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UEA (SU): Calls for 'Greater Transparency' as Students back a more 'Purpose-Driven' Union

Survey reveals measured view of UEA(SU) while identifying clear areas for improvement.

The Current Affairs Team

An all-student survey by Concrete – conducted between the 28th of October and 14th of November – saw many respondents describe the representative body as 'Friendly' and 'Positive', but many others said it was 'Confusing' and 'Counterproductive'.

At a time of significant change in the lived experiences of students at UEA, the survey details how many are keen to see a purpose-driven Union continue as part of the fabric of the Home of the Wonderful while calling for greater transparency in its decision-making processes and overall communication with the student body.

KEY FINDINGS:

SOME CONFUSION ABOUT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: A large number of respondents reported feeling they needed clarification about the roles of the

SU's full-time student officers. 67% of respondents admitted to only 'partly' or 'not really' knowing what the 5 full-time SU officer roles entail, highlighting a potential communication gap between the SU and the student population. A further 30% said they had a 'decent idea', while the remaining 3% were unaware of the roles' existence.

"Less than 10% chose 'Representative' as one of their top three words to describe the SU"

AN UNDERLYING LACK OF REPRESENTATION: A recurring theme throughout the survey was the feeling that the SU does not consistently represent the needs and views of many students. Less than 10% of respondents chose 'Representative' as one of their top three words to describe the SU.

Furthermore, just 18% felt that the SU represents them 'Very well' or 'Extremely Well' on a scale of 0 to 5. 33% said they felt the body represented them 'Somewhat Well', 20% felt 'Neutral', and 26% selected 'Not very well' or 'Not at all well'.

STUDENTS WANT A PURPOSE-DRIVEN UNION: 97% of respondents identified distinct ideas of what a Students' Union should be. 81% agreed an SU should exist "To best represent the views and concerns of students". 75% agreed it should "work towards providing solutions to common problems faced by students while at university"; 58% agreed it should "provide students with a variety of extracurricular activities, opportunities and events" and 55% that it should "act as a political body to campaign for the rights and values of the student body." 4% said they weren't sure what the purpose of an SU was, and one person stated that "Students' Union's should not exist".



A DISTINCT DISCONNECT WITH MATURE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS: While the survey did not specifically focus on mature and postgraduate students, their high level of negative responses indicated a greater sense of disconnect from and dissatisfaction with the SU. Several added comments highlighting a lack of consideration for the needs and concerns of these student

groups on campus, with many PG and mature respondents criticising the management of the changing of the former Scholars' Bar into a new LGBTQ+ space over the summer.

(continued in 'SU Special Report, page 18...)

Image Credit:UEA(SU)

Further Cuts for UEA as VC's £340k Pay Package revealed

Jamie Bryson Co-Editor-in-Chief

The University of East Anglia (UEA) is facing further budget cuts of 3% and the possibility of redundancies as it continues to grapple with a severe financial deficit.

The cuts, announced last month by Vice-Chancellor Professor David Maguire, come in response to rising inflation and a drop in interna-

tional postgraduate students.

Maguire said the university needed to save £11m against an expenditure of around £350m. The cuts will reportedly target non-pay costs such as building maintenance, library acquisitions, travel, and training. However, Maguire did not rule out redundancies, adding that some reductions in headcount may also be necessary.

The announcement has been

met with dismay by the University and College Union (UCU). Nadine Subair, UCU co-chair, said she was "absolutely shocked" at the news, coming on top of last year's job losses. "We're back in a situation where we're potentially going to lose hundreds more," she said. Subair questioned the university's commitment to growth while cutting essential resources. "You can't grow

a university without investing in it," she said. "How do you grow student recruitment if there are no books for them, if there are no people to teach them?" UEA has been struggling financially for several years. In 2023, the university faced a £45m deficit and implemented a voluntary severance scheme. Maguire, who took over as Vice-Chancellor in May 2023, said the university had made significant progress in addressing its financial problems but acknowledged the need for further cuts.

The news of further cuts comes amid localised controversy over a sharp rise in the number of staff receiving total pay packages of more than £150,000. The university now has 22 employees in this bracket, up from 12 in 2022. The rise follows a recruitment drive that has seen the total number of employees earning six-figure salaries on campus reach 78, including the Vice-Chancellor, who receives a total remuneration package of £340,000.

(continued on page 4...)

Editorial



All Work and No Play Makes Fiona a...?

It would be very easy to come to these editorials each month and find some sort of optimism, a kind of glossy veneer that can fit neatly into this little corner of the paper, tidy and expected. Most of the time, that positivity very much reflects my attitude, after all, I'm the type of person who is quite determined to be happy despite everything. Still, I've been thinking and I'm starting to realise that it's actually ok when things are less than perfect and (despite what social media may encourage us to think) it's a good idea to talk about it.

Truth is, being an EiC for Concrete is the hardest thing I've ever done. I mean physically and mentally- it's exhausting. There's a lot that gets sacrificed in the process as well-- time with family and friends, on your degree, your summer holiday... It all makes it very difficult not to feel as if you're letting down at least one social group in your life at all times. Don't get me wrong, I knew that stress was part of the position when I applied, but I'm not sure if I could have ever really understood how emotionally invested in it all I would become. Still, in regards to student leadership and all the many other re-

sponsibilities students partake in, I'm certainly not alone in feeling this way. As always, it has been the brilliance of our editorial team that reminds me time and time again why I fell in love with this paper in the first place and what it's added to my life over the past 15 months. At the end of the day, how could I not feel incredibly honoured to witness, not simply the unpacking of the final product, but the amount of work that goes into it. This is evident in every issue, but I must say that I've been particularly impressed by this November. The energy that Jamie, Anna, Emily, Mar and Milla have put into the investigation

into the SU is pretty inspiring, especially when you realise what a useful insight it may be for future students. In regards to the information collected, I think that the results speak for themselves!

I'm also incredibly excited about Venue this month, with Lily, Sankavi and the team doing an amazing job! There are also so many really interesting articles to get into, with 'Remembering the Weaponisation of Art' by Valentina Vinciarelli in Art and 'The World in Words: Han Kang and the Importance of Translated Literature' by Polly Dye being two really insightful takes.

Ultimately, I feel that this issue has been a bit of a saviour in regard to getting my feet back on the ground! It makes it feel even more strange that Jamie and I are exactly halfway through our tenure and that this means we've only learnt half as much as we will do by the end (wow that's a little bit overwhelming!). I suppose if I had to pick one key thing that I've learnt this autumn it would be the importance of taking time out. Regardless of what your responsibilities are, I think it's something a lot of students find difficult. So I'll leave you with a book recommendation (Lost in the Garden by Adam S. Leslie), a TV recommendation (Sex and the City- for a little escapism!) and the total absorption of any guilt you might feel in spending a cosy afternoon doing nothing but yapping to your housemates. Happy November- we've got this x

Fiona Hill (she/her)

Co-Editor-In-Chief

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Photo of Jamie, Fiona and 'King Kong-crete'. Credit: Lily Taylor

Long nights, a million summatives & a tub of Ben & Jerrys

After two editorials of droning on about how the nights are drawing in...I'm going to repeat myself...because they have now, actually, drawn in. 'Meh.' It's no secret that many of us feel a bit blue and lonesome this time of the year. With summative deadlines looming and the light-lacking individual study rooms in the library turning dark at 3 pm, it's easy to go into hibernation mode, put off that advisor one-to-one until a day before the summative (like I do with Editorials), and spend £6.75 of your maintenance loan on a tiny tub of Ben and Jerrys at the shop.

Alas, I have tried this winter to turn such feelings into more productive personal reflection (as well as still the occasional Ben and Jerrys, I can't lie). What exactly is it that makes me feel so 'meh' this time of year? What can I do

to give me a bit of a boost? Before I turn this into a one-way therapy session, I'll stop talking about myself...just know, if you're out there feeling the winter blues - you're not alone, and there are plenty of people who empathise and wish you well!

Power through those summatives, UEA, reward yourself at the LCR Christmas gig on Friday, the 13th, and then go and indulge in some home comforts over the winter break and rest up. But for now, what can I recommend in this issue...?

Well, as you may have noticed, on the reverse of this page, we've conducted a student survey on people's experiences with the SU over the past few weeks, alongside an extensive SU Special Report (see pages 16-19). Have a good look at this. What do you think? Do you agree with the general sentiments? Feel free to

ping me over your thoughts on Teams or Outlook. As the leading representative student body at our uni, we thought it was high time Concrete found out directly from its readers what they thought of it. It's very easy to get caught up in the many rumours, endless rhetoric and gossip on concrete confessions (no dig 'admin' - ultimately, I think it's great that we have it!) and feel nobody quite knows what exactly is going on at ground level. I'm not suggesting our survey result will clarify all of this, but I hope it at least contributes to a more open and productive discussion on how we can all do our bit to help improve student representation and support during our time here. Thank you to all those who responded and the many staff members at the SU, including the full-time and part-time officers, who cooperated and spoke to us as part of this process. We're also very pleased to welcome a

brand new section to Concrete—Investigations—led by the hugely talented Emily Pitt-Shaw. If anybody has any suggestions for future UEA or student-based investigations, please do get in touch with Emily or Concrete directly. This section is here for you to uncover important information and hold our representatives to account.

Lastly, I'd like to say an extra special thank you and well done to our Venue Co-Editors, Lily and Sankavi. Venue is looking particularly great this month, with a fresh makeover and probably the most amazing front page I've ever seen (reflective, too, of the interview it is 'purrrtraying!').

That's it from me...good luck with those summatives...it will all be worth it in the end!

Jamie Bryson (he/him)

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News

IFS: Welfare spending increase of £48bn possibly due to poor mental health

Milla Cartwright
Deputy News Editor

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), there has been a large increase in the payout towards health-related benefits across the last four years. Young people and those with mental health issues are amongst the groups with the greatest growth in benefit claims in the UK. T

he IFS noted an overall rise in health-related benefit claims throughout the UK, with a rise of 30% in claimants for disability benefits.

The two main trends observed in their report were that the new claimants were younger and were more likely to claim benefits due to mental health problems (including learning disabilities). According to the Department for Work and Pensions, at least two-thirds of incapacity benefit claims in 2023 were for mental health problems.

Resolution Foundation (RF), a think-tank advocating for those coming from low-to-middle incomes, warned of the decline in mental health well-being amongst young people. They found that people aged 18-24 years reported symptoms

linked to 'common mental disorders' more than any other age group. Currently, one in eight young people are not in employment, education or training, according to the Office for National Statistics. In line with this, RF alleged that Personal Investment Payment (PIP) claims in 2023 had tripled amongst young people compared to 2016.

Overall, there has been an increase in working-age health-related benefits spending. The annual spending has increased from £36 billion to £48 billion over the last three years. This trend is forecasted to continue to rise. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) reported that if these trends continue, then this number could rise to £100 billion by 2030.

Whilst the number of benefit-claimants has risen in the UK, the same cannot be said for other countries throughout Europe. Where there had been a continued rise, for example in France and Norway, the rate has remained far lower at approximately 13% rise in payouts. Meanwhile, the UK has been experiencing more than double that increase, stated the IFS.

The Labour government has

made increasing employment rates one of their priorities – raising the current employment rate of 75% to 80%, according to their manifesto. They state that raising employment levels will bring down the “benefits bill.”

One proposed initiative would be a Youth Guarantee, which would direct support towards training and apprenticeships, as well as in job seeking. The aim would be to ensure that young people are better equipped to be “earning or learning.” For example, they pledged to “guarantee two weeks’ worth of work experience for every young person.”

The Labour government also called for a reformation of the benefits system so that it “encourages work.” They would also address the barriers that those on benefits may face when seeking employment. Momentarily, re-entering the workforce for 16 hours a week could financially set back claimants more, than if they do not work at all, analysis by the IFS found.

However, specialists have called for a healthcare-focused approach to address the rise in benefit payouts. Nil Güzelgün from the mental health charity, Mind, stated that these trends

highlighted “the acute need for mental health support.” She emphasised the 1.9 million people currently on waiting lists for NHS mental health treatments. Moreover, Christopher Rocks, of the Health Foundation thinktank, has called for “tailored support” to address ill-health, rather than a “crackdown on jobseekers.”

The new budget announced by the Labour government. Amongst the changes, Rachel Reeves, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated that investing in the NHS was made a priority and announced a £22.6 billion increase in day-to-day health spending. This funding hopes to alleviate current constraints on the NHS and to help offset current waiting lists.

The government also revealed that benefits for those under the State Pension age will be rising by 1.7% next April. This includes Universal Credit and PIP benefits. As an additional incentive to employment, the government will be increasing the national living wage from £8.60 to £10 an hour for 18-to-20-year-olds and £11.44 to £12.21 an hour for those older. These changes will also be implemented in April 2025.

I would encourage customers to keep their contact and bank details up to date in their online account to ensure they don't miss any key communication regarding refunds.”

The Student Loans Company has introduced ways to reduce overpayments and improve the repayment process for students.

This includes introducing an online repayment service, issuing automatic refunds and actively contacting those who might have overpaid.

While these changes have helped to reduce the number of students making overpayments, more than a million former students still overpaid in the 2022/23 tax year – so it's well worth checking.



Image credit: Unsplash

UEA Students 'Clueless on COP'

Jaz Brook
Environmental Correspondent

With COP29 (the UN's 29th annual international climate change conference) in full swing in Azerbaijan, we took to the streets of UEA campus to find out what students knew about COP.

What is COP? Most UEA students were clueless on COP, with very few confident that they knew what it was, or what it stood for. Some students had a vague understanding, giving responses such as 'I think it's about climate change' or 'I know it's for climate change and they have one a year' however others confused the acronym with the nickname given to American police officers. COP stands for 'Conference Of the Parties' and refers to annual meeting of the parties of the UNFCCC.

Which number COP is it this year, or where it is being hosted? Not one single student knew which number COP it currently is. Most students replied 'no' or 'I don't know', and others attempted to guess, their estimations ranging from 16-28. Similarly, not one person we spoke to knew where this year's COP is being hosted.

Does COP work? One student commented that 'it raises awareness and shows the international community taking climate change seriously, however I don't actually think it's making a significant difference' with them suggesting that 'it needs to be more down to individual governments having the courage to internally radically change how they address climate change within their own country... but also then having an international plan to deal with things like tax avoidance, international travel or pollution, eco-genocide etc.' Another student shared their views on the limitations of the conference declaring that 'I think they could definitely do more, I think they could definitely meet a lot more frequently, propose a lot more policies, I think there is a lot of disagreement from them as well so they need to get that sorted out.'

What should be the priorities of an international climate change conference? Despite knowing little of the conference itself, all students were able to express what they felt should be prioritised by international climate policy. Remarks included addressing specific issues such as 'cutting back on single use plastics', 'reducing fossil fuel emissions', 'global warming' and 'pushing' electric vehicles. In addition to this, some students suggested specific policies should be prioritised such as 'potential sanctions for countries not following their climate goals, for them to show that they're trying their hardest to reach goals before their set dates... and if Trump is elected and then he starts to refuse to attend and pull back just like he did before, then the US should receive sanctions.' Other prime concerns for students were 'educating people from a young age', ensuring there are 'various perspectives and to make sure all voices are heard' and 'the long term effects of everything'.

COP29 is hosted in Baku, Azerbaijan this year from the 11th to 22nd of November.

Students to reclaim £1000s after overpaying loan interest

Anna Johnson
News Editor

One million university leavers have overpaid their student loans and could be owed hundreds to thousands of pounds according to the latest figures from Student Loans Company (SLC).

One student, Lisa mentioned on Martin Lewis' website, "I spent 15 minutes on the phone and got £555 back for overpayments on my student loan. Most was because of my maternity leave. Thanks so much, couldn't have come at a better time."

Another student, Charlotte Gill received £68 back. She said to the BBC it did not make a huge difference "but every little helps when

you are a student".

"At the end of the day, it's your money, it's not the government's money, so if you've got any entitlement to a refund then absolutely take it," she said.

The main reasons an overpayment could have happened is due to repaying the loan in some months despite not earning enough in the full year. Another reason could be that you are on the wrong plan and could be repaying too much.

The latest figures from SLC Shows that 20,575 students were on the wrong repayment plan in 2023/24.

You could be repaying your loan too early. According to

Martin Lewis, "If you graduated in 2023 (or left uni for any other reason that year) you shouldn't have started paying anything back until April 2024."

It is easy to check whether a refund is owed by logging on to the government's Student Loan Company portal.

Steven Darling, Customer Experience Director at SLC, said: "With a below threshold refund being the most common reason why a customer might be eligible for a refund, we've made it quick and easy to request a refund through the online account. The figures in our latest report demonstrate the value of these improvements, with £61.6m being paid to 248,000 customers since May 2024.

... continued: UEA fears further cuts as largest pay packets double

(Remuneration refers to a total pay package that can include a base salary plus pension contributions, expenses, bonuses and other benefits).

However, the increase in top salaries has drawn criticism from unions and a Norwich Member of Parliament. UCU co-chairs Nicholas Grant and Nadine Zubair questioned the ethics of high salaries for senior leaders while the university was cutting staff and claiming to be unable to pay the real living wage.

Chris Kershaw - UEA Students' Union's Campaigns and Democracy Officer - commented: "This is nothing but a reward for failure. As the University slips down the ranking tables, as students report decreasing satisfaction, and as teaching and support staff face the threat of redundancy, I wish I could say I was surprised to

see that the number of people taking home more than £7,500 a month has doubled. Unfortunately, I'm not.

On Thursday 7th of November, Clive Lewis, Labour MP for Norwich South, told Concrete: "I met with campus unions to gauge their reaction so I could put those to university management along with my own concerns and those of the many constituents who've contacted me. Among other things, unions have said they want management to look again at their Deficit Reduction Plan and capital expenditures and review executive team remuneration, including pay raises and promotions. These all seem perfectly reasonable requests, and I'm waiting for a response from the Vice Chancellor's office."

In response, a UEA spokesperson told Concrete: "Over half of

the roles that are paid over £150k are in clinical specialities where the remuneration is linked to NHS work and the University, therefore, does not pay all of that salary. Only seven of the roles in question are fully salaried by UEA.

"The salary for UEA Vice-Chancellor Prof David Maguire is lower than that of his predecessor and in the bottom 25% of all Vice-Chancellor posts nationally. He has not had any pay increases since he started in the role in May 2023.

"Last year, the University reluctantly had to withdraw from our commitment to pay the Real Living Wage (RLW) but agreed to 'match' the existing rate for the period of January-July 2024.

"The new rate for the RLW was announced in October 2023, and following careful consideration, the decision has been made not to match the RLW from August 2024, in line with other cost-saving measures. We are committed to reviewing this difficult decision this financial year."

The UEA's financial challenges reflect a broader downward trend in the higher education sector. It was revealed by the Office for Students last week that almost three in four UK universities will be 'in the red' (financial deficit) next year and it would take "bold and transformative action" to compensate for a £3.4bn drop in income forecast for 2025/26.

Young people's entry into the workforce may be disrupted by new AI technologies

Milla Cartwright
Deputy News Editor

Generative AI programmes are predicted to hinder young people's entry into the workforce.

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has investigated the potential outcomes of companies' and governments' increasing use of generative AI. They refer to generative AI being computer software that can "read and create text, software code and data."

Newer programmes, like ChatGPT and DALL-E, are now able to produce original content, solve complex problems and execute multi-step tasks.

Already, 11% of work-related tasks in the UK economy are exposed to generative AI, according to the IPPR. With continued technological advancements this number will continue to rise.

Some companies have replaced certain responsibilities with AI programmes, such as using chatbots instead of customer service operators. IPPR holds that the integration of generative AI into the economic market will initially affect entry-level, part-time and back-office jobs.

These "exposed occupations" include secretarial and administrative jobs, data input roles and customer service professions, which are traditionally entry-level positions. The disruption to these roles would mainly impact women and young people.

Previously, entry-level positions have enabled people to "climb up the career ladder." However, automation has replaced many tasks fulfilled by these jobs. Subsequently, many entry-level jobs have disappeared, and those that still exist involve responsibilities that companies often con-

sider unsuitable for recent graduates. Virgin Media O2 reported that over 74% of 25-34-year-olds have been rejected from entry-level jobs due to a "lack of experience."

"11% of work-related tasks in the UK economy are exposed to generative AI"

The advancement of AI has led to a deficit of such positions, leading to higher demand towards on-hand experiences. In fact, StandOut CV reported that one-third of current entry-level positions require on average 2.5 years of prior experience. As such, young people have resorted to using internships to gain this necessary level of experience in order to compete with AI.

Companies that use AI to fill roles have been reducing their hiring, rather than laying off current employees. For example, IBM announced it would pause on hiring jobs that AI can perform. Therefore, the workforce disruptions will largely be experienced by those entering the job market or transitioning between sectors.

However, CEO of OpenAI, Sam Altman, has argued that AI is a "tool" and therefore is unable to "substitute expertise." He believes that AI could create new jobs in unforeseeable sectors and services. As such, he has encouraged young people to "learn AI skills like programming and engineering."

A study by McKinsey Global Institute estimates that by 2030, AI could create over 20 million new jobs globally. Other AI researchers have predicted that young people could exploit the rise of AI if they acquire the right skills to adapt to its technologies. The UK parliament has already proposed introducing AI skills development in schools, to prepare children for the digital workforce.

Alternative attitudes on AI's influence over the workforce include Geoffrey Hinton, the AI "godfather." He advised that the jobs that would survive AI would be the ones that are "very adaptable and physically skilled, and plumbing's that kind of job."

The council approved the 'Fossil Free Careers' motion.

Union Council Report: November

Jamie Bryson
Co-Editor-In-Chief

The second Union Council (UC) of the academic year kicked off with the election of the Chairperson using a Single-Transferable Voting system. Sapphire Roques, Syed Mohammed Hamza, and Alicia Khuttan were each given one minute to make a statement on why they thought representatives should vote for them.

Syed Mohammed Hamza was duly elected as the new Chair of Union Council.

Voting members then 'approved' October's UC minutes, followed by the approval of nine new societies and peer groups.

Fashion Society, His children Society, Hong Kong Society, Mental Health Nursing, Padel Society, Scandi (Scandinavian) Society, Sociology Society Sport and Exercise Medicine Society and Stroke and vascular Society were all approved.

Next came the election of two members of the Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) (see the Governance page on the UEA(SU) website for more details). Sapphire Roques, Zak Williams and Amelia Żabicka all stood for the positions, each making a roughly one-minute statement.

Zak Williams and Amelia Żabicka were elected to the DPC.

One final election took place, this time for the SU's Board of Trustees Risk and Finance subcommittee (see the Governance page on the UEA(SU) website for more details). Two positions were open, and the candidates were Sebastian Magnago, Devin Owen, and Ethan Peters.

Sebastian Magnago was the only candidate in attendance and was duly elected to the Risk and Finance sub-committee.

The next item on the agenda was the Student Officer Committee reports. In previous years, the 5 full-time student SU officers would present these in detail to the council. However, this year, they are instead emailed the reports to representatives prior to the meeting.

SU part-time officer for the Environment Oscar Welchman and Jaz Brook, climate campaigner and Concrete's representative for the Student Sustainability Network, introduced the new initiative, giving a brief overview of the group's aims and purpose. You can find out more about the SSN on their new Instagram account.

Moving on to the 'Motions' section of the meeting, UEA Student BCAN Society proposed 'Fossil Free Careers' - a motion calling for "the University Careers Department to end their recruitment relationships with the oil gas and mining industries...You can find out more about this on the UEA Student BCAN Society Instagram page (also see page 9).

The council approved the 'Accountability: more than just a buzzword' motion.

A second motion was proposed by Campaigns and Democracy Officer Chris Kershaw and seconded by Undergraduate Education Officer Rebekah Temple-Fielder titled 'Accountability: more than just a buzzword'. The motion "seeks to clarify bylaws around the accountability of Full Time Officers (FTO) regarding their duties as employees, responsibilities as co-workers, and their duties as elected officers".

The council approved the 'Accountability: more than just a buzzword' motion.

The next meeting of Union Council will be held on Thursday, 5th of December.



Charity Shops To Offer Hospices £60 Million More Than Government

Emily Pitt-Shaw

Hospice UK have revealed that, in the year ending March 2024, they received £38 million more in funding from charity shops than the government.

The organisation represents the community of over 200 hospices in the UK, supporting palliative care patients and offering bereavement services.

Furthermore, Hospice UK estimates that a further £60 million will need to be provided by charity shops this year, to make up for the reduction in funding from the government.

“They received £38 million more in funding from charity shops than the government”

Charity shops across the UK reported an overall 15.1% increase in profit in the first quarter of 2023, according to data from

Charity Retail Association.

Yet they are still expecting to plug 36% more in the funding gap this year than last - that's an extra £22 million - despite only a 0.8% increase in charity shop income in the first quarter of 2024.

Vinnie, a retail manager for Age UK Norfolk, described how 'it's amazing that [charity shops] can support the homes they are raising money for... but it's not fair that the government isn't paying equally. It doesn't feel right.'

Age UK's website states that 93% of their income goes towards their charitable aims.

As with similar organisations, funding is raised through a combination of donations, trust grants, and selling second hand products in shops.

As of March 2024, Hospice UK explained that a charity shop would have to sell approximately 43,000 shirts to equate the cost of a year-long bed stay for an elderly patient.

The Charity Retail Asso-

ciation suggests that the number of clothing donations received by charity shops has risen since 2020.

“It's not fair that the government isn't paying equally. It doesn't feel right.”

However, only three in ten clothing items donated make it to the shelves, according to UK Business Waste Management.

“Lots of elderly people donate because they want to

“One in five hospices in the UK plan on restricting services”

give to something that will eventually benefit them” explained Vinnie, when asked about the store's demographic.

“Many parents come in with their children, too. It's a bit of



everyone and everything, really.”

Such donations are important, with reports showing that one in five hospices in the UK plan on restricting services, reducing staff and cutting the number of beds available due to a decrease in government funding.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health and Social Care explained that the Labour government inherited 'huge challenges' in the hospice sector when they were elected in July 2024.

Referring to the '£22 billion black hole' that they were left with, he explained that 'these problems will take time to fix'.

While recognising the vital role that

hospices have in providing end of life care to people that need it, the spokesperson emphasised that these organisations will need to continue to play a part in shifting “more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community.”

A staff member from East Anglia's Children's Hospice charity shop explained that “it's vital that people continue to donate and shop with us” in order to meet these demands and fund hospices fairly.

“Charity shopping is not just better for the environment, but it's cheaper too. Buying a pair of jeans could literally help support a life.”

Image credit: Pexels

“Groundbreaking” Technology Could Change the Course for Cancer Treatment in Norwich

Anna Johnson
News Editor

New treatment is being used at Norwich Hospital to shorten and improve cancer treatment.

The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital have a new Surface Guided Radiotherapy (“SGRT”) technology in use along with a new Orthopaedic Centre.

Alice Macdonald MP (Lab and Co-operative, Norwich North) visited the new state-of-the-art centre saying it is “a singular demonstration of how advanced technologies can help strengthen our NHS.”

The Orthopaedic centre has been developed with many of its own facilities including a same-day admissions unit, a 21-bedded ward,

physiotherapy rooms, a pharmacy and much more.

At full capacity, the centre will carry out around 2,500 orthopaedic cases a year for patients who need ankle, foot, hip, knee or shoulder operations.

“There is hope this new centre and technology will relieve some of this stress”

To help with this work, four new consultants - experts in hip, knee, shoulder and hand surgery, have been employed to bring the most innovative techniques to the team.

Covid-19 has caused a backlog of patients needing treatment. According to the British Medical Association since August 2024 the waiting list for treatment in the UK stands at 7.64 million cases.

There is hope this new centre and technology will relieve some of this stress.

Macdonald welcomed it as a “singular demonstration of how advanced technologies can help repair our broken NHS.”

The MP's visit also included the radiotherapy department, where new SGRT technology has recently been rolled out and is designed to limit patient discomfort and treatment time.

It works using light beams and cameras to create a 3D outline of a patient's body to help radiographers make sure they are positioned to receive the x-rays to treat their cancer.

Macdonald also went on to say, “NHS staff...are the backbone of our NHS working incredibly hard.

Labour is developing a ten-

year plan for the NHS working with -staff and patients. The three big shifts that the Health Secretary is focusing on are sickness to prevention, hospital to community and from analogue to digital.

The groundbreaking radiotherapy systems and the new state-of-the-art Orthopaedic facilities on display... at the NNUH show how we can harness technology to improve patient care.”



Image credit: Alice MacDonald MP

Features

How will the Budget affect you?

Mar Devonport
Features Editor

In a historic moment, Labour's first Budget since 2010 has left many wondering what the future could possibly bring. While most of the policies won't come into effect until next year, this will affect you and how it will, is something that we have all been anxious to know.

Bus Fares

Norwich North's MP, Alice MacDonald has welcomed this new budget as a "rejection of austerity," however, local MP, Clive Lewis, has previously called for more redistribution and an increase in taxation of the super wealthy in order to maintain an affordable bus fare cap.

However, despite this, the cap is set to increase by 50% from 1st January.

So, what does this mean for you?

Well, the single bus fare will increase to £3. While an increase of a pound doesn't sound significant, those students that are relying on the bus to get to and from campus, will soon feel the impact of an extra pound or two a day.

Vapes and Tobacco

While the government has U-turned on their decision to ban smoking in beer gardens, they are planning on making vaping and tobacco more expensive, due to new health warnings on vaping.

The duty rate on all tobacco products will increase to 2% above inflation, with hand-rolling tobacco increasing by an additional 10%, making it a 12% duty rate. For 10ml of vape liquid, a duty of £2.20 will be introduced in

2026, almost doubling the average price.

This along with the ban on disposable vapes coming into force in the summer of 2025, will make vaping more difficult and more expensive, all to discourage use.

Employers National Insurance Increase

While this is something that might not affect students directly, the rise of Employers National Insurance (NI) to 15% from 13.8% will make it more expensive for your current or future employers.

The secondary threshold will also decrease, which will mean employers will have to start paying NI for employee's earnings from £5,000 instead of the current threshold of £9,100.

What does this mean for you?

As small and medium sized businesses are likely to be hit the hardest, if you are currently in part-time employment, there may be redundancies, as some businesses won't be able to afford to keep the same staff numbers.

If you are currently in your last year of university, it could also mean that it is more difficult to find future employment for the same reasons; some companies will not be able to afford more staff. And with that comes a lot of uncertainty.

UEA as an Employer

Unfortunately, the rise in Employers NI not only affect your current or future employers,

but as the university is an employer of 3,712 (as of 2022/3), there could possibly be more job losses for staff members.

A UEA spokesperson said: "The University has to meet its obligations to pay the increased NI contributions and will do so... The University's Executive Team and Finance Committee will consider their response to the increased fee cap and additional NI costs in due course."

However, with the financial trouble UEA has had in the past and the recent announcement of a further 3% cut to finances before the budget was even released, what the rise in employers NI means for the university, isn't yet clear, but it could possibly lead to further redundancies.

And unfortunately, with redundancies, comes strikes, and with strikes comes class disruptions. If this becomes a reality for UEA, it could become a difficult next few years for students.

It is still unclear whether the recent announcement of the rise in tuition fees will help the fiscal situation at UEA but, in a comment made to Concrete, Clive Lewis argued that "the £285 p.a student fee increases are, at best, a sticking plaster. They won't stave off the collapse of many institutions and add to students' debts."

What's Good?

While this all sounds very negative, and a lot of these worries could become realities in the next few years, this budget is not all bad.

Real spending is set to increase by an average of 4.8% in 2024, with education and the NHS being prioritised.

The rise in the minimum wage to £8.60 for 18-20-year-olds and £11.44 for 21 and over, could be seen as a sign that this government is trying to prioritise the poorest in society who have been so deeply affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

This is a very new budget from a new government. Clive Lewis highlighted how "no single budget could possibly undo all the damage done over so many years, but this seems like a very positive step forward."



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Students Face Heavier Debt Burden as Tuition Fees Increase to £9,535

Naa Yarley Yartey

In a move that promises to reshape the landscape of higher education, the UK government has announced an increase in tuition fees for the first time in seven years. Capped at £9,535 starting in 2025 the new fees come amid growing pressure on universities to stay afloat. For students, the rise signals a deepening financial crisis. While the government argues the increase is essential for the sector's stability, advocacy groups and student unions warn that the real consequences will be felt in the pockets of students already grappling with record-high living costs and rising debts.

Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, defended the decision, explaining that the rise in tuition fees would help "secure the future of higher education." However, students have voiced their concerns about the imbalance between the government's efforts to secure university finances and the lack of tangible support for those who will shoulder the burden. "Universities cannot continue to be funded by an ever-increasing burden of debt on students," said Alex Stanley, Vice-President for Higher Education at the National Union of Students (NUS). Stanley described the decision as a "sticking plaster" that failed to address the deeper fi-

nancial challenges facing students, particularly those from the poorest backgrounds.

The timing of this announcement couldn't be more critical, as UK students are already struggling to navigate the mounting costs of tuition, accommodation, and living expenses. Tuition fees have been capped at £9,250 since 2017, but the new £9,535 cap, while relatively modest, is a stark reminder of how higher education has become an increasingly expensive pursuit for young people. More troubling, however, is the government's failure to reinstate maintenance grants, which were abolished in 2016. Unlike loans, grants do not have to be repaid, providing vital, non-debt-based support for students from low-income backgrounds. Without grants, students are left relying solely on maintenance loans—money that must be repaid after graduation—leaving many with debt that fails to fully cover even basic living costs."

Carl Cullinane, Director of Research and Policy at the Sutton Trust, stressed that the government's response barely scratches the surface of what's needed. "While students will welcome any additional money in their pockets, a 3% increase in the maintenance

loan will scarcely begin to restore levels which have fallen more than 11% in real terms since 2021." The £400 increase in the maintenance loan will do little to alleviate the financial hardships facing students, many of whom already rely on food banks to make ends meet.

Students from lower-income families are hit hardest by these changes, with the poorest graduating with the highest levels of debt. Kate Ogden, senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, noted that the increase in maintenance loans only partially offsets the real-terms cuts that have left the most vulnerable students in an even more precarious position. Even with the loan boost, the poorest students will be entitled to borrow about 10% less next academic year than an equivalent student five years earlier.

The government's approach to addressing the higher education funding crisis has been criticized as insufficient. While increasing tuition fees may ease financial pressures on universities, it leaves disadvantaged students burdened with growing debt. Carl Cullinane argues that the government must do more to ensure students from low-income backgrounds can meet basic needs without

excessive debt. The failure to reintroduce maintenance grants, despite rising tuition, means students continue relying on loans, deepening their financial strain. Advocates contend that grants could be reintroduced with minimal cost through repayment system reforms, but the government has yet to act. Ultimately, the rising cost of education risks pricing out those who need it most.



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

What exactly is COP?

Oscar Welchman

In 1992, over 150 countries came together in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to form the first ever United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC). After more than 50 years of evidence that global temperature had been dramatically rising, and over 30 years of proof that this was due to the burning of fossil fuels, governments were finally meeting to work towards a solution. Their objective, to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system,” as outlined in the COP 29 Observer Handbook.

Today, the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) is the largest annual summit, with over 190 countries and nearly 4,000 organisations attending or participating in the COP 29 negotiations which are currently taking place (11-22 Nov) in Baku, Azerbaijan.

But what is a COP, who attends one, how are decisions made, and most importantly, how can you get involved?

While there are three different Conferences of Parties, the most famous and most attended is the Climate Change COP — this year’s being COP 29. At the summit, delegates including heads of state and representatives of parties, observer organisations, and the media will be attending. This two-week summit, dubbed the ‘finance COP’, will be where the UNFCCC’s new finance goal, known as the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) is to be decided. But what is this NCQG for?

COP21 in 2016 was a seminal moment, where 196 parties signed the ‘Paris Agreement’: the first legally binding international treaty on climate change. The agreement included limiting global

warming to below 2 and at preferably 1.5 °C, and to work in 5-year cycles towards increasingly ambitious climate actions. These actions are decided by Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), in which each party have put forward the most ambitious contributions their circumstances allowed.

The NCQG is also a key element of the Paris Agreement, and it will be a new financial target to support developing countries in their climate actions. It builds on the \$100 billion target set in 2009 and aims to provide a more ambitious annual financial framework, declared within the Paris Agreement. Currently, only a few of wealthy countries pay UNFCCC finance and will be due to pay the NCQG. However, there have been calls for reform regarding which states pay to adapt to the rapidly developing and recently countries that emit the most greenhouse gasses.

Finance raised at COPs go towards a number of different funds, from a Least Developed Countries Fund and a Green Climate Fund to, most recently, a Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, established at COP 28.

However, COP finances have a problematic history, not only was the \$100bn 2009 funding goal reached 3 years late (last year), but 70% of this money has been given in loan format from the Global North. Critics argue that this may be severely crippling to the developing countries who will be using this fund. It is generally the least polluting and poorest countries who need the fund the most, and since the money provided to them might be in loan form, they will suffer from crippling interest rates and impossibly large costs to pay back afterwards.

Experts argue that the Global South will

require around \$1 trillion per year by 2025 for costs due to climate change, and that this number will increase to \$2.4 trillion by 2033. While we watch the annual NCQG budget being decided during COP29, if the parties of the UNFCCC aim to match expert advice, we should expect an annual pledge much closer to these above numbers, as opposed to the \$100bn floor. But with a failure from parties to provide sufficient funding already, there is speculation that this number will be smaller than needed, which is worrying when considering the pledge for decreased spending from major polluters like America, by the new Trump presidency.

Next year, at COP30 in Brazil, countries will have to redefine their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Experts suggest that, according to parties’ current NDCs and results from COP28’s global stocktake, we are not nearly on track for the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C goal. If a catastrophic post-2°C climate disaster is to be prevented, parties must majorly increase their ambitions within their NDCs.

Right now, the British Government will be choosing how much funding it pledges to the NCQG, and it will also be working on its new NDC for COP 30. Britain has a strong influence within the UNFCCC space; if the UK pledge a large amount of funding and an ambitious NDC, then other countries and country groups may follow along. So, in quoting a speech from another member the ‘UK Youth Climate Coalition,’ “write to your MP, share the word, be an activist, and push for a more ambitious UK within COPs; because the UNFCCC is the best chance the world has to prevent further climate change catastrophe.”

Why Saoirse Ronan’s BBC appearance is only the beginning: Battling women’s public security this winter

Meg Thubron
Features Senior Writer

It was only last week I was out on a run in the afternoon trying to chase the sunset. I’m sure by the time this piece will be published that the days will be much shorter. Why am I mentioning this? Unfortunately, I was at one point run after, on a well-lit road, by a group of young lads who found it amusing. For me, it was anything but. My watch recorded peak heart rate immediately.

Experiences like this are sadly not isolated. The case of Sarah Everard three years ago struck the nation and exposed the vulnerability that women face when out in public alone. Women feel the need to constantly look behind them, hold their keys or phone clenched amongst hands in pockets, not wear headphones and take longer routes home so they can see and be seen clearly. This is the new norm for women which is only heightened with increased hours of darkness.

As we head into winter, it is true that men need to become more aware and considerate of the position that women find themselves in, so much so, that it has been in the headlines recently. However, it was somewhat positive, as Irish actress Saoirse Ronan was able to directly address one of the many issues women go through and expose the naivety of even those deems the ‘nice guys’ of Hollywood.

Since the death of Sarah Everard, work has been done to ensure discussions between men and women have become more frequent, not only to highlight the anxiety and fear that women may face, but to inform and educate. Nevertheless, there is still a lot to be done to open up these conversations further. Not only did Graham Norton, the host of the show Ronan was on, move on quickly, but the backlash Paul Mescal has received for being naive or ignorant, hasn’t been useful towards having these open conversations. Really, the actor has been apologetic for his comment and is open to discussions over women’s safety.

Discussing this topic, although it may seem sensitive, should not be a taboo. Encouraging men to be open to these everyday thoughts and processes women feel the need to go to protect themselves is an important step going forward towards.



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Home of the Wonderful

The Hidden Gems of Norwich

Khushi Samtani

Home of the Wonderful Editor

Norwich, a city that beautifully marries its rich historical past with vibrant modern culture, is home to a thriving student community. While the city's iconic landmarks are well-known, its specifically quaint locations truly show its character. From tranquil study spots to unique dining experiences, the city provides students with an abundance of interesting gambles. For those looking to venture off the beaten path, here is a directory of Norwich's hidden gems that are popular among students, exploring beyond the usual haunts. Finding an ideal study spot at university can be problematic. While the library is always an option, it doesn't always hit the spot. Sometimes the chairs get uncomfortable, the temperature isn't quite ideal, or the silence gets overbearing. When it comes to constructing the optimal study or work atmosphere, everyone has distinct needs, and the typical spots sometimes just don't cut it. The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, situated on the University of East Anglia (UEA) campus, is well-known for its impressive collection of world art and contemporary exhibitions. However, concealed behind the main structure is a secret garden that provides a sanctuary of peace and creativity. This serene nook, which is usually overlooked by visitors, is great for students looking for a quiet place to study or reflect in nature. The garden's meticulously maintained greenery, among art installations, fosters creative expression. With this, another hidden natural treasure in Norwich is the Plantation Garden, a beautifully restored Victorian garden not too far from the city centre. With its lush green sanctuary, Gothic foun-



tain, and colourful flower beds, the garden is another ideal place for students looking for a peaceful spot or a strike of inspiration. Bring your study materials, or just take a moment to relax and rejuvenate in these serene locations away from the bustle of the city.

When it comes to dining, Norwich provides a wide variety of options to suit every preference. A popular cafe for students is the Wild Thyme Café – especially for vegan foodies. This city centre café has a menu full of tasty, healthful plant-based dishes that are filling and appealing. It's a great place for study breaks or getting food with friends because of its friendly atmosphere and comfortable interior. For a taste of international flavours, head to Jive Kitchen, a Mexican restaurant well-known for its flavourful and unique plays on Mexican cuisine and lively atmosphere. Their colourful menu offers a variety of dishes made with fresh, regional ingredients, from mouthwatering burritos to zesty street-style tacos. The bold flavours are complemented by a selection of creative cocktails, including their famous margaritas. The decor, with its vibrant murals and lively music, adds to the upbeat vibe, making Jive Kitchen an ideal location for a casual dinner with friends or a festive start to a fun night out. Soyokaze Japanese is another hidden gem in the centre of Norwich, providing a genuine taste of Japan. This intimate, cosy restaurant is ideal for a quiet meal, with a menu that ranges from their famous Tonkotsu Ramen to a large array of fresh sushi and sashimi platters. The minimalist decor and soothing music add to the overall experience, making it a must-visit for food lovers.

Norwich's pub scene offers a diverse range of options – whether you're looking for a fun night out, or a quiet place to unwind. The Playhouse is a distinctive combination of theatre and bar that offers a vibrant environment for pre- or post-performance drinks. Students who want to get involved

in the local arts scene often choose it because of its cosy atmosphere and varied schedule of events. Along with this, another gem is The Arboretum, an intimate pub tucked away in a hidden setting and renowned for its warm, retro ambience. Its charm resides mostly in its secrecy; As it is stated on their website 'If the door is shut, check the candle in the lantern above the front door. If it is burning, we are serving.' It stands also as an antique store – from rare taxidermy to vintage chaise lounges, The Arboretum retains its quaint random quality. Furthermore, Norwich's numerous independent local stores lend a unique flair to any evening excursion. The Lanes' surrounding area is brimming with witty boutiques and small shops, making it the ideal place to peruse unusual gifts or locate the perfect accessory. These stores add to the lively mixture of neighbourhood culture and camaraderie, as do the welcoming pubs and bars. The local hotspots in Norwich have something to offer everyone, whether you're looking to enjoy a shopping spree, a quiet drink in a comfortable setting, or an eventful night out. Traversing these hidden treasures gives your time as a student a special dimension, enabling you to explore Norwich outside of the typical tourist areas and fully enjoy its lively and eclectic charm.

Photo Credits: Fiona Hill



UEASU Society of the Month



UEA History, Heritage and Archaeology Society

“They've hosted one-of-a-kind events that bring history to life and help new members explore Norwich. From a guided historical tour of the city to a fascinating trip to the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, where curator Hannah Henderson shared her expertise, they're making history feel vibrant and accessible” - UEA SU

UEASU Club of the Month



UEA Badminton Club

“Beyond the court, Badminton Club is giving back to the community. They've partnered with a local Chinese church to donate shuttlecocks and funds after their Christmas tournament, and they're gearing up to support a 24-hour charity campaign at Wensum Sports Centre in November. This includes donating kit to help raise funds for local charities - a wonderful way to make a broader impact!” - UEA SU

Fossil Free Careers Campaign: How to Ensure UEA is not Actively Complicit in Supporting Fossil Fuel Giants

Petra Todd

President of Student BCAN Society



I am running out of ways to communicate the terrifying lack of action on the climate crisis. The global UN climate conference, COP29, has begun, yet the chief executive for the conference was filmed signing fossil fuel deals in Baku early this week. Over 200 were confirmed dead in early November due to catastrophic floods in Valencia, but we are yet to see urgent policies and actions from our world leaders. Fossil fuel companies are causing this global cri-

“I am running out of ways to communicate the terrifying lack of action on the climate crisis.”



sis; a crisis which is causing loss of human life. Nonetheless, fossil fuels continue to be extracted and burnt, and even here, at UEA, they are promoted.

UEA Career Central promote oil, gas and mining jobs. They advertise them on their website, put posters around the central campus and schools of study, and invite them to career fairs. They are also suggested in placement and internship workshops, and students are encouraged to apply. With so much of your time and energy going towards your job in your overall lifetime, it's one of the most important ethical decisions we make. When previously challenged on this issue, Career Central stated that they continue to advertise these companies due to their “impartiality policies”. By advertising these companies, however, they are not being impartial, but very opposite, and actually supporting these organisations, while turning a blind eye to the climate crimes they commit.

I am president of the Biodiversity and Climate Action Network student society, and one of our main campaigns is to achieve fossil-free careers, meaning that UEA and career central cut ties with the fossil fuel industry and stop promoting them. This campaign has been going on for several years at UEA, and actions in previous years have involved a march around the UEA campus to hand in a petition to Career Central.

As well as generally raising awareness of our campaign this semester, we have passed a fossil-free careers SU motion. This means the SU now publicly support the idea of a fossil-free careers service, and they will help promote this and raise awareness. They will also facilitate communications between us and Career Central, as well as ensuring that no oil, gas or mining companies ever appear at SU-organised events. Dur-



ing the Union Council meeting, a concern was raised about this reducing employability prospects for students. To be clear, if a student wanted to work in these industries and asked about opportunities in a one-to-one careers meeting, the advisor would still be able to inform and advise the student. The key thing is that these industries will no longer be publicly promoted around UEA. It is also true that secure long-term careers will increasingly be found in greener sectors as the era of fossil fuels comes to an end, and jobs in the industry become less tenable and available.

“Promoting fossil fuel jobs isn't just staying silent. It's being actively complicit in the damage they do.”

The climate crisis is already affecting so many and will affect every single one of us in our lifetime. Promoting fossil fuel jobs isn't just staying silent, it's being actively complicit in the damage they do. The fossil-free careers campaign ensures our university will no longer support industries which have caused a threat to civilisation, as well as the habitability of large stretches of the

planet for humans and other life.

In response to this article, Evan Hancock, Associate Director of Graduate Success, said:

“CareerCentral is here to support students in their decision making, not in making decisions for them, and our directory of jobs [...] is based on what students are searching for and where they are working. CareerCentral are always considering the best fit for our students, and we remain open to further dialogue.

We vet and check all of the employment vacancies we have on the platform to make sure they are paying adequately and properly employing our students, however we believe that our students themselves should be able to choose which companies and opportunities are right for them and the impact they want to be making.

CareerCentral actively seeks ways to contribute to UEA's Sustainability Strategy and encourage sustainable practice, including signposting students to subject matter in courses that relate to sustainability issues. We promote National Green Careers Week to proactively support sustainability-related opportunities and careers.”

Photo Credits- Cop29, Children Protesting and student march: Wikimedia Commons

UEA Grooves: Defining Campus Music Culture

Khushi Samtani
Home of the Wonderful Editor

With their polished performances and high standards, UEA Grooves is upending the University of East Anglia's music scene and raising the bar for musicians on campus. One of the nine ensembles that the UEA Music Society provides, the band operates as the university's official function band and specialises in jazz, funk, soul, and disco. However, UEA Grooves is not your typical student collective, with their providing a special fusion of musicianship at grade 8 and above standard, as well as a focus on the community outside of the university.

Through this significant role in Norwich's larger community as well as on campus, UEA Grooves are well-known for playing at private parties and society gatherings in and around Norwich and are celebrated for their upbeat performances. With a smaller band playing jazz standards and a larger 14-piece band for 'discos and dancing', they are able to cater to a wide variety of events. One of their year's major highlights includes their annual performance at Voodoo Daddy's, a well-known Norwich performance space. Through drawing an audience of Norwich locals and students, the band establishes links between campus life and the local community and enhances UEA's cultural visibility within the city.

In order to prepare for such events, band mem-



bers first audition before dedicating time and energy to honing their repertoire during weekly Tuesday evening rehearsals in The Strode, where they practise from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Here students gain important experience working under a strict rehearsal schedule, much like they would in a professional music setting.

Due to a spirit of cooperation, each member contributes to the sound of UEA Grooves, making every performance feel unique and personal. By providing a distinctive, elite experience that blends professional standards with a genuine love of music, UEA Grooves defines what a university music ensemble can be. In addition to enhancing the campus music scene, UEA Grooves strengthens the connection between UEA and the neighbourhood. For students, UEA Grooves offers a fantastic chance to participate in a unique musical experience that will help them advance their musical abilities while creating enduring relationships.

In Conversation with the Co-Leader of UEA Grooves, Hannah Rollins

Can you tell us about the process behind UEA Grooves' formation and how it stands out from the other ensembles within the Music Society?

"UEA Grooves originally formed as an offshoot from the Music Society Big Band, it began as a space for more experienced players to enjoy playing together at a higher standard than our inclusive society ensembles. Initially playing Jazz, Grooves was called UEA Jazz Collective. Over the years Jazz Collective grew, and we expanded our repertoire to include pop, funk, soul and disco – your classic wedding disco bangers. In September 2024, when myself and Izzy Dhillon began leading, we rebranded to become UEA Grooves to reflect our wide repertoire. We still play improvised jazz standards in small band settings

but have the capacity to fill a dance floor too!"

How do you ensure that UEA Grooves maintains professional level of performance while still fostering a fun and inclusive environment for all its members?

"Operating as a professional band while maintaining a fun and inclusive environment is a fine balance to find! It's something we're constantly talking to our band members about and has been our main aim since we began band leading. For us, being a part of Grooves has two vital areas; that we enjoy playing with other incredibly talented musicians and develop individually as players; and build real-world skills like effective communication, time management and organisation so we can operate as a professional band. Finding a balance between this can be hard; our ethos is that 'degree comes first' We have a wide range of students in the band, learning from and understanding each other helps us maintain the balance between professional and fun! Ultimately, we all love making music! Playing together and having fun at gigs is a real highlight during the academic year, and that's always the goal. Rehearsals are a switch off from our busy, and often stressful degrees."

What role do you see UEA Grooves playing in the broader UEA music scene, and how

do you hope it will evolve in the coming years?

Gigging is one of our favourite things to do. Some of our favourite gigs have been working with different university societies to perform at their end of term dinners and balls. This year we've expanded what we offer to two main sets. We provide a small jazz band that is perfect for dinners and creating a warm atmosphere for events. Our whole band then join together for funk, soul, disco and pop hits which can fill a dancefloor.

Two years running we've played our own gigs at Voodoo Daddy's, one of our favourite live music venues in Norwich. This year we aim to increase the number of private gigs we do and branch out further into the Norwich music scene. There is nothing more exciting for us than filling a room with people who just want to have a good sing and dance. Looking to the future, we've been working with our players to ensure a smooth transition of those who graduate and move on from Grooves while welcoming new, talented players. We want to future proof our band by creating lasting relationships with local event organisers while also taking care with simple things like well-organised music catalogues.

If you'd like to book UEA Grooves for your event or society, please get in contact via email Ueagrooves@gmail.com or Instagram [@uea-grooves](https://www.instagram.com/uea-grooves). Photo Credits to UEA Grooves



Concrete Archive: 30/10/2002

Sankavi Naresh
Venue Co-Editor

In this month's Concrete Archive, I look back on an issue published on the 13th of November 2002. No time like the noughties, eh? I say this as someone who would've been very young for most of it, but nonetheless – it seemed to have been an amazing time to be an adult! Great tunes, funky hairdos, eclectic fashion AND you wouldn't have to bankrupt yourself on a night out. The ad next to "Generation Text" offered 4 bottles of beer or alcopops for £5, at a bar I assume no longer exists. If they are still running and have kept their prices, then I'd keep an eye out for a naff bar the next time you're on Prince of Wales Road. Ruth Charnock ex-

plores what effects text messaging would've had on students at the time, welcoming the reader to the "joy of text". If only they knew how integral texting would become in our lives (and how complicated it could make situations!)

Charnock questions whether the new breakthrough of communication was making people "lazy" and argues what drives people to text instead of talk is "fear". Instinctively, we might be inclined to disagree but how many times has a housemate sent the group chat a passive aggressive text asking everyone to wash their dishes instead of just saying it in person? I don't think we're opposed to talking as much as the writer might have predicted, talking isn't "sooo 20th century" – at least not yet!

There's an anecdote from Lisa, a third-year environmental student at the time, who was saying some rather unpleasant things about her housemate and ended up texting it to said housemate instead of her friend! Whilst embarrassing, it's not quite as incriminating as when you send a screenshot of a message to the person you were talking about. There's not very much you can do to recover from that either, multiple snakebites might have to be bought to gain the receiver's forgiveness! To today's texters, it's a rookie mistake and one we probably made at the young age of ten or eleven on our first ever phones. Thankfully, we've now been blessed with the ability to unsend and delete messages – even if it comes with

the risk of seeming suspicious. Attached to the article is a nifty texting guide, although many of us would cringe or scratch our heads in confusion if we were to receive a PCM (Please call me) or a BCNU (Be seeing you) from a mate.

It's fun to imagine what we'd do if we all got transported to the past. Would you use up your remaining credit to vote out your least favourite Big Brother housemate? I suppose it's not all too different from your grandma ringing a number to save her favourite dancer on Strictly Come Dancing! Advancements in technology always make way for funny mishaps but something tells me your Aunt Sue won't be letting go of her Nokia brick anytime soon.

on text

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Issue 144: 13th November 2002
Editor: Katie Hind

Puzzles

Aarohi Deshmukh
Puzzles Editor

Word Search x Literature Society

THANKS TO LIT SOC FOR SHARING THEIR-
SEASONAL READING RECOMMENDATIONS!

Auntie G's Horoscopes Winter Candle Edition

Kasey Campbell
Anne Glia

ARIES – Sweet and Spicy Cranberry

The fiery red of a cranberry alongside the spicy scent embodies you, Aries. It is indicative of your passionate and vibrant nature. As are you, spiced cranberry is the hit of the party.

TAURUS – Gingerbread Biscuit

Pure indulgence. This scent reflects Taurus' love for comfort and coziness. The sweet and spicy aroma of gingerbread calls your name. This candle brings a comforting atmosphere wherever it goes, and you bring comfort to those around you, Taurus.

GEMINI – Frosted Peppermint

Vibrant and refreshing, this candle is representative of Gemini's playful and social nature. Your energy is as powerful as the first punch of crisp peppermint and reflects the dynamic nature you bring to a holiday gathering.

CANCER – Cinnamon Cookie

The familiar and comforting scent of winter baking reflects your family-oriented nature, Cancer. You love to be around loved ones at this time of year. This candle is sweet, warm and loving – the same as you!

LEO – Spiced Orange and Thyme

This scent drips luxury. Leo, you love to do things extravagantly and this candle reflects your grandeur. Zesty citrus matched with the sophisticated scent of Thyme reflects your dynamic personality and generous nature.

VIRGO – Fir and Smoked Cedar

Virgo, you love a natural earthy scent, which is exactly this candle. Crisp, smoky and simple, this candle reflects your love for minimalism and simplicity – bringing the smell of a winter log fire into your home.

LIBRA – Winter's Kiss

Like Libra, winter is romantic and charming. If Winter was to stand close and give you a smooch, this is how it would smell. Warm and inviting vanilla with a hint of sweet spices. This candle says flirty elegance and so do you, Libra.

SCORPIO – Frankincense and Myrrh

Exotic and mysterious, these intense aromas reflect Scorpio's mystic personality. Scorpions appreciate the underdog scents, and the rich, smoky scents of Frankincense and Myrrh are an underrated favourite of Scorpio.

SAGITTARIUS – Spiced Mulled Wine

The fun and free-spirited nature of Sagittarius can be encapsulated in the rich, full-bodied smell of sweet spiced mulled wine. A winter favourite, the scent of citrus and red wine reflects Sagittarius' love for blending the old and new traditions of winter.

CAPRICORN – Roasted Chestnut and Spiced Clove

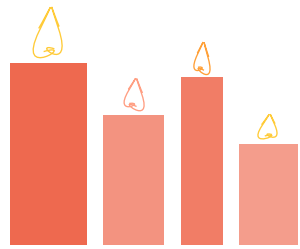
You've a love for tradition, Capricorn. The cosy, nutty scent of chestnuts and earthy smell of clove reflects your love for the classic smells of winter. Timeless and perfection – what can I say?

AQUARIUS – Frosted Pine and Juniper Berry

Innovative and independent. Aquarius, you stand out with the crisp scent of Frosted Pine and sharp Juniper berries. Like this scent, you're slightly unconventional and open to new traditions.

PISCES - Vanilla Snowfall

Dreamy, soft and sensitive. The delicate scents of snowfall and vanilla make you think of the magic of a snowy day. Whimsical, like you Pisces.



Sudoku

4	7	8	2			5		
6	2	5		3			8	9
	3		4					
		2	5			9	4	3
	1		3				5	
		3	8	4		2	1	
3	8	7			4			5
	4		7				6	
1		6				7	2	

- Autobiography of Red (Anne Carson)
- Autumn (Ali Smith)
- Bunny (Mona Awad)
- Coraline (Neil Gaiman)
- Dracula (Bram Stoker)
- Hell Screen (Ryūnosuke Akutagawa)
- If We Were Villains (M.L. Rio)
- It (Stephen King)
- Jane Eyre (Charlotte Brontë)
- Little Women (Louisa May Alcott)
- Outlander (Diana Gabaldon)
- Pride and Prejudice (Jane Austen)
- Pumpkinheads (Rainbow Rowell)
- Rebecca (Daphne du Maurier)
- The Ex Hex (Erin Sterling)
- The Great Alone (Kristin Hannah)
- The Guest List (Lucy Foley)
- The Hobbit (JRR Tolkien)
- The Once and Future King (T. H. White)
- The Secret History (Donna Tart)
- Transit (Rachel Cusk)
- Weather (Jenny Offill)
- Weyward (Emilia Hart)

A	T	H	E	S	E	C	R	E	T	H	I	S	T	O	R	Y	L	B	L
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K	I	E	C	I	D	U	J	E	R	P	D	N	A	E	D	I	R	P	C
G	N	I	K	E	R	U	T	U	F	D	N	A	E	C	N	O	E	H	T

Global

The Realities of Environmental Defenders in Putumayo, Colombia

Emma Darlington
Global Senior Writer



Latin American environmental defenders, especially in Colombia, are ensnared in a deadly environment marked by assassinations, forced recruitment, land mines, and cultural violations on a daily basis. In 2023, Latin America was responsible for a staggering 85% of global murders of environmental defenders. Colombia, with its long history of conflict, remains one of the deadliest places for those protecting the land. In Putumayo – a biodiverse region between the Andes and the Amazon rainforest – Indigenous leaders such as Soraida Chindoy are risking their lives to protect their territories from an ongoing encroachment. Despite Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement, violence has intensified, driven by armed groups and land grabs, often supported by international capital and corporate interests.

The 2016 Peace Agreement marked a historic moment, officially ending a 50-year civil war between the Colombian state and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP). While it promised to address deep land inequalities – one of the primary drivers of the conflict – its slow and flawed implementation has left communities in resource-rich regions, like Putumayo, facing worsening violence.

Putumayo was once controlled by the FARC guerilla group, but even after the peace agreement and being designated as a priority area for territorial development violence has surged. According to InfoAmazonia, with FARC's exit, other groups including dissident factions and criminal gangs like the Carolina Ramirez Front and Los Sinaloa moved in, fighting for control over the territory. These groups have openly targeted anyone who opposes them, creating a climate of fear. Putumayo's natural resources and strategic location on the border of Ecuador and Peru make it a desirable location for many

criminal networks, corporations, and political actors.

Putumayo is home to fourteen recognized indigenous ethnic groups divided into 126 Cabildos (a social-political organization of territory) with 39 Resguardos (land reserves). These communities have deep cultural ties to their land, which is not only a source of sustenance but also central to their cultural identity. Indigenous leaders and environmental defenders are particularly vulnerable, as they embody the voices and resistance of their communities, severely heightening their risk.

In 2009, "the Highest Court of Colombia declared that the Siona (an ethnic group in Putumayo), along with 33 other indigenous people at risk of physical and cultural extinction due to the armed conflict". The court required the state government to implement immediate measures to guarantee their survival". Yet, the Siona and other indigenous groups continue to face what has been described by some scholars as a "silent Genocide". Johan Galtung, a scholar of peace studies, refers to this as a form of "systemic violence" embedded in economic and political structures that shape the distribution of power and resources. A silent genocide is occurring hidden in various regions deep in the Amazon.

Alongside violence from armed groups, pressure for economic development in Colombia has continued to be a threat to the communities living in Putumayo. According to research conducted by the World Resources Institute (2020), banks and international funds have financed hydrocarbon extraction projects with great economic profit, in 450,000 square kilometers of indigenous land, impacting over 20% of indigenous territories.

Putumayo, an area rich in oil reserves, has been particularly affected. When the British oil company Amerisur sold its stake in Putumayo to Chilean company GeoPark in 2020, the deal was financed with \$350 million in bonds from international banks. This enabled "GeoPark to obtain Amerisur's main assets of 11 oil fields located across Putumayo". According to an investigation by The Guardian, GeoPark allegedly dumped poorly treated wastewater into the Putumayo River, leading to significant pollution and health risks for local communities. Despite repeated complaints from indigenous groups, Colombian authorities have continued to grant GeoPark new permits (once in 2009 and 2011) for waste dumping (rivers and the ground), contributing to the community's ongoing deterioration of health. The Siona people, who live along the Putumayo River, suffer from severe contam-

ination that affects their water supply, food sources and health. Their leaders have spoken out against oil contamination, asserting that it violates their rights and disrupts their cultural practices, such as their use of yagé (ayahuasca) for spiritual and community rituals. As one elder stated to Amazon Frontlines:

"Yet with our very existence at risk, the Colombian government has sold extraction rights over the only rainforest territory we have left to the British oil company Amerisur. In 2014, when Amerisur first arrived, we told them no. Today, after Amerisur sold their interest in the oil underneath our land to the Chilean company GeoPark. We say no again".

"Even though the Colombian Peace Accords were signed in 2016 the violence along the Putumayo River continues. The oil operations nearby are already inflaming that violence, causing division amongst our neighbors, and putting the lives of our leaders at grave risk. Instead of protecting us, the Colombian government has abandoned us".

The financial backing of environmentally destructive projects by major banks exposes the complicity of international institutions in the ongoing destruction of indigenous land. Although banks like Citibank, Unibanco, and the Bank of New York make public claims about their commitments to environmental and social responsibility, their funding of oil extraction in sensitive ecosystems is a direct juxtaposition. Furthermore, according to "The Independent News", in 2021, US and European financial institutions (Bank of America, JPMorgan and Credit Suisse) helped GeoPark restructure its debts, and issued a further \$150 million in bonds. This case, like too many others, shows how despite the 2009 threat of extinction by the Highest Court of Colombia (which was reinstated in 2017) and various forms of resistance, the company Amerisur still found a buyer.

In what world when communities stand at the brink of extinction, do we allow economic interests to prevail? The struggle faced by environmental defenders in Putumayo and across the whole world portrays how wider neoliberal and capitalistic factors interplay and reinforce each other. As armed groups and corporations continue to encroach on Indigenous Peoples's land we must defend nature by holding the international community, including banks and corporations, accountable for their role in supporting these practices.

Photo 1 Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Photo 2 Credit: Unsplash

Breaking the Blue Wall: Trump's Victory and a Shifting American Electorate

Naa Yarley Yartey
Global Editor

Donald Trump's decisive victory in the 2024 U.S. presidential election represents a tectonic shift in American politics. Driven by economic frustration and scepticism towards the Biden administration, the outcome underscores an enduring truth in U.S. elections: when Americans face economic hardship, they often reject the incumbent party. Trump's campaign promises of economic revival and a "rebirth" of American greatness resonated powerfully with an electorate weary of inflation and stagnant wages.

"For many voters, the economy was the big issue," explained Dr. Emma Long, a lecturer at the University of East Anglia, "and historically, voters in the U.S. have tended to favour Republicans on economic matters." Trump's platform, rooted in promises to revitalize industry, create jobs, and restore economic stability, tapped into long-standing distrust of Democratic economic management, particularly among working-class voters who saw him as a figure who understood their grievances. His support among white voters without college degrees surged, and his appeal expanded to urban Black and Latino communities—a development Dr. Long identified as "a realignment not seen since the Reagan era," when working-class Democrats migrated to the GOP. The election also highlighted Harris's

struggle to connect with voters on economic issues, despite attempts to distance herself from Biden's record. Biden's approval never exceeded 43% in major swing states, and disapproval rates above 55% created a substantial barrier. Harris's team tried to pivot the campaign from a referendum on Biden to a forward-looking choice about leadership, yet her efforts were thwarted by her inability to overcome widespread economic dissatisfaction. "There was something quite specific about her experience that she could have brought to the campaign," Dr. Long observed, alluding to Harris's personal background. However, Harris's approach to emphasize policy over identity may have made her less relatable to some voters, an approach Long suggested may have missed an opportunity to connect with diverse demographics.

The 2024 election data reflects an unprecedented demographic shift, notably among Latino voters, who supported Trump at levels unseen in previous elections. Trump made substantial gains among Latino men and women, particularly in states like Nevada and Texas, traditionally Democratic-leaning regions. Dr. Long attributed this trend to a deeper heterogeneity within the Latino community that Harris's campaign may have underestimated. "The term 'Latino' encompasses a broad range of social, economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds," Long explained, pointing to a complex voter group that resists easy categorization. For these

voters, economic concerns often eclipsed social policy issues, aligning them with Trump's message of restoring the economy.

Trump's ability to harness this discontent was bolstered by his adept use of social media, which created an echo chamber for his messaging and circumvented traditional media narratives. Harris's more conventional campaign struggled to break through this polarized media environment. As Long noted, "There were entire streams of social media posts that were misogynistic and racist," which contributed to an environment where Harris's policy points were often overshadowed by toxic commentary, making it more difficult for her to present her vision.

Social issues like abortion rights, which the Democrats hoped would galvanize their base, ultimately had limited impact on voting behaviour. Although exit polls showed two-thirds of Americans support legal abortion, many voters still backed Trump, prioritizing economic stability over social concerns. In states like Michigan and Pennsylvania, where ballot measures supported abortion access, voters felt they could support Trump while ensuring abortion protections locally. As Long remarked, "For people struggling financially, other issues may seem less immediate," pointing to a dynamic in which economic anxiety trumped other considerations.

In the aftermath of his victory, Trump faces the challenge of translating his populist cam-

paigned promises into concrete policies. His win, while a triumph for the GOP, raises questions about potential shifts in foreign policy and international relations. Trump's previous criticisms of NATO and promises to pull the U.S. out of international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord indicate a possible return to his isolationist "America First" approach. "We might see a more isolationist America," Dr. Long noted, suggesting Trump's second term could strain U.S.-European relations and heighten global unease, especially as other democracies contend with similar populist pressures.

As Trump prepares to assume office, millions of Americans await the economic restoration he promised. His supporters see his win as a rebuke of the bureaucratic inefficiency they associate with the Biden administration, while his critics fear the social and political consequences of his aggressive agenda. For Trump, the real test lies in fulfilling his economic pledges without deepening the divides that have come to define American society.



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The US Election at UC Berkeley: On Studying Abroad During Election Day

Micah Petyt

When I signed up to study in the United States for my year abroad, I was fully aware that the presence of a presidential election would drastically affect my experience. The way I saw it, the second Election Day results came out, something would change. What took me by surprise, however, was how the upcoming election would so strongly impact my experience at a largely liberal school like UC Berkeley. On campus, a major push for voter registration saw the school hosting events and giveaways to get students involved. Most notably, in early October, UC Berkeley held a small concert by indie-rock artist The Dare, opened by internet sensation DJ Mandy, as a part of what was dubbed "Votechella." During this event, in between sets, members of the student union encouraged students to register to vote, and tables were giving away free drinks if you showed your voter registration, and similar giveaways occurred in the weeks leading up to registration deadlines. Furthermore, Berkeley heavily publicized the ability to vote absentee, and offered California residents the option to vote early on campus. Compared to the last UK election, the level of community engagement I witnessed while at Berkeley was unparalleled. Nothing could have prepared me for the immediate shift that would be felt the second

the race was called. In the lounge where I was watching the results, some people were crying, others were shaking their heads or calling their loved ones, and this sentiment carried on the following day, as I went to class the following day. What first struck me as I walked to my 10 am was the silence on campus. Sproul Plaza was no longer filled with tables urging students to register or vote early, the woman who had stood under Sather Gate with voter registration deadlines for the last few weeks was gone, and it felt as though everything had gone quiet. Some of my professors canceled classes outright, others used our time together to talk about people's feelings surrounding the election. The main word used during these conversations was fear, as my female classmates expressed their anxieties not only for their lives but for those of women in more conservative states. Along with this came a genuine regret at the rise of conservative values in California, with citizens voting to maintain prison labor and indentured servitude, along with increasing the number of felony charges. Everyone had their own theories on why and how Trump managed to win, though general consensus found that no one was surprised. Disappointed, but not surprised. While one of my professors ended class early, she allowed us to remain in the classroom to work if we so chose, which felt extremely emblematic of how this election is being ex-

perienced for millions of people. Although we were given the space to cope with the results, at the end of the day, life goes on and assignments remain. As we all eventually headed our separate ways, people talked about what they planned on doing for the rest of the week. Some of them talked about wanting to focus on school or midterms, others wanting to drink or get high in order to unwind. In my case, a friend of mine was baking in my flat, the same friend who had been sobbing to me a few hours before about how scared she was for the future. Experiencing such a big election from within the US has forced me to reexamine the perspective from which I view American politics and its consequences. While most of the people I know in Europe were responding with either jokes or anger, something that I have done myself very often when observing America from abroad, it felt surreal to be reading such posts when everyone around me was experiencing such sadness and disappointment. When portraying American politics, the European side of the Internet often pokes fun at the absurdity of the political system, of its candidates, or of campaign strategies. As the election is turned into a spectacle, it becomes entertainment for those unaffected. And yet, for millions, the election had very real consequences. It has played such an overpowering role in shaping 2024, and from one moment to the next, it was done and hope was lost.

CORRECTION: 'The Relationship Between Lebanon, Israel & Iran'. Issue 403: 15/10/24

"While Hamas, as a Shia Muslim group..." —
"While Hamas, as a Sunni Muslim group..."

"Hezbollah, being Sunni..." — "Hezbollah being Shia"

"The Shia in Lebanon, Saudi, Bahrain and to some extent Iraq, are often marginalised and impoverished, or even seen by Sunni Muslims as heretics" — The Shia have been historically discriminated against in Lebanon, Saudi, Bahrain and to some extent Iraq."

The Editors-in-Chief would like to offer their sincere apologies to anyone who was offended by this piece. We learnt that an incorrect version of this piece was mistakenly put into the printed issue — one which contained a number of factual inaccuracies and misrepresentations on a very serious humanitarian issue. It was not the intention of the publication to cause this offence or relay these inaccuracies. All individuals who have contacted us regarding the piece have been sent an official apology and explanation of this incident.

Opinion

Complicity and Denial: The UK Government's Disregard for the Ongoing Massacre in Gaza

Liv Mepham
Opinion Editor

“Genocide” refers to the violent crimes committed against a certain group, with the intent to destroy the existence of that group.

“Ethnic cleansing” is the systematic forced removal of a certain group, through their deportation, displacement or mass killing.

Make no mistake, both terms are well judged in defining the horrific events happening in Gaza. There is nowhere safe in Gaza. Over 80% of the population is under active evacuation orders, and only a “trickle” of aid is reaching the approximately 2 million people living in desperate conditions.

The United Kingdom is complicit in this genocide. Their failure (or more aptly, their refusal) to acknowledge this actively challenges their integrity and reputation.

The UK's support for establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, beginning with the 1917 Balfour Declaration, has had lasting impacts on the Palestinian population. Over the years the British government has consistently backed Israel, supported warfare and sold arms despite Israel's violations of international law in the region that goes back decades.

The ceaseless massacre continuing to unfold in Gaza is a reality that confronts us all. We cannot ignore it. In an age where disturbing footage and first-hand accounts are more accessible than ever, we have all seen the harrowing events play out for ourselves. Despite the blatant evidence, the UK remains complicit, continuing to supply arms and only suspending a scant 30 out of 350 of its weapons export licenses to Israel.

What's worse, the foreign secretary David Lammy told the House of Commons that using the term “genocide” to describe the systematic annihilation of Palestinian undermines the gravity of the term, referring its usage to the context of crises “like” Rwanda, WWII and the Holocaust, where millions of people lost their lives.

Yet the horrors of these past atrocities – those we collectively promised to “never again” allow, are mirrored in the daily suffering of the Palestinian people. Just how many Palestinians must die for the UK to realise the severity of the situation and hold Israel accountable for its actions?

Palestinian author and activist Susan Abulhawa

wrote a heart-rending article on the subject that was met with controversy due to her assertion that Israel was committing the “holocaust of our time, in full view of a seemingly indifferent world.” I implore anyone to read this article and form their own opinion – in my view, the facts are undeniable, and the parallels to past genocides are clear. It is shameful that our foreign secretary is choosing to undermine international law, opposing the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) resolution that found a “plausible risk of genocide” in Gaza. Someone should remind Lammy that the UK government are violating their legal obligations under the Genocide Convention, established in reaction to the Holocaust.

Not only does this ignorance discredit our moral compass as a nation, but it dangerously misguides the truth of the horrors happening in Gaza. Ultimately, it is not incomparable to crises “like” the WWII or Rwanda, because death toll alone is not determinative for findings of genocide. And undoubtedly, a genocide project with the ethnic cleansing and displacement of the Palestinian people is taking place.

Since beginning to write this article, Israeli football fans have incited riots in Amsterdam this week. Mainstream media and Western politicians have framed these incidents as antisemitic attacks, disregarding the reality shown on social media showing Israeli fans deliberately provoking confrontation. This misrepresentation deserves a deeper analysis of yet another instance of the West's selective interpretation of events when it comes to the actions of Israel. Meanwhile, the UK remains in denial, using the smoke screen of antisemitism to avoid confronting the reality of the genocide it is facilitating in Gaza.

This week also brought the harrowing eye-witness testimony of Nizam Mamode, a British surgeon working in Gaza. In Parliament, he broke down in detailing the war crimes he witnessed there, describing Israeli quadcopters that were deliberately striking down Palestinian children. Can the accounts of the realities faced by Palestinians be any more candid?

The current responses of Western governments (in multiple aspects of current politics) are disheartening to say the least. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to remember the power of collective action and international solidarity. Let's continue to hold our representatives accountable and push for policy that respects humanity and international law.

‘No bro... We Can't Be Friends.’

Lin Vu



On November 5th, I frantically refreshed the polls every 30 minutes for the 2024 Presidential Election. I hoped for a blue wave after seeing the red mirage. I woke up on November 6th to the election results and texts from my friends and little sister. They were scared, disappointed, and inconsolable. Frankly, I was as well. The only thing I could do was text my friends and sister that I was sorry. But I didn't even really know what I was sorry for; I felt so guilty for not being able to do more with my ballot eight hours ahead of everyone else.

Then came the posts I see on social media: if we have different political opinions, we can still be friends.

Maybe this was true back in 2012 with Obama versus Romney, back when Republicans weren't devout followers of Trumpism (and presidential debates were super boring to watch). And some of the only disagreements that took place were how social services should be funded.

Post-2016, the political climate has changed. In good conscience, I can't be friends with people who align themselves with the far-right agenda, who gratify themselves from the satisfaction of ‘triggering the dumb liberal.’

I'm exhausted from explaining to people that this is personal to me. It always has been and in good conscience, I can't be friends with people that value the economy over my friends' and family's right to live in the United States. And I can't be friends with people that believe my existence in the UK is somehow replacing ‘true British people.’

I'm exhausted from explaining to people that virtue signaling as ‘one of the good ones’ is self-serving and deflects them from taking real responsibility. Seriously, what is the ‘blue bracelet movement’ going to do to address the deep-rooted issues of White supremacy? If you want to be known as good, then be good. I'm exhausted from explaining to people that ‘canceling out your partner's vote’ is performative and it's also a deflection from taking real responsibility to address White supremacy.

This isn't to say my friends and I have the exact same political views, checking every single box along the way. Frankly, we disagree on plenty of sociopolitical issues, and that's okay. But at our core, we value the same things: humanity, empathy and growth. We do feel anger, but it is anger directed at the institutions and powerful figures that exploit and profit off young men's anger that push them to align themselves with the far-right agenda.

So, I am an immigrant. And I am a statistical burden to these people. I am a number before I am a person. They are waiting for me to do irrevocable damage to spread an anti-immigrant agenda. So why would I want to be friends with someone who views me as a numerical burden before I am a person?

The Reality of Being Disabled in the UK in 2024

Hermione Guyer

Physical Disabilities Officer (PT) - UEA(SU)

On March 18th, 2024, the UK Government was brought before the United Nations for a hearing to state what actions the UK government had taken since 2017, providing an oral defence to the UN's Committee for the Rights of the Disabled People.

Embarrassingly, the UK was previously found guilty of systemic violations to the human rights of disabled people in 2017 and failed to attend a hearing in August 2023.

Concerns remain about the harmful ways that individuals with disabilities are portrayed, with accusations that the UK government have contributed to their stigmatization, particularly regarding the benefits system.

“Concerns remain about harmful ways that individuals with disabilities are portrayed...”

In 2013, a new system for disability benefits was rolled out, Personal Independence Payment, or PIP. It replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which

had been in use since 1992, and was supposed to provide disabled people with financial support to live independently.

The cost of living for disabled people is more expensive than it is for non-disabled people, an estimated £570 a month more. These extra costs mean disabled people will have less money to spend than their non-disabled counterparts, creating a reliance on benefits to be able to survive.

The benefits system we are currently living under operates under a points system, quantifying a disabled person's individual experiences. We must answer humiliating questions, explain in detail how our disabilities make aspects of life more difficult, and we must use the right language, so assessors know which boxes to tick. The current system categorises our subjective experiences and then tells you whether you are disabled enough to receive financial help.

To receive the standard rate, you must score over eight points for the mobility section and another eight points for the standard rate in the daily living component. In the most recent application to PIP that I submitted, I scored 4 points for the daily living component, and 0 points for the mobility component.

The criterion for PIP is confusing and you will get different results depending on who is assessing you. Cases can make it all the way to tribunal, where 68% of PIP appeals were won by the claimant.

The first time I applied for PIP, my case went all the way to tribunal, where I was rejected again. It took over 18 months to get there, and it destroyed me when I was rejected. I was hoping to get a wheelchair to help with my deteriorating mobility. It took me over a year to reapply after how ruined I felt last time. This experience of being rejected again and again is traumatic.

Many others have bad experiences with PIP with these systemic flaws causing the deaths of numerous disabled people.

The theme for this year's Disability History Month is "Disability, Livelihood and Em-

“The current system categorises our subjective experiences and then tells you whether you are disabled enough...”

ployment". Disability is so often assumed to mean unemployment, but it's not questioned why it is the case for so many disabled people. The Government says that PIP won't be taken away if you begin to work, but it is hard

to trust what the government says when many people have been taken off PIP for no reason.

I applied for PIP last year and was rejected in December. For one of the sections where I scored 0 points, I was told the reason was because I am a university student so my disabilities must not be making too big of an impact.

My disabilities make a massive impact on my education, I struggle to get to classes because of my mobility issues and fatigue and I struggle to pay attention in lectures because of my autism.

It's humiliating to explain all the ways I struggle to be a student, and it's enraging to be told by someone you have never met that these struggles don't exist. With the cost-of-living crisis, most university students must work alongside their studies. Now, that is not a possibility for me.

PIP could have made my life so much easier already by easing financial pressures. It has been 16 weeks since I sent a mandatory reconsideration letter to PIP, and I am still waiting to hear back. In July last year, the average waiting time for a decision after a mandatory reconsideration was 32 weeks.

It's hard for me to talk about my experience being disabled without getting angry, as I know I have been lucky in so many ways. But I don't think this anger will end until disabled people are listened to and have a space in society.

You can contact Hermione, as the SU Officer for Physical Disabilities on Outlook or Teams.

America to End by 2028...

Stephen Whitear

The US Presidential Election this year was energetic and spontaneous. There are so many moments that could define it, from the two assassination attempts against former (and future) President Donald Trump and no less than three eventful presidential debates.

President Joe Biden made waves when he conceded his bid for re-election in the Summer. It was a damaging and consequential period for the Democratic Party.

But that's in the past. The road ahead is clear, and millions of people have the right to be worried, and many have the right to feel betrayed. I'm going to try and temper your expectations. Just a little. One candidate - the Democratic Party's Kamala Harris - was fighting an upwards battle for popularity within her party, and the other candidate - Donald Trump - was battling a legacy of failure and brash decisions culminating in the Capitol Insurrection on January 6th, 2021. Both candidates were unpopular with masses of the American people, which led to the election being on a knife-edge across the nation. In the end, it played to Trump's strengths. The Democratic Party had a significantly lower voter turnout than previous elections, chasing a Republican electorate that would never vote for them in a million years, while treating their own base



Image Credit:WikimediaCommons

with contempt. And here we are. This election was a slaughter for the Democratic Party. As well as losing the White House, they lost the electoral college, control of the Senate, the popular vote, and several Senate races. I don't brag often, but I feel like on this occasion it's earned. I went into US Election night with a long list of predictions, such as which states would be won by which candidate, and how long it would take until we had a clear idea of who the winner would be. Every one of those predictions was right. I was able to make such informed estimates because this is an election I've followed since the tail end of the last one. I never stopped following the key figures in US politics in 2021, and I've seen dozens and dozens of rallies over the last four years, including every single one by Re-

publican and Democratic vice-presidential candidates JD Vance and Tim Walz. Many people are worried about what comes next and, no, that isn't just because JD Vance is a heartbeat away from the presidency if Trump corks it. Many people are beginning to come around to the fact that they were lied to during the election cycle, both Democrat and Republican. There are worrying Google search trends in the last few weeks such as what tariffs are, and even why they couldn't vote for Joe Biden. This uninformed electorate could seriously be hurt by an Oval Office that is now packed with billionaires. So much is now possible. Many of the people who were crucial in securing Trump the presidency are paleoconservatives - politicians who vote and act based on their faith. Popular examples of paleoconservatives are the Republican vice president-elect JD Vance, and the speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson. Mike also doesn't believe in dinosaurs, and that's not a joke. So, changes could come from the White House that reflect an overwhelmingly Christian faith, such as pro-life legislation - the end of abortion as we know it - and the criminalisation of pornography. There are already elected senators who are looking towards the prospect of banning interracial marriage, some of whom are ironically enough married to people from a different race themselves. A lot of these aren't claims that Trump campaigned on, but as hardline paleoconservatives they are now absolutely conceivable in the United States. Pledges that are all too familiar to Trump's supporters like a 'remain in Mexico' policy and restrictions of transgender rights also feed back into faith. All this and more to come on the next season of the United States.

Special Report: UEA (SU)

What is the Students' Union, really?

Milla Cartwright
and Mar Devonport

The Students' Union was established in 1963, alongside the opening of the UEA.

It was created to allow students to be heard by the university as an organised collective.

Over the years, the SU has taken on numerous new responsibilities and roles, however many students are unaware of all that the SU encompasses.

The UEA's Union is one of the UK's largest Students' Union organisations in relation to its university's size. Which is why its structure and procedures can seem so broad, and oftentimes confusing.



Image credit: UEA(SU)

“It employs approximately 60 members of full-time staff, as well as over 300 members of student staff.”

Since 2011, the UEASU has been registered as a charity which is overseen by the Trustee Board. They ensure that the SU is acting according to its Constitution, in a legal and financially secure manner.

The Trustees include external representatives, as well as appointed students. There are four sub-committees established through the Trustee Board. These oversee the overall management of the SU, from commercial and financial strategy to human resources.

Aside from the Constitution, the Union is regulated through the Bye-Laws. The Constitution maps out the governance and structure of the SU. Meanwhile, the Bye-Laws detail the procedures and commitments of the SU.

Over time, misuses of power were resolved through Bye-Laws to ensure accountability, which has resulted in confusing or contradictory processes.

This governance structure also includes procedures through

which students can remove committee members from office.

In addition to being students' representative body, it provides support regarding academics and wellbeing. This is facilitated through platforms like advice(su), which aim to provide students with resources and guidance. Additionally, the SU is responsible for the extracurricular activities offered on campus, such as Clubs and Societies. Currently, there are over 50 Clubs and 160 Societies under the SU.

Each year, there are five Full-Time Officers (FTOs) and fifteen Part-Time Officers (PTOs). Each officer oversees a specific aspect of the Union's activities. They can leverage their platform to advocate for students in relation to the university, the city of Norwich and the UK government.

The FTOs are elected students on a sabbatical year and are paid for their work. They are the political face of the Union and hold the position for a maximum of two years. Meanwhile the PTOs volunteer in more behind-the-scenes positions.

Permanent staff members support the officers in the overall functioning of the Union as an organisation. They facilitate the transition of officers into their roles.

This includes ensuring the continuation of ongoing projects that could otherwise remain unfinished. Often projects can be impeded by the procedures in place, which is why the staff play a crucial background role. They act as a knowledge source on anything

from the practical side of implementing ideas to understanding all the procedures of the SU and the UEA. This extends to supporting students in general, not just the SU's officers.

The main decision-making body of the SU is Union Council (UC). They set policies and affirm the actions of the officers. UC currently involves the FTOs and PTOs, Society Representatives, Club Representatives, Peer Support Group Representatives, Faculty Convenors, School Convenors, and the Postgraduate Committee.

At full capacity, there are 281 members of the Union Council, however momentarily there are only 173 active voting members. In recent years, there has been a trend of disengagement within UC. Nevertheless, these meetings are advertised online for anyone to attend.

“Nevertheless, the Union is a separate entity from the University, despite what many might believe.”

On the surface, the SU and the UEA hold a united front.

They maintain a collaborative relationship, but the UEA holds a position of power over the SU. There are several bodies through which they cooperate. For example, the Learning and Teaching Committee or the Student Experi-

ence Committee. The SU is the legal representation of students and so, the university is required to communicate with the Union. Alongside this, the UEA provides the SU with grants to financially support its functioning, approximately £1.4m annually.

The Hive, the Union's headquarters, has always been rented from the UEA. Therefore, of the accommodation grant, £438k is redirected back to the University each year.

To ensure more financial independence, the Union has established its own income revenues. The main streams stem from its venues. The SU owns four commercial services: the two bars (Bar(su) and the LGBTQ+ Bar), and two entertainment venues (the LCR and The Waterfront).

All profit gained from these facilities is reinvested into the Union. This ranges from paying salaries, event organisation and student-related projects.

Previously, the University shop, Unio and several other establishments around campus were run by the SU. However, in 2020 these were taken over by UEA management as part of a bailout loan.

Such venues are the SU's primary income source. However, alcohol consumption amongst students has decreased over the years. Consequently, more universities are developing spaces that do not circumvent alcohol.

However, momentarily, the SU relies on these venues and at times has had to prioritise them to support itself.

An example of this was the introduction of Day Fever events, a daytime party for the over 30s. Despite being a non-student-oriented event, it was hosted as means to introduce profit.

The SU's new five-year strategy was announced this year. Primary goals would be to modernise the organisation and streamline its resources. Additionally, ensuring the SU's financial stability is crucial. This includes through creating supplementary incomes, such as through more (alcohol-free) spaces outside the Hive.

To encourage student engagement, they want to provide better support and training through the Union. In recent years, the roles of Students' Union's have often been questioned. That's why the SU is trying to become more adaptable towards students and implement better processes to improve transparency and representation in their systems.

You can read more about the SU's new strategy here: www.ueasu.org/union/ourstrategy/



Untangling the Officer Roles and Navigating the Big Issues

All Images Credited to UEA(SU)

Milla Cartwright
and Mar Devonport

Since the Union's foundation, its agenda and landscape has drastically changed. For example, the first Union Council meeting included a request that students "take special care about stubbing out cigarettes on the furniture." In time, the number of students at the UEA has exponentially increased and its demographic has shifted significantly. This resulted in a gradual adaptation of the Union and its engagement with students.

This year's FTOs recognise that the Union is a flawed entity and are working towards the facilitation of change. Three of the five Full-Time Officers (FTOs) were interviewed to gain a better insight on the structure of the SU, their roles within it and to address some of the key concerns and criticisms that the SU faces.

The Undergraduate Education Officer this year is Rebekah Temple-Fielder. This position oversees the academic wellbeing of undergraduate students, advocating for students at university-level discussions, like the University Senate. She explained that she wanted to address the academic representative system after having had "no engagement with it." She said that often officers come to their roles after encountering problems at university.

Rebekah discussed students' mistrust towards the SU stemming from issues of transparency. Particularly, a lack of understanding regarding how and why decisions are being made. Often students gain information from one another, or through participation in campus activities, like clubs and societies. Subsequently, not being involved within these circles can make the Union seem clique-y.

Where the SU's website could provide further insight, students are often faced with outdated or inconclusive results. As such, sometimes it is these barriers or complications that prevent accessing information. Rebekah discussed updating and streamlining the website to ensure "no more dead ends." This would help students better access resources and information that they need.

The Undergraduate Education Officer and Postgraduate Officer jointly oversee the School and Faculty Convenors. This year, the role of Course Representatives was removed and now students directly communicate with their Convenors. Currently there are 27 Convenors (19 School-level and 8 Faculty-level). Students' feedback is then used in cross-faculty meetings to compare experiences. This format also helps address disparities in resources and facilities, she said "sometimes you don't realise it until you put two people from different schools in a room."



UG Education Officer, Rebekah Temple-Fielder

Rebekah argued that "you can always do better with the quality of education." She emphasised it being "the element of university that students are paying for." This spans from reducing printing costs to ensuring that every student has a positive sense of engagement with their academic supervisor.

Reflecting on the overall role of the officer, Rebekah described it as a "weird" position to be in, as it can involve a range of activities from "throwing stuff out on a nightclub stage to having meetings with the Vice Chancellor. So, there's no middle ground."

Bhaskar Bukkanahalli Shivanna is currently in the role of Postgraduate Officer. The position advocates for the postgraduate students, for both Taught and Research. This includes educational representation, however, expands to the broader university experience as well. So far, this has included advocating for postgraduate student representatives within societies and clubs, as well as distinct forms of postgraduate roles at School-levels.

PG Officers are responsible for postgraduate wellbeing and facilitating their engagement with the SU. The Officer works in close col-

laboration with the Postgraduate Committee. The Committee is elected by the Postgraduate Assembly. Together they oversee events, opportunities and spaces dedicated to postgraduates.

All FTOs adopt the positions at the beginning of July and start training and planning throughout the summer. However, postgraduate programmes continue throughout this period. Consequently, postgraduates receive limited access to services and opportunities during these months. Bhaskar explained that it can be hard to get support when everyone is "busy planning ahead for the next academic year."

The type of students attending the UEA has changed dramatically, since the first 88 students started. This means that the positions and responsibilities within the SU are re-evaluated to ensure that it is equitably representing students of all backgrounds. For example, through a higher level of attentiveness towards cultural inclusion.

In recent years, the SU has worked in collaboration with select Schools to provide a Students of Colour Ambassadors (SOCA) scheme. It allows students of colour to work on projects that shape the experiences and curriculum within their Schools. These projects can also facilitate systematic change within the University. Currently there are 17 SOCA across nine Schools. Each officer brings their own lived experiences to the table. In Bhaskar's case, being an international student, he wanted to introduce more intercultural events. This was seen with the organisation of the Diwali festivities. Bhaskar shared the importance of there being "a home for students where they can celebrate their own culture."



PG Education Officer, Bhaskar Bukkanahalli Shivanna
This year's Campaigns and Democracy Officer is Chris Kershaw. According to him, his role is to "oversee the democratic institutions of the SU, to try and improve them." Within that, the work ranges from signposting to facilitating

larger initiatives, such as protests. Another side is engaging with groups on campus to lobby their interests regarding policies and decision-making. Through this, the SU facilitates foundational learning experiences, outside of academia, on "being fully engaged members of society."



Campaigns & Democracy Officer, Chris Kershaw

Union Council (UC) acts as the Union's decision-making body, a key platform to represent student interests. Most governing processes are streamlined through UC. Meaning, all students rely on it to enact change or voice concerns. In recent years, there has been a sense of disengagement with the Union and its processes. Chris described the Union's current infrastructure as full of "dead ends where ideas go to die." Reflecting students' disillusion towards it.

In response to this, the Democracy Review was introduced to examine the structures and processes in place. The Review has since resulted in a proposed system. It is still undergoing revision and is being discussed in UC meetings. Chris emphasises the need to "make sure that any of the changes that are brought in also have a level of democratic legitimacy." One part of the proposal would be to restructure some of the Union's organisation. For example, by replacing some of UC's functions through Committees, to allow more concentrated approaches to decision-making. In theory, this would streamline resources and communications.

In January of this year, Jumara Stone took over the CEO position. The current officers see this as a positive marker for change in the SU. Jumara has previously stressed the need for an "adaptable and responsive" Union. The new five-year strategy stresses the importance of streamlining resources and facilitating student collaboration. The SU has recognised some of its shortcomings and appears to be trying to ensure that students continue to want to be engaged and involved with the SU.



Explore 'A Day in the Life of...an SU Officer' with Olivia and Nathan in Concrete's new mini-documentary series on YouTube



YouTube: @concreteuea92



...continued: Survey calls for greater transparency and better communication from the SU

The Current Affairs Team

The survey's open-ended questions provided valuable insights into the specific concerns of students.

Many expressed a desire for greater transparency in the SU's decision-making processes and called for increased consultation with students on important issues such as changes in the use of SU space and the affordability of university life. There were also calls for the SU to be more proactive in addressing the diverse needs of the student population, including those of mature, postgraduate, and international students.

A POSITIVE PLATFORM FOR CHANGE
Despite a large proportion of neutral or negative findings, the survey also presents an opportunity for positive change.

By actively listening to student feedback and addressing the concerns raised, the SU can take meaningful steps towards rebuilding trust and improving its relationship with the student body. Our respondents suggest this should include:

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION:

The survey suggests the SU needs to communicate its roles, responsibilities, and activities more clearly to the student population. Several students have told Concrete this could be achieved through various channels, including social media, student newsletters, and a broader range of events.

INCREASING REPRESENTATION:

Many student voices are calling on the SU to actively seek out more ways to represent the diverse voices and needs of all students, including those from minority groups. This can be achieved by establishing focus groups, conducting regular surveys, and ensuring that all students have equal access to opportunities for participation in SU activities.

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY:

The SU needs to be more transparent in its decision-making processes, the survey suggests. Recommendations for addressing this include publishing and more actively sharing minutes of meetings, providing regular updates on SU activities via digital channels and physical forums, and actively seeking greater student input on important issues.

ADDRESSING STUDENT CONCERNS:

Lastly, the survey suggests the SU should be more proactive in addressing student concerns and working towards solutions that benefit the entire student body, not just a "select few" or "distinct groups" with "the loudest voices". Suggestions for improvements include establishing and promoting clearer channels for students to voice their concerns, and greater active engagement with all student groups and societies.

Concrete's survey makes clear that students appreciate and welcome many elements of a 'Friendly' and 'Positive' Students' Union that is purpose-driven and actively aids and supports students as they navigate their university experience.

In response to the survey, the 5 full-time Student Officers provided the following joint statement:

"As your student representatives, we recognise that the Students' Union is not perfect. If it were, we wouldn't have the opportunity to make meaningful change. We believe that every organisation or system has room for improvement, and we embrace this re-

ality as part of our responsibility to you. We welcomed the investigation conducted by the student newspaper, as it provides a valuable opportunity for reflection and accountability. The areas for improvement highlighted in the report will guide the work we do moving forward. Constructive criticism helps us grow and ensures we remain responsive to the needs and concerns of the student body.

At the same time, we're grateful for the positive feedback shared. It's encouraging to hear what we're doing well and motivates us to build on those strengths as we continue to develop and improve.

We genuinely appreciate the transparency and honesty of everyone who contributed to this process. Through such open dialogue, we can continue to make positive changes and create a Students' Union that better serves all students."

To explore the survey results in more detail, head to the Investigations section on Concrete's website, where you will also find the results of Concrete's Committee Members Survey.

"We need to show that we care"

In Conversation with Alicia Khuttan, UEASU Women's Officer 2024/25

Fiona Hill Co-Editor-in-Chief

The idea that sexism and misogyny are the issues of yesteryear is an all too prevalent opinion and one that finds a place in our communities through silence. Whilst studying at UEA, it is hard not to notice this distinct lack of discussion around women's issues, especially in light of recent figures deeming that 68% of women are subject to sexual harassment within their university experience. Although the results of the Concrete SU survey suggested that support for women was not a highly contentious concern regarding the SU, it seemed possible that this quietness signified not an absence of a problem at UEA but the same acceptance of an unfair reality. In order to understand this better, Concrete reached out to the SU's Woman Officer, Alicia Khuttan, who was keen to discuss what the SU is, and potentially isn't, doing to aid students who identify as women.

Founded in the 1960s, the UEASU was established in a nation with many differing social perspectives to today. When questioned about the extent to which it may be institutionally stuck in the slipstream of an older era, Alicia stated, 'With the people that work in the SU now, women aren't so afraid to say what they want to say. It can be different in a professional and a

personal setting.' Alicia went on to expand on this difference, claiming that 'There are women in the SU that have experienced misogyny in their roles and there have been cases where some haven't felt comfortable speaking up. It isn't just the case here, but you can be in a big meeting and there's a lot more men in the room and you have something to say and you just don't want to say it because- I hate this term- but it can be a very 'laddish' culture.'

When asked what would aid these challenges for both students and staff, Alicia answered decisively. 'Absolutely the bye-laws. We need more clarity about how we're meant to be running this and what the rules are. That's something we're working on.'

Alicia refers here to the bye-laws that accompany the SU constitution and cover how elections are run, the conduct at meetings and the equality and diversity commitments. With these commitments in mind, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDICT) was established in 2018. In response to whether this was still in place, Alicia responded with, 'No, it's not running. There's a lot of stuff in there that doesn't need to be there or doesn't make sense.' Similarly, in regards to whether the Woman and Non-binary Network was still operating, Alicia responded with 'Not that I know of, no.'

Despite this, Alicia is keen to create new spac-

es for discussion and has developed an inclusive approach to how she would like to implement this. 'I want my workshops to target all groups as I don't want to speak on behalf of women, but alongside them. For instance, I can talk about what it's like to be a woman of colour, but I can't talk about transsexuality. Thankfully there are other officers that can.'

Alicia emphasised this sense of unity amongst the officer team, with her recalling how she was being supported in an anti-spiking campaign set to launch next semester. 'I can't share all the ideas at the moment, but full-time officers would help, as well as a few other part-time officers.' Similarly, she praised the SU's Advice and Welfare team for the refilling of period products in the toilets in the Hive, an action that compliments her creation of period packages that are set to be implemented at the end of the semester.

Continuing to recall positive progression, Alicia reflected on the increase in uptake of female leadership in societies and clubs. With around 45% of Society Presidents and around 50% of Club Presidents identifying as female, she remarked that 'It's good to see the changes that are happening here. It's got a lot better over the last couple of years.'

Taking into account the present lack of formalised spaces for discussions on sexism

and misogyny, as well as what she describes as outdated bye-laws, Alicia still makes it apparent that both herself and others within the SU are looking to make UEA a better place for students identifying as women. Towards the end of our discussion, she admitted to this nuanced perspective, stating that 'We could always do more. It's got a lot better over the last couple of years, but we need to show that we care. It's not a matter of doing it because we have to, it's about wanting to do it, for students and for women.'

Image Credit: Alicia Khuttan



Investigations

SU Admits “Failure on Both Parts” Following Conversion of former Scholars’ Bar

Emily Pitt-Shaw
Investigations Editor

A Concrete investigation has revealed how a lack of foresight and transparency was involved in converting Scholars Bar to the LGBTQ+ Bar following an annual loss of around £8,000.

The decision was signed off by the Student Union’s Trustee Board prior to any discussion with students from either community, as members of the committee reportedly believed that the process between signing the contract and changing the bar was going to be a lot slower.

‘We were under the impression that there was going to be more time for students to be consulted on the rebrand’, said Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer Nathan Wyatt.

A proposal to relaunch the establishment as a space for members of the LGBTQ+ community was introduced following the consistent decline in income from Scholars Bar since it was first opened in 2015.

When launched, the bar was managed by the Graduate Centre Management Committee. This was part of the Postgraduate Student Association, before both groups were absorbed by the Students’ Union.

Posters on the doors of the bar, that were only removed shortly before its transition, explicitly stated that the original centre’s primary objective was to run the bar to benefit the postgraduate community and ‘not to focus on financial profit’.



Image Credit: Emily Pitt-Shaw

An anonymous post on Concrete Confessions voiced concern that ‘The SU tried to cover up financial losses on a non-profit project by offering false hope to another minority, and it needs to do better by all of us at UEA.’

But Nathan explained that, although the aim was not to make profit, the running costs of the bar were not being raised due

to external issues such as the pandemic, security fees, and the cost of living crisis impacting students.

The Students’ Union maintains that although the purpose of the bar is still not to make profit, it was no longer financially viable existing as the Scholar’s bar as it was contributing to the general debt of the union.

Overall, the Student Union has accrued approximately £3.2 million of debt through loans from University of East Anglia, bank loans, and repaying historic pension schemes.

“the Student Union has accrued approximately £3.2 million of debt...”

Assistant Finance Director Tim Cave outlined the Unions clear and structured plan to repay each of these sectors - and while further financial strains from staffing costs are predicted for the coming academic year, he reassured that it represented and accounted for what Chief Executive Jumara Stone ‘believes is the best structure’.

It also allows room for pay increases for junior staff - as well as changes in executive contracts. These adjustments include reducing the Chief Executive’s sick pay allowance from the previous six months to one month, as well as extending their initial probation period. Both were implemented upon Jumara’s arrival in January 2024.

Tim explained that the previous two Chief Executive Officers ‘had left office prematurely by mutual agreement’, the most recent of which involved a five-figure exit payment in 2024. ‘This is a habit that would be good to break’, he said.

From the start of her career with the Student Union, Jumara has remained transparent with the full-time officers as to how to remove her position if ever needed, explains Nathan Wyatt. It’s a level of transparency that the Union is financially used to working under as a charity.

As a charity body, the Union falls under a reporting framework determined by charity law. Tim Cave said that ‘we operate in an environment where there’s transparency and scrutiny’ as a result of reporting and filing their accounts with the charity commission. The Union exists under this category as it has a purpose to meet charitable aims; to provide opportunities, advice, support and representation to students.

However the Students’ Union is also a

registered company and social enterprise, owning both Student Union Services Limited and the Adrian Flux Waterfront.

Adrian Flux, a Norfolk-based insurance broker, pays an annual fee to have its name affiliated with the venue, but does not own shares of or operate the club in any way.

The split between raising their own income and grants provided by the university is close to equal. Such grants come in two parts - one unconditional, block amount, and the other an optional grant offered by the UEA to support new and existing programmes, such as The Buddy Scheme that was launched in 2017.

The relationship between the university and the Students’ Union is binding as a result of the Education Act 1994 - although legally and financially, the Union continues to remain independent.

As a result, the Students’ Union is still largely dependent on its own trading for funding, mainly due to the LCR’s position as the biggest venue for music and events in Norwich.

Financially, the two biggest interactions between the Union and students are through clubs and societies memberships, and attendees to the bars - one of which being the newly rebranded LGBTQ+ Bar.

Tim Cave explains that ‘when Scholars Bar could no longer justify itself commercially, a proposal for it to have a different life with a new audience was found, without compromising its proposition to graduates’.

“In what context can we be all things to all people?”

It’s an undeniable challenge for the bar to be both a source of income as well as a space for multiple demographics. ‘In what context can we be all things to all people?’, Tim questions.

Current Part-Time LGBTQ+ Officer Matthew Shields, who at the time of the decision to rebrand the bar was the head of UEA’s Pride Society, explained how the Students’ Union ‘should simply have been more transparent about their finances from the start... and there should always have been a conversation first’.

An accountability session was held shortly after the decision in the summer, but with many students at home during this time of year, the impact was useful but limited.

Although both LGBTQ+ and Postgraduate students appear to acknowledge that the Students’ Union meant well in their decision to repurpose the bar, it’s a general consensus that ‘they were out of touch with committees when making the decision’.

“[the SU] should simply have been more transparent about its finances from the start”

It follows a long-running lack of engagement between decisions made by the Trustee Board and university students.

Matthew has focused on breaking this cycle in his current role by nurturing the relationship between the Students’ Union and members of the LGBTQ+ community. The past lack of communication between the two has resulted in both parties running parallel events at the same time with no collaboration, such as Transgender Visibility Day in March 2024.

Matthew said he had ‘no place in making the decision’ and was not approached about the transition of the bar. He ‘felt let down that [he] wasn’t able to represent [his] community properly’.

But despite feeling like he once had to insert himself into the Union’s ongoings in order to keep up with events and plans, he says it has recently become more natural, and is going in the correct direction - this comes shortly after he, alongside fellow LGBTQ+ Trans and Non-Binary Place Officer Thea Glover, were consulted by Nathan to help shortlist new names for the LGBTQ+ Bar.

He says that the Students’ Union is taking on feedback from the community he represents as an officer by recruiting queer DJs for Liquorice, as well as encouraging students to vote for the bar’s new title. The drinking spot will be named Kaleidoscope, Dorothy’s, or Unity once votes have been counted.

Full-time officer Nathan Wyatt reflected on the decision, highlighting that ‘there was a failure on both parts, when the paper was delivered and agreed to’.

Since the rebranding, the Students’ Union has implemented Wednesday club night Liquorice, as well as offering the bar to host a new book club and karaoke nights. ‘It can also act as an overflow space for future events in other bars’, they suggest.

Interview

UEA Nursing Society: Determination in the Face of a National Crisis

Last month, Concrete reached out to the UEA Nursing Society in order to obtain a comment on the student nursing recruitment crisis. Encouraged by their positivity in the face of applications dropping for a third year in a row, we were curious to understand more about the student nurses behind the headline, what exactly it was that motivated them to pursue a potential career with the NHS and how their society aided their fellow students. On an early November morning, we sat down with the Equality and Diversity Officer and Secretary Steph Coates and the Treasurer Maddie Grindrod to find out more.

For both Steph and Maddie, nursing wasn't always the first choice. 'I came to university a bit later,' Steph began, 'After leaving school I was an early years practitioner but I decided I wanted something a bit different. I did a little bit of

support work and that's when I saw these nurses coming in. It was really quite motivating for me.' Similarly, Maddie reflected on starting a biomedical degree before realising her interests lay elsewhere, 'I'd always liked the idea of nursing. My grandparents had such varying care in their old age and I always thought that was so interesting.'

“Nobody in my family is medical so I had no idea what I was walking into!”

However, despite some previous experiences in the medical sector, both Steph and Maddie made it apparent that they couldn't have anticipated the challenges of being a student nurse. 'Nobody in my family is medical so I had no idea what I was walking into!' Maddie laughed as Steph added,

'There's lots and lots of paperwork that you might not realise and that can be a bit of a surprise!' Steph went on to emphasise the strict and often bureaucratic element of nursing- even for students, with hospital paperwork acting as legal documentation.

The stringent na-

ture of hospital routine became even more apparent as they detailed the ins and outs of a day on placement. With an early start at 7 o'clock and only two half-hour breaks before finishing at 7:30 in the evening, their days are filled with dressings, personal care, NG tubes and the distribution of medication. After 3 to 13 weeks of such high-paced work, both agreed that the theory-based learning at university felt much slower, if not still intense.

With what appears to be such an active degree, it is truly a wonder that Steph and Maddie are able to balance it with running a society. Despite this, Steph made it apparent how important their role as Equality and Diversity Officer was to them and the culture they wanted to see when they entered the workforce. 'I'm quite passionate about it myself, being LGBT and disabled. Going into nursing as a member of a minority group and as someone with health conditions can be quite intimidating and sometimes it's about fighting for yourself a little bit.'

Steph explained how the UEA had accommodated well to their needs, with them praising their advisor, the well-being team, and occupational health- to which all nursing students are entitled. Unfortunately, outside the university sphere, both student nurses spoke of a different experience. 'Sometimes with the trust (Nursing and Midwifery Council) you have to be a bit pushy and a little bit assertive', Steph pointed out, with Maddie adding that hospital assessors could also

“Going into nursing as a member of a minority group and as someone with health conditions can be quite intimidating”

pose a difficulty when faced with reasonable adjustments, such as shorter working hours and aversion to distributing certain medications as a result of allergies.

Reflecting on her role as Treasurer, Maddie was also able to highlight difficulties experienced by student nurses, with financial barriers whilst training being a serious prohibiting factor for many. 'I try and keep the costs down so as many people can come to our events as possible. Nursing is difficult already as a lot of things have to be paid for upfront- so if you can't afford to travel, you can't afford placement. I mean some people spend thousands.'

With Steph and Maddie's help, the Nursing Society is able to run multiple socials and events across the year, including a 'Drinks and Yap' event in September and a Christmas Party at the end of this month. With these events result-

“It can be quite a relief for a lot of people to have a space where you can talk freely with others who are in the same boat!”



Co-Editors-In-Chief **Fiona Hill** and **Jamie Bryson** in conversation with **Steph Coates** and **Maddie Grindrod** of the **UEA Nursing Society**



ing in many varied conversations, Maddie reflected on the talks of placements, assignments and nursing tips, 'It's a very nurse chat!' she added, 'It be quite a relief for a lot of people to have a space where you can talk freely with others who are in the same boat.' She also explained how this sense of camaraderie was not just evident amongst student nurses, but also found within the hospital itself, 'The community on wards is amazing. I think that's why people stay in the NHS and don't go private and do agency work-it's for that community. I love it.'

Perhaps this is one of the many reasons that Steph and Maddie claimed the greatest challenge they faced was the prospect of an understaffed ward. With 'scary' and 'daunting' brought up fre-

“After a long day on the ward: ‘I could have done so much more with a bit of extra support.’”

quently within the discussion, it seemed as if burnout, both in an emotional and physical sense, was all too prevalent within the role. Steph was able to encapsulate this feeling of exhaustion and helplessness as they reflected on a thought that they would often have after a long day on the ward; 'I could have done so much more with a bit of extra support.'

In spite of these difficulties, Steph went on to explain that they had seen improvements in how the

nursing sector approached well-being since the COVID-19 pandemic, with both a new mentality within the profession, as well as hospital advertisements encouraging nurses to set boundaries and to take time off when burnt out.

Although the topic of COVID-19 often evokes negative and sometimes traumatic memories among those in the healthcare profession. Whether it had changed the public's outlook on the NHS was something that Maddie saw as two-fold, 'We were really put on a pedestal with the clapping for the NHS staff and so people expect more now. But then equally I think that people can see a lot more of what we go through and as students we hear so many awful stories of what people went through during COVID.' Such stories include those of the thousands of third-year nursing students who were registered early and thrust into the workforce before their final placements. 'Straight out and straight alone' as Maddie described them, 'I've spoken to them and it sounds horrible.'

With the heroes of the pandemic being one current public perspective, Maddie brought up a less positive depiction that was continuing to affect nurses. 'After Lucy Letby, people will often want to talk about what happened. I mean, you can be chatting to a patient and they'll just make a joke about it.' Not only is this prevalent amongst those external to the hospital environment, but she also stressed how fellow student nurses were using it to describe those on their course they

disliked. 'It's really bad,' Maddie admitted, 'but it does happen.'

What with the long hours, the pressures of being understaffed and the plethora of stereotypes, it was obvious that pursuing a career in nursing was at the very least challenging. Maddie admitted 'Even now, I think about whether I'll be a nurse when I'm 40. Maybe, maybe not. I mean I love it, but can I take it that long?'. With

“Even now, I think about whether I'll be a nurse when I'm 40 [...] I mean I love it, but can I take it that long?”

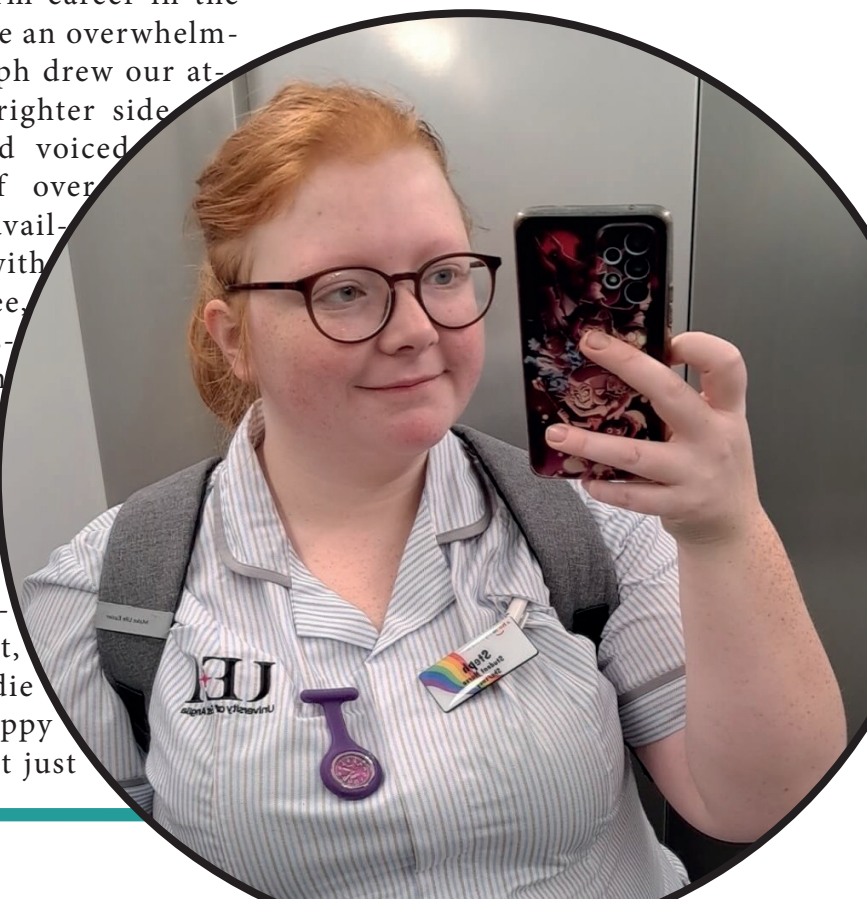
Maddie continuing to detail qualified nurses informing her of their regret as to their career choice, this isn't difficult to understand. Whilst a long-term career in the NHS seemed to be an overwhelming prospect, Steph drew our attention to the brighter side of this issue and voiced their own relief over the other routes available to pursue with a nursing degree, with health visiting, nursing in holiday resorts and other community aid being a few of many.

However, looking to the present, Steph and Maddie seem both happy and enthused, not just

with their course and society, but by the prospect of beginning their careers next year. 'It's so rewarding and I've found the experience incredibly supportive,' Steph exclaimed, 'Getting to know your colleagues, being with everyone-it's great'. No more plainly is this reflected than in their choice of downtime activity, with both looking forward to indulging in the latest medical TV shows, including Gray's Anatomy, Casualty, 24 Hours in A&E and Chicago Med. 'People ask me if nursing is my only personality,' Maddie laughed, 'and I'm like- yeah, it really is.'

*Photo 1: UEA Nursing Society Logo.
Photo 2: UEA Nursing Society at 2023 Christmas Celebration, Maddie Grindrod in green.
Photo 3: Steph Coates.*

All photo credits go to UEA Nursing Society



Lifestyle

Making Your Home a Winter Nest

Elle McKinnell-Michael
Lifestyle Editor

Squirrels have filled up their dreys, hedgehogs have stored up fat and bats have readied their roosts. As the nights get colder and darker, the animals around us are getting ready to stick out the winter. So, what lessons can we learn from these creatures in their warm, cozy nests?

The cold dark nights don't just affect animals, humans can feel the changing seasons just the same. Many of us feel fatigue as our bodies fall out of sync with the sun, especially after the clocks change. Whether you have experienced the 'winter blues,' or you feel the effects of 'Seasonal Affective Disorder,' this time of year can leave you feeling low, drowsy, and irritable. It is only natural after all; your environment will always affect your mood. Our busy, active lives can feel fruitful and fulfilling, but when all you want to do is get cozy and rest, you could risk falling into a cycle of guilt about your missed plans and lost opportunities. How can you best set your expectations to stay positive and comfortable over the winter period?

As modern humans we expect lots of ourselves, especially students; we juggle study, summative deadlines, paid work, social lives, and extra-curricular projects. Our social lives flourish over the summer, we feel

the pull of nightlife, summer nights are perfect for long evenings with your loved ones. In winter though, it can be hard to muster the energy to brave the cold for an overpriced pint, especially when you know it is pitch-black outside. This isn't to say that you should become a hermit over the winter, but it is important to set your expectations early. You may find that social plans are pushed back regularly, it might feel hurtful when your friends cancel last minute, and you might feel guilt for doing the same. When setting plans, consider things you know you will feel ready for when you are feeling low or tired, places close-by, warm and comfortable.

Over the winter months, your home should be a place you look forward to returning to. Keeping your space warm, tidy, and cozy can be helpful. Take some time to think about your bedroom or living space, do you really feel comfortable there? How can you make it cozy for the winter? Cozy autumnal or wintery scents can make a world of difference. It's also important to think about your after work/university routine. How can you warm up and start to relax when you return home? How you do this is personal, but warm showers, comfortable clothes and soft blankets always do the trick.

Your evenings tend to feel longer as the darkness drags out in the winter. It can feel boring, and you

could quickly become self-critical, feeling lazy or guilty. It is important to make active choices to fill your time with things you enjoy doing. Bed-rotting can be nice, but falling into the trap of spending every evening in your bed and on your phone can make you feel low and sluggish. Watch that movie people keep recommending, listen to an audiobook of a classic novel, pick up that instrument you never find time to practice and learn a new song. Do whole activities, no matter how easy, that have a clear beginning and end; you might be craving the feeling of completing something. Collect little leaflets, letters, stickers and notes you no longer need and keep a scrapbook with diary-style notes to remind yourself of the things you have been up to. This can be helpful to look back on if you start feeling guilty about being anti-social or inactive.

The food you eat can affect, but also be affected by, your mindset and mood. When we feel low, our feelings around food often change, so it is important to set up a steady structure around food if you know you are typically affected by the winter blues. It can be helpful to have a small rotation of comforting evening meals that nourish your soul and body over this period; consider foods that will make you happy, and foods you feel happy to cook when you're feeling tired or depressed.

Until the Winter Solstice on the 21st of December, the nights are only going to get darker. This can be a bleak thought, but it is helpful to remember that the cycle of the seasons is natural and that this yearly change can be predicted and prepared for. Look to the animals around you on your way to and from campus, watch as they

set up for the cold dark nights and ponder how you can do the same.

If you are struggling with your mental health or wellbeing, don't hesitate to reach out to the support systems around you. Contact UEA's Well-being Team via Student Support.



Credit: Unsplash



Keeping Warm on a Budget

Lillie Clark

As the days get colder and the price of energy bills stays high, I thought I would share some cost-effective ways to keep yourself warm that you could work into your routine.

Firstly, layers are your best friend. Many thin layers are more effective than a couple of thicker ones. Look for clothing made of wool and cotton and don't forget about thermals! If you are going outside, try to cover up as much as possible with a hat, gloves, earmuffs, etc. Flannel and fleece bedding is best for sheets and, if you can splurge a little, electric or weighted blankets are a cost-effective way to keep you extra toasty.

Other items that can keep you warm are hot water bottles and rugs (although do not use hot

water bottles with an electric blanket). Rugs will help you insulate your rooms and keep the heat from escaping. More ways to insulate include blocking draughts; you can do this by lining the draughty area with a blanket, towel or cushion.

When it is sunnier out you should open the curtains to allow the natural heat in. If you must open your windows to ventilate your space, try to do this for a short amount of time at the sunniest or warmest part of the day (usually this is mid afternoon).

Eating a balanced healthy diet over the colder months is important to support your immune system. Consider making warming foods like soups, stews, and bakes. One pot dishes like these are a clever way to use up tinned produce

like beans, pulses, and vegetables. If you use the oven, keep the oven door open after you have finished to allow the heat to spread around your space.

A free way to warm up is to move around. This could be with intense exercises like home pilates or high intensity training, taking a walk (perhaps to a free warm space) or even just doing chores around your home. If it is hard for you to move around look into chair-based exercises — even doing some small movements can help with circulation.

Finally, you can try to get help. Find out if you're eligible for government help, like the Warm Home Discount Scheme or the Cold Weather Payment.

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Anne Glia:

Coping When it Isn't 'The Most Wonderful Time of the Year'

Kasey Campbell
Anne Glia (Agony Aunt)

Hello everyone! Welcome back to Concrete. I'm Aunt Glia, your resident Agony Aunt!

I can't wait any longer. It's tiiiiiiiiimeee! Mariah Carey is defrosting; we're officially in the "brr" months. November is upon us, and with it, the sights, sounds and smells that accompany the start of the festive season! You might consider November too early to think about winter festivities and Christmas (if you celebrate it), but not in my home! I get very excited for this time of year, but sometimes I have to remind myself that not everybody feels the same – which brings me to this month's question:

Auntie G, I hate Christmas. I'm always so lonely, even when surrounded by everyone. I don't feel any festive joy. I know I shouldn't, but why do I feel so blue at this time of year?

It's easy, isn't it, to get bogged down in all the 'I should's'. But just because the general opinion is that this season is 'the most wonderful time of the year', it doesn't necessarily mean everybody feels like that. There are several reasons this could be a difficult time of the year for someone. It's normal to not love occasions that you're 'supposed' to love but take time to identify why it is you might feel that way.

For example, one's birthday is supposed to be a joyous occasion. My birthday, which coincidentally falls in early December, is not my favorite time of year because my father had a heart attack on my birthday (cheers, dad). Praise be, he's fine now, but when that time comes around, I sometimes find myself fixating on those memories of fear and guilt.

Unfortunately, life doesn't wait for celebrations and festivities to pass before it happens. But, as my dad still reminds me, you have to go with the flow and count your blessings. I haven't stopped celebrating my birthday. To stop those festivities would just be sullen when, in fact, I'm grateful he is still around to celebrate my birthday with me and guide me to see the good in the bad.

So, how can we combat those winter blues, and try to find that festive joy, when all we can think about is the negative? Firstly, it's important to continue to engage in social activities. Many psychological studies link depression and social isolation, so, get out in your community and socialise. The SU has many exciting upcoming events, like Christmas flower arranging and bauble making, to get you in the Christmas spirit. If you don't celebrate Christmas, I would encourage you to look at your favourite societies and see what they've got going on. For example, the Pakistan x African and Caribbean Society's November sports day. More information about all these events can be found on the SU website.

At this time of year, it's important to reflect on the things we do have, not what we don't. Try to find excitement in the little things, because it's a privilege to experience them. What smells will fill your home? Who will you see that you didn't all year? Personally, it's a privilege and a blessing for my biggest concern to be whether I'm going to have a cinnamon or cashmere scented candle in my home, and not whether I'll have a home at all. It's a privilege to worry about what I'll buy my family this year, and not whether they'll survive the winter. These are the things I consider when I feel the festive joy dwindling.

Wishing you all a wonderful festive season, take care of each other.

Best of luck,

Anne Glia.



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A Student Divide: Part-Time Work

Elle McKinnell-Michael
Lifestyle Editor

There is an unspoken divide between students, a divide that affects your free time, energy, and ability to learn. The fact is, some students have to work to pay the bills, and other students do not. However, just how impactful is working a part-time job on the overall student experience, and what can be done to improve the lives of students struggling financially?

A recent survey of 10,000 full-time undergraduate students carried out by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) found that 56% of students have paid employment while they study, work that averages 14.5 hours per week. The majority of the other 44% of students have a maintenance loan, bursary and/or scholarship that covers their rent and day to day costs, have their income supplemented by family or are unable to find suitable em-

ployment. The figures differ for certain social groups, for example, the HEPI found that 80% of students who had been in care had to take on extra work while studying.

When combining study and face to face contact hours with working hours, some students found that they were occupied over 55 hours a week. According to the HEPI, working too many hours alongside your full-time degree can come with challenges. They describe that 'when students work more hours than they can manage, it risks compromising the quality of their studies.' According to the institute, students with jobs are more likely to use AI programs to assist in their studies and are more likely to view lectures online rather than attending in person.

What is the reality of work for students? The Work Foundation at Lancaster University found that 65% of new zero-hour contracts are signed by people between the ages of 16-24. This type of contract, in which employers are not required to give a minimum number of hours to employees, is common among working students. It is argued that this style of contract is a boon for students, meaning they can slot shorter shifts around their study hours and are not tied down to their university town when they wish to travel home. However, it must be noted that almost three-quarters of workers on zero-hour contracts are in a situation described

as 'severely insecure work' by the Work Foundation. This means that they may face financial insecurity based on their uncertain contract, and that they have limited access to workers' rights or protections.

Whether it is down to a failure to predict inflation, negligence, or students falling low on the priority list of the government, many students find that their student loan just isn't enough to live on.

"For many, the maintenance loan installments they receive throughout the year are not enough to cover rent, let alone utilities or food."

For over ten years, the minimum threshold on household income has remained the same, meaning fewer students each year are entitled to the maximum maintenance loan. Also, as the cost of living rises, universities are less and less able to provide grants and aid to students from lower-income backgrounds.

It is not radical to suggest students be able to survive off their maintenance loan. Gov.uk states that the maintenance loan provided for students is 'for living costs', and so it should cover rent, utilities, and food. An ideal situation for many students would be one where they can live securely and comfortably

on their maintenance loan and enjoy nutritious and adequate food.

Can work 'work' for students? Working alongside study can be an invaluable tool to gain professional experience in your field of study, or to broaden your experiences so that you finish university as a well-rounded graduate. Having a disposable income, even a small one, is not to be taken for granted. Provided that you have an acceptable relationship with your workplace and colleagues, working to earn extra money can absolutely be fulfilling, whether you're building up an emergency fund or using the money you earn to treat yourself.

There are large gaps in the student finance system, especially for those from less privileged backgrounds. For many students there simply isn't enough money in their accounts to get by, meaning they must over-work themselves out of necessity.

"Until systematic change comes about, remember to look out for your friends who may be struggling; community support can ultimately be the difference between someone going hungry or eating."

Credit: Unsplash



Travel

CO₂ and You: How to reduce your carbon footprint whilst travelling

Abbie Harding

You've just got your beach towel, found the perfect place to settle down under the shade of an umbrella, and are ready to relax with cocktail in hand. Your phone's on silent (no work calls: result!). Your computer's safely back at home, with no summative in sight (get in!). There's nothing but the rolling waves, the fluttering of birds, and the thought that the flight you just took has dumped 5.81 tonnes of CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere.

One's carbon footprint isn't often what people consider on their holiday agenda.

However, where carbon dioxide levels have increased by more than 22% in less than 44 years and more and more people are taking flights around the world, the impact on emissions on climate change is a serious one. Heathrow airport alone suggests that with they had on average 536 daily flights arriving or departing in 2021 alone. When I first went to Western



Australia as part of the UEA Study Abroad programme, I ad-

mit that I wasn't thinking very much about my carbon footprint. But with the almost daily occurrence of wildfires, temperatures in soaring to over 50 degrees in parts of WA, and many of the coral reefs I visited bleached, I felt like something had to be done. By reducing my carbon footprint, I was able to enjoy the rest of my study abroad guilt free. So, below I will list some things I did to help lower my carbon footprint on holiday (whilst still enjoying a cheeky cocktail on the beach).

1. Get a non-stop flight

If you can, getting a non-stop flight helps to save emissions because the plane takes the most direct path to your destination. That way, you can have peace of mind

not needing to worry about your emission impact AND trying to find the right gate at your stopover.

2. Use public transport

Planes aren't the only things to consider when planning to lower your carbon footprint on holiday. Like it or not, public transport is great to get you around a city in an economic and low-emission way. In Perth I could on a train, bus or ferry to go to the city or further afield. It was a great way to explore a new country by seeing things and meeting people you wouldn't experience through a taxi alone.

3. Eat local cuisine

Being the downfall of my wallet, I was lucky enough to get my food from the local market down at Fre-

mantle. Shopping locally is a great way to lower emissions, because there is less packaging and trans-



portation needed for the supplier to get the food from producer to buyer. It also is a great way to get to know the vendors, support independent businesses, and discover local food specialties which you might have otherwise missed.

Photo Credit: Neils and Marco on Unsplash

JarraTree on Wikimedia Commons

Cinematic Landscapes in the Peak District

Tania Casali
Travel Correspondent

The Peak District makes the perfect setting for many popular movies and tv shows, with its rolling hills and dramatic moorlands. Accessible from Norwich by train, it is a beautiful place to visit in the autumnal season!

Chatsworth House

Chatsworth House, located in the heart of the Peak District, makes the perfect backdrop for the 2005 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet and Matthew Macfayden as Mr. Darcy.

Chatsworth is portrayed as Pemberley, the home of Mr. Darcy. The estate has been home to seventeen generations of the Devonshire family, with over 25 rooms including the Painted Hall and Sculpture Gallery. It also features a 150-acre garden, famous for its impressive waterworks and Victorian rock garden. In the film, Elizabeth Bennet ex-

plores the property and admires its sculptures, including the one of Mr. Darcy himself. This is a significant moment in the film as she reflects upon her feelings for him. It is believed that Jane Austen based Pemberley on Chatsworth House as she was staying in Bakewell, just six miles away, when she wrote *Pride and Prejudice*. In the novel, she even mentions Chatsworth as one of the estates Elizabeth Bennet visits with her aunt and uncle before arriving at Mr. Darcy's home.

Stanage Edge

The use of the Peak District in *Pride and Prejudice* doesn't stop there, as Stanage Edge was also used in a memorable scene where Elizabeth Bennet stands alone and gazes out at the landscape. This famous location provides stunning views of the Dark Peak moorlands and the Hope Valley. It is formed from Millstone Grit, a coarse-grained sandstone which creates ideal rock-climbing conditions. It is also accessible by walking, although it is considered a moderately challenging route. However, the views

at the top are well worth the effort.

Castleton

Castleton is a beautiful village located in the heart of the Peak District. Founded in 1086, the village is popular for its show caves, history and scenic walking paths. The *Game of Thrones* prequel se-



ries *House of Dragon* (2022) used this location as a filming site, with nearby villagers reporting that they had seen plenty of crew as well as famous actor (and UEA graduate!) Matt Smith. Much of the filming took place near Cave Dale, a dry limestone valley formed by glacial meltwater. There are four caves to explore at Castleton, which are accessible by guided tour.

Haddon Hall

Haddon Hall has featured in several films and TV shows, renowned for being one of the most significant and oldest heritage destinations in the country. This Tudor manor has 900 years of history, with an impressive tapestry collection, early English furniture collection and Elizabethan Walled Gardens. Haddon was used as a stand-in for Hampton Court Palace in the high-profile production *Mary Queen of Scots* (2018), starring Margot Robbie and Saoirse Ronan. Location manager Pat Karam described the house as his favourite location used for the film. As one of the most popular film

locations in the country, Haddon Hall has also starred in three film versions of the famous novel *Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2008) and *The Princess Bride* (1987).

Chrome Hill

Chrome Hill is a limestone reef knoll and one of the most distinct and recognisable hills in the Peak District. Formed around 340 million years ago, there are several

routes around this popular hiking area to explore. Fans of *Peaky Blinders* were quick to recognise Chrome Hill in the final scenes of season 6, the last episode of the whole series. The main character, Thomas Shelby, overlooks the landmark which was chosen for its spectacular views. Head of production David Mason noted that the location presented some challenges to get all the equipment to the top of the rugged hill, but the views made it worthwhile. Chrome Hill is part of a feature named the 'Dragon's Back', for its distinctive shape which is also formed by Parkhouse Hill.

Cities neighbouring the Peak District have regular intercity rail services which connect to destinations across the country, such as Norwich. Travellers from Norwich can reach Sheffield or Manchester by train and connect to locations in the Peak District from there. The Hope Valley Line between Manchester and Sheffield gives direct access, with stations such as Grindleford, Hathersage, Bamford, Hope and Edale, all villages located within the Peak District National Park.

Photo Credit: Chrome Hill by Peter Bar on Wikimedia Commons

A Month in Singapore

Sankavi Naresh
Venue Co-Editor

Singapore. A small island country in South-east Asia. You may know it as high-tech, a place where chewing gum is banned and for its good food – but there's a verve to the city that seems to be overlooked. It's methodical and fast paced but if you wander far enough, you'll find some truly unforgettable spots tucked away from the hustle and bustle. A tranquillity hangs above residential areas, as well as a strong sense of community. Even with its orderly streets and low crime rate, it feels vibrant.

I was lucky enough to go on a study abroad programme at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), where I took courses on digital media and watercolour painting (which isn't my strongest suit, but I had a lot of fun trying it out!). It was interesting to see what university



life was like in a city that's so different to Norwich.

A wave of hot air hit me as soon as I stepped off the plane. Now whilst this was a nice change to the gloomy weather I was used to at home, it did take some time getting used to. Nonetheless, the humidity didn't stop me taking in the beautiful sights.

There is a rhythm to the city, hawker centres humming with life as families, students and businessmen gather around steaming plates of food, the sounds of chatter and cutlery mingling together contrasted with the

high-rise office buildings lit up until the early hours of the morning. Singapore doesn't seem to sleep. Safety is prioritised here, petty crime rarely happens, and people usually walk about quite confidently - even late at night! There's also so much nature amongst this sprawling metropolis, leafy green trees springing up at every turn.

Singaporean cuisine is varied and diverse borrowing from Malaysian, Indonesian, Indian and Chinese cultures. From Laksa to Hainanese Chicken and Rice, Roti Canai, Cendol and

Nasi Lemak – you could never tire of the countless options for food. I miss the food there – it was cheap, full of flavour and nutritious! I had quickly gotten into a routine of stopping by the local shopping centre for dinner with my friends after lessons, indulging in Pandan Cake or Cendol (a sweet, shaved ice dish) for dessert. As cliché as it sounds, the best memories I have of my time in Singapore are the simple ones, it wasn't the grandiose buildings or the fancy shopping centres. It was trying new foods with friends, the late-night train rides back to NTU and the warmth of the Singaporean people.

Singapore is a relatively young country but despite this, it flourishes with a rich history, multicultural identity and an evident resilience. It's a must-visit, and I'd highly recommend!

Recommendations:

- The Merlion
- Maxwell Hawker Centre (Had amazing Laksa here for only \$5 SGD (£3!))

- Gardens by the Bay
- Marina Bay Sands
- Ann Siang Hill
- Taman Jurong Food Centre
- Chinatown

Nearby cities and countries you could pay a visit to:

- Johor Bahru, Malaysia – a great place for doing some cheap shopping! Only a 5-minute train journey from the Woodlands Checkpoint in Singapore!
- Hanoi, Vietnam
- Bangkok, Thailand

Photo credit: Bna Ignacio on Unsplash

Lily Banse on Unsplash

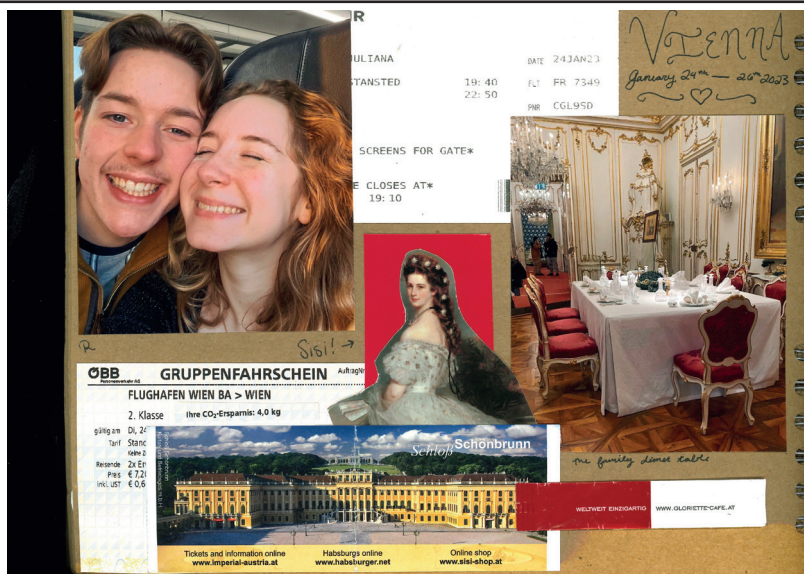


Scrapbook for Your Life!

Jo Gisler
Travel Editor

There is nothing quite so special and emotional, almost magical, as looking through an old family photo album. It is a precious thing to see your nan's teenage face and recognize a likeness or glean a precious hint of personality from a photo of your late great-aunt on her once-in-a-lifetime trip to Rome. Having a photograph of yourself used to be something important and rare. To have an album filled with pictures of your ancestors is an immense privilege even now, and always a much-treasured keepsake for future generations.

Not anymore! One of the wonderful, terrible problems of our modern age is that we are all constantly taking photos. I, myself, have collected just over 22,000 photos on my phone, the product of seven years of selfies, screenshots, and blurry pictures of the moon. Apple informs me I have taken roughly 3,750 this year alone. If I keep this up, I am



on track to have 300,000 photos by the time I am 90 years old. Perhaps one day my entire life from womb to tomb will be compiled into an computer-generated Apple "memory" and set to patronizingly upbeat royalty free music.

The task of curating this ever-growing collection into something manageable and easily accessible to my future self only gets more difficult with each passing day. I can't help but procrastinate. Yes, maybe the best of the most Instagrammable might be curated somewhere on social media, where

they can be easily accessed and flipped through, but many others sit unloved and excluded. Not to mention the existence of my photos are not guaranteed! I am unavoidably reliant on the incorruptibility of Apple and Meta corporations to not only keep them safe but outlast me and my heirs.

All of this is in defense of what is an inherently an egotistical project dedicated to the preservation of my personal memories and fleeting good looks: my beloved travel scrapbooks. A physical, tangible, flip-throughable set of acid-free

tomes containing miscellaneous curiosities, itineraries, and of course plenty of photos from my travels over the last few years. They are collectively my favorite thing that I own and certainly my most expensive. They are a creative outlet, a way to curate my many thousand photos down to a few hundred, and place to note down memories I never want to forget. Going through even now, with the oldest only being three years old, it is like reliving the experience. Truthfully, I am immensely proud of them. In that great and ancient tradition of gathering hostages around the projector to show slides of your most recent seaside holiday, I too have been known to pull them

out for unwilling party guests.

But think of the children! My potential, non-existent children and the smiles on their faces- and yes, maybe tears- as they flip through illegible receipts and Snapfish Prints to enter the world of a distant past when their mother got sloshed at a tourist hot-spot in Dublin. So grateful will they be to have this curated selection of memories in their hands after all digital photos were accidentally wiped in the Great Apple-Google Wars.

So, I implore you: go get a scrapbook now! Print out that photo you wouldn't put on Insta! Glue down those Italian McDonald's receipts! This is no time to be bogged down

by aesthetics, anything and everything will do just fine. It is an urgent matter for the historical and personal record. You, your children, and your children's children will be glad you did.



Photo credit: Author

Food and Drink

True British Comfort: The Copper Kettle

Lin Vu
Food and Drink Editor

The Copper Kettle is a place Tom and I hold close to in our hearts. Back in first year, we were both struggling with insomnia and I was violently craving an English breakfast all throughout the night, but I didn't want to go into my kitchen to make it nor did I even have the ingredients for one. After one sleepless night, I asked him if he wanted to go out in the morning. I wanted an excuse to buy more mangoes and get breakfast but I didn't want to go alone.

We got my mangoes, and walked around for a while to decide where to eat. We initially were going to a different cafe, but the wait time was too long. Given we were sleep deprived and a thirty minute wait was unappealing to the both of us, we decided to "give it a think" and went elsewhere. Not any fault of that particu-



lar cafe, I was dealing with hunger pangs and sleeplessness. I really just wanted something that would put me straight to sleep as soon as I got back into my room.

We walked around until we found The Copper Kettle on Lower Goat Lane. I'm normally that type of person to look up a place at least two months in advance, memorize the menu, and recite what I would like to order to myself until I get it right, and then go. But with this cafe, I didn't have to do that. The menu is simple, consisting of classic and comforting British food. And my personal favorite thing: they didn't try to gentrify, or hipster-fy, whatever term you want to use, the food (if baked beans are in a little pot, it's a sign). Plus, the meal was so good that we went to sleep as soon as we got back to our rooms.

It was kind of unspoken between us that we decided this place would be like "our

designated place." We would routinely come to The Copper Kettle over the years whenever we (more like me) wanted a breakfast (or brunch) fix. I would order the same thing: a deluxe breakfast with toast and grilled tomatoes, a latte with two sugars, and maybe some ketchup on the side if I was feeling it. Tom would normally switch his up, going for the deluxe breakfast as well, or American style pancakes with an apple juice.

Recently, we paid another visit to The Copper Kettle and I had my usual order: the deluxe breakfast with a latte. It tastes just as good as the first time I had it. I always look forward to the best sauteed potatoes that feel like you're eating thicker crisps with a soft crunch, deviating from hash-browns you normally get at other places. The bacon and sausages are locally sourced from farmers around Norfolk, so you really do taste the quality. The coffee is freshly brewed and with some sugar, it hits the spot.

Tom ordered American style pancakes this time around with some apple juice. The pancakes are thick and fluffy, in a nice stack of about four pancakes and drenched in maple syrup. Although he thought the pancakes were slightly chewy, it was made up for with the perfect balance of sweet and salty from the blueberry compote, maple syrup and bacon.

We spent about £35 total between the both of us, with the deluxe breakfast coming in at £15.95 and the American style pancakes at £12.95, plus the drinks. The portion sizes are pretty generous and the quality is there, so you do get value for your money. Plus, you're helping support local farmers around Norfolk!

We loved, and still love this little cafe. The atmosphere is modern cozy, with warm toned furniture and perfectly bright lighting to draw you in. There's a nice playlist of background music, ranging from soft jazz to classic hits that doesn't blast all throughout the place, so you can actually have a conversation with the people around you at an inside voice, while still enjoying the music with your food. Seriously, there's nothing I hate more than having to shout my sentences multiple times only to sit in awkward silence with techno music blasting my ears. Not to mention, the staff and the owner are absolutely lovely and will make you feel right at home. The overall vibe is like you're just getting a warm hug every time you come here, like you're at your gran's house for dinner.

Overall, I would highly recommend The Copper Kettle to anyone. It's perfect for a casual hangout, or even a casual date. The food and vibes are nostalgic, perfect for anyone who needs a nice pick me up.

Image Credits: Lin Vu

Rich, Comforting French Onion Soup

Easy Recipe for Beginners



Lin Vu
Food and Drink Editor

For some reason, this soup season I really wanted to relish in the classic soups people know and love, straying away from my traditional-ish Vietnamese palette. An inexpensive, rich, comforting soup I've always wanted to try was French onion soup.

The only expense you'd really have to make is time. Lots of time. I put my laundry in the washing machine before I started, and was on the phone with my mom for two hours and the onions still weren't completely done, so allocate lots of time if you do decide to make this.

Nevertheless, the soup was still delicious and definitely very comforting, especially as the weather gets colder and all you want is some soup.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 6 large yellow onions
- ¼ cup (58g) of butter
- 2.5 cups of beef stock
- ½ cup (118ml) of dry red wine
- 1 ½ cup (355ml) water
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 sprig of rosemary
- 3 sprigs of thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 tps of worcestershire sauce
- Baguette
- Gruyere cheese

STEP BY STEP:

1. Cutoffthetwoends of the onion. Peel your onions and thinly slice them following the natural lines of the onion.
2. In a large pot, add the butter and allow it to melt complete-



- ly. Add your onions and stir.
3. Cook the onions on a low heat, stirring occasionally.
4. Continue to cook the onions on a low heat, mak-

ing sure the onions don't burn.

5. Caramelize the onions until they reach a deep, brown color. Any lighter than this, the onions aren't



ready. This can take upwards to two hours. The key is to be patient.

6. Once the onions are caramelized, deglaze with the wine to scrape up



the fond (the brown stuff at the bottom of the pot) until it turns jammy.

7. Add the beef stock and water to the pot and turn the heat to high to bring to a boil.
8. Add the bay leaves, rosemary, thyme and worcestershire sauce to the pot and allow it to simmer on medium-low heat for 30 minutes to let the flavors fuse together.
9. Salt and pepper to season, and if it's too rich, add a little bit more of worcestershire as needed.
10. To an oven safe ramekin, put baguette slices on top with some gruyere cheese. Put it in a preheated oven at 220C for 5 minutes until the cheese is broiled.
11. If you don't have an oven safe ramekin, simply make cheesy bread on the side to dip into the soup.
12. S e r v e !

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

I mistakenly bought only 1 can of beef stock, which is why I supplemented the missing stock with water. Ideally, you'd want it to be all beef stock to add richness.

Image Credit: Lin Vu

Afternoon Tea: Trend or Tradition?

Fiona Hill
Co-Editor in Chief

I often look back at 2012 as the best year of my childhood. Caught up in the whirlwind of the London Olympics, the Diamond Jubilee and Andy Murray's Wimbledon successes, for an eight-year-old, the idea of Britain and 'the British' seemed to have a lot to do with trifle and something called Pimm's. In all fairness, my enthusiasm, was in part, decided by the selection of food that was on offer and luckily enough, growing up in the suburbs of Norwich, it felt as if the summer of street parties would never end. Cucumber sandwiches, homemade Victoria sponges, cheese scones, piles upon piles of profiteroles, quiche Lorraine- I could go on. However, it was a small 50th birthday party in a rural Norfolk hamlet that really came to capture my attention. 'We're going to Angela's' my mum told me, 'for 'afternoon tea'.

"Although it is easy to look at afternoon tea's position on social media as yet another capricious trend, beneath a sugar-coated surface, hides the same want for achievable luxury that has been in play for hundreds of years."

And so for many years my idea of what afternoon tea was petered on as some kind of reflection of that warm August day. Easy, relaxed, unpretentious, there is no doubt that it sits many miles away from what can be found on social media currently.

This popularity of 'the afternoon tea' has been at record heights on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Pinterest, with the boom in short-form videos capturing establishments such as The Ritz, Claridge's and The Savoy. Such fascination with etiquette and visually beautiful cuisine has been in development for a few years, with Pinterest's 2022 annual trend report stating that "drinking tea pose" and "tea party aesthetic" were some of their most popular searches. Due to their report this year claiming

"Growing up in the suburbs of Norwich, it felt as if the summer of street parties would never end."

that searches for "afternoon tea party ideas" are up 165%, it is no surprise that the rise in social media has also taken effect on the afternoon tea business itself, with many businesses seeking to cater for photography by launching a selection of themed afternoon teas, such as Norwich

Assembly House's recent Peter Pan rendition. Interestingly enough, this understanding of afternoon tea as a statement of order, luxury and wealth is far from a contemporary idea, in fact, it really does translate as the modern embodiment of what the event has always been. Popularised in the 1840s, many claim that afternoon tea was brought into being by one of Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting,

"Easy, relaxed, unpretentious, there is no doubt that it sits many miles away from what can be found on social media currently."

the Duchess of Bedford. Concerned by the growing distance between lunch and supper she established a time in the day to eat 'bread and cakes'. Although many food historians now argue the Duchess's chef d'oeuvre to be a myth, the connection to the aristocracy certainly didn't hinder the event's indulgent feel both at the time and up until the present day.

Although it is easy to look at afternoon tea's position on social media as yet another capricious trend, beneath a sugar-coated surface, hides the same want for achievable luxury that has been in play for hundreds of years. Despite my own wistful memories of what felt like a

less superficial time, I have to admit that as far as afternoon teas go, it couldn't be further from the performative nature of its own tradition.



Picture Credits: Image by Ji-yeon Yun from Pixabay

What should I cook using left over Pumpkins?

Caitlin Bennett
Food and Drink Senior Writer

Autumn is a beautiful time of year where the air grows cooler and the leaves decorate the ground; trees dress the pavements with acorns and chestnut shells. We all flock to pumpkin patches and markets in search of cute pumpkins to decorate our houses. Pumpkin carving is still a fun pastime, especially if you're going to make use of the seeds and meat of the gourd. Starbucks reminds us yearly that even if you don't like pumpkin spice everything, you'll still be inundated with seasonal reminders that you're not on trend. So, here's a little ode to all the goodness you can make with your pumpkin next time around, after using it for seasonal display purposes.

One of the easiest ways to make use of your pumpkin in a low cost and low effort way is to scoop out the seeds and roast them with anything you want. Last year, oil and salt were enough to make a snack high in fibre. This year, pumpkin seeds tossed in honey with a pinch of salt was a very tempting treat too. Simply put them in a preheated oven for 10 minutes at 200C and you'll have a fantastic snack

which you can pimp anyway you want. Make them garlicky, spicy, or have them in a salad too!

Another great way to use your pumpkin is in a soup, and in combination with whatever vegetables you'd like. To me mixing it with potatoes which thicken, and a stronger veg like tomato or onion would disguise the taste of the gourd which I'm not too keen on, without wasting it! There's plenty of recipes for pumpkin soup on the internet and with a little trial and error I think even a hater would find one which they could have every year to celebrate the season.

Now a little trick to follow on from the soup is to roast as per usual, but instead of pairing with a warm toasted slice of ciabatta, pour over some rigatoni or tagliatelle and create a festive, wholesome pasta dish. One recipe on the internet called to add garlic and oil to your pumpkin and create a thick luxurious sauce, but I also think mixing with tomato would make this amazing too.

Picture Credit: Lin Vu



New Mission: Stop LA Stunt Food

Lin Vu
Food and Drink Editor

Oh Los Angeles, the heart of Southern California and the hub for everything entertainment, obscene displays of wealth inequality, and stunt food. Stunt food is food that was meant for the camera, and only for viewers to eat. The average person could replicate most of these dishes using whatever they already have in their pantry.

Before commercial landlords got too greedy with their rent prices, people were able to really experiment and capitalize on food trends, like the cupcake frenzy in 2015. You couldn't escape the newest cupcake storefronts with the worst cake-to-icing ratio known to man, with toppings stacked as high as your heart desired, defeating the purpose of a cupcake. Nor could you escape the 8-patty cheeseburger that was then drowned in more cheese. Not to mention they were extremely overpriced and a 4.5/10 at best.

I often laugh about Dave's Hot Chicken and I had the misfortune of trying it this past summer. It's a chain that originated in LA, known for its hot chicken tenders with a 'secret sauce' and over-filtered Instagram pictures. When I went to try it this past summer with my sister, we both agreed to never go there again. The chicken tenders just looked depressed, tasted like the bitter aftertaste of charred spice, and the piece of wonder bread at the bottom of each tender was soggy than a wet sock. Our entire experience made me wonder if TikTok Foodies were emailing them

just to get the best-looking food that day.

Now I avoid stunt food like the plague. I've seen so many food trends come and go, and TikTok recommendations are something I question whenever I'm interested in trying something new. While some places are decent, or even dare I say, good, the prices slapped on these stunt foods doesn't make me feel too good.



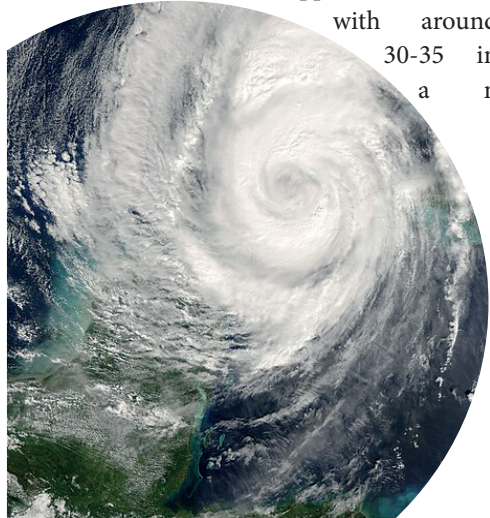
Dave's Hot Chicken Mascot Credit: Photo by Kiragan Mercer on Unsplash

Science

In the Eye of the Tornado: A Day at the TORRO Conference

Abbie Harding

The 5th of October marked an electrifying day as the 50th anniversary conference was held for TORRO, the Tornado and Storm Research Organisation. TORRO are a self-funded research body serving the national public interest. Documenting and publishing hail, lightning, snowfall, temperature, and tornadic weather phenomena since 1974, the work undertaken by the organisation has helped to provide over 50 years of integral insight on weather systems and events in the UK and Ireland. And, you heard right: tornadoes do happen in the UK,



CREDIT: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

average

year.

Held at the University of Reading, there were 13 impressive presentations throughout the day exploring the history, achievements, and recent supercell activity. Here are some of the highlights:

1) The TCO, TORRO and 100 years of Thunderstorm reporting: with some epic thunderstorm episodes

2023 has certainly been a record-breaking year. Jonathan Webb explained that this September broke the near 50-year record of the most days of thunder in an area, with Reading having 7 days of thunder. But this is not the only impressive event in the database of storms over the past 100 years. The storm episode of 1936 occurred over 3 days, with over 600 to 700 incidents of lightning damage reported across Britain and Ireland. On the 10th and 11th of June 1970, 111 millimetres of rain crashed down in Gloucestershire within 90 minutes, with the Wiltshire storm of August, 1975 peaking with 140 lightning strikes occurring in just 5 minutes.

2) The November 1981 tornado outbreak

TORRO has a huge database found within its archives. Since 1091 there have been historical records of over 4000 tornadoes and waterspouts. The archive also documents information on giant hail, whirlwinds, ball

lighting, coastal storm impacts, and lightning injuries. Regarding November 1981, Mike Rowe explained that 104 tornadoes occurred in this 6-hour outbreak. Beginning in Anglesey, North Wales, the storm swept through the country and left at the Essex coast. This number came from around 30 press cutting agencies, around 35 appeals, and 38 to 39 accounts from individual newspapers. However, reassessment of this outbreak has been undertaken with a revised estimate of between 58 to 90 tornadoes.

"2023 HAS CERTAINLY BEEN A RECORD BREAKING YEAR"

3) The remarkable Jersey tornado and hailstorm of 1 November 2023

Last year Jersey was hit with a devastating tornado occurring in a supercell thunderstorm associated with Storm Ciarán, which left 150 people homeless and 3 people hospitalised. Sarah Horton explained that the estimated strength of this tornado was rated on TORRO's T-scale as having T6 damage, with winds of 161-186 mph. The storm entered Jersey with a 500m wide path, throwing a vehicle over 25m, and twisting metal 5m long around a tree 500m away. Matt Clark explained that the tornado

formed close to the cold front, and through an organised line of convection a supercell

formed. This formation contains a rotating updraft, called a mesocyclone, and created the conditions for the tornado to occur. The radar data captured from this tornado marked the first tornado debris signature (TDS) to be observed in northwest Europe.

Paul Knightley, the current Head of TORRO, talked on the importance of having these conferences and the future for TORRO. "They are a social thing," he said, "it allows us to share ideas and create a form of outreach."

For the future, Paul said that their focus would be on continuing to "record and publish information around our climate, and engage more young people to join."

The next 50 years look very promising for TORRO, who will continue to publish information for the public. Being a volunteer with TORRO means you can help the team with site investigations, learn about the climatology which impacts you, and join a welcoming community.

Explore TORRO's research and upcoming conferences here: <https://www.torro.org.uk>.

Prototypicality - Creativity Backed By Science

Ella Pamment

If you think of a fruit, what comes to mind? An apple, an orange, a banana? Only 1 in 20 times will this fail. These common images are examples of **prototypicality**, a mental framework where our brains categorise something as 'good,' or 'bad.'

Imagine it as a circle with the example of "apple" at the centre, representing a "good" fit for the category of fruit. Moving outward, *secondary examples*, like a pomegranate, are recognised as fruit but not as quickly.



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Even further from the centre are *peripheral examples*, such as a tomato or cucumber, which are technically fruits but don't immediately come to mind in the same way.

This system is part of our Idealised Cognitive Model (ICM) – a place where we organise and navigate our knowledge and understanding of the world. ICMs are shaped by our social and cultural experiences. It is through our personal history and collective experience that we can label, organise, and recall information effectively.

To categorise something, our brains rely on five key aspects: **proximity** (how close it is to a central *good* example), **similarity** (how much it resembles typical features), **continuation** (how it fits into a broader pattern), **functionality** (how we use it), and **closure** (whether it has enough features to be "complete" in the category).

Closure is the 'The End' of our ICMs; if we aren't sure, we either can or can't make it fit, and we move on. Let's look at a coconut. Whilst you know it's a fruit – it's natural, grows on trees, and has a seed inside – you don't notice that it is a peripheral example;

your brain has 'closed the gap.' Despite the hard shell, and the lack of sweetness, it still has enough criteria to be a fruit.

To understand categories more precisely, think of them as a hierarchy of levels. For example, "dog" is a general category that most people can picture — this is called a *basic-level category*. When we get more specific and name a type of dog, like "poodle," we're diving into a *subordinate* category. The broadest category here would be "animal," which is called a *superordinate* category.

Each level helps us see different shades of meaning. "Dog" tells us something general, while "poodle" adds detail. This layering of categories, from broad to specific, helps us better understand and communicate complex ideas.

These layers also have practical applications in communication styles. Sarcasm often shows up as over specificity: if someone asks about the weather, a sarcastic response might list exact precipitation levels. Yet, being evasive or dismissive is under specificity; if asked about your dog's breed, replying that it's "a dog with four legs" can

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seem standoffish. Recognising these patterns help us respond with prototypically "good" answers, allowing us to spot assumptions, and improve communication styles in casual and problem-solving contexts.

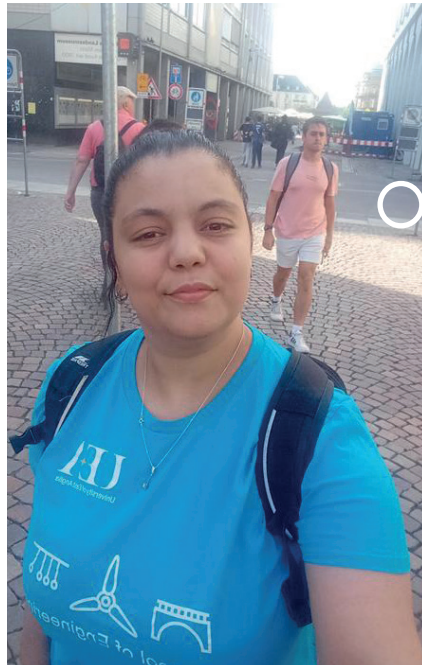
Understanding prototypicality opens up powerful insights for communication and creativity. When we recognise how our brains categorise, we can spot patterns — and then break them. By identifying the usual, we unlock ways to twist the expected, crafting fresh perspectives that spark attention and inspire new ideas.

Next month we will dive into *Scripts and Schemata* — the mental framework of memory structures and context, and how to subvert expectations by deviating away from them.

PhD Patter - In Conversation With Ahlem!

Daisy Lester
Science Editor

Popular among undergrads, postgrads, and professors alike: it's Ahlem! The Algerian Engineering PhD candidate joined me to chat about her research, her journey, and her opinions on a life in STEM. **So, Ahlem, how would you describe your research?** "I model capillary forces – the forces when a droplet meets water. [I'm trying] to create a model that simulates the reality. That's it – it's too easy." **Speak for yourself! Is it a big field?** "REALLY big field – and important. The benefits ... are to get the quantification of the phenomena. [It's] looking at how surface tension interacts with things – I'm looking at electronics." **And how far in are you? Enough to have plans after?**



"I'm about midway – halfway point. [I'd like to] stay in CFD – definitely." **Ohhh, and in academia? A postdoc, maybe?** "[A postdoc] – definitely. [Academia] very competitive. I will be in the competition with the others. Everyone is really excellent – especially at UEA." **High praise! Speaking of, what did your journey here look like?** "In Algeria, [I went to] an elite aeronautical engineering school. To get in, you need at least 80%. There is a contest for the undergrad, then again for the masters. Then I was research assistant at Houbmedeen. [I was] designing codes, running simulation models – modelling multiphase and capillary phenomenon." **So this is your second PhD?!** "It's my second, but it's still really hard. Research is not easy." **Then why a second, and why UEA?** "My first one was in French! ... [I] didn't find so many people who believed I could make it with such little English skills, but my supervisor did. He brought me here. A lot of the research in my area is theoretical, but I believe that with [all the facilities] here will one day make it reality. Plus with all the people researching applied mathematics – all brilliant minds – including my supervisor, Jack Panter. Super smart guy." **I asked who the coolest person she met over her STEM journey was, and the same name popped up.** "He knows how to deal with me. I'm from a really different cultural background, and he just knows how to deal with that in a really gentle manner. He never gets mad, or when I'm disappointed – he's just constant. And he's a really nice person. The kind of person you know who is the best, but would never say it. Just so wonderful."

Lot's of positives! But if you were going to improve one thing about the academic field, what would it be? "The way how we are evaluating people. We are still doing the same things as many years ago... I want to find new way... Even if it's a really good student, with 80% and another with 78%, they didn't do the same exams. I think some research needs to be dedicated specifically that area. Not in 1940, but in 2024, what is the best?" **So why did she choose to stay?** "I was always that person to study, even after exams. I love to learn something new – every day. I can't stay in one place for years and years – it's when it gets boring! ...I think if I went back a million times, I would still choose the same path. It's still really difficult, but it's something that I love, and I don't think I would do as well doing something different." **Motivational! But she's not just inspiring herself – her presence and support makes a difference.** "We always focus on getting younger girls into science, but you get to my point [PhD level] – it stops." **She's right – studies show that STEM subject (with Engineering being one of the worst) have low retention rates among women.** "I don't find it difficult. I don't think you find it difficult. So why, when you get to PhD, there's just 2 girls?" **And what advice would you offer to anyone looking to continue in STEM or academia in general?**

"For everyone, studies [can be] so easy. You just have to love them. If you don't love it, the studies won't love you. It's like anything in life – you love swimming, you go there, you do your best."

PHOTO CREDIT: AHLEM MOKHTARI

UEA Research Round-Up - November

Daisy Lester
Science Editor

With all the awesome research done at vthe UEA – it can be hard to keep up! So here is a quick round up of highlights from the past month:

Partnering with the Natural History Museum, the UEA is launching a new, groundbreaking project, known as KRILLGUARD. Looking at the genomes of Antarctic krill, the research team has developed DNA probes to analyse 10,000 gene sequences and compare historic specimens from the Natural History Museum with contemporary krill from the British Antarctic Survey. As a species sensitive to climate change, the research will enable the team to identify adaptations of the krill, and will be vital for conserving the species.

The UEA will be the home of a new, state-of-the-art unit for gastrointestinal studies. The university has recieved a £1.8 million funding boost (with the Quadram Institute receiving another £1 million) as part of a national £80 million funding programme to protect public health. The UEA will be the lead institution in a partnership across the UK Health Security Agency, the Quadram Institute, and Newcastle University, with the research at the unit aimed towards "reducing the burden of gastrointestinal infections on public health".

We're back to the Antarctic again as Marlin – a lost autonomous glider – has been found! Marlin, who was launched in December 2022, got lodged in the Ross Ice Shelf when it got caught in a strong current and pulled into a cavity in the ice shelf for four days. While lost, Marlin completed 79 dives, taking measurements up to a depth of 200 metres – a region not usually possible to monitor. Analysis by UEA researchers found that heat transported into the cavity has increased over the last 45 years – most likely due to climate change. The accidental trip has opened a new avenue for measuring the warm water in the ice shelf cavity from the open water of the Ross Sea – important for monitoring the effects of climate change.

Sadness Surpressing Science Tips!

Daisy Lester
Science Editor

With the season bringing cold snaps and the sunlight bidding fair well, here are a quick 5 hacks to help feel better! Each tip is backed by the science of positive psychology - founded in 2000 by Martin Seligman - it is the "scientific study of what makes life most worth living".

1 Eat (dark) chocolate. Foods like chocolate, tofu, and salmon are high in Tryptophan – an amino acid that your body uses to make serotonin (more common-

ly known as the "happiness hormone"). While exercise or sunlight, can also help – a good snack provides a quick and tasty lift while the November days stay gloomy.

2 Help out! Or maybe just hang out. Studies show that volunteering your time to a good cause increases happiness – a double whammy, with both dopamine and oxytocin (the love hormone) being released through social bonding. If volunteering is a bit out of reach, a 'mini' version can be having a positive social interaction, like complimenting someone's nails.

3 Look on the bright side! Gratitude always shows up on lists like these, and for good reason – extensive studies show being thankful helps to brighten the mood, and to feel more connected to those around you (oxytocin again!), but that doesn't mean there's no benefits to...

4 Looking on the dark side? A 2008 study showed that thinking about how your situation could be worse – known as mental subtraction – lead to increased positive emotions over control groups. So when someone says "it could be worse", science says they're not wrong.

5 Use your strengths. One model of happiness in positive psychology is the PERMA model, standing for Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments. Accomplishments are most easily fulfilled by doing something you're good at! The Greater Good Science Centre at UC Berkley recommends making a list of your strengths, and each day consciously choosing to use one of them in a new way. A 2005 study boasted boosted happiness for up to 6 months!

So there you go! 5 science tips to see you through the dark and gloomy nights of Autumn, and into the even darker and gloomier days of summative season. Whether you choose chin up, or chin down, remember, as the old adage goes this too shall pass.

Sport

“University is About Students...”: In Conversation with Activities & Opportunities Officer Olivia Hunt

Sofia Royal
Sport Editor

It is safe to say that the UEA Student Union has been the subject of many controversies over the years, particularly in recent months. With many of their actions coming under fire, the positives rarely outweigh the negatives. However, Activities and Opportunities Officer, Olivia Hunt is one of the few unproblematic officers taking charge in the Union. Elected into her role in March, Hunt has been a positive force for change and a key representative in creating stability amongst sport clubs and societies.

Aiming to fulfill her manifesto by the end of the academic year, Hunt has made a name for herself across campus and was a pivotal figure in handling the ‘SportsPark Incident’ in October. Upon the unexpected passing of a UEA student, Hunt was keen to handle the situation as delicately as possible. “I reached out to my FTO team and then directly to my CEO to say ‘we don’t know who it is yet- if it’s a student we need to make sure we’re ready to go tomorrow with some sort of protocols,” Hunt says of her first call of action, unaware of what protocols were in place for the circumstances.

After news broke from the press that the fatality was a student, Hunt explains that she told Jumara Stone, CEO of the SU that she wanted to be involved, believing that she could “deliver very quickly what’s the right protocol”. As part of the protocol, the student’s name was ran through MSL: “at that point we could see that he was part of multiple clubs and societies.” Hunt describes the student as a “BNOC” which only encouraged her to “take the lead” of the incident more.

Working with the FTOs, the team produced a statement released on Instagram that was later taken down the following morning. “Whilst we got confirmation that we could use his name, it didn’t extend to social media,” Hunt clears the air by adding “we didn’t know this at the time.” As a result, Hunt faced the wrath of many whilst “managing people’s grief and trying to get an outcome to a situation where we were completely in the dark over what we were doing.”

Despite the circumstances, Hunt isn’t eager to blame others. Instead, she effortlessly finds the silver-lining. “It’s been really lovely to see how the community have come together in all of this... Seeing people do the fundraising- the

amount of money they have raised is phenomenal.” Hunt’s sense of pride cannot be disguised when community is to be discussed. “We really just want to come together for this”, she says. As an evident team player, it seems that Hunt’s strong suit has become a predominant part of the grieving process for many across campus.

“It’s been really lovely to see how the community have come together for this...”

When she’s not helping campus grieve, Hunt is busy ticking off each of her manifesto pledges. Having already achieved most of them, Hunt discusses her aim for financial transparency. With previous Activities and Opportunities Officer’s making a start on this project, none had ever fulfilled the pledge, often making mistakes with Hunt describing it as “never perfect.” After creating a table on every Sports website, students are now able to break down the costs of joining a club. The ‘Real Cost of Sport’ initiative displays how much students will pay in the Autumn and Spring semesters alongside overall costs that are broken down into how much they would cost a student per week.

“I think people need to know, for example Cheerleading, that I’m going to pay my uniform upfront and I’m going to pay my comp fees in January so that I can budget better.” Hunt’s initiative comes at a time where students need it most. With the cost of living crisis affecting more students by the day, unexpected costs leave students with less accessibility to join clubs. Bringing a sense of financial transparency to sport not only allows for better financial responsibility amongst students, but also makes sport on campus inclusive.

It appears that inclusivity is what Hunt strives for. As part of her manifesto, the

aim for scholarship fairness was imperative. Having “agreed with Sport that the A&O will sit on the scholarship panel”, this is a change that will see “more consideration” for other sports.

Previous scholarships were made for the “conventional” sports such as netball, football and rugby, without a thought for other sports. Hunt saw this as an opportunity to break the cycle, providing a wider range of options for scholarships. Positive in her vision, she was able to “push for a dance scholar”. With the person being offered a scholarship, Hunt says “it’s nice to know that in the future there is a student representative in that space that can advocate for the other.”

Hunt’s ‘Sport for the Mind’ initiative was created when she “recognised that there was a gap of looking after committee members specifically”. With many students suffering from conflict in their committees, which is often expressed on ‘Concrete Confessions’ or to the SU, Hunt found that many students “don’t know how to deal with it”. Feeling that students didn’t know where to go nor get support from, ‘Sport for the Mind’ will provide team placements for those struggling, enabling students to meet with others in similar situations. Acting as a “support group”, Hunt describes it as a way of “knowing the right way to signpost people.” The initiative aims to produce a flow chart that assists in pointing students in the right direction with the best approach to deal with the situation, no matter the circumstances.

It’s expected that this will help as the SU look at a potential rebrand of the Welfare Officer role. “The welfare role is seen as a therapy person and that’s not what it should be.” With the role set as a way of signposting people, the reality is evidently different. With Welfare officers lacking the appropriate training and experience to deal with extremely pressing matters, Hunt has been privy to complaints from Welfare officers “being phoned at 10 o’clock at

night and ‘trauma-dumped’ With a palpable concern for her colleagues, she brands the situation as “not fair”. Clear boundaries need to be set for the role, in which communication with students is key. If anything, this tells us that the wellbeing services across campus are insufficient, lacking the support that students truly need.

“The Welfare role is seen as a therapy session and that’s not what it should be...”

Bringing the spotlight to students, Hunt is working on the development of TV screen promotion. As a collaboration between clubs and societies, Hunt’s marketing concept focuses on “recognition”, gathering footage and clips from the collective and displaying them across campus. Hunt wants students to “feel a sense of importance because at the end of the day, university is about students and I think that a lot of the time it’s quite commercial”. With full accessibility to the screens, the Hive will be the main place showcasing the extra-curricular activities that UEA has to offer. However, in building a closer relationship between the SU and UEA Sport, Hunt is looking to bring the spotlight into the SportsPark too.

“University is about students and I think that a lot of the time it’s quite commercial...”

In line with Hunt’s media promotion, the SU is about to begin a partnership with the live streaming service ‘Joymo’. As a project that’s been in the works for quite some time, Hunt has been brought in to seal the deal on a service that is guaranteed popularity on campus. Starting by live streaming inside court games, students and parents will be able to stream campus matches via the app. “It’s not just for you to watch your friends,” Hunt says “but it’s also for you as an athlete to go back and watch your own performance.”

If the SU can take one positive from providing a live streaming service for students, it’s the fact that next year’s Derby Day will be an even more exciting experience. Having already had her first Derby Day meeting, Hunt is “really keen



to change Derby Day". Wanting to make the day more of a "community", it's clear that Hunt wants to rival Essex not just in sport, but rather atmosphere. Looking for a "sport festival-type vibe", the change would see "people giving out free stuff and pop-up food vans". Claiming rightfully so that "everyone loves a freebie", Hunt's agenda is clear: UEA needs more than the expectation of winning. "It's no secret that UEA win and we are a stronger sporting side, but I think that the concern is how this affects Essex and their involvement in Derby Day."

Currently, UEA have won Derby Day for ten consecutive years in a row. As a result, our relationship with Essex ceases to exist, which is something Hunt wants to repair proposing the idea that UEA and Essex "scrap the overall winner and change it to be winners of your sport." In a hope of taking away the "Essex lose, Essex lose" atmosphere, the concept would "create the perfect party celebration of people coming together for sport." With the idea being supported heavily, it is now in the hands of Essex as they contemplate the potential change.

"I think that the concern is how this affects Essex and their involvement in Derby Day."

However, with this year's point scoring system sparking controversy amongst clubs, Hunt claims that "from a student perspective" it was "harsh" to value clubs in a hierarchy of points, adding: "I don't think it was the correct way for students to feel about their sport." Although the argument remains that the original scoring would see UEA take a simple victory from Essex, Hunt believes that the focus should be "how can we make this a better atmosphere, a better community, with people coming together to just genuinely enjoy it?"

In spite of the continuous feeling that the SU lacks any care for what students want, Olivia Hunt is the epitome of what students of UEA need in a Student Union. Amongst all of the points she is working hard to fulfil to students, her biggest project of all is being "reactive to what people actually want." Hunt makes it very clear in our conversation that she "can very much shape and change priorities. Through the changes and impact she has already made in her time as Activities and Opportunities Officer, she is a student political figure that carries out on their promises. If I wasn't certain before, I am by the end of our conversation when she proves in so many words why she was made for this role: "At the end of the day I'm elected into this role to represent students and that's what this should be. It shouldn't be

Setting the Tone for Change – Norwich City and UEA using Sport to drive Mental Health Awareness

Daniel Freeman
Sport Senior Reporter

For many, sport can be seen as the perfect distraction for those wanting to escape the pressures of everyday life. Whether it's finding a new sports club, supporting your local football team or going to support a loved one on a Saturday morning, sport and its impact on people's mental wellbeing is a link that only seems to be getting stronger. This connection is one that couldn't be more emphasised than here, in our fine city. Through Norwich City FC's trailblazing campaigns for World Mental Health Day as well as UEA Sport's fundraising for men's mental health campaign 'Movember', you would struggle to find a place doing more to emphasise mental health in sport than Norwich. As a result, it is only right to highlight and praise the work of those inspiring these initiatives.

Over the past year, Norwich City FC's work with suicide prevention charity Samaritans has been praised right across the sporting community. "Incredibly Powerful" was the response from the football body 'UEFA' in response to an incredibly moving video brought forward by Norwich City for World Mental Health Day in 2023. The video aimed to highlight some of the underlying issues of those suffering and to encourage everyone to always check in on the people around you even if they seem okay. Radio host Roman Kemp called the video in a post on Twitter as, "the best bit of Mental Health Awareness I've ever seen." Although, Norwich City's efforts to emphasise mental health didn't end there.

"Suicide takes someone's life in the UK every 90 minutes, the length of a football match..."

In addition to Norwich City's inspiring video of 2023, before their 4-0 win against Hull City in October this year, all the 25,000 players and fans inside Carrow Road took part in football's first ever 'minute unsilenced'. With statistics showing suicide takes someone's life in the UK every 90 minutes, the length of a football match, Norwich City

took the chance to allow fans and players to interact with their feelings and check in on those around them. To add to the already special atmosphere taking place, on standby at the stadium were Samaritans volunteers there for those who needed support and guidance during the extraordinary event. In a 90-second video produced by the club after the event titled 'Break the Silence' you could clearly see that fans were truly taken back by the event. One of the video's creative directors, Jay Phillips, stated that "The '1-minute unsilenced' felt like a great way to fans starting a conversation. Not just in the stands, but in pubs and at home too." This was supported by Neil Clarke one of the video's other directors who argued that "by talking about mental health challenges, making it part of life and normalising it... we all have a chance to stop someone we love from disappearing forever." Not only have Norwich City helped raise awareness, but they've broken ground in the football community. It will be fascinating to see whether the FA and teams across the country will be inspired to raise awareness themselves. I personally hope to see organisations not just in football but across sport in general look at Norwich City's work and put in foundations to make the 'minute unsilenced' and other initiatives a regular occurrence throughout the country.

However, it's not just our city's football club where the relationship between Sport and Mental Health is being highlighted. Here on campus, UEA Sport has been a firm supporter of the Men's mental health campaign 'Movember'. A campaign that seeks to take on issues surrounding most notably Male suicide as well as prostate and testicular cancer, 'Movember' is one of the largest mental health charities in the UK. With suicide being the highest killer of men under the age of 50 and too many being taken from us too early, 'Movember' seeks to break down many of the stigmas people currently face and want to help people come to terms with their issues. With these objectives at its front and centre, UEA and its use of sport to raise awareness, has been able to raise thousands of pounds for the 'Movember' campaign in the last few years.

Whether it's people growing moustaches, going on daily runs and walks or charity bake sales fundraisers have become the new craze within the UEA sporting community.

"the link between mental health and sport is nuanced..."

As the UEA fundraising total continues towards its goal of £20,000 for this calendar month, it's not only the students who are doing their efforts to raise awareness for the 'Movember' campaign. We had the pleasure of speaking to Chiara Tecchio, the Student Sport Marketing Coordinator at UEA Sport, who has been hard at work on a fascinating project into the complex relationship our students have with sport and the effects it has on their mental health. In conversation with us she highlighted that she was, "highly intrigued by people's lived experiences, and how those have shaped their perception of the world." She told us that after her chats with some students that, "the link between mental health and sport is nuanced." She emphasised that despite an overarching theme of sport enabling people to, "escape, to tap into another dimension and to find community," sport can also be incredibly demanding on people's mental health. Therefore, sport and its nuanced relationship with people's mental health only emphasises the reason to applaud these initiatives and highlight that mental health awareness in sport can save lives. Chiara will be presenting her work in a documentary expected to be released to the UEA Sport YouTube channel by the end of November and I would highly recommend you spare the time to watch it if you can.

Consequently, the role that sport has on raising awareness for Mental Health issues cannot be put in higher regard. With our city at the heart of this message the relationship between sport and mental health will only continue to grow. To support these initiatives and especially that of UEA Sport's 'Movember' fund, I couldn't encourage you more to sponsor and support those fundraising and help the University reach £20,000 raised before the end of the month.

Women's Rugby Face a New Opponent As They Tackle Breast Cancer With 'Let It Hang' Campaign

Sofia Royal
Sport Editor

When it comes to marketing a campaign, it seems Women's Rugby know how to do it best. As UEA's own version of the 'Calendar Girls' the team's 'Let It Hang' Instagram post was a pivotal moment for their annual fundraising month of October. Raising money for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, this campaign is "an every year thing" for Women's Rugby.

Affecting 1 in 7 women, breast cancer is the most common cancer worldwide and accounts for 15% of all cancer cases in the UK alone. "It's something that can affect all of us," says Harriet Heathcote-Wells, Community and Outreach Officer, "this year we've had someone who has had it, but has come through the other side and she's still playing."

When I meet with Heathcote-Wells and her fellow teammate and Publicity Secretary Amelia Dixon, their 'Let It Hang' post had amounted 41,217 views and counting on Instagram. "The insights are incredible," Dixon states with an evident sense of pride. However, it's not the only thing the team have got to be proud of. As part of their 'Let It Hang' campaign, the team take part in the Colney Lane Park Run, raising funds for Breast Cancer UK through a Just Giving page.

"We put up a Just Giving page," Heathcote-Wells tells me, "we started it at like £100 and thought, 'oh you know if the team can't make it to the park run that we do as well, they can send that to their

friends or family' and it's currently at £650."

With the team starting with an original goal of £100, Dixon says that the money was raised "within 4 people". Gradually increasing the goal amount, the team has raised a total of £635. Feeling optimistic, Heathcote-Wells explains, "we're aiming to get £750 because the park run made just under £250, so £1000 would be amazing."



Credits: UEA Women's Rugby

Aside from their impeccable fundraising skills, the main goal is clear when it comes to this campaign. The encouragement to get people to check their chests are what these ladies are striving for. Through last year's campaign, Heathcote-Wells was inspired: "I saw [the campaign] last year and got checked... I know people that have seen the post have also been checking their chests as well."

The bigger focus is searching for early traces. Ironically, this can be hard when the NHS only begin to offer breast screenings (mammograms) to women aged between 50 and 71. Yet, seeing how this has affected the team personally, it's apparent that this is something that only encourages this team to campaign more.

"It's frustrating," Dixon says on the notion that screenings are not offered to younger people "we know someone that's been affected and this is before we even met her. She's young now, let alone when she had to go through it, so it's frustrating that it's not available to us, which is why we do what we can."

In addition to campaigning for self-checks, the team have been aiming to "put a bit of a bigger focus on men checking their chests and trying to get male sport clubs to recreate"

Last year, the team's 'Let It Hang' campaign had

17 different recreations. Whilst, the popularity of the campaign has soared this year, it's fair to say that there has been a lack of recreations from other clubs. "It's hard to recreate..." says Dixon, "We have had a few clubs recreate - rowing was one of them... MMA are doing it with just the male members of their club, so we've got a few more to come as well but it's just so important"

The lack of male participation only raises the idea further of a stigma around breast cancer in men, and in trying to fight the stigma, it seems these ladies agree. "Not in a bad way, but I don't think [men] take it seriously," says Dixon. With statistics showing that it is only 1 in 400 men that are diagnosed with breast cancer, Dixon states "you just wouldn't ever expect it to be you, but it can be you. Unfortunately, it's more probable that it could be any one of us and men won't think to check either. I just don't think they think it applies to them when it does."

Running the Colney Lane Park Run last month, the team had a group of 16 run. Whilst some of the team may have done park runs before, for Heathcote-Wells, this was a first. "It was my first park run - my first 5k - I had a pink tutu on and pink shorts," Dixon adds, "she ran it in like 27 minutes."

In order to get as many team members there as possible, some of the club volunteered, dressing up in pink and baking cakes for a bake sale. The team have also developed a relationship with the park run over the last few years, with the Head of Volunteering at the park run posting the team's campaign post on Facebook, as well as the link to their Just Giving page. "When we do this every year we get that support so we don't have to start fresh each year when we're trying to raise awareness," says Dixon, "we are raising awareness for it and each year we raise more and more awareness and it reaches so many more people because we have organisations like that on board."

"A quick check of your chest is so easy to do..."

Speaking to last year's Publicity Secretary and Development Team Captain, Rebecca Crudge, she says that the "donations that the team have raised this year have been astounding... these donations go to prove how much of an impact breast cancer has across our communities."

In hindsight, this campaign and the Women's Rugby team set an example. With a campaign that holds a message that can affect us all, Heathcote-Wells simply puts it: "a quick check of your chest is so easy to do..."

When It Rains, It Pours in Sao Paulo...

Grace Mcgonigal

For those who tuned into the race on Sunday, the main takeaway would be that for Lando Norris, the title fight is now over. While Verstappen has not officially become champion, the now 62-point gap seems unlikely to sway in Norris's favour. For Verstappen this was arguably his most impressive race yet, starting P17 and gaining 7 positions by lap 3. While Norris and Russell pitted during the virtual safety car, Red Bull took a gamble and left Verstappen out. Something that hugely benefited them when a subsequent red flag gave the team a free change.

In the same vein, Alpine, an unlikely podium contender, made the same gamble. The team needed just 4 points to jump Williams in the Constructors' Championship, but with Ocon and Gasly's joint podium, they've gained 33 points to put them in 6th. This podium came at a pretty horrible start to the season: with a bad testing session, their technical director Matt Harman moving to Williams, as well as Bruno Famin's departure. The team felt deserving of their result on Sunday.

For McLaren, things were less hopeful. While they received a promising result during the sprint race, the wet weather conditions on Sunday saw a reduction in the car's top speed. Their bigger rear wing, which should've provided them more downforce, resulted in a rather lacklustre pace. For Oscar Piastri, his 10-second penalty caused him to drop behind Tsunoda in P8. For Norris, he lost pole position at the start to Russell. There was then a struggle to close the gap, before inevitably pitting during the VSC, a crucial mistake.

The chaotic nature of the race made it a busy one for the stewards, with multiple drivers picking up both fines and penalties. Norris and Russell were fined €5,000 respectively for their infringement on the start procedure, as well as a reprimand. Mercedes was fined €5,000 for car 44 and €5,000 for car 63 due to tyre infringement. Ollie Bearman had a rather eventful weekend, as he was propelled into Kevin Magnussen's seat after the Dane fell ill. He subsequently made too many mistakes, fighting Zhou and Colapinto and then skidding off track. Bearman picked up a 10-second penalty for his collision with the Williams, it was a p12 finish for him.

As for Sauber, it was another weekend without points. Zhou had bad luck at the start, ran last, and it ultimately took far too many laps for his tyres to warm up. All he could do was p15. Williams had both a DNS and a DNF, with Albon not starting and Colapinto going off. Colapinto was up 4 places to p12 but then struggled with his front brakes locking up. He pitted for the second time but then eventually found the barriers. Stroll had a suspected braking problem which is why he went off on the formation lap, and Alonso dropped down due to a rear wheel locking up, he finished the race p14. Finally, in RB it was double points. Tsunoda P7 and Lawson p9, but they are still down one in the Constructors' Championship because of Alpine's success story. Once again, Sao Paulo provided a memorable race with its rather unpredictable weather conditions and hilly terrain.

Issue 404

Music

Film

TV

Books

Creative Writing

Art

Theatre

Fashion

Gaming



WENUE

Arts and Culture

Editorials

Lily Taylor Venue Co-Editor



Above: Lily (Credit: Maggie Reed)

I'm going to use this editorial to apologise to everyone who has had to be around me lately. With my course ramping up, alongside my immune system deciding to take a holiday, I have been stressed, irritated and generally not very fun to be around. Now that the November issue is here, you will probably see me around a bit more, as I emerge out of my Concrete cave.

However, I would not change it one bit. This issue has been tough, but with the support of my lovely Co-Editor Sankavi, and the amazing work of our section editors, we have created something brilliant. A big shout out to the Venue editors for putting up with me and Sankavi while we run our silly little experiments toying with design. A big thank you also to Co-EIC Fiona, who, with her INSANE InDesign skills, has helped us with the overall look of the paper this month.

Finally, a big thank you to Sarah Price, who is our interview star this month! I had such a lovely chat with her and I'm really proud of the interview we produced. I hope the article does our conversation justice, Sarah!

Here's to Issue 404, you lovely people! I hope you enjoy!

Sankavi Naresh Venue Co-Editor

Welcome to Issue 404! I hope summative season hasn't been too taxing and everyone's been squeezing in time to grab a warm drink at UNIO or for a cheeky night out!

I'd like to thank our lovely section editors for all their hard work this issue, even at such a busy time and one of the Co-EiCs of Concrete, Fiona Hill, for helping us design this issue of Venue! Last but not least, I'd like to thank my wonderful Co-Editor, Lily Taylor, who has soldiered on through whatever obstacle has come our way creating this issue, she's also been massively supportive when things have gotten stressful. We've worked really hard on this month's issue and we hope you enjoy reading it! :)



Above: Sankavi (Credit: Jamie Bryson)

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In Conversation: Sarah Price
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What's On

W/C 18th November



Tuesday 19th

The SU are holding a Barbie Pyjama Movie Night in Bookable Room 6. Taking place from 6pm to 8pm.

Wednesday 20th

Head over to the new LGBTQ+ Bar for Liquorice, UEA's weekly queer club night. Taking place from 10:30pm-1am.

Thursday 21st

Indie vs Emo club night is back at the LCR due to popular demand! Taking place from 10:30pm-2:30am.

Friday 22nd

UEA Pride are hosting a board games night in the New Science Building 0.01. Taking place from 6:30pm-9pm.

Saturday 23rd

Join Navigate Norfolk for a trip to Winterton-On-Sea. Tickets are available on the UEA SU website.

W/C 2nd December



Monday 2nd

Weekly quiz in the Blue Bar! Taking place from 8-10pm.

Tuesday 3rd

Weekly karaoke in the Blue Bar from 8pm-10pm. Bring your friends, grab a drink, and enjoy a night of good music and fun.

Wednesday 4th

Furry Friends Club: Campus Dog Walk. Meet at Security Lodge at 1pm! Don't miss out on this fun and relaxed outing with your fellow animal lovers!

Thursday 5th

Get into the festive spirit with the Ceramic Christmas Bauble Painting session at the Blue Bar! Taking place from 2-4pm

Friday 6th

ueashowchoir would like to invite you to their end of term xmas show! This event is FREE and open to all. Taking place from 6-9pm

W/C 25th November



Monday 25th

Weekly quiz in the Blue Bar! Taking place from 8pm-10pm.

Tuesday 26th

Gingerbread decorating in the Exhibiton Space. Taking place 2pm-4pm.

Wednesday 27th

Weekly Sports Night at the LCR! Taking place 10:30pm-2:30am.

Thursday 28th

UEA SU presents Luv in the Blue Bar, where you can catch some great local talent. Taking place from 7:30pm-10pm.

Saturday 30th

Your weekly A-List club night! Head over to the LCR from for the biggest chart, pop and dance anthems.

W/C 9th December



Monday 9th

Film Club in Bookable Room 6, Union House. This is not a society-run event but one led by UEA SU to bring together like-minded students and film buffs. From 8-10:30pm

Tuesday 10th

Weekly karaoke in the Blue Bar from 8pm-10pm.

Wednesday 11th

LGBTQ+ Club Night at the new LGBTQ+ bar! From 10:30pm-1am

Thursday 12th

Drag Race watch party in Bookable Room 6, Union House from 8-10:30pm.

Friday 13th

Christmas At The LCR! It's the most wonderful time of the year! Are you ready to jingle all the way to the LCR for the ultimate Christmas party?

Redefining the Drop Date: Why Artists are Moving Beyond Friday

By Adam Teschner

Halloween week was set to be busy for new music, with five major hip-hop albums and the return of The Cure incoming. However, by the time New Music Friday rolled around, the world had already listened to two of them: Tyler, The Creator's blockbuster 'Chromakopia' arrived on streaming services on Monday morning, shortly followed up by Dreamville-affiliated rap duo EarthGang's 'Perfect Fantasy' the next day.

Friday has been the industry standard release day ever since 2015, marking the first time a globally standardised music release day and charting week were set. Inspired by Beyoncé's surprise Friday release two years prior subverting the US' Tuesday norm, new music was pitched as an end-of-week celebration.

So why did Tyler and EarthGang go against the grain?

After all, a weekday release gives these releases a far smaller window to rack up their first-week sales, and therefore a far smaller chance of popping up on your radar screen. Well, it's clear Tyler isn't interested in the numbers; "if you put it out during the week, that commute to work or school, you really have that hour or thirty minutes to really 'dive in' and really listen".

He makes a point - the Friday midnight slot seems tailored to the sleep-deprived music nerd. EarthGang explained their Tuesday release in a tweet expressing a similar sentiment, having also previously released ten songs from the album in two EPs over the past year to further allow fans to "live with the music". Ultimately, these artists want to do all they can to streamline their fans' ability to bond with them, many of whom are bound by the same 9-to-5s

that Tyler and EarthGang are all too familiar with.

Despite only 4 days of chart tracking, 'Chromakopia' still went No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart and had Spotify's biggest rap debut of 2024. And Tyler has not been the only benefactor - his Californian compatriot Kendrick Lamar incited a similarly anti-industry moment this year with the Saturday release of 'Not Like Us', and by now you probably don't need that song's success explained.

This world where artistic movements like these, which seem nothing but counterproductive on paper can be carried out in the mainstream and - in Tyler's case - supported by a major label - is a welcome departure from the rigid industry culture of only a decade ago. Next time Friday comes around, try not to just listen to the music - live with it.



A New Kind of Tension: American Idiot at 20

By Daniel Garcia

It cannot be overstated how huge Green Day were in the 90s, breaking through with 'Dookie' in 1994. After 2000's 'Warning' undersold, the band were in a creative slump. The original plan was to make an album called Cigarettes and Valentines, but after the master tapes were stolen (or more likely, the band just weren't happy with the sound), they changed tack.

With encouragement from producer Rob Cavallo, the band set out to make their biggest record yet, the concept rock-opera 'American Idiot'. It has since gone on to sell 23 million records worldwide, being certified six times with a platinum status in the United States and Australia, diamond in Canada and 8 times platinum in the UK.

The album follows the self-proclaimed "son of rage and love" - the Jesus of Suburbia, a disillusioned young man who leaves his broken home for the promise of the city. There he meets the revolutionary Whatsername and awakens his dark alter-ego St. Jimmy. He finds himself torn between these two forces: the idealised revolution that Whatsername offers and the addictive self-destruction that Jimmy represents. These self-destructive habits lead to his relationship with Whatsername falling apart, and he realises that he has become what he always hated - the titular American Idiot. The album ends in a sombre contrast to its grandiose beginning - with Jesus returning home alone, forever changed by his time away.

Overshadowing the whole album is the disillusionment and disenfranchisement that many American youth felt in the fractured post 9/11 America. Whilst he is never

explicitly mentioned on the record, there is an incredibly strong anti-Bush sentiment and heavy criticism of the then recently launched war on terror and the Iraq War.

Overshadowing the whole album is the disillusionment and disenfranchisement that many American youth felt in the fractured post 9/11 America. Whilst he is never explicitly mentioned on the record, there is an incredibly strong anti-Bush sentiment and heavy criticism of the then recently launched war on terror and the Iraq War.

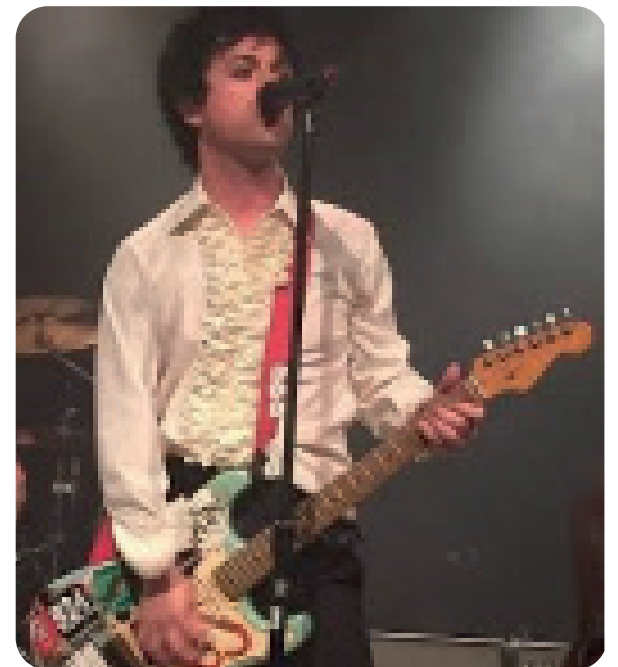
2004 marked the start of a turning point in public sentiment towards the war. 'American Idiot' came during the perfect time, capturing a nation's frustrations and articulating them into powerful protest. The titular track 'American Idiot' directly calls out the media's use of propaganda to sow paranoia among the people, whilst 'Holiday' is as angry a critique of Bush could be without mentioning him by name.

Whilst the album is inherently political, what makes it truly timeless is that the story also speaks to something both personal and universal. The incredibly personal 'Wake Me Up When September Ends', a song about the death of lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong's father when he was a child, has since become a universal song of mourning, especially in the context of 9/11. At its core, the album is about being lost in a world where everything is trying to influence you, and desperately trying to find where you belong.

Twenty years on and 'American Idiot' hits harder than ever. A deluxe version released earlier this year and the recent worldwide Saviors tour, in which the band play the album in full, has enjoyed sold-out arenas of fans screaming back every word. Armstrong regularly

changes certain words of the more politically charged songs, like 'Holiday' and 'American Idiot' to reflect current events.

The world is more heavily saturated with media than in 2004, with it now practically always at our fingertips. The fears of mass media control, xenophobia and propaganda that 'American Idiot' grapples with are fears that have unfortunately only grown stronger in contemporary society, so the album will undeniably continue to resonate more and more in the coming years. "For that's enough to argue".



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The Westernisation of K-pop

By Isaac Arif

In the past year alone, we've seen a significant increase in the so-called westernisation of the K-pop industry. With the debut of Kalseye, an American group, and the onslaught of English tracks from word-famous names such as Twice, BTS and BlackPink, it is becoming clearer that selling albums is more important to the industry than their creative output.

Keeping in mind that K-pop isn't a genre but an industry whose main goal is to create profits, it's sad to see that conforming to the West comes at the cost of the quality of the music being released.

A popular example of English tracks harming a K-pop group is BTS. Their recent English releases, 'Dynamite' and 'Permission to Dance' have been highly criticised for their poor lyricism and generic pop sound, and I couldn't agree more. Before these songs, BTS was adamant about keeping their music in Korean. This level of creative control can be traced through their lengthy discography, and it becomes apparent when going through the later releases that the decision to move towards English tracks has caused a decline in quality. BTS is known amongst die-hard fans for writing songs about mental health, self-love, and Korean society, but their English releases are shallow in comparison - they're filled with meaningless lyrics accompanied by

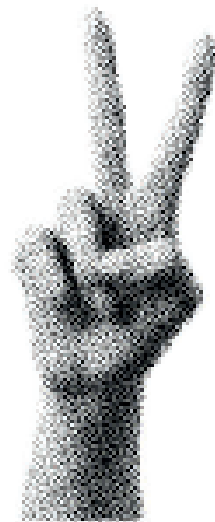
unmemorable music videos.

How does a group go from releasing 'Fake Love', an emotive song about hiding depression, to the empty dance track 'Permission to Dance'? Watching a group popularised for their fresh approach to pop music become caricatures of what they claimed they'd never become is baring. I now see this in many groups, who opt out of pushing against Western ideas and instead lean into them in full force.

The prioritisation of English-speaking audiences may lead to K-pop's downfall, as it reveals the companies' money-grabbing intentions. K-pop has always been tied to America, with the creators of first-generation pop crediting hip-hop for the industry's birth. However this is purely influence, which is not in itself negative. If anything, it displays how music can permeate across the globe, making way for new sounds. What is happening today appears more sinister and charged by greed. If you walk into an HMV today, you'll likely see four or more different versions of the same K-pop album. They aren't even trying to be subtle about the state of the industry being more about money than music.

K-pop appears to be less about the Korean aspect or audience and more about creating a certain type of upbeat sound

accompanied by high-concept music videos, constructing idol-like stars and selling photocards. This definition of K-pop leaves me unsure whether K-pop's "K" part matters anymore. I believe that companies and fans of the industry are a most equally liable for this shift. If fans stopped engaging with poorly made English tracks the industry might focus on creating high-quality music again. But I don't have much hope in fans, as the extreme support they provide to every single release means these companies will always get what they want more money.



Lin Manuel-Miranda and Eisa Davis Come Out to Play with New Concept Album

By Edie Davies



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

According to popular culture, Musical Theatre does not lend itself to hard-hitting subjects well. However, 'Warriors', a new musical theatre concept album created by Hamilton's Lin Manuel-Miranda and Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Eisa Davis, proves that theatre can uplift oppressed voices and tackle serious topics with ease when a creative team truly cares about its subjects. The album, inspired by the 1979 film of the same name, follows a New York gang called the Warriors. The Warriors are incorrectly blamed for the assassination of Cyrus, the infamous leader of the 'Gramercy Riffs', at a meeting. The Warriors must make their way from the Bronx back to their home of Coney Island, facing off against other gangs and the corrupt New York Police on their way.

Despite this story being older than Lin Manuel-Miranda himself, Warriors has remained relevant. Gang violence is still a large issue across New York, and the recent Black Lives Matter movement in America has revealed the unacceptable levels of police brutality across the United States, especially towards women of colour. Miranda and

Davis have ensured that these issues are the centrepiece of the album, adapting the Warriors themselves from an all-male gang into an all-female one, with the actresses all being women of colour. Davis' writing expertly captures the powerful nature of sisterhood. Miranda's lyricism works perfectly alongside it through songs like 'A Light or Something', a duet between Warrior Swan (Jasmine Cephas-Jones) and new recruit Mercy (Julia Harriman), as they navigate their romantic feelings for each other. The music in 'Warriors' is just as diverse as it's cast. The album includes huge names in theatre and mainstream music to back up its experimentation, including Nas, Busta Rhymes, and Ms Lauryn Hill. Lin Manuel-Miranda's willingness to experiment in his musical projects has been obvious since his Tony Award winning shows 'In the Heights' and 'Hamilton', and it has only become clearer in this new project. From Miranda's usual rap and RnB numbers to heavy metal and pop punk, the concept album is an exciting explosion of sound that calls back to the diversity of New York City.

A standout song in the album is 'Going Down', a track with heavy metal influences and an incredible vocal performance by Kim Dracula, who plays Luther, the main villain. However, Miranda's dip into pop punk through the song 'Orphan Town' is an experiment that does not pay off, mostly due to the casting of the titular Orphans. Star of Broadway's 'Back to the Future' Casey Likes and 'Pitch Perfect's Utkarsh Ambudkar sound more like whiny teenagers than rebellious gang members; compared to other gangs who seduce the Warriors with RnB or attack the gang with bombastic club anthems, the Orphans fade into the background.

Davis and Miranda clearly push the boundaries of what a musical can be with 'Warriors'. With a cast of musicians this stacked, it is almost impossible to predict how this album will be adapted for the stage, if it ever is. Even so, the album itself is an incredible listening experience with an engaging storyline, despite the lack of a visual aid. The album opens and closes with the line "this is the sound of something being born," a phrase that couldn't be more relevant for this expert musical adaptation of such an iconic story.

The Writers' Playlist

What have our writers been listening to this month?

'Prescription - Extended' by Remi Wolf

This 2023 single has been on repeat ever since a friend recently recommended this song and I instantly connected with it. The song is wholly hypnotic. As it begins, we're drawn in by the slow, enchanting synth as Remi pours her heart out. She shared that the song captures the feeling of "being in love and being really, really scared," a sentiment perfectly embodied by the swelling instrumentation that compliments her raw, unaffected vocals—a refreshing contrast to the distortion she used on Big Ideas.

It's easy to enjoy the rich synth sounds and intertextuality, with hints of the 'Minneapolis sound,' touches of synth-pop and nods to Prince's way of pastiching classic soul. The co-producer Knox Fortune's influence is too prominent in the bridge, mirroring his 2017 single '24 Hours'.

I highly recommend you commit to the seven-minute extended version and just letting it take you in. - Poppy Wyeth

Mom Jeans

Back in the swing of Autumn, I've gone back to bands who capture that end-of-summer feeling, a feeling of a warm embrace bringing you back home to reflect. No band encapsulates this emotion more than Mom Jeans, a popular Midwest-Emo group from California that combines sounds of indie-rock, classic emo & pop-punk, creating vulnerable & relatable songs talking of youth struggles, heartbreak & fading relationships.

Their hit debut album 'Best Buds' shows off a stripped-down and pure sound with moving melodies highlighting their lyrical brilliance in relating to common feelings of heartbreak & loss. The 2022 album 'Sweet Tooth' showcases their growth as musicians, with evolved and cleaner-sounding production.

My year-end rotation always contains Mom Jeans and so should yours. - Elliot LaCointe

'Cartoon Darkness' by Amyl and the Sniffers

Australian punk-rock band Amyl and the Sniffers have just released their long time coming third album, 'Cartoon Darkness', three years after Comfort to Me.

The album's title reflects the juxtaposition of childishness and innocence, and fear of the unknown that underpins the entire album. The album features a broad range of music from silly, crude, drunken anthems like 'Jerkin', classically punk rebellion that you can hear on 'Chewing Gum', and also more emotional, gentler moments such as 'Big Dreams', where frontwoman Amy Taylor expresses the feeling of wanting more out of life than you feel like you can get.

If you are like me and love the energy and punch that old-school rock music has, this album is a great listen to bring that retro energy into the 21st century. - Robyn Sriksandan

Cinema Society

By Isaac Arif

I sat down with Leila Osman, president of UEA's cinema society to chat about the society's new approach with increased international films. This year there will be regular screenings, showing films from a wide range of global perspectives, genres and filmmakers. As you'll read below, it is the perfect place to discover new films and discuss them with fellow students.

What are you hoping to introduce to cinema society this year? Are there any particular types of films?

I wanted to introduce more international films to people because I feel it's important to hear more international, queer and sub-cultural voices. We'll be curating our monthly screenings by theme. These will be vague so each member of our committee can pick something so we show a wide range of films. However, one of my rules is that we'll show at least one non-English language film a month. I just want to show more international films because I'm tired of showing too many American films.

vague so each member of our committee can pick something so we show a wide range of films. However, one of my rules is that we'll show at least one non-English language film a month. I just want to show more international films because I'm tired of showing too many American films.

What do you love about sharing cinema with a wider community?

I love showing people films that they wouldn't necessarily watch by themselves and having conversations about them. I feel like I live in my own echo-chamber a lot and I really like having good discussions with people, so I'm focusing on the social aspect so we can have on-going discussions about throughlines in the films.

What's a favourite film of yours that you hope to screen this year?

I'd really like to show *The Handmaiden* (2016) this year. It's one of my all-time favourites and I love it because everyone has a slightly different perspective on it. Even though I love it, I think there are valid criticisms, so I'd like to hear what others have to say. I also think it's wonderful and gorgeous and people should watch it.

There's No Place Like Home

By Charlotte Ward

As the release of the new screen adaptation of *Wicked* draws near, the lingering nostalgia of our first trip to Oz tugs at the periphery of our memories. At 85, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939, Victor Fleming) is still firmly ingrained into our culture.

Having not watched the film for a good few years prior to my revisitation of it, I can confidently assert that the technicolour land of Oz never dulls. From early memories of relentless re-watches of *The Wizard of Oz*, screened from a hot pink DVD player, even after all these years, I fondly remember the intricacies of the Scarecrow's (Ray Bolger) endearing support to Dorothy (Judy Garland), to the ever-changing colours of the horses of Oz. Just as Dorothy comes to recognise her ability to return home has been within her all along, the film is embedded into my formative memories, like a familiar routine uncovered from years ago.

And I know I am not the only one who regards *The Wizard of Oz* as a cultural touchstone. Many of the cherished characters and iconography are so embedded into our subconscious that it is almost as if the film has transcended the label of a classic film to something more profound – something of an ageless facet of folklore. As

Dorothy departs Kansas and opens the door into the fantasy world of Munchkinland, she simultaneously and metaphorically opens the door to the world of possibility. In 1939, we may recognise this as a testament to films possibility for further technological development. The shooting of a feature-length film in three-strip colour at a time when colour film was still a novelty and, of course, the complexity of set design that accompanied it proved to be monumental achievements.

But more than that, it is everything that the lure of Oz symbolises that suspends it in the eternal imagination of many. *The Wizard of Oz* presents an idealised journey through life from the black-and-white banality of Kansas into the enticing but daunting world of the rainbow-coloured dimensions of Oz. Dorothy fulfils a fantasy we can't. Her trials and tribulations through a land far from home introduce her to characters reminiscent of those she knew before, and she succeeds in becoming the hero of her narrative by the story's close. However, amongst all this newness and excitement, her main finding in the end is simple: 'There's no place like home.' As she taps her ruby slippers to return to the embrace of all she knew before and comes to realise

Upcoming Films



New Releases:

All We Imagine as Light (Payal Kapadia)
November 29th

Conclave (Edward Berger)
November 29th

Your Monster (Caroline Lindy)
November 29th

Nightbitch (Marielle Heller)
December 6th

Queer (Luca Guadagnino)
December 13th

Re-releases:

The Holdovers (Alexander Payne)

At Cinema City December 11th

Bridget Jones's Diary (Sharon Maguire)

At Cinema City December 12th

everything was a dream, superficially, this narrative resolution can be read as primitive in breaking the first rule of storytelling. Although, with a film so enchantingly evocative of a dreamscape, isn't wish fulfilment the point of fantasy? We may not be able to return to a past version of things exactly as they were, but we can live vicariously through Dorothy. *The Wizard of Oz* is sprinkled with nostalgia at every level - a warm hug with the resounding message that ultimately, "home is where the heart is."

Credit: [Wikimedia Commons](#)



Lady Bird: It'll Always Have a Place in My Heart

By Lily Taylor



Back in early 2018, I took a cinema trip with my sister to see Greta Gerwig's solo directorial debut, *Lady Bird*. I didn't know much about the film beforehand, but my twin sister, now a passionate film student, was desperate to see it. After nearly getting refused entry for forgetting our IDs, we managed to blab our way in and take our seats.

The film focuses on the life of Christine 'Lady Bird' McPherson (Saoirse Ronan), a headstrong 17-year-old desperate to flee the restraints of her hometown, Sacramento. Her fiery personality results in her experiencing a string of rocky relationships, something which is best reflected by her frequent clashes with her equally headstrong mother (Laurie Metcalf). We are introduced to their difficult relationship at the very start of the film, where they are arguing in a moving car and Lady Bird opens the door and throws herself out onto the road, breaking her arm. While it is an unprecedented and shocking moment, it is also ridiculous. From the beginning, Gerwig successfully captures that blend of exaggerated drama and hilariousness that makes up the coming-of-age narrative.

As someone who was a fairly shy, compliant teenager, Lady Bird's

confidence is something I instantly admired. What makes her even more compelling is that she is beautifully flawed, as all teenagers are. There are several moments in the film where she makes poor decisions, particularly in her friendship with Julie (Beanie Feldstein). We also see her struggle with her confidence at times, particularly during her turbulent relationship with Kyle (Timothée Chalamet). Yet, she makes up for her flaws through her ability to recognise her mistakes and empathise with those she cares for, which makes her a truly lovable character.

After the film ended, my sister and I sat in silence for a moment watching the credits roll. As we left, I remember a feeling of confidence washing over me. In a confusing teenage world, *Lady Bird* had taught me that it was okay to mess up, and not really know what I want - I can still be my authentic self while working things out along the way.

Seven years later and we still come back to watch *Lady Bird* on a regular basis. My sister even has a tiny lady bird tattooed on her collarbone to reflect her love of the film.

Terrifier Slays Competition

By Steven Whitear

Terrifier (2016, Damien Leone) is generally considered an underdog in the world of horror cinema. The ultraviolent, excessive franchise has been a secret success since 2016, earning massive returns from miniscule budget. This year, *Terrifier 3* (2024, Damien Leone) hit the stage and has already passed \$50m - a huge success considering its budget was only \$2m. Indeed, it was a success after its Thursday previews.

Terrifier 3 was released at a very fortunate time, with its main competition being the freshly notorious *Joker Folie à Deux* (2024, Todd Phillips). The fact that both movies feature a clown as the main villain led to the so-called 'Box Office Battle of the Clowns.' Overwhelmingly negative reviews for *Joker* led to *Terrifier 3* becoming the number one movie in the United States. *Terrifier 3* was showing in cinemas weeks after *Joker* became dead and buried on streaming.

There was a time when we weren't sure if *Terrifier 3* would even come to Norwich. The first *Terrifier*'s theatrical run was minimal, yet successful. *Terrifier 2* (2022, Damien Leone) had a lot more screenings, but never really left America. This time around, Damien Leone was eager to give *Terrifier 3* a worldwide release in cinemas but there was some uncertainty as to whether it would only stay in larger cities in the UK. Despite the first two films screening for the first time across Norwich in September, the closest screening to UEA for *Terrifier 3* until just a few days before its release was at an independent cinema in Gorleston. However, tickets went up for cinemas like Vue and Odeon just three days before its release.

The Substance: Review

By L McKinnell Michael

Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance* (2024, Coralie Fargeat) follows a fading star, Elisabeth Sparkle (Demi Moore) as she is given the cold shoulder by show business. She decides to use a drug known as 'the substance' to create a younger version of herself (Margaret Qualley), who she must swap consciousness with every seven days. This younger substitute, Sue, finds fame of her own, but refuses to follow the rules of the substance. Although the dialogue was pulpy and unnatural at times, the lead actors delivered brilliant, emotive performances. Their joint desperation for fame and agency was striking.

The Substance is best viewed with a large group, with plenty of people to react to the grossest parts of the film. In fact, the film was an exploration of filth and gore, from eating with your mouth open to vomiting a dismembered breast; the practical effects certainly bolstered the impact of the more extreme moments. The visuals, score and costuming were unique and modern with an 80's twist; the over-the-top sound design only added to the - already strong - body horror elements of the film.

Smile 2: Review

By Heather Wallis

Time to smile! Parker Finn's *Smile 2* (2024) is out and has become the latest sensation in horror cinema. Packed with spine-chilling thrills and gut-wrenching tension, it is a must-watch for a movie night guaranteed to keep you on the edge of your seat.

Smile 2 elevates the horror and suspense of the original, delivering a darker, bloodier sequel that's both terrifying and impossible to look away from, with heightened gore that makes each scene more disturbing than the last. The palpable tension is magnificently created through the sharp camerawork that transitions between lingering stillness to sudden, unsettling close-ups. The bold visual style of the film features tenebrous, shadowy tones, juxtaposed by saturated reds and eerie lighting, which perpetually amplifies the terror that makes up the chilling atmosphere.

The film's distinctiveness lies in its meticulous blend of horror and real-world pop culture, embodied through the character of Skye Riley, who was effortlessly brought to life by Naomi Scott's authentic and captivating performance. Scott's layered performance masterfully conveys Skye's psychological unravelling, capturing both vulnerability and resilience in a way that feels raw and relatable. This impassioned character portrayal allows viewers to empathise deeply with Skye, even as she confronts unimaginable horrors.

Isaac's Highlight

Vicky Krieps

Vicky Krieps is a name probably not known to many, but it should be. Krieps is a Luxembourgish-German actress who consistently delivers complex and witty performances in a range of different types of films. Sit to watch *Phantom Thread* (2017, Paul Thomas Anderson) and you'll find a wholly dissimilar Vicky Krieps from who you see in *Corsage* (2022, Marie Kreutzer) or *Bergman Island* (2021, Mia Hansen-Love).

I continue to be surprised by how she takes the material provided and moulds it into her own through performance, something that is often hard to achieve. For instance, in *The Dead Don't Hurt* (2023, Viggo Mortensen), Krieps is the central woman in a Western film. On paper her place there seems like a fish out of water, a European actress using her own accent in a Western? Even as a fan of hers, I went in hesitant, but in actuality she provides a much-needed balance and substance to the story. That dedication to morphing characters who appear out of place, into having sovereign is what keeps me coming back to her marvellous filmography.

Will It Always Be Sunny In Philadelphia?

By Guy Sutton

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia is the best modern sitcom! A sentiment enthusiastically shared, as it's become, as of its fifteenth season, the longest running live-action sitcom in history. An accomplishment that's no easy feat considering it was born from a pilot shot on less than \$200 by three friends with a camcorder. With sixteen released seasons and a seventeenth currently being filmed, the show's longevity and continued relevance in the television industry is nothing short of remarkable. It's a testament to its unique blend of dark humour, satirical social commentary, and sharp character dynamics. The core group—Charlie (Charlie Day), Dennis (Glenn Howerton), Dee (Kaitlin Olson), Mac (Rob McElhenney), and Frank (Danny DeVito)—are all dysfunctional, but their collective failure to evolve has kept the show fresh. In an era where many sitcoms falter after a few seasons, It's Always Sunny has defied expectations, even going as far as to address topics like toxic masculinity, cancel culture, and political correctness, all while maintaining the crudeness and absurdity that has become its trademark.

Despite many fans being open and excited for a Seventeenth Season, there's an essence of discontentment stirring within the fandom. The fears of these fans are relatable, and I say this a cult-like fan myself. There's a nervousness that the lesser quality of these later seasons, while still being decent in their own rights, are representative of a gradual decline, akin to The Simpsons.

As with many long-running shows, especially sit-coms, fatigue eventually sets in after a while, leading to the writers becoming more strained to think of new ideas that continue to give the characters fresh material to chew on.

The risk of becoming a relic of its former self is ever-present. With each season, the show treads a thin line between nostalgia and relevance, between daring humour and outdated jokes. The fifteenth season saw the series implement a season wide arc that involved them travelling to Ireland. While I was a supporter of the season overall, it was hard to remain oblivious to other fan's well-reasoned objections. They considered the nature of the arc to be overly high concept in nature and doesn't provide the backbone to many good jokes, betraying the shows robust humour and character dynamics to create something uncharacteristically aimless.

Not only is there a risk of becoming a relic of its former self, but there's also the risk of losing the unique voice it possessed. The merits of the 4:4 aspect ratio it originally utilised will be debated, but it's undeniable that it provided the show with a unique visual style that complimented its uniquely nihilistic outlook and malicious humour. It juxtaposed other television sitcoms with its dark, grungy lighting, low-production values, and scrappy camera work. Since the show's switch after the fifth season to a more approachable 1:85:1, the show's lighting has become more washed out and saturated. The character that lurked within the shows shabbiness has been drowned out, making it feel simply like another sitcom. All shows must evolve to maintain the freshness that made it so exciting in the first place, but it's often a detriment to the original vision for the show. This voice gradually being lost due to its own longevity is heartbreaking for a fan of any show. Always Sunny seems to be stuck in a quandary where wants

to continually push the limits of its characters and its storylines, risking its humour in the meantime. But if it continually just plays to its strengths, it becomes routine, losing the energy that made it spark.

But even with all the fear surrounding the ambiguity as to the quality of the upcoming season, there is always hope. Many fans considered the sixteenth season an improvement over the previous three. Learning from the mistakes made regarding the increased reliance on outlandish, experimental concept episodes that substitute the shows signature humour for loopy parody. Season sixteen was more self-contained, bringing it back to the characters and relishing in their well-defined dynamics. But even then, in my opinion, it still lacked the anarchic spirit of the early seasons. The jokes, while funny, felt more standard and it never felt like it made the most of its concepts, losing that go-for-broke attitude that made the show so good originally.

The Seventeenth Season may well be exceptional, but I doubt many fans would lament if it was announced as the last season. It may be Sunny as usual, but I think it's about time the weather changed.

The Damn Kids Just Won't Grow Up

By Charlotte Davies

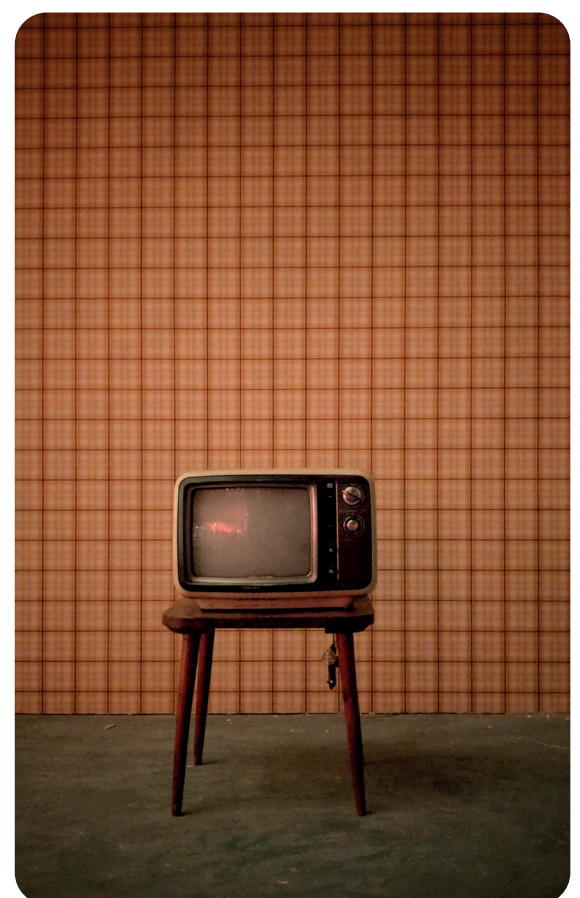
South Park, best known for its extremely controversial opinions within pop culture, is sticking around for a lot longer than first believed. The pop-cultural phenomenon, most known by its leading characters Eric Cartman, Kyle Broflovski, Stan Marsh and Kenny McCormick, has now broken headlines with its record-breaking deal of \$900 million for six new seasons alongside 14 movies set within the South Park universe. Despite only having one official film as of now, creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone previously stated some past episodes (that had been made into a longer format, such as the 'pandemic special') were made to 'scratch both itches. Providing both longer form content while making it more palatable to an audience with a short attention span.

The fan favourite show, which has been running for over 20 seasons, has had many scandals surrounding it. From the title of their first film being rejected for being too outwardly rude, having a public feud with Scientology, and of course countless run ins with being 'politically incorrect'. Despite all this and more, the cultural phenomenon has survived all this controversy and to this day the creators say they don't have to worry about cancel culture as they have 'f-k you money now'. While the two have never hidden their immense wealth, earned through both the success of South Park, and the Tony Winning musical 'The Book of Mormon', it was brought into the public eye after

the purchase of restaurant Casa Bonita (a famous Colorado restaurant, re-popularised by the show). It is the creators' ability to branch out into various business ventures that has enabled them to stay relevant in an ever-changing social climate.

Rather than running from the social beast that is cancel culture, Parker and Stone seemingly run towards it without fear as they deem it to be a 'legit cultural change' that can only truly understood and respected through comedy - demonstrated through many recent episodes of South Park. However, through playing into the restrictive nature of cancel culture alongside the guaranteed payout, it has been argued that the show has now lost its integrity, morphing into an apparent mockery of itself. Fans worry that due to the large financial risks that have been placed on the continued success, fewer risks will be taken within the writing of episodes, resulting in only a glossy shell of what it once was.

Aside from all the online debate surrounding South Parks future, it is clear that Parker and Stone intend on only ingraining it further within social culture, through bringing more features of the fictional town into reality. Luckily, it appears fan favourite location of Tegrity farms may become a reality. While the legalities have not been outlined yet, the co-creators have stated this will become the first of many new South Park themed ventures to come.



Credit: Unsplash

The Downfall of American Horror Story

By India Yates

Credit: Unsplash

FX's anthology series *American Horror Story* (2011-) has been a household staple among horror fans for over a decade. Created by Ryan Murphy, the show has revolved around a plethora of themes, from a haunted hotel, to a witches coven, to an 80s summer camp. But with a drastic drop in ratings and viewership for recent seasons, the future of this once much-loved series is at stake. Are the increasingly falling numbers an unfair representation of the show's quality or is there a greater horror story lurking behind them?

With seasoned regulars and fan favourite actors by the likes of Sarah Paulson, Evan Peters and Jessica Lange ceasing to appear in recent seasons, it comes as no surprise that viewership of the show is now dwindling. As an anthology series, *American Horror Story* relied on these beloved actors to coax back viewers season after season. The actors' absences can notably be felt in later seasons which rely on an, although talented, brand-new cast to deliver the show. This cast constantly finds itself grappling to live up to the expectations of fans and fill the shoes of the series legends that came before them. Despite the efforts of the latest instalment, *Delicate*, bringing back old favourite Emma Roberts to play the role of Hollywood star Anna Alcott, the new season is still 'shockingly bad to the point it's almost comical', according to *Outkick Magazine*.

The once great writing in earlier seasons such as *Murder House* and *Asylum* is now a distant memory in the eyes of many fans of the show. *American Horror Story*, which characterised itself with catty, campy and queer dialogue and undertones, now fades into the abyss of

new shows which cater to the same audience in a newer, more captivating light. It is hard to tell if these new shows truly pull off this characterisation better than recent seasons of *American Horror Story*, or if fans have become bored of the show's predictability and over-reliance on it. This does not begin to scratch the surface of the writing issues that plague *American Horror Story*.

With plot holes and incomplete storylines becoming ever more present in new seasons, audiences are becoming tired of finishing a show with more questions than answers. Arguably *American Horror Story* has slipped onto the back burner for creator Ryan Murphy, as his newer shows, such as *Pose* and *Ratched* still hit the mark with fans and critics alike.

The lack of fresh ideas and convoluted plots are more aspects of decline on the minds of many *American Horror Story* fans. Recent seasons of the show are packed with incohesive storylines, plot holes and repeated material. How many times can the show expect to use the 'you died and are stuck here forever as a ghost' trope before it becomes a bore? It comes as no surprise that audiences are choosing to give up on the series with an abundance of new shows to watch with fresh and original ideas.

Maybe *American Horror Story* has finally run its course, and fans have been left to watch the show slowly and inevitably fizzle into the archives of pop culture. Or will the anticipated season 13 finally bring a much-needed revitalisation to the show, with rumours of the original cast returning in hopes of 'getting the band back together'?



New School Year at Abbott Elementary

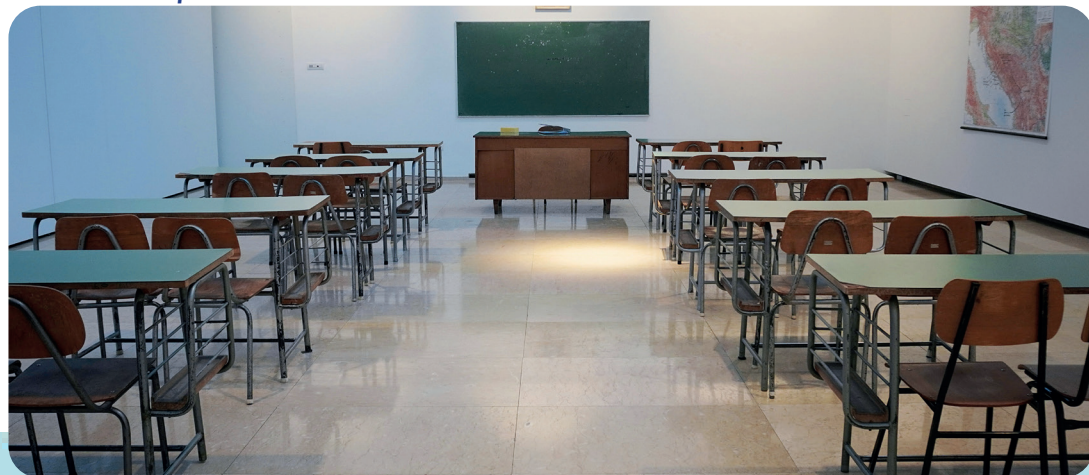
By Samuel Hallam

Quinta Brunson's hit documentary sitcom, *Abbott Elementary*, is back for a fourth season with its delightful cast of characters who've won viewers' hearts.

Season 4 of *Abbott* kicks off with one of the biggest twists since "I can see dead people...". A new white student at the black public school we have been following the previous three seasons. The new student acts as a harbinger of what seems to be this season's big bad... a new golf course. This golf course is funded by the city and only seems to land holes in the teachers' lesson plans. The construction causes a myriad of problems ranging from low water pressure due to a burst pipe to giving people trouble parking. The parking issue leads to 'concerned' deadbeat, Darnell, being late to the fight he challenged Tyler James Williams' Gregory Eddie to (because of Darnell's son admiring his 1st grade teacher, Eddie).

The introduction of the golf course within minutes of the first episode holds the theme at the beating heart of this show right in front of your face: The lack of funding and resources given to public schools and teachers. The city feeds money into this golf course to supposedly increase property value and build new houses, which the current citizens of West Philly "will never see the inside of," as noted by Darnell. All the while Lisa Ann Walter's Melissa Schemmenti has snot on her hands thanks to the low water pressure and Sheryl Lee Ralph's Barbara Howard is "still waiting on those paper towels," for her classroom. *Abbott* points the finger

Credit: Unsplash



at the governing bodies that choose to fund trivial pastimes for wealthy white people, for the sake of improving the city's aesthetic. All whilst underfunding public school districts and leaving the teachers, parents and students of *Abbott* out to dry.

Though *Abbott* remains focused on the American Education System I find many of the themes relevant here in Britain. Particularly, those regarding funding. We have seen our government sink money into the xenophobic 'Rwanda Scheme' and fund Israel's assault on Gaza rather than our education system and public services. Now tuition fees have been raised, making higher education more inaccessible, and the bus fare cap being raised to £3 pounds will make the simple act of travelling to school or university more expensive.

However, rather than giving into the doomerism around the state of education *Abbott* maintains a joyous optimism by detailing the relentless efforts of the staff to provide for their students. History teacher Jacob Hill (Chris Perfetti) locks himself in room full of students who have been exposed to

ringworm so that they still get an education that day whilst containing the spread. Gregory discovering connecting with his students is "the best part of the job." The Christian Barbara Howard lying through her back teeth so the district will service the school's computers. The same computers she, Jacob and Melissa obtained through blackmailing those in charge of the golf course. Eternally optimistic Janine Teagues, played Brunson herself, working with the district to get funding for extra-curriculars and coming out with class pets. Overseeing it all is Principal Ava Coleman, who across the four seasons has gone from not taking her role seriously to scheming and bending over backwards "to get [her] kid's computers," and other resources, despite action being her "least favourite thing to take."

The first half of season 4 is off to a fantastic start. Gregory and Janine's romance is still endearing even after they have gotten together, and the cast is a goldmine of one liners and exceptional comedic timing. *Abbott's* future looks very sunny indeed.

"The thinnest yellow light of November is more warming and exhilarating than any wine they tell of. The mite which November contributes becomes equal in value to the bounty of July." - Henry David Thoreau

The First Chapter of the Norwich Book Festival

By Hannah Jones

With the nights drawing in and a greater chill in the air, there is no inspiration like the season of autumn for cosying up with a good book. This year, book lovers across the city and county were given the ultimate autumnal treat in the form of the Norwich Book Festival. Taking place over four days at the end of October, there were over 35 events, ranging from author talks to storytelling on a bus, at venues of literary significance in the city centre such as the Forum, Dragon Hall, and some of the major bookshops of Norfolk. Several of these events, particularly those for children and families, were free or held on a 'pay what you can' basis.

Many authors leading events had connections to the city and UEA, reinforcing UEA's reputation as "a powerhouse of producing these amazing talents", as the National Centre for Writing's Chief Executive, Peggy Hughes, put it. Several of the appearing authors were graduates of UEA's world-renowned MA Creative Writing courses. Among the impressive line-up were Emma Bamford, UEA MA Prose Fiction graduate, and Stephanie Bishop, UEA's own Professor of Creative Writing, who shared a captivating explo-



Credit: Unsplash

ration of the female gaze and the power of the protagonist in fiction. In the realm of 'Young Adult' fiction, Dr Ashley Hickson-Lovence, UEA Creative and Critical Writing graduate, and Joseph Coelho didn't disappoint with their discussion of their latest novels *The Boy Lost in the Maze* (by Hickson-Lovence) and *Wild East* (by Coelho and which is also set in Norwich). Natalie Lawrence also mesmerised an impressive audience with her eloquently delivered talk about her new non-fiction, *Enchanted Creatures*, analysing 15,000 years of imaginary beasts and the secrets of the human mind they divulge, as well as reflecting on our past and future relationship

with nature. The weekend brought families out for a range of crafting activities and stalls at the Imaginarium in the Forum, while storytelling sessions were held in the unique venue of the First Story Bus outside. With only 1 in 3 UK children and young people aged eight to eighteen saying that they enjoy reading in their free time, one of the lowest levels of reading enjoyment ever recorded, Norwich Book Festival has been born at a time when it has perhaps never been more important for this demographic.* The provision of free and 'pay what you can' activities was a commended move for greatly minimising the financial barrier preventing families' access to these opportunities for children's vital engagement with books. Norwich's evident significance in the literary world, as the City of Stories and the first UNESCO City of Literature, makes us wonder at how overdue a book festival seemed. But rooted in the buzz of readers and writers of all ages coming together was a definite sense of deep connection with an appreciation of the incredible host city. With the pilot having set the bar high, it is safe to say that we can expect more great things from Norwich Book Festivals to come!

*According to the Literacy Trust

The World in Words: Han Kang and the Importance of Translated Literature

By Polly Dye

Since serving as the Writer in Residence for the British Centre for Literary Translation here at UEA in 2015, Korean poet Han Kang will receive a Nobel Prize in Literature this December. The reason for her award being her "intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas" whilst exposing "the fragility of human life", according to the Nobel Prize website. Kang's work attests to the importance of literary translations: by converting texts into new languages, we experience the vividness and history of diverse cultural backgrounds, creating a more inclusive literary community.

When translating a work of literature, writers must balance linguistic precision and cultural sensitivity to guarantee the text replicates the original writer's unique voice and their own cultural context. In their desired target language, translators should capture the author's tone and style, including all metaphors and idioms they may use. As well as this, it is beneficial for translations to convey the deeper meanings of the text in order to honour the culture it came from. These characteristics of translation both promote an understanding of diverse cultures, ultimately fashioning a more educational reading experience. Though, the translation of literature comes with a beguiling question: should translators craft as literal a translation as possible, or focus on making the

translation accessible for readers unfamiliar with the original culture? It is safe to say a literal approach preserves the author's voice more intelligibly, as it aims to replicate their exact words, offering readers a more fulfilling understanding of how the text would actually appear in its original language. By breaking linguistic borders to protect the text's language, translation proves its value to not only casual readers, but to academics who may be intent on studying the literature's language. Thus, literal translation's integral role within academic fields enhances the original text's ingenuity, thereby affirming translation's importance in the literary community. However, as literal translations are focused on linguistic precision, they fail to capture the deeper meanings of their original text. A more interpretive translation intends to replicate the work's emotional impact, removing the possibility of alienating readers from the text for it may not translate the language-specific phrases of the original. Though this style of translation may overpower the original authorial voice, it is this that ensures texts are accessible to all cultures, guaranteeing the success of literature's cross-cultural adaptability.

Combining both translation styles seems impossible; a less literal approach wholly immerses readers into diverse cultural contexts but diminishes

Credit: Anita Staff



the author's voice, and vice versa. Though there appears to be no solution, it is important to acknowledge all types of translation have one goal in common: achieving universally accessible literature. It is this that makes translated literature a piece of art in its own right; by building cultural bridges through words, translations let us glimpse at lives different from our own, to grasp an understanding of them. This fosters a more empathetic readership and encourages connection to the people around us, a unique gift only literature can provide.

The Alarming Global Literacy Crisis

By Andi Gill

In the summer of 2023, I worked part time as a camp counselor at my old school. It was meant to be an easy summer job- take my assigned group of kids to the scheduled activities, and then do a half hour of group reading after lunch. I thought the kids in my group were just extraordinarily shy, since none of them ever volunteered to read, and I wasn't going to force them to do so. The first two weeks passed, and group reading had turned into story time. Only, I realized that my initial mental explanation of shyness couldn't possibly be true when so many of the kids were extroverted and whispering to their friends while I read to them. So, I started making reading mandatory, to an honestly unexpected degree of protest. I soon figured out why.

Nearly every child in my group couldn't read a full sentence out loud without stumbling. These were all kids from underprivileged areas of my city, and the whole point of the camp was for them to have better learning opportunities while school was out, but it still shocked me that 8-9-year-old kids wouldn't be able to read a full sentence out loud. I had to correct my course and use much simpler books for group reading until it was clear that everyone was on the same page. By the end of the summer, all of them had improved a bit, but they still weren't even remotely close to the 9-year-old reading level I had expected.

So, when the World Literacy Foundation revealed that global literacy rates were dropping by 5% every year in developed countries, it didn't surprise me. I had attributed my personal experience to COVID-19, since kids who were 9 then had

been in lockdown at as young as 6 years old and had missed the crucial first few years of schooling. And since they were from disadvantaged schools, online learning was inaccessible, due to how much money was involved- money for Wi-Fi, money for a computer, and enough financial security for their mothers or fathers to be able to take frequent breaks from their own work to monitor them and keep them on track. The pandemic had set those kids back two years, and more if they weren't actually caught up when they were thrust back into school. Teachers are required to follow the curriculum, but what happens when none of their students can keep up with it?

Things look even worse in underdeveloped countries. The World Literacy Foundation revealed its findings in the same article that 70% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries cannot read or understand simple text, continuing at a rise of 20% of that number a year. Before COVID, the number of children and adolescents lacking foundational literacy skills was 260 million- during COVID, that number jumped to 1.6 billion.

It's important to remember that this doesn't just apply to reading for fun, (although that is an invaluable part of a child's education). We're talking about 1.6 billion kids who may never hold a mid-level job, who may never make it into any form of higher education, and who won't be able to do things like file their own taxes. It's said that education is the great equalizer. All that illiteracy serves to do is keep the impoverished exactly where they are and kick the disadvantaged in developed countries down even further.

So, what do we do? We're in a digital Dark Age- with-

"70% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries cannot read or understand simple text."

Credit: Unsplash



out access to the internet, it's difficult to get access to books in many of these countries. Bill Gates has suggested that AI chatbots could help kids learn how to read, but that requires stable internet access as well. Unless there were suddenly some way to give every child a functioning computer with inherent internet access, I can't see the internet being the best way to combat this. A more effective route would be a taught course, individualized to each country, which would take kids through the basics of reading from the very beginning. Kids who excelled could be excused from it in favor of designated "reading time," while kids who need it would have a teacher specially trained in teaching literacy skills. That would still be expensive, of course, and how it would be funded would need to be worked out through the UN and UNESCO, but a total solution is probably far off in the future. And these kids need help now if they're ever going to catch up.

Book Review - Walking Disaster: My Life Through Heaven and Hell by Deryck Whibley

By Daniel Garcia

Content warning: reference to sexual abuse and grooming, substance abuse, military conflict, STDs and PTSD

Deryck Whibley has led a storied life. Being the frontman of rock band Sum 41 since he was a teenager, he has been used to living a life in the public eye. His new autobiography *Walking Disaster: My Life Through Heaven and Hell*, is an incredibly revealing and moving account of his life thus far, delving deeper into him and the band than ever before.

There are stories of wild Los Angeles parties with rockstars and celebrities, with genuinely heartwarming stories like the early days of Whibley's marriage with fellow Canadian artist Avril Lavigne. It is fascinating to see Whibley's creative process, as well as how his life influenced the songs he was writing. It was particularly interesting to see how the first singles from the first three Sum 41 albums, "Fat Lip", "Still Waiting" and "We're All to Blame", were the last songs written for their respective records. Another single from *Does This Look Infected?*, "The Hell Song" was written about Whibley's childhood friend contracting HIV, and his fears about being infected himself.

But while the highs are high, the lows are incredibly low. The story of the 'Tokyo drug trip' is hard to sit through, and Whibley's near-death experiences

with alcoholism are incredibly difficult to experience vicariously.

The biggest revelation of the book is undoubtedly the allegations of sexual abuse and grooming that Whibley levels at Greig Nori, the band's former manager. These allegations, that Nori was inappropriately involved with Whibley since he was sixteen, cast a dark shadow over the darker parts of his life. It adds a much sadder backdrop to the band's issues throughout the years, as they were (allegedly) being turned against each other by Nori. They were barely adults.

"A song that they risked their lives to make."

What I have found most fascinating as a fan of the band is how the book adds so much context to their changing sound.

Chuck is a dark album, and arguably the band's 'magnum opus'. During the making of the album, the band traveled to the active warzone of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to film a documentary with War Child Canada - *Rocked: Sum 41 in Congo*. During the filming of this documentary, a fire broke out around the hotel that the band

were staying at, and they had to be evacuated by UN peacekeeper Chuck Pelletier, who the album was later named after. Whibley was certain that this would be his grave.

All killer, no filler.

He writes about the post-traumatic stress disorder that the band experienced as a result of escaping from the DRC. In a particularly harrowing episode, he talks about experiencing severe physical symptoms of his PTSD whilst boarding a plane in the following weeks. It makes the Chuck single "We're All to Blame", which was written after the trip, so hard hitting. It is both an album and a song that they risked their lives to make.

Despite their changing sound, one thing that has always remained the same is the level of emotion they put into all their music. And this comes across in the autobiography - Whibley talks incredibly candidly about his life, the breakdown of his relationships, everything.

The sun may have set on Sum 41 at their highest. The band is all they have ever known since they were fifteen, so it only makes sense that they want to start the next chapter of their lives. For many of them this is fatherhood. But for all of them, especially Whibley, the story is not over.

Creative Writing

Editor: Sasha Ouvry

The theme for this month's Creative Writing section was **Lotus Eaters**. If you're interested in submitting to us, you can join the Concrete Society through the UEA SU website to gain access to the Concrete Writers team, where the theme for December's online issue will be posted on 30 November. We look forward to reading your work!

Lotus Eaters

Lara Parsons

Your palms are cupping the lotus fruit. Each of us brings it to our lips. It's slightly sweet but knows its bounds. We are absorbing our route to reverie in perfect synchronisation. We're adding the seeds to our juices. Crafting the lotus fruit into a pudding. Anything can go into a cheesecake. Or baked into a warm pie, comforted by custard. We bathe together in warm water with floating flowers. The lotus self-pollinates in the water, growing inside us until we're submerged in a wondrous haze.

If I were to dance with you, it would be in a faraway land, under the light of Himalayan salt crystal caves. Our figures move in unity, aligned like swift swans. The skies are rosy, each dawn a dioxazine hue. You are a goddess and I, an angel, monarch of the skies. Overseers. You are my main observation, the subject of my allure. The white peplos you wear ends just before the floor begins.

Those figures sipping nectar are us, sitting idly upon two thrones. Sweet-sounding birds in courtship. Then we're waltzing in euphoria, the overseers. I'll twirl you into a home in my arms. Tuck your golden hair between your ears as we dance.

We're back under the crystal caves of my mind.

There comes a time when the petals of the lotus flower lose moisture and lose life. The lotus-eater grows hungry again.

Sleep was a simple narcotic I entrusted my mind to. It made me the greatest lotus-eater of them all. I did not want the world to invade, to come crashing through the surface. I am in the heavens, floating with you. Down below, my eyes are flickering at the cityscape through my window. Bills are stacking and our appliances are slowly breaking. I have beeping alarms and deadlines I can't meet. Downstairs, my mother is calling my name. The way it sounds is not magical like Althea or Juno. You are a creation of my head and I have work to do. Fractions. Probability. Adenine and thymine and cytosine and guanine or whatever was due this week. Read chapter one of the Confessions of the English Opium Eater. Survive. Hope.

If I were to dance with you, it would only be in a dream.



Morning Haze, 1888, Claude Monet



The Four Seasons, 1780s, Alexandre Bricau and Jean-Baptiste Huet

Forget Me

Hebe Purdy

How strange to watch the curdling of time,
The bud that forms.
Such cold rain and the leaves
That this time hold on.
Emerald and constant and soft,
Your eyes always did hold difference.
One a country. One a day.
Whispered, still, of the promise of spring.

Murmured blurred words now sting and cut
Clean in meaning.
Is it cruel of the leaves?





Venus, c. 1580/1590, Francesco Brambilla, the Younger

Venus in Furs

Anonymous

Like a woman
laughter nightingale
Divinity
seated
drawing slight breath
for whom morning tenderly writes enchantment
and meadows sigh delicate
nothings
Here shimmers Her rage
diabolically as is softness
Here Venus delivers an Odyssey before the laughing music
and us
green with adoration
full of red amazement.



Fragments

Sankavi Naresh

I always get caught up between the times of 11 and 6 in the morning. There's a sort of sadness in the transience of the people you meet. A gaping hole which cannot be filled. Concerts. Standing in the cold queuing for ages. Finally pouring into the stadium. A rush of hot air. Chatter growing steadily. Air pulsating with anticipation. Thin plumes of smoke ribbons in the night sky, I struggle to light the cigarette. I'm too drunk. The shoddy red lighter lent by a friend gets left behind. Nights I try to remember. Try as I might, the blurry pictures and videos are of no use. I forget.

I come back one night to find the house empty. Nothing but a green light fills the hallway. It's not alive anymore, thrumming with laughter and anger and hurt. Not what it used to be. I try to cook dinner, and introduce some normalcy back in. What it should've been. But all I can taste is bitterness.

A bitterness. Asparagus isn't in season for another three months. Why did he make this? It doesn't go with the lemon and parmesan polenta either. It's all too fucking bitter. My face scrunches up, displeased. He notices me swirling around the food on my plate, creating a strange-looking mash. A question hangs between us.

"It's out of season," I say out loud.

"What is?" His eyebrows raise and he mumbles, his mouth filled with food. When did he become so uncultured?

"The asparagus." I push my plate away.

"How much?"

"About 50 quid including the wine and dessert –"

"Only £50. It's fine, I'll pay you back."

I put down my fork.

"Why didn't you visit me last month?" I look at him pointedly.

"The train tickets were too expensive, besides you said there's nothing to do," he sighs.

"That was last year, you know I wasn't myself. Exeter's a lovely city. I might have a love-hate relationship with it, but there's lots to do. You spent the money and made time for Holly. And James. Luke too. Do I have to go on?"

"Yeah, I'll see," he whispers back. Our voices are hushed, the lighting is dim. Who knows when the big light will be fixed? I can't quite make out his facial expression.

"You'll see?"

"What do you want me to say?" he slams down his cutlery, steak juice splashing onto him. It drips down his tie unpleasantly.

Someone slams the front door, shaking the pinboard on the wall. It's crowded with pictures of my house-mates from nights out, rusty pins, receipts, letters, stupid inside jokes, recipes, useless things that we held onto for no reason. Something drops from it, I can't see what it is. It falls flat, face down.

Still Life with Asparagus and Red Currants, 1696, Adriaen Coorte



Interview

Editor: Lily Taylor

Sarah Price, Manager and Founder of The Cat House Norwich

By Lily Taylor

I sat down with Sarah Price, manager and founder of the Cat House Norwich. We met in the Cat House itself, so while Sarah was talking to me, several furry visitors walked across the table and stood on my laptop, typing random strings of letters and numbers in the process.

As a huge cat fan myself, I had visited the Cat House on several occasions. In fact, I knew all the cats' names: Dave, Stanley and Lily met me at the door as Sarah let me in to the lounge.

Already having good knowledge of the cats, I wanted to find out more about the woman behind their care. We started off with the obvious topic: Sarah's passion for cats.

"I've always loved cats, always had cats. Grew up with cats and wanted more. But my dad was one of those dads that said no. His word was king. Lovely dad, but, you know, only two cats at a time really."

Now surrounded by 21 cats, it seems that Sarah's dream has come true. However, the journey to achieving this dream wasn't a straightforward one.

"Back in 2021, my mum had just passed away from cancer, very suddenly, bless her. So, I was very able to submerge myself in the world of cats, and eventually we managed to sell her flat, so I had a little bit of inheritance.

COVID had stopped my career because I worked in care homes doing musical workshops. So, I travelled around a lot to different care homes as a self-employed practitioner, but they didn't want to carry on with that sort of thing because of COVID, so I had to think of something else to do. And I love to be self-employed. Didn't want to go and get a job. So, it all just suddenly clicked."

Sarah and staff member Vicki went on a road trip, visiting 10 cat cafes in five days. Yet, Sarah felt something was missing.

"I didn't want to do what we had seen in the cat cafes, because they were just cafes with cats. I love cooking at home, but I didn't want to do it for my day job.



14 Credit: The Cat House Norwich

I run a circus with my husband. I help him. It's his circus. So, we're very much used to putting on events and dealing with bookings and people.

Because I'm an artist, I just suddenly had this vision of an art centre that was cat themed. But then, of course, there's the doubt going, oh, but is that too specific? But actually, no, it's been very well received.

I think the art side of this has given it its good reputation. It's kind of helped to lift it just above a cat café, yeah, it's given it that grounding."

The Cat House certainly offers a unique experience to your typical cat café. Currently, the art centre is hosting a wide range of arts and crafts events and introduces new events frequently.

"We do events and then we do workshops. We are working on our Christmas cat quiz at the moment. That's going to be a fab event. And we've just started doing cat bingo, which is fun. Obviously, there's cats climbing on everyone's laps. And all the prizes are cat gifts. So, it's really lovely.

We've got so many new workshops coming. We've got origami starting up. This chap called Russell Woods got in touch. He's the chairman of the UK Origami Society, and has written a book, which you can buy on Amazon. So, he's gonna be running that, starting the 22nd of November.

Another new one is macrame, where you're plaiting and weaving this cord. You have really long cord, and then you do these knots, and it ends up looking really twisted. It's beautiful. And it's quite straightforward. We've got a new tutor, Jerry, coming to do that, so that's gonna be interesting.

Then, we've got all our standards. We've got clay cats, which is once a month, where you make little cat head shapes, and you get some dry already that you can decorate and paint, and then the fresh ones that you make, you can stamp cats' names into that, or your friend's name, or whoever you want to give it to. So that's great.

We do cat life drawing once a month and cat painting once a month. That's fun. We also do cat tarot once a month, and that's so popular. Everyone gets a personal reading for 10 minutes, and there's a whole general chat about what tarot is and how to use it.

And then we have diamond art and various crafts like glass painting decoupage, stone painting and tote bag design. We have lots of UEA societies come down and book the tote bag painting, because they can sit there and draw cats on bags and just have a really chill social time.

We run cat yoga every Wednesday too, so we've got some wellness. Yeah, so lovely, so nice. We've got video footage of someone with Khamoon (a sphinx cat living at The Cat House) sat on their belly, trying to rise up and down. So funny. But people come



for that."

Credit: Lily Taylor

Something else that makes this venue stand out from your typical cat café is the general environment of the Cat House. As soon as you walk in, there is this sense of safety and coziness which makes it such a great place to come and escape from the stress of everyday life.

"I try to keep the décor really calm, because the cats can run around and be zooming, and they are the stars, but the rest of it is really earthy and cozy. I like people to come and be cozy and warm, and I love to be cozy and warm with a cat on my lap. So I like to offer the same to other people."

Sarah's love of everything cozy is reflected in an exciting upcoming Christmas solstice event at the Cat House, 'Cats by Candlelight.'

"It's gonna be a nice evening where it's just fake candles and fairy lights, and we're gonna have lovely, atmospheric wintry music. We're gonna have mega hot chocolates with all the toppings, mulled wines, cozy cakes, and it'll all be darker, but really like a feast for the senses, to celebrate the longest night with our little candles and fairy lights."

It is clear from talking to Sarah that she cares about the welfare of her customers as much as she cares about the welfare of her cats.

"I think the Cat House gives people a focus. If they've lost a cat, they'll often come and have a little cry and stroke one of ours for a cuddle. If they're at uni and they're away from their family pet, a lot of them will come regularly because they just want some cat cuddles. Yeah, it's not like you can walk down the street and pick up a random cat and it will love you back. But these guys, they're really fab with new people, and they're not shy at all. Everyone gets a cuddle when they come.

We have quite a lot of foreign students from Amer-



Credit: The Cat House Norwich

ica that volunteer, and they come and help out because they really miss their cats. So, for them, it's a really important place.

We also have lots of older people who perhaps don't want to have the hassle of having their own cat anymore, or perhaps can't bend down because they're physically unable, or they may be partially blind and can't see, so they really can't have a pet. So it's lovely because family members or carers will bring them to see the cats.

We have quite a few bookings from care homes and charities bringing people down that are in that situation. We have mental health charities come down, and they have special private bookings, and then all their clients come, and then they've got the carers as well, just to keep an eye and make sure they're okay. But generally, they love it, and they'll come and interact with the cats and get a lot of joy out of that.

I love being able to give people those opportunities that they otherwise can't have."

Another way Sarah keeps the Cat House connected to the local community is through collaborations with local artists.

"We've got 30 to 40 local artists now that bring in either artwork to hang on the walls or gifts to sell that they make. We get lots of jewellery as well, and all sorts of really wonderful cat things that people make. Who knew there was so much? But there really is, and it's so nice to be able to incorporate them and help people to find a place to sell their wares."

As much as the people are important to Sarah's business, so are the cats themselves, which is why Mondays and Tuesdays at the Cat House are closed for cat care.

"On Mondays, we carry out a full health check on every cat. Each cat has got a folder, so we get everything ticked off - there's about 25 different points. They all get checked up and get weighed once a month.

Then on Tuesday, the café gets a deep clean, along with the gift shop and the patio. We do the laundry on a Tuesday and make sure the gift shop is stocked up."

At this point in the conversation, we are interrupted by Romeo, a large and extremely stunning European Maine Coon. He hops onto the table and looks at Sarah expectantly, until she picks him up and cuddles him like a baby.

With Romeo comfortable in Sarah's arms, we move on to talking about the Cat House's social media coverage. Their Instagram is already impressive, with daily updates on events and frequent reels showcasing the cats.

"We've got Jam on social media. He comes in for

30 hours a week, and we have a meeting on a Tuesday, and then we work out what's planned for the week ahead. Yeah, and then he gets on and does it and comes up with funny ideas for reels and things."

However, Sarah is hoping to take the coverage even further.

"In the New Year, we're going to move on to more educational things as well. Because people say, 'What do you feed them?' or 'What litter do you use?'"

We'll still keep the silly stuff, because that's really important. But grooming videos and nail clipping videos, eye wiping videos and how to look after a bald cat videos, that's all really important, because we see ourselves as very much as educational as well.

People come to check out the different breeds because they might be wanting a new cat. As much as we're not promoting breeders, it happens, and people breed. So, it's nice for people to be able to make an informed decision. Because the problem is, if people get an idea and they think they want, say, a bald cat, and they go to spend £800 on it, and then realise they can't quite cope with it, where does it go? A shelter. It's not good. So, our goal in everything is to help people make good decisions, and also to promote shelters that have cats that need homes."

Since starting out last year, the Cat House has helped rehome over 30 cats.

"It's really nice knowing that they have bypassed the shelters. And it helps the shelters not to be overfull either. I like that we don't charge for that service. It's just a nice thing to offer."

In terms of future projects at the Cat House, Sarah hopes to start an annual cat symposium.

"It would be like a cat masked ball in the evening, and then in the daytime, lots of events like book readings from local authors that have written about cats."

The event would incorporate other art venues throughout the city, so it would take a while to organise.

"Maybe next year, hey?" Sarah says.

Sarah's enthusiasm for her work, alongside her love for art, people and cats makes the Cat House such a special place to visit. Her personality is built into the Cat House, and so is her mother's.

"My mum is very much woven into every part of this. While I was building it, and had wobbles, I would her voice in my head going, 'You've got this, dear.' So yeah, she's very much here with me, and yeah, here we are."

You can find more information about events and workshops at the Cat House by heading over to <https://www.cathousenorwich.org/> or following their Instagram @cathousenorwich.



Credit: The Cat House Norwich

Unifying Power of Art: Local Talent on a National Scale

By Annabel Knill and Thomas Lewis

Fostering creativity, sparking meaningful dialogue, and celebrating the unifying power of art, the Norwich Art Fair at the Assembly House is an event not to be missed. Whether you're a budding artist, a seasoned collector, or simply a lover of beautiful things, the art fair offers a chance to highlight the local talent on a national scale.

This past weekend, the historic Assembly House in Norwich transformed into a vibrant hub of creativity and inspiration as it hosted the highly anticipated Norwich Art Fair. Drawing artists, collectors, students, and art lovers from across the region, this annual event offered a unique opportunity to explore and engage with a wide array of contemporary art. Boasting an impressive selection of works from both emerging and established artists, the fair showcased everything; from John Sparks' cinematic fine art, to the modern wuxtronic trigonometry of Andy Walker's digital art, all the way to the abstract washes of colour and composition from Jade KD's inky pieces. Yet, what brought all these many creations together was their foundational connection to beauty and love of Norwich and Norfolk. No matter how impressionistic, like

Jane Wilson soft edged collages or direct pieces like Colin Revell's Parisian landscapes of Norwich, the Art Fair's collection highlights the multiple face identity of Norfolk.

Upon entering the fair, you are met with an immense range of colour and contrast from the many pieces. Feeling secluded and secretive within the windowless rooms of the Assembly houses, the pieces themselves produce pockets of little worlds in each of their stalls as they wind a path of expressive life and culture as you venture through. The fair featured vibrant abstracts, tranquil landscapes, evocative portraiture, and daring experimental pieces that pushed the boundaries of traditional media. Artists explored themes of environmentalism, identity, and mental health, among others, encouraging audiences to reflect on contemporary issues through an artistic lens.

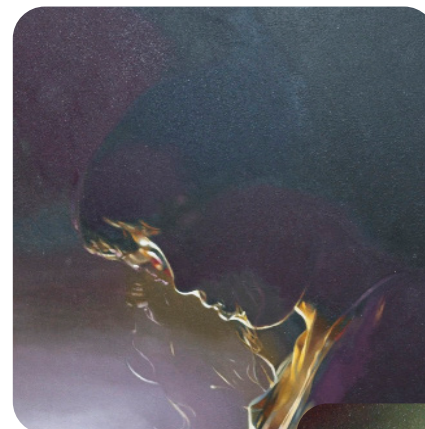
And yet, what can't go unsaid is the impact of the artists' presence alongside their works. Causing the Art Fair to stand out among many other exhibitions and galleries is the voice that the artist can give to their art; transforming the work from an objective piece into a productive activity of discovery

as the method of creating the work comes to focus more acutely, individualizing the artwork as a character of its own. This focus on the process of art was starkly seen through Simon Bailey's work, where the process of creation aided him in finding focus and relief from migraines. His pieces are interactive with the viewer, inviting you to cloud gaze and discover new shapes and colours that continue to emerge.

However, neither can it be denied that while the artist spoke of their paintings, so did the painting speak of the artists. An interesting meta-physical relationship between artist and artwork came into view, as wondering around the fair it became apparent of how each artist looked like their own work. In the way in which they dressed, spoke and even moved there was an interesting kinship of the art works becoming an external extension of the artist, revealing the nature of the artist's being. This became a unique and inspiring experience to the limitless nature of the medium of art, and an experience only found through the Art Fair.



Julia Tooley: Bringing a boldness to her still lifes, Tooley's works create an vintage appeal capturing a compelling and warming essence of the towns.



John sparks- creates cinematic fine art, capturing not just reality but anomalies caught on a camera, bring the chiaroscuro use of light of the old masters to a new light



Will Teather – Teather's magical realism brings together through a unique use of the chiaroscuro lighting of the old masters to the modernised fantasy of his compositions

Jade KD – founded on a love of water, KD's pieces took up to three months to create due to the process of layering ink upon each other, using only her fingers to move the ink around. Inspired by a nightmare, her pieces create an abstract dreaminess though their arguably hidden subjects from dragons to reflections in water



Remembering the Weaponisation of Art: The Baedeker Raids

By Valentina Vinciarelli

November is the month of remembrance, of poppies being gratefully worn over our hearts. During this time, it is our duty as dwellers of the now to think and act regardfully towards the history behind those bright paper pins.

One does not need to travel too far back in time or space to do so: our beloved Norwich, too, has a substantial history of suffering and loss that was imposed upon her during the Second World War. Indeed, together with other English cities such as Exeter, Bath, Canterbury, and York, Norwich had been selected as a main target in the "Baedeker Blitz", a bombing offensive by the German Luftwaffe that took place during the Spring of 1942. Many believe these planned raids to have been retaliatory attacks following the Royal Air Force's (RAF) earlier incendiary bombing of the city of Lübeck on the 28th of March 1942.

What correlated the two bombings together was the cultural and artistic importance of their targets, an aspect which was highly intentional in either case. Both Lübeck and Norwich were and still are cities famous for their art and beauty. To understand the extent of their importance, it might be helpful to note that both cities now boast the international accreditation of UNESCO. Intentionally adding the destruction of art to the already devastating consequences of bombings - casualties, homelessness, environmental damage, to name a few - was one of the most effective ways to weigh down civilian morale. Art had been totally and declaredly weaponised to hurt each other in one of our most human, most soft spots: our identification with and desire for aesthetic expression. The valuing and safeguarding of art as a cultural and aesthetic asset was something that Western

populations had been improving on since the early Egyptian, Greek, and Roman cultures, who saw art as mainly functional and as something that could be dismissed once that function was no longer being fulfilled. It can therefore be said that by the 1940s both the English and the Germans were extremely aware of the emotional relationship between nations and their artistic productions, whether those be decorated infrastructures, literary collections, paintings or sculptures. The damage suffered by Lübeck and Norwich was mainly of the infrastructure kind, however it inevitably extended to the ancient paintings and sculptures that decorated the interiors of the involved buildings. The buildings in Lübeck that suffered the most included St. Mary's Church (Marienkirche), the Lübeck Cathedral (Dom zu Lübeck), the Lübeck Rathaus (City Hall), the Holy Spirit Hospital (Heiligen-Geist-Hospital), St. Aegidien Church (St. Aegidien Kirche), as well as many historical Merchant Houses.

Similarly, the buildings in Norwich that most suffered included the Cathedral, the Castle, the Medieval and Georgian buildings in Elm Hill, Guildhall, the Assembly House, and the City Library. In a 1997 interview by Conrad Wood for the Imperial War Museums (IWM), civilian John Benjamin Fuller narrates his experience during the Norwich Blitz. He vividly recalls: "When we had the Blitz in 1942 that was terrible because next door where we lived and all-round, the area was just completely one mass of flames. [...] I remember my sister when she was rushing down to the shelter, her coat had caught on fire." This precious recording allows us just a small insight into those nightmarish days of destruction: the scorching flames, the loss of loved ones, the fear, the sense of perdition.



Original photos George Plunkett, courtesy of Jonathan Plunkett.

The works of repair and restoration started around the 1950s for both cities and took many years to complete.

It is thanks to these great efforts that we can still enjoy and appreciate their cultural and artistic qualities. Qualities which now shine even more enriched by the light of peace and respect. During this month, let us use the art of our shared city of Norwich - as well as art in general - as a means of memorial so that we may always illuminate ourselves and the world with gratitude and consciousness.

Meet the Art: Getting to Know the Big Personalities at the Sainsbury Centre

By Kate Wolstenholme

'Art is whatever you can get away with' - Dan Brown

Discover Leonora Carrington's "Old Maids," a whimsical blend of fertility, ageing, the occult, and culinary practices at the Sainsbury Centre. This painting features a tea party with ladies, a monkey, and magpies around a kitchen table, overseen by a mysterious haloed figure. Carrington humorously blurs the lines between humans, animals, and food, transforming the mundane into the magical.

By celebrating spinsters and crones, Carrington rejects conventional beauty ideals and challenges the Surrealist muse. Explore "Old Maids" and its subversive, feminist storytelling. Come to the Sainsbury Centre art museum on campus to enjoy this masterpiece. Claim your FREE Student Membership today or 'pay if and what you can' for access into the museum.

Image caption: Leonora Carrington, Old Maids, 1947. Pictured on display at the Sainsbury Centre. Photo: Kate Wolstenholme



Minotaur Shorts 2024

By Sankavi Naresh

I went to see the second day of the Minotaur shorts on the 17th of October, the night consisted of 4 short plays, written, directed and produced by the Minotaur Theatre Company. The Minotaur Theatre Company consists exclusively of Drama students at UEA! There was a buzz as me and my friends waited in the queue to collect our tickets, the lobby of the Drama Studio was filled with friends, families and students alike – a strong sense of anticipation hung in the air as everyone took to their seats and the curtains opened. Without further ado, let's take a closer look at each short!

Knives In: Written and directed by Liz McKenna

Knives In (cleverly named after the film directed by Rian Johnson, Knives Out), is a who-dunnit style play featuring lots of twists and turns and stars a stellar cast with very well-timed comedic breaks. There were a lot of laughs, Inspector Spectre's character was very entertaining, and the plot kept us intrigued with lots of surprises peppered throughout!

Minotaur Theatre's description: "A fifteen-minute murder mystery that's jam packed with comedy and twists! When esteemed gentleman Winston Ashford's body is discovered in the drawing room of Grandview Manor, the eyes of suspicion naturally fall onto the mansion's inhabitants. But who could be responsible? Well, if anyone can answer that, it's Inspector Spectre."

Cast List:

Jenkins: Daniel Hall
Reginald: Theo MacGregor
Beatrice: Lizzie White
Inspector Spectre: Joshua Scales
Mabel: Katie Howell
Ashford's Body: Chloe Giess

Room: Written by Amira Hollis, directed by Amira Hollis and Annika Nolen

The set of Room was simple, with a countdown timer projected above our two protagonists Simon and Nic,



Credit: Harriet Pringle

portrayed brilliantly by Finn Kennedy Macmillan and Amil Charles respectively. The pair are kidnapped by an unseen individual and are held in a room, watching the timer looming above their head. Whilst the premise seemed straightforward, as the performance went on, the short took on a more existential tone and our characters started questioning the meaning of life and how we spend our time living and exploring the relationships around us. It was quite reflective and makes you ponder! It ended quite poignantly too, with the characters embracing, fearful of what may be their last moments.

Minotaur Theatre's description: "Two unfortunate strangers, Nic and Simon, wake up in an empty room, a large timer on the wall counting down from 24 hours..."

Cast List:

Simon: Finn Kennedy Macmillan
Nic: Amil Charles

The Peace Agreement: Written and directed by Erin Muldoon

The Peace Agreement focuses on the Flinn family who have immigrated to Liverpool from Northern Ireland in the 90s amidst the Troubles. The Peace Agreement really immersed me and my friends into the story, both the acting and the writing was spectacular. The short traversed issues pertinent to society both when it was set and now, shedding an important light on an otherwise overlooked part of history.

Director and writer, Erin Muldoon, describes the play as a dark comedy that explores the complexities of Northern Irish family dynamics post-civil war. Erin states that "It's called the peace agreement because it's basically a mini 'peace agreement'. A Catholic mother, Lily (Eloise Sladden) and lesbian daughter, Orla (Martha Haslam-Cook) eliminate religion in the form of a priest, Father Michael (James Moxley)

because it only adds to their problems. Getting rid of religion improves their relationship. They went to an extreme to kill this priest if it gave them peace, much like the English government deciding to just draw a line under decades of war. It's borderline insane, but it's a desperation for peace."

Minotaur Theatre's description: "A dark comedy set in 1993 Liverpool, where the Flinn family has emigrated from Derry, Northern Ireland, only to find itself devoted to God, and devoted to Father Michael. But one night, a particularly tasteless, unlawful and comically tragic exorcism takes place."

Cast List:

Lily: Eloise Sladden
Orla: Martha Haslam-Cook
Father Michael: James Moxley
Colm: Joe McCloskey

Pony: Written by Harriet Pringle, directed by Harriet Pringle and Sadie Robinson

Pony starts us off during the Christmas period at a nursing home, which although starts off relatively calm, quickly picks up a different tone. This performance had us clutching our sides and featured a hilarious (mock) Magic Mike show which was met with raucous laughter from the crowd. Harriet's description of the play reads: "After the antics of last years 'exotic animal' handler at the Christmas party, the residents of Pelham place retirement home are beside themselves in excitement! (Well, at least one of the residents is excited) for the arrival of the much calmer 'Semi Tones' Christmas choir! But an unexpected mix up results in SEMI TONED the Magic Mike tribute act rocking up at the front door (he would be fully toned, but he only goes to the gym half the year) which descends the care home into absolute mayhem. A stripper and a bunch of geriatrics? What could possibly go wrong?!"

Cast List:

Magic Mitch: Tom Kampf
Lesley: Daisy Dolan
Peter: Finn Kennedy Macmillan
Anne: Betsy James
Emma: Martha Treston

Whilst all 4 plays had our eyes glued to the stage, my personal favourites had to be 'The Peace Agreement' and 'Pony'. Whilst 'The Peace Agreement' took on a more serious tone, 'Pony' was a lot more light-hearted and had us chuckling – both shorts were standouts in my opinion!

The set, lighting and the cast for each play were nothing 'short' of amazing, all the actors performed excellently and were accompanied by incredible stagehands. **Keep your eyes peeled for The Minotaur Theatre Company's future performances on their Instagram @minotaurtheatre**



Credit: Lizzie McKenna

From Page to Stage: The Theatrical Experiments of Bluets

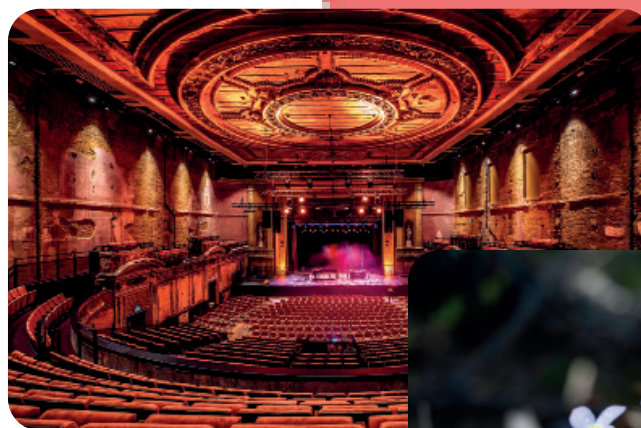
By Isaac Arif

I quickly read Maggie Nelson's memoir *Bluets* two weeks before seeing its stage adaptation. Like many others, I was amazed by Nelson's exploration of depression and love but found the idea of adapting this text puzzling. Composed of singular paragraphs, without an overarching narrative or discernible characters to cling to, *Bluets* is a musing on the colour blue more closely related to poetry than theatre. My apprehensions towards the play were both proven and disproven, leaving me months later unsure of how to feel about it.

From May 17th to June 29th at The Royal Court Theatre, *Bluets* starred Ben Whishaw, Emma D'Arcy and Kayla Meikle as the same narrator, performing paragraphs from the original text. Each actor had a segment of the stage with a television behind them. A camera focused on them individually, while a projector displayed their performances on a large screen above. The televisions served as a makeshift form of rear projection, a filmmaking technique where acting occurs in front of pre-filmed scenes. This technique was distancing and entrancing simultaneously. Its uniquely experimental form is something like no other, but that distinctiveness doesn't necessarily mean it worked. It was a feat in combining the two mediums, but I don't believe *Bluets* was the correct text for it.

Even with the memoir fresh in my mind, it was difficult to digest what I was watching. This blockade between the audience and the stage appears from the aversion to narrative structure. It works brilliantly in the memoir, but it slumps on stage as the actors keep going, reading vague monologues with no end in sight. Without a story, the emotionality of the piece is lost, which is saddening to say, considering how much the book connected with me.

Bluets is a testament to the possibilities and limitations of adaptation. While the production captured the essence of Nelson's prose, it struggled to maintain the intimate connection that makes the memoir so affecting. The combination of literature, theatre, and cinematic technology is ambitious and even admirable, but Nelson's work resisted such a drastic transformation.



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Credit: Wikimedia Commons



The Return of 'A Streetcar Named Desire'

By Sankavi Naresh

The acclaimed production of 'A Streetcar Named Desire' returns to the West End for three weeks only in February 2025! The multi-Olivier award winning play is produced by Rebecca Frecknell. The production sold out last year during its run at the Almeida Theatre from December-February, the cast includes: Paul Mescal (*Normal People*, *Gladiator II*, Olivier Award winner for Best Actor) as Stanley, Anjana Vasan (*Black Mirror: Demon 79*, *Wicked Little Letters*, Olivier Award winner for Best Supporting Actress) as Stella and Patsy Ferran (*Summer and Smoke*, Critics Circle winner for Best Actress) as Blanche.

Critics wrote favourably about last year's performances, Arifa Akbar from the Guardian stated that "For all its clever artifice and non-naturalism, it is the power of these performances that gives this production its fierce and dangerous energy."

Highly coveted, there are now only a few premium priced tickets available for the short run of the production showing at the Noël Coward Theatre at the West End. The Almeida Theatre sold a limited amount of tickets at the door last year and allocated a set amount of tickets for Under 25's too, Noël Coward Theatre offers a similar scheme which is a positive sign of the growing audience of younger theatre-goers.

Noël Coward Theatre's official description reads: "On a street in New Orleans, in the blistering summer heat, a sister spirals. When Blanche unexpectedly visits her estranged sister Stella, she brings with her a past that will threaten their future. As Stella's husband Stanley stalks closer to the truth, Blanche's fragile world begins to fracture. Reality and illusion collide, and a violent conflict changes their lives forever."

Performance Schedule:

Monday to Saturday: 7:30
Thursday and Saturday: 2pm

Show running time: 2 hours and 45 minutes



Credit: Quinzaine des Réalisateurs, YouTube, Wikimedia Commons



Credit: Unsplash

Heidiween 2024: Heidi Klum's Legendary Halloween Transformation Continues

By Heather Wallis

Halloween wouldn't be the same without Heidi – every year Heidi Klum surprises us with yet another striking Halloween costume for her annual Heidiween party in New York City. Klum's iconic looks never fail to disappoint, with a few special mentions to some favourites from the glamorous recreation of Jessica Rabbit (2015) to her more grotesque looks including an Old Woman (2013), an Alien Zombie (2019) and my personal favourite, a Worm (2022). Klum discusses these iconic looks with passion – in an interview with People, Klum reflects on the time she invited fans to come and watch the styling process through a window during the making of the Alien Zombie costume: "I wanted people to see the art behind it, I wanted people to see the magic in what they do". Indeed, art and magic are exactly what Klum brought to Halloween in 2024.

An entire year in the making, Klum decided to mix nostalgia with her fondest childhood memories in a journey back to the '80s, turning her favourite childhood movie character into a magnificent, jaw-dropping, larger-than-life form. This year's big reveal? None other than the iconic alien himself, E.T.! Klum's dedication to conceptualising this impressive, lifelike costume reflects her deep admiration for the beloved character, which she

fondly expressed in an interview with Entertainment Tonight. Klum reminisced on her memories as a nine-year-old when E.T. hit cinemas: "The movie came out, and I fell in love with the movie and I fell in love with E.T.", clearly still enchanted by the little alien's big heart and wide-eyed wonder, which fans have found oh so relatable.

Klum is renowned for these larger-than-life transformations; however, she will be the first to admit to the restrictive and often uncomfortable experience of wearing the dazzling costumes, along with the many hours that her creative team tirelessly work to make every October a success. Klum loudly praises the work of the FX artists who are responsible for the clever crafting of her looks; this year requiring a team of thirty creatives to build the alien magic. The mind-blowing artistry is flawlessly presented in the intricate detailing of E.T.'s wrinkled skin to the impressive, characterful eyes that perfectly imitate those from the movie. Undoubtedly, the discomfort paid off for the astounding look that had fans mesmerised, followed by a flood of comments praising the costume across social media – an X user commented: "Heidi Klum kills it every year !!!!", and I'd say that's something we can all agree on. Every October, Klum brings a world of magic and

a fresh sense of theatrical creativity that fans excitedly anticipate in the run-up to each spooky season. This year's Halloween look is more than just a cool costume; it's a nod to Klum's own childhood memories and to a character that's kept audiences spellbound for decades. Klum didn't just recreate E.T. – she brought a piece of movie magic to life, proving once again that Halloween isn't just about costumes; it's about going all out, Klum-style.



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The Return of the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show

By Charlotte Ward

After having been on a hiatus since 2018, the Angels returned in last month. From Kate Moss to Bella Hadid, the show brought all the big names to the runway.

Alongside them were the famous wings and pink, diamond-studded lingerie. Highlights included Gigi Hadid's pink plunge silk teddy complete with a set of wide electronic feathered wings to match, and Lila Moss' Victoria's Secret debut in blush undergarments, complete with the shine of stars and body jewellery detail, with a blush fringe coat to match.

Meanwhile, the runway also boasted more modest looks, incorporating pyjama bottoms, robes and leggings. Slip dresses also featured – one styled by Mika Schneider included a light pink dress paired with sparkling silver shoes, teasing a matching silver bra.

With an all-female ensemble of musical entertainment from Tyla to Cher, a key part of the fashion retailers "rebrand" was in placing the message of female empowerment and inclusivity forefront. This came in the wake of intense backlash 6 years prior (at the time of the show's demise) over its infamous placing of a certain male-gazed body type on a pedestal, which was divergent from societal attitudes following the #MeToo movement. Thus, in the show's return, we can see plus-sized models, multiple models over the age of

40 walking the runway and trans inclusivity with fashion and social media icon Alex Consani.

But despite the show's return, it is still evident that with the fashion retailer's much-reduced budget since its decline in popularity, the 2024 Victoria's Secret show is merely a shell of what it once was. Whilst the iconography remained consistent, the quality did not. No fantasy diamond bras made an appearance and whilst nearly all the models got wings, they were nowhere near matching the grandeur of what they used to be. Perhaps it was the model Doutzen Kroes getting her heel stuck in the runway or perhaps it was just down to the passage of time, but there was something about the show that made it seem "tacky" – a costume party imitating the real thing.

Even in the supposedly positive move towards more diverse models, it is not all acclaim. Many of their plus-sized and older models seem not to be motivated by a shift in the company's values. Rather, many seem to be there because the fame attached to their name carries more value than their body type.

With all of the show's clothing available to buy online, one wonders whether this was more of a desperate attempt at false virtue-signalling to secure sales. Perhaps once great, but now past its sell-by, the Victoria's Secret fashion show belongs to the past – a relic of attitudes from past decades.



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The Best Celebrity Halloween Costumes of 2024

By Jade Drever

I think it's fair to say that this year's batch of celebrity Halloween costumes have been a little underwhelming. I expected more pop culture costumes in relation to this year's movie releases like *Beetlejuice* and *Deadpool*. Instead, we got celebrities dressing as each other and lots of y2k references with the likes of Kendall Jenner and Hailey Bieber dressing as Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie from the *Simple Life*, and Paris herself dressing as Britney Spears. I have scoured Hollywood for the very best celebrities had to offer for this year's Halloween so here are some of my favourites.

Sabrina Carpenter - Lizzie McGuire

Pop princess Sabrina Carpenter channelled early 2000s icon Hilary Duff with her igloo dress from *The Lizzie McGuire Movie*. This white, ice block patterned gown is complete with puffy hood, sleeves, and archway detailing on the front of the dress. She actually tweeted in 2018 'anyone sellin this on Etsy, ya girl needs a Halloween costume' - call it manifesting.

Lupita Nyong'o - Storm

I loved seeing Lupita Nyong'o bringing yet another iconic Marvel character brought to life, even if it was just for Halloween. She paired a black velvet blazer with a silk crop top and gold jewellery. But the star of the show was of course the electrifying white wig and contact lenses, giving the full Storm effect.

Madelaine Petsch and Camila Mendes - Kim Possible and Shego

In previous years the core *Riverdale* actresses, Lili Reinhart, Petsch, and Mendes, come together to dress as some pretty iconic trios, including the *Power Puff Girls*, *Sanderson Sisters*, and *DC Villains*. However, without Reinhart, they had to continue the tradition as the Disney Channel duo *Kim Possible* and *Shego*. Petsch wore a latex crop top, khaki cargos, and combat boots, while Mendes donned the famous green and black catsuit.

Ice Spice - Leeloo

Rapper Ice Spice dressed as *The Fifth Element*, Leeloo. She paired gold leggings with a white crop top and orange overall straps to replicate this 90s action-comedy character. This was the perfect costume for her famous ginger locks.

Amelia Dimoldenberg - Roz

The *Chicken Shop Date* star went viral for her Halloween costume this year as she dressed as Roz, *Monster's Inc's* office administrator. She wore green prosthetics and a purple wig, paired with a burgundy cardigan and beige skirt. Of course, the look was not complete without Roz's nemesis, a Mike Wazowski plush.

Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco - Alice and the Mad Hatter

Sporting blonde locks and blue tulle dress, Selena Gomez stunned as the titular Alice in *Wonderland*. Her beau Blanco wore a tan suit jacket and tails with a polka dot neck scarf, topped off with the Mad Hatters' top hat and red hair.

Alyson Hannigan and Alexis Denisof - Football and Aristotle (Taylor Swift 'So High School')

While to the untrained eye, this is a rather unusual couples costume, however, to a Swiftie, it's absolutely perfect. In reference to the Taylor Swift song 'So High School' lyric "you know how to ball, I know Aristotle," Hannigan wore an American football costume while husband Denisof dressed as Aristotle, complete with toga and long white beard.

Megan Fox and Machine Gun Kelly - Padme and Anakin

This year saw a very tame addition to their series of couple's costumes with Padme and Anakin. Fox donned the very elaborate red throne room gown, complete with fur trim and bejewelled headpiece, while MGK wore long, brown Jedi robes, with Anakin's famous *Revenge of the Sith* wig and lightsabre.

Justin, Hailey, and Jack Bieber - Ron Stoppable, Kim Possible, and Rufus

Kim and Ron are a very popular couple's costume, however, it's the addition of the baby Bieber that makes this costume stand out. I have to say, I laughed more than I should have when I saw little baby Jack as their pet naked mole rat, but its just too cute and arguably hilarious!

Kourtney Kardashian and Travis Barker - Morticia and Gomez Addams

This goth pair decided to channel the king and queen of Halloween with the iconic Addams parents. Kardashian shone in a floor length black dress and sleek, long black hair, accompanied by Barker in a pinstriped, tailored suit and slicked back hair.

The Met Gala 2025: Superfine

By Andi Gill

To say that the Met has made a very interesting choice of exhibition for this upcoming year would be the understatement of the decade. A couple of weeks ago, they announced that their Spring 2025 exhibition would be "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style," which will focus on the fashion of black dandyism. Not only is it the first Met Gala to focus primarily on menswear since 2003, but it will also be the very first Met Gala chaired entirely by men of colour, and the first exhibition of the Costume Institute to focus solely on the work of designers of colour.

The exhibition will be curated based on Monica L. Miller's book *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity*, which raises the question: what is dandyism? Historically, a dandy was a man who took fashion seriously and approached it as a discipline. Initially, black dandyism began with the popularization of dressing slaves in clothing which displayed the wealth and station of their owner. These dandified servants were only meant to be a visible marker of status, but over time, the practice of dandyism would become a powerful tool of self-expression and defiance for black men. A clear example is where the title of the exhibition, "superfine," comes from; the memoir of a formerly enslaved man who bought his freedom. He wrote that he planned to celebrate

by wearing "a suit of superfine clothes." The exhibition is going to be curated to show how black dandyism reflected the issues of race, power, and culture within the African diaspora.

I'll be honest, I am very excited. Not only is this set to be a refreshing break from the typical fashion choices of male celebs (how many plain black suits have we seen on that carpet before?), but thanks to a truly unique exhibit, it should also be different from any other Met Gala we've seen so far. The dress code hasn't been announced yet, which is the actual theme of the outfits we'll see at the Gala, but typically the theme is strongly linked to the exhibit, so we can expect that it will be centered on formal black menswear. Which would be in line with the choices of hosts, as fashion-forward black celebrities Pharrell Williams, Colman Domingo, Lewis Hamilton, A\$AP Rocky, and LeBron James are chairing the event.

However, it seems just slightly too coincidental that after intense criticism last year for the blatant white elitism that the Met represents, it would choose its first ever exhibition focusing on the work of people of colour. Given the issues it has faced for its history of excluding people of colour, it would seem that this is the Met's attempt at a rebrand from its reputation as an institute of white privilege.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Gaming

Editor: Abby Eastwick

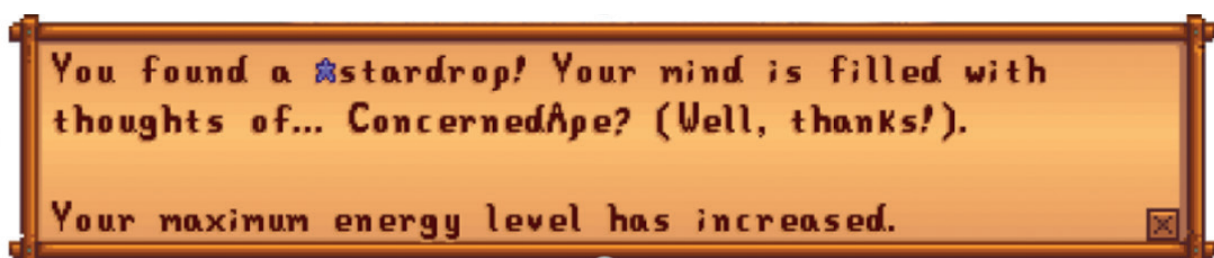
Stardew Valley: The Indie Masterpiece That Harvested a New Era of Gaming Changed My Life

By Evelyn Oakes

As the winter months hit, days get colder, and nights grow longer, it's the perfect time to get cosy with a cuppa and start a new indie game. For me, that game was Stardew Valley. I had heard of the game before, having such a big name in the gaming industry, but I had never played it. Although it has become more mainstream, with a review score of 9.5/10 from IGN (an American video game and entertainment media website), it is still an indie game at heart.

Stardew Valley (currently £10.99 on Steam) is a farming simulation game primarily inspired by Story of Seasons, a series by the Japanese video game developer Marvelous. It was solely developed by American indie game designer Eric Barone, known professionally as ConcernedApe for over four and a half years. He graduated from university with a computer science degree and used this base knowledge to help teach himself the skills he needed to create the game, including programming, art, music, and design. Barone was also inspired by other games such as Animal Crossing, Rune Factory, Terraria and my personal favourite, Minecraft – adding features such as crafting, quests and combat. At the Golden Joystick Awards, it was nominated for 'Best Indie Game' and won the 'Breakthrough Award' in its release year.

The game starts with the option of creating your character, where there are endless options of hairstyles, clothes and the choice of your "favourite thing." This comes into play when the player eats a stardrop, and this icon appears:



This comes into play when the player eats a stardrop, and this icon appears: Depending on the favourite thing you choose, it will appear where "ConcernedApe" is written above - but this specific message will appear if you choose the game developer himself.

Once you have created your character, they inherit a plot of land and a dilapidated house once owned by their grandfather located in Stardew Valley. As the game is open-ended, it is up to you how you choose to play - whether you prefer to interact with the NPCs and form relationships with them, foraging and collecting materials or even fishing (which might be my favourite part so far).

The creator of Stardew Valley still remains very involved in the game, informing users directly via the blog on the Stardew Valley website about new updates and other information. The most recent update (Stardew Valley 1.6) was released on November 4th for mobile and console users. This brought a range of new content, visual improvements, multiplayer changes, bug fixes and many more features.

I would highly recommend this game to anyone who has always had a soft spot for Minecraft but also feels that it lacks aesthetics. Also, you'll soon find out that Stardew Valley Wiki will quickly become your best friend throughout your journey in this indie video game!



Credit: Unsplash

Will Unplugged be Unplayed?

By Steven Whitear

Euphoric Brothers - still the new kids on the block when it comes to game development - have taken a break from the viral success of their Garten of Banban games to create a new IP. Unplugged was revealed on YouTube unexpectedly to almost a million disappointed subscribers who are still eagerly waiting for news on Garten of Banban 8. As Euphoric Brothers first non-Banban venture since the franchise started, many felt that it was a breath of fresh air, and very impressive that a team so small had been working on an ambitious title behind the scenes. Looking back, any hope that Unplugged would be massively different from the incomplete and bare-bones experiences Euphoric Brothers are known for were utterly misguided.

Unplugged describes itself as a 'medieval co-op multiplayer online horror' game. This alone makes it sound quite distinctive. The game works as follows: a team of up to four companions are dropped off in a small, procedurally generated medieval village in the Euphoric Brother's signature art style. Together, you must gather ingredients and battle monsters before regrouping in your little hut and creating a potion. When you have the correct combination of ingredients to create this potion, the village becomes cured of its 'plague,' you head back to your vehicle and another village is created. The cycle then repeats.

It sounds fun - and Euphoric Brothers deserve massive

respect for being able to create a multiplayer experience like this - but there is no looking past the absolute disaster of a launch the game suffered.

There are small annoyances, such as the 'cooldown time' between picking up items, which happens a lot. It makes the smallest job when you're out in the wild laborious and irritating. However, these don't hold a candle to some of the bigger issues, such as - game mechanics flat out refusing to work.

Firstly, not all collectibles can be used as ingredients for creating a potion, but the items that can't be used serve no additional purpose making them useless. When you have the right items (either 2 or 4, the game never specifies) the lever, which is used in your hut to operate the cauldron and begin creating a potion, has a 1 in 3 chance of working at all, even if all the ingredients presented are correct - leading to a lot of confused faces on day one from streamers and players alike.

The in-game mic quickly made a name for itself as being unusable. Words are incomprehensible and the sound is so loud it makes a task as simple as speaking to your other teammates torturous.

When an enemy is defeated, it isn't guaranteed to actually die. In fact, sometimes they will continue to swing at players with four times the range and power.

Due to the nature of the villages being generated at random, some environments spawn on top of each other, making some maps unplayable as some crucial items can't be reached. The list goes on.

When quality settings are set to low, the instructions on the walls of your hideout are unreadable and grainy. One reviewer has stated the graphics quality, when set on low, 'looks as though you have a 90% alcohol level.'

Even if you don't encounter a single glitch when playing Unplugged, the game is a chore. Running between the forest area and the hut is boring enough by itself. I've played Unplugged for 10 hours and have achieved everything. The title has been out for a month, and has only broken 10,000 concurrent players once, despite being free to play for a short period. Today, that number looks more like 200 players consistently. Negative reviews outnumber the positive by a ratio of 2:1 which has caused the game to display on its Steam page as either 'Negative' or 'Mixed.'

The Completionist Community: What It Is, Why It Matters, and Games That Fuel the Passion

Credit: Unsplash

By Abby Eastwick

It will surprise nobody that, like other hobbies, different gamers have different ways in which they like to tackle each new adventure. On one end of the spectrum you have the casual gamers, who play games as and when they feel the desire; on the other end you have the completionist. This gamer will leave no stone unturned in the games they pick up, going above and beyond in completing the main story, fully mastering and collecting everything the game has to offer. Over time this has grown into its own unique subculture, bringing gaming perfectionists together over their shared drive to squeeze all possible content out of their beloved games.

experience this side of gaming and as such can miss out on intentional details left by the developers. Of course, there are levels to this, varying from those who only 100% complete games that interest them to those who strive for 100% in all games they play, often replaying games to catch what they missed. However, they all share common goals for what they want to achieve in their completionism: achievements, hidden lore, collectibles, alternative endings and 'hard' modes. These together provide a picture of the game experience being 100% completed.



Credit: Unsplash

What is Completionism?

Firstly, completionism is the pursuit of achieving and collecting everything a game has to offer, beyond simply reaching the end of the story. This can include completing side quests, collecting all resources and unlocking trophies or achievements. Many casual gamers never

What brings the community together?

As with any community, completionists are often drawn to each other. It makes sense - the patience, attention to detail and dedication required to complete these games would seem tedious to many, but completionists thrive on the sense of accomplishment gained from full completion of a game. Spaces on the internet exist aplenty for people to share their passion, from dedicated forums on Reddit, servers on Discord and dedicated guides on TrueAchievements and TrueTrophies. Further, the hugely popular 'The Completionist' YouTube channel boasts an impressive 1.4 million subscribers and produces content such as completion guides and reviews. Completionists may appear to be a relatively unknown corner of the internet, but it's far more popular than it first seems.

Popular games in the community

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild offers a vast open world full of hidden secrets, shrines and unique items. Finding all shrines, defeating all bosses, completing all side quests, discovering all map locations and collecting and upgrading all equipment is a huge undertaking, not to mention collecting all 900 Korok seeds (each of which are in a unique location with no way to tell which you already have).

The Dark Souls series (and Soulslike games in general) offers intense and challenging combat and hidden lore pieces that can only be accessed by exploring every corner of the world, as well as having unique boss weapons and items that are only accessible by fulfilling

certain conditions; this can require multiple playthroughs.

The Batman: Arkham series of games have a healthy mix of main story, side missions and Riddler challenges. Particularly, Arkham City and Arkham Knight provide a vast number of collectibles and challenges, such as Riddler trophies and full combat upgrades. Persona 5 Royal adds to the original Persona 5 with even more confidants, activities and items to collect, as well as multiple endings to experience. The time-limited nature of each in-game day makes it especially challenging to accomplish everything in one play through.

The ups and downs

As an intensely engaging hobby, completionism naturally comes with its upsides and downsides. Accessing every element of a game can provide a deeper enjoyment of the experience, adding a sense of personal achievement by achieving something the average player has not. However, this unsurprisingly proves extremely time-consuming, sometimes leading to burnout and stress in an attempt to achieve such perfection.

The unique culture of completionism in the gaming community is driven by a collective spirit for enjoying their favourite games to the maximum extent possible. Completionism offers a rewarding, immersive way to experience gaming. For those who enjoy challenges and perfectionism, it's a deeply satisfying way to engage with a game on a whole new level you may not have otherwise known existed.



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