

>> ACCESS ALL AREAS? **M4-5**
We look at student life in a wheelchair

>> YORK DOES EDINBURGH **M15**
Students shows going to the Fringe

SPRING WEEK NINE
Wednesday June 20 2007

MUSE



Summer special: where to go
and what to do this holiday **M12-14**

Muse 20.06.07



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NanFlory



Why can't I wake up without you?

Things have been getting me down lately. Frivolous things. It seems to me, that there are the really terrible things, and then there are the unnecessarily terrible things. It's the unnecessarily terrible things that are worrying me right now. They are the things that exist in the entertainment arena, as opposed to the world-politics-famine-war-global warming arena. Stuff is bad enough over in the latter that you would have thought we'd give ourselves a break and stop letting our light relief from the drudgery of the human condition be shitty and tasteless. I've compiled a little list of things that are plain wrong without any excuse for their wrongness that could be seen as valid in the way that destructive imperial regimes are an excuse for more important things being really bad.

Like: When Take That split up they had to set up hotlines to deal with the public grief. Robbie Williams is the biggest selling artist in Europe in the 21st century. When a Brighton drama student got kicked off Big Brother the other day for being ignorant and racist she said, 'But I've got so much more to give.' Don't worry though, you can still make friends with her on Facebook. Andrew Lloyd Webber is worth \$56 million and has spent a portion of that fortune on a pet Turkish swimming cat. Madonna is directing

her first film. Guy Ritchie is directing another film. They changed the design of the Smartie tubes so you can't pop the lids off anymore. Dan Brown is worth \$88 million. Tom Cruise is worth \$67 million. What is the deal, guys?

And now, as if the first two items on my list aren't enough, they're making a musical about Take That. Can you imagine? It's called *Never Forget*. I'm not sure if the title refers to the previously unknown levels of nausea you will experience, and never forget, if you go see this show, or if they just want you to never forget Take That and their eponymous song. Either way, the producers can hardly have your best interests at heart. Resurrecting Take That at all is not great, resurrecting them through the cheesiest, most irritating genre in the world is plain sadism.

Never Forget is not strictly speaking about Take That, it's about a Take That tribute band and how 'pretending to be someone else can sometimes help you find out who you really are.' The main character is called Ash Sherwood and he has hidden depths. I think there should be a scene where the man playing Howard Donald sings a song about the difficult dilemma he has to face. That is, should I get dreadlocks and more accurately impersonate Howard, or should I sacrifice realism and chose dignity? Apparently they're only singing actual Take That songs

though, no new material. The only good thing about the show is that the unique programmes can origami into sick bags. That's an innovation that could take off—they could take them on that show where you try and sell your inventions. Dragons' Den, that's it.

Ok, maybe I'm being over zealous; at least this is a musical that is not asking to be taken seriously. Take That are silly, musicals are silly...no sweat. Also, the man who wrote it also wrote *Shameless* which is a super programme. At the moment I am disappointed in him for getting involved with this *Never Forget* debacle but maybe, if I actually watch it, I'll feel bad for not having trusted his judgment.

The worst musicals are definitely the ones that are about people dying and political issues and religious philosophy. Cheesy sentimentality is harmless enough until they start trying to pull on your heartstrings with songs about, let's say, the trials and tribulations of living with Hepatitis C. They just belittle real issues by rhyming stuff like 'if I had a healthy liver/my heart I would give her.' Someone should tell the people who write these shows that they are making fun of, not representing, the STI-afflicted.

I suppose I should just admit that I am really not a fan of musical theatre as a genre. I just think it sucks, big time, like



Ben TattersallSmith

Ethical living in the internet age

It was when I realised that nearly all my birthday presents were completely frivolous that the guilt began to set in. I knew what would happen. And, indeed, a month on, the unwatched DVDs are still sitting on my shelves and the latest Bill Bryson book remains unread. Yes, I may be a poor student living off pasta and baked potatoes, but I do have way too much stuff, most of which I really don't need. Before you stop reading, I'm not going to become a complete eco-freak on you—I love my gadgets too much to go down that road. Nonetheless, I really feel the need to rethink the way I've been living.

Enter Adbusters (www.adbusters.org). Adbusters is a not-for-profit, anti-consumerist organisation which originated in

Canada. The site is politically informative, providing a sharp critique of the political system, economics and consumer culture. Adbusters also runs campaigns on a number of issues they support, including TV Turn Off week, which unsurprisingly advocates us all considering a life away from the idiot box; Slow Down Week, which encourages people to reconsider the relentless pace at which we all live our lives; and Buy Nothing Day, an event which has been taken up around the world. The organisation also provides useful information about alternative forms of consumption. (They offer various items of conscience friendly clothing.)

If I'm being really honest though, for all its worthiness, what really keeps me going

back to Adbusters is the smug sense of self-satisfaction that one gets from reading it. Ultimately, Adbusters is purely about intellectual masturbation, allowing you to pretend for a minute you are somehow screwing the system over—before ordering their 'unbranded' Adbusters shoes, postcards and magazine. Money well spent, I'm sure.

Next on the list of sites that allows me to get up on my high horse is the Huffington Post (www.huffingtonpost.com). The Huffington Post is a political news source and blog with a progressive slant and often features contributions from noteworthy journalists, politicians and satirists. Set up by journalist Arianna Huffington in 2005, the site has quickly become an important and renowned online resource.

Finally on our intellectual tour de force is the website of Professor Richard Dawkins (richarddawkins.net/home), the prominent and outspoken evolutionary biologist.

Described as "a clear-thinking oasis" the site provides a wealth of information, ideas and opportunities for discussion of Dawkins's work and atheistic principles.

These are just a few of the sites I use to inform myself about the world. The beauty, and quite possibly the tragedy, of the internet is that with so much information out there, you really can find something to corroborate anything you believe in, be it left or rightwing politics, a fundamental distrust of scientology or that 9/11 was a conspiracy. With all its power to connect, the net also has the power to divide: with all of us able to live in our own self-congratulatory bubbles, what need is there to ever even think about listening to someone whose world view digresses from our own? So I have no doubt that, as I sit and read some lefty rant at my computer about the failings of neoclassical economics, there's someone out there who thinks that it's me who is the butt of the joke.



Russia in statue row with F...
 Philippine...
 Warm weather...
 Earthquake...
 risk of summer...
 Man arrested...
 Police chief attac...
 Man convicted of ha...
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The world's gone mad

Stories you might have missed

Californian police rushed to the apartment of Matsuyuki Sato upon hearing a distress message left by his two-year old shitsu, Tiddles. Mistaking his master's bone-white antique telephone for a telephone-white antique bone, the hapless hound pawed and chomped at the thing, inadvertently calling 911 through mastication. Emergency operator Jan Cork later explained, "At first we just heard wheezing and grizzling, but when the caller loudly said 'rape', we sent the LAPD round straight away." The nation's heroes broke down the door of the flat, only to find an embarrassed Sato stumbling from the lavatory, where he had been engaged in a particularly strenuous bout of constipation. "He often plays with the phone, and I guess it was just an accident waiting to happen," said Sato. "Tiddles is very naughty, and won't be having any treats."

Lowestoft rambling fanatic Gregory Nuffin died last week attempting to climb the North Face of Everest without oxygen. He was 81. His sponsor, a local camping equipment supplier, asked to remain anonymous, but told the local newspaper that Nuffin "seemed averse to the tourist trail of the South Col and wanted to do something meaningful." Armed with, we shall presume, not much more than a Thermos flask and a couple of extra layers, Nuffin fell victim to hypothermia before even reaching his base camp. He was survived by his wife, Lorna. "He always said that fortune favours the brave," the widow told reporters, "but I kept telling him that it has a knack of killing off the stupid."

The case of Coldstream v Twack ran into its second week, amidst histrionic scenes which would not be out of place in an American courtroom. Which was no surprise, given that the case for damages was being heard by magistrates in Springfield, Ohio. The trouble began when the judge found in favour of the plaintiff, Simeon Coldstream, who alleged that a gang of what he called "rogueish proletarians" had set about him and his electric tricycle as he waited to be served a hot dog at Brian Orion's Meat-n-Greet in the village of Sneed. The defendants, Kevin, Paulie, Eric, Dawdon, Neville, Sandy, Dookie, Bernice and Candace Twack, initially accepted the verdict with grudging penitence, but when Coldstream's attorney requested a further allowance for \$200 on account of his client having "parted company with a couple of shirt buttons" during the attack, all hell broke loose. Dawdon and Sandy leapt upon the unfortunate lawyer, while Neville struck him repeatedly about the lower abdomen with a lever arch file. Paulie and Kevin tore down the curtains. Dookie urinated in a corner of the room. Justice Dimitri Blow, presiding, cleared the court and later asked the press, "Why can't right thinking Americans just round these people up and shoot 'em all?" When the newsmen asked the judge which people he meant, he cryptically responded, "God knows who I mean."

Freedom, frivolity and fish pie

Oh domestic bliss! What I love about all this time after finishing your degree is all the things you can do with it. Last week I spent a day in good company, making fresh pasta. It was amazing and very tasty, accompanied by fresh pesto, which is far tastier than the stuff in a jar. We also made cupcakes and expressed ourselves creatively in the act of icing them. I made a fish pie from scratch which involved using all four hobs at once. And the oven. It is a far cry from having no food in the house because you don't feel that you have the time to go shopping and then being embarrassed at the library when you pull out your lunch of two dry oat cakes and a hard boiled egg.

Other things: I've done my laundry, am in the process of cleaning my room and have recycled all my notes. And the printouts of my essays which are in red ink because my cartridge

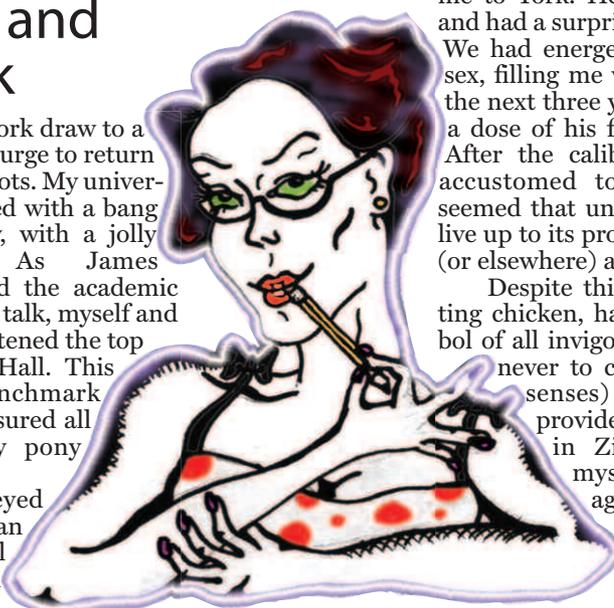
ran out. I also had time to book an appointment at the dentists and to read a book for shits and giggles. Two and a half actually, so far. I've thought about getting some exercise, although I haven't got as far as actually doing any yet. I've been to the park and sat in the sun for an afternoon; I've watched films and had sleepovers. I've done some leisurely window shopping with an ice cream in hand. I've written some letters.

Next step: cleaning the communal areas of my house because it has recently hit me, I *really* want my deposit back. Did you, as a demanding child, ever get taught the difference between want and need? For instance, you don't need sweets, you want them. And yes, you do need ugly clunky school shoes even if you want neon jelly shoes. That kind of thing? Well, I totally *need* my deposit. OK landlady? OK?

Goodbye and good fuck

As my years at York draw to a close, I felt the urge to return to my sexual roots. My university career had started with a bang (or, more accurately, with a jolly good banging). As James Alexander christened the academic year in the induction talk, myself and a fellow fresher christened the top balcony of Central Hall. This became the benchmark against which I measured all subsequent baloney pony rides to Tuna Town.

As a wide-eyed fresher, this gentleman seemed to embody all that had attracted



me to York. He was friendly, green and had a surprisingly toxic fountain. We had energetic, mind expanding sex, filling me with optimism about the next three years (not to mention a dose of his finest man-chowder). After the calibre of boy I'd been accustomed to in sixth form, it seemed that university was going to live up to its promise in the bedroom (or elsewhere) arena.

Despite this man, and his spitting chicken, having become a symbol of all invigorating at York, I was never to come across (in both senses) him again. Until providence leered upon me in Ziggys and I found myself sandwiched against him at the bar. Overcome by an intoxicating cocktail of nostalgia, reck-

lessness and horniness, I dragged him into a taxi and back to the scene of the original crime.

Once outside the gloom of Ziggys, it became clear that this embodiment of all things glorious at York had become, in a convenient extension of the parallel, jaded. His complexion blotched from cheap alcohol, his waistline similarly deteriorated, this was not the Adonis I remembered. His sexual ability had suffered similarly (or perhaps it was merely my tolerance levels that had diminished).

As he plugged away, I took the opportunity to enjoy the view of campus spectacularly lit up by the Physics Centre. As I contemplated post-university existence, my sex life began to flash before my eyes. The blinding indiscretion of my first year, in which my sordid Central Hall ren-

dez-vous was followed by an even grimmer tryst involving myself, the Ziggys fire escape and a group of rugby players. My second year, during which I set my sights rather higher and poured all my ingenuity into the pursuit of my rather rugged supervisor. Unfortunately, propriety got the better of him and nothing was to come of that particular exercise. The series of ill-advised and ill-conceived liaisons that you, dear reader, have been party to during my third year.

My reverie was cut abruptly short by a pre-orgasmic groan from Mr. York '04-'07. "Where d'you want to come?" I murmured, in a final attempt to salvage the situation. "I'm fine here, thanks", came the response. I, on the other hand, am very much looking forward to pastures new, fresh and fertile.

Access all areas?



For students with mobility issues, accessibility is central to their university experience, as **Toby Green** discovers

As potential students continue to visit York on open days, they will be casting a critical eye on their surroundings. The state of the accommodation, their chosen course's syllabus, the number and quality of drinking establishments: these factors will all play a large part in their final choice of where to spend the next three years.

Yet for those prospective students who use wheelchairs and scooters, they will also have to take into account an issue which would never cross the minds of the majority of visitors: the problem of accessibility.

Katie Player is the YUSU Disability and Access Officer and a wheelchair user herself. She explained to me that there is one simple obstacle to someone in a wheelchair. "My friends always say I'm like a dalek," says Katie, "because the only reason daleks don't take over the world is because they can't climb stairs. A step or a curb is the only thing that stops wheelchair users, and it becomes a step on top of a step, which then becomes a staircase."

At York, it is the job of the Disability Office, including Disability Support Co-ordinator Deb Taylor, to try and reduce the impact of disabilities on the day-to-day lives of students. I asked Taylor what the main aim of the Office was. "The ideal is where every person with access difficulties will be able to get anywhere on campus, but obviously we're working with what we've got. Thankfully we've got a campus which, I don't know whether by luck or by design, happens not to have very many steps."

It's not just ramps and automatic doors that the Disability Office works to implement and Taylor has already been in contact with some of next year's student intake, inviting them to be shown around campus and discuss any special provisions that need to be

made. "We show them around the wheelchair accessible rooms we have available because we have many different layouts and we let them make their choice, since different users have different needs."

One student who has benefited from the help provided by the Office is Francis Boorman. "I found the aid they offered extremely helpful, and they lis-

"My friends say I'm like a dalek as the only reason daleks don't take over the world is because they can't climb stairs"

tened specifically to my needs. Within a few days of arriving at university they had fitted a button to my chair so I was able to remotely open doors."

Working with Taylor and the rest of the Disability Office is Russell Bailey, Access Officer for Estates Services, the body that is responsible for the management and the development of the university buildings. He stresses that whilst their emphasis is on making physical changes to the campus as much as possible, time constraints and the nature of some of the buildings

means that occasionally this is not possible. "The problem is that we are dealing with a campus that was predominantly built in the 1960s when access issues were not really considered. Therefore we get cases, such as when we are trying to widen a corridor for easier wheelchair access to a seminar room for example, where there are obstacles such as structural beams which we are not able to move."

Alongside an ongoing campus audit working to a five year plan, students, staff and conference guests can also let Estates know when they have problems with access and generally these are dealt with as a matter of priority. In cases where physical constructions and adjustments are not possible, both Estates and the Disability Office work with the student in question and academic departments in order to provide an alternative whilst maintaining an identical service. "Although we've certainly got it a bit easier than universities who are dealing with huge medieval buildings, with some of the original colleges it is difficult to make it all accessible," says Taylor. "When it is difficult to provide full accessibility in a building, we aim to provide the same facilities elsewhere to the same degree."

"If students can't get into a particular area for their tutorial because their corridor isn't big enough, we ask that

the tutor relocates to a spare room somewhere else where they can give the tutorial just as easily."

Talking to scooter user Stewart Aitken about his experiences with access on campus, it became clear just how much one piece of equipment malfunctioning can affect those with mobility problems: "Lifts are perhaps the most contentious problem for me in that when they are broken, I can't access the rooms they would take me to. However, repairs have been undertaken speedily and I have been kept in the information loop as to progress."

He also talks to his department about how they can make access easier for him. "The place where I will be studying next year recently implemented fire protection improvements which have made access more difficult, but I have been in consultation with them, and improvements will be made before the start of the new year."

Time and money restraints aside, the general view is both positive about the work already done on campus to help disabled students and hopeful for the future. Yet, as I was to find out, York city centre was a different story. In an attempt to gain a small glimpse into the difficulties posed by environments built around the needs of able-bodied people to those with mobility issues, I decided to spend some time around



“Everything, including this campus, is designed on the assumption that people have the ability to get around easily”

and Welfare Officer from 2005-2006, and I asked him whether he thought an attitude change was needed. “From what I saw, people need to move away from thinking they need to improve access because of legality or ‘duty’, and move towards wanting to improve access because they believe disabled students are equal partners in society.”

He picked out an example from his time as part of the Students’ Union. “When James Alexander was President, he went all-out to organise a Disability Awareness training session for SU officers and embarrassed those who didn’t go by publicly naming and shaming them. It was an excellent session and I felt it really changed people’s views. However, when I suggested something similar to my fellow officers last year, one response was, ‘Oh God, not that again, what a waste of time.’ So you see how some people can’t really be bothered with access for disabled stu-

Narrow and crowded pavements mean that wheelchair and scooter users often find it difficult to get around York. Photos: Georgi Mabee

dents—it’s like a necessary evil for them.”

I asked Stewart how he felt the attitude of his fellow students was towards wheelchair and scooter users. “Students are in general very helpful, however there are some issues. For example, sometimes students will meet friends and stop and chat in the most awkward places. They will see you coming and ignore you until you ask them to move.”

It is these examples of people just not thinking, rather than deliberately restricting wheelchair access, that Taylor believes show it is vital to raise awareness. “One of the examples that I’ve enjoyed using in the past is the rule that you are not allowed to ride bikes on the covered walkways. Many people think, ‘What’s the point of that?’ and do it anyway. The problem is people on bikes tend to assume people will move out the way, yet for a variety of reasons the person in front of you may not be aware of your presence. There was once a nasty accident where a deaf student hadn’t heard a cyclist’s bell, and they ended up getting tangled.”

It’s also important for her that people aren’t afraid to ask their fellow students if they think they may need help, but are unsure about what they can do: “Don’t automatically make assumptions that people see things, do things, hear things, move, and walk in the same way as you do. If you have a

student with a visual or hearing impairment in your seminar group, don’t be afraid of saying the wrong thing; ask the student themselves.”

For Katie, the importance is mainly for people to just have it in their minds. “It doesn’t have to be a conscious thing so that people are panicking, thinking: ‘Oh God, we must all get ramps’. It’d just be good if people reading this think that one day, if they opened a shop or restaurant, they may get a ramp or a big toilet. People need to realise that making provisions isn’t as hard as it seems.”

Taylor believes that it is society’s responsibility to work towards a different attitude to access. “Everything, including this campus, is primarily designed on the assumption that people have the ability to get around, and to get around very easily. In fact, any ability that any of us have is only temporary. As we get older our mobility gets less, and you’ll find the slopes work for older people too and so on. It’s not just helping the disabled; there are things that can be done that can make life easier for everybody and it is these kinds of things that we’re steadily trying to get implanted. With the University, we’re trying to move away from ‘Oh, look, that person is disabled and we’re having to do things for them’. If the little things are thought about, it means that disability doesn’t become as much of an issue.”

Student support workers

The Disability Office are constantly on the lookout for student support workers. They do a variety of different work to assist students with disabilities with academic tasks. These include note-taking, reading aloud notes and worksheets, and helping students use the library. The work is flexible and pays £10 an hour. If you’re interested, email Deb Taylor at: disabilityservices@york.ac.uk.

York in a wheelchair myself. Katie was encouraging: “I think it’s a really good idea, but you can’t cheat. And you will want to cheat. I’m sure you’ll find it easy. Well, maybe...”

The one thing that hit me was the way in which people simply failed to take any notice of my ‘needs’. There were plenty of what Katie calls “sympathy stares”, yet on a busy Friday the crowds didn’t seem to realise that I needed more space than they did. If people got out the way at all, they did so only at the last moment. People walking towards me gave me only the narrowest gap with which to pass them, meaning I was almost forced into the road on a number of occasions.

It wasn’t only about giving me space; people also interacted with me differently. Katie had warned me that “when shopping with someone, you’ll find shop assistants don’t talk to you, they talk to the person you’re with. Even when I’ve directly asked them a question some people will talk to the person I’m with.” I found this out for myself when taking the FTR bus back to campus. Although clearly displaying I was capable of speech when being helped on by a conductor, he chose to bypass me and address my companion as to where we were getting off. It was a very strange experience, as if my companion was somehow a ‘real’ grown-up who was there in order to be responsible for my well-being.

In terms of access to shops, there was a wide variety in quality. Some, such as Marks and Spencer, had nice wide passageways which were easy to traverse. Others, such as Jack Wills, had that dreaded step. In 2004, changes were made to the Disability Discrimination Act that required “businesses and other organisations to take reasonable steps to tackle physical features that act as a barrier to disabled people who want to access their services.” Taylor is “amused” by its effects on York city centre. “I found suddenly there were cases such as doorbells attached to gates outside for wheelchair access, but the bell would be quite low down and you wouldn’t be able to reach it if you were in a wheelchair. We have lots of places where they will pull out their new piece of technology, but there’s a difference between it seeming to be accessible and it actually working. These are places that will have made the effort but possibly need to think about it a little more.”

Katie agrees: “In general clubs are a nightmare. As a result I tend to go to places that I know, or I pop my chair outside and my friends carry me around which is fine as I’m light and chuckable. You find the places that are good, the places which are bad, and stick to it.”

A prime, and rather amusing, example is Toffs. “Their disabled access takes you into the indie room where there is a small area around two square metres, and then steps. So you are able to get into those two square metres but nowhere else!” Through her role in the Students’ Union, she is currently in discussion with Toffs, in the hope that their planned construction for a smoking area will mean that wheelchair users will have a greater freedom. “I’m going to go in there and tell them where I think ramps should go, and they might turn around and say no but I’m going to give it a try anyway.” Unsurprisingly Ziggy’s is “awful”, but Evil Eye, Dusk and HaHa! all get the thumbs up, mainly because of the size of their disabled toilets.

Neil Barnes was YUSU Academic

An orgasm of one's own:

For the generation of women reared on Carrie Bradshaw's writings, the concept of **Sayed** talks to three women who have chosen to pursue careers in alternative sex

“A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” The crux of Virginia Woolf’s polemic on female creativity—first declared in 1928 and walloped around the theoretical arena ever since—resounds today more than ever for the post-Sex and the City generation. Sure, the envisaged room is a “post-war Upper-East side walk-up” and the finances are limited by a substance abuse problem (expensive footwear), but the ethos remains the same: for women to create, they need agency.

In a twist on Woolf’s argument, ‘sexpert’ and writer Emily Dubberley generates the “money” by writing about sex for the traditionally inscribed sex. Founder and Editor-at-large of both *Scarlet* magazine and *Cliterati* (not forgetting author of 12 books in the last four years), Dubberley’s prolific career has centred on a process of “reclaiming”. The magazine was originally supposed to be called *Peach*, but Dubberley eschewed this title as sounding like a “paedo or spanking magazine”, and instead settled on *Scarlet*. “Personally, I’m a great believer in re-branding words such as ‘slut’ so that they become much more positive and liberating, rather than a ‘keep you in your place’ kind of thing. I thought we couldn’t call it ‘Slut’ because that was too full on, but ‘Scarlet Woman’ was the old fashioned equivalent, so it was a re-branding in that way”.

Reckoning with that feared taboo of the sexual woman, Dubberley’s work seems an active reaction to when Woolf “burst out in scorn at the reprehensible poverty of our sex”. Granted, Dubberley’s writing facilitates the financial issue; but with a demanding

60- to 80-hour week, she admits: “The work pays well, but boy, do you have to work for it.”

One aspect of Dubberley’s *Scarlet* magazine is ‘cliterature’—aptly named, in regards to Woolf’s thesis, for its amalgam of *that* female space and fiction specifically for women. Cliterature is unique to *Scarlet* as the only example of erotic fiction in a UK women’s magazine and is, in effect, a microcosm of Dubberley’s first enterprise in 2001: www.cliterati.co.uk. She describes this as “the UK’s first text-based sex website for women”, which now boasts more than 2000 stories. Frustrated with the wealth of erotic material available for men and the comparatively destitute “wank-material for women”, Dubberley declares, “I was pissed off and thought that there should be some out there. I chatted to about 200–300 women over a year, asking, ‘What do you want in a magazine?’, and they all came back with ‘honest representations of sex’”.

Both Cliterati and cliterature are amassed by “any woman adding her fantasy to the site.” Whereas Woolf lamented that females were “locked in by the safety and prosperity of one sex and the poverty and insecurity of the other”, Cliterati effectively reimburses women for all those *Playboy* and *Hustler* years, and has engendered a secure, safe forum to express their sexuality. Following Woolf’s proviso, Dubberley encourages creativity in her sex—and while a part of this process is through sex fiction, the rest works to dismantle the fictions written by men about female sexuality.

And what tangled yarns do some of them weave. Leaving Hardy, Hemingway and *Genesis* on the back burner for now, one such male author

who few, if any, of you will have heard of, is Ron Coleman.

When Jacqueline Gold first pitched her idea for what would become the £74 million-a-year Ann Summers Industry, to a wholly male-dominated boardroom, Coleman declared: “I don’t care what you say, women aren’t interested in sex.” Apart from suggesting the world population was spawned via rape, this little remark almost cheated the Gold Industry of an extra £87.4 million in revenues per annum. Suffice to say,

“Personally, I’m a great believer in rebranding words like ‘slut’ so that they become much more positive and liberating”

Ron no longer forms part of the Gold Group.

Sphinx-like as we are, the mystery that is woman is one rarely deciphered by men with much accuracy and is too often substituted to stubbornly-held, erroneous projections of their own imaginations. Dubberley encountered a similar situation. After graduating with a degree in Psychology, specialising in female sexual fantasies and sexuality, she moved to London and was soon shortlisted for the *Cosmopolitan* Scholarship. After enrolling on the *Cosmopolitan* programme she was asked to come up with two feature ideas based on the new influx of women into the Houses of Parliament. She offered up one on the last remaining Suffragette and another more controversial proposal: “Don’t Tax my

Tampax”. The piece questioned whether, now that women had a more prominent role in the Houses of Parliament, the VAT on sanitary products would be eliminated. The 17.5% tax mark-up on a three quid pack of tampons effectively meant that women were paying the equivalent of £16,000 in a lifetime for the sake of an inconvenient and unavoidable bodily process that debilitates you for a week all in the name of that imperative public service, procreation. “It’s basically a tax on being female”, comments Dubberley. Alas, the idea was shunned by the male editor of *Cosmopolitan* at the time who griped: “Well, it’s a nice idea but we don’t see it as an issue that is relevant to the majority of our readers.” Indeed; it is a women’s magazine after all.

Gold Group also found themselves misjudging the market before Jacqueline Gold stepped in. As she says: “The primary market was mostly the dirty-raincoat brigade as well as tourists and gay men”, and the profits weren’t dazzling by any means. However, when Gold began what she saw as her “mission to feminise the world of sexual pleasure”, things started to change. Inspired by ‘Tupperware’, the first party-based selling business of ‘50s America, Gold set up Ann Summers ‘party-plan’, and their first year’s gross turnover was £80,000. According to Gold, the reason the party-plan flourished with such triumph was that, at that time, “the sex business was biased in favour of men. There just weren’t opportunities for women to buy products to enhance their lives. The concept of sexual pleasure was something that seemed to exclude the idea of women as consumers, [it wasn’t] female friendly.”

One explanation for why the parties worked so well, and still do, is because they are completely female zones, in which women don’t feel the need to conform to a masculine perspective. Gold clarifies: “Our parties are a chance for women to escape their husbands, kids and careers, to forget being a mother or an accountant for a while, and tap into another side of themselves”.

All in the name of research, I decided to allow my friends a chance to escape their boyfriends, books and degrees and host an Ann Summers Party myself. To ease the slight tension, party organiser Anne* started us off with a game of musical chairs. Grudgingly, we put our tightly clasped drinks and Cadbury’s Mini Rolls to one side and took our places. The game was simple enough: Anne would ask us a question with a true or false answer, and if it was true we had to move one seat to the right. By the end of the game I think it is accurate to say that we were all quite physically and emotionally bonded, having been forced to

Inside an Ann Summers store. Photo supplied by Ann Summers



women who spank back

female empowerment now stretches from the boardroom into the bedroom. **Sara industries:** those of lingerie, therapy and the aptly named 'cliterature'

clamber onto each others laps and let our sex secrets out into the ether of my Badger Hill living room. If only walls could talk, a dalek probably wouldn't be the only thing being aimed in my direction by my OAP neighbours en route to the corner shop. But the game unveiled some interesting points about women and their sexcapades. To protect identities as much as I can, I'll refer in generalities: "Have you ever been caught in the act?"—the majority moved; "Have you ever slept with anyone else's guy?"—everyone stayed rooted to the spot and indignant exclamations erupted; "Have you had sex this week?"—a few moved, the rest grimaced, scowled or surreptitiously reached for a voodoo doll; "Have you ever faked an orgasm?"—most smirked and nodded.

Ever since Harry met Sally, the faking of the female orgasm has been inscribed in cultural lore. Sure, Meg's climactic shrieking is never going to prompt sombre ponderings, but isn't the fact that over 70% of women fake an orgasm at some point in their lives

'In Texas it's illegal to sell a vibrator but not a gun. Why is it that only men are allowed to release tension by shooting off?'

just a little depressing? Admittedly, we can't all be like Samantha Jones, who declared, "when I RSVP to a party, I make it my business to come", but the stigma that we should and the weighty expectation of our arrival is a burden borne by many women solely to further nurture the male ego. Whatever happened to the ethos that when you turn up at a bad party, it's frankly okay to grab your coat, hail a cab and leave? Ann Summers has made it its business to create a different kind of party, where women not only stay till the end, but also leave satisfied.

Yes, the contentious vibrator. Ann Summers boasts a selection of some 50 vibrators, the most famous of course being the Rampant Rabbit. Most men, if you'll allow me to generalise, regard the vibrator either with discomfort and trepidation or just plain, no-holds-barred ridicule. My housemate commented, "Most men are shocked to learn that their girlfriends use vibrators. But why? It's a biological fact that penises don't vibrate." One of my friends exclaimed, upon being enlightened to the existence of 'the Bunny', "My girlfriend doesn't need a vibrator! I can satisfy her five times over!"—again, biological factors might dispute that claim. Notably, in Texas it is illegal to sell vibrators, but it is still legal to sell guns. Why the one sex is afforded

* name has been changed

the opportunity to gain tension release by shooting off, but not the other, is beyond me. The fraught relationship between men and the vibrator is due largely to the fact that vibrators allow women to access pleasure that has nothing whatsoever to do with men. It is literally in our own hands—and female agency, as always, is considered something threatening.

Interestingly, the one question that came up in the musical chairs game which posed a smidgen of discomfort was, "Have you had an orgasm this week?" The question was no more probing or outlandish than the others; if anything it was the most clinical of them all. The issue, I think, was that it was perhaps too intimate a topic for girls to discuss outright. Not because it was taboo, or because it had been contorted and subjected to patriarchal stigma, but simply because it was private. Whereas Samantha perhaps exemplifies the sexual aspirations of many woman, Charlotte may represent their sexual reality. Sweet, doe-eyed, Park Avenue-princess Charlotte—at least that's how many brand her. Of all the SATC women I feel she is the most commonly misconstrued, and I think that the majority of us are closer to Charlotte than we'd like to admit. Granted, she may not be as brazen as her friends, but she's certainly no prude. Many forget that Charlotte not only had sex in the show, but that she enjoyed it—who can forget that tumultuous reunion with the sorority girls who snubbed her for zealously off-loading her frustrations with her impotent kilt-clad husband? Or when her addiction to the Rabbit reached such heights that Carrie and Miranda had to intervene AA style and wrestle it from her? Charlotte was just as sexual as the other three women on the show—she just didn't feel like waxing lyrical on it so much.

Sex therapist Jo Woolf is more acquainted with the Charlottes of the world, the women who "don't seek out the information, who avoid the exposure TV and everything, because they have their own particular set of fears and anxieties". Like Charlotte, these women aren't silenced by the male thumb, they just find it difficult to talk about their sexual problems. Jo began initially as a GP and then trained as a specialist in psycho-sexual medicine. She recounts how, "When I was in general practice, inevitably I would see women come in for smears, who had anxieties because there was something not quite right down below. I had a facility for listening and hearing and they would tell me stories. When somebody comes into the room, I'm going to listen to their story the way they want to tell it, but I'm also going to pick up other signs from the way they tell their stories, the non verbal communica-



RACHEL HOLLOWAY

In their careers and relationships, these women wear the suspenders

tions. Through physical examination, I was also able to pick up fears and fantasies about the genitals."

Woolf's work demonstrates that a key aspect of sexual liberation is not, as some might assume, being comfortable enough to brandish your Rabbit in Vanbrugh Bar and burn your bra on the way out—it's having the confidence to talk about sexual issues, to "recognise that your sexual problems count as valid problems and that it's acceptable to have them looked at."

Emily Dubberley elucidates a different facet of the sexually liberated woman—the one who has the confidence to say "no, thanks". "I hate the word normal. I'm completely anti the whole, 'to be a sexually liberated woman you must have had a threesome, had anal sex and dabbled in bondage.' It's about being sexually confident, which means you do what you want to do and you don't do what you don't want to do. It takes a lot more guts to say 'no' than it does to say 'yes'."

She offers the example of a woman, lying in bed with her long-term boyfriend, who turns over and says "Darling, can we try anal sex?" Now, she may really not want to, but "she'll feel pressured into saying 'yes' because she's been with him for a long time and by the media pressure of 'if you're sexual than you should.'" Dubberley's suggestion for handling this situation? Say to him: "I will if you will—tomorrow we'll buy a strap on and I'll take you first. And if the bloke says 'no' to that, he has absolutely no right to keep on nagging you."

Few women realise the extent of sexual control they have over men in their lives. So often written into the roles of the victims of an over-zealous male libido or the 'lie back and think of England girl', many of us forget that at the end of the day, it takes two. As Frederike Ryder so succinctly put it: "When a man goes on a date he wonders if he is going to get lucky; a woman already knows."



“I always go onto Google Earth. I can see the house I was born in. It's still there now. I show my children and I say: ‘This is our house.’ I always want to go back to this house.”

Jabbar Hasan's house is in Al-Karada, an affluent suburb of Baghdad, Iraq. On the computer screen, it could be on a sunny street anywhere in the world. Rows of large houses with generous gardens are lined by pavements kept cool by the shade of overhanging trees. He describes the area as being “surrounded by the river on three sides; a very nice area. It's a big house, detached, the kind of house you would dream of in this country.”

Hasan has not seen this house in 32 years. He is now the director of the Iraqi Association, an organisation created to support the large diaspora of Iraqis in the UK. In 1975 he was forced to leave his home country as a result of politics. An exile at 19, he came to London to complete his higher education. While Hasan was at university, Saddam Hussein seized control of the Ba'ath party, and with it the country. In 1982, the secret police confiscated his house in Baghdad. Hasan's parents and sisters were dumped on the Iranian border and told never to return. His brother was arrested and disappeared inside Saddam's increasingly brutal judicial system. Hasan never saw him again, but suspects that his body lies in one of the many mass graves that have been exhumed since 2003.

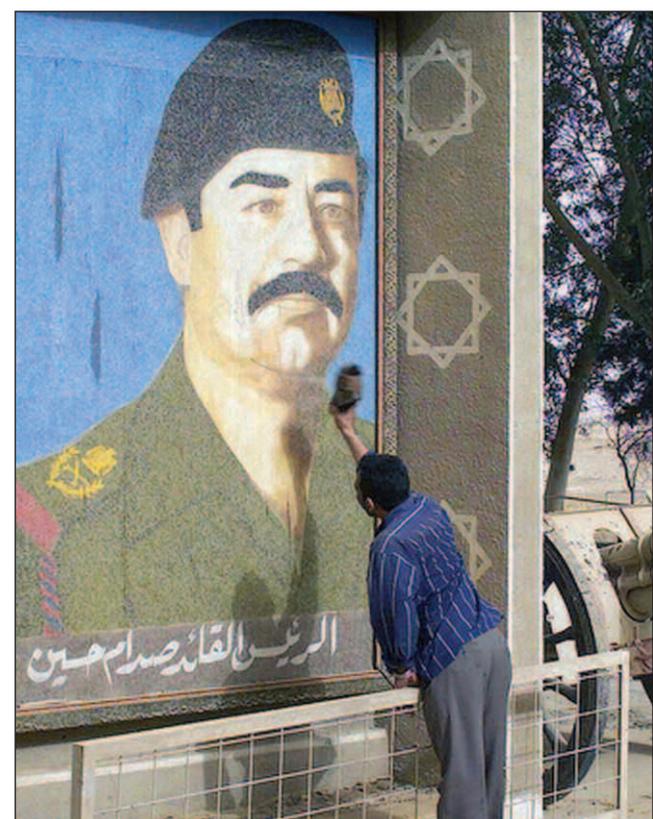
Sitting in the cluttered offices of the Iraqi Association, based in a council building in Hammersmith shared by nearly a dozen refugee associations,



Hasan stares out the window and continues his narrative. “My mother went back after the removal of Saddam. She went to see the house. She was so depressed she couldn't stay there and came back. She said everything had changed. Everything we had hoped for for 25 years... a dream that never came true. He destroyed everything.”

I set about speaking to London's Iraqi community with the aim of talking about the present. I wanted to

understand how it might feel to turn on the television and see smoke rising from your home city, the streets you once walked on now the scenes of gun battles. I wanted to compare the presentation of Iraqi society in the media to the one given by Iraqis themselves. I was looking for the insights into the current situation afforded by a native's affinity with the culture. Yet each time I raced down these avenues of inquiry, I was politely stopped. If you want to talk



Above: Najim Shamma's family after they were deported. Below: defaced murals of Saddam Hussein

about Iraq, they said, you must first talk about Saddam.

For many of us in the West, Saddam Hussein is a fading memory. Dead for six months now, he is rarely invoked in any media discussion of the situation in Iraq today. At the mention of his name, we think of his haggard, blinking emergence from the hole out of which he was dragged by American troops in 2003, and the hollow rhetoric of defiance at his trial. For us it

‘We’re isolated. Our grief is killing us’

Members of Britain’s Iraqi community have seen their homeland destroyed by a dictator and now must watch it being torn apart by war. **Raf Sanchez** meets the people struggling to come to terms with the fate of the country to which they still long to return

seems that the situation in Iraq has moved on; Saddam is no longer relevant. Yet for the Iraqis I spoke to, any discussion of what is happening today must always take place against the backdrop of the regime he personified. As Hasan puts it: “Saddam was Iraq, and Iraq was Saddam.”

The importance of Saddam is unsurprising when you consider that many of the London-based Iraqis have spent decades watching him from afar and campaigning and praying for his downfall. Hasan explains how thoughts of Iraq will never leave those forced to leave it: “Iraq is a daily ingredient of our day—the one time we don’t talk or think about Iraq is in our sleep. That is, if we don’t dream about it.”

Like Hasan, Dr Abbas Al-Hussaini has spent nearly his entire adult life struggling for a country he left in 1972. Today he is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Westminster’s School of Architecture. While studying in Britain in the early 1980s, Al-Hussaini was a prominent member of the Iraqi Student Society, a no-longer-existent offshoot of the NUS. The struggle to galvanise support against Saddam was a frustrating one. The Labour party and elements within the trade unions were sympathetic but impotent, while Thatcher’s government showed more concern over keeping Iraq as an ally against Iranian radicalism and Soviet expansion.

Today the enemies in Iraq are, for the most part, faceless. The conflict is made up of glimpses of masked insurgents and the unsigned work of suicide bombers. There is no one at whom Iraqis can channel their hatred and

frustration. This is a marked difference to the past 35 years when all that was wrong with Iraq could be embodied by Saddam. Aya Jaffar Al-Kadhimi, a student who now lives in Canada, told me that in her home the very word ‘Saddam’ was used as a curse whenever anything went wrong. As I listen to the passion with which Saddam is spoken of by those who spent years fighting him, I can’t help but feel that for some their opposition to him has become an important part of their identity.

Perhaps inevitably, this concentration of emotion on a single figure, however distant, can lead in some cases to the forming of a twisted sort of relationship with him. Zahraa Al-Shamary is a dentistry student at Bristol. Born in Iraq, she has since spent most of her life in the UK. Despite experiencing relatively little time under Saddam’s regime, she still has intense feelings towards the dictator: “They say you grow to love your enemy. I grew to love Saddam. He was cynically overpowering; dominant yet detrimental; he was passionate about his land. I watched him on satellite television. I read about him in books. I knew his hobbies, habits and addictions.”

I sense that many in the Iraqi community share a similar level of knowledge of Saddam; he might have been a figure of distant enmity, but he was also one of disturbing familiarity. For this reason, I was intrigued to know how it felt when he was finally executed on December 30 2006—the first day of

“If I went to Baghdad now I would get lost. I’m a complete stranger in the town in which I was born and brought up”

Eid ul-Adha, an important Islamic day. How does it feel when the wall against which you have pushed for so long suddenly gives way before you?

The range of responses to this question is as diverse as the community itself. When I put it to Hasan, he smiles slowly and defers to his young son, who looks no older than 10 and has been playing contentedly at his father’s desk for the course of the interview. The moment is a strange one. The boy ponders briefly. “Well, sort of... happy,” he begins. “He did many crimes against humanity; he made a lot of people suffer and die. So, I think it’s good for him to be dead, so we can be finished with him, once and for all; so we can move on with our lives.” The answer is delivered with thoughtful confidence, the vocabulary picked up in a political household and employed with the simple logic of a child. Hasan

affirms this view. “It was a big relief for us. At least we achieved something, we got rid of him. He faced what we think was a very fair trial. His crimes were exposed and he was executed, although it was in an unprofessional way. We are all hoping, working, struggling for a new Iraq. But people must face fair trials and be treated like humans, whoever they are. This became like a revenge.”

For Zahraa, the strong undercurrent of revenge rather than justice that seemed to motivate Saddam’s executioners undermined whatever catharsis his death might have been able to provide. “To me, it was a childish school trick; to show the leader of the other gang that this was our territory now. I preferred Saddam alive because I could hate him without the burden of guilt. I can’t hate him anymore because he’s dead. He can’t defend himself.”

Saddam was eventually convicted and executed for the murder of 148 people in Dujail, a Shi’ite town in northern Iraq. Estimates of the total killed during his regime, however, are as high as 2 million. Like Hasan, many of the Iraqis I spoke to could name close family members and friends who had disappeared into Ba’athist jails, never to be seen again. The weight of the dead is suffocating. Yet, beneath it are more subtle, yet important, losses that need to be understood in order to have even a vague idea of the pain Saddam inflicted.

The first is that Iraq, and with it an important part of their identity, was brutally torn from them. Hasan’s longing to return to the house of his birth is followed by an acknowledgment of bitter reality when I ask him if he sees himself ever returning to live in Iraq. “I have to be realistic,” he says. “Go back to what? If I went to Baghdad now I would get lost. I’m a complete stranger. If you and I were to go together, the only difference would be that I speak the language, and you don’t. We would both be strangers in the town in which I was born and brought up in.”

Najim Shamma is a former civil engineer I met at a meeting organised by the Iraqi Association. Eager to talk about his home and his past, he speaks kindly and slowly to me in somewhat broken English (he refers to it jokingly as his “second-hand language”). He was deported in 1980 with his family; his newborn son was just over a week old. From his wallet he produces a lovingly preserved photograph of the family taken several years later in Iran. He tells me of being forced out of Iraq: “The people who deported me and my family took my papers too. I am Iraqi but I have no proof to say that I was Iraqi. No one believes me. I went to the Iraqi Ambassador to say to them ‘Please give me my Iraqi nationality’, but they told to me go to Baghdad and

get it from there. This is not possible because of my health.” He looks distant as he speaks. “Saddam Hussein took my papers, he took my country.”

The distance from home makes the current violence all the more difficult to bear. Hasan tells me, “We are currently dealing with a family who lost two family members. They are grandparents living here in Hounslow. They lost their son in Iraq, six months ago. He was assassinated. Two weeks ago their granddaughter was killed in the street. She was only five years old. They said one thing. They said if they were back home they could have mourned their loss much easier. ‘Here, we are isolated. We are mourning amongst ourselves. It is killing us.’ It has been the same for every Iraqi here.”

If there is anything more painful than each individual’s loss of Iraq, it is the collective loss, the sense that Saddam took Iraq from itself. Throughout the community, the old and the young, those who lived in Iraq and those who never have, there is an enormous pride in their country. The walls of the Iraqi Association are covered in photos of the Mesopotamian architecture of Babylon. Iraq’s title as the ‘Cradle of Civilisation’ is often evoked. The point repeated again and again is that the madness that plays across our television screens is not representative of Iraq, but rather the result of the vestiges of Saddam’s poison, still coursing through the infected veins of the country.

Perhaps the most painful manifestation of this venom is the sectarian violence currently sweeping the country, presented as a division along Sunni-Shi’ite-Kurd lines. Safa Hadi Al-Mafraji, a student and the son of a former Iraqi Communist party official, insists that before Saddam, “Iraqis were united; we had Jewish musicians, Assyrian athletes, Kurds holding several ministries. All working under one flag and banner. Now, everyone works for his own sect, own race, own religion. Before 2003 no one asked me if I was Arab or Kurd. Now a small minority of people go into details asking me not only if I’m Arab or Kurd, but also if I’m Shi’ite or Sunni.”

Yet for all that has changed and all that has been lost, there is still a palpable sense of optimism. Hasan and Al-Hussaini, both of whom have watched Iraqi politics for decades, predict the insurgency to be in its last throes, and claim to see the first signs that the Iraqi people are beginning to turn against the insurgents. Whatever the future brings, Iraq will continue to hold an immovable place in the hearts of its displaced community. As Aya puts it: “Walking in a dirty street anywhere would just be walking in a dirty street; but walking in a dirty street in Iraq would feel a million times better.”

In the buff: bareback riders

Sam Noble strips down to his Speedos and joins York's nudist cyclists in a protest against oil dependency. Would you dare to bare for the city's naughtiest bike ride?

I am an idiot, I thought, as I waited in a queue of men and women of all shapes, sizes, and colours. All of a similar mental disposition, however—all naked. I am an idiot, I repeated to myself.

As my friends and family will agree, I will do anything if challenged to. Even if I'm only being teased or slightly goaded, no matter how silly, I'll be there with bells on. So my mind was caught between two polar positions when dared to do the second annual York Naked Bike Ride. Did I really want to join the party of hippies and all those other people to whom gravity has been severely unkind as they cycled around York in their birthday suits? Or would it just be a bit of harmless fun? As I stood there in my pink Speedos, I couldn't help thinking, once again: "I am an idiot."

The Naked Bike Ride is a protest against our country's oil dependency, an unfortunate consequence of our reliance on cars. The aim is to promote other means of travel, particularly cycling, public transport and walking. The cyclists' nudity was supposed to represent the fragility of cyclists who face careless drivers everyday; lorries, four-by-fours and cars who show disregard for us peddling, environmentally-friendly types. Whilst I basked in the sun, I thought about the issues (and my idiocy) over and over again, wondering whether it was really worth the potential humiliation.

Like most people who will be reading this, I do genuinely care about the gargantuan of cars clogging up the roads and the effect it has on dying Mother Nature. When my mum used to drive me to school, we'd cynically

'It was surreal. The stereo played 'The Bare Necessities'. Everyone we passed either laughed or cheered us on'

count the number of cars with lone drivers in the long queues of traffic. We would berate them for their wanton disregard for car pooling and the environment. As soon as I was dropped off, however, we would both avoid making eye contact as we realised with shame that we were both hypocrites. Now my mother cycles to work and I try to walk everywhere as much as possible, which in York is completely feasible. I'm certainly not judging anyone, but it confounds me that anyone would want to pay £1.50 for a single on the number four into town when the city centre is only 20 minutes away from campus. When I lived in Derwent, I'd walk into town with like-minded thrifty gentlemen as our friends would board the bus. By the time the bus collected

A nearly naked Sam gestures to the camera. Photo: Georgi Mabee

side the library and arrived in town, we'd be waiting by the bus stop, with a smug grin and an extra pint in our bellies.

I may still be an idiot, but this naked cycle felt like a vindicated protest against the country's dependency on four-wheeled transport. When I asked my fellow cyclists what their motivation was for taking part in the ride, it was clear their nudity was all for fun, but that they appreciated what we were protesting against. Oil dependency is bad, they said again and again—promoting alternatives is good. I laughed at the slogans emblazoned onto people's backs, my favourite being from an elderly gent who had 'Nude is good' written on his behind, while his sweaty John Thomas rested on his saddle. A bunch of tattooed bikers covered their modesty with 'I'm only here for the crack'.

We left Memorial Park at 6pm to the sound of a large crowd cheering and snapping away at us with their cameras. The police cyclists who escorted us looked exasperated and sweaty in black, while us naturists enjoyed the feel of the breeze on ordinarily hidden parts of our bodies. The cycle took us towards the Minster, through town towards Clifford's Tower, all the way down to Millennium Bridge, then back through Micklegate towards

Coney Street and finishing finally in the Museum Gardens. The route reminded me just how beautiful

York is, with its cobbled streets, Georgian terraces and lush parks. I didn't want to be anywhere else as the sun shone on me—and I certainly didn't want any clothes on.

To say the experience was surreal is a breath-taking understatement. We cycled at a leisurely pace, accompanied by a stereo that played 'The Bare Necessities' and 'Don't Worry, Be Happy', accurately capturing the mood of us merry cyclists. We made a cacophony of noise with our bells, whistles, horns and cheering as we passed gobsmacked pedestrians and people in their cars. Every person we passed either laughed happily, clapped, smiled maniacally or cheered us on, appreciative of the silliness that we had all embraced. I felt less of an idiot and more like a hero; we were treated like astronauts in the '60s driving through a ticker-tape parade. What an utter pleasure to do something completely ridiculous and make a group of otherwise indifferent people happy.

While in this wistful mood, I thought of the paradoxical nature of the English. On one hand, we are a moody, quiet and reserved nation. If you've ever tried to spark up an irreverent conversation with someone on the Tube, you'll know what I mean. On the other hand, we are an island of characters who embrace silliness, fun and the surreal like no other, as Father Christmas on a unicycle next to me demonstrated by booming out his green politics in rhyming couplets. We may be naked idiots, yes. But I'm proud of it.





Woodstock 2006 (clockwise from left): Fenna Rhodes and the True Ingredients; the crowd show their appreciation; a daring student takes on the lake. Photos: Georgi Mabee

Woodstock '07: best yet

This year's Woodstock is set to be the biggest yet. **Jo Shelley** previews one music festival you won't need your wellies for

Music, free love, mud: three terms that defined Woodstock's celebrated name-sake but seem, at first, to make for rather unfortunate comparisons for the York version. Mud? It's difficult to dirty the concrete that paves the delightfully named Vanbrugh Paradise. Free love? Tricky to feel its vibe when metal barriers have been used to cage in the specified 'festival area' and Door Safe check your bag for booze on the way in (and, should you drink too much, put the metaphorical boot to your behind on the way out). Woodstock, I'm afraid, freshers, this 'Woodstock' is not.

Or not entirely. What remains, luckily, is the music and—coupled with

the fact that this is live music you can listen to on the cheap, with all your friends and in your own backyard—it is the 12 hours of pure, unadulterated, home-grown music which makes this campus event one that you should definitely RSVP to. This year, in particular, prepared to be surprised (if not awed) by the talent on offer. Battle of the Bands finalists, jugglers, choirgirls, flamethrowers, Fenna—they're all here.

From the top down, then; headlining are BoB's trio of medal-winners: Make It Better Later, ...Accept Instruction (formerly known as Clip the Apex) and Apply the Brakes.

Make It Better Later's rise to the coveted 11.15pm slot is the ska punk kid's inspirational story of rags to riches, if ever there was one. After just a year and half together, the band's first notable achievement was getting knocked out in the BoB heats in 2006. They've gone on, however, to play Leeds Cockpit, record a soon-to-be-released album and share a stage with Wheatus (and the less well-known Zebrahead). Now they're on the top of the bill at Woodstock. "It's quite surreal," said the band's lead singer, Aaron Carey, "I can't quite believe it myself"

The rest of the group of late-night

performers are a mishmash of newbies and old hands. Both ...Accept Instruction and Apply the Brakes came from nowhere to reach the final of (and, in the former's case, win) BoB 2007 back in March and now, with "about two other gigs" to their names, are also headlining. But no Woodstock would be complete (in this day and age at least), without Fenna Rhodes, golden boy of the York hip-hop scene. He is rumoured to be appearing for the last time with his band, The True Ingredients.

The real selling point of this year's festival is the number of acts allowed to perform on the day. About 30 bands, musical ensembles, dance troops and the like have been allotted a slot in the schedule. The reason? The organisers have not only constructed a stage outside on Vanbrugh Paradise, which will play host to the more mainstream bands, they have also built one inside Vanbrugh Dining Hall, on which the likes of Vudu Guru, Arctic Fury, and Continuum will appear.

It's an impressive plan that increases the variety of performances on offer, resulting in a line-up that encompasses music genres from indie to rock, interspersed with a bit of gospel, a turn of eardrum-crushing

samba beats and, who could forget, some moves from the limber ladies and gents that make up Pole Exercise.

The SU's cunning food and drink provisions mean that it's perfectly possible, as I learned first-hand last year, to spend an entire day within the Woodstock enclosure. There's a barbeque from 2-8pm and two bars, open from midday until 11pm.

Sam Daunt, this year's Woodstock Coordinator, says, "This is an event that you just can't miss. It's a 12-hour event with lots of alcohol, food, and music and, at £3, it's insanely good value for money. And it's all for charity, which gives people an excuse to drink even more than usual! As it's not ticketed entry, people can just come down whenever they want and see what's happening."

If you don't fancy paying the £3 entry donation, however, or don't want to face the queues that build up to get into the event during the evening, then a crowd usually congregates on the steps by Central Hall, swigging their supermarket-bought beers and enjoying music away from the clamour around the stage.

Woodstock takes place on Saturday June 23

It's been over 30 years since Tony Wheeler, founder of the Lonely Planet enterprise, set off on his first trail-blazing trip. **Venetia Rainey** meets the man who has inspired generations of travellers to take up their backpacks and venture into the world of the unknown

“I should dedicate it to George Bush, really; he made me write it,” explains a quiet, smiling man with greying hair. “I had a lot of fun though, and I really enjoyed all the places I went to. I had [Bush’s] three axis of evil countries—Iraq, Iran and North Korea—then Burma, Cuba, Afghanistan, Libya, Saudi Arabia...” He trails off, allowing me to imagine the “fun” to be had in such politically unstable places. “I’ve always liked those sorts of places,” he continues. “We started Lonely Planet by going to the odd places in the world. The big publishers were doing the Frances and the Italys and we couldn’t compete with them, so we had to find odd places to do; there weren’t books about those countries.”

I am, of course, talking to none other than Tony Wheeler about his new book *Bad Lands*. He is the founder of the now giant guidebook company, Lonely Planet, whose name was apparently chosen after Tony misheard the lyrics to the song ‘Space Captain’ (it’s really ‘lovely planet’).

It is little wonder, considering the story of how Lonely Planet was founded, that even today Tony continues to pioneer and document ‘different’ travelling. Just when we were beginning to think that there was nowhere exciting left to go in the world, Tony is releasing his new, fairly controversial book, wherein he explores places which, by his own (and Bush’s) criteria are “bad”. Questions to be asked of countries before they can feature in the book include, firstly: how do they treat their own people? (For example, did you know that in Cuba you are allowed to run a restaurant, but you can’t have more than 12 seats, because if you do, you might be competing with the government?) Secondly: how do they treat their neighbours? And finally: do they support terrorism? “It’s much more difficult to find a ‘good’ land,” he remarks, shaking his head slightly. “To be a ‘bad’ land all you have to do is something bad and then, well, you’re bad. To be a good land everything you do has to be good. If I sell enough copies I’m all set to do *Bad Lands 2*. Zimbabwe would be an obvious case study, and Syria.”

Tony has a sense of humour that, perhaps refreshingly, allows him to laugh at the state of our world, even after having seen as much of it as he has. He tells me that, while most of the people he met in the “bad” countries were friendly and willing to talk to him, he did have a bit of a problem in Saudi Arabia: “I had less insight than I expected in Saudi Arabia. I talked to lots of people, but they were all Westerners or Egyptians. The Saudis just sit at home and count their money—they don’t work. They don’t drive the taxis or work in the hotels. “One of the interesting things about writing the book is that people

The Lonely Planet tale

In 1972, Tony Wheeler and his wife Maureen bought a beat-up minivan in London for £65 and drove it to Kabul. They then travelled across Asia by any means possible, arriving in Melbourne with just 27 cents. In response to the many questions they were asked, they decided to write a book: *Across Asia on the Cheap*. It was a massive success and so Lonely Planet was born; a guidebook company aiming to promote innovative, independent travel.

The prologue to the 1973 edition is fantastically typical of the hippie mentality the journey sprung from: “The Asian overland trip has become so popular in the last five years that there’s almost a groove worn in the face of the map. Few people realise that for the same cost as jumping on a plane in Sydney today and off in London tomorrow they could spend several highly enjoyable months seeing a whole cross section of cultures—and get to London! Of course, being adventurous is no longer a pre-requisite of the trip, but if you don’t mind roughing it a little you can join the thousands of people who really have dropped out of the nine-to-five rat race. All you’ve got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go.”

really want to talk to you about their country because you are neutral. You’re an outsider, you’re safe; you’re not going to shop them to the government.”

This brings up the question of whether or not we should consider politics when travelling, especially in light of the so-called War on Terror, which is a particularly pertinent issue when exploring countries such as Iraq. “I don’t think you can go anywhere without thinking about politics, and if someone does bring it up, you need to have a response,” he says.

I am reminded of Nicholas Garrigan in *The Last King of Scotland*, and ask him what he thinks of the negative effects of mindless tourists. “There is no question that there is a bad

side to tourism,” he replies. “There are some things you definitely don’t want to see happen, like sex tourism.”

So is he staunchly against the Westernisation of destinations? He is, after all, the original off-the-beaten-track travelling man. “You go to places where you think, ‘20 years ago it was quiet and it was peaceful,’” he says. “But if you go to people there and you say, ‘Oh, it was nicer when I first came here 20 years ago’, they’ll turn around and say, ‘Yeah, but 20 years ago there wasn’t a school for my kids, we didn’t have electricity and I was lucky if I had a bicycle; most of the time I walked. And look at it now! I’ve got air conditioning and a car and my kids are in school and I can watch television!’ And you think: ‘No, that’s not what we want; we want to get away from what we have at home’. But we have no right to say to them, ‘stay primitive. Don’t get electricity, we like it with the oil lamps.’”

The irony for the average backpacker setting off this summer with their LP guide in their rucksack is that it is exactly this type of travel which sets the wheels in motion to transform a city, beach or even restaurant from an undiscovered gem into a tourist honeypot, minus the oil lamps. It’s a conundrum: how does a guidebook promote

“If we rave about some place in India we can make or break it. But as an author, if you do find something really good you just cannot keep it a secret”

independent and sustainable travel, when in purely by mentioning a place it is condemning it to widespread popularity, and perversely, its eventual demise? “If we rave about some place in India, we can make or break it, you have to be very cautious about how you use that power.” That’s exactly it, the power of the guidebook; how should writers and readers alike approach such a dangerous medium? “As an author, if you find something really good, you cannot keep it a secret. Some readers say, ‘I use your guidebook to find the places where I don’t want to stay and don’t want to eat, because I know I’m going to meet all the other travellers there’. And fair enough—that’s quite an imaginative use, really.”

On the subject of guidebooks, I turn the conversation to his first ever guide; the book that started it all, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, the predecessor of the famous *Asia on a Shoestring*. His highly personal and, in places, perhaps a little dated tone runs throughout, evident in comments like,



Now’s the time, guys: escape the rat race

Above: Mount Everest, Nepal. Right: Tony Wheeler surrounds himself with a colourful array of Lonely Planet guidebooks

“The Hindu religion is such a comic book, with a Disneyland set up; it is almost difficult to take it seriously. If one looks at it as the Hindus do, then it becomes meaningful”, or his advice to hippie “freaks” crossing borders: “Do yourself and everyone else a favour and stay cool”.

Statements such as these are a far cry from those populating the clinical and politically correct guidebooks of today. Apparently, however, I am far from alone in bemoaning the depersonalisation of Lonely Planet’s travel guides: “We keep saying to our writers that people have to have some feel of what their opinion is. It is difficult, there’s no question. Because you end up having a number of writers, and they are big projects.”

Perhaps the problem lies in the massive public demand for up-to-date guidebooks. Even guidebooks that are bought the year in which they come out sometimes prove out of date and once over a year old, their popularity declines rapidly for fear of them being unreliable. Books at Lonely Planet are put on two or four year rotations, depending on how popular they are. All the time in between two editions is spent revising the first. Authors are given a few weeks to do their city or part of a country and all of this time is spent checking out every place they have already included, plus looking out for new places to eat, stay, drink, party, and so on. In light of this, it is not hard to understand why the informal, chatty style of Tony’s first book has petered out. Unfortunately, some of the more quirky sections of his book have also disappeared; the section entitled ‘Dope’, for instance, has sadly faded into a quaint memory of a time before health and safety went crazy.

“People are going to look for drugs whether we tell them about it or not. One of the things we do much more now is tell people where you would be crazy to look for it; in Singapore for example, you are absolutely nuts to even think about it, whereas in Ibiza—not that I’m particularly up to date with the drug situation there —I expect you might just get your knuckles rapped.” Quite a contrast to the advice he dishes out in his first guide: ‘If dope is what you want then you are going >>

Travel hot spots

We asked Lonely Planet where they think the next big travel destinations will be. This is what they told us—prepare to be surprised...

Oman

Part of the Arabian Peninsula, this country is the antithesis of neighbouring Dubai; it is one of the few remaining relics of the old Arabia. In contrast with many places in the Middle East, Oman is politically stable and very accessible. Spectacular diving opportunities, breathtaking desert treks and ancient Arabian cities are all, as yet, unbesieged by tourists. Go now.

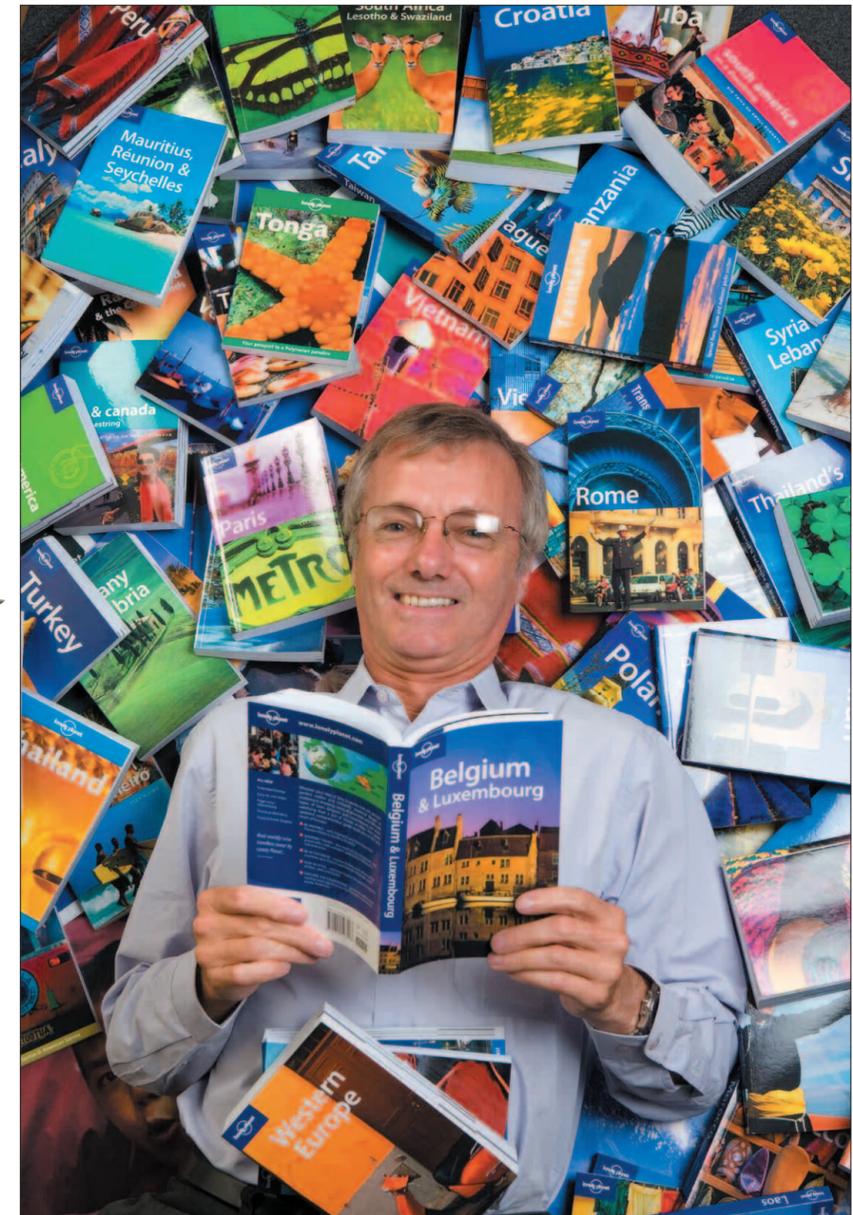
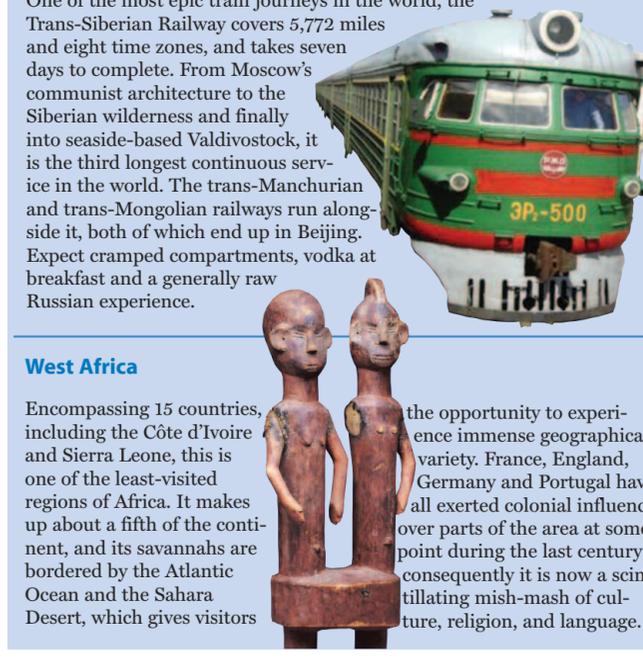


Trans-Siberian Railway

One of the most epic train journeys in the world, the Trans-Siberian Railway covers 5,772 miles and eight time zones, and takes seven days to complete. From Moscow’s communist architecture to the Siberian wilderness and finally into seaside-based Valdivostock, it is the third longest continuous service in the world. The trans-Manchurian and trans-Mongolian railways run alongside it, both of which end up in Beijing. Expect cramped compartments, vodka at breakfast and a generally raw Russian experience.

West Africa

Encompassing 15 countries, including the Côte d’Ivoire and Sierra Leone, this is one of the least-visited regions of Africa. It makes up about a fifth of the continent, and its savannahs are bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the Sahara Desert, which gives visitors the opportunity to experience immense geographical variety. France, England, Germany and Portugal have all exerted colonial influence over parts of the area at some point during the last century; consequently it is now a scintillating mish-mash of culture, religion, and language.



to the right places! In Bali, mushrooms go down well, the restaurants will prepare you an interesting omelette if you supply the mushrooms. Afterwards you can trip gently down to the beach and watch a truly unbelievable sunset.

I press on, conscious of how fast time is slipping away. Are the only places that are acceptable to go to now the ones that are underdeveloped, without basic amenities and as far from home as possible? His pleasant chuckle reassures me that I am wrong: "One can travel for different reasons, I think. Last weekend I went to Paris and had a very enjoyable few days. I stayed in a nice hotel and ate nice food. I was just a regular tourist in a very nice country." How extraordinarily, well, nice. "France is still one of the most popular destinations in the world, and when you go there, you realise why," he says. "It's very civilised travelling."

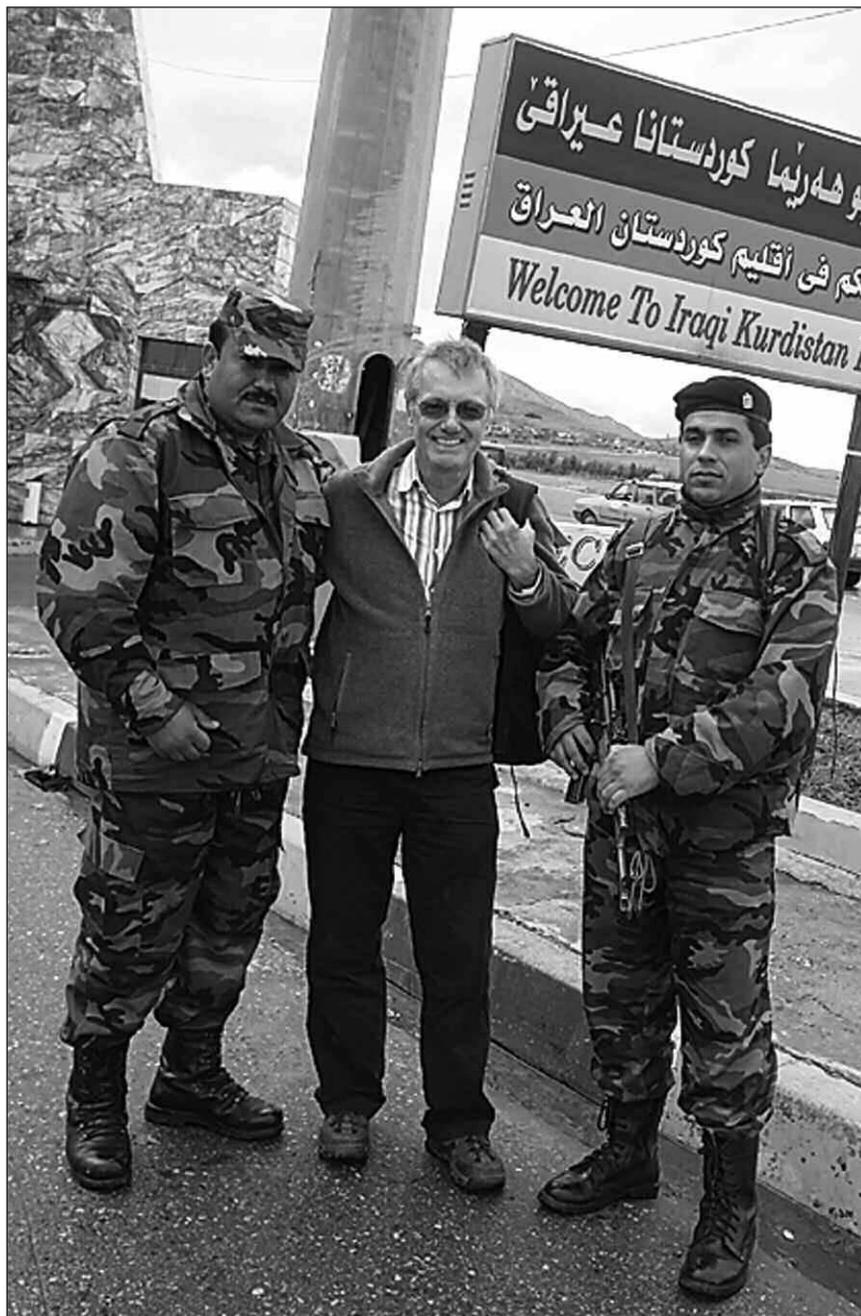
I find myself relaxing in my seat; thank God we are still allowed to travel civilly. Today you would be forgiven for thinking that the only travel worth doing involves one set of clothes, corrugated tin shacks and either a collection of African orphans or a small herd of endangered turtles. "But equally," Tony continues on, "one of the trips Maureen and I did this year was this thing called the Plymouth-Banjul challenge. You come to England, buy an old car, and then drive through France, Spain, down into Morocco, through the Western Sahara, and then finally into Banjul, the capital of Gambia. When you get there you give the car away, and it is auctioned off with all the other cars in order to raise money for charity."

Enough of France, I hear myself saying, what about England? More importantly, has he ever been to York? "I really didn't like England when I first returned for sixth form after America," he chuckles, "I can see myself spending a lot more time here in future, though." Sensing he is not quite answering my question, I ask again: has he ever been to York? "It's funny, when we did our first Britain guide, I thought, this is crazy, I know India better than I know England, and I was born here! So I ended up writing about the South, the Midlands, and the North of Scotland. I learnt a lot." How strange, I think; is York that awful a conversation topic, or is he just trying to hide something? I repeat my question a third time, and finally he yields, albeit begrudgingly (or

"Squat toilets scare people for some reason. I like them, they're physically good for you"

is it guiltily?): "I've never been to York, no. But I would like to..."

Following a brief but unashamedly enthusiastic plugging of our beautiful city, I venture into the realm of languages, and the role they play in travelling. Surely, I joke with him, he speaks at least five languages, one of which is an old African tribal dialect no longer in existence. "I am an awful linguist," he smirks good naturedly. "If I could improve one thing in my life, I would be better at languages. It isn't from lack of trying," he protests, seeing the look of ill-suppressed shock on my face. "I took Italian lessons last year for a few months. But I think more important



than being good is being willing to give it a go. If you can speak a bit of a language, it makes the world of difference."

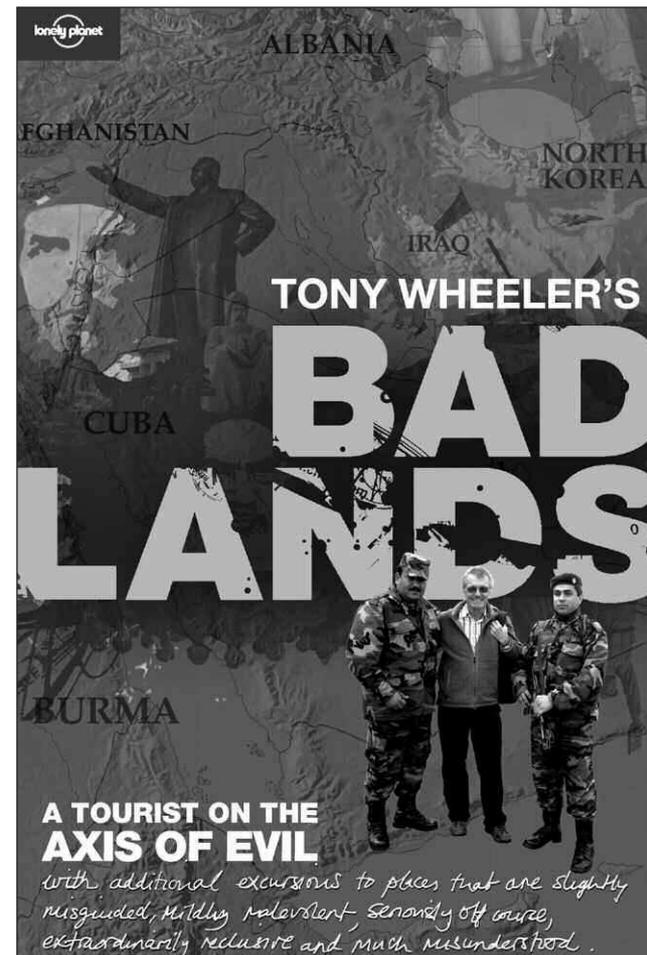
We are interrupted, at this point, by a knock on the door. "Are you finished yet?" I hear a female voice enquire. Something about my journalistic naivety must have struck him, however, and he decides to give me another five minutes. "I still like travel for the sake of travel," he proceeds. "You know, just bumping into people and meeting people and things happening; general good fun. But I also like bicycle trips. They are good fun too."

What about travel dislikes? Is there anything that really gets his goat when he hits the road? "I dislike jetlag," he replies quickly, "I dislike tiny hotel rooms where you're tripping over things all the time. I don't dislike squat toilets, on the other hand," I hear him add, nonchalantly. Really? I find them quite irritating, I reply. I have obviously touched a nerve here, however, as he proceeds to launch into a tirade against toilet-intolerant people: "One of the things people have when travelling out of their comfort zone is that they are really scared of toilets. Squat toilets scare a lot of people for some reason. I don't mind them at all; some people even argue that they're physically better for you." For more on Tony Wheeler's worldwide toilet shenanigans, check out his toilet blog (no joke) at www.lonelyplanet.com/tonywheeler/my_lists/here_i_sat.

Moving swiftly on, I ask what he plans to do next. "Well I'm in England for the rest of the week, then I'm going to the USA for two weeks to promote

Bad Lands, then I'm stopping in Tanzania on the way back to Australia to climb Kilimanjaro with some friends." A pretty standard month then, roughly on par with what I'm getting up to myself over the next few weeks. "I used to live in Detroit, you know. It's changed a lot over time; some of it is like a third-world disaster area now." Is he a fan of the USA, then? "America has a lot going for it, it's just a shame it has a lot going against it as well," he answers coyly.

So where is he a fan of, I find myself asking. In light of the fact that he must have been to nearly every country in the world, where does he find himself drawn back to time and time again? "I actually haven't been to every country in the world," he replies, shaking his head. "That's a bit too much like ticking off things on a list for me. I've been to more than 130; Maureen says it's appalling to keep count. One of my friends claims to have done it, but then how many countries are there in the world? The UN represents 192 officially, but it doesn't have Taiwan, for example. And is Gibraltar a country? Or Antarctica? The Lonely Planet Blue List book ended up with 235." He pauses to think for a second and the conversation is briefly suspended as both of us take in the sound of the English rain beating on the glass roof of the room. "But the place I've gone back to more than any other place is Nepal, I guess." I have to ask him to repeat this, as he pronounces it Ne-pall, in an American sort of way; his accent is a truly bizarre fusion of Australian, English, and American. "Over the years I've probably been there



Sustainable travel: do's and don'ts

DO...

- ... your homework. Find out about each country's background, what you should be supporting with your money and what you should definitely be avoiding (eg the fur of an endangered species).
- ... ask questions. People are far more likely to tell you what they are really doing in terms of recycling, etc. if you ask them to their face—it's much harder to lie.
- ... focus on the positive things you can do in your destination country. Learn the language, for example, and make an effort to understand the culture.

DON'T...

- ... take two one-week holidays. Take one two-week holiday instead, and fly between the countries you are visiting. Simple mathematics says that your overall carbon emissions will be greatly decreased the fewer flights that you take.
- ... just stay at hotel chains. Although these places play a role in the economy, it is much more beneficial to stay in locally-owned accommodation. The same goes for restaurants. As a general rule, spending money at multi-national chains means that your cash is not going to the host country.
- ... be a stereotypical tourist. Explore the country for yourself, meet local people and think about how you are having an impact on your surroundings.

Tony Wheeler hangs out with Iraqi border guards; the cover of his new book, *Bad Lands*. Photos from Lonely Planet

over a dozen times." Because of the fascinating mix of culture and landscape? "Because of the walking," he smiles generously. "I love to walk."

I draw the interview to a close by asking him if he has a travel motto. "If there is a motto, it is to be open, to expect things to not work out all the time, and to be ready to change," he says. Sounds more like a motto for life than for travel to me, but then I suppose that's the thing: for Tony Wheeler, his life is travel, and I can't help but be a little bit jealous.

Roll up, roll up—it's Tony! The Blair Musical

Success at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival is often more about shameless gimmicks than flawless performances. **Amy Scott** talks tactics with York DramaSoc's hopefuls

Sitting at home one night after a musical marathon with *Evita* as the highlight, student director and playwright Chris Bush started thinking. Thinking about musicals; thinking about iconic people; and thinking about how and why the two collide. Chris was thinking, perhaps, about his slightly unpopular American namesake, and this, perhaps, led him to think about said namesake's English counterpart. And then inspiration struck.

After a succession of titles including 'Tony; My Life in Rock' and simply 'Call Me Tony', 'Tony! The Blair Musical' was born. *Tony! The Blair Musical* was written and directed by Bush, and premieres at the York Theatre Royal this July before transferring to the prestigious C Venues at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August. The prospect of the dates at York Theatre Royal is clearly exciting as well as nerve-wracking for the production team. Producer Anna Donaghy seems genuinely nervous about seeing the posters going up in the centre of York in the next few weeks, but the real test of this show's mettle will come when the cast hit the billboards in Scotland later this summer.



The *Tony!* production team join a plethora of York students making their way to Edinburgh to take part in the largest arts festival in the world. Beth Pitts's recent Drama Barn production of *Cricket on the Moon* will be making an appearance, as well as this term's production of *Trainspotting* directed by Simon Maeder. Student company Rubber Duck Theatre return after their success with *Fantastic Mr Fox* last year with a production of Roald Dahl's *The Giraffe, the Pelly and Me* and Alex Wright's *Tapestries* will also be joining the York contingent.

Bush and Donaghy know all too well the pitfalls of taking a show to the Fringe. Last year, the White Rose Theatre's production of *Man and God*

(also written by Bush) received positive reviews from a number of publications at the Fringe, but didn't manage to grab much media attention or sell many tickets, despite being a well-written, funny and thought-provoking piece with a cast of some of DramaSoc's finest actors. Undeterred, however, Bush is optimistic about the company's chances with this year's production: "The show is topical, a comedy and a musical—everything a show could need for commercial success at the Fringe. Last year we went with a piece of legitimate theatre. This year we're going with a shameless gimmick."

Someone who knows a thing or two about shameless gimmicks is director and bona fide campus legend, William Seaward. He is also returning to the Fringe this year with the second in his series of Bouncy Castle Experiments. *Bouncy Castle Hamlet's* success last year saw him grace the pages of the *Guardian* five times, including three headlines, as well as appearing on Sky and BBC News. Consequently, Seaward and his bouncy castle have been invited to return to Rocket Venues, who are described by the director as 'ridiculously enthusiastic'. The highly original, if not entirely artistically viable, choice of staging Shakespeare on a bouncy castle came to Seaward in an unexpected setting: Argentina. "I was at a young cousin's birthday party some months before staging *Waiting For Godot* at the Fringe a few years ago," he told me. "I was stuck for staging ideas, but also mesmerised by the bouncy castle at the party and somehow, somewhere along the line, the two thought processes fused." Although Beckett's classic did not receive the bouncy castle treatment, the seed was sown for Seaward's Shakespearean triumph last year.

This year, the bouncy castle will be released from its current position (under Seaward's CD player) for his production of *Bouncy Castle Macbeth*. He feels that *Macbeth* is more suited to the bouncy castle environment as "it has a lot more action than *Hamlet*"—neatly summing up centuries of literary criticism on the Prince of Denmark's difficulties. Many of the characters will be wearing kilts although, thankfully, given their propensity to flying up, they will be worn with underwear, which Seaward hopes will win the hearts of the Scottish audiences. The director brushes off worries that speaking the word "Macbeth" on a bouncy castle is as disastrous as uttering the name in a theatre: "We are going to play with the curse thing—my current plan is for the castle to start collapsing every time anyone says it." When asked what he's learnt about being a media success at

the Fringe, his advice is simply "to be much less subtle". Exactly how one can be less subtle than performing Hamlet on a bouncy castle is left unclear.

It seems Seaward's approach of abandoning all subtlety really is the recipe for success at the increasingly crowded festival, and the team behind

Tony! The Blair Musical have taken the lesson to heart. Songs in the extravaganza include 'There's No "Me" In Tony', the more obtuse 'I Am Evita Perón' and a gaggle of singing soldiers in Iraq. The advertising campaign planned for implementation at the Fringe will mimic a political campaign with posters and rosettes.

In another genius bid for publicity, the play also features a barber-shop quartet of failed Tory leaders including student Ed Duncan-Smith, who will be playing the role of his own father, the former Conservative party leader, Ian Duncan-Smith.

Duncan-Smith junior also plays the part of Alistair Campbell, who appears alongside Tony and Cherie (played by James Duckworth and Ellie Cox), Peter Mandelson, Gordon Brown, George Bush and Princess Diana. Donaghy explained the difficulties of the casting process: "We weren't just looking for people who could act, or people who could sing, but also people who could commit to 30 shows and feasibly be made to look something like who they're supposed to be." However, Bush seems confident they have found the right man to play Blair in Duckworth, who apparently has "a great Tony grin and hand gestures". The demands on its cast are certainly high, with a

run 10 times the length of an average Drama Barn production a mixture of trained and untrained singers. The battle to keep everyone's voice in shape may overtake the usual Fringe battle of making sure your liver still functions at the end.

Bush has shied away from making political statements in his piece. The story of Tony Blair's 10 years in office is told from his own perspective, and is as a result somewhat rosy and, as Bush

"Blair would enjoy it. He won't be very busy this summer—he might as well come and see it"

Below: James Duckworth as Tony Blair. Left: poster for *Tony! The Blair Musical*

puts it, "faintly ridiculous". The writer preferred to make the piece "an affectionate satire, rather than a searing political comment". When asked if Blair would consider the musical a fitting part of his legacy, Bush enthuses, "I think he'd enjoy it". Donaghy plans to send the script and copies of the songs to Downing Street. Bush points out, "He won't be very busy in the summer, he might as well come and see it."

Tony! The Blair Musical is on at the York Theatre Royal July 18-21, in Edinburgh August 1 - 27 in C Venues. Bouncy Castle Macbeth premieres at Edinburgh's Rocket Venues August 2 - 18.



Uncle Matthew



He would care, but he just doesn't want to...

'Imagine how grateful those fresh-faced, virginal newcomers will be to have such an aged and experienced guide; to be taken under your wing and initiated into the freedoms of uni life'

Dear Uncle Matthew,

My problem is rather depressing. Having finished my degree, I was keen to get back into the vibrant clubbing lifestyle of York. However, on my re-entry into the social scene of Toffs, I found it hard to revisit my youthful first year. Instead of pulling random blokes on a VK-fuelled high and vomiting on people, I was discussing mortgage rates and worrying whether the bouncers were feeling the chill. Will I ever be able to reclaim my libido for York, or must I resign myself to a life of knitting and middle-brow literature?

Yours,
Financially-aware, Halifax

Dear Financially-aware,

Growing up is never easy, but it seems you have matured substantially while at York. Only you can tell whether you are truly ready for change —whether you have achieved what I like to call 'escape velocity' from campus life. Before facing the wider world, consider what you may have yet to offer at York. Freshers' week is only months away. Imagine how grateful those callow, fresh-faced, virginal newcomers will be to have such an aged and experienced guide; to be taken under your wing and initiated into the freedoms of life away from home. Finishing your degree does not mean you have to stop living like a student. Wait until there is some 'new blood' on campus, then make your choice.

Yours predatorily,

Uncle Matthew

Dear Uncle Matthew,

I think I have an anger problem. I'm short, prematurely balding and prone to lashing out at random people. Only yesterday I made a friend of mine cry because he stole my Maltesers. My companions keep telling me that I should get laid to solve my problems. Is that the answer, or can I find a release through less carnal methods? I don't want to have a coronary before I'm 30, but the girls don't seem to like the passionate side of me.

Please help,
Red-faced, Derwent

Dear Red-faced,

Anger is a very powerful emotion and can be a barrier to building relationships. So much pent-up rage is not healthy, especially since you may have a heart condition. The act of sexual congress may prove too much of a cardio-vascular strain and do more harm than good. My solution will help solve both your passionate attachment to personal property and also spare you the risks of associating with the opposite sex. Forswear both and become a monk. Vows of celibacy and poverty will insulate you from your own wrath, while a tonsure is an ideal disguise for premature baldness.

Yours monastically,

Uncle Matthew

Dear Uncle Matthew,

I believe I have a Jekyll and Hyde personality that is causing me problems. One side of me can't stop spreading the news about my love life. I can't even open my mouth without details of my latest conquest spurting out, despite my intentions to keep it quiet. Yet I've also discovered I am somewhat of a prude, and was almost sick when a girl proposed that I took her up the back passage. Everyone thinks that I'm some sort of sexual deviant, yet in fact my spiritual soul-mate is nearer Mary Whitehouse. How can I claim back my long-lost dignity?

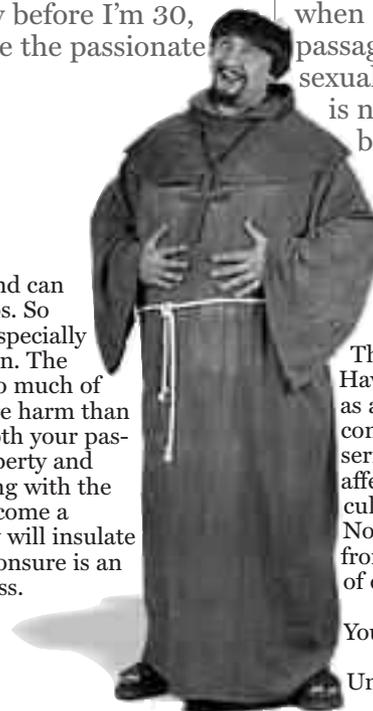
Thanks,
Prudish, Goodricke

Dear Prudish,

The human heart is complex and often contradictory. Have you considered that your compulsive bragging is as a result of failing to achieve a genuine emotional connection in your relationships? Perhaps you should seriously consider pursuing the true object of your affections. You may find this helps solve both your difficulties at a stroke: Mary Whitehouse died in November 2001 – shouting that particular conquest from the rooftops may well help to teach you the value of discretion.

Yours cadaverously,

Uncle Matthew



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Andreas Masoura



Bad teaching, religious tension and horny ducks—glad to be leaving?

Management a joke

As the year comes to an emotional end and my time in the campus bubble of York draws to close, a university department has admitted that its teaching quality requires urgent review. The lecturer in question relied on a company website in order to provide lecture slides whilst supplementing this with notes posted on Facebook. The degree I am referring to is, of course, Management Systems.

I'm not joking, this is actually a degree. At first I felt utter sympathy for the students concerned since they were being supplied with substandard and thoroughly inadequate teaching. One student reflected on the fact that he had chosen a good university and was therefore disappointed and surprised at the poor level of teaching. I would suggest, however, that any degree with management in the title should be avoided. Anyone who disagrees with me only has to look at the evidence above. If the University itself cannot take the degree seriously enough to provide adequate teaching that is not centred around Facebook groups, then why should I?

I suggest anyone with a strong interest in management should try working for the McDonald's in Camberwell. Within a few weeks you can potentially be a store manager, complete with a wage increase of 50p

per hour. University Vice Chancellor Brian

Bribery and corruption

Cantor has allegedly blackmailed the Student's Union regarding student representation on some important matter or another. Students have been left with the choice of either losing their vote and attending the committee or not attending at all. This move emphasises the complete disregard

for student interests throughout this entire university. This is nothing new and has only

seemed to worsen throughout my time here. Ask any Goodricke student living in relative squalor whether he thinks the Roger Kirk centre was worth building. The cost of the toilets alone (they have a fantastic

fountain thing) could have probably funded the renovation of the entire college. Instead, millions of pounds were wasted on a building that was not designed for students at all. The Roger Kirk truly comes to life during the holidays when business conferences make full use of this otherwise waste of space. I don't think the quality of the food justifies its existence. I wonder if the Roger Kirk will be dismantled once Goodricke College moves to Heslington East. It wouldn't be the same otherwise.

...and some more

The director of Drax Power, which has a coal fired power station located close by in Selby, has been awarded an honorary degree for his contributions to the University. I'm not sure quite what these contributions are. In fact, I don't think anyone is. Drax Power pride themselves on having the cleanest coal powered power station in the UK. The University of York, meanwhile, prides itself on having the cleanest plastic-lined lake in Europe.

Wobbling for the world

York's environmentalists recently decided to raise awareness of the polluting nature of cars by stripping off and riding about town on bikes. This was a particularly enthralling sight consisting of a haze of saggy flesh and shrivelled cock. To all the over-50's in York, I'll make you a deal: I promise I will walk everywhere from now on as long as you cover up any droopy body parts. I have

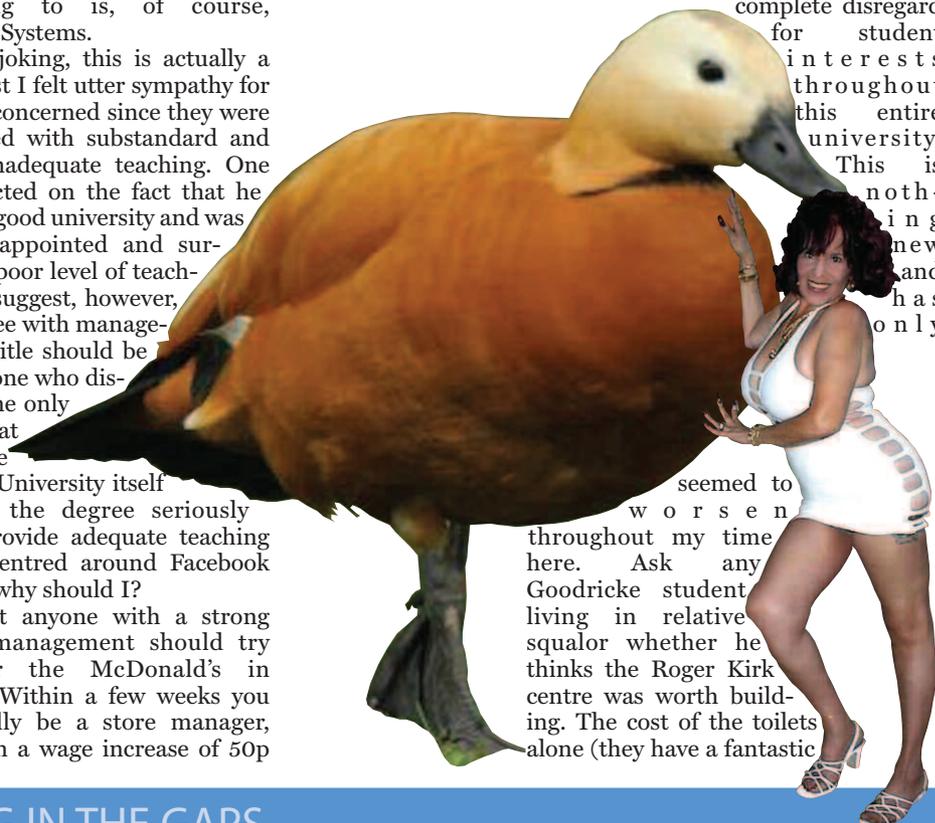
always wondered why the least attractive tend to be the first to reveal all, whether on the Ziggy's dance floor or the roads of York.

Get yer duck out

Trevor the golden duck (the king of the lake) is having woman trouble. Apparently his mate has gone missing, but no body has been found yet. The search continues. Trevor is showing signs of depression due to his lack of action and requires help immediately. If you're reading, Trevor, get in touch and I'll show you a place called Ziggys where even a duck can pull. Just use the tried and tested chat up line, "Hi there, would you like to mate with me?" I'm not guaranteeing you quality by any means, but you certainly won't leave the club alone.

The Crusades of York

The Christian Union (yes, them again) declared that on converting from Islam to Christianity, a certain individual moved 'from darkness to light', causing quite a stir in the Islamic camp. As usual, religion provides no other purpose than to divide people. Personally, I do not require the Bible to tell me not to kill, since I have common sense. Perhaps the two societies should simply fight it out, given that violence usually solves most things. Take, for example, a friend of mine who recently responded to a racial jibe in Ziggy's with two jabs and a left hook. That did the trick.



FILLING IN THE GAPS

The year is coming to an end, and with it the University, and the World. The weather is nothing short of apocalyptic; either torrential rain, leaving Vanbrugh underwater and drowning anyone in a ground floor room in lake sewage, or relentless, beating sunshine that leaves even the geese too limp with sunstroke to peck students to death. The setting is epic and dramatic. I feel a movie coming on... Not a long time ago, on a campus far, far away...

As the hissing of angry avians is replaced by the hissing of duck-guano boiling in the heat, the camera pans to the twisted, malignant features of the Evil Emperor Cantor and his terrifying sidekick, Darth Batten. This summer marks the beginning of their master plan. The Galactic Senate has unwittingly allowed a takeover by giving planning permission to Senator Cantortine, as Emperor Cantor used to be known, to invade the green and pleasant planet of Heslingtonaboo. He used the new powers granted him by the Senate to take complete control of the Galaxy and found his evil empire.

First, the gigantic space-age construc-

tion the Hes East Star moves into position in a peaceful campus in the western spiral arm of Yorkshire, then, suddenly, "That's no student venue!" and BOOM! In a spectacular explosion of concrete and duck crap, the peaceful planet of Goodricke is vaporised and its essence absorbed into the Hes East machinery.

But something is wrong. Emperor Cantor slams his leather-gloved fist against the radar while Darth Batten strangles an unfortunate minion using only the terrible power of The Administration. What has so angered them is a tiny speck on the radar, moving swiftly away from the ruins of Goodricke. Our camera zooms in on the speck... and it resolves itself into the Millennium FitDuck, the fastest blockade-running spaceship this side of the Wentworth Edge.

The camera pans around the ship and we get a first look at our heroes. They are a ragged but determined bunch. There is the young and ambitious padawan, Luke Fletcher-Hallwalker, the grizzled smuggler Matt Burtonsolo, the bizarre but comic robots Colin2D2 and Croker3PO whom

Luke found wandering the wastelands of Alcuine, and the great big hairy ape-thing known as Tom Moore. Accompanying them on their travels is the wise old Jedi master Obi-Kenobi Todd.

Luke Fletcher-Hallwalker is practicing using The Administration to make things happen with the power of her mind. She has learned well from training with Yoda in the desolate marshes of the planet Laboursoc. Suddenly, the communications beam crackles into life. A message is coming in, but it's faint. First comes the coded signal, the Facebook poke. Then the wall post comes through loud and clear. It is the beautiful Princess Leia-Marie Canning. She is in trouble! The evil Emperor Cantor is holding her prisoner on the Hes East Star. Cantor is trying to eliminate every student vote on the Rebel Welfare Council! "Oh my lord!" mutters Croker3PO wetly. "Beep bing beep!" exclaims Colin2D2. "Shut up, Colin2," retorts Croker3PO, "you lost the elections. I won them."

"What does that matter now!" shouts Luke Fletcher-Hallwalker, as Matt Burtonsolo slams the Millennium FitDuck

into hyperdrive. "Grooaauurgh!" agrees Tom Moore, as the freighter makes the jump into hyperspace.

The camera watches the Millennium FitDuck cruise down onto a cold, icy and apparently abandoned planet surface. An outrunner, riding a giant goose, is the only sign of life until the hillside opens and welcomes the FitDuck into the secret YUSU rebel base of Hal'ifax, which is under attack! Great big walker things advance toward it! Everyone must evacuate, and fast! Luke Fletcher-Hallwalker jumps into an advanced Z-wing fighter, and takes off with the rest of the fleet.

They must attack the Hes East Star. Fletcher-Hallwalker levels his ship with the only weak spot and fires off two missiles using only The Administration for guidance. They hit! The Hes East Star explodes into a massive cloud of wasted money, to the jubilation of all.

The movie ends with a massive party on the planet Derwendor, home to a large number of small furry people.

"Grooooooaaarrrr!" says Tom Moore, and everyone agrees.

Nicky Woolf

Arts Reviews

BOOK: THE LAST WITCHFINDER

AUTHOR: JAMES MORROW

PUBLISHER: PHOENIX

PRICE: £7.99

REVIEW: STEVEN WARD

☆☆☆☆☆

Jennet Stearne is the daughter of the zealous Witchfinder General. Whilst her father travels the country in search of suspected witches and sorcerers, Jennet is tutored in Natural Philosophy by her inspirational and learned Aunt Isobel, whose scientific experimentalism soon attracts the attentions of the witchfinders. In an attempt to save the life of her aunt and other innocents, Jennet resolves to come up with a work of scientific genius that will logically disprove the existence of demons and witches. Jennet's tale takes her to the Salem Witch Trials and before the malevolent Judge Hathorne, into the bed of Benjamin Franklin, into the confidence of political theorist Montesquieu and finally into conversation with Isaac Newton.

Set against a barrage of different locations, Morrow's novel can at times become overly preoccupied with setting, even at the expense of its central theme—science versus superstition. His erudite message is often lost amidst a jungle of irrelevant contextual detail, which suffocates the novel's basic premises. Although a good idea, it could be great if it were distilled into a more focused work.

CLASSIC BOOK REVIEW

BOOK: DANGEROUS LIAISONS

AUTHOR: CHODERLOS DE LACLOS

PUBLISHER: PENGUIN

PRICE: £6.99

REVIEW: SARAH COWIN

☆☆☆☆☆

The plot of *Dangerous Liaisons* will already be familiar to most people through the many film adaptations, including *Cruel Intentions*. More amoral than the rugby team in *Ziggys*, *Dangerous Liaisons* was certainly not a book approved of in its time. In fact, it was so shocking that the publishers added a foreword to reassure people that it was a work of fiction.

The schemes, actions and consequences of the main characters are revealed through a series of letters. This style is one of the reasons *Dangerous Liaisons* works as well as it does, as you understand the motives of Merteuil and Valmont without necessarily empathising with them. It is a book that doesn't feel like it has aged; although it is set in 18th-century France, it could just as easily be set in 21st-century Britain. The characters would still be considered morally repugnant; Valmont as a sexual predator using very dubious ways to snare his women, and Merteuil as dangerously Machiavellian.

Dangerous Liaisons twists and turns throughout and has a satisfyingly unpredictable end; it is a necessary read for those who enjoy a well written tale of scandal.

Anjali Raval checks out all the glitz and glamour of Bollywood

Yorkshire recently underwent a transformation with the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Fringe Festival.

The action-packed cultural festival took place from June 5-10, with the most notable event being the IIFA Awards at Hallam FM Arena, Sheffield, on Saturday June 9. The ceremony, which rivalled the Oscars for sheer glamour, saw the arrival of numerous celebrities from Indian cinema aiming to promote Bollywood in Yorkshire. With the venue sold out within days and giant screens set up in neighbouring Leeds and Bradford (renowned for their strong British Asian populations), this was cinema on a grand scale.

The IIFA Festival is expected to bring 28,000 visitors to Yorkshire and generate £10 million, raising Yorkshire's profile as a tourist destination amongst a global TV audience. The ceremony was graced with the presence of the godfather of Bollywood, Amitabh Bachan, who has appeared in more than 130 films and has won nearly 20 top film awards. Other names included Bachan's son, Abhishek, his new wife, the beautiful Ashwarya Rai who has acted in mainstream British cinema, Akshay Kumar, Rani Mukherjee, and Preity Zinta. With them was Shilpa Shetty (of Celebrity Big Brother fame) and British actors Colin Firth and Sienna Miller.

The awards opened in true Bollywood style with a spectacular



Ashwarya Rai performs at the opening ceremony of the Indian Film Academy Fringe Festival

love story with a twist. It was relayed through contemporary dance and performed to the rhythm of 'Ruby' by Leeds-based band Kaiser Chiefs, remixed by Sandy Nuttgens with a driving drum beat from the Dhol Foundation's Johnny Kalsi. It truly captured the diverse atmosphere of the ceremony.

Rang De Basanti (Paint it Yellow), about a group of disillusioned Indian youths who learn to be patriotic, starring Aamir Khan and British actress Alice Patten, came out victorious, winning Best Film, Best Supporting Actress and Best Musical Direction. Hrithik

Roshan won Best Actor, while Best Actress went to Rani Mukherjee for her work in *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (Never Say Goodbye). Finally, the award for Best Director was given to Rajkumar Hirani for the musical comedy *Lage Raho Munnabhai*.

The UK is the second-largest market for Indian films. Film-makers have acknowledged the demand for Bollywood amongst audiences outside of India and have re-edited films to make them more appealing to this audience. *Rang De Basanti*, for example, is to be released as *The Colour of Sacrifice* with the amount of

Hindi reduced and a Hollywood runtime (Indian films are often three hours long). The festivities were rounded off by that other great Indian love (apart from acting, singing and dancing); cricket. After hosting the test match between England and the West Indies, Headingly staged a celebrity cricket match on the Friday before the ceremony. The cricket match, umpired by Dickie Bird, saw a team brimming with Indian cricketers. For Bollywood fans, it would have been like watching their version of Brad Pitt bowling a yorker to Tom Cruise, with Julia Roberts commentating.

EXHIBIT: MAD MAN IN THE MINSTER

VENUE: YORK ART GALLERY

DATE: 09/06/07 - 21/10/07

REVIEWED BY: KIRRAN SHAH

☆☆☆☆☆

From June 9 until October 21, York Art Gallery offers an exhibition displaying the Minster's scale and grandeur alongside the man who attempted to destroy it.

On February 2 1829, a fire swept through the east end of York Minster. No lives were lost, but the medieval wooden roof, organ and choir stalls were all destroyed. It was deliberately started by a religious fanatic, Jonathan Martin (1778-1838), a man obsessed with divine retribution, who later made no attempt to protest his innocence.

'A Sketch of York Cathedral', made at 9am on Monday 2 February 1829, by an eyewitness is a dramatic depiction of the blazing Minster just after the roof collapsed. After noticing sparks rising from the cathedral's roof, he rendered a vividly cold billow of smoke which contrasts with the surrounding warm watercolours representing the heat radiated by the walls and the glow inside the cathedral. The Clerk of Works at the Minster, John Browne, directed the early stages of the reconstruction after the fire. His own sketches appear throughout the exhibition, depicting the restoration of the



Jonathan Martin, Minster arsonist

nave's roof. John Varley's sketch, 'York Minster from North West' of 1803 was vital to the restoration.

The most striking work is by Edward Lindley. His 'Portrait of Jonathan Martin', 1829, instantly captures your attention when you enter the room. Martin's stern angular face imprints in your visual memory alongside his quotation: "Your great Minsters and churches will come rattling down upon your guilty heads." Lindley paints him with an austere countenance, reflecting his 'mania'. While Martin's own ink sketch of Samson slaying a lion hangs opposite, his bold contours and lack of depth are inconsistent with the intricacies of the architectural sketches. The exhibition is surprisingly diverse, and certainly worth a visit.

WHAT'S ON

Theatre Royal:

Wuthering Heights
Until
June 23

Dansopolis
June 26

Birmingham Royal
Ballet
June 29-30

Grand Opera House:

Beauty and the Beast
June 19-30

Other Side Comedy Club:

Edinburgh Review
Steve Williams and Matt Kershin
24th June

Drama Barn:

Daisy Pulls it Off/The Children's Hour
Week 9

Open Drama: Musicals Night
Week 10



More reviews online at www.nouse.co.uk

Theatre Reviews

While the skies open around her, **Amy Scott** enjoys some open-air Shakespeare

There are a number of things that signal a bad start as far as theatre is concerned; someone with giant hair sitting in front of you or a large bag of excessively wrapped sweets being opened a few rows behind spring to mind, and now we can add being advised by cast members to climb over an iron fence to gain access to a venue to the list. After such inauspicious beginnings, things were not looking up for Sam Hanna's production of *The Tempest* in the Minster Residence Gardens, as threats of heavy rain persisted in the run up to their opening night.

However, having arrived in the gardens through the more traditional route, things began to look up. A group of spirits led by Ariel (Lauren Clancy) filled the space with harmonious song as the audience took their seats, setting the tone for what could have been a mystical and haunting evening. The storm sequence that began the play was cleverly handled through the use of a rope attached between two trees and thunder claps made by sheets of metal hit with rocks, which unfortunately fell a lot shorter than the real winds. The arrival on stage of Prospero, played by

the commanding James Duckworth, suggested that it would be a truly enjoyable show. And then it rained. And it rained. And it rained a little harder. Duckworth, impressively, was still audible, but Miranda (Tamsin Urquhart) was entirely drowned out. At this point, unfortunately, the first night was called off, and the audience left the Minster Gardens unfulfilled and rather damp.

Take two. On the first day of the week when the rain seemed less than incessant, Hanna attempted a successful opening for the Saturday matinee, with some showers during the interval but overall much drier. Picking up where we left off, Duckworth made an engaging Prospero, and Urquhart, although she could still be louder, carried Miranda well. William Seaward made a fine Gonzalo, and the pairing of Antonio and Sebastian (played by Alex Forsyth and Ed Duncan Smith respectively) was understated yet still comic. The biggest strength in this production, and the most original touch, was Hanna's presentation of the spirits occupying the island. Ferdinand carried them as logs during his toils, they presented themselves as chairs and tables and performed cheerleader-style for-



James Duckworth and Lauren Clancy in *The Tempest*

mations along with Ariel during their mischievous manipulation of the shipwrecked sailors. The comic trio of Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban (Sam Hinton, Nick Wright and Alex Wright) started off shakily but quickly found their feet, and with their characters' increasing drunkenness came increasingly solid and funny performances.

The bad weather, always a risk

with outdoor performances, was a real shame for audience and cast but the quality of the production easily shone through the rain. Unfortunately the quality was marred somewhat by the venue and issues from last year's Shakespeare production were again apparent. The Minster bells interrupted every 15 minutes and almost constantly during a wedding on the Saturday. The stage backed on to the city walls which saw a parade of tourists, Dom Joly impersonators and, particularly hilariously, soldiers from a medieval re-enactment club. The performances were fantastic and deserved a setting where they could be properly appreciated, not consistently interrupted.

The Tempest will continue showing in the York Minster Residence Gardens until June 21. For more outdoor theatre before the end of term, check out Park Productions's *The Importance of Being Earnest* on June 19 and 21 at 7pm and June 23 and 24 at 2.30pm, as well as William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, June 20 and 22-24 at 7pm. Showing at the Bandstand, Rowntree Park. Tickets available from Your:Shop, or York Theatre Royal Box Office.



**PRODUCTION: TRAINSPOTTING
VENUE: THE DRAMA BARN
REVIEW: RAF SANCHEZ**

★★★★★

Simon Maeder and Alex Wright's production of *Trainspotting* provided a striking and visceral piece of theatre. Alex Forsyth's performance gave balance in his dualistic role as the witty, amused and philosophical Renton. The strong physical element to his acting heightened this distinction.

Andy Birnie gave a strong performance as the ambitious Sick Boy, playing impressively with the character's doomed sense of invincibility. Lucy Whitby was both vulnerable and thrillingly assertive as Amy. Will Seaward captured Begby's theatricality and limitless self-importance but was occasionally lacking in real menace.

The production's only set was a tyre hanging a few

inches above the ground, but through clever usage and convincing interaction it became a bed, a table, a toilet and most importantly an abstract platform for the highs and lows of drug use and the viciousness of human life.

A highly-choreographed drug sequence, in which Renton, Sick Boy and Amy are awash in a sea of gentle colours, was particularly impressive. The Barn was plunged into pitch blackness, with only the pinpricks of lit cigarettes visible. The lights showed the three characters staggering and barely able to interact.

Overall a powerful portrayal of the realities of drug use that forcibly reminded the audience that, before the film, there was in fact a play.



**PRODUCTION: JOURNEY'S END
VENUE: DRAMA BARN
REVIEW: HELEN CITRON**

★★★★☆

A traditional rendering of R.C. Sheriff's 1928 play *Journey's End* got off to a shaky start. However, the cast soon found their feet and the audience was transported into the trenches of World War One.

The set was in traverse, providing immediacy and intimacy, and emphasising the truly claustrophobic trench conditions.

The play was filled with men on the edge, whose proximity to each other caused tension. Particularly effective was Jonathan Kerridge-Phipps's portrayal of Hibbert, suffering from neuralgia and on the verge of breakdown. Sam Hinton's embittered Stanhope, struggling to keep control by constantly numbing himself with whisky, was also

impressive.

The confined space of the trench highlighted the men's stoicism and the tenderness of their friendships. Ollie Jones's controlled portrayal of Osbourne provided contrast to Stanhope, despite lacking expression.

The emotional climaxes of the play came in the scenes between childhood friends Raleigh (Tom Powis) and Stanhope. Towards the end, when the awaited raid finally arrived and bombs whizzed overhead, it would have been easy to be over-the-top.

However, both parts were played sensitively, with what was left unsaid being equally important. Overall, the play explored universal themes on a very human level.



**PRODUCTION: THE TARTUFFE
VENUE: DRAMA BARN
REVIEW: NICKY WOOLF**

★★★★☆

Jamie Wilkes's self-written adaptation of Moliere's classic French farce is a hilarious romp through the grotesque world of performance and belief on a sumptuous and intriguing set.

The story tells of Orgon, a rich actor (Dominic Allen), who takes in a holy man, Tartuffe (Nik Morris), with disastrous (but hilarious) consequences. Tartuffe is no holy man, however, but a confident trickster.

Stellar supporting performances were given by Fran Trewin and Matt Springett, who displayed a breathtaking versatility, switching between roles seemingly without pause, and Nik Morris was perfectly arrogant in his mischievous portrayal of the malevolent fraudster. Allen's

Orgon stole the show, however, with all the magnificent and opulent theatricality and sudden, violent anger of Lawrence Olivier playing a Shakespearean prince.

Wilkes's script brims with references and titbits for the audience to unpack; Tartuffe's biblical version of *The Lord of the Rings* was particularly clever, and had the audience in stitches.

The farce gained momentum from the cast's ability to ad-lib, and the play was buoyed-up by the tremendous energy of the performers. Only a few awkward moments jarred with the naturalistic flow of dialogue and these were swiftly obliterated by the fizzy vivacity that abounded. A stunning success for both directors and cast.

MusicPreviews

SAM NOBLE

'When I'm sixty-four...'



Parents never understand you. When I first started listening to hardcore punk and metal I nervously put a CD on my stereo, filling my room with desperate screaming, jagged guitars and thundering drums. I loved it and still do. Yet, the reason I remember it so clearly was my mum's reaction as she crept upstairs—all furrowed brow, anguished look and hesitant steps. "What's wrong with you?" she asked, with trepidation, clearly at odds with the hardcore scene. What's weird though, is that mum herself encountered perturbed reactions from her folks as she spun Earth, Wind & Fire on her record player. "It's just thud-thud-thud", they lamented, and so on. It got me wondering if I would ever react in, as it seemed at the time, such a misinformed way to great music.

I kind of hope so and relish the thought that when the music my grandchildren have streamed into their heads evokes the same reaction in me: misunderstanding, confusion and a strong dislike. The reason I think my grandparents don't like Napalm Death or Pendulum is not necessarily its heaviness, melody or rhythm, but its inconceivable tenure as 'music' when they were our age. Bill Hailey & The Comets, the founders of what became rock and roll—that mutable, yet eternal genre—were, in their time, considered subversive, heavy and dangerous due to the sexual implications their songs apparently contained. The point is that now, to our modern ears, this music is considered tame, polite even, in comparison to our contemporary musical insurgents: Marilyn Manson, to name one of many.

Our ears have been subjected to years of indie, metal, grime, punk and all of the other subsidiary rock offshoots. My theory is that there is nothing contained in music to actually cause a generational dislike except what we are used to. How music sounds is often dependant on when you hear it. This both fascinates and terrifies me, because as a listener of all sorts of music (if you can coax a note from a cheese roll, I'll probably buy your album), I wonder if I'll stubbornly stick to the music I love today. Will I despise my children's music, failing to understand its worth the way our folks do?

But that's why teenagers and us early 20-somethings are the demographic all A&R men watch hawk-like to discern what music style will garner them their next squillion-dollar profit. They then engage in a ruthless labelling process, contorting these once innovative styles into 'scenes'—just like rock and roll became in the '50s, psychedelia in the '60s, Britpop in the '90s and perhaps emo in the '00s.

Then again, I welcome with open arms, and even a cuppa-soup style hug, the idea of music so unfathomable and inconceivable to me at an elder age. Whatever the next genre we embrace and our parents convulse at (bugger me if I know what it sounds like), nevertheless, barring all hip replacement-induced complications, you can certainly expect me, with furrowed brows and a few anguished looks, to still have a valiant stab at embracing it—however hard that may be. "When I get older, losing my hair, many years from now..."

SHOW: THE FALL
VENUE: THE RITZ, MANCHESTER
PREVIEW: ROBIN SEATON
DATE: 01/07/07

★★★★☆

What better way to celebrate your first day in your new house than by going to see The Fall? At least you'll know there's someone more mean-spirited, sour-faced and downright miserable than your new landlord. This man is, of course, Mark E. Smith – it seems unlikely that he'd clean the mould off your ceiling or fix the boiler, but he just might play the best gig of the summer. That, or he'll sack the band halfway through and play with just him and 'yer granny on bongos'. Either way, it'll still be The Fall, and the effect will be something similar to being harangued by an erudite tramp who appears to have hypnotized an incredibly tight garage rock band into following him everywhere, except that they keep leaving when he throws chairs at them.

The Fall's legendarily frequent line-up changes (43 members in 30 years, across 80 albums) have now been codified into Smith's squad rotation system, so where once anyone could have turned up on stage, Smith and his new wife Elena Poulou (on keyboards) are supplemented by a selection of guitarists, bassists and drummers for Smith to choose from, depending on which of his players haven't walked out on him or been punched by him recently.

Smith recently threatened to sue Franz Ferdinand and Bloc Party for nicking his ideas, while simultaneously damning them as



Mark: sans "yer granny on bongos"

sounding nothing like The Fall. Famous fans who definitely won't put in an appearance in Manchester include Pavement (definitely), Bo Diddley (probably apocryphally) and Wu-Tang Clan's the RZA (even more probably apocryphally). Unusually, the band will be supported by readings from a new collection of short stories, *Perverted by Language*, inspired by their music.

Regardless of who turns up, and barring random accidents, this show should see some great performances of the songs off their new album, *Reformation Post-T. L. C.* To finish with a John Peel quote (obligatory to all pieces on The Fall); "Apparently there are some people out there who don't love The Fall. I spurn them with my toe."

SHOW: BRIGHT EYES
VENUE: THE ACADEMY, BIRMINGHAM
PREVIEW: STEPHEN WILLIAMS
DATE: 06/07/07

★★★★☆

Seven albums in, and the boy that has made a career out of sonically working out his heartbreak and insecurities has most recently, and bizarrely, found his inspiration for taking to the studio in a community of psychics based in Florida. The resulting record, named *Cassadaga* after the spiritualist camp which led to its inception, is surprisingly Bright Eyes's most commercially polished work, and a prime slab of country-tinged goodness.

Now the mastermind behind the moniker Conor Oberst is headed to our shores with string players in tow for a brief stint in what is an increasingly rare visit to the UK. Displaying a desire to break away from the cast of 'singer songwriter that emo kids can relate to', his newest incarnation as honky-tonk revivalist with Colonel Sander's wardrobe should provide an adequate spectacle to match the new music. The uniquely fragile voice which has come to define him has taken on a more powerful edge of late, and the lyrical self-flagellation of his earlier work has been externalised to take aim at nefarious governments and the naughtiness of capitalism.

Overall the signs are Oberst is in an extroverted mood, which bodes well for his live show. Although it's a tad far, for fans, this chance to witness his 'when I was little I wanted to be a cowboy' phase should be an unmissable barn dance.

ON THE UP: KATE NASH

Being dubbed 'the next big thing' by the queen of cheeky London-accented pop, Lily Allen, is both a blessing and a curse, especially when you peddle a rather similar collection of memorably-chorused gems. A blessing because all of Lily Allen's fans will automatically go out and buy your album, regardless of all other reviews. A curse because all of Allen's detractors, and there are quite a few out there, will automatically lump you in with her, forever referring to your output as "that song by the girl who's like Lily Allen".

Both of these responses are unfair to Kate Nash, the recipient of Miss Allen's accolade, because her music is both remarkably different to songs like 'Smile' and 'LDN' and, frequently, better. With recent release 'Foundations' receiving regular radio play, you may have heard how she eschews the beatsy ska pop and slightly lazily spoken vocals that define Allen, while keeping her own character-led songwriting and funny lyrics. This allows her to rise above the cheeky-cockney genre, with its roots in market stalls and Chas 'n' Dave (most recently defined by The Streets, Allen and even Hadouken!), to apply for a place in the

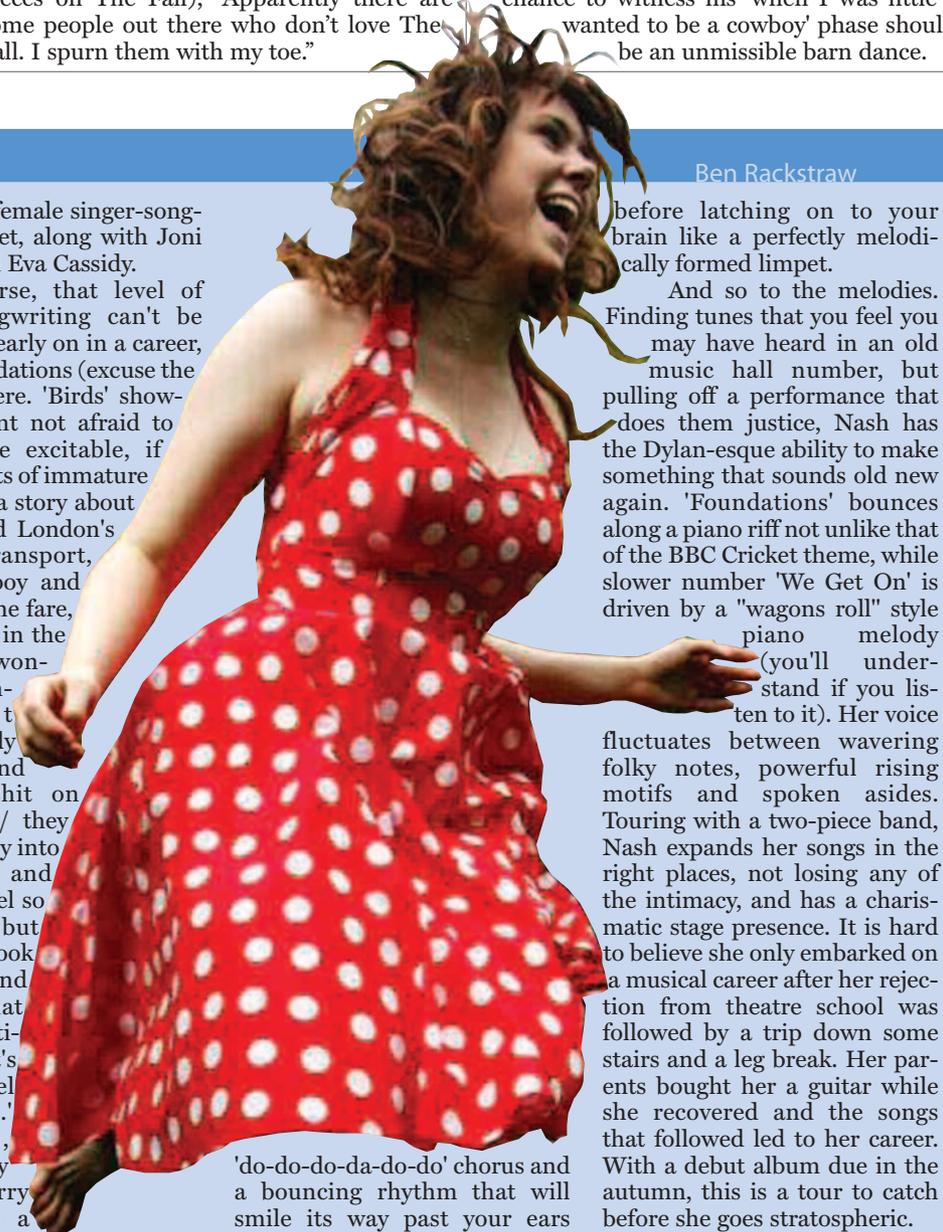
respectable female singer-songwriter bracket, along with Joni Mitchell and Eva Cassidy.

Of course, that level of quality songwriting can't be expected so early on in a career, but the foundations (excuse the pun) are there. 'Birds' showcases a talent not afraid to embrace the excitable, if crude, aspects of immature young love: a story about racing round London's public transport, meeting a boy and not paying the fare, culminating in the dizzyingly wonderful complex 'birds can fly so high, and they can shit on your head, / they can almost fly into your eye and make you feel so scared, / but when you look at them and you see that they're beautiful, / that's how I feel about you.' Elsewhere, the insanely catchy 'Merry Happy' has a

Ben Rackstraw

before latching on to your brain like a perfectly melodically formed limpet.

And so to the melodies. Finding tunes that you feel you may have heard in an old music hall number, but pulling off a performance that does them justice, Nash has the Dylan-esque ability to make something that sounds old new again. 'Foundations' bounces along a piano riff not unlike that of the BBC Cricket theme, while slower number 'We Get On' is driven by a "wagons roll" style piano melody (you'll understand if you listen to it). Her voice fluctuates between wavering folkly notes, powerful rising motifs and spoken asides. Touring with a two-piece band, Nash expands her songs in the right places, not losing any of the intimacy, and has a charismatic stage presence. It is hard to believe she only embarked on a musical career after her rejection from theatre school was followed by a trip down some stairs and a leg break. Her parents bought her a guitar while she recovered and the songs that followed led to her career. With a debut album due in the autumn, this is a tour to catch before she goes stratospheric.



'do-do-do-da-do-do' chorus and a bouncing rhythm that will smile its way past your ears

MusicReviews

SINGLES REVIEWS

ARTIST: KLAXONS
SINGLE: IT'S NOT OVER YET

With their new single, it seems that the Klaxons are trying to blow away the irritating 'New Rave' label once and for all; 'It's Not Over Yet' is a cover of an actual rave tune by '90s dance act Grace, done in the style of an indie band. This incredible post-modern new-wave-new-rave turnaround has the potential to turn the universe inside-out, annihilating scenesters and civilians alike. Fortunately it is the Klaxons' weakest single yet. The world is safe for another week.

ARTIST: ROBIN THICKE
SINGLE: LOST WITHOUT YOU

'The first white artist to top the American R'n'B charts since George Michael!' pants the press release. This probably says more about the state of American R'n'B than it does about Robin Thicke's acoustic guitar-infected ballad. This is a track that even the compilers of Justin Timberlake's album tracks would give one listen and reject for being a bit too cringeworthy and syrupy. Still, the Americans love it, and your girlfriend might just agree with them.

ARTIST: HADOUKEN!
SINGLE: LIQUID LIVES

If you haven't heard Hadouken!'s brand of London flavoured dance-punk then you really should make the effort to. Despite agreeing with Popjustice last week that nobody outside East London will ever buy one of their records, this is the kind of hyperactive, one-riff dance tune that should be soundtracking your summer, playing as you hop on and off public transport on your way to a new city and a houseparty with someone you met at university only this year.

ARTIST: BON JOVI
SINGLE: MAKE A MEMORY

This kind of song title is a gift when writing reviews. 'I want to make a memory not to buy the new Bon Jovi album!' one could quip, even leaving room for a bit of 'I want to make a memory to cover up the one about listening to this song!' But that would just be lazy, and anyway this is only a response to the awful Snow Patrol material we in the UK have been exporting to the states recently. 'Call that a heart wrenching ballad?' Jon Bon is saying, 'I'll give you a ballad!'

Singles this week were reviewed by
Ben Rackstraw

NOUSE music podcast

We chat to Kate Nash, plus singles reviews and all the unsigned music your dear hearts could desire



BAND: DAVID WARD MACLEAN
ALBUM: ACTS OF FAITH
REVIEW: SARA SAYEED
DATE: NOW - SOMEWHERE IN YORK

★★★★☆

You may not have heard the name, but you've almost certainly heard the man—and live, at that. For those screwing up their faces and spluttering, "Whaa?" or grunting, "Huh?", let me give your memories a little joggle. Apart from the hermits, most of us have frequented Evil Eye or at least bumbled around York at some point this year. In the eager trottings and sozzled toddlings to and from Mojito-haven, the less cocktail-saturated may have noticed some acoustic delights serenading their Stonegate meanderings.

Yes, David Ward Maclean is the somewhat furry, resolutely shaggy-haired troubadour of York busking fame. Damned to sporadic bouts of fleeting appreciation and admiration as us civilians saunter by, Dave has finally consolidated some of those poignant melodies that have made winter



EVENT: THE CRIBS
VENUE: THE REFECTORY, LEEDS
REVIEW: MIKE MCGOVERN
DATE: 10/06/07

★★★★☆

This was always going to be a good gig; The Cribs provide simple, unpretentious rock and roll and here they showed it off in abundance. This was, after all, the last night of the UK tour announcing their third album, as close to their home town of Wakefield as the circuit would allow. Then, to the slightly unusual strains of Whitney Houston's 'I Want To Dance With Somebody', more accustomed to being played in Ziggy's than as the entrance song for a rock band, The Cribs took to the stage.

The band's energy is infectious. Ryan Jarman's endlessly bouncing figure was silhouetted against flashes of strobe lighting during the first number, exciting the crowd to such an extent it took him a good minute to silence them before launching into the raucous, wrenched chords of favourite 'Mirror Kissers'.

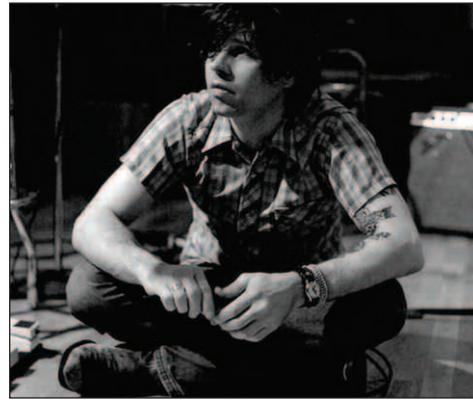
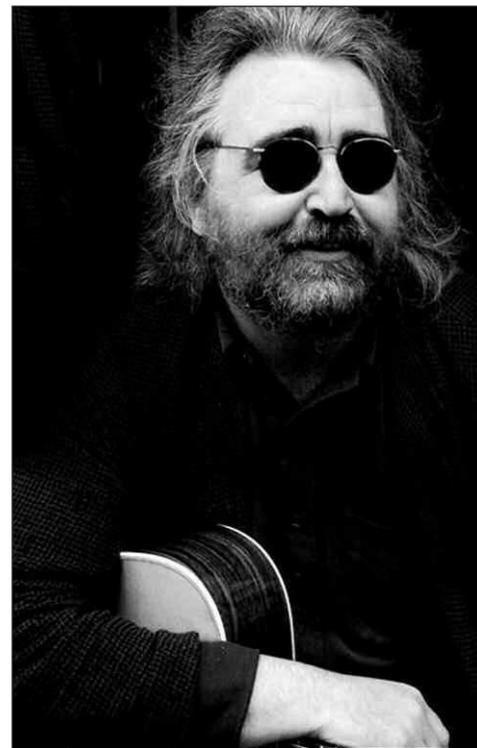
In truth, the middle order lagged slightly; new songs perhaps didn't live up to some of the band's earlier work. Or maybe it was the searingly unbearable heat of the venue in mid-June. Nevertheless, The Cribs' energy didn't falter; and despite not even indulging an encore, the stage diving and guitar smashing antics sufficed to round off the evening and keep the near exhausted audience hanging on their every move despite the mingling sweat. Proper good.

nights more bearable and even rendered York's summer dusks somewhat ethereal.

Acts of Faith is the beautifully pared down 12 track album, comprised of just Dave and his six- or 12-string. Dave has stripped music back to its bucolic folk basics, demonstrating that you don't actually need the latest synthesiser to create such stirringly rich harmonies that make you forget there's only one instrument actually at work.

Described by *Sandman* magazine as "like Jose Gonzales but with stronger tunes and more flexibility", the tracks do indeed share Gonzales's brooding solemnity, yet still always manage to skirt just the right side of desolate, inviting contemplation without imposing any gloom. The album is a mere titbit of Maclean's rumoured 1000-song repertoire and the record is only covertly flitting about York's ether.

Decidedly anti-commercialism, apparently Dave was bullied into recording this little gem. If you can't fasten your mitts on it and your appetite has been whetted by his Myspace samples, swing by the Basement Bar on July 6 to hear him support James Apollo or even, after that next French Martini, take a little pause and have a listen.



EVENT: RYAN ADAMS
VENUE: EASY TIGER
REVIEW: SAM NOBLE
DATE: 26/06/07

★★★★☆

Ryan Adams is often criticised for his lack of editing skills, to which the three albums released in 2005 and his 18 'joke' hip-hop albums posted on his website attest. So for a veteran Adams fan, waiting a year for an album is an eternity. Thankfully, *Easy Tiger* is worth the wait, while lazy critics coo over his return to form, implying he lost his songwriting during the years he's actually been perfecting his craft. As Ryan says, "I ignore the people that say I'm at fault for being a hard worker. It's completely unreasonable."

Easy Tiger sounds like a hard working song writer getting even better. Recorded with analogue equipment, which lends a '70s warmth, the lyrics are more heartfelt and laboured, showing a thoughtful side that Adams's year of sobriety can only have sharpened. 'Goodnight Rose' opens the album with warm, crunchy guitars and 'Halloween Head' follows the well-defined guitar interplay that his backing band the Cardinals have developed with excellent guitarist Neal Casal.

"It's a bunch of individual poems, really. I still feel even unfamiliar with this record," muses Adams with characteristic wistfulness. It is an exceptional and beautiful album, perhaps his most accessible since *Gold*, yet still a bold artistic statement of individuality no one can quite convey the way Adams can.



EVENT: STYLUS WAX:ON FESTIVAL
VENUE: LEEDS
REVIEW: DUNCAN PELHAM
DATE: 26/05/07

★★★★☆

Simian Mobile Disco, lively electronic outfit risen from the ashes of the now defunct Simian, wander onstage, only momentarily mistaken for a couple of techies. The electro-boppers, who gave us the breezy summer smash 'We Are Your Friends', twiddle around with their giant analogue synthesiser, emanating infinite geek chic.

Tonight in Leeds, fluorescent crowds of students dance frenetically to an amalgam of Simian Mobile Disco's remixes and their incoming debut album, *Attack Decay Sustain Release*. Unfortunately, the systematic album play-through renders the set about as exciting as bunging a giant CD player onstage and jabbing the play button. Granted, the tunes are addictively danceable—the duo deftly release beats and distort noises, animating an elated crowd.

Next up is German Electro-Tech artist, Boys Noize. They kick off with gnarly growls and synth-infused guitar crunches, finally dropping into wonderful heavy basslines and grinding techno. Heavy and dirty, it will by no means appeal to everyone. The darker option, Boys Noize offer real stompers and twisted remixes, including Rapture's classic 'House of Jealous Lovers'. As the clear victors of the beat battle, they manage to eschew the lazy stage antics of Simian Mobile Disco and craft a winning set.

Film Reviews

DAVID COATES



Looking to the future, home and abroad...

The York Filmmaking Society will be producing two impressively ambitious pieces in the Autumn term. *The Heist* is an old-school break-in flick, whilst *Scarlett Obsession* is a dark comedy about a serial killer who finds love. The latter, inspired by thrillers like *American Psycho* and the snappy direction of *Shaun of the Dead*, boasts a tight script and some black-as-hell comedy. Casting is currently in progress, and shooting starts next term. *The Heist* is being shot now, and screened this autumn. It follows a group of skilled criminals breaking into a mysterious, high-security building. Featuring a helicopter/skydiving shot, this is possibly the biggest York student film yet. Both projects are large-scale and require extensive crew, particularly in the art/make-up department; to get involved, check out their respective Facebook groups.

A compelling concept lies behind the upcoming *Paris, je t'aime*. Writers Tristan Carné and Emmanuel Benbihy weave a film spanning 20 different five-minute shorts - each set in a different arrondissement - into a single narrative whole. It may sound like a cheap gimmick, but the light-footedness of the movie not only allows individual freedom on the part of the various creative teams, but for the innovative potential of cinema as a genre. And Paris is pretty cool. Featuring (amongst others) Gus Van Sant, The Coens, Gerald Depardieu, Wes Craven, and Alfonso Cuarón behind the camera; and Willem Dafoe, Nathalie Portman, Steve Buscemi, Juliette Binoche et al in front, *Paris, je t'aime* is released June 29.

Perhaps not as artistically challenging, but just as exciting, is the new release from Judd Apatow, *Knocked Up*. From the pretty awful title—and his track record; *Anchorman*, *40 Year Old Virgin*, *Talladega Nights*—caution would generally be excused. The critical response State-side, however, is nothing short of phenomenal. Abandoning the loose, sketch-based format of his previous work, Apatow has approached his subject matter - an accidental pregnancy - and his characters - an aging dropout and an aspiring TV presenter - with subtlety and care. Playing more like a drama that just so happens to be hilarious, *Knocked Up* could cement Apatow as a fully-fledged master of off-beat comedy. Having already challenged *Pirates of the Caribbean* in the US box office, it will have its chance in the UK on August 24.

FILM: OCEAN'S THIRTEEN
 DIRECTOR: STEVEN SODERBERGH
 STARRING: GEORGE CLOONEY
 BRAD PITT
 MATT DAMON
 REVIEW: AMY SCOTT
 RUNTIME: 122 MIN

★★★★☆

Ocean's Thirteen, Steven Soderbergh's third installment of the *Ocean's* franchise, lines up alongside a number of blockbusters to hit our screens this summer, and is set to walk the usual summertime line of critical hatred alongside massive box office takings. The summer without blockbusters would be like the pre-Oscars season without gorgeous actresses uglying up - it just wouldn't feel right. However, in recent years the ideas pool for the blockbuster seems to be a little shallow; we've done all the comics, we've done all the remakes and we're done with Bruce Willis, so this year audiences are left with sequels.

After disappointing outings from the makers of *Spiderman* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*, a good show from George Clooney and his gang of overly-attractive comen is needed to remind audiences of the halcyon days before movies were

based on fairground rides. And, thankfully, the all-star cast have pulled it off again. Danny Ocean (Clooney) and his increasingly numerous associates are back in Vegas for their latest outing, and are out for revenge after a dodgy business deal leaves group father-figure and all round nice-crook Reuben Tishkoff (Elliot Gould) bedridden after a stroke. The subject of their revenge, Willie Bank (Al Pacino), is opening a new casino and hotel, which the group plan to defraud in their usual incomprehensible manner. Highlights include the Malloy brothers (Casey Affleck and Scott Caan) accidentally causing a revolution at a factory in Mexico, Matt Damon managing to be the ugly thick one, and the mild improvement of Don Cheadle's British accent.

Ocean's Thirteen succeeds where other blockbusters fail because the makers so clearly understand what makes a film entertaining. The franchise is the best modern example of quality cinema for pure entertainment, it hits all the right buttons from the all-star cast to the swinging soundtrack, and with plenty of laughs to boot. It is also, importantly, an undeniably well made film. The 24-style split screen shots, the shaky camerawork and the security footage all aid the excitement and sense of secrecy and surveillance. The level of cliché works better



here than in *Ocean's Twelve*, mostly because of their return to Las Vegas. *Ocean's* is over the top at the best of times, a style that suits the high-flying casinos much more than the riverbanks of Amsterdam, and the numerous *Godfather* references coupled with Pacino's arrival in the cast make the film a joy for film-buffs and laymen alike.

The *Ocean's* franchise is subject to a lot of cynicism, not least because of Clooney and

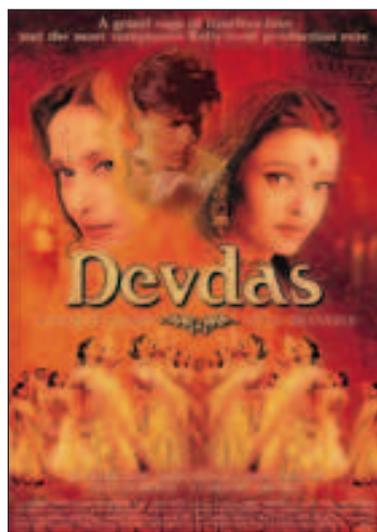
Soderbergh's honesty when admitting that they are made primarily as a financial exercise - the profits directly fund the pair's more challenging productions such as *Syriana* and *Good Night and Good Luck*. However, it is arguably because of the fact that this franchise, with pure entertainment as its goal, is made by filmmakers with their hearts in more challenging cinema, that makes *Ocean's Thirteen* such a success.

FILM: DEVDAS
 DIRECTOR: SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI
 STARRING: SHAHRUKH KHAN
 ASHWARYA RAI
 MADHURI DIXIT
 REVIEW: ANJLI RAVAL
 RUNTIME: 182 MIN

★★★★☆

Set in the 1940s, this Romeo-and-Juliet-style romance is a story about childhood sweethearts Devdas (Khan) and Parvati—known as Paro—(Rai), whose plans for marriage are thwarted. Devdas' parents, who feel that their status is far superior to that of Paro's, forbid the marriage. Paro's mother feels insulted and vows to marry her daughter into an even wealthier family than that of her sweetheart. The lovers are separated; Devdas, tormented by his loss, resorts to alcohol for comfort, even rejecting the unflinching efforts of the beautiful courtesan Chandramukhi (Dixit), while Paro, though living a life of luxury after marrying an even more affluent suitor, longs for her lost love in her emotionally hollow new life. In his desire to see her once more, Devdas makes his way to her mansion, disregarding all societal restrictions, bringing the film to a poignant conclusion.

Devdas, which made it to the Cannes Film Festival in 2002, is based on the most widely-read novel in India, and is the most expensive Bollywood film ever



made, evident by the grand mansions and exquisite, authentic costumes. Do not be put off by the sheer length of the film, clocking in at over three hours; the beautifully choreographed song and dance pieces, together with the universally tragic story of passion and lost love, constitute a film that is a truly remarkable addition to world cinema. Shah Rukh Khan and the most sought-after actress in Bollywood, Ashwarya Rai, make a superb pair, whose chemistry makes the story immediately believable and engaging.

The film cost around \$12 million to make, and took over nine months to shoot, and is in Hindi with English subtitles. It has been a roaring success with international audiences and is a great starting point for anyone interested in modern Indian cinema.

CLASSIC FILM: NIGHTWATCH
 DIRECTOR: TIMUR BEKMAMBE-TOV
 STARRING: KONSTANTIN KHABENSKY
 MARIYA POROSHINA
 REVIEW: ALBI FURLAN
 RUNTIME: 92 MINS

★★★★☆

Nightwatch, despite a well-trodden fantasy plot, dazzles with its visuals and sophisticated use of special effects. Though the story liberally uses many time-tested elements of the genre, the events of the movie are never predictable.

The story concerns the mystical *Nightwatch* and *Daywatch*, opposing sides of 'The Others', people born with supernatural talents who choose which side to serve. The two factions police each other in the truce to their eternal war until, as prophecy states, the Great One will come and relight the conflict again, tipping the scales of victory in favour of the side he chooses. So far, so *Star Wars*.

In an all-star Russian cast, Khabenski plays Anton, an Other with clairvoyant powers, more curse than gift. Finding himself caught in the middle as the prophecy unfolds around him, Anton never seems unbelievable or invincible, Khabenski's performance portraying perfectly the man who is in too deep and wishes he wasn't.

It is the directing and visuals, however, that make this movie such



a refreshing watch. Bekmambetov takes the viewer on a rollercoaster ride in the gritty side of Moscow, and does so with style. The camera is dynamic, zooming around the set, almost a character itself, shaking in fear and searching for details in the story and characters.

CGI is varied, but used with parsimony, highlighting certain plot details or to see through the eyes of the Others, especially in their own dark dimension, 'The Gloom'. And not since the first Matrix movie has 'bullet-time' been used so effectively, dramatically impressive on each occasion. The soundtrack, a little on the heavy-metal side, carries the same élan.

Nightwatch will captivate you with its flair and artistry, proving that even a middling plot can be salvaged by technical originality. Take heed, Tarantino.

Food & Drink Reviews



WHICH CEREAL BAR?

Although I am one of those lucky arts students who doesn't often have to get out of bed for the dreaded 9.15 am lecture or seminar, on the rare occasion that this does happen, I often used to find myself sleeping through the alarm, waking up at 8.45 and barely having time to change out of my pyjamas and into a pair of jeans, let alone eat a decent breakfast. If it hadn't been for cereal bars, the people sitting next to me in my seminars would have had to put up with the dreadful rumbling coming from my stomach as I blushed apologetically, wishing I had had time to have that essential piece of toast and Marmite before leaving the house. The problem is, with so many to choose, how do you know which cereal bar is the best?

CEREAL BAR: NUTRIGRAIN STRAWBERRY

Nutrigrain bars come in a variety of flavours, but strawberry is always the flavour that I'm drawn to. The label claims that they contain 8% actual strawberries, but I'm not convinced that you can actually taste them, although this doesn't really matter. The oats are a change from the usual crispy texture of cereal bars and overall this is a tasty and surprisingly filling alternative to breakfast.

CEREAL BAR: GO AHEAD FOREST FRUITS YOGHURT BREAKS

These biscuit-type bars taste much too good to be the healthy snack they claim to be. Two biscuits in a pack, with sultanas and a forest fruit-flavoured yoghurt topping (which you can be forgiven for thinking resembles white chocolate), leave you feeling very satisfied indeed. The problem is they are so delicious that you'll find yourself wanting another.

CEREAL BAR: COCO POPS

For the more sweet-toothed, Coco Pops have always been a good choice and if you feel the need for that chocolate hit first thing in the morning, this bar won't disappoint. Personally, I found this that little bit too chocolatey – if I wanted a sweet start to the day, I would simply reach for a much more satisfying bar of Dairy Milk.

CEREAL BAR: BLUEBERRY SPECIAL K

At only 90 calories, these are the healthiest of the bunch, but do they live up to the high expectations set by their delicious cereal counterpart? Although not quite as nice as a normal bowl of Special K, these bars aren't bad. They're slightly too sugary for my liking, but this is made up for by the delicious drizzling of yoghurt and fruity blueberries.

Written by Lauren Menzies

RESTAURANT: SIAM HOUSE
ADDRESS: GOODRAMGATE
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £9
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £3
REVIEW: LAUREN MENZIES

★★★★☆

The small entrance to Siam House (blink and you'll miss it) leads you upstairs to a charming restaurant situated above the hustle and bustle of busy Goodramgate. Having never tried Thai cuisine before, I was expecting there to simply be a list of curry dishes and the odd seafood platter. However, Siam House offers much more than this and it really was quite difficult for my fellow diners (my two housemates) and I to choose from the extensive list of poultry, pork, seafood, beef and curry dishes.

The food was served to us by waitresses wearing what I presume was authentic Thai dress, adding to the general ambience of the restaurant, which is decorated in a traditional Thai style. All we had to hope for was that the food was as authentic as the décor was.

RESTAURANT: LA TASCA
ADDRESS: BACK SWINEGATE
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £3.50
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £3
REVIEW: STACEY GO

★★★★☆



If you're looking for that perfect restaurant to spend a lazy summer's day in, La Tasca might just be it. With an outdoor rooftop terrace and offers such as 'tapas for a tenner', I just had to venture inside.

After much deliberation, I decided to order the paella de chorizo and was definitely not disappointed. Slightly spicy and bursting with a potent mix of Spanish seasonings, the paella was tasty and filling—a meal in itself. The chorizo served as a great finishing touch to an excellent dish.

La Tasca also proved their cold dishes were of the same high standard with the ensalada de pollo con pimientos, a salad combining chicken, spinach, avocado and peppers. Served together with the paella, the ensalada tempered the former's spiciness with a cool, refreshing taste.

However, the third dish—the gambas pil pil, king prawns sautéed in olive oil—was a disappointment. Although the prawns were fresh and tender, they arrived drowned in tasteless olive oil with pieces of garlic haphazardly thrown in for good measure.

Despite this, eating at La Tasca was a delightful experience, with the taste of the paella de chorizo and ensalada de pollo a welcome, exotic addition to a hot summer's day.

For starters, we decided to share a collection of appetizers, consisting of very delicious chicken satay with peanut sauce, spring rolls, some rather rubber-like fish cakes and some yummy prawn toasts (although I do wonder how much prawn was actually in them). Although quite satisfying—the chicken satay was as good as any I have ever tasted—I wasn't blown away by these choices, the fish cakes ruining it for me ever so slightly.

However, for the long-awaited main course, Siam House surpassed themselves. The sweet and sour duck was delicious and perfectly cooked; served with pineapple, tomatoes, peppers and onions, the extremely generous portion was exactly what I had hoped for. My fellow diners, similarly happy with their choice of duck with ginger, agreed wholeheartedly.

If you're in the mood for something a little different from your usual Chinese takeaway, Siam House could be just what you're looking for. With its authentic surroundings and delicious food, it is the perfect setting for a light dinner with friends. Even if you prefer the comfort of your own living room, you will be pleased to hear that this pleasant Thai restaurant now offers deliveries direct to your door. What more could you ask for?



RESTAURANT: MANA
ADDRESS: ST SAMPSON'S SQUARE
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £8
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £3.50
REVIEW: HELEN CITRON

★★★★☆



Summer has well and truly arrived, and one of the best aspects of this season is the luxury of al fresco dining. Not many places in town cater for pavement eating, apart from Mana, which not only has seats outside, but also an open shop-front to allow those seated inside to enjoy the warm weather. As I worked my way through a bottle of wine with some friends, surrounded by stone-washed walls and terracotta decorations, it was almost possible to believe I was actually in some sunny seaside location. I was not in York's St Samson's Square in May, but rather the cobbled streets of a sleepy Mediterranean village in the height of summer.

The restaurant describes its food as 'Greek-Med Cuisine'. The result is a menu boasting both traditional Greek foods, such as kebabs and moussaka, alongside more classical pizzas and pastas. My moussaka was delicately flavoured, better than some of the touristy dishes I've been unlucky enough to sample on authentic Greek Islands. However, the pasta was disappointing and bland, and one wonders why the management feels it necessary to have such a huge menu, instead of just specializing in good Greek cuisine.

The food may be hit-and-miss, but Mana is worth a try for a classier night out.

RESTAURANT: MELTON'S
ADDRESS: SCARCROFT ROAD
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £18
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £6
REVIEW: LOUISE BRYDGES

★★★★☆



Situated just outside the city walls, Melton's is a discreet and delightfully charming little restaurant that entices ravenously hungry students, such as myself, into its lair with its mouth-watering smells. The cosy, intimate interior with its soft lighting and scattered candles creates a lovely atmosphere to leisurely peruse the menu. In doing so, one immediately gets the sense that this restaurant is all about the food.

I chose the puff pastry with the new season's asparagus, chives and butter, followed by a breast of Gressingham duck with rhubarb and spice, local greens and potato gratin and for dessert, a crème brûlée. The meal was utterly delicious, everything was cooked to perfection and the combination of flavours was superb. My companion was also particularly impressed with the lager which (apparently) was not the usual stuff served in restaurants, but is from the local Sam Smith's brewery, and therefore a lot nicer.

Overall, this restaurant is really very good. It is also, however, very expensive. It's probably not ideal for the average, perhaps dwindling, student bank balance. It is, however, far more suited to the parents-visiting-York scenario, which I think is a rather good alternative.



Clockwise from top left: Playing at York Fibbers - Hell is for Heroes; Derwent's flagship charity event, Big D; James Duckworth takes on the role of Tony Blair; *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*

LIVEMUSIC

Wednesday June 20

Hell is for Heroes

Fibbers will play host to Disco Ensemble, Gavin Portland and Hell is for Heroes. Described as "an incendiary guitar-thrashing, maniacal live act", it must be worth seeing. Tickets: £10 OTD.

Wednesday June 27

The Envy Corps

Upbeat country-tinged rock and a ton of chest-bursting anthems - Midwesterners playing their guts out and hanging hearts on their guitars. Think brooding pop à la Guillemots or Radiohead. York Fibbers, Tickets: £6 OTD.

Monday July 2

Athlete

The London-based, indie rock band will kick off summer '07 and are sure to playing songs from their soon to be released album 'Beyond the Neighbourhood'. This UK only tour is their first performance for quite some time. Leeds Cockpit. Tickets: £15.

Friday June 29

The Voltz - Single Launch Party

The band's sound has been likened to the classic guitar bands of the 1990s, with the brute sonic aura and attitude of early Oasis, guitar riffs that are catchy and heavy in equal measure. Leeds Cockpit. Tickets: £4.

CAMPUSEVENTS

Saturday June 23

Woodstock

Held in Vanbrugh Paradise with promotional offers on drinks and food, 12 hours of live music and featuring 27 excellent campus bands. Performances also from JazzSoc, Pole Exercise Soc and Comedy Soc. Tickets: £3 OTD.

Thursday June 28

Big D

Featuring three bars, a BBQ, a beer tent, sumos, an inflatable slide, an ice cream van, a rodeo bull, a bouncy castle, candy floss, a bungee and a surf ride! Tickets: £18 from YOUR:SHOP or Derwent Bar.

Wednesday June 27

Summer Ball

York's Summer Ball is open to non-graduates for the first time ever. Held at York Racecourse with live performances from Ash and East17, there's also a free fair-ground. Tickets: £29 (ball only) from www.yusu.org/summerball.

Friday June 22

Athletic Union Dinner and Awards Night

A spectacular 3 course meal, presentations of individual and club awards and entertainment from The Goosehorns. More info: www.yusu.org/au. Tickets: £28 from AU office (includes free drink on arrival).

ART&PERFORMANCE

Wednesday June 20

Curator's Lunchtime Talk, York Art Gallery

Philippa Strang, Assistant Curator for Biology, talks about the seasonal developments of flowers and how artists such as Henri Fantin-Latour reflects them in his paintings. Starts at 12.30p.m. Free.

July 18 - 21

TONY! The Blair Musical, York Theatre Royal

A sharp satirical musical outlining the last 10 years of New Labour's government. Put on by University of York students, it promises to be a fantastic political comedy. Starts at 7.45p.m. Tickets: £10. (Students: £5)

June 21-23

Inspired by Art, York Theatre Royal

A light and emphatic look at the world of art performed by three Youth Theatre groups who have devised performances each based on a different piece of art. A unique double bill of performances every night. Starts at 7p.m. Tickets: £6. (Students: £5)

June 27 - 30

Peer Gynt, York Theatre Royal

Written by Henrik Ibsen and directed by Anthony Ravenhall, this is a modern retelling of the original 19th-century story. Tickets: £8. (Students: £5) Starts at 7.30p.m. every night, as well as 2p.m. matinees on 28 and 29 June.

CINEMA

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer
Released Friday June 15

The original cast return in a film which revolves around The Fantastic Four's discovery that they aren't the only super-powered beings in the universe. As a result they square off against the powerful Silver Surfer and the planet-eating Galactus.

Vacancy

Released Friday June 15

A dark and haunting thriller starring Luke Wilson and Kate Beckinsale, a young married couple who become stranded at an isolated motel and find hidden video cameras in their room. They soon realize that unless they escape, they'll be the next victims and stars of a snuff film.

Captivity

Released Friday June 22

Staring Elisha Cuthbert, this is a strikingly similar thriller in which a man and a woman awaken to find themselves captured in a cellar. As their kidnapper drives them psychologically mad, the truth about their horrific abduction is revealed.

Primeval

Released Friday June 8

A news team is sent to South Africa to capture and bring home a legendary 25-foot crocodile. Their difficult task turns potentially deadly when a warlord targets them for death. Given a mere one star by www.hollywood.com, this film is recommended to be seen for just how bad it is.