

Fire Action
1. Operate nearest fire alarm.
2. Leave building by the nearest exit.
3. Report to assembly point.

The Secret Abortion Trail

Abortion is still illegal in Ireland, so what can women do?

The Real Black Swan

Members of the National Youth Ballet dispel the myths about their art .

Controversy and Character

The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu talks about his passion for the youth, football and Yorkshire.

Muse.



M6



M14



M16

Features.

M4. Archbishop of York, John Sentamu talks to **Tom Witherow** about his passion for Yorkshire's youth and a roast.

M6. The death penalty still exists in over 60 countries worldwide. **Jenny Barnett** addresses the issue.

M8. The youth dancers at the English National Ballet dispel the myths about their art to **Bella Foxwell**.

M10. Abortion is illegal in Ireland. **Janey Stephensen** finds out what women do.



Is the grass really always greener?

What if Cilla Black rapped, Rush Limbaugh was the face of the Democratic election campaign, and Amy Childs won a Turner prize? It's not out of this world. A world where the grass is always greener on the other side, and 90 per cent of celebrities truly think they can jump that fence. Some few get the best of both worlds (J-Lo managed to keep her foot in the Bronx door with 'Jenny from the Block'). Most others seem discontented with their starting point.

This week Dominic West has brought this issue to the fore, lamenting his 'Etonian' past – likening the label to that of a "paedophile". The media grabbed onto it with gusto – *the Telegraph* and *the Daily Mail* positively horrified that someone could resent a royalist connection. The private/public school stigma can't come as any big surprise, though. 'Juicy' wouldn't have packed half the punch it did if Notorious

BIG, admitting he 'sipped champagne when he thir-stay', hadn't made it there from nothing.

It's the first thing you learn at uni; the first thing pummeled out of you via lambrisco and Never Have I Ever before the all-important interrogation of your sexual history: where you went to school. Private school is not cool, and for many I encountered, not acceptable. My school was no Eton, but a private sixth-form nonetheless – as I learned, far more of an ice-maker than breaker. Fresh Meat tried and failed to really parody this. Witnessing university attempts at 'changed identity' can be pure platinum – from the 'private school rude boy accent,' to some Oscar-worthy tales of drug-heists and sex-on-car-roofs, in a bid to consolidate their cool.

Celebrities, however, aren't as privileged as we unknown, perhaps undiscovered, students. Without the smooth and rejuvenating segway of

university, they have to take far more drastic leaps to reinvent themselves. Or at least I hope that was Snoop Dogg's theory behind his recent decision to take up coaching a women's American football team ("in lingerie-style uniforms"). Or Kanye's relentless determination to make his name as a fashion designer, despite his equal determination to persist with leather and fur. If internet trolling has by pure chance led you here, Kanye: let it go. Few avenues are left untrodden – Ronald Reagan opened the political path to, among others, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Eric Cantona. Madonna took up directing (poorly). These guys were hardly floundering before this point – bar Arnie they were highly acclaimed. Why oh why take that giant leap into the clearly unknown?

Fair enough if you're Peter Andre, who has "finally confessed" that this whole showbiz debacle was just a diversion from his true passion:

blending coffee – something he hopes to realise soon with the opening of his worldwide café chain, "Andre's". It's not quite a sex-tape – the segway countless celebs, including Rob Lowe and Shakira, have fallen for – but unfortunately for Pete I'm still not so sure this is the key to 'getting serious' and shaking the far more embarrassing label than 'Etonian': "Jordan's ex". He needs to take a leaf out of Mark Whalberg's book – a man who has got so close to an Oscar, it is sometimes impossible to detect his inner Marky Mark. Even Victoria Beckham, as of this year, has finally been commended with making it out of the long, long tunnel from Posh, to 'Losing my mind', to crap perfume creator, to acclaimed designer.

True, seen as having had life handed to him, Dominic is not blessed with street cred. Whether by chance or on purpose, though, he managed to bag a role in *The*

Wire – arguably the most effective, fast-track way of securing emergency rep – and hasn't really had to look back until now. Woody Allen married his stepdaughter and just won an Oscar... I think Dom's ok rep-wise.



Mia de Graaf

Fashion.

Indulge in our London Fashion Week supplement for the Muse coverage of the Autumn/Winter 2012 collections shown in February.

Arts.

M12. **Celia Scruby** looks at the Mystery Plays coming to the Museum Gardens in York. In addition, Ai Wei Wei and sunflower seeds.

Music.

M14. Beardy Texan musician Josh T. Pearson talks to **Sam Briggs**. Plus Bowling for Soup.

Film.

M16. The Gay and Lesbian Film Festival had a rocky past, but has a bright future, discovers **Sophie Rose Walker**.

Food & Drink.

M17. The Experiment this week is Lamb, Chocolate and Leek stew. We also paid a sneaky visit to La Vecchia Scuola.

Image Credits.

Cover: Courtesy of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, photo by Jeff Bridges.

Quirks Politicians Eating

Eating is big business for the US party candidate selections. Here are some awkward moments of the campaigns.



Rick Santorum has ribs of steel.



Can Michele Bachman handle her corn dog?



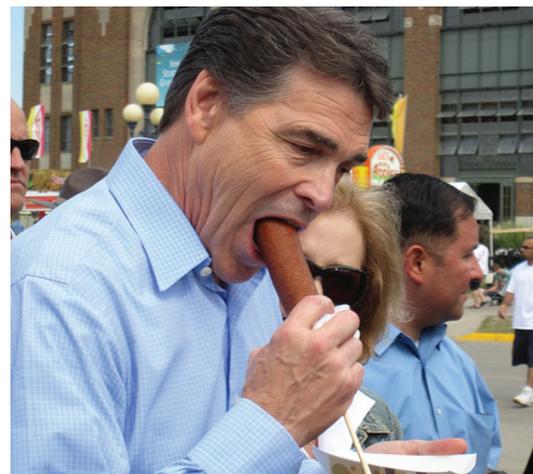
Newt Gingrich is licking his way through his campaign.



Obama feels strongly about ice cream, and contraception.



Mitt Romney supports his Jewish voters.



Rick Perry chooses to bite his corn dog, rather than nibble.

Thinking Inside the Box



Camilla Apcar

There are many times when 'bigger equals better'. When you make too much brownie mix and have to make a dozen extra ones. When you get an unexpected upgrade from a single to double bed. When you buy the March or September issues of fashion magazines. Gypsy brides and grooms, too, like livin' it large.

I expected 'gypsy dressmaker' Thelma Madine to outdo herself in this second series of *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*. I anticipated more diamonds, more netting, and a record-breaking 17 bridal underskirts. But no. The second series (taking its name from one of my top ten favourite films now available in its entirety on YouTube complete with Greek subtitles, FYI) has, dare I say it, disappointed me.

Maybe it's because my own expectations have been raised. As it so happens, I am being a bridesmaid this year. I've never been to a wedding, or a hen do, and the whole preparation process has overwhelmed me in ways I could never have imagined. Have you ever found yourself contemplating whether a deep orchid or Cadbury purple is more suitable for buttonhole flowers? I have. It's all felt quite inaugural, but I now know what a wedding breakfast is and I've perfected my bridesmaid's photo pose. What more can there possibly be to master?

It's really not a surprise that the travellers featured go so over the top. Making a cake with so many tiers that half of them have to be made of polystyrene, out of practical necessity, is really just like monogramming your wedding/baptism/first Holy Communion. You can get so many things personalised: your laptop case, towels, nappy bags... why not a wedding? Even world cage fighting champ, Tony, wanted to specifically "go a more oaky colour" last week, in his quest for the perfect tan. As long as you don't flash the world your knickers whilst getting into the horse-drawn carriage, there's no such thing as 'too big'.

It's easy to blend into the crowds, all walking around in navy coats and tan coloured chinos. I've certainly mistaken my fair share of people. Yelling excitedly across 100 meters for no less than 30 seconds to a friend seemed like a perfectly normal thing to do, before he approached and it turned out to be someone else wearing a similar hat (with a group of 12 prospective students bearing witness, laughing like no tomorrow at my unfortunately loud mistake). "It happens," grumbled the unperturbed doppelganger. This much I know: it'd be hard to mistake a traveller bride. In a high enough density, the colour pink suddenly becomes very visible. I might suggest this potential wardrobe change to my friend, a lover of the monochrome wardrobe.

I've had my own personalisation frenzy of late, at none other than a paint-your-own ceramics shop. With two friends, we were quite likely the only non-parent adults there, but after the misrecognition incident I have no shame. Choosing a blank egg cup or three-tier piggy bank is just the beginning. The real freedom lies in painting anything you want whatsoever with no limits of 140 characters, and no restrictions of 'only comes in size 22 fuschia'. Unbounded possibilities.

Traveller girls would probably love the independence, nothing like the confinement of cleaning their caravans for the fourth time that day before their husbands get home. The prescriptive life of a traveller and marrying outside the community are both issues that series two addresses, but as always, the only thing that's really clear is that we're not getting the full picture. I'm sure there's ten times more temper tantrums and thousands of forlorn discarded diamanté studs than Channel 4 make us privy to.

And does my bridesmaid dress have diamonds on? I couldn't possibly say - it's a Big Fat Secret.



YouTube by numbers. The Kony Era.

1) 196,000,000. Views of Lady Gaga's 'Bad Romance,' top video of all time. 'Charlie bit my finger' is a close second.

2) 45,000,000. The number of 'hits' the front page gets every day.

3) 1,000,000. Brazilian footballer Ronaldinho's Touch of Gold became the first video to get a million hits.

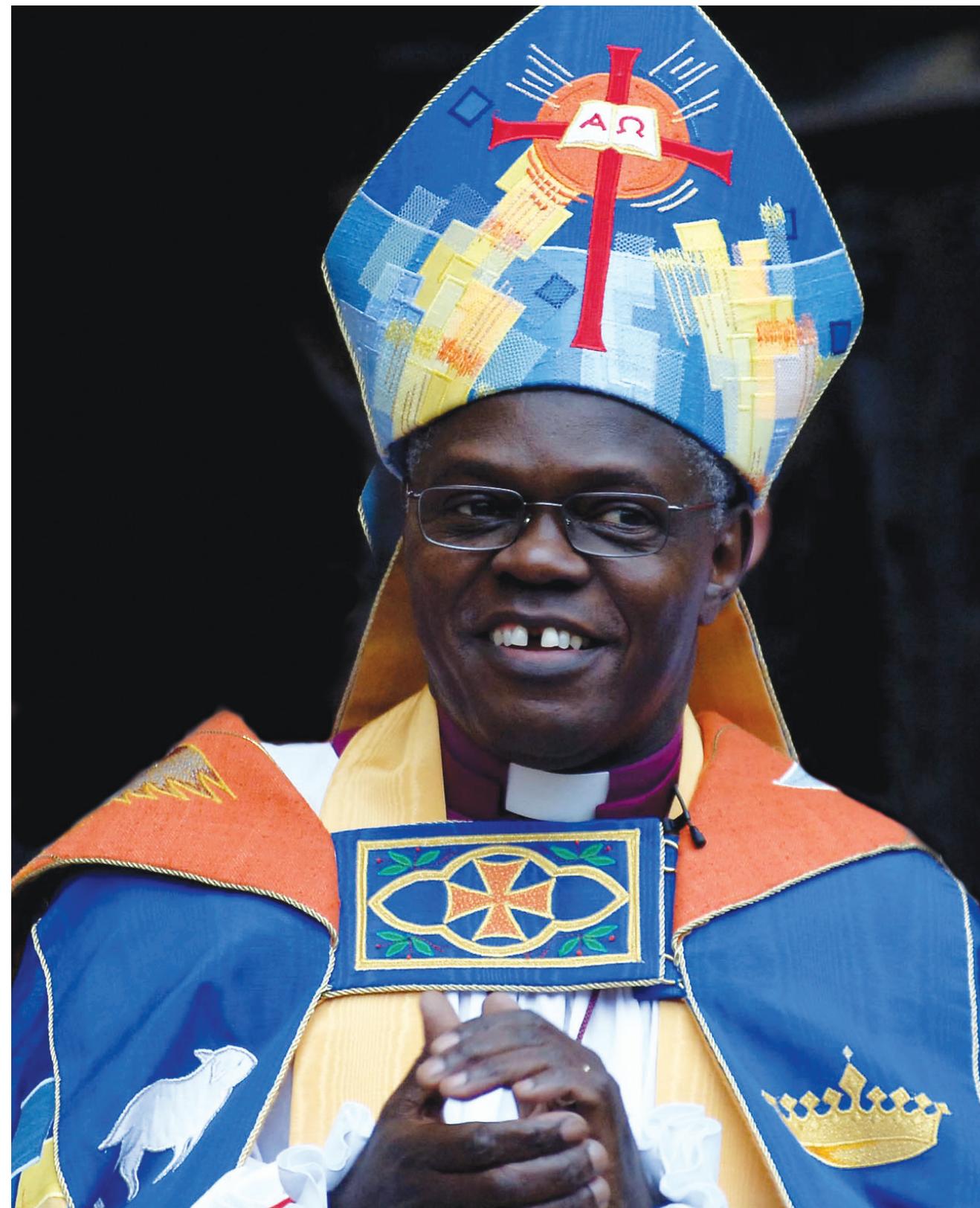
4) 2007. The year the Queen launched the Royal Channel for her Christmas Day message. Barack and the Pope now do too.

5) 1,700. The number of years it would take to watch every single video.

6) 15. Average number of minutes a user spends on the site everyday.

Controversy and Character

From rural Uganda and London's poorest communities to a palace in York: **Tom Witherow** meets Archbishop John Sentamu to discover the man behind the public figure.



No I never envisaged being a senior minister. But it doesn't matter if you are called Archbishop, bishop, vicar or plain John Sentamu, you have a responsibility to get out there and to show the love and the power of God to others."

Archbishop Sentamu has sparked debate in all aspects of British public life, from his impressive 'stop and search' record to his recent stand on gay marriage. The sixth child of

13, he trained as a lawyer and served as a high court judge. All before the age of 25. But that was before serving 90 days in prison at the hands of dictator Idi Amin for his judicial independence. He was beaten and kicked around like a football before being forced into exile – three weeks after his marriage to his wife, Margaret.

Second in command of the Church of England, he has risen through the hierarchy, spending time as a vicar in Brix-

ton (just two years after the riots), before being consecrated as Bishop of Stepney and later Bishop of Birmingham. In 2005 he took up the historic role in York as the 97th Archbishop.

Many say he provides the charisma and straight-talk that the Church is so desperately lacking. Others simply see him as a show-boater who provides nothing but discord. There is also no doubt he is a great rhetorician, with a penchant for manipulating a media increasingly jostling for his attention. His diary is booked up months in advance; I am squeezed into a late Friday afternoon slot. At 63, the Archbishop appears to be revving up – retirement the absolute last thing on his mind.

But in amongst all the hype, the imminent race for Lambeth Palace and the controversies his comments have sparked, the Archbishop is keen to emphasise that primarily his role is a local one. "We need to ensure we are connected to our communities and addressing their needs – not seen as remote or removed. It is a great honour to serve people in York, and across the north of England, and be an advocate on their behalf."

Not seen as remote or removed? Once again, the Archbishop provides a divisive force. Within the community he is active. Yorkshire is an enormous area. It contains 24 deaneries, almost all of which he visits every year. Much of his week is spent in the car meeting people, giving interviews, and attending to the numerous organisations of which he is patron. At the time of writing he had announced his wish to meet the families of the six soldiers of 3 Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, killed in Helmand Province last Tuesday.

However, his views rarely fail to alienate at least one section of his congregation. Whether it is young people speaking out against his stand on gay marriage or traditionalist anger at his liberal take on cohabitation. I suggest that as a representative of a body of Christians he ought to be more reflective of their views. "There is a fantastic Yorkshire tradition that I have found since living here, and that is the importance of speaking plainly. Always try and be honest and speak as you find. I think that most people appreciate that as a characteristic in someone. I don't try and second-guess what people think I should be saying; I just speak out when I feel it is necessary."

The Church does have a central role to play in the public sphere?

"When we see injustice or bad policy being made, we have a duty to speak up. I don't agree that Christians should stay out of politics. We should be as rigorous as anyone else, and feel able to make suggestions on how to improve difficult situations. There is absolutely nothing wrong with articulating that in the public sphere. If you do not speak up then all that happens is that someone else will speak for you."

So many public figures cite a focal point for their take on life and society. Dr. Sentamu is very frank: "Stop worrying about what other people think and put God back at the centre of our thinking. We shouldn't be afraid of speaking about morality, and we shouldn't be afraid of talking about compassion."

His charisma and power in capturing the imagination of the public is what initially struck me, but perhaps it is his humility which sets him aside from public perceptions of other lofty ministers. Offered a place on *Celebrity Big Brother*, his press office calmly and pithily replied, "we don't do celebrity". Further to this he insists on being Archbishop for York. "Being the Archbishop of York tells people where I am based. Being for York tells people what I'm doing – serving the people in this region. The Church is there at every level of society, in every community, serving."

And indeed his website profile boasts his commitment to re-connecting England with the Church. On the surface a worthy aim I'm sure, but what precisely does he mean by this?

"The Church needs to be addressing need wherever it arises. All too often what is reported in the news is the Church talking about itself. Yet in the North of England there are



PHOTO CREDIT: ALBERTSTARS.COM

some real challenges. Unemployment in the region is higher than elsewhere, with youth unemployment in particular being a particular problem. That has to be a great concern for our nation, and I think the Church has a role to play not only in supporting people but also in saying this is an unfairness that needs addressing. I've visited workers in Teesside when their steelworks was threatened with closure, and I've met workers at BAE who have faced cuts – we need to stand alongside people going through difficult times and do all we can to help. Wherever there are Christians, that should be good news for those around them.”

But in recent years the Church has only really been punching its weight at the evangelical extreme. Take a look at the strength of the University's own Christian Union. At creationist and fundamentalist margins the number of members is actually increasing, while mainstream religion suffers long-term managed decline. Previously the Church's strength has lain in its flexibility – it adapts to shifts in the secular world, but maintaining gradualism in its accommodation. It seems utterly mad that it is tripping over its shoelaces on issues as banal as whether God minds women preaching His Word or minds blessing a bond between two men.

Dr. Sentamu is firm that although the Church is often seen in a political light by secular society, it is the characteristics of individual Christians which we should be focusing on. So what does he think the people of York think of the Church? “You'd have to ask them. In my experience, there is still a lot of fondness and support for the Church in the work that it is doing, particularly in the north of England. I suspect most people have a pretty good idea what they think a Christian should look like. When people see something going wrong, they will often say: “That's not very Christian.” The Church has a responsibility to live up to those positive expectations of what Christians should be like, and that means that we need to stand up against injustice and expose unfairness in society.”

Dr. Sentamu, as the first black Archbishop, certainly embodies something of the multiculturalism of the north. But hard economic times have brought tension, with immigrants often placed as the scapegoat for job losses. What can the Church do in the face of differing cultures? “We need to recognise that every individual is different – fearfully created by God. We need to communicate with others where they are and in ways that we can all understand without ever being patronising or condescending. Sadly, so many problems are caused by not listening well to one another. The one thing we should never lose sight of though is that whilst we are all different, we are also a part of the main – we are all part of the community. It is that shared humanity which brings us closer together at times. Don't always look for what divides; look for what people have in common.”

And what about young people? The Archbishop stands out amongst his peers as a man seeking to connect with youth. Forget Sunday school he says: “I have a Youth Trust which helps encourage and support young leaders in the north of England, often in some of the most deprived areas. When I look at what some of those young people are doing, I feel both humbled and inspired. It's important that the Church is accessible for people, young and old alike, and I am pleased that we are finding new ways, or ‘fresh expressions’ as we call it, of reaching out to new people. Why not hold events at pubs or in cafes? God is not confined to Church buildings.”

Although I'm not too sure about fresh expressions, Dr. Sentamu certainly seems in touch. He's jumped out of a plane with the Red Devils at the age of 58. At his inauguration, during a Ugandan dance of celebration he played his own drums. And very well too, I'm told. Not to mention the bare-chested, leopard-skin clad men supported by the wild ululations of foot-stomping women. Demonstrating against the stereotyping of ‘hoodies’ he put one on, a purple one in fact, and preached against their demonisation. A little more meaningful than a hug.

So not the menace of today, but the leaders of tomorrow? “Young people aren't the leaders of the future, they are the leaders of today.” That'll teach me... “It's important to value young people and treat them as uniquely special. Too often society ignores or condescends to young people because they are not seen as important. But they are important, and we should be listening to what they have to say. Organisations such as the YMCA give young people that vital opportunity to be heard.”

Outside his busy Church life, he is, like so many Africans, an avid football supporter. And who does he support? “Oh my goodness. Man U. Since I was 17 years old. And, of course York City, my local team.” His favourite thing to do at the weekend? “I do like cooking. I think my favourite food would have to be a good roast. Yes. It always goes down well.” His integration into the Yorkshire world is remarkable – on receiving Yorkshire Man of the year in 2006, he joked once that his Christian name Mugabi spells ee-by-gum backwards. “As they tell me, Yorkshire is God's own county!” Well aren't we fortunate to live here then. **M**

**To learn more about the Youth Trust visit:
www.archbishopofyorkyouthtrust.co.uk**

PHOTO CREDIT: ALBERTSTARS.COM

“If you do not speak up then all that happens is that someone else will speak for you.”



12,500ft and £75,000: the Archbishop raising money for the Afghanistan Trust



The Penal Code

Four billion people worldwide can still be sentenced to death.

Jenny Barnett finds out what's being done to abolish the death penalty.

“Correia spoke the truth to power in the way that a prophet does, bringing a timely message out of the margins and to the masses.”

The 2003 American drama film, *The Life of David Gale*, sees its title character on death row in Texas. Gale, played by Kevin Spacey, is the head of the Philosophy department at the University of Austin and a member of the anti-death penalty activist group Deathwatch. He is shown to lose a televised debate against the governor of Texas when he is unable to point to an example of a demonstrably innocent man being executed. In an ironic turn, he himself is sentenced to death for the rape and murder of a fellow Deathwatch campaigner. The film strikingly questions whether or not this man is deserving of a place on death row. This is a question which drove the relentless anti-death penalty work of real life activist Martina Davis Correia.

Correia, a woman who died of cancer in December of last year, aged 44, was publicly mourned by anti-death penalty organisations and humanitarian groups alike. Correia was a volunteer leader for Amnesty International, working on different human rights issues with death penalty abolition work as her speciality. She worked for over 20 years to exonerate her brother Troy Anthony Davis whom she believed to have been wrongfully convicted for the murder of an off-duty police officer, Mark McPhail, in 1989. McPhail was shot dead whilst running to the aid of a homeless man who was being beaten on the side of the road. Correia's campaign to prove her brother's innocence gained thousands of supporters, including Pope Benedict XVI, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former US president, Jimmy Carter. Davis' execution was

stayed three times as lawyers filed appeals, and several witnesses came to change their accounts, fuelling debates about the reliability of eyewitness testimony. His supporters insisted that there was too much doubt for Davis to be executed. However, many of the alleged recants of eyewitness reports were never actually testified and were termed “largely smoke and mirrors” by the court. In September 2011, Davis was put to death by lethal injection in the state of Georgia. Following Correia's death, an Amnesty International article written by Laura Moye, described her as “[speaking] truth to power in the way that a prophet does, bringing a timely message out of the margins and to the masses”.

It is 35 years since the ‘Gregg v Georgia’ ruling saw Troy Leon Gregg constitutionally sentenced to death for double murder, thus reinstating the death penalty in the US following a four year de facto moratorium. The issue of whether or not capital punishment is ever a just or effective form of retribution continues to be a contentious one. Sixty per cent of the world's population live across the 58 nations where the death sentence is still employed, with the United States of America and the People's Republic of China being the two largest practising nations. In America, 34 of its 50 states carry capital punishment, a number which has fallen from 38 in the last five years with Illinois being the latest to abolish the death penalty in 2011. The United Nations have had a moratorium on capital punishment since December 2007, which has been reaffirmed twice, awaiting a third vote under the item entitled “promotion and protection of human rights” later this year. Across the world the death penalty divides attitudes and practices, with the “Leader of the Free World”, the

United States of America, providing one of the most arresting examples of this divide.

In the US there are several organisations devoted to the nationwide abolition of the death penalty. The oldest of these is the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (the NCADP). With its headquarters in Washington DC, the NCADP is comprised of a network which represents over 100 state and national Affiliate organisations as well as having thousands of supporters and volunteers. It sets out its belief that the so-called “struggle against the death penalty will be won state by state when good people of all walks of life demand change. We help to build organisational infrastructure, provide training and strategic planning, and support the leadership of locally led campaigns. We believe that together, strong local campaigns add up to a strong national movement for abolition.”

Among its affiliates is the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP), an organisation working against the death penalty in the state which has historically executed the highest number of death row inmates. The TCADP describes itself as engaged in “outreach, education and advocacy aimed at raising awareness of issues related to the death penalty and mobilising the citizens of Texas – and their elected officials – to support abolition.” Politically, Texas has been generally conservative and in favour of capital punishment. Very much a Republican run state since 1994, the Houston Chronicle released a poll in 2002 which confirmed that 61.9 per cent of Texans supported the death penalty. It is no coincidence that *The Life of David Gale* is set in this state, because the conflict between the TCADP campaigners and

“Serial killers get life in prison,
whilst the mentally ill get sentenced to death
for lack of media attention and lawyers”.

Land of the free?



the pro- death attitudes of the vast majority of both citizens and state officials provides an ignitable backdrop for the debate. Last year the Austin American Statesmen reported that “Texas executions and death sentences continue to decline” falling to their lowest level in 15 years. Death penalty opponents jumped on the idea that it was concerns over wrongful convictions that caused this; victims’ rights advocates cited an overall crime decrease and litigation costs as the cause, not a moral outcry.

As a fundamental issue of human rights, the arguments for and against capital punishment are largely constructed on a basis of morality, with cost and effectiveness often raised as secondary issues. The aptly named website antideathpenalty.org sets forth eleven reasons to oppose the death sentence. Firstly, it argues that executions cost four times as much as life imprisonment: \$2 million instead of \$500,000. Secondly, the innocent may be executed. 82 inmates have been freed from death row since 1976, which could be seen to amount to one person found wrongfully convicted in every seven. It is also argued that the death penalty does not act as a deterrent because crime rates have not decreased in America and that life in prison also guarantees no future offenses.

The religious standpoint is considered, with Catholic, Presbyterian, Quaker and Amish religions being against the death penalty. Fundamentally, the site proclaims, killing is wrong and violates international human rights laws. The death penalty is also, it says, “no longer practised in most sophisticated societies.” Finally, the issue of the fairness of sentencing is raised. It is argued that impoverished and mentally ill murderers are sentenced to death due to lack of media attention and the inability to hire good lawyers. Serial killers, on the other hand, such as the “infamous” Gary Ridgway – who admitted to killing 48 prostitutes and runaways – get life in prison. In Texas, a man with schizophrenia was executed despite the Board of Pardons’ recommendation for clemency after learning of his time in mental hospitals and his unintelligible ramblings. Here it is asked whether death sentences are a question of justice or of money.

Conversely, prodeathpenalty.com begins its avowal with a quotation from poet Hyman Bershay, who writes “the death penalty is a warning, just like a lighthouse throwing its beams out to sea. We hear about shipwrecks, but we do not hear about the ships the lighthouse guides safely on their way. We do not have proof of the number of ships it saves, but we do not tear the lighthouse down.” The death penalty, the website declares, is a just punishment because committing atrocities is an act of free will, and therefore the punishment should fit the crime. It affirms that the death sentence actually asserts human rights, because “if execution is murder, then killing someone in war is murder. On the contrary, it is necessary to protect the rights of a group of people. Hence, the death penalty is vital to protect a person’s right to live. Is arresting someone the same as kidnapping them? Executing someone is not murder; it is punishment by society for a deserving criminal.”

The website also uses the words of federal law enforcement official and lawyer Frank Carrington, an early advocate of the rights of crime victims who is termed the “father of the crime victims’ rights movement in America”. Carrington’s view was that “there are murders, such as those who act in passion for whom the threat of death has little or no deterrent effect. But for many others, the possible penalty of death may well enter the cold calculus that precedes the decision to act”. Therefore the fact that there is no empirical evidence to support the idea that capital punishment is a deterrent, Carrington contends, is not a valid way to prove that the threat of death does not reduce homicides. Death is feared, and the pro death penalty stance is that this fear will inevitably stop some murders taking place.

The most basic human right is the right to life. So the question of whether or not any governing body should be able to take away life, as a means of punishment, is a considerable moral issue in the world of justice. Over this issue there is worldwide division, ranging from liberal countries such as Norway who employ a maximum sentence of 21 years imprisonment for any crime and have famously progressive, even “cushy” prisons, to the People’s Republic of China which employs the death penalty for a number of crimes including drug offenses, property theft and the theft of cultural relics. In the case of the USA there is contrast within the nation itself. Every state has its own penal code which includes whether or not, and for what crimes, to employ capital punishment.

The Life of David Gale, a film which attracted some of Hollywood’s top actors for its starring role, can be seen as sensationalist in its representation of an anti-death penalty argument. But the fact remains that the debate behind the melodrama is just as thought-provoking, perhaps even more so, than this big budget Hollywood film aims to be. For the use of the death penalty sparks a wealth of debate. It is concerned with those fundamental questions of life and death, human rights and what the right way to bring about justice is, in a world where 60 per cent of people live with the death penalty as a part of their punitive system. These are questions which remain in no rush to be definitively answered. **M**



PHOTO CREDIT: BALLET.ORG.UK

The Real Black Swan

Dancers from the English National Ballet talk to **Bella Foxwell** and set the record straight about the enigmatic world of ballet.

With the poise and grace of a swan, the ballet dancer is a different breed of human being. Perhaps this is why there is a fascination with the mysterious world of ballet and the myths of pushy mothers, eating disorders and bleeding toenails. A year ago, the film *Black Swan* was racking up Oscar nominations for its dark portrayal of the life of two ballerinas who are driven to extreme measures in the name of perfection. Natalie Portman won the Oscar for her disturbed and bulimic ballerina and the issue of female dancers and their body weight resurfaced once again. In February this year, the Italian dancer Mariafrancesca Garritano was sacked from Milan's prestigious ballet school, La Scala, after claims that she and fellow students had been pushed into severe eating disorders and body dysmorphia. The claims were damning, however, they were made over 15 years ago, so the question remains as to whether in 2012 the pressures on ballet dancers are still the same.

The Emerging Dancer Competition is an annual competition for the English National Ballet to recognise and nurture the phenomenal talent of its up-and-coming dancers. Six of the company's most exciting young artists are nominated by their colleagues at the English National Ballet to compete for the title. The dancers who perform in this competition are young: 18, 19, 20. I was intrigued to find out how daunting a task it is to be involved in the competition.

Speaking to Nancy Osbaldeston and Barry Drummond, two of the six competing for the 'Emerging Dancer' title, I noticed how grounded they both are. There is no essence of the paranoia and borderline-craziness we see in *Black Swan*, the ubiquitous 'perfect' dominating the script: "Perfect? I'm not perfect. I'm nothing," "I just want to be perfect," "I was perfect..." "I felt it. Perfect. I was perfect," and "I see you obsessed getting each and every move perfectly right." As Nina, played by Portman, 'loses herself' to get ready for the role of the lead in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* she starts to have visual hallucinations. She sees a black-clad version of herself across the subway platform and again in the maze of hallways at Lincoln Center. Even the pink stuffed animals that adorn the bedroom she shares with her neurotic mother seem to come alive and mock her.

I ask Nancy and Barry if *Black Swan* was an accurate por-

trayal of the life of a ballerina. We all remember the daunting scene where director Thomas Leroy walks around the room of ballerinas and taps those he wants to star in *Swan Lake* on the shoulder. Barry assures me that this isn't the norm: "The casting for a ballet is never done during a company class and there is always more than one person that performs each role. It's much more official than your director tapping you on the shoulder to indicate which rehearsals you should attend. I feel that *Black Swan* was an accurate portrayal in a few areas but in order to make it out of the ordinary they obviously had to distort reality a little." Nancy said: "*Black Swan* isn't that far from the truth, no. I think it gives quite a good impression of a dancer's daily life to people who have no idea. I always have that problem when my legs suddenly transform into duck's legs." I laugh. A sense of humour? I certainly don't remember that in *Black Swan*.

What about the eating disorders and physical toil on the human body that ballet causes? One anonymous commenter on the *The Guardian* website wrote "In 2012, there is so much awareness of the problem I find it very hard to accept that anorexia and other dangerous behaviours (except, oddly, smoking) are epidemic in ballet." It is true that Mila Kunis trained seven days a week, five hours, for five, six months total, and was put on a very strict diet of 1,200 calories a day for her role as Portman's competition in *Black Swan*. She lost 20 pounds from her normal weight of 117 pounds and said "I would literally look at myself in the mirror and I was like: 'Oh my God. I had no shape, no boobs, no ass...' All you saw was the bone. I was like 'this looks gross.'" Nancy doesn't sugarcoat the reality: "I encountered eating disorders when I went away to ballet school. It's inevitable really if you're telling young impressionable students who dance in front of a mirror all day, everyday, that they could lose a couple of pounds... you're just asking for it." However, Judith Mackrell of *The Guardian* warns, "We should be wary of assuming that dancers are 'anorexic' simply because they are very lean. There are amazingly slender performers who are perfectly fit and who, yes, go on to have babies." Indeed, any profession that involves pushing the human body to its limits requires a certain level of will power to keep it in its best condition, and that means watching what you eat. As Barry says, "eating disorders aren't unheard of,

but aren't as common as one would think. Living healthily is such an important part of being a dancer. Eating and sleeping well, socialising and generally being a well-rounded part of society, I think, are essential."

As for bleeding toenails, if you type 'ballet bleeding feet' into Google there is no denying the abundance of results. Sarah Wildor, principal dancer with the Royal Ballet, says wistfully: "My feet might have been quite nice if I hadn't been a dancer." She describes the corns that grow between her toes, due to the pressure placed on the bones. She trims the corns to keep them under control, but she has "a really horrible soft one, between the fourth and fifth toes" whose only effective treatment would be an operation to shave the bone. Although it makes us feel uncomfortable, the foot still has the power to bewitch and to shock. It is not only the defining image of different styles of dance - it is also the focus of ballet's mystique and what would ballet be without the ubiquitous pointe shoe? Darcey Bussell once said she "numbs [her] mind to the pain" and it seems that dancers who are serious about their profession sacrifice pretty feet in the name of art. Nancy and Barry don't even mention their sore toes, Barry simply explains how he tries to keep the aches and pains at bay: "I learned the hard way that body maintenance is a vital skill. Making sure aches and pains don't have the potential to worsen, and result in having to take a lot of time off, by listening to my body. I make the time to see the physiotherapist, get sports massages and use a lot of ice."

One thing definitely isn't a myth in the ballet world: pushy parents. "Pushy mothers are most definitely a part of the ballet world and in vocational ballet schools there are lots of overly involved parents," says Barry. Dame Margot Fonteyn's (widely regarded as one of the greatest classical ballet dancers of all time) mother, Hilda, signed her up for ballet classes aged four. She studied ballet in Shanghai when her industrialist father moved to China and was brought back to London at the age of 14 by her mother, specifically to pursue a ballet career which saw her feted internationally and remembered as one of the greatest classical dancers ever. One woman's pushiness is another's awareness of the potential of her child, and the distinction between the two seems remarkably small. But like all exaggerated stereotypes, the pushy parent

Top: Barry Drummond and Nancy Osbaldeston with their fellow Emerging Dancer competitors



PHOTO CREDIT: THE BLAINE BROTHERS

isn't quite what it seems when you are actually a part of the industry, as Nancy explains: "When I was younger there were pushy mothers galore at the competitions I used to do, but if the child is to get anywhere professionally the passion has to come from them."

It sounds like a potentially stressful environment to say the least. "It is a competitive environment because you're always competing with the dancers around you for the same roles but at the same time in a company where we are constantly all putting on shows together, you become almost like a family working together for the same thing, which is to be better. When I was younger I would get jealous of other dancers very easily but now I've learnt that even if someone is much better than you, everyone is unique so they will never have what you have - which is being you," explains Nancy. What about the feeling that perhaps they have missed out on the university experience? Are they growing up too fast? I receive an ever-wise response from both Nancy and Barry, their

"Black Swan isn't that far from the truth, no. I always have that problem when my legs suddenly transform into duck's legs"

outlook on the world completely grounded: "I don't regret not going to university because moving to London at 16 to do ballet was, for me, exactly what I wanted to do. I lived in a flat with three other girls and we had a ball. I'm sure living in halls at uni is a great laugh too, but at the same time I'm not sure it would be worth it if I were studying something I didn't have a passion for. I have just finished a degree from Middlesex University in Dance Performance that I have been doing in my spare time. I did find it tough coming home after working all day in the studios, to opening my laptop and writing about dance again. It was a bit full on but having completed it I feel chuffed."

There is certainly a sense of 'seize the day' with ballet. Much like football, and other sports, there's no place for an 'old' - constituted by a mere 30 years in this physically demanding world - ballerina. If it's what you want, you have to go for it now. Barry wholeheartedly believes this: "I often think about what my life would be like had I gone to university and I don't regret taking the opportunity to be a dancer. Your career is short which leaves so much time once you've retired from dancing to go back and challenge yourself with the things you had to bypass in your youth. You can go to university as a 'mature student' but there's no such thing as a 'mature ballet dancer'. If you don't do it while you're young, you never will."

Despite the lows of the ballet world - the strained muscles, the sometimes-pushy parents, the sore toes - what I've learnt from Nancy and Barry is that none of that matters when you feel the rush of adrenaline from performing in front of thousands. As Nancy says, "being on stage makes it all seem worth it." They are utterly thrilled to be nominated for something as prestigious as the Emerging Dancer Contest and answer my questions with the humblest of remarks. "I'm sure I'll benefit from the entire experience regardless of the outcome," Barry says. Yes their days are looking chock-a-block at the moment, with Barry saying that "we normally have a relatively full day of ballet classes and rehearsals from 10:30-6:30, so our Emerging Dancer rehearsals usually take place in breaks in between rehearsals, during the day or after hours." Full-on perhaps, but their beaming excitement shows that their extra work doesn't seem to bother them.

After talking to Nancy and Barry, the myth of the ballet dancer seems to have lifted somewhat. Films such as *The Red Shoes* and *Black Swan* are great entertainment but they "set the public's perception of ballet back 50 years," as Deborah Bull, a former dancer with the Royal Ballet stated. And it's true. Today, in 2012, Nancy and Barry are two normal, dedicated dancers who know that success doesn't come without hard work, will power and dedication, and that involves pushing their body to its limits. They aren't bitter or resentful because this is what they absolutely love to do and they appreciate every day that they have to spend in the profession. As Barry poignantly puts it, "If I won this contest I would be over the moon. To have all your hard work justified like that is so rewarding, but we gain so much from all our preparations anyway that it's not the end of the world if I don't win." **M**

Below and top: Barry Drummond and Nancy Osbaldeston preparing for the Emerging Dancer Competition

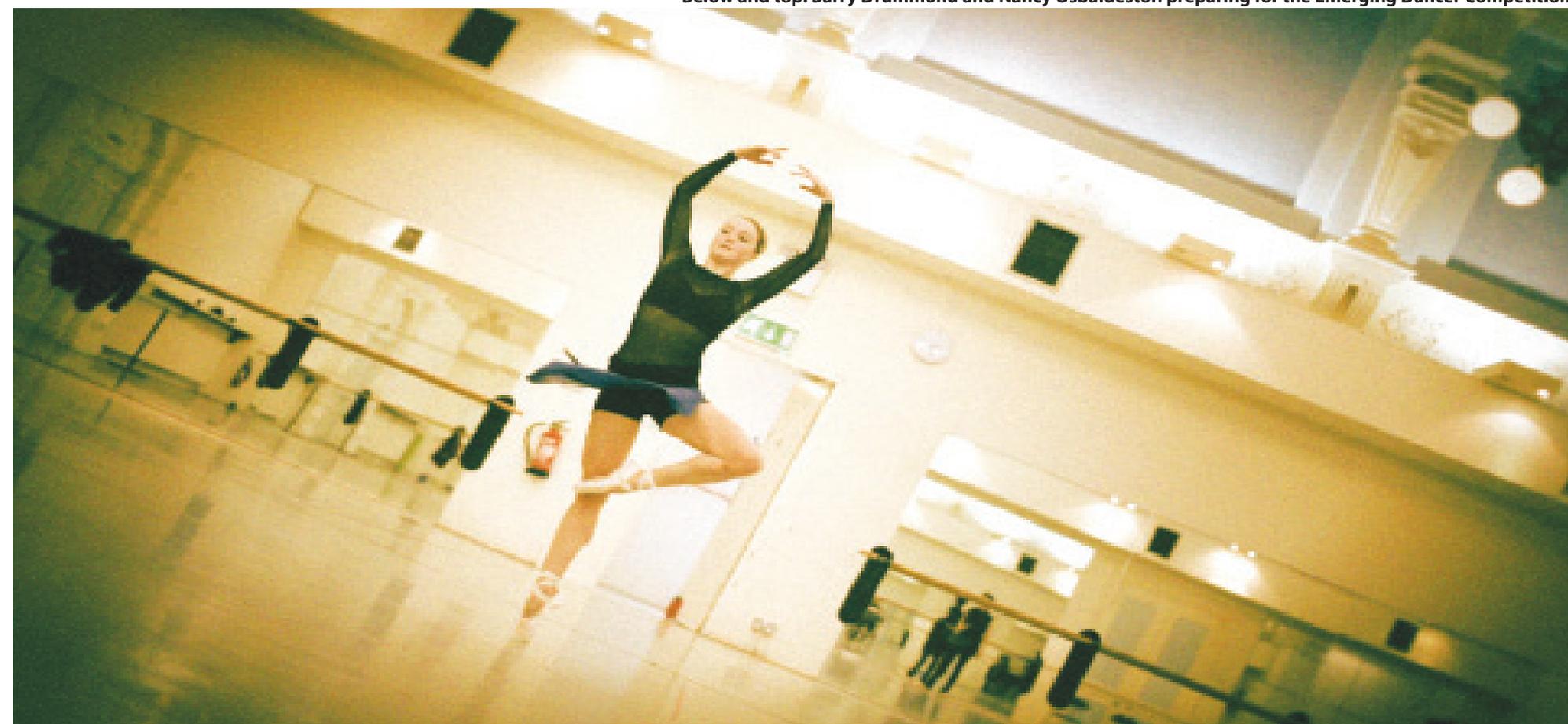


PHOTO CREDIT: THE BLAINE BROTHERS



The Secret Abortion Trail

Irish women don't have the right to choice. **Janey Stephenson** meets the charity helping them on their journeys to the UK.

There will always be pro-lifers. There will always be pro-choicers. There will also always be women seeking abortion.

According to new research from the Guttmacher Institute and World Health Organisation, 'restrictive abortion laws are not associated with lower rates of abortion'. Instead, they make safe abortions more difficult to obtain. As the Irish abortion debate rages on, the Abortion Support Network (ASN) helps hundreds of Irish women making the journey to England to terminate their unwanted pregnancies - but who can't afford to.

Every year, nearly 7,000 women from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland cross the Irish Sea to have an abortion in a British clinic. Mara Clarke, the founder and Director of ASN, asks, "Why in 2012, in the western world, does ASN need to exist? Why are women still forced into this circumstance where they have to throw themselves upon the mercy of strangers to access a medical procedure?"

Under the 1861 'Offences Against The Person Act', abortion is illegal in Ireland and Northern Ireland. This includes cases of rape and foetal abnormality. The unborn has an

explicit right to life from conception. Women who want to terminate their unplanned or unwanted pregnancies must make a silent journey to England, often alone.

Mara is matter-of-fact about the situation: "It is absolutely a class-based decision. Women with money have options, women without money don't." An Irish or Northern Irish woman is a private patient in the UK, where abortion is legal until 24 weeks, five days. Prices start at around £330, rise exponentially after 14 weeks, and past 19 weeks rise to £1595. However, this only covers the procedure, not travel (which is often last-minute air fare), accommodation, childcare costs or a passport.

ASN was founded in 2009 to provide accommodation, financial assistance and confidential, non-judgmental information to the women forced to travel to England to access a safe, legal abortion. The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) describe a 'culture of silence and confusion' in Ireland; accessing basic services for any counselling or medical advice can be an isolating, daunting prospect.

Often, the women ASN hear from will not have been able to tell anyone. The stigma attached to abortion in Ireland and

Northern Ireland is strong; screaming pro-life campaigners picket family planning clinics and rogue crisis pregnancy agencies misinform and bully pregnant women. In 1992, The 'Offences Against the Person Act' gained amendments to provide a 'right to travel' and 'right to information'. However, 20 years on women are still unsure of how to exercise these.

"We have women call us because they just don't know the law, they don't know their options," explains Katie, one of ASN's phone volunteers. ASN are contactable by phone, e-mail or text. However they clarify that they are 'not doctors or counsellors'. The majority of cases they deal with are concerning women who have made their decision, saved up what money they can but are racing against time and struggling. Inevitably, the recession has been a further blow. "I've heard the word 'redundant' a thousand times over the last six months," Katie says. "Everybody is saying 'I was laid off', 'my husband was laid off', 'we don't have any money coming into the family', 'I don't have any savings', or 'I can't afford my mortgage any more.'"

Mara describes women "in desperate situations", explaining, "when you make abortion against the law, all you

“Because we’re dealing with women below the poverty line or who are seriously struggling financially, some of them have never left Ireland.” Obtaining a passport in time is a frequent problem. Furthermore, there are different clinics in different cities for different stages of gestation on different days. ASN advises women organising their travel and has 21 volunteer hosts in the UK who provide accommodation for women who need to stay overnight, necessary for post-19 weeks procedures. However, it is not uncommon for women to want to complete everything in a single day.

Mara recalls a case which she promises is not atypical: “we just heard from a girl who flew from Ireland to Liverpool and took a train to Birmingham, then the next morning took a five am train to go to Manchester so she could fly out. We hear women who are five hours from the airport but want to come in and out in a day. They have to take the first flight in and the last flight out. So they sleep in the airport the night

“It is absolutely a class-based decision. Women with money have options, women without money don’t.”

before.”

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service warns: ‘It is best not to travel within 24 hours of treatment’. The side effects of abortion can include sickness, heavy bleeding and abdominal cramps. Nevertheless, the psychological distress of telling other people, compounded with the financial impossibility of missing a day of work, or inability to cover childcare, leaves women with restricted options.

“Amongst women from Northern Ireland, a higher percentage are less likely to have been able to tell anybody about their decision to terminate, with the possible exception of their partners, if they have partners,” Mara adds. Another issue of disclosure comes from victims of domestic violence, who often fear that they would be physically prevented from leaving the country and forced to keep the pregnancy.

Psychologically, Mara believes the inability to talk about it, sometimes lying to friends, families, and work, leaves women “so alone, with a level of shame”. Sometimes, ASN are the first people the women will talk to. Katie describes “women who may have kept it bottled up and immediately start crying” on the phone.

However, not all the women come to ASN alone. Not all

the pregnancies are unwanted. Mara recounts how some of the most harrowing cases they help are with couples who are planning a family: “Some of the most heart-breaking people we hear from are couples with wanted pregnancies, who don’t find out until after week 20 that there are catastrophic anomalies: babies with no brains, babies with no internal organs.”

This presents an impossible situation: “Imagine you find out that your wanted pregnancy is going to result in a baby that is going to die within days of being born. You have a matter of weeks, first to decide whether you want to continue with the pregnancy or not, and secondly to come up with about £3000.” These procedures must take place in a hospital setting, and are at top-end prices. And this still leaves last-minute plane tickets and overnight accommodation to pay for.

This is the grim reality of such restrictive legislation. However, the ASN team are relentlessly compassionate. Mara, Katie and Susie all believe in practical welfare. ASN is a support service and facilitator of women’s needs. It is not a campaigning organisation; groups such as Choice Ireland, Alliance For Choice, and Abortion Rights are already fighting for more liberal abortion law.

Mara emphasises her belief that “this is a decision that should be made by a woman, with unbiased medical information and where appropriate, with her partner and her God.” When asked how she describes her pro-choice politics to her five-year-old daughter, she merrily replies, “women who are mummies should want to be mummies”. She glows with admiration at the ‘incredible resourcefulness’ of the women ASN hears from, who do everything in their power to gather the necessary money.

ASN is the only charity in the UK to financially support Irish women seeking abortion in England. Last year they heard from 250 women. Consisting of 36 dynamic volunteers, Susie describes the organisation as “very grassroots” and “non-bureaucratic”. However, it’s working: the number of calls they receive has already tripled since last year. The phone advisors are given the autonomy to grant women up to £200 without permission and sometimes, women are sorted within 15 minutes of calling. The method is simple, Mara says, “Here’s a woman. She needs our help. We’ll help her”.

“None of us are paid,” affirms Susie. “We can guarantee every penny goes to the women.” ASN is funded by individual donors. Their only expense is their phone bill, which is covered by a donor with an unrestricted standing order. Volunteers fit ASN around other jobs. Despite this, they all claim that their job satisfaction is immense. Mara proudly declares, “ASN is what happens when a group of people decide that they want to make a difference in people’s lives.” Although they run on a “hand-to-mouth” basis and are “almost always running out of money”, they have never turned a woman down to date. Their sole aim for the future is to “survive and keep helping women”.

In January 2010, The Irish Examiner conducted a survey, concluding that 60 per cent of 18-35 year olds were in favour of legal abortion. With the ‘A, B and C v Ireland’ case in 2010, which saw three Irish women who had travelled to England to access abortions challenge the Irish Government’s ban on abortion in the European Court of Human Rights, and with Ireland’s recent introduction of the morning-after pill over the counter in February 2011, a change in legislation could be on the horizon. Yet it is not guaranteed. ASN have received criticism that they are a ‘plaster’ for a governmental problem: helping these women so the government doesn’t have to. Katie calmly sweeps this criticism aside: “I challenge anyone to spend five minutes on the phone to these women and not want to help them”. M

To find out more about ASN, or make a donation, visit abortionsupport.org.uk

PHOTO CREDIT: TOM WITHEROW

PHOTO CREDIT: DEMOTIX.COM



do is make it even harder for poor women, or more often women with children, or disenfranchised women, or very young girls.” She adds: “We don’t feel like we always have to talk about the raped 15 year old, although we’ve had several.”

ASN carefully consider every case on an individual basis, but Mara highlights a commonality: “They [the women] are more or less frantic 92 per cent of the time, because they don’t have the money. I can’t tell you the amount of families who say ‘if we don’t pay our rent this month, we can pay for the flights, can you help with the procedure? We once heard from this girl who was £20 short. Can you imagine £20 making the difference between you and the rest of your life?’”

First, by law, women must receive a consultation to have an abortion. These can be accessed for free in Ireland, Northern Ireland or for a small fee in England. However, Susie, one of the trustees, notes that clinics can be ‘very compassionate’ for Irish women. After this, women must consider which clinic to go to. Then, they must start to plan a complicated journey and, for most, how to explain their disappearance to people. Katie is keen to point out that, for many women, it is an unfathomable ordeal.

Arts.

Mystery Plays Rewind History

The producer of York's Mystery Cycle Production, Liam Evens-Ford speaks to **Celia Scruby**.

Liam, having worked in York for 10 years now either acting or producing theatre, enthusiastically tells me that being able to produce this year's York Mystery Plays is something he couldn't be more proud or honoured to do. But with a cast of 500 to organise, and the responsibility over a tradition which has been a part of York's heritage for more than 800 years, his job certainly isn't an easy one.

Admittedly most of what I knew about the event was from its title, ambiguous in itself, but speaking to Liam it's clear that York Mystery Plays are a notorious part of the city's history. These plays are focused on the representation of Bible stories which came about in the late 13th century, and different trade groups would put on plays dealing with all the major events in the Christian calendar. Plays were performed on decorated wagons that moved about the city to allow different crowds to watch each play. The entire cycle could take up to twenty hours to perform and could be spread over a number of days.

What Liam explains is so extraordinary about York's cycle is that it is the most complete set of texts of their kind, going back further than any other mystery plays. With 48 plays in total, York's cycle reveals abundance about the city's medieval community. Liam tells me about a few of the little quirks which emerged: "Each guild was specifically linked to the particular story they performed; the guild of shipbuilders would perform Noah and the Ark while the butchers would rather bawdily perform the Crucifixion of Christ." The reason why they were called 'mystery plays' also relates to the guilds, as Liam explains that "the idea of 'mystery' has a double significance really, in their nature these tradesmen were themselves rather mysterious in that they worked stringently to keep the tricks of their trade secret, but also the stories they were performing were a bit controversial, as biblical stories were read in Latin, usually confined to religious edifices rather performed in bawdy un-pious plays." These small details give a small insight into the phenomenon that is York's Mystery plays. Liam adds that what people don't realise is that this is not only a national but an international event, drawing interest from all over the world: "In North



YORK MYSTERY PLAYS.CO.UK

America York's mystery cycles occupy a prominent field of academic research and this year a leading professor in mystery plays is travelling from Sydney especially to witness the project."

Although the Mystery Plays have long been a tradition in York this year they are going to be performed on a completely different scale. So far over 1000 people from York have joined a team of professional artists and technicians to create this spectacular production, with over 1000 pieces of costume to be made and a cast of 500 to be made up into character. Liam doesn't exaggerate when he says that this is going to be "without a doubt the biggest event in York - rarely do you get to do theatre on this scale." This year the Mystery plays are going to be performed in the Museum gardens with the ruins of St Mary's Abbey to add an appropriately arresting ambience.

From speaking to Liam, I have had growing realisation of the colossal responsibility he has taken on in producing this project. When I voiced these thoughts he admitted, "Yes, I am very aware of the vast responsibility, we're doing something that people have been

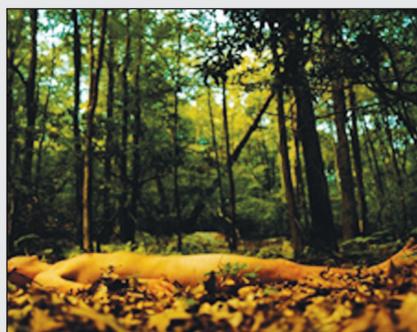
doing for over 800 years, while you want to make it relevant and want to make it new you also can't disrespect what has gone before." As part of his research a video booth was set up in the first week of January this year, for citizens to go and share their memories of York's Mystery Plays from years gone by. Liam highlights one story that stuck out for him. "A member of the audience from a performance in 1964, recounted a rather spiritual moment at the ruins of St Mary's Abbey when a flash of lightning struck the vista at the exact moment when 'God' started his monologue." Liam went on to say that the videos captured in January "really revealed a sense of heritage in York's community, and like any tradition many of York's residents recalled that it passed down through generations. Liam also recalls that this was the way Dame Judy Dench, now also a patron of the event, got involved. "Her mother used to make the costumes and consequently, Judy got involved. She was in both the 1951 and 1955 performances, once playing Mary Mother of God. She did the Mystery Plays before she became a professional, even before her time at the Royal

Shakespeare Company," Liam tells me. "In a way she is indebted to the Mystery Plays as it was part of her early training."

When I asked Liam what we could get excited about for this year's performances he was reluctant to give too much away but he said "the stage will be a box of tricks - what I can tell you is that we want to show that these stories have huge relevance to now." The plays will be set in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Liam explains that his reason for doing this is because "it is a huge period of suffering, humanity was really struggling through a world war, economic depression and personal loss but then there was also the jubilation of the end of the war, this gives us huge echoes for stories that were told in the bible where humanity really struggles and then really thrives." Then without so much as a pause, he casually added that Mike Kenny, Olivier Award winner for his adaptation of the *Railway Children*, would be reinterpreting this year's York Mystery Plays. So, if there is one thing I have taken away from my interview is that this event is headed to reach blockbuster status and with Liam it seems he has a few tricks up his sleeve as well.

"Dame Judi Dench is indebted to the Mystery Plays as they formed part of her early theatrical training"

In Pictures: Easter Culture Calendar



Globe to Globe London, The Globe to 10th June



Sensual Africa Oxford, Pegasus Theatre until 24th March



Modern British innovation, London V & A, until 12th August



20 years of Damien Hirst, London, Tate Modern, until 9th September

WeiWei's message

Weiwei's sunflower seeds still have a continuing power, investigates **Agatha Torrance**

A recent purchase by Tate Modern, saw a tenth of Ai Weiwei's 'Sunflower Seeds' become part of the permanent collection of the gallery, helping to commemorate a key moment in the history of foreign affairs and art. He's been named one of the most influential people in the world and was voted second runner-up to Time Magazine's esteemed Person of the Year Award, along with the bride of the year, Kate Middleton. He's been the topic of discussion in parliaments across the world, caused global protests and yet for some reason Chinese artist, Ai Weiwei is still surprisingly underplayed in the media.

When I first encountered Weiwei's work, I could never have anticipated the events to come. It all started out quite typically. Having been invited to exhibit as part of the prestigious Unilever Turbine Hall Project at London's Tate Modern, Weiwei used this prominent platform to display his creativity as an artist and his message as an activist: he spread a grey beach of a 100 million hand-crafted, porcelain sunflower seeds over the floor of the Turbine hall. It was lauded by critics, not only for its multiplicity of meanings but its accessibility, and was enjoyed by the thousands of people who built "seed-castles" and played in and amongst the husks. As with any highly publicised piece of modern art, the analysis came flooding in: some saw it as a discussion of the vast population of China, a reference to the sunflower imagery of Chairman Mao's propaganda, or a comment upon the manufacturing power of China. Whatever Weiwei was trying to say, we liked it.



"SELF-PORTRAIT (AI WEIWEI AND GRASS MUD HORSE)" BY AI WEIWEI (2011)

"I have to speak for people who are afraid"

On 3rd April 2011, however, 'Sunflower Seeds' was irrevocably changed. Whilst boarding a plane in Beijing, Weiwei worryingly disappeared, and authorities later revealed that he was being detained until further notice. The artist and the Chinese police had a highly antagonistic relationship, and remembering the brain haemorrhage he'd sustained in 2009 at the hands of the Chinese Police, many believed the worst was yet to come, and that the artist's life was seriously at risk. The fight for his survival began.

Campaigns similar to the recent controversial "Kony 2012" movement spread across the internet through social networking sites and on YouTube. Tate Modern extended the exhibition run and protestors repeatedly demonstrated in the Turbine Hall. Prominent artist Anish Kapoor refused to exhibit

in Beijing, Tracy Emin denounced the situation as a "nightmare" and supporters painted the slogan, "Who's Afraid of Ai Weiwei?" across the walls of major cities. The US, British, German and French governments all placed political pressure on China, demanding his safe return. The aim was simple: the more famous Ai Weiwei became, the increasingly difficult it would become for China to silence him. "Sunflower Seeds" drew attention to Ai Weiwei's dangerous situation and simultaneously reminded the world of the highly problematic nature of China's human rights and severe censorship record.

The tiny grains of porcelain introduced Weiwei's art and his political message to a whole new group of people, some of whom went on to campaign and fight for his release. We'll never know what exactly caused his release

after 81 days; romantically, one could argue that it was in part his creation that helped to save him, but regardless, a comparatively negligible yet dubious charge of tax fraud and a £1.5 million tax bill accompanied his return.

Contemplating the effect that Weiwei has had, not only on the art world, but in relation to the much-debated political climate of China, I'm surprised his name is not more widely known. He reconfirms the value of art as he acts as a reminder of the significance and the power that modern art can have but for Weiwei it's a compulsion, not a choice: "I have to speak for people who are afraid."

Bearing in mind the excess of self-consciously surreal and sometimes ridiculous works of modern art, this is very refreshing.

Mary O'Connor

Editor's Picks.

13th March – 29th April
The Barbican, London
Gross und Klein (Big and Small)

Strauss' play of surrealism and fantasy really finds its feet in this production to be performed at the London Barbican. With Hollywood superstar Cate Blanchett cast as the lead role of the contemplative Lotte, who is alienated from family, friends and her husband, viewers will not be disappointed.

5th April - 30th September
Hampton Court Palace, Surrey
The Wild, the Beautiful and the Damned

This exhibition will explore the ever changing concept of beauty through the depiction of the lives of 17th century courtesans and libertines who lived and died in the Stuart Court during the reigns of Charles II, James II, William III & Mary II and Anne (1660-1714).

For those of you staying or living in the north over Easter, don't miss out on *How to disappear completely and never be found* at **York Theatre Royal from 21st -24th March at 7.45pm.**



Best Book

Lucy Dickens

Smut

Alan Bennett

Smut takes the form of two short stories by Northern national treasure, Alan Bennett. The first, 'The Greening of Mrs Donaldson', focuses on a widowed older woman, acting out diagnostic role-plays for medical students to pay her bills, and the second, 'The Shielding of Mrs Forbes', a tale of public secrets and a disastrous suburban marriage. Described by *the Independent* as being like the 'saucy seaside postcards of old' the book will have you laughing like a hyena, at the same time as being wholeheartedly mortified at the bluntness of Bennett's literary approach to his smut.

An endearing old lady called Mrs Donaldson has two students lodging in her house, who offer to pay her in 'sexual favours' when they get into arrears with their rent. This story is keen to explore an elderly woman's sexual reawakening as part of Bennett's conviction that ageing should not be categorised as just a 'little accident.' The second story, involving one Mrs Forbes, centres on another elderly lady, whose son is 'secretly' gay. The son,

Graham, marries Betty in order to maintain the concealment of his true sexuality. Bennett is truly honest and dry in his humorous depiction of the twists and turns of this story.

These sentimental stories will touch you with their genuine emotion, while the graphic and uncompromising sexual details are made to shock. Don't be offended by what you read, but be prepared for the grotesque. Despite this, the narrative is beautifully constructed with a clear sense of purpose. The language is no sense fustian, but every word weighted with meaning. The cutting comedy, both dark and whimsical is entertaining throughout and at only 189 pages, *Smut* is a swift read. The dramatic scenes in 'The Greening of Mrs Donaldson' are, at times, hilarious, while other scenes are immensely poignant. Bennett manages to create two stories with the ability to astonish, while simultaneously invoking emotion, a truly amazing feat.

Smut is the ideal length to read in one sitting, perfect for a quick read over the Easter holidays, or as a way to ease your return to 'reading books for pleasure' after a long term of being forced to read *Derrida* or such like. *Smut* should definitely be on your list of Easter purchases, if only to give as a present to your mum.

BLACKWELL'S

This book is available from the campus bookstore, Blackwells.

Editor's Favourites

The Second Coming
John Niven

(April 2012)

Crafting God as "a god-damn heart-throb," Niven's humorous look at the world when God goes away for a short holiday is sidesplittingly funny. With heaven now set as a highly efficient office presided over by the typically renowned angels, God is able

to breeze through several hundred years worth of human history – which is not at all to his liking. As a result, he sends the reborn street musician 'JC' back to Earth to sort out the problem and make humanity 'nice' again. What neither JC or God realise is that Earth is going to be more of a match than they reckoned for... Definitely give this bally and hilarious book a read over your Easter break.

The Sense of an Ending
Julian Barnes

(March 2012)

Winner of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2011, this is a must read for the Easter break. Tony Webster and his group of friends first met Adrian Finn at school. As a typical group of sex-hungry young men in an all-boys school, they were

inseparable, trading in affections and dry wit. Years on, Tony is isolated. As a retired divorcee, he is forced to confront the past, which brings home a lot of unsettling truths. He's certainly never tried to hurt anybody. *The Sense of an Ending* is the story of one man coming to terms with the mutable past. Laced with trademark precision, dexterity and insight, it is the work of one of the world's most distinguished writers.

Music.

Last of the Country Gentlemen.

Beardy Texan musician Josh T. Pearson talks divorce, death and divinity with **Sam Briggs**

“Just be patient with him”, warns Josh T. Pearson’s tour manager, as we watch Pearson sound-check; an imposing presence alone onstage with his long, bristly beard and thick Southern drawl. Granted, an even more intimate performance of his brutally personal tracks only adds an element of awe to the atmosphere surrounding Pearson, whose appearance, music and persona seem far removed from the usual wet, grey Sheffield afternoon. Our interview is slightly delayed, as Pearson attends to the needs of the support act in the dressing room next door, and searches for relief from the waves of “room spinning” ailing him. As we sit down to talk, he jokes – “Do I need to record this too? No, I trust you. I never forget a face, anyways.” Even his broad laugh doesn’t quite dispel an air of intimidation. However, over our conversation, Pearson reveals himself to be thoroughly endearing, charming and self-deprecating, as well as incredibly thoughtful and considered.

With no official release to his name since 2001, which heralded the first and only album from his first band, *Lift To Experience*, I ask Pearson what the intervening years have held. “Work, work, work. I stayed holed up a while, got my head straight, and fought a lot with myself, and God and the angels and all that nonsense. Where you pace backwards and forward trying to figure things out.” It becomes clear that his exorcising of his personal demons, be it through music or otherwise, is a full time profession. “I’m always writing, where I’m at, my brain never ceases to continue to be creative.”

Leaving his Texan hometown “as fast as I possibly could” for a solo show in Berlin, he “decided to stick around for a beer championship which I lost. Miserably”. He describes his personal experience of the end of *Lift to Experience* as requiring “heavy lifting spiritually... a real fragile part of me that I didn’t have the strength to carry on my own. Tricky adult stuff.” Moving away musically towards the contemplative folk musings of his recent album came from trying “different genres, simple songs in regular tuning which I’m still playing to date. You’d think pop stuff’s the easiest, but it’s the hardest”.

Not that last year’s critically acclaimed record, *Last of the Country Gentlemen*, is in anyway easy. As Pearson puts it, “super sad first person songs written about divorce and the loss of God, and the death of God et cetera, written in a format that’s just a guy with a guitar, with songs that are 10 minutes long – that’s not an easy cup of tea for anybody”. Completed two years ago,



they represent one of what Pearson refers to as “batches” of songs, “fitting into categories and shelves in [his] mind”.

What was it about this batch that made them ready for release? As Pearson admits, he had “written them for therapy” as a “love letter”, with no “immediate plans to put them out.” “But playing [them] out live, hearing what a few people said about the songs made me reconsider my aesthetic. I thought it might do the world some good, if I could handle it mentally and spiritually. There’s a toll it takes out of you, putting something so personal out there for ridicule and scepticism.”

This toll is especially costly for a songwriter as honest as Pearson. “Most people write in the first person, and then change it to her or she. Not to hide, just because it’s easier”, he says. “But I decided to keep it. I said, you’re going to be the asshole here, because you are an asshole, you’re a fallen man, you’ve failed.” Understandably, the “aesthetic rules” Pearson sets for himself made the album an “incredibly painful son of a bitch to record, to collide with the extreme extreme of loss. It’s like videotaping a death. I’m glad to have made it through.”

Despite the form that this stark sadness and intense soul-baring took, the

“At least you listen to my record and feel better about your life.”

record appeared in several best of lists, and was awarded Album of the Year by *Rough Trade*. “It’s a mixed blessing,” explains Pearson, “as it’s a tragic record. It’s honest, and the good things in life are hard and honest. But it’s surprising that there are quite so many people being touched by it. I didn’t think there were that many sad people in the world! When you’re incredibly sad and lonely, you wanna hear something incredibly sad and lonely. I just hope I raised the level a little bit. At least you listen to my record and feel better about your life.” He is convincing on the good that music can do for the world, which begins to satisfy the struggle of such personal performance. “Every night, I think I’m never doing this again. But nobody dies, and people seem to feel a little bit... that’s why we gravitate towards music and the arts, because we feel we’re made better from it.” And for Pearson, this redemptive belief is layered through the Pentecostal upbringing that exists “in every facet, in every part of me and who I am.”

We talk about his musical influences, and the “clusterfuck” that exists around genres today. He refers to the forbidden rock and roll that became a secret pleasure, and the church music that he was brought up on. However, he sees his influence as coming “more from what’s affected you as an individual”. Indeed, the title of the album comes from “what she called me”. “To me it’s more a throwback to my old self, to becoming the things that you hated and didn’t understand as a kid. Normal life stuff. It’s hard growing up.” Is it a lament to the past, I ask? “It’s more taking the good with the bad. Romance [and mystery are] dead to an extent, but we have instant access to anything... it’s wonderful as people are smiling.”

So what next for the immensely talented songwriter? Could anything inspire him to that level again? “I gotta hope not or I’ll lose all my hair... though I wouldn’t mind a sound guy.” Whatever the future holds, Pearson for now remains an inimitable talent, utterly consumed with his spiritual and personal identity, religion, and purely “playing alone for thousands of hours, just playing for the joy of playing,” in search of those “sacred spaces” where his heart-break can exist, aesthetically and personally.

Above: Josh T Pearson

REVERB.

“It’s not like fucking Lana Del Rey defecated all over herself on stage at fucking Bonnaroo.”

Bowling For Soup

MILFs, touring and going solo: bassist Erik Chandler talks to Alex Edgerton about the band from 1994 to 2012.

“I didn’t know fans like that existed until we got there!”, so says Erik Chandler, bassist and one quarter of legendary pop-punkers Bowling for Soup, in reference to the “amazing support” they receive from our fine country, most notably from the fairer sex, whom they once referred to as “ageing like a fine wine” on their song ‘Girls in America’ (when I ask him if that means our country has a multiplicity of *ahem* MILFs, he replies in the affirmative).

Erik and the band’s singer/guitarist Jarrett are due to cross the Atlantic next month to undertake their third annual acoustic tour as a duo, visiting a number of small venues like, among other places, the Duchess in York. “I know it’s so cliché, out of the book to say [that an acoustic show] is a much more intimate experience, but honestly it is and we design it that way.”

This is a point which I agree with him on, since after my experience of seeing Flight of the Conchords at the gigantic Wembley Arena, it always seemed strange to me that two guys and their guitars should be housed in anything but a smaller room.

Despite Erik claiming that 2012 will be “a quiet year” for them as the band “want to spend [time] with their families”, they still seem to be fitting quite a lot in for what he indicates is something of a sabbatical. Between the acoustic shows are a series of military gigs with the full band in Africa and the Middle East, and that’s without even mentioning the fact that Erik has a solo album, which he describes as “taking on a more personal tone”. After touring under his own name over the summer, he pledges that the band in full will return for a tour round the States and Europe.

Erik’s forthcoming album is set to indicate a marked tonal shift from some of BFS’ more well-known songs. For years,



ABOVE: ERIK GETTING CHUMMY WITH HIS BANDMATES.

the band have combined often scatological humour with tales of unrequited love and troublesome relationships, most famously on ‘Girl All the Bad Guys Want’ about a girl far too immersed in nu-metal for Jarrett to romance, or the ‘Bitch Song’, with its surprisingly poignant take on despising your other half yet still being utterly infatuated with them (“you’re a bitch/but I love you anyway”). However, it seems in recent years the band themselves have changed, not only with the more introvert sentiments on Erik’s solo material but also following on from the band’s last album *Fishin’ for Woos* (2011), in which they led off with the surprisingly tender and grand-sweeping single, ‘Turbulence’.

Although Erik is keen to point out that this apparent change arises more from where they are professionally than from some new-found emotional maturity. He maintains that there have always been “two very distinct sides to Bowling for Soup,” in which “the more serious side often gets overshadowed by the more humorous”. However on their most recent LP, “we finally

felt that we were in a spot where we could lead off with one of the more serious songs...we were able to say ‘Hey, y’know look at this other side.’” The ‘spot’ to which he refers to is the band’s current position as heads of their own independent record company, ‘Que-so Records’.

The opportunity arose for the band to start this label after they were unceremoniously dropped by the now defunct Jive in 2009 right after releasing their 10th studio album, *Sorry for Partyin’*. It was a move that Erik describes as at first “overwhelming” due to the “really poor timing” of it, but afterwards they realised it was actually a blessing in disguise. “[The label] had ideas that we didn’t always agree with...we’d go behind their backs and start the ball rolling on what we’d wanted to do, then they’d turn around and tell us to do exactly that.” Such an infuriating process even led them to “actively pursuing the idea of how to get out of our record deal” years before the decision was made for them, hence the band remains largely sanguine about their situation, calling it “great” and “exactly what we wanted”.

They plan on releasing another record in June this year and regularly play at the Duchess. *Alex Swadling.*



Local Spotlight.

There’s nothing quite like the thuds of synth layered with atmospheric guitar, a groove ridden drum beat and anguished crooning, that either means you’re in Reflex or have fantastic taste in your 80s music. In this case, you’d be listening to York based post-punk band, Berlin Black. They define themselves as post-punk, but when founding member and lead singer Chris Tuke (also ex-Screaming Banshee Aircrew) sings, it’s like David Bowie and Robert Smith have climbed inside him, done something unspeakable and the audible result is his tormented yet distinctly dulcet tones, singing some darkly memorable lyrics. Alongside Tuke the aural masseur, he is accompanied with

other experienced musicians like bassist Jo Violet, also a member of The Mach Violets who gained considerable fame in the 80s. Although the 80s sound is pretty authentic, Berlin Black undoubtedly feel modern and their achievements up until now are proof of this. After having only played four gigs, Berlin Black were asked to play main stage at Whitby Goth Weekend and since then have supported bands like Pop Will Eat Itself and Chameleons Vox (ex 80s band, The Chameleons). The foursome are signed to Trash Vogue Records, which they commendably set up themselves and released the E.P *Burn it Down* in 2010 and the single ‘The Only Ones’ in 2011 through the York-based label.

Reviews.

Artist: Redlight
Date: 21st February
Venue: The Duchess, York
Review: Joni Roome

★★★★

The ‘It’s a Bass Thing’ team kept up their high standards when Redlight came to town on the 21st February. Main support came from DJ Jo Kira, and before her a hip-hop showcase from local boys Kritikal, Double Deuce and Deviant with Royce Rolls spinning the tune. The bar was set from the get go with the trio of MCs hyping the crowd up and DJ Jo Kira playing a smooth and flawless set until the man himself took to the decks.

Redlight used to make drum and bass and jungle influenced music under the moniker of Clipz, but he moved away from Clipz to create a more chart-orientated sound combining all types of dance music. His radio played tracks got a big reaction from the crowd with ‘What You Talking About?’ - his collaboration with Ms. Dynamite provoking ecstasy amongst the vest wearing masses.

His other big hits, ‘Stupid’ and ‘Get



Out My Head’ were also well received by the punters but because of the nature of the songs, being more pop structured, it did feel at times that we weren’t watching a producer play his songs but a DJ just pressing play.

The venue is a baffling one - a cavernous room that has the appearance of an indoor paintball centre rather than legitimate gig venue, which destroys an intimate feel that nights like this really need to take them to the next level. After blitzing through his set Redlight had to make a quick get away, but all credit to the It’s a Bass Thing boys because they ensured the night lived on into the early hours by blasting out tunes until the doors closed. Again, given Redlight’s talent it was a disappointingly small crowd - but that couldn’t stop the quality of all the acts shining through.

Artist: Portico Quartet
Date: 6th March
Venue: The Duchess, York
Review: Rory Foster

★★★

I would have loved to see more of Portico Quartet, but due to arriving late, The Duchess’ tiny stage and at least 50 per cent of their fanbase being tall men, I was struggling. Through the gaps I was however able to observe a great performance, let down only by the stage and the sound.

The Band - probably best known for their Mercury Music Prize nominated first album, *Knee Deep in the North Sea* - have had a few changes recently, notably their new member Kier Vine and their new album, *Portico Quartet*, released earlier this year.

Most noticeably live is their Hang and live drums have been (mostly) replaced by synthesized versions, which although sounding great, meant their set was somewhat limited new material and heavily reworked versions of old songs, of which there were few in the hour-long gig. Set and album opener ‘Window Seat’ seemed more



suited to walk-in music: two of the four members standing awkwardly during the electronic/bow fused minimalist track played out that was thankfully quickly replaced by album highlights ‘ruins’ and ‘spinner’, giving the band a bit of a workout. Though the band seemed to be playing great and enjoying themselves, the Duchess’ sound setup did let them down - two main speakers blasting out sax, double bass and electronic drums made for an at times messy output. Some disappointment at the lack of ‘Steepleless’, the one song featuring a vocalist off the album, but the crazy sax solo during the encore of ‘Dawn Patrol’ made up for it. All in all, a solid gig that felt let down only by the room it was in, not the band who were in it.

Nouse Playlist.

Disappointment.
Alex Swadling & Rory Foster

It’s that time of year again. You can finally feel your fingers and as festival line-ups are beginning to be announced, there’s a distinct feeling of excitement in the air. Unless they’re shit. Soundtrack your line-up disappointments.

‘Offensive Lineup’ - Snowgoons ft Craig G

Angry underground hip hop producer Snowgoons has clearly had his festival excitement ruined several times, because he made a song about it.

‘We Are Fucking Angry’ - The King Blues

What? The King Blues aren’t playing? You expect me to pay 200 quid to see Miley Cyrus headline?

‘The Drugs Don’t Work’ - The Verve

They really won’t with that line-up either. Although perhaps Richard Ashcroft was a bit hasty with this advice, we’re pretty sure there’s something that could help...

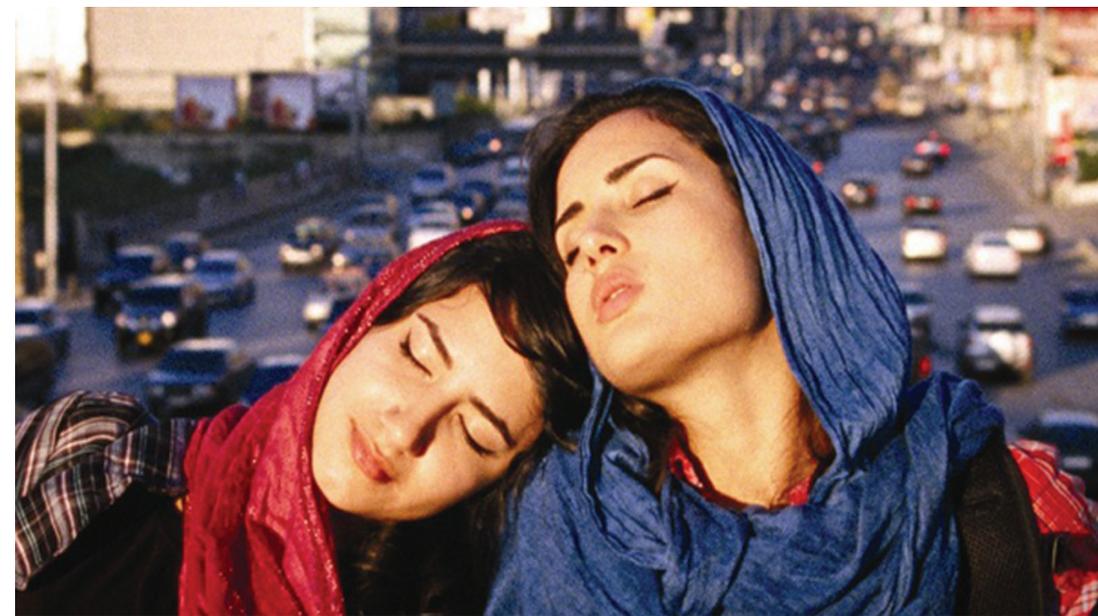
‘Predictable’ - Korn

After ten of pretty much the same studio album, Korn know about predictability. At least they haven’t totally sold-out.

Film.

A Queer Celebration

The BFI's Gay and Lesbian Film Festival has an uncertain future, **Sophie Rose Walker** learns.



The Tehrani couple in *Circumstance*, 2011

The British Film Institute's London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival is taking place over the Easter holiday from 23rd March to 1st April. They have called the event a "celebration of queer creativity in the UK," but the films and shorts featured on their programme are inadvertently much more political than that description. Although the festival, which celebrated its 25th edition last year, is known for its subtle choice of beautiful, yet poignant films, their plots are all still somewhat 'damaged'.

The opening night Gala film is Thom Fitzgerald's *Cloudburst* starring Olympia Dukakis and Brenda Fricker as a pair of lovers in what *Gig City* described as "the best menopausal lesbian road trip movie ever made". It follows Dotty, who has just been released from a nursing home, travelling to Nova Scotia where she and her partner, Stella, intend to get married. Dukakis' performance has been dubbed as a seminal portrayal of a lover's plight.

One of the most apposite centre-piece screenings is of *Circumstance* (pictured above), which is a powerful drama about two Muslim lesbians' coming of age experience living in Tehran. With a contemporary lifestyle, and traditional society, their tale is entirely plausible and it won the Audience Award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. The Arab Spring was a zeitgeist for social change,

and this film portrays the consequences of that change, whether political, or personal, as still being hugely controversial.

Other films on the programme include a feature about author and activist Alice Walker by British filmmaker Pratibha Parmar, and *Families Like Ours*, which follows the LGBT parenting stories of characters from parents to teachers.

A stand out film based on one outstanding performance from newcomer Harmony Santana, is *Gun Hill Road*. A father is released from a lengthy prison sentence to return home and discover

"Unfortunately, people only want to buy *Glee* on DVD."

the truth about the life and the teenage son (Santana) he left behind. Set in tough Brooklyn, Santana is transitioning to female and it follows the complexity of this process comparative to his father's acceptance. In a father/son relationship where both have fulfilled unconventional roles, it is very much a film about conventional love. For a story set in the context of urban strife, it offers something profoundly different.

The festival started as being about predominantly gay themed films during the 70s when the impact of Aids and left wing activism provoked the arts scene

to claim its voice in speaking out against ignorance of these issues. But although it has broadened into exploring all areas of LGBT interest, it still remains that in mainstream, gay cinema, and especially lesbian directors are still hugely marginalised. One notable exception is Lisa Cholodenko, whose film *High Art* opened the LGGFF in 1999. She went on to receive an Oscar nomination for her piece, *The Kids Are All Right*, which was quite momentous for Hollywood.

But it would be wrong to assume that merely being gay and being in film merits an artist actually wanting their work to feature in a gay festival. The stigma attached to a gay event (albeit aimed at all audiences), appears to put off as many people as it attracts. Indeed, the commercialised promotion of mainstream films such as *A Single Man*, starring Colin Firth, and *Brokeback Mountain* starring Heath Ledger were not featured in gay film festivals as art house pieces as being 'gay films'. Quite the contrary, they were films, which inevitably had greater access from a much wider audience because they weren't marketed so specifically. Or maybe they just wanted to win awards.

At least films like these retain a legacy because of the stars in them, or the DVD release. A film called *Parting Glances* released comparatively recently in 1986, almost struck disaster when 20 years later it was realised that very few actual records of the film existed, indicative of the lack of prints and access to queer film archives. However, although the festival suffered budget cuts last year, they should be archiving properly from now on with a new wave of industry support and independent interest.

The festival will close with *North Sea Texas*, a film about two young teenage boys in a remote Belgian coastal town in the 70s. Directed by Bavo Defurne, it is classic tale of unrequited love and repressed desires, shot with a beautiful wide lens, and melancholic angst.

Although LGGFF was born out of radical activism, the festival is now more a celebration of sexual diversity, but its importance in the film world should be greater, in order to quash the only features people do want to buy on DVD, such as *Glee*.

Having said that, *Glee* isn't 'damaged'; it's happy. Surely that's a celebration of being gay?

Easter Film Guide

WHAT TO WATCH

In Darkness

Jewish Refugees during the Nazi occupation

The Hunger Games

Set in the future, people fight to death on live TV

21 Jump Street

Jonah Hill as a cop on a drugs case at high school

We Bought a Zoo

A family saves a Zoo after a traumatic death

WHAT NOT TO WATCH

The Raven

Edgar Allan Poe helps solve mysteries that follow his stories

John Carter

A prisoner on Mars during a Civil War

Bel Ami

Robert Pattinson's Victorian romance

The Devil Inside

A woman involved in exorcisms discovering her mother's past

Festivals

London Independent Film Festival

The London Independent Film Festival is from 12th-23rd April, showcasing the best UK Indie cinema, shown at cinemas across London.

Tribeca Film Festival

Founded in response to the 9/11 attacks in Manhattan, this festival celebrates New York as the centre of film. This year, it's from 18th-29th April.

British Silent Film Festival

Now based at the Cambridge Arts Picturehouse from 19th-22nd April, this will include footage from archives on a range of fascinating topics.

Reviews.

Film: *Rampart*
Director: Ören Moverman
Starring: Woody Harrelson
Runtime: 108 mins
Review: Bilal Mazhar & Peter Smith

★★★★

While engaging in some scenes and even realistic in others, *Rampart* is disjointed and lacks direction even with the brilliant performance from Harrelson. He plays Dave Brown, a policeman corrupt in the mind, soul and practice who is found to be at the centre of the Rampart scandals of 1999 in Los Angeles. He swings from acting as a normal, sometimes honourable policeman when with colleagues and bosses to the

sociopathic, racist and belligerent cop he really is when on the job. His unstable behaviour leads him into a sea of debauchery and dishonour and his attempts to redeem himself by sparking a close relationship with his younger daughter seem futile and pointless.

The movie feels more like a documentary on Brown than a film exploring one of the USA's most famous corruption scandals. While Harrelson gives a great performance, other characters have a merely cosmetic role and hence the movie feels limited and repetition into the debauchery within Brown's life causes the script to go stale and ends up becoming a film that loses its edge and momentum making it feel like a movie lasting three hours rather than just two.

Film: *Project X*
Director: Nima Nourizadeh
Starring: Thomas Mann
Runtime: 88 mins
Review: James Tyas

★★★★

Three high school students plan a house party in order to boost their reputation amongst their peers and improve their success with the fairer sex. Sound familiar? *Project X* is more or less a 'found-footage' version of *Superbad* and has been universally reviled by the UK press with one critic calling it 'possibly the worst film of the past 20 years.' It has been criticised for being witless, derivative, morally reprehensible and ultimately vacu-

ous. *Project X* is all of these things and more: The found-footage element is completely implausible and all the lead characters are unlikeable. Despite this, *Project X* succeeds by making no apologies about being all of these things.

The film has no pretensions to being anything other than what it is, and what it is, is a film in which a midget gets locked in an oven and subsequently proceeds to punch people in the crotch. The party scenes are stylised compilations of teenage drunkenness, promiscuity and drug taking; like a beautifully shot and well-choreographed episode of *Sun, Sex and Suspicious Parents*. *Project X* is fun to look at for 90 minutes and completely empty otherwise. But sometimes, that's all that's required.

Food & Drink.

The Experiment. Lamb, leeks and chocolate sauce

Tim Godfrey

With Easter just round the corner, here's a dish that combines good old fashioned hearty British food (leeks, potatoes and lamb) with a savoury chocolate sauce to really wind up your housemates that have given it up for Lent - but it also tastes delicious.

The Method:

1. Peel the potatoes and chop them into roughly cuboid shapes. If your potatoes are massive, halve them or they won't cook through. The remaining potato offcuts can be used another time for mash or chips.
2. Whack just over half of your butter into a frying pan and get that up to a nice medium heat, before chucking in your potatoes, along with half the garlic and some thyme.
3. Taking care not to let your potatoes burn, move onto the savoury chocolate sauce. Pour about 200ml of the stock into a small saucepan and top it up to about an inch and a half below the rim with the red wine.
4. Put this onto a medium heat and it will start to simmer and reduce (this will take at least 30 minutes, so it's important to get this started ASAP).
5. With your potatoes and sauce underway, you can relax a bit, as these both take a lot longer than the rest of the dish. Peel and dice the onion and the garlic, before topping and tailing the leek and cutting that into sections. All the while, keep

Ingredients:
Two lamb chops
4 medium sized potatoes of the fluffy variety
1 leek
1 big onion
A couple of cloves of garlic
300 ml stock
½ bottle of red wine
A bar of dark (70%) chocolate
150g butter
200 ml milk
2 heaped dessert spoons of plain flour
A big wedge of stilton/blue cheese
Salt & pepper
Rosemary & thyme

turning your potatoes and stirring the sauce, so they don't burn.

6. Get another small saucepan and melt the rest of the butter on a low heat, before adding in your flour and mixing it together to make a smooth paste.

7. Slowly pour in the milk, stirring it in as you go so it remains smooth. If you can acquire a sous-chef, place them on stirring duty so your sauces don't congeal and your potatoes don't burn. If not, just grow more arms - two should do.

8. Grate the stilton to your taste, before mixing it into the white sauce. Make sure the heat is very low, or it will get too thick - but you can always thin it with more milk.

9. Once your potatoes are fairly brown all over, chuck in the rest of the stock. Beware, this will spit at first.

10. Chop up about six blocks of chocolate into small pieces and add these to the wine and stock mixture.

11. Add one or two teaspoons of sugar according to taste, and the end sauce will be savoury with a mild fruit and chocolate kick.

12. For the lamb itself, fry up half the onion and the rest of the garlic in some oil, then throw this onto a tray with your lamb. Add herbs and seasoning to the lamb, then chuck it under the grill. As a red meat, lamb can and should be enjoyed pink, so it is up to the individual to cook it to their own taste.

13. Whilst your lamb is cooking, get the remainder of the onions and the leek and fry them up with a bit of pepper.

As soon as your lamb is done, you should be ready to plate up - but if any component doesn't seem done, that's fine, you can just turn the heat down or off on everything else and it will keep warm while you wait.

PHILIPPA GRAFTON



Easter Sunday Hot Chocolate

Philippa Grafton

Once Lent is over, why not treat yourself to a conglomerate of vices. Alcohol, chocolate, whipped cream, you name it.

To make the perfect hot chocolate you will need;
Hot chocolate powder (I use Morrison's drinking chocolate),
Sugar,
A dash of hot water,
Milk,
Amaretto or Irish Cream (for a non-alcoholic version use Irish Cream syrup).



1. Depending on the size of your mug add about three heaped teaspoons of drinking powder to a mug, followed by three level teaspoons of sugar.

2. Boil your kettle and then add in about a dribble of water and your Amaretto/Irish Cream (syrup), mixing with a fork (or a mini-whisk, if you're lucky enough to have one) to avoid clumps and to make a smooth paste.

3. Let your paste cool for a while as you heat a mug's worth of milk in a pan (or a



microwave if you prefer).

4. Keep it on a low heat to avoid burning the milk whilst continually stirring.
5. Once your milk is at a lovely hot temperature (but not having boiled) slowly stir into the paste. If you're really glutinous feel free to add marshmallows or whipped cream, but it's up to you. Enjoy.



PHOTO CREDITS (ABOVE): PHILIPPA GRAFTON

The Review. La Vecchia Scuola

Emily Heggadon

As Italian restaurant addicts, the imposing white façade, pillars, and appearance of happy diners sipping red wine through the windows convinced us that this would be a safe bet. What we didn't take into account was that our decision was probably marred by our situation; that of trudging through drizzling York, in the throws of dizzying hunger, contemplating our own stupidity for not booking into a desired restaurant on a Saturday night. Therefore the mock Italian support team standing awkwardly and laden with flyers managed to convince us that the grandiose exterior housed food that would be the answer to our praying stomachs.

To start we ordered antipasti, the cream of the Italian crop. Our mouths were wet with anticipation of salty cheese and succulent olives snuggling beside sheaves of salami and prosciutto. Our thirst however remained unquenched, as our waiter seemed to have forgotten to bring the wine. We politely reminded said waiter of the wine, and went back to anticipating the main event.

There are no words to describe what appeared in front of us. Lying limp and sad on a plate no bigger than my hand,



were scattered four yellowing leaves of lettuce, one slice of fatty salami, a sister slice of the processed monstrosity that is mortadella, a hunk of cheese masquerading as pecorino but not even having the decency to be parmigiano, and the pièce de résistance: a generous slab of celery. Worst of all, the wine had still not turned up.

We decided not to indulge in this 'feast', which at almost £8 was ridiculously overpriced. For the first time in my life I sent food back to the kitchen. And so we remained, without food or wine, in a restaurant. After gazing around at the plates appearing from the kitchen - chunks of meat drowning in a sauce already forming a film, nestled

Address:
62 Low
Petergate
Price Range:
£15- £25



close to soggy and uninspiring vegetables and Calzoni that appeared looming, stodgy, and tasteless as judged by the look on the recipient's face, we opted for pizza. Boring I know, but hopefully not too difficult to mess up. In general the menu was disappointing, distinctly lacking anything memorable with basic pasta dishes being upwards of £10.

The pizza appeared, the wine appeared, and for a while we were happy. The atmosphere was made even more enjoyable by the dulcet tones of the burly head waiter attempting to convince a lady behind us that 'a side of your choice' as written on the menu actually meant of the kitchen's choosing, and our exquisitely chosen background music continued for a good twenty minutes.

I ordered fungi pizza from the 'cheap' menu, and so I can't really complain about its lack of flavour, texture, or porcini mushrooms. It came to embody the whole experience within the restaurant. Do not go to **La Vecchia Scuola**. Italian restaurants should be about mouth watering flavours, unending hospitality, the constant cry of mangiare, and soul; none of these traits were present. I repeat, do not go **La Vecchia Scuola**.

Win prizes for you and your university

The Ernst & Young University Prize-Tagging Competition

Visit our facebook
page for the chance
to win great prizes
for you and £10,000
for your university.

[facebook.com/
EYUKcareers](https://www.facebook.com/EYUKcareers)



 **ERNST & YOUNG**
Quality In Everything We Do

THE TIMES
TOP 100
GRADUATE EMPLOYERS

 **Stonewall**
TOP 100
EMPLOYERS
2012
Employer of the Year
Ernst & Young

The Final Say.

Internet date? Please. Hannah Ellis-Petersen



A friend recently confided in me that, thanks to the continual failures of her love life, she was seriously contemplating turning to internet dating. This friend, I might add, is 20. Clever, attractive, and at the risk of sounding like a pervy uncle, at the prime of her life. If I was a man, I would date her; unfortunately, I am not that way inclined.

Yet my initial horror at the idea swiftly turned to intrigue. After all, my own love life has come closer to resembling a Tarantino movie than anything from the pages of Mills and Boon. EHarmony claims to have accounted for 5 per cent of all marriages in the US; maybe this is where I've been going wrong?

To those of you who scoff, and claim that thanks to the internet, romance is dead, I will simply point them in the direction of womenbehindbars.com, a dating site for women in prison to meet the man of their dreams. Most profiles include the prisoner's release date "so you can make long term plans". They even claim to have fostered over 50 marriages. If the Myra Hindleys of this world can find love, well dammit, there's hope for all of us.

The list doesn't stop there. Head to stachepasions.com, for "men with quality lip fur and the women who love to brush up against it," or onlinebootycall.com, where those who take part have to subscribe to commandments such as 'if someone cometh over whilst thou art here, thou art my cousin from out of town.' Each to their own I guess.

The fact is, finding love is a tricky business. If you want to resort to vampirepassions.com to live out those fanged fantasies, who are we to judge? Halle Berry, Chace Crawford and Charlie Sheen have all admitted to signing up to online dating (as well as Julian Assange who used to go by the alias Harry Harrison - though I include that as more of a warning), so why the taboo?

Of course should the realm of the Internet prove too daunting, one could always resort to that old-fashioned staple, the personal ad. How quaint. How harmless. Or not.

As it turns out, this is actually very, very misguided advice. In fact, after considerable research I retract it entirely. It seems, as all the normal (if a little desperate) singletons have turned to virtual dating, the personal pages of the newspapers have become breed-

ing grounds for those people usually only found on the most warped of reality television shows. "Muscular, gifted man seeks woman. I am an immaculate specimen of man, with rippling muscles and a very strong jaw line. I have been compared to Jean Claude Van Damme, both in musculature and in dancing abilities, even once by Jean Claude's cousin Adelbert, who is a friend btw. I will also need a ride to and from our trysts as my van is currently incapacitated after an unfortunate episode at the Arby's Drive Thru. Fatties need not respond" was one such gem. If you ever need evidence that honesty is not the best policy, this is it.

Another man claimed to be "thin, youthful and well endowed; a philosopher type, 70 per cent reclusive/ 30 per cent an amazing dancer." 30 per cent an amazing dancer? Well at least he's modest, and has a basic grasp of maths. One can't help but wonder, more than anything, how he worked out those statistics.

Honestly I think I would rather be a hermit, living out my days alone in the Outer Hebrides, than find myself in the company of someone who believes the best way to lure in the ladies is to write an ad asking "so can we get together and make some magic happen? I THINK WE CAN".

Yet as much as I want to push the ukulele-playing twat in the match.com adverts under the incoming train whilst his future blonde amour watches on from the opposite platform, love in general is the one subject where I think we should all hold on the cynicism.

Maybe I've become a romantic in my old age. Maybe watching 'Hitch' last night on Channel 5 had more of an impact on me than I would usually care to admit. But at the very least we can all go to sleep at night in the comfort we have not, as yet, reached the point of this personal ad that caught my eye: "sinister-looking man with a face that only a mother would love; think an ageing Portillo and you have my better looking twin. Dates better in those Welsh villages where electric lights can't be guaranteed. Charitable woman to 50 appreciated". Romance, evidently, is very much alive.



<Photographs of the Week>



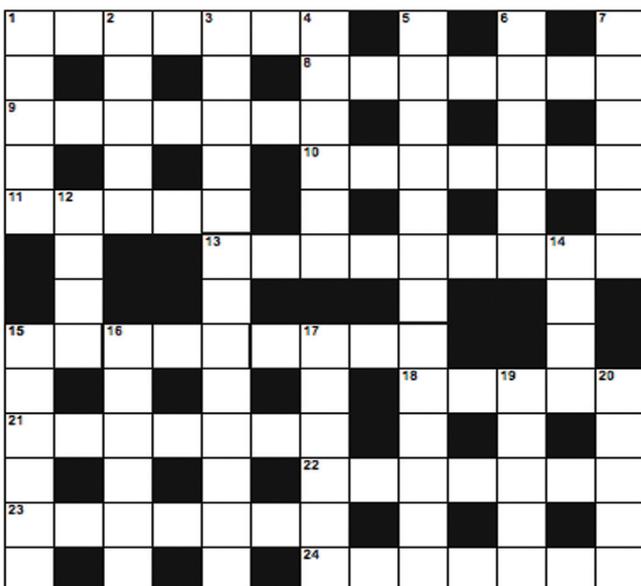
Saffron Shirreffess

These photographs were taken by the members of PhotoSoc. If you would like to send us in your own photos of York, then send them to muse@nouse.co.uk



Owen Walton

The Nouse Crossword



Across

- 1 Wild canine of Africa and southern Asia (6)
- 4 Vast multitude (5)
- 7 Mild oath (6)
- 8 Spanish party (6)
- 9 Tract of uncultivated upland (4)
- 10 Repays — returns — I request (anag) (8)
- 12 Offbeat musical rhythm (11)
- 17 Person from England's capital (8)
- 19 Fury (4)
- 20 Framework of stakes with interwoven branches to form a fence (6)
- 21 Artistic movement influenced by commerce and the mass media (3,3)
- 22 Beg (5)
- 23 Black Sea port (6)
- 25 Holiday destination(6)
- 27 Fame (6)

Down

- 1 Showing envy (7)
- 2 PM (7)
- 3 PM (9)
- 4 Seventeen-syllable poem (5)
- 5 Rice dish (7)
- 6 Go by (6)
- 11 Mammal with four legs (9)
- 13 Asia's longest river (7)
- 14 Makes a sudden entry or invasion (7)
- 15 African country, capital Abuja (7)
- 16 Enlarge — explode (4,2)
- 18 Lubricated (with drink?) (5)
- 14 Evident (7)
- 15 Back, support (7)
- 16 Line of equal pressure (6)
- 17 Deep gorge (6)
- 18 Passageway (5)
- 19 Command (5)
- 21 Zest, zeal (5)

The Nouse Sudoku

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

Answers will be online at www.nouse.co.uk



EVERY MONDAY AT

Vudu Lounge

**R&B / HIP-HOP / UK FUNKY / GRIME
DANCEHALL / AFROBEATS**

2FOR1 COCKTAILS £2 SELECTED BOTTLES

£2 JAGERBOMBS £1 SELECTED SHOTS

**GUESTLIST | MIXTAPES | PHOTOS
FACEBOOK.COM/EGOUK**

**ADMISSION: £1.50 GUESTLIST BEFORE 12
£2 NUS | £3 OTHER**

DOORS 10:30PM - 4AM

**Vudu Lounge - 39 Swinegate, York, YO18AZ
Call James on 07791305082**



WWW.THISISDJAMES.COM