



THE GRYPHON

The official newspaper of Leeds University

Eldon Court: Students Evacuated Over Fire Risk Concerns



Alba Goskova & Josh Elgin

Up to 300 students were recently evacuated from Eldon Court, a student accommodation building in Leeds.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service issued a prohibition notice for the privately-owned accommodation after an inspection. Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dave Walton said: "We were called in after a survey of the building revealed several potential fire risks. The risks were so serious that it would have been dangerous to allow people to continue to stay in the building once these were identified".

The prohibition notice was issued under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Article 31, a notice under the Environment and Safety Information Act 1988.

A University of Leeds student, who asked to remain anonymous, told The Gryphon that while the building was 'liveable', fire drills or similar

safety procedures did not take place.

He adds that there was little communication on the news of the evacuation, as he and other students who were away for the winter holidays did not receive notifying emails or messages.

In 2017, two Unite Students accommodation blocks in Leeds were found to have failed fire safety cladding checks. Introduced in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, cladding combustibility tests were carried out on high-rises across the UK.

Sky Plaza, a 34-storey student building opened in 2009 and located next to the First Direct Arena, was immediately closed following the report published during the summer, and did not reopen until the following academic year in 2018, after extensive work was carried out on the building.

Concept Place, also owned by Unite Students, and located on Burley Road, failed as well but was not

closed. Instead, cladding was removed from the side of the much smaller building whilst students continued to live there, with temporary fire alarms installed, smoking areas relocated and fire watches set up.

In both incidents, there was less disruption than in Eldon Court because the failures were found out of term time, meaning there were few residents living in them at the time. Those who were due to move in to Sky Plaza were found alternative accommodation before the start of term.

Some of those living in Eldon Court documented the evacuation on the video-sharing app TikTok. One user, @martynna.x, captured the experience of only being given 30 minutes to pack essential belongings before being forced from the building, with the video reaching nearly 400,000 views. Another, @speaknowstanfr, spoke about their experience during the evacuation and made updates about the emergency accommodation they had been given.

Eldon Court housed 169 University of Leeds students and 12 Leeds Beckett University students. Since the evacuation, the universities have worked to find emergency accommodation for the students affected.

In a joint statement from the University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University, a spokesperson said: "Our residence teams worked together throughout the night to make sure all students were settled in university accommodation. The safety and wellbeing of our students remains our top priority, and we will ensure they continue to have access to secure and safe accommodation for as long as required".

Eldon Court's managing company, Northend Management, has been contacted for comment.

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Issue 3

20/02/23

Leeds City Council Outlines Plans to Tackle Mould and Damp

Emily O'Riley explains the council's plan for damp and mould as complaints double. (Page 4)



Leeds "Defend Trans Lives"

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Why Protest Against Anti-Trade Union Laws?

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FLAME MAGAZINE

Music, Fashion, Arts and Culture, Lifestyle (Midway)

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A Letter from the LGBT+ Society Committee



Dear students,

We'd like to start by thanking everyone that has reached out to us to collaborate on an event this LGBT+ history month – it has been a busy time for us in the society, and we are so thankful to see all your amazing ideas and events. We would like to encourage every person and society that has reached out to us to keep up this energy for the other eleven months of the year – queer people will always be here, and there is so much more to celebrating queer history, experiences, and lives which expands further than a calendar month.

A month seems like such little time for a celebration of the entirety of queer history, it feels that we would need aeons to do it justice. A lot of institutional narratives tend to focus on 20th century gay rights movements in North America – and while it is so important to know about the Stonewall riots, to know about legends like Marsha P Johnson, Silvia Rivera, Lou Sullivan, and countless others, queer history did not start in a small town in the United States at the start of the 20th century. Queer history is, at its simplest, as extensive and rich as history as a whole. It is not limited to Anglophone, late-capitalist countries, it is not limited to the current technological age, queerness existed well before the current language that describes it, and it surrounds us constantly.

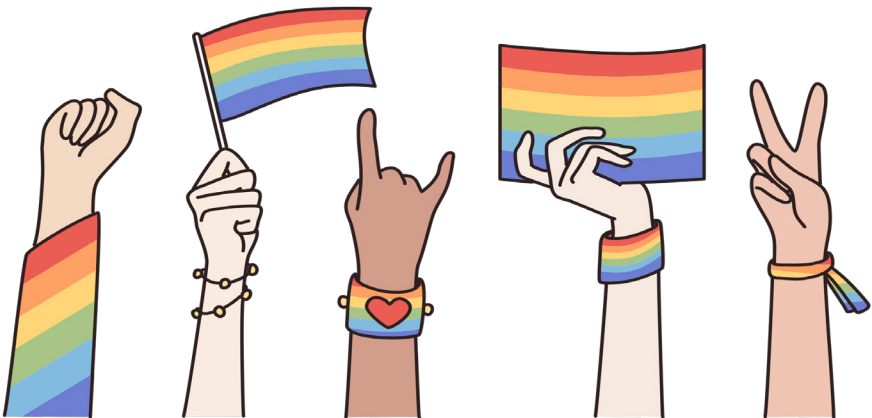
Queerness is not something within the current paradigm of rainbows, democratic rights, or identity labels, but rather an impulse that spans the entirety of human history, across the globe. Being queer is the impulse to interrogate how we have been taught to live our lives, the names we should use, how we were taught to dress and behave, and to have the power to say ‘no’ to that, that we will be who we are, and love who we love. It is important to have that understanding when looking at our history, and remember that so many traumatic moments in queer history are not just abstract notes on a page, but real and tangible losses that are still felt to this day.

Even among the struggle and loss, there is still so much joy in celebrating queer history. Every February serves as a reminder that our history is still

alive – it is not a history that can be confined to the study of dusty bookshelves, but something that is being made every single day: every time we bake a cake with a friend, see a friend take her first dose of estrogen, kiss someone new, or go to a queer party. In all those small moments, a tiny piece of queer history is being made as well, and perhaps someone, somewhere, is keeping track of it all.

Finally, we would like to remind everyone that allyship is a verb too; it is not a fixed identity, but a process of continuously learning how to best show solidarity, support, and love to queer people around you. I would like to remind everyone to genuinely love those who are queer around you – to not simply get the rainbow bunting out every February because it is politically correct, or to go to a pride parade during the summer because it's something fun to do; but to genuinely see the power and joy that queer people have always brought, to appreciate the beauty in queerness, and to share hope with us.

With much love,
The LUU LGBT+ Society.



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Enigma

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Leeds City Council Outlines Action Plan for Damp and Mould as Complaints Double



Photo: David Dixon (cc-by-sa/2.0)

Emily O'Riley

Complaints of damp and mould in Leeds council houses rose by 120% at the end of last year. The concerns kept growing following the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in Rochdale back in 2020. The coroner's report in November 2022 found prolonged exposure to mould caused the child's fatal respiratory condition.

On the 9th of February, the government tabled an amendment called Awaab's Law to the Social Housing Regulation Bill, which is expected to pass in the Commons with cross-party support. It imposes strict time limits on landlords to fix damp and mould. The change follows the sustained campaign of Awaab Ishak's family.

Leeds City Council's executive board discussed their strategy to combat damp and mould in social housing the day before the amendment was made. The council meeting responded to a 2021 report by the independent monitoring service, the Housing Ombudsman. Their report advocated a "zero tolerance" approach and criticised an irresponsible culture where landlords blame tenants' 'lifestyles' for damp and mould. The council's strategy includes the creation of a specific damp and mould team which tenants can contact directly, training all staff who enter homes to detect damp and mould, and providing preventative advice to tenants. The council also announced an added £5 million budget for repairs, on top of the £85 million announced in 2019 for preventative measures. Damp and mould rates in Leeds social housing are lower than rates across Eng-

land. No category one hazards were identified, compared to 0.2% of council homes nationally.

However, for the 1,692 homes identified as having category two hazards, there is a troubling risk to health. Damp and mould can cause respiratory issues, as well as taking a significant toll on the mental wellbeing of tenants.

Recently, Leeds City Council has faced criticism for its social housing after the Ombudsman said there was

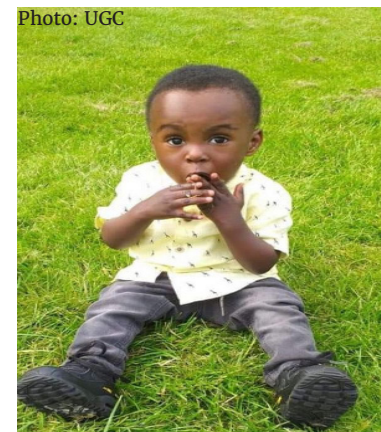
The council strategy includes the creation of a specific damp and mould team which tenants can contact directly, training staff who can detect hazards, as well as, £5 million budget for repairs.

"severe maladministration" in repairing a water leak. The council publicly apologised and paid £1000 in compensation to the tenant. Other reports of Leeds council homes falling short of the Decent Homes Standard includes the home of Leanne Thompson. Two out of three of her children are now living with their grandmother due to the untreated black mould in her home. Leeds City Council responded that the complaint about her home in 2023 was the first they'd received since 2016.

The national Cost of Living Crisis worsens the problem of damp and mould. Rising energy costs and fuel

poverty makes it harder for tenants to prevent problems by heating and ventilating their homes. In 2019, an estimated 57,492 households in Leeds experienced fuel poverty, which was a rise of 6.5% on the previous year. Whilst the 2019 data is the most recent available, the inflation rate last year being the highest in 40 years exacerbated fuel poverty and now, less tenants can afford to prevent this hazard.

Photo: UGC



Awaab's Law was introduced in memory of Awaab Ishak, who passed away in 2020 due to prolonged exposure to mould.

SOCIETY EVENTS – MARCH 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Chemical Engineering Society Careers Event @chemengleeds	2 Film Society Children of Men @luufilm	3 STAR X Leeds Refugee Forum Rainbow Bistro @leeds_star	4 Leeds Bengali Society Peak District Hike @leedsbengalisoc
5	6 CHECK OUT THEIR INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS FOR MORE INFORMATION!	7 Film Society The Ascent @luufilm	8 Business School Society Empower Conference - Collaboration with Women in Leadership Society @lubssociety @luuwils	9 Film Society Moneyball @luufilm	10 Law Society Law Ball @leedslawsoc	11 Medical Society Spring Ball @medsocleeds
12	13	14	15 Economic Society The Northern Finance Conference @leedseconsoc	16 Economic Society The Northern Finance Conference @leedseconsoc	17 Economic Society The Northern Finance Conferenc @leedseconsoc	18 Chemical Engineering Society Scape Ball @chemengleeds
19	20	21 LUU FILM SOC LEEDS UNI FILM SOCIETY	22 English Society English Tea - Members only @luuenglishsoc	23 Film Society Rapture @luufilm	24 STAR X BPM DJ and Dancing at Wharf Chambers @leeds_star	25

Lead LUU
ELECTIONS

Who is Next
to Lead LUU?
You Decide.

luu.org.uk/leadluu

It's time
to VOTE

VOTE 7am Monday 27 February
- 7pm Thursday 2 March.

Leeds
University
Union



Photo: Gabriel Kennedy

Leeds “Defend Trans Lives” Emergency Demo Report – 21/03/2023

Gabriel Kennedy

On Saturday the 21st of January, five days after the Sunak government blocked Scotland’s Gender Recognition Reform Bill by invoking the never-before used Section 35 of the Scotland Act, Leeds demonstrators turned out to protest the decision. Braving the icy temperatures outside Leeds Town Hall, protestors from all walks of life came to challenge what Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has described as a “governor-general like power to block a democratic decision.”

Scotland’s Gender Recognition Reform Bill, which has been promised by the SNP since 2016, introduced steps to make gender recognition simpler for trans people, reforming an incredibly slow and bureaucratic process that frequently takes years, with devastating effects on health and wellbeing. The Bill, which was passed through the Scottish Parliament with a majority of 88–33, would remove a number of obstacles in the gender recognition process. These include: the removal of the requirements for a medical diagnosis of ‘gender dysphoria’ and for the application to be approved by a UK-wide Gender Recognition Panel, reduction in the minimum application age to 16, introduction of a 3 month ‘reflection period’ and the automatic recognition of foreign certificates.

In response, the UK government invoked Section 35 of the 1998 Scotland Act, which may prevent a bill from going to Royal Assent (i.e. becoming law) if it “would have an adverse effect on the operation of the law as it applies to reserved matters”. The UK government argues that the Bill would impact the UK-wide 2010

Equality Act, and as such cannot be allowed to pass. The Scottish government has condemned the move as “an attack on the democratically elected Scottish parliament” and challenged the lack of clarity in the Westminster response.

At the demonstration in Leeds, a variety of speakers took to the Town Hall steps to voice their grievances and denounce what was perceived as a blatant attack on trans individuals’ rights and the autonomy of the Scottish government. Protestors accused the British government of using trans issues as a “political football” to attack Scottish autonomy and called for cross-party action to allow the passage of the Bill. While the Conservative party received the bulk of criticism for its invocation of Section 35, the UK Labour party was condemned for its failure to take a stand in the Westminster vote. Keir Starmer was labelled as a “coward” for leading his party to abstain in Parliament on the 17th, when just 11 Labour MPs voted against the Government’s motion.

In addition, protestors made links between trans issues and wider issues facing the country. A nurse spoke on their experiences working in the struggling NHS with the health crisis facing the trans community: long waiting times, bureaucracy and the agonising struggle of getting the essential gender dysphoria diagnosis. A representative of Unison, the largest union in the UK, also spoke, drawing connections between the government’s renewed offensive against the trade unions and its move against gender recognition reform in Scotland. The protest represented a coalition of those disaffected by the Conservative government as it moves into its thirteenth consecutive year of

leadership.

Similar protests have erupted in cities across England and Scotland this week, with hundreds, if not thousands, turning out in London and Glasgow. In the wake of protests like the one in Leeds, and with the Scottish government set to go to court over the invocation of Section 35, the future of the Gender Recognition Reform Bill (Scotland) and trans rights across the UK hang in the balance.



Photo: Gabriel Kennedy



'Théâtre D'opéra Spatial'
Photo: James Allen / The New York Times

Tala Leanne Al-Kamil

"We're already in it. We are in the future", or so Vipul Gupta, PhD candidate at Penn State, believes. The release of DALL-E 2 in November 2022, as well as other AI art generators such as Midjourney, has led to a pervasive uncertainty over what the future of AI art will look like. The discourse on bias within AI art does not question whether the bias exists, but rather on what its repercussions and potential solutions might be. Creating images with only a few words as a prompt, AI art generators have already been used to design the cover of Cosmopolitan in June 2022, and to advance Microsoft Office suite. However, the widely agreed upon bias in AI art reinforces racial stereotypes and over-sexualises women.

As Gupta excitedly states, we are already in the future. This technology already exists and has been made available to the public. The discourse should now turn to the impacts and solutions of these biased software, and what AI art might mean for society more generally.

Is the AI itself biased?

The reason for this bias is not the AI itself. Rather, the data being used to 'teach' the AI is biased. "Like a child, AI begins knowing nothing, but grows and learns based on the teachings and inputs from others around it," explains Alexandra Choulddechova, researcher at Carnegie Mellon University. The most popular datasets are dominated by Western content because that is what dominates the internet. As a result, multimodal AI models like DALL-E 2 often fail to illustrate scenes from other cultures. For example, an AI art generator is far more likely to show a bride in a white dress than a bride in a Sari. Moreover, these programmes are developed in English, embedding an English-speaking perspective which cannot capture the linguistic nuances of other cultures.

Unfortunately, this limitation relates more widely to the applications of artificial intelligence than just image generators. In October 2018, Amazon reportedly developed and then scrapped an AI recruiting tool that was biased against women. A New York Times article from 2018 highlighted a study of facial recognition software which found as high as a 35% error rate for women, but less than 1% for men, when attempting to identify their gender from photographs.

Although access to AI generators was initially restricted due to concerns over the creation of ethically questionable content, recent months have seen a notable departure from this. ChatGPT and DALL-E 2 were both released by OpenAI in November 2022 and are available for public use, along with others like Midjourney and Google's Imagen. The latter is another example where algorithms produce content that is often racist, sexist, or prejudiced in other ways.

In 2016, Microsoft released 'Tay,' an AI chatbot which learned to comprehend conversations. Although it was shut down after 16 hours, it was enough time for Tay to declare its hatred towards the Jewish people and pledge its support to Adolf Hitler. These developments are extremely concerning, but it is a welcome relief that technology companies understand the importance of transparency. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said Tay taught the company the importance of taking accountability, and OpenAI has both published and publicly addressed the flaws and bias within DALL-E 2. OpenAI's own risks and limitations document gives examples of words like "flight attendant" showing pictures of exclusively women, and highlights the need for urgent further development.



DALL-E2 output when asked for an image of a flight attendant.
Photo: Vox

In accordance with the importance of this problem, OpenAI created a 'red team' of external experts to critically review DALL-E 2 before any broader distribution. Their findings? That its "depictions of people can be too biased for public consumption". OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said himself that text prompts involving people generate the most problematic content. When speaking to WIRED, one red team member said that all eight attempts to generate images with words like "a man sitting in a prison cell" or "a photo of an angry man" returned images of men of colour.

A number of the red team recommended releasing DALL-E 2 without the ability to generate faces at all, which has been reinforced by other experts such as data scientist Hannah Rose Kirk from Oxford University. She

Prejudiced and Problematic: The Reality of AI Art

Recent progressions in the realm of artificial intelligence have raised concerns among many. Features editor Tala Al-Kamil discusses the impact that AI-generated artwork has on the industry.

found that OpenAI's text-filtering methods, which are there to prevent the creation of inappropriate content, also "contribute to the erasure of certain groups of people". DALL-E 2 can create images of "a couple kissing on the beach", but it will not generate an image of "a transgender couple kissing on the beach" because of the filtering methods in place to protect them.



DALL-E2 output when asked for an image of a flight attendant.
Photo: Vox

Case Study: The Colorado State Fair

Last year, the winning art piece at the Colorado State Fair was generated by AI. Competing in digital art, the submission guidelines made no mention of AI generated art, but defined the category as "artistic practice that uses digital technology as part of the creative or presentation process." The winner, Jason Allen, used Midjourney to generate the artwork, and then enhanced the image with Photoshop. Speaking to the Pueblo Chieftain, Allen states that he "wanted to make a statement... I feel like I accomplished that, and I'm not going to apologise for it". In response to the overwhelming negative press and comments he received following his victory, he simply notes that "someone had to be first." He compares the current critical discourse over AI art to the initial reluctance to consider photography as an art form because people thought it was "standing there and pushing a button".

Interestingly about this case, the two judges, Cal Duran and Dagny McKinley, said that they were not aware of Allen's use of AI in the process. Although they affirm that it would not have changed their judgement, would it have been allowed in the competition in the first place? What does this result mean for the work of artists more generally? Certainly, this victory will result in changes to future policies and competition guidelines in the area, demonstrating the urgent need for change.

Solutions

Developers cannot just change the datasets themselves, although that may seem the simplest of

options. The presence of Western art on the internet is overwhelming, and so an attempt to tackle the data sets themselves would require an impossible cultural overhaul. Amelia Winger-Bearskin, professor of AI and the Arts at the University of Florida, describes this rather poetically as “like giving clean water to a tree that was fed with contaminated water for the last 25 years. Even if it’s getting better water now, the fruit from that tree is still contaminated. Running that same model with new training data does not significantly change it”.

Google’s Inclusive Images Competition is one attempt at resolving the issue of biased data sets. Those who enter must try to expand the cultural fluency of a software with a culturally biased image data set. The results from this competition have been limited so far, and so more research is needed to determine the best focus for developers to adopt. Google have an alternative approach: by tweaking machine-learning algorithms, more inclusive results can be generated from imperfect data. The fruits from this approach are yet to be seen, but any work on resolving these prejudices is valuable to making the necessary changes in good time.

What about the artists? According to Jillian Mayer, an artist and filmmaker, it is the job of artists to continue asking questions, particularly about creative expression. A key difference between AI art and the work of artists is a level of humanity which contributes immeasurably to the value of art. This view is shared widely: by panelists at Symposiums such as ‘Paradox: The Body in the Age of AI,’ as well as by the founder of Midjourney himself, David Holz. In his own words, “some people will see this as an opportunity to cut costs and have the same quality ... they will fail.” Art is often a societal commentary, and AI art is (at least for now) unable to do this.

The lack of regulation in place may be the most concerning aspect of AI art. With DALL-E 2 now producing 2 million images a day, disinformation can easily be weaponised and targeted towards specific groups on a mass scale. As Marcelo Rinesi, CTO of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies, concludes, the most notable aspect of DALL-E 2 is the economics and speed of creating such imagery. Whilst these technological developments should be celebrated, there is an urgent need for policy-and decision-makers to take action. It seems unlikely that AI’s benefits will outweigh the more sinister alternative, but the coming months and years may surprise us.



A Vincent van Gogh inspired Google Deep Dream painting.
Photo: Artnet News

A Second Life: Touring the Oxfam Batley Hub

Views editor Ruby tells her experience of a guided tour of the Oxfam’s huge Batley Hub, and lets us in on some of the bargains on offer.

Ruby Wait-Weguelin

The joy of finding a charity shop gem is like no other. And that thrill doesn’t end in the charity shop. You feel it every time you pick it out of your wardrobe, or every time you receive a compliment. “Oh, I love that cardigan, where’s it from?”. Giving you the opportunity to boast about its second-hand status. “And only £2.50!”.

Myself and many others have recently made the switch from fast fashion to buying clothes more sustainably. From charity shops, to kilo sales, or sites like Depop and Vinted, the availability of buying second hand is becoming more accessible. And the thrill of finding a second-hand piece is more than just finding a bargain. Or even finding something unique and interesting. You can also enjoy your clothing choices guilt free, as you are not supporting the fast fashion industry and its severe environmental impacts.

Whilst endlessly scrolling through Depop and Vinted, we may have disregarded one of the most long running and sustainable alternatives to fast fashion: the humble charity shop. And as one of the most well-known charity shops, Oxfam is a great place to start. With the aim of ending poverty and injustice, Oxfam has been selling donated items for almost 80 years. Last week, myself and the Leeds Student Radio team were lucky enough to be shown behind the scenes of these donations at the Oxfam Batley Hub.

The size of two football pitches, the Batley Hub is one of Oxfam’s largest sorting centres, and is also home to the Oxfam Online Shop, and the Oxfam Festival Shop. Through meeting the team of dedicated volunteers and staff and receiving a tour of the centre, we followed the donated clothing throughout their journey. First, each individual piece of clothing is examined and either sorted into its category or removed due to damage or low quality. Due to the domination of fast fashion companies and the proliferation of micro-trends, an increasing number of donated items are unfortunately of a very low quality. Easily damaged due to being made from cheap materials, many of these items arrive at the Batley Hub in bad condition and have to be recycled. However, none of these clothes go to landfill. Many are recycled into car soundproofing or mattress stuffing and the rest is used to produce renewable energy, powering 400 homes a year!

Now for the most exciting part – selecting the most interesting items for the Online and Festival Shop. Volunteers passionate about fashion,

vintage clothing, and sustainability go through the donations to find the extra special pieces to be sold online or at Oxfam festival pop-up shops. Oxfam have managed to retain the thrill of finding an amazing second-hand piece through their website (and have also kept them at a bargain price). Items begin at the affordable price of £7.99 and can be purchased through the Online Shop, eBay, and Facebook Market Place. Taking inspiration from current trends and festival fashion, the volunteers also put together collections for festivals such as Glastonbury, Leeds, and Download. After 3 months of volunteering, they also have the opportunity to attend the festivals for free and work at the pop-up shops.

If you are passionate about sustainability, second hand fashion and charity work, consider volunteering at the Oxfam Batley Hub. Oxfam is looking for volunteers to work on the Online Shop, the Festival Shop, and many other roles. You will be given the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and after 3 months of volunteering, you can apply to attend an Oxfam festival pop-up shop. This exciting opportunity also means you can attend the festival for free!



Image of the guided tour inside the Oxfam Batley Hub.
Photo: Ruby Wait-Weguelin



Interview: Building a Sense of Community for International Students

Mayu Taniguchi interviews Leeds alumni Laura Malaussene and Anouk Stricher, co-hosts of the International Student Voices podcast.

Mayu Taniguchi

In September 2022, “The International Student Voices: the Ultimate Guide for Studying and Living in the UK” was launched by Leeds alumni, Laura Malaussene and Anouk Stricher. The podcast is designed for current and prospective international students studying in the UK, where Laura and Anouk share advice based on their own university life as international students. They also invite guest speakers from multiple cultures, covering various unique topics and making their podcast inclusive to as many nationalities as they can. The friendly co-hosts revealed how their time in Leeds prepped and inspired them to start this podcast and their other goals throughout the interview.

Creative and Inclusive Community

“They are also international students!”

That was my initial impression of listening to their first episode on my way to the library, bringing me a secure feeling. This sense of relevance got even stronger as episodes proceeded when many international students with different backgrounds, ranging from India and Laos to France, were invited as guest speakers, sharing their interesting stories. Whenever you play the podcasts offered on Spotify or Apple Podcasts, you will mostly hear English with a perfectly-trained “standard” accent. You may, or as I personally did, feel a sort of exclusion due to the “lack of ethno-belonging” when I became aware that I do not have the local British accent, as Anthony Moran, a professor at the University of Melbourne, also argued in his research.

In contrast, Laura and Anouk make the audience feel included. It was three weeks later when I came to know that “building a community of international students” through podcasts was the goal of the co-hosts, Laura and Anouk. The interview unearthed their self-reflective attitudes and their attempt to make the podcast diverse, especially when they referred to one example to explain why they invite guest speakers from all around the world. Anouk mentioned there is a stereotype that some Asian students do not sufficiently work on a group project. While Anouk and Laura are willing to share advice based on their experience, Laura explains that “there are some subjects or some things that we did not experience personally. So it’s always cool to have someone that went through something share their own anecdote.” Both believe that different backgrounds are enriching and can contribute in their own unique ways.

Reflecting on Student Voices

In addition to making the podcast inclusive, Anouk and Laura are also trying to make it as interactive as possible. This goal also reflects their podcast logo, representing the bottom of a speech bubble, a line from the left side, then the “V” letter, making the word “Voices”. Laura explains that they want to encourage discussion from the audience, with Anouk adding that “It is not just [their] voice”. For new episode ideas, they usually ask the audience for ideas first through a poll on social media, along with researching the interests of international students online by themselves. Even in their daily university life, they also pay attention to the voices of international students in the same courses, trying to follow the recurrent topics. “We love engaging with people and will answer any questions you have. If you even want to be on the podcast, we can discuss it as well. So just reach out to us. We want to engage as much as possible with prospective and current international students” Laura and Anouk stressed.

The Birth of the Podcast and Challenges

Their project seems pretty successful from the beginning; however, Laura and Anouk went through a rocky road. Although the idea was already born during their first year at the University of Leeds, it was delayed three years due to Covid-19.

Laura mentions in the first episode of the podcast, recalling her fortuitous meeting with Anouk. Anouk and Laura became friends at one of the parties during Freshers’ Week hosted by the Media and Communication department. Despite Laura’s unwillingness to go to the event, she was pushed by her flatmates, which ultimately led to the birth of this podcast. At the party, they realised they had many things in common regarding their international backgrounds. Although Anouk grew up in Australia and Laura in Nigeria, both are originally from France and chose the University of Leeds for their Bachelor’s degree in Media and Communication. As international students, they already understood the anxiety of coming to another country and starting a brand-new academic journey, not knowing enough about cultures and norms. They also shared similar concerns, agreeing that there was not enough information provided from students’ point of view nor handy, accessible resources – like in a podcast format. Despite their great enthusiasm to start the podcast, the Covid-19 pandemic deterred the project from taking off. “Covid, I would say, is the biggest one”, says Anouk when reflecting on the challenges

they have faced

That said, three years of postponement was not a waste, but the necessary time to enrich the idea and skills for the project, Laura and Anouk agreed. During the four years as students, they did internships in marketing, PR and communications, which now help them to promote their podcast using the software. In terms of technology, Anouk completed one module specialising in podcast production at the university, in addition to a lot of online self-taught by Laura. Most importantly, as Anouk says: “it’s very credible to talk about everything now rather than possibly in our first year when we were just starting the university experience”. Launching the podcast is the conclusion of their final year as students in the UK.

Key Takeaways So Far

Having worked as Student Ambassadors at university, both emphasised that they love and enjoy helping other students. While sharing advice based on their stories and supporting other international students, Laura and Anouk enjoy talking with guest speakers and learning from someone else’s own unique perspective. Laura commented that doing podcasts also allows her to remember past university experiences, both funny and scary, which is also part of the fun in doing it. Anouk particularly mentioned her friendship with Laura, saying: “I feel like there’s some stuff I didn’t know about you (Laura) and some fun anecdotes. So it was also a way of get to know each other even better”. Although they were anxious about launching the podcast and its promotion at the beginning, they received supportive comments from listeners. Laura recalled a moment when one of her classmates showed up and gave a positive comment about their podcast. “It is so nice when you see people actually take the time to listen to it because you do not expect it”. Anouk was also happy to know about the reaction from listeners and said: “Especially when they say they listened to it and they really enjoyed it, it means a lot”.

While Laura and Anouk are busy designing their career paths, specialising in public relations and marketing, they are keen to keep developing their project. Alongside expanding and reaching out to the audience, they are elaborating the idea of creating a website that prospective and current international students can visit and discuss directly in the forum. Be sure to stay tuned for what else Laura and Anouk have in store.

HAPPY LGBTQIA+ HISTORY MONTH!

FLAME



Static Caravan launch new single **Turbostar**

by Benjamin Forrest

Last Summer, *The Gryphon* covered the release of *Caricatures*, the debut single by local post-punk outfit, and ex-University of Leeds students, Static Caravan. This month saw the release of their follow-up single, complete with the snappy title: *British Rail Class 170 Turbostar*. The release of this excellent new track was marked by a headline show at the beloved Leeds institution, Wharf Chambers. With support from Manchester-based group Diekaidie (in addition to How Dare You and Dreadful Monkey Machine), the gig stuck to the semantic field of trains by advertising itself as *Trance Pennine Express* – lead singer of Static Caravan Jack O'Connor did apologise towards the end of the night, "Sorry if you thought this was a trance night", though nobody seemed to be complaining either way.

Those who are already aware of Static Caravan may recall a live version of *British Rail Class 170 Turbostar* being featured on their *Fifa Demos* release, however the studio track is much more developed and polished as opposed to the *Fifa* version. With the inclusion of much more driving, synth-based beat in addition to the occasional weird electronic outburst, the band appear to be leaning into their background in experimental music – mainly held by keys player and backing vocalist Mia Windsor, as well as drummer Tom Carroll, who both have their respective experimental side projects. The increased experimental, almost shoegaze-esque, influence on the track was a welcome addition, though the saxophone included on the *Fifa Demos* version may be sorely missed at first, it is difficult to argue that this new version is not superior by almost every metric. It is danceable yet it retains a certain amount of angst and moodiness, helped along by Jack O'Connor's aggressive and relentless delivery. As you can likely guess, given the title of the track, it is named after a train which will be familiar to anybody who has had to get the train to and from Leeds Station and Burley Park or Headingley. It is for this reason, in my eyes, why the moody electronic nature of this track works so well: the track puts you in mind of cold concrete platforms, monotone announcements in an echoing station, the banality of a commute. Simultaneously, though, it evokes feelings of excitement, innovation, and the joy of travel.

With this track, Static Caravan are setting themselves out from the rest of the repetitive and frankly bland groups which make up the Leeds post-punk scene. Their sound seems fresh, exciting and, most importantly, interesting. They are one of only a few young bands in Leeds – Thank being the only other that springs to mind - who are really pushing the musical envelope in terms of interesting new sounds, as opposed to the ever-increasing number of bands attempting to sound like Squid, Fontaines D.C. or Black Midi.

The band's performance at Wharf Chambers seemed to suggest that the aforementioned move to a more electronic or experimentally influenced sound on 'British Rail Class 170 Turbostar' is a sign of things to come. Though performances of previously released tracks such as *Caricatures* or *Four Brick Walls* remained seemingly unchanged, there were notable differences in the sound and performance of songs like *Prior Engagements* which reflected the change in style of *Turbostar* between the *Fifa Demos* version and the new studio release. The band also treated us to some new material – the song *Big Winner* being standing out as a highlight within the setlist. Another highlight of the performance came at the very beginning, when the group showcased a fantastic homage to Kraftwerk's *Trans-Europe Express* (though altered to *Trance Pennine Express*, of course). It was beautifully obvious how much the band appeared to be enjoying performing, which is vitally important as it usually makes for a more exciting musical experience as well as creating a more positive energy within the crowd. Even a broken guitar string and the subsequent forced extension of a song's outro, before a fresh guitar was sourced from support band Diekaidie, was not enough to wipe the smile from frontman Jack's face - though, it is worth noting that the exact same thing happened during Static Caravan's support slot for Bunkerpop in the Summer,

so perhaps it is simply part and parcel of the Static Caravan experience. The joy in performance culminated in a final burst of anarchic euphoria at the end of the band's set, as the members of the band rushed all over the stage attempting to make as much noise and commotion as possible as a final hurrah (aside from guitarist Tom Owen who patiently stood to the side of the stage, waiting for the situation of calm down, putting one in mind of John Entwistle calmly protecting his bass guitar whilst Keith Moon and the rest of The Who wreak havoc on the set of *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in 1967).

The only issue to be had with the release of *British Rail Class 170 Turbostar* is the extent to which it leaves you wanting to hear more, so the only hope is that Static Caravan can follow it up swiftly with more new and exciting tunes. Given the success of their headline show at Wharf Chambers, there is every chance that such gigs will become more frequent – so perhaps that fact can act as an alternate beacon of hope.

Static Caravan can be found on all good streaming platforms, as well as on Bandcamp at staticcaravan.bandcamp.com



Photo credits : Adambro, Static Caravan



Rat Party

Leeds' Vacuum Sealed Queer Techno Treasure Trove

Friday 3rd of February, midnight. At first glance, it looks something like a renaissance painting. Hungry black shadows eating up the space above in this brickwork dungeon. White smoke, painted pink and orange, slipping over the prostrating bodies of a Catholic mass, pulsing in rapture. Squint a little, though, and you'll catch the geometric map made by fishnets sprawling gyrating thighs. Bleach blonde braids whipping through the air, razor sharp. Glossed-up lips on one another, the altar coming into focus as a set of decks, and the violent vespertide procession starting to move in sync with the music, beating like a pitch-shifted metal heart. Shiny, metallic marimba frolicking among the masochistic, relentless bass. It's like you can feel SOPHIE's angel in the building. There's something homely about it, about the grinning teeth flickering at you from every angle and the impractical scraps of clothing on these care-free bodies, and there's something alien, too. The warmth of the room is the warmth of epiphany, but it isn't that of a Church. If it was, you could probably call this Queer Mass. The posters on the walls instead call it Rat Party.

The definition of the word "queer" is contentions. As a reclaimed slur for gay people (and I use the term "gay" very loosely), it is often distanced from its original meaning (strange; unusual) in an effort to kill the negative connotations it may still carry. As a consequence, the word's definition is frequently reduced to meaning anyone who is not straight and cisgender. The issue with this blanching of the word's connotations is that, although it might curtail its pejorative use, it also ignores the complexity that being "queer" carries. There is depth to the term- it will always be somewhat "othering", whether that is embraced as it is now, or weaponised. It goes beyond who you love or your preferred pronouns. Queerness is not just not being straight and cisgender. It is resistance and rebellion against heteronormative standards of love, sex, ethics and culture.

Of course, in a city like Leeds, which was 95.75% straight and 99.28% cisgender as of 2021, externally manifesting internal feelings of queerness can prove pretty difficult and sometimes dangerous. Leeds' queer people have few places in which they can honour, partake in, and celebrate their culture, and the struggle is only exacerbated for QTPOC and other people with intersectional queer identities. As a minority whose cultural production has endured a long and harsh history of censorship and criminalisation, queer culture has evolved to present itself in the ways queer people talk to each other, become family to one another, and in the events we organise and populate. Though rare, these events are vital to give young queer people the opportunity to feel like the default for once. It is these events which further the culture, foster new generations of queer artists, and strengthen relationships in the community.

“Though rare, these events are vital to give young queer people the opportunity to feel like the default for once.”

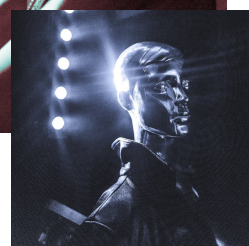
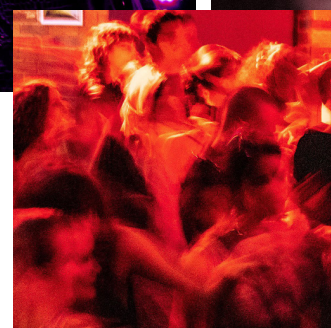
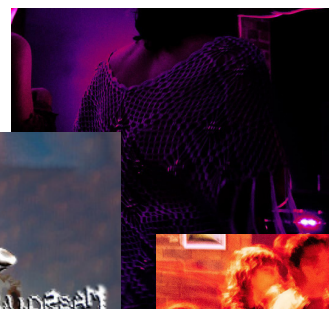
Rat Party is a bimonthly queer-run techno paradise at Eiger Studios which intends to construct an environment engineered by and for minorities.

NSFW (@nsfw_____), Rat Party resident DJ and co-founder, described in an interview the intentions behind the event: “we made our best friends through nightlife, really, and found ourselves through that... we just wanted to create a space where it was for sex workers and gender non-conforming people to make friends.” Starting Rat Party just before the pandemic, NSFW notes how they, along with fellow founders Iyesha and Roxanne (@iyeshaaaaa/@roxx._xxanne), “threw parties in Otley forest” and “under a motorway bridge, buying all the equipment using OnlyFans money”, before landing a regular gig at Eiger Studios.

Rat Party operates with a sliding pay scale system, in which queer and POC individuals are asked to pay a discounted ticket fee, with sex workers, QTPOC, and gender diverse persons offered further subsidisations to account for the added socioeconomic challenges they face. On their Instagram account (@rat._party), the pay scale system is described as being representative of how QTPOC, sex worker and gender variant communities are the “focal point” of Rat Party and compensatory for the unfair economic imbalances these communities face day-to-day. In action, it is clear to see how this pay scale system encourages not only need-based expenditure but acts as a way of flipping the demographics, with queer and POC individuals making up the majority of the crowd. This space allows the minority to feel like the majority, the default, and the resultant atmosphere is radical and potent.

Now having partied for two-and-a-half years, Rat Party still has its claws tight around its core values of uplifting the community, engendering queer euphoria, and serving cunt. “We definitely got inspired going to events like Love Muscle and Flesh in Tension,” says NSFW, “music inspiration came from there and discovering other parties around the EU that play harder, faster stuff”. Friday night's roster certainly paid homage to these influences, featuring ecstatic sets from self-proclaimed “Mákina Diva” barcelonina Sonora, German Europa, and Toronto-based Myst Milano, along with NSFW themselves. The energy in the room was as euphoric as its music, leaning into trance for the large part of the night with bubblegum bass-style jangly synths and europop aesthetics slipping in and out of the mix. The sound matched the visuals, with the sexed-up, eclectic style of the crowd doing as much for the venue's setting as the heavy smoke and dynamic lighting.

The sense of freedom in the air was palpable and so perfectly aligned with the party's spirit, one of passionate queer abstraction of clubbing traditions. What resulted was a space that wasn't just safe, but raw, genuine and unique both behind and in front of the decks. Parties like these suggest that the diversification of the Leeds scene is blossoming, and I'm excited for the vivid, dirty, and controversial influence Rat Party will have on the future of queer nightlife.



By Kyle Galloway

Photo credits : Instagram (@rat._party)

I'm Not Here to Make Friends

Sam Smith's glorious self-expression amidst video backlash

By Esme McGowan



Amidst RuPaul's iconic call for self love ('If you can't love yourself, how in the hell you gon' love somebody else?'), recent Grammy-winner Sam Smith glides into the night sky. Clad in gorgeous pink ruffles and riding lavishly in a golden helicopter, so begins their latest music video *I'm Not Here to Make Friends*.

The disco-infused track is dripping with sexual liberation and hedonistic freedom, with a New Romantics-style video and lyrics such as 'If you want it bad tonight/ Come by me and drop a line/ Put your aura into mine/ Don't be scared if you like it.' The message is clear, we're here to have fun, be sexy and enjoy our bodies - if you're going to ruin the vibes, don't come along.

Like many pop-tracks, Smith's *I'm Not Here to Make Friends* invites self-loving and freedom of expression, however they have received a disproportionate amount of criticism for the video, with complaints centering on its hypersexualisation and supposedly loose morals. Although such disapproval does come up occasionally, with tracks such as 'WAP', one cannot help but think that this backlash doesn't have anything to do with sexualised content and is, instead, a result of Smith being non-binary, plus-sized and joyously themselves.

With their most recent album *Gloria*, Sam Smith has entered into a new phase of musical expression, one which feels more open and liberated. The album explores their struggles with self-love - the first track *Love Me More* directly addresses Smith's challenges with body image and external criticism - whilst also reflecting the difficulties that can come with being queer. Moments such as the *Hurting Interlude*, a sample from lesbian activist Lilli Vincenz in the 1970s, captures the loneliness caused by heteronormativity and homophobia and locates the album within the wider LGBTQ+ movement. Amongst current discussions on and restrictions of trans rights, there is added sense of importance to this album.

Smith's classic sound remains, with love ballads and impressive vocals throughout, but the album also has a celebratory sound. Tracks such as *I'm Not Here to Make Friends* and *Unholy* explore an overtly sexual and joyous self-expression, whilst *Who We Love* reflects the liberation that can come from being your true self.

All-in-all, this album feels like a pure reflection of Sam Smith and their musical and personal journey over recent years,

In regards to *I'm Not Here to Make Friends*, the video content is not dissimilar to other mainstream pop songs - extravagant outfits, large-scale dance routines and gyrating bodies left, right and centre. You'll have seen similar things in performances by Little Mix, Nicki Minaj, Madonna and countless others. Unlike these artists however, the video is unapologetically queer, filled with gorgeous, provocative and androgynous outfits, Drag Queens and ballroom style dancing. Smith looks stunning, donning multiple outfit changes as they parade amongst dancers and adoring ball-goers. It is glorious.

For critics, however, there seems to be something wrong, evident in significant backlash online. Unwanted and unneeded criticism regarding Smith's performance, whether to do with their outfits (notably the presence of corsets and nipple tassels) or suggestive dance routines, reflects not only a continuing anger towards unapologetic queer expression, but the persistence of body-shaming and transphobia within such discourse. Smith being plus-sized and non-binary underpins much of the criticism faced online, as their choice to exercise an alluring androgyny by wearing traditionally feminine outfits, such as ballgowns, does not fit within traditional binaries. The irony is that other artists, such as Harry Styles, have been praised for such boundary crossing and are seen as pioneers in the field. Of course, this is not really a surprise but goes to show how such explorations in fashion and self-expression are only deemed acceptable when performed by those who fit the classic pop-star moulds, and heteronormative boundaries.

Despite this, the video has also garnered positive attention and is seen by many as a wonderful production of queerness, sexuality and freedom. The video is extravagant, quirky and over-the-top in all the best ways. The song itself is also upbeat and enjoyable, reflecting excess and liberty in the age of 'friendzoning', dating apps and break-ups. Sam Smith's return has been eye-catching and the *I'm Not Here to Make Friends* music video is just one exuberant extension of this.

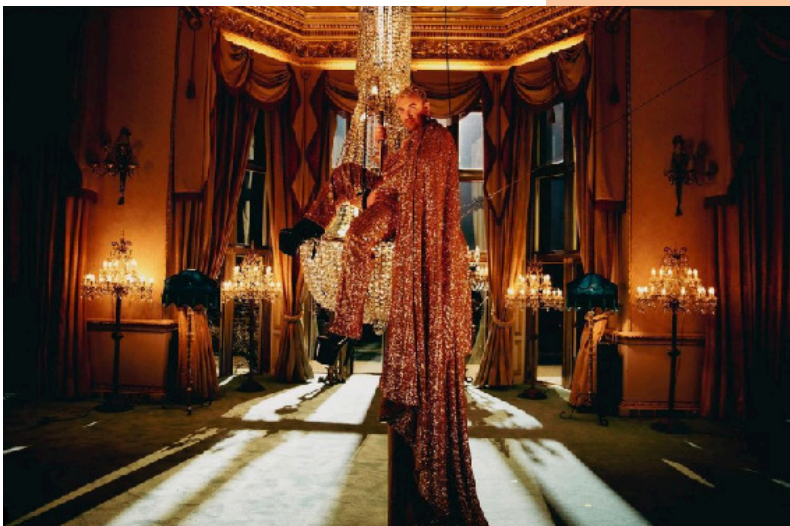


Photo credits: Instagram (@samsmith)

A little homage to a legend : Celebrating 50 years since Bowie blew Leeds away

by Xavi Straw

In 1972, an alien came to Leeds and struck the city with his magic. That magic has changed, and continues to change, the people of Leeds fifty years on. Located in Leeds City Museum, this small exhibition of Bowie memorabilia pays homage to that magical encounter. Packed with nostalgia-infused artefacts, the exhibition perfectly condenses the enigmatic beauty of this pop culture icon who managed to touch the souls of each and every individual whom he came across.

This collection is bursting with colour and calamity. In one glance you are met with the many faces (literally) and feelings of the immortal star, from the sombre to the psychedelic. The sheer range of artefacts is astonishing, from pins to posters, tees to toys - each portraying their own clear character and capturing a specific moment in Bowie's constant evolution.

This collection represents not only who Bowie was, but the impact he had on those he encountered. It features audio logs from three individuals who attended his Leeds show fifty years ago, each sharing their personal experience of the gig, and the impacts it had on them as they grew. What I found most striking was the unique stories each individual had, leading up to their attendance of the show, their experience of the show, and the impact it had on the rest of their lives. Each story is filled with love and nostalgia, from being gifted a cassette player by neighbouring students at a time when families could only dream of affording such a thing, to tears of joy rising up upon receiving tickets as a birthday present. The show was, of course, unforgettable, but it was these gestures of generosity, discovery and awe which has stuck with them and fundamentally changed them in their own ways, and which has shone through the rest of their lives. It can be summed up with words from Maureen's story; 'you don't remember the words said, but you'll always remember the feeling... I walked out of there a different person.'

I found Steeve's story particularly moving. Being a closeted homosexual during a time of great stigma, he recalls the warmth and companionship he felt through Bowie's music. Bowie allowed him to be different, encouraged and reaffirmed his right to live the way he was. Inspired by Bowie's sense of style and confidence, Steeve went on to embrace the aesthetics of the unusual, engaging later in the Punk scene and beyond. This theme of inspiring confidence is present in each story. Chris recalled being drawn in by Bowie's outlandish looks, and later being 'blown away' by the costumes worn by the attendees of the show. To think that these are just three of the thousands of life changing memories inspired by Bowie puts into perspective his influence, yet during the peak of his career, he was viewed by many in a drastically different light. The exhibition also features a clip of BBC reports on Bowie's stardom, rife with cynicism, subtle homophobia, and degradation. In the hindsight of today, this only serves to proliferate our admiration for Bowie choosing to be himself against his society's hatred of difference.

Bowie's subversive bravery has left its mark on generation after generation, being seminal to swathes of music genres, aesthetics, and activism to this day. Wandering further into the museum I came across a corridor dedicated to contemporary trans-rights and LGBTQ+ protest and artwork. After just moving away from Bowie's exhibition, with him still firmly in my mind, I could see every placard, painting and costume holding a little piece of Bowie. The world would not be the same without this alien angel, not of this world, but just human enough to inspire us all to lose it, use it, and boogie.

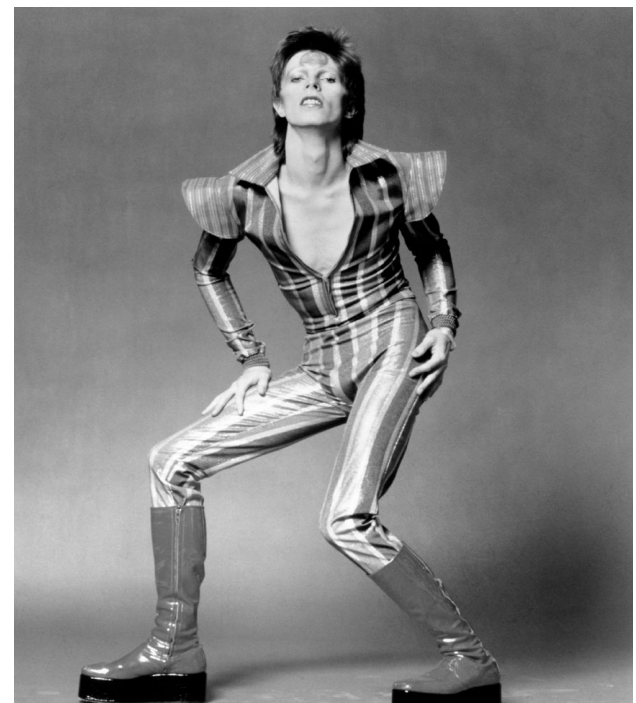


Image credit: The Wall Street Journal

Dartmoor is saturated with storytelling,



with rich geographies of folklore...

Drawing by Mia Fulford

DARTMOOR BELONGS TO ITS STORIES: OLD CROCKERN, PROTEST, AND THE RIGHT TO ROAM

I grew up in Devon and on Dartmoor. I live less than a mile away from a neolithic stone row, which my mother affectionately refers to as the 'giant's grave'. I live five miles away from a 'healing stone', a rock with a perfect person-sized hole in the middle that to slide through is to relieve any ailment. Slightly further is Wistman's Wood, where, if you are lucky, you may witness the Wild Hunt and the hounds of the moor. Beyond that, at Postbridge, the Hairy Hands have driven people to their deaths. In these ways, Dartmoor is unknowable. Its history is vast and woven with the folklore and traces of those who came before; its stories situate the collective and overlapping identities of people who have related to the land for thousands of years.

Old Crockern is one such example of the richly-threaded cultural tapestry of Dartmoor. For centuries, Old Crockern, the spirit and guardian of the moor, has ridden out from Crocken Tor at night. He is a ghoulish figure of varying gaunt descriptions who rides a skeletal horse. In the years of enclosure, locals called upon the spirit to resist the impeding of their common land. Old Crockern's curse is powerful: there are stories of landowners attempting to farm and fence off the moor only to be forced out by waning financial circumstances or personal failings.

It is apt, then, that Old Crockern has become the figurehead of a movement against a new kind of enclosure. On January 13th, Alexander Darwall, a wealthy hedge fund manager with multiple properties across the UK, won a landmark legal case which effectively overturned the right to wild camp on Dartmoor. Darwall sought to prohibit wild camping on his 4000-acre holdings on the moor for pheasant shooting.

For years, Dartmoor has been the only space left in England where you can legally wild camp: a final bastion of legal protections for those seeking to exercise their freedoms on common land. Among the subsequent public outcry was a peaceful march on January

21st attended by hundreds and spearheaded by The Right to Roam UK and The Stars Are Ours. Crucially, the objective of the march was to awaken Old Crockern. Here, I would argue, is a stroke of protest genius. To say that Dartmoor belongs to anybody, even 'the people' is to subtly disavow the contingency of the relationship between humans and the moor when they enter it. Of course, it is crucial to embolden the collective against their rights and access to nature being stripped. The revoking of the bylaw undermines one of the last few legal protections in England for access to nature. The case creates a legal precedent that the general population is not entitled to their green surroundings and helps further demarcate the land along contours of class and race. It takes away an opportunity to experience untouched landscapes in a time when they are increasingly few and need protection. But the moor belongs to itself.

To claim ownership of the moor for anybody is to trace the same anthropocentric binarisms between human and nature that lead to it being exploited and cut up to begin with; it ignores what people collectively owe to the moor. Using Old Crockern, however, problematizes claiming the moor at all. Old Crockern represents how the moor is its own, self-empowered place of human history and storytelling. He represents how humans are inspired and built from the land, rather than vice versa. Yet, there are issues with the use of Old Crockern worth attending to.

'Tradition' is often a precursor for regression, for staking a claim to a land and barring it off to others. In the case of Old Crockern, this pitfall is avoided purely because the spirit attends to the land first. Equally, going out and attempting to awaken a spirit is perhaps a particularly gentrified form of protest, removed from the very tangible, material circumstances that other protest movements grapple with. Again, though, focalising the movement through other means would probably be self-defeating because the protest's key focus is the moor. And using Old Crockern isn't

unsuccessful. Ongoing talks between the protest movement, Dartmoor National Park and now the government are hopefully signalling progress. Just last week, the Labour cabinet pledged to revoke the wild camping ban if they came to power.

The use of Old Crockern in protest, then, bolsters the land itself. Crockern helps us appreciate the histories of Dartmoor as a site of knowledge and creative inspiration. As a being of inbetweenness that is not wholly 'human' or 'natural', Old Crockern merges and balances the two spheres. The guardian symbolises a stewardship for the environment and emboldens the body of tradition and land that has made him.

Dartmoor is saturated with storytelling, with rich geographies of folklore that situate the unknowability of the land. The way in which the moor ongoingly influences imaginations attests that the land will always predate human manifestations of it: that it belongs to itself. In protest, then, who are people like Darwall to try and undermine the relationship to the land that Old Crockern embodies? Who is Darwall to overlook such a testament to Dartmoor's power?

by Mia Fulford



Could it be *Ireland's* Time to Shine at the 96th Academy Awards?

Frankie Haresign discusses the wealth of Irish talent being represented in this year's Academy Awards nominations and questions if we're living in the golden age of Irish cinema.

Once again, it's every film lover's favourite time of year as the nominees for the 96th Annual Academy Awards were announced recently. After last year's ceremony left a sour taste in our mouths, we are all ready to hear which of this year's cohort will be taking home the prestigious Academy Award of Merit. This year especially could be Ireland's time to shine on the film industry's world stage. History has already been made by this year's nominations with the most Irish and Northern Irish nominees in the Oscars near 100-year history representing a surge in Irish talent that has been ignored for far too long.

Martin McDonagh's *The Banshees of Inisherin*, featuring a predominantly Irish cast and crew, picked up nine nominations. This is the second most at this year's Oscars, and four of them are first time acting nominations. McDonagh's repertoire may not be the most extensive, but his signature style of 'absurdist black humour' has earned him widespread critical acclaim and plenty of Oscar nominations. It looks this year that he may finally bring home Best Original Screenplay after two previous nominations in the same category. He also stands in strong contention for other nominations for Best Picture and Best Director. Also for *The Banshees*, Colin Farrell's nomination for Best Actor feels painfully overdue. Yet, his portrayal of Pádraic, the loveable yet melancholic lead, proves why Farrell is one of the finest actors working today. The film's supporting cast also bring their A-game earning three first time Best Supporting Actor nominations. Brendan Gleeson and Kerry Condon's performances both contrast Farrell's in different ways but elevate the dialogue-heavy film to one that is deeply emotional and nuanced in their exploration of their characters' relationships. Barry Keoghan solidifies his position as one of the most

exciting new talents the industry has to offer with his nomination for what is undoubtedly the most interesting performance in the film. As well as nominations for Best Original Score and Film Editing, *Banshees* has become the bookies favourite to win big this year: McDonagh showcasing the Irish film industry at its very best.

Rivalling Colin Farrell for best actor is fellow Irishman Paul Mescal, once again first-time nominee, for his gut-wrenching performance in Charlotte Wells' semi-biographic indie film *Aftersun*. Mescal first broke our hearts in the hit series *Normal People*, and again he manages to tug on the very same heart strings as he portrays a young, struggling father to a shining Frankie Corio's Sophie. What makes Mescal's performance so special is how much the viewer can buy into it; at times it seems less of a performance and more of a projection of the director's memory into film. Upon reaching the credits we're slapped in the face with all sorts of emotions as each subtlety and acting choice in the performance comes full circle. Mescal rightfully earns his place amongst some of the best acting performances of the year.

With these nominations, according to Reuters, Ireland becomes only the third country behind the USA and the UK to have five or more acting nominations at a single Oscars ceremony. This year, Ireland represents a quarter of the acting nominations overall. Elsewhere in the nominations, Irish language film *The Quiet Girl* became the first film from Ireland to be nominated for Best International Feature and *An Irish Goodbye*, featuring Northern Irish actors set in their home country, also made its way into Best Short Film category.

The 96th Academy Awards point to an upcoming golden age of Irish cinema, with Belfast's success last year

and the host of nominations picked up by Irish cast and crew this year. Irish filmmaking has proved more than capable of challenging the dominance of the US and British film industries. Irish nominees can expect tough competition this year with Brendan Fraser's well-earned comeback story and the mind-bending *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, but such a high volume of Irish talent amongst the nominations can only be positive. For Irish filmmaking more generally, these awards signal an inspiring new generation of storytellers who embody the rich culture Ireland has to offer.

by Frankie Haresign

Image Credit: Slate, CNT, HBO



How to support International Women's Day

Even if you aren't aware now, you will be on 8th March when your entire Instagram feed consists of the following:

1. *Groups of girlfriends on a night out*
2. *Celebrity women, probably Beyoncé, perhaps the Kardashians*
3. *Someone's mother doing amateur modelling in the 80s*

All will be unified by something resembling "my women #IWD". Once upon a time International Women's Day became nothing more than an opportunity to show your otherwise apathetic followers that you too are a girl-power loving, feminist queen. For one day a year, if you don't post anything with the eponymous IWD hashtag, you are a woman hater and may as well join an Andrew Tate fan club. With the stakes this high, chances are you will come across a post of a girl you know full well to have famously and consistently slandered her friends, now aligning herself with the upper echelons of feminism. Herein lies the fallibility of 'clicktivism' and why a hashtag does not make you a supporter of International Women's Day. Instead, you can show your support all year round and avoid. Despite the above, there is obviously no problem with honouring your friends online, IF you are going to love them on the other 364 days as well. University can be a tricky time for comparison, when others are getting internships and job offers, and you seem to be faced with rejection after rejection. Excitement for them can sometimes be overshadowed by your own disappointment but it is really important, both for them and for the longevity of your friendship, if you can give them the praise they deserve. Equally, when you're enshrined in success don't forget about those that are not



If we consider feminism to be the raising of women to reach an equilibrium with men, then it is essential that women are bolstering one another along the way. Not putting other women down to elevate yourself and being nice to your friends are things we should be doing every day regardless of whether you are posting about it. The International Women's Day campaign theme for 2023 is #EmbraceEquity, a hashtag with an impact. This year there is a push towards equity for inclusivity amongst all genders, with an emphasis on the fact that feminism that isn't intersectional isn't feminism.

LGBTQ+ women are subjected to a double burden of sexism and sexual-orientation discrimination. A 2021 University study conducted by Stonewall showed that nine out of ten LGBTQ+ students have a positive or neutral Uni experience. As a reader of The Gryphon, the likelihood is that, in one way or another, you contribute to Leeds student culture. Think of your words and actions as the microbiome of the university environment and continue to make a conscious effort to make everyone's Uni experience the best it can be; be vigilant, call out offensive jokes, challenge stereotypes and confront bias. Although LGBTQ+ experiences tend to be far improved than they once were, there is still a long way to go, so if you are wondering whether we still need International Women's Day, the answer is YES. And if your annoying male housemate asks, "when's international men's day?" Lottie Passmore

Building Healthy Habits in 2023

At the start of the New Year, it is typical for most people to create New Year's resolutions in the hope of making the new year better than the old. These New Year's resolutions are always overly complicated, and it can be disappointing when, inevitably, they fail. Rather than create these impossible resolutions, I would like to offer a few simply healthy habits that you could introduce into your life to build a better 2023.

Sleep

Sleep is one of the most important things to keep your mind well and to encourage good habits during your day. While getting the full eight hours of sleep is not typical for a university student, there are habits you can introduce to be rested and right mindset to start your day. Setting an alarm and waking up at the same time each morning gets your body into a routine and creates healthy sleeping patterns.

Food

Eating a balanced diet is important for both body and mind. Introducing just a few healthy foods into your diet can make all the difference. Replacing just one snack per day with a fruit or vegetable is a good way to start! Why not give meal prepping a go too? Making multiple meals at once and freezing them will ensure that you always have dinner available even after long days of studying!

Planning

Planning out your days at the start of the week can make the Sunday scaries seem a lot less daunting. This includes writing down classes, study time, nights out with friends and meal plans. Having everything written down is a simple way to take the stress out of the week and make your life easier. It also means that you will not forget any important assignments or tasks because everything is written down. Producing a daily checklist means you can plan a reasonable amount of work to get done every day by setting achievable targets.

Time for yourself?

Perhaps the most important healthy habit to introduce into 2023 is taking time for yourself. Making sure you schedule time to do the things you love – whether it be reading, watching television, arts and crafts – is important to a healthy balance in

Jessica George



Art (both): Coco Thomas | Instagram @cocolilac-art

Valentines Day: the practice of self-love

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, couples all over the country are being sucked into the commercial pull of roses, teddy bears and dinner reservations. But in this push to declare your love for someone else, there is often little regard for loving yourself. It's 2023 and it's time to expand the narrative. Self-love is one of the most valuable practices to keep, but it is often one of the hardest. As someone who has recently started a journey towards self-love and self-compassion, here are my go-to tips to get you started on your own journey.

Invest in a good journal

For me, writing is a form of release. With that, something that has massively helped me become more in tune with myself has been journaling. Taking a few minutes out of each day to jot down any thoughts - positive or negative - allows me to unclutter my mind and feel much less clouded. Along with that, I have found that practising gratitude can be invaluable. In documenting daily achievements, no matter how small, can really help give a positive spin on life.

Challenge yourself to have a digital detox

Do you find yourself glued to your phone most of the time and scrolling endlessly on social media? I do too, and if anything, it makes my self-esteem worse. It wasn't until I started introducing digital detoxes into my life that I really realised how addicted to my phone I really was and how damaging that can be. In no way am I not saying that you should get rid of your phone completely, as these devices can be really great tools. However, if like me, you find yourself slipping into comparison behaviours with others on social media in a negative way, it could be useful to factor in some time out during the day by leaving your phone in a different room.

Run yourself a soothing bath

To me, nothing screams self-care more than a hot, steamy bubble bath. I must admit, the bath is probably my most treasured home comfort. It's also a great place to simply take some time out by yourself and really relax. I personally find that lighting a candle

Buy yourself some flowers

In keeping with the Valentine's theme, why not treat yourself to some fresh flowers the next time you're in a shop or super-market? You don't need to wait around for someone else to buy them for you, or you may be waiting a while! If, like me, you spend a lot of time in your bedroom, I find that having a bunch of fresh flowers in the corner really helps bring some colour and life to the same four walls and really puts a smile on my face.



Breathe!

This last one may seem like a given, but I cannot stress this enough. One of the most powerful things that we, as human beings, can do is to take a moment and focus on our breath. Deep breathing really helps to reduce stress, and bring us back to the ground, especially after a difficult day. Even if you simply take one deep inhale and exhale just before you go to sleep, this can really help you to relax. If you're interested in going a bit further with some longer mindfulness and breathing techniques, there are some brilliant YouTube videos and apps, such as Calm, that are dedicated to guiding you through this process and helping you find your inner peace.

It can be far too easy to get so wrapped up in loving everyone else that ultimately, you end up forgetting about loving yourself! So, this year, let's dedicate Valentine's day to loving ourselves and to treating ourselves with all the love and kindness that we truly deserve.



Random Acts

With 'Random Act of Kindness Day' this month, we can all think about one small way to show kindness to those around us, our environment, and ourselves. It doesn't necessarily mean going out of our way, but the smallest act could make somebody's day - or even change their life. Here are 50 ideas; pick a few you think you could swing and make a difference today.

1. Compliment a stranger
2. Litter pick
3. Pay for someone else's thing
4. Text someone that you haven't heard from in a while
5. Give flowers or chocolates to someone
6. Get a vegan dessert - trust me, they're hard to find
7. Make a meal for your flatmates/housemates
8. Bake something for your neighbours
9. Tell your friend something you admire about them
10. Offer to body double for someone struggling with exams
11. Leave a nice note
12. Give your favourite person a hug
13. Tip the server that's working hard
14. Give stuff to a charity shop
15. Play the UN's vocabulary game at [freerice.com](https://www.freerice.com) to help feed those in need
16. Send a care package to someone who needs it - [websites]
17. Remember something that bothered you about the system at university or work and draft a proposal to change it
18. Lend your ear to a colleague having a tough day
19. Download the Finch app and send your contacts some anonymous support from an adorable bird!
20. Offer to give someone a lift
21. Tell someone that you're thinking of them
22. Send a handwritten letter or postcard
23. Arrange a potluck dinner with friends
24. Bring water, tea or coffee to people working or studying with you
25. Send a jigsaw or book you've finished to a family member or friend
26. Download the 'Thought Catalog' app and use CBT techniques to tackle your negative thoughts
27. Send a thank you card to a medical professional/surgery that helped you out
28. Email an old teacher that inspired you or made a difference
29. Tell your lecturer you found their lecture interesting
30. Pick up a piece of litter as you pass on the street
31. Sign up to donate blood
32. Re-rack weights lying around at the gym
33. Give snacks to post men and delivery drivers
34. Write a kind comment
35. Order an extra side next time you get takeaway and give it to someone who's struggling
36. Help people feel less alone by interacting with the community on the HeadHelp app
37. Check on elderly neighbours
38. Let someone know you support them when they're experiencing a conflict
39. Be a courteous driver
40. Put a kind sticky note on a mirror in a public bathroom
41. Leave a message in a library book
42. Leave a pack of sanitary products in a public bathroom
43. Smile at an anxious-looking stranger
44. Download a Kindness Calendar for daily ideas at <https://www.randomactsof-kindness.org/kindness-at-home#kindness-calendar>
45. Make an extra portion of dinner for someone you know who is feeling overwhelmed

Felicity Haslin

***Gucci Slides
GF, Off-White
Dunks BF: Jo-
nah Hill's lat-
est is a modern
streetwear ro-
mance.***

YOU PEOPLE

Whilst Netflix's latest release 'You People' may have missed the mark cinemat-ically, we're all envious of its wardrobe. For those of you who are yet to watch the movie (don't rush on my account), 'You People' follows a classic trope. Two families who clash on cultural differences, battling race, religion, and stub-born parents. However stereotypical and cliché the movie can be at times, the outfits sported by stars Lauren London and Jonah Hill are nothing short of a streetwear fiend's dream closet. Forget the plot, let's get into those all-important grails showcased in the movie.

Like I said, the movie is nothing to write home about. In fact, it was painful at points; the constant signalling to overt racial stereotypes and 'the culture' cringed me out. But it seems that the streetwear injected into its veins kept our attention alive. In fact, it's sneakers and streetwear that sparks the first flame of romance between our on-screen couple. Michelle R. Cole, the movie's costume designer, is in this case the real star of the picture. With nine Emmy's under her belt, Cole worked closely with the actors to deliver not only looks that resonated with the characters, but, evidently, looks that resonated with their real-life actors.

Jonah Hill is no stranger to the world of fashion. The 39-year-old Superbad star has become an unexpected, formidable style icon due to his incredible taste in streetwear, with a fan even creating a viral Instagram account dedicated to his fits (@jonahfits). His looks on screen did not fail to impress. Bold prints adorned our screens throughout, with many a camp collar shirt adorned by our protagonist – the coral pink BornxRaised shirt was a personal favourite. On Ezra (Hill) and Amira's (London) first date, he sports a brave tie-dye, cosy Camp High sweatsuit, paired with Abloh-designed dunks – enough to make a girl swoon. Well, me at least. Ezra, though comfortable with a statement piece, shows that he can dial it down a notch – pairing a neutral Gucci cardigan over a Gucci tee yet making it look so put together. He also keeps it lowkey with his graphic tees throughout, including everything from a basic \$5 dollar Death Row Records eBay cop to a £40 Honor The Gift piece.

Moving on to Amira, played by the stunning Lauren London, who is 100% on my rob list. When we meet Amira, she's effortless and chic. A Marine Serre monogram tucked into leather trousers and paired with Lucky Green Air 1s – chefs kiss. From her statement, chunky gold jew-ellery to her trusty Telfar mini shopper, her looks are ac-cessorised to perfection. Amira also proves she can pull off a high glam look, stunning our screens in a sweep-ing emerald slip for her hen night.

It's always fun to see costume designers experi-ment with streetwear. It is such an integral part of fashion today and should be reflected in bold, daring outfits on screen. Though the on-screen romance did not achieve what it was hoping to in the eyes of cinephiles, the movie still stands as a love letter to fashion. Because, at the end of the day, who doesn't want to wear match-ing Sean Wotherspoon Air Max 1/97's with their boo? True romance.



Image credit:
GQ

designer profile:

Haider Ackermann’s collection for Jean Paul Gaultier was indisputably the most anticipated show in Paris Couture Fashion Week, spring 2023 season.

Ever since Gaultier’s retirement from the runway in 2020, Ackermann has joined the likes of Olivier Rousteing (Balmain), Glen Martens (Diesel and Y/Project) and Chitose Abe (Sacai) in his contribution towards the yearly guest-designed Gaultier couture collection, leading to a renewed interest in his work.

Ackermann has been celebrated for his raw talent in fashion long before his collaboration with Jean Paul Gaultier. Having received a Swiss Textile Award and Fashion Group International Award for Design, he is a decorated designer with an impressive résumé. Being the former creative director of Berluti, Ackermann has been approached to lead several design houses, such as Dior and Maison Margiela, and was even described as Lagerfeld’s ideal successor at Chanel by Karl himself. Descriptions like a “new Yves Saint-Laurent” have, however, not come easily to Ackermann. In his pursuit of a fashion design degree at the prestigious Royal Academy of Fine Art in Antwerp, he was expelled in 1997 for failing to complete his assignments. Ackermann attributes this to his constant strive for perfection – he felt unable to produce collections which met his standards. Designing Gaultier’s guest couture collection this year has granted Ackermann complete access to the Gaultier atelier in Paris, allowing him to “go nuts” with all the resources available. Ackermann has said that his designs are “progressive and avant-garde,” and he has “pushed the envelope in culture and society as a whole, above and beyond fashion. If one follows fashion, you follow Jean Paul Gaultier,” said Ackermann, calling his new position “an immense honour.”

In three words, Ackermann’s designs are dynamic, intricate and tailored. His work is influenced by his global upbringing, particularly the discord of cultural differences. His close collaborator Timothée Chalamet models the fluidity of Ackermann’s designs better than any runway show can. Given Chalamet’s notoriety as one of Hollywood’s “most thrilling red carpet dressers,” his return to Ackermann’s designs throughout the years is testament to this designer’s ingenuity. Examples include the belted silver satin suit which Chalamet wore to the premiere of The King in 2019, to his backless halter jumpsuit at the premiere of Bones and All, called his “most daring red carpet look yet” by Vogue. This collaboration does not end on the red carpet; it has evolved into a close friendship with shared values. Chalamet shared on Instagram that the pair had “been wanting to make something for a couple of years now,” and the result of this endeavour was a hoodie for Afghan Women’s Rights. It was designed in December 2021 and 100% of the proceeds from this hoodie went to Afghanistan Libre, a French organisation which strives to protect Afghan women’s rights.

Ackermann has often been described as a designer’s designer, and his couture collection for Gaultier is no exception. In-aesthetic with Gaultier’s more-is-more mentality, Ackermann’s collection stays very true to who he is. Past collections have dominantly black and white garments with exceptional tailoring, maximalist silhouettes and complicated constructions. praise for his “sophisticated colour sense,” with a few vibrant choices cropping up throughout this collection. Be-expressed that he had “always loved Haider’s work, especially on the tailoring,” and expressed his certainty that “remarkable”.

When asked to describe his collection, Ackermann returns to the word purity. He uses this to describe his experience and as an attempt to honour the work of the seamstresses. In addition, he uses it to describe his “absolute ideality” which he tries to reflect through this collection as well as to describe his gender-fluid fashion style. In the shows have been described as “all fluidity and grace,” with the summer 2010 show being the epitome of this. the innovation does not end there. In an interview with Phillip Utz, Ackermann describes his reasoning for in-women’s wear in the same runway show – “I really like this exchange, this moment of sharing between men and experience a love story.” An example of the humanism in his work is shown through his nod to Iran during the show by including the song “Baraye” by Shervin Hajipour in his soundtrack – a song written about the women’s Iran following the killing of Mahsa Amini in September of 2022. On this, Ackermann simply said “it’s a human mess-when considering haute couture, “you can’t not think about every other woman and her right to freedom, too.”

Despite the gender-fluidity of his designs, there is very little information on the designer’s sexuality. Ackermann is a private person, and does not enjoy press intrusions into his personal life. To speak more generally, Ackermann has frequently shown support for the LGBTQ+ community. Following the Fila x Ackermann collaboration which debuted in Manchester in late 2022, Ackermann and his guests piled into the infamous G.A.Y. club on Canal Street to celebrate the show. In his interview with Utz, the pair joked that Ackermann had “just left an afterparty at Mec Zone,” a gay club nearby, before conducting their interview. In response to this, Ackermann said “You’re outrageous! Next question.” It seems as though Ackermann’s private life will stay private, and rightly so.

Where Gaultier is the ‘enfant terrible’ of French fashion, celebrated for provocation and maximalism, Ackermann focuses on humanism and minimalism in his designs. Thus, the collaboration between the two was described by Ackermann as “an interesting exercise,” but the result was something truly unique and exemplary. Following on from the successes of this show, Ackermann may receive new opportunities at his own brand or elsewhere. With open roles as Louis Vuitton’s menswear lead and the top job at Gucci, Haider Ackermann is one to watch out for.

terplaying his personal minimalist consisted of minimalist, pre-It is easy to understand the fore this show, Gaultier his couture would be

rience in the atelier alised version of past, Ackermann’s For Ackermann, cluding men’s and women. They Gaultier runway rights protests in sage,” and that

Image credit: GQ

HAIDER ACKERMANN

PUGH

florence X vogue

Image credit:
Vogue

The newly turned 27-year old Oxford born superstar Florence Pugh has grown to become one of the fronting names in Hollywood. Since her international breakthrough in 2019, Pugh has starred in her fair share of major motion pictures Winter Vogue.

Shot by Colin Dodgson, the magazine cover shows Veneta dress. Although, the focus, it would seem, models so effortlessly – from Valentino to Loewe theme across the images and the cover story fashion: cooking. This is not to say that the two Exhibit A: one of the images is Florence in an al-dress moving down a shopping aisle at a food with a neutral toned image of the actress in a holding a giant fish.

On the theme, the interview takes place over the count on Ms. Florence Pugh to make cooking Alexander McQueen dress and heels look easy. In Pugh discusses everything self-acceptance. Not she make the point to Vogue that “The best sign good person is the ability to laugh at yourself”, when asked about some of her more daring and revealing fashion choices recently (her sheer, pink Valentino gown for instance) she expresses important attitude of “If I’m happy in it, then gonna wear it.”

Pugh herself has a pas-
the choice of theme.
hit on her social
three things.
her cooking
crostini
those of
know
need
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Num-
three:

The Winter issue is, however, not Pugh’s first time vest and scarf, she graced the cover of the Febru- to Instagram her reflections on how far she has Vogue and Anna Wintour for the surreal offer: time feels just as unique. If not more?”, she says. in these pictures and pages like this is such a

Back at the time of her 2020 Vogue cover, she *Black Widow* and with an Academy Award Her two latest films, *The Wonder* and *Puss* and she has a number of highly anticipated *Person* (directed by her ex Zach braff, starring star-studded *Oppenheimer*.

Fierce, fearless and unfiltered; three words her name. Florence Pugh is all of those core characteristics that make her such a to many young women for all things fashion,

Pugh has grown to become one of the fronting names in Hollywood. Since her international breakthrough in 2019, Pugh has starred in her fair share of major motion pictures Winter Vogue.

off the actress in a sophisticated sapphire Bottega does not only lie on the high fashion looks Pugh to Alaïa – but rather, not so subtly, on a consistent which is completely unrelated to the world of elements cannot coexist and be admired equally. most vegetable-looking green Proenza Schouler market. Another is quite simplistic in contrast, beige Jil Sander dress standing, slightly stiffly,

kitchen counter
in full glam
the

– you can
and an
interview,
only does
of a
but

hot
the
I’m

sion for cooking, explaining “Cooking with Flo” has become a media channels and has taught us Number one: she loves garlic. For session with Vogue, she made a garlic with tomatoes, feta and anchovies, and you who have been watching her cooking stories that she has an unconditional love for tzatziki. If you further proof, just check her Instagram bio and you shall the statement that “Tzatziki goes with everything.. Fact.” ber two: a cooking-cocktail is a must for Flo. And Number she undoubtedly inherited her dad’s talent in the kitchen.

on the cover of Vogue. Dressed in a Marc Jacobs blazer, ary issue back in 2020. For her recent cover, she took come since then and expressed her gratitude towards “Anna Wintour wanting me on the cover for a second “I love working, I love working hard. To be recognised wonderful nod.”

was just on the rise, having recently wrapped Marvel’s nominated performance in Greta Gerwig’s *Little Women. in Boots*, both recently received a BAFTA nomination upcoming projects set to be released in 2023: *A Good Morgan Freeman*), *Dune: Part 2*, and Christopher Nolan’s

printed in bold on the Winter Vogue cover along with things, and the words elegantly embody three of the powerful female figure in Hollywood and an inspiration food and self-acceptance.

Finding Common Ground: Climate Activism

The Gryphon Views Team

Last October saw activists from Just Stop Oil throw tomato soup at Van Gogh’s Sunflowers before glueing themselves to the wall. Similar methods have been employed by activists supporting environmental causes, and the impact of vandalism has proved controversial following much media discussion of this form of climate activism.

Considering the polarising nature of recent climate activism, for this edition of ‘Finding Common Ground’ we sat down with Tala Al-Kamil and Gabe Morrissey-Limb, both students at Leeds, to discuss their opinions. While Gabe was supportive of the activists’ methods, Tala has some doubts. We hoped they could find some common ground in their outlooks.

For Tala, there is a concern that vandalism of artwork was not the most effective tactic. “You’re getting media attention, but at what cost? The cost of culture and the cost of people supporting the cause”. She expresses apprehension that this method threatens to isolate the public from environmental activism. This leads to a questioning of what the activists hope to achieve. Tala argues that if their goal is simply to gain media attention for their cause, then they are proving successful. Yet, if they wish to increase widespread public support their approach is questionable. Instead, she stresses her faith in the use of law and litigation to achieve change and apply pressure to support environmental justice.

On the other hand, Gabe highlights how the Just Stop Oil protests have been effective in fueling a conversation about climate change, raising

awareness of the issue. He questions what other forms of activism will work, pointing to marches

most efficient immediate action”. He accepts that the point of a protest is to disrupt, and that an inevitable consequence of this is that some people will always be isolated from the cause.

The conversation briefly turns to the role that social media plays in forming people’s opinions on climate change. There had been much discussion on social media regarding the possibility that Just Stop Oil had been partly funded by an oil heiress. Gabe believes that misinformation around climate change on social media needs to face more regulation. Agreeing with this, Tala contends that social media has played a role in polarising the climate debate when, as a platform, it has the potential to make a significant difference.

As the conversation drew to a close, it was clear that Tala and Gabe share ‘common ground’ in their environmental worries and concern for the threat of climate change. Both are keen to stress that while no methods are perfect, taking action to support environmental justice is most important. In their discussion, Tala draws attention to rising sea levels in Tuvalu, an island in the Pacific Ocean, while Gabe mentions the UK’s heat waves last summer. Both agree that achieving change should not rest on the shoulders of activists, as rich, powerful companies and countries are the main contributors to emissions damaging the climate.



Tala’s Post-Debate Reflections

What were you hoping to gain from this debate?

“I was hoping to hear another perspective and really consider it. You can always learn more about this topic”.

Strongest Argument?

“Whatever you can say about the protests, they are urgent. Although they are disruptive, they are like that for a reason. Considering that these protests are non-violent, I think that he [Gabe] is right about how necessary they are”.

Has your opinion changed?

“Yes, I think going forward I will be more sympathetic. I have recently looked at the climate protests with scepticism. I will consider them more with Gabe’s positive perspective; he sees the good it can do in terms of galvanising support”.

Do you think the conversation was productive?

“I think it was productive. I don’t know if it was uplifting as it’s hard to have a conversation about the environment that leaves you feeling positive about the future. We were both listening to each other’s points and reacting to each other’s opinions with a lot of care and attention”.

Was there something that you would have wanted to discuss that was not raised?

“We could have spoken about COP27 more, but I’m glad about what we did speak about”.

Gabe’s Post-Debate Reflections

What were you hoping to gain from the debate?

“I was hoping to gain some insight into a different viewpoint on this topic and put my idea out there”.

Strongest argument?

“Tala’s point about using litigation to tackle climate change is very interesting. I agree with her that the goal of activists should be to change existing laws on this subject in order to achieve long-lasting change”.

Has your opinion changed?

“Yes, my opinion on the importance of litigation has changed. I neglected the significance of legal reform prior to this conversation and mainly focused on other methods of pressure politics”.

Do you think the conversation was productive?

“Yes, I think it was productive and interesting to talk to someone who does not necessarily have the same opinion as you, especially on such a contentious issue”.

Was there something that you would have wanted to discuss that was not raised?

“I think we covered every topic that I intended to cover”.



Anti-Trade Union Laws Must Be Resisted



Photo: Wikimedia

Kaynan Hudson defends the right to strike in response to the prospect of Anti-Trade Union legislation

Kaynan Hudson

As strikes take place across the UK, the Conservative Party is planning to introduce a wave of anti-union and anti-strike legislation. Continuing in Thatcher's footsteps, the party remains committed to its ideological conflict with organised labour.

Rather than negotiating with trade unions, the Conservative strategy is to eschew negotiations in the hopes that prolonged industrial action will turn public sympathy against the strikes, and thus make it politically easier for anti-strike legislation to be brought forward in Parliament.

The government should be tackling the underlying causes of the strikes. Although the disputes are about a range of issues (job security, working conditions, etc.), pay disputes are common throughout. The government claims that public sector pay rises are not possible in the current economic climate. Yet, apparently, rising bankers' bonuses and an increase in the wealth of the already wealthy are fine.

It must be recognised that it is not the working class that have caused the current economic problems. It is not the fault of cleaners, waking up in the early hours of a winter morning to clean a train station. It is not the fault of nurses, who worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic. It is not the fault of our postal workers, our teachers, our firefighters; it is not the fault of any part of the working class. The blame is squarely upon the government. Instead of touring morning television studios, ministers should be negotiating with trade unions, agreeing on pay settlements, guaranteeing job security and protecting workers' terms and conditions. They should be using wealth taxes to fund investment into our public services

and boosting recruitment numbers. Instead, they are devising plans to further weaken the organisational capacity of the working class by restricting union activity and the ability of working people to strike.

The right to strike must be defended. Contrary to Conservative arguments, industrial action is always a last resort. The Royal College of Nursing, for example, has not gone on strike in 106 years in England. Workers who strike also lose pay for every day that they withdraw their labour. Amidst a cost of living crisis, this is not an easy decision.

However, when the government is refusing to negotiate, or when employers continue to be obstructive, working people are left with no other choice but to withdraw their labour. Although disruptive, strikes are the final option taken by unions when all other options have failed. If people want the strikes to end, then they should direct their anger not at those on strike, but at the government and employers who have created the conditions leading to the strike.

The government is aiming to divide the working classes, so that anger is not directed at the government, but at other working people who take industrial action. Ultimately, this is self-destructive. It is the trade union movement that has won working people most of their rights. Governments do not simply grant rights out of goodwill; they must be fought for.

History illustrates this. A specific example is the right to equal pay, which was won by Ford workers in the 1960s who went on strike over gender discrimination. Other examples include the two-day weekend, paid maternity leave, retirement ages, health and safety standards, the minimum wage, paid holidays, workplace pensions,

the eight-hour working day, and so much more.

To attack and undermine trade unions is also to attack workers' rights and the achievements of generations of trade unionists. Fundamentally, every person should have the right to collectively organise and to withdraw their labour. It is through the collective organisation of workers that the working class can derive their political strength and defend their interests.

That is why all anti-trade union laws must be resisted. If such reforms are enacted, people's right to collectively organise will be diminished. This will make it harder for workers' interests to be advanced. Instead, workers' rights will come under sustained attack from the Conservatives, and there will be minimal legal options to resist them. In a democratic society, people must have the right to organise politically to represent their interests. The interest of Labour is represented through the labour movement. To restrict union activity is to restrict the right of the working classes to have their political and economic interests represented. Fundamentally, anti-union and anti-strike legislation is undemocratic, and it must be resisted.

Is America's Ban on China Chip Exports the End of Globalisation?

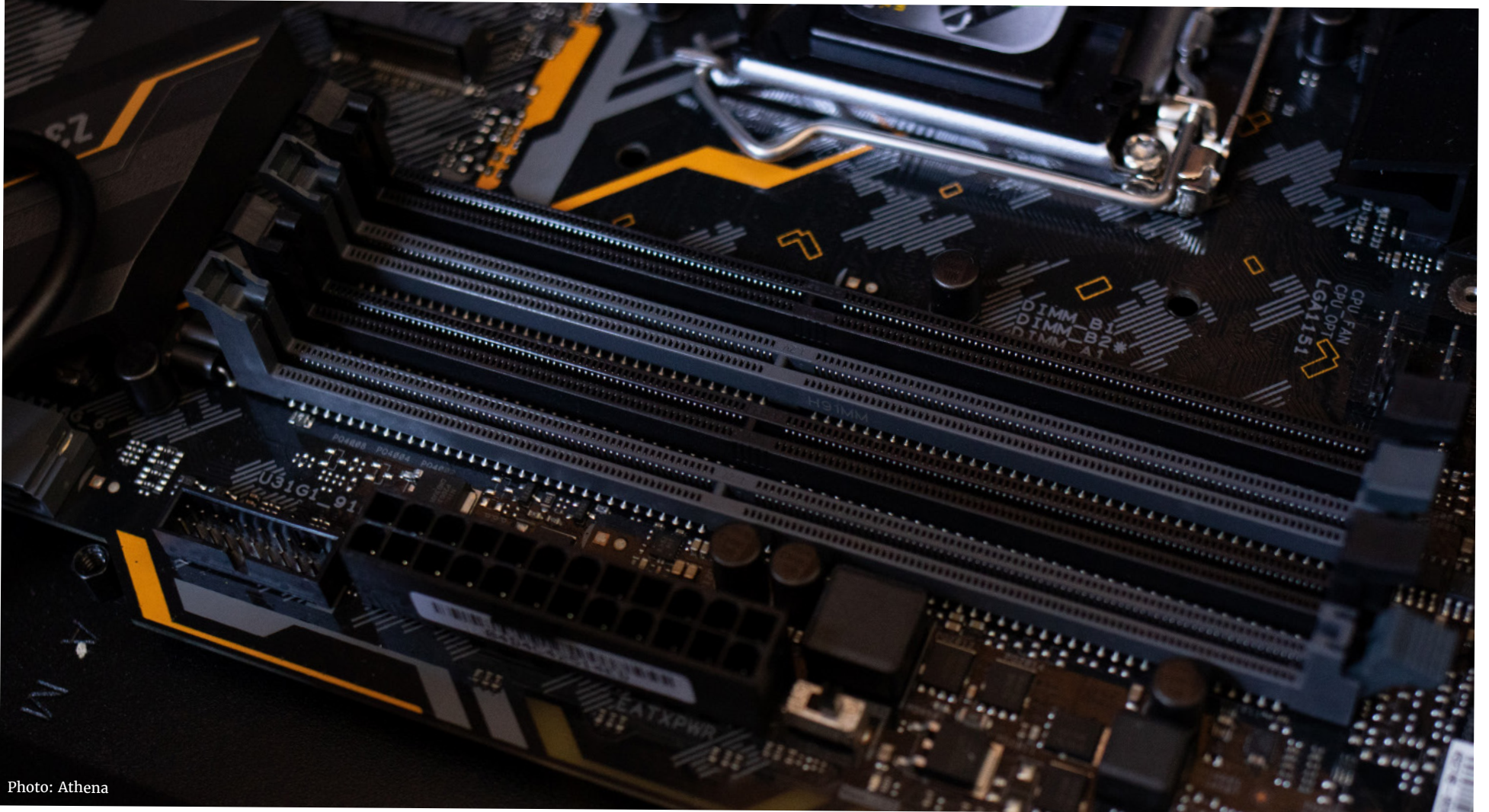


Photo: Athena

Jian Feng

President Biden announced tougher restrictions on semiconductor exports to China on October 7th. According to him, it's a human rights issue, because advanced chips can be used to produce cutting-edge military weapons.

Chips are an advanced technology product that can be found in a wide range of household items, from electric vehicles to computers and dishwashers.

After the announcement, chip and related companies stocks in China fell sharply. Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp. fell 9.3% during the next three days. Naura Technology Group Co., a leading chip equipment maker, fell by its daily limit for two days in a row.

Before these new restrictions, the American government implemented policies such as limiting the number of Chinese students studying technology degrees at American universities. In addition, the U.S. in the past has put restrictions on Huawei, a Chinese mobile firm.

However, the latest moves bring more damage to both countries. Advances in electric vehicles and other technologies that benefit the environment will be in danger. It's a sign that globalisation, which has bolstered economic growth throughout decades, is in retreat.

Although America has world-leading chip technology, it is relying on the chip-making

companies in China to produce it. The battle will be whether China can overcome the new export rules by creating their own advanced chips. This requires a large amount of time and funding.

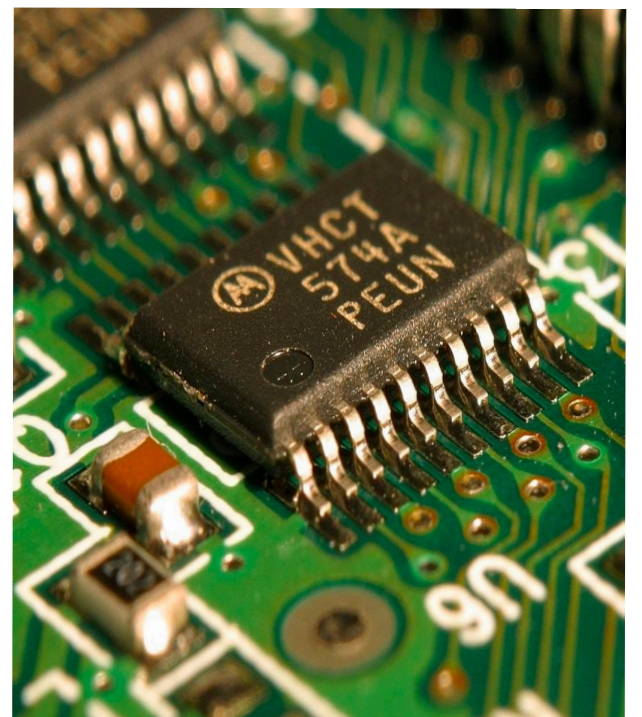
On the other hand, the American government needs to develop their own chip supply chain instead of relying on cheaper labour from other countries. They also need to design policies that will attract companies to move their overseas offices in China, back to America.

China has made it a national priority to build a domestic semiconductor industry, but at the moment they still need to import chips from America because of the technology gap.

This policy would also delay China's ambition on developing auto driving, cloud computing, and digitising their currency. The new restrictions also requests that staff who are of American nationality leave the job, cutting any link with Chinese chip companies. This include Applied Materials Inc., KLA Corp. and Lam Research Corp. They started to bring back their employees from Yangtze Memory Technologies Co., China's most advanced maker of memory chips.

The China Semiconductor Industry Association has suggested America reverse the restrictions, and follow the international trade negotiation process. Although China can find other countries to import chips from, America could force their allies to join the restrictions. This poses another

risk for the future of international trade and globalisation. The tech cold war is now getting hotter than ever.



These sanctions are having a direct effect on the stock market.
Photo: PxHere



Supporting LGBTQ+ Scientists

Photo: Flickr

Olivia Kolasinski

A quick Google search of LGBTQ+ in science brings up a number of events, exhibitions, interviews and organisations focusing on the stories and experiences of people who identify as members of both, the scientific and the LGBTQ+ community. It is important, however, to remember that this information was not always so easily accessible, or readily published, and it has taken many years and the concentrated efforts of hundreds, even thousands, to make the sciences a more inclusive field. With that being said, there is still a long way to go to ensure that the science sector is one where everyone feels safe, seen, heard and included.

In 2019, research reported that 30% of LGBTQ+ scientists, and over 50% of transgender scientists have considered leaving their place of work as a result of ‘unfriendly’ and ‘hostile’ behaviour from colleagues. On top of this, over half of study respondents reported a general ‘lack of awareness of LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace’. More recently, a 2021 study found that professionals working in STEM faculties and companies who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community experienced greater hiring and wage discrimination, as well as career limitations, harassment and ‘professional devaluation’ than other members of the workplace.

From the research it is clear that more needs to be done to support the LGBTQ+ community in the workplace, especially those working in STEM careers. LGBTQ+ voices deserve the right to be heard and to work without fear of judgement or hostility. This issue of The Gryphon celebrates the stories and history of the LGBTQ+ community. Here in the Science section, we outline three ways in which we can support and uplift these voices, and encourage the scientific community to become an even more inclusive space for everyone, regardless of identity and orientation.

Practise Pronoun usage:

Pronoun usage has become a hot topic over the past few years. To someone who identifies as the same gender they were born, this may not even be on their radar as a problem. However, for someone who does not identify with the gender they were born with, being referred to with the wrong pronoun can be a traumatic and

dehumanising experience.

Speaking to Nature, Micah Savin (they), a two-spirit non-binary PhD candidate based in NYC said, “every time you misgender me, you are saying “this space isn’t created for you, I don’t see you as yourself”. Promoting the use of pronoun nametags, in email signatures or using they/them when unsure of someone’s gender, are all small ways to make someone feel included.

It is also important to be able to correct yourself when you make a mistake, allowing yourself to be uncomfortable and admit error, rather than erase someone’s entire identity. An increasing number of people are using gender-neutral pronouns. Saying they or them doesn’t take more effort than saying he or she, and it can make a world of difference to someone else.

Be inclusive:

Our behaviours can have a massive influence on the behaviours of those around us. There is numerous evidence published about how people will mimic other people’s behaviour, hiding behind a ‘herd mentality’. However, this herd mindset can also be used for good. Being welcoming and friendly invites others to do the same, and makes a huge difference to someone. It is important to call out hateful language and behaviour when it happens, rather than letting it slide or ‘minding your business’. A space only becomes inclusive by including.

Create and promote a support network:

Another way to support LGBTQ+ people is to provide them with a safe support network. Promote local LGBTQ+ groups and societies, diversify the type of academics you follow on social media and expand your network. Often in STEM careers there is a tendency to avoid personal discussions.

Sean Vidal Edgerton said in an interview with Nature, “in academia, it is so easy to shove off those other parts of you and just do your work. But your perspective, your thought process and how you solve problems matter[s]”. By making the space more open and inclusive, it invites others to share their experiences too, and builds a stronger community.



In 2019, over 30% of LGBTQ+ scientists considered leaving their workplace.

Photo: Pexels

A Love Note from Outer Space

Zoe Parker

The radio signal received is emitted by atomic hydrogen when its single electron undergoes a spin flip transition and emits a photon at a wavelength of 21cm. This wavelength is found around young stars, and has many uses in astronomy, most commonly as a tracer for probing the universe. This is not the first radio signal received by scientists on Earth, but the special interest around this particular signal is due to the fact that it has been received from the furthest galaxy yet.

This signal could therefore change the way we learn about the early universe. The signal was detected by scientists in India, using their Giant Metrewave Radio telescope and a technique called gravitational lensing. Large objects can warp the spacetime around itself, effectively bending light at different wavelengths ever so slightly.

However, gravitational lensing acts to amplify

the signal and change the wave's direction form, its original straight-line course. This is a natural phenomenon that allows us to see deeper into the universe than we otherwise would have. Waves cannot maintain their initial energy without this amplification, as the expansion of the universe causes them to 'red-shift' (an increase in wavelength and subsequent decrease in frequency and photon energy).

It is thought that a nearby galaxy acted to amplify the signal by almost 30x its original. The signal was emitted by a galaxy known as SDSSJ0826+5630, located 8.8 billion years away. This galaxy is older than our own (the 'milky way') by 0.1 billion years.

In astronomy, looking upwards is the same as looking back into the past when we look at the farthest objects. Because the universe is expanding homogeneously in every direction equally, it must therefore have expanded from

something to begin with; a singularity where all the matter was in one single confined space.

Receiving this signal from a galaxy so far away is therefore the equivalent of looking back 8.8 billion years. Not only is this the furthest we've ever had a radio signal from, but it has also provided details about the early universe, in particular young galaxy formation.

Researchers have found that it has twice the mass of its visible stars, which could be yet another piece of proof for dark matter with further research. Work like this has enabled a new way of studying the early universe, enabling scientists to get a step closer to solving the mystery of its formation.

Supercharging the Immune System

Alessia Stanistreet-Welsh

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide, accounting for approximately 10 million deaths in 2020. Whilst traditional cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy, have paved the way as the most effective treatments for cancer, in recent years, a new approach to treating cancer has emerged: immunotherapy.

The immune system is designed to detect and destroy abnormal cells, which prevents the growth of many cancers. However, in some cases, cancer cells will evolve ways to avoid detection by the immune system and avoid being destroyed. The goal of immunotherapy is to boost the ability of the immune system to recognise and attack such cancer cells.

The concept of using the immune system to treat cancer has its beginnings in 1981, when William Coley (who is widely recognised as one of the founding fathers of cancer immunotherapy), attempted to harness the power of the immune system for treating cancer. His studies involved injecting bacteria into patient tumours with the hope of triggering an immune response to the infection that would also attack the tumour.

Coley achieved some remarkable results, with tumour regression seen in several patients. Despite this, the risks associated with deliberately

infecting patients with bacteria meant that surgery and radiotherapy were accepted as the standard treatments for cancer in the 20th century.

However, in recent years, immunotherapy has been revolutionised by several advances, particularly with the development of CAR-T cell therapies. CAR-T cell therapy involves the removal of immune cells (T cells) from a patient's blood, genetically engineering them to recognise and attack cancer cells, then infusing the modified cells back into the patient's blood.

The biggest advantage of this treatment is that it is personalised to each patient, as the therapy is tailored to target the unique genetic mutations and characteristics of the patient's cancer. CAR-T therapy has produced considerable success in clinical trials for several types of blood cancers. For example, CAR-T cell therapy has produced response rates of up to 90% in patients with relapsed or refractory B-cell lymphomas, which is significantly higher than conventional treatments.

Such positive clinical trials have led to the approval of certain immunotherapies for treatment, with the FDA approving CAR-T cell therapy to treat a form of leukaemia in 2017.

Despite this, immunotherapy is still relatively

new, meaning that more research is needed to determine its effectiveness for a wide range of cancers and to fully understand its potential side effects. Furthermore, immunotherapy itself still only remains an option for treatment after all other options have been exhausted.

Despite its limitations, immunotherapy is likely to become a staple in the clinician's toolbox for treating cancer. Crystal Mackall is a researcher at Stanford University, hoping to develop CAR-T cell therapy to treat brain tumours. In a report to Nature, she recognised that immunotherapy still presents considerable challenges, stating "we clearly have a long way to go". Despite this, Mackall has hope for the future of immunotherapy, predicting that immunotherapy will "go way beyond cancer in the years to come", suggesting that it may become a treatment for a wide range of conditions.

Chelsea's January Spending Spree: What Does This Mean for the Future of Football?



Photo: Flickr

Joe Pocklington discusses whether there is too much money in the Premier League.

Joe Pocklington

Two-hundred-and-eighty-eight million pounds. That is how much Chelsea splurged on eight different players in this January window; this is in addition to the £270m they spent in the summer. These are truly unprecedented figures for the Premier League and have caused concern for a number of reasons.

Firstly, is this sustainable and in-keeping with the league's financial fair play (FFP) rules? And secondly, is the Premier League becoming the very behemoth its fans so vociferously tried to block when news of the European Super League broke in April 2021?

Among their record-breaking window, Chelsea set a new British transfer record when they paid £107m for Argentinean midfielder Enzo Fernandez. Other records came tumbling down too. Premier League clubs spent a total £815m in the January window, a near doubling of the previous high of £430m in 2018.

Chelsea's excessive spending is possible due to the weird and wonderful rules of FFP in the Premier League. The rules state that the purchase of a player can be spread over the duration of the contract, for example, Fernandez's £107m is spread over eight-and-a-half-years, that is roughly £12.5m a year for FFP, small sums in this day and age.

Conversely, sales of players are treated differently. The fee from a sale is taken into the accounts straight away; that means sales of players including Tammy Abraham and Fiakyo Tomori, not to mention the significant number of academy products Chelsea sell every year, help to balance the books and keep Chelsea within the rules of FFP.

Whether delaying these payments over lengthy contracts is actually sustainable and good business remains to be seen. However, what is for sure is that Graham Potter has been given a squad that one would argue can't fail, heaping huge amounts of pressure on the new manager for instant success. Todd Boehly,

Chelsea's new owner and American tycoon who also owns the Los Angeles Dodgers, insists that Potter is part of a long-term project, but everybody understands how quickly the atmosphere can grow toxic at Stamford Bridge when a season goes by without silverware.

Football finance expert from the University of Liverpool, Kieran Maguire, says that people like Boehly purchase football clubs out of 'vanity'. This explains their constant desire to find loopholes in the sustainability rules as demonstrated by the increasingly creative loan-to-buy or swap deals that are becoming more common in the transfer market.

What this transfer window means for the future of Chelsea remains to be seen. UEFA are tightening their rules on spending as a percentage of revenue; perhaps what we are witnessing is a case of making hay whilst the sun still shines, and that future spending will be have to be more responsible. Adding fuel to this fire, however, is the news that Manchester City are being investigated for breaches of FFP over a nine-year period. The outcome of this story is far from certain, but it will make clubs' respective directors of football think twice when sanctioning future big-money transfers.

Furthermore, the arguably more concerning aspect is how the Premier League has come to dominate the world of football. The Premier League spent more than Ligue 1, the Bundesliga, Serie A and La Liga combined in the window just gone. Can there be healthy competition in Europe when financial dominance rests so overwhelmingly in the hands of one league?

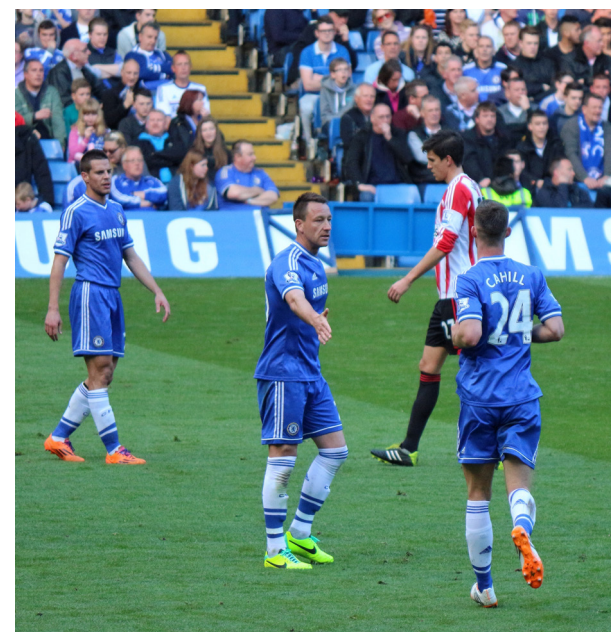
Takeovers in the Premier League at Chelsea, Manchester City, and, most recently, Newcastle United – the latter two backed by Gulf States – show that financial power is such an accurate predictor of success. The capital flow that the Premier League continues to attract is overwhelming.

People might argue that the money is irrelevant.

After all, English teams have only won the Champions League three times in the past fourteen years and England themselves, despite dramatic improvements in performance recently, have not won an international tournament since 1966.

However, one might suspect that with the increasing imbalance in wealth we will see a reversal in this trend with clubs on the continent – like Barcelona – starting to struggle financially.

The Premier League is undoubtedly a brilliant innovation and export for England, yet its exponential rise in value seems to be causing a divide in the world of football. Only time will tell how profound an impact this will have.



The Premier League is the highest-spending football league in the continent.

Photo: Flickr

Six Nations Preview: Who to Look Out for?

William Heaver

This year's Six Nations competition is more important than usual, with the World Cup coming around in September this year.

The favourites this year are France, the hosts of this year's World Cup, and the pressure will be on Les Bleus to deliver at the tournament. Led by arguably the world's best player in scrum-half, Antoine Dupont, the French will be aiming to follow up last year's Grand Slam with another one. Watch out for their massive pack, with players such as Uini Atonio, Greg Alldritt, and Sekou Macalou all leading from the front.

France's biggest competitor will likely be Ireland, who will be looking to get their own Grand Slam after winning the Triple Crown last year. This is a big tournament for the Irish, as they look to build towards the World Cup when they have traditionally failed. As ever, they will be reliant on the seemingly ageless Jonny Sexton at fly half, but this Irish side under coach Andy Farrell seem to be built of stronger stuff. With a strong core from European heavyweights Leinster, they have a great togetherness and have created substantial depth in their squad.

Speaking of coaches, Steve Borthwick leads England for the first time after the sacking of Eddie Jones. Borthwick has recalled some experienced heads, with Dan Cole coming back into the squad, but also some inexperienced flair with the uncapped wingers Caden Murley and Ollie Hassell-Collins likely to make their debuts across the competition. There is the ongoing question over the 10-12 axis. Will captain Owen Farrell play alongside Quins talent Marcus Smith or will the youngster be on the bench? Another key addition could be the appointment of Kevin Sinfield as defence coach after he has done an outstanding job at Leicester.

Wales also have a new coach, with Warren Gatland returning to the setup. They have been on the decline in the last couple of years under Wayne Pivac, and fans hope that Gatland will bring the stability and identity they have lacked in recent times. The ageless Alun Wyn Jones returns, and the Welsh will hope Flanker Justin Tipuric can bring his sublime form for the Ospreys onto the international stage.

Scotland come into the tournament under a bit of cloud, with the spotlight on the relationship between coach Gregor Townsend and superstar fly

half Finn Russell. If Russell does not play, it's unclear whether Blair Kinghorn or the uncapped Ben Healy are truly international class. Once capped by England, Ruaridh McConnochie has been called up to bolster wing options, which were already strong with Duhan van der Merwe previously playing a star role in the autumn.

Finally, Italy who will be looking to build on their victory against Wales in the last tournament and their win against Australia in the autumn. Fly half Paolo Garbisi is joined in the squad by younger brother Alejandro and a number of other young exciting players. Michele Lamoro will be looking to inspire his troops to another victory, and will hope that the young Ange Cappeluzo can work some more magic.

Australian Open 2023 Recap

Theo Genc

Djokovic cemented his tenth Australian Open victory with a gruelling 6-3, 7-6, 7-6 win over the Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas, a player to potentially replace the ageing greats in the years to come, boasting one of the cleanest and best forehands on the ATP tour. Nevertheless, it was not meant to be on this occasion, and Djokovic's early break in the first set established the mood and showed the Serbian's 10 years experience over his opponent.

Alternatively, for the Women's Australian Open Champion, Aryna Sabalenka, this was her first major singles title as she came from a set down to beat Elena Rybakina 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. In a complete turn of events, the reigning Wimbledon champion, despite claiming the first set, was completely overpowered by the brute strength and relentlessness of Sabalenka's groundstrokes.

This could have been due to Rybakina's arguably tougher route to the final, defeating World No.1 Iga Swiatek in the fourth round and two-time champion Victoria Azarenka in the semi-finals. However, take nothing away from Sabalenka, who has been in blistering form since her title win in the Adelaide International Tournament in early January 2023.

Sabalenka moves to World No.2 after her brilliant performances, yet Jimmy Connors warns of 'post-Grand Slam funk', hinting this is a crucial point to either propel herself to greater success or to lose perspective of her tennis career.

Looking at the tournament as a whole, one of the fairy tale stories was one of our own: Andy Murray.

After two hip surgeries which saw Murray's form falter in 2022, the former World No.1 entered the Australian Open unseeded and was at the mercy of the draw.

Murray was matched against last year's semi-finalist, Matteo Berrettini, a player on the rise in the tennis world which starkly contrasts Murray's own situation. Nonetheless, against all expectations, Andy won the five-set epic 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-7, 7-6. With this mammoth match lasting 4 hrs 49 mins, you would think Murray's Australian Open run would become less eventful, however, quite the opposite was the case.

Totalling Murray's longest ever match, Murray defeated Thanasi Kokkinakis next, finishing at 4am in Melbourne after 5 hrs 45 mins of yet another heroic encounter. Having come from two sets down against Kokkinakis and the controversial lack of recovery time in-between his second and third round, Murray seemed mentally and physically drained in his defeat to Roberto Bautista Agut 6-1, 6-7, 6-3, 6-4. Regardless, Andy 'gave everything' and received a fitting standing ovation as he valiantly bowed out of the competition.

Turning to other fan favourites, the tennis great Rafael Nadal heartbreakingly suffered a leg/hip injury in the second round of the tournament, with expected recovery to last six to eight weeks. Rather concerning, this follows the injury that saw him pull out of Wimbledon 2022 in the semi-finals and freak racket injury in the US Open 2022. His uncle

and former coach Toni Nadal quickly dismissed any retirement plans, but the 36-year-old Spaniard is unfortunately declining as the end of an era may be approaching, much like Roger Federer and Serena Williams who both announced their retirements in 2022.

More big names dropped out quickly of the 2023 Australian Open such as Emma Raducanu, who was defeated 6-3, 7-6 by fellow young superstar Coco Gauff - as well as Nick Kyrgios, one of Australia's own who bowed out to injury, and perhaps suffered from the Netflix curse after appearing on the new series 'Break Point'.

Nevertheless, the tournament discovered new stars like doubles pairing Rinky Hijikata and Jason Kubler, the Australian wildcards who knocked out the top seeds in straight sets, and also rediscovered old ones as in the case of Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic.

The tournament provided new beginnings and nostalgia for tennis fans as we now look toward Roland Garros starting on May 28 2023.