

April 2025

FASHION:

Fashion
Trends at
Full Speed

STUDENT LIFE:

Secrets
From Behind
the Bar

ENTERTAINMENT:

Generative or
Destructive?
The Impacts of
AI in Film

UN
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LIFESTYLE &
WELLNESS:

Circular
Fashion for
Dummies

CURRENT
AFFAIRS:

Orange you
glad: He's
back in
office

ÉIRE:

Tír Gan
Teanga, Tír
Gan Ainm



TRAVELLED

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Pull the string, turn the page, welcome to UNRAVELLED!

College life can be a whirlwind, that's why we have put together the perfect magazine, written by students, for students. The entire team has put an incredible amount of hard work and effort into creating our magazine. I couldn't be prouder of the work everyone has done and the beautiful features we have created. I would especially like to thank my right-hand woman in all of this and our co-editor Tara, thank you for the countless hours you put into bringing this together, I'm so glad to have had the opportunity to work with you so closely.

We would all like to express our massive Thank You's to Aoife for her invaluable guidance throughout this process, for her patience and trust in us, we couldn't have done it without you! I can't wait for people to finally read our informative, compelling and memorable pieces <3.

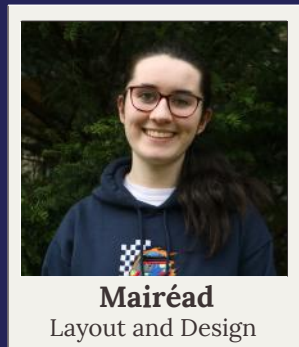
Our magazine is about bringing light to the trials and triumphs that come with being a student. We have included pieces close to the hearts of our readers like; How the shows and movies you watch influence the career you choose, and the influence politics has on the music industry and the cost of living as a student. There is a feature here for everyone.

Now that we've unravelled the introductions, let's get to the good stuff!

Kerry

UNRAVELLED

MEET THE TEAM





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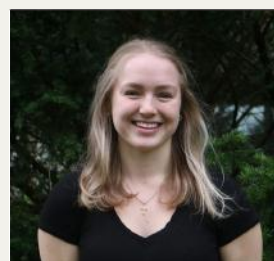
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TRAVELLED

2025

CURRENT AFFAIRS

RAVELLED

Student by Day, Homeless by Night: The Student Accommodation Struggle



By Kerry Sheehan



The Battle for Beds

For many students across Ireland, securing a suitable place to stay while attending college and university has become one of the biggest struggles in their academic journey, let's talk about it! The student accommodation crisis can no longer be seen as just an inconvenience to those in power—it's a deciding factor in whether or not students can afford to stay in college at all.

Particularly, students at the University of Limerick (UL) are feeling the burden. UL's website states that over 18,000 students are currently enrolled at the university yet there are only 2,800 rooms available in on-campus accommodation across the seven-university affiliated villages. That leaves approximately 15,200 students struggling to find a place to live leaving them with extremely difficult choices to be made about their education and future.

The Struggle is Real: Commuting or Dropping out

Countless students are left choosing between the long haul and unreliable commutes or, the life-changing decision to drop out altogether due to the lack of affordable and available student accommodation. Some students even reported to travelling several hours each day just to attend their timetabled lectures. On top of student fees in general this is an expensive price to pay for choosing to study as fuel and public transport prices rise.

Others resort to staying with non-immediate family, staying on friends' couches, or even in some cases, booking hotel rooms when midterms and exams make attending college completely necessary. It's often overlooked the enormous impact this has on the student's mental health. This instability can negatively affect their academic performance and social life.

This begs the question of why 'students don't just try to secure off-campus housing'? well, with the cost of renting a room in Limerick skyrocketing in recent years, many landlords are now charging upwards of €600 a month for one room— an unthinkable price for students already paying student fees, food costs and general living expenses.



Booking.com

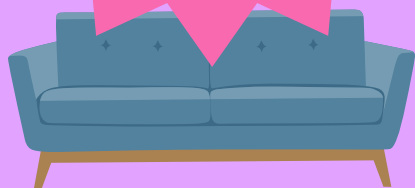
**Over 50% of the
students I spoke to said
they would have
enjoyed having
accommodation when
entering UL**



The Digs Dilemma: A Plaster, not a Solution



Every student should find out if they have access to grants, SUSI's official website gives you a quick and easy income test and tells you whether you should apply.

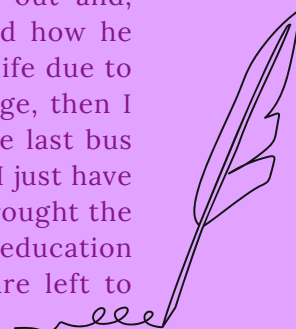


The rise of “digs” housing, where students rent a room in the house of a family they don't know, or couch hopping between friends has become a sustainable solution to some. Digs provides somewhat affordable prices for students, but they come with their own restrictions, many ‘host’ families impose limited access to the kitchen, early curfews, and force the students to leave on the weekends. This has a negative effect on young people striving to be independent while trying to balance an academic career and enjoy a social life. These living conditions can feel restricting. This situation was all too real for second year UL student Josephine Cronin who found herself staying in digs for the second semester of her first year, “she genuinely wouldn't allow me to go on nights out with my friends (the landlord), because if I did I wouldn't be allowed to come in home during the night”

In Limerick, the demand for these rooms often outweighs the supply. Websites like ‘digs.ie’ have rooms that are in such high demand that even if you apply, your request is unlikely to ever be seen due to the volume of applicants.

Education and well-being

Academic success cannot be possible without a stable living situation for students. Many studies like one done by ‘National Institutes of Health’ (NIH) directly links housing instability with anxiety and depression in students. The sheer pressure of continuously doing assignments and searching for places to stay leads to students becoming burnt out and, ultimately, dropping out of university. David Fogarty a first year student explained how he became anxious and depressed when he began missing out on lectures and a social life due to living at home. David said “if the bus makes me more than 10 minutes late to college, then I would just skip the lecture because it is too embarrassing to walk in late” and “ the last bus home is so early that I can't stay and drink with my friends or I won't make it home, I just have to watch them enjoy themselves while I miss out”. UL students' union has recently brought the stark findings of an accommodation survey to Simon Harris, the minister of higher education at the time, yet no solutions or resolutions seem to have been made. Students are left to navigate this crisis alone.



What Needs to Change?

In no way is the student accommodation crisis a ‘new’ issue, but it has reached emergency status. Action is needed now if all students are to have access to safe living conditions and affordable housing. The government needs to rethink and prioritise its student accommodation budget, while universities like UL should expand the capacity of housing on campus

What is also essential is that rent caps are enforced to ensure landlords aren't exploiting their tenants just because their students. Increased student grants like SUSI would not only help students in affording accommodation but also give them some peace of mind that they are financially stable.



Students should not have to choose between a place to rest their head at night and an education. Real action must be taken. This crisis cannot be solved overnight, but students are here, and they demand their voices be heard. The question is, will those in power finally listen?



COST OF LIVING VS. COST OF ENTERTAINMENT: THE ULTIMATE STUDENT BATTLE

BY AALIYAH POPOOLA



In one corner, we have nutritious, balanced meals, fueling you for long college days. In the other, we have your favorite artist performing live in concert. Who wins your hard-earned cash?

According to my survey where 24 students responded, 58.3% of students chose singing along with their idol over spending on necessities.

In this cost-of-living crisis, students are forced to choose between two things. Affording necessities or doing fun activities. Students should ideally balance both, but with UL's accommodation fees rising by 1.5% next academic year, will they be forced to choose?

Campus accommodation ranges from €5,416 to €7,905 that can be paid for in monthly installments. Students are also expected to pay for food and necessities with 50% of students spending an additional €200 to €300 on these.

These figures may seem high, but even basic expenses add up—laundrette costs alone are €7 per wash and dry, totaling €28 per month. Add into the mix the rising costs of food (remember when the Tesco sparkling water was 75c *without* the deposit return scheme?) and it's a recipe for overspending.

GIVE OR TAKE: FOOD, RENT OR COLLEGE

Take Kimberly Uwechia, a second-year student living in UL's Dromroe Village, for example. Paying €810 per month for a room and kitchen, the engineering student struggles to make ends meet.

"I get a gym membership that I don't even have time to use because I'm working to afford rent" Kimberly responded when asked is anything else included in the high price.

Being a woman in STEM isn't easy work and when she isn't solving equations and learning anatomy, the biomedical engineer is working one of her six jobs to have a bed to rest in and a table to study at.

Though it sounds like a joke, rising costs have even impacted Kimberly's studies. On a particular Wednesday, she had to skip studying just to work, minutes before her midterm exam. The detrimental effect this enormous rent has is an experience felt by all students across Ireland

COST OF LIVING LANDS A PUNCH ON PARENTS


Grants like SUSI and student assistance funds help some, but 33.3% of surveyed students don't qualify. The most common reason being that their parents supposedly make too much and were deemed ineligible for the grant. One even stated they "didn't qualify for it, was out by a very small margin", putting even more financial pressure not only on students but on parents too.



While Kimberly does receive the SUSI grant, it still does not cover all her expenses. Having used her savings from her gap year, her mother also helped to pay her rent in the first year. However, the cost-of-living crisis has put a halt on that just due to financial stress and other responsibilities.

“If it gets bad, she will send me money. I just don’t want to keep asking for things from her because I also know she has things to deal with.” the student emphasises, saving her mother from worrying. With all the pressure cost of living brings, it seems the want to do fun and entertaining activities receives a devastating blow.

NO RECOVERY: COST OF ENTERTAINMENT IS STAGGERING ON ITS FEET



“MY SOCIAL LIFE EXISTS WHEN I’M IN SCHOOL. I ONLY INTERACT WHEN I’M ACTIVELY IN SCHOOL.” KIMBERLY EXPLAINS.

With activities ranging from watching movies at the cinema to going to dinner with friends, there's a variety of activities to choose from but there's a catch. They all cost a high price. A night out isn't cheap—entry to a nightclub is €10 (€20 on busy nights like College Christmas).

Cinema tickets cost €6, bowling €7, and that's before factoring in drinks, taxis, or late-night food. These costs deliver a knockout to a student's bank account with 75% of students saying they have no money left to afford these “luxuries”.

‘You can’t do anything free of charge. It’s always ‘do you wanna watch a movie’, ‘do you wanna do this’. If I’m already struggling to pay rent and struggling to feed myself, it’s like how’s a girl gonna do all of this?’

91.7% of students have even had to cut down on these events just to afford their living expenses.

THE COLLEGE DREAM RECEIVES A DEVASTATING UPPERCUT

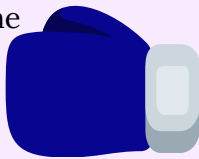
Dreams of the ‘Perfect College Experience’ are dashed in this shocking reality. Movies and TV shows like *Legally Blonde*, *Pitch Perfect* (admit it, you were hoping there would be pitch offs too) and *The Sex Lives of College Girls* gave the illusion that students would be partying, hanging with friends and studying all while avoiding any money troubles along the way

HOW WRONG WE WERE.

“I HAVE NEVER GONE TO RAG WEEK. I WAS EVEN WORKING AT THE RAG WEEK EVENTS. SO, WHEN PEOPLE MY AGE ARE DRINKING AND HAVING FUN, I’M LITERALLY WORKING.”

Many students are just like the Vice-President of WiStem in UL, one particular response stating that they ‘don’t really have a social life it’s just college and home and it gets lonely sometimes’

It’s a heartbreaking reality. Part of the college experience is spending time with friends and being able to enjoy events but with this constant stress, it’s become more of a burden than an enjoyment.



The cost-of-living crisis has the time and energy for fun activities on its knees and 70.8% of people have said it has negatively affected their college experience

“You want to travel; you want to experience life while you’re still young. Because once you leave college, you will never have this much free time again.” The future engineer reminds all of us.

THE RESULT?

With so much money going towards the cost of living for students, the cost of entertainment is left deflated on the mat with and students left at a standstill.

Enjoying their freedom and friends now or having a comfortable place to stay while neglecting their studies and peers to keep it.



Orange you glad?

HE'S BACK IN OFFICE

The past few months of Donald Trumps presidency have been tumultuous.

Executive orders have been signed, threats have been made, and tariffs have been placed. This is something many of us in Europe feel detached from. The US is so far away and will not affect us in the EU, some may think. That is wrong. The US and EU have an integrated relationship both economically and culturally. This means that Trump's actions will have a huge impact on us here in Europe. This feature will discuss in concise words exactly what areas Trump will affect and how you will be impacted.



Photo by Library of Congress on Unsplash

Ukraine v Russia

The ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia has been a relevant topic ever since the war started three years ago. Though now we seem to be getting closer than ever to a ceasefire deal. Trump has been relatively vague regarding the support the US will offer Ukraine in these deals. The US has clearly stated that they want peace, but they have also called Zelensky a dictator and ungrateful for their support. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has explicitly stated on many occasions his appreciation and gratitude to the American people and the US government for their support. However, this seems to slip their mind when in the same room as well as when actions against Russia are being taken. The UN held a vote for a resolution that would clearly state Russia as the aggressor in the war and the one to blame. The US voted against this resolution, in alignment with Russia, but then deserted its allies in the United Nations. The facts are there as Russia invaded Ukraine in breach of the UN charter and International Law. Trump and his cabinet are portraying him as a peacemaker who wants to remain neutral. This is an interesting proclamation as Trump has been calling Zelensky "Ungrateful" and "a dictator", clearly showing a negative opinion towards Zelensky's words and actions in these circumstances.



Photo by Joseph Chan on Unsplash

Security

The EU has a security agreement where if an invasion occurs, they will support each other. This, along with the discussion of an increase in investments for a collective European military, shows how the European leaders are fearful of the situation at hand. Trump has a lot of power that can greatly harm Europe's security as many see Ukraine as the border that must be held so other countries won't be invaded by Putin. This situation is tricky as Hungary is a member state of the EU, but the prime minister of Hungary is also in close relations with Putin. Therefore, if there would be talks of an increased collective EU military, Hungary could be persuaded by Putin to use their Veto and stop this. This all depends on Trump and his future actions. He is still adamant about attaining Greenland, which is an independent territory in the Kingdom of Denmark (an EU Member). If there are actions taken by Trump in pursuit of attaining Greenland, this will be seen as an invasion of Denmark, and therefore, further European military action might have to be taken.

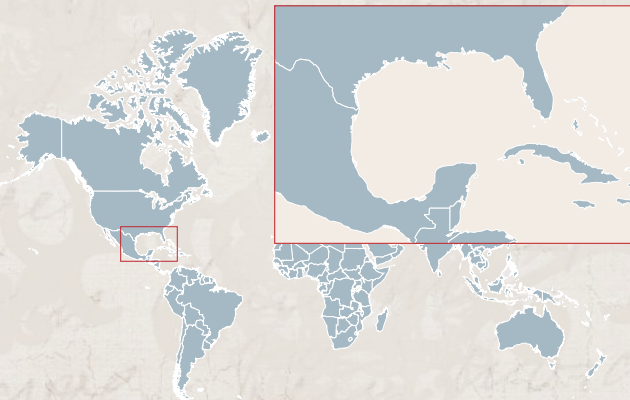


“Free speech”

President Trump and his right-hand man, Elon Musk, are both free speech and truth advocates. This truth-telling is something they struggle with implementing themselves. Both often lie and deceive while speaking to the public and the press. Firstly, the Trump administration is handpicking what journalists and news outlets are allowed in during white house briefings. This greatly harms the flow of information to the American people and people internationally and limits press freedom. One news outlet that has been banned from the White House press events is AP, which is being excluded as they are not willing to call the Gulf of Mexico ‘The Gulf of America’ as Trump has proclaimed it is called. Moreover, the stats the Trump administration is providing to the general public are also wrong. Trump claimed the US military funding to Ukraine to be \$350 billion, whereas documents and reports show it is \$185 billion. Most of that money is also going back to the American Military-Industrial Complex. Furthermore, Musk declared that the US is funding \$50 million worth of condoms to Hamas in Gaza. This is false as the US does not provide that service to any country in the Middle East. The sexual health aid that they are funding is mostly for Africa and is much smaller than Musk stated. Elon Musk later confirmed that he did not tell the truth and would continue to lie. This spreads disinformation to the whole world, which can be greatly harmful to this already unsteady political climate. Yes, this was only about condoms, but many are scared about what the next lie could be. Even Republican politicians have uttered their disagreement with Trump, especially after his words against President Zelensky. Trump stated in his first speech to Congress that “the age of unelected bureaucrats is over”, with Elon Musk on his side, an unelected billionaire who is in charge of a governmental organisation and is the primary adviser to the president himself. The hypocrisy was definitely in the room with him.



The Gulf of America

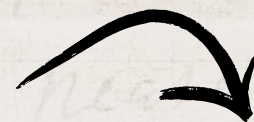


The age of unelected bureaucrats is over



Rights for Women & LGBTQ+

People of the LGBTQ+ community exist and have always existed. On his first day of office, Trump signed an executive order that put into law the existence of only two genders, male and female. This is extremely harmful to the community as trans people will not have their chosen gender on official documents and passports, which can cause extreme danger and harm to them when travelling abroad or doing everyday things as the gender on their documents does not match what they are presenting as. The constant minimising approach of the Trump government is troubling. Not only are they enforcing rules for what women can do with their own bodies, they are also cancelling diversity programmes, not allowing trans people to participate in sports, and defunding research which includes “taboo words” such as Women and COVID-19.



According to the UCLA Williams Institute, there are roughly 1.6 million transgender people in the US above the age of 13. This is 0.5% of the US population. Trans people exist but are not taking over the country like many seem to think.

Economy

Firstly, the EU and the USA have an integrated economy. Rory Costello, a University of Limerick Lecturer in the Department of Politics and Public Administration, explains they both have historically emphasised the need for free trade and open economies internationally. Trumps policies state that they want to protect the American working class. In alignment with this, the administration wants to put a halt to the EU and US cooperation as he puts tariffs and blockades on anything other than American goods and companies. According to Mr Costello, this situation might call for the EU to rethink their economic partnership with the US as they can seem “too unreliable”. Moreover, a partnership with China can be encouraged instead, which could change the economic landscape we know today. Ireland is also heavily impacted economically as it is reliant on Multinational companies like Apple and Google. The Trump administration has clearly stated the desire for these companies to relocate back to the US, which would harm the Irish economy. Therefore, a trade war between the EU and the US would greatly harm Ireland. And there is no winner in a Trade war.



Photo by Unsplash

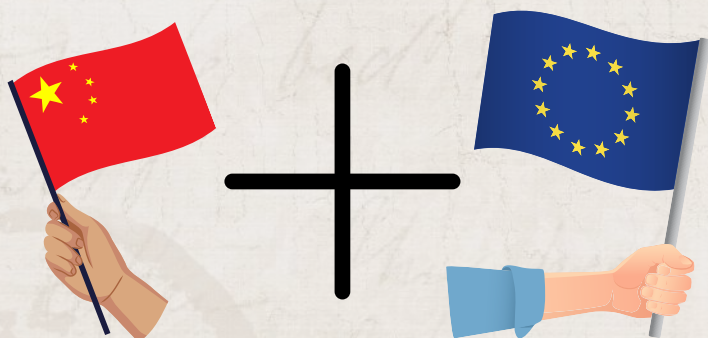
Science

Trump and his administration set their mark on medical aid and research. They have defunded the research in the US by 15%. This greatly harms the possibility for universities and other research institutions to conclude their research. As the US is a leading nation in research, especially biomedical research, this will not only affect the scientists and people in the US but also those all over the world. These cuts will limit the ongoing clinical trials as well as future trials and research for medicine. The US has already left the World Health Organisation and will now force scientists out of jobs as there are not enough facilities to support these scientists and their trials in other countries. The world will therefore loose brilliant scientists who might find the cure for cancer and more.

Tariffs:



A tax put on imported goods. If there is a 10% tariff on goods from Ireland, that makes a €10 product €11. Trump believes this will encourage American production and secure jobs for the American people



Conclusion

In conclusion, Trump’s actions will affect us in Europe. It is important to know this and act accordingly. A trade war is on the horizon from which no side will benefit. A campaign of disinformation is in full motion. Rights are being stripped away. Science is undermined and underfunded. People’s lives are at risk, and it doesn’t seem like it will stop any time soon. In the meantime, political engagement and involvement are vital to protect Europe and to protect your rights.



CONNOR SHEEHAN: FIGHTING FOR HOUSING JUSTICE



By CHRISTIAN ROSENBERG



The private rental market has also become increasingly unaffordable. Rent caps and tenant protections have been debated at the national level, but the reality on the ground remains dire. Limerick, once seen as a more affordable alternative to Dublin, is now facing the same issues that have plagued the capital for years high demand, low supply, and growing inequality.

Connor Sheehan, a Limerick TD recently elected in the labour party and the housing spokesperson of the party, has been at the forefront of the fight for housing reform. Since being elected, he has consistently called for more investment in public housing, stricter regulations on short-term rentals, and rent controls to ease the burden on struggling tenants. Unlike many politicians who offer vague promises, Sheehan has presented concrete solutions and held the government accountable for its inaction. “The minister of housing (James Browne) has appeared to have backtracked on the initial target of ending homelessness by 2030, claiming now that ending homeless won’t have a specific timeline in relation to” states Sheehan

Sheehan argues that the government’s reliance on the private sector to solve the housing crisis has failed. “We cannot continue to let developers and landlords dictate housing policy,” he states. “The people of Limerick deserve secure, affordable homes not a system that prioritizes profit over people.”

His stance has earned him support from housing advocacy groups, but it has also drawn criticism from those who believe his policies are too radical or financially unfeasible. Developers and some policymakers argue that stricter regulations could deter investment in housing projects, worsening the supply issue rather than solving it.

Limerick is in grips of a worsening housing crisis. Rents are skyrocketing, social housing waiting lists are growing, and the dream of homeownership is slipping further away for many. Homelessness is no longer just a Dublin problem it has spread across Ireland, hitting cities like Limerick hard. As families struggle to find affordable housing and young people are forced to leave their hometowns, one local politician has made it his mission to push for urgent change. Connor Sheehan, a determined and outspoken TD, has emerged as one of the loudest voices advocating for radical housing reform. But can his fight make a real impact?

The housing crisis in Limerick is not new, but it has escalated dramatically in recent years. A combination of factors including a lack of new housing developments, slow government response, and soaring rental prices has left many people struggling to find a place to call home. According to housing charity Focus Ireland, the number of homeless individuals and families in Limerick has been rising steadily, with many being forced into emergency accommodation or overcrowded living conditions. According to new figures released, over 15,000 people have been left homeless in Ireland including almost 5,000 children so far this year with the numbers expected to rise before they fall.

HOUSING STATISTICS

The CSO (Central Statistical Office) has revealed that the number of houses that commenced building in January was 1178, a 65% fall on the same month last year. Lack of supply has led to accelerating property prices, now rising by 9.4% per annum.

A total of 30,330 homes were built in 2024, a 6,7% decrease from the previous year and well short of the 40,000 target set by the government.

More than half of the completions were in Dublin or the mid-east (Kildare, Louth, Meath, and Wicklow).

Almost a thousand people have been left homeless since the end of summer last year with the new record number being set to 15,286.

Behind the statistics and political debates are real people suffering the consequences of the housing crisis. Take the case of Andrea Mesarosova, a single mother of one who has spent over a year searching for affordable housing in Limerick after being given a notice of eviction of which is due in November after 17 years of living in rented accommodation. Despite working full-time, she has been unable to find a home within her budget and is now at risk of homelessness

“I never thought I’d be in this position,” Andrea says. “Everywhere I look, the rent is too high, and the places I can afford are either in terrible condition or get snapped up immediately. I feel like I’m running out of options.”

Stories like Andrea’s are becoming more common, and for Sheehan, they reinforce the urgency of housing reform. “When people tell me their stories, it’s clear that this isn’t just a housing issue it’s a social crisis,” he says. “We need bold action now.”

So what needs to happen next? Sheehan has laid out a clear plan to tackle the crisis, focusing on three key areas. Massive public housing investments is something Conor advocates for. “The government needs to build more social and affordable housing rather than relying on the private sector” he states. “Stronger tenant protections. This includes rent caps, longer leases, and better enforcement of rental regulations to prevent evictions and rent hikes. Crackdowns on short-term rentals.” With many homes being used for Airbnb-style short-term rentals, Sheehan wants stricter rules to ensure that housing is prioritized for residents, not tourists.

While these policies are ambitious, they are not without precedent. Other European countries, such as Austria and the Netherlands, have successfully implemented large-scale public housing programs, proving that government led solutions can work.



PHOTO BY LEAH FARRELL

Sheehan’s housing policies have sparked significant debate in Limerick and beyond. Supporters praise his unwavering commitment to tenants and his push for government accountability. Housing advocacy groups such as Threshold and the Simon Community have endorsed many of his proposals, arguing that they are necessary to combat homelessness and prevent further housing instability.

However, some critics question whether his proposals are financially viable. Opponents argue that large scale public housing investment requires significant government spending, which could place pressure on taxpayers. Others worry that excessive regulations on the private rental market could lead landlords to withdrawing from the market, further reducing housing supply.

Despite these criticisms, Sheehan remains steadfast. “We’ve seen what happens when we leave housing policy to the market,” he says. “We need to take a different approach one that puts people before profit.”

The road ahead is not easy. Housing crises are complex, and political opposition is fierce. However, Connor Sheehan’s commitment to Limerick’s residents and his refusal to accept the status quo make him a rare and vital voice in Irish politics.

For many struggling to find a home, the stakes couldn’t be higher. Whether or not Sheehan’s proposals become reality, his efforts have already sparked a much-needed conversation about the future of housing in Limerick. As the crisis deepens, one thing is clear the fight for housing justice is far from over.

The Sound of Change:

How Kendrick Lamar exposed racial inequality through music



By Bronagh Lonergan

Music has a unique ability to evoke emotion and bridge the divides in human experience. Even though you may have never experienced heartbreak or grief, songs of that nature have an equivocal impact regardless. This is especially true for the vulnerable and heartfelt music created by marginalised communities, which sheds light on the injustices they endure.

Who is Kendrick Lamar?

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth (born June 17, 1987) is an American rapper from Compton, California. Kendrick has been releasing music since 2005, and with six albums to his name, he has been awarded a Pulitzer Prize and 22 Grammy awards

Lamar has been commended for highlighting the social divide in America as President Donald Trump, whose inauguration left many citizens uncertain and fearful, watched from the stands.

Lamar's headlining quote, "The revolution 'bout to be televised, you picked the right time but the wrong guy," is a rework of Gil Scott-Heron's poem, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." Gil Scott-Heron vocalises the gruesome reality of police brutality: "There will be no pictures of pigs shooting down brothers on the instant replay."

Although in our modern world everything is televised- whether it's surveillance footage or each individual's role as a content creator engaging with social media- important issues such as racial injustice are not given the necessary attention.

This isn't the first time police brutality has been given centre stage at the Super Bowl. Colin Kaepernick went viral internationally after he took a knee during the American national anthem to stand against police brutality at the 2016 Super Bowl.



Credit: Getty Images

Kendrick Lamar followed in the footsteps of legendary performers like Sinead O'Connor, tearing the photo of the pope on SNL to call out the sexual abuse rampant in the community; Rage Against the Machine, advocating against police brutality and capitalist greed during Coachella 2022; and Public Enemy, demanding racial equality during their VMA's performance. Music has and continues to bring critical underacknowledged subjects to the light.

Kendrick Lamar seized the global stage of the Super Bowl halftime show to use his music as advocacy. His performance created an unforgettable visual statement on racial inequality and discrimination in modern society. This performance came at a tactical and crucial time. Lamar has built on the international success of his diss track to fellow rapper Drake, "They not like us," which has surpassed over 1 billion streams on Spotify. This allowed Lamar to reach a broader audience and maximise the impact of the critical messages he highlighted.



Credit: The Seattle Times

Kendrick VS Drake?

The rappers accused each other of ghostwriting, industry politics, and personal controversies in a series of diss tracks released in 2024

While many praised Lamar's performance for its powerful message, some critics were less enthusiastic. The BBC called the show 'one big tease,' while Marca criticized it for lacking stadium-sized impact, stating that 'the energy felt low' and 'the staging was uninspired.' This divide reflects a broader debate: Should political messages be integrated into mainstream entertainment, or should performances remain purely apolitical?

Helen Phelan, a professor in the Irish World Academy of Music & Dance at the University of Limerick, shared her thoughts on the subject:

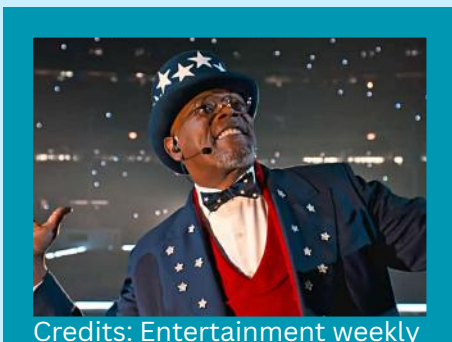
“Throughout history and across cultures, music has been one of the most important ways in which human communities have expressed, shared, and challenged their values.

Relegating music solely to the realm of entertainment diminishes its potential role in society. It is very interesting when artists such as Kendrick Lamar choose to challenge this by using the Super Bowl halftime show as an opportunity to communicate a powerful social commentary. ”

Lamar’s performance reignited the polarized discussion of whether politics should be brought into entertainment such as sports and music or if they should be separate entities. Fehintola Ogundipe, an African Irish student, gave her perspective “I thought he did really good making it entertaining and making a statement at the same time, especially considering there’d be people watching who otherwise wouldn’t engage with something of the sorts.” She added “Using music definitely attracts more people my age. ”

In a survey conducted by CIRCLE, the centre for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, only 40% of young people say they feel well-qualified to participate in politics.

Reinventing how we approach politics could be the change we need to increase the number of young people interested in politics.



Credits: Entertainment weekly

“No, no, no, no! Too **loud**, too **reckless**, too **ghetto**! Mr. Lamar, do you really know how to play the game? Then tighten up,” Samuel L Jackson interrupts Kendrick’s rapping as Jackson embodies “Uncle Sam” a common personification of the United States.

“ I think all music is political. Even saying that music is not political is a political statement. ”



Credits: Maurice Gunning

This statement depicts the criticisms black artists like Lamar face. Those who challenge the status quo and push the barrier of what has been and can be done are met with judgement and disgruntlement. Lamar highlights that to succeed as a person of colour, you must “tighten up” and conform. Lamar further highlights the futile political and social divide between American citizens as the dancers align to create a split American flag.”

Phelan highlights that music can approach difficult topics without watering down their meaning: “Because music opens us up to emotion, it can also be quite traumatic, especially when people have gone through challenging realities connected to what is being communicated. Kendrick Lamar’s reference to ‘40 acres and a mule’, for example, was a reminder of the promise made to formerly enslaved people after the Civil War in the US to provide some form of economic reparation for their forced labour, a promise which was largely broken.”

“ It’s way more interesting to listen to Kendrick Lamar or Beyoncé than some old politician ”

“This is not easy to digest, but music is one of those amazing experiences which allows us to feel multiple emotions at the same time: hurt, anger, courage, joy, hope. I passionately believe that music is like an underestimated superpower we have at our disposal to help us tackle the big challenges we are facing in our world today.”

Kendrick’s call to action highlighted how music remains one of the most powerful tools for resistance and social change and the impact that can be made by celebrities when they advocate for what they believe in.



Black Beyond Borders

Black students' experiences studying abroad By MIALY RAKOTOHARILALA



There is no experience quite like studying abroad. It is an opportunity to immerse yourself into a new culture, meet new people from across the globe (or from home!), travel to parts of the world you could only dream of, and more. Learning to live independently in an unfamiliar country, though challenging, is something that most students look forward to when going on exchange. However, said challenge looks very different for certain demographics. The perspectives and experiences of racial minorities— particularly Black students, let alone Black women— and how they differ from their non-Black counterparts are rarely acknowledged, much less accommodated during application and pre-departure programs. As a Black woman on exchange myself, this is an issue that hits quite close to home, and that I would like to bring more awareness to.

To explore this topic more in depth and bring an overview of sorts on our thoughts and experiences, I spoke to two other Black women currently on exchange here at UL; Timna Habta and Mani Carnes, third-year students coming from Canada and the United States, respectively.

How hard can it be?

What many may not consider is that our very approach to exchange diverges from that of our non-Black peers. Priorities shift, and the process of choosing a host school or country becomes much more tedious; we all recounted spending hours on TikTok and Reddit searching for answers to “Is ___ safe for Black people”, or “Is ___ culturally diverse” before feeling comfortable enough to apply to a host university.

Timna: I couldn't be concerned about having a fun time the way people around me were. I had to think about my wellbeing first. With my co-op schedule my options were pretty limited as is, but on top of that I was worrying about how safe I would be as a Black person— as a Black woman— in whatever

country I chose. Where everyone around me was just excited about traveling and the nightlife, and could prioritize the fun of their experience, I felt like I couldn't even begin to think about those things. [...] Also having a, I guess, harder time enjoying travel than others when I have colonialism in the back of my mind at all times. And this is probably just me, but for example we're visiting London this weekend, and I want to explore the city and I'm playing into tourism, but to understand that none of this would exist without colonial violence. It's a tricky experience and as a result I'm... “grateful”, almost, to be in a country that isn't a colonial power— that is, actually, actively the opposite— in the way Spain or Britain are.

Mani: I had been waitlisted for a few programs— London, here [Limerick] and Copenhagen were my tops — and she [study abroad advisor] was like, “have you considered Austria or Iceland?” because these schools had pretty high availability at the time. And I said no. And in the grand scheme of things, I know she was just trying to help me get into any program I could. But I explained that I wanted more culturally diverse countries; I had looked up Austria, and apparently it's among the most racist countries in the world.

A 2022 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that Austria had the highest reported levels of racism among 6,800 Sub-Saharan African respondents in 13 EU countries—64% had experienced racial hostility in the past year, and 72% in the past five years.

Mani : And what she told me was that, “you need to learn to be more comfortable with uncomfortable situations”. And that is just, really not the same thing at all. Being deeply uncomfortable with

people who possibly despise you for four months is different than, like, average culture shock.

Timna : And the fear that anyone could be being racist towards you, and you don't even understand [the language].

Timna : They're [institutions] just thinking about me as a student. But, especially when travelling, I'm Black before anything else.

One constant across both pre-departure programs was attention (while not as detailed as it could've been) to the safety of LGBTQ+ students going abroad, while neglecting that of students of colour. We were shocked by our institutions' willingness to acknowledge how identity could affect queer students' experience while actively dismissing that of visible minorities, and refusing to directly address the fact that racial violence and discrimination are still relevant concerns.

(Un)expected

As much time as we spent imagining every possible experience we'd come across, for better or for worse, we can't be prepared for everything. From the price of curly hair products to the types of people we've met, we've come across many surprises— some more pleasant than others, but all unique to our time so far here in Limerick.

Timna : With UL in particular, I don't find that I have to move— or, navigate— any differently than I do at home. At least, not because of my Blackness. It's been nice.

Mani : Having a Black Buddy* was honestly such a pleasant surprise, and like super comforting. I think I got comfortable much faster than I would've otherwise.

The UL Buddy Programme is an opportunity for incoming exchange students to connect with a current UL student who can help them navigate life in Limerick. The program offers fun events to help students connect with their Buddy, meet others in the program, and make the most of their time here at UL!

Mani : I didn't expect my American-ness to— to almost matter more than my Blackness. And I did

didn't expect to be so defensive over my American identity. [...] To be lumped together with all the Americans when usually, as an African-American I'm like, excluded from that. And, my experience as an African-American, with my specific heritage, is so different from non-Black Americans and the people here, I feel, can never ever understand that.

When All is Said and Done

In spite of our fears, we are all more than happy to have followed through with our exchange, and to have found one another in it. To have people who share our concerns and background has been a huge comfort in this daunting experience, and we encourage any students in situations like ours to take the leap and trust that you will find your people. Make sure to advocate for yourself any space you enter, from the moment you begin your application all the way until you board your flight home, and your study abroad experience will be one to remember forever.





TRAVELLED

FASHION



FASHION TRENDS AT FULL SPEED:

The Social Media Trap

By Leah Kirwan



The Rise and Fall of a Trend - Faster Than Ever

Fashion trends once unfolded slowly—like seasons, they arrived with anticipation and lingered for months. Designers set the pace on the runway, and shoppers had time to embrace a look before it was deemed outdated. But today, fashion moves at lightning speed—trends are born and die within weeks. This rapid turnover forces us to ask: is fashion more exciting than ever, or are we sacrificing individuality and sustainability?

TikTok can make a trend rise and fall in a matter of days. ‘Clean Girl’ makeup quickly gives way to ‘Mob Wife’ chic, and last season’s must-have ballet flats are already collecting dust. In today’s digital age, it’s not designers but influencers and algorithms that determine what’s “in.” While this accessibility makes fashion more inclusive, it also raises concerns. Are we genuinely enjoying this fast-paced trend cycle, or are we mindlessly following fleeting fads at the expense of our personal style and the environment?

Trendsetting at the Speed of Wi-Fi

Gone are the days when fashion inspiration came from glossy magazines or high-end runways. Today, TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest serve as the new front row, with influencers, stylists, and everyday users shaping the conversation.

Makeup artist Mary Kiely has seen first hand how quickly trends take hold in the beauty industry. “There has been a huge rise in online trends, and they dominate conversations in the studio,” she says. Clients come in asking for ‘fox brows’ or ‘airbrush brows’ because they saw them online, but the reality is—not every trend suits every face.”

The same applies to fashion. One viral post can launch a micro-trend, sending consumers into a frenzy before it fades just as quickly. Fashion influencer Sophie Bubl  has learned to recognize when trends are about to disappear. “If a trend is oversaturated, I’ll decline a collaboration—I can already tell when something will vanish in a few months.”

The pressure to keep up is relentless, especially for those whose careers revolve around social media engagement. “I feel it more with makeup and skincare,” Bubl  admits. “With clothes, I have my own style, but with beauty, it feels like you always have to try the next best thing.”

Despite the constant cycle of trends, some influencers take a more mindful approach. Bubl  explains, “I dress for my shape, comfort, and height.” For those who develop a strong personal style, the urge to chase every new look diminishes



*Chloe Koyce
Fashion and beauty
influencer & Tik tok
sensation!*

The Cost of Chasing Trends: Money, Sustainability & Mental Exhaustion

Fast fashion retailers have mastered the art of rapid production, with brands like Shein, Boohoo, and PrettyLittleThing recreating viral styles in days. This ensures consumers can participate in trends while they’re hot—but at what cost?

1. Environmental Impact

The rise of ultra-fast fashion has significantly contributed to textile waste and pollution. A report by Repak states that Ireland generates over 2.5 million tonnes of waste annually, with a growing proportion coming from the fashion industry. The constant turnover of trends fuels overconsumption, with discarded clothes often ending in landfills.

2. Financial Pressure

The push to “stay on trend” leaves shoppers financially drained, as social media fuels the feeling that they must constantly update their wardrobes.

3. Burnout & Identity Crisis

As trends move faster, many people feel they’re chasing rather than expressing personal style, struggling to keep up with what’s “in” before it disappears.

Viral fashion and beauty influencer Chloe Koyce has learned to resist the pressure. “I used to feel the need to update my wardrobe constantly, but now I know what works for me. If a trend isn’t versatile, I don’t invest.”

Even influencers, who often promote these trends, feel the strain. Koyce highlights the industry’s fast-paced nature: “Our attention span is so small now that brands are constantly changing their style and switching it up to keep consumers tuned in. This is exciting but also brings pressure to keep up.”

Beauty Trends: From Overlined Lips to 'Clean Girl' Minimalism

This obsession with fast fashion isn't limited to clothing—beauty trends are evolving just as rapidly, creating new challenges for consumers and professionals alike.

From dramatic overlined lips to barely-there makeup, the pendulum swings constantly. Makeup artist Jade Kirwan, who works in the bridal industry, says she's constantly adapting. "As an MUA, you need to be versatile. Trends come and go, but keeping the basics on point is essential."

The beauty industry has also been shaped by filters and Photoshop. Kirwan notes, "Clients screenshot images they find online, but many of them aren't realistic. Social media can be a great tool, but it also creates unattainable beauty standards."

Mary Kiely echoes this sentiment, saying, "So many clients bring in heavily edited photos, not realizing the power of filters. The issue is, editing has become so advanced that people don't even recognize when an image is altered."

While these trends may be fun to experiment with, the constant change makes it hard to keep up—even for professionals.

Are Influencers the New Designers?

For decades, designers dictated fashion trends. Now, influencers have become the new tastemakers, often outpacing traditional designers.

Chloe Koyce believes the shift is due to accessibility. "Fashion used to be controlled by magazines, models, and high-end designers. Now, influencers can showcase affordable pieces directly to consumers—it's more relatable and personal."

However, not all trends are created equal. Bubl  notes that influencer-driven trends tend to dominate beauty, whereas designer-driven trends still shape luxury fashion. "Younger audiences lean toward influencer trends, while high fashion still holds power over the older demographic."

Regardless of who leads the trends, one thing is clear: social media is the ultimate trend accelerator—and it's showing no signs of slowing down.

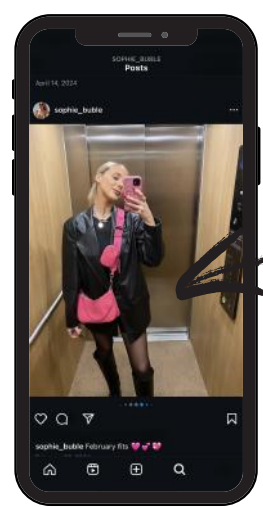
What's Next? The Future of Fast Fashion & Beauty Trends

If trends are moving at warp speed now, what does the future hold?

- More Micro-Trends – The rise of niche aesthetics (think: "Indie Revival," "Mob Wife," "Coquette") suggests that we won't return to long-lasting fashion cycles anytime soon.
- A Push for Sustainability – As climate concerns grow, will consumers resist fast fashion's pull in favour of timeless, ethical pieces?
- A Return to Individuality? – With so many trends swirling, will people finally reject the cycle and embrace personal style again?

Koyce hopes so. "I miss the Indie era—band T-shirts, messy hair, smudged liner. Maybe people will start looking back instead of chasing what's viral." Bubl  offers a word of caution, saying, "I am also conscious that in a few years, we could scroll back and think 'viral' trends look ridiculous, so I try not to give in to them too much."

For now, one thing is certain: fashion will continue unravelling at full speed, and whether we choose to chase it or step off the carousel is up to us. Fashion and beauty will always evolve, but we don't have to be slaves to every fleeting trend. Instead of letting social media dictate our style, maybe it's time to slow down, refine our tastes, and wear what feels like 'us'—trend or not.



Sophie Bubl  Fashion influencer

Q&A Style

How Can You Avoid Getting Swept Up in Every Trend?
Q: Should I buy into a viral trend immediately?

A: No! Follow the 30-day rule to see if you still love it after the hype dies down.

Q: How do I know if a trend suits me?

A: Ask yourself: Does this align with my personal style, comfort, and body shape?

• Sophie Bubl : "I avoid anything that doesn't work for me."

Q: What if I still want to participate in trends?

A: Incorporate trends through accessories or thrifted items instead of overhauling your wardrobe.

Q: Will I regret following every micro-trend?

A: Consider the Scroll Test—do past viral trends look embarrassing now?

• Sophie Bubl : "In a few years, we might scroll back and think 'viral' trends look ridiculous."

Q: What's the best investment for my wardrobe?

A: Timeless staples that fit multiple styles.

• Chloe Koyce: "If a trend isn't versatile, I don't invest."

Final Tip: Don't chase trends—make them work for you!

"Younger audiences lean toward influencer trends, while high fashion still holds power over the older demographic." – Sophie Bubl 

Sustainable Chic

How Fashion is Going GREEN



By Haruka Sasaki

FASHION IS NOT JUST ABOUT APPEARANCE, IT'S ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSCIOUS CHOICE.

The Fast Fashion Problem

Young people, in particular, are driving the demand for sustainable fashion, prompting companies to adapt. Fashion is no longer just about aesthetics

—it is about ethical responsibility—.

Fast fashion produces trendy clothes quickly and at low prices, making it easy for students and young people to follow fashion trends without spending too much money.

But fast fashion has serious problems. Many brands pay workers very low wages and make them work in unsafe conditions. This system also leads to massive waste, as people buy cheap clothes, wear them for a short time, and then throw them away.



Fast fashion is harming the planet. Every year, the world produces over 92 million tons of textile waste. The fashion industry is responsible for about 10% of global carbon emissions, which contributes to climate change. Also, synthetic fabrics release microplastics into the ocean, polluting water and harming sea life.

Because of these problems, many governments and organization trying to make fashion more sustainable. Let's look at one country that is taking the lead in this effort.

Are Brands Finally Going Green?

Sustainability is no longer just a trend —it's a necessity—

it is becoming a necessity. Many brands are now trying to be more eco-friendly by starting to recycle programs, using sustainable materials, and improving working conditions.

A prime example is UNIQLO's RE.UNIQLO Initiative, which champions reducing, reusing, and recycling clothing. This program collects used UNIQLO garments, cleans and dyes them, and gives them new life as stylish, sustainable pieces.

By encouraging customers to return old clothes instead of throwing them away, UNIQLO is helping to reduce waste and promote circular fashion.

Even fast fashion brands like H&M have introduced sustainability initiatives.

However, the real question remains: Are these efforts genuine or just greenwashing tactics?



UNIQLO Furugi (Secondhand clothes) Project

Green Washing is a deceptive marketing practice where companies exaggerate or falsely claim their products are environmentally friendly to appeal to consumers. This can include vague labels like "eco-friendly" without proof, using misleading imagery, or promoting minor sustainable efforts while ignoring larger environmental impacts. To avoid greenwashing, consumers should look for third-party certifications and research a brand's actual sustainability efforts.

Small changes make big differences in sustainable fashion

Fashion is not just about looking good; it's also about being kind to the planet. I had the chance to talk to Kaho, an international student at the University of Limerick (UL), about her thoughts on fashion and sustainability. Kaho has a strong sense of responsibility when it comes to taking care of her clothes. A prime example is the hoodie she wore during our interview—a piece she has cherished for over a decade.

"I always try to take care of my clothes, to make them last as long as possible," Kaho explains. When it comes to shopping, Kaho usually buys her clothes online, and she's a frequent user of Zozotown, Japan's large online fashion platform.

"I sometimes buy second-hand clothes on Zozotown, looking for cheap yet good-quality pieces," she shares. While she's aware of the benefits of secondhand shopping for the environment, Kaho still prefers brand-new clothes. But what made her to choose that?

"The main problem is that secondhand options are hard to find in Japan. There are very few secondhand shops, and they're not as accessible as in other countries," she explains.

"I don't have much knowledge about thrifting either. The stores are often in specific locations, making them difficult to reach, and the atmosphere at these shops can be unwelcoming sometime, especially for newcomers. It's not like in Europe, where charity shops are common."

Despite these challenges, Kaho remains committed to sustainable choices. "I want to make choices that help the environment, but it's not always easy when there aren't many options or when I'm unsure about where to look." On a day-to-day basis, Kaho tries to make small efforts to extend the life of her clothes.

For example, she uses a laundry net to protect her clothes during washing, and she irons and hangs them to keep them in good condition. These practices may seem simple, but as a busy student, they require effort.

"It's hard to keep on top of these things with everything going on in my life, but I try to do what I can," she says. When I asked Kaho what makes her care so much about her clothes, she said,

"I don't throw away clothes easily. I feel attached to them. When you take care of your clothes, they become something unique to you. That's why I prefer to keep them for as long as possible."

Kaho's dedication to both fashion and sustainability reminds me that even small, daily actions can make a difference. Her approach shows that sustainability isn't just about big changes—it's about the personal commitment we make every day.



SECONDHAND FASHION
is becoming popular. Secondhand clothing now makes up about 10% of the fashion industry's profits. Buying vintage clothes reduces waste and allows people to find unique, high-quality pieces at lower prices. Money is also a reason why secondhand fashion is growing. People want budget-friendly options without losing their style. Online platforms like Mercari (Japan), Grailed (USA), eBay (UK), and Depop have made it easy to buy and sell secondhand clothes. These platforms help people from different countries take part in sustainable fashion.

A Second Life for Vintage Finds by Haruka



"I THRIFTED A VINTAGE VIVIENNE WESTWOOD WALLET FOR 4,000 YEN (€25). WORN OUT BUT STILL POTENTIAL, I TOOK IT TO A LEATHER REPAIR SHOP TO CLEAN AND FIX ITS FRAYED STITCHING AND RUSTED PARTS—GIVING IT A SECOND LIFE THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY."

The Future of Fashion

The time of buying and throwing away clothes without thinking is coming to an end. Growing awareness of fashion's environmental impact is driving more conscious choices. Governments and fashion brands are also working on solutions to create a more responsible industry. The future of fashion is not just about trends—it is about responsibility.

By choosing secondhand clothes, taking good care of the clothes you have, and supporting sustainable brands, everyone can help make a difference. Fashion is a powerful way to express yourself, but now, it is also a way to show the kind of world you want to live in. Are you ready to embrace the future of sustainable fashion.



REVEALING CHARACTER: COSTUME DESIGN THAT SPEAKS LOUDER THAN DIALOGUE



By Eszter Réka Róth

RAVELLED

Behind every unforgettable character is an equally iconic costume, crafted by a skilled costume designer. Their job is to create a look for each character that serves the need of the story, sometimes to make a character stand out from the crowd, sometimes to blend into one, but always to make sure that they are clothed in the appropriate attire.



Deciding on what would make for the most appropriate outfit requires a deep understanding of the character and story.

A good costume designer knows how to analyse a screenplay much like an actor would, to get inside the head of the character, to develop an understanding of the world of that character belongs to and design the wardrobe accordingly.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has been awarding Oscars in several categories since 1929, but the award for best costume design has only been awarded since 1948 and costume designers don't get as much recognition in the media as they should. This is exactly why it is important to talk about costumes in movies and series, and especially how they contribute to the storytelling.

HEIDI BIVENS, COSTUME DESIGNER FOR EUPHORIA, NOTES THAT CELEBRITY STYLISTS OFTEN RECEIVE MORE ATTENTION THAN COSTUME DESIGNERS. HOWEVER, THE PANDEMIC—WHEN AUDIENCES SPENT MORE TIME WATCHING FILMS AND TV—SPARKED A NEWFOUND APPRECIATION FOR ON-SCREEN COSTUMES. BIVENS PREDICTS THAT THIS SHIFT WILL USHER IN A NEW ERA WHERE COSTUME DESIGNERS GAIN THE RECOGNITION THEY DESERVE.



PRINCESS ANN (AUDREY HEPBURN) IN ROMAN HOLIDAY SHOULD BE WEARING SOMETHING ELEGANT WHILE FULFILLING HER ROYAL DUTIES, AND SOMETHING RATHER DRESSED DOWN WHILE INCOGNITO IN ROME.



“As a costume designer sometimes, we are more like psychologist figuring out our characters, how messy or neat they are, where they shop, and basically we set the time and place with our costume.” – Daniel Orlandi (costume designer of Jurassic World)

“It is a true collaboration in that we are all reading the same screenplay, and the screenplay has clues, but you have to have conversations with the director, and not just one, a lot of conversation, because it is the director’s movie.” - Deborah Landis (costume designer of Indiana Jones)

The first step in designing an effective costume is understanding the script. To make a character feel authentic, designers must consider every detail—from their background and financial status to their fashion sense and the context of each scene.

After thoroughly reading the script, the costume designer collaborates with the director. Each director has their own unique vision for any given project, and it is that vision that every crew member of the project should be working towards.

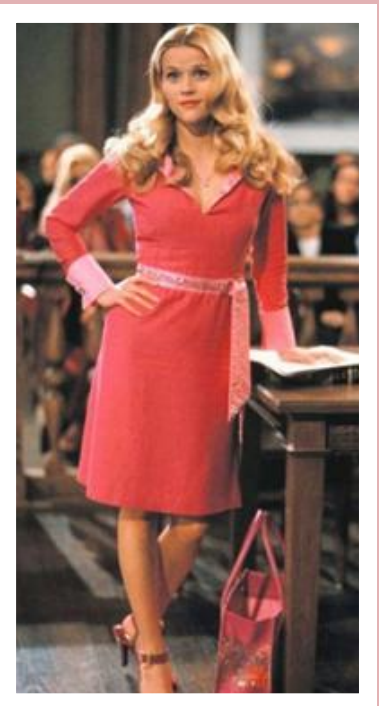
These discussions are crucial for understanding the story’s themes, a character’s transformation, and how costumes should reflect their journey. Colour, in particular, plays a vital role in expressing emotions and symbolism. Every colour has multiple meanings that may vary depending on your culture or where you are located.



THE COLOUR RED CAN SYMBOLISE LOVE, PASSION, RAGE, OR WAR, DEPENDING ON ITS CONTEXT



People associate pink with femininity, playfulness or romance all things that we could see Elle Woods from the film, Legally Blonde aligning herself with. In the beginning of the movie, we can see her in the lot of pink, she also wears it when she thinks Warner is going to propose and during her college admission essay video. When she gets to Harvard, she faces judgement the way she dresses. There are scenes we she is wearing a pop of pink, but it is always underneath something dark. Her wardrobe becomes duller and down especially during the scenes when she is working on the case. She does not wear the head-to-toe pink like she used to until she goes back to her roots by wearing her signature colour in the final scene. She is embracing herself despite society trying to box her into a stereotype. The best part is she does not have to say it out loud, her costumes said it for her.



Uma Thurman's bright yellow tracksuit in Kill Bill becomes an iconic visual during her battle against the Crazy 88, Go Go Yubari, and O-Ren Ishii. Tarantino is referencing Bruce Lee in the 1978 film Game of Death. Lee chose this colour, because he realized that yellow was a perfect canvas for footprint and what better colour for a fight scene.



The yellow tracksuit is super bright and stands out in the sea of suits and differentiates her from everyone else and most importantly, blood shows up well on this colour. The end of the fight the suit is drenched in red splatters from all the people she is killed, it makes her look badass and we get that same visual marker that Bruce Lee was also looking for. So, if the tracksuit used a darker fabric like blue the blood would not really read as blood on screen.



Costumes help to tell us something about a character and the world they are inhabit. They aid the actor in the transformation process and help them to deliver their best performance. The most memorable costumes are those that feel lived-in, helping the character come to life and leaving a lasting impression on the audience.

“The costumes that stick in your mind are the ones that the character has inhabited, and the character has really come alive in and that is why you remember them. That is the goal, I think.”- Kym Barrett (costume designer of Matrix)



TRAVELLED



LIFESTYLE AND WELLNESS

 RAVELLED



Circular Fashion For Dummies



By Tara Lowth

If all the clothing in the world were gathered and evenly distributed, it would be enough to clothe the next six generations. But the latest Zara jeans are still a need and the new trending top from Shein would go so well with them.... What do we do?

Living in a digital age with the everyday convenience of online shopping with next day shipping, how can we not just indulge ourselves with one more top or pair of new leggings. However, if Hollywood has taught us anything, it's that good things never come without a price.

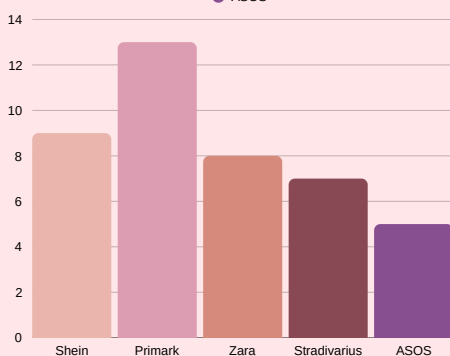
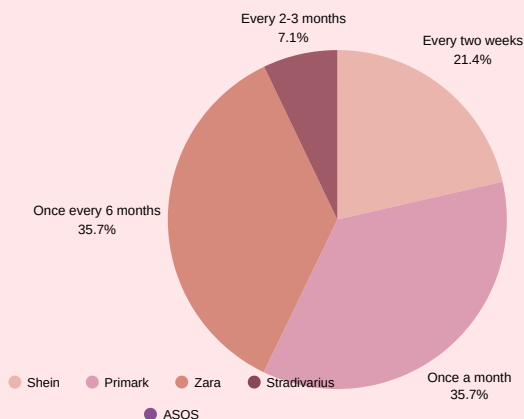
Currently the world is producing 150 billion items of clothing a year, for a global population of 8.2 billion. With the fashion industry being one of the leading contributors of carbon emissions, we have to look at who are the main consumers.

The leading buyers in fast fashion are young adults between the ages of 18-24 years. In a survey we conducted with the leading demographic, we wanted to find out what the fast fashion craze looks like from the buyer's perspective.



Credits: Aoife McNamara Instagram

Students' Relationship with Fast Fashion



In the survey, 35.7% of young adults, majority being students, admitted to purchasing from a fast fashion brand in the last month. While over 50% reported spending between €25 and €75 per month on these brands.

The companies who saw the biggest cashflow from the students was Penny's, Shein and Zara. With companies like Stradivarius and ASOS bringing up the rear.

While any broke university student may see cheap clothing as a way of saving themselves money, it's clear that this doesn't hold up in the long run. With 50% of students claiming that the clothes they are buying from these mass-producing clothing companies not lasting long as they are made with cheap and poor-quality materials.

The story of our shopping habits is a tale as old as time, but in a world of growing climate pressures, we need to look for solutions. Circular Fashion is the leading, proven example of where clothes designed with the intention of being reusable, repairable and recyclable, are saving our environment.

Fabric Of Change

One such initiative is Fabric of Change, a campaign led by the environmental charity VOICE Ireland. The charities aim for their campaign is to empower local communities to take positive action to conserve our natural resources through circular fashion.

Founder, Solene Schirrer, began the campaign while working as an intern for the VOICE 2 years ago. In an effort to fill the information gap surrounding fast fashion, she began the Fabric of Change campaign.

“The idea was to provide an online platform where you can have everything in one place.”

The campaign has grown since starting, having received funding from the Irish Environment Network (IEN) to start up their website, which provides a whole host of information and articles.

“I think people are looking for this information and they probably didn’t know where to look because there is so much circulating”.



Solene Schirrer, Founder of Fabric of Change

The website, Fabric of Change, is organised for viewers into three chapters. Learn, Getting Started and Imagine. All curated with the aim of helping give a better understanding of the industry, actions we can all take and what the future industry could look like in Ireland.

Combating the original narrative of fast fashion, Solene wanted to show how there are many different avenues to becoming sustainable in one’s fashion. The campaign aims to look at “more than second hand and trying to be more holistic in the vision in what we want to offer and to show all the different sides of what circular fashion can be.”

Fabric of Change, having only been established for such a short time has already gained recognition from media outlets, and received great support from their launch on Grafton St, Dublin 2 years ago.

Solene spoke on the new projects they are hoping to implement in the coming year, “We are working on another project that is meant to track the textile waste, The industry is not providing transparency on where are clothes go and so we are trying to get that transparency and see for ourselves to track clothes.”

Speaking on the role students play in the fast fashion space, Solene offered some realistic goals in cutting their consumption.

“Disconnect from fast fashion itself. Understand it and learn about it so you are more informed, and you know why you choose not to get involved with fast fashion.”



Try these Irish Sustainable Brands instead!

Jump the Hedges:

Sustainably made bags from Belfast. Each bag is totally unique with 'Bag Drops' only happening 3 times a year.



Human Collective

They are a sustainable clothing brand who are committed to crafting affordable, luxurious leisurewear that is kind to the planet and fits seamlessly into your modern lifestyle.



Pure Clothing

Pure Clothing is an Irish-based fashion business offering stylish, on-trend clothing made from eco-friendly materials and a sustainable supply chain





Renting Dresses is so in

Local Clare entrepreneur, Eve Lawlor has done just this with her company, Circular Style by embracing the ethos of buying less and taking a holistic approach to circular fashion.

Her company came to be after Eve's own experience with working in retail. "I started working in Brown Thomas when I was studying in UL, I was such a spender, I was buying loads and loads of dresses and handbags and never got to wear them enough."

"I decided that it was time to share and began uploading all my dresses and handbags up there. I just thought that it would be a nice way to share them with everybody."

With the business turning a year old in February, Eve talked on her plans for the future of the business, "Last year we had an opportunity to hold a pop-up shop in the crescent shopping center for a full weekend. I would love to do that again, maybe before the student races, so people have the opportunity to try the dress on before they rent them. We have our eye on different pop-up spaces thus year, including Cork and Galway."

"Men have been renting tuxes for years and women haven't really had the opportunity to rent dresses before."

Where that leaves us...

Sustainable fashion is no longer an unattainable reality with resources like Fabric of Change and more renting options with Circular Style. People like Solene and Eve give us the first steps for us all to take in beginning of their circular and sustainable fashion journey.

"It's all about the process, learning and trying step by step to get little changes, and in general buying less and reconnect with the clothes you already own"

-Solene Schirrer

A concise change can be made by changing our mindsets and actively engaging with campaigns and companies who are striving for better. Not just for us, but for our future.



Limerick Native Aoife McNamara, became Ireland's first B-Corp fashion brand whose focus lies with crafting modern heritage pieces that are deeply rooted in Irish tradition. Not only does having the certification give Aoife's brand a competitive edge in the market but also aids and drives long-term sustainability. It puts the AMN brand in a position to lead and to be the change in sustainable fashion.

IRELAND RANKS 10TH IN THE WORLD THAT SUFFER FROM SAD

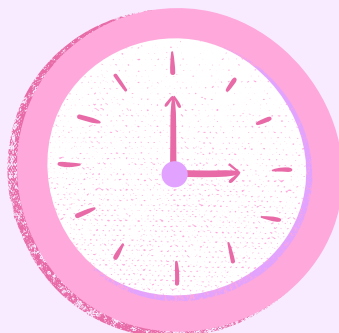
By: Lizzy Gruenloh



Vitamin D is necessary for the health and well-being of everyone, but what happens when we don't get enough of this nutrient? In Ireland, the weather forecast is usually the same thing every day: overcast, windy, and rainy. When the sun does make an appearance, it's usually not for long. This can have a negative side effect on the average Irish person, particularly in relation to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). According to John Hopkins Hospital, SAD "is a type of depression that occurs at the same time each year, usually in fall or winter. It is triggered by shorter days and less daylight, leading to symptoms such as sadness, lack of energy, oversleeping, and weight gain". What measures should we take to better our mental and physical health? If we can't get enough Vitamin D from the sun, where can we get it?

"It's dark all the time. You wake up its dark, at 3 pm its dark out"

-COLLEEN HEAGNEY



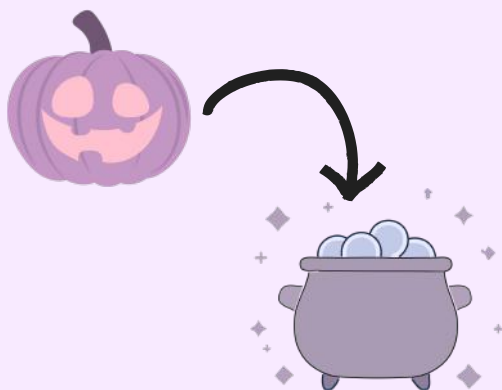
Symptoms typically emerge in autumn and persist throughout winter. In winter especially, the sunlight decreases, the melatonin increases, and the symptoms of SAD get worse and worse.



To better understand the effects of SAD, I spoke with psychology student Colleen Heagney. She shared her insights on how Vitamin D and melatonin influence mental health. "Although Vitamin D is important, it's not the only factor that plays a part", said Colleen Heagney. Vitamin D is, "just the amount of time you see the sun for... yes it's involved but it also has to do with the overproduction of melatonin".

The average person requires 10 mg of Vitamin D daily, but in Ireland, most people consume less than 5 mg per day. This has also led to Ireland ranking number 10 in the world for countries that suffer from SAD. Ireland has a score of 59.3 on the global list and is estimated to have 1 in 15 people suffer from SAD.

The overproduction of melatonin has to do with the darkness we observe from our retinas that go into our brain. This makes it realise we are not getting enough serotonin. Heagney continues to say more about the overproduction of melatonin, “It’s dark all the time. You wake up its dark, at 3 pm its dark out”. Focusing on Ireland and how it’s ranked 10th in the world, Heagney says, “People in Ireland are more susceptible to SAD because of the location of the equator”. She goes on to say that “Children are more susceptible to SAD” because they are born into the location with less sunlight and more melatonin levels. Because Ireland is so far away from the equator, it causes the sun to produce less sunlight which causes the serotonin levels to be replaced with higher levels of melatonin.



If we cannot get Vitamin D from the sun, then we must look at other places to take care of ourselves. There are always Vitamin D supplements which you can get from pharmacies. They are available as tablets, drops, and sprays. For ages 13-64 you should be taking a 15 microgram Vitamin D supplement from Halloween to Saint Patrick’s Day. Vitamin D is also found in a small number of foods; these include oily fish, red meat, liver, egg yolks, fat spreads, and breakfast cereals. However, these contain small amounts of Vitamin D; the best way to handle your health would be to take Vitamin D supplements.



Students at the University of Limerick struggle with mood and energy changes. When asked about those changes due to the seasonal shifts, the answers varied from a couple weeks to 3+ months.



Some advice that students gave when asked about their coping tactics were exercising, going on walks, taking part in hobbies, or doing things that bring you joy. Some other good ideas in coping strategies would be chatting with friends and adjusting the light in your environment to make you feel safer and more comfortable.



SAD is a widespread issue in Ireland due to its northern location and lack of sunlight. While not all cases are linked to Vitamin D deficiency, it remains a key factor in overall well-being. Get outside when the sun is out, keep a diet that has Vitamin D in it, and take Vitamin D supplements. No one wishes to fall victim to SAD.





By Sara Gleeson

GROW YOUR OWN MEDICINALS



“Western modern medicine's approach is that you wait until someone is sick, and then you try and fix them, the point of holistic health is that you try to keep people well”, this is the opinion of Kilkenny Wellness Instructor Essie May.

Holistic wellness is an alternative approach to health that underlines the importance of preventing illnesses over time instead of only treating them when they arrive. Senior yoga instructor, aromatherapist and massage therapist, Essie May highlighted the overall idea of adapting a holistic lifestyle; “If you take your herbs, and your citrus, and your greens, and all the things that you're supposed to take, and you look after yourself holistically, the idea is that people don't get sick.”

This approach to health focuses on averting sickness by sustaining a healthy lifestyle. Through the daily intake of natural remedies, good nutrition, exercise, and adequate sleep, individuals can increase their overall health. In doing so, it can reduce the likelihood of developing chronic conditions like cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

One of the key factors of holistic wellness is the use of herbal teas. Essie May, who has created her own line of herbal teas, shared her inspiration: “We grow a lot of herbs ourselves, and we've always used herbs. If you're using herbs in your coffee, it's not just for the flavour; they have

medicinal properties. If you're eating salads and vegetables, it's not just because they taste nice, they also have the properties that you need to be well.”

Herbal teas are a natural way to promote health and wellbeing. For students dealing with stress, burnout and irregular sleep patterns, particular teas can be beneficial. Essie May recommended occasionally substituting herbs for caffeine, “Most students are waking up and starting their day with caffeine. I would say to them, well, if you can make a



Photo permitted from Essie May's Instagram

switch in the afternoon, and when it comes to after lunch, have herbs instead of caffeine.”

For example, teas that encourage energy and alertness, such as those with ginseng or peppermint, can be consumed in the afternoon. In the evening, soothing teas like chamomile and lavender can promote relaxation and better sleep.

“Western modern medicine's approach is that you wait until someone is sick, and then you try and fix them, the point of holistic health is that you try to keep people well”

A healthy sleep routine is essential for overall health, and holistic wellness emphasizes the importance of quality sleep. Essie May explained, “If somebody wants to sleep well, usually they need to look at their whole routine surrounding sleep.”

There are very different types of sleep, and some types allow for the body to do a lot more healing and regenerating.”

To enhance our quality of sleep Essie May suggested incorporating a relaxing bedtime routine that includes activities such as drinking herbal tea, taking a hot bath, using aromatherapy mists, and practicing yoga or meditation. This routine helps to prepare the body and mind for restful sleep, ensuring that individuals can wake up feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. Holistic wellness is not just about addressing immediate health

concerns, it is about maintaining a balanced lifestyle that promotes long-term well-being.

Just as holistic wellness focuses on overall well-being, reflexology offers another avenue for restoring balance and harmony in the body. This is where Mary Moloney's work at the Hawthorn Clinic comes in.



Top 3 Tips for STUDENTS looking to ENHANCE WELLBEING



Photo permitted from Mary Moloney's Website

RAVELLED

Mary Moloney and the Hawthorn Clinic

Located in Thurles Co. Tipperary is where herbalist Mary Moloney practices the ancient art of reflexology, offering her clientele more than just leisure. With a holistic attitude, Mary crafts a safe space where people can reconnect with their bodies, recognise imbalances, and return harmony.

"For me, it's about supporting the overall well-being of the person. Many clients come to me feeling disconnected, lacking energy, or simply not feeling like themselves. Reflexology helps them recognize these imbalances and fosters body awareness, which is the first step toward achieving homeostasis."

Homeostasis, a term which refers to the body's natural state of balance, is the foundation for health. Reflexology, with its targeted techniques, enables the body to regain this stability, promoting both physical and emotional wellness. By mapping the reflex points on the feet to specific organs and systems, Mary can address a wide range of troubles, from stress to digestive issues.

For those interested in incorporating reflexology into their day-to-day routine, Mary proposes simple techniques that anyone can try.

"The tips of the toes correspond to the head, while the central area of the foot relates to the adrenal glands," she explains, "Students or anyone feeling overwhelmed could benefit from working these areas gently."

However, Mary stresses that reflexology is primarily a touch therapy, therefore, it's best completed with professional guidance.

Alternatively, the act of walking barefoot on grass or inhaling deeply whilst establishing an intention can guide individuals into feeling more grounded and connected to their bodies.

Mary believes that the feet embody the whole person, and the act of holding them becomes a sign of care and respect. For Mary, this connection is transformative not just for her clients, but for her as a therapist. "When I hold someone's feet, I feel like I'm holding their entire being. It's a profound and powerful experience."

The relationships Mary builds with her clients are at the heart of her practice. Every session is client-led.

"The most significant learning I've done as a reflexologist has come from my clients"

"Their experiences teach me so much about resilience, healing, and the human spirit." The mutual exchange of energy is one of the reasons why Mary finds her work so fulfilling. As her clients descend into deeper states of ease, she too benefits from the relaxing flow of energy. "It's a quiet, grounding experience that reminds me of why I chose this path," she added. Through her practice at The Hawthorn's Clinic, Mary Moloney continues to champion the benefits of reflexology, inspiring her clients to prioritize their holistic health.

Holistic health is far more than just a 'lifestyle choice'. In fact, it is the responsibility we hold of nurturing our body, mind and spirit. Let holistic wellness be your foundation, guiding you to live a truly grounded and gratifying life.

Are you tired, lowly motivated and over rely on caffeine?

Ditch your caffeinated drinks and Americanos for Ginseng !
This traditional Korean drink is known for improving focus and stamina, ginseng is a popular herbal remedy for increasing energy without caffeine.

Feeling anxious?

Well, in that case I suggest you sit back and sip on a warm and soothing green tea. Green tea contains L-theanine, an amino acid that promotes relaxation without causing sleepiness.

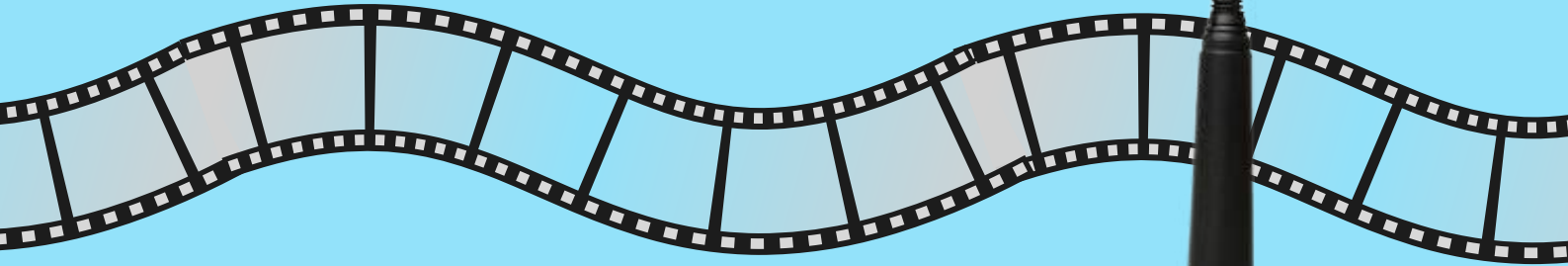
Can't Sleep?

Go the extra mile with chamomile! This calming tea is rich in apigenin, an antioxidant that stimulates relaxation in the body.

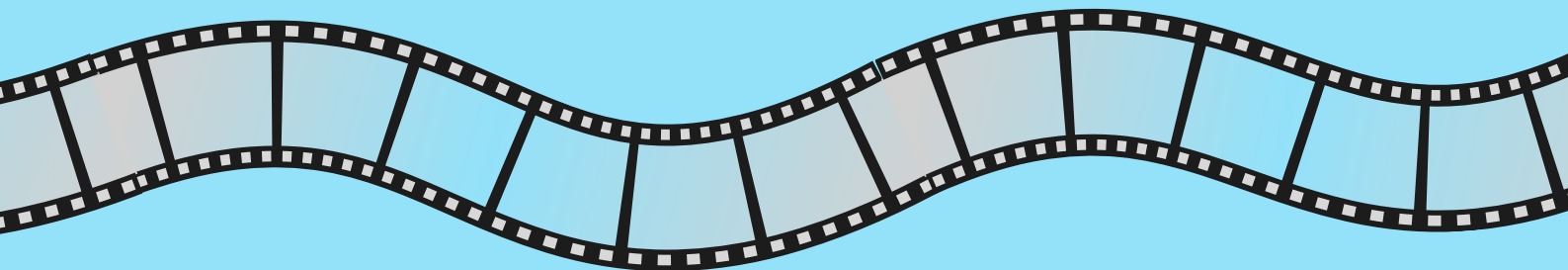


TRAVELLED

TRAVELLED



Entertainment





Generative or Destructive? The Impacts of AI in Film

OK

BY ROHAN COLEMAN



Ever watched a movie and thought, 'Something feels off'? An actors face looking unusually younger, a monotonous tone in their voice you never picked up on before, or something simply just looks off. For these strange instances, we have AI to thank.

The use of artificial intelligence has infiltrated almost every aspect of modern life, from helping to write essays, to setting alarms and writing schedules. It has become an increasingly prevalent part of our daily lives, with many people using it for academic help, as a search engine, or simply as a helping hand to make a shopping list.

While these examples of a digital helping hand seem like a dream come true on a surface level, many people fail to recognise, or are unaware of, the very damaging impacts that AI use can have. Even without considering the artistic impacts, the environmental damage caused by AI is rapidly increasing.

Film-making is one industry in which AI has already had devastating implications, which have been severely downplayed or ignored. The main ways that AI has been used in film recently is in de-aging, object removal and CGI improvement.

Tom Hanks' latest movie 'Here', used AI to de-age both Hanks and his on-screen wife, Robin Wright, as the movie follows this pair for multiple generations. Early horror classic 'Late Night with The Devil' was found to have used AI generated title and intermission cards. Kirsten Dunst's latest war thriller 'Civil War' produced multiple AI generated posters.

When caught, many directors and production teams defend their use of artificial intelligence by highlighting its cost and time efficiency, stating "we experimented with AI for three still images which we edited further and ultimately appear as very brief interstitials in the film," as said by 'Late Night with The Devil' directors Colin and Cameron Cairnes. But why is using AI in movies bad? Why shouldn't film-makers save costs where possible for investment in other areas?

While there are valid positive aspects of AI use that can be argued, such as efficiency, the negative aspects far outweigh any positives. Cost efficiency immediately sounds like a benefit to the film-making process, in which million-dollar budgets drain in the blink of an eye. But this fantasy becomes less sweet when we realise money is only being saved as one less wage is being paid. Opting for an artificially generated poster over a graphic designer potentially puts at least one creative out of work, if not an entire design team. Similarly, de-aging actors through a generative model has the potential to put a makeup team, or even a set of younger actors out of work completely.



Film production teams and actors are not the only people fearing unemployment due to AI replacement, as a major issue that has been flagged within conversations surrounding AI is in its multitude of copyright issues.

University of Galway lecturer, Dr. Abigail Rekas, is an expert on copyright and access law, with a specific focus on the impacts of technologies like AI on society. Rekas details how the basic methods used to gather data for AI generated content highlights complex copyright issues, stating “there’s the unremunerated use involved in the scraping [of online data]. Because this is not contemplated by the law, it’s unclear whether scraping is or isn’t something that should be repaid.

Huge volumes of the data that goes into making a large language model or an image generator is data that is scraped from ordinary people.” This means that any information published online, whether it be text, images, or videos, can be used to train AI models without the knowledge of the original author, meaning those of using the internet every day.

“There’s no framework for thinking about the copyright of ordinary people, who don’t think of themselves of people working in the arts, but whose data, whose language, whose images have been baked into these foundational models.”

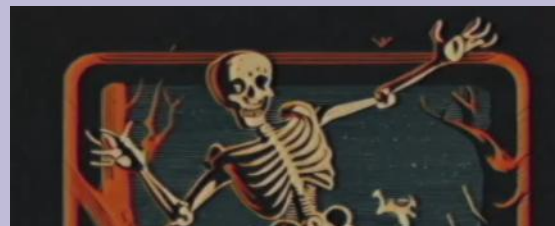
Environmentalists around the world also warn of the extensive damages that AI data centres cause to the environment. Similarly to when your phone overheats, AI data centres overheat due to the constant calculations of these models when given a task - you give ChatGPT a task or ask a question, and hundreds of equations are run behind the scenes to get a response.



In the previously mentioned Robert Zemeckis feature, ‘Here’, we follow one couple and their growing family over almost 100 years in the same house. While the acclaimed director of ‘Forrest Gump’ and ‘Back to the Future’ chose to de-age his actors artificially, he instead could have hired up-and-coming actors to portray the much younger versions of these characters, instead of having a strange, blurry look on their faces the entire runtime.

These calculations are done by a series of mega-computers in a specific data centre, running constantly to uphold these artificial models. But what happens when they overheat? They surely can’t be turned off like your phone? To prevent overheating, huge amounts of water are used to cool down these systems and facilitate smooth working mechanics.

As Dr. Rekas explains, “running those data centres sucks so much electricity, and uses so much water, every 20 searches is consuming around 500ml of water, and people just use it like Google.”



"It could also put every commercial artist out of work."

While these damages may seem incredibly existential, and rightfully so, that isn’t to say AI is completely harmful and has no benefits whatsoever. Dr. Rekas highlights some of these benefits, mainly showcasing the inclusivity that artificial tools can bring to the art world by allowing people into creative spaces they may have been excluded from before. “AI does have this flipside where it will facilitate the entry into art creative for people who

have been excluded before. It will allow for Pixar to create beautiful flame effects [for the animation ‘Elemental’], but it could also end up putting every commercial artist out of work. So, it’s not just this monolithic bad, but there are still pieces where you go ‘that could be something really cool’”.

The next time you find yourself with popcorn in hand, staring at the big screen, consider the possibilities AI use in the film industry has - for better and for worse. Is environmental damage, and potential loss of jobs worth spending a bit less money on digital effects that a viewer might not even notice?

Or is AI enhancement the cheapest and easiest digital tool to aid creative work in a modern technological society? Is there a firm answer? As Dr. Abigail Rekas describes it, “AI is a technology in search of use. We’ve invented this technology, and I don’t think we’re clear on what it’s really good at.” Should we wait until careers are completely erased before taking AI’s impact seriously, or should regulations be put in place now to prevent the erosion of creative industries?

Unapologetic & Underrated



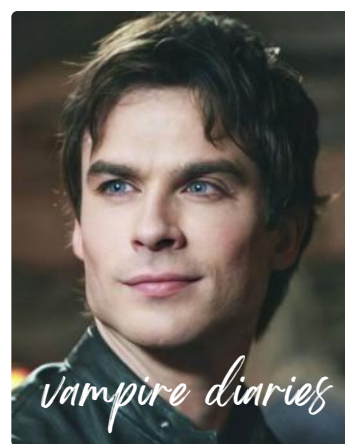
by Khushi Verma



*Not every popular opinion deserves a platform,
But most unpopular ones definitely deserve a mic!*

Curated like a glossy Instagram feed, popular opinions are shoved down our throats to match aesthetics. Rarely thought-provoking, these hot takes rewire our brains to consistently favour the algorithmically made decisions. And while this might feel harmless, it fosters an environment where critical thought is replaced by trendy consensus and dissenting voices.

What if the real reason most opinions are popular isn't because they're true, but because they're... Pinterest-worthy? Neatly packaged. Bite-sized. Easy to get 'socially accepted,' even easier to parrot. It's tofu for the brain, all shape, no flavour. Cheeky and unapologetically honest, this article calls out double standards and flips the narrative on intellectual laziness disguised as 'consensus.'



NETFLIX, NARCISSISTS & NARRATIVE NONSENSE

Beyond fiction, these tropes sneak into real life...

Rewatching shows like F.R.I.E.N.D.S., Gossip Girl and The Office under the disguise of 'free therapy' is like drunk dialling your ex and calling it closure. Judging the suspicious amount of casual homophobia, transphobia, fat-shaming and out-dated gender jokes masked as quirky banter, these shows aren't 'comforting,' but nostalgia in denial. From glorifying back-stabbing friendships (**Gossip Girl**) to relationships that idolise supernatural manipulation in a leather jacket (**The Vampire Diaries**) and obsession by serial killers (**You**) as the pinnacle of love; we are normalising toxicity with high production values.

Cinema keeps repackaging abuse, gaslighting and zero boundaries as passion and the audience keeps watching as long as the abuser has brooding eyes and six-pack abs. Nobody cares about the serious consequences of romanticising neglect, so long as the characters have sizzling chemistry and the ending features a grand gesture with a romantic soundtrack. But here's the thing about happily everafter, the only one worth rooting for is where these characters end up in years of therapy.

Take the 'makeover' trope; a girl's value magically increases after a beauty transformation and a wax. Shaping unrealistic expectations of love and gender roles, the young generation is conditioned to believe that affection involves being nonchalant and avoiding intimacy. Young girls drool over hot-and-cold emotional chaos and the 'I can fix him' mentality, hoping that the emotionally unavailable guy with dimples will show up in the rain outside their window. Meanwhile, young boys believe that emotional illiteracy is mysterious and detachment is seductive as long as their looks are charming.

While the mainstream swoons over the emotionally stunted with a tragic past, here's what emotionally quotient viewers with a therapist and...taste think.

If the confusion between being crazy or a protagonist in a rom-com is constant, it isn't romantic or 'epic'.

Pop culture's favourite genre is a draining situationship with magical screenplay. However, in the real world, this is a recipe for disaster. True love doesn't mean enduring pain or an everlasting emotional dodge ball.



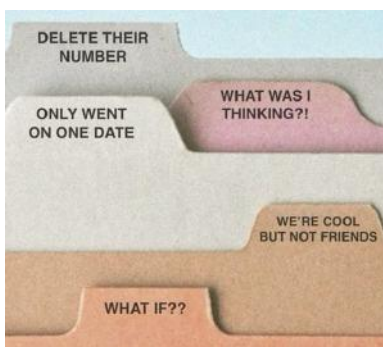
Fun isn't harmless when pop culture rewards gloss over grit and popularity over principle. A female lead with a make-over or sword isn't feminist if she was written by men who won't let her speak unless it's 'spicy for the plot.' Times are changing and so should the cinematic emotional dysfunction.



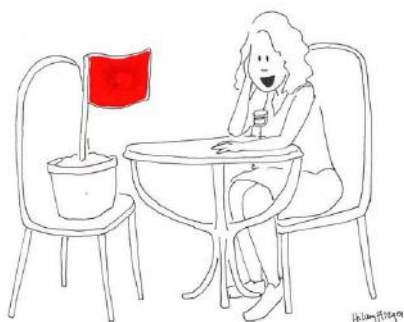
LOVE, LUST & LEFT-ON-READ

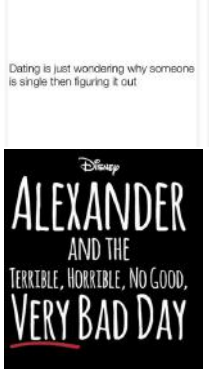
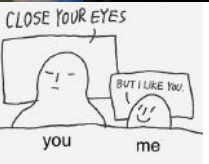
Dating in the modern age feels like working at a journalism co-op, often unpaid with no future commitments; rarely about forming genuine connections. We soft-launch our partners while hard-launching our collective attachment issues. Constantly emotionally unavailable or delusional or drained, the only thing we consistently share is the Wi-Fi that works perfectly when it comes to sexting, but starts malfunctioning the moment it comes down to "So... what are we?"

Dating apps are like a LinkedIn profile with candidates marketing themselves in 50 words, trying to strike the perfect balance between vulnerability and mystery, hoping that they match with 'something real' until it leads to 'something real' that neither of the parties is actually interested in. Crafting bios with just enough existential flair to seem emotionally deep but unbothered, the question arises: With the amount of emotionally quotient youth we have, why are we progressing backwards?



TELL ME MORE





Throwing around terms like breadcrumbing, orbiting, love-bombing, ghosting, benching and more attachment styles than the human brain can grasp, with so much ease, we've rebranded emotional damage into casual linguistics. And while defining detachment as desirable and 'too hard to get' as an exciting chase seems very 'butterflies in the stomach,' we remain clueless to the truth that those butterflies aren't love, but merely infatuation coupled with anxiety.

Despite being so 'self-aware' and 'eternally positive' online, even the possibility of liking someone more than they like us, terrifies us offline. For a generation that talks a lot about vulnerability, therapy and inner child work, our connections last no longer than five-minute dopamine bursts. A shared playlist. A photo tag. An addition to close friends on Instagram. A hinge match based solely on attraction.

Consent means checking in after as well, not just during. Consent is hot but so is asking your partner what they enjoy. Intimacy should not be reduced to just being physical. Intimacy involves being vulnerable and romantic, that's the beauty of it. Hook-up culture has been so normalised that we have forgotten to appreciate the little moments and romanticised being nonchalant, effortlessly chill and low-maintenance. The irony? All of us still want our true everlasting love to feel like a Nicholas Sparks novel. This isn't a generational misconception, it's a generational tragedy.

Relationships shouldn't be reduced to finding someone who doesn't leave you on read, has the same sense of humour and won't disappear after a sleepover. Chemistry isn't confusing chaos for connection and you shouldn't be in relationships that you are too scared to define; because it slowly sneaks into your friendships and family bonds too.



"ONLINE DATING DOESN'T SUCK. TOO MANY PEOPLE SUCK AT ONLINE DATING!"



Are dating apps your love story or your love disaster?

I asked Gen Z for their unpopular takes on modern dating and they turned it into a TED Talk that nobody asks for, but everyone needs to hear.



Popular opinions are a lot like Shein. cute from afar. questionable up close. yet everyone continuing to consume it.

The right ingredients for a healthy love recipe include hot honesty, bold boundaries, charming consistency, mutual maturity and communicative chemistry with a drizzle of affectionate intimacy.

Drowning in trends and hot takes, we starve for emotional validation. However, the truth is that growth doesn't come from echo chambers; it comes from echoes that challenge those chambers.

Most people don't have a type, they have a pattern. They should uninstall Tinder and go to therapy.

Dating today is like a university group project with no clear roles, no deadlines and no guarantee anyone's showing up. And yet, we all keep trying because in secret, everybody craves it.

Dating apps are merely digital vending machines for people with self-esteem issues yet good photogenic skills.

Masculine energy is just code for emotionally constipated boys.

I genuinely believe it when boys say 'it's not you, it's me.' I know that I am not overthinking it, they're under-communicating it.

Let's go with the flow on dating apps is translation for: I fear abandonment and commitment, so I prefer talking stages that last longer than actual relationships.

Dating Detox Checklist

- I convinced myself that "I don't catch feelings" while spiraling over a 'last seen.'
- I've sent a snap instead of making a genuine effort.
- I keep finding red flags in everyone instead of doing some reflection to find my own.
- I say "I'm healing" but I am too scared to be alone so I keep ending up in the same toxic patterns.
- I said "I'm not ready for anything serious." then wanted them back as soon as they moved on.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, Career!

ARE MOVIES AND TV SHOWS INFLUENCING OUR CAREER CHOICES?

CHOICES?

BY DEARBHLA PARRY



Saoirse Scanlon - Legally Blonde

Saoirse Scanlon was ten years old

Visual media while deciding on their college courses.

when she first watched Legally Blonde, and only three years later, she played Elle Woods on the stage with Breakthrough Dance Company. She explained, "I am passionate about law reform and protecting human rights in general, but this movie started this idea within

me from a young age that women can do whatever men can do and that just because you have aspirations and interests that society doesn't seem as important as the likes of law, it doesn't mean that you can't study it." She said she liked how "they showed that even though she went for a silly reason (to chase after a boy), this movie showed that these girls can do smart things, these girls can be smart people, and that they can be more than just their interests; They can take over the world."

Elle Woods, the movie's main character, studies law at Harvard Law School to become a barrister. Saoirse now studies law, politics, and economics at the University of Galway "with the goal of becoming a barrister", just like Elle.

"If you like feminine things, if you like girly things, if you like makeup, all that stuff, society has deemed us to think that we're less than or we're silly or stupid... I think the main message behind it was that girls can do just as much as lads can, even if they're underestimated, and girls don't have

to pretend to be 'not like other girls'. Their interests can be just as important and not diminish their intelligence."

Elle Cullinan - The Supervet and The Zoo



ELLE WOODS, LEGALLY BLONDE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO DIVINITY SCHOOL

Elle Cullinan's love for wildlife began at age nine while watching The Supervet and RTÉ's The Zoo (Dublin and Fota). These shows sparked her passion for working with wild animals and led her toward the conservation side of zoology. She is now studying for a Bachelor of Science in Zoology

Choosing a career can be overwhelming, especially in a world saturated in constant media. But, how do the movies and TV shows we watch - whether consciously or subconsciously - shape our career decisions?

"This movie showed that girls can do smart things... They can take over the world."

As a kid, I loved Sabrina the Teenage Witch and was fascinated with how fun her job looked. Then the summer before my Leaving Cert, I watched Gilmore Girls. Both heavily influenced my decision to become a journalist. Even now, if I need motivation, I find myself rewatching these shows. The more I thought about how much these TV shows affected me, the more I wondered if there were any other shows or movies I liked that showcased the career I am studying for, and (spoilers) there are - The Devil Wears Prada, Sex and the City, Roman Holiday, Bridget Jones's Diary, 13 Going on 30 - the list goes on and on...

In a recent survey, 63% of respondents said a movie or TV show influenced their career choice. Furthermore, 57% of them cited a specific character or figure as their primary inspiration.

To get a better understanding of how and why television is affecting our career choices, I spoke with three of my friends who were inspired by certain

Movies/TV Shows that have inspired you:

- ★ GILMORE GIRLS
- ★ NATURE DOCUMENTARIES
- ★ ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL
- ★ HOUSE MD
- ★ CASUALTY
- ★ LEGALLY BLONDE
- ★ NIGHT CRAWLER
- ★ HOW TO GET AWAY WITH MURDER
- ★ SEX AND THE CITY

at the University College Cork.

Noel Fitzpatrick from The Supervet is the main vet in the show and has "two practices making bionic limbs for animals". She explained, "When I was younger, it was my favourite program and I wanted to be able to help animals like him". She said that she also took inspiration from Gerry Creighton in the Dublin Zoo show - "He was one of the main zookeepers and is now an international elephant care consultant, so he makes sure that in zoos, their enclosures are big enough and have enough shelter and enrichment."

Julia Wiehcinska - Jurassic Park

Julia Wiehcinska is studying for a Bachelor of Science in Genetics and



SABRINA, SABRINA THE TEENAGE WITCH BY GORILLADAMEE

Genomics at the University of Galway. She explained how in Jurassic Park, “they used the DNA of the dinosaurs from the past to make them again”. She said, “I remember being so dumbfounded by that and I just kept asking questions about it, and now I study genetics”. The first time she watched the movie at 11 years old, it instantly piqued her interest – “I was in like fifth class or sixth class when I first properly watched it... Jurassic Park really confused me as a child and nobody could explain it to me and now I study genetic engineering.”

“I just kept asking questions about it, and now I study genetics.”



JURASSIC PARK LOGO BY JURASSIC PARK WIKI

IS IT GOOD OR BAD TO TAKE INSPIRATION FROM MOVIES/TV SHOWS?

Characters/People that have inspired you:

- ★ RORY GILMORE
- ★ HARVEY SPECTER
- ★ DAVID ATTENBOROUGH
- ★ MAVERICK
- ★ CHARLIE FAIRHEAD
- ★ RACHEL ZANE
- ★ LOGAN HUNTZBERGER
- ★ ANNALISE KEATING
- ★ CARRIE BRADSHAW
- ★ STEVE BACKSHALL
- ★ JAMES HERRIOT



Saoirse: “I don’t think it’s a bad thing. I think you should make an informed decision... I don’t think you should base it solely off a character, but I think movies and TV shows can be important in shaping your opinions and they can be important reflections on society.”

Ellie: “I think TV shows, when it’s actually real life, is a good thing because it shows you what the career is like. Movies, I think, can be good but also can be unrealistic. So personally, I would do more research into it beyond just seeing it in a movie.”

Julia: “I think it’s a good because it can be hard to choose what you want to do and I feel like it’s kind of a full-circle-moment if you do end up in your favourite movie’s profession. Nowadays, maybe not so much... It depends on what kind of movies and TV shows, like obviously I don’t think it’s good if you take inspiration from Pretty Woman, or something like that.”

There seems to be something encapsulating about seeing successful people on television and envisioning ourselves doing the same. Maybe the green goblin was right when he said “We are who we choose to be” in Spider-Man... Looking for inspiration around you to envision your desired future can be helpful - Seen by the inspiration mood board trend that took over TikTok during the New Year. Whether it was a childhood film you grew up obsessed with or a series you binged before filling out your CAO, were you influenced when choosing your career?

RORY GILMORE, GILMORE GIRLS BY WIKIPEDIA; HARVEY SPECTER, SUITS BY FREDICELLI; DAVID ATTENBOROUGH BY BRITTER'S CONSERVATION; MAVERICK, TOP GUN BY WIKIPEDIA; CHARLIE FAIRHEAD, CASUALTY BY THE GUARDIAN; RACHEL ZANE, SUITS BY FASHIONANDREACTIVNOW; LOGAN HUNTZBERGER, GILMORE GIRLS BY GILMORE GIRLS WIKI; ANNALISE KEATING, HOW TO GET AWAY WITH MURDER BY WALLPAPER; CARRIE BRADSHAW, SEX AND THE CITY BY FASHIONSTREBLENG; STEVE BACKSHALL BY DREAMSTIME; JAMES HERRIOT, ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL BY WIKIPEDIA

The Rise of Influencing in Ireland



By Christina O' Mahony

Scroll to Success: What does it really take to go viral online

What was once just a hobby has now transformed into a full-fledged career path. Content creators across Ireland are now making a living through brand deals, sponsorships, and social media engagement. From viral TikTok stars to fashion-forward Instagram influencers, these digital personalities have reshaped how we consume content, shop, and even lifestyle choices. But what does it really take to turn likes and shares into a sustainable income?



In Ireland, the influencer industry has grown rapidly, with social media stars finding ways to monetise their platforms through paid partnerships, user-generated content, and even their own businesses. However, behind the glamorous Instagram posts and polished TikTok videos lies a competitive and demanding industry—one that requires consistency, creativity, and resilience.

To understand what it takes to thrive in this space, I spoke to three Irish influencers—Lauren Gavin, Lexi Mackeown, and Kasey-Leigh Campion—who are all at different stages of their careers. From navigating online hate to balancing authenticity with paid promotions, they share their experiences, challenges, and insights into making a living in Ireland's fast-growing influencer economy

Dublin native Lauren Gavin is an up-and-coming influencer, though social media fame was never part of her plan. “It’s something that happened out of nowhere,” she admits. Her journey began last August when she sent a funny video of herself and her grandad to her girls’ group chat on Snapchat. Encouraged by her friends, she posted it on TikTok, where it unexpectedly went viral. Soon, people were even recognising her grandad in public. The moment was particularly special for Lauren, as she had recently lost her nan. “It was so nice for my grandad to have something,” she says. In less than a year, she has gained over 30,000 followers, an achievement that still feels surreal. “I remember one day, someone came up to me and my grandad and said, ‘Oh my god, I love your videos,’ and to me, that was crazy,” she recalls. With social media overflowing with repetitive trends, Lauren is determined to stand out by staying true to herself. “There’s no point in faking being another person,” she explains. She wants her online persona to reflect who she is in real life so that if someone met her on the street, they’d see the same person. That said, she does follow one piece of advice from her mother: “She warned me not to curse as much,” Lauren laughs.



“I definitely struggled with being authentic when I was younger.”



Lexi Mackeown, hailing from County Cork, is a full-time influencer now living in Bali, with a combined following of over 50,000 on TikTok and Instagram. Like many creators, her content first gained traction during lockdown, but it truly took off when she moved to London and landed her dream job at a major fashion brand.

Fashion and lifestyle are at the heart of Lexi’s content, a passion she’s had since childhood. She credits her mother and grandmother for sparking her love of style and creativity. “They were both tailors,” she shares, adding that her mother even worked in Harrods in the 1980s, tailoring for high-profile clients.

When it comes to authenticity online, Lexi shares the same philosophy as Lauren Gavin, that being yourself is key. “It’s easy when you don’t put pressure on yourself to be anything other than yourself. People can see through you when you’re not,” she explains. However, she admits that staying true to herself wasn’t always easy.

“I definitely struggled with being authentic when I was younger.”

One way Lexi stays connected with her audience is by engaging directly with them. “I answer every DM I get. They’re the reason I can do what I do, so it would be super negligent and ungrateful if I didn’t try to get back to as many of them as I can! No gatekeeping around here, girlies,” she says.

Building an audience across different time zones presents its own challenges. To stay connected with her Irish followers, she schedules posts for 3 a.m. Bali time (7 p.m. in Ireland). Much of her content is User Generated Content (UGC), meaning she creates content for ads rather than companies and marketing agencies coming up with the content. She prioritises “long-term partnerships over short-term financial gain,” which is why she’s turned down paid posts from major brands like Adanola, Bo+Tee, and Exeré. As the current creative director of Irish-owned fashion brand Bound Apparel, she’s selective about the brands she works with. “You can see a shift in power dynamics between audiences and how they interact with celebrities, brands, and influencers. People are more savvy to marketing techniques,” she explains.

As for the future, Lexi is excited to see “what unfolds.” She’s also working on launching her brand, so keep your eyes peeled.

Kasey-Leigh Champion has taken the Irish TikTok scene by storm, having over 116,000 followers on TikTok, and is best known for her entertaining story times and relatable love-life struggles. Beyond social media, she's making waves in traditional media too—currently working for Dublin's FM104, recently appearing on Ireland AM, and hosting her own podcast, On the Kase Pod.

Kasey has always loved filming herself, a passion that started in childhood. "I was always taking videos," she says. However, it wasn't until she left college that she finally felt comfortable posting them. "I didn't want anyone judging me."

Like many influencers, she's faced criticism for doing sponsored content. "People don't really like the ads because they know you're getting paid for them," she admits. "But it's the same as any other job—you have to do what you have to do."

Keeping up with the demands of social media isn't easy, and Kasey doesn't pretend otherwise. "I don't keep up—I don't," she laughs. "My phone is never out of my pocket, and it takes a big toll on everything—my energy, my mental health." She adds that consistency is key, but maintaining it can be exhausting.

Unfortunately, dealing with online hate has become part of the job. Kasey has had to develop a thick skin. "If hate comes from a fake account, I'll ignore it. But if it's from a real account, I won't," she says. While negative comments don't necessarily upset her, they do irritate her. "The fact that people think they can say things like that just annoys me."

Before wrapping up, she shared her thoughts on the public's perception of influencers. "I think society treats influencers really badly. Everyone hates us—hates the fact that we get paid, hates the fact that we get free stuff. But in any job, you get perks," she explains. "Not to say 'pity us' or anything, but I think people are very begrudging and jealous. They don't see that it's a real job."

Influencers Entrepreneurs

Irish influencers who turned their online content into successful international businesses

1. Aimee Connolly – Sculpted by Aimee
2. Suzanne Jackson – SOSU Cosmetics & Dripping Gold
3. Pippa O'Connor – POCO by Pippa & UP Cosmetics
4. Marissa Carter – Carter Beauty & Cocoa Brown Tan
5. Rosie Connolly – 4TH ARQ
6. Keilidh Cashell – KASH Beauty
7. James Kavanagh – Currabinny



"I think society treats influencers really badly"

The rise of social media has opened the door for a new wave of Irish influencers, turning personal passions into full-time careers. But as Lauren Gavin, Lexi Mackeown, and Kasey-Leigh Champion have shared, influencing isn't as effortless as it may seem. Behind the viral moments and curated posts lies a demanding industry that requires resilience, adaptability, and a thick skin.

Despite the perks—brand deals, free products, and the ability to work from anywhere—their experiences reveal the realities of an industry that is often misunderstood. Many still struggle to view influencing as a "real job," dismissing the work that goes into content creation, audience engagement, and brand partnerships. As the influencer landscape continues to evolve, one thing remains clear: authenticity, persistence, and a strategic understanding of social media distinguish fleeting virality from a lasting career.



SUBSCRIBE

The Impact of a Controversy



BY RUEBEN MULLIGAN

These days, it's pretty easy to name a celebrity that has gotten in some controversy. But how often does this controversy end up following them into the future, and has it really affected their cultural status?

Let's start with OJ Simpson. Born Orenthal James Simpson, OJ was an NFL running back for 11 seasons, for the Buffalo Bills and the San Francisco 49ers. He was extremely successful, earning many awards, including the Heisman Trophy in 1968, the most prestigious award in college football. He's considered among the best running backs of all time. Yet his football achievements are rarely mentioned today because, in June 1994, he was charged with the murders of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown, and her friend, Ron Goldman. He then had an eight month long trial, which received international publicity, and this is what the generation before ours probably remembers OJ for. This trial was famous, and was the first televised court case to receive global coverage. When Russian President Boris Yeltsin met U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1995, his first question reportedly was: 'Do you think O.J. Simpson did it?' This is certainly an example of the controversy outshining the man's career. But American football is very, well, American. What about a more global example?

Michael Jackson was iconic, being the best-selling solo music artist in history, with over half a billion records sold worldwide. But Michael Jackson was not without his fair share of controversy. In August 1993 Michael Jackson was accused of child sexual abuse of a 13 year old boy, Jordan Chandler and his father, Evan Chandler.



Jordan said Michael had engaged him in various forms of kissing and oral sex. In 1994 Michael Jackson settled with the Chandlers outside of court for a reported 23 million dollars. In 2002 in a documentary he was filmed discussing sleepovers with a twelve year old, and that he saw nothing wrong with sharing a room with a child. In 2013, 4 years after Jackson's death, Wade Robson sued Michael for sexually abusing him for years, all the way from when he was seven years old. In 2014, a similar case was filed by one James Safechuck. The cases were both dismissed in 2021 and 2020 respectively, but before then a documentary called Leaving Neverland premiered in 2019 centered on these claims. The Jackson estate called this documentary a "character assassination", and radio stations around the globe removed Michael Jackson from their playlists, before some stations added him back in late 2019 due to positive listener metrics.

This continued and repeated controversy has hung over Michael Jackson's entire legacy. Of 30 people I questioned, all 30 knew of Michael Jackson allegedly sexually assaulting kids and Google Trends data mirrors this. When Leaving Neverland premiered, for every 13 searches for Michael himself, one was for the documentary, a feat considering his global stardom. With these cases clouding his legacy, it makes you think. What if a record breaking artist garnered a reputation in current times?

From storming onstage during the 2008 VMA's to saying Beyonce should've won Best Female Video instead of Taylor Swift to saying "George Bush doesn't care about black people" on live TV, Kanye West has always been controversial. But in recent times, he has taken a bit of a turn. Ye has posted many antisemitic messages on Twitter over the years, has self-identified as a Nazi and even tried selling a plain white shirt with a swastika on it at his website, yeezy.com.

Who was once hailed as an "complex act that challenges white notions of what constitutes true art music" by PopMatters, seems to have fallen in line with recent far-right political movements in the US. Of those I interviewed, every single person knew of Kanye West's recent antisemitic tweets, and 11 knew of the 2009 VMA's incident. For something that happened almost 20 years ago, that's a pretty memorable event for some.

It can be said that this recent controversy has outshined Kanye's recent music. Vultures 1 and 2, released after these antisemitic comments, had a mixed reception from critics. Vultures 1 was certified gold and silver by RIAA and the BPI in the UK and US respectively, a fall from The Life of Pablo's triple platinum RIAA certification. Google Trends shows Vultures 1 and "Kanye West Nazi" are receiving similar amounts of searches in the last two months, with Vultures 2 trailing far behind. He's not as culturally dominant as he previously was with his previous albums, and I believe that points to a shift in public perception.

While a superstar's legacy can hold steady for years, it can also be easily overshadowed by a crime, a court case or even a shift in ideology. This was just a small selection of many, many celebrities who have had their career impacted by controversy, you could list many more. I think we can all agree that the things these men have done or were accused of are bad things but it makes you ask, what if the glove didn't fit?



A SURGE OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF BOOK SELLERS

How Communities like BookTok have saved physical books from “dying out”



By Kayleigh Downey

INTRODUCTION

Social media, plays a huge part in our everyday lives. It is a comfort in dark times, allowing us to escape reality when we most need it. For many, social media has become a constant presence in daily life- offering connection, entertainment and sometimes even an escape from reality. During the Covid-19 lockdowns, as the world came to a standstill and social interactions became limited, apps like TikTok provided a space for connection and communication at a time when physical closeness was restricted. It occupied our minds for hours on end allowing us to escape from the looming threat for a while and making people feel as if they were a part of a community. Amongst all the trends circulating, from viral dances to making iced coffee and more absurd challenges a small, wholesome community emerged. What began with people posting quotes from different books soon evolved into a community of readers recommending their favourite books. Fast forward five years and it is still thriving now more than ever, #BookTok has over 47 million posts and has played a key role in revitalising interest in books and preventing them from becoming a “dying breed”.

INTERVIEW WITH QUAY BOOKS



Tucked away on Sarsfield Street is Limericks hidden gem; Quay Books a small cosy bookshop that offers a variety of different books accustomed to everyone’s taste. The store aims to offer a variety of unique and unusual books that you may perhaps not find in other stores such as O’Mahony’s or Eason’s, they encourage readers to browse until they find something that may not be their usual taste but has drawn them in because of the cover or because it intrigues them. On a particularly quiet day I spoke to employee Ruth O’Driscoll, being such a small store with big competitors Quay books have managed to hold their own with their wide variety of genres and have gained a younger audience in the past couple of years, “I have noticed more young people coming into the shops with a keen interest for classics, like modern 20th century classics, we have noticed that, I don’t know where it comes from but we do notice which is encouraging as well”. After Covid when shops started to reopen Quay Books started to gain more popularity than ever, “It would have always been a very much older audience that would have come into the shop, the older men would like the history books and the older women would like the romances but we have this new wave of young people buying the serious fiction and maybe the art books”. Ruth believes this new wave of popularity for books has “steadied out” the future of book stores, before Covid there may have been uncertainty about how long bookshops had left before everything went online but this new gained traction has certainly helped take the pressure off, “I think the people that are going to use kindle and not use bookshops have done that and I think some people just like having books so I don’t think it’s going to get better but I don’t think it’s going to get any worse”. With so many outlets to buy books now it can’t be stressed enough how important it is to support small local businesses, “It’s really important to shop local, when you shop online it’s ok to look for something you want but to be able to browse and to discover something that you didn’t know was there you want a physical bookshop and also for the physical interaction, it’s nice with people in the shop but I think a physical bookshop is much more important for discovering books you didn’t know where there before, it’s also really important for authors who earn more profit from books sold in stores rather than from Amazon.”

ALTERNATIVE BOOK STORES/SITES TO AMAZON

World of books (Wob): Sells new and used books ,free shipping in Ireland

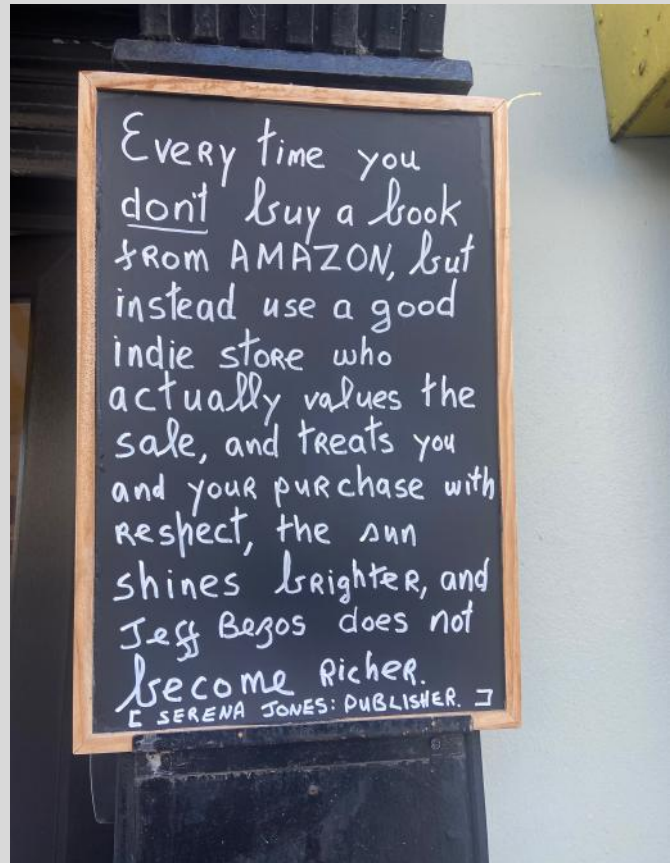
Kenny’s Bookshop: Offers a wide variety of books; new, old , out of print and rare books. Free shipping in Ireland , international shipping from, €2 per book

Chapters bookstore: sell new and used books, free shipping in Ireland once it’s over €30,

IMPACT BOOKTOK HAS HAD

The impact BookTok has had since it first started is monumental, it has allowed for wide user engagement connecting people from different parts of the world. It has also given people who promote books greater opportunities for instance, Jack Edward's a British book influencer has had significant success in branching out from this fame, in 2024 he was asked to join the judging panel for the TikTok book awards, he was awarded an honorary patronage for his contribution to literature by the Philosophical Society of Trinity College Dublin, the highest honour the society can bestow and he has also gained quite a following on both TikTok (731,000 followers) and YouTube (1.46 million followers).

BookTok's impact doesn't just extend to influencers- many authors have found renewed success thanks to viral recommendations on the platform. Alex Aster is a prime example of the effect BookTok has had, Alex's novel was rejected by more than a dozen publishers when she decided to take to TikTok to try and advertise her book on there, she gained an audience which led to attention from a publishing house which resulted in her getting a six figure advance and a Universal movie deal. The novel originally published in 2022 now has three books and a fourth is on the way and news about the movie is expected to be announced this year.



DOWNSIDE OF BOOKTOK

As with any trend, BookTok's rise has its downsides. One notable issue is the lack of diversity- while many books gain attention, a disproportionate number are by white authors, raising concerns that authors of colour are not receiving the recognition they deserve. Another prevalent issue is that many books that are promoted on BookTok seem to glamorise tough topics such as sexual abuse and other sensitive topics. The book "It ends with us" by Colleen Hoover, a book that focuses on a woman Lily who is a victim of domestic abuse has been branded as a "must read romance" by the community. Marketing it this way can cause harm to many who could be triggered by topics like this but may not know when they start it due to how it is promoted.

The author also came under scrutiny when she announced a colouring book was being made which led many to believe she was trying to profit off the success of a book that focused on such heavy topics. Misleading promotion of a book can also set a younger audience up to believe it is something they might want to read when in reality it could be triggering for vulnerable young children and not age appropriate at all. The promotion of Amazon and how you can get cheap books on there, compared to a regular bookstore amazon can afford to sell books for the discounted price they get it for and not make a profit however bookshops can't afford to sell it for the price they get it for from authors as then they don't make a profit which means amazon looks like the ideal choice for customers but with that comes the price of book stores suffering. This is why it is important now more than ever to shop in your local bookstores.

A YEAR OF POP GIRLIES



OUR 2024 SOUNDTRACK



BY ESMERALDA HOLMBERG

Charlie XCX, Chappell Roan and Sabrina Carpenter were among the artists who took over the Billboard charts - and my personal playlist - last year. Ring any bells? If not, you might have been living under a rock for the past year.

In December last year, I counted down the minutes until Spotify would reveal my most-streamed artists of the year. The drumroll ended in pure joy as an all-female list appeared, for the first time in years. For the record, I still love letting the melodies of Bon Iver and Marvin Gaye fill my ears. But this year, my playlist reflected a shift. Could 2024 mark a turning point for the music industry? Symbolize a milestone in the fight against systematic gender bias?

A Feminized 2024

According to the Women Musicians Insight Report from The Musicians' Union in the UK, 50% of English female musicians have experienced gender discrimination (Musicians' Census 2023). In Denmark, the Danish equivalent of the Billboard charts featured just two women among 31 artists in 2022 (Koda 2022). This sort of systematic discrimination is difficult to avoid although 2024 turned out to be a game-changer in the music industry. Online, it was celebrated as The Year of Pop Girlies, a year marked by record-breaking albums, historic award wins, and chart-topping hits by female artists around the world.

According to pop culture expert Ema Bach Seferovic, 2024 marked a defining moment:

"2024 marked a peak for female artists in a way not seen since the 90's girl-power wave with Spice Girls and Destiny's Child and the 00's with Beyoncé and Taylor Swift. Not only did female artists dominate the charts - 2024 was also the year when multiple different narratives of womanhood and femininity emerged in popular music."

FEMININITY WAS EXPLORED IN ALL ITS FACETS: VULNERABLE, AGGRESSIVE, PLAYFUL, MYSTERIOUS, LOVING, UGLY, STRONG, UNPLEASANT, BEAUTIFUL, RAW AND POLITICAL



A wave of female empowerment surged through pop culture. As women's rights came under increasing threat around the world, female artists harnessed their platforms as powerful tools for protest. Take Sabrina Carpenter for instance, her clever and playful lyrics normalize female sexuality, challenging outdated taboos. While this is not a new phenomenon, 2024 saw even more female artists taking control of their own narratives.

BRAT is the new Black

We cannot talk about 2024 in music without mentioning Brat. Going from an album to becoming a phenomenon, UK-based artist Charli XCX turned the summer neon-green and united women globally. According to Ema Bach Seferovic, a celebration of women's diversity was exactly what 2024 was about.

"Femininity comes in many shapes and in 2024 we saw how this diversity was celebrated. Femininity was explored in all its facets: vulnerable, aggressive, playful, mysterious, loving, ugly, strong, unpleasant, beautiful, raw and political - and many more".

Another artist that contributed to this celebration was US artist Chappell Roan who creating the term Femininomen - a blend of feminine and phenomenon. The word promotes the idea that women should write their own stories as the main character. Alongside other female musicians, Roan defied conventional beauty standards by being unpolished and unapologetic.



This felt like a break free from the ‘clean girl aesthetic’ trend that dominated pop culture at the time. They defied expectations of perfection by being wild, loud and chaotic. As Charli XCX took the stage at a Danish festival 2024, I stood shoulder to shoulder with complete strangers and screamed the lyrics “I’m your favorite reference baby” and “looking like an icon” in unison, dancing like there was no tomorrow. Moments like this transformed pop music into a collective experience, uniting artist and audience.

Leading voices of 2024’s music scene

With a background in both music labels and broadcasters, Ema Bach Seferovic has long been interested in pop culture’s impact on society.

“Several female artists have contributed to help expand what defines a woman in pop music. Meanwhile multiple have challenged genre conventions and pushed boundaries for mainstream pop,” she states.

In 2024, Charlie XCX pushed more hyperpop into mainstream music, Chappell Roan expanded the stage for queer artists, and Beyoncé proved that artists are not bound to a single genre with her country album. However, according to Seferovic, four additional contributing factors in reshaping the music landscape of 2024 were:

Fans

Gen Z fans have played a central part through fan-based campaigns and a huge engagement online, turning The Eras Tour (Taylor Swift) and The Renaissance Tour (Beyoncé) into global cultural phenomena.

Music labels

Labels recognized commercial value of female artists dominating charts, and they have been more willing to invest in female artists across different genres; from hyperpop to country and R&B.

Streaming platforms

Algorithms have enabled greater diversity among female artists, though data still shows how it favors male artists. Barriers have also been created, making it harder for artists without strong social media presence to break through.

Social media

Several of 2024’s biggest hits went viral on TikTok giving female artists a direct link to fans without relying on traditional PR. An example is the song ‘Water’ by Tyla that went viral after she poured water on her back during her performance.

EXPERT’S VERDICT : ARTISTS TO WATCH



According to Ema Bach Seferovic, these are the rising stars to watch on the global music scene:

Tate McRae – Draws inspiration from the great pop queens of the 2000s, striking a nostalgic chord in today’s music scene.

Olivia Dean – A charismatic performer who is rapidly rising.

Victoria Monét – For long an industry insider, now on her way to super stardom.

Normani – Delivered a stunning debut album and is ready for her next step.

Addison Rae – Mastering the art of blending nostalgia with a modern twist.

Gracie Abrams – Has proven to be one of the most promising singer-songwriters.

FLO – A British girl group predicted to be the next Destiny’s Child.

Doechii – Original and uncompromising, her Grammy performance was a sensation.

Tyla – Has popularized amapiano and is on her way to global stardom.

Milestone or momentary trend?

The music industry remains male-dominated which makes systematic changes difficult. I asked Ema Bach Seferovic if she believes the momentum of 2024 could be the turning point of long-term change.

“Women have had big years in music before, but the industry tends to fall back into old patterns. To ensure lasting change, investments in female artists are needed at all levels – from project managers, A&Rs, songwriters, producers to executives, employees at radio stations, streaming services, and festival organizers, who must actively push for a more balanced industry,” she replies. She adds that to achieve gender equality we need to change how we perceive women’s success:

“The next step is to ensure that women in music are not just seen as a trend, but as an indisputable part of the industry, promoting and enriching our cultural life and the way we view and exist in the world.”

2024 was more than just a year in music. It was a cultural shift proving that women should have their say in the industry. However, one question still remains: Will this be a lasting change or will women once again be reduced to a passing trend?

TRUE CRIME TWISTS

ANNA COUNIHAN

IF YOU LOVED THESE CASES, YOU'LL BE HOOKED ON THESE ONES TOO

True crime has an undeniable grip on audiences worldwide, offering a mix of intrigue, horror, and a peek into the darkest corners of human nature. Whether through books, podcasts, documentaries, or social media, certain cases have become cultural phenomena. However, a lot of chilling cases are relatively unheard of. If you were captivated by one, there's likely another that will send shivers down your spine. Here's a guide to some of the most infamous true crime stories and their compelling counterparts that deserve a spot on your must-watch or must-read list.



PSYCHOLOGY OF TRUE CRIME

Ever wondered why we're so obsessed with true crime? Psychologists say it's a mix of curiosity, fear, and a need for understanding. True crime allows us to explore the twisted minds of criminals from a safe distance, which in turn reinforces our own moral compass. It's in our nature to be highly attuned to criminal misdemeanours, and we instinctively want to discover the "who", "what", "when" and "where" so we can find out what makes criminals tick, and to better protect ourselves.

IF YOU FOUND TED BUNDY'S CRIMES FASCINATING, WATCH 'METHOD OF A SERIAL KILLER' ABOUT ISRAEL KEYES

Ted Bundy remains one of the most infamous serial killers due to his charm, intelligence, and gruesome crimes throughout the 1970s. His ability to manipulate his victims, blend in, and avoid capture for years only heightened the horror of his spree.

If Bundy's story intrigued you, Israel Keyes is a modern counterpart who operated under the radar for years. Unlike Bundy, who thrived on his fame, Keyes was an meticulous planner, hiding 'kill kits' across the United States and selecting victims at random to avoid detection. His calculated, cold-blooded approach makes for an even more terrifying documentary viewing experience.



IF YOU WERE GRIPPED BY THE O.J. SIMPSON CASE, WATCH 'THE AARON HERNANDEZ STORY'

The O.J. Simpson trial dominated the 1990s, captivating the world with its high-profile defendant, racial tensions, and the infamous Bronco chase. It was the trial of the century, filled with shocking evidence and a not-guilty verdict that left the public divided.

If that case fascinated you, Aaron Hernandez's story offers another gripping mix of fame, crime, and downfall. Hernandez, a former NFL star, was convicted of murdering Odin Lloyd in 2013, shocking the sports world. His trial, much like O.J.'s, was highly publicized, filled with unexpected twists, and raised questions about the privilege of celebrities. The tragic ending to Hernandez's case only deepens the intrigue of this complex case.



IF JEFFREY DAHMER'S STORY SHOCKED YOU, LISTEN TO 'THE BUTCHER BAKER' PODCAST

Jeffrey Dahmer's cases of murder, cannibalism, and necrophilia are some of the most grotesque in true crime. His ability to lure victims and appear normal make him so infamous.

For another lesser-known yet disturbing case, the story of the Butcher Baker of Alaska, Robert Hansen, is worth diving into. Hansen was a respected member of his community who abducted and hunted women in the Alaskan wilderness. Like Dahmer, he maintained a double life as a respectful individual and a sadistic serial killer.



IF JUNKO FURUTA'S CASE DISTURBED YOU, READ ABOUT SYLVIA LIKENS

The case of the torture of Junko Furuta stands as one of the most chilling and tragic crimes recorded in history. In 1989, Junko, a 17-year-old Japanese schoolgirl was abducted, subjected to severe torture, and ultimately murdered, suffering 44 excruciating days of abuse. The extreme brutality of the crime along with the disturbingly short sentences given to the offenders, left a profound impact on the global community.

In a similarly tragic narrative, the story of Sylvia Likens is equally disheartening. In 1965, Sylvia was subjected to horrific abuse and ultimately killed by her guardian and several local children. This case revealed horrifying human cruelty and negligence, which parallel the horrors faced by Junko Furuta and serve as a deeply unsettling yet important true crime to be aware of.



TRUE CRIME PODCASTER, MICHELLE SHELLY

I ASKED TRUE CRIME PODCASTER, MICHELLE SHELLY WHY SHE THINKS PEOPLE ARE DRAWN TO TRUE CRIME.

“TRUE CRIME ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE CRIMINALS—IT'S ABOUT THE VICTIMS, THE JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND HOW SOCIETY REACTS TO THESE CASES. I THINK PEOPLE ARE DRAWN TO IT BECAUSE IT TAPS INTO OUR CURIOSITY ABOUT HUMAN NATURE AND SURVIVAL INSTINCTS. IT'S LIKE SOLVING A PUZZLE, BUT WITH REAL-LIFE STAKES.”

IF THE MENENDEZ BROTHERS' CASE INTRIGUED YOU, READ ABOUT THE BEVER FAMILY MURDERS

In 1989, Lyle and Erik Menendez were arrested for the brutal murders of their wealthy parents in their Beverly Hills home. The trial, filled with allegations of abuse and greed, divided the public on whether they were victims of years of torment or they were calculating killers seeking their inheritance.

For a similar case with an even darker twist, the Bever family murders in 2015 tell a hauntingly familiar yet more brutal story. Two brothers, Robert and Michael Bever, carried out a premeditated attack on their family in Oklahoma, killing five members, including their parents and younger siblings. The Bever brothers claimed the reason for the murders was a desire for infamy, making this case even more chilling. Their lack of remorse and motivation for the whole thing sends chills all around.

“I USED TO BE MORE TRUSTING, BUT AFTER COVERING SO MANY CASES, I'M MUCH MORE AWARE OF HOW DARKNESS CAN HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT.”

- MICHELLE SHELLY

True crime narratives engage our interest as they highlight the sinister elements that can exist beneath what appear to be normal exteriors. There is an endless array of cases that evoke both discomfort and fascination. As we continue to consume these stories, what does our fascination with crime say about us?

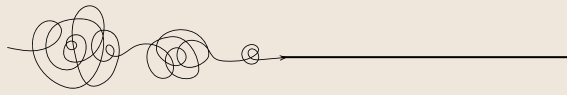


TRAVELLED

ÉIRE



RAVELLED



TÍR GAN TEANGA, TÍR GAN AINM



-LAURA NOLAN



Is 2025, the Irish renaissance era?

The Irish language is in peak resurgence as it slowly takes over the Irish mediascape. The language is once more being welcomed and integrated into society, in ways that were previously unimaginable. From fashion and jewellery, to even tattoos, Gaeilge is reclaiming its place at the heart of Irish culture.

Fashion

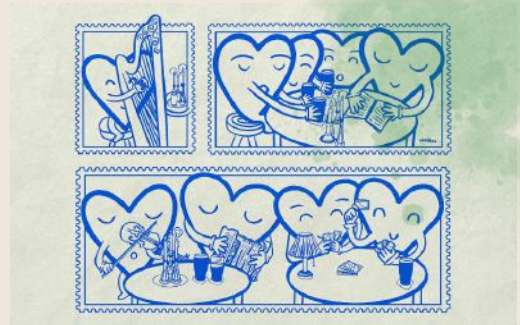
Irish, and indeed old Celtic symbols seem to lie at the centre of most fashion trends nowadays, ranging from the Claddagh heart to the classic harp, emblems of our heritage, furthermore, stamping our culture into modern day fashion. The Claddagh heart, originating from claddagh county Galway, is a symbol of love, loyalty and friendship. As Gaeilge its known as “Fáinne Chladaigh”, the heart represents love, the crown represents loyalty and the hands represent friendship. As Gaeilge its known as “Fáinne Chladaigh”, the heart represents love, the crown represents loyalty and the hands represent friendship. The infamous claddagh rings are often used to signify someone’s relationship status: if the wearer decides to have the heart on the ring facing towards them, it means they were ‘taken’ or in a relationship. However, if it is worn the other way around, with the heart pointing away from them, it means the wearer is single or waiting for “their heart to be taken”.

Once representing relationship status, now an icon statement piece of jewellery. This symbol has also been seen across a wide range of clothes such as the vibrant scarves created by ‘Aoife Cawley Art’. The bright colours combined with an array of Irish symbols, a perfect staple to any outfit. A fashion favourite as her pieces are often described as “unique” and “vibrantly creative”.

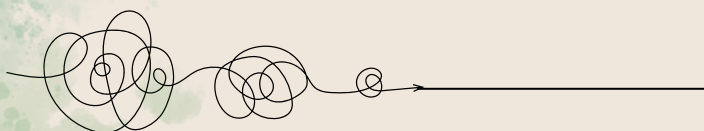
Tattoos

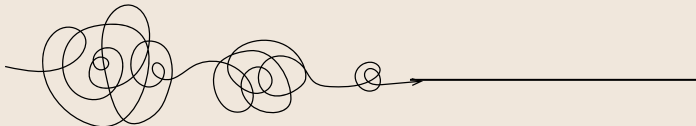
Irish-themed tattoos are IN for 2025!

Gaelic tattoos are experiencing a surge in popularity, as they carefully blend deep cultural significance with modern artistic expression. This trend reflects a broader movement towards celebrating heritage and personal identity through body art.



From surnames derived ‘ogham’ to even the ‘Guinness’ logos, the tattoo artists have it cut out for them. These ink-tastic pieces come in shapes big and small from intricate fine line Irish quotes to full -sleeve Celtic warrior themed tattoos. The tattoo artists’ have been seen to sometimes blend these two styles together, in order to create a more personalised feel to each piece . Most people want to get an Irish tattoo as they “want to feel closer to home when I [they] move to Australia”, “have an easy talking point to help make new friends while I’m [they’re] on my [their] J1 in America over summer”, and “mark my [their] heritage” , according some of the clients of ‘Foxes Bow’ tattoo parlour in Limerick city.





TikTok - GaelTok

TikTok has played a significant role in the resurgence of the Irish language. There are now over 39,000 videos under the #Gaeilge hashtag, on the well-known social media platform TikTok. This proves the growing interest in the Irish language with creators like @gaeilgelejane leading the charge. Jane shares a range of day-to-day Irish phrases that can be used at home or in the workplace, as well as: pronunciation tips and cultural insights, creating a thriving community of Irish language enthusiasts. Her content has transformed online learning into real - world connections, with her in-person events consistently selling out. Irish influencer Lauren Whelan created a new trend where she gets ready for an event or work, except she explains her steps in Irish, more commonly known as “get ready with me as Gaeilge” (GRWM as Gaeilge). This trend is more than just a series of videos, but a group effort adopted by Irish creators to incorporate more Irish into their daily lives. When famous creators share their routines in Irish, such as Lauren Whelan, a sense of community is created by encouraging others to return to their roots and re-learn the language. Its often the case where viewers are inspired to create their own content in Irish, therefore further spreading the use of Gaeilge.

Music

The infamous boy band from the north of Ireland known as ‘Kneecap’ have really broken through the surface after releasing a film, and indeed a multitude of music. The band are also famous for making hit pop songs ‘as gaeilge’, throwing in catchy sheanfocals every now and again. There is no doubt that the Irish language has a unique phonetic quality and can often add a hauntingly beautiful sound to music. However, ‘kneecap’ uses the harshness of certain phrases highlighted by their thick accent to add a roughness and grunge feel to their music. This uniqueness appeals to both artists and listeners who are looking for something different and culturally rich. There are numerous initiatives aimed at promoting this kind of music. For example, TG Lurgan are known for translating well known pop songs into simple Irish, making the language more accessible and appealing to the younger generation.

The Irish Renaissance of 2025 is a testament to the enduring appeal and resilience of Irish culture. This resurgence is evident across wide range of areas, from fashion and tattoos to social media and music. The embedding of Gaelic language and traditional symbols into modern trends reflects a deep-seated pride in our heritage and a desire to preserve it for future generations. As Irish culture continues to thrive and evolve, it not only enriches the lives of those who embrace it but also inspires a global audience to appreciate the unique beauty and significance of Ireland's rich culture.



EVERYDAY GEN Z PHRASES ‘AS GAEILGE’

1. CÉ HÍ AN DIVA
SEO? – WHO IS
THIS DIVA?
2. AGUS SIN AR
LÁNSTAD – AND
THAT’S ON
PERIOD!
3. ‘S BITSEACH
BUNÚSACH THÚ –
YOU’RE A BASIC
B*TCH
4. RÍ BEAG –
SHORT KING
5. SLÉ MÓR – BIG
SLAY
6. D’ITH TÚ –
YOU ATE
7. TÁIM GAFA –
I’M OBSESSED

Irish Language & the Media's Revival



CHLOE NIC DHONNACHA

“Just a few years ago, there was hardly any online presence for Irish, so it's really exciting to see the language getting more attention and engagement today.”

AR CHUÍLA TÍP?...



If you're looking for the perfect way to learn a cúpla focail, look no further than the hit podcast *How to Gael*. Created by friends and broadcasters Doireann Ní Ghlacáin, Louise Cantillon, and Síomha Ní Ruairc, this podcast has brought the Irish language to new heights.

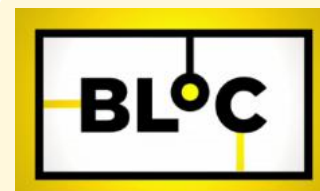
The trio discusses everyday topics in both Irish and English, making it feel as if you're just chatting with your friends!

Following the success of their sold-out Dublin shows in 2024, *How to Gael* is continuing its tour in 2025, with performances all around Ireland and even a global show in New York next month.

It's safe to say these ladies are an inspiration! Catch *How to Gael* on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Podbean.

Ar ais arís and better than ever.. In a world often dominated by major global languages, Irish—a language once thought to be fading into history—has experienced a remarkable resurgence. Once dismissed as a 'dying language,' Irish is now experiencing a powerful revival, particularly across social media, film, and music. Once confined to school textbooks, it has now become an integral part of everyday life—far more than just a subject in the Leaving Cert. From viral social media posts to feature films and chart-topping music, the language is no longer just surviving; it's thriving. Its revival is not just about preserving tradition but also about making Irish relevant and accessible to younger, diverse audiences worldwide. As more creators embrace Gaeilge in their work, they're shaping a dynamic, contemporary narrative for the language—one that blends the old with the new and invites a new generation to speak, share, and celebrate it. This newfound 'grá' for the Irish language is visible across social media, with a wave of creators sharing their content through Irish. From talking us through their makeup routines, daily work life, and outfit ideas—these everyday interactions help make learning and using the language feel cooler again. But this raises an important question: Is the media truly influencing the Irish language? The growing visibility of Irish across digital platforms and mainstream media could be one of the key factors in its revival. By normalising the language in popular culture, the media is shaping how young people perceive and engage with Gaeilge, showing that it's not just a part of the past, but an integral part of the present and future.

Caitríona is delighted to see the Irish language finally gaining the recognition it deserves, particularly within the media. She believes that its growing presence in digital spaces has made it more accessible and appealing, attracting a wider audience. Having always had a deep passion for media, Caitríona loves the creative freedom it provides. She finds joy in crafting easy and fun content that resonates with her viewers. “It's incredibly rewarding in two ways,” Caitríona shares. “First, I get to do something I absolutely love and am passionate about—and I'm getting paid to do it, which is amazing. But the real satisfaction comes from seeing people engage with my videos. When I see people liking, sharing, or commenting, it really makes me feel good.” She continues, “What's most fulfilling is knowing that people are learning from it. To see that my content is helping others connect with the language is something I never take for granted.” For Caitríona, her work isn't just about creating content—it's about connecting with her audience and making the Irish language feel fun, accessible, and relevant in today's world. Creating content for BLOC couldn't be simpler—all you need is a phone and a creative mind. The beauty of it is that you're free to express yourself however you like, as long as it's in Irish. The platform gives you the flexibility to explore your creativity while celebrating the language. Currently, TikTok is BLOC's most popular platform, boasting nearly 30,000 followers and an impressive one million likes.



Students' relationship with the Irish language is often a love-hate one—some embrace it, while others find it challenging. Much of this stems from their school experience, where Irish is a core subject in the Leaving Certificate. For some, this can shape their perspective on the language, either sparking a lifelong passion or leading to frustration and a desire to never hear a word of it again. While digital media is helping spread the language globally, on-campus initiatives like Cumann Gaelach are ensuring that Irish thrives in student communities.

Someone who's trying to change that narrative for students is UL's Irish Society Secretary Ashleigh Wood. Cumann Gaelach provides a welcoming environment for people to come together and speak Irish in an informal, pressure-free setting. For many, it's a chance to use the language casually, away from the formality often associated with school. Ashleigh, a member of the group, recognizes that while there is still a shortage of Irish speakers, platforms like TikTok and social media are playing a crucial role in raising awareness and visibility of the language on campus. "By posting about what we're doing, it helps put Irish out there for everyone to see," she says.

Recently, Ashleigh posted a TikTok video that received significant engagement, a stark contrast to when she was in second year, when online interest in Irish was much lower. "It's amazing to see the interaction now," she reflects. "Just a few years ago, there was hardly any online presence for Irish, so it's really exciting to see the language getting more attention and engagement today."

When asked about how they use content within Cumann Gaelach, Ashleigh shared that Instagram and TikTok are their go-to platforms. The group creates light-hearted, funny videos that are fun to make and fun to watch. "This type of content has definitely drawn people in," Ashleigh says, noting that social media has proven to be far more effective than traditional posters in getting the word out. "When events are posted on social media, way more students find out about them compared to just seeing a poster or word of mouth."

Ashleigh believes Irish is "definitely having its moment" in the media, with TikTok emerging as a key platform for the language. This sentiment comes after it was revealed that the hashtag #Gaeilge has garnered over 120 million views on the app, showcasing the growing popularity and reach of Irish among a global audience.

It's clear that the media has played a significant role in the revival of the Irish language, and with continued support, we hope it only gets níos fearr (better) from here!

“Irish is really having its moment, which is great”



Learning a new language can be challenging, but it's super rewarding when you start to get the hang of it! Barry Farber, an expert in language learning and author of *How to Learn Any Language*, shares some fun and easy tips to make the journey enjoyable and keep you motivated:

1. Set Simple, Achievable Goals: Barry says the first step is to set clear goals, like holding a basic conversation or reading a book in your new language. Having something to work towards gives you a clear direction and helps keep your motivation strong when you hit those milestones.

2. Celebrate Your Wins: Every little progress counts! Whether it's learning a new word or having your first conversation, celebrate it! Barry recommends treating yourself after reaching a goal—maybe with a snack or something you enjoy. It makes the process feel like a fun reward!

3. Make Learning Part of Your Daily Life: Who said learning has to be all about textbooks? You can easily slip it into your everyday routine. Watch movies in the language you're learning, listen to podcasts, or even change the language on your phone. It's a fun way to practice without even thinking about it.

4. Connect with Others: Learning doesn't have to be a solo journey. Farber suggests using your language skills to meet new people and make friends. Joining a language group or chatting with others who are also learning can keep things social, making it a lot more fun and motivating.



Top 4 stunning natural landscapes to visit in spring in Ireland



By Nerea Marco Chumillas

Did you know that Ireland in 2024 has welcomed 6.2 million tourists from around the world? That's great news for the economy of The Emerald Isle, according to CSO.

Ireland, famously known as The Emerald Isle, gets from its lush green meadows and breathtaking natural landscape. From majestic cliffs to national parks and castles, the island offers a unique combination of wild beauty and rugged coastlines that make it a truly unforgettable destination not only for tourism, but also for those Erasmus or international students who come to study in Ireland.

In this article, the University of Limerick will recommend to you four natural landscapes close to Limerick that you should visit before returning to your home country.

Travel

Tips

Legends

Films

Killarney National Park: A paradise for nature lovers



Photograph: Richard Clancy

Killarney, a charming town in County Kerry, sits the shores of Lough Leane and is surrounded by mountains, waterfalls, dense forests. It is home to Ireland's tallest mountain, McGillicuddy's Reeks, which attracts 1.5 million visitors annually, according to the Killarney National website.

Tourism in Killarney dates to 1895, when Thomas Cook, a British entrepreneur that opened the first travel agency in England, organised his first tour to this town. As tourism expanded, Killarney underwent significant transformation—hotels multiplied, roads were built linking it to major cities like Limerick and Cork, and many local residents were pushed to the suburbs to preserve their traditional way of life.

Despite human transformation, Killarney National Park keeps its stunning sceneries and nature that can be discovered in different ways such as walking, cycling or sailing into the Lough, as Richard Clancy, with 32 year's experience guiding into Killarney National Park, recommends it. Additionally, the guide suggests to those people who want to come to Killarney staying at least 3 days: "There are many things to visit here: 15th century Ross Castle near the lake, Copper mining that ended its activity in 1828, Muckross house, once visited by Queen Victoria, Yew wood situated close this house, St. Mary's Cathedral and Torc waterfall. The best season to come to Killarney is May, the days are longest, the place is not too crowded".

Celebrities approved destination

The gorgeous Killarney's landscape caught the eye of celebrities such as Charles de Gaulle, French retired president who visited Killarney in June 1969. In this year, a Hollywood film titled Ryan's Daughter was filmed in County Kerry. This production brought many tourists from America because "they want to see where it was filmed" as Clancy mentioned.

The Burren National Park: The live come up in spring

Once upon a time, a soldier described the Burren as “a country where there is not enough water to drown a man, wood enough to hang one nor earth enough to bury one ... yet their cattle are very fat”. How true those words were.

The Burren National Park, located between Counties Clare and Galway, is one of the well-known karst landscapes in Ireland. Its soil contains a mixture of nutrient rich herbs and a diverse range of floral species. However, do not expect to see a large meadow. You will be surrounded by big limestone formations.

Spring is the season when The Burren national park revives. From March until October the visitors can witness the blooming of numerous orchid species, with Fly orchids and Butterfly orchids being among the most prominent. As Phoebe Larking, the Head Guide in The Burren national park, explains, no matter the season you come to the park “the weather in the west of Ireland is unpredictable though so you can never be guaranteed a dry day”.

Nevertheless, during the interview she mentioned that if a group of students wishes to visit the national park, the best time is between May and August, as free shuttle service runs from Corofin to the trailhead.

While the Burren National Park offers a dramatic rocky landscape, Lough Gur, on the other hand, invites visitors into a world of ancient myths and history.

Lough Gur: Unveiling Mystery and History

Lough Gur, a remote lake located in County Limerick, is one of the most mystical, historical and archaeological significant sites in Ireland. To this day, 37 national monuments have been discovered in the area, according to Brian Collopy, the Operations Supervisor at Lough Gur Visitor Center.

Surrounding this lake is a legendary tale of Gearóid Iarla, the son of goodness Áine, who was banished to the bottom of the lake after practicing dark magic in 1398. After the disappearance of Gearóid, the local people affirm that every seven years, under a full moon the son of Áine emerges from the water riding a white horse along the lake’s shore.

Photograph: Kman99

Difficult access, gorgeous views

Visiting this lake is not easily accessible for everyone, you need to be fit. The nearest bus stop is at Holycross, 4km away from Lough Gur, and the path leading to the lake is narrow, with several obstacles such as agricultural machinery, mentioned the guide, Brian Collopy.

Nevertheless, cycling is a great alternative for those looking to explore this majestic take in County Limerick. As Collopy shared: “It would be great to see more people visit us using this method.”

Cliff of Moher, the favourite sceneries for producers and visitors

The Cliffs of Moher have served as the backdrop for numerous iconic films, including Ryan's Daughter (1970), Hear my Song (1992), Harry Potter & the Half Blood Prince (2009), The Yank (2013). This is four of hundreds of films, series and video clips filmed in Cliff of Moher. Why did the producers choose this gorgeous cliff? According to the Cliffs of Moher website, the sheer scale and rugged beauty of the cliffs create a captivating visual backdrop, making it a dream location for filmmakers worldwide.

Additionally, Sharon Malone, assistant sales and marketing manager of Clare tourism west and Northwest mentioned that after Harry Potter being filmed at the Cliff of Moher many fans of the saga visit the cliff asking, “where Harry’s cave is?”.

The Cliff of Moher is one of the rising vertical walls formed by sandstone, siltstone and shale located along the coast of the Wild Atlantic Way recognised by UNESCO as a unique global geopark.

As a visitor, you could do diverse activities from walking on the Cliff Moher trail, accessible for all people does not matter if they have reduced mobility or you are elderly, a guide will be provide for them, to rent a boat from Doolin.

Branaunmore, a limestone pillar in the middle of the sea, and if you are lucky, you will see puffins fishing and sharks swimming around the boat.

Whether you visit one or all of these breathtaking locations, you're guaranteed to experience Ireland's wild beauty at its finest. So, pack your bags, explore, and make memories that will last a lifetime!

Photograph: Sharon Malone



TRAVELLED



STUDENT LIFE



UNRAVELLED



WHICH PLATFORM IS WORTH YOUR SUBSCRIPTION?



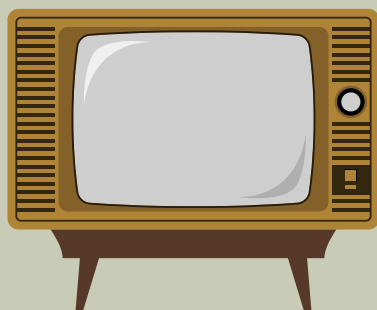
BY ANNA KISSANE

In a world of ever-growing access to streaming services, it's hard to pinpoint which ones are worth our while. As a college student, one of the main things that gets me through long days sitting at my laptop taking notes, is planning what movies or TV shows I'm going to watch to wind down in the evening. In a survey I conducted amongst my fellow UL college students, 53% of participants said they use streaming services once a day or more than once a day. Streaming has completely reshaped the way that we consume media. While previous generations relied on cable TV for entertainment, streaming services have vastly expanded access to diverse media that was far less available just a decade ago. In this article, you will find out what the most popular streaming services are amongst college students, which services you should keep or cancel, and some tips on how to save money while streaming.



STUDENT STREAMING HABITS

According to my survey 80% of students are subscribed to two or more streaming services. It's no surprise that the most popular service among them is Netflix, the platform that launched their streaming service in 2007 and gained momentum so quickly that by 2012, it had made its global expansion to Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe. Back then, a Netflix subscription was all anyone needed for a satisfactory watching experience, as few other streaming services had broken mainstream media like Netflix had; but due to the rapid advancement of technology in recent years, it didn't take long for competitors to drop into the market. We find ourselves saturated in choices of services, including Amazon's Prime Video, Disney Plus, Now TV, Apple TV, and so on. There's so many options that it's hard to know where to start.



A downside.... The rise of competing platforms has also led to continuous price hikes. Most recently, Netflix announced a €2 monthly increase on all its subscription plans

In an interview with Steve Ryan, course director of the MA in Songwriting, he says "They are corporations. They are only concerned with making money, make no mistake. The only reason they might choose to attempt to provide a more "user friendly" experience for their customers is to get ahead of their competitors and steal their users." With prices increasing across multiple platforms, it's important to assess whether our subscriptions are truly worth the investment. Here's a breakdown of the most popular streaming services among students.



A BREAKDOWN OF YOUR FAVOURITE SERVICES

NETFLIX

Netflix currently charges between €10.99 to €23.99 a month, the number of devices it can be streamed on at one time is 1, 2 or 4 depending on your package and Netflix offers no free trial period. Prominent titles include Squid Game, Love is Blind, Queens Gambit, Stranger Things, Orange is the New Black, Narcos, Bridgerton, Black Mirror, etc.

DISNEY+

Disney plus charges €10.99 to €13.99 a month or €99.90 to €139.90 annually. It can be streamed on 2 or 4 devices at once depending on your package and there's no free trial period for Disney plus. Notable titles include all the classic Disney movies, the Star Wars franchise, the Marvel franchise, Grey's Anatomy, The Simpsons, etc.

PRIME VIDEO

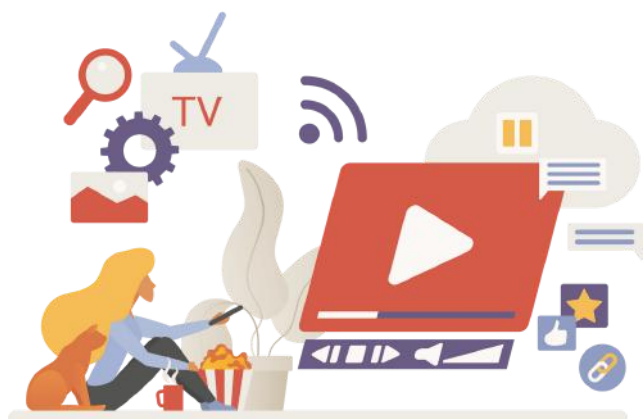
€6.99 a month, and a 7-day free trial available. It can be streamed on two devices, but some good titles include Fleabag, My Fault: London, Fallout, The Handmaid's Tale, etc.

APPLE TV

€9.99 a month with a 7-day free trial, it can be streamed on 6 devices, and some notable titles include Ted Lasso, Severance, Bad Sisters, Prime Target, Slow Horses, etc.

HOW TO SAVE MONEY

Streaming services are getting more expensive, and it's not easy to break the bank on simple pleasures as a college student with all the other expenses we must prioritise, but there are ways to be smart about saving money when it comes to streaming.



SUBSCRIPTION BREAKDOWN

p/m - per month
p/y - per year

NETFLIX

€10.99-€23.99 p/m
No free trial
1, 2 or 4 screens depending on package
HD/Ultra HD depending on package

DISNEY+

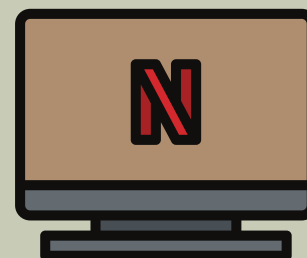
€10.99-€13.99 p/m
€99.90-€139.90 p/y
No free trial
2 or 4 screens depending on package
HD/Ultra HD depending on package

PRIME VIDEO

€6.99 p/m
7-day free trial
2 screens
HD/Ultra HD (select)

APPLE TV

€9.99 p/m
7-day free trial
6 screens
HD, 4K



1 The first suggestion I have is to keep up to date with the availability of student discounts. Some services offer student discounts at different times of the year for students generally between the ages of 18 and 23, and following a bit of research, I found that Disney plus is currently offering 15% off their annual subscription to students.

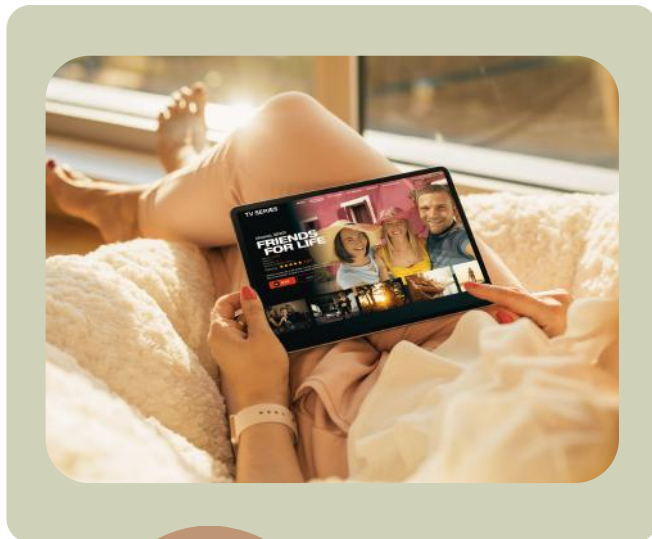
2 Account sharing is a huge money saver for everyone involved. Whether it be chipping in to a family plan or committing to a subscription with your friends or roommates, it saves everyone a bit of money and counts for an excuse to get together for a watch party!

3 Another good idea is to rotate your subscriptions instead of subscribing to multiple platforms at once when you may not even be using them. Luckily, streaming services are relatively flexible, with 30-day long contracts, you can cancel at any time without any additional fees. Keep track of your watching habits or make a list of some must-watch series and movies so you can plan what services you need. Once you're finished binge watching the latest Netflix documentary, you can cancel and subscribe to Disney plus to catch up on some new Marvel content. I'd recommend downloading a budgeting app like Rocket Money to help keep track of your subscriptions and remind you when to cancel. It's also a good way to keep your viewing experience broader instead of falling into repetitive viewing.

Steve Ryan says streaming services tend to get his watch preferences wrong in comparison to music streaming platforms. "I feel like they're trying to pigeonhole me by assuming they know what my viewing habits are. For example, some evening I might feel like watching an overblown and frankly silly action movie. No regrets! But then I get prompts to watch watered down and even sillier versions of the nonsense I chose to watch".

4 Besides these tips, you can of course opt for alternative free options like YouTube, Channel 4, RTÉ Player and Virgin Media Player, if you don't mind ads. In my survey, 48% of responders said they use cheaper ad-supported streaming sites, and a following 27.3% said they don't have a preference.

"Streaming media has increased accessibility of content to a degree that was unquantifiable maybe only 20 years ago"



Rocket Money is a finance app that can help you discover, track and manage subscriptions, making it easier to avoid unnecessary costs!



Although streaming is a huge convenience compared to Cable TV, it is a costly frustration for us college students who pay out of our own pockets. Regardless, these tips will help you save effectively, while gaining from a broad range of media from various streaming services. "Streaming media has increased accessibility of content to a degree that was unquantifiable maybe only 20 years ago. Almost everything is now available to listen to and to watch on whim, a simple push of a button", says Steve Ryan. "We don't just rely on the UK or US press to feed us the "next big thing", it's very much an internationalised endeavour now, and that is no bad thing".



BALANCING THE BOOKS: INTER-COUNTY AND COLLEGE COMMITMENTS



ANDREW MOYTIHAN



THE game is changing. Simple as that. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is a cornerstone of Irish culture and has come a long way since its inception in 1884.

The organisation has evolved into an otherworldly being. The so-called amateur status of the organisation is nearly laughed at. Near-professional levels have been hit, and demands have increased tenfold.

The sacrifices of an inter-county player are well-documented. Player welfare and protection is a leading protocol for teams, with the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) working hard to safeguard the sport.

It's a situation that many of these players know all too well. Students take up a large chunk of many inter-county panels. Look at Mayo. 20 players featured in their Round 1 League fixture vs Dublin. 10 are currently in third-level education.

For players like Bob Tuohy, this is a relentless juggling act. It's a Wednesday lunchtime in Ashdown Student Village, south of Limerick City. Bob has just landed back from morning lectures. He arrived back from training in Castlebar at midnight, 12 hours previous. The usual banter and craic of a student accommodation is alive and well here.

The kitchen boasts a humorous flag of Bob in action for Mayo. In irony, more than praise. "Can't let him get too bigheaded", uttered a housemate.

In his third year with the Mayo Senior Footballers and third year studying Primary Teaching at Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Bob is one of many striving to find the balance between academic and sporting commitments.

"Throughout exam season, it would be very difficult. It's very busy around that time because you're in championship season as well. You'd miss most of your evening classes. Any class between four and six, you really wouldn't make it."



BOB TUOHY IN ACTION FOR MAYO

Missing classes is one thing, but this leads to unwanted grief from lecturers. “You’d lose marks on attendance, I have before. There wouldn’t be much understanding from the lecturers for missing classes. I wouldn’t even tell them because they wouldn’t get it”.

It doesn’t just come from a college perspective. Management teams in Mayo sometimes lack understanding of the situation players like himself find themselves in. The current Tuesday/Thursday/Friday training schedule is not ideal, according to Bob.

“On Tuesdays, I’d have classes from 10am til about 1pm. I’d come home, make dinner for myself, and leave Limerick around 3:30pm to get to Castlebar for around 5:30pm for a 6:30pm training. You’re then leaving Castlebar around 9:30-10pm to be back in Limerick for midnight”.

This is something Bob would like to see changed. “If the Thursday session is switched to Wednesday or a Friday, it’d make more sense. Currently, I have to travel back down for classes on Friday morning and travel back home to Mayo on Friday afternoon. It’s a lot of mileage, and it doesn’t take the student into consideration”.



“I just think some change has to happen.”

The company shortens the trip, Bob admitted. “There’d be four or five of us in the car. Donncha McHugh, Frank Irwin, Cian McHale, and Fenton Kelly all study down here. It makes the journey go a lot faster, you can chat away and have the craic”. Pit stops in Tuam for a hot chocolate and a snack do their part in splitting the journey.

MIC competes in the Trench Cup, the second tier of college football. However, Bob was unable to take part in the competition this season. Bob found that Mayo senior footballers in Sigerson Cup squads were allowed to compete, but there was no allowance for the Trench Cup. “There’s a bit of leeway in the Sigerson, but I find there’s a push to get players away from college football”.

Disrespectful to the lower-level competitions, you might say? “Football is football at the end of the day. It’s important to play these competitions and a great way to make friends in college, too. I see no harm in playing it in November/December.”

“I just think some change has to happen”, Bob concluded.



McHALE PARK

Club: Castlebar Mitchels
 Occupation: Student
 College: Mary Immaculate College
 Achievements: NFL Div 1 2023, U21 A County Medal x2
 When you started playing?: Aged 5 at Castlebar Mitchels
 Biggest influence on career: My parents



Sporting event you want to attend: The Masters
 Favourite Limerick nightspot: Icon (without a doubt)
 Favourite music: Kingfishr
 Favourite film: Shrek 2
 Laziest housemate: Oisín Carolan
 Joker on the Mayo panel: Diarmuid O’Connor



MTU KERRY MANAGER BRIAN SCANLON. PHOTO: DOMINICK WALSH

Relating to Bob's point of not being allowed to participate in the Trench Cup, Scanlon said, "The reality is these (inter-county) managers are under pressure. They want the best for their team at the end of the day, and when you're trying to share resources, it's not easy. Not all managers are like that. It mightn't be the right approach. Having played the Trench Cup, it's a great competition, and we took a lot from it. It's not an easy scenario for all involved". The fact is that these competitions still matter. Whether it be Fitzgibbon, Sigerson, O'Connor, or Ashbourne Cups, these are central to the association.

Scanlon is an advocate for the minding of these games

"I'm very fond of third-level college football and always have been. I enjoyed playing it, and I enjoy the coaching aspect. I think it can be a good vessel for some players to put their hands up and say I'm ready for county football. I'd argue it's a better indicator than minors or U20 football. The timing of it and where it sits on the calendar? That's the challenge. What can we do to help these up-and-coming elite players? The time window will always be scrutinised, and I don't know".

Time is the issue, yet the timing of age comes at a particularly great time for the players involved, who

MTU Kerry boss Brian Scanlon can echo the sentiments of Bob when it comes to college football. Three years into his reign as manager of MTU Kerry, he has enjoyed a renaissance. Despite relegation to the Trench Cup in his first year, they won the Trench and secured promotion straight to the Sigerson in his second year. The team reached a commendable quarter-final spot in this year's competition, losing to finalists UCD.

Even in the face of difficulties, Scanlon has enjoyed the experience. "It has its challenges, its sort of an unknown quantity heading into it. We just didn't have the required depth in the panel in my first year. To win the Trench Cup and head straight back up to Sigerson then was great and very rewarding."

"I think it can be a good vessel for some players to put their hands up and say I'm ready for county football."



MTU KERRY SIGERSON SQUAD 2025

get to partake in a unique competition. "The Sigerson is a very important game. Players find themselves with a new group of friends for two/three/four years of their lives. It's a high standard of football, you're up against the best young players and it's the best shop window for inter-county action".

In an age where inter-county demands are greater and split season chatter dominates the media, who is going to stand up for our friends in Higher Education GAA?

Competitions that stand the test of time, survive two World Wars, a Civil War, the Troubles, and much more? They must be cherished. Let the kids play ball.

SECRETS FROM BEHIND THE BAR



BY TILDE HOLM

From a couple hitting each other with a pool cue to a Spiderman chase on the roof. As bartender and manager of The Stables Club at UL, Patrick Moriarty's eyes have seen more than most.

It is 2 p.m. on a Tuesday and The Stables is packed with young people in colorful jerseys and thirsty faces. A nearly bald man in a brown shirt blends perfectly with the rustic oak walls. His name is Patrick Moriarty. Music mingles with laughter and chatter from the packed tables. Behind the crowded bar, Patrick almost dances between his colleagues, positioning himself perfectly wherever his help is needed. The 43-year-old General Manager of The Stables Club has had his job title for two and a half years. "I'm the new guy here," he jokes. Despite this, he seems to know everything about everyone. And when I ask him about the secrets of The Stables, he smiles and says, "There are too many - there are a lot..."

Above Patrick's head, a purple sign reading "Charity Week" dangles loosely from the bar. A girl in a yellow jersey is first in the disorganized queue to order a drink. Patrick darts to the other side of the bar and begins mixing red and yellow liqueurs. A minute later, Patrick gives the girl the drink, smiling and winking friendly. "I like to think of myself as quite easy-going," he tells me. "I'll have a craic, talk, laugh and joke with anyone."

Every night is different

Yet, the role of general manager requires more than just a good craic. "Most days when you come in here it is exciting. Because you can go from zero to hero in the matter of - Patrick snaps his fingers - 20 minutes. You never know what is coming." And that is exactly what he loves about the job. "Every day and night are different here and you have to deal with every situation differently. But the more you do it, the more you see it before it happens. You get a feeling for it."

Not long ago, Patrick's intuition was put to the test when a woman hit a man with a pool cue. "I watched it. She thought she was having fun with him, then he got upset because he did not think it was fun." Patrick rushed to stop the situation before it escalated. "I had to sort of sit them both down and have the conversation and explain: 'Well, not everyone thought it was fun to hit another fella with a pool cue.'"



A parental figure: student safety is important

In dusty black frames on the wall, two men from another era gaze down at the lively crowd. Across from them, Patrick is busy serving beers at the bar. When I ask if he ever feels like a parental figure to the students, he nods. "completely at times." However, he doesn't believe in talking down to people, "I always think you can have a conversation and try to get your point across to the person without physically talking down to them," he says. Like any parent, Patrick is very concerned about the safety of the students when they spend a night out. "For me, The Stables is a place where everyone have good fun, good craic and goes home safe at the end of the night."

One chaotic night, Patrick had to manage not one but three separate incidents at the same time. A girl blacked out, and just as Patrick was calling for paramedics, a guy put out his knee. But the bad luck was not over yet. "Then a clown jumped off a table and landed on a glass," he says, fanning his hands to his sides and rolling his eyes. "I would like to tell you that we never have incidents - unfortunately, we do. But again, it's how you deal with them and how you move on from them."

I SAID 'FOR FUCK'S SAKE KEVIN' - HE'S RUNNING ACROSS THE ROOF!

ABOUT PATRICK MORIARTY

43 years old.

General Manager at The Stables Club for 2.5 years.

Married with two children.

Fun fact: If Patrick could choose anyone in the world to have a drink with, it would be his colleague at The Stables and good friend Declan, "he always says to me: 'Don't forget, I have 37 years of experience from this place,'" Patrick says.

Spiderman hunt on the roof

While working at the bar, Patrick barely looks up, yet he seems to know exactly where everyone is. I ask him if there is a night at The Stables that he will never forget. Without hesitation, he shouts out "SPIDERMAN!"

He begins to describe the memorable night in detail. A customer had heard snoring from the roof of The Stables. Patrick and his colleague Kevin grabbed a ladder. As soon as Patrick reached the top, he spotted a man lying on the roof. But the moment the man saw Patrick, he started to run. "I said 'for fuck's sake Kevin' - he's running across the roof!" Patrick laughs. The man leaped down into The Stables' backyard, with Patrick in pursuit. "I think he thought he was Spiderman." Security eventually took control of the situation, but Patrick shakes his head and says, "That is one night I will never forget!"

A familiar face at UL

Patrick has vanished from the bar. A moment later he stands by the food counter and flashes a smile at the next customer in line. As a natural part of the job, Patrick sees a lot of faces. "I would not always remember everyone's name. I do find that hard at times - but faces I am very good at."

Students at UL sometimes recognize Patrick outside campus. "All these people might not know you personally, but they will go 'oh that's Pat The Stables - he gave me a chicken roll and chips yesterday, or he gave me six pints of Fosters last night - or oh jeez, he put me out the back door last night!" he smiles and continues, "It makes me feel very nice, I suppose."



HOW TO GET A FREE DRINK FROM ME?!

The biggest secret

But Patrick's biggest secret is yet to be revealed: how to get a free drink from him. When I ask, he shakes his head, crosses his arms and looks up with a smile, "how to get a free drink from me?!" he repeats, as if considering it. "I usually see who is going to have good fun with me!" he gestures with his arms. "If we have a fancy theme for the night and whoever is dressed well, dances the best or makes a fool of themselves, I will give them a drink voucher - no problem at all".

At the bar, the crowd has thinned. Patrick picks up empty glasses from around the room. By the window, the two men in the dusty frames keep their eyes on him. They are waiting for the next memorable story to take place at The Stables Club.

FOOD SHOPPING AS A STUDENT: HOW TO SAVE MONEY?

by Mairéad Hughes



There is a lot to consider as a student, what classes to take, which societies to join, and what nights to go out. As a result, one area that often gets left on the back burner is budgeting, especially when it comes to the weekly grocery shop. According to a recent survey, 90% of students surveyed admit that they don't stick to a budget when food shopping.

John McDermott is a Student Financial Support Advisor at the University of Limerick, he meets with students to give them advice on how to prepare and use a budget. Many students view budgeting as something that is difficult to learn later in life, this is completely false. According to John, "budgeting is the sort of exercise that you can start learning at any age", all you need is a little bit of time and self-discipline.

When creating a budget, it is vital to include all sources of income and expenditure, no matter how small they seem. In a "perfect budget, if you were to describe it like that", you will have more income than expenditure, outlines John. Once you have your budget, you will be able to see how much you can afford to spend on food, each week. It is vital to stick to your budgeted amount when shopping, otherwise, you will leave yourself short for the following week. If you spend less than you anticipated take it as a bonus for next week's food shop. Do not use this as an opportunity to splurge on non-essential items. 'Girl math' and budgets are not compatible.



Another top tip from John is each week you should write a list with two columns. In one column, you will list all essential items and in the other, you will list any non-essential items. This list will differ from person to person and from week to week, so it is important to take a couple of minutes each week to write a new list. This is the basis for your shopping list. The more essentials that you need to buy will mean that you will have less money to spend on luxury items.

"Budgeting is the sort of exercise that you can start learning at any age"

John highly recommends that students do their research, "go online before you go shopping and find the best deals". Most supermarkets publish weekly online catalogues highlighting their best deals. "If there is meat on special offers, like beef, turkey or chicken, and you get it at half price, you should certainly buy it even if you don't plan on eating it that day or that week because when it is raw you can pop it in the freezer, and then take it out and cook it a week or two later," says John. But it is also important to have a critical eye when it comes to offers, "if something seems too good to be true, sometimes it can be". Promotional offers often encourage customers to buy larger amounts of food, e.g. buy one get one free and 33% extra free. These marketing ploys can lead to customers buying more food than they need. This can lead to wasting both money and food. A recent survey by Coyne Research on behalf of Aldi found that 43% of customers throw away food on a weekly basis, at an average cost of €832, per household per year. Therefore, it is vital to stop and think before grabbing the XXL version of a product.

While avoiding unnecessary purchases is key there are also smart ways to take advantage of discounts – especially when it comes to food nearing its sell-by date. John suggests looking out for “special offers on food items that are reaching their sell-by date”. These products are reduced to half price by the supermarkets, and often they are still safe to consume. Safefood, an organisation who promote knowledge and awareness of food safety, recommends treating “Best Before as a guideline and Use By as a deadline”. After its Use By date, a food becomes unsafe to eat but after a Best Before date the quality of a food might begin to deteriorate but it will still be safe to eat.

Too Good to Go is an app that allows customers to purchase surplus foods that are close to their Best Before date, for a fraction of the price. There are over 1000 Irish businesses signed up to Too Good to Go, including restaurants, cafés and supermarkets, including Aldi in Castletroy. Aldi offers a “Surprise Bag” for €3.99 consisting of products that would normally cost €12. While you can’t know exactly what will be in the bag, you can expect a mix of products such as fruit, vegetables, cakes, pastries, snacks, fish and meat.

Knowing where to shop is also an issue, nowadays there are many supermarkets available, each with their own product range and offers, it can be hard to choose one. Many students opt for the supermarket that is closest to them. 70% of students surveyed choose their grocery shop based on proximity. While, this is a non-negotiable for students who don’t drive and walk to the shop, for students with a car, it might be worthwhile to shop around. Prices can differ significantly from store to store and every week or two the offers and promotions in each store change. This means that to get the best value for money you need to shop around.

To outline how much prices can differ from supermarket to supermarket, I created a standard weekly shopping list for a student and priced these products at three supermarkets, Tesco, Supervalu and Dunnes Stores. NB - Tesco price matches Aldi with many of their products.



In each store, I tried to choose own-brand products, however this wasn’t always possible. Similar shopping baskets cost €37.50 in Tesco, €39.78 in Supervalu and €43.77 in Dunnes Stores. Looking at the bottom line alone, these differences look drastically different, however, it is important to note that the products in each store are not identical, there are variations in weight between many products.



To overcome this issue, customers should not look solely at the product price, instead, they should compare products based on the unit price. The unit price is listed in the following measurements price per kilogram, litre and metre. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission recommends comparing prices this way as it can allow customers to see which product is the best value – “regardless of the brand or the size of the pack”. This is particularly useful when buying meat, for example, beef mince with 5% fat in Tesco costs €10.11/Kg in comparison the same product in Dunnes Stores costs just €8.85/Kg.

At first, saving money on your food shop can seem like an impossible task, but if you follow these simple steps after a while it will become second nature.



There's No Taste Like Home

By Mary Ellen Moloney



The worst thing about being away from home is missing the familiar taste of home-cooked meals. This seems to be caused by the memories people have surrounding sharing meals with family and friends. Food is strongly tied to memories and the absence of home cooked meals makes feelings of homesickness more poignant for those living abroad.

Aoife, Brianna and Jorien have all shared their unique experiences of being homesick for home cooked meals while either living in Ireland coming from another country or living in another country coming from Ireland.



Aoife

Aoife is currently studying in Belgium as part of the Erasmus programme for her course in Ireland. She shared that *'as stereotypical as it sounds, I really do miss my potatoes. She says that while living in Belgium the 'oily fries' are 'no comparison to a bit of Irish mash'. Aoife also told me that one thing she found difficult after her move to Belgium was the difference in dairy products compared to those found in Ireland. She was shocked to find that in Belgium 'milk is not stored in the supermarket fridges and instead kept in the aisles along with the bread and eggs.'* Aoife says that before she moved, she *'took the quality of Irish produce for granted'* and due to the change in dairy products she has now *'switched to oat milk as it is more palatable'* to her.



Roast Dinner

Speaking about how not having the same food available in Belgium as in Ireland has impacted her longing for home Aoife recounted special memories that she has surrounding family dinners describing how *'every Sunday my parents would invite all my extended family over for a large meal. I was the designated sous chef to my mom. While she whizzed around preparing Yorkshire puddings, stuffing, and lamb, I had the extremely strenuous and straining job of peeling and chopping the carrots. Sufficed to say the vegetables were always the star of the show.'*

Despite the lack of good Irish potatoes and her mother's roast dinners Aoife has gained an appreciation for at least one of the classic Belgian foodstuffs, *'I will give this much to the Belgians; their waffles have made up for their lack of Irish farmed goods.'*

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Brianna

Brianna has been living in Ireland for the past number of months while she completes her Erasmus studies at UL. Like Aoife's struggle with differences in dairy and potatoes, Brianna faced a similar challenge living here when it came to sausages. Growing up home cooked meals were an important part of her life. These meals shared with family created formative memories for her and she now enjoys cooking for herself. She often likes to try and recreate dishes her mother would make for her as a child, but this has become difficult following her move to Ireland as she explains:

'I guess there are definitely foods that like my mom makes differently. So, my mom's Italian. And so, her pasta is vastly different than what I can recreate here. I have no idea why. I'm, like, trying to get the recipes that I'm following it to a T, but it doesn't taste the same.'

Adjusting to Irish food was difficult for Brianna to begin with. Irish pork sausages being packaged raw was something she didn't expect seeing as she is familiar with cured meats like Polish kielbasa sausage sold in the USA.

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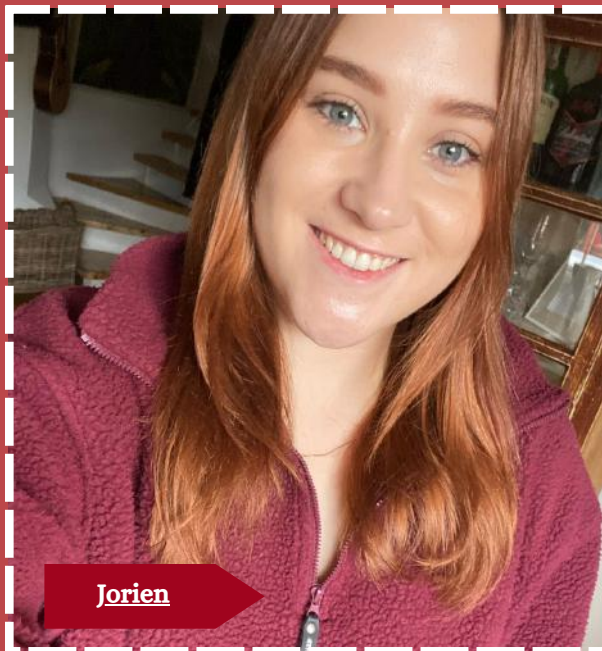


Kielbasa

'There're sausages that I can't find over here. I feel like all I can find is Irish pork sausages everywhere. Kielbasa is a Polish sausage that's already precooked, and some people serve it cold usually you like warm it up with like potatoes or something. So, like when I make it here, I'm using Irish pork sausage. And I'm like, yeah, it tastes good. But like, this is not the meal I wanted. So, the first week I was here it was just international students. I was making the sausage and potatoes, and I'm used to since kielbasa is already precooked, just throwing it all in the pan at once and I did, which means I scorched my potatoes. They were like burnt to a crisp and my sausages were like just barely cooked enough that I could eat them, and it tasted vile. And then the potatoes are weird 'cause. They're a lot smaller here than the ones I'm used to back home. So, the first time I went to go make, mashed potatoes, I like boiled them way too long. I guess it wasn't that big of a deal, but I was like, oh, these are falling apart as I pulled them out.'



Irish Pork Sausages - Credit Home Butchers.com



Jorien

Finally, I spoke to Jorien who is originally from Belgium but has been living in Ireland for the past 8 years. She told me about some of the everyday foods that she misses from home like bread and cheese.

'When I just moved here, I moved here for college. So, I was a student. So, the first things you miss is like your convenient food because you're not necessarily cooking as a student.'

'One thing that you might find funny is decent bread. I couldn't get over the amount of sliced pan. Sliced pan just doesn't exist in Belgium.' Jorien then laughs as she says that the Covid 19 pandemic caused a phenomenon where people became obsessed with baking bread. This meant that different types of bread like those she missed from home became more readily available in Ireland. *'Thank God COVID happened and every everyone wanted to go bake sourdough bread. Now you can walk into any supermarket and pick up an actual loaf of bread.'* Jorien explained why bread is such an important food for Belgians; *One of our meals usually lunch time is bread based. It'll be a sandwich in whatever, shape or form you like it, but it's nearly blasphemy to have two hot meals in one day. If that's your culture that every time at lunch, you eat a sandwich and all you can find is sliced bread and that's it. It's a bit hard.'*

We're quite famous for our beers. There are different types of beers, so you have your regular craft beer and then you have what we call a Trappist. You're only allowed to be called a Trappist if your beer originates from a monastery. They have their own little cheese factory as well to go along. Belgian monastery cheeses they're all stunning, gorgeous and I miss every single one of them. Before I came to Ireland, I'd never tasted cheddar. There's just no point in eating cheddar if you have the whole world of cheeses available to you. So that was pretty disappointing.



Cheddar Cheese



Breads

Although supermarkets are now stocking more international products, it is very clear that there's no taste like home.

Fun Facts

There are only 14 monasteries worldwide that are licensed to make 'Trappist' beers and cheese.

Six of these are found in Belgium.

The Belgian monastery cheeses are Chimay, Westmalle, Westvleteren, Orval, Rochefort and Achel.

Did You Know?

Biscoff spread, the popular caramelised biscuit spread is made in Belgium. It was created by Belgian baker Jan Boone Sr in 1932

Contrary to their name, French Fries originated in Belgium

Now popular in the United States of America and many other countries, what we now know as Kielbasa was invented in Poland in the 1400's



TRAVELLED

UNRAVELLED



A 2ND YEAR
JOURNALISM
MAGAZINE @ UL