



AN FOCAL



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

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A Newly Discovered Bacterium Is Causing Us To Re-Examine Life As We Know It. Page 6.



‘127 Hours’ And Why The Acting Trumped The Directing. Page 19.

CAR SINKS INTO SCHUMANN FOUNTAIN

Written by **Finn McDuffie, Editor**

A MOTORIST drove into the Schumann Building Fountain on 7 January, in what has been described as “a freak accident.”

The motorist was an elderly man, thought to be from the Ballysimon area. The incident happened at around 5:45pm in dim light and icy conditions as the campus experienced a light snowfall. Visibility was poor and the fountain was covered in layers of ice and snow. It is thought the driver, in his late seventies, mistook the fountain’s surface for a concrete area, mounting the curb, and driving on to the ice.

UL Head of Security, John McDonnell, said there was no indication of any skid marks and the visiting driver believed the fountain was in fact a turning circle. The driver was rescued by the Limerick Fire Service by means of an inflatable raft. Gardaí and an ambulance were also present. Onlookers captured video footage of the rescue, which has been posted on YouTube.

The elderly man was shaken but uninjured and was taken home by his daughter shortly after the accident. The vehicle ended up in the centre of the smaller part of the Schumann Fountain and was later towed. The road on which the incident happened was closed temporarily and traffic redirected through the Plaza by UL Security.

SU President, Ruán Dillon McLoughlin, said “I found the situation very bemusing and couldn’t understand how it was possible.”

“I was glad no-one was hurt. It was great to see how quickly the emergency services removed the car restored things to normal.”



Photo: Cillian Keogh

HUNT REPORT RECOMMENDS GRADUATE TAX

Written by **Colm Fitzgerald, News Editor**

THE long awaited Hunt Report on higher education in Ireland has recommended a graduate tax system, whereby students pay no fees until they have graduated and have found jobs.

The report, chaired by Dr Colin Hunt, former advisor to Brian Cowen, suggests that higher education institutions in Ireland will be unable to cope with demand with current levels of funding. The Central Applications

Office (CAO) has recorded a 14% increase in applications for students intending to start third level courses in September 2011. Minister for Education and Skills, Tánaiste Mary Coughlan said “It is not my intention that students should be left with an unmanageable debt burden upon graduation, rather, students should make an equitable contribution to the overall cost of the significant economic advantage they

gain from higher education” Last year saw the Government attempt to raise the Student Services Charge to €3000 in the 2011 budget.

This increase was reduced because of political pressure from the Opposition and a student protest of record proportions in November. A €500 increase has been introduced for the 2011/12 academic year, while the second and subsequent child in a family

will pay the old charge of €1500. ULSU Welfare Officer Derek Daly has urged students to “take the recommendations seriously”. “The implementation of fees is something that the student movement must engage with or we will end up with a fees system that students have had no input in and which may act as a barrier,” Mr Daly said. “Everyone who needs a third level education for their chosen life path should have it available

regardless of means. These loans should not be considered ordinary debt under any circumstances and should not be linked to credit histories,” he added.

Opposition parties have already criticised the report, with Labour claiming its “conclusions on financing are vague, poorly described, not quantified in any manner and would receive a D mark if submitted as an answer to a commerce degree exam.”

News

UNIVERSITY GOVERNOR TO SEEK DÁIL SEAT

Written by James Crowe

UNIVERSITY Governor Dr John Hillery will contest the next general election in the Co. Clare constituency. He was chosen unanimously as one of two candidates to contest the Dáil seat for Fianna Fáil at a selection convention in Ennis. Dr Hillery is a consultant psychiatrist with a particular interest in intellectual disabilities. He was appointed to the University’s Governing Authority as a nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills along with two others and is the son of former president of Ireland Dr Patrick Hillery. John Hillery is currently chairman of the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities and has served on the Medical Council. The North Campus of the University is located in the Clare constituency but the majority of students do not have a vote there because they are only entitled to vote in their home constituencies. There has been some dispute over the location of UL buildings in Clare, with recent suggestions that the University be renamed the University of Limerick and Clare mooted by Clare County Councillors. Dr Hillery’s father, veteran Fianna Fáil politician Patrick “Paddy” Hillery was TD for Clare for 22 years and served in many ministerial posts under Taoisigh Éamon de Valera, Seán Lemass and Jack Lynch until being elected president in 1976.

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

WELCOME ERASMUS AND STUDY ABROAD! YOUR TIME IS NOW!



Finn McDuffie, Editor

IT was dark. It’s always dark at the beginning of tales like this one. Some say that’s because stories start off best in the dark. Others reckon it’s just pointless melodrama, but they’re not very good at storytelling.
It was also winter in France. So the night in question was a particularly cold one with a faint smell of baguettes. A frenzy of biting air hit me as I stepped off a train and on to an icy platform.

There was an announcement from somewhere, a whistle from somewhere else and a hissing from the doors behind me.
The trouble with hissing doors is that they generally tend to unnerv people. Much better if a door sighs in satisfaction. A flurry of passengers strode off busily. The train crept away. And that was that. But it wasn’t just that. It was also the beginning of my Erasmus experience.
I had left home. My comfort zone was a thousand miles away. But this was what I had wanted. This had always been the plan. So there was no point getting all upset about it. At least I

had a place to stay and a fresh towel. Adventure beckoned as I faced the unknown.
Adventure has been beckoning for centuries and has been cited by many historians as the primary cause of an awful lot of excitement and consternation in generally banal men and women. These historians have often left their jobs and gone to live in the Amazon.
I heaved a heavy sigh and felt much lighter afterwards. And so, I set off, through the train station, down the steps and toward the friendly hum of busses.
Welcome to UL!



Asia has been described as “a chaotic collection of nations and peoples where colour and contrast make the ordinary extraordinary.” This is a picture from the Hindu springtime festival of Holi, which is celebrated by throwing coloured powder and water. It happens at the end of the winter season on the last full moon day of the lunar month.

NEW STUDENT VILLAGE TO OPEN ON CAMPUS

Written by Darragh Roche, Deputy Editor

A NEW village for postgraduate students will open on the University’s North Campus later this year. The village will be for postgraduate students only and will be near the new Graduate Medical School.
Plassey Campus Centre (PCC), the company in charge of on campus accommodation, will unveil plans for the new village in March. It is expected to resemble older student villages such as Dromroe and Cappavilla.
“Most universities our size have a village like this for postgrads,” said Director of PCC John O’Rourke “There will be medical residences and postgrad village residences. Postgrads will still be able to live in the other student villages” he added.

PCC has recently updated its website and adopted a new logo as part of a “refresh” to bring the logo and website up to date. The website had not been updated since 2001. Last semester, PCC began renovations of Plassey village as part of a regular updating of their properties. Plassey is 50% refurbished

and will be completed in the summer. The name of the new postgraduate village has not yet been decided, though the University authorities will have a large input. Images of the new village should be available from March.



Campus Life Services
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

PCC’s new logo.

CONTEMPLATIVE CENTRE HOSTED ‘HORSE OUTSIDE’

Written by Colm Fitzgerald, News Editor

THE Rubberbandits viral, chart topping single “Horse Outside” was filmed in the UL Contemplative Centre.
The initial and concluding segments of the video show a crowd gathered outside nearby Milford Church, while the majority of the video is in fact filmed inside the Contemplative Centre located in the student centre.
Many people hoped the popular single would reach the number one spot on the charts at Christmas.
The duo was beaten by X Factor Finalist, Matt Cardle with his single “When we Collide”.

GARDAÍ RAID HOUSE IN BRIARFIELD

Written by **Finn McDuffie**
and **Darragh Roche**

TWO Garda armed response units, two unmarked squad cars and a Garda forensics van searched and made two arrests at a house in the Cedars, Briarfield, Castletroy at around 11am on 12 January.

An eye-witness, who is resident of the estate and a UL student, said there were tens of Gardaí present in front of and inside the house, which is near the Hurler’s alleyway.

Two men from Castletroy, Patrick O’Brien and Thomas Stuart, have since been charged with the murder

of Breda Waters and Des Kelly of O’Malley Park in the District Court, following the raid. Ms Waters and Mr Kelly were murdered earlier this month, in what was originally believed to be a murder-suicide pact.

Detective Garda Paraig O’Dwyer told the court Mr Stuart’s address was the Cedars, Briarfield, Castletroy. He also said Mr O’Brien’s address was Glanntan, Golf Links Road, Castletroy. Judge Tom O’Donnell refused to consider bail on the grounds that in the case of a murder charge, bail is a matter

for the High Court. As the two men were leaving the court, Mr O’Brien shouted “f**k ye”. Members of the public gallery shouted “f**k you” and “scumbag” in response. Briarfield is popular off-campus accommodation for UL students and is a short walk from the Hurlers and the Kilmurry Lodge. The two accused men appeared before the court by video link on 20 January.



Gardaí units at the Briarfield raid.

POPULAR POLITICS LECTURER LEAVES UL

Written by **Darragh Roche**,
Deputy Editor

POLITICS lecturer Dr Luke Ashworth is leaving the University to become head of the Politics Department in Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. The position entails a full professorship.

Dr Ashworth arrived in UL at a time when there was merely a politics group and was a founding member of the Politics Department.

“We’ve built up a thriving politics department and I regret leaving the department we helped to create,” he said. “I feel our department is the best in Ireland.” He has been one of the most popular lecturers in the Department for many years and several students have expressed dismay at his departure.

“I’ve had a Hell of a lot of good experiences here,” Dr Ashworth said. “I’ve had a great time with all my

students, from first years all the way up to Ph. Ds. I will miss my colleagues and students the most.”

“He’ll be a hard act to follow,” said colleague, Prof. Tom Lodge. “He’s a fantastic teacher and a great colleague. Everyone will miss his enthusiasm, his warmth and his terrible jokes.” Prof. Lodge is the newly appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Dr Ashworth is an expert in international relations and teaches the subject in UL along with European Studies and Studies in Political Thought. He has written widely on a range of subjects on the issue. He is the course director of the MA in Politics and has won an award for excellence in teaching.



Farewell: Dr Luke Ashworth, lecturer extraordinaire.

AN FOCAL SCOOPS VINCENT BROWNE AWARD

Written by **Colm Fitzgerald**,
News Editor

CHRISTMAS came early for the An Focal editorial team and contributors, with the surprise announcement on 15 December that An Focal had won the TV3 “Tonight with Vincent Browne Student Newspaper of the Year” award. The prestigious awards take place annually, featuring awards for Newspaper, Book, Journalist, Story and Picture of the Year. 2010 saw the inaugural “Student Newspaper of the Year” award. Commenting on the achievement, Finn McDuffie, Editor of An Focal said “I was called by TV3 some hours before the announcement was made on air. I hadn’t known An Focal was being considered for an award. Finding out that we’d won was a wonderful surprise and came straight out of the blue”. 2010 saw considerable change in the fortnightly newspaper, with a revamp in layout and design, paper size and content balance.

The paper also became full colour: the first time in its 19 year history. 2,500 copies are distributed fortnightly to various locations around campus. An online edition is also available at www.issuu.com. The Christmas issue saw a leap in online reader numbers, with more than 1000 views; another first for the newspaper. The Editor and Deputy Editor work with four Sectional Editors. These volunteers compile each section from contributions from a group of more than 50 student contributors.

“Contributions this year have been vast and generally of high standard. And long may it last! The students are doing a great job and keep me in check too,” added Mr McDuffie.

UL President, Professor Don Barry will host a reception in Plassey House tomorrow (Wednesday, 26 January) in recognition of the award.



Contributors are at an all time high this year.

LIMERICK MAY GET ITS OWN BIKE SCHEME

Written by **Michael Reid**

LIMERICK may soon get a bike scheme similar to that in Dublin. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is expected to approve Limerick’s Smarter Travel Proposal before the general election. A bike scheme is a key element of this proposal. Limerick City Council and UL submitted a joint proposal to a competition for local authorities, which sought projects to encourage public transport, walking and cycling.

The Smarter Travel Proposal will cost €10m and the implementation of the proposal would require upgrading of junctions and the creation of a designated, high quality cycle lane between the

University and the city centre with adequate surface, lighting and security cameras. There is also a new Facebook page that calls on the people of Limerick to support a scheme similar to the one in Dublin, though the page provides little information on the Dublin project or who is operating the page itself. The Dublin scheme is a public private partnership and it is envisioned that the Limerick scheme will be the same. As soon as the Dept. of the Environment approves the scheme, it will be put out to tender by the council.

Limerick City Council also hosts an annual bicycle parade, which will take place towards the end of this semester.

time to turn over a new leaf
time to write for your newspaper

your campus
your life
your newspaper

AN FOCAL

News

NEWS IN BRIEF

“BED FOR A SEMESTER” PROVES SUCCESSFUL

MORE than 100 students have used the Students’ Union’s “bed for a semester” application on the SU website. The section lists rooms that are available to rent for one semester only and is particularly geared towards returning co-op and Erasmus students who may have difficulty finding a room for one semester. Though there is some delay in removing rooms from the list once they have been let, the SU has deemed the scheme a success. It was originally devised by SU President Ruán Dillon-McLoughlin and Welfare Officer Derek Daly. Students can avail of this service by logging on to www.ulsu.ie.

BIKE SHOP LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

UNICYCLE, the bike shop set up by the Students’ Union, has launched a new website to advertise its products for the coming semester. The bike shop sells various brands of bike and is the only shop that specialises in one speed bikes in Ireland. Unicycle is selling bikes and plans to then buy them back at the end of the semester in an effort to encourage foreign students and others to cycle. Unicycle also sells other equipment and clothes and offers a bike repair service. All information can be found at www.unicycle.ie.

QUB GRADUATE LOSES APPEAL

A GRADUATE of Queen’s University Belfast who went to court because he was awarded a 2.2 has been refused leave to bring the case before a judicial review. Andrew Croskery claims that he would have gained a 2.1 if he had had better supervision from QUB. The High Court in Belfast ruled that the issue should be dealt with exclusively by the university authorities who are still reviewing the decision not to award Mr. Croskery a 2.1 degree, which he failed to achieve by 0.5%.

NEW CHAPLAIN APPOINTED

FATHER John Campion is the new University chaplain. Fr. Campion is the former parish priest of Milford Parish Church. He succeeds Fr. Koenrad van Gucht, who has taken a one year leave of absence. The chaplaincy team is available for the support of students and staff in the Contemplative Centre (Teach Fáilte).



PRESS OFFICE TO DRAFT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

THE University Press Office is in the process of drafting a social media policy. Such policies have been adopted by businesses and universities to regulate the use of social networking websites and copyrighted material by staff.



Visitors to Irish Aid’s Africa Day Dublin on Sunday, 16 May last year in the Iveagh Gardens.

UL LECTURER PUBLISHES PAPER ON LEGEND OF ISMERIA

Written by **Conor Forrest**

DR CATHERINE Lawless, lecturer in Art History in UL, has published an article in the Journal of Medieval History on the legend of Ismeria. She suggests the legendary figure is the grandmother of Mary and great-grandmother of Jesus Christ. Dr Lawless made the discovery while examining 14th and 15th century Florentine documents. In other versions of Christ’s lineage, Ismeria is described as the sister of St. Anne and grandmother of St. John the Baptist. But in manuscripts analyzed by Dr. Lawless, she is named as the mother of St. Anne and so, the grandmother of the Virgin Mary. Dr Lawless said “most of the legend is concerned with Ismeria’s life of penitential piety as a wife and widow and has little in common with standard legends of the Virgin or Saint Anne”. Lawless has pointed out that the manuscripts she has examined are

obscure and have never been popularly accepted. She states “It is a legend, a story. It has no origins in scripture or doctrine”. This legend marks a shift in belief. Sanctity was usually earned through blood martyrdom rather than good works. Lawless credits this in part to the rise in a belief in Purgatory. George Ferzoco, a research fellow at the University of Bristol, said that the paper analysing the legend is “brilliant” and “reveals an exciting trove of religious material from late medieval and renaissance Florence”. The identity of the author is unknown. “Some manuscripts like these ones were written or copied in monastic scriptoria, some were handed down as family heirlooms or lent between friends and copied in that way” said Dr Lawless. “We have no known author for this legend,” she said.

YOUTUBE VIDEO TURNS VIRAL

Written by **Colm Fitzgerald, News Editor**

A YOUTUBE video posted by UL students during study week has turned viral. The video, which captured students progressing from College Court into UL falling on ice, received over 15,000 views in just 24 hours and in excess of 224,000 in one month. This placed it in the “Most Popular-Entertainment” category on the Youtube homepage for several days. Almost two dozen unfortunate students were captured by the camera as they slid, fell and hopped down a small slope, apparently without major injury. But several pages of comments were

posted on the video, many of which allege the video authors poured water on the slope before recording. The artic temperatures would have ensured the water froze quickly. Other comments slam the video, claiming severe or fatal injury could have been caused. One irate poster claims “this is utterly sick, perverted, deviant behaviour”. Other users were generally amused. One, who claims he fell at that location, suggests people should see the humorous side of life”. Many proudly proclaimed “That’s Limerick City!”.

EXPERT ON AFRICA TAKES UP PRESTIGIOUS NEW JOBS

Written by **Darragh Roche, Deputy Editor**

PROFESSOR Tom Lodge, an expert on African politics, has taken over as the new Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Prof. Lodge has also recently joined the Irish Aid Expert Advisory Group, which advises Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power. “I have a particular interest in developmental issues,” Prof. Lodge explained. “The group is meant to be a forum where big ideas are discussed. We’re concerned with very broad strategic aims.” The administrative offices of Irish Aid are located on Henry St., Limerick and a number of co-op students have worked there but the Government has recently made cuts in overseas aid because of the Recession. “Ireland has a very good record on foreign aid,” Prof. Lodge said, “The cuts haven’t

impacted severely on the range of activities. This is a particular area that should be protected because the Government does it very well. Ireland has won an international reputation for the effectiveness of its aid.” Prof. Lodge is one of very few experts on African politics working in Ireland and taught at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, South Africa for almost 30 years. “Africa is a mixed picture,” he said, “The last decade has been a decade of economic expansion but also in some parts of Africa the most awful war, but the tide of war has receded in recent years. It is progress of a kind.” Prof. Lodge succeeds Prof. Pat O’Connor, a sociology lecturer and expert on gender, who was the founding dean of the faculty. The appointment to the Iris Aid Expert Advisory Group is for three years.

DUBLIN ITS SEEK UNIVERSITY STATUS

Written by **James Crowe**

DUBLIN Institute of Technology (DIT) is seeking to amalgamate with three other Dublin technical institutes and be re-designated as a “technical university”. The other institutions are Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and the Institute of Technology, Tallaght. The move follows the recent publication of the Hunt Report on higher education in Ireland, which suggested that some ITs be re-classified as technical universities that would focus on the skills needed in the changing economy. However, the Hunt Report also argues there are too many universities and the new technical universities would essentially be junior partners to already established universities. This is not the first time ITs have sought an upgrade in their status. Both Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) have long believed they would benefit from university status. The Hunt Report rejects the idea of re-

designating DIT, CIT and WIT as universities because it proposes that institutes of higher education should work in regional clusters. Technical institutes have often felt disadvantaged by sharing their regions with more traditional universities. In Dublin, DIT must compete with long-established rivals and research leaders UCD and Trinity College and former institute of higher education, DCU. WIT has sought re-designation as the University of the South East, but the presence of both UL and UCC in Munster has made this task more difficult. DIT’s bid to become a new, technical university comes at a time when it is about to move to a new €1bn campus in Grangegorman, Co. Dublin. This move will be complete within the decade and if the recommendations of the Hunt Report are implemented, institutes of technology will focus closely on the needs of industry and the realities of the struggling economy.



Opinion

CONFLICT, QUESTIONS AND A WITCH-HUNT

Written by **Josh Lee**

“WAS he made to use a false name? Was he made to dress as a girl? Was he made to lie again and again and again, until he could barely discern reality from fiction?” These are the questions of Dr. Keith Ablow in his theatrical probing of Julian Assange’s turbulent childhood; a period in which, according to the psychiatrist, a young Assange was exposed to a malicious cult led by his stepfather.

Dr. Ablow is a member of the ‘Medical A-Team’ at Fox News, a media organisation whose tagline reads “Fair and Balanced”, yet it’s hard to find an article more indicative of the unnerving trend of character assassination directed at Assange following his whistleblowing website WikiLeaks’ published over 650,000 sensitive military and diplomatic documents late last year.

The embarrassing leaks have ignited a firestorm of reactions across the world. While supporters of WikiLeaks’ quest to “open governments” view the revelations as triumphs for journalistic

liberty, transparency and the freedom of speech, it is claimed that the release of sensitive information will only serve to increase governmental secrecy. It has also been claimed that leaks relating to the war in Iraq will put countless civilian and army lives at risk.

While the merits of WikiLeak’s actions are still up for debate, the manner in which some public figures have pursued Assange is extremely questionable. American Senator Joseph Lieberman, for example, put forward draft legislation to secure his extradition in fear that the 1917 Espionage Act would fail to do so. The proposed Securing Human Intelligence and Enforcing Lawful Dissemination Bill is aimed solely at Assange but, more disturbingly, Sarah Palin has called for Assange to be hunted “like Taliban”. And, like an alarming amount of US public figures, Mike Huckabee, former governor of Arkansas and current Fox News host, has called for the WikiLeaks founder to be executed. This extreme opposition to WikiLeaks has not gone

unnoticed. A group of internet activists known solely as ‘Anonymous’ have launched cyber-attacks against websites they see as enemies of WikiLeaks. PayPal and MasterCard, both of whom have discontinued donation services for the website, have been targeted yet Assange is said to be unhappy with the attacks. His lawyer claims that “he was not happy about the cyber-attacks because he believes in openness and free speech.”

Though he is still embroiled in a confusing case of sexual misdemeanour and the threat of extradition to the US, the saga spawned by Assange’s revolutionary website continues to pose vital questions in the search for governmental transparency and asks whether it is in the public’s best interests to be privy to the inner workings of power at all.



Embroiled in controversy: Julian Assange

SUDAN: A COUNTRY DIVIDED?

Written by **Shane Clifford**

ON Monday, 9 January 2011, residents of the southern states of Sudan took part in a vote which, for the first time in their lives, could bring real change to this impoverished region. Drove of citizens from South Sudan showed up to vote in a referendum separating them from North Sudan and the government of Omar al-Bashir.

Elections in Sudan have often fallen foul to corruption, vote rigging and the intimidation of political figures. Last year, a video was posted on Youtube showing election officials stuffing false ballots into a ballot box during the presidential election. This time, however, there is a sense that real change is about to occur and that Africa’s largest country is about to be carved in two.

North and South Sudan differ in culture and race as well as religion. Over 2 million have been killed over half a century of bitter civil war. The Arab north has suppressed the African south and exploited their oil fields since independence in 1956, but now there is genuine cause to believe that the decades of suffering in the south are coming to an end. In a move becoming increasingly uncommon on the continent, President Bashir has promised to stand by the results of the referendum, and has even offered financial aid to the south if it should



choose to separate. It is a sad situation that we have to be thankful of an African leader, though there are many of them, that stands by election results and doesn’t try to use military power to fight the choice of the people.

Despite the continent containing many stable, progressive and democratic governments in countries such as

Ghana, Senegal and Benin, there has been an increasing trend of leaders using the military as their personal guard and clinging on to the position of president when the people have voted them out. We need look no further than the way the international community deals with these stubborn leaders to determine the reason for the increase in presidents digging their heels in. When Robert Mugabe refused to give up his position following the results of a general election, a power sharing deal was brokered by the UN and African Union.

Taking this into consideration, it’s no wonder that defeated leaders have followed suit in defying the people’s choice when there is a chance that they can hold onto their powers. So it turns out that the man who has been the enemy of the south for almost three decades, Omar al-Bashir, is the man who can now copper-fasten their freedom by doing as he has promised, and accepting the result of the referendum. The alternative? Forcibly reclaiming the southern oilfields and, in doing so, spawning civil war, famine and death. African politics needs a success story. South Sudan deserves it.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF A PINT?

Written by **Darragh Roche, Deputy Editor**

WHAT is the point of a pint? This is the question that vexes the curious mind. There is nothing in our society that is more universal or more ubiquitous than alcohol. Every rural village, almost every street of every city of our little nation has a pub of some sort. We serve alcohol at everything: we drink to celebrate birthdays and births, we drink to mourn family and friends, we drink to have fun and to unwind and we even drink when we’re unhappy. Yet it makes us sick, it makes us do stupid, nasty and instantly regrettable things and it is always bad for us, so why do we drink it? We drink because it is easy. Society, friendship, relations: all the complex systems of social interactions that we have manufactured for ourselves are so terribly intimidating for us to negotiate, so filled with pitfalls that we need a fallback. This cheap and reliable poison becomes a crutch for us, a means to avoid the stark realities of the world. It helps us to feel closer: if we’re all drinking at least we have something in common. Alcohol is the cure for our social cowardice: if we can’t talk to the girl, if we’re nervous about fitting in with our new college friends or if we just don’t know how else to begin to build a rapport, then we drink. It is an institution so insipid that we don’t even notice that we’re slipping into it. The truth is ugly: alcohol is a poison. And it is a poison that kills. Let’s not speak of

morality; that really has nothing to do with it. The facts are indisputable. The human body is simply not designed to handle as much alcohol as people put into it. People get sick and get hangovers for a reason. Every time someone has a hangover, every time a person vomits from too much drink, their body is telling them that they have done something wrong. Your own body is repulsed by your actions and does its best to expunge the poison. But the body is only so strong; eventually, all things can be broken.

What is worth living for? The things that matter to people, the things that make their hearts beat faster, the things that make them stick their chests out with pride and cause their chins to quiver: those are the things that life is meant for. Alcohol doesn’t enhance our experience of life, it numbs us. It numbs the minds with which we dream our dreams, it dulls the senses with which we perceive the many wonders of our world and it gives us only the cheap thrill and short release of knowing for a moment that we have succumbed to the same weakness as everybody else. But we don’t need alcohol to remind us we’re human.

So now and again, when we stand at the bar and know the bottom of a glass awaits us, we should stop and think. What price am I really willing to pay for my pint?

time to turn over a new leaf
time to become a class rep

* your voice, amplified



ulsu*

Features

RE-EXAMINING LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Written by **Josh Lee**

LURKING in a hazardous Californian lake, a new form of life discovered by NASA may prompt a re-evaluation of our perception of what makes us who we are. In early December last year, the space agency announced the exciting discovery of a new form of life; a unique type of bacterium found in California’s ecologically-rich, yet poisonous, Mono Lake. In a highly anticipated press conference, NASA astrobiologist, Felisa Wolfe Simon, disclosed the discovery which looks set to alter our understanding of biology. All living things on earth are made up of cells composed of six components: carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and sulphur. These six substances are the building blocks for every living thing

from the blue whale to simplest of bacteria. The new bacteria’s DNA deviates from this system, something which was previously only theorized by scientists such as Simon. What’s revolutionary about these new bacteria is the absence of phosphorus from their make-up, which is replaced with fellow element arsenic. Before the discovery, something like this was thought to be impossible. In the past it was thought that for a planet to be hospitable, it needed to possess conditions similar to earth. But this new revelation prompts questions about our understanding of what makes a planet habitable. While the unearthing of a new form of bacteria on home soil rather than the dusty landscape of the Red Planet may not seem like the most exciting scientific

breakthrough ever, biologists have stressed the importance of this discovery to the future of our appreciation of what makes life tick. “The definition of life has just expanded,” said Ed Weiler, the associate administrator for the Science Mission Directorate at NASA’s headquarters in Washington. “As we pursue our efforts to seek signs of life in the solar system, we have to think more broadly, more diversely and consider life as we do not know it.” For decades humans have been fascinated by the idea of intelligent alien life forms visiting Earth. And while a simple bacterium may not satisfy earth’s ET crave, it opens up new realms of possibilities for life on distant planets.



E-BOOKS WILL NEVER REPLACE SENTIMENT

Written by **Aoife Coughlan**

FROM the mobile phones to I-phones, our era is defined by advances in technology for communication and recreation. They have become necessities in our world, revolutionising information and knowledge. Our fulfilment in these areas is reduced to a few buttons, clicks, whirls and flashing lights. The easy, user friendly world of practically everything is open for business to all and will fit snugly in the pocket. But I believe we have gone too far in simplifying everything to LCD screens and touch technology. We have lost the pleasure in tasks and the enjoyment of old fashioned ritual. No other technological advancement proves this for me more than the birth of the Amazon Kindle. Kindle is a pocket sized computer that allows you to buy e-books from internet bookshops and read them from your Kindle screen. Cheaper than buying

conventional books and more convenient to download from your own home, it allows you to store an entire library without the need to rearrange your entire room after each trip to the bookshop. I profess to be a lover of literature, so why do I oppose what surely has the power to expand our reading horizons? Simply put, because I love the cliché of musty, chaotic bookstores and the floors and floors of words lovingly sorted by enthusiastic staff. I adore the purring of paperbacks pages and the excitement as the words dance before our eyes. Those pages that are filled with our expectation simply cannot be perused with such fervour on the glassy screens of Kindle. You see, books hold on to our own stories as well as their own. They hold sentiment, from the inscriptions on the page of a birthday present, the signed

copy we queued to obtain or the signature of the previous owner of our second hand shop book. In my opinion, it is the effort of searching through shelves to find our next read that heightens the whole experience. The fact we bothered to find a book makes it all the more meaningful. A deliberate thoughtful action of choosing increases the merit in reading, instead of random selection just because of convenience and availability. For me Kindle is not a novel idea, pardon the pun. I accept it provides the same service as any book but books are so much more than that, they are an institution if you will. Be it Twilight or Tolstoy, I will support my solid friends of real books. And hopefully the future of bound books shall never become a fairytale.


THIS YEAR, RESOLVE TO BE POSITIVE

Written by **Sinead Keane**


THE year 2010 has been nothing short of harrowing for us Irish. After living in luxury for the last 10 years, given the responsibility of keeping ourselves afloat in a global crisis seems a little too much for our carefully manicured Irish lámhs. As a result, we now have no idea what the New Year will bring. Although younger generation may never have witnessed any kind of hardship, older people

would certainly have gone through this kind of recession before. It does seem as if the Irish have forgotten what it was like to watch the pennies. Similarly, the infamously positive attitude of the Irish, coined in the phrase “Sure, it’ll be grand”, seems to be dwindling. It won’t be grand: there are no jobs, no money, and no hope for any kind of future. The air around us is heavy despair and dejection. As 2011 dawns, the annual cliché “new year, new beginnings” is an interesting concept. After being hit in the face by First World poverty and a sudden drop in wealth, the Irish seem a little lost for words to continue with our lives as a once prosperous nation. Where is that famous positivity that placed Ireland on the world map as the merry nation who always lived for a better future? What happened to our in-built

assurances that everything would turn out alright? We have become too dependant on material things: the dream house, the second car and so on. Ireland has forgotten that a life can be built from things other than money. Keen to save on expenses and to improve our financial situation, most people will choose this year to give up something that they had thought essential but this may not be the best resolution to make. Instead of giving up that occasional treat, look at 2011 as a year of change. This year, don’t give up something; take up something. Join a society or club. Take up a sport, or take a yoga or karate class. But more importantly, take up that old attitude that has made us Irish famous. It will be grand, in the end. All we need is a little bit of happiness to get us back on track.



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



Take Burren Education Geogra
ogy Humanities s Political Scienc
y Psychology Bguages, a Literat
ces Nursing and Engineering and In
Mathematics Me ss and Closer F
fery Look M
w Enoi

Postgraduate Open Day, NUI Galway

Wednesday 2 February 2011, 12.30 pm to 4.30 pm
Bailey Allen Hall, Áras na Mac Léinn (Student Centre)

- Develop expertise in your chosen subject
- Boost your employability and earning power
- Work with leading academics in your field

Visit the Open Day to find out about our programmes, attend information sessions, and to talk to lecturers and students.

To book your place at the fair visit:
www.nuigalway.ie/postgraduate-open-day
Or just turn up and register on the day.

For enquiries about the Open Day email: postgrad@nuigalway.ie

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Written by **Kelly O’Brien**,
Features Editor

AS the weather warms, many of you will be thinking about your summer plans. Some selfless souls will volunteer to teach kids in Africa, some will take the sensible option and settle into summer jobs, but most of you will be traipsing in and out of USIT this semester trying to finalise your J1s. And a few of you will go to the home of the Yankees, I’m sure! So, here are some things you need to know about the Big Apple.

You need to sort accommodation before you get there but DO NOT pay a deposit without being 100% sure that the place exists and is owned by the person you are contacting. This happened to me and my friends and not only did we lose our money, but we ended up homeless in New York. After a week of destitution at the Holiday Inn Hotel, the bellboy eventually took pity on us and moved us into his basement where we lived for three months with a cockroach, some millipedes and a double bed between four of us. So if this isn’t your cup of tea, you should look for accommodation through a reputable accommodation service. I recommend the Aisling Community. Sort out a job before you leave and make sure you know where the job

“Do not under any circumstances step on a cockroach.”

is and what it entails. Having blindly arranged a job without asking many questions, I was shocked to learn that not only was my workplace a three hour commute, but that my co-workers consisted of five illegal immigrants, six ex-cons and one out-of-work movie star. Things did actually work out for the best on the job front, though. It was the best place I ever worked and I would definitely recommend prospective J1-ers to look for work with a moving company. The hours were long, but the tips were great and the conversation totally irreplaceable. By the end of the summer, I could carry a wardrobe down two flights of stairs, drink beer like a Mexican and pronounce America properly (Ah-Mar-Ick-A apparently).

If you’re under 21, you’re not going to be served alcohol. However, I recommend finding a certain Irish bar on the lower East side of Manhattan called McSorley’s, and pretend you’re a distant relation visiting from the motherland. They’ll welcome you in

like a wounded pigeon and serve you one of the two drinks they serve: light ale or dark ale. I’d stay away from the dark ale if I were you, you don’t want to know why, just trust me.

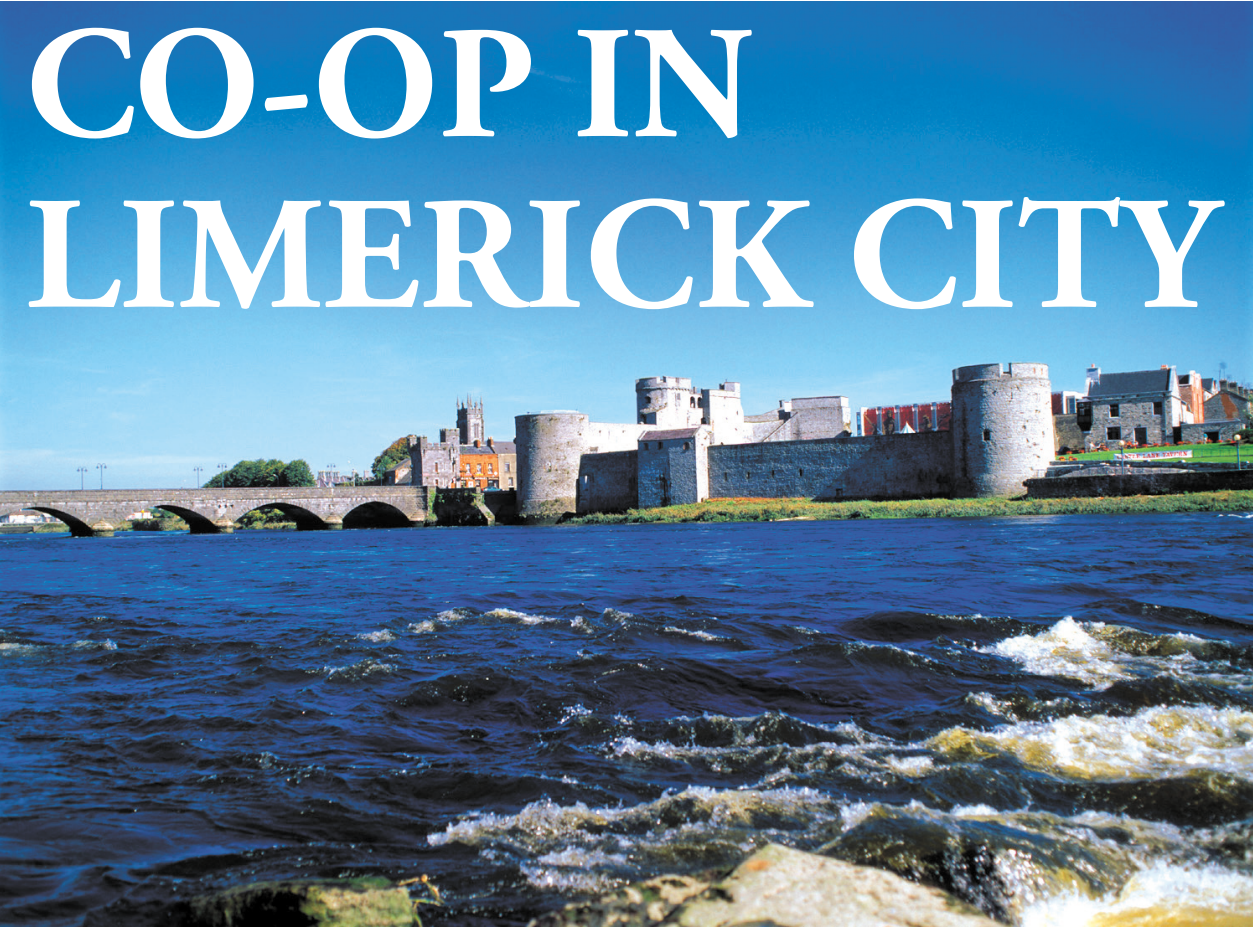
Do not under any circumstances step on a cockroach.

And finally, make sure to study your subway map very carefully. Otherwise you might accidentally end up in Harlem at 1am in a deserted station with no reception.

So, I hope this has been helpful! Reading back over it, I’m thinking I might have disheartened a few people but I can’t stress enough how UN-RAIL New York is. At the end of the summer, I was bawling my eyes out because I wanted to stay so badly. But for now I’ll stay here, and you can go in my place, to make crazy American friends, eat savage American hot dogs and fall completely in love with the greatest city on Earth.



The Statue of Liberty: much like the J1, it’s a symbol of freedom and opportunity.



Written by **Alana Walsh**

ANY co-op diary that I have read in An Focal has generally reported on exciting adventures in some far flung country. But I’m not writing this from somewhere exotic. Not even close to exotic. I’m in good auld Limerick Citaay!

For the past year and a half I have lived in the bubble of Castletroy but now I have said my goodbyes to my beloved Four Seasons Pizza, the Stables and college accommodation in order to relocate to the city centre. For the duration of my co-op, I will be volunteering in the Northside Learning Hub situated in Kileely, working to

provide fun learning projects and activities for children from local schools.

Now that I’m living in the city, it might be an appropriate time to learn some street names other than William Street and to stop describing them like “the one where Dunnes Stores is” when referring to Henry Street. By summer, I should know the city like the back of my hand, right? Well, we’ll see how that goes. So far I’m enjoying being a short walking distance from everything I previously needed a bus to get reach.

By the time the 10 January rolled around, there was no sulking about the fact that I had to start work while those of you who are still on campus had another two weeks off. I was fed up of doing nothing and ready to give my full, undivided attention to something. The energy of the staff in the Learning Hub

is fantastic. From the first minutes of talking to them, I realised that the next few months will be really interesting and a great opportunity not only to share my existing skills but to pick up new ones. There is so much room to be creative; they are so open to our ideas and facilitating them to be put into practice. Currently, I need to decide which projects that I would like to be involved in and to put on my thinking cap to contribute some ideas. The next eight weeks will be hectic with St. Patrick’s Day parade preparations which we will all be helping with. I’ll be writing again in the last An Focal of the semester to let you know how I got on, so until then, enjoy settling into Semester Two, I’m there in spirit.

STUDY ABROAD IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Written by **Jason Kennedy**

THERE are some things that you pray will never happen to you when you move abroad. You pray that the flights will be peaceful and that everything will run smoothly. Well, that’s what I did, but it seems the Fates had different plans for me. My four month stay in Newfoundland, Canada, where I am currently studying Arts, kicked off by proving that everything that can go wrong, will go wrong.

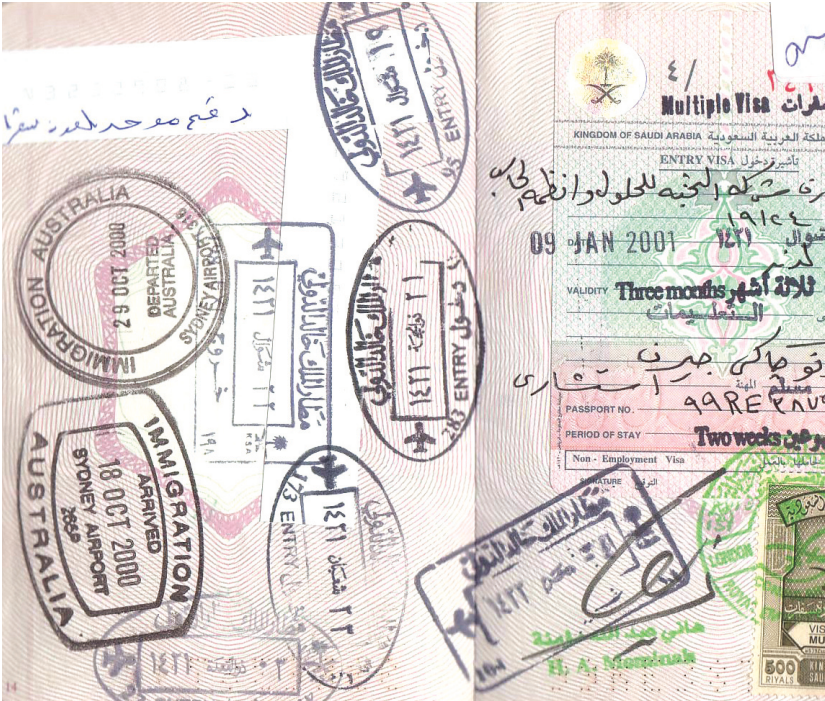
The start was actually quite pleasant. Continental Airlines managed to accidentally book me into first class, where I enjoyed an eight hour flight with delicious food, new movies and reclining seats. But that’s where the daydream stopped.

Once we arrived in Newark, I found that my connecting flight kept getting delayed, until it was ultimately cancelled. I rushed over to get in front of the line for free accommodation

in New York for the night, so I could wake up fresh for the next flight in the morning. Luckily, the rescheduled flight went ahead. Unluckily, all my bags and the bags of all the passengers were left in Newark. It took four days to get all my bags sent to me (and I was in first class!).

Then the worst thing happened. I got stopped at customs and questioned over the validity of my stay. I was hauled into interrogation, where I was locked into a room with a policewoman, who asked for proof of my intention to study. Thank God for my iPhone. I managed to email all I needed to her from my phone and went on my less-than-merry way.

They say that bad things come in threes, and with cancelled flights, lost luggage and angry police, I’m inclined to believe them. But things can only get better, right?



Lifestyle



CHANGE IN THE STARS

Written by **Aoife Coughlan**

MY horoscope holds hopeful words for my near future. “ROMANCE blossoms while exploring new pursuits this week.” It’s funny how these predictions never seem to materialise. Perhaps it’s because horoscopes are all concocted nonsense written by bored journalists. Or perhaps it’s down to a major catastrophe created by the ancient astronomers, those blasted Babylonians, when they calculated the zodiac calendar in the first place. Thus, these ancient fortune tellers caused consternation for our constellations when Professor Parke Kunkle proposed that a change in our star signs was needed. Now we all have to move our star signs back a month and, while we’re at it, let’s also throw another sign in to the mix. Because of course, something as frivolous as a paragraph of print media poppycock deserves

such a monumental change. I mean, God forbid we would go around believing that we were a feisty Leo instead of diplomatic Libra for the next 1000 years. The change to our zodiac caused such a stir that it made me question how we view star signs today. On planes, trains and buses you will find females goggling at the horoscope columns. Even the most distrusting of them will perk up when they read something uplifting. Most will say they only read them for “a bit of fun” yet something still compels us to pour over the predictions with intensity. I won’t deny it, I do the same. A cup of tea and a taste of my future in Sunday’s paper is a ritual of mine. Like many others, I read them because I hate uncertainty. We take comfort in the thought that someone somewhere can predict our future.

"Horoscopes are all concocted nonsense written by bored journalists."

Humans are obsessed with the future. Whole civilizations have looked to stars, stones and tealeaves to predict it. There’s no reason for today’s generations to be any different. If we paid less attention to others’ predictions and more attention to our own actions, perhaps we could better influence our fortune, regardless of whether we are an Aries or Aquarius. Or even an Ophiuchus!

POST FESTIVE DETOXING

Written by **Róisín Flanagan**

AND so, another booze-fuelled Christmas comes to a close, leaving nothing but flashbacks of dancing on tables and kissing people you shouldn’t have. But Mam and Dad’s drink cabinet isn’t the only empty thing. Your wallet contains a cloakroom ticket, a sachet of salt that accompanied some late night cheese-curry chip and a receipt which provides evidence that those jagerbombs did exist. Those eight consecutive nights out have come to a demise as reality beckons. And with that, college and work have re-entered your life. It’s like Christmas never happened. But your liver sure knows it did. Hot whiskeys, Irish coffees, mulled wine along with spirits, shots and beer have left you depressed, haggard and screaming for a break. So put down that bottle of wine, and listen up because Charity Week will soon be here and you’ll need your good friend once again.

Firstly, have a cup of hot lemon and water in the morning before your tea. It’s an antioxidant and it will drag the alcohol out of you kicking and screaming, flushing out those toxins that have left your skin and stomach in bits. Hit to the nearest pharmacy and invest in a tube of Vitamin C to re-build your immune system (alcohol sucks Vitamin C out of your body). Now don’t consume the tube (wolfing them like you did the Nurofen Plus after Stephen’s night) but take one scrumptious tablet a day. Try to regain your sleeping pattern. Your body has become accustomed to passing out at 4am and regaining consciousness at 11am. Aim for 12 hours until your system can adjust to the college eight. With a proper sleeping pattern should come a regular eating pattern. Get your diet right back to where it was, because those Christmas pounds are going nowhere fast thanks to many tins of Celebrations and selection boxes.

Notice how I haven’t mentioned to go off the drink? Pointless. We’re students and we’re Irish. We have no hope. But since your wallet is still pretty useless, Saturday night in the local with DJ Dave is probably the hub of your social activity. Look after Mr Liver and he will look after you (or your social life).



THE BEAUTY COLUMN

HAPPY NEW YEAR, HAPPY NEW YOU!

Written by **Meghann Scully**

AFTER indulging on Christmas treats and the over consumption of alcohol you may be feeling sluggish as we all are. We all made New Year resolutions that realistically did not start until 3 January and ended several days later. Diets, no more sweets, walk every day, cut down on the drink etc. Seems achievable but we all know, lads ad lasses, it is short lived. College starts back and suddenly resolutions are to have less drink and fewer treats. So, let’s get together and make a realistic resolution that will not only make us feel better but that we can stick to. Diets are a fad. The best way to regulate your weight is to cut down on big meals after 7pm. Eat a bowl of cereal instead of a take away, as whole grain is a natural source of protein. We are all victim to Superdine after The Lodge and the taco you devoured at 3am isn’t so satisfying in the morning. When you are getting ready for a night out, tell yourself at least five times

that you will not go to the chipper. An unusual, yet effective tactic. It’s a classic case of mind over matter. As for exercising, don’t join a gym on your first day back this January. For many, it simply does not work and you won’t see the money again. Try to walk to College every day instead of driving, and pick up the pace on the way. Another little trick is to run up the stairs instead of walk. Seems daft but it’s the little things that make a difference. Now I’ve left the best ‘til last, high heels strengthen the calf muscles so strut your stuff! As for the drinking, I won’t be a hypocrite and say cut down on booze. Just simply change the mixer. Water down dilute or opt for juice. Vodka is 0% fat, so happy days. And finally, drink water daily. Even if it’s just a glass, it is better than nothing. Not only does it hydrate the body but it provides that energy to run up the stairs, clears skin and leaves a healthy glow.

STICKY HONEY AND GINGER CHICKEN

Ingredients:
½ tsp. ground turmeric
2oz honey
Some fresh root ginger, finely grated
One garlic clove, crushed
Grated zest and juice of one small lime
25g sweet chilli dipping sauce
Two chicken breasts
75ml of white wine

Method:
Put the turmeric, honey, ginger, garlic, lime zest and juice and the chilli sauce in a bowl together and stir to combine. Slash the chicken breasts and place in a bowl, cover with cling film and leave in the fridge overnight.

Pre-heat the oven to 200c (fan oven). Take the chicken from the marinade and place in a roasting tin, spoon some of the marinade over the chicken and cook for 30-35minutes until the chicken is cooked through and golden.



Another delicious, healthy option from An Focal’s resident food guru, Elizabeth Neylon.

PUT A SPRING IN YOUR STYLE

IT’S time to put the winter woollies in the back of the wardrobe because we’re about to hit the summer with a bang. Gone are the warm colours like red and purple, we’re going to follow in Henry Holland and Betsey Johnson’s footsteps and bring back vibrancy.

Written by **Emily Maree**

We’re talking pastels with a bit of sass, rainbow colours and of course (the new black), white! Style that doesn’t make you think of your grandmother’s wedding suit or velour tracksuits from the nineties. Think English garden party from the forties with a wee bit of an oriental twist. Think a photo shoot straight out of the spring edition of Italian Vogue. Think Tommy Hilfiger with attitude.

This season will see a more relaxed and tribal vibe; the fashion world’s way of combating the recessionary times we’re struggling through. Design houses all over the world from Calvin Klein to Givenchy, from Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel to the child prodigy, Alexander Wang, have adopted white as their statement colour, not only because it’s

fresh, bright and perfect for summer, but also because it’s the colour of the dove. The dove is a symbol of hope and these designers are trying to convey that even in times as bad as ours, there can always be a silver lining. And why shouldn’t you start with your clothes? Usually the colour white is associated with virginity and innocence but everyone from Max Mara to Chloe are creating white that isn’t virtuous but a beam of pure energy!

We’ll all channel our inner Alexa Chung for the next few months and wearing a lot of blues, creams, and greens (and of course whites) for quite an aquatic feel, as shown by Agyness Deyn on Alexander Wang’s catwalk. Forget what everyone says, everyone can pull off white somehow!

Style this season is going to have such a British feel. The best thing you can do is watch fashionistas like the aforementioned Alexa Chung, Agyness Deyn, and Emma Watson to see how they achieve the effortless and relaxed cool that’s going to be so in this season.

Most importantly, statement pieces are the way to make this season yours. So make sure you have a few of these essentials in your wardrobe; a white shirt, a trench coat, a blazer, some ankle boots and a leather biker jacket. If you have these basics, then you’ll be sorted.



JANUARY MADNESS

Written by **Karen O’ Connor Desmond**

SHOPPING ‘til you drop!’ is a painful reality for passionate fashionistas who dare to brave the sheer and utter madness of the January sales.

The start of the January sales marks a milestone in every dedicated shopper’s diary. Come 26 December, hoards of shoppers tear relentlessly through the streets of Ireland. All it takes is one word to fuel their internal fire; SALE. With promises of unique bargains, why wouldn’t anyone want to join in on all the fun?

Once the doors open, there is no going back. The only way to tackle the buckling rails of clothing and over-flowing shelves is to strategise. The store is a battlefield. Everybody is your enemy and make no mistake; they will take you out as necessary. We have all undoubtedly suffered the dire consequences of letting a sweet mother push her pram ahead of you. This, my friend, is an unfortunate rookie mistake. The gurgling offspring is, in fact, her weapon of mass devastation.

Everywhere, we are confronted with image after image of mind-blowing must haves at seemingly unbelievable prices. This, of course, is a lethal mix for a shopaholic. The idea of such

an occurrence has many foaming at the mouth. With shops such as Next opening at 5am in accordance with this rare occasion, it all becomes too much. Slowly but surely, they are consumed by all things sale-related until they eventually snap. The stir-crazy shoppers seek refuge the only place they can think of; the shops.

The January sales of 2011, however, are different. The “sales” that are taking place have been taking place for months. Our country’s current financial situation has ensured that every day is a sale day. Unfortunately for most of our shopaholics, not many have come to this realisation yet. They are still stumbling from shop to shop, determined and focused to find that “fantastic bargain”. The power that the word sale holds over shoppers is simply quite shocking.



GUY FASHION

Written by **Amy Grimes**

WHEN we talk fashion in An Focal, it’s generally with the ladies in mind. But judging from some of the sights around campus, the gentlemen could do with some help too. The following is for the absolutely clueless among you, as I’m aware there are many fashionable fellas wandering around UL. But for those whose dear aul’ mummies would faint if you picked out your own clothes, I’m here with some advice.

You may be broke, but you needn’t look it.

Take advantage of sales, online shopping and outlet stores. The silver lining of our current economic climate is that most stores are constantly reducing stock they can’t shift. Sales are no longer limited to January; it’s pretty common to see stuff reduced year-round.

Your student ID is your best friend.

That little piece of plastic can get you around 10% off in places such as Schuh, Jack & Jones, Burton and Diesel. Always ask a staff member if the store does student discounts as it may not be prominently displayed.

Shoes. They’re not just for girls.

Look at your feet. Are your shoes filthy? Are they older than time itself? Are they reliable runners that you wear with everything? Firstly, shoes can be washed. Secondly, ancient trainers do not a snazzy outfit make. Throw them out! Thirdly, shoes are nice. It’s ok to own more than one pair of ‘tackies’ and one pair of ‘good shoes’. For guys, the old reliables tend to be brands such as Vans, Etnies and Converse. If you can’t afford the real deal it’s pretty easy to get a good knock-off in Dunnes.



You’ll never get the shift wearing that.

When it comes to going out, it’s one area where you guys have it way easier than us girls. It’s pretty simple. Do – wear the aforementioned stylish runners with some dark-wash jeans and a simple shirt. Don’t – wear skinny jeans, a tweed jacket and pointy-toed loafers. Ever.

Quality over Quantity.

Sure, it’s tempting to stock up on bargain shirts or jeans for less than a tenner. But cheap clothes won’t last

much more than a semester. It’s better to invest when buying wardrobe staples that you’ll wear often, such as a good pair of jeans or a shirt that’ll take you from a Co-Op interview to The Lodge. A ‘witty’ slogan t-shirt doesn’t look quite as dire when it’s paired with some quality denim.

Are you lost?

Do you have absolutely no idea where to start? Find a willing friend who is both stylish and honest and ask them to take you shopping. You may owe them a drink afterwards but it’ll be worth it.

time to turn over a new leaf
time to support your shops

of each euro you spend, 12c goes back into services for you

SPAR

Letters

AN FOCAL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor, UL Students’ Union, Castletroy, Limerick. T: 0860435304 E: sucommunications@ul.ie W: www.ulsu.ie
An Focal endeavours to accommodate all letters as far as legally possible. All parties have the right of reply to letters printed herein.

LAST ONE WITH A DEGREE TO LEAVE IRELAND – PLEASE TURN OFF THE LIGHTS

Sir, - The [above] Facebook page has over 18,000 fans. Not surprising really given the dire economic situation. The majority of my 2010 class is now in Korea, Dubai or Canada. With this in mind, I’ve decided to share my experience of dodging the Recession bullet. The plan was simple: grab my degree, jump on a weekend TEFL course and book a one way ticket to Hong Kong.
Many teaching programmes will set you up with everything you need but my chosen destination meant organising the trip independently. Within a month of landing I had secured a job, an apartment and a visa. I had no solid teaching experience, but I had a degree which makes all the difference in applying for jobs in Asia. I now work in a learning centre earning twenty-five euro an hour; a lot when my main responsibilities include singing nursery rhymes and teaching the alphabet!
Asia may seem a million miles away from the comforts of home, but Hong Kong is a very westernised place, which makes the transition easier. Cultural differences are interesting to say the least.
You can expect fish balls, shark fin soup and fried starfish in every restaurant. Practices such as calling each other fat are socially acceptable. In more remote areas, people are

often amazed by my eye colour and Irish skin. Children here are very determined to learn, making your job as a teacher a lot easier.
Enjoyably, the main difference here is the complete absence of ‘recession talk’. Asia is booming and while I had not always considered teaching English, I am delighted that my post-graduation path has gone in this direction. It is at least more exciting than joining the back of the dole queue! If you are interested, a quick Google search will throw up plenty of options. And if you are the last one to leave, don’t forget to hit that light switch!

Yours, etc,

RACHEL MANNING

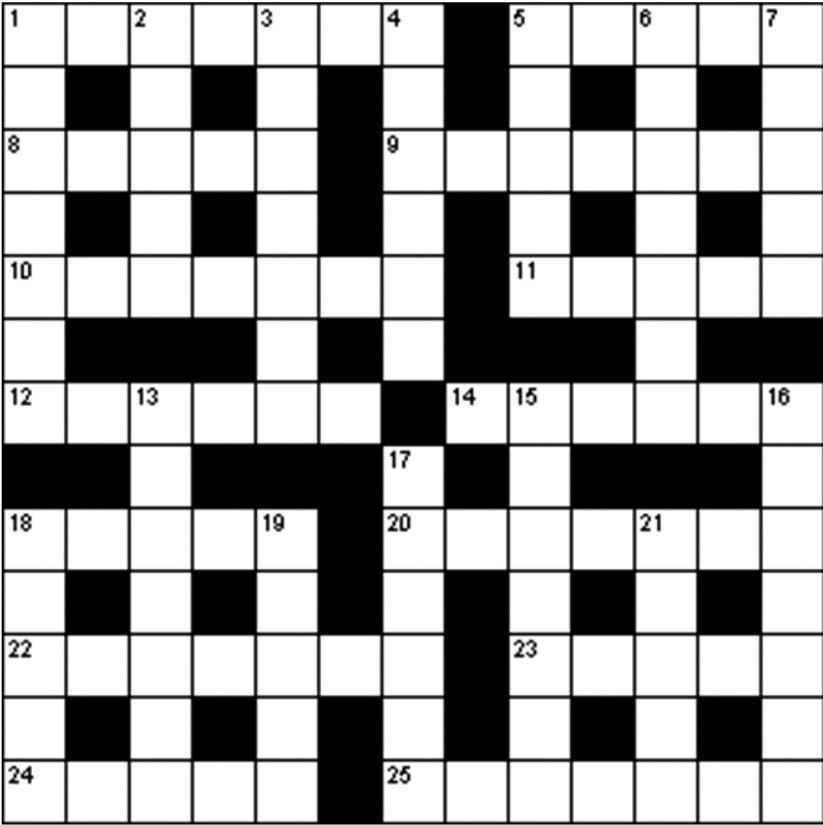
LETTER FROM AN EMIGRANT IN SAN FRANCISCO

Sir, - My phone’s not working here. But anywhooh. OK, so remember our chat about going away over the Summer? Well my dearest, as soon as I got off the plane I’ve fallen in love with the place and I think you are the person (of all my friendypoops) that would love it the most.
Been to Alcatraz prison which was really interesting. You get the boat to an island. The captain called me over and let me sit in the driver seat. Random. Healthiest restaurants ever!

Been drinking wheatgrass shots nearly every day and pho chay soup is my new thing!
Went to the beach yesterday and there were beefcakes surfing and two people playing the violin. Haha, you could bring your flute and I’ll pick up the harmonica! The shops are surprisingly cheap here as well: I bought some savage stuff in the vintage stores! And I love the Harley Davidson stuff, bigtime!
Even the homeless people are happy here. One guy said to us, passing by, “Hey! Any one of you ladies wanna kidnap me, beat me up and throw me in your closet?”
Had a “super veggie mex tacos” today and a sunbed Friday. I kissed a marine guy in Fiddlers Bar, Friday night! There are trams to travel and my aunty said the guy let her drive the tram up the hill before. Haha the legend! Going to cycle across Golden Gate Bridge tomorrow and the aquarium on Tuesday!
Soooooo... my aunty needs someone to babysit here cats for three weeks in April. You want to come with me? Free accommodation!
Also, seriously contemplating coming here for the Summer but only if you are up for it? Couldn’t go on holidays without you this time!

Yours, etc,

A FRIEND



CLUES

- ACROSS:
1. The rich might live in one (7)
5. True statements (5)
8. Benefits from (5)
9. Moribund (9)
10. Took retribution for (7)
11. The Orient Express is the world’s most famous (5)
12. The relationship between rivals (6)
14. Stick strongly to (6)
18. Permit (5)
20. Very sincere (7)
22. The WWF protects them (7)
23. Belief of the Church (5)
24. Can be made of wood or ice (5)
25. It is eaten after the meal (7)
- DOWN:
1. Wealthy businessman (7)
2. Clatter (5)
3. Deep understanding of something (7)
4. People who move around, Mongols, say (6)
5. Aspect of (5)
6. Goes well with bacon (7)
7. Serious, dour (5)
13. Ennui (7)
15. Strongly insults
16. Pull out, a tooth, say (7)
17. Stopped an action (6)
18. Collect a large amount (5)
19. Canary ... in London
21. It can be golden, crested or bald (5)

ANSWERS CROSSWORD ISSUE 7	ACROSS: 4. Christmas 7. Santa Claus 9. Candles 11. Egg	DOWN: 1. Stockings 2. Wreath 3. Candy Cane 5. Present	6. Jingle 8. Snow 10. Sleigh
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QUITE INTERESTING

Get laughing!

Laughing lowers levels of stress hormones and strengthens the immune system. Six-year-olds laugh an average of 300 times a day.

Adults only laugh 15 to 100 times a day. You can stimulate your heart and lungs, elevate your blood pressure and improve breathing capacity by laughing. You can get the same benefits from laughing 100 times a day as you can from 10 minutes of rowing. Laughing for 15 seconds adds two days to your life span. The Chinese laugh more than any other culture in the world.

THE DOOR

Written by **Miroslav Holub**

*Go and open the door.
Maybe outside there's
a tree, or a wood,
a garden,
or a magic city.
Go and open the door.
Maybe a dog's rummaging.
Maybe you'll see a face,
or an eye,
or the picture
of a picture.
Go and open the door:
if there's a fog
it will clear.
Go and open the door:
Even if there's only
the darkness ticking,
even if there's only
the hollow wind,
even if nothing is there,
go and open the door:
At least there'll be a draught.*

time to turn over a new leaf
time to use your advice centres



your education and welfare officers
are located in your Union building



THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Written by **Ruán Dillon-McLoughlin**, ULSU President

THE Government has published the long awaited Hunt report. This is a high level, 20 year, national strategy for higher education. It has been broadly welcomed.

Funding was a major theme. The sector needs an investment of over €500m. The Government has neglected higher education in Ireland. Most European countries invest 1.5% of GDP. Ireland lags behind, contributing only 1.2%. At present our Colleges and Universities are at breaking point and this is directly affecting the quality of education being received by students.

The report suggests the increase in student fees and the introduction of a loan system. The increase in fees is ridiculous. At present Irish students pay the second highest rate of student fees in Europe, currently standing at up to €2,000 a year. The Government must seriously consider how it is going to fund higher education whilst playing catch-up.

The report raises a number of other issues, including working arrangements for academic staff and the difficulties first year undergraduates face in college after a Leaving Cert dominated by rote learning. The report suggests greater collaboration of third level institutions and the amalgamation of a number of institutions of Educations. It also raises the inclusion of family assets in the grant means test.

WELFARE WATCH



Written by **Derek Daly**, Welfare Officer

WELCOME! I hope you are enjoying SHAG Week (Week 1). Thanks to Vivion (CSO) for all the help. He also graduated over the holidays. Congrats Viv!

At tie of print, I'm waiting on Durex to get back to me on non-latex condoms. I had a complaint about lack of XL non-latex, which I did spend some time (unsuccessfully) looking for. Neither of our suppliers stock (or know of) XL non-latex.

The Student Assistance Fund is still proving to be an administrative nightmare. With a deadline in Week 6 last semester it still hasn't been paid for a variety of reasons. However, all applications have been reviewed, some three to four times. A second semester fund is unfortunately unavailable but the emergency part is there for anyone who experiences a serious unexpected setback such as death of a parent or emergency medical procedure.

Christmas was strange this year. We've always had a fairly lively house with the neighbours and friends kids, but this year it was odd. No buzz; no magic. You never realise until it's missing that apart from the spiritual aspect in Ireland, Christmas really is about the kids.

For info on accommodation issues due to the weather, please see www.ulsu.ie

ENLIVENING EDUCATION



Written by **Aoife Finnerty**, Education Officer

YOUR results were a new level of awesome and you're ready for Round two, right? If not, remember QCA is about balance! So balance your not-so-hot QCA with a bordering-on-genius one from this semester!

1. Read your module outline

If I had €1 for every student who couldn't tell me about their module assessment, I'd be a rich girl. It's minutes of reading to save hours trouble; no missing deadlines, losing marks for nonattendance or preparing too few topics! If your lecturer hasn't provided one (or if it's incomplete), contact me! It's a serious breach of regulations by your lecturer!

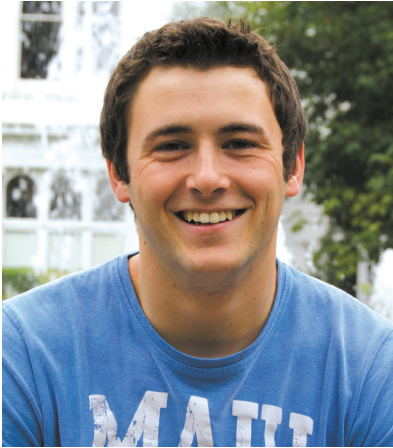
2. Organise yourself

There's no point having the best intentions in the world but not following through. Once you lay your hands on your timetable, make your own. Include the time you get up, the time you go to bed, the times you exercise or spend on activities. Then pencil in time to revise notes from that week/do some extra reading.

3. Organise your notes

Exam-time study is much easier if your notes have been in order from the beginning. Get different folders for each module (failing that, different bedroom drawers/shelves!) and colour-code notes. The more organised you are now, the less time you'll waste in Week 13. Get moving!

CAMPAIGNS BRIEF



Written by **Vivion Grisewood**, Campaigns and Services Officer

WELCOME back from the long break! I hope you are all ready for a hectic time of it in the upcoming weeks, as Steve (my shiny new co-op student) and I have been planning some exciting events for you in the next few weeks!

Week One is SHAG Week (Sexual Health Awareness and Guidelines) and there will be condoms galore, a lovely SHAG leaflet that Derek has made for you and on Thursday, we will have our very own SHAG Magician.

Week Two will be another epic trip away. Think, the Mega Mystery Tour, but then throw in Ballyunion and you have UL's very own Mid-Week Madness. Tickets are €12 and available from the ULSU reception.

Charity Week is coming along nicely and most of the day time activities are ready to go. The favourites like the raft race, great race and Barry Sinclair, the renowned Hypnotist are back. Along with some new and crazy activities and your help, we hope to raise lots of funds for the really worthwhile charities!

Anyway, I hope you all are ready for another whirlwind of a semester, full of great activities and crazy nights out!

WORDS FROM THE PSA



Written by **Dan Comerford**, PSA President

HOPE you enjoyed your holidays!

What I've been doing?

I've been kept busy since my return in early January. I've been working on the PSA Graduate Ball which will be held in the Strand Hotel on Friday, 25 February. I'm really looking forward to this night and the PSA Exec has been working so hard on it to keep costs down while keeping entertainment high. I hope to see lots of you there.

The Spring Conferings took place. I graduated! Yay! I'd like to congratulate everyone who graduated and wish you all the very best of luck!

Look out for

There will be more events this semester so be sure to come along. If you want a specific kind of event, let me know!

Elections for the SU Officers and PSA President take place this semester. If you are interested please speak to the relevant Officer.

The UGM will take place early this semester so I can get feedback and in turn will give me more time to achieve what the meeting sets out to.

If you wish to contact me over any postgrad queries, please contact me on dan.comerford@ul.ie

DON'T BE SILLY, WRAP UP THAT WILLY!

Written by **Sonia O'Connor**

AS a new university semester kicks off, you've got to make sure you have all the essentials a student needs.

The latest laptop for all those notes, a fully functioning liver for all those parties and most importantly, some great condoms for all that sex. With the start of SHAG week (Week 1), it's a perfect reminder that you've got to wrap up!

While everyone wants to have fun, the serious side to all that sex can be STIs and unwanted pregnancy. And condoms are crucial to reduce the risk of these bad boys! There is no excuse for lack of

condoms at the ready because there is a range of great quality condoms called Mojo Condoms available from your Students' Union.

Created by an Irish couple, Mojo Condoms was born of a desire to offer a cool, vibrant condom brand at a great price for the Irish student market and beyond.

The condom range had to have all the necessary international quality standards such as BSI Kitemark and CE, as well as an appealing range and prices that don't break the bank. Not that UL students have to worry about

the price of Mojo Condoms. You can get them free at your Students' Union. Nice!

Treat condoms as accessories; something that is always part of the 'night out on the town kit' – mobile, wallet, keys and condoms (guys AND girls!) The days where a girl waits for a guy to produce the condoms are long gone. And remember “no glove, no love!” Sorry! And have a safe and sexy SHAG week!

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“The condom range had to have all the necessary international quality standards such as BSI Kitemark and CE.”

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NEW YORK GAA BUILDING TOWARD FUTURE

Written by **David Prendergast**

A RECENT poll by the Irish Examiner/Millard Brown indicated one in three Irish people between the ages of 18-24 were to leave these shores for greener pastures abroad. UL graduate and current New York GAA Development Officer, c, tells An Focal New York hasn't been congested with a new generation of Irish just yet.

There was a time when such economic downturn meant an influx of Irish to America. But since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, immigration into the Big Apple has been strangled. With legal status hard to obtain, it appears the youth are seeking fortune in Australia, the UK or Canada instead. While the GAA might be thriving abroad due to the cold economic climate here, the games' survival in New York depends now more than ever, on the breeding of their own players. Gillespie explains "between 1997 and 2008, thousands of Irish went back home because of the Celtic Tiger. As well as players, a lot of the people that left were key, behind-the-scene members, involved in organisation and running costs. Many club structures simply collapsed." Consequently, New York GAA is re-building from the ground up with huge

emphasis placed on promoting the game amongst youngsters. This plan involves Gillespie and co. bringing the sport directly to schools. "A high school program involves [...] after-school coaching and entering into a school league which we hope to complete by the end of the year." Due to competition from American sports such as baseball, basketball and American football, they tend to target communities with an Irish background and Catholic schools. In Gillespie's view, the trouble with integrating GAA into American children's way of life, is that to most it is their "fourth or fifth choice sport." "They [see and play] American sports every day of the week. If we were to bring over our stars and show them off it would have no effect because kids don't see GAA on the TV. They wouldn't know who they were." Gillespie believes making GAA



matches available to watch free abroad would do the sport good. He suggests that if GAA is to gain youth appeal, then a site that allows free, live streaming is necessary. That said, proof of the GAA's passion was visible all summer. The seventh annual Continental Youth Championship was held in New York and the four day Féile-type competition which Gillespie deemed "a great success." 152 male and female teams entered from New York, Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, Toronto and Ottawa. The tournament has a strict focal point on breeding players and this year 2,500 children between the ages of eight

to eighteen participated in football, hurling and camogie competitions. Up to 10,000 people watched the events that weekend. According to Gillespie, despite the high costs involved in travel, accommodation, registration and food, the huge number of participants reflects the determination of immigrant parents to keep the GAA alive in the USA. Further proof of success came with the opening of the Rockland Centre of Excellence in July. It was an historic occasion for the GAA at home and abroad as it is the "only centre owned by the GAA outside of Ireland. The GAA only rents Gaelic Park and it's the same situation in Boston so this

was a huge step forward." The facilities include a large clubhouse, a speaker system, full irrigation, floodlights and two smaller pitches. The development cost \$2 million, half of which was raised through raffles and several fundraisers. At present there are 26 adult clubs in New York with roughly 500 players. 2011 sees the introduction of four new clubs, with the arrival of junior hurling into the city. Significantly, all hurlers will be strictly New York based players. Gillespie believes the work being put in at underage level Ireland's heritage is certainly alive and kicking in that concrete jungle where dreams are made.

VICTORY FOR SENIOR HURLERS IN LEAGUE FINAL

Written by **Mark Connolly, Sports Editor**

THE UL Senior Hurlers retained their All Ireland Senior League title before Christmas in the Carlow IT Grounds at the expense of a gallant St. Patricks Drumcondra team with a comfortable nine point victory. The opposition, appearing in their first national final for many years and with a large following of student support got off to a bright start with two early scores. However it did not take long for the UL team to settle into the game and start applying serious pressure on the St. Pats goal. Some fine individual scores including a masterfully finished goal from corner forward Kieran Morris and some clinical long range free taking from Thomas O'Brien gave UL a four point half time lead of 1- 6 to 05 points. The introduction of Tipperary's All Ireland winning forward Mikey Heffernan in the second half helped

cement the dominance of the University side as he recorded an impressive personal tally of two goals and one point. The stiff breeze in the second half, also assisted as UL started to dominate in all areas of the field. Only conceding 1-03 in the second 30 minutes was testament to their tight and dominant defence led by team captain Kieran Joyce while others to perform well included Michael Walsh, Kenneth Murphy and Seamus Hickey. The aforementioned O' Brien and Joe Gallagher were in complete control of mid field while the pace and accuracy of Morris, Heffernan and the further introduction of Tipperary's Paul Kelly caused massive problems for a tiring St. Pats defence. The game finished on a score line of UL 3-11 St. Pats 1-08. An Focal would like to wish a hearty congratulations to the 31 senior

hurlers who travelled to Carlow to do their University proud and also to their management team led by Ger Cunningham, Sports Department and Brendan Cawley M&OE. The senior hurlers now begin preparations for their Fitzgibbon Cup campaign to be hosted by Waterford IT on 25 and 26 February. UL: 1. Stephen O Keefe 2. Kenneth Murphy 3. Michael Walsh 4. Kevin Fox 5. Alan Hogan 6. Kieran Joyce 7. Seamus Hickey 8. Thomas O'Brien 9. Joe Gallagher 10. Noel O Murchu 11. David Butler 12. Martin Boran 13. Kieran Morris 14. Michael Collins 15. Shane Dooley Subs Used: Michael Heffernan. Paul Kelly. Andrew Quinn. Kieran McManus. Michael Malone.



www.ul.ie/hurling

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Sport

TRANSFER WINDOW BARGAINS



Robbie Keane

Written by **Paul Carty**

With the end of January, madness in the transfer market is yet to take flight, Paul Carty runs down through five of the most successful January transfers of recent years.

1. Nemanja Vidic

Amazingly, Manchester United was not Vidic’s intended destination in January. Rather Fiorentina were the victims of an audacious robbery which saw the Serb move to Old Trafford for £7m in January 2006. After an unconvincing start, he went onto to form one of the most formidable centre back partnerships of the Premiership with Rio Ferdinand.

2. Emmanuel Adebayor

Not too many eyebrows were raised when the Togolese from AS Monaco arrived at Arsenal in January 2006 for £3m. He was positively prolific in the

absence of Thierry Henry, banging in 24 league goals in the 2007/2008 season. Arsenal can include Adebayor amongst their list of high profit sales after the Sheikhs of Manchester City shelled out £25m for his services in 2009.

3. Christophe Dugarry

Milan, Bordeaux and Barcelona were some of the team-sheets Dugarry had graced before his arrival at St Andrews. The fact he was already a World Cup winner would have had you scratching your head at why he thought the fading embers of his career needed a stint at relegation threatened Birmingham. Nonetheless, he almost singlehandedly led the Blues to safety with five goals in as many games as well as a similar number of assists.

4. Robbie Keane

The out of favour Irish Captain rocked up at Celtic last January to great effect. Keane [who has cost clubs a combined £80m for his services] rattled in 12 goals in just 16 appearances. Ultimately, it was all in vain as Celtic endured a desperately disappointing season, though Keane did win the Fans Player of the Year having spent just six months at the club.



Emmanuel Adebayor

5. Charlie Adam

Loaned to Blackpool in January of last year, no one could have foreseen the impact the former Rangers man would go on to make. Sent off in his first game for the club, he subsequently impressed enough that Blackpool paid £500,000 for him. They were justly rewarded when he stroked home the winning goal of the play-offs sending the northwest club to the Premiership.

TECHNOLOGY: NOT THE FUTURE FOR GAA

Written by **David Prendergast**

THERE is an old joke that goes along the lines of this. “A father says to his son, ‘Son if you don’t stop masturbating you’ll go blind.’ The son replies, ‘Dad I’m over here.’” Well, after the GAA controversies of 2010, I’m sure there is many a Louth fan that would assume the father in this story is in fact referee Martin Sludden. Of course, Louth was not the only team to suffer grievances at the hands of poor refereeing.

Kildare’s chances of a first All-Ireland final appearance since 1998 suffered an irredeemable blow after thirteen minutes when Benny Coulter’s fisted goal was allowed to stand, despite the fact that he was waiting for the ball to arrive in the square for an outrageously long time. These incidents have renewed calls (originally made by Tipperary in 2009) for the introduction of new technology. The successful implementation of technology in rugby

is the positive example highlighted but video replays interrupt the game only when a try is in doubt. Where would the GAA draw the line? Every year there are controversial bookings, scores, frees etc.

The introduction of technology into the GAA would lobotomise the game as we know it. Besides, the lack of technology was not the reason Meath and Down’s goals were allowed to stand.

They were allowed to stand because of bad calls by the officials. While television replays of the Leinster Final clearly show Meath’s Joe Sheridan throwing the ball over the goal line, the same footage also clearly shows the umpire staring straight at him while he does it.

While technology may seem like the way forward, the consequences which would occur must be considered. Chaos would erupt on the field if every hard shoulder was called into

question by the opposition and the referee was forced to resort back to his ‘third-eye’.

Managers would dispute every decision that went against their team and referees would find themselves swinging from a wrecking ball between a rock and a hard place. Most of all technology would betray the passion of our sport. Physical fracas would all but disappear. Just look at the harsh treatment Paul Galvin received for such a harmless incident involving Eoin Cadogan. GAA prides itself on this sense of raw passion which flows on the pitch but the introduction of ‘Big Brother’ like technology would certainly restrain players from wearing their hearts on the sleeve of their jersey and that would be the biggest shame of all.

“The introduction of technology into the GAA would lobotomise the game as we know it.”

FOUR STUDENTS ENJOY FIRST TASTE OF NEW BURSARY

Written by **Owen Hickey**

FOUR UL students were presented with the inaugural Limerick FC Talented Football Scheme (LTFS) bursary last November.

Nigel Stanley and David McGrath received first team awards for the 2010/11 academic year while Cian Doyle and Philip Lavin received A Championship awards.

The bursaries are funded by Galtee Fuels Ltd. and are an example of their on-going commitment to supporting education through sport initiatives throughout the county.

Speaking at the launch, Limerick FC chairman and owner of Galtee Fuels Ltd. Pat O’Sullivan said “One of the biggest challenges that will prevent young footballers achieving their goals is the inability to mix their need for education with the demands that are placed on elite sports people.”

“The importance of education for our young sports people cannot be understated and we believe that the Limerick FC Talented Footballer Scheme is the ideal vehicle through which we can better support the educational and football development of young players,” he added.

The LTFS is aimed at young amateur soccer players who currently attend, or plan to take up a place at UL in the future. This scheme is further evidence of the focus Limerick FC are putting on developing underage talent.

After a busy start to the transfer window, including the signature of Wexford Youths striker Gary Sheahan, Limerick FC senior manager Pat Scully said the club would now be concentrating on developing academy players.

“We won’t be signing many players as everyone at the Club has worked very hard on our underage system and we have some excellent young players who will be part of next season’s squad.”

Applications for the next series of bursaries will be taken in May/June 2011. Talented footballers aged 17-25 and studying at UL or intending to study at UL are eligible for the award.

More details of the Limerick FC Talented Footballer Scheme can be found on www.limerickfc.ie.



FORGOTTEN FOOTBALLER, LIAM MILLER



Giovanni Trapattoni has continued to select Miller for various Ireland squads, despite his poor record.

Written by **Mark Connolly, Sports Editor**

LIAM Miller started the 2004-2005 season as a Manchester United and Irish International player following a hugely promising spell at Celtic which saw him start regularly for the Glasgow club in their Champions’ League run of the previous term.

But it was all to go dramatically downhill for the Cork man as his career was to unravel to the point where he ended up getting on the wrong side of club manager Roy Keane for regularly failing to turn up on time to training at Sunderland.

Signed in January 2004 as a key part of Alex Ferguson’s drive to contract Europe’s top young talent, Miller soon fell out of favour with the Scot, making just 22 appearances during his two year stint at Old Trafford. He was the duly loaned out to Yorkshire rivals Leeds United for three months before being snapped up by Roy Keane who wanted fellow Lee sider, Miller, to play a part

in the Irish dominated squad he was building in the north east.

Things started well on Tee side for Miller as he played regularly for a Sunderland side that eased to Premiership promotion. But he soon became disillusioned with life in the north east and soon he didn’t even bother to arrive at training on time. Angered by his lack of professionalism, Keane placed his midfielder on the transfer list and a year later, Miller signed a permanent contract with QPR.

But his spell in London didn’t work out either and he was released from his contract five months later. Miller was disastrously left without a club when the English transfer window closed at the end of August and so decided to start training with Airtricity League clubs to keep up his fitness levels until Hibernian eventually intervened to take him back to Scotland after Miller personally called manager John

Hughes to offer his services. This must have been a traumatic time for Miller. But he could at least console himself with the knowledge that, unbelievably and in an indictment of the dearth of midfield talent in this country, Giovanni Trapattoni continued to select him for various Ireland squads that summer.

To be fair, he has turned things around at Hibernian, starting regularly last term and is now affectionately known as the ‘King of Hibs’.

“It all went dramatically downhill for the Cork man.”

FERGIE NEEDS MIDFIELDER TO SUSTAIN CHALLENGE FOR HONOURS

Written by **Robert McNamara**

A clear out is imminent at Old Trafford. While Ryan Giggs and Paul Scholes will be offered new one year contracts, Owen Hargreaves, Wes Brown, Michael Owen and Tomas Kuszczak will move over to make way for the youth ranks and summer transfer arrivals.

A new goalkeeper will replace Edwin Van Der Sar following his retirement. Danish prospect Anders Lindengaard has been signed but Sir Alex is determined to introduce an experienced shot stopper and avoid the chaos that followed Peter Schmeichel’s exit.

Some players will be promoted from the reserves and academy. Will Keane, Ravel Morrison and Jon Cofie will

feature in the Carling Cup while Tom Cleverley and Danny Wellbeck will get a chance in the first team after their impressive loan spells in the Premier League with Wigan and Sunderland respectively.

This new team is expected to be built around the core of Anderson, Rafael, Darren Fletcher and Wayne Rooney. But United has lacked a creative midfielder who can change games for several years, suffering as a consequence. Last season, Michael Carrick’s poor performance and injuries to Anderson and Owen Hargreaves put too much pressure on Paul Scholes’ aging shoulders.

Encouragingly though, there are hushed tones coming from Carrington about one player in particular. Paul Pogba is expected to be an absolute star for United. He has all the attributes to be the best midfielder in the world and is the most exciting prospect at the club since Ryan Giggs in the early nineties.

He is tall, quick, physically strong and can attack as well as defend. He has been scoring some spectacular goals in the United reserves and youth cup teams this season. You read it here first in An Focal. Paul Pogba, a future Manchester United legend.

SPORTS QUIZ

Written by **Robert McNamara**

1. Filbert Street is home to which English soccer team?
2. Who is the manager of the Limerick GAA football team?
3. In which city does the Brazilian Formula 1 Grand Prix take place?
4. Where did Graeme McDowell come in the recent golf Tournament of Champions event in Hawaii?
5. Leinster Lock Trevor Horgan recently retired. How many times did he play in the red of Munster?
6. Who did Bernard Dunne defeat in 2009 to become WBA Super Bantamweight world champion?
7. Johnny Giles won an FAI Cup winners medal with Shamrock Rovers in which year?
8. Katie Taylor has represented her country at which sport aside from boxing?
9. The Angels baseball team plies their trade in which Californian city?
10. The 2011 Superbowl will be held in Houston. How many Superbowls have been held?

ANSWERS		
1. Leicester City	5. 57	6. Ricardo Cordoba
2. Maurice Horan	4. Third	10. 45
	7. 1978	9. Anaheim
	8. Soccer	



A moment of joy for Fergusson

‘WE CAN BEAT MARTIN JOHNSON’S PANZER DIVISION. BUT KIDNEY MUST GET HIS SELECTION RIGHT THIS TIME’

Written by **Mark Connolly,**
Sports Editor

WHEN an old champion is in the process of being hammered, it’s almost become a sporting tradition for commentators to concede his greatness in the face of the adversity by sighing something along the lines of “he’s got nothing left to prove.” But in reality, logic dictates when a guy is still competing, he has got something left to prove and is open to criticism. This is very much the case for Irish rugby coach Declan Kidney. The Cork man, directed Munster to two Heineken Cup triumphs and later led Ireland to a Grand Slam, leaving his place in the pantheon of Irish coaching legends assured. But an increasingly bizarre team selection policy and a

disappointing showing in the Autumn Series internationals have created a legitimate debate around his suitability to lead us in the World Cup in New Zealand. Thus, with European rugby at low ebb allied to Ireland’s favourable fixture list with home matches against England and France, a failure to take advantage in spring could come at a price. This year’s Six Nations does indeed present Ireland with a glorious opportunity to seize the massive psychological edge of going into the World Cup as European Champions. Wales, Scotland and Italy have failed to produce a Heineken Cup quarter finalist this year and none

showed anything in autumn to be afraid of. Meanwhile, France’s 43 point walloping at the hands of an unfancied Australia says more than I can about the deep seated problems in their national set up thus leaving the likely tournament decider to be the clash against Martin Johnson’s Panzer division at the Aviva Stadium. We can beat the resurgent England but for that to happen, Kidney must get his team selection right this time. Mick O’Driscoll and Tony Buckley cannot be reminded what an Irish dressing room looks like. With due respect to those warriors, the coach erred wildly with their selection against South Africa and it cost us that day. Mike Ross should

replace Buckley at tight head prop for us to have any scrummaging platform. It is also almost incontrovertible that a place be found for Sean O’Brien in the back row while at second row the overrated Donncha O’Callaghan can no longer be carried by the team. The coach faces other selection issues but these are the ones he simply has to do a U-turn on. Otherwise, a hugely talented backline will be left impotent and a massive opportunity lost ahead of the World Cup. That will have consequences.



DALGLISH NEEDS TIME AND MONEY TO STOP THE ROT

Written by **Robert McNamara**

THE return of Kop hero Kenny Dalglish will not transform the fortunes of Liverpool FC right away.

The presence of the clubs greatest ever player will have a stabilizing effect on a sporting institution that has underachieved for 20 years. But it remains to be seen how long it will take for the eighteen time champions to re-establish a place in the upper echelons of the Premier League table. Roy Hodgson was clearly not the right man for the job despite being a victim of the hangover left by Rafa Benitez’ bizarre tenure. The concept of a relegation battle was unacceptable to Liverpool fans and Hodgson had to go. The change in management is for the moment strictly cosmetic though. There is dead wood all over the squad sheet with many players incapable of meeting the high standards of a club that once swept all before them. A huge clear out is overdue and an overhaul of the clubs transfer policy and player development system is required in order to move forward. Liverpool’s new owner John ‘Dubya’ Henry has already started the ball rolling in this regard by shrewdly recruiting Damien Comolli who will oversee the acquisition of young talent. Another positive move instigated by new manager Dalglish is the appointment of Steve Clarke a man thoroughly trusted and highly regarded by none other than Jose Mourinho. These positives aside, it is hard to see how Liverpool will satisfy the demands of supporters getting carried away

by the romantic return of Dalglish. Manchester City has resources any other club can only dream of. Tottenham are now a force to be reckoned with both on the field and financially. Chelsea is currently in disarray with an aging squad but they have an owner who is willing to bankroll a new assault on silverware both domestically and in Europe. Meanwhile, Manchester United have slashed rid of a sizable chunk of their debt amid speculation of a takeover from Qatar and the word from Carrington is that the red devils are willing to splash the cash in the summer to complement some stunningly talented youth prospects. UEFA have praised the business model used to run Arsenal and the gunners are sure to contest for top trophies for years to come. It may be easier for Liverpool to appoint a legend than to regain their status as a top club when the competition continues to get stronger.



SIX NATIONS PREVIEW

Written by **Paul Carty**

“Scotland remains largely workmanlike. They are bereft of attacking flair.”

THERE’S nothing quite like Six Nations Rugby to make those cold spring weekends go more quickly. It’s looking like one of the most open Championships to date demonstrated by the odds of 4/6 against there being a Grand Slam winner. All of the teams have significant question marks over them so let An Focal lend a helping hand.

England

After playing some turgid Rugby in the early part of Martin Johnson’s tenure, England have started to marry the brute attacking force with a little guile. The victory over what is a quite exceptional Australian team was an indication of a team turning the corner. Despite this, they’ll continue to be limited playing the one dimensional Tindall in the centre. The Red Rose however, (provided they get over the not so insignificant obstacle of Wales in Cardiff) looks good value for the Grand Slam at 5/1.

Prediction: 1st & Grand Slam

France

The French are truly Rugby’s enigma. The refreshing through-the-hands champagne rugby that can blow the best of teams away is so often blighted

by a sourness that manifested itself in the astonishing 43 point hammering doled out by the Australians in Paris. Nevertheless, the French have the most talented group of players in the Championship and you can expect them to make it count on more than one occasion. France will build a solid platform from which the likes of Parra, Medard and Jauzion will run up a cricket score on at least one team in the Six Nations. However Twickenham is a graveyard for the French and therefore they’ll have to be content with the runners up spot.

Prediction: 2nd

Wales

Wales have few friends amongst their competitors courtesy of the inflammatory nature of Warren Gatland’s personality. They do however possess a very good squad which with a firing backline can live with anyone on their day. The front row will do damage against poorer scrums but it remains to be seen if the much heralded but ineffectual back row can conjure up anything like their potential. They have England and Ireland at home in Cardiff and should they beat the English, you would have to consider them very likely to threaten a Triple Crown.

Ireland

2010 was quite the year to forget for Declan Kidney with his side only winning five out of 11 Tests in the year. The Autumn Internationals do not inspire optimism given the distinct lack of spark in Ireland’s performances and Kidneys loyalty to his former Munster

charges. The Irish front row remains a huge problem which doesn’t look like being solved. Ireland will struggle to gain parity at scrum time despite having the best back row in the competition. The lack of a platform for the backs will mean Ireland will play most of this year’s Championship games on the back foot. The Grand Slam season of 2009 will be a distant memory.

Scotland

They crashed the party in Croke last year with the performance they were threatening all season. In denying Ireland a Triple Crown the Scots emerged from years of toiling at the wrong half of the table. Andy Robinson has turned them around to the extent that it will be no surprise to see them cause one of the bigger nations problems. However, Scotland remains largely workmanlike and they are bereft of attacking flair in the backline. Max Evans and the Lamonts will put in the hard yards but game winners they are not.

Italy

Perennial whipping boys, the Italians briefly moved ahead of the Scots for a time in the last few years but they will resume their place of annual wooden spoon receivers this year. The fabled Italian pack does possess quality but that tends to only lend itself to 60 minutes of rugby. Parise is undoubtedly world class but after that it’s difficult to see anyone who would even make the bench for any of the other nations. They have no attacking threat, no goal kicker and no plan B. Thus, last place is theirs.

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The Beautiful, Handmade, Folding Bicycle And Its Journey To Limerick.
Local Cycles Enthusiast Marty Mannering Talks To An Focal About
Establishing Ireland’s First Brompton Owner’s Club. Page 24.

25th January 2011

Issue 8 FREE
Volume XIX

PROMISING PROPHECIES FOR 2011

MATT Cardle’s ‘When We Collide’ topped both the British and Irish charts as we entered 2011, but luckily for us there are far more exciting prospects for this year’s music scene than an X Factor winner’s lackluster Biffy Clyro cover.

Written by **Damien Ryan**

With new releases expected from everyone from Britney Spears to Bjork, it’s a safe bet that the charts are in for a pretty exciting year. Earlier this month, Essex vocalist Jessie J was named as the BBC’s ‘Sound of 2011’, as well as the winner of the Critic’s Choice Award at the upcoming Brit Awards. The hype has paid off for Jessie J and her debut single has already soared to no.2 in the UK. This flurry of new-year hype surrounding new

artists can be a blessing and a curse. Jessie may already be building on her promise, but in the past acts, like Little Boots and Delphic, became lost amongst their own initial hype and failed to live up to their initial potential. Let’s take a look at five of the most exciting artists set to debut in 2011. They may not take the charts by storm, but should deliver some thrilling albums of their own.

Clare Maguire

Having recently been named “Next Big Thing” at the 2010 Q Awards, Birmingham vocalist Clare Maguire has plenty to smile about, but her music is anything but light-hearted. The chanting hype single, ‘Ain’t Nobody’, is hauntingly dark; its chorus of “Ain’t nobody can love me like you do” sounds almost threatening. Her first official release is Michael Jackson tribute, ‘The Last Dance’; a beautiful example of pop at its best. Her powerful voice soars, at times echoing Kate Bush in her exaggerated pronunciation. Maguire’s vocal delivery edges towards Florence and the Machine territory, but she is more than talented enough to deliver a stunning debut of her own.



Natalia Kills

Having successfully launched Lady Gaga, Cherrytree Records is set to push UK popstar Natalia Kills to the top of the charts in 2011. Sounding like a mix of Rihanna and Gaga herself, lead single ‘Mirrors’ is a stomping electro-pop sex anthem, with its whispered chant of “sex, love, control, vanity”. Kills plays with dark imagery and litters ‘Mirrors’ with references to handcuffs, blindfolds and leather. After successfully building blog-hype with the broody ‘Zombie’ (“I’m in love with a zombie/But his heart is so cold”), Cherrytree are hoping that Natalia Kill’s ‘love-grenade’ will be this year’s ‘disco-stick’.



Jamie Woon

Falling somewhere between soul and dubstep, Jamie Woon’s ‘Night Air’ presents Woon as the more musically accessible alternative to UK indie darling, James Blake. The son of a backing singer for Bjork and Stock, Aiken & Waterman (amongst others), Woon describes his sound simply as “R&B, groove-based, vocal-led music”, but it’s also much more. With production from critically acclaimed Londoner Burial, new single ‘Night Air’ seamlessly blends Woon’s soulful, yet conventional, vocals with oh-so en vogue, hauntingly eerie, dubstep. If one act is likely to follow The XX’s rise to dinner-party music de-jour in 2011, it’s Woon.



The Naked and Famous

Having topped the charts in their native New Zealand, The Naked and Famous seem destined to storm Europe

this year. The Kiwi five-piece blend the vocals of founding members Thom Powers and Alisa Xayalith, resulting in a sound similar to Passion Pit or MGMT at their most commercial. Indeed, debut album ‘Passive Me, Aggressive You’ is filled with hits á la ‘Kids’ and ‘Time to Pretend’. The planned global push for 2011 will almost certainly result in The Naked and Famous becoming the soundtrack to Skins, Coke commercials and probably your summer too.



Yadi

Having just recently made the move from Myspace to major label, Hannah Yadi may be the best-kept secret in UK pop today. ‘Guillotine’ is a military march of aggressive drumbeats and jumpy piano keys over which she defiantly declares, “like a queen I can make you love me”. A promise she definitely fulfills. Yadi is unashamedly radio-friendly and boasts the perfect pop-combination of infectious hooks and striking looks. She’s been touring the UK with Marina and the Diamonds, but her new publishing deal with Warner Records may see her out-shine Marina in the next twelve months.



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Wed 26th	ALBERT NILAND	8pm €12
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Thurs 3rd	DOLANS DOT COMEDY PRESENTS MAEVE HIGGINS	7.30 €13
Fri 4th	WAYNE BRENNAN	8pm €11
Sat 5th	LA BOUTIQUE	11.30 €10
Sat 5th	ROOTS FACTORY	€5 b4 11pm 11pm €8
Thurs 10th	STREETLIFE PRESENTS MR SCRUFF	10 €12.50
Thurs 10th	JOY KILLS SORROW	8pm €12
Fri 11th	HOWARD MARKS	8pm €15
Fri 11th	MASTER AND DOG <small>FORMERLY JOHN, SHELLY & THE CREATURES</small>	8pm €8

coming soon: simon fagan, micronite, declan o'rourke, tesseract, goitse, cara, ryan sheridan, protobaby, halves, planet parade, r.s.a.g...

www.dolanspub.com

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE IRISH MAMMY?

Written by **Victoria White**

EVERY Christmas, my parents buy us at least one decent book each to make sure we don’t go brain-dead over the festive season. Imagine my dismay when this year, instead of the usual stalwarts like Pride and Prejudice or Memoirs of a Geisha, I unwrapped my gift to find Victoria White’s recently published Mother Ireland: Why Ireland hates Motherhood. My brows furrowed even further when I read the back; “Don’t for the love of God get pregnant. If you must get pregnant, sort your career out first. Don’t let babies interfere in any way with your career”. I resisted the urge to turn to my beaming parents and say “thanks

guys! Real subtle.” And it’s a good thing I didn’t, for it is exactly this line of thinking that former journalist Victoria White challenges. White’s main bone of contention is the lack of recognition the work of mothers caring for children in the home receives, not only from every level of officialdom, but from society at large. Despite the Irish government’s enormous investment in the expansion of childcare facilities, the preferred option in Ireland remains that small children be raised in the family home. White emphasises that she does not promote either family or career as the right option for a woman

to choose. However, as a woman who picked raising four children over a highly lucrative job as the arts editor of a national newspaper, her preference tends to lean towards the more traditional role of the mother as care-giver. The book, however, largely attempts to remain impartial. It challenges what White describes as a code of behaviour for women with a third-level education in post-feminist Ireland to choose the advancement of their careers over raising a family. Her use of statistics to emphasise the benefits of a maternal presence in the home is devastatingly effective;

“The book challenges a ‘code of behaviour’ for women.”

however, her wider point regarding the pity, even derision, former career women turned mothers meet within Irish society is far more interesting. In one sense, the book does seem to hark back to the days of yore, when Mammy was always there by the fire darning a sock. In another it provides us, today’s generation of young Irish women, with a wider perspective,

encouraging us to recognise that we have a choice; whether or not we want the role of Mammy, the choice should be ours, and not one foisted on us by the demands of the Irish economy.

WELCOME TO BURLESQUE!



Written by **Caitríona Ní Chadhain, Entertainments Editor**

TAKE the blueprint of almost every dance movie made since the dawn of cinema. Sprinkle it with glitz, seriously sexy ensembles, and amazing dance routines. Throw in Christina Aguilera. Add a dose of the once great (but now unable to speak properly let alone sin) Cher. Don’t forget the obligatory good-looking male co-star, Cam Gigandet. And here you have the enjoyable but boringly predictable Burlesque. Ali, played by Christina Aguilera, ventures off to LA to follow her dream of becoming a successful dancer. She soon stumbles upon an intriguing looking burlesque club, imaginatively named ‘Burlesque’, and ventures inside where after wiggling and winking at the barman she is directed in the direction of the clubs’ owner Tess (Cher). Tess is less than interested in Ali’s prospects, as is portrayed through the painfully derived script, and not through Cher’s non-existent acting abilities. Maybe if her face wasn’t injected into a motionless Team America puppet-like state, she might be able to portray a little emotion. Sadly, it’s almost as if the people behind the scenes figured they

could spin out the same contrived script as pretty much every other “small-town girl turned overnight sensation” movie. Maybe they’re right, if ratings are what you’re going for. Big names and revealing clothes draw crowds better than a well written script. As far as dancing and singing goes, Burlesque is brilliant. Aguilera’s spine-tingling voice is the saviour of the movie. Her rendition of ‘Tough Lover’ is the moment when she reveals her vocal ability to the clubs’ patronage and is the crowning moment of the film. On stage Christina is so captivating; one could forgive her lack of acting experience. Same can’t be said for Cher however who was a struggle to watch. She has a great voice, sure. But she’s had too much Botox and can’t move her lips properly, which creates a grating sound. This movie has plenty of formulaic dullness. I would watch it again, but only with a remote control so I could skip the drivel and fast forward to the dancing and singing bits.

SÁR CEOL AGUS ATMAISFEAR SAN ROISÍN DUBH

Scríobhta ag **Sinéad Ní Chatháin**

BHÍ sceitimíní orm agus Miller fuairithe i mo lámh nuair a sheas mé i measc óg agus aosta i gcomhair cóisir na mBliana Nua a bhí ar siúl san Roisín Dubh i nGaillimh. Bhí line-up iontach ag an Róisín don cóisir mór seo, ceoltóirí difriúla lán le fuinneamh agus func éalárnach, agus bhí an áit plódaithe le leantóirí ceol indie ó gach taobh den saol. Tá atmaisféar zen ag an pub trí stór seo atá suite i lár na cathrach agus cáil air do gigs sármhaith ag cur ceoltóirí amaitéarach chun cinn i sochaí na Gaillimhe agus na hÉireann. Ba é an chéad ceoltóir ar an stáitse ná an fídléir Daithí Ó Dronaí. A tháinig chun suntasacht ar an clár teilifíse ‘The All Ireland Talent Show’ i 2009. Bionn gigs rialta aige anois agus tá sé soiléir go bhfuil muinín aige ina chuid ceol agus an set iontach atá aige ar an stáitse. Meascann Daithí dhá seánra go hiomlán difriúil le chéile chun fuaim

nua a chruthú. Ag seinm an fídil mar giotár ina lámh le piocanna beaga i príomhshéis amháin, cuireann Daithí an seomra ar fad ag damhsa lena buillí glórach agus an trealamh leictreach atá aige. Is fuaim agus domhan nua é domhan an mac léinn óg seo, ina bhfuil gach nóta agus gach tiúin indéanta. B’iad an phríomh ghrúpa ar an oíche ná dream cheolmhar eile atá ag dreapadh dréimire ceoil na Gaillimhe ná an ghrúpa ‘The Kanyu Tree’. Is triúr deartháir Gaillimheach iad seo atá tar éis bliain a chaitheamh ag seinm ar fud na hÉireann agus sa Bhreatain. Nuair a tosnaíonn fonn domhain giótár Daniel agus dord rithimeach Oisín, ní féidir leat ach do chuid barraicín a tapáil. Cloistear ansin nótaí glan geal an amhránaí Shane agus an fusion iontach idir surf-rock clasaiceach na Beach Boys agus rac-cheoil nua-aimseartha an lae inniu. Tá vibe an Kanyu Tree leithleach agus tógálach,

níl aon ghrúpa ar an scene Éireannach inniu leis an fuaim céanna atá acu. Má tá ceol sár-mhaith agus ceoltóirí úr tréitheach á chuartú agat i mbliana, is é an Róisín Dubh an áit is fearr.



‘The Kanyu Tree’. Is triúr deartháir Gaillimheach iad.

CAMPUS LISTINGS	DAY	WHAT	WHERE	TIME	TICKETS
WEEK 1	Monday	Open Mic Night + DJ	Stables	8pm	Free
	Tuesday	Band: Traffic	Stables	9pm	Free
	Tuesday	Live Music: Hermitage Green	The Scholars	9pm	Free
	Wednesday	Karaoke	Stables	8pm	Free
	Wednesday	Irish Traditional Music Session	The Scholars	9:30pm	Free
	Thursday	Sex Magician + Music Soc Band	Stables	9pm	Free
	Friday	International Party Night (DJ and finger food)	Stables	9pm	Free
WEEK 2 Ents Highlight	Monday	Open Mic Night + DJ	Stables	7pm	Free
	Tuesday	ULSU Ents Midweek Madness @ JD's	JD's Ballybunion	Buses leave 8pm	€ 12
	Wednesday	Karaoke	Stables	9pm	Free
	Wednesday	Irish Traditional Music Session	The Scholars	9:30pm	Free
	Thursday	International Ball	Stables	8pm	Tickets @ SU
	Friday	International Party Night (DJ and finger food)	Stables	9pm	Free

THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR GENERATION?

EVERY generation has its defining soundtrack. From the protest songs and psychedelia of the late 1960s to the Seattle grunge explosion and the rise of hip-hop in the 1990s, every decade has had music that instantly immerse the listener in the Zeitgeist of a particular era.

Written by **Graham Dockery**

But what are the defining songs of the 21st century? We live in an age of unprecedented change, where our education, our economic stability and even our sovereignty is at risk. Yet there are no artists in the mainstream recording songs about this. Instead, we suffer through season after season of the X-Factor, buying the throwaway pop acts it produces by the bucket-load. We can't find any originality in mainstream pop music, so what about rap? In the 21st century, rap music has lost all its drive and energy. Instead of telling us about the social ills of America's ghettos, rappers such as Lil' Wayne and

Tinchy Strider prefer now to release countless songs describing the lifestyle of champagne, clubs, bitches and bling set to a background of formulaic auto-tune choruses and soulless beats. In the depths of a recession this music is both irrelevant and downright annoying. Even rock music has lost its edge. Kings of Leon are the nearest thing in today's charts to heavy rock music and while their crowd pleasing sing-along anthems have made them world famous, they are not pushing any boundaries or saying anything meaningful. So where does that leave us now? I don't want to sound like a grumpy

old man but music today is weak and watered down and musicians are afraid to break convention and try anything new. We need change. To anyone who feels the same way, we can do something about the sorry state of modern music. Pick up a cheap guitar, learn a few basic chords and sing about how you feel. The Beatles usually used only three chords per song, as did Nirvana. The Sex Pistols could barely play their instruments. So refuse to accept weak pop and rock and R&B and get out there and play something. The future of music is in your hands.



The Kings of Leon. Has our music lost its depth?

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Written by **Kelly O'Brien**

DIRECTED by Danny Boyle and starring James Franco, 127 Hours is based on the true story of mountain climber and all-round adrenaline junkie Aron Ralston. While exploring some canyons in Utah, Aron slips down a crevasse and finds his arm stuck under a heavy boulder, effectively trapping him in an extremely isolated area of the world. To make matters worse, Aron Ralston, lone explorer extraordinaire, didn't tell anyone where he was going. The remainder of the film focuses on Ralston's increasingly tenuous situation and his ability to deal with it. In this fashion, Ralston begins a remarkable fight to save himself, all the while

examining his life, his past mistakes, and his selfish ways. The casting of Ralston was the most imperative part of this entire production. Franco doesn't just have to be in peril; he needs to go through a wide range of emotions, including the accurate portrayal of the care-free soul we first meet. In my opinion, it was a phenomenal performance by the relatively under acclaimed actor. His intense, subtle and gripping display definitely deserves to be recognised come Oscar season. Director Danny Boyle, however, does not. Boyle quite obviously relished the challenge that this film presented him with and, while he does manage the

project somewhat successfully, it's all a little predictable. From the frantic opening sequence alone we can tell the direction he's taking us. With the frequent use of split screens, shots of milling crowds and the obligatory racing clouds we are seeing the trademark Danny Boyle set-pieces we've known since Shallow Grave and Trainspotting. Overall, there is a slight feeling of style over substance as Boyle's over usage of technique tends to distract us from our empathy. Ralston's story alone is invaluable raw material that doesn't require half of the director's aesthetic embellishments to capture an audience's attention for its running time.



James Franco, Star of 127 Hours

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“HERE WERE THE CHILDREN OF THE AMERICAN BOP NIGHT”

Written by **Michael Lawlor**

NO book encapsulates the excitement and freedom of youth as well as Jack Kerouac's On the Road. Hailed as the voice of the Beat Generation, Kerouac recorded his own adventures on the road through his alter ego, Sal Paradise, but it was the mythical Dean Moriarty who became the novel's standard-bearer. Written in 1951, the book in fact describes the America of the 1940s, a world of hitchhiking, jazz and wild parties as Sal and his friends move back and forth across the great expanse of America, in search of the one great epiphany that will change their lives. Kerouac claimed to have written it in a mere three weeks. Whether it was longer is not as important as how it was written: on a single scroll of paper now as famous as the book itself, a method that perfectly reflects the frantic energy of the story itself. Since its publication, it has been the bible of every young person and not only in America; even here, many college students have read it and all of them want to live it. But due to the crazed antics of Dean and the nights of jazz and booze, the thoughtful, more reflective side of the novel is often overlooked because ultimately, in spite of all his trips and

companions, Sal is an introvert, a solitary man stranded in the huge, open space of his country, contemplating the passage of life. He is the unsung hero of the story and his observations mark Kerouac as a writer of something more serious than the drug-addled carelessness the Beats came to represent. The legendary book, now nearing its sixtieth anniversary, is in the process of being made into a film but the erratic content and spontaneous rush of the novel will not translate well on to the screen, and the attempt will most likely cheapen what has always been a classic spread by word-of-mouth.



Jack Kerouac

Student Speak

Welcome Back! Are you in this issue of Student Speak?

The An Focal camera zoomed about last week, looking for the strangest one-line stories.

So what is the craziest thing you've ever done?



Seán O'Reilly and Martin Keogh
"The whole week in Salou, including the bathtub."



Louise Clohessy *"I licked the cream off a cucumber cock in Rag Week in third year."*



Dafydd Phillips
"I simply walked into Mordor."



Eoghan O'Brien
"I refused to get stitches on a club trip to the Alps."



Lily Carrol
"I dropped the soap."



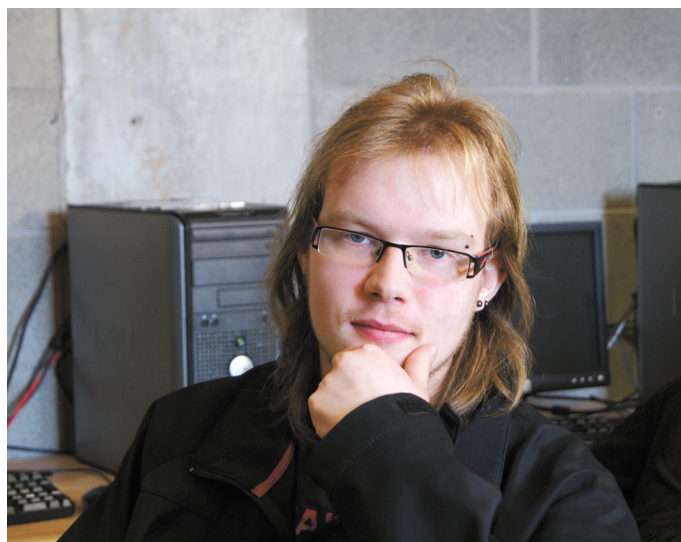
Aoife Harney
"Nothing that can be put in print."



Kieran Murphy
"I went to a sex club in Berlin and didn't take my clothes off."



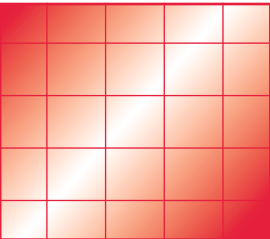
"Belly" Alan O'Sullivan
"Whatever I did on my 21st. I don't remember but it was crazy."



Max Raetz
"I went skinny dipping in a well-known fountain. Wink wink."



Sophie O'Gara
"I set up Anime and Manga Soc!"



The Grid

Exclusive communication for Clubs and Societies.

Attention C&S PROs! Send content for The Grid to sucommunications@ul.ie only before Friday, 28 January 2011 to benefit from your space in the next issue of An Focal.

Clubs	Handball We will host a Race Night in the Stables on the 8 February (Week 3) starting approx. 9pm. Visit our Facebook page for more details or email ulhandball@gmail.com .	Rowing No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Societies	History No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .
Do you think The Grid is a useful tool for your Club or Society? Email: sucommunications@ul.ie		Sailing No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Anime and Manga No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	International No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .
		Skydive No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Architecture No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Law No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .
Athletics No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Kayak Kayak varsities will take place on 17 and 18 February in UCC. UL is the current varsities winner. See www.ulkayak.com for further information on the club.	Soccer No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Christian Union No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Medical No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .
Badminton Happy new year 2011 from all of us in the badminton club. Training in the Arena has resumed as usual from the second week of January. League games will re-start early in the term. Do not hesitate to come and support the UL badminton teams.	Krav Maga No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Softball No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Computer No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Music No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .
Basketball No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Ladies Hockey Training on the Astroturf pitch behind the Arena every Tuesday and Thursday from 6pm to 8pm All are welcome! Any queries, contact ulladieshockeyclub@gmail.com	Sub Aqua No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Cumann Gaeilge Ciorcal Comhrá in Scholars Bar, Wednesday at 7pm	Debating Union Trinity College IV Friday and Saturday of Week One.
Boarders No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Ladies Rugby No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Tae Kwon Do No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	<div>Attention Student Teachers</div> <div>The government want YOU to pay for their mistakes.</div> <div>New teachers graduating this year will face a 16% cut to their wages compared to last years teachers.</div> <div>Newly graduated students will no longer be paid accoring to their qualification, and will be paid the same as previously unqualified teachers.</div> <div>The TUI, ASTI and INTO are coming together to campaign for you, the future teachers of Ireland.</div> <div>Please attend the information evening: Jean Monnet Theatre, Wednesday 2nd February, University of Limerick, 8 p.m.</div> <div>Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be served after.</div>	
Capoeira No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Men's Rugby No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Tennis No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .		
Chess No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Mountain Bike No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Trampoline No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .		
Dance UL Classes start again on 31 January in Drumroe Village Hall. Salsa, Irish Dancing, Beginners and Advanced HipHop, Ballet and Jazz. For more details, see www.danceul.com or our Facebook Page.	Outdoor Pursuits (OPC) No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Ultimate Frisbee No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .		
Fencing No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Parkour No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	UL Ninjas No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .		
GAA No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Pool & Darts No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	Windsurfing No submissions received. Visit registercs.ul.ie .	<div>ulsu</div> <div>misu</div> <div>TUJ</div> <div>ASTI</div> <div>into</div> <div>Find us on Facebook</div>	

DRAMA SOC PLANS TO BREAK SOME LEGS

Written by **Conor Gibbons,**
Drama Society PRO

DRAMA! It's a new semester and we at Drama Soc have big things planned. Big, leg breaking things...
Firstly, please note that our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is on Wednesday Week 2 in the Jonathan Swift Theatre (B1023). Be sure to come along for some tips on how you can get involved this semester. We'll also fill you in on workshops, performances, projects, trips and hoodies and introducing this semester's committee. Drama Soc's first performance is nearly upon us.
Love is Merely a Madness is our first production of the year, and is a special production to mark Valentine's Day. The show is a collection of famous Shakespearean love scenes, sonnets and monologues. So, whether you rue

the day St Valentine was martyred or can't wait to start stringing love-heart fairy lights and sprinkling rose petals, Shakespeare knows how you feel.
Experience timeless moments, along with some contemporary surprises. Created initially for an American crowd, we can't wait to bring it to a UL audience.
Interested in getting involved? Auditions are Tuesday of Week 1, 25 January, beginning at 6pm in Dromroe Village Hall. The performance will take place 15 February in the Swift theatre (the day after Valentine's). Regardless of how you feel about love, you are sure to love this show.



A photo taken during the Drama Society's pre-Christmas production, Raise the Roof. Photo Hugh O'Brien

MIXED FORTUNES FOR HANDBALL CLUB IN DUBLIN

Written by **John Fitzgerald**

ON the weekend of 26 November, the UL Handball Club travelled to Dublin to take part in the 40 x 20 teams' Intervarsities. The competition was based in the National Handball Centre in Croke Park and matches were also played in Leixlip, UCD, Sportslink and St. Brigid's.
The club won the Ladies A doubles competition. Deirdre Donohoe and Laura-Anne Furlong competed in this competition. Deirdre and Laura-Anne came up against tough competition in the quarter-final as they faced NUIG's Lisa Falvey and Siobhan Tully. After losing the first game Deirdre and Laura-Anne fought back to bring the game to a tie breaker but NUIG pairing had just enough to win the tie. After this defeat, the UL duo continued the weekend in the plate division which they won defeating Royal College of Surgeons in the final.
Two teams represented UL in each of the B and C categories and the Ladies

A doubles was contested by Deirdre Donohoe and Laura-Anne Furlong. In the C competition, UL One, Eamon McNicholas, Cathal Fleming, Rob O'Hara and James Enright, had a strong first round win, overcoming DCU. Despite this promising start UL One were beaten in the next round by QUB who went on to win out the division.
UL Two, John Hurley, Andy Kenny, Laura-Anne Furlong and Peter Foran, faced IT Sligo in their opening game, despite having to forfeit a game due to a lack of numbers the three man team of IT Sligo proved too strong for UL Two. In the B competition, Fiachra Hayes, Paul Holden, Damo Healy and John Fitzgerald got the ball rolling with a win over UCD despite losing the first game, they fought back to overcome the challenge of last year's winners. In the quarter final, they came up against NUI Galway Two. This match went down to the very last game

and saw UL grinding out a two point victory. In the semi-final the team was paired against a much fancied DCU side. DCU proved too strong for UL and went on to win the division. Gary Hassett, Deirdre Donohoe, Shane Walsh and P.K. McGrath played their first round match against NUIG One. They got off to a slow start and were defeated by the eventual finalists.
The attentions of the club will now turn to preparations for the showpiece event of the Irish collegiate handball calendar, the 40 x 20 singles intersarsity's which will be held in the Ulster venues from 3 to 6 February. Also a number of members will travel to the USHA collegiate nationals in Tempe, Arizona in February.
The UL Handball Club will host a race night in the Stables on 8 February. Keep an eye on the notice boards and the UL Handball Club's Facebook page for further details.

UL FASHION SOCIETY LAUNCHES IN STYLE

Written by **James Crowe**

‘Search’ “University of Limerick Fashion Society” on Facebook for details on how to purchase tickets!”

UL Fashion Society will host an official launch on 24 February at the Kilmurry Lodge Hotel at 8pm.
There will be a fashion show and an after party in the Lodge Night Club and all anyone with an interest in fashion is encouraged to attend. The Dance Club will also perform at the event.
Tickets will cost €5 and the Fashion Society will donate all the money collected to charities for Haiti, which is still recovering from a calamitous earthquake last year.
llovelimerick.com will also attend the launch. I Love Limerick is an organisation established to show the world all the Limerick has to offer and

to exhibit Limerick city in a positive light. They will have photographers at the event to record the formation of a new society. Limelight Magazine is also expected to send people to the launch.
The Fashion Society was founded by Tina Nsubuga, who is very enthusiastic about the success of the project and its ability to raise money for charity.

UL DANCE SPINS INTO BUSY SEMESTER

Written by **Emily Maree**

DANCE Soc is back for another semester and it's going to be action packed. Our classes start in Week 2 including regular classes: hip-hop, Ballet and Jazz along with a couple of new ones, Salsa and Irish dancing. Come along, try something new. We guarantee it'll be fun. The auditions for Intervarsities will be on 3 February and we hope to see lots of auditioning for our squads. The categories are Hip-hop, Irish, Alternative, Jazz and Overall. Intervarsities are in Cork on 3 March and we hope to do as well as last year. Videos of last year's performances are on our Facebook page. Our AGM is on Monday, 3 February. This is a chance for you to get involved in running the club. We'll also announce Intervarsities squads. Semester 2 will be busy with Intervarsities and a show. But it will definitely be fun! If you want to get involved or have questions, check our Facebook page, our website on www.danceul.com or email 09004422@studentmail.ul.ie for more information.



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ULSU ENTS PRESENTS



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TUESDAY WEEK 2

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DRINK PROMOS ALL NIGHT



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UL Clubs and Socs are achieving great things on the Campus west side. The arrival of the Pump Track represents another victory.

PUMP TRACK FEVER

Written by **Finn McDuffie, Editor**

A WORK in progress since 2007, UL Mountain Biking Club (MBUL) has finally constructed its new pump track, which will officially launch in April of this year.

The track, which cost €3,000 to construct, is located beside the UL Boathouse. Track designer and founding member of MBUL, Cormac Eason (Pictured), invited An Focal down to the new facility. “I put the design together, made the CAD drawings and worked alongside the contractor,” he said. “We worked out the path to make the track symmetrical. We wanted something which uses all the space we had available, with lots of bends.” They certainly achieved this. The track can facilitate five to six mountain

bikers of similar speed, at one time. “We’ll launch the track in April when the weather’s better,” he said. “Until then, it needs a bit of tuning, but it’s pretty close to right.” And that’s a pretty fantastic achievement when you consider the club has never built a pump track before. “We’d like to thank the Clubs and Societies Executive for their support. Paul and Liz were excellent and the Buildings Department of the University were very supportive,” he said. MBUL was founded in 1998.



“Designed with rain in mind, the pump track dries in hours.”



“It might be bumpy, but the track is engineered to keep your speed.”



“All members of MBUL can benefit from this latest fixture.”

Interview

LIMERICK COULD BECOME THE IRISH CAPTIAL OF THE FOLDING BICYCLE

IT’S tough keeping the good side out in these tough times. Everybody’s talking economy. But some champion along, never failing to see an opportunity. Marty Mannering is one of those people, and his opportunity is one from which we could all benefit.

Written by **Finn McDuffie, Editor**

An engineer and a pioneer, Mannering has a passion for folding Brompton bicycles. So much so that he makes them his business. A Brompton is a lightweight, folding bicycle. Handmade to order in the UK since the early 1980s, they have emerged as a distinguished brand, winning accolades such as the Prince Charles Award for Accomplishment and Design.

“They’ve always kept themselves a very English-based, hand-made, crafted company,” says Mannering. “They’ve completely managed to keep away from the whole Chinese mass produced market.”

These special cycles are sold in every European country and there’s a 14 month waiting list if you want one. So what’s their allure?

According to Mannering, “it’s the design of the fold really. The complete fold takes around about four and a half seconds. Their lightness is very important too.”

Marty has made it his business to service these bicycles, establishing himself as the only Brompton and Brooks (specialist saddles) workshop, service and repair agent outside of Dublin.

“Brompton is a very unique product. We had to spend two years dealing with Brompton, courting them if you like, before they would speak to us. And they actually flew in over here to meet us, check out our facilities and see who we were and what our ethos was for the future.”

And his ethos is certainly one of dedication to a cause. Mannering has also established the country’s first and only Brompton Owners’ Club. “The Club is set up because of the lack of awareness of Bromptons that I think

exists in Ireland,” he says. “So my ethos is always that if something’s very successful in the UK, then why shouldn’t it be very successful in Ireland?”

And that’s probably the ethos you need in Ireland’s economic climate. Brompton has been an enormous success right across Europe, after all.

“I think there’s no reason, other than lack of public awareness that Brompton shouldn’t be a massive success here.”

It’s easy to get involved in the club. Simply log on to Mannering’s website www.foldingbikes.ie, click a link to the club homepage and you’re off. You can also submit details of your Brompton and an image. The club is new, however, so its development is in its early stages.

“The initial objective is to make a date so lots of Brompton owners can meet. And if we meet, then of course from that, there’ll be lots of people who are either experienced in Brompton or who have experienced difficulties in getting hold of parts or getting services carried out.”

Mannering envisages a very interactive club. “Simply, we’re putting it out there as a forum so that Brompton owners can get together,” he says. “One of the beauties of having such a light, folding bike is that it will be easy to get the first meeting off the ground at any location. The bicycles are so easy to transport.”

So it seems the Brompton could quite easily kick off as a new cult item in Ireland. “I’m so amazed that there’s nothing here for Brompton people. It’s the usual scenario. You have to go to England to get you bits n’ bobs and your parts,” he says.

Marty spent quite a while in the North East of England and believes having

links overseas has aided his business know-how.

“I’ve come through the last big recession in England. I’m not fearful of what recessions are all about. And I just see an opportunity and I go for it. I think, ‘right, let’s do this, why not? Why aren’t people on Brompton bikes all over Ireland?’”

Industrious as ever, Mannering has also put a proposal forward to the Irish Tourist Board for funding to run Limerick City Brompton tours. “Limerick City could become the Brompton Capital of Ireland,” he reveals. “Duck boats up and down limerick city aren’t the answer.”

“I can picture eight or nine people on a tour on Brompton bikes, flying around the city on a bicycle, doing the tour and when they get to a place where they have to go into, fold the bike and carry it.”

“So these people are walking around the Hunt Museum and they’ve got their bicycles. There’s no worry about leaving them outside or getting them stolen or anything like this.

“I can picture it. Wouldn’t it be lovely to see them sitting by the Shannon with these Brompton bicycles next to them, ready to fold up and off they go?”

Marty Mannering is also an expert in Electric Bicycles and provides the world’s only Electric Bicycle holidays, a feat for which he receives over 300,000 hits on his website every month. His company is called GoEco and his website is www.foldingbikes.ie. He is based in Eyon, Cappamore, Co. Limerick.



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