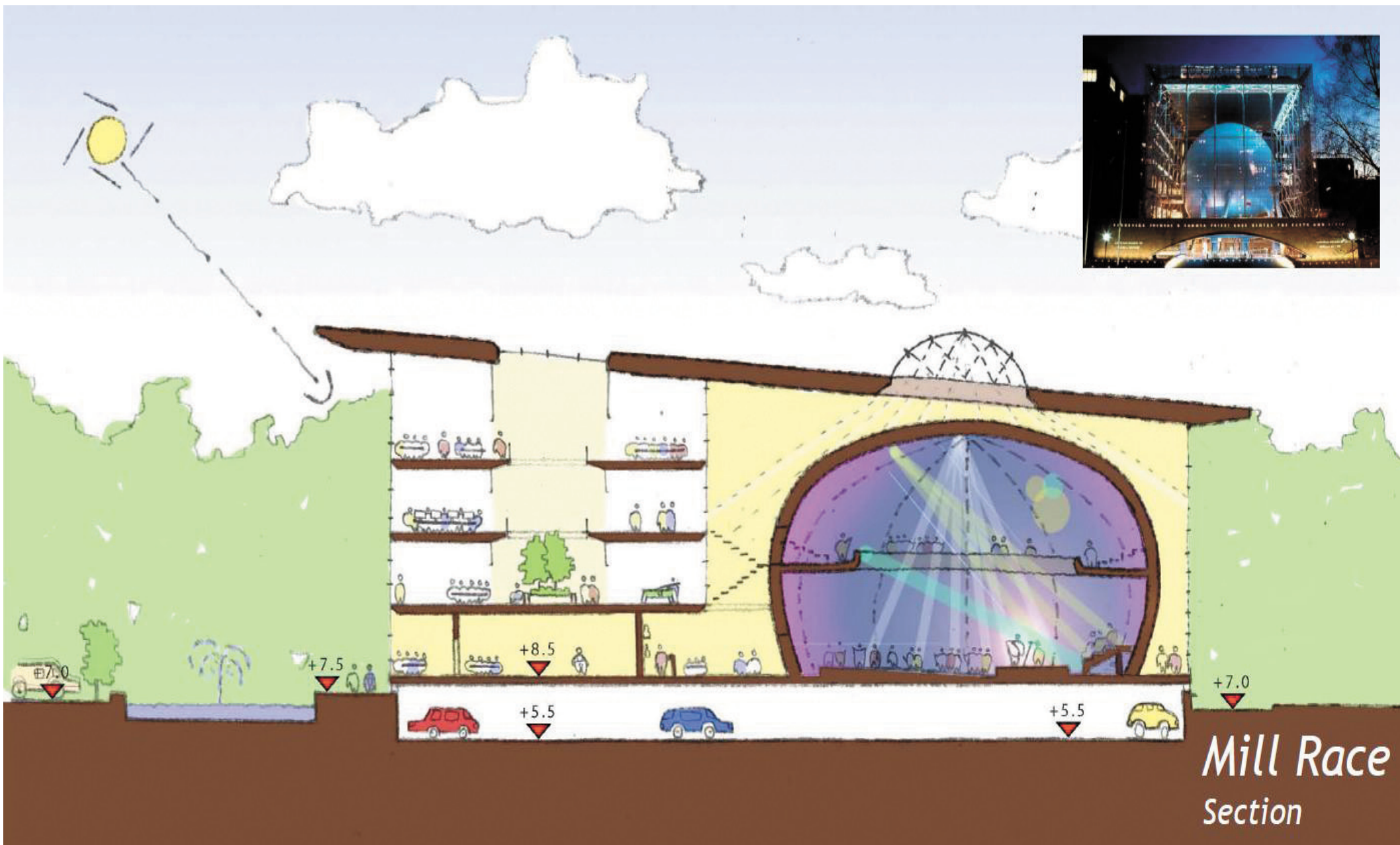


Will Romney make it to the White House? Turn to page 6 for Comment by James Bradshaw.



Audrey Hepburn, the woman who created class. Roisin Curran elaborates on page 10.

Upcoming referendum to decide on new Student Centre plans



Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

An artists projection of what the new student centre will look like

FOLLOWING a two year consultation, plans are emerging for a new Student Centre building.

The current student centre, which comprises the building containing The Students' Union, Spar, Javas, all retail and banking space and the Stables, has been deemed inadequate and not fit for its purpose. The proposed 7500 square metre building could be located

next to the fountain in the Foundation Building car park, bordering the building with the foundation and engineering research buildings and Dromroe village. It is proposed that SAA, the SU, Health Centre and Print room be located in this building making it a focal point in student life.

Emphasis will be placed on open space as opposed to corridors and offices. Kelly O'Brien, ULSU Communications Officer, said that she would "welcome" the new student centre but would urge UL students to find out more about it. "I think that students really need to look at these plans and give some feedback on it.

It's the perfect time to get involved as it's in the planning stages."

She also expressed concerns relating to finances, "I've heard a few students wonder how the SU is getting the money for a new student centre.

I don't think they fully realise yet that it's not coming from us, that it comes from maintaining or possibly increasing the student levy paid with registration each academic year."

Clubs and Societies are also provided for in the plans, with increased space in line with their requirements. Meetings often have to be held in academic buildings on campus which is not seen as ideal or inclusive.

Other items under consideration, should the Student Centre not be suitable for certain facilities, include a previously shelved Arena extension, put on hold due to lack of promised state funding of approximately €4 million, and the overdue restorative works on field sports training facilities. The proposed extension to the Arena is being planned with the suggestions of Clubs and Socs in mind. Items under consideration include a permanent climbing wall, deep diving pool and potential upgrade of the Maguire's training area including provision of floodlights. Finance of such projects are subject to the extension of the student

centre levy. At present, undergraduate students pay an additional €72 on the €2000 student contribution. This levy has been used to part finance the University Arena, the Boathouse and the Stables extension. The levy would need to be increased by €18 to €90 or €28 to €100.

Any extension of the levy to fund the new student centre or extension of the arena will have to be decided in a constitutional manner by holding a referendum in October of this year.

News

UGM fails to reach quorum

Unfortunate choice of venue blamed

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

THE UGM held on Monday, Week 8, failed to reach quorum.

Classrooms in the University with capacity of 200 or more were unavailable, which resulted in the UGM of ULSU and the AGM of ULSU Services Ltd being held in the Stables Bar.

The 70 students in attendance were critical of the choice of venue, claiming it was chosen to “deliberately avoid quorum”.

While SU President, Derek Daly claimed the meeting is “traditionally”

held in the stables, it was clear the venue was entirely unsuitable, with the meeting coinciding with a busy lunchtime trade.

Some students remonstrated querying what was done to find an alternate time or venue. Many suggested the meeting be rescheduled to take place alongside either Class Reps Council or Clubs and Societies Council.

Mr Daly denied claims that “free drink” was given out as an incentive for students to attend previous AGMs.

The meeting was called to vote on several motions mooted at the EGM held in Week 2.

Those present were irate that the entire wording of the motions was not submitted before the meeting, though the Communications Officer is only

mandated to distribute the agenda, and not the motions.

Any student wishing to submit a motion for the meeting could do so in writing up to 5 University days before the meeting. Several were submitted.

The SU proposed a motion regarding continuation of services provided by the abolished Communications Office including provision of a Student Handbook, An Focal and ULFM.

Motions were submitted to reduce quorum of general meetings to 100, to recognise Irish as an official language of the SU, to reduce wages of sabbats by €1 per hour, to reduce wages during handover and training, to amend certain articles of the draft constitution and to propose sabbats wear silly hats while addressing public meetings.

It was asked if these motions could be voted on by means of an electronic vote, which is possible but in the form of a referendum. This requires that around 2500 students need to vote and 1800 vote in favour.

Pat Carroll of Pat Carroll and Company, Auditors to the SU, addressed the crowd and spoke briefly about the accounts presented. Students asked if Dromroe shop delivered a profit.

“There was no loss at Dromroe per se. The assets there were put in place such a long time ago that the cost of them has been written off. If the assets there were sold in the morning it would be sheer profit”, said Mr Carroll. The fit out of Cappavilla shop cost €200,000, which was funded by the SU. It is hoped that once the

Courtyard shop turns a profit again, ULSU Services Ltd, operators of the shop, will begin to repay this debt to ULSU.

The meeting concluded with what some thought was a rather cheeky discussion of the proposed new student centre.

An Focal Comment Editor, Darragh Roche was incensed by the proposal saying “How can we provide a new building but not be able to afford to provide services within it. We need some truth and facts instead of vague threats”.

Over €10,000 expected from Charity Week

Sharon Whelton

IT is believed that this year’s Charity Week will raise in excess of €10,000, with student union officers thrilled with its overall success.

Events and Promotions Manager Keith Quinlan and his fellow officers felt that the week was very well received by all involved.

“I really feel that Charity Week went well overall,” Keith said. “The events themselves were very well attended, there seemed to be a good buzz around campus for the week, and thankfully we were fairly lucky with the weather as well.”

“The events have made a profit for charity, which is great. We’re still counting the money, but I think that currently we are somewhere in the region of over €10,000.”

“At least €9,500 of this tally was raised from student contributions to events such as the Shave or Dye, or the Nearly Naked Mile, so fair play and thank you to everyone who helped out during the week to do their bit for charity.”

“There wasn’t much trouble in the estates thankfully,” he added. “But if you compare it to the recent events in Galway, then it was very minor. The whole week went off very well.”

President of the University of Limerick Students Union, Derek Daly said that the total amount of money fundraising couldn’t be officially confirmed at time of print.

“We won’t have final figures until the end of next week, so we won’t be commenting until all monies have been collected and distribution allocated,” the SU President added. Daly also explained that the level of the amount of damage done in local estates throughout the week had also decreased from last year.

“In terms of damage, there were some issues in College Court,” he said. “However, overall across Castletroy, the levels of anti-social behaviour associated with Charity Week were greatly reduced on last year, which in turn was a reduction on the previous year.” “I had one landlord from Elm Park come in to the Union to compliment students on their behaviour, which he described as no different from any town on the average Saturday night.”



Participants in the Boat Race which raise much needed funds for Charity this year

News

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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:

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

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Kelly O'Brien, Editor

EDITORIAL

Hello and welcome to issue eleven of An Focal. With only one issue left to publish, I must start by thanking everyone who has been involved in this publication.

There has been a great standard of writing this year which will hopefully be reflected in Smedia nominations come April!

Contributors and sectional editors put a great deal into their work with An Focal and I appreciate it immensely.

Throughout this issue, you'll find all the usual sections along with two specials. The first of these takes form in Student Speak (back page of

section 1). This edition focuses on last week's Body Image Awareness Week, spear-headed by Tara Feeney. In it, Tara asked the question "What do you like most about your body?"

The responses were both comical and warming with some having a laugh and stating their "41 year old tight buns" and others oddly stating they were proud of their "tiny wrists".

The second of these specials can be found on pages 18 and 19 – the election special. These two pages detail who have put themselves forward for election by the student body. This list may not be (but probably is) comprehensive as nominations had not closed at time of print. If you're interested in the elections, there's also a very well written comment article on page 5 you might want to have a look at.

In the world of communications, I'm a busy little bee trying to get everything wrapped up before I vacate office. There's a hell of a lot left to do, but we're getting there. ULFM recently took part in the All Ireland Student Radio Takeover in the DCUfm studios which was a big

milestone for the station.

We're currently taking applications for next semester for the ULFM Development Board. If you're looking to get involved, just email board@ulfm.ie and someone will get back to you asap.

With An Focal, we're currently trying to move over to a more student-focused system of operations. As such, An Focal are also looking for more student involvement.

We're looking for sectional editors as well as promotional people so, if this side of things interests you, just email kelly.obrien@ul.ie and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

So that's it from me, for the moment. The next time we meet shall be our last.

Kelly O'Brien
 Editor



UL Students taking part in Body Image Awareness Week. Image: Tara Feeney

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Residents unhappy at student behaviour

Sophie McDermott

A NUMBER of residents in the Castletroy have labelled UL students as drunken disgraces, who are bringing down the tone of the neighbourhood in national media outlets.

Residents have made official complaints to the University of Limerick after claims that trees were uprooted, refuse bins set on fire, bottles smashed on the grounds of residential areas and general drunken behaviour.

Residents from the residential estates told The Evening Herald that the week was a disgrace, with students even drinking upon the roofs of their houses. Residents are looking to the University to take responsibility for students behaviour after a large garda presence could not refrain the students from causing mayhem in Castletroy, they say.

One outraged resident told The Herald that it is the University's responsibility to provide a duty of care to the area and that the behaviour should be addressed immediately by the University.

Derek Daly, Student's Union President, also told The Herald that the University in no way condones bad behaviour and has introduced more

events on campus to deter the students from drinking around the estates. The University also hired their own security called the M n' Ms to patrol the areas to keep unruly behaviour to a minimum. There was approximately 25 M n' Ms patrolling throughout the week.

Any student that can be identified as engaging in anti-social behaviour could be brought up before the disciplinary committee and penalised accordingly.

A statement on the UL website stated that: 'This year An Garda Siochana will be operating a zero tolerance policy for any students who are littering or engaged in antisocial behaviour and will hand out fines immediately. This

in particular pertains to drinking in the estates so please don't do it. There are a lot of local reside. This in particular pertains to drinking in the estates so please don't do it. There are a lot of local residents with families who live in these areas so let's try having some respect for them.'

However, despite taking numerous measures to ensure the week goes without any social problems, the University can't take and strict precautions against students living in private estates.

ULFM seeks to fill 2012/3 Development Board

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

AS the academic year nears end, ULFM seeks to add members to a reformed development board for the 2012/3 academic year.

The positions of Programming Controller, Manager of Training and Standards, Marketing and Promotion Manager, Development Manager, News Broadcast Manager and Events Manager are all vacant.

Specific skills and qualities may be required for each individual position, however, individuals should, in general be driven, enthusiastic and have some knowledge toward radio and/or the media.

The Board's general aim is to run the station on a daily basis and to further it as much as possible with whatever resources are available.

The positions of Station Manager, Technical Manager and Production Manager have been filled.

The station manager shall be a co-op student who will work unpaid for ULSU.

A chairperson for the Board shall be appointed from these members to chair the board's meetings. No sabbatical officer shall sit on the board.

The board generally meets once weekly.

If you wish to apply, email a CV with relevant experience etc and a cover letter to info@ulfm.ie.



Journalism students invite media professionals to campus

Denise Calnan

AS part of their final semester, the BA Journalism & New Media class of 2012 are inviting media personalities to the university as part of the Current Issues in Irish Media Seminar Series.

Some of the guests will include the Executive Editor of the Irish Examiner Dolan O'Hagan, thejournal.ie Editor Susan Daly, Irish Times Online Editor Hugh Linehan, Malachy Browne

from politico.ie and storyful.ie, Irish Time Financial Correspondent Simon Carswell, CNN Golf Anchor Shane O'Donoghue, RTE Crime Correspondent Paul Reynolds and Hot Press Deputy Editor Stuart Clark.

The guests are invited to speak on a range of issues they see in the world of Irish media today. The hosting students then publicly interview the guest before questions are open to the floor. Any students with an interest in the public figure are invited to attend each seminar.

Kieran Foley and Denise Calnan, two of the students in the course have already hosted a public interview with Cathy Halloran, RTE's Mid-West Correspondent last February 28.

"It was a great experience to interview Cathy," Kieran said, "She was such a relaxed person to spend the day with and was very honest in what she said to the students about

her working day and how she got to where she is in her career today. People had plenty to ask her and there was a great atmosphere in the room. Cathy didn't even bat an eyelid when the Nearly-Naked Mile ran past the window."

Neil Treacy and Orla Walsh have partnered up to invite CNN Golf Anchor Shane O'Donoghue to the Seminar Series and are both excited at the prospect of interviewing the CNN "Living Golf" programme host, originally hailing from Tipperary.

"Myself and Orla can't wait to speak to Shane. He's quite a big name in the world of golf. He's worked with RTE, BBC and now the CNN, it's great to get someone from such a big network to come speak at the university," Neil said.

"He'll be able to speak about the differences between broadcasting in Ireland and the U.S which should be

interesting. It's a great time in Irish golf too at the moment with names like Rory McIlroy, Padraig Harrington and Graeme McDowell on the scene so it should be good to hear an Irish person speak about Irish golf at the moment."

Deirdre Allen and Sharon Whelton, both in their final semester of Journalism and New Media have invited RTE Crime Correspondent Paul Reynolds to the university.

"Myself and Deirdre are very flattered to be honest," Sharon said, "To have such a renowned figure in his area of expertise come to the university is impressive. It should be a good interview and myself and Deirdre are really looking forward to it."

Increased interest in science courses in CAO choices

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

SCIENCE courses have seen a surge of interest in this year's round of CAO applications.

Numbers interested in Food Science have increased by half, Computer Systems by 58% and Biomedical Engineering by 67%.

Applications to the new International Business Degree offered by the Kemmy Business School have increased by 22%. The new programme will give students grounding in International Business requiring knowledge of various legal and ethical issues.

"Despite the challenging environment, key disciplines are performing well with increased first preference numbers for subjects directly related to Food Science, Computer Systems, Biomedical Engineering, International Business", said Associate Registrar Dr Pat Phelan. "This is an important development in providing for graduates qualified in STEM subject which will meet the

needs of Irish companies", he added. It has been noted nationwide that increasing numbers apply for courses which may yield better employability as opposed to courses which students may apply to out of mere personal interest.

Dr Chris Exton of CSIS said "Computer science is apparent in nearly every new advancement that has been made in the last few decades

as either an enabling technology such as the super computers that model climate change to the software that serves out the estimated 50 billion web pages that are currently hosted on the internet."

"Whether you want to be a developer, engineer, scientist or graphic artist, studying computing science will provide you with valuable knowledge that is a part of just about everything we do and touch and will give you a real insight into how the modern world works", he noted.

The Graduate Entry Medical programme has seen an increase in applications of 13%.

Other courses which have seen an increase in applications also include Civil Engineering, 35% and Construction Management, 13%.

Comment

We should be wary of sabbatical candidates

Darragh Roche, Comment Editor

“THE evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy. The people do not want virtue, but are the dupes of pretended patriots.”

These are the words of American vice-president Elbridge Gerry, after whom the practice of vote rigging known as ‘gerrymandering’ is named. Though this particular quote is of questionable provenance, as we head into the annual sabbatical elections it may be worth keeping in mind.

Each year, a group of students, fresh from finishing essays and FYPs, deploy bright construction paper, sloppy slogans and colourful t-shirts in an attempt to win an extra year in college – and a full-time above minimum wage job in the Students’ Union.

This year, there are only three jobs to contest, two others having been successfully axed due to the SU’s financial crisis. Nevertheless, these supposedly ‘core’ positions are usually the focus of intense campaigning as Class Rep hacks, Clubs and Socs stalwarts and those chancing their arm try to convince us to vote for them.

If you don’t care about the SU, you may stop reading here. If, like me, you see the SU as a tiresome but necessary vehicle for providing students with services and, to a degree, representation, then you may appreciate the warning in the opening line of this piece.

It would be a lie to say every candidate who ever ran did it for careerist reasons, but it would be disingenuous to deny the personal advantages of a sabbatical position. Any candidate who does not try to convince us of his or her undying commitment to students and the SU’s noble purpose has clearly never seen an election before.

Pretended patriots’ will be everywhere this week but that’s not to imply that they can’t do a decent job. And that is the criterion: the candidates we elect should be competent and determined; they should not think they can change the world.

Personal experience has shown me that some sabbats are able to spend a year quite literally sitting on their asses and doing nothing, others manage to do all the wrong things. It is extremely rare for a sabbat to be a shining beacon of change and hope. Because of this, we should always be dubious of vague promises, unsubstantiated claims and any ‘silver bullet’ solutions to the

SU’s financial or structural problems.

The recovery will be slow and the new sabbats should recognise this. What we need now is a firm hand on the tiller. All those rumours that have been swirling around will end this week as the officially declared candidates parade themselves before the electorate and ask for our votes. They may make promises, they may just promise to be as good a President, as good an Education Officer and as good a Welfare Officer as they can be. Given the situation is less than ideal, anyone who runs, knowing the work to be done, should be scrutinised.

If we believe they can do the job, then they deserve to win. If they look like just another flash in the pan schyster, they do not.

ELECTIONS



Student apathy shows need for renewed engagement

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

I’M VERY interested in what students think about student politics.

What is the reason for student’s unwillingness to engage? It’s quite difficult to ascertain. Some attend college and never set foot inside the Students’ Union, don’t care for Charity week or throwing their chicken roll wrappers around the common room. The only place they’ll know their way to is the Lodge and the Swift (though for the latter, it’s habit of disappearing makes that an achievement!).

That’s absolutely grand. However, some students will attend and take part in the aforementioned activities with regularity during their studies. Yet, when it comes to spending an

hour at an AGM, they suddenly have a lecture. All take and no give is clearly an unacceptable protocol by which to operate. The very nature of the structure of our Student Union means that student involvement is necessary for business to take place. Why don’t students care? There’s no questioning the majority of those who attend general meetings of the SU are those who are already involved in some way. Be it Clubs and Socs, class reps or An Focal writers.

The apathy shown by the remainder though, is somewhat disconcerting.

Having worked in the SU for the last 3 months as a co-op student, and with 3 more to go, the most major thing I’ve learned from dealing with students directly and indirectly is an incredible amount of students are very ignorant, and quite often by choice.

For these, no amount of campaigns, free condoms or educational advice will sway. They don’t care, and probably never will.

Involvement makes a difference most obviously for the SU as a whole but also in small way for yourself.

You don’t have to do anything special to engage. Come to the AGM. Read the website. Those who run the SU are not too far from the real world. And they don’t bite.

If you think there’s a cliché, that’s disappointing. But why don’t you do something to break it? If you don’t like the way things are done, speak up. Have a great idea? You’ll get full credit for it.

The ‘Fiscal Compact’ is nothing but an Austerity Treaty

Cian Prendiville

THE coming referendum on the so-called ‘Fiscal Compact’ will see all sorts of accusations, threats and PR stunts. Already, the government have attempted to ridicule the idea that this is really an Austerity Treaty.

This treaty will see austerity institutionalised into law at a national level. Article 3 bans a country from running a budget deficit of more than 0.5% of GDP. Governments will be banned from investing in an economy to create jobs and improve public services. Instead, an “automatic correction mechanism” will be triggered if a country breaches the limit. This will mean an intensification of the disastrous austerity policies being pursued with such zeal by Enda Kenny’s Fine Gael / Labour government. Based on government projections Ireland would have to make €5.7 billion worth of cuts to meet the 0.5% target if implemented when the bailout programme finishes. This will mean more slashing of public services, attacks on wages, the asset stripping of the country and the driving into the ground of workers and the unemployed.

This is anti-democratic. If the targets are not met, the unelected Commission can in effect place a country in administration. Removing any semblance of democracy, the power of these unelected technocrats will be enhanced allowing them the power to survey national budgets. Elections will become even more meaningless as the policy will be dictated from Europe.

Article 4 puts the interests of bondholders and banks ahead of the interests of the people. Governments will be forced to reduce their debt to 60% of GDP by paying back one twentieth of the value they owe above this each year. Ireland will be forced to pay back 3% of its debt each year to get from the projected debt of 120% to the 60% level. This means that public money will be siphoned off from funding already stretched public services and from investing in the economy. In reality, this will mean over €4.5 billion a year of public finances given to financial markets on top of annual interest repayments of €9 billion.

The European elite and the government will attempt to frighten the Irish people into voting ‘yes’. Their big stick is that if the treaty is not passed a country cannot access funds from the Economic Stability Mechanism (ESM), which is a permanent bailout fund. But the amended version of ESM with the bailout clause has still not been passed by the Dáil, so the government still has a veto on that clause.

A ‘No’ vote in Ireland will be a powerful message to the government and European elite that austerity has failed and is being rejected by the people. It will send a message to the workers, unemployed and young people across Europe that far from being the best pupil of austerity, that the Irish people are sick and tired of it. That Irish workers are prepared to fight back and that a pan-European fight back can defeat these disastrous policies. A new Europe is needed, one run in the interests of the millions, not the millionaires.



Comment

President Romney?



Mitt Romney: future world leader?

James Bradshaw

AFTER his Super Tuesday triumph, Mitt Romney has clearly established himself as the front-runner in the battle for the Republican nomination.

Willard 'Mitt' Romney has had his sights trained on the presidency since he became Governor of Massachusetts in 2003, but this Republican primary has still proved tough. The GOP's conservative base has never warmed to Mitt, and with good reason. This is a man who has repeatedly changed his position on crucial issues—such as abortion, gun control, healthcare reform, etc—to suit the prevailing mood. However, beneath the pragmatic exterior lies a deeply conservative individual.

Romney attended college during the heady days of the 1960s, yet he wore a shirt and tie to most lectures, and only ever attended one protest, which was directed against a group resisting the Vietnam draft. After then spending 30 months working as a Mormon missionary in France, he returned home to the States and married his childhood sweetheart.

He could have followed his father into the auto industry, but instead he cut loose and embarked on a career in business consultancy, which culminated in his setting up of the wildly-successful private equity firm, Bain Capital. Success here led him to volunteer to lead the troubled Salt Lake City Winter Olympics of 2002, turning its fortunes around in spectacular fashion. This experience then paved the way for a successful run for Governor back home in Boston, and from then on that desk in the Oval Office has never been far from his mind. There's no doubting his leadership abilities, but his

ideological flexibility—many would say opportunism—has meant that though he is respected by his fellow Republicans, he is little loved. However, the more conservative candidates in the race—Santorum and Gingrich—are regarded as unelectable, and Romney is thought to be the party's best chance at re-capturing the White House. This Tuesday's victories show that the Republican rank-and-file has decided to give up on their dreams and just settle for Mitt. The primary will drag on a little longer, but it's almost certain that the nominee will be Romney.

So, what does he actually believe in? To judge him by his record, Romney is nothing if not a pragmatist, and with America deeply divided someone with his unquestionable leadership skills could re-forge a consensus for reviving the world's largest economy. However, due to the influence of the Tea Party, Romney has had to adopt more conservative positions than he would have liked. This might help to secure the Republican nomination, but it could him the votes of Independents on Election Day. Obama has raised more money than any candidate in history—a fact often overlooked by his left-wing supporters—and despite the high unemployment rates he is still personally popular among Americans.

The presidential contest will determine who leads the country that shapes the world's destiny. Will America give 'hope and change' another chance? Or will Mitt Romney succeed where his much-respected father didn't and make it to the White House? Only time—and the American electorate—will tell.

Putin wins - The Dynasty - because if surprise, surprise there's one thing Trinity needs it's more privilege

Conor O'Riordan

IF only the American presidential election could be so simple, eh?

Vladimir Putin's victory in the Russian presidential election surprised nobody and indeed, why should it? Putin's ascendancy from Prime Minister back to the comfy confines of his beloved presidential office was never in question.

Yes, forget the fact that the vast bulk of the Russian media are under Putin's control, forget the blanket coverage Putin's election campaign and rallies received and also forget all those nasty allegations regarding election fraud.

No sour grapes now Zyuganov, Mironov or Zhironovsky, it could have been you sipping tea and relaxing on a comfy leather sofa in the Kremlin and not Russia's favourite tiger tamer.

Of course, the truth surrounding Putin's victory is a lot less jovial and trivial than I have described. His ascension to president was never in question but the election is still shrouded in mystery. Us here in the West have been quite quick to cast aspersions on the character of Vladimir Putin and the validity of his win and this comes as no surprise.

Russia and, more pertinently, Putin intimidate the West. Even though over twenty years have passed since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, an uneasy tension pervades through Russo-Occidental relations. And it all started so well. In the infant stages of dear old Vladimir's

first term, relations between Russia and the West could not have been better. After 9/11, the affable Vlad publicly backed America's War on Terror and was the first head of state to ring George W. Bush and offer his condolences for the September 11 attacks.

After this incipient congeniality came a more cold and uneasy relationship. America withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, an agreement formed between the US and the Soviet Union in 1972 to limit the amount of nuclear weapons at the disposal of both countries. This action was not welcomed by Putin and his indirect riposte was to refuse to support America's invasion of Iraq.

Dear old Vladimir has risked the ire of the West again in recent years with frequent indiscretions such as the poisoning of former spy Alexander Litvinenko and the 2008 invasion of Georgia.

So should we all be grasping our shovels and hurriedly constructing our Anderson shelters now that dear old Vladimir has returned to power? Will the 21st century experience a Cold War? Not likely. No matter how strenuous relations between the former Soviet state and the West get, neither side want a repeat of the eerie yet ultimately frivolous Cold War. America have bigger fish to fry anyway what with tensions between Israel and Iran reaching boiling point and a presidential election of their own.

David Hartery

THETA Omicron is a group that charter and support fraternities across the United States and, more recently, Ireland. They have just set up a chapter in Trinity College Dublin, colloquially known as "The Dynasty". If at this point you haven't already released this is probably the lamest/stupidest/most bourgeois concept you've ever heard of, the following should probably summarise why that is so.

Firstly, it's a male only organisation. Notwithstanding the obvious discrimination that the very existence of this group perpetuates by its existence, the main thing to draw from here is that groups that include girls are just more fun. Over 50% of the world's population is female and I would hazard a guess that they make up at least that percentage of the interesting people.

Secondly, it's obviously an attempt to grant "exclusivity" to certain people. I think exclusivity in all contexts is pretty much a synonym for "secretly worried I have a small penis". Such a barefaced grab for perceived superiority can only be driven by crushing insecurity. Any attempt to build self-esteem based on affiliation rather than meritorious individual action is clearly due to an incapability to access the latter.

Lastly, the idea of building a Young Old Boys Network and hanging around with other upwardly mobile young men

is just so disgustingly privileged as to be a reason to reject the whole thing outright. They become these cliques and just maintain the kind of parish pump, backroom deal, Galway Races tent dynamic that brings out the worst kind of skulduggery in Irish society. The main motivating factor here is explicitly to be a support and fraternal network to assist those within the society to progress. They are exactly why society, economy and politics will never function, prioritising arbitrary membership of a group that is designed to separate those on the inside from those on the outside over actual merit or skill on behalf of those who did not join. To add one final point, Irish

colleges have done perfectly well without the existence of fraternities. Why we need to construct a system of male only, exclusive societies based on the exclusion of others is beyond me. I would be of the opinion that if you want people to help you with your course or with job applications and the like, you should do that with your friends. If you want to hang around with people of similar interests, you should join a club or society based around that interest that is open to all. There's no need to institutionalise privilege in a way that is only going to lead to narcissism and exclusion.



A shot of Trinity's Belltower

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Turn to page 31 for this editions Forgotten Footballer, Luis Garcia.



André Villas Boas. Finally stepping out of Mourinho's shadow? More on page 32.

Cunningham: We left ourselves too much to do



UL manager Ger Cunningham conceded that the outgoing champions found it too tough an ask to recover from losing an early goal

Liam Toghher

SPEAKING after the defeat to UCC in the Fitzgibbon Cup semi-finals, UL manager Ger Cunningham conceded that the outgoing champions found it too tough an ask to recover from losing an early goal and having to chase the game thereafter.

"We just left ourselves too much to do in the first half. We had to try and pull out all the stops after the interval and we nearly did it but not quite," said the UL boss.

UL famously recovered from nine points down to beat LIT in last year's final and clawed back a seven point deficit with 15 minutes remaining to

draw against their crosstown rivals in the 2012 group stage but Cunningham admitted that it was asking a lot to pull off yet another amazing recovery.

"We've gone to the well once too often but the opposition we faced today were too good. UCC are a quality team. Their movement was very good and they punished us when we were vulnerable."

Cunningham was not overly pleased with the performance of referee Michael Wadding, who awarded UCC a penalty in the second minute of the game and booked four UL players.

"I think the referee contributed to the four yellows. It was a disgraceful refereeing performance, the worst I've seen in a long time. They could hold us, foul us and flick us but when we did that he blew for a free. As for the penalty, our goalkeeper came out and tackled with two feet. Our goalie tackled the ball but their player fell over him. How

he was supposed to tackle without using his feet is incredible."

When interviewed by An Focal after the semi final defeat to Waterford IT in 2010, Cunningham stated his intention to stand down from the managerial post but he reconsidered and a year later he guided UL to the Fitzgibbon title. However, he says that his time as manager may now be up. "This is definitely the end for me. I need a break from it and the players could do with hearing a different voice. There are people who can take the mantle now. I achieved what I set out to achieve last year."

If Ger Cunningham follows up on his word and steps down from the job, he will leave as one of the finest ever UL hurling managers and he will always have the honour of leading them to Fitzgibbon glory in 2011.

Collingwood Cup 2012 review

Robert McNamara, Sports Editor

UL crashed out of the Collingwood Cup with a defeat to unfavoured Mary Immaculate in the quarter final of the tournament held on campus. UL were without former Limerick FC and

Cobh Ramblers player Martin Deady for the first game but were favourites to go through and tipped by many to go on and win the trophy. From the off UL were on top and controlled

the tempo of the game. Mary I had obviously come to contain the home side and hit them on the break. Cian Tobin, who was solid at centre back all afternoon, had a good chance from a corner but directed his header straight at the Mary I keeper who was to be called into action many times over the course of the 90 minutes.

UL were deservedly in front just before half time when a corner was whizzed in, Declan O'Donnell raced to the front post, and angled his header past the keeper who was beaten all ends up.

The second half saw Mary I dancing to the same tune as UL opened them up time and time again, with both full backs getting forward and causing

havoc. Right back John O'Leary was unlucky to hit the crossbar with his cross come shot that had the Mary I keeper scrambling back towards his goal line. UL continued to squander chances and this was to eventually prove their downfall.

With 10 minutes to go the home side should have been out of sight but a speculative ball into the UL box found them napping and Mary I capitalised. Minutes later Mary I were ahead when a long punt was allowed to drop, O'Donnell and Tobin tried but failed to clear and Mary I were left celebrating an historic victory with UL dropping into the Farquar Cup. UL went onto beat NUIG 5-1 to progress to the final but unfortunately

they also missed out on silverware in the Collingwood's sister competition, losing 3-2 to NUI Maynooth to end a disappointing tournament.

Mary I continued to confound their critics in the Collingwood by knocking out UCC on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the semi-final.

Their luck didn't hold out for the final though, and they were beaten by a well drilled UCD side. UCD dominated from start to finish and an early goal meant they took the title back to Leinster after the game finished 1-0 to the Dubliners.

Want to write Sport for An Focal?

We'd love to hear from you!
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Sport

2012 Fitzgibbon Cup finals review

Liam Toghher

OVER the last few years the Fitzgibbon Cup finals weekend has thrown up its fair share of drama and the centenary tournament at the Mardyke in Cork recently was no exception.

For the second year in a row the semi-finalists were exclusively from Limerick and Cork (UL, UCC, LIT and CIT) and this time it was record champions UCC who prevailed on home soil, thus winning their 41st Fitzgibbon title.

Semi final Friday began with CIT and LIT facing off in front of a healthy crowd.

LIT's prolific forward Joe Canning was unavailable due to a shoulder injury and such was his importance to the team that CIT had been made favourites beforehand. It was a lively first half, albeit one punctuated with frees awarded by whistle-happy referee Alan Kelly.

CIT had a three point lead at the interval and completely dominated the second half, with Davy Fitzgerald's LIT being outdone in the air by the Cork side, who had also wised up to hampering their opponents' short handpassing game. CIT ran out winners on a score of 0-17 to 1-9. In the second semi-final holders UL took on host college UCC in what was an eagerly anticipated clash.

An early Pauric Mahoney penalty left UCC in front throughout the game and they had a commanding six-point lead at half-time.

They continued their dominance into the second half and with less than 20 minutes to go the margin was nine points. UL had produced stirring comebacks in the past, though, and refused to surrender their title easily. They recovered to within a point of UCC but just couldn't fully bridge the gap and the Limerick side bowed out gallantly, 1-15 to 0-15.

An all Cork final in that very city drew an attendance of 2,100 on Saturday afternoon so it was a pity that the match began in torrential rain. UCC had been considered firm favourites but CIT looked the better side in the first half and led by two at the break, but they had also hit some wasteful wides.

The second half appeared to be petering out to a landmark CIT victory but two late goals from UCC put them three ahead. Then CIT salvaged a goal of their own to force extra time, which was neck and neck up to the final minute again.

With both teams level, Seamus Corry fired over the point that gave UCC the honours by 2-15 to 2-14 and cruelly denied a formidable CIT challenge on another classic weekend of Fitzgibbon Cup hurling.

Editorial

Robert McNamara, Sport Editor

"NORTERN Ireland is a different country to the Republic of Ireland. You have your own team, you have your own nation. It's as simple as that."

That was the verdict of Nigel Worthington during the launch of the short lived Carling Cup of Nations in October 2010. Worthington has since exited the managerial post at Windsor Park to be replaced by Michael O'Neill, a Catholic who played for Northern Ireland and managed Shamrock Rovers. He will be the first Catholic to lead the North since Bertie Peacock in 1961.

As Northern Ireland floundered and the Republic soared to qualification for Euro 2012, it seems an all Ireland team is a concept that is as far away as ever.

But, just because the Republic is doing relatively well does not mean that the issue will lose its resonance in the wider social context.

Staying away from debates about religion, Nigel Worthington was not entirely correct in his statement. We are in-fact the same country, but we are two different, territorially demarcated states with different governments.

However, consider this. Anybody born in the North is entitled to both a British and Irish passport. Darron Gibson, Marc Wilson and James McClean have all opted to exercise the FIFA ruling which allows Northern dwellers to declare for the Republic, despite playing under-age for the North.

It is the right of those players to make that decision and Northern Ireland will continue to suffer if the Republic absorb their resources and continue to be accused of stealing talent like a school yard bully pillages the spoils of a smaller child.

Former Fianna Fail TD Chris Andrews raised a valid point regarding the pooling of resources in 2005. "Two football associations for a population of five million people amounts to a waste of resources and expertise."

O'Neill told World Soccer upon his appointment, "The IFA is not the wealthiest association in the world,



but a lot of resources have been put into developing young players. We want an inclusive team." A colleague recently put it to me that supporting Northern Ireland is primarily the realm of Protestants and Unionists. A united Ireland team would not work the same way as it does in rugby because those supporters are of a "higher social class" he argued. This, to me, was an extremely morbid analysis of our society cloaked in sport. What bigger a statement could be made about the contradictions of this island?

UL put up brave show but fall to Cork rivals



UL had made a contest of it when other teams would have folded

Liam Toghher

UL's defence of the Fitzgibbon Cup came to an end in the semi-finals after a 1-15 to 0-15 defeat to host college UCC at the Mardyke.

Ger Cunningham's team came into the game hoping to become the first team since 2004 to retain the trophy in the competition's centenary year, but they were left playing catch up for nearly all afternoon. Mikey Heffernan had a goal chance saved by Darren McCarthy in the opening seconds before Conor McGrath got UL off the mark with a free.

Then referee Michael Wadding awarded UCC a controversial penalty, which Pauric Mahoney fired to the net. Cyril Donnellan pulled a point back for UL but then UCC took control with five unanswered points, one from William Egan and the rest coming from Mahoney frees. UL's Johnny Coen stemmed the

tide before Mahoney and McGrath traded scores to leave it at 1-6 to 0-4.

Shane Bourke added to the home side's lead and a brace of Mahoney frees sandwiched a Bill Beckett score for UL. McGrath got the last score of the first half to give a half time score of 1-9 to 0-6 in UCC's favour. The lead would have been far greater were it not for three excellent saves from UL goalkeeper Thomas Lowry and a dramatic Paddy Stapleton goal-line clearance. UL brought on Joe Gallagher and Pdraig Walsh at the interval and Beckett got the opening score of the second half, but they continued to concede frees to the hosts. Four UCC points from Brian O'Sullivan, Egan, Brian Murray and Bourke left UL nine points in arrears with less than 20 minutes remaining.

UL didn't win the 2011 Fitzgibbon by

throwing in the towel when behind by a similar margin in that final and the decision to switch Padraic Maher to centre-back from his original wing-back role generated a remarkable comeback.

In 15 second half minutes, UL scored eight points without reply (McGrath 4, Coen, Gallagher 2 and David Butler) to set up a grandstand finish to a thrilling semi-final. UCC held firm, though, managing to disrupt UL's momentum in the closing stages and points from the excellent Mahoney and O'Sullivan pushed the lead out to three.

UL had made a contest of it when other teams would have folded but, having twice produced stirring comebacks against LIT in the last 12 months, it was asking just too much for them to manage it once again.



UCC claimed a 41st Fitzgibbon title on home ground

Sport

SPORTS
QUIZ

Alan Brazil

1. How old is a filly when she officially becomes a mare?
2. In which country was former motor racing driver Ayrton Senna born?
3. Which Formula 1 team were barred for two races for running underweight cars?
4. Who was the first footballer to be knighted?
5. In which Sport does your team only have to travel 3.6 metres To Win?
6. Only two Americans have won the Formula Motor Racing Championship. Name one.
7. Jerk, clean & snatch are terms used in what activity?
8. In English cricket what do the letters TCCB stand for?
9. Who became the first black manager of a Premiership club when he took over at Chelsea in 1996?
10. Who did Cassius Clay beat to win his first world heavyweight boxing title?

Answers
1. 4 Mathews
2. Brazil
3. BAR
4. Sir Stanley
5. Tug Of War
6. Phil Hill and
7. Weight lifting
8. Test and
9. Rued Gullit
10. Sonny Liston
Mario Andrett
Board
County Cricket

A date with destiny



It looked destined that Zambia would bury the ghosts of 1993 from the outset

Eoghan Wallace

ZAMBIA'S extraordinary victory at the African Cup of Nations last month seemed to be written in the stars.

It looked destined that Zambia would bury the ghosts of 1993 from the outset; their opening game was against Senegal, the side they were on their way to play 19 years ago when a plane crash robbed them of their greatest ever team.

Coincidentally this year's tournament was being held in Gabon, where the plane went down. While it may read like a Hollywood script Zambia were truly worthy winners.

The general consensus among critics has been that this year's African Nations was not only one of the most competitive in recent years but also one of the most exciting. The absence of the traditional powers such as Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt meant that fewer teams entered the tournament inhibited by the weight of expectation, apart from the obvious favourites Ivory Coast and Ghana.

The foundation for Zambia's success can be traced back to their failure to qualify for the 2006 World Cup. As a result, the Zambian FA's president

(himself a member of the 1993 team) decided to take the best players from the under 23s, the under 19s and the under 17s and build a young team that would grow and flourish together.

As such Zambia had a more coherent and balanced side than many of the other teams there including, their opponents in the final, Ivory Coast.

Ivory Coast were the hot favourites to win their first African title in twenty years and the lack of Cameroon and co. meant the draw was left wide open for their 'golden generation' to finally deliver a trophy.

Alas, the wheels fell off as they did in the last three tournaments. Didier Drogba, reminiscent of 2006, missed a clear goal chance which would have handed victory to the Elephants. The tag of golden generation seems to be a millstone for them as it was for previously titular teams (see Hungary in 1954 or England in the 2000s). It is possible that Drogba's last chance for the club was a youngster and only after a one-year move to Atletico Madrid did he appear for the Catalan giants' first team.



He may now be in the twilight of his career but Luis Garcia still provokes debate. Was he unfairly maligned at Liverpool or did he only perform on an occasional basis?

Forgotten Footballer: Luis Garcia

Liam Togher

EAMON Dunphy once called him "a midget with an Alice band", saying on another occasion that he ought to be substituted and put "where he belongs: in a dustbin".

However, that seems awfully harsh on Luis Garcia, the diminutive Spaniard who made key contributions to Liverpool in his three years at the club, even if his performances ranged from fantastic to erratic.

A graduate of the Barcelona academy, Garcia was continually loaned out by the club as a youngster and only after a one-year move to Atletico Madrid did he appear for the Catalan giants' first team.

He was one of the first signings made by Rafael Benitez at Liverpool when he arrived at Anfield in the summer of 2004.

It took Garcia time to settle into the physicality of the English game but he flourished on Champions League nights, scoring a wonder goal against Juventus in the quarter finals and, famously, the winning goal against Chelsea that is still debated to this day as to whether or not it crossed the line.

He also featured in the unforgettable final against AC Milan in Istanbul.

The following season Garcia again proved his worth in cup competitions, notching a superb strike against Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-finals, but he lacked the consistency which is required for nine month league football.

He had one more season at Liverpool but it was an abortive one and in 2007 he departed for Atletico Madrid, with Fernando Torres going the other way.

Garcia had two mixed seasons with Atletico, which included a return to Anfield in a Champions League game, and in 2009 he transferred to Racing Santander.

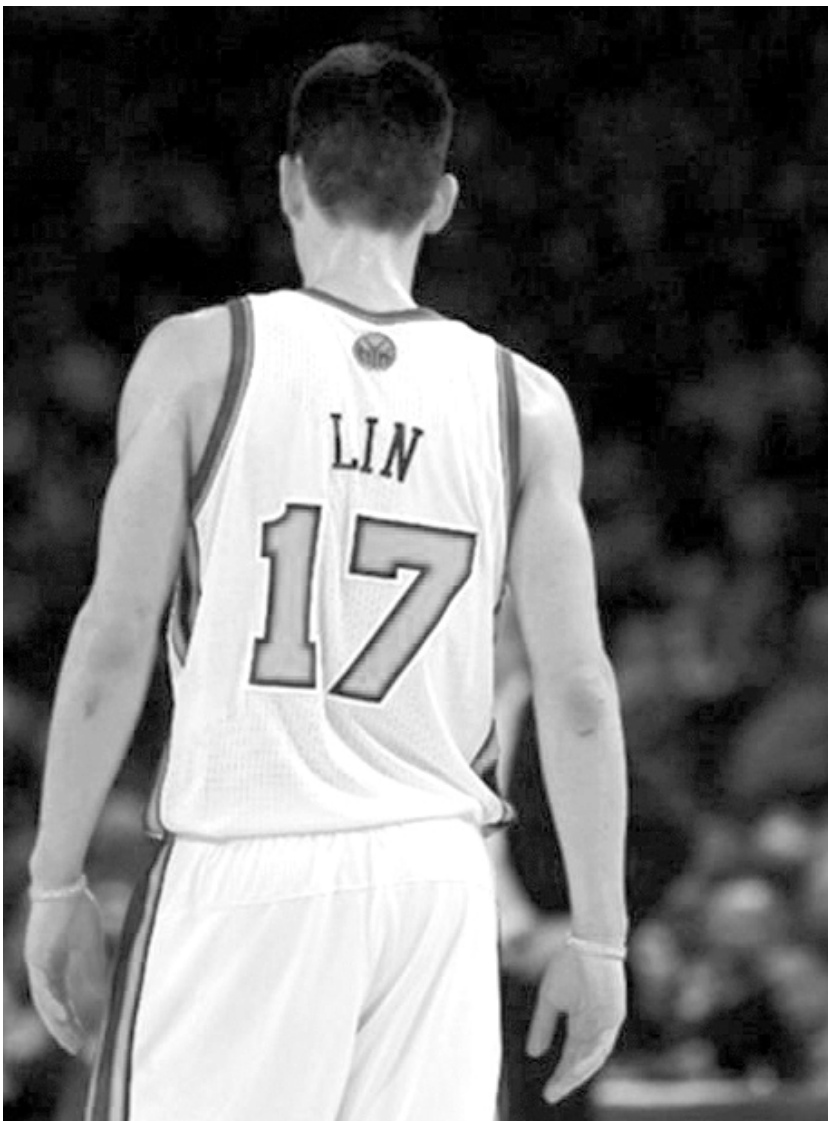
That was another frustrating season for the forward as the club narrowly avoided relegation.

He played for Panathinaikos in 2010/11 and now he features for Mexican side Puebla.

Garcia appeared for Spain at the 2006 World Cup, playing in three of their four games in Germany.

He may now be in the twilight of his career but Luis Garcia still provokes debate.

Was he unfairly maligned at Liverpool or did he only perform on an occasional basis? Did that goal against Chelsea in 2005 actually cross the line? What cannot be argued, though, is that he played his part in some of the Reds' most memorable nights of recent years.



This young man's meteoric rise has led to the phenomenon of Lin-sanity

The sudden rise of Lin-sanity

Garry Irwin

STATISTICALLY, Jeremy Lin is having the season of his life.

15 points per game, over 6 assists and 3 rebounds per game too. In this strike shortened season he has more than doubled his career stats in all the categories that matter; and in the process has helped the New York Knicks to an unfamiliar position, that of battling for a playoff spot. The Knicks have only reached the playoffs twice in the last ten years and haven't even won a playoff game since way back in 2001. This from a team who from '88 to '01 never failed to make it to the postseason.

So it is no surprise that the Knicks fans have taken to their new star with such enthusiasm. This young man's meteoric

rise has led to the phenomenon of Lin-Sanity. His jersey is the biggest seller in New York for years and his face is soon to be plastered over a number of big endorsement deals.

He is seen as a role model for all the Asian-American community; and all this before he had even played twenty games of the season.

What's more remarkable is his route to stardom. The odds were really stacked against him at the start of his career. Only a handful of Asian-American players have ever played in the NBA. On top of that he went to college at Harvard, a top Ivy League school, but not where you play basketball. The Ivy League (America's 8 top colleges) hasn't supplied a player to the NBA since 2003, Harvard itself, since 1954.

He ended up signing a deal with his hometown GoldenState Warriors, but ended up being sent off to play

development ball (D-League), only getting 29 NBA games in 2010/11 and averaging a paltry 2.6 points per game.

The Warriors eventually let him go to make room on their payroll for new signings. As the strike delayed the start of the season; Lin was on waivers before being claimed late on by the Knicks. He was thought of as third or fourth back-up point-guard for the team, maybe fifteenth or sixteenth on the roster overall and on the verge of playing D-league again.

But a spate of injuries and some terrible form, the Knicks were on a run of 2 and 11, saw Lin get his chance on court. One which he seems to have taken, but he may find that even a strike shortened season can be a long one.

Ghost of old mentor looms large

Michael Ramsay

IT was on the island of Eire, that André Villas Boas tasted his finest sporting achievement, guiding Porto to the hallowed treble.

Indeed, the only other time this feat had been achieved in the long, illustrious history of Porto, was by a certain José Mourinho, mentor to Villas Boas for many a year.

It was at this precise moment where he finally breathed a sigh of relief – his years of chasing Mourinho to clubs across Europe, with a sack of footballs in one hand, and a clipboard in the other, were over.

Villas Boas had finally made it. Having studied management since

the tender age of 16, he had finally thrust himself into the limelight, announcing himself to Europe as a promising, young manager.

Within three weeks of that UEFA Cup success, Villas Boas was accepting a call he may have overheard seven years earlier, when José was being seduced from his Porto hotseat.

Having had his faith crushed on three separate occasions since inexplicably firing José, Roman Abramovich has long since regretted his decision, and seemingly came to the conclusion that the best man to finally fill Mourinho's shoes was the man with an almost identical early-career record.

While there is breath in his lungs, the ghost of José shall forever shadow Stamford Bridge. With every failed substitution, and every underwhelming performance, murmurs of 'Mourinho! Mourinho!' rang throughout the 33,000 Chelsea faithful.

Villas Boas didn't find it easy, having been thrust into the hotseat and forced to deal with the famed Chelsea dressing-room cliques.

Landed with getting the best out of 50 million pounds worth of zero confidence up front, staving off a media crucifixion of his club captain, and dealing with contract-stalling egos, Villas Boas was dealt quite a challenge. It is no wonder rumours circulated post sacking that he was delighted it was over.

Mourinho is no stranger to calling quits whilst at the pinnacle of his achievements, and with Real Madrid looking increasingly more likely to finally beat Barcelona to the La Liga title it may be time for him to return to London.

Villas-Boas on the other hand would do well to avoid his mentors shadow in Milan and the lure of the Nerrazzurri if he wants to further his career.

Special report: Where has the magic of the FA Cup gone?

Conor O'Riordan

FOOTBALL fans of every generation are brought up on the magical stories of the FA Cup, tales of glory and giant-killing, of heroes and villains.

From an early age, our minds are inculcated with images of Ronnie Radford's famous muck sodden winner for Hereford against Newcastle in 1973, Keith Houchen's gravity defying diving header to equalise for Coventry in a particularly pulsating final in 1987 against Tottenham Hotspur amongst many others.

These tales are used as irrefutable proof as to why the oldest cup competition in the world is also the best club competition in the world.

Though, like Shakespeare's Hamlet, it has of late lost all its mirth.

Managers curse it, players ignore it and fans try and feign interest in it.

The FA Cup is not dead but its magic has significantly depleted.

We've reached the stage now where finishing in the top four has now superseded winning the FA Cup in terms of manager's priorities.

In days gone by even the most prosperous of managers would have killed to have won the Cup. What's most telling though is that it's not just

the big clubs who are prioritising their league form over a cup run. Reading's Noel Hunt appeared on last Saturday's edition of Soccer AM and when the Waterford man was asked about being knocked out of the Cup by lowly Stevenage, Hunt referred to the loss as 'maybe a blessing in disguise' given that the Berkshire club are 'right up there in the Championship'.

Right there, Hunt encapsulated the growing feeling regarding the cup which pervades many clubs in England today. The Cup is seen as an unwelcome distraction to the evidently more important league campaign.

While a good cup run remains a lucrative venture for any club today, it pales in comparison to the fiscal opportunities on offer to clubs who are promoted to the Premiership or qualify for a European competition.

The incentive to do well simply isn't there and this leads to managers playing weakened sides so as not to risk their best players falling foul to injury or fatigue on what they perceive as a tie of minor importance.

This in turn leads to interest from the general public diminishing as if the best players aren't on show fans aren't willing to shell out big bucks on pricey cup tickets. Read part 2 in the next, and last, edition of An Focal.

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Lifestyle

City Chaos vs Country Calm



Sophie McDermott

EVER wonder why most, if not all your “culchie” friends seem to be a lot more chilled out than you all the time?

How come when it comes to last minute assignments, they still remain cool as a cucumber while you’re hyperventilating in the library watching the clock tick?

According to experts, those of us who were born and bred in the cities are deemed more likely to have a mental breakdown than our country counterparts.

Maybe it’s the fumes and radiation that we feed on in cities or large towns while everyone else is feeding on fresh, country air with a hint of manure, but scientists have discovered that stressful situations trigger a much more active response in city dwellers than country bumpkins.

So what does this mean? Basically, those of you who experienced an urban upbringing in the likes of Dublin or Limerick are more prone to mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and depression.

A probable cause for this finding could lie in the fact that people who grew up in the countryside experienced the peace and quiet we all need from time to time to maintain a healthy mental state, but city kids are much more exposed to loud sounds at night, large groups and a generally busy lifestyle.

In a study conducted in Germany, it was found that a certain part of the brain, the amygdala, was more reactive in the city born students than the countryside students when placed in stressful situations. Without going too much into the scientific nitty-gritty information, the city kids were more prone to emotion than the country kids. But don’t worry, just because you’re from a city doesn’t mean you have to spend the whole of your life being an emotional wreck nor do you have to marry a farmer to try and achieve some mental stability.

By looking after you’re mental health and learning how to cope with stress properly, you too can be as cool and collected as the bogger from next door.

Why football is better than women

Conor O’ Riordan

Many men profess this in moments of intense fervour when watching football, only to laugh off the mere notion of it when they calm down moments later.

But deep down, we all know football is better than women.

It was Friedrich Nietzsche who said, “Ah women, they make the highs higher and the lows more frequent”. True that. For you see, we men are a simple bunch.

This is how we are portrayed and it is true. We like to make things easier for ourselves and without question it is much easier to love a football team than it is to love a woman.

For starters, your football team are with you for life. You will never suffer the heartbreak or embarrassment of a messy breakup. It is a relationship that starts at childhood. There is an old cliché that says “You don’t pick your football team, it picks you”.

I did not consciously make the decision to support Manchester United, it just sort of happened. United was always a

faithful partner. Never cheated on me, never stopped talking to me and never stopped giving.

I know we United supporters live a charmed existence in comparison to many other clubs but I’m sure this is the case for most other clubs’ supporters. United never asked for my opinion on what clothes make their arse look fat.

They never chastised me for not listening enough. I don’t recall United telling me that, “I’m just not their type”. Like Bruno Mars, they love me just the way I am.

Football is also a source of conversation amongst your friends, the main source for many people. You can’t discuss women in depth with other men, it’s unnatural! Football doesn’t put any unnecessary pressure on you. If you fall out of love with football, it will wait. It will carry on as always in the background and when you are ready to embrace it again, it will welcome you back with open arms.

Feed yourself pretty

Roisin Curran, Beauty Columnist

WE all ignore it. The fact that vitamins, water, spice and everything nice, actually do great things for our appearance.

Instead, being the lazy make up reliant generation that we (myself included) are, we say “meh” to the healthy goodness of food and instead pull out the ever reliable concealer.

So instead of thinking fruit is your enemy and water its evil twin, why don’t you give mother nature’s intended makeup a go and give your cosmetic bag that well deserved rest.

Drop that bottle of coke immediately, even if it’s diet. How many times did your grandmother say you can’t drink better than water? Don’t you always see the pretty skinny girls carrying around huge bottles of water and think what the hell is in that bottle? Well I’ll tell you: there’s radiant skin, brighter eyes and shinier hair.

For your skin and hangover cure, there’s nothing more rejuvenating than water. Its trick is that it hydrates skin cells and improves their elasticity,



making them look less haggard and you less demonic after a wild night out.

For your eyes, the simple method of dabbing them with water will leave the under eye area and tough bags brighter and cooled. And for shiny hair, the secret is to grit your teeth and stifle a scream, because giving hair a last minute blast of cold water after washing will increase its shine tenfold. And don’t forget your vitamins deary;

another classic line from grandma but one that’s right yet again. The papaya fruit, exotic enough your grandma wouldn’t know whether to kill it or eat it, is stocked in vitamin A.

The exact vitamin that is an antioxidant, removes dead skin cells, exfoliates and firms, something that will come in very handy when you’re nearing good ole grandma’s age.

Do clothing sizes really work?

Niamh Masterson

WE all know that when we go shopping, you could end up bringing at least 2 sizes of everything into the dressing rooms.

Personally, I think it's nearly impossible to be the exact same size in every shop on the high street.

For example in Penneys, I find that some of their clothes are a smaller fit, in New Look their clothes tend to be more generous for their size along with Top Shop, who seem to go for the straight up and down physique.

So why is it like this? Shops like French Connection have admitted that

their clothes are cut more generously, while Zara clothes seem to be cut for a more petite, curvy silhouette.

The creator of What Size Am I (an online sizing programme) Anna Powell, discovered that the more expensive clothing shops cut their clothes more generously than cheaper clothes.

But she also points out that shops usually aim their clothing sizes at their average customer. So, therefore, it is no surprise that the leading high street shops have their clothes aimed at teenagers and young woman and this means that a slim body template is usually used.

It has to be said that it can get really annoying having to try on tons of clothes and maybe only walk out of the dressing room with about one thing

that actually fits you and that you like. So what can we do? The What Size am I site seems to have the right idea with this new programme.

Take your measurements and you put them into the programme and they'll tell you what size you are in the shops.

It can be really good for online shopping because some people don't like the hassle of buying something really nice online and then having to send it back. So although clothing sizes don't really work, this programme seems to be doing something helpful. Give a look and make shopping easier for yourself.



I think it's nearly impossible to be the exact same size in every shop on the high street



The Food Column

Karen O' Connor Desmond

Homemade Spaghetti Bolognese with Garlic Bread

Recipe: (serves 4+)

500g pack of mince meat
One pack of wholemeal spaghetti
Extra virgin olive oil
6 cloves garlic
6 shallots
12 mushrooms
One red pepper, one green pepper
Tomato purée
500g Passata
Oregano
3 bread rolls
Butter

Spaghetti Bolognese:

Heat up a good drop of the oil in a frying pan on a medium to high heat. Add the mince meat. With a spatula, break it down gradually until it's in small pieces. Once browned through (approx 20-30 mins), add 2 cloves of

garlic and the shallots. When they are soft, add the mushrooms and peppers. Bring a saucepan of water to boiling point and add the spaghetti. Cook the mince for a further 5 mins on a medium heat. Then add the passata and one heaped tablespoon of tomato purée. Stir in and leave to simmer for a further 5 mins. Add a heaped teaspoon of oregano and mix through. Simmer for another couple of mins. The spaghetti should be firm when done (approx 10-15 mins). Turn off the meat and strain the spaghetti, rinsing swiftly with cold water. Serve while hot.

Garlic Bread:

Cut the bread rolls in half and spread liberally with butter. Chop up the 4 remaining cloves of garlic finely and sprinkle on top of the rolls. Heat the grill to a medium temperature. Grill the garlic bread for 5-7 mins or until golden brown. Try using different combinations of vegetables, whatever you like! The quantities can be reduced/increased to suit personal preference and the amount of people you're cooking for.

Can men say no to sex?

Aoife Mc Loughlin

THAT is the question. The old bump and grind. It tends to be an irresistible thing for the testosterone filled of our species.

We see it all around, half naked (if not naked) "naughtily" posed women donning the men's media because, it's the main thing on our lovely boys' minds!

The age old myth is that on average men think about sex every seven seconds.

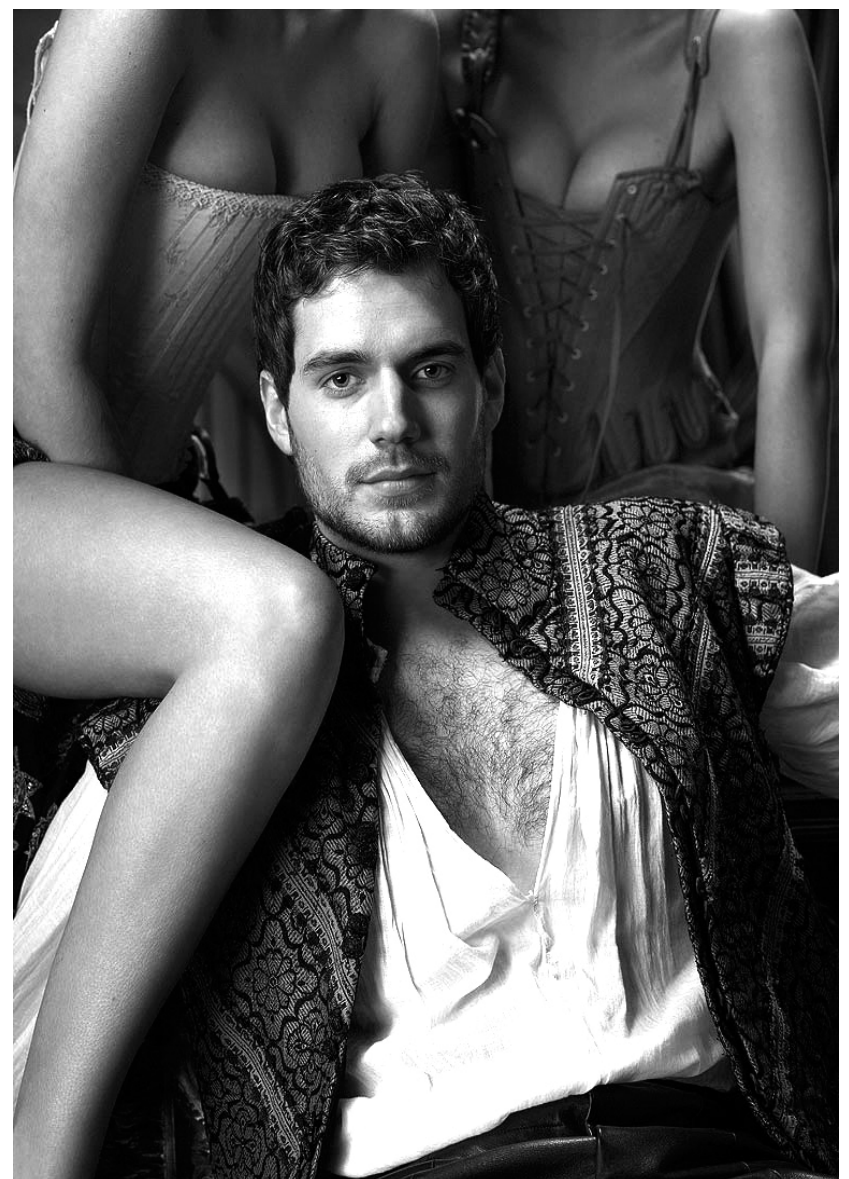
Now if one were to do their research, like I have, this myth would be proven wrong. According to the Kinseys Institute FAQ, "54 percent of men think about sex everyday or several times a day, 43 percent a few times a month or a few times per week and 4 percent less than a month."

But as the stats and facts fly by, the question remains. This is where the sex drive is divided by gender.

Aside from pleasure, sex is all about procreation.

In order for a man to procreate, he must be sexually aroused and he must climax. Unfortunately, to create and house a human life, women need neither.

This may help answer why men are the philanderers of nature. Going back to the first homosapien it was essential for men to spread their "seed", continue the gene pool, pick and choose mates according to hair, breast size and health in order to create little kings and leaders. Essentially biology has made it a lot easier for men to be seduced into bed by a desiring female. Men produce million of sperm everyday, this means a man can afford to be so generous as to give these babies (no pun intended) away willy nilly!



The age old myth is that on average men think about sex every seven seconds...

Women on the other hand only produce one egg a month which means its budget time, and with this egg comes hormones.

Hormones that tend to make the female of the species quite emotional at times, innately aware of the pitter patter of little feet and the need to be loved and not used.

Bring this into today's society of sexual liberty, overly sexualized media and a country full of lovely girls. How could a single man not say no to sex?

Unless of course he has a headache.

Fashion

Where are all the good writers gone?

Sophie McDermott

LIKE everywhere else in the world, the Irish are obsessed with fashion. We're always on the lookout for the hottest trends and models.

While the local fashion industry here in Ireland is quite vast for such a small country, are there enough readable publications to show this? We have a highly active journalism industry but has fashion been pushed to the backseat and forgotten? Our fashion designers are included in the list of the top designers in the world. The likes of Galway man Philip Treacy, who designed the hats seen at the Royal Wedding.

Never heard of him? That comes as no surprise as Irish fashion designers aren't in the Irish limelight and appear on a more global level. Ireland lacks a

fashion journalism industry that caters to promote Irish fashion and make these designers and models household names. We hear about models on a daily basis but it may not always be in a positive light. Tabloids and celebrity gossip magazines may feature Irish models in their spreads but there is no emphasis on their career alone.

Much of the focus is on their personal lives and neglects their success in the industry. This further highlights the proper Irish fashion journalism drought that Ireland is experiencing. Many people want to read magazines for the local fashion trends or to admire the next top Irish model.

While there are a few very talented fashion journalists in Ireland, there doesn't seem to be much work accredited to them. The likes of Bairbre Power and Angela Scanlon haven't received anywhere near the same amount of recognition that journalists in other fields do. They may have a

column or two in a few different papers but it's hardly the same as Vogue, is it?

Instead, we are forced to buy UK and US magazines such as Company or Vogue to get our fashion fix. They're the kind of magazines we need in Ireland for Irish women.

It's desponding to think that young girls or boys who want a career in modelling think that the only way to get anywhere is to emigrate to these countries that recognise the need to promote the fashion industry and inform the public of issues and successes that the fashion industry is currently experiencing.

It's evident that Ireland needs fashion journalism to promote the Irish fashion industry. We have hundreds of talented individuals who work in the industry that deserve to be recognised. Irish people have the right to have a fashion magazine we can be proud of and can compete with the likes of Vogue.



International fashion designer Philip Treacy with one of his designs

The woman who created class



Audrey Hepburn in the infamous film, 'Breakfast at Tiffany's'

Roisin Curran

AUDREY Hepburn is the woman that made the little black dress iconic.

Simple, elegant, beautiful and charming: her style is one that has been revered through the ages, her outfits and poise inspirational.

Who doesn't recall that classic dress, hairstyle and pearls in front of Tiffany's window? It has reached icon status and is right up there with Marilyn's white dress and THE Chanel suit. Granted Marilyn may have been sexy and Chanel a fashion powerhouse, but no one has class or style like Audrey.

She is no doubt the only woman in the world eligible to play both a nun and a call girl with effortless beauty and grace. Albeit Julia Roberts was lovable in *Pretty Woman*, her leather boots couldn't hold a candle to the Givenchy dress on *Miss Golightly*.

What has lifted Audrey into the good graces of fashion was her love of designer Hubert de Givenchy. And he loved her right back, catering to her whim and desires and designing almost every outfit in every role she played. The two became inseparable and with Audrey's charm and Givenchy's grace, they set the trend that rocked through the 50's on *Vogue* covers, the runway and in the movies. When she is remembered for her fashion style, it's mostly in those of the films in which she starred. The dress and pearls in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the towering hat and parasols in *My Fair Lady*, her Capri pants in *Sabrina* and running around Rome in a pair of pumps in *Roman Holiday*. But when the camera stopped rolling, Audrey's eye for style continued.

The tight hairstyles, fitted pants, slim silhouette and basic colours were all synonymous with Hepburn. She refrained from bold colours, preferring instead

staples of black, grey and brown which equalled instant glamour. She brought Italian demure to Hollywood, with ballet pumps and cinched waistlines we could only hope to get around our ankles. She brought Parisian sophistication to New York, with turtle necks and trench coats. And she brought Hollywood glamour to the world, with satin dresses and long gloves that never looked tacky. Audrey in her time was never rivalled, and still no one has managed to step up to the plate and remain standing since. She is the poster girl for sophisticated glamour. She was always modest, never self-important or arrogant and grateful for her good fortune and fame.

Even to her lasting legacy and in the face of iconic status, she remains refined and effortless, "I never think of myself as an icon. What is in other people's minds is not in my mind. I just do my thing." And we will always love her for just doing her thing.

All white on the night

Lisa Blake

THE BIG O was upon us at the end of February. The star studded event didn't fail in the fashion stakes.

The Oscars are the time for Old Hollywood Glam and all other award nights are mere diamonds on this rock. So who lived up to the standard and who fell short of the mark?

Which designers stole the limelight on the red carpet and who stayed in the dark? Considering the display of bronze tones normally found on the Hollywood boulevard, this year saw a particularly pasty crowd. White dresses and pastel colours were big on trend, with Gwyneth Paltrow taking centre-stage in her white caped Tom Ford dress. It girl Rooney Mara made the best of her pale skin tone in white Givenchy, while Octavia Spencer glittered in a white Tadashi Shoji gown. Milla Jovovich wowed the crowd wearing a white dress by a popular designer this year, Elie Saab. What would a red carpet be without the golden couple Brangelina?

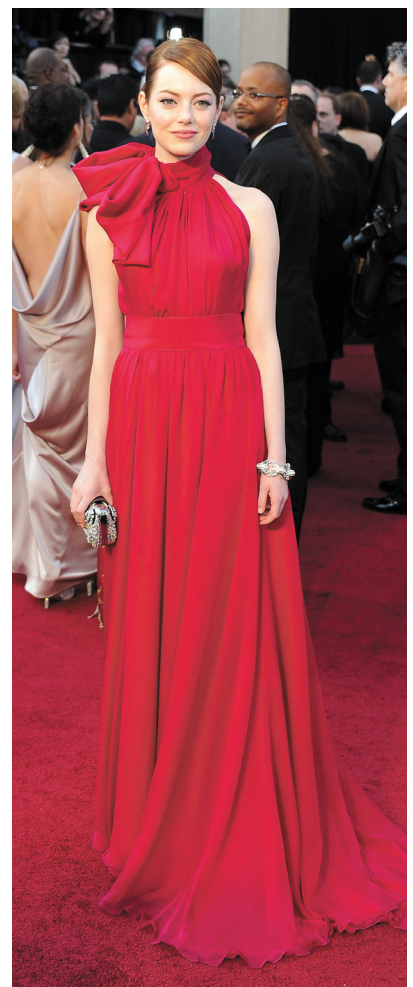
This year the pair delivered their classic elegance once again, but not without Angelina causing somewhat of a stir. She wore a thigh high slit black Versace number which was the very essence of Old Hollywood glam.

Designer Carolina Herrera would only dress one starlet on the night, comedienne Tina Fey being the lucky lady to strut her stuff in the midnight blue creation with a peplum waist. Pénélope Cruz got it oh so-right in a blue Armani ball gown with sleeves that fell delicately around her shoulders.

Certain ladies donned dresses reminiscent of Oscar statuettes that made them award-winners in their own right. Meryl Streep wearing Lanvin, and George Clooney's beau Stacey Kiebler wearing Marchesa looked Oscar perfect in their gold ruched gowns.

Next we saw the ladies in red. When Emma Stone first emerged on to the red carpet we were instantly reminded of Nicole Kidman at the 2007 Oscars in her Balenciaga gown that tied in a bow at the neck, the same as Stone's Giambattista Valli number. Natalie

Portman was darling in a vintage Christian Dior Haute Couture Gown with a stunning v-shaped sparkling necklace. The majority of the starlets got it right this year with just a handful that looked like they weren't quite sure of the dress code. Kelly Osbourne was a surprising style offender when she wore Aldo shoes and that awful granny rinse colour in her hair that she unashamedly flaunts on special occasions. Ms. Osbourne is a member of E!'s fashion police but should have been the one being prosecuted. Kristen Wiig forgot that the understated look does not belong at the Oscars when she wore a blush coloured J Mendel dress with wavy natural hair, a bit of colour wouldn't have gone astray.



Emma Stone in Giambattista Valli at the 2012 Oscars

Fashion

Two of a Kind



The Olsen twins, actresses and fashion designers

Marie Enright

IN THIS constantly changing industry, there are those who stay on top and those who simply fade away. Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen are definitely on top of the world right now.

The child actresses turned fashion designers have revolutionised the fashion industry and become some of world's youngest billionaires as well.

What is it about these girls that make them so appealing? Despite not having a degree or educational background in fashion design, they are currently one of the most successful designers in the market. The twins are unique in the sense that they have designed clothes for both the high and low end of the market. At a young age, they were already designing clothes for the "tween" market which was made available in Walmart.

The girls currently have three clothing lines that include The Row, Olsenboye and Elizabeth & James, which is named after their sister and brother.

The reason that their lines are so successful is due to their exclusivity.

These are definitely high end apparel as their handbags alone can cost up to \$39,000. With these prices, it is clear that the girls have implemented the use of leathers and other questionable fabrics. This particular bag in question costs such a price as it is made with one hundred percent alligator skin. While

not everyone would approve of this, celebrities still flock to their line and are eager to be seen wearing their designs.

Perhaps the best advertisement for their lines is their sister Elizabeth who is currently taking Hollywood by storm with her performances in movies such as "The Silent House" and "Martha Marcy May Marlene". The young star is often seen wearing her sister's designs and has said in many interviews that up until a certain age, she would even wear their hand me downs. Other celebrities that have been seen in their designs include Lea Michele, Gwyneth Paltrow and Rosie Huntington Whitely. This shows the broad appeal of their line as it is geared towards women of all ages. The interesting thing about their main line, The Row, is that it does not reflect the typical girly colours and patterns that you might expect from such young girls. The girls created the "homeless chic" trend that is still a firm favourite with celebrities today. This look included layers of baggy clothing, plain colours and oversized sunglasses. The twins have implemented this look into their line as well and have established monochrome dressing in the fashion industry. The girls have clearly set a high standard for their fashion peers and it doesn't look like they are giving up soon!

A foot in the Dior

Sophie McDermott

IN March 2011, fashion house Christian Dior announced it had started actions to dismiss British designer and creative director John Galliano.

This shocking announcement occurred when a video surfaced of Galliano making racist remarks against the Jewish race while intoxicated. This video sparked global controversy as tabloid newspaper The Sun also received it and put it on their website for the entire world to see.

Many were astounded by the news. Dior models like Natalie Portman were disgusted by the racist slurs which caused for awkward conversation as more than two models belonging to the fashion house were Jewish.

So why would a man of such importance in the fashion industry throw his career and fans away for the sake of a drunken speech? Patricia Field was one of the very few who took to her blog to defend Galliano by putting the whole thing down to "theatre".

While a lot of people could say that condemning a whole race of people for theatre is sick and twisted and he should be punished accordingly, there are those that might think, what's the big deal? Is Dior making a huge mistake by firing Galliano? In my opinion, of course they're not! The fashion label has a reputation to uphold and should not be seen to be in support of such

blatant racism from one of their very own. Field's defence may be right in regards to it being a bit of theatre but unfortunately for Galliano, it's theatre the world could do without.

However, Galliano's huge mistake didn't mean the end of his career as he created his own brand soon after but some lucky individual will be revelling in the drama, as Dior is on the hunt to replace Galliano and take the load from the current temporary creative director Bill Gaytten. So, is it a coincidence that Raf Simons of Jil Sander has just resigned from his position in the company? I think not.

The Belgian designer might just be on the move to Dior before his seat at Jil Sander even gets cold. Good thing or bad? It is most definitely a good thing. Raf Simons's clothes have a universal appeal to both men and women all over the world and he has even been described as a personal favourite by the Olsen twins and Ellen DeGeneres.

The announcement for the new creative director for Dior was hoped to be made during fashion week in Paris this year but there was no such luck for the curious masses and the rumour mill still churns on until further notice, so watch this space.



John Galliano, the former creative director of Christian Dior

Wishing the Summer Away

Emily Maree, Fashion Editor

THERE IS nothing like not even getting into springtime yet and worrying about what you'll wear in October or November.

Far from our pastels colours and floaty designs of spring, mint green being a personal favourite, we're worrying about how to fill our wardrobe with the simple burgundy's and navy's that graced this month's catwalks all around the world.

Or are we? The bright colours of spring and summer will cling on into the cold months and we can prolong our wardrobes a bit longer.

As always, knitwear is first on the list. Gaytten laid a huge emphasis on knitwear for the Christian Dior show, in all kinds of rich wintry colours.

Giambattista Valli also used knits, showing them in different ways than usual in bodices and skirts.

Trench coats also made a huge splash on the catwalk for next season, as they do almost every year.

From Vivienne Westwood to Louis Vuitton and of course, Burberry, every design house wanted a bit of the wool trench glory.

There were all types of coats: delicate, military, even huge shoulders were back with a vengeance.

It became increasingly clear as the shows went on that a trench-coat is the ultimate investment for the fashion forward next season.

Like the last few seasons, the emphasis on lady like clothing is extremely strong.

Dior in particular went back to their original style of the 40's, creating silhouettes and shapes instead of masking them.

This glamorous, elegant style was also seen in the form of fur and soft fabrics, making lines and frames that suit even the most figure-shy women.

"Like the last few seasons, the emphasis on lady like clothing is extremely strong"

Some designers refused to acknowledge the winter coming at all, staying loyal to summer and stuck with florals and summery prints. Mary Katrantzou, Issa and Temperley London, amongst many others, both used a lot of florals in their work and from the looks of things over the four fashion weeks, come September, it won't be time to put the florals away.

Cheryl Tweedy would be proud of the military styles that were shown in Milan by Moschino and have you get a little into your wardrobe you're sure to be too.

There wasn't just the usual khaki and navy colours, but a whole host from red to black to yellow lined up like toy soldiers, which makes sure that everyone can enjoy a wee bit of military fashion in their lives.



Dior's use of light colours and elegant styles will brighten up the winter months

So, this winter, don't limit yourself to dark colours. Leave those bright summer hues and prints in your wardrobe and throw on a pair of tights with them. Just because the weather is dark outside, just gives you more reason to brighten the place up.

Student Speak

STUDENT SPEAK

"So guys, what do you like most about your body?"

This week, your Welfare Officer, Tara Feeney, took the An Focal camera out and about for Body Image Awareness Week.



Extra, extra, read all about it
Springsteen is still The Boss. Read all about it on page 15.

21ST March 2012

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The Machine has a heart and its name is Florence



The sonic-lunged songstress herself, Florence Welch

Kelly O'Brien, Editor

I HAVE a confession to make. I do not own any Florence and the Machine albums, singles or merchandise. Apart from appreciating her songs on the radio in passing, I have never gone out of my way to listen to more of her work. This grievous mistake ends here, however, as I recently had the pleasure of witnessing a live performance by none other than Flo herself. And what a performance it was.

I purchased tickets from a friend on a mere whim a month or so ago. I've always loved live gigs, and I had the money to spare, so I went with it. I was tempted to sell the tickets on many occasions, as it clashed with another performer, Ben Howard, who I really wanted to see but Ben Howard, it turned out, was completely sold out... so it was off to the O2 for me and my significant other.

Having encountered a slight delay, we ended up missing the first support act, Spector, and half of the next act, The Horrors. Though I can't comment on Spector, what I saw of The Horrors, I liked. Accompanying Florence on her Ceremonials Tour, and having collaborated with Florence on 'Still Life', there was never any doubt that The Horrors were going to be anything but top notch.

A recovering garage-punk outfit, there was something oddly enrapturing about their sound and their set. I'd definitely go see them again.

Weaving closer the stage throughout The Horrors, we were in a fairly good position for when Florence Welch and her various band members (together with her collaborators, collectively known as The Machine) exploded onto the stage. Donning a billowing cape created by Lady Gaga stylist Alex Noble, Florence looked every bit the superstar as she launched into her first song of the night.

A melodramatic meditation on doomed love, What the Water Gave Me, found Florence charging, stadium rock-fashion, from one side to the other as her three backing vocalists took on the heavy lifting.

The most overwhelming moment

was her old hit Dog Days Are Over, which, at Welch's urging, saw the entire downstairs standing area transformed into a bouncy, feel-good mosh pit.

Apart from the stage featuring a gleaming art-deco backdrop and, of course, the booming vocals of Florence herself, the overall feel of the performance was very toned-down. It was a concert that seemed trimmed of all fat, with no excess to be seen anywhere, yet it absolutely worked.

The one downfall of the night was of my own making. With thousands of fans swaying to the music and bellowing out the words to almost every song, though surrounded by people, I felt incredibly left out!

Here was a world class singer, and a tight, tight band, and I only knew a handful of their songs! The shame!

Well gone are the days of my Florence ignorance.

From now on, I'll be following this songstress with the same passion as the 14,000 other spellbound fans in attendance that night.

Florence is an excellent performer and an even better vocalist. If you ever get the chance to go see her, do.

***Florence and the Machine
play the Phoenix Park with
Snow Patrol on July 8 2012.***



The late author of *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Stieg Larsson

Girl with the Dragon Tattoo reveals torrent of sexual abuses

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

I'M FOREVER searching for an unbeatable crime novel. I have a penchant for Scandinavian things, so call me bias but I guess this book struck all the right chords.

It's author Stieg Larsson has won overwhelming posthumous acclaim, mostly thanks to its Hollywood display. Aside from lakeside chalets and snow soaked hills, the novel reveals a society saturated with multifaceted sexual abuse of women. Having read books on the subject before, I was far from enthralled and thoroughly bored. However, in this

case, I was quite interested. If you've watched the Hollywood adaptation, you'll have seen the graphic rape of Lisbeth Salander (Rooney Mara in the film). This in itself shows the mentality of manipulation that the authority figure, in this case the man, holds.

The book is equally as graphic as the movie. Hollywood omitted far too much, though. They opted for several minutes of the not so believable wiring of funds from one account to another when this only takes up a page or two in the book. Instead, a somewhat more believable technology fuelled trip to Australia fulfils the goal of Mikael Blomkvist's business on the fictional Hedeby Island. The reliable good 'ol, corporate fraud plays a dominant part with the activities of several firm

from somewhat troubled magazine, Millenium, to shady security firm for whom Lisbeth "sorts post", Milton Security.

The book was a slow start though. After about 150 pages, I was killed by the curiosity cat and couldn't sleep until I finished it, which I duly did.

I was tired of the same old rehashed Dean Koontz-esque plots and predictable endings, so the breath of fresh air I wanted was given to me.

So if I were to give it 5 stars it would merely be so because it is Swedish. That does not mean you should not read this book. If the curiosity of Nazism, casual sex, violence against women and sexual sadism appeals, you should definitely read.

Hit and Miss



The New York band, Fun

Josh Lee,
Arts & Entertainment Editor

FUN'S 2009 debut, *Aim and Ignite* embodied a kitschy energy that even the most twee of indie pop outfits would consider excessive. The New York band channels campiness to brilliant effect. Reel dance around your bedroom with the blinds closed stuff.

Some Nights is the group's highly anticipated new LP, with lead single *We Are Young* making an appearance on *Glee* at the tail end of last year bringing the band into an exciting new sphere of exposure. At times, lead singer Nate Ruess' towering voice has a tinge of Freddie Mercury at his most ecstatic about it. The titular intro is classic fun bursting at the seams with a cacophony of pantomime sounds, a full orchestra and bursts of colour. Fun is theatrical to the core; everything's large, booming and exaggerated, perhaps even crossing into self-indulgence a bit too often.

On *Aim and Ignite*, the music's gaiety belies Ruess' lyrics, which are often

laced with sadness. It's an interesting juxtaposition, and a contrast that's oddly poignant. But that's mostly gone on *Some Nights*. Lyrics are more conventional ("Yeah, it's all alright / I guess it's all alright" Ruess tells us on "All Alright"), drums are more punchy and bass lines more saturated.

"*We Are Young*" draws on R&B chic in the form of Janelle Monáe, and the track is certainly more hip-hop-edged than fun's usually soaring string sections and pompous melodies. Janelle fades in and out, never really taking centre stage. The track feels deflated compared to fun's usual fare. It oozes pop sheen, but lacks the explosive emotion and colourfulness of, say, the embarrassing irresistibility of *Be Calm* on *Aim*. Ruess tribute's the bloated grandiosity of Kanye West's, *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* with providing a heavy hip hop influence, going so far as to hound that album's co-producer Jeff

Bhasker for help on the production and it becomes increasingly obvious as the album progresses. "Some Nights" is certainly ambitious, and a dynamic switch of style for Ruess, who since his pre-fun days in *The Format* has never been afraid to go his own way.

"My life's become as vapid / As a night out in Los Angeles / And I just want to stay in bed," he laments on the sappy "Why Am I the One", which is also probably the weakest track on the album. Fun tread a fine line between vivacious excellence and over-dressed pop. Unfortunately, the track is strangely reminiscent of Atomic Kitten's rendition of "Eternal Flame".

At its best, "Some Nights" is lush, daring and very, very fun. But collectively it comes across as a confusing hodgepodge of different ideas and sounds, not all of them executed terribly well.

The Dark Side of Ticket Touting

Josh Lee,
Arts & Entertainment Editor

IT'S BEEN over four years since the world plunged into recession, and at this point it would be safe to assume that most of us have become numb to the perpetual scandals of back scratching and behind closed door deals that have plagued our current brand of crony capitalism. So one would be forgiven for digesting with an fatigued sigh the recent scandal exposed by Channel 4's *Dispatches* investigation into ticket touting that has taken advantage of followers of large musical acts, and sporting fans, wanting to see their idols in the flesh.

Dispatches revealed music promoting giants like Live Nation, who own both Ticketmaster and secondary selling service TicketsNow, SJM and Irish firm MCD have been setting aside tickets and giving them to secondary ticket dealers like Viagogo and Seatwave to sell at exorbitant prices. Essentially, fans were and are being denied of the chance to get their hands on face value tickets that

never actually went on sale, and instead forced to pay out the nose on supposed fan-to-fan websites. Suddenly, that shady guy scalping tickets outside the door seems altogether quaint. Most of us would regard this practice as indefensible greed, and the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in England seems to agree. It has obtained a court order against Viagogo, forcing the website to reveal the address and identity of people who sold tickets on the website, some of whom could then face action by the RFU for breach of sale terms.

But scandals like this have an annoying tendency to slither from attention. It's clear that this news isn't something that will stop dedicated fans using these fan to fan websites. For those frantically F5'ing of the Ticketmaster page at 8:59am only to miss out on a ticket, going to these websites is the only way to reverse the heartbreak. And the professional ticket touters know this. One MP in the UK even went so far as to describe their business methods as "an excellent example of the enterprise culture and of what a classic entrepreneur does". So, what exactly can be done? Regulation? The responsibility for purging misleading selling methods shouldn't have to fall onto governments, here or in the UK. The onus should be placed on the artists themselves to ensure fans can get access to tickets at their face value.



Organised scalping Channel 4 exposed the unsavoury underbelly of secondary ticket sellers

Arts & Ents

Here's to hoping for a change this year

Niamh Masterson

ON the Late Late Show at the end of February, Jedward were elected our Eurovision contestants. Many complained last year when they were sent to Dusseldorf, Germany so how were they voted in again?

No one knows, but they are apparently popular! So this year they are being mentored by Linda Martin, a previous Eurovision success.

However, there doesn't seem to be much excitement about the Eurovision this year.

In fact, over the last couple of years there hasn't been much hype over the song contest at all. Since the days of You're a Star our acts being sent to Eurovision have fallen on the wrong side of mediocre.

The day we sent Dustin the Turkey to Eurovision was the day that interest disappeared.

In my house the television isn't turned on to watch Eurovision, and I definitely think this is the same for many households across Ireland.

When I was younger the Eurovision used to be something you had to watch just, like the Toy Show, but now I couldn't be bothered if I missed it. So I have to wonder does it even matter if Jedward are good or bad?

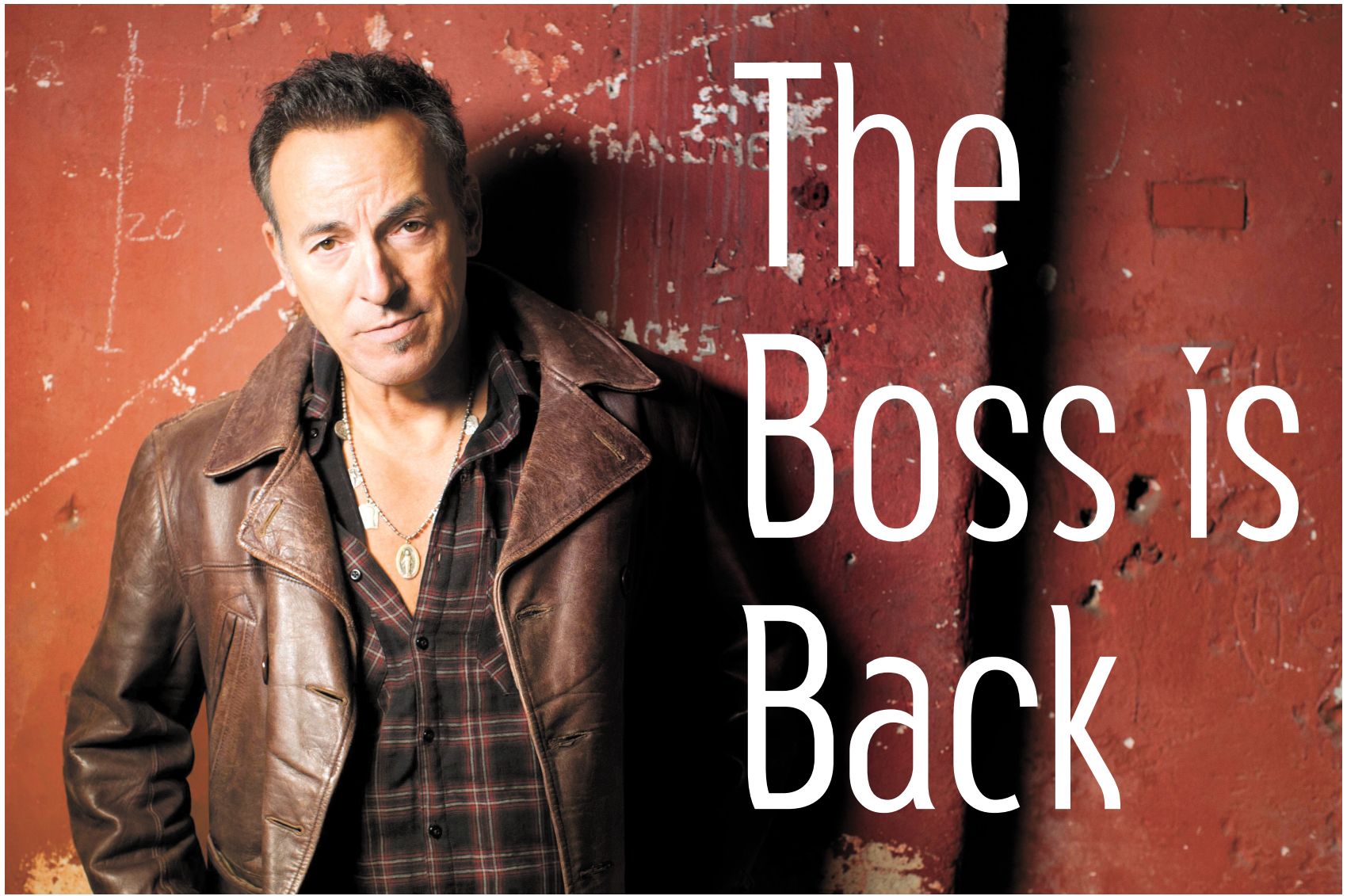
But it had to be said that Jedward will probably do better this year than most expect. We have no real expectations for the duo, so who knows what will happen? Statistics have appeared for the Eurovision which have revealed some interesting trends.

Apparently Ireland are lucky on leap years and if we're drawn 17th in the final then we have it in the bag, it's happened three times before.

While I don't really believe in these theories, they are something to think about. Jedward have a big fan base in Europe and when they were in Germany last year all the press could talk about was the twins.

So maybe this might be our year to regain our Eurovision glory and possibly spark some new interest in the the competition which in the past had been so fondly enjoyed by Irish people.

Lets give them a chance anyway and see what happens. Either way; Azerbaijan, get ready for Jedward!



'Wrecking Ball' is the latest LP of Springsteen's distinguished career

Paul O'Sullivan

"Up on bankers hill the party's going strong / Down here below we're shackled and drawn".

Bruce Springsteen's latest release, 'Wrecking Ball', offers a voice to the voiceless and hope to the hopeless. Addressing the Zeitgeist, Springsteen sings of the painful reality of the economic depression, bitterly attacks those responsible, while also giving his listeners a ray of hope in a way only The Boss can. This album is quite possibly Springsteen's best work since 2005's

'Devils and Dust'. Imagine "The Rising" meets "The Seeger Sessions" with a hint of gospel and soul. The album's first track, "We Take Care of Our Own", is the obvious single and has the traditional Springsteen trademark written all over it. However, the tracks that follow best represent the overall theme of the album. "Shackled and Drawn" is a rousing folk rock anthem that might have fit in well at the tail end of 'The Seeger Sessions'.

"Jack of all Trades" is a less lively song which takes a look at the life of a traditional man who would work at anything just to work, a situation all too familiar I would imagine. The title of the most poignant and raw track goes to

"This Depression" where Springsteen lays bare his soul and sings on behalf of the masses. With despair in his voice he sings "I haven't always been strong, but I've never felt so weak".

"Wrecking Ball" is not all gloom and doom though. While most of the songs address the temperamental economic climate, there are a number of songs that are hopeful and uplifting. You would expect to hear

"Death to my Hometown" in the local Irish trad bar. The album's title track shows Springsteen confidently confronting the tough times with the chorus "Come on and take your best shot / Let me see what you got / Bring on your wrecking ball". Fans of the late

Clarence Clemons will want to listen to "Land of Hopes and Dreams", where the Big Man's signature saxophone sound can be heard. His posthumous appearance on this album is a fine tribute as it offers the album what he had offered all along: passion and strength. This is a very strong album and it shows how, even at the age of sixty-two and after seventeen records, Springsteen is still The Boss and is well capable of surpassing the work of his "glory days".

J. K. Rowling: new success on the horizon?

Niamh Masterson

AS SOME of you may know, J. K. Rowling has decided to write a new book directed at adults.

This is her first book since the Harry Potter series and some wonder will she be able to separate herself from the boy with the lightning shaped scar.

The Harry Potter series was a huge success for Rowling.

Millions of books were sold as people of all ages could not get enough of the magical adventures.

Then, when the films were released, Rowling was once again the limelight

for her captivating books. Harry's adventures brought tears, laughs and excitement for all those who were completely drawn in by the characters. Yes, I am one of them.

When the last Harry Potter book was released I didn't want to read the last page because that meant the end.

Many Harry Potter fans like me were feeling the same, so when this new book is released fans will probably be hoping for a new series that they can become obsessed with.

However no one knows what route Rowling is going to take this book.

It is unlikely she will take on the magical genre again.

If she writes in this genre again too many comparisons will be made



J. K. Rowling is to take her first steps post-Potter

between it and the Harry Potter series and that could lead to some bad press for her new book.

The question is what genre will it fall under? Could she write like a new Marian Keyes? Or will she venture towards mystery or even love. It is hard to know where her talents lie after fantasy fiction because that's all we have seen of her.

Harry Potter was a huge, and highly successful, series. This new book will be aimed at adults and she will have to change the tone. The way Rowling

writes will have to completely change, and that can be hard for any writer. But the only way she can remove herself from being known as the woman who penned Harry Potter is to make this book a complete success.

But can she do it and will she win over the old Potter crazy fans? I know I will probably be the first in the line to buy it! I can feel another obsession coming on!

Film

Free Film Wednesdays from the Law School

Jennifer Armstrong, Film Editor

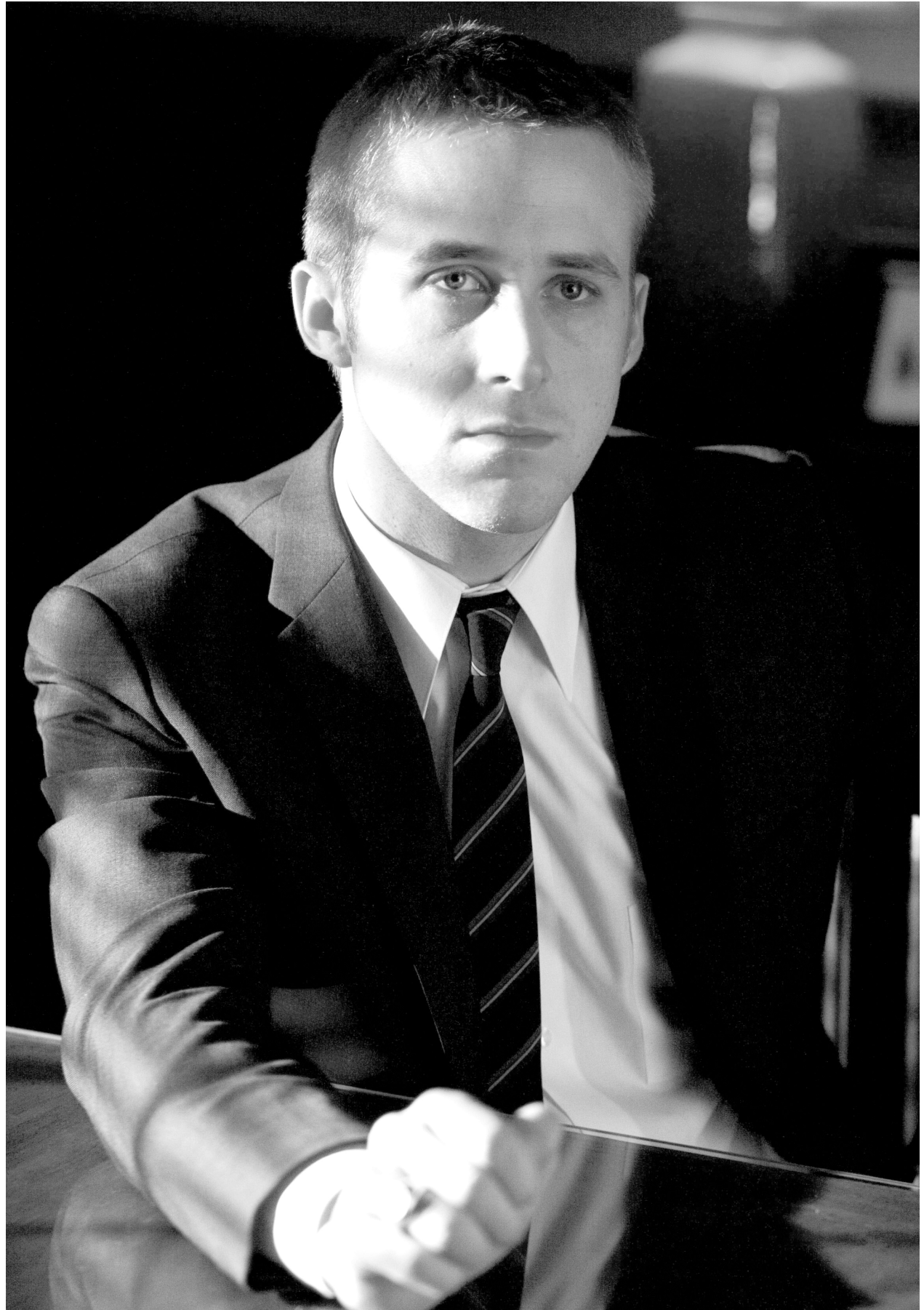
LINGERING in the main building after 6pm has never sounded appealing.

The lights begin to dim, the Hoover comes out, and Starbucks takes its last few victims who can't but resist spending 50 percent of their weeks allowance on some ice coffee explosion. Now however, it might just be worth it. The Law School, in efforts to engage students in something more than worrying what grade is printed on their transcript at the end of the year, have started what is called "Law in Film Nights". Every Wednesday for the past semester they have been screening films that deal with the topic of law in some way, to try and help stimulate the minds of students, and perhaps even create some heated debates on the issues being addressed.

Most recently they aired *Fracture*, an exciting tale of deceit and manipulation starring the ever terrifying Anthony Hopkins and the ever beautiful Ryan Gosling. Previous films have

included *The Runaway Jury* starring Gene Hackman and Dustin Hoffman, and *Conviction* with Hilary Swank. Although the idea of 'organised fun' can seem slightly painful, and most of us want to wipe clean everything we've learnt that day by 6pm, to tune into a good movie for 2 hours isn't the worst thing we could be doing.

There really is no harm in stimulating our minds with something decent for a change, while simultaneously receiving valuable legal information that could well come to our aid some day in the future. The screening is completely free and the atmosphere is relaxed and fun. Students are encouraged to bring along popcorn and treats, or maybe even your dinner! The event takes place every Wednesday in C1061 in the main building at 6pm. Come future lawyers or future actors, or even just movie enthusiasts! As the poet Robert Frost once remarked, 'A jury consists of twelve persons chosen to decide who has the better lawyer.' In my mind, as long as Ryan Gosling continues to be one of those lawyers, I feel he should win, every time!



A shot from the movie *Fracture* which was recently aired in the Main Building

Christopher Plummer, better late than never

Dearbhaile Houston

AT this year's Academy Awards, Christopher Plummer beat the likes of Jonah Hill and Kenneth Branagh in the Best Supporting Actor category and became the oldest actor to win the accolade at the age of 82.

He was previously nominated in 2009 but lost to Christoph Waltz. This year he won for his portrayal of a man, who after the death of his wife comes out as gay, in the film *Beginners*. Directed by Mike Mills (and based on the life of Mills' father), this is probably, without any exaggeration, the best film in the world. I mean, it has Ewan McGregor, a cute dog that communicates through subtitles (take that, Uggie!) and of course, Plummer giving one of the most gloriously heart-breaking and entertaining performances of his career. Born in Toronto in 1929, one of Plummer's first major roles was as Captain Von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. He began acting in his teens and started working in theatre and on Broadway, later making his way into acting on screen.

He is still well known for his theatre roles, especially as a Shakespearean actor and has won quite a few Tony awards for his work. With a career spanning almost seven decades, Plummer's repertoire is vast. So while you might have seen Plummer in recent films, his older work is well worth looking at too. Apart from the aforementioned *Sound of Music* and *Beginners* (which you have already seen, thanks to my glowing recommendation), some of Plummer's best roles include Sherlock Holmes in 1979's *Murder by Decree*, Mike Wallace in *The Insider* and as the psychiatrist in *A Beautiful Mind*. Also recommended is his turn in *The Last Station* as Leo Tolstoy. However, my favourite Plummer performance will always be Charles Muntz in Disney Pixar's *Up*. And it will be yours too, unless you don't have a soul.

For the time being he may be known as the world's oldest Oscar winner but Christopher Plummer has long been cemented in everyone's mind as a brilliant and talented performer.

Film Review: *Contraband*

Martin Gosling

MARK Wahlberg is Chris Farraday in *Contraband*, a remake of the Icelandic thriller *Reykjavik-Rotterdam*.

The film tells the story of a former smuggler Wahlberg who now earns an honest living as a security installation expert in New Orleans.

Family life with his wife Kate and their two kids keep Chris out of trouble until Kate's wayward little brother Andy (Caleb Landry Jones) gets into smuggling and botches a drug deal for the ruthless Tim (Giovanni Ribisi).

Chris enlists the help of his shady pal, Sebastian (Ben Foster) to help him pull off a near impossible heist involving a supertanker and several million dollars in counterfeit bills.

This is the war of *Contraband*. Ben Foster is at a level where you want the other actors to join him and add complexity to their characters. The story has to plod sluggishly through a weak set-up to reach the good stuff and then it comes to a silly, unnecessary

coda when it had the opportunity to dodge the Hollywood Ending and do something powerful and tragic.

The director, Baltasar Kormákur, who played the lead role in the original, uses the good old shaky camera technique, but uses it better than most because it brings the illusion of realism to the world of smuggling.

Kormákur gives us a realistic representation of how smuggling operates and eschews Hollywood thrills. Kormákur wrings some tension out of a few scenes that rely on a ticking clock. But *Contraband* squanders its tiny bit of goodwill with a gritty attitude that is never reflected in the film.

With Wahlberg as a dull leading man and even the usually reliable Foster failing to cut loose, *Contraband* is not nearly as fun as it could have been, but not dramatic or realistic enough to get by as an honest thriller either.

There is a Mark Wahlberg film about counterfeit money smuggling we would all fall over ourselves to see, but *Contraband* scratches the surface



Mark Wahlberg and Caleb Landry Jones in *Contraband*

of that idea just enough that you badly wish you were seeing the better version.

The World of Irish Cinema

Donnchadh Tiernan

WITH the recent explosion of Patriotism for our national holiday, it is worth investigating the current stance of the Irish film industry.

Unfortunately, the Cinema in Ireland has for many years been more famous for its heavy right to censor than its quality of output. Peter Lennon, maker of a Rocky Road is a film every Irish citizen should see and not many have. It is the only critically reflective account of Irish society by an Irish film-maker that was not so in a fashionable sense, like Angela's Ashes or Song for a Raggy Boy. Purposefully not going into detail on its content, its suppression by the Irish government (it could not be banned because it contains no sex) and the veritable ignorance towards it by the Irish people says enough to anyone who views the film to inspire a multitude of mail-plaudits to Peter Lennon.

One might cite the recent films Hunger and Wind the Shakes the Barley as oblique statements in contradiction of native traditionalist views on Nationalism, but both of these excellent films stemmed from British helmsmen. The nearest home-grown statements on these two counts are the sensationally non-confrontational, Some Mother's Son and Michael Collins, although the latter is great to kick off a pub-crawl with. The closest Irish film-makers have come to relevant social critiques in recent years are Adam and Paul and Garage, both subtle by Lennon's standards (though Lennon's film is a documentary), but both biting and deeply affecting at the same time. And, of course, both entirely ignored in Ireland, the former even finding a larger audience in Austria.

The iron grip of Catholicism has somewhat loosened in recent years but the stagnancy of Irish political and populist thought has much evolving still to do. Perhaps there are film-makers among us who have seen these revelations within themselves but they have yet to share the output publicly and until they do Cinema in Ireland un-free will never be at peace.



Cillian Murphy in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Mr Bluray

Jennifer Armstrong, Film Editor

HAVING only recently lost my bluray virginity, I was quite sceptical of the new 'sensational' technology up till now.

Lets call a spade a spade. A film is a film. Casablanca was just as heartbreaking back then as it is now, John McClane's explosions seemed to work quite well without more intricate detail or better sound, and Ferris Bueller still rocked our socks away as he bounced around on that float.

However, I won't lie, it is rather cool. To be fair, the world of technology only functions as a constantly progressing industry. "Cool" guys sit at desks or in labs and hunt for 'the next big thing'.

Like cheetahs racing against each other, they are constantly attempting to out run each other on the steel lined, gadget filled race track they call life.

A personal best is good, for example, the ipod may grow and change, but it

will always be the ipod, the top runner, a household name. But ultimately, you want something epic, something that will change the face of home entertainment forever, although I thought I'd never say it, enter bluray. Although the main aim of the technology is greater disk size, the sound and detail is greatly different and most definitely noticeable.

Again, sceptical doesn't even explain my initial reaction to new movie technology, I was genuinely quite happy with my Disney cassette tapes.

However, with combined DVD and Bluray are on sale for as little at €80, I reckon it's no harm in getting ahead of the technology cowards, and catching up with the Bill Gates of the world.

The first discs were released in 2006 with films such as 50 First Dates and Hitch but now every single day old films are being remastered into the new medium. Everything from Pulp Fiction to Ghostbusters is available on the market and every new release is brought out in both formats.

I reckon it's only a matter of time before the DVD production dwindles away. Rest in peace DVD, rest in peace. One could of course argue that in a matter of months a new craze will hit the market, and undoubtedly, it will! But this is all part of the fun tree we call "the ever changing DVD Market". I think at this stage, it's much easier to just jump on the band wagon than scream and run from the technological lions that are driving it.

We bought a Zoo

Gabrielle McArdle

CAMERON Crowe is back! After a six year aperture in what one could call hibernation due to the shame he felt from producing his last god awful movie "Elizabethtown", Crowe has made his return.

Accompanying his arrival with the latest of his productions "We Bought a Zoo", Crowe is on his way back to retrieving his reputation once again.

Based on a true story and on the memoirs of Benjamin Mee, the movie is set in sunny California where Matt Damon who plays the protagonist Mr Mee falls apart after losing his wife to cancer. Yearning to move on and find some new life adventures for himself and his two children, a five year old girl and an estranged teenage boy, Mee relocates his family to the countryside. In doing so he purchases an amazing house on the site of what used to be a zoo! With a crazy farfetched notion of renovating it and reopening it to the public Benjamin puts his entire lives savings and inheritance from his father into making this his dream come true.



We bought a Zoo - somehow, it actually works

Along with the zoo comes of group of workers and including the lovely Scarlett Johansson who plays the role of feisty carer and zookeeper to the animals, Kelly Foster. As ridiculous as the story-line seems, Crowe has somehow made it work. Although the movie is a tad predictable and has your everyday run of the mill sop story written all over it, it was not as bad as I was expecting it to be. Damon holds the movie together with yet another almost flawless performance. He nails his role

as the grief stricken Father and we see this at its prime in a tragic Oscar worthy scene where he revisits photos of his late wife. If bored on a wet, miserable Sunday afternoon this movie would be well worth watching. As the movie says "all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage. Just literally twenty seconds of embarrassing bravery". It takes far less than 20 seconds to flick the movie on, and I promise you, you won't be disappointed!

Elections

Election is on March 22!

With voting only around the corner, your Union wants to give you the best possible information on how the electronic voting system will work for the Sabbatical Officer elections on Thursday March 22 2012. Polling will take place from 7am to 8pm and the results will be announced in the Stables at 8:30pm. To help remind students to vote we have asked the IT department to change the homepage on all PCs to the <https://vote.ulsu.ie/home> website, we hope this doesn't inconvenience any students. We received a record breaking 3,865 votes and we are hoping to get over 4,000 votes this year, please cast your vote on the 22nd March, it'll only take 2 minutes!

PRESIDENT

"The President
is the face
of the Union"



Name: David Hartery
Position sought: President

Blurb: David is currently a fourth year Law Plus student. He has been PRO, Auditor, Treasurer and IV Convenor of the Debating Union and has also been C & S Exec Societies Representative. He was also appointed to the Chair of C & S Council.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?

I plan to increase accountability and transparency - to continue to publish both management and audited accounts as well as monthly status reports from SU Exec and from Sabbatical Officers. I would ensure a strict officer budget system is introduced and I would make sure that the student media publications continue in their role as checks on SU power.

Why should students vote for you?

It's critically important in the current financial environment that we heal the divide between the SU and Clubs and Socs. The only way to keep a vibrant campus is to keep people engaged through grass roots organisation. I'm not a person who is after power or advancement, I just want a platform to listen to students and to represent them as best I can.



Name: Eamonn Horgan
Position sought: President

Blurb: Eamonn is currently in fourth year of Civil Engineering.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?

I would ensure that other officers adhered to their jobs details. I would work with the buildings and estates department to ensure greater security in and around the college, in the car parks and library. I would create a positive atmosphere in the place. I would promote tolerance in the college. Health, mental and physical, is also a key point of my campaign and will work very closely with Welfare to ensure the best services are provided.

Why should students vote for you?

I am a motivated, positive problem-solver.
I am a natural leader and have the drive to be a great president.
I am a people's person, outgoing and confident;
someone you need to be president.



Name: Adam Moursy
Position sought: President

Blurb: Adam is currently a third year Law Plus student. He has previously been C & S Exec. Societies Representative, President of the Law Society and Co-Chairman, Treasurer and First Year Rep of the UL Rugby Club.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?

My main plans are simple: Approachability. The Union, as it is, is not approachable. People are cautious around it; they do not see it as a welcoming environment. My aim is to change this. Promotion of the Union: I think vast strides have been made this year to promote the Union but I feel more can be done by improving the current media outlets we have.

Why should students vote for you?

I am the right person for the job. I will give everything I have if elected. It is important to me that students feel they can approach me and have a conversation. If elected, I will make it my aim to represent students in the best way possible as well as improving the image of the union to make more people feel welcome in there.

DEPUTY
PRESIDENT/
WELFARE

"A good
Welfare Officer
knows how
to listen"



Name: William Jennings
Position sought: DP/Welfare

Blurb: William is currently a fourth year Business student.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?

I would continue the good work of the current Welfare Officer. Grants: attempts to cut down on release time as it is increasing every year, maintain free Medical Services as free access is vital for a healthy student life and the events making them both fun and educational as ever.

Why should students vote for you?

They should vote for me because: I'm a fresh pair of eyes. I'm not afraid of a challenge and I have a friendly disposition and as many people keep saying "where there's a will there's a way", my addition to this is "I'm Will".



Name: Kelly O'Brien
Position sought: DP/Welfare

Blurb: Kelly is currently your ULSU Vice President/Communications Officer. She studied New Media and English here in UL and graduated in August. She has previously held the positions of Drama Society Treasurer, PRO and Secretary.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?

- I have a three point plan for the Welfare office.
- 'Niteline'. Student volunteers would man a telephone line for students feeling stressed or depressed. They would speak to a trained peer and, if needed, be referred to counselling or another relevant organisation.
 - Bulk buy duxes condoms and pass the savings onto students.
 - You'd still be able to get Mojo's for free, but at least you'd have the option.
 - Bigger and better Welfare campaigns.

Why should students vote for you?

Because I'm the right person for the job!
I've already proven my dedication to the SU in making Communications as good as it is - hopefully I can do the same for Welfare.



Name: Cathal Ronan
Position sought: DP/Welfare

Blurb: Cathal is currently a fourth year studying for a BA (Joint Honours) in Criminal Justice and Economics. He is currently the Legal Officer for the UL Psychology Society and was a Class Rep in his first year. He then went on to run for First Year Rep.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?

I would try to return the SU to its former glory, the SU I knew when I started college here. When the SU suffers, it's the students and their welfare that suffer. It will take hard work and dedication, something I am not afraid of doing.

Why should students vote for you?

I will devote myself to the needs of the students. Student health and happiness are first on my agenda. I am loyal, trustworthy and approachable. I am a good listener and can also make my voice and yours be heard. I will do everything I can for you.

Elections

Protect your password!

Please protect your password and do not give it to any candidates or campaign teams for use on the electronic voting system.

The system the Students' Union uses for the electronic voting protects your identity and does not transfer any personal data to a third party.

VP/
Academic

“VP/Academic deals with students' concerns, aspirations and problems in relation to their courses”



Name: Patrick Rockett
Position sought: VP/Academic

Blurb: Paddy is currently ULSU VP/Campaigns and Services Officer. He studied Bsc Education (Biological Sciences with Physics) prior to his term in office. He has previously been ULSU Community Relations Officer and Fundraising Officer and was Science Ed Class Rep for three years. Two years ago, Paddy ran for the office of President and, last year, he ran and was elected as Campaigns and Services Officer.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?
Increase Union Transparency via a better Union forum.
Target the following areas of representation for students:
• Union • University • Entertainment
Increase recruitment and uptake of both faculty and class reps with a cheaper cost effective means of training. Academic podcasts/videos to deal with the overly frequent questions.

Why should students vote for you?
I can re-invigorate active participation from the student body and aid the new sabbatical team in engaging in open, collaborative decision making for the benefit of the students we represent. I feel I am genuine and approachable and in any case I always do my best to help students! Rockett4Academics

Name: Jackie Woods
Position sought: VP/Academic

Blurb: Jackie is currently in her fourth year of Business Studies.

If you were elected, what would you do and why?
I would ensure that the QCA is explained fully to students on their first year of study in UL. I would work to ensure that deadlines do not overlap in relation to the continuous assessment of modules. I would develop a co-op hotline for students who have any queries in relation to their co-op. I would have more security over exam results so that what happened this year will not occur again.

Why should students vote for you?
I can bring fresh ideas to the Union. I am dedicated, committed and understanding of the educational needs of the students. “Education makes options, Woods makes results”



How to Vote:

1. Log on to <https://vote.ulsu.ie/>
2. You will be directed to log in using your University of Limerick username and password
3. You will be asked to consent to the transfer of data to the University approved controller for the IT Dept. (this controller is called SWITCH)
4. A ‘Digital ID Card’ will be created to verify that you are authorised to vote
5. Confirm the ‘Digital ID Card’
6. Cast your vote
- Don't forget there are 3 different elections



Journo Soc visits The Sanctuary



Members of the Journalism Society on their recent trip

“LAW has been a registered charity since 1983. It is dedicated to caring and rehoming animals from the entire Limerick area”

Pamela Ryan

The Journalism Society recently went on a trip to the Limerick Animal Welfare in Moorestown, Kilfinane. Upon arrival, the excitement was heard in the high pitched voices cooing over animals with baby talk that would have sounded extremely creepy and inappropriate in any other context. We were given a tour of the facilities which currently include dog kennels, a cat unit, rabbit hutches and vast amounts of land for horses, pigs, goats, and the cutest little Shetland ponies I've ever seen. There is also an unfinished main building that The Sanctuary is currently raising money for. Each of us was given a dog for the day and we brought them for walks. In many cases we were being walked by the dogs... but we didn't mind much. We were caught in a small hailstorm but suffered on and luckily missed the downpour that was to follow. Many walker/dog bonding relationships occurred and dogs were named based on personality traits. Mine, for instance, I had christened Tenshie because she was the most pretentious dog I had ever met. But I loved her anyway. Arriving back at The Sanctuary we hungrily sat for lunch before realising we had lost three of our walkers. On calling them we were immediately received by their voicemails. Panic ensued. Then we got over it and ate without them. After many theories had floated about like mutant dog people in the hills, they arrived eventually, and fully intact.

Next was the fun bit, the dog washing. The cooing and giggles were joined by bubbles and squirming puppies. Drying wasn't so easy because a few were afraid of the hair dryers but seeing a dog play with a towel and get all caught up in it is a laughable sight to say the least. Feeding time and washing up was the prelude to about an hour of sitting

in kennels and cuddling puppies and kittens. Before we left we weeded out one of the outdoor kennels until it was immaculate. There was an accident or two with overturned wheelbarrows but we did an excellent job all the same. The sight of the bus approaching was one of sadness for me. The most difficult thing about volunteering at The Sanctuary was having to leave. LAW has been a registered charity since 1983. It is dedicated to caring and rehoming animals from the entire Limerick area. Over the past five years alone they have saved and rehomed more than 2,000 animals. The Sanctuary has a no-kill policy except in circumstances of irreversible ill-health. They offer talks to primary schools and secondary schools and frequently have these students out to visit the animals and volunteer at The Sanctuary. It now provides shelter for up to 60 dogs and puppies, 50 cats and kittens, numerous rabbits, goats, pigs, horses, ponies and donkeys. The Sanctuary is currently trying to raise money for the finishing of the new main building which will cost around €1m and the isolation kennel for cats and kittens. Donations can be made using PayPal, Wordplay or directly into The Sanctuary's bank account or fund. Donations can also be made in their charity shop at 59 Parnell Street, Limerick. People can also volunteer at The Sanctuary by walking the dogs, feeding the animals, washing up after feeding time, scrubbing out kennels, litter trays and rabbit hutches, helping staff give veterinary treatments, and washing and grooming the animals. Volunteers must be over the age of 16.

Phone 063 91110 or 087 6371044 or email limerickanimalwelfarequeries@gmail.com to get involved.

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ENROLL TODAY

Localisation Research Centre



Life in UL Ladies Rugby

Katie Sullivan

I HAD never seen a rugby match before I studied abroad at the University of Limerick. The only thing I knew about it was that the players threw the ball backwards and I liked how the boys looked in the snug uniform.

But when I landed in Ireland for my five-month adventure, I told myself I'd try things I never had before. So when a fellow American asked me to join her for rugby training one night, I agreed, having absolutely no idea what I was in for. I played sports my whole life, everything from volleyball to soccer to softball. But never before had I played a sport where people charged full-speed ahead, barrelling into one another with no pads and no apprehension. I'll be honest, I was terrified.

The first few practices were rough. I had no idea what was going on and my body ached in places I didn't even know existed. But with the encouragement of some of the friendliest women I've ever met, I slowly and surely began to comprehend what was going on around me. I could tell the difference between

a ruck and a scrum, and I was able to lift a lineout jumper no problem. Soon I discovered how invigorating the sport was, the adrenaline pumped through my veins every time I caught the ball from the kick-off and charged toward a pack of girls, knowing my teammates were behind me to back me up.

The high I got from battling someone in the front row of a scrum was unmatched by any other sport I had ever played in my life. The camaraderie I felt with my teammates after we fought like to get the ball across the try line to beat our opponent was truly an athletic inspiration. More importantly, I met some of the most friendly, open-minded, outrageously fun people I'd ever come across. The women I stepped on the pitch with took the time to explain the complexities of the sport and maintained their patience and encouragement as I got my bearings. But the rugby girls weren't just friends on the pitch.

Almost instantly I had a group of people to go out with, party with, to dance like a fool at The Lodge with. I had people I could meet for lunch, lounge on the lawn with. My fellow American and I even got invited to spend a weekend at home with one of the girls and her parents (thanks, Leah!).

Two years later when I came back to visit Dublin on holiday, I didn't hesitate to contact one of my former teammates who was gracious and hospitable enough to let us crash at her townhouse for five days (thanks, Michelle!).



Katie Sullivan and Kate Frier

The women of the UL rugby team inspired me to continue my rugby career in the States, and I played at my home university, landing playing time in the Division I National Championship game in California. Now that I'm graduated and working, I help coach at a local university and hope to get back into playing. Amidst all the traveling I did during my time in Ireland and all the sites I saw throughout Europe, playing rugby at UL was by far the highlight of my time abroad. The relationships and bonds I formed by playing rugby at UL

are genuine and I'm hoping life-long. I know whenever I'm back in Ireland I could call anyone of them up any time and they'd be down to meet up for a pint or an adventure. And I hope they know they are welcome to crash my place anytime they venture to the States. So girls, if you're new at UL, studying abroad or just looking for a fun activity with some amazing people, join the rugby team. It will be one of the best things you ever do.

UL DebU to host Irish Mace Semi-final

Evana Downes

ON Tuesday Week 9 (March 20), the Debating Union will be hosting a semi-final round of a high profile and prestigious national competition, the Irish Mace.

The Mace will be a black tie event preceded by a wine reception, and is expected to be attended by student debaters from all over Ireland.

There is also a high possibility of a UL team being among those competing on the day for a place in the Irish Mace final, which will be held in DCU.

This event is one of a number of events that will be held by UL's Debating Union in the coming weeks. The society recently announced that it will be awarding the Auditor's Medal to Chief Justice Susan Denham later in the semester, in recognition of her contribution to debate and discourse. This esteemed annual award was presented in former years to UL's founding president, Prof. Ed Walsh, and the late former Taoiseach, Dr Garrett Fitzgerald.

DebU has also been keeping busy over the past few weeks with debating events and competitions. On Wednesday Week 6, the society ran a successful debating workshop for secondary school students, directed by Schools Convenor Mikey Hayes, within the university.

The workshop invited the participation of several Limerick schools, and introduced debating at secondary school level to a large number of students.

DebU was also pleased to welcome an interested guest to observe our Speaker Development class on Monday Week 7, and will be holding a Schools' Mace competition for secondary school students as a follow-up to the workshop in coming weeks.

More medals for UL Tramps in Scotland

Grainne Ni Hodhrain

AT 3am on the not so bright morning of the February 24, Twenty-Four UL tramps headed for Edinburgh. The club attends the Scottish Student Trampolining Open (SSTO) every year along with various Irish, English and Scottish clubs.

The trip involving a car journey, a flight and two train journeys left us exhausted but more than ready for warm up bounces and, of course, the first night out. As JK Rowling wrote the first Harry Potter book in a cafe just up the road from the University of Edinburgh, a Harry Potter themed night was in store.

Spectacular efforts were made by most with costumes such as Dementors, a snitch and our very own nearly headless

Emma. Saturday's competition started with some face paint still half on, routines slightly wonky and some heads very fuzzy.

The day continued with some epic crash-outs and some even more epic routines. Prize-giving on the Sunday morning revealed that UL tramp Shannen Minter had beaten 51 other competitors to take the gold in intermediate Ladies while UL's Will Reidy had taken the bronze in Advanced Mens.

Colm Madigan, a UL tramp last year, now completing a Masters at the University of Edinburgh, took the silver in Intermediate Mens, we still take full credit for all his skills! Newbie James Downey and our secretary Dave Ryan narrowly missed out on medals



Members of UL Tramps during their competitive trip to Edinburgh

Intermediate Mens, just 0.5 off third place. Unfortunately, Sunday's synchro competition was filled with pretty disastrous failed synchronisation for most of the Irish clubs meaning our winning streak from Varsities will have to continue at our next competition instead. The Irish Student Trampoline

Open (ISTO) will be held in Belfast at the end of week 10. ISTO will be bigger than ever this year with 500 competitors from Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales so the UL tramps are training hard.

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Kayak Club win third Consecutive Intervarsity



Member of the Kayak Club with the hard won trophies

Oisin Bates

HAVING clinched the title by the narrowest of margins in 2011, the lead in to this year's Canoe and Kayak Intervarsities was a tense and anxious affair for the UL Club.

As many of the club's core members, crucial to the past two victories, had since graduated, there was an awareness that a huge effort would be needed to win this year's title. Pre-competition training started for most in January and continued until the week of the event.

The first event of the three day tournament was Kayak Polo. Though the polo-squad had prepared well, they unfortunately received one of the toughest possible draws and were unlucky not to progress past the quarter finals. Following the event, there was awareness that a considerable effort would be needed across the remainder of the weekend in order to win the overall tournament.

Day 2 saw a huge effort from the white-water and freestyle teams in their respective events; UL's white-water boater-cross team came first

by a comfortable margin while the freestyle team won with an impressive 870 points, 205 above their nearest challenger.

The final day brought a number of long-distance races across a variety of disciplines. To the relief of many competitors, the course's length was scaled from a 6k endurance race to a 2k sprint as a result of problems securing the entirety of the intended river course. A huge effort was put in by the entirety of UL's competitors for this last bout and the Club won the overall event with two first place finishes, one third place finish and a fourth place finish.

The club's overall performance this year was a testament to the effort put in during the past weeks by so many to raise their fitness and technical skill. The victory wouldn't have been possible without the presence of many of the Club's first years who were indispensable in the victory. Three-in-a-row is always sweet and marked a huge milestone in the Club's progression (the first in its history).

On the back of this victory, UL's canoeing and kayaking scene is as promising as ever.

Casey Slams USHA Handball Collegiate Championship in Fresher Year

Mark O'Donovan

CATRIONA Casey added to her already impressive trophy collection for the year by winning the Women's Division 1 Open Singles Final at the 60th National USHA Collegiate Championships hosted in Springfield, Missouri. Partnered with Lisa Loughnane, the UL duo also won the Women's Open Doubles Final beating the duo from Lake Forest, Illinois.

Casey can now boast having won every ladies title available in Colleges Handball in her Fresher's year.

Casey defeated everyone put in her path emphatically by conceding only 9 points throughout the whole singles tournament while scoring 168 points herself to become the champion. Loughnane had to meet the inform Casey in the Semi Finals where no love was lost between the two and Casey conceded the most aces of the weekend in any one match, with the game finishing 21-1, 21-4. The two girls then had to turn around and

straight back in to the alley to play the semi-final of the Doubles which the double pairings were handing out lessons in the game of Handball. Casey & Loughnane only conceded 11 points on the way to the title over 4 matches.

In the Men's, Colm O'Luing was UL's only male representative. After coming through 3 tough qualifying rounds in the Division 1 A, O'Luing finally was overcome by Jeff Streibig from Missouri State College who was playing on his home turf. It took a tie breaker for O'Luing to be defeated



Catriona Casey in action in the Open Singles Final

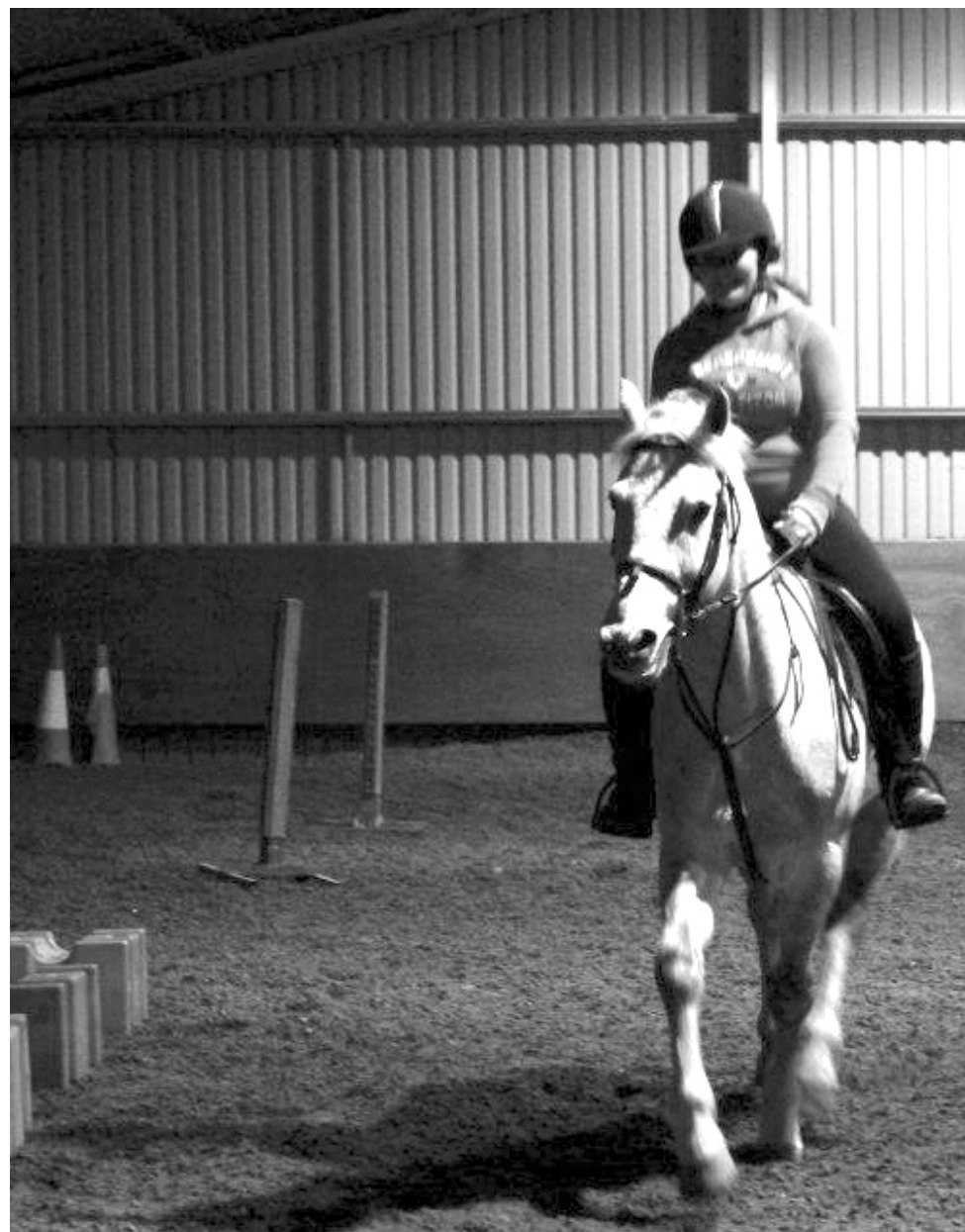
on a score line of 18-21, 21-11, 11-2. All matches were being broadcast live over the internet so everyone at home could watch the progress of their college mates. The commentators took a particular shine to O'Luing, and he became known as 'The Horse' in the commentary due to the power and resilience he showed in his match's.

The next major event on the calendar for the Handball Club is the 13th & 14th April for our Annual One Wall tournament which we host in the PESS Building.

This ensures to be a fantastic weekend with handballers coming from other colleges and surrounding Handball Clubs. Entry to play is €20 and entry forms will be available in the next fortnight. Email ulhandball@gmail.com for an entry form.

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Selected photographs from the UL Equestrian Club competing in the NUIG intervarsities and the Clonshire Pony Games.



C&S

Britton and Mulhare Lead UL Charge

Kevin Moore

THE second Saturday in March brought us to the sunny south east for the IUA Cross Country in Waterford hosted by WIT Athletics Club.

A warm day along with what could only be described as a truly challenging hilly cross country course met us upon arrival in Waterford.

In the ladies race Una Britton ran a superb race to come up through the field and claim the silver individual medal. Nicola O'Ceallaigh was the next UL athlete in 19th position closely followed by Claire Sullivan in 26th place, Claire Earls in 37th, Gemma

Reddin in 43rd, Catherine Kelly in 45th, Fionnula Mulroy in 48th and Sinead Prendiville in 52nd. The ladies combined to get fifth team.

In the mens race, Michael Mulhare led the UL charge to claim the bronze medal in third place and hence show early signs of form for the upcoming season. Jake O'Regan ran a brilliant race to claim 7th position in his first ever IUA Cross Country appearance and was closely followed by Liam Feely who ran a blinder to finish in 14th position his best finish to date.

Next we had Shawn McCormack and yours truly in 41st and 42nd respectively. James Leddingham finished in 48th position, Finbarr Horgan in 64th, Brian Looram in 93rd, Colin Maher in 95th, Samuel Keating in 100th, Noel Rice in 103rd and Aodhán Tuohy in 114th position.

In the team event the men were unlucky to be off the medal podium

with five points separating third and fourth. It was a pity that at such a prestigious event as this that we didn't have our full complement of athletes competing. Medals may have been left behind again!

In the overall standings UL got third behind DCU and UCD. UL Athletics Club with like to congratulate WIT Athletics Club for organising such a successful event and banquet afterwards.

Next up for UL Athletics is the Munster Track and Field in CIT closely followed by the IUA Cross Country in Athlone. Keep tuned to our website and facebook page for updates - ulathletics.webs.com and facebook.com/ULAthletics



UL Athletes at the IUA Cross Country held recently in Waterford

www.thomondstudenttimes.com

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Student Times

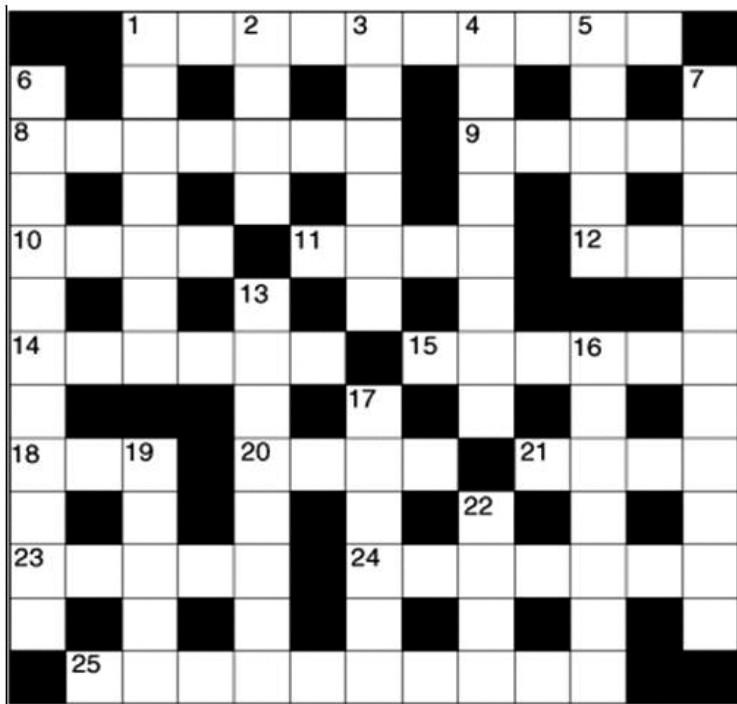
7 - 5

AN
FOCAL



Puzzles

The Cross-focal



ACROSS

- 1 Act prematurely (4,3,3)
- 8 Guarantees (7)
- 9 Relish (5)
- 10 Of unpleasant appearance(4)
- 11 Shove (4)
- 12 Top or summit (3)
- 14 Rural (6)
- 15 Dazed state (6)
- 18 Drinking vessel (3)
- 20 Sound a horn (4)
- 21 Slender (4)
- 23 Mother-of-pearl (5)
- 24 Medical practitioner (7)
- 25 Ominous, fateful (10)

DOWN

- 1 Bumps or pushes roughly (7)
- 2 Additional (4)
- 3 Paper hanky (6)
- 4 Albumen (3,5)
- 5 Unhappy or distressed (5)
- 6 A need (11)
- 7 Section of a railway carriage (11)
- 13 Salve (8)
- 16 Filches (7)
- 17 Toxic substance (6)
- 19 Lizard (5)
- 22 Approximately (2,2)

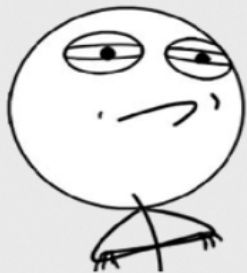
The Arrow-Focal

Units of sound volume	Sleep phase (1,1,1)	Japanese money	Made quieter	Raw metal	Wind flower	Part of a circle	Ditch Water pipe
Poetic word for 'before'		Kingship				Advice	
Reprimand		Actor, ... James			Chef		
Obscure		Object frequently			Oyster gem	Operate	
Individuality	Lyric poem			Suppose			Hog's home
	Circuits			Needless fuss			
		Native of Denmark				Famous acting academy	Sleep
Thin strip of wood		Jumble		Most expensive			
				Even if			
		Sprinter, ... Boldon			Gathering		
		Thespian			Liver, eg		
Venomous snake	Waist-band			Former Great anger		Hawaiian outdoor feast	Give rise to, beget
Time gone by	European mountain	Group of singers			Gift to the poor		
		Ocean			Epoch		
			Try to persuade			Latin where	
Zodiac lion			Equipment			Irish airline, ... lingus	
Make thirsty				Essential character			



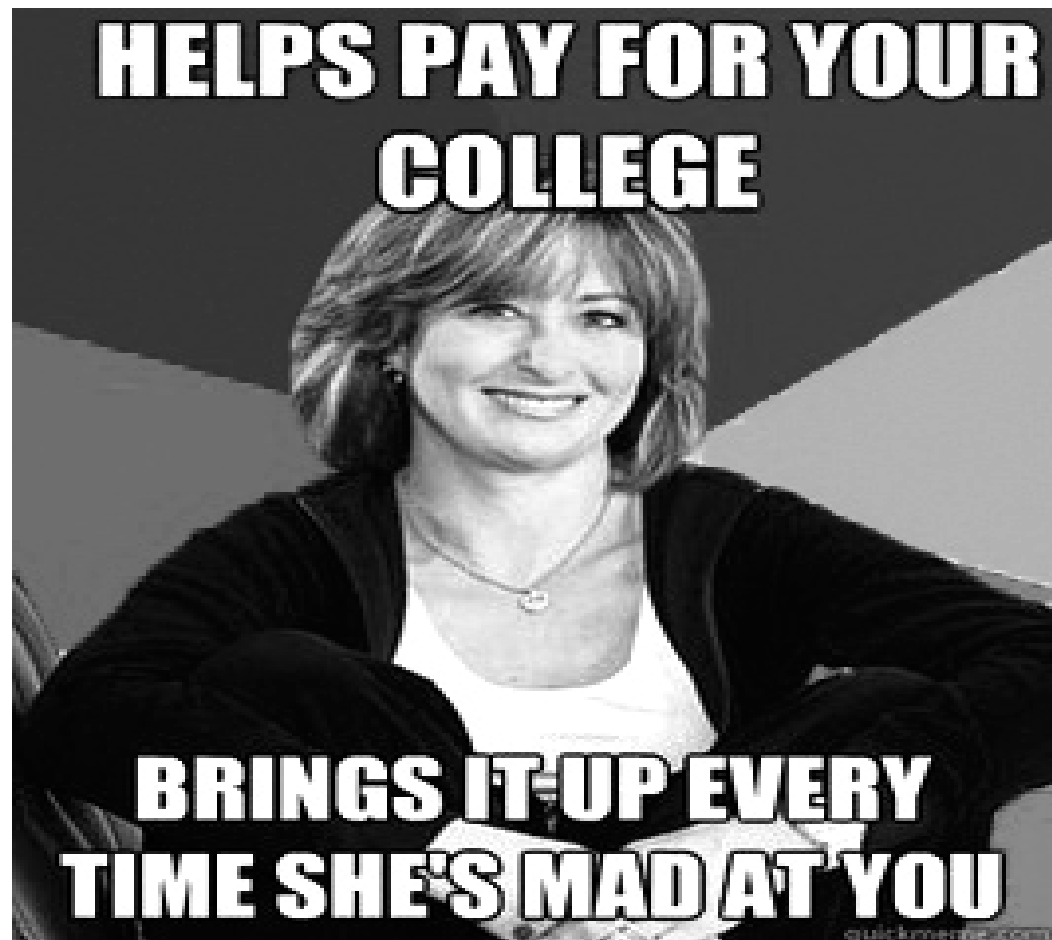
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Easy Sudoku

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

Medium Sudoku

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

Hard Sudoku

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

Travel



Calle de Alcalá, Madrid

Memories from Madrid

Alana Walsh

If you are interested in visiting Spain for a break away then why not try the country's capital, Madrid.

The city is filled with things to do and places to see. You could easily spend a long time exploring Madrid but in a weekend it is possible to get a good taster. When I visited I was living a five hour bus journey away in the south of Spain. The first thing that struck me was the vastness of the city but never fear, with a map it is easy to negotiate and as well as the usual public transport there is of course the Metro. I would highly recommend having your hostel or choice of accommodation sorted prior to your arrival though as my friends and I left it to be sorted on the day and traipsed around for four hours trying to find somewhere reasonable.

While Madrid is an incredibly busy and fast moving city, everyone that I encountered during my visit there was pleasant and helpful. The bright red city tour buses are a great way to get around the city but be sure to plan which sights are your priority as there are two tour routes to cover all that there is to see and hopping on and off does get a bit tiresome. For about €20 you can get

a day ticket for one of these buses. I would recommend in particular doing the tour of Real Madrid's Bernabéu Stadium. An unguided ticket will cost you sixteen euro but it is really memorable and enjoyable. For when all that sightseeing, picture taking, walking and hopping on and off a tour bus tires you out, be sure to pay a visit to the James Joyce Irish Pub, nothing beats some good wholesome food and a pint while putting your feet up for awhile. The Sheppard's Pie is to die for!

If you feel like hitting the town obviously the city has a great variety but I went to Club Joy which has a great atmosphere, good music and although it is pricey to get in it is worth it. Drinks are also expensive, spirit and a mixer in Club Joy is €11. When in Madrid you should definitely pay a visit to San Ginés for their famous churros. Churros are a famous Spanish snack; they are fried dough pastry and dipped in hot chocolate before eating. San Ginés has been around since 1894 and they stay open until 7am so when you leave the nightclub you can grab something sweet to eat.

If you have not already been, put Madrid on your 'To See' list, it does not have the same architectural sights as Barcelona but Puerta del Sol and Plaza Mayor are worth exploring along with the rest of the city.

A Grad Down Under



A buzzing seaside scene in St Kilda, Melbourne

Sinead Keane

If you ever wanted to experience a place as culturally different as possible to little old Limerick, you couldn't do better than Brunswick.

Brunswick is the suburb where people roam the streets in their bare feet, sip coffee on the sidewalk and pull a ukulele out of their pocket at 10 in the morning. It's the place where anything could happen; you never know what you might see walking down Sydney Road or Brunswick Street.

I have discovered this place through its bars, cafes and Sunday afternoons, and I could not have asked for a

better life experience during my time in Melbourne. I've been to St Kilda, the party suburb and Irish hub of Melbourne. I've been to Southbank, where the best dressed celebs splash their cash in true cosmopolitan style. Melbourne is a wonderfully social city; the nightlife is something of true individuality. For me, nothing excites me more than a night out in Brunswick. The hair is different, the fashion is different. I've never lived somewhere where being unique is celebrated so much; the crazier your make-up or outfit is the more accepted you are!

Take Ray's Cafe for example: a small, rough looking place with no name out the front, no signs, just a few chairs, a wobbly table and a coffee machine. Not exactly a top class venue. But the coffee is great, Ray is always chatty

and the place is never empty, night or day. Its character that drives businesses in Brunswick; people survive on pure friendliness and honesty alone.

It's this honesty that makes this place so enjoyable to live in. People smile at you, they wave at you and offer you a cigarette. There is a serene atmosphere about Brunswick that makes you relax, no matter how stressed you are. The streets are so laid back that you can't help but smile. Every single day I notice something different and new that I marvel at, and that is something that I love about my life here in Australia. Life is so interesting when you live in a place that pulses with culture every minute of the day!

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Travel

Belfast is vibrant and exciting

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

BELFAST had long been on my places to visit list. A visit there a couple of weekends ago has meant it will forever remain high on my places to return to list.

The most noticeable thing after a weary bus trip from Dublin was the domineering high rise city landscape, and the ridiculous number of city buses maintaining a busy hum of activity.

We arrived well after dark and though we were slightly apprehensive, it was a straightforward city to find our way around and we didn't at any stage feel unsafe or unwelcome.

The Premier Inn on Alfred Street was our residence for the weekend. It's staff were very friendly and welcoming and were happy to recommend places to eat. The hotel was, like it's sister hotels, a hotel in a box but with a little bit of character. Tripadvisor reviews were the casting vote in choosing it over the similar budget chain hotels in the city.

Belfast is quite incredible when it comes to choice for shopping. Royal Street is the main thoroughfare with mostly British street stores, including a 4 story Primark, a vast HMV, M&S, BHS and a load others. The Castlecourt

shopping centre is located adjacent to this street and has a Newlook, Next, Debenhams among others, and quite importantly, a Starbucks. The Victoria Square Shopping Centre is a few minutes walk from Royal Street and is filled with mostly high street fashion, including H&M, Timberland, Tommy Hilfiger, Topshop etc. It's an open air shopping centre on multiple levels though still retains a roof, of sorts, for cover from the rain. It too has a Starbucks, and a very cool looking observation deck in a large dome on it's roof, which unfortunately only opens until 5pm so we didn't get to have a look. Across the city there are many branches of most popular fast food eateries (KFC in particular), along with places like Nandos and TGI Fridays, both of which I heartily recommend. As a city it's quite exciting, and though it apparently has the population of Dublin, it feels far smaller and far more welcoming. Price wise, it seems cheap, though with the price of sterling, the savings are probably minimal. Most shops will take euros, too. There is an hourly bus service from Busaras jointly operated by Translink and Bus Eireann, about 2 hours 20 minutes and €20.50 for a student return ticket. There is a regular train from Connolly also, however at €40 return the cheaper option won over.



Belfasts River Lagan

A Guide to Frankfurt

Ann Styles

IF you're looking for a city break that is easy on the pocket and offers something for everyone then Frankfurt is the place to go. With cheap flights from Kerry Airport and accommodation to suit every budget it's a win win situation.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about Frankfurt is the people.

They give the Irish a run for their money in the hospitality stakes. Most speak English and are welcoming and helpful. Transport is good with trams running day and night and a comprehensive metro service. Taxis are easily recognized, as they are invariably beige Mercedes, which are in plentiful supply throughout the city. Frankfurt is a city of contrast. Sparkling glass and chrome skyscrapers tower over church spires that have been there for centuries. It is the financial capital of Europe and home to the European Central Bank. Financial institutions from around the world have offices here and Germans flock to the city for work.

The main shopping district (The Zell) boasts all the usual high street names and is host to an impressive farmers market on Sundays. When it comes to nightlife, Frankfurt does it in style. From rustic old pubs to techno clubs, everyone is catered for. The bar staff join their

customers in drinking and smoking, which may play a part in the party atmosphere that prevails. Many bars and clubs are open until 6am. Across the river, Old Sachsenhausen is a warren of cobbled streets that come alive at 11pm as natives and tourists alike come out to play. There are heaving, multi-floored theme pubs (including Irish of course) and tiny back alley cave like taverns. The whole place is teeming with character and worth a visit.

Culture abounds with over 50 museums in the city (art, German, Jewish, natural history and more). The famous opera house is a multi-tiered, multi-faceted building that was rebuilt, like a lot of Frankfurt, after the war.

It is worth a visit with or without taking in a concert. The Romer area of the city is picture postcard perfect with a sublime square fronted by the medieval town hall. Close by is Frankfurt Cathedral and between the two lies the Archeological Gardens. Frankfurt also boasts a zoo and botanical gardens. Diners are well catered for in Frankfurt. There is cuisine from every corner of the globe with prices for every budget (from apple wine pubs, bars and beer gardens to internationally renowned restaurants and trendy eateries). Street vendors, selling hot pretzels and German sausage, can be found throughout the city.

So whatever your pleasure, Frankfurt has it all; impressive and widely varying architecture, delightful parks and gardens, thriving nightlife with particularly good gay/lesbian and techno scenes and a culinary smorgasbord of choice. Book your tickets now, you won't regret it.



The medieval Town Hall in Romer

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Interview

A Musical Love Affair:

An Focal Interviews Niall Byrne

Jack Brolly

NIALL Byrne, better known as Nialler9, is one of the worlds biggest music bloggers. His influence within an area that's overwrought with voices cannot be disputed.

He has won multiple awards for his efforts within the blogosphere and has brought many Irish bands into the International light.

An Focal caught up with him recently to see what it's like to be Ireland's busiest music nerd. You don't become one of the worlds biggest music bloggers overnight or without some hard work. How did Niall go down that avenue in the first place? "When I started, blogging was a new thing so it was something I was trying out. It fit me and I've been doing it ever since", he stated. "I began to get regular viewers around 2006/2007 when there was an actual Irish blog community and a lot of other bloggers would read and comment on my posts."

Niall has been a vital component in kick-starting the careers of plenty of Irish bands and musicians by featuring them on his blog, but he says that the Irish scene didn't always have a strong focus on Nialler9. "When I started in late 2005, I was looking further afield to what was happening in pockets of

the North America and UK with the likes of Broken Social Scene, LCD Soundsystem, Diplo and MIA doing really interesting things", he explains. "The Irish scene remained dormant creatively for a year or two after but has been impossible to ignore since."

With the emergence of a strong scene in Ireland in 2007/8, how strong is it now compared to previous years? "It's been strong, consistent and diverse since 2007."

Every week, there's something good or interesting emerging that I've never heard come out of Ireland before. Irish artists are discovering trends worldwide through the net and immersing those influences in their own music", he explains.

He adds that the Irish scene is now being recognized worldwide. "I hear a lot of anecdotes and labels, managers and A&R looking at my blog and others and expressing interest in the artists featured on it. Also, Irish artists are generally doing quite well abroad at the moment."

Look at And So I Watch You From Afar, James Vincent McMorrow, The Cast of Cheers, Villagers, God Is an Astronaut, The Minutes, Wallis Bird, Mmoths and Funeral Suits for evidence."

Niall has covered and curated gigs and event all over the world. His opinion is held in high regard at an international level.

The future holds seemingly endless possibilities. What's next? "Curation of gigs and events in Austin, Texas for SXSW as well as Camden Crawl in Dublin and London. Hopefully I can continue to blog about music I love."



Niall Byrne, better known as Nialler9, is one of the worlds biggest music bloggers

"Niall has covered and curated gigs and event all over the world. His opinion is held in high regard at an international level"

Would you like to write for An Focal?

We'd love to hear from you.

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