

# In The Middle

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# In The Middle with Anathema

[Photo: Carlotta Grimaldi]

Love and beauty are two very important concepts genuinely dear to Anathema – just listen to their latest record *Distant Satellites* if you want proof. But you could say this of most bands and artists nowadays, though there seems to be no end to the amount of artists today who carelessly fling these very delicate virtues into their songs with total disregard for their intimacy and intrinsic value. Just turn on the radio; what is everyone singing about? Love. Anathema's lead guitarist, Vincent Cavanagh, echoes this sentiment.

## “Every band's ultimate aim is to progress”

“Every band's ultimate aim is to progress. Just look at the charts man, you see these bands now churning out the same shit album after album, it's like a factory. When you get on stage you owe it to the fans to absolutely mean it and that's something a lot of these groups can't do. Our music is completely honest; we don't do it for money but for ourselves.”

Anathema are a group who fully embrace progression in music. In their early incarceration they were a doom metal band. Bloodcurdling screams and down-tempo waltzes characterized the band in those early years. Their current sound, a majestic form of melodic rock, is completely different and in some ways the very antithesis of what they started out with.

“I like to see progression as an ethos rather than a genre. Anathema get tagged as progressive rock nowadays but I don't think that represents every aspect of our music. When we create a new album we don't want to repeat ourselves, we want to explore new musical territories. What's the point in not progressing? It opened up that door for you in the first place”.

Anathema's current tour sees the band stripped down to its bare essentials. An acoustic tour is a great way for bands to really showcase the intricate musicality of their songs. During a conventional gig when bands have their full line up there is a danger that the songs can fall victim to obfuscation – you only really get a sense of what the song is about while the real meaning is buried away under waves of distortion. An acoustic gig offers a solution to this, certainly true in the case of Anathema's magnificent Leeds Minster performance. The simplicity of the music naturalizes the sound and the vocals are finally able to play a dominant role in the soundscape. That Anathema are doing this in a cathedral espouses the music with a certain righteousness not found anywhere else.

“When you walk into a church you get a certain sacral respect that you wouldn't get anywhere else. Everything's different; the feel of the place, even the reverb is altered. One of our worst gigs we've done was this acoustic gig one time in a really loud venue, everyone was shouting and being noisy and I was on the stage like ‘I'm trying to play something delicate here!’”

Vincent is right on the ball here. As the sonorous vocals of Lee Douglas encapsulate the cathedral the hallowed images of archangels quietly observe the spectacle – there is a sense that the solemn holiness of the cathedral and Anathema's music are inextricably interconnected in some profound way. Both offer explanations for things beyond human comprehension.

Take for example the song ‘Ariel’ from *Distant Satellites*.

“We were in Buenos Aires and my brother had been experiencing a personal crisis, so I didn't expect him to make it down to soundcheck. But then he did make it down and immediately he started playing the refrain for Ariel. Then I started spontaneously singing the lyrics. The song was so natural, it was as if our sub-consciousness had already written it. My brother really needed to pour all his feelings and emotions, and that song provided the outlet”.

This is what Anathema is best at: composing incredibly powerful songs often derived from personal experience. When Daniel Cavanagh says that “this is a very special song for me” before they launch into Ariel at Leeds Minster, it becomes demonstrably clear that it is not just a song but an integral part of the man himself.

Surely the responsibility of playing such elegies to mankind is a nerve-racking task for frontman Vincent? “No, I never get nervous anymore. The only time that I would be nervous on stage would be if a minute before we go on, someone else is panicking, whether that be one of the band members or one of the crew”.

The confidence that Vincent betrays in those warm Liverpoolian tones endorses this statement completely.

[Jake Leigh-Howarth]

## Pearson Sound by Pearson Sound



Hessle Audio are currently marauding around the UK on a huge headline tour. It was a very satisfying moment to see them come home to play to a packed out Wire in January, and reflect on how far they have come in a few years. Just behind Sainsbury's, one can hear the echoes of those first few exhilarating dubstep tracks. That groundbreaking sound sanctified in these otherwise grim cobbled streets, and it's hard not to feel a certain pride or sense of elevated being when strolling towards them today.

Unlike the label's signature glitchy, stop-start bass-music sound, they are progressing unstoppably and always driving the scene forward into often frighteningly modernist realms. Pearson Sound's debut LP, the second full album to be released on Hessle, is their latest bold passage into the unknown. As if with the Hadron collider, David Kennedy smashes the atoms of techno, dubstep, grime and ambient together to create music as dangerous and sublime as a black hole.

Although Hessle are primarily known for the quality of their club nights, it can't be said that many of these tracks are floorfillers. At Wire, Pearson Sound was almost completely anonymous; it was Pangaea who shook the place with his thunderous, galvanising selections. The tracks definitely align with the vibe of a Hessle show: pitch black, crazed and cool, but they aren't club ready. Instead, these songs fill your mind with fear and wonder in equal measure. They are visionary electronic sketches; glimpses of what the future sounds like, yet laced with spirit of those gloomy, student-populated streets in Hyde Park. If you were to drop any of these tunes in a set it would be the closer 'Rubber Tree, a percussive techno cruncher. But the real gems are the creepy, grimmer tracks such as 'Six Congas'. And it is towards grime that club music seems to be moving – at least it will be after this album does the rounds. As per, everyone is sure to follow Hessle's lead. *[Oliver Walkden]*

## Projections by Romare



Footsteps echo down a corridor as synthesised waves rise uniformly from the cloudy day outside, at some point becoming indistinguishable from the drops of water that bounce from the windows. Rising, falling, rising again; taking a moment to linger before the cycle repeats. With one pause, a voice breaks through. "Whatever happens, just be."

As you wander on, voices wash past with the resonance of an understated significance, drawing thoughts from the pools of history to see what patterns the resulting ripples design. These voices called you here, yet they seek no recognition, ushering you on with unerring restraint to continue along the weaving path. A tone of sadness rings out, but each oscillation brings with it an unmistakable harmony, the defiant rise of joy.

At times you move on alone, travelling confidently through walls of foliage and into open fields. On occasion, subdued choirs and lone visionaries appear, nudging you forwards after you've caught your breath, but for the main part they are just an accentuation of the rhythm that you have already found. Bleeding through the crisp air like the red sun falling into the darkening earth ahead, there's a brightness to each breathy melody; a brightness that remains even after the last vibration has ceased.

One last look back reveals the ground you've covered, and the multitude of textures that you've traversed. With a final venture forward, you break through to sweeping plains once more, empty save for the buzz of an obscured memory attempting to re-emerge. It feels familiar here, but the footsteps have long since stopped echoing. The end is not important. The beauty lies in the journey. *[Andrew Kemp]*



[Photo: Jessie Jones]

## Father John Misty Brudenell Social Club 27th February 2015

Since I saw Steps on their farewell tour, there have been very few bands that have rendered me raspy from screaming their words back to them from the crowd. Josh Tillman a.k.a Father John Misty is one of those select few.

In a sold out Brudenell, he swaggered on stage in a full suit to an unwaveringly adoring crowd. Backed by a band of four, the show felt meatier than the acoustic sets we are used to seeing on YouTube. This was a gig that could really be called a show. Though there was no fancy back-drop, elaborate costume, or even innovative light display, there was something rather speak-easy about the set.

The source of my hoarse voice in the following days was Tillman's uncompromised lyrical genius. The whole crowd shared the pleasure of giggling at, and belting out, the lyrics along with him. Mixing both old and new, the set was a perfect harmony of vamped up favourites and new gems from *I Love You, Honeybear*. Then came the moment when he entered the crowd, sarcastically asking "so who wants a selfie then?" He had several audience members, including myself, nestled into his dapper suit, smiling and singing 'Bored in the USA' as he went. As always, Tillman's theatricality and dry wit was married perfectly with the beautiful irony and comedy of his songs, the between-song dialogue being as poetic and laugh-inducing as the lyrics themselves. The tender start to the set with 'I Love You, Honeybear' was brought back at the end in cyclical resolve with his beautiful and unforgettable 'Every Man Needs a Companion'.

A delight to behold and a hand-shaking crowd-hug encounter made the gig one of the best I've attended in a long time. There's one thing Tillman can be counted on for, and that's mystifying his audience.

[Jessie Jones]

## Earth Brudenell Social Club 22nd February 2015

The genius of Earth doesn't lie in its riffs, though they are abundant. Out of context there's little to be excited by in the riffs themselves, they're just riffs. Uncomplicated to a tee, accompanied by simple bass lines and sparse drumming. This is definitely not the maximalism so often associated with metal. Nor is it revolutionary. Riffs and metal are firm friends and, what's more, any Earth track, often reaching 20 minutes long, will have at most two or three riffs in it.

Earth's genius exists outside of any attempt to qualify or quantify the parts their pieces are built out of. Earth practice repetition, and much in the same way of a lot of dance music, it's in this repetition that Earth find themselves.

Frontman Dylan Carson would occasionally embellish a riff, adding an extra note, or delaying one slightly, or indeed any number of minor changes. What exactly he did didn't really matter. This presumably well-rehearsed aimlessness meant it was never quite clear where a track was headed, if indeed it was headed anywhere at all. On more than one occasion Earth would end a track in almost exactly the same way it began.

This gave the performance a ritualistic quality, not least because of Carson's shamanic via Americana vibe. Between his mean strut, his habit of pointing his guitar to the heavens and some fantastic facial hair, there was sense that Earth were invoking something higher.

Too bad the gig was never loud enough for them to fully transfer this something to the audience. That said, most of the satisfaction from the show came from the genuine tension as each cycle of a riff came around. Would Earth opt to change things or not? The answer was usually a resounding and definitive no.

*[Daoud Al-Janabi]*

## Glass Animals Belgrave Music Hall 4th March 2015

With pineapples and palm trees at the ready, Glass Animals entered the Belgrave with a tropicana agenda. The half hour delay only builds the suspense, but eventually the unmistakable tropical rainforest sounds of Glass Animals wash over the crowd.

'Black Mambo', the latest single from their debut album *Zaba*, opens the show. Lead singer Dave Bayley typically performs his peculiar, shaky, juddering dance moves while spouting lyrics such as "pools team with tiny feet" and "whisper sloths in curls of smoke". The interpretive dancing is on another level and continue into 'Walla Walla' and 'Wyrd' - they like their weird track names as well as their weird dance moves. Song after song gushes in and out with singles 'Gooley' and 'Hazey' invoking jubilant screams and sing-a-longs to the 'peanut butter vibes'.

After probably the shortest wait for an encore of all time, Glass Animals return for two final songs. A superb take on Kanye's 'Love Lockdown' culminates in Dave Bayley jumping down from the stage to join the crowds. Eventually he finds his way back onto the stage and swings into finale 'Pools' with thick drums and groove-driven beat.

*[Luke Humphrey]*

## Gig Guide

Friday 13th March

**Fred P at Wire, £9**

Butter Side Up return with another sterling transatlantic import.

**Radioland: Kraftwerk's Radio-Activity Revisited at Belgrave Music Hall, £10**

An audio-visual treat as the German pioneers' seminal 1975 is explored live.

Saturday 14th March

**STARFEST at Wharf Chambers, £5**

Banana Hill lead the line as a variety of artists do good songs for a good charity.

**BBC Philharmonic at Leeds Town Hall, £16-£31.50**

BBC Phil join Leeds Philharmonic Chorus to perform pieces by Dukas, Britten and Orff.

Tuesday 17th March

**Pharoahe Monch at Belgrave, £16**

Belgrave brings hip hop through the New York veteran's intricate flows.

Wednesday 18th March

**Vessels at Belgrave Music Hall**

Techno heads with guitars, providing a post-rock dance experience.

# Weekly Chart



**Florian Kupfer**  
*I Feel You*  
[WT Records]

Almost-atonal keyboard samples underpinned by a fuzzy kick and the unusual vocal work which has come to define most of Kupfer's best tracks.



**Hysteries**  
*Empty*  
[Night Slugs]

Uncharacteristically mellow house roller from the Night Slugs affiliate with subtle hints of the label's recent Jersey obsession.



**Herron**  
*Lost Track*  
[Workshop]

Meandyou head honcho's contribution to the latest Workshop release finds a perfect balance between dancefloor melancholy and dizzying claustrophobia.



**Sparky**  
*94archive2/8*  
[Rubadub]

Excellent intricate electro piece dug out from Dave Clarke's old track archives by the esteemed Glasgow record store, Rubadub.



**Pearson Sound**  
*Gristle*  
[Hessle]

The former Leeds student's album has proved to be well worth the wait, delving into even stranger territory than expected with corrosive-sounding synths defining the LP's sound.

[Laurence Huntingdon]

## Review: Brotherhood Sound System SWAMP81

Brotherhood Sound System and Swamp 81 is without a doubt a match made in heaven. To celebrate their 3rd birthday the Brotherhood boys returned to Beaver Works and invited Loefah's infamous imprint for the ride.

'Swamp 81' took over the Basement for the whole evening, culminating with Loafah's excellent extended set. CHUNKY and Mickey Pearce did not disappoint earlier on in the night, they offered up the vintage drum machine sounds, interesting basslines and jerky rhythms which denote Swamp as a label. Paleman also did a good job of keeping everyone's energy levels high. The big names attracted a slightly disproportionate amount of the crowd to the Basement, which meant it was verging on overcrowded. But then again the Beaver Works Basement is known and loved for being pitch black and packed to the brim.

The visual effects in the Warehouse did draw people in: intrinsic light projection decorated the DJ booth and lit up the room. Yet the room felt too much like a meeting place for friends to catch up and chat, and the hubbub unfortunately distracted from the music. Alexander Nut managed to overcome this with his lively set, a highpoint of which was him playing Floating Points' recent release 'Nuit Sonores'. Otherwise the main room of Beaver Works fell a little short compared to the consistently fun atmosphere elsewhere in the club.

The Back Room seemed to be a preferred choice for a lot of people. Silas and Snare Surgeon's second set of the evening was a personal favourite: full of upbeat garage tunes it was the perfect way to end the night.

The event was thrown in association with JCKS CRWN clothing, whose day skate jam event the following day sounded as fun as the night.

[Maddie Davison]



# Croatia / The Garden of eden for electronic music

After 10 successful summers of partying on the Adriatic coast, 2015 marks the final year of The Garden Festival. Since its conception and immediate success, the festival has sparked a trend amongst UK collectives and promoters seeking sun, sand and blue skies as a festival backdrop and it's acted as a model for other European and Croatian festivals to follow. In light of their final summer, In the Middle caught up with two of the founders, Nick Colgan and Eddie O'Callaghan to learn more about their ventures of the last decade.

Croatian destinations have become almost commonplace within the electronic music scene – Outlook, Dimensions and Hideout all reside on the country's beautiful coast – but The Garden did it first. Uprooting their lives 12 years ago, Nick, Eddie, their wives Charlotte and Gail and their children, made an ambitious move to begin The Garden's journey – not knowing where it would take them. "We had a friend who was from here who was instrumental in getting us over the first time", Nick explains, "he kept going on about how stunning the coast and islands were and when we got here we found he was absolutely right. I think then we knew there was something really special here, the country and its people, which made us want to stay." Despite the 6 hour trek down the old coast road from Zagreb to Zadar, the families were overwhelmed by Croatia's offerings. Opening The Garden Zadar, a bar and restaurant in the city, the idea for The Garden Festival then developed when they stumbled upon its original site in Petrcane.

**"we knew there was something really special here, the country and its people, which made us want to stay"**

A lot has changed since then – budget flights now run to the coast, and a brand new motorway cuts 3 hours of the road journey. For some, Croatia's development rate has been concerning – going from an idyllic retreat to a major tourist destination for house and techno partygoers in a short period of time. Having moved to Croatia over a decade ago, The Garden team are familiar with Croatia as a tourist hotspot, but also as a home. "Croatia has changed massively in the last 10 years, but I still feel there is a lot of room for development and investment," says Nick. "Croatia is a big place with a small population of 4 million – and a quarter of them live in Zagreb. I feel that as long as the growth is controlled somewhat and governed then we will be ok". The Garden certainly owes part of its success to this steady development: the new transport links, low-cost airlines and easy access, ultimately enable the festival to run smoothly and have allowed others to follow in its footsteps.

When talking about The Garden Festival it's hard to avoid the discussion of the festivals it has inspired, and you'd be hard pushed to find anyone in Leeds who hasn't heard of the Outlook and Dimensions brand. Despite the recent abundance of UK-Croatian hybrid festivals, seemingly riding with The Garden's original concept, Eddie tells me there has not been any rivalry. "Not many people remember, but the first Outlook was at our site in Petrcane, the lads were good friends but it was obvious to all that they needed a bigger site to grow" – Outlook has since moved to Fort Punta Christo, a site near Pula. "We support any event that has a genuine love of music at its core and will prioritise quality over quantity every time. This statement embodies The Garden's whole ethos, and the festival is renowned for its warm and friendly atmosphere. Its small capacity is an aspect of the festival that has been continually praised and very deliberately retained. "We think growing slowly and organically is the best way to avoid problems. We have relied hugely on word of mouth, and friends telling friends is always the best way to avoid trouble and guarantee the family vibe we worked so hard to achieve." The mark had been set by the first few hundred punters in 2006

and was built gradually from there. "Good people bring good people" Eddie remarks, and he's right. There's something refreshing about this attitude, which is no doubt the reason that The Garden has managed to retain its magic for all these years. The festival has never had any backstage or VIP areas, once again reaffirming The Garden's unique approach to event organisation. The team are truly in it for the love of it and the want to provide good music to good people. "Our focus has always been about making the experience as good as we can for everyone who comes, and we have annually been attracting an ever more international crowd. Even when we moved sites from Petrcane to Tisno we have always maintained our original ethos, which is always about making the festival better each year."

This year's lineup indeed matches, if not surpasses the incredible program of previous years, welcoming back old favourites like Craig Richards, as well as a mix of DJs and live acts. The Garden guys will yet again prove they are well equipped to cater to an ever expanding niche. The last ten years have seen many artists become a part of The Garden family, and their support has been integral to the festival's success since day one. Following the announcement that 2015 will be the final instalment, the team were inundated with requests from artists to play, underlining what an iconic event this has become. DJ Harvey is one act the team are particularly excited for. It will be the last ever music played at the festival over at Barbarella's and is set to be emotional. "Harvey's eclecticism and vibrant style embodies what we have been striving for all along and will be a perfect way to put a cap on a wild and wonderful decade." A "very special" guest will also be appearing on the main stage on the final day, and the Secret Island Party is also worth getting excited about.

A unique selling point for The Garden Festival is its length. Running for 7 days at the beginning of July, it's been congratulated for retaining a more relaxed feel, something like a holiday. "We always thought from the very beginning: Croatia is way too beautiful and the potential for a fabulous time so great that it would be crazy to try and cram everything into a few days." Developing a true love of Croatia and its landscape, the team have taken into account the fact that people want to travel. Exploring Zadar, Split and the stunning Plitvice Lakes is all achievable from The Garden's site at Tisno. "With a 3 day festival there is always a nagging sense of missing something but over a week you can dip in and out of the festivities," Eddie explains. Even most of the artists come for the week, joining the crowd once their set is over and immersing themselves in the festival – "it's like a music conference without the bullshit boring bits!"

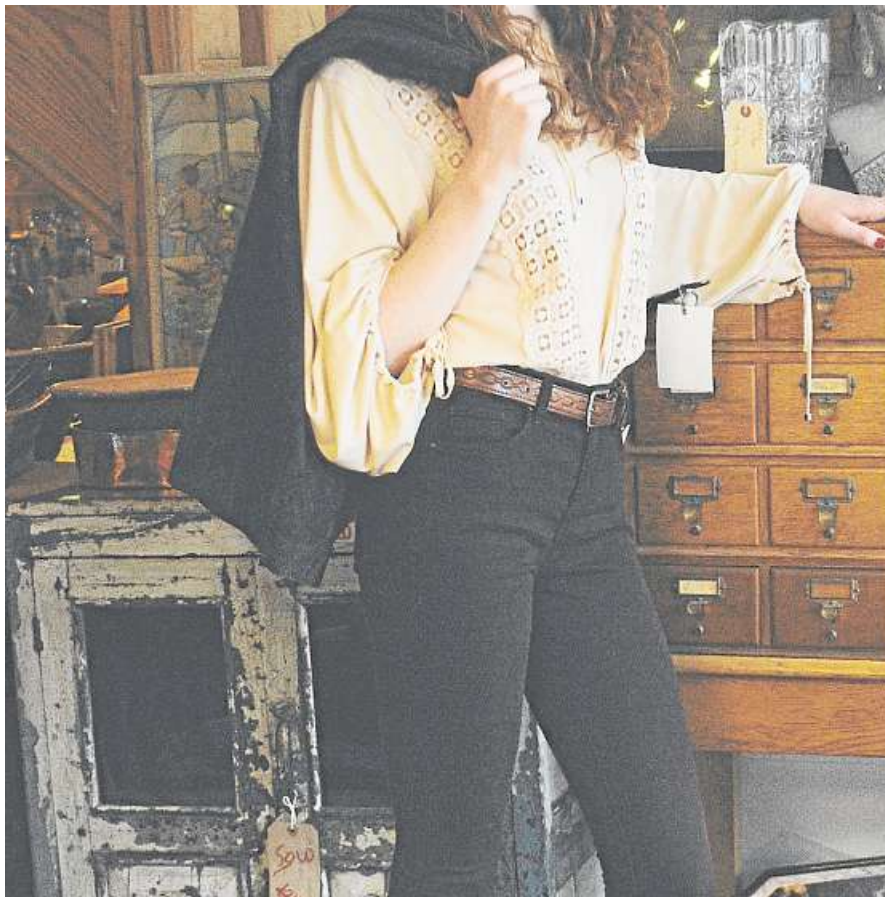
2015, however, will mark the final Garden Festival. "10 years is a good innings", says Nick "and we always wanted to end it on a high." The closure had been on the cards for a while, and allows for new developments of The Garden brand. Nick has been working on a micro-brewery project that will be tied to the existing venues. Eddie and Gail are moving to Birmingham to pursue a "new concept for lovers of clothes", but will be back in Croatia over the summers. "It is really our home now," says Nick, "and we will always have something going on here." The team are also planning a trip to Mexico to look at new opportunities, which definitely sounds exciting. Of course, Barbarella's and The Garden Tisno will continue to host other festivals and club shows each summer, along with The Garden Zadar. It's all pretty hush-hush at the moment, but a new event is also set to follow in the space that The Garden festival leaves.

With such an inspirational ethos, The Garden team have so far proved to be visionaries in their field. Bidding their festival farewell this year, we can be sure that wherever in the world they may be, even bigger and better things are to come in their future.

[Harriet Shepherd]



# That 70's show

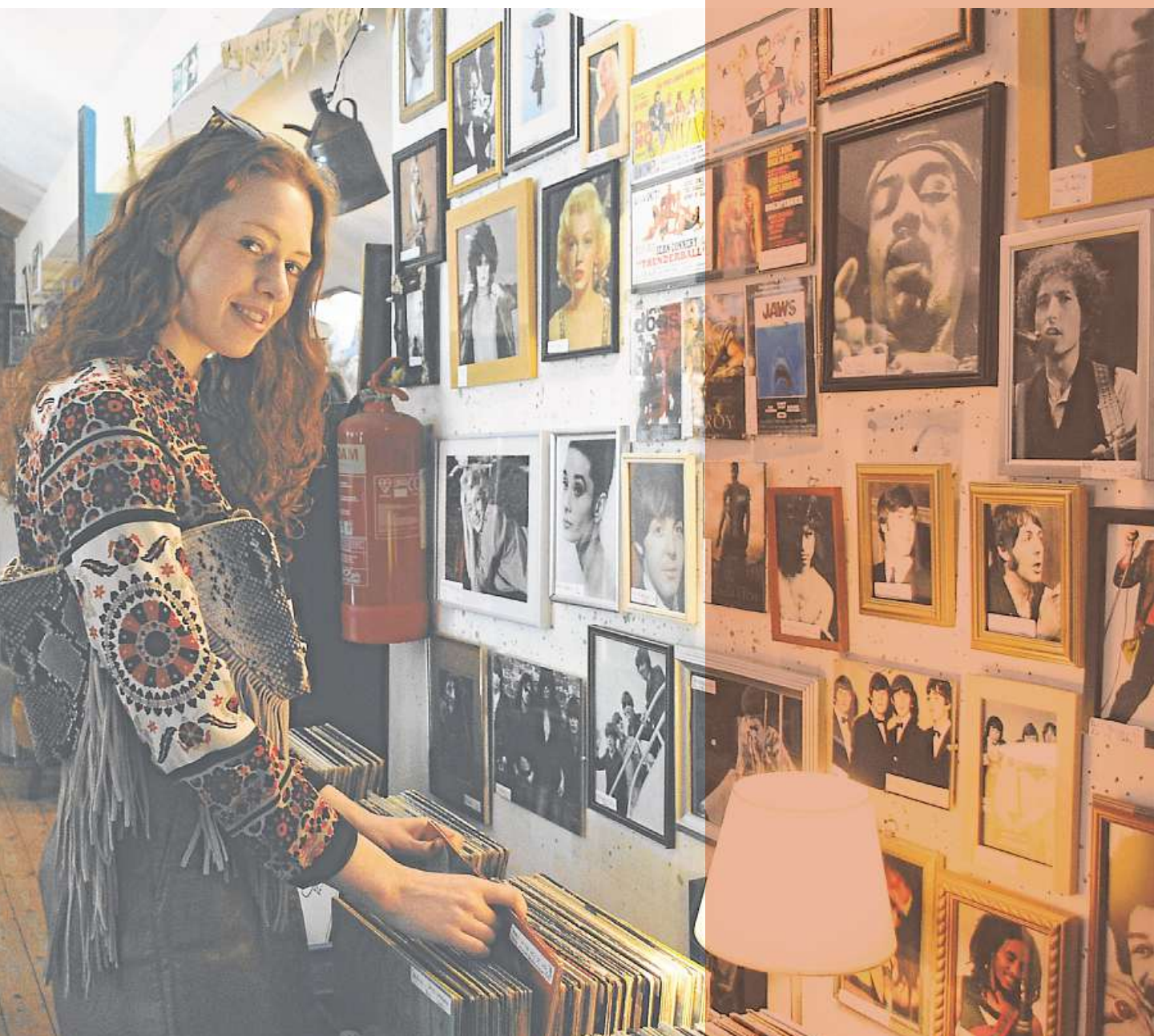


*[Modelled by Katelyn Edwards, Photographed by: Tammi Nowell, Stylists: Claire McQue and Tiffany Grous]*

The easy-breezy days of the seventies are a Go-go! Flares, fringing, and crazy paisleys inject equal doses of glamour and bohemia into this Spring's fun-loving aesthetic. A warm, earthy palette blends with tactile materials; anything suede earns instant brownie points. Channel your inner seventies siren with a slick of eyeliner and wicked cat-eye shades. Just add disco beats and spinning glitter balls, à la Studio 54.



Zara Lace Blouse £20,  
Topshop Jeans and Shoes £52,  
Asos Sunglasses £12,  
Vintage Jacket and Belt, Stylist's own.



Leather Skirt, £25.99 and Printed  
Shirt £29.99, both Zara.  
Topshop Fringed Bag £38



# Made you look, made you think - Banksy in Gaza

Throughout history the arts have documented and dominated public consciousness, both as a tool of power and of revolution. But if we think about what impacts our lives now, literature, music, and film certainly do, but for most of us the stuff on the inside of a gallery won't register. Enter Banksy, a man whose work has been putting a solid two fingers up to the establishment for years, flagging up issues of social injustice and government control, while changing the contemporary discussion on art itself. In the stunningly titled *Wall and Piece* he writes, 'When you go to an art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires.' So, Banksy takes his art straight to the streets; no one pays, no one owns, everyone sees.

His newest location however, is a little different from the urban metropolises on which he has previously made his mark. Policemen kissing on a wall in Soho is one thing, but weighing in on the Israel-Palestine conflict? Tricky, to say the least.

This however isn't the first time that Banksy has been to Palestine: a trip there ten years ago left nine pieces on the wall separating the occupied territories from Israel. His images included children with buckets and spades in front of holes in the wall showing through to beach paradises, a little girl using balloons to try to float over the wall, and a little boy painting a ladder to get over it. Beautiful pieces, but problematically so. Is it right to make something so monstrous prettier? Did Banksy whitewash the problem here?

No, he didn't. Being 12 in 2005, I had very little awareness of the Israel-Palestine conflict, but I saw those images. Yes, art will make it pretty, but pretty attracts attention - art married with politics will make you look and make you think.

Banksy's technique of bringing art to the streets in order for people to take note isn't quite as easily achieved when you're over two-thousand miles away. This time, he has engineered a different, innovative and intelligent way to make us look. Instead of photographs of the pieces, Banksy has made a travel guide style video, encouraging viewers to 'Make this year the year YOU discover a new destination.'

He stated his intention to 'highlight the destruction in Gaza by posting photos on my website - but on the internet people only look at pictures of kittens.' Low and behold, one of his pieces shows a kitten on a wall, positioned to be playing with some of the debris. It seems he has also

picked up on the quest for originality in travel destinations in the 21st century's twenty-somethings; the scenes of children playing and snaps of conversation with the locals are vaguely reminiscent of something you might see from someone's GoPro compilation from their gap yah. Still, the images, ironic captions and cutting parenthetical statements combine to make you realise this isn't somewhere you'd ever like to spend your time. The video is without doubt an unsettling watch. The camera pans across scenes of destruction to a wide shot of the wall and watchtower, the caption reading 'Nestled in an exclusive setting,' and in brackets underneath '(Surrounded by a wall on three sides and a line of gun boats on the other.)' Some of the other facts have been deemed inaccurate by Israeli sources, for example the video's statement that no cement has been allowed into Gaza is apparently false, and some critics have argued that Banksy's clear bias is inappropriate in such a delicate conflict. Would we be right to take these statements with trepidation, knowing how problematic an issue bias has already been in our perception of the conflict? When faced with a video like this (not to mention last summer's atrocities - but that's a different story), it's very

hard to remain neutral - the evidence of destroyed lives is laid in front of us. Banksy knows this. It seems he pre-empted his critics, ending the video with an image of a statement written in red on a wall: 'If we wash our hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless we side with the powerful - we don't remain neutral.'

If we put this statement against the initial question of whether Banksy was right to weigh in on the conflict, it seems we are only left with one answer. This is what he does, forces our attention where it needs to be, using his combination of art and popular culture to make us look, and his cutting challenges to injustice to make us think. If anything, this may be where the likes of Banksy are needed most - we needed to 'discover' this 'new destination.' After the horror of last summer, someone needed to put Gaza back into our collective consciousness, and Banksy does this in an intelligent, subtle and thereby particularly powerful manner - highlighting not only the injustice in Gaza itself, but how we misuse our privilege to information on the internet. There's plenty of material on the conflict out there - but we're more interested in cats and searching out the next backpacking hotspot. This is where the marriage of art, popular culture and politics is most poignant - Banksy makes us look and makes us think. *[Chess Carnell]*



# The Controversial Musical: A new outlet for the offensive?

Since its creation in 2011, *The Book of Mormon* has wowed audiences both on Broadway and the West End, but what makes it so successful and why do audiences revel in its controversial content?

The theatre is no stranger to controversy, but with *The Book of Mormon*, a highly risqué piece in the typically safe form of a musical, it could be said that audiences are becoming more relaxed about being exposed to non-PC and irreverent content? With tickets shamelessly priced up to £175, I was lucky enough to see the show recently at the relatively modest price of £47. It's clear that demand is incredibly high, and *The Book of Mormon's* reputation as an offensive musical seems to present no barrier to the popularity of the show. In fact, it boosts the show's appeal to a surprisingly large target audience.

In an industry where new work struggles to take off (it has been recently reported that *Made In Dagenham* is to close next month after a mere six-month run) and where revivals of musicals such as *Cats* or *Miss Saigon* seem to be the safe option for producers, *The Book of Mormon* seemingly ticks all the boxes of regarding what not to put in a musical. With offensive material aimed pretty much any sub-culture, gender, sexuality, nationality – in other words anyone and everyone, *The Book of Mormon* (similarly to *The Producers*) subverts the criteria of a traditional musical and the world has been responsive, perhaps even enlightened by this fresh piece of theatre for challenging the form.

It would seem that there is something about this musical which seems to bring out the cheek in all of us. Perhaps it's because the show pokes fun at everyone, so that we can all laugh along together. Looking around the auditorium, I was surprised to see the variety of audience members who came along to witness what is clearly the most controversial musical currently in the West End. Part of me relished the idea of a theatre scandalized by the show, and I was informed that many are seen to walk out in outrage before the interval.

Ten years previously, *Jerry Springer the Opera* was the buzz of the West End and even amassed protests outside the theatre before each performance. Yet, with *The Book of Mormon*, the fuss outside is instead made by hopeful spectators vying to win the ticket lottery for the show. It comes as no surprise that the masterminds of irreverent animation *South Park* were behind this musical. In fact, any fan will remember *South Park's* episodes about Mormons. Musical tunes in that episode followed by the gleeful chant 'dumb dumb dumb dumb' could perhaps have been foreshadowing *The Book of Mormon*.

However, *The Book of Mormon* show carries a message beneath its offensive exterior: no matter how ridiculous one's religion tends to be, spiritual belief and togetherness are what it takes to make it through life. Perhaps it is the moral of the story that allows us to forgive and enjoy the show's relentless rounds of satire and humour, none of which should be taken seriously. When we see shows that are deemed controversial, the hype tends to be some form of political drama to market a piece as engrossing and relevant. But on many occasions we are left underwhelmed by such shows. The fact that *The Book of Mormon* is a musical shouldn't prevent its writers from exploring the controversial reaches of comedy. It could even be suggested that the musical form acts as some sort of security for the show to be as controversial as it is.

*The Book of Mormon* gives the theatre audiences hope for future productions. Far too long have musicals been branded as twee and irrelevant. Whilst there remain token productions of *Les Misérables* and *The Phantom of the Opera* to represent the treasures of the West End, I invite theatre audiences to welcome new and exciting productions such as *The Book of Mormon*. It is a shame to see so many productions fall off the theatre atlas due to today's audiences becoming too habitual with their viewing pleasures. At the same time it is enlightening to see audiences attitude towards controversy improving.

[Mark McDougall]



[Image: Columbia Pictures]

## Film

# Chappie

There has been no shortage of films focusing on the advent of A.I. recently, from *Ex Machina* released in January to the hotly-anticipated *Avengers: Age of Ultron* which will be released at the end of April. Somewhere in the middle sits *Chappie*, the third directorial outing from South African director Neill Blomkamp, best known for directing the Oscar-nominated sci-fi hit *District 9*. Set once again in Blomkamp's native Johannesburg, *Chappie* is the imaging of a not distant future where a robot police force has taken over control of the crime-ridden city to great success. Amidst this is a rejected robot reloaded with an artificial intelligence programme which gives him the ability to think, feel, and learn. Intended as the pet project of the A.I.'s creator, 'Chappie' is actually adopted by a group of gangsters who intend to use him to carry out a heist so they can repay an associate who looks like Riff Raff on steroids. As they try to teach Chappie to be 'original gangster number one', hilarity, destruction and heartache ensues.

On the positive side the film features solid performances from key cast members, notably Yolandi Visser (of rave-rap duo Die Antwoord fame) as Chappie's surrogate mother and Dev Patel as the boy-genius creator of the police robots and Chappie. Also starring are Sigourney Weaver and Hugh Jackman, the latter of whom sports a mullet and has a great time playing the unhinged ex-SAS rival to Patel, an engineer who hates AI and champions his own creation of super-robots operated by humans via mind control, but in honesty does little to add to the film's plot. Chappie himself is voiced by Blomkamp's good friend Sharlto Copley, who does an excellent job of conveying the robot's childlike innocence and providing humour at various junctures. In addition the film is largely soundtracked by Die Antwoord's music, which makes sense considering they're a large part of the film and could feel self-indulgent, but actually gives the film a bit of energy and compliments the overall chaotic vibe Blomkamp seems to be aiming for.

But those are the positives. Much like Blomkamp's last film *Elysium* *Chappie* proves to be over-ambitious, setting out with the best intentions and a decent concept that ultimately falls flat, perhaps because the film tries to do too much with its premise or simply because it asks the audience to invest in a plot that becomes gradually more ridiculous as it goes on. This isn't to say that *Chappie* doesn't have its charms, particularly the robot himself who in his naivety and innate trust of the world is a refreshing change from the evil AI that tends to grace our screens, and the scenes between Chappie and Yolandi Visser are some of the film's best. Audiences will fall in love with Blomkamp's AI creation, but not the film itself.

That's the real problem; if Blomkamp had edited his script a little and focused more on the relationship between humanity and technology, he could have made a much more interesting film about human nature, which is what he achieved so well in the plot of *District 9*. *Chappie* has so much going for it, but just fails to make the kind of impact that it deserves.

[Hannah Woodhead]

## Dance

# LUU Dance Show

Leeds University Union has always been proud to host award winning dance societies with such creative flair one has to wonder how a single university can have so many talented people in one small space. Year upon year the LUU Dance Show provides a platform for showcasing this incredible ability, and the 2015 show was quite possibly one of the best yet. All of the dance societies from the university were invited along to perform, have fun and represent their skill no matter their dance style and all collaborated to create what can only be described as an unforgettable night.

This year's theme was film, with the majority of societies focusing on childhood favourites and classic hits that most of the audience were familiar with. It was interesting to see how each of the dance styles incorporated the stories of the films into their choreography. Some of the societies really went all out with the theme and stand out performances included Irish Dance's interpretation of *Rocky*, StreetDance's *Game of Thrones* themed sequence and Vertical Fitness' inspiring routine based on *Frozen*. All were performances worthy of west end shows and I would defy any audience member to say they weren't impressed. That's without even mentioning one of the evening's most powerful and emotional pieces of art from the Freestyle Contemporary group - anyone with a dance background in this style would regard them highly for such a moving performance.

The whole show isn't down to just down to the performers themselves though, and it's important to remember that a lot of what made the night so spectacular were the aesthetics achieved through music, set and lighting. The credit for all of these things should go to Backstage Society, who really do deserve applause, as without their hard work and dedication it's fair to say we'd be left with a far less dazzling experience.

The Leeds Uni Dance representative Jordan Steel should be extremely pleased with the performance put on across the four nights at the Riley Smith. Every last, step, every formation and beat accounted for and it was evident there was real passion on stage. The remarkable thing is the dancers truly looked like they were having fun, which is half the key to success and undoubtedly will ensure that the LUU Dance show will continue for many more years to come.

[Emily Willson]



# Matthew Bourne's Edward Scissorhands

A touring production of Matthew Bourne's Edward Scissorhands recently played four dates at Bradford's Alhambra theatre. Adapted from Tim Burton's eponymous film, Matthew Bourne's production resurrects the cult favourite as a mesmerising all-dancing show. This version tells the story of a young boy who is electrocuted whilst holding some scissors. Although his father tries to fix him, the old man dies before completing his work, leaving Edward with scissors for hands. Orphaned Edward is soon discovered by a suburban mother who takes him in as her own. The heart-warming tale that follows shows Edward's assimilation into society as he falls in love with the family's daughter, Kim.

**“elements of Danny Elfman's score remain, leaving audiences with goosebumps every time those choral chants are heard”**

This adaptation is mostly true to the story's original form and the artistic direction of an all-dance performance makes for interesting viewing. Certain elements of Danny Elfman's score remain, leaving spectators with goosebumps each time those mystical choral chants are heard. The overall score of the piece

effectively translates the story for the stage, making it accessible for anyone unfamiliar with the original film. The staging of Edward's origins contrasts with the backdrop of American 1950's suburbia, enhancing the gothic elements of the production. However, the theatrical illusion is sometimes undermined due to some small houses on stage which are smaller than the dancers, meaning the performers are visible as they enter and exit upstage. While the set is visually interesting, it does sometimes leave spectators detached from the main action on stage.

Matthew Bourne's choreography demonstrates each individual's need to be part of a group within society. Accompanied by blues and jazz instrumentals, each family has a unique motif which adds to the depth of the ensemble. Often the audience has the chance to choose between several dances occurring onstage at once. A most impressive sequence occurs at the end of act one in the involving the ensemble dressed as greenery accompanying Edward and Kim as they dance through Edward's dream.

Matthew Bourne's reputation as a choreographer creates high expectations for each of his productions and whilst Edward Scissorhands may not be his most memorable production for critics, it certainly makes for pleasant viewing for anyone new to dance or any fan of the original film. *[Mark McDougall]*



# Drugs Live: Cannabis on Trial

## A boring, biased look at cannabis

Channel 4's *Drugs Live: Cannabis on Trial* attempted to distinguish the difference in the feelings and effects induced by hashish and the reportedly "three times stronger" skunk, which has created much debate in recent years. Millions of people in the UK smoke cannabis every year and it's an experience many students go through at some point during their time at university.

The show promised a great deal, with star academics such as Professor David Nutt, and charismatic presenters like Christian Jessen all taking part, but it lacked purpose. Its attempt in making a flashy and exciting introduction fell short, with a selection of confusing camera shots showing each presenter walking in different directions, followed by a comment from Richard Branson, a completely random choice of celebrity to include in the show. Even he seemed somewhat bemused when Jessen came over and put him in the spotlight. The lab coats and tacky studio layout didn't help to make the show more interesting either, just undeniably cheesy.

As it continued, the show became increasingly similar to an awkward video a teacher would put on in a science class before half the students fall asleep. The only really enjoyable part of the show was the moment Jon Snow had his famous panic attack in the middle of an MRI scan after smoking skunk. However, presenting what was to happen at the beginning essentially ruined the surprise of it.

One flaw of the television experiment which was never addressed was the fact that being high and being forced to talk about feelings of anxiety would considerably increase these feelings than if, say, the participant was sat listening to music and eating a bag of Doritos. After all, anxiety feeds on loops of thought. This could have been a crucial reason as to why Jon Snow had such a bad reaction; never mind the fact that he took the strongest strain of the drug that there is.

When it came to interviewing 'real life' stoners and not fifty-year-old, middle class presenters, they couldn't have picked a more stereotypical bunch if they tried. It basically consisted of a group of students saying how good cannabis made them feel and how great high sex is. They just seemed happy to have a few moments on television more than anything.

The deluded message that creativity correlates with cannabis use, even though it may have been unintentional, could be inferred incorrectly by some of the audience. Music sounds better to a high listener, that's agreed. But there's no proof it makes anyone more creative and this shouldn't be implied on an 'informative' show.

The results provided little new revelations about cannabis. The dramatised promise for a massive discovery came to a flat finding that skunk is in fact worse than the better known, normal strain of cannabis and hash. This created a strong sense of purposelessness and inadequacy; *Drugs Live: Cannabis on Trial* was one hour of television seriously lacking. [Sasha Hodes]

# 12 Monkeys

## Time travel and mystery in Syfy's new drama

The Syfy channel is well known for showing a wide variety of dramas with a twist, and their latest offering of *12 Monkeys* is definitely no exception. Based on the 1995 film of the same name, the show has successfully been brought into the 21st century.

We're introduced to James Cole (played by Aaron Stanford of *X-Men* and *Nikita*), a time traveller rummaging through an abandoned medical centre in the year 2043. The gruesome discovery of a wrist watch on a skeleton prompts a quick change to the year 2013 and serves as the introduction for Dr Cassandra Raily (played by Amanda Schull of *Suits* and *Pretty Little Liars*). It is quickly evident that as with all programmes featuring a time travel element, the episodes will all be split across several time periods; effective if done correctly but quite often falls flat.

The meeting between the lead characters is a dramatic one with Cole lurking in Raily's car, weapon in hand. Cole quickly attempts to explain his dilemma; he is a sick time traveller from the year 2043, a world in which a deadly virus has wiped out 7 billion people; a figure which he explains equates to just over 93% of the population. There is an odd moment where a 'timeline is severed' and a scratch on the watch of 2013 results in a firm change in direction for the show's cinematography, with cliché camera-shaking to boot.

Overall, this has all the potential of a good and gripping drama. The cast consists of some talented actors who have the ability to deliver on the hype we've already seen around the work. Hopefully this promising piece of television will not follow the footsteps of past newbie science fiction dramas (*Alcatraz* anyone?) and won't over-hype the element of time travel. If it sticks to its solid plot and keeps the shaky effects to a minimum, it could quickly become a must-watch piece of television. [Devon Allen]



Books

## Bitch Planet

Image Comics are quickly proving themselves to be the publishing equivalent of a fairy godmother for creators and readers alike. They offer some of the biggest names in the industry the chance to write/ draw the comic they've always wanted – to create the characters and craft the story their career has been building up to. *Bitch Planet* is a perfect example of this. Its writer, Kelly Sue DeConnick, has recently done some fantastic work on the *Captain Marvel* series – receiving praise from fans and critics alike.

DeConnick's *Captain Marvel* is often thought of as a strongly "feminist" take on the character, but without losing focus on the actions and superheroics that long-time fans have come to expect. The downside of this is that *Captain Marvel* remains a Marvel product, not a DeConnick product – she has a lifetime of character development outside of the author's imagination and there is only so much "transformation" her creators have the freedom allow her.

*Bitch Planet* is an entirely different beast altogether. Here, DeConnick isn't required to dilute her politics or have her social commentary play second fiddle. If *Captain Marvel* is a series that started with an existing character and got some of DeConnick's gender politics stapled on, *Bitch Planet* is a series that starts with its creator's message and sculpts everything else around that. The result is an indulgently political comic, with a clear feminist slant; it pulls no punches and offers no apologies. Each issue comes with a short critical

essay at the back, and while some may find this idea overly preachy and self-indulgent, I find it a refreshingly personal touch.

While *Bitch Planet* is a deeply political series with a clear agenda, it's also one with a heart. This isn't a slow-paced lecture, it's a punch to the chest. The series is set in a dystopian future where "non-compliant" women can be sent to a huge space-station-come-prison-complex known as "bitch planet" for failing to exist peacefully in their deeply patriarchal society. As you can imagine, all the coolest women end up there.

The diverse cast of characters should result in some really interesting and dynamic relationships as the series unfolds, and it has already cemented itself as a fan-favourite. The "NC" logo used to brand "non-compliant" female characters has already skyrocketed to "iconic" status, with many fans tattooing themselves with the initials in solidarity. The series is billing itself as "Margaret Atwood meets *Inglorious Bastards*", but I think throwing in a jug of Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror*, a dash of *Orange is the New Black* and a pinch of *The Hunger Games* should give you a far more accurate picture. If that doesn't convince you to pick up a copy – nothing will. [Anna Turner]

# How to Be a Knowledge Ninja

## All the hints and tips you need to make it through your degree

Self-help books equate to an \$11 billion dollar industry in the United States alone, a figure that shows no signs of slowing down. I admittedly harboured the outdated attitude that all self-help books resembled *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*; a view I am happy to say has now changed.

Graham Allcott is a self-confessed "author, speaker, social entrepreneur and the original productivity ninja". His previous book *How to Be a Productivity Ninja* received excellent reviews, a success I'm sure his current offering of *How to Be a Knowledge Ninja* will easily emulate. This book is aimed at students with the promise to correct our flaws of procrastination, disorganisation and lack of motivation.

The opening chapter gives a brief overview to all the problem areas we commonly face; studying at inappropriate times, writing 'to do' lists and then losing them, checking Facebook every ten minutes etc. The first chapter of 'Getting Organised' is probably the most useful and is full of helpful suggestions such as recommendations for online checklists (all apps are free to download) that are also multi-platform. A tool the book often utilises is providing a space for you to write your own entries alongside your reading, for example coming up with a weekly checklist based around your own activities.

The further chapters cover a variety of problem areas for students such as exam revision, essay writing, general study and memory techniques, all of which are of great use for any student. Then came the chapter I needed the

most, procrastination. The chapter opens with the figure of between 80-90% of college students in America admit to suffering from procrastination. Allcott then comes up with many suggestions of ways to counteract this nasty habit, including suggestions of setting yourself mini deadlines while keeping a record of when and why you digress each time.

I was really sceptical about this, but after reading it, I would definitely recommend it to any student who associates with any of the above or has any form of deadline or exam approaching. Allcott's casual and friendly attitude helps you identify your own problem areas and provides ways to improve them in time to apply to your own work. He is keen to stress it's okay to fail, as long as you realise you're slipping into old habits anything can be rectified. Another bonus of the book is you can pick and choose the relevant sections, the chapters are all individual blocks, useful for those who on research courses with no exams, or vice versa. [Devon Allen]



## Travel

# Interrailing in Europe

Like many students, this summer you're planning to go inter-railing. Your friends and family are all telling you different things; what to bring, where to visit and where to avoid. You've all heard the great stories people have had during their travels as well as the horror stories. Here I give the advice I wish I'd known before I went last summer.

Set a reasonable budget. I know that it seems best to take the minimum amount possible to ensure you don't spend too much, but the best thing to do is take a little more than you think you'll need. Whatever budget you calculate at home will always be nothing compared to your actual expenditure in reality. You don't want the stress of calling home to ask for more money before a night out in Berlin.

Book hostels in advance for every city you visit. Lots of people do the spontaneous thing where they travel with no bookings and hope to find a hostel with a vacancy somewhere in the city. That's pretty risky, especially during summer time when hostels are in highest demand. You don't want to end up sleeping on a bench out in the cold, so book them at least a few weeks before you travel. Strangely, some people I spoke to actually enjoyed sleeping on the benches when they couldn't find a hostel, but they were certainly in the minority.

Try to avoid going out to the nightclubs that the hostels promote and avoid bar crawls. It may seem like they are giving you a good deal, but the 'free shots' and 'discounted entry fee' are advertised for a reason. It's either going to be scam once you're in there or a terrible atmosphere. We made the mistake of booking a bath party in Budapest promoted by the hostel we stayed in and it was one of the worst night of the trip. We got a discounted entry fee so decided it was a good deal, only to then find out there was a tab limit of £16 and the baths were filled with unidentified fluids and floating condoms.

Search online for the best clubs and ask around before you make plans. It's also a good idea to see where other groups in the hostel are going too. The bar crawls are also a rip off, on average costing you £10 for what you could do yourselves for free.

Don't make a travel route that's too all over the place. No one wants to be travelling for 14 hours every train ride. Pick a route that won't tire you out and that makes sense from country to country. However, a beautiful scenic route once in a while will remind you what you're there for. [Sasha Hodes]

## Books

# Old School

## We take a look at those high school classics worthy of a second read

Harper Lee has recently announced that she is releasing a sequel to *To Kill A Mockingbird*, fifty five years after the book was first published. The novel is studied by many students at GCSE level, and I can remember reading the novel, 10-12 pages at a time, in a classroom. Unfortunately, this stop-start mechanical consumption caused the excellence of the book to be lost on me at the time, as I'm sure it was for many other students also. It's only when I re-read the novel, six years on, that I fully appreciated its poignancy as a piece of literature.

## Plays:

The perceived barrier to fully appreciating Shakespeare's work is the language, and it is the hurdle at which most people fall and give up. However, the saying 'no pain no gain' applies here and the perseverance is definitely worth the reward. An absolute must is *Hamlet* – the story of a young Prince's quest to avenge his murdered father. Hamlet's sanity gradually deteriorates as he is tortured and possessed by the gravity of his task.

*An Inspector Calls* by J.B. Priestly is a gripping and gloomy snippet into the lives of the privileged, and underprivileged, in the early 20th century. The Birling house is visited by the ominous Inspector Goole one night regarding the suicide of a young woman. It's highly entertaining, not too lengthy and easily consumable – definitely worth a (re-)read when you have a few hours down time.

## Novels:

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde is essential to this list. A dark philosophical novel which explores beauty and morality in the infamous character, Dorian Gray. It is a timeless piece which becomes more enjoyable every time you read it.

*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* are a brilliant couplet. Bronte's novel is an absolute classic and Rhys' prequel is a brilliant interpretation of events prior to *Jane Eyre*.

## Poetry:

After studying A Level English I'm also quite partial to a Shakespearean sonnet – short, sweet and affecting. I highly recommend *A Lover's Complaint* – not quite so short and sweet – but a beautiful reflection on love, beauty, deception and the wiles of time.

Along a similar, but much more sinister, vein is *Porphyria's Lover* by Robert Browning; a tale of the murder of a woman by her lover. For anyone who enjoys a darker read, this poem chills to the bone.

In the realm of more contemporary poetry, I recommend the works of Welsh poet Owen Sheers, which is accessible, unpretentious and relatable. In particular, *Keyways Unlocking* and *Skirrid Hill* are very touching. [Sarah Lamb]



Photo: Charlotte de Drouas

## Food

# Choco-Nut Clusters

## The perfect bake for Mother's Day

Swamped with deadlines but still want to surprise Mum with something sweet for Mother's Day? These chocolate-nut clusters are quick and easy to make and they never fail to impress. Only 3 simple ingredients needed. The sea salt is optional, but does provide a delightful contrast to the sweetness of the chocolate.

## Ingredients

340g dark chocolate

280g (roughly 2 cups) whole raw almonds/walnuts/cashews/peanuts (unsalted)

A few pinches of coarse sea salt (optional)

## Method

**1** Line a baking tray with baking paper.

**2** Roughly break up the chocolate into small pieces, and microwave in a heat-proof bowl for 2 minutes. Take out and stir every thirty seconds and stir; chocolate burns very quickly. Give your chocolate a little longer if not completely melted after 2 minutes.

**3** Add your choice of nuts to the melted chocolate and mix well.

**4** With a teaspoon, scoop out a few chocolate-coated nuts and form a mound on the baking sheet. The chocolate will spread out a little, but this is fine. Feel free to play around with how big or small you want your clusters to be!

**5** If desired, sprinkle with coarse sea salt.

**6** Leave to cool completely in the fridge or freezer. They will only take a few minutes to harden up.

**7** Store in an airtight container, and finish off with ribbon to make them look like the perfect gift. They are now ready to be sent off to Mum.

# More Sugar and Fat For Your Diets

## The truth behind gluten-free Food

Intolerances to foods such as eggs, nuts, lactose and micronutrients such as gluten are on the rise. Surveys suggest that 1 out of every 133 people in the general population is gluten intolerant. Just 10 years ago, this figure was 1 in 2500. The intolerance to gluten, referred to as Coeliac disease, is a common digestive, autoimmune condition in which a person has an adverse reaction to gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye and barley.

Unlike other intolerances, Coeliac disease is not a food allergy, which is the common misconception. Symptoms include malabsorption, including chronic fatigue, neurological disorders, anemia, nausea, diarrhoea, bloating and abdominal pain. The gluten-free diet is the only treatment for the condition, which can make life as a coeliac a real challenge.

Ruan Shah, second year University of Leeds student said that for him, gluten was 'as bad as smoking' for his insides. He discovered he had the disease when he was just 6 years old after taking a test. He was screened because the disease runs in his family; his grandmother had the disease, and only 4 out of her 30 grandchildren are not intolerant to gluten.

After reading around the topic, complex reasons permeate the gluten-free narrative, centering around the drastic changes made to our lifestyles in recent years. Increased consumption of sugar, alcohol, antibiotics, environmental toxins and the introduction of GMOs into our foods over the last 15 years has had a significant impact on the imbalance within our guts. The Weston A. Price Foundation research found that modern wheat varieties are genetically very different to more traditional kinds, so some people's bodies have not been able to readjust to cope with this change.

Cutting out gluten however, is not necessarily good for you if you are not a coeliac, with reports emerging of individuals actually developing illnesses such as insomnia when they had cut the protein from their diet. Ella Southall, first year Food Science and Nutrition student at Leeds University said, 'there is a pre-misconception that avoiding gluten will lead to a healthier lifestyle, although the products that are free from gluten often contain higher levels of sugar, fat and other unhealthy substances'.

We've tampered extensively with our diets and environment, and so it should come as no surprise when there are consequences on our health, our well-being and our relationship with food. [Josie Hough]

# Getting hooked on a hitch with RAG

*In the Middle* speaks to Molly Elmes, RAG's hitches manager, about the student phenomenon that is hitchhiking.

Hitchhiking is a popular event and RAG host many across the year. It's primarily a student experience and is directly catered to them. When you leave university, there isn't much chance to try it.

Hitching is an easy way to travel, it's cheap and everyone makes the targets because the fundraising requires low totals. Hitching gives you a chance to meet new people, and with events like the Amsterdam hitch, everyone's arrival is celebrated with a big night out.

Jailbreak is a nationwide phenomenon and gives students a taste of adventure without taking up too much time, giving students a small break away from their studies.

Molly took part in Jailbreak in her first year and hitched with friends all the way to Venice in 36 hours. They spent 15 hours in a car with a Greek man driving from Sussex to Greece who agreed to drop them off. The girls had a great time, were given food and talked about Greek politics. Molly said they were still in contact with him. Her team came third, beaten by two groups who made it to Budapest.

She enjoyed it so much that she became a leader in her second year and decided to rebrand Jailbreak. Everyone was given an orange t-shirt to identify them and their cause. That year saw participants double, with roughly 75 people taking part. To join, students have to raise at least £170 for a charity of their choice.

Hitching is a great way to raise money for charity and give students a good time, as well as important life skills and experience. Recent events have seen thousands of pounds raised. The Christmas hitch raised £1575 for Crisis at Christmas. The Amsterdam hitch raised £3675 for the Refugee council. Jailbreak had between 50 and 60 participants, raising a minimum of £8925 for charities and Wanderlust will raise at least £2100.

Compare this to £244.66 raised at Speed Dating and £424.45 at Take me Out

and you can see why hitching is such a popular way to fundraise.

As a child, you're constantly told not to talk to strangers or get into their cars. Hitching goes against this and it's easy to be anxious about this style of activity. There are risks to participating in these events but it's not as dangerous as it seems. Hitching gives you a chance to restore your faith in humanity as you practise trust and encourage charitable acts from strangers.

The biggest piece of advice is to trust your instincts. Talk to people and get to know a little bit about them before committing yourself. Be careful and look for any sign of someone being under the influence. It's also a good idea to find someone who speaks English, unless you're bilingual, so that it's easier to understand each other. RAG recommend you travel in groups of two or three, and advice groups to include at least one male.

RAG provide hitch participants with a laminated letter which explains the events purpose. They insist students wear either a RAG or hitch t-shirt to identify them. Some students text friends and family with car registrations and flight numbers so that they can be tracked. RAG asks all participants to text the leaders every three hours in order to track progress, and tweets are sent continuously to keep in contact.

Trains can be tricky and you should make yourself aware of rules regarding tickets. In the past, students were arrested in Germany and held for a couple of hours because they didn't have tickets. Luckily, the situation was eventually understood by the German police and the students were released.

RAG are also introducing a tracking device. Using an internet server imbedded in sites like Tumblr, tweets and texts with locations will be automatically uploaded to create a visual of where all students are currently positioned.

So if you're looking for a unique experience to remember your time at Leeds, try hitching for charity and see how far you can get.

## Why not join Veggie Soc?

There is little that can top the excitement I felt attending Veggie Society's Pizza Making Give It A Go. A devoted vegetarian from the age of nine, there aren't many times when I can go to food events without having to annoyingly ask the hosts, "Is there meat in this?" Veggie society (obviously) had none of those concerns.

Hosted in cute vegetarian café Roots and Fruits, the pizza making was conducted in a comfortable and friendly environment – an atmosphere that the Vegetarian society strives to create at every event. As well as being welcoming to me, the members of the group encourage anyone to join. The only prerequisites are a love for food (not difficult) and an open mind.

Although the society only really became active at the start of 2014, they've already had a medley of events and a growing number of members. Ranging from Halloween and Christmas potlucks to vegan chocolate making, Vegetarian Society offers something for everyone. It's not only members that have been taken with Veg Soc, the society has also received lots of support from local businesses. Companies have donated food, venues and skin care products at low prices, meaning that an added bonus of joining the society is a free goodie bag!

The pizzas themselves were peppered with interesting fruits and vegetables: The bases were also quite creative – though it seems pretty straightforward.

I'd never thought of making pizza out of a wrap. I also tried the phenomenon that is vegan cheese (I know, sounds dodgy, right?) and was pleasantly surprised to find that there was really no difference to regular cheese (seriously, try both blindfolded and then get back to me).

At the low price of £5 for membership or £3 for their GIAG, Vegetarian Society know what's up. So if you're looking for a new cuisine, or want a nice place to enjoy your normal one, take a chance on the Vegetarian Society. [Avigail Kohn]



# Calendar Events

13th March	14th March	15th March	16th March	17th March	18th March	19th March
12-2pm	9am-5:30pm	9am-5pm	2-4pm	6-8:30pm	6-7pm	5-7pm
Postgraduate Drop in, Hidden Cafe. Drop by for as long as you want, grab a cuppa and meet new people like you.	Kitesurfing GIAG, Meet at Parkinson Steps. Prepare to get wind-swept as you learn the basic skills. Don't worry though, you won't get wet just yet.	Action Bound: Cake Icing. Meet at Parkinson Steps. Volunteer to take young carers for a fun day of icing cakes and bowling, to give them a break from home.	Dodgeball, The Edge Sports hall 1A. Free. Dodge, duck, dip,dive and dodge to win prices. Teams of 6, contact sdl3nrs@leeds.ac.uk.	Child Protection Training, Rupert Beckett Lecture Theatre. Free. Compulsory for all wanting to volunteer with Action.	Bridge the Gap. Grove Court Nursing Home, free. Entertain the elderly by playing bingo and socialising.	Create: Cushion Making, LUU Room 5, £4. Make your own cushion out of bright, lovely materials.
6-7pm	9am-4:30pm	10:30-4:30pm	4-6pm	7:30-10:30pm	From 7:30pm	5-8pm
Breakdance GIAG. Anyone is welcome to try out this fun dance form. Bring your A game.	Civ Soc vs Shock Soc Paintballing. Meet at Parkinson Steps, £19.99 non members. Get down and dirty as you fight with paint. 200 paintballs included.	Leeds does Vintage, The Leeds Club, £2. Browse the rails of vintage clothes and enjoy afternoon tea. There's live music and beauty stalls too.	Baking GIAG, LUU Room 5. Try Cake decorating and learn different techniques from buttercream piping to fondant modelling.	Dinner at 2 Oxford Place, £5 deposit. Purchase before 14th March. Enjoy tasty cuisine and spoil yourself with two or three courses.	McBusted at First Direct Arena. Get nostalgic with hits from the 90's including 'Year 3000'. Enjoy a mix of the old and the new.	Alternative Therapies Evening with Katharine Graves. Rupert Beckett Lecture Theatre. £7 non members. Learn about hypnobirthing.

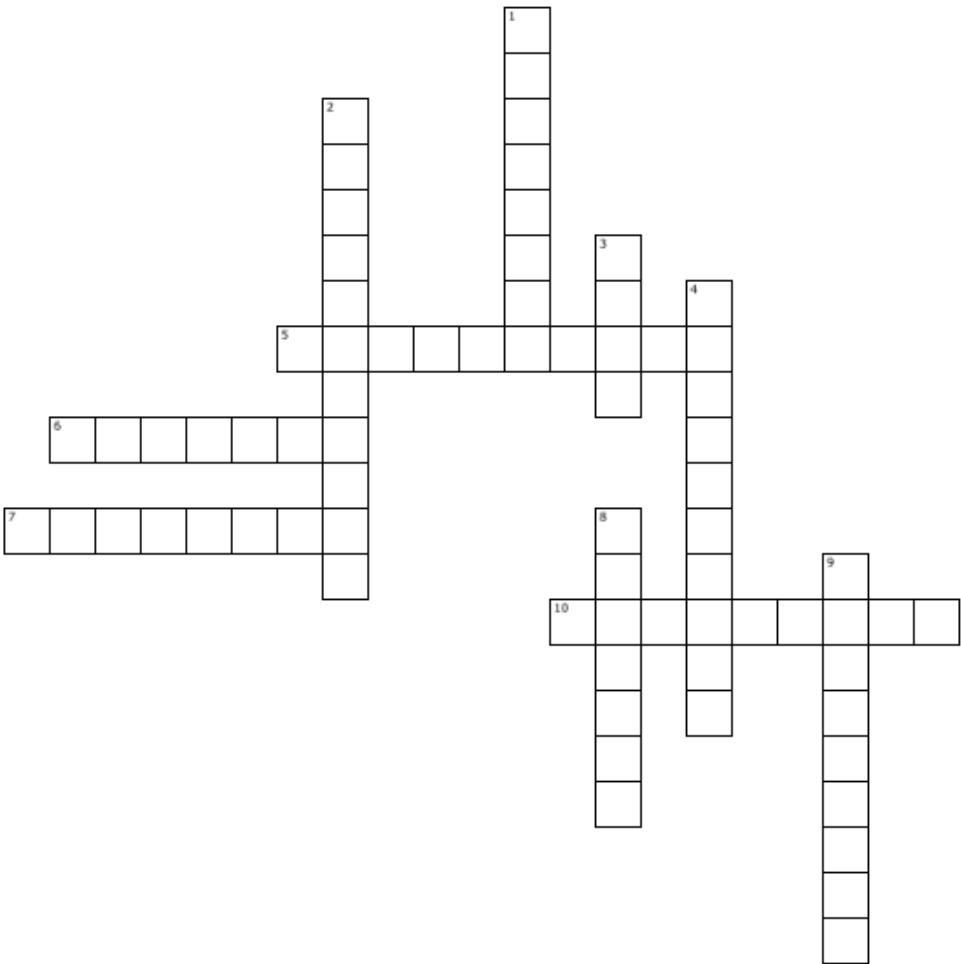
# Crossword

## Across

5. As if it wasn't despicable enough, a court has ruled that Blurred Lines infringed upon the copyright of this singer. (6,4)  
6. Real Madrid's forwards are commonly referred to as BBC, Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale, and who? Karim... (7)  
7. The county in which the BBC's latest big budget drama, Poldark, is based. What do you mean nobody's watched it? (8)  
10. A system of government in which power is vested in the people, who rule either directly or through freely elected representatives. (9)

## Down

1. Controversial presenter suspended for getting involved in a 'fracas', but probably in truth due to prior racist remarks. Jeremy... (8)  
2. How is Kimmy Schmidt, the lead of Tina Fey's new Netflix sitcom described? (11)  
3. American state considering reinstating execution by firing squad. (4)  
8. Hybrid animal, born of unholy union between cattle and buffalo, causing havoc in the Grand Canyon. (7)  
9. Ex-england football star terrified of his own phone after repeated hackings. Paul... (9)



# Columns

## I'm not special, and neither are you



Jen Pritchard

I had a crushing realisation this week. It's rather obvious, but it's something that's never properly sunk in in any sustained way, until now. It's the fact that I'm going to be poor forever.

When I say poor, I speak as a privileged uni student using that word. I mean the poor where I'll never own a house but can most likely have children. The poor where I can afford to run a decent second-hand car, but probably not go on holiday. You know, that kind of poor which is actually relative luxury

compared to the situation for most of the people in this country.

What I mean is I'll be poorer than my mum and dad, who aren't particularly well off themselves. I'd always dreamed I'd be able to get my parents out of Harlow and buy them a bungalow by the seaside. I guessed I'd be able to live where ever I wanted and have a big successful family who would want for nothing. I imagined that I'd be able to travel the world. I'd always assumed that, ultimately, I'd be a little bit rich. The majority of my family didn't go to uni, so the fact that I was going to uni would surely mean I'd be better off than them, right?

Until recently, that's still how I thought it worked. Even with the raise in fees I still thought it could happen like that. Going to uni would mean everything about me would change. I'd come out, transformed, as a renowned academic, get paid handsomely to just write shit, buy a huge house and then have a tonne of kids and live happily ever after. As ridiculous as that dream is, it carried on vaguely ticking away for the past five years. A warm, comfort blanket of bollocks. A bollock blanket.

But it's not going to be like that at all. Where I was consistently told I'd need a degree to get a decent job, two years into my degree I'm told that I need sciences or engineering, and that doing a silly old arts degree is about as useful as not going to university at all. Except with the added fun of being £45,000 in debt.

The more I think about it, the more I realise that it's not actually about being rich. For the longest time I've been convinced that going to uni would make me special. In all the books I read and films I saw the ending was them successfully

getting to uni, usually Oxford or Cambridge, and from there you just know they'll be okay. They've won. The History Boys, An Education, anything that Stephen Fry wrote. All the stuff that, having no idea what university was even vaguely like, I devoured and packed away in the dream future of my mind.

It's time for me to come to terms with the fact that I'm not special. When I graduate I'll be very proud of myself, but I'll join the thousands and thousands of other 21-year-olds who should also be very proud of themselves. I'm really scared. It's a scary thing to suddenly realise that you're not the protagonist of a novel, to realise that you're not the protagonist at all. So naturally I'm scared. But then, and this is that crucial point, so is everyone else.



**“I was an Honorary Research Fellow here, but I got too old for that. So I say I’m a Quondam HRF. Quondam is Latin for ‘Once Upon a Time’.” - Morris**