One scene in particular portraying the police shooting of Jimmie Lee Jackson, an unarmed African-American youth, tragically recalls the events of August 2014 in Ferguson. The filmmakers are only too aware of this and, following the euphoric success of the march, include a devastating postscript informing us of the violent deaths of many of the key players, ending the film on a melancholy note and evoking the progress still to be made. A powerful statement in a compelling film.

[Peter Brearley]



Carmen

The fabulous OperaSoc opened the show season of the Riley Smith with a serious something. *Carmen* was a treat. Opera may not be everyone's cup of tea, but the enthusiasm and talent on stage was simply infectious. I've seen a couple of OperaSoc's shows before, and know their strength when it comes to comedy, but *Carmen* is full of drama, and conflicting romance. Despite this, I had already heard great things about the cast, the orchestra, and sell-out mid-week performances. I went along in anticipation with an open mind.

Bizet's *Carmen* is fairly well known and was a brave choice, however they really pulled it out of the bag. It's got pretty much everything you could want from a show, romance, drama, politics, and a good helping of great melodies to carry it all through - no wonder it's passed the test of time. The music of *Carmen* is recognisable, even if you've never heard of the opera, as it's used in pop culture all of the time - it was nice to finally put this into context.

The hall was filled with people and there was a great atmosphere; it was clear from the very beginning that a lot of work had been put into the show. The best part of the production was the synergy of chorus members throughout. Some really great scenes will still take me back, Bianca Von Oppell's depiction of *Carmen* really gave the self-penned nickname 'Queen of Sass' some real meaning, whilst Calum McGregor brought all the innocence and confusion of young love and enamourment to Don Jose. The addition of choreography to the show was a welcome one, whilst the strength of all of the leads really brought the show alive, showing both the strength of the cast and production team, as their casting was very well thought through.

The orchestra was larger than I had expected, and although fighting against the constant battle that is the acoustic of Riley Smith, with Musical Director Jake Pople at the helm, OperaSoc most certainly won.

Carmen was an absolute triumph for OperaSoc and all those involved, I for one can't wait for their next production: Gilbert & Sullivan's comic opera *HMS Pinafore*.

[Beverley Logan]

Dark of the Moon

We've all become accustomed to supernatural beings as the lead protagonist in shows; from TV to film and even theatre too, characters often come in the form of vampires, werewolves or witches, but it is rarer to see these particular beings as male characters. Within *Dark of the Moon*, the lead character is John, the witch-boy, which already sets apart the play from the supernatural norm.

Set in a time when witches were still very much feared and religion ruled above all, *Dark of the Moon* portrays a love story between John and Barbara Allen, a human. In his quest for love John begs to be made a human and is granted this wish on the condition that he gets his beloved Barbara to marry him and that she remain faithful for one year. But of course, the path of true love never did run smooth and the community of the Smoky Mountains soon become suspicious of John. This plot line is cleverly accompanied by music and song as well as dark humour.

The whole performance was brilliantly acted. From the accents to their mannerisms, the audience couldn't question the setting or the beliefs of the characters. Particular credit is owed to the actors playing John, Barbara and the Pastor, as each mastered their character and with each step, word and look you could see they were immersed in their role. The rest of the cast were also outstanding, with each playing an incredibly important part in developing the storyline and allowing the audience to get lost in the story.

Nevertheless it is the play's moments of dark humour that are truly captivating. These draw you into the story to the point where you almost forget quite how twisted this community is in its religious extremism.

It is for this reason that you are left constantly mediating between what you feel is right and wrong, as on one hand you hope John and Barbara can be together but are also convinced into half-believing it's wrong for a witch to live amongst the community.

Despite the dark and controversial storyline, you never feel depressed or saddened, as the music and folk community spirits uplift and convince you that life in the Smoky Mountains is not all bad. However it's this that makes you constantly question who it is that is ultimately evil in the play. If a play still has the ability to make audiences debate the characters' natures long after it the curtain is down, then it has clearly left an impact and deserves recognition for its powerful performance and story.

[Emily Willson]



TV

Looking

Looking for love in San Francisco

Looking throws itself into your face and shrugs off your surprise. Created by Michael Lannan, *Looking*, is the story of a trio of gay friends living in San Francisco, and their pursuit of sex, love, and happiness. Season two shows some welcome progress for the boys; Patrick (Jonathan Groff) is still awkward and slightly neurotic, but is branching out of his comfort zone in his new, unconventional relationship with his boss. Dom (Murray Bartlett) is close to realising his entrepreneurial dreams, but finds his work and love life colliding as he dates a much older, richer man. However, Augustín (Frankie J. Alvarez) has regressed somewhat, deciding to get over his break-up with Frank the only way he knows how, self-medicating and partying his way into oblivion.

Their storylines continue to move fluidly between themes including, but not limited to, open relationships, the San Francisco drug scene, threeways, fear of commitment, drag bars, joint stag parties, casual hook-ups, dating sites, HIV tests, and sugar daddies. There is a matter-of-fact quality to this show that refuses to pander to contrived concepts of “normal” or “abnormal”, which is extremely refreshing to watch.

The characters feel more fleshed out and three-dimensional in this second season, and are mercifully lacking most of the stereotypically ‘gay’ characteristics often put upon LGBTQ characters in sitcoms and romance shows. *Looking* in fact flips the stereotype of the fabulous or bitchy gay male roommate by giving Dom a straight female roommate, Doris (Lauren Weedman), who at the start of season one was in danger of being typecast as a so-called ‘fag hag’ and whose inclusion smacked a little too much of tokenism. Thankfully, in season two Doris is rounded out into a real character with sexual relationships of her own, rather than as a mere trope to complement the three boys.

With *Looking*, Lannan has succeeded in creating a programme of worthwhile substance that neither outweighs nor suffers beneath its entertaining style. The narrative has a relaxed, naturalistic feel, and although it sometimes lacks pace and excitement, a sense of realism is achieved without any loss of humour. This humour is interspersed with moments of truly soulful poignancy that would seem mawkish if it weren’t so carefully juxtaposed with awkward encounters with ex’s and instances of Patrick’s hypochondria, for example.

Overall, I found *Looking* to be a programme with nothing to prove, no agenda to push, but simply a lot of relatable, entertaining stories to be shared with anyone who cares to pay attention: may I recommend that you do so. [Kathryn Kaiser]

TV

Better Call Saul

Meet Breaking Bad’s little brother

This week fans of the *Breaking Bad* series have finally been served their much needed fix with the premiere of *Better Call Saul*. Set six years prior to the events of *Breaking Bad* the series follows Saul Goodman before he was Saul Goodman, and still struggling lawyer Jimmy McGill. With only two episodes aired Saul has already caused a storm, with the show already being labelled as ‘too good to be a spin off’. But is this just an overly dedicated fan base putting the yet-to-be ‘criminal lawyer’ on a pedestal? Does the prequel really fill the large shoes of its predecessor?

The opening scene introduces us to what we presume to be Saul’s life after the events of *Breaking Bad*, the shots are stylistically black and white, displaying the director’s eye for creating a fantastic mise en scène. Creators Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould have unsurprisingly created many allusions and similarities to *Breaking Bad*, with the intro providing an enjoyably, ominous prediction of what is yet to come.

Over the course of first episode we see Jimmy struggling to make ends meet and desperately trying to recruit clients. The intensity of how dismal his life is emphasized to the point that it almost becomes tedious. Although the scenes stirred sympathy and pity, there was also a certain desperation for the show to continue with the actual story line, perhaps the creators’ intention. Even when events began to heat up, neither the scenes nor the characters proved enthralling. All that changed, however, with the episode’s finale, making pressing play on that next episode an easy task. It seems that this first episode was a character building one – for both Jimmy and the series; one that will undoubtedly enhance our pleasure later if not immediately.

Cameos from old characters seem to be placed to incite cooing from the large fan base rather than serve any actual function to the plot. However, with only two episodes so far it is difficult to tell whether Gilligan and Gould have plans for these old characters. The second episode improves dramatically and is far more watchable, exploring the edge-of-the-seat dramatics that fans of *Breaking Bad* will remember. That is not to say that the first episode is boring, but rather that it is simply not that exciting. The second episode emulates more closely the grit that viewers have come to know and love. Let’s just say that I certainly will never look at breadsticks the same way again.

The overriding problem that *Better Call Saul* faces is that it will inevitably be compared to *Breaking Bad*, especially since it shares the same characters and stylistic techniques. The show in itself shows a lot of promise but perhaps religious fans should base what they see on the show’s own merits. *Better Call Saul* may be slow to begin with, but it there is a whisper that suggests it may be on the cusp of greatness. [Lauren Emina-Bougaard]



[Photo: Laura Dale/BNPS]

Immigration Street

Has Channel 4 crossed the line?

The controversial Channel 4 documentary *Benefits Street*, labelled by many as “poverty porn”, has been hogging the limelight for some time. Somehow, a handful of residents from the impoverished James Turner Street did quite well out of the series, with ‘White Dee’ (Dee Kelly) bagging herself a career in television, she recently appeared on *Celebrity Big Brother*. Word on the street is that she’ll soon be hitting the big screen too – nice.

However, many did not wish to reap the benefits – pardon the pun – of the documentary. Other residents felt they were taken advantage of, and claimed that they had been purposefully misrepresented by Channel 4. Meanwhile, many of the public didn’t find the programme as engaging as promised, and it received a total of 900 Ofcom complaints. Riled audience members stated that the series embarrassingly supported a “something-for-nothing” benefits culture, which should not be given air time.

Channel 4 do not seem fazed by the negative backlash and have fearlessly ploughed ahead to film a spin-off programme, *Immigration Street*, due to hit our screens before the election this April. Any press is good press, it would seem. Channel 4 claims “Cameras will follow the lives of some of the residents of Derby Road” down in Southampton, where “the majority of residents were not born in the UK. The series will explore how the changing population is shaping the community, relationships, friendships and everyday life for those who call it home.”

The locals, however, were not content. A number of residents feared the documentary would split the community and provide incentive for racially motivated attacks. 1,000 residents signed a petition in a desperate bid to stop the project going ahead. Many also protested outside of Channel 4’s

headquarters to raise media attention.

A local councillor who grew up in the area, said: “Just like me, the majority of people who live in Derby Road are not first generation immigrants. They will be second or third generation. This begs the question, at what point do me and my neighbours stop being classed or considered as immigrants and start being considered British?” All this has resulted in Channel 4 cutting the series from six episodes down to just one. The show’s producer, Kieran Smith, has defended the programme, asserting that “many people on Derby Road made the crew feel welcome and wanted to share their stories”.

Though *Immigration Street* will provide insight into the interesting yet sensitive immigration debate, it is easy to forget that documentaries of this kind are not just entertainment, but people’s lives. *Benefits Street* shined a spotlight on many issues that have not previously been aired to the public, creating a rifling mainstream debate. Whatever your opinion, whether you were appalled or fascinated, the controversial series was a documentary insight into the lives of many that evidently made powerful TV viewing. However this was at a price and some residents claimed they faced unwelcome attention due to Channel 4’s misrepresentations.

The residents of Derby Road are justified in their reservations, as this programme promises to tackle and highlight an extremely complex and sensitive subject. It would be wrong and prejudicial of Channel 4 to abuse the relationships of an already vulnerable community. The TV channel are stirring up a toxic debate, capable of provoking extremist behaviour. Whatever questions marks hang over the morality of these programmes, one certainty is that it won’t be up everyone’s street. [Poppy Hamilton]

Britain’s Neglected Authors

The truth behind making it in the publishing world

It can easily be imagined how difficult it is to make it as an author. Hours of writing met with one rejection letter after another. Yet, is finally getting a book published really the big break we might expect it to be? While we may not expect all authors to achieve the wild fame, wealth and success of J. K. Rowling, we at least expect it to be a viable and potentially lucrative industry. However, the harsh reality is that most authors cannot afford to live off book sales alone through traditional publishing methods. A recent survey by Digital Book World revealed that nearly a third of traditionally published authors only make a shocking £350 a year from book sales and, unsurprisingly, around half of writers are dissatisfied with the proceeds from their books.

The book world is changing dramatically fast. Reading is moving to a digital platform as we see the rise of the e-book and decline of the high street bookshop. Facing fierce competition from online book superstores such as Amazon, the number of independent bookshops in Britain has fallen below 1,000 – a drop of a third in nine years. Tim Godfray, chief executive of the Booksellers Association, told *The Guardian* that ‘the future of our bookshops – and therefore the health of the publishing industry and reading itself – is at risk’. However it is not just the decline of independent bookshops that is putting the publishing industry at risk. The consequences of the difficulty faced by authors to make any money through traditional publishing methods sees a growing number of ‘hybrid’ authors, who use traditional publishing as well as self-publishing. Those that are taking this route appear to be capitalising the most on the current book market, as The Digital Book World Survey

revealed they take in the highest earnings a year.

Amazon continues to wage a war against publishing houses, allowing a platform for quite literally anyone to get their book out there. The wages they offer are enticing, with authors seeing a return of up to 70% of the list price of their book. As great as this sounds, it is still incredibly difficult for authors to generate a decent wage. Even those utilising both methods of publication only see a median annual income of £4900 – £6600. The fact still remains that the real winners are those capitalising off the creative talent of the many authors who drive the book market.

Whilst Amazon may be allowing authors to see better returns for book sales, it’s still driving the industry towards a capitalist free market. We cannot possibly place a monetary value on the creative industries; their worth cannot be measured in wealth. The decline of independent bookshops is most worrying, as it indicates a decline in the social value of books and the reading population in general. Unless something is easily accessible and digitalized, we are now less inclined to bother with it, and that is scary. Literature can enact social and political change and has been used for centuries as a vehicle to convey powerful and controversial political messages. The fact that authors are being driven to find more creative methods of publishing in order to profit at all within the industry puts further strain amongst the realm of economic gain within the arts industries. [Annie Foyster]



Books

The Best Comics of 2015

[Photo: DC]

A guide for the interested and the uninitiated alike

2014 was an interesting year for comics and 2015 looks set to be no different. So let's take a break from moaning intermittently about New Year's resolutions and deadlines and get stuck into the way bigger issue so pressingly at hand – what comics are coming out this year? Will they be any good? Can I just jump right in and enjoy them without reading the entire Marvel back catalogue? Here is a list of upcoming comics that should make for great jumping-in points in 2015.

Paper Girls

Paper Girls is a brand new comic from the writer of *Saga* (Brian K Vaughan) – a comic book series that has totally changed the landscape of comics over the past few years, proving that an original series can consistently out-sell even some of the biggest titles in comics. So, what do you do when you've proven you can out-sell *Batman* with a family drama set in space? You team up with an artist who produced one of the biggest smash hits of 2014 and write a comic about 12-year-old newspaper delivery girls set in the 80's. Most of the details about this comic are being kept under wraps but with some of the best talent in comics working together on this title, *Paper Girls* is definitely one to watch this year. Expect visual gags and pop-culture references with some genuine, emotional storytelling at the core.

Black Canary

In 2014 DC re-launched *Batgirl* with roaring success. They introduced an entirely new look and way of storytelling, incorporating character design that actually felt cool and fashion-forward while utilising fictional versions of Instagram, Tinder and Spotify as part of the character's lives. What you get is something akin to the TV show *Girls*, set in Gotham and populated with super powered twenty-somethings. It's a concept you'll either love or hate, but if this sounds up your street, keep an eye out for *Black Canary* in June, the most recent character to receive "the Batgirl treatment" from DC in 2015.

A.D: After Death

Scott Snyder is perhaps best known for writing some of best-received *Batman* titles of the past few years – including *Batman: The Black Mirror* in 2011. At the 2015 Image Expo it was announced that Snyder would be teaming up with artist Jeff Lemire to bring us *A.D: After Death*, a science-fiction comic that explores what life might look like once mankind has discovered a "cure" for death. In an interview with *Vulture* about the project Lemire said the comic wasn't just about "cheating death or whatever – it was more that that was the starting point for the story. It's about what happens next. What kind of life or lives do you live after that?" Food for thought indeed...

A-Force Assemble

I wasn't going to mention this one, but like a love-sick puppy I couldn't stay away. There isn't a huge amount of information on this series as of yet, but Marvel are set to debut a new all-female *Avengers* line-up that looks huge, illogical and insane. The team will be headed up by She-Hulk and appears to feature some unlikely members, such as Kitty Pride and Medusa. This comic may not be the easiest "jumping-in point" if you haven't read much Marvel before, but it's an exciting premise and is set to hit stores in May. [Anna Turner]

In The Middle

A Moment More Sublime

The life of a college professor

Labour disputes and classroom discussions of Aristotle are not the first subjects which spring to mind when considering what makes a gripping work of fiction. Yet Stephen Grant's debut novel, *A Moment More Sublime*, has both in abundance and still remains eloquent, witty and engrossing.

A Moment More Sublime centres on Tom Phelps, a philosophy lecturer and union representative at a sixth form college in London. Tom and his colleagues are forced to protect their jobs through industrial action when the corrupt principal Dickie, with the support of the college governors and his sycophantic management team, decide to make a quarter of the staff redundant in order to modernise the school's buildings. As a union representative, Tom is forced to fight a drawn out and largely rhetorical battle with management whilst attempting to settle down with his partner Sofia, deal with the attentions of an ardent female student, and sate his passion for tennis.

The novel has been surrounded by controversy, as Grant resigned from his position at Richmond Upon Thames College in October, a mere three months after the novel's publication, after he faced disciplinary action for dealing with the media without prior authorisation. Grant has stressed *A Moment More Sublime* is not directly inspired by the labour dispute he was directly involved with in recent years, however press coverage of the college's approach to Grant's literary work has raised some speculation there may be more to the apparent fictional work that initially meets the eye.

Grant writes eloquently and breathes life into the rather dry subject of labour disputes by ensuring all the characters, from the morally bankrupt managers and their lackies, to the often bizarre members of teaching staff, are well-rounded and at all times humorous. Whether it's the Klingon-obsessed teacher, the secretary who seduced her way to a more prestigious position, or the inattentive and erratic student, Grant's characterisation and brief witty interludes drive the third person narrative on at a rapid pace.

A Moment More Sublime is a surprising novel. It is a novel which, based in the realms of fiction, reflects on current predicaments within our education system and, as such, is hugely topical. Grant, through the use of Aristotle's philosophy, also prompts the reader to consider what it means to be a good and wise person even when the rule of petty tyrants impinges upon our own relatively small worlds. [Elinor Cosgrave]



Food

Bird and Beast



[Photo: Bird and Beast]

A cut above your usual Nandos

Any establishment that claims to be 'the home of awesome chicken' is likely to be met with scepticism, seeing as Nando's has always been the undisputed go-to for the nation's poultry needs. However, we can confirm that Bird and Beast, a restaurant that opened in Leeds' bustling city centre last July, is wholly deserving of that title, and may well be the one to kick the UK's fave off its peri-peri pedestal.

Upon entering Bird and Beast there was an air of tranquillity; the muted lighting, the brick walls and soft music put us swiftly at ease and soothed our frazzled student nerves. Not to mention the array of delectable cocktails they had on offer. My personal favourite was the Strawberry Daiquiri, a whimsical, fuchsia concoction that was fresh and fruity to the taste, packing a mighty punch. At £6.95, their cocktails are not easy on the wallet, but they make for a delightful treat, producing a sense of elation that is worth every penny. We have all just finished our exams, after all. The restaurant also has its own separate bar called The Beats, for those who simply wish to enjoy a beverage in a cosy, laid-back environment.

With drinks that good, we couldn't wait for our taste buds to be dazzled by the food available. While Bird and Beast are renowned for their tasty free-range chicken, their menu also boasts baby back ribs and several wholesome salads. We ordered a selection of succulent chicken pieces, which were coated in a thick BBQ sauce that was rich with smoky flavours. The chicken was transcendent; the tenderness of the meat coupled with that distinctive sauce made for a truly joyous experience. However, a warning for the nimble fingered eater; the sauce is extremely sticky, so Bird and Beast may not be the best place for a first date, unless you have mastered the art of eating like an adult, which we, unfortunately, have not. The chicken was complemented perfectly by a side of sweet potato wedges, which were silky-smooth on the inside with a crispy, generously seasoned outer skin. The experience was made even better by the amiable waiting staff, who brought our food to the table with prompt efficiency.

The owner of the restaurant jokingly warned me about the heartiness of the portion sizes before we ordered, but we gave a good-natured laugh as he was clearly unaware of our whale-like appetites. Yet, by the end of the main course, we sat comatose with satiation, and had to take a brief hiatus in order to compose order. Once recovered, we eagerly perused the dessert menu, and settled on a masterfully made apple crumble with cream and what can only be described as a 'life-changing' chocolate fudge brownie.

Overall, for excellent customer service and decently priced chicken presented with an effortless flair, Bird and Beast cannot be beaten. Your pursuit for poultry need go on no longer, so make sure you head on down to enjoy a free range feast. [Melissa Gitari]

Travel

A Day in York

Pub grub and culture on your doorstep

After a month of exams and being trapped in a continuous migratory pattern between Hyde Park and Edward Boyle, there was much talk about 'getting out' and escaping Leeds for a day. That's how last Sunday, eight pounds and a twenty minute train ride later I found myself, along with my housemates, arriving into York.

The original plan had been to find a country-wstyle pub, complete with roaring fire, in which to get a drink, but the sun was shining and the temptation to wander the tangled mass of cobbled streets and medieval buildings that greeted us upon arrival was far greater. With vague talk of finding the minster, we wandered through the city exploring the plethora of antique bookshops and vintage stores.

After a couple of recommendations from the locals, we stopped by 'The Golden Fleece', where I was served a local ale by a barman who sagely advised me to watch out for Lady Peckett, the resident ghost who has a penchant for moving furniture and surprising unwitting guests on their way to the toilets. The pub is certainly not hiding its reputation as the most haunted pub in York, no mean feat considering pretty much every establishment lays claim to a couple of resident spirits. The promise of ghostly sightings only adds to York's historical presence, as the remnants of the past shape the city's beautiful architecture.

I would certainly recommend The Golden Fleece as a place to get a drink, but we had been told that 'Ye Olde Starre Inn' was the best place for a Sunday Roast. As the oldest pub in York, it is situated in the area known as 'The Shambles', York's oldest and best preserved medieval street. Ye Olde Starre Inn did not disappoint on the Sunday roast; they even put together a veggie roast for the non-meat eaters in our group. It is also situated very close to York Minster, where we went after our meal to soak up the last of the winter sun and absorb the beautiful architecture.

Before we left, we had to head back down The Shambles. This was undoubtedly my favourite part of the City and is a must for any visit; the narrow cobbled streets and ancient low hanging buildings will transport you back into York's rich medieval history. Nestled between the antique shops and cosy pubs, you will find 'The Early Grey Tea Rooms', which invites you to sit amidst oak beams and tapestries and enjoy hot buttered tea cakes, which of course we did.

The historic city may feel like a little country village, as York ignores the demand for the grey tower blocks and masses of concrete that define other cities. We arrived with no expectations and found ourselves spoilt for choice, trying to soak up as much as we could before returning to Leeds. You could spend a day wandering through the streets visiting the shops, soaking up the beauty of York Minster or just sit and enjoy a long lazy lunch in front of a roaring fire. However you choose to spend your day, visiting York is a must for your time at Leeds and a perfect way to escape the stresses of work. [Annie Foyster]

Calendar Events

20th February	21st February	22nd February	23rd February	24th February	25th February	26th February
4-6pm	9am-12pm	9:45am-4pm	6-7pm	6-9pm	1-3pm	1-4pm
Make cocktails with SocieTEA. LUU Room 4. Learn to make tea cocktails and winter warmers. Non-alcoholic (but it's easy to add)	Scout and Guide: Leeds Monopoly. Meet at Parkinson steps. Explore your city and monopoly around the main sights. Wear comfy shoes.	GIAG: Conservation. Meet at Parkinson steps. Prepare to get mucky digging in a local woodland. BBQ lunch will be provided.	Bridge the Gap. Meet in Union Foyer at 5:15. Volunteer at an old folks home playing bingo and having a good natter.	GIAG: ISOC. The Common Room. Grab some free food at a delicious banquet made by the society's members	Cupcake decorating. LUU Room 2. £2. Treat yourself and your sweet tooth. Come along and make some cakes.	Challenge Leeds, Civic Hall. Grab the chance to talk to Leeds City Council about key student issues.
5:30-7:30pm	9:30am-5:30pm	2-5:30pm	8-11pm	11am-4pm	1-7pm	6-7:30pm
GIAG Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Edge Studio 2. Try a new way to keep fit that will kick ass with this combat sport.	Trip to York with Medieval Society. Meet under old clock face in York Station, £15 non members. Go on a tour with Dr Alaric Hall.	GIAG: Golf. Cookridge Hall Golf Club. £5. Jump on the No.6 bus and give it a try with qualified pros to help you learn.	Her Campus Pub Quiz, Terrace. Test your knowledge, meet the committee and win some fab prizes.	LUU Guide Dogs Sensory Unit. LUU University Square. Meet trainee guide dogs and experience what it's like to be blind.	Creative writing with Scribe Magazine. Get crafting your best poetry and prose with the finest arts mag collective on campus.	Bevan Healthcare for the Homeless talk. Baines Wing 4.12. £1 non-members. Talk to GP's who help the homeless and hear patient's perspectives.

Healthy Mind Tips

Hear from Mind Matters Society President Lawrence Thompson about tips for improving mental well-being

Tip 1: Talk it out with someone you trust

Tip 2: Make the most of access to proper support services

Tip 3: Maintaining a healthy diet and regular exercise

Tip 4: Maintaining a regular sleep pattern

Tip 5: Learn from the experience of others

In celebration of welfare week, Mind Matter society President Lawrence Thompson spoke to In The Middle about the best coping strategies to improve mental health

It's good to talk. Chat to someone you trust and talk out whatever difficulty you're having. One of the most powerful phrases to hear when someone is in difficulty is: 'me too' or 'we'll find a way through this.'

Proper support services are available. Mental health and well-being are important and there are some things where only professionals can offer the right help.

Last year, the society launched a campaign called 'Time to Change'. This pledge was signed by the university which led to the creation of a 24/7 email listening and signposting service. This has increased the support available to anyone with concerns about their mental wellbeing.

There is a weekly peer support group every Tuesday from 5:30-6:30, organised by Mind Matters Society in cooperation with national mental health charity Rethink. There is also a welfare hour every Monday at the same time with a trained welfare officer, who provides an active listening service.

Don't be afraid to learn from your experiences. Some people have particular experiences with particular treatments and there's often variation in how 'well' someone responds to particular treatments.

Lawrence was quick to add that myths around mental health can serve as barriers to support. Student Kat Jones said: "Mental wellbeing is something that affects us all, and issues with mental health can be equally, if not in certain cases more, debilitating than a problem that manifests itself physically."

There's lots of evidence to show how diet, exercise and maintaining regular sleep patterns can help Mental Health generally. Lawrence stated that these will be of limited benefit if you have a formal diagnosis. A member of the society said: "you have to be resilient, set realistic expectations, and be open to different viewpoints. However you also have to be kind to yourself and seek the support available to you when you need it."

Lawrence concluded: "Mental Health is a phrase which covers a wide range of difficulties and issues, and there's no silver bullet for any of them. Consider your own needs and expectations".

Columns



Ellie Parkes

We're talking about graduation and I'm hearing a great deal about London at the moment. Perhaps it's because I'm old and a lot of my friends have flown the nest, accepted their age, bitten the bullet and are now in the process of evolving into real, grown-up, tax-paying, earning people. Meanwhile, I cling on to the blissful liminality of studentdom in complete denial (I'm not a girl – not yet a wooman).

I went to the Big Smoke the other day to see a friend. I turned up to discover there were no less than five other graduates from our close group of friends in second-year at Leeds, who all happened to have

It's time to get over London

converged in that one sitting room.

You might think because I'm from Suffolk and thus a horrible Southerner who only befriends posh cultured people who share a distaste for Greggs and rain.

But stereotypes are the first thing we need to get rid of. First thing's first – Greggs sausage rolls are fantastic. They may not constitute exactly the brand of 'street food' that everyone raves about in London, but you can't tell me that a hot floppy sausage cuddled in flaky pastry on a high-street bench, doesn't warm your cockles against the wind and snow. Secondly, people think it always rains in Leeds. Not true, although I admit it may be one of the only cities in the country to combine a pub with a boat on the bus route. Better to be safe than sorry though, as Nan always says.

There's a clear degree of resentment towards London's inflated prices and aloofness, not just in the North, but anywhere in the UK outside the 1hr capital commuter-belt. I've come to notice an attitude towards Londoners, which can be paralleled to the one in France towards the Parisians. My French friend from the south called his romantic national ambassadors: "impolite snobs zat sink zey're better zan everybody else." Re. Londoners, the delightful Yorkshire equivalent I heard was: "so far up their own arses- they think they can see the sun shine out of their gobs when they speak".

"It's easier to get a job in London" is something I've heard a lot. But Leeds is actually a pretty sweet place for job opportunities, especially in Law and Finance. "You get paid more in London" is another excuse. But you then have to spend it on your shockingly high rent and living costs – so, quid pro quo.

To me it seems really to be an attitude thing. The HS2 malarkey is an odd one – waved around by Londoners like Boris, it's a policy that's blatantly got a

capital-centric, messy blonde thinking cap on top. Isn't linking the North to London an idea based on the premise that the North needs the direct help of the South in order to improve? Surely, if we're talking railways, we should be opening up the country horizontally, rather than vertically, if we are to right the current skew of wealth?

I have lived in and loved a range of places, but it's the people in the places that always makes me want to stay. There's nothing about Leeds or Manchester or Birmingham that needs to change to get young people to flock up here but, rather, if more young people that came here were to stay, I think things would quickly change. Hordes of students do come already, but if the graduates stayed, based their friend groups up here, their start-ups and their businesses – the students would turn into young professionals, and then into yuppie families that would do-up the crumbling Victorian housing, work up here and boost the economy.

Talk about politics, culture, practicality, but, please, in the word of Harry Enfield's Yorkshireman: "don't talk to me about sophisticayshun, luv – ah've BEEN ta Leeds!"

Leadership Lame

For the next four weeks you'll be bombarded by posters, videos, and slogans galore; an election in which the person with the most memorably punny name is immediately guaranteed a head start. Soon no surface, vertical or horizontal, will be safe from the infuriating scourge that is chalk. Everywhere you look walls, bins, trees, pavements, steps, and fences will be covered in illegible scrawls and nonsensical hashtags. And unless the rain can reach them to wash them away, there they will stay for eternity (shout out to the "Vote Huge" brick at the top of Brudenell Road. May you one day be liberated from your chalky hell.)

But the ubiquitous chalking is nothing compared to the entire swathe of rainforest used to paper every wall and corridor with posters, manifestos and flyers. Or you could always use this very newspaper upon which to daub your slogan, as one inspired candidate endeavoured to do last year. I'm sure I speak for all students journalists out there when I say that there really is nothing like seeing your words and hard work slapped up on a wall covered in paint to really make you feel respected and valued as a member of LUU.

I've not got anything against the candidates themselves. It's what people want to do and that's absolutely fine. It's more than fine, it's great. It's bloody hard work and the next few weeks will be torturous for them. It's the most important year of their lives for the final year students and they're doing that on top of running a campaign for over a month. It almost seems like irresponsible timing by LUU, but I'm sure they have their reasons. After all, the students always come first.

So I really do wish them the best of luck. A few of my best friends are running and I'll support them and help them and certainly vote for them. But then that's just it. I'm voting for my friends. Everyone is voting for their friends. You ask a student who has just voted why they picked their choices and the answer would be a) I know them, b) Their name was catchy, or c) I wanted to get some free stuff from LUU so I picked at random.

Maybe it's bad that this is the case. Maybe we should all be a lot more involved in the democratic process of the Union and stop being so cynical about how much our votes actually matter outside of giving them a nifty number to wave in the face of Sheffield's student union. Maybe incentives and bombardment aren't the way to go about it. Could it be that what needs to be addressed is why we need to revert to these tactics to get students caring about politics, big or small? Then again, if the main political parties in the UK started offering out Haribos, what's to say we wouldn't all be much happier?



Jen Pritchard

It's started.

From now until Easter a plague will sweep Leeds. Not content with containing itself within The Union, or even campus, it will seep into the rest of Leeds, infest Hyde Park, and even cement itself inescapably within your home via social media. I'm talking about The Leadership Race.



“There’s this quote, I can’t remember who by now, but it goes something like: ‘A reader lives a thousand lives, the man who never reads lives only one.’ - Victoria