Drop in uni applications

Latest figures reveal further lack of interest in UK university applications

Maclej Matuszewski

The gap between the number of applicants to UK universities this year compared to last has widened. The latest figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) reveal that the number of applicants for higher education courses has fallen by 12.9%, corresponding to over 23,000 people, compared to this time last year. Last month’s figures indicated a drop of only 9.0%. This overall drop comes despite the number of non-EU applicants, who pay far higher fees than others but are not affected by the government’s higher education funding reforms, increasing by 11.8% compared to last year. This suggests a growing unwillingness by prospective home students to pay fees of up to £9,000.

The Telegraph this week reported Liam Burns, the president of the National Union of Students, saying that “ministers need to take responsibility for their disastrous education reforms and admit that, regardless of the final application numbers, the behaviour of prospective students will be affected by the huge rise in fees.” However, Nicola Dandridge, chief executive of Universities UK, was reported as adding that “it’s worth noting that applicant numbers are currently down, not only in England, but also in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who do not have the same fees system.”

A UCAS press release also reminds that the final application deadline is January 15 and that “application patterns this far ahead of that date are historically unreliable indicators of the eventual year-on-year change.”

In a statement released alongside the figures UCAS Chief Executive Mary Curnock Cook added: “Recent changes in HE funding mean that application patterns this year may be different to previous years and we are gearing up for a possible late surge close to the January 15 deadline where applicants have taken more time to research their applications. We expect some depression of demand due to a decline in the young population but it is much too early to predict any effects from changes in tuition fees.”

In fact, the total number of applicants who faced an earlier deadline of October 15 (those applying to Oxford and all Medicine and Veterinary related courses) has only fallen by 0.8% compared to last year. The number of UK domiciled early deadline 18 year old applicants actually rose by 1.1%, despite the population size of that age group decreasing slightly.

It is also perhaps unfair to compare this year’s figures to those last year. There was an especially large number of applicants for 2011 entry, undoubtedly in no small part as a result of people wishing to avoid higher fees. Indeed, there has only been a 2.7% drop in total applications compared to figures released in November 2009.

Felix questioned Pro Rector (Education) Professor Julia Buckingham about application figures relating to Imperial College. Professor Buckingham reaffirmed her position regarding the latest figures following...Continued on Page 5

Wednesday sees mass walkout after Government plans pension changes

...Continued on Page 5
What's on

Chamber Music Society & UNICEF: Charity Concert

Chamber Music Society presents a winter-term concert in association with UNICEF. The members will play a variety of pieces from different genres – includes violin trios, four-hands, solo piano music. £3 for society members, £5 for non-members. Tickets on sale in the JCR on December 2 from 12:20pm. All proceeds will be donated to Children in Need.

Read Lecture Theatre, Sherfield Building, Level 5
Monday 05 December 19:30

Competition

Christmas is coming and the pencil cases may well be bare, but why not get back in the game?

Using colour in your note taking not only livens up the dark winter mornings, but it has proven to help you boost your memory by 78% and effectively increases your attention span by 82%.

The STABILO point 88 is a fine liner available in 25 different colours that aims to bring your note taking to life.

We’re giving away four lucky readers the chance to win a pack of STABILO Point 88 pens (a wallet of 20). To enter, simply email us at felix@imperial.ac.uk with the subject heading ‘FREE PENS’. The competition closes on Wednesday 7 December at 18:00. Winners will be randomly selected from all entries.

PICK OF THE WEEK

You don’t even need a home or garden to enjoy our new section

While I know approximately one person with a garden (and that’s a patch of scrubland), our extensive market research revealed that there’s a gap in the market for household stories and tips. Behold, the Home & Garden Section, which has somehow survived beyond a week.

This week we’ve got some household gold for you, do-it-yourself whiteboards! Whether you’re thinking of getting one for your room in halls or for private accommodation, thrill as our resident expert provides you with his top tips to get you started.

Editor

Ping Pong: Dim Sum Giveaway

21st century Tea House Ping Pong has 11 central London and City based restaurants serving hand-made dim sum, fragrant teas and cocktails. On top of this, the restaurant is giving away a meal for two. Simply email felix@imperial.ac.uk with the subject heading ‘PING PONG’ to be in a chance with winning. Competition closes on Wednesday 7 December at 18:00. In addition, Ping Pong are now running a 20% discount for students.

Lolcat of teh week

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Babar Ahmad petition leads to debate

Votable parliamentary discussion on extradition to take place on Monday

Aemun Reza

An online petition calling for ex-Imperial College staff member Babar Ahmad to be put on trial in the United Kingdom reached 141,000 signatures by its closing date of November 11, passing the requirement of 100,000 for a discussion in Parliament. This has led to a parliamentary debate being held next week on the issue of extradition.

Babar Ahmad is the longest imprisoned without charge UK citizen, having been imprisoned for over 7 years. He is fighting extradition to the US and the online petition was set up by his family to grant him a UK trial before he is extradited.

Instead of the case being raised in Westminster Hall as an individual discussion, Babar Ahmad’s case was included as a part of a bigger debate on extradition on November 24. The debate was only attended by 35 MPs but the conclusion was that the Babar Ahmad online petition should be discussed in the main chamber of the Commons.

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas spoke on the case during the debate. She acknowledged that the case was unique and the amount of support behind it was substantial enough for its own discussion. She said: “the family and the 140,000 plus people who signed the e-petition now deserve a full Commons debate on a voteable motion.”

She also mentioned that Babar Ahmad’s solicitors and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had admitted to never analysing the evidence in relation to his case in a letter dated November 22. This comes as news, as they had previously stated that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute him in the UK, hence his extradition to the US.

Babar Ahmad’s father, Ashfaq Ahmad commented on this revelation saying that “It is quite shocking to learn that the CPS made no effort to examine the evidence seized from Babar’s home but instead simply outsourced our criminal justice system to the US. Had it examined the evidence then it could have prosecuted Babar in the UK.”

“the family and people who signed the e-petition now deserve a Commons debate”

On December 5 there will be a full votable parliamentary debate on extradition. The Free Babar Ahmad Campaign hopes that this discussion will have a positive impact on Babar Ahmad’s case. They are confident that, even though the case is not mentioned in the final text of the motion, it will be the milestone they need.

Ashfaq Ahmad said: “It is essential that any reforms to the extradition laws that are voted for apply to pending cases such as Babar’s as it would be absolutely immoral to extradite British citizens under a Treaty that has been found by Parliament to be unfair.”

The full text of the motion calls upon the House of Commons to “reform the UK’s extradition arrangements as a matter of urgency to strengthen the protection of British citizens” through the introduction of a Bill in Parliament to “enact the safeguards recommended by the Joint Committee on Human Rights in its Fifteenth Report of 2010-12, and by pursuing such amendments to the UK-US Extradition Treaty 2003 and the EU Council Framework Decision 2002 on the European Arrest Warrant”.

This is a significant step for the Free Babar Ahmad campaign. The organisations have expressed their gratitude for the overwhelming public support of 141,000 signatures that brought Babar Ahmad’s case to the government’s attention. They are now awaiting the outcome of the debate on December 5 and how it will affect Babar Ahmad’s case.

Science Challenge winners announced

Alexander Karapetian

The Royal College of Science Union (RCSU) held a formal dinner for alumni and the Science Challenge 2011 winners on Thursday 24 November. The Science Challenge competition is an annual, national scientific essay writing competition aiming to encourage scientific debate, reasoning and the communication of science in a public-friendly context.

Imperial students may enter as well as students from secondary schools and colleges, with the topics separated as students from secondary schools entering the Science Challenge 2011. The overall winner of the Science Challenge 2011 was Andrew Purcell, who received £2,000 for his submission to the Physics question, “Why is it morally wrong to clone humans?”

Science Editors Alexander Karapetian and Kelly Oakes for the Mathematics and Physics prizes respectively and Erica Thompson for the Chemistry prize, each receiving £250 for their efforts. The overall winner for the external school entries was James Bezer, who received £500, with runners up Hiba Chaudhry and Joseph Herbert receiving £250 each.

John Sanderson, President of the Royal College of Science Association (RCSA) was present at the dinner along with Professor Maggie Dallman, Paul Beaumont, Vice President (Operations) of the RCSU and Science Challenge Chair announced the next challenge’s launch date to be 17 January 2012, commenting he “encourages people to enter as it’s going to be bigger than ever before,” with judges including the BBC’s Science Correspondent, The Times’s Science Editor and Lord Robert Winston.

Luke Cancez, RCSU President, said “it was fantastic to see that even after graduation Imperial scientists still have such a strong connection with not only Imperial but the RCSU,” adding “it was great to finally announce the winners and I’m looking forward to next year’s Science Challenge!”

More student cuts

Discount haircuts for Imperial students at Fresh Hairdressers

More student cuts for Imperial students at South Kensington’s FRESH Hairdressers.

Men's cuts £22
Women's shampoo and cut and blow-dry £38

All our cuts are done by highly experienced stylists.

Tuesday to Fridays 9.30 to 4.30 (sorry no discounts on Saturdays).

We are only 70 metres from South Kensington tube station

To book an appointment, call 0207 823 8968. Ask for a student discount and bring your Imperial ID, Cash only.
Public sector protests

Workers took to the streets on Wednesday over Government pension plans.

Navid Nabijou

This Wednesday, public sector workers up and down the country went on strike, in what was described by some as the “biggest walkout for a generation.” The action was directed against the Government’s planned reforms of public sector pensions, which comprise part of its wide-reaching deficit reduction plan. The most contentious aspects of the changes are plans to alter the method of calculating the pension rate from the current system – which is based on the worker’s final salary – to one which is based on his or her career average earnings. Accompanying this are plans to raise the retirement age to 66 by the year 2020, with the intention for it to eventually reach 68. The Government argues that these reforms are necessary, since people are now living longer and contributions to pension plans are no longer keeping step with the costs of those pensions. The Unions counter that the proposed changes will unfairly and disproportionately impact public sector workers, with employees having to work longer and contribute more towards an ultimately smaller pension. A number of public services have been closed or partially closed as a result of the action. Well over half of all schools in the country shut their doors, while in hospitals thousands of non-emergency operations and appointments were cancelled. Accompanying the strike were large marches in London, as well as other major cities such as Birmingham, Leeds and Exeter.

However, in spite of the scale of the action, problems at the country’s busy airports were kept to a minimum, with very few flight cancellations. Imperial College was also little affected, with very few lectures or tutorials being cancelled. The Government has branded the strike “irresponsible”; they claim that it is damaging to the economy and a hindrance to negotiations currently on-going with the Unions. The Unions, however, say that the Government has not properly engaged in negotiations for some time: “this idea that negotiations are continuing is just not true.” In recent weeks, the Government has hinted that its current offer to the Unions could be retracted if an agreement is not reached soon.

Abu Dhabi Diabetes Centre walk on

Carol Ann Cheah

An annual walkathon to promote healthy living, jointly hosted by the Imperial College London Diabetes Centre (ICLDC) in Abu Dhabi and The National Health Insurance Company Daman, took place at the Yas Marina Circuit (the venue for the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix) on November 25. Walk For Life, which is now in its fifth year, saw a turnout of up to 16,000, with over 45,000 having taken part in it since it began in 2007. The event saw participants immersed in an afternoon of family entertainment that included a mix of musical acts as well as fun fitness activities, which culminated in a 5km walk undertaken by the participants. Hosted under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Walk For Life is part of ICLDC’s award-winning public health awareness campaign, “Diabetes-Knowledge-Action”; encouraging the public to take charge of their lifestyles. According to Dr Michael Bitzer, Daman’s Chief Executive Officer, Walk For Life “draws the attention of the nation to the importance of regular exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle practice”, alongside a healthy and balanced diet.

Meanwhile, ICLDC’s Medical and Research Director and Consultant Endocrinologist, Dr Maha Tayyis, Barakat, spoke about the enormous health benefits of exercise. “A sedentary lifestyle and a poorly-balanced diet are likely to lead to excess body weight, which in turn can eventually manifest as Type 2 Diabetes,” she said. The ICLDC is a state-of-the-art outpatient facility that specializes in diabetes treatment, research, training and public health awareness. Launched in August 2006, the centre was built by Mubadala Healthcare in partnership with Imperial College London. It has since offered diabetes prevention, education and treatment to more than 100,000 people.
New academic health science partnership

North West London hospitals and institutions set to improve local healthcare

Sophia David

Imperial College London is establishing ties with numerous healthcare providers in North West London including approximately eleven NHS Trust hospitals and institutions. The new Academic Health Science Partnership (AHSP), to be launched in April 2012, aims to improve the health and care of the local population of 1.9 million people.

The AHSP will facilitate collaborative approaches between primary, secondary, tertiary, community and mental healthcare providers as well as the academic community at Imperial. For example, there will be greater opportunities to conduct clinical trials at a large and meaningful scale and to apply research findings to benefit a greater number of patients. The AHSP could also take a leading role in training and educating healthcare professionals.

The idea of developing the AHSP has been formulated by Professor Lord Ara Darzi, Head of the Division of Surgery at Imperial, and formerly Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health.

He said, “The partners involved in developing the AHSP face many common challenges but have one unifying goal: to bring the highest quality care to the people of North West London. By focusing on our strengths and systematically implementing what is known across the partnership about providing the best clinical care through innovation, we should achieve much more than we could apart. Our simple ambition is to use all of our academic and clinical expertise to improve the quality of care for our North West London population as a whole.”

Lord Darzi is to lead a Transitional Partnership Board that will confirm the membership of a number of healthcare providers and establish the organisational and legal structure of the AHSP. The Board will also include members such as Sir Keith O’Nions, Rector of Imperial, Chief Executives of the NHS Trusts and a GP representative.

O’Nions said, “Lord Darzi has developed a convincing vision for achieving higher quality care for patients through innovation, and for strengthening Imperial’s links with healthcare providers across North West London, opening new doors for all. He has achieved widespread support for his proposals and I look forward to working with the other partners to shape the AHSP.”

Drop in UCAS applications

Latest figures continue to suggest fewer people are considering university as an option

...Continued from Front Page

statements made after initial forecasts in October, saying: “Although marginally down on last year, applications to the College look very healthy. We will need to wait until mid-January to draw any conclusions about the final application numbers.”

Professor Buckingham told Felix in October that this year’s application rates to Imperial were “broadly in line” with 2010 application figures.

While the headline figures do seem worrying, it is clear that the situation is more complicated than it seems at first sight. It is certainly too soon to be making alarmist comments – we will only know the full impact of the higher education funding changes in January.
Protesters marched throughout London.

Protesters opposed plans for individuals to work for longer and pay more into their pensions.

Prime Minister David Cameron labelled the protests as a "damp squib".

Photos by Andrew Fok
The ever-changing shape of Anonymous

The Prime Minister and his Deputy making an artistic appearance

Unions estimated that up to two million people went on strike

Over 70 arrests had been made in London by Wednesday evening

Pensions lay at the heart of the protests
In brief

Scientists discover hidden channels under nanofolds and wrinkles

Wrinkles and folds are important in nature as they allow a large surface area to be fitted into a small volume. Studying these features could lead to the development of smaller electronic devices or even flexible computer tablets. Recent research from a group of scientists from the USA and South Korea has bought these technologies a step closer to reality.

Kyung-Suk Kim, professor of engineering at Brown University, says that “wrinkles are everywhere in science but they hold certain secrets.” Writing last week in the Proceedings of the Royal Society A, Kim and his team describe how they created wrinkles in 20 to 80 nanometre thick gold films by depositing them on a stretched layer of polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS), a rubber-like substrate commonly used in the electronics industry. When the tension on the PDMS was released the gold sheet buckled to form wrinkles. The surface of these wrinkles was then examined using atomic force microscopy while cut sections of the film were studied by a scanning electron microscope.

The team discovered that when the gold film buckled, difficult-to-see secondary wrinkles are formed at large separations from each other in addition to the far more closely spaced primary wrinkles. When the gold film is compressed to a greater degree the spacing between these secondary wrinkles was unexpectedly found to increase, rather than decrease, as is the case for the main primary wrinkles. The team also found that if the gold was compressed asymmetrically it followed the so-called Ogden model and the wrinkles began to touch, forming fully-fledged folds. Upon closer examination, the team found that previously undiscovered nanochannels were buried below the films. Professor Kim said, “They were hidden — we were the first ones to cut [the film] and see that there are channels underneath.”

The discoveries improve our theoretical understanding of folds and wrinkles, but could also have significant implications for fluid transport and be used in anything from microscopic pumps to water purification systems.

DOI: 10.1098/rspa.2011.0567

Macień Matuszewski

Dreaming of another world

Kelly Oakes on what to do if you need to take the edge off painful memories

Have you ever woken up the day after a night out and mentally recoiled in horror as you remember embarrassing things that you said or did under the influence of alcohol? Well, researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, have discovered a way to take the edge off those painful memories, all you have to do is nod off long enough to dream.

Matthew Walker, lead author on the study published last week in the journal Current Biology, and his colleagues showed that rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, the phase of sleep in which we dream, is associated with a decrease in activity in a part of the brain that processes emotions. This decrease in activity allows a more ‘rational’ part of the brain to take over the processing of memories, decreasing their “emotional intensity”.

Thirty-five people, split into two groups, participated in the study. Both groups viewed 150 images, chosen to elicit certain emotions, twice, with 12 hours between the two viewings. The only difference was that one group saw the images in the morning and then again in the evening in the same day, having remained awake in between, whereas the other group saw the images in the evening and then again the next morning, after a night’s sleep.

Those that slept in between the two viewings reported a significant decrease in their emotional reaction to the images. MRI scans also showed a significant reduction in activity in the amygdala, a part of the brain that processes emotions. Walker and his colleagues noticed that when activity in the amygdala decreased, the more ‘rational’ prefrontal cortex became more active.

REM sleep is also associated with changes in neurotransmitters. Walker and colleagues measured electrical brain activity and used this to show that levels of neurotransmitters associated with stress decreased during REM sleep.

Walker thinks that reprocessing emotional experiences during this period will soften those memories and allow us to wake up feeling better than when we went to sleep.

Unfortunately, dreams won’t stop other people remembering your drunken escapades, but at least your own memories of the event will be a bit blurry around the edges.

More seriously, the findings point to an explanation of why people with post-traumatic stress disorder find it difficult to recover from their experiences. Walker thinks that perhaps this dreaming therapy does not work the way it should in people with post-traumatic stress disorder, so they relive the full painful experience every time the memory is triggered.

But hope is not lost for patients with post-traumatic stress disorder. A physician at a US Department of Veteran Affairs hospital noticed that post-traumatic stress disorder patients who were taking a generic blood pressure drug had fewer reoccurring nightmares. It turned out that the drug has the side effect of suppressing the stress neurotransmitters that are usually reduced during REM sleep.

This observation was what prompted Walker to investigate the link between REM sleep and post-traumatic stress disorder in the first place. This study helps to explain how the drug helps those with post-traumatic stress disorder and may even open doors to new treatments that relate sleep and mental illness.

DOI: 10.1016/j.cub.2011.10.052

Fleming’s fungus finally identified

Sarah Byrne

Moulds are perhaps the least celebrated of organisms, with the notable exception of the one that led to Alexander Fleming’s discovery of penicillin in 1928. The story is well-known: the fungal spores were accidentally allowed to contaminate a petri dish, Fleming observed that the mould was killing the culture of bacteria on the plate, and on further investigation it was found to be secreting an anti-bacterial substance which we now know as the first antibiotic: penicillin. It’s surprising, then, that we’ve never known exactly what it was.

At least, that was the conclusion of recent research from Imperial’s School of Public Health, published in Molecular Ecology. The species has usually been identified as Penicillium chrysogenum, a commonly occurring microscopic fungus found in air and house dust and on some foods. And indeed P. chrysogenum, originally derived from mould on a cantaloupe melon, has been the culture of choice for industrial penicillin production over the years. However when preserved samples of Fleming’s culture were subjected to modern genetic analysis techniques, they turned out to contain a separate species, as yet unnamed. In fact, what we’ve previously considered to be simply P. chrysogenum actually appears to cover four distinct species.

This finding is of more than historical interest, however. Subtle differences between species of fungus mean they secrete slightly different versions of the antibiotic, or yield greater or lesser amounts. Understanding the differences and accurately identifying distinct strains gives us the ability to select for particular pharmaceutical properties, and discover entirely new compounds. As antibiotic resistance becomes an increasingly serious problem, innovation and clearer understanding in this field are essential.

Also this work offers a fascinating insight into the complex and debate-filled world of fungal species identification. Distinguishing between species is not always straightforward, least of all when dealing with microscopic asexual organisms where it is difficult to even define exactly what ‘species’ means. Indeed Fleming himself originally identified his fungus as P. rubrum, before P. chrysogenum was accepted as the correct diagnosis.

Earlier this year, other prominent researchers in the field published their claim that Fleming’s species is in fact P. rubrum. We may well expect a response from them soon, and the outcome is by no means certain. It would seem a fitting tribute, however, if Imperial scientists could honour their famous predecessor by giving his species their proposed name of Penicillium Flemingii.

DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-294X.2011.05244.x

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Earth’s core deprived of oxygen

Nicola Guttridge

The composition of the Earth’s core has been a mystery to scientists for nearly 60 years. While we know much about how this section of our planet affects us in terms of magnetism, energy generation, and planetary stability, its precise makeup has remained hazy. Until recently all we knew was that the core is composed of predominantly liquid iron, along with small amounts of nickel, and 10% (by weight) of light elements.

Researchers have now used a mix of seismic and geophysical data, in conjunction with laboratory models, to determine the relative proportions of these light elements present at the centre of our rocky planet. New research by Haijun Huang and colleagues, published in Nature, examines their respective abundances and comes to a surprising conclusion – the Earth’s core is oxygen-poor.

The composition of the Earth’s core is vital; differing elemental proportions would result in different rates of cooling, rate of core growth, and evolution of our internal geodynamo – something that results in the generation of and variation shown in our magnetic field. By examining our core, it is also possible to gain remarkable insight into the conditions present when the Earth formed, and its subsequent geochronological evolution.

The Earth’s core is known to be composed of a large, liquid outer core that houses a smaller, solid inner core – this is shown well on the accompanying image. The extreme temperature and pressure conditions make it difficult to investigate how seismic isotropy, velocity and density would differ with the presence of varying light elements. Possible suspects for this light element quota include sulphur, oxygen, silicon, carbon and hydrogen, due to their solubility at the temperature and pressure ranges required.

Huang and the research team performed shock-compression experiments, where samples are subjected to core-like conditions through high-velocity impacts. Experiments such as these have played a major role in unveiling current knowledge about core composition; when iron-rich samples are used the results are extremely close to those we expect to occur in our core.

The researchers used liquid samples in order to increase the accuracy of their findings as far as possible, and measured the sound velocity of the shocked samples along with the density and temperature states achieved through the impact.

Comparing these sound velocities and densities with the geophysical seismic data known for the core, Huang and colleagues were able to rule out certain compositions. They experimented by splitting the 10% by weight between oxygen, sulphur and iron, and found that samples with more than 2.5% oxygen by weight were unable to match the required dataset for density, temperature and sound velocity. “The results show that we can rule out oxygen as a major light element in the liquid outer core,” say the researchers.

While sulphur is able to match the dataset required, previous accretion models have limited the proportion of this element to only a small amount. Huang and colleagues have significantly advanced our understanding of the Earth’s geochemical origins and elemental structure, but further experimentation is required using different mixes of light elements in order to fully determine the composition of our core.

DOI: 10.1038/nature10621

Facebook is making the world even smaller

Alexander Karapetian

Facebook has conducted a joint study which suggests that there are, on average, 3.74 degrees of separation between users on the popular social networking website. The study, joint between Facebook’s data scientist Lars Backstrom and four researchers from the University of Milan, found that the number of people that link two others on average is approximately four. This is, as the authors of the study explain, “when considering another person in the world, a friend of your friend knows a friend of their friend.”

The study was carried out in May before the ‘Suggestions’ feature was added to Facebook and celebrity fan ‘Pages’ were not taken into account in the data. All active members of the site were included in the study, and users were deemed to be such if they had logged on at least once over a 28 day period. This marks the largest test regarding Hungarian author Frigyes Karinthy’s idea that there were six degrees of separation between any two people on Earth. The hypothesis has long since been tested with various samples, including a notable effort by psychologist Stanley Milgram in the 1960s involving delivering a letter to an arbitrary person by passing through acquaintances.

Facebook’s social graph data had 721 million members at the time of the experiment, with a total of 69 billion friendships. The researchers were able to analyse the data using rules from graph theory within discrete mathematics and by performing combinatorial analysis. They used a 24-core computer with a 1 terabyte (TB) hard disk to crunch the numbers, costing them “no more than a couple of thousand pounds”.

Facebook typically limits users to a maximum cap of 5,000 friends. The median amount from the sample size representative of 10% of the global population was only 100 friends, accounting for 0.00014% of Facebook’s total membership. Results indicated 99.6% of all pairs of users were connected by 5 degrees of separation, with 92% connected with only four. The average distance between any two users was found to be 3.74 degrees, shorter than the average distance of 4.28 found by a similar Facebook study in 2008, strengthening the idea that a larger sample size often results in a lower separation level.

The researchers said that “the average distance appears to be stabilising”, suggesting it would not change from 3.74 even if the rest of the world joined Facebook, arXiv:1111.4370v1

Nicola Guttridge

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The study was carried out in May before the ‘Suggestions’ feature was added to Facebook and celebrity fan ‘Pages’ were not taken into account in the data. All active members of the site were included in the study, and users were deemed to be such if they had logged on at least once over a 28 day period. This marks the largest test regarding Hungarian author Frigyes Karinthy’s idea that there were six degrees of separation between any two people on Earth. The hypothesis has long since been tested with various samples, including a notable effort by psychologist Stanley Milgram in the 1960s involving delivering a letter to an arbitrary person by passing through acquaintances.

Facebook’s social graph data had 721 million members at the time of the experiment, with a total of 69 billion friendships. The researchers were able to analyse the data using rules from graph theory within discrete mathematics and by performing combinatorial analysis. They used a 24-core computer with a 1 terabyte (TB) hard disk to crunch the numbers, costing them “no more than a couple of thousand pounds”.

Facebook typically limits users to a maximum cap of 5,000 friends. The median amount from the sample size representative of 10% of the global population was only 100 friends, accounting for 0.00014% of Facebook’s total membership. Results indicated 99.6% of all pairs of users were connected by 5 degrees of separation, with 92% connected with only four. The average distance between any two users was found to be 3.74 degrees, shorter than the average distance of 4.28 found by a similar Facebook study in 2008, strengthening the idea that a larger sample size often results in a lower separation level.

The researchers said that “the average distance appears to be stabilising”, suggesting it would not change from 3.74 even if the rest of the world joined Facebook, arXiv:1111.4370v1
A company spokesman for AMD recently stated that the company is going to “let go of the old ‘AMD versus Intel’ mindset”, a rivalry that has been ongoing for decades. It’s hardly surprising that they’ve decided on a shift in strategy, as they just haven’t been able to compete in the last few years. Even the latest Bulldozer chips – which were meant to be the pinnacle of desktop power – flopped. Meanwhile, Intel are going from strength to strength, with their Sandy Bridge line trouncing anything and everything that gets in the way. So what can we expect from AMD in the coming years? They have never expressed interest in building chips for smartphones and other handhelds before – and that’s a market already dominated by ARM. But they could have something in their sleeve. Or perhaps they’re looking at the emerging ultrabook market; one without a clear chip leader. Only time will tell, but with nothing to lose, it was probably the right decision for them.

**Tips & Hacks**

**AMD pulls out of ‘two-horse race’**

Feroz Salam

I expect most of you have noticed the new items that have started appearing in your Facebook feeds: Spotify playlists of music that your friends are listening to, and news articles from a whole host of national and international papers. They are part of the ‘OpenGraph’ scheme that Facebook has been pushing in earnest over the last few months: adding a few tags to your website means that any links to your website from within Facebook makes it a Facebook page.

Facebook’s been selling this feature hard: it describes the feature as enabling you to ‘integrate your Web pages into the social graph’, whatever that means. Yet how much control does the average user have on articles that appear in your profile, and how intrusive is the new service? As anyone trying to use any of the new links will have noticed, you can’t click on news articles on Facebook without signing up for ‘a new social reading experience’. Before agreeing to use the service you can choose which of your friends get to see what articles you read, a feature which I suspect few people are using. On getting through to the article, you are delivered to a Facebook themed version of the news website, with an option to visit the actual website if you wish. It’s all fairly straightforward and has been embraced with some enthusiasm by downturn-stricken publishers as a way of driving hits and advertising revenue. Yet despite the new media/social media feeding frenzy, of how much benefit is this to the average user? The new interface adds nothing of value to the reader, unless you find comfort in reading reams of PR waffle about the power of social sharing. The biggest change that you have probably noticed is that your feed is now cluttered with the titles of articles your friends have read. If you have anywhere near the average number of friends, the articles are bound to be from a wide selection and not really catered to anything you are interested in. As far as new and interesting reading material goes, I’ve seen little. The same applies to Spotify in my opinion. I don’t make friends solely on the basis of music taste, and in many cases would rather not know about what my friends have been listening to.

One might argue that the responsibility of choosing which feeds end up in your timeline lies with your friends, as they are in control of what you see after all. Yet I would have to disagree - the sharing system in Facebook is very cleverly organised to make limiting sharing a few orders of difficulty more complex to organise than expanding sharing. In a system geared towards drastically increasing the amount of information you push out to the world, it’s not surprising we’re hit with much more than we can possibly care about.

It wouldn’t be wise to underestimate the way media sharing has changed our communications. Yet sharing is only effective when it is organic, not when it is forced. Whole hordes of PR representatives shouting about the value of ‘next generation creative synergy’ will not get me to read an article about something that doesn’t interest me, no matter how hard they push it into my feed.

Social media is in essence about finding information that interests you that you wouldn’t have found before, but it doesn’t mean that information can be thrown at you from every context. When I log onto Facebook, it is to share things with all my friends, a diverse bunch of people from different countries, with diverse political and cultural tastes. Shoehorning views that are of no interest to me into my feed doesn’t interest me. Sharing has been great, but with everything, the point of ‘too much’ has been reached.

**Technology**

**Facebook: all shared out?**

Feroz Salam

Have you ever taken a picture, only to be disappointed when you later find it to be out of focus? You’re certainly not alone. Enter Lytro, the world’s first consumer-targeted light-field camera.

So what does that mean? In your everyday camera, what the sensor captures when you press the button is what you’re stuck with. It doesn’t matter how many millions of pixels you can capture at once if the light information you gather results in a blurry image. The light-field technology used in the Lytro takes a completely different approach to avoid this. Instead of focusing on a point and capturing the light information for that perspective, the camera captures up to 11 million rays of light going in every direction.

The main (and cool) advantage of this? You get to focus and refocus your photos after they’ve been taken. Not only that, but there’s no auto-focus motor working in the time between you pressing the button and the picture being taken. That results in the picture you end up with being much closer to the one that you saw with your eyes when you pressed the button – essential for fast moving objects and the like.

So what about the actual camera itself? It’s surprisingly small – a cuboid-shaped device just over 11cm long and 4cm wide and high. With that you get a small (3.3cm) touchscreen, shutter and power buttons, either 8 or 16GB of storage and a very decent 8x optical zoom. It’s light too, weighing in at just over 200g, but it’s strong aluminium shell means that it doesn’t have to skimp on durability to achieve that figure.

The pictures come in at about 20-25MB each, and Lytro quote that the 8GB models (“Graphite” and “Electric Blue”) will hold about 350 pictures, with the 16GB model (“Red Hot”) holding up to 750. The different models are priced at $399 and $499 respectively, which isn’t cheap, but isn’t too expensive either when you consider how new this technology is.

If you often find you’ve missed out on capturing those unmissable moments due to shoddy focusing, or perhaps you like to take pictures of fast-moving objects, then the Lytro may be the camera for you. Even if you don’t buy this camera, I reckon we’ll be seeing a lot more of this technology in the years to come.

**Lost focus? Try the Lytro**

Chris Bowers

Have you often found you’ve missed out on capturing those unmissable moments due to shoddy focusing, or perhaps you like to take pictures of fast-moving objects, then the Lytro may be the camera for you. Even if you don’t buy this camera, I reckon we’ll be seeing a lot more of this technology in the years to come.
Looking at The Bottom Billion

A review of the book and a glance at the main problem in international development

Rory Fenton

The world of international development is more often than not consumed by a series of piecemeal interventions – aid, debt cures and heart-strings-tugging TV ads might project. Often riddled with scandalous corruption and heated debate, a heavy dose of evidence is clearly needed. Oxford Professor Paul Collier aims to provide just this in his 2007 book The Bottom Billion. Billed as an explanation as to ‘Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it’, the book injects a generous helping of evidence and statistical analysis in the aid debate, like smashing LSE and Imperial together in a particle accelerator.

A real strength of this book is that it manages to be utterly devoid of ideology. It doesn’t even argue that fighting poverty is a moral issue, rather pointing out that the practical benefits more than pay for themselves. This absence of ideology is achieved by a genuine helping of evidence and statistical analysis in the aid debate, like smashing LSE and Imperial together in a particle accelerator.

Conflict

It’s pretty obvious that a country in the midst of a civil war is not going to develop economically, but what Collier does is to quantify this truism. From the stats, a given failing state has about a 14% chance of civil war occurring within a 5 year period. He finds that each percentage point knocks a percentage point off that risk. So a poor country growing at 2% will have the risk of civil war reduced to 12% whereas a country declining at 2% each year will have the risk increase to 16%. Of course, you might think that the prospect of peace leads to lower spending and so peace causes growth and not the other way around, but even when growth is caused by a rain shock (a flood, drought of very good rainy season), the same effect is found on the risk of conflict.

This might be hard for many to accept, as it is tempting to believe that rebels are fighting for some kind of cause, not simply because of a low growth rate, and besides, isn’t much of Africa’s civil strife simply a result of the horrors of colonialism? But when Collier compared countries with varying levels of economic inequality and oppression of minorities as well as whether or not they had been colonised, he could find no clear evidence that these made countries any more conflict prone.

Other than the human misery caused by civil war, the impact is economically devastating. Collier puts the economic damage due to civil war at $64bn to both the country itself and its neighbours. Given that two civil wars on average start every year, that’s about $100bn lost – more than the entire global aid budget.

So the poorer a country is, the more likely it is the fall into the very conflict that keeps it poor.

Natural Resources

Natural resources should be an easy route out of poverty and yet some of the world’s poorest countries have an abundance of the stuff, just think of Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Natural resources feed into the conflict trap since they provide something clearly worth fighting over, as seen in the movie Blood Diamond set in Sierra Leone. But natural resources can damage any country because they reduce the treasury’s reliance on individual taxes, thus making politicians less accountable to their people. It is also much easier for politicians to embezzle money from natural resources and spend the money on inefficient public services.

What Can Be Done?

Simply giving poor countries money is the obvious answer. But when used unwisely, aid can be counterproductive. When money flows into a country in the form of foreign currency (such as with aid) it needs to be converted into local currency to be useful. However, aid isn’t the only foreign currency that needs to become local; money generated from exporting goods also needs to be converted into local cash. So aid money actively competes with exports, reducing the value of engaging in the kind of trade which could pull the country out of poverty. Added to this, many poor countries place high tariffs on imported goods, which makes it even less likely that citizens will want to purchase foreign currency; they have nothing to buy with it, reducing the exchange value of the aid.

It also isn’t clear that aid necessarily brings growth (as argued most strongly by NYU’s William Easterly). Collier points out that a good natural experiment for an increase in aid money is “can be seen by the increases in the Nigerian governments revenues due to record oil prices; no additional growth followed. Not only can direct financial aid have this effect, so can the debt relief so loudly trumpeted by the Live 8 concerts. This doesn’t mean that aid is doomed to failure; rather that it can’t be seen as a magic bullet.

And aid money doesn’t necessarily go where the West might want it to go. Collier estimates that about 11% of aid is actually spent on the country’s army, representing 40% of military spending. Interestingly, Collier finds that the influx of aid increases the probability of a coup; to the victors, the spoils. Aid also reduces the need for economic reform, as it removes the urgency.

Given this, Collier’s conclusion is not that we should give up on aid, rather that it should be given when and where the time is right. Corrupt governments will only waste the stuff, but once a genuine reformer gets in they should receive all the help they can get.

Military Intervention

This is undoubtedly the most controversial section in The Bottom Billion. Remember the $64bn lost by everyone in the 1990s war? Collier argues that military intervention can prove to be one of the most successful forms of aid, providing intervening forces are prepared to take real risks, unlike the infamous peacekeepers in Rwanda, who would only fire when fired upon, not when civilians were at risk. The economic arguments make a novel addition to the (but compelling) moral ones.

Conclusion

Collier, in all, seems convinced that we can chip in. International regulation is his weapon of choice to tackle governments that pay bribes and to provide a benchmark mark for reform minded politicians. His case for military intervention is definitely the most daring of his proposals and in a post Iraq world, the least likely to take place. Aid can make a difference when directed at the right time and in the right kind of investment (like infrastructure). The book is certainly very ‘big picture’ and a proper review of how aid works at the local level will have to wait for my rereading of Poor Economics. All in all, a worthwhile, interesting read.

And the title of the book? Perhaps the most successful criticism contained within the book is contained within that title. It is time, Collier argues, to move away from seeing a world of 1 billion rich people and 5 billion poor when so many of those poor are pulling themselves out of poverty. The Millennium Development Goals make this mistake by bunching the world’s poor together. A new development strategy focussed less on boosting China, India and Brazil could achieve a lot more for the poorest billion who, so far, seem stuck at the bottom rung.

The world beyond College walls

by Joseph Letts and Rajat Jain

Iran

After Tuesday’s storming of the British Embassy in Iran by angry protesters, tensions have risen between Iran and several European countries. British diplomatic staff have been evacuated from the country and on Wednesday Germany and France announced they were also withdrawing their embassy staff in Tehran.

Wednesday saw a further breakdown in relations between London and Tehran as Foreign Secretary William Hague gave Iranian diplomats 48 hours to leave the UK.

Mexico/US

US police have found an impressive drug tunnel, which links warehouses in Tijuana and San Diego. The tunnel is approximately 4.5 metres deep and contains lighting and transport carts for efficient drug movement. Mexican security forces seized three tonnes of marijuana at the tunnel entrance shortly after discovering the tunnel in a warehouse in Tijuana.

A US police spokeswoman speaking during a press conference said it was the most impressive drug tunnel they have found in 5 years.

Egypt

Last week protests in Tahrir Square were restarted as the population shows its dissatisfaction with the rule of the military council that took over the governance of Egypt after the deposition of former President Hosni Mubarak. Since they started to lead the country, public safety has decreased and economic investment in the country has declined. After increased pressure, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces promised to hold a presidential election in June, as well as releasing political prisoners.
Western tragedy

The Felix Business Section finally turns its eyes to Europe in an attempt to explain the seismic pressures of the bond markets

Albert Nickelby

As a result of the so-called “Euro debt crisis” – whose solution seems to be too distant still to be clear – several of the euro club countries have been bailed out. Starting with Greece (2009), Ireland (2010) and Portugal (2010) have also been rescued, and in all the cases, the process followed a similar pattern.

At some point, financial analysts and the “markets” – that abstraction which so conveniently hides the fact that there are made up of people – start questioning the capacity of those countries to honour their debts. How so? Enter the credit rating agencies, whose credibility, severely harmed by the credit crunch, does not prevent them from offering their educated opinion on the subject, in the form of the rather vulgar recitation: “public debt is too high; current deficit is not being adequately tackled; hence, we are cutting their credit rating from AA- to BB+ with negative outlook…”

This brings in to question the ability of those countries to pay their debts, and panic ensues.

Their public debt bonds, which are exchanged in secondary markets, become far less attractive than before, and the interest rates investors ask for buying new emissions surge. In no time, these rates have reached such high levels (about 7% interest for 10 years bonds is usually thought to be the limit) that it becomes unsustainable for those countries to sell their bonds on those terms. As a result, the credit rating agencies cut their rating further, and in no time those countries have be bailed out by the IMF and the European Union.

As a spectator, the process seems quite dramatic.

The attention of the media focuses on public finances – self-styled financial experts start pontificating about their problems, their economy’s durability, the sustainability of their finances, and so on.

A media circus begins, that only precipitates the outcome, and, upon being bailed out, they are forced to undertake severe budget cuts, which inevitably depress the economy further, thus forcing them to take even more radical measures that necessarily produce further recession: the tragedy has just begun.

The arguments analysts and experts usually offer are all the same. They will point out the unsustainable amount of public debt with respect to the GDP; then that their governments have failed or have not done enough to reduce their deficits; that the ongoing economic crisis means that they are less likely to grow enough to pay off their debts; that their economies have severe structural problems that make the long term sustainability of their finances impossible unless dramatic reforms are implemented.

They will suggest liberalising the labour market, increasing the retirement age, VAT and other taxes, and slashing government spending: “privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation”, economists’ universal panacea.

These arguments seem sensible: offered from an expert’s perspective they are by all means good ones. However, the fallacy is that the same arguments offered to question the public finances of Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain or Ireland can equally be used to question those of more economically fortunate countries such as the UK, Germany, France, or the USA.

“...the prudent finances of Germany seem no better than those of the often questioned Italy”

Consider, for instance, the UK, where public debt amounts to 81% of the GDP. If the total debt is accounted for, i.e. if the foreign debt due to private individuals and companies is included, the UK’s debt is of 436% of its GDP. That is amongst the highest in the developed world: each UK citizens owes €117,580 to foreigners. Now, compare these figures with those of, say, Spain: public debt, 67% GDP; total (public+private) debt, 284% GDP; each Spaniard owing €41,366 to foreign investors.

The prudent finances of Germany (83% GDP public debt; 176% GDP total debt; each German owes €50,659 abroad) seem no better than those of the often questioned Italy: 121% GDP public debt; but 163% of total foreign debt, so that each Italian would owe €32,875 to foreign investors. Germany and the UK are not the same, which roughly explains why some are so severely questioned and others so mildly treated: it is, after all, a matter of confidence, of whether investors believe you will be able to honour your debts or not. But that confidence is more or less based on the strengths investors may see in each country’s economy. For instance, the UK has a huge financial sector and attracts and moves a great deal of capital, which accounts for much of the private debt; as long as it does not have to be bailed out by the UK government (an impossible deed, looking at the amount it owes), the UK seems to have a strong enough economy to be able to honour its debts. The huge Irish debt is also explained by the amount of foreign companies that, thanks to the Irish fiscal dumping system, have their European headquarters in the emerald isle; but as the housing bubble burst, Irish indebtedness was judged too large. In turn, Spain has suffered a devastating burst of its construction and housing bubbles, so although its public finances are by far the best of all the countries considered, its overall economic situation, with 20% unemployment rate, doesn’t seem very attractive. And Germany’s economy has fared so well during the recession, and its fame as a safe haven. But, all in all, reasons to fear the long-term sustainability of public debt are not that well founded.

But, in all, reasons to fear the long-term sustainability of public debt are not that well founded. Consider, for instance, Germany. It is quite true that its economy is the strongest one in Europe, but all the same it has had its share of problems. The arguments analysts and experts usually offer are all the same.

The prudent finances of Germany seem no better than those of the often questioned Italy.
The Autumn Statement: 10 Key Conclusions

- Economic growth forecast downgraded
- An extra £111bn of government borrowing over the next 5 years
- 1% cap on public sector pay rise (after 2 year pay freeze is over)
- Rise in state-pension age to 67 brought forward to 2026 (from 2034)
- Basic State pension to increase to £107.45 p/w
- January’s 3p increase in fuel duty delayed until August
- Credit easing of £20bn (but possibly up to £40bn) to start helping SMEs borrow
- £1bn to subsidise 6-month work placements for 410,000 young people
- £5bn new spending on infrastructure (another £20bn to be unlocked from pension funds)
- £400m to kick start construction projects

in the eurozone, but its public debt is still an 82% GDP; its 10 public banks are close to bankruptcy, and many of its municipalities and lands are broke. A large proportion (37% and increasing) of its energy imports are Russian gas; and, most worryingly, its demographics are catastrophic: with an average retirement age of 62, in 2060, 44% of the German population will be over 65 years old. There is already a huge shortfall in the pensions system, and, most worryingly, its demographic tendencies continuously harm its economic perspectives in the long term. The UK is expected to become one of the tories’ main pledges during the election campaign of 2010, and signals a major blow to the Conservatives. The general economic outlook is far bleaker now than it was 24 months ago; it seems that the austerity measures and the weakness of our public finances, combined with the international economic situation, have led our economy back to recession. Whether or not Osborne’s policies are the main responsible is a question of opinion. On the one side, the government is arguing that the stagnation is mainly due to external factors such as commodity prices and the Eurozone crisis; on the other hand, Labour argues that it is the way the government is spending the public sector for our welfare. But at the same time, any scheme that tries to help youth unemployment cannot be too harshly criticised. The main message from the Autumn Statement is that everything is worse than before. Thus, the Conservatives are now on the defensive, starting to make pledges promising plans for the economy to start growing again. However, what Osborne offered this week seemed to be a lot about small policy, still too obsessed with keeping an austerity plan that seems to be slowly sinking. With these promises of action, at least they seem to discard the option of just sitting tight, crossing our fingers, and hoping we all get out of this intact.
Let’s talk about Ron Paul

Why Liberty and Democracy don’t mix

Samuel Horti

I f you’ve been paying attention to the goings on in America in the lead up to next year’s presidential elections, you will no doubt have heard many political commentators expressing the view that Ron Paul is the man that everyone has been waiting for. The hero that America needs. What is especially impressive is that this type of praise is happening across the board, regardless of political loyalties or emotional ties. Now, I’m not going to tell you Ron Paul is a bad presidential candidate. He, in contrast with many in the American political system, is very honest, consistent and forthright with his views. I would whole-heartedly agree with him on many of his political positions, such as his desire to abolish the income tax (and lower taxes in general), and to end the “War on Drugs.”

Best of all, he is a Libertarian who wants to reduce the size of the government and decentralise power, something that seems to me, at least in principle, a very good thing. Although not much of an achievement, he is by far and away the best Republican candidate, and seems to be the most viable alternative to another 4 years of Mr Obama. However, as you can probably tell from the title of this article, I find that Ron Paul’s ideas are fraught with practical problems to their very core. Some of his more ludicrous views, such as his non-belief in both evolution and the separation in Church and State, are regrettable for a man of his intelligence, but their importance is negated by the fact that Mr Paul won’t impose his beliefs on the American people. This, somewhat ironically, is where the main problem lies.

Essentially, Ron Paul wants decisions to be increasingly made at a state level. Whilst this means, thankfully, that his more ridiculous opinions will not translate themselves into law, it worryingly puts power in the hands of the American people. “But surely,” I hear you cry, “more power to the people is a good thing, right?” This is the point at which the problems of democracy rear their ugly heads. Anyone who advocates individual liberty (as Ron Paul does) must immediately sense a problem when confronted with a democratic system. Democracy rear their ugly heads.

Anyone who advocates individual liberty... must immediately sense a problem when confronted with a democratic system

Would you have known if we had just put a picture of a random guy that wasn’t Ron Paul? Don’t worry, this is Ron Paul. Honestly. Or is it?

FELIX

Imperial is unique rather than active

Following the sudden impact of the first wave of student protests last year, this week’s pension protests almost seem part of a natural occurrence, but one, nonetheless, that continues to demonstrate the ever-changing nature of political activism. Imperial, however, remains an anomaly amongst institutions as protests continue on (as demonstrated by limited campus action on Wednesday). This is by no means a negative aspect.

If there is one area of life at Imperial College that separates us from a number of other universities, it is the neutrality of our Student Union. The refusal of the sabbatical officers to break ultra vires means that, at least for the immediate future, we will not see them protesting in central London alongside their counterparts from other universities, such as University College London. If anything, officers would be representing only a portion of students’ views should they attend. They are, in a way, politicians rather activists.

As a scientific institution, Imperial prides itself on the search for answers to difficult questions through considered evidence and an avoidance, where possible, of bias. If our Union actively followed one particular political viewpoint, it would provide an opposing message to the aims of the College.

For those who believe that a more politically active Union would lead to a more politically active student body, they would be mistaken. As the student body is largely inactive when it comes to activism of their own accord, suggestions from student representatives would be equally likely to fall on deaf ears.

The fact that our Union does not, for the most part, take a particular political standpoint is something that should be praised rather than ridiculed. If anything, a far greater number of students are likely to stand behind a Union that is neutral and caters to as large a group of students as possible. Such a situation, as it stands at the moment, in no way hinders the potential for the individual student to organise a group to protest for their own political view.

Some may argue that they do not represent the student viewpoint, but the neutrality instead provides a blank slate that can be written on by the individual, rather than the result of dictation by a higher authority. We should not decry our apoliticism, but instead embrace the measured thinking and opinion that we are open to.
This title has been delayed

Reading that title, you can probably roughly guess what this article is going to be about. It’s the trains in Britain. I used to think the trains being often delayed, expensive and not running much on the weekends are an Essex thing, innit. It appears that I was wrong in that assumption, and Mock The Week panellists must be pleased that it’s widespread enough for everyone to appreciate their jokes. I’m just going to go straight for the jugular here: the trains in Britain need to be re-nationalised.

I can’t pretend to know much about what the trains were like in the past. I also don’t really reliably ask anyone: if I ask my mum (who, if she’s reading, I’m eating loads of fruit and working so hard that I could technically take Imperial to some sort of criminal tribunal) she runs out of the room to grab her most rose-tinted of spectacles and tell me everything was perfect. So, what I know is what is here at the moment. Obvi-ously, it wasn’t always perfect then, it’s not perfect now, and it will never be perfect. We should look to improve what we have now. Saying “yeah, well, if you look at objectively it used to suck so why does it matter if it’s awful now” is a bit defeatist. We constantly should be trying to find a way to improve a service.

You may, at this moment, be shouting, “hey look you massive arsehole, we’re over two paragraphs in and you haven’t made an argument yet”. To this I would say that calling me an arsehole is a bit strong, made an argument yet”. To this I would say “hey look you massive arsehole, we’re”.

The train service is a public service ... it just makes no sense for it to be privatised

The train service is a public service, it is a public service for a good reason. It just makes no sense for it to be privatised. The train service is a public service for a good reason. It just makes no sense for it to be privatised.

The Occupy Protests are succeeding. Just look at this paper

The Occupy movement, inspired by protest in Spain, made famous in New York and now a global phenomen-enon, is succeeding. On the face of it, this might seem to be an undeni-able claim. Indeed, some of you will be reading this and audibly scoffing. “They have no clear goals; what are they succeeding at?”

Actually (though I would firmly suggest you read their statement at occupy.lxs.org), that question is surprisingly valid. There is no single event that will definitively cause the protesters to say “right, job done”, and head home. Though the movement ad-vocates some specific policies, such as the abolition of Tax Havens, the main focus is something more fundamental.

What these protests aim to do is to encourage public thought, discussion and debate over the social, economic and po-itical issues that affect all of us each day. In short, they are trying to effect the end of societal apathy.

What the occupiers have recognised is that a movement will fail without wider support, especially when you seek to erode the concentration of power held by the 1%. As such, they have sought to in-clude as many people as possible from day one. For example, the London protesters have set up Tent City University and the newly opened Bank of Ideas, holding daily free talks and discussions. Even the camps themselves welcome anyone, whether you’re a purposeful visitor or a curious passer-by.

For another example, consider the movement’s General Assemblies used to decide everything from appropriation of food to writing their political agenda. Totally “horizontal” and once again open to anyone, the GA reaches decisions via collective agreement, and under the rules any spectator can vocalise their particular opinion or reservations.

When the protests began, many sceptics may have gladly remarked that for “the 99%”, the number of people demonstrat-ing seemed somewhat small. But, through this focus on public awareness, it has taken less than six months for a single camp to swell into a global phenomenon. It is with this in mind that I declare the Occupy movement is succeeding. You need only look to this, the student paper of a reputedly apolitical institution, to see that it has managed to provoke a public debate. In the past month we’ve seen fewer than three comment pieces on the Occupations and two features on public protest. However, this success marks only the beginning. These protests have become more than simply clumps of tents; they have become an ideology, merging seam-lessly with the wider public outcry that saw 61% of British people support the No-vember 30 strike.

As @OccupyWallStreetNYC tweeted, “You Can’t Evict An Ideal”. Cheesy? Yes. But, in fact, already vindicated: two weeks after, 200 people were forced from Zuccotti Park, more than 1000 took to the streets of New York, and the demonstra-tions show no sign of stopping.
"Total policing" not like total football

After 12 hours of protest, beginning at 7 in the morning at Liverpool Street, the idea of protesters as lazy hippies has simply dissolved. They believe the mantra that the early anarchist gets the worm. We saw electricians, librarians, teachers, council workers and children line the pickets and march in protest against the changes to public sector pensions. However, following on from the November 9 student protest where 4,000 police, 3 helicopters, steel barriers and numerous surveillance techniques were used against 5,000-10,000 protesters, the strike day in London was marked by unprovoked heavy handed policing.

This has now been termed "total policing" and has been created to save face for the Government after last year’s student protests and the summer’s riots. Although people champion this as what the police should be doing to control violence, the knock on effect is that peaceful protest is being squashed. In the morning, police, with dogs, descended on 30 picketers in Hackney arresting them for “blocking a road”. Whilst this occurred I took part in the Occupy London tour of the city raising awareness about the strike during the morning rush hour. The police outnumbered us, getting quickly physical, aggressive and frequently kettling us; they obviously had the idea that nothing would happen today.

Before heading out on the main London march to Victoria Embankment, I joined the public service picket in Brixton. Here people felt angry about bailing out the banks whilst public service workers have greater pressure on their already low pay. They chanted “What do we want?”, “A pension”, “When do we want it?”, “Before we die!” This energy, also present on the march, quickly fizzled out as people were shepherded by lines of police in to almost motion-less crowds to allow traffic to continue. The police’s presence flattened nearly all emotion. After 3 hours of constrained marching, we arrived at Victoria Embankment exhausted, and like the people around us, feeling like nothing had been achieved.

As the 2 million workers refused to work today, 92% of London schools closed, and thousands flooded the streets across the country. David Cameron remarked in the House of Commons that the day was a “damp squib” and Boris Johnson asserted that it “won’t make a bean of difference”. The lack of recognition of the protest, its support, and the nearly successful attempts to quash it with the force of police, meant that I felt left at the end of the march completely disillusioned. Our collective effort has delivered nothing due to the arrogance of the Government, which believes it can ignore the population and its interests without sparking further riots. As things could not get worse, we witnessed the baseless arrest of people leaving the protests in Trafalgar Square; and when we gave them legal advice, as the police were ignoring the legal process, we were threatened with arrest ourselves. Democracy is being burned to ashes.

However, a surprise Phoenix of civil disobedience managed to escape from the heavily policed flames. On a Sunday morning, the authority of Occupy London we gathered in Piccadilly Circus along with considerable riot police, though, as if by magic, hundreds of Greek football fans entered the square celebrating a victory. The police got distracted, the samba band kicked into action and a flare led crowd charged around the corner into Xitrata, the company with the highest paid CEO in the FTSE100. Noam Chomsky criticises football for distracting the masses from political action, though here the distraction served a much-needed purpose.

Today would have passed with no mention of the bankers that have caused this crisis, as the city was heavily blocked. The politicians safely lay behind 12 foot steel fences and the Tory headquarters, ransacked in last year’s student protests, were guarded, even though they lay miles from the crowds. However, by sheer chance, the startling inequality of this country – where the CEO of Xitrata is paid £15m on a year, as 60% of children in the nearby Tower Hamlets lie in poverty – could be shown in all its disgusting glory. The protesters who peacefully entered the building will now expect up to a year of legal proceedings to be prosecuted with aggravated trespass – a charge purely created for policing peaceful protest. The night the arrest was also be filled with police harassment; the people caught in the vicinity are being placed on police records (hopefully including the suit-wearing man who kicked me), police dogs were brought in to an already contained crowd and I have heard reports of police violence in isolated pens.

Even with the disproportionate scale of police reactions, people still felt it necessary to highlight the issues with the Government’s austerity measures, where the poor are punished as CEOs see their pay constantly rising. And for the moments where the orange glare of the flare guided people into the bastion of inequality that is Deloitte, it was truly beautiful.

Luke Sheldon

We need a new kind of giving

If you are a science student at Imperial there’s very little you can do to get involved in international aid. The medics can use their skills to deliver life-saving vaccinations in Mozambique. The engineers can use their skills to build drought-fighting dams in El Salvador. And us scientists? We get to teach English in a random school somewhere. Of all the skills I’ve gained from my education, being able to teach English isn’t one that ever made it to my CV. And yet for so many of us this is the only way to get involved with charities. This feels like a terrible waste of ability. Fortunately it doesn’t have to be this way.

You see for all Imperial’s students that are involved in charities, there are questions that ought to be answered: just how do we know we’re actually making a difference? How do we measure and improve outcomes? This is where the scientists come in.

I would argue that the state of international development today is much like the state of medicine two hundred years ago. The patient’s problem may be clear but she finds herself surrounded by various conflicting quack doctors, each offering his own particular brand of tonic to cure all-ills. It took the rigour of the scientific method with its ruthless reliance on randomisation and evidence to break through the quackery and create what we now call medicine. To be poor in 2011 is much the same. The problems may be clear but solutions are offered from so many different groups, each peddling their own particular cure-all-ills ideology, that any correct answer is likely to be lost among the crowd. The case for a new, rigorous, evidence-based approach to aid couldn’t be clearer.

A year ago I had the chance to see how this could work in practice. Luke Turkana, the largest body of water in Kenya, has been the site of so many important archaeological discoveries that it is termed “the cradle of civilization”; a title that will strike any foreign visitor as ironic on seeing an area with miniscule literacy, increasing and devastating drought and a HIV prevalence of up to 25%. It was here that a friend and I had the chance to investigate a fishing program, interviewing fishermen who had received subsidies to help them buy boats and nets. After speaking to around 200 of these fishermen and going fishing ourselves, we took the data back home and ran it through our machines with a statistician. The results were surprising.

It seemed that boats were bad, expensive investments compared to nets. Boats served more as a status symbol than an economic investment. But this was good news. It meant that the charity funding the subsidies could shift their focus onto nets, saving them money while increasing the number of fish caught. They are currently working on how best to implement this strategy.

The power of what was essentially a lab report level analysis was surprising and exciting. But the role that the scientific method can play gets much more sexy with Randomised Control Trials, orRCTs. To oversee a metaphor, they work just like medical trials – properly randomised with control groups receiving no aid and a test group receiving ‘treatment’ such as a particular microfinance program or school system. Carrying out this kind of trial takes exactly the skills required in a science degree.

The ability of the scientific method to shine a light on a hitherto murky world of guesswork and quackery has been proved over the centuries, but its role in aid is just starting to be recognised. Some at Imperial have taken a lead in this – Sir Alan Fenwick will be talking about his experience in just this work today at 6 in SAE. It will likely be today’s graduates who will help shape an aid debate in which evidence truly triumphs over ideology. For this to happen the aid world needs more scientists getting involved. Looking to make a difference? A career in development may be an unexpected use for your degree, but it’s much more effective than teaching damned English. Who’s with me?
IC Debating Society are always up for an argument. Sometimes they send them to us to put in here. Unfortunately, this week, they got sidetracked for two hours debating the meaning of debates. Then they started arguing about if they were even really there or not. Luckily, they got round to debating Greece as well. Here it is...

“Should the Greek Economy be allowed to fail?”

**Yes – James Clough**

Greece has serious problems. Essentially they have run out of money, and lending any to them is seen as a very risky business. As such, the lenders are only willing to offer high interest loans; this worsens the problem as Greece’s interest repayments increase and their budget deficit gets ever bigger.

How did they get into this mess? It’s this simple: the Greek government spent too much money. “But we’re in a recession,” you say. “Keynes says that we need to spend our way out! Increase government spending – boost aggregate demand” you cry. Keynes does say this, but he also says that you must save during the good times, during the boom, so that you can afford to spend your way out of the bust.

Greece didn’t do this – they even managed to lose money during the boom years. And thus, the seeds of disaster were planted. Because they didn’t save when they had the money, and because they have been borrowing too much for too long, Greece simply can’t just borrow and spend their way out of this mess.

What normally happens in this situation? Well, usually governments have another trick up their sleeve. They print more money; they devalue their currency, and their debts are worth less. It doesn’t do the country much good, but it helps get rid of the debt. But Greece can’t do this because they are part of the Euro.

They don’t get to choose when their own currency is devalued. Political problems arise, because the rest of Europe, who still have money and are still trusted to borrow (mainly Germany and France) have to bail them out. These countries promise that they will guarantee the Greek debt. And of course, Greece has to cut its spending to ensure they don’t get into the same mess twice. There will be years and years of harsh austerity as future Greek taxpayers are forced to bear the burdens of older generations who earned too little and spent too much. And what of the next in line: Italy? Too big to fail, but also too big to bail. Italy’s debts would swallow up the entire bailout fund, and maybe more. Not to mention the fact that Italy is supposed to be one of the three countries who are guaranteeing the bailout fund. We can’t afford to bail out big-spenders forever.

There is another way, though. Let Greece fail and let the Greeks accept that the Euro has failed them. Having one currency for multiple governments has meant that they could not fully control their own financial system and deal with the crisis. Getting help from Germany means surrendering political freedom: Greece will have to do whatever its masters tell it.

If they leave the Euro and return to their old currency, the Drachma, they can recover. Yes, it will lose a lot of its value at first. Many Greek civil servants, once part of a bloated bureaucracy, will have to get private sector jobs. But weak currencies can be the catalyst for future growth. Greeks will struggle to afford the import of foreign goods, but they will be able to sell products for lower prices. Imports fall but exports rise. Money will flow back into the country. Slowly but surely the tide will turn and Greece can experience true growth, unlike the dangerous debt-filled bubble they resided in before.

Let Greece have its own currency, let them devalue it, and let them sort out their problems.

**No – Ed Middleton**

When, in 2001, Greece joined the Eurozone, it signed a treaty that certified its membership of this group indefinitely. There was no clause that permitted the secession or expulsion of a state from this particular community. This would make it very difficult for Greece to decide to leave or, equally likely, to be thrown out. Granted, it would not be impossible to create a pathway by which states may leave the Eurozone, but this would become problematic in the future. The same problems would form that drove Abraham Lincoln to declare war with, and reunite, the Confederate States of America in 1860. If members of a group are free to come and go whenever they please, the authority of the community is undermined; without unanimity, it is very difficult to achieve anything.

If a state feels that a policy is not in their interest, they can simply leave. This makes it impossible for strong community-based governance to occur and makes the community indecisive, stagnant and slow to implement change. It also adds an internal political element to the decision, where leaders of member countries can gain political capital by threatening to exit the Eurozone unless their state’s demands are satisfied. This would be in nobody’s interests, since it makes it very difficult for the community to fulfill its goals and aid co-operation of member states.

The main danger with Greece is that of disorderly default. This would occur if Greece could not meet its financial obligations and so decided to simply give up. In this instance, there would be huge losses for investors, not just within Greece but across the world. Many French banks would be heavily hit, as they hold large numbers of Greek Government bonds. This would generate a wave of instability that would threaten to shatter both fragile and more secure economies in Europe. Even if it wasn’t possible to prevent a default in Greece and the levels of bailout were not sufficient for Greece to meet all of its obligations, a public attempt is important. If other European nations make a clear and public demonstration to Greece that they are supporting it in its hour of need and attempting to shore-up its fragile economy, Greece will be much less likely to turn around and give up on Europe and its payments. A strong partnership between Greece with the rest of Europe is likely to mean that Greece can be kept on track and any default, should it occur, can be rigidly controlled to minimize the damage and risk of spread.

This element of contagion is also important with respect to global investor confidence. Many foreign investors have been wary of investing in Southern European economies – as well as Western European economies to some extent – since Greek financial woes came to the fore. If Europe is seen as being decisive and clear in its support of Greece, investor confidence in other European countries will be sounder. This is important as it has consequences in terms of borrowing for government bonds, such as interest rates. An amputation of Greece from Europe would mean a long period of instability in Greece (see Argentina from 1999 onwards) and likely a disastrous return for foreign investors: who, if they feel that countries will be allowed to fail and then jettisoned from the community, will be much more wary of Europe as a whole.

To conclude, it is practically important that Greece be bailed out and allowed to continue as a functioning, participating member of the Eurozone. We can’t afford to simply control the flow of instability and risk of spread. As such, the lenders are only willing to offer high interest loans; this worsens the problem as Greece’s interest repayments increase and their budget deficit gets ever bigger.
The Poet’s Column

Essence of Heaven’s Soul
by Pavitar Devgon

Summer’s shine and winter’s sleet
Autumn’s crisp and spring is sweet
Ready for the haul ahead
Acting on impulse and beat
Hardly there yet still a thorn
Innately there to see the dawn
Lending a thousand words unsaid
Open free and shackles torn
Vying for a pedestal
Every shout I return its call
Yawn and itch, my hunger’s fed
Only then to jump and fall
Unless of course already said

Marilyn’s back with a new message:

“ICSM Drama’s Main Play this coming March is an adaptation of Billy Wilder’s classic film ‘Some Like it Hot’. To be a part of the most hilarious, scandalous and glamorous play in Imperial’s history come to the Auditions NEXT WEEK.

Eva Rosenthal

The first poetry evening I attended left me with the somewhat sour taste of disappointment, enhanced, no doubt, by the dashed hopes I’d been harbouring all week. Instead of great poetry, I was faced by something resembling slapstick stand-up comedy.

For that reason, I turned up to Fluent on Paper with no hopes at all – and was very pleasantly surprised. Hosted in one of South Kensington’s nicest pubs, The Builders Arms, the atmosphere was warming, perfect for a freezing November night. In front of a dark banner, aspiring poets read their work to an audience of friendly faces; no doubt welcoming in the face of spilling your emotions to complete strangers.

Most of those reading their poetry had never done so in public before. They managed in spite of shaking hands and voices; their courage was inspiring. Ed Spencer in particular, who was the last of the invited poets, established the necessity of ‘acting’ one’s readings. Perhaps his poetry was not what one would call ‘first-rate’, but no-one noticed or even cared because he proved to be such a fantastic actor; his poems lived and breathed in his interpretation of them. There were even several poets written on the spot, as people found themselves inspired by the creativity of the evening. Matt Allinson’s hilarious poem on the organiser of the event, Kadhim Shubber, certainly had the laughter flowing. Dylan Lowe ended the night with a poem written in ten minutes on the beauty of Bulgaria.

One was never meant to enjoy poetry alone and in silence. Instead, poetry readings were commonplace in homes, public spaces and at the glittering literary salons of the past. It is impossible to translate the nature of these events to our hurried times, but

The Old Man and the Movie

Charles Betts

It was Tuesday and I found myself having a beer in Brinkley’s, the Joules Chelsea eatery and favourite Hugh Grant haunt, and I was surrounded by middle-aged desperate housewives. They were botoxed and dyed blonde and high-heeled. It was then that I became engulfed in a peculiar Hemingwayesque malaise. It was then that I realised just how depressing desperate housewives are. It was then that I noticed there are too many cheerless people busy gold digging and lust searching at the same time when the two appear to be incompatible. They demonstrate that romance is dead in all too many marriages.

It was therefore appropriate that I stumbled upon Woody Allen’s latest cinematic oeuvre Midnight in Paris on Wednesday. In what has been rightfully hailed as a cinematic tour of a golden age of art and literature, the film prominently features Ernest Hemingway throughout. His bold, poignant sentences in stark contrast to Owen Wilson’s lead charac-ter’s somewhat clumsy Californian chat. The film explores, by means of sharp wit and a stunning Parisian back-drop, that a life without art is a life not worth living. As Gertrude Stein (yes, she’s in the film too) observes: “The artist’s job is not to succumb to despair but to find an antidote for the emptiness of existence.” It is around this theme that we meet Picasso, Matisse, Dali, Man Ray, Scott Fitzgerald, and many more; each with their own delightfully attributed clichés. Not least Hemingway, parodied with such gems as “no subject is terrible if the story is true and if the prose is clean and honest.”

A couple of years ago I saw Woody Allen play the clarinet with his New Orleans Jazz Band in Paris. While his rendition of ‘If I Had You’ sounded more asthmatic wheezing fox than Benny Goodman, his passion for jazz shone through. His films have consistently played themselves out to the tune of jazz standards and provided the uninitiated with a glut of great melodies. Midnight in Paris is no different, with Cole Porter making an appearance as he strokes the ivories to the sound of ‘Let’s Do It’ at a characteristic 1920s hedonistic party.

The movie also argues that lasting relationships are built neither on lust nor love at first sight. Unlike the pseudo-romantic marriages of the aforementioned desperate housewives, they are built on understanding founded on shared tastes. Woody Allen has his critics. They proclaim that the gags are cheap and that the sets are clichéd and that the plots are thin. But I have always loved his films (although best to avoid Scoop). Perhaps this love too stems from shared tastes. Affection for jazz, hearty quips, and a belief that life shouldn’t be taken too seriously.

To those who read Felix for the witty picture captions, I’m sorry
A Fairytale Shredding

No Grimm faces at Shamini Bundell’s latest MT Soc offering

Matt Allinson

Imperial College’s very own Musical Theatre Society consistently puts on hilarity filled shows that mix wild humour, a flair for the outrageous and an almost tangible passion for performance. The first term revue of late has progressively developed into something more elaborate. While still based around a collection of well-known show tunes, the plot element and staging of these performances has become ever more ambitious. The sheer scale of this term’s production meant that, attending my preview, I was terrified that perhaps in an attempt to outdo last year’s exquisite Imperial Collage, the well-meaning folk of one of Imperial’s most vibrant and active societies had completely over-reached themselves.

The script, written by Shamini Bun-
dell for this performance, sounded completely mental and the cast was huge. Settling down with apprehension, what I saw unfurl before me was beyond what I could have possibly imagined. The animated anarchic explosion of drama and pure, unbridled, and not-a-little-bit camp fun that followed had me either in stitches or semi-rapturous joy.

The general concept of the story line is a pastiche of several of Grimm’s Fairy Tales, similar, in a way, to Shrek. However, like that perennially re-commissioned children’s classic, the use of well-known characters is not overbearing on the plot itself; rather it allows for a familiar background on which the action, concerning a few intertwined love stories and a traveling band of lesbian cat bandits, can take place.

I can’t begin to think of where to start chucking the praise in terms of who deserves it most. Ms Bundell has crafted a fantastic script that manages to keep you laughing without wallowing in trying to be funny for the sake of it. Any weaker gags are carried by the strength of the cast, who with such a short amount of time for rehearsals have between them managed to build up a spectacular ensemble performance. What is most obviously recognisable to an audience member is that everyone on stage is having an absolute blast. The energy they positively throw into the crowd whips you along in the show’s tidal wave. Special mention of course always has to go to Phil Ray-mond for his stellar performance as the Prince, but also to Rebecca Miller as the villainous Mayor; Chris Witham’s debut performance for MT Soc as Buttons was particularly impressive.

I really can’t stress enough how much of a great time I had at this show. Fortune favours the brave and this production has levels of bravery akin to some-one trying to revise for an end of year exam the night before. However, unlike my second year Maths module, the results here are spectacularly good, and hell, it’s free, so you have no excuse.

Charming: An alternative ever after is on at The Union Concert Hall, Runs Monday 5th - Wednesday 7th December, 7.30pm. Tickets are free!

A play with more than the average number of sofa-wetting whale references

Will Prince

It’s been nearly eight years to the day since the final installment of the Lord of the Rings trilogy hit our screens - eight long years with little but over-sexed vampires and undersexed boy wizards to fill the void. Clearly spotting the astute observations of life in both the real world and in fantasy, the play is suited to novices and level 3 Paladins alike. Encounters with a princess, who is more Miami than Mordor, and a frank chat with Phil the Wrath are the kind of thing that would probably have Tolkien turning in his grave. Equally, I imagine representatives of Deutsche Bank – the show’s sponsors – may find themselves squirming in their seats as the goblins bicker over maximizing teamwork and leadership skills.

Despite its two-hour duration, ODAM maintains its freshness by hopping between Terramundus and the Bowmans’ house. Brothers Evan and Drake (played with aplomb by Luke Bullard and Ranulf Kinloch-Jones) clash as the former tries to introduce his girlfriend Kate (the tireless Camilla Nicholson) to the game, much to the disgust of character-hat-wearing die-hard player Drake. Sarah Brand brings a deadpan tone to her role as lesbian witch Ivy and Hassan Choudhury completes the band with a modicum of sanity, playing game master Simon.

Over in the Western Realm, things are more farcical still. James Goodchild struts the stage scantily-clad as Conan-lookalike Teflon, combining dopy, debonair delivery with deft comic timing. In the closest thing I could find to a similarity with the Steinbeck novel from which the play takes its name, Omar Fahmy brings shades of Lenny to his role of the orc poet, Urg, contrasted by the flesh-hungry energy of Zoe Pierre as Gaboo-
as. Mizlly Cardena Neville, as Areya, adds the finishing touch, maintaining a grave voice of reason in the face of the hapless fellowship.

The specials effects are innovative to say the least and give ODAM an unpren-tentious charm, best exemplified when a climactic fight scene is paused as Mrs. Bowman hands out Ribenas. The script, whilst a little long, is well written, with echoes of Monty Python’s Holy Grail as well as moments of real original com-
edy. DramSoc is clearly alive and well at Imperial, and most important of all, it’s got a good sense of humour.

Of Dice and Men plays tonight and tomorrow, Union Concert Hall, £5 in advance for students, £7 otherwise.
TEKUA: CONTRIBUTING

“A Pound for Hope”
Contribute here to be part of the movement against injustice:
http://www.justgiving.com/projectTEKUA/
or www.projecttekua.co.uk

TEKUA Art Exhibition
Over 700 pounds raised in just 2 days!
Bring your Imperial Card, come and visit and make your contribution at:
58 Fenchurch St.
London
EC3M 4AB

“A better way to protest
The TEKUA project comes to London in co-operation with local Tanzanian education

Claudio Emma

From the streets of Manhattan to the crowded squares of Europe, much of the recent media attention has been devoted to the extravagant protest of those who call themselves “Indignados”. Thousands have taken to the streets, forcibly occupying major landmarks in protest against financial injustices inflicted on them by the capitalist system. But amidst all of the ruckus, hidden deep in the background, is the persistent call for help of a people who are so often forgotten and largely ignored by the mass media of the Western World. I am talking about the atrocious statistic reporting the 92% of young Tanzanians who cannot afford to pay for secondary school. While the noisy protest aims of the “occupy” group are often sympathised with by Westerners, the silent cry of millions of Tanzanians who are denied an essential human right often falls upon deaf ears. It is to change this gruelling reality that a group of Imperial students has chosen to speak out and take concrete action. Rather than forcibly occupying town squares and pointing fingers at potential culprits, we have decided to adopt a different approach by reaching out to local businesses in search for potential fundraising opportunities. The target of all our efforts is an inspirational education establishment in north eastern Tanzania, called the TEKUA project.

TEKUA is an acronym that stands for the five Swahili words: empowerment, education, initiative, health and poverty. The centre effectively uses education as a weapon to break the crippling chain of poverty which reduces the lives of many young Tanzanian’s to a mere fight for survival. With education comes the empowerment of women in a society whose patriarchal traditions contribute emphatically to the spreading of HIV/AIDS. With education, the centre takes a concrete stand against poverty by equipping the youths of Tanzania with the skills necessary to find decent jobs. Most importantly, with education comes the possibility for young students to realise their dreams and make positive contributions to the development of their society. These are goals worth fighting for. These are statistics worth protesting against. There are 92% of Tanzanians who deserve a voice in our world, and we are determined to finally give them one.

Now how do we Imperial students fit into this context and how can we actually make a difference to the lives of these young Tanzanians? The answer is by doing enough work to make the TEKUA centre financially self-sufficient. Unfortunately this is much easier said than done. It would be far easier to ask people for their spare change on street corners and donate all the proceeds to the centre. This approach however, would make the centre entirely reliant on the generosity of foreigners, thus preventing it from growing and flourishing independently. The way we have chosen to approach the problem is to take the skills learned by TEKUA students at the centre
to make a difference

and use those to generate an income. The educational centre’s curriculum provides lessons in three main subjects: English, ICT and art. While the first two subjects may seem more directly relevant to a young Tanzanian who is aiming to find employment, the study of art has proved just as fundamental to the students. By teaching the students painting and sculpting skills the centre has effectively created a workshop for young artists producing fine and vibrant pieces of art. It is our aim to use the pieces of art as a resource for the centre to fund itself and create a self-sustaining cycle. Practically this amounts to selling students’ artwork here in London where the paintings and sculptures are worth far more than they are in Tanzania. Having been priced by a professional art dealer, the works are worth an average of 60 pounds which, if you do the math, works out to a staggering 170,216.696 Tanzanian Shillings! In a country where the price of a kilo of maize is just 20 p, this is obviously a substantial amount of money. With these profits divided equally between the student artist and the school we could provide a small stipend for the students whilst also supporting the centre.

Success in our efforts would have a dramatic impact on the future of the centre. Having recently undergone an expansion, TEKUA has now opened a second school where it will give its students vocational training in trades such as sewing and mending clothes. Thus our work in financially supporting the centre is more relevant than ever. To intensify our fundraising efforts we have launched a campaign at Imperial under the slogan “A Pound for Hope”. We are asking you to make what is a seemingly insignificant contribution of a single pound in the hopes of reaching our target which would support the centre financially for an entire year!

As university students we are often condemned for being apathetic towards global issues and criticised for taking part in deleterious movements such as the 99% campaign. This is our chance to prove these allegations wrong by stepping up to a challenge that is highly ambitious and needs the attention of the world. It is in our power to determine the direction of progress in Tanzanian society and as citizens of an increasingly globalised world we cannot ignore our responsibility. With this kind of decisive action we will undoubtedly have a dramatic impact on the lives of 92% of young Tanzanians. So if you want become part of our mission come and visit the exhibition to take a stand against a crippling statistic that deserves your time.

The TEKUA Education Centre project presents Tanzania: Art for Knowledge at Chartis UK, 58 Fenchurch St., London, EC3M 4AB, 10:00-16:00 daily until December 17.

According to the guys at TEKUA, the Western ‘99%’ is not the real 99%
Some things never go out of style.
Well this is it ladies and gentlemen, we’ve had to resort to plain indecency

But seriously, we need you to do a centrefold (clubs, societies or individuals!) Christmas theme anyone? Email centrefolds@imperial.ac.uk if you’re interested!
Kadhim’s totally hot album of the week

Youth Lagoon
The Year of Hibernation
Lefse Records
2011

On Sunday, I was at a friend-of-a-friend’s flat; it was almost completely burnt out. The TV had caught fire and the ensuing blaze had torn up the walls and silted around the rooms, turning home into hell. Some things had survived: a coating of soot was all the happy family photos had to endure. Other things had been less lucky: a grand full-length mirror had been warped to destruction by the heat and the once-intricate frame was charred and black. I said to him, rather stupidly, “it feels like it was a really nice place”. He was kind enough to be patient with me and replied, simply, “yeah, it was…”

When I returned home that evening, to my conspicuously uncharred flat, I listened to Youth Lagoon’s debut album, The Year of Hibernation, and felt transported back to those dark, ash-ridden rooms. I imagined sitting on the miraculously undamaged green leather sofa and thought about the destruction brought into his home; the place where we find solace and warmth eaten up by flames and smoke.

But, more striking than that was the sense of optimism. Youth Lagoon (a.k.a. Trevor Powers, of Idaho disposition) doesn’t paint a story of despair. The wistful guitar melodies, ghostly vocals, misty piano keys, and discreet beats (file next to Washed Out and Wild Nothing) speak of a rebirth, of a phoenix rising from the ashes. Which brings me nicely to why I spent my Sunday in a burnt-out flat: the friend-of-a-friend had decided to do a photo-shoot in the charred remains of his life, and needed some extra hands. There can be no doubt that if life is going to hand you heartache, there’s no truer response than to try to make something beautiful from it.

My reputation as “an extra pair of hands” is unimpeachable. If you want to make use of my hands, tweet @kadhimshubber and give me a time, place, and bag of Haribo Starmix. Better still, tweet @YouthLagoon and tell them his music is “too obscure and pretentious”, and probably “too underground to be of use to anyone”.

Be sure not to miss...

Sun Ra Arkestra
Cafe Oto
Tuesday 6 - Thursday 8, November

The late Sun Ra’s explosive big band return to Cafe Oto for a three day residency, following their previous five day marathon when they were stranded in London following the eruption of notorious Eyjafjallajökull. Don’t miss the chance to experience the Arkestra’s legacy of spaced out cosmic jazz. Íñigo Martínez de Rituerto

Origin of Symmetry
An essential classic for any music lover, says Clare Cheng

B ack in 2001; the year iTunes was born, J-Lo got her first UK number one single and George Bush began his war on terror, Muse released the amazingly beautiful album that is Origin of Symmetry. Although this was the Devonshire band’s second album after Showbiz, it was the collection of songs that marked the greatness that was to come.

To celebrate this momentous occasion the band played the album in full at this year’s Reading and Leeds Festival. The stage was decked out with colossal forks as seen on the album artwork, with Matt Bellamy’s glass piano taking pride of place.

Their set was the best, hands down, all weekend; the opening song ‘New Born’ being accompanied by flying saucers hurtling across the screen, launching huge inflatable eyeballs into the crowd that burst to release confetti, and shooting fireworks that exploded high above the stage... oh and not to mention the songs were pretty spectacular too.

“Each song has such feeling and emotion woven into it”

What makes Origin of Symmetry so different, timeless even, is that it appeals to every music listener. Even my Dad, who loves his classical and jazz, likes listening to Muse rocking it out. The strong bass chords allow the guitar to expand and explore, but still remain restrained enough so as not to scare away the not-so-die-hard rock fans.

Matt’s voice somehow manages to infiltrate every cell of the body, being familiar and warming, but at the same time sending a single down the spine that leaves us wanting more. His voice makes him the David Attenborough of music.

Matt and his fellow band members even manage to pull off a cover of Nina Simone’s ‘Feeling Good’ in this album – such a classic made even better.

To be honest, if I need to remind/convince you anymore of how amazing Muse is then there is no point in you having ears to hear with.

The album begins with ‘New Born’ - the gentle building of the piano, the low hum of the bass and Matt’s gentle voice all lull the listener into a false sense of security. But then the real fun begins as the guitar chords let rip, after a pause for anticipation. It’s a fantastic opener, setting the tone for the ambitious tunes to come.

However, do not be deceived; this is not all they do. The album takes off on a journey, pushing up the heart rate one minute, but then mellowing it down the next. Each song has such feeling and emotion woven into it.

When I listen to the album I am taken on a rollercoaster ride of different emotions. ‘Bliss’ fills me with such warmth, it makes me smile; ‘Space Dementia’ and ‘Plug In Baby’ bring up deep feelings – sadness, passion, joy. These songs make me want to sing my heart out. They are able to spell out my emotions when I have no words to explain them.

“They still have the same punch of emotion”

Some critics consider the songs ‘Dark Shines’ and ‘Screenager’ to be downsides of the album, perhaps reflections of the early stage in Muse’s career. However, as a die-hard Muse fan I could tell them to sod off. But I’ll show some restraint and argue that these tracks still reflect the complexities in their repertoire. Although really quite different from earlier songs in the album, they still have the same punch of emotion and musical brilliance: the trademark of Muse.

This is what makes not only the album but the band themselves an essential for any music lover’s collection. I mean, this is what they were producing when they first started out – imagine how amazing they are now.
The best of Heaven

Stuart Masson is impressed by EMA and Zola Jesus

EMA stands for Erika M. Anderson, but she performs with a full band. Her debut album Past Life Martyred Saints has been interesting positive reviews from across the music press spectrum, and for good reason. The live performance is something else, though. The whole gig switches between haunting vulnerability and rip-your-face-off intensity. Her lyrics are rarely positive and she doesn’t betray that with her stage demeanour. The main highlight is ‘Butterfly Knife’, which climaxes in heavy strobing, a monstrosous wall of sound, a guitar being smashed apart and its neck being launched into the crowd at concerning velocity. This is followed by the most beautiful section of the set, as she quietly strums through ‘Marked’, with its slightly disarming refrain of “I wish that every time you touched me left a mark”. ‘Closer California’ is sublimely apathetic and ends with another guitar being thrown to the ground. There are relatively few older tracks but those relatively few are great. The swelling build-up of ‘Run Me Out!’ is particularly pleasing. The new album tracks also deliver. ‘Hikkomori’ is a beautiful swirl of synths and wailing vocals and on ‘In Your Nature’ she gives a performance to match anything I’ve heard. It’s a fantastic show and not one you’re likely to get elsewhere. One of the best gigs of my year.

Despite the insistence of a delightful lady behind me, there is nobody that can match her voice. It is massive. She forced her parents into giving her opera lessons as a child, and I’m glad they relented. As a frontwoman, she exceeds all expectations as well, switching between statuesque-princess mode and bent-double-over-her-microphone-flailing-limbs mode. There were even two forays into the crowd and a strobe-light headbanging sequence.

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CMYK Vibrations

Katherine Chimenes

James Blake. The face of a dazed little boy, presumably innocent and so melancholic at the same time, with a voice, or should I say voices (oh the beauty of transpositions) so poignant it makes you want to bury your face in your hands and cry – it’s OK, don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone. So finally, I managed to witness the context lied in how the music which usually brought an imposing and nearly intimidating body felt the music. The show wasn’t meant to appeal exclusively to hearing or sight anymore. It was something transcending what was expected and its neck being launched into the crowd at concerning velocity. The whole gig switches between haunting vulnerability and rip-your-face-off intensity. Her lyrics are rarely positive and she doesn’t betray that with her stage demeanour. The main highlight is ‘Butterfly Knife’, which climaxes in heavy strobing, a monstrosous wall of sound, a guitar being smashed apart and its neck being launched into the crowd at concerning velocity. This is followed by the most beautiful section of the set, as she quietly strums through ‘Marked’, with its slightly disarming refrain of “I wish that every time you touched me left a mark”. ‘Closer California’ is sublimely apathetic and ends with another guitar being thrown to the ground. There are relatively few older tracks but those relatively few are great. The swelling build-up of ‘Run Me Out!’ is particularly pleasing. The new album tracks also deliver. ‘Hikkomori’ is a beautiful swirl of synths and wailing vocals and on ‘In Your Nature’ she gives a performance to match anything I’ve heard. It’s a fantastic show and not one you’re likely to get elsewhere. One of the best gigs of my year.

Then James Blake came on, alone, with his traditional highly buttoned-up collared shirt and immaculate hair. A peaceful look on his face, collected and confident, he managed nevertheless to bring an imposing and nearly intimadating charisma on stage with him. The lighting was clearly studied, the stage setting was minimal, and the sound system tremendous. The magnificence of seeing James Blake live in such a context lied in how the music which usually seems to appear so contained manages to gain so much intensity and power, offering a perspec- tive on his music I could have never imagined. The way objects and liquids vibrate in the video of ‘Limit to Your Love’ seemed to gain a whole new meaning when, this time, it was my entire body experiencing it. I gave up on keeping my gaze on James Blake. I just let it all carry me away. Eyes closed, every single organ in my body felt the music. The show wasn’t meant to appeal exclusively to hearing or sight anymore. It was something transcending what was expected from a gig. A journey through some emotion- ally charged music, like some of Antony and the Johnsons’ concentrate of musicality and classical immoderation blended with the blunt- ness of post-dubstep beats. From a faithful take on ‘I Never Learnt to Share’ to an incredible improvisational dub of ‘CMYK’ or other sparkling renditions of some more recent songs like ‘A Case of You’, he managed to take the last breath away from everyone of us standing in that fully packed venue, making us only scream for more.

Punk Planet by Douglas Heaven

This week: Argentinian punk

Argentine punk had a troubled upbringing. Though inspired by the notoriety of the Sex Pistols, Argentina’s pioneers couldn’t afford to play the same kind of media-baiting games. The year that brought us punk rock brought Argentina a vicious military dictatorship, and all evidence suggests that dictators don’t like punk.

One of the most important scene-setting bands was Los Violadores (1981) – the violators, or law-breakers – who despite the heavy-handed censorship established an underground movement of dissent and released an album a year. One way they survived their dangerous early period was by adopting the name Los Violadores – the flying ones – whenever things looked especially dicey. They’re still going strong, chastising slightly younger upstarts 2 Minutos (1987) for writing unpunk songs about beer and football.

Just as Argentine punk was escaping its oppressed childhood and coming of age, the Falklands War made everything associated with the UK, well, let’s just say uncool. Sumo (1981-1987), one of the most influential scene-setters, never wanted to be a punk band in the first place, and peppered its sound with everything from reggae to tango. Luca Prodan, Sumo’s frontman, was born in Rome but grew up in Scotland, where he went to Gordonstoun – the famously cold and character-building boarding school that counts both the Queen’s husband and eldest son among its alumni. But unlike our heir to the throne, Prodan then befriended Joy Division’s Ian Curtis in Manchester, suffered from heroin addiction, and moved to a friend’s farm in Argentina’s backwoods to kick the habit. There he recorded a few songs in a small studio, eventually moved to the big city, and ended up fronting one of the biggest bands in Argentina. As heritage stories go, Sumo’s beats the usual Peter-meets-Jane-at-art-school.

But let’s end with the fine example of Fun People (1989-2000), a converse-wearing, pogo-jumping punk band in the same bouncy vein as Bad Brains. Originally called Anesthesia after a famous Metallica song, they eventually wisely promoted their music as antifascist gay hardcore to distance themselves from the moshing boneheads they were attracting.

All these bands want you to visit their websites, except Sumo who might not have one. Los Violadores: www.violadores.com, 2 Minutos: www.2minutosweb.com.ar, Fun People: www.funpeople.com.ar.
Metric is going back in time to the 90’s for an eclectic mix of all the classics. Everybody loves to dance to “Saturday Night” by Whigfield and Mark Morrison “Return of the mack”

It is going to be massive!!!
Louie: like Seinfeld, but with swearing

Tim Arbabzadah

Louie is directed, written, edited by, and starring Louis C.K. The show is basically him; in fact, I’ve heard an interview where he says that he helps with the cinematography as well. I’m not entirely sure how to describe the look of the show, but I’ll give it a try. It’s shot as a sort of a reality show, much in the same way as The Thick of It. That should give you an idea of the sort of visual style to expect, hopefully.

Louie centres around a fictionalised version of Louis C.K (don’t ask about the discrepancy in name spelling, as I have no idea either). Louis C.K is, in real life, a comedian’s comedian, who is very well respected in the comedy world. He’s also got a style that is very funny and accessible. It’s not all pretentious ‘clever’ humour of deconstructing the joke style comedy. I say that because I fear the other sentence made it sound like he was, like, so underground and non-mainstream, man. He really does have jokes that many people will appreciate. In case you haven’t noticed, I’m trying hard not to sound a bit douchey. I’m probably failing. Any way, in the show, Louie is a comedian who is well respected and doing okay, but not exactly thriving.

He has two daughters and is divorced. It’s difficult to say what the overall plot of the show is, as there isn’t one in the traditional sense. One of the reasons for this lack of a central theme is that Louie is basically the only main character. All other characters make appearances every now and then, but couldn’t really be described as main characters. There is a woman that he likes that doesn’t like him back, but it’s not your traditional sitcom will-they-won’t-they although they-obviously-will-eventually. It’s a bit more tragic as he tries a couple of times to go for it and gets batted away each time.

If you can pretend that this is a seamless segue; I want to point out that way too many shows have a fairly predictable basic premise and central plot line; the main character has feelings that are not in a way relatable and can be used to derive humour or drama from. My problem is that most shows play that ultimate they-get-together card too early. The guy gets the girl, then, the show thinks “oh, fuck, hang on, that was our main plot and we’ve been renewed and need to stretch this out into another season. Right, let’s now have something happen and it goes badly, then we can get them back together later on. Oh, here’s a good idea, she gets back together with her jerk, jock boyfriend”. If the guy has got the girl once, the whole ‘she’s so out of his league and is his dream girl’ aspect is like David Cameron’s social science: lost.

Every episode of Louie is split into two parts, each being fairly self-contained (absolutely seamless segue back into review mode, right? No, yeah, fair point). This is interspersed with scenes of him doing stand-up in a comedy club (think Seinfeld, but with swearing). Actually, Seinfeld isn’t too bad a comparison, it’s ‘mundane’ in the fact that it can be bleak, but sometimes the show is, surprisingly, heart-warming. There was an episode where he goes to perform to troops and that has a very uplifting ending. I don’t want to give it away, but it really did make you feel good afterwards.

Louie is also littered with guest stars. Considering the low budget, the quality of guest stars is amazing. I think this shows just how popular Louis C.K is with comedians. Everyone from Amir of The-smallest of all the film reviews from Steve Coogan to Joan Rivers has made an appearance. These guests are always used well, and aren’t just there to show off that he knows famous people.

Basically, Louie is funny, well written, and worth a watch. It may not be everyone’s cup of tea, but I think the stand-up routines are something that we can all enjoy, even if you don’t like the rest of the show.

Modern Family – A Family Portrait

Marie-Laure Hicks

I have a completely insane family. So when I heard about Modern Family, I didn’t think much of it. The advert on TV just made me cringe. That was until I watched an episode. American comedies can sometimes disappoint, but this show is fantastic. I would venture to say it’s because it has a hint of British humour to it, with all of the slapstick and puns that we love so much.

This Emmy-winning “mockumentary” is a window into the Pritchett’s and Dunphy’s everyday life. Jay Prichett (Ed O’Neill) is the patriarch of the family having a second go at fatherhood with his new, much younger Colombian wife Gloria (Sofia Vergara) and her son Manny. Right from the start, the stereotypes come rolling out: old guy with a younger wife who says “djes” (“yes” with the cutest Colombian accent) and it keeps on going. Manny is a grand romantic, writes songs and poetry, wears silk shirts and Cologne. He’s an eleven year old child.

Jay also has two children from his first marriage: Mitchell and Claire. Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) is gay and lives with overemotional, over dramatic partner Cameron (Eric Stonestreet) who enjoys dressing up as a clown during his spare time. Together they have adopted Lily, a Vietnamese baby.

Clue (Julie Bowen, Kevin Spacey’s sexy wife in Horrible Bosses), a complete control freak, is married to Phil Dunphy (Ty Burrell). Phil believes he is the coolest dad ever (the can sing and dance to all the High School Musical songs) and has a tendency to act like a child. They have three children: Haley, the popular high school teenager hooked to her phone, Alex the nerd and Luke who probably has ADHD or some obscure syndrome and is unbelievable accident prone. In addition, the cast includes appearances from Jay’s crazy ex-wife and Haley’s boyfriend Dylan who has a talent for writing brilliant but inappropriate songs (and performing them in front of his girlfriend’s parents).

Throughout the series two characters gain in importance and screen time. I’m talking about Gloria’s breasts. Approved of by arse-men, leg-men, tit-men, women and gay men, they provide voluptuous huge peaks to the scenery. Frequently clad in tight and plunging fabrics, there will always be an occasion to glimpse at the view. Subtlety clearly isn’t the producer’s policy.

The genius of this comedy lies most certainly with the script, the actors’ talent at its service but also in the simplicity and the everyday quality of the plot. The show is based on the families of the creators – Steven Levitan and Christopher Lloyd – supplying it with its realism, a beautiful comedy source. Your family may be dysfunctional but nowhere near as much as this one. You will laugh, cry and smile. So sit down with these hilarious and lovable characters and simply enjoy the beauty of modern family life.
FILM

iCU Cinema All-Nighter
Tuesday 13 December

Have you got what it takes? Simple question: it’s a ‘yes or no’ question. To make it through the ICU Cinema All-Nighter, you’re going to need to sit back and enjoy over 12 hours of the latest films. Does that sound like something you can do, Imperial?

Simply put, the All-Nighter is six of the latest films back-to-back on one spectacular night of cinema, caffeine, and tub after tub of Pot Noodle. It’s a cinematic journey that begins with Johnny English Reborn. Don’t scoff, a friend of mine works at Vertigo, the production company that makes Johnny English; it’s basically one of the most profitable truly-British films in recent history.

Then we have Drive, the stylish action/thriller starring “OH MY GOD HE’S SO HOT” Ryan Gosling (don’t tell my mother I wrote that...)

After this? Real Steel. Hugh Jackman acts alongside some robots. Or something.

Then we have Paul. Like all Edgar Wright & Co films, Paul is hilarious and intelligent, unlike oh so many Hollywood stoner flicks. It’s a true tribute to the science fiction genre and you’d be mad to miss it. To run down the night we’ve got style, action and good old troll whacking.

First we’re straight into Contagion, a film about a global pandemic that’s genuinely described as a “medical thriller”. You can imagine the pitch for this film; “What if, like, virus?” I’m probably being too cynical, Rotten Tomatoes gives this film 84%. Then finally ending the night we have Troll Hunter. If you’ve made it this far then you’re a true trooper and could probably do a fair bit of troll bashing yourself.

So there it is. Six films, one night, and a whole lot of caffeine. See you there, if you’ve got the ovaries to... unless he’s squeamish about... [Image 260x508 to 795x812]

The Twilight Saga - Breaking Dawn Part 1

Director Bill Condon
Screenwriters Melissa Rosenberg, Stephanie Meyer (novel)
Cast Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart, Taylor Lautner
Lucy Wiles

Thousands of hormonal Twihards queued for days for the much-anticipated arrival of The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 1, the fourth film in the hugely successful vampire love story franchise was released last week, setting the scene for the big finale next year. An emotionally fraught, dramatic tale, this latest film shows that the structure of the Twilight franchise – that of surging adolescent emotions quashing rational thought, and the resulting arguments and tantrums – is still foolproof.

The first three films weren’t epic, but despite the somewhat crammed-in storyline, the filmmakers did a pretty good job with them. However, the story for The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part I is getting slightly ridiculous – Bella gets pregnant with a vampire-human hybrid that rips its way out dramatically – and even director Bill Condon and his ace team can’t make it perfect.

Having said that, while the filmmakers have taken a lot of flack about their choice to take what has been dubbed the ‘Harry Potter gameplan’ and splitting the final novel into two films, when it comes to profits the decision was a definite win for the hackers. The three-day opening here in the UK bagged a rather impressive £13.91m, and is expected to go straight to the top of the UK Box Office chart, having shot to the top of the USA’s with a whopping first weekend take of £138m.

The story follows on from the previous Twilight Saga films; after a beautiful wedding, Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson) and Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart) set off on a romantic honeymoon to Brazil. However, the trip is cut short when Bella discovers she is pregnant with a half-vampire half-human baby, which is fast mutating and crushing her weak human body. To add to the problem, when they get home there are a few pretty angry werewolves who are really not keen on the arrival of this mutant child waiting on their doorstep. Can Bella’s werewolf friend Jacob (Taylor Lautner) help sort things out? And how will Bella and Edward cope with their new species of child?

The acting is as it always has been – fine, but hampered by a rather miserable script. A reasonable supporting cast is held up by Pattinson still credibly portraying hurt soul Edward, while the intensity between him and Stewart is genuinely convincing, for a teen flick there are very moody faces all round. Even in the rare moments of attempted humour, the actors can’t seem to get it across. Lautner does a good job with angry, angsty Jacob, but even he has his moments of childish tantrums and storming off. Nevertheless, the whole cast do a good job, and it is clear that a lot of effort has gone into pushing the mood of the film towards ‘dark and disturbing’ in the set-up for the final part.

If you watch Breaking Dawn Part I as a prequel to the total hell that is about to break loose in part two (you know what I mean if you’ve read the book, Twihards) then it’s ok. But if it is viewed as a stand-alone film, the unnecessarily slow pace and extended length of the film can make it a bit dull. There’s enough to keep it all moving along, especially in the second half, and there is a lot of tension created by heartbroken Jacob’s doubts, torn desperately as he is between love and vengeance. But there is a serious lack of fight scenes and action, other than the threatening pack of werewolves who really only remain on the periphery. The only minor action shows the wolves leaping a bit as the vampires move really fast, which gets a bit tedious after a while.

Possibly the best thing about this film is the effect it’s having on men across the world. As mentioned, the film portrays Bella’s difficult pregnancy as she carries the child of her vampire husband, culminating in a graphic scene of the baby’s birth. Viewer Brandon Gephart, from Roseville, California, was reportedly taken to hospital after suffering what seemed to be a panic attack during the birthing climax. “He was convulsing, snorting, trying to breathe,” said his girlfriend Kelly Bauman. That particular screening had to end early when the paramedics arrived. Other cases of men freaking out have been recorded, such as an unnamed man from Utah (as reported by ABC4) who also had some sort of seizure during the same scene. “I didn’t really remember what happened,” the man told the news crew. “I think I blacked out. According to [my wife] I was shaking and mumbling different noises.”

The ending naturally gears us up for the final part of the Twilight Saga, and – alongside a sneaky mid-credits teaser – sets the stage for a very different Bella and the battle for her new family’s safety in 2012’s concluding installment. All in all, despite the Rotten Tomatoes rating of just 28%, this is a reasonably enjoyable, easy film to watch – one to drag your boyfriend to... unless he’s squeamish about pregnancy.

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“Edward, I’m pregnant...” “Bella, I’m leaving you...”

Film Editors: John Park
Lucy Wiles

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Michelle’s mesmeric Monroe

My Week with Marilyn

Director Simon Curtis
Screenwriters Adrian Hodges, Colin Clark (novel)
Cast Michelle Williams, Eddie Redmayne, Kenneth Branagh, Judi Dench, Dame Judi Dench, Dominic Cooper, Emma Watson

John Park

Marilyn Monroe is without a doubt one of the most celebrated, well-known figures of the 20th Century. My Week with Marilyn, as its title may suggest, only explores a brief section of the icon’s life, but since she has accomplished so much, even the smallest slice in her showbiz-surrounded life is full of fun, romance and charm which is exactly what the film offers.

The Prince and the Showgirl, shot in England, (infamously united Monroe with Clark, as well as Branagh, a more than satisfactory marriage) where the production was plagued with delays, miscommunication, and great discontent from Olivier, as he was far from impressed with Monroe’s notoriously erratic behaviour on set that included tardiness, alcoholism and drug use. Whilst My Week with Marilyn does focus on the filming aspect, caught in the middle of this is in fact Colin Clark (Eddie Redmayne), the third assistant director, whose job is to do all the grunt work. Captivated by Monroe even before her arrival in London, Clark’s boyish enthusiasm and warm personality bring the two close together. Trapped in a less than satisfactory marriage to Arthur Miller (Dougray Scott), Monroe finds comfort and solace in Clark’s arms.

Milton Greene (Dominic Cooper), Marilyn’s business partner, warns Clark to not get involved: “She breaks hearts, she will break yours too.” But what they share has very little to do with sex or lust. It’s a strong friendship built on trust, with the occasional moments of passion that build up from spending so much time together. Although there is an unavoidable tragedy lurking around the corner, director Simon Curtis makes sure the atmosphere is always light enough and the breezy script supports this. As the infuriated Colin, Redmayne is a wholly likable central character, with his wide-eyed, somewhat childish fascination towards everything that is going on around him. He is a tall, handsome actor with immense appeal, with enough cheek and confidence that he convincingly adds to his initially clueless character.

Success brings luxury, fame and infinite love from crowds, but for a price. The pressure she faces in Pinewood Studios starts to build up. Despite her acting coach Paula Strasberg’s (Zoë Wanamaker) supportive words, Marilyn finds her confidence shaken every time she stumbles on a line, further infuriating the already heated Olivier. Dame Sybil Thorndike (Judi Dench), is more understanding, and as a woman of principle and disciplined manner, she exudes warmth as well as firm maternal presence to anyone who unreasonably crosses the line.

No words can describe just how superb Williams is in the role of Monroe. She has the looks, the voice, the swagger, and the sassiness, but there is something so much more to her portrayal than what is visible on the surface. The behind-the-scenes Marilyn, the insecure, vulnerable and troubled superstar longing to be taken seriously, to be loved, and not quite ready to cope with all the uncomfortable sides the glitzy Hollywood life brings with it. Williams makes sure that Monroe is a human being after all, and that she is someone worth caring about. But she’s not all about the depressed Marilyn, as when her character gets her vibrant energy, she is delightfully glamorous.

As for the invaluable supporting players, Cooper’s wonky American accent aside, everyone stands strong in their roles, with two of the greatest English actors, Branagh and Dench, living up to their usual high standards. Wanamaker, as Marilyn’s coach who wants what is best for her most talented student, is stubborn and relentless, clashing with Olivier regarding Marilyn’s acting style. She believes in method acting, he doesn’t. Emma Watson, in her first post-Potter role, has an interestinging style. She believes in method acting, but she doesn’t. Emma Watson, in her first post-Potter role, is best for her most talented student, is stubborn and relentless, clashing with Olivier regarding Marilyn’s acting style. She believes in method acting, he doesn’t.

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As for the invaluable supporting players, Cooper’s wonky American accent aside, everyone stands strong in their roles, with two of the greatest English actors, Branagh and Dench, living up to their usual high standards. Wanamaker, as Marilyn’s coach who wants what is best for her most talented student, is stubborn and relentless, clashing with Olivier regarding Marilyn’s acting style. She believes in method acting, he doesn’t. Emma Watson, in her first post-Potter role, has an interestinging style. She believes in method acting, but she doesn’t.

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Smack it down to the ground, WWE style

Edward Bals tackles THQ’s latest professional wrestling game, WWE ‘12

THQ promised that WWE ‘12 would be the game to reinvent their tired series, and it seems that with this new entry they have succeeded, at least in part. This is a game which recreates the almost absurd dramatics and stage-play that wrestling is famous for: from The Undertaker’s chilling entrance to one of the, sometimes hilarious, match modes.

The ‘campaign’ within WWE ‘12 is the ‘Road to Wrestlemania’ which puts you in the shoes of three different characters: Sheamus (the villain), Triple H (the outsider) and Jacob Cass (the player-created rookie wrestler). The Road to Wrestlemania occupies a fairly sizable chunk of the game (roughly twelve hours) but it is at times frustrating. To mimic real life pro-wrestling this game mode has backstage fights, promos and even scripted events in the middle of matches. These scripted events can often be the most frustrating element of this mode as quite often I found myself fruitlessly trying to pin an opponent, when all that was required was a contextual button press.

“To mimic real life pre-wrestling this game has backstage fights, promos and even scripted events in the middle of matches”

Gripes about Road to Wrestlemania aside, the other single player mode, WWE universe, should provide many hours of enjoyment. This mode provides a section of the game without a story, allowing the matches to be shown in a calendar format allowing almost complete customisation and allowing for what the game should be mainly about (the wrestling) to come to the fore. Feuds and alliances will be formed in this mode and should keep you coming back for more.

The multiplayer mode is great fun as playing against a human opponent is much more enjoyable than competing against the AI opponents in WWE ‘12. When against the AI the difficulty occasionally spikes with the only reason seemingly being to punish the player for having become better at the game. However, the AI can be easily tweaked using a large range of customisation options. Competing against a human opponent is still the best experience for a match in WWE ‘12, and the almost lag-free online multiplayer makes it even easier to enjoy this.

In terms of controls the game is very easy to pick up with its intuitive control system. The A button is used to grapple, B is used for punches, kicks, Irish whips and pins, whilst the Y button controls the wrestler’s signature moves. The game also supplies button prompts for countering moves but these flitter onto and off the screen at such a speed that the countering system is somewhat down to chance, unless you have lightning-fast reflexes. The ability to target specific limbs is also a welcome addition as it adds an almost tactical and strategic feel to the gameplay.

“The vast customisation options in WWE ‘12 really give the game a unique touch; you can create your own character from scratch”

The customisation options in WWE ‘12 are vast. You can create your own character from scratch, altering their appearance, entrance, move set and finishing move. There is also an option for creating your own arena for use in the game. These customisation options really give the game a unique touch when you watch your wrestler come on using their own entrance rather than a stock one.

As a complete package WWE ‘12 is worth your time. The impressive customisation options, the large roster of over 60 characters and the solid core gameplay make this game a tempting package for anyone with the slightest interest in wrestling.
Interview Dressing: Womenswear

Dress code etiquette is key for formal events. Saskia Verhagen shows us how to make the best first impression.

Getting dressed for your interview needn’t be the looming and perilous task that it may seem. As for men, the main principal for a good interview outfit is simple: the keyword is subtlety. Appropriate but not boring, chic but not trendy, classic but not frumpy, feminine but not girly, and most of all, memorable – but never quirky. This is an exercise in which to women, comes as second nature: subliminal manipulation. We do it all the time, with a turn of phrase, a certain look – it’s all in the touches which aren’t obvious, but get the job done. Each piece, each accessory is clearly well-chosen, sublimely chic and perfectly appropriate. The most crucial thing to remember is to buy the best quality you can afford, look for great cuts and fabrics that fall well on you (Lord knows poly-blend doesn’t fall well on anyone) and quietly sophisticated detailing.

So don’t fret; whether you’re gunning up to meet the head honchos at a slick media firm or battening down the hatches in preparation for the endless rounds of interviews at the corporate finance firms, the below guide should sort you out for whatever Careers Services throws your way. And by the way, looking stylish is never about what you wear, but always about how you wear it: confidence is key.

Grooming

It is not quite clear why some girls find it so difficult to look properly put-together at interview, the simplest things make the biggest of differences. Make-up should be kept as natural as possible: after a proper cleanse, go for a tinted moisturiser and a touch of concealer with the lightest flush of blusher on the cheeks. Take note: no bronzer, no fake tan and no full-thickness foundation. Beyond anything else, it looks like you’ve tried too hard and with all that effort, all you’ve managed is to look entirely ridiculous. A neutral eye shadow with a touch of eyeliner and a lick of mascara if you’re feeling adventurous. Top this with a tailored brass-buttoned blazer which nips in at the waist, a small-ish square handbag over the shoulder and a pair of modest-height heels to complete the look.

For these pieces on the high street, Zara looks graces runways season after season (see last season’s Paul Smith and Michael Kors shows for well-styled examples) and always looks elegant and effortless, yet fabulously stylish.

Accessories

Your shoes and handbag should be good-quality, clean and tasteful, leather (not patent) or suede, in a co-ordinating shade to the rest of your outfit. Shoes and handbag needn’t match; indeed, it can look rather contrived and frumpy if they do. Avoid any designer-emblazoned anything, and worse than that, any designer knock-offs – beyond terrible.

Shoes should be kept to a modest (less than 3”) height and your handbag should be appropriately sized and smart. Jewellery ought to be kept to a bare minimum (sleeper earrings, delicate necklace, inconspicuous watch) and colour-appropriate tights or stockings are an absolute must: going bare-legged with a skirt on to an interview is a total faux-pas.

Informal Interviews

Here we’re talking about a company dinner with a few executives, or perhaps a casual interview for a cool media post somewhere you’ll find yourself fetching everyone’s tea order for your first six months of employment. This type of interview means deciphering the impossible oxymoronic ‘smart/casual’ dress code – but fear not: this is not the Everest climbing mission that it might seem.

An easy ensemble that never goes out of style is the simple pairing of a high-waisted trouser, belted over a silk shirt (Equipment is the perennial classic, but Miss Selfridge does the job too), keeping your colours muted and neutral: navy, camel, taupe, black, white, maybe maroon or forest green if you’re feeling adventurous.

Top this with a tailored brass-buttoned blazer which nips in at the waist, a small-ish square handbag over the shoulder and a pair of modest-height heels to complete the look.

For these pieces on the high street, Zara cuts a wicked jacket and their handbags are excellent too. Think Grace Kelly during the day, or classic Katharine Hepburn. The look graces runways season after season (see last season’s Paul Smith and Michael Kors shows for well-styled examples) and always looks elegant and effortless, yet fabulously stylish.

Formal Interviews

There are a few directions a girl can go here: full on skirt suit, coordinating skirt and separates, or a dress. The choice obviously depends on your personal taste and the company you’re interviewing with, but most often, trousers are not the right choice here.

If you are, indeed, a woman entering a man’s world, the best thing is to own up to it: look feminine and beautifully put-together, with a CV as enviable as your innate sense of style. The safest and most perennially stylish dress is the wrap dress, made famous by Diane von Furstenburg but which you can find good copies up and down the high street. If you’re going for separates, keep the colour palette edited down to a maximum of three shades, and never monochromatic – the funeral rule applies to women too. Try white, camel and navy; cream, black and maroon; pale blue, mustard and navy blue.

As mentioned before, fabric choice counts: look for cashmere blends for your sweaters, light wool blends for skirts and jackets and crisp cotton for shirts. Avoid anything too stretchy or acrylic like the plague: it feels cheap, looks cheap and fits badly.

Skirts should hit just below the knee and sweaters, shirts and jackets should be tailored but not tight. If you’re going to go for a pattern (a subtle check, houndstooth or stripe is acceptable), keep it to one item only, including accessories.

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As for hair, wearing it up or down is a matter of how you feel most confident. It should look neat and you should not feel the need to fiddle with it. Perfume, if you usually wear it, should be fresh and never overpowering.

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Lady’s Fingers

What a lovely name for a food! Ladies’ Fingers or Okra (it has various different names around the world) is one of the most popular vegetables among West Asians, North Indians and Pakistanis, where it is known as bamiya or banyaa. The following recipe is very common in Palestine, Syria, Greece, Cyprus, Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen, and Israel.

Ingredients

- 1 kg okra
- 2 onions
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 stock cube
- 1 ½ glass olive oil
- 1 glass of vinegar
- A pinch of salt

Preparation

Wash okra and put it in a bowl. Pour the vinegar on it and leave it for 4-5 minutes. Then fry it in the olive oil until it becomes ‘withered’ and put it in the pot. Fry the onions until they become brown and add them in the pot. Remove the oil from the frying pan and fry the tomatoes with the stock cube. Put them in the pot, add enough water (until it covers everything) and boil until the water is absorbed.

Anastasia Eleftheriou

Interview: Mark Pitts-Tucker

Shooting the Bries with Cathedral City’s very own ‘cheese grader’

Anastasia Eleftheriou

A: You are the cheese grader for Cathedral City. What does Cathedral City Cheese have different from other cheese brands?

M: It is correct that on a busy day I can grade in the region of 500 samples. Davidstow is a large producer by any measure and there are a lot of cheeses to be assessed. My two favourite cheeses are Cathedral City Vintage-20 and a nice gooey, cabbage smelling Brie.

A: What knowledge and skills are needed to be a cheese grader?

M: First the ability to taste accurately and consistently, secondly a good understanding of the manufacturing process, thirdly focus and concentration, and finally a thick skin if you need to reject product.

A: Do you enjoy your job? Are there any moments when you simply don’t want to eat any more cheese?

M: I do enjoy my work and it is one of those jobs that you didn’t you would soon be found wanting. There are times when I have certainly had enough cheese but never too much and I often eat cheese in the evening even after a full days tasting!

Recipe of the week: Thai Green Chicken Curry

Straight from the kitchens of Covent Garden’s Tamarai comes this dish.

With Christmas quickly approaching, prices are only bound to go up everywhere but Tamarai are trying their best to offer their award winning Pan Asian Food at an extremely pocket friendly price so all of your extra pennies can go towards those highly awaited presents under the tree.

Ingredients

- Chicken slices (Breast) 120gms
- Eggplant Slice 5gms
- Pea eggplant 4gms
- Kaifer lime leaves 2gms
- Basil leaves 5gms
- Bamboo shoot 10gms
- Green curry paste (readymade) 30gms

Sugar 5gms
Canned Coconut milk 400ml
Fish sauce
Oil 5ml

Method

Heat oil in a thick-based sauce pan. Add kaifer lime leaf, pea eggplant, sugar and green curry paste and sauté it. Stir occasionally and ensure it does not stick to the base. Add 100ml coconut milk, chicken slices and simmer until the chicken is cooked. Add the rest of the coconut milk and bring to the boil. Season with fish sauce and heat well. Finish with basil leaves. Serve hot. Manish Mehrotra – Chef
As a mathematician living with a group of other mathematicians, I like to think, at least some of the time, that our conversations relate to something beyond our chosen subject. But let’s face it: we’re Imperial students. Inevitably, the moment does come when normal discourse collapses into a frenzied exposition on Graph Automorphisms and the implications of Zorn’s Lemma.

In the heat of the moment, having everyone jostling around the puny Pukka Pad on the kitchen table can be pretty frustrating. It disrupts the flow, forcing everyone to be louder and more violent as they try to get their point across.

The solution to all this? A whiteboard station. The equations are up there on the wall in nice, big letters that everyone can read, there’s enough space for everyone to stand around, and, with multiple pens, people don’t have to fight each other for scribbling rights. On top of all this, there’s the added bonus that anything you write will seem instantly important – simply by virtue of being scrawled up on a board.

And the boards can be put to a lot more use than you first might think. Ours have been used for games of Pictionary; language lessons; even just leaving messages for each other (“pay rent” being the most common). It functions as a nice little communal place for people to gather around. You might never have thought of making one, yet once you have it somehow seems indispensable.

How to do it

The size of your station will depend on a few things: the number of people living in your flat, the length of uninterrupted wall space you have, and what your budget is. We have three whiteboards side-by-side, spanning about three metres in total.

While this guide will be for a three-board set-up, you can easily tailor it for more or less boards as you see fit. (Do be warned, though, that while the boards might look big in the shop, once they’re up on the wall you’ll quickly find yourself running out of writing space.) Here’s what you’ll need:

- Whiteboard: 30” x 90” (x3)
- Pack of sticky fixers
- Board markers (x3)
- Clothes for wiping (x3)
- String
- Nails (x3)

Most of these can be picked up at an ordinary stationery shop. The bulk of the cost will, of course, come from the boards. They’re usually around £15 a pop, but if you’re lucky enough to catch a sale at Ryman’s you can get them for half that.

Once you have all of the above, it’s time to get down to business. First thing to do is hammer a nail into the top-right corner of each board. We’ll be using this later to hang the markers and wiping cloths.

We’re going to use the sticky fixers to attach the boards to the wall. You could use nails, but your landlord might not be best pleased about this; in fact, on the subject of pissing off landlords, if you cheap out on the sticky fixers there’s a chance they could leave some nasty marks on the wall when you eventually remove the boards.

Now that I’ve cleared myself of any legal trouble: apply the sticky fixers liberally to the back of each board. We’ll be using this later to hang the markers and wiping cloths.

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The blob at the top is meant to be China. Don’t ask why.

Next week is the last issue before Christmas! Please, please, send in your Home & Garden stories. If you do, Navid can stop writing the kind of nonsense you see above. If we don’t get any submissions, next time he’ll be teaching you how to make a scale model of Santa’s sleigh. I’m not joking. Email us at felix@imperial.ac.uk
WOMEN IN SET PRESENT

GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS

IMPERIAL’S BEST LOOKING NIGHT

£3 EARLY BIRD
WIKIPEDIA RACES
sign up on Facebook for prizes

08-12-11 7 till 11pm

BELLY DANCERS AND JUGGLERS INCLUDED!
Volunteer for Nepal

Project Nepal needs you for their charitable projects

Cai Heath
Kevin Moulton
Jing Tang

Dear Imperial Students!
We are announcing the new Project Nepal group at Imperial College Union, we have now been officially registered as an ICU project and we have been overwhelmed by the positive response that the project has received so far from students. We now need volunteers both on our project committee and for next summer’s international trip so please read on for more details.

“We need volunteers for our project committee and international trip”

Project Nepal is partnering with two organisations to make our goals a reality next summer, we will be working with the UK charity, InterVol (http://www.intervol.co.uk), who will support the UK side of our work, and the Nepali organisation, Partnership for Sustainable Development (PSD) Nepal (http://www.psdsnepal.org) who we will work with during the summer project. The project aims to improve education in rural Nepal through providing funding and volunteers to construct school buildings and to teach basic lessons in primary schools. These schools struggle to get by and often have far too many children due to Nepal’s growing population and levels of poverty. PSD Nepal work with the Nepali government to target some of the worst off schools who really need assistance and then target those schools with projects such as this one. Volunteers will raise money as a team through fund-raising events in the UK to support the project. Volunteers from a number of UK universities, such as Oxford, Birmingham, Bristol and Edinburgh, take part in the programme currently and Imperial College will be the newest addition!

Project Nepal has been accepted as an official charitable project by Imperial College Union and we are now looking to increase the size of our committee. Please get in touch with us if you would like to be involved at this stage, especially if you already have experience of being on a committee at ICU. Our current volunteers need support with planning our applications process, starting fund-raising and arranging the upcoming meetings, being an official part of the committee is great for your personal development and you will develop skills and experience in project co-ordination with a registered charity that are hard to get during university. Dedicated committee members will also have a better chance of securing their place in the programme.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the meeting next week!

Volunteer for Nepal

Engineers report on busy club night at High Street Kensington’s Archangel

Will Seez

On Thursday 17 November, the CGCU hosted their annual club night at Archangel on High Street Kensington. After a highly successful Welcome Dinner at Café de Paris, there was a huge amount of pressure on the CGCU exec to see if they could pull it off again. With their reputation somewhat dwindling over the last few years, Jacky Kwan and his committee really seem to be stepping up to the plate this year. The club was full to the brim on the night. The crowd was a good mix of freshmen and slightly more mature students, but more surprisingly, of males and females. The music was great and the atmosphere even better. Deals that rivalled those at the Union kept the masses in good spirit. Add to this the fact that some free drink vouchers seemed to slip away mysteriously, and you get the levels of amusement that the committee were hoping for.

“Deals that rivalled those at the Union”

Clearly people enjoyed the night. Highlights include an unnamed fresh-er turning 18 in style, an unnamed se-nior student getting furiously slapped around the face and some serious love given to Spanner (see photo). So all in all, a resounding success.

What does CGCU have to offer next? Leaving Christmas Dinner plans to each respective engineer- ing society, CGCU can save for more events next term. In the near future there will be an Ice Skating Evening at Winter Wonderland and in the Spring term there can be more club nights expected!
Politicians sometimes sound like a broken record. Here’s the David Cameron text board. It’s like a sound board, but it’s in your head. Use it to make up your own fully formed sentences! You may even form an actual policy from them. If you do, please send them into the Coalition Government. They desperately need them. **Blue = what he says Green = what he means**

I once met a black man
I think I saw a film with that Wesley. L. Jackson chap the other day

We’re all in this together
You’re all in it together, good luck

We have no intention of privatising the NHS*
I intend to privatisé the NHS, but know that it would be incredibly unpopular to do so in a direct way.
So I’m finding a way around it.
* Note: said while privatising the NHS in an underhand way

We must cut the deficit. Imagine if you had a bill to pay, would you pay it or just wait...
I’m definitely sticking with this plan, so here’s an oversimplified analogy for you povvy plebs

These strikes are damaging
These strikes are irritating, just sit down and do as you’re told like the working class used to

Remember, it was the LAST LABOUR government that put us in this mess in the first place*
Please don’t remember that before I wasn’t screaming for regulation of the banks and didn’t say anything like this could happen
* used to justify doing something that he claims Labour did, so it’s okay to keep doing it then

We’re making tough decisions
We’re making really easy decisions, for us

That’s what the Big Society is all about
How did someone actually manage to sell me on a policy that is basically just “well, we aren’t going to bother helping you. Do it your fucking selves.”

For Nick Clegg, just reword it all, adding in the words “equal partners” and “fairness”.

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* Note: said while privatising the NHS in an underhand way

Send in your drunken mate of the week photos to: felix@imperial.ac.uk
Misguided protestors campaign against haircuts

Drunk Men of the Week

Their next act: walking into an operating theatre and scaring the shit out of the patient.

Horoscopes

* I bet you they can’t even be arsed to change this fucking caption

Aries

This week you snort a line of coke, pick up your son from his father’s house and get on a tram in Croydon. You decide to start airing your concerns about demographic changes in South London. Turns out your views are unpopular.

Taurus

You’re a medical student. After watching a morbidly obese patient die of a heart attack: surrounded by strangers and shitting themselves; you realise that you hate humanity. Upon expressing this belief, all the qualified doctors burst into applause and you’re handed your degree on the spot.

Gemini

This week you are required to write a circular email to the Imperial College RAG committee, as an opening gambit you decide to start airing your views on the comedic merit of a university publication. Turns out your views are unpopular.

Cancer

This week you go on strike. Your pension is being sold down the river, which is completely outrageous because it’s not your fault that the world economy is down the shitter. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, the strike achieves nothing. Politicians inexplicably call you greedy.

Leo

This week you’re doing bong hits with Eliza Manningham-Buller outside of Queen’s tower when Keith O’nia’s rocks up and starts getting all whingy about respectability and bullshit like that. Just when you thought your high had been crushed forever, Prof. Nutt turns up with his special 2:2. You’ve made it through to send you banal, cute small-talk filled text messages at 2 hourly intervals. To add to your broken heart, you get a 2:2.

Virgo

This week you’re doing bong hits with Eliza Manningham-Buller outside of Queen’s tower when Keith O’nia’s rocks up and starts getting all whingy about respectability and bullshit like that. Just when you thought your high had been crushed forever, Prof. Nutt turns up with his special 2:2. You’ve made it through to send you banal, cute small-talk filled text messages at 2 hourly intervals. To add to your broken heart, you get a 2:2.

Libra

This week your girlfriend doesn’t love you anymore. Unfortunately, girlfriend is the name you gave the programme you made for your computing coursework, designed to send you banal, cute small-talk filled text messages at 2 hourly intervals. To add to your broken heart, you get a 2:2.

Scorpio

This week as King of Felix, you train your underlings of malnourished urchins in the art of swordsmanship and lead them out to war against RAG. Unfortunately no one on campus can tell you where RAG is based, and very few have even heard of them. You regroup in the JCR to plan strategy.

Sagittarius

This week your girlfriend doesn’t love you anymore. Unfortunately, girlfriend is the name you gave the programme you made for your computing coursework, designed to send you banal, cute small-talk filled text messages at 2 hourly intervals. To add to your broken heart, you get a 2:2.

Capricorn

This week you decide to lead your Felix Army on a campaign to conquer IC Radio. However, when you get there, you find the station manager being bundled into a police van and the Union President in what appears to be a Stasi uniform setting alight to their server. Foiled Again!

Aquarius

This week, in a fit of loneliness you buy a hamster. You very quickly realise that the companionship derived from a creature that primarily just eats and shits a lot isn’t huge. You decide to name him Virginity and deliberately lose him. Now all the lads will think you’re a real man.

Pisces

This week you are the girl in the yellow jumper with gold studded black gloves smoking in the entrance to Sheffield at 2pm on Wednesday, you’re so hot you ruin every guy’s day. Call me 020 7515 7897, from 6pm to 4am on weekdays.
PUZZLES

Last Week’s Solutions

Crosswords

SLITHERLINK

The aim with Slitherlink is to make one continuous closed loop by connecting the dots. The numbers in each square indicate how many edges of the square are part of the loop, so if it contains a “2”, you know that two and only two out of four edges have lines. That’s all the info you need to get the one logical answer (though waiting a week to see the solution will also do). Answers to puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk, as the puzzles team receives one shaved moustache per correct solution.

Word Wheel

Make as many words of at least 4 letters as you can, always using the central one. NO plurals, conjugated verbs, comparatives or superlatives, because I said so... There is always at least one 9 letter word.

ChessSoc Chess

Black to play and win

Contributions wanted!

If you’d like to contribute by sending in puzzles, comics or even some editing, e-mail puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk. Be they horrendously complicated things or funky picture puzzles you think readers would like, do get in touch. General suggestions are also welcome.
Welcome to another round of cryptograms. Each letter has been encoded so it stands for a different letter. In the end, a poignant quote and the person who said it will appear.

Welcome to another round of cryptograms. Each letter has been encoded so it stands for a different letter. In the end, a poignant quote and the person who said it will appear.

Nonogram – Techno File

The cells in a grid have to be coloured or left blank according to numbers at the side of the grid.

The numbers measure how many unbroken lines of filled-in squares there are in any given row or column. Look at last week’s solution to see what a typical solution looks like.

The overall solution should yield some sort of picture, or as good as a picture can look in monochrome on a 15x15 grid.

As usual, answers to puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk.

Cryptic Crosswords? No Thanks!

Having trouble with the Felix cryptic crosswords in the sports section? No idea what it all means or would like to know why some answers are as they are? Contact puzzles.felix@imperial.ac.uk with the subject line “Cryptic Help.” You’ll be sent an introduction to how cryptic crosswords work and what to look out for. Each week you’ll also receive complete explanations to the answers in the previous week’s Felix cryptic crossword.

1. Effervescence similar to pubescent ghost
2. In the way a rotating boulder does
3. Detainment building music
4. Strolling down a snowy month, amazing place
5. Flu on a weekend’s evening
6. Oval of birth
7. Kensington sword
8. MC causing a trip into passion
9. Boy in the reflection
10. The meaning of life

Synonymous Songs

Here are 10 sentences that are synonymous with song titles. For instance, Precipitation in the Autumn would clue November Rain.

1. Effervescence similar to pubescent ghost
2. In the way a rotating boulder does
3. Detainment building music
4. Strolling down a snowy month, amazing place
5. Flu on a weekend’s evening
6. Oval of birth
7. Kensington sword
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QFDROIMFVWZ CRYPTOGRAMS

Welcome to another round of cryptograms. Each letter has been encoded so it stands for a different letter. In the end, a poignant quote and the person who said it will appear.
Hockey: Men’s 3rds with 1st win of the season versus Sussex

Kesh Murthy
Hockey
Men’s 3rd  2
Sussex 2nd  1

To say that it has been a disastrous start to the season would be an understatement for the IC Hockey Men’s 3rd XI. By losing their first four games they had already lost more times this season than in the entirety of the last. With relegation a shocking possibility, the team knew that they needed to register a win soon, which is exactly what they did against a shell-shocked Sussex 2nd XI.

Playing 4-4-2 with a diamond had not been working for IC who have been lacking an attacking edge all season. So with drastic times calling for drastic measures, the team changed to a 4-3-3 and within minutes of the push back this change almost reaped immediate rewards with SCID almost knocking in a loose ball but for good work by the Sussex keeper.

IC kept up this pressure throughout the first 10 minutes of the half, but after this period, the game started to turn. A break by Sussex into our D saw goal-keeper Sifter run out to make a fine goal-saving tackle, but severely injure his neck in the process.

After a lengthy injury time out, IC took too long to get back into the game and found themselves a goal down when the Sussex forward snuck in behind the otherwise excellent Eager Beaver and Fritzl to slot coolly past a helpless Sifter. Some more poor play from IC offered Sussex plenty of opportunities, but thankfully poor finishing kept them 2-0 ahead.

Sussex were stunned and try as they could, they failed to muster much of a response with the IC defence pushing up high and snuffing out attacks before they could develop. It was a nervy end to the match though, as Sussex were awarded a short at the death but Gingy-pops stood up to the test and pressured the Sussex forward into a mistake.

2-1 the final score and a thoroughly deserved win for the Men’s 3s who hope to extend this one match winning streak against the RSM next week.

Selected results

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**Football: Men’s 7s make light work of Heythrop**

Ed Lambourn  
Men’s 3rd  2  Sussex 2nd  1

A fine afternoon in Fulham yielded a impressive 4-0 away victory for the Imperial football 7th team against a strong Heythrop side whose Kensington location made it as close to a derby game as any possible outside Varsity week. Equipped with armfuls of food from some of Gloucester Road’s most reputable food outlets, the ever-professional 7s proceeded to the tube, soon arriving at Putney Bridge to meet the rest of the players. After an accidental and brief detour via the private Hurlingdon Club, which was met with stern and disdainful looks from the gatekeepers, the pitch was found in nearby Hurlingdon Park. The team quickly found the changing room (whose size suggested it had actually been designed for 18-a-side Aussie Rules Football) and pulled on the literally hole-filled rags which were masquerading as the 7s’ kit for the season.

The rare presence of a referee for the first time in the season was a welcome one, and he quickly got the game under way with Heythrop losing the toss, leaving the 7s to kick off. Talismanic left-winger Ed Lambourn had been self-diagnosed with a severe pulmonary embolism, and was therefore unavailable for the first time this season – a game in which his devastating pace would surely have been useful, against a defence which exhibited about as much speed as a paralysed snail. He was placed in midfield released Mo who easily outpaced the haggard Heythrop defence and fired low into the corner of the net – his second goal to come, with Ben releasing Mo on the halfway line, who promptly outran the 7s’ goalkeeper to give Imperial a 3-0 lead into the half, as another punishing through ball from the midfield seemed to return at the beginning of the second half.

The only other incident of the first half was a rare yellow card for right wing on the edge of his own box to prevent any kind of threat materialising down the flanks. Any lightning spirit from Heythrop which had seemed to be absent for most of the first half seemed to return at the beginning of the second half, as the game took a more even stance. Winger Bhavik Bhatt replaced Chris and took up a left midfield role, with Mikkel moving into the centre. The fourth and final goal came midway through the second half, as another punishing through ball down the right flank released Mo on the halfway line, who promptly outran the Heythrop defence and fired confidently across the body of the keeper low into the corner of the net – his third of the season.

For the final ten minutes, Sergei took up position in goal, allowing James to inject some of his tough-tackling and enthusiasm into the centre of midfield. After being unsure of his own ability in goal, James had looked every bit the professional keeper, with a confident performance. The only incident in the last few minutes was a penalty for Imperial being waved away by the referee after talking to Ben, who proved the 7s’ sportsmanship, even though a penalty would surely have led to a fifth goal.

Soon after, the final whistle blew, signalling celebrations from Imperial to accompany their most convincing result of the season. Imperial were given man of match after his sterling performance, which had resulted in two goals for the right winger. With performances like this, the 7s are sure to quickly rise up the table – form which could not have come at a better time, as more challenging matches lie in the weeks to come.

**Imperial Surfers go to Devon: Westward ho!**

Alexander Karvelas  
**Surfing**

The first weekend of November saw 28 Imperial students hit the coast of north Devon for a weekend of surfing and initiation activities.

The trip was the first of the new academic year and saw 16 newbies join the surf soc veterans to hit the Devon coast a fortnight before; huge as the 50ft waves which battered the Devon coast: a forecast promising large swells.

After being unsure of his own ability to keep the beginners and (self-claimed) pros happy.

The night following the Saturday surf session was arguably one of surf soc’s finest to date. Following the initiations which saw newbies consuming beverages through the surf soc boot of grief, the club continued to play the usual surf soc marathon of games. The usual victims of the boot never failed to entertain the crowd, with certain committee members prowling on innocent newbies in search of some early swell white wash for the Sunday session.

The Sunday saw the final surf session of the weekend. The waves improved in quality becoming less choppy than the previous day, allowing everyone to improve on their skills’ facade. Some members decided to sit out this session feeling a bit dodge from the night before. After a Sunday roast over looking the beach, the surfers loaded the minibuses and hit the road. The journey back to the grindstone was considerably better with the travel time halved… for the one minibus. The second bus decided to re-join some traffic, and are due to come back next week...

The continued success of surf soc over the last year has allowed the club to up attendances on trips to 28 per trip. With sponsorship, and a larger committee the club is continuing to grow and are open to any Imperial students joining the club… provided you can swim!

**Interested in surfing?**

Surf soc welcomes beginners/intermediates/kooky slater quality surfers. To be put on the mailing list and learn more about surf soc simply email: surf soc@imperial.ac.uk

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**Darren Ambrose, eat your heart out**

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**Everybody goes surfin’, surfin’ Devonshire**

*set to the tune of the Beach Boys song, Obviously*
The 20th was the first home game of the season for the Imperial Immortals and they were 4-0 but succumb to Portsmouth.

The defending National champions were in a real trouble, but thankfully Mike Peacock was able to bring life back to a suffering team with his inspirational words.

The second half was not particularly eventful; the Destroyers clearly assuming they were favored to score a lot more points had their offense destroyed thanks to some powerful play by Temi Ladega and Jordan Douglas. The Immortals defence failed to capitalise on the immortals scoring two long yard running touchdown through a shambled Immortals defence. Imperial looked as if it couldn’t wait for the end of the season head-on, maybe even fighting their way to the final score of the game; finishing the game with their first loss of the season.

The Immortals defense failed to capitalise on the struggling Portsmouth offense, however, barely managing to move the ball against the best defense in the country. Instead the Immortals had to console themselves with a scoreless half against the reigning national champions; finishing the game with their first loss of the season so far.

Starting the second half of the season at 3-1 with the only loss being to the national champions in a heartbreaker the Immortals barely 4 years old, can be incredibly proud of. Hopefully, with hard work and time for injuries to heal, a full Immortals team can take the rest of the season head-on, maybe even fighting their way to the playoffs. Good luck Imperial Immortals.
Captains’ Interviews: Dodgeball Club Captain

Indy Leclercq
Sport Editor

As we roll into December, the Captains’ interviews just keep on coming! This week, we have one of the quirkiest Imperial sports on display: Dodgeball. Alan Soltani, a 3rd year physicist and Dodgeball club captain, is the man of the hour. We meet up in Beit quad to talk about balls, wrenches and more.

“I’m not quite sure what to expect coming into the interview – what would the ‘dodgeball type’ be?” Very friendly, as it turns out. I kick things off by asking a bit about the structure and organisation of the club, and where Alan fits in.

“I’m club captain, as well as being first team captain – we also have a president though. My role involves organising the competitive side of the club, the matches, coaching and training.” How many teams do Dodgeball have? “This year, we’ve got three teams, which is the most we’ve ever had. Teams are mixed, with the game played six-a-side. We took twenty-one people to the university championships a few weeks ago.”

As I don’t remember anyone from dodgeball sending in a report about that, I ask him to tell me more. “There were thirty teams competing at Cranfield university, in the ‘experienced’ teams category. The first team did pretty well, our first fixtures are this Saturday. One thing to point out is that the leagues aren’t run by BUCS: there is a mix of university and non-university teams.” What are the team’s objectives for the season?

How was the fresher intake for this year? “Really solid. We started having training sessions in Ethos just this year, before that we would use the Union concert hall – which is surprisingly good for dodgeball. Training at Ethos makes it easier to draw in newcomers or people who want to give it a go, though, and I’d say we have about 35-40 people per training session.”

Do they have official dodgeball balls and everything? “Yeah, of course it’s not rubber, actually, but inflatable with a soft outside layer.” He shows me one, and what immediately comes to mind is a Volleyball, but a bit lighter and slightly padded. Alan tells me it’s soft enough that head shots are allowed… perhaps with a bit too much of a grin on his face.

Now for the serious stuff: how did he get into Dodgeball? “Actually, when I was at school, I used to watch this programme called Extreme Dodgeball that was on Sky. It just followed a bunch of American players around, and introduced the world of dodgeball, but it was on Sky. Just followed a bunch of American players around, and introduced the world of dodgeball, but it was amazing! When I got to uni and saw the dodgeball stand at fresher’s fair, I thought ‘I’ll give it a go’, and then just ended up loving it.”

It seems to be a recurring theme, this, of people picking up a sport at university and becoming the captain a few years down the line… So how easy is it to progress at dodgeball? What skills are needed? “It’s essentially a throwing and catching game, and those are the things you need to work on – along with speed, reflexes, that sort of thing. It’s pretty easy to progress rapidly, if you’re shown what to do. We [the people who joined at the same time as Alan - Ed.] took ages to progress, though, because at first we had no idea what we were doing, and no-one was really there to show us the ropes. The new lot are picking it up really quickly as they have us to teach them.”

Finally, the question I have to ask: was Dodgeball the film a blessing or a curse for the sport? “Definitely a blessing. UK dodgeball didn’t kick off until the film came out – there was a guy in Leicester who saw the film, thought ‘this is wicked’ and started the UK dodgeball association.”

To be very honest, most people had a bit of a laugh when I told them I’d be interviewing the dodgeball captain. I tell Alan this, and he concurs. “It’s not always the easiest sport to admit to playing seriously.” I’ve had quite a bit of stick over the years, especially when you say you play dodgeball competitively… but I’m used to it!” As the great Patches O’Houlihan once said, “If you can dodge a wrench, you can dodge a ball.” You just have to be prepared to take some stick for it.
Immensals Round-up
Mixed results for Imperial’s gridiron gang:
Page 42

14-Medal Haul for IC Judokas

Imperial’s team of elite and not so elite judokas trekked to the edge of civilisation last Saturday, to the point where electricity is limited to 4 hours a day and counting to six on one hand gets easy. It was time for the London Open Championships in Uxbridge and the second biggest competition on the judo calendar.

Despite the 5:00 am start, Imperial was in high spirits after collecting 9 medals this time last year, a feat that everyone was hoping to better now that our ranks included a high number of beginners who had come through our dedicated beginners’ course and were entering the category specifically for those who have started judo this year. We practically ran towards the dreaded weighing scales to be informed if 3 weeks of dieting and the self-torture of abstinence from drinking had paid off. All made it and could finally eat some breakfast apart from one fresher who was so confused about not making his weight category...until he remembered the Pizza Hut All-You-Can-Eat eating competition he’d had the night before. Gabriel, shame on you.

Fresher’s and advanced players alike, Imperial put on an impressive display of foot sweeps, shoulder throws, drop throws and strangles to beat their way to 6 finals and 8 semi-finals. Spectacular fights included several Imperial friendly fire situations, notably Thanos who beat 3 other Imperial players to claim a bronze medal and Thore Bucking who beat not only everyone in his own weight category but everyone in the category above! One of our black belts was even awarded “Fastest Throw of the Day” winning a fight in just 5 seconds!

Going into the final fight of the competition was Imperial Dan grade (black belt) Jusso, Imperial and Brunel University were neck and neck for overall points scored, if Jusso won his last fight not only would he win the team’s 4th gold medal but Imperial would win the competition overall. 2 minutes of nail biting judo and Imperial lay the smack down with a flawless throw that saw his opponent’s feet flying higher than his head before crashing into the mat. Imperial win the fight and the championship.

Total competition hoard: 4 gold, 2 silver and 8 bronze medals and one massive shiny team championship trophy. Roll on BUCS.

Turn to p.40 for a picture of the team!