



Read Online

UNIVERSITY BUDGET CUTS

Uncertain Times for Music, Nursing, Languages, and Humanities

James Roberts
Opinion Editor

Like students at the School of Music, Cardiff University nursing students were greatly impacted by leaking of the proposed changes to the media before they were announced by the university itself. With a lack of any official information, one nursing student, who wished to be anonymous, told us of how she and her co-students were “collectively getting our updates from Wales Online as it was updated”. Layla Harris, a second-year adult nursing student, told us that it was “heartbreaking not to find out through the university but through the press”. Adding that it had “left us all lost and confused”. The widespread panic and confusion among nursing students caused some lecturers to email students that night to reassure them, even though

they reportedly had little information themselves, although the same anonymous student told us that none of the senior lecturers at the school contacted them at that time. Nonetheless the day after cuts were announced via the media, a senior lecturer at the School of Healthcare Sciences, emailed nursing students to inform them of changes to their course in light of a staff meeting that had taken place that day. In that email, which has been shared with Gair Rhydd, she identified the university's reasons for cutting nursing. They were “finance, inconsistent NSS results, poor student experience in placements and not being able to meet our commissioned targets”. Healthcare is a devolved matter in Wales, and it has been reported that alongside departmental issues, the reduction of nursing grants by the Welsh Assembly

has contributed to the axing of nursing from Cardiff University. The reaction from nursing students and the wider student community to the axing has been one of shock and dismay, with many especially confused given the broader national context in which demand for new nurses has never been greater. One nursing student described feeling “disgusted”, adding that “I’m concerned personally but more what this means for the future of nursing in Wales. The NHS is already in crisis and this will only

make that situation worse”. While the university has publicly committed to allowing current nursing students to complete their degrees, like those studying music. There has still been a climate of uncertainty in the days after the announcement, with one student telling us...

To read the special report, turn to page 14

How Moving to a Big City Changed my Perspective on my Hometown

Ella Simmons
Contributor

Cardiff. The capital of Wales. Moving to what is, and as a Welsh girl, this is the biggest and the best. In Cardiff, the parks are always full of people who have their lives together going on runs; the nightlife always thrives, even outside of the weekend; the shopping centre is a land of distraction and indulgence; the restaurants and bars line up for what feels like miles on end; and everywhere is always busy...

To read the full story, turn to page 10.

2024: A Year of Elections

Adam Dunstan
Politics Editor

The year 2024 saw sixty-four countries, as well as the European Union, head to the polls in a year that will go down as one of the most significant years in global political history. A key takeaway is that the world saw an increase in right-wing populism, especially in Europe. These are political parties that aim to appeal to ordinary of the votes cast—significantly fewer votes than in the previous election...

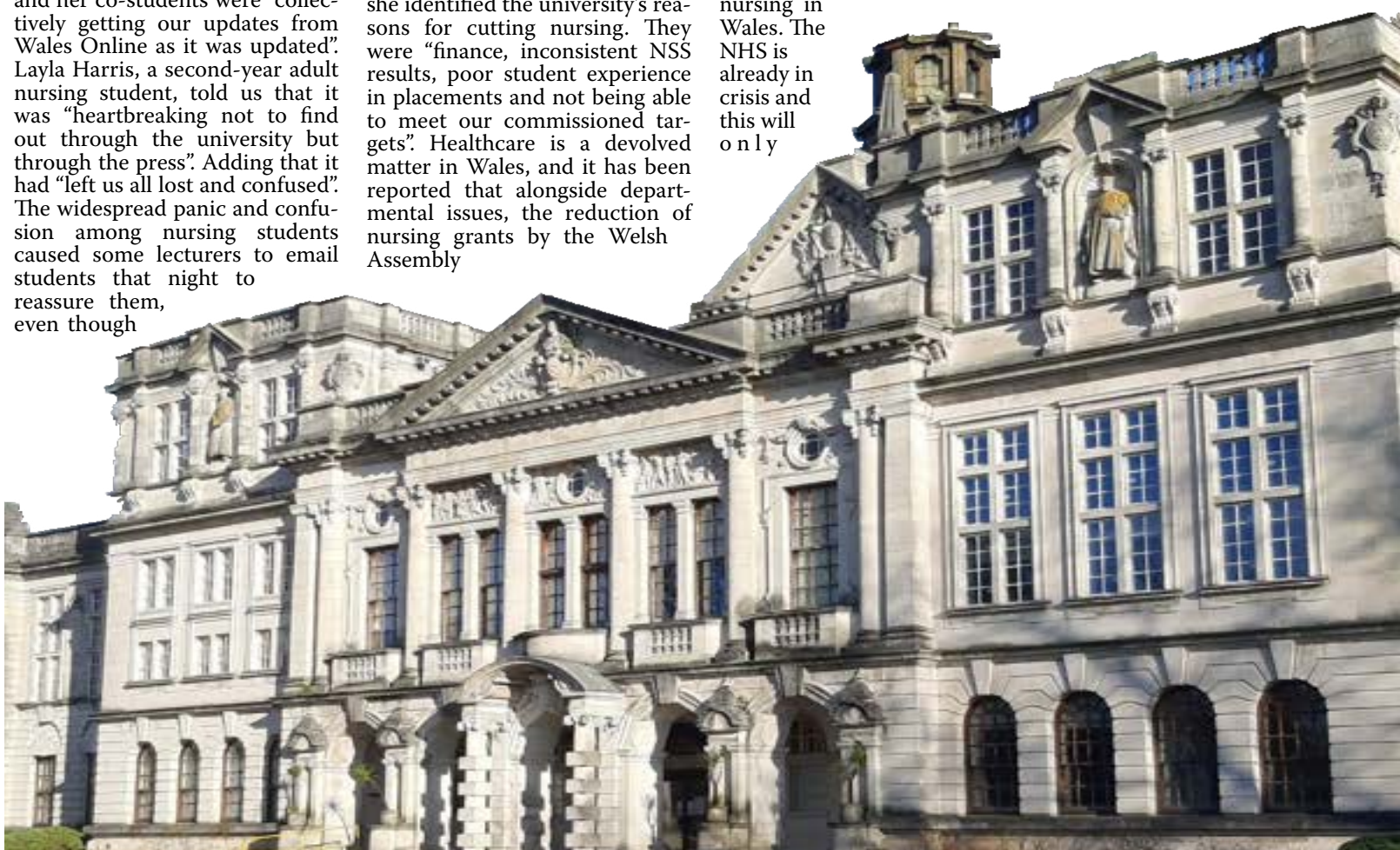
To read the full story, turn to page 13.

Old Dog, New Prancing Horse: 2025 F1 Season Predictions

Aimee Szulczewski
Head of Sports

The 2025 Formula 1 season is shaping up to be an all-time classic, with significant team changes shaking up the grid. Two of the sport's biggest stories revolve around Hamilton's long-awaited move to Ferrari and McLaren's realistic shot at a drivers' championship. But beyond these headline-grabbing moves, other teams are making strategic changes that could see them disrupt the looming season...

To read the full story, turn to page 23.



THE TEAM



Ari Plant



Neve Powell



Heather Layton



Bridgid Chanen



Pavitra Padinjaroot

SPOTLIGHT



Five Things to do this Galentine's Day

Heather Layton
Spotlight Editor

Galentine's is an excellent annual opportunity to show your girlfriends how much you appreciate their support and friendship, and to spread some love at a time of the year that can be challenging for people. Whether you're planning on going out, or staying in and enjoying wholesome activities, these are the five best things you can do this Galentine's:

Cocktail/Mocktail Board Night

A cost-effective and creative evening that can be hosted from home is a homemade cocktail and mocktail evening. Each attendee makes their own cocktail and mocktail based on a theme—I went to one of these last year and the theme was “make a cocktail based on your ex”, although I have heard other people making cocktails based on their type, their favourite film, etc. If you have too many people, and hence too many cocktails (if that is possible!), an easy substitute for this is a snack

platter or a sweet treat.

Korean BBQ @ Kimchi Korean Restaurant

Kimchi Korean Restaurant in Pontcanna boasts delicious food and drink with amazing value for money. Sharing platters of marinated meat and fish can be shared with a group, and you can cook them yourselves to order. Being able to grill your own dinner makes an entertaining change, and can be accompanied by generous portions of rice, noodles, and dumplings. Having seen similar restaurants online, I went to Kimchi before Christmas with my housemates, and I was not disappointed by the quick and friendly service, amazing food, and the novelty of grilling my own food.

Coyote Ugly's Annual Man Auction

Although it technically falls on Valentine's Day (14th) and not Galentine's Day, Coyote Ugly's

Annual Man auction would also be a fun and unique addition to your Galentine's celebrations this year. Tickets are £5 and include two complimentary drinks (from a selected range) and the chance to bid and win the “Man of your dreams”. All proceeds from the event will be donated to charity AND if you happen to know any male friends who would be a perfect participant for this event, they can sign up on the website now!

Fakeaway Night

Making a Fakeaway with your friends is a fun and cost-effective way to put a spin on a classic takeaway. Most ingredients can be found in our local supermarkets and independent food shops around Cardiff, whether you want to make a Chinese, Indian, homemade pizzas, or your take on a chicken shop classic. The Fakeaway can be enjoyed at home while

watching your favourite films or playing games, and is adjustable depending on cooking skills and whether or not you want an easy convenient dinner or a challenge.

Love Fest hosted by Taylor Swift Society

On the 13th, the Taylor Swift Society are hosting “Lovefest”, a club night featuring Welsh Chicks who will DJ a full set of favourites by Charli XCX, Sabrina Carpenter, Gracie Abrams, and, of course, Taylor Swift. The night will run from 10pm–2am in Y Plas. You and your friends will be able to dance the night away to constant hits and it would be a wholesome end to a day of Galentine's festivities. Tickets are available now on the society's Students' Union web page.

The Revival of Clubbing Etiquette

Sienna Wilson
Contributor

From Misfits to Circuit, we've all had our fair share of elbows on the dancefloor and someone nicking your spot in the drinks queue. Post pandemic, have young people left their manners at home on a night out? Or, as clubs and small venues continue to close, have we lost the essence of clubbing etiquette as a whole?

Clubbing is an integral aspect of the majority of students' uni experience—the sociality, the music, the self-inflicted intoxication and the dancing. But recent figures paint a bleak picture. Since March 2020, 37% of UK clubs have permanently shut their doors, with an average of three clubs closing per week. If the trend continues, UK clubbing could be “extinct” by the end of the decade.

And it's not just the venues that are struggling. High inflation rates have “put students off” nights out, with one in five working over twenty hours a week just to make ends meet. Clubbing has become an unaffordable luxury, as students juggle rent, bills, the weekly food shop, and the ever-growing cost of living.

In a stark contrast to the glory days of the “superclub era” of the 90s,

clubbing in 2025 is a far cry from its former glory and, honestly, a bit shit. Drum'n'Bass, house music, and EDM have instead been replaced by the likes of Joey Essex's “Reem” and numerous remixes of Sabrina Carpenter's “Espresso”—and, if that's not bad enough, Joey Essex himself probably popped in your local Pop World. Combined with the blatant lack of respect and manners—shoving in queues, unsolicited flash photography on the dancefloor and scraps in the toilet—more and more students are simply “not interested” in hitting up the clubs.

So, how did we get here in the first place?

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an entire generation missing out on a year or more of pubs, clubs, and other experiences, and, as a result, their relationship with music is fundamentally more online. Add to that the cost-of-living crisis, and it's no wonder young people are opting out of nights out. When clubbing feels more like an overpriced hassle than a chance to let loose, it's easy to see why the etiquette of the past has slipped into the background.

The demand for a better, safer, and more respectful night out is on the rise. Following strict restrictions and social-distancing rules,

people now want to enjoy themselves while also feeling safe and comfortable (or as comfortable as you're going to get after ten Jägerbombs). As a result, clubbing etiquette—once a given, now being rediscovered—has become a central topic for clubgoers and event organisers alike. It's not just about keeping your elbows to yourself (although, yes, please do), it's about respecting personal space, being mindful in queues, and not being that person who harasses the DJ for their favourite track.

The revival of clubbing etiquette signals a return to the true values of rave culture and, hopefully, a

half-decent night out. When you're chucking your keys, phone and half-drunk Smirnoff bottle into your bag, don't forget to toss your manners in, too.



SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

Society Events to Look Out For

Juliette Harink
Contributor

Cardiff University is home to over two hundred societies. From Medieval Re-enactment to Women in STEM, there is bound to be something that you'd want to partake in. With the new semester starting and refreshers in full swing, now is the perfect time to try out a new club or society, find new friends, and, in some cases, raise money for some fantastic local charities. Here are just a few of the upcoming events being hosted by Cardiff's societies:

Loverfest

Hosted by Cardiff's Taylor Swift Society, this annual event is not one to miss. Hav-

ing won the big event of the year at the SVMAs last year, the club night's return to Y Plas will be happening on Thursday 13th February. Not a Swiftie? Don't fret as this event is a club night collaborating with DJs Welsh Chicks who are most notable for their appearances at Misfits on a Wednesday night. Expect a night filled with pop icons from Sabrina Carpenter to Paramore. Tickets are currently on second release and selling fast!

Wet Dippers GIAG

Interested in getting more active? On February the 16th, The Wet Dippers society are hosting their give-it-a-go event at Jackson's Bay in Barry Island. Their aim is to get more people into wild swimming. So, bring a friend and get

involved! As it is a give-it-a-go event, tickets are completely free. Why not try your hand at something new and seemingly quite cold?! The community of wild swimmers at Cardiff is unique and you might find that wild swimming is a great way to counteract the stress of uni!

Beer & Cider Festival

Running from the 28th of February to the 1st of March, the Real Ale Society will be taking over the Great Hall and hosting this year's beer and cider festival. This year's event, held in support of Cardiff Mind, features live music all weekend, as well as a pub quiz on the Friday night and a chilli-eating challenge on Saturday. This event is a great way to

try lots of beer and cider while soaking up the atmosphere of the weekend.

Strictly Come Dancesport

If you're looking for an event less focused on alcohol, this might be for you! The rehearsals have already begun for CU Dancesport's *Strictly* competition in which the dancesport society professionals have been paired up with "celebs" from different societies. All in support of the charity Marie Curie, Cardiff's Dancesport Society will be hosting their very own *Strictly Come Dancing* live on the 28th of March. It will be a night of talent, rooting for your favourites while raising money for an incredible cause.

The Baking Society

Lucy Bushnell
Contributor

If I had to choose three words to describe Cardiff Uni's Baking Society, they would be: fun, inclusive, and chill. We are a friendly and welcoming group of students who come together every other week for *Bake Off*-style meetings centred around a particular theme, including: Chocolate Week, Comfort Bakes, and Halloween Specials.

Members have the option to bake at home, either individually or with friends, and then bring their creations to our Monday meetings, where they are presented and shared. We award prizes for the top three bakes as voted by members, as well as a special committee favourite, which includes the highly coveted Golden Spoon. But if life gets too busy and you don't have time to bake, don't worry! You're more than welcome to come along, enjoy the atmosphere, and indulge in some delicious treats. Who doesn't love a free cake tasting session?

Beyond our signature Bake Off nights, we also host a diverse variety of social events on alternate weeks.

These include both drinking and non-drinking events, so there's something for everyone. This month, we have a relaxed pub night at The Taf, as well as a Valentine's biscuit decorating session. Additionally, we organise large collaborative events with other societies, one of our biggest being "The Great Cardiff Bake Off". Last year, this event brought together over sixty societies and successfully raised 138kg in food donations for Cardiff Foodbank, alongside an impressive £80 in card donations.

As an inclusive and welcoming society, we take pride in the fact that everyone is encouraged to join, no matter their skill level. Whether you're a seasoned baker or have never picked up a whisk before, you'll find a home here. Our Platinum-Tier status recognises our commitment to fostering a positive and engaging environment for all members.

Joining the Baking Society is a fantastic place to refine your baking skills, make new friends, or just enjoy some homemade treats. We keep our members updated through our social media (@cubakingsoc), where you'll find posts about our latest events and activities.

Membership is just £5 for the entire year (a bargain!), granting you access to all our events as well as an exclusive members' group chat. The Baking Society is the perfect place to your university experience through the joy of baking.



Women in Law Society

Heather Layton
Spotlight Editor

Cardiff University's Women in Law Society was founded in 2022 and aims to increase equality in the legal field for women and non-binary individuals, in Cardiff and across the world. Since its establishment, the society has arguably succeeded in these aims, creating a welcoming sisterhood and network where current and former students can support each other.

In terms of events, this year's committee has aimed to respect the balance between the academic, more serious events calendar and the fun, well-being-based events. An example of how Women in Law has done so this academic year can be seen in the first term's events. In December, Women in Law Society hosted a Networking Event allowing its members to mingle with brand representatives, placement year students and trainee solicitors. This event was a privilege for all attendees, as it provided them with the opportunity to share advice and opinions, and to meet people they may not have otherwise come across.

Additionally, Women in Law Society had its first ever YOLO social in November, which was a vast difference from the networking event!

The Society also publishes a monthly newsletter accessed exclusively by its members, which gives application and study tips, commercial updates, reminds members of upcoming society events, as well as application deadlines, and highlights a "Woman of the Month". Contributions to

the newsletter are made largely by the Society's editor, Isabella McNulty, as well as this year's Ambassadors—a group of students who volunteered to promote events, campaign for causes and have input in the events organised throughout the year. January's "Woman of the Month" was Helena Kennedy, an advocate and researcher of gender-based bias and disparity in the legal field. Highlighting a "Woman of the Month" is vital for the society and its members as it provides examples of inspirational women, and how female law students can strive to be as successful as them.

Finally, Women in Law aims to remain as affordable for students as possible. For this reason, the annual membership fee is only £2 and has remained the same since it was established in 2022, despite the cost-of-living crisis and the rise in inflation. All events are also managed carefully and subsidised as far as possible to ensure that there are no financial barriers to them being accessed and enjoyed by students.

As a society that promotes

equality and diversity in the legal profession, being affordable and breaking down financial barriers to increasing employability is a vital

principle.

Memberships are still available and open to everyone on the Students' Union website and will give purchasers access to the newsletter mentioned above, discounted tickets to upcoming events and the chance to nominate themselves for the upcoming elections for the 2025/26 committee.



THE TEAM



NEWS



Dilichi Dieobi



Tom Nicholson

Cardiff Rent Prices Soar: Students Face “Unnecessary Financial Stress”

Ava Hicks
Contributor

Cardiff, supposedly one of the cheapest cities to attend university in, has seen a 106% increase in rent prices since 2020. With costs for houses spanning between £328 and £676, students are understandably concerned.

The competitive housing market has caused these problems for themselves. Landlords began increasing prices which created a knock-on effect where all other landlords had no choice but to also increase their rent prices. The cost-of-living crisis has its part to play in this situation; however, it is the students that feel the brunt of the problem. The real problem here, though, is student finance. Students' main income is often not enough to cover rent, let alone sustain their life. The unfair means testing puts pressure on the students

to receive aid elsewhere, which is not always available. Many students turn to part-time jobs to meet rent—giving them less time to work on their studies. Still, students across Cardiff have expressed that the cost of rent is “unmanageable” even with consistent income from a part-time job.

Additionally, jobs in Cardiff are few and far between with there being only sixty-one part-time jobs within 10km of the city. This is concerning when we consider the job-to-student ratio. Sixty-one jobs compared to the 32,725 students as of 2022/2023 is untenable.

This combination of increased rent, poor funding, and lack of jobs leads to unnecessary financial stress to students in Cardiff. This concern is widespread, with students noting that people will “struggle to meet these new increases.” Even when letting agencies maintain a fixed price for

some students who re-sign the same property, the surge for new tenants can reach up to £100.

Some students, however, feel that their rent prices are fair. With one noting that they

pay

£395

for a

four-bed

property with

2let2. The student explained that

they live slightly further out and

finds it is a good compromise for

cheaper rent prices. However,

this might not work for other stu-

dents whose buildings are further

out or if they have accessibility

issues.

The housing and job markets in

Cardiff need to improve, along

with funding provided by student

finance, or the quality of life for

students will reach dire levels.



Storm Éowyn Thrashes UK Coasts

Gwen Lyon
Contributor

On the 24th of January 2025, Storm Éowyn hit the UK, marking the fifth storm in the 2024/25 European storm season. With recorded wind speeds of up to 100mph in South Lanarkshire, Scotland, and 114mph in County Galway, Ireland, Storm Éowyn was the most intense storm in the UK in the past ten years in Ireland since 1961.

The Met Office officially declared Storm Éowyn on the 21st of January after deciding the potential damage by winds could be classed as an amber or red warning. Having named the storm, the Met Office was able to issue weather warnings in order to minimise risk to life. Northern Ireland and the Central Belt of Scotland were the most heavily impacted areas in the UK. Both areas were issued a red weather warning, and 4.5 million people were advised to stay at home through government-issued emergency phone alerts. Sadly, the 19-year-old Calum Carmicheal died in East Ayrshire after an uprooted tree fell on his car. He was driving home before the red alert was issued. 20-year-old Kacper Dudek died in a similar manner in County Donegal, Ireland—the only other casualty of the storm. In compliance with the red weather warning, all schools in Northern Ireland were closed on the 24th, as well as 90% of all schools in Scotland and all Scottish universities and colleges. High winds caused damage to over-head power lines leading to power cuts in 285,000 Northern Irish properties and 290,000 Scottish properties.



This also took its toll on broadband and mobile connectivity. Damages to water assets as well as reports of stolen equipment left up to 3,000 properties without water in Northern Ireland. Bottled water was distributed as a temporary solution while engineers worked to restore damages.

Transportation was also affected by these high winds. Belfast and Edinburgh airports suspended their activities, leading to over 1,000 flights being cancelled. In addition to this, the teams at Network Rail Scotland had to clear over 120 trees from the tracks, which delayed efforts to re-open train lines. Transportation in Northern Ireland was also badly affected, with 1,800 incidents of fallen trees and other debris blocking roads, making response efforts more difficult. Although Éowyn was not predicted to hit England and Wales as badly as Scotland and Northern Ireland, it still caused major disruptions in some areas. The Met Office issued an amber wind warning for North Wales and England with a yellow wind warning covering the rest of

the UK. Across Wales, fifty schools were closed, including thirty-three in Anglesey, to encourage people inside. Aside from this, the biggest impact of the storm across England and Wales was disruptions to the electricity network. The wind gusts, which were reported to be as high as 93mph, disrupted up to 40,000 supplies across North and Mid Wales as well as Cheshire and Merseyside.

By the next evening at least five-hundred properties were still without power. While electricians addressed these issues, Electricity North West set up “warm hubs”—community spaces which offered free hot food and warm spaces for those badly affected. In the aftermath of Éowyn, the Met Office has issued further yellow weather alerts for wind and rain in parts of Wales and England with exposed hilly areas particularly vulnerable to high winds. This warning predicts high rainfall, which could lead to flooding in Wales and South East England, as the countries' recovery from Storm Eowyn unfortunately collides with the remnants of the Spanish storm Herminia.

St Dwynwen's Day: The Welsh Day of Lovers

Dilichi Dieobi
Head of News

We are all familiar with the 14th of February, Valentine's Day—however, we hardly ever pay attention to the 25th of January, St Dwynwen's Day (or Dydd Santes Dwynwen), also known as the Welsh Valentine's Day. Unlike St Valentine, St Dwynwen is a female saint and is the Welsh patron saint of lovers. Her story dates back to the fifth century, and ironically she did not experience such a fairytale-esque romantic life.

Dwynwen was one of the thirty-six daughters of the Irish king, Brychan, apparently the most beautiful. She fell in love with Maelon Dyfodru from North Wales; however, her father was not a fan of the northern Welsh lad his daughter had fallen for, and therefore would not allow the marriage to go forward. Instead, he had arranged for her to marry someone else. Infuriated by this, Maelon threatened to rape Dwynwen, so she prayed that he would be turned to ice, freezing his passion. In her sleep an angel

then granted her three wishes and gave her a sweet potion designed to erase all memory of Maelon. Dwynwen then wished to be free of Maelon, to never marry, and to help lovers in pain. After all of this palaver, she settled down, founding a convent in Anglesey, Lladwyn Church. According to folklore, a sacred fish and eels swam by the church, predicting the future of relationships with their movements.

So who still celebrates St Dwynwen's day? Many people, actually. If you look online at #SaintDwynwensDay, there are many posts. The celebration has increased in popularity recently, with more shops selling St Dwynwen's day cards and memorabilia. As per tradition, love spoons are also exchanged between Welsh lovers and have been since the seventeenth century. People also continue to celebrate the religious aspect of the day and visit the remains of Lladwyn church on pilgrimages to pay their respects to St Dwynwen. So why wait an extra three weeks to express your romantic feelings when you can say “dwi'n dy garu di” on the 25th of January?



NEWS FROM AROUND THE UK



GLASGOW

UWS targeted by Russian cyber gang amid time of financial scarcity for Scottish universities.

NEWCASTLE

Number of Newcastle University staff earning over £100k almost triples despite £30 million cuts.

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham University professor sentenced for making over 1,500 indecent images of children.

CARDIFF

Cardiff University’s former vice-chancellor spends £26,000 on overseas trips in five months.

LONDON

King’s College London accused of holding “race-segregated” NHS-funded classes.

Student Sexually Assaulted in Students’ Union Bar

Eve Yates
Contributor

Amit Patel has been convicted for sexually assaulting a fellow student while working in the Students’ Union bar. While working a shift last summer, Patel assaulted a woman by reaching under her skirt and groping her underwear. The 26-year-old was working his first shift at the bar, and he denies the sexual assault and any physical contact with the victim. However, he has since been found guilty at Cardiff Magistrates Court, with Judge Gareth Williams stating that his claims were “implausible” and rejected due to CCTV footage and the victim’s credible account. The defendant grew up in India and moved to Cardiff in 2023 to complete his Master’s degree.

He has since graduated from the school of data science and analytics at Cardiff University. During his first shift at the Students’ Union bar, Patel stated he was restocking the bar and had not been drinking when the assault occurred. He stated “my shift had ended and I wanted to go home,

so I left the storeroom and walked through the main room”. According to *Wales Online*, Patel was asked in court if there was any physical contact when he passed the woman; he replied: “No. I don’t think so. I don’t remember.” He then added “there was no contact”. When asked if he was certain, he replied “Yes”, and claimed he did not see the victim as they passed each other.

He added that after he passed the woman, she grabbed his shoulders from behind, which he claimed was confusing. Patel was examined by the prosecution who asked: “It was a crowded room, wasn’t it? So, to make your way around, you would have to look where you were going. Why didn’t you see her?” He replied: “In my thought, I wanted to go home.” The prosecutor accused Patel of placing his hand under the victim’s skirt and putting two fingers to her underwear.

The prosecutor stated: “I’m going to put it to you that you were walking out of a bar, you saw a pretty girl in a short skirt, and something went through your mind. You decide to touch her vagina. You took an opportunity as you thought

you could get away with it because it was dark and there was loud music.” It was stated that the defendant’s fingers “ran up”, to which Patel replied: “No, I didn’t do anything. My only thought was to go home.”

Following the assault, the victim immediately confronted Patel before police arrived at the scene and arrested him. Despite Mr Chudleigh (defending) stating that alcohol being in the victim’s system may have impacted her recollection of events, Judge Williams rejected this, stating that the evidence the victim had provided previously had been “credible and truthful”. It was stated that she “recalled the events with clarity and was not hazed by alcohol”. CCTV in the venue did not clearly show the assault; however, Judge Williams stated that there was enough room for Patel to pass the victim without going so close to her. Patel failed to give an explanation as to why the victim immediately turned

around with anger after he passed her.

After Patel’s failure to provide a statement to the police following the event, due to there being no Hindi interpreter, the judge stated “I accept English is not your first language, but you have answered questions today in English and it appears you have followed the trial with relative ease”. The victim described the deliberate movement of Patel’s finger over her genital area, stating the touching was not accidental. The upward movement was indicative of a deliberate action,



meaning the assault did not happen by accident. Patel showed no emotion when he was found guilty of sexual assault.



Dyled, Toriadau a Phrotestiadau: Prifysgol Caerdydd o dan Fygythiad

Hanna Morgans
Golygydd Taf-od



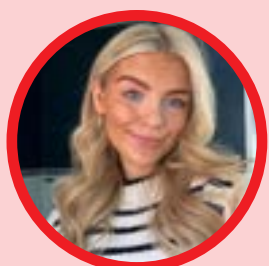
Hannah Williams



Charlie Thomas



Ffion Wyn Jones



Elen Williams



Hanna Morgans

Mae Prifysgol Caerdydd wedi cadarnhau cynlluniau i waredu 400 o swyddi - sy'n 7% o'r gweithle, tra bod cynnydd mewn costau a gostyngiad mewn cyllid.

Cynigir cau cyrsiau gan gynnwys nyrsio, ieithoedd modern, cerddoriaeth, hanes hynafol, cyfieithu, crefydd a diwinyddiaeth ac yn sgîl hyn bydd ymgynghoriad o 90 diwrnod.

Mae Ysgol y Gymraeg hefyd o dan fygythiad o gael ei huno ag adranau eraill.

Cefndir ariannol y Brifysgol

Ar hyn o bryd mae Prifysgol Caerdydd mewn dyled o £31.2 miliwn.

Yn ystod flwyddyn academiaidd hon (24/25), cafodd cyllid o Lywodraeth Cymru ei dorri gan £3.6 miliwn - sy'n ostyngiad o 5.2%.

Prif ffynhonnell incwm Prifysgol Caerdydd yw ffioedd dysgu, sy'n dod i £328.3 miliwn - mwy na hanner ei hincwm ar gyfer 2023/24. Fodd bynnag, mae nifer y myfyrwyr rhyngwladol, sy'n talu ffioedd uwch, wedi gostwng

yn sylweddol.

Er hyn, gwariodd y brifysgol £680 miliwn y llynedd—£31 miliwn yn fwy nag yn y flwyddyn flaenorol. Mae'r cynnydd hwn yn benaf yn sgîl costau staffio uwch a gwariant eiddo, wedi'u hysgogi gan chwyddiant ac ymchwydd mewn prisiau cyfleusterau.

Dywedodd y Brifysgol petaen nhw ddim yn ystyried gwneud y toriadau yma, ni fydd arian ganddynt ar ôl.

Yn ôl Dr Andy Williams, cynrychiolydd Caerdydd UCU (Undeb Prifysgolion a Cholegau) a darlithydd yn JOMEC:

"Mae pawb mewn sioc o ran maint y toriadau hyn. Bydd y toriadau yma'n niweidio'r brifysgol, y ddinas, a Chymru yn ogystal â'n haelodau."

"Dyma fydd dechrau'r diwedd i'r Cymry rhyngwladol"

Yn ôl Fflur James, myfyrwraig yn ei hail flwyddyn yn astudio Cymraeg a Ffrangeg mae wedi'i siomi o glywed cynlluniau'r toriadau.

"Daw'r newyddion yma'n sioc fawr i ni fel myfyrwyr Cymraeg, a hefyd fel myfyrwyr yr adran Ieithoedd modern. Mae dysgu Ieithoedd Mod-

ern yma yng Nghymru mor hanfodol os ydyn ni am barhau i weld Cymru'n ffynnu ar y llwyfan rhyngwladol."

"Ond am wn i, dyma fydd dechrau'r diwedd i'r Cymry rhyngwladol yn fy marn i."

"Mae meddwl am fy athrawon presennol yn gorfod mynd drwy'r fath brofiad erchyll yn torri fy nghalon, gan gofio pa mor gefnogol a gweithgar mae bob un ohonyn nhw wedi bod i'w holl fyfyrwyr ar hyd y blynyddoedd."

Arian wrth gefn gan y Brifysgol

Mae gan y sefydliad £506 miliwn mewn cronfeydd wrth gefn sy'n anghyfyngedig, sydd wedi cynyddu mwy na 50% mewn blwyddyn, yn ôl ffigyrau Newyddion S4C. Dywedodd darlithwyr undeb UCU y dylai ychydig o'r arian yma gael ei ddefnyddio i leihau toriadau.

Ond ymate-
Brifysgol i
dweud nad
oedd
y

cronfeydd wrth gefn yn arian parod y gellid ei ddefnyddio'n rhydd a bod costau addysgu ac ymchwil £31.2 miliwn yn fwy nag incwm ym mlywyddyn academiaidd 2023-24.

Cyhoeddodd Prifysgol Durham eu bod nhw hefyd yn bwriadu torri tua 200 o staff ddydd Mawrth diwethaf (21ain) i leihau costau gan £10 miliwn. Yn ogystal mae'r Prifysgolion Aberystwyth, Glasgow, Aberdeen, a Queen's Belfast hefyd yn ystyried gwneud toriadau.

Protestiadau a Deisebau

Disgwylir i brotestiadau gan staff a myfyrwyr ddigwydd o fewn yr wythnosau nesaf. Mae myfyrwyr wedi mynd ati i greu deisebau i achub cyrsiau a derbyn degau ar filoedd o lofnodion yn dangos eu cefnogaeth. Mae'r deisebau yma ar y grŵp Facebook Overheard at Cardiff University.

Ond ymate-
Brifysgol i
dweud nad
oedd
y

bodd y
hyn yn

Dynodi 5 mlynedd ers gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd

Ifan Meredith
Golygydd Taf-od

Mae'n bum mlynedd ers i'r Deyrnas Unedig adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd ac ar y 31ain o Ionawr, cynhaliwyd digwyddiad gan sefydliad 'Cymru dros Ewrop' yn adeilad Undeb y Myfyrwyr, Prifysgol Caerdydd a oedd yn edrych ar gyflwr Cymru pum mlynedd ymlaen.

Roedd siaradwyr y digwyddiad yn cynnwys y Prif Weinidog, Eluned Morgan, Richard Wyn Jones o Ganolfan Llywodraethiant Cymru ynghyd â sgwrs banel gan wleidyddion.

Yn ystod y sesiynau amrywiol, trafodwyd ystod o bynciau gan gyn-

nwys ystadegau gan Ganolfan Llywodraethiant Cymru ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd a'r cyfleoedd mae pobl ifanc wedi eu colli yn sgîl Brexit.

Un o'r pryderon oedd anallu pobl ifanc i deithio o dan gynllun 'Erasmus' a mewn ymateb mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi cyflwyno cynllun 'Taith' i roi cymorth ariannol i bobl ifanc i deithio.

Cynrychiolydd Plaid Cymru ar y panel trafod oedd yn cloi'r digwyddiad sef yr AS Adam Price. Wrth siarad â Gair Rhydd, dywedodd fod "barn gyhoeddus yn gallu newid a dyma yw hanfod democratiaeth."

"ma Plaid Cymru o blaid Cymru yn Ewrop ac i ni eisiau cyrraedd nôl yn rhan o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd cyn gynt-

ed ag sy'n bosib... y llwybr hoffon i weld ydy i Gymru ddychwelyd [i'r Undeb Ewropeaidd] fel gwlad annibynnol."

"heb fod ein pobl ifanc ni'n ffynnu, does na ddim dyfodol i Gymru gyfan"

"dwi'n credu fod y genhedlaeth iau yn cael y ddêl waethaf ar hyn o bryd... mae angen dwi'n credu gweithredu ar egwyddogion dyn ni fel gwlad wedi gosod mewn statud gyda Deddf Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol. Ar hyn o bryd, fi'n credu dyn ni'n bradychu dyfodol ein pobl ifanc ni" meddai.

Trwy gydol y digwyddiad roedd 'na bryder clir am dwf yr adain dde gydag aml-

ygrwydd yr AFD yn yr Almaen, Marine Le Penn a'r Front National yn Ffrainc a Reform UK yn y Deyrnas Unedig.

"fi'n credu y ffordd gorau i ymateb i dwf yr adain dde eithafol yw i gynnig rhaglen gobeithiol sydd yn ailennill ffydd ac ymddiriedaeth pobol mewn gwleidyddiaeth."

Ychwanegodd mai'r "hyn sydd gyda ni sydd yn wahanol i'r adain dde, dyn ni yn cynnig gwelediaeth gobeithiol. Dych chi ddim yn cal hwna gyda'r adain dde sydd, at ei gilydd, yn taflu sen at bobl eraill sy'n apelio ar sail agweddau negyddol"



Torri tir newydd ar S4C: Amour a Mynydd

Fflur James
Golygydd Taf-od

Am chwip o gyfres! Mae hi wedi bod mor braf gweld S4C yn camu ar drywydd mwy mentrus yn ddiweddar, gyda chyfresi newydd yn hawlio sgysiau rhwng ffrindiau ac mewn sgysiau swyddfeydd gyda'r boreau, ac am wn i, dyma ddangos llwyddiant cyfres newydd, fel Amour a Mynydd.

Mae rhai wedi bedyddio'r gyfres hon fel y 'Love Island' Cymraeg, ond efallai bod ychydig mwy o swmp i'r gyfres hon, buaswn i'n dadlau! Wedi'i leoli yn yr Alpau Ffrengig gydag Elin Fflur yn cyflwyno, does fawr o syndod fod y gyfres hon wedi apelio at Gymry ym mhob man. Yn y gyfres-pedair-pennod hon, fe ddaeth 8 o Gymry at ei gilydd, o bob cwr o'r wlad, i fyw gyda'i gilydd mewn cha-



let yn yr Alpau, gyda'r nod o gwrdd â chariad. Yna, hanner ffordd drwy'r cyfnod, fe ddaeth tro ar fyd, a daeth dau arall i ymuno â nhw i gynhyrfu'r dyfroedd.

Bu'r castio'n llwyddiant ysgubol yn fy marn i, gyda chynrychiolaeth o acenion ac ardalloedd amrywiol yn cael eu dangos ar S4C, a braf oedd hynny. Roedd hi'n hyfryd gweld pobl efallai na fydden nhw wedi dod ar draws ei gilydd o'r blaen, wedi'u huno mewn chalet, ac yn gorfod sgwrsio ac yn gorfod canfod tir cyffredin mewn byr amser.

Mae'r Alpau, sy'n gefnlen i'r cyfan, yn ychwanegu'n fawr at y gyfres hefyd am fod y lleoliad yn creu darluniau hyfryd trwy'r holl benodau. Roedd hi'n braf hefyd gweld yr holl gast yn datblygu wrth i'r gyfres fynd rh-

agddi ac yn ennyn hyder mewn sefyllfaoedd eithaf bregus. Yma y gwelwn yr elfen o wir realaeth yn fy marn i, pobl go iawn yn dangos sefyllfaoedd go iawn. Lot mwy 'real' na theledu realaeth Saesneg am wn i.

Mae'r naws y mae'r gyfres hon wedi ceisio'i chyflawni wir yn effeithiol; o'r deunydd hyrwyddo, y ffontiau Ffrengig sy'n cael eu defnyddio, y gerddoriaeth Ffrangeg a'r elfen o realaeth wir wedi taro deuddeg gen i ac mae'r holl elfennau hynny yn ychwanegu at gyfres gyflawn.

Rhaid sôn hefyd am y 'vodcasts' sydd wedi bod yn dilyn pob pennod er mwyn trin a thrafod holl ddeunydd y penodau-elfen newydd a bywiog i gyfresi S4C. Mae'r elfen hon wedi ychwanegu at y modd y mae'r gyfres yn anelu at y gynulleidfa a'u tynnu nhw i mewn yn y drafodaeth wedi pob pennod.

Mae'n rhaid canmol beiddgarwch a chreadigrwydd S4C am gomisiynu'r gyfres gyffrous hon. Mae'r syniad hwn wedi cydio yng nghynulleidfaoedd ar draws Cymru, a mawr obeithiaf y bydd cyfres arall, a sawl cyfres arall wedi hynny hefyd!

Diweddu Rhaglenni Cymraeg Capital yn “tanseilio'r ymdrech i gyrraedd miliwn o siaradwyr”

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-od

Dechrau'r flwyddyn cyhoeddodd Global Radio y byddai newidiadau sylweddol i'w gwasanaethau radio. Ymhlith y rhain oedd y penderfyniad i derfynu rhaglenni Cymraeg Capital Cymru ar y 24ain o Chwefror, a'u disodli gyda rhaglenni Saesneg.

Daw'r cyhoeddiad mewn cyfnod ble mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn anelu at greu miliwn o siaradwyr Cymraeg erbyn 2050. Yn sgîl hyn, mae'r Aelod Seneddol Plaid Cymru, Llyr Gruffydd, wedi mynegi ei bryderon y gallai'r newid hwn “danseilio'r ymdrech i gyrraedd miliwn ossiaradwyr”.

Mae'r newidiadau yn rhan o strategaeth

newydd Global i gynig gwasanaethau cenedlaethol yn hytrach na lleol. Yn sgîl hyn, fe fydd rhaglenni lleol a rhanbarthol Heart, Smooth a Capital yn dod i ben yn Lloegr.

Y bwriad yng Nghymru yw cyfuno rhaglenni'r go-gledd a'r de i ddarlledu un rhaglen genedlaethol drwy gydol y wlad. Yn rhan o'r strategaeth, bydd stiwdio newydd yn cael ei blygu yng

Nghaerdydd i ddisodli'r swyddfeydd sydd eisoes yn bodoli yng Nghaerdydd a Wrecsam.

Caniateir y newidiadau yn sgîl cyflwyno'r Ddeddf Cyfryngau newydd y llynedd. Ond yn ôl Mr Gruffydd, yn ystod trafodaethau ynglŷn â phasio'r bil, awgrymodd Pwyllgor Diwylliant y Senedd i Lywodraeth y DU y dylai OFCOM fod â'r pŵer i sicrhau bod darlledwyr masnachol yn cynnig darpariaeth Gymraeg. Cyhuddodd Mr Gruffydd Lywodraeth y DU o fethu'n llwyr i wneud hyn ac fe wnaeth ddatgan ei bod hi'n ddiwrnod tywyll i ddarlledu Cymraeg. Y

mae'n galw am ddatganoli darlledu i Gymru, gan bwysleisio, “Rydym angen i benderfyniadau am Gymru gael eu gwneud yng Nghymru”.

Mae aelodau Cymdeithas yr Iaith hefyd yn galw am bwerau datganoledig o ganlyniad i'r bygythiad i'r Gymraeg. Mewn ymateb i gyhoeddiad Global, rhyddhaodd y mudiad ddatganiad ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol yn dweud, “Mae'r bwriad i gael gwared ar raglenni Cymraeg Capital yn dangos nad oes diddordeb gan gwmnïau, gwleidyddion San Steffan nac Ofcom yn y Gymraeg a'n cymunedau”.

“Mae angen i Lywodraeth Cymru symud ymlaen â'r cynlluniau i greu Corff Cynghori ar Ddarlledu a Chyfathrebu i Gymru er mwyn i ni wneud penderfyniadau dros ein cyfryngau ein hunain”.

Tarddiad ein Traddodiad: Santes Dwynwen

Charlie Thomas
Golygydd Taf-od

Croeso nôl i Tarddiad ein Traddodiad! Gyda dechrau'r flwyddyn yn barod wedi bod, a'r gwyliau Nadolig wedi dod i ben, mae'n teimlo'n iawn i drafod un chwedl yn benodol. Gyda Dydd Santes Dwynwen ar y 25 o Ionawr, mae'n teimlo'n gywir i ddarganfod hanes y dydd llawn cariad a thrafod ei phwysigrwydd i'r rhai sy'n ei dathlu yma yng Nghymru.

Mae'r stori am Santes Dwynwen wedi cael ei haddasu a newid llawer dros y blynyddoedd, ond yn ôl yr hanes wreiddiol credir ei bod hi'n ferch i Brychan Brycheiniog, brenin o Ganolbarth Cymru yn y 5ed Ganrif. Mae llawer o ansicrwydd ynglŷn â phwy oedd ei mam, gyda Rigrawst (a oedd yn wyres i Ymerawdwr Rhufeinig), fwyaf tebygol, gyda Santes Dwynwen ei hun yn byw yn Ynys Môn. Dros y blynyddoedd, mae chwedl Santes Dwynwen wedi datblygu i'r stori rydyn yn gyfarwydd â hi heddiw.

Yn y chwedl fel rydym ni'n ei hadnabod mae Maelon Dafodrill yn cwympo mewn cariad gyda Dwynwen, ond roedd rhaid iddi hi ei wrthod er ei bod yn ei garu, oherwydd roedd ei thad wedi addo y byddai'n priodi rhywun arall. Gyda'i chalon yn torri, fe wnaeth Dwynwen weddio i Dduw er mwyn cwympo allan o gariad gyda Maelon, ac o ganlyniad daeth angel i droi Maelon yn iâ. Rhoddodd Duw dair dymuniad i Dwynwen. Dewisodd i ddadmer Maelon, byth priodi, a bod Duw, trwy Dwynwen, yn gwylio dros y cariadon. Oherwydd hyn, ac er mwyn dweud diolch, symudodd Dwynwen i Ynys Llanddwyn er mwyn dod yn lleian tan ei marwolaeth yn tua 460 AD.

Ond ceir rhai fersiynau hŷn o'r chwedl sy'n dweud bod dehongliad Dwynwen o gariad wedi'i ddinistrio o ganlyniad i'w thad yn ei gorfodi i briodi tywysog a hefyd oherwydd bod Maelon Dafodrill wedi gorfodi ei hun arni. O ganlyniad, gofynodd Dwynwen am ddiogelwch o gamdriniaeth, i ryddhau ei hun o'r bridoas ac i bawb sydd mewn cariad fod yn hapus - sydd yn wahanol iawn i'r chwedl heddiw.

Er bod hyn ychydig yn wahanol i'r chwedl am gariad rydym ni'n gyfarwydd gyda hi, mae'r ddau fersiwn yn cynnwys negeseuon pwysig am gariad yma yng Nghymru, ac yn rhoi cyfle i ni fel cenedl i ddangos cariad tuag at ein gilydd yn y ffyrdd cywir!



THE TEAM



Ella Lane



Aneurin Davies



James Roberts



Emily Clegg



Adrian Miesik



Miriam Southall



OPINION



The TikTok Ban

Aneurin Davies
Opinion Editor

The TikTok ban in the USA has seemingly loomed over users of the app for months now. It had been enough time for a cycle of uproar and quiet to come and go, before returning to uproar once again at the beginning of January. On the 18th, users in America opened the app to a blank screen with text stating: “TikTok isn’t available right now!” Yet, a day later, service was resumed and users flooded back to the app and everything was back to normal. So, why did this happen? Who gained anything from this? What was the point? To put it simply, the answer to all of those questions is President Donald J Trump. (It’ll make sense, bear with me!) Trump is the man who originally proposed the ban all the way back in

2020, fearing TikTok’s parent company ByteDance had political ties with the Chinese Communist Party.

In August of 2020, Trump signed an executive order forcing ByteDance to sell TikTok to an American company, though this was reversed a year later by President Joe Biden’s administration. This decision was then again reversed in 2024 when a bill forcing ByteDance to sell TikTok was approved by Congress and signed into law by Biden. The reason for the more recent concerns were pro-Palestinian bias and alleged security concerns regarding ByteDance. And then the ban was reversed within a day, every American cheered “thank you, Donald Trump” in the streets, no ulterior motive was unveiled, and the world went on merrily.

Obviously, this didn’t happen. Many theories for why Trump would first

propose and then revoke the ban have surfaced. Trump changing his mind over the five years since he initially proposed the ban has never been a theory worth considering—the president simply wouldn’t switch up so quickly without a reason. In my opinion, the most believable idea is that Trump wished to be viewed as a saviour by Gen Z TikTok users in order to increase his polling numbers. A flood of people thanking Trump appeared online, with many forgetting that he was the cause of the ban in the first place. You can absolutely argue that his ploy worked out in the end, as he gained supporters and lost nothing with the ban.

At the end of the day, the TikTok ban has always been a political ploy, no matter how you look at it. Banning a social media website because of

pure scepticism and alleged political ties is not reason enough. With no evidence ever having surfaced to provide an understandable justification for the

decision, it’s clear that the ban was, and always will have been, a sham.



“MAYBE THE CURTAINS WERE JUST BLUE”: A CRITICAL THINKING CRISIS

Samira Abbey
Contributor

No secondary school English lesson on analysis was complete without someone declaring: “Maybe the curtains were just blue.”

What began as a light-hearted pushback against over-analysis gradually became a broader preference for surface-level discussions over critical analysis. This early dismissal of deeper meaning, combined with an education system increasingly skewed towards STEM subjects, has contributed to the broader devaluation of theoretical and humanities-based disciplines. Until 2015–16, more than half of all A-level students consistently took at least one humanities subject, but by 2021–22, that number had dropped to just 38%. As fewer students take analysis-driven subjects, they miss the opportunity to develop essential critical thinking and interpretation skills—leaving them ill-equipped to navigate complex information, weakening political discourse and media literacy.

But what does an anti-intellectual crisis even mean, and what fuels it? At its core, anti-intellectualism is a deep distrust and hostility toward experts and intellectuals. In its most extreme form, it has historically been a tool of totalitarian regimes—leaders like Hitler, Stalin, and Franco weaponised anti-intellectual sentiment to suppress dissent, imprisoned scholars, and eliminated those who challenged their authority. While modern democratic societies may not resort to such brutal measures, the consequences of anti-intellectualism are still profound. A key irony of this crisis is that while the humanities are often dismissed in favour of science and technology, anti-intellectualism also fosters a rejection of science. This is evident in movements like vaccine hesitancy and climate change denial, where misinformation thrives because people cannot critically evaluate sources or differentiate between legitimate expertise and conspiracy theories. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed this trend, as scepticism in scientists and public health officials—fueled by widespread misinformation—led to resistance against vaccines and safety measures.

In recent years, the rejection of expertise has become increasingly mainstream, particularly in politics. Figures like Donald Trump have weaponised misinformation, not only normalising scepticism toward science and academia, but

also elevating conspiracy theories into legitimate political viewpoints. Anti-intellectualism is no longer a fringe issue; it actively shapes public opinion, policy, and democracy. One of the most alarming consequences of this trend is the rise of political and media illiteracy. Nowhere is this more evident than in the United States, where the media landscape has allowed nativist, racist, and blatantly false narratives to flourish. During his 2016 campaign, Trump dismissed expertise outright, famously declaring: “The experts are terrible.” More recently, in the current election cycle, he made the entirely baseless claim that immigrants from Haiti were eating Americans’ domestic pets. While a critically literate public would recognise this as political fear-mongering, some of his supporters accepted his words at face value. The repercussions were immediate: within weeks, his statement fueled a wave of bomb threats. This growing disdain for expertise has transformed misinformation from a political tool into a powerful weapon, eroding truth, inflaming division, and threatening the very foundations of democracy.

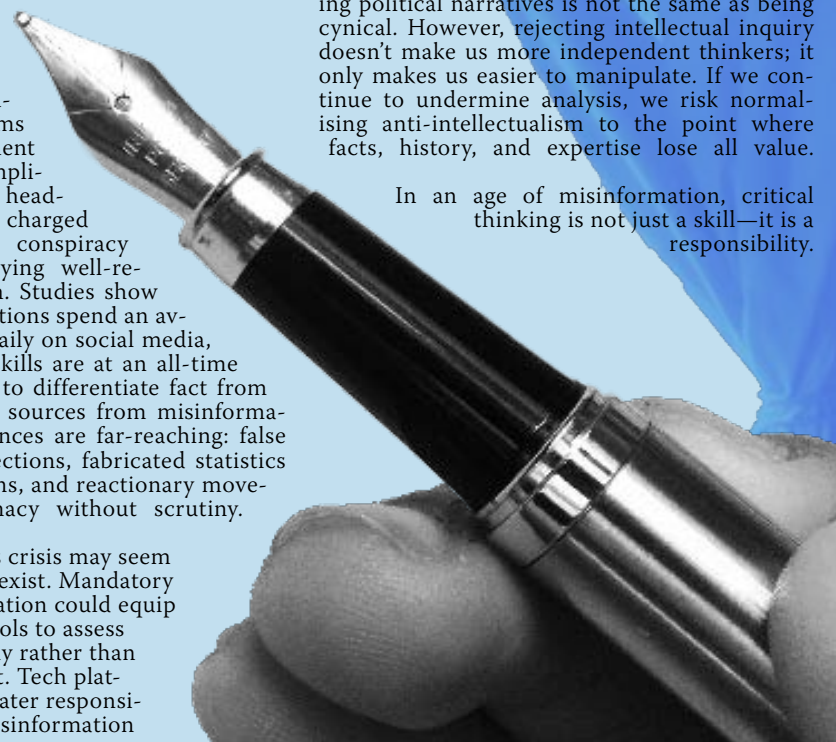
The rise of social media has accelerated anti-intellectualism, reshaping how people consume information. Algorithms prioritise engagement over accuracy, amplifying misleading headlines, emotionally charged content, and viral conspiracy theories while burying well-researched journalism. Studies show that younger generations spend an average of 4.8 hours daily on social media, yet media literacy skills are at an all-time low. Many struggle to differentiate fact from opinion or credible sources from misinformation. The consequences are far-reaching: false claims influence elections, fabricated statistics drive policy decisions, and reactionary movements gain legitimacy without scrutiny.

While reversing this crisis may seem daunting, solutions exist. Mandatory media literacy education could equip students with the tools to assess information critically rather than passively consume it. Tech platforms must take greater responsibility for curbing misinformation

through stronger fact-checking measures and algorithmic transparency. Finally, a broader cultural shift is needed—one that values intellectual curiosity over instant outrage, rewards analytical thinking over reactionary discourse and encourages engagement beyond ideological bubbles. Without these changes, we risk losing our ability to participate in democracy meaningfully—replaced by a society governed by misinformation, manipulated narratives, and surface level thinking.

“Maybe the curtains were just blue” has long been used to dismiss deeper analysis, but its implications extend far beyond literature. The rejection of nuance in media, politics, and public discourse has allowed misinformation to thrive and critical thinking to erode. Humanities subjects train us to question narratives, recognise manipulation, and engage with complexity. Yet, as they are increasingly devalued in favour of so-called “practical” fields, society becomes less equipped to navigate a world of misinformation and political spin. Engaging critically with information does not mean we cannot enjoy it or appreciate simplicity—just as questioning political narratives is not the same as being cynical. However, rejecting intellectual inquiry doesn’t make us more independent thinkers; it only makes us easier to manipulate. If we continue to undermine analysis, we risk normalising anti-intellectualism to the point where facts, history, and expertise lose all value.

In an age of misinformation, critical thinking is not just a skill—it is a responsibility.



Agree to Disagree: Does Our Generation Rely on Past Music?

Disagree:

Khate De Castillo
Contributor

Music today is often seen as deeply connected to the sounds of previous generations, with many artists borrowing or directly referencing older styles and genres. While it's true that past music influences modern sounds, reducing contemporary musicians today to mere imitators of what has come before them overlooks their talent and creativity. Instead, today's artists use historical influences as a springboard for innovation, blending them with new technologies, global styles, and fresh perspectives. Rather than relying solely on nostalgia, modern music evolves in response to cultural, political, and social realities, continuously pushing the boundaries of what music can be.

One artist who exemplifies this innovation is Fred Again. A record producer, singer, songwriter, and DJ who has emerged as a leading force in electronic music. His trilogy of albums titled *Actual Life* showcases his unique approach to production, incorporating samples of everyday sounds—fragments of conversations, voicemail messages, and even viral clips. This technique adds a layer of authenticity that sets his music apart from the often sterile and overly polished digital productions of today. Many assume that sampling is nothing more than repackaging old material, but in Fred Again's case, it is a tool for reinvention rather than imitation. His work transforms familiar sounds into something entirely new, recontextualising moments of the past with a modern sonic landscape.

For example, his track "Marea (We've Lost Dancing)" captures the emotions of isolation and longing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The song samples a monologue by The Blessed Madonna, who reflects the absence of communal dance spaces. Fred Again doesn't just reuse this sample; he

reshapes it into a poignant electronic anthem, turning nostalgia into an optimistic expression of resilience and connection. This approach demonstrates that referencing the past isn't about dependence but about using history to create something emotionally and culturally relevant today.

Speaking of electronic music, technological advancements have revolutionised music creation in ways that previous generations never had access to. The rise of digital production, AI-powered tools, and social media-driven music discovery has expanded creative possibilities beyond anything imagined before. Now, independent artists can produce, distribute, and promote their music without the need for traditional record labels, fostering a more fragmented and experimental music scene.

Genres like hyperpop, spearheaded by artists such as 100 gecs, SOPHIE, and Charli XCX, illustrate how technology has reshaped music. Their sound distorts and warps conventional pop music, resulting in a futuristic and chaotic listening experience. These artists manipulate vocal effects, experiment with glitchy production, and layer unexpected sounds, proving that today's musicians are not simply looking backward but are actively forging new, uncharted territories.

With advancements in technology and the emergence of diverse genres, we can trace the joyful evolution of music. Artists like Fred Again do not simply recycle the past; they innovate, crafting soundscapes that reflect modern emotions and experiences. Music today is not about imitation but reinvention, proving that contemporary musicians are not just artists but architects of sound, shaping the future while acknowledging the past.



Agree:

Emily Stevens
Contributor

Does that song sound familiar? Well, it's probably because you've heard it all before!

Are we becoming so reliant on paths paved by previous generations that we have forgotten that we can make our own way? With artists as prominent as Adele facing plagiarism accusations from Brazil and her song "Million Years Ago" getting banned from most platforms, it can't help but feel like our generation's musical voice is lacking authenticity. Plagiarism isn't the only culprit responsible for the soundtrack of the 2020s feeling like a poorly manufactured echo of nostalgia, especially when the rise in unimaginative sampling has swarmed the music industry. When Central Cee samples the main riff from Eve and Gwen Stefani's "Let me Blow Ya Mind" (2001) in "Doja" (2022), it feels closer to laziness rather than innovation.

The reliance on a previous generation's experience means we lose our own unique voice.

This isn't to say that original work is void, but in 2023, the BBC reported that "One in four Top 40 songs sampled an older track". When a quarter of songs that are dominating charts contain samples, it is hard to find a reason to say that we are not overly reliant on the past. However, this isn't without reason. With COVID-19 bringing the world to a halt, many of us were thrown into nostalgia, with no way of artists recording or performing. Arguably setting the tone for the rest of the decade, we emerged into somewhat normality, and cinema turned towards biopics of musicians. In this decade alone, over ten musical biopics have been announced or are already out, including musicians such as The Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan.

The comfort found in what we already know means that we revisit what is already there, losing desire to create something original or recycling sounds that are already loved. After the release of *A Complete Unknown*, Bob Dylan's streams increased by over 18 million, exemplifying the revival of pre-existing songs. With music being passed down like old stories, and reiterated through sampling and plagiarism, the reliance our generation has on the past is clear.

Should Emilia Pérez Be Nominated For Thirteen Oscars?

Carolina Ribo Ramirez
Contributor

Emilia Pérez, an original French musical crime film, streaming on Netflix, is the first ever non-English language film to be nominated thirteen times at the Oscars, being nominated as many times as the renowned films *Forrest Gump*, *Mary Poppins*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. However, is Emilia Pérez worthy of joining such an esteemed list? The majority of the public think not, thanks to an awkward musical clip of the film that surfaced on TikTok, where Rita Mora Castro (Zoe Saldña) consults with a doctor about transitioning, singing the words "men to women, women to men" in the most cacophonous tone.

Many commented that it is "awful" and reminds people of an "SNL skit" and while I can only see Emilia Pérez working as a musical as this genre allows the film to encapsulate such a dramatic tone, one which would not be possible if it were another genre. Parts of the musical composition are terrible, especially when we compare it to other nominees this year, such as *Wicked*. Not to mention the use of

AI to improve Karla Sofía Gascón's singing...

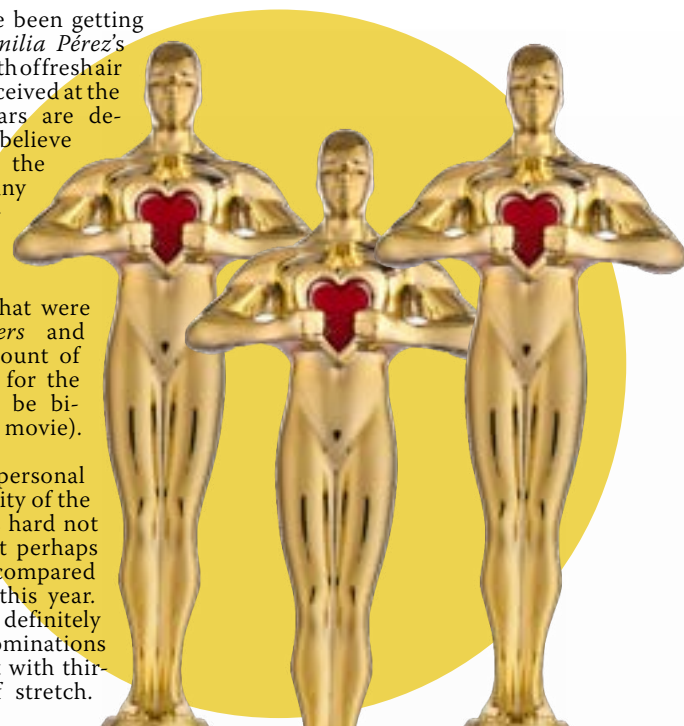
Personally, I think the music is the weakest aspect for which Emilia Pérez has received an Oscar nomination, despite two songs being nominated for the Music (Original Song) category. The last time that two songs were nominated was in 2017 for *La La Land*'s songs "City of Stars" (which won) and "Audition"—which most people deemed praiseworthy. But the majority are not as accommodating when it comes to Emilia Pérez's music, but perhaps the year of 2024 just did not produce the best original music.

Despite my negative views on the music, I can see why Emilia Pérez has been so critically acclaimed. Firstly, all the actors do a spectacular job, especially Zoe Saldña whose emotive performance could win her an Oscar within the first ten minutes of the film. The film is an original story which explores many issues, such as the thousands of people disappearing weekly in Mexico, the corrupt justice system, and gender dysphoria, in a way I haven't seen done before.

The directing is decent and so is the screenplay (if we ignore the music). Compared to most

of the crappy remakes we have been getting over the past couple years, Emilia Pérez's imaginative concept is like a breath of fresh air and the critical acclaim it has received at the Golden Globes and the Oscars are deserving. Nonetheless, I do believe that thirteen nominations at the Oscars for a film with so many scenes in need of vast improvement is far too many. Especially regarding the music, as this year had many films with incredible sound/music that were snubbed, such as *Challengers* and *Maria*. To be at the same amount of nominations as *Forrest Gump* for the Oscars is absurd (but I may be biased as I absolutely love that movie).

The music may just not be my personal preference, but when the majority of the public have a similar view, it is hard not to come to the conclusion that perhaps the music is just inadequate compared to other films that came out this year. That being said, Emilia Pérez definitely earned the majority of the nominations it has received, but awarding it with thirteen does seem like a bit of stretch.



Are Video Games Leaning Towards Gacha Systems?

Sophia Moulder
Contributor

What Are Gacha Games? In the modern gaming industry, the term “Gacha” has become increasingly prevalent. From the rise of *Genshin Impact*, notorious for its unforgiving Gacha mechanics, to debates over whether *League of Legends* can be classified as a Gacha game, the concept has embedded itself in gaming discourse. The word “Gacha” originates from the Japanese term *gachapon*, referring to vending machines that dispense small capsule toys at random. Players insert money without knowing which toy they will receive, making it a form of gambling. While Gacha games are often marketed as free to play, their core mechanics revolve around spending in-game currency to participate in Gacha draws—usually for rare characters, weapons, or cosmetic items. Although this currency can sometimes be earned through gameplay, it is often scarce, encouraging players to spend real money. The immense financial success of *Genshin Impact*—which generates at least a billion US dollars annually—demonstrates how lucrative these systems can be.

Despite their “free-to-play” label, many Gacha games lock desirable content behind paywalls, pressuring players to invest

money to experience the game to its fullest. Since the release of *Genshin Impact* in September 2020, the popularity of Gacha games has surged. With its billion-dollar revenue and time-limited “character banners”, many developers have adopted similar monetisation strategies. Games like *Honkai: Star Rail* (2023), *Tower of Fantasy* (2022), and *Arknights* (2020) have followed suit, implementing Gacha-based mechanics into their gameplay. Beyond new releases, existing games have also begun integrating Gacha elements, even when they were not part of the original design. *League of Legends* is a notable example. While its core gameplay does not rely on Gacha mechanics, recent updates have introduced systems like “the Sanctum”, which encourages players to spend in-game currency for a chance to win skins—drawing direct comparisons to Gacha mechanics. This shift raises concerns about the growing normalisation of Gacha-based

monetisation across the gaming industry. As Gacha games continue to dominate the market, their drawbacks have become increasingly evident. Much like gambling, these games can foster unhealthy player relationships, where enjoyment becomes tied to the Gacha system itself.

In *Genshin Impact*, accumulating in-game currency is time-consuming, and players often find that grinding for resources yields little meaningful progress. This frustration leads many to either quit out of frustration or spend real money to keep up. The time-sensitive nature of limited-time banners adds another layer of pressure. Players must acquire enough currency before the banner expires, or risk missing out entirely—further incentivising real-money purchases. Additionally, streamers and con-

tent creators often spend thousands of dollars on Gacha pulls for entertainment, unintentionally encouraging viewers to do the same. While these influencers may recoup their expenses through content revenue, many everyday players do not have that luxury, potentially leading to overspending and financial strain. Interestingly, despite its massive success, *Genshin Impact* has experienced a decline in revenue in recent years.

Whether this is due to dissatisfaction with the game itself or fatigue from its demanding Gacha system remains uncertain. However, it does suggest that players may be growing weary of these aggressive monetisation strategies. The success of *Genshin Impact* has influenced the gaming industry’s approach to monetisation, leading many games to adopt Gacha mechanics as a primary revenue model. However, this shift has also placed increasing emotional and financial strain on players, making it difficult to enjoy these games without feeling pressured to spend. The introduction of Gacha systems in games like *League of Legends*—which originally had no such mechanics—indicates a broader industry trend. As more developers incorporate Gacha elements, concerns about player well-being and fair monetisation practices will likely continue to grow.



Is ‘BookTok’ Having A Negative Impact on Readers?

Anna Crowley
News Editor

For those who aren’t aware, “BookTok” is a TikTok subcommunity for book lovers and writers to make friends, discuss their most loved novels, and explore new content. Some argue that this community is beneficial because it inspires young people to read more, which we need as technology increasingly influences education. However, I think that BookTok as a community is having a strong negative impact on young readers due to the form of content that tends to circulate and become popular. For many young teens, social media is a primary aspect in their social lives. It is critical for making friends, learning cultural norms, and developing emotionally. When trends and

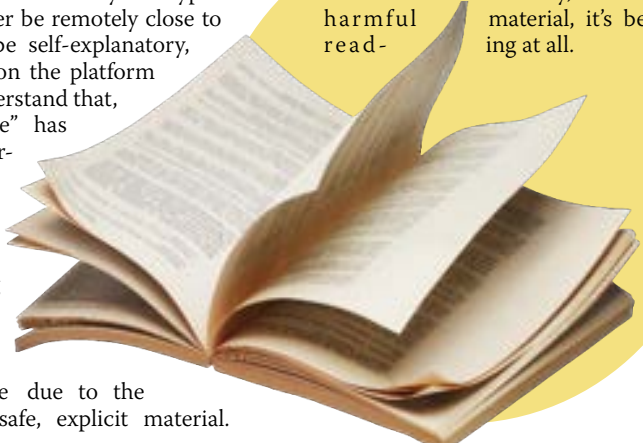
popular culture circulate inappropriate themes and material, it can be incredibly damaging to young people’s behaviour and mental health.

The main genres that BookTok engage with are romance, young adult, and typical fantasy-style media. While at a basic level none of these are harmful, the lack of engagement elsewhere is preventing young readers’ intellectual expansion into more complex and better quality writing. Even worse, the categorisation of romance has now changed. On social media, BookTok has popularised a subgenre of “dark romance”, which is simply a thinly veiled glorification of misogynistic, toxic, and abusive relationships. Not only are these unhealthy themes very harmful for the mental health and social development of teens, but they are also often intensely explicit. Many of the books recommended on the platform un-

expectedly feature scenes and themes of abusive sex, controlling behaviour, and exaggerated sexual violence. The reasons why this type of content ought to never be remotely close to children should be self-explanatory, but many adults on the platform don’t seem to understand that, as “dark romance” has begun to be normalised and internalised.

It’s so important for young people to read, but BookTok is having a strong negative influence due to the popularity of unsafe, explicit material.

Other sites like GoodReads are far better, correctly categorising engaging and good quality novels. Ultimately, when it’s unhealthy, harmful material, it’s better to not be reading at all.



How Moving to a Big City Changed my Perspective on my Hometown

Ella Simmons
Contributor

Cardiff. The capital of Wales. Moving to what is, and as a Welsh girl, this is the biggest and the best. In Cardiff, the parks are always full of people who have their lives together going on runs; the nightlife always thrives, even outside of the weekend; the shopping centre is a land of distraction and indulgence; the restaurants and bars line up for what feels like miles on end; and everywhere is always busy.

Compared to my hometown of Wrexham up in the north of Wales, it is a different story. When I think of home, I think of the streets that I know all too well. On Tuesday mornings when I walk to work, they’re quiet all over. Saturdays are the opposite, being first and foremost football days, where the whole town is

watching eagerly and coming together to support the thing they love most. Of course, in a true Welsh fashion, everyone knows everyone.

Even though Wrexham is much more laid back than down here in the South, moving to university makes you miss the little things from home that you never really picked up on before, the things you would just take for granted. The small chats you have when you pass your old schoolmates on the high street asking what they’re up to now, passing your old schools and feeling the surge of memories flood back to you, and seeing the twentieth person this hour in a Wrexham shirt, feeling the true sense of community that can never be lost.

Maybe when I was young, I thought my hometown was boring, but I could not have been more wrong. Moving to university changed how I see home. When I think of Cardiff, it’s exciting and fun; but home is comforting and calm, a place surrounded by the friends and family who I miss, who watched me grow, and now watch from a distance as I build myself a career and get my degree. In a sense, my perspective of home has changed for the better. University life makes you realise

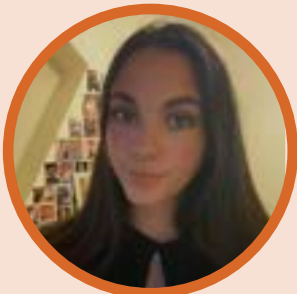
how much you love both sides of the coin. Living in two places is special and I feel incredibly privileged to be in two places in Wales, the best country on Earth. In a true Welshie fashion, I say: Dwi’n caru Caerdydd a dwi’n caru Wrecsam.



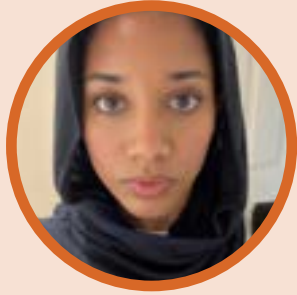
THE TEAM



POLITICS



Lauren Tutchell



Laila Dawelbeit



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King Charles & Prince William Make Millions From Private Estates, Investigation Reveals

Lauren Tutchell
Head of Politics

We all know the Royal Family are immensely wealthy. They own twenty-two royal residencies, comprising beautiful castles, palaces, manors, and estates. They enjoy considerable personal wealth in the form of art and jewellery collections, as well as private investments. They also receive tax-funded payments from the British public (which amounted to £86.3 million for 2024–25) to pay for their household staff, travel and the maintenance of their vast properties. None of this is anything new.

However, following an investigation by Channel 4's *Dispatches* and *The Sunday Times* back in November, it was shockingly revealed that the private estates of both King Charles and Prince William are making millions of pounds a year by charging the army, the navy, the NHS, the prison service, and state schools to use "their" land, rivers, and seashores; while simultaneously benefiting from massive exemptions for corporation and capital gains tax.

These property portfolios are known as the "duchies" of Lancaster and Cornwall, which comprise sprawling property businesses (of which there are more than 5,400), with assets jointly worth £1.8 billion. The Royals earn revenue from a plethora of places, including toll bridges, gas pipelines, ferries, sewage pipes, village halls, churches, pubs, car parks and wind turbines, to name a few.

Investigative work has also discovered some of the shocking deals that the duchies have made with public bodies; for example, charging the NHS £11.4m over 15 years for a warehouse to store ambulances; charging the Ministry of Justice £37.5 million to lease Dartmoor Prison for 25 years; charging the British Army to train soldiers on Dartmoor; and the Navy to moor and refuel its fleet and many, many more.

This is shockingly disgraceful. We expect the Royals to defend and uphold the values and institutions which we hold integral to our British society, and yet they have completely denigrated them, treating our public services like cash cows as they squeeze out every last possible penny. Talk about benefit scroungers!

The incomes from the royal duchies have increased fivefold since the early 1990s, and they raise around £50 million in the last year, with every penny ending up in the personal pockets of King Charles and Prince William (£27.4 million and £23.6 million respectively). Not that they need the extra money, with the King worth a staggering £610 million, according to *The Sunday Times Rich List*. The Republic report has also calculated that William's personal income is six times the combined salaries of all the elected heads of state in Europe.

For centuries, we have swallowed the cost of upholding our Royal Family on the basis that they are paragons of patriotism—the pinnacle of national pride on the world stage. They are meant to represent the purest and proudest form of Britishness; a

benign force of good which is bound to duty and selflessness in the service of our nation. We are told that we should be proud of this system. We are told that the idea of inheriting billions of pounds' worth of wealth, palaces, and prestige on the basis of "birthright" and bloodline is a normal, acceptable concept in the 21st century. We are told how they offer a more safe and stable alternative to an elected head of state. We are told that this option will protect us from ending up with a self-centred, out of touch occupier of our country. We're told this... but do we really believe it?

Is this national Stockholm syndrome? It feels as if the Royal Family have kidnapped our country, convincing us that we need them and that there is no viable alternative. Yet poll after poll shows there is little appetite for inappropriate proportions of wealth. People have had enough of inequality. It is obscene that we have allowed this to happen for so long, but especially considering the current dire state of our country.

Austerity has been thrust upon normal working people for years and consequently we are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, soaring house and rent prices, and cuts to our public services. Meanwhile, the Royal Family and all the other millionaires and billionaires in this country have been making more and more money right under our noses.

Maybe it is time for a referendum to see what the public really think on this issue; or maybe the thought of another simplistic "yes" or "no" vote is too painful to bare?

Rachel Reeves Says she Will go "Further and Faster" to Kickstart Economy

Laila Dawelbeit
Politics Editor

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, in a speech on 29th January, set out a range of "supply-side" policies aimed at kickstarting the UK's sluggish economy, as she shows newfound optimism in its potential.

The upbeat, half-hour-long speech set out the clearest vision of Reeves's economic approach, with her announcing the government's backing of a third runway at Heathrow Airport, vowing to build "Europe's Silicon Valley" in an Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor, and a new planning and infrastructure bill that will remove some of the barriers that slow down infrastructure projects.

This comes after the decline in the UK's economic growth since the 2008 financial crisis and the UK experiencing the lowest level of investment in the G7 for 24 of the last 30 years, according to a study published by the Institute for Public Policy Research last year. The last half of 2024 was gloomy in outlook, marked by talk of "difficult decisions" on tax, spending, and welfare, and constant mention of the "£22bn black hole" in the public finances inherited from 14 years of Tory government. This has distanced investment into the UK. Mohammed Alardhi, executive chair of \$53bn investment manager Investcorp, told the *Financial Times* that "when the government continues to talk about doom and gloom because they inherited bad things from the Conservatives, investors and business will believe you and go somewhere else." Reeves's relationship with businesses and investors has also been shaken by the increase in the rate of employer's national insurance contributions in the Autumn Budget.

In an attempt to woo big investors fazed by the UK's poor growth performance, Rachel Reeves attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, between 20th and 24th January, with a new, more positive outlook. She emphasised that growth was the Labour government's number-one mission,

aiming to ease regulatory burdens in areas such as technology, planning and financial services, and to soften non-dom tax changes.

Non-dom status allows people who live in the UK to avoid paying tax on money made abroad because their permanent home for tax purposes is outside the country. In its election manifesto, Labour pledged to scrap the status, saying that this would address unfairness in the tax system and raise extra money for public services. In Davos, Reeves said that the government will tweak the Temporary Repatriation Facility, the three-year scheme designed to help ex non-doms bring their assets to the UK at a discounted tax rate. The Prime Minister's official spokesman said that this will "encourage non-doms to bring their funds to the UK, encouraging them to spend and invest this money here".

The chancellor's growth plan has attracted wide ranging criticism, even before she gave her highly anticipated speech on 29th January. Some argue that her approach is too focused on long term growth, rather than implementing measures that will have a noticeable impact in the short term on the dire fiscal situation inherited from the Conservatives. Others have argued that certain aspects of the plans are inconsistent with the UK's net zero target. Entirely out of her hands, Donald Trump's return to the White House, and his insistence in using international trade, specifically tariffs,

as a diplomatic and political weapon, rather than for purely economic purposes, poses a risk to her plans as it has sown uncertainty in the global economy.

Additionally, while Reeves seems determined to break down the barriers on new infrastructure and housing projects, it will not be easy to navigate politically. Protests from local communities are likely to be amplified by the rightwing press. The Prime Minister's aim to tackle the migrant crisis appears at odds with the chancellor's growth plans as it raises the question of whether the building sector in the UK has the capacity to expand its construction workforce sufficiently to build the 1.5m homes, new stations, and other big infrastructure projects the government has set out.

Many of the proposed projects, including Heathrow's third runway, still need to go through a formal planning process, so it could be years before building starts and the economy sees any tangible benefit. However, it laid out several specific efforts to remove barriers from existing growth mechanisms and promoted new drivers of growth. Whether the UK will break out of decades of weak productivity growth caused by underinvestment, policy uncertainty, and low business dynamism, remains to be seen. But the UK's economic outlook does appear less bleak than many commentators feared at the time of the Autumn Budget.



What is the Future of Gaza Post Ceasefire?

Eve Yates
Contributor

Monday 20th of January marked a monumental day: thousands of Palestinians were able to return to North Gaza after 471 days of unrest. Following the opening of military checkpoints that have divided the Gaza strip for over a year, the forced exile that many feared would become permanent, came to an end.

Tensions between Hamas and Israel were high during the release of hostages, with the attempt to find a common ground being imminent. Amid complications surrounding the release of Israeli hostage Arbel Yehoud, a 24-hour delay to the ceasefire sent panic across Gaza. Thousands felt unrest in the Netzarim corridor on the evening of Saturday the 18th, with Palestinians expecting the corridor to be opened; it remained blocked by Israeli tanks and gunshots were fired, as the group was seen as “posing a threat”. This cor-

ridor was created within weeks of the conflict and has watched thousands of Palestinians moving to the south of Gaza. However, the ceasefire deal finally came into play when three hostages were released, one being Emily Damari, a British-Israeli woman.

Once the first stage of the ceasefire was in motion, the first wave of people were able to return to their homes in Gaza. 90% of the 2.3 million people living in Gaza have been displaced due to the conflict and nearly 47,000 have been killed—this does not include those who have died from hunger, lack of shelter, and the collapse of the healthcare system. According to UN data, 80,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed in Gaza since the start of the conflict, leaving many without homes. This was not a shock, with many expecting to return home to find Gaza in ruins. But hope was not lost, as crowds cheered and welcomed those returning home. The citizens of Gaza found peace in being able to pitch a tent in their own land after months of

displacement camps. While some celebrated reunions with family, friends and loved ones, others mourned but knew those who had been lost would finally have a place to rest.

Palestinian Ambassador Husam Zomlot described those returning to Gaza: “There is only one direction of travel ahead for the Palestinian people after 100 years of forced displacement and oppression: liberation and return!”

Gaza still has a long way to go, with violence unfortunately still being an issue. Some Palestinians who were trying to return home were shot at, and fear is widespread surrounding the pressure from Israel’s right wing. While the ceasefire has brought joy and comfort to thousands, the omnipresent fear of the attacks happening again is still a concern for the citizens of Gaza.

The thousands that have returned to Gaza are now having to start their lives from scratch, and organisations providing aid are working around

the clock to support those in need. With the prime minister of Israel being urged to advance the second stage of the ceasefire, things are looking hopeful in Gaza.

However, the end is not in sight, with the UN stating that the Gaza strip will take up to 350 years to recover from the conflict. Hope, joy and reunions are ever-present in Gaza, with citizens being able to return to their homes and hostages being able to return to loved ones, but unfortunately, there are still lots of challenges facing Gaza and Palestine on the horizon.



Reform Target 2026 Senedd Majority

Nye Jones
Contributor

It is ‘well within the realms of possibility’ that in 2026 Reform could form a new government in the Senedd; that’s according to the party’s Welsh spokesperson Oliver Lewis. Under the new proportional representation voting system which will emerge in April 2026 and expand the size of the Senedd from 60 to 96 MSs from 16 enlarged constituencies, Oliver Claims that Reform could win anywhere from 20 to ‘hopefully 40 seats.’ Such a gain would see them become the largest party in the Senedd. From a Reform perspective there is every reason to be so optimistic in Wales. The party won 16.9% of the vote in the 2024 general election, equating to 223,018 votes and came second in 13 constituencies. Despite their unmistakable popularity, because of the UK’s first past the post system Reform won no seats in Wales. However, the new reformed proportional representation system would allow them to finally benefit and represent their growing support. In light of Lewis’s optimism Reform UK still do not have a recognised party leader in Wales and instead will look towards the popularity of Nigel Farage to bring them success in 2026. Lewis claimed that ‘Nigel is far more popular than the leaders of the other parties in Wales’ and speaking at the party’s conference in November last year, Farage himself said that the Senedd election would be his party’s ‘biggest priority’ in 2026. With YouGov polling Reform at 23% in Wales – just 1pp behind the largest party Plaid Cymru – it is impossible to dismiss Farage’s optimism as mere fancy.

Since Farage’s comments at his party’s conference in November there have emerged question marks regarding the longevity of Reform’s rise. On January 5th Elon Musk posted on X publicly calling for Reform to look for a new leader and claiming that Farage ‘doesn’t have what it takes’ to lead the party. It came after Farage looked to distant himself from Musk due to his increasing support for far-right activist and criminal Tommy Robinson, who is currently serving an 18-month sentence for contempt of court. Only weeks earlier had there been widespread reports

stating that Mr Musk would be prepared to donate as much as £100 Million to the party by the next General Election, with Farage posing with Musk for a social media photo in Mar-a-Lago. Ten Reform UK councillors from Derbyshire also resigned last month in protest against Farage’s ‘increasingly autocratic manner’ of management, claiming that the party had ‘lost its direction’ since he resumed leadership in 2024.

As a populist politician leading a populist political party, any publicity for Farage would be seen as good publicity and despite claims of instability there is a quiet sense of inevitability for the party’s success in the 2026 election. One anonymous Labour MP spoke candidly about the threat of Reform and the tactics they use. ‘It’s like Brexit all over again, isn’t it? Kicking back against the system[...] the Reform thing is real. We need to seriously, seriously, wake up to it.’ The MP went on to predict that in areas like Llanelli, where Reform came second by only several hundred votes in July, they are ‘absolutely doomed.’ Much of Reform’s manifesto is broad and unspecific yet crucially, and perhaps successfully, it is fundamentally contrarian at its core. The two biggest controversies so far of Labour’s leadership have been around the winter fuel payments and the farmer’s inheritance tax and with a rural and an older population Reform will undoubtedly benefit from discontent amongst these demographics. In addition to this, the heart of the party’s popularity in July was found in areas of South Wales which still feel left behind by the legacy of 1980s Thatcherism, and this support is a reflection of the anger of communities in Wales which feel neglected by the political establishment.

Across the globe in 2024 incumbent political parties were punished at the polls and Reform would look to build on this trend, toppling 26 years of Welsh Labour governance. With many in Wales and the UK feeling increasingly dissociated with any political party, the success of Reform’s populist approach with simple answers to complex issues and broad commitments in 2026 could be seen by many as a dress rehearsal for the next general election and will surely be watched closely by those in Westminster and Downing Street.

An End to Wales’ Railway Woes?

Isabelle La Barbera
Contributor

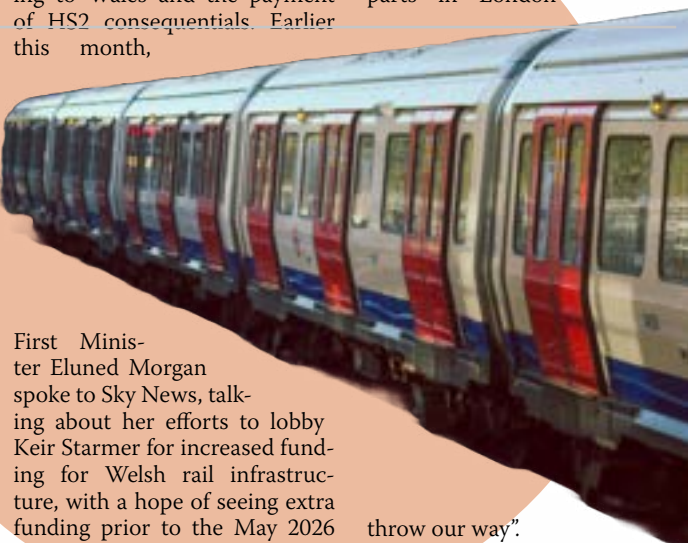
The UK government has admitted that Welsh railways have been underfunded in recent years. For anyone familiar with Welsh politics, this is no revelation, with railway funding—in particular with relation to the funding of HS2—proving to be a topic of contention in relations between the Senedd and Westminster. The statement came in the form of a letter by UK Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander to the First Minister and Welsh Transport Secretary Ken Skates. In a committee meeting with Welsh MPs, Welsh Secretary Jo Stevens reiterated this sentiment, announcing that her priority for the upcoming spending review was to ensure that “Wales receives its fair share of funding [in order to] tackle the historic underfunding in rail infrastructure”, attributing this deficit to fourteen years of Conservative rule.

Welsh railways are funded in two ways: rail infrastructure is funded and owned by Network Rail, meaning that levels of funding and decisions on new routes are not determined by Wales, but directly by Westminster; the operation and management of rail services, however, is overseen by the Welsh government through Transport for Wales. The budget of the Welsh government is determined by the Barnett Formula, wherein the UK Treasury calculates the percentage by which a policy area is devolved to Wales, multiplied by the increase in funding received by the equivalent department in Westminster.

HS2 was particularly controversial, as the Treasury designated it as an England and Wales project, meaning both countries would

benefit from its construction and Wales would not receive an associated increase in funding. In contrast, Northern Ireland and Scotland did receive extra funding from the Barnett Formula. Treatment of areas of infrastructure under the jurisdiction of Network Rail have also led to claims of inadequate funding for Wales, with only 2% of Network Rail’s rail enhancement project spending targeting Welsh lines, despite the country having 10% of the total rail network.

This move is likely to be linked to a desire by UK Labour in Westminster to ease relations with Welsh Labour in the Senedd, who have faced pushback from UK Labour for their calls for the devolution of justice and policing to Wales and the payment of HS2 consequential. Earlier this month,



First Minister Eluned Morgan spoke to Sky News, talking about her efforts to lobby Keir Starmer for increased funding for Welsh rail infrastructure, with a hope of seeing extra funding prior to the May 2026 Senedd elections.

The exact size of any extra funding the UK Government may grant is unknown, with estimates of the funding deficit ranging from £4 billion (according to Plaid Cymru), £500 million (according to Cardiff University’s Wales Governance Centre), and £350 million (according to the Welsh Government itself). Despite the disagreement on

exact figures, the underfunding of Welsh railways is a bipartisan issue, with the Welsh Conservatives, Welsh Labour, the Welsh Liberal Democrats, and Plaid Cymru all previously criticising the UK Government for its provision of devolved finances.

This admission and pledge by UK Labour suggests that having a Labour government in power in Westminster gives the Welsh Government greater bargaining power than it held against a Conservative one. Opposition parties aren’t convinced, with the Welsh Lib Dems critiquing the letter for neglecting to mention Mid and West Wales, and Welsh Conservatives attacking Eluned Morgan for accepting “whatever scraps her counterparts in London

throw our way”.

With a number of rail projects underway, notably the South Wales Metro—although one can dream of a North–South line—the Welsh Government will be grateful for this extra cash injection, though it remains to be seen what impact this will have on rail infrastructure in Wales.

WHAT IS... SENEDD CYMRU?

Stan Senior
Contributor

Simply and exactly, Senedd translates into English as “Parliament”. Senedd Cymru is Wales’ democratically-elected body, and it scrutinises the activities of the Welsh Government. Of course, with Wales remaining a member of the United Kingdom, it can only exercise devolved powers from the UK Government.

This includes powers over such matters as the Welsh NHS, education, the Welsh economy, transport, the environment, local government, and some limited tax powers. The UK Government retains powers over policing, justice, pensions, foreign affairs, and the Crown Estate. The Welsh Government is primarily funded by the UK Government via the use of block grants. Last year nearly 80% of the Welsh Government’s budget came from the UK Government. The Welsh Government is then free to use this funding as it pleases, subject to Senedd scrutiny and votes of course.

Elections to the Senedd work differently than elections to the House of Commons. The Senedd has always used the “additional member system (AMS)” to elect its sixty members. In practice, this means forty members are elected via “constituencies” (exactly like in UK elections). Twenty further members are then elected to represent five “electoral regions” using the D’Hondt method of proportional representation.

Significant reform is ready for the 2026 elections. The Welsh public will be tasked to elect ninety-six members to an expanded Senedd via a party-list proportional representation system, using the D’Hondt method. The new system will use sixteen six-member constituencies, with members elected via the D’Hondt method again. Other changes include reducing the length of Senedd terms from five years to four.

As leader of the Welsh Labour Party, Eluned Morgan has been first minister of Wales since August. While being the first woman to ever hold the position, she also became the third first minister of 2024 when she was elected in August. Sandwiched in between Mark Drakeford’s resignation in March, and Baroness Morgan’s current premiership, was Vaughan Gething’s controversy-filled time in office. Eluned Morgan is also currently served by Huw Irranca-Davies as Deputy First Minister.

As the second largest party in the Senedd, the Welsh Conservatives form the official opposition to the Welsh Labour government. They are led by Darren Millar in the Senedd. Just one seat behind the Welsh Tories is Plaid Cymru, led by Rhun ap Iorwerth. The Welsh Liberal Democrats are also represented in the Senedd by their leader, Jane Dodds, who is also currently the party’s only Senedd member.

After the Senedd celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary last year, Welsh public opinion remains generally favourably towards devolution. The most popular opinion has consistently been for the Senedd to receive increased powers. As ex-Welsh secretary Ron Davies famously said when Wales voted to introduce devolution in 1997, devolution is a “process, not an event”. With constitutional debates alive and well, the devolution in 1997, devolution is a “process, not an event”. With constitutional debates alive and well, the story of Welsh devolution seems destined to continue to be written over decades to come.

2024: A Year of Elections

Adam Dunstan
Politics Editor

The year 2024 saw sixty-four countries, as well as the European Union, head to the polls in a year that will go down as one of the most significant years in global political history.

A key takeaway is that the world saw an increase in right-wing populism, especially in Europe. These are political parties that aim to appeal to ordinary citizens who feel their concerns are disregarded or ignored by political elites. This was seen in the UK in July, as although the centre-left Labour Party won the general election, they received only 33.7% of the votes cast - significantly fewer votes than in the previous election. Meanwhile, Nigel Farage’s party, Reform UK, received the third highest share of votes, with 14.3% of the vote share and with many of their candidates coming second to successful Labour MPs, leading to speculation about whether Reform will be more successful in the future. In the European Parliament election, which took place in June to elect members from across the 27 member states across the Eu-

ropean Union, there were also significant gains for right-wing parties such as Alternative for Germany, Brothers of Italy, and the National Rally in France. These results provoked President Macron of France in June to call snap elections to the French parliament, and although the National Rally failed to win overall, the party also made significant gains.

In December, the party joined forces with other parties to remove Prime Minister Michel Barnier, making him the prime minister of France with the shortest reign since 1958. The takeaway from this is that, unlike a decade ago when populist parties were considered minor parties, 2024 showed that they are now embedded into Europe’s political culture and are a threat to established political parties.

Right-wing parties are also increasing in popularity in Latin America, particularly in Argentina and El Salvador. However, unlike their European counterparts whose focus is immigration, these countries have leaders who oppose abortion, social

democracy, and have a hardline view on crime. The most consequential election, however, was in the US. Since his inauguration last month, Donald Trump has withdrawn the US from international treaties and organisations such as the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the World Health Organization. In recent days, he has threatened multiple countries including Canada, China, and Mexico with huge tariffs which would have major impacts on the price of goods for global consumers. This election result signalled the end of the global status quo, and in Trump’s eyes, the end of the American people being taken for granted.

Looking ahead, this month Germany is set to go to the polls in their federal election and multiple news organisations have predicted the incumbent SPD party to come third along with gains for the populist Alternative For Germany. Canada will also go to the polls before October; however, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has announced his intention to resign before then.

Climate and Nature Bill Fails

Angelie Marwaha
Contributor

A recent bill and legal initiative aiming to combat climate change and global warming on a UK level, has been halted at just the first hurdle.

This latest attempt, dubbed the Climate and Nature Bill and proposed by Liberal Democrat MP Roz Savage, received only seven votes in favour of debating its implementation, being defeated by 120 votes. This means the bill is not going anywhere for a while, and when it does return to the Commons in July, it is unlikely to get passed.

Savage became the MP for the South Cotswolds in the 2024 general election but had been dedicating her life to raising awareness about marine pollution and the crippling effects of global warming. She has hence moved away from education and information, to influencing political and environmental policy.

This bill would have required the environmental secretary to create and implement a crucial strategy with regular annual targets of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and placed emphasis on reversing the degradation of nature. Strikingly, it would achieve this through working with a citizen’s assembly, ensuring the UK’s population are effectively represented and listened to. This is unlike anything that has been suggested before and would offer a unique insight into a plethora of the population’s opinions and suggestions.

The bill received cross-party support, with some Labour and backbench Conservative MPs signalling support for the proposed reforms, and criticising cabinet members for going back on green commit-

ments and promises. A Downing Street spokesperson counteracted this, stating that the UK “already has a well-developed legislative framework with legally binding targets”, pointing to international commitments such as the Paris Climate agreement, and the UK Climate Change Act of 2008. Despite these alleged commitments, however, the debate and plans for a third Heathrow Airport expansion have been renewed, with Chancellor Rachel Reeves signalling her strong, unequivocal support.

Approval for this runway was won back in 2018, yet received delay due to pressure-group action and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but is now circulating back in the public eye. Reeves has approved this third runway despite numerous criticisms and objections against it, pointing to climate commitments and responsibilities that this runway directly threatens. The Friends of the Earth pressure group have been vocal about the detrimental impact of a third runway and have been vocally opposing its status since its proposal in 2018. They argue that the expansion would “blow the UK’s chances of meeting our targets for cutting emissions” and that it undermines the legally-binding Paris Climate Agreement. Conversely, Heathrow CEO Thomas Woldbye has welcomed the progress and the momentum of the third runway, stating “we welcome the chancellor’s support for the aviation industry”, applauding her for a decision that is designed to grow the economy and stimulate the UK supply chain.

about whether to prioritise short-term economic gains or the long-term well-being of the environment remains undecided. Nevertheless, the runway is contentious, with much of Labour opposing it (including Keir Starmer in 2018 at the outset of its debate. It has also not garnered much external popular support, due to the catastrophic environmental effects felt on a global and local level.

The UK has a legal and global commitment, not to mention responsibility to stick to its net zero targets, working towards ensuring global temperatures do not rise more than required. Heathrow’s third runway is undoubtedly a direct threat to this, and it’s unclear what the government is currently doing to combat the devastating global consequences of climate change.

This bill could have been a decisive step towards mitigating and reversing environmental degradation. Yet due to inadequate support and involvement of unelected citizens, it has fallen.



THE CARDIFF UNIVERSITY BUDGET CUTS

It's Time to Face the Music, Cardiff University. A Response to the Budget Cuts at the School of Music

Miriam Southall
Opinion Editor

On January the 29th at 10am, music students gathered in the School of Music's Concert Hall waiting with great trepidation. A meeting had been called to hear what the lecturers had to say in response to information being leaked about the school's impending closure as part of a significant cost-cutting exercise. Being a music student myself, I was among this growing crowd, all of us in a state of shock and confusion as we digested and tried to make sense of this news.

As time ticked closer and closer to 10am, the mass of students kept increasing, filing in through the doors, one after the other with a look of anxiety spread on every face. In no time at all, every seat in the hall was taken and it was bursting at the seams, with standing room only for latecomers. For me, although extremely unsettling, there was a comfort in seeing the entire Music School cohort coming together, proving how every single student cared for each other and felt a passion for music and their degree.

At the appointed hour, and with grim expressions, the lecturers entered the hall. Immediately a hush fell across the crowd and what was a hall exploding with noise became silent—not a breath heard. I should add that all those who spoke at the meeting, whether lecturer or student, wished to remain anonymous at this stage.

The main speaker made it clear that lecturers were “extremely unhappy” with how the university had handled the situation and called it “a failure.” It was also recognised that “an awful lot of upset had been caused” and that the university's rationale for closing the school was “full of holes.” It was clear to all students how passionate this main speaker was and that even he was in a state of shock. Indeed, he even stated how he and other lecturers were “shell-shocked.” After this dramatic opening statement, others lecturers spoke, trying their best to explain to the students what was happening and to explain what the plan moving forward would be. It was emphasised to us how the news about the closure of the Music School and other departments like Nursing and Modern Languages, were “only proposals” and we didn't have to worry about an imminent closure

and “students would be able to finish their degree even if the proposals were approved as a closure was set for 2029/30”.

Concerned students then began raising questions which the lecturers did their best to respond to; however, this just highlighted how even the lecturers were very much in the dark themselves about events going forward. This is not really surprising given the fact that they themselves were only made aware of the drastic nature of cuts less than twenty-four hours earlier. Although they tried to appear generally optimistic, stating how the “quality of our degree and its teaching wouldn't be affected”, as more questions were raised by students and more information began coming out, it was apparent that there was much cause for concern. It came to light that redundancy packages had already been offered that morning and questions about potential strike action were not clearly answered.

There is no doubt that throughout the whole of the meeting, both staff and students alike appeared extremely distressed and uncertain with what the future holds for our school. However, the main speaker closed the meeting with the forceful state-

ment that “we will fight tooth and nail to keep the music school”. This determination to fight for the school resulted in a lift of spirit and morale among all us students, and the meeting ended with everybody standing and clapping. This was a powerful and galvanising moment, showing how appreciated and highly thought of our music school and lecturers are, and that no students wish to see any closure or redundancy.

Since the news of the threat of closure of the music school, students have been doing all they can to raise awareness and gain support. An online petition to save the school has already over 15,000 signatures, a busk protest has taken place, and many music societies are expressing online support.

This is the start to the semester anticipated by neither students nor staff. There is now a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty about what the future holds, and understandably spirits are low in the music school. However, we music students are fighting back and will no doubt continue to fight for the school we love.

Uncertain Times for Nursing and Humanities Students

James Roberts
Opinion Editor

Like students at the School of Music, Cardiff University nursing students were greatly impacted by leaking of the proposed changes to the media before they were announced by the university itself. With a lack of any official information, one nursing student, who wished to be anonymous, told us of how she and her co-students were “collectively getting our updates from Wales Online as it was updated”. Layla Harris, a second-year adult nursing student, told us that it was “heartbreaking not to find out through the university but through the press”. Adding that it had “left us all lost and confused”. The widespread panic and confusion among nursing students caused some lecturers to email students that night to reassure them, even though they reportedly had little information themselves, although the same anonymous student told us that none of the senior lecturers at the school contacted them at that time.

Nonetheless the day after cuts were announced via the media, a senior lecturer at the School of Healthcare Sciences, emailed nursing students to inform them of changes to their course in light of a staff meeting that had taken place that day. In that email, which has been shared with Gair Rhydd, she identified the university's reasons for cutting nursing. They were “finance, inconsistent NSS results, poor student experience in placements and not being able to meet our commissioned targets”. Healthcare is a devolved matter in Wales, and it has been reported that along-

side departmental issues, the reduction of nursing grants by the Welsh Assembly has contributed to the axing of nursing from Cardiff University.

The reaction from nursing students and the wider student community to the axing has been one of shock and dismay, with many especially confused given the broader national context in which demand for new nurses has never been greater. One nursing student described feeling “disgusted”, adding that “I'm concerned personally but more what this means for the future of nursing in Wales. The NHS is already in crisis and this will only make that situation worse”. While the university has publicly committed to allowing current nursing students to complete their degrees, like those studying music. There has still been a climate of uncertainty in the days after the announcement, with one student telling us of rumours that nursing is to move to USW. Whatever the basis of these claims, it is clear that recent events have had a major impact on the lives of nursing students. The prospect of the end of nursing as a course of Cardiff has led to the creation of the “Save Nursing” campaign, which is currently organising protests in response.

Alongside the termination of Nursing courses and the closure of the School of Music, Cardiff University intends to close the School of Modern Languages and end the teaching of Ancient History and Theology at the same time as downscaling humanities departments more broadly (allegedly as much as 50% in the case of ENCAP). This is expected by many to have a negative impact on student experience.

Carys Jenkins an Ancient History student told us “We have concerns of module deduction and whether lecturers are to leave” and that the changes will “leave many of us with less opportunities to learn specific modules within that course”. Similarly, Fflur Evans, another Ancient History student commented that “I'm worried about what support will be available for us”. Likewise, students at the School of Modern Languages have been left feeling unsure about the future quality of their courses as the school prepares to close. One student expressed concerns about the future of the department, saying “When we come back from our year abroad in fourth year, what will it be like?”. Charlotte Amelie, a French and Law student, commented “Language students often have to fight to be respected, I am the daughter of parents who both have degrees in languages and it has only enriched our lives. I hope we are all heard and it is acknowledged the true impact of these decisions”.

As with both Nursing and Music students, there was panic and distress from the unofficial way the university's decision reached students. One Ancient History student expressed how they felt “deeply disappointed and angry at the university” for the way it had communicated with them. Evans told us that it was “cruel and unprofessional for us to find out about our course closures from the media”.

On the 5th of February, the Cardiff branch of the University and College Union (UCU) issued a statement outlining the motivation for a vote of no confidence in the governing board of the university.

“A packed open meeting of the Cardiff University UCU Branch yesterday voted overwhelmingly to hold a no confidence vote in the leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof Wendy Lerner and the University's Executive Board (UEB) over their plans to axe 400 staff and cut schools and programmes in nursing, music, modern languages, ancient history, and religion.”

Dr Joey Whitfield, president of the UCU characterised the the cuts as “cruel and unnecessary” and argued that the vote of no confidence “reflects their deep-seated anger and frustration within Cardiff University”. It is clear, at least from the perspective of the UCU, that the recent decision has caused a crisis between management and staff.



The Student Response

Once the meeting came to a close, many students lingered in the hall, discussing what had just been said and expressing their solidarity with lecturers. I took the opportunity to interview everyone, from freshers to PhD students, to get a deeper insight into their opinions and emotional well-being.

Do you feel questions and concerns were answered at the meeting?

"I feel like they told us everything they could."

"I feel like they weren't given enough information so they couldn't answer everything to the full potential and the uni could have told them more."

"We are waiting on more information from higher up."

"We'll have to wait for more information after the ninety-day consultation period, but we just don't know what next year looks like."

Do you think this will affect your experience of Cardiff?

"Yes, no matter what the lecturers say, it will affect us."

"They can try to reassure us that we will still have an amazing experience, but I don't feel this can be guaranteed."

"Unfortunately, by the university putting this information out, they have damaged the reputation of the music school to anyone who may want to join next year."

"No one will want to join now; I wouldn't want to join. This will affect student interactions and the community."

What are your main concerns?

"The module options."

"Part of the reason people come to the Cardiff School of Music is because of the wide range of module options, particularly in year one. This makes the degree broader and allows individuals to become the musicians they want to become. This advantage may change if modules have to be altered."

"We feel devalued and are going to be here for the next two or three years knowing the university don't want or value us."

"I'm angry but not surprised, because music degrees are often looked down on and seen as less valuable"

What's something you want fellow Cardiff students to know about the course and what's happening?

"It's more than just a course; we're a family here."

"I would love to show any of the members of Cardiff University the building and vibrancy the course has and show them our concerts. I would love to put a concert on for them just to show the experience we get to have and are so grateful for."

"Music is a family; it's a collective. Music is our lives, it's what we've been doing since childhood. It's not just a course. It's much more than that; it's our livelihood and what we stand for."

As first-year students do you feel any anxiety and apprehension on what will happen in the second year?

"Extremely, the modules could change but I love the way they are now."

"Lots of anxiety."

"I didn't sign up to pay thousands of pounds for these dilutions in my course."

Question to second-years, third-years and PhD students: As you've had more time and experience at the school what's your reaction to all that's happening?

"The word I would use is abhorrent."

"Distraught and ashamed."

"Embarrassed and extremely angry. Honestly, so many emotions. We just feel so disrespected by the central team in Cardiff University. I feel like they don't want to speak to us or listen to our concerns."

Vice-Chancellor Response

We know here at Cardiff University that it is no longer an option for us to continue as we are. Our new strategy, co-created with our community, lays out an ambitious future for our University where it is collaborative, innovative, and delivering value for Cardiff, Wales and the wider world.

"Securing that future, in the context of tightening finances, means we need to take difficult decisions to realise our ambitions to enhance our education and research, and improve the staff and student experience."

"We have worked diligently to create initial proposals for a slightly smaller University, refocused around our core and emerging strengths—a University ready to leverage new academic opportunities, prepare students for an adapting world and meet changing market demands as they arise."

"At the same time as putting forward these proposals to reshape our current activities, we will be working on a new model for flexible lifelong learning, new opportunities in transnational education, and new approaches to learning and teaching."

"Our proposals aim to create a more focused, higher quality research environment for staff and students that is world-leading with cynefin, place and co-creation at its heart."

"We also want to ensure a consistently excellent education experience for students of all backgrounds and experiences."

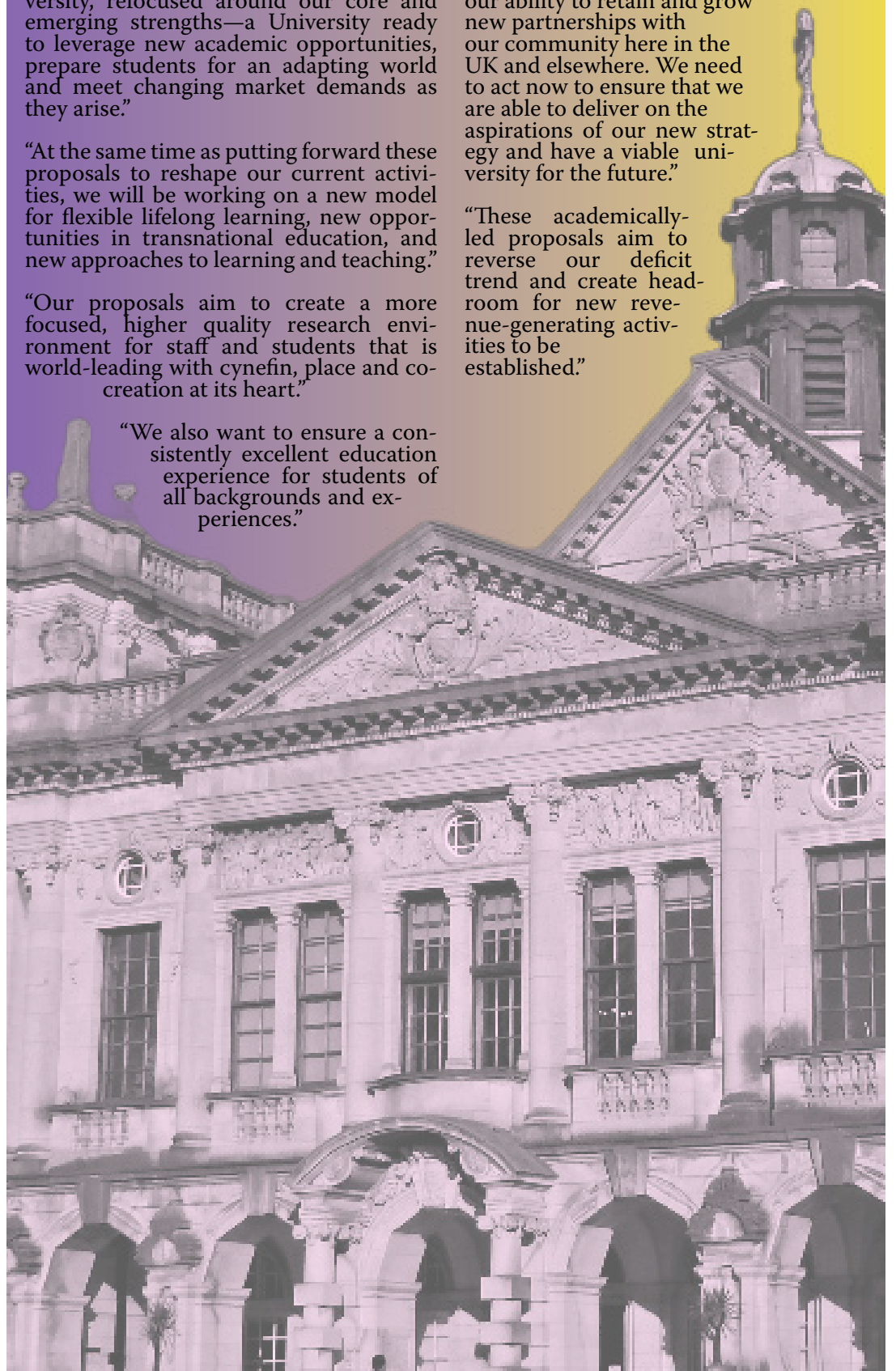
"I want to stress that these are proposals and our final plans will be shaped by our community—both internal and external—through formal consultation. The scale of the challenge will remain, but the way that we address it will certainly be refined and developed over the next 90 days."

"I know that these proposals impact some staff more than others and they will cause a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety for those potentially impacted."

"We have done everything that we can to avoid reaching this position, but ultimately we know that annual rounds of cuts demoralise our staff, affect our students, and limit

our ability to retain and grow new partnerships with our community here in the UK and elsewhere. We need to act now to ensure that we are able to deliver on the aspirations of our new strategy and have a viable university for the future."

"These academically-led proposals aim to reverse our deficit trend and create headroom for new revenue-generating activities to be established."



THE TEAM



REVIEW



Emily Jo Cottle



Gemma Willmott



Lowri Jones



Angela Griffith



Sam Wainwright



Mac Miller: Balloonerism

The Come Up Show (via Flickr) / CC BY-ND 2.0 / background removed

Khate De Castillo
Contributor

Mac Miller's latest posthumous album, *Balloonerism*, is a testament to his artistry, offering listeners another glimpse into his creative mind even after his death. Long rumoured among fans as an unfinished project before his *Faces* era, the album arrives as both a celebration and a bittersweet reminder of his talent. With its dreamy production, introspective lyrics and signature jazz-infused sound, *Balloonerism* feels like a continuation of Mac's journey—one that floats somewhere between reality and the afterlife. But does it serve as a fitting conclusion to his legacy, or does it leave us longing for what could have been?

After lingering on the internet for years, fans no longer have to rely on leaks or dodgy links to listen to *Balloonerism* after Mac's estate @92tilinfinity released a statement on Instagram

announcing its official release in the new year. The post explains: "We believe the project showcases both the breadth of his musical talents and fearlessness as an artist. Given that unofficial versions of the album have circulated online for years and that releasing *Balloonerism* was something that Malcolm frequently expressed being important to him, we felt it most appropriate to present an official project to the world." *Balloonerism* revisits themes explored in Mac Miller's previous albums, diving deeper into mental health, love and substance use. The album introduces itself with an instrumental track titled "Tambourine Dreams" setting an atmospheric tone before transitioning into "DJ's Chord Organ" featuring Grammy Award winner SZA as the album's sole guest. Her smooth, airy vocals glide over the ethereal production of Stephen Bruner, better known by his stage name Thundercat. Rather than dominating the song, SZA's contribution adds layers of warmth and melancholy,

blending seamlessly with Mac's signature style. Offering a glimpse of musical chemistry that, tragically, we'll never get to see fully realised. Another standout track is "Mrs. Deborah Downer", which leans into Mac's signature introspection. With the help of a languid bass, the songs taps into Miller's psyche, pulling the listener into a dreamlike state that paints rich imagery of self awareness and existential questioning.

His effortless wordplay and stream-of-consciousness delivery make this track feel deeply personal—almost as if it were a diary entry set to music. My favourite hypnotic moment is from "Stoned", a track that perfectly captures *Balloonerism's* psychedelic, intimate energy. With a blues-driven guitar meandering through its soundscape, the song travels fluidly between your head-

phones, immersing the listener in its sensual atmosphere. The mellow laid-back instrumentation is reminiscent of his jazzy alter-ego Larry Lovestein. Rather than focusing on drug use, "Stoned" finds solace in a shared escape with a significant other, offering a sexy moment of peace and vulnerability. Mac's lyrics are raw and authentic, and feel hauntingly relevant to his life even after his passing. With *Balloonerism*, Mac Miller continues to transcend time. It's an album that doesn't just showcase his artistry but reaffirms his legacy—one that will keep floating, long after the music fades.



A Real Pain: Short and Sweet

Angela Griffith
Review Editor

Jesse Eisenberg's *A Real Pain* arrives twenty years after his directorial debut, *Becoming a Werewolf* (an eight-minute film about... well, werewolves), and three years following the success of the critically acclaimed *When You Finish Saving the World*.

Clocking in at a tight ninety minutes, *A Real Pain* is short and sweet. It follows the journey of secular Jewish cousins David (Eisenberg)

and Benji (Kieran Culkin) as they travel from New York City to Poland in an attempt to honour their grandmother, a Holocaust survivor who fled Poland in 1939. It felt apt to watch it on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which was observed last Monday as Holocaust Memorial Day.

The script and character development in *A Real Pain* are exceptional. The cousins, who are perhaps more like brothers, have drifted apart over the years, yet a deep bond remains between them. Their relationship is a complex mix of love, hate, and un-

spoken envy. They see in each other what they both lack. And, as they visit their grandmother's hometown, they are forced to confront not only the trauma of their grandmother's history but also their own histories and selves. In their journey through Poland, David and Benji are forced to confront the aspects of themselves they don't like: the ones that they wish they could hide from the world. Isn't that just part of being human? And, in a way, we could see *A Real Pain* as a film purely dealing with "humans being human".

Eisenberg and Culkin have undeni-

able chemistry, with Culkin's performance standing out in particular. The statue scene is a standout moment, both in terms of writing and acting. The brilliance of this film lies in its dialogue—sharp and witty at times, yet profoundly moving and haunting when needed—for example, the silence during the concentration camp scene.

A Real Pain is a film about the human experience. It encapsulates the inescapable nature of pain. It's a subject that often goes undiscussed, but perhaps this film will inspire us to reflect on it more openly.

Conclave Succession Meets Vatican



T.R. Cunick
Contributor

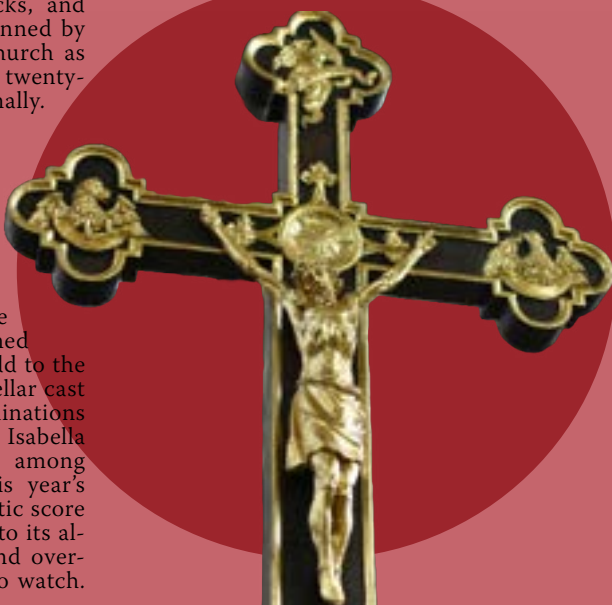
The recently released film *Conclave*, based on the Robert Harris novel of the same name, attempts to depict the inner workings of the Vatican and the ancient and secretive election of a new Pope ("The most famous man in the world") and, similar to the Netflix production *The Two Popes*, is constructed in an epic and cinematic manner drawing on a cast of familiar faces—many tipped for Oscar success and meticulously recreated sets and scenarios.

The film centres on the sudden death of the current Pope and the inner circle of cardinals who, being summoned, witness the breaking of the Piscatory Ring and the declaration of the "Throne of the Pontiff" being now vacant. Three weeks later the conclave gathers for the re-election with divisions and positions now evident and public with Cardinal Bellini being the liberal, Tremblay the moderate, Tedesco the traditionalist, Adeyemi the popular choice and Laurence the dean of the conclave.

The scene is then set for melodrama of the highest order as the conclave begins the process of

reviewing and questioning the candidates with a view to electing a new Pope and all that entails. Along the way they encounter allegations, bribes, embezzlement, terrorist attacks, and an unexpected final result all underpinned by the ideology and principles of the Church as it tried to retain its relevance in the twenty-first century, both publicly and internally.

It is fair to say that Harris' original tightly-plotted novel is given much reverence here, as the film quickly becomes a thriller as much as a more descriptive narrative, dramatising this otherwise private and sacred process with many twists and turns. Much has been made of the setting of the Vatican and its contained and intense atmosphere which does add to the melodrama and gives a stage for its stellar cast to perform. The film boasts Oscar nominations for Ralph Fiennes (Best Actor) and Isabella Rossellini (Best Supporting Actress) among the eight overall nominations at this year's awards. Furthermore, the film's dramatic score and its use of visual effects really add to its already intense and intimate setting, and overall really makes it a compelling film to watch.



We Live In Time:

Garfield and Pugh Star in Time-Jumping Tearjerker



Emily Jo Cottle
Head of Review

When a director decides to cast two powerhouses of acting alongside one another in a romance movie, I am immediately intrigued; the boundless talent of Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield did not disappoint. Nick Payne's *We Live in Time* is a romantic comedy drama centring on the lives of Tobias, a once divorced humble Weetabix worker and Almut, a former figure skating champion and now professional chef. I will preface this article with a spoiler warning, but will also add that I do not believe the events or the ending of the film is its most important feature, but rather the incredibly human depiction of Tobias and Almut's loving relationship despite its hurdles and vicissitudes.

We Live in Time has a non-linear narrative and the film consists of scenes that jump back and forth in time. So we see scenes of the pair living happily together with their daughter before the moment where the two first meet. This non-linear structure did feel initially jarring at the start and I was worried that it would mean sacrificing a full understanding of character and plot, but as the film went on, I understood it was symbolic of the unpredictable spectrum of life from tragedy to comedy. The film's central plot is Almut's struggle with ovarian cancer and her battle with chemotherapy; however, his

not the film's sole focus: it is also about falling in love, navigating the woman's dilemma of work or children, struggles of infertility, and every shade of humanity in between. The disjointed, non-linear collection of short scenes also encompassed the fleeting nature of precious moments in time. I felt this worked really well alongside Almut's struggle with cancer which reduces her time significantly.

The film was incredibly sensitive about Almut's cancer diagnosis. An especially moving moment is when, after a doctor's appointment, Almut questions whether she wants to go through chemotherapy. Almut tells Tobias that maybe she would like to have "six wonderful and proactive months" over "twelve shitty passive ones". The couple come to the resolution that Almut will have chemotherapy while trying to live a full and

bountiful life planning their wedding, taking part in the highly prestigious cooking competition, the Bocuse d'Or, and caring for their young daughter. I think there is a tendency to believe that illness, especially cancer, is a solely passive, dark, and melancholy time, but it is more multifaceted than that. The film highlights how Almut's struggle with cancer shifts how she looks at life and how darker moments lead us to moments of complete relief and fulfillment. Pugh's acting in this film is nothing short of perfection; so true to Almut's fierceness and competitiveness. She grapples with her chemotherapy with strength and grace while aching moments where she is utterly terrified of being forgotten.

Upon reading of her reviews of this film I was quite shocked that a general comment was that the writing of this film was clumsy

and clichéd at points. My personal view was that the writing combined with Pugh and Garfield's performance showcased uncomfortable but innately human moments like impassioned arguments, clumsy nakedness, and the awkward grace period of the beginning of their relationship.

I think the film is sensitive to the spectrum of these characters and, though I would agree there are some melodramatic moments, the film is still ultimately grounded in realism. The scene where Almut and Tobias first meet via her running him over is a dramatised version of reality but still plays to the unpredictable humour of unexpected moments in life. This is best shown in the scene where Almut gives birth in a patrol station toilet—an incredibly humorous but also not unbelievable event. Despite these scenes, the film is very much grounded in the beautiful mundanity of life. At its core the film simply pleads us to hold onto those around us because, ultimately, that's all that matters. The audience doesn't see Almut pass away, but we do see the loving moments before and how Tobias continues this love in caring for their daughter after. I think the beauty of *We Live in Time* is not in the poeticism of the script, or a layered and multifaceted plot, but in the human depiction of a loving couple whose time is cut short. It acts as an oppressive reminder that our time is limited and we must make the most of it with those we love.



Céline Dion Was on the Titanic?! Titanique Review

Emma Samsun
Contributor

A campy, nonsensical adaptation of James Cameron's romantic disaster film, *Titanic*, docks at London's Criterion Theatre until June. *Titanique*, a musical parody, retells the fictional romance between the upper-class Rose and penniless artist Jack through the discography of Céline Dion. As the hilariously wacky Dion, Lauren Drew narrates the "real" story of the fateful voyage, commanding the show with her cheeky asides to the audience, comical facial expressions, and powerhouse rendition of "My Heart Will Go On". The cast recreate scenes such as the iconic "Draw me like one of your French girls" moment, with Rose (Kat Ronney) showcasing her comic timing and bizarre poses while Jack (Rob Houchen) attempts to draw her with limited artistic skills. The fast-paced slide show of queer and pop culture references puts the audience in stitches for the course of the 100-minute performance.

A particular favourite was Drew's brilliantly improvised "spooky" monologue between Jack and Rose, featuring comedic mentions of *Strictly* and *Traitors* host Claudia Winkleman being sighted without her fringe, and Boris Johnson announcing the twenty-seventh lockdown. The brooding rivalled dynamic of self-absorbed Cal (Jordan Luke

Gage) and Jack fighting for Rose's affection is perfectly balanced in a battle of idiocy and camp. The show's inherent queerness is unmistakable, as Cal appears more engaged in his Grindr notifications and his obsession to make it to New York early enough for his hair appointment in SoHo, than his romantic pursuit of Rose. Sporting light drag, Stephen Guarino, as Rose's overbearing mother Ruth is a hilarious portrayal—even impersonating *White Lotus*' Jennifer Coolidge as he incorporates the fan favourite line "these gays are trying to murder me" into their big scene.

The vocal chops of Charlotte Wakefield's Molly Brown, mother of Cal gifted us a heartfelt rendition of "All by Myself", with a hilarious twist as she paddles to safety. Notably, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* star Layton Williams gives a standout performance in a variety of roles from camp museum guide to a Tina Turner-inspired rock 'n' roll "Iceberg B*tch", with a fiery performance of "River Deep, Mountain High". As the ship collides with the iceberg, there's even an unhinged "lip sync for your life" between Cal and Jack in which Williams (as RuPaul) determines the fate of the rivalled lovers. From the glittering piñata-style heart of the ocean adorning the Criterion stage, to the effervescent cast, this show is the epitome of "camp chaos"—and a must watch!

The Traitors: More Bullying Than Betrayal?

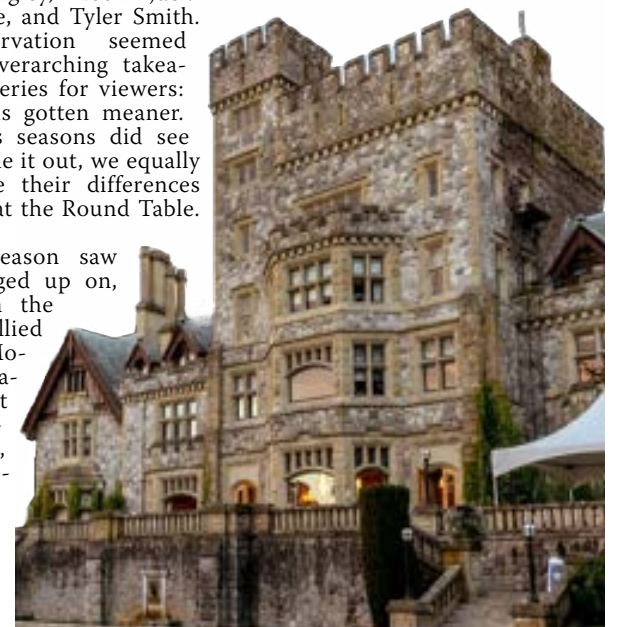
Gemma Willmott
Review Editor

BC One's hit show *The Traitors* was back on our screens this January, with its brand new series airing its first episode on New Year's Day. The TV show, hosted by Claudia Winkleman, has been highly anticipated since last year's drama-packed season ended. However, fans were left with a slightly sour taste after this year's season, and were left asking: has *The Traitors*' castle become more a place of bullying than betrayal? Fans were appalled fairly early in the season as contestant and "Faithful" Kasim Ahmed was condemned as a "Traitor". Heartbreaking footage showed Kas wandering through the castle with his dinner, and finally resigning to eating alone as none of his fellow contestants would engage with him. Contestants were certain Kas was a Traitor due to "gut feelings" and a suspicious "twinkle in his eye". One fan wrote on X: "Not naming names but the 'gut feeling' these lot had was racism I really hated watching the way they treated Kasim. #TheTraitors." Another wrote: "I love #TheTraitors but god, that was uncomfortable. Seeing a person of colour saying they feel isolated and ostracized is not a good look. I know people say it's just a game, but it must be hard not to take it personally. Kas was a king among men." Kas' banishment occurred in episode four of the season. Needless to say, the dynamic in *The Traitors*' castle was one viewers were uncomfortable watching.

Kas released a statement via Instagram after the uproar at his treatment in the castle, writing: "Joe and Jake [other contestants] may have led the charge against me in the game, but have been an excellent support in the real world and are some of the loveliest people I've met [...] *Traitors* family forever!" Fans, however, remained unimpressed and accused the show of fostering a toxic environment that encourages bullying and ostracising. Fans of the show pointed out that there was a pack mentality unlike any other series. Contestant Freddie Fraser noted that a "clique" had formed within the castle, comprised of Leanne Quigley, Leon Jackman, Livi Deane, and Tyler Smith. Freddie's observation seemed to convey the overarching takeaway from this series for viewers: *The Traitors* has gotten meaner. Where previous seasons did see contestants battle it out, we equally saw them leave their differences and arguments at the Round Table.

No previous season saw individuals ganged up on, ostracised from the group, and bullied en masse. Moments of this season were difficult and uncomfortable to watch, almost reminiscent of popular teenagers picking on their less popular classmates.

The contestants from this year's season have tried to reassure fans that they are all friends "outside the game". Though this may be true, I think there is still some merit to the criticisms made regarding the dynamic of contestants within the show. The mob-like style of eliminations this year was uncomfortable to watch, and several contestants seemed defeated before even attempting to fight their corner. I hope that next years *The Traitors* sees the return of light-hearted perfidiousness rather than mob mentality, for the sake of both the contestants and the audience.



Nosferatu (2024)



Sam Davies
Contributor

Robert Eggers’ adaptation of *Nosferatu* is a refreshing reimagining of a traditional tale told time and time again. Originally inspired heavily by Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, *Nosferatu* is a staple of the gothic-vampire genre.

Now, as the third cinematic rendition of *Nosferatu*, the execution of the narrative and cinematography is captivating. As a parallel to *Dracula*, the film’s opening sequence follows the male protagonist’s venture toward the Count’s castle. Much like my experience with Stoker’s novel, this was perhaps my favourite sequence of the film before the perspective shifts to focus on multiple characters. Tom’s journey through snowy landscapes and over winding cliffs leads to his fateful meeting with the Count and his torment within his walls. I was completely immersed in these moments, despite having consumed this sequence many times before across multiple adaptations and formats. Following this section, the film shifts from

strictly adhering to the classic vampire conventions, such as the isolated castle, to exploring the social disequilibrium of the characters. Focusing on Lily-Rose Depp’s portrayal of Ellen Hutter, the subject of Count Orlok’s wrath, possession, and desire. By doing so, offering an appreciated perspective on the personal struggles of those affected by *Nosferatu*. The very first scene especially sets this tone for the rest of the film, when Ellen, as a result of her loneliness, calls out for companionship from “any celestial form”. This moment serves as a symbolic testament to the narrative’s overarching themes: the willingness to sacrifice and the desperation of humanity, both of which manifest in the plague-like horror of Orlok—*Nosferatu*.

The acting across the cast is phenomenal and wholly convincing, particularly in the film’s grotesque and striking moments. Eggers’ di-

rection and framing elevate these scenes—such as the eerie carriage ride through the woods and the chilling final confrontation between Ellen and Orlok—into something disturbingly and disgustingly brilliant.

The film pushes boundaries in ways so outlandish and inhuman that at times I found myself questioning whether I even enjoyed what I was watching. Yet, the lasting impact of the plot and performances kept my mind returning to the film for days after. Ultimately solidifying my opinion that it is a great film, clouded only at first by the unnaturalness of what I was consuming. Which in its own way, succeeds its motivations as a horror film.

Furthermore, the symbolism and foreshadowing throughout make *Nosferatu* a feast for cinephiles. In one instance, for example, the

childhood innocence of characters playing and imagining horrors mirrors their tragic fate. Another moment sees Ellen seemingly possessed in a fit, lying on the shore as she climaxes. This could be an intentional nod to mythology, specifically *The Odyssey*, where Penelope calls out to the sea for her missing husband as he voyages the Aegean. On a deeper analytical level, folklore portrays women’s intimacy with the sea as a sign of primal connection and feminine energy, an erotic surrender to something greater than themselves. This parallels Ellen’s relationship with Orlok; her actions in this moment serve as a complete surrender to him. Later in the film, she is even described as the characters’ “salvation”.

Overall, I am glad to add *Nosferatu* to the top of my 2025 watched list. It is a strong start to the year, with specific shots and sequences offering some of the best cinematography and acting I have seen in years. I implore you to give it a go if you do not shy away from the weird and unsettling. Just give it time before making any rash judgements. You may, like me, find it growing on you, lingering in your mind like the rats that plague its haunting second half.



A Complete Unknown: A Refreshing Change for Biopics

Owen Russell
Contributor

As the 97th Oscars award ceremony approaches, we are seeing an increased interest in a range of films from across the globe. And personally, the film that I was most excited to see was James Mangold’s biopic starring Timothée Chalamet titled *A Complete Unknown*. As a Dylan fan I went into the cinema uncertain yet excited to see how Chalamet would portray him. Biopics, and in particular music biopics have remained a staple of award ceremonies in recent years. Films like *Elvis* and *Bohemian Rhapsody* were very popular at the Oscars, and the latter even won the award for Best Picture. This trend of so called “Oscar bait” biopics doesn’t appear to be slowing down, films about Bruce Springsteen and The Bea-

ties are already on the way, and will no doubt be in contention for a multitude of awards.

One factor of these films that often faces criticism is the broadness of content they aim to convey. Most follow the format of aiming to cram as much of a musician’s life as possible into the runtime, often risking quantity over quality. *A Complete Unknown* is no such film. Mangold focuses on a uniquely short, but vital, part of Bob Dylan’s career. It chronologically focuses on the four-year period between 1961 and 1965, and instead of featuring montage flashbacks focuses specifically on Dylan’s rise to fame and the evolution of his music from folk to the controversial “electric Dylan”.

The title of the film, taken from Dylan’s pivotal song “Like a Rolling Stone”, remains prevalent throughout the film. Chalamet’s portrayal keeps the musician at somewhat

of an arm’s length. Questions about his past are brought up by characters in the film, he claims to have worked in a circus, but they are never answered. Mangold’s direction proves that they don’t need to be answered within the narrative, this film is a snapshot into a specific era in American musical history, it does not aim to attain any sense of revelation into the character of the icon Dylan.

It is in this way also de-mystifying; the image of Dylan as mysterious and intellectual is deconstructed in an enjoyably humorous way. At many times throughout the film, particularly in his interactions with various women, Chalamet conveys Dylan as rather arrogant and unlikeable. The focus remains largely on musical progression over character progression, leaving no great lessons learnt and many of the conflicts in the film being left unresolved. We only receive

an answer to the outcome of these conflicts in a brief text at the end of the film.

Through focusing on such a short time span, Mangold conveys a youthful Dylan who is undeniably talented and a phenomenal songwriter, but also a brash and confident young man in his twenties dealing with fame. This limelight of electric music and psychedelic lyrics is wonderfully contrasted against the simple folk songs that Dylan starts the film playing. This film concludes with an exaggerated but nonetheless dramatic portrayal of the infamous 1965 Newport Folk Festival. *A Complete Unknown* is a unique and welcome addition to the genre of musical biopics and gives a humorous and nuanced tribute to an icon of American music at the fascinating peak of his fame.

UPCOMING MUST-SEES

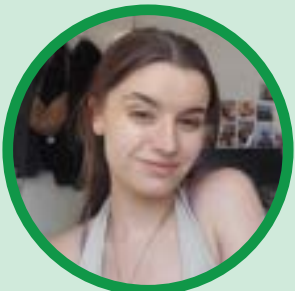
Bridget Jones Mad About the Boy – 13th February

Captain America: Brave New World – 14th February

The Last Showgirl – 27th February



THE TEAM



Hannah Prince



Dan Gorst



Ruaidhri Gillen Lynch



SCIENCE



Hangovers: Causes and Prevention

Hannah Prince
Head of Science

We have all experienced it—the dreaded morning after the night before where your head is pounding, and your stomach is churning. But is the rumour true that some alcohols give you a significantly worse hangover than others?

All alcohols contain compounds called congeners, and it is this compound that scientists believe is responsible for providing the dreaded hangover.

Congeners are a by-product of the fermentation process, where the yeast converts amino acids into ethanol. The congeners produced in the distillation process are esters, ketones, acids, alcohols and aldehydes, all helping to give the alcohol its individual taste. The higher the number of congeners in a drink, the worse the hangover you feel the next morning. Drinks with high congeners will also have a high amount of methanol. Vodka, for example, has 102mg of methanol per litre, compared to rum which has 3633mg of methanol per litre.

If the alcohol is paler in colour, such as light rum, vodka, gin, and white wine, it will generally have a lower number of congeners, as they are less heavily distilled. Darker alcohols such as dark rum, whisky, and red wine, will have a higher number of congeners due to the longer and heavier distillery processes involved in their production.

Hangovers are commonly thought of being caused by dehydration, which while true, is not the only cause. This is because alcohol interferes with the body's antidiuretic hormone production, which signals the kidneys to reabsorb fluids. When you consume alcohol, ADH is suppressed, causing the kidneys to excrete more water.

Congeners have a big impact on how severe the hangover is. However, in the majority of cases, people will consume drinks with a variety of congener levels throughout the night, so the hangover is the combined effort of all of those drinks.

So, the most important question is: How can you minimise your hangover?

1. Try to drink lighter alcohols which will have a lower number of congeners.

2. Don't drink alcohol on an empty stomach, especially if you are drinking darker, and therefore higher congener alcohols, as a full stomach will slow down the absorption and allow your body to break down more of the congeners.

3. Drink plenty of water throughout the night to keep yourself hydrated.

It goes without saying that you should drink responsibly, but now you know the science behind how exactly different alcohol affects your

body and what causes your hangovers, helping you to feel fresh the morning after YOLO and attend your all-important Thursday morning lectures.



The Gender Pain Gap: Scientific Fact or Gender Illusion?

Sienna Wilson
Contributor

On the morning of January 12th, 2023, 26-year-old primary school teacher Dena Collins collapsed in her home. After numerous attempts at resuscitation, she was pronounced dead at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, despite visiting the same hospital the previous evening. Dena had been discharged from A&E just the day before but was sent home without the medication that could have saved her life. This is the reality for millions of women worldwide who believe their pain is dismissed and discarded by medical professionals.

The Gender Pain Gap describes the phenomenon of women reporting more instances of chronic pain than men, but also being less likely to be offered timely pain relief. In a survey conducted in 2019, almost half of the respondents claimed they did not think their healthcare providers took their pain seriously. And yet, there continues to be a lack of improvement. In the 2023 Gender Pain Gap Index report, it was

revealed the gap had extended from 7% to 11%.

Lack of research, medical bias, and social and cultural factors play a significant role. From contraceptive implants to chronic illnesses, women just like Dena are told they are "hysterical", "dramatic", or "emotional" when describing their pain, leading to misdiagnosis, incorrect medicine dosages, and delayed treatments. Two years later, Dena's family is speaking out. "She was just sparkling glitter. And you couldn't help but want to be in her presence", expresses Clare, her older sister.

Dena's initial worries arose after a pain in the back of her leg on Saturday the 7th of January, which led to a developing sickness. She was aware of the risk of blood clots, as she was on the combined contraceptive pill and had just completed a course of antibiotics, so sought medical attention the following Monday. The GP's notes acknowledged the possibility of a blood clot, but Dena was sent home with a diagnosis of "likely muscle strain", and the appointment was never logged on the NHS system. Two days later, the pain was extortionate, and Dena's father rushed her to Urgent Care at QEH. Checks for blood clotting problems showed a score of 710, three times the normal level, but Dena was released without the blood-thinning precautionary medication often given to patients at this stage. The following morning, Dena passed away.

While Dena's family are sympathetic to the pressure NHS workers face, they feel as though the hospital did not take Dena's concerns seriously. Her

sister, Clare, says, "Instead, they sent her home to die in our family home in front of us." Misogyny in medicine is a growing concern and was raised in a report by the Women and Equalities Committee last month. While Dena's tragic story highlights the life-threatening consequences of ignored pain, it is not an isolated case.

I spoke to Faith Saunders-Beckwith, a 17-year-old student who was diagnosed with endometriosis after fighting for three years to be taken seriously by her doctors. "I had a lot of moments where I was like, am I really just being dramatic?" she says, "I feel like in yourself, you know when something's wrong, and you know when something doesn't feel right. [...] I feel like a lot of healthcare professionals shut you down. It's this thing of 'You're hormonal, you're dramatic, simply there's nothing wrong.' Finally, someone listened to me. [...] I had an ultrasound, they didn't see anything on the ultrasound, and then I was sort of disregarded again, and it was back to square one."

Endometriosis is a long-term condition where tissue similar to the lining of the womb grows in other places, such as the ovaries and fallopian tubes. Common symptoms include pelvic or lower back pain, pain during or after sex, and heavy or irregular periods. For some women, this condition exceeds physical agony and can lead to infertility, anxiety, and depression, having a huge impact on their lives. One in ten women live with endometriosis, yet it can take anywhere from four to eleven years to receive a diagnosis. While one in three women in the UK will suffer

from a reproductive or gynaecological health problem, the lack of research into female health is staggering. There is five times more research into erectile dysfunction, which affects 19% of men, than into premenstrual syndrome, which affects 90% of women.

As demonstrated by the tragic case of Dena Collins and the ongoing struggles of girls like Faith Saunders-Beckwith, the dismissal of women's pain by healthcare professionals is not only damaging, but also life-threatening. Until healthcare systems acknowledge and address the Gender Pain Gap, countless women will continue to suffer in silence, their pain unheard, unacknowledged, and untreated.

FUN FACT!

If we stacked all the bacteria in the world on top of each other, they would stretch for 10 billion light-years.



UK Government Disposes of its Plutonium Stockpile

Ruaidhri Gillen Lynch
Science Editor

The UK's nuclear power sector functions almost entirely through advanced gas-cooled reactors (AGRs), which, with their use of enriched uranium as a primary fuel source, produce plutonium as a by-product. Since the 60s, the government has slowly amassed the largest global stockpile of the substance at 140 tonnes, with the general idea having been to recycle this waste product and repurpose it as a fuel source if and when needed by the UK's reactors. The problem is that no such situation has arisen. The UK now spends around £70 million per annum on the storage and guarding of the dangerous substance,

with storage container changes and armed police racking up a large bill.

In 2011, the government created a preliminary policy standpoint to keep storing plutonium, with thoughts to use it as a mixed-oxide fuel; however, they also invited this to be open to debate. Following this, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority carried out a veracious analysis of the deliverability, technical practicality, and economic cost of such a path, concluding that it would be a poor financial decision, and instead recommending that the plutonium be taken out of commission.

On 24 January, the government announced its decision to do just that: the UK will now process its plutonium into a ceramic-like material which, while still radioactive, is far more stable. This makes it suitable for its subsequent permanent storage deep underground in Sellafield, where the UK has been processing and storing its nuclear waste since the 1940s.

Once contained correctly, nuclear specialists say it will be safe for millions of years, with the additional benefit of an influx of skilled labour into the local area. With the UK struggling with the costs of getting projects like Hinckley Point C and Sizewell Cup up and running, the majority of the nation's reactors being set to go offline within the next decade, and no sign of a future for the use of this fuel in the UK, the decision is being regarded as a positive, rational, and necessary step forward to a realistic approach to nuclear energy in the UK.

US Withdraws From Paris Climate Agreement

Olivia Nilsen
Contributor

President of the United States, Donald Trump, has once again decided to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement. Despite the previous withdrawal taking effect after a four-year waiting period, it will only be twelve months before the 2025 withdrawal begins. It seems President Trump does not want to stop there, signalling a withdrawal from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, an international framework for climate change cooperation.

A federal withdrawal of support for the clean

energy sector risks the US falling behind internationally. Green energy production is a burgeoning field with vast technological advancements and opportunities for job and economic growth. Due to the Trump administration, the US may lag behind the advancements being made globally. Many are worried that through Trump recalling more than one hundred environmental rules, the United States' emissions will soar, while the renewable energy sector suffers.

The US has historically been the biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, if presently second to China. A world leader outright denying climate change in this new era of extreme weather, raises political anxieties for many. The year has begun with the outbreak of wildfires in California, while catastrophic droughts and extreme flooding continue.

The United States leaving the agreement may set a worrying precedent for other nations to withdraw support. Without US financial aid and backing, it is unclear how successful efforts to curb global emissions will be, particularly as the next five years are the most significant for hitting pledged targets. Under the current US administration, emissions may rise to 36% higher than the current policy.

It is clear that during these most fragile years, the United States will not stand alongside other nations in endeavouring to reduce emissions. With this being the second time President Trump has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement, questions arise about US reliability on a global scale. Not only does this damage US credibility internationally, but it highlights a complete disregard for scientific efforts and global cooperation on this issue. It highlights that the Trump administration systematically disregards long-term climate goals and an ignorance of scientific efforts on a global scale.



The Science Behind Dreams

During our nightly sleep, our minds create vivid, often perplexing narratives. Dreams, a universal human experience, occur during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep when brain activity is heightened. Whether scary, insightful, or downright bizarre, the function and science behind dreaming remain widely debated mysteries.

Historically, dreams have been seen as messages from the divine, sources of guidance, or even glimpses into the future.

Psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung believed they revealed hidden fears, desires, and unconscious conflicts. Culturally, dreams have shaped myths, art, and decision-making, from Indigenous dream rituals to modern storytelling. Whether viewed as mystical visions or mere brain activity, they continue to intrigue and influence human thought.

One leading theory suggests that dreams aid memory consolidation. As we sleep, the brain processes the day's experiences, potentially transferring them from short-term to long-term memory. Another theory argues that dreams help regulate emotions by simulating challenging situations in a safe environment, allowing us to work through

fears and stress. From a neurological perspective, dreams may simply be the brain making sense of random neural activity as we sleep. The activation-synthesis hypothesis suggests that the cortex in the brain assembles this activity into coherent, if sometimes surreal, narratives.

Physiologically, dreaming is driven by a network of neural structures known as the "dreaming brain". The pons, located in the brainstem, trigger REM sleep and send signals to other regions.

The amygdala, a centre for processing emotions, is highly active during dreams, which may explain their often intense emotional content. Meanwhile, the prefrontal cortex responsible for logic and decision-

making, becomes less active, explaining the illogical nature of many dreams. Recent breakthroughs have shown that two-way communication with dreaming individuals is possible. Studies from Northwestern University, Illinois, and research teams in France, Germany, and the Netherlands have independently demonstrated that people in lucid dreams—where they are aware they are dreaming—can respond to external stimuli, offering new ways to study consciousness.

Not all dreams are pleasant. Nightmares, triggered by stress, trauma, or sleep disorders, can disrupt rest and heighten anxiety. Managing stress, maintaining good sleep hygiene, and practising relaxation techniques can help reduce their frequency. For recur-

ring nightmares, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and imagery rehearsal therapy (IRT) have proven effective.

Despite ongoing research, the purpose of dreams remains uncertain. With advances in neuroscience and sleep studies, we are getting closer to understanding their role in memory, emotion, and brain function.

Tia Rudman
Contributor



The Dangers of a Nicotine Addiction

Helen Turnbull
Contributor

Nicotine, naturally occurring in tobacco plants, is a key ingredient in cigarettes, vapes and snus—all of which are rising in popularity among students.

University College London conducted a study that found the proportion of 18-to-24-year-olds who vaped had tripled since disposable vapes came onto the market, going from 9% in May 2021, to 29% in May 2023, with these numbers continuing to rise. Strikingly, a study showed that 34% of students said they could get through a disposable vape as quickly as one day or even one night out. But most shockingly, *The Tab*, after surveying the student population, discovered that Cardiff University is ranked as the third most vaping-addicted university, with 67% of Cardiff students saying they are addicted. So, how has this epidemic started, and what are the effects?

Nicotine is the main psychoactive component of tobacco; acting as a stimulant, it binds to nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs), which cause the release of neurotransmitters,

primarily dopamine, providing that relaxing sensation. The process also causes the release of norepinephrine and serotonin, which increase alertness and aid mood regulation, respectively. This whole process creates a reinforced behaviour pattern for the user, creating an association between usage and pleasure. With repeated use, the brain adapts to become more resistant to nicotine usage (often by the reduction in the number of its receptors), driving users to ever larger doses for the same feeling—the result of which can be a physical dependence. This dependence can result in users feeling withdrawal symptoms, such as decreased capacity for focus, which for students, drives them back to usage: without nicotine, students can feel less able, or completely unable to work, pushing them back in exam seasons.

A 20mg disposable vape is roughly equivalent to 20–40 cigarettes, directly contributing to this spike in addiction due to the intensity. Some electronic vapes are even able to deliver nicotine to the bloodstream more rapidly than cigarettes. As well as this, the accessibility of nicotine in corner shops and the social pressure to join in with this unhealthy trend, augments the addiction.

While the long-term effects of nicotine addiction are widely known (lung cancer, lung diseases like emphysema and chronic bronchitis, cancer of the mouth, throat, etc.), the immediate effects are hugely impactful too. The University of Surrey conducted a study which showed that regular vape users display a 15% increase in insomnia over non-users, with three in four people's symptoms being clinically significant. Moreover, researchers in this study found that people with a nicotine addiction consumed twice as much alcohol each week as those without. These alarming statistics create a concerning reality for many students—poor sleep and excess alcohol use. The obvious next question is how this affects students' studies. Needless to say: not positively.

In addition to the detrimental

effects on students' physical health, using nicotine is also linked to a rise in anxiety. Despite nicotine creating an immediate sense of relaxation since it is an anxiolytic drug, the feeling is temporary, and the withdrawal symptoms afterwards lead to an overall larger anxiety.

How can students kick this dependence? This, the vital question, remains.



Recent Scientific Discoveries

Marmoset monkeys have been discovered to give each other names to aid their communication.

Scientists have used IVF to impregnate a white rhino, in the hope to stop the species going extinct.

The FDA have approved the use of a diagnostic menstrual pad that collects menstrual blood and allows scientists and doctors to analyse blood sugar levels.

Scientists discovered that the root cause of Lupus is an imbalance in T cells and this discovery should help the reversal of symptoms.

Could There Be Life on One of the Moons of Uranus?

James Burns
Contributor

An unlikely candidate for harbouring life has emerged. Miranda, one of Uranus' small and mysterious moons, has, according to recent findings, presented potential for life. Beneath its icy exterior lies the possibility of a hidden ocean, a groundbreaking revelation that challenges our assumptions of possible life beyond Earth, as well as raising questions about habitable environments.

The feasibility of Miranda having subsurface oceans was raised in a 2024 study in *The Planetary Science Journal*. A team, led by planetary science journalist Tom Nordheim, examined the images and data from NASA's Voyager 2 mission, which offered our only close-up view of Miranda in 1986. By re-analysing these images with advanced computer models, the team found features consistent with subsurface heating, an indication of the existence of liquid water. This ocean, if present, would lie beneath an icy crust 31km thick and 97km deep, a remarkable size for a small moon with just a 146 mile radius.

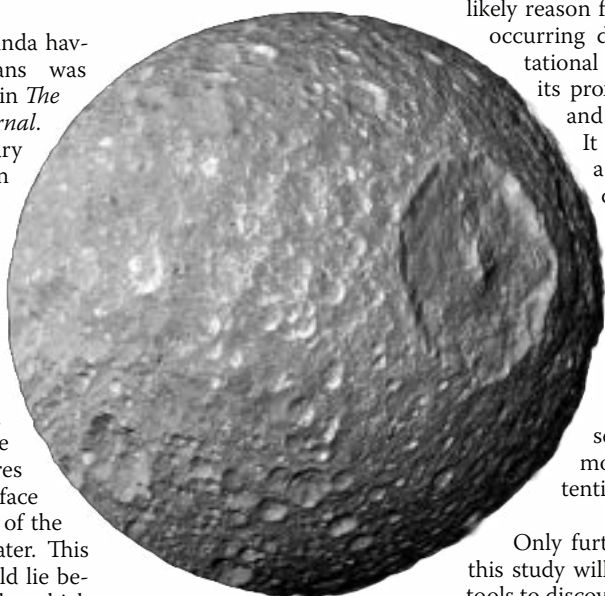
This potential discovery is significant, as Miranda's distance position, existing 2.7 billion kilometres from the sun subjects it to extreme cold, making it an unlikely place for liquid water. It is known to planetary scientists that the moons of other distant planets in the solar system possess potential subsurface liquid water oceans, such as the Jovian moon Europa and the Saturnian moon Enceladus. These moons exist outside the "goldilocks zone"—the optimal distance from a star in which liquid can exist on a world's surface, that

moon's, bring into question the distance from a star required to support hidden habitats, as long as internal heating mechanisms are at play. This suggests that there is the potential for life in and far away from our solar system.

Miranda's surface consists of a mosaic of towering cliffs, deep canyons and unusual regions known as coronae, as well as oval areas with layered patterns. This varied landscape suggests a history of intense geological activity. Tidal heating is a likely reason for these features, occurring due to the gravitational pull caused by its proximity to Uranus and nearby moons. It orbits Uranus in a slightly elliptical path and the varying distance causes its structure to stretch and compress, creating heat from friction inside. This same process is seen on the other moons with the potential for oceans.

Only further research like this study will help give us the tools to discover the true extent of its habitability, as the endless scientific quest to find life far from home ensues.

was previously thought to be a requirement for habitability. The findings of liquid water on



Getting Down and Dirty in Zero Gravity

Hannah Prince
Head of Science

As we enter a world where space tourism is a genuine possibility in the next couple of decades, the question of the possibility of having sexual relations in zero gravity arises.

Sex in space is discouraged by NASA, and there is no documentation of it ever having happened, although we have to ask whether it is something that astronauts would admit to. There are only 279 astronauts who have been to the International Space Station

fellow crewmates healthy and alive.

Since the International Space Station was first established, there has only been one married couple in space at the same time: Astronauts Mark Lee and Jan Davis, but they denied ever attempting any sexual activity while on board the ISS.

While no one has ever ever attempted to have sex in space (or so they claim), it doesn't mean that it isn't possible.

The main issue is gravity. How do you attempt to have sex when there is no gravitational pull keeping you in place? As Cassidy Ward says in her exploration of sex in space: "It's hard to get down and dirty if there is no down."

An element of acrobatic skill may be required for couples to get any enjoyment out of sex as you are not able to stay in one place without tethers keeping you there.

Another element to consider is sexual fluids. As we all know, when men orgasm, they produce semen, a fluid containing sperm, which, when ejaculated into the vagina, swims towards the egg

to try and fertilise it. In space, these fluids would likely just float, potentially creating a biohazard. Sex (if done correctly), is a physical activity, resulting in both parties involved being sweaty and exhausted by the end. Sweat, in zero gravity, would bead up and float to create what is essentially a sweat cloud, or sphere. I think we can all agree that floating semen and sweat clouds are not exactly the romantic atmosphere we want to create when enjoying sexual relations with a partner.

Scientists have also concluded that space pregnancies are not very desirable. Embryos, while in the uterus, require gravity to successfully form their bone structures and vital organs. So while there is a chance you could sustain a pregnancy in space, there is a significant chance that there would be medical deformities and long-term medical issues that the child would face.

As we look towards a world where the average person, rather than a highly trained astronaut, could be heading to space, these questions become more realistic. The real question is, who will be the first person to get down and dirty in zero gravity?





Aimee Szulczewski



Grace D'Souza



Lily Zeeuw

Sir Chris Hoy's Inspiring Battle with Cancer and Bucket List Trip to Wales

Aimee Szulczewski
Head of Sports

Six-time Olympic cycling champion Sir Chris Hoy has revealed his battle with terminal prostate cancer, a diagnosis that has deeply moved fans and fellow athletes alike. Despite the devastating news, he remains dedicated to raising awareness about the disease, emphasising the importance of early detection.

Hoy, who had no symptoms before his diagnosis, has partnered with Prostate Cancer UK, urging men to get screened. His advocacy

work has already made a significant impact, with the BIGGER 180 campaign raising over £1 million for prostate cancer research. In January, Hoy made an emotional appearance at the PDC World Darts Championship final, where he presented the Ballon d'Art trophy to Luke Littler, who threw the most 180s in the tournament. The 17-year-old darts star expressed admiration for Hoy's bravery and highlighted the importance of his presence at the event.

Beyond his tireless advocacy, Hoy has been focusing on making the most of his time, recently fulfilling

a lifelong dream with a bucket list trip to Wales. Accompanied by his wife, Sarra, Hoy spent several days exploring the country's breathtaking landscapes and cultural sites in a vintage Singer Turbo. He described the experience as 'the stuff dreams are made of', cherishing the opportunity to create unforgettable memories.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men in the UK, with one in eight diagnosed during their lifetime. Hoy's openness about his battle has shed a light on the importance of regular health checks, giving hope

and encouragement to countless others. It is important to have a thorough discussion with your GP about getting tested. Regular checking and being aware of any changes in urinary habits and other related symptoms can also aid in early detection.

While his future remains uncertain, Hoy continues to live life with the same determination and resilience that made him a cycling legend.

For more information, visit the NHS website or consult your GP.

Strictly Come Dancing is Coming to Cardiff University!

Sophie Foley
Contributor

Cardiff University Dancesport Club exemplifies the blend of artistry and athleticism. Known for its competitive spirit and inclusive community, Cardiff Dancesport offers a platform for dancers of all levels. Whether beginners or seasoned competitors, everyone finds a place to shine, learn, and grow.

Founded in the 1980s, Cardiff Dancesport set a vibrant scene for a Ballroom, Latin and Salsa dancing society, where students were offered the exciting opportunity to represent Cardiff

University at national competitions. As one of the oldest and most esteemed clubs within the Cardiff Students' Union, Cardiff Dancesport has a rich history, watching the club evolve from a society called BopSoc, to a recognised sport in the Athletic Union, fostering high-level dancers for the past forty years.

Under the instruction of Phillip and Carol Perry from the New Cottage Dance Studio, Dancesport flourished in the 1990s. Members describe their experience as "a total blast" and something that made their university experience some of the "best times" of their life so far.

By the early 2000s, Phillip and Carol handed the baton to their son Sean and his wife Kay Perry. They have continued to teach hundreds of students at Cardiff University and New Cottage Dance Studios, now known as Shappelles. They

continued instructing to this date and are the backbone of the club.

Over the years, Cardiff Dancesport has hosted the Southern University Dance Competition (SUDC) and has also attended many competitions, achieving notable success. From the Cardiff A Team placing first at the Southern Friendly in 1995, to Zoe Bannister and Anirudh Bansal winning the National Pre-Intermediate Inter-Varsity Championship in 2024, Cardiff Dancesport has thrived for over forty years.

Currently, revitalising post COVID-19, Dancesport is slowly regaining its momentum and thriving as a club. The coaching team, led by Sean Perry, now includes his daughter, Ella, and her partner, Gustav, and salsa specialist, Andy Witt. Though membership numbers have dipped from their peak, the club is steadily regaining momentum. Members

describe it as "an unforgettable experience" and "the highlight of university life", making it a cherished part of the student experience not to be overlooked.

Over the next eight weeks, Cardiff Dancesport is taking on an incredible challenge, teaching twelve sport clubs and society members to dance, ready to perform at their *Strictly Come Dancesport* charity show on Friday the 28th of March.

Featuring societies such as Rugby League, Kickboxing, Kayaking, Taylor Swift, and so much more, this will not be an event to miss! Tickets go on sale soon, all in aid of the hospice and end-of-life care charity Marie Curie, so don't miss out on an unforgettable evening.

Wales and England set to Face off in "Group of Death"

Lily Zeeuw
Sports Editor

The Welsh women's football team, having recently secured a historic qualification for their debut international tournament at the UEFA Women's Euro 2025, are set to face a big challenge after being drawn into the so-called "Group of Death" for the competition, Group D. The group features reigning champions England, 2017 winners the Netherlands, and France, who reached the semifinals in the previous tournament.

Wales have already provided the underdog story of the competition beating out, the (according to FIFA) higher ranked Republic of Ireland to reach the tournament, making them the lowest ranked team in the upcoming Euros. Therefore, a potential

upset against one of these heavyweights of women's football cannot be ruled out.

Cymru seem to be dedicated to coming into the tournament with the best team possible. With the January transfer window seeing Hayley Ladd, an integral part of the Wales squad, moving from Manchester United, where she was not getting playing time, to Everton, where despite not challenging at the top of the table like Manchester United, getting key minutes in preparation for this summer.

Wales will open their Euros campaign against the Netherlands on the 5th of July, with an exciting and perhaps consequential final group game against England waiting on the 13th of July. It will certainly be a tough fixture; however, with rivalry and potential qualification to the latter stages of the tournament

on the line, anything could happen!

Across the tournament, hosts Switzerland were dealt with a kind draw, with their group including a Nordic trio of Norway, Iceland, and Finland. World Champions Spain should secure knockout qualification in a group that includes Portugal, Belgium, and Italy. Group C provides a bit more competition than the previous groups, with Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and debutants Poland all competing for spots in the knockout round.

For now, Wales has a lineup of Nations League fixtures that should line up as good preparation for the tournament, with their group containing Sweden, Italy, and Denmark, all competing at the European Championship this summer.



Raducanu Falls in Singapore Opener but Stays Determined

Alaia Osoz
Contributor

British tennis player Emma Raducanu lost the first round of the Singapore Open to Cristina Bucsa, the WTA No. 101. This was Raducanu's first match since suffering a heavy defeat to Iga Swiatek in the third round of the Australian Open.

The three-hour match in Singapore saw seventeen serve breaks, with Bucsa winning the match 7-5, 5-7, and 5-7. Raducanu won the first set, putting herself in a strong position for the next set, and she was up 5-4 in sets two and three. However, she struggled to win points with her second serve, which proved costly in this close match, as Bucsa won sets two and three, despite being behind on Raducanu.

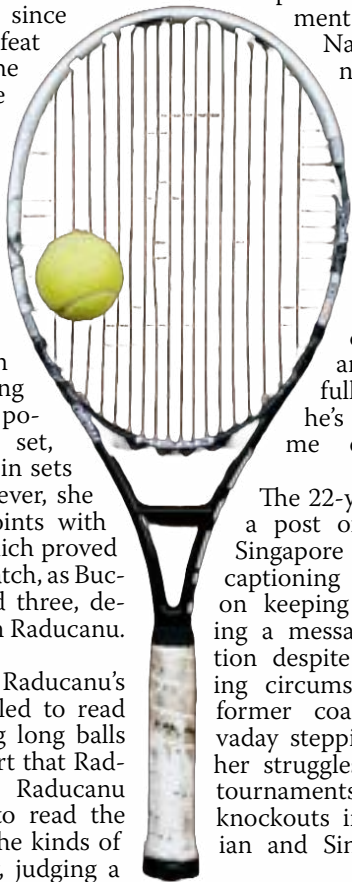
Bucsa capitalised on Raducanu's mistakes and struggled to read the match by hitting long balls into areas of the court that Raducanu left exposed. Raducanu struggled at times to read the match, particularly the kinds of shots coming at her, judging a short shot as a long shot. It was a match of close margins and both players struggled to hold serve, but Bucsa was resilient and broke a weary Raducanu in the deciding set to take the win.

The Singapore Open was Raducanu's first tournament after her

childhood coach Nick Cavaday stepped down from the role due to health reasons. Raducanu's mother accompanied her in Singapore alongside fitness coach Yutaka Nakamura, who has previously worked with tennis legend Maria Sharapova. Raducanu expressed her excitement to work with Nakamura: "My natural athleticism is something that I have to use. I have to hone it, I have to polish it, it's still pretty raw and I don't think anywhere near fully developed so he's going to help me explore that."

The 22-year-old shared a post of her time in Singapore on Instagram, captioning it: "Keeping on keeping on." Conveying a message of motivation despite the challenging circumstances of her former coach Nick Cavaday stepping down, and her struggles to go far in tournaments like her early knockouts in the Australian and Singapore Open.

Raducanu has not won a major tournament since her 2021 US Open victory at only 18 years old. However, she is seemingly optimistic about her future in tennis, as her early existence in Singapore has allowed her to accept a wildcard into the qualifying draw at the Abu Dhabi Open.



Old Dog, New Prancing Horse – 2025 F1 Season Predictions

Aimee Szulczewski
Head of Sports

The 2025 Formula 1 season is shaping up to be an all-time classic, with significant team changes shaking up the grid. Two of the sport's biggest stories revolve around Hamilton's long-awaited move to Ferrari and McLaren's realistic shot at a drivers' championship. But beyond these headline-grabbing moves, other teams are making strategic changes that could see them disrupt the looming season.

Let's be honest—Hamilton in Ferrari red just feels right. There is something almost mythical about an all-time great joining the sport's most legendary team, like Michael Schumacher before him. But let's not romanticise it too much. This is not just about nostalgia of "the prime years". We also need to wonder if Ferrari will give Hamilton a car capable of fighting at the front.

Hamilton himself is excited, calling his first Ferrari test "one of the best feelings of my life". But emotions do not win titles, fast cars do. Ferrari has been frustratingly close in recent years, but inconsistent performances and strategy have kept them from truly challenging Red Bull. Is this where Hamilton comes in? His experience, technical feedback and ability to extract the most out of a car could be exactly what Ferrari needs to take that final step.

The wildcard? Charles Leclerc. The Monegasque is not just Ferrari's golden boy; he is desperate to win his first title. Hamilton has spent years dealing with internal rivalries (flashbacks to Nico Rosberg at Mercedes), but how will he handle battling Leclerc in a team built around his younger teammate? The dynamic needs to be managed well, because this

healthy rivalry can very easily implode as we have seen before.

If Ferrari delivers for Hamilton, even at 40 he is still one of the most talented drivers on the grid, and he has one goal left: breaking Schumacher's record with an eighth title. It won't be easy, but the prospect of Hamilton winning it all in Ferrari red is something that fans can only dream of.

If any team could crash the Ferrari-Red Bull party, it's McLaren. The papaya outfit is riding high after clinching the Constructors' Championship in 2024, but can they now take the next step and deliver a Drivers' title?

McLaren's 2025 lineup is powerful (and young). Lando Norris has proven he is a championship-calibre driver, while Oscar Piastri has emerged as one of the most exciting young talents on the grid. The biggest question isn't whether they're fast enough, it's whether McLaren can manage two hungry drivers fighting for the same crown.

Zak Brown and the McLaren leadership must walk a fine line. Let Norris and Piastri battle too aggressively, and they risk internal chaos. But if they handle it well, McLaren could dominate this era, much like Mercedes did in the 2010s.

Despite losing the Constructors' crown last season, Max Verstappen and Red Bull will be desperate to reclaim their throne. With Adrian Newey still leading the charge on car development and Verstappen's relentless drive, Red Bull cannot be counted out.

Enter Liam Lawson. The young Kiwi impressed during his brief F1 stints, proving he has the pace and racecraft to compete. Bringing in Lawson has made the Red Bull lineup younger and even more ag-

gressive. His adaptability and aggressive driving style make him a strong asset, and if Red Bull sees him as Verstappen's long-term partner, the team could have a formidable duo for years to come.

Mercedes is in a transitional phase, but has made a bold move by promoting Andrea Kimi Antonelli to race alongside George Russell. The highly-rated young driver has been fast-tracked, signalling a new era for the team. With Russell's experience and Antonelli's raw speed, Mercedes aims to rebuild and reestablish itself as a championship contender.

Meanwhile, Williams has pulled off a significant coup by signing Carlos Sainz after his Ferrari departure. Sainz brings race-winning experience to a team that has been steadily improving over the past seasons. Paired with Alex Albon, Williams now boasts one of its strongest lineups in years. If their car development continues its upward trajectory, they could be a serious midfield threat, if not a podium challenger.

Haas has taken a rogue youthful approach. Signing Ollie Bearman. Bearman, a British talent, has shown incredible promise in junior categories and now gets his shot at a full F1 season. Haas may not be fighting for wins yet, but with Bearman's potential and Hulkenberg's experience, they are positioning themselves for a stronger future.

F1 is at a crossroads. Will Hamilton's move to Ferrari end in triumph or disappointment? Will McLaren take over as a dominant force? Will Red Bull and Verstappen fight back?

One thing is certain: 2025 has all the ingredients to be one of the most unpredictable and exciting seasons in recent history.

Hamilton's Ferrari Era Begins: "One of the Best Feelings of My Life"

Thea Dury
Contributor

Sir Lewis Hamilton hit the track in Ferrari's 2023 F1 car last Wednesday as part of his "immersion programme" and acclimatisation work with the team, hailing the experience as "one of the best feelings of my life".

A highly anticipated debut since the announcement of his move to Ferrari, Hamilton—who has only driven Mercedes powered engines throughout his 18-year F1 career—completed thirty laps of the Fiorano circuit. Heading out in an SF-23, the most recent car he is allowed to drive under F1's testing restrictions, in damp conditions amid a foggy morning, Hamilton's family, the tifosi, team principal Fred Vasseur,

and deputy Jerome d'Ambrosio all watched from the sidelines.

"When I started the car up and drove through that garage door, I had the biggest smile on my face", Hamilton reflected afterwards. "It reminded me of the very first time I tested a Formula 1 car, it was such an exciting and special moment, and here I am, almost twenty years later, feeling those emotions all over again."

As testing came to a close, having encompassed flying laps, practice starts and a team debrief, Hamilton then greeted the fans that had gathered to watch him.

"I already knew from the outside how passionate the Ferrari family is, from everyone in the team to the tifosi! But to now witness it firsthand as a Ferrari driver has been awe-inspiring."

Vasseur also offered his thoughts: "As is the case every year, the first time you go out on track is a bit like the first day back at school and quite an emotional feeling, especially today as it was Lewis' first day as part of the team."

Hamilton's first official public appearance as a Scuderia Ferrari driver will be at the launch of the F1 season on the 18th of February at the O2 in London. Three days of official pre-season testing in Bahrain will then commence on the 26th of February before the start of the season at the Australian Grand Prix in March. Until then, Hamilton—who "can't wait to get started" and is "grateful for the love

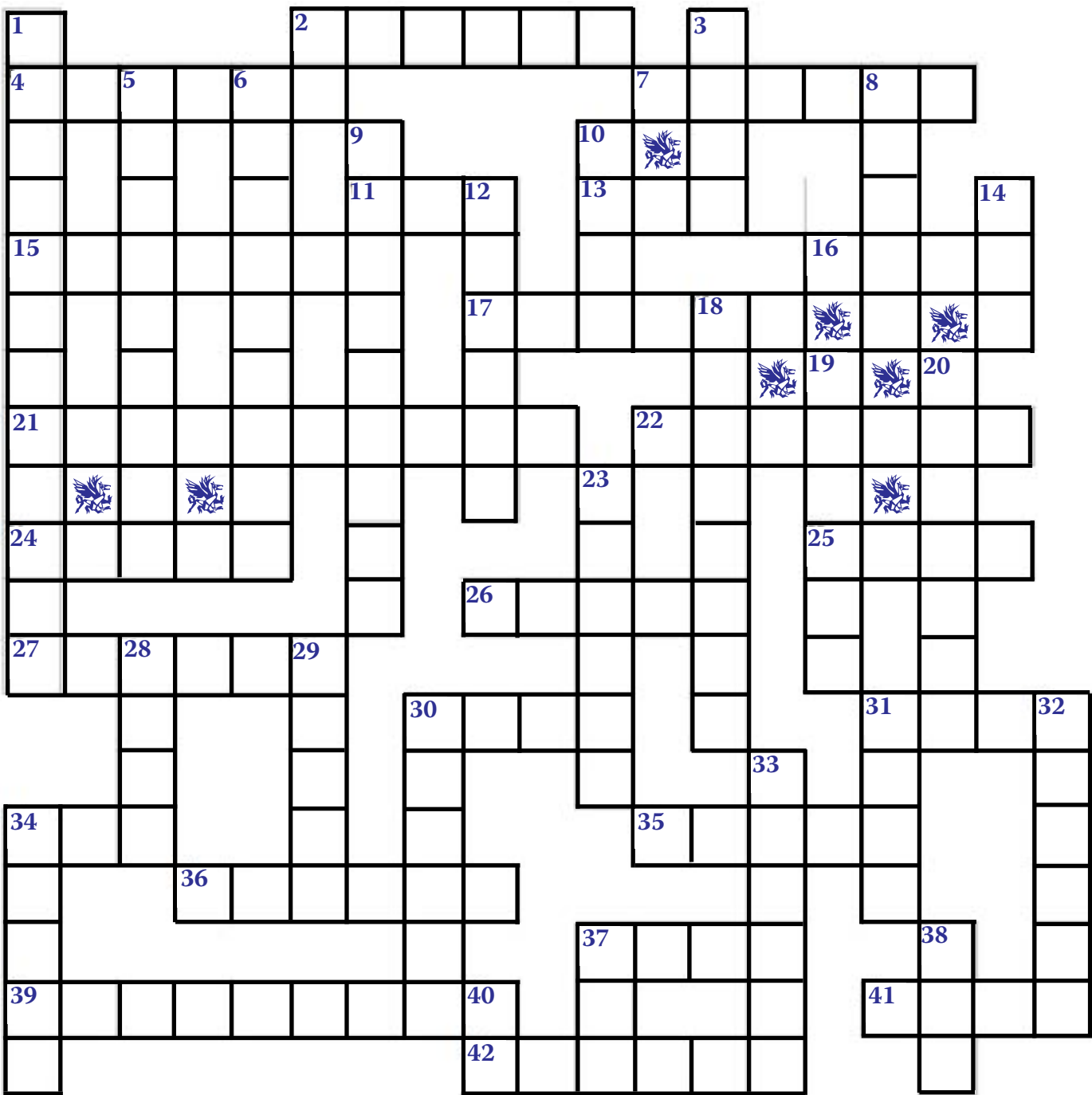
from everyone in Maranello"—will continue spending the coming weeks integrating with the team as they push forward with their preparations for the 2025 season.



Now error-free!
Hopefully...

Crossword | Croesair

Daniel Raybould



ACROSS

2. Cardiff computer science home (6)

4. laws of motion discoverer (6)

7. 43–0 Wales vanquisher (6)

11. dinghy propeller (3)

13. self-aware Facebook parent (4)

15. to deal with (7)

16. most important point (4)

17. Wales’ Westminster (in Welsh) (6)

21. madam, racecar, Mr Owl ate my metal worm, etc. (10)

22. critically-acclaimed country singer (7)

24. makes level (5)

25. mosquito consequence (4)

26. to enter abruptly; flat-bottomed
- boat (5)

27. online persona; James Cameron money-maker (6)

30. Frozen snowman (4)

31. unwanted garden grower; elevating plant (4)

34. pool stick (3)

35. alleged healthcare reform advocate (5)

36. eats greedily; ravines (6)

37. greasy, odorous secretion; trending tech oligarch (4)

39. in disguise or under an assumed character (9)

41. wise guy; savory spice (4)

42. itty-bitty bite (6)

DOWN

1. “crash” “boom” “bang” “skrrrt” (12)

2. “a” friend (2)

3. a youth—spoiled, selfish, and mischievous; last summer (4)

5. “Tree-stuff town”, popular with students (9)

6. things sacrificed or given as a religious act (9)

8. ____ f(l)avour (5)

9. vampiric count sighted in 1922, 1979, and 2024 (9)

10. sign of things to come (4)

12. continue; curriculum vitae (8)

14. chopper (3)

18. Chinese chatbot competitor (8)

19. to smoothen; what someone born
- in Łódź is (6)

20. hard water; NWA affiliate (3, 4)

23. trade war weapon (6)

28. adolescent affliction (4)

29. king, tsar; straight line aid (5)

30. a thing; to oppose (6)

31. cry of despair, like a banshee’s (4)

32. what you hope to get from uni (6)

33. a perilous situation; vinegar-based veg preserve (6)

34. heart targeter (5)

37. Goodfellas fellas (3)

38. a perilous situation; sugar-based fruit preserve (3)

40. not off (2)