

# WHERE'S OUR PENGUIN?

Gross theft of LSE art last Saturday night. Full story page 3.



Novelist  
Mohsin  
Hamid  
p19

# The Beaver

10 March 2009  
Newspaper of the  
London School of Economics  
Students' Union  
thebeaveronline.co.uk

## Continuity and change

### Government cuts £2.1m research funding for LSE

### Union elections see huge turnout and in- cumbents returned

Joseph Cotterill

Aled Dilwyn Fisher will lead the Students' Union as General Secretary for a second year after a night of drama closed the counting of the ballots in last week's Union elections.

Over two thousand students voted in the elections, setting a new record over last year's tally of sixteen hundred ballots cast.

The rising profile of the internet in LSE student politics is believed to have increased turnout, with candidates campaigning on facebook for the first time, and students voting online up to the last seconds of polling on Thursday night.

"It's been a fantastic evening, this has shown what the Union can be," Fisher said of the two thousand votes cast, moments after his victory was announced at the ballot count in the Quad.

"I'm relieved, that's the word to say... I've had the hardest race I've ever had," Fisher added, drawing a veil over a tough contest with two other candidates that had seen the strongest campaigning of the race.

A total of 837 people voted for Fisher, giving him a lead of 120 votes over his nearest opponent, Peter Barton.

Fisher, who ran on a "proven track record" of campaigning for education quality and to save the LSE nursery, now faces making good on his election promises to promote campus integration and increase postgraduate representation.

Fisher will once again become first among equals on the Students' Union's sabbatical team. Its four officers receive a £26,000 yearly salary to represent LSE students, with the help of a part-time executive of continuing students.

In a good night for incumbents, Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang also successfully held on to his position as Education and Welfare officer. Reelected with 805 votes, Akpan-Inwang promised in his manifesto to increase halls representation and "redefine the relationship between tutors and students".

Other candidates Helen Roberts and Ruby Buckley tallied 610 and 381 votes respectively. Roberts disliked the result. "I should have won. It's unfair that the Sabbs are allowed to re-run, it puts them at an advantage," she said.

When asked about allegations that the

Next year's student representatives full details pages 4-5



Houghton St on Election Day. Photo: Sze Keat Ong.

race to become Education and Welfare officer saw some dirty campaign tactics, she said that she agreed, adding that "I had nothing to do with it, and nor did Ruby."

"I'm going to do everything it takes to make sure that the students of this university get everything they deserve," Akpan-Inwang said after celebrating his victory, adding that he was "absolutely delighted to be coming back next year."

New faces were elected to the two remaining sabbatical posts of Treasurer and Communications officer.

Rob Low, an Athletics Union football team captain, snatched a narrow victory in

the Communications officer race, winning by 595 votes to 527 for LSE Not for Profit campaigner Michael Deas.

Low said of his victory that he was "ecstatic, what else can I say? I thought I was the underdog of this race." Low's campaign promised to overhaul Union campaigning on education, and to restore the Union's Friday night venue Crush to its former position as the biggest student night in London.

In the final sabbatical position, George Wetz swept to victory as the new Treasurer with 825 votes, one of the largest majorities of the election. His opponent Joseph

Brown won 584 votes.

Wetz sensationally committed to fifty-seven different policies in his campaign, which included a giant baked-bean tin careering down Houghton Street in a bid to attract voters during the final phases of the election. Ten of Wetz's policies focus on reducing the Students' Union's impact on the environment.

Live on air during the Media Group's joint coverage of election night, a jubilant Wetz said that he was "really excited, just really excited about next year, really."

Comment Union's next steps page 9

## Governors favour student experience reform

Zeeshan Malik

A Students' Union paper for improving academic, teaching and social experience at the LSE has been presented to the School Council.

The "Improving the Student Experience" paper was presented to the LSE Council, which includes two student representatives among academic governors.

The paper in question was "generally well-received", according to General Secretary Aled Fisher who added that there was some criticism of it being "harsh and incendiary" with its proposals.

Lay Governors, who are mostly alumni and form the majority of the Governors,

"had a really good reaction", many of whom "remember a different time at the LSE, with smaller classes and guaranteed contact with some of the greatest minds of the world", said Fisher.

A working group has subsequently been set up under the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) to free up Wednesday afternoons for "student enrichment activities" which include sports, societies and extracurricular languages.

The SAC, which is chaired by Professor Janet Hartley, who is the Pro-Director for Teaching and Learning, also consists of Fisher and Education & Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang as well as Course Representatives.

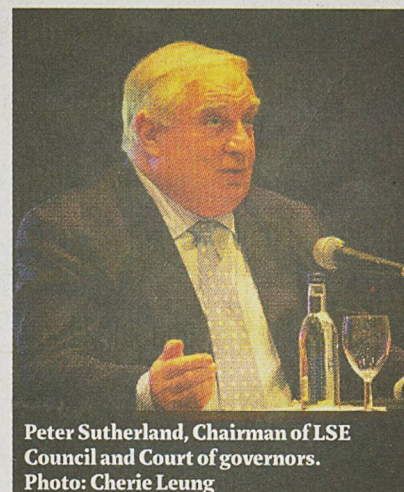
A member of the Athletics Union said, "Many of my team mates have had lectures from 12 to 1 on a Wednesday, which makes

getting to Berrylands a tall order. It's disappointing that it's taken this long for this issue to be seriously discussed by the relevant bodies of the School."

During the Courts of Governors' meeting, where the Council reports to all other Governors, one Governor "described [the] paper as the most important they had ever seen", according to Fisher. "Many of the Governors on Court are particularly critical of the School's direction", he added.

Other items on the agenda for the meeting included the question of whether student occupations, such as the one recently held in the Old Theatre in protest at the war in Gaza, should be banned.

Chairman of LSE Council and Court of Governors Peter Sutherland, among others, objected to the proposal.



Peter Sutherland, Chairman of LSE Council and Court of governors. Photo: Cherie Leung

LSE's research funding allocation for the academic year 2009/10 has been slashed by £2.1 million.

The School is one of 53 universities facing funding cuts from the previous year's allocation in the new figures released by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) last Thursday.

The LSE, hit with a 13 per cent reduction, emerged as the fifth biggest loser this year, behind Imperial College (£4.95m), Reading (£4m), University of the Arts, London (£3m), and Southampton (£3m).

School director Howard Davies said the School will "absorb" this cut in funding because, "our finances are currently healthy."

However, he added that the schools, "forecasts now show a tight budget picture in the next few years, given this cut and the high pay increases negotiated nationally, so we will have to control our expenditure very carefully, and seek alternative sources of research funding."

"That is our focus now, and we have no plans at this stage to cut back on research. This shows the wisdom of running the university with a surplus, to cope with unexpected hits of this kind, so current students need not worry."

LSE Pro-Director for Research and External Relations Sarah Worthington added that, "the loss in funding represents a relatively small percentage of the School's total income for last year and in fact HEFCE has provided 'transitional funding' just for 2009/10 to help smooth out this loss. In addition, we have been remarkably successful in attracting external grants to support our research efforts over the past few years."

"So, in short, I do not see our research efforts or reputation being compromised by this funding outcome, and nor do I see the shortfall having an impact on teaching efforts," she said.

The government's decision to prioritise natural science subjects in this year's allocation has been cited as a factor in the cuts.

According to the HEFCE website, "the funding method for research has been developed to take account of the outcomes of the 2008 RAE (research assessment exercise)."

However, changes in the 2008 RAE from the previous 2001 RAE created fears that the new system would penalise many top science institutions. As such, money was ring-fenced for the sciences resulting in cuts for the social sciences.

HEFCE stated that they "are protecting the position of science subjects. In teaching, £25m for very high cost laboratory-based subjects has become permanent as a recurrent targeted allocation from 2009-10."

Davies voiced the School's disappointment with this policy. "We are very disappointed by this outcome, which does not reflect the strengths of our research, on the government's own rankings. It results largely from a decision to protect funding for science."

"We believe that social science research is just as valuable for this country and the world as a whole," he added.

The LSE achieved the highest percentage of "world leading" research in the 2008 RAE and "on any of the other popular ranking criteria were amongst the top four institutions in research quality league tables," Worthington said.

She added: "In non-STEM (science, technology, engineering and

>>continued page 6

## Collective

Raidev Akoi; Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang; Madeeha Ansari; Hasib Baber; Fadhil Baakeer-Markar; Vishal Banerjee; Wil Barber; Peter Barton; Ramsey Ben-Achour; Graeme Birrel; Julian Boys; James Bull; Mike Carlson; Jess Cartwright; Beth Cherryman; Elizabeth Cheesbrough; Angela Chow; Estelle Cooch; Joseph Cotterill; Oliver Courtney; Jonathan Damsgaard; Richard Dewey; Elle Dodd; Cathy Druce; Marie Dunaway; Holli Eastman; Louisa Evans; Ossie Fikret; Aled Dilwyn Fisher; Charlotte Galvin; Justin Gest; Erica Gornall; Lucie Goulet; Aula Hariri; Yisum Heneghon; Charlie Hodgson; Tahiya Islam; Felipe Jacome; Daniel Jason; Lois Jeary; Megan Jones; Yisum Heneghon; Naeem Kapadia; Sam Tempest Keeping; Pooja Kesavan; Sadia Kidwai; Alizeh Kohari; Marion Koob; Vivek Kotecha; Anna Krausova; Cherie Leung; Phyllis Lui; Affan Mohamed; Shibani Mahtani; Zeeshan Malik; Nizar Manek; Nada Mansy; Sophie Marmont; Jamie Mason; Trent Maynard; James McGibney; Liam McLaughlin; Nitya Menon; Irfan Merali; Anna Mirkeda; Ravi Mistry; Ali Moussavi; Deotima Mukherjee; Utsa Mukherjee; Aditi Nangia; Brett Noble; Rachael O'Rourke; Aba Osunsade; Anup Patel; Jaynesh Patel; Rajan Patel; Sachin Patel; Alice Pelton; Will Perry; Clare Pickering; Chloe Pieters; Danielle Priestley; Rahim Rahemtulla; Dominic Rampat; Anjali Raval; Rosalie Ray; Helen Reeves; Ricky Ren; Joe Rennison; Katherine Ripullone; Sacha Robehmed; Helen Roberts; Joe Sammut; Charlie Samuda; Thienthai Sangchaphanthanon; Amrita Saraogi; Christina Schimdt Zur Nedden; Dan Sheldon; Andre Tartar; Sam Tempest Keeping; Kerry Thompson; Meryem Torun; Molly Tucker; Vladimir Unkovski-Korica; Subash Viroomal; Simon Wang; Jonathan Weir; Chris Westgarth; David Whittaker; Sean Whittington Roy; Christine Whyte; Matthew Willis; Chris Wilkins; Chun Han Wong; Calum Young

The Collective is The Beaver's governing body. You must have three pieces of work published in the paper to qualify for membership. If you believe you are a Collective member but your name is not on the list above, please email

### Collective Chair

Lucie Goulet

collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk

## Editorial Board

### Executive Editor

Joseph Cotterill  
editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Managing Editor

Chun Han Wong  
managing@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### News Editors

Zeeshan Malik  
Joe Rennison  
news@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Comment Editor

Sean Whittington Roy  
comment@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Features Editor

Shibani Mahtani  
features@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Social Editor

Madeeha Ansari  
social@thebeaveronline.co.uk

The Beaver would like to thank the LSE students who contributed to this issue.

The Beaver is published by the London School of Economics' Students' Union, East Building, Houghton Street, WC2A 2AE. Printed at Guardian Print Centre, Rick Roberts Way, Stratford, London E15 2GN.



### Sports Editors

Sam Tempest Keeping  
Alice Pelton  
sports@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Part B Editors

Julian Boys  
Sachin Patel  
partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Design Editor

Mike Carlson  
design@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Photo Editor

Cherie Leung  
photo@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### General Manager

Sanjiv Nanwani  
info@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Web Editor

Srikanth Narayanamohan  
web@thebeaveronline.co.uk

The Beaver uses pictures from flickr.com which have been issued under a Creative Commons license. We would like to distribute the Beaver under a similar license - we'll keep you posted. You can browse through the pictures we post to flickr at: [flickr.com/photos/beaveronline](http://flickr.com/photos/beaveronline).

### Contact the Beaver

info@thebeaveronline.co.uk  
0207 955 6705

East Building  
LSE Students' Union  
London WC2A 2AE

## LSE events

### Highlights of this week's public lectures and talks

#### Will the Rich Man's Crisis Crush the Emerging Economies?

Thomas Mirow  
President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development  
Tonight, SZT, 1830

#### China in International Society: can 'peaceful rise' succeed?

Professor Barry Buzan  
Tonight, OT, 1830

#### Thinking Like a Social Scientist

Professor Gilat Levy  
Wednesday, U8, 1305

#### Hecklers to Power?

The Waning Tools of Liberal Rights and Challenges to Feminist Activism in South Asia  
Professor Ratna Kapur  
Wednesday, HKT, 1830

#### Flexible Employment, Stable Society?

Professor Wolfgang Streeck  
Thursday, SZT, 1830

#### Extraordinary Times Demand Extraordinary Actions

Australian Treasurer Wayne Swan  
Friday, HKT, 1000 (Ticketed)

## Positions of the week

### LSE Careers Service's pick of the best jobs

3 Verulam Buildings  
12-month commercial pupillage

Corporate Executive Board  
UK summer internships

RWE nPower  
Quantitative Risk programme

EuroStrategy Consultants  
Trainee consultants positions

RBS, Global Banking and Markets  
Global Restructuring Group summer internship

Coller Capital Limited  
Graduate Investment Accountant

Tesco  
China Graduate Programme 2009

Frank Hirth plc  
Apprentice Opportunities in Tax

Knexus  
Product Marketing Internship

Procter & Gamble  
Internships summer 2009

Banco de México  
Financial System Analysis  
Department Summer Internship

BBC  
Producer, BBC Afrique

European Council on Foreign Relations  
Internship in the Advocacy Team

The Work Foundation  
Internship opportunities

Vestas  
USA Graduate programmes

TradingScreen  
Global Client Services Business  
Graduate, Infrastructure Intern, Infrastructure Trainee, Java Developer  
Trainee positions

Watson Wyatt Ltd  
Economists positions in China, India and Uruguay

Roubini Global Economics  
Analyst for EMU and Western European Economies

IT Services LSE  
Student IT Facilities Assistants and IT Help Desk Advisors

Private Employer/Documentary  
Student Researcher

British Red Cross  
Administration and Research Assistant

European bank for Reconstruction and Development  
Intern, Office of the Chief Economist

HP  
HR Management Associate  
Programme 2009 and Marketing internship

Interested?  
For details of these posts and over three hundred more, log in to My Careers Service and click on 'search for opportunities' at [www.lse.ac.uk/careers](http://www.lse.ac.uk/careers)

# Cybernetically enhanced Beaver.



The Beaver's digital revolution continues.

Now on twitter!

[twitter.com/beaveronline](http://twitter.com/beaveronline)

Let us know where to go next:  
[info@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:info@thebeaveronline.co.uk)

The Beaver  
[thebeaveronline.co.uk](http://thebeaveronline.co.uk)



# The Church, the entrepreneur, the bakery and their off-license

Joseph Cotterill

When is an organic artisan bakery not a bakery? When it's an off-license, argue a group of Holborn churchgoers, who are preparing to take a local entrepreneur to court to prove it.

LSE students walking from campus to Holborn tube station or halls of residence in Bloomsbury via Lincoln's Inn Fields have been passing through the middle of a property dispute between the six hundred parishioners of the Church of St Anselm and St Cecilia, and businessman Jon Dalton, who has set up a bakery in the area.

Complaints of noise, fumes, alcohol and potential disorder, put forward by the church and other opponents including an LSE academic who also serves as the local councillor, have stalled Dalton's expansion and alcohol licensing plans for the Fleet River Bakery.

The bakery opened three weeks ago on a site attached to the church, a Grade II-listed building facing on to Kingsway's busy intercourse.

"The big problem for us is noise," Father David Barnes, the leader of the church's congregation, said.

Father Barnes described the bakery's position in the building as "integrally bound up" with the church, its parish rooms, and his adjoining flat. "What goes on affects enormously all three areas," he

said. The priest's house is also used as a working office and for the "delicate work" of counselling, he added.

Masses and prayer meetings have been disrupted by the building work since last autumn. "There is no rest for us," Father Barnes said. Light knocking from construction work inside the bakery could be heard through the party wall as Father Barnes spoke to the Beaver in his flat.

Dalton, the entrepreneur behind the Bloomsbury Bowling Lanes venue in Tavistock Square, bought disused office space behind the church's parish hall in December 2007. The dispute with the church began soon after work started on the site in July 2008 to convert it into a coffee shop and bakery.

In December 2008, Camden council refused a planning application by Dalton to add a building extension to the site, citing "noise, vibration and fume nuisance to the adjoining property."

For his part, Dalton pointed out to the Beaver how far the thickness of the party wall had been reinforced by the construction work. Far more acoustic protection had been installed than previously, he added.

Work continues on a large kitchen in the shop basement, for baking bread in the early morning. Seating for eighty people has also been constructed. Dalton said that the materials used in the construction were in keeping with the historic character of the area.

Opponents beyond the church have also attacked the bakery's plans to sell drinks for consumption off-site.

Straddling the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and London's historic legal quarter in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the bakery's surroundings incongruously receive the largest number of alcohol licensing applications of any council ward in the country.

Dalton applied for a license to sell alcohol at the bakery for consumption off-site between 12pm and half past ten at night last year. The proposal was defeated in a Camden council meeting in January.

Julian Fulbrook, the councillor for Holborn and Bloomsbury, who also serves as a law lecturer and the dean of graduate studies at the LSE, said the Fleet River Bakery's license was one of only three he had objected to during decades spent on the council. Fulbrook did not personally have decision making powers over the licensing application.

Dalton blamed "last-minute objections" for the fall of the planned license. The councillors who dealt with the proposal had not read the application and did not understand the concept, he said.

He further alleged that the councillors had been swayed by the voting potential of the mostly elderly objectors. "It's an election year," he explained.

Far from not understanding the concept, Fulbrook countered, for an artisan bakery to press for a full alcohol license

was a "half-baked proposal".

All the other licensed premises in the area restricted how much they sold for off-site consumption, Fulbrook said, apart from the Fleet River Bakery. "Having a full off-license was a big surprise," he said. "Is this a bakery or a bar?"

Father Barnes shared Fulbrook's concerns. "If this is a bakery, why does it need to sell alcohol?" he said.

Fulbrook added that Holborn's homeless population, many of whom sleep rough in Lincoln's Inn Fields, could become drunk and disorderly on alcohol sold by the bakery.

Dalton conceded that he may not have explained the purpose of the license enough, but he dismissed the idea that the Fleet River Bakery would attract unruly elements.

"We'd be the last port of call," Dalton said. "If you're a homeless person, all you care about is the cheapest."

The bakery plans to sell organic cider from £3.50 a bottle, as well as organic wine. The Shakespeare's Head, one of the largest pubs in the Wetherspoons budget franchise, stands just opposite the Fleet River Bakery. Large posters in the pub's windows advertise pints of cider for £1.99.

Dalton added that he had now volunteered to restrict the license by closing the bakery altogether on Sundays. Both Father Barnes and Fulbrook said they were unaware of the proposal.

The original license had also been

within Camden council's framework hours, Dalton said. The fact that he planned to move his family to a flat above the bakery showed that he wanted to avoid bringing disorder to the area, Dalton added.

"I'm living here. I don't want a late-night venue either," he said. "We want to see this area improved."

Dalton claims the support of the Campaign for Real Ale and local alcohol retailers. Close to two hundred Holborn office workers and LSE staff and students have signed an online petition in support of the bakery.

Resubmitting the bakery's licensing application to Camden council, the next step in the dispute, will cost £5,000, Dalton said. Further court action involving the church could cost £5,000 more. "If this was my first business and I had no money, I'd be in trouble," he said.

Despite their rationale behind opposing Dalton's application, councillors had granted the Shakespeare's Head a license extension to 1am last year, also within the framework hours. Fulbrook confirmed that he had not dealt with the issue and that there were "no complaints" from his constituents.

Father Barnes said his parishioners had not opposed the move. "Maybe we should have," he said.

# LSE Penguin statue wrenched off campus



Photo: Cherie Leung

Joseph Cotterill

A gaping hole has been left in LSE's array of public art with the mysterious disappearance of the penguin statue outside Waterstone's bookshop.

LSE security said that three men had taken the statue at half past two on Sunday morning, escaping pursuing staff. Vandals also smashed the entrance to the LSE directorate office on the same night.

Only the statue's base and two flippers remained after the attack. The penguin's aluminium frame appeared to have been violently torn off and manhandled far off campus.

Students passing Waterstone's on

the way to the library on Sunday morning were stunned at the absence of the penguin. A gift from Canadian alumni, it usually looks across to the elephant on the steps of the Student Services Centre.

"I'm pretty gutted, to be honest," Rachel Leighton, an undergraduate, said. "I love that penguin. I used to always feel the need to have my photo taken with it when staggering out of Crush," she added.

"But I never thought of taking it home with me, it looked fairly sturdy," she said. "I really do hope we get it back."

Other students expressed their reaction to the penguin's loss in a more light-hearted manner.

"Gone fishin'," read a small poster attached to the wall behind where the statue once stood.

A bouquet of flowers was also left on

the base of the missing penguin yesterday afternoon. "We miss you penguin and we hope you are happy with your new friends," said a note attached to the bouquet.

LSE security is currently looking into the possibility of Afterskool party-goers being responsible for the theft.

Revellers emerging from Afterskool, a popular teenage indie night held in the Quad on Saturdays, have been known to vandalise the area before. Windows in the Peacock Theatre were smashed early last term.

LSE security head Paul Thornbury said "good progress" was being made on finding the culprits. "Like any other case of theft or criminal damage we take this incident very seriously," he said.

# Vote establishes agenda for Students' Union next year

**Zeeshan Malik**

LSESU Elections '09 have come to an end after a two-week run and intense campaigning.

The election results were announced Thursday night at the Quad, during an event covered in-depth by the LSE Students' Union Media Group, comprising The Beaver, PuLSE Radio and LooSE TV.

Nominations closed Monday 23 February, with the first surprise being Dan Sheldon's lack of presence on the candidates' list. Sheldon was rumoured to be a sure shot runner for re-election this year.

Another surprise was Peter Barton's entry into the General Secretary race, allegedly replacing James Bacon who "settled" for Treasurer. Murmurs of the "Bacon-Brown Pact" soon transformed into those of the "Barton-Bacon Pact".

Joseph Brown's nomination for Treasurer came as the third curveball this election season. Brown has been in the political spotlight for much of this year, particularly for his pro-active involvement in the Old Theatre Occupation earlier in January. He had been rumoured to run for General Secretary ever since.

Returning Officer Ossie Fikret set the tone for the elections in his meeting with the candidates following nominations' closure, when he discussed the extensive rules that they had to follow – the real significant change this year being the rules surrounding internet campaigning on Facebook following the amendment to the Codes of Practice.

A significant proportion of the "dirty play" this year has indeed been related to internet campaigning.

Emmanuel Apkan-Inwang, winner of the Education and Welfare race was the first candidate to be sanctioned for starting his Facebook campaign three hours earlier than the prescribed time. Aled Fisher and George Wetz followed suit when Dan Sheldon was warned for communicating on Facebook in his role as Communications Officer whilst displaying a picture promoting the campaigns of the two candidates.

Peter Barton took the cake for internet

sanctions when his rights to campaign online were removed by the Returning Officer following an e-mail Barton managed to circulate throughout the LSE International Relations Department promoting himself.

Another crucial factor in the candidates' campaigning was their respective performances at the hustings which took place at the Union General Meeting, LSE halls of residences as well as those organised by various SU societies.

Highlights from hustings included Fisher's unexpected endorsement from the Jewish Society, Barton's "sympathy" towards Israeli issues at Israel Society hustings whilst failing to communicate his strong support for the Old Theatre Occupation and an inexplicable challenge to drink a chilli vodka shot followed by a WKD at the Bankside hustings.

Other noteworthy moments from the election season include James Bacon's sudden withdrawal from the Treasurer race, the vote-scoring Wetz tin can which patrolled Houghton Street for two days and Ben Jones' explicit criticism of Brown's role as Anti-Racism Officer in the Quad hustings.

Active campaigning only kicked-off on Wednesday as voting polls opened. Candidates informally agreed to concentrate campaign resources in the two final days despite being allowed to campaign five days before.

Voting polls closed at 7pm on Thursday 5 March with a record-breaking 2,002 ballots. Deputy Returning Officer Sanjiv Nanwani called the vote-count a "tremendous achievement for the Students' Union".

In an interview with the Media Group on election night, re-elected General Secretary Aled Fisher commended The Beaver for its contribution to raising awareness about elections throughout the Union. A campaign manager for Wetz and Fisher added, "media coverage has influenced turn-out and made it more interesting."

The Executive Committee of the Students' Union will be headed by incumbent sabbatical officers Aled Fisher and Emmanuel Apkan-Inwang as well as new additions George Wetz and Robin Lowe.

amendment in January and the amendment has been crucial in increasing voter numbers. It saturated media group coverage so that the elections were more widely publicised.

Although this is a new record it still represents less than one quarter of the student body who are eligible to vote.

When asked why so many students chose not to vote Fikret said, "It's a shame that three quarters feel they don't have to vote in the Union. I feel the one thing we did this time was to make sure everyone knew that the election was happening."

Regarding the future of elections and how voter turnout might continue to increase in subsequent years, Fikret said, "The internet's vitally important. There's more to the internet than Facebook, let's face it. Let's give people a chance to use their web talents."

**Joe Rennison**

Over two thousand students have voted in this year's Students' Union elections, setting a new record.

As ballots closed, 2002 votes had been cast. Last year 1617 voters turned out to the polls.

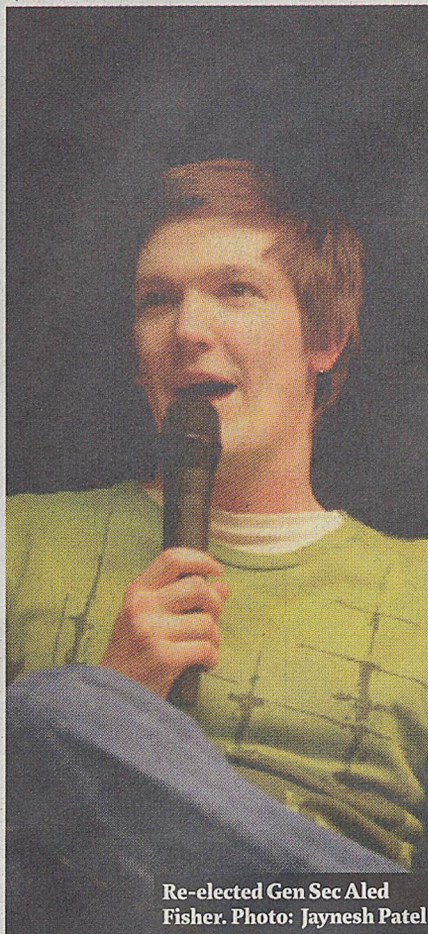
Around 1300 votes were cast online this year, with the rest coming from paper ballots cast in the Quad.

"It's great," Ossie Fikret, the Union's returning officer, said. "We put in a lot of effort. We put the effort in and we're reaping the reward. It shows the changes we fought hard for have made a difference."

An amendment to the Union's constitution was passed before elections which allowed the media group unrestricted reportage.

Fikret added: "We planned for the

## In Focus: LSE SU



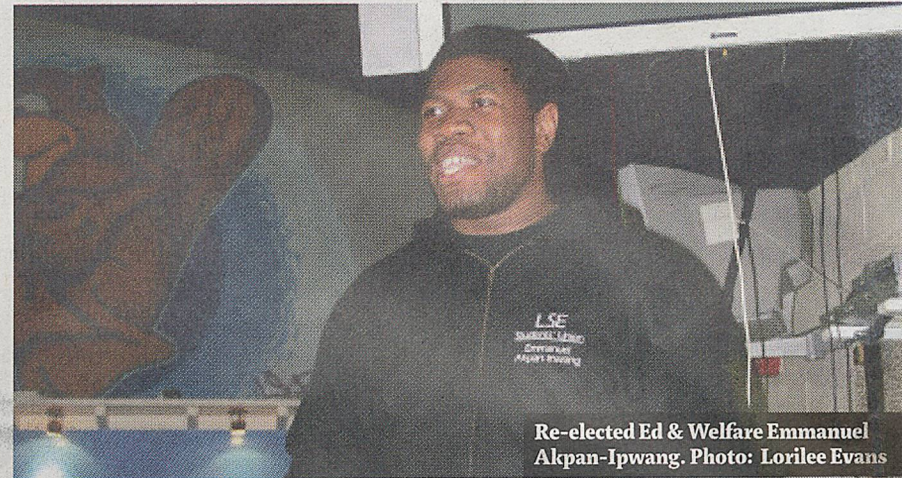
Re-elected Gen Sec Aled Fisher. Photo: Jaynesh Patel



Treasurer George Wetz. Photo: Cherie Leung



Comms Robin Lowe. Photo: Cherie Leung



Re-elected Ed & Welfare Emmanuel Apkan-Inwang. Photo: Lorilee Evans

## Defeated LGBT candidate requests official recount after close results

Vote shows a Pezeshki win with 51%, to MacDonald's 49%

**Zeeshan Malik**

A vote recount has been requested by an LGBT candidate from last week's SU elections.

First-year Government Student Scott MacDonald lost to Kimia Pezeshki in the race for the LGBT Officer by a total of 22 votes.

"I need to know for my own peace of mind", he said. "I can't see why anyone would have a problem with it."

The request has been rejected by Returning Officer Ossie Fikret. Chair of Constitution & Steering Committee (C&S) Aliabbas Virani said that the committee is the final authority on such matters and will consider Fikret's decision later in the week.

According to Section 9.6.6 of the

**'I need to know for my own peace of mind. I can't see why anyone would have a problem with that.'**

Codes of Practice, "any candidate may submit a written complaint to the [Committee] within 24 hours of the posting of the election results". MacDonald lodged the complaint at 9pm on Saturday. Results were announced on Thursday night and an e-mail was sent out to all students the following morning.

However, MacDonald still feels that a recount "in a less chaotic environment could achieve better and more accurate results".

"The ballots were counted by two very experienced counters, one of whom is currently on the SU Executive Committee. We are confident that they have discharged their duties responsibly and with utmost diligence", said Deputy Returning Officer Sanjiv Nanwani.

Pezeshki could not be reached for comment.

## Campaigning violations

This year's elections saw a number of candidates violating the Codes of Practice on Elections. The recent amendment to the Codes of Practice regarding Internet campaigning had a significant impact as candidates are not yet accustomed to the new rules. Violations were dealt with by the Returning Officer after complaints were made.

Violation: Emmanuel Apkan-Inwang started Facebook campaigning before the official start. **Sanction: No Facebook campaigning for four hours.**

Violation: Dan Sheldon, a campaigner for Aled Fisher and George Wetz, published a message on Facebook in his role as Communications Officer while displaying a picture advertising the Wetz and Fisher campaigns. **Sanction: Warning.**

Violation: Scott MacDonald broke official regulations regarding the placement of campaign posters on campus. **Sanction: Warning.**

Violation: Several candidates' Election Facebook Groups had non-LSE 'friends'. **Sanction: Warning and threat of Facebook ban.**

Violation: Ben Jones explicitly criticized sitting Anti-Racism Officer Seph Brown. **Sanction: Warning.**

Violation: Peter Barton circulated an unsolicited e-mail through the International Relations Department in favour of his campaign. **Sanction: All rights for Internet campaigning revoked.**

Violation: Helen Roberts broke regulations pertaining to poster in Halls. **Sanction: Street campaigning prohibited for two hours.**

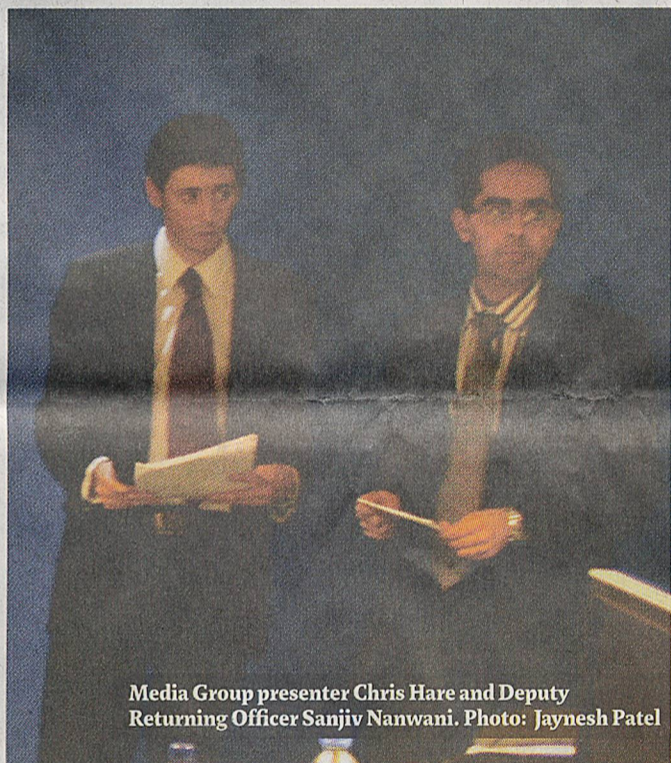
# Elections 2009



The Vote Count. Photo: Jaynesh Patel



Awaiting the results. Photo: Jaynesh Patel



Media Group presenter Chris Hare and Deputy Returning Officer Sanjiv Nanwani. Photo: Jaynesh Patel

## Media group coverage pushes into new era

Vivek Kotecha

The LSESU media group was responsible for coverage of last Thursday's election night.

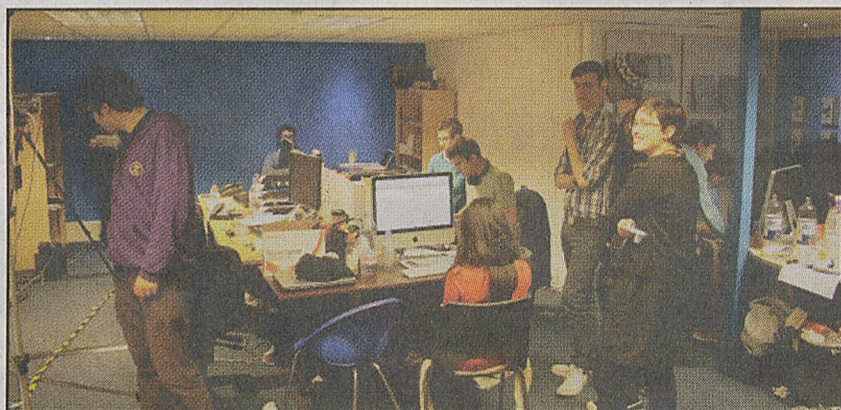
There was a record 2870 hits on the dedicated election blogging site and up to 50 simultaneous viewers of the live video broadcast all of which was constantly updated for over six hours collectively by the media group, which consists of the Beaver, LooSE TV and Pulse radio.

It was 'one of the best nights the media group has ever had', said executive producer for the show Joseph Cotterill.

'This year's election night coverage was designed to give both LSE student journalists and their audience experience in what will be the new media environment of the future. We used the latest internet tools like twitter and blurred the boundaries between LSE's different media more than ever before', Cotterill said commenting on the group's achievements.

A blogging site set up to follow the events of the election night was constantly updated throughout the evening by reporters from the media group. It provided news and feedback from victorious candidates and from the losers within minutes of results being announced allowing those not there at the time a chance to keep up to date with the latest developments.

The blog attracted thousands of hits in one evening, which took even the media group by surprise. Cotterill commented



on how the media group was 'taken aback by how popular we were'.

Coinciding with the blog was a live video feed to the Quad and the website provided by LooSE TV and Pulse radio. Results were officially announced to the eager audience in the Quad by Ossie Fikret, the returning officer, and the winning and losing candidates were interviewed minutes after the results were announced.

'This year's election coverage was by far the best we have put on to date' said Mark Harrison who co-presented the live show. He also added that the interviews with candidates, the presentation of awards such as the Hack Attack awards and the continuous news updates meant that the coverage 'definitely reflected the mood of the count night'.

There was a 'significant leap' in viewership numbers this year according to

Chun Han Wong who worked with LooSE TV on the video streaming. With an average of around 30 to 45 viewers throughout the night and no major technical problems and Chun credited this down to 'the good work and team effort from the production team' and he added that the high viewership numbers were 'the fine reward for their hard work'.

The success of the election night has given further encouragement to the media group in its plans to expand into new media with the Beaver continuing to build up its website. 'The Beaver, Pulse and LooSE media empires are expanding and mixing together at an ever increasing pace, so I predict LSE students will benefit from even better coverage for the 2010 elections', said Cotterill, who is also at the lead of the Beaver editorial board.

## Full Elections Results

Elected in Bold

**General Secretary**  
RON 59  
Alfred Kovaci 64  
Chris Gully 378.  
**Aled Fisher 837**  
Peter Barton 717

**Treasurer**  
RON 128  
**George Wetz 845**  
Seph Brown 584

**Education & Welfare**  
RON 75  
**Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang 805**  
Helen Roberts 610  
Ruby Buckley 381

**Communications**  
RON 85  
Michael Deas 527  
Daniel Jason 171  
**Robin Low 595**



**LGBT**  
RON 167  
**Kimia Pezeshki 603**  
Scott MacDonald 582



**E&E**  
RON 104  
**Hero Austin 619**  
Katherine Ripullone 360  
Joe Sammut 458



**Womens**  
RON 172  
**Jessie Robinson 641**  
Anna Krausova 546  
Annais Nourry 197



**International**  
RON 126  
Michael Lok 445  
Farsan Ghasshim 602  
**Suraj Girijashanker 730**



**Societies**  
RON 96.  
**Chris Westgarth 423**



**Residences**  
RON 107  
Joseph Coney 401  
**Andrew Wright 676**



**Mature & Part-time**  
**Vladimir Unkovski-Korica 414**  
RON 104



**Anti-Racism**  
RON 122  
**Ben Jones 731**  
Benedict Sarhangian 465  
Leon Matthias 178



**Disabilities**  
**Luke Moore 487**  
RON 61

F&S



**Valerie Khoo 248**



**Natalie Osafo 153.75**



**Aliabbas Virani 251**



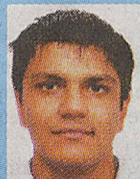
**Michael Lok 161.36**



**Arjun Madhavan 219**



**Kate Strivens 153.75**



**Hinal Shah 221**



**Sofia Zabolotskih 153.75**

**Sachin Kakkar 176**  
RON 152



**Mubbien Hayat 158**  
**RON 138.48**  
Sayan 82.18  
Franckowen Magennis 54.44  
Zarish 129.91  
Mark Twyford 114.65

## Higher Education & Research

### LSE and sector news

#### University Lecturers are doing more unpaid overtime than last year.

According to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), university lecturers are doing far more overtime than the national average, working an average of 52 days extra over the course of a year. Sally Hunt from the University and Colleges Union (UCU) said: "Rising class and seminar sizes, increased bureaucracy and ever greater pressure to compete make a mockery of the work life balance for many staff." For more information visit: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3736>

#### Denham gets flustered over criticism of adult education cuts

A raucous meeting with campaigners in Westminster saw the Universities Secretary John Denham booed for defending the governments decision to bail out the banks rather than funneling the money into education. He pointed out that his departments budget was nonetheless increasing above the rate of inflation signalling the governments commitment to education. Members of the NUS and UCU raised concerns over the £1.4 million withdrawn from the funding for adult education places. Denham said that the government had to have priorities and that right now the money was being directed at courses which helped people into work. For more information visit: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=405667&c=1>

#### Concern raised over the standard of work which achieves the top grades

Richard Royle, senior lecturer in law at the Lancashire Law School, University of Central Lancashire has expressed his "astonishment" at the first class degrees that were routinely given to third class standard work during his time as an external examiner. Declining to mention the institution he was referring to Royle said how his comments were repeatedly ignored and that such a standard of work would only barely be passable at his own institution. Mr Royle said: "Last year, I was totally astonished at the poor quality of the answers that were awarded first-class marks ... students were awarded a first ... for work that would be on the borderline of third class and failure at my institution."

#### Science is the Government's focus

Gordon Brown has pledged the governments support to the Sciences in a lecture given at Oxford University last week. He added that he would protect the funding for sciences from the effects of the recession. Brown said: "We will not allow science to become a victim of the recession, but rather focus on developing it as a key element of our path to recovery. That is why we will maintain the ring-fence we have placed around science funding."

# Miss UL controversy continues

Joe Rennison

LSE students are set to protest against the final of the Miss University London (Miss UL) competition.

Students' Union Women's Officer Ruby Buckley will lead a demonstration outside the pageant's venue, the Crystal nightclub at Oxford Street, later this evening.

The Miss UL pageant has been criticised by some students as misogynistic and objectifying despite the organisers' claims to "seek beauty not only externally, but in the quality of character with which people carry out their lives." The competition has also received national media attention following widespread student protests against the individual college contests late last year.

At the Miss LSE pageant which took place in November, Buckley organised a protest outside the event using the slogan "misogyny at LSE".

She said: "We had a huge crowd out to protest outside Miss LSE last year, and I expect an equal or even bigger crowd for the final. This should be an amazing protest, with all the schools in the Univer-

sity of London joining together. Silence would imply our that Union is endorsing the event. We have to take a stand against the institutionalised objectification of women."

Buckley has also organised an event called "Post-feminism and Miss LSE: how far have we really come?", which will take place at 4pm today. Guardian columnist Zoe Williams is expected to attend.

She continued: "I have always made it clear that it wasn't my intention to get the event banned. The fact that it takes place is a great catalyst for debate. It has forced us all to address the question of the emancipation of women and it is blatantly obvious that we still have a fair way to go."

Miss UL organiser Christian Emile, a former LSE student, did not accept the criticisms leveled at his event. He told the Beaver: "While we are respectful of everyone's opinion, I believe that those who are planning to protest are doing so without a full understanding of what our event is about - none of them have actually attended one!"

He added: "Those who are protesting did absolutely nothing to stop the Mr LSE contest that took place on campus, where contestants were made to strip. Nor do

they oppose the annual Development Society auction which sees female students auctioned off to the highest bidder."

"It seems very hypocritical to me. Surely these are cases of 'objectifying' individuals and 'misusing' the LSE brand?," he said.

Emile also clarified that, contrary to claims made by many protesters, the event does not impose physical requirements and nor are measurements taken of any participant.

Other University of London colleges from which students intend to protest include the School of Oriental and African Studies, Heythrop college, and Goldsmiths.

Goldsmiths students' union Campaign and Communications officer Jen Jones said: "We've got masses of people from just Goldsmiths attending, and yeah, there's going to be direct action, not just a protest!"

Winners from the pageants at LSE, Kings, Queen Mary, SOAS, University College London and Regents College will join selected participants from other universities in London to battle it out for the ultimate crown.

Heythrop College ran their own

independent Miss Heythrop competition with the aim of entering the winner into the final of Miss UL. Their winner was Christopher Hayden-Hayes, also known as Miss Jessica Sparkle, a professional drag queen from Manchester. Hayden-Hayes was rejected from participating in the final of the Miss UL, much to the anger of the organiser of Miss Heythrop, James Johnston.

Emile said: "Heythrop College already have a contestant in the competition so they should back her. She applied before anyone else did and was accepted."

Regarding his application Hayden-Hayes said: "James and the president of my Students' Union, John Underwood, both took it upon themselves to follow it up as they believed that they would have more power being part of the Union and therefore having an official body behind them."

Johnston said: "I am dumbfounded and a little insulted by the lack of courtesy shown towards us. We are not by any means trying to tear anything down and simply want the chance to be included. That and world peace. World peace is very important."

## Jack Straw defends Labour rights record

James McGibney

Muslims can practise their religion more freely in the UK than in any other country in Europe, according to Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Jack Straw.

Straw made the claim in response to accusations that the Labour Government had undermined basic freedoms, particularly amongst the British Muslim population, levelled by an audience member at his public lecture at the Sheikh Zayed theatre last Tuesday.

"I completely refute the charge that we are a government that has eroded civil liberties," said the Labour politician, whose lecture on the changing constitutional position of the Lord Chancellor formed a part of the LSE Law Department's 'Officers of the Law' public lecture series.

"You ask people of the Muslim faith where they can better practice their religion and have more people showing respect for their religion...it's hard to find a better country than the UK, nowhere else in Europe...and actually few countries in the Middle East," the former Foreign and Home secretary added.

He admitted that there was "understandable anxiety amongst those of the Muslim faith that they are being targeted

as potential suspects". However, he argued that "there's also an appreciation that they want effective law enforcement - including counter terrorism enforcement - as they're just as likely to be the victim as anybody else."

Straw also was "unrepentant" at his own role in the creation of a nationwide police DNA database. "I was the minister... who changed the law so that DNA samples could be retained even if someone who has had their sample taken was later acquitted," he said.

His response was met with jeers from some members of the audience.

A postgraduate law student, who asked not to be named, was not impressed by Straw's statements. "Everyone knows that today we have to strike a balance between security and liberty. But Straw has done his part to make sure the balance lies firmly on the side of government interests," he said.

In his lecture, Straw also called for reform of the public legal aid system, which has "grown faster than any other comparable public service over the past 25 years".

Postgraduate law student Geraldine Wycherley, however, was not persuaded. He said: "He was clearly making a political statement about legal aid. It's obvious that Labour are going to start cutting back as part of their drive for "efficiency", yet this is often at the cost of individual rights."



#### Winehouse seen on campus

Amy Winehouse was seen on campus last week, at the corner of Sardinia St and Portsmouth St, near the entrance to the NAB. She was coming out of [that building] and ducked into a blacked out car which quickly left the area. Photo: Joe Rennison.

## Government slashes LSE research funding

>>>Continued from front

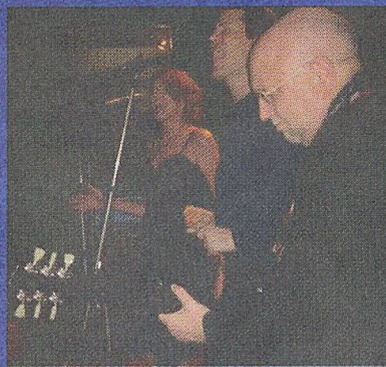
mathematics) areas, outside the ring-fence, faculty (and student) numbers have grown more rapidly, and the potential for small pockets of research excellence is greater. The inevitable result is a relative dilution of support available to high quality research in the non-STEM areas like ours."

Davies agreed, saying: "The issue is not with the structure RAE or REF (research excellence framework)... though the individual based approach does mean that funding is spread more thinly, it is primarily with the government's decision on science funding."

As a result of the 'spreading out' of research funding to more institutions, top institutions are facing some of the biggest cuts in funding.

Despite Oxford and Bristol being among the top ten universities receiving increased research funding, the Russell Group, which represents 20 research-intensive universities across the country, will collectively face a loss in funding.

Russell Group chair Malcolm Grant said: "Across Russell group institutions, there will be reviews of staffing. Some institutions will want to reduce staff or not hire new staff. It's going to be quite tight."



LSESU RAG and the Philosophy Department present

### The Critique of Pure Rhythm

('probably the best philosophical rock n roll band in the world')

Thursday March 19 in The Quad, LSE

Doors at 7:30

Band on stage at 8:00

Entry £3 (minimum contribution)

All proceeds after expenses go to





The UGM.  
Zeeshan Malik.

# Tibet motion provokes UGM chaos

Joseph Cotterill

Chinese LSE students filled out today's Union General Meeting to vote against ratifying last week's minutes, including a controversial Free Tibet motion.

The UGM held during elections is traditionally quiet as its student politician stalwarts focus on Houghton Street campaigning.

Two weeks ago Michael Mcghee, a mature masters student, proposed a motion to 'Free Tibet'. The motion passed. Because the meeting was not quorate, the motion had to be ratified at today's UGM.

The quoracy of a meeting is the minimum number of members who must be present to make proceedings stand.

After a quoracy call at the beginning of today's UGM, the chair announced that he would, pause the meeting for four minutes to allow the audience to bring in more people from the street to make the meeting quorate.

The Students' Union treasurer Will Barber said that the chair clearly supported the agenda of the meeting to stop the ratification of the 'Free Tibet' motion.



UGM Chair Azan Marwah  
Cherie Leung

There were subsequent calls of no confidence in the chair, but regarding the legality of the chair's actions, former Constitution and Steering (C&S) chair Antonia Strachey said that it's "not explicitly stated whether its allowed or not allowed" in the constitution.

Rumours suggested that many current candidates in the Union elections had told students that the meeting was cancelled. The chair said that if this was the case that, "these are not the candidates we want in the SU."

Four candidates did not turn up for the UGM, including George Wetz and Joseph Brown, who are both running for Treasurer, as well as General Secretary candidate Christopher Gully and Education and Welfare Officer hopeful Ruby Buckley.

The first speaker against ratifying the motion expressed that he was "really proud" to see "so many Chinese students here... to represent ourselves."

He criticised the motion for not representing and not taking account of Chinese students and that the number of Chinese students in attendance at the meeting would, "make Chinese voices heard in the UGM and in the SU." Subsequently cheers erupted from the crowd.

As the first speaker in favour of ratifying the motion Charles Dougherty walked on stage the crowd began to boo and throw paper at the speaker.

Dougherty suggested that students should propose a motion to "work with" the previous motion to free Tibet. He admitted that the motion "sucked" but that it had opened up an issue that we all care about.

Dougherty faced criticism from one member of the audience who said that the motion should not be ratified because the, "UGM is meant to represent majority opinion of LSE student body."

Dougherty responded by saying that all students have an equal opportunity to come to the UGM and that the UGM has been held at the same time for "I don't know how many years."

When the chair began allowing open discussion on the topic one audience member shouted: "This is not a talk show, you're not Jeremy Kyle." The chair responded: "If you don't like it, get rid of me."

A vote on the motion saw it fall by a significant majority meaning that the events of the UGM two weeks ago were not ratified.

## Higher Education & Research LSE and sector news

### School Admissions Procedures are too complex, according to new Research from the LSE

A study entitled 'Secondary Schools in England: Policy and Practice' by Professor Anne West has shown that the admissions procedure for secondary schools in England is still too complex, despite improvements. She suggests that the admissions system would be fairer if it were run by an independent body because some schools are asking for personal information from prospective students and their parents which might then be used to select or reject students. An independent body would have no vested interest in the students attending each school and so would necessitate the governments desire for a fair admissions procedure, argues Professor West.

### Official History of the Criminal Justice System to be written by three LSE academics

Professors Paul Rock, David Downes and Tim Newburn will look at the criminal justice system over the forty years preceding the late 1990's. The Official History will look at the significant changes in the criminal justice system with respect to a number of themes; the transformation in the way policy is made, the fact that criminal justice is now a collaboration between official agencies and non-governmental organisation, whereas before it was solely the domain of official agencies and the impact of globalisation will all be looked at. Professor Rock said: "The fact that three LSE academics have been appointed to write this reflects the strength of criminology at the School organized under the auspices of the Mannheim Centre."

### Arts and Humanities Research Council rates the LSE as "excellent".

30 PhD scholarships have been awarded to the LSE based on their record of research in the arts and humanities as well as the schools research strategy and their institutional and departmental provision of research training for PhD students. Subject areas to receive awards will be Law, History, Philosophy, European Culture and Design and Film studies. The LSE was awarded the scholarships for being an organisation which fully justified its approach and at which, "students will have excellent training and supervision."

### ULU Election Results Announced

Nizzam Uddin from SOAS has been elected as the new ULU president after receiving 935 votes to Zara Kings, his closest competitor, 657. Mazdek Alizadeh from Queen Mary University will be the new vice president and Hilary Aked will be the new Editor of the London Student paper. ULU Sabbatical officers get paid £20,000 a year except for London Student Editor, who receives £18,000.

## Union Jack UGM sketch



Jack is the Beaver's anonymous mole at the Union General Meeting, every Thursday at 1pm

The phone rang. Roused from his mid-day stupor, Jack lifted the receiver and pressed it to his ear.

"Raise the alarm," gasped the voice from the other end of the line. "They're coming."

A tingle ran down Jack's spine. It wasn't meant to happen. Not since that fated winter in 1950 had the infamous horde poured forth in anger.

But there was no time for stunned inaction. The receiver dropped from Jack's hands. A flurry of feet carried Jack's lithe frame through the massing forces of the inchoate offensive and into the intimidating arena of battle – the blood-soaked confines of the Joint Security Area.

Many a valiant fighter had lost their lives on this ground; committed to their prized motions, relished in their indignant self-importance and felled upon their shattered swords of unwarranted pride.

But today was different. The vainglorious Occident imperialists were grossly outnumbered. Swamping the JSA instead were the disciplined ranks of the Chinese People's Volunteers. United in their purpose, committed to their cause, unquestioning in their faith.

Jack knew this spirit. This vigour. This élan. An émigré fighter who fought the

good fight back in a day, Jack once revelled in this collective mental fortitude. But Jack was no mindless follower. Jack never bought the banal rhetoric and herd mentality others tried to foist upon him. And certainly not the nebulous sense of ethnic pride that polarises and inflames more than it could ever unite and inform.

But there they were in the JSA. That they knew little and couldn't care less about the intricate workings of the armistice agreement didn't matter. That their defensive logic rested on unsound and selective reasoning was irrelevant. The clarion calls were sounded, so they responded. Their leader had waved a furious digit at the imperialist enemy, so they gathered.

Yet surprisingly, perhaps in the confusion of the sudden impromptu action, even the well-drilled brigades found themselves somewhat lacking in presence. The battle could not begin, thanks to diplomatic niceties, unless sufficient pieces were placed on the board.

JSA commandant Ah Shan Ma Hua was keenly aware of the numerical shortfall that was hampering the CPV offensive. But he was adamant that there will be blood. Years of deprivation and boredom had gotten to him – the chance to satiate

his bloodlust would not be passed.

"Get out there and mobilise your brethren!" he called. "Bring in your comrades!" The gall. The conceit. With indignation and vocal displeasure, Jack offered little more than futile resistance. With the backing of the CPV, the renegade Ma Hua could not be deposed.

With the gift of time, the horde quickly bolstered their numbers. That the newly-recruited volunteers couldn't comprehend the exclusive and high-brow Panmunjom lingo didn't matter. As long as they could follow orders and throw their weight behind their leader at the right time, all else is forgiven.

Numbers overwhelming, the horde swiftly dispatched the offending motion put forth by the Occidents the week before. With a useful ally in the pliable Ma Hua, they could not have failed in their endeavour. Martial power resounded across the Demilitarised Zone.

Dismayed, Jack slipped out into the periphery of the JSA. The stampede of the mindless cattle carried the day. But it wasn't unexpected. Once again, varnished pride and unbridled conceit dominated proceedings. Only this time, the players weren't the usual radicals, but a sizeable portion of the Great Silent Majority.

www.twitter.  
thebeaver  
online.com

Follow us on  
Twitter!

**The Beaver**

**COME  
WATCH  
BEAVERS  
REPRODUCE**

**The Beaver's collective meets this Thursday to elect a new executive editor for next year - the person who is in charge of the newspaper overall and sets its strategy over the long term.**

**While only collective members are eligible to vote, students and staff are welcome to come and ask questions to both the outgoing editor and the candidates for next year. See you there.**

**Executive editor**

**2009/2010**

**Thursday 12 March**

**New Theatre 1700-1800**

**Other 2009/2010 positions**

**Opening week 10**



# Comment

## It's a long way from real ale to real student campaigns

The Students' Union is too trapped in pettiness to deal with issues we really care about

Mira  
Hammad

The Students' Union seems to be regarded in much the same way as Tippex. Both have a definite capacity for changing and correcting the status quo, but when active use is made of either device, often the ensuing chaos is rather larger and more apparent than the original mess. Students, therefore, tend to avoid using either unless the situation presents no viable alternative.

This perception seems to be not wholly unreasonable when you analyse the Union's problem solving methods. For example, at the beginning of the year, the Union's website was what can kindly be described as a little ungainly. Which is secondary school report language for inefficient, ugly and useless. This catastrophic reality served, at its very worst, as a minor irritation in the lives of students. One that, in the eyes of our venerable Communications Officer, merited a £30,000 solution and a year's worth of dithering over. To be honest, I wasn't £30,000 worth of bothered about the website in the first place.

A more bothersome thing which happened to me this year was a higher class of LSE thief breaking into my locker and deciding that my stuff was too crap to steal. But nicking my bag and leaving the stuff anyway. So why was this frankly insulting specimen of human life able to get into my locker to begin with? Apparently because LSE doesn't have enough money for lockers which have the added mechanism of actually locking properly. Suddenly the £30,000 which seemed so well spent begins to look a little superfluous. In fact, it seems a downright waste when you consider the whole host of awareness-raising, useful events that the Union could have supported with said amount of money. Or, what the hell, we could even have been magnanimous and stuck it in a Medical Aid for Palestinians bucket. The point is, we were at no point asked whether we wanted this google-



Should we prioritise service in the Tuns over student-led campaigns?  
Photo: Beaver archive

priced piece of technology or not. Despite having the most bureaucratic, rule-laden democracy invented since the French National Assembly of 1971.

Notwithstanding this, and similarly life-sized blunders, I don't think that giving up on the Union is the solution. I fear I am betraying my idealist tendencies when I confess that I genuinely think that the Union could be used as an extremely effective vehicle for change at the LSE. The nursery campaign demonstrates the success that can be achieved when the Union takes a firm stand against the LSE administration on an issue that students feel passionate about.

So why is it the only notable example that I can think of? The Union is supposed to be democracy and trade-unionism at its freshest and most active. In every society, it is the students who are supposed to be at the forefront of the campaign for change: we are supposed to represent the most dynamic section of society, the most vocal section, and the section that is most prepared to challenge the deficiencies of the status quo. Instead, we find an insipid union that spends half of its time debat-

ing the logistics of providing Real Ale in the Tuns. The question that the newly elected Executive should ask themselves is: How do we build on what was begun last year and develop this Union into a real, campaigning Union that serves as a relevant force in student's lives and really protects their interests, rather than simply squandering their money?

The first thing that the Union must do is change itself dramatically in order to attract new and disillusioned students. Immediate realisation of the problem cannot have failed to hit students with the veritable force of a Tyson punch if they have ever simply walked into the back of the UGM, or observed the recent elections. Doing these things personally made it glaringly clear to me that the problem with Student Union politics is that it is plagued by petty power struggles and manipulated by people who are more concerned with building a career for themselves than with improving students' lives, or making a tangible difference to the world around them. This is evidently not true of all candidates; however, it is undeniable that the Union is losing a large pool of people

who would be extremely talented and capable of moving it forward, because they are put off by what they see as being petty politics.

Is there any way to change this, or is it an inevitable reality of any organisation, no matter how small, insignificant or well-meant? I think change would come as a by-product of creating a Union which is in touch with students' needs and which takes an active interest in the world around it. We need to offer students who do not have a career interest and are not drawn to the power and importance presented to them by Union politics an incentive to take an active part in the Union, and that will only happen if they perceive the Union as a real force for change.

The new executive need to take an active role in propagating student interests. They need to listen to campaigns on campus, and to support, not hinder, them. Rather than simply maintaining the everyday work of the Union at its current level, they have to identify key concerns held by students and take steps to rectify them. Even if that means ruffling feathers among the school administration.

Too often, the exec have a tendency to play the role of mediator between the administration and the students, instead of standing alongside the student body and acting as an amplifier of student desire for change. It speaks volumes that the UGM has only been overfilled once this year, and that has been in support of a cause that the exec subsequently attempted to - by and large - distance itself from. It's also difficult to criticise the LSE for ignoring student petitions of over 400 students on issues such as Gaza and the LSE Not For Profit Campaign, when the Union is sweetly doing exactly the same thing. The new exec need to support and encourage such popular student activism. A big part of this will involve paying great attention to the LSE Listening Campaign, which is being carried out by Citizens For Social Justice and will identify key concerns that LSE students raise about their lives in London and at the LSE.

Changing the Union means radically changing the Union into an efficient, campaigning body which can stand up for student rights. Instead of using Tippex, the Union needs to start crossing out.

## Opt-in to the Union

If students had to join the Union themselves, it might pay attention to what they want

David  
Woodbridge

Every year, after the Student Union elections, some killjoy ends up writing an article bemoaning the low turnout and lack of participation in the democratic process by the vast majority of students.

This year, I am that killjoy. Certainly, turnout was up from last year, and a number of the candidates seized upon this as an example that perhaps we're not all as apathetic as is commonly made out. For instance, the new (or should that be 'old'?) General Secretary said on count night that "2,000 people

have voted, that's fantastic".

No, it's not fantastic. Just because there's been an increase from the incredibly low base established last year does not disguise the fact that only around 20 per cent of those eligible to vote did so, and that all victorious candidates were the first choice of less than 10 per cent of the student population. This is not, in any way, an achievement to be trumpeted. In no sense has apathy and disinterest been dispelled by this election.

It's tempting, and perhaps not without foundation, to blame preoccupation with issues so far removed from most students - such as the recent Israeli invasion of Gaza - as to not even be a factor in their lives for this alienation, but I think that this is probably an oversimplification. After all, the Union's leadership has also made a commendable effort to tackle is-

suess relevant to the problems on campus this year. But, even in such a context, attendance at focus groups is paltry, responses to surveys low, and the UGM is barely quorate most weeks.

Yet alongside this, we have a number of extremely active societies and sports clubs, which may seem paradoxical when set against such disinterest in the central organs of the Union. But is it?

Consider that the Union was first set up in 1897 to facilitate social interaction between members of the School. The nice lady at the Press Office was understandably bemused when I asked her if she could find out for me how many students were registered at the School in that year, and never rang back, but I'm going to guess that the figure was a small one, making such organisation across the School possible. Today, with over 9,000 students, such a feat would be totally impractical; hence, the existence of societies to facilitate the social interaction that, over a hundred years ago, was engendered by the Union itself.

Fine, so the growth in the number of societies to cater for different student interests matched the growth of the actual number of students. This is why there's so much participation in them; these groups

are the heir to the legacy of why the Union was created in the first place, and the desire of students to enjoy themselves outside the classroom is, I'd wager, as strong now as it was then. But where does that leave other aspects of the Union, which have remained unchanged even in the face of the massive growth of the School?

Considering such institutions' current distance from the purpose for which they were originally set up, it's hardly a surprise that most students don't bother to attend UGM or vote in elections. Why should they? The societies of which they are members will continue to operate regardless, and everything else involved in Union governance is mostly dull and often irrelevant.

Many of the candidates this year expressed a desire to 'increase participation' in the Union, failing to recognise that participation in the Union is already, in fact, high; just not in the boring parts. I'm going to end with a fairly radical suggestion for the new Executive team anyway, though.

Currently, all students registered at the School are automatically members of the Union. It is possible to disaffiliate, though the negative effects of doing so are considerable and render the act barely worth-

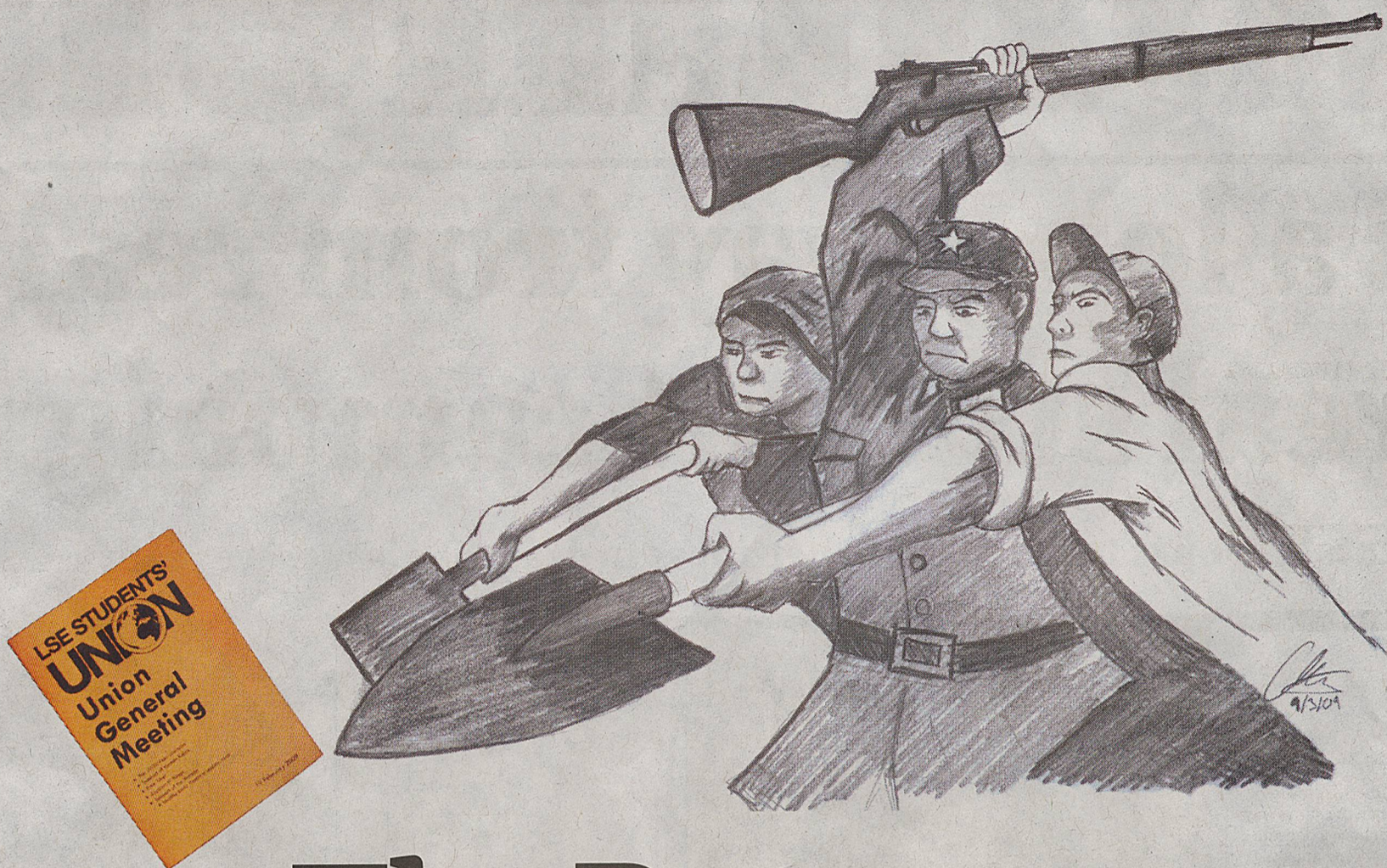
while; only two students in the School's history have ever opted out in this way.

But what if membership was not automatic, was dependent on students voluntarily and actively joining, and those remaining outside could still participate in the groups which they already pay separately to be members of anyway?

This would merely formalise the situation which already exists de facto. Societies, the AU, the Media Group and so on could become separate organisations affiliated to the Union, thus attaining more independence. At the same time, since the Union's grant (and, thus, Sabbatical salaries) from the School is subject to its levels of membership, there would suddenly be a major financial impetus to become more relevant and inclusive, and would do away with the dangers both of complacency and the temptation to focus on issues irrelevant to most students.

Finally, since the students who would bother to join the Union are also much more likely to bother to vote, we wouldn't have situations such as we've found ourselves in in recent years and now, where victorious candidates are elected on such paltry turnouts that their positions are barely legitimate.

Just a suggestion.



# The Beaver

Established in 1949  
Issue No. 705

Telephone: 0207 955 6705 Email: editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk

## New emperors and new clothes?

**A** twenty per cent voter participation rate. Half of the government is the same as last time. Signs of an ever-expanding media influence on the outcome of the vote. For any national election, it would be the recipe for the paralysis and slow death of democracy.

But for last week's Students' Union elections, weirdly enough, these are all good signs for the future. Just over two thousand students voted - a new record. The majority of them trusted the policies and personalities of two of this year's four sabbatical officers enough to give them a go for another year.

It was also all change for the Union's part-time executive positions, from the LGBT officer to the anti-racism portfolio. For the first time in a long time, the Beaver, Pulse radio, and LooSE TV were able to report on this process like any other news event, guiding students' voting decisions fairly and without favour.

Nothing too dramatic, you might say - but it is a big, big change from the way elections used to be conducted, for the better. Two thousand is not much more than a sliver of LSE's student population - and we cannot be sure whether this number really did reflect LSE students' diversity, rather than

over-representing some groups over others.

Nevertheless, it compares incredibly well with the downward trend of the previous few years. In this space last week, the Beaver wondered whether that trend had become a death spiral. It looks like we were wrong.

The re-election of two incumbents to sabbatical roles is a more mixed blessing for students. It could indicate that electability now depends more and more on name and face recognition accumulated over the past year. There is also the danger that Aled Dilwyn Fisher and Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang, who both graduated in 2008, will become increasingly distant

from the students they serve.

On the other hand, it could also be a vote for experience and a proven track record. Much of the Union sabbatical officers' work also involves negotiating with the LSE to secure access to improved services. These negotiations usually have to be wastefully restarted every year: even student politicians have to leave university some time. On a range of important issues - improving teaching quality for one thing - students will benefit from continuity.

At the same time, students will benefit from a breath of fresh air in the new sabbatical officers and the new part-time executive. The Communications

Officer-elect Rob Low brings experience outside the Students' Union echo chamber from the Athletics Union and the Beaver. Similarly, George Wetz, next year's Treasurer, is no mere hack, having served on Pulse Radio and, yes, the Beaver.

So, a more diverse and open Union will hopefully result from this year's elections. In some ways, this stands in tension with the yearly bid to increase student participation in the same, central activity - the Students' Union. But in others, notably supporting the growing popularity and freedom of the media group and student societies, this can only be a good thing.

## Retroactive retrograde

**B**e careful what you wish for. The Union General Meeting has been stuck in the slough of despondence all academic year. Its audience and relevance both remain in free fall.

In this week's comment pages, Judith Jacobs writes it off as a "white man's club" marooned outside the diverse stream of student activities at the LSE. You can say that again. The Beaver's news reporters have also lost count of the number of LSE student politicians who have prom-

ised to make the UGM central to the campus experience again.

We wonder what they made of last Thursday's meeting. The Week Eight UGM is usually abandoned, its student politician regulars scurrying out to prop up their election campaigns out on Houghton Street.

It was good to see many of them buck the trend and turn up this time. It was also very good to see so many Chinese students, who as a group are dismally engaged by the Students' Union, attend the meeting.

But it was not good to see

those students attempt to rewrite history and deratify the minutes of the previous UGM, because it had passed a motion in favour of Tibetan independence. Not good at all.

The deratification was carried out in deeply unconstitutional circumstances. It is true that the UGM that passed the Tibet motion was iniquitous. Nor are UGM motions promoted enough to the student population. It is not good enough, for example, that the week's UGM motions are approved too late for the Beaver's print deadline.

But the argument that Chinese students did not have the opportunity to discuss the issue the week before is highly specious. It also sets a dangerous precedent for the future authority of UGM resolutions. Any group of students, were it sufficiently determined, could now force the Union to backtrack on any issue - including things that would benefit LSE's Chinese student community.

Few of the UGM's new attendees last week seemed to understand the procedure of the meeting. The meeting's chair,

Azan Marwah, is supposed to explain and enforce that procedure.

Instead he chose to disregard it completely, bizarrely "suspending" the meeting at one point to allow "a free discussion". It was a spectacular display of bias, fitting for the UGM's poor reputation this academic year, but utterly unacceptable otherwise. We hope it will not be repeated this week.

# The climate has changed for good.

## Adaptation is now the answer

Mitigation may be useless if we can't learn to live with the damage we have already done

Wayne  
Fan

Reading the transcript of Obama's inauguration speech, I found the passage that I was looking for. It was not the full passage that caught my attention, just one particular line where President Obama declared, "With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to... roll back the specter of a warming planet."

There is obviously nothing wrong about trying to 'roll back' the dire consequences of global warming. In his first speech as the most powerful man in the most powerful nation in the world, Obama addressed the issue of climate change. This is a positive indication to the world that he cares about the problem. However, the emphasis on rolling back global warming, more commonly referred to as climate change mitigation, is based on the assumption the negative effects of climate change can be mitigated.

But what if this assumption is wrong? What if, no matter how successful the post-Kyoto negotiations, the potential harm caused by climate change has now surpassed the point of full rescue?

The notion of mitigating climate change is difficult to disagree with. However, climate change solutions framed around mitigation seem to have overshadowed a more urgent, if no less important, aspect of climate change policy: adaptation. We should not ignore the importance of mitigation, but we also need to raise the concern that the focus on mitigation could over-dominate the climate change debate to the point of detriment if ignoring an equally important (and perhaps more urgent) issue of adaptation.

The suggested policy implication of a 'roll back' to a better time may be well intentioned, but it is ultimately wrongheaded. It overestimates our current capacity to mitigate, while underestimating our current need to adapt to global warming. The potential devastation of rising sea levels could be deadly for low island countries such as Maldives and Kiribati and low-lying regions from Bangladesh to Florida. As Dr David Vaughan from the British Antarctic Survey warns, "it is now clear that there are going to be massive flooding disasters around the globe."



Glaciers, such as this one in Greenland, have been melting faster in recent years  
Photo: flickr user Ludovic Hirlimann

The idea of climate change adaptation is not to forgo mitigation all together. These two ideas are not inherently incompatible. While mitigation aims to prevent things from getting worse in the long-term, adaptation focuses on coping with the coming crisis that may be inevitable in the short-term. Indeed, in the ideal world, the two should go hand-in-hand in any good climate policy. However, this is easier said than done, particularly when politics gets in the way.

It is not difficult to understand why adaptation is not higher up in the climate change political agenda. First, in recognising the urgent need to adapt to climate change, politicians and environmental technocrats must inevitably admit to failures in previous action. An inclination towards adaptation is an admission of defeat, and the admission of defeat may create some short-term political backlash. Moreover, the troubles with the economy are already getting people depressed enough. The fight against climate change is suppose to be one area of optimism guaranteed in the

enlightened age of Obama. However, the agenda of climate change adaptation is difficult to position well within the current situation of an already dismal economy.

Who wants to read more bad news related to climate change when the public has already filled its appetite with the business sections? An opportunity exists, however, to take advantage of the current dismal economy. It can be done by linking stimulus packages to shovel-ready job projects directly relevant to making infrastructure more adaptable to cope with the consequences of climate warming. At this point, the public is getting fed up with all the money set aside for Wall Street and bail-outs for Detroit. Money spent on shovel-ready infrastructures is certainly more palatable to the average working Joes.

According to a 2008 report by the National Research Council based in Washington DC, "Climate change will affect transportation primarily through increases in several types of weather and climate extremes. [The impact of climate warming] will require significant changes in the planning, design, construction,

### An inclination towards adaptation is an admission of defeat

operation, and maintenance of transportation systems." If presented and designed properly, a large public works project for climate change adaptation would not only be fitting as a stimulus for the current economy but political astute at the same time. Action taken by America on climate change adaptation would have effective echoing effect throughout the rest of the world.

The dialogue on climate change in the past few years has successfully mainstreamed the idea that climate change is indeed happening. While Al Gore's Inconvenient Truth raised public acceptance of climate change as a fact and global warming as a threat, more has to be done to raise awareness on adaption as a solution. This must be the legacy of the Obama administration's policy on climate change. In another part of Obama's inauguration speech, he declared, "We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories". However, before doing that, it would be prudent also to upgrade of the roads, dikes, and levees just in case the salvations promised by mitigation comes too little too late.

## Pork-barrel spending won't bring home bacon

Obama's stimulus plans will fund a host of useless projects and create a huge deficit

Ian  
Craig



Last month we saw the historic \$789 billion stimulus package officially signed into law by the President Obama. It is clear that the money is drastically needed to help revive the economy; the majority will be spent on important tax relief and infrastructure improvement.

However, a whopping \$308 billion will be appropriated by the federal government and passed on to state representatives in the form of discretionary grants. \$260 billion of which will represent what is known as pork-barrel spending, or money

spent on wasteful projects that benefit people from one local area, but whose costs are spread amongst all taxpayers. This represents in more real terms nearly half of the total cost of the Iraq War. Now that's expensive bacon! But then again, we all know Democrats have expensive tastes.

First, a little pork history. In 1982 over \$14.6 billion (\$8.08 billion in 1982 dollars) was spent on the infamous Big Dig or the Central Artery/Tunnel Project in Boston, Massachusetts. Despite President Reagan's veto, Congress voted to override it, proceeding with the project. Although the tunnel has reduced commuter time, it was terribly managed and the structurally flawed design resulted in the death of one person, after the collapse of a concrete ceiling panel in 2006. What has "benefited" a handful of Bostonians will cost the US taxpayer an estimated \$22 billion after interest and won't be paid off until 2038.

If that seems like a lot of money to you, it represents only a fraction of what

President Obama has lined up for us in his "stimulus" package. Up to \$18 billion will be allocated to crush (yes, physically crush) brand new SUVs and trucks. I've got a better idea: why not just give them away for free? Or, if you are worried about the environment take them apart and sell the scraps, instead of creating wastelands of unwanted cars.

Unfortunately, the spending binge will not end there. Children will be thankful as \$7 million will be used for the construction of waterslides and specially designed Frisbee parks. Fish will enjoy more freedom after \$20 million is spent to remove waterway barriers throughout the country. Moreover, butterflies will also be grateful after Mr. Obama builds them new gardens, worth \$4.5 million. For that price, I wonder if he plans to line their cocoons in 24 karat gold? A further \$500,000 will be spent on

recreational facilities for dogs. Spa treatment included?

Less harmless creatures will also benefit from stimulus. Radical left-wing political action committees (PACs) such as ACORN will receive \$5 billion in "thank you money" for supporting their winning candidate. Hollywood producers will see a \$246 million tax break to buy motion picture films. Isn't that thoughtful?

"There are 9,000 reasons to vote against this spending bill - 9,000 earmarks slipped and crammed into this pork-stuffed nightmare," Rep. John Shadegg (R-Ariz.), remarked last month. "Last night, President Obama bragged about this claim that there were no earmarks in his stimulus bill -- and yet he's silent today as he prepares to put his signature on 9,000 earmarks."

Don't worry, I'm not going to recite all 9,000. But there are a few more projects that stand out as porkier than the rest. \$200 million has been allocated to "design

and furnish" the Department of Homeland Security headquarters. I wonder if Giorgio Armani won the bid? An additional \$100 million was earmarked to raise awareness of the hazards of lead-based paint. Giorgio, you have been warned: don't use lead-based paint. Do governments really take us for complete idiots?

All these projects could theoretically be justified if the United States was running a large surplus and had so much money it just didn't know how to spend it. But, the truth is, we are facing probably the most difficult recession in a generation and spending billions of dollars on ludicrous projects, now more than ever, just seems downright criminal. They would have been better off giving personal bailouts of \$3,500 to every American family.

Sadly, future generations having to shoulder this financial burden will surely not appreciate the irony when \$1.5 million was spent on pig odour research in Iowa.



Obama loves bacon  
Photo: flickr user Paxie

# Letters to the editor

## My time at FSA

Dear Sir,

In last week's issue you report Mr Max Steuer, a former member of the Economics Department here who retired before I arrived in the School, as saying of my time at the Financial Services Authority that "Northern Rock was looming up and it was his job to see if there was anything untoward. Did he? No. He kept it pretty quiet".

Steuer has now said to me, in an email, that "I did not say anything about Northern Rock and the role of the FSA or your position at the time" when he met the Beaver. The Beaver reporter says that he took a note of the conversation. That is a mystery which I cannot resolve.

Steuer also has said that "what went on at Northern Rock and what was known at the FSA is something I know nothing about". In fact, there have been two published reports on the events leading to the failure of Northern Rock. They have both concentrated on the period 2006/07, when the bank's balance sheet grew very rapidly. It tripled in size between 2003 (when I left the FSA) and the summer of 2007. Its securitisations, which were at the start of its problems, grew about four and half times during that period.

This confirms just how right Mr Steuer is when he says that he knows nothing about the FSA and Northern Rock.

Yours,

**Howard Davies**  
Director, LSE

## Elections are just popularity contest

Dear Sir,

With turnout in last week's elections well below 50%, surely it is clear that the majority of LSE students are simply not interested in their student union. Those who stand in this mere popularity contest are pathetic inadequates, so desperate to boost their CVs that they befriend anyone who will vote for them. Isn't it about time these pointless elections were got rid of? If they were, nobody would notice or indeed care. The LSE should appoint people to positions of responsibility within the student body to ensure that skilled, capable people run our union, rather than those with the most friends. Then again, even if this was the case I still wouldn't give a toss who they were.

Yours sincerely

**Graeme Smith**  
BSc '10

**Have we done a good or bad job informing the LSE community this year?**  
**Are we biased or accurate in our reporting?**  
**How often do you read the Beaver?**  
**What's your favourite section?**  
**What should be in the Beaver next year?**  
**How can we improve your newspaper?**  
You tell us.

**Take part in the Beaver's annual reader survey. On Houghton Street from today.**  
**You can also complete it online:**  
[thebeaveronline.co.uk/survey2009](http://thebeaveronline.co.uk/survey2009)

**The Beaver**  
2009 survey

TELL  
US  
WHAT  
YOU  
THINK

# Integration through diversification

The Students' Union will never be diverse if it concentrates on politics and the UGM

## Judith Jacob

A cursory glance of most online student forums will reveal two things about the LSE: first-year economics students are always looking for answers to problem sets, and well-meaning upper-class men are always looking to provide an answer for the catch-all question, "what is the LSE really like?" The typical answer to this question entails a brief rant about the workload, poor teaching quality and most interestingly, a complaint concerning the lack of integration by international students. For such a diverse institution that markets itself on the premise that you will receive an education in an international atmo-

sphere, this complaint resonates. After all the School has, technically speaking, succeeded in facilitating this with approximately 52.5 per cent of undergraduates being non-UK nationals.

The assumption made by those who buy into this particular advertising hook in the prospectus is that by being surrounded by lots of people from varying ethnic or cultural backgrounds, everyone easily comes out of their nationalist shells, suddenly wants to create for him or herself a diverse social network, and become an active participant of the university life. If only integration were so simple. It would then be effortless to incorporate Muslims into France or to make Jews an active part of political life in Turkey, let's say. Preserving a cultural, religious, ethnic or national identity while simultaneously trying to create an all-encompassing collegiate one is extraordinarily difficult. One must realise that this is a problem not unique to the LSE and is something that governments with high immigrant populations

face constantly. More over, few governments have yet to successfully deal with this issue, much less a university with almost 9,000 students.

Perhaps it is time to realise that diversity can be overwhelming. Living in a foreign country for the first time without your usual support networks is a harrowing experience: having to make new friends with backgrounds so different from your own and establishing common grounds for friendship become that much harder. Maybe it is time to acknowledge that people retreating to their national societies is not an apocalyptic failure on part of the LSE or on the individual students who choose to do this. Maybe, it's time to stop placing the onus on them to integrate.

In light of the elections last week, one is forced to ask: how much do the students who run the Union matter in terms of creating a community spirit that transcends entrenched preferences for familiar backgrounds? More importantly, can they even

do this? We have heard a lot of rhetoric from all the candidates promising greater integration with little understanding that the majority of this university does not want to be assimilated into the culture that celebrates the white male-dominated political theatre of the UGM each week. Integration in LSE needs to be more than achieving higher attendance at the UGM or getting more people to attend Timeless. The leadership of the Union needs to recognise that feeling a part of the school need not entail being an engaged part of its political processes.

If these candidates seriously want these elections to matter to more students than just the politicised minority because of their integrationist platforms, then they should start actually talking to the majority, rather than political grandstanding at the usual array of hustings. Preaching to the converted is not going to attain the inclusive collegiate atmosphere they hope for. Candidates will hopefully recognise that the apathy and disaffection towards

the Union and the type of student life it promotes is created because of its failure to reach out and accept that there is more to student life at LSE than protests on Houghton Street or Crush in the Quad. LSE is all of those things plus the aspirations of up-and-coming financiers, the academic goals of those who spend all their time in the library and the national groups who feel most comfortable in each others company.

Integration should not be about bringing more people to the white man's club on Thursdays at 1, but rather accepting that these cliques are part and parcel of life at LSE and giving practical help to these groups to facilitate their goals and agendas (whatever they might be). This is what the Union's leadership should really be aiming to do. If LSE really aspires to be a diverse university, then a promotion and facilitation of a wide variety of activities by a wide variety of groups is really how the creation of an college identity should be promoted.



The Students' Union needs to go beyond encouraging UGM participation if it is to be useful to most students  
Photo: Erik Lang

# Features



Flickr User Comrade\_S

## The sounds of the underground

**Matt Lomas** appreciates the buskers that add colour to the London landscape

A man with big black army boots and a white tattered felt cowboy hat strumming a pristine classical guitar, while three drunken young women dance along to the music - incongruous, perhaps, but not an unlikely scene at the London Underground on a Saturday night.

I routinely have had to change lines at Tottenham Court Road station over the past year, on my way to Mornington Crescent tube; occasionally stopping to ask a busker on the interchange if they'd like to come on Pulse Radio while commuters tread past in unison staring at their feet. I co-present the 'Adrian and Matt' show where we get buskers on every (well, most) Fridays. It is not unusual for us to find worn-out business cards belonging to various buskers in our pockets.

But doubtless, we have had some real personalities on our show. This has led me to the opinion that on the whole, buskers are an interesting group of people: social commentators who benefit from a hell of a lot of people watching. I have also come to appreciate their contribution to life in London.

Buskers have been around for centuries and have been discriminated against for almost the same amount of time. The Metropolitan police first started clamping down hard on buskers in the early nineteenth century, when the number of performers increased dramatically. Buskers then were made up of unemployed soldiers returning home from the Napoleonic wars. They were classified as

'obstructions' and 'beggars' who would sing 'Onward Christian Soldiers' until they scraped enough money together to get drunk.

Admittedly, perceptions have changed somewhat since then, but until six years ago there was still no system in place to accommodate for buskers in London. Therefore when Transport for London (TfL) decided to follow on from New York's example and regulate busking on the underground in 2003, something really good began. The scheme was first sponsored by Carling, and then the London paper and lastly by Capital Radio. There are 28 'pitches' throughout London's labyrinth of underground passages at tube stops. The best pitches are believed to be at Green Park, Piccadilly Circus, Tottenham Court Road and Leicester Square stations. There are around 300 licensed buskers with TfL and sometimes competition over pitches can get nasty - if a busker is late, then the previous one is allowed under regulations to stay for the next two hours. Imaginably, there have been a fair few fights over this.

As hard as it is to pick, the most interesting buskers we have met on our show are two guys called Dave Mwaniki and Ruben H.

Hailing from Salamanca, Spain, Ruben plays the guitar and harmonica (for example, doing a great rendition of Neil Young's 'Heart of Gold' along with his own lyrics). I will always remember when he appeared on the show and proclaimed so prophetically the "end of

the Anglo-Saxon dominated world." This was last year, when the banking world and the finance sector were tumbling and collapsing here and in the US. He proclaimed to be economist and apparently it was for this reason that he was very excited about appearing on an LSE radio show.

After his Pulse appearance, Ruben and Dave Mwaniki played at a Clare Market Review website launch party. Here, he told me how he believed that Londoners were cold and reserved, but that London was still a "magical" place where a musician could draw much inspiration. In a strange way, he found the drab, grey surroundings of London beautiful. He also shared that he was ironically earning more money during the credit crunch than he did usually; people "appreciate music more in times of hardship," he said. A singer-songwriter, Ruben has also written songs commenting on the deficiencies of current brands of capitalism. His song 'Unhappy Socialdemocrat', for example, frequently repeats the line "The game is out of control" with great effects.

Dave Mwaniki is not actually a busker on the underground, but busks in Covent Garden. His appearance on the show was especially memorable, because he was the first and probably the best. If you have been to Covent Garden in the evening, there is a high chance you will recognise him and his talent for covering soul classics such as Bill Withers' 'Ain't No Sunshine' and Stevie Wonder's 'As'. An East Londoner, Dave used to be a committed gymnast, but suffered an injury

that ended his career. He identifies this as the beginning of his turn towards God and a more spiritual life. One of the nicest guys you could ever meet, he can really get a crowd going as well, as demonstrated when he played in the Quad for Pulse Radio's Ragathon.

Rather than dealing with cumbersome authorities such as TfL, Dave and the other buskers in Covent Garden operate through a representative body run by two sisters, Bertie and Evelyn Anderson. They then liaise with Liberty International (LI), the owners of Covent Garden Courtyard. This system has worked well, with the sisters fostering a good relationship with LI. At the moment, the Greater London Authority does not classify busking as illegal. Since 2003, they have left it up to individual boroughs to decide whether to set up a licensed scheme. Perhaps a system like the one in Covent Garden would be a better system for the Authority, and one that TfL can draw inspiration from.

The last busker deserving a mention is Hadar Manor, who was hailed "Queen of the Underground" by the London paper and Capital Radio in 2008. She describes her music as a "bit of folk, bit of blues, bit of ska, bit of London, bit of New York, bit of life, bit of sugar, bit of milk...". From "the Judean hills of Israel", Hadar won the London paper and Capital Radio Ear and even the Underground competition, in which more than 30,000 people voted. She has also been invited to 10 Downing Street. Her best songs are about life in London - check out the funky song 'Night

Bus' and the aptly named 'Queen of the Underground' on MySpace. I met her in the underground without any previous knowledge of this, and asked her if she wanted to come on the show. Unfortunately she did not get to grace our show, as I have lost her email and therefore cannot ask her to come on. But if you're reading Hadar (because that's really likely, of course), please come on!

There is, however, cause for concern regarding the future of busking on the underground. Since last year, the busking scheme is without a sponsor. The scheme itself has deteriorated, evidenced by TfL's scrapping of an online booking system in favour of an automated phone service. Buskers have to ring up every Tuesday morning, often up to two weeks in advance, to book a pitch. Dan Bernhard, an LSE student who used to busk in the underground, says "it's ridiculous, you can't get a spot unless you're prepared to wait for hours."

TfL has also effectively made a Yahoo! Group redundant, which the buskers used as a representative body. They issued a statement through this group, stating that none of the decisions over pitch swaps on this site will be recognised. Pitches have been reduced from 42 to 23 in the last two years and TfL is set to cut 1,000 jobs - raising fears that it may streamline costs by stopping the busking scheme. It would be a tremendous shame if this was to happen and ultimately, the underground would be a much duller place for it.

# AFTER THE PARTITION

**Y**et amidst the euphoria, one could not resist the thought that their birth had its acute pains and complications, for independence also meant Partition. That day, India and Pakistan were officially divided into two countries, the latter expressly created as a home for India's Muslims. Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) seceded from Pakistan 24 years later. Opinions on the Partition are, true to the spirit of the event, divided: it is variously mourned as tragedy, hailed as victory, or resigned to as inevitability. In this article, we portray the different Indian, British and Pakistani perspectives on this monumental event.



## India

Most Indians see the Partition as unnecessary and unfortunate, not least because of its horrific human cost.

The Partition provoked one of the largest population displacements in recorded history. On conservative estimates, 1.5 million perished, 75,000 women were raped, and 12 million became homeless in the communal riots that enveloped the multi-religious border regions of Punjab, Sindh and Kashmir.

Pakistani Hindus and Indian Muslims alike left their ancestral homes, hoping to reach the perceived safety of the 'other side'. Far too many failed. Trains of refugees were burned and villages destroyed. For this reason alone, many Indians (and Pakistanis) wish Partition never happened.

Secondly, many Indians regret Partition because it divided a people who had

lived together for centuries artificially, and along religious lines.

For the idea of India is that of a pluralist ever-ever land emerging from an ancient civilization and united by a shared history, not divided by conflicting religious beliefs. "India", Winston Churchill once barked, "is merely a geographical expression. It is no more a single country than the Equator."

Churchill was rarely right about India – or about Gandhi, who he once lovingly described as "a naked fakir" – but here he captures the idealistic sense that Indian nationalism is indeed a strange animal. It is not based on language (for India has 22 official languages and 22,000 dialects), religion (since India, though mostly Hindu, has large, ancient Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Zoroastrian populations, and has been ruled by Buddhist and Muslim kings) or race.

Rather, India's national identity has always been based on the concept of, to use the hackneyed phrase, "unity in diversity". It is difficult for such a country

to agree with Partition.

In fact, to speak only of religious identity is to ignore people's other identities. A Tamil Muslim, for instance, shares more in common with a Tamil Hindu than with a fellow Muslim from Lahore. The fact that Pervez Musharraf was born in India and Manmohan Singh was born in what is now Pakistan illustrates just how inadequately the political borders capture the identity of people on either side.

Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, summed up the view of most secular Indians (and most Indians are secular) during his Independence day speech: "We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come.

"They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen, and we shall be sharers in their good or ill fortune alike." I personally look forward to sharing in Pakistan's good fortune in future.



## Britain

In 1900, the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, infamously noted that 'as long

as we rule India we are the greatest power on earth'.

The ruminations of an archetypal imperial gentleman have led some historians, and the Pakistani and Indian co-authors of this article, to conclude that Indian Independence was driven by nationalism.

The reality is that by 1947, the British neither had the will nor the capacity to rule empire. They, in fact, were complicit in Independence and carried it out not for the benefit of the Indians, but for themselves.

The Second World War did more for the Independence movement than Gandhi, Jinnah or Mountbatten. Following the war, Britain faced the greatest economic calamity in its history; the economist John Maynard Keynes went as far as to call the British position a 'financial Dunkirk'.

The accounts of the British state were in ruins to the extent that it was even in debt to its colonies, a point which Gandhi laconically summed up as 'like attempting to cash a cheque at a failing bank'. India was also no longer a vital trading point for Britain; by 1947 only 8 per cent of British trade went to India.

The movement towards Independence can also only be understood when placed in an international context. Arguably, the main ideological movement of the twenty years which followed the Second World War heralded de-colonisation.

The United Nations charter, ratified in 1945, officially stated that all peoples had the right to rule themselves. International condemnation of colonization was growing just at the time when Britain no longer had the necessary military and economic confidence to resist it.

Also, for the first-time, mainstream opinion in Britain also turned against the Empire and refused to regard it as an inherently good thing.

This was in stark contrast to the jingoistic sentiments of nationalism and superiority that drove the quest for new imperialism in the first place. Previous British governments had supported territorial expansion abroad for its prestige, and out of an emotional commitment to a Greater Britain. After the Second World War the tide had changed. The Labour government under Clement Attlee, which came to power in 1945, was prepared to take a pragmatic view on the Empire.

Thus, when the Indian sub-continent no longer suited Britain's economic interests, its Independence became inevitable.

Whilst nationalist movements did play a part in the Independence, their role should not be overstated.

Any conception of a cogent Indian op-





Flickr user openDemocracy

# ION

**At the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, a fifth of the world's population celebrated their independence from British colonial rule as India and Pakistan rose to life and celebrated their freedom. By Aizeh Kohari, Mehek Zafar, Marion Koob, Sid George and Calum Young**

position to British rule should be rejected. Out of a nation of 400 million, it is estimated that no more than 300,000 Indians actively took part in revolt against British rule. Language and religious differences meant there was no concerted, unified opposition. As Churchill later said: 'we could have held India for another 20 years'.

This leads us to another question - to what extent can Britain be judged responsible for the violent upheavals following Independence?

Britain's actions were primarily a response to its own self interest, rather than concerns over what was best for Indian. This leads me to believe that as a result, Britain bears the responsibility for the internal chaos which followed independence. As is the similar tale in Cyprus, Palestine, and Kenya, Britain has to account for the violence which has resulted from its rushed and ill-conceived withdrawal.



Pakistan

The year of 1947 saw the boundaries of the Indian sub-continent blurred

by violence as a nation bled a homeland into existence.

One nation, some insist; others claim not one, but two. The case for Pakistan was fought on the basis of the Two-Nation Theory, the idea that Muslims and Hindus are separate by every definition and 'to yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built for the government of such a state.'

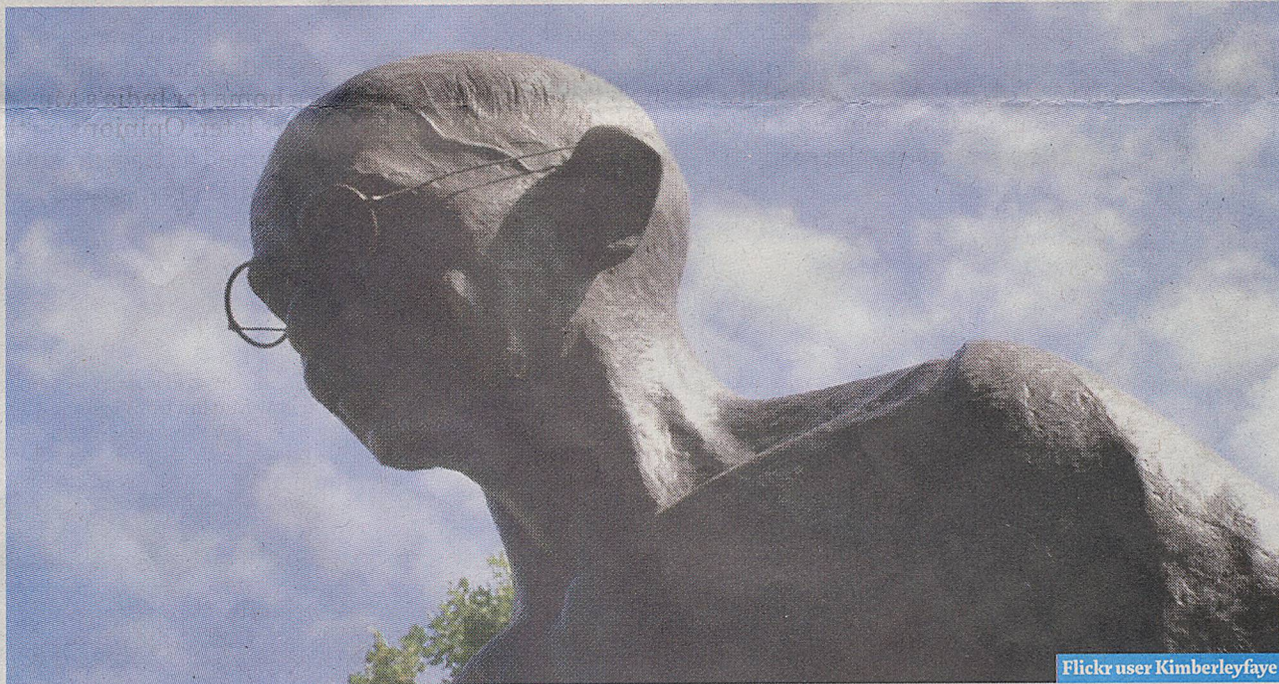
In an increasingly irreligious world, the notion of religion as the basis of a homeland seems strange, absurd even. If divisions are to be made, they can be made ad infinitum: what about a separate nation for every ethnic minority? For liberals? For conservatives? For socialists? How about a country just for women?

Religion, however, should not be brushed off as an arbitrary factor; the Hindu-Muslim divide in the dawning years of the twentieth century certainly was not. Hindu principles of plurality and the much more exclusive nature of Islam were just the beginning of the differences that divide the two religions.

'Their aspect on life and of life is different,' Jinnah argued in 1947, 'they derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes, and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other and, likewise, their victories and defeats overlap.'



Flickr user Koshyk



Flickr user Kimberleyfaye

Arguably, the Two-Nation Theory was trampled upon in 1971 - as Mrs. Gandhi herself was kind enough to point out - when Pakistan fractured into two and Bangladesh was born. The near-corpses of the Theory is unceremoniously trod upon every time ethnic tensions flare in Karachi or when, in the heartbeat it takes for a bomb to detonate, a Shiite mosque crumbles to rubble.

At a time when the country seems to be folding in on itself, buckling like a slaughtered cow, it is difficult to make the case for Pakistan. A glimpse at any daily broadsheet once in a while will certainly attest to this.

But we will make it. Erase the tape of history. Rub Pakistan off the reel. Would Hindus and Muslims have coexisted in a post-colonial unified India? After all, there are other minorities today - Christians, Sikhs, Jews, Zoroastrians - who manage to live with precious little discord.

But the relation between Muslims and Hindus in India, as Jinnah so earnestly argued, was distinct: the Muslim Mughal rulers reigned over the Hindu majority for several centuries before the British set foot on Indian soil.

When, in 1947, British expulsion would be achieved, how long would it take for antagonism to be directed towards the erstwhile colonizers? The theory exists - and it is a plausible one.

Yes, more Muslims chose to reside in India than chose to trip, stumble, falter eastwards over boundaries uncertain long after independence had been declared. But the Muslims who live in India today

## Britain bears the responsibility for the internal chaos which followed independence

and who form 13 per cent of its masses are a statistically proven depressed class: they have shorter life-spans, worse health, lower literacy levels and lower-paying jobs.

Add to this bleak mix a sprinkling of such incidents as the demolition of the Babri Mosque - secular, cosmopolitan Bombay burned for days as a result - and the 2002 communal violence in Gujarat.

Were the fears of the founding fathers, then, truly groundless?

Or was there some inkling of truth to their claim, a truth that was possibly contained by the creation of a separate Pakistan?

A further claim then arises: the country was created. Pakistan today is a fact. Riddled with problems and accusations of it being a "failed state" though it may be, its creation is an entirely separate matter from its standing in the world today. It was created both as a refuge for a people whose existence in India was threatened at the time, as well as a platform where that distinctly separate Muslim identity that Jinnah spoke about could take root and bloom. Most importantly, it is a nation, with people identifying themselves distinctly as Pakistanis foremost rather than anything else. Surely this must mean something.

Has Jinnah's vision been realized? Perhaps not - but where it has taken centuries to carve out success for some, is it fair to give up on Pakistan after just 60 years?

Although the writing process of this piece was a reasonably peaceful one, the divergence of these three views uncovers some of the reasons as to why the relations between India and Pakistan still remain painfully tense.

Time can heal wounds, however: after all, in a case in which the colonizers are ready to blame themselves for the effects of the colonization, where Indians are willing to consider Pakistanis as brothers and wish them well can lead to hope, if not of a political solution, of at least a human reconciliation over these events.



Photo: Lorilee Evans

# Swishing for Dummies

**Lorilee Evans** discovers the fashion world's latest environmentally-friendly phenomenon

In times such as ours, it is not rare to find yourself wanting to improve your wardrobe, but struggling to find the cash for new clothes. Possible solution for every female (or male?) out there – swishing.

For the curious but uninformed, swishing events are basically organised clothes swaps. This ethical way to update one's wardrobe has now become a global phenomenon. Tempted, I had to go for an event myself to find out what all the fuss was about.

I looked up the essential website for all potential swishers, [www.swishing.org](http://www.swishing.org) and decided to attend an event. Part of my decision to attend one of these events was the desire to learn more about the phenomenon. I did not go with the intention of finding the perfect dress or jumper; one always sets oneself up for disappointment when having such expectations. Having registered a place at the event, I was very excited about the prospect of attending. To attend, I needed to bring 5 items to the swap. I then opened my wardrobe to find that all of my clothes I have with me at university are my favourites and the ones I would like to swap are back home in Wales. I tried not to panic and instead chose five items from a local charity shop. I purposefully chose not to go to a clothes shop, as this would have defeated the ideology behind swishing. I was also able to donate to a good cause. The fun started for me when I picked out three tops, a bag and a necklace to bring to the event.

The event I attended was held in the basement of the Juno Bar in Shoreditch. Upon arrival, I paid my entrance fee of £5, donated my five items to swap and was

given a wristband, a process everyone had to go through. We were then sent back up to the bar; waiting in anticipation to be called whilst the organisers arranged the clothes into sections. While waiting, I started chatting with some women who were attending the swap and found out the reasons behind their enthusiasm for swishing. Some wanted, like myself, to find out about swapping, others were here to donate their clothes as they were having a clear out and others just enjoyed swishing and had been to many events previously. The atmosphere was relaxed and no one was rushing.

Once everyone had come down to the basement, the organisers explained the rules – 20 minutes' browsing time, which allowed women to try on items and decide what they wanted the most. The swapping would then begin; rounds were introduced and raffle tickets issued. Anything left was available for anyone to take home or went to charity.

The items which were brought to the swap were not restricted to clothes, other items such as make up, shoes, handbags, hats and belts were all included. Some of the items brought were brand new, with their labels still attached, but others had been worn. I soon learnt that swishing is the expression given to describe the sound of bargain hunters, looking for that precious garment among rails and rails of clothes – a bit like when Marge Simpson went to the thrift store and Lisa found her that gorgeous Chanel number.

I picked up many items, my first item being a pair of Clarks sandals. I did not have to raffle with anyone to obtain these shoes and swiftly moved onto my second

item, which was a pink wrap around cardigan. By the time the third round of items was underway, everyone had decided on what they wanted to swap and no one seemed to be raffling any more so the organisers allowed us to pick up what we wanted. By the end of the swap, I had collected many items including a few dresses, a couple of tops, shoes and a poncho. Once everyone had finished swapping people began to leave and hardly anything was left on the rails.

Some items of clothing were clearly popular and highly coveted by the women attending the event. The organisers had put in place a raffling system which enabled the women to have a fair chance of obtaining the items. The pieces that were raffled included a yellow Gap rain mack and an Alexandra McQueen dress, which was named the star item of the swap. Swishing clearly has its ethical advantages, in that it curbs the temptation of consumerism and stops us from polluting the environment.

Maverick TV was recording the whole event for the programme Ten Years Younger. Upon entering the event, the organisers alerted participants that Maverick TV were recording and asked if we didn't mind being filmed. Throughout the event the organisers asked participants to move towards the back out shot of the camera if they had objections to being filmed. Two people were followed around the swap and were recorded at the start of the swap, detailing what they had donated and what they hoped to find.

Swishing events are held by many different people across the country, both professional and amateur. All the events

vary in terms of entrance fees and the amount of items that one is required to bring. Some events are more exclusive in that email confirmations are required and there are only very limited places. Sometimes, money is donated to charity and other times it is used to pay the cost of the venue. All these technicalities lie in the hands of the organisers, so it is necessary to read the requirements on the event before attending. It is likely that some swishing events will appeal more than others.

My advice is pick up items you like, but also items you believe you can bring to other events to swap for other clothes you might like more.

#### Dates of upcoming events:

17 Mar 2009 19:00  
Tall Women's Clothes Swap Party No.2 @  
The Candid Arts Trust Banquet Room, 3  
Torrens Street, London EC1

21 Mar 2009 01:00  
Swap don't Shop (in aid of Breast Cancer  
Charity) @ Keston Lodge Pub - 131 Upper  
Street, Islington, London, N1 1QP

Swishing links  
[www.swishing.org](http://www.swishing.org)  
<http://www.bigwardrobe.com/>  
<http://www.swapstyle.com/>  
<http://www.whatsmineisyours.com/>

#### Interested in holding your own swishing party between friends?

Swishing parties are easy to hold and lots of fun.

Here are five easy steps to follow:

1. Decide on a venue. A house or a public place?
2. Decide on who will be invited and send out invitations. Will your event be a public or a private event. How will you distribute your invitations? Create a Facebook group, hand write them or email.
3. Decide on the rules of amount of items to be swapped and their condition. How many items are allowed to be brought to be swapped, how many items can be swapped. Are the clothes to be brand new, vintage or worn?
4. Decide on how the items will be displayed at the event. Using rails, laying out on tables, on the floor, in a pile?
5. When guest arrive explain the rules and begin the swishing!

Have FUN!

This is a perfect event to be incorporated into RAG week to raise lots of money for a charity or different charities. Encouraging people to swap clothes rather than buying new clothes is much more fun than trailing around the shops endlessly through crowds of people. Who knows what you might find at the swishing event you may end up with something you love.



## From Right to Left: the political columns

### Hayek

Alex  
Blance



### Putting the economy before ideals

Perhaps poorly, I don't follow Scottish politics all that much. Devolution has led to a massive hiving off of affairs to the Scottish Parliament, and while we focus so much on the 'Westminster bubble', it is perhaps inadvertent that a lot of important stuff in Scotland is missed. However, last week there came a story from the Holyrood legislature that caught my eye: Labour and the Conservatives backed a Liberal Democrat call for the minority Scottish National Party government, which has been running the country since elections in 2007, to ditch its plans for an independence referendum. This amendment was carried by 72 votes to 47.

Despite this, the SNP have said that they will still put forward legislation next year for holding a plebiscite, and if they lose this they intend to fight the next election on the issue. The nationalist government claim that the opposition parties are trying to block the right of the people of Scotland to decide their constitutional future. This however, might seem slightly indulgent of the government of Scotland, considering that the UK is going through a time of near crisis over the recession.

In a recent interview the Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, expressed a similar sentiment on a comparable issue. He was asked about how much of a priority reform of the House of Lords, a constitutional question that has been rumbling on since Labour came to power in 1997, would be for an incoming Conservative government. Mr Cameron replied, "In terms of reform, having a more elected chamber, which is what I favour, to be frank it is not an urgent priority. The urgent priority is to sort out the economy and introduce social reform programmes." This is obviously the approach of man who has bigger things on his minds, and one would hope the same logic would be applied to the question of Scottish independence. The crashing of RBS and HBOS have severely hurt Scotland's economy and big job losses have been incurred; Mr Salmond and his team have better things to concentrate on.

But the crash of Scotland's banking sector actually makes a much bigger point against Scottish independence too: it is now entirely uneconomically viable. The SNP had been looking enviously to countries like Iceland and Ireland (particularly

as an EU member state) as examples of how small independent countries could be successful on their own. However, now that the financial crisis has truly hit, we have seen the catastrophe brought to Iceland, who have had to take loans from the IMF. With the trouble that the Irish economy is in too, we see the flaws in the economies of these small nations, that appear to have had little else going for them apart from their inflated banking sectors.

Gordon Brown swiped at the SNP at the Scottish Labour conference over the weekend, saying that the Scottish government would not have been able to save the banks on their own. On this issue we must agree with the Prime Minister, and so too should a sensible SNP regime. If they really wish to show that they are a sensible party who could potentially govern an independent Scotland one day they cannot act as irresponsibly as they currently are.

But let us all hope that current circumstances can focus the minds of all and push such luxurious questions like this out of our minds.

### Laski

Estelle  
Cooch



### Restoring our faith in politics

At the risk of sounding like a particularly boring English teacher, if you break down the word 'politics' to its etymological roots what do you get? 'Poli', the latin word for many, and 'tics', which are...well...a type of bloodsucking creature. Okay, while I admit that may not be the official Oxford Dictionary definition of the word, it is at times like LSE election week that this definition begins to have a particular resonance. We begin to get a glimpse into the dodgy dealings and back-room pacts of those who will undoubtedly go on to rule some of the world's major and most important institutions.

It makes you wonder: is Parliament purely a mirror image of the slightly insecure, blackberry-wielding misfits who engulf themselves in the cliquy world of the Students' Union? I would venture to say, while not all fit this description - most likely.

The Sabbatical team that has been elected is much the same as last years'. It has its merits and its limitations. Yet, despite a higher voter turnout than previous years, we must ask ourselves why the majority, both in society and within the Students' Union, remain apathetic.

There is a tendency amongst parts of the left and within the anarchist movement to simply dismiss parliamentary elections as an opportunity for, in the words of Karl Marx, 'particular representatives of the oppressing class are to

represent and repress them'. There is certainly an element of truth in the claim that if elections actually changed anything, they would be abolished.

That is not to say that elections do not serve a purpose. The election of Barack Obama for example presents us with some of the most obvious contradictions of reforming politics within a hugely unequal global system. The vague rhetoric of 'change' and 'hope' allowed ordinary people to project their desires onto him. Obama became pro-trade union, pro-choice, pro-Palestinian, whilst also being pro-business, pro-life and pro-Israel.

The overwhelming desire for a break from Bush created a mass movement of ordinary people in America who, rejecting decades of being told 'no-you can't', declared 'Yes-we can'. The sense of optimism and belief in the ability of ordinary people to change the world that epitomised Obama's election is empowering and impressive, but will no doubt come back to haunt him.

An election campaign can pull together all those who share a belief in a better society and the election of even one MP or deputy can give a platform to a radical position that can influence millions. The election of revolutionary socialist Karl Liebknecht to the German parliament at the beginning of World War One, for example, allowed him to make a stand against the war breaking the wall of silence imposed by state censorship. Likewise, the election of Northern Irish

socialist Bernadette Devlin to the British parliament in 1969 allowed her to use her position to denounce British state repression in Ireland.

Parliament is, at its best, a debating chamber where different representatives of society can air their views. While a debating chamber cannot overturn the hierarchies of power embodied in the state, it can provide a means for mobilising people against those hierarchies. The history of all progressive reforms, be it for civil rights, LGBT rights, or the struggle for the right to vote, is not a history of willing and benevolent politicians granting concessions, but a history of ordinary people and mass movements taking to the streets and demanding the equality denied to them by the state.

The LSE is no different. In the coming year it is our job to organise amongst the student body to demand a Sabbatical team that campaigns for the interests of students. A team that takes a stand against rising tuition fees, against cuts in services and that is not afraid to defend the right to education of students internationally.

If, in the words of Alice Walker 'Activism is my rent for living on this planet', it is a price we should all be willing to pay.

Only then can we make sure that democracy does not become, in the words of George Bernard Shaw, "a device that insures we shall be governed no better than we deserve."

### Viridian The mercury menace

Rosalie Ray

With all the focus on the harmful effects of carbon dioxide emissions and the possibility of a successor to the Kyoto protocol coming out of Copenhagen in December, it is tempting to forget our other serious environmental problems. Fortunately, the governing council of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has not. Last week, they announced in Nairobi that they were opening negotiations on an international treaty to curtail mercury emissions and discharges, an announcement that has been seven years in the making.

Mercury is a neurotoxin; exposure could impair the neurological development of children and impact the cognitive skills and nervous system responses of adults. Normally, people are exposed to mercury via harmful concentrations in fish, water, or air. Occupational exposure to mercury for hat-makers is the source of the phrase "mad as a hatter," and the well-known author Terry Pratchett recently spoke out about the mercury fillings used in his dental work and its possible link to his early onset of Alzheimer's disease.

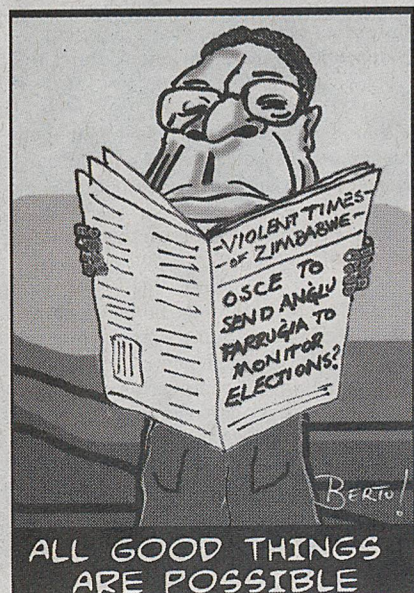
Today, mercury's main uses are in electronics and the manufacture of industrial chemicals, as well as in light bulbs, signs, batteries and thermometers. In the developing world, it is also used in small-scale gold mining. This results in the direct deposition of mercury into water, where it is then absorbed by fish.

UNEP negotiations will center on how to reduce the supply of mercury and store it safely, as well as reducing the demand for mercury in products and processes and thus the international mercury trade. Possible actions include bans on mercury exports such as the one that will come into effect in the European Union in 2011, and that of the US which is proposed to begin in 2013. There will also be arrangements that will assist developing countries in adapting to new technologies. These negotiations are expected to take approximately three years.

Experts believe that newfound US commitment to reform has provided the impetus for the announcement. Barack Obama demonstrated this by introducing a bill banning mercury exports when he was a senator, and naming mercury as the world's gravest chemical problem during talks in Nairobi.

It is difficult to not draw a comparison between this relatively amicable negotiation and much more high profile climate change talks. Perhaps the former was easier because so little attention was paid to it, or perhaps it is simply the removal of the Bush administration that helped foster a stronger environmental regime. One can hope it is the latter, but regardless, this breakthrough is enough to make the dim prospects of collective action on environmental issues seem just a little brighter.

### Measured musings



This should not come as a surprise, but as long as Mugabe remains in a position of power in Zimbabwe, democracy will continue to be nothing but a farce.

On Friday afternoon, a tragic "accident" killed Susan Tsvangirai, mother of six and the wife of Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. The prime minister himself was "badly bruised and cut", according to Eddie Cross from his Movement for Democratic Change party.

Perhaps it would be more believable that this was indeed an "accident", had the land cruiser hit a tree during bad weather or swerved off the road, with the driver having lost control of the car. Instead, an oncoming lorry crossed into the path of the Prime Minister's car (and his convoy of two other vehicles), on a kilometre-long stretch of clear road sandwiched between two commercial farmlands. This does not sound like a recipe for disaster.

Well, at least not until you remember the power-sharing deal signed last month

which established Tsvangirai as the Prime Minister and his rival, Robert Mugabe, as the President of Zimbabwe. Again, in most states this will not translate into suspicion, but the obvious controversy surrounding this power-sharing deal and the feeling that it was only signed because of a significant amount of international pressure put on Robert Mugabe makes any discerning news reader think twice.

Looking back at history, Tsvangirai faced treason charges in 2003 and 2004, a crime which carries the death sentence in Zimbabwe. It was later found out that this was an elaborate set-up by a power-hungry politician who wanted to oust any opposition. This happened again in 2007, when Tsvangirai was lashed by the police and severely injured, coincidentally at a time when the MDC was gaining significant political momentum.

Considering the carnage we saw before, during, and after the LSE Student Union elections last week, it is surely

not too much to suspect that a politician, who does not have the most sparkly track record and who has even been charged for crimes against humanity, had some hand in this tragic "accident". Clearly, a combination of ego, the perennial need to hold on to power and a lack of any sort of morality in the face of this conviction is a dangerous formula.

It is so easy to keep talking and agreeing to illusions of peace, power-sharing and democracy and to go back on this rhetoric in the most discreet and covert ways. Rumours and suspicions surrounding the accident stop short of pointing fingers at anyone, but the level of emotion and anger within the MDC makes it clear that all of them are thinking the same thing. At the very least, it reveals the flaws within the infrastructure of the country itself and highlights the fact that Zimbabwe is indeed a failed state at all levels.

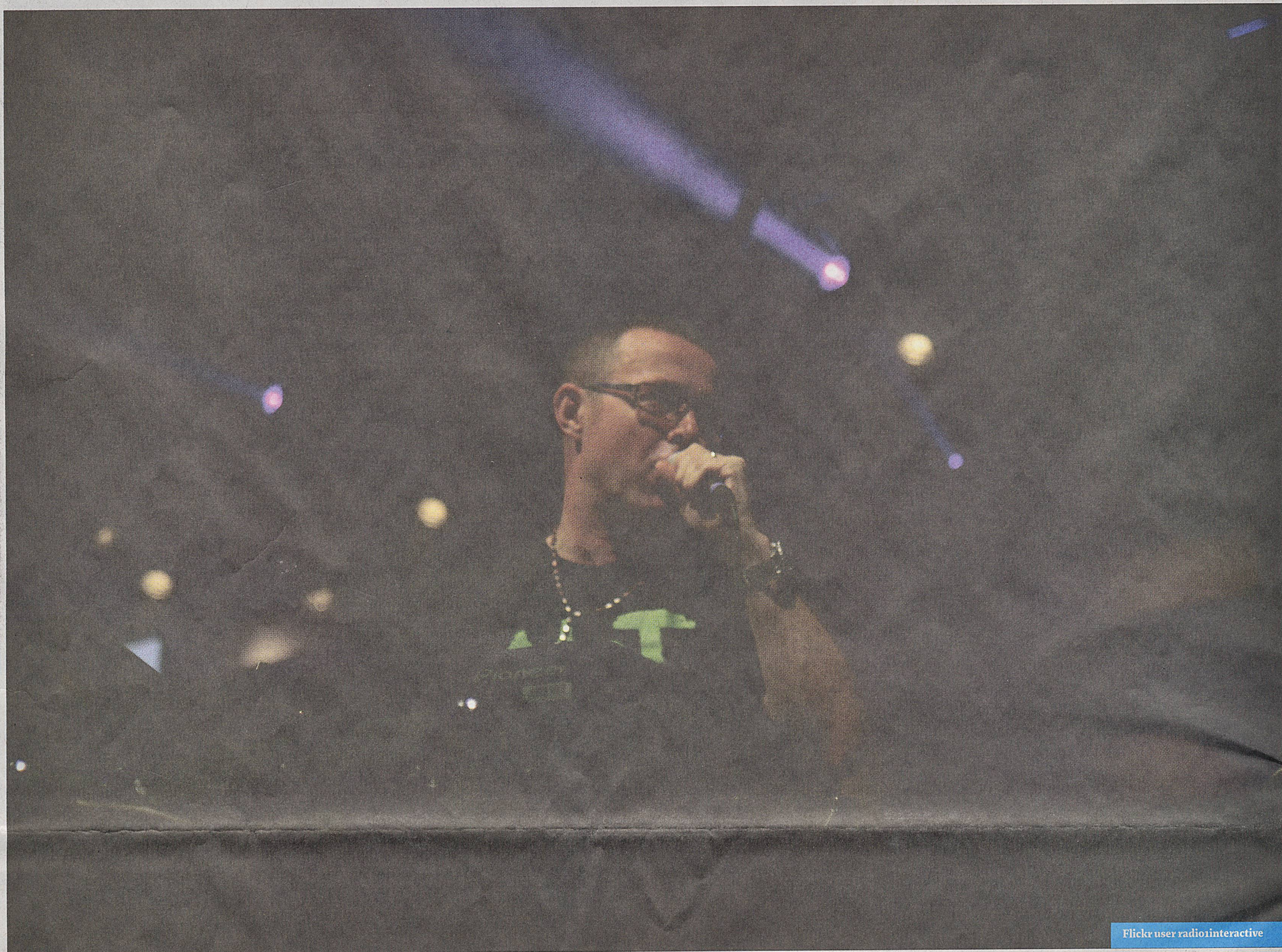
When popular support, elections, attempts at co-operation, talks, deals and

everything in between fails - what is a party, a politician, and even a state to do? It is painful that just when a people, and the international community, thought that the country had hope of a somewhat normal future, this tragedy came and once again poked holes in the dubious democracy that is Zimbabwe.

It remains to be seen what will happen in the remaining time that Mugabe remains in power, however long that may be. But perhaps a more pressing question at the moment, before talking about broader and complex questions involving Zimbabwe's future in political, economic and social terms, is whether those six children including the 14-year-old twins, will ever be able to lead a normal life.

Shibani Mahtani  
Features Editor

### Talk is cheap



Flickr user radiointeractive

# Alumni interviews: Judge Jules

Richard Dewey talks to Judge Jules about his leap from an LSE Law student to a world famous DJ

Judge Jules is a world famous DJ and the host of two popular radio shows on the BBC. From 1997-2006 he was not ranked outside the top 20 in DJ Mag's annual top 100 poll. Jules is also a producer, has a fashion line and regularly guest on various television programs. He graduated from the London School of Economics in 1987 with a degree in Law.

**What was your motivation for attending the LSE? What brought you there?**

I'm from London, so there was quite a bit of thought as to if I should leave or stay. Ultimately it was difficult to leave the city and LSE was one of the best law schools in the country. So I stayed and went to LSE

**What is your favorite memory of LSE - Crazy story - Something unexpected that you gained from the experience?**

The thing I enjoyed most about LSE was the political conscience of the student body. It had this reputation of being a hotbed for left wing political thought that it gained in the 1960's. However I was surprised when I arrived to find that there were just as many right wing, conservative leaning students as those on the liberal side.

LSE had the whole political spectrum covered and I really enjoyed that aspect. There was a lack of apathy among the students that was very stimulating.

**Did you perform/DJ at LSE? Were you involved in the campus radio station?**

I did perform and DJ while at LSE at parties around London. There was not a campus radio station when I was at LSE, so I became involved in a pirate radio station. We had a transmitter that blocked out terrestrial radio for a one or two mile radius. We operated it from student halls. The police were looking for us and I reckon there were students who were not pleased.

I'm happy to hear that LSE students are

**“The thing I enjoyed most about LSE was the political conscience of the student body”**

taking less of a Che Guevara approach to the student radio station.

**What did you do after LSE? What was your first job - how did you cut your path?**

Well I had done quite a bit of Djing around London and had a lot of experience on the illegal pirate radio, so I fell into working at clubs rather easily and had a job on legal radio shortly after graduating.

It is especially difficult to make a full time living as a DJ so I feel very blessed to have a job that I love and not have to work at other jobs to support myself.

**Did you always know that you wanted to take this path? Was there a thought of “Hey I might be a barrister or solicitor... or Judge?”**

Well I guess it is always in the back of my head - maybe something for the long term. When I got out of LSE I had work lined up as a DJ, so there was never a thought at that time of pursuing a career as a lawyer.

**Who gave you the nickname Judge Jules?**

As with most nicknames, it sort of evolved rather than just happening. When we were growing up there were a lot of distressed properties - this is going back a recessionary generation - and we would be squatters in these abandon buildings and throw massive parties. Inevitably the police would show up. I had more bravado than brains and would always be the one to confront the police and tell them that I was throwing the party for a bunch of

mates from law school. In reality the parties were open to the public. Since I always confronted the cops and settled the situation I became known as The Judge or Judge Jules.

LSE students should not follow my example in this instance

**What is the craziest thing you have seen at a club or festival in your 20 plus years Djing?**

Well for me, at this stage in my career the venue becomes something special. I've seen everything from people having sex on the dance floor to full on riots, but the best thing was playing in front of the Pyramids in Egypt - it was a surreal experience. The only other musicians to have played in that particular place are Peter Gabriel and Sting so it was very special.

Otherwise I always enjoy playing in open air venues, it's a nice change of pace, particularly with the British weather.

**Future projects? What is on the agenda for 2009?**

I have a lot of stuff on the table right now. I play about 175 live gigs a year and host two weekly radio shows. I have a fashion line, a brand new artist compilation and I dare say the now legendary summer residency Judgement Sundays at Eden in Ibiza.



Flickr user alexharries



Photo: Ed Kashi (mohsinhamid.com)

## The job description of a novelist

Alizeh Kohari and Madeeha Ansari talk to **Mohsin Hamid** about stories and stereotypes

If children were once meant to be seen and not heard, writers were once meant to be neither; they were only to be read. These two journalists had a rather set idea about the literary writer as an aloof, anointed being in a bohemian setting, casting nets of language around elusive truths. It took the combined effort of the LSE Literary Festival organizers and the LSE press office to set things in perspective.

Mohsin Hamid is a Pakistani author whose books have gained international critical acclaim. A chronological nutshell of his life would include words like Princeton; Harvard Law School; McKinsey and Co.; and Booker Prize shortlist. It is no wonder that we expected him to be ensconced in some kind of intellectual cocoon. Before going in to talk about "Literature as Social Commentary" with David Hare and Boyd Tonkin, however, Hamid had just enough time to present a more human image of the modern writer.

"Well, there's art for art's sake, I guess. I'm not really sure what art for art's sake means (today). Most writers are writing partly because they need to write, want to write; partly because they want to communicate and for people to read them – and partly because they need to make a living."

This balance between art and practicality seemed to be in perfect sync with the general mindset at the LSE, where all three literature courses are studied in the context of politics and society.

"Why you would teach Literature to Business, Economics and Political Science students is the question. Partly because (it helps) to understand another human being. That's an important component of being human and functioning in the world – I think reading books is important. Then, learning how to write and learning how to tell stories is an important part of even the most transactional, business kind of careers. Finally, although stories (can be) completely false and novels are supposedly fiction, they sometimes contain more truth than things that are pretending to be true."

When it comes to stereotypes, Hamid doesn't seem to believe in them. As evidence, he cites a clutch of writers from just one specific region gaining prominence today.

"Muhammad Hanif is a malang (as-cetic) type; Daniyal [Mueenuddin] comes across as much more intense. He manages a farm in Pakistan and went to Yale Law school. Kamila Shamsie is again a very different type of person – she professionally operates more in the arts. I've done

### Learning how to tell stories is an important part of even the most transactional, business kind of careers

some work in business. So different backgrounds, different people. And that's just four Pakistani writers of my generation."

We still thought we could trace a pattern among modern writers, many of whom hailed from elite educational institutions. Even there, he insisted that there wasn't really a "generalised type".

"Is there an LSE type? You must know a thousand people here."

(Incidentally, we thought there was.)

"Well, it seems like that now, but wait till you leave and you look at everyone in a number of years. Somebody will be a drug addict; somebody will be a mother of six; somebody will be a hedge fund manager; another will be the head of the UN. You may seem like a type because you're all here, studying similar things in the same city, but wait till you go into the world."

Although he dismissed the importance of formal training in literature, there are some prerequisites for being a writer – and a successful one at that.

"You need to read a lot ...and you have to be someone who wants to tell stories."

"People are storytellers. You talk to a rickshaw-driver from the back of his

rickshaw and he starts telling you what's going on in Lahore or Karachi. Or you sit down with an old coach at the place where (the legendary) Jansher Khan learnt to play squash and he starts telling you about the past. Whether they are story-tellers who write stories in English, publish them and make a living from it? Probably not.

"In a way, people like me are lucky because we can plug into a global readership very easily. It's a lot harder for Urdu writers to do that."

Story-telling is a two-way street, and Mohsin Hamid is well-aware of traffic from the other end.

"Where I come from, people don't read. One thing I've always thought of is: how can I get them read me? I don't want to sit on a bookshelf. I thought: you can write in a very simple way – which I didn't want to do. So I thought I'll write something which (I think) is quite complex, but because it's short it won't be intimidating... and people are willing to give it a shot. And hopefully if they start reading it and it's short and it grips them, they finish it before they know what they're doing. And they stand back and say: oh wow, I read a novel."

The modern writer feels compelled to entertain; perhaps the modern reader demands for it to be so. "Here's the transaction: give me a few hours of your life; in exchange, I'll give you entertainment that, hopefully, will be worth those few hours of your life."

Perhaps life nowadays is too short for a long story. Is there really any point to the unread novel? When, though, did Literature succumb to the mechanics of demand and supply? Finding a balance between creative integrity and what will be read – that's the dilemma.

"It's very easy to get wrong. You can write what you think people want to read, but actually it's the unexpected that works. Twilight, for instance. Watchmen. Demand is being satisfied in so many different formats – newspapers, television, film. So it's not like you can say: people are really itching for the great Okara novel, you write the Okara book and it works. Also, just because there's demand does not necessarily mean you can supply. As a writer, unless it's something you feel passionate about and you have something to say about, writing a book for which there's demand won't go anywhere."

It was ironic that he mentioned Gabriel Okara, who has a very original way of translating the African experience into English. Right now, most Pakistani writers seem to want to show off their bilingualism by inserting Urdu words in their texts.

"There are just a lot of ways of doing it. Think of it as painting. You want to paint bright light. How do you do it? You can either use yellow colours or you can use big bold (swathes) of paint that create the feeling of light... There are different techniques and one technique is using the (actual) words. I prefer not to do that because if I'm going to write in English, I want to give (my characters) an English voice that captures the intention and meaning of what they're saying. In my third book I'm playing with the notion: how would Pakistanis talk if they were speaking in English?"

Salman Rushdie, in his book "Midnight's children", created a distinctly Indian kind of English. That, however, is not entirely the path Hamid would choose at this point.

"I kind of like the idea of creating Englishes that *feel* like this person sounds as opposed to feeling peculiarly Indian or Pakistani."

The conversation then drifted on to references to indigenous literature, to help create the texture of a different culture. On that he was refreshingly unpretentious.

"Just be yourself. I don't think you should do it to establish your authentic

Pakistani credentials.

"It's hard for me to say it's important because you're not trying to be the representative of the Pakistani literary world, you're just being yourself, telling stories. If somebody wants different knowledge (than you possess), they can read somebody with different knowledge than you. I don't think it's your job as a writer to acquire the knowledge to speak for an entire people."

Nor did he think it was necessarily the "job of the writer" to present the world in a certain way.

"We are part of a collective of human beings and trying to be a net positive actor in that collective is important – but it doesn't matter if you are a writer, student, mother or a businessman.

"You have a social duty but you define it for yourself. From Pakistani writer to professional propagandist is a very short slippery slope... and it's not my job to say: let me always make (my country) look good."

In the light of current affairs, the demand curve for Pakistani writing has experienced an upward shift. Naturally, supply has risen as well.

"There has always been a trickle of Pakistani writers being published. In the last decade there have been more and more of them gaining attention abroad, winning prizes, selling lots of books. That creates a certain visibility for people. But then also, the attention of the world is on Pakistan itself; it was, I think, Daniyal (Mueenuddin) who said: "Had I been a writer in Bulgaria, nobody would have cared."

At the same time, of course he conceded the importance of quality writing. Bulgarian writers cannot be blamed for the relative political stability in their land, but if they are passionate enough about the written word, that should be enough.

As we discovered in our next literature lecture, the most important part of being a writer is the need to share experiences. It was interesting to see how different Mohsin Hamid was in the NAB that day, talking about "harnessing of an identified market" for books; and how traces of the McKinsey man disappeared when he returned to address a much smaller audience. Then, he talked of childhood and the child's imagination, of little plastic dinosaurs made to lunge at each other, plastic heads clacking in combat. That puddle of rainwater sitting snug in a street dissolved into an ocean; that fleck of dirt right there became a merrily bobbing submarine.

"Then you grow up and you stop. Only writers... they remain that way."

**One thing I've always thought of is: How can I get them to read me? I don't want to sit on a bookshelf**

# Teaching and learning

**Ashma Kunde** shares the experience of being a tutor

“Can't you do twenty weeks instead of just twelve?” sighs one of my tutees as she nonchalantly flips the pages of a book, after I break the news to her that our weekly reading endeavours had now come to an end. The feeling is mutual.

My reasons for signing up to the LSE Student Tutoring Scheme back in October were simple – I find children adorable and enjoy working with them (and of course, unparalleled happiness can only be achieved from acts of benevolence). Applying was a straightforward procedure – we had to undergo a criminal record check and attend a three-hour training session for preparation. Previous teaching experience was not required, and placements were matched as closely as possible to our preferences. It is an unpaid voluntary scheme, but travel expenses are reimbursed.

My placement was at Duncombe Primary School situated in Archway, in the borough of Islington. During our induction visit, Headmaster Barry O'Shea explained to us that Archway is one of the most deprived areas in the UK, reflected in the school's challenging past and the backgrounds of many of its students. He spoke of the huge improvements that have taken place on both educational and social levels at the school, and the work he does with ex-students facing difficulties. I found his dedication inspiring.

My first official visit was a bit of a shock. As I walked through the canteen, ghastly memories of school dinners came flooding back to mind. I certainly wasn't expecting angelic children, perfectly-dressed and walking in pairs like something out of 'Madeleine' – but these kids were all over the place! I found it bizarre how casual the atmosphere was; the young ones just seemed to detach themselves from groups and walk off to other corners of the rooms. Younger children would frequently come up to me

**I certainly wasn't expecting angelic children, perfectly dressed and walking in pairs like something out of "Madeline"**

and stare unabashedly, as if they expected strangers to do strange things. The staff, out of compulsion and much practice, was well-versed in shouting techniques. Call me old-fashioned, but I found it strange that the students referred to their teachers by their first names. However, the strong sense of community within the school was very endearing – the close relationships between teachers and students, and between students themselves, regardless of year-groups.

So what exactly did my tutoring entail? I'm the kind of person who likes everything to be perfectly prepared beforehand, to the most minute detail. My notebook plan was as follows:

1. Sign in; 2. Collect child from classroom with a pair of scissors and reading book. 3. Talk to child about aspirations and news (10 mins). 4. Reading (10mins).
5. Pick 2 sentences from what was read, write on a sheet of paper and cut up. Put in envelope and write the full sentences on them. 6. Make note of the session, book, sentence and new words. 7. Get office staff to sign travel expenses sheet.

Yes, this is what we were supposed to be doing with our tutees. I spent the evening before my first session calling around asking for used envelopes.

I actually feel quite silly looking back at this rigid plan, because I never followed any of it. The cut-up sentences part was crossed out as soon as I found out I would be tutoring Year 6s. I have a brother the same age, and I know the look he'd give me if asked to show me where full stops and capital letters go.

Instead, I chose to focus more on their reading and pronunciation and any difficult vocabulary they encountered. Sometimes I'd help with comprehensions too. In fact, during my debut session, I was helping a chatty young girl with a passage on the Republic of Congo. She explained to me the diamond situation in this country and subsequently asked "Why can't all the poor people in Africa come and live in England?" I told her how it is physically impossible to fit all the inhabitants of a huge continent onto one little island. Then she asked "Why can't rich countries just give money to the poor countries?". I racked my brains to find the simplest economic/social/political reason – it was a difficult question.

In the latter weeks the proportion of talking versus reading changed significantly. We had so many fascinating discussions: from aspirations to superstitions, from Turkish films to the school curriculum. I also got asked several times "Is University hard?" I would laugh as I answered in the affirmative. Whatever the age, a student's perspective on studying never really does change. Not all the students were so talkative though, and it was often challenging trying to channel their attention towards the book at hand when they clearly wanted to be elsewhere.

I'm sure there are student tutors who made a much grander difference, but I wish I could judge the extent to which my modest 12-week contribution helped. Personally, I found the process invaluable because, however small the contribution, there is always something so beautiful in being part of the process of shaping young minds.

# Part-time party

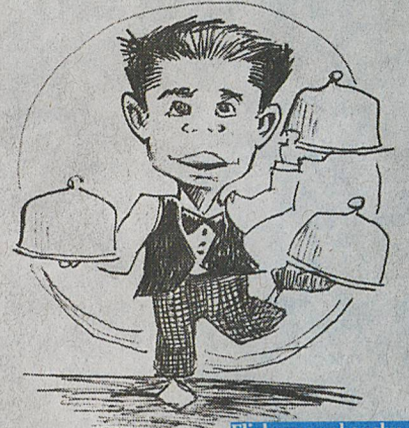
**Sean Whittington-Roy** thinks it worthwhile to juggle jobs as a student

The list of things I would have had to do without if I hadn't had a part-time job this year is quite extensive, including both my flat and most of my food. The student loan doesn't go far enough, and support from my parents helps, but none of this is enough to keep me going. The problem was finding something that wouldn't take up too much time and was flexible enough to allow me to take time off during my frequent essay crises.

Party Ingredients, a company providing catering to a wide range of events from corporate dinners to weddings, 'society' events and film premiers, managed to help me out. Shifts usually just take up an evening, and their flexible system means I can book up to three shifts a week – or none, if I need some time off. At busy periods, it's possible to get enough choice to be able to fit the job around my schedule each week.

The work itself is straightforward, if quite pressured. Training takes only an hour in the company's offices, and includes the basics of the high standards of service that you'll have to provide (which can include silver service). Best of all, you don't need any prior experience, breaking that annoying catch-22 for those of us unable to take advantage of nepotism or who haven't had the time to do this sort of work before. On the job, there is always plenty of support, as service is conducted in teams led by experienced staff. The principles are easy enough, and although it can take a bit of practice, after a few shifts the work becomes easy.

Chefs are well known for their short tempers, and providing a four course meal for 600 guests can put a lot of pressure on the management and chefs at these events. Not everyone enjoys working under such pressure, but once you know



Flickr user: shanshy

what you're doing and can do it quickly it's easy to get by. Most of the time on each shift is spent doing much less exciting things anyway – setting up, washing up and packing up.

Even if it can be stressful at times, there are many benefits to this sort of work, besides just the scheduling. Pay comes in generous packages of cash at the end of each shift and taxes are all taken care of. Easily the most satisfying part of each shift is the meal – usually they serve up whatever gourmet food didn't get served to the guests, although they refuse to do the same with the wine.

Working like this has been easy to do and fit around my schedule, whilst also providing me with useful experience of leading teams, now that I've been working for a while. Not only is it helping me study, it might even help fill out my CV for when I graduate.

## Listings: This week around campus

### Friday 13 March

LSE ACS presents:  
"The Carnival" – A celebration of African and Caribbean culture  
Old Theatre, 7 pm  
Tickets: £7 (non-ACS members)

### Tuesday 17 March

Sustainable Future Consulting and LSE Estates present:  
GIVE AND TAKE!  
NAB Foyer, 10 am – 5 pm  
Bring something old, take something new (for you)!  
Leave your clothes at SU reception and bring any other items (books, stationary, household items) on the day.

### Monday 9th March - Friday 13th March: LSE Arts Week

The LSE Literature Society presents:

"The Muse" Launch Party  
Introduction and readings by  
Professor Angus Wrenn

Refreshments to be provided

Friday 13th March 2009  
Parish Hall, 6-8 pm



The Italian Society presents:  
"Garibaldi"  
Send in a painting, photo, sculpture or poem celebrating Italy, and you could win £200!

Submission deadline: Friday  
20th March 2009

For more information, see [www.lseitaliansociety.com](http://www.lseitaliansociety.com)

The Visual Arts Society presents

Student Art Exhibition

Monday - Thursday  
Parish Hall

# The dignity of labour



Flickr user: azglenn

**Richard Crellin** steps outside the executive office

The "CV enhancing position" had fallen through and I was facing a summer of cold rainy days and little money. When a position as a labourer for a road-laying company came up, I can't say I was thrilled. With a little parental push, a weekly wage packet, and the rubbish weather, though, I thought I would give it a try.

I am not the labouring type. Toned muscle does not fill my wiry frame. You couldn't describe me as one of the lads either. I don't like football and would invariably choose a salad over a deep-fried breakfast in a polystyrene box. I like tea, but not with sugar and I had never read *The Sun* or *The Star*.

Little has changed. I finished the summer tanned, but not muscled. I still like salads and still drink tea without sugar. I have now read those papers and think, on balance, I am probably a better person for having done so, but that's about it. It wasn't a life-changing experience; there was no epiphany as there is for those who awaken to survey the savannah before a day of building wells for impoverished Africans. However, change can be subtle too.

I was terrified that my fellow layers of tarmac wouldn't like me, that I wouldn't fit in. The fact was they weren't the problem. For most of the summer I lived a double life. From clocking-in to clocking-off I assumed the life of a quiet and hard-working labourer. I pushed barrows of tarmac and welded stop and go signs at commuters who didn't seem to care if they killed me.

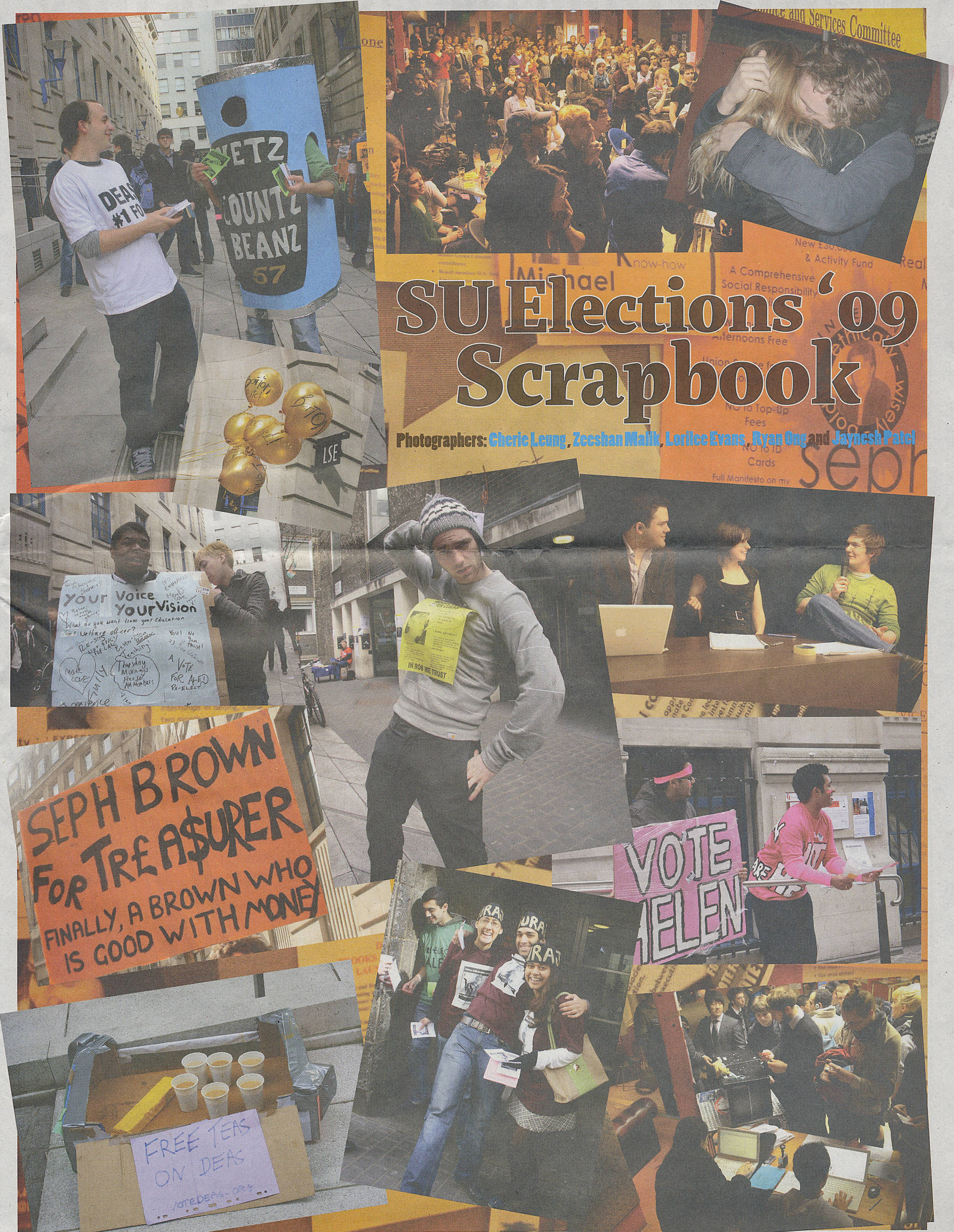
Things were different in the evenings. In pubs and clubs with friends, everyone wanted to know how I was doing. For some it was shock; intrigue at my unconventional job. Others wanted to see if I could hack it. Sadly, I think some just wanted me to slag off my work because they hated their office jobs and wanted their disappointment vindicated. Truth be told, although I was happy to leave the job in September – it isn't a job I could do for the rest of my life – whilst I was doing it, I enjoyed it.

Work has its own dignity. I was embarrassed as friends drove past me on the way to their banks, but by the end I was proud of my job. I have to say I enjoyed physical labour. Little is more satisfying than a road of newly laid tarmac at the end of a long day.

Working with people who have done the same job for all their working lives was often demoralising. My foreman, twenty years my senior, got paid about a pound an hour more than I did. He had three kids, one with special needs, and a wife. These men didn't love their work but then I guess they never had a choice. One GCSE, probably none – but they still make a go of it, while we feel entitled to having the pick of the job market. We all value work as a means to an end, however different that end may be. For road workers it puts food on the table, for investment bankers it puts a new Ferrari in the garage.

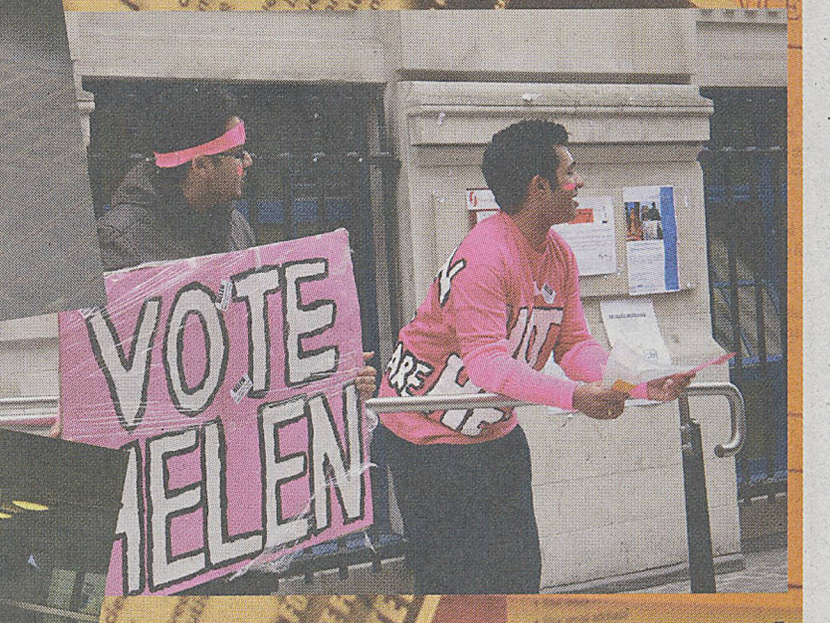
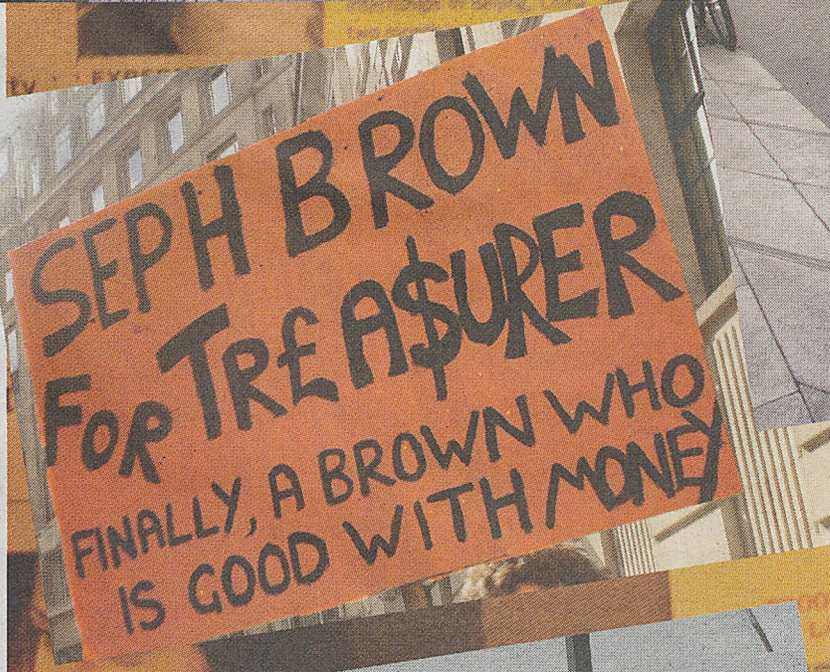
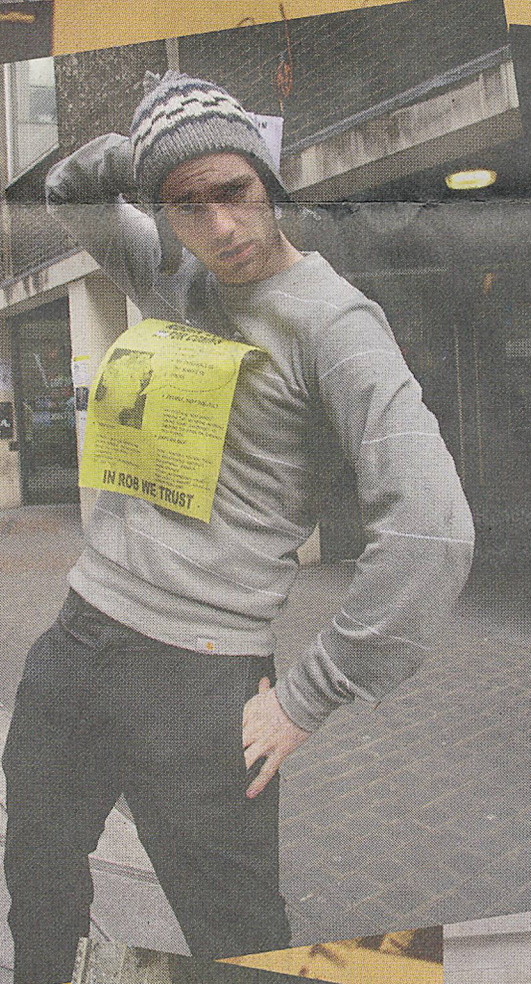
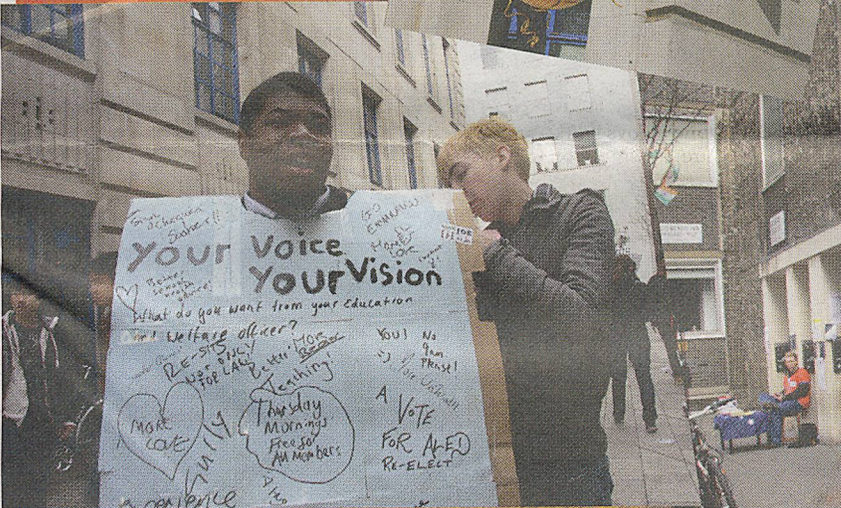
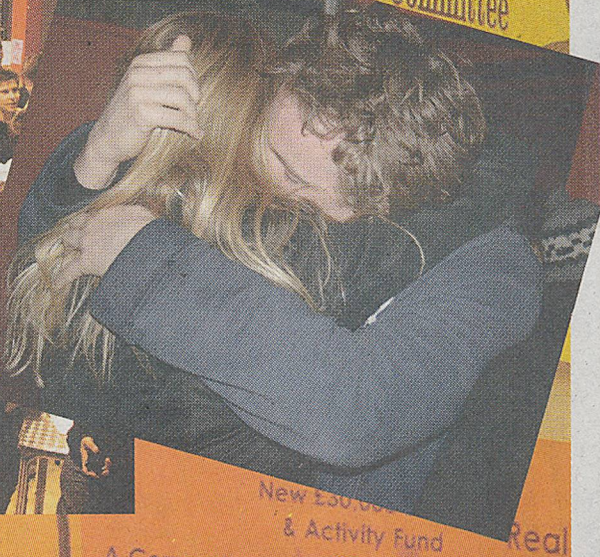
I am not a heart-on-your-sleeve socialist, but these are the kinds of people that society should be trying to help. They didn't claim benefits, they worked hard and most of them, thanks to the economic crisis, are now redundant.

Internships and summers in Africa may be great, but there are a whole host of equally "enhancing" jobs. It's good to know what you really should fight for. Traditionally, work experience is supposed to help us figure out what we want for our future, but it can do more; it can help to strengthen our identity.



## SU Elections '09 Scrapbook

Photographers: Cherie Leung, Zecshan Malik, Lorilee Evans, Ryan Ong and Jaynesh Patel



# Snatched from the jaws of victory

Lee Mager

An absolute monster weekend of pool took place at the Vauxhall Holiday Park in Great Yarmouth, the Mecca of English pool, from 19-22 February 2009. A total of 77 teams with 400 individual players from universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland competed for the spoils. A full seven of the LSE cohort reached

the last 256, an impressive feat in itself considering none of us, apart from myself, had any experience in competitive pool before a few months ago.

In particular there was a solid performance from Will who reached the last 128 stage, along with myself getting to the last 64. The star of the LSE show was Chris 'Tripod' Gully, who managed to reach the last 32. A truly awesome performance unlike his campaign to become gen-sec. He came back from 2-0 down in two of his matches and managed to overcome the

No. 3 Seed in the UK, Michael Rogers in an amazing match.

The format of the team competition was based on five-man teams, with one frame worth one point, with the first team to reach 6 frames being declared the winner. Teams played in seven groups with the top two from each group going through to the last 16 whereupon the competition became a straight knockout.

Both the 1st and 2nd teams performed brilliantly in the group stage remaining entirely undefeated. The 2nd team were

sadly then drawn against the Leeds 1st team, who had two pool superstars on their team, Glen Spalling and Martin Pratt in the last 16 who proved too strong and won 6-1.

The first team drew Lancaster in our last 16 match. These were by far the strongest opponents we had faced thus far; it came down to a horrifically tense decider where Martin Rydland pulled off an awesome thin-cut down the cushion to pot the winning black, at which point I pulled a muscle in my throat from screaming so loudly.

We then smashed up Kent in the Quarter Final 6-1. Our Semi Final match was to be against the Portsmouth 1st team who had only lost 2 frames for the entire tournament thus far and had three county players on their team making them among the favourites for the title.

Well, it was over quite quickly. The LSE did the unthinkable and won 6-3, with Robert winning the deciding frame like the merciless snooker demon he is, forcing their captain into taking on a very difficult black which he jawed to leave the simplest of finishes.

So now, here we were, in the god-damned final of the shield! Who were we up against? The aforementioned Leeds all stars and to make matters worse, they put the match on the TV tables, so our games were broadcast live on Cuesport TV. No pressure.

There's no question that none of us are anywhere near the level of Pratt and Spalling, so it was pretty much a given that they would win their frames. Irritatingly, I was drawn against Spalling, a former World Under-18 Champion, right at the start on

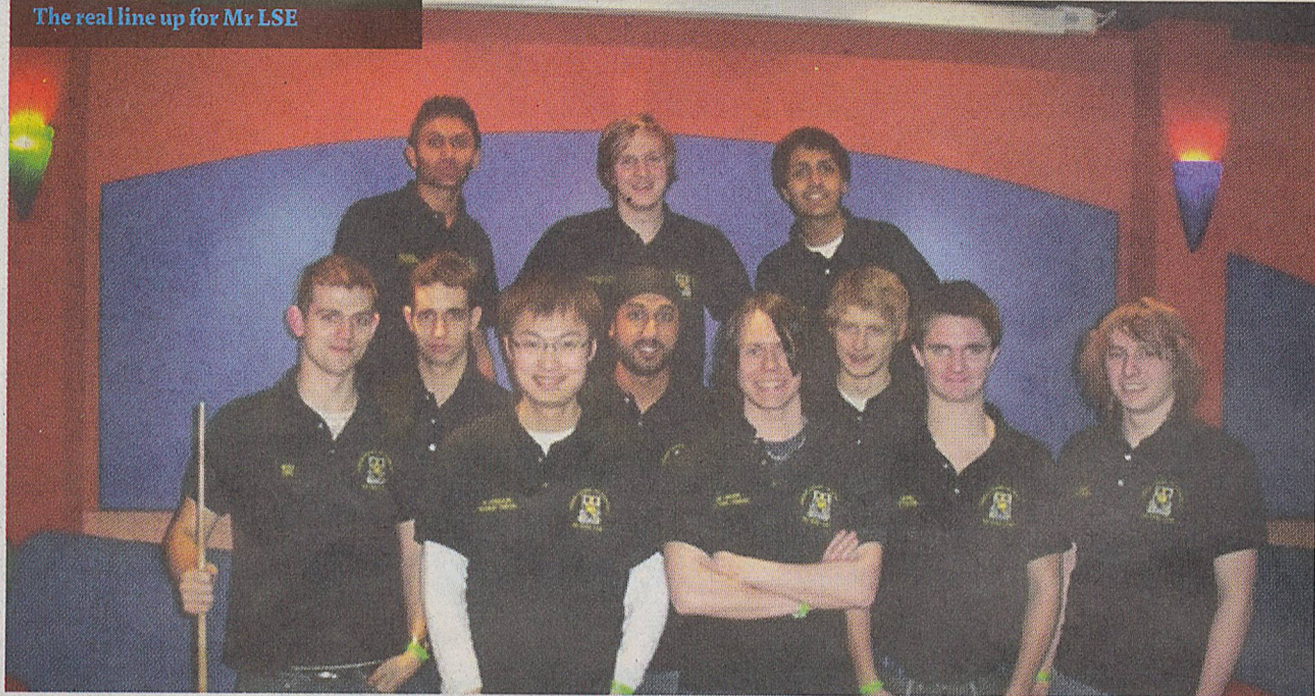
the TV table. Amazingly I dished Spalling off the table in one visit.

Robert was clearly jealous of the applause I received from the crowd and so he decided to do the exact same thing, a total one-visit clearance, against Martin Pratt, former BUCS semi-finalist and No. 4 seed. The Leeds contingent were stunned into silence.

I won the next frame at a canter and Alpeh's long double on his final yellow left us 5-2 up in the final. One more frame and we would win the whole bloody. Our hopes were raised when Spalling missed a black against Martin, but swiftly slammed back down to earth as the black rattled in the jaws and then flew down the cushion and straight into the other corner pocket. Without that fluke, Martin would have been guaranteed the win given that he only had three, very open, balls left.

Leeds stormed back to 5-5. This meant we had to have a three-man playoff to decide who would win the title. The first team to get 2 frames would be the champions. After Robert lost against Pratt and I won my frame, Alpeh was left up against Spalling in the decider. He pulled off yet another heroic shot to open up all of his balls in one beautiful movement of the cueball. Suddenly he was in and had a clear shot on the black that would win us the title. It was horrifying to see it wobble in the jaws, leaving Spalling with two balls directly over pockets to win the title for Leeds. The LSE team was mortified, and I walked outside the venue nearly in tears. We never expected to get anywhere near that far, but now we'd got there, to lose by one ball was devastating.

The real line up for Mr LSE



## Firsts face final face-off

### Students' Union Comms Officer-elect Rob Low on the football first team's run to the BUCS Cup final

The inaugural BUCS Football cup competition sees LSE's 1st XI taking on Brighton in the South-East final in Sheffield on 25 March.

It was a quite remarkable cup run which took the 1sts to the final. Wins against Kingston, Essex, Chichester and St. Mary's took us all over the home counties and even yielded a one off trip to the David Beckham Academy. These victories led us to a semi-final away in Portsmouth, facing perhaps our toughest competition thus far this season.

Portsmouth was a tough, physical outfit, but the 1st team were quite comfortably the better team, and in the end the team which played the better football won. A cracking goal from Gurpreet "the pigeon lover" Dhama, coolly finishing after some fantastic team passing in the build up. The final score was 3-0 and the job was done. Now the tickets have been booked to Sheffield for finals day. Why the South-East final is being held in Sheffield is anyone's guess. But we shall go, and we shall win, and no one will ever know because it takes place after term has ended.

With regards to the rest of the season, there have been a lot of what ifs. What if we had scored one of our many chances in the ULU Cup quarter final against RUMS before losing? What if we had not been so shit against SOAS when we had the chance to go top of the league? What if referees weren't so quick to send people off for innocuous challenges? We will never know the answers to these, but it seems like the first XI was very close to something great, but perhaps a combination of a lack of commitment from some players, and injuries at crucial times, it will only be a very good season.

That may sound greedy, but when you are so close to achieving something memorable, and you end up with just having a successful season, it is tough. That said, the chance to win a BUCS final doesn't come about very often, and all the teams in ULU that we have played against have been knocked out, but we mustn't have any 'what if' scenarios when we play Brighton, we must grab this opportunity and have something to show for what has actually been a solid collective effort, with some fantastic moments, and some not so brilliant ones as well.

If all else fails we might be forced to win

the football competition on the Football Club's annual trip to Spain, where we take on universities from across Europe. If that fails we'll just have a few lad sauces, sing a few songs, and head on down to Avenue.

If you wish to attend the BUCS final please contact captain Ed Healy on e.m.healy@lse.ac.uk



## Results

### Men's Hockey

2nd's 5-1 RVC  
3rd's LSE 7-RSM 1

### Mens Tennis

LSE 2nd's 10-0 SOAS 1st's

### Women's Hockey

LSE 1-0 RVC  
LSE 6-1 Kings

### Ladies Squash

ULU Cup Challenge: beat St George's Medical 5-0 to reach finals against King's  
BUCS: Beat Southampton University to reach Semi finals against Bristol.  
Beat Bristol University in semi finals of BUCS trophy cup knockouts. 3-1

### Netball

LSE 1s 44-24 Southbank  
LSE 2nds 21-32 RUMS 2nds  
LSE 2nds 46-6 St. George's 4ths  
LSE 2nds 30-27 Royal Holloway 2nds  
LSE 4ths 12-15 Queen Mary 3rds  
LSE 5ths 15-20 Kings 4ths  
LSE 5ths 21-17 Queen Mary 4ths  
LSE 5ths 24-28 Imperial Medics 4ths

### Women's Badminton

LSE beat Bristol 4-4 (10-9 on games won)

### Men's Table Tennis

Men's 2nd team: 9-7 win against Brighton 2 in BUCS cup semi-final.

### Mens Football

LSE 1s 3-0 Portsmouth's 2 through to the final of the BUCS cup  
LSE 1s 4-1 Brunel 3s  
UCL 2 3-0 LSE 2s (relegated)  
Imperial 2s 1-0 LSE 3s

### Women's Rugby

Lost 36-10 to Reading  
0-0 Draw with UCL

# Thomas Jackson; where did it all go wrong?



## Philosophical Barry

Strong leadership is a fascinating character trait. To recognise when a man's head drops, coaxing him through his melancholy while his senses are blinded by a fog of doubt, and relighting the fires of his spirit is an uncanny ability. It's what makes a good player a great one.

Within this year's LSE Athletics Union there have been some stand-out performers in terms of the above. All those who have camped outside the 1st team changing room at Berrylands will testify that Ed Healy is possibly the most gifted orator since JFK. Choice team talks have involved repeating the phrase "I went to sleep dreaming about this" twenty-two times and the line of the season thus far has to be "They are going to come in our faces". Moments that will be enshrined in FC folklore for years to come. Notable mentions also go to 1st team Netball captain Charlie Glyn, Ulitimate Frisbee's Daniel Stein and Men's Basketball co-captains Nick Broadway and Justin Gest.

One captain, however, has been consistently brilliant. His telling commitment to the cause and inexorable faith in the ability of those around puts him in a league all of his own. From the moment that the first rendition of "Stand By Me" echoed out over the Tuns in the opening week of term all those under his stewardship knew this would be a season to remember. This man, of course, is Thomas Jackson.

That first dig at the footballers from the Rugby Club Captain was the beginning of a string successes for the man who

has overcome so many obstacles to get where he is today, including being from Essex and having a remarkably small penis. Burdened with the unenviable task of succeeding the incommensurable P W Burkmisher, many thought that Jacko had everything to lose when he inherited the club's top job but he has truly been a revolutionary influence on the, at times, most despised group within the AU.

Moving to dispel the myth that the Rugby club is full of public school boys, with more money than banter, he drafted in ghetto superstar Josh Olomolaiye and working class hero Matthew Box (I presume everyone from Sunderland falls into this social category) to add some much needed diversity. In addition Jacko has also sought to breakdown barriers between his own club and those around it, forging a particularly strong relationship with those in the Netball club. All in all, the Rugby club has undergone a total transformation from a bunch of muscle-bound reprobates into what I dare say may be termed as pretty decent bunch of lads.

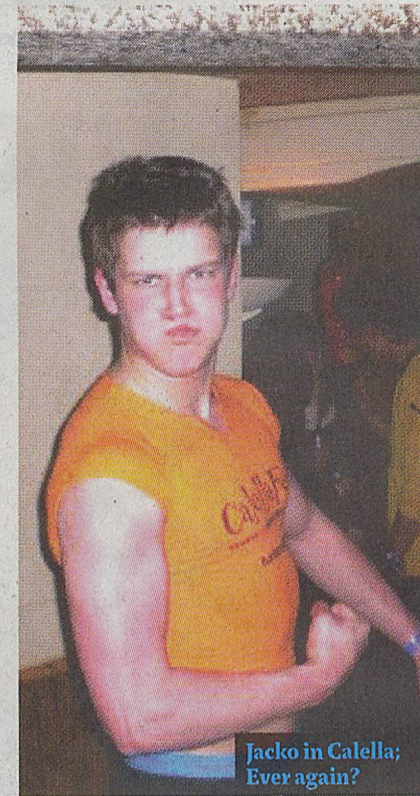
It is these facts that make recent news of Jacko's status re Calella all the more damning. In this instance, said atrocious team was Imperial fourths on Wednesday.

After featuring in the last couple of games, and therefore his longest run of the season so far, the changing room banter was flowing from BJ before the match. Sadly for him, however, Rog thought that the match called for the dedication and hard work (uncharacteristic of the resident jester), and thus he was left to warm the bench with Bowny for the entire 90 minutes. It would appear that this ruthless captaincy paid off however, as the unity of the players on the pitch seemed the key in holding off the onslaught late on in the match.

Before the onslaught, Vik scored two good goals to put us ahead within the first twenty minutes, and an unexpected mistake from Jarrett at a corner allowed Imperial back into the match. These incidents, along with a few missed chances on our part, left the match balanced at 2-1, a score line which severely flattered our below-par opponents. The second half saw a slight improvement in the quality of play from Imperial, and our attacking play was limited to counter attacks that could

Just think about it, lad.

[philosophicalbarry@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:philosophicalbarry@thebeaveronline.co.uk)



Jacko in Calella; Ever again?



Betty gets Batty. Photo: Vicky Satterthwaite

## Hockey girls commit regicide

Dani Priestley and Alex Webb

The Women's Hockey Club enjoyed another snow day on Wednesday, during our match against Kings Seconds. By half time the pitch was white all over and we could hardly see the ball. The umpires were just waiting for someone to fall over and the game would have been called off.

Luckily, Alison wasn't there to oblige, and we're bloody glad no one came a cropper, as they would have incurred the wrath of Captain Emma Heap. The only semi-casualty was Dani, who managed to walk into the dugout and half-knock herself out, but brushed off any possibility of concussion since we had no substitutes.

But, back to the game; we dominated from the first push back, which we stole and Superstar Alex Webb slipped it into their net before they even had the chance to turn around. Soon came our first penalty corner; Heap ejaculated the ball in the usual style in Dani's direction. She passed it onto Alex, who sent it to the right post, where Heap eagerly slipped it between the goalie's legs. Job well done. After a few moments rest Heap had the energy to do it again.

If the Kings girls had channelled as much energy into playing decent hockey as they did into hurling abuse at each other, they might have given us a run for our money, but as they insisted on having

an 11-way domestic we were free to run rings around them in what was widely considered our best match of the season.

The King's Captain, who had clearly learned her leadership skills from Heinrich Himmler, managed to eject the ball up the pitch, and the centre-forward took a break from being a playground bully to score a fluke of a goal past the so-far impermeable Serene, leaving the score 3-1.

Collin's superb man marking, Betty's usual stoicism, and Vicki's brilliant tackles kept the ball well away from our goal, giving Haugh the chance to score a well-deserved pre-half-time goal.

During the second half, the snow receded, but the animosity amongst the Kings team did not. Never mind, we capitalised on their scrappy defending and their willingness to give us the ball as soon as we approached them, and Alex and Haugh got another goal a-piece. A solid performance in midfield from Kathryn and Caroline, and reliable support on the right wing from Gine ensured we held our lead, and the game ended 6-1.

A particularly enjoyable night at Walkabout ensued, highlights included Alex's "yo-mamma" dance-off, Pickles' interesting-aroma snog, Alison's splinted leg, Heap's interesting campaigning methods, Caroline's put-downs, Haugh's scary admirer with an unusual chat-up technique (in which "no" means "yes" and "get lost" means "I want you bad"), and Dani's general inebriated-ness.

## Ups and downs, fourths dispell the frowns

Matt Perkins on why revenge is the order of the day as the 4th team face the same team twice in 4 days.

When Iain Dowie coined the word "bouncebackability", he did not realise how fitting it would be for the manner in which the fourth team go about their business in ULU Division 1. With only a few matches remaining in the season, and the prospect of relegation still looming large, it has to be noted that, to date, the team has failed to win two games on the trot.

The players seem to be chronically incapable of motivating themselves unless they have just suffered defeat at the hands of some atrocious team. In this instance, said atrocious team was Imperial fourths on Wednesday.

After travelling for what seemed like an eternity on the Piccadilly Line (and passing the time by singing several renditions of well-known pop songs in preparation for karaoke later that night), our journey was prolonged further by having to wait to for Palvir. Although most of us would have not bothered waiting, the fact that the responsibility of washing the kit had been bestowed upon him made it a regrettable inevitability.

Unfortunately, the day went from bad to worse. On a pitch covered in a couple of inches of water in many places and with redundant striker Deeny in goal, the match was very scrappy. The ref frustrated us all day, making strange decisions and punishing Al on several occasions for pushing from behind (something which he never normally gets told off for). After conceding three sloppy goals, a goal each from Matt and Vik were not enough to prevent us from going down 3-2.

Having already noted our self-evident pattern of results, the stage was clearly set on Saturday for victory. The best part about this particular instance was that our opposition was the same as it had been in mid-week, and was therefore an opportunity to seek some direct revenge. A couple of ringers came in for the experience: Fenton, who had enjoyed his previous match with us so much that he has begged to return ever since, finally had his wish granted, and Louis, desperate to play alongside his brother, brought our Crow quota up to its maximum.

We turned up at the Fortress early to get our game-faces on, which was particularly important for Gonads (your new AU Secretary) who, despite warning Matt against having too much to drink at Crush the night before, turned up looking somewhat hungover. Our long-haired contingent also showed their intent for

taking this match seriously, all deciding to get their hair out of their faces. Jarrett sported a red bandana, and Mig and Louis wore headbands, making them look more at home in Serie A and the 1970s respectively.

After featuring in the last couple of games, and therefore his longest run of the season so far, the changing room banter was flowing from BJ before the match. Sadly for him, however, Rog thought that the match called for the dedication and hard work (uncharacteristic of the resident jester), and thus he was left to warm the bench with Bowny for the entire 90 minutes. It would appear that this ruthless captaincy paid off however, as the unity of the players on the pitch seemed the key in holding off the onslaught late on in the match.

Before the onslaught, Vik scored two good goals to put us ahead within the first twenty minutes, and an unexpected mistake from Jarrett at a corner allowed Imperial back into the match. These incidents, along with a few missed chances on our part, left the match balanced at 2-1, a score line which severely flattered our below-par opponents. The second half saw a slight improvement in the quality of play from Imperial, and our attacking play was limited to counter attacks that could

have brought more joy if the offside rule did not exist.

The last twenty-five minutes or so were incessantly punctuated with Imperial players saying "time Ref!" and "how long Ref?" which got extremely irritating, especially as time seemed to be going very slowly as we were trying to hold out their attacks. Thankfully the Ref did manage to officiate the game with a reasonable degree of ability, which was particularly surprising given his lack of experience or expertise; although when we are referring to Rob Low it seems that this is never a stumbling block in his exploits (congratulations on the election victory by the way).

With only two matches left to play in the league, and neither of them at the Fortress, we hope to stave off the threat of relegation with some more solid performances. As Ash, Vik, Al, Mig and Rog are nearing the end of their FC careers (providing that they can resist returning for a few cheeky cameo appearances next season), the whole team will pull together to make their last season a success.

Three more points should ensure survival, and we will hopefully attain them on Wednesday so that we can enjoy the AU ball in style. Then again, losing has never stopped us getting on the lash: as Al says, "win or lose, get on the booze."



# Sport



**Congratulations  
to former  
Sports Editor Robin Low  
on his election victory**

## No luck as rugby ladies see red

Katerina Soukeras

Emotions were running high in anticipation of Wednesday, 4 March's match against Reading.

This was a team that had sent three of our players to hospital last term; one with a dislocated shoulder, one with concussion, and one with most of the ligaments in her foot destroyed. Two of these players were back in action for this game, and both wanted revenge.

So far this season has been eventful. This team made up mostly of freshers, most of whom have had little or no experience of rugby previously, has developed beyond recognition. With a better win tally than the men's 1st XV, who are rumoured to be facing relegation, the women's 1st XV has been LSE's saving grace in the rugby scene, refusing to let our university become the laughing stock of the rugby world.

Indeed the name LSE women's 1st XV has begun to strike terror in the hearts of the Strand Poly players. These Pommy scum must cringe to remember that the team who they so easily beat earlier in the season, thrashed them beyond belief twice in a row. So too must St Georges; no less than three ambulances were called to pick up the remains of their team when we last played them.

We arrived in plenty of time to allow for our warm up to be thorough. Perhaps a little too thorough for Sarah 'I need to pee' Dawes who had incurred a drunken injury to her coccyx the previous week. Sarah and our lovely social sec Lia had to watch, frustrated from the sidelines, for the rest of the game.

Kick off was eventful to say the least. The card-happy Welsh referee, who Welsh Kate disgustingly described as "from the Valleys", was completely misunderstood by both sides on every occasion. It took three kicks by our captain for the game to kick off. She failed to understand the gobbledegook that the ref was sprouting - he wanted to blow the whistle for the first kick off of each half, but was prepared to leave his job up to us for the rest of the game.

Play in the first half seemed very slow, the referee called both teams up on every single minor error. The forwards were so exhausted by the endless stream of

scrums that it was difficult for them to concentrate on the game. Naz, who is well known for screaming at the opposition "she's mine" and "come here you", directed her shouting at our side to get our dodgy defensive line in order.

The tackles that the forwards were putting in paled in comparison to their usual kamikaze style. It seemed that the journey on the banter bus had drained everyone's energy. Nevertheless Alex Peters-Day showed her characteristic dedication to the sport by continuing to play despite being hit by a vicious bout of food poisoning worthy of Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck.

The tides began to turn at the beginning of the second half when Hannah Riches almost broke through the Reading line of defence, running with such determination that most of the team were sure there was a thunderbird on the other end of the pitch. Her run started a series of rucks which allowed the LSE ladies to gain ground, venturing deep into the Reading half.

LSE's first try was scored soon after by Mini-chi who used a very complex and intellectual tactic to confuse the opposition. When given a penalty she turned to speak to the ref, touched the ball to her foot and ran. The Reading team were completely baffled and with shouts of "what the hell's going on?" a try was scored.

As usual Kate was, like Reading, was rather confused for much of the match. Not helped by the pathetic Reading supporters (you would have thought that a team whose halls are less than five minutes away from the pitch could rally more than five weedy-looking plebs) who screamed "sit on her, Kate" to a rather large blonde number 8. Her distraction was also caused by the constant calls of "I love you Kate" - a phrase that was no doubt repeated by another Welsh Twat later that night.

For a team who's kicking was exceptional, Reading's line-outs were horrific. Indeed it was stupid that they continually kicked the ball into touch, and then lost possession as the flying Nadine 'vampire' Marshman snatched the ball out the air. After some of these terrific line-outs the brute strength of the Forwards mauled left Reading falling to the floor as the ball was pushed half way across the pitch.

As LSE's play improved ten-fold, the opposition became more and more



Photo: Katerina Soukeras

**As LSE's play improved ten-fold, the opposition became more and more desperate, with their discipline becoming worthy of England's Six Nations performances**

desperate, with their discipline becoming worthy of England's Six Nations performances. Judith was brought down with an exceptionally high tackle from Reading's ginger second row. As they both lay on the floor with indignant shouts of 'high tackle' rising from the LSE team, it was very clear that Judith was essentially in a headlock. Yet the referee refused to see that this was rugby not a wrestling match, and play continued.

There was a close call with the sin bin when Kirsty high-tackled one of the opposition. It was only through a mixture of excessive flirting and innuendo worthy of a netball player that she managed to escape. Reading's number 5 was not so lucky, after yet another dangerous tackle she was sent off and then proceeded to smoke a fag by the side of the pitch.

Despite losing the game, the 1st XV re-

mained in high spirits knowing that even though they had a slow start they played a brilliant game. The game however did not end without injury, both Vanessa and Kat's knees were in agony. To be honest what was more worrying was the possibility of some kind of brain trauma for some of the backs, who, at the end of the game went completely the wrong way to the changing rooms, displaying an IQ scoring equal to their shirt numbers.

With two matches left till the end of the season, the women's rugby team should be proud of their progress. Winning four matches in a row this term was by far our greatest achievement. Our coach Jim says it all (literally) when he points out that "communication is definitely a strong point" and that the squad has "the most important thing - team spirit". Team spirit indeed.

## Netball 2nds have a great 3some

**Charlotte Hacker** breaks down the recent escapades of the netball seconds

With six new freshers and Lydia (pretty much recruited straight out of the womb at the tender age of seventeen), it was inevitable that the second netball team would take time to gel. Last term we clinched some well-deserved wins. However this term began in a less than desirable manner with one loss, give or take.

When the delights of snow day hit, Britain did what Britain does best and erupted into panic. Matches were cancelled all over the shop and we were left with almost two netball-less weeks, leaving us fully unprepared for our second cup match against Roehampton 1sts.

Sources had kindly informed us of Roehampton's thrashing of their last opponent 90-1, so it was down to sheer terror rather than dedication that us shooters trekked to Berrylands two hours early to practice before the match. We were pleasantly surprised when we discovered that Roehampton had to replace their team with a significant number of 3rds, and the extra shooting practice paid off as we doubled their score 50-25 amidst their captain's demoralising cries of "this is embarrassing".

Thus the 2nds fluked their way through to the quarter finals of the cup in a smug manner. Lydia redeemed herself after her spectacular own goal last term (note that she is our goal keep). She won player of the match and all was well.

We hurriedly skim the events of the next cup match, which found us face to face with Portsmouth 1sts. No amount of superficial fake tan digs could save us here, but accepting our fate, we played admirably considering the obscene amount of food consumed on the minibus. We never lost heart, although no amount of determination stopped us getting utterly spanked. Thanks go to the first's Annabel who stepped in as GS.

Relentlessly rescheduled matches took us straight into a BUCS match against Southbank at home. Our Trinidad representative Valene was desperate to warm up, and consequently darted around the pitch like your mum on speed, feeding the ball effortlessly into the circle, where the quaintly named "shooting Charlottes" scored 28 goals.

Our merciless defenders allowed a mere 7 goals, thanks to Lesley's ability to constantly intercept in a manner com-

parable to a pitbull, and Janine's 'Arms-McGee' lean. Even the Goal Keep's poor sportsmanship didn't put us off as she referred to Charlotte as a "f\*\*king idiot". This was probably down to Charlotte's somewhat 'expressive' face; we were marked a little closer than we thought acceptable.

Canterbury Christ Church was yet another minibus journey away, and a delayed arrival rushed us onto the court without a chance to warm up, although the girls did manage to relieve themselves in a nearby field due to the lack of toilets. With the 3rds Emma Coker kindly filling in for Goal Shoot we were immediately at advantage when we realised (albeit one quarter in) that CCC had only 6 players.

This game demonstrated improvements in our passing and spacing thanks to our efficient wings Alice, Valene and Olga and a final score of 49-15 left us victorious.

The most recent of our winning streak took place last Monday against Royal Holloway, crucial to securing our place in the league, and to justifying alcohol-fuelled celebrations. With our beloved mother goose Alice injured, and only one reserve

we were in a precarious position. The match began cautiously, with a one-for-one goal climb, but nerves got the better of us as we threw away easy chances as we realised they were willing to fight just as hard as us.

Pressure continued as neither team managed to get a significant gain, and with particularly strict umpiring on subtle footwork such as dragging, the ball was constantly being handed over.

The third quarter saw carnage; panic-induced messy play and injuries as their Goal Keep - not without comic potential - head-butted the goalpost and I went over on my ankle. The subsequent, urgent swap between Charlotte and I could have disrupted our set up, but it is with serious relief that I can recall the final score as 30-27 to LSE, with Lesley reclaiming her much deserved Player of the Match title.

So watch this space on and off the court. The 2nds have found unity and the beginnings of success in an almost entirely new team. With ten boyfriends, the seconds may be renowned for being largely unavailable, but as long as we have Janine we feel that we more than compensate.

## Gamblers Anon

The GA team took a break last week after an inordinate amount of bets were placed on Robin Low to become the next SU Comms officer leading to allegations of political subterfuge. It turns out that Rob was wagering his prospective salary in attempt to make as much money as possible out of a possible election victory. Luckily for him he won, otherwise the only communicating he would be doing would be with the Metropolitan Police.

This week we are going to focus upon the world of European Ice Hockey. Firstly we will place £5 on Wolfsburg to beat Augsburg at 1.74 (8/11) in the German DEL League. This well publicised "battle of the 'burgs" is sure to hark back to a time when the two towns battled over religious differences which have now thankfully given way to a more peaceful type of conflict. That said, there are still good odds that someone may lose at least six teeth.

And in a shocking change in tactics we are going to pump our final £15 on Rodovre to overcome Frederikshavn (which roughly translates as Fred-Eric-Shaun, the towns founders, in English) at 1.66 (4/6) in the Danish All-Bank Ligaen. Fingers crossed we can make some loot of this one.

**betfair**  
sports casino poker

18+ Please gamble responsibly. Visit [www.gamblaware.co.uk](http://www.gamblaware.co.uk)



١٥ - ١٤٤٤ هـ

**TBPB#0705**

**3 RANT**

4 MINIMALISM

**6 MUSIC**

**7 FOOD**

**8 POINTLESS**

10 THE SPIRITUAL ART

**12 FILM**

**13 VISUAL ARTS**

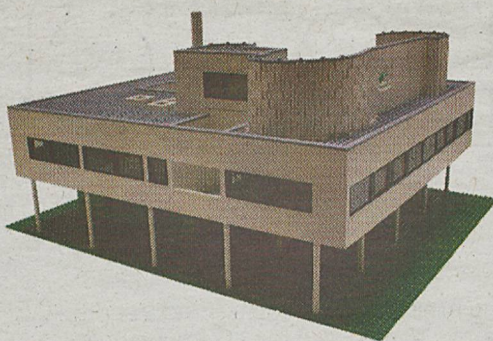
**14 JOURNEYS**

**16 TV**

Naturally, as a student, I live in a box. As an LSE student, I am in possession of a mountain of textbooks, course packs, financial newspapers and the unavoidable corporate freebies. Fresher's Week alone not only filled the space under my bed but also provided me with a month's supply of mints. As you may expect therefore, minimalism isn't an option for me. I have too much stuff - however useless - and since it's all I own in the whole world, I can't say I'm desperate to get rid of it.

There are people though who yearn for the sparse, and clamour for the untouched. But are these people happy with their homestead? A place that's empty and white; where belongings are invariably tucked into every cubby hole only to be used when absolutely necessary. I saw a television programme a while ago named something in the region of "Britain's Best Home". It followed a group of such clutterphobes, whatever a group of clutterphobes would be called - perhaps a brace? Anyway, it followed a brace of clutterphobes who lived in fantastically well-kept (and incredibly boring) homes. You could almost say they were untouched.

In one case this was found to be true when it transpired that the whole family lived in a hovel-like room in the basement. It really does take a certain kind of barmy to lock your family up in a cellar, and leave the rest of the five-bedroom Georgian townhouse to be a museum with no guests. A shell in



LESS IS  
LESS

HOWARD ISMARIKSON LI  
HATES THE GRAND DESIGNS  
OF NOTHINGNESS

which the only visitor is a person employed to dust every surface twice a week. These idiots were scared to walk in their own home for fear of touching it! Is this really aspirational? Is it really one of the best homes in this country? No, it isn't. It is in fact this supposedly glorious concept of minimalism gone horrifically and irreconcilably wrong.

That brings me on to **Grand Designs**, a programme that takes those mugs that spend four years and a million billion pounds to build their dream home, and puts them on TV. Usually this involves renovating an old building; more typically, building a whole house around one old wall and in so doing, doubling the cost of the whole project. After several setbacks, lazy builders and bad weather (this is England after all) it's the turn of Kevin 'brown nose' McCloud to come in and pour unequivocal praise upon the amphitheatre of nothingness that is the interior. 'There's such a feeling of space!' he exclaims. No shit, Sherlock. There's nothing in it! Now I may be a cynic (and for the record, I really am) but surely it can't take two minutes before the house is full of scatter cushions, nests of tables and, if they have kids, Lego.

A clean, spacious, functional house may be what people want but you can't have all that and still end up with a comfortable home. For me, less is less, and nothing makes me so sure of it as seeing a family struggling to keep everything spotless with almost military precision.

## HARDER, BETTER, FASTER, SMALLER

**ROB MORTON** MINIMISES EVERYTHING IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS

As I write this, The White Stripes are explaining what an Icky Thump is to my upstairs neighbours, via my trusty iPod and speakers. This marvel of modern engineering/perfect evidence of modern marketing is a prime example of how minimalism has become all the rage. Smaller. Faster. More efficient. More stylish.

First there was the original iPod, which was revolutionary because it managed to carry vast quantities of music in a stylish, consumer-friendly package. It was a pretty clunky, but it no longer mattered when the iPod-style music player became the social norm, and people couldn't live without 1,000 songs at their fingertips. And the sizes would only get bigger: the four-button, the iPod photo, the iPod colour, the iPod video. Then somewhere along the line, they dropped in the iPod nano.

I grew up in a culture that screamed "big is beautiful" and "more is better", yet at every turn things seem to be getting smaller. America, land of the large, now has the largest vegan population in the world. The Hummer's beastliness and history as a military vehicle made it the ultimate 'size is power' car, but TIME recently reported that GM was considering whether to abandon the iconic

Hummer under their restructuring plans. Economists will debate a variety of reasons for the Hummer's fall, but one reason stands out for my purposes: the Toyota Prius' notion that it wasn't cool to possess horsepower worthy of a drive through downtown Baghdad.

Our sentences are getting shorter, condensed down to one-hundred and sixty characters, courtesy of Nokia and Motorola. When kids aren't chopping phrases to fit on Facebook walls, adults are studying "business" English, where Shakespeare is conveniently swapped for Shakespeare Very Good English School's eBook. Nudists rejoice as beaches become increasingly minimalist - wearing clothes when you're going to be wet is so inefficient - while fashionistas elsewhere sport tube-tops, flip-flops, G-strings and Twitter, which is itself a bloody minimalist rip-off of Facebook.

Steve Jobs figured it out; who needs live people? We can put silhouettes in our commercials! The whole dance is essentially an impression of Justin Long (aka The Mac Guy) sling-shotting a MacBook at a silhouette of Goliath - if Goliath wore white headphones.

A glance at property markets shows that disused lofts in regenerated districts are

often priced above sprawling mansions in suburbia, with the hipster crowd favoring the edgy, modern and minimalist. Vlad the Impaler's Romanian castle, with the comforts of various medieval torture devices and a few washrooms for snotty tourist kids, came in at number three on Forbes' Expensive Homes of 2008. Away from home, we've recently invented small-scale ecotourism (well, Calella it ain't) and cultural breaks and adventure holidays. Yes, people now actually pay to live the nature-enforced minimalism of our forefathers for a few days. If only the same people had been around during the Industrial Revolution, we wouldn't be worrying about global warming today. We'd probably also be living in the Dark Ages, gushing over the amazement of taking a piss outdoors in winter.

But trends are cyclical, and perhaps minimalism is a phase that will soon change. We abandoned the bloated pop of the late 1980s for the grungy, minimalist Nirvana; the Red Scare movements of the 1950s for the small-scale idling of flower power; Transformers-style monster trucks for speedsters like the Mini Cooper. The question is, when does minimalism go too far? How much can we sacrifice, marginalise and minimise before life becomes impractical? And, how exactly would an iPhone shuffle work?

# MINIMALIST CULTURE

DANIEL B. YATES SHOUTS FROM A PILLAR IN THE SYRIAN DESERT

My television screen flickers dimly as on it Simon is envisioning his new home. He wants the space to remain with an open feeling. 'I want the space to remain with an open feeling,' Simon says idiotically to camera. He wants an uncluttered space, an uncluttered mind. 'I want an uncluttered space... and an uncluttered mind,' and as he says this I wonder whether the latter needs to be conceived as an aim. One might expect Simon to blurt out a word that has become casual effluvium in this sort of setting, a simple catchphrase for a simple medium. The word is minimalist.

The word is certainly a utile one; it crops up in differing discourse after differing discourse, to the point at which it begins to exhibit conceptual stretch marks. There is semantic minimalism, judicial minimalism, theological and theoretical minimalism, Chomsky has his own linguistic minimalism and Obama has been praised for his light-touch consensualist 'minimalist politics'. For a term denoting precision and economy this prevalence is an indecent irony. And in its becoming commonplace, the term seems to have become déclassé within its sphere of origin, the arts.

Father of minimalist music La Monte Young employs the language of the spiritual, and is terse in his insistence that minimalism as a word only has 'limited usefulness'. However musical historians would disagree. Minimalism, replete with capitalization, refers to the movement Young precipitated which burgeoned in the US of the mid-1960s. Drawing on his love of Webern and Indian Classical music, Young produced elongated, atemporal sonic planes. The likes of Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Phillip Glass constituted a coterie of louche rebels within the musical establishment. Dangerously close to pop, and with scant regard for convention, their flimsy and defiantly conceptual pieces threatened to undermine the functional assumptions of classical music. Young's work especially would later give birth to drone rock, catalysed by Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* (whose liner notes misspell a namecheck of Young). On the danceable end of the spectrum Glitch and Minitech owed big debts to the sparse geometrics of Glass and Reich.

In the visual arts, Minimalism arose to counterbalance the excess of Pop and Op Art, and the zealous vigour of 'action' expressionism. Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* are often cited as an origin, and artists such as Dan Flavin, Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt as secondary movers. We might include Rothko's language of vibration and Mondrian's geometrical eloquence in the mix as well. The reality of the term, as in music, is historical; Art dealer Charlotte Jackson is not alone in view-

ing minimalism as 'a dated and inappropriate term when applied to contemporary art'.

Anne Beattie and Raymond Carver are usually acknowledged as literary minimalism's preceptors, despite Carver, whenever interviewed repeating the line 'I do not like the term minimalism', a refrain perhaps too phonetically loose to qualify for a Phillip Glass piece, but he made his point.

In the midst of this denial we might return to Simon and his uncluttered mind, and with whose domestic circumstance we started the article. His new home is modest. The cramped top of a 15-metre pillar in the middle of a Syrian desert. Some local monks have constructed for him a taller, more ornate pillar than the one he previously occupied. Half an hour later Simon is taken by the devil to the future city, to sit with a hot archangel in a scuzzed-up rock club. He calls the angel a 'cross-eyed hag'.

No, Simon was not the putative star of a property programme, there was no Sarah Beany, this was not *Bland Designs*, *Jizz up your Walls* nor any other aspidistra-shaded daytime orgy of covetousness. It was Luis Buñuel's surreal film *Simon of the Desert*, retelling the story of St Simeon Stylites, who lived on top of a pillar for 37 years in his fifth century bid to become a famous ascetic.

The ascetic impulse - in its desire to realign the relationship between the spiritual and the material - is paradoxically guilty of excess. In all its fanatical abstinence it denies our pissing, shitting, fucking humanity. It is anti-human. In the same way that in the film Buñuel picks up Nietzsche's lead in levelling the charge of hypocritical anti-humanity at religious asceticism, critics have seen the self-same hypocrisy in minimalism, accusing it of its own asceticism, its own anti-humanism.

In minimalist art the refusal of representation, and the relentless abstraction that replaces it, hints at a certain indifference to the human presence. The movement's conscious rejection of gestural painting which foregrounded the physical act of brush on canvas, and its cold denial of intuitiveness, conspire to erase the presence of the artist behind the work. Minimalist music refuses the codes of drama that loosely pertain to our ideas of how emotion ought to be solicited, becoming, in Western terms at least, as non-representational as its visually artistic cousin.

Art critic Kenneth Baker considers minimalist art to be "even more inert visually than 'abstract' suggests". Movement is a required characteristic of human life, yet it is not minimalism's business, one thinks of Warhol's filmic minimalist masterpiece *Empire*, an eight-hour static shot of the Empire

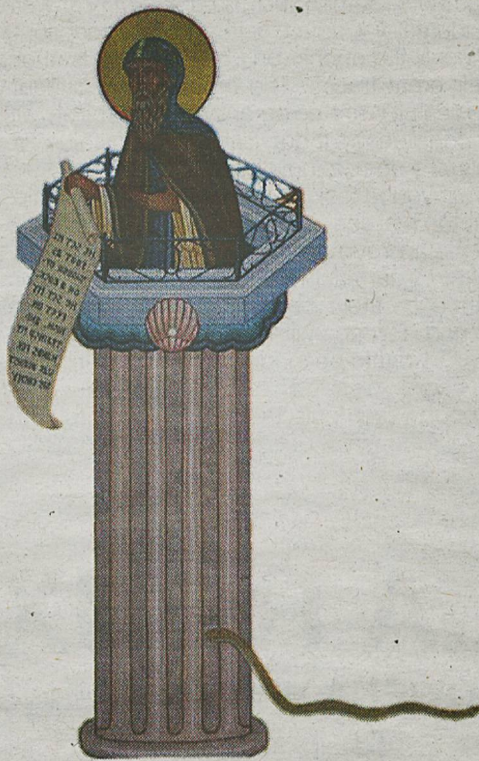
State Building. Nor are those other biological indicators of life we learned at school well-served. No irritation is shown by the cold indifference of a right angle. Growth is resisted by Reich's static refrains or the single unmoving register of Terry Riley's *In C*. Reproduction is perhaps the only sign of life displayed by minimalism, but even then it could be considered to be closer to a photocopier than to the experience of love.

According to Joshua Gilder, 'the motivating impulse behind minimalist literature' is a 'fear of life'. Life is a messy affair, without clear edges. In minimalism the indeterminate boundaries of the social organism may be shored up and made sure. Life is channelled into a totalising order, and there is a point at which it may become a fascistic enterprise. The philosopher Ortega y Gasset, himself having fled Franco's Spain, saw one unifying principle in the divergent forms of modern art - the tendency to dehumanise. The 'new sensibility' of the modernists sought a squeamish separation of art from life, 'dominated' as it was 'by a distaste for human elements in art'.

While crying in front of a Rothko is a tongue-in-cheek rite of passage in the art world, there is something vitally moving about those gut-churning confrontations with sheer colour. Lost in the drone of a Young loop you don't need a tab of acid on your tongue to feel some manner of kinship with frequency, resonance, to sense a universe of sound. There is perhaps a cosmic humanity in minimalism, that goes beyond representation directly to sensation.

The case may also be made for Minimalism's compatibility with democracy. It is systematic in that it raises ideals beyond individual concerns, and its non-hierarchical compositions and tendency to serialise mirrors egalitarianism. Its emphasis on visibility of means and rawness of material are models of transparency. Judd and countless others' use of concrete and found materials are direct requests to consider the making of the modern world, and, much like democracy, minimalism may aspire to universalism. So Dan Flavin's light may speak to anyone with a retina, La Monte Young's 'sound for sound's sake' may be interpreted by anyone with functioning ears. These consider themselves trans-cultural languages, through which all spectators are spoken to.

The same with any moment in art, we are free to take the term for its uses, rather than its abuses. As Steve Reich, who himself prefers the term *musique répétitive* to Minimalism, once remarked, "Debussy resented 'Impressionism.' Schoenberg preferred 'pantonal' to 'atonal' or 'twelve-tone' or 'Expressionist.' Too bad for them."



# CABBAGE ROCK

## KRAUTROCK PINCHES NATHAN BRIANT

No one likes a frilly bugger, which is just as well since this week's topic involves the stripping of any filler deemed unnecessary. Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage – all prominent minimalist composers of the twentieth century – gave the world music that notoriously doesn't faff about.

Scouring through the annals of 'pop', the closest lineage to minimalism arrived in the guise of **Krautrock**. It didn't mess around in establishing the direction of the music, stripping it down to the bare essentials to give it its unique, raw quality. Typically a synthesiser (or two), one guitar and a drum kit, and frequently a sparse vocal line, and the Krautrockers were away.

Originating from the late 1960s and early 1970s German progressive rock scene, **Neu!**, **Kraftwerk** and **Can** are probably the most famous of the bands created during this period of minimalist pop music.

Kraftwerk are most probably the most famous of these three – the wonderful melody from "Computer Love" was later lifted by Coldplay for their song, "Talk", something which long-standing Kraftwerk fans found considerably disheartening, for obvious reasons. A band of outstanding quality, and still active today, the Kraftwerk deserve their position as one of the foremost bands of this movement.

However, the best band to have come out of

Krautrock is, for me, Neu!. At their best, they were the most effective at extracting the true qualities of the minimalist ethic, whilst preserving a pop sensibility.

"Hallogallo", from the *Neu!* LP, is the best of their oeuvre, though to the ignorant ear, nothing really happens. The melody is built around a synthesiser loop, which repeats approximately every three minutes; a staccato guitar; infrequent, pulsating bass; and the motorik drums so characteristic of the genre. Its beauty and perfection lies in its very emptiness.

Can's best works are to be found on their second and third albums, *Tago Mago* and *Ege Bamyasi*. Although far more aggressive in sound and musically more complicated than Neu! (a factor not surprising since Neu! had only two members, both former members of Kraftwerk, incidentally), Can are nevertheless exceptional. "Pinch", the opener on *Ege Bamyasi*, is of one their great tracks. The drumming is brilliantly musical: it's not going anywhere fast but, with its consistency, it draws in the listener. The vocals are something of an unconventional nature if you're looking for three-part harmonies, but the real skill is shown through the arrangements and subtle progression in the music.

Although they had occasional successes around Europe, with the exception of Kraftwerk, Krautrock made little impact in terms of record sales. Can's most successful song, "Spoon", crept into the German Top 20 in the

early 1970s, mainly because it was used in a film; Neu! didn't achieve any kind of chart domination in Britain – a crying shame. Even the master DJ John Peel didn't manage to bring about any transformation in the bands' popularity, leaving Krautrock records languishing on dusty record store shelves until decades later, when their avant-garde aesthetic would finally be appreciated.

The monumental respect shown at Dinger and Stockhausen's respective deaths in the past couple of years, and Krautrock's decisive impact on music in recent decades – particularly through artists such as Joy Division and PiL – shows that no messin' can work out marvelously.



## LA ROUX

ROWENA WYLES REVIEWS

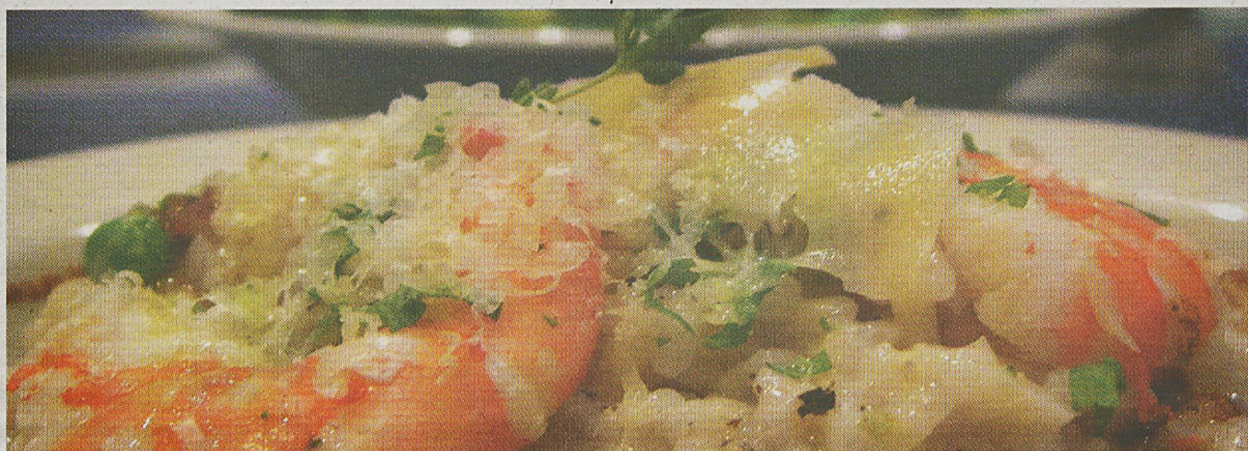
"IN FOR THE KILL"

Yet more of the young female vocal based electronic pop we are all supposed to be loving in 2009... apparently. To be fair though, 'In for the Kill' sounds far less like a Girls Aloud b-side than any of Little Boots' bland, synth-laden offerings. The bouncy electronic beats are overlain with breathy, yelping vocals which lend a smudge of originality to an overused template. Heavily influenced by the electronic synth-pop bands of the 80's, La Roux sounds like a mutation of Gary Numan, Depeche Mode and the Human League, but retaining less of the charm and humour and more of the icy attitude of her Scandinavian counterparts (Annie, The Sounds et al.). If you enjoy a bit of electro-pop this is worth a prance to.



# QUALITY & QUANTITY

**SOPHIE MARMENT** ASKS WHY NOT BOTH?



Have you ever noticed Gregg Wallace burst into huge, cuddly grins of delight when he samples a MasterChef dish which he describes as "bursting with big flavours?" If you haven't then you've missed a real treat. It has become a fairly commonplace occurrence in the MasterChef series and is now somewhat of a catchphrase but the basis of what he expresses is still interesting. What exactly does he mean by big flavours? Looking a little closer at the programme and at what these dishes consist of, it is usually the opposite of the adjective 'big.' In fact, they would be much better referred to as 'minimalist.' The flavours might 'pack a punch,' (another of Gregg's favourite adages) but the ingredients and the complexity of the plates put in front of the two MasterChef critics are more often simplified than complicated.

For instance, a lamb cutlet served on a bed of shredded cabbage and a potato mash with a red wine reduction. This is undoubtedly a classic dish with a minimalist shopping

list. Nevertheless, it will deliver on flavour, as it is clean and uncluttered. This is what John means when he talks of 'big flavours.' So is he right? Should we be minimising the number of things we put on our plates? Do we really need a naan and a poppadum with our curry? Do we need ketchup and mayonnaise with our chips? Well, it's all a matter of taste at the end of the day. However, it's difficult to deny the satisfaction one feels when eating a really well put-together meal, using minimal ingredients, whilst giving optimum flavour. It is a question of achieving a good balance of flavours and textures without putting so much into the dish that half of it is lost. There is such a thing as putting too many ingredients into a recipe.

Minimalism in haute cuisine is not always a positive, however. Portion size is one department where minimalism has no place in my mind. I am entirely in agreement that rich food should be served in smaller portions but there is no excuse for cutting down on portion size for any other reason. There is nothing more galling than a visit to a repu-

table and expensive restaurant, for which you will have starved yourself all day in order to achieve optimum enjoyment, only to find that when your order of prawn risotto with a pea purée arrives, it is not the filling feast you had in mind but a small blob of pitiful rice with a splodge of icing-bag piped greenery on top. All right, so it might taste divine, but is it satisfying? Far from it. The MasterChef gurus may have a point when they are presented with a plate piled high with whatever luxury concoction their contestants have cooked up, but there is also such a thing as too little. You don't need to provide a portion that caters for three people but, at the same time, you shouldn't put together a plate which will struggle to fill even a quarter of a person.

Minimalism in the kitchen should be strictly kept to content not quantity. "A good, clean plate of food," as our friend Gregg would put it, should be minimalist in what is included in the dish, but certainly not in how much is served on it.

## RECIPE

### Prawn & Sugarsnap Pea Risotto

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| Easiness  | 33.5/67 |
| Tastiness | 60.3/67 |
| Cheapness | 40.2/67 |

Stuff that goes in it (for two):  
1 cup arborio risotto rice  
1 pint chicken stock  
3 fl oz white wine  
1/2 large onion.

1 clove garlic  
1 stick of celery, chopped  
3 oz Parmesan  
Butter  
Packet cooked & peeled prawns  
2 handfuls sugarsnap peas

1. Heat the stock in a pan.
2. At the same time, steam the sugarsnap peas over a pan of boiling water for about 3-4 minutes until cooked through but still crunchy.
3. In another large flat pan melt a knob of butter and add chopped onion, celery & salt and sweat until soft.

4. Add garlic and stir swiftly, add rice. Stir the rice slowly until it is translucent. This takes approximately 3 minutes.
5. Add the white wine and continue stirring until absorbed.
6. Add a ladle of stock and stir until the rice has soaked it up. Continue adding the stock a ladle at a time until the rice is soft with a slight bite.
7. Season, add a large knob of butter and the parmesan and stir in.
8. Remove from the heat, stir in the prawns and sugarsnap peas until combined.

28

27

26

24

25

30

31

39

32

37

36

41

42

33

34

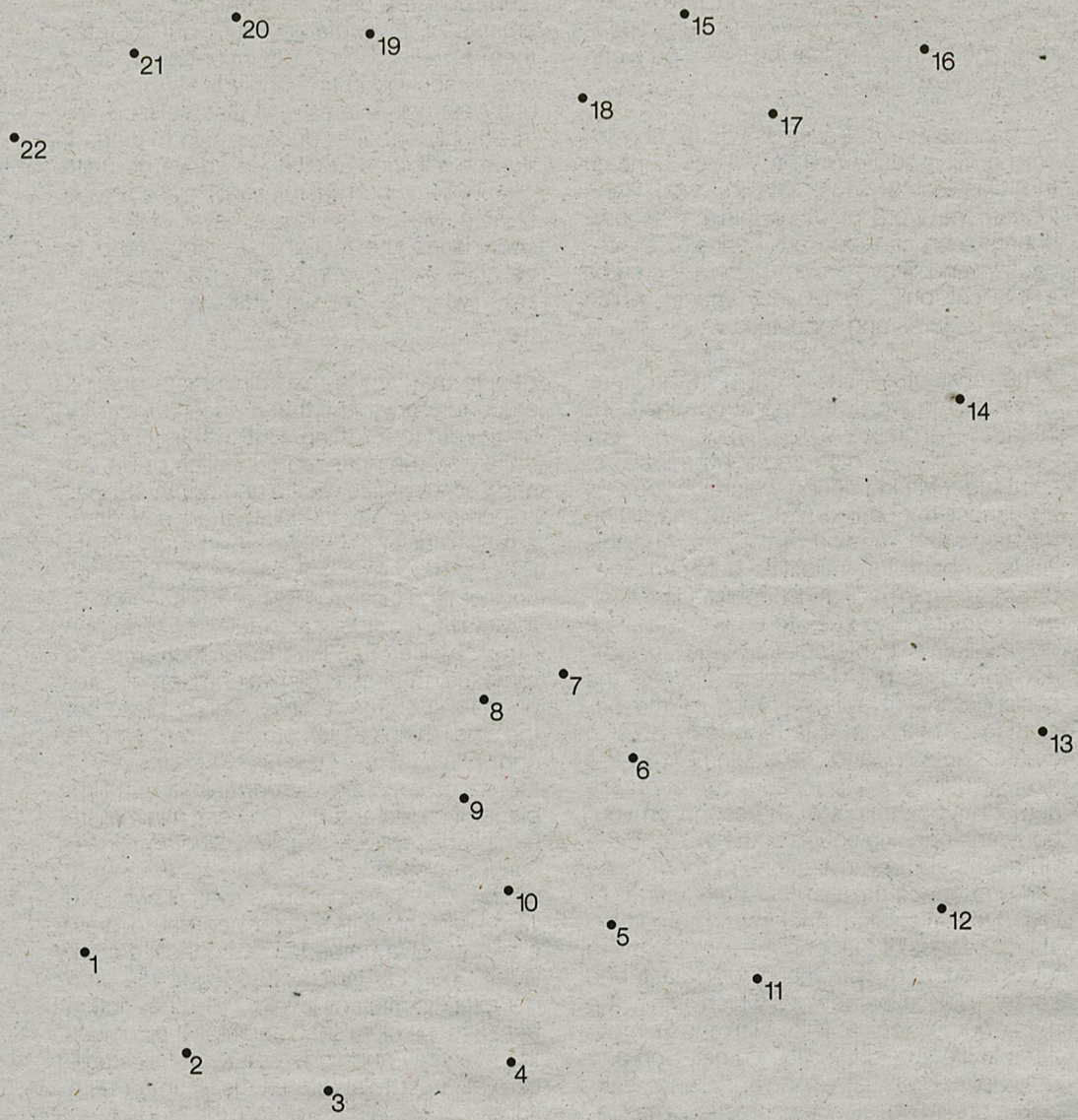
35

38

43

40





# THE SPIRITUAL ART

## LIAM MCLAUGHLIN MEDITATES ON MINIMALISM

"That word should be stamped out," said Philip Glass of the term minimalism.

Are categories for the arts that destructive? Or are they just helpful little boxes which we can use as an easy reference point to shop around for art that suits us? Artists generally get irritated at constant pigeon-holing and it's easy to see why; it instantly tacks a fluorescent sticker onto the contents of their soul to brand it for easy marketing. It can also make the art itself seem derivative and boring. Consider the lameness of the term 'rock n' roll' to describe titanic music such as Led Zeppelin. Does the term 'cubism' really get across what artists like Pablo Picasso were trying to achieve? No. They're just words. Art exists in and of itself as an original creation and expression of an artist and neither genres, labels nor styles can encapsulate any of that.

Or can they?

This is where minimalism steps in. The term was originally lazily coined to describe paintings and sculptures that thrive on simplicity in both content and form, and seek to remove any sign of personal expressivity. The actual aim of minimalism itself is to allow the viewer to experience the work more intensely without the distractions of composition, theme and so on. And although distracting to the art itself is the trite little genre named, quite unimaginatively, minimalism, what minimalism itself attempted to do was defy this completely. One of minimalism's aims, like so many other artistic movements before and since, was to create a singular artistic experience. On one hand it tried to avoid assimilation into the capitalist superstructure but ended up, simply by virtue of being a product of the modern world, quite entrenched in it.

However, on the other, more optimistic hand, minimalism's stylistic ethos has rather more longevity than other such movements or indeed the term 'minimalism' itself. Minimalism's philosophy shares a lot in common in terms of ideas with the ancient Buddhist religion. This similarity enables the art of minimalism to overcome destructive processes such as branding or plagiarism and as Buddhism preaches, transcend. Arguably both minimalism and Buddhism propagate ideas of moving beyond the physical/emotional and the benefits of the absorption of all conceptions of I-ness (such as the ego, solipsism and individualist identity). These ideas themselves are designed to create a transcendental experience for humans where only the 'spirit' is engaged. In terms of art, the 'spirit' would be our inherent apprecia-

tion of beauty and creativity which minimalism, in its aesthetic, form and philosophy, tries to engage by removing all superfluous baggage from its art, leaving it as a pure and untainted experience.

So back to Philip Glass. Why is he considered a minimalist? Well, if we look beneath the classical stylings, Glass's work (and indeed the work of other minimalist composers such as Arvo Pärt, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Steve Reich) generally creates a cyclical build-up of instruments which create textures and tapestries which after a while create a flurried sense of drone even if the music itself isn't droning in the literal sense of the word. It's the atmosphere it's intended to create; one of mounting tension and release; dark and light; ellipses of spiralling, chiming sound which lull you into an almost trance-like state with the flitting repetition and iteration of themes. And this leads us back to similarities between Buddhism and minimalism. Buddhists, like minimalist artists, also seek to coax out a state of meditative contemplation and 'trance' not via music, but via the utterance of the ancient Sanskrit syllable 'Aum' at the beginning of mantras. It is reportedly able to create harmony, and the attainment of the highest human consciousness through the actual physical effect of the sound on your body; the opening sound of the 'Au' and the vibrations and reverberations of the 'm'. As you pronounce each of the three letters, A, U and M (which altogether sound something along the lines of "aaooommmmm"), you are tapping into a deeper meaning as each one contains lexical archetypes which signify the many numerological links with the number three in life and spirituality; Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; wakening, dreaming, sleeping; creation, maintenance and destruction; sunrise, daylight and sunset, birth, life and death. But I digress.

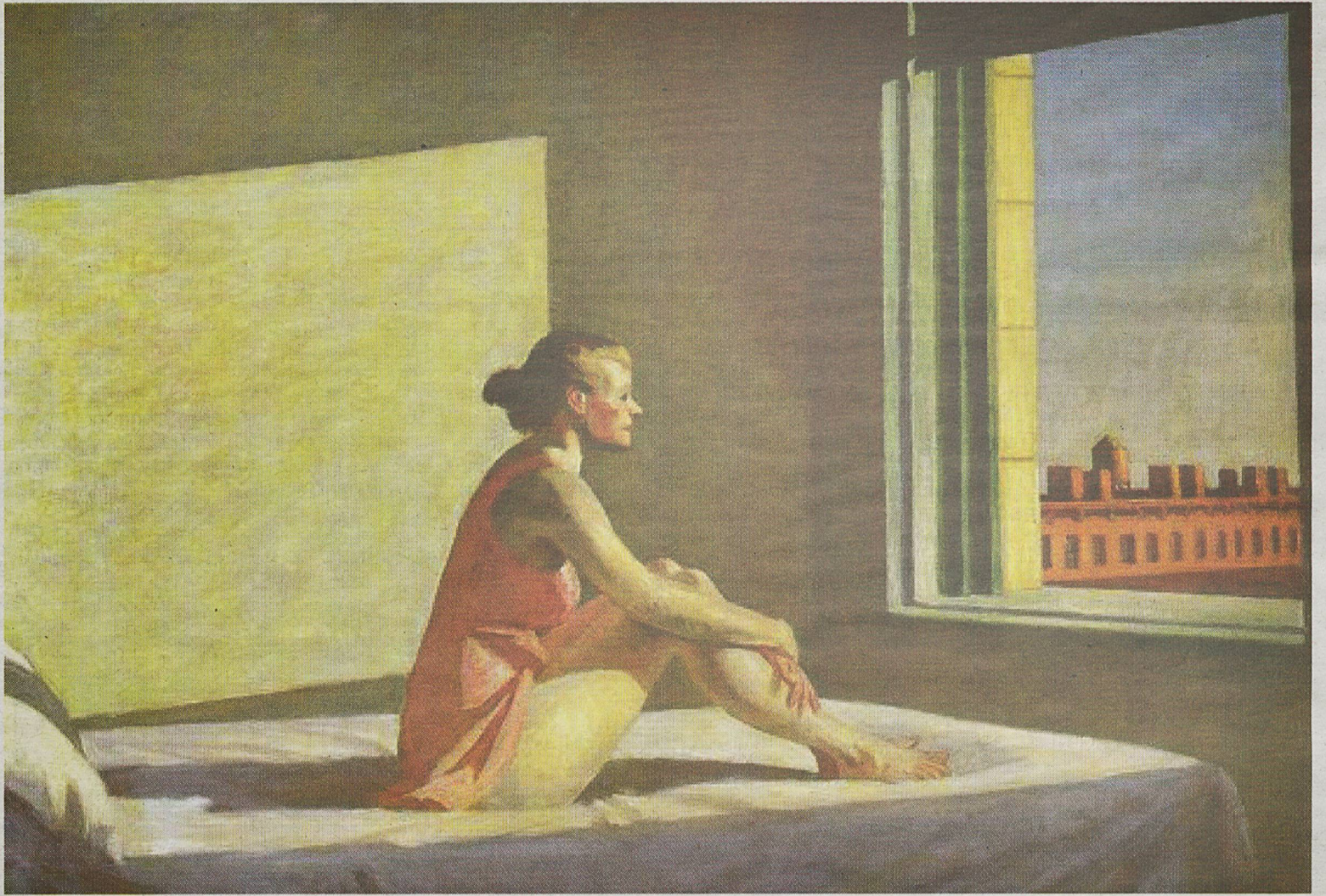
Still, from the deeply spiritual to the drug-addled, minimalism still reigns supreme. Think back to the post-Bob Marley reggae influenced Rastafarian genesis of dub and all its sub-genres which retained minimalist aspects such as sparse instrumentation, simple rhythms, tape delay and tons of echo, all wrapped up in a thick satin sheet of heady marijuana smoke. Dub was minimalism which appealed to the quasi-spiritual effect of the marijuana spliff; the dizzy high and the stoned serenity. The dub rhythms languidly pulsed along with the slowed heartbeat of the weed-influenced body and the eerie echoes expanded the mind into fragments of one love, one heart. Over thirty years later, and not only is marijuana still as popular, if not more so than before, but dub has also evolved again to create

the electronic minimalist cityscapes of dubstep. Dubstep uses the same minimalist elements of its godfather, dub, but mutates them to reflect the grimy inner-city where it was conceived in an unholy trinity of weed, gritty council estates and GarageBand. Interestingly enough, dubstep has managed, like the religions mentioned above, to unite people in clubs regardless of class, creed or race. Maybe it's done an even better job considering the fact that religions tend to be quite exclusive in terms of dogmas and laws, whereas dubstep just wants you to dance.

People may argue that minimalism doesn't amount to anything; that it doesn't mean or demonstrate anything. But with its concentration on the nuanced subtleties of life, art and spirituality; its wealth and depth of ideas is perhaps more touching than any other artistic movement. Take short-story writer Raymond Carver, influenced by Chekhov and other Russian legends. His attention to detail and understated tales of suburban American life often lead to far more moving climaxes than the sensationalism of Stephen King or Tom Clancy. Carver picks out the small things which others may not notice and, within thirty pages, his stories move you more than any convoluted mainstream film, piece of music or story. Carver's minimalism is in his deceptively simple writing and unassuming tales. Take one of his more famous stories, *Cathedral*, about a cynical husband who helps his wife's blind pen-pal to draw a picture of a cathedral. It sounds boring. But it's not. Far from it. It touches you on a completely different level to all other fiction because it is blemished and real. It eulogises the everyday and finds beauty in the smallest yet most relatable things. Human relationships are laid bare and the tragedy or beauty of them is palpable. The paintings of Edward Hopper can also be seen to reflect the minimalism of Carver's words in picture form; the deep shadows and lonely blue skies of American suburbia are completely static in visual terms yet have the capacity to move you on far deeper levels than the façade would initially have you believe.

Arguably minimalism's main attraction is that it focuses the attention between the lines, not necessarily on them; on the silence, not the music; on the blank canvass, not the colours or forms. And why not? The Buddhist moment of transcendence beyond the colours, sounds and words of thought is worth more than an infinite amount of anything else. And so minimalism could be considered the most spiritual of arts, and also the most human.

One love.



# "ARE YOU HAPPY, IN YOUR LIFE?"

**TRENT MAYNARD** REVIEWS THE MIKE LEIGH FILM *HAPPY-GO-LUCKY*

Mike Leigh's *Happy-Go-Lucky* (2008) is a film about a school teacher in her 30s with unquenchable optimism. So optimistic is our heroine Poppy, played skillfully by Sally Hawkins, that when her bicycle gets stolen she laments not the theft itself, but the tragedy that she didn't get a chance to say goodbye.

Not wasting any time or spilling any tears, Poppy registers for driving lessons so she can get her license and fill her newfound void in transportation. Scott, an angry xenophobe with a penchant for rants and righteous indignation, becomes her instructor. The two start out on rocky ground, but not even Scott's anger and intolerance can do battle with the carefree hope and joy that Poppy radiates.

Her younger sister resents this inner beacon of positivity; she mistakes it for immaturity, for denial. She tells Poppy to start thinking about having kids, to get a mortgage, to start saving for retirement: "You've gotta take life seriously, Poppy, you have to take responsibility".

But Poppy is an adult. She has a carefree attitude and a youthful outlook, but she is

not irresponsible or immature. Her smile and upbeat attitude stem not from naïveté, but rather from a deep understanding of the world and its heartbreaks and disappointments. Poppy's optimism is the way she deals with life; the way she survives the tiny daily tragedies of modern living that can chip away at the soul.

When one of her students starts bullying some of the other children, Poppy senses there might be a deeper root to the boy's anger. She knows that behind every action - and every reaction - there is a story. She recruits a social services worker, Tim, to help the boy work out his problems.

Tim and Poppy have a mutual attraction from the get-go, and as they go out on their first date, we can't help but sit there and nervously cringe. The film captures something so genuine and sweet in their interactions; watching them is just like going out on a first date with someone who seems too good to be true: you are weary, cautious, afraid they are going to break your heart, but at the same time there's a vulnerability; a hope that maybe, just maybe, you've found the one. It's that tender vulnerability in their eye contact, in their flirtations, in the way they touch and kiss and go to bed together, that

makes the film what it is. It is the moment we realize how much we've fallen in love with Poppy, and how badly we want her to find happiness, to not get hurt again.

And in the end in *Happy-Go-Lucky*, as one might expect, it all comes back to happiness. But the brilliance of the film is that it recognises the nuances between happiness, contentedness, hopefulness, and optimism; indeed, they are not the same thing. And while we see traces of all these qualities behind Poppy's smile, they are also joined there by unspoken loneliness, longing, and disappointment.

"Are you happy, in your life?" she asks Tim, the morning after their first date. "That's a big question," he responds, half smiling. "Isn't it, just," she replies. In the way he looks at her, we know he's not necessarily unhappy, but he isn't happy either; he's looking for something more; true happiness has evaded him. Poppy's eyes tell the same story, and we hope - desperately - that perhaps they will both find what they are looking for in each other. And even if they don't, Poppy's smile will remain, facing her loneliness, facing the world, facing it all.

---

# ON AN ISLAND IN THE SUN

**RAHUL AGARWAL** FINDS MINIMALISM IN *CASTAWAY*

*Castaway* has always been one of my favourite films. With Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt and director Robert Zemeckis (*Forrest Gump*, *What Lies Beneath*), it spells Hollywood box office, but it is actually a simple film centred on the raw human emotions of the main protagonist, Chuck Noland, played by Hanks, who was nominated for an Oscar and BAFTA for the film.

This movie has no need for a complicated script or high production values. It achieves its narrative goals through minimalism, with very little music (about 26 minutes in a 142 minute film), little dialogue or conversation and one central location: an uninhabited, unnamed island in the Pacific. There are also very few characters; the film is undoubtedly a vehicle for one of the greatest actors of our time.

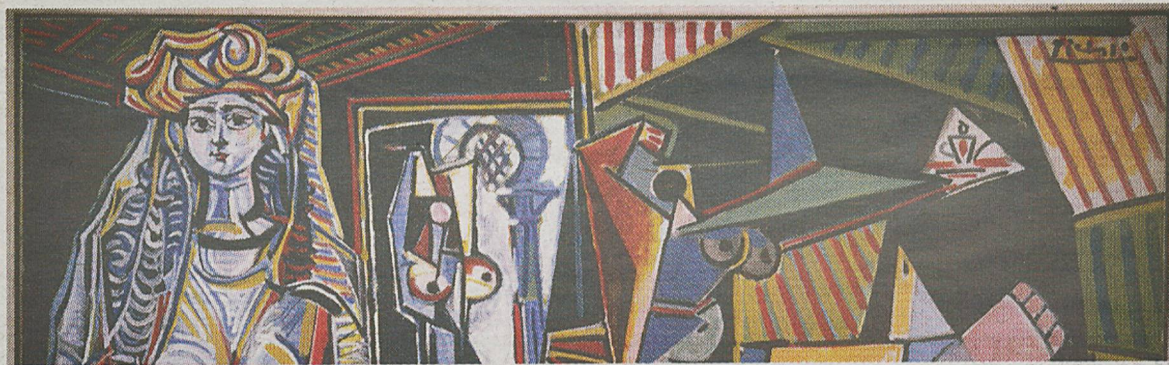
The film follows Chuck, a time-obsessed FedEx systems analyst. He is in a relationship with Kelly Frears (Hunt); both want to get married, but Chuck's busy schedule always proves an obstacle. He finally proposes to her just as he heads off on a freight plane for another work assignment.

This is when things go wrong and the plane crashed into the ocean, killing everyone but Chuck who is washed up on a deserted island. This is a new world for Chuck, one without deadlines, where the only goal is survival.

The film takes a dramatic turn in style; suddenly it centres on Chuck and how he learns to cope with basic human survival and the loneliness that accompanies his solitude. The true indicator of the film's success is how it sucks the audience in, making the

most simplistic acts, like learning to make a fire, utterly gripping. Indeed, it's this stripped down approach to story-telling that makes it possible.

No voiceover, no dialogue, no music: the film reveals Chuck's emotions simply through Hanks' incredible performance. But we feel everything Chuck feels, from the satisfaction of catching his first fish, to his frustration from trying to open a coconut. It slows us down as viewers, removing the trappings that distract the senses and demand attention, and instead putting us face-to-face with Chuck; demanding we follow his journey, slowly, step-by-step, simple victory by simple victory, towards his ultimate goal of living - and getting home alive. Minimalism, perhaps not in theory, but indelibly in application.



# PICASSO

**MARK TWYFORD** ON THE MASTER'S ART AND CHAT-UP LINES

Only a few times in a century, it seems, will an artist come along who completely challenges the contemporary genre. Pablo Picasso was one such artist, and is readily acknowledged as one of the twentieth century's finest. Yet what truly lingers behind the façade of legend; how does Picasso stand in the lineage of tradition, and what are his lasting contributions to art?

The new Picasso exhibition at the National Gallery is entitled "Challenging the Past"; an apt title considering the revolution in artistic technique that Picasso instigated. Yet it also confers the debt he owed, in his style, to past masters such as Vincent Van Gogh, Francisco Goya, and in particular Paul Cézanne, whom he described as "the father of us all".

Ironically, the National itself is somewhere you would more readily associate with such "classical" artists, and it is no coincidence that this is in fact the first Picasso exhibition the Gallery has held. But from the start of the exhibition (which is divided into six rooms of varying themes), one can understand why they have chosen to take this leap to displaying a more modern artist, Picasso's wealth of technique and styles was broad enough to challenge any of the past-masters, as well as changing the face of art (and the faces of people) completely.

Pablo Picasso was born into what was not just a relatively middle-class background, but also an extremely artistic one. His father, Jose Ruiz, was a professor of art, and was

the first master of the young Pablo, and it was perhaps in defiance of this fact, that the young artist eventually adopted his mother's maiden name. Indeed, the influence of his personal life upon his art is one of the things which come across very strongly in this exhibition. The various women who came in and out of his life, and his reliance upon them as muses, clearly transcends his work. On top of this I think he came up with one of the greatest chat-up lines I have ever heard; "I am Picasso, and we will do great things together".

For visual art, alongside other forms (such as drama and film), the true test of time is the ability of a contemporary audience to relate to the piece of art produced, and at this Picasso is a genius. His ability to imbue the seemingly simplest of pictures with the emotionally sensitive was his greatest talent. This is certainly the case in his work *In the Garden* (1953) in which he portrays himself as a faded figure in front of his son, symbolising his deteriorating relationship with his then-wife. Likewise there are his takes on the Rape of the Sabine Women. In the latter of these paintings, the Roman's mischief is clearly embodied in the wicked and sinister grin of his horse, while the woman lies beneath broken and in agony, contorted and twisted, with her head inverted like a puppet.

Of course, no exhibition is ever without criticism, and this one is no exception. For one thing, in comparison to the Picasso Museum in Barcelona, the collection on show here is relatively small. For some, this fact may even

be a blessing, as Picasso's artwork certainly isn't for everyone's taste; particularly his later more avant-garde works. But in defence of this particular exhibition, is the quality of the works on display; these paintings truly demonstrate Picasso not only at his best, but also at his most diverse.

Works such as the enchanting *Sleeping Nude with Blonde Hair* (1932) and *Women of Algiers* (1955) display the artist's ability to convey the erotic in a very sensual and organic way, clashing with the chauvinist portrayals of beauty in the annals of classical art. Likewise his *Flayed Sheep's Head* (1939) perfectly sums up the angst, fear and tragedy of living in a nation (France) with the clouds of doom setting in. It is through works such as this, that Picasso's lifelong idealism (he identified himself as a Communist and an individualist) shows. For, even in comparison to many other so-called "greats" of the twentieth century, Picasso outshines. For while men such as Warhol detached themselves from their art, and (Warhol like Dalí) whored themselves out to commercialism, Picasso remained grounded in idealism producing art for the sake of art, and not for the sake of money.

Talking of money, ultimately, the £6 student entry fee (or £15 for the season if you're really keen) may seem a little pricey, but it is well worth it for the intense quality of the art on display. For while the free collections in London are often of varied quality, as well as being overwhelmingly large, here is a selected set of classic works from one of the true masters. Make it while you can!



Pablo Picasso  
Les Femmes d'Alger, 1955  
European Private Collection  
© Photo courtesy of Libby Howie /  
Succession Picasso / DACS 2009

The world's biggest drug trafficking highway, riddled with violence, poverty and anti-western sentiment; Central America isn't exactly on the tourist trail. So when I was asked to travel from Mexico City to Panama City in a month, I naturally jumped at the idea. I would like to say that this whirlwind tour through what I thought of as a dilapidated and forgotten corner of the world opened my eyes to the inaccuracy of my prejudiced view of the region, but unfortunately I cannot. Central America is, to be frank, a bit of a dump. However, and there is a however, the region is one of the most beautiful places I have been to. Even the crazy, ugly, dirty and dangerous cities and slums of the region are strangely attractive when viewed against the contrasting background of their natural setting.

### Mexico

After settling into my seat on the plane to Mexico City, I picked up a copy of the Times for a little light reading. I opened the paper, and was faced with the rather alarming statement: "Violent crime in Mexico City out of control". With this in mind, we hopped into the first illegal cab that we saw at the airport on arrival. As it turned out, Mexico City was rather pleasant and we encour-

had to be the formidable Volcan Pacaya. We were led up this active volcano by a slightly grizzled old man who we called the 'Mayan Rambo'. After purchasing 'muy necesario' walking sticks from local children at the foot of the hill, Rambo guided us off the tourist track and under some fences to the ash covered slopes of the volcano's cone. While we prodded at the flowing lava, the sun started to set and a thunderstorm started on the other side of the valley. The view was pretty spectacular, and the disappointing amusements in the town below were all but forgotten.

### Honduras

At 3am the following day we hopped on a bus for Honduras. We arrived in Copan, a border town famed for its Mayan ruins in the early afternoon. In typical style we jumped into the car of the first hotel promoter that accosted us and, after checking in, bought into the \$30 'Mayan horse riding adventure' that the man at the hotel told us about. This turned out to be a longish trek on a couple of clapped out ponies with another elderly Mayan named Marguerito, who led us up to some forgotten Mayan ruins. He decided that, as the more feminine traveller, I should pose as a Mayan mother in his re-enactment of an ancient birth ceremony. Other than

perlatives just don't do this place justice - we chilled for two days in hammocks, then rented motorbikes and went round the entire island twice. Nothing on Earth can possibly beat riding ninety kilometres round two active volcanoes at sixty miles an hour in blazing hot sunshine. A definite trip highlight.

### Costa Rica

After leaving the island we hot-footed it to Costa Rica. We climbed, not literally but in a \$150 taxi, into the mountains of the interior to the cloud forest reserve of Monteverde, home to coffee plantations, sloths, and the 'legendary' quetzal bird. The forest itself is amazing. It is called cloud forest because, unlike rain forests, it is always wet. The forest is so high that, instead of experiencing tropical storms and periods of drought, it is shrouded in clouds all year round. From the top of the reserve you can see across the jungle all the way from the Pacific to the Atlantic. We rented a jeep and drove recklessly to Volcan Arenal, another tourist volcano, but much more commercialised than Pacaya. After judging it unworthy of a proper visit, we moved on to the Caribbean town of Puerto Viejo. This town was settled by Africans brought here to work the banana plantations and build railways, and retains a strong Caribbean feel. Green, yel-

## CHARLES HODGSON DOES

# CENTRAL AMERICA

tered very little violence, probably because we spent most of our time on the 'Turibus' (Tourist-bus) listening to the poorly translated audio tour. The city is famous for its anthropological museum, which in turn is famous for its giant concrete mushroom. This modernist nightmare, supposedly the largest concrete structure supported by a single pillar in the world, provides shade for the courtyard of a museum which houses an enormous collection of fascinating artefacts of pre-Columbian civilization in Mexico. Many of these objects were uncovered at the very impressive pyramids of Teotihuacan, a short Turibus hop north of the capital, which, despite being mounds of rubble with no secret passageways like in the movies, are very impressive.

### Guatemala

After a few days in Mexico, we decided that enough was enough and jumped on the next plane to Guatemala. We had been enjoying the blue skies and soaring temperatures in the dusty bowl of Mexico City, and were blissfully unaware that we had decided to visit the tropics, which we were now flying into, in the middle of the rainy season. Our first stop in Guatemala was the tourist haven of Antigua. The 'charming' colonial town has few actual attractions, other than the market, where all manner of illegal documents and mystery pills can be bought, and the various bars. The highlight of Guatemala

the ruins of Copan, Honduras is not highly recommended. The capital, Tegucigalpa, is worth a day's visit, if only because it is without doubt the worst city in the world. We moved on swiftly to Nicaragua within twelve hours of arriving there.

### Nicaragua

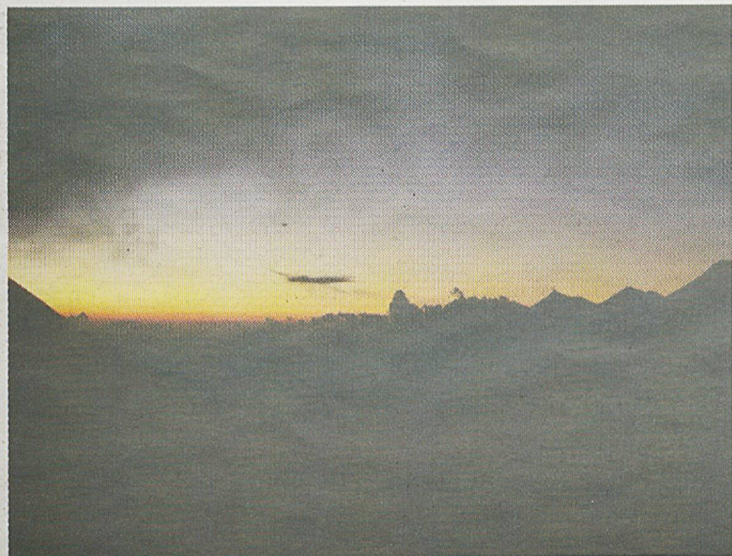
Nicaragua's capital, Managua, turned out to be almost as unpleasant as Tegucigalpa. After emerging from two days of traveller's sickness at the Crowne Plaza hotel (the President was chilling in the bar there), we checked into more modest accommodation in a rough looking neighbourhood strewn with images of Che Guevara and stray dogs. We decided to check out that evening and paid a taxi driver \$50 to take us somewhere else. Luckily we ended up in the 'Tourist Capital of Central America', Granada. This town on Lake Nicaragua is full of that same stuff that seems to be the main attraction of most towns in the area, 'Colonial Charm'. The central plaza was pleasant enough, but the 'Centro Turistico', which charges a dollar entry fee, turned out to be a dirty beach, a dirty bar, and a row of dirty benches. Nevertheless, we spent a couple of days there watching the collapse of Lehman Brothers on CNN. After growing bored of our cable TV, we crossed the water to Isla Ometepe, the volcanic island in Lake Nicaragua. Another highlight of the trip, this island was spectacular, and overflowing with life. Su-

low, and red flags hang from every building and pictures of Bob Marley are almost as ubiquitous. A worthy stop, its laid back atmosphere was embodied by the guy who sits in a tree all day shouting "Ganja?" at passers-by to much avail.

### Panama

We crossed a primitive railway bridge which served as a border crossing to get into Panama. The rickety structure is wide enough for one car, and there is no traffic light system, so trucks play chicken with each other while pedestrians duck and weave between their tyres. After running this gauntlet we went to the islands of Bocas Del Toro, where we were taught to scuba dive by the very helpful people at Starfleet Scuba. We had almost reached the end of our journey and decided to spend our remaining cash on a flight to Panama City. Panama City was relatively inconsequential. We borrowed a Scottish bloke's Land Rover and drove it to some desert islands in the north of the country for a day. It was rather pleasant except for the boiled fish our guide served us for lunch.

So there you have it. Central America. The variety and vibrancy of the people and places we encountered was astonishing, especially considering the relatively tiny size of the region. Nice to visit, but slightly inhospitable.



# JUMP A SHARK

GRAEME BIRRELL ON MINIMALISM IN TV

This week *The Simpsons* broke a record by becoming the longest running TV show on the tube in America. But why? Is there seemingly no end to the number of capers that five yellow people can get up to that still appeal to TV audiences around the world? Apparently not. But is *The Simpsons* really still that good – or has it declined into mediocrity, season after season getting an automatic renewal because of the still marginally profitable advertising revenue that it still brings to the FOX network? On the other hand, why do some TV shows that have infinitely more appeal and backbone than *The Simpsons* cease to exist past season three? (I'm thinking of *The Office*, *Fawlty Towers*, *Brass Eye* etc.)

The term 'jumping the shark' is widely used when describing TV shows that have once been great but are now on a steep decline into mediocrity. It actually refers to a 1977 episode of *Happy Days* in which the leather jacket-wearing main character jumps over a shark whilst water skiing in Hollywood (notably wearing the leather jacket at the same time). It's here that most fans and critics of *Happy Days* generally concede that the show began its downward spiral into cancellation by placing main characters in absurd scenarios in a vain attempt to reconcile lost interest. However, despite widespread criticism and general acceptance that the show was now nothing more than a never-ending joke on TV, *Happy Days* continued to be renewed by the network, making over a hundred more episodes. Why? Why didn't the producers call it a day and end the show on a high, placing it on a shelf in history as a much loved '70s teen fad? Long running TV shows can achieve this – *Seinfeld* ran for over ten years and still managed to quit while it was ahead, at the peak of its popularity, with Larry Seinfeld as the highest paid actor in the world and fans gagging for more. It didn't need to run itself into the ground, and kill off some main characters, or introduce aliens to save itself – it simply ended with its characters intact, the production structure retaining its original genius, and the comedy as good as it had ever been.

The 'jumping the shark' question can be asked of loads of other shows too – *Friends* is a notable example. Whilst starting off as a mildly amusing pastiche of stereotypical twenty-something New Yorkers living fairly believable lives, it finished up as six twats all

having babies with each other, getting married and divorced twice an episode, and dropping all forms of vaguely credible comedy that the writers once looked for. And in the infinite wisdom of NBC executives, they even tried a dire spin-off featuring the 'now-a-bit-too-old-to-still-be-trying-to-be-an-actor', Joey. What the hell possesses networks to keep this kind of crap on screens? Is it the middle-aged women who tune in each week and actually find crude sex jokes and mild slapstick funny? Or the producers and writers who would struggle to get a job elsewhere? Or perhaps most likely – even shit TV shows generate enough viewers to make the gains from advertising able to cover production costs for networks. This isn't to say that spin-offs can't do well – *Frasier* did well after *Cheers* (although *Frasier*'s character did have to be radically altered and moved out of Boston for it to stand on its own legs). But seriously, pure economics really shouldn't be what drives TV shows should it? Surely that should be down to actors wanting to retain something of a career, or networks holding on to a reputation for quality programming?

And so we turn to programmes where these are what drives the show's production. Obviously the most poignant example of this is *The Office*. Two series, one Christmas special to tie up loose ends, and Ricky Gervais will now live on forever as a comedy legend because of the succinct genius of the show. *The Office* will never make a comeback – and rightly so. Its shortness is key to its charm, its tight writing and comedy style were original and brilliant. Perhaps, though, its characters were a little static – there was no real progressive storyline (save the shutting merger and loose love story), and nobody really 'developed' in personality. But this was why it was so good when it ended – they didn't deviate from the original idea of a believable 'mockumentary' with great comedy thrown in. Other revered shows follow suit too – *Fawlty Towers* was very similar in being written around a static status quo; *Brass Eye* enveloped '90s politics and needed do nothing more; and countless others graced our screens fleetingly and brilliantly (anyone remember Bill Bailey in *Black Books*?).

So maybe this has something to do with the fact that I've split these groups into British vs. American. After all, it's not hard to see that the heavily-revamped US version of *The Office* has sorely removed all of Ger-

vais' quirky comedy style and moved towards a storyline focused production style in order to push it into continuous renewal and infinite seasons. That doesn't mean it's necessarily bad – Steve Carrell is actually quite good in his own way – but doesn't it say something about American audiences when a brilliant comedy style needs to be reworked so obviously in order to give it length of stay over quality? Admittedly, we do have an advantage in the UK of having the BBC, where everyone pays regardless of how many seasons Gervais writes. And this is probably a good thing – *Extras* may return, but it may not. Steve Merchant and Gervais aren't really under any pressure to write anything new. Just the same, James Corden and Ruth Jones had to be begged by fans to embark on a third season of *Gavin and Stacey* – despite it winning critical acclaim from almost everywhere, they didn't feel the need to jump into production again for the sake of it.

For me, the ability to end a show is just as important as to start it to preserve its greatness. Some shows can last – the 'jumped the shark' status of *The Simpsons*'s is contentiously debatable, and *South Park*'s ability to rewrite itself as a more serious satire of America culture than just toilet humour has given it new (arguably, brilliant) life that will probably sustain it as an enjoyable show for at least another couple of years. But wouldn't some shows that haven't ended have benefited greatly from quitting while they were ahead? *Lost*, for example, was cool and very well done in its first season. But there was no need to instantly sign a contract for six more seasons off the back of one good one – wouldn't it have been better if they just told us where that fucking polar bear came from in episode one of season two, wrapped up all the initially interesting stories in the flashbacks by episode twelve, and come up with some cool ending by the end of the second run? Instead they tried to ask all sorts of new questions, bore us all to death with bullshit filler, and prolonged it too much.

If anything, then, America could probably benefit from not relying so much on advertising space, the insecurity of losing a job come end of season, and get over the fear of actually ending a TV show on a high. Ending on a high is probably – in this journalist's mind – a greater mark of TV genius than holding the record for the longest running show there could ever be.