

## Roger Ballen

“Whatever painters do is a transformation of their mind. I don’t see photography as much different.”

**MUSE.**

# MUSE.

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The female-dominated world of performance art makes it difficult for men break in

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Art photographer Roger Ballen tells us how he creates rather than captures



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Top left to right: Luca Teuchmann, Virgin Emi, Jack Richardson  
Bottom left to right: James Hostford, Patrick Ford Photography



IMAGE: CHRISTINE TAN

## No strings attached

Former Singapore National Youth Orchestra violinist **Christine Tan** talks about the pressure of following a career in music

The **Singapore National Youth Orchestra** (SNYO) is a project under the Ministry of Education in Singapore which aims to cultivate the talent and passion of young Singaporean musicians. It puts up four main concerts a year, offers amazing opportunities which include playing in the best national venues, concerts and masterclasses with guest artists and, if we're very lucky, participating in international music festivals. It has close ties with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, whose members coach and conduct the SNYO. Ideally, it is supposed to groom the next generation of Singaporean musicians.

**When I was six, I saw a group of other small kids playing the violin and really wanted to do the same**, so I asked my parents if I could get lessons. No, I wasn't the kid forced to learn two instruments on top of 1000 extra classes, although stuff to that effect does happen, sadly.

**My most memorable experience was when we performed in Berlin** as part of the Young Euro Classic (a music festival). There's something about playing in a great concert and knowing it; the pieces are made new although they have been rehearsed a million times in part and whole. There is a hypersensitive connection to different members of the 100-odd piece orchestra, and a collective adrenaline rush that made us feel mighty especially when playing Tchaikovsky's 1812, even though we didn't have any live cannons. We also played Scheherazade, and when we were done with everything the entire hall gave us a very lengthy standing ovation (they seem to be quite generous with these in Europe) that continued even until we went outside to find the people dining at the restaurant opposite clapping and cheering for us. Some people say that the Berlin Phil are the best orchestra in the world because they play every concert like it's their last. It felt a bit like that that night.

**Violins typically have one of the more visually and aurally noticeable parts** in the orchestra, and can be described as its 'face', (though I believe all parts are equally challenging and important and will not stand for any kind of section snobbery.) We present melodies, fill out the higher registers at climaxes, inject playfulness, humour, sentimentality and a whole range of sound effects from shimmer to violent hacking, especially in more modern compositions.

**My closest friends in the orchestra are all going to study music.** I have two friends who got accepted into Julliard this year! A music career is a very, very tough decision to make anywhere, but especially in Singapore with its prag-

matic emphasis on economic success and where the arts industry isn't given mass support or audience. My peers have experimented with some options: doing gigs (unstable, no degree needed, unrewarding classical repertoire is what they want), teaching (money is alright but lacks performance opportunities), playing in orchestras, chamber groups etc. Bottom line being: you can only be a musician if you're brilliant, passionate, intensely hardworking, and a bit crazy. To be a soloist and make a career out of it is another level of insane difficulty, although not impossible. In its short history Singapore (and the SNYO) has produced a few success stories.

**It's a little hard to compare the University orchestra and the SNYO** because I've been in the UYSO for seven months but SNYO for seven years. UYSO tends to do exciting, ambitious repertoire and I like it, and it is definitely more relaxed.

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I also feel that being a university orchestra predominantly filled with music students, UYSO is more mature in some ways and makes music very intuitively without explicit directions from the conductor. I do miss the rigor of being in a national youth orchestra though. I miss the pressure to try harder again and again, the excellent and thorough guidance, the painstaking, detailed work put into playing not just the right notes but with the right expression and style. But Mahler 2 with UYSO was awesome stuff and I'm looking forward to more.

Interview by Deborah Lam

## Editor's note



### Muse Editor Deborah Lam nearly dies over Easter

The snow beneath my feet crunched with every tentative step, threatening to give way or worse, make me slip. A thick layer of fog had descended around me, creeping in, little by little, from a thin mist around my ankles to the deadly wave that engulfed me and made it impossible to see. As I walked along the precarious knife's edge of Snowdon's imposing cliffs with a sheer drop to my left, my vision started to spin as though I, in drunken stupor, had wandered the road less travelled.

Unfortunately (and also worryingly), this highly dramatic descriptive narrative is true. This actually happened during my Easter vacation when I decided that climbing Mount Snowdon in icy conditions would be better than a nice warm, relaxing holiday in Barcelona.

There's something about nearly plunging a little less than 1085m to your death that makes you realise what your life amounts to. They weren't lying when they said your life flashes in front of your eyes. Well, not quite since what was in front of my eyes was a vertical deathwish (I thought it might settle my vertigo and spinning vision if I faced the abyss full-on), but my 21 years did fly through my mind.

First, I thought about what would happen to my parents. Perhaps they'd finally get the dog they wanted to fill the daughter-shaped hole in their hearts. Then, sadly enough, I thought about the essay that I'd never get back. I toyed around with the idea about the marker thinking it was brilliant and the University publishing it in memory of me, but after the fantasy faded, my realistic, rational self took over and reasoned that it would probably just get another 2:1.

Finally, I started fretting about what would happen to Muse's production week if I died, and then realised what a sorry existence I had led up to that point.

So now, I will totally carpe diem and all that jazz. Spend more time with loved ones, read more beautiful literature and take more long walks just being one with the world. Atleast, after I spend six days in the office. But I hope you will enjoy Muse despite the near-death looming over this edition. Easter may be a time of rejuvenation, but I doubt I'd be able to be resurrected like Jesus on Easter Sunday.

### MUSE'S CULTURE CURRENCY

OUT

IN

#### The banjo

Despite an overwhelming successful few years and six Grammy nominations, Mumford and Sons have decided that the bango is now 'too mainstream'.

#### Generic synths

The band have ditched their unique folk sound and replaced it with synths and repetitive lyrics. I thought Coldplay already had electric drivell covered.

#### Jeremy Clarkson

Unless you've been living in a cave (or perhaps a dissertation-induced stupor) you've probably heard that Clarkson has been fired. Turns out the BBC don't care about petitions; if you punch someone, don't expect to keep your job.

#### Star Wars

The recent release of the newest trailer for the return of the classic sci-fi franchise was met with excited squeals in the Nouse office. Featuring the return of an older but still chiselled Harison Ford, the Star Wars hype is certainly gaining pace.

#### Jodi Picoult

The hype of her 'chick lit masquarading as the literary' has died down, and the world seems to have forgotten about her books that never fail to make you cry.

#### Shakespeare

With the Shakespeare Festival coming to York and experts agreeing that they've recently found a lost play by him, it seems like the Bard's making a comeback.

# Now you see him

Having achieved the highest grade in the secretive art of ninjutsu last year, **Jake Sharpstone** talks to Jack Richardson about assassins and the art of invisibility

**J**ake Sharpstone does not look like a man who could kill me in the blink of an eye. He greeted me at the front door of his home in Brighton, cradling his young daughter, looking like a thoroughly healthy and normal middle-aged man. However, in 2014, after more than 25 years of training, Sharpstone was awarded 15th Dan by Grandmaster Masaaki Hatsumi of the Bujinkan, the first modern organisation dedicated to the study of Ninjutsu. This art has been practiced for over 900 years by Japanese ninjas — covert agents and warriors whose duties included espionage, survival and assassination. Sharpstone is one of only about 50 individuals in the world who hold this highest rank of proficiency.

His apparent normality is by no means accidental. “I had new students turning up in black masks, thinking that they had to wear them. I used to say to them, ‘Go and walk out onto the street wearing that and see how well you blend in.’ What we learn is blending in and concealment, and that sort of garb is certainly not very useful in the daytime. What ninjas wear is one of the biggest misconceptions, because they would actually wear whatever was necessary in order to blend in, be that [as] a farmer, a musician or a courtier,” he tells me: “Even at night time, dark blue is actually a better colour because black stands out.”

The ability to hide in plain sight is one often associated with the ninja, but it points to a wider skill: “The first character of the word ‘ninja’ (忍) means ‘endurance,’” Sharpstone

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We try to learn from things that have been developed in the past, and add them together to make a whole

says. This comes particularly in the form of adaptability. As we step into his office, I notice an eclectic mix of LED lights and fittings, trappings of his profession, and dozens of weapons, ranging from padded sticks meant to represent swords to six-foot long staffs, to bracelets with claws, to knives, to the ever-popular shuriken or throwing stars. I half expect blades to be hidden in the pram that leans against one wall, below his impressive collection of grading certificates, all written in calligraphic Japanese. In showing me how each one can be used, he explains that the point of learning how to use all this equipment is really to teach that anything can be used as a weapon.

In a reasonably light-hearted duel (for him), pitting his skills against my own novice kendo training, he quickly disarms me and switches his short staff for my bamboo sword. “The difference here is that weapons don’t mean anything to us. I can throw things and pick them up later, take your weapon and use it knowing that I could always just use my bare hands,” he explains, releasing me from my chokehold. Such devious tactics stand in stark contrast to the samurai code of honour, and even stretch to the design of the weapons themselves. Presenting an apparently full-size sword, he quickly draws it to



## NINJA (忍者)

Convert agent or mercenary in feudal Japan. Also known as shinobi.

## NINPO (忍法)

The modern alternative term for Ninjutsu, the tactics and skills of the ninja.

reveal a blade of half the expected length pointed straight at my chest. Ninjas would even put chilli powder in the scabbard or in between bamboo slats to flick into opponents' eyes.

Weapons training comprises only a small part of the nine schools of the Bujinkan, which range in their teaching from climbing to horse riding to escape tactics. Sharpstone doesn't agree that his training is too specific or historical to be useful, saying "If the UK split into territories with their own warlords and I had to defend myself and my family, I think my skills could become very useful" and continues to say that "There's enough duress in everyday life that you have to try to sidestep that the skills are still much more practical than climbing the walls of castles. We practice what will be useful, and that's how to deal with a conflict situation and restrain somebody using the minimum force, or maximum force if required."

In terms of the 'syllabus' (although many would disagree with the allusion to such a structure), Sharpstone says he tries to keep things "parallel to Japan". For effectively every practitioner of ninjutsu today, 'Japan' means Masaaki Hatsumi. Sharpstone explains his significance to me: "Ninjutsu is an amalgamation of nine very old Japanese schools, some from samurai, some from ninja, each specialising in different things. They were all brought together by one person, called Toshitsugu Takamatsu, the previous Grandmaster. He learnt the nine schools over the course of his life, and passed them down to Hatsumi, the current Grandmaster. In order to properly bring the schools together, Hatsumi created the Bujinkan organisation."

Hatsumi became the formal Grandmaster and inheritor of Takamatsu's legacy in 1973, but the schools themselves stretch

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It's not the grade that will keep you safe, but the skill

back centuries. The oldest, the Togakure-ryu, is over 900 years old, and had been passed down through 33 generations before it reached Hatsumi. However, modernity still shows itself in the lives of the current and previous Grandmasters, as Sharpstone points out that "Takamatsu was really the last 'fighting' ninja, and he learnt some of the schools from his grandfather and uncle from about the age of three. He felt there were parts missing from them, so he learnt some of the other schools and combined them." Hatsumi, on the other hand, may best be described as a practitioner, and "hasn't felt the need to add or remove anything. All the hard work has already been done for us."

The convergence of multiple schools from multiple sources presents something of a challenge for those who wish to define ninjutsu. Certainly Sharpstone doesn't seem to have a simple answer: "You can't say 'Is it ninpo?' or 'Is it ninjutsu?', because it's a little bit of ninpo, it's a little bit of ninjutsu, it's a bit of budo, a bit of jujutsu, a bit of dakentaijutsu, a bit of kobujutsu and so on. There's all these specialist schools combined. The Kukishinden-ryu, for example, is a samurai school from which we get most of our weapons training. The Togakure-ryu is the school for the 'true' nine skills, like disguise, concealment, escape and the like. That's also the origin of the throwing stars."

Despite the admission that skill at mixing and delivering various poisons is no longer in particularly high demand, Sharpstone says that no schools are given preference in study. "It's a difficult concept for Westerners and even traditional Japanese people to grasp. A lot of Japanese people are traditionalists whereas a lot of Westerners are theorists. Nei-

## DAKENTAIJUTSU (打拳体術)

A collection of tactics involving unarmed strikes, similar to karate.

## BUDO (武道)

A blanket term for Japanese martial arts, encompassing both physical skill and philosophy.

ther are applicable in a self-defence situation. Hatsumi and each Grandmaster's responsibility is to make the art practical and pragmatic for that particular time. That's one of the reasons why all the schools were added, and why the philosophy evolves. We work on foundations, and once you've established a firm foundation you can create a fluid entity on top of that. Think how powerful and fluid the sea is, but it still needs a firm bed of rock underneath.

"The traditionalists have practiced the same art for 300 years, but that's not what I'm looking for. A lot of people like to learn the way it was done, but I'm all about learning practical self-defence. That's also what Hatsumi's about. He says that he doesn't see it as being about these things but rather about taking the competitive and traditional aspects that are focused on in other martial arts out and looking at the effective aspects: "We try to learn from things that have been developed in the past, then add them together to make a whole. I might practice the particular movements in the Gikan-ryu, then learn another school, like the Kumugakure-ryu. Then I return to the Gikan-ryu and apply the distancing and timing that I learnt in the previous school. Hatsumi describes it as 'creating peace.'"

The removal of competition is something that drew Sharpstone to ninjutsu in the first place. He originally practiced judo from the age of eight, five times a week for about 15 years, under Joe Robinson, who had featured in James Bond films and taught some of the self-defence principles from jujutsu and karate alongside judo. He tells me "I enjoyed it, but the thing about judo is that it's very competitive, and I was looking for something more defensive. I'm not really a competitive person."

He moved away from Brighton at 17 and tried various martial arts but found them either too regimented or too sports-like. After reading 'The Ninja' by Eric van Lustbader and returning to Brighton in 1989 he saw a poster for ninjutsu lessons at the bottom of the road. The fit seems to have been evident from the beginning: "I started then and have been training every week since."

Nowadays he runs a class in Brighton once a week, with stretches and walks every day. The effect of the former is clearly evident. During the training session I witness that evening, Sharpstone shows off an array of cartwheels, rolls and high kicks that I am unable to imitate because of more than just my trousers. This is just the warm-up. With a group of fewer than 10 students ("I'd rather have just a few dedicated students than water it down to give it wider appeal," Sharpstone says), he goes through numerous scenarios involving hand-to-hand combat as well as the use of knives, swords and longer weapons. By learning so many varied skills, ninjas can adapt to any situation, Richardson says "You learn something generally, then get good at it. Then you repeat it a thousand times until it becomes natural, then you forget about it. The idea is that you can fight without thinking."

Without thinking about the movements themselves, one can focus on awareness, which Sharpstone argues is a simple principle for everyone to take away from ninjutsu training: "Be aware of your surroundings not only to avoid danger but also to use your surroundings as a weapon if need be. You don't have to fight now, and you don't have to fight on someone else's terms. The important thing is to get home safe, not necessarily to win."

Sharpstone thinks back to the 5th Dan test, which generally consisted of Hatsumi standing behind the applicant with a bamboo sword and striking. If the applicant avoided the hit, they passed.

## JUJUTSU (柔術)

A martial art designed to defeat armed and armoured opponents.

## KOBUJUTSU (古武術)

Weapon based martial arts from the Okinawan region of Japan.

For higher grades, however, the requirements are far less tangible.

"Hatsumi wants to make it clear that it's not the grade that will keep you safe, but the skill. After a certain point, grades

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You don't have to fight now, and you don't have to fight on someone else's terms

are almost like a gift from him to thank you for continuing your training. I'm at the highest grade now, but I'm still training and so is Hatsumi."

When I ask Sharpstone whether there was a time he felt like giving up, he looks almost confused, then smiles: "Like I said, ninjutsu is all about endurance. If people can't endure then they don't advance. All I've done is keep going." M



# Coachella chic

Rachel Paix tells us how to achieve Kendall Jenner's festival look for

There was much to see at the fashion parade staged at Coachella this year. Models Alessandra Ambrosio and Jasmine Tookes opted for delicacy and successfully introduced feminine dresses to the festival scene. Here, warm colours excelled by teasing summer vibes and complimenting those sporting a golden tan. Accessorising a simple dress with a belt, necklace or hat also was a popular look. But the star of the show was the Queen of Coachella herself, Kendall Jenner.

The heart of the fashion world and certainly the envy of many, Jenner did not disappoint with her collection of festival attire at Coachella this year. Bravely boasting her slim physique, she craftily complemented a bikini top with a statement necklace and sleeveless leather jacket, whilst also proving that vintage denim need not be left in the past with her ripped boyfriend shorts.

Though we may sigh in despair that we're not Kendall, the high street is here to help imitate her look. The faux leather jacket can be found for only £45 from ASOS. Check out New Look's swimwear range for a cheap alternative to her Aztec bikini top at just £5. Accessorise are also offering some great pieces to rival Kendall's, such as this Kiya Statement Necklace for just £25.99. To complete her more laid back look, throw on these boyfriend denim shorts, only £29.50 from Marks and Spencers. For a more feminine look, accessorising a simple dress with a belt, necklace or hat can work a treat.

Overall, the Coachella 2015 A-List have not failed to impress this year and are sure to skew seasonal trends this summer. Engaging with a variety of styles, the high-street promises to save us some money and cater for the diverse tastes of festival goers. Finally, although we might not have been at Coachella we can at least dress like we were. Anyway, there's always next year?



## Blast from the past

Forget Glastonbury, Grace Howarth talks about the vintage festival craze that took York by storm

The fifth annual Festival of Vintage was held at York Racecourse over the weekend. The sunny weather drew in crowds for the loud, flashy and up-beat event. The festival, which was a celebration of popular cultures from the 20th century, was situated in two main grandstands. Spread across three floors were stalls of vintage clothing, furniture and living displays, where visitors could trawl down memory lane. Exhibitions of radios, cassette players, juke boxes and record players were not to be missed, while outside classic vehicles such as cars, caravans, scooters and bikes were lined up for the crowd to admire.

The festival also boasted fashion parades, exhibiting looks from the 1930s as well as a chance for collectors to find hidden treasures in the 'collectors corner'. Alongside this there were many attractions and novelties for the public to try, such as a barber's shop and beauty parlour for those who wished to achieve a truly authentic vintage look. Also available were free dance lessons, where visitors were encouraged to partner up and learn popular moves from the 1930s such as the Charleston, Foxtrot and Swing dance.

The dance hall was situated in one of the main stands which housed a stage and atrium so that visitors could look on and enjoy talented music acts covering songs from the likes of Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Benny Goodman, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday and T-Rex.

Many of the visitors got into the spirit of the event and came dressed in vintage clothing from various eras. Some women wore traditional 50s floating prom dresses in brightly coloured florals and check prints with matching head acces-

sories such as scarfs, turbans and flowers. Others wore more conservative tweed suits from the 40s with fur stoles, pearls and leather gloves.

Many men wore clothes imitating professional uniforms such as those from the armed forces. Some dressed as military officers from World War Two, one in an aviator's brown leather bomber jacket and peaked cap, another in a pilot's navy suit with gold braiding from the 50s. Others opted for attire inspired by the wealthy upperclasses of the 1920s such as the pinstripe suit, tie and waistcoat, complete with a pocket watch on a chain.

Meanwhile, some men sported clothes from a later era, such as the retro 'Grease Lighting' look in leather jackets, rolled up jeans and waxed, back-combed hair.

The event proved very popular, attracting thousands of visitors, from people just looking for a unique day out, to die-hard vintage lovers. Over the two days, the festival provided people with the rare opportunity to observe some of the iconic styles of the past as well as purchase new or second hand items from the stalls of fresh upcoming designers.

Although these events usually attract the generations who grew up during the respective eras on show, it was nice to see a younger generation who also share this unique interest. Despite these styles rarely being seen on our streets today, the vintage festival created an alternate world where modern clothing seemed lacking and out of place. Overall events such as this allow us a chance to look back at a pioneering time for fashion and music that created and still inspires our lifestyles today.



# Model citizens

Shahreen Vacha and Chloe Kent discuss how rising unconventional models have revolutionised our perceptions of beauty



IMAGE: ELLE.BE

As any reliable dictionary would tell you, beauty is defined as “a combination of qualities, such as shape, colour, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight.” This line of thought is so simple yet so essential, for nowhere does this definition utilise the terms blonde, skinny, curvy, hourglass, fair or any of the other labels that we have been associating with beauty.

An average girl's perception of herself is reliant on an ever-changing fashion industry that dictates to her time and again what's beautiful and what's not. From the voluptuous blonde bombshell in the 1960s to the size zero fad that took over runways not too long ago, beauty has always been evolving and yet it has remained conventional through its ability to deem a certain look as beautiful and demean anyone who does not adhere to it.

However, recent years have seen an increase in demand for 'unconventionally' attractive models. A prominent example of this is Tess Munster, who, standing at 5ft 5in, wears a UK size 26. Signed onto Milk, a large mainstream modelling agency, Munster has been named by Vogue Italia as one of the top six plus size models in the world. Another emerging icon is Winnie Harlow. The model, who has the skin pigment condition vitiligo, was recently awarded the Beauty Idol gong at German magazine Gala's Spa Awards 2015, having walked the runway for brands such as Desigual and Diesel. Munster and Harlow both are considered unusual beauties, not conforming to our cultural norm of what is considered, by and large, to be “classically” beautiful, yet are clearly very successful in their own right, redefining how we perceive the fashion world.

However, there is something perverse about the way in which these women are considered oddities, the fact that individuals who are not thin or may not have flawless skin, stand out so glaringly. It is almost as though they are celebrated as being beautiful in spite of their quirks, and not including them, or indeed as a result of them.

Another driving force to promote unconventional beauty is Dove's 'Real Beauty' campaign. Launched in September 2004, this campaign came as a breath of fresh air, strongly committed towards widening the definition of beauty. With adverts and short films such as *Evolution*,

Dove has targeted the unrealistic expectations set across the world in order to be considered beautiful. This movement is about much more than physical appearances and ideals of perfection. It is a call to women and young girls across the globe to embrace themselves the way they are, without conforming to society and its perception of beauty. It is about rebuilding their self esteem and their broken confidence in order for them to believe that they are indeed, beautiful and that no industry or society has the right to tell them otherwise.

The beauty industry is an entity which constantly shifts and changes, but whilst it is easy to accept red being in one day, blue the next, it is more difficult to come to terms with physical characteristics themselves waxing and waning in popularity. Beauty shouldn't be defined, because it can't be defined. If beauty has no price, then why must we give it a label?



## Beat the heat

Sarah Martin shares her tips on keeping your summer makeup looking fresh from dawn to dusk

### 1. Prep

As we all produce more oil in the warmer months, it may be time to switch to an oil free moisturiser if you have oilier skin or a lighter cream formula to satisfy drier complexions. The French pharmacy skincare brands always do great moisturisers (and at a reasonable price) so try La Roche Posay Effaclar Mat for oily skins, or Avene Hydrance Optimale Light Protective UV, both £14.50.



### 2. Prime



Primers are one of the main steps that can ensure longevity of your face. Laura Mercier does great ones, and doesn't just cater for oily skin, but also sell Illuminating Primer for dull, dry skin. When packing on the shadow, definitely pop some eye primer on the lids. It's personally something I do every day and prevents creasing. The best primers are Nars and Urban Decay.

### 3. Thin layers

Try to apply makeup in thin layers, building up when needed. For example, a thin layer of primer, a small amount of foundation buffed well into the skin, finished with targeted spot and blemish correction with concealer. Using fewer, well-blended products means it's less likely to move around and will mesh effectively with your skin. Also, moving away from creamy products to water or gel-based products will help keep the shine at bay.



### 4. Shine Control



A light dusting of powder across the T-zone will immediately tone down shine when applying makeup in the morning and preserve your makeup to make it last throughout the day. The Bourjois Healthy Balance Powder (£8.99) is a really finely milled powder and is pretty much undetectable on the skin.

### 5. Refresh

If natural oils begin to build up, it's probably best not to powder over the top. To absorb excess oil, try blotting paper, which soaks it up, while maintaining the makeup underneath. DHC are a steal at £3. Powder can gather and make your complexion look cakey so to rejuvenate your makeup use a moisturising spritz. Try Caudalie Grape Water at just £6.



# Your new fashion icons

Upcoming fashion designer **Sarah Gamble** and rising modelling talent **Hannah Bennett** share the secrets of their success in the fashion world

Sarah Gamble, a Psychology graduate from the University of York, now co-owns the increasingly popular ethical fashion business, Adorned.

**Hi Sarah! First things first, where did the idea for Adorned come from?**

Hi there! Well, it sort of just happened... during my first year of uni I embroidered a denim shirt with a stag head and got a load of compliments on it. So, my mum suggested that I make a few pieces for a market stall she was hosting just to clear out some old jumble. I'd also been making jewellery since I was a kid thanks to her, so made a few pieces. After a couple of stalls, we started to get some really good feedback, so I started making more, selling more, and it's just been growing. I never actually intended to do this - I always thought I'd just do a bit of art in my spare time!

**You studied Psychology at university - what made you change your career path to fashion design? Do you link them both in any way?**

I did psychology because I think I needed the academic stimulation as I wasn't quite through with studying! Honestly I'd never known what I wanted to 'be' when I grew up, but I've always loved and been good at art. Psychology has definitely given me some transferable skills that are useful to Adorned, like the ability to be critical and also to present myself and ideas clearly. But in short, I wouldn't say the two have a great deal of overlap!

**Adorned is becoming extremely popular with both students and customers abroad, what's the next step for the brand?**

[Laughs] At the moment I'm just trying to keep it all up! As we specialise in mostly one-off pieces, as soon as one item sells

it needs to be replaced with another, especially online. We are also currently expanding the homeware section to include some gorgeous sparkly elephant pieces, recycled and thrifted ornaments and handmade cushion covers as well as our beautiful Fairtrade throws. This summer though will see us travel to sell at a few local festivals, more than we have done before! We'll be returning to Festival of Thrift in Darlington, which is an amazing weekend. We'll also hopefully be at Splendour in Nottingham, our hometown. As soon as I learn to drive we'll be able to travel to more vintage fairs - but I'm a bit scared to learn to drive, I'll be honest.

**Your brand represents 'upcycled' and ethical goods, is this something you feel more brands should try to replicate?**

Definitely! Of course not all brands, especially those who deal in mass-produced goods, can strive to be upcycling, but all brands should really aim to be ethical in their practices. There are so many industries out there who exploit the third world for their own gain, and fashion is no exception. But it's also down to the customers - question your favourite brands. Who made your clothes? In buying from your favourite high street store are you contributing to child labour in India? For those who are willing, take a little look at the Fashion Revolution going on right now (you can google it).

**If you could design a collection for anyone who would it be and why?**

Oooh, my favourite boho brand of all time are Spell & the Gypsy Collective. They just ooze femininity and their prints are to die for. I have also always been a big fan of Monsoon and Accessorize as there's always so much beading and intricate embroidery in their pieces. However, above all I'd want to work with a brand who are ethical in their practices, so I will have to get back to you for a definitive answer.



IMAGE: SARAH GAMBLE

Hannah Bennett, a second-year student studying PPE, has been signed to the world's number one international model management firm, IMG.

**Hi Hannah! How does it feel to be represented by such a prestigious firm?**

I've only been officially signed since January so it's still pretty surreal to be honest. But I've been surprised by how lovely everyone is - there's a stereotype with the fashion industry that everyone is going to be mean and bitchy but within the agency there's such a great atmosphere, they really want what's best for their girls so they've been incredibly supportive and made me feel really welcome.

**You're already a famous face among York's student fashion publications, what took your modelling career to the next level?**

I think being friends with the majority of the HARD Magazine editorial team definitely had something to do with that. Strangely enough I actually got into modelling through Instagram. I followed Jeni Rose on Instagram, who is the vice-president of scouting for IMG, because she was always posting cool pictures of the new girls they were signing and she just happened to click on my profile and got in touch with me that way. It was just pure luck that she happened to spot me. But it was definitely nice having already been on set and done a few shoots before I started - it meant I didn't feel completely lost when I first went on shoots with professional photographers.

**What are the biggest ups and downs of the business? And what's been a highlight for you so far?**

The industry seems to be entirely up and down. Everything is incredibly last minute too - I've received emails at 7pm before asking if I could shoot in London at 10am the next day and castings will quite often be only 24 hours before the show starts. The biggest ups and downs have got to be in Fashion Week. I went on six castings in one day and heard nothing then a day later booked my first show. Walking for Marques Almeida has got to be my highlight, the adrenaline rush is just incredible, even just being backstage is amazing - at one point I had two different people doing my make up with a third physically pulling me away to do a run through - it's absolute chaos but so much fun.

**Do you think this is something you're likely to pursue after uni?**

Definitely. IMG is a great agency in that they don't just want flash in the pan girls, they want to try to cultivate a career and build up relationships with clients and are very particular about what jobs they send me on because of that. Hopefully I'll be able to commit to it full time for a while once I've left York, and maybe even travel to other countries and work there for a while.

**How on earth do you manage to juggle both uni work, IMG and still have time to socialise?**

It can be tough - I've missed shoots in London and things in York because I've had deadlines or not been there. I've learnt to be very efficient on trains and managed to get decent amounts of work done on my way to and from jobs, plus there's quite often a lot of waiting around on set so I can take work with me. It's mostly just about making the most of the time you've got, I definitely miss a lot fewer lectures than I did in my first year because I know I've got to miss others and can't afford to miss them so much anymore. IMG have been really understanding as well, if I tell them I can't work for a week because I've got essays due in then they book me out, and I've got about four weeks booked off during exams so I won't be stressed about trying to do both.

**Can you give any tips to students who want to pursue a modelling career?**

As much as most girls still get scouted on the streets like the typical scouting story, I would say social media is an incredible new tool for agencies. I wasn't the first girl that IMG found on Instagram - there are actually about a dozen of us. They've now set up an account called We Love Your Genes especially for scouting. If you hashtag #WLYG on a photo then they have people who are there specifically to search through the photos for new girls. The account's got nearly 35,000 followers and there are over 146,000 photos with the hashtag and although other brands, such as Marc Jacobs's #CastMeMarc, have used social media to scout new faces, it's the biggest ever attempt of its kind. **M**



IMAGE: IMG



# Long Live McQueen

Lily Papworth looks at McQueen's legacy at the *Savage Beauty* exhibition

Alexander McQueen. A name defining the fashion of the 21st century. With the opening of the V&A's *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, it is a name that has once more been called into the spotlight. The V&A's exhibition provides access to work spanning McQueen's entire career and as it is held in his hometown of London, the evolution of the mind behind leather, lace and latex is experienced, giving a fresh perspective to his vision. As a designer, McQueen created more than just fashion; combining theatre, art, history and couture, he became an icon, establishing a new landmark on the fashion timeline. Alexander McQueen changed the face of fashion as we once knew it and, as you walk through the V&A's exhibition, this is hard to ignore.

Lee Alexander McQueen's success is rooted in his beginnings. At the tender age of 15, he became a tailor's apprentice on the prestigious Savile Row, learning how to tailor suits with utmost precision. In 1990, he joined the MA Fashion course at Central Saint Martins, developing skills and learning how to define himself. Fashion was not simply aesthetics but also a narrative with moods and controversy. Inspired by London's grunge and industry, McQueen's costumes embodied grimy urban life. He also drew upon history, both relating to his Scottish heritage and fifteenth-century Northern European art, creating lines echoing both religion and the struggles of his ancestors. McQueen was seen to mimic a Romantic artist in this way, the authority of imagination through history dominating his work.

Imagination is important for both viewer and designer when experiencing McQueen's work. His delicate silhouettes are artfully combined with materials of a morbid, sadomasochistic nature, challenging the average audience by forcing them to enter the painstakingly engineered world of the designer. This uncanny blend reveals McQueen's affinity with the Gothic, as well as his belief in the strength of the female character. Female power is pivotal throughout McQueen's work and is explored in multiple ways across his career.

The Exhibition's 'Cabinet of Curiosities' aptly demonstrated the significance of the imagination: floor to ceiling, black mir-

ror walls are filled with dresses, jewellery, headwear and shoes made from feathers, wire, latex, beading and even horns. Video screens add to the visual bombardment, showing footage from various McQueen shows. The theatricality of his work shines through here, only heightened by the wall of sound in the room: robotic murmurings, a clicking typewriter, innocent humming, singing birds and classical music.

This room is immersive. After a mere few minutes standing at the centre, it is as if you have stumbled into McQueen's mind and have discovered his deepest, darkest thoughts. Finally the importance of the imagination reveals itself in this room, and you begin to understand how McQueen's vision evolved from revolutionary fashion into an art movement of its own.

Towards the end of his career, McQueen's work evolved from its dark, deeply sexual roots into something more ethereal and, when looking at Plato's Atlantis, futuristic. McQueen began to grow as an artist, transitioning from feathers, spikes and rubber to more digitally-inspired prints. It is interesting to see how flexible McQueen's work became and despite the brand outliving its creator, I think it is hard to tell how McQueen himself would have grown creatively, had he not passed in February 2010.

McQueen redefined fashion as a form of art. It was not just the clothing that was meticulously created, but the concept, which was actualised through his shows and garments. The Tate Britain's sister exhibition, *Nick Waplington/Alexander McQueen: Working Process*, follows McQueen's journey through his 2009 *Horn Of Plenty* collection, exposing the encompassing nature of McQueen's designs. Just as Chanel transformed the face of women's fashion and Vivienne Westwood gave us the world punk, Alexander McQueen set a new standard in the 21st century, showing us how to move fashion forward. No longer was creating radical design enough: garments had to be works of art, as well as pieces of history.



IMAGE: SMITH AND DOWNES KIMONO EXHIBITION

## Fashion a little closer to home

Rachel Paix reviews the city-wide exhibition as York's local fashion talent takes to the stage

Last weekend, organisers from Fashion City York took to the streets to unveil the local talent our historical city has to offer. Their annual Fashion Weekend, awaited with great anticipation, has been growing from strength to strength since its founding in 2010. From catwalk shows to exhibitions and boutique stalls to competitions, the event did not fail to appeal to the tastes of the budding fashionista. Spread over three days, it was great to see local businesses eager to get involved, ensuring lots was on offer for locals.

One of the main attractions was watching HSBC Bank

transform their ground floor into a pop up Fashion Village. This offered smaller retailers, such as Jo Bagshaw Jewellery and Little Ditsy Clothing, a platform to exhibit their works. FCY hopes this is the first step in creating a permanent Fashion Village in order to promote up and coming designers who may need a helping hand climbing the financial ladder. Chair of FCY, Angela Brown, disclosed intentions to "showcase all York has to offer as a fashion city," aiming to mark York firmly on the fashion map.

Even City Screen Cinema prepared for the weekend, from

hosting a Kimono exhibition showcasing Smith and Downes designs, to screenings of the latest fashion film release, *Dior and I*. Likewise, fine china retailers Mulberry Hall showed their support by putting on a live window display. Models exhibited products from Paperdoll Boutique and Bang Bang hair while dining for afternoon tea. This was certainly a popular idea, Browns and Fenwicks also opted for the chance to display fashion ranges via live windows.

However, these weren't the only stunts to catch the public eye, as male jockey models entertained shoppers by running a selfie competition in the city centre. It didn't stop there: as official sponsor Mini Cooper offered free test drives from parliament square. As a local shopper, it was great to see a diverse range of local businesses keen to support the project. Angela commented on this diversity by emphasising: "It's not just for fashion shops, it's about photography, art and film."

As an ever expanding organisation with high aspirations, Fashion City York is always looking to encourage those who share similar passions to get involved. For instance, a particular focus intends to reach out to the younger community; and as part of the weekend, FCY coordinated a fashion photography competition for students at York College - with the winners work to be displayed in Attic Coffeehouse.

Overall, the weekend was a great success and many thanks is due to the FCY steering group. Speaking to Angela about the FCY organisation, she reveals it is a board of dedicated professionals from a variety of backgrounds including marketing, admin and retail. Angela emphasised that the group works well because each volunteer is able to bring their personal expertise while sharing "passion, enthusiasm and energy" for the project. Angela explained that their ultimate aim is to expand enough to establish a York Fashion Week. With a clear vision and a great support network, it can be expected that FCY will continue to grow and flourish.

When asked about how FCY differs from other projects, Angela highlighted the focus on collaboration with the community: "There's so much richness here, it's a really quirky, varied, mixed bag." FCY strikes me as a project which aims to preserve authenticity in York, leaving behind an overwhelming desire for commercial success and offering an unique retail approach.

# Denim: The High Street Edit



**He wears:** Denim jacket, £90 Levi's; T-shirt, £8 River Island; Indigo stretch skinny jeans, £25 asos.com



**She wears:** Denim dungaree dress, £56 Urban Outfitters; Floral blouse, £29.99 Zara; Frilly socks, £1.50 Primark

**She wears:** Print bomber jacket, £35 River Island; Acid denim fray bandeau, £20 and Denim pocket skirt, £28 both Topshop



**She wears:** Fedora hat, £14 Dorothy Perkins; Denim shirt dress, £42 Miss Selfridge



**He wears:** Petrol blue skinny jacket £45 Topman; Denim mid wash shirt £25 at asos.com; Black skinny jeans £30 Topman

Double denim can sometimes feel like a taboo area in fashion. Get it right this summer by mixing up acid-wash, indigo and white tones to create layers in your look. Don't be afraid to mix textures. Keep the look playful by adding floral tones and textured accessories. Or why not add a more urban feel by embracing an oversized staple denim jacket - perfect for the transitional time of year.

**Fashion Editor and Creative Director:** Beki Elmer, **Photographer:** James Hostford, **Models:** Lara Shannon & Olly Taylor, **Makeup:** Sarah Martin, **Assistants:** Grace Howarth & Jordan Bonner. All accessories and shoes stylists own.

# Game Review: Bloodborne

Callum Gearing takes on Hidetaka Miyazaki's latest challenge

Platform: PS4  
Developer: From Software  
Release date: 27 March 2015

Hidetaka Miyazaki, director of *Demon's Souls* and *Dark Souls*, has returned with the PS4 exclusive *Bloodborne*, an offshoot of the *Souls* series.

*Bloodborne* has many of the features now familiar to players of Miyazaki's previous games; a difficulty often unseen but now emulated by other games in the Action-RPG genre; a levelling system with currency used as both experience points and for purchasing items; a large range of boss battles, and a variety of weapons and equipment that allows for many different play-styles and builds.

In *Bloodborne* you play as a foreigner in Yharnham, a city with architecture from the darkest depths of the Victorian era. With no memory (a common staple of the *Souls* series) you become a hunter of beasts, in pursuit of blood; blood which powers the city's economy and replaces the estus flask of dark souls for healing. With no real advice on how to do this, you are, at first, left to explore for yourself and determine what needs to be done.

The bosses in the game are varied and interesting to fight. They differ in attack patterns and how to face them, from 20 foot tall horned wolves to another hunter carrying similar weapons to yours. Although when facing these bosses repeated death is almost certain, when you finally defeat them the relief and reward is deeply gratifying and encourages you to continue on.

Level design has been a return to form for From Software. Unlike the linear level design of *Dark Souls 2*, *Bloodborne's* levels twist back on themselves, and exploration is rewarded with hidden shortcuts that allow quicker movement through the levels and secret items that could help you further on.

On first playing the game I found myself very comfortable with exploring the first area for new shortcuts and secrets, just taking in the fantastically designed backgrounds for hours, before I even felt inclined to tackle my first boss fight. This design continues in all further areas, and the world design brings all areas together to create a very believable world which crosses over itself many times.

Combat now focuses on the offence, and there are a lack of defensive capabilities beyond the well-timed shots of the firearms provided. Faster weapons and the capacity to regain lost health for a small period by attacking nearby enemies is a dis-



tant cousin from the slow, methodical and defensive play-style favoured in previous games.

Also, a change from individual or small group combat to large groups leads to a much more frantic combat, with quick flurries of attacks and well timed dodges leading to smoother combat.

The weapon choice has been subject to some criticism from fans of the previous game due to a lack of choice. With weapons restricted to either the left or right hand and a much smaller choice of weapons to choose from I can see why they would have such an opinion, but I have to disagree. Many melee weapons are 'trick' weapons, able to change between two modes, leading to a very large choice of attacks from only a single weapon.

20 hours in and I am still using the weapons I chose at the beginning without any disappointment in their use - a pis-

tol, and a cane-sword that with a single button press is transformed into a whip, perfect for large targets and crowds.

I still have some complaints for this game - it is very good but I'd refuse to call it flawless. Loading times upon deaths are slow and often last around 30 seconds, and can leave you feeling frustrated if stuck in a very specific situation; loading times are due to be decreased in future patches. Additionally, co-op is only available if you spend an 'insight' that is in very limited supply early on and still precious late-game and this is irreversible.

In conclusion, I would recommend *Bloodborne* to any owner of the PS4 who finds themselves with the grit needed to get through the steep starting curve of a From Software game. To followers of the series, I would further recommend it as a change of pace compared to the previous games, but with enough similarities to allow a swift change-over.

## Sexism isn't Peach-y

George Nanidis discusses the biggest issue currently faced by gaming



A recent study conducted in Germany has found that playing video games over a long period of time doesn't increase the likelihood of a sexist attitude developing in that person.

The study comes after years of gaming being seen by some as a cause of deviant behaviour in children and young teenagers. The study, published in the *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* journal, challenges 'cultivation theory', which suggests that the longer a game or TV show is consumed, the more likely a person is to accept those fictional worlds as truth.

The research was conducted over a three year period, with the intent of discovering whether there were any long term effects from playing video games.

However, it does leave open many of the issues raised during the #gamergate controversy. There are obviously deep seated sexist beliefs in some parts of the gaming community, as the attitude and behaviour of those involved in the internet abuse wasn't a one off. Play any game online and chances are that you will see gamers using offensive and damaging language towards each other. This increases dramatically when any woman joins in the game.

Where these attitudes stem from is hard to say. Most people nowadays play a video game of some sort, and the vast majority of those people would not use sexist language towards other gamers. Gaming has a history of accepting people from all walks of life, often breaking down social bar-

riers due to the anonymity that playing online can offer. So for gaming to be accused of holding sexist beliefs was largely shocking for some of the community.

It is true that those who represent gaming on Twitter and other online spaces are often the vocal minority, who have created their own sub-community.

While games don't actively create attitudes of sexism in young teenage males, it has been highlighted many times that they don't do enough to discourage them either. There have been some fantastic narratives in gaming, but the majority of those focus highly on plotlines driven by male characters.

Ultimately, the problem is that most games only portray women as oversexualized characters, with very one dimensional personalities. Usually it is the man who has the textured and intriguing story, with the female characters simply featuring as minor characters in his story arc. Maybe if there was greater deviation from this trusted norm, and towards narratives that feature more female characters, not only would we get a different perspective, but we'd actually improve the quality of storytelling in gaming too.

Despite highlighting the roles of characters such as Princess Peach who features in the *Super Mario* series, the study doesn't do enough digging into the roles that women play in these games, and doesn't confront the problem of online harassment.

Being able to reach out to so many of the community through mediums like Twitch and YouTube, gaming has a real chance to change the portrayal of women that it currently has. It should be expected of those in the gaming industry to do their part in reducing an unconscious bias against women.

# Documenting change

As a controversial new documentary sheds light on the Church of Scientology, Alex Killeen considers whether documentaries can ever bring about real-world change



With the recent release of *Going Clear*, the HBO documentary exploring some of the darker elements of Scientology, it's a good time to consider the power of the documentary medium. Any newly released documentary poses the question of whether it can actually change anything in society. It's safe to say that *Going Clear* has generated a controversy - for both its revelations, and the backlash coming from Scientology's best and brightest.

While it highlights some apparent problems within Scientology, terrifying viewers, no one can see it actually changing anything to do with the powerful religious organisation. However, is this the point of a documentary? Most features of this genre just intend to reveal a little known or glossed-over issue to the audience. *Super Size Me* comes to mind as an innovative and interesting documentary about the widespread problem of obesity in America. It's shocking, and rather disgusting at points, but you can understand its intention

and the format is perfect for the content. But has it really changed anything? Some people are always going to opt for the fast food option even after seeing its effects.

*Blackfish*, possibly one of the best documentaries of modern times, manages to hit all the right notes for a documentary. It is praised for its accuracy and testimonies from people closely involved with Seaworld. But it's also emotional; it managed to strike an evocative tone and addressed the serious problem of animal cruelty. What is exceptional about this particular documentary, though, is that it actually managed to change people's views towards Seaworld - the company took a \$25.4 million loss and its shares have plummeted in the wake of its release.

Louis Theroux may be the best known British documentary filmmaker and rightfully so. Be it investigating neo-Nazis in America or porn stars talking about their time in the industry, Theroux manages to engage and interest the British public each time he

releases a new documentary. However, Theroux' documentaries may be so appealing due to the unusual, topics they cover. His recent documentary *By Reason of Insanity* was a shocking look at murderers who have successfully escaped conviction by pleading insanity, a topic which has barely been approached by documentaries before. Theroux' highlighting of this rather shocking defense strategy can hopefully lead to some form of change, but it's highly unlikely.

It's not that documentaries have a responsibility to incite change, or even that they'd want to, but a lot of them nowadays address topics that are sites of outrageousness in the modern age. People find these sort of social topics intriguing and while they definitely stimulate thought on them, they can never really attain a status of changing platforms.

*Going Clear* points to many outrageous qualities of Scientology but it never taints them with subjectivity, the perfect quality of a documentary. However, this objective ap-

proach to serious topics of the modern age means that people watch them rather passively. Shocked and awed, they are surprised by the content, but never really motivated to want to change things.

*Going Clear* is one of HBO's most-watched documentaries ever and reactions have been interesting. Alex Gibney, the director, has called for Scientology's tax exemption status to be recalled, but that's the only call to arms it offers. Documentary, by the nature of the genre, is paradoxical; it's meant to enlighten people from ignorance, but unfortunately, those who want to change something can't because of the limitations of the medium. The tale of the documentary is an interesting one, but with a growing number of strange proclivities and activities from all over the world, it'll be interesting to see how the genre can fit itself into this picture, and whether some of the social commentaries they provide can overcome their slightly weird status as mere items of passing interest.



## Daredevil

Alex Killeen



The Marvel brand has recently become synonymous with success, with the Marvel Cinematic Universe bigger than ever and the Avengers franchise the most successful superhero cinematic series to date. Its translation to TV has been questionable, (*Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D* we're looking at you) but *Daredevil* is surprisingly dark and thrilling.

Bone-crushing and sometimes cringe-inducing violence are interjected by chilling origins segments, but Charlie Cox as Matt Murdock grounds the blind vigilante superhero's tale in humanity. Vincent D'Onofrio as the Kingpin is possibly the best performance, - emotionally damaged and unhinged, but intent on seeing his plans come to fruition.

Other cast members such as Elden Henson as Foggy Nelson, Deborah Ann Woll as Karen Page, and Rosario Dawson as Night Nurse

are all admirable, although their storylines sometimes divert attention away from the compelling narratives of Murdock and Kingpin. Foggy Nelson seems to be an attempt at comic relief and while it works to an extent, it sometimes deviates from the tone.

The action sequences are nothing but amazing, especially one in Episode 2 which is reminiscent of *Oldboy*. They're never on unequal terms in *Daredevil*'s favour, though, which feels realistic; a blind guy who is well-trained in martial arts and has enhanced senses is still going to struggle against a huge group of thugs. There is a permanent sense of danger and peril.

All in all, this series could go far. Marvel's future series on Luke Cage, Jessica Jones, and Iron Fist are set to be just the same in tone and will group into the Defenders storyline - an exciting future in store.



## Lost River

Matthew Edwards



With his dark fairytale directorial debut, Ryan Gosling breaks no new ground.

Inspired by devastation and social deprivation in Detroit, his story walks the well-worn road of the American dream.

The film revolves around single mother Billy (Christina Hendricks) trying to find the money to save her house and family by working in a sinister 'house of horrors' club.

Her eldest son Bones (Iain de Caestecker) tries to make a living and look after his infant brother while a relationship grows between himself and his neighbour Rat (Saoirse Ronan).

However, the constant threat of menace is personified by the primal and violent bully (Matt Smith), who has claimed control over the town of Lost River.

As the characters' names highlight, *Lost*

*River* is a film painted in broad, on the nose brushstrokes. Blunt lines of dialogue sometimes disrupt the film's flow as the actors struggle to deliver them as naturally.

Nevertheless, most of the performances come through strongly, heightened enough to engage with the dreamlike magical realist atmosphere, yet never to the extent of distraction or pantomime.

Uncompromisingly strange and in places disturbingly violent, *Lost River* is never going to satisfy everyone's tastes. But in a period of cinema releases dominated by sequels and real world biopics, for a first-time director to create a film such as *Lost River* is pretty commendable.

It's a flawed film that shouldn't be lauded as anything visionary, but still manages to be a striking and disturbing, but ultimately warming, tale of monsters and dreams.

# New kids on the rock

One half of the UK's latest rock duo, Slaves' enigmatic drummer **Isaac Holman** gives Lara Shannon an insight into their enormous success as a new band



IMAGE: VIRGIN EMI



Slaves, a two piece formed in 2012, are a band that – if not already – are soon to be the name on everybody's lips. A prime example of 21st century punk and at the forefront of the British rock scene, Slaves last month landed a spot on the prestigious NME Awards Tour line up. Despite being busy recording their new album *Are You Satisfied?*, scheduled for a June release, and hitting it hard on tour with big names such as Fat White Family, Palma Violets and The Wytches, vocalist and drummer Isaac Holman still managed to find the time to talk to Nouse while wandering around Manchester on a rare day off.

Starting at the very beginning, I couldn't help but look back to the conception of what has become one of today's most promising British rock projects. I ask Holman what made him and band mate Laurie Vincent decide to become a two piece. "We never really saw ourselves as a two piece. We sort of just broke off on our own, and I guess we never argue – or, we argue a lot less – and we have more of a tight bond. We see ourselves as a partnership."

And what about song writing? "Not sure if it makes it easier to write," he tells me. "There's less dispute but there's less input, so it goes both ways really."

When Slaves started out they operated predominantly on the toilet-circuit, in sweaty, close contact settings where the line between stage and crowd often becomes blurred. One of those small venues was York's very own Fibbers, and it turned out to be an incredibly intense, high energy and downright feral set, with Holman getting dragged into the crowd and having his sweat-drenched shirt almost ripped off him by a group of female fans ("God yeah, I remember that" he laughs).

Now, after being propelled headfirst into the spotlight, with the shows they put on getting bigger and bigger, it's hard to imagine that the flavour of performances has remained consistent. "It's a whole different ball game," he agrees. "Small venues are our home. Playing on big stages was definitely hard to get used to, and it's amazing, but we'll always love small venues."

From the adrenaline filled, savage performance we saw at Fibbers, it seems almost a shame that it'll become increasingly difficult to recreate the small settings in which this total animal of a band are at their best with their newfound fame and growing fanbase. Yet Slaves seem perfectly able to tear up big stages just as well as the back room of a pub, as their NME Awards Tour billing has served to illustrate.

Talk turns to musical and sonic influences, and I put the following question to Holman: if you had to pick between being a support act on tour with your biggest influence, and having your own world tour, which would you choose?

"World tour," He says without hesitation. "Although it would be a pleasure and an honour to support our favourite bands, there would be no feeling in the world like a world tour of our own. My personal influences growing up were artists like Mike Skinner from The Streets.

"I don't really have any idols as such, and a lot of things influence our song writing, but other music is only a small part of that. For me it's more every day observations – people and conversations. There are a lot of other influences, like art – especially Laurie, he

likes art. And film."

It's easy to hear this in almost every Slaves song. This isn't a band whose music is built on the riffs of other songs, or whose image is built on Sid Vicious' haircut. Completely original and completely down to earth, through their lyrics and their rhythms we see through the eyes of two typical British lads. It's no real wonder that they're the new darlings of British rock and have landed the coveted spot they hold on the NME Awards Tour. "The Tour's been great. We've had a few days off in Manchester. There's been a couple of heavy nights. Our last tour was completely dry, so we've sort of fallen off the bandwagon a bit – I've gained a bit more of a backside." All the more for the audience to grab on to, I joke, but Holman assures me that his girlfriend is on tour with him this time, so there'll be none of that.

Holman tells me that his Tour highlight has definitely been hearing the crowds singing the lyrics to their single 'The Hunter' back to them; it's that disbelief, as if they're becoming a well-known, signed, British rock band by complete accident, that makes these two lads so likeable.

The rest of the Awards Tour line-up is a veritable feast of new age rock royalty. What

““

Royal Blood have completely smashed the doors open as a two-piece and they have my respect

do Slaves make of the resurgence of rock bands into the British mainstream? "Royal Blood have definitely paved the way, I think. They completely smashed the doors open as a two-piece and they have my respect. As for the bands on tour, it's great because they're bands I listen to – I love Fat White Family, and The Wytches have just been added to the line-up, and they're great. I hadn't listened to that much of Palma Violets, but they're a really great bunch of guys."

In light of the gravitas of the company they're now holding, where do the guys themselves hope their trajectory will take them? "Well, the band started on a whim as a bit of a joke," Holman says. "And if I'd been told a few years ago where we would be now, I would have told them to shut up. I guess I just hope that we get to keep doing this – to keep playing and to keep being happy. Because the minute this stops being fun and we stop enjoying it, we'll stop doing it." It's blatantly clear that Slaves aren't in it for the fame and fortune. This comes across not only in their manner, but in their uncompromising, driven music.

I leave things on a lighter note, and ask to Holman, if he were hosting a dinner party and could invite five musicians, who would they be? "I'm just going to spitball these out. Frank Sinatra, Mike Skinner, Bob Marley, Eminem, and...err...Ozzy Osbourne. Make it a crazy one." **M**



## Spotlight On: RHODES

Breakthrough singer-songwriter talks to Lily Papworth

Having finished his biggest solo UK tour to date, and currently in the process of completing his debut album, RHODES is keeping himself busy. Perhaps not yet a renowned headline artist, it is fair to say that he's done the rounds. Already with singles 'Breathe' and 'Turning Back Around' gaining regular radio play and having toured with the likes of Sam Smith, London Grammar, Ben Howard and Nick Mulvey, he certainly learnt the ropes from some of the best.

"Ben Howard was probably my favourite person to go on tour with, as it was then that I discovered how much I like his music. London Grammar were amazing too, as they are really fun to hang around with, and Sam Smith was really inspirational.

"To be honest, whenever anybody asks who my favourite artist was to go on tour with, all I can say is that I learnt so much from everybody and each artist gave me something different. Nick Mulvey was the first person I went on tour with and he's so chilled out - you can tell he absolutely loves life. He was always meditating, which was quite weird but also so inspiring. Just to see the way different people take different things from life is amazing."

Having toured with many big names, RHODES has picked up a few tips along the way. "The playing live bit has got to be the least stressful part -

you've got the song, it's finished and you're just out there playing for people. Then again, I do find it quite hard getting on stage every night. Being up there on your own is actually quite hard to do every day. Maybe with a band it might be nicer, you know, having a little gang on stage to play off of - I'm looking forward to that."

Now heading towards summer, RHODES is not slowing down. With an album underway and an EP just released, he is heading into festival season with some serious drive. Although nothing official is disclosed, RHODES tells me that he's hoping to appear at many of the big festivals this year. He did of course play at Glastonbury in 2014, and this alternate world whet his appetite for more festival life.

"It's a lot more fun [at festivals], and you get to hang out with all the other bands. It's much more of a community feel. Every festival you do, you bump into people you see on the road and you get the chance to catch up - it's really nice."

Whether you caught him on tour this time around, or you're waiting to discover him on a stage at a festival somewhere this summer, keep your eyes peeled for RHODES. His warm, acoustic vibes are hard not to enjoy and, with all the experience he has under his belt, such an atmosphere is hard to resist at a live gig. M

## The Prodigy - *The Day Is My Enemy*

Beki Elmer

Gnarly, impassioned electro-punk that's ridden with fist-pumping tracks and scorching vocals? Yep, that pretty much sums up The Prodigy's noise. Unfortunately, those who eagerly anticipated another explosive, metal-dance fused album from the Essex trio were probably left thinking, 'what the hell happened?'

We're thrown into a false sense of anticipation during opening number, 'The Day Is My Enemy'. The swelling, marching drum base and haunting vocals yearn to burst into the band's familiar fist-pumping and juddering electro-beats. Sadly the story ends there. Overly tampered-with vocals robotically churn out in repetition for four and a half minutes. 'Beyond the Deathray' and 'Invisible Sun' are unnecessary interludes that frankly become lost. Their building synths anticipate a head-thrashing, mosh pit-inducing anthem we are all craving from the trio, but both songs simply fail to deliver and bleed out into silence.

Even worse are the cringe-worthy dance collaborations with DJs Flux Pavillion and Sleaford Mods. 'Ibiza' feels unbalanced and lacks lyrical meaning, making it disappointing compared to The Prodigy's usual sophisti-



cation and intricate layering of sounds.

On the upside, there are a couple of numbers hot enough to rival classics from their 2009 album 'Invaders Must Die'. Lead single 'Wild Frontier' is essentially another classic anthem and a call to arms for die-hard fans. Keith Flint's iconic urban vocals are churned out among a backdrop of frantic synths and screaming primates (yep, you heard it). 'Rok-Weiler' shreds the floor up with its blazing metal chords and hooligan-esque chanting.

It's these tracks that take the entire album up a notch - you'll no doubt be brawling in a fiery mosh pit to these alongside classics 'Omen' and 'Firestarter' in the near future.

## The Wombats - *Glitterbug*

Hatti Linnell

Some bands like to take their time delicately crafting their albums, to the extent that fans begin to wonder whether the band is still together. The Wombats have certainly been one of these, with four years between each of their releases so far.

Putting in long-term effort is important, but it raises high expectations. If you spend four years making something, it needs to be pretty damn special.

Whether The Wombats have achieved this with *Glitterbug* is doubtful in my mind. The record is a coalmine with a few sparse diamonds; I found it hard to remember most of it even after several listens and the songs merge together, making it one long tale of over-synthesized sex and drugs-based escapades.

The start is good, and you can see why songs like 'Give Me A Try' were released as singles to promote the album. The chorus is filled with the potential for an indie-disco anthem, and it very nearly gets there. 'Greek Tragedy' also has the makings of something good, and it brims with the passion that I associate with the band's first album.

Unfortunately, after this there isn't much else good to say. Lyrically, songs like 'Emoti-



cons' are rather hit and miss, with lyrics like 'It's tough to maintain focus, baby/ Now all my elephants are in the room', which are a little reminiscent of a pretentious teenager trying to show their intelligence. 'Be Your Shadow' is similarly uncomfortable, while 'Headspace' drags so much that it'll make you want to tear your hair out.

Further through the album, links begin to emerge between songs from this album and better songs from the Wombats' back catalogue. Overall, there are a couple of tracks on this album which are worth your time, but listening to it as a whole will likely prove a disappointing listen.

## MUSINGS.

*Mumford and Sons' guitarist Winston Marshall*

"Even if we get bottled off, even if they chuck shit at us, at least I can say we've headlined Reading + Leeds - even if we only last 10 minutes."

# Political pressure point

In anticipation of the upcoming General Election, **Rachael Maskell**, York Labour candidate, and **Robert McIlveen**, Conservative candidate, talk to Jack Harvey about all things politics



V



## What brought you to politics?

From a very early age I've had a real desire to change the way this world has worked. I come from a very political family: my father was a trade unionist and my uncle led a campaign for the abolition of the death penalty. Since the age of three I've been arguing about the big issues, and fighting to change the structure of our society to make it fairer, particularly for the poor and vulnerable.

## Why did you choose to stand for Labour?

I joined the Labour Party when I was at school. It's always been where I would stand. I went on to join the trade union movement, fighting the cause for other people. I've worked in the health service for 20 years as a physiotherapist, and alongside that I have been Head of Health for Unite, representing one hundred thousand health workers across the spectrum.

## Why should students put their faith in Labour over the other parties?

I think the Labour Party has put a great focus on education. We wish to help people into the labour market, building up to a good home, a good job and solid foundations. We've also driven the agenda towards education such as further education and vocational education.

## Why don't people feel enthused with politics today?

The university has been doing lots to encourage students to register to vote, but I know many who haven't yet and don't intend to do so.

## Why do you think it is important that they register?

Politics, for me, is not just about putting

a cross in a box. If you want someone in power then you have to be in a position to do that, but this is only the first step. We can move on to engaging in the real debates, enabling lots of voices to be heard in politics. To people who are doubtful about putting a cross in the box, I'd ask them to come and join the process, come and get involved. If you do, and I am your MP, I will do my very best to get everything right for people.

## We've heard lots about austerity in recent political discussions and debates. Would you agree that 'austerity' has become a dirty word in politics?

I think austerity became an excuse for being able to project different political outcomes. What has happened over the last five years has been used to privatise services and to redistribute money away from the most marginalised in our society. What we should do instead is look for a fairer way. As one of the wealthiest countries on the planet we should be trying to see off poverty. It's really important to me to get rid of food banks. Austerity is the big stick that has been used as an excuse to suppress people rather than encourage them.

## On the day of the election, what would be the nightmare result for you to endure?

A return of this government! Whether it be the Tories on their own or if they are in another coalition, the NHS will disappear, and that is our most valued asset. We'll see a new agenda involving even harder and faster cuts. We'll have more people in poverty than before. In York there's a straight choice between Labour and the Conservatives, and if people want a different kind of politician I would urge them to vote for Labour.

## What brought you to politics?

I'd always been interested in politics growing up and I did a degree in it at university. It was on my gap year between my undergraduate degree and my Master's, working in a prison, when I thought to myself that despite a huge amount of activity we weren't achieving anything. The same prisoners were coming back to prison. I've always considered myself a Tory and thought if I wanted to improve things I'd get involved – so I did.

## Why did you choose to stand for the Conservatives?

I strongly believe in individual responsibility. What I really want to see is the government creating the conditions in which people can improve their own lives. It's not necessarily about what politicians can do for young people, it's more about what politicians can do to make sure British universities are the best so that young people can have the best education available. It's really about wanting people to thrive off their own backs rather than having the state do things for people.

## Why should students put their faith in the Conservatives over the other parties?

We'll take you seriously! I think that with Labour's policy of cutting tuition fees, the only people who will benefit from that are the best-paid graduates afterward. Tuition fee rises or cuts only impact people who are capable of paying the debt all off. Cutting the fees from £9,000 to £6,000 is a bit of a con if you do a degree in something you love but isn't something that will give you a well-paying job at the end of it. The Conservatives will be honest; we want universities to be securely funded and we also want to invest more in the sciences.

## Why don't people feel enthused with politics today?

Politics is quite remote to some people. If you've voted a few times you've probably made a confident decision to follow a party, and for many people it doesn't feel like things change enough to swing their vote. For the first time you have to think about what you believe and take into account what the parties are saying. I remember the 1997 election and just about recall the 1992 election, so I've had that lifetime of experiencing politics and the views of the parties; but other people might not have been brought up with politics in their home, and we have to reach out to these people and bring politics to them.

## We've heard lots about austerity in recent political discussions and debates. Is 'austerity' a dirty word in politics?

It's become one, but everyone seems to have forgotten about the deficit. Many questions at the York Central Candidate Hustings concerned spending; it's obviously a nice thing that the government does, and if we were running a huge surplus then we would have a different approach to our policies. We're only just getting the deficit under control. Sadly we're going to have to continue the boring, long-term drudge of cutting spending. You can't abolish boom and bust, you can't abolish recession; we're the only party that takes this seriously, with the intention of eliminating the whole deficit.

## On the day of the election, what would be the nightmare result for you to endure?

Two options: either a massive Labour majority, which would undo a lot of the hard work and gains we've made and challenge our economic credibility; or a dead heat, which be a horrible mess.

# Tarantulas on toast

As recent tv show *The Island* sees contestants munching on insects, Amy Norton joins the debate on whether it is quite as bad as it seems

Eating bugs. It's the stuff of playground legend, and a concept that most of us can't stomach. Yet the consumption of insects (entomophagy) has, for thousands of years, been a well-established practice in parts of Central and South America, Asia, and Africa. Everything from crickets to tarantulas are fried, chargrilled, or fermented, in dishes, or simply as a mid-afternoon snack.

In the Western world, there is a general taboo surrounding the eating of insects, but this is understandable. To find a fly or anything worse in food is a sign of disgraceful hygiene standards. We watch in undisguised horror as celebrities on reality TV shows such as *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here* shove whole critters into their mouths. Yet, these creepy-crawlies feature in the diets of up to two billion people, collected and even farmed at home; they are free and easy to gather. What's more, they can contain as much as 65 per cent protein – that's three times more than your average juicy hamburger.

No student would ever consider popping down to the supermarket to pick up frozen ants, and if Iceland doesn't stock them, then chances are that the UK population is definitely closed to the idea of grasshopper vol-au-vents. Although the French are clearly open-minded with their gourmet taste for snails, the average Brit wouldn't approach one without a stick or a spoonful of salt. And as we are a nation notorious for overcooking meat, it's hardly surprising that the Australian taste for sweet-and-sour honey ants hasn't caught on here, nor the Ugandan penchant for queen termites (apparently similar to small sausages).

However, luxury brands and foodie companies have seen a lucrative potential in bugs, including the high-brow Fortnum & Mason, with their 'Edible Scorpion' vodka concocted to provide a little extra sting. Delicacies such as mealworms and cricket pâtés often make appearances at food festivals, and one Dutch company

makes falafel from chickpeas and worms. The online retailer 'BugGrub' offer 'Bush Tucker Banquet' bags, consisting of ready-to-eat locusts, beetles, and more. Bon appétit!

So perhaps it's time to reconsider. Eating insects, although a hideous prospect to many a mind, is a much more sustainable (as well as nutritional) way of satiating our carnivorous desires. After all, the processed meat we buy is often of a dubious quality, as brought to light by the horsemeat scandal. Many swear by the taste of a grasshopper dipped in sweet chilli sauce or smothered in chocolate. So, although we protest that eating bugs is disgusting, in reality it's not a half bad idea.

So how do you take your worms? Boiled or fried?

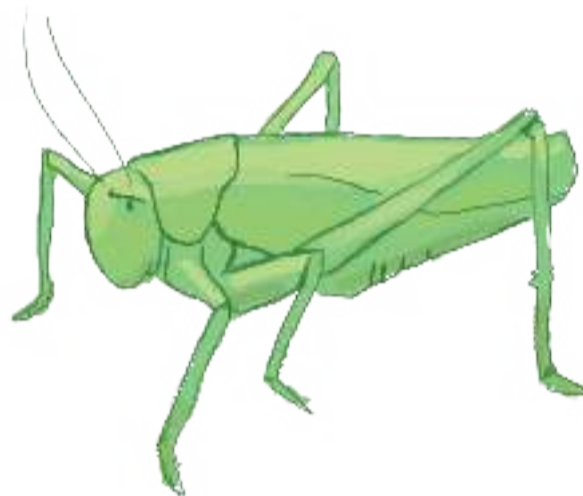


IMAGE: HARRIET CHESHIRE

## COSMO: a bargain banquet?

Kayleigh Sutton weighs up the pros and cons of COSMO, the marmite of York's restaurant scene



COSMO's offer of lunch for two for £10 has been a regular sight on the back of bus tickets for months now. Marketed as a 'Pan Asian and World Dining Experience', COSMO offers an all-you-can-eat lunch and dinner time buffet service to its customers. But is it worth hanging on to these small scraps of paper, with the idea of going 'someday' – when everyone is free, has the money to go, or doesn't have a deadline that week.

A central concept behind the brand is that there really is something for everyone, and even the fussiest of eaters should be a little excited with the prospect of this unique dining experience.

It is this widespread appeal that has seen them open 17 successful restaurants in the UK since its launch in Eastbourne

in 2003. As a chain, many of the restaurants nationwide have live cooking stations, and each sitting offers over 150 freshly prepared dishes to choose from, in a stylish yet casual dining environment. All of this for the reasonable price of £7.99 for lunch or £13.99 for dinner – from Monday to Thursday only. Seems like a pretty good deal, right?

Many were quick to acknowledge the ingenuity behind the model of the restaurant, with cuisine from all corners of the earth. Yet the consensus seems mixed. As one second year diner, Rachel, explained: "the food's not amazing, just standard, and unless you want to eat excessively, it doesn't make a first choice of where to go for a meal out". The company does promote value for money as a fundamental aspect of the dining experience, so with that in mind, expect to get quantity over quality. Other diners felt the promise of an exceptionally diverse or varied meal at great value for money was somewhat of an overstatement, with one even summarising the night was just "a waste of money".

On the other hand, Tom, a third year, noted that it was "a good way to try a lot of Asian dishes as you could pile a plate full of little bits of everything". It would therefore seem that COSMO removes the pang of disappointment of a 'wrong order', with that moment of serious food envy when your neighbour has ordered something that looks better than your own menu choice.

While COSMO may not be the best meal of your life, for those with a large appetite and an indecisive belly, it has a place in the York dining scene. However, you could put those precious pennies of loan to better use – York has some great restaurants to offer if you're heading for a well-deserved break from revision.

## #instahungry

With the ever increasing penchant for taking pictures of every meal, food is not just for eating anymore. Here we give a run-down of some of the best food and drink Instagram accounts which deserve your double-tap.



IMAGE: @SYMMETRYBREAKFAST

@symmetrybreakfast  
Every morning, the couple from London lovingly prepare a beautiful, symmetrical breakfast together. The perfect account for any one who appreciates art and exotic culinary creations from all over the world.

@topwithcinamon  
19 year-old London student and baking sensation Izy Hossack is your go-to for if you have a sweet tooth. While she posts an array of photos of sweet and savoury dishes, her baked goods are where she really shines.



IMAGE: @DRINKSTUBE

@drinkstube  
For those who love a good cocktail, the Jamie Oliver-endorsed team are a great follow on Instagram. With a combination of smoothies, hot drinks and cocktails, this is one of the best accounts out there for anyone with a thirst for beverage creativity.

@smittenkitchen  
Having recently secured a book deal, creator Deb Perelman will have you drooling over your phone with her mouth-watering baked goods and light lunch ideas.



IMAGE: @MINIMALISTBAKER

@minimalistbaker  
Recipes consisting always of 10 ingredients or less and ready in under 30 minutes, the recipes of Dana Schultz are beautifully simple. An advocate of vegan recipes that you can actually make, this is a must-follow for students wanting to stay healthy without spending hours in the kitchen.



# Found in Translation

Self-appointed 'Destroyer of the Japanese Language Learning Industry' **Koichi** talks to Jack Richardson about the Japanese language, linguistic shortcuts and sea creatures



For many of us, learning a second language can seem impossible. Even if one has the necessary linguistic inclination to begin with, remaining motivated a few months down the line is extremely difficult. Add to that the myriad of methods vying for attention, and it's a wonder anyone succeeds.

Despite his Japanese heritage, Koichi, creator of Japanese culture site Tofugu and language learning sites TextFugu and WaniKani, found his way through formal education. "I grew up in Washington state. I had Japanese relatives who spoke Japanese, but they never spoke it with me.

"I was that sort of 'In America you speak American' kind of generation of immigrant. Also, I practised kendo since high school, which was another reason I wanted to study Japanese. So, I studied Japanese in high school and university, and then kept studying after that."

For those of us not studying Japanese at degree level, Koichi fast outgrew his own system and started turning his attention to teaching others through independent study: "This became Tofugu, where I wrote about Japan, learning Japanese,

“”

We're not afraid to try things that go against common sense

and that sort of thing. Though at this point, it was fairly minimal."

Although the blog was originally written in Japanese, he noticed that many views were coming from outside Japan. "I did a post in English, and that had way more traction than anything else. I did a few more. Same thing. So, I spun off Tofugu and made it into a blog that only talks about Japan and the Japanese language.

I continued working on it throughout college and it got more and more popular. When I graduated, I thought I'd do something stupid, so I tried to go full time with the blog. I made about \$800 a month on ads, but not enough to survive or make my parents happy about my life decisions."

He spent a few months working for a live video e-education website, eduFire, during which time he explained that he worked both in marketing and teaching "Here's where I started experimenting with different teaching methods and sort of figured out what worked. I did this a lot and kept learning about teaching.

"Then the company ran out of money. I had to do something else. Mostly out of necessity I created TextFugu, which is an online Japanese textbook. I was really fortunate and it did really well, so I kept doing that. It continued to do well so I kept hiring new people to help out and eventually Tofugu has become what it is today."

Styled as "Learning Japanese the Hard Way", Koichi elucidated how Tofugu is, in its current form, a series of lessons grouped into eight 'seasons', starting from an absolute beginner level through to lower intermediate. The insistence on learning the basic scripts (hiragana and katakana) before all



project called EtoEto, which will stretch all the way up to advanced levels. Although he is experienced in teaching and learning formally, Koichi has little experience in learning from scratch that looks to make EtoEto “very, very different.” Coach learning Mandarin in a few months in preparation for a friend’s wedding revealed an interesting strategy for high-speed studying of the basics.

“To begin, I mainly focus on vocabulary. I find a list of common words by frequency and work through that. To do that, I come up with some kind of mnemonic method to make it go much, much faster, while putting the words in some kind of flashcard deck like Anki”

“Each language will have to have its own different mnemonic method, though. At the same time, I’ll learn about 12

“““

I think  
the thing  
that makes us  
really good is  
that we’re also  
pretty bad

but the most basic grammar points may be off-putting at first despite the rewards later on.

Nevertheless, he is untroubled by this to the point that it’s become part of the work ethic: “I think the thing that makes us really good is that we’re also pretty bad. What I mean is, we make our products for a very specific kind of person. For this person, our products are awesome. There’s nothing else like them. But, for another type of person they’re terrible. If I did try to make something for everyone though, everyone would think our products were just mediocre”

“We make learning resources for ourselves, and we use them, and then it turns out there are a lot of other people out there too who are kind of like us. We’re not afraid to try things that go against common sense. It’s amazing how many people don’t question things that ‘ought to be the way they are’ when really there’s a much better way of doing things.”

Perhaps the most significant (and scary) example of this comes when one starts learning the Chinese characters, or kanji, that make up a significant portion of the language. By structuring vocabulary around them, users learn two things at once. This is not to say that everything is illogical. Users are introduced to kanji by simplicity of the character, rather than the concept, as Japanese children may be. This may take a lit-

tle longer as far as utility is concerned, but builds confidence early in one’s ability to read and write a completely alien set of characters.

As kanji are taught as part of TextFugu, Koichi discloses that demand grew for a dedicated platform, especially for those who are more advanced in the spoken language. For this, Tofugu created WaniKani (literally, ‘crocodile-crab’), which has the goal of teaching one around 1,700 kanji characters and 5,000 vocabulary words based off them in about a one to two years. It is a highly structured online flashcard program, complete with related vocabulary and audio samples for pronunciation.

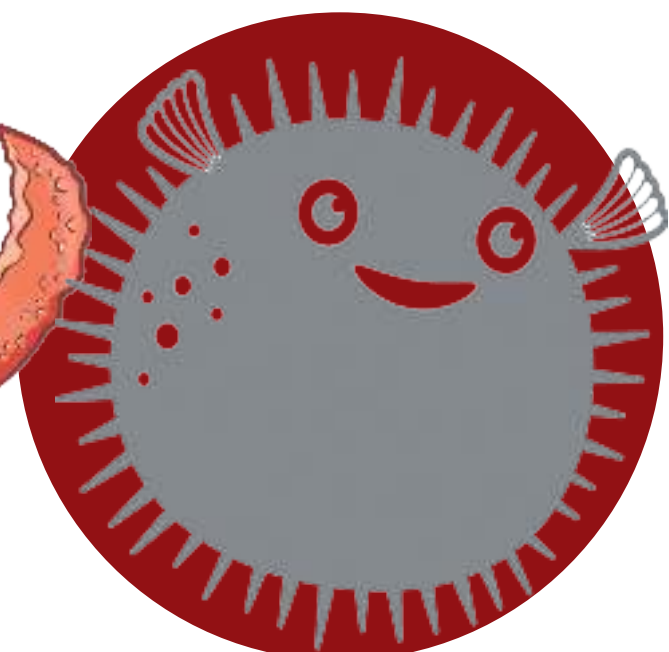
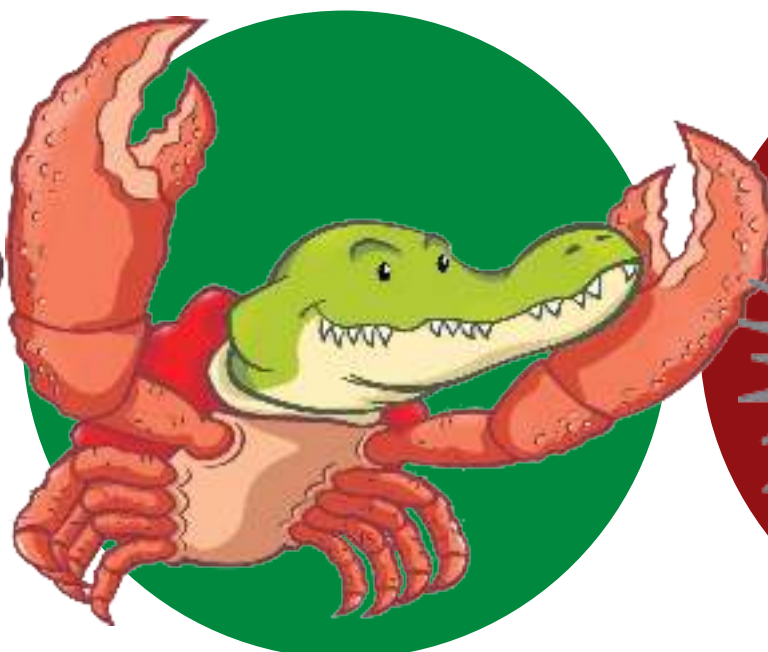
Learning kanji are grouped by level, and one must reach ‘Guru’ level in at least 90% of the characters in order to proceed to the next one. It uses the Spaced Repetition System, which is fast becoming popular for such applications, and works by adjusting the interval between each review of a flashcard depending on the success rate. If one answers correctly, the level goes up and a review is pushed back. If one gets it wrong, the card will be reviewed sooner. Of course, this is Tofugu, so expect a (very) slow start and maniacal late-night review sessions of 500 or more in the later levels.

Textfugu is currently being developed further into a new

grammar patterns. These 12 patterns will cover around 90% of the necessary practical vocabulary. So, if you can learn 500-1000 words and these 12 grammar patterns, you have yourself a really good foundation.” In this case, variations of eating an apple allowed him to focus on sentence structure and vocabulary separately.

Koichi and his team of crack web designers, writers and linguists remain hard at work on the various websites, tying together kanji, culture and language under one system. The only question that remains is why sea creatures feature so prominently: “I came up with Tofugu simply because I thought it was easy to say and remember. It has some repeating letters in there and the fu and the gu rhyme.

WaniKani came up because when we were trying to find a name I was looking through a Japanese kanji dictionary and came to the “fish radical” section. I found Wani, and then saw Kani, and thought, ‘Hey that rhymes and sounds good.’” He continues whimsically, “So we went with that. Really none of our names have any deeper meaning, they’re just short and sound good (at least in my opinion). Plus, we got to make an awesome hybrid alligator crab mascot for WaniKani, and that’s a win for everybody.” M



# My shit week so far

Tom Fennelly

From essay period to exam/dissertation period. The deteriorating life of undergraduates continues at an alarming rate as I stare blankly into the face of graduation, which stares back at me with open arms and a mask that hides the wily grin behind it. For it knows that my Bachelor of Arts will read 'Sociology with Criminology', and it knows that, beyond the vision of graduation, the real world will not be kind to me.

Has anything happened on campus since you've been away? Of course not, this university hasn't had anything noteworthy happen to it since they concreted over Vanbrugh 'Paradise'.

The only thing the paper picked up on was the strange ousting of Constantine SA president Usman Khan. Now I've met Usman, he's an absolutely lovely bloke who loves his cricket, so it's hard to see why anyone would want to slander him. Unless it was by some immature cliché collective, of course. Hmm.

What was most peculiar about that situation was that no one seems to have come and said exactly what Usman has done wrong. A group of new students who have no knowledge or experience about how a college should be run, telling a new student with no knowledge or experience about how to run a college how he should be running a college. Flawless Oxbridge-reject self-reinvention, probably.

Meanwhile, essay requirements have meant that I've had to spend a shit Easter holidays tucked up in the studios bosom of JB Morrell and his many books, occasionally fleeing back to the four-bed terraced house that I reside in after dark.

It is at this fragile point in my existence that all my housemates thought it would be a good idea to abandon me. Away from the sunny Snapchats of my other housemates having a relaxing time in a cosy London coffee shop, living alone for

near enough a month has invoked nothing but fear for when I inevitably have to survive in the real world.

I live in an old house, but every noise in my abode convinces my mind that my place is in a perpetual state of burglary. It's led me to occupy my mind with some pretty odd things.

Firstly, you'll be pleased to know that I've made lots of friends with the insects. Ants appear seemingly out of nowhere on my leg. I've befriended at least three of them, I think. Well, they all look the same. As I type this, I'm chatting to a fruit fly about my railway map of Britain and Ireland from 1907 while feeding it a grape (because I like trains, alright, each to their own).

My time on the internet has also been a tad confusing, as a few Intelligence Officers from GCHQ are probably discussing. Aside from the copious amounts of pornography (only joking, mum), I've noticed each of the sections of the library - JB Morrell, Raymond Burton and Harry Fairhurst - are named after rich, white men. A patriarchal conspiracy via subliminal messaging, it would seem.

Also, on a strange internet tangent, the online reviews for magnetic cat flaps are bloody hilarious. They work by putting a special magnetic collar on your cat, which unlocks the cat flap as they go through, stopping other cats from getting in. Unsurprisingly, this does have its problems.

One consumer lamented how the cat they have been trying to prevent entering the house just smashed the cat flap off its hinges as a way round the problem. Elsewhere, another consumer noted how her cat had managed to confuse the locking mechanism, meaning her cat became the only cat that couldn't get in, while all the others could.

These magnets were also proving to catch these cat's out in their mishaps outside the home. One user commented how

her cat came with half of her neighbour's cutlery draw stuck to the magnet, whilst another user found her cat wrestling with the metal water dish that had attached itself to the poor thing's neck.

When my parents got round to fitting one for our cat, it proved to be a helpful adversary to working out who had stolen half of my lunch. Probably the cat grappling with a soup spoon stuck to her collar.

Anyway, I'm only mentioning magnetic cat flaps because my cat's died and I'm trying to sell one. Don't worry, I'm over it.

Who needs a cat when you've got ants to talk to, eh? My life is slowly turning into a rejected plot-line for Ant Man.

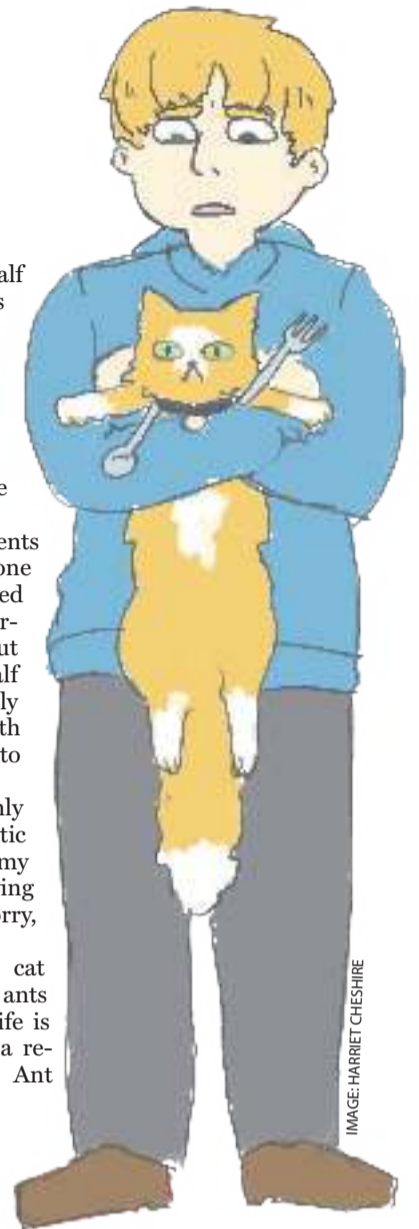


IMAGE: HARRIET CHESHIRE

## Callum McCulloch:

# 10 things I've learnt this week

**1** Uni ski trips are just an excuse for those who did a ski season to show off. NB. If you refer to it as a period of employment in an alpine region specialising in winter sports, people will be less likely to take the piss...I think.

**2** People that drink water from protein shakers in lectures just want everyone to know they go to the gym. Oh please do tell me more.

**3** Beware any hairdresser with a horrendous haircut. I like iced-gems as much as the next person, but not sure I'm comfortable having the delicious party treat as the inspiration for my current hairstyle.

**4** The punctuation and grammar on Tinder in Oxford is intimidatingly strong. However, I knew it was time to come back to uni when faced with the impossibly bleak statement "There's no one new around you."

**5** If exams were conducted on QuizUp I'd be sorted. My knowledge of obscure footballers may be enough to beat some randomer from Lebanon, but unfortunately doesn't have much practical application elsewhere.

**6** I'm hosting a funeral for my bank account. I hope you can all attend to help me through this difficult period. Donations are accepted and encouraged.

**7** Being the only one of my friends who doesn't smoke is seriously problematic. There's only so many times I can refresh Facebook while they go out for a cigarette every 30 minutes. Maybe I should start. Sorry Mum.

**8** Ed Miliband is as useless as a one-armed trapeze artist with an itchy arse. I'm not sure whether certain media outlets are favouring him as a result of a high-stakes 'odds on', or out of morbid curiosity. If it's the for-

mer, I can't wait for the Tab article.

**9** This term I'm paying £3000 for 28 contact hours. I usually love lavish, unsustainable spending but am not seeing the fun in this. But £50 for a shirt off Wavey Garms I'll probably never wear? Now you're talking.

**10** The first rule of the ski trip is, you must always talk about the ski trip. With uncountable Facebook albums, GoPro videos and #liveupdates there was enough to bore even the biggest social media fiends. But on a serious note, if a university student goes skiing on a mountain and no one is around to Instagram it, did they really go skiing? By the way, I went skiing.



IMAGE: HARRIET CHESHIRE

## Feeling the Blue

Sam Hickford

An age has come where we'll sing forth the New.  
Beyond the uncertain sway of trees  
Are the chants of political melodies  
As we tear down the shackles of our youth.  
Without a boring job to sway our views  
We vote to win back these crawled-over seas  
Or to consign neo-liberalism to our memories  
Carving a Left or Right of sincere Truth.  
But me, I don't think this world's been painted Bland  
In the strongest colours: we need more endless dull  
And my daddy's pockets are not quite as full  
As they once were. O, thou, sagging Half-Man  
David Cameron! I am your only fan  
Give me more and more of your unfinished Null!

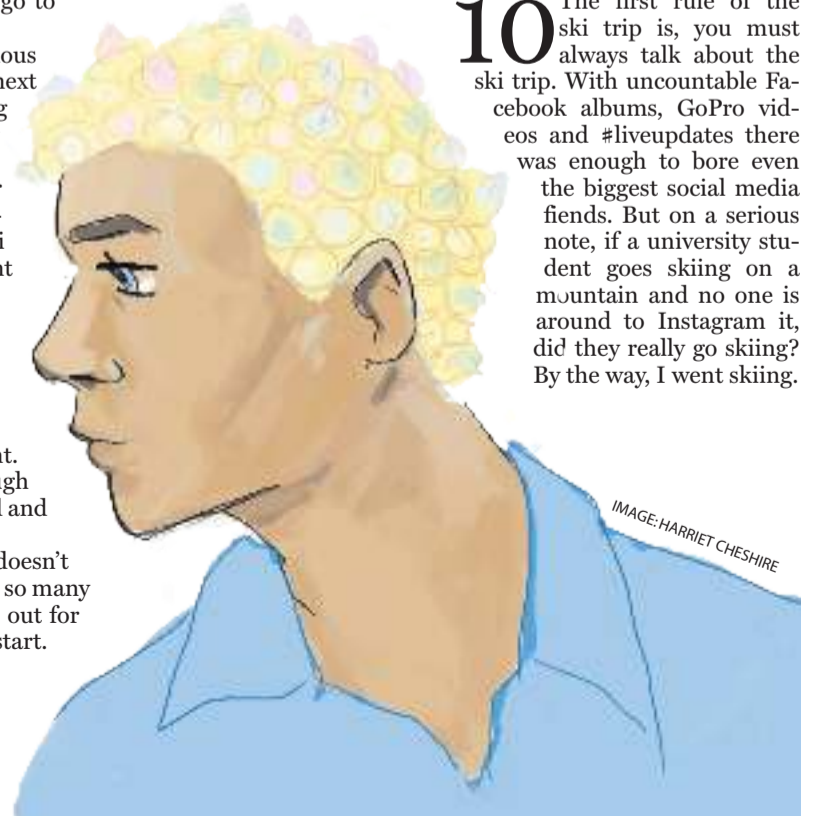


IMAGE: HARRIET CHESHIRE