



Read Online

Welcome Back! Have a Great Autumn Semester!
Croeso nôl! Mwynhewch semester yr Hydref!

THE IRIS PRIZE



Source: The Iris Prize

An Interview with the Winner of The Iris Prize

Gemma Willmott
Review Editor

The Iris Prize is the largest LGBTQ+ short film prize in the world. Based in Cardiff, The Iris Prize awards £30,000 to the winner to make another LGBTQ+ film shot in Wales, which this year is awarded to Dima Hamdan, director of *Blood Like Water*. In the film, protagonist Shadi and his family are faced with an impossible decision: whether to collaborate with the Israeli police or a gay sexual blackmail video of Shadi will be sent to their community. In 14 minutes and 24 seconds, Hamdan explores the complexities of loyalty, family relationships, and the understanding she shares for Palestinian families facing this horrible reality. I had the pleasure of speaking with her about all things *Blood Like Water* this week while interning with the Iris Prize LGBTQ+ Film Festival.

How do you hope that *Blood Like Water* will resonate with audi-

ences? Particularly with audiences of different backgrounds than yourself?

To be honest, when I did the film, I had my audience in mind. You know, I was thinking about a Palestinian audience, [...] your first audience always must be your local audience. If it resonates with them, it resonates with the world. I've seen so many times where films might be lacking in sincerity, and that's because they're contrived, they're manufactured for a Western audience or a non-local audience. So, a starting point always is my people in Palestine.

Because, you know *Blood Like Water* is unlike any other film that I've done in the past, it is about tackling an issue. You know, the fact that this is based on true stories: gay Palestinian men are very vulnerable, and if they're vulnerable, the entire society is vulnerable because they're so easy to recruit. I wanted to talk about that with a local audience, that was my starting point. [...]

I didn't set out to make an LGBTQ+ film, I wanted to make a film about choice. About the options that a family like Shadi's has. It just happened to be that, in real life, this issue is the most difficult. I wasn't sure if I qualified as an LGBT film because, as an ally of the community but not from the community, and the question of representation, you're never sure if [those are] the criteria. My friends told me: "No, it's a very important thing, you have to show this on platforms". Especially because there's always this perception that Israel and Tel Aviv are the gay capitals of the world, the most tolerant place, gay pride in Israel is the most important event of the year, and people always celebrate that part. What they don't realise is that they're oppressing the gay community in Palestine, and to celebrate gay pride in Tel Aviv is pinkwashing the occupation. So, this film must be seen by the community worldwide. So, I'm very excited to be at Iris.

To read the full story, turn to page 14

Y Gymraeg ar Lwyfan Brydeinig: Adolygiad o *Lost Boys* and *Fairies*

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-od

Cefais gyfle dros wyliau'r haf i wyluo llwyth o raglenni sydd wedi bod ar fy rhestr wyluo ers tro. Wrth ystyried y rhaglenni hyn oll, does dim amheuaeth mai rhaglen y BBC *Lost Boys and Fairies*, sy'n dod ar frig fy argymhellion i...

Er mwyn darllen y stori gyfan, trowch i dudalen 7

Earth has a 'Mini Moon' in Orbit for Autumn

Hannah Prince
Science Editor

This autumn, planet Earth has temporarily gained a second 'moon' according to scientists. Whilst it won't be around for long, Earth's gravitational pull has attracted a small asteroid into its orbit, making it a second moon for a couple of months from the end of September. Unfortunately, due to its small dimensions, it won't be visible to the naked eye and will only be able to be seen with a professional telescope...

To read the full story, turn to page 20

Former Cardiff University Lecturer Convicted of Kissing 15-Year-Old Girl

Dilichi Dieobi
Head of News

A former Cardiff University lecturer has recently been convicted of having inappropriate relations with a minor and has confessed to kissing a 15-year-old girl. His wife then contacted the police, calling him a "sexual predator and a paedophile". He admitted that he had met the young girl online and groomed her. Steven Stanley, 46, was at the time a lecturer at Cardiff University in the School of Social Sciences...

To read the full story, turn to page 5

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A Note from the Editor Nodyn gan y Golygydd



Welcome back! Things have changed since you were last here.



Annabelle Lee
Editor-in-Chief | Prif Olygydd

Things have changed since you last picked up a Gair Rhydd newspaper. We have many new faces on our team across all sections however, also a new Editor-in-Chief. I feel as if I should introduce myself properly, my name is Annabelle Lee and for the 2024/2025 academic year, I will be the Editor-in-Chief of Gair Rhydd. I am a third year Journalism, Media and English Literature student.

If this is your first time picking up a Gair Rhydd newspaper, welcome. Welcome back to anyone who is returning to our newspaper, also. We are so excited to have you giving our paper a read! Even if you just do the crossword bored in the back of a lecture theatre, we are so grateful that you've picked up our paper. We hope you had a good summer and are ready for the year of academics that lies ahead of you.

After a summer full of travel and relaxation, I am lauched

back into a world of newspapers. I am currently writing this at the new Gair Rhydd desk in our Media Office after a rather tiring day of Indesign and emails. A considerable shift from sitting in the Maltese heat as I was doing all summer. Surprisingly, however, I love it. I would rather be sat here, hosting meetings and designing pages on Canva and Indesign than anywhere else right now. Sounds strange, I know.

Taking over from Edward Sutton felt like a major responsibility given his success of last year. I feel a certain amount of pressure to take Gair Rhydd beyond where it has been before. I admit, I am worried about not being able to emulate the success of last year. One major shift Gair Rhydd has implemented this year is a focus on you, the students and a focus on the wonderful city we live in. In this issue, you will find student news, Cardiff sporting fixtures and so much more to highlight the best of student

life around Cardiff.

Within this issue, there are a myriad of exciting stories and features that will hopefully engage you. We have a double page feature on the Iris Prize, Cardiff's queer film festival, Cardiff half marathon stories and so much more. There will definitely be something for you in one of our nine sections! From Politics to Sport, there is something for you in every issue of Gair Rhydd.

Gair Rhydd has already had major success this year. We currently have over 250 contributors, a working website after it being down for a year and successful socials. Our time at the Freshers Fair was also a major success and honestly, something I was looking forward to all summer. I hope to maintain this energy throughout the whole time. I will be Editor-in-Chief. I want to win regionally and nationally this year and I believe we are already starting out in a great way to achieve all we want to achieve this year.

So whether you're a fresher or a University veteran, we truly hope you will pick up a copy when we publish twice a month. Make sure you also keep updated with our new and lovely website to find a range of stories that are not in our print issues.

My editorial team have been tireless in creating a publication they are proud and one that they can call their own. I hope you enjoy reading our first issue as much as I have enjoyed being at the helm of it for the first time. Feel free to drop me an email if you have any ideas of our upcoming issues.

Happy reading!

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THE TEAM



SPOTLIGHT



Henry Moxon



Neve Powell



Manala Aggour



Ari Plant

Is Ballie Ballerson Worth the Hype?

Kira Sutton
Contributor

Ballie Ballerson is one of the most recent unique venues to open in Cardiff and has been on everyone's radar for planning a night out or a little cocktail date since it opened last September! With all the excitement surrounding the venue on social media, I had to go and see for myself if it was worth the hype. Here's what I thought...

After seeing so many vibrant posts all over social media, I had high hopes for the decoration of the venue and was not disappointed. As soon as you enter Ballie Ballerson, you are instantly immersed in a mosaic of vibrant colour and a somewhat nostalgic feel, as if walking into a child's dream birthday party. With neon lights and extravagant decorations all around, there are plenty of photo opportunities. There is

also a Big Brother-themed photo booth, which was so much fun—especially when you're tipsy!

One of the occasions I visited for was their Taylor Swift-themed bottomless brunch events. For a two-hour brunch, we received unlimited pizzas (vegan options available!), unlimited pornstar martinis and prosecco, endless Taylor Swift music, and access to the ball pit, all for £34. However, prices do vary depending on what kind of ticket you purchase. For that value, I consider this to be a reasonable price! For the table of three, we had around seven pizzas and lost count of how many times we had our pornstars refilled. The staff were not stingy when it came to topping up our drinks and food, which I believe is usually the worst part of bottomless brunch, as you feel like you have to beg to order more drinks. Some of the workers were also dressed up as Taylor and Travis Kelce which was amusing

to watch for the brunch. I would say the events at Ballie Ballerson are good value, such a fun time, and a unique experience.

However, the only thing I believe the venue falters in is the drinks. There is no denying that the cocktails are very aesthetically pleasing and worthy of an Instagram post, however, the taste is just something I could not look past. The cocktails are based on classic childhood sweets such as dip-dab, skittles, and rocket lollies, and even come with said sweets! However, as a group, we all agreed that the drinks were extremely difficult to drink due to their usual taste. Despite being based on a sweet, they lacked serious flavour and did not resemble the sweet at all. They were also extremely strong-tasting, which is usually not an issue, but even when completely drunk, we all struggled to force ourselves to drink the cocktails. This is so disappointing, as in

every other way, the venue is an amazing addition to Cardiff and a memorable night out, with just the dire taste of the drinks letting it down.

Moving on from the drinks, the ball pit in Ballie Ballerson is one of my favourite places ever! The bottomless brunch included ball pit entry, however, if going in separately, it ranges from £7 to £10 depending on the day. Although it is more on the expensive side, I would say it is worth doing, even once! There is something about being drunk with your friends in a massive ball pit surrounded by lights and mirrors that is just one of the most entertaining experiences ever!

Overall, I do believe Ballie Ballerson is worth the hype. If there could just be some improvements in the taste of the cocktails, then it would be perfect!

Cardiff's Most Instagrammable Coffee Shops

Millie Higgins
Contributor

After living in Cardiff for over two years, I've frequented my fair share of coffee shops and have solidified a list of favourites. My go-to iced vanilla latte has been perfected by most cafés in Cardiff, which is simultaneously incredible for me and damning for my bank account. Therefore, the deciding factor in which one to choose is their interior décor; the more aesthetic, the better.

An obvious choice for the most Instagrammable coffee shop in Cardiff has to be Scaredy Cats Café in the town centre. Its vibrant decorations, plethora of board games, and own merch

line make it hard to beat. This, paired with the café's spectacular and constantly changing menu of drinks and bakery items, makes it a very popular option. The coffee shop serves as a hub for all kinds of meet-ups and slowly transforms into a bar as the day progresses. Its fun indoor atmosphere and cute outdoor seating make it the perfect place to snap a few pictures of yourself, friends, or the gorgeous drinks.

Another contender is Brodies Café, particularly the small cart near the Museum Gardens. Situated entirely outdoors, the chain coffee shop is surrounded by beautiful greenery and blossom trees, providing the most stunning backdrop for an Instagram story. Despite having a

smaller selection of drinks, the scenery and lovely array of tables and chairs allow customers to indulge in excellent coffee while enjoying the best seats for a bit of people-watching. As we approach the winter season, Brodies Coffee Cabin is the perfect spot to grab a quick hot chocolate as the sun sets. The place lights up with fairy lights, and the surrounding lampposts provide all the ambient lighting needed to take the perfect snapshot.

The arcades of Cardiff host a whole array of wonderful establishments, many of which are coffee shops. Although my personal favourite is Maple and Bean, renowned for its delicious drinks and gorgeous selection of brunch dishes. Situated in the

centre of the Morgan Arcade, its walls of windows make it the perfect spot to people-watch all day long. The cozy wooden interior complements the extensive collection of delicious drinks and food to be enjoyed throughout the year, but particularly on a chilly autumn day. The light that pours in through the many windows sets the vibe perfectly; the place dims down when it rains, allowing you to relax in darker lighting accompanied by the sound of rainfall, or lights up in the summer with sunlight peeking through.

These are my personal favourite spots to visit when the need for an aesthetic Instagram story arises, but Cardiff hosts incredible coffee shops throughout the city that are all worth a visit,

Cardiff's Best Park: Bute vs Roath vs Heath

Juliette Harink
Contributor

Cardiff is home to some incredible green spaces, both in to the city centre and further afield. There are no excuses not to indulge in nature, as even as far away as the Heath Hospital, there is always a park within walking distance of your house, accommodation, or lecture theatre.

In the best months, when the sun is shining, many hundreds of students flood to the green spaces of Cardiff to do their reading in the sun, have picnics with friends, and maybe even to take a dip in the River Taff. But even in the winter when the weather is cold there's nothing like bundling up and heading to one of the many parks that Cardiff houses. With the autumn weather coming in, I'm hoping that this article will persuade you to get out and brave the Welsh

rain to explore everything that Cardiff has to offer.

Most central to the City Centre and most definitely the star of the show is Bute Park. As the park closest to the Talybont accommodation, it's the perfect spot for a hangover cure when you need to reconnect with nature. Bute offers 130 acres of parkland, flower gardens and areas of woodland to explore, while also hosting a Cardiff parkrun every Saturday morning. There are several walking routes through the park, many of the paths flanked by hundreds of trees and flower beds but also following alongside the banks of the River Taff.

However, if the greenery itself is not enough to convince you of Bute's beauty, the park itself backs onto Cardiff Castle. In the summer the Secret Garden and Summerhouse cafes are particularly popular, serving hun-

dreds of iced coffees and ice creams daily. In the winter months, the park is host to the Bute Park Light Trail and Winter Wonderland, making it one of the most festive spaces in Wales across the holiday season and it becomes an unmissable attraction for Cardiff residents.

If Bute is too far or overcrowded for you, don't panic as just over the other side of Cathays is my second favourite park: Roath. Roath Park is slightly quieter than Bute and is home to the most stunning lake and lighthouse that are a central attraction of the space. In the summer, it is possible to hire a boat and ride on the water but all year round you can follow the circular trail around the lake and take in its scenic views. Roath also has its own unique attractions as aside from the lake, there is a stunning rose garden that blooms every year without fail. Finally, you should not take a trip to Roath

without seeing the botanical gardens hidden inside the park's conservatory, where you'll find aquatic plants, ferns, and shrubs.

For those medics among us, up by the Heath hospital is Heath park, albeit not quite Bute or Roath, it still has its charm and is known for being family friendly and a prime spot for dog watching. The park also contains areas of wetland with a few small ponds alongside its open green space and if trains are your thing, there is a model railway centre there too.

The seasonal flexibility of Bute makes it the top of my list, but all three parks deserve the attention they are given. I urge you to get outside and take in the invaluable environment that is practically on your doorstep!

Fast Fresher Food: Neve's Chicken Curry

Ingredients

4 diced chicken breast strips (or 450 grams)
1 tbsp oil
Curry sauce jar (korma was used)
Broccoli
Half a bag of spinach
1 small pepper, chopped
Salt
Pepper
Garlic granules
Curry powder (optional if you don't like spice)
Packet of microwave rice

Step 1: For the quickest meal you can get the chicken pre-cooked, but we're out here getting our good protein and cooking it ourselves! (well, I am) Add your diced chicken and chopped pepper into a hot pan with the oil and fry off for about 4 minutes or until the chicken looks

cooked on all sides. Then add in your curry sauce from the jar and leave this to simmer on a low heat.

Step 2: Cut up and boil your broccoli in a pan of water for about 5 minutes so it's just cooked. This can either be done before or while your chicken is cooking. Then add it to the curry sauce mixture!

Step 3: Before you add the broccoli, add your spices to the sauce and chicken mix. I used whatever my housemates and I had lying around the kitchen: shake of salt and pepper, some garlic granules, and some curry powder. But use anything you like to add a bit more flavour to distract from the healthy stuff we're going to throw in, because vegetables actually are significantly better for you than just chicken nuggets and wedges...

Step 4: Add in your spinach and cook it off until it significantly reduces in size (so you don't notice it's there anymore) and then give everything one last mix together!

Step 5: Now the curry has come together, stick some microwavable white rice into that Taly-kitchen microwave (if yours actually works) and plate up! This should make 2–3 portions, depending on how hungry or malnourished you are. Heads up, besties, you've just made adult food!

Side note: Make sure your curry has cooled down enough before you put it into your storage containers and into the fridge/freezer! Use refrigerated meals within 2 days of making!

Hope you all tune in next issue for another fast-fresher-food recipe!

Best Photo Opportunities Around Cardiff

Thomas Mahoney
Contributor

Considering its fairly average size in comparison to other British cities, students who haven't explored any further than Cathays, Talybont, or Roath could be forgiven for considering Cardiff an 'average' city. However, visiting these locations should change your mind and provide plenty of photo opportunities.

Honourable mentions: Victorian and Edwardian Arcades: If cosier (drier) places where you can shop and take some more atmospheric photos attract you more, Cardiff's shopping arcades (Castle Quarter, Royal, High Street, Duke Street, Dominions, Morgan, Wyndham) will hit the spot.

Roath Park lake: A calming, tranquil place to watch a sunset and take your mind off things. The ornamental lighthouse, rolling hills to the north, and luxurious housing add to the atmosphere.

Bute Park: The diverse range of plants and trees of this popular inner-city park combine as a perfect photo backdrop.

Cathedral Road: You'll find this photogenic avenue round the corner from the Sophia Gardens cricket ground, lined with grandiose early 20th-century townhouses. There are some charming pubs and restaurants here as well, albeit on the pricey side!

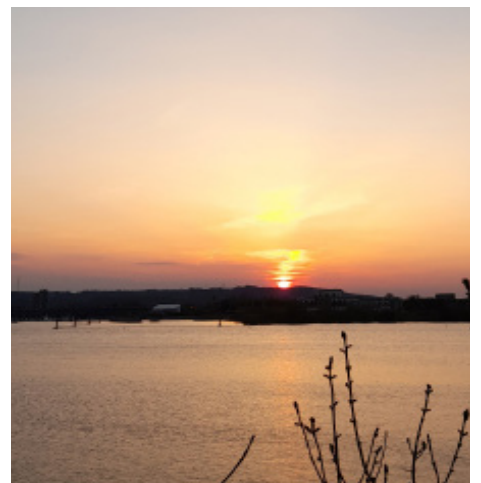
Cardiff Bay Barrage (pictured top right): Constructed as part of the modernisation of Cardiff Bay in the 1990s, this man-made

dam serves as a great spot for a run, walk, and of course, some photography! A path spans across the seafront, connecting Cardiff docks and the Senedd with Penarth Marina. The walkways towards the south side next to the bascule bridge enable panoramic views of the Cardiff skyline, the frontiers of the South Wales Valleys, the Somerset coast, and even the two Severn crossings on a clear day.

Cardiff City Hall (pictured above): The industrial might of South Wales in the early 20th century is exemplified in this Edwardian-Baroque building, opened in 1906 to celebrate Cardiff's city status. It boasts a sumptuous façade, balustrades, sculptures and even a dragon-themed dome. Directly to its rear, you can find Alexandra Gardens, a peaceful space with

well-kept horticulture. Lock this one in for your graduation pics!

Garth Hill: You'll need to catch a train up to Treforest Estate or Taffs Well to access this 307m-high viewpoint, but it's absolutely worth the trip and hill climb—a panoramic view of Cardiff and much of southeast Wales awaits you at the summit. A high-quality camera will be needed for detailed shots of Cardiff itself, however you can also follow the line of the Somerset/Devon coast, take in the sheer size of the Severn Estuary, and even glimpse the highest peaks in the Brecon Beacons on a clear day. Perfect idea for a weekend afternoon out with housemates, especially if you want to escape the hustle and bustle of university life for a while. (Photos via Thomas Mahoney)



Scheduling your Shopping a Lidl Bit

Ari Plant
Spotlight Editor

If you have spent more than a few moments in Cathays thinking about cooking your dinner in an IKEA student starter pack frying pan, you know that the Lidl on Maindy Road (the one closest to the ASSL, the Woodville, and Cathays) is a hellhole. You only needed a can of tomatoes but they're out. Students have flooded the aisles. It will take you a few hours versus a few minutes to get everything you need and get out. The Lidl bag; be yours to hold it high.

Yet there is a better way, and that is, unfortunately, scheduling. You go on a day (not Wednesday), around noon or 1pm, and no student will be there. If you go on a Thursday before noon,

you'll be the only student soul in that Lidl. If you go on a Saturday before noon, you'll be the only soul in that Lidl. When others are having hangovers, you can get the ingredients to that pavlova that you swore you would finally make.

You have to think — students make up a gigantic amount of Cardiff's population, so plan around their chaotic sleep schedules and their desperate need for pesto pasta and ready meals? You'll be able to waltz right into Lidl, pick up exactly what you need, and be out in less than ten minutes. No longer will a cheeky trip to Lidl eat into your evening "study" time.

Go for a Walk on the Womanby Side

Ari Plant
Spotlight Editor

If you've come to Cardiff with a denim vest in your bag and you have a few screw-in punk spikes coming in the post, Womanby Street is for you. Having survived COVID-19 and several recessions, the music scene located in Womanby Street is made of steel and will probably survive a nuclear blast at this rate. Stand at the top of Womanby Street and hear only the monstrous anger of the guitars wailing.

Down the fantastic street, you have five venues meant for music and a Wetherspoons for a pre-gig pre-mosh carb-load. The locations are Tiny Rebel, Wales's largest brewery which also hosts pretty good gigs in their upstairs area; The Moon,

which is known for hardcore, garage rock, and 3 Red Stripe cans for £10; Bootlegger, a jazz bar with a good selection of cocktails; Fuel, the only dedicated rock bar in Cardiff which in 2023 hosted 307 events; and Clwb Ifor Bach, the popular elder sibling of the street.

There will be something for everyone down that street and, almost every day of the week, there is another band loading into one of the venues that will match whatever tastes you have. Black metal, club music, house music, grungy indie rock? Womanby Street will have it for you.

THE TEAM



NEWS



Dilichi Dieobi



Heather Layton



Tom Nicholson



Oliver Morten

Changes to Recycling in Cathays and Roath

James Paine
Member of Cardiff Council

Recycling in Cardiff is getting a major upgrade with Cardiff Council introducing a new recycling system that is already significantly increasing the quality of the recycling material collected.

Cardiff is shifting from single-use, green recycling bags to reusable recycling sacks and caddies, so, if you live in Cathays or Roath, it'll soon be your turn to start using the new recycling containers. Over the next few weeks, the containers will be delivered to households in Cathays and Roath along with information on how to separate your recycling.

From the 29th of October, recycling will be collected using the new reusable containers, which means that the green recycling bags will soon become a thing of the past and won't be collected after the new containers come into use. Currently, this scheme does not apply to flats where green bags are placed in communal bins.

Collection days will remain the same including weekly food waste collections and fortnightly general waste collections. If you need any additional recycling sacks or caddies, replacements are available at stocklists, like Cathays library, which you can locate via the Cardiff Council website (www.cardiff.gov).

uk) or on the 'Cardiff Gov' App.

Wales is already one of the top recyclers in the world, and sorting recyclables, food waste, and general waste into the right containers is a simple way everyone can help the environment and keep local communities tidy.

For more information about waste and recycling services in Cardiff, visit the Cardiff Council website www.cardiff.gov.uk.



Source: Elliot Brown (via Flickr)

Former Cardiff University Lecturer Convicted of Kissing 15-Year-Old Girl

Dilichi Dieobi
Head of News

A former Cardiff University lecturer has recently been convicted of having inappropriate relations with a minor and has confessed to kissing a 15-year-old girl. His wife then contacted the police, calling him a "sexual predator and a paedophile". He admitted that he had met the young girl online and groomed her. Steven Stanley, 46, was at the time a lecturer at Cardiff University in the School of Social Sciences, and arranged to meet the girl in Bute Park, having full knowledge of her age. He proceeded to take her back to his flat, played his guitar to her until she left and quickly found a nearby train station.

Stanley used social media websites including MySpace and Skype during the mid 2000s to groom his victim. He, however, denied this, telling his wife that he had shared an ad online titled "BDSM student-teacher dynamics in a generation Z context". Stanley is also currently under investigation for having inappropriate relations with students.

The victim said that she was experiencing difficulties and unhappiness at home and in her life at the time she decided to start speaking

to Stanley. She caught a train to Cardiff and met the former lecturer in Coopers Field. She said that as she was lying on the grass in Bute Park, Stanley touched her lower back (or leg) and kissed her on the lips. She described the kiss as "sensual" and as "though he had been thinking about it for a long time".

After being interviewed by police in her home, the victim was visibly shaken when she heard Stanley's name, and informed police that she has behavioural and trust issues as a result of her experience with the defendant. Her personal statement was read aloud to the court on Wednesday the 25th of September at the Newport Crown Court; Wales Online has reported it as follows: "I met him when I was a young teenager, I was a vulnerable young person and had problems at home. Thinking back now I realise how vulnerable I came across to Steven."

What happened [took] a long time to put to the back of my mind due to shame on my part. I've come to realise shame does not lie with me. I have some lifelong behavioural issues because of what happened. It's hard to trust people now, I can't trust people for who they show me they are. What if they have some capability to manipulate or lie to me? I have suf-

fered terribly with mental health which I am extremely open about as it consumes a large part of my life. I was used by a person professional qualified to understand my issues.

One of the most stressful things I have had to do. The emotional damage I've had will be a lifelong battle to carry. I can't erase a memory. I wouldn't want anyone else to feel the way I have to and to know there are other people is devastating and unacceptable... I am aware and extremely vigilant of people like [the defendant] and will be extremely cautious when it comes to my own children."

After pleading guilty to inciting a child to engage in sexual activity, Stanley was sentenced to a 24 month community order, 150 hours of unpaid work, and a 20 day rehabilitation activity requirement. As well as this, he is now also subject to a Sexual Harm Prevention order, sex offender notification requirements, and a restraining order, all of which will remain effective for five years. As he sentenced Stanley, Judge Daniel Williams said: "You used your apparent respectability and responsible job to reassure [the victim] as part of the grooming process." Stanley's career as a university lecturer is now over, and he is hoping to find a new profession.

Cardiff University Student Finds Dead Mouse in Bed

Kiera Holmes
Contributor

Chloe Adams of Dogfield Street in Cathays, first reported a problem with mice immediately upon moving into her house at the beginning of July, when droppings were found inside of her kitchen cupboards. The viral clip, captioned "if you don't laugh you'll cry" boasted over 30,000 likes, and sparked both outrage as well as sympathy in the comment section from other students going through similar circumstances, with one user commenting, "[a] universal Cardiff student experience".

Chloe, in complete shock, mutters during the clip: "I actually can't live here. I was lying on a f***ing mouse." Reiterating in re-

sponse to multiple comments that she feels "traumatised" by the event, Chloe feels the need to "check every corner of [her] bed and bed[room]" and still feels haunted by nightmares.

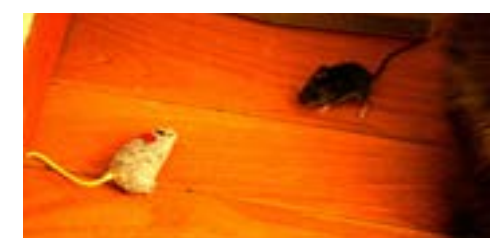
After disposing of the vermin, Chloe stripped her bed and took a shower, but was woken later on in the night to find another mouse scurrying across her bedroom floor. Too terrified to sleep in her own bedroom, she began sleeping in her housemate's bedroom instead. While Chloe's housemates may attest to hearing scratching sounds from mice inside of the walls, Chloe's bedroom, which sits directly above the kitchen, seems to be in the direct path of the colony of mice. Chloe added, the "pitter-patter" of about 20 mice can

be heard throughout the property. The student stated she posted the video after having "had enough" with the state of her house and lack of action to attempt to fix the problems, describing the property as "just not liveable".

After claiming to have contacted Pinnacle Letting Agency with her complaints multiple times, and supplying video and photo evidence of the problem, Chloe stated that no action had yet been taken.

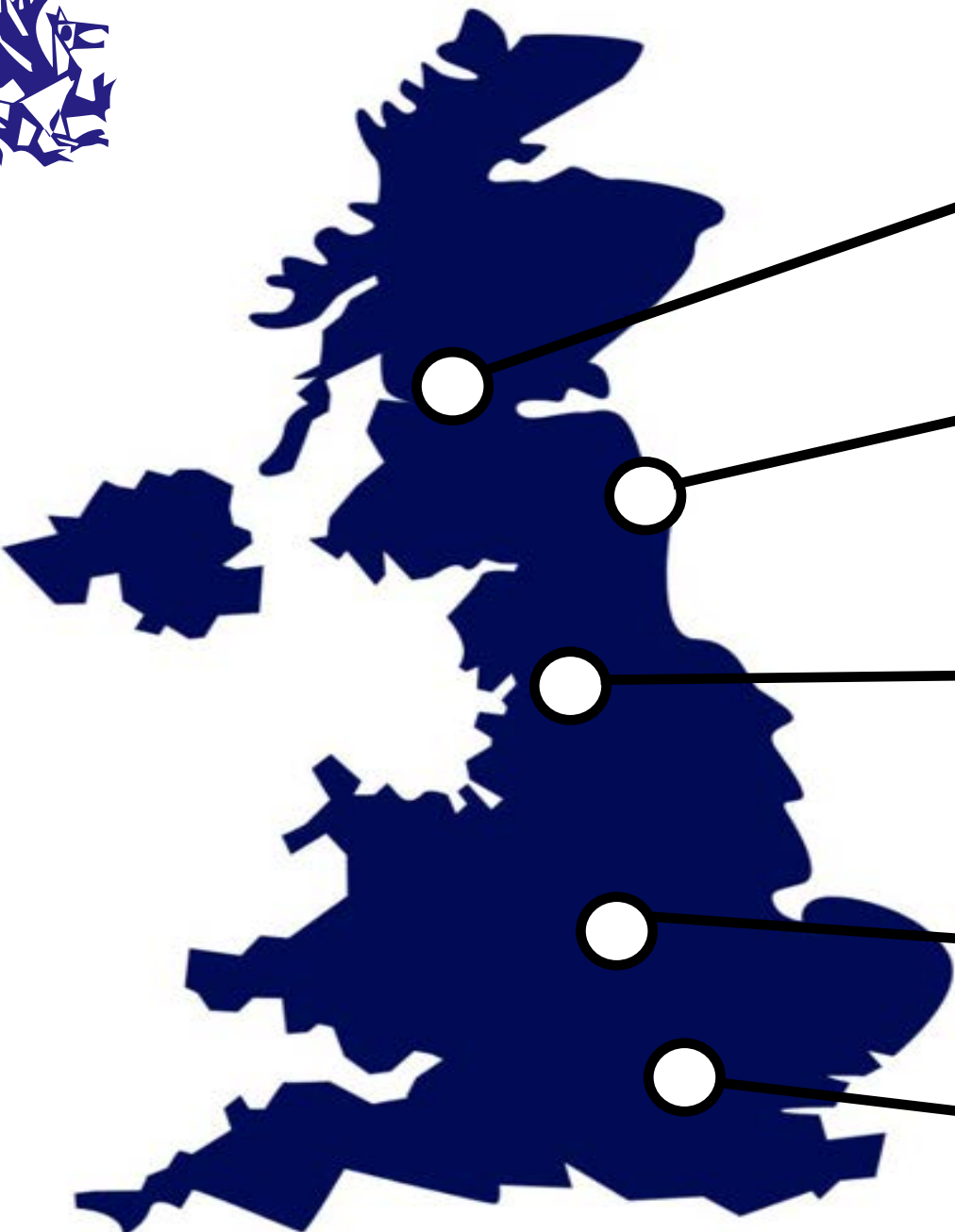
At the beginning of September in her comment section, Chloe stated, "the pest control haven't found any evidence [of vermin in the property]", despite her reports of scampering in the walls, droppings, and the video evidence of the mice in her

bedroom. A spokesperson from Pinnacle Letting Agency has said, "We take complaints about live mice very seriously, and have instructed the council pest control to attend. We will ask the landlord to action any recommendations made by the council's pest control team."



Source: Sean Dreilinger (via Flickr)

NEWS FROM AROUND THE UK



- GLASGOW**
Student bites police officer outside Glasgow nightclub in ‘anti-Scottish’ attack.
- NEWCASTLE**
Newcastle ATM gives out free sausage rolls in new Monzo partnership with Greggs.
- MANCHESTER**
Student protest after Manchester Pro-Life Society held ‘grill the prolifer’ talk on Manchester University campus.
- BIRMINGHAM**
The University of Birmingham has found that recycled human urine could be used to grow food.
- LONDON**
London students sleep on NHS building for 72 hours in transgender healthcare inequality protest.

The Homelessness Crisis: Support Need has Risen by 300%

Heather Layton
News Editor

With winter looming, the demand for support by rough sleepers has increased exponentially, as many face the prospect of having no permanent shelter arrangements and sleeping in the streets in the approaching harsh weather conditions. This may also be exacerbated by the current recession and the cost of living becoming ever higher. Due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, the number of people accessing Welsh food banks in 2023 has gone up 85% since 2018. Following this spike in demand, the Welsh government pledged £330 million towards social housing, and a further investment of £210 million towards support services and the prevention of homelessness in Wales in 2023. Despite the government’s aid pledges, Helping Our Homeless Wales, a Cardiff-based charity that provides rough sleepers with essential resources,

tents, food packages, and hot drinks, has claimed that the number of people using their services has tripled in the last year.

A spokesperson and volunteer for the charity stated that they believe the Welsh government has provided significantly less support for rough sleepers since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which greater support and temporary accommodation was provided to homeless people to adhere to government health and safety guidelines. Rough sleepers were temporarily housed in hotels or vacant properties and were provided with PPE and other essentials to ensure they could adhere to lockdown rules.

The charity’s spokesperson also alleged that there had been a sudden increase in people accessing the services provided, which was unprecedented compared to previous figures in the seven years that Helping Our Homeless Wales had been providing support.

In February 2024, the Senedd reported that 10,000 individuals in Wales (including 3,000 children) had been placed in temporary accommodation, which represented an increase of 167% from 2018. In contrast to the number of people requiring accommodation, the Office of National Statistics reported that over 100,000 Welsh homes remained vacant in January 2024, another large increase of 303% from 2018. In response to these figures, Janet Finch Saunders MS, Shadow Housing Minister, challenged the then First Minister Mark Drakeford and declared the Welsh housing crisis as a “far-reaching systemic problem”, and said that it was a “key measure of a society’s prosperity”.

Unfortunately, it is evident that in the winter ahead there will be ever-growing claims on the services and resources provided by Welsh food banks and homeless charities, despite the government’s measures.



Source: genericprofilename (via Flickr)



Y Gymraeg ar Lwyfan Brydeinig: Adolygiad o Lost Boys and Fairies

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-Od

Cefais gyfle dros wyliau'r haf i wyllo llwyth o raglenni sydd wedi bod ar fy rhestr wyllo ers tro. Wrth ystyried y rhaglenni hyn oll, does dim amheuaeth mai rhaglen y BBC *Lost Boys and Fairies*, sy'n dod ar frig fy argymhellion i.

Wedi'i selio yn rhannol ar brofiadau go iawn, mae'r gyfres 3 pennod hon, wedi'i gyfarwyddo gan James Kent a'i hysgrifennu gan Daf James, yn dilyn hanes Gabriel, sy'n *drag queen*, a'i bartner Andy ar eu taith i fabwysiadu plentyn. Mae'r rhaglen yn cyfodod y gweithredoedd positif o ddechrau teulu a mabwysiadu plentyn gyda themâu tywyll megis trawma plentyndod, marwolaeth, homoffobia a mwy. Yn sicr, mae'r cyfodod creulon o

ddigwyddiadau positif a negyddol trwy gydol y rhaglen yn ysgogi amrywiaeth o ymatebion gan y gwylwyr, o wenu twymgalon, i deimlo tristwch dwys.

Ni ellir ond teimlo'n flin dros y cymeriadau ar adegau, a theimlo balchder a hapusrwydd drostynt ar adegau eraill, a hyn yn destament i dalent yr actorion. Rhaid canmol actio Sion Daniel Young, sy'n chwarae rôl Gabriel, am roi mewnwelediad cignoeth i'r gwylwyr i fyd y cymeriad, a chaniatáu i ni ddeall ei gymhlethdod a'i berthnasau amrywiol gyda chymeriadau eraill. Roedd yr holl actorion yn portreadu eu cymeriad nhw mewn modd unigryw a chlir, a rhaid eu cymeradwyo am eu talent.

Yn sicr mae'r sgript yn llwyddo cyfleu'r stori mewn modd real a thrawiadol, ac y mae'n caniatáu'r

gynulleidfa i ddod i adnabod y cymeriadau ar lefel ddyfnach. Elfen unigryw o ran sgriptio'r rhaglen hon yw'r dwyieithrwydd. Er mai rhaglen i gynulleidfa Brydeinig ydyw, a Saesneg yw prif iaith y rhaglen, Cymraeg yw'r iaith a ddefnyddir rhwng Gabriel a'i dad, gydag is-deitlau yn cyfieithu'r sgyrsiau. Nid yn unig y mae'r Gymraeg yn gwahaniaethu perthynas gymhleth Gabriel a'i dad i weddill ei fywyd, ond y mae hefyd yn rhoi statws i'r Gymraeg.

Yn sicr, rhaid canmol y rhaglen, nid yn unig am roi llais i leisiau sydd yn y gorffennol wedi cael eu tangynrychioli yn y cyfryngau, megis dau ddyn hoyw, ond hefyd am roi llwyfan i iaith leiafrifol, gan ddangos bod y Gymraeg yn llewyrchus ac nad testun sbort ydyw. Fel siaradwraig Cymraeg brwd, roeddwn yn falch iawn i glywed defnydd y Gymraeg

mewn rhaglen mor boblogaidd, ac rwy'n gobeithio y bydd hwn yn agor mwy o ddrysau i'r Gymraeg serennu ar y sgrin yn y dyfodol. Ewch i wyllo *Lost Boys and Fairies*!



Yr actor Fra Fee yn 2016
Tarddiad: The Lowry (via Flickr)

Pererindod Patagonia

Fflur James
Cyfrannwr

Yn ddiweddar iawn, mae criwbach ohonom sy'n astudio ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd wedi dychwelyd o'r Wladfa Gymreig, yn yr Ariannin ar ôl treulio 6 wythnos yno. Mae'r Wladfa yn fwy na gwladfa arferol. Mae yna rhyw hud yn perthyn i'r tir, i'r ardal, ac yn fwy nag unrhywbeth, i'r bobl. Mae'r Wladfa arbennig hon wedi'i lleoli yn ne'r Ariannin, yn nhalaith Chubut sydd tua 2 awr o hediad o Buenos Aires. Er mai ym 1965 aeth y Mimosa, y llong gyn-taf o Gymru i'r Ariannin, mae'r cysylltiadau Cymraeg a Chymreig yno, hyd heddiw, cyn gryfed ag erioed.

Penderfynodd y dair ohonom ymgeisio ar gyfer y cyfle arbennig hwn dan adain *Global Opportunities* y brifysgol, yn y gobaith o fod yn llwyddiannus a chael profiad unwaith-mewn-oes lle mae'r bobl mwyaf arbennig yn byw ac yn dal i barchu'r traddodiad Cymreig, a gwneud hynny gyda brwdfrydedd a bywiogrwydd. Roeddwn i'n ymwybodol iawn o'r hanes cyfoethog sy'n perthyn i'r Wladfa; wrth gwrs, wedi dysgu am hanes y Mimosa yn yr ysgol, yn ogystal ag oddi wrth ffrindiau sydd wedi bod yno nifer o weithiau a chysylltiadau yn dal i fod yno hyd heddiw. Ond gwnaeth un stori aros gyda mi ers i mi ei chlywed pan oeddwn yn ferch ifanc. Hanesyn am geffyl hynod o'r enw Malacara a achubodd John Daniel Evans, un o gonglfeini'r Wladfa, a bu i Malacara fod y

Mab Darogan i John Daniel Evans, ac mae bedd Malacara i'w weld yn Nhrevelin yn yr Andes. Ers i mi glywed y stori hon gan ffrind flynyddoedd yn ôl, ces fy nghyfareddu a'm hudo yn llwyr gan y Wladfa, ac fe wnaeth hynny i mi fod eisiau mynd yno a blasu'r chwedloniaeth drwy fy mhrofiad fy hun. Ac mae'n deg dweud mai hudol fyddai'r gair gorau i ddisgrifio ein profiad ni yno. Felly roedd mynd ar bererindod i Batagonia ar fy rhestr er i mi fod yn fach, ac felly pan ddaeth y cyfle euraidd hwn gan y Brifysgol i fynd yno i wirfoddoli a theithio, wel doedd dim dwywaith amdani! Roeddwn ni yn yr Ariannin am dua 6 wythnos i gyd, ond 4 wythnos oedd y gwirfoddoli, felly roedd hyn wedi rhoi digon o amser i ni i gael gweld talaith Chubut a thu hwnt a chael blas go iawn ar beth oedd hi i fyw yno.

Yno, roeddem ni'n gwirfoddoli ac yn helpu'r gweithgarwch o ddysgu Cymraeg yno wrth fod yn yr ysgolion cynradd, uwchradd, dosbarthiadau nos, digwyddiadau i ddathlu Gŵyl y Glaniad a chymaint mwy. Buon ni mewn dwy ardal lle mae'r Gymraeg yn cael ei siarad sef yn yr Andes - yn Nhrevelin ac Esquel, ac yn Nyffryn Camwy- y Gaiman, Trelew, Dolavon, Rawson a chymaint mwy. Roedd ystod yr oeddrannau yr oeddem yn ymwneud â nhw yn drawiadol o blant 2 mlwydd oed yn Ysgol Gymraeg y Gaiman i'r to hyn oedd wedi cael eu magu ar aelwyd Gymraeg ac am weld yr ethos Gymraeg gref sydd yno yn parhau. Roedd eu balchder nhw dros eu hanes a'u

diwylliant yn gwbl neilltuoelrhywbeth rydym ni yn bendant wedi dod nôl ag ef i Gymru. Cafon ni amser gwbl wefreiddiol ymhlith holl bobl Patagonia- o'r Andes i'r Dyffryn- y croeso mor gynnes, a'r bwrlwm o ddysgu Cymraeg yn iasol. Dydw i ddim yn meddwl i mi erioed brofi y fath groeso a'r cariad at gymydog fel y gwelais ym Mhatagonia- roedd eu haelioni yn gwbl neilltuoel. Tra i ni fod yno, fe wnaethom ni drïo llawer o fwydydd nodedig Patagonia fel teisen ddu, jam laeth, jam citron, alfajores a chymaint mwy o fwydydd Archentaidd a Chymreig. Roedd y croeso gafon ni yn Ysgol Gymraeg y Gaiman, Ysgol y Cwm yn Nhrevelin a Choleg Camwy, a'r holl ysgolion y buon ni iddyn nhw, megis Ysgol Aliwen, Ysgol Bryn Gwyn ac ati, mor mor gynnes, ac roedd eu parodrwydd i'n gwahodd ni yno yn hynod, bob tro.

Heb os, uchafbwynt y daith, oedd y bobl. Y bobl hyfrydaf i mi gwrdd â nhw erioed. Gyda'm llaw ar fy nghalon, ni fyddaf i fyth yn gallu dygymod â'u caredigrwydd nhw, a'u haelioni- a byddaf i'n trysori hwnnw am byth! Iddyn nhw felly mae'r diolch am wneud y profiad-buasai'r profiad wedi bod llawer tlotach hebddyn nhw. A phan fyddaf yn meddwl am Batagonia, y cymeriadau sydd yn dod i'r meddwl yn syth, ymhell cyn y lleoliad fel petai. Petawn i'n gallu, bysw'n i'n dychwelyd yfory. Mae'r hiraeth sydd gennyf i am y bobl yno, yn anferth. Mae'n deg dweud ein bod ni wedi sefydlu cyfeillgarwch hynod.

Felly da chi, peidiwch ag oedi ymgeisio, pan ddaw'r amser, ar gyfer y cyfle gwefreiddiol hwn. Roedd y profiad ym Mhatagonia yn brofiad y bydd gyda fi am weddill fy oes. Roedd y bobl, y tirlun a'r croeso yn gwbl gwbl anghredadwy, a dylai pob Cymraes neu Gymro fynd yno, ar bererindod, a mabwysiadu eu brwdfrydedd a'u balchder nhw dros eu Cymreictod. Byddaf i o hyd yn meddwl am ein hamser ni yno dan wenu, wrth gofio am yr holl atgofion melys y crëwyd yno, y cyfeillgarwch a sefydlwyd a'r bobl hyfryd y gwnaeth ein croesawu ni mor gynnes. O, am gael bod nôl ym Mhatagonia!



Tarddiad: Fflur James



At Sylw'r Glasfyfyrwyr!

Ffion Wyn Jones
Golygydd Taf-Od

Gall dechrau'r Brifysgol fod yn gyfnod ansicr ac ofnus.

Ond gall ymuno â chymdeithasau a chymryd rhan mewn digwyddiadau rhoi'r cyfle i greu ffrindiau a chreu cysylltiadau. Gallwch weld hyn yn haws trwy'r Gymraeg efallai? Dyma rhai awgrymiadau bydd yn gwneud eich cyfnod cyntaf yn y Brifysgol ychydig yn haws!

'Y Gym Gym'

Yn gyntaf dylech gael golwg ar gyfryngau cymdeithasol y Gymdeithas Gymraeg, neu fel mae'n cael ei hadnabod 'Y Gym Gym'. Mae'r Gym Gym yn trefnu digwyddiadau amrywiol sydd yn rhoi'r cyfle i chi gwrdd â phobl o bob cwr o Gymru sydd wedi dod i astudio yn y Brifysgol. Mae crôlau diri yn cael eu trefnu yn aml yn ystod y semester gyda themâu amrywiol, gan amlaf bydd y crôl yn gorffen yn Retro's. Yn ogystal bydd y Gym Gym yn trefnu tripiâu

a digwyddiadau yn ystod y flwyddyn sydd yn brofiadau gwych tu hwnt i Gaerdydd megis tripiâu rygbi yng Nghaeredin a Dilyn a digwyddiadau rhyng-golegol o gwmpas Cymru. Mae'r digwyddiadau Rhyng-golegol yn cynnwys Eisteddfod a dawns flynyddol sydd yn uno Prifysgolion ar draws Cymru megis Bangor, Aberystwyth, Abertawe a Phrifysgolion Y Drindod Dewi Sant.

Chwaraeon 'Y Gym Gym'

Mae gan 'y Gym Gym' cangen chwaraeon sydd hefyd yn gyfle gwych i gymdeithasu drwy gemau pêl rwyd, pêl droed neu rygbi. Yn ystod y flwyddyn mae ymarferion a gemau wythnosol yn cael eu cynnal gan gapteiniaid y timoedd. Dyma amserlen ymarferion eleni: Pêl rwyd—Nos Wener rhwng 6:30–7:30 ar gyrtiau Llys Talybont. Rygbi—Dydd Mercher (manylion i'w cadarnhau yn fuan). Pêl droed—Dydd Mercher (manylion i'w cadarnhau yn fuan). Am ragor o wybodaeth, ewch i dudalennau cyfryngau cymdeithasol chwaraeon y

Gym Gym.
Canu Cymraeg?

Aelwyd y Waun Ddyfal

Os yw canu yn y Gymraeg yn cymryd eich ffansi, ymunwch gydag aelwyd y Waun Ddyfal sydd ar gyfer unrhyw un rhwng 18–25 mlwydd oed. Mae ymarferion wythnosol ar nos Fawrth rhwng 7–8 y.h yn Eglwys y Crwys. Mae'r Aelwyd yn cystadlu a pherfformio mewn ystod o ddigwyddiadau megis yr Eisteddfod, digwyddiadau o fewn y Senedd a Chôr Cymru.

Cyfryngau Cymdeithasol Cymraeg UMCC – Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Caerdydd

Ar dudalennau cyfryngau cymdeithasol yr Undeb mae yna gyhoeddiadau ar gyfer digwyddiadau'r Undeb drwy'r Gymraeg megis y Stomp Gŵyl Ddewi a gynhaliwyd eleni gydag uned Ysgol y Gymraeg. Ar y tudalennau yma gallwch ddarganfod gwybodaeth ar gyfer etholiadau blynyddol y Brifysgol a manylion cyswllt Cymraeg y Brifysgol.

Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (Coleg Cymraeg)

Mae gan y Coleg Cymraeg amrywiaeth o adnoddau sydd yn fuddiol ac yn werthfawr ar gyfer myfyrwyr Cymraeg y Brifysgol. Mae nifer o wybodaeth ar lein, ar eu gwefan megis newyddion a blogiau, citiau cymorth pynciau arbenigol megis newyddiadura a gwybodaeth hanfodol. Mae'r rhain yn rhoi golwg ar ddigwyddiadau o fewn Prifysgolion a digwyddiadau Cymreig cyffredinol.

Ysgoloriaethau Coleg Cymraeg

Mae'r Coleg hefyd yn darparu arian ar gyfer astudio drwy'r Gymraeg sydd yn gymorth enfawr fel glasfyfyriwr! Gallwch ffeindio'r holl wybodaeth yma ar wefan y Coleg Cymraeg:

<https://colegcymraeg.ac.uk/canlyniadau-chwilio/?k=ysgoloriaethau&sb=0&f=b=&pn=1&l=cy>

Tarddiad ein Traddodiad: Chwedl Gelert

Charlie Thomas
Golygydd Taf-Od

Dwi'n siŵr eich bod chi wedi clywed chwedlau gwahanol wrth fynd trwy eich bywydau. O'r stori am Bendigeidfran yn marw o ganlyniad i gael gwaywffon yn ei droed, i Gantre'r Gwaelod yn cael ei foddio o dan y môr, mae cannoedd o chwedlau wedi dod i'r amlwg yn ein gwlad dros y miloedd o flynyddoedd diwethaf—ac felly mae'n rhaid gofyn y cwestiwn, o le ddaw'r chwedlau yn wreiddiol? Faint o wirionedd sydd tu ôl i'r straeon yma a wnaeth mam-gu ddarllen i chi cyn mynd i gysgu?

Dwi'n credu ei fod yn gwneud synwyr i ddechrau gydag un o fy hoff chwedlau, sy'n boblogaidd iawn ar draws y byd—sef Chwedl Gelert. Mae'r chwedl mor enwog fod y lleoliad Beddgelert yng Ngwynedd wedi cael ei enwi ar ei ôl, neu dyna beth mae'r mwyafrif yn meddwl...

Yn y chwedl, mae Llywelyn yn lladd ei hoff gi, Gelert ar ôl meddwl ei fod wedi lladd ei etifedd. Mewn gwirionedd, fe wnaeth Gelert amddiffyn y babi rhag y blaidd, ond pan sylweddolodd Llywelyn hyn, roedd hi'n rhy hwyr. Felly rhoddodd glad-dedigaeth urddasol oedd yn addas i farchog i Gelert. Ni wnaeth Llywelyn wenu byth eto. Dyma'r bedd rydym yn ei weld ym Meddgelert, sy'n adrodd y stori ar garreg. Yr unig gwestiwn sydd ar ôl i'w gofyn yw, a gafodd Gelert wir ei gladdu yn y bedd yma? Wel, ar ôl ymchwilio, dydy'r ateb ddim beth fydddech chi'n disgwyl!

Mae'r stori fel rydym yn ei hadnabod yn dod o'r 18fed ganrif, ar ôl i David Pritchard, rheolwr y gwesty 'Goat Hotel', oedd yn lleol i Feddgelert, addasu'r stori wreiddiol trwy enwi'r ci yn Gelert a chynnwys Llywelyn – un o enwau pwysigaf hanes Cymru – er mwyn iddo gynyddu twristiaeth yn yr ardal, ac yn fwy pwysig, creu mwy o arian! Gyda help y trigolion lleol, fe lwyddodd Pritchard i greu'r bedd ar gyfer y ci, a chynyddu'r dwristiaeth gymaint mae dal yn atynnu pobl hyd heddiw.

Mewn gwirionedd, mae'n eithaf tebygol fod y dref wedi cael ei henwi ar ôl 'Celert', a oedd yn Genhadwr Cristnogol a wnaeth symud i'r ardal yr holl ffordd nôl yn yr 8fed ganrif, bron 1000 o flynyddoedd cyn i'r stori ymddangos yn yr ardal! Erbyn hyn beth bynnag, mae'r chwedl yn cael ei gweld ar draws y byd fel symbol o beidio gwneud dewisiadau byrbwyll mewn eiliadau o emosiwn, ac felly mae'r stori enwog hon yn bwysig iawn i'n hanes ni fel Cenedl.



Draig Queen's — Cymraeg i'w Chlywed am y tro cyntaf ar RuPaul's Drag Race

Hanna Morgans
Golygydd Taf-Od

Mae RuPaul nôl ar ein sgriniau am gyfres arall o *RuPaul's Drag Race* y Deyrnas Unedig. Mi fydd dwy *drag queen* Gymreig—Actavia, 21 o'r Bala, a Marmalade, 24 o Gaerdydd yn mynd ati i ddangos eu talentau i geisio ennill teitl "Seren Drag Nesaf y Deyrnas Unedig", ac eleni, am y tro cyntaf gwobr ariannol o £25,000.

Mae Actavia yn arloesi fel y drag queen gyntaf erioed i siarad Cymraeg ar y rhaglen, gan ddweud yn ei llinell cyntaf "Dyw'r slag's 'ma ddim yn gwybod be sy'n dod amdany'n nhw... ond bu nhw".

Beth yw RuPaul's Drag Race?

Mae *RuPaul's Drag Race* yn gystadleuaeth realiti lle mae criw o *drag queens* yn cystadlu yn erbyn ei gilydd mewn ystod eang o heriau sy'n profi eu sgiliau perfformio megis canu, dawnsio, actio, ysgrifennu comedi a lip sync. Tra hefyd yn arddangos eu galluoedd gwnïo mewn tasgau creadigol amrywiol, er mwyn plesio RuPaul—y *drag queen* fyd enwog, a'i banel o feirniaid gwadd enwog.

Cafodd y gyfres gyntaf o *RuPaul's Drag Race* ei chyhoeddi yn 2009 yn America ac mae cyfres newydd ohono yn cael ei darlledu bob blwyddyn. Erbyn hyn, mae dros 45 o gyfresi gan gynnwys cyfresi deilliiedig fel *All Stars*—i'r cystadleuwyr mwyaf eiconig rhoi cynnig arall ar ennill, yn ogystal â chyfresi rhyngwladol fel y Deyrnas Unedig.

"Diolch"

Am y tro cyntaf erioed clyw'r Gymraeg ar y rhaglen droeon o weithiau yn y bennod gyntaf. Y sialens gyntaf oedd sioe dalent cabaret, cyflwynodd Actavia berfformiad dawns a rap bywiog a oedd yn cynnwys llinell yn y Gymraeg, gan ddweud "does neb yn y ras 'ma jest fel fi", a gorffennodd gyda "diolch". Er nad oedd neb o'r cystadleuwyr na'r panel yn deall un gair o'r Gymraeg mae'n drawiadol fod Actavia yn gwneud cysylltiad uniongyrchol gyda gwylywyr Cymraeg.

Yn ôl Teifi, sydd hefyd yn cael eu adnabod fel y drag queen Anniben:

"Mae'r nifer o artistiaid drag sy'n gallu siarad Cymraeg yn fach, ond yn tyfu. Fi'n teimlo mor falch i weld yr iaith yn cael ei cynrychioli ar raglen deledu fi wedi bod yn gwylio am flynyddoedd, yn enwedig gan berson cwiâr - mae'n codi'r calon. Fi'n siŵr neith hyn, yn ogystal â'r cynrychiolaeth mae Actavia a Marmalade yn dod â, mynd i agor llygaid llawer o bobl i ddiwylliant Cymraeg."

Y Ddraig a'r Fari Lwyd

Thema gyntaf y gyfres oedd 'tref enedigol', ac roedd y ddwy yn hapus i seilio eu gwisgoedd ar Gymru. Disgrifiodd Actavia ei gwisg fel "fflag Cymru wedi'i ddadadeiladu", gan ymgorffori'r ddraig trwy baentio ei hwyneb yn goch gyda cholur beiddgar, anadlu mwg, a gwisgo *bodysuit* coch wedi'i addurno â chlorian a chynffon. I gwblhau rhith y faner, gwisgodd glögin gwyrdd a gwyn tu ôl iddi.



RuPaul mewn parti yn 2008
Tarddiad: David Shankbone (via Flickr)

Cyfeillgarwch Alabama a Chymru yn Mynd ‘o nerth i nerth’

Elen Morlais Williams
Golygydd Taf-Od

Mewn ymweliad â Chaerdydd yr wythnos diwethaf, mae cynrychiolwyr o ddinas Birmingham, Alabama wedi atgyfnerthu'r cyfeillgarwch hirsefydlog rhwng Cymru a Birmingham.

Llynedd, llofnodwyd cytundeb Cyfeillgarwch Rhyngwladol rhwng Llywodraeth Cymru a Birmingham er mwyn ceisio hyrwyddo cydweithrediad ym meysydd megis y celfyddydau, addysg, economi a gofal iechyd. Ar y 26ain o Fedi, dathlwyd y fenter hon yn swyddogol gyda digwyddiad yng Nghanolfan y Mileniwm a fynychwyd gan arweinwyr lleol, cynrychiolwyr cymunedol, a llysgenhaddon diwylliannol.

Gwraidd y cyfeillgarwch rhwng Cymru a Birmingham, Ala-

bama oedd y cydymdeimlad a ddangoswyd dros 60 mlynedd yn ôl gan bobl Cymru i ddi-oddefwyr ymosodiad hiliol yn Alabama. Ar fore'r 15fed o Fedi 1963, pan oedd dwsinau o blant yn mynychu'r ysgol Sul yn Eglwys y Bedyddwyr ar 16th Street, cafodd pedair merch ysgol eu lladd mewn ymosodiad bomio hiliol yno.

Penderfynodd yr artist, John Petts bod rhaid dylunio ffenestr liw i gymryd lle yr un a ddinistriwyd. Cafodd y 'Wales Window' felly ei gyflwyno i Eglwys y Bedyddwyr ar 16th Street ym 1965 gan bobl Cymru fel arwydd o ewylllys da. Cododd bobl ar draws Cymru arian i dalu am y ffenestr lliw gan gynnwys plant o Ysgol Gynradd St Mary the Virgin yn Nhref Biwt a rhoddodd eu harian poced i helpu. Fel rhan o'u diolch, cyflwynodd y gwesteion Americanaidd Sêl Dinas Birming-

ham yn rhodd i ddisgyblion yr ysgol gan Faer Birmingham.

Yn y digwyddiad yng Nghanolfan y Mileniwm, estynnodd gôr Cymraeg Prifysgol Caerdydd, Y Waun Ddyfal groeso cynnes cerddorol i'r ymwelwyr. Rhai o'r ymwelwyr a gafodd y croeso yma oedd chwirydd y pedair merch a lladdwyd gan gynnwys Sarah Collins Rudolph.

Dywedodd Sarah: "Mae'r cwlwm rhwng Birmingham a Chymru wedi golygu cymaint i mi a sawl un arall a gafodd eu heffeithio ar y diwrnod ofnadwy hwnnw yn 1963."

"Dangosodd rhodd y Wales Window i ni fod pobl yr ochr draw i'r môr yn meddwl amdanom yn ein poen ac yn credu mewn dyfodol o obaith ac undod. Nawr, wrth sefyll yma heddiw, rwy'n cael yr un ymdeimlad o undod, gan wy-

bod bod ein cyfeillgarwch yn dal i fynd o nerth i nerth."

Mynegodd Eluned Morgan, y Prif Weinidog: "Mae'n bleser croesawu'r cynrychiolwyr o Birmingham Alabama i Gymru yr wythnos hon. Mae'n amlwg bod y cwlwm rhyngom wedi cryfhau dros amser ac yn ffynnu heddiw, gan roi cyfleoedd pellach i ni gydweithio. Nododd hefyd bod y "Wales Window wedi bod yn sylfaen i'n cyfeillgarwch a bydd yn ein hatgoffa o undod a gob-aith am genedlaethau i ddod."



Tarddiad: Daniel Morris (via Flickr)

Calan Gaeaf yng Nghaerdydd

Gwenno Davies
Cyfrannwr

Wrth i'r dyddiau fyrhau ac wrth i naws iasol gydio yn y ddinas, daw Caerdydd yn barod unwaith eto am Galan Gaeaf llawn gweithgareddau gwefreiddiol. Sdim ots beth yw eich diddordeb, mae yna lu o ddigwyddiadau i'ch cadw chi'n brys dros yr wythnosau nesaf-peidiwch ag anghofio eich gwisg ffansi!

Sinema danddaearol Calan Gaeaf
Dyddiad — 31ain o Hydref
Lleoliad — Castell Caerdydd

Gall unrhyw un ddweud eu bod wedi gwyllo ffilm mewn sinema o'r blaen, ond ydych chi erioed wedi gwyllo ffilm o dan furiau hen gastell? Dyma gyfle i fwynhau rhai o'ch hen ffefryn-

nau fel *Ghostbusters*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, a *Hocus Pocus* mewn amgylchedd hollol unigryw a newydd.

The Summoning Immersive Horror Cinema
Dyddiad — 29ain-31ain o Hydref
Lleoliad — Portland House

Opsiwn arall i'r rheini sydd wrth eu boddau o flaen y sgrin fawr yw teithio i'r bae i'r *Summoning Immersive Horror Cinema*. Nod Portland House yw i gyfoethogi eich profiad sinema arferol gydag actorion byw ac effeithiau arbennig brawychus—mae'n ddigon i godi arswyd ar unrhyw un!

Teithiau ysbrydion
Dyddiad — 12fed- 23ain o Hydref
Lleoliad — Sain Ffagan

Os yw eistedd yn yr unfan yn gwyllo ffilm yn rhy ddiflas i chi, beth am fentro draw i Sain Ffagan am daith erchyll o amgylch yr hen adeiladau hanesyddol? Cewch glywed straeon am gyfarfyddiadau ysbrydion yn yr amgueddfa, yn ogystal â chlywed am ofergoelion Cymreig am farwolaeth, galar, ac ysbrydion. Gellir hefyd gwneud cais am daith drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg wrth gysylltu â *Dark Wales Tours* yn uniongyrchol.

Bingo Lingo Calan Gaeaf
Dyddiad — 26ain o Hydref
Lleoliad — Depot

Peidiwch ag wfftio'r syniad o chwarae Bingo fel gweithgaredd ddiflas i fenywod ganol-oed — nid gem arferol o Bingo yw hon! Ewch i Depot am noson llawn diodydd dychrynlyd, gwis-

goedd ffansi, a digonedd o hwyl a sbri. Efallai mai chi fydd un o'r unigolion lwcus i ddychwelyd adref gydag un o'u gwobrau gwallgof yn eich llaw!

Bottomless Brunch wrth wyllo ffilm Beetlejuice
Dyddiad — 26ain o Hydref
Lleoliad — Lo Lounge

Mwynhewch ddiodydd diddiwedd am 60 munud a phryd o fwyd stryd wrth gamu i fyd dychrynlyd *Beetlejuice* yn y Lo Lounge ar y 26ain o'r mis. A fyddwch chi'n ddigon dewr i aros am yr ôl-barti, neu a fydd yr arswyd yn ormod i chi?

Does dim esgus 'da chi i aros adref dros y cyfnod brawychus hwn—ewch i brynu'ch tocynnau nawr!

Cymeriadau'r Mabinogi i Serennu Mewn Gêm Fideo

Poppy Goggin-Jones
Cyfrannwr Taf-Od

Yn ddiweddar cyhoeddwyd bod gêm fideo ar fin cael ei rhyddhau yn seiliedig ar chwedlau traddodiadol Cymreig y Mabinogi. Nid yn unig y bydd y gêm yn cynnwys cymeriadau'r Mabinogi, ond bydd hefyd ar gael i'w chwarae yn y Gymraeg.

Mae'r rhyddhad o gêm fideo sy'n seiliedig ar y Mabinogi yn eithriadol o bwysig ac arwyddocaol nid yn unig i ddiwylliant Cymru ond hefyd i'n hiaith. Wrth addasu'r straeon diwylliannol hyn i gyfrwng modern a rhyn-gweithiol fel gemau fideo, mae nid yn unig yn rhoi bywyd newydd i'r chwedlau traddodiadol Cymraeg hyn a oedd yn bersonol yn rhan arwyddocaol o fy addysg Gymraeg a phlentyn-dod, ond hefyd yn hybu'r Gymraeg

i'r genhedlaeth ifanc. Mae hyn yn arbennig o bwysig i siaradwr Cymraeg ifanc, fel fy hun, na chafodd gyfle i archwilio a dysgu am fy nhreftadaeth trwy gyfrwng sy'n trochi'r unigolyn yn y diwylliant i'r graddau hyn.

Yn fwy na hynny, mae'n arbennig o gyffrous clywed y bydd y gêm hon yn cael ei rhyddhau yn y Gymraeg, gan y bydd yn darparu ffordd arloesol i bobl ifanc ymgysylltu â'r Gymraeg mewn gofodau digidol cyfoes, lle mae'n aml yn cael ei thangynrychioli, gan gyfrannu o bosibl at adfywiad y Gymraeg mewn bywyd bob dydd. I mi, y gobaith yw y bydd hwn yn meithrin balchder a diddordeb yn yr iaith ymhlith chwaraewyr o Gymru, yn ogystal â'r rhai o gwm-pas y byd sydd o bosibl heb unrhyw wybodaeth neu ymwybyddiaeth flae-

norol o'r iaith Gymraeg a'i diwylliant.

Gallai'r gêm hon ddrychafu amlygrwydd Cymru ar y llwyfan diwylliannol byd-eang trwy arddangos ein mytholeg unigryw, ein hiaith hardd a'n hanes deniadol, ac mae'n gysur gwybod bod amlygrwydd ein treftadaeth a'n hiaith yn parhau i dyfu mewn byd o gyfryngau torfol gorlawn, gan sicrhau felly nad yw ein gwreiddiau fel cenedl yn cael eu hanghofio.

Yn bersonol, rwyf wrth fy modd yn gweld stori mor arwyddocaol i fytholeg Cymru yn cael ei haddasu ar gyfer cynulleidfia fodern, gan ei bod yn pontio traddodiad ac arloesedd, wrth atgyfnerthu'r syniad nad rhywbeth sydd wedi'i adael yn y gorffennol yw diwylliant Cymru ond grym byw, esblygol a all ffynnu yn yr oes ddigidol.



Tarddiad: Nick Sinclair (via Flickr)

THE TEAM



Ella Lane



Aneurin Davies



Alice Roach



James Roberts



Emily Clegg



OPINION



Chasing the Hit: Which Song Deserves the Crown as 2024's Song of the Summer?

Alexandra Bousfield
Contributor



Source: Isabella Mendes (via Pexels)

One of the terms thrown around this year has been 'Brat Summer' and if you haven't heard of it then you must have been living under a rock. Charli XCX's *Brat* truly has been the sound of the summer. Although one song on the album really stands out as encapsulating the feeling of having the best time of your life, *von Dutch*. The high energy lead single to the *Brat* album is just so addictive.

This song has been just about everywhere: clubs, TikTok, radio, you name it. Charli XCX captures the party atmosphere through a blend of pop melody and dance beats on this track. This is a composite of pop and electronic music. The song was produced with EASYFUN, similarly to one of her other song,

Speed Drive. *Von Dutch* has a very heavy bassline and synths to give that electronic feel. This was the single released before the album and I think it gave a great taste of what was to come.

The lyrics are very 'it-girl' coded. There is a lot of repetition of "I'm your number one" throughout the song. Charli XCX seems to embrace being an 'it-girl' who gets criticised but in response taunts her critics by saying, "it's okay to just admit that you're jealous of me". I think the lyrics show that public icons are hated on, but this is why they are so fascinating. Charli says she is a "cult classic", like the brand American fashion brand, Von Dutch. *Von Dutch* provides commentary on our society, where critics look to tear

people down but also shows that this is what makes our musical icons so untouchable.

The video of *Von Dutch* also adds to this idea of main character energy and rebellion. Charli XCX is seen in Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport. She is trying to evade the paparazzi, fight with the camera, and cause chaos on a plane. The video ends in Charli being strewn out on the carousel next to luggage. There is a very messy feel to the video, where she is quite often fighting with the camera and throwing punches. The camera is always following Charli and feeds into this "obsession" she describes in her lyrics.

The timing of *Von Dutch*'s release made it perfect to be a summer song. Al-

though the single dropped in February of this year, a remix with Addison Rae was then released in March. The full *Brat* album then followed, coming out in June. I think *Von Dutch* geared up excitement for the album release but releasing a remix kept it relevant throughout this period until the full album.

I honestly just keep coming back to this song and I think for me it will be synonymous with 2024's summer. It has been a very strong year for music, especially in the pop world. However, I think that the entire *Brat* album and *Von Dutch* have been the best releases of Charli XCX's career so far. Solidly crowning *Von Dutch* as my song of the summer.

A Celebration of Girlhood

Alice Roach
Opinion Editor

As I'm sure so many have, I spent my childhood and time as a teenager being ashamed of liking things that were too 'girly' and trying to prove to people around me that I had interests that weren't feminine. I never questioned why I was feeling this shame or why women, and girls specifically, were lesser, and our hobbies embarrassing. This is why I've been so enthusiastic about the recent celebration of girlhood in media and the space it creates for these young girls who feel like they're not as valued as a demographic and allows them to express that which they enjoy freely and

without shame. I believe this started with the phenomenon that was the 'Barbie Summer' of 2023 paired with the beginning of the American leg of Taylor Swift's Eras Tour. The *Barbie* movie directed by Greta Gerwig was entirely a celebration of women and worked as an introduction to feminism for young impressionable girls. The phenomenon that was 'Barbie summer' saw women and girls everywhere embrace the colour pink, a stereotypically feminine style of clothing, and not feel shame for it. This was also simultaneously happening with (primarily teenage) girls dressing up in a largely overall feminine style to attend the Eras Tour with groups of friends. This sense of camaraderie and belonging allowed girls to embrace their femininity and feel

proud of being girls. This has continued ever since with the concept of the *girl* being celebrated through many different trends such as the "hot girl walk", "girl dinner", and the "I'm just a girl". These trends have been shining a light onto a demographic which has been kept in the dark for so many years and bringing them together rather than pitting them against each other. The fact that all of these trends are rooted in a woman's enjoyment and not focused around men is what makes it so different to previous years where the majority of trends for young girls were rooted in performing for the male gaze. While obviously there is a long while to go to achieve a social sphere where girls are allowed to be girls freely, I have

really enjoyed the seemingly recent shift towards creating safe online communities for girls where they can embrace femininity without judgement and am excited to see how it progresses.



Source: Roberto Nickson (via Pexels)

The Rise of 'Core' Aesthetics: Why Every Subculture Now Needs a Label

Lottie Baston
Contributor

In today's society, every subculture is seeming to come with its own label, usually recognised by its -core suffix. From the rural aesthetic of cottagecore, to the flamboyant Barbiecore, these aesthetics are about lifestyle. They incorporate visual and artistic elements that help to express a certain mood or even identity.

However, the question is, why has this -core suffix become the go-to way to define subcultures.

The word 'aesthetic' differs from the new 'core' aesthetic. Historically, aesthetics deal with the nature and appreciation of beauty and art, whereas 'core' aesthetics latch onto

trends and change quickly. Gen Z have played a huge part in the growth of 'core' aesthetics. Their desire for expression and self-identity has fuelled the trend. For a long time, subcultures have acted in a way to help people fit in. Since the 1970s, 'subculture' has served as a key conceptual frame for sociologists' and cultural theorists' accounts of youth culture.

However, more recently, niche aesthetics have derived from the word 'hardcore'. Subcultures have always acted as a way for like-minded people to get together and share their interests. Subsequently, fandoms are created from the trends that arise. This article is going to explore the root of 'core' aesthetics, why they happen, and what they reveal about trying to categorise style and trends on the internet.

Core aesthetics emerge from subcultures and often reflect societal shifts. There is usually a cycle of how they come around. For example, a trend goes viral on TikTok then journalists write about this trend until it becomes a buzzword that everyone is using. Eventually, the trend dies out, and the majority of people will think it is 'cringe'. Usually, one aesthetic will become mainstream, and then derivatives will form. For example, cottagecore became popular during the pandemic, as people were longing for simplicity.

Consequently, farmcore became popular, creating an endless cycle which reflects the desire everyone has for self-expression. Gen Z is responsible for how quickly these change and grow, the generation grew up using social media, and platforms such as TikTok or Instagram

allow users to disseminate trends which enables the subcultures to change pretty much overnight. The rapid trend cycle is caused by the algorithm-driven nature of social media.

Whilst 'core' aesthetics have gained lots of popularity, and are usually trending, I don't believe that they will last. The excitement of these trends will fade, and people will get bored eventually. I also believe that these 'core' aesthetics will start to face a backlash, where people go against the constant need to label everything. People might start to reject them altogether, which will cause a shift from categorisation, and people may return to more natural forms of self-identity and expression.



The TV Licence: An Outdated Tax Funding a Fading BBC

James Roberts

Opinion Editor

There are several things that I and most other people dislike or even hate about life in Britain: the winters, the cost of living, bad landlords, the broken politics. On and on I can go, probably enough to fill this newspaper, and thoroughly ruin the mood of anyone who might be reading it. Bearing this in mind, I want to focus on one particular gripe of mine that has re-surfaced lately, namely the TV Licence, or “Telly Tax” as it is colloquially (and more accurately) known.

If, like me, you live in student housing you have probably received some of TV Licensing’s deceptive and threatening letters. Often written in red, these threat letters promise action—or retribution depending on how you look at it—for nonpayment of the TV Licence. This tax, always referred to as a levy on BBC broadcasts, pays for the upkeep of the aforementioned organisation. This was of course where the disgraced Huw Edwards was drawing his salary from, even after being charged with serious offences. That aside, I wish to ask the same two questions most of us are asking nowadays: firstly, why should we be compelled by the antiquated Communications Act (2003) to pay for the BBC even if we watch a livestream on YouTube? And secondly, why is TV Licensing allowed to act in such

an aggressive manner towards the public?

It seems ridiculous that in a digital download age, where the consumer has arguably been empowered like never before, that the public should be compelled to pay for the lumbering and uninnovative mass that is the BBC. Why, merely for watching a live football match on Sky, Amazon Prime or ITV, should we have to fund *Eastenders*, *Doctors*, or *Call the Midwife*?

I wrote last year about how the quality of the BBC’s history output has been on the decline for some time. It could be argued that the same decline has taken hold of most of its other departments. Its news output, especially its political coverage, shows a lack of vitality and edge. They repeat the same format of jovial and complaisant discussion, as if Robin Day is interviewing Harold Wilson. Ask yourself, have you ever seen a BBC reporter ask Keir Starmer or Boris Johnson to give a clear answer to a question, rather than settling for a half-cooked excuse? Perhaps once or twice, but nowhere nearly as much as they should. Likewise, the organisation’s entertainment output is underwhelming; especially its comedy, which has not birthed anything of note since *This Country* stopped airing. At the same time the BBC refuses to broadcast classics like *Monty Python*.

Beyond the state of the BBC, the moral indefensibility of the tax grows by the year,

people of our generation dip in and out of the BBC like any other service, so it seems bizarre that it should be given a legally protected superiority over all other media.

It is this legal protection which empowers the BBC through Capita (a private company who run TV Licensing) to sow fear in the public. You’ve probably seen at least some of this, ranging from letters informing that licensing officers “have been authorised to visit the property”, all the way up to doorstep confrontations and court action. YouTube has given some exposure to the aggressive tactics of licensing officials, and the BBC does not pursue nonpayment in the same way as it did before. Nonetheless, around 30,000 people are prosecuted every year for nonpayment. Typically, the poorest and most vulnerable of society. Foreign students are also a helpful source of revenue, as their lack of knowledge on the law means they normally pay up when faced with a threat letter. TV licensing’s website is arguably as misleading as its letters, and employs the broadest interpretation of the law as to make the watching of YouTube on a mobile phone part of its remit. The BBC and wider media have covered the aggressive tactics employed by utility companies in the past. Ignoring the obvious self-interest at play, why isn’t the same scrutiny applied to Capita?

Lisa Nandy has spoken of wanting to review the funding structures of the BBC as its char-

ter comes up for renewal. I have little hope that change as most people want will occur. The BBC is a useful tool for the government to establish and re-enforce the current social and political paradigm, and is therefore unlikely to be significantly undermined. In which case the anachronistic TV Licence will go on collecting tithes like a feudal lord, and adding further annoyance to our lives.



Source: KoolShooters (via Pexels)

Agree To Disagree: True Crime as Entertainment?

AGREE

Ella Lane

Head of Opinion

Have you noticed the rapid rise of true crime stories in the media? From informative documentaries on Netflix, dramatic adaptations on TV, and even references to killers in song lyrics, our generation cannot seem to stay away from the gory details of murderers and their motives. Some view this fixation on such horrible events as insensitive to victims of violent crimes and their families, however, this article will argue that there is a place for certain types of true crime in our media.

So why do people enjoy it? I myself cannot get enough of the genre, some of my favourites of late being Netflix’s *Worst Roommate ever* and *Don’t F*ck with Cats* for their victim-focused approach and creative retelling of events. When questioned about why they enjoy true crime, some point to feelings of adrenaline they get from true crime stories, or morbid curiosity. Others suggest that watching shows where criminals are punished by the legal system helps satiate our desire for justice, in a world where this is sometimes hard to believe in. In my opinion, the main reason why people enjoy true crime so much, is that in this world there are so many unknowns. These horrible people, who commit these atrocities that we cannot understand, make us feel scared. Therefore, to feel more in control and to gain knowledge about the motives of these criminals, we continue to engage with true crime stories.

However, there are definitely examples of true crime in the media which are insensitive and have left me feeling disgusted by their creators. One example of this is 2022’s *Dahmer* starring sex symbol Evan Peters. His uncanny portrayal of the notorious serial killer was unsettling to say the least, and choosing to cast someone considered conventionally attractive was a strange choice to me, as it led to people fetishising Jeffrey Dahmer which should never be the aim of true crime entertainment. *Dahmer*, among many other ex-

amples, glorifies the actions of the killer, putting him on a pedestal, and in turn takes the attention away from the deaths of innocent people, deplatforming the families and those who were close to the victims.

Despite examples such as *Dahmer*, I believe there are some examples of positive true crime. For example, *Keep Sweet, Pray and Obey*, as well as examples of untraditional true crime, like *The Program* and *Hell Camp*, in my opinion successfully provide those affected by abuse a positive and free space to recount the events that they have survived. What these docuseries have in common, is that they are victim-focused, and aim to raise awareness about the abuse that victims have survived. Complete with content warnings and resources that those watching can use, the stories told are not sensationalised, and allow the victims to speak their truth from start to finish.

Whether you hate true crime or can’t get enough of it, I hope my article has proved to you that there is a space for certain types of true crime in our media.



Source: cottonbro studio (via Pexels)

DISAGREE

Aneurin Davies

Opinion Editor

True crime as a genre has absolutely exploded in popularity over the past decade. Documentaries, films, books, even TikToks exploring the deaths of people at the hands of murderers have become an absolute monolith on streaming platforms and social media. But seeing so much content relating to the deaths of primarily innocent people has always seemed so odd to me. Creating content based on real murders is absolutely horrifying in theory—yet so many people are drawn to it without even considering its grim nature.

The absolute core of true crime feels rotten. Monetising the deaths of innocent people? That should be an absolutely disgusting idea to most people—but it isn’t. People flock, money in hand, to streaming sites to watch documentaries based on deaths, showing huge companies like Netflix that this genre is an absolute money-making machine. And so, more documentaries are made, more money is made, and more deaths are unearthed, just to be shown off to the world.

An argument could be made that if some of the money made from these documentaries was given to the families of the victims, that there’s some benefit from the genre. But not even this happens. Probably the most popular example of this happening is the 2022 Netflix recreation of Jeffrey Dahmer’s murders, *Dahmer*. A family member of one of the victims, Rita Isabell, spoke out, saying that neither her family, nor any of the others, received any sort of compensation from the Netflix series. So, the argument of compensation being given essentially becomes moot, in the face of corporate greed.

Furthermore, so many people in online spaces fetishise and glorify these murders and the serial killers who committed them. Easily the most obvious case of this occurring is Ted Bundy. During his trial in the 80s, many people commented on his attractiveness and this

was exacerbated by his portrayal by Zac Efron in 2019’s *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*. During this time, the internet was flooded by people talking about Bundy’s attractiveness—with no mention of his crimes! This is just one example, but the fetishisation of serial killers is absolutely aggravated by the media conglomerates who fund these documentaries and films, in order to manipulate their audience into consuming this content. An audience which consists of 80% women.

Desensitisation is another incredibly important issue that comes with consuming true crime documentaries. Naturally, if you’re constantly watching recreations of murder, torture, and rape, you become apathetic towards these horrific crimes within the real world. Instead of viewing these victims as individual deaths, you group them into a category of “Oh, just another death”. As the old adage goes: “One death is a tragedy, a hundred deaths is a statistic.” I understand the justification that some people use is that some of these true crime documentaries focus on the victims, making the viewer feel empathetic towards their murder. But is that really enough if you’re watching hundreds of these documentaries?

If you can’t tell, I’m not the biggest fan of true crime. In truth, I can barely see the pull it has on so many people. But there’s some points that I can absolutely concede, like the morbid curiosity aspect. It just isn’t for me!



Source: cottonbro studio (via Pexels)

THE TEAM



REVIEW



Emily Jo Cottle



Gemma Willmott



Lowri Jones



Angela Griffith

NEW RELEASES

This October:

The Menedez Brothers:
True Crime Netflix
Documentary

Joker: Folie à Deux
Sequel starring
Joaquin Phoenix and
Lady Gaga

Love is Blind
Return for Season 7

The Critic: Affairs, Scandals, and Commentary

Emily Jo Cottle
Head of Review

The *Critic* is set amidst the vibrant theatre scene of the 1930s and it follows the relationship between a fierce drama critic and the actress who falls victim to his callous commentary. The role of the unforgiving and savage critic, Jimmy Erskine, is played by wickedly talented Sir Ian McKellen. Nina Land, played by Gemma Arterton, is a much-beloved leading lady by London theatregoers but endeavours each performance to win the approval of Erskine. When the owner of the paper dies, his son (Mark Strong) is promoted and Jimmy Erskine's job is under threat. He is warned to make his work more palatable and less cruel or he will be cut. Jimmy, under suspicion of his boss's affliction for Nina Land, strikes up a deal with the actress. This deal acts as the catalyst for

scandal, affairs, and the downfall of their unhappy victims.

One thing I enjoyed about this film was the insight into the 1930s theatre scene and the stakes of a play's fate being the social epicentre of London. Before going to watch it, I thought it would solely focus on the dramatics of the stage, fame, and scandal and I was really intrigued by the exploration of the relationship between critic and actor, one which is often solely reserved for written commentary. In the film, you see Jimmy and Nina meeting to discuss their artistic differences and their own views of the craft of acting. I really enjoyed this scene but felt it was rushed in order to speed up the revenge plot of the protagonist. Jimmy Erskine's character was convoluted; it is hard to know what his intentions are and why he is driven to act so carelessly. We learn early on that Jimmy is homosexual, yet his struggle with prejudice is not

fully explored. This drama on the surface had everything concerning issues of 1930s social life, from closeted homosexuality, affairs, scandals, and a sudden suicide, but it felt as if each of these components was left half finished.

Due to this disjointed viewing, it seemed to me that each of these components, instead of forming a shocking climax, worked to build anxiety throughout the film as opposed to a tragedy. At points it felt as if scenes were missing, as you could not always make out how each action led to the next. When looking into this film I was curious as to why the initial date of release was 2023 when I had only just seen it in the cinema. Upon further research I saw that *The Critic* had been released and then shortly retracted for scenes to be reshot. I found this interesting, as this perhaps explains this incoherence I felt between scenes. I thought each storyline was clever

and beautifully acted, but not detailed nor dramatic enough.

The cast is completely star-studded, from Ian McKellan, Gemma Arterton, Mark Strong, Ben Barnes, and Lesley Manville and—unlike Jimmy Erskine—I could not fault the acting in this performance. The whole cast was incredible from start to finish, and at points I felt the actors were doing everything they could within the restraints of the writing. Had there been more scenes or more build up to the 'shocking' revelations, I feel this film could have been great. I would have loved to see more of what I enjoyed about this film, like the witty and catty Ian McKellan and the anxiety of performance. Sadly, and rather ironically, I feel like a catty critic of this film that had so much potential.

Heartstopper Season 3: The Best Season Yet

Sam Wainwright
Contributor

Suffice it to say that *Heartstopper* fans have been highly anticipating its third and latest season, and, well, let's say that some tears were shed. Alice Oseman, the immensely talented creator of the original graphic novels, has undoubtedly outdone herself, and this may just be the best season yet. Now, fair warning, it predominantly features some mature and adult themes. However, they're ever more meaningful as they add verisimilitude to the character's growth and development, complemented by the incredibly talented actors and crew, who really make *Heartstopper* the ultimate feel-good queer romance experience.

The show's central couple, Nick (Kit Conner) and Charlie (Joe Locke), are in love (oooooh). It is heartwarming to see them explore the many joys and challenges of navigating a teenage relationship, and a testament to the genius writing and dedication that goes into making and producing the show, as this series, in particular, walks the line between idealism and escapism for the viewer, whilst addressing some hard-hitting topics that can feel all too real. Keen-eyed viewers, as well as those who have read the comics, were likely bracing for impact from the very first episode, as Charlie's problems with eating are an integral part of the storyline, as well as how his sister, Tori (Jenny Walser), who really gets her moment this season, and his boyfriend encourage him to seek professional help. These challenging scenes are complemented masterfully by an array of memorable music tracks, such as Tom Odell's *Black Friday*, which makes an upsetting

series of flashbacks midway through the series all the more heartbreaking. Needless to say, Charlie's eating disorder and body dysmorphia are handled delicately, though as true to real life, there is no quick fix: he has to learn to challenge his compulsions, and, when he has a bad day, how to accept support from those who love him the most.

In the comics, Nick's mum, played by Olivia Coleman in the previous two seasons, listened to and relieved her son's frustrations with not knowing how to help Charlie. However, due to scheduling issues, Coleman is sadly missing for season 3. In her absence, Nick's auntie, Diane, played by Hayley Atwell, steps in to provide guidance and support. Atwell gives an emotionally tender performance in a memorable scene when the extended family go on holiday to Menorca in episode 2. Nick confides in his aunt about Charlie's state of mind, who gently explains that no matter how strong his love for his boyfriend may be, it cannot cure his mental illness. I also think that Atwell's outstanding acting ability and the character's medical background add more authenticity to her advice—who knew Peggy Carter would be a fantastic aunt?

On a lighter—or should I say—raunchier note, the show features another prominent theme: sex. Given the maturity of the characters, this is not much of a surprise. Still, it is beautifully encapsulated, despite the “cucumber shenanigans” in the Year 11 sex ed class (honestly, where is Jean Milburn when you need her?). Elle, played by Yasmine Finney, knows she wants to be more intimate with her boyfriend, Tao (William Gao). However, as a trans teenage girl, this

level of intimacy proves to be more complicated than she anticipated. The show particularly shines as it effortlessly unpacks these emotions and gestures to the importance of boundaries and communication when taking your relationship to the next level.

It's apparent that this season certainly has more grit than before. At the same time, how it handles the intricacies and complexities of teenage relationships is second to none. For example, though the show has to maintain its idealism, with Charlie successfully advancing on his path to recovery, anorexia is still the deadliest mental illness in the UK, and as is highlighted in the show, receiving treatment doesn't necessarily help those afflicted. Some may even leave the experience in a far worse state. Again, this is where I have to applaud the show for considering the harsh reality, even though it doesn't necessarily follow that pattern itself. As somebody whose own mum was anorexic during her teenage years, I found the scenes between Joe Locke and the psychiatrist, Geoff (Eddie Marsan), incredibly moving, as well as those demonstrating Charlie's rocky relationship with his own mother, played by Georgina Rich.

Charlie undergoes significant growth this season, and his boyfriend does, too. Nick not only has to come to terms with his limitations in how much he can give, but he also has to face the daunting task of selecting his uni options—will he choose to stay close to Charlie to avoid straining his relationship? Or will Nick put himself first for a change and prioritise what he wants? Such a conundrum reminds me of advice I once received from my chemistry teacher,

which was, in essence, a testament to not following your boyfriend to uni or, in this case, not going to a specific university because of said boyfriend. Let's hope Nick chooses wisely (and that Netflix green-lights a fourth season, pronto). In summation, season 3 of *Heartstopper* is a celebration of inclusivity. The show, an idyllic encapsulation of queer teenage romance, continues to delve into the characters' journeys of self-discovery. Whether it's their sexuality, relationships, or familial grievances, *Heartstopper* covers all the bases.

It's a perfect comfort watch, filled with moments that will have you kicking your legs in excitement and anticipation, grinning with unequivocal ecstasy, and, yes, occasionally shedding a tear. This new series balances its moments of joy and sadness to create an emotionally engaging, ever-changing, idealistic, but also harsh world with abundant relatable moments for all viewers. The feeling I had after finishing the last episode is indescribable; this latest series is unquestionably worth watching. I also urge you to watch the first two seasons if you haven't already, as they're filled with subtle clues for the third series, and they cement *Heartstopper's* legacy as a cinematic masterpiece.

Kneecap Review: An Authentic Portrayal of Irish History

Angela Griffith
Review Editor

K*neecap* is officially Ireland's entry to the Best International Feature category at the Oscars. It is a mildly-fictionalised Irish language biopic following the rise of Irish-speaking, middle-finger-giving, drug-dealing West Belfastian rappers Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh (Mo Chara), Naoise Ó Cairealláin (Móglai Bap) and JJ Ó Dochartaigh (DJ Próvaí) during the aftershock of the Troubles. As stated by Liam Óg—"it's like the trauma our ancestors suffered has inserted itself in our genetic code".

Although a lot of the comedy during the film is built on specific reference to Irish history, the script and timing is so witty, complete with slick boyish hand-written scribbles over the screen (that hints somewhat at Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting*), the comedy works throughout, regardless of how much you know about Irish history. This is helped

by the depth of the character's backstories, which brilliantly immerses the audience into the world of 2010s Belfast. We are entrusted with the knowledge that Naosie's former Republican paramilitary dad has faked his death to escape from the likes of Detective Ellis, highlighting themes of identity and the weight of familial legacy on Naosie, and on his shut-in and isolated mother, who serves to emphasise the psychological toll that such a life can take on individuals left behind and the lasting scars of trauma.

Liam's story is less introspective and is mostly developed through his romance with a Unionist Protestant girl called Georgia—who (spoiler alert) turns out to be the niece of Detective Ellis, which crucially acts as a microcosm of the potential for unity. However, Georgia's link to Detective Ellis signifies the weight of legacy and the unresolved tensions that still exist. By showcasing these contrasting attitudes, *Kneecap* emphasises the possibilities of reconciliation while acknowledging the difficulties posed by the

past. Ultimately, this dynamic between Liam and Georgia is a clever way of encapsulating the broader struggle for a more peaceful future amidst the lingering shadows of historical conflict.

The film begins with Mo Chara, held in police custody after being caught drug-dealing in a rave, who refuses to speak English to his nemesis, the pro-British Detective Ellis. This results in teacher and musician JJ Ó Dochartaigh being awoken in the middle of the night to hastily interpret what makes a hilarious scene between the three characters. During this interrogation, JJ discovers Mo Chara's notebook of anti-authoritarian, drug-fuelled, Irish language lyrics, puts them to music, and (then following a brilliant scene of Mo Chara's run-in with the Orange Order) *Kneecap* is born and quickly gains popularity with the Belfast youth, to the horror of Detective Ellis, and the Republican Action Against Drugs.

Interestingly, *Kneecap* gains fame amidst

the political atmosphere of the cultural fight for Irish language to be recognised as an official language by the state, which creates a tension as to whether *Kneecap*'s identity as "low-life-scum" and "hoods" in their rapping is a positive or negative publicity for the Irish language. This is explored through JJ's partner, the public advocate for the recognition for Irish as an official language. She suffers from the publicity of *Kneecap*'s lyrics during her TV interview, when the journalist utilises their negative, crude use of the Irish language in their songs against her arguments.

Regardless of how the debate plays out, it's very clear that the reception of *Kneecap* (band and film) has been inspirational for those wishing to learn, or those already fluent in Irish Gaelic. Seen as the effects of British colonialism can be felt in over ninety countries, and in many languages, I would argue the sentiment of this film could be felt universally and without a doubt will ring true for its Welsh audiences too.

Unwanted Flesh: A Whimsical Exhibition of The Human Body

Emily West
Contributor

U*nwanted Flesh* is an exhibition showcasing the work of Delphi Campbell and her exploration of disability and sexuality through luxuriously tactile mediums. The exhibition is a deeply personal study of the artist's body, presented through an eclectic assortment of materials, ranging from smooth silks to tightly knitted wool. The collection of her work appears to demonstrate the complex and emotional relationship an individual has with their own body, more specifically a disabled body through a queer lens.

The exhibition begins with her initial paintings, which appear to have inspired the rest of her project. The small paintings feature striking naked self-portraits of the artist exuding a powerful vulnerability, reminiscent of Egon Schiele. They are both captivating and uncomfortable in equal measure, as they do not seek to flatter the female body. They present a rawness through red, bony elbows and shoulders, yet this is not at the expense of their beauty. The brutally honest depiction of a body alludes to the theme of otherness that is apparent in Campbell's work. Her paintings reflect the juxtaposition of the joy and pain that comes with having a body, and in the context of chronic illness, the notion that your own body can fail you.

Campbell alludes to her experience of chronic illness in a wall made up of various materials stretched over wooden frames inspired by medical micrographs of her cells. In doing so, Campbell turns the micro into macro, her work being noticeably large in size, making it evermore impactful to the viewer. As the exhibition transitions from painting to textile, it creates a powerful desire in the viewer to reach out and touch the artwork and explore their contrasting textures. Campbell notes that there is a sense of "untouchability" in relation to the disabled community, and here she directly seeks to contradict that. She combines the realities of chronic illness with sexuality, as the exhibition is united in the theme of a hot, sensuous and playful pink. Its colour palette is clever in its multitude of connotations. It

draws the viewer's mind to that of raw flesh, some pieces being akin to skin stretched across a canvas, ready for inspection. Yet simultaneously, it alludes to sex and the desire to be touched. It is feminine, garish, and unapologetically loud. Campbell's art addresses uncomfortable topics which people often shy away from through enticing the viewer to touch and feel her work. Furthermore, in the culmination of the exhibition, Campbell allows the viewer to quite literally become part of the artwork itself.

The pinnacle of the exhibition is a mosaic of fleshy pink and red fabrics that stretch across the floor, ceiling and walls at the back end of the studio. Campbell invites the viewer to remove their shoes and step inside the strange, padded, womb-like nest which consists of a plethora of textures. Hot pink faux fur is sewn alongside cyst-like rubber sacks. Red stuffed fabric hangs from the ceiling like a giant uvula above your head and knitted swirls lie under your feet like veins. To top it off, the ominous thud of a beating heart is emitted from the walls. Campbell's centrepiece encourages her audience to sit and stay a while, as if they were red blood cells in a giant body made of textiles. It is an excellent reminder of the individual relationships we all have with our bodies, one that is equally unnerving as it is comforting. *Unwanted Flesh* is a must-see and is showcased at Cardiff Made Gallery in Roath.



Twisters: The Summer Film that Took Audiences by Storm

Lowri Jones
Review Editor

Whenever a sequel is released in the cinema, I approach it with caution, as many films miss the mark, not living up to the original. The bar is upheld by the likes of the 2022 film *Top Gun: Maverick* which was a success in both the box office and with its audience. It's safe to say that *Twisters* does carry the nostalgia of the original whilst also being a strong sequel to the similarly-named 1996 classic by Jan de Bont.

The cast elevates the film greatly with the likes of Glen Powell, who is becoming the go-to male lead in Hollywood in recent years, starring alongside *Normal People* breakout star Daisy Edgar-Jones. Powell (*Anyone But You*, *Hit Man*) is no stranger to leading a cast and does so in *Twisters* excellently as the cocky and arrogant tornado wrangler Tyler Owens. He has a talent for luring you in with his charming and charismatic performance. Though you are wary of his character and his antics initially, you are soon won over by the character's soft side and chemistry with co-star Daisy Edgar-Jones. The British actor takes on the role of meteorologist and former storm chaser Kate Carter—and does so with a flawless American accent. She brings an understated vulnerability to the character whilst also being a compelling and strong character who ultimately faces her demons.

It's worth noting that viewing this film is not going to increase your knowledge of tornadoes or how to potentially survive one, but it is everything you could want from a summer flick. A more central aspect of this film is its romance; the chemistry between the leads is palpable

and truly the beating heart of the film. The action scenes closely follow. The original film was groundbreaking in its marrying of both visual and practical effects, and this sequel's special effects were similarly strong and looked highly realistic. The most action-packed sequence is at the penultimate part of the film, where a large tornado hits a small town and everyone is forced to flee to safety, with Tyler taking shelter in a movie theatre with Kate until she flees to save her friend in the eye of the storm. The sequence has your heart racing from beginning to end until the tornado eventually passes and Kate is cared for by Tyler.

The promotion for the film by Powell and Edgar-Jones created a lot of buzz in the lead up to the release, as many were lured into their press interviews by their chemistry and a few brief appearances by Powell's dog Brisket, who has become a celebrity in his own right. These viewers in particular were left wanting more in the final scene when Tyler goes after Kate to presumably confess his feelings that have been hinted at throughout the film. Though the lead up is swoon-worthy, the payoff was slightly underwhelming to many viewers, causing a stir online.

Ultimately, the film was a box-office success—more so in the States than globally, but it still managed to lure a large viewership of action lovers looking for crazy special effects as well as an older audience searching for a touch of nostalgia. While the film is not by any means groundbreaking, it still radiates joy and humour, encapsulating a nostalgic summer feeling that is rare in media today. *Twisters* is definitely worth your time on a film night and can be enjoyed by a variety of audiences. Maybe not if you have a fear of tornadoes though.



Source: texaus1 (via Flickr)

THE IRIS PRIZE

An Interview with the Winner of The Iris Prize: *Blood Like Water* Director Dima Hamdan



(L-R) Adeeb Safadi and Ruba Blal rehearsing with director Dima Hamdan

Gemma Willmott
Review Editor

Transcribed by Kait Hooper

The Iris Prize is the largest LGBTQ+ short film prize in the world. Based in Cardiff, The Iris Prize awards £30,000 to the winner to make another LGBTQ+ film shot in Wales, which this year is awarded to Dima Hamdan, director of *Blood Like Water*. In the film, protagonist Shadi and his family are faced with an impossible decision: whether to collaborate with the Israeli police or a gay sexual blackmail video of Shadi will be sent to their community. In 14 minutes and 24 seconds, Hamdan explores the complexities of loyalty, family relationships, and the understanding she shares for Palestinian families facing this horrible reality. I had the pleasure of speaking with her about all things *Blood Like Water* this week while interning with the Iris Prize LGBTQ+ Film Festival.

How do you hope that *Blood Like Water* will resonate with audiences? Particularly with audiences of different backgrounds than yourself?

To be honest, when I did the film, I had my audience in mind. You know, I was thinking about a Palestinian audience, [...] your first audience always must be your local audience. If it resonates with them, it resonates with the world. I've seen so many times where films might be lacking in sincerity, and that's because they're contrived,

they're manufactured for a Western audience or a non-local audience. So, a starting point always is my people in Palestine.

Because, you know *Blood Like Water* is unlike any other film that I've done in the past, it is about tackling an issue. You know, the fact that this is based on true stories: gay Palestinian men are very vulnerable, and if they're vulnerable, the entire society is vulnerable because they're so easy to recruit. I wanted to talk about that with a local audience, that was my starting point. [...]

I didn't set out to make an LGBTQ+ film, I wanted to make a film about choice. About the options that a family like Shadi's has. It just happened to be that, in real life, this issue is the most difficult. I wasn't sure if I qualified as an LGBT film because, as an ally of the community but not from the community, and the question of representation, you're never sure if that is the criteria. My friends told me: "No, it's a very important thing, you have to show this on platforms." Especially because there's always this perception that Israel and Tel Aviv are the gay capitals of the world, the most tolerant place, gay pride in Israel is the most important event of the year, and people always celebrate that part. What they don't realise is that they're oppressing the gay community in Palestine, and to celebrate gay pride in Tel Aviv is pinkwashing the occupation. So, this film must be seen by the community worldwide. So, I'm very excited to be at Iris.

What kind of questions and conversations are you hoping to provoke with the film? Do

you think it's relevant to broader LGBTQ discussions that are prevalent at the moment, or do you think it will provoke something new?

Well, as an ally of the community, I'm also an outsider. So, if anything, this festival is going to be a huge education for me about what are the kinds of discussions, themes, topics, and issues. [...] Is [*Blood Like Water*] going to contribute to the wider discussion? I certainly hope so, I think it's very important for me as a Palestinian that people realise that there's a shared struggle against oppression, against these dark forces that are trying to wipe this side of existence, we're not a conflict that is far away. This war has everything to do with the people here, especially in the UK because the government is complicit. So, I'm sort of coming with my message, I want people to watch this and—it feels weird because, compared to all the other horrific scenes we've heard in the last year; the torture, the killing, the starvation, raping the inmates in jails. [...] I think I'm waiting for the screening to see how people react to it, and what kind of questions are going to be asked, I'm hoping that it will keep Palestine alive in people's minds because when you're into the genocide, we seem to not matter anymore.

And it was the anniversary [of the start of the war] yesterday, wasn't it?

Yes, it was the anniversary. So I think it's poignant that we're coming to the theatre on the first

anniversary to remind people, because right now, it's impossible to isolate this issue from everything that is happening in Palestine, an entire nation is at risk, it's not about—you know, how usually when they talk about a war or a conflict, and then they focus on women, children and the elderly, like "these are the most vulnerable" but in Palestine, everyone is vulnerable, everyone. So, I think this is what I'm trying to remind people. If you think this is "outrageous", keep it in mind, this is happening right now.

Would you say that at the heart of the film is the moral conflict or the political conflict?

It's the moral conflict, the political conflict for me—I wasn't interested in showing what the Israelis do. It is very clearly targeting, there's nothing there to explore, and the occupying of power anywhere in the world is going to look for the vulnerable, dark secrets and the poor segments of the people they are trying to control. [...] But I did it for my Palestinian audience, so I wasn't interested in telling them "Look what the Israelis are doing", they know what the Israelis are doing. For me, the bigger conflict is the moral issue, what does it mean to sacrifice, because you must understand that this is a very, very big deal. I mean, I come from a relatively conservative household, so I understand the notions of honour and reputation and all these things, these are very important values for my people. So, I can't jump over them and pretend that they're not important, they are important, and this is where my starting point is. I wanted to make a film where the parents that are like Shadi's parents can sit in

the theatre and feel that they're seen and heard.

[...] I wanted to create the fact that Shadi can feel for a moment that he can safely return home that night, and tell [his parents], halfway through the film. It tells you he becomes closer with his family. In most cases, the kids are not that close, they can't come home and say to the parents what Shadi did with his parents. But I still want those parents to understand that this film understands their moral conflict, that it understands that this is a very, very big deal for them. You can understand it from the father's part in the film, where he says to his wife "Okay, even if I didn't have a problem with him being gay", which means "I do have a problem with him being gay, talk me through it, how am I supposed to protect him? When did the video come out?" So, I want the parents, when they see this film, to understand that this film is about them, to feel that they're seen and that they're heard. Which is to answer your question, it's more about understanding the moral conflicts that these people face.

The film ends on a bit of a—I don't want to say—cliffhanger, but you're desperate to know what happens after [the blackmail film is released].

[...] Well, I think, when it comes out, in a situation like this, the Israelis will make an example out of this family. They will, the video will go viral, which is, I felt, rather than providing it as a clear answer, I was hoping to convey it in the sense of trepidation, the feel in the very last because they know it's going to happen.

I just thought, if it was ten minutes longer, what would that look like?

Well, I completely forgot, we did have a 'day after' scene. We shot it, but it didn't work. What we had in the last scene was, it's a beautiful morning the next day and the neighbour is walking down the street and she's talking to her friend in a coded language to say that Gahed came, and she saw him, and she's very happy. Then suddenly, she gets this disgusting video on

her phone, and then you see all the neighbours are getting the video, and then you realise that the Israelis delivered on the threat. We shot it, it didn't look very good, and then when we watched it, we felt even if it worked well, it was not going to add anything. [...] It made sense to stop everything in the room, and then everything is this pressure-cooker situation. [...]

So, have you seen the reaction to the film in person before?

No, this will be the first time. Of the thirty-seven festivals, I only attended one festival in person, which was in Berlin. [...] And I wanted to apologise to [the audience]! Because I could hear sniffing in the theatre like people were crying. [...] I'm hoping that my film adds to the repertoire of [Iris'] films, that it's something that hasn't been done before. You know, that would be a huge badge of honour, if somebody says to me "I've seen a lot of queer films, and yours is different", it means I've contributed something.

Do you think that you'll cover any similar subject matter again in future?

Well, *Blood Like Water* was taken out of a future project that I've been writing for many years [...] called *Amnesia*, and it talks about broader societal issues. It's a crime thriller, like a political thriller of a guy who wakes up in the middle of the town of Jericho, in the middle of the night. He's got total amnesia, and then his journey to and through his memory reveals dark secrets about the town and amnesia becomes a metaphor for their collective amnesia. Then there is a mystery about a young man, and everybody knows his story but nobody ever talks about it. [...]

Do you have any plans for what you are making next, short-wise?

Well, I plan to shoot my first feature. [...] But I mean, to be very honest, I haven't had a single

creative thought since the war started. I have not written a single thing; I have only managed to finish one book—I'm paralysed from inside. I just only started writing in my diary again. You know, *Amnesia* is on its way to being made because it has been written and rewritten and gone through multiple development labs before the war started. I think I managed to finalise it and get one draft in at the beginning of the year, and I have not seen it since. Because if you asked me this question before the war, I would've said "I would love to forever make short films, whenever I can." I don't think I'll ever have a career in filmmaking though. [...]

I mean, I would like that, but I've been doing this for many, many, many years and projects always fall through, so I'm trying not to obsess over whether I'm going to have a career, and what defines a career. If I make 3 or 4 more films before I die, then that'll be wonderful—but maybe not! I do it because it saves my soul. And if it gets to a point where you're in the industry and you feel drowned by the sickness that is in the industry and it's no longer fun, then I don't want to do it.

Is it important to you to tell stories that are close to home? What do you think about the debate regarding "who is qualified to tell which stories"? Do you think you can only tell stories that are within your sphere of knowledge?

Well, I certainly welcome the idea of making films that are not for my part of the world. But I need to feel something for the story like it needs to touch me on a personal, visceral level. I mean, that's who I am as a filmmaker, other people are more experimental; there are more poetic; and then their work transcends borders and transcends all these issues about conflicts and causes. I'm a different kind of filmmaker. I feel that because I was a journalist, so I continue to approach things from a very factual perspec-

tive. So, I need to feel something that resonates with me. [...]

Having said that, by the same token, I find it incredibly irritating when Western filmmakers come and decide they want to make films about our part of the world. That I think should be forbidden for a few years [...].

I feel like there's a level of understanding that you can't possibly grasp if you're so far away. That's quite a hot-button issue now, in the queer space and in the wider political space, of who can tell what story.

This is why I was wondering, you know, like can I show, will my film be considered a queer film if I am not queer? One friend of mine said to me, you know, she was quite adamant that I don't qualify if I'm not from the community. Like I shouldn't be speaking on behalf of the community. Or, you know, "Good on you, you've made a good film, but you don't get to call it a queer film." I was like "Ooh, okay. [Holding her hands up in surrender] Sorry!" And then multiple queer festivals were like "No, we want to have your film".

[...] I didn't set out to make a queer film, I set out to make a film about something that resonated with me. It took 2 years of talking to people and asking people. I did a development lab in Paris with Palestinian mentors, and they threw all sorts of tough questions at me, [...] They said "Are you making this because queer films are in vogue? Be honest." I said "No, of course not," and they said "Exactly. So, if you know you're not making it because—if you know for sure you're not that kind of filmmaker, then what story are you telling? It's a story about choice." They were being tough for a reason, and I owe them a lot.

Every element of *Blood Like Water* feels intentional to the viewer. To me, Dima Hamdan was well deserving of the Iris Prize: they champion "excellence in storytelling", and Hamdan exemplifies this in her film.

The Opening Night of The Iris Prize

Henry Moxon
Head of Spotlight

Being an advocate of better queer representation in media, I was immediately drawn to the Iris Prize film festival. Not only is it a space where queer and trans people can see themselves represented on the screen, it acts as an environment in which you can meet other lovers of queer film.

The four films, *Teth*, *Bender Defenders*, *Fistior*, and *Where are all the Gay Superheroes?* all shone brightly in different ways. They touched on themes like acceptance, queer/trans representation, self-love and even Welsh Folklore through the mediums of comedy, documentary, horror and action respectively.

Teth—my favourite film of the night—is a Welsh-spoken film that focuses on the characters of Ioan, a trans man who just had top surgery, and his Dad, who was struggling to find the right way to communicate with his son. After he removes the plasters that protect his nipples, one his them falls off, after which Ioan's dog decides to eat it (as well as running away with the plastic penis he has bought for himself). After a heart-to-heart conversation with his father, an image of a trans male version of Jesus and a punch to the face of a transphobic vicar, *Teth* ends with Ioan and his dad burning his binder—marking an end to their previously strenuous relationship. This film was the best of the night and had the entire theatre laughing. It

was meaningful, thought-provoking and really funny—everything I like in a film—and was a brilliant way to start the night.

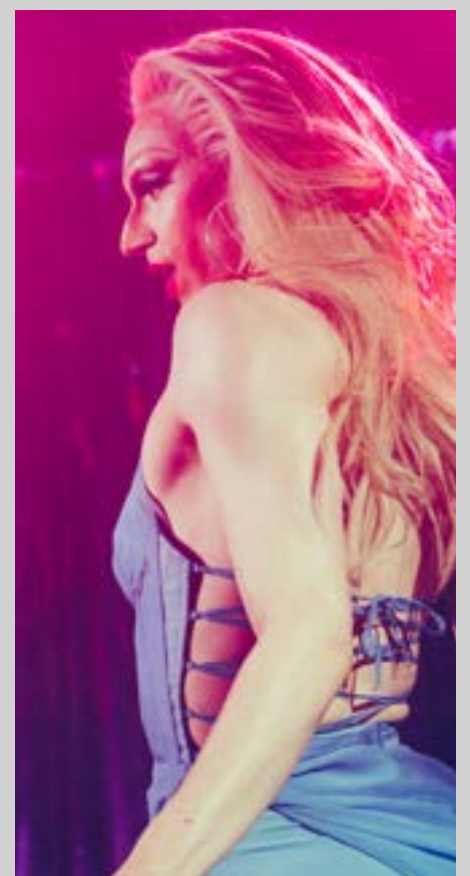
The second film, a documentary highlighting the martial arts club Bender Defenders, was a brilliant way to highlight the importance of sport for queer and trans people. The feeling of community that director Ira Putilova conveyed and the safe space that was created undoubtedly reshapes that way many queer and trans people feel about sport. Those talking throughout the film clearly loved the environment they were in and felt safe opening up about their positive and negative experiences in sport. At a time where the existence of trans people seems to constantly being questioned, especially their place in sport, the film was a reminder of the strength of the queer community and its ability to make a safe space for everyone, regardless of sexuality or gender identity.

Film three was a Welsh language horror film called *Fisitor* which combined the themes of grief and loneliness with Welsh folklore. After the death of his husband from illness, Ioan is stalked by a frightening creature who wants to prey on his grief-stricken state. Being entirely in black and white, the film utilised the contrast of the two to create tension and uneasiness as the creature's white animal skull mask emerges from the shadows. The film plays really well with light and shadow—assisted by the black and white filming—and this makes the film both gripping and scary. As someone who doesn't particularly like films in a horror genre,

I thought the film was really engaging and had a really interesting depiction of grief through use of the supernatural.

We come to my most anticipated film of the night *Where are all the Gay superheroes?* As a lover of all things Marvel and DC, and a lover of all things queer, this film was the one I was looking forward to the most. Set in a singular location, two male superheroes fight a killer robot, and discuss whether there can ever be and out-and-proud gay superhero. With a tragic ending and a thought-provoking message, the film certainly wasn't what I was expecting. Perhaps my obsession with the superhero genre meant I was assuming the short film would have more action and special effects—an assumption that left me pleasantly surprised after watching the film. The overall message of the film left me thinking, potentially more than the other films did. Will there ever be a day where queerness in a superhero is seen as a strength, not a weakness? The film's question about masculinity was echoed by Tom Paul Martin, the director, in a Q&A afterwards, where he suggested that the masculinity associated with the superhero genre, currently, means that a gay superhero simply won't be as profitable.

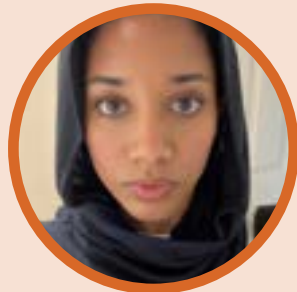
The opening night of the Iris Prize left me thinking. My mind was full of questions about acceptance, public perception of queerness and transness, community and self-love—questions I'm sure will remain with me for a long time. The night was thought-provoking, moving and so queer, and it's a night unlike any other.



Source: The Iris Prize



Lauren Tutchell



Laila Dawelbeit



Adam Dunstan



Luke Tonkinson



Thomas Wilson

Labour Cuts Universal Winter Fuel Payment for Over 10 Million Pensioners

Lauren Tutchell
Head of Politics

Avocado toast. Netflix subscriptions. Starbucks. We young people are all too familiar with hearing these criticisms from the boomers whenever we moan about the fact that the simple act of buying a house has become almost impossible for our generation. Oh, how the tables have turned as we are now expected to be outraged that millions of wealthy pensioners will no longer receive free money from the state.

When Gordon Brown introduced the Winter Fuel Payment (WFP) in 1997, pensioners were significantly poorer than people of working age, pensions were linked to inflation and there was no triple lock; so the annual tax-free payment of £100–£300 was viewed as a helpful and necessary form of government support.

However, over the past 25 years, pensioners have become steadily healthier and wealthier. According to ONS data, one in four pensioners live in a millionaire household. Just under half of pensioners are now in the top half of the population as a whole by income. The “baby boomer” generation have been hailed as the “the richest generation in history”.

Yet the British welfare state still treats old age as a proxy for need, giving £2bn a year to pensioners through the WFP, regardless of how wealthy they are. Or so they did, until the new Labour

Government came into power this July and announced they would be restricting the WFP only to those on Pension Credit or other benefits, reducing the number of claimants by over 10 million. They hope will save taxpayers £1.5bn a year.

The move to means-testing the WFP was justified by the Treasury, arguing that “this will better target support for heating costs at those who need it”. Speaking on the cut, Chancellor Rachel Reeves said: “The decision about winter fuel, it isn’t a position that we wanted to be in. No one wants to be in the position, but you’ve got to make those sorts of choices.” But did they really have to make this choice?

Charity Age UK, who have been critical of the cut, argue that this decision will be detrimental to the 2.5 million pensioners on low incomes which aren’t quite low enough to qualify for pension credit.

Commenting on this point, Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis said: “While there’s an argument for ending its universality due to tight national finances, it’s being squeezed to too narrow a group—just those on benefits and Pension Credit. Yet again, those just above the thresholds will be hardest hit.”

Perhaps the biggest critique of all is that the cut to WFP won’t even save the Government as much money as they anticipated. Following the announcement, applications for pension credit have increased by 152%. On current trends, data suggests there could be an additional

158,000 claims, costing £246 million.

But Labour aren’t necessarily viewing this increased uptake as a bad thing, with a government spokesperson saying: “We want people to get the benefits they are entitled to, which is why the government is working hard to drive up pension credit uptake. We are committed to supporting pensioners—with millions set to see their state pension rise by £1,700 this parliament through our commitment to the triple lock.”

According to ONS data, the proportion of over-65s with a total wealth above £1 million has grown from 9% to 27% since 2010. Yet, it’s not just about millionaires. Many other pensioners are asset wealthy due to property they own that has benefited from booming housing markets.

Speaking of this, Liz Emerson, CEO of the Intergenerational Foundation, a charity that campaigns for youth-friendly government policy, said: “When you combine housing wealth and pension wealth, older people have been doing far better than the younger generation over recent years... Should these pensioners be subsidised by younger taxpayers to stay in a valuable home? It seems to us to be intergenerationally unfair.”

This point was unintentionally yet hilariously highlighted in a recent Conservative advert where they interviewed pensioners who will be losing out on the WFP, yet eagle-eyed viewers noticed expensive decor, top-name coffee machines, and a grand piano in the background of the hous-

es of the poor old pensioners who are choosing between “eating and heating because of Labour”. The magnum opus of this controversial clip though came from one gentleman wearing a Rolex watch estimated to cost around £17,000 as he moaned about losing out on the £200 payment.

Perhaps the most frustrating part about this is the fact that there are over 4.3 million children currently living in poverty in the UK (which is double the amount compared to pensioner poverty), and yet when the two-child benefit cap was put in place by the Conservatives, no one seemed to bat an eyelid. To highlight the hypocrisy even more, child benefits are already means-tested, meaning many struggling parents just above the threshold are excluded from support. If we’re content with means testing benefits for children, why shouldn’t we be content with means testing benefits for pensioners?

If the younger generation is expected to fend for itself, surely those with Rolexes and grand pianos can afford to lose a small slice of state-funded pie. In a time of limited resources, maybe it’s time we reconsider what ‘need’ really means—because if we’re content to tighten the belts around children living in dingy flats where they share a bedroom with three siblings and are going to school unwashed and hungry, we shouldn’t be loosening them for boomers living in four-bedroom houses and wearing designer watches.

“Defund Universities who are not Conservative” Proclaims Liz Truss

Aneirin Jones
Contributor

Speaking at a fringe event at the 2024 Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham last week, Liz Truss took aim at the “institutions of wokery” as foundational contributors to the overall “decline of Western civilisation”.

When pressed on the issue, Truss explained that there is a “complete intolerance for conservatism” and “people on the right” within these institutions; claiming that conservatives in academia are being “hounded out and not allowed to exist”. She ultimately declared that such institutions should be “defunded” if they do not uphold conservative values. One such specific example of this which Truss used was the Hope Not Hate group being “appallingly funded by the Home Office”. It is worth noting that this is something of a half-truth and that the Home Office has absolutely no monetary link between

themselves and any political advocacy by Hope Not Hate. They campaign against racism and fascism and as a result it is deeply telling that Truss would choose to attack the exposure of such a group as “woke” and “unconservative.”

When pressed on what “woke” actually meant, Truss claimed that the Equality Act (2010) and the Gender Act (2004) were “major contributors to the country becoming more woke” in an appallingly one-eyed and almost inhumane statement. By making the case that such acts had made things worse, Truss opens the door to a world of deeply troubling interpretations.

Would Britain therefore be better if such acts were repealed? Would people be happier and better off if marginalised groups in society were once again denied basic freedom of expression?

Academia was not the only institution targeted by the sweeping sword of Truss’s attack. She also claimed

that the left is using the “capture of the media” to promote their views. The rise of populist paradise X (formerly Twitter) under tech billionaire Elon Musk has now seen up to 53% of US Republicans claiming that X is “mostly good for democracy”—a figure which has tripled in the last two years, directly undermining Truss’s statement.

In the more established national media, BBC Director General Tim Davie has a history of right-wing conservative affiliations, standing as Deputy Chairman of Hammersmith and Fulham Conservative Association in the 1990s.

It is therefore difficult to interpret Truss’s statement of media being “captured by the left” as anything more than rather misleading. Why therefore should we listen? Truss’s statements are easily ridiculed and undermined, and one could make a strong argument not to give a figure like her a platform at all. However, this is directly the point for which Truss argues, yet also

against; it is important to listen and take into account opposing political positions. The news is there to inform, rather than to affirm, and as a result, it is crucial to lend an ear to uncomfortable conversations.

Yet it seems that Truss’s medicine for the ills of Western culture is to surgically remove anything and everything which she cannot or more likely will not lend an ear to herself.

Having lost her seat in the 2024 General Election, during a 14-year political career which saw her become the Prime Minister with the shortest tenure of just 49 days. Perhaps it is time for Truss to have a look out of the ever-deeper hole which she has resided in before the ground gives way completely.



Keir Starmer: Middle East “on the Brink”

Laila Dawelbeit
Politics Editor

Keir Starmer has asserted that the UK “stands with Israel” after Iran attacked Israel following Israel’s incursion into Lebanon to attack Hezbollah targets. The Prime Minister also established Britain’s support of Israel’s “right to self-defence” and urged British nationals to leave Lebanon immediately, concerned that the “region is on the brink”.

The leader of Hezbollah, Iran-backed Shia political party and militant group, was assassinated by Israel on September 27, following Israeli strikes on the southern suburbs of Beirut. The death of Hassan Nasrallah has triggered what many fear will become a widespread and devastating war across the Middle East.

Iran attacked Israel in retaliation, launching almost 200 ballistic missiles into the country. Most of the missiles were intercepted by Israel’s David’s Sling, a joint US-Israeli manufactured air defence system. The Pentagon has said that two US Navy

Destroyers, deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean, were part of the efforts to defend Israel, firing a dozen interceptors. However, it is not known whether they took down any of the missiles. Similarly, UK Defence Secretary John Healy said that British forces “played their part in attempts to prevent further escalation”. It is understood that British military jets did not shoot down any Iranian missiles. With Israeli forces deep in Lebanon, many are reminded that it has been a year since the Hamas-led October 7 attacks on southern Israel, causing Israel to retaliate in what many call an ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

In December 2023, South Africa, supported by a number of countries, filed a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the court of the United Nations, accusing Israel of genocidal conduct. The ICJ, in January 2024, issued a preliminary ruling which found that the claims in South Africa’s filing were “plausible” and issued an order to Israel requiring that they take all measures within their power to prevent acts of genocide. South Africa’s President, Cyril

Ramaphosa, has recently said that it intends to present new “detailed evidence” proving that Israel committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. In March 2024, Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territories, issued a report stating that there were “reasonable grounds” to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of acts of genocide had been met.

Ceremonies are being held across Israel to commemorate the first anniversary of October 7 and the killing of more than 1,100 Israelis in the Hamas-led attack.

In Gaza, the Ministry of Health has said that since the beginning of the war, almost 42,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli attacks, with thousands more buried under rubble and threatened by illness. 90% of Gaza’s population has been displaced, some up to ten times.



Source: Reuters (via freemalaysiatoday.com)

Starmer's First Meeting with Trump

Debolina Gayen
Contributor

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer met with former US President Donald Trump for the first time over a two-hour dinner at Trump Tower in New York on September 26. Starmer was accompanied by Foreign Secretary David Lammy. The prime minister visited Trump Tower in New York as he visited the United States for the United Nations General Assembly, ahead of the US election set to be held in November. Reflecting on the meeting, Starmer emphasised the importance of personal relationships in international diplomacy. “It’s good to have the opportunity to meet Trump”, he said, noting that the purpose was “really to establish a relationship” between the two leaders. The discussion focused on the “longstanding friendship between the United Kingdom and the United States” and the importance of maintaining their strong partnership, according to an official UK government statement. Before the dinner, Starmer had expressed his intention to meet with both US presi-



Source: White House | Shealah Craighead (via Flickr)

dential candidates. He reiterated his desire to meet Vice President Kamala Harris, citing “diary challenges” as the reason for the delay. Starmer emphasised the value of face-to-face meetings with international counterparts, stating, “I think it really matters that you know who your counterpart is in any given country”.

The meeting came after Trump delivered a press conference in which he criticised his opponent, Harris, for what he described as a “mass invasion” of illegal immigrants into the US. He also suggested Harris’s approach to Russia’s war in Ukraine amounted to surrender.

Asked whether a Trump presidency could leave Ukraine vulnerable, Starmer avoided speculation, stating, “The special relationship between the UK and US always sits above whoever holds the particular office”. Starmer downplayed concerns about how a Trump presidency could affect the UK’s position on the global stage, saying, “The US people will decide who they want as their president, and we will work with whoever is president”. He added, “I’m not going to speculate on what any particular issues may be on the other side of the election”. In a rare moment of public praise, Trump described Starmer as “very nice” and ac-

knowledgeed the Labour Party’s success in the July election. “He ran a great race, he did very well. It’s very early, but he is popular”, Trump remarked. Trump also praised Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, calling him “great” and commenting on the party’s performance in recent elections. However, Trump’s understanding of the UK electoral system appeared flawed, as he suggested Farage was unfairly denied seats, misunderstanding the UK’s first-past-the-post system. Foreign Secretary David Lammy, who attended the meeting, has previously been outspoken in his criticism of Trump, once referring to him as a “woman-hating, neo-Nazi-sympathising sociopath.” Starmer himself had criticized Trump on multiple occasions, notably in 2019 when he condemned Trump’s endorsement of Boris Johnson. Ahead of the meeting with Trump, Starmer addressed the UN General Assembly, where he stressed the importance of Britain adopting a less paternalistic approach in international relations, advocating for listening more and speaking less.

WHAT IS... PARLIAMENT

Luke Tonkinson
Politics Editor

Parliament is made up of two chambers. The lower house, the House of Commons, is made up of 650 Members of Parliament, who each represent an area of the country (known as constituencies). A general election, whereby all 650 MPs are elected at once, must be held no later than five years after previous general election. These five years are somewhat confusingly known as ‘a parliament’. If an MP leaves office for whatever reason before the next general election, a by-election is held in their constituency.

MPs are split into three groups. The party (or parties) of government. These are the MPs who belong to a political party which makes up His Majesty’s Government (often referred to as simply the Government). Whilst theoretically anyone can become Prime Minister, it is by tradition the person who leads the largest party in the House of Commons who is appointed by the King and asked to form a government. This is because the government needs to be able to secure a vote from the majority of MPs. If more than half of MPs vote to oust the government, then a new government must be formed which can gain the House’s support, or a general election must be called.

The second largest party forms His Majesty’s Most Loyal Opposition (often referred to as simply the Opposition). The party leader becomes Leader of the Opposition, and also leads the Shadow Cabinet who critique the government’s policy. The idea of the Opposition is to act as a government-in-waiting. Being the Official Opposition grants privileges to the party, most notably more time during debates to scrutinise the Government. This is most often seen at *Prime Minister’s Questions* where the Leader of the Opposition is given six questions, whilst the leader of the third largest party (currently the Liberal Democrats) is granted two. No other Member of Parliament is guaranteed to receive any questions.

The upper house of the UK Parliament is the House of Lords. The House of Lords currently consists of 804 members. It is the second largest legislative body in the world, and the only upper house larger than the lower. There are three types of members in the House of Lords. The largest group are the 687 appointed by the King, on the advice of the Prime Minister, to life peerages, meaning they serve in the House of Lords for the period of their lifetime.

Another 92 are hereditary peers, meaning that their membership of the House of Lords is passed down through the generations of their family. Collectively, the appointed and hereditary peers are known as ‘Lords Temporal’. It is important to note that the current government has pledged to abolish the hereditary peers, and mandate that peers retire at 80. The third type of peer, known as ‘Lords Spiritual’ are bishops from the Church of England, their number is capped at 26.

Bills (prospective laws) require the approval of both houses to become law. A bill can be proposed in either house and works its way through both in much the same way. One of the reasons that there are so many members of the House of Lords is that the government requires any legislation to also pass that House. While the government will almost always have a majority in the Commons, this is not guaranteed in the Lords where there are no elections. As such, Prime Ministers appoint new peers to shore up their numbers. Currently, for example, whilst there is a Labour government, in the upper chamber only 185 Lords are members of the Labour Party. Successive Prime Ministers have been criticised for appointing political cronies to the Lords as opposed to experts and people deserving of a peerage.

There are a number of factors which means that the House of Commons is the dominant chamber. Firstly, the Salisbury Convention is an understanding that any pledge mentioned in a government’s pre-election manifesto will not be opposed by the Lords. Secondly, the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949 prevent the House of Lords from vetoing most legislation that passes the House of Commons. Under the 1949 Act, any legislation that is passed by the House of Commons which the Lords refuses to pass, can be passed into law regardless, if the Commons votes for it again after a year. This power is rarely used by the Commons (it has been twenty years since the last time) but it cements the dominance of the elected chamber and reduces the Lords to being primarily a chamber for (in theory) apolitical legislative scrutiny.

What Happened to the Labour Left?

Harvey Knowles
Contributor

It's the 12th of December 2019 and a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party await the exit polls for the general election triggered by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Labour members, voters, and canvassers look for a glimpse of revived hope to rival comparatively dire opinion polls gathered prior to the date. Unfortunately for them, no swing would occur.

Almost five years later, following a humiliating election defeat and three Conservative prime ministers, an almost unrecognisable Labour Party finds itself elected into government. A now more centrist party finds itself under the leadership of equally centrist Keir Starmer, a starkly different political position than under previous leader, the left-wing socialist Jeremy Corbyn. Policy such as ending austerity, to the current refusal to scrap the Conservative two-child benefit cap raises the question of how such a revolution of the Labour Party occurred in just under five years.

Following Labour's crushing election defeat, Corbyn announced that he would resign as leader of the party. This would allow Labour to decide their path, and ultimately the direction of all future policy.

Starmer would find himself victorious in the 2020 leadership bid, beating Corbyn ally and fellow socialist Rebecca Long-Bailey and current Secretary of State for culture, media and sport, Lisa Nandy. Although one could point to this election result as being the end of the Labour left, through the defeat of Rebecca Long-Bailey, Starmer's campaign included numerous, now uncharacteristically, socialist pledges. These pledges include promises such as the re-nationalisation of rail, abolition of university tuition fees and, perhaps most

notably, to promote peace, prevent wars, and to review arms sales.

It was not until after Starmer's election to party leader that these left-leaning policies, in hand with the party's general political position, began to shift into the centrist standing seen today.

Starmer has since denied claims that he has abandoned the pledges due to them having already served their purpose in gaining votes from the left of the party for his leadership, and instead told the BBC that these pledges had been "adapt[ed]" due to changes in circumstances following "COVID... and the conflict in Ukraine."

This shift in policy can be seen most clearly in the example of the aforementioned refusal to scrap the Conservative's two-child benefit cap. Following a motion called by the SNP for its abolition, seven left-leaning Labour MPs had the whip suspended after voting against their party.

Support for the left was shown to still have strength when Starmer was forced to backtrack on his decision to prevent Dianne Abbot to stand as a Labour candidate. It is perhaps most necessary then to realise that, although the left of the Labour Party do not exist as strongly in the parliamentary party anymore, the reminiscence of this stance still remains.

And perhaps most fittingly, as Jeremy Corbyn told Mohammed Hassan in an interview on The Big Picture, the left of Labour still exists "on the streets, in the community, on the picket lines and in the campaigns" and that the view that the left has diminished is merely a result of less coverage by the media. It seems to be that the Left has merely momentarily stepped out of the political spotlight.

Lib Dems: Labour Too Pessimistic

Ewan Sanders
Contributor

Sir Ed Davey triumphantly ended the Liberal Democrat conference this month, celebrating being the largest third-party leader in the House of Commons for 100 years.

This comes as the Lib Dems won a staggering 72 seats at the general elections, signalling a significant shift for the party, who have struggled to reach double digits since the coalition of Cameron and Clegg in 2010.

The dizzying victory for the Lib Dems comes as a result of tactical voting and a unique campaign method made up

of stunts and the 58-year-old politician speaking of adult social care in a kayak and extending the vote to 16-year-olds whilst bungee-jumping.

However, it appears the positivity has continued beyond the campaign trail, as Davey told the conference: "We will cut through the Governments doom and gloom with our ambition for our country" saying "the challenges we face cannot be solved by burying our head in the sand—like the Conservatives do, but neither can they be solved with the pessimism and defeatism we are hearing from Labour".

This comes as a reaction to multiple speeches made by PM Keir Starmer where he

consistently reminds the public that difficult decisions will have to be made in order to "rebuild the foundations" of the UK following the billions of unfunded spending commitments left by the outgoing Conservative government.

We have already seen Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves following through on the difficult decision as she alters the winter fuel allowance, so it is no longer universal, but means tested.

Davey has condemned this cut and forced a vote to block this policy, stating the Labour government needed to "winterproof the NHS" to end the annual winter crisis in the health service.

However, questions must be asked about where Davey's optimism and opposition to welfare cuts was when he was a minister in the government who oversaw one of the largest cuts to public spending during Cameron and Clegg's era of austerity.

Davey insists the future of the Lib Dems is promising. As the Conservatives lurch to the right chasing the votes they lost to Reform, they leave behind space in the centre where the Lib Dem can thrive on anti-Labour and Conservatives votes as Ed Davey says "The country needs to be encouraged to believe that there is a different way forward."

"Two-Thirds" of a Pint, is it the Way Forward?

Ifan Meredith
Contributor

Freshers' week is over but the talk on pints continues following a recent study by Cambridge University which called on the Government to stop serving beer in pints to reduce the UK's alcohol intake.

According to the study, removing pint glasses could reduce beer sales by up to 10%, and the UK could see wider public health benefits.

Currently, alcohol is the fifth largest contributor to early death and disease across the world and was estimated it caused 3 million deaths worldwide in 2016.

The report estimates that removing the pint glass would mean a 9.7% decrease in the mean volume of beer, lager, and cider sold daily. The study was undertaken in 13 pubs

in England where two-thirds of a pint was served during a period of 4 weeks between February and May 2023.

During the same period, the study researched the effects of removing the largest measurement of wine (250ml), but found no evidence that it decreased alcohol consumption to the same extent as introducing two-thirds pints.

Some governments are already acting on this idea. In Scotland, the tax on alcohol has just increased to 65p from 50p, meaning that the minimum charge for alcohol is 65p. Since 2020, Wales has introduced a 50p tax on alcohol; in England, the tax depends on the alcoholic volume.

If these further recommendations are taken further, the UK might shrink the pint size to two-thirds of a pint. Smaller sized pints aren't unheard of, however, with Australia's popular schooner which measures 425ml.

Truly, the UK's 568ml pint is among the largest servings in the world, as Germans prefer a 500ml measure, French favour a 330ml measure and Belgium 250ml.

Even in the US, where food and drink is famously much bigger compared to European counterparts, their pint size is in fact smaller than ours at 473ml.

Professor Dame Theresa Marteau, the professor leading the Behaviour and Health Research Unit at Cambridge University stated that "the less we drink [alcohol] the better our health".

She insisted shrinking 'pint' sizes would be "beneficial both to the nation's health and the health of individuals".

It is stressed, at this time, this is only a recommendation and is not due to be implemented soon (if at all) but there are many questions to be answered before justifying this change.

The Crisis of American Electoral Scepticism

Thomas Wilson
Politics Editor

As the presidential limousine meandered its way through Washington, protests lined the streets of the nation's capital; some even resorting to launching a barrage of eggs at the vehicle, often dubbed "The Beast". Alongside this, protestors yielded placards decorated with slogans such as "What Mandate you Nitwit?", "VoterGate", and "Not my President."

Yet, the President-elect was George W. Bush, not Joe Biden. The year 2001 not 2021. Allegations of voter fraud would not only dominate the election of George W. Bush, but the race for the White House in 2020.

Throughout the election, Donald Trump and his bedrock of loyal

MAGA devotees peddled the idea of the election being "stolen", before a single ballot paper had been crossed.

A mere two days after the votes were cast on the 3rd of November, Trump asserted that there was "tremendous corruption and fraud going on. If you count the legal votes, I won"—a statement of flagrant deception, given the lack of credible evidence of voter fraud occurring.

At the time of writing, the American electorate appears virtually split down the middle when it comes to their support for Kamala Harris, the former Attorney General and Senator for California, and Donald Trump, a convicted felon.

The support for Trump has stagnated, yet remains considerable, which raises the question:

Is American democracy in crisis?

On the face of it, the fact that so many Americans are projected to vote for Trump provokes shock. However, a cursory glance through modern American political history can provide answers.

As previously described, the reaction to the election of George W. Bush proved fierce—with many Americans perceiving the result to be a fraudulent one. The roots of this perception can be traced back to one state; Florida. By 20:00 on election night, all the major television networks had unanimously declared Gore to have taken Florida, sparking scenes of jubilation in the Gore camp.

However, within two hours, the picture had dramatically—with Florida reverting back to being categorised

as "undecided." Amidst the ever-changing picture, the threshold for a recount of Florida was met, which served to plunge the entire presidential race into complete uncertainty. Following weeks of judicial toing and froing, the Supreme Court voted 5–4 to deem a statewide recount of ballots unconstitutional—leaving many Americans with an idea of American democracy being broken—a sentiment echoed by Trump in his desire to "drain the swamp" of American politics.

The perception of American democracy being corrupted is not simply a phenomenon exclusive to the 21st century, propagated solely by Gore-backing Democrats or the MAGA masses of today. For older Americans, memories of Watergate still run strong. From the hiring of Cuban emigres

by Howard Hunt to break into the Watergate building; to the sanctioned burglary of the office of a psychiatrist who had been offering counselling to Daniel Ellsberg—the man responsible for the leaking of the Pentagon Papers—the Nixon administration was awash with criminality and served to pollute the image of American democracy.

In light of the effects of Watergate and the blocking of a recount in Florida, it is a succinct argument to suggest the rise of Trump is simply the result of decades of discontent amongst the American people at the standards and, ultimately, the state of their democracy. The only question that is left is this: how did so few people see Trump coming?

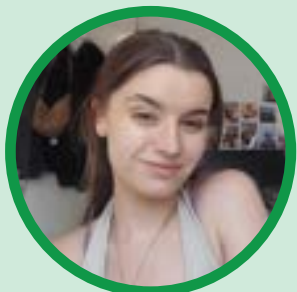
THE TEAM



SCIENCE



Natasha Fray



Hannah Prince

Taking on Twisters: Can You Tame a Tornado?

Natasha Fray
Head of Science

The summer hit *Twisters* asks the question “Can you tame a tornado?” The film concludes with a successful outcome but we want to find out if this is something that could be made a reality.

Tornadoes are inherently unstable and are formed when heat is rising from the ground on a warm day, it reaches the cooler air above and condenses into clouds. The more warm air there is, the larger these clouds become, eventually forming thunderstorms. If you combine this with strong winds going in different directions at different altitudes, you will create a wind shear which rotates horizontally in the atmosphere, this is essential for the formation of a tornado. The updraught from the ris-

ing warm air will tilt this wind shear vertically, the strong rotational forces create a funnel cloud from the cloud base where moisture is continually getting pulled into the potential tornado's vortex. Down-draughts of cooler air support the funnel and focus the vortex towards the earth. It's only when the funnel touches the ground that it can be classified as a tornado, which is why you see some tornadoes begin to form but never actually 'touch down' as there was insufficient wind speed and moisture.

The solution provided in the film was to introduce a polyacrylate into the main funnel of the tornado, which would extract the moisture causing the tornado to collapse in on itself. In the opening scene we see the female lead, Kate, attempt this but doesn't have enough of this chemical to impact the

force of the tornado. Moisture in the air acts as fuel to a tornado, much like oxygen is fuel to fire, you starve a fire of oxygen and it will die out, the same principle applies to moisture and tornadoes with no moisture a tornado can not sustain itself.

Now it is true that some specific polyacrylates are super absorbent polymers which can hold up to one thousand times their own weight in water. For example, sodium polyacrylate can absorb up to 800 times its weight in pure water, but this is reduced to only 300 times for something like tap water due to the mineral content. It is the dust and debris that make the tornado more visible so it is likely this would cause issues when trying to replicate the film's theory in real life.



Source: IrfanFaiz (via Wikimedia Commons)

Earth has a 'Mini Moon' in Orbit for Autumn

Hannah Prince
Science Editor

This autumn, according to scientists, planet Earth has temporarily gained a second 'moon'.

Whilst it won't be around for long, Earth's gravitational pull has attracted a small asteroid into its orbit, making it a second moon for a couple of months from the end of September. Unfortunately, due to its small dimensions, it won't be visible to the naked eye and will only be able to be seen with a professional telescope.

NASA first spotted this asteroid on the 7th of August using its Asteroid Terrestrial-Impact Law Alert System (ATLAS) and its

trajectory was studied by scientists of the American Astronomical Society. According to these scientists, if an asteroid of this size is moving slow enough, at a speed of around 2,200mph, then our planet's gravitational field can pull it in and temporarily trap it, making it enter our orbit.

The asteroid is predicted to be about 32ft long, which is considerably smaller than the size of Earth's moon. Asteroids range in size, with the largest one being Vesta, which is 329 miles in diameter. It is then understandable why the 'mini moon' that has entered into our orbit is not visible to the naked eye. Asteroids are usually irregularly shaped bits of rock that revolve around the Sun in an elliptical

orbit. As they revolve in these elliptical orbits, the asteroids will rotate, gaining speed as they go, sometimes moving erratically. Scientists predict that it will spend about two months orbiting Earth, beginning from the 29th of September and leaving around the 25th of November. Due to the short amount of time that it will be in the Earth's gravitational field, it will not complete a full revolution of Earth.

According to NASA, the majority of asteroids orbit the sun between Mars and Jupiter, in the asteroid belt, as both have a very strong gravitational pull. However, there are occasions where asteroids get pulled away from the asteroid belt and into Earth's neighbourhood by the gravitational pull of plan-

ets nearby to Earth. This doesn't happen that often, and it is even less common for an asteroid to enter completely into our orbit, creating a second moon for Earth.

This isn't the first time that this has happened, with 'mini-moons' being spotted in the past, and NASA scientists predict that many, even smaller 'mini-moons' will have never been spotted.

These 'mini moons' will sometimes re-enter Earth's orbit, and scientists are predicting that this asteroid will return to orbit the Earth again in 2055. Keep an eye out for pictures of this 'mini moon'.

SCIENCE

Here's a few Study tips and tricks from the Head of Science to get you ready for the year ahead!

Use One Planner to get Organised — if everything you need to do is written down in one place, it is much easier to manage and reduces stress. And if you colour coordinate, it makes it easier to visualise how much time you spend on different tasks.

Take Breaks — it's incredibly important to take time away from studying too, this could be spent with friends, doing hobbies, or watching your favourite show. You are more likely to remember more if you study in shorter, spaced-out sessions compared to cramming it all into one long study session.

Study Groups — Get together with people on your course and arrange a study session, it can be incredibly productive as you can ask each other questions which will further your own understanding (and it's a great opportunity to make new friends)!

Don't Study Where You Sleep — An easy mistake to make, but it really is worth it to put in the extra effort to get out of the house and go to a library, the Students' Union or your own university building. Having a separate study space means that when you do go home you can properly rest and it prevents you from getting distracted if you were to study in your room.

Physical Effects That Stress has on Your Body

Ayesha Shah
Contributor

Stress: the feeling of tension or worry that students are all too familiar with—whether it's cramming for a test or juggling deadlines. It may feel like just an emotion, but stress is a hardwired physical response that affects the entire body. Acutely, stress can be advantageous, but if activated too often or for too long, stress becomes chronic, and that primitive fight-or-flight response can cause damage to both the brain and body.

Stress triggers the release of the hormones cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine through the adrenal gland, which circulate through the bloodstream reach-

ing major organs and blood vessels. Chronic stress raises heart rates and blood pressure, leading to hypertension, heart disease, and strokes, whilst also promoting inflammation, which increases cardiovascular risk. Cortisol damages the inner lining of blood vessels, changing the way they function, and contributes to atherosclerosis (cholesterol plaque build up), which is linked to heart attacks and strokes. Stress can also exacerbate respiratory conditions, like asthma and contribute to hyperventilation.

When the brain senses stress, it activates your autonomic nervous system which communicates this stress to the intestinal nervous system. This brain-gut connection means stress can cause

'butterflies' as well as more serious health issues, such as disturbing the rhythmic contractions which move food through the gut, leading to conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome. One may also start to experience increased gut sensitivity to acid, leading to heartburn and ulcers. Stress can alter gut bacteria over time and cause changes in appetite, leading to cravings for 'comfort food'—which is high-carb and energy dense. This can result in visceral fat gain, which actively releases immune system toxins called cytokines. Cytokines increase the risk of developing diseases like heart disease and insulin resistance, which results in type 2 diabetes.

Whilst stress prepares the body

to fight infections or heal injuries, chronic stress suppresses immune function, making the body more susceptible to infections and slows down wound healing. Chronic stress keeps the nervous system in a heightened state, impairing cognitive functions like memory and attention, and is associated with mental health issues caused by structural changes in the brain.

To combat stress, practices like mindfulness, exercise, and a healthy sleep schedule are essential. Stress is inevitable, but viewing challenges as something we can control and master allows for better short-term performance and long-term wellbeing.

THE TEAM



SPORT



Aimee Szulczewski



Grace D'Souza



Lily Zeeuw

Cardiff City are the Comeback Kings!

Grace D'Souza
Sports Editor

My first fixture back at Ninian Park after summer break was a truly great one to enjoy from the press gantry, for nothing makes me happier than seeing the mighty Millwall crumble. After a very difficult start to the season, Cardiff finally got a well deserved three points. Cardiff started the season with very poor form: five Championship losses against Burnley, Middlesbrough, Hull, Leeds, and Derby. They picked up a single point after a draw against Swansea. Millwall thought they opened up the scoring in the first minute, but did not stand due to a nasty foul on a Cardiff City defender. In the fifth minute of the game a foul was committed just outside the box; no free kick was given to the Bluebirds. A minute later, Cardiff City's Ollie Tanner went down with what appeared to be a leg injury. He held his leg and face. It looked like a nasty cut, but he got up and continued playing. Cardiff's number 47, Calum Robinson, was denied a free kick



Source: Grace D'Souza

in the 16th minute. In the 27th minute it looked like the bluebirds were going to be 1–0 up, but it went just wide—a great effort from the blues. The bluebirds got another free kick denied by the referee—he definitely was not feeling sympathy for the blues. Millwall definitely had strong pressure on the ball, but the Cardiff defence was very strong, in particular the Bluebirds' number 4, Dimitrios Goutas. In the 38th minute a goal was finally scored by the Bluebirds' number 38, Perry NG, who timed his shot

perfectly scoring from a corner. You could tell he had been practising that set piece in training as it fired in the back of the net. The crowd erupted and the Millwall fans held their heads in their hands in utter despair. Millwall tried hard to get an equaliser before half time but were denied by a solid Cardiff brick wall. They well and truly parked the bus. At half time it was still 1–0. In the second half, Cardiff City looked the most confident on the ball, and in the 64th minute they were given a free kick just outside the

box after a late Millwall tackle. A great save from Millwall's keeper, Lukas Jensen, denied Cardiff a 2–0 lead. Despite their keeper's great work, Millwall struggled to find an equaliser. It looked like Millwall were going to get a very important equaliser in the 84th minute, but the Lions were denied a goal by Cardiff City keeper Jak Alnwick, who made a superb save at full stretch. In the 88th minute, Millwall's number 17, Matty Longstaff, got it all wrong: his corner cross goes flying to the other side of the pitch. Millwall looked hopeless out there. To make matters worse, in the 90th minute, Millwall players 18, Ryan Leonard, and 25, Romain Esse, clashed with each other—the team are losing focus. It has been a very poor match for the Lions with five minutes of added time left. Within the first four, it was almost a back-heel goal equaliser for Millwall, denied by Cardiff keeper Jak Alnwick, who was by far the most valuable player on the pitch. The final score: 1–0 Match attendance: 15,687. With the severside derby just around the corner, CCFC have definitely kept fans on the edge of the seat.

Driver Change at RB Leaves Ricciardo out and Lawson in for the Rest of the 2024 F1 Season

Mia Coley
Contributor

An announcement last Thursday by F1 team RB confirmed the rumour that Daniel Ricciardo will leave the team with immediate effect—replaced by Liam Lawson for the remainder of the season. Red Bull Management, unconvinced by his performance this season, have decided to drop the 35-year-old Australian with just six races remaining.

The 22-year-old New Zealander, Liam Lawson, had shown talent in his five-race stint last season when he filled in for Ricciardo after the driver had broken his wrist in a severe crash at the Dutch Grand Prix.

Thus, the rumours as to next year's RB lineup were directed at the possibility of the reserve driver finally getting his step up to Formula 1. These rumours were stoked by the team confirming Yuki Tsunoda's contract extension back in June, but did not also confirm one for Ricciardo.

Lawson's seat in 2025 is not guaranteed, as the contract with RB expires at the end of the current season, so the young driver will have to prove his skill over a short six-race stint. By putting Lawson into the car now, his performance can be accurately assessed over the remaining races before Red Bull finalise their plans for the 2025 season. Though he is one of the most popular drivers on the grid

thanks to his cheery personality and sense of humour, Ricciardo's performance this season was not enough to keep him in his seat at RB. The Australian had been consistently outperformed by his teammate Tsunoda since he was brought in mid last season to replace former RB driver Nyck de Vries, leaving him at 14th in the Drivers Championship standings, just ten points behind his teammate.

Across his 14-season long career, Ricciardo has racked up 258 Grand Prix finishes, 32 podiums and 1329 total career points. Many fellow drivers such as Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton and McLaren's Lando Norris have paid tribute to Ricciardo's extensive career on their own Insta-

gram pages, reflecting the legacy Ricciardo is leaving in his wake.

In a statement on Instagram, Ricciardo said: "I've loved this sport my whole life. It's wild and wonderful and been a journey, to the teams and individuals that have played their part: thank you. To the fans who love the sport sometimes more than me: thank you. It'll always have its highs and lows but it's been fun, and, truth be told, I wouldn't change it." "Until the next adventure."

Lawson will be in the RB in just two weeks at the US Grand Prix Austin, Texas—but for Ricciardo the sun sets on his thirteen-year long career racing in Formula One.



Who Will be Cardiff City's Next Manager?

Lily Zeeuw
Sports Editor

After 58 games at Cardiff City, Turkish manager, Erol Bulut was sacked after a terrible start to the season. Bulut's one win in six has left the Bluebirds at the bottom of the championship table, the worst start for the club since 1930. Chairman, Mehmet Dalman and CEO, Ken Choo have started the process to find Bulut's replacement, with the aid of specialists to attempt to find the right man for the job.

As always, many names are being thrown around the rumour mill, so let's have a look into some of the favourite candidates to take the job in the Welsh capi-

tal: Freyr Alexandersson. The Icelandic played football for 8 years in the Icelandic leagues before taking the step to become a coach. He has managed Valur Women, Leiknir Reykjavik, Iceland Women, Lyngby Boldklub and has held assistant roles at Valur and the Iceland Men's team. He currently manages Belgian Pro League side Kortrijk, who sit second to bottom in the Belgian pro league table.

James Rowberry. The second favourite to take charge of the Bluebirds is James Rowberry. The Welshman has only managed one club previously: League 2 club and close Cardiff neighbour, Newport County. During his time there he steered Newport to a mid-table finish in 11th. Since his time at Newport

County, Rowberry has been assistant manager with Both Wales's men's and women's national teams, currently assisting Craig Bellamy at the men's team.

Welshman Mark Hughes is another name said to be in contention. Hughes an extremely successful player in his time played for clubs like Manchester United, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Chelsea, Southampton, Everton, and Blackburn Rovers. Hughes's extensive playing career set him up nicely for a role in managing. He has previously managed Wales Men, Blackburn Rovers, Manchester City, Fulham, QPR, Stoke City, Southampton, and most recently Bradford City. It is no doubt that the appointment of Mark Hughes to Cardiff City would find

an experienced manager, but despite his years in managerial positions, Hughes is yet to win a trophy with any of his clubs.

There are still several names linked with the job, and with reports that the search for Bulut's replacement is going to be thorough, we may not find out who will take the helm of the Bluebirds for a while. Steven Schumacher has recently emerged as a possible candidate for the job, as well as current interim manager Omer Riza. It is certain the next manager will have a tough job on their hands, needing to turn Cardiff's fortunes around and lift them from the summit of the table and out of the relegation zone.



Source: Grace D'Souza

UPCOMING FIXTURES

CARDIFF UNI FC
16/10 Cardiff Uni v Cardiff Met
23/10 Hartpury v Cardiff Uni

CARDIFF UNI LFC
16/10 Cardiff Uni LFC v Swansea

CARDIFF CITY FC
19/10 Cardiff City v Plymouth
23/10 Cardiff City v Portsmouth

CARDIFF COBRAS
13/10 Cardiff Cobras v Bath Bees
20/10 Cardiff Cobras v B'ham Lions

RESULTS

CARDIFF CLASH
MEN'S

Cardiff Uni (7-41) Cardiff Met
WOMEN'S
Cardiff Uni (0-57) Cardiff Met

CARDIFF UNI FC
Cardiff Uni (6-0) Cardiff Vale

CARDIFF UNI LFC
UWE (2-1) Cardiff Uni LFC

CARDIFF CITY FC
Cardiff City (1-0) Millwall FC

Chris McCausland Becomes First Blind Contestant on Strictly Come Dancing

Alaia Osoz
Contributor

Strictly Come Dancing has returned for another season, and it has welcomed its first blind contestant. Stand-up comedian, Chris McCausland, has been paired with pro dancer Dianne Buswell, as he makes history as the show's first blind contestant.

McCausland lost his sight when he was 22 years old from a chronic hereditary eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa. The condition causes the cells in the retina to slowly break down, leading to gradual vision loss. He lost his sight over time, which he describes as a "constant phase of frustration and denial". He explains that it is difficult to say when exactly he became blind, because "you stop being able to do different things at different stages".

He is known as a comedian

from appearances on shows like *8 Out of 10 Cats*, *Have I Got News for You*, and for hosting *The Chris McCausland Show*. He has also appeared on the Channel 4 series *Scared of the Dark*, which shows eight celebrities living without light. He openly spoke on the show about his experience of going blind, saying that "when it started happening it was scary and embarrassing".

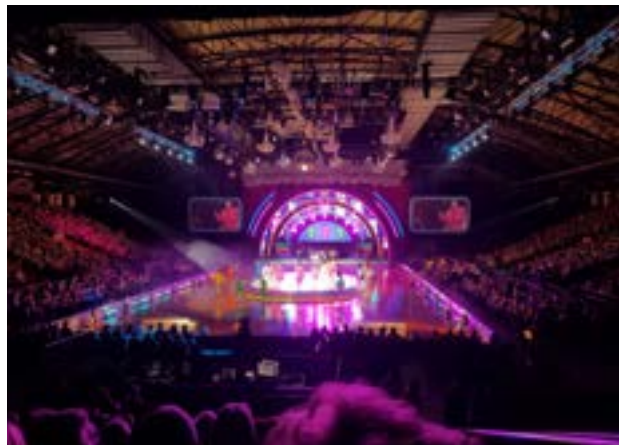
However, he now views his disability as something that is a part of him. He spoke about representation, saying that "it's great that there's people coming through who are able to represent disability while also having the experience to do the job properly".

McCausland has previously admitted that he had "no burning desire" to take part in *Strictly* but has since signed up "to show just how capable and resilient blind people are". His participation showcases the abilities of visually impaired individuals and

the importance of having disabilities represented.

Disability advocate, Yahya Pandor, said that McCausland's appearance on the show was proving barriers "don't stop" blind people. Speaking to BBC Radio Gloucestershire, Pandor said that "it's really showing what blind people can do and how limitations, obstacles and barriers don't stop us". He believes that what McCausland is doing is "magnificent", because

blind people are "so under-represented" in the media. The producers of *Strictly* are delighted to have McCausland on the show, as "he has a hilarious sense of humour". They are also "really keen to showcase disability on TV and are conscious of how important it is", adding that McCausland "is determined to show it won't hold him back on the ballroom dance floor".



Source: vagueonthehow (via Flickr)

England's Female Cricketers Secure Historic Pay Rise and New Multi-Year Deals in Major Step for Gender Equality in Sport

Lucy Gilder
Contributor

Eighteen ECB contracts are set to be on offer, ranging from £90,000 to £130,000, alongside multi-year deals in a historic move towards gender equality in cricket. England's female cricketers are set to receive a more than 30% pay rise, with multi-year contracts on offer for the first two players this October.

Contracts are expected to vary based on players' experience and seniority. This comes as a progressive step towards closing the gender pay gap after multi-year deals were offered to some of England's male players.

With all fifteen members of Heather Knight's squad anticipating new contracts, the new pay rise provides an injection of enthusiasm as the team prepares to participate in the Women's ICC T20 World Cup, which started October 3rd. Predicted to make the

semi-finals, England beat Bangladesh by twenty-one runs in their opening game in Sharjah, after the tournament was moved to Dubai and Sharjah from Bangladesh due to ongoing civil unrest. Knight's team will then confront the likes of South Africa and Scotland in the coming weeks.

The England and Wales Cricket Board will award around eighteen full-time deals in a bid to provide greater job security for players following a report from the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC), which was critical of the ECB stating that "women receive an embarrassingly small amount compared to men".

Beth Barrett-Wild, director of the women's professional game, said that the ECB is committed to making the women's game an "enticing" profession rather than just being "viable", in order to achieve greater parity with men's sports. After a thrilling Ashes

performance last summer, the female team received match fee parity with men after the women's series received record crowds and increased viewing figures double those of 2019.

According to last year's ECB gender report, the average gender pay gap was 21% in 2023, compared with 17% in 2022. The ECB is expected to provide further comments next month, including a potential equalisation of salaries by 2028.

In addition to the pay rise,

the ECB has pledged an extra £5m-a-year investment into the women's domestic game from 2025, with an additional £1m having been allocated to women's salaries in the Hundred last year.

The top salary is now £50,000 compared to £15,000 when the competition started in 2021.



Source: Naparazzi (via Wikimedia Commons)

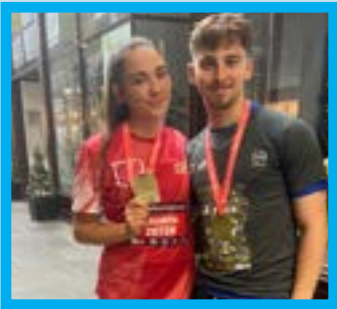
CARDIFF HALF-MARATHON

OPINION EDITOR ALICE ON THE CARDIFF HALF



This is my second year in a row running the Cardiff Half Marathon and the overwhelming sense of positivity and community never fails to astound me. I first started running as a way in which I could bond with my dad when I was in secondary school, as he would go on nightly runs, and I've since fallen in love with the activity itself and the participation in organised runs. What always stands out to me, with the Cardiff half being no exception, is the constant support you get from strangers who don't know a thing about you and yet are cheering you on as if you were the reason they came to spectate. That is a feeling I don't think I will ever tire of and hope to experience again and again.

HEAD OF POLITICS LAUREN ON THE CARDIFF HALF



You get a lot of recognition and praise when you run a half marathon. The amazing crowd cheer you on, friends and family message you to say well done, and you get a nice shiny gold medal. But it's the days where you're running in the rain, in the dark, after a long day at work or uni, waking up early to train, or running when you really, really can't be bothered that you need that support the most. The race is actually the easiest, most fun part. But the commitment and determination it takes to do a half marathon is exactly why I keep signing up. It's made me more confident, motivated, and resilient. It's made me appreciate my body and the amazing things it allows me to do. It's made me appreciate my life! Those moments where you're so tired and achey that you want nothing more than to stop running are exactly why I keep going, because it reminds me that I can ignore those negative thoughts and I can get through it, and I carry that reminder with me through everything I do now!

POLITICS EDITOR LAILA ON THE CARDIFF HALF



This was my first half marathon! I started running in January 2024. Since then I have come so far, from signing up to the Cardiff Bay 10K in May with only a month to prepare, to joining a run club and doing weekly Parkruns with my brother during the summer. I ran it with other Cardiff-based runners to raise money for two Palestinian families devastated by the war in Gaza. If you asked me a year ago if this is what I would be doing on a random October Sunday morning I would've laughed in your face! But running has truly changed my life for the better.

Sophie Pask in Action: Cardiff Half Marathon Success

Aimee Szulczewski
Head of Sports

Cardiff University student, Sophie Pask, crossed the finish line at the Cardiff Half Marathon on Sunday after four months of dedicated training. Running for her mother, Sophie took on the challenge to raise money for Cancer Research UK, a cause close to her heart. With determination and a powerful personal motivation driving her every step, she turned the race into not just an individual achievement, but a meaningful moment for her loved ones. This motivation helped her achieve her goal of finishing in 2 hours and 31 minutes.

Her journey to the race was not without its challenges. Sophie dedicated the summer to training, putting four months of hard work

to prepare her body for the 13.1-mile race. However, just a week before the big day, she faced an unexpected setback—a hip injury that threatened to derail her training and efforts. Despite the pain still lingering on race day, Sophie was determined to persevere, keeping her focus on why she was running.

On race day, Sophie felt strong (but nervous) at the start, finding the scenic Cardiff Bay and Penarth stretch of the route to be a moment of calm amid the excitement. The peaceful stretch of the course helped her maintain her focus in the longest run she had ever done, with the quietness allowing her to block out the nerves and stay in control.

As she reached Roath Park, Sophie encountered what many long-distance runners describe as “the

wall”, where fatigue sets in and motivation starts to waver. The uphill climb in this section added to the difficulty, making it one of the toughest stretches of the course for her. Despite the physical and mental strain, Sophie pushed through, drawing on the energy from the crowd as she looked for familiar faces to keep her going.

Her efforts paid off as she crossed the finish line, achieving her target time and feeling a deep sense of accomplishment, especially after outrunning the rain. A special surprise awaited her at the end of the race: her friends, her parents, her dog, and a well-deserved pint. Their presence at the finish line added to the joy of completing the race, making the moment even more memorable.

With over £400 raised for Cancer Research UK, So-

phie's race became more than just a personal victory, it was a heartfelt tribute to a meaningful cause.

Inspired by her success, Sophie is already setting her sights on more running challenges. She is considering taking on the prestigious SuperHalves series, a set of five major half marathons across Europe. With her determination and growing passion for the sport, Sophie is sure ready to take on even bigger challenges in the future.

The Cardiff Half Marathon was an overwhelming success for the city and participants. With the most competitors to enter the race this year, the atmosphere was electric. If you are considering taking part in a huge part of the city life, the Cardiff Half is a great opportunity for next year.



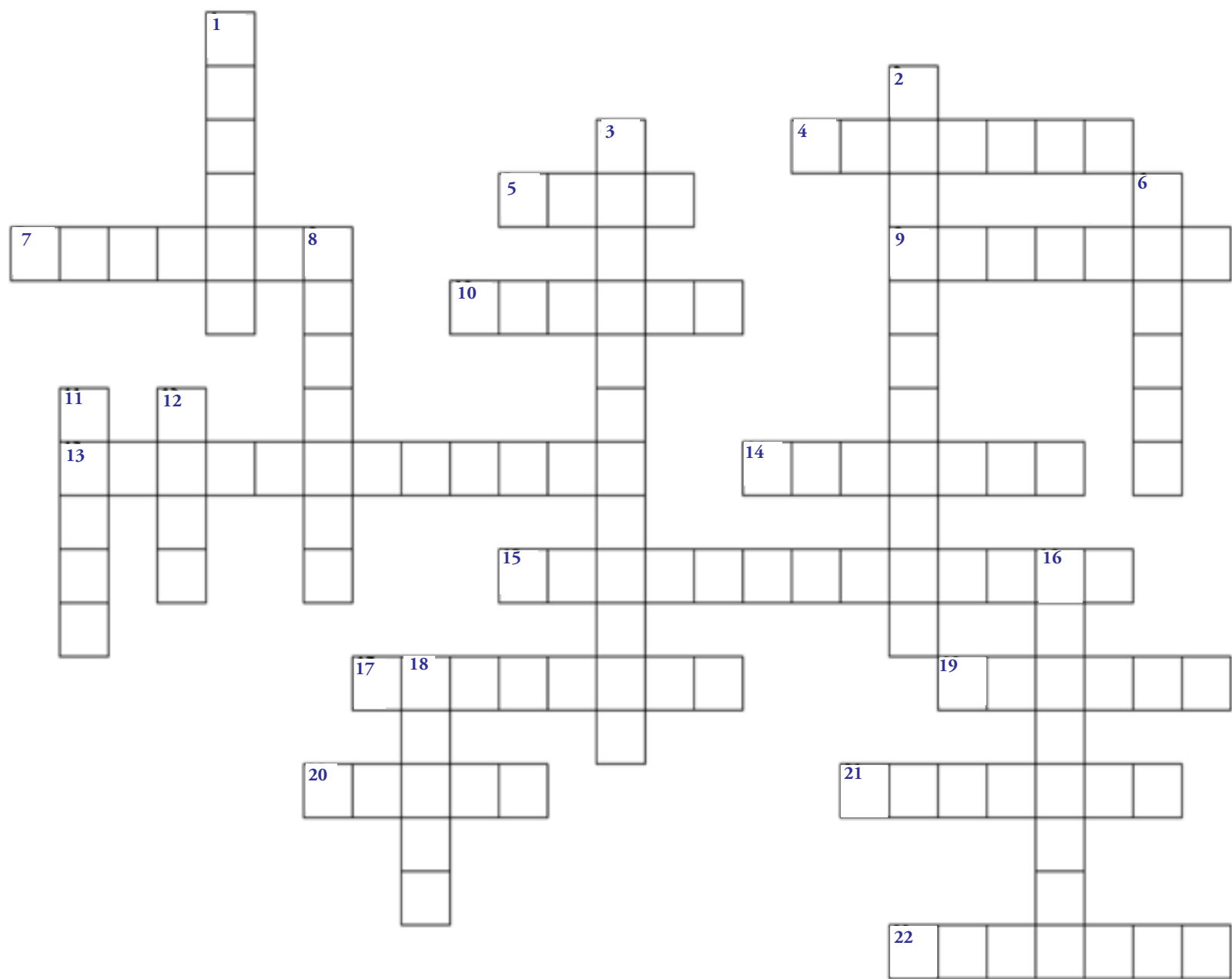
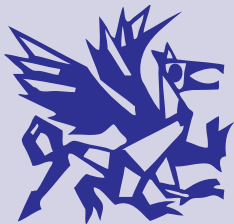
Source: Aimee Szulczewski



Source: Jonathon Pask

Crossword | Croesair

Daniel Raybould and Oliver Morten



ACROSS

- 4.** Educational newcomer (7)
- 5.** Platform by the water for loading and unloading (4)
- 7.** Outcasts who don't quite fit in, may congregate in a social club (7)
- 9.** Found everywhere, functioning nowhere (7)
- 10.** 3 a.m. essay fuel; Chappell Roan song (6)
- 13.** Coming-of-age Netflix series; something causing cardiac arrest (11)
- 14.** Electrical flow path; the worst laundry company ever? (7)
- 15.** Length of focus, frequently tested at university (7,4)
- 17.** English translation of Gair Rhydd (4,4)
- 19.** Charmingly old-fashioned (6)
- 20.** "Filthy" new food served in the Union (5)
- 21.** Emissive equilibrium, supposed goal of many governments (3,4)
- 22.** Patron Saint of Wales, commemorated via minigolf-sporting establishment (2,5)

DOWN

- 1.** To perform a lively movement or playful activity (6)
- 2.** Invocation of sources; essay writer's bane (11)
- 3.** Annual Cardiff event; cause of Lucozade pollution (4, 8)
- 6.** Historical site extremely common across Wales (6)
- 8.** Coastal varsity opponent (7)
- 11.** Carnivorous marine animal; preferer of the educational newcomer (5)
- 12.** 55-mile active travel route, or the water body that is its namesake (4)
- 16.** Harmonised singing, no instrument in sight (1,7)
- 18.** Town and school in the West Midlands; rowdy sport (5)

Find the answers on our Instagram page, under our 'Crossword' highlight!
@gairrhydd