

# In The Middle

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## Women's Issue



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

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# In The Middle with Slow Club



Walking backstage to Slow Club's dressing room I hear booming laughter and suppressed giggles. Charles Watson, the bearded multi-instrumentalist, and Rebecca Taylor, energetic lead-singer, are sat on the floor attempting to toast some pitta, a homely and inviting sight. Rebecca immediately offers the concoction around with a homemade guacamole accompaniment, putting any nerves before the coming interview completely to rest. After politely refusing and finding somewhere to sit in the small box room we begin to talk music, Samba and Hollywood glamour.

Slow Club have been pretty much touring since they first formed a band, only stopping occasionally to record. They are therefore, as far as bands go, experts at live performance. "Smaller towns are great because people come out even if they've not really heard you," Rebecca tells me. "But of course you have to do the main cities like Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds too." So what makes each tour different? "They all have their own flavour mostly because of van jokes or personality," Charles reflects. "But this one's definitely been a lot more sober." Approaching nearly 10 years since the band was first formed, Slow Club know how to get the most out of a touring experience, the music and audience being the primary focus of the moment: "Drinking isn't good for your music or you," Rebecca draws on previous tour experiences to make the most out of their touring so far. "I've stopped and it's been amazing, I just feel bad for the boys."

Rebecca and Charles first met at a Samba workshop, set up by their schools to merge

music departments. From a young age, the pair have been into music, relying and leaning on it to "cower away from the bullies". Keeping in touch over MSN, Rebecca and Charles exchanged music, but didn't form a band until much later. After that however, "it really never stopped. I don't know what happened but we've carried on being in this band and will continue to do so until we're older". Rebecca seems sure and certain in saying this, the bond and friendship between the pair undeniable.

**"Imagine if you got everything straight away, you probably wouldn't make music any more"**

From my few moments spent with the duo, it's quite easy to see why they work so well together, their opposite outlooks on life and music meeting to form a kind of harmony. Yet they are also reluctant to question why they work: "I think because we haven't really figured out how it works, that's why it still works." Working together for such a long time, learning each others strengths and weaknesses, has added a definite humbleness to the group, especially on Rebecca's part: "Imagine if you got everything straight away, you probably wouldn't make music anymore, but for us there's a real saddy's approach to stardom. I'm happy for it to take

ages." Leaving behind the glitz and glamour of the Hollywood dream, Rebecca seems to have adopted Charles' more laid back approach to music. "I'm dreaming of having a fresh pair of jeans and a guitar that stays in tune", to be content and thankful for their success thus far. Rebecca adds, "unfortunately I am only happy if Charles likes it so I'm stuck in this for life, and vice versa."

Their different approaches to life and music is further evident through their approaches to songwriting: "I make sure I'm in horrible relationships with awful people and allow them to break my spirit until I write songs about it," Rebecca says sinisterly. Charles on the other hand, remarks to make music you have "to stay aware of your surroundings and interpret it really."

After nearly 10 years without a break, the pair seem more than happy to see where life takes them as opposed to planning ahead: "We're at the stage where we don't know if we're gonna do a load of festivals or just stop and have a break and start writing. I guess we'll see what happens." Reflecting on my meeting with the duo, it is evident that the music world is lucky to have such a dedicated and hardworking band. Slow Club are witty, thankful and perhaps most importantly, the best of friends. So why should you give them a listen? "We're the only duo after the Chuckle Brothers, so we're basically the second greatest duo to come out of Rotherham." If that's not an incentive to listen to a band, I don't know what is. *[Stasi Rose]*





# Interview: Ghostpoet

*Shedding Skin* is unlike any of Ghostpoet's previous albums. Obara Ejimiwe – aka Ghostpoet – is a London based vocalist and musician whose recent release 'Off Peak Dreams' encapsulates the daily grind of a commuter. But *Shedding Skin* is bigger than London; "It's definitely in there, it's natural that it gets into the music....but it's more a feeling I've got from travelling the world, it's more global. The feeling that things could be better."

Japanese frames the album, marking the three different stages in the process of shedding a past self. "A few days previous, I watched this documentary called Jiro Dreams of Sushi. I was so taken by his life and his attitude towards his work – the idea of dedicating your life to one job, one passion and seeing it through to the end, and trying throughout the course of your career to keep a level of quality and never falling below that – it got stuck in my head and I thought, right, I want to get some Japanese on this album."

**"It's definitely in there...  
the feeling that things  
could be better"**

"That was the night before the last day of mixing", recalls Ejimiwe, "so it was a bit last minute." But identity has always been at the heart of *Shedding Skin*, "the idea that regardless of what you look like, where you are in your life, you can shed any past or baggage that is stopping you from moving forward. The artwork reflects that – it's my skin cells under a microscope. Looking at that you can't tell if it's a man or a woman, a white person or a black person."

*Shedding Skin* captures an intensely personal process yet Ejimiwe seems to embark on his most experimental album to date. Driven by a "burning attitude, a strong desire to make something I wanted to make", Ejimiwe leaves behind the comfort of his electronic production to try his hand at a guitar record. "I'm a huge fan of guitar music, always have been. I've flirted with it in the past few records and I have a great touring band, so I thought why not give it a go."

Was it more difficult making this album then? "No, not really, definitely different though. For once, I allowed the music I was listening to to influence the music I was making. I was listening to a lot of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Interpol, TV on the Radio, Massive Attack... but I didn't want to replicate what they were doing, I just allowed stuff that I love to influence what I was going to make. It's like making a copy of a painting... say there are ten people doing a still life drawing, you will get ten very different paintings. Everyone has such unique perspectives on what they see in front of them. What I make is always going to be me", Ejimiwe laughs, "to my detriment maybe."

Quietly slipped onto Soundcloud during the process of making *Shedding Skin*, I ask Ejimiwe about the idea behind his side project, The Art of Nothing. Ejimiwe sounds genuinely surprised, "Thank you very much, I didn't think anybody listened to that. Basically, I always get classed as a poet, even though I don't think I am at all, so thought I'd have a go at it. 'The Blue Painter' is the result of recording a conversation with a taxi driver, using interesting soundscapes as a creative springboard to write poetry. It's trying to continue the conversation, taking it in the direction I thought it would go."

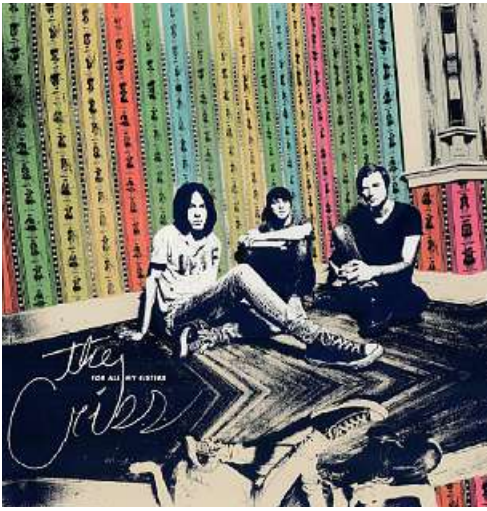
Will there be more The Art of Nothing material to look forward to? "I've realised making this record, I shouldn't keep all my eggs in one basket, I want to keep this Ghostpoet thing as free as possible – and having this space to experiment, to do some creative stuff away from Ghostpoet definitely takes the pressure off."

**"For once, I allowed the  
music I was listening to  
to influence the music I  
was making"**

With just weeks until his tour, I ask Ejimiwe how he's feeling. "I'm really looking forward to playing the new record and touring with the new band. This record was made with live performance in mind. If they're around, I'd love to have the actual artist perform with me but I'm quite happy with what we've been practising – I've got my synth/keyboard player who does the female vocals and my new guitarist who's got a bit of a voice," Ejimiwe laughs, "he really has."

After the darkness of *Some Say I So I Say Light*, it's fair to say that *Shedding Skin* is about dealing with the aftermath, about getting on your hands and knees to sift through and process the pain before you can truly let go. And slowly but surely, Ejimiwe gets there. [Emily Watts]

## For All My Sisters by The Crips



For me, a lost thirteen year old transitioning from the shallow pool of pop-music into the depths of the indie music scene, The Crips were the tidal wave that propelled me through the world of jangly guitar riffs and angst-fuelled lyrics.

With their first five albums practically acting as blueprints for how to make a perfect indie-rock album, I was anxious to hear if Gary, Ryan and Ross Jarman could remain on top of the indie-music pedestal.

From the dizzy heights of the thrashing guitar opener on the track 'Finally Free,' to the impassioned distorted vocals on 'Simple Story,' *For All My Sisters* proves to be another triumph for the three-piece from Wakefield.

Speaking about the new record, the band have said that it has been heavily influenced by 80s pop music and that describing the new album as 'poppy' is in no way a dirty word. This influence is clear on tracks such as 'Different Angle', with its anthemic, catchy and upbeat chorus and 'An Ivory Hand' where a charging guitar is matched with Gary's rousing and nostalgic vocals.

Although the band has declared that "punk rock and indie are dead," the record contradicts this. There are reflections of past albums in the record; the commanding yet charming riffs and understated vocal performances are still prominent throughout, as are the reflective lyrics which prompt such passionate harmonies from gig-goers.

The album challenges the band's refined formula without straying too far from previous works. The Crips have proven that they are still an important band for any young, aspiring 'indie-head', and *For All My Sisters* is certainly an important port of call on this journey. *[Olivia Marshall]*

## Gig Guide

Friday 6th March  
**Romare at HiFi, £5**  
 Off the back of a sterling debut LP, Ninja Tune's Romare brings his eclectic set to HiFi

Saturday 7th March  
**Crater Lake at Wharf Chambers, £5**  
 All-day celebrating avant-garde music with a special preference for noise. A baptism of fire for the curious.

Monday 8th March  
**Zun Zun Egui at Brudenell Social Club, £8**  
 Bristol based international crew play whatever sticks under the guidance of Fuck Button's Andrew Hung.

Wednesday 11th March  
**Ravi Coltrane Quarter at Howard Assembly Room, £16.50**  
 Grammy nominated jazz great with a command of past and future. It's in his blood.

Thursday 5th March  
 Kalyan Presents at Belgrave Music Hall, £4  
 The night ('Swimming In') will feature Manchetser's Saultation Dub Collective alongside visual artists making for an eclectic evening of thoughtful music and art.

## We Slept at Last by Marika Hackman



Marika Hackman's debut album has finally arrived, marking an incredibly promising start for the 23-year-old solo artist. Coming after three years of hard graft, which saw her team up with the likes of Leeds boys Alt-J as well as folk powerhouse Laura Marling, this album proves to be a purposeful and powerful statement of intent.

Kicking things off, the album's lead single 'Drown' sets the tone with its spooky atmosphere. This is followed by 'Before I Sleep' maintaining the animalistic imagery and unnerving melodies. This is an album of understated and melancholic songs which, though interesting at first, soon becomes a little monotonous.

You have to wonder how many songs you could really pick out individually that are worth a second listen.

The only genuine high point the album comes in the form of 'Animal Fear'. It's hard to define this kind of music; it sits right on the threshold between folk and rock. The gloomy ambience stands out but it's only once this track in to slide more towards the indie-folk section as an upbeat and cheery guitar-filled chorus that it really shines for me, which giving a new flavour to Hackman. That said, while the other singles make for a good listen they don't have that press-repeat effect that 'Animal Fear' does.

*We Slept at Last* is a good start for Marika Hackman, she establishes herself and her preference for the dark and the glum, but this consistency means the individual songs never manage to be memorable. Hers is a sound you won't necessarily forget, it's just tough to say that it's one that invites you back for more. *[Luke Humphrey]*





Clockwise from above:: Twin Peaks, The Orielles, Bruising and Twin Peaks. Photos: Jack Roberts and Sam Lewis

## Twin Peaks, Bruising & The Orielles (Secret Gig) 22nd February 2015

Events these days very rarely fit the bill of true punk rock. It is difficult in an industry of intense competition and promotion to stage something that evades the tethers of commerce and pop. Revenue quite literally runs the show. But last Sunday, three bands went against the grain and played in front of about 50 people (including members of Eagulls and Weirids) in a smart bungalow between Headingley and Meanwood, owned by members of Leeds band Jasper House.

The show was hosted by Bruising (Ben Lewis and Naomi Baguley) and featured local band The Orielles, who have an average age of just 17, and very special guests Twin Peaks from Chicago who are currently giving the tiresome garage rock genre a kick up the arse. There was no garage in this house, but there was a living room in which equipment was cobbled together and the bands played with a lovely, sweat-inducing intimacy.

Refreshingly, the music was central to this house party. Too many events at houses in Leeds end in horrific legless squalor, soundtracked by painfully repetitious deep house. But rock n roll isn't dead in West Yorkshire. Here, the crowd sipped a beer and enjoyed the sweet, sunlit indie of The Orielles and the ragged yet contemplative punk of Bruising before things got a bit rowdier for the American headliners. Twin Peaks' set can only be described as Cooper famously hailed his coffee in the band's namesake TV show: it was damn fine.

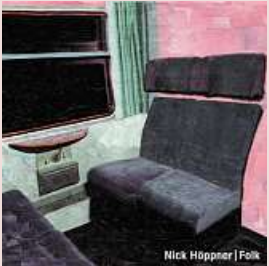
It's satisfying to see the punk torch being carried into houses rather than onto the stage. Naturally, the music felt more at home. The startling youthfulness of these bands is also very promising. Out of the rich musical hotbed of Hyde Park, Headingley and Meanwood could sprout an exciting new indie rock movement, akin to that of Twin Peaks' in Chicago, to run alongside its profusion of bedroom producers and DJs. Keep your ears open.

*[Oliver Walkden]*





# Weekly Chart



**Nick Höppner**  
*Rising Overheads*  
[Ostgut Ton]

Forthcoming from Höppner's debut album, Folk. Stripped back, hypnotic techno.



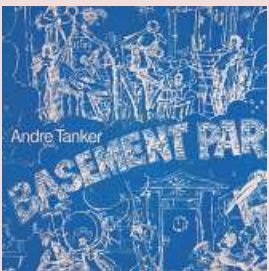
**Sacha Mambo & Guillaume Des Bois as Macadam Mambo DJ's**  
*Lolo La Pantera*  
[Macadam Mambo]

Easy-listening, Italo-influenced sunshine music with funky undertones.



**Formel**  
*Harare*  
[Komplike]

Vinyl-only deep house with Nina Kraviz-esque vocals.



**Andre Tanker**  
*Hosanna*  
[Left Ear Records]

Trinidadian Andre Tanker blends reggae, disco, funk and calypso in this must-have re-issue.



**Khotin**  
*Tsoi*  
[Clan Destine Traxx]

Dark acid house by Canadian producer, Khotin on new compilation, Dark Acid IV.

[Harriet Shepherd]

## Preview Just A Little: Nightmares on Wax

As we nudge house music gently off the scene, and welcome a revamp of funk, groove and disco, we also prepare for the astonishingly cool dude that is George Evelyn, AKA Nightmares On Wax.

He will be returning to't North on 20th March, having grown up here with a soundtrack of dub, reggae and heavy bass. He now resides in Ibiza, claiming that he 'comes from the city, but sunshine is in my music'.

The intimate venue, Wire (in conjunction with Just A Little), will play host to the musical wizard, hoping that his experimental chilled-out, grooving vibes will bring some zing and Balearic sun to our chilly city. Strong support in the shape of Stephen Howe and Simon Scott, are juicy additions, to ensure those bodies are suitably warmed up for a blistering boogie. Wire has been on a winning streak with its recent chain of events, hosting Ben UFO, Daniel Avery and Boddika, to name but a few of the blinders. Add to that Nightmares On Wax, and the underground pit suddenly becomes Ali Baba's lavish cave.

The thing about Nightmares On Wax is that he is constantly evolving and adapting to the music scene – he will not fade away like some of these artists and genres. Indeed, he has been continually reinventing himself since his first studio album in 1991. His quest has always been to find fresh music, guaranteed to leave you 'Feeling Good', and even if you've never heard of him, there's a chance you may be one of the 1.5 million viewers/listeners of his Boiler Shop set back in 2013: a stonking hour and a half session of investigational hip-hop, soul and groove.

He is Warp Records' longest serving artist, and for good reason: each project is dealt with in isolation, allowing inexorable improvements and genius updates. Having dabbled in the band scene, Mr Evelyn is now back on a solo mission, making music for the people to dance. He then nips to London the following night, but according to his events page, that is it for the UK, so don't risk it, buy a ticket. [Flora Tilley]





[Photo: Wilde Press]

# Interview: Heidi

In light of our women's issue, *In The Middle* interviewed Heidi van den Amstel, better known as Heidi, to celebrate her success and prosperity in a male-dominated industry.

If one thing can be said for Heidi, it's that she's come a long way from her home of Windsor, Canada. Meeting the guys at German record label Get Physical and going on to host a weekly UK Radio 1 show, Heidi's success has quickly become international. Her popularity in Britain has undoubtedly been catapulted by her involvement on the radio; she's gone from working in a record store, to hosting stages at Parklife and the Warehouse Project. Her influence has also inspired many upcoming female artists in a resurgence of female producers and DJs, much to Heidi's approval. Speaking to the internationally recognised DJ herself, she spoke to me about her roots, the sevenyear influence of British radio and, of course, her opinion on the ever growing female influence on underground house and techno music.

**“The sisterhood in this business is powerful and it's only getting stronger”**

Born and raised in Canada, Heidi owes a lot to the 90's house and techno coming out of Detroit, just a stone's throw away. Living so close to Route 94 and the birthplace of House music, van den Amstel had the opportunity to meet some of the scenes heavyweights from an early age. “I was always going over to Detroit to see bands and to go record shopping, and then in the mid 90's I met Richie Hawtin”. Introducing her to mid-90s techno, Hawtin's was an influence that proved pivotal for the DJ. Growing up as a Rock n' Indie kid, it had always been Heidi's aspiration to work in a record store – an opportunity she seized when she moved to London in 2001. After consideration, she set up her own record store, Phonica Records in 2004, off the back of working at Koobla. This shop can still be found in central London today. Like anyone who is successful in the music industry, Heidi was consistently opportunistic throughout the early stages of her career, making her an icon for other DJs and producers wanting to break into the scene today.

Despite BBC Radio 1's unquestionable impact on Heidi's career, the UK underground house and techno scene hadn't always welcomed the Canadian's DJing presence. “At the time the UK wasn't really interested in me, mainly because I'm not a producer and I don't make music. I had to establish myself properly as a DJ before they took notice, which I admire”. Due to the competitiveness of the UK underground dance scene, Heidi had to venture out into Europe, meeting the guys at Get Physical. She went on to tour with M.A.N.D.Y and Booka Shade, which truly gave Heidi the experience she needed in the field. This was back when Traktor didn't exist, when all mixing was to be done on vinyl and there was never the option of pressing the trusty 'sync' button on your controller. Despite initial difficulties, Heidi's skills quickly improved and her DJ career took off in Britain. Her persistence to improve musically is widely

appreciated amongst the many fans she's accumulated over the radio for the past 7 years and has been the reason why she has achieved so much success over the course of her career.

“Being part of Radio 1 allowed me to push underground dance music to a much larger audience, it's something I absolutely love doing, and has given me the opportunity to see young talented DJs musically progress, like watching children grow up, which is a wonderful feeling”

Having played to a national audience for a number of years, the Canadian has utilised the radio as a means of developing her career. Continually surrounded by DJs with similar musical interests, Heidi has been able to develop her technical ability at the same time as discovering new music. The radio has given her the opportunity to play at a variety of events throughout the UK, especially in Manchester where her Jackathon parties have been hugely popular. Throughout the interview Heidi was continually appreciative of the opportunity British dance music has given her, describing the past 5 years as “one wild ride”.

**“We are all friends, there's no bitchy vibe, just lots of love and support. The way women should be with each other”**

Along with Mary Anne Hobbs and Annie Mac, Radio 1 has fashioned one of Britain's most popular female house and techno DJs, purely based on her mixing expertise. Heidi has broken through the once patriarchal underground music scene to reach the forefront of British dance radio. She acknowledges the impact of the female predecessors that influenced her prior to committing to DJing as a full time job in 2007, “there were quite a few women before me. Miss Kitten, Ellen Allien, Magda, Lottie, Lisa Lashes, Ann Savage, Sister Bliss, Dj Heather, etc. They opened some doors for me. I actually came on the scene a bit later.” The rise of young female artists and DJs is an important progression for house and techno, and one that should be promoted throughout the industry. Heidi outlines the importance of female support, “I wouldn't be where I am today without some very key women in my life” – agent Patci and close friend Catheryne Littlejohns have helped her get to where she is today. “They have been on this insane ride with me for the past 10 years. It's not an easy job. It's the hardest and most rewarding thing I've done in my life to date”.  
[James Bate]



# What does a feminist look like?

Whether artists such as Bjork wearing huge headdresses, or Ellie Goulding at Glastonbury being referred to as 'the gold bra' on Twitter by *The Guardian*, fashion can be used against performers in sexist vitriol. If Bjork were to stroll on stage in a pair of high-waisted mum jeans and a white t-shirt, the musical performance would be swallowed by a torrent of guesses as to what was 'wrong' with her. The issue all along has been how female frontwomen have to, or feel pressured to, live up to certain expectations. In almost every interview now a woman is asked whether she's a feminist or not. The answer is irrelevant. A female singer shouldn't be asked if she is a feminist, because it shouldn't be surprising if she is. The pressure is already on by the fact that the question exists. The answer should be 'of course aren't you?' But the word has been so changed, morphed, demonized and misunderstood over the past twenty years that it's become an extremely unfair and weighted question.

Alanna is the frontwoman for Joanna Gruesome. Alanna is a feminist. That's not a revelation, a gigantic political statement, or an admittance to violent activism. She's just a woman who believes in equal rights for women. But the division between women is so rife and raw right now, that somehow feminism has become an issue that women sometimes have with other women. The pressure to be a 'perfect feminist' with unwavering confidence to fight, is an unrealistic expectation in itself.

'I remember there was a youtube comment once,' said Alanna. 'We played this show, and the sound was awful, I couldn't hear anything, so I knew I was out of tune and this comment said 'well at least she's pretty'.

'Sometimes I feel like I have to look nice, or make an effort to look pretty', because I feel as though even if it sounds bad then I'll have something to fall back on. Which is awful and so unhealthy. Yeah there's definitely a pattern of, if you do something to your

appearance that's supposedly a 'feminist statement' you'll get grief for it. But if you don't then there's feminist pressure there, and you feel like a failure,' the singer adds.

My mother and I had a similar conversation a few days later, in which I stressed to her the importance of not condemning a woman because she appears to be appealing to objectification. Women shouldn't walk around miserable just to reinforce the feminist cause. However I feel we should, at every opportunity, discuss why, and from where, that pressure comes.

This is something that both girls translated into music. This is where the male technicians come in. Women musicians have to prove themselves to such an extent that D.I.Y music takes on a whole new meaning.

**"Like can I not take a shit without it being a feminist statement?" Alanna McArdle**

"Yeah like that's the same thing that crops up in conversations with men who are very convinced that the reason there isn't that many female guitarists is because they're not very good. Where you have to sit and count and prove how many amazing female guitarists there are. Why should I actually have to do this? I shouldn't have to tell you all the women who play guitar who are amazing at guitar, for them to be valid in music,' says Alanna.

And it's not just guitar music that becomes stereotyped, but the incredibly male-dominated realm of electric music, can also become a bigger challenge. For a woman to prove herself there's an enormous pressure to show expertise over equipment.

That women, as we know, face far more pressure in the music industry than men. Not only do they have to constantly prove their own talent but even, as aforementioned, their own beauty. Unfortunately it may be that sometimes that a male member of the media will be perversely staring at the leg angrily stomping to the music, rather than the music itself. So next time you go and see an all-female band, or a band with an incredible female singer like Menace Beach or Joanna Gruesome, turn around if you have to; just celebrate the music without analysing the gender politics. [Jessie Florence Jones]





## Role Models Not Runway Models

Diversity is only beginning to break its way into the fashion industry. Undoubtedly, its slow progress is a problem that needs to be addressed. One way to tackle a major issue, especially one of a long-standing tradition, is to set a precedent. And on February 12th of this year, actress Jamie Brewer did just that.

Modelling in a black A-line for Carrie Hammer's 'Role Models, Not Runway Models', Brewer became the first model with Down's syndrome to grace the runway at New York Fashion Week. The aim of Hammer's showcase was to show empower women from all walks of life, featuring the likes of female CEOs and entrepreneurs.

But Brewer shouldn't just be recognised for her appearance at NYFW. She doesn't let her disability define her, but instead defies social norms and engages with issues that are undoubtedly important in contemporary society. A commendable activist for people with Down's syndrome, her contribution to the removal of the word "retarded" from a Texan law which concerned the needs for people with disabilities is just one of many ways the 30 year-old Californian is changing perceptions. Identifying herself to be a role model, Brewer has stated: 'Young girls and even young women see me and say "hey, if she can do it so can I". It's a true inspiration being a role model for any young women to encourage them in being who they are and showing who they are.'

Breaking this fashion barrier will hopefully be a game-changer for the industry. But perhaps more importantly she has turned the whole notion of 'beauty' on its head. This monumental occasion has shown that women with Down's syndrome can be portrayed as beautiful figures, moving the unrealistic idea of 'beauty' beyond the boundaries of thigh-gaps and prominent cheekbones. With this in mind, hopefully more women will be encouraged to pursue their aspirations. As Brewer says, 'embrace the fear and go for it.' [Josh Lee]

## Jane Shepherdson- A feminist fashion hero

Dubbed the 'fairy godmother of the high street', Jane Shepherdson initially made a name for herself as the woman responsible for her innovative work at Topshop. She is renowned for turning the high street brand into the fashion forerunner that it is today. Shepherdson worked for the company for 20 years, leaving as Brand Director in October 2006. Shepherdson's departure from Topshop sparked controversy based on her notoriously difficult relationship with Topshop founder, Sir Philip Green, and his decision to hire Kate Moss for a fashion collaboration, however both parties have denied any truth to this speculation.

At this point in her career Jane turned her hand to the drastically different world of charity shops. Famously receiving a handwritten note from Oxfam suggesting "I hear you've got a bit of time on your hands." It was indeed the vision and experience of Shepherdson that urged the charity to capitalise on the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion, under the label, PeopleTree.



Jane has now been CEO of Whistles for seven years. She has been credited with the brand's evolution from 'mumsy', to the sleeker, stylish silhouettes seen lining their stores today. She cites Sophia Coppola as 'The Whistles Woman', someone she considers to embody the understated sophistication of the brand. The company expanded stateside last year, evidence of her constant drive and ambition for the label to grow and develop.

However, Shepherdson is more than merely a success story of high street retail. She is an example and role model demonstrating the place of women in the world of fashion. As an advocate for change in the industry, she has previously spoken out against her field as a male dominated world, suggesting 'This industry employs over 80% women, and yet in the boardrooms, they make up less than 10%. It's women's fashion – it just doesn't make sense to me'. In an attempt to change this Shepherdson not only prides herself on communication with students and young women, but is also keen to urge this generation that they are able to affect these statistics for the better. She has most recently been presented with a CBE in the New Year Honours published at the start of this year for services to UK retail business, and continues to evolve the Whistles brand. [Molly Shanahan]





## Anna Wintour: Fashion Guru

Behind those sunglasses is a woman far more complex than meets the eye. Known for her pageboy haircut and oversized black sunglasses – reportedly used to shield viewers from her icy stare – Anna Wintour is one of the most recognisable names in fashion. Her bold decisions and cold demeanour carrying over to the world of pop culture, with Miranda Priestly of *The Devil Wears Prada* clearly channeling Wintour, something that's cemented her status in the public eye.

The accomplishments achieved by Anna Wintour have, on occasion, been overshadowed by her public image, despite the power she holds over a billion dollar industry. We have to ask ourselves, why should powerful women have to be interpreted as intimidating people? She herself recognises that men in high positions are not spoken about in such a manner, yet women in similar positions have been subjected to sexist attitudes that can harbour in boardrooms.



She began her hugely successful career at Harper's Bazaar and British Vogue. She then relocated to American Vogue where her work was associated with using less well known models, and mixing street style with high fashion for a fresh, youthful feeling. Her first issue featured a young Israeli model wearing a pair of simple jeans – a first for the fashion publication – juxtaposed with an embellished jumper. Wintour has become a pioneer in the fashion industry for having the ability to discover young talent, including designers Christopher Kane and Marc Jacobs.

Wintour has paved the way for empowering women in fashion. She sits at the helm of the fashion bible as editor of American Vogue – a position she has rightfully held for over twenty-five years. Her work has brought worldwide recognition to the magazine with each issue is eagerly awaited to set the latest trends. The most revered being the September issue which is even a subject of its own documentary.

What may go unnoticed is her philanthropic work to both the arts and other issues. As chair of the annual Met Gala at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art she has fundraised over £82 million. Other major contributions have included developing research into AIDs across the United States for over a decade, of which Wintour has said 'It is a wonderful opportunity to be able to help others, and for that I'm eternally grateful'.

[Francesca Macari]



## Wear Your Power On Your Sleeve

Fashion is not just the clothes you step into, the handbags that you carry or the shoes that you stride in, but the way a woman feels when she dresses a certain way. Fashion is a form of expression and art. Fashion allows us to express personality through an image created most often by ourselves. Yes, we are inspired by what we see other people wearing and what is hot on the catwalks, but in essence it is down to the personality and taste of us all as individuals. What is your flare? What empowers you as a woman?

Over the decades fashion limitations have been ferociously broken, liberating women and the sickly stigmas attached to what women should, or should not, wear. There is no doubt about it, that the women of the suffragette movement of the early 20th century are to thank for being the first successors to break boundaries in the hope of changing views towards women. Followed notably by Coco Chanel in regards to fashion; as her designs such as the little black dress, women's tailoring and trouser suits revolutionised women's fashion. The magnificent mademoiselle Chanel implicated freedom, comfort and practicality through her designs, the three factors that make us girls feel our best.



As styles and trends shift over time, designers may be inspired by political and social movements that accompany the years as they pass by. Season after season, designers never cease to surprise us with

their latest collections; Moschino's tongue in cheek 'McDonald's' collection for example struck controversy, yet reflects upon pop culture and lifestyle in late 2014. Meanwhile, it might be through their collections that leading fashion designers respond to changes of society. Vivienne Westwood's 'climate change, not fashion' campaign promotes Greenpeace's efforts to save the arctic from global warming.

So, next time you find yourself looking in the mirror and thinking 'is my skirt too short?', just remember we control fashion and what we wear. Follow the trends but filter it to personal style and what makes you feel flawless. In the words of the infamous Coco Chanel 'Fashion fades but only style remains'. [Alex Jones]





[Image: Stefan Wermuth/Reuters]

# A middle-aged Bond Girl: what's the fuss?

The media applause over Monica Bellucci's casting as the female lead in the new James Bond film as a huge positive step for the series is somewhat baffling. Praise for this decision, described by director Sam Mendes as "revolutionary", stems from Bellucci being, at fifty, the oldest female lead in the series history, and seems more than a little exaggerated considering the longstanding misogyny of the series that popularised the not-exactly-progressive concept of the 'Bond girl'.

In fairness, the source material is much, much worse. Ian Fleming's novels are harsh on their female characters – as a side note they are also virulently racist and homophobic – who are at best slept with and discarded. More frequently however, they are sacrificial lambs to be tortured or murdered to provide the most hackneyed form of character motivation for Bond. Fleming's sexism culminated in the widely panned *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Explicit to the point of being pornographic, it essentially exists as a means of writing leering sex scenes from what Fleming construed to be a female perspective.

The film series could only improve on this situation, and it did – slightly. Sex scenes were toned down, however offensive names such as Pussy Galore and Fleming's neanderthal attitude towards sexuality remained. Any number of ridiculous moments from the series' early years could be cited as an example but *Goldfinger's* – often cited as the best film in the series – scene of Bond forcefully 'seducing' Galore, an established lesbian who is turned heterosexual by the experience is offensive even by mid-1960s standards.

The films more or less maintained this classy tone throughout the 70's and 80's, with only *On Her Majesty's Secret Service's* Tracy DiVincenzo standing out as a well drawn female character, and even she is killed to motivate Bond's quest for vengeance in the following film. Following the AIDS crisis, the film-makers made the small concession of making Bond monogamous, which at least had the effect of reducing the time spent ogling women per film. However the series eventually went back on this and continued to flaunt the over-sexualisation of its female characters with only minor moves towards a more enlightened gender perspective throughout the 1990's, *Tomorrow Never Dies'* Chinese spy Wai Lin was at least a step in the right direction.

The advent of a more serious tone, ushered in by Daniel Craig's Bond provided some hope for real progress, but this did not get off to a good start. *Casino Royale* may have featured an excellently performed and well-rounded lead in Eva Green, but it fell victim to the predictable series traps of having one-dimensional female characters killed and/or tortured to provide character motivation. The same goes for the next two films. Only Judi Dench's M stands up as a consistent, non-sexualised female presence and surprise, surprise, she is killed off at the climax of *Skyfall*. It is bizarre considering the Craig era's rejection of other long time tropes – gadgets, puns, ridiculous villains – and the undeniable talent of the film-makers, Sam Mendes directed *American Beauty* and *Road to Perdition*, that misogynistic attitudes remain entrenched in the series DNA.

Now, with *Spectre* due for release this year and *Skyfall* having grossed over one billion dollars worldwide, any drastic changes to the established Bond structure seem highly unlikely. Yes, having a 'Bond girl' older than Bond himself is a welcome shake-up, however Lea Seydoux, aged twenty-nine, has also been cast as another of the female leads, suggesting that even that minor progress might be a false hope.

But looking to the future how could the series shed these tired tropes? Previous attempts to create villainous female characters have largely relied on tired 'black-widow' clichés. Perhaps a genuinely powerful villain able to outsmart Bond and who, for once, does not sleep with the hero, could create an interesting dynamic. Or maybe, just maybe, a woman could take on the lead role. Sure, there would have to be some rejigging of character names and backgrounds but if, as the current rumours of Idris Elba suggest, the studio is looking beyond the pool of white male, British actors for the next Bond, it could be more than just wishful thinking. After all just imagine what a talented female actor such as Maggie Gyllenhaal, Jessica Chastain or Felicity Jones could do with such an iconic role. It may appear ridiculous but, if the series is to prevent a slide into outdated nonsense, it may also be entirely necessary. [Pete Brearley]



[Image: Miramax Films]

# A Brief History of Oscar Upsets

As the dust settled, Neil Patrick Harris put his clothes back on, and Sean Penn made a vaguely racially insensitive remark, the 2015 Academy Award for Best picture went to *Birdman* over long time favourite *Boyhood*, in what can only be described as an upset. *Birdman* had a lot of buzz, and, quite rightly, was very well received critically and was tipped to win awards. However, the exceptional, groundbreaking *Boyhood* had been on a steam train of critical praise and awards, and was by far the favourite to come away with the top prize. The result meant that *Boyhood* came away with just one award from its six nominations, surely to go down in history as one of the biggest surprises in recent Oscars history. *Boyhood*'s lack of awards is not the first time the Academy has provided us with a good shock, and nor will it be the last. Throughout the history of the awards there have been various examples of genuinely shocking picks, and that's not necessarily a bad thing.

For the first real shock, you can go back all the way to the 14th Academy Awards in 1942, where two big names battled it out to win the Best Picture gong: *Citizen Kane* and *The Maltese Falcon*. It was expected that *Citizen Kane* was going to win most – if not all – of its nominations, and *The Maltese Falcon* had received a fantastic amount of critical praise. Once the envelope for Best Picture was opened, however, the winner was announced to be *How Green Was My Valley*. The Welsh drama ran away from that ceremony with five awards from nine nominations, including Best Picture, Best Director for John Ford, and the fantastically specific Best Black-and-White Art Direction – Interior Decoration. *Citizen Kane* went on to become a genuine classic; *How Green Is My Valley* meanwhile, despite it being a fine film in its own right, is barely more than the answer to a trivia question.

The shocks have kept coming ever since. In a particularly stacked year, the 49th Academy Awards in 1977 saw exemplary films such as *Taxi Driver*, *All The Presidents Men* and *Network* take a back-seat to the big winner: Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky*. *Rocky* is a great film, and an incredibly enjoyable underdog story. But ahead of *Network*? Ahead of *Taxi Driver*? Surprising to say the least.

In one of the most famous examples of an Oscars shock, 1994 had *Forrest Gump* beating out the incredibly popular *Pulp Fiction* and the beloved Frank Darabont classic *The Shawshank Redemption*. *Shawshank* came away from that year's ceremony with zero Oscars to its name. A travesty for sure, but looking back the lack of awards for the film has actually added to its appeal. Audiences undoubtedly think "I can't believe it didn't win any Oscars!"

And then we get to *Crash*. Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* is undoubtedly one of the most important films of the last decade. Critics adored it, it dealt with a timely, important social issue, and people went to see it in their droves, making \$178 million on a budget of just \$14 million. It was by far the favourite to win a heap of awards, and indeed it did come away with three, but not the Best Picture award. This was reserved for the forgettable, convoluted *Crash*, a film certain to be consigned to the same trivia question pile as *How Green Was My Valley*, while *Brokeback Mountain* continues to be one of the most important pieces of LGBT+ cinema of all time.

*Boyhood* not winning Best Picture is a shame. A big shame. But if you look through the history of awards, is it such a bad thing? Looking at *Shawshank*, at *Brokeback Mountain*, at *Taxi Driver*, these important, exceptional films have more than survived; indeed, they have flourished almost because they didn't win the Best Picture gong. *Birdman* can have the award, it more than deserves it, but surely those involved with *Boyhood* will be quite happy to be in the "How on earth did that not win the Oscar?" pile. [Allistair Norman]





## Comedy Stephen K. Amos

Leeds City Varieties Music Hall echoed with laughter as Stephen K. Amos brought his current tour, *Welcome to My World*, to Leeds on Wednesday evening. Void of a warm-up act, Amos took the role of both support and main act as he performed a seamless stand-up integrated with light hearted audience interaction and cultural references to Leeds and its surrounding areas.

Amos declared 'I'm in a cheeky mood tonight, Leeds' as he began his act with a few experimental jokes. Drawing from his recent ideas in a workshop environment, Amos used the opportunity of warming up his audience by trying some new material out. Whilst this wasn't performed to the highest levels of professionalism, the jokes performed were entertaining and fulfilled the role required.

The evening was filled with uncontrollable laughter as Amos masterfully wove audience interaction into his set. The audience responses complimented Amos' feel-good atmosphere as many responded with humorous comments such as 'we went to the grand theatre instead' and 'dessert was late'. The audience welcomed Amos' heartfelt humour and the interaction merely enhanced the feel-good vibe which soaked through each audience member.

A few heartfelt stories were told in-between rounds of comic gold to the audience. This didn't affect the mood, however, and the audience continued their support until the very end. It would seem that the integration of audience interaction held the show together, particularly during the section where Amos unearthed the cultural object that is the 'meat raffle'; a sausage fest to the uneducated amongst us. First row audience members enlightened him with the northern tradition to the point where Amos played spectator, laughing at the spectator's experience with the northern tradition of a meat raffle. The exclamatory phrase 'Wang it!' will forever represent the night's performance. *[Mark McDougall]*

## Theatre Addams Family

Have you ever welled up over a man in a bald cap serenading a parasol? If not, then you must have missed Musical Theatre's production of the macabre *Addams Family Musical*. Sleek and comic, the production was devilishly good, with first time director Anna Carley proving herself capable of constructing a high quality performance. A sublime cast from principals to chorus, the twisting love story was interwoven with comedy as black as Grandma Addam's teeth.

Young Wednesday Addams (Issy Chakiris) threatens to break away from the clan when she falls for Ohio boy Lucas (Ben Eccles), causing chaos within the family as a result. While Chakiris' Wednesday was peppier than may have been expected, she defied her character's wish to be average during 'One Normal Night', where she displayed her excellent voice.

Clearly vocal ability was in the Addams family genes, as the sultry siren Morticia (Ellie Pead) and meticulously characterised Gomez (Richard Upton) proved their worth as the head of the family. Upton's superb comic timing resulted in every joke hitting home, as the audience settled into the darker side of their humour. The 'Game' was especially entertaining, with the song 'Full Disclosure' involving choreographed hand and head movements from the whole family, as they feared being the next chosen to tell a secret truth.

Grandma Addams however, was one character not keeping anything to herself. Whether attempting to entice male characters, or her brief rendition of 'Single Ladies', Downing's portrayal deserved as many laughs as it got.

A truly professional production, thought could be seen in the minutest details of the show. From the precision of the band to the glowing crosses carved into the set, the dedication of the cast and crew was obvious. Particularly in reference to the chorus as the Ancestors, who were utilised in every scene they appeared in. From representing haunted trees to the inventive use of a parasol to represent the moon, the chorus proved themselves a vital asset in acting as well as vocals. Indeed, the ensemble vocals were impressive. The first note was wordless, yet hit with the force of the entire cast as they descended the stairs in the positioning of a family portrait.

Unfortunately there was more than one occasion where actors were battling to be heard above the band, but nonetheless the beginning striking image set up what proved to be an equally striking show. *[Jess Williams]*



[Image: Dreamworks Pictures]

# Is the Bechdel test failing us?

In a world increasingly concerned with equality between the sexes, it seems shocking that, of 5,788 films listed on the website [www.bechdeltest.com](http://www.bechdeltest.com), only 57% pass. In addition, the Geena Davies Institute on Gender in Media found that, of 120 films produced between 2010 and 2013, only 31% of all named characters were female, and only 7% of those films were directed by women.

The Bechdel test was originally seen in a 1985 comic-strip by Alison Bechdel, from *Dykes To Watch Out For* and highlights Hollywood's unshakable gender bias. In order for a film to pass the test, it has to feature two or more women in it, who speak to each other about something other than a man. Doesn't seem like a big ask, does it?

At this year's Oscars, only four of the eight films nominated for Best Picture passed the test – and even then, *The Theory of Everything's* Felicity Jones' only non-male orientated conversation with another woman was about her joining the church choir – not exactly a riveting plot point. Even more worrying is the distinct lack of women in powerful, decision-making positions; all five of the nominees for Best Directing this year were men, as were all of the nominees for both Adapted Screenplay and Original Screenplay. Perhaps this is hardly surprising, given that the AMPAS – Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences – who decide the nominees and winners are overwhelmingly white, male, and over 60.

Even films or television series that are pre-disposed to a female audience have similar flaws. In *Sex and the City*, Miranda Hobbes, one of the four main female characters, highlights the series' shortcomings by saying: 'All we talk about anymore is Big, or balls, or small dicks. How does it happen that four such smart women have nothing to talk about but boyfriends?' In a series that was originally praised for its female leads and frank approach to women's sexuality, a huge amount of its action centres around men, and what women have to do to get them.

Obviously, the Bechdel test has flaws, and can't be applied to every film in a fair way; for example, *The Shawshank Redemption* features an almost entirely male cast, as it is set in a men's prison, not because Frank Darabont didn't want to cast strong female characters. Similarly, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* fails, as it set

in a medieval monastery. Also, a conversation between two women based entirely around stereotypes still constitutes a pass: If two named women talk solely about shoes, shopping and babies, the film will pass.

Perhaps, then, it is more prudent to look at the subsequent tests inspired by the Bechdel model. The Mako Mori test – named after Rinko Kikuchi's character in *Pacific Rim* – has the following criteria: there must be at least one female protagonist, who gets her own narrative arc, that isn't about supporting a male character's story. In other words, the film must include a female character whose removal from the plot would alter the course of the film. Again, this test doesn't absolutely ensure gender equality in the film, but it's a start.

**“Maybe the Bechdel test isn't the best way to measure female presence in film, but at the very least, it does highlight the lack of well-developed female roles in the acting world.”**

The problem of gender bias in films is seemingly unlimited; Pixar are prime culprits for lack of diversity. *Finding Nemo*, *Toy Story*, *Up*, *Ratatouille*, and *Monsters Inc.* all fail the Bechdel test. In fact, of the 14 Pixar films produced, only four of them pass, with *Brave* being their first attempt at a female-driven plot. If you compare this to the amount of female lead characters in animated Studio Ghibli films, Pixar falls far behind. Hayao Miyazaki's visions such as *My Neighbour Totoro* and *Spirited Away* seem to ignore gender in favour of plot and character development – perhaps the Western film industry should begin to follow suit.

Maybe the Bechdel test isn't the best way to measure female presence in film, but at the very least, it does highlight the lack of well-developed female roles in the acting world. The Bechdel test's findings are important in showing the disparity between reality, and the reality portrayed in films; despite half of the world's population being female, there are roughly two male characters to every female one in film history, with the ratio standing at 3:1 in family films.





With the popularity of period dramas surging dramatically in recent years, it came as no surprise when Channel 4 announced their latest and most expensive production yet, *Indian Summers*. Replacing *Downton Abbey*'s primetime location on a Sunday evening and with a budget of reportedly £14 million, there were undoubtedly some reservations about its potential success. However, an outstanding cast and a truly striking landscape has made for one of the best historical dramas of recent years.

Set in the dying years of British rule in India, this 10-part series starts with the annual move to Simla, where the British elite spend their summers away from the heat of the cities. The drama is focused on three families and their shifting sense of identity during this period, when significant change is imminent. With a large cast, our original introductions to the characters are brief. Spread over 10 episodes, however, there will be plenty of time for the characters to be fleshed out and it feels like a deliberate choice rather than an overlooked aspect of production.

In fact, with so many characters to get to know, it was perhaps a wise idea to use stereotypes as a way of giving us recognisable characters. There's the handsome Private Secretary to the Viceroy of India, Ralph Whelan (played by Henry Lloyd-Hughes); his mysterious sister Alice (Jemima West); the seemingly good-natured missionary Dougie (Craig Parkinson), and his unfriendly snobbish wife, Sarah (Fiona Glascott). Then of course there's Julie Walters, who plays the fabulous Celia Coffin, the proprietor of the Royal Simla Club. It's disappointing how little Julie Walters actually features – a lot of promotional material was focused on her character – but this does allow the talent of the lesser-known cast members to shine through, with stunning performances all round, in particular Nikesh Patel as Aafrin Dalal and Jemima West as Alice Whelan.

The pace of the first few episodes is undeniably slow for a drama, yet the spectacular scenery and the meticulous attention to detail make up for this and ensure that whilst the action is not always thrilling, it's definitely worth watching for the cinematography alone. Besides, there are rumours that *Indian Summers* is the to be the first of four series focusing on the India's move towards independence – and as the British control of India diminishes, there's bound to be a stepping up of the action.

What's more, the first couple of episodes alone have covered themes including politics, passion, class tensions, exploitation, attempted murder, and sex, so a slow pace definitely isn't synonymous with tediousness – there really is something for everyone, and lack of previous knowledge of the period or culture is no excuse. This drama is a gentle introduction to the contrast between the British desperately clinging to Empire, and those who find themselves fighting bravely for independence. It is definitely worth a watch. [Annie Clay]

In The Middle

## Video Games

# The Order: 1886

## Vampires take over Victorian London

*The Order: 1886* has by far been my most anticipated game since its announcement at E3 in 2013. With every release date we've been given being constantly pushed back, I was beginning to doubt the game would ever actually be released. However, it's finally here, and having been in the making for almost two years, saying I was excited to play it is a serious understatement.

Straight off the bat I was struck by the simple fact that graphically the game is beautiful. Cut scenes blend with the game play seamlessly and the general detail of both is outstanding.

Throughout the game you play as Sir Galahad, a member of a group known as 'The Order' in Victorian London. The group themselves are reminiscent of the Knights of the Round Table, but have guns. The plot is stunning, just as you think you've got it worked out you're thrown a curveball and the story goes in a completely different direction. The developers at Ready at Dawn studios have interwoven history into the gameplay with brilliant accuracy – just walking through the streets you'll hear mentions of the infamous Jack the Ripper.

Your weapons expert is Nikola Tesla, and his unique creations take centre stage. In your attempt to investigate the infiltration of the East India Company by rebels you'll come across both werewolves and vampires alike. The developers have striven to create a historically authentic environment, mean-

ing that even these creatures don't appear out of place.

Despite this, there are plenty of causes for concern with *The Order: 1886*. The length of the gameplay is severely disappointing; it's possible to finish the game in around 8 to 10 hours. On top of this, the breathtaking cut scenes take up a fair amount of the game itself. As you get further embroiled in the story these scenes become more frequent, which is a sad oversight by the team.

There is not enough environment interaction; the location is beautiful but we're given no real room to explore. You're only granted access to areas of the city that lead to the next chapter, which in a generation of games giving you seemingly unlimited freedom across their worlds is noticeably limited.

Overall, the delays in release have been time well spent. The game invents exciting backstories and is full of historical links to the real world alongside the stunning visuals. However, more time should have been invested in creating a longer story line; considering the price of a PS4 game, there is simply not enough game for your money. I would definitely recommend playing it and you won't be disappointed, but the price is sure to drop quite drastically in the coming months as more copies find their ways on to the preowned shelves. [Devon Allen]





[Photo: Angst Productions/Dan Goldsmith/BBC]

## Comment

# Battle of the Genders

## Do our panel shows promote gender inequality?

In February 2014, the BBC's director of television announced that they were no longer going to broadcast male-only panel shows. Whilst this was certainly a well-intentioned move, the backlash undoubtedly cast doubt on the decision. A year on, most of us have been left asking: has it really made any difference?

It would be wonderful to be able to say yes, sexism is really that simple to fix, that all we need is more rules and quotas and eventually equality will come. However, positive discrimination has a tendency to become counter-productive, and in the case of sexism in television, it's arguably caused more problems than it's fixed.

There does need to be more women on every kind of panel show, from *Have I Got News for You* to *Question Time*. Considering there are no panel shows on the BBC that have anywhere near an equal number of men and women, it's hard to argue that sexism is no longer an issue on screen.

However, it's difficult to find evidence having at least one woman present on a televised panel is in any way beneficial. Comedian Dara Ó Briain pointed out that banning all-male panels will make any female that makes an appearance look like the 'token woman'. Is it fair to deny a more-talented or qualified man a place on the panel just because he's a man? And is it fair on a woman to disregard her talents and give her a place just because a woman is needed to fill a quota? I'm all for television executives pushing their producers to try and involve more women in their shows, but to do it so publicly has only seemed to alienate women and ensure the continuation of the problem.

The argument, one that's brought up time and time again, that the lack of representation is due to the lack of women in comedy doesn't quite stand up – what about talk shows and political programmes? It's simply unacceptable that half the population is so far off being fairly represented on television.

On the other hand, what about panel shows like *Loose Women*, which are made up entirely of female panellists? They claim to discuss important issues from the female perspective, yet they're often accused of being sexist themselves. If there were a panel show made up of men claiming to discuss issues from a male perspective, I can't help but feel that it would be a hugely controversial and unpopular setup – especially if they discussed women the way the *Loose Women* discuss men. However, whilst the *Loose Women* don't exactly portray women as effectively and broadly as many of us would like, it is refreshing that their space on TV is accepted, alongside so many panel shows which are inherently male-dominated.

Ultimately, the goal is not to have an equal number of men and women on every media platform. The idea is that one day, we won't need quotas – all-male panels will be occasionally fine because there'll be enough mixed and all-female panels to be representative of the population. Until that day, I suppose we have to take any victory we can get, and if that means celebrating *Loose Women*, so be it. [Annie Clay]

# Lara Croft & Metal Lingerie

## Revealing the female characters in games

It only takes a few seconds to realise how sexist the games industry can be. Perhaps the reason there is a distinct lack of strong female leads in games is because they were all KO'd long ago, as their armour was basically metal lingerie.

When I was younger, inspirational female characters were few and far between. I loved Coco from *Crash Bandicoot*, but she only ever appeared in a couple of levels. Female characters from the fighting game *Tekken* also failed to carry much depth. But when looking at the painfully slow transition of female characters in games to more prominent roles there may be hope on the horizon.

Lara Croft is an example of how far the depiction of women in games has come. For me, she is a perfect reflection of exactly what the western world is like at any given time, helping break the glass ceiling for women. In the 90's, her debut as a no-nonsense treasure hunter conveyed strongheaded independence, going against the stereotypical role of women as damsels in distress. Her most recent role as a vulnerable yet persevering young woman shows the developing maturity of video games. *Tomb Raider* and *The Last of Us* both address the issue of sexual assault, giving many gamers a reality check by showing them

the hardships many women have to face. It's not just Lara who reflects the journey of feminism: Female Commander Shepard from *Mass Effect* plays no differently from Male Shepard, Faith from *Mirror's Edge* is a damned fast runner 'despite her boobs', and I'd take Chloe from *Uncharted* in a jewellery heist over Nate any day.

But sadly, any female character that is not depicted in an unnecessarily feminine and over sexualised manner is an achievement for womankind, as it still happens so infrequently. Screenshots from *Final Fantasy XV* show a female Cid in short-shorts and a skimpy crop top, and try to find an MMO that doesn't have at least one character with their boobs, tum or bum out. Quite quickly, this brings us all back to the overarching issue of how females in pretty much all aspects of the gaming community are treated. We have come on leaps and bounds, although it may not seem like it in the greater context of things, but that one step in the right direction is vitally important. The growing amount of strong female leads in great games will hopefully create a snowball effect and mean good news for women and gamers everywhere. [Lauren Emina-Bougaard]





[Photo: Jack Roberts]

# Food Pintura

## A taste of Spanish culture in the heart of Leeds

Drawing inspiration from the traditional Basque region of Northern Spain, stepping into the newly opened Pintura immediately transports you away from a chilly Leeds evening to somewhere far more exotic. From the moment you settle down along one of the three bars, every moment is a reassertion of the laid back Basque culture, with the staff keen to share their captivating anecdotes about the delights of the northern region.

The restaurant has been carefully designed to make every customer feel comfortable and a part of the Pintura family. Guests are given seats along the bar where they are able to watch in awe as chefs and bar staff simultaneously serve up their masterpieces. Sitting so close means that you can easily engage in conversation with the chefs who know everything there is to know about their dishes; intimacy is clearly the priority here.

Based on a concept similar to tapas, the menu offers an immense selection of delicacies and we were treated to a varied selection of the head chef Greg Lewis' favourites. From a traditional Spanish omelette, to a selection of their finest cured meats, to a tuna steak nicely garnished and served in a chic can, every dish was a delight and we couldn't finish quickly enough. The menu balances the traditional with the innovative, as we discovered when the chef placed a cut of pork cheek in front of us. A new discovery for the both of us, it was surprisingly delicious. Here the tapas-style arrangement really works; you can trial these more adventurous dishes but fall back on the tasty cheese croquets if it all goes wrong.

After our main courses we were given two desserts to share. Having looked at the menu beforehand, we had been firmly recommended to try their chocolate mousse and it arrived in all its glory, presented in a clay flower pot and decorated with crumbled biscuits and edible flowers. It tasted even more fantastic and we gorged ourselves silly.

Venturing down to the basement leads you to the stylishly decorated bar, this one dedicated entirely to your alcohol needs. Sold as a gin bar, it is understandable the drinks menu is full of a variety of gin and tonics, and gin cocktails, all of which look delicious. They use Portobello Road Gin, the same as Jakes Bar on Call Lane, and you can tell they know how to use it. For those of you



who don't get the gin hype, the bar also has a selection of cocktails invented especially for Pintura. We got to sample their Lemon Torte Cava cocktail and it was divine.

It is fair to say that this is a special place that is sure to do well. The prices are reasonable, with dishes starting from £3 and increasing depending on ingredients and size. Six savoury dishes are plenty for two people, even without the dessert. The drinks are also affordable, with the majority of cocktails priced at just less than £8. This affordability, combined with its upmarket feel, make it the perfect place for a birthday or graduation meal.

The welcoming friendliness of the staff, the laidback atmosphere and the delicious food mean that it's easy to pass many hours in Pintura without even realising. Sipping on cocktails while watching the head chef whip up a Spanish omelette before your eyes; it's not an experience you can readily get in Leeds, but one you should definitely try. [Laura Rowlands]





[Photo: MyGreekDish.com]

## Recipe

# Papoutsakia

## Greek stuffed aubergines

“Papoutsakia” translates to “little shoes” in Greek, though explanations as to why cannot seem to be found. This dish is easy, versatile and cheaper than a dinner on a Greek island. If you’ve got any leftover ingredients in your fridge – mushrooms, carrots, celery, sausages, etc – feel free to add them to the stuffing too, it all adds to the flavour. These can be made vegetarian too – as pictured above, mushrooms and lentils were used, topped with a sprinkle of breadcrumbs!

## Ingredients

Serves: 2

- 2 medium-sized aubergines, cut lengthways
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 250g lean minced meat (beef, lamb, chicken)
- 3 tbsp tomato purée
- 3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp oregano
- 5 large ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 100ml red wine
- 125g feta cheese, crumbled
- Salt, black pepper

## Method

- 1 Preheat oven to 200°C and then using a spoon, scoop out the flesh of each aubergine ‘shoe’, leaving a small border around the edges. Keep the flesh to one side.
- 2 Rub the 4 halves generously with olive oil and sit them upright in a shallow baking dish. Cover with foil and bake them in the oven for 15–20 mins. Depending on the size of your aubergines, you may need to alter the baking time. Smaller aubergines would be fine in 10 mins.
- 3 Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large pan. Coarsely dice up the scooped out flesh, add to the pan, and fry over medium heat for about 5 mins. Set to one side.
- 4 Add another 2–3 tablespoons of olive oil into the pan and gently fry the onion until soft and transparent. Add the minced meat, stirring to break up any chunks. Once browned, stir in the garlic, tomato purée, tomatoes, wine, spices, salt and pepper. Mix well and leave to simmer for 15–20 mins, allowing the juices to boil down. You want it to reduce till you see about 1 tablespoon of juice.
- 5 Divide the mixture between the aubergine ‘shoes’ and return to the oven for 15 mins. 5 mins before the end of cooking, sprinkle the cheese over the top of each stuffed aubergine and return to the oven to finish off the cooking. Drizzle over some extra-virgin olive oil before serving.

[Charlotte de Drouas]

# Dieting is a female fad

Dieting seems to be everywhere, with new fad diets constantly popping up only to lure in those looking for a magical solution for weight loss. There are special diet sections in most supermarkets, adverts on television and “thinspo” images on social media. What is interesting is that they target women almost exclusively.

Why is this the case? Women are constantly being bombarded with information causing them to think they need to lose weight. Whilst I am by no means attacking someone who wants to lose weight to feel more confident, I do believe that the diet companies should not be the ones telling us we need to do that. Statistically, women are more likely to try different diet plans than men, and this can be attributed to the various marketing schemes employed by diet companies. The use of support schemes, female models and celebrity endorsements all appeal to women’s emotions in order to attract them. The message is that if you go on this diet, you will lose weight and that will solve all of your problems.

Not only can it lead to a negative self-image, a lot of the time these diets promote unhealthy solutions that don’t bring long-term results. But that is how these companies continue to make their money. They offer you a quick fix, and once the diet is over and you return to your regular eating habits, you put the weight back on, and return to the diet in order to lose the weight again. It is a vicious cycle and the only way to break it would be to stop buying into fad diets and live a healthy lifestyle.

Women are the target audience, and they continue to buy into society’s dictations of what is considered attractive. This shaming makes easy solutions seem extremely attractive. Doing a 3 day juice cleanse, or cutting out all carbs from your food intake for 2 weeks can sound daunting, but we are being told that at the end of it we can all look like Victoria’s Secret models and we go for it. These p harmful for the body and ultimately leaves us disappointed with the result, or lack there of.

Whilst men can also be subject to unrealistic societal expectations, they are rarely the target audience for diet advertising. It is unfair that women are being told that in order to look good they have to resort to unhealthy, ineffective and often expensive methods. The media makes us feel guilty about what we eat, and unhappy with the way we look. This shouldn’t be the case, and we need to become better informed on what is good for our bodies. [Sofia Dedyukhina]



# FemSoc: “It’s awesome if we are the most hated society”

FemSoc coordinators, Cassie Sivapalan and Edie Boon, talk about the importance of FemSoc and Feminism on campus.

*Cassie Sivapalan:* Feminism, the society, and the Tequila campaign

I think it’s up to individual women if they define themselves as a feminist or not. Struggling against oppression is not the same for every woman; some women are fortunate and don’t receive much overt discrimination, and for others feminism is something which they feel excludes them.

I think having a space where feminism is the norm is pretty crucial. The feminism scene has widened at the union and we now have the LUU Women’s Liberation campaigners, Leeds Students for Women International, and the LUU BME campaign has its own WOC reading group. However all these spaces obviously overlap massively. I’m pretty happy with the idea of FemSoc being a bit more vague. We have debates that can be as a vague or specific as we want.

It was great being involved in the Tequila campaign. It seemed very obvious to everyone at the time that this club was massively harmful. I think some people perceived it as a matter of offense but I disagree. I think its about harm. There have been a few chancers trying to cash in on the Tequila escapade for a while and good luck to them. Leeds is an exciting city and I am not sure how many people there are who just want to get drunk, listen to chart music and make rape jokes.

If people want to sit behind their computers and call us boring, good for them but if your idea of a good time is making rape jokes, then it’s not the people calling that out who are being boring. It’s awesome if we are the most hated society, hopefully the Riley’s will create a new award so we get the praise we deserve for that.

*Edie Boon:* Feminism is a key issue

There seems to be a lot of debate around whether or not feminism is necessary, with movements such as Women Against Feminism arguing that they do not experience noticeable inequality between genders. This is so far from the truth, even with obvious inequalities such as the pay gap, our lack of control over our own bodies, and the fact that simply leaving the house can be cause for harassment such as cat-calling.

The word Feminism addresses this inequality in a way that words such as ‘equalism’ cannot, as it acknowledges that women do not yet experience equality to men. It also means that as a feminist movement we associate ourselves to great past movements in the fight for gender equality, and recognise their importance.”

The Feminist Society, in my experience, allows people to have a voice on such issues where they might otherwise feel powerless, and is a safe space for people to find consolation in their experiences.

## DanceSport win big in Blackpool

Leeds proved to be tough competition at the two biggest Ballroom and Latin dance competitions of the year, Northern and Nationals.

The Northern University Dance Competition was held on the 14th February 2015, with the Leeds team dominating throughout the day, reaching 16 out of a possible 18 finals.

Leeds instantly illustrated their strength in the Ballroom Section, securing 5th and 6th place in the warm up event. The Waltz and Quickstep followed, with Matthew Booth and Nicola Sheratt taking gold and Joanna Barrett and Eefke van Eden taking the bronze medal, both in the novice category. In the advanced Ballroom event, Leeds team captain Nicola Ward and her partner, Jordan Steel, secured silver. The Salsa section was also a success for the Leeds team, with Nicola Sherratt and her partner Callum Sanderson coming first.

In the Latin events, the beginners were particularly successful with outstanding performances from Isabelle Meneses Da Ponte and Xiaoxi Zhang who placed 1st in both the Cha Cha Cha and Jive competitions. Matthew Booth and Nicola Sheratt added to their ballroom success by placing 1st in the Latin section. Leeds continued to achieve other noteworthy results throughout the afternoon, including 3rd place in the ex-student category, and 3rd and 4th place in the same-sex category.

The day concluded with team matches. The Leeds team cruised through and won team knockout, beating around 20 other universities. In the normal team match, the division two beginners A team made the final and finished 5th. In

the division one final, there was just one point between first and second place, but Leeds snatched first place, becoming the Northern champions.

The National competition was held in the ballroom capital of Blackpool, at the Winter Gardens on the 28th February. The day started with the ballroom section. The most notable Leeds results came from Sarah McKenna and Mollie Feather who came third in the Same-Sex Ballroom category and from Joanna Barrett and Eefke van Eden who came 5th in the novice category, beating 140 other couples.

The Latin section commenced in the afternoon, with Leeds gaining excellent results in all events. In the beginners category, Isabella Meneses Da Ponte and Xiaoxi Zhang continued their latin success from Northern and came 2nd in both Cha Cha Cha and Jive.

Matthew Booth and Nicola Sheratt took the gold medal in Novice Latin, making them the best in the whole country for their category. Jessica Craighan and Manuel Cabral made it to the finals of the intermediate Latin category. Ex-student and Ex-Dancesport president David Adams and his partner Laura Tiffany came fourth in their Latin category.

Two Leeds couples made the final of the Rock and Roll competition, with Nicola Sheratt and her partner from Liverpool, Katy Chadwick coming 6th and Roisin Holmes and Bethany Leake coming third. *[Beth Leake]*

# Calendar Events

6th March	7th Match	8th March	9th March	10th March	11th March	12th March
2:30-4pm	7am-9pm	12-6pm	6-8pm	12-2pm	2:30-4pm	5:30-6:30pm
GIAG: Lishi Soft Kungfu, LUU Room 6. Try this ancient art which mixes Tai Chi, Qigong and soft Kungfu.	RAG's Smarty Pants Hitchhike, £28 registration fee. Get dropped off in a secret location and race back to Leeds in your underwear.	GIAG: Windsurfing. Meet at Parkinson Steps. All abilities welcome to test your skills. Prepare to be snapped on camera soaking wet.	EARS AGM. Business School Western LT G.01. Help elect a new committee and vote on society changes whilst eating free pizza.	Bardon Growing Drop in Session. LUU Sustainable Garden by Roger Stevens. Pick up a trowel and help to grow organic fruit and veg.	Create: DIY Photo Canvas. LUU Room 2, £3. Grab your favourite photo and turn it into your own canvas.	GIAG: Dance Expose, Stylus. Join Dance Expose and see what their society is all about with this fun class.
6-8pm	10am-5:30pm	5-7pm	6-7pm	6-8pm	4:30-7:30pm	6:30-11pm
GIAG: Origins of the Syrian conflict. Business School Maurice Keyworth SR 1.09. Join Friends of Syria to discuss the current crisis in the Middle East.	GIAG: Sailing, Meet at Parkinson steps, £15. For beginners and experienced sailors alike, hone your skills with qualified instruction.	GIAG: Veggie pizza making. Meet at Parkinson steps, £3. Meet some like-minded people and make veggie and vegan pizzas.	Bridge the Gap. Meet in the Union at 5:15pm. Volunteer to socialise with older people in a Leeds care home, playing bingo and other games.	GIAG: Henna. LUU Room 5. Whether you've tried it before or not, experience the fun of practising body art.	GIAG: Easter Egg Painting. Business School Maurice Keyworth SR 1.33. Join the Polish Society in this old tradition as they make 'pisanki'.	GIAG: English Society Theatre Trip. Meet at Parkinson Steps. See Northern Ballet's Romeo and Juliet at Leeds Grand Theatre.

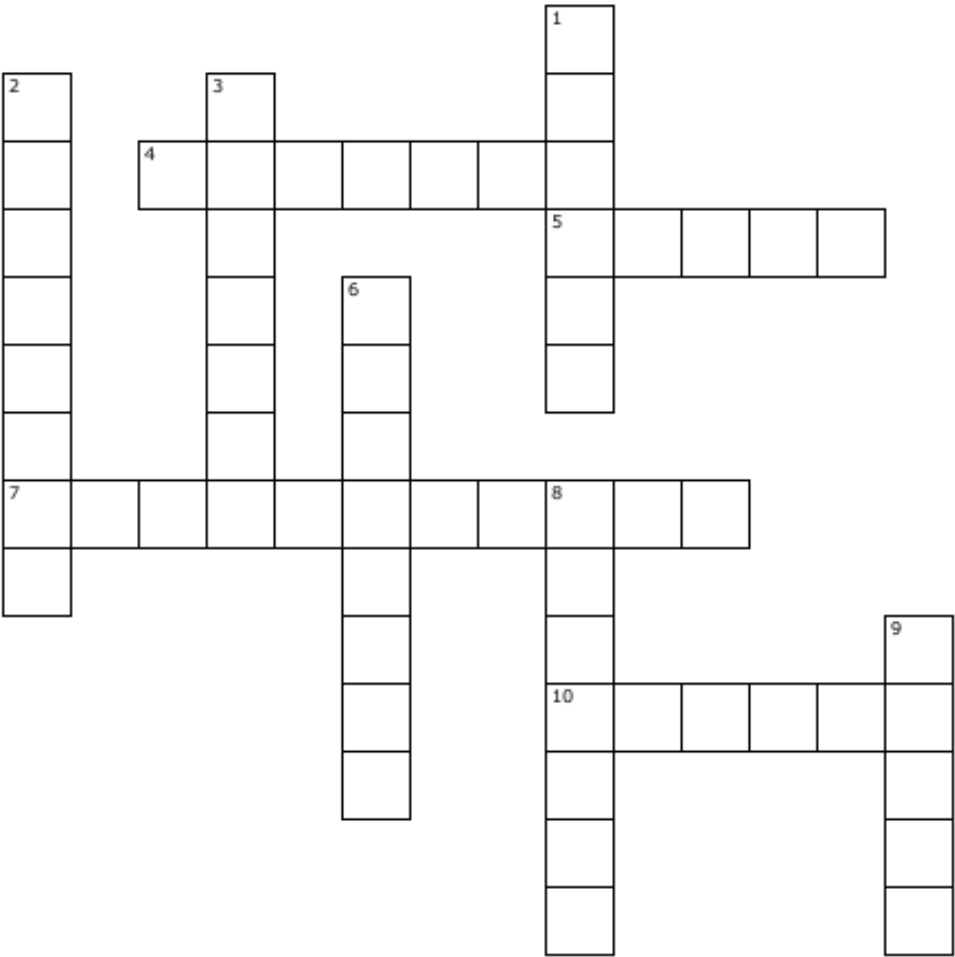
# Crossword

## Across

4. Queen of Pop whose performance at the BRIT awards was hijacked by her Armani cape. (7)  
5. Beloved actor/director who sadly passed away last week. First achieved fame playing pop culture icon, Spock. Leonard... (5)  
7. The name of Kanye West's forthcoming album. No doubt it'll be the best thing any of us have ever heard. (2,4,2,3)  
10. Racists in Newcastle have tried to emulate this far-right German party with little success. (6)

## Down

1. In Rugby Union terms the six nations are: England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Italy and... (6)  
2. You either saw it as blue and black or white and gold (if you were a freak). (3, 5)  
3. This Kentish seaside town hosted UKIP's spring conference, giving you just one more reason never to visit. (7)  
6. Ex-footballer who is reportedly considering standing as an MP for the Conservative Party. Sol... (8)  
8. A winged beast with the head of an eagle and the body of a lion. (7)  
7. This football player recently did a "John Terry", changing into full kit to celebrate his team's Capital One Cup victory despite not playing. Nemanja... (5)





# Columns



Ellie Parkes

The expression “coffee break” implies that the act of getting coffee takes place in the pauses in life, in the rests between the more important occupations of the day.

I blame everyone but myself for this, but recently it feels as though it’s the Brotherton I’ve been going to for my breaks, for rests between my far more pressing engagements that beckon from the bustling coffee establishments across the road.

This semester, the “daily grind” could probably be more adequately applied to my more consistent

## By any beans necessary

association with the process of preparing beans for my liquor pick-me-up, than a real sense of academic productivity.

There’s been a lot of procrastacoffee recently. So much that I do believe my life is governed entirely by when and where I’m going to get my next fix.

There’s an assumption some people make that I resent – that as soon as the last bitter-sweet drops have passed your lips, you should be marching your nose back to the grindstone, dragging it away from its favourite dark den of rich, roasted snout-opiates, and into the cold winter air, streaming.

First of all, there are a few things to get straight – rule one: the “coffee break” does not only last the duration of the physical consumption of the drink. Coffee is not just a delicious beverage – it is a concept, a culture, a bonding exercise, an art. Anyone who does not agree with this is struck off from my caffeine-coterie.

Secondly, and if you did not infer this from rule one, you are not paying enough attention – coffee must be taken very seriously at all times. I’ll have none of this “coffee is overrated and tastes like fags the first time you have it and people spend far too much money on it and they are addicted to caffeine which makes them more tired anyway and your bottom teeth look like they’re sitting in shit”.

The only people who say those outrageous things are the people who only like their drinks sickly flavoured and overwhelmed with whipped cream – who can’t bring themselves to order a dessert in the middle of the afternoon, so resent the entire coffee-shop culture accordingly and dismiss it completely.

Then there are the Tea People, who are our allies and affiliates, so we forgive their sometimes sense of superiority as we sit down together over their half-

the-price and twice-the-size wafting brew – mainly because they understand the addictions of ritual inebriation and the small hourly comfort that can be provided by something so simple as hot soaking vegetation– but also because tea can only ever be either associated with Yorkshire (and thus the drinker is friendly and kind), with the holistic and healthy (so they probably do yoga and people that do yoga and drink herbal tea are great because they are invariably chilled, beautiful and bendy).

Rule three, the final rule and one that may seem to contradict rule two: when it comes to the “coffee break” – hipsterness, feeling more grown-up and cooler than everyone else, even (people will hate me for this) coffee quality – these factors are not essential. A coffee breaker by occupation will get to a point when they don’t really care what it’s cut with, along as they regularly get hold of the stuff, and it’s warm and gushing through their body as soon as possible. Crappy instant granules in a thermos, a terrible Americatpiss from a Union coffee machine, a brimming polystyrene cup for 75p from a take-away place – it doesn’t have to look good any more because the love is unconditional. We’ve settled down with it as a way of life.



Jen Pritchard

As you may or may not have realised by now, I love feminism. I can bang on about feminist issues and women’s issues and patriarchy for hours and hours, until I’ve noticed that no one is listening and that I’m just in a room by myself shouting about the Mail Online.

Feminism teaches me to be content and confident and okay with myself. There is so much in the world telling you that you’re inherently wrong (see the Mail Online), it’s proper nice to have something that

## A column about Karen Pritchard

convinces you that you’re genuinely doing fine. Feminism is pretty much the entire reasoning behind why I fuk tha h8rs every day.

Well, that’s not quite true.

Because what I really want to talk about, what really laid the ground for all this self-respect and refusal to be ashamed, is my Mum, Karen.

Karen grew up in Harlow, Essex in the 60s and 70s. Unlike me, she didn’t have the privilege of University, and the internet, and a truckload of media just a click away, to empower her and introduce feminism in any relatable way.

The more I think about it, the more I realise that all the lessons feminism has taught me over the last five years are things my Mum’s been trying to teach me since I could walk. At age 11 when I was convinced by girls in my PE class that the invisible smattering of blonde down on my legs was disgusting and needed to be scraped off with a razor asap, it was Karen who desperately tried to convince me that my body hair was nobody else’s business.

During the literally hundreds of times that I’ve been inconsolable about my body size, Karen never once suggested I just lose a little weight to feel better, always insisting that every body is different and perfect. She’s never given a single shit about speaking openly about everything, from menstruating to mental health. She has taught me and my sister that, if nothing else, we should never be apologetic or ashamed of who we are, even if that meant demonstrating that fact by relentlessly embarrassing us in shopping centres for our entire childhoods.

That woman has performed some sort of awkward dance in the aisles of every M&S in East Anglia.

Yes, feminism has put names to all the things I’ve been feeling my whole life, and let me know that it’s not just about me. And maybe the way my mum brought us up was just good parenting. But to fight against everything society is insisting upon, and raise two daughters who refuse to be undermined by bullshit gender expectations, takes more than being a “good mother”.

Karen occasionally tells my sister and me that she doesn’t want us to grow up to be like her. I think she means in a job she doesn’t like too much, having lived in Harlow her whole life. But I just don’t agree with her. If I could end up being half as open-minded, loving, assertive and shameless as Karen, to somehow instil someone with as much confidence and aspiration as she’s given me and my sister, I’d be fucking amazing. And I can think of nothing in this world I want to be more than a woman like Karen.



**“I had been going through this for a while now, and I didn’t know it was unusual, all this stuff going on in my head. It turned out it was an eating disorder. You’re aspiring to something that you’re not really sure of, you want to be thinner but lose sight of how thin and what thin even is, it’s like a constant battle in your head because you keep striving for something that isn’t there. I was really nervous about telling people, but after I did it’s brought me so much closer to them and I released how amazing all my friends are. I realised that it’s OK not to be cheerful or happy all the time, it’s OK to give in and be looked after for a while.” Ruth**