



Turn to page 9 to read about Rick Genest and other fans of body modification.



Lady Gaga arrives at the 2011 VMA's in an 'embryonic state'. More on page 10.

Students set to pay for Health Centre visits



The Student Health Centre is located in the main building. Services are currently free of charge.

Kelly O'Brien, Editor

IT has recently emerged that UL Student Health Centre, located in the main building, will be charging for medical services as of this coming September.

The decision to implement charges comes from the University Executive and follows in the footsteps of UCD, DCU, NUIM and TCD.

Professor Paul McCutcheon, Vice President Academic & Registrar of UL stated that the medical centre was "running deficits" year on year and, as such, the executive has decided to seek a "student contribution" for medical services. He states that this change stems from "increased demand" in the health centre and is partially due

to a "change in student requirements". Professor McCutcheon states that "We want to make the medical service sustainable. It's not sustainable under the current scheme as we are running deficits. We're aware that the students have medical needs and we want to provide a reasonable level of service that we can sustain into the future.

The only way this can be done is by putting in charges for medical consultation." Professor McCutcheon goes on to say that the charges will be "considerably less" than you'd pay for a GP. The charges for the medical centre will be as follows: €25 to see a Doctor, €10 to see a Nurse, €25 for a psychiatric consultation, €40 for physio, €10 for the STD clinic and €10 for contraceptive advice. The University will continue to partially subsidise the cost of the Centre.

ULSU Education Officer, Aoife Kenny, stated that the current economic climate was partially to blame for this move and that "the days of getting stuff for free are well gone by."

On a more optimistic tone, she went on to say that "it's still cheaper than you'll get in Castletroy or in the city centre." With the introduction of fees, it is expected that UL students will see a complete systems upgrade in the Health Centre. Essential services such as medical, physio and sexual health will be retained with improvements being made in relation to waiting times and opening hours.

Students in possession of a medical card will still have to pay for Health Centre services, but can claim back this money from their local health board. Students who have health insurance may also claim back the cost of their visit.

ULSU President, Derek Daly, called the move "unfortunate, but necessary" and believes that the situation is a "manifestation of the unsustainability and underfunding of the third level sector in Ireland."

"I expect that students will demand much more of the health centre now that they are directly contributing

toward its upkeep." Currently, UL is one of very few educational institutes that offer free medical care for students. NUIG does not currently charge for students to use their healthcare facilities, though this was part of an agreement between NUIG and NUIG Students' Union in banning their version of RAG Week. There are currently charges for medical care in UCD, DCU and Trinity College Dublin.

The future of the Health Centre, and other necessary services, is also under discussion. With the plans for a new Student Centre currently being drawn up, officials are taking this as an opportunity to safeguard the facilities and services currently in operation. Plans for a 'Wellbeing Hub' have been put forward for consideration.

Director of Student Academic Administration, Dr Bernadette Walsh, described the Hub as being a "very joined up service". She goes on to explain that though these plans do depend on finances going into the

future, that the 'Wellbeing Hub' would be a centre that incorporates all the different services integral to student life – medical centre, student counselling, disability support etc

On the current situation with the Health Centre, Dr Walsh states "the reality is that we're trying to provide a comprehensive range of service and there's a big cost associated with that. We simply cannot maintain a level of service unless we introduce some level of charges. If we didn't do that we'd have to look at reducing the level of service."

The UL Student Health Centre services between 9,000 and 12,000 students per academic year. In its inception, it was designed to be an acute service and more reactionary than permanent. Though originally meant to be an A & E of sorts to deal with on-site cases, in recent years the centre has moved towards being a more general medical service.

Rockett, Ronan and Moursy elected after disappointing turnout



Bank holiday weekend blamed for slow election week

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

THE 2012/3 Sabbatical team consisting of Paddy Rockett, Cathal Ronan and Adam Moursy was elected in what was deemed a somewhat lethargic election week.

Incumbent CSO, Paddy Rockett, was elected to Vice President Academic Officer with 1173 votes. Academic is the new name for the education office. He beat Jacqueline Woods by a narrow margin, with Ms Woods receiving 960 votes. Cathal Ronan pipped incumbent CO Kelly O’Brien to the post for the welfare office, with a total of 1090 votes after transfers, with Ms O’Brien 5 behind on 1085. William Jennings was eliminated in the first count with 336 votes. 164 of those were transferred to Mr Ronan. For the presidential office, Adam Moursy was incredibly close to becoming elected on the first count, being a mere 54 votes from the quota of 1178. After Eamonn Horgan was eliminated, 208 of his 529 votes transferred to Mr Moursy. Mr Moursy was then deemed elected,

beating David Hartery 1332 votes to 920 votes. The turnout was 2355, considerably lower than last year’s record vote of 3865. It was hoped to break the 4000 mark, however these hopes were quickly dashed when the vote by lunchtime was only around the 1000 mark. Any registered student could cast a vote online using their student ID. 100% electronic voting was introduced last year, to the disappointment of some students who shouted at last year’s results announcement “Back to the ballot box”. A laptop was available in the SU Photocopy Room for students to vote, and all computer labs on campus were deemed to be polling stations. As such, campaigning within 10 metres of these rooms was not permitted. The particularly slow election week was partly blamed on Bank Holiday Monday falling at the start of the week, putting campaign teams at a disadvantage. Many have also suggested that the apparent disrepute the SU brought itself into this year because of the financial crisis is mainly to blame for students’ apathy. The reduction in sabbatical officers from 5 to 3 may also have prompted student disinterest. Both Campaigns and Services Officer and Communications Officer were abolished at the Week 2 EGM. The newly elected officers will take up office on 15 June.

Education Officer “disappointed” with CRC turnout

Siofra Mannion

LAST Tuesday, the final Class Rep Council of the year was held with President Don Barry attending to answer student’s queries and give advice. Turnout was very poor for this event, with only 56 out of 229 reps in attendance.

Aoife Kenny, VP/Education Officer stated that she was “extremely disappointed” with the support shown by current class reps but that she was “happy with the reps who did turn up and who asked questions. I really appreciate their attendance; it shows that some of them do actually care about the student voice.” Class Rep for Second Year Industrial Biochemistry Michael O’ Donnell said “For the first few meetings the Council it looked promising but after that it was a joke.” Despite the low turnout, Don Barry was received well by students in attendance. He received somewhat of an onslaught of queries and answered each one to the best of his knowledge. Rep for Second Year Journalism and

New Media Paul O’ Sullivan said “He confidently addressed the questions of the council. He was very honest and sometimes openly admitted when he didn’t know something. While this does give students the confidence of knowing their president is an honest man, it was quite shocking to learn just how little the president has to do with the day-to-day running of the college.” Michael also said “he didn’t really have a chance to give much information due to the questions he was asked, but overall I thought it was quite relevant to the occasion, despite not being able to answer certain questions fully”. Ms Kenny commented on the overall attitude of this year’s reps saying “the main problem I received when I took over office was reps complaining about mandatory council attendance. That was removed this semester to help with the restructuring. Maybe I was just being very naive in believing that it wasn’t about getting free stuff and free weekends away and fear mongering to attend council as the semester seems to have ended on a very lassie faire approach from a lot of reps who only did anything when there was a complaint.”

UGM fails to meet quorum second time around

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

UNSEASONABLY clement weather was blamed among other things for a turnout of just 35 at the Wednesday, Week 10 UGM.

The general meeting, held in the 380 seater KBG12, was intended to pass motions that were not passed at the Week 8 UGM as that meeting was also not quorate. The meeting was scheduled to take place after the final sitting of class reps council which took place at 6pm. Only around 70 students attended that meeting in the first instance. At least 200 registered students must attend to meet quorum. Those in attendance were unsurprisingly critical, saying the meeting was “publicised badly” and

more could have been done to raise awareness of the meeting. Clubs and Societies Council Chair, David Hartery said that issues should not be made “cool” and hit out at using “sexy” descriptions to encourage attendance. Meanwhile, incoming An Focal Editor, Darragh Roche encouraged the SU to pay less heed to poor numbers. “A government which receives a poor voting turnout during elections doesn’t stop providing services”, said Mr Roche. Incumbent CSO and Academic Officer Elect, Paddy Rockett lay blame on election week, which may have resulted in students suffering from leaflet overload. Sabbats in attendance were frustrated at the situation. SU President, Derek Daly enquired out of all present in the hall who attended out of their own desire and not because of Class Reps or C&S, to which two students responded. It is unknown what will now occur.

Limerick Student Race-goers Break World Record

Anne Byrne

THE highly anticipated Student Raceday took place two weeks ago at Limerick Race Course. As well as rodeo bull riding and sumo wrestling games, the legendary Captain Morgan and his Morganettes brought the party spirit to the races this year. Anyone familiar with Captain Morgan knows of his famous one-legged stance called ‘the Captain’s pose’. The Captain and his Morganettes asked race-goers to join them in an attempt to break a world record for ‘Most People Standing on One Leg Simultaneously’. The official Guinness world record stood at 339, set by some basketball fans at half-time in a Trailblazers v LA Lakers basketball game in February 2011 at the Rose Garden stadium in Portland Oregon. In order to break the record, Captain Morgan needed over 339 Limerick race-goers to stand on one leg continuously for a minimum of 2 minutes. The eventual tally of record breakers came to 936 which was made up of people from over 10 different 3rd level colleges from all over Ireland. The world record attempt took place in front of the main stand under the watchful eye of Captain Morgan who showed race-goers how to do the perfect leg raise before jumping onto ‘Canon’, his trusty horse, to monitor the attempt. Race-goers can view the world record breaking video on Captain Morgan’s Irish Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CaptainMorganIreland.

UL students show support for children’s rights

Sheryl Binley

CAMPAIGN for Children, a new children’s rights organisation, was on campus last month to get UL students involved in the drive to strengthen children’s rights in Ireland.

The campaign, which was supported by the Students’ Union, aims to raise awareness of the current gaps in child protection and children’s rights in Ireland, and calls for the rights of children to be protected and respected. Campaign for Children Recruitment Director Lara Kelly said “We got a positive reaction from students at UL. This is such an important issue, and one that is in danger of falling off the agenda again. The on-going support of UL students will be vital in the months ahead, if we are going to see any real progress on children’s rights in 2012.”

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1. Contributors please note:

All submissions to An Focal are greatly valued. If you have submitted an article which has not been published in this issue, it is very likely that your piece has been retained for publication in future issues. If you are concerned that your article has not been published, please say so.

2. Editing:

If you are unhappy with how your article appeared in An Focal, please discuss this with the Editor. A number of strict guidelines are followed in the production of An Focal, which means some articles may be altered to allow them to fit on the page and to improve readability.



Kelly O’Brien, Editor

EDITORIAL

HELLO and welcome to the last edition of An Focal for the academic year 2011/12... and what a year it has been.

In the past eleven editions, we’ve seen ups and downs, trials and tribulations. We’ve brought you the successes and failures of the Students’ Union, the leaps and bounds made by Clubs and Societies, and top notch journalism by University of Limerick students.
Writing this was hard. My final Editorial has been looming over me for the past three weeks, lying in wait on the edges of my mind, reminding me, ever reminding me, of my own mortality.
Looking back on my year as Editor, I can’t help but hear the echoes of the past. To quote my predecessor and his predecessor before him, “This will be the best and worst year of your life”. I cannot express how true this statement has proven to be.

In the past year, I’ve had the great honour of founding ULFM, publishing Cellar Door, and working tirelessly on this, An Focal, newspaper. I have given this office, and this job, everything I ever had. In compiling my last edition, I can safely say that I gave it my all and I’m so proud to have been here, and to have had the opportunity. I’ve met with and worked with some fantastic individuals who I’m now proud to call friends.
One of these individuals, a certain Darragh Roche, will be filling my size 7 and a half’s next year in his role as the new An Focal Editor. Having completed his co-op with my predecessor Finn, and having written for An Focal for four years now, Darragh is more than qualified for the role and is the perfect person to take An Focal into being a student-run organisation. I wish him, and the new team, the very best of luck and I hope he has as good a year as I have had.
The Annual Student Media (Smedia) Awards are coming up, and it would be an absolute privilege to have one of our writers nominated for something. I also have plans to hold a ULSU

specific awards ‘ceremony’ of sorts in Week 12 to recognise the work put in by the writers, presenters and poets of ULSU. If you’ve been involved at all this year, please do come along.
On a final note, people have been asking me left, right and centre about my plans for next year.
In all honesty, I can say I have no idea where I’ll be two months from now, never mind a year! I’m so busy trying to get things sown up here that I haven’t properly sat down and thought about it. But wherever I am in the world, one thing is certain; I’ll be reading An Focal as soon as it’s out.
But for now, as usual, read on and enjoy this, my last edition.

Goodbye for now,
reader, and farewell.

Kelly O’Brien
Editor



“Captain Morgan himself at the Limerick Student Raceday”

A Special Thank You

As with all successful endeavours, a large amount of people have to be thanked. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but may it go some way towards expressing my gratitude.
First of all, of course, I have to thank all of the sectional editors of An Focal – Colm Fitzgerald, Jason Kennedy, Darragh Roche, Robert McNamara, Amy Grimes, Karen O’Connor Desmond, Emily Maree, Feilim O’Flartharta, Josh Lee, Jenny Armstrong and Lynda O’Donoghue. Without each and every one of you, An Focal would not be up to the excellent standard that it is. I must also thank the editors of the online site, Aoife Coughlan, David Hartery and Adam Leahy – I am very grateful to you all

just wasn’t there for more. Keep the concept in your hearts and someday you will have your outlet. A massive thank you goes out to the staff and sabbatical officer of ULSU – it has been a joy to work for and with you all, I wish you the best of luck in the future.
Darragh Roche, though you have done many things for this office already, and are set to do much, much more, I want to thank you, mainly, for always giving me your honest opinion. For never backing down, for always standing firm in your beliefs, I admire you greatly. I cannot wait to see what you will do next year; you will truly be a force to be reckoned with.
Jason Kennedy, you little rascal you. Thank you for always making me smile and for keeping me company. Be it UL related or gossip related, you always knew it before anyone else. I am truly sorry that you never got the chance to be CO, but I know you’re going

on to bigger and better things. Colm Fitzgerald, you have been contributor, News Editor, Comment Editor, Deputy Editor, Presenter, Technical Manager, co-op student and friend. Your advice, hard work, and dedication has never failed to amaze me. You are an amazing person and you deserve everything this world has to offer. I wish you and Rachel all the best on Erasmus, and I know you’ll do great things upon your return. Aoife Kenny, my wife, my friend. I don’t think I would have survived the year without you. Thank you for being there. Kevin O’Brien, my fake husband, my best friend, thank you for loving me. To all above, and all I had no space to mention – thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will never forget any of you.

Kelly O’Brien
Editor

Undergraduate Awards launches search for world’s brightest students

Kevin Murray

THE Minister for Education & Skills Ruairi Quinn T.D. has encouraged undergraduate students across Ireland to submit to the 2012 Undergraduate Awards programme – an initiative that recognises innovation and critical thinking within coursework at an undergraduate level.

“The Undergraduate Awards are a most welcome and valuable addition to the higher education landscape both in Ireland and abroad, encouraging innovation and critical thinking at an undergraduate level”, said Minister Quinn at the official UA 2012 launch.

“Not only is it dedicated to the bolstering of our nation’s knowledge economy but it, too, is working to create a global community of independent thinkers and thought leaders who will convene annually in Ireland, showcasing the country as a great place for their ideas to flourish.”

Open to undergraduate students in their final or penultimate year of a degree course, the awards programme is accepting corrected coursework that has achieved a high 2.1 or above from students attending every third level institution across the island of Ireland and the top 20 universities in Britain, USA & Canada – including Harvard, Stanford, Cambridge, Oxford and MIT.

“This year’s programme has

received an overwhelming response” explains UA Programme Director, Louise Hodgson, “The final deadline is July 2nd but already over 2,150 students from as far afield as CalTech, McGill and St. Andrews as well as from our own third level institutions have officially registered their intent to submit.”

Speaking of Google’s support of the programme as a Founding Partner, John Herlihy, MD of Google Ireland said, “The Undergraduate Awards is an important initiative that helps position Irish graduates among their international counterparts. For prospective employers, UA provides them with additional independent verification of the quality of the graduate’s coursework. For the graduate, they are an important validation that they are pursuing excellence in their chosen careers.”

The Undergraduate Award winners will be brought from around the world to Ireland for the three-day UA Summit in November where they will be presented with their awards by the patron of the Undergraduate Awards, President Michael D. Higgins.

Students can submit to UA 2012 at www.undergraduateawards.com before July 2, 2012.



Ruairi Quinn TD and Grainne Pollak pictured at the launch of the 2012 Undergraduate Awards. Image: Maxwells Photography.

Fourth Year wins prestigious fund

Sharon Whelton

A FOURTH year Journalism and New Media student from the University of Limerick has been chosen as the recipient of a renowned media award following a nationwide search.

Twenty two year-old Sarah Moyles from Nenagh in county Tipperary was picked as the winner of the prestigious Simon Cumbers award, and will travel to Uganda this June to report on development issues in association with Newstalk and the Irish Times.

“I chose to apply because I knew how prestigious this award was, and what amazing opportunities it would bring if I won,” Sarah explained, “but I never actually thought that I would win,” she said.

“The fact that the award allows you to travel to these amazing countries was an opportunity I couldn’t miss. I love travelling, and it’s my dream to travel the world, so this award is bringing me one step closer to achieving that.”

I saw a short interview with two comedians from South Africa one

was black and the other was white, and together they were trying to fight racism through their comedy,” Sarah continued.

“I thought it was really interesting, and I wondered was there anything similar in Uganda. To my complete surprise, I found that Kampala (the capital of Uganda) was full of comedy clubs and theatres, and I knew that I had found my story.”

“When I found out I had won, I couldn’t believe it. I genuinely thought there had been some mistake. I kept reading the letter over and over, trying to see if they had sent it to the wrong Sarah. It’s amazing and I’m so thankful and grateful to have won it,” she said.

Journalism and New Media Course Director at UL, Tom Felle, was thrilled following the announcement, describing the win as a “major coup for UL”.

“The win demonstrates the University’s commitments to media and development,” Tom added.

“Sarah has demonstrated excellence in journalism and we are delighted she has been chosen, I have no doubt the documentary will be fascinating and I look forward to hearing it,” he finished.

UL set for RAGSTOCK

Sophie McDermott

UL RAG Society is looking to continue on their previous successes with another exciting event, RAGSTOCK, which aims to raise money for Pieta House of Limerick for suicide and self-harm prevention.

RAGSTOCK will take place on April 12 in the Stables Club with live performances from The Original Rudeboys, Ke Tat, Atlanta and UL Battle of the Bands winner Petri Chor.

The night will offer a various range of music from acoustic to hip-hop with the headline act of The Original Rudeboys who are currently storming the Irish Charts.

Tickets are €7 from the Stables Club or from members of UL RAG Society who will be around campus this week or €8 on the door.

There will be a late bar and a DJ both inside and outside with doors opening at 7pm sharp.

Pieta House is a counselling service dedicated to preventing suicide and self-harm with offices in Dublin and Limerick.

“There is a growing epidemic in this country. Suicide is something that has touched all of our lives and we feel with the huge national movement at the moment to help tackle this

problem, Pieta House of Limerick is a more than worthwhile and worthy cause. We just hope we can raise enough funds to make a difference,” said Kevin Bolger, chairperson of UL RAG Society.

As well as fantastic music and a late bar, students will also get the chance to win 10 tickets to the Stables Club Birthday Party.

UL RAG Society are only two months old, but already the society has raised an amazing sum of €2000 euro for various charities as well as being involved in Mental Health Awareness Week and the ‘UL Says No’ campaign fighting anti-gay legislation that has been introduced in St. Petersburg.

Orientation Guides Wanted for Next Semester

Denis Murphy

STARTING university can be an exciting and challenging time. Orientation Guides are the first point of contact for new students. Each Orientation Guide is an ambassador for the University of Limerick.

Orientation Guides need to have a good knowledge of the University of Limerick, its services, facilities and academic programmes. They need to be good communicators – new students have a lot of information to take in and a lot of questions to ask. Orientation Guides need to be able to be able to talk through and explain clearly everything from the enrolment process to understand timetables. Most importantly, Guides need to make new students feel welcome and help their group of students to get to know one another. They should be able to offer positive supports to new students by encouraging them to get connected within the UL community and becoming involved with on campus student organisations.

The job of an Orientation Guide can be physically and mentally demanding. You will be required to take between 10 and 15 students around the campus and introduce them to each of the services and supports that are available to students of the University of Limerick.

Orientation Guides receive comprehensive training in leadership, communications and group facilitation and it’s a great opportunity to develop some real life skills and make some new friends. The rate of pay for Orientation Guides is €8.65 per hour.

To find out more come visit us at <http://orientation.ul.ie>

Comment

Nobel Winner, Ignoble Laws

Declan Mills

ELLEN Johnson Sirleaf, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and current President of Liberia, joined Tony Blair (in his capacity as head of the African Governance Initiative) to give a joint interview to the Guardian newspaper on 19 March.

During the interview, Sirleaf defended her country’s laws criminalising homosexuality and refused to consider scrapping them, saying “We like ourselves just the way we are”, a polite warning that she doesn’t consider human rights in Liberia any business of the West. All that Blair could do was sit and squirm in mute embarrassment. Sirleaf also claimed that she was trying to preserve “traditional values” in African society. This is misleading; pre-colonial African cultures were tolerant of homosexuality, and modern African homophobia stems from the colonisation (and conversion to Christianity) of much of the continent during the Victorian era. In Liberia’s case, the colonisers were African-

Americans, freed slaves who brought their Baptist and Episcopalian beliefs with them from the USA. However, the fact that the freedmen who colonised Liberia in the 1860s had been taught that homosexuality was a sin is no excuse for their descendants believing it 150 years later. The Anglican Church tried to liberalise under Rowan Williams, the last Archbishop of Canterbury. So, what was the result of this attempt to catch up with the rest of the world? Anglican communions across the developing world formed a breakaway organisation, GAFCOM, and are effectively refusing to recognise Canterbury’s authority until the Church reasserts homosexuality’s sinfulness. There is a greater context to the new laws. Sirleaf is leading a minority government and needs the support of other MPs to rebuild Liberia’s shattered infrastructure and administration. Until recently, Liberian homosexuals lived in secret but not in fear of their lives, but Hillary Clinton’s recent announcement that America’s development aid budget would be used to promote gay rights by tying funding levels to human rights records sparked an upsurge in homophobia across Liberian society. If Sirleaf

decriminalised homosexuality she would destroy her political career and potentially end any chance of rebuilding Liberia within this generation. The Liberian situation is part of a wider surge in homophobia across the continent. Even in South Africa, where homosexuality is legal, so-called ‘corrective rapes’ of lesbians are on the rise. It’s probably only a matter of time before an opportunistic ANC politician decides to distract attention from the allegations of corruption and racism surrounding the party by jumping on the homophobic bandwagon. In the meantime, what can be done about Liberia? Sirleaf’s claim that it’s none of the West’s business is incorrect: Liberia is a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, which is considered legally binding. More to the point, if Liberia wants Western investment to support a Western-style parliamentary democracy, it should realise that respect for human rights is a prerequisite for such a system. Perhaps the simplest way to get across this message is by withholding development aid until the law criminalising homosexuality is repealed.



Liberian president and Nobel laureate, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

UL Student Exit Survey 2012

Your Voice

Your Opinion

All final year students

Staff are good at **explaining** things

Feedback on my work has been prompt

I found the course **motivating**

I am satisfied that I chose to **study** at UL

I am satisfied with the **campus** facilities

My **placements** were valuable in helping my learning

I am satisfied with the range of **clubs and societies** on offer

Check your **STUDENT** email

Contact us: exitsurvey@ul.ie

Comment

We should all mourn Adrienne Rich

Darragh Roche, Comment Editor

“SHE died a famous woman denying/ her wounds/ denying/ her wounds came from the same source as her power”.

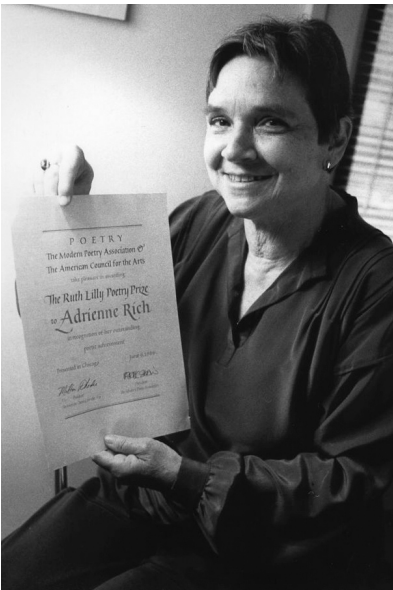
So wrote Adrienne Rich in her disturbing poem, ‘Power’, about the life of Marie Curie and the condition of women more generally. Rich was a poet, a feminist, a polemicist, an academic and a campaigner. She is a person whose loss should be keenly felt but who is more likely to be known for her occasional appearance on the Leaving Cert English course than anything else. Rich’s poetic style began cautiously, writing in traditional verse. But as she became radicalised,

throughout the 1960s and 1970s, so, too her poetic style became more experimental and more intriguing. She was, as Robert Frost would have put it, ‘playing with the net down.’ As Rich discovered herself, as she embraced her lesbian identity, she began to use her poetry and to advocate for greater rights, for sexual equality, for better treatment of those at the margins. She was a campaigner for civil rights, she was strongly opposed to the Vietnam War and she was not afraid to use her considerable poetic talents to advance her views. It is perhaps fitting to see Rich as a polemicist. Though she wrote scholarly essays, it is in her poetry that she truly, succinctly and compellingly expresses her feelings as a repressed lesbian woman, her outrage at the injustices visited upon the marginalised. If

anyone can claim to be the poet of the feminist movement, it is Adrienne Rich. But we seem to live in an age where many people feel feminism no longer matters. All over the world, women’s rights seem to be receding or under attack. In America, the left believes a ‘war on woman’ is being waged by Republican reactionaries, values voters and Evangelicals. As a new generation of women come of age in a world that is increasingly hostile to them, they would do well to look back on Adrienne Rich. Her words and sentiments go far beyond simple equality. Rich’s work and her life experience speak to the core issues for which feminism was created. Rich fought for social justice. Even as she got older, she continued to speak out against events like the Iraq War and the cynical policies, as she saw them, of the Clinton and Bush

administrations. Her academic career continued apace, and she received several literary awards, though she never won the Nobel Prize. If viewed merely as a poet, Rich is a great loss. She was at the very pinnacle of her craft, she broke the unwritten rules of poetry and made it into something that served her own, noble purposes. This feminist polemicist gave voice to the oppressed and the marginalised in a way that would not have been possible without her poetic gifts. Despite her age, she never stopped fighting for what she thought was right – equality, social justice and truth.

RIP Adrienne Rich (1929-2012)



RIP Adrienne Rich (1929-2012)

Irish third level teaching will need to change

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

A RECENT Irish Times report reflects on a reality that we might wish to ignore.

Third level teaching in Ireland is stale. While some of you might think UL is great, unfortunately in the greater scale of things, it quite worryingly, is not. The primary function and purpose of a University is to facilitate research and to a lesser extent, confer teaching and at a later stage, degrees. A University does not exist to aid you in getting the shift, eat several hundred hot chicken rolls, and drink 456 six packs of Bav. I fear that the student experience has been given all too much emphasis and we have lost focus on our primary reason for being here. To learn. The quality of teaching and those who teach has not been assured. That is not to say there are not an exceptional number of hugely qualified, inspirational and well capable lecturers at UL. But with that there are very qualified and knowledgeable individuals who are incapable of imparting that knowledge to students. The Irish Times reports that academics often trade teaching duties for administrative duties and vice versa. This may indeed result in situations involving those who are talented at teaching relinquishing themselves to the photocopier. There is no justice in this for the student. Countless students suffer from difficulty understanding and grasping material, often resulting in the dreaded repeats. It seems fair to ascertain that inadequate lecturers are partly to blame here. It’s all very well having lovely new buildings, pubs and manicured greens, but that does not aid us in fulfilling our primary purpose

with adequacy. This may be a gravely incorrect assumption however it has been said that those who spend many years pursuing a PhD often become disconnected from the student life. When they progress on to teaching they may well have great passion for their material but have little idea as to what it’s like to be a student. In similar vein, there are rafts of Masters holders who are equally passionate and knowledgeable but have not forgotten the principles of learning as an undergraduate. These individuals should not be eradicated from the learning chain. With registration fees rising year on year, it’s about time students started to look for value for their money.





“Bounty’s are nothing new to football.”
Turn the page to read the latest controversy from the NFL.



How can a manager like Villas Boas grow and cast his own shadow if players and fans are living in the past? Turn to page 31 for more.

Going nowhere, and fast!

Eoghan Wallace

ST. PATRICK’S weekend saw the conclusion of the 2012 Six Nations.

Wales were deserving winners after their extraordinary showing at last year’s World Cup; amazingly this is their third Grand Slam following victories in 2005 and 2008.

For Ireland, however, it was another campaign that promised so much and failed to deliver. Ireland may have returned from Paris undefeated for the first time since 2000 but it came against an abysmal French team who finished fourth behind us in the table.

It all ended on a dire note for Ireland after England’s annihilation of the Irish scrum. This campaign has provided more questions than answers for Ireland, who rather than building on

their World Cup win against Australia seem to be going backwards. Ireland’s lack of discipline continues to infuriate, they conceded a total of 54 penalties. An average of 10.8 per game will cost any team a win.

However scoring points does not seem to be a problem for us; Ireland scored a total of 121 points but conceded 94 points, the most after Scotland and Italy. Wales, on the other hand, scored the second highest, 109, but conceded the fewest 58. One of the most worrying issues with the Irish team is the lack of squad depth. Against Scotland and England, Ireland started without Paul O’Connell and Brian O’Driscoll. The last time they started a game without either was eleven years ago.

Our reliance on the old guard is worrying. While we have a healthy number of excellent flankers there is an unsettling shortage of good quality props, second-rows and scrum-halves waiting in the wings. The debate about

foreign players at the provinces will rear its head again but the fact Tomás O’Leary can still make it into the squad and come on as a substitute is a telling reminder of the small pool of talent we have to pick from. Declan Kidney only started nineteen players throughout and one of the few Irish success stories is the emergence of Donnacha Ryan, who just turned 28. Both Wales and England gave their young players an opportunity to prove themselves, Alex Cuthbert and Owen Farrell grabbed theirs with both hands.

The first Six Nations after a World Cup should be a building process, worryingly there is very little difference between the current squad and the one that crashed and burned in France five years ago. The future of Irish rugby doesn’t look too rosy.



For Ireland it was another campaign that promised so much and failed to deliver



16 nations will vie for the UEFA European Championships in Poland and Ukraine and, best of all, Ireland is one of them

Euro 2012 preview *let the excitement commence*

Liam Togher

In just a few weeks’ time, 16 nations will vie for the UEFA European Championships in Poland and Ukraine and, best of all, Ireland is one of them.

One small problem, though. We have some damn tricky opponents to encounter in Group C. We begin the adventure against Croatia, a highly skilful outfit with Luka Modric as its talisman.

Our last group game is against Italy, who have some promising youngsters and they need a strong performance after their humiliation at the 2010 World Cup. In between these games, there is the small matter of Spain. This is where Ireland want to be,

facing world class opposition on the biggest stage. We won’t be beaten easily but the others are likely to have that vital bit of extra quality. Our English neighbours were drawn into Group D. Stuart Pearce looks set to call the shots after the resignation of Fabio Capello in February.Despite the bleeding of several newcomers since the World Cup debacle, it’s hard to place much faith in them.

Ukraine, as co hosts, will be a tricky obstacle and several of their players have impressed at Champions League level with Shakhtar Donetsk.

Sweden are in a period of transition but the whole is often greater than the sum of their parts and they have a first rate striker in Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

France could be a team to watch at the finals. Laurent Blanc has ditched the rebels of 2010 and introduced young, hungry personalities with no little talent. Group B will be well worth watching.

Germany will enter the finals looking for a first trophy in 16 years but

they have been there or thereabouts several times recently and they have a fantastic side.

Netherlands also bring top quality and hopefully will ditch the dirty tactics we saw at the World Cup. Portugal’s team revolves around Cristiano Ronaldo, whose genius masks the dearth of quality elsewhere in the side. Denmark are unlikely to progress far but will not sink like a stone and they have the excellent Christian Eriksen.

Group A, by contrast, looks a mediocre one. Poland may be co-hosts but there are much better teams who failed to qualify. Greece may not be under Otto Rehhagel anymore but I doubt they will be a high octane team to watch. Czech Republic looked nothing special when they came to Dublin a few weeks back and even Russia, the strongest side of the four, could self destruct spectacularly.

Spring is in the Air: Must mean Baseball

Garry Irwin

THE 2012 Major League Baseball season gets underway on March 28th this year with a two game series between the Oakland A’s and the Seattle Mariners.

These games are being played in Japan at the historic Tokyo Dome, home of the Yomiuri Giants baseball team. Baseball is as big in Japan as it is in America; this series gives Japanese fans the chance to see some of their home grown stars.

Tokyo born Hisashi Iwakuma is a Mariners starting pitcher, and they also have in their roster the veteran Ichiro Suzuki. Ichiro at 38 is winding down his career, but is a legend in Japan, and is sure to get a rousing reception when he takes to the plate.

Back on American soil the season gets underway on April 4th. That day sees the World Series champion St. Louis Cardinals travel to Florida to take on the Marlins.

This year sees the Marlins move into their new 37,000 capacity stadium, Marlins Park. It also sees them change their name from the Florida Marlins to the Miami Marlins.

The Fightin’ Fish fans will hope this new identity will spur them onto greater success than they had enjoyed over the

last number of seasons. The biggest change the fans will see this year is the expansion of the post season. A one off wildcard game will be played by the two highest ranked teams that are not divisional champions.

The winner of this game will play the divisional champion with the best record. This gives ten teams the chance to win the World Series come the end of the season.

While the free agent market hasn’t been as busy as in previous years, there has still been some big money, eye catching signings for the new season. The biggest sees Albert Pujols join the L.A. Angels for \$254m over ten years. Pujols, one of the best hitters in the game over the last ten years should be worth every cent.

Prince Fielder moved from Milwaukee to the Detroit Tigers in a nine year, \$214m deal; hoping to emulate the success his father enjoyed in Detroit, when played there in the early nineties. At only \$106m over six years, Jose Reyes has moved from the Mets to the Marlins, and it could prove to be a bargain.

Reyes has probably been the best shortstop in the league for a number of seasons now. Whether these signings can bring their teams the coveted World Series, we will have to wait and see.



This year sees the Marlins move into their new 37,000 capacity stadium, Marlins Park. It also sees them change their name from the Florida Marlins to the Miami Marlins.

Editorial

Robert McNamara, Sport Editor

WHEN the margin between success and victory is minuscule, sometimes there is no more you can do in your preparation for the big event, the defining moment, the split second when your legacy is decided.

Sports writing is a privilege.

The best a sports writer can aim for is to put the same effort and endurance into the craft as the athletes that they write about.

They try to capture the colour and feel what’s happening in front of them. I hope An Focal sport has captured a little bit of that for you.

As this is our last edition I’d like to take this opportunity to thank our sports writers who have done all the hard work this year. Some have gone

above and beyond the call of duty by writing articles when they have had academic considerations and lives to lead outside of the University of Limerick. It has been a pleasure to read their insightful, entertaining and sometimes funny pieces.

Much credit must go also to the athletes that you read about in this paper. We cover our fair share of mainstream sports in issue driven feature pieces, but we try to include as much UL sport as we possibly can.

The only downside is that we can’t cover everything, although we wish we had the time and resources to do so. What a year it has been in sporting terms for the University.

There was wonderful success for the UL Eagles and UL ladies basketball teams on a national level.

The fledgling UL boxing club claimed their first prizes in what is sure to be a glittering story. The Collingwood Cup and Harding Cup squad in soccer and the Fitzgibbon Cup squad in hurling were unsuccessful in their attempts to bring trophies back to Limerick, but they all represented the college well and we must remember that success is not always measured in silverware.

We hope we made Erasmus and Study Abroad students feel at home with



our coverage of international sport and particularly our focus on North American sports.

This coming summer is going to be packed full of wonderful sport with Euro 2012 and the Olympics across the water in London just scratching the surface of what’s in store.

Lots to watch, take in and savour as some of the best athletes in the world take the field.

Until September, enjoy the last issue.

NFL bounty controversy



Former defensive coordinator Gregg Williams could face a lengthy coaching ban if found guilty.

Garry Irwin

THE New Orleans Saints were Super Bowl champions in 2009, and they have been in the play offs ever since, but just not quite able to scale the same heights. 2009 also saw the introduction of a player bounty pool, where players were rewarded for injuring or taking out opposing players during a game.

This is only coming to light now, as the NFL and the players association conduct investigations, with the intent of fining and banning anyone found responsible for participating in the bounty pool.

Former defensive coordinator Gregg Williams could face a lengthy coaching ban if found guilty. And as many as 27 Saints players are said to be involved. Williams, it has been alleged, oversaw a similar pool when he worked at the Washington Redskins from 2004 to 2007. The bounties rewarded players \$1000 if an opposing player was taken

off the field after a tackle and \$1500 if a player was knocked out of a game permanently. The league has said that the bounties totalled more than \$50,000 during the 2009 Super Bowl winning season. The pool was talked about in the 2010 season, but instead of trying to put a stop to it, it seems the Saints carried on with their scheme for the next two seasons.

The NFL has been trying hard to increase player safety over the last number of years, and this blatant disregard for safety could see those involved given strong punishment.

Bounty controversies are nothing new to football. Rumours of big money being rewarded to the player who takes out a rival teams star players have been rife for years.

College football has also seen players being rewarded for making big hits, and with collegiate players not earning

any money, officially, they are seen as more susceptible to such schemes which could breed the acceptance of a similar culture when they move on to playing in the NFL.

Players seem divided on the issue. Offensive players, the ones who get hurt, have spoken out against such bounty schemes. While defensive players say if you are not prepared to get hurt, you should not be playing the game. Both sets of players comment that any talk of bounties being paid in dressing rooms is usually blown out of proportion.

As Ravens line backer, Jarret Johnson, said recently, “In my mind, if I’m out there thinking about an extra thousand I could get for hitting somebody, I’m probably not playing very well.”

SPORTS QUIZ

Mike Duxbury

1. What is the most popular sport played in Nudist Camps?
2. Which golfer won the 2002 British Open Championship?
3. In 1994 the football league banned an innovation first introduced by Queen’s Park Rangers in 1982, what was it?
4. In cricket how many runs are scored when the ball hits a helmet left on the ground by the fielding team?
5. There are four strokes in competitive swimming, breaststroke, backstroke, butterfly and which other?
6. How long is a full-size snooker table?
7. It’s the Oxford and Cambridge boat race this afternoon. What number race is it?
8. In which sport are competitors required to change lanes after every lap?
9. What game is played on a Diamond?
10. How many lanes does an Olympic swimming pool have?



Answers	4. Five	3.3676073 metres - precisely)	7. 151st (This is	10. 8
1. Volleyball	5. Freestyle	8. Speed Skating	9. Baseball	
2. Ernie Els	6. 12 feet			
3. Artificial pitch.	(4 yards or			

The Price of Power



Gerard Flynn

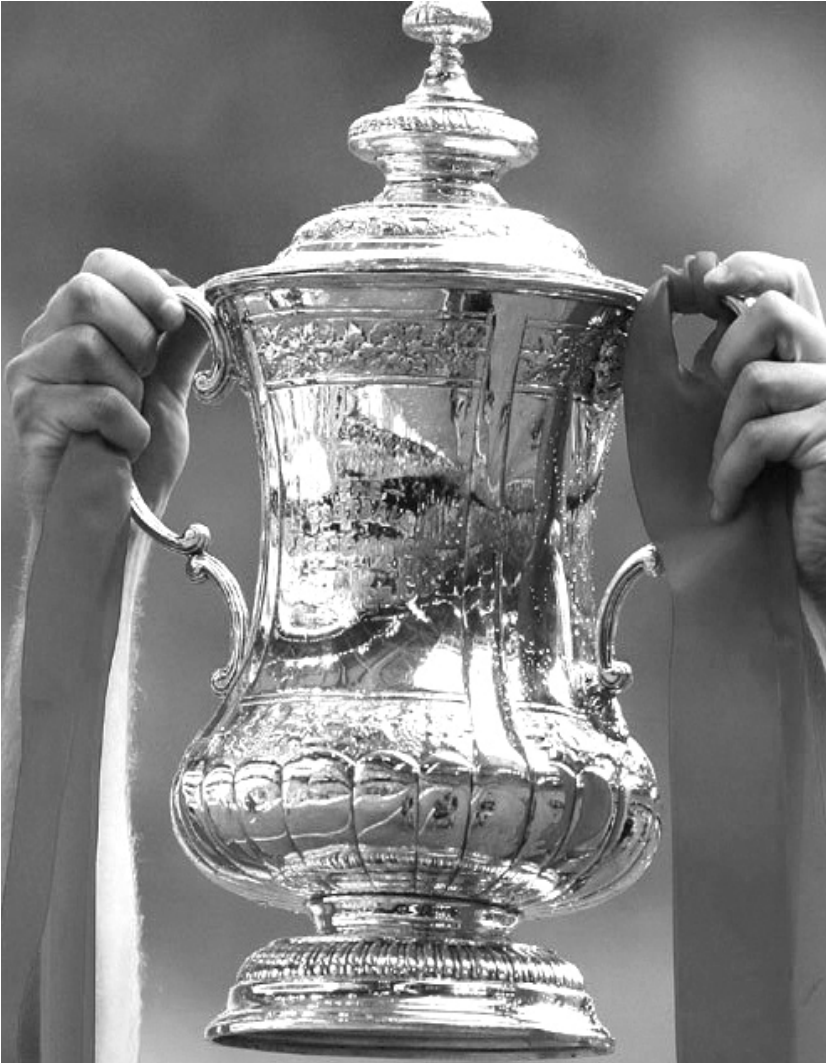
AVB was never going to fully gain the respect of Chelsea players because no manager truly has since the special one’s departure.

ANYONE who does not think that player power is ruining the game should probably talk to a certifiably indignant Andre Villas Boas.

Known for his ability to create a great team spirit at Porto last year, few could have predicted that his Chelsea plan would be undone by the power afforded to players like Frank Lampard, John Terry and Didier Drogba since the Mourinho era. Even the mention of Mourinho signifies the problem at Chelsea with the players and their demanding owner. AVB was never going to fully gain the respect of Chelsea players because no manager truly has since the special one’s departure. How can a manager

like Villas Boas grow and cast his own shadow if players and fans are living in the past? Many could argue that Villas Boas’ tactics were too new age for a Chelsea team that had been following the template that Mourinho had handed down to them almost seven years ago. In the players’ eyes, veering from this way of setting out your team was not how to win a game in the Premier League. Villas Boas was naïve to think that he could change an aging team that only knew how to play one way. Forcing them to press high up the pitch and play with a high line was always going to yield unfavourable results, especially if you have José Bosingwa playing right back. With a 48 percent win average, the lowest since Glenn Hoddle’s three years at the club in the nineties, it’s fair to say that Villas Boas time in charge of the blues has been a failure. Even before his last game in charge at the

Hawthorns, it was obvious that the former Porto man was on his way out with media outlets reporting that he had finally fallen out of favour with owner Roman Abramovich. His sacking, the ninth managerial change if you include Ray Wilkins’ single game in charge in 2009, has confirmed to the footballing world that Chelsea FC has now become a circus. Success is demanded immediately at the club due to Abramovich’s spoiled and competitive nature and while he’s writing the cheques, no one is going to stop him. But who should get the job next? I’d like to see a certain Russian tycoon finally take the job and end this smoke and mirror routine. It’s time that fans finally see the man behind the curtain step out and accept the blame for his mistakes in the past.



How can the FA Cup reclaim its place as one of the pillars of English football, a bonafide footballing institution?

Special Report Part 2 - Where has the Magic of the FA Cup gone?

Conor O’Riordan

THE question is how can the Cup regain its lost magic? How can it reclaim its place as one of the pillars of English football, a bonafide footballing institution? There are some ideas bubbling around that may prove quite the antidote to the problem. The first action I would advise would be to give the winner of the Cup automatic entry to the Champions League. This would obviously mean the Premier League losing one of its four Champions League spots though I believe it’s for the best. This move would unquestionably lead to the bigger clubs, and even the smaller clubs, taking their participation in the Cup a little more seriously. With the big clubs paying closer attention to the Cup, there would be no more faffing about

with reserves and youth team players in cup ties. Another action which must be undertaken is moving semi finals to neutral grounds again. Playing a semi final in Wembley just doesn’t work. Wembley is a sacred arena and should be used sparingly so as to protect its prestige. Playing semi-finals there lessens its prominence. It would be, as Stuart Pearce infamously said, ‘the carrot at the end of the tunnel’. While we’re on the subject of FA Cup finals, one has to make the point that it would be bordering on sacrilegious to alter the time structure for the final. 3pm on a Saturday afternoon is etched into the soul of every footballing person the world over as football time. There have been musings circulating in the past few years suggesting that

a late kick-off or a mid week final would be more desirable. This cannot happen. We bit our lips last year when the FA decided to bring the Cup Final forward two weeks but there would be many a disillusioned fan were the FA to modify the 3pm kick off. The cup ain’t dead but it is, metaphorically speaking, becoming the geriatric, senile figure of English football telling us of how we should take it more seriously and regaling us of past tales of glory. We have a choice in the matter though. We can acknowledge the fact that there is a problem with the format and alter it or we can bury our heads in the sand and pretend the FA Cup is still the best club competition in the world while quietly ignoring it each time it comes around. The ball is in your court FA.



Kezman was flogged to Atletico Madrid in an attempt to find a strike partner for Fernando Torres, but once again he failed to meet the grade in the higher tiers of European football.

Forgotten Footballer Mateja Kezman

Fionnbarr Thompson

MATEJA Kezman was a Serbian striker who featured for nine club teams during the course of his fourteen year career span.

Unfortunately for him, he never quite reached the level of greatness expected following a host of glittering youth and early professional displays. After making his debut at the tender age of just nineteen for his boyhood club Partizan, he made his name as a prolific goal scorer with 33 strikes in just 54 appearances. With blistering pace and a keen eye for goal, he seemed to have a bright future in front of him. Evidently this form did not go unnoticed and the Serb soon earned a move to PSV Eindhoven in The Netherlands in 2000. It was here that he grew even more in stature and quickly became a feared part of what hoped to be the golden years in Eindhoven with Guus Hiddink at the helm and Arjen Robben, Park Ji-Sung and Dennis Rommedahl, the former sparking up a superb understanding with Kezman which earned them the epithet “Batman and Robben” leading the charge.

Having terrorised defences in Holland for four years, surmounting an impressive 105 goals in just 122 games, Kezman felt the time was finally right to make the move to the Premier League with Chelsea. Being entrusted with the number nine shirt which is often so highly revered in English football, he made the London club wait until December of 2004 before he made his first strike for Chelsea, an audacious chipped penalty at Stamford Bridge against a despairing Shay Given in the Newcastle goal. He struck only three more league goals for Chelsea, hardly living up to the promise he showed at his former clubs. He did find brief hero status however after scoring the winner against bitter rivals Liverpool in the Carling Cup final in 2005, but this was not enough to prolong his career in England. Kezman was then flogged to Atletico Madrid that Summer in an attempt to find a strike partner for Fernando Torres, but once again he failed to meet the grade in the higher tiers of European football. Struggling to hold down a regular first team place, Kezman has since had stints in Turkey, France and Russia to name a few. Always a man to throw up a good quote of two, Kezman once stated that “Only God can judge me”. No Mateja, we can all judge you.

Premier league title race and relegation battle

Conor O’Riordan

AS another boisterous Premier League season draws to a close and the clubs are busying themselves booking their flights and accommodation for far flung pre season tours, all that’s left to decide is who gets what and who goes down.

It’s very simple in theory. The battle for the Premier League crown and the struggle against demotion to the championship has not been as prosaic as that. It’s been a rambunctious ride, with plenty of twists, bumps and turns and who’s to say there isn’t a few more to come yet? The battle for the title has been perhaps the most intriguing title race in recent times. The “Battle of Manchester” as it has been dubbed has provided us with one of the closest and most oscillating races in years. In one corner is the old reliable dog, Manchester United. This gargantuan beast has been there, seen that and has the trophy cabinet to show as proof. They have the experience and they have the mettle to last right to the end. In the other corner is the new pretender, Manchester City. After years in the doldrums, this old dog has been revitalised by Arab cash and amassed a plethora of foreign and domestic talent. They’re hungry, but will they choke just when squeaky bum time ensues? Domestically, both clubs have been near imperious. United have been, well, United. They’ve been chalking up wins when they really should have lost, interspersed by the occasional thumping of lesser lights. City on the other hand began the season in a scintillating fashion, combining defensive steel with attacking potency ultimately climaxing in the famous 6-1 demolition of United way yonder in October. The crisp, cold winds of January did stall City’s advance and they have been prone to the odd embarrassing defeat – take the loss at Swansea for instance. Coming into the final stretch of games, it’s difficult to pick a winner. United do have the better run in which may give them a slight edge though. April 30 is a date to pencil into your diaries. United will take the short jaunt across Manchester that day to the Etihad Stadium. With the way things are shaping up it’s likely that it’s there and then that the title will be decided. I’m backing United for the title.



April 30 is a date to pencil into your diaries. United take the short jaunt across Manchester that day to the Etihad Stadium.

The relegation dogfight

Conor O’Riordan

The battle for survival is looking just as thrilling as the race for the title. Five teams Wigan, Blackburn, Wolves, QPR and Bolton are stuck in the mire and three of them will go down.



Five teams, Wigan, Blackburn, Wolves, QPR and Bolton are stuck in the mire and three of them will go down.

Wolves currently look dead in the water. After the sacking of Mick McCarthy a heft coterie of established names were linked with the managerial position including Walter Smith and Alan Curbishley. None of these links materialised and Wolves were, for all intents and purposes, forced into appointing McCarthy’s assistant Terry Connor as manager. The move has proved costly as Wolves have nosedived down the table having incurred heavy losses at the hands of Blackburn, Fulham and Manchester United. QPR have endured a typically calamitous season what with the sacking of Neil Warnock and swathes of new arrivals. On paper their team looks well placed to survive but you don’t battle relegation on paper. Blackburn, and in particular manager Steve Kean, have been subjected to a tumultuous campaign. Supporters’ protests against Kean and the club’s owners, the Venkys, have been de rigeur at Ewood Park this season and survival will be the only tonic sufficient for Rovers fans. Bolton’s woes on the other hand have somewhat fallen under the radar. There have been no protests, no calls for Owen Coyle’s head and no real sense of disgruntlement. After a stellar campaign last term, maybe Wanderers fans were almost expecting a more sterile season. In similar fashion, Wigan’s woes have not been well documented either though dissimilar to Bolton, there is a rather elementary explanation for this. Wigan are always battling relegation. Well, it feels like that anyway. Each season, Wigan clamber their way through defeat after defeat after defeat until March when they perform an incredible piece of escapology and survive by the skin of their enamel. This season they have been particularly poor with Rodallega and Sammon particularly profligate in front of goal and Caldwell and Alcaraz leaky at the back. If I were a betting man, and thank goodness I’m not, I’d back Wigan, Wolves and Bolton for the drop. Of course, that’s the beauty of the Premier League. You just never know.

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Lifestyle



When we fall for someone, we don't see what everyone else might, instead we see the most beautiful, attractive specimen of a human.

Sophie McDermott

EVER look at certain couples and wonder how on earth they ever ended up together?

Maybe you can't believe your own luck after pulling above your weight? Well, according to scientific research, there is a reason behind why the most unlikely of couples exist around the world. When we fall for someone, we don't see what everyone else might, instead we see the most beautiful, attractive specimen of a human. Great news for all! We no longer have to hide away our bulges or other quirks that make us self-conscious to others, because you're other half (if they're worth it that is!), think you're amazing anyway. As part of the research, 70 couples were asked to rate their partner's attractiveness using photographs. Members of the public were then invited to have their say and also rate the partner's attractiveness. The results were that couples definitely do find each other more attractive than others might. However, while this notion may seem perfectly ideal in theory, thinking your partner is the

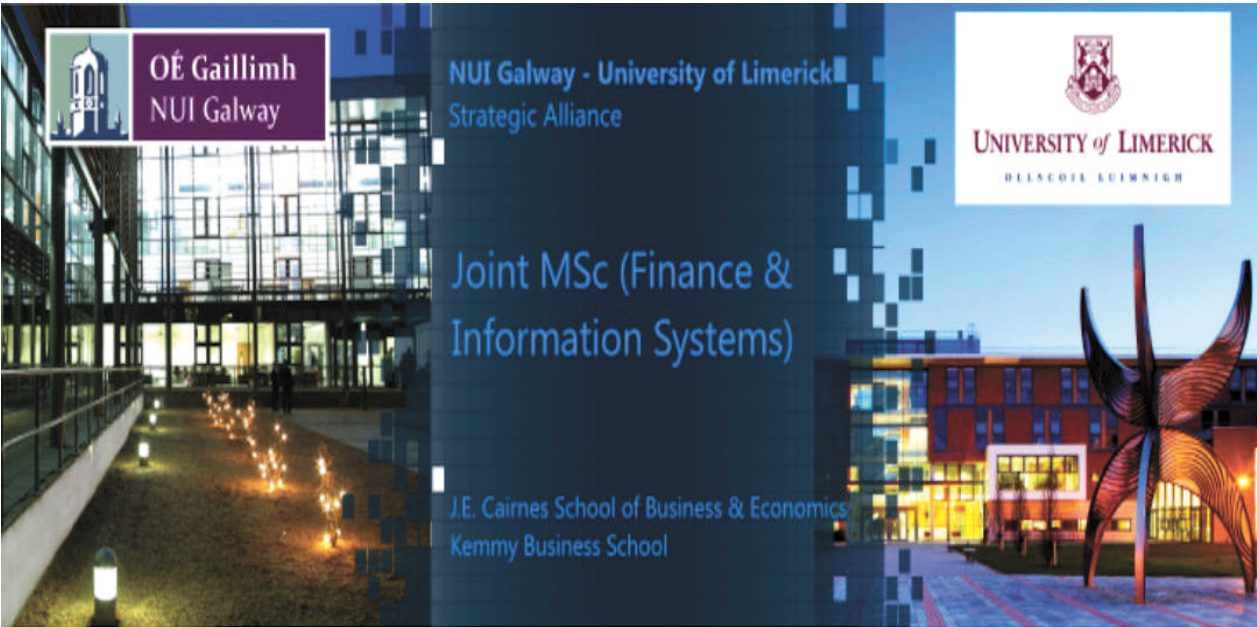
doppelganger of Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie may result in a higher degree of jealousy when it comes to other people outside the relationship. But this study is more positive than negative. Girls, you can finally stop waking up at half six in the morning to freshly apply your make up, so he doesn't run out screaming. And guys, countless hours at the gym everyday are no longer necessary, as your woman thinks you have a better body than Ryan Reynolds. The "positive illusion" theory usually starts at the beginning of a relationship, the falling in love stage if you will. But throughout the relationship the positive illusion may become more prominent when trying to figure out if your partner is "The One". When one looks at their partner, they try to minimise any flaws they may have, in the hopes of achieving security in their relationship. So, do you think your partner is the bees' knees? Maybe so, but don't expect everyone else to think that way. Feel secure in the way your partner looks at you and if they don't make you feel like the best in the world, then maybe they're not worth it.

Females ignored for another 12 Months

Michelle Duffy

SYMPATHY must be shown for men, because if a Facebook "like" suggests that if a girl thinks that giving birth is hard, try scoring a goal with Emile Heskey on FIFA. Then this must be a serious problem that burdens the young males of today. Like many girls, I too, whether for better or for worse, have come into contact with FIFA. Thankfully I only have a sister so my exposure to it has been kept to a minimum. That is until this year, where since September there has been a constant ring of males sitting around the TV for hours on end playing the beautiful game. So serious was their game that if one was to cross the other side of the room we would have to ask first. Of course, in a split second we could interrupt a possible Crouch hat trick. Oh the guilt! Dealing with this every day I often wonder what females really think of FIFA? I have never claimed to hate FIFA and I, of course, cannot speak for all females. There is a general consensus that girls hate FIFA because lads show more attention and passion for

Christmas tree formations and apology rules than for their own girlfriends. To be honest, I am more baffled by it than annoyed. Asking a male friend, who wishes to remain anonymous, why he plays FIFA so much he aptly replied "Well its fun and I like it". That obviously gave me a clear insight! FIFA from female perspective can be a strange one. However, I think if we take ourselves out of the situation and to the best of our ability become an objective third party with no personal interest in the matter, we might just see that FIFA and the Xbox are just male forms of a girls night in or girly catch up over coffee. Lads have the banter playing it and it's unlikely that they'll have that doing retail therapy with their friends. They are just as puzzled about what girls do in the same way that we are with them. While many believe the cons of FIFA outweigh the pros I cannot help but thank it all the same. FIFA shuts the lads up for hours and that's a big plus when you're in no humour to entertain. So girls, although the bitterest pill is hard to swallow, maybe it isn't as bad as we think. But lads, please know your limits before the Xbox causes an ex.



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Don't judge a book by its cover

Roisin Curran, Beauty Columnist

IT’S a slippery slope alright, this whole body modification thing. You start off with one piercing, maybe even go as far as a tattoo, but before you know it you’ve turned yourself into a cat clone or a walking zombie. I’m not condemning these people that feel being human just isn’t enough anymore, but I wouldn’t want to hold a conversation with one.

It’s an art form, it’s self-expression, it’s visionary... and it’s creepy. Who in their right mind would want to look like a giant cat? Well there’s a few out there. One man has leopard print tattooed all over his body. He is named Tom Leppard and appropriately adopts his persona by living in an isolated cabin

off Scotland and travelling ashore by canoe once a week to collect his pension. Did I mention he’s 73? Now as far as cat people go, the least I can say is that I find it unnerving. I don’t like body modification, I don’t get it and I don’t ever want to get it. But there is one guy who throws me off a little; because I think what he has done is kind of cool, albeit crazy. You may have seen him in one of Lady Gaga’s music videos “Born This Way”? Does Rick Genest ring a bell? Now this guy is known as “Zombie Boy”, but he is by far the coolest and best looking zombie I’ve ever seen. Props must go to Miss Gaga for unearthing this modern walking sensation. I can’t say that he’s changed my mind on the entire issue, and he’s probably going to look like a wrinkly skeleton when he’s sixty. But right now he’s young, handsome (you know, in that rugged zombie way) and has caught my attention.



Rick Genest - you may have seen him in Gaga’s video to ‘Born This Way’.



GINGERGIRL’S FOOD UL LOVE...

Helen Keown, Food Columnist

WHEN it comes to food to share with friends over a glass of wine, it has to be Baked Camembert. Camembert is a soft cows’ milk cheese with a furry white rind and a creamy, pale interior that becomes increasingly yellow as the cheese matures. This recipe is a perfect combination - cheese, walnut and pears are a match made in heaven. I recommend you bring the cheese to room temperature before you put it in the oven, otherwise it will take forever to cook. Don’t be nervous about baking the cheese in its case, but do place the box on a tray or ovenproof dish in case it leaks. Make sure that the box is wooden and is stapled together, not glued. The glued ones tend to come undone in the oven.

Walnut Bread with Baked Camembert

For the bread:

- 300g of plain flour
- 200g of wholemeal flour, and a little extra for dusting
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 2 teaspoons of bicarbonate of soda
- 100g of walnuts, roughly chopped
- 284ml carton of buttermilk
- 50ml of olive oil
- 150ml of milk

For the cheese:

- 1 Camembert cheese in a box
- a drizzle of walnut oil
- 3 pears, cored and thinly sliced

Heat oven to 200°C. Bread: mix flours, salt, bicarbonate and walnuts in a large bowl. Stir in buttermilk and oil, followed by enough milk to make a very soft, sticky dough. Dust a baking tray with flour, shape the dough into a round, flatish loaf and place in the middle of the baking tray. Dust with a little more flour. Using a butter knife lightly cut a cross on the bread and bake for 30-35 minutes until risen and cooked through; it should sound hollow when you tap the bottom of it. Leave the bread to cool. Unwrap cheese and put back into the box. Drizzle cheese with walnut oil, season, then put in the oven for 10 minutes. Serve with thin slices of the warm walnut bread and sliced pear. Helen’s produce is available nationwide from independent food emporiums and at UL Farmer’s Market where you can also purchase her range of breads and chocolate brownies. Want some cooking advice and tips? Email helen@gingergirl.ie For a chance to win some delicious gingergirl produce and avail of special offers, follow gingergirl on Twitter ([gingergirlfood](#)) or on facebook ([gingergirl](#)).

Increased life span by cutting red meat?

Barbara Ross

THERE is nothing better than a nice steak and a glass of red wine. The ultimate dinner on many personal menus, but just how often should we indulge ourselves?

Red meat has many health benefits such as containing iron and vitamin B12 (to help make DNA and red blood cells healthy) and zinc, which keeps the immune system working properly. Red meat has also recently been linked to reducing depression in women who eat it regularly. However, it is not only unhealthy when eaten regularly, but can be positively lethal, according to a major US study. The research shows that regularly eating red meat, especially

the processed variety, dramatically increases the risk of death from heart disease and cancer. So rethinking that quarter pounder after the Lodge may have more benefits than just your waistline. The study also found that cutting red meat out of the diet completely led to significant benefits. Replacing red meat with fish, poultry, or plant based protein foods contributed to a longer life. Eating nuts was said to reduce the risk of dying by 20% making a case for swapping roast beef for nut roast. Data from over 120,000 men and women taking part in two large US health and lifestyle investigations was analysed to produce the findings, published in the journal Archives of Internal Medicine. The studies monitored the progress of their participants for more than 20 years and gathered information about diet. In total, scientists documented nearly 24,000 deaths including almost 6,000 from heart disease and over 9,300 from cancer. The World Cancer Research Fund, a cancer prevention charity, recommends that people avoid processed meat entirely and

limit their consumption of red meat to 500g a week. Dr Rachel Thompson, the charity’s deputy head of science, believes that the study strengthens the body of evidence which shows a link between red meat and chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Cutting down on red meat may increase your life span and will certainly deepen your pockets as other protein sources such as fish, poultry, beans or lentils are much cheaper on a students budget than steak.



Fashion

Googoo for Gaga



Lady Gaga arrives at the 2011 VMA's in an 'embryonic state'.

Barbara Ross

WHEN the term style icon is mentioned, images of Audrey Hepburn, Jackie Kennedy, Grace Kelly and many others spring to mind.

However, they seem to have some company in the newest and strangest fashion forward star ever, Lady Gaga. With a huge cult following, including a website dedicated entirely to copying her style, and her outfits causing a stir in all fashion circles and not necessarily for all the right reasons there must be some attraction. Every time she leaves her house, whether it's to film a video, hit the red carpet, or take a stroll, Gaga always seems to make an outrageous statement with her attire or lack of it, in some

cases. But are her bizarre creations brilliant or just plain weird? It seems to be a matter of opinion, for example her infamous meat dress worn to the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards. The dress was simultaneously condemned by animal rights groups and named by Time as the top fashion statement of 2010. As with her other dresses, it was archived, and went on display in 2011 at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame after being preserved by taxidermists as a type of jerky. While 2011 brought no meat dresses, scarecrow ensembles or Space Age princess gowns, Lady Gaga delivered another year of confusing and downright awe inspiring getups. Speaking about what her 2011 VMA performance might entail, she described it as a continuation of everything she's ever done. With this expectation, she opened the VMAs this year as Jo Calderone, her male alter ego. Not only did Gaga carry out her VMA performance as Calderone, but she didn't break from the character for

the entire night. This brings to mind the question, is Jo Calderone some kind of performance art, or is Lady Gaga actually becoming Jo Calderone? It is possible that not even Lady Gaga can answer that question. While more a mode of transportation than an outfit, the Grammy egg is technically what the Born This Way singer was snapped wearing on the red carpet in February 2011. The media was told that she was in an embryonic state and would not be born until the performance which consisted of Gaga hatching out of the glowing egg on stage at the beginning of her performance. While not fashionable in the conventional sense she is proving not only to one of pop music's most flamboyant stars but also one of fashion's most daring new icons. Whether she is a risk taker or an icon is purely an individual choice but one thing is for certain: everyone is googoo for Gaga.

Flying the flag for Limerick

Sophie McDermott

TWO talented students from the Limerick School of Art and Design have been announced as the finalists in this year's Persil Irish Fashion awards in May.

Emma Coniine and David Murray have been named as two of the eight lucky finalists in the competition. The Persil Irish Fashion awards are in their thirteenth year, providing fantastic opportunities to talented young designers to get their name known in the increasingly competitive fashion industry. The competition represents Persil's belief in unleashing the human potential. The talented finalist to win the competition will win the amazing price of €10,000 to kick start their career. The panel of judges in this year competition include infamous fashion designer Peter O'Brien as the star judge. He will be accompanied by TV3 Xposé presenter and model, Glenda Gilson and also Anne Fahy from major retailer Dunnes Stores. The chosen brief for this year's finalists is sportswear. The finalists must use the colour white as the base with the option to opt for red, blue,

green or purple. Their designs must include the signature Persil colours, the blue and green splat as decoration in their design. LSAD is one of the top art schools in the country, with many of it's graduates moving on to bigger and better things. In 2010, LSAD student Aisling McDonnell won the Gillette Venus Spa Breeze Dress of your Dreams competition. Artist Samuel Walsh is also a highly notable graduate of LSAD after being selected for residencies all over Europe and some of his work proudly hung in the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin and in museums all over the nation. The winner of the Persil Irish Fashion Awards 2012 will be showcased in selected Dunnes Stores outlets all over the country during June 2012. Anna Fahy, Head of the Ladies Wear department for Dunnes spoke of her excitement to be involved in such a fantastic project. "We at Dunnes Stores are delighted to lend our support once again to The Persil Fashion Awards, which gives young Irish designers such a fantastic opportunity to further their career. We really look forward to seeing Ireland's upcoming design talent."



Fashion designer Peter O'Brien will be one of the judges at the Persil Irish Fashion awards in May.

The Flawed Side of Beauty

Emma Norris

EVERY girl knows that a high resolution photo of you looking your very best is still worrying.

Dry patches of skin, oily pores and less than perfect teeth: these are all things that concern every woman at one time or another. So why don't our magazine models reflect this? How do they get their even skin tone and sleek hair, the like of which I can only achieve on rare occasions and for mere moments at a time? The fashion and beauty industry would have you

believe that it's a thousand different moisturisers and products in play but the truth is it's a tech savvy art department with excellent Photoshop skills. Almost anyone can erase fat lines and touch up their complexion in drunken photos before they hit Facebook. For someone with an in-depth knowledge of this kind of software, creating a 'perfect' person is easy. But we're getting fed up of the less than honest depiction of women. Clothing giant H&M faced massive controversy at the end of last year when it was noticed by a Swedish website that their latest swimwear campaign bizarrely featured the same body in every photo. But that body wasn't even a body: it was a mannequin digitally altered to look more human. Different bikinis corresponded to different faces, but everybody was a uniform slim prototype, striking the same pose. When asked to comment on the bizarre revelations, H&M said that "The message is clear: buy our clothes, not our models." Makeup brand Rimmel also faced some criticism last year after photoshopping indie Zooeey Deschanel in one of their lipstick campaigns. The waxen looking finished photo hardly resembled naturally gorgeous Zooeey. In 2010, Rolling Stone Magazine featured Katy Perry on the front cover

and six months later, "before" pictures were leaked on blogging platform Tumblr. The photos showed a pre Photoshopped Perry looking natural and vulnerable compared to the altered photo, which had adjusted Katy's tummy, thigh, hand position, and skin tone, as well as plumping up her breasts by at least a cup size. This disregard for Katy's own natural beauty just goes to show that the industry doesn't care about portraying natural beauty, and certainly doesn't care about our self-esteem. If you see un-Photoshopped pictures of 27 year old Katy Perry, you'll notice her crow's feet and thick layer of foundation. In other words, she looks like a human being: flawed, but still beautiful. For some reason, the bosses behind fashion magazines think that we as consumers don't want to see that. It's true that some of us see fashion magazines as artwork but it's also true that it's incredibly refreshing to see our perception of beauty turned on its head. You need only do a quick scan of the fashion blogosphere or your afternoon lecture, to realise that everyone is beautiful and very, very few of them look like they'd fit in on the cover of a glossy magazine. But that's the industry's fault, not theirs.



Zooeey Deschanel looking very airbrushed in her Rimmel ad campaign.

"We're getting fed up of the less than honest depiction of women"



Beyonce sporting her pregnancy belly at the 2011 MTV Video Music Awards

The yummy mummy brigade

Sophie McDermott

WITH pregnancy being the new black in the celebrity world, it’s hard not to be jealous of those yummy mummys who still manage to retain their figures throughout their pregnancy and after.

The likes of Una Healy and Beyonce have very recently given birth and yet both these superstars don’t seem to have spent the last nine months with swollen ankles and a baby bump. So what is their secret? Maybe it’s the access to the best fitness trainers and diets or some magical trait they all have that disallows them from becoming frumpy mums, but whatever it is, celebrities certainly know how to snap back into shape. However, these celebrities do tend to come under

scrutiny from the media for ‘losing the weight too quickly’. Many medical experts reckon that crash dieting throughout and after birth is highly dangerous to the mother and baby’s health. While other mums have attacked celebrities for putting pressure on mums to be to be a supermodel merely weeks after giving birth. In particular, Tess Daly, a TV presenter, came under harsh criticism in The Daily Mail, when she was pictured on a beach in a bikini looking fabulous, only ten weeks after giving birth to her second child. But it doesn’t seem to be all crash dieting and excruciating exercise regimes that cause the celebrities to ditch the baby weight. Actress Amy Adams, reportedly announced that it was merely walking her baby that allowed her to lose her baby pounds. Author Jackie Keller, told Shape magazine, that celebrities begin their weight loss programmes by just brisk walking. For anyone wondering where the trick is, it turns out there is none. Yes, some celebrities resort to crash dieting immediately after giving birth,

like Victoria Beckham, but celebrities maintain that all that is needed is a healthy diet and a walk in the park, literally. So, for many of you still wondering how celebrities lose weight so much faster than us not-so famous people, the answer is pretty simple. We lack the help, the sleep and the motivation to hop on a treadmill for an hour a day. And the best part is, we shouldn’t feel guilty about it! Celebrities face pressure from society everywhere to look fantastic whereas we mere mortals get to sit around in our pyjamas all day, looking like crap if we want to. However, not all celebrities get caught up in the severe weight loss trend, singer and actress Jessica Simpson, has been spotted supporting the biggest baby bump Hollywood has ever seen and she’s in no rush to lose the excess weight any time soon. Is there celebrity secrets to losing the baby weight by the time you’ve come out of labour? Of course not, all it takes is a bit of motivation, a pram and a live in nanny to feed off the baby pounds.

The Man behind the Hat

Michelle Duffy

GALWAY has never been a superpower in terms of fashion, neither had Ireland for that matter. But one individual from the small town of Ahascragh, often mistakenly referred to as British, has been dominating fashion world for the best part of twenty years: the unmistakable Philip Treacy.

Early exposure to weddings at his local church was a huge influence for him going down the career path that he has. Like many students, he went through the traditional route of CAO. It was at the National College of Art & Design that his talent outshone that of his classmates; enough to win himself a place on an MA in Fashion design course at the Royal College of Art, London in 1988. This caught the attention of Karl Lagerfeld of Chanel and Isabella Blow, Tatler’s style editor who was to become his greatest supporter, friend and influence. After graduating at the age of 23, Treacy set up his workshop in the basement of Blow’s house in Belgravia, London and from there, he enjoyed a meteoric rise in his designs and popularity. He began designing hats for Alexander McQueen’s collection in Paris, for Karl

Lagerfeld at Chanel, Valentino and Ralph Lauren which for a person just starting off this was an incredible feat. For this work, he was awarded the title of British Accessory Designer of the Year at the British Fashion Awards on five occasions during the early 1990s. Treacy staged his first fashion show in 1993 during London Fashion Week consisting of all black hats. He had so much influence and hype around him at the time that ‘in demand’ models such as Yasmin Le Bon modelled free of charge with Kate Moss only earning a model spot because she complained that she wasn’t asked. Growing popularity allowed Treacy to open his first shop at 69 Elizabeth Street, London in 1994. Since then, Treacy has designed hats for fashion shows, films including Harry Potter and Sex and the City and horse racing events such as Royal Ascot. Perhaps most famously of all, Treacy’s name was on everyone’s mind coming up to the Royal Wedding, as he is a firm favourite with royalty. In total, he designed 36 hats for the occasion including Princess Beatrice’s interesting ‘Pretzel’ hat which while being universally ridiculed, his ability was not questioned. In recent years, he has stretched his company to make gloves and bags but it’s his hats that are irreplaceable. Being awarded an OBE shows us the extent of his services to fashion and hopefully ongoing contribution as his shoes will be hard to fill.



An ‘Alice in Wonderland’ fascinator designed by Philip Treacy.

Grace by Name, Grace by Nature

Dearbhaile Houston

IMPECCABLY dressed and made up, Grace Kelly is now shorthand for classic Hollywood glamour.

Born in 1929 to second generation Irish-Americans in Philadelphia, Kelly began in theatre before moving on to television and finally to Hollywood where she had a contract with MGM. Kelly gave off a regal, laconic aura and was known as the ‘Ice Queen’. This was capitalised largely through the roles she played, especially in Alfred Hitchcock films, but also off screen. The gown she wore to the 1954 Academy Awards is a now iconic image that cements this view of her. Designed by costume designer Edith Head, Kelly wore the mint green silk column dress with elbow length white gloves and her blonde hair coiffed. As was the norm at the time, Kelly sought her clothes from the studio costume designers like Head or Helen Rose. As they worked closely together on set and were familiar with Kelly’s measurements and style, this meant that she always wore exceptional pieces that suited her shape and her dignified personality. Though her career only spans six years and eleven films, Kelly’s costumes are a cornucopia of fashion



Grace Kelly with her co-star Cary Grant in ‘To Catch a Thief’.

inspiration. Her outfits in To Catch a Thief would be perfect for those rare sunny days or if you’re lucky enough to be going off to warmer climes. The boyish shorts, espadrilles and over sized white framed sunglasses she wears are simple and would be easy enough to find in a rummage around Penney’s or your local charity shop. In The Country Girl for which she won an Oscar, Kelly was stripped of her usual finery and put into dowdy blouses and a pair of horn rimmed glasses that would not look out of place with the geek-chic trend that is dominating the high street at the moment. If you are seeking a more formal look, her outfits in Rear Window are a good option.

Think block colours and classic 1950’s full skirts, lots of tulle and a string of pearls. It’s a deceptively simple look that has carried over almost without change to the 21st century. Unfortunately Kelly died much too early in 1982 but she has left behind a fashion legacy that many still try to recreate today. Her inspiration can still be seen in the clean all American aesthetic of Ralph Lauren or Calvin Klein and countless collections through the years. As is evident from her long standing appeal and the cultural cache her name brings, Grace Kelly was a style icon built to last.

Student Speak



STUDENT SPEAK

Kevin and Jack are at it again. This time they're asking,

"What are you doing this summer?"
Images: Kevin O'Brien

Rita O'Carroll and Eilis McDonagh
"Heading off to Spain"



Jack Deacon
"Working in Galway all Summer."



Amy Sheehan, Naomi McMahon and Alice Lynch
"We're going to Canada to become Au Pairs"



Eadaoin Scannell
"Going to Ocean City!!"



Hannah Buckley and Lisa Hogan
"We're going to Greece!"



Mike Forde
"Trying not to wake up hungover"



Amy Walsh and Rachel Horkan
"Dancing!"



Niamh Farrelly and Elenor Fields
"We're emigrating..."



Megan McGinley, Patrick Moran and Heather Lee
"Adopting a Vietnamese baby..."



Adam Davis
"Travelling America before I hit the real world"



Sean Sheil

UK recording artist Scroobius Pip touched down in Limerick for the penultimate gig on his European tour. Pip accompanied by American rapper B Dolan as support provided an electric night in Dolans for lovers of hip-hop music.

David Meads aka Scroobius Pip originally part of the electronic hip-hop duo Dan Le Sac VS Scroobius Pip. Pip has branched out releasing a solo album named Distraction Pieces last year which is firmly influenced by the punk and rock music of his youth. This new style adopted by Pip could be likened to the Radiohead of the rap world due to its experimental and

progressive nature, although it has to be noted despite this progressive nature a seasoned rock fan would consider the drum and guitar somewhat generic. However don't let this put anyone off the fusion of rock and rap works like a treat and because of this it provided one of the most eclectic audiences I have ever seen at a gig. A quick scan of the crowd and one could see, not only the stereotypical hipster indie kids, but equally the heavily tattooed Mohawk hair styled punk rocker kids both giving it socks to the meaningful lyrics of his songs. Dolan's seemed like the perfect venue for this style of music giving it a real underground vibe one normally would not associate with hip-hop gigs. Another nice touch was both Pip and Dolan had a merchandise stand set up, and were notably generous in signing everything and anything a hardcore fan would throw at them, as well as taking pictures with any fan who was smart

enough to bring a digital camera with them (I unfortunately was not). B Dolan's set suffered a technical difficulty at the start, rather than let this deter him from entertaining a crowd he proceeded to perform a spoken word poem about Justin Timberlake which was met with cheers and laughter. After this Dolan restarted his set, which consisted of blistering rap over samples of already famous hip-hop songs eg. M.I.A. Paper Planes. The highlight of Dolan's set was when he invited an audience member to come on stage and have a dance off while he rapped. Dolan busted out his best dance moves, at one point mimicking Madonna's iconic vogue dispelling his previous macho stage image. Pip was joined on stage by a guitarist and drummer and quickly set about proving that rock music mixed with rap can work. Pip also showed that with some inventive takes on non-rap songs and guest appearances from B

Dolan and Natasha Fox it is easy to turn a thirty minute album into a hour and a half set. Pip started off strong opening with Introdiction and Try Dying, although his set did reach a low point when he performed 1000 words, this 'song' was originally a spoken word piece which did not work with a band and failed to impress the crowd. Pip quickly had the audience back in the palm of his hand bringing his set to an exhilarating conclusion with Let Em Come complete with a crowd going crazy and starting a mosh pit. When the crowd demanded one more tune, Pip showed his tongue was firmly in cheek when he brought B Dolan (in a full white suit) and Natasha Fox back onstage to rap a Prince song. If you missed this incredible show I would strongly recommend you buy the Distraction Pieces album you cannot call yourself a lover of rap until you have heard this album.

A somewhat disappointing end to a compelling trilogy

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

IN ISSUE 11 of An Focal I wrote about Steig Larrson's posthumous success with The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo. Having been wildly compelled to read that book at an unnecessarily fast pace, the logical thing to do would be make haste and rampantly read the remaining two books, The Girl who Played with

Fire and the Girl who Kicked the Hornets Nest, which I duly did. You must read the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo first, otherwise the entire story will be lost on you! That is advice worth heeding. The Girl who Played with Fire deals with life after Lisbeth removes Blomkvist from her life. She's living the high life in far flung exotic places, drinking cocktails and seeking casual sex with married men. Having a tantric romp is indeed the theme of the book, with an investigation into sex trafficking from eastern Europe complimenting

the affairs of Lisbeth. I was however, at a loss. I spent quite a portion of the book waiting for something fantastic to happen. It seemed as though the foundations were there, however life for Blomkvist sauntered along at a barely acceptable pace. The book reveals the fabricated past of Lisbeth, who's mental conditions were nothing but a cover story. Her father, Zalachenko, who we learn was a Soviet defect, makes a somewhat brief appearance. His past was very quickly revealed which was gravely disappointing. The Girl who

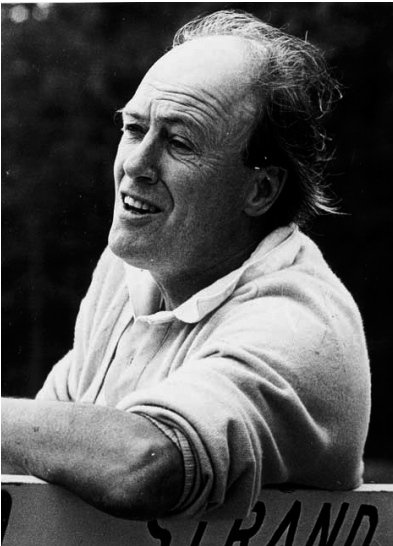
Kicked the Hornets' nest sees both Lisbeth and her debased father in a hospital. Zalachenko is killed off very early in the book by a demented hitman, who then turns the gun on himself. The story of Zalachenko was unnecessarily cut short. There could have been a lengthier version, without doubt. Too much time was spent explaining the inner workings of SAPO, a corrupt secret service organisation which was frankly quite boring. It is irrefutable that far more time should have been devoted to Lisbeth's court case, which sees her cleared of all criminal charges against her, and declared competent. As a whole, the book was disappointing. Theme wise, both books continue the discussion of derelict attitudes toward women, sadist sexual activity, and corrupt state organisations. It's all nicely complimented by several incredibly unpersonable and rude policemen. Both books were worth the read to find out what happened, but were quite unfulfilling. I await the Hollywood adaptations with bated breath!

The Magic of Dahl

Barbara Ross

WHAT is the best way to be transported back into the magical time that is childhood?

A time when Oompa Loompas could sing you to sleep and giant peaches were common. For most of us it is to pick up our favourite children's book and give it a read. In a generation where video games rule and books are for nerds, the magic of Roald Dahl has not waned. The fact that his books are still being treasured by the youth of today is amazing. And the proof is in the pudding, as Roald Dahl's dark but funny tales saw him voted as favourite children's author in an online survey of UK primary teachers. Teachers said Dahl's best were 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', 'The Twits', 'Danny, the Champion of the World', 'The BFG' and 'George's Marvellous Medicine'. Amanda Conquy, Dahl's literary estate manager said one of the stories' strengths was that they had not dated. Dahl's first book was not, as many think, 'James and the Giant Peach', but 'The Gremlins', which was a picture book published in 1943. Dahl was not a fan of it, and his career as a children's writer did not begin in earnest until 1960. While the world was waiting for 'James and the Giant Peach', which was published in 1961, it made do with his short stories aimed at adults. Roald himself once said: "I'm probably more pleased with my children's books than with my adult short stories. [...] The child knows the television is in the next room. It's tough to hold a child, but it's a lovely thing to try to do." And he certainly succeeded. His fan base is made up nearly completely of children and the most amazing thing is that his tales have not aged as his fan base has grown up. Obviously this is the secret to an ever growing fan base. When we reread his fantastic books we become kids again, our innocent curiosity returns and all we want is to find out if Matilda would use your magical powers to escape Miss Trunchbull and finally be part of a happy family. Even when happy endings were inevitable his dark stories make you doubt them every time you read these fantastic creations.



Childrens Author, Roald Dahl

Alternative Miss Ireland

Emma Norris

IF you're not into drag, then you might not have heard of Alternative Miss Ireland, the fabulous, almost annual pageant which celebrated its jubilee anniversary this year.

Alternative Miss Ireland is a non profit collective dedicated to raising funds for Irish HIV/AIDS organisations, over €335,000 to date plus this year's profit, and aims to "expand definitions of beauty through spectacle and gender augmentation".

This year's event was held in the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, saw ten drag queens and faux queens take to the stage in an effort to win the coveted title of Ireland's most alternative miss. Awash with colour, drama, glitter and copious amounts of Panstik, the competition featured performances from the lovely Shirley Temple Bar of Telly Bingo fame, as well as last year's winner, Miss Mangina Jones.

This year's contestants included Limerick's own Madonna Lucia and a very politically incorrect Alexandra Burqa, complete with black burqa and a play on her namesake's song "Bad Boys", with the lyrics: "The bad bombs are always blowing my house away, a-whoah!".

But drag is all about challenging people's sense of what's acceptable and what's not. That might include casual racism, and some crude and lewd behaviour, but it's part and

parcel of an event which aims to raise awareness about a subject that's still very much taboo in this country.

For a competition that is so unknown in the straight community, Alternative Miss Ireland has a massive following in the gay community and is affectionately referred to as Gay Christmas.

It's surprising the amount of famous faces in Irish entertainment that had their humble beginnings on stage in a drag competition in Dublin. As well as the gorgeous Shirley Temple Bar who won in 1997, you know Katherine Lynch off the telly? She won in 1998 as her alter-ego Tampy Lillette.

By all accounts, we were promised a performance from Katherine but it became apparent at the end of the show when previous winners were brought on stage, that Katherine had had one too many pre cocktail party cocktails.

There were some pretty bizarre (and terrifying) performances from Mr Donkey and Miss Big Chief Random Willy Girl, but in the end, tiny Miss Minnie Mélange was crowned the undisputed winner. Her performances drew massive cheers from the packed theatre. Dressed as Snow White, and surrounded by seven fully grown men, Minnie told us she wanted to challenge a stereotype: "Who says Snow White has to be tall? Who says the Dwarves have to be dwarves?"

She won our hearts last Sunday night and will surely go on to bigger things.



Shirley Temple Bar with Alternative Miss Ireland 2011 performers

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Arts & Ents



Josh Lee,
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Albuquerque indie rockers, The Shins

SUNSHINE is nice, isn't it? Like soapy water rousing worms from the soil, the sun draws the Irish out into grassy parks and sandy beaches.

Clothing shrinks and pasty skin reddens, but I doubt the world would begrudge this country a bit of sun. And it came early this year, with the end of March gifting us a flourish of gorgeous weather. Let's just hope it's not our quota for the year gone. With sun, comes sunny music. There's a

lot to be said for easy listening, top-down tunes. The Albuquerque indie rockers The Shins fit this mould nicely, and the release of their latest LP 'Port of Marrow' on March 20 coincided perfectly with our sunny spell.

From the band's inception, The Shins have been essentially the project of lead singer and guitarist James Mercer. The firing of keyboardist Marty Crandall and drummer Jesse Sandoval in 2008 means Mercer remains as the sole original member. At this point, I have to hold my hands up and say I'm rarely enamoured by joyous music. Happiness

just doesn't do it for me; to wallow in a nice Swans-induced existential crisis is my idea of a good night of music; melancholy over merriment, pain over pleasure and constant catharsis – I'm a blast at parties. But 'Port of Marrow' caught my attention recently, perhaps because it isn't an out-and-out feel-good album by any stretch of the imagination.

"September", in particular, tugs on the heartstrings. Mercer's limp acoustic strumming and tale of broken love isn't likely to eradicate any blues.

"Well this is just a simple song," begins "Simple Song", and that sums

up the album, and much of The Shins discography, nicely. True to form, 'Port of Marrow' is difficult to pinpoint lyrically. Mercer can flit between nonsensical, nostalgic, endearing and baffling all inside a four-minute track. But that hardly matters beneath his sparkling melodies and nuanced pop sensibilities.

"No Way Down" bounds along atop a lively twang, and it's obvious the big-name producers who were recruited for the record brought with them radio-friendly sheen (producer Greg Kurstin's recent projects include The Wanted and

Kelly Clarkson), something that isn't abundant on The Shins previous LPs.

While I wouldn't pay any heed to promises that The Shins will change your life – even if Natalie Portman is the one making them – 'Port of Marrow' is an enjoyable listen.

It's comfortable, with little jarring deviations or lofty ambition to distract from our spell of nice weather. Unfortunately, its impact may fade just as quickly as our sunshine.

Independence Day

Josh Lee,
Arts & Entertainment Editor

LONG-TIME 'Rolling Stone' writer Erik Hedegaard once offered us this terrifying insight in the world of Iggy Pop: "He would slather his body in peanut butter; barf on his audience; cut himself up with broken glass; shoot heroin; make frequent use of his big, beautiful penis; beg horrified record-label executives for drug money; pass out in bathrooms with the spike still in his arm; check himself in to a mental institution and score coke off David Bowie while there."

But the life of a quintessential rock star burns bright and short, and it isn't long before buying class A drugs from Ziggy Stardust becomes flogging insurance that you aren't even able to purchase yourself.

But music pulses through the veins of people like Iggy, and although the hotel room wrecking rock star may be a species on the verge of extinction at this point, relics of the music culture

of yesteryear are still being preserved in quarters. Like the many pieces of the True Cross housed in churches throughout the world, independent record stores draw in the devotees and the deluded alike. Record Store Day, falling on April 21 this year, is a celebration of the unique culture of these musical Kaabas in the age of digital downloads and illegal file-sharing. Mr Pop's role of ambassador for the celebration's fifth year assures us that the old dog never lost his love for the independent spirit of music, and the day's success over the last five years reveals music lovers haven't either.

Record Store Day offers a bountiful swag of collectable musical goodies. Limited edition LPs and reissues of some of the classics (three of The Kinks catalogue, for example), as well as new releases are to hit certain stores around the world.

The Flaming Lips are releasing 'The Flaming Lips and Heady Fwends' to mark the occasion, and album featuring collaborations with a wide range of artists from across the musical spectrum.

It's not often that you'd see Nick Cave, Bon Iver, Neon Indian, Yoko Ono and Ke\$ha sharing a tracklist, but such is the magic of Record Store Day.

While brick-and-mortar music stores may seem anachronistic in themselves nowadays (the collapse of Game perhaps providing us with a grim glimpse of the future), the recent increase in vinyl sales and the growing amount of big artists throwing their weight behind Record Store day bodes well for the future of indie stores.

It's Simple Economics

Jack Brolly

"IT started in Red Raisins..." is never a good start to a story. Yet John Slattery and Seán Hurson, both MMPT students, have proven that good things can begin there among the chatter, the hum of laptops and the rustle of Subway sandwiches being unwrapped. They've been running gigs in Bakers for the last few months under the moniker Economics. All of which have been well received and well attended. An Focal recently caught up with the lads in the place where it all started, to find out how it all started.

"I said I wanted to do gigs and I thought 'Sean's my guy'", says John. "You found out it would be possible to do stuff in Baker's and we thought why not get it started up again", adds Seán. Despite the fact that the country is in an unstable position economically, Economics is an apt title in that regard, John explains that each night they've run has had a good turnout. "It's been going really well so far. There's a core group of regulars.

It's very niche. The people who show up are quite relaxed and just want to see the bands. It was the same amount of people at each show." The hardest part of anything are the early, uncertain first steps, Seán tells us how they took theirs.

"We contacted loads of people and we got it off the ground. Everyone is open to doing gigs but logistical things can get in the way" When it comes to choosing who to book they don't let the stature of any band dictate their decision. "We bring the bands we want to see. Bourke's have been bringing some bigger acts so there's no need for us to do that."

There are other advantages to everything that comes with Economics. "A big part of it is becoming more aware of the scene by being part of it. It's nice to be able to be part of something that we both love and interact with bands we really like." John explains.

Economics recently expanded a bit when they organized a show in Ennis for Fighting with Wire. What does the future hold for them? "Hopefully we'll be able to keep organizing shows for the bands we like", Seán says. Economics has proven that there's a community of music fans in Limerick just as passionate about it as Cork or Dublin. People who want to support their local music scene and strengthen the Irish music scene as a whole.

The next Economics show is on April 25, in Baker's Place, with the bands yet to be announced. It's €5 in at the door.

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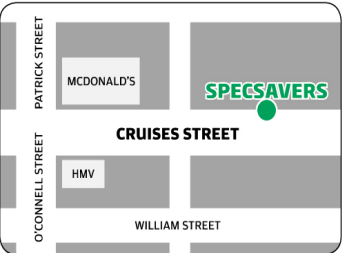
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Film Review: John Carter

Donnchadh Tiernan

JOHN Carter is the tale of an American civil war vet (Taylor Kitsch) who is magically transported to Mars and stills the tribal tensions of the red planet while falling in love with a beautiful Martian princess (Lynn Collins) and learning a bit about life back on earth while he’s at it.

If this synopsis sounds simple it is misleading of the actual but indicative of the tales potential, which drifts as far from the film itself as Mars from the sun. The film’s attention to detail and special effects are, admittedly, hugely impressive and if all one had to pay was the extra Euro it costs for the 3D show one’s money would be well spent. As far as the remainder of the price is concerned, little or no work has been done to prevent the average cinema-goer mourning the loss of the two and a half hours this film attempts to sneak away with. There is a fun Martian dog that can run at many miles per hour, spectacular cityscapes to rival a Marvel comic illustration

but the glue that traditionally holds these components together is entirely absent: plot. To say this film flopping will be a surprise would be dishonest. Everything about it yearns to usurp the throne that Avatar built, but not a second’s celluloid is worthy of mention next to James Cameron’s revolutionary re-working of the sci-fi epic. I personally admire everything Andrew Stanton has produced to this point and I hope John Carter provides a learning curve for him in the ways of live-action film-making. Considering his back catalogue (he scripted all three Toy Story’s) I find it impossible to deal this director an outright “fail”, but my integrity as a reviewer forbids me to mark his helming of John Carter above “capable of better”.



A not so maiden voyage

Martin Gosling

JAMES Cameron’s Titanic recreates the ill-fated maiden voyage of the White Star Line’s R.M.S Titanic and the tragic sea disaster of April 15, 1912.

Spanning over three hours, Titanic was the most expensive film in Hollywood history at the time of its release. The contemporary storyline involves American treasure seeker Brock Lovett (Bill Paxton) retrieving artefacts from the submerged ship. Lovett finds a picture of a naked woman wearing only a necklace. When 102 year old Rose (Gloria Stuart) reveals she’s the person in the portrait, she is summoned to the wreckage site to tell her story of the 56 carat diamond necklace and her experiences of 84 years earlier. The scene then moves to Southampton

in 1912 where passengers boarding the doomed Titanic include penniless Jack Dawson (Leonardo DiCaprio) and society girl Rose DeWitt Bukater (Kate Winslet), who is returning to Philadelphia with her wealthy fiancé Cal Hockley (Billy Zane). After the ship sets sail on April 10, Rose becomes passionately involved with Jack, and Cal’s reaction is vengeful. The Titanic strikes the iceberg midway through the film, and water rushes into the great vessel. Cal begins to pursue Jack and Rose as the massive liner begins her decent into the Atlantic Ocean. Cameron began the project after he saw Robert Ballard’s 1987 National Geographic documentary on the wreckage. Blueprints of the real Titanic were followed during construction at Fox’s custom-built Rosarito, Mexico studio, where a hydraulic system moved an immense model in a 17-million-gallon water tank. During three weeks aboard the Russian ship Akademik Keldysh, underwater sequences were filmed with a 35mm camera in a titanium case mounted on the Russian submersible Mir 1. When the submersible neared the wreck, a video camera inside a remote-operated vehicle was sent into the Titanic’s 400-foot bow, bringing back footage of staterooms, furniture and chandeliers. An immense amount of work went into trying to re-capture the beauty of the Titanic for Cameron’s epic film. Titanic had its world premiere at the 10th Tokyo International Film Festival on November 1 1997, and now you can re-live every jaw-dropping moment of Cameron’s epic masterpiece in spectacular 3D. The film returns to cinemas on April 6.

This film will seduce you

Dearbhaile Houston

If you are nearing the end of your time in university you may not be feeling that hopeful. And who could blame you? You can’t get a job because the economy is wrecked and that one way ticket to Australia is looking pretty expensive. What is there to do? The best you can hope for is that you’ll move back home, an older lady will have an affair with you and then you’ll fall in love with her daughter. Or if that sounds too taxing you could just watch The Graduate. Based on a novel and directed by Mike Nichols in 1967, this was one of the seminal American films of the sixties. For all the retro looking costumes and sets, not to mention the brilliant Simon and Garfunkel soundtrack, the film is still surprisingly modern. For what will never date as the years go by is the panic and angst that comes post graduation from university. Dustin Hoffman plays 20 year old Benjamin Braddock, fresh from the Ivy League and uncertain of what he’s going to do next. All around him are adults praising him for his past achievements and full of questions about his future plans. On the night of his graduation party he is seduced by one of his parents’ friend, Mrs. Robinson (Anne Bancroft). Thus begins Ben’s summer of misadventures. Everything is fine and dandy for a while until the Robinson’s

daughter Elaine comes home from the summer. Ben takes a liking to her-something that Mrs. Robinson is not too happy about and...well I won’t give away the ending; you’ll have a lot of time on your hands these next couple of months to see it for yourself. This is one film that has long been cemented into pop culture. I’m sure you’ve seen many a parody on the “Mrs. Robinson, are you trying to seduce me?” scene.

It was also placed at #17 of the American Film Institute’s 100 Year 100 Movies list in 2007. Not only does the film have a long-lasting and relevant meaning, it is beautifully shot and Hoffman gives a brilliant performance as the naïve and despondent Benjamin. So if you are seeking motion pictorial comfort in those barren weeks after you leave University, look no further than The Graduate.



Dustin Hoffman looking fresh faced in The Graduate



John Markham

BLOCKBUSTER season is upon us again!

As John Carter has already demonstrated, big budgets do not mean big success, so it is no surprise to see established franchises returning yet again and a few potentially dodgy and expensive franchises being launched (hello Battleship!). Undoubtedly, the film of the summer will be the final instalment in Christopher Nolan’s epic

Batman saga, The Dark Knight Rises. Everyone knows about that, so we will push on and see what else is out that may be worth your hard earned cash! Joss Whedon, of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Firefly fame will helm one of the big Marvel offerings for the summer, The Avengers. Featuring a large superhero ensemble (including Iron Man, Thor, The Incredible Hulk and more), Whedon has the calibre to deliver a fun and entertaining thrill ride. Continuing the superhero trend, Spidey makes his return to the big screen this summer in The Amazing Spider Man. The second

Marvel offering will see the rebooted Spidey web slinging his way through another origins story. For animation fans, there will be plenty of fun adventures available, with Madagascar 3: Europe’s Most Wanted (yes, that is the actual title!) and the latest Pixar release, Brave. No doubt Pixar will have adults and children alike swooning again with another delightful creation. Sure to make a tonne of money will be the fourth instalment in the Ice Age franchise, Continental Drift, with all the gang returning. For action heads out there, there will be a vast amount of

adrenaline pumping action adventure coming out this summer, with The Bourne Legacy and The Expendables 2 being the picks of the bunch. Jeremy Renner takes over from Matt Damon in Bourne and no doubt will kick some serious ass and face the awesome Edward Norton who is the films villain. The Expendables 2 will expand the cameos of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Bruce Willis from the first film, so expect plenty of 80’s awesome on display! Finally, the film that in my opinion will be the closest challenger to The Dark Knight Rises (perhaps

not in financial terms) will be Ridley Scott’s return to science fiction in Prometheus. For the geeks out there, the film will draw on the mythology of his famous 1979 horror masterpiece, Alien, and bring terror to a new generation! I have of course overlooked a lot of films, so keep your eyes open, because there definitely will be something for everyone this summer!

Hunger Games Serves Up a Treat

Fionnbarr Thompson

BILLED as being the answer to the Twilight craze, The Hunger Games serves only to delight its audience.

This fantasy-thriller takes place in a futuristic North American setting which is experiencing heavy repercussions following an uprising which tore colonised America to shreds. Director Gary Ross, famed for his work on the movie Seabiscuit, produces quite a spectacular show which captures all the emotion and action portrayed within the book series penned by Suzanne Collins. At first glance, the film moves to deceive the audience with its setting. North America has become a totalitarian state which has led to food shortages and as a result, an uprising. This uprising was soon scuppered by the government who then generously decided to “forgive” the inhabitants by setting up an X-Factor-esque television

show in which two representatives from all 12 districts are selected and pitted against each other in a fight to the death, with only very basic training and knowledge of the playing field. This is the authorities’ way of trying to keep the peace, instilling fear of the games into the nation. What was interesting in this movie was the costume department’s choice of attire for the stars. With the nation having become poverty stricken, they have reverted to a 19th century style which only enhances the viewers experience and provides a unique back drop of colour for the selection process to take place. Our protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, is expertly played by future superstar Jennifer Lawrence who displays maturity and acting flair beyond her years. Moving on from her role in X-Men: First Class, Lawrence keeps up her thirst for action with a vein pumping showing which captures the imagination of the audience. This, supplemented by her fantastic ability to act out the anger, angst, and



Jennifer Lawrence, who plays Katniss in The Hunger Games

just a hint of teenage cynicism of her character had been admired for in the written series, makes for an inspired performance that distracts us from the fact that the games do not even start until half way through the 144 minute production. The Hunger Games certainly provides enough thrills and action to entertain any audience throughout the entire movie. Adoptions from books have never been my cup of tea; however The Hunger Games may just have changed my appetite.

A Sister Act Obsession

Leonie Holly

IT is cringe-worthy to say that for near six months straight my sister and I watched either Sister Act 1 or Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit on a daily basis. Every lyric, every word, every medley can still be accustomed to rolling off my tongue without a moment’s notice. Was it a secret desire to marry a high class criminal? Was it a want to be a black lady full of attitude? Was it an infatuation with nuns? Who knows what made this my favourite film as a child but there is no doubt about it, I have never found a film that surpasses my love of this work. The leads Whoopi Goldberg and Maggie Smith definitely made the film what it is, however you cannot overlook the clever story line, the heart-warming innocence of the other nuns and the catchy hymns – which all attributed to the movie in many different ways. Badass Deloris Van Cartier (Goldburg) gets involved in the wrong crowd and has put her life at risk after witnessing a murder, forced to join a convent in an effort to hide her from her ex’s gang. Van Cartier’s feelings towards the place change drastically in the progression of the first movie. Now known as Sister Mary Clarence, Van Cartier gives an insight into the daunting nun world to an average person. After returning to her regular entertainer’s life after the first movie, Van Cartier is convinced to return to

the convent to help teach the crew of reckless teenagers that have been left under the group of nuns supervision in a new school. Van Cartier uses her musical talent to win them over and ironically each and every one of the students can sing and are highly talented in many ways. The opening medley in the second film promised and proved that the sequel would be catchy with some great and better songs than the first movie; however, the story line of the first film was hard to beat. The diverse and brilliant personalities of each and every nun in the film, the heart-warming story line and the bopping tunes make these films a must-see-at-some-stage-in-your-life-time series. So go out and watch these bad boys as it will be an evening’s entertainment that you won’t regret.



Whoopi Goldberg, Sister Act Lead



Nicola Griffin

THE trip to Galway Head of River was worthwhile for the UL Rowing Club Novice Women last weekend, with the Novice 8 finishing in first place and the Novice 4 coming second to NUIG.

The girls, many of whom only began rowing last September, have been going from strength to strength over the last few months and are now in preparation for the Intervarsity’s Regatta, taking place in the National Rowing Centre in Cork on April 14. There were also strong performances from single scullers Gerard Sheehan, Liam Rice and Alice O’ Sullivan, all finishing within the top 3 in their categories. The Senior Men’s Quad came a very close second place to Carlow Rowing Club, less than half a second behind.

In other news, three of the UL Senior Rowers – James Brinn, David Meehan and Liam Rice were selected to row for Munster in the London Head of River, taking place this weekend. Crews from all over the world compete in this race, with over 3500 participants each year.

UL Ladies Rugby hit Ashbourne

Claire Lewis

BY far one of the best trips of the year on the UL Ladies Rugby social calendar is to Ashbourne Co. Meath.

The girls had three home matches there this season, all of which were supported by a huge contingent of ULLR players who were there to cheer on the girls in green.

It’s a great chance for our girls to witness the best female rugby players in the country first hand. For a lot of the girls on the college team their goal as players is to one day fill their boots, to wear an Irish jersey and be proud to represent their country.

It’s outstanding the number of players who have come through the ranks from the University of Limerick and have gone on to play for Ireland. Players such as Lynne Cantwell, Gillian Bourke, Laura Guest, Patrique Kelly, Caroline

Mahon and Louise Beamish are only but a few who have done just that. It gives us college girl’s great motivation to be able to see the Irish girls in action, knowing that only a few years ago they were in the same position as we are in now and look how far they’ve come.

With none other than the Irish hooker, Gillian Bourke coaching us here in UL, we’re getting top class training from someone who has experienced it all. Gill started playing rugby when she went to UL, continued on to play at a provincial level for Munster and from there was selected to play for Ireland, for which she currently has 31 caps. It is only fair to say we couldn’t have a more experienced coach.

The Irish ladies have had an excellent 6 Nations campaign this year, only losing by a single point to France and being defeated by the current 6 Nations champions, England. The girls are improving immensely. I for one cannot wait for 2013.



The Irish ladies have had an excellent 6 Nations campaign this year and many are looking forward to 2013 already

Table Quiz!



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Frank Daly on a trip to Lanzarote with ULSAC

ULSAC Roundup

Rose Barrett

THE 2011/12 academic year has been a busy one for ULSAC. The move from ScotSac to CFT (The Irish Underwater council) has kept the club busy. There has been much work involved in the move but it has meant that the club has now access to more local knowledge, diving with other CFT affiliated clubs in the region and support from the organisation as a whole. Thanks must go to all involved in the crossover. The club had a mix of new and cross over divers join this year, along with existing members renewing their membership. This has meant that there has been a varied mix of qualifications being attained by ULSAC members and instructors this year. The next mile stone for a large proportion of the members will be the Club Diver qualification; equivalent to PADI’s advanced open water. Divers at this level can then dive to 30 meters. ULSAC has been diving many different dive spots this

year ranging from the old and familiar, such as Killary, Co. Galway and Portroe dive centre, Co. Tipperary and a new spot that packed a lot of punch, Lanzarote, Canary Islands. Spots such as Portroe offers accessible diving for all levels and is ideally suited to training; particularly for trainees. The trip to Lanzarote offered diving in ideal temperatures and conditions at a time of year when diving isn’t possible in Ireland. There were over 120 hours of diving completed by the club during the trip and many divers progressed their training. The club will be travelling to the Aran Islands over the Easter break taking 10 divers of all levels. There is more to the club than just diving in. A club weekend was organised early in March with a trip on Lough Derg on Saturday in ULSACs’ own RHIB, The Plassey Bird and paintballing on the Sunday. There were a series of first aid courses run over the winter

fundraising for the club and offering students and staff reasonably priced training. The club was represented at CFT’s annual Dive Ireland Dive Show getting an opportunity to meet up with CFT members from all over the country and have ULSAC officially recognised as a CFT club. Some members were involved in the search for the missing fishermen in Union Hall in January of this year. The club has much more happening over the coming months of the summer. ULSAC will help in the annual UL Bar Boot Sale in Aid of Concerns work in Haiti. Trips to the Red Sea and around various dive sites in Ireland are currently being organised and as dive times are clocked up many members will move on in their training and complete exams for diving qualifications. The summer of 2012 promises much for ULSAC.

Fencing Intervarsities 2012: UL Fencing improves its level

Pierre Bahain

ON 25 and 26 February, the UL Fencing Club participated in the intervarsities competition held every year since 1955. This year it took place at TCD.

The Championships comprise of six weapons, Mens and Ladies Foil, Mens and Ladies Épée and Mens and Ladies Sabre. The winner of the competition is the college with the most victories across all six weapons. 43 teams from 12 institutions participated this year with UL presenting three teams, Mens and Ladies Épée, and Mens Foil. UL’s Mens Foil team consisted of Mark Rankin, Eoin McLoughlin, Quentin Fuzeau and Guillaume Auzolle. Foil was really new to the club which acquired the equipment 2 weeks prior the Varsities. Despite this they fenced remarkably well and placed 5th overall. The UL’s Men’s Épée team came 3rd overall which is an incredible achievement for the Club. The team consisted of Pierre Bahain

(the French coach of the club), David Shanahan, Dara Dermody and Fintan McGuinness. The matches lost were very tight and with more experience the team will do better next year. The Women’s Épée team was composed by Miriam Cashman who is ranked 1st of the Irish ranking, Lisa Ni Chaoimh and Aya Takemori. They had some difficulties to start, losing tightly their first matches, but they finished well to place 4th overall. The Club came 6th of the overall ranking across all 6 weapons. It is a great result considering that we put forward teams in only 3 categories. Trinity College Dublin has retained the Frank Russell Intervarsity Cup for the 5th consecutive year and the 35th time in 58 years. We are very proud of the whole squad and of the few supporters who showed up at the weekend. The UL Fencing Club will host the intervarsities next year. We are looking forward this big event and we will train hard to represent UL the best we can. The Club also hosts the National Team Championships on the 21 and 22 of April in the University Arena. We hope to see you there and show the Club some support!



“UL Athletics Club would like to congratulate WIT Athletics Club for organising such a successful event and banquet afterwards”



UL Athletes at the IUAA Cross Country held recently in Waterford

Britton and Mulhare Lead UL Charge

Kevin Moore

THE second Saturday in March brought us to the sunny south east for the IUAA Cross Country in Waterford hosted by W.I.T. Athletics Club. A warm day along with what could only be described as a truly challenging hilly cross country course met us upon arrival in Waterford. In the ladies race Una Britton ran a superb race to come up through the field and claim the silver individual medal. Nicola O’Ceallaigh was the next UL athlete in 19th position closely followed by Claire Sullivan in 26th place, Claire Earls in 37th, Gemma Reddin in 43rd, Catherine Kelly in 45th, Fionnula Mulroy in 48th and Sinead Prendiville in 52nd. The ladies combined to get fifth team. In the mens

race Michael Mulhare led the UL charge to claim the bronze medal in third place and hence show early signs of form for the upcoming season. Jake O’Regan ran a brilliant race to claim 7th position in his first ever IUAA Cross Country appearance and was closely followed by Liam Feely who ran a blinder to finish in 14th position his best finish to date. Next we had Shawn McCormack and yours truly in 41st and 42nd respectively. James Leddingham finished in 48th position, Finbarr Horgan in 64th, Brian Looam in 93rd, Colin Maher in 95th, Samuel Keating in 100th, Noel Rice in 103rd and Aodhgan Tuohy in 114th position. In the team event the men were unlucky to be off the medal

podium with five points separating third and forth. It was a pity that at such a prestigious event as this that we didn’t have our full complement of athletes competing. Medals may have been left behind again! In the overall standings UL got third behind DCU and UCD. UL Athletics Club with like to congratulate W.I.T Athletics Club for organising such a successful event and banquet afterwards. Next up for UL Athletics is the Munster Track and Field in CIT closely followed by the IUAA Cross Country in Athlone. Keep tuned to our website and facebook page for updates. ulathletics.webs.com and facebook.com/ULAthletics



A sample of Photo Soc photography

PhotoSoc Northern Ireland Trip

Lauren Pink

THE weekend of the 23 March, PhotoSoc went on a trip to Northern Ireland with visits to Belfast and Derry. In Belfast, we saw the city by night and had a local photographer shows us the historical aspects of Belfast, along with helping us to improve our photography.

He took us to the Capital building where we learned how to produce zoom bursts which consists of zooming in while taking the picture along with long exposure shots which we were able to catch the lights of passing cars in our pictures. He then took the group down by the river and into the Titanic Quarter to get some water shots. The following day, Saturday, on the way to Derry we made stops at Stormont, Glenariff Forest, Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge and the

Giant’s Causway. At the Glenariff Forest students were able to capture fantastic nature shots that included the waterfalls and the valley that was carved out by glaciers in the Ice Age. Although we didn’t get a chance to go across the Carrick-a-Rede Bridge or get a picture of a perfect sunset at the Giants Causway due to haziness, we did get some fantastic images over the duration of the day. After a long day of taking shots we decided to enjoy the night-life in Derry while some photographers took the opportunity to capture the night-life. On Sunday, we met up with a few local photographers who showed us around Derry and some of the historical aspects along with tips to improve our photography. They took us into the “walled city” where we were able to capture the essence of the city where we were able to look at and learn more about the murals that were painted on buildings all around town. When we left the city and we drove along the west coast to see a sunset along the water while we drove back to Limerick. The weekend was full of picture taking along with learning more about Northern Ireland history, which every member enjoyed.

Parkour Trip to Glendalough

Emma Porter

BEING new to parkour, I wasn’t exactly sure what it involved. I think my impressions were of people doing backflips off walls. The first training session put me at ease. Everything is at your own pace and you only attempt what you feel comfortable doing. I had my name down to go on the upcoming trip to Glendalough by the end of that first training. Eight of us went to Glendalough on the Friday evening. We stayed the weekend in a hostel with about a hundred others from the OPC and the International Society. We had a great laugh Friday and Saturday night at the hostel and the local pub. We did a lot of Methode Naturelle all day Saturday – climbing up the hills of boulders and jumping to cross the waterfall. We could have taken the path I suppose, but that’s no fun! I got to know the members of parkour that I didn’t really know before the trip and met some other great people that were on the trip too. The club in general is great craic and I’ve recommended parkour to my friends – think I’ve persuaded a couple too! Really looking forward to the trip to Dublin this weekend, should be brilliant!



PKUL Traversing along under the bridge

Queers Go Native

Emma Norris

FRESH from their hat-trick success at this year’s C&S awards, Out in UL present Queerbash 9 on Friday 13 April in Dolan’s Warehouse. The tribal themed showcase event promises to be a night of unadulterated entertainment!

At this year’s Clubs & Societies Ball, Out in UL took home three awards, including Best Society Event for last year’s gothic-themed Queerbash. Queerbash 9 has a lot to live up to but it promises to deliver! Hosted by Alternative Miss Ireland contestant Madonna Lucia and previous AMI winner Sheila Fits-Patrick, with performances from the

untouchable Candy Warhol, Fada, and Eileen, and many more, the event will be a feast for the eyes and ears. Expect Dance UL, UL Drama, and UL Choral Soc to demonstrate their talents on the night. Jack Deacon will provide tribal drumming to get you in the mood for a raindance. With music from DJ Jeff and Return to Sender (RTS) as well as a few supprises, Queerbash 9 is set to be better than ever! Dust off that old African headpiece and release your inner animal. This will be a Friday the 13th you’ll never remember! Dolans Warehouse, Friday 13th April, 9pm Queers Go Native.

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2012

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Walking by the Liffey

Finn McDuffie

I WALK by the Liffey every morning. It’s nearly always the same; a sleepy rush hour buzz, the chime of car brakes, the pitter-patter of hurried footsteps and a faint green-man noise. A bright haze rises over the water and as you look out to Poolbeg, you can just make out the towers.

Beside the great, shining Samuel Beckett Bridge squats a small, red trailer with Coffee Angel on the side and a strong aroma fills the air. There’s usually a queue as the morning suits arrive. It happens every ten to fifteen minutes; like clockwork, unless the dart is delayed.

They’re all off to work. I join them just before the bridge. Just a year ago I was probably sitting on the library lawn at UL with a wibbly wobbly wonder or working on the final edition of An Focal. And each year before that I was probably looking out the library window at the people on the lawn or procrastinating in the plaza. It’s all very rose-tinted now and rightly so because I loved those fleeting five years at UL. In fact, being at UL was one of the greatest privileges of my life.

I’m into a different chapter now. I was dealt a lucky hand and got a fantastic opportunity to work at Google, Dublin. I never set out to work in online advertising (my degree is Law). But it’s been a very interesting seven months. Google is an unconventional company.

There are bean bags, hammocks and foosball tables in the hallways. To wear a suit is ill advised. And everybody seems to be in their mid-twenties. Having entire teams of colleagues

my age is a rare thing and something I appreciate. Naturally, it’s not all fun and games. There’s a work hard, play hard ethos. But it’s nice to be able to play.

I was very surprised to have found a job, given Ireland’s predicament. I still feel lucky. But if you are about to graduate and think you have to emigrate to find a job, don’t go knocking on the door of the Australian Embassy just yet. Having lived here for some time now, I’ve noticed a certain amount of growth happening in the Dublin Docklands.

Ireland’s positives are generally underplayed by the press, who favour bad news which sells better. But tech companies are springing up in Ireland. Other companies (both indigenous and foreign) are expanding their operations. Dublin is buzzing. Sure, it takes a bit of luck, but never dismiss an opportunity!



Former ULSU Comms Officer, and current Google employee, Finn McDuffie



Jack Brolly

TOM King has worked in UL for the past 5 years doing maintenance work. At the start of June last year, he weighed 23 stone. After almost of year of hard work he has managed to lose 9 stone.

“It was for health reasons and I’m a lot better off now without the weight on”, he says. His decision to lose the

weight was an obvious one. “It was hard to get around and I struggled an awful lot. It was getting harder for me to do things like work”, he explains.

He decided to get help from Weight Watchers to get fitter and lose all the weight, he tells us why he went down that route.

“I went with Weight Watchers because I used them before and I gave it up. I decided I’d go back to them and this time I’d give it a good go and hopefully I’d succeed. At this present time, I’m succeeding.”

Mr. King’s life has improved tenfold since he dropped the pounds. “There’s been a massive difference in my life since I lost the weight. It’s easier to get around and easier to work.

I’m more fit; I go to the gym 4 days a week. Without all that help it

wouldn’t have been possible. It was very hard at the start but now it’s easier to manage.”

Losing weight isn’t easy. There are plenty of people who are struggling with weight issues at the moment. What advice does he have for people who want to change their life in the same way he has?

“It’s as simple as changing your eating habits. Just eat proper food and not junk. I’ve proven it can be done but it’s up to you how you do it. Weight Watches does work, it’s how you make it work that makes all the difference.”

Surfing the Emerald Isle

An Focal catches up with UL surfer Stephen Kelleher

Kelly O’Brien, Editor

ORIGINALLY from Lahinch in County Clare, Stephen has been immersed in a surfing culture from a very young age. On the sport, he states “I just love surfing and I can appreciate all types. Ever since I started surfing I always aspired to surf a longboard. I love the way they flow and cruise into waves. I try to surf progressively and modern, high performance longboards are capable of many of the same kind of manoeuvres associated with shortboards.”

Stephen recently took part in the All-Ireland Championships in Sligo last month. On the weekend, he stated that the conditions were “OK” and that he has previously surfed in “far worse” conditions at previous events. “The swell was a bit too big for the beach and if you got caught inside badly your heat was effectively over but I managed to hold my position and get a couple of good ones in each heat. I snapped my leash in the first round and was left swimming after the board but I got it back handily enough so I think I got off quite lightly all in all.”

When asked about Irish surfing, and the future of surfing in Ireland, Stephen states that the standard of surfing “grows year on year” in this country and “all you have to do is look at the magazines or on the internet to see what surfing in Ireland is all about. I think all the heavy waves that are surfed by Irish and international surfers and bodyboarders have put the west on the map as a destination for surfers from around the world.” Having said this, he goes on to say that though the sport

has come along “leaps and bounds” in Ireland, he believes that surfing is still in its infancy here and that it’s great to see young people picking up the sport. “It is brilliant to watch the next generation surfing at a high level. I look forward to seeing the sport go from strength to strength and I expect it will continue to grow in the future. There is an abundance of talented photographers in this country and as long as they are present to capture the images and footage, the next few years look very bright for Irish surfing.”

An Focal will be watching the progress of this award-winning UL Surfer, and we hope to see great things from him. In the meantime, Stephen would like to thank his sponsors Emerald surfwear, Eimhin McMullan board designs and the UL sports department for all their support throughout the year.



UL surfer Stephen Kelleher

The Cross-focal

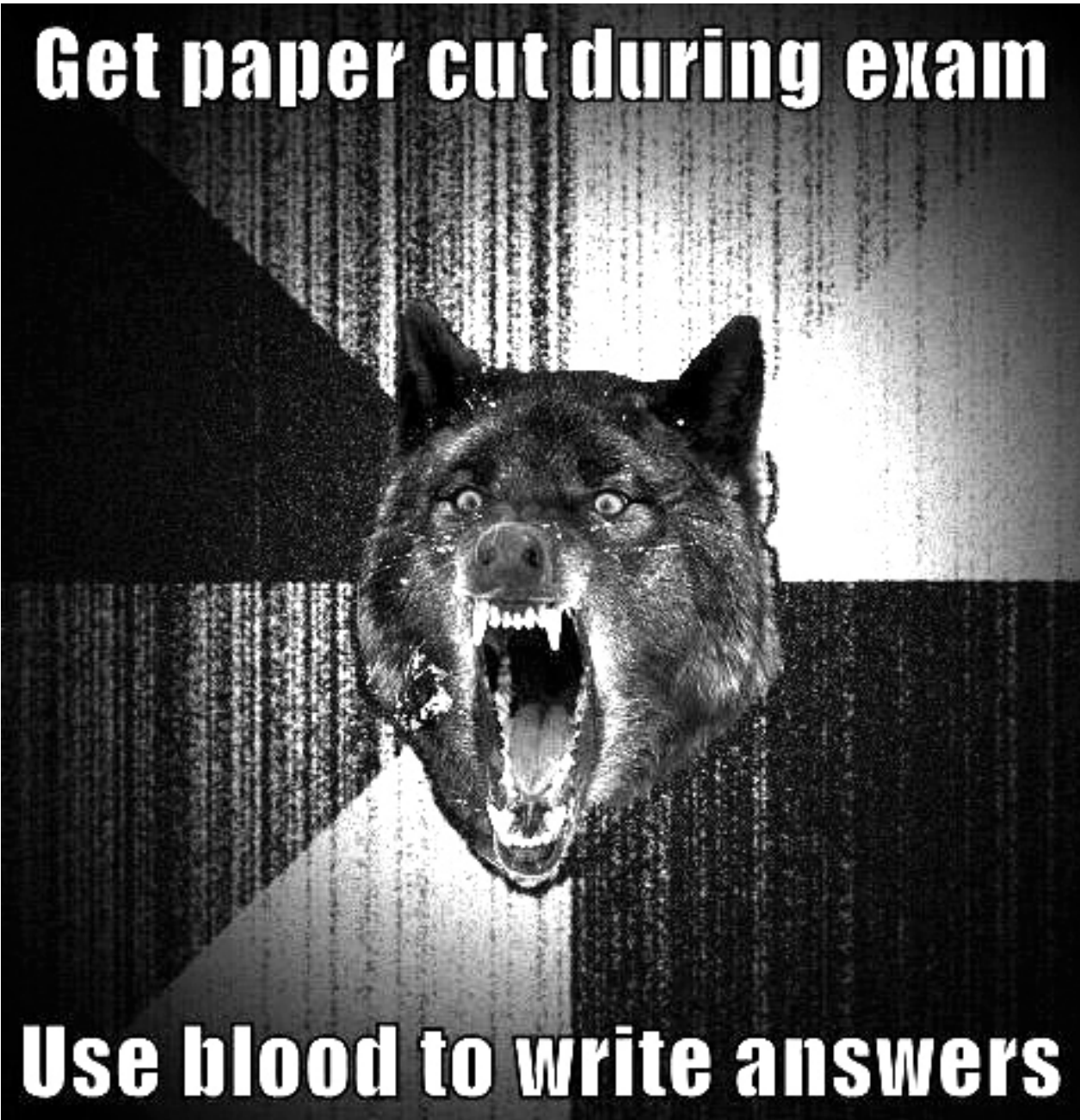
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19							20				
21											

Across

1 Untruth (9)
8 Woody climbing (usually tropical) plant (5)
9 Sleepwear (7)
10 Divided skirt (8)
11 Wildebeests (4)
13 Dissolute-gratuitously cruel (6)
14 Author of The Thirty-Nine Steps(6)
16 Food (for a friar?) (4)
17 Blushing (3-5)
19 (Of a sailing vessel) stop moving (5,2)
20 Permit (5)
21 Where King John signed Magna Carta in 1215 (9)

Down

1 Inca fort (anag) (8)
2 Horizontal beam over a doorway (6)
3 Therefore (4)
4 Neglected (3,2,3,4)
5 Severe scolding (in old clothes?) (8-4)
6 Worker preoccupied with finishing time (5-7)
7 Prisoner's restraint (4,3,5)
12 Right to vote (8)
15 Need to (anag) — indicate (6)
18 Seductive (4)



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,
I read your article in the recent An Focal regarding Charity week at UI and your reference to ever-disgruntled residents. It was not inaccurate to say that College Court was in a bad state. I spoke to your Student Union office who had sent some volunteers to the estate and he agreed with me that it was in an appalling condition.
I am a resident of College Court and my neighbours and I may well be ever-disgruntled but it is due to the ever dirty and noisy students.
I do not have an issue with ‘Charity week.’ If all we had to bear was 1 week we would not have a problem.
The issue we have is that we are subjected to loud noise, gunning of car engines, overturning of bins, litter and generally unacceptable behaviour from Sept to May. What is wrong with putting their beer bottles and cans and fast food papers etc in a bin,. in their own house? Why drop it on the ground? Should we all not be more conscious of the environment?
So not only do we have to contend with ‘Charity Week’ we have to put up with the appalling litter problem for 9 months of the year.
I know UL students took part last year in a Clean Campaign on the river bank. So obviously someone is conscious of the environment. So I am asking through the good offices of your newspaper to ask your students to please bring home their litter, have a little more regard for the environment, and their neighbours and remember that College Court is not a campus, it’s a residential estate.

Yours sincerely
G Morrissey
College Court
Castletroy

Easy Sudoku

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

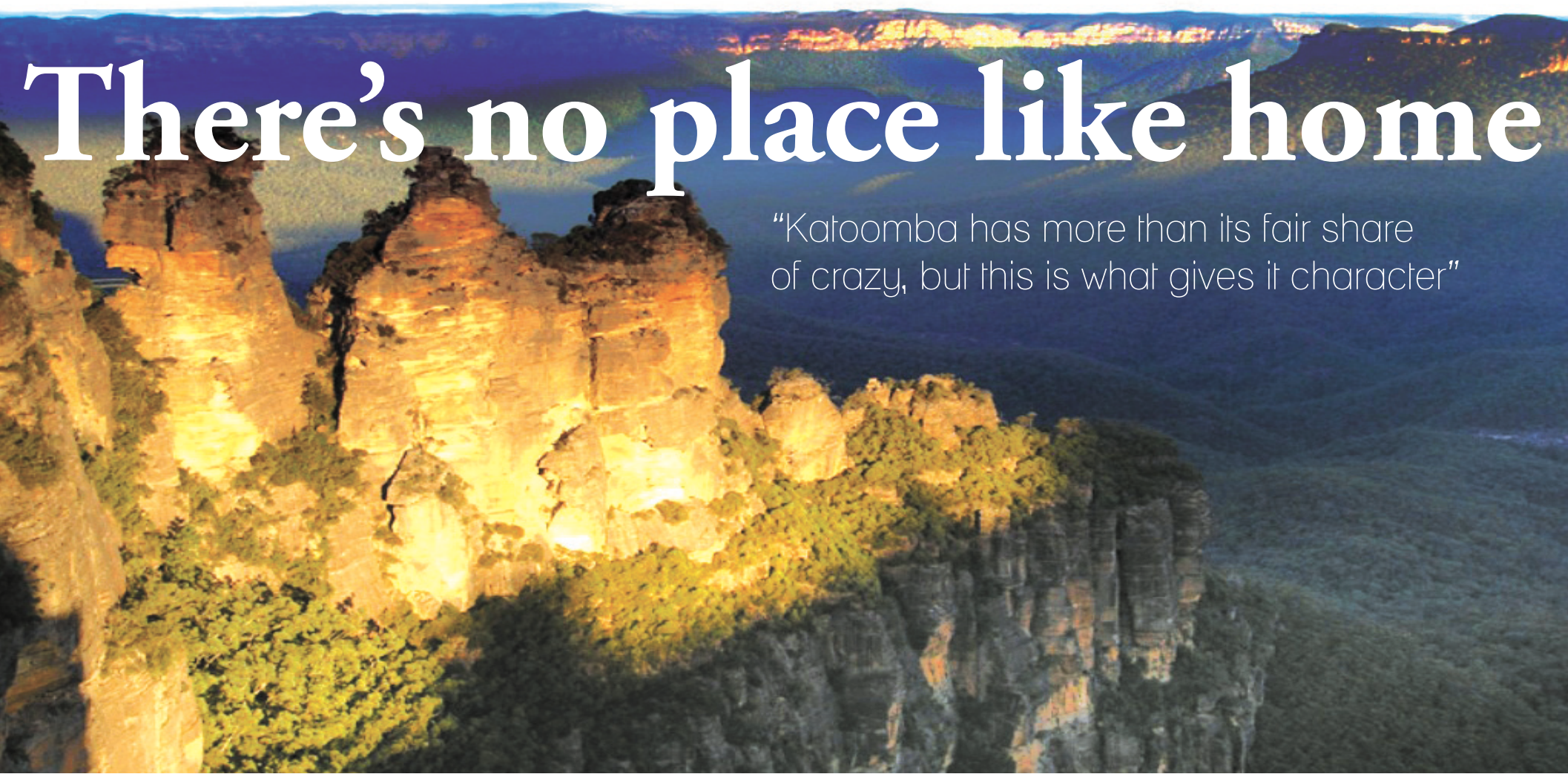
Medium Sudoku

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

Hard Sudoku

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

Travel



There’s no place like home

“Katoomba has more than its fair share of crazy, but this is what gives it character”

Sophie Watt

The Blue Mountains, Katoomba.

WHEN most people think of Australia they think of tanned surfers, golden beaches or the beautiful people of Summer Bay and Ramsay Street. Or they think of Steve Irwin, poisonous spiders, venomous snakes or the sharks waiting in our bays to take a chunk out of you. As delightfully exciting as all that sounds, that is not what Australia is about. Mostly desert but a paradise on the coast, Australia does have sunny beaches and beautiful cities but no one ever writes about where I am from. People usually write about the exciting places they visit or the adventures they

go on. For once, I want to look back and talk about home. About two hours out of Sydney, when you think you’ve gone too far, you’ll find the Blue Mountains. Named for the surrounding blue hued mist given off by the gum trees, to me there isn’t a more beautiful place in the world. Full of small towns that run along the highway, the entire mountain area is a protected national park. The most interesting town, set atop one of the peaks, is Katoomba. It’s full of alternative music and the hippies that

tend to flock to those odd, out of the way places. Lined on either side by quaint little cafes and themed food places, Katoomba has everything you could possibly need from sushi to a fifties themed diner, from high tea overlooking the valley to a homespun café run by a reclusive cult. It’s a clash of cultures and class. In a five minute walk you may pass a formally dressed couple going out for dinner followed by the resident loon who wanders the street dressed in a kilt no matter the temperature, singing disjointed songs and reciting old

ballads. Katoomba has more than its fair share of crazy, but this is what gives it character. Once a year all those attracted to the strange emerge from where they had been hiding and put on the biggest event in the Blue Mountains; The Winter Magic Festival. Held in June, it is a unique combination of semi-organisation and the kind of anarchy that arises when so many colourful and creative people get together. There are fire breathers, acrobats, jugglers, people on stilts and the just plain crazy stuff that appears every year without warning. Perhaps it’s the surrounding

natural landscape or perhaps it’s that so far up in the mountains there is room to experiment and express your art and creation; either way the Blue Mountains are a giant mixing pot of unique culture, crazy characters, Australian myths and amazing landscapes all mashed together in a somewhat unconventional township that I call home. There isn’t any other place like it.

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Gnóthaí Mac Léinn Student Affairs

Life Post Erasmus

Alana Walsh

IT has been six weeks since I returned to UL after moving home from Spain.

While it is great to have been reunited with everyone who was away in different countries and I found myself settling back into life in Ireland quite easily, there is now an Erasmus void in my life.

I simply miss living abroad. Missing Erasmus is something that hits you in waves every now and then, it is loosely referred to as Post Erasmus depression by some Facebook groups or YouTube dedicated videos.

Socialising is a significant part of any Erasmus and my first pint back in the Stables was a great moment, it signalled the commencement of college life back in UL. However, there is a huge discrepancy between socialising here and in Spain.

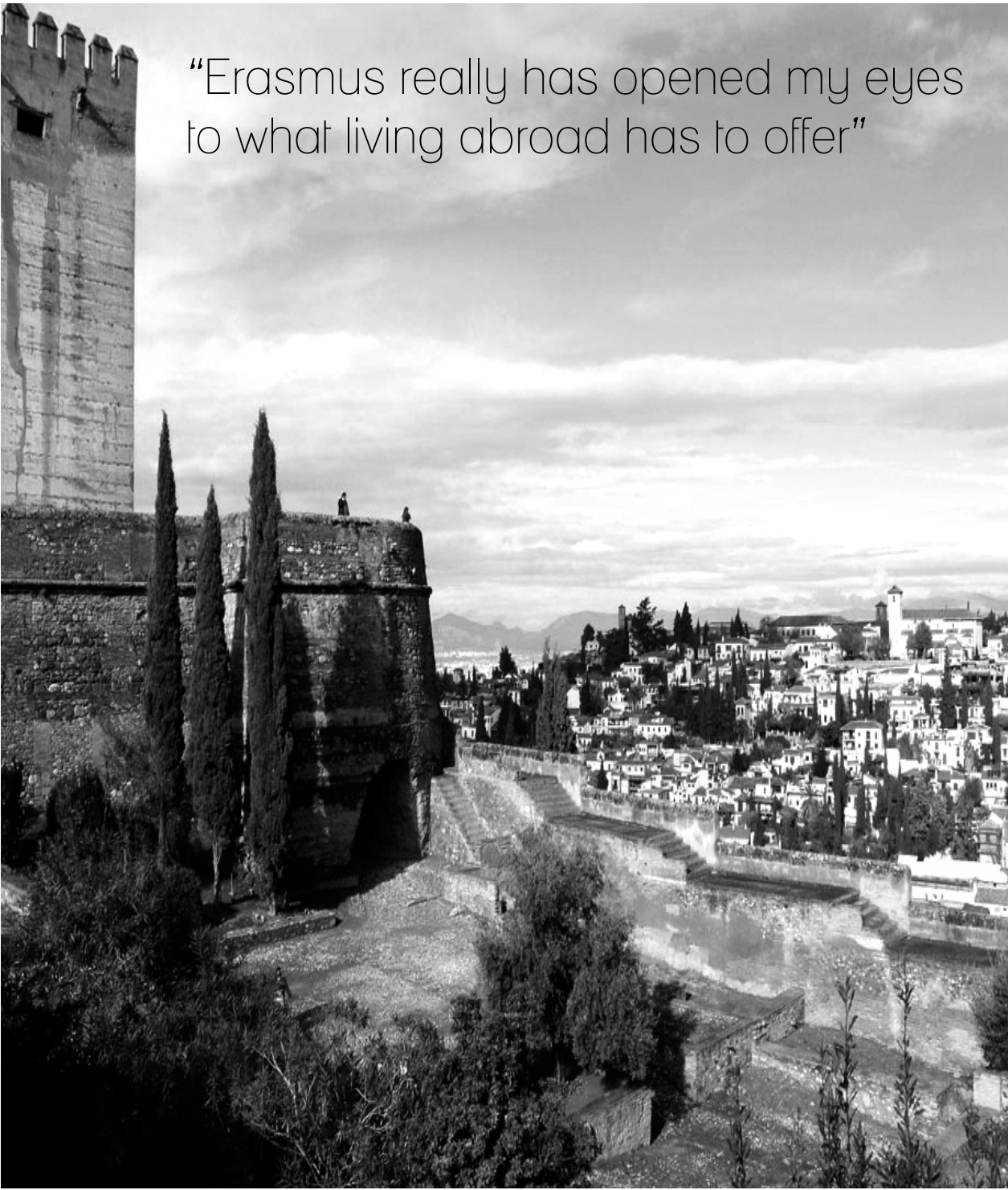
We are severely ripped off in Ireland. I loved every aspect of living in a different culture and how each day was new, exciting and quite often random. What kills me now is that in the south of Spain in Granada, where I was living, the weather has reached temperatures of up to 33 degrees and it is March!

Here that would be considered a heat wave and we would be talking about it for years to come. There are vivid reminders that I have left it all behind, like pictures of my friends who are still living there continuing the madness that for five months was a shared existence. Erasmus really has opened my eyes to what living abroad has to offer. This can only be a good thing considering I will hopefully graduate next year and let's face it, emigration is pretty high on the list of any graduate's options nowadays.

Settling back into UL has not been a chore. It's great to be back on campus after a year away but coming to grips with the workload was a different story, Erasmus in short has ruined my academic drive and motivation seems to be in short supply.

This, I am hoping, is only a temporary side effect of Erasmus that will rectify itself before fourth year and the siege of FYP. I am highly grateful though that lectures here are not two hours like on my Erasmus as there is some hope that my attention can be held for an hour.

Despite the grey clouds that constantly seem to loom over Castletroy, overpriced socialising and not being able to get away with war by saying "No entiendo", it is good to be back.



A view of sunny Granada, Spain.

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The Downside of Study Abroad

Brige Newman

EVERYTHING has been all sunshine and light up until now, but there is one thing that I never considered when I came here, what would happen if I lost someone back home?

That is a question I and some of my fellow Internationals have had to experience, and something that you need to think about. The day I arrived my uncle passed away, I couldn't do anything for my family, I couldn't leave, I wouldn't have been home on time. So all I could do was grieve 3,000 miles away alone, and call my aunt whenever I could, to keep her up to date about my life, something to at least distract her. I thought it was bad enough that it happened to me, but I wasn't alone. My friend from Australia had her grandmother pass during her first week here. She took it pretty hard, being homesick already didn't help but her family Skyped her constantly to try and comfort her. This week, however,

was like the week from hell. In the space of a day one girl's father passed and another guy's cousin also passed. It broke all of our hearts. What do you say to someone whose dad is now gone while she's at least several thousand miles away from home, separated from family that knows what you're feeling and would be able to comfort and console you? It is a question we have all been wracking our brains to answer, and all we can do is be there whenever she needs us. We've tried to distract her, go on as normal, and just keep her happy, so far it is working. But she looks like a time bomb, anything could set her off and we are all walking on eggshells anytime we are alone with her. I hate to leave you with such a sad story, but the bright side is that we (the Internationals and myself) have made such good friends that we are willing to help in any way possible. So I guess if I leave you with anything on your way to Study Abroad, Erasmus or just plain travelling, pick your friends carefully, they will be your lifeline and the thing that makes your experience worthwhile.

Interview

PJ Gallagher, he'll kick you in the Bolsheviks

Kelly O'Brien, Editor

ONE of Ireland's most recognised comedians, PJ Gallagher, was on the line with An Focal recently. Here's what went down.

"Are ya well? What's the craic?!" The happy-go-lucky Irishman was, as usual, in cracking form. With a surprisingly endearing Dublin accent, and a quick wit to boot, PJ soon has us all in stitches. Formalities out of the way, we asked him how he started off in comedy.

"By accident really! Jason Byrne didn't wanna do gigs on his own so he asked me if I'd come with him. We used to work in a warehouse together years ago the two of us. I knew him long before either of us ever did a gig ya see, and he just didn't wanna do it on his own."

He recalls that his first proper gig was sometime around '92 or '93. "Jason made me do it. I was supporting him in Vicar Street which scared the life outta me coz I hadn't the experience for it, and of course I was terrible... but it kinda worked! It was the older vicar street so there were about 700 people at it. It was some craic though and I got away with it, I think."

After doing the rounds in the Dublin comedy scene for a few years, Gallagher stated that he wanted something a bit different and enrolled in, and later graduated from, the Gaiety School of Acting. "I kind of intended on doing acting coz comedy scared the life outta me so much... but there was just no work in it. The more comedy you do, the more you start to think 'ah here, this is alright'. It was a natural progression more than a decision at any stage. I think after ages I just realised I hadn't gone to auditions for years and I was quite happy about it I think!"

On his career path, he explains, "I knew I was never gonna fit going around with a shirt and tie on, I knew that was never gonna happen. I just sorta banged away and tried me hand at a million different things and comedy sorta found me."

When asked how he spends his down time, PJ begins an enthusiastic tirade on all things bikes. "It's all bikes, I just ride bikes all the time. If I'm not racing motorbikes I'm racing BMX bikes and if I'm not racing BMX I'm out for road cycles... and if I'm not road cycling, I'm mountain biking! If I'm too tired for all of that I'm watching bikes on Eurosport or something. It's all bikes, me whole life revolves around bikes. I only really tell jokes to earn money to buy bikes! I don't drink and I don't

smoke, I don't go to restaurants or nothing, I just pass my time by going as fast as I can."

While not an entirely unusual obsession, An Focal was curious as to how the bike addiction began. "I got into motorbikes just after me dad died. Me dad died and I just got on a motorbike and that was the first time after that I just didn't care about anything, I was just sorta locked into a moment and enjoying myself again, a big smile on me face and that addiction just kicked in. It's like a drug ya know, except drugs are probably healthier for ya and cost less!"

While PJ obviously has to say that Jason Byrne is his favourite comedian, he says "he is though, he genuinely is." Explaining his reasons, PJ goes on to say that he has "never seen anyone do what he can do on stage. I remember going to see Jason three nights in a row in Vicar Street and he did three different shows each night and I just thought 'that's fuckin' unreal'. I mean, Billy Connolly can't do that, ya know?"

Being curious about hecklers and how comedians deal with them, we heard PJ recount an odd tale. "I did a gig last Monday night and outta nowhere a guy stood up and said "What about the Nigerians?". It had nothing got to do with what I was talkin' about... it was just the most unbelievably irrelevant heckle I've had in me life. I could have got upset with him but it was just too amazingly irrelevant. That was the weirdest heckle... although a Russian guy did once get me in a headlock and throw me over a dinner table at a corporate gig..." When quizzed on the reason for this, PJ guiltily admits, "I told him I'd kick him in the Bolsheviks". Amid our snorts of laughter, he's quick to defend his actions saying, "But he was being really rude before that!"

Being involved in Naked Camera and Strawberry Alarm Clock pranks, PJ's no stranger to awkward humour. When asked why people from Ireland and the UK find this humour so intoxicating, he states that he doesn't really know. "It just seems to be the strange sense of humour we have. You can show it to Americans and they'll go [adopting a nasal-based American twang] 'there's nothing funny about that, he doesn't know what's happening', and you're like, 'that's EXACTLY why it's funny!' I think it's just that we love windups and if someone's in a situation that's awkward or uncomfortable, there's a part of us that just goes 'ahaha... thank GOD that's not me'. We always see people in these horrible situations and instead of jumping in and helping we'll go 'we'll just wait a minute, we'll just see what happens'.

PJ Gallagher plays Dolan's Warehouse on April 26. Miss it at your peril.

