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who'll represent you on campus next year.

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THE GRYPHON

The official newspaper of Leeds University

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Issue 8

21/02/20



Image: Ed Barnes

Sports Societies Reveal Complaints About The Edge

13 student societies at LUU have come forward with complaints against the sports complex on campus including claims of rude staff and a lack of access to facilities.

Millie Frain
Sports Editor

Multiple student sports societies have come forward to complain and vent their anger and frustration with The Edge, the sports and fitness complex at the University of Leeds for what they have described as poor service, lack of access to facilities, and rude staff.

The Edge is a fitness, sport and wellbeing complex at the University of Leeds situated on the south end of campus that promises good facilities and 'top notch' coaches. On their page about sports at the University of Leeds, they promise to "inspire you through sport and physical activity, providing one of the best sporting experiences in the UK."

However the recent complaints launched against the University's gym certainly appears to contradict this. *The Gryphon* discovered the issue

through a post on social media and since then a total of thirteen out of 46 sports societies have come forward so far detailing various issues they have with the sports complex. Five of those societies have over 100 members with two having over 250 members.

Some societies did not wish to come forward publicly out of fear of losing access to The Edge's facilities.

The most widespread issue highlighted in the complaints seemed to be with a policy operated by The Edge. This policy is that if a student does not have a University of Leeds Student ID card on their person, they cannot enter The Edge itself or utilise the Cromer Terrace Fitness Studio. While it is not a recent policy, it has only recently been heavily enforced.

However in addition to these complaints, many societies said that they found it hard to have access to certain facilities such as outdoor

pitches and some members of staff were described as "rude" and "dismissive" by students.

One society in particular said some staff "treat us like shit" even though "they see us every week" and "they know we pay to use that facility". The society went on to add "they refuse to have conversation with us when we communicate these problems" and argued that some staff "straight up ignore it and are really rude about it"

Suzanne Glavin, Head of Sport at the University of Leeds said:

"The Sport and Physical Activity service works closely with LUU and always welcomes feedback, working hard to continually improve its service which has seen significant investment in the last two years. Helping to ensure that members of The Edge - who rightly expect value for money - can get the best possible experience, is our priority."

Story continues on page 6.

Taking a Look Inside Labour

Associate Editor Ian White gives his take on the state of the Labour Leadership race and the recent CLP nominations.

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Did Switzerland say Gay Rights?

Views discusses a recent anti-discrimination law on sexual orientation and gender identity that was passed in Switzerland.

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Rishi Sunak is in the House

Business Editor Will Southall takes a look at the new Chancellor and what this suggests for the government.

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A Reason to Bee Hopeful?

Serena Gagliardi looks at how scientists have discovered genetic alterations in bacteria that might help eradicate the pest killing honey bees.

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Editors of the Week
Georgie Fuhri and Mary Yeh

Georgie and Mary did a fabulous job editing Blogs and Lifestyle this week. They managed to find some beautiful illustrations and pics to go alongside some great articles. They're also great fun too.

Quote of the Week

"I'm going back to vagina"

We promised to continue this story. Sadly Georgie was left disappointed this week as her date last week ghosted her.

C'est la vie

Georgie has already moved onto better candidates - is a potential Princess Charming just around the corner?

Credits

- Editor-In-Chief
Ed Barnes
- Associate Editors
Megan Ardis
Ian White
- Social Media
Caitlin Tilley
- Website
Milly Martin
- Marketing
Clare Redman
- Radio
Freya Hillyer
- Treasurer ~ Abby Drew
- Advertising ~ Zainab Adedeji
- Secretary ~ Emma Ferguson
- News ~ Charly Loughlin, Amelia Cutting, Elliott Hodgkin, George Davis
- Society ~ Tilly Judges, Jess Farmer
- Features ~ Elena Sotelo, Michael Keating.
- Views ~ Eloise Barry, Charlotte Abbott, Alfie Coulstock-Couceram, Michael Turnbull, Eleanor Noyce
- Science ~ Michelle Heinrich, Anna Davison
- Business ~Will Southall, Chloe Pryce
- Sport ~ Millie Frain, Millie Warrilow, Owen Ellicott
- Equality and Diversity ~ Santia Ahmed

Editorial Letter:



Hi readers,
Not going to lie. I was a bit stuck on what to write this week. Instead of writing this, I've been watching Rose Crees' Instagram story spam about her hotel bathroom that smells of feet. In a 20 episode long series, Rose took us multiple times on a tour of the bathroom that she repeatedly insisted smelled of feet. Her mum says it might be down to soy milk, who knows why really?

As you can see, I've been very productive with my time. I feel by this point I might have run out of anything useful to say but at the end of the day, what is a copy of The Gryphon without an editorial dispensing questionable wisdom across campus.

I'm sure it has probably not escaped your notice that we are gearing up for this year's LeadLUU race. If you hadn't noticed the massive (and a little odd) trailer that's been parked outside the Union entrance for the last week, I'm impressed. LeadLUU is that time of year when campus is plastered with crayon drawings, banners and paper manifestos. I would know this because I spent two weeks doing the exact same thing last year. It's a frantic time with people running left, right and centre trying to pull in as many student votes as possible.

Keep an eye out for some inventive puns - we all love a good slogan. I was certainly helped by my name (Ed for Editor certainly has a nice ring to it). Ironically that wasn't enough for one person the other day who thought my surname was Gryphon. That would be an even weirder coincidence.

Now I would hate to labour on about the importance of participating in democracy because I'm sure students at this point are a little tired of those same platitudes again and again. However please tolerate the fact I will give a little plug to our four excellent Gryphon Editor candidates this year (might be a record). You can hear about all that they want to do on Page 7 to keep the paper running on campus next year. They've all got some fabulous ideas that's for sure!

Now moving on from important matters like democracy on campus and onto post Valentines-blues. Even our Editorial Team didn't escape disappointment in the dating arena this week with Georgie Fuhri being ghosted. Hard times for all of us. Like many single people, I'm sure you've wanted to vomit over the last week as unknown couples flood your Instagram feed with how amazing their partner is.

Now they might not be wrong. Maybe their partner is the best but if you're feeling down about it, don't!

At the end of the day, you've got a time limit left on this Earth. So why spend that time and energy moping about someone who will never love you back? It was never going to happen. Sorry to break it to you and they probably weren't worth it anyway. You'll be grateful

once you're old I'm sure. We certainly spend so much of our lives longing after a marriage or long-term relationship because that's what we see in advertising, films, TV and so on. However that time will come but instead of waiting for it to happen, why not make use of the time you currently have?

At a time of year when couples are loving it up on social media, strike out on your own. Go do something by yourself out of your comfort zone - there's Meanwood round the back of Headingley with some beautiful hill walks and woods, there's Ilkley or the Dales. You could try catch Parasite or another film at the Hyde Park Picture House before it closes. You could watch Netflix at an artsy cafe in Headingley while gorging on a donut. I know a thing or two about being single. I've been kicking it out on my own since I came out and to be honest, I'm glad for it. This probably isn't the best thing to say but if you're ever feeling down, do what I do. This is to think of when you've seen couples fighting and remind yourself that at least you don't have to deal with THAT.

Being by yourself does you a lot of good in my opinion. It orients the focus of your life onto your friends. You learn to be independent and put your own needs and priorities first. University is literally the beginning of your adult life - you've only moved out of the house for Christ's sake - so don't feel like you have to link up with anyone anytime soon. Focus on wholesome things like your career and achieving a good work-life balance.

A good partner will come along at the right time so why not work on yourself, improve yourself, until you're ready to meet them. You might not even want a partner to be honest (I'm being very presumptive) so feel free to prepare for that wonderful life of being surrounded by ten dogs watching some classic drama on TV.

As Katya Zamolodchikova and Trixie Mattel, two icons, once said:
Katya: That d*ck is not that bomb. I, myself, have experienced the full range of earthly pleasures in my lifetime.

Trixie: Way more than you should.
Katya: Way more than I should. I have blasted my neurotransmitters into the absolute zenith of pleasure. There is no d*ck on this motherf*cking earth that is bomb enough to convince me to do something crazy.

Trixie: If someone doesn't like you then move the f*ck on.
Whatever you want in life, remember that you are the most important person in your life. So if you're tired of being mucked about by that skinny boy who is more interested in his DJ decks than anything else, move on.

On a final note, I want to say a big thank you to Emma Jacobs and Eliza Broadbent who temporarily moved from LTSV to The Gryphon office this week to help me out while I was one Newspaper Associate down. Last but not least, a big big thank you to Ian White for staying with me the entire day on Thursday to get this issue ready for you!

Ed Barnes
Editor-in-Chief
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Exec Columns:



Union Affairs Officer
Lauren Huxley

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It's that time of year again... Lead LUU!

I know I keep banging on about it but it is so important that we remain student led by electing our next 7 student leaders to be on the LUU Exec.

I've had such a wonderful time on your Exec team for the past 2 years and I'm so sad that it's coming to an end but so excited for everyone who is about to

campaign to take our places.

Please check out their manifestos from the 24th Feb and remember to vote between 2-5th March. And most importantly, be kind to those running in the elections, it can be an intense period and it makes all the difference when you're met with a smile and some encouragement.

You can find more information about

Lead LUU and all of our student leaders on the LUU website.

We also know the next few weeks of strike action are going to impact many of you so please remember that we are here for you if you need support or more information.



Education Officer
Abiha Khan

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We know the next few weeks will be affected by industrial action. We are committed to both supporting the wellbeing of our student body and maintaining a high quality educational experience at Leeds. Since the previous strike we have spent a considerable amount of time consulting with as many of you as we can to find out your opinion and how the strikes have affected you so far. Whatever your view is, there is a space for you to express it. Please get in touch so we can support you over the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, I'm continuing to work with Schools on curriculum developments.

LUU is in touch with students from a number of faculties and we hope to have an announcement about a particular initiative very soon!

Space to work is a key issue for many of you. Along with the Postgrad Engagement Team I've been working on developments to improve space for postgrad researchers on campus.

Over the exams period I block-booked teaching spaces for you to use to revise, for when library spaces were at capacity. I'll continue to work on this with the Uni's Education Spaces Group. The next steps include expanding this to other areas of campus and continuing to audit space

usage around the university.

The big news this week was the announcement of the new Vice Chancellor for Leeds! I am really excited for Professor Simone Buitendijk to join us – she brings a wealth of experience in student education, inclusion and has an innovative approach to HE.

Finally, as LeadLUU gets underway it's fantastic to see students from both undergrad and postgrad, home, EU and international backgrounds joining in the campaign. Good luck to all the candidates and I hope everyone will support them by getting out there and voting!



Community Officer
Cat Fairbairn

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Hi everyone! Its LeadLUU time again so good luck to all the candidates running for Community Officer, and to all students, please make sure you have a read of their manifestos and vote!

The passion that candidates have for the Community is amazing and this is your chance to vote for someone who wants to make a difference and try and

help students have the best possible Uni experience.

As well as the housing survey that I am working with Unipol on the Rate Your Landlord survey is now live and you can submit responses at rateyourlandlord.org.uk. You can help future students by writing about your experience, shout about a fantastic landlord or warn people away from a

bad one.

Housing is such an important issue and it can really affect your time at Uni so please take some time to complete both surveys. Lastly I have another clothes swap event coming up this term where you can bag yourselves something new to you whilst being kind to environment.



Activities Officer
Lydia Evans

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We had the most recent round of the LUU Activity Grant this week, and the Activities Exec spent nearly three hours sifting through the applications.

I always really like going through each application form and hearing about the great stuff all of you want to get up to.

The Activities Exec also attended a

workshop to discuss space and storage at LUU with the Head of Activities, and there are lots of ideas for me to get going with. LeadLUU has also launched and there are loads of great candidates running to be the next Activities Officer.

I'd encourage you to get in touch, have a chat with them and hear how they

want to change things up. Lend a hand with their campaigns and get as many people to vote as possible!

Campaigning starts on the 24th February, with voting being open from the 2nd to the 4th March.



Equality & Diversity Officer
Chloé Elliott

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It's that time of the year again! LeadLUU has rolled back around, and this year will be better than the last.

It's really exciting to see so many nominees running this year across all of the Exec roles. But there's also lots that you can get involved in, even if you aren't running.

Whether you want to get to know the nominees a bit better or vote in style

in our Lead LUU polling station out on the precinct, you're not going to want to miss out! Lead LUU is your chance to have a say on who will represent you in the next academic year.

Lead LUU also coincides with the end of our LGBT History Month celebrations. You can find more details for the upcoming events on the LUU website.

So far we've had panel events, film screenings, a pub quiz, an art exhibition and more! You can also pick up a copy of our LGBTQ+ Guide in the union building too!



Welfare Officer
Amy Wells

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Hi everyone, this week I'll be working on my mental health project (survey coming soon, as well as the publishing of my report on student mental health at Leeds, followed by some events with key partners in the area of mental wellbeing).

I will also establishing a Welfare Rep system, helping to re-do the uni's lecture capture policy so that if lecturers don't record there is an appropriate alternative

provided, and raising issues of hidden course costs and inaccessible mitigating circumstances procedures at TSEB (Taught Student Education Board).

It's also week 2 of the strikes – like me, this might be the third time you've been through industrial action at Leeds.

I am incredibly disappointed that this is happening to students all over the UK due to the inability of the “employer bodies”

(UCEA on the four fights issue – pay, casualization, workload and equality – and USS on the pensions fight) to negotiate with UCU until agreements are met.

Please get in touch with our Help and Support team for advice if you're dealing with a lot of academic disruption or if you want to know more about how you can support your striking lecturers.

Campus Watch



1 University of London Graduation ceremony for foreign students postponed over coronavirus fears

The friends and families of students who were expecting to graduate next week from the University of London have been told that the ceremony has been postponed over coronavirus fears.

Many were due to fly to the UK this week and were only informed of the cancellation on Monday, leaving no time to cancel flights and hotel bookings.

Some soon-to-be graduates at the university say that they weren't sent emails about the decision and only found out about the news over social media.

Akarsha, 21, from Colombo, Sri Lanka said his family spent £6,130 on visas, flights and hotels for four family members who are due to arrive on Thursday. His mother and father booked a year in advance to attend the ceremony and have said they will be unlikely to be able to do it again.

Approximately 4,000 attendees

from more than 100 countries were due to attend the ceremony which was specifically for the university's long distance and flexible learning programmes. Students on the course were studying in their home countries.

Some are demanding compensation, with one individual claiming to have spent their "life savings" on the trip.

Charly Loughlin
News Editor

2 University of Hull Student Left "Isolated and Abandoned" by Wheelchair Inaccessibility

A first-year Zoology student at the University of Hull by the name of Sarah-Marie Da Silva went viral on Twitter with a damning picture of inaccessibility in the classroom, which has her stuck in the back of a lecture theatre, unable to get past the stairs in her wheelchair.

Da Silva told the Disability News Service that accessibility had been an issue in all buildings, including the newly built one and the university has done nothing but "move to slightly more accessible lecture theatres and then ignore us".

She says it has left a "severe impact" on her mental health, and feels "segregated from everyone", as well as "isolated and abandoned by the university". If her needs aren't addressed soon, she is considering legal action.

A University spokesperson commented that a "rigorous process" had been undertaken on all teaching rooms to ensure "students' additional requirements" were addressed, and that "a mistake" had happened in this instance. The university added it will "ensure that we take necessary steps to make sure this does not happen again".

Penelope Helbest

3 Wrexham Glyndwr University Eco-friendly food containers introduced to cut waste

Wales' Wrexham Glyndwr University has just launched reusable food containers in its canteen, aiming to cut single use waste. Students can purchase a tag for £5 which can be exchanged for a container that is then returned for cleaning. For every nine uses of the container, users will receive a free meal.

The canteen will also now start charging 30p on single use food containers. Catering manager Jamie Lovell stated, "Our new eco boxes are the latest step towards helping Wrexham Glyndwr University reduce the overall volume of waste which is being sent to landfill". The new scheme is an expansion of the introduction of reusable cups at Glyndwr in the past year, and it is part of the university's 'Go Green' week, which involves both staff and students in eco-friendly activities.

The initiative has a good potential to be translated in the Refectory at the University of Leeds, where reusable cups already have great success among students.

Serena Gagliardi

4 University of Aberdeen University forced to repay £119,000 of grant money

The University of Aberdeen has been forced to repay £119,000 of grant money to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

The university was ordered to return the large sum of money after a review into the pay-off which was given to its former principal, Professor Sir Ian Diamond.

Professor Diamond announced his plans to retire in 2017 but his 12 month notice period began when he had actually left his post.

The SFC said: "We decided to review the payment made to the former principal of the University of Aberdeen because the financial statements did not appear to accord with our understanding of the principal's retirement and we were not satisfied with the university's response to our initial enquiries".

Senior governor at the university stated that they "have not" asked Professor Diamond for the money back. She added, "Obviously the minister's made it clear that he thinks we should do that. That will be an issue for the (university) court to decide about".

Charly Loughlin
News Editor

5 University of Manchester University Faces Another Expenses Scandal

The University of Manchester has found itself at the heart of another expenses scandal. Back in 2018, the university was in the red regarding its claims on corporate credit cards, and this issue has come back to light within the last week.

This time, claims have been made against meals at 'Hooters', a controversial American restaurant chain. Seemingly unsuitable for academic staff on a business conference, since the chain is deemed as sexist and objectifying and known for its female waitresses who are required to serve in low cut tops and tiny shorts.

Between August 2018 and August 2019, the investigation also revealed expenses being claimed against bearded dragons for undergraduate research projects, clogs, and experiences such as Go Ape and The Crystal Maze Live.

Within the year, this resulted in an expenses bill of almost £6.7 million. Despite this, a University spokesperson argued that all claims were legitimate and used only for business-related purposes.

Megan Valentine

Alarm at Ofsted Style Plan to Rank Universities Based on Graduate Earnings

Yasmine Moro Virion

The Conservative Party will identify “low quality courses” as the ones with the lowest graduate salaries and therefore rank universities using an Ofsted-style method.

The plan would discourage pupils from studying arts and humanities related subjects and pursuing their education in more deprived areas.

The government wants to judge universities similarly to the way in which Ofsted categorises inspected schools. The regulator classifies education establishments as either “outstanding”, “good”, “requires improvement” and “inadequate”.

This plan comes after another announcement in 2016 which stated that universities would be rated based on the quality of their teaching and given either a gold, silver or bronze rating. In 2017 the University of Leeds achieved a gold rating under this Teaching of Excellence Framework.

Now the government wants to classify courses by considering how much students will earn after graduating. According to a 2016/17 study by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), medicine and dentistry graduates earned the most while those studying creative arts and design the least.

This plan to classify low-income courses as lacking

“quality” is quite significant considering that over 100,000 more students obtained Higher Education qualifications in non-science subjects rather than science ones in 2018/19.

However, this can change as earning prospects could potentially put young people off from enrolling in arts and humanities courses.

Moreover, the focus on earnings will further damage the employment reputation within more deprived areas outside of London. Career Experts estimated that graduates earn the least in Wales and the most in the capital.

Talking to The Guardian, Professor Alec Cameron, from Aston University in Birmingham, said that “We should push back against the idea that a good salary is an adequate measure of how much a job matters to society”.

According to UCAS, in January 2020 applications for medicine-related subjects were over 300,000 whereas under 4,000 applicants were interested in non-European Languages and Literature degrees.

Unsurprisingly, the Conservative manifesto shows its focus on the scientific prospects of the country. Some targets mentioned “the science funding system”, collaborating “on scientific research” and “commercialis[ing] our scientific discoveries”.

The focus of the party on the funding of university’s

courses and their outcomes, comes after a report by Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) showed that since 2012 undergraduate students’ perceptions of obtaining value for money decreased.

As a result, in 2018 the then Universities Minister Sam Gyimah announced an “information transformation”. This allowed technology to help potential students expand their knowledge about what comes after graduating from specific universities.

On the other hand, the British Academy for the humanities and social sciences said that it “is extremely concerned that if AHSS subjects come to be offered at lower fee levels, this will misleadingly play down the value of AHSS and may create the perception that such courses are of low quality”. AHSS being Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences subjects.

In 2019, the Department for Education published a report about post-18 education and funding which proposed to move funds away from the Humanities sector towards “high-cost and strategically important subjects and to subjects that add social as well as economic value”.

It says that “The government is estimated to now spend over 30 per cent more per student for Creative Arts degrees than it does for Engineering degrees” and therefore “should adjust the teaching grant attached to each subject”.

Government Funding to be Withdrawn from 5,000 Post-16 Courses

Boris Johnson’s government announce plans to scrap funding for post-16 courses, for example A-Levels and BTEC, with less for 100 students enrolled, to pave the way for new T level qualifications.

Ella Jones

5,000 qualifications at post-16 level which have less than 100 students enrolled per year are now at risk of losing government funding. Following the recent parliamentary review of Post-16 qualifications at Level 3 and below, proposals have been made to withdraw government funding from low-enrolment courses.

As part of the review, the government is seeking views from the education sector on whether any of the 5,000 qualifications on the list should continue to attract public funding from August 2021.

This is a move taken by the Department of Education to ensure qualifications are high quality and enable students to progress into employment or further study.

Qualifications under threat of funding cuts include Level 3 Personal Training and OCNLR Level 2 Interior Design, as other options for students looking at those subjects are in higher demand.

Though some low-enrolment courses will maintain funding, the Chief Executive of The Association of Colleges David Hughes explains:

“I am pleased at the approach being taken which

should protect highly-valued but low enrolment qualifications which provide crucial skills, often in smaller sectors of the economy.” He adds that the system changes are essential “in making the qualification landscape easier to navigate for students and employers is crucial for the success of technical education.”

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said that: “Removing funding for qualifications that have no or low numbers of enrolments will help make sure students have a clearer choice of the qualifications on offer, and ensure they get the skills they need to progress”

He adds that “trying to decide what course will put you on the path to a great career is hard enough, but with over 12,000 qualifications (including A-Levels and GCSE) available and many in the same subject – it can feel like a needle in a haystack”

However, the course funding cuts follows the introduction of T-Level qualifications from 2020 onwards. T-Levels aim to streamline qualification options for 16–19 year olds, bridging the gap between BTEC Awards and A-Levels as an alternate balance of vocational and academic study.

The Department for Education described the new

qualification as “the gold standard technical course of choice for young people from 2020.” Aiming to level up skills and opportunities, the government has worked with over 200 employers to create the higher quality vocational qualification, preparing students for entering the workforce.

T-Level qualifications are the equivalent of 3 A-Levels, but consist of an 80% classroom and 20% work placement balance.

The 2 year courses will include a 45 day placement, enabling students to gain experience in industry. 50 colleges around the UK will be providing T-Levels as an option for students from Sept 2020, with an additional 63 colleges to offer the qualification from Sept 2021.

Similarly to current Levels 1–3 awards, T-Levels will use the pass, merit, distinction, distinction* grading system. A T-Level Distinction* will earn UCAS points equivalent of 3 A-Levels at A*.

The subjects available for this qualification are gradually being introduced from Sept 2020–Sept 2023, with prospective courses such as Education, Digital Business Services, Accountancy, Human Resources and Catering to be introduced.



Image Credit: Ed Barnes

Some Staff “Simply Argue Back”: Sports Societies Tell Us About The Edge

Continued from front page

Lydia Evans, the Activities Officer at the University of Leeds said in response to several societies coming forward to complain about issues with The Edge:

“For me, I think what has been raised here prompts a question to the University. In short, playing sport is expensive, and it shouldn’t be. Being physically active has so many positive benefits and the University should be making these opportunities accessible to every student on campus. The Gryphon club fund, which LUU campaigned for, has helped students participate but I think more can be done. When Clubs are having to charge higher membership to cover the cost of facility hire, or can’t accept new members because they don’t have the space, the University is not doing a good enough job. Being physically active has so many benefits: mental wellbeing, improved focus, sense of belonging all of which contribute to student success.

It’s sad to hear that students feel let down by reported poor customer service. I would encourage Committees to formally report this via the SPA website, and I will use my good working relationship with SPA to follow up. Sport and Physical Activity are committed to good customer service and I’m confident that we can work together to resolve these issues.”

As stated before, one of the most common complaints was refusal of entry if a student doesn’t have a University of Leeds student ID card. This rule was upheld even if a student has valid proof that they are on one of the sports teams that frequently train in The Edge. Several sports societies pointed out that this excludes any Leeds Beckett or Leeds Art University members who wish to train with University of Leeds students.

Obviously, they do not have University of Leeds student cards, and this therefore means they have to pay entry every single session. In some societies, people have alluded to this potentially creating tensions between the teams, with people missing sessions as a result.

In order to gain entry they are either required to pay the £6.50 entry fee or pay for an Edge membership on top of their society membership. This means the policy excludes members purely down to the fact that they do not go to the University of Leeds. Many Leeds Beckett and Leeds Art University students join University of Leeds societies as there are not as many different sports societies at other Universities.

Societies have pointed out that this discourages members, particularly new members from attending the training sessions. Some staff were also described as being “rude” to the students about forgetting their card with one member of staff at the sports facility named in several complaints. This meant that some students did not return back to The Edge at all.

Societies also told The Gryphon that they felt The

Edge itself was ‘limiting society growth’. Reportedly staff members at the gym have told some societies that their club is not large enough to utilise the facilities they require. They have been told this even after they have seen a significant increase in members in the last academic year.

Consequently, their club is made to use a smaller capacity venue, which therefore limits the number of members who can train or join that session. With an increase of people this semester requesting to join societies, sports committees are forced to decline upcoming people from attending events, thus limiting the numbers of the society and consequently the profile of the society on campus.

One society claimed they were told they “don’t have a big enough club to use The Edge” despite having over 60 people asking to join the society each semester. The society is regularly given 40-capacity spaces but has over 100 members in their society.

This is further proven with some societies being declined certain facilities such as the 3G pitch (an “astro turf” type surface) that they had access to the previous year. Take circuit training for example. Many society members have told us that if training is not deemed to be a core necessity in their sport, “they are not allowed to utilise the facility”. One society says that this has led to a significant drop in members.

One society told of difficulties in booking rooms at The Edge. They said that one member of staff would not inform them of when the Sports Hall is free saying “we never get a response” and need to contact multiple members of staff in order to do so. They additionally said they would have to go through LUU to do so though this raised complications as Leeds University Union and the University of Leeds are separate organisations.

Some societies have also found it hard to access certain facilities with restricted times. As a result some have had to pay for off-site pitches because other societies have been given priority when it comes to using certain facilities.

It was also alleged that due to disorganisation in regard to booking, some societies are put at risk for health and safety. For example, sports that could be potentially dangerous must have mats in place to make things as safe as possible. If groups are moved unexpectedly, societies argue these measure aren’t put in place.

One society told us that the Cromer Terrace studio “always” run out of first aid supplies and ice packs. Given that their society is a “high impact sport”, society organisers believe that this puts the health and safety of members at risk given the society stated that injuries are regular. The society also added that if The Edge moved their booking to an alternate location, on

occasion the right equipment has not been provided such as mats.

It also seems that double booking can be an issue, again causing additional stress for societies. According to some societies too, on occasion some Edge staff have interrupted a current session in order to set up for the next society. Here the issue of organisation arises, which again stems back to the staff lacking the capabilities to communicate with all the societies in an efficient manner.

Despite some societies acknowledging that the facilities The Edge provides them are excellent, many societies have found it frustratingly hard to actually access these facilities.

These issues would be less of a concern if societies found the staff more approachable. The Gryphon has been told that some staff ‘simply argue back with the students, dismissing them and even undermining the captains of some societies’. Some societies even told us they’ve received rather rude emails from members of staff with staff suggesting they are trying to ‘bypass the system’ by forgetting their cards. This seems to have been a wider issue across many different societies.

One society described the attitude at The Edge as non-compassionate with “every interaction I have had with The Edge being negative” with “no desire to understand the students’ point of view”. They felt that the “Us vs. them” attitude with the sports complex stemmed from a “mixed image of a University gym [for students] and a commercial one”.

The Gryphon can also reveal that not only do some Edge staff make accessing the facilities more difficult, there are also difficulties relating to the coaching staff engaged by student societies too. Societies employ external, qualified coaches to come and train members with some of them coaches who have coached on a national level.

This has raised issues with another policy that requires coaching staff to collect cards from The Edge in order to come in and teach their sessions. This has caused much aggravation for many societies due to poor communication between staff and societies. Coaches have been told their cards are ready to collect, only to come sometimes on their days off to be told their cards aren’t ready.

One society told us that some staff at The Edge were “constantly rude to our GB coaches” and they “were not informed that the coaches had to sign for the card”. The number of societies to have come forward, including societies with large membership bases, highlights the issues that many are facing. While all The Edge staff are trained in customer service, the number of complaints from different societies are nevertheless concerning.

The Next Editor in Chief: Meet the Candidates



Jess McCarrick
Music and Clubs Editor

Why do you want to be Editor-in-Chief?

I have a strong interest in layout and presentation and feel my experience in a design background will help elevate the paper visually. I understand the importance of a range in media that can change the impact of the paper to make it as effective and enjoyable as possible. Furthermore, I feel strongly invested in creating a traditional media source that can represent students effectively, we are a major voice to be heard and other outlets do not focus on our views or interests. I want to be editor to ensure an effective portrayal of the complete student voice.

What are some key policies?

I hope to implement a point in the paper that allow for an easy feedback route for all readers, the student body can comment on sections in the paper, suggest feedback or even contribute to the next issue.

I want *The Gryphon* to be a more sociable place, where the student body can network and produce content together, so it is as effective as possible. Bigger projects and stories that can be worked on and covered by a range of people from a range of backgrounds. It will be a place to come together and collaborate; creation is just around the corner.

Why should people vote for you?

People should vote for me, not only because they write or feature in the paper week by week, but because they have something to say. A vote for me will ensure more pathways to contribute to the paper that match your skill set – the paper should represent you. A vote for me is a vote for more opportunities within the city, tangible support for the future journalists, editors, photographers, illustrators and content creators. Vote for me if you want the University to be held accountable. Vote for me if you have something to say – which everyone does.



Safi Bugel
Music and Clubs Editor

Why do you want to be Editor-in-Chief?

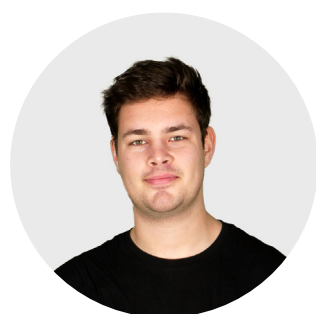
I want to be Editor-in-Chief of *The Gryphon* because I believe in the importance of print and student journalism. However, I also think there's big structural issues within the paper that need to be addressed, which I will explore further in response to Question 2. As an LGBTQ+ woman of colour who is part of the University's Plus Programme, I think I can spearhead a movement towards dismantling the current hegemony. In turn, I believe I can help to create an engaging and exciting student newspaper that represents us all.

What are some of your key policies?

I want to make the paper more diverse, in its content and, crucially, in its team of writers. Our paper as it stands is unrepresentative of BAME, LGBTQ+ and working-class voices and their issues. I also want to make *The Gryphon* more in touch with students and the community in Leeds by reaching out to groups in the area, and responding to local news. Finally, I want to ensure that contributing to *The Gryphon* is a worthwhile experience for students. I will aim to do this by offering training, workshops, alumni talks and feedback via open office hours.

Why should people vote for you?

People should vote for me as *The Gryphon* editor as I am truly committed to the ideas I have proposed on my manifesto. Over the last three years, I have consistently written about and reached out to groups that are marginalised in the media, as well as chairing a panel discussion on gender in the media last semester. I have also encouraged a focus on Leeds, by exploring its creative scene as well as changes within the University itself. I also think it is important to note that I will be the first non-white Editor-in-Chief in recent years.



Michael Keating

Features Editor

Why do you want to be Editor-in-Chief?

I want as many people as possible to go on the same journey I have, beginning with (very nervously!) sending off my first article and ending up with valuable new skills and a huge passion for journalism. I began writing for *The Gryphon* just before Christmas in 2018. Fast forward a year and a bit to now, and I've used the foundation that I gained from *The Gryphon* to start writing and editing for other publications. At the moment, it seems that so few people are aware of these amazing opportunities available to them. I want to change that.

What are some of your key policies?

There are two essentials for any organisation: people and money! We should encourage more partnerships with local businesses, I'd love to explore the possibility of including discount codes in adverts. This would encourage more people to pick up a copy and drive people towards great local businesses. I want to make investing in people my #1 priority: more money means more equipment like dictaphones and cameras, and if we work to offer guidance and training regardless of experience level, we will make sure you get the most out of your involvement.

Why should people vote for you?

First and foremost, I see the role of editor as enabling others to share and contribute, and the fact that people give up precious free time for *The Gryphon* is something that should be celebrated much more. I want to bring in as many students that are part of our community as possible: undergrads, postgrads, mature and international students, anyone and everyone. I'll fight to let people express themselves, and will give my full support even if I don't agree with them, because it's not about me – it's about what I can do to everyone to grow with *The Gryphon*.



Clare Redman

Head of Marketing

Why do you want to be Editor-in-Chief?

I've been involved in *The Gryphon* for 3 years. I've benefitted from the wonderful opportunities it provides, and would love the chance to give back to the community. By serving as a writer, photographer, music editor, and head of marketing, I've gained a understanding of all aspects of *The Gryphon* and appreciate the importance of everyone's role in delivering a newspaper that holds our university to account and reflects the diverse interests that exist amongst our readership. I want to improve on this legacy to further boost the newspaper's popularity.

What are some of your key policies?

I want to help our contributors to feel more comfortable by giving them more training opportunities. *The Gryphon* has worked hard towards diversity this year, but there is still more work to do. Similarly, the online presence of *The Gryphon* is improving but needs to make better use of multimedia and mobile journalism content to stand out from our competitors. Ultimately, *The Gryphon* can't exist without funding. We don't have a big enough team working on marketing, so I would seek to recruit students from our world-class business school to give us a much-needed boost in this vital area.

Why should people vote for you?

By studying Journalism at Leeds I have a strong understanding of how the industry has evolved in recent years, and how *The Gryphon* needs to adapt to stay relevant. I want to foster an open, friendly environment for our contributors, where students can feel free to try out the many different aspects on offer in print and online journalism. Essentially, I believe I have the industry knowledge, communication skills, leadership qualities, and dedication to get the job done, and to do it well.



Dominic Cummings: The Downing Street Strongman



Image: PA

Dominic Cummings is not your typical advisor. His strong character and radical solutions are turning society upside down. Isabel Ralphs examines the profile of one of the most influential men in the UK.

Isabel Ralphs

For all that is thrown at MPs for the failings of Parliament, it is actually an unelected individual that is currently calling a lot of the shots in Downing Street.

Dominic Cummings is something of a love-him or hate-him figure, and has been dividing opinions with his brash approach to Government since he first came on the scene as Special Adviser to Michael Gove from 2007 to 2014.

Following his successful overseeing of the Leave Campaign in 2016, Cummings was promoted to the position of Special Adviser to the Prime Minister by current PM Boris Johnson and, even in the few short months since his appointment, he has caused quite the stir to Number 10.

In January, Cummings' blog – an assorted array of rants and musings on education, politics and scientific discoveries – went viral after he posted a job ad calling for “data scientists, project managers, policy experts and... assorted weirdos” to apply for the Civil Service. Despite being an Oxford graduate himself, Cummings wants to see an end to what he judges to be a domination of our bureaucracy by an out-of-touch and assimilated elite.

Cummings' scepticism also extends to the elected officials he oversees in Westminster as well. As Chief Aide, he is behind the decisions to hire and fire staff and contributes to setting the general tone of the Government – which he currently appears to be ruling with an iron fist.

He made tabloid headlines last week after he – apparently “jokingly” – told a journalist that cartoon characters could outperform the current Cabinet. With

Cummings urging him on, the PM culled a number of sitting Ministers in last week's dramatic Cabinet reshuffling. This included a reduction in the number of women in the Cabinet, from eight to seven.

Cummings' no-nonsense approach to hiring and firing is reflective of the increase in power that seems to be held by those at the very top ends of the UK political system these days. Number 10 are currently waging a war on a number of media outlets, including the BBC who Cummings had previously branded as a “mortal enemy” of the Conservative Party.

It has been reported that Boris Johnson and his closest aides are boycotting the flagship BBC Radio 4 Today program, complying only with the “cushier” interview style of more relaxed shows, like BBC Breakfast.

It seems that the Government is able to pick and choose to be interviewed when it is convenient for them, a practise that can hardly be said to constitute genuine scrutiny. With threats of abolishing the license fee that keeps the BBC afloat increasing in ferocity by the day, the power that our current Government has over media outlets shows no sign of relent.

Cummings perceives political discourse, the Civil Service, Trade Unions, the media and other professional associations generally as a barrier to innovation and “getting stuff done”.

If his blog posts are anything to go by, he seems to think that the world is made up of a very small number of intelligent people and a mass of mediocrity – and that the former certainly cannot be found in our Civil Service, media or Government.

It seems strange to have an unelected official have so much influence over the inner-workings of Government – and particularly one who not long ago

remarked: “I strongly dislike Westminster, so I am reluctant to return”.

Cummings is not an openly partisan person, claiming he has remained at Downing Street in order to represent the “left-behind”, i.e. people living outside of London and the North-East (where he heralds from) in particular. However, his aversion to too much debate within politics is bad news for the left, whose progressive ideas rely heavily on discussion to push them forward.

Whether Cummings' big plan to strip away any red-tape and revolutionise the way UK politics is conducted will really come to fruition remains to be seen.

Parallels could be drawn between Boris' caddy and former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon in the US, who also attracted a lot of media attention and divided opinions in his short time as part of the Trump administration.

Bannon ultimately resigned after it was reported that it was under his advice that Trump declared there were ‘very fine people on both sides’ in a Neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville that resulted in the deaths of 3 people in 2017.

Figures who find themselves on the cover of tabloid newspapers on a regular basis tend to have a pretty short political lifespan. And it wouldn't be all that surprising if Cummings met a similar fate to his American counterpart.

However, even without Cummings in Downing Street, it seems more and more likely that he would still leave behind a legacy of much greater government control over our democracy.

The State of the Race: Inside the Labour Leadership Election



Ian White
Newspaper Associate

As the Labour leadership election rumbles on, local Labour UK have met to nominate their favoured successor to Jeremy Corbyn. In committee rooms and church halls up and down the country, Labour members have been having their say over which candidates will make it onto the final ballot.

Now that Corbyn is on his way out, how is the party membership that twice elected him responding to Labour's crushing defeat in the General Election? Which candidates are members gravitating towards? I decided to dust off my Labour membership card and head to my local nomination meeting to find out.

For full disclosure, I have never been Jeremy Corbyn's biggest fan. But this article is not about what I think. As someone who stays up late re-watching BBC coverage of the 1997 Election Night, and who has a framed picture of Tony Blair on their wall, I'm definitely not representative of the average Labour party member – 70% of whom have a positive view of Corbyn's leadership according to a recent YouGov poll. These are the people who will choose Labour's next leader, and if you're a particularly optimistic Labour enthusiast, Britain's next Prime Minister.

The first thing that strikes you when you walk into a Labour party meeting is how old everybody is. The members gathered on a cold, blustery night in Adel Methodist Church were a world away from the thousands of enthusiastic students that turned up to cheer Jeremy Corbyn at an open-air rally at the Brudenell Social Club during the 2017 General Election campaign. Of the 120 party members in attendance, I was probably one of just a handful under the age of thirty.

Members were invited to speak for three minutes in favour of their chosen candidate. First, the supporters of Rebecca Long-Bailey were invited to speak. Long-Bailey is widely regarded as the "continuity Corbyn candidate" – she was the only leadership candidate to support Corbyn's bid to become Labour leader and has remained assiduously loyal to him ever since.

Her supporters were passionate, but it was obvious to me that their speeches had been prepared in advance – clearly, this meant a lot to them. They all insisted that

Labour should not change course, even if it had seen its worst defeat since 1935. Their message was clear – Labour's policies were popular, we won the argument and the defeat was caused by Brexit, the hostile media and treacherous Labour MPs who had opposed Corbyn.

I had expected that the scale of our defeat would have prompted some deep soul searching on the part of Corbyn's loyal supporters. However, it seemed that this unpromising message was appealing to some members who had backed Corbyn in the past.

The next to speak were the supporters of Lisa Nandy – or not. Nobody seemed willing to speak up for the Wigan MP. Only after a long and awkward silence an elderly man got to his feet to speak. He had not prepared a speech but made a series of insightful points. He praised Nandy for her thoughtful approach and for not pretending to have all answers to the challenges Labour is facing. After he had finished, three other members came forward to speak in her support.

You can call me biased, because I most definitely am, but their arguments were far more convincing than those in favour of Rebecca Long-Bailey. Whilst direct criticism of Corbyn is rare, and Labour members may look homogenous, they are a pretty ideologically diverse group. Even among many former Corbyn supporters, some of whom spoke for Nandy, there has been an acceptance of what went wrong and that Labour has to change if it ever wants to win again.

Nandy resigned from Corbyn's shadow cabinet and has been critical of his leadership in the past. That she seems to be winning support from former Corbyn backers suggests that the election defeat may have resulted in a loss of faith in the Corbyn project among some members.

After nobody volunteered to speak for Emily Thornberry, it was Keir Starmer's supporters' turn. The former Shadow Brexit Secretary has pitched himself as the unity candidate who can end the infighting by treading the fine line between being electable and holding left-wing policy positions.

His supporters stuck to this theme, emphasising unity and electability – an appetising message for Labour members worn out by years of factional infighting and demoralised by electoral defeat. Based on recent polls of Labour members that put him way ahead of his rivals,

this message appears to be cutting through.

But it was when I heard the speeches in favour of Richard Burgon, uber-Corbyn loyalist Leeds East MP, I felt as if I'd passed through the looking glass.

One of his supporters went on about the perils of quantitative easing, seemingly forgetting that we are in the opposition and have no control over monetary policy. Another insisted that the British public was crying out for radical socialist change. Why then, had they just elected Boris Johnson by a landslide?

They seemed totally disconnected from reality, so much so one stood up to say he was supporting Colin Burgon (he had confused the deputy leadership candidate with his uncle). Political parties always seem to attract a number of oddballs and cranks, needless to say there are plenty in the Conservative Party too. The question was, which way would the silent majority cast their vote?

After a long wait and several recounts, the results were read out. Keir Starmer had won a narrow victory over Rebecca Long-Bailey. Long-Bailey had actually won on the first ballot, but when Lisa Nandy's second preferences were redistributed, Starmer picked up 23 votes and finished 61-58 ahead of his rival.

Although I cast my ballot for Nandy, I was relieved by the result. Starmer may be pitching himself to win the support of left-wing Labour members, but he is not a diehard Corbynite. If he wins on the 4th of April, Labour can begin to put the last five years behind us and start to make up some of the ground we have lost.

Denial is the natural first stage of grief, but if Labour is to have any hope of winning again, we have to be honest and accept what went wrong. We cannot afford blame, bargaining or denial. We cannot afford to behave like a delusional owner on Kitchen Nightmares who does not understand why they do not get any customers, insisting to Gordon Ramsey that their food is delicious whilst their kitchen is a mess.

The result of the vote in Leeds North West, and similar votes across the country, suggest that enough Labour members are moving on from denial, through bargaining and onto acceptance. Labour may have a mountain to climb if it is to form a Government in 2024, but on the basis of what I heard from rank and file Labour members in that meeting, it might be making the first tentative steps in the right direction.

Putting Welfare In The Spotlight

In light of the upcoming Leeds University Union WelFair event on the 25th February, we got to know Mind Matters Society and new society LUU Disabled Student Network

Lewis Newstead

Last week I sat down to speak with two Mind Matters peer support group coordinators, Callum and Rachel, about the help their society can provide to people who may be struggling at university, and about their plans for this year so far.

Mind Matters, in their own words, is a student-led society that aims to support students and open up the conversation around mental health. The society does this through a combination of events, presentations and, most importantly, their weekly peer support group.

The society is free to join and holds many events throughout the year. For example, a colourful leg warmer hike in collaboration with BEAT, the eating disorder awareness society, which raised over £230 for charity; they also help out in the local community, delivering presentations to Leeds secondary school students about mental health in order to reduce the stigma around the topic.

In addition to these, Callum and Rachel want to highlight the society's peer support group, which is held every Monday from 6pm – 7pm in the LUU advice room and gives students a safe, confidential space to talk about their feelings. These sessions are entirely voluntary and based on participant's comfort levels and boundaries, so you don't have to talk if you

don't want to. Although they are non-advisory, the volunteers do receive some training and are able to signpost students to any further help if needed.

Primarily, the groups are there to help people to open up about their mental health and wellbeing in a safe, inclusive environment surrounded by empathetic people with similar experiences.

Mind Matters are not only looking to raise the awareness of these important sessions, in order to help more students, but also to gain more brilliant volunteers with a passion for helping others. Callum and Rachel both started as volunteers who took up more active roles in the society as they both really resonated with its goals and enjoyed seeing students supporting students.


One volunteer said that the sessions were "eye opening in terms of how much comfort other students have talking to someone in a similar position", and that she "came to appreciate her role as the first step people take to receiving help". If this is something that might appeal to you, then feel free to drop Mind Matters an email or message.

Going forward, the society has 4 goals for this year: to raise awareness about homelessness and mental health through liaising with local homelessness charities, help to create a more inclusive environment and highlight mental health within minority ethnic groups, work with the NHS locally, such as supplying

the LGI Children's ward with Christmas hampers as they did last year and finally, raising eating disorder awareness in conjunction with BEAT.

With regards to events, Mind Matters are hosting a music, dance and poetry night planned for the 15th March at the LS6 Café, raising money for suicide-prevention charity Papyrus and YoungMinds. They will also have a stall at the welfare fair in the LUU foyer on the 25th February, so catch them there if you'd like to talk.

If you enjoy helping others, and want to be part of the important support sessions, or even just have any questions, you can email Mind Matters at luumindmatters@gmail.com. For information about events and the support group, head over to their Facebook page at [LUU Mind Matters Society](#). Where they post about upcoming events and are happy to receive any messages about volunteering or advice on mental health.



Jess Farmer
Society Editor

LUU Disabled Student Network is a brand new society this year at the University of Leeds. I was lucky enough to speak with the committee members, Emeline (President), Olivia (Vice President) and Alex (Secretary) who informed me of some of the aims and plans for this society over the next semester.

Emeline made the conscious decision to start LUU Disabled Student Network last semester following her personal experience with brain cancer which resulted in her taking a year out of university to recover. Emeline arrived at university and realised she needed more support to come to terms with her disability but she noticed that there was no clear support network or space for students to discuss their disabilities and common struggles at university.

Emeline decided to research how she could change this. She discovered that shockingly, the University of Leeds was the only Russell group university in the UK which didn't have a Disabled Student Network and thanks to her hard work, alongside the other committee members, she has changed this!

LUU Disabled Student Network aims to provide a new space for students suffering with physical and invisible disabilities. No matter how severe or minor the disability, the society offers an opportunity for students to make friends and discuss university life with people who share similar experiences. The committee are aware that disability is still considered a taboo subject and they hope to break stigmas and create a social, fun and caring environment for disabled students to voice concerns. The society is not just a place to discuss disabilities but also a social

space which provides essential help and information for disabled students.

Olivia, vice president and third year student, explained why she wanted to help to develop the society. She explained that students were often bombarded with information from their school's support systems for disabled students but this was often overwhelming and difficult to organise. LUU Disabled Student Network aims to provide a hub of all the disability services available at university within different schools to make life for disabled students easy and organised. They want to collate all of the necessary contacts and departments responsible for supporting disabled student's experiences at university in one simple and easy to access area.

The committee are hoping to grow the membership of the society over the semester. They want to make people aware that any disability is welcome, even if it is self-diagnosed. As a new society they don't yet have meetings. Nevertheless, their Facebook page

is the main hub of contact where you can send a message if you want to get involved or you can ask for some advice regarding your disability. The society wants to work on a casual, no pressure basis. The main aim is to make life easier for disabled students.

In the long term the society hope to be more active and change things within the university. They are hoping to arrange for guest speakers to come and give inspiring talks about their careers, life goals and disabilities.

The first big event for the society is taking place on the 25th of February. The committee members have a stall in LUU foyer as part of the 'WelFair' event which will take place between 11-3pm. Be sure to go down and speak to Emeline, Olivia and Alex if you would like to get involved or find out anymore information.

The society is a great way of supporting disabled students at Leeds and it is a fantastic way of ensuring that disabled students have the best possible university experience.



The Gryphon
Arts Supplement of

IN THE MIDDLE



ISSUE 8 Fashion - Blogs - Lifestyle - Music - Clubs - Art - Culture

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2020 FESTIVALS PROVE MUSIC MISOGYNY IS STILL RIPE



It is not an opinion that the music industry is heavily skewed towards supporting only male musicians; 80% of festival headline slots are given to men, and most festival teams seem to be in no hurry to straighten out this issue.

Neighbourhood Weekender has pulled out Ian Brown and Catfish and the Bottlemen as their main headliners, with Sam Fender and The Wombats joining them. The issue is already obvious. The festival has long favoured male artists, choosing Courteeners, Jake Bugg, and George Ezra to headline in previous years. After multiple searches, tracing back to the festival's very beginnings, it may be unsurprising to realise Neighbourhood has never had a single female headliner. In previous years they have made way for countless, almost indistinguishable male acts, repeatedly bringing back men such as Gerry Cinnamon and The Charlatans. For female artists, however, the same cannot be said, as talented artists such as Bloxx are relegated to the very bottom of their rankings.

Reading and Leeds Festival have come under particularly heavy backlash, after they revealed their line-up earlier this month. Stormzy, Rage Against the Machine, and Liam Gallagher are set to headline, meaning the festival has not seen a single headline slot given to a female artist

since Paramore in 2014. In twenty years, there has been exactly one female headliner, whilst many male-only acts have headlined numerous times; Kasabian, Eminem, and Fall Out Boy to name just a few. Surely even Fall Out Boy fans are tired of seeing their name come up again and again, alongside heritage bands who have long ceased to be exciting?

Many (men) have come forward in defence of the festival line-ups, arguing that this is a result of the simple fact that there are more male artists in the indie/rock scene, or that there are just no good female artists that would be fit for the main stage. But looking at the first argument, you would have to question just why so many nearly identical male bands are being pushed towards fame and success, whilst female artists are given no such support. There are many popular bands whose repetitive, unoriginal songs prove that this inclusion is not a matter of objectively-judged talent, but a conscious and discriminative decision, from the booking agents of Reading and Leeds to the very roots of the music industry itself.

And for the second argument, which sees fans argue that there are no appropriate acts to play such festivals, one must question if they are being wilfully ignorant of talented

female artists, or simply not being exposed to them due to the heavily patriarchal system that has long dictated the success of artists in the industry. Lorde, Lana Del Rey, Pale Waves, Stevie Nicks, and Florence and the Machine would all easily slot right into the main-stage slots, and yet the agents continuously throw money towards the Gallaghers instead. Furthermore, there are rising bands such as The Rooves who are female fronted, original, and hugely talented, and yet not being promoted nearly as heavily as the Courteeners-style bands we have seen dominating line-ups year upon year.

Primavera Sound, a Barcelona based festival, has proved the idea of gender-equality in festivals is not a ridiculous idea, but rather quite easily feasible. Featuring a line-up of Lizzo, FKA Twigs, and Charli XCX, the organisers made clear that there was no room for excuses. Hopefully, other festivals will quickly follow suit, and music fans will begin to demand equality of representation as a new normal in the following years to come.

EVA LIUKINEVICIUTE



Credit: Matt Eachus

BLOSSOMS

Location
Leeds
Beckett
Union

Date
6th
February



Within just a week of having released their second number one album *Foolish Loving Spaces*, Blossoms arrived at the Leeds Beckett Students Union as a part of one of their February album launch shows.

With no support acts playing before hand, the focus was purely on Blossoms as they kicked off the set with their new album's first single, 'Your Girlfriend'. The night mainly consisted of songs from their debut album *Blossoms*, and of course their most recent release, although some of their other hit songs such as 'There's a Reason Why (I Never Returned Your Calls)' and 'I Can't Stand It' were also played.

Blossoms gave off the impression that they were there to have fun and entertain. By adding in elongated almost improvised guitar solos to some of their songs, as well as the fascinating addition of bongos to accompany

Joe Donovan's drumming, the band brought a unique energy with them to the gig. It was this energy that rubbed off on the audience, resulting in an electrifying atmosphere consisting of mosh pits, chants and an overall exceptionally loud crowd. This was especially the case in their more popular songs such as 'At Most a Kiss', in which the venue seemed to erupt, creating some extremely memorable moments.

For a band who are so accustomed to performing in much larger venues, Blossoms seemed to be immensely comfortable and relaxed in this much more intimate setting, with a prime example of this being the amount of times that front man Tom Ogden interacted with the audience. He often encouraged the crowd to sing on their own, such as when he played a short cover of Oasis' 'Half the World Away' in between songs, and would even

point at crowd members and sing to them, creating a real connection between the band and the audience.

The band performed for just under an hour before wrapping up what was a terrific set with their most popular song 'Charlemagne'. Having only seen Blossoms once before at Leeds Festival 2017, it was particularly enjoyable to witness the band perform in a much smaller and intimate venue. The venue size allowed the five-piece band from Stockport to showcase just how good they are live without the pressure of performing in front of an festival sized crowd, and as a result made this one of my favourite gigs yet.

SAM WINSTANLEY

FUDGE.

Location
Lending
Room

Date
7th
February



One week on from the release of their first EP, *Panic On*, Leeds four-piece Fudge. took on the Lending Room once again with riotous energy.

Guests once again to the 360 show in Leeds and following on from the talent of Teeff, The Harriets and Sir Curse, Fudge. obviously have the local following to back themselves up. Despite being a previous fan, even I was not prepared for the pandemonium that would ensue from the moment the local rockers stepped on stage – or rather descended onto the crowd, diving from the bar at the back. With a huge pit extending the entire width of the Lending Room, what followed was what can only be described as pure, unadulterated chaos.

The gig is non-stop, strong riffs electrify the air but the aggressive vocals from leadman Cam are not allowed to take a back seat. Fudge. are monstrous, even managing to ramp up the disorder when they launch into one of their first hits, 'Walrus'. The pit is inescapable, myself abandoning the illusion that I would be able to stay to the side to review, eventually

deciding to fully embrace what Fudge. has to offer. I can put as many descriptive words in this review as possible to try and encapsulate the experience and yet still be unsuccessful – there were bodies flying everywhere, a constant feed of powerful guitar and even an elderly relative of the support dancing in his own circle created to protect him from the moshers – this was local punk at its finest.

Fudge. exude a cocky and boyish energy and are clearly able to charm a crowd with ease. Despite the fire alarm sounding half way through the gig, illuminating the pit with red lights, Fudge. refuse to stop for anyone. They're able to play off the technical mistakes, including the breakage of their delay pedal and a couple guitar strings, and lack none of the self confidence that usually comes from smaller bands. The crowd are insatiable, only slowing for a moment to catch a breath before plunging into the next song.

Taking inspiration from alt-rockers such as IDLES, the local band manage to capture the

essence of political rock that can arguably be lost with bigger bands in bigger venues. The striking lyrics 'we just want to feel like we're going somewhere' speak to their position as youths today, feeling unrepresented and lost in the state of society. Fudge. have an unfailing desire to enact change, even on the small scale and even if it's simply to spread their anti-establishment message through their own music. Accompanied by elaborate backing visuals and personalised lighting, one can't help but have respect for a band that's honed their sound and secured such a dedicated following in such a short amount of time.

If you hadn't already seen the smatterings of Fudge. stickers adorned across lampposts and buildings alike throughout the city or heard the rumours of their legendary gigs, maybe now is the time to take notice. Fudge. are clawing their way to the top and taking the house down as they do.

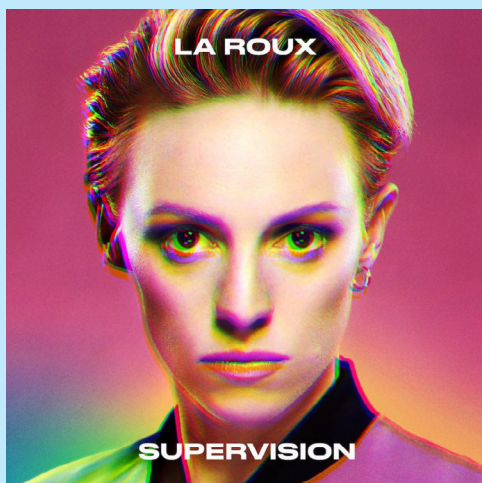
MILLY WATERS

MUSIC & CLUBS

ALBUM REVIEWS

LA ROUX

Album
Supervision



The infectious, high pitched 2009 lyrics of La Roux's 'Bulletproof' are etched onto the brains of the nation: the ultimate throwback tune and a classic 80's-but-actually-noughties track. And while her new album, *Supervision*, likely won't bring the same level of fame, it certainly brings a similar vibe: synthy, neon, electropop, just as captivating as before.

The album is carried by the strength of singles 'International Woman of Leisure', 'Automatic Driver' and 'Gullible Fool', all of which possess energy that makes them almost impossible to listen to without at

least tapping your foot, and in most cases full on dancing. These tracks make for the ultimate shower songs, and it's guaranteed that the upbeat melodies will be stuck in your head after a couple listens.

The rest of the album is good too, if a bit same-y. *Supervision* is kaleidoscopic: mesmerising, hypnotising but sometimes blurred together. Most tracks have a similar tempo and the same synthy foundation, making *Supervision* a little repetitive at times. But despite that, Elly Jackson's remarkable vocal range and the difference of the album's retrospective sound among

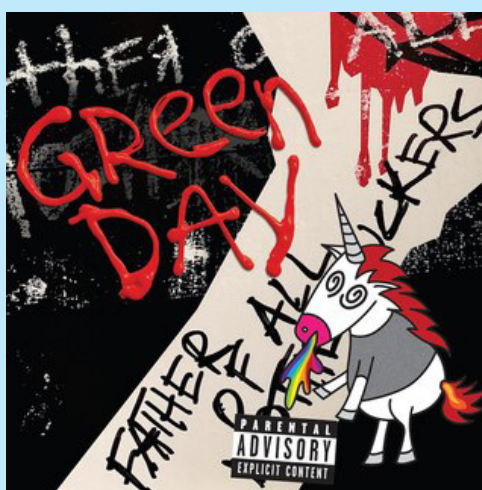
today's pop scene bring a freshness which is reviving.

Supervision falls just slightly short of La Roux's previous successes but, having said that, they left big shoes to fill. The whole album is definitely still worth a listen, if not just for the impressive vocals. La Roux might be stuck in the 80's, but Elly Jackson's voice is timeless.

ISABELLA WIGLEY

GREEN DAY

Album
Father Of All...



Father of All is just... boring. A product of an aged band and a style that has aged with them, Green Day bring us their latest album, teeming with insipid, tired rock clichés and unimaginative guitarwork. Stuck in 1994, the whole thing is about drinking or drugs or women or being really cool and 'dangerous'. *Father of All* is utterly purist in its pursuit of a mainstream rock record – resulting in a serious deficiency of inspiration, or originality. It's 26 minutes of soundtracks for car adverts.

The album cover is emblematic of the record; a rehash of *American Idiot*'s iconic heart-handgrenade, admitting Green Day are entirely reliant on nostalgia and legacy to earn streams and sales. The throwback is now adorned with a unicorn obscuring the full album title, 'Father of all Motherfuckers', because nothing

says punk rock like commercial viability. This nostalgia bait is continued repeatedly throughout *Father of All*, with musical references throughout and lyrics that sound just similar enough to be throwbacks to old Green Day songs. It could just as easily be lazy repurposing, though.

Billie Joe Armstrong sustains a strained falsetto throughout the entirety, combined with a filter that makes for fuzzy, irritating vocals, and the impression you might be listening to a demo, not the studio release. Most songs sound very similar, 'Fire, Ready, Aim' and 'Sugar Youth' sounding particularly alike. 'Sugar' in that song, by the way, is a very intelligent, well-veiled metaphor for cocaine. Most of the lyrics are equally deft.

The issue above all else is that the music is, essentially, 'correct'. It's not bad, just entirely inconsequential. 'I was a teenage teenager' are the same two verses repeated to an unchanging wall of basic guitar rock, with a chorus that says the name of the song and rhymes a lot and is, all in all, exemplary of a song attempting to be catchy. It feels constructed.

Whilst the album is not consistently terrible throughout, it suffers in contrast to Green Day's wider discography. With regards to the genre as a whole, *Father of All* fails to find a space or gather enough quality to construct its own. *Father of All* is two things; seemingly a cash grab, and entirely out of touch.

TOM POOLE

TAME IMPALA

Album
The Slow Rush



It's been a weird few years for Tame Impala's Kevin Parker. After the critically and commercially acclaimed *Currents* elevated Tame Impala from a darling psych-rock project to a household name in mainstream music, even leading them to headline Coachella last year, Parker explored new musical avenues by collaborating with the likes of Mark Ronson, Travis Scott and Lady Gaga over the last five years.

After such a vast shift in Kevin Parker's status as a musician then, the themes of nostalgia and time that permeate *The Slow Rush* feel especially potent. Parker sings more honestly than ever before about his personal struggles of the past, be it the pain of accepting the loss of his father in 'Posthumous Forgiveness' or his less-than-bearable humble beginnings mentioned in 'Lost In Yesterday'. Likewise, the implications of Tame Impala's recent widespread success are the cause of some anxiety and dread for Parker, who fears losing his creative edge in 'It Might Be Time':

'you ain't as young as you used to be', 'you're goin' under'.

Despite the newfound lyrical candidness that Parker describes as 'therapy' for himself and his listeners, Tame Impala's signature psychedelic soundscapes appear once again, densely layered throughout a track list that places a heavy emphasis on funk, pop and disco beats. Although *The Slow Rush* is sonically decorated with rich strokes of Parker's iconic psychedelic reverberations, what truly shines in the album is the dynamism between the crunchy basslines and the flawlessly rhythmic drum performances which act as perfect foundations for the songs to pivot upon.

There's a lot to love here, both thematically and sonically, which makes the album's structural defects all the more frustrating. Running at just over 57 minutes, *The Slow Rush* is not only Tame Impala's longest album, but also its most bloated and inconsistent. Tracks that at first appear

tantalising such as 'One More Year' or 'On Track' often fail to develop enough to reach musical highs, with the absence of a satisfying climax causing some songs to just fizzle out into the aether. Likewise, the bite-sized exhibitions of talent found in 'Glimmer' or the interlude of 'Breathe Deeper' are brief enough to feel merely like half-baked ideas rather than fully realised tracks.

While most listeners will likely find themselves in awe of the dramatic heights reached in tracks such as 'Tomorrow's Dust' or 'It Might Be Time' – both shining examples of Parker's outstanding song writing ability – the cyclical nature of some songs or their disjointed compositions lead to an album that demands an almost uncompromisingly patient listen. *The Slow Rush*'s best ideas ultimately shine above all else, but at times the experience can be frustratingly trying.

JOHNNY WINTER



BLOSSOMS

Album
Foolish Loving Spaces



Following on from the success of their first two studio albums, Stockport's five-piece indie-pop band are back with their latest record, *Foolish Loving Spaces*.

An album described by the band as "a pure celebration of love", *Foolish Loving Spaces* is a creation inspired by the likes of U2, Talking Heads and Primal Scream. Blossoms are a band known for using a masterfully blended combination of guitars and synths, with their new album being no exception to this. However, how the band has blended these instruments seems to have changed, with the synths taking on less of crucial role, allowing for melodies and hooks from guitar, bass and even piano to take centre stage, more so than they did in the previous albums.

In an attempt to experiment with their distinctive sound, the band have added some refreshing touches to the album, including a gospel choir, which perfectly complements frontman Tom Ogden's pop vocals and cleverly straight forward and relatable lyrics.

Foolish Loving Spaces is exactly what you'd expect from a Blossoms album. It's an extremely upbeat record full of catchy songs that don't fail to get stuck in your head. The only exception to this being 'My Vacant Days', which is a much slower, acoustic styled song. However, despite it being slower, the track does not feel out of place on the record, but instead demonstrates the depth and variation that this album has.

Overall, *Foolish Loving Spaces* feels more mature and sounds how a third album should sound. You get the idea that Blossoms no longer believe they have to prove how good they are to anyone and thus it feels as if *Foolish Loving Spaces* was a record that Blossoms were able to simply have fun with. Without the pressure of living up to their previous successes, Blossoms have been able to create some of their best material yet, as well as a feel-good album that is incredibly enjoyable to listen to.

SAM WINSTANLEY



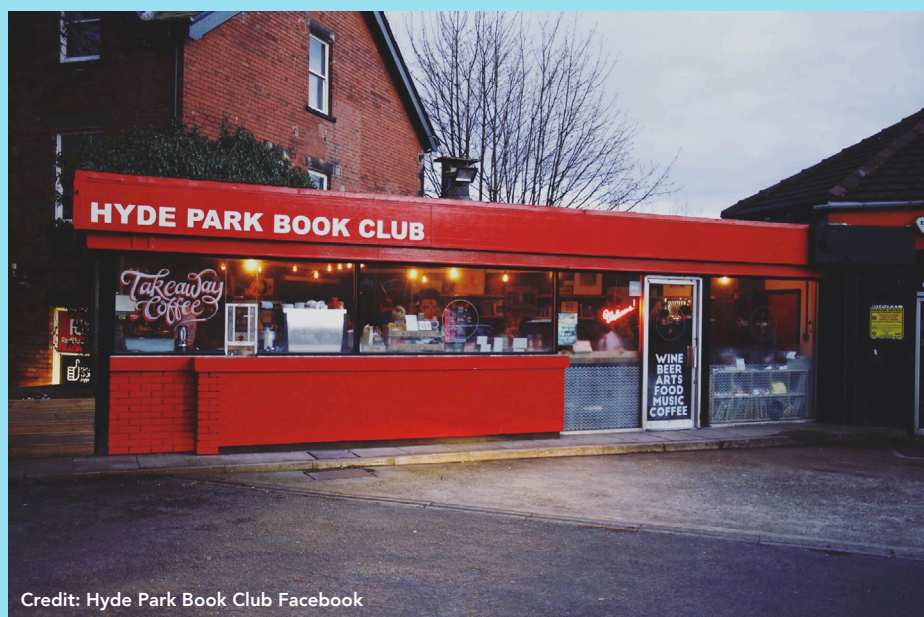
A GUIDE TO UNDERGROUND ELECTRONIC MUSIC IN LEEDS

With as many gigs going on at CHUNK and Wharf Chambers as you can shake a stick at, how do you know what's what? With events going on all the time ranging from the lightest, airiest ambient to the biggest noise walls, Dada percussion and found object bashing, this guide will provide some insight into this world.

A lot of gigs in this DIY space are not as well promoted as other rock gigs such as those featured in adverts on Facebook or glossy posters around campus. However, some amazing posters are up and around if you've got an eye out for them. At the venues such as Wharf Chambers, CHUNK, Hyde Park Book Club, and other hubs for music (e.g. the Leeds Union Music Library located on floor 2 of LUU), there are often fliers or posters advertising these events.

When attending these sorts of events, it's quite easy to be intimidated by the idea that the music is 'out there' and outside your comfort zone, with the audiences often tending to be quite small. However, the community is very inclusive and happy to talk (or not, if that's your thing). In addition to this, a lot of people attending will often be musicians themselves (sometimes performing that night), and will happily tell you about how they make sounds and what motivates them, etc. Often people will be recording the music through audio, video and photography, becoming part of the performance themselves in some ways. Audience participation is sometimes part of acts, with the barrier between artist and audience being shattered, thus leading to the terminology 'No Audience Underground'. Personally, I've found this interaction inspiring, with it leading me to create more and more music of my own (see pcrv.neocities.org).

A lot of these bands might seem very serious from posters and Facebook event descriptions, but a lot may be parodic and very un-serious. A few of the best events I've attended have had the crowds in fits of laughter, especially those which use found objects to make unexpected noises. Furthermore, events exist which re-contextualise serious music by presenting them in spaces that are unexpected. For example, LUUMS composers' ensemble took to Hyde Park Book Club's basement last March to perform pieces that would traditionally be played in a stuffy concert hall, transforming the atmosphere and providing a space for the work to flow better. This year, they've teamed up with MME Society to hold another event in the same space on the 28th of March (it's for charity so make sure you get down there!).



Credit: Hyde Park Book Club Facebook

Perhaps more often known for their use as club spaces, many of Leeds' DIY venues are also home to an exciting underground electronic music scene. Thomas Carroll offers an insight to the community, which favours 'horrid sounds' and audience participation.



Credit: leeds.independentlife.co.uk

Rocking up at a gig with a 4-pack of the beer that you bought before turning up (gigs at CHUNK are usually BYOB), and getting ready for a night of horrid sounds can be quite comforting, I think, as a form of catharsis or even just a connection with people who are there for similar reasons. Venues-wise, there are some interesting spaces also being used for these events. An example is the (literally) seasonal 'Drone for the Season' event that takes place in Burley Park at the bandstand around the equinoxes and solstices of each season. Again, in line with the idea of 'No Audience Underground', there's almost always a level playing field created; most acts use tables on the floor, and stages are sometimes used as part of the act as a subtle, ironic nod towards the idea of 'separation'. A lot of gigs are also inclusive in the financial sense, with most operating a 'no one turned away for lack of funds' or 'pay as you feel' policy. Of course, this is down to the promoter, but it's nice to know that you can see bands even if you're not so well-off.

THOMAS CARROLL

Upcoming Events

- Feb 26th // CHUNK // Hogwash 28
- Feb 28th // CHUNK // Cowboy Builder // Nape Neck // Lo Egin // Duck Scrap
- Mar 12th // Wharf Chambers // Strange Parade (Leeds Union Music Library, acts tbc.)
- Mar 18th // Wharf Chambers // David Liebe Hart (off of Tim & Eric) // Guttersnipe // Luke Poot // WYHD
- Mar 28th // HPBC // HATCH with LUUMS Composers' Ensemble & MME Society

WHO MAKES YOUR UNION DREAM TEAM?

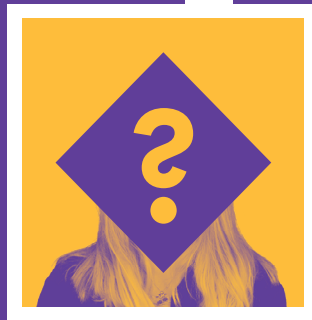
It's time to select the seven Student Exec officers
who'll represent you on campus next year.



UNION AFFAIRS
OFFICER



EQUALITY &
DIVERSITY OFFICER



COMMUNITY
OFFICER



ACTIVITIES
OFFICER



WELFARE
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INTERNATIONAL
OFFICER

THE WINNERS AND THE LOSERS ON THE OSCARS RED CARPET

Watching the Oscars red carpet on Sunday night, there was a palpable air of disappointment hanging over the room. Compared to previous years of glamour, the fashion fell far short. Still, there were some redeeming outfits, with many stars choosing to re-wear ensembles from previous years in a show of support for sustainable fashion, a welcome break from the constant one-wear-dazzlers. Here are some of the best (and worst) from the night from Lizzie Wright.

FASHION



Credit: Evening Standard



Credit: Footwear News



Credit: Entertainment Tonight



Credit: Celebmafia

JANE FONDA

Presenting the biggest award of the night, Best Picture, Jane Fonda dazzled in a form-fitting nude illusion Elie Saab dress, which was covered in intricate beading. Having recently promised to never buy another item of clothing again, she had indeed reworn this gown after first choosing it for the 2014 Cannes festival. Making a further statement, she paired it with a matching coat, thrown effortlessly over her shoulder. That same coat was the last piece of clothing Fonda will ever buy. Despite emerging new trends and the pressure to always look current, Fonda looked hardly out of place, with her choice of gown being elegant and timeless.

REGINA KING

When King stepped onto the carpet, I audibly gasped. Her Versace dress, a light pink with silver embellishments, flattered her skin tone perfectly, and the singular strap highlighted her toned arms while still looking feminine. Originally more of a bodycon dress, a removable train was added to give a ballgown effect, whilst also enabling King to remain comfortable all through the night. Pairing the dress with simple, slicked back hair and neutral makeup, the look would be perfect were it not for the concentration of jewellery round her wrists and hands, but it certainly comes close.

FLORENCE PUGH

Florence Pugh is one of our generation's brightest stars, and she wore a dress to reflect that. A bright teal Louis Vuitton ballgown with a bell shaped, ruffled skirt, this is a dress that only someone with Pugh's youthful glow could pull off. With its simple but elegant top half, it manages to do a lot without crossing the line into being too much, a key trend in the age of the Giambattista Valli tulle, and difficult to nail. With the addition of little details- the thin, circular-buckled belt, the Joan of Arc inspired necklace, the rebellious ballerina slightly messed updo - this was the best new look on the red carpet that night.

LAURA DERN

After sweeping Best Supporting Actress at almost every award show this season, the Oscar was Dern's to win. Unfortunately, Best Red Carpet Fashion wasn't. Her Armani dress, a powder pink ensemble with black detail along the chest and neckline, didn't stand out amongst the other stars as it should have for a likely award winner. The shape of the gown did little to flatter Dern's figure, and the black seemed too harsh against the softer colours of her complexion and hair (both of which were made up in a way that failed to compliment the outfit).

LITERALLY EVERY MAN...

Well, maybe not every man, but certainly a majority of them chose to wear a standard black suit to this year's ceremony. How long will it take until men feel they can be more adventurous with their fashion outside of the Met Gala? Notable men who managed to stand out from the crowd were Timothee Chalamet in a Prada tracksuit-esque ensemble that somehow managed to be both casual and smart enough for the red carpet, Spike Lee in a moving purple and yellow suit in tribute to the late Kobe Bryant, and of course, Billy Porter. Credit must go to Joaquin Phoenix, who has worn the same Stella McCartney suit to every award show this season (although why more men apparently don't do this, we may never know).



Credit: Evening Standard



Credit: Teen Vogue



Credit: Esquire

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

In a tribute to one of fashion's best loved figures, Iona Tompkins unpacks fashion's unhealthy relationship with its designers.

For Christmas 2015, I received one (very heavy) present. This was the hardback book that accompanied the V&A's landmark *Savage Beauty* exhibition on the late Alexander McQueen. Christmas day and almost every subsequent evening was spent reading the tome from cover to cover, transporting me to a different place. To me and many others, McQueen's shows are not just creative masterpieces - they are escapism at its finest.

McQueen taught me that dark moments of anxiety and self-harm were not something to be ashamed of, but something that could be unleashed through a powerful creative medium. When most fashion shows were aiming for unattainable beauty, McQueen was transforming his women into fearsome animals (*It's A Jungle Out There*, 1997), patients in a mental asylum (*Voss*, 2001) and ethereal sea creatures (*Plato's Atlantis*, 2010). Rather than being ashamed of the darkness and anger within him, he laid his raw emotions down for the world to see. Bravery is not a word we normally associate with the world of fashion, but it is inextricably tied to Alexander McQueen.

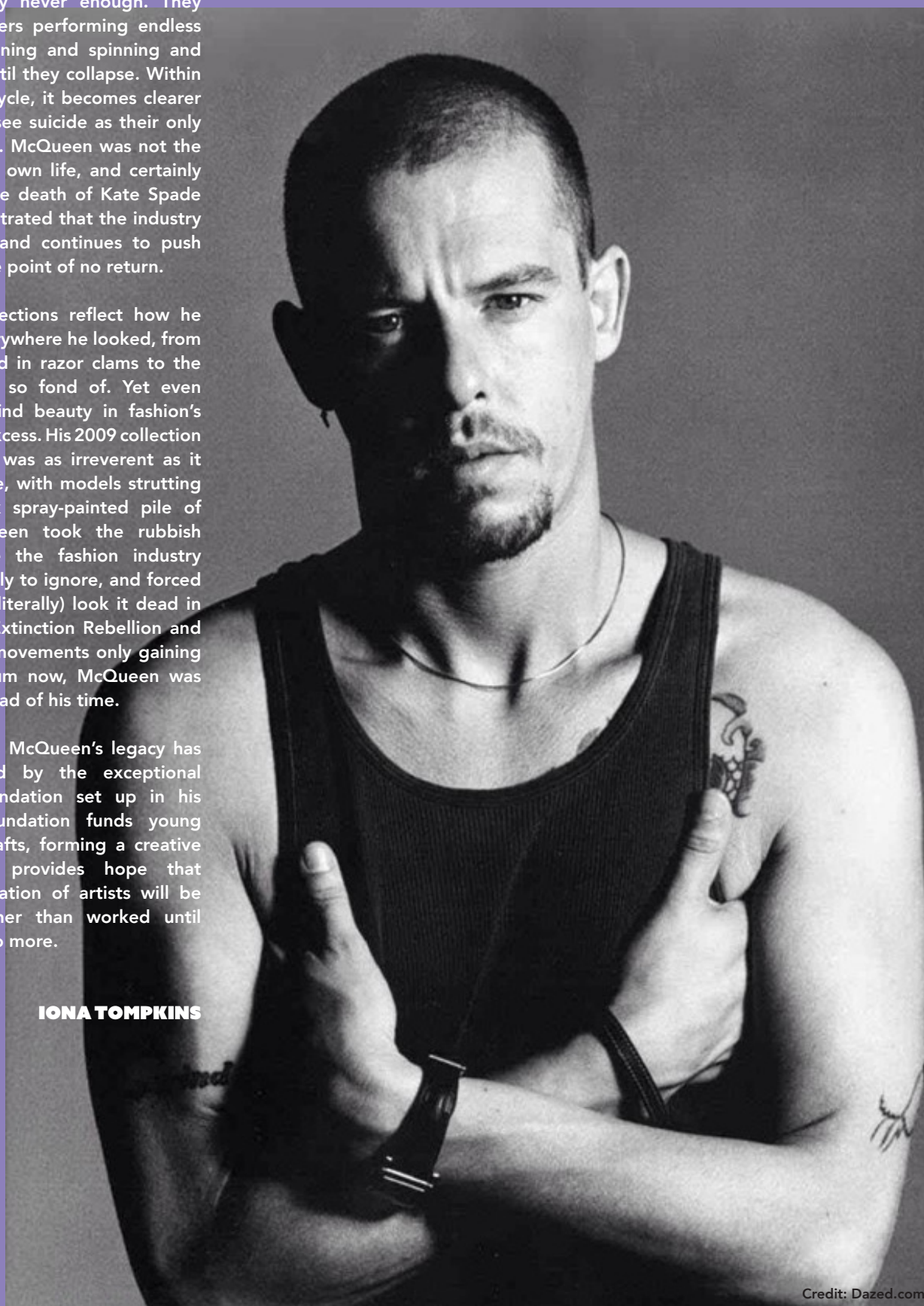
As it currently stands, the fashion industry is a frenzied, exhausting and endless hamster wheel spinning out of control. S/S and A/W are no longer enough, with designers having to work on diffusion lines, perfumes, makeup, resort, and separate men and women's collections. Each collection must top the last, with a demand for fashion that is more creative, more wearable, more exciting. However, whatever designers

do is seemingly never enough. They are ballet dancers performing endless pirouettes, spinning and spinning and spinning and until they collapse. Within such a vicious cycle, it becomes clearer why designers see suicide as their only route of escape. McQueen was not the first to take his own life, and certainly not the last. The death of Kate Spade in 2018 demonstrated that the industry learnt nothing and continues to push designers to the point of no return.

McQueen's collections reflect how he saw beauty everywhere he looked, from a beach covered in razor clams to the falcons he was so fond of. Yet even he could not find beauty in fashion's unsustainable excess. His 2009 collection *Horn of Plenty* was as irreverent as it was avant-garde, with models strutting around a black spray-painted pile of rubbish. McQueen took the rubbish and the waste the fashion industry tries so frantically to ignore, and forced them to (quite literally) look it dead in the eye. With *Extinction Rebellion* and environmental movements only gaining major momentum now, McQueen was desperately ahead of his time.

Since his death, McQueen's legacy has been continued by the exceptional Sarabande Foundation set up in his name. The foundation funds young artists of all crafts, forming a creative community. It provides hope that the next generation of artists will be supported, rather than worked until they can take no more.

IONA TOMPKINS



Credit: Dazed.com



Credit: My Wardrobe HQ

THE DEVIL RENTS PRADA...

Is there a future for hiring fashion?

It's no new revelation that fashion is one of the world's most polluting industries; we're aware that fast fashion comes at the cost of poor labour conditions in sweat shops, that the tons of disposed fashion waste we constantly produce is an environmental nightmare and that our over consumption is leading to an entirely unsustainable future for fashion. What we're less aware of, however, is what to do about this. How do we change habits that have taken years to form? What do we do when nothing found in charity shops fits? How do we support sustainable brands when they seem so overpriced?

My Wardrobe HQ, which has recently hit the floor in Liberty London, offers one potential solution: renting clothes. Now you can faithfully keep up with your 'not buying it' environmental mantra whilst still donning a different dress to all those big events and Instagram opportunities. It's like loaning from your friends, but on a commercial scale. You can wear the brands you've coveted at only a fraction of the price, you can try something more experimental as a one-off, and you can rest easy knowing that your decision is, for once, both fashion forward and environmentally friendly. My Wardrobe HQ don't take any shortcuts, after all – they'll take care of postage and dry cleaning, using Green Courier, the UK's leading eco-distribution option, and they partner with Blanc Living, a dry cleaning company committed to using non-toxic, biodegradable detergents.

On paper, I'm sold. I'm fed up with companies not taking the sustainability issues in fashion seriously, yet I love treating myself for special events, and I have to confess I'm not likely to rewear an occasion dress more than a handful of times. My Wardrobe HQ is definitely the solution for me, especially given my expensive taste and love of designers. But, having said this, I've never actually used the service and in honesty

I'm not sure I see myself giving it a go anytime soon. After a little browse on the site, I found a gorgeous white Victoria Beckham dress, rentable for £19 a day. The main issue became quickly clear once I clicked through to the product; the minimum rent time was 4 days, which would make me £76 poorer for a one-time wear. Admittedly, the product retails at £1,475 so it's really only a fraction of the price. But, for most of us, I'm not sure it's easy to justify that amount of money on something you're not actually getting to keep. It's especially hard to make that decision when it's possible to own a dress for life for around the same figure; I'm not even talking about a cheap fast fashion outlet here, but instead considering second hand options on Depop or similar. There's also sustainable companies that aren't too far off that figure, and will give you a piece to treasure for life.

Perhaps it's us consumers that need to change our perception; perhaps the solution to the fashion minefield we've got ourselves into is one that can be solved by shifting away from a sense of ownership of our clothes. Perhaps we need to collaborate, share and let go of our goods. But, whilst this might work between a group of friends exchanging their favourite dresses, I don't think My Wardrobe HQ is ready to change the whole face of fashion just yet. At the end of the day, they are still supporting the idea that you only need to wear an item once; would it not be better in the long run to encourage people to be seen in the same occasionwear pieces time and time again? Surely we need to stop thinking that we need a new outfit for every photographed event, and start rewearing our own pieces?

Another concern I have is the potential damage renting clothes could do to a company's sales. This is why the choice on My Wardrobe HQ is limited; not every brand is happy

to start competing with their own products, but at a rented price. It is unclear if brands receive any cut in the rental price, but I would certainly hope so given the design expertise undoubtedly involved in producing the luxury pieces. It is also difficult to see how sustainable companies can be supported in the future, if instead of buying their pieces, we chose instead to spend a fraction of the price for a one-time wear. I doubt, however, that My Wardrobe HQ is looking to completely redefine fashion to the point where nobody owns anything at all; it seems to me more of an option to supplement your wardrobe for special occasions.

You can probably tell just from reading this that my feelings overall are very mixed. Logistically, I'm not ready to commit more than £30 for something I won't wear more than once, so for the time being it's looking like a no from me. But I do think the concept is genius. I like that My Wardrobe HQ is changing the perceptions of re-using pieces, and bringing this to a luxury market. I think the company has real integrity too, and as a fashion lover, I'm enthralled by their brand selection, full of interesting designs and flattering pieces. I think we're a long way off shared ownership of fashion items and the world of rentals, but I think there's a lot of good to be taken from My Wardrobe HQ's philosophy. It's about time we all start working out how we can reduce the amount of one-time wear pieces in our wardrobes, whether that's by selling on, swapping or loaning. My housemates will be pleased to know I am now more convinced than ever that they should lend me clothes for my next big date, and that, in return, they'll be allowed to borrow any of my wide range of gym leggings, bobbled old jumpers and baggy trousers... it's a win-win, right?

LYDIA VARNEY

SLUGGISH CLICHÉS OR REFRESHING ROMANCE?



Credit: Elle

To *All the Boys I've Loved Before: P.S. I Still Love You* is the lacklustre sequel to Jenny Han's book series turned film franchise, *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*. What began as a modern, inclusive and somewhat refreshing take on the teenage romance film has fallen victim to a sluggish and awkward direction held together by a script jumping from one cliché to another.

Following almost immediately on from the first film, *P.S. I Still Love You* accompanies Lara Jean Song Covey (Lana Condor) as she navigates her way through her first real relationship. Quickly realising that the plethora of romance novels and 80's movies she's consumed over the years did not count as research, Lara Jean and Peter Kavinsky (Noah Centineo) have to learn that sweeping promises and dishonesty do not make for a perfect relationship. It was the letter sent by John Ambrose McClaren (Jordan Fisher) that kickstarted the couples' issues, as Lara Jean realises her latent romantic feelings towards him. Never have I seen a bump in the road be so sickeningly charming, handsome and respectful and therein lies the problem with the story. There is no tension, no fault to John Ambrose's character and nothing overwhelming redeemable about Peter's either, leaving me feeling wholly and utterly uninterested in the film's conclusion.

Michael Fimognari's direction manages to uphold the contemporary and cute visuals from the first film, with frames full of colour and text messages laying the action out in front of us. The film manages to flesh out its main characters, by developing Lara Jean's Korean heritage and delving deeper into her turbulent friendship with Genevieve (Emilija Barnac). To give credit where it is due, this film deals with issues of intimacy, insecurity and the complexities of relationships (at all ages) with a tender, respectful and honest approach.

It was genuinely baffling how much non-dialogue there was in both films, and not interestingly or intentionally, but more like the silence when you forget your lines in a GCSE Drama performance.

Finishing at an hour and forty-two minutes, the film could have easily met the 90-minute mark if it had picked up the pacing significantly and cut away all the awkward moments of silence in the script. It was genuinely baffling how much non-dialogue there was in both films, and not interestingly or intentionally, but more like the silence when you forget

your lines in a GCSE Drama performance. There were awkward moments where the tone of the film changed completely as characters broke the fourth wall, attempting an aesthetic and trope entirely unfit for the movie.

What began as a modern, inclusive and somewhat refreshing take on the teenage romance film has fallen victim to a sluggish and awkward direction held together by a script jumping from one cliché to another.

For the most part, *P.S. I Still Love You* is nothing to write home about, and I feel a complex ambivalence towards the franchise a whole. As far as cheesy romance films go, this one hits the mark, given it is one of the very few rom-com that features an Asian protagonist, I'm happy to let the clumsy direction and simple script slide. I firmly believe that people of all shapes, sizes, ethnicities and sexualities deserve their very own cringey romance films to hate-watch on a Sunday night.

EMILY PARRY

THE WEST IS NOT THE BEST:

WILL PARASITE'S SUCCESS BE ENOUGH TO REINVENT THE FILM INDUSTRY?



Image: Vox.com

Owen Frost explores the success of *Parasite* but why it's progress for international films could be lost.

As the awards season sees its final curtain close and the last embarrassing monologues are abruptly cut short, the Academy had one conclusive "surprise" win up its tuxedo sleeve this year. *Parasite*, Bong Joon Ho's superb satirical exposé of class division in South Korea, took home the Academy's top prizes, grabbing Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best International Film. However, with Mark Ruffalo set to star in a new HBO adaptation of the international hit, will Hollywood's efforts only detract attention away from praiseworthy international films or emphasise their excellence?

Until Sunday night, 2020 had proven to be a largely unremarkable and perhaps even regressive awards season. The BAFTAs, in particular, led the way with their false promises of more inclusive and diverse nominations, leaving many outraged. Indeed, the Oscars only nominated Cynthia Erivo for Best Actress for her role in *Harriet* and the Best Director category was bereft of any female directors. Many rightfully argued that Greta Gerwig was snubbed for her vision of her recent *Little Women* remake. However, the Academy has revitalised interest in this year's season of accolades by backing Bong's South Korean masterpiece *Parasite*. In the face of overwhelmingly traditional Oscar-bait films, *Parasite* took home four academy awards beating an unsurprisingly undiverse, white, largely male selection of Hollywood's usual suspects: Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman* and Sam Mendes' *1917*.

Parasite itself is a gorgeous film, and undoubtedly Bong's best to date. The actors never skip a beat and the screenplay is packed full of black humour, providing the film with immense entertainment value, as well as intense shifts in dramatic

beats - a feature which has become Bong's signature auteur move over the last few years. Another stellar feature of *Parasite* is its visceral, visual representation of the entrenched rich-poor divide in Seoul, imaginatively portrayed through the cinematography and mise-en-scène.

Disappointingly, it looks like perhaps the breakthrough in international cinema is to be diluted by HBO looking to further exploit the success of Bong's critically acclaimed feature. Just recently, Mark Ruffalo was rumoured to star in an American television remake of the film which Bong has said will be a '6-hour miniseries version of the film' with Ruffalo likely snatching Song Kang-ho's role as the father, Mr. Kim. So much for climbing over the 'one-inch barrier' Bong eloquently pointed out in his Golden Globes speech earlier on in this awards season. One step forward, two steps back.

Yet, we must not forget how big an achievement Sunday night was for international cinema. With *Parasite* taking home all the major awards, it is bound to get the predominantly American dictated big studios thinking. Perhaps now the Academy will deem any international films worthy of being judged in the same category as the notoriously English-Speaking dominated 'Best Picture' category. If not, at least Oscars viewers can go back and watch some of Bong's other filmography such as *Okja*.

We can only wait until next year and hope that the next award's season will credit the amazing work being done across the globe and not filter out everything that isn't white or male-oriented. *Parasite* is an utterly fantastic film and it would be a shame if the film's success was marred by Hollywood's own parasitic inclinations towards money and success.

OWEN FROST



Image: Hollywood Reporter



Image: The New York Times

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CAROLINE FLACK: TRIAL BY MEDIA

On February 15th, despite reports of having spent Valentine's day with a close friend, renowned TV personality and former Love Island host Caroline Flack was announced to have passed away. 40-year-old Flack was found in her London flat and confirmed by her family to have taken her own life; they have requested privacy during this difficult time.

Flack has been hounded by British tabloids to such an extent that we can barely fathom to remember where it began or why. It has dated from rumours of when she hosted the reality music show The X Factor concerning her relationship with the younger Harry Styles and this haunted her steps to the courthouse under allegations of her abusing her current boyfriend, Lewis Burton. She has continued to make public appearances and barter with gossip and scathing commentary, yet it is only now with the news of her passing that – typically - the internet is awash with shock and dismay. The reaction from those that had a hand in stewing the controversy has been so predictable that it is almost comical. The Sun has allegedly removed access to hundreds of pieces concerning Flack. Frequent provocateur Piers Morgan has tweeted the news as 'horrendous.' The X Factor has posted words of grief and consolation at the news of Flack's death, and even Burton himself claims to be 'heartbroken' by the loss of a suddenly beloved girlfriend.

Many of these sentiments could be genuine. Or at least Flack's death has catalysed a stream of disillusionment surrounding the obvious – the words we say have consequences. What is truly despicable is the fact that we already know this; we have known since Diana. The involvement of the press contributed to the grisly and far too premature end to her story. We have followed and scrutinised the press in very recent history, from Meghan Markle and Prince Harry having reached such a limit that they decided to step back from their royal duties entirely, to the evidence being so convoluted between

Johnny Depp and Amber Heard that we are exhausted in trying to work out where to place our sympathies. The role that media and news outlets play within society has been a timeless topic of discussion and controversy. It is meant to be a source of education, yet we are wary about its influence and reliance on persuasion. The British media has become renowned for being scandalous and provocative in their pursuit of their warped perceptions of 'truth,' happy to transgress over whatever moral barrier they see fit so long as it gets the public to cash in their spare quid. Worse still, every time this happens and harmful gossip is allowed to spiral, we never really appreciate the consequences until it is too late. If this was true of anyone, it was the case for Caroline Flack. One cannot even be sure where the controversies began; where the resentment and malice crept in, so unaware to the viewer or reader that not only did we see the need to fight it; the sad commonality of her treatment meaning that we accepted and encouraged it.

Flack's death then has started afresh a war cry of online protest; bays for blood over the actions of media outlets and cancelling any who criticised Flack in the first place. Most interestingly it has sparked outrage that sorrow is being expressed towards Flack alone rather than women of colour. This returns to Morgan's participation as Twitter users have challenged him in goading whether he will have the courtesy to leave Meghan Markle and Jameela Jamil – his frequently favourite victims of chiding – alone now that we have experienced the reality of online trolling through Flack's passing. Whilst this is true, and we should apply this experience to the future of women's welfare, such conversation at this stage is arguably premature. Flack's death is not a case study. We are already falling prey to the trap that ensnared Flack – a cycle of enmity and eagerness to perpetuate our opinions and vanity rather than paying attention to the subject and respecting those that are grieving.

Indeed, now that that cowardice has crept in and the voice of the media has decided to call it a day, the voices of genuine support flooding in Flack's favour is as clear as day. Contestants of Love Island are going so far as to call for the show, the sources of their own notoriety and success, to be axed immediately. Lex Croucher has offered an insightful and honest view that we can take all aspects of Flack's story into consideration; that we can appreciate the distressing nature of her passing whilst taking the abuse allegations and relationship with the media seriously. If there is anything that will evoke sympathy for Flack, it has been her message from friend Laura Whitmore. She pays an emotional tribute via BBC Radio detailing her love for Flack's 'infectious chuckle,' that she had a 'passion for life' and gave so much to Love Island because finding love was something genuinely important to her.

Whitmore's account is given more credibility for acknowledging that Flack was not perfect – but then neither is anyone. She rightly highlights that any critique or troll that has benefitted from tearing down another needs to have a good look at themselves in the mirror. It reminds us that despite the image and face that many grew to love to hate, Flack was to loved-ones a figure of genuine affection. Many may have heard the news of Flack's passing and choose to stick to their guns, finding reasons to avoid reflection and justify their discriminate attitudes towards her. However it takes but a few seconds to listen to Whitmore to realise that such mindsets no longer hold water. Those who have been 'demonised' for their success have truly 'had enough.' It is long overdue that society realises that there is nothing that can cut us deeper than words, and it is a solemn shame that it is still not even certain whether Caroline Flack's death will force people to realise that we must do better.

TANIKA LANE

THE OSCARS: THE SAME OLD STORY

Arts and Culture editor Delphie Bond explores how far the Oscars have come in ensuring diversity among its nominees.



When I picture the Oscars, I gawp at golden gowns stroking the rouge carpet at the feet of stars. I see the black and white vertical lines of directors' suits. When I picture the Oscars, I see red, gold and white. Red carpets, gold awards and white skin. Opulence and whiteness; the perfect closing scene.

However, of course, this is not an accurate reflection of the face of film in the world. This is just the image we are fed. The Oscars, which has once again, received a multitude of criticism for the lack of black winners this year, disturbingly doesn't seem ready to depart from this white narrative.

In 2015, the #OscarsSoWhite campaign surfaced on Twitter, with the aim to force Hollywood to 'rethink how it tells black people's stories'. The campaign, which was not without momentum, pushed forward the right for black people to be rewarded in telling their stories through the screen. However, with only 5 black nominations this year, a decrease from last year's 15 nominations, it would seem black communities are still being massively overlooked in the cinematic universe.

One voice which spoke out against the crowd, however, in a somewhat controversial collection of speeches over the award season was Joaquin Phoenix (*Joker*). In what Vox described as a "sprawling sociopolitical epic", Phoenix used his acceptance speeches to address the blatant inequalities so often silenced in Hollywood; the exact inequalities which place him on the winning pedestal, and others voiceless. Speaking at the Oscars, Phoenix stated:

"We're talking about the fight against the belief that one nation, one people, one race, one gender or one species has the right to dominate, control and use and exploit another with impunity."

In my opinion, the *Joker* actor needn't be applauded for speaking on behalf of those who are silenced in the industry, it was merely the right thing to do. His speech was good, and morally sufficient, however why is it that Phoenix had to articulate these issues? Why is it his voice that pierces through the crowds whilst others remain hushed? Shouldn't we all be good and moral? Shouldn't we all be striving for equality?

It is then, however, that we come to many obvious realisations: Trump is president, America was founded upon inequality and Western society is still riddled with injustice.

Collectively the film industry has a duty to do better. However, more importantly, we individuals need to raise our expectations and crucify complacency. The 'film star' is not a fixed, dark-haired, white woman, neither is the 'director' an alabaster male. Just as film is fluid and flexible, so are the people who create them, act in them and make them.

DELPHIE BOND



BOKU NO BACKLASH

Beloved manga and anime *Boku No Hero Academia* falls under the threat of the axe after writer Horikoshi delves too far into the more war-torn aspects of Japan's history.

Boku No Hero Academia (My Hero Academia) has undoubtedly been one of the most popular anime and manga franchises to hit the market in recent years. It follows the endeavours of young Midoriya Izuku amongst his society filled with 'quirks' – the term applied to those born with superpowers and therein provided with the opportunity to become superheroes. As Midoriya was born 'quirkless,' it is his encounter and display of bravery in front of the No. 1 Hero, All Might, that causes him to be gifted with his idol's own quirk. He is then allowed the opportunity to follow in his footsteps alongside his talented and formidable classmates, tackling fearsome obstacles in pursuing his ominous fate to step into the role of the most successful hero. There are numerous reasons that the series is so popular, from the unique and refreshing perspectives that *Boku No Hero Academia* offers on heroism and morality, the complexities of the characters that come under the banner of 'villainy,' gender dynamics and representation and even the details of the glorious, engrossing animation and brilliant musicality.

In recent developments, the series has faced considerable criticism in regard to the recent machinations of writer Horikoshi Kohei. The most recent arc of the series has seen the police and hero forces track down the 'Doctor' whom assists in the grotesque and fearsome experiments behind the ambitions of main villain, All for One. What has fans up in outrage is the choice of name applied to the villain – 'Shiga Maruta' being translatable in Japanese as a reference to the victims of human experiments during both the Sino-Japanese wars and World War II. Source *dexerto* notes that the name specifically refers to a Japanese covert-ops; a historical figure whom experimented on his subjects personally, the ethnicities of his choice being Chinese and Korean. *Comicbook.com* has noted that this piece of history is so sensitive that it is often dismissed from school curriculums, the barbarity of the crime and political impact it may have being an understandable reason for why this detail has heard such formidable backlash. Horikoshi has publicly apologised for his supposed lapse in judgement and there are reports of a chance of the name being

changed, otherwise there is a very genuine concern that such a popular story may be axed on account of this public outrage. This detail has arisen amongst other unfortunately sensitive details that fans have spotted in the ballistics behind the series, for whilst protagonist Midoriya's birthday coincides with the date of the establishment of the Japanese Communist party, additional character favourite Katsuki Bakugou's birthday falls on the same date as Adolf Hitler's. As he is renowned for being particularly aggressive and flamboyant - his quirk being that he can produce firepower at his fingertips from a bead of sweat - it is easy to see how such characterisation might seem tone-deaf and cause fans to be upset.

The above concerning the 'Doctor' has caused such a fervent offense that it arouses curiosity; reports of human experimentation within the Japan indeed being a clouded aspect of global history. It is possible that the public are keen to keep this aspect of Japanese history out of the spotlight, but then this raises questions about the ethics surrounding reflection and accountability. It draws on a tale as old as time: whether art should have the authority to prod and pry into the diabolisms of humankind. This is not the first manga/ anime to be hit with outrage, as fellow blockbuster *Shingeki no Kyoujin* (*Attack on Titan*) has been renounced by many for having underpinnings of facism. It even relates to *Game of Thrones'* outcome, as many were incensed by the way the writers muddled their depictions of gender in tandem with notions of justice and tyranny.

However, in reference to *Kyoujin* in particular, there is a strong argument in favour of how it's own writer, Hajime Isayama, has chosen to handle the situation. As Dave Trumbore discusses in *Collider*, the inclusion of the discussion of facism and anti-semitism is not an encouragement of such sentiments, but rather the allegory of the barbaric Titans turning out to be the protagonist's own people is meant to elicit sympathy. We are not meant to see the Eldians as the vermin - rather that label should be applied to their tormentors, Isayama then using allegory to make a heated critique on facism, rather than suggesting that he is in favour of it.

Even acclaimed animation legend Hayao Miyazaki was initially embroiled in criticism for deciding to create *The Wind Rises*, as the film was based on the plan designer Horikoshi Jiro, whose Mitsubishi A6M Zero's were responsible for the Pearl Harbour bombings. Whilst Miyazaki does indeed create an empathetic portrayal of Horikoshi, he is far from promoting war and violence. On the contrary, the effect of the beauty of his art accentuates the tragedy as an undeniable stain in global and national history; a loss of lives on both sides that has caused longstanding melancholy.

We can then say that there is a possibility that *Boku No Hero Academia* is doing the same thing. Indeed, it is arguably brave that Horikoshi has tried to use an intricate part of Japanese history to accentuate his ideas of immorality and use realism to resonate with his readership. Even Bakugou's birthday is an arguably ingenious move, as his arc is mainly concerned with adapting to more conventional ideas of heroism - this additional odd to be stacked against him stoking further support towards his maturity and redemption.

Perhaps there are some allegories and references that are felt to be too grave for manga, and so this invites questions as to what are the limits to which writers are allowed to tap into history in order to become inspired. We are used to literature and film being challenging and provocative, so this situation begs the question as to why manga is scandalised for trying to do the same thing. Violence is not highlighted in order to be incited, but acts like a microcosm of a virus to be injected inside us, so that the antibodies of our conscience will be roused to prevent repeated mistakes in the future before us. It would actually be a shame if Horikoshi was forced into redacting his narrative choices as his provocations may be intended as constructive. We can only hope the beloved manga then does not fall prey to fears of misinformation and bias, as it is not always shameful to tackle even the most gruesome aspects of the past that lies behind us.

TANIKA LANE

Images: Reddit, Pinterest, KnowYourMeme, My Hero Academia Wiki, Kissmanga



BIRDS OF PREY PLUNDERS: A BOX OFFICE BLUNDER?



Credit: Warner Bros.

***Birds of Prey* has bombed at the box office with a \$33 mil. opening weekend and a disappointing Valentine's. Matthew Moorey expresses his disappointment in the lack of appreciation for women's representation.**

Despite receiving good critical and audience responses, *Birds of Prey (And the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)* has suffered at the box office over the course of its opening weekend. The film took home around \$80-90 million, falling just shy of its \$97.1 million production budget (which is made worse considering you traditionally double the budget for marketing costs). Of course, it's only had one weekend out in cinemas and Warner Brothers are eager to turn this around; they've changed the commercial name of the film to *Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey* in an attempt to draw in more cinema goers. It's a real disappointment that the film isn't having much success at the box office given that the film certainly deserves more acclaim. But the potential reasons behind this are what is even more saddening. The women haters strike again.

Before we get into this, it has to be acknowledged that an R-rating (15 for us in the UK) for the film can rule out a significant portion of cinema goers, hence reducing any potential box office gross. However, this doesn't mean that the film is guaranteed to struggle. *Joker* became the first R-rated film to bring in over \$1 billion, and elsewhere films like *Deadpool* have also had financial success. So while this may have played a role in *Birds of Prey* having

less success at the box office, it's certainly not the only contributing factor.

The same old rubbish and regurgitated twaddle that you'll find around any female-lead film continues to surface. The IMDb user reviews for the film are littered with comments about the films supposed 'agenda', and complaints about how 'woke' it is. Firstly, I don't think they've even seen the same film I have. While yes, the main group of protagonist are female and the villains are men, I struggle to see how this translates to the film having an agenda. The comments that suggest otherwise present a hypocritical logic. A great deal of films feature male goons and minions, but I don't see complaints about male villains on films like *John Wick*, *Die Hard* or *First Blood*. It's not even like *Black Mask* (who by the way is excellently played by Ewan McGregor) and Victor Zsasz were originally sympathetic villains in the comics and transformed into terrible people for this film. They've always been monstrous, murderous psychopaths.

So is it solely down to having female leads? Surely this can't be the case since even the people who leave these complaints would consider *Alien* protagonist

Ellen Ripley a legend of the action genre. I just can't understand why the ideas of a 'feminist agenda' and a 'woke' culture are so frequent. For goodness sake, as a comic book property *Birds of Prey* is nearly 25 years old. Yet, it's happening to almost every high profile film released now. One comment I encountered had the audacity to ask why Hollywood "isn't getting the message" that they don't want female protagonists. My answer to that is that they are getting the message, it's just not your message. Yet mindless, hypocritical comments like this are slowing progress down.

Similar to the unjustified negativity that faced *Terminator: Dark Fate*, women-haters objected simply to the presence of women in leading roles. And at the end of the day, if they just can't handle the idea that women can have prominent roles just as often as men, then they should stay at home. I sincerely hope that the hatred I've seen directed at this film is simply a vocal minority and that the box office figures aren't because of it. *Birds of Prey* has thankfully received good critical responses and good audience responses from rational human beings, and deserves better treatment.

MATTHEW MOOREY

BIG HAIR DON'T CARE: NATURAL HAIR VS. EDUCATION

The issue of school policies on natural hair have come to the forefront of pop-culture and feminist attention recently, largely in the wake of Ruby Williams, a school student being repeatedly sent home from her school in east London after being told her hair was “too big”. Ruby has commented on the case in an interview with the BBC, arguing “Am I really being sent home because my hair is growing out my head the way it is?”. The school refused to accept that they had discriminated against Ruby, however after Williams’ family took legal action, she was offered compensation of £8500.

Racial discrimination against natural hair is an issue that goes beyond the issue of school uniform policy, uncovering a deeper issue in education politics and the relationship with black culture. The idea that black hairstyles such as cornrows, braids and afros are ‘impractical’, ‘untidy’ or ‘inappropriate’ is based on a long history of discrimination against ethnic minorities, the example of Ruby Williams being sent home from school being one of many examples that have come to the forefront of media and social attention in recent years.

Actress Thandie Newton spoke out on Twitter about her experience with racial discrimination relating to her hair.

She described how her primary school prevented her from having her photo taken on School Picture Day due to the fact she had braids. The idea that having a black hairstyle gives schools a mandate to punish children is social injustice. By implementing rules against black hair in schools it is perpetuating the idea further into social belief that Black students and people of colour are at a disadvantage due to their hair and as a result their nationality, race and heritage.

Black hair is rich in representing not only black culture but also black history. The afro hair style originated in the 1960s during the civil rights movement, as a believed symbol of rebellion, pride and empowerment. Pascale, a black student, commented in an interview describing how “White children in class would come back from holidays all the time with braids they’d got done on the beach, and no one ever said anything about it”. The fact that white pupils are able to wear hairstyles that symbolise black culture, without suffering the repercussions, speaks volumes on the targets of these regulations put in place in schools.

Hairstyle regulations appear to have formed a pattern of policing that is directed towards Black hairstyles, hence why the issue has been resolved through the means of

“Black hair is rich in representing not only Black culture but also Black history”

legislation in parts of America such as California. Given these new waves in policies regarding action outlawing discrimination against natural hair, how long is it going to take for the UK to follow on this? How many more Black pupils need to be punished in school? How many more Black employees need to be discriminated against in the workplace?

Intolerance against natural hair symbolises an intolerance in society against Black culture and Black people. When celebrities such as Kim Kardashian are pictured wearing the same braids that Black children are being told look ‘inappropriate’ in school there is absolutely no question that the issues presented reveal a lasting form of racism.

NISHA CHANDAR-NAIR

UNIVERSITY CONFESSIONS ON A DOWNWARDS SPIRAL

It is the reason you still have Facebook, it is the ultimate form of procrastination; LeedsFess has become a staple of the Leeds university life.

Since university confession pages took off, LeedsFess has gained itself a reputation for scandalous stories and anonymous declarations of love. Students enjoy nothing more than gossip. Viral Leedsfess’ have become notorious talking points - from the failed romance of poo boy and poo girl, to discovering what people in Eddy B really think about you. On a positive note, Leedsfess has become a space people feel comfortable expressing their mental health worries and to anonymously reach out for advice.

Lately, however, there are fears that LeedsFess is losing its power. Since last year’s appeal for new admin, the once celebrated confessions page seems to have lost its flare. Extensive hours are left between posts, and there are complaints that the quality of submissions actually being posted has declined. Are the students of Leeds losing interest?

The quick expansion to Memerva and Leed-ons was controversial and it seems the admins may have taken on too much too fast. Being one of the mythical LeedsFess admins was once something to brag about in a club, now the same individuals may encounter angry followers questioning why their last five submissions were not posted.

Despite the controversy, LeedsFess is never going to die out. Although the ‘religious organisation’ has arguably already achieved its peak, it continues to remain influential. We may not be as obsessed with the page as last year, but this will not stop us tagging our friends in any post with their generic initials or writing a strongly worded response to a contentious tier ranking. Even if my last ten, top quality submissions were (unjustly) rejected, LeedsFess will no doubt remain iconic. Maybe checking the page weekly, rather than routinely daily, will not be a bad thing.

LEAH DUNDERDALE-SMITH



LeedsFess

2 hrs · 🌐


⋮

#21326

Today I found out that I'm not normal for spaffing all over myself instead of finishing into some tissues, my housemates think I'm disgusting but I thought it was the normal :(

Like for splonking all over yourself

Angry react for respecting yourself



LeedsFess


31 mins · 🌐

⋮

#21463

Now whilst i dont think newfess is better, theyve posted like 250 confessions in a day... we need to keep up

👍 2



LeedsFess

10 hrs · 🌐

⋮

#21427

not a confession, but back in the good old days (a year ago) all of my leedsfess where posted, im not thinking its because you have more submissions. my theory is you have a new admin, and your sense of humour is shocking. I AM FUNNY. my mum told me

👍 🤔 58

1 comment

20

BLOGS & LIFESTYLE



Credit: Poppy Goldsmith/ PoppyMarinaArt

THE PROS OF TRAVELLING SOLO

Megan Johnson highlights the different benefits that travelling by yourself can bring to your journey of personal development.

If there's one thing that you should take away from this article, it's that travelling alone is one of the most liberating experiences possible. Everyone should take time out once in a while – ditching friends, partners and family – to voyage into places unknown by themselves.

Travelling solo provides an enormous sense of fulfilment. It's really satisfying to know that you've relied only on your own devices to get to the place that you are at. Perhaps you didn't think you were capable of trekking through sweltering summer cities or navigating forest routes, but in being alone, we have no other choice but to achieve. Really pushing yourself to these limits can consequently help boost your confidence and self-esteem.

Being on your own also pushes you to interact with a multitude of people. This means becoming more immersed in the specific culture of where you're visiting. Discovering the essence of a place comes from the people who live there too. Finding new fellow travellers to be alongside is something

which would rarely happen on a trip where you're already with your tight group. Although it may feel like the scariest thing in the world to approach someone and start up a conversation, the person may be in the same situation as you and so, building that mutual bridge allows you to establish those reciprocated feelings.

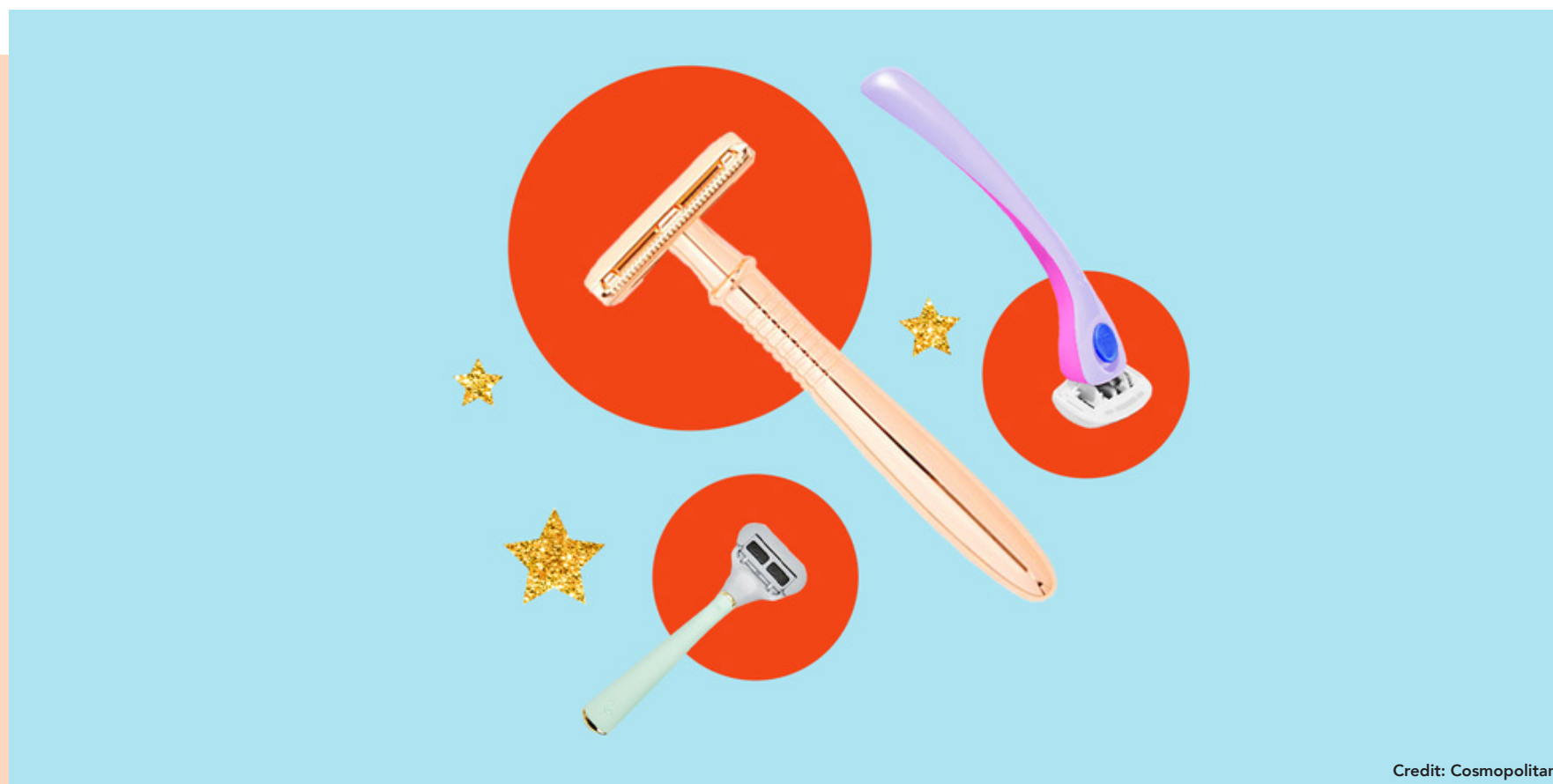
Although it's clear that travelling on your own does come with its risks, especially as a female or a younger more inexperienced individual, if you stay safe and alert, these can be minimised. Getting lost could be an issue, but isn't this supposed to be part of the adventure? At least we have maps, Google and good old-fashioned communication to aid our naïve struggles. It shouldn't feel too lonely being away, but if you can't bare the thought of time apart from loved ones, even a bit of weekend solo travelling can be a soothing experience. Personally, I feel less anxious when I get to spend self-care time alone. It can leave you feeling refreshed, nourished and relaxed.

Also, in travelling solo, you're fully in control of what and when you want to eat, what activities to do and how much time you'll spend on anything. Compromise isn't needed when you're not forced to get an early lunch if your girlfriend is hungry, or sit by the kid's pool with your younger brother. Being on your own allows you to fully make your own choices. If getting up at 5am for a morning run is your thing then there's literally no one holding you back from spending your holiday putting your own needs first. When you're stretched out on a beach, it feels good not to be wondering when the person next to you will be thinking about leaving.

So, next time you're feeling like taking a trip away, make it a solo one. Travel should be about adventure, and true adventure comes from pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. Grab your rucksack, passport and sense of determination. **Travel as an individual.**

MEGAN JOHNSON





Credit: Cosmopolitan

THE HAIRY DEBATE: TO SHAVE OR NOT TO SHAVE?

Lauren Woodley discusses the stigma around body hair on women and urges women to support each other's decision to shave or not shave.

My general belief is that for any gender, it should be your own decision to do whatever you want to your body. Only you are the one in control of your body, and no one should force you into doing anything you do not want to. Despite this belief, in reality women in particular face pressures to shave their body hair.

I, amongst others, wish to seek the reason behind why so many people find it repulsive when a person has made the personal decision not to shave their armpits.

THE HISTORY OF SHAVING ARMPITS

According to an article by Vox, women in the early 20th century did not care about shaving their armpits, and it would not be surprising if a woman had long body hair. The debate of shaving is a very modern issue, most likely developed as a result of the loosening rules around how females dress, and the development of razor technology. By the 1950s, legs and underarms were targeted in ads and many women were encouraged, even expected, to be smooth, silky and stripped.

Thankfully, as we entered the 21st century, it became more common for women to not feel like they have

to shave, and many women now embrace the 'au natural' look. It is more common to see celebrities with unshaven arms, and many women feel more comfortable talking about it.

However, due to the controversial history of the matter, there is still, and probably always will be, disagreements surrounding the debate.

SO SHOULD YOU SHAVE?

No matter how much you may have convinced yourself, when you see an image of a woman with long underarm hair you will subconsciously notice this and form an opinion on it. Yet, if it was in the case of our male counterparts, the reaction is very minimal.

I am guilty of doing this myself. A friend of mine recently decided to grow out her underarm hair and I naively pointed this out to her. Whilst I am completely supportive of her decision, I still brought attention to it. Why? Because, I suppose I wasn't expecting it. Because it is still not the norm.

It is seen as powerful and inspirational when a woman chooses to grow out her underarm hair. I think that a statement is made and it takes a lot of

confidence and bravery. From experience, people may pass comment. I personally choose not to shave my leg hair, and I have faced so much judgement from this decision in the past. Am I not womanly enough? Does body hair really change a person's appearance that much?

The solution is just not to say anything at all. Some people may think it is funny to pass comment, but it can really make someone feel insecure and pressured into shaving their body hair.

Of course, some women do prefer to be shaved and smooth. It is a luxury that can make you feel more confident, with many perhaps not finding their own body hair attractive. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this either.

Shaving your body hair will always be your own personal choice. No matter what anyone says, it doesn't make you any different whether you have body hair or not, as long as you are shaving your body hair for YOU and YOU only. All women should support each other in the fight against the stigma of armpit hair.

LAUREN WOODLEY

– held tight. *Hold tight.*
A lift of bones and breath.

Last night I heard of his passing and I wondered could there really be black walls of water
black walls of water of weighted nothingness clung bore broke,
breaking,
painting a river's exoskeleton, a blue amulet's armour

arm her; this woman is breaking slowly fracturing,
fissures mapping themselves as the painter maps moments
he held bound tightly
knotted;
her stomach is a knot when she thinks of lost lovers
the passing of people place time
keeps unravelling,
cold to the touch,
your hands, in the early hours,

when he takes your arms and caresses
a whispering curling conversation
that strips him her bare,
fragments freeing themselves from containment;
she's shaking a little

shaking shifting,
she thinks what it is to age –
skies losing light
a haze as alphabets confer
lettering she can't decipher,
bearing crosses
bearing the weight of loving someone who may not love back
I you we, two boys together clinging;

Hockney takes me through these gallery paths
his hand reassuring as it reaches
to be held;
when he dances I think of stray drips stray fingers toes tips
when David when he when she unravels
I become a whispering conversation,
cold touched exoskeleton
armour fracturing beams kaleidoscopic

when he dances,
painter and strokes recede, only a burst of colour remaining
and Burroughs tells me how to catch a rhythm catch a fish,
each scale bejewelled crimson to indigo
night
- the warmth of dark skies holding cloaked arms round our bodies like black walls of
water,
until the sun the passing the conversation shakes a little,
as light returns and visions are bared, shook free;
shook shaking
shingle, the river runs on

and on and on and
oh, there's a whispering,

it's this aching thought,
the impress of Love of ache of thought
in my bedclothes,
this aching thought
as you handle yourself so gently as night fades,
grey gossamer to black, my inked lettering and your wild black hair.



Boris Johnson and Press Censorship: A Trumpian Shift?

Rayan Striebel

A group of journalists recently walked out of a briefing at Downing Street. The gesture was in solidarity for colleagues who were allegedly uninvited and told to leave. While Downing Street denies this, a minister told MPs that “we reserve the right to brief journalists which we choose whenever we wish to, and that is not something abnormal.”

The decision has been criticised by journalists and MPs who accuse Downing Street of adopting Trumpian attitudes and damaging democracy. Some say this constitutes press censorship, suggesting that Boris Johnson is following Donald Trump’s example.

The incident in question took place at a briefing on the government’s Brexit policy. Journalists who were invited brought colleagues from other media outlets such as the Mirror, the i, HuffPost, PoliticsHome, the Independent and others. The journalists were separated upon arrival, and those not on the invite list were asked to leave. In a show of solidarity, the remaining journalists left with their colleagues.

Press relations have always been a defining feature of any government. At times these relations are openly friendly or hostile. Regardless of the quality of these relationships, a key tenet of democracy has always been the freedom of the press. The government’s standpoint that they can decide which outlets receive information is a dangerous violation of our democracy.

If normalised, this behaviour could lead British democracy down a slippery slope as our government potentially begins to immerse itself in Trumpian

practices of the ‘post-truth’ era. Different outlets may be privy to different information based on their political standings or the demographic that corresponds with their readership. This ability to pick and choose would be invaluable in an election, but highly immoral and undemocratic.

In addition, this incident raises concerns over the government’s current standing. Considering the government’s huge majority, one would imagine that such desperate tactics to control the agenda would be beneath them.

In the context of Brexit, the pomp and confidence characterising Boris’ language is defeated by this

A key tenet of democracy has always been the freedom of the press. The government’s standpoint that they can decide which outlets receive information is a dangerous violation of our democracy

thinly veiled censorship. Such actions would make any government appear weak.

On the other hand, this could be the government flexing its power to do as it pleases. This behaviour could be seen as a poor attempt to appear strong in anticipation of Brexit and trade negotiations.

This is especially worrying for the country if the government is acting in such a defensive way, with months of Brexit negotiations ahead of the country, as

well as the ambitious claims that the Tory manifesto put forward.

Strong parallels can be drawn between this incident and Trump’s interactions with the media. Trump’s brazen dismissals of questions from critical outlets, principally CNN, along with his belittling of journalists are tactics which could be easily adopted by a Prime Minister keen to grow closer to the USA. The refusal to include unfriendly media outlets in the democratic process would lead to the dominance of a pro-Boris rhetoric. This is similar to how Trump has maintained a firm grip on his supporters via Fox News and other Republican-friendly outlets. This interferes with the political discourse and distracts from pressing issues as reports dwell on those who were not at briefings rather than what was said at them.

Behaviour such as this is never becoming of any Prime Minister, President, or any other Head of State. The press should always be allowed to operate freely in a democracy. Government briefings should be available to all media outlets. Restricting the audiences of these briefings denies the public a diversity of interpretations, views and ideas that fuel the discourse of our democracy. This situation should lead to more scrutiny of the government’s activities, with the aim of ensuring that this behaviour is not repeated.

Ireland Election: A Case for Unification?

James Welham

Fianna Fáil emerged as the overall winner of Ireland’s General Election. Yet, this contest will be remembered through the remarkable rise of Sinn Féin; the left-wing, pro-Irish Unification party, who became the second largest party in The Dáil while also winning the popular vote.

If you had asked a political commentator which leader would benefit electorally from Britain’s agreed withdrawal deal from the EU, few would have predicted that Boris Johnson would win a stonking parliamentary majority while Leo Varadkar’s Fine Gael would slump to become Ireland’s third largest party.

Varadkar was commended internationally for his firm yet agile stance in negotiating against a perilous Brexit that could have curtailed Ireland’s stability. This success contributed to his downfall: voters approached the ballot box with the opinion that Brexit posed no immediate threat to prosperity, and thus focused on domestic issues. Indeed, RTE’s exit poll stated that only 1% of the Irish Electorate perceived Brexit to be an important issue.

Voters instead expressed their frustration against the centrist duopoly that has had a stranglehold on the Irish government since 1981. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were viewed as complicit partners in obfuscating opportunity for under-65 year olds, many of whom

have been unable to set foot on the housing ladder due to rising prices, and have instead been condemned to a life of low-regulation renting.

The election demonstrated an economic fallacy: low unemployment and a burgeoning GDP does not necessarily equate to a high quality of life for workers. The election result mirrored a growing trend in Western democracies, where discontented voters have given a bloody-nose to the status quo and have favoured more radical politics.

However, it would be an oversimplification to declare that this result provides a strong mandate for Sinn Féin to form a government. While it may seem incredulous on these shores, Ireland (like many other European nations) uses a PR-STV model for voting which encourages coalitions and compromise. Moreover, due to Sinn Féin’s previous capitulation in local elections, the party only fielded 42 candidates, which meant that Mary Lou McDonald’s chances of becoming Taoiseach were low from the outset. The most likely outcome is that either Sinn Féin becomes a junior-governing partner or that another General Election is called in the Spring to recalibrate Ireland’s parliamentary arithmetic.

Despite neither being a ‘unification’ nor a ‘Brexit’ General Election, the most profound implication from the result is that while it may be moving at a glacial pace, Ireland and Northern Ireland look set to unify in our lifetimes. The long-term statement of intent for

Sinn Féin is clear; McDonald has promised to prepare for a border poll if she wins power.

While Johnson has, so far, been successful in waving away the Scottish case for independence, his options regarding Northern Ireland seem limited. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement enshrines that a border poll must be called when demographics favour unification. Young people across the island of Ireland already favour this, and incrementally this could possibly become the opinion of the majority.

The case for unification will be augmented by Brexit, as the terms of the UK’s withdrawal from the

Ireland and Northern Ireland look set to unify in our lifetimes

EU dictated that Northern Ireland must be in a quasi-customs union with the Republic, while also requiring checks on imports and exports travelling between Northern Ireland and Britain. Northern Ireland will become culturally and economically more entwined with the Republic, while simultaneously growing ever more distant from the Union. If the 2020 General Election marks Sinn Féin’s appearance as a governing party in the Republic’s politics, the case for unification will eventually become deafening.

HS2: Yet Another Vanity Project that Ignores the North

Laura Kerr

Boris Johnson's green light for the first stage of HS2 (High Speed 2) railway, connecting London to Birmingham, has been a long time in the coming and not without its controversies. Both within parliament and in the UK more generally, the expensive, disruptive, 'grand project' is a source of serious contention. Although only the first stage is being officially discussed, the railway eventually looks to connect London with Birmingham, and further North to Leeds and Manchester.

Conservative West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street, is an active supporting voice for the project, arguing that it will drive investment in the region, creating job opportunities in the cities of the Midlands and the North.

However, you only need to visit stophs2.org to understand the extent of the opposition to this project. 'No business case, no environmental case and no money to pay for it' are the protestors overarching claims.

They are not the only ones with these criticisms either, members of Boris Johnson's own back bench are also vocal opponents of the scheme, calling it a vanity project, in which the economics do not add up. Johnson has been accused of pushing big projects to create the illusion of improvement and change after the stalemate of Brexit. However, the enormous budget is starting to get attention, could the money be better spent elsewhere?

The project was initially allocated a budget of £56 billion when it was proposed in 2015, but new estimates indicate it could now cost up to £106 billion.

Sir John Peace, chairman of Midland Connects,

supports investment in Midlands transport but has expressed concerns that HS2 must maximise and integrate with regional transport strategies, improving the journey of commuters who use already existing networks.

This concern is also reflected in Northern MPs, who believe that the massive budget being given to HS2, would be better spent on Northern trains, public transport and intercity connections.

While HS2 looks to more thoroughly connect the North with the Midlands, and the South, it doesn't tackle one of the most outstanding issues in British railway: Northern commuter services. Around the cities of Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham, people rely on regional train services every day to get them into the city. The government is constantly promoting the use of public transport to cut down on car use in the cities, but can commuters be blamed when the train services that get them into work are consistently delayed, cancelled and overcrowded?

Do we really need another project that benefits the richer, London end of the line more than anywhere else?

Whilst Boris Johnson may have expected mass support for HS2 in the North and Midlands, this has not quite been the reality.

With the exception of London, the UK public is against the HS2 by 39% to 34% according to a recent YouGov Poll. This reflects the ineffectiveness of the railway in combatting the everyday issues of

commuters and passengers. While it is less sexy to invest in commuter trains and regional networks, than to create a new £100 billion high-speed railway, my prediction is that it would have been a lot more popular.

There has been an effort to turn decision making around transport investment to local councils in the North: both Leeds and Manchester council have been given the power to decide their own railway priorities for themselves.

This will undoubtedly lead to a focus on commuting and urban transit. However, the amount of money allowed for these projects will be minuscule compared to the money pumped into the London-Birmingham HS2.

As a student at Leeds, from the South, the problem seems obvious. Travelling back from university, as long as you're going to London, you get the luxury of the new LNER Azumers. They're fast, comfortable and (ignoring the lack of luggage space at the end-of-term), they're nice trains.

The contrast only becomes obvious if you instead travel to Sheffield, Manchester or York, where trains from Leeds are old, tightly packed and frankly, and, if you're really unlucky, feel like a biscuit tin on wheels. Travelling from Leeds to Burley Park the one day a week that I work is also unpleasant, it is hot, crowded cancelled more often than not.

The inequality between Northern and Southern transport is undeniable, and the disregard of Northern issues has been further highlighted by the HS2 project. Do we really need another 'London-magnetising' project that benefits the richer, London end of the line much more than anywhere else?

It's Time to Abolish the Tampon Tax

Natasha Peters

Men's razors, children's nappies, Jaffa cakes, exotic meats, edible cake decorations and nuts with their shells. What do all of these items have in common? When you buy one of these you will not be taxed because they are considered a necessary item for everyday life. 50% of the population are women, the majority of women, once a month, experience menstruation and need to use products such as tampons and sanitary towels to go about day to day life.

However, tampons are still taxed. More than 4.5 billion boxes of tampons were bought last year this is an incredible amount of money spent on something that women need, not want. In addition, the average woman in the UK uses 12,000 tampons a year- each tampon costs about £0.16 which seems little, however when you consider the amount women have to buy, the price is hefty. Let alone buying sanitary towels, pain killers and other necessities for one week every month. The average tax is 20% of the product, tampons are only charged 5% but even this aids period poverty.

One might ask, why, in this day and age, have they not scrapped this ridiculous tax? The reason for this was when the UK joined the EU we became subject

to certain laws including tax laws. While the threat of breaching international law may be high, it could be argued that listening to the needs of 50% of your population is greater. Indeed, if women cannot afford sanitary products then they might miss 12 weeks a year of work, which is in fact an economic loss to the government.

One might ask, why, in this day and age have they not scrapped this ridiculous tax?

Additionally, Germany have eradicated the tax - the first member of the EU to do this. The first ever country to eliminate the ridiculous tax was Kenya, other countries such as Australia, Canada, India and several US states followed. Whatever your opinion might be on Brexit, at least one benefit is that the UK does not have to be sovereign to ridiculous laws such as this. We should leave this law behind in 2020! Adding to the horror, it is anti-abortion groups that are beneficiaries to the tampon tax, perhaps suggesting there are several political reasons behind the tax.

One step forward that was made, was called the Red Box project which resulted in all UK schools having to supply girls with sanitary items. This may not seem like a big deal to some girls, but to the 1 in 10 girls who cannot afford to buy menstrual products and the 137,000 kids in the UK who have missed school because of period poverty, this is a huge deal. Before this may girls who use socks, newspaper and 20% of girls have used toilet roll. The fact is, to many women in the UK the tampon tax is annoying, disrespectful and frankly misogynistic but it does not stop them from buying sanitary items. For sexist reasons alone this law should be abolished.

However, arguably more importantly, it should be stopped for the women and girls who face period poverty every month; who cannot go to school, get their qualifications and get a good job. The tampon tax is more than something that seems ridiculous, it can be the difference between being lifted out of poverty or not.

It is not just, to subject girls to stay at home because of something that happens to us involuntarily. Having a period is natural.

Abolishing this law is not a question, it is not a debate, it should just be done.

Has Switzerland Finally Said Gay Rights?

Charlotte Smith

Switzerland is a leading country in Central Europe and is generally considered to be one of the freest and most desirable countries in the area to live in. However, in comparison to a lot of Northern and Western European countries it is considerably antiquated in its beliefs. Last week, an anti-discrimination law based on sexual identity and orientation finally won its passing by a vote of 63.1% to 36.9%, despite public opinion that a majority result was incredibly unlikely. The surprisingly positive outcome shocked a lot of people and marked an incredible shift in the support for LGBTQ+ people in Europe as a whole over the space of just over a year.

The result demonstrates an urgency for change and the amount of people willing to push for it.

However, despite the support for the passing, it did not come without significant opposition. Many (largely right-wing supporters) publicly argued that the passing of the bill was a restriction on the freedom of speech within a country which has always, until now, been a free country. The outrage was only worsened when popular company Coca Cola launched their campaign in support of the passing with slogans and images of their bottles branding rainbow flags

being used in marketing. A press release even claimed that they 'don't like Coca Cola anymore'. However, there is an irony in those claiming to advocate against the public punishment of homophobic behaviours in favour of free speech, criticising a company for their display of free speech which favoured the movement. It seems some of the opponents to the law are only in favour of a free speech which speaks against homosexuality and not that which speaks in favour of it.

The surprisingly positive outcome shocked a lot of people and marked an incredible shift

The intensity of the opposition and their confidence in their public movement demonstrates the ingrained homophobia within Switzerland which remains regardless of the bill, with people on the LGBTQ+ spectrum 5x more likely to commit suicide than those who identify as heterosexual, demonstrating a lack of comfort and security within Swiss society.

Nevertheless, the passing of the law is undeniably a step in the right direction for Switzerland, as it shows a majority support for the minority group and gives those within the LGBTQ+ community a figure on which they can latch onto when they feel isolated within society. The hope is that the new law will allow LGBTQ+ people to feel comfortable in society

and to press for further laws to be passed in regard to marriage and adoption rights for the community.

Additionally, it gives a newfound life to the rest of central Europe which is significantly trailing in their support for LGBTQ+ people. Switzerland isn't a members of the EU, but among EU member states only 14/27 allow same-sex marriage. Recognition is particularly bad in southern, eastern and central Europe.

Therefore, having the majority support for the community in a leading country within central Europe should act as an incentive and example to those around it to follow in their stead. The result demonstrates an urgency for change and the amount of people willing to push for it, making it harder for other European countries to persist with an outdated societal system.

Despite the success in Switzerland, it is relatively minor in comparison to elsewhere (for instance the 80% majority which it passed with in France) and therefore cannot be forgotten the lack of security and safety which the LGBTQ+ community has within their society.

Therefore, the passing of the new law (which makes public homophobia illegal) is merely an indication that a change of opinion within central Europe has begun, but by no means the end of the struggle of members of the community in Switzerland and surrounding communities.





Confirmation Bias: Elections, Veganism and Climate Change Denial

Chloe Pryce
Business Editor

Three in four people think society in their country is divided. According to the BBC Global Survey 'A World Divided', the majority think their country is now more divided than it was 10 years ago, particularly in Europe and particularly with regards to political views, income inequality, immigration and religion.

But there are many things which divide our society, from veganism and the environmental effects of plant-based milk production, all the way to whether we hear Yanny or Laurel. Society just can't seem to agree. It's possible that we can partly explain the rising polarisation which is permeating the world through confirmation bias.

What is confirmation bias? Confirmation bias is the tendency to interpret new information as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories and the tendency to 'ignore' data which does not conform to one's beliefs. The bias has been studied extensively in academic literature, with a 1979 paper by Stanford University scholars finding that the beliefs we hold affect how we process and assimilate new information.

The study explored perceptions around capital punishment and its ability to deter crime. Participants rated studies which conformed with their original beliefs as more methodologically rigorous whilst rating studies which took the opposite stance as inferior. The study found that having read both articles, subjects felt even more strongly about their

original beliefs than before.

Our inherent bias to interpret new information based on opinions we already have may help to explain increasing divisions in society.

Access to the news and to social media platforms is now at our finger tips. Political scandal? Your BBC app will inform you in seconds. A scroll through Twitter during the election? Several million peoples' opinions there for you to read. With access to such a wide range of data, one might expect that society would become less divided and achieve more balanced opinions.

However, it might be that we only interpret new evidence as confirmation of our own existing beliefs as opposed to absorbing everything we read as equally valuable. For example, give a Labour supporter an article about a Conservative party policy which increases equality, will they read it at face value and update their beliefs accordingly?

According to confirmation bias, they will read it and absorb little from it, deeming it inaccurate. And the bias doesn't stop there.

In 1996, MIT researchers warned that, "Individuals empowered to screen out material that does not conform to their existing preferences may form virtual cliques, insulate themselves from opposing points of view, and reinforce their biases".

It can extend to our social circles and our social media feeds, further fuelling the polarisation. According to David Robert Grimes, as we consume news through social media, we trigger algorithms that then shape our feeds for the future. A simple follow of a Labour

party leader could see your feed transformed into a haven of pro-Labour news, leading to a lack of accuracy and balance. This phenomenon is even more concerning considering the existence of fake news. For example, social media has allowed the climate change denial discourse to thrive and grow. Not only do our social medias act to confirm our current beliefs rather than challenge us, we also have tendencies to choose friends whose beliefs match our own.

Can we overcome confirmation bias? Yes and no. Whilst there will always be some inherent bias, there are things we can do to reduce our bias. According to the Cognitive Bias Podcast, one way we can overcome this is by continually questioning our beliefs and challenging ourselves to try to understand the opposite stance.

For example, imagine I am a passionate supporter of a politician. It is important to step back and write down all the reasons why I should not support this politician. If, after this exercise, I still feel passionately supportive of the party, that's perfectly acceptable. In no way am I suggesting you shouldn't have an opinion. Follow leaders who may challenge your views and not simply those who will strengthen them.

Converse with people who support the opposing political party and take what they say at face value rather than deeming the information inaccurate. Be sure to challenge your opinions from time to time and don't stay within the cosy remit of your own social media bubble.

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New Chancellor Ahead of First Boris Budget: Who is Rishi Sunak?

The Gryphon takes a look at the UK's new Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, after Sajid Javid resigned during the Prime Minister's cabinet reshuffle. With a budget in just a few weeks' time,

Will Southall
Business Editor

In the run up to the General Election just a few months ago, Rishi Sunak stood in for Boris Johnson in both the BBC's and ITV's seven-way debates between all of the main political parties.

At the time, Mr Sunak was Chief Secretary to the Treasury, a position he had held for only a few months prior to the debate, having only become an MP in 2015. But Rishi Sunak is seen by many to be a rising star in the Conservative Party, and one that is clearly liked by Boris Johnson.

Having supported Brexit from the start, voted against a second referendum and in support of both Theresa May's and Boris Johnson's deals, he has an attractive record to the Prime Minister, who has been looking to build a cabinet that will have the enthusiasm to "get Brexit done".

"I am living proof that this is a welcoming, meritocratic and tolerant country"

However for someone with relatively little ministerial experience, it is perhaps still surprising that he has landed what is arguably the second-most important job in the government, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

So who is Rishi Sunak? Well, by his own admission he is "living proof that this is a welcoming, meritocratic and tolerant country", although not everyone might agree with this statement.

Mr Sunak studied PPE at Oxford, perhaps the most exclusive and yet typical route for aspiring British political leaders.

Before Oxford, he studied at the highly exclusive Winchester College Independent School, where yearly fees are £14,000, before going on to Stanford to complete an MBA.

After finishing his studies, he went to work for investment bank Goldman Sachs and other hedge funds, working his way up to the title of Partner at the Children's Investment Fund Management.

Sunak has also been the director of Catamaran Ventures, another investment firm, owned by his father in law, billionaire Indian businessman N. R. Narayana Murthy.

One would therefore be forgiven for thinking that there is little difference between Mr Sunak and the men who have preceded him in recent years.

He is from a privileged and wealthy background, where doors will likely have been opened for him

throughout his career. However, that is not to say that these doors would not just as quickly shut in his face if he did not have what it takes to make it as a top politician.



Image: Gov.uk

Rishi Sunak is a reliable and confident speaker, which bodes well for the budget he is due to announce in just a few weeks' time on 11th March.

This will be his first real test, particularly as the Prime Minister has been under scrutiny lately over the announcement of further major spending plans, such as giving HS2 the green light and proposing the construction of a bridge between Scotland and Northern Island. For the meantime, it seems unlikely that he will face opposition from any Conservative backbenchers.

Indeed, Rishi Sunak seems to be attracting praise from all over the Conservative party, with the former Chancellor Sajid Javid tweeting that "the force is strong with young Sunak".

What to expect from the Budget

Reflecting back on the election campaign, you may remember that Boris Johnson ran on a manifesto that looked to spend a lot more than any Conservative government in recent times.

BBC political show host Andrew Marr put it to Mr Johnson that he was in fact running on a socialist manifesto, with large spending increases in police and healthcare, as well as cuts to National Insurance contributions.

It is now time to see the detail of these policies, in which many have been lacking. This makes the March 2020 budget less dull than usual, as it will be a true indicator of the Government's fiscal intentions for the next 5 years.

It is expected that there may be announcements of major investment in the North, as the Conservatives look to reward those who dropped their Labour loyalty and came out to vote Tory in the last election. Many hope that this investment in the North may be accompanied by redistributive tax changes, reducing the wealth gap between the South East and the rest of the UK.

However Boris Johnson has made it clear that he

no longer supports a wealth tax, otherwise known as the 'mansion tax' that was proposed by former chancellor Sajid Javid and would have been levied on the most expensive properties in the UK, mostly found in the South.

The Conservative Party election manifesto pledged to increase the threshold for paying National Insurance, which would affect around 30 million workers, earning over £12,600 with a saving of £100 per year.

This is likely to be confirmed in the budget, as it is one of the few policies that had been clearly and unambiguously set out in the manifesto.

Other spending plans such as that on social care remain uncertain.

"No one who needs care [should have] to sell their homes to pay for it"

The Queen's Speech in December came with promises of an extra £1bn of funding for councils to spend on social care, in order to ensure that "no one who needs care has to sell their home to pay for it", but it is yet to be seen how this will be costed and whether there may need to be a rise in council tax to make this policy feasible.

At a time where environmental issues have come to the forefront of politics and policy making, many will be hoping that this will be the budget in which the Government announces large scale investments in green technology.

Boris Johnson won the election at a time of heightened environmental activism, yet the Tory party rarely focused on the environment in the same way that some of the other parties did, having famously not turned up the Channel 4's environment debate.

Concerned environmentalists will be hoping that they are not ignored in this budget, as with such a strong majority in parliament and another 5 years of this Conservative government, this budget should be a much better indicator of changes that are to come.



Image: The Telegraph



The Perfect Swarm

Katherine Graves

10 Plagues of Egypt Bingo is a game you just don't want to win. East Africa is yet to tick off rivers of blood, death of firstborns and thunderstorms of hail and fire, but they are unfortunately off the start line with locusts.

Billions of desert locusts are currently storming through East African farmlands on a biblical scale. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Somalia and Ethiopia haven't experienced swarms this size for 25 years, while for Kenya it's been 70 years.

Desert locusts are the world's most dangerous migratory pest. They are herbivorous insects similar to grasshoppers and are a mere 6–8 cm. They are usually solitary but when conditions are right, they find their inner Mick Jagger and breed at a staggering rate, forming swarms. Locusts can consume their own weight in food in a single day. Now this may not sound like much, but when one swarm can consist of a billion (that's 1,000,000,000) locusts, it has devastating consequences.

To highlight just how damaging Desert Locust swarms are, here are some fast facts. A desert locust swarm of one square kilometre contains roughly 40 million locusts and this swarm can consume 80 tonnes of food per day.

That's enough to feed 35,000 people, roughly the population of the University of Leeds, every day. This means that, a medium size swarm, which covers 10 – 100 square km, would equate to 350,000 to 3.5 million people's food being eaten by locusts each day.

But what caused swarms of this size? According to the FAO, it started with cyclones that brought heavy rain in the Empty Quarter of the southern Arabian Peninsula in May and October of 2018. So much rain fell that lakes started to form between sand dunes, encouraging vegetation to grow – and where there's

A desert locust swarm of one square kilometre contains roughly 40 million locusts and this swarm can consume 80 tonnes of food per day

a lot of vegetation, locusts are not far behind. Three generations of breeding went undetected, which meant that no control measures were put in place. In January 2019, the first swarms left the Empty Quarter to Yemen and Saudi Arabia, where they continued to breed and spread further, reaching Somalia and Ethiopia around October 2019.

Since then, the swarms have continued to grow, spread and decimate crops. In February 2020, there

were reports that the desert locusts had reached northeast Uganda and northern Tanzania.

Farmers are at their wit's end as not much can be done at a local level to stop the locusts. The United Nations has said that the only effective way to combat them is by spraying pesticide from aircraft and they have allocated \$10 million to get this done. This seems like a large sum, but could be inconsequential as the UN warned that a further \$60 million may be needed to combat the locusts effectively.

According to the New Scientist, there isn't a clear scientific link between climate change and the cyclones that caused the locust swarms, but the UN has stated that "climate change may have contributed to the outbreak".

I for one am not surprised as the climate crisis has accelerated and intensified many recent natural disasters and the interlinked nature of ecosystems often obscures the impact it is having on all facets of the earth system.

If there is an increase in cyclones, as has been the trend in the past ten years, there will likely be more frequent desert locust outbreaks.

If left unchecked, there will be havoc on the same scale as currently seen in East Africa, if not worse. The combination of cyclones, warm weather and all-you-can-eat food supply really is the recipe for a perfect swarm.

Banishing Blights on Bees

Serena Gagliardi

Scientists from The University of Texas, Austin, recently found genetic alterations in bacteria which live in bees' guts to be successful at killing Varroa Mite, an Asian native mite that kills honey bees, as the study gets published in Science, 31st of January 2020.

Varroa Mite is an invasive parasite that feeds on bee's blood and fat stores and also leads to wing deformation viruses, making bees weak and therefore more susceptible to pathogens. It

is known to be one of the causes of CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder) together with disease, other parasites, poor nutrition, pesticide exposure (especially neonicotinoids), and other stressful hive management practices.

Colonies affected by CCD have a queen, honey, brood and pollen but very low numbers of adult bees. This causes bee colonies to fail with dire consequences for pollination businesses as well as agriculture and food production. As of 2015, bees contributed £651 million to the UK economy. If the number of pollinating bees declines, the country will have to rely on hand pollination services which cost approximately £1.8bn a year.

Scientific researchers found that a symbiotic bacterium that lives in bees' guts, *Snodgrassella Alvi*, can be genetically modified in order to destroy the Varroa mite and its correlated wing virus through RNA interference: an antiviral defence mechanism that helps the body fight certain viruses.

Bees were fed with the engineered bacteria which triggered a response against the deformed wing virus. As the bacteria's genetic sequences matches

those from the Varroa genome critical to the mites' survival, the response to the bacteria from the mites' own immune systems lead to their auto-disruption.

The results found that the bees treated with the strain of bacteria targeting the virus were 36.5% more likely to survive after 10 days, while mites feeding on treated bees were 70% more likely to die.

Robert Paxton, bee ecologist at Martin Luther University-Germany, stated "If the technique works in the field, that could be the end of Varroa and the viruses".

The engineered bacteria is easy to grow, only targets bee pathogens and is unlikely to spread beyond bees as it cannot survive outside their guts.

However, its gene-silencing potential and the possibility of mutations means the use of this method in wild natural environments is prohibited. Hopefully researchers could use this method as a base for further genetics studies as it enables insights in bee genome working, making it possible to develop new approaches to produce more resilient bee colonies.

The UK's First Climate Assembly met – but now what?

Zahin Ali

The UK's first citizens' assembly on climate change have now had two out of their four allotted meetings held to tackle the meaty challenge of deciding how the government should meet the legally binding target of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The assembly will meet for four weekends over the course of two months. The first meeting was purely educational – allowing the 110 ordinary people who comprise the assembly to get up to scratch with the challenges of reducing carbon emissions. The assembly listened to climate experts and had their questions answered, including practical conundrums such as 'which is better for the environment, British beef or an avocado from Peru?' as well as questions that required deeper ethical considerations like 'how can we ensure the cost of changes don't affect poorer people disproportionately?'.

The experts present included representatives from the New Economics Foundation and Natural England. Also in attendance were a panel of representatives from organisations such as the National Farmers' Union and the Confederation of British Industry.

The second meeting got down to the grittier details. The assembly discussed the implications of the government implementing individual carbon

budgets, the development of synthetic fuels and how the fast-fashion industry should be addressed. However, the assembly is already experiencing difficulties in coming to a joint agreement, with one member stating "it's hard because everyone's going to want to keep the same standard of living – not make massive changes. But we'll have to. So it's going to be interesting how we get to that happy medium." Over the course of the four weekends, the assembly will be faced with the enormous challenge of proposing a set of recommendations to the government on how they should reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The key subjects to be considered are transport, agriculture, energy and consumerism.

The members of the assembly were chosen to be reflective of the diversity of the nation. 30,000 households were randomly sent an invitation to apply, of which 1800 responded, keen to be considered. Of these, a computer algorithm chose the final 110 members based on their age, ethnicity, gender and education levels. The commitment to diversity was even extended to the members' stance on climate change, meaning that citizens of the assembly range from climate change deniers, to devotees and every viewpoint in between.

Crucially, the assembly's proposals to the government won't be costed so they can be as far-

fetched as they like, such as taking all petrol and diesel cars off the road by 2040. On top of this, similar citizens' assemblies in other countries like Ireland and France have shown dwindling attendance rates over the course of the discussions. To try to mitigate against this, the members of the assembly are being offered an incentive of £150 per weekend attended, as well as paid-for travel and accommodation fees.

But how much influence can the citizens' assembly actually wield? While it's great that ordinary members of the public are being brought into the conversation about climate change, there is no obligation for the government to act on their recommendations. Six select committees from the previous parliament called for the assembly to be formed but the current government has no compulsion to implement the recommendations. They don't even have to read them. A spokesperson for Extinction Rebellion, whose primary demands include the formation of a citizens' assembly on climate and ecological justice, stated that while it is a significant achievement for ordinary voices to finally be heard, this assembly does not match their demand. As the assembly has not been commissioned by the current government and therefore has no real power, Extinction Rebellion want to see an assembly that has more genuine influence in the future.





Preview of Fury Vs Wilder 2

Fury and Wilder return to the ring this Saturday, for what promises to be a tantalising

Callum Pinches
Boxing

On 1st December 2018, at the Staples Centre L.A, the boxing world enjoyed one of the most electric heavyweight clashes of the century. Tyson Fury's unrivalled resilience came up against arguably the hardest hitter to ever grace the ring, Deontay Wilder.

On Saturday night, they prepare to do it all over again.

Fury's elite boxing brain was pitted against Wilder's raw unbridled power. For 11 rounds it seemed as if technique had won, but this was before the 12th round commenced. Wilder's thunderous right-left put Fury on the canvas, his body seemingly unconscious.

But Fury's recovery was almost legendary, rising on the referee's sixth count. Wilder shocked, Fury revitalised, the round continued, and the match ended controversially as a draw.

The result undeniably sparked life into the heavyweight division, making the illustrious title of unified heavyweight champion of the world a three-horse race between the Fury, Wilder, and multi-belt holder Anthony Joshua.

The division was at dangerous risk of becoming stagnant, just as it had been previously during Wladimir Klitschko's long reign as heavyweight champion for nearly 12 years.

Fortunately, both fighters produced a result which

opened up the playing field and reminded fans of what a truly great heavyweight bout looks like.

Both fighters have been regularly fighting in the ring since that December evening. Wilder has produced two KO victories, against Dominic Breazeale and in his rematch against the renowned Cuban brawler Luis Ortiz.

Fury, who in February 2019 signed an £80 million deal with ESPN, has beaten Tom Schwarz and Otto Wallin, both of whom are young rated heavyweights progressing in their respective careers.

Fury's open struggle with depression and mental health, alongside his 10 stone weight transformation makes him not only a great boxer but also a likeable character. This gifts boxing with an individual who is open about his emotions and feelings, a sight rarely seen in the sport.

Fury is however the challenger. With Wilder holding the WBC title, a man driven to succeed, the 'Bronze Bomber' always puts on vicious displays. He is undoubtedly angling for the much-anticipated clash against top of the pile Anthony Joshua.

The 'Gypsy King' is the fan favourite, and a talented showman. A promoter's dream, Fury is extremely able at selling himself and his fights to punters, which makes him commercially one of the biggest names in the sport. Wilder, whilst certainly less popular, is evidently a unique fighter. His power can be decisive, despite him not being the most technically gifted

boxer. Given one opportunity, he can wreak carnage.

With the MGM Grand at Las Vegas as host, the widely held prediction is that if it goes the distance, Fury's technique and boxing brain will be proclaimed winner. But if Wilder lands just one well aimed hook, it will seriously disrupt any game-plan previously held by Fury, leading to a potential KO.

With both fighter's unbeaten record on the line, the match-up of brawn vs brain, alongside the ever-unpredictable nature of boxing, the stage seems to be set for another classic.



UEFA Ban Threatens to Sheik up Man City's Champions League Dream

Julian Bovil
Football

Manchester City this week were banned from all UEFA competitions and fined £25million for a range of charges levelled at them by European football's top governing body.

UEFA found Manchester City to both be in breach of Financial Fair Play regulation as well as misleading them over payments made to the club.

UEFA's statement read: 'The Adjudicatory Chamber has found that Manchester City committed serious breaches of the UEFA Fair Play Regulations by overstating its sponsorship revenue in its accounts and in the break-even information submitted to Uefa between 2012 and 2016.'

UEFA's Adjudicatory Chamber found that in addition to these charges, the lack of cooperation from Manchester City during the investigation did not help them in the overall outcome of the ruling, and as such UEFA have levelled what most experts perceive to be the most severe punishment a football club can receive.

This most notably concerns the majority owner, Sheik Mansour of the UAE, and Etihad Airways, also of the UAE. The airline sponsors Manchester City's ground, shirts and academy, pumping in a supposed £67.5 million a year.

What UEFA claim to have found, however, is that this money was not coming from the airline, but instead straight out of Mansour's pocket. People may ask why this is such a big issue, perhaps rightly, as he owns the football club.

However, this is where the deceit factor that UEFA have talked of so strongly comes in. While City claim to have irrefutable evidence to suggest otherwise, UEFA claim that City have consistently lied about these particular finances, and that is why the punishment is so severe. City's deceit is what has not sat with the European football's governing body.

It is a watershed moment for football. With some of the most talented and recognisable players in the world, as well as the most recognisable manager in the world, this is an enormous move by UEFA, to ban one of their biggest clubs.

Manchester City fans might accuse the European governing body of cutting off their nose to spite their face, as it were, but their findings seemingly have serious grounding.

Der Spiegel, the investigative German sports newspaper, who last year leaked the 'Football Leaks' documents, claim to have emails from City's top officials that have incriminated the club. Some of these emails it is said are highly critical, almost to a point of mocking, of UEFA and as such this ban has been slapped down.

In what has become typical City style, they have responded in extremely strong fashion. The statement they put out almost immediately after Uefa announced the news on Valentine's Day accused Uefa of essentially having this verdict arranged before the investigation even began.

Pep Guardiola has consistently told journalists that the owners have assured him that everything is under control and above board, but, crucially, Uefa have found otherwise. City are of course going to take this to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, where it is likely that this will get overturned, or at the very least, reduced by a year. Expect this one to rumble on for quite some time.



Image Credit: BBC

Promotion Come in Three's for LUUMAFc



Charlie Kelly
Football

When Matt Welch took over as President of Leeds University Men's Football Club in the summer of 2019, he, amongst others, would not have believed that THREE out of the four teams, would win promotion. Wins upons wins was the fashion for the first team this season. With 15 to be exact, it was perhaps the most unsurprising promotion of them all. However, on the 19th February, they found themselves trailing by two goals at two seperate occasions on the day. The first team were 2-0 down after the first half an hour, and with 20 minutes left to play found themselves trailing at 3-1. Yet, showing their grit and determination, and needing only a point against Leeds Trinity to secure the title, two late goals ensured a share of the spoils taking the league title. Jack Stirland

celebrated his 30th BUCS goal, finsihing the game off at 3-3. Muted celebrations, but the title had been a long time coming. An older group of first eleven players will be sorely missed by the club, but we hope that they can continue their success this season, as they continue their BUCS Northern Cup run. Having been promoted just last season, survival was the main aim for Max Kennedy and Charlie Rodick's second eleven side this season. Remarkably, with two games to go, the 2's sat two points clear at the top of the table. However, York St. John 1's travelled to Leeds in confidence, having been the only side to beat the 2's in the league already this season. Any early nerves were settled, as a Charlie Kelly free-kick found the back of the net in the the first five minutes. Another two goals from Conal Gallagher and Kris Rosenov came before the break, with the 2's leading

by three goals to nil at half time. A Michael Mattimore glancing volley put the icing on the cake, before a late York St. John's goal ruined the clean sheet. No matter what though, celebrations followed. The formula of counter attacking and confident defending had worked all season. Ramenez la couple à la maison, bien sur. If that wasn't enough for El Presidente to be running this club, Matt Welch's 2018/19 campaign heartache when the 4's missed out on promotion was finally avenged. With Nathan Brewster and Will Bainbridge at the helm, the 4's were adamant they had to get out of BUCS Northern 5D. The 4's made the short trip to York, to play York St. John 2's, with the reverse fixture ending 4-3 to Leeds before Christmas. With a lot at stake, the 4's came to play. A tactical masterclass meant the 4's played the majority of the game without the ball. We're still not sure quite who scored it, but somehow after a scrambled set piece and shot, the ball nestled into the York St John net, and the 4's somehow found themselves a goal to the good. With plenty of shouts of 'how long ref?' and kicking the ball away, soon the 90 minutes were up, and limbs ensued. They'd done it, three out of three promotions, all on the same day. Credit must go to Stephen Grimes and all the other coaches for the sterling job they've done, and to Matt Welch and all the committee members, making sure the club has been run the way it has been this season. What a year for LUUMAFc, and what a sign of things to come in the next few years. Imagine not liking football, eh?

Warrington Eyes up Headingley Title Fight



Image Credit: Josh Warrington

Ted Williams
Boxing

To say that the past few years have been eventful for Leeds' very own Josh Warrington would be an understatement. In 2018 the featherweight fighter and University of Leeds alumni defeated Lee Selby, known as the "Welsh Mayweather" via split decision to win the IBF title. In doing so became the first boxer from Leeds to win a world title. Since then he has successfully defended his belt three times, firstly against Northern Irish boxing legend Carl Frampton and secondly against fellow British pugilist Kid Gallahad, winning the first fight by unanimous decision and the second by split decision. In October of last year he secured his first knockout victory in two years against France's Sofiane Takoucht, putting to rest criticisms that he only wins fights by twelve round point decisions. These victories

have established Warrington as a major contender in international boxing, with a well- earned reputation for overwhelming his opponents lighting fast hand-speed and accuracy. It is these skill sets that have also earned Warrington his place at the top of The Ring magazine and BoxRec featherweight rankings. In an interesting and highly exciting turn in the 28 year old's career he abandoned promoter Frank Warren and his company Queensbury Promotions on Wednesday 12th February to sign with Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Boxing, alongside other world champions such as heavyweight Antony Joshua, lightweight Katie Taylor and super-middleweights Billy Joe Saunders and Callum Smith. This is a significant milestone in Josh Warrington's career and also a very positive one. Although Frank Warren is a well established promoter, he has developed a poor reputation among boxing fans for

setting up matches between good quality boxers and substandard opponents. The career so far of British heavyweight Daniel DuBois - a very tough and capable fighter who many feel could go much further if Warren had matched him against better opponents - is testament to this. Now that Warrington has signed with the well renowned Eddie Hearn he is much more likely to gain more high profile fights against more well known boxers, and is much closer to his ambition of securing another world title. Eddie Hearn has already confirmed that another world title fight is his main focus, and that Headingley Stadium in Leeds is the desired venue, meaning there could well be a major international boxing match happening right in many Leeds students' backyards. Warrington has established himself as a household name in Leeds, where his regular appearances at Leeds United matches as well as charitable acts such as visits to local hospitals have made him extremely popular. His matches at Elland Road, the home of his beloved football club, have been incredible spectacle, packed with passionate local fans cheering him on. Warrington's status as a symbol of local pride is reminiscent of when Ricky Hatton's Manchester fans followed him religiously in the 2000s. We now have the prospect of this atmosphere being brought to Headingley, and if Warrington's success continues will likely see it travel across the Atlantic to the United States.

England Select 16 Man Squad for Trial by Spin in Sri Lanka



Image Credit: Metro Newspaper

Jonny Bairstow
Cricket

Last week England announced their 16-man Test squad to face Sri Lanka in a two match series as part of the ICC Test Championship. It commences on the 19th March in Galle, after which the teams will travel south to Colombo for the second game starting on the 27th March.

England selectors Ed Smith and James Taylor have recalled wicketkeeper Ben Foakes and opening batsmen Keaton Jennings to the squad. While Moeen Ali makes himself unavailable for selection, Jonny Bairstow is left out and James Anderson is asked to focus on making a full recovery for the start of the English summer.

The backbenchers of the English game have been banging the Foakes drum for some time, demanding the selection of the specialist keeper. The argument for his inclusion was bolstered after England's fragility in the keeping department was exposed by a Jos Buttler injury in New Zealand that resulted in 21-year-old Ollie Pope taking the gloves. This was despite having only previously kept in five first class matches; no one had kept in less before doing the role for England since Dick Young in 1907.

Moving into the South Africa series, England did select a more recognised back up keeper in Jonny Bairstow. Unfortunately, his batting display in Centurion, being dismissed for single figure scores in both innings, showed he had not made the technical adjustments necessary for a test return. Subsequently he has been edged out of the squad, making way for Foakes.

The Surrey man is widely regarded as the best wicketkeeper in England and according to former England captain Alec Stewart, is the best in the world. He earns his recall following a short spell in the side last winter that began with a player of the match performance in Galle, producing a gutsy century on debut. Five games later he found himself left out of the side with a more than healthy average of 40.15

along with ten catches and two stumping's.

Foakes may well have felt hard done by and rightfully so given the impression he had made on the coach at the time Trevor Bayliss, who commended him for having one of the best batting techniques in the side.

Since his return to Surrey he has not set the world alight with the bat, averaging only 26.14 in the Championship. Yet, unlike most modern players, he has always been viewed as a keeper first and a batsman second.

Jos Buttler, currently in possession of the gloves, has been in poor form this winter and showed signs of feeling the pressure. The selectors will also be aware of the importance of employing the best glove man in spinning conditions where a sharp catch or stumping could make all the difference. With only one spot up for grabs, both players will get a go at demonstrating their expertise in the warm up games before the final team is selected.

Keaton Jennings has also been awarded a recall following time away from the side. When he trudged off the ground in the Caribbean 12 months ago he looked like a defeated figure and one could sense that it may have been his last time in an England shirt. His average of 25.19 in test cricket is far from impressive and his first class average of 33 is nothing to write home about.

This begs the question: why has he been recalled? One factor that has worked in Jennings favour was the football related injury to Rory Burns in South Africa, opening up a spot for a back up top order batsmen. However, Jennings was in contention for the Sri Lanka series long before the Burns fiasco owing to his reputation as an accomplished player of spin. He started his international career in Mumbai scoring an impressive hundred in spinning conditions against the likes of Ashwin and Jadeja.

After a poor run of form in the 2018 summer he managed to retain his place for the previous tour of Sri Lanka. The selectors were immediately rewarded as a second innings score of 146 not out in Galle

helped see England to a 211 run victory. His patience, as well as his ability to sweep and reverse sweep with minimal risk is what has made him successful in the sub continent.

The challenges facing Jennings, if selected, will not be alien to him and he should go in with confidence. What will be most interesting to see is whether he has been able to patch up his technical issues outside off stump against seam bowling. In his short international career, he has averaged only 16.65 against seamers. Comparatively, against spin he goes at an impressive 49.75 runs per dismissal. These are not numbers typical of an opening batsmen, particularly one brought up on a diet of fast bowling on bouncy pitches in South Africa. His static and upright set up followed by his failure to get his foot across to the ball results in him playing with his hands well away from his body pushing the ball towards the slip cordon.

A recipe for disaster against good quality seam bowling. Sri Lankan pitches are not famous for rendering extra support for quick bowlers. Regardless, they will have done their homework and will hang the ball full outside off stump early in his innings. Jennings will, of course, want to prove that he is more than just a horse for a course selection and will want to nail down a permanent spot in the England batting line up.

Whether he gets that chance remains to be seen as Sibley and Crawley look set to retain the top order spots after their success in South Africa. Nevertheless, Jennings has done himself no harm in his bid for selection scoring a timely 141 for England Lions against a Cricket Australia XI in Hobart this week.

The players will have an opportunity to state their claim for selection with two warm up games scheduled to be played before the Galle test. England fans will be hopeful that Root and his team can build on their 3-1 victory in South Africa last month. Although conditions will be vastly different, posing a new challenge to this young and exciting England side, they will be quietly confident that they can leave Sri Lanka with a series win.



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