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AN INTERVIEW WITH LEE WATERS

POLITICAL EDITOR LAILA DAWELBEIT SITS DOWN WITH THE MEMBER OF THE SENEDD FOR LLANELLI

Laila Dawelbeit
Politics Editor

What type of community did you grow up in and how did that impact your worldview today?

That's a good question. I essentially grew up in the Amman Valley, which is a core mining community and has a strong Welsh-speaking tradition. I suppose what you would call close-knit. The impact it had on me was that, on the one hand, it's a sort of community that celebrates people who are good at rugby and at

sport, and I wasn't. It's a community that also respects people who achieve things, and that was something that had an impact on me. I put pressure on myself. I was never going to be able to excel at sport, but I did want to do something that the community I grew up in would recognise as an achievement, which is one of the reasons why I went to work in television—because it was the one thing that people would be able to see and identify with having done well. Having achieved that, I then left television, but, thinking back, that probably was one of the motivations that spurred me on.

One thing which has driven me in politics is a saying I used to hear from school teachers, which

is: "If you want to get on, you have to get out". Most of the people I was in school with who had ability [had] left, which is understandable, but also sad. Because community is about balance—it's about a mix—and if the people who are most able to make a contribution to improving an area no longer have a stake in an area, the people who are least able to make a contribution are left behind and essentially left there to rot—and I felt very uncomfortable about that. I've made my career in Wales because I wanted to make a contribution to Wales. Going to London is an easier thing to do in many ways. So yes, you could "achieve more and earn more", but that's a path people have been following for hundreds of years, and the more challenging path

is to stay in Wales and make a contribution to Wales—because that's hard. It's not glamorous, it doesn't pay as well, but it's more important. So that's one of the reasons I went into politics. I wanted to represent the part of Wales I'm from. I didn't want to stand anywhere else, because I wanted to do what I could, in a modest way, to try and make things better. The issues we're facing are tough and in some cases intractable, so you're not going to be able to solve them. But making a contribution and trying your best is important, and that's what I've tried to do.

To read the whole story, turn to Page 16

Wales Women's Upcoming Fight for 2025 Euros Qualification

Lily Zeeuw
Sports Editor

On the 25th and 29th of October, the Welsh women's football team will face Slovakia in a two-legged play-off semi-final that could see them progress to play-off final, keeping their hopes alive for qualifying for the European Championships, hosted by Switzerland in the summer of 2025.

Wales have never qualified to play in both the Euros or the World Cup, so progressing past Slovakia would be a significant step closer...

To read the whole story, turn to Page 23

Horror in the Home: The Trope of a Loved One Antagonist in Modern Horror

Alice Roach
Opinion Editor

With Halloween just around the corner and autumn well and truly underway, I've found myself being drawn to horror movies yet again and couldn't help but notice the way in which more contemporary horror movies focus on the horror inside the home. When I think of Halloween and horror movies, I immediately think of classic slasher movies such as *Friday the 13th*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Scream*, the list goes on. However, I've been watching a lot of 21st-century horror and it's evident that the focus has shifted to people experiencing horror...

To read the whole story, turn to Page 10

Is Sally Rooney our Generation's Best Horror Writer? Intermezzo Review

Lucy Holton
Contributor

After having my heart completely and utterly wretched again by the latest Sally Rooney novel, I think it is fair to say she is writing some of the scariest books of our generation. Rooney's ability to give every character relatable and often hateable traits, makes them so easy to fall in love with and her books so hard to put down.

Whether it is Marianne's struggle with self-worth, Connell's with miscommunication, Frances' tendency to be hurtful...

To read the whole story, turn to Page 14

From Scrubs to Ballgowns: Student Vet is Competing in Miss Wales 2025

Dilichi Dieobi
Head of News

Xantia Hobrough, 19, from Sully is switching out her scrubs for ball gowns, as she has been selected as a finalist for the Miss Wales 2025 pageant. Xantia is currently a student vet studying at Bristol University working towards being a veterinary surgeon.

The Miss Wales 2025 pageant will take place in May across three days at The Riverfront Theatre & Arts Centre in Newport and the Holland House Hotel in Cardiff. The pageant involves an empowerment day, a charity ball, and a catwalk show in front of an audience...

To read the whole story, turn to Page 5

Gair Rhydd 2024/25

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Alice Roach
James Roberts
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Review
Emily Jo Cottle
Gemma Willmott
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Hannah Prince

Sport
Aimee Szulczewski
Grace D'Souza
Lily Zeeuw

Spotlight
Henry Moxon
Ari Plant
Neve Powell
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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Nodyn gan y Prif Olygydd



Annabelle Lee

Welcome to Issue 1202 of Gair Rhydd.

Personally, autumn is one of my favourite seasons of the year. The crunchy leaves, the chai lattes and my birthday, there is frankly not much to dislike. However, with the intense workload from university looming over our heads, it is important to remember that this time of year is actually the most enjoyable. The realisation that this will be my last autumn semester at university is the spookiest revelation of the season.

I turn 21 tomorrow, if you are reading this on the 28th of October. Maybe you are reading this on my birthday! Maybe on Halloween! Maybe you are not reading this at all. Another year older and hopefully wiser. To be truthful, I still think I am 18 and often stutter when someone asks me how old I am. I do not want to be an adult just yet... give me more years at university.

With Halloween fast approaching,

it makes sense to include a range of spooky articles this issue. From ghost stories to horror movie reviews, there should hopefully be something that piques your interest this spooky season. However, if Halloween isn't your thing, we still have a range of articles for you!

We are more than a news source, we are also a platform for your voices as well. In this edition, our new 'Agree to Disagree' page will hopefully facilitate discussion on a range of topics. From superstitions to pop music, our new section allows for healthy disagreement and allows you to make up your own mind!

Another special edition to this spooky issue is an interview with Lee Waters, the minister responsible for the 20mph speed limit in Wales. A really interesting and informative read about Welsh transport policy!

We hope you enjoy!

Croeso i bennod 1202 o Gair Rhydd.

Yn bersonol, hydref yw fy hoff dymor o'r flwyddyn. Y dail creisionllyd, y chai lattes, a fy mhen-blwydd, does dim llawer i gasáu. Ond, gyda dwyster gwaith prifysgol yn treiddio'n bywydau, mae'n bwysig cofio taw dyma yw'r amser mwyaf llawen y flwyddyn. Y sylweddoliad taw dyma yw fy hydref olaf yn y brifysgol yw'r un mwyaf ofnus y tymor.

Dwi'n troi 21 yfory, os ydych yn darllen hwn ar yr 28ain. Efallai rydych yn darllen hon ar fy mhen-blwydd! Efallai nad ydych yn darllen hwn o gwbl. Blwyddyn yn henach a, gobeithio, yn ddoethach. I ddweud y gwir, dwi dal yn teimlo'n 18 ac weithiau'n atal pryd bynnag mae rhywun yn gofyn fy oedran. Dwi ddim yn barod i fod yn oedolyn eto... jyst rho' cwpl mwy o flynyddoedd i mi yn y brifysgol.

Gyda Chalan Gaeaf yn agosai yn gyflym, mae'n gwneud synnwyr i gynnwys nifer o erthyglau arswydus o fewn y rhifyn hwn. O straeon ysbryd i adolygiadau o ffilmiau ofnus, rydym yn gobeithio bod rhywbeth yma i'ch ymddiddori. Ond, os nad yw Calan Gaeaf o ddiddordeb i chi, rydym dal wedi cynnwys ystod o'n herthyglau arferol i chi!

Rydym yn fwy nag ffynhonnell

newyddion, rydym hefyd yn llwyfan ar gyfer eich llais. O fewn y rhifyn hwn, gobeithiom fod ein tudalen 'Agree to Disagree' newydd fedru hwylyso trafodaeth am nifer o bynciau. O ofergoelion i gerddoriaeth pop, mae ein hadran newydd yn gadael le am ddadleuon iach er mwyn i chi creu barn eich hun!

Ychwanegiad arbennig arall i'r argraffiad arswydus hon yw cyfweiliad gyda Lee Waters, y gweinidog oedd yn gyfrifol am y terfyn cyflymder o 20mya ar draws Cymru. Cyfweiliad hynod o ddiddorol ac addysgiadol am bolisiau trafnidiaeth Cymru.

Gobeithiom eich bod chi'n ei fwynhau!



THE TEAM



SPOTLIGHT



Henry Moxon



Neve Powell



Heather Layton



Ari Plant

Independent Influencers — Cardiff's Solo Standing Shops!

Neve Powell & Sophie Arben
Spotlight Editor & Contributor

Tucked away in Cardiff's vibrant streets are some of the city's best-kept secrets: its independent businesses. From quirky craft stores to artisanal cafés and unique dining experiences, these local businesses offer a shopping experience that's full of personality and charm.

Cardiff Creative

Located inside Queen's Arcade in the city centre, Cardiff Creative is home to over fifty local creatives' work, hosting everything from candles to clothing, from tea towels to vivid prints as well as lots of hand-made jewellery; perfect for spicing up an autumnal outfit!

The local makers are appreciated and many a time have I been distracted by section after section of different goodies. If there's anybody you need to buy a present for, this store will definitely have something, and their lovely staff

are always available to help, giving great recommendations as well.

The shop itself gives such a homely feel and to see so many businesses blossoming under one roof is so lovely in the big city of Cardiff, so if you're looking for something or not too sure if you're looking for anything, you'll find something in Cardiff's creative hub!

Wally's Delicatessen

Concealed within one of Cardiff's central arcades, Wally's Delicatessen exuberates sophistication, quality and individuality to provide the ultimate luxury food-shopping experience. The variety of produce includes local delicacies like a great selection of cheeses from the Snowdonia cheese company, including their "Red Devil" red Leicester with chillies and crushed pepper.

Thinking about having a board night? This decadent cheese could be perfectly paired with

a bottle of the Celteg's Elderberry wine—a Welsh company with Vineyards located a short drive away from Carmarthen. Not only does Wally's provide provincial Welsh produce, but they also create a continental atmosphere with their selection of Halkidiki olives, Barilla pesto, Weiss Lebkuchen, and a vast selection of European charcuterie such as salami, Bierschinken, and Prosciutto. The perfect delicatessen would not be complete without a chic café, located on the first floor of Wally's.

The Viennese Kaffeehaus provides an extensive range of traditional Austrian delicacies like Aufschnitt (meat and cheese platters) perfect for an alternative lunching experience.

The Grazing Shed

If you're looking for Welsh quality, you'll truly find it at The Grazing Shed, where there is always super tidy service to go

alongside the super tidy burgers they've been serving since 2013!

Offering beef, chicken, veggie, and vegan options, you will truly find something that tickles your fancy here whether it be their famed burgers or something different—maybe some loaded fries or wings? Additionally, they offer a range of soda flavours from root beer to cherry bakewell, (which is undeniably the best in my opinion) to give us something different—however, if in doubt, the lemonade is stunning.

So, if you fancy a cheeky bite with your friends, follow the glow of the lightning bolt just outside St David's food court, or get it delivered to you fresh here in Cardiff. I am never disappointed by the undeniable quality in the food that comes out of those doors, and I hope you won't be either!

All About Cardiff's Historical Statues

Ava Hicks
Contributor

Bustling about Cardiff, it can be easy to miss the myriad of public art projects scattered around the city. With Cardiff's rich history filled with important public figures and events, the statues that adorn our streets hold stories that are worth taking a moment to think about.

Betty Campbell (1934–2017) Central Square

If you've ever walked to JOMEC or from the train station up towards St Mary Street, then you've almost definitely passed the huge bust of Betty Campbell. Commissioned after a BBC "Hidden Heroines" poll, the statue tells the story of the first black head teacher. Her impact in life was palpable.

Campbell's determination from a young age to become a teacher and make an impact in education despite people telling her not to bother was inspirational. She used her position to teach black history and even contributed to the founding of Black History Month. Alongside her impacts during her lifetime, her statue itself marks an important moment in Welsh history. Hers is the first statue of a non-fictional woman in Cardiff. Her legacy will live on through

this poignant sculpture of Campbell surrounded by children—demonstrating the success of her career and activism both in life and posthumously.

John Batchelor (1820–1883) The Hayes

Liberal politician John Batchelor made waves in Cardiff through his strong opposition to the Bute family. He eventually became mayor of Cardiff, among other roles, and earned the title "Friend of Freedom", which marks his statue.

His work as politician provided Cardiff with effective sewage and drainage, and a school for poorer children. He also broke the Bute control of coal trade and provided more opportunities for the business owners of Cardiff. The statue itself was raised from donations of £1,000 and unveiled on a Saturday so that the working population, those who Batchelor had impacted most, could attend.

However, the Conservative force in Cardiff petitioned to remove it and defaced the statue three times within two years. His political standing as a voice to the people proved controversial to the opposition, but to the working class of Cardiff, Batchelor was more than worthy of a statue for the representation he gave them.

Aneurin Bevan (1897–1960) Queen Street & David Lloyd George (1863–1945) Gorsedd Gardens

Two high-profile Welsh politicians of the 20th century who are often compared to one another both have statues in Cardiff: Aneurin Bevan, creator of the NHS, and David Lloyd George, the first and only Prime Minister from Wales.

While both men were radical, liberal politicians, they often did not see eye to eye when their paths crossed. When you take a look at their history, you see two different experiences of Wales. Lloyd George, a Welsh-speaking non-conformist who lived in north Wales and was thoroughly educated.

Bevan, was a non-Welsh speaker from the valleys who grew up in a working-class environment and worked as a miner. Their statues in Cardiff solidify their common positions as power-

houses of British politics who invigorated Wales with a sense of nationalism. Despite their differences, both men were advocates for liberal policies and supported Wales through their careers. The statues immortalise them both as having moulded the Wales we live in today.

Many protests and processions begin at the foot of Aneurin Bevan's likeness. While these four statues highlight some of the more notable characters of Welsh history, there are so many more in the city to find. Public art is a constantly growing medium which displays people and ideologies relevant to both the past and the present. Statues like *From Pit to Port* and *People Like Us* in the Bay are just as important for telling the stories of Welsh people and heritage.

I encourage you on your next walk around the city to take a moment and view some of these sculptures and read their inscription. The often underrepresented history of Wales, its people, and its culture can be told through the statues of Cardiff that you walk past every day.



Aneurin Bevan on Queen Street
Source: Kaihsu Tai
(via Wikimedia Commons)

Fast Fresher Food: Henry's Chorizo and Tomato Pasta

Ingredients

½ chorizo ring
½ bag of cherry tomatoes (halved)
250g of conchiglie (any pasta will do)
2tsp of garlic (or two cloves)
200g tomato pasta sauce
1/3 bag of spinach
1tsp of salt
1tsp of pepper
2tsp of parsley/mixed herbs (either works well)
4tbsps of cream cheese
1tbsp of tomato purée
Oil for Cooking

Step 1: Bring your water to a boil for your pasta—it's a quick meal so put it on ASAP! I prefer boiling the water in a kettle, then putting it in the saucepan to make it much quicker, but do whatever you fancy!

Step 2: Put some olive oil into a frying pan and allow it to heat up, then add your chorizo (being patient means your chorizo stays soft in the middle but crispy on the outside!). Cook at a medium heat for about 10 mins—use your judgement! If you're veggie then feel free to skip out on the chorizo!

Step 3: Add the pasta to the water and cook for about 10 mins, though this can differ if you like your pasta more al dente or more soft! Add some salt to the saucepan because I was told this is what the top chefs do, and we are indeed top chefs at Fast Fresher Foods.

Step 4: Add the cherry tomatoes and garlic into the frying pan. Cook for another 5 mins, or until the skins of the tomatoes have wrinkled. Then add the spinach and cook until it shrinks. There should be an intense but delicious smell of chorizo and garlic at this point!

Step 5: Add your tomato pasta sauce to the frying pan—this is the saucy element of the dish, and brings everything together really well. Avoid using passata or tinned tomatoes as these make the dish taste watery and gives it a nasty salmon colour (I have tried and been severely disappointed). At this point, also add your dry ingredients and tomato purée. Cook for another 2–3 mins.

Step 6: Add the cream cheese to the middle of the frying pan and stir into the sauce. It will take a minute or two to melt, but will make the sauce a nice orange colour! Drain the pasta, and once the cream cheese is melted into the sauce, add the pasta in too! Stir it in, serve and enjoy (and I promise you, you will!)

Cooking time: 25 minutes!

Celebrating Cardiff's Gayest Cafés

Cameron Wagg
Contributor

From the Queer Emporium to Scaredy Cats, the gay scene in Cardiff stretches far past its various clubs and pubs. The city has an amazing range of accepting and queer-friendly cafés. However, many of these venues do fly under the radar. I myself had only visited some of these places during my third year at university. So, for anyone interested in finding more chill daytime queer-friendly safe-spaces, I have compiled a short list of my personal favourites.

The Queer Emporium is

probably the most well-known gay café in Cardiff. Being led and run by almost only transgender, non-binary, and intersex people, the Queer Emporium has aimed to have an inclusive space for all members of the LGBT+ community since its opening in 2021. Beyond its safe and vibrant environment, the Queer Emporium has a range of tasty food and drinks, all made locally and by LGBT+ people. Furthermore, all of its profits go towards LGBT+ community projects. By visiting, you will be supporting the greater queer community. A welcoming place for adults, teenagers, and especially

students, the Queer Emporium is not to be missed.

Another great queer-friendly café is Scaredy Cats Café Bar. It is an independent venue in Cardiff well known locally for its abundance of board games. From *Villainous* to *Unstable Unicorns*, if board games are your forte then Scaredy Cats is a must to visit. I visited this café my first day back this year with two of my flatmates. We stayed for three hours, relaxing and drinking coffee. It is a great place to go for a long haul when looking to be entertained in town. Its incredible and fun atmosphere is extremely refreshing and greatly enjoyable.

Finally, Big Moose Coffee is one of the most accepting and queer-friendly places in Cardiff. It is a non-profit organisation holding the title of the best coffee shop in Cardiff on TripAdvisor. With affordable food and drinks, Big Moose Coffee deserves its high ranking. The coffee shop was formed as a way of honouring the owner's father's friend who was nicknamed "Moose". You can feel the heart and the warmth of Big Moose Coffee as soon as you enter, with its friendly and open staff. The venue is extremely receptive to the LGBT+ community and has hosted many socials for the Cardiff University Pride Society.

Cardiff Castle: Is It Truly Haunted? The Tale of the Grim Coach

Ari Plant
Spotlight Editor

Cardiff Castle. It needs no introduction in Gair Rhydd. If you're a student in Cardiff, you know the castle. It may be from a freshers' era date to Winter Wonderland or simply as the background to drunken post-club debriefings, but did you know that inside the walls, phantoms apparently haunt its chambers? And from in slowly darkening dusk to the dead of night, you may be able to catch a glimpse of these flickers of the past?

Ghostly happenings have been occurring in the castle all the way back in the middle of the 19th century. In 1868, a trustee of the Bute fortune was inside the walls of the castle. He heard the arrival of a carriage through the courtyard and it stopping at the door, horses' hooves skidding and wooden wheels rolling to a creaking stop.

There was no knock at the door. Thinking nothing of it, he entered the hallway, only to be told by a butler that no such carriage had arrived; the doorway was empty of visitors, the courtyard empty of tracks. At the same time, the third Marquess' only daughter, Lady Marga-

ret MacRae, was in Scotland and heard that same carriage. That evening her father passed away.

There are two theories about the arrival of the carriage. One is that it is the arrival of the ghostly carriage warns of the death of some member of the ancestral family of the Marquess of Bute.

The other is that it predicts bereavement; for those who see it someone they know will die. The grim reader's grand carriage has been seen since 1956. A man called David Brecon saw the carriage on a frosty night, heard the turn of its wheels, the jingle of its bells, and even the cry of the coachman.

All before turning and, full speed into the castle door, vanishing from sight as if there was no obstacle. So, be wary around the castle. For ghosts now ride round Bute, coaches made of mist, and they may spell doom for you.

An Interview with Art Shop ArtHole

Ari Plant
Spotlight Editor

ArtHole, hidden in one of the twisting arcades—the one dominated by Gin and Fizz and the Parisian restaurant—is a wonderful shop, built and operated by Elliot, Kay, and occasionally, on a blanket in a corner, their dog, Colin. ArtHole is a not-for-profit art shop, selling stickers, magazines, badges, T-shirts, art prints, little plaster models of tiny creatures, cards, tapestries, crocheted hats, and anything the artists in the surrounding area have made and produced.

If you want a illustrated magazine about having

a nightmare on Chippy Lane, ArtHole has five. The two owners are so lovely that they even made zines for "aspiring art student who has just moved to a new city" on where to go and what to do in Cardiff. It is full of fantastic suggestions on where to go and what to do, so I recommend picking it up.

I went in to interview the two owners about the art scene in Cardiff. "Cardiff is split into East and West" is what Elliot says, to me—and it's true. A majority of the art scene is in Canton with the Corp Market and Chapter Arts Centre (both lovely places). "All the students are over in Cathays", unable to know about the wonderful art that's just across the

River Taff. Having been in Cardiff for four years, I only discovered Chapter Arts halfway through my second year here and whenever I visit an exhibit at Chapter, I am often one of the only people there. "Its own little nice Canton bubble", suggests Kay—and it's true again. Most students never really know about what's going on in Chapter Arts Centre. It's why ArtHole wanted to do outreach. It's why they're based in the city centre—to bridge the gap of Cardiff and hopefully promote a nicer art scene.

According to Elliot himself, he has been saying that Cardiff is "up and coming" for ten years now, suggesting it is "on the brink of a really good little renaissance".

The art scene in Cardiff has not had a big moment yet and both are hoping it will come soon with its own Cardiffian identity. Lastly, when I asked them if they had any questions for students, they said: "What do they want? More opportunities to meet? More markets?" "More places to hang out?" They offered to answer any questions that students had, stating that "it's not easy being a student".

On advice for students, Kay had this to say: "Use all the facilities, you'll miss them when they're gone. Rinse them for all they've got."

THE TEAM



NEWS



Dilichi Dieobi



Tom Nicholson



Oliver Morten



Man Arrested for Rape Attempt in Cathays

Eve Yates
Contributor

On Monday, the 14th of October, a man appeared in court after being arrested and charged with sexual assault and attempted rape in Cathays, Cardiff. For four months, South Wales Police have been investigating an attempted rape attack on a young woman on Sunday, the 12th of May in the Cathays area.

Fawaz Alsamaou, a 32-year-old man from West Yorkshire, has been charged with attempted rape and sexual assault and was taken to court. The alleged incident took place under a railway bridge by Senghennydd

Hall university accommodation and Salisbury Road. The victim, aged 23, has said she was on her way home from a night out in the city centre with her friends. After leaving the nightclub Pulse, she appears to have been followed through the city centre to the location where the attack took place. The victim describes being forced to walk past him to get home prior to being stalked and attacked.

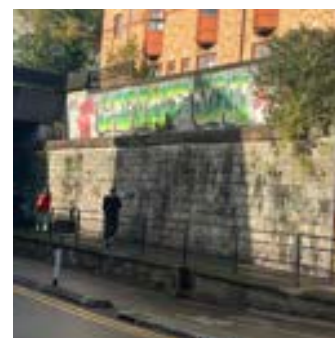
On BBC Crimewatch, DI Todd appealed for anyone to come forward with information regarding the attack. In an interview, DI Todd stated that the suspect initially remained at a distance, even crossing the road to create further distance between himself and the victim. However, as soon

as the victim moved onto St Andrews Place and walked towards the railway bridge, his speed increased, closing the distance between them. The suspect then attempted to engage in sexually explicit conversation, before proceeding to place his hand up the victim's skirt and grabbing her neck. He was last seen under the railway bridge after the victim ran onto Salisbury Road.

Since the incident, South Wales police have urged anyone with information to come forward. The victim has been scarred from the event and has stated that she has had trouble sleeping and that it has taken weeks for her to gain the confidence to leave the house. CCTV footage identified the suspect alongside information

provided by the victim and witnesses.

No further news has been released since the court hearing on Monday, the 14th of October.



Source: Grace D'Souza

Student Nurse, 19, Fights for Life after Collision with Stolen Land Rover

Lucy Gilder
Contributor

A student nurse was left for dead in a suspected hit-and-run, after a stolen Land Rover, which was being chased by police, crossed the central reservation on the A449 Stafford Road in Wolverhampton.

After travelling back from work with a colleague, Freya Theobald, 19, was a passenger in a Ford Fiesta when she collided with the stolen vehicle. She was rushed to hospital following the collision at around 20:30 on the 30th of September, after having to be cut from her colleague's car, which her stepmother Jolene described as "completely crumpled". Freya suffered a fractured spine, a collapsed lung, a split bowel,

and a bleed on the brain and was placed in an induced coma. The teenager, who had just started her nursing degree, is currently fighting for her life in Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Freya's mother Jolene said: "Freya had been at work looking after palliative care patients and was getting a lift home with a colleague. The car went over the central reservation and into their lane. It went straight into them. She had to be cut out of the car because she was stuck inside."

"She's had emergency surgery on her bowel because it was split in two. She's had a nail put in her femur bone. She's got broken ribs and a collapsed lung. She's had lacerations to her liver and pancreas. She was in an induced coma but doctors

have now reduced her sedation. She'll have the odd moment where she'll say something to us but she's sleeping a lot."

"When she does wake up she's generally panicked. They've said she was very lucky. The doctors have said she's very fragile and vulnerable at the moment. Her colleague managed to walk away without any injuries. She saw the car coming towards them and swerved. She's worked so hard, and for her to be out there helping others and this happened, it's unbelievable."

Her father Tom said: "Freya's whole life has changed. Her life won't be the same. Mentally she's not going to be the same either. I nearly lost my daughter to this and it's going to be a long process. I just want justice for Freya."

An 18-year-old man has been arrested and released on bail on suspicion of vehicle theft and dangerous driving.

Friends of Freya have launched a GoFundMe appeal for the student, which has so far raised more than £5,000.



Source: Thomas Faull (via iStock)

From Scrubs to Ballgowns: A Student Vet is Competing in Miss Wales 2025

Dilichi Dieobi
Head of News

Xantia Hobrough, 19, from Sully is switching out her scrubs for ball gowns, as she has been selected as a finalist for the Miss Wales 2025 pageant. Xantia is currently a student vet studying at Bristol University working towards being a veterinary surgeon.

The Miss Wales 2025 pageant will take place in May across three days at The Riverfront Theatre & Arts Centre in Newport and the Holland House Hotel in Cardiff. The pageant involves an empowerment day, a charity ball, and a catwalk show in front of an audience. The Miss Wales organ-

iser, Paula Abbandonato has said that "Miss Wales is committed to beauty with a purpose that means empowering young women and raising money for good causes through the glamour and fun of pageantry ... The girls get to make great friends and experience new opportunities while really doing their bit for charity".

Xantia is passionate about animal conservation and has spent three months in South Africa volunteering at a cheetah sanctuary, as well as completing an internship with a marine conservation organisation. She is also a black belt in Taekwondo, once winning the British Championships, and has represented Wales in the surf Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships. It is safe to

say that she most definitely fits Paula Abbandonato's description of a successful Miss Wales.

The Miss Wales crown is currently held by Millie-Mae Adams, a medical student at Exeter University, who won in the 2023/2024 year of the competition. The Miss Wales slogan is "Beauty With a Purpose", and Miss Adams embodies these words. She has listed her many accomplishments and accolades in a short statement on the official Miss Wales website: "I'm a medical student at Exeter University and a Yale Young Global Scholar. During my first year of medicine, I created the first ever Street Doctors team for the South West to train young people how to save a life. During my time as Miss Wales, I also plan to

deliver '8 Minutes to Save a Life' training in Cardiff in the Welsh language too. I post 'MEDICAL MILLIE' videos in both English and Welsh on my social media platforms to help educate people on important medical issues. I have a passion for the Welsh language and have signed up as a 'siarad volunteer' for @llywodraeth which is a Welsh Government campaign aiming to increase the number of Welsh speakers to one million Welsh 2050."



2011 Miss Galaxy Wales Winner
Source: Tim Kreshmann (via Flickr)

NEWS FROM AROUND THE UK



GLASGOW

Man carried out of Glasgow University library after allegedly performing “indecent act” on himself.

NOTTINGHAM

Nottingham University puts Christianity trigger warning on Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales.

COVENTRY

Coventry University becomes first university to allow students to use ChatGPT in exams.

BRISTOL

University of Bristol student discovers a live scorpion in Shein package.

SOUTHAMPTON

Former Southampton student pleads guilty to stalking lecturer after booking a registry office for their imaginary wedding.

Cardiff Half-Marathon Runner Dies Shortly After Crossing Finish Line

Debolina Gayen
Contributor

A participant in Cardiff’s half marathon tragically died after collapsing at the finish line, Run 4 Wales has confirmed. In a statement, the organisation expressed “deep regret” over the death of one of this year’s runners.

Stephen Jenkins, 37, collapsed after completing the race and was immediately attended to by the event’s medical team. He was then transported to the hospital, where he was later pronounced dead. Organisers described the incident as a “terrible tragedy”, noting that Jenkins had suffered a cardiac arrest.

The Cardiff Half Marathon, which hosted more than 29,000 participants in its largest event to date, saw the streets filled with runners covering the 13-mile route. According to Wales Online, a spokesperson for Run 4 Wales said: “The runner was immediately attended to by the medical emergency team at the finish line before being taken to the University Hospital of Wales, where they later passed away.”

This marks the fourth fatality linked to the Cardiff Half Marathon in recent years. In 2019, Nicholas Beckley, 35, died after collapsing at the finish line. The year before, Ben McDonald, 25, from Cardiff, and Dean Fletcher, 32, from Exeter, both suffered cardiac arrests and died within minutes of each other after completing the

race. A coroner later ruled that their deaths were due to natural causes. In response to these tragedies, Run 4 Wales has worked to raise awareness of undiagnosed heart conditions.

Stephen Jenkins’ family has paid tribute to him, calling him a “wonderful father” and a “genuinely kind person”. His parents, Karen and Dyfrig Jenkins described him as “a wonderful son, loving partner, and wonderful father”. Wales online reported that his father stated: “Stephen was a friend to everyone... Stephen was an avid runner and cyclist, with a deep passion for Welsh rugby.

He and his grandfather held season tickets near the halfway line at the Principality Stadium and rarely missed a game since the sta-

dium opened. He was also very proud of his Welsh heritage and language. Although his daughter is being raised in Walthamstow, she already speaks some Welsh.” Matt Newman, the chief executive of Run 4 Wales, expressed his condolences, saying: “The thoughts of everyone connected with the race are with Stephen’s family and friends at this difficult time.

The medical team and emergency services responded swiftly and professionally to his collapse at the finish line, and he received specialist care within a minute.” He added, “Run 4 Wales works closely with the bereavement support charity 2Wish, who will continue to support Stephen’s family and friends.”



Source: Gareth James
(via Wikimedia Commons)



Lemfreck yn cipio Gwobr Gerddoriaeth Gymreig 2024

Elen Morlais Williams
Golygydd Taf-Od

Mewn noson yng Nghanol-fan y Mileniwm i ddathlu'r sin gerddoriaeth Gymreig, llwyddodd Lemfreck i gipio Gwobr Gerddoriaeth Gymreig 2024. Yn gwbl haeddiannol, enillodd y rapwr a'r cynhyrchydd o Gasnewydd y wobwr ynghyd â gwobr ariannol o £10,000 am ei albwm Blood, Sweat & Fears; Albwm a'i fryd ar dynnu ar brofiadau gonest a theimladwy ei fagwraeth ef yng Nghasnewydd.

Yn ôl Owain Elidir Williams, un o feirniaid y gystadleuaeth: "Mae'n albwm wych sydd nid yn unig yn gweithio fel cyfanwaith arbennig, ond yn teimlo fel casgliad sy'n sefyll dros rywbeth arbennig hefyd. Mae'r gwaith mae Lemfreck wedi'i neud dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf - yn rhoi llais a llwyfan i artistiaid eraill o Gasnewydd - yn wych ac mae'n llawn haeddu'r wobwr."

Wrth dderbyn ei wobwr gan gyflwynydd BBC Radio 1, Siân Eleri,

pwysleisiodd Lemfreck, Lemarl Freckleton, bwysigrwydd ei wreiddiau: "Mae'r wobwr hon ar gyfer fy nghymuned yng Nghasnewydd." Mewn ymateb i dderbyn y wobwr, datganodd pa mor bwysig yw cynrychiolaeth yn y sin gerddoriaeth ac nid "box tick" yw hi pan mae artistiaid fel ef yn ennill gwobrau fel hyn ond "cadarnhad o gelfyddyd".

Ategodd Owain Elidir Williams mai dewis anodd oedd hi eleni hefyd gyda 15 o artistiaid hynod o addawol yn cyrraedd y rhestr fer: "Roedd hi'n dipyn o gur pen dewis yr albwm fuddugol." Ond, roedd Lemfreck yn "llawn haeddu'r wobwr".

Gwobr Ysbrydoliaeth Cerddoriaeth Gymreig

Eric Martin a DJ Jaffa enillodd Gwobr Ysbrydoliaeth Cerddoriaeth Gymreig eleni sef gwobr i ddiolch am eu cyfraniadau drwy gydol eu gyrfa i'r sin gerddoriaeth yng Nghymru. Law yn llaw, fe wnaethant helpu sefydlu ac arloesi'r sin hip-hop yng Nghymru, gydag Eric Martin hefyd yn ser-

ennu yn fyd-eang wrth iddo gydysgrifennu'r gân Pump Up the Jam!

Dyweddodd Martin: "I feel blessed to have been part of a young, vibrant hip-hop scene in Wales". Ychwanegodd DJ Jaffa: "To see so many artists from boom-bap to drill to all forms of hip-hop morph into something beautiful warms my heart ... I love to see Black music in Wales. This is our year."

Gwobr Triskel

Mae gwobr Triskel hefyd yn cael ei gyflwyno'n flynyddol gyda chefnogaeth yr elusen Help Musicians er mwyn helpu artistiaid i esgyn i'r lefel nesaf yn eu gyrfaedd. Eleni, Adjua, WRKhouse a Voya a ddaeth i'r brig. Dyma dri grŵp o artistiaid â seiniau gwbl newydd a chyffrous gyda phob un a'u sain a'u steil unigryw eu hun - o R&B i Electronica i Alt-pop.

Mae buddugoliaeth Lemfreck, llwyddiant enillwyr Gwobr Triskel a safon aruthrol o uchel y rhestr fer yn sicr yn cynnig dy-

fodol cyffrous a blaengar i'r sin gerddoriaeth yng Nghymru!



Lemfreck yn 2022
Tarddiad: Festival Flyer (via Flickr)



Hannah Williams



Charlie Thomas



Ffion Wyn Jones



Elen Williams



Hanna Morgans

Kneecap yn Perfformio yn y Tramshed

Gwenno Davies
Cyfrannwr

Ym mis Hydref 'leni, ymgasglodd llu o bobl yn y Tramshed yng Nghaerdydd i wylu'r band 'Kneecap' yn perfformio. Disgrifiwyd y gyngerdd yn "wych," a "chyffrous" gan y rheini a fu'n bresennol, gydag un unigolyn yn nodi mai uchafbwynt y gyngerdd, iddo fe, oedd i'r DJ chwifio baner Owain Glyndŵr yn yr awyr ar ddechrau'r sioe. Ond pwy yw'r triawd yma, beth sy'n eu gwneud nhw'n unigryw, a pham fod Owain Glyndŵr yn arwyddocaol iddyn nhw?

O Ogledd Iwerddon yn wreiddiol, mae Mo Chara, DJ Próvaí a Móglaí Bap wedi ennill cefnogaeth gref ar

draws y byd ers iddynt ffurfio yn 2017. Yn y Wyddeleg y cana'r grŵp hwn y rhan fwyaf o'r amser, ac mae eu hangerdd tuag at yr iaith, yn ogystal â'u credoau gwleidyddol, yn bynciau sy'n amlygu'n gyson yn eu caneuon. Fel triawd a oedd wedi hen arfer â sgwrsio gyda'i gilydd yn y Wyddeleg, canu yn yr iaith honno oedd y dewis amlwg iddyn nhw.

"Oedd 'na lot o bobl yn dweud bydden ni byth yn llwyddo gan bo' ni'n canu yn y Wyddeleg," meddai Mo Chara, "Ond y gwir ydy mai'r ffaith bo' ni'n canu'n y Wyddeleg ydy'r rheswm pam bod gymaint o ddrysau wedi agor i ni."

Fel siaradwyr iaith leiafrifol, mynega'r tri edmygedd fawr aton ni'r Cymry am ein llwyddiant i

ddiogelu ein hiaith. "Roedden ni'n gweld pa mor wrthryfelgar oedd y Cymry'n rhwygo arwyddion uniaith Saesneg i lawr, y gwaith oedd Cymdeithas yr iaith yn ei wneud" meddai DJ Próvaí. Yn ôl y rhai a fu'n bresennol yn y gyngerdd, bu'r tri'n dangos eu parch o'r Cymry yn gyson wrth wneud "toutes neis tuag at ein hiaith ni," fel wrth gyfarch y gynulleidfa â 'shwmae' cyn dechrau.

Bu'r Gwyddelod, hefyd, yn brwydro'n ddiflino dros ennill hawlau i'w hiaith, a chyflwynwyd addysg Wyddeleg yng Ngogledd Iwerddon am y tro cyntaf yn 1972 wedi iddynt ymladd drosto am flynyddoedd maith. Mae nifer wedi bod wrthi yn ceisio eflychu sefyllfa'r Gymraeg draw yn

Iwerddon, trwy gynnal eu fersiwn eu hunain o'r Eisteddfod, a sefydlu TG4, sef y sianel deledu Wyddelig. Dywed DJ Próvaí - "Erbyn hyn mae'r holl beth 'di troi mewn cylch, ble roedd pobl yn cael eu curo ac efo cywilydd o'r Wyddeleg, bellach maen nhw'n ei defnyddio ac yn falch o'i siarad."

"Roedd hi'n deimlad braf cael gweld band arall, sy'n hynod o fawr ar hyn o bryd yn ymfalchio gymaint yn eu hiaith nhw," meddai unigolyn a fu'n y gyngerdd, "odd e'n rhoi lot o obaith i fi fel siaradwr Cymraeg fod yna le nid yn unig yn y cyfryngau, ond hefyd yn y byd cerddoriaeth ar draws y byd i ieithoedd leiafrifol."

Felly, os fyddwch chi byth yn

Oes Angen Mwy o Fuddsoddiad ar Gyfer Myfyrwyr Cymraeg?

Aneurin Davies
Golygydd Barn

Un o'r pethau mae Prifysgol Caerdydd yn ceisio gwneud blwyddyn ar ôl blwyddyn yw denu mwy o siaradwyr Cymraeg. Dwi'n siŵr bod pob siaradwr Cymraeg wnaeth ysgrifennu eu bod nhw'n rhugl yn y Gymraeg ar eu ffurflen cais yn cofio'r e-byst yn ceisio'u denu i Ysgol y Gymraeg neu i astudio o fewn yr iaith. Er bod y dacteg hon

yn un effeithiol (gan fod yr e-byst yn gyson yn rhoi gwybodaeth fanwl am gyfleusterau Cymraeg y brifysgol), mae'n rhaid cwestiynu - oes digon o fuddsoddiad i mewn i fyfyrwyr Cymraeg?

Ysgol y Gymraeg, o fewn yr adeilad John Percival, yw un o'r ysgolion gorau o fewn y brifysgol. Maent yn cynnig cymaint o gyfleoedd a phrofiadau i fyfyrwyr, gan gynnwys modiwl sy'n rhoi lleoliad iddynt mewn gweithle

sydd o ddiddordeb iddynt (S4C, ysgolion, ayyb.). Cynigant y cyfle i ymuno â'r Panel Myfyrwyr, lle gallwch drafod problemau (a llwyddiannau!) y brifysgol a sut i'w gwella. Yn bersonol, ni allai gofyn am fwy gan Ysgol y Gymraeg.

Ond, beth am ysgolion eraill y brifysgol? Wrth gwrs, dyw cwrs yn y Gymraeg ddim yn eich unig gyfle i astudio o fewn y Gymraeg. Mae myfyrwyr efo'r cyfle i astudio nifer o gyrsiau trwy'r Gym-

raeg. Mae darlithwyr sy'n dysgu trwy'r Gymraeg wedi bod yn ymladd am well cyfleoedd o fewn y brifysgol am flynyddoedd maeth nawr. Un esiampl arbennig yw JOMEC Cymraeg, sydd wedi bod yn gweithio'n galed am gyfleoedd gwell i fyfyrwyr er mwyn eu denu i astudio newyddiadau. Ar hyn o bryd, darlithwyr JOMEC Cymraeg sydd wedi bod mwyaf llwyddiannus gyda'r buddsoddiad cyfyngedig maent yn derbyn.



‘Tipyn o Ergyd i Blant Byddar’: Atal Cyflwyno TGAU Iaith Arwyddion Prydain

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-od

Mae nifer o bobl wedi'u siomi yn dilyn penderfyniad Cymwysterau Cymru i atal cyflwyno cymhwyster TGAU iaith Arwyddion Prydain (BSL) yng Nghymru. Un o'r rheini yw Martin Griffiths, Rheolwr Cymdeithas Fyddar Brydeinig, Cymru, a ddisgrifiodd y cyhoeddiant, "yn dipyn o ergyd i blant byddar a'u ffrindiau a chyd-disgyblion ar draws Cymru".

‘Penderfyniad an-odd’

Roedd cynlluniau i'r cymhwyster gael ei ddatblygu erbyn 2027, ond cyhoeddodd Cymwysterau Cymru ar yr 2il o Hydref eu bod "wedi gwneud y penderfyniad anodd i atal datblygiad y cymhwyster TGAU Gwneud-i-Gymru mewn iaith Arwyddion Prydain". Dywedodd y sefydliad fod hwn yn sgil "llaweroheriau ymarferoli'r

sector addysgyneigyfanrwydd".

Bellach, dywed Cymwysterau Cymru y bydd "unedau iaith Arwyddion Prydain ar gael yn ein cymhwyster Sgiliau am Oes newydd", yn hytrach na datblygu cymhwyster yn benodol ar gyfer iaith Arwyddion Prydain. Maent yn hyderu y bydd hwn yn caniatáu nifer o ysgolion i ddarparu eu disgyblion gyda "sgiliau ymarferol ar gyfer rhyngweithio cymdeithasol mewn lleoliadau bob dydd".

Daeth y cyhoeddiad ddiwrnod ar ôl i Jane Hutt, Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet ar gyfer Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, sôn am ddarpariaethau gan Lywodraeth Cymru i "hybu a hwyluso'r defnydd o BSL" yng Nghymru.

‘Deall y bydd siom’

Un sydd wedi'i siomi gan hyn yw Prif Weithredwr y Gymdeithas Genedlaethol i Blant Byddar, Susan Daniels. Dywedodd, "Dros ddegawd mae pobl ifanc byddar wedi bod yn ymgyr-

chu dros TGAU BSL. Mae darganfod bod Llywodraeth Cymru wedi mynd yn ôl ar eu gair ac na fydd TGAU BSL yng Nghymru bellach yn ddinistriol". Ychwanegodd at ei rhwystredigath gan honni "Does dim amheuaeth eu bod yn hae-ddu gallu ennill cymhwyster sy'n cael ei gydnabod yn ffurfiol yn eu hiaith eu hunain", gan gyfeirio at bobl ifanc byddar.

Mewn ymateb i gyhoeddiad Cymwysterau Cymru, dywedodd llefarydd ar ran Llywodraeth Cymru, "rydym yn deall y bydd siom ynghylch penderfyniad Cymwysterau Cymru i atal datblygiad TGAU BSL. Fodd bynnag, rydym yn falch y byddant yn parhau i ddatblygu unedau BSL fel rhan o'r cymhwyster Cyfres Sgiliau newydd, a fydd ar gael o 2027".

‘Mor benderfynol ag erioed’

Er y siom, mae Susan Daniels yn obeithiol y bydd cymhwyster ar gael yn y dyfodol. Dy-

wedodd, "Rydym mor benderfynol ag erioed i wneud yn siŵr bod TGAU BSL yn dod yn realiti yng Nghymru ac rydym yn awyddus i weithio gyda Chymwysterau Cymru i oresgyn yr 'heriau ymarferol' maen nhw'n eu disgrifio".

Mae Signature, y corff dyfarnu blaenllaw ar gyfer cymhwyster cyfathrebu ac iaith fyddar yn y DU, hefyd yn benderfynol o sicrhau bod cymhwyster yn cael ei ddatblygu yn y dyfodol. Dywedodd Lindsay Foster, y Cyfarwyddwr Gweithredol, "Byddwn ni'n rhannu ein hymchwyl gyda Chymwysterau Cymru ar y galw am TGAU mewn iaith Arwyddion Prydain, yn ogystal â'r dystiolaeth o gyflenwad addysgu digonol yng Nghymru i'w lansio".

Tarddiad ein Traddodiad: Cantre'r Gwaelod

Charlie Thomas
Golygydd Taf-Od

Fel y gwelsom gyda Chwedl Gelert yn y rhifyn diwethaf, mae gwreiddiau ein chwedl wedi wedi datblygu ac addasu dros amser. Y tro hwn, mae'n bryd i ni droi ein sylw at chwedl rwy'n siŵr i chi ei chlywed o'r blaen - Cantre'r Gwaelod, gan ystyried y cwestiynau, o le ddaw'r chwedl yn wreiddiol, a faint o wirionedd sydd tu ôl iddi?

Mae'r chwedl yma wedi'i seilio mloedd o flynyddoedd yn ôl ym Mae Ceredigion, fel rydym yn ei adnabod heddiw. Clywn stori Cantre'r Gwaelod yn wreiddiol yn Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin, a ddaw o'r 13eg Ganrif, ble caiff y lleoliad ei alw yn Maes Gwyddno. Mae'r stori wreiddiol yn dweud bod y maes wedi gorlifo ar ôl i forwyn o'r enw Mererid, a oedd i fod i edrych ar ôl ffynnon ddŵr, adael ei dyletswydd - a arweiniodd at y ffynnon yn gorlifo a boddi'r pentref!

Erbyn hyn fodd bynnag, mae'r chwedl fel rydym yn ei hadnabod yn wahanol. Mae'r fersiwn hon o'r stori (o'r 17eg ganrif) yn sôn am deyrnas Cantre'r Gwaelod ym Mae Ceredigion oedd yn cael ei diogelu gan lifddorau i amddiffyn y pentref rhag y môr. Cafodd ei boddi ar ôl i'r tywysog Seithenyn, sy'n cael ei ddisgrifio fel meddwyn mewn rhai fersiynau o'r chwedl, gwympo i gysgu ar ôl yfed gormod, pan oedd i fod i edrych ar ôl y llifddorau a sicrhau eu bod ar gau. Daeth y môr trwy'r llifddorau a boddi'r deyrnas, gyda'r gwar-chodluoedd yn canu'r clychau er mwyn rhybuddio'r bobl, fod y lle yn boddi o dan y môr. Yn ôl y sôn, gallwch glywed clychau Cantre'r Gwaelod yn canu o dan y môr pan fo perygl yn agos!

Mae'r stori wedi cael ei chymharu ag Atlantis dros y blynyddoedd, gyda llawer yn galw Cantre'r Gwaelod yn Atlantis Cymru.

Ond y cwestiwn yw, ydy'r stori yn wir? Mae rhywfaint o dystiolaeth wedi dod i'r amlwg dros y blynyddoedd am ardrefniant yn ardal Bae Ceredigion, gydag adroddiadau mor bell yn ôl a 1770. Mae tystiolaeth ddynol i weld hefyd, gydag olion llwybrau cerdded pren, ôl troed sydd wedi caledu mewn mawn, a hefyd carreg hen aelwyd.

Felly, mae'n bosib bod elfen o wirionedd i'r chwedl, ond mae'n anodd gwybod pa mor wir yw'r fersiwn rydym yn gyfarwydd â hi.



Plaid Cymru yn gwrthod cefnogi cyllideb y Lywodraeth Lafur

Ifan Meredith
Cyfrannwr

Mae arweinydd Plaid Cymru, Rhun ap Iorwerth wedi gwrthod galwad Llafur i gefnogi ei chyllideb yn y Senedd heb drafodaeth am y swm dyledus HS2 i Gymru.

Mae gofyn i Lywodraeth Cymru dderbyn cefnogaeth oleiaf un blaid arall yn y Senedd er mwyn cadarnhau ei chynllun gwariant gan mai 30 (50%) o seddi sydd ganddynt ym Mae Caerdydd.

Ond, gall hyn fod yn anoddach na'r disgwyl ar ôl i Blaid Cymru dynnu ei chefnogaeth heb sicrwydd buddsoddiad teg i Gymru,

sy'n cynnwys y ffrae barhaus dros ddyled HS2 i Gymru.

Dynodir cynllun HS2 sef gwasanaeth rheilffordd uwchraddedig rhwng canolbarth Lloegr a Llundain yn gynllun ar gyfer 'Lloegr a Chymru' a hynny er nad oes troedfedd o drac yn dod i Gymru. Yn sgil hyn, dydy Cymru ddim yn cael dim un ceiniog ychwanegol i'w chyllideb.

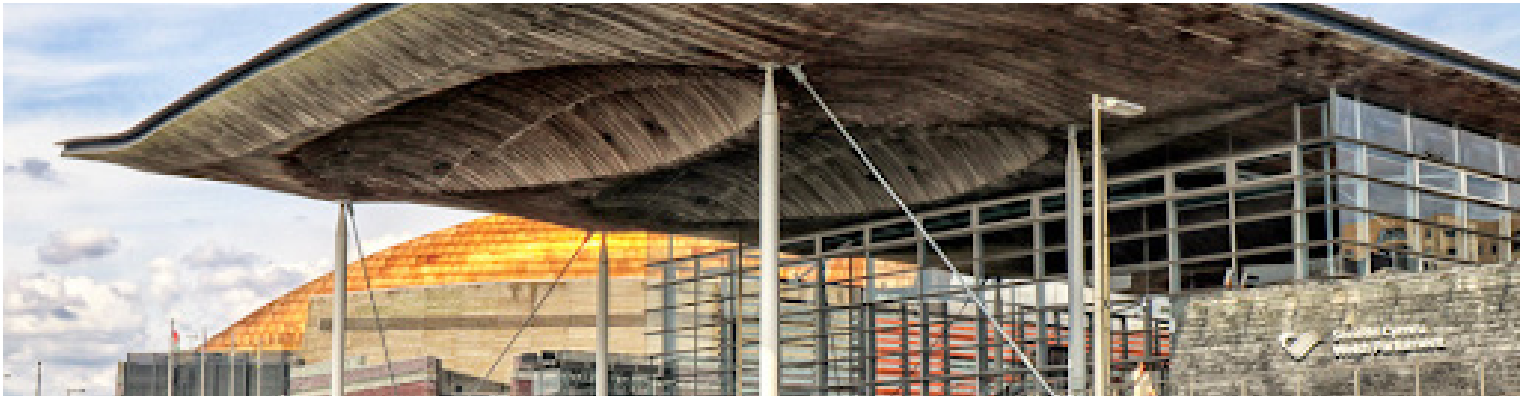
Daeth sylwadau Rhun ap Iorwerth yn ystod ail ddiwrnod cynhadledd y blaid yn Stadiwm y Principality yng Nghaerdydd. Cyhuddodd Arweinydd Plaid Cymru y Llywodraeth Lafur yng Nghymru dan arweiny-

ddiaeth Eluned Morgan o "roi'r ffidl yn y to ar sefyll dros Gymru" er mwyn osgoi sefyllfa o emaras i'r Prif Weinidog, Sir Keir Starmer.

Yn ystod cynhadledd Plaid Cymru, bu'r pwyslais mawr ar etholiad Senedd Cymru fydd yn cael ei gynnal yn 2026 gan gyflwyno ei hun fel llywodraeth sy'n aros. Ychydig o amser yn ôl bu'r Blaid yn y Cymoedd ar gyfer "cynhadledd y Cymoedd" ym Mhontypridd wrth i arweinydd y blaid ddatgan eu bod yn "ffocysu tipyn ar y Cymoedd" er mwyn denu pleidleiswyr newydd i'r blaid. Roedd agwedd gobeithiol ac angerdd y gynhadledd yn amlwg a'r momentwm yn

uchel wrth i ni gamu i gyfnod gwleidyddol newydd yng Nghymru sydd yn arwain at yr etholiad ymhen dwy flynedd. Mae hyn yn dilyn llwyddiant y blaid yng nghymunedau Arfor, yn ennill pedair sedd yn etholiad Senedd y DU yn gynt eleni.

Ond, mae wedi cael ei bwysleisio yn ddiweddar am broblem fwyaf y blaid, sef a yw'r gallu ganddynt i ddenu Cymry di-Gymraeg i bleidleisio dros y blaid? Amser a ddengys a all Plaid Cymru symud o'r wedd o fod yn 'Party for Welsh-Speakers' i 'Party of Wales' yng ngwedd y pleidleiswyr sydd yn methu siarad yr iaith Gymraeg.



Tarddiad: tagois (via Flickr)

'X' – Llai o ddefnyddwyr?

Ffion Wyn Jones
Golygydd Taf-od

Mae hi bron a bod yn ddathliad (neu'n gofiant) eleni ers datblygiad Twitter i X, ddwy flynedd yn ôl. Ond faint o effaith cafodd y newid sylweddol yma ar y defnyddwyr?

Yn glir iawn, mae Elon Musk wedi newid llawer o agweddau ar y plattfform yma, sydd wedi gwneud i bobl, yn enwedig ffigurau amlwg o fewn ein cymdeithas i adael X, neu leihau eu defnydd ohono.

Yn ddiweddar, mae plattfformau fel 'Reddit' a 'Quora' wedi bod yn trafod ac yn ateb y cwestiwn, pa gyfryngau cymdeithasol sydd fwyaf niweidiol. Er mai Instagram a TikTok sy'n ef-

feithio iechyd meddwl waethaf, 'X' sydd ar frig y drafodaeth am awyrgylch mwyaf tocsig ar lein. Pam fod hyn?

Dull 'Chwyldroadol' Musk – Llais Rhydd?

Un o fwriadau Musk wrth adnewyddu'r safle oedd cynyddu'r cyfle ar gyfer lleisio barn rydd. Yn amlwg mae hyn wedi cynyddu'r defnydd o gamdriniaeth ar y plattfform a rhaniad camwybodaeth.

Camwybodaeth, bots a chamdriniaeth

Yn sicr mae cynnydd ym mhob ardal ar-lein o ddosbarthiad camwybodaeth, camdriniaeth a bots. Ond mae 'X' yn cael ei weld fel safle sy'n cael ei dargedu yn benodol gan y rhain, gyda

llai o gyfyngiadau i gymharu gyda phlattfformau eraill. O ganlyniad i hyn mae nifer o academyddion a busnesau wedi ymadael â'r plattfform oherwydd yr anffurfioldeb a'r camwybodaeth a allai gael eu cysylltu gyda'u cwmnïoedd nhw.

Rhesymau Moesegol

Yn sicr mae nifer o unigolion yn ymadael â'r plattfform oherwydd rhesymau moesegol sydd gydag effeithiau hir dymor. Mae hyn i'w wneud â model ariannu'r plattfform sydd yn elwa o ddosbarthiad camwybodaeth a hyd yn oed camdriniaeth. Dengys ffigurau gan y 'Financial Times' fod y nifer o ddefnyddwyr yn y DU wedi cwmpo 1/3, tra bod y nifer o ddefnyddwyr o'r UDA wedi cwmpo 1/5.

Ble mae'r defnyddwyr yn mynd yn lle?

Mae nifer o ddefnyddwyr yn dechrau troi at blatfformau newydd tebyg i 'Bluesky'. Wedi ei frandio fel safle 'microblogio' sydd yn edrych yn debyg i'r hen 'Twitter'. Er bod y plattfform yn un newydd iawn (wedi ei lansio ym mis Chwefror 2024), mae'r plattfform yn denu bron 800,000 o ddefnyddwyr yn ddyddiol!

Gall hyn fod yn problem i obeithion Musk am 'X'?

Mae'n ymddangos fod y safle tradodiadol yn ailymddangos fel brand newydd, sydd yn diogelu defnyddwyr a'r brand personol/busnes.

Wrecsam: Clochdar y creision yd yn

Fflur James
Cyfrannwr

Daeth bwrlwm i ddinas Wrecsam yn ddiweddar wedi i gwmni Kellogg's sydd bellach yn cael ei alw'n Kellanova, gyhoeddi ei bod nhw'n bwriadu sefydlu ffatri fwyaf Ewrop sy'n cynhyrchu grawnfwyd, yn nhref y sêr Hollywood, Wrecsam.

Bwriad y cwmni grawnfwyd Kellanova yw buddsoddi £75 miliwn i'r cynllun hwn yn ninas Wrecsam a hynny wrth ddyblu maint y ffatri sydd eisoes yno yn barod ac yn cyflogi 350 o weithwyr ar hyn o bryd. Bydd hyn yn cael cryn effaith ar faint y bocsys o rawnfwyd sy'n cael eu cynhyrchu. Bob diwrnod, bydd modd cynhyrchu 1.5 miliwn o focsys o rawnfwyd dan olau'r datblygiadau newydd. Yn llygad y datblygiadau hyn, bydd ymhell dros 100 o swyddi newydd yn cael eu creu ar y safle, gan gynyddu maint eu cynhyrchu hefyd.

Ond nid yn y ffatri ei hun yn unig y daw budd y datblygiadau hyn. Mae nifer o bobl leol yn grediniol y daw budd i'r dref ac i fusnesau'r ardal wrth ddod â maint y buddsoddiad hwn i ardal mor fach.

Mae Kellogg's yn enwog am gynhyrchu rhai o rawnfwydydd mwyaf adnabyddus y byd, megis Special K, Fruit 'n' Fibre a Crunchy Nut.

Yn dilyn y bwriad arfaethedig i gau ffatri Kellanova ym Manceinion ymhen dwy flynedd, bydd ffatri Wrecsam yn dechrau cynhyrchu creision yd, neu 'Corn Flakes', sef un o rawnfwydydd

dd mwyaf enwog y Deyrnas Unedig. Yn ôl Cyngor Wrecsam, mae'r datblygiad hwn yn 'gyffrous' ac maen nhw'n gobeithio y gwneiff y dref weld buddion ym mhob agwedd o fywyd cymdeithasol ac economaidd fel sgil-effaith i'r buddsoddiad sylweddol hwn. Nid yw'r maes cynhyrchu grawnfwyd yn y Deyrnas Unedig wedi gweld y fath fuddsoddiad ers sawl degawd, ac felly mae'r Cyngor yn obeithiol iawn am yr effaith y'i caiff ar y dref a'i phobl.

Dywed y Cyngor hefyd, bod y datblygiadau hyn am fod yn rhai hir-dymor, sydd am weld dyfodol cryf i ffatri Kellanova Wrecsam, sydd yn newyddion cadarnhaol i nifer o bobl leol sydd yn debygol o fod yn chwilio am waith yn ystod y blynyddoedd sydd i ddod.



Tarddiad: Felipe Andrade (via Flickr)

Nifer fwyaf erioed wedi rhedeg Hanner Marathon Caerdydd.

Hanna Morgans
Golygydd Taf-Od

Ar y 6ed o Hydref, cafodd Hanner Marathon Caerdydd ei chynnal gyda'r nifer fwyaf erioed o redwyr, gan ddenu dros 29,000 o bobl o bob cwr o'r byd i gymryd rhan.

Diwrnodau ar ôl cyflawni'r ras eleni, mae rhedwyr eisioes yn barod yn paratoui ar gyfer y ras flwyddyn nesaf, gyda'r holl lefydd cyffredinol wedi'u llenwi o fewn y 12 awr gyntaf o fynd ar werth.

Agorodd y cofrestru ar y 9fed o Hydref, ac roedd y galw am le yn y ras yn ddigynsail.

Hawliwyd tocynnau 'early bird' ac ail ryddhad mewn ychydig dros awr, yn hwyrach wedyn llenwyd yr holl leoedd mynediad cyffredinol.

Gyda phob lle wedi'i werthu mor gyflym, yr unig ffordd i redwyr gymryd rhan yn y digwyddiad flwyddyn nesaf yw drwy gynrychioli elusen neu ymuno â phecyn her busnes.

Wrth siarad gyda Taf-od, dwedodd Luned Jones, 20, a redodd y ras: "Rwy'n credu bod e'n ddigwyddiad mor boblogaidd oherwydd mae'n siawns i bobl mynd allan o'i 'comfort zone'. Yn ogystal, mae'n siawns i bobl gwblhau gol a chodi nifer o arian ag sy'n bosib i elusennau".

Hanes y ras

Sefydlwyd Hanner Marathon Caerdydd yn 2003 gan elusen Barnado's ac fe gymerodd 1,500 o redwyr ran yn y ras. Mae'r digwyddiad bellch yn denu degau o filoedd i gymryd rhan, gan gynnwys athletwyr o safon fyd-eang.

Erbyn hyn mae wedi tyfu i fod yr hanner marathon fwyaf poblogaidd yn Ewrop a digwyddiad elusennol mwyaf Cymru, gyda dros £3 miliwn yn cael ei godi bob blwyddyn.

Dyma un o'r rhesymau pam benderyfnodd Luned Jones redeg y ras. Dywedodd: "Roeddwn 'di cael fy ysbrydoli gan fy nhad-cu. Mae e wastad di bod yn fodel rôl i mi gan roedd e arfer gwneud llawer o chwaraeon pan oed-

dwn i'n ifanc. Mae nawr yn dioddef o ddementia felly roeddwn i eisiau codi arian i'r afiechyd yma."

Llwyddodd Luned i godi £645 i'r elusen.

Mae'r cwrs yn mynd heibio holl olygfeydd mwyaf trawiadol ac eiconig y ddinas, gan gynnwys Castell Caerdydd, Stadiwm y Principality, Canolfan y Mileniwm, y Ganolfan Ddinesig a Bae Caerdydd

SuperHalfs

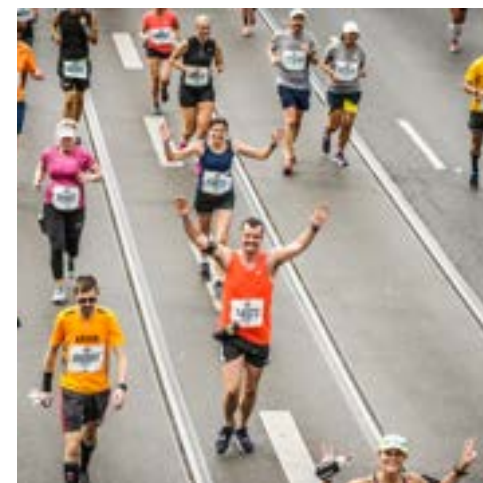
Mae Hanner Marathon Caerdydd yn rhan o'r gyfres SuperHalf's sef sialens o gyflawni 6 hanner marathon yn y dinasoedd Lisbon, Prague, Berlin, Copenhagen, Caerdydd a Valencia o fewn 60 mis.

Mae disgwyl bod dros 60,000 o redwyr yn cymryd rhan yn y her hon.

"Roeddwn i mor browd"

Wrth groesi'r llinell derfyn, disgriaiodd Luned iddi fod yn deimlad "anhygoel" – "Roeddwn i'n teimlo'n

falch o ba mor bell roeddwn i wedi dod, nid yn unig yn y ras, ond trwy'r misoedd o hyfforddi. Roedd gweld y llinell derfyn wedi rhoi llawer o egni i mi, ac wrth imi ei chroesi, roeddwn yn llawn hapusrwydd. Roedd yn foment roeddwn i wedi gweithio mor galed ar ei chyfer! Roeddwn i mor browd."



Tarddiad: Nicki Dugan Pogue (via Flickr)

THE TEAM



Ella Lane



Aneurin Davies



Alice Roach



James Roberts



Emily Clegg



OPINION



Did Lorde's Pure Heroine Change the Landscape of Pop Music?

Emily Clegg
Opinion Editor

Whilst scrolling through social media the other week I saw a post commemorating the 11th Anniversary of the release of Lorde's debut album *Pure Heroine*. Fans and critics alike were praising the album for its lasting impact on the modern-day music landscape. Reflecting on the album I wanted to further explore its continued influence and why I, like many others, hail *Pure Heroine* as a vastly defining album of the 2010s.

With its sound still impacting the way music sounds 11 years later Lorde certainly left her distinct mark on the landscape of pop. Let's take a trip back to 2013. When the chorus of "Royals" first hit the airwaves, it was clear that pop music was in for a major shake-up. Lorde, a 16-year-old from New Zealand, didn't just sound different; her whole aesthetic was a bold

departure from the glittering norm of chart-toppers previous. Critics praised her for "keeping her clothes on," a compliment that now feels a bit cringe-worthy and more than a little misogynistic. With her enigmatic persona and a commitment to maintaining her privacy, Lorde's stage name became more than just a brand—it was a symbol of mystery that drew listeners in. "Royals" burst onto the scene and flipped the script on what pop could be. Instead of the usual party vibes and glitzy lifestyles, here was a teenager, raw and unfiltered, calling out the excesses of pop culture. It was a refreshing slap in the face to everything we thought we knew about mainstream music. Fast forward a few years, and you can see Lorde's influence everywhere.

Look at Billie Eilish—her debut album, *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*, is steeped in that same introspective vibe. Billie's music feels like a diary entry set to beats that might keep you up at night. She's embraced a sound

that prioritizes mood and honesty over traditional pop polish, just like Lorde did. It's almost as if Billie took the torch from Lorde, weaving those raw feelings into tracks that resonate with a new generation. And then there's Olivia Rodrigo. If you listen closely, you can hear the echoes of Lorde in Olivia's emotionally charged lyrics and catchy hooks.

Olivia has mentioned how much Lorde's music impacted her writing, and it shows. With her blend of heartbreak and youthful angst, Olivia perfectly captures the essence of *Pure Heroine*. Lorde made it clear that you don't need a perfect image or a flashy persona to connect with listeners. Authenticity became the new cool, and it opened the door for a wave of artists who prioritize realness over the usual glamour. As we watch Billie, Olivia, and others carve out their spaces in the pop landscape, it's impossible not to recognize the impact of *Pure Heroine*. In a world that often pushes

for perfection, her music reminds us to embrace our quirks and flaws something we can all celebrate.

As I celebrate the anniversary of *Pure Heroine*'s release, it's hard to overstate its influence. Lorde transformed pop into a space where teenage girls could be the protagonists, rather than mere objects. Her raspy, theatrical vocals have inspired a new wave of artists like Billie Eilish and Olivia Rodrigo, who continue to push the boundaries of the genre and will continue to pave the way for new boundary-pushing artists.



Source: Annette Geneva (via Flickr)

Threads (1984): A Modern Doom Painting

James Roberts
Opinion Editor

One of my favourite ways to escape from the sometimes overwhelming cycles of university life is to visit St Fagans. Amongst its many reconstructed buildings is St Teilo's Church, inside of which you can experience the highly visual nature of medieval faith. Looking above the rood screen you can see a reconstructed Doom Painting, which in an affronting and uncompromising way conveys the horror of apocalyptic damnation. It is not an especially complex message, but the depiction of naked men and women being swallowed up by the mouth of hell is hard to misinterpret. It is tempting for us to relegate this kind of imagery to the past, and look down at any society that cen-

tred such primitive fear. But maybe we need this sometimes, and perhaps it can provide a reality check for our society when we don't fully consider the danger of catastrophe. This is why I was pleased at the recent re-broadcasting of *Threads* to mark forty years since its release. It is in many ways a Doom Painting for our nuclear age. (Yes, I might just be praising the BBC.) Set in Sheffield, the film is rooted in scenes of the everyday, which immerse the viewer into a world on the brink of nuclear war. Its cast of then little-known actors adds further to the realistic and relatable scenario, so that by the time Britain is attacked with nuclear weapons and the country begins to descend into chaos and barbarism, the viewer feels a greater sense of pain and loss at the devastation of nuclear war. Surprisingly for a pre-CGI film, and one shot on a famously low budg-

et, *Threads* can still horrify viewers with its scenes of people eating rats, rummaging through endless mounds of rubble, and shivering in rags. As a Doom Painting for our age (despite being forty years old) it confronts us with our own ability to destroy all that we take for granted. The stark warning at the heart of *Threads* is probably more relevant than ever before, with war erupting in the Middle East, perhaps escalating in Ukraine, and China threatening Taiwan. The film shows us how a lack of restraint on the part of global leaders can have apocalyptic consequences for the world due to the enormous degree of raw power that comes with nuclear weapons. As a side note, there is a scene of panic-buying before the outbreak of war, which bears a startling similarity to what took place in many supermarkets in March 2020. It is claimed by some that *Threads*

led to a move towards nuclear de-escalation when it was first broadcast. I hope that if enough people look at this modern Doom Painting, then perhaps we might be more cautious in how we negotiate the current uncertainty. Maybe a re-awakened sense of the horror which accompanies nuclear war will lead our government to deal carefully with nuclear armed Russia, and soon to be nuclear Iran.



Source: Pixabay (via Pexels)

Horror in the Home: The Trope of a Loved One Antagonist in Modern Horror

Alice Roach
Opinion Editor

With Halloween just around the corner and autumn well and truly underway, I've found myself being drawn to horror movies yet again and couldn't help but notice the way in which more contemporary horror movies focus on the horror inside the home. When I think of Halloween and horror movies, I immediately think of classic slasher movies, like *Friday the 13th*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Scream*, the list goes on. However, I've been watching a lot of 21st-century horror and it's evident that the focus has shifted to people experiencing horror and fear

through the actions of their loved ones rather than an unidentified killer or monster. The first films that come to mind when considering this new trope are *Midsommar*, *Ready or Not*, and *Don't Worry Darling*. All three of these movies focus on a female protagonist who is put into a dangerous and life-threatening situation by their partner who tricks them into believing they are doing something good. This allows for a new genre of "final girl" to emerge: a final girl who not only survives the physical horrors she is coming up against, but also faces the emotional challenge of cutting off somebody that she loves. The crux and most memorable parts of these three movies arguably are not when our protagonist survives a physical attack, but

rather when we, alongside her, witness the death of her partner. The satisfaction behind this very extreme cutting off of someone who was supposed to love you is, in my opinion, is far greater than the satisfaction one gets when watching a "final girl" survive a generic unknown murderer in a slasher movie. What really sticks out to me with this current horror movie trope is the way in which, as the audience, we begin the movie with trust for the protagonist's partner mirroring their own trust and it is only as the scenes play out where we begin to suspect and later confirm that they may have done all of this with intention. It reminds me of a quote I see on TikTok semi-regularly that argues "it is unreasonable to assume a character knows what genre

they're in" and makes me question if I would even recognise the signs of malicious intent from these partners without having the knowledge that I'm watching a horror movie. Would I too fall for their lies? This feels like a direct parallel to the way in which domestic abuse victims trust their partners unconditionally and believe wholeheartedly that they would never want to hurt them. Why would somebody assume that they're in a horror genre kind of scenario unless they've been told or have explicit signs. The focus towards this subgenre of psychological horror caused by a relationship in recent years has definitely caught my eye and caused me to realise the potential of applying everyday horrors to a more classic horror media to spark societal conversations.

Ranking Halloween Costumes: The Creative, The Controversial, and The Completely Overdone

Millie Higgins
Contributor

As the reality of autumn semester and its inevitable challenges catch up with everyone, the one saving grace is the excitement of Halloween. With the array of costumes putting weekly socials to shame. From the classic clown and skeletons to the movie characters and landmarks of the world all the way to the less than savoury Pocahontas. The different costumes that can be expected this Halloween. There are, of course, some costumes that appear year after year and have become boring staples of the 31st of October. Although boring doesn't mean bad. A classic is a classic for a reason and the expected cat costume is hard to do wrong, with a little black dress, cat ears, and eyeliner whiskers being instantly recognisable. Which is the tell-tale sign of a well done costume. In fact, almost all animal cos-

tumes have become expected and tedious every year, with the leopard and deer expected to take the crown this year. Another unavoidable costume has to be the pairing of Angels and Devils. This duo costume is repeated consistently with every person you know having the ability to whip it up at the last minute. Following the incredible popularity of Marvel and DC in recent years, a plethora of superhero costumes pop up every October in varying degrees of success and recognition. These costumes fall in the acceptable zone of Halloween costumes, as their basicness is balanced out by their reliable nature and easiness to craft last minute. In complete opposition to the overdone but recognisable costumes discussed above, the niche but incredibly creative costumes often wow the crowds. Once they finally recognise the costume that is. A favourite of the creative costume category must be random objects that don't initially spring to mind when brainstorming a cos-

tume but end up being a hilarious addition to the night. This genre includes dressing up as a basketball, a painting, or a food item that often gain media attention for their unexpectedness. Heidi Klum and her notorious Halloween parties always take the crown for the most creative Halloween costumes, with her costume remaining equally as incredible every year. The costume highlights being a peacock, a worm and both Adam, Eve, and the apple simultaneously. Dressing up at various landmarks across the globe is also extremely fun and creative with the Statue of Liberty and Big Ben being my personal favourite. With the right accessories and resilience any idea can be turned into a fantastic costume that will leave others speechless and in awe of the designer's creativity and desire to leave the basic costumes in the past. As the typical bunny and more exciting, creative ideas of a celebrity costume are a staple of the spooky season, so are the cultural appropriation costumes that are

fortunately dying out as knowledge and awareness is spread. Harmful representations of Native Indians, Hawaiians, and shameless acts of blackface are disguised as costumes each year as their danger is protected by the 31st of October. Thankfully these "costumes" are fading away as shops are stopping sales. With the general public realising that there are far more respectful and fun costumes out there. Other controversial costumes are those of recently deceased celebrities, who even in death are unable to escape public attention. This is especially insensitive when the death is unexpected and is still being grieved by many. Costumes can be very controversial without being harmful, like dressing up like politicians, especially those holding extreme power like the presidents of North Korea, Russia, and the USA. Generally, anybody who is controversial in their real life is controversial in costume form and therefore it's advisable that you don't dress up as them.



Source: KoolShooters (via Pexels)

Does Outdoor Exercise Render The Gym Obsolete?

Thomas Mahoney
Contributor

DISCLAIMER: This isn't a criticism of gym-goers, rather a re-evaluation of whether the gym is necessary for anyone not partaking in high-level sport.

Alongside this, running is a perfect way to get that all-important fresh air and vitamin D—two elements entirely absent from an hour's slogging away in air-conditioned rooms. Running can accustom your legs and feet to travelling along different surfaces, bringing further health benefits. Put off by rainy or cold conditions? Just get stuck in and try it—it's actually refreshing and immensely rewarding afterwards as long as you wrap up accordingly. Plus, you don't have to stand around scrolling on your phone whilst waiting to use your running route. Walking provides many of the benefits mentioned above, as well as broadening your horizons, improving your sense of direction and immersing yourself in nature. The awe of glimpsing a sea of undulating greenery reveal itself from behind a hill's apex, or the tranquillity of a sheltered forest track are hard to beat. Cardiff itself has numerous green areas—very therapeutic to wander through to your favourite album, and completely free! Granted, neither running nor walking help much to "build muscle", but this merely prompts another point: behind the mass consumption-orientated, social-media-friendly branding of

gyms lurks a nefarious motive that annuls any ostensibly benevolent one. In the UK and particularly on the continent, gyms tend to plaster deliberately selected, "conventionally attractive" models on their adverts, attempting to reinforce an inseparable link between muscle mass and attractiveness within people's minds. And in our internet dating and social media age, it's easy to be manipulated into prioritising this yourself, exacerbated by influencers and the PEDs, plastic surgery or unhealthily restrictive eating practices that contribute to their appearances. The result: an industry profiting from self-consciousness and particularly self-comparison, once dubbed "thief of joy". Regardless, upper body strength can be nurtured through home workouts or investing in your own weights (cheaper long-term), if that's your aim. Therefore, my opinion is: it's possible that we'd be physically and mentally healthier if we associated fitness with being active in the real world around us instead of enclosing ourselves in gyms.



Source: Victor Freitas (via Pexels)

Burnout to Balance: Rethinking our Working Culture

Clemency Byrne
Contributor

In today's fast-paced world, burnout is no longer a rare phenomenon, rather a crisis that affects almost every industry. Long hours, unrealistic demands, and "hustle" culture have become normalised, often leaving employees exhausted and disengaged. Despite growing awareness, many workplaces still treat burnout as an individual's problem, something to be cured with Band-Aid solutions like wellbeing seminars and meditation apps, while ignoring the root cause: a toxic culture that glorifies overwork.

The Silent Epidemic of Burnout

While workplace burnout has long been on the rise, rates spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between lockdowns, caring responsi-

bilities and the public health crisis, the hiring platform Indeed found that 67% of respondents held that burnout increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even before the pandemic, a 2018 Gallup study of 7,500 workers in the US found that 67% had experienced burnout in the workplace, with 28% saying they feel burnout "very often". This doesn't just mean long hours and vast deadlines, it's about an intrusive lack of balance that leaves people in the workforce emotionally, mentally and physically drained. Consequences aren't just for employees: higher turnover rates, reduced productivity and increased healthcare costs. Despite its presence, burnout remains stigmatised. Employees are often cautious to admit they're struggling, that it may be seen as weakness or a lack of commitment. In the height of "hustle" culture, with smartphones and laptops blurring the divide between work life and personal life, boundaries have disappeared. Responding to work-related emails,

taking calls on weekends, or even eating lunch at your desk is normal, sometimes necessary to stay ahead in competitive industries. But glorifying this hustle doesn't necessarily increase productivity. In fact, after a certain point when an employee is exhausted, their productivity, creativity, and engagement plummets, and the cycle of stress ensues, perpetuating burnout.

A Cultural Shift: From Hustle to Health

The narrative around work must change to one that values health and sustainability over non-stop hustle; it requires a deep rethinking of how we define productivity, flexibility and work itself. Firstly, productivity shouldn't be measured by the number of hours logged or emails responded to, but by outcomes. When workers are rested and energised, they perform better, suggesting we ought to focus not on time spent but the impact of work done. Secondly, flexibility is critical to reducing burnout. This doesn't

just mean working flexible hours but understanding the personal needs of each employee. Whether this means allowing time for family commitments or creating a more inclusive work environment, organisations must consider tailoring policies to support individual well-being. The path to a balanced work culture will require structural changes and a shift in attitudes. Policies like the four-day work week, which have gained momentum in some parts of the world represent this cultural shift, but they are only the start. As we face the future of work in an increasingly connected world, companies that prioritise wellbeing will not only attract top talent, but retain it, fostering an engaged, creative and resilient workforce. The shift from burnout to balance isn't just necessary, but inevitable for the future of the workplace. Let's work smarter, not harder, because in doing so, we can build a culture where we can all thrive.

The Truth About Student Housing: How Students Are Being Exploited

Khaanam Mohammed
Contributor

We all know the struggle of finding the right accommodation for us, whether that's student halls in your first year or housing in your second and third years. We have to rush, hoping and searching for somewhere perfect within our price range, all while preparing to live with people we don't know. This almost always ends in settling to live with whoever you can, with a shared rundown bathroom and a mouldy bedroom, or a half-hour walk from your university building. Of course with this comes: the housemate who doesn't know how to clean up after themselves; the landlord that can assure you "the mould was never a problem for them"; rent that increases every year; additional bills you have to pay; and on top of that all while a random energy company you're not a customer of keeps sending you letters claiming you owe them money.

However, if this isn't appealing and not part of the university culture you'd like to experience,

you can always book with private student accommodation, with their tall buildings, private newly built bathrooms, and shared kitchens of less than five people. This is, of course, if you are willing to pay more on your rent than you get from your student loan in one large sum or three large instalments, or if you are happy to sign a sixty-page tenancy agreement that is sent to you six times a day stating "if you go over your bill usage for the week you will be charged" despite them advertising "all bills are included", or that same agreement warning you that "you will be charged if you set a fire alarm off (even if accidental)", but then them also having unplanned fire alarms due to technical issues three times a week at 6am.

It is clear there is no student accommodation that actually benefits the student, and there is a huge lack of support in finding what's right for them. Instead, landlords rent to us knowing how eager students are to find somewhere to live, as ultimately, in the end, no matter how rundown or expensive their dwelling is, someone will end up living there. In my opinion, after living in student accommodation twice and student housing twice, booking early is incred-

ibly important, but so is who you are living with, so don't feel pressured to live with people you are not sure you like yet. If you are booking private accommodation, be aware they're not as social as housing or university halls, and you are responsible for your own cleaning and sometimes others'. Also, always book directly with the accommodation's website and not an accommodation finder website to avoid any hidden fees or booking rooms that are already reserved. Finally, when in doubt, check with TrustPilot for reviews and use student housing agents to help you find a house that's right for you. Student housing has always been notoriously bad—it's just something we accept as students because that's what we've been coerced into thinking is normal. However, being in a secure and comfortable environment is essential for our well-being and therefore our studying. So, make sure you ask all the questions you have and are entitled to and do all the research you can. Nowhere will be perfect; however, I'd say 2–4 of my homes have had great landlords and decent living situations for fair prices, and my other two houses had spacious rooms and great locations, so it's not impossible to find something that suits you!



Source: Joaquin Carfagna (via Pexels)

Marvellous or Marvel-Less?

Miriam Southall
Contributor

We all have our heroes and idols to look up to and aspire to. Whether motivated by wealth, fame, knowledge, or religion, each of us requires a unique source of inspiration to spark drive and ambition. Many consider on-screen heroes as positive role models, but is this the case? In this article, I intend to explain the impact of the Marvel franchise on viewers and cinema.

Between 2012 and 2021, Marvel appeared to dominate the film industry, reaching a peak in 2019 with *Avengers: Endgame* which grossed \$2.8 billion. Despite its massive success, I believe the Marvel craze stifled creativity in cinema. A classic

film captivates through storytelling and whether it's an intense thriller, a romantic rollercoaster, or the use of an unreliable narrator, the viewer's attention is gripped. Additionally, films should be able to deliver messages and explore controversial subjects for viewers to contemplate. However, I have never found this to be the case with Marvel films. Initially, you might say that these films do include plot twists and that there are many positive messages to be taken. For me though, the plot lines of each film are repetitive, featuring the conflict between the hero and villain with the message of good triumphing over evil and the need to stand up to the "bad guys". While characters may have slight changes, the core ideas remain consistent. As the franchise gained popularity, the films started relying on recycled ideas to make money. This led to remakes and

spin-offs relying on repetitive storylines, with writers focusing more on conflict and violence rather than exploring new and original ideas.

As well as the effects on cinema, it is also important to discuss the portrayal of violence and fighting in these films with the potential consequences it could have on younger viewers. Clearly, as with any action film, fighting scenes are extremely common, often featuring brutal and gruesome moments. However, Marvel often censors these bloody scenes, showcasing battles while not actually including any explicit injuries. Initially, this could be seen as being beneficial and more appropriate for kids, though doesn't this give impressionable children a false image of fighting. With the film's age ratings being mainly 12, this means a high number of viewers are likely to

include children around the age of 11 or 12 still learning about the world. Children at this age could watch a fight scene and with no show of injury, assume it is OK to get into fights and that no one would get seriously hurt. They could also think that fighting is justified if another child is doing something bad, after watching the "heroes" fight the villains.

Marvel's popularity has declined in recent years, with poorly reviewed and attended films such as *The Marvels*. At the same time, I would argue that cinema has seen a rise in originality with unique films like *Anatomy of a Fall*, *The Menu*, and *The Banshees of Inisherin*. Will this trend continue, or will the Marvel craze rise again? It's up to us as viewers to shape the future of film.



Source: Martin Lopez (via Pexels)

Has Hollywood Run Out of Original Ideas?

T.R. Cunick
Contributor

When was the last time you watched a Hollywood film that was new? One that wasn't a sequel or a reboot? You might remember last summer's "Barbenheimer" phenomenon perhaps or something similar? Other than this though, have you noticed that most films these days are sequels and reboots? Has Hollywood run out of ideas?

I think that for the most part, yes it has and Hollywood only has itself to blame.

You could argue that this is a problem with most industries these days, the constant push for financial and industry dominance meaning that, over time, you will need to reduce the quality of your products in order to maximise profits over a diminishing period of time. How do you sustain this?

Simple. Just like leftovers from last night's meal, you reheat and remarket it as the thing of today even though it was actually from yesterday.

This is most prevalent in huge multinational companies such as Disney.

As of writing they have released yet another

Marvel film and the third film of the *Deadpool* series: *Deadpool and Wolverine*, the consensus being that these films are excessively cameo-heavy, "unnecessarily sexualised", and just a cash grab. In fact, almost all of the recent Marvel films are just reheated leftovers. Films like *Ant Man* and *The Wasp* just seem to underperform: both as a film and at the box office.

Disney, in their quest to reheat much of their old content, recently announced a live action *Snow White* film, much to a chorus of disapproval, mainly due to their insistence on rewriting the original story and growing controversy around casting decisions—which does not bode well for a successful release if history has anything to do by.

It's not just Disney who fall foul of this: recent releases such as *Ocean's Eight*, a revision of *Ghostbusters*, endless excursions into the *Star Wars* universe and perhaps most relevant right now: *Joker: Folie à Deux*—all remakes or sequels of frankly better films. These all had good ideas but were executed badly, hence ending up being nowhere near as successful as hoped.

Of course, there are still original ideas, but they seem to be rarer. 2023 film-wise being dominated by the two aforementioned films, *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*. Two films with very different plots but both of which shared one sim-

ple thing: they were different, they were new. In a sea of sequels the people who developed the atomic bomb and an existentialist Barbie were bound to stand out and their box office revenues proved this: *Barbie* grossing over a billion dollars and *Oppenheimer* over nine hundred million (and a few Oscars to boot)! Compare this to *Antman and the Wasp* grossing four hundred million and *The Marvels* a mere two hundred and six million dollars—still a lot, but in Disney money terms, a failure.

Audiences are voting with their feet and with their wallets. Additional, if that was not enough of a message, then even titans of cinema like Quentin Tarantino and Martin Scorsese have vocalised their objections, with Scorsese's description of Marvel being no more of a theme park rather than cinema probably delivering the hardest punch.

This then should be the ultimate wake-up call for Hollywood: hire fresh talent, embrace new ideas, and stop making so much of the same thing. This is after all how Tarantino, Scorsese *et al.* got their first breaks and became the defining voices of their generation. Hollywood needs to regain some prestige and allure and get people back into the multiplexes, because just more of the same just won't cut it any more.



Source: Paul Deetman (via Pexels)

AGREE TO DISAGREE

Are We Living Through A Pop Music Renaissance?

Agree

Angelie Marwaha
Contributor

It's Summer 2024 and I'm spell-bound, watching Chappell Roan sing as Joan of Arc, Sabrina Carpenter kiss an alien, and the whole world do the *Apple* dance to Charli XCX's *Brat* album through my phone. It's therefore obvious to see just how ingrained pop stars and pop music are in our surrounding popular culture and how we are well and truly living through a pop music renaissance. For the past decade, aside from stand-out artists, it's felt like pop music has accepted defeat, packed up its bags and gone home. However, a new wave of predominantly female Gen-Z artists has, in a sense, resurrected the industry, breathing new life into a pretty statutory genre of music that excited few. Artists like Chappell Roan and the resurgence of Charli XCX are opening a new door on vulnerable, communicative and emotive lyrics with young women like Olivia Rodrigo punching out downright angry power ballads, hitting us where our heart is. This captivates us, making it easy to get behind these artists and their music. Just step foot in a club and hear the screams when *Espresso* or *Hot to Go* come on and affirm the wave of pop music that is gripping us completely. It's so fun! When the whole club is all doing the *Apple* dance by Charli XCX, it's physical proof of the breadth of the renaissance, and just how far it's spread.

Of course, it's important to look at how it's got so popular again. Social media has undoubtedly played its part, most notably with the almost overnight adoration of Chappell Roan. Her sophomore album *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess* came out in September 2023, and while doing incredibly well, she only really became a name in our mouths with the release of *Good Luck Babe* this spring with its addictive bridge binding us on TikTok. The song and album garnered fierce support from fans and shows that Roan is a key player in this pop renaissance. A striking feature about this movement is how it's stepping away from gendered terms. Although being predominantly spearheaded by female artists, it looks like everyone is enjoying how freeing this pop music renaissance is, regardless of who they are. This marks a differentiation with the 2010s, where pop music was disregarded and dismissed as girls' music and nowhere near as close to how universally listened and danced to it now is. Pop music comes and goes in waves, capturing our attention and holding us tight with its beats and lyrics. It's clear we are living in a rebirth period with it growing from strength to strength, getting more popular and popular. It's giving space to new artists who are refreshing the game and shaking things up, enticing their audience and giving us all something to root for.

Disagree

Emily Clegg
Opinion Editor

The idea that we are currently experiencing a "pop music renaissance" may not fully capture what's really happening in today's mainstream music landscape. While pop remains a dominant force, the music world is actually moving in a direction of diversification, where genres like country and rap are stepping more into the spotlight and reshaping the mainstream. Instead of a rebirth of pop, we're witnessing a broader cultural shift toward musical variety, with artists from different genres finding significant commercial success. One clear example of this shift is Beyoncé's surprise 2024 album *Cowboy Carter*. In this release, she blends elements of country music with her signature R&B and pop style, creating a genre-fusion track that's reflective of how music is evolving. The album has been embraced by fans in the UK, where country music is historically less mainstream. Beyoncé's foray into country-inspired sounds underscores how genre boundaries are increasingly fluid, as even the world's biggest pop stars are exploring new musical landscapes. *Cowboy Carter* taps into the broader trend of country and Americana sounds influencing mainstream music, offering a new take on UK pop culture's sonic palette. Similarly, artists like Post Malone have also taken a delve into the country genre, as well as one of the biggest selling

songs of the year being Shaboozey's *Bar Song*. Country music is certainly becoming more of a staple on popular music radio, and I believe it will only continue to grow in popularity. At the same time, rap continues to exert an enormous influence on the mainstream. Artists like Drake, Kendrick Lamar, and Travis Scott have remained dominant forces in 2024, with albums like Travis Scott's *Utopia* achieving massive commercial success. Rap is no longer confined to specific charts or demographics; it has become a universal language in popular music. Megan the Stallion, Doja Cat, and Ice Spice are further examples of how rap and hip-hop have expanded their reach, influencing pop music's sound and aesthetics while dominating streaming platforms. And of course, the Drake vs. Kendrick beef was one of the defining music moments of this year. Instead of seeing a renaissance of pop, we're witnessing a blending and diversification of genres. Country, rap, and even Latin music—artists like Bad Bunny and Rosalía—are breaking through traditional boundaries and reshaping what mainstream music sounds like. The current era of music is more about the rise of genre fusion and cross-genre collaboration than a simple revival of pop music. The mainstream isn't just pop anymore—it's an evolving mix of influences, and that's what makes today's music scene truly exciting. While pop is obviously never going anywhere the diversification of charting music will be interesting to observe as this musical era continues.

Paranormal Activity: Does it Really Exist?

Agree

Ella Lane
Head of Opinion

As Halloween draws closer, I know some of you will agree with me when I say the veil is thin. Since I was young, I have believed in ghosts, spirits and the afterlife, having often encountered things that I cannot explain. I have also visited mediums and been told secrets by them that no person apart from the dead could know, cementing my position firmly as that of a believer.

Skeptics will try to underpin my belief in the supernatural with two main arguments: Firstly, there is no empirical evidence. To disprove this, all I can say is that there is also a lack of disproof. Just because you haven't seen it doesn't mean it doesn't exist, and I will leave it at that to avoid a back and forth which could become endless. Secondly, some will argue there is always a psychological explanation for the unexplained. In response to this, I believe that my family and I, (some being skeptics themselves) are credible witnesses, and we believe that the event that I will recount really happened. While this article will be largely anecdotal, after you hear my ghost story, I hope my experience will encourage the skeptics to open their third eyes to the unexplained phenomenon of the paranormal.

My story begins in a small town in Appalachia, where I spent my summers with my grandparents until I was 15. Known for its rich history, folklore and specific regional superstitions it's only fitting that my first encounter with a ghost occurred here. This particular summer, our usual hotel arrangement had fallen through and my great grandmother suggested that we stay in the home

of her friend who was merely "away" for the summer. The paranormal activity started shortly after we arrived. At nights, knives and forks would rattle within their draws, we'd hear banging on the windows and the rope swing out back would sway by itself. The real haunting happened about a week into our fated stay. My siblings and I were staying in a bedroom together, which had been converted into a hospital-esque room for the elderly lady who lived there. Following the activity of the entity the nights before, my siblings opted to sleep in with my parents in the smaller bedroom, leaving me alone for the night. I drifted off to sleep and awoke in the dead of the night feeling a cold breeze. As I came to my senses, I realised that the hospital bed I was asleep in was drifting across the floor with me in it, as if I was being pushed. I sprang out of bed immediately and sprinted to my parents' room and we left the next day. They felt the energy shift as well and it wasn't until years later that they told me the previous owner of the house, my grandmother's good friend, had died in the house, and in fact in the room where I had slept alone. It still gives me chills to this day to remember the sensation of being pushed across the floor by a bodiless being.

In the wake of my ghost story, which is nothing but the truth, and one of many, I hope some of you doubt your skepticism and embrace this spooky season with a newfound belief in the paranormal. It is real because I have seen it and the sheer number of paranormal encounters reported over the centuries cannot be ignored. So, be on the lookout for the signs of ghosts, ghouls and spectres, and never doubt your instincts that tell you someone is watching...

Disagree

Aneurin Davies
Opinion Editor

Fear of the unknown drives us into believing many things. From monsters appearing in our wardrobes or under our beds when we were kids, to the fear of bad luck from walking over three drains in a row. We all have our own superstitious beliefs that affect how we make decisions. Take me for example. I believe in karma and the fact that bad deeds will reflect absolutely horrendously on me at an unknown point in the future. But I have absolutely no evidence that this has ever affected me either positively or negatively—and if I gave you any examples you could probably demolish them with a single sentence.

Karma of course is a superstition, but it's nowhere near the main superstition. Ghosts of course are where things take a turn. According to a 2014 YouGov poll, 34% of Brits believe in ghosts, while only 23% say they're religious. This odd dichotomy puts a spanner in Ella's belief that skeptics will disagree with her based on the fact that there's no empirical evidence of ghosts existing. But this is the exact case with religion. So why do more people believe in ghosts than religion?

I can only offer the most logical explanation that I personally believe to be the case—it makes a damn good story to tell to your friends. Before you dogpile on this, you've got to hear me out. I'm not one to shy away from telling a good story, and I know for a fact that ghost stories intrigue most people. A story of a ghost terrifying and terrorising you while you were alone in your

home is a lot more interesting than a book falling because of a light breeze from an open window. It might not even be a conscious effort to make a good story out of a scary situation. Our subconscious minds are constantly attempting to rationalise the odd and bizarre situations that we sometimes experience. Even if the only way to do so is by forcing yourself to believe that a ghost is lurking in the dark and unknown corners of your house and haunting you.

But that brings me to a point that's always bugged me about the paranormal and "scary" ghost stories. Why are ghosts always scary in these stories? If ghosts exist and are constantly haunting people, surely even 1 in 10 would be helpful in at least some way. Maybe they'd roll that pen you lost a few weeks ago from under your bed, or gently remind you of some forgotten thought. Personally, I'd love that—a spectre that goes around haunting people but in the best way possible. My point being that unknowable occurrences force the mind into the worst-case scenario. One in which you're being haunted or stalked by entities the human mind can barely even comprehend.

While Ella may have a pretty damn good Appalachian-themed ghost story, I have absolutely nothing that compares. Nor do I have any belief in the supernatural or cryptids or creatures that lurk in the shadows. But maybe ghosts really exist and I'm just naive. Who am I to tell you your story's a lie?

THE TEAM



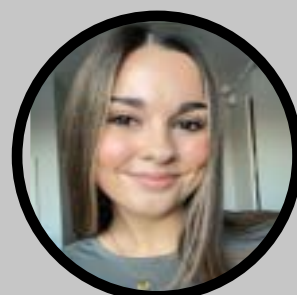
REVIEW



Emily Jo Cottle



Gemma Willmott



Lowri Jones



Angela Griffith

UPCOMING RELEASES

**This October/
November:**

Chromakopia by Tyler
the Creator - 28th

*Songs of a Lost World
by The Cure* - 1st
November

Anora - 1st November

Heretic - 1st November

Gladiator II - 15th
November

brat and it's completely different but also still brat

Isabella Liddle
Contributor

Brat is expertly repackaged as the fun, catchy, and much-awaited collaborative remix of Charli XCX's hit album continues to present the singer's most emotionally vulnerable moments as inseparable from her glamorous life of celebrity. Brat is repackaged as Charli expands upon her previous anxieties—such as whether to become a mother on I Think About It All the Time, her position on the fringes of celebrity, her insecurities, and much more. This all alongside the commercial success and popularity of the original version of the album, which has shot her to a new level of fame. In an interview with Zane Lowe for Apple Music, Charli opens up about her shock surrounding

the unprecedented popularity of the album, stating: "I've not really sacrificed any part of myself to appeal to more people." As it turns out, this is exactly what connected to listeners across the world.

Amongst the album's new releases that were much awaited by fans, remix tracks such as Von Dutch feat. Addison Raye, Talk Talk feat. Troye Sivan, Guess feat. Billie Eilish, and Girl, So Confusing feat. Lorde were gradually pre-released, with their critical and fan reception building exhilaration for the rumoured release of the full remix album: Brat and It's Completely Different but Also Still Brat. Each remix seamlessly remasters each original track, making them completely different but still everything we loved about Brat, with the col-

laborators achieving the seemingly impossible by adding even more energy, emotion, and fun to Charli's masterpiece.

Undoubtedly, one of the most entrancing remixes on the album is Everything is Romantic featuring Caroline Polachek; this track mimics the intimate nature of a phone call between friends: "I think I need your advice". Polachek paints a picture of a late-night stroll through autumnal London while discussing Charli's complex feelings about Brat's success: "It's like you're living the dream but you're not living your life", as Charli's rise to new heights of success leaves her "smothered by logistics" and pressure. The track ends on a positive note, with a call-back to Von Dutch's energetic and, indeed, romanticised portrayal of "living that

life" as a celebrity: "Charli calls from a photo set/Living that life is romantic, right?".

While each remix track has its obvious individual merits, other examples stood out. Continuing her tribute to her late friend and artistic peer SOPHIE, Charli and producer A.G Cook's fast-paced, flowing track shows them reminiscing as they "think about all the good times". The opening track, 360 feat. Robyn and Yung Lean perfectly reworks the iconic backing track with equal levels of confidence and catchiness. Club Classics feat. Bb Trickz and 365 feat. Shy Girl cement themselves as vibrant, bold, and rave-ready. And the list goes on. It becomes clear that Charli XCX's long and successful career has reached new heights, as new and old fans alike continue their love for Brat.

Is Sally Rooney our Generation's Best Horror Writer? - A Short Review of Intermezzo

Lucy Holton
Contributor

After having my heart completely and utterly wretched again by the latest Sally Rooney novel, Intermezzo, I think it is fair to say she is writing some of the scariest books of our generation.

Rooney's ability to give every character relatable and often hateable traits, makes them so easy to fall in love with and her books so hard to put down. Whether it is Marianne's struggle with self-worth, Connell's miscommunication problems, Frances' tendency to be hurtful, or Eileen's tendency to feel everything so deeply. Every reader can find parts of themselves in Rooney's novels. All characters find themselves in and out of love, wrestling with moern-

day relationships and coming of age, having to navigate school, university, long-distance relationships, different jobs, and awkward class dynamics. Technology is often more of a hindrance than help, leaving every character never fully feeling like there is any effective communication, with feelings often lost in the translation of text. It isn't a surprise the largest proportion of Rooney's readership is aged between 18 and 30...

The way she writes often leaves the reader turning the mirror inwards, and as we go into spooky season, the prompted reflection about my own thoughts, feelings, and action is much scarier than any horror novel I have read recently. In Rooney's latest novel we follow two brothers Ivan, a 22-year-old chess prodigy and Peter, a 32-year-old lawyer, in the wake of their father's death. We watch them

both try to navigate sibling rivalry and tumultuous romantic relationships. Ivan falls in love with a much older woman called Margaret, who can understand and warm in his feelings of being a misfit. As they both struggle with the complexity of their relationship—Margaret more with the guilt and shame of the age gap, and Ivan with the grief of his father's death—the vulnerability they both share helps the relationship to feel intimate and real. Peter, however, is attempting to juggle relationships between Sylvia, his first lasting love, and Naomi, a much younger, unserious student.

While medicating himself to sleep and grappling with the relationship between himself and Ivan, the ten-year age gap between the brothers and the baggage they both carry from childhood puts immense pres-

sure on their relationship as they often can't understand each other and end up in rows.

This novel has been named Rooney's best work yet with many glowing reviews from the BBC, The Standard and The Telegraph. It reads with much more depth and maturity than any of her previous novels and as the book's backbone is the "forced relationship" between the brothers we can understand her writing style from a whole new angle whilst appreciating the romantic relationships which both brothers are enduring. The everyday horror of the mundane and relentless introspection can leave you wrestling with your relationships and self-worth, meaning I would thoroughly recommend this book (or any of her previous novels) for anyone looking for a REAL emotional horror this Halloween.

You Are One: A Review of The Substance (2024)

Ari Plant
Spotlight Editor

A film about patriarchal beauty standards that are created and perpetuated by the entertainment industry. A film where plastic surgery, anti-aging creams, and SPF 100 every day are taken and pumped up to an extreme eleven. This is a film that through deliberately lecherous camera angles and intentional sexualisation of its characters seeks to make a poignant and important point—whole minutes of this film are spent with the camera focused directly on an actress' body.

The Substance, if directed by a man,

would have been morally putrid and would have elicited justifiable outrage from its audience. Luckily for the viewer, The Substance is written and directed by a woman, Coralie Fargeat, a French director who started making waves with her 2017 film Revenge.

Demi Moore plays Elizabeth Sparkle who, upon being axed from her job for simply turning fifty, is drawn into trying out a procedure that purports it can create "a better version of herself"—an experimental metaphor for plastic surgery and the like. The result of this procedure is Sue, played by Margaret Qualley. An unfortunate stipulation of the procedure is

that only one version of the person can be in control at a given time. For seven days, Elizabeth Sparkle has to live with the ordeal of being fifty in beauty-obsessed LA. Then, for the next week, Sue gets to play at being a beautiful twenty-something in beauty-obsessed Hollywood. From there, the two manage to have a tense relationship that deals with themes of intergenerational hatred, normative beauty standards, and exploitative media practices—all culminating in a gigantic, fleshy monster.

It is a film that could be dissected a thousand different ways but the true villain, as it always is in Hollywood, is a man with power who forces these

beauty expectations on young women. If you want a feminist body horror film, The Substance has the stuff you need.



Demi Moore at the Cannes Film Festival (via Free Malaysia)

Joker: Folie à Deux, You Get What You Deserve

Taine Lardner
Contributor

Jaws: The Revenge is said to be one of the most disappointing and most pointless sequels of all time. It was made to ride the coattails (or rather, fishtails) of a beloved previous entry, only to release to little fanfare and severely underperform at the box office.

All of the above can also be said about *Joker: Folie à Deux*, or as most people just refer to it, *Joker 2*. Universal Pictures didn't need to make a fourth *Jaws* just as director Todd Phillips didn't need to make a second *Joker*, but alas, here we are. Whereas the first movie made commentary on mental illness, society, violence, city life, and abuse, the second film doesn't elect to say anything new at all, choosing instead to reiterate what has already been said in a weaker, less impactful way. This, coupled with some strange directing choices, results in a movie that just doesn't hit its mark. I will say, however, that it isn't all doom and gloom. While I was at first skeptical about the choice to make the film

a musical, I will say that some of the musical sequences were exceptionally well done, with excellent lighting and set pieces that were a treat to look at. The singing, however, while far from terrible, left some things to be desired. While Joaquin Phoenix can indeed sing, Arthur Fleck on the other hand, cannot. This was obviously done intentionally in order to keep the character of Arthur consistent, as it would be a shock if this murderer had the voice of an angel. But when paired with the obviously fantastic voice of Lady Gaga, it can be quite jarring. Especially considering she's supposed to be playing a mental patient/psychiatrist. (Who just so happens to have the singing talent of a professional pop singer?)

While the fact that it is a musical is clear, you'd think that the musical segments would be few and far between considering the movie's serious tone. This, however, couldn't be further from the truth. While you might think there might be around five or six musical segments, I regret to inform you that there are around ten or eleven. By the seventh segment I began to think to myself "Surely this is

the last one?" only for there to be another, and another, and so on. By the beginning of the final act, I could no longer concentrate or enjoy what was happening on screen as I was too busy dreading the next song, worried that each time Arthur or Harley opened their mouths, they'd break into song yet again. This wouldn't be so bad if these segments didn't completely take you out of the seriousness of the previous scene, forcing you away from the actual plot and shoving you into a completely disconnected series of events that serve no purpose other than padding out what would otherwise be a dry, mediocre courtroom drama. As for the performances, Phoenix once again knocks it out of the park with his portrayal of the titular Arthur Fleck. His ability to flip from quiet loner in the prison to loud, dangerous sociopath in the courtroom is the highlight of the entire film, while Gaga's Harley offers some much needed vigour into the otherwise bleak world of Gotham, her energetic yet subtly domineering presence providing a contrast to Arthur's meek persona, while simultaneously complimenting the intensity and bombastic nature of the *Joker*. As for the sup-

porting cast, it's rather hit or miss. The prison guards are the stand-outs here, while other characters, such as prosecution lawyer Harvey Dent, feel incidental at best and can easily be forgotten about the second they aren't on screen. As for some of the other positive things I can say about this film, if nothing else, it should at least be studied by future film students for its excellent camera work, by drama students for its fantastic performances, and by business students for how to avoid a bad investment.

This is not one to see in the cinema; I can assure you that the ticket price left more of a lasting impact on me than this film did. I can't recommend it to fans of musicals, as the movie doesn't even fully commit to being one. I wouldn't even recommend it to fans of the first film, as there is a greater chance that the lacklustre ending would make you feel disappointed rather than satisfied. I would, however, recommend people with a passing interest in the first film or fans of Joaquin Phoenix's films to check it out once it hits streaming services, as it may offer some level of spectacle, or at least something to watch on a rainy day.

The Menendez Brothers: Heartless Killers or Victims of Abuse?

Emily Jo Cottle
Head of Review

If, like me, you are fascinated with the inherently dark and twisted, this is the next crime documentary for you. For those who are unaware of this case, in 1989, Lyle (21) and Erik Menendez (18) killed their parents, Jose and Kitty Menendez, in their multi-million-dollar Beverly Hills Mansion. The documentary begins with Lyle's 911 call to the police and ends with the pair in prison after being found guilty. The documentary works chronologically through the case and unveils the emerging evidence as it was found out. I found this incredibly gripping as I know a lot of people are aware of what occurred, but not in what order, and certainly not how long secrets of the family were kept even after the deaths of Jose and Kitty.

The documentary is told using photographic evidence and footage from the criminal trials. It is also interspersed with accounts from the prosecuting lawyer and commentary from the brothers themselves. Through the chronology you can see how long the initial trial lasted after a month of deliberation, leading to two deadlocked juries and a mistrial.

The prolonged deliberations were down to the complexity and sensitivity of this fascinating case. Initially, the brothers were under fire from the media as everyone believed the pair were spoiled rich kids after their parents' money. When Jose Menendez's character is called into question, the boys reveal the dark secrets of their childhood—secrets of sexual, physical, and life-threatening abuse, all of which their mother Kitty was aware of. The Menendez brothers, after sharing their stories, had to make the jury believe that their lives were at risk on

the night they killed their parents. The jury had to decide whether years of sexual abuse and physical threats resulted in the belief their lives were in danger or that they killed their parents with planned and conscious intent.

In 1996, Lyle and Erik Menendez, after their second trial, were found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to two consecutive life prison terms without parole. The documentary ends with the two speaking from prison about their new artistic outlets and trying to find peace in their irreversible state.

One thing I found really interesting was how the documentary commented on the TikTok wave that was partly responsible for the production of the series. The social media surge is mostly in support of the brothers and specifically them as survivors of sexual abuse. It is interesting to see this perspective from

a generation who were not alive to see the initial trials. Social media, though potentially damaging with misinformation, can open up new discussions about old cases. In light of this specific wave and emergence of new evidence, the Los Angeles District Attorney and his office have begun talks about whether this case warrants resentencing or a retrial. The popularity of this case also led to a drama series called *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* released just before the documentary. I would recommend watching the documentary first and seeing the evidence from the defence and prosecution before seeing the dramatisation.

This documentary was fascinating and I would especially recommend this series to those who already know about the case, as there are distressing moments throughout, especially in regards to sexual violence.

Good? Bad? No. Shut Up. Megalopolis.

Tom Jackson
Contributor

From the man who brought you *Apocalypse Now*, *The Outsiders* and the *Godfather* trilogy, comes Francis Ford Coppola's latest picture, *Megalopolis*. The "epic science fiction drama", set in the city of New Rome, attempts to draw parallels with the current United States and the fall of the Roman Republic. The allegory is thinly veiled with characters such as Cesar Catilina (Adam Driver) and his antithesis Mayor Franklyn Cicero (Giancarlo Esposito). Self-produced by Coppola, costing some \$120 million, it has completely divided opinions, this split aptly reflected by its current Letterboxd rating being an exact 2.5 out of 5 stars.

The film centres mostly around Driver's character of Cesar, a brilliant yet

vice-ridden architect and his pursuit of creating a perfect utopia through his discovery of the new building material "Megalon". Opposed by the mayor of New Rome—a pretty weak metaphor of New York City—who evily supports the poverty that takes place outside of the Patrician families of the city.

Aubrey Plaza's performance as Wow Platinum, a scheming wall street reporter, and Adam Driver's portrayal of Caesar might be the only conciliation of an otherwise poor movie. Plaza adds some much needed levity, attempting to make the film somehow aware of its ridiculousness and Driver does his absolute best with the dialogue and direction he is given, attributing a sincerity to every scene he features. However, the love interest of Nathalie Emmanuel's character, Julio Cicero, the mayor's daughter, feels oddly like a forced afterthought despite

her role being so titular to the feature's plot. The picture also has a feeling of early 2000s nostalgia reflected at times by its uncomfortably embarrassing special effects, in spite of the serious budget. One of the reasons for this could be the fact that it was originally planned to be set into production at the start of the millennium, yet was ultimately halted due to the September 11 attacks. The producers refused to spend the needed money on his project so he went out to fund it entirely himself.

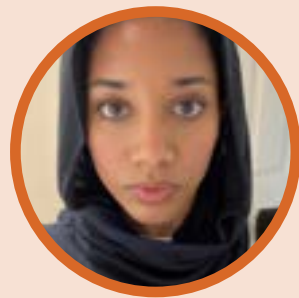
The sense that this film should not have been made reflects into the dialogue as well, which feels like a collection of poorly-arranged notes. Some lines slip into an almost Shakespearean level of seriousness, others, such as "What do you think of my boner?" and "You're anal as hell. I, on the other hand, am oral as hell", just leaves you asking, what did he

mean by this? Chloe Fineman even totally flubs a line and Coppola just decides to keep it in. Why is he doing this? The film is lacking in—perhaps any—intrinsic value, but it represents something special. Totally unhinged, the genuine creative freedom that it represents is, in a way, inspiring. However, for what is perhaps the most well-funded independent film ever made, it just doesn't hit the mark. Constantly confusing, some of the main plot points fail to work in the way they were intended. This is, perhaps, most obvious by the fact the whole film's action is effectively solved in no more than thirteen minutes.

For audiences who like watching other people leave a movie theatre clutching their pearls, this is for you. It just feels like someone should probably get Coppola to bed before they start taking back his academy awards.



Lauren Tutchell



Laila Dawelbeit



Adam Dunstan



Luke Tonkinson



Thomas Wilson

Interview with Lee Waters

Minister Responsible for 20mph Speed Limit

Laila Dawelbeit
Politics Editor

What type of community did you grow up in and how did that impact your worldview today?

That's a good question. I essentially grew up in the Amman Valley, which is a core mining community and has a strong Welsh-speaking tradition. I suppose what you would call close-knit. The impact it had on me was that, on the one hand, it's a sort of community that celebrates people who are good at rugby and at sport, and I wasn't. It's a community that also respects people who achieve things, and that was something that had an impact on me. I put pressure on myself. I was never going to be able to excel at sport, but I did want to do something that the community I grew up in would recognise as an achievement, which is one of the reasons why I went to work in television—because it was the one thing that people would be able to see and identify with having done well. Having achieved that, I then left television, but, thinking back, that probably was one of the motivations that spurred me on. One thing which has driven me in politics is a saying I used to hear from school teachers, which is: "If you want to get on, you have to get out". Most of the people I was in school with who had ability [had] left, which is understandable, but also sad. Because community is about balance—it's about a mix—and if the people who are most able to make a contribution to improving an area no longer have a stake in an area, the people who are least able to make a contribution are left behind and essentially left there to rot—and I felt very uncomfortable about that. I've made my career in Wales because I wanted to make a contribution to Wales. Going to London is an easier thing to do in many ways. So yes, you could "achieve more and earn more", but that's a path people have been following for hundreds of years, and the more challenging path is to stay in Wales and make a contribution to Wales—because that's hard. It's not glamorous, it doesn't pay as well, but it's more important. So that's one of the reasons I went into politics. I wanted to represent the part of Wales I'm from. I didn't want to stand anywhere else, because I wanted to do what I could, in a modest way, to try and make things better. The issues we're facing are tough and in some cases intractable, so you're not going to be able to solve them. But making a contribution and trying your best is important, and that's what I've tried to do.

What about sixth form and university? How did those days impact your interest in politics?

Sixth form was probably my happiest time in schooling, because I was able to focus on issues and subjects I was interested in. I was really interested in politics. I was always interested in news as a kid, and developed an interest in politics through my teenage years. I was taught A-level Politics by a teacher, and I was the only one in the class, so sort of a self taught A-level, not a traditional one. And I just absolutely loved it. He was brilliant, because he would challenge my prejudices and pick apart my arguments and force me to sharpen my thinking. That was fantastic. I really loved that. And I'm still in touch with him, a guy called Adrian Phillips who was just a wonderful teacher. I want to do some tutoring now for A-level Politics myself. I've signed up to a voluntary scheme for people who can't afford private tuition. I've always loved talking to students about politics, because I've remained at my heart a nerdy, enthusiastic sixth-former interested in studying politics. And one of the reasons I've done my job is that I'm fascinated by how it works, trying to understand the different dynamics and how they bounce off each other. I do find politics fascinating, because it's about people, and it's about complexity, and it's a really intricate puzzle which nobody ever cracks and you're constantly trying to work at it. The more you understand the complexity, the more complex it becomes because you realise there are no simple solutions to these things. That's something I'm still as interested in today as I was then. I went on to study politics at university in Aberystwyth. I wanted to be a journalist, but I worked out pretty quickly that my brain is not good at learning languages and maths, and so the idea of learning shorthand, which you're expected to do, was something I thought I could never do. My wife did it, and I could never do it and I didn't think I could get onto a training course. So I was going to go into academia, and I had a PhD lined up. And then I was offered a job in politics, which was exciting. But when that fell apart, because the person I worked for resigned, I found a chance to go into journalism—initially freelance, with no promise of any work—in the BBC. I was able to get a job in journalism without doing shorthand, so that was brilliant. I did that for a number of years.

What was the process behind 20mph and why did you want to do it?

I've given a number of reforms in transport, and they've been overshadowed by 20mph, which is a bit frustrating, because they're probably much more impactful in the longer term. 20mph was meant to be a popular policy. All the polling was showing it was very popular three years out. All polling showed 80% of people in Wales supported it. And we knew that as you came towards implementation, support was going to drop, because it always does, but we expected fairly soon after it came in for people to get used to it and for support to grow. I think the way we went about doing it was imperfect—but also the timing. Post-COVID, the public mood shifted. And while they looked to the Welsh government very positively for the cautious measures that were taken on COVID, as soon as we started to come out of COVID, people started to resist and resent anything that could be seen as telling them what to do. And that very quickly soured the public mood and bled into the 20mph policy. It was implemented in a fairly clumsy way, in some circumstances, the councils didn't use the discretion they had to exempt some roads, which aggravated the underlying trend. I also used to say it needed to pass the sniff test. Unless people understand why they're being asked to drive slowly on this particular stretch of road, it's not going to work. And the theory was that councils would take out those stretches of road that didn't make sense, and that would be a much more streamlined way of doing it. Rather than saying we can apply these rules on each street one at a time, we'll apply them to a whole area, but we'll take out the bits that don't make sense, and that taking out bit didn't happen—certainly didn't happen consistently—and it didn't happen as much as it should have done. So we're now having to go back to that, but people's blood was up by that stage and it became a fashionable cause to oppose it. What's interesting is that even though it is unpopular with lots of people, people are observing the law. They are driving slower. They're not driving at 20mph, but they weren't driving at 30mph before. The average has dropped to around 25mph and, critically, the number of people doing over 30mph has dropped dramatically—and that's the big road safety win. The figures from the first six months show a 32% fall in casualties, which is brilliant. There are people alive today who wouldn't be alive otherwise, and I think in time people will get used to it and it'll be seen as a good policy to have done. But it's been a really difficult one on a personal level—a very painful one.

What about your other transport policies? Is there anything in particular that you think had a really big impact?

Yes, there's two. One is the big emphasis we've placed on active travel: walking and cycling. That has transformed in the last ten years. And it's going to take time—it's a generational project. It takes time to build these networks. But in Cardiff, for example, you now see far more prominent cycle routes, and people use them—they are popular. And that just wasn't the case before. That has happened through the efforts of lots of people, but I certainly play a role in that, which I'm pleased about. And the second was changing the approach to road-building in Wales, which is being looked at around the world, and others will follow over time. It cancelled lots of road schemes because of climate change, and we've set a different range of rules for when roads are the right answer in the future, and I think that's the right thing to do. But, again, that was a bold step, and very difficult politically, but it's one which we will look back on and not regret.

Is transport a reserved power?

No, it's mostly devolved. Rail infrastructure, for example, isn't devolved and that's a problem for us. But most of transport is fully devolved or partly devolved.

Do you think that rail infrastructure should be devolved?

I think more money needs to be spent on railways in Wales by the UK government. They have got the responsibility for rail infrastructure, and Wales has been at the end of the queue for too long. That's the main issue with rail—not where the power lies. We need a greater say in what is built. It's become a fashionable cause to say that rail powers should be devolved to Wales, and I am not against that—but I think we should be careful in what we wish for because the reality is that rail is really expensive. And when you look at what we know is coming down the road with climate change, and you look at where the railway lines are, a lot of our railway lines are next to the sea, and all the model-



ling shows that over the next thirty to forty years, they're going to be severely damaged by rising sea levels and wild weather, and that's going to cost an awful lot of money. If we simply go along with the fashion of saying "let's devolve rail to Wales", that means we'll have the sole responsibility for paying for it, and we'll regret it. So there's a halfway house where the UK government retains responsibility. We pressure them to spend more money on it, and we have a greater say in it, and that means that we can have the best of both worlds.

Do you think that the Barnett formula works or do you think it does not give Wales what it needs?

It works in the sense that it does the job it was set up to do. It's a simple formula for moving money around. The problem with it is that the world has changed a lot since it was first introduced—and Wales' position in the world has worsened a lot. What the formula doesn't do is recognise our need. We have an older population and a sicker population, and that's not reflected in the formula. We have more people retiring into Wales and they're not generating tax, so they are costing more to look after, and Wales is having to pay for that extra cost. So the formula doesn't work in the sense that it doesn't meet the reality of the pressures the government of Wales has to face to deal with an older and sicker population. In that sense, it's a long-overdue change. It's one of those problems where whenever you change a formula, some people benefit and some people don't benefit. And those that don't benefit are going to be the loudest. The particular complication in this regard is that the Scots will suffer the most, because they do very well under the Barnett formula. And I can't see a UK government wanting to take money off the Scots when they are threatening independence. That's the brutal political reality of it, but the incoming Labour government is very alert to the need for change. Eluned Morgan is pushing hard for an updating of the funding formula, and I hope that we're able to reach a point where Wales' needs are recognised more.

For 14 years now, there's been a Welsh Labour government and a Conservative government in Westminster. That has made it difficult to deal with certain things. Now that UK Labour is in government, has it been easier and do you think it will be easier? Or are there still differences?

There will be differences, and there should be differences. That was the whole point of devolution. I campaigned strongly for a Senedd for Wales precisely because a London parliament is never going to fully understand Wales' needs. So it's right that we have our own say over lots of things, but we're also part of the UK, so there are bound to be tensions, because we've got different electorates, different mandates, and different values. It's already making a difference in that we've got a better relationship with the UK government and we're starting from the same point of view of wanting to do things better from the same set of values.

When I was a minister dealing with a Conservative government, their contempt for Wales was palpable. They treated us as stakeholders, not as an equal fellow government—and that's changed already, and that will, over time, bring benefits. But there are always going to be points in which we see things differently from them, and we shouldn't be afraid to fight Wales' corner, stand up for Wales, and be willing to disagree and fall out with them.

Welsh Labour is said to be the democratic world's most electorally successful party. Some would argue that if you wanted to make change in Wales, you would have to be Welsh Labour to do that. When a party has been in power for that long, there is a question of accountability.

Being in power for a long time presents huge challenges to a party. One thing competitive elections give you is that they keep you on your toes, and they give you periods out of office where you get to rethink and refresh. When you're in power for a long time, you don't have that. So you need to find other ways of making sure you are kept on your toes, and you need to encourage challenge. We've seen, this last year, lots of challenge. We've had a new First Minister. That shows we are certainly capable of challenging ourselves. But that is something we need to be very alert to, and go out of our way to encourage criticism and challenge—and we're not always great at that. I've always been an outspoken and challenging politician on my own side. The first thing I did when I got elected was challenging the decision to build an M4, which my first minister was very set on, and I was dead set opposed to. So there is a way in which you can do both. You can be part of a team and support, but also be willing to take them on from time to time. Not everybody loves you for it. We are accountable—there are elections. We've done well winning elections, in part because the voting system we have has been kind to us. From 2026, we've created a voting system that is not going to be kind to us, and I think that's to our credit for doing that. No one's giving us any praise for setting up a voting system that is going to act against our own interests, but that's what we've done, and we're right to do it, because Wales does need greater plurality. But it's going to create a real political challenge for us, having been in power for 27 years by that point, in the sense that the state of the NHS has not improved. There are all sorts of reasons for that—primarily austerity—but it will take time for the UK government to fix, and it won't be in time for the next election, so it's gonna be a very tough set of elections for us. And I think that's the challenge Eluned Morgan now has. How can we have a refresh in government? And how can we send the signal to people that, yes, it's still Welsh Labour who's asking you to return them to office, but it's a Welsh Labour that is changing, is willing to challenge itself, that's put itself at the mercy of a new voting system because it believes in improving Welsh democracy, but still has relevant things to say about the future of Wales. And that's the trick. Politics is as much an art as it is a science, and that's why it's so fascinating.

WHAT IS... DEVOLUTION

Luke Tonkinson
Politics Editor

Devolution refers to the decentralisation of powers from the central legislature to regional legislatures. It differs from federalism because while in a federal system, the decentralisation is guaranteed by the constitution, devolution can theoretically be revoked at any time.

In the UK, devolution refers to powers being given by the British Parliament to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Senedd, and the various mayors and combined authorities in England.

Devolution in the UK is asymmetrical, meaning that not every parliament and authority is given the same powers. While the regional English authorities are by far the weakest of the various devolved areas, there is a difference in the powers they hold, with the Greater London Authority, led by the Mayor of London, more powerful than the West Midlands Combined Authority, led by the Mayor of the West Midlands, for example.

Equally, Wales has a weaker devolution settlement (meaning the Senedd has power over fewer things) than Scotland. Northern Ireland has a unique devolution settlement as a result of the Good Friday Agreement to end the Troubles.

Devolution was granted to Wales following a referendum in 1997, whereby 50.3% of voters were in favour of Welsh devolution. In 1998, the Government of Wales Act passed Parliament, and the National Assembly for Wales was created. Initially given few powers, the National Assembly was granted powers over more areas following Acts of Parliament in 2006, 2014, and 2017. In 2020, in order to reflect the higher level of power it now possesses, the National Assembly changed its name to Senedd Cymru, or Welsh Parliament in English.

With its devolved powers, the Senedd has passed many laws that apply only to Wales. This is why prescriptions are free in Wales, Welsh students receive a grant as part of their

Student Finance, and there is a default 20mph speed limit across Wales. However, there are many areas that the Senedd is not able to make laws on. These are known as "reserved powers" as the power to change these areas are reserved to the British Parliament in Westminster. These include areas such as the constitution and defence.

Many political parties in Wales, particularly Plaid Cymru and Welsh Labour are calling for further devolved powers. At the moment, many are calling for powers over the Welsh justice system to be devolved to the Senedd. While a separate Scottish justice system was a condition of the Treaty of Union in 1706, England and Wales have had a single, joint justice system for centuries. The current British government has said that they do not plan on devolving justice to Wales.

The majority of Welsh people are in favour of Welsh devolution, with a poll by Redfield and Wilson conducted in May of this year showing that 60% of people believe that Wales should have its own parliament. While there are those who favour abolishing the Senedd, devolution for Wales and the rest of the UK, is here to stay.



Politics Editor Laila Dawelbeit with Lee Waters



Scottish Nationalism May Be in Decline

Thomas Wilson
Politics Editor

On the 12th of October, Alex Salmond was in the city of Ohrid, North Macedonia; a city often referred to as the “Jerusalem of the Balkans”, in light of the city once having 365 churches. Upon his arrival at the Inex Olga Hotel, Salmond collapsed and was pronounced—precipitating an avalanche of commemorations from Unionist and Scottish nationalist public figures alike. Salmond was unquestionably the Caesar of Scottish nationalism, as under his premiership the SNP went from 7 to 53 seats in the Scottish Parliament from 1999 to 2011. Yet, when it came for the Scottish people to cross the Rubicon at the 2014 referendum, Salmond’s dreams of an independent Scotland were dashed, with 55% of the Scottish electorate voting against independence. Ten years on from the campaign which divided Scotland, Scottish nationalism is in severe decline; a decline largely resulting from poor judgement and corruption. A year after the referendum, the SNP had a new leader in Nicola Sturgeon, a former member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament who entered politics as a result of the inspiration she took from Margaret Thatcher. Sixteen years after she left behind her career as a solicitor to become an MSP, Sturgeon led the SNP to record-breaking results in the General Election of 2015, with the SNP claiming 50% of the vote share and 56 MPs. When contrasted with the results of 2024, the situation looks bleak. The SNP vote share decreased by 20%, falling from 1,454,436 to 724,758, and the total number of MPs elected was just nine.

The early stages of this decline are surprising, with an early sign of decay being the loss of ground by the party in the 2017 General Election. Many had tipped the SNP to capi-

talise on the vote for Brexit due to the party being staunch advocates for membership of the European Union, a position in keeping with the Scottish electorate who voted 62% in favour of Remain. Despite the vote for Brexit, the party’s vote share fell from 1,454,436 to 977,568 and they lost 21 MPs. The result itself was largely blamed on the apathetic attitudes of Scottish voters for another independence referendum so soon after the previous vote, yet it does also reveal that European Union membership evidently does not take precedence over remaining part of Britain in the eyes of much of the electorate. Given that 33% of the Scottish voters did not vote in the 2016 referendum and 38% backed Brexit, this means that while 62% of votes cast were for Remain, 71% of the electorate either didn’t vote or voted Leave. In short, Scotland is far less of a Europhilic country than it is often mistakenly perceived to be.

While the performance of the SNP improved moderately in 2019, the 2020s have proved disastrous. From the arrests of Nicola Sturgeon, her husband Peter Murrell and treasurer Colin Beattie amidst allegations of embezzlement and fraud, relating to spending of party funds designated for use in a second Scottish referendum which never happened, to the SNP’s Gender Recognition Reform Bill resulting in a convicted male rapist opting to identify as a woman while awaiting trial and consequently being sent to a female prison in Stirling, the decade has not proved a fruitful one for the fortunes of the SNP. The simple fact is this: the Scottish electorate became reticent about supporting an independent Scotland, given the perception that if it is to be ruled with the same inefficiency by people mired in equally damning scandals as their counterparts south of the border, it is not the utopia described by its proponents.

What can we Expect from the First Labour Budget?

Lauren Tutchell
Head of Politics

Change. Remember that phrase? The one that was persistently pedalled in every interview, speech and conference that Labour did before the election.

And yet it has been just over one hundred days since they entered office, and it is hard to see any difference between Labour and the Conservative Government they supposedly replaced.

However, Rachel Reeves’ impending budget, which is set to be announced on Wednesday the 30th of October, is an opportunity for Labour to get back on the front foot following their recent controversy.

This budget will be their first big set-piece. An opportunity to clearly set out their priorities, their values and the direction they want to take our country. But the backdrop of this budget isn’t a pretty one. NHS waiting lists have risen thirteenfold since 2011. Schools are crumbling. Prisons are overcrowded. Local governments are on their knees. There is a gaping “£22bn black hole” in the public finances.

On top of this, Labour’s previously ambitious economic plan has been cut back to the bare bones. The yearly £28bn Green Investment Plan was taken off the table. Any discussion on Brexit has been abandoned.

The National Wealth Fund has been cut by £1.5bn. Yet the most sickly icing to top this cake is the fact that Labour willingly chose to adopt the Conservatives’ strict fiscal rules when they took power, which has boxed Reeves into an extremely small corner.

As a consequence, if Labour want to provide the level of investment that is needed in our public services, then major tax rises or intense spending cuts will be inevitable. Unless, of course, they change or ditch these restrictive

and unnecessary fiscal rules, which is indeed a viable option. In fact, seventy members of Reeves’ own party are urging her to do it.

Lucy Rigby, co-chair of the Labour Growth Group, said the government needed to “break the Tory doom loop of low investment, low productivity, and low growth if we’re going to deliver the change our constituents want to see in their communities”. Yet there is little sign from the Treasury that this will happen, and the fiscal rules were clearly labelled as a “non-negotiable” aspect in the Labour manifesto.

The chancellor subsequently finds herself in a difficult position of trying to ride two horses at once. She wants to get the public finances back in shape while simultaneously investing in the future. That is not easy.

Perhaps tax rises will be the answer. Labour have promised not to increase taxes on “working people”; but capital gains tax, inheritance tax, and employer national insurance contributions are hinted to be hit. Capital gains tax increases are particularly favoured as rates are unjustifiably lower than on other forms of income.

For example, the top rate of tax on employment income is 53%, but some capital gains face a top rate of only 20%. Closing loopholes is also predicted to bring in around £12bn, and raising employer NI contributions is estimated to raise £17bn.

Labour also already announced in their election campaign that non-doms, private equity, windfall taxes on the profits of energy companies, and VAT on private schools. They have also hired a COVID Corruption Commissioner to try and recuperate the money wasted by the Tories in dodgy COVID contracts.

The Chancellor subsequently made it clear in an interview with Andrew Marr that “people will be in no doubt when we do the Budget—those with

the broadest shoulders will be bearing the largest burden.”

So perhaps it is not doom and gloom after all, and Labour are being brave and ambitious when it comes to finding money for our public services. But we cannot get complacent. As we have seen over the past fourteen years, the cost of inaction costs more than action. Austerity is a false economy and the public are frankly sick to death of it, (for some, quite literally).

We need to start spending money in areas that will actually expand the economy and improve the wellbeing of our work force. We need to increase productivity and growth. We need to stop being afraid of borrowing money to invest.

David Cameron was once quoted saying “we need to fix the roof while the sun is shining”. Yet, despite fourteen years of Tory rule, they did not fix the roof. In fact, the austerity they imposed allowed it to completely fall in and drench us all soaking wet. If Labour do not invest, they will keep us sodden and the roof will remain in pieces.



Source: Chris McAndrew
(via Wikimedia Commons)

Review: The Rest is Politics Live in Cardiff

Adam Dunstan
Politics Editor

Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart provide Cardiff with a fun evening of political anecdotes and jokes, with some serious conversations along the way. Campbell and Stewart started *The Rest is Politics* podcast in March 2022, having both left their respective political parties (Stewart Conservative and Campbell Labour), in the hope they would be able to provide some level-headedness to the often feisty and rampant political debates.

They do this by trying to “disagree agreeably”, releasing two episodes a week. The podcast has gone on to become one of the most popular in the UK, with a reported 650,000 listeners per episode, it has been

the UK’s number one political podcast since its launch, beating competitors such as *The Newsagents* and *The Telegraph’s The Daily T*. It is a testament not only to the podcast’s stature, but also to the hosts, that they have been able to launch a series of sold out shows across the country.

The tour began in Brighton, then moved to Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow before its penultimate stop in Cardiff. The tour concluded with a sold-out show at London’s O2 arena. The first of the show followed the same format as their podcast episodes. The pair discussed the Conservative leadership debate—both were bemused that Kemi Badenoch and Robert Jenrick are the party’s final two candidates. Backed up by polling the audience, they agreed James Cleverly could

have had a chance of winning in the final two. Of course, they also concluded, that Rory Stewart would make a better leader than either of the remaining candidates, with Stewart unsuccessfully running for Conservative leader in 2019. Then the topic then moved on the new Labour government.

While Alastair was obviously more favourable towards the government, the pair agreed it had been a difficult time. When the audience was asked whether they thought Labour was doing better than expected in government, only one percent of people agreed, with most people saying they were either doing worse or as expected. This was largely due to the government’s cut to the winter fuel allowance. An interesting take from Campbell was that the government only seems

overtly unpopular because of the extraordinary length of time between the election and the upcoming budget. When Chancellor Rachel Reeves unveils her budget this week, it will be 3 months and 26 days since the election. This has allowed for a lot of media speculation regarding the potential raising of taxes, especially whether the government will choose to raise certain taxes they promised not to in the campaign.

He also noted that following previous elections that resulted in change of governments, the time until the budget was much shorter. Following the interval, in which merchandise such as T-shirts with the pairs’ faces on could be bought (I am not sure who really wants that), Campbell and Stewart brought out their American counterparts Katy Kay and Anthony Scaramucci

to discuss American politics and the upcoming presidential election. This was followed by a light-hearted Q&A, where the hosts used their swathes of experience to provide an insight into current affairs as well as poke fun at each other. Overall, the show was greatly interesting if you are interested in politics. Was it worth the £44 price tag? Probably not, as you would likely hear the same opinions by listening to their podcasts. But the fact Campbell and Stewart can fill arenas across with a variety of demographics shows that, despite not being active in politics any more, their centrist opinions are very much valued.

US ELECTION

Project 2025: The Republican Plan to Uproot Democracy

Daniel Raybould
Deputy Editor

You may have heard reports about the threat of Trump's so-called "Project 2025". It refers to the ninth iteration of the Heritage Foundation's *Mandate for Leadership* book series—a conservative policy proposal, supported many right-wing groups, outlining their goals for a "Presidential Transition Project". Prior to dropping out of the presidential race, Joe Biden proclaimed that "Project 2025 will destroy America". After being passed the torch, Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate, Tim Walz, repeatedly attacked Trump for his supposed links to this policy proposal. In the first Harris-Walz rally, the new running mate directly addressed the project: "Don't believe him when he plays dumb. He knows exactly what Project 2025 will do to restrict our freedoms." If you listen further to the Democrats, they would have you believe that this dry, 922-page policy proposal, boasting such exhilarating chapter titles as "Department of Energy and Related Commissions", represents an existential threat. They are right. They are not only right, but they are underselling its significance.

The explicit aim of Project 2025, here quoted verbatim from an introduction, is "to assemble an army of aligned, vetted, trained, and prepared conservatives to go to work on Day One to deconstruct the Administrative State". The project also asserts an maximalist version of the "unitary executive theory", an interpretation of Constitutional law according to which the president has sole authority over the executive branch of government. It challenges the notion of a balance of powers between the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches and contends that the president should have total control over all federal agencies. To achieve this goal, Project 2025 advocates for the reclassification of tens of thousands

of federal civil servants as political appointees, making them replaceable with people loyal to a Republican president and abolishing the independence of federal agencies. Needless to say, this makes enacting right-wing policy significantly easier.

Project 2025 has spent the last years amassing an enormous stand-by group of loyalists who will be happy to carry out the will of the next potential Republican administration in all soon-to-be-free civil service positions. The potential consequences of replacing people selected for expertise with those selected for loyalty for the health of Americans cannot be understated. Project 2025 also calls for drastic funding cuts to the Department of Justice (DOJ), the dismantling of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), and perhaps most concerningly, gutting the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and eliminating the Department of Education. Additionally, it advocates for using the military in domestic law enforcement, including using the Insurrection Act to suppress dissents. A militarised police force, under the rule of the Commander in Chief is not what law enforcement should look like in a democratic society.

These policies will complement the recent US Supreme Court rulings about executive power. First, that Trump as president had legal immunity from prosecution for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election. The ruling said that presidents have immunity for "official acts" undertaken during their presidency. Naturally, the 6-3 conservative majority Supreme Court is the body who gets to decide what an "official" act is. As was argued by the dissenting liberal voices of the Supreme Court, this decision has any Republican president the power to flagrantly break the law—up to and including assassinating political opponents—without fear of consequence from the judiciary. (Unless the conservative Justices decide to break rank and decree any

potential illegal acts as "unofficial".) While this is not unprecedented, the whims of six judicial high priests is hardly the stringent check on executive power that a democracy should be hedging its bets on. The second ruling undermined administrative agencies' abilities to impose regulations on businesses, including those ensuring clean air and water; safe food, drugs, and consumer products. This legal paradigm is perfectly complementary to a Project 2025 agenda.

Project 2025 advocates for gutting the Environmental Protection Agency, but its attack on climate change mitigation goes much further. There is, of course, the standard policies of increasing natural gas and crude oil production. But the project goes much further: repealing the Inflation Reduction Act that opened up billions of dollars for the energy transition; explicitly abandoning strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; abolishing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for being "one of the main drivers of the climate change alarm industry"; reversing a 2009 EPA finding that carbon dioxide emissions are harmful to humans; and creating incentives "to identify scientific flaws and research misconduct" in climatology research. A Project 2025 training video even advocated for "[eradicating] climate change references from absolutely everywhere". According to Energy Innovation, Project 2025 would result in billions of additional metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions compared even to the United States' current inadequate policies. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the alignment of Project 2025 and Trump on all matters climate is to directly quote Trump on his comprehensive energy policy plan: "Drill, baby, drill."

Further policies proposed by Project 2025 include cutting Medicare and Medicaid; criminalising abortion; criminalising emergency contraception; prosecuting people who send or receive abortion pills or

contraception via the post; labelling "transgender ideology" as pornography; making pornography illegal and imprisoning those who produce it (thereby criminalising transgender identity in public in one fell swoop); banning discussions of LGBT topics in schools; removing protections against discrimination; employing the DOJ to arrest people for "anti-white racism"; arresting, detaining, and deporting all undocumented immigrants (a Trump classic); using death sentences to provide a "finality" to sentencing; creating a "biblically based" definition of marriage and family; forbidding government agencies from collecting statistics about gender, race, or ethnicity; and many more for which this article simply has no space.

Trump has tried to distance himself from Project 2025, purporting to "know nothing about it" and calling it "abysmal". Even if we take his words at face value, Trump's own policy agenda does not differ much from that of Project 2025. The Trump campaign's "Agenda 47" calls for "cleaning out the Deep State" and "on Day One" issuing an "executive order restoring the president's authority to fire rogue bureaucrats", just as Project 2025 proposes. There is also precedent for the policy: in late 2020 Trump attempted to institute a version of this plan through executive action. The "Schedule F" classification removed crucial protections for civil servants. Thankfully, this policy was never fully implemented before Joe Biden won the presidency and repealed it. In 2025, with the overwhelming support of America's right wing, the extent of the seizure of the administrative state can only be imagined. Further connections between Trump and Project 2025 are patently obvious. In response to Trump disavowing the project, Heritage president Kevin Roberts said that no one at Project 2025 has hard feelings because they know that "he's making a political tactical decision". Trump's campaign officials have had

regular contact with Project 2025, and told Politico in 2023 that the project aligned well with their Agenda 47 programme. Project 2025 mentions Trump over 300 times. Additionally, the Heritage Foundation employs many people who are closely aligned with Trump, including at least 140 people who worked for him. Trump was seen photographed on a private jet with Kevin Roberts. Trump's vice president pick, JD Vance, even wrote the introduction to Kevin Roberts' book. Trump himself has said that "the critical job of institutions such as Heritage is to lay the groundwork—and Heritage does such an incredible job at that", vowing to "keep Heritage at the vanguard of the conservative movement". He has also vowed to use federal law enforcement to enact revenge on his opponents, to use the National Guard against the "enemy from within", and to "be dictator on Day One".

A revealing slip-up is when Trump urged Christians to vote for him because: "You won't have to do it any more. Four more years, you know what? It'll be fixed, it'll be fine, you won't have to vote any more." That this signals intent to rig future elections is hardly a stretch. A recent exposé revealed that Trump reportedly told his former Chief of Staff that he wishes he had "the kinds of generals that Hitler had", which should tell you all you need to know. The stakes could not be higher, and while Kamala Harris is hardly a perfect candidate, she and her party are not writing 900-page manifestos brazenly elucidating their plans to institute authoritarianism, so make of that what you will. All we can do is wait and see what future the American people (or more accurately, the Electoral College) chooses for America—liberal democracy or authoritarianism. Whether or not the full force of Project 2025 will be enacted under a Trump presidency is unknown, though not unlikely, and all America (and the world), can do, is wait for November 5th.

Why the 2024 US Election Matters to the UK

Angelie Marwaha
Contributor

The political elephant in the room is swiftly approaching, inundating our newsfeeds, podcasts and even our TikTok. The US 2024 general election and all its coverage will soon be nearing a close, and with it a potential incoming Donald Trump as leader of the free world. The US and its president undoubtedly carry significant global influence and have consequences for the rest of the world, but how so? Both candidates, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump stand for opposing attitudes to global matters, institutions and organisations, meaning things like military funding, international aid and defence spending will all be up for change.

Additionally, formally known as

the "special relationship" any leader of America will also work closely with the UK's prime minister, Keir Starmer. Both the US and UK internationally back each other, supporting each other with resources, finances, and collaboration. Trump and Starmer would likely clash, disagreeing with international decisions made, thereby affecting their ability to cohesively work together and lead on key global operations. A looming point of concern is the Russo-Ukrainian war, with Trump maintaining a staunch America-first policy, he could decrease military intervention, funding, and resources towards Ukraine's defence, leaving scope for a Russian victory and expanse into Eastern Europe.

Additionally, Europe relies on a lot of US spending and resources for NATO's operations and functioning, and with a Trump presidency

that is increasingly dismissive of European issues, EU leaders and officials are concerned about the financial health of such institutions and its capacity for future global change. We are also facing a current trend of far-right political gains in electoral competitions, seen with the right winning throughout Europe, such as in Italy, Hungary and the gains in the European parliament. A likewise shift to far-right policies and ideologies in America could only further this trend and mark a profound change in conducting and implementing politics.

Another point of disparity amongst the candidates that shape the global stage are their contrasting views on the Israel-Gaza conflict. With much of the international population watching the mass violence taking place, an incoming Trump—who would only exacerbate and fur-

ther fund Israel's campaign—looms large. Harris, on the other hand, has condemned the inordinate amount of violence in Gaza, calling for aid and humanitarian treatment. However, the extent to which she will rein in US military support remains unclear due to America's extremely strong ties with Israel. The US election matters hugely on a global scale, and in this context to the UK. Whoever the new president will be must work closely together with our government, amongst international organisations such as NATO with the capacity to shift the international stage, affecting human rights and justice. It's for these reasons the US matters and its new leader has real power to set a precedent and direction for liberal democracies around the world through how they govern, conduct legislation and set the outlook for international relations globally.



Source: Sawyer Sutton (via Pexels)

THE TEAM



SCIENCE



Natasha Fray



Hannah Prince

Hurricane Milton has Scientists Spooked

Natasha Fray
Head of Science

Hurricane Milton has ripped through Florida recently, leaving a trail of destruction behind it. Why is it that this storm has had scientists spooked?

In the span of 48 hours, what started as a tropical storm turned into a Category 5 Hurricane. This rapid intensification paired with exceptionally high wind speeds, exceeding over 175mph (approximately 280 km/h), which is extremely unusual for an October hurricane, has raised concerns among the scientific community. The term Rapid “intensification” is used when maximum sustained wind speeds increase by at least 30 knots (approximately 35mph) within a 24-hour period. BBC analysed data, provided by

the US National Hurricane Center, and found that “Hurricane Milton strengthened by more than 90mph in 24 hours”. This drastic increase in speed can account for the storm moving up several categories in the Saffir-Simpson Scale.

Hurricane Milton didn’t start as a particularly large storm, this meant it could maintain its tight, high speed rotation, circling its narrow eye. Within the eye of the hurricane, the pressure dropped by 50mb in the span of 10 hours, this severe change in pressure had one meteorologist, John Morales, calling the storm “horrific”. This notable pressure drop is important as lower central pressures allow for the storm to be stronger with higher maximum sustained wind speeds.

As Hurricane Milton crossed

the Gulf of Mexico, it encountered record high ocean temperatures, which stretched deep below the surface. This fueled the hurricane, providing it the energy it needed to climb the Saffir-Simpson Scale with such rapid intensification. Hurricane Milton was actually the strongest hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico since Hurricane Rita in 2005. As the average Global Temperature has been consistently rising in recent years, it is providing the ideal environment for the formation of powerful hurricanes. A New York Times article states that “Tropical storms in the Gulf of Mexico are 50% more likely to undergo rapid intensification during ... periods of hot sea surface temperatures”, so we can expect to see more stories like this, across the rest of the Atlantic hurricane season this year.



Source: NOAA-21 Satellite (via Wikimedia Commons)



Source: NASA (via Wikimedia Commons)

Astronauts Stuck in Space

Hannah Prince
Science Editor

On 5 June 2024, two American Astronauts, Barry Wilmore and Sunita Williams, left Earth on an eight-day test mission to the International Space Station on a Boeing Starliner capsule. They, and their entire team and family, expected the mission to go smoothly, and return to Earth on 16 June, however, things didn’t quite go to plan. They experienced several technical issues, and they are now stuck in space, with no definitive date of when they will be able to return to Earth.

The mission that they had prepared for was to test the spacecraft with passengers for the first time ever. The spacecraft the astronauts left Earth in was the Boeing Crew Space Transportation 100 Starliner spacecraft which was developed collaboratively with NASA’s Commercial Crew Program. The intention behind the development of this spacecraft was to be able to accommodate up to seven passengers or, if needed, a mix of crew and cargo. This spacecraft is innovative and can be used up to ten times—something that previous spacecraft have been unable to do—and it has some of the most up-to-date technology on board.

When Ms Williams and Mr Wilmore were towards the end of their journey up to the International Space Station, engineers on the ground noticed some issues with the spacecraft’s thrusters and realised that

there was a helium leak. Astronauts are highly trained, not only in simulations of space travel, space walks, zero-gravity and G-force, but also in other disciplines such as Earth sciences, meteorology, space science, and engineering. They also undergo extensive training on the specific spacecraft with which they are travelling to space, to ensure that if there are any technical issues, they can fix them. In this case, however, the astronauts do not have the supplies and materials they need to fix the leaks in the spacecraft’s propulsion system, resulting in them being unable to return to Earth until a new spacecraft can be sent up to them.

In the most recent update from the BBC, NASA are expecting these two astronauts to be on the International Space Station for up to eight months. The Boeing spacecraft within which they went up to space is being flown back to Earth in the coming days without them in it, as neither the astronauts, nor the team on Earth are convinced that it would be safe to put people in the vessel. According to the BBC, Ms Williams and Mr Wilmore are “happy and healthy” and thank everyone for all the kind messages sent. While they say that they miss their families, they spoke about having lots of work to get on with on the International Space Station and that it is their “happy place”. While there is no exact date for their return to Earth, it has been confirmed that a spacecraft from Boeing’s rival company, SpaceX, will be used for their return.

Northern Lights Sighted Across the UK

Thea Dury
Contributor

The Northern Lights have been visible all across the UK after the biggest geomagnetic storm since 2003—a G5, the highest on a 1–5 scale—treating many to a dazzling show of colourful auroras across the night sky.

These increased sightings have been aided by the Sun reaching a “maximum” in its 11-year solar cycle. During this solar maximum, our home star releases plasma, a scorching gas made up of charged particles that travel through space at speeds of around one million miles per hour in events known as Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs). The particles are captured by the Earth’s magnetic field, passing energy to atoms and molecules in the atmosphere, such as oxygen and nitrogen, where the gases then emit the energy in the form of light, resulting in the spectacular natural phenomenon.

In recent weeks, photographs have been captured across England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland with the light display even being seen as far south as Kent and East Anglia. According to Matt

Robinson, an astronomer and astrophotographer from The Aurora Zone, “The stronger the storm, the further south in the Northern Hemisphere the Aurora Borealis is visible. This is why the Northern Lights have been spotted multiple times in the UK within the last 12 months.”

To those who have yet to spot the Northern Lights, there is still time. According to NASA’s Kelly Korreck, more displays are likely to be visible in the coming months and the Royal Astronomical Society states that sightings should continue into 2025, where the sun’s current peak is expected to last until the middle of the year.

Experts advise that the best way to view the phenomenon is to find a spot away from any light pollution or other bright light sources. As the aurora is unlikely to look very vibrant or colourful to the naked eye, meteorologists have advised the best way to capture the event is by photographing the sky with long exposure or night mode—the longer the exposure time, the more light the camera can acquire and thus, the brighter the image will be. However, many have reported that they were still able to see the aurora and its vibrant colours without using any form of camera.



Source: Andrew Tryon (via Wikimedia Commons)

Decrease Your Smartphone Usage to Increase Your Quality of Life

Anna Crowley
Contributor

In this age of fast-paced technological advancement, the development of the modern smartphone has been completely transformative to our lives. These devices have become critical in our access to global information and leisure activities, in the provision of instant communication, and, most importantly, to our daily routines. When everything is organised online, smartphones have become a necessity.

However, smartphones, with their connection to the internet and social media platforms, are becoming increasingly problematic. Researchers, reporters, schools, and parents are discovering links between smartphone use and poor mental health in

both children and adults. Academics have discovered that problematic smartphone use (PSU) has correlations with increases in stress, depressive symptoms, anxiety, sleep issues, attention deficit disorder, and many other physical and mental factors that reduce one's quality of life. PSU has been found to cause addictive behavioural patterns as a result of the instant, short-term dopamine that smartphones are so good at providing. This includes tell-tale behavioural patterns such as emotional and physical withdrawal. The UK parliament's Education Committee has found that PSU affects over 25% of children and young people.

If PSU can impact your mental health so significantly, what does this mean for education and full-time employment? Predictably, performance suffers as

a consequence of PSU across all sectors. Most concerning, research has found that the cycle of behaviour and resulting low mood is almost impossible to break on one's own.

Thankfully, these behaviours can be changed. Research suggests that a conscious reduction of personal screen time for a mere hour a day outside of work correlates directly with improved mood. This simple change results in less stress, depressive feelings, and increased life satisfaction, suggesting that without completely removing oneself from the world to which smartphones grant access, mental health can still be significantly improved.

For these reasons, many are calling for technological detoxes. An article from the BBC praises the recent release of

the HMD Barbie Phone—a flip phone designed to encourage the reduction of screen time with limited functioning capabilities, including being unable to connect to the internet. BBC news author Zoe Kleinman reports that the Barbie Phone has worked excellently to take her away from the constant connectivity of her usual smartphone, though she does suggest that children and young adults might benefit more from proper education in media and technological literacy. It poses a difficult decision that is still very much up to debate: should we be regulating and preventing smartphone use altogether, or does education on the dangers suffice? Regardless, an increasing number of studies find that decreasing one's smartphone screen time is endlessly beneficial to overall health and happiness.

Could Plastic Become Infinitely Recyclable?

Charlotte Hardie
Contributor

Plastic consumption and production are at an all-time high. According to the United Nations Development Programme, around 9% of all plastic waste globally is recycled, and 79% ends its life in landfills or nature.

Polymers are found in almost every material used in our daily lives. For example, washing clothes leads to microplastic particles being poured into the ocean. This is why creating new cycles of life for plastic is essential for life and global sustainability.

Chemists from the University of California, Berkeley have found a way to process the largest components of plas-

tic waste: polypropylene and polyethylene. The former is what most plastic bags are made of, and the latter is used to make more resistant objects, such as luggage or dishware.

Essentially, the process consists of two common catalysts—sodium on aluminium oxide and tungsten oxide on silica—which break the chemical bonds of the plastic molecules. These molecules become “gaseous monomers”, which can enable the fabrication of new plastics such as propylene. The new plastics have “all the properties of virgin material”. There are some challenges to this discovery. A Cardiff University Doctor, Benjamin Ward, argues that the recycling of plastic is hindered by the presence of additives, such as dyes, flame retardants, and plasticisers. These additional materi-

als constitute up to a third of a finished product and contaminate the recycled output. Even though recycling is considered to be an environmental hero, it merely postpones landfill disposal and the waste disaster.

However, this discovery solves the additive problem, as the plastics are reduced to gaseous monomers which consequently removes additives. The experiment has been tested only on more common additives, so there is still work to be done. This process is considered to be a beacon of hope for the environment, as it could create a “new circular economy for plastics”.

Plastic has been the subject of debate for many years now. Should we stop making plastic? Is there a future without it? Plastic pollution presents numerous threats to biodiver-

sity and compounds our ever-worsening waste problem. With the consumerist society in which we live, plastic eradication is not a feasible option as polymers are too essential for our economy. John Hartwig, a scientist developing this project, is trying to solve the plastic issue while also keeping in mind our society's tendencies: “One can argue that we should do away with all polyethylene and polypropylene and use only new circular materials. But the world's not going to do that for decades and decades. Polyolefins are cheap, and they have good properties, so everybody uses them.”

“People say if we could figure out a way to make them circular, it would be a big deal, and that's what we've done. One can begin to imagine a commercial plant that would do this.”

Racial Bias in Medication Efficacy

Olivia King
Contributor

New research suggests melanin may impact the efficacy of drugs within the human body. These shocking findings stem from a recent review paper by Simon Groen and Sophie Zaaijer who work in genome biology. Their research highlights that the medical field has failed to address and research how medicines interact with bodies of different skin pigmentation. Skin pigmentation has been suggested to act as a “sponge” for some medicines, which raises questions about the usefulness of standardised dosing.

Groen and Zaaijer highlight that diversity is necessary in

research and development as well as in clinical trials to ensure healthcare can help people of all races and ethnicities. Zaaijer has said: “Embracing inclusivity is not just an option any more, but a necessity.”

Currently, there is a lack of diversity in clinical trials. This was demonstrated in a 2020 US clinical trial, where out of 32,000 individuals, only 8% were black, only 6% were Asian, and only 11% were Hispanic. This lack of diversity in clinical trials may be a consequence of non-white individuals being afraid to partake in such trials, as drug risk profile testing is typically done only on human cells of Northern European descent, meaning that people of colour are taking much higher risks when participating in clinical trials.

New guidelines are being finalised by the United States' Food and Drug Administration, whose Food and Drug Omnibus Reform Act aims to make diversity a requirement within preclinical and clinical research. Alongside this, Groen and Zaaijer propose a new research method that uses three-dimensional human skin models with varying degrees of skin pigmentation.

This is part of a much larger issue of disparities in the outcomes of healthcare resources between whites and non-whites. For example, an in-depth report published by the UK government this year highlighted inequities in the performance of medical devices for pregnancy between people with lighter and darker skin tones.

As well as this, research has found that medical students appeared more uncertain when analysing non-white people's skin conditions. Students are more likely to accurately diagnose skin conditions for white people over non-white people, suggesting that teaching resources for medical students need to include more diverse representations to ensure adequate care for all.

It is apparent that the current medical field consistently demonstrates inequities that disproportionately harm people of colour, including inequities in the efficacy of drugs. Therefore, it is essential that the medical field adjusts to physiological characteristics of all racial groups. Healthcare which caters to all should be a standard.

The Science Behind Freshers' Flu

Tia Rudman
Contributor

By mid-October, freshers' flu needs no introduction. If you have not had it, everyone you know has. In fact, a 2023 survey by the National Union of Students found that over two-thirds of first-year students experienced symptoms of freshers' flu within their first few weeks of university. But what exactly is freshers' flu, and why does it affect so many students?

“Flu” here is a bit of a misnomer, as freshers' flu refers to a range of cold-like illnesses, mostly caused by viruses, that spread quickly during the autumn. Symptoms typically include a runny nose, cough, headache, sore throat, fatigue, and sometimes a mild fever. The duration can range from a few days to over a month, and in severe cases, it can hinder a student's ability to keep up with academic and social activities. The illness stems from a mix of respiratory viruses like rhinoviruses (the main cause of the common cold), adenoviruses, and occasionally the actual flu virus. These viruses spread easily through droplets when people cough, sneeze, or speak. University life, with its crowded lecture halls, shared accommodation, and social events, provides the perfect setting for rapid transmission. Many students also bring local strains of viruses from different regions, exposing others to pathogens they have never encountered before, raising the risk of infection.

Additionally, the start of university life can weaken the immune system. Stress from adapting to a new environment, academic workload, and social pressures, combined with poor sleep, an unbalanced diet, and likely excessive drinking, reduces the body's ability to fight off illness.

Preventing freshers' flu is challenging. The high volume of social interaction and shared spaces makes universities ideal for viral transmission. While hygiene measures like regular handwashing, covering your mouth when sneezing or coughing, and avoiding close contact with sick individuals can help reduce the spread, these measures are often not enough. Many students also neglect key health habits like getting enough sleep, maintaining a nutritious diet, or staying active, all of which can compromise their immune defences. If you do catch freshers' flu, the best remedy is self-care. Rest, staying hydrated, and over-the-counter medicines can help alleviate symptoms. A healthy diet also supports recovery. However, it is important to monitor symptoms to rule out more serious illnesses like meningitis, which shares some flu-like symptoms but requires urgent medical attention.

While freshers' flu is a rite of passage for many students, understanding its causes and taking basic precautions can limit its impact, helping you get through your first term at university with minimal disruption.



Aimee Szulczewski



Grace D'Souza



Lily Zeeuw

Cardiff Rugby's Cameron Winnett Wins Young Player Award

Alaia Osoz
Contributor

Cardiff and Wales full-back Cameron Winnett has won the 2023-2024 Young Player of the Year Award. The Welsh Rugby Writers' Association (WRWA) has rewarded the 21-year-old after a successful season both domestically and internationally in senior rugby. He has become a regular starter for Cardiff Rugby's senior team, as well as achieving seven senior caps for Wales.

Winnett started playing representative rugby from a young age at Wattstown, progressing to Treorchy, and then his district, Rhondda, after which he joined the Cardiff Academy. He made his senior debut with Cardiff in 2021, and shortly after started the Champions Cup match against the Harlequins where he scored a try. Since this pivotal match in his career, he has grown in confidence and seized the opportunities presented to him.

Winnett made his senior Wales

debut in the Six Nations this year in the match against Scotland. His emphatic performance gained him a place in the starting lineup for the other four matches in the tournament. He rose to the occasion of wearing the number 15 shirt that has been previously worn by Leigh-Halfpenny and Liam Williams for the past decade. Over the summer, the national team's coach, Warren Gatland, started him against the Springboks and the first Test match out of two against Australia. Reflecting on the season, Winnett says: "It was a crazy season, to be honest, and I didn't expect to be where I am now. I'm very grateful for the opportunities I've had and it's been a good year."

He has started the first three games of the new season for Cardiff and has scored two tries. Expressing his excitement for the upcoming season, he states: "I'm still building on last season and hopefully I can take that experience into this one. I'm looking forward to it." Looking to the future, he outlines his goals: "I want to play as much as I can again and to take



Source: RawPixel

my opportunities. My main goal is winning games for Cardiff and then hopefully [getting] into the Wales squad again this autumn. It's where I want to be."

His work ethic on the field is often praised by his teammates and coaches. Senior player for Cardiff, Josh Turnbull, says: "He's a quiet lad, but on the field he understands his role". Turnbull further adds: "For someone who is quite quiet on the field, he's quite demanding on it. His chat on the field is very good for a youngster. I've got to give him that."

Cardiff Head Coach Matt Sherratt has also been impressed by Winnett's attitude. Sherratt comments: "He comes in, does his work, and keeps himself to himself but when you watch him train, he's very consistent in all his actions." Winnett's consistency has been rewarded and Sherratt applauds him, saying: "I'm delighted he's won the award. He deserves it."

CULF Triumph Over UWE in Thrilling 3-2 Victory!

Grace D'Souza
Sports Editor

On the 9th of October, I had the amazing opportunity to watch and photograph the Cardiff University Ladies Football (CULF) team taking on UWE at Llanrumney. From pre-match warmups to target practice, this team looked ready to win. In the first 4 minutes, it seemed like CULF would take the lead, with number 6, Lottie Trespaderne, attacking with pace, but her shot went narrowly wide. The UWE defense became strengthened after that early scare from Lottie. CULF's number 5, Ashleigh Poolan, went for goal in the 13th minute, but, similar to Lottie's effort, it went narrowly wide. Despite this, UWE struggled to clear the ball, and with Ashleigh constantly pressing in the box marking her player well, it was a strong 15 minutes for the number 5.

There was very good link up play between Lottie and Ashleigh, as Lottie went for goal again in the 16th minute but fired it straight at the UWE goalkeeper. A heavy tackle from CULF's number 12, Emma Henry, saw UWE's number 4 taken to the ground in the 18th minute. CULF won a corner, taken quickly and well by number 11 Saira Fisher, but it was headed straight over the crossbar.

In the 22nd minute, UWE's number 23 gave CULF's number 5, Ashleigh Poolan, an aggressive shove in the back - an incident that should have been a foul, as CULF deserved a free kick. UWE looked strong on the attack, and in the

25th minute, they went for goal, but the shot went just wide. CULF's number 7, Catherine Andrews, did well to track back, but UWE capitalised on a counterattack after CULF's number 2, Jenna-Marie Taylor King, mistimed her tackle. In the 32nd minute, UWE got the opening goal. CULF's goalkeeper Betsy Mangan guessed the right way, but there was just too much power behind the shot. UWE grew more confident on the ball as the lead seemed to fuel their momentum. UWE's aggressive play saw tackles on both CULF's number 8, Lulu Patalano, and captain, number 14, Sophie Hauptmann.

As halftime approached, UWE took a corner, but it was poorly executed and booted clear by the CULF defence. At halftime, the score stood at 0-1. The second half kicked off with an immediate impact from CULF. Number 10, Sam Coffey, put the ball in the back of the net in the 48th minute. Clearly, the halftime team talk had motivated the players. CULF's number 11, Saira Fisher, showed incredible skill, taking advantage of every gap. She went for goal in the 54th minute, but the UWE keeper saved it comfortably—unfortunate, as the build-up play was outstanding. In the 63rd minute, CULF took the lead when number 16, Erin Slade, struck the ball well to put the team ahead. Six minutes later, CULF's number 4, Siena Barada, scored the team's third. UWE were crumbling, losing their composure, as CULF had them in their back pockets. In the 73rd minute, captain Sophie Hauptmann played close to the corner and touchline, which aggravated UWE

even more. CULF's number 18, Annabelle Simeonova, shoved UWE's number 19, causing a heated moment; Annabelle was lucky to avoid a booking.

A soft and controversial penalty was given to UWE in the 90+3 minute, but despite that, the final score stood at 3-2 in CULF's favour. Post-match, I spoke to captain Sophie Hauptmann, who said: "I'm really ecstatic about how well the team played, especially since we were down 1-0 in the first half and came back to win 3-2. Everyone played really well together, and I'm really looking forward to seeing how this new team continues to develop and improve throughout the season. Our ultimate goal is to win the league and get promoted."

Many thanks to CULF captain Sophie Hauptmann and vice-captain Jenna-Marie Taylor King for having me. I wish all of the team the very best of luck this season!



CULF 2's Dugout



Georgia Spry: Leading Cardiff University Sport's Bold Future

By Aimee Szulczewski, Head of Sport

Georgia Spry, Cardiff University's VP Sports and AU President, is not only at the forefront of shaping the university's sports community but also a trailblazer for women in leadership. In this exclusive interview, Georgia shares her journey, the challenges she faced, and her bold vision for the future of Cardiff sports.

What are your key responsibilities at Cardiff Students' Union, and how do you balance the administrative and community aspects of your role?

As one of seven sabbatical officers in the Students' Union we are responsible for supporting the best interests of students and campaigning and lobbying for positive change to make the University experience for students in Cardiff as best as it can be. Each of us have our own manifesto of aims that we want to achieve while we're in post. A few of mine are to continue to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in sports, push for better and improved sports facilities and continue to promote wellbeing and support mental health in sport. Balancing the administrative and community aspects of the role is not an easy task but I make sure to plan my time effectively and look to the amazing staff around me for support. One of my favourite things to do is seeing our sports clubs in action, whether that's heading out on a Wednesday and watching our teams play in BUCS or popping by a training session/event to chat and show my support. I make sure I have time in my schedule to do this each week.

What initially sparked your interest in sports, and how has that passion evolved over the years?

I've been involved in sports since I was a child and my parents put me into swimming and gymnastics lessons. They

let me try all sorts of different sports growing up and I attended as many after school clubs as I could so that I could try them all! The one that stuck was martial arts. I loved the physical and mental challenge of it, how strong it made me and how happy I was when I was training with my family and friends. I started when I was 10 and was competing by the age of 12, instructing by 16 and leading my own classes by 18. I have been able to keep pushing myself to get better and help others improve and I love it. Sports isn't just great to win medals, but to create friendships, develop self-awareness and confidence and support mental health.

Being a woman in a leadership position within sports, have you encountered any particular challenges or barriers, and how have you addressed them?

There are still many problems in sports, particularly barriers for girls and women which CUTV are creating a documentary about that will feature Cardiff University Women's Football Club and the AU. Our Mental Health Officer and the CUTV Sports Director, Grace, is directing it! During my time as VP Sports I have consistently championed the importance of sports and how it should be accessible to everyone. Last year I ran the Disability Sport campaign, a Rainbow Laces campaign (LGBTQ+) and supported the Black History Month Campaign and I plan to do that again this year.

Some of the challenges we are currently facing and talking to the University about funding in sports and the University not seeing the importance of sports. The university sport facilities at Talybont need improvement and expansion to facilitate the high demand of sports activity we are seeing. Sports is so important for physical and mental health yet they don't have capacity for all our students to take part. Not only that, compulsory lectures are now be-

ing scheduled on Wednesday afternoons, leaving students to decide whether they want to play their sports fixture and have it affect their grades or attend their lecture and let their teams down. It's not good enough. One of the projects I'm working on this year is the weekly Sports Spotlight where I aim to highlight the amazing sports we have here at Cardiff and there will be a large presence of female members.

What are your main goals for Cardiff University's sports community during your tenure?

I want all students to have a positive and amazing experience while participating in sports. To do this I aim to start the process for culture change in sports by moving away from the strong drinking culture, elitence and toxic masculinity that is often seen. Already this year I have seen clubs posting about wellbeing and physical and mental health which is promising for the year ahead. The Let's Talk Consent campaign is already live and educating students on sexual violence and how to be an active bystander and I will be running more projects focusing on sober socials and athlete wellbeing throughout the year. I want sports to be seen as a priority at University and mental health in sports taken seriously.

Looking ahead, do you have any aspirations for further involvement in sports or other leadership roles?

At the moment I'm not sure what I want to do career wise but I think that's pretty common for most students leaving University. I know that I love sports and being in leadership/management roles so I'm definitely keen to stay involved in sports leadership roles. I think I'll let those guide me and end up somewhere where I can make a positive impact on those around me.

Wales Women's Upcoming Fight for 2025 Euros Qualification

Lily Zeeuw
Sports Editor

On the 25th and 29th of October, the Welsh women's football team will face Slovakia in a two-legged play-off semi-final that could see them progress to play-off final, keeping their hopes alive for qualifying for the European Championships, hosted by Switzerland in the summer of 2025.

Wales have never qualified to play in both the Euros or the World Cup, so progressing past Slovakia would be a significant step closer to making their debut at a major international tournament. Slovakia and Wales have met twice in the past, both matches nearly a decade ago in 2015. Wales won one with a 1-0 scoreline, while Slovakia won the other, 2-1.

Despite these close encounters, Welsh fans should expect a differ-

ent picture this time, with Cymru's squad featuring players who compete in some of the top women's leagues, including the Women's Super League in England and the National Women's Soccer League in the United States. In contrast, Slovakia's players largely compete in lower-profile leagues across Europe, suggesting that nearly a decade on, Wales and their supporters should be hoping for a more comfortable victory. However, fans should look out for Slovakian number 11, Patricía Hmírová, who could pose a threat up front. Hmírová scored in Slovakia's previous qualification game against Israel in a 2-0 win, she is also Slovakia's all-time top scorer. With Slovakia having never qualified for a major international tournament either, they will certainly put up a fight. If Wales progress, they will face either Georgia or a Celtic clash in Ireland in the next round.

A win in that round would see Wales qualify for the Euros, joining teams like Germany, Spain, Iceland, Denmark, France, England, Italy, Netherlands and host Switzerland, as well as other play-off winners. Qualifying for the Euros would mark a massive step forward for women's football in Wales, boosting its visibility and popularity. After England's Lionesses won the previous Euros on home turf, there was a significant surge in women's football in the UK, with increased participation, viewership and overall visibility.

A potential Welsh qualification is certain to fuel similar growth in the sport within the UK. The second leg will be held at Cardiff City Stadium, so if you're interested in going to support the women in their hopes of qualification, you are in the perfect place to do so!

Farewell Foxy! Jonathan Davies Announces Retirement from Professional Rugby

Aneirin Jones
Contributor

Last week, it was announced that arguably Welsh rugby's greatest ever outside centre, Jonathan 'Fox' Davies, would retire at the age of 36, marking the end of an 18-year professional career.

In a statement posted on social media last Sunday, Davies said: "After taking time away from the game following the end of my last season with the Scarlets, I have come to the decision to call time on my professional rugby career". He added that he had "been lucky enough to play the game professionally for 18 years, dedicating everything I have to being the best rugby player I could be. I now look forward to what the next 18 will bring, as a father, a husband, and in my next professional chapter. Diolch, Foxy."

Davies left the Scarlets at the close of the 2023/24 season, having scored 55 tries in 209

appearances. He helped the team win the 2017 Pro 12 title and reach the 2018 European Champions Cup semi-final. On the international stage, Davies was a crucial part of Warren Gatland's Wales team, earning 96 caps since making his debut in 2009. His international career under Gatland saw him be integral to helping Wales climb to the top of the world rankings in 2019 as well as being a two-time Rugby World Cup semi-finalist and two-time Six Nations Grand Slam winner in 2012 and 2019 respectively.

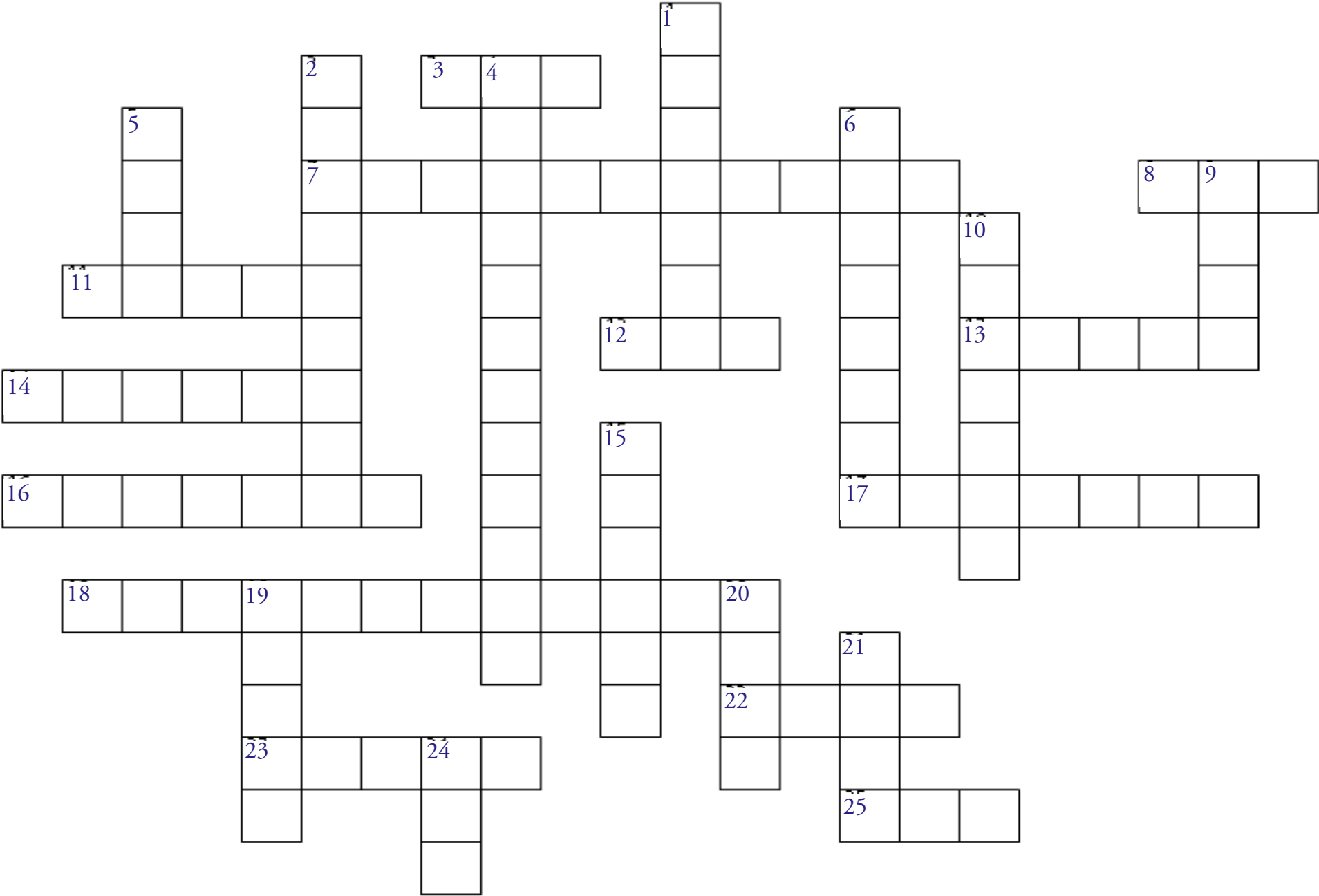
He toured twice with the British and Irish Lions in 2013 and 2017, playing every test and relegating Irish Rugby legend Brian O'Driscoll to the bench for the deciding test with Australia in 2013; which the Lions won comfortably. In 2017 he was named Lions player of the series in their historic series draw with New Zealand. Jonathan Davies played with a rare combination of both flair and measured control; a gifted

footballer and equally brilliant with ball in hand he proved a nightmare for defences across the world. His powerful hand-off and underrated pace proved a threat in both attack but most notably in defence; he was truly an all-around great.

Players of his talent and skill do come along more often than not, but his reliability and discipline at the top of the game will be difficult to emulate. A modern legend of the game, the task now turns to who could possibly replace him.



Crossword | Croesair
Daniel Raybould and Oliver Morten



ACROSS

3. to fall behind or fail to keep pace; excuse of many a poor gamer (3)
7. pre-room room (11)
8. spooky exclamation, or one of derision (3)
11. _____ Cymru; twilled and chequered cloth (5)
12. a slippery fish (3)
13. many matriarchs; post-Misfits pilgrimage site (5)
14. you'll get hard if you see this snaky lady (6)
16. hopeful high-school football coach (blue) (3,4)
17. swirling high-heat cooking technique; the peak of most students' culinary ability (4,3)
18. a sovereign nation headed by a prince or princess; sports venue (12)
22. Welsh symbol; onion relative (4)
23. a category of a discussion (5)
25. the fake variant may result in excess orange (3)

DOWN

1. hopeful couch-lover (red) (2,5)
2. Cardiff-born author who fascinated us with witches, factories, and large fruits (5,4)
4. NHS-spearheading politician commemorated on Queen Street (7,5)
5. to savage; cause serious physical wounds, as to Qui-Gon Jinn (4)
6. cacophonous avian predators that prey on rubbish bags (8)
9. enemies, abbreviated (4)
10. an orange Halloween sight (7)
15. the highest point, especially of a celestial body in the sky; luxury student accommodation tower (6)
19. up on a map, Kanye's daughter (5)
20. a rambunctious mid-week reminder of the impermanence of life (4)
21. great enthusiasm and energy; citric flavouring (4)
24. when a boy runs after ping pong ball (3)