



See page 11
for more on
unexpected
style icon
Tinie Tempah



Feeling motivated?
Turn to page 9 to
read about the
tradition of New
Year's Resolutions

Necessity of Sabbatical Roles Reviewed as ULSU Shops Remain Closed



Kelly O'Brien, Editor

ULSU staff and sabbats at one of their weekly meetings.

It has recently emerged that the Students' Union and its Sabbatical representatives are to recommend two major changes to the governance structure of ULSU.

These proposed changes come in the form of two motions which will be voted on next week at an EGM. The first of these motions recommends the removal of the position of CSO, or Campaigns and Services Officer, a sabbatical office currently held by Paddy Rockett. The second of these motions recommends the removal of the position of CO, or Communications Officer, a sabbatical office currently held by Kelly O'Brien, ULFM Chair and Editor of An Focal.

The reasoning behind the proffered motions are both financial and structural. In the case of CSO, the Union believes that the duties of this position are best held by student volunteers (campaigns) and industry professionals

(services). With the money saved on the annual wages of a Campaigns and Services Officer, the ULSU as a whole could put that money towards securing its financial position which is currently believed to be unsustainable.

This step would be the first of many aimed at reducing the expenditure of the Union and making ULSU and ULSU Services more financially viable.

Further steps so far have included the closure of the Spar shops located in both Dromroe and Cappavilla Villages. The ULSU Bike shop will also face cuts as discussions are currently underway to amend opening hours. It is expected that the Bike Shop will only open for a limited amount of weeks at both the beginning and the end of term time.

Further discussions have been entered into between the ULSU Executive and the Financial Controller of the Students' Union. A financial plan will shortly be decided upon and further cuts are certain though, as of yet, there has been no indication as to which sectors are most likely to be hit.

In the case of the position of CO, the Union believes that the duties of this office would be best fulfilled by a staff position and that the current duties of the Communications Officer are fundamentally operational as opposed to representational. The Union believes that a current student, appointed to the position around the same as the sabbatical elections are held, would be better equipped to fulfil the role.

It is thought that this change would develop the office significantly in terms of time management, workload and, consequently, productivity. The method of application and subsequent employment would also guarantee that the level of qualification of the successful candidate would be sufficient enough to ensure the candidate possessed the right skills to effectively perform the require duties.

These motions will be put to a vote at the EGM (Emergency General Meeting) on Wednesday of Week 2 in the Stables Courtyard. All current UL students are encouraged to attend.

News

AnFocal.ie Launched

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

THE much anticipated Anfocal.ie website has now been launched.

Plans for an online version of the 20 year old newspaper were actioned at the end of last semester, with a website put in place over Christmas.

The website has been created to a high standard by first year Computer and Electronic Engineering Student, Kieran Caplice. Commenting on the website, Kieran said it was a “rewarding process”. All sections of the printed version of An Focal shall be made available on the website, along with additional features such as gigs

AN FOCAL

listings. Visitors to the site shall be able to comment on articles posted, subject to moderation. Current UL Students Aoife Coughlan, Adam Leahy and David Hartery have been appointed as the dedicated online editorial team who shall work alongside the current editors and subeditors to ensure provision of

high quality material on the website.

Members of the general public shall be able to upload their own articles, which, should they meet standards, will also be published on the website.

The site is accessible on www.anfocal.ie

ULFM Upgrades Continue, Enablement Fund Monies Received

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

A PLETHORA of multifaceted upgrades and adjustments have taken place at ULFM over the Christmas break.

A complete rearrangement of the studio has taken place with a view to improving the technical efficiency of the station, along with providing an increased level of aesthetics and space for presenters and their guests.

Some new equipment and a new computer have been provided, providing an immeasurable increase in performance and reliability for those presenting shows on the station.

A phone line will be provided for

those who wish to have live callers on their shows. The ULFM application to the Ulster Bank enablement fund has resulted in approximately €10,000 being made available to the station for the aforementioned equipment purchases and upgrades. A significant sum will also be spent on training.

Programming for this semester will begin on Monday, Week 2. The audience base has been broadened with the addition of shows such as an Irish Trad hour, Clubs and Socs hour and a Union hour, along with a “Top 30” type show in both Irish and English. Highly successful shows such as Censored with Grainne Harte and Sean Dunne will be making a return, along with Tunes on Tuesday with Daniel Fox. A new website has

been provided. Kieran Caplice, who has also been busy with the An Focal website, has put the new ULFM site in place.

A shortcut to the website has been provided on the desktop of all staff and student PC’s in ITD clusters in the University, while it is envisaged some form of public broadcast in areas such as the SU Common Room will take place this semester.

A successful trial was held in the courtyard Spar shop toward the end of last semester.

Information on programming, the station, and to listen can be found at www.ulfm.ie

UL Student Wins Sports Journalism Award

Ann Styles

UL Student Neil Treacy was 2011 national winner of the Brendan McKenna award for sports journalism, sponsored by the Soccer Writers Association of Ireland (SWAI).

Neil’s prize includes media access to an international match with a member of the SWAI and a €250 voucher for computer equipment.

Beating off competition from the country’s top Journalism schools Neil won with his original analysis on Sligo Rovers titled ‘The Western Connection’.

Along with American sports writers like Rick Reilly and Bill Simmons, Neil is also influenced and inspired by Irish sports writers such as Daniel McDonnell and Paul Kimmage but he admitted that there were just “too many to mention”. During his time in UL Neil has held the sports editor position for both the ‘Moyross Voice’ and the ‘City

Voice’ newspapers and has also spent six months working with the Limerick Leader newspaper.

UL Section Leader in Journalism, Tom Felle said: “Neil’s passion and commitment for sports journalism is unrivalled”. A final year student of Journalism and New media, Neil knew from an early age that sports journalism was for him and with the Journalism school just starting up in UL when Neil finished school in Limerick it was meant to be.

It is Neil’s hope that he will secure an internship at a sports desk on a regional or national paper when he completes his degree in May.

“I have no doubt this award is only the first of many in what I hope will be a long and illustrious career in sports journalism.” said Mr Felle.

Neil would advise future entrants for the Brendan McKenna award to “come up with something original”.

‘Fairytale of New York’ is UL’s Christmas Number One

Liam Togher

‘Fairytale of New York’ by the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl was chosen by UL staff and students as their favourite Christmas number one song in a survey carried out in the college.

The survey also had a fundraising element to it, where entrants left a donation for charity in addition to submitting their vote, and this proved to be highly successful.

A total of €1,000 was raised and the money was split evenly between Milford Hospice and the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association (IMNDA). Organiser Leo Kirby was extremely happy with the response to the survey, with a late surge managing to drive the eventual figure up to the four-figure mark.

“So many charities need funding and I think the fact that Milford Hospice is close to many people’s hearts and is on campus helps when collecting,” Mr Kirby said.

“I’ve seen what great work the IMNDA do and any money they receive is of huge benefit. The fundraising started slowly but in the end people came through with the help of some of our postgrads and staff.”

Mr Kirby added that he wanted to sincerely thank any person who helped with the survey, in particular those who cast their votes and made a contribution to fundraising.

Late Grants Force Student Drop-outs

Aisling Hussey

STUDENTS experiencing financial difficulty are being forced to drop out of UL because of late payments of their maintenance grant.

This is according to ULSU Welfare Officer Tara Feeney, who told An Focal that she has encountered cases where students could not possibly afford to stay in college.

“People are left in a situation where they have no money and they can’t rely on their parents,” she said.

“I’ve had a case with an MA who couldn’t graduate because she didn’t get the grant. I’ve also met students who haven’t got the first payment of

their grant yet.” “Students are left in limbo, and a lot of them cannot afford to continue their education,” she said.

Tara said that the abolishment of grants for MA students will result in emigration and graduates becoming dependent on social welfare.

“People are just going to end up living on the dole instead of furthering their education,” she said. “Others will emigrate, or take a year out.”

Tara further added that students who are experiencing difficulties should contact the SU for aid.

“Financial aid from the SU could get you out of a difficult situation, like paying rent or groceries. We can also provide a childcare bursary for parents,” she said.

If you are concerned about late payment of the maintenance grant, contact your local VEC or county council.



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.

E: sucommunications@ul.ie to contact the Editor.

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Kelly O'Brien, Editor

EDITORIAL

Hello and welcome to the first edition of An Focal 2012! Over the last month or so, a lot of changes have been proposed. Some have been adopted already and some have yet to pass. One of these changes, I'm sure you've just noticed, is that there are now black and white pages in our beloved An Focal newspaper! This breaks my heart a little but it was a necessary measure to make the paper more cost effective. I hope you will all understand.

If you turn to the front page, you'll see a major change on the horizon. Hopefully I have explained this proposed change in as fair and as unbiased a manner as possible. As with the mono pages in An Focal, the two motions to propose the removal of the offices of CSO and CO have their basis in current finances. The ULSU simply cannot continue to function if its costs outweigh its income. Though it would not have been professional of me to have stated this on the front page, I am actually in favour of both these motions.

As regards CSO, the role is two-fold, campaigns and services. Campaigns used to be run by students on a voluntary basis. With the right

direction and guidance, they can do so again. This not only saves money, it increases student involvement. With services, it is unfair to expect a student to go straight into running businesses, sitting on management boards, and being accountable for those businesses success or failure. That is an operational task that should be carried out by professionals qualified to do so.

The Communications Office, likewise, is a very operational role. It is operational in that the job entails putting together a newspaper, running a radio station, selling advertising and overseeing all the social media of the Students' Union. Being that it is a representational position, however, the elected candidate also has to sit on various rep meetings both within the Union and without. This is flawed. You can be operational and you can be representational... but it's extremely hard to do both. Taking this into account, it's no wonder that a) every CO there has ever been has worked insane hours and b) nobody runs for a second term.

"But what of An Focal and ULSU?" you cry. Well, that's the beauty of it.

There would still be a Communications Office, and a Communications Manager, fulfilling the same needs as I currently do. This position would be a full-time, paid position offered by the ULSU to a current UL student who would be appointed to the role on a year contract. This would a) take away the representational side of the job allowing the manager could spend less time in meetings and more time on their job and b) ensure that the most qualified person was appointed to the job each year thus ensuring the longevity of both ULSU and An Focal.

But, of course, this is all just my opinion. I am not the one who gets to decide this, you are. Whether you agree or disagree with me, I would strongly urge you to attend the EGM on Wednesday of Week two in the Stables Courtyard. Maybe you want to vote, maybe you don't, but as students it is your responsibility to get involved, have your say and for god's sake, question things. Because if you don't, then who will?

Kelly O'Brien
Editor

ULSU Ents Preparing Charity Week

Sharon Whelton

IT has been confirmed that this year's eagerly anticipated Charity Week will take place on the week commencing February 27, Week Six. Following the success of last year's event, organisers and officers are hoping that this year's week of events will bring financial support to local charities.

The chosen charities for this year's Charity Week are Pieta House, Tipperary Limerick Care for Cystic Fibrosis (TLC4CF), Brothers of Charity, and The Mid West Rape Crisis Centre.

ULSU Events and Promotion Manager, Keith Quinlan, stressed to An Focal that the fundamental aim of the week is to fundraise for the aforementioned charities.

"People can get involved and help out with any of the events by emailing events.su@ul.ie," Keith said.

"We've organised many events to raise money for charity, but we need people to get involved and take the initiative.

If they have their own ideas for how to fundraise, pop into me in the office in the SU, or drop me an email."

According to the UL Students'

Union, one of the key things of the week is to show how Charity Week is essential in a student's year.

So far, fundraising activities planned include a Shave or Dye, a Dodgeball competition, a Sabbatical Auction with SU Sabbats, Iron Stomach, a Raft Race, Leg Waxes, and other events that have yet to be announced.

Acts that will be performing during Charity Week will be confirmed and announced during Week Three. Though it is expected that there will be no 'Big Name' act as such, leaving the floor open for a higher number of smaller events and an increased level of participation.



Last year's Sumo Suits donned by UL Students. Image: Barry Kennedy

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News

High Demand for UL FM Slots

Sophie McDermott

A TOTAL of 99 students have applied to join the ULFM team which means not everyone will be guaranteed a slot on the streaming stage radio station.

According to ULSU Communications Officer, Kelly O'Brien, 67 show proposals have been submitted by students but only 34 of these can be allocated time slots on air.

"While the increased interest in the station does mean we will be assured of good quality shows, it also means that some people will not be allocated timeslots", commented Ms O'Brien

While some may be disappointed if they were unsuccessful in getting their show on the air, the ULFM Development Board has established plans to ensure that every interested student gets the chance to be involved in the radio station. These initiatives may also be a stepping stone to helping

young students work their way up to being on radio without having any other prior experience.

The ULFM News Crew is being set up to give students the experience of interviewing others and recording their views on certain topics as well as learning essential elements of radio work. The second initiative is the ULFM Wolfpack, which gives students the opportunity to help out at the station by involving them in promotional work for the radio station. Interested Wolfpack helpers can also avail of the chance to do occasional interviews and vox-pops to help kick-start their radio career.

Kelly O'Brien said that: "We hope that a lot of people who are unsuccessful in their show applications would consider joining the Wolfpack and News Crew. These initiatives will give them the foot in the door should they wish to apply again next semester."

ULFM was established last summer and went live on September 21 2011. Since then, the radio station has proven to be a wonderful addition to the UL campus, with an increasing numbers of students tuning in every day.



ULFM Production Manager, Conor Keane, in the studio

Christmas Days raises nearly €16,000 for charity

Rachael Power

ALMOST €16,000 was raised for various local Limerick charities during Christmas Days, one of the biggest events in the UL Calendar.

The event which spanned over three days last November, from Tuesday 22 to Thursday 24 saw 400 students per day take to the Stables Club to support the worthy causes.

Owner of the Stables Declan Collins said that he was "delighted" by the students' generosity. "We were delighted with the students' willingness to donate money to charity. Some

students even paid more than they were supposed to, for example €15 and €20 for a ticket," he said. "Students are always very generous and there is always great fun had at Christmas Days," he added. As a limited number of tickets go on sale for Christmas Days, there are always large queues on release, and also result in a packed venue. Declan says this is all part of the "great atmosphere" and charitable spirit of the event. "Christmas Days was initially set up as UL students' last party before exams and going home, and has been running for twenty years. After its set up we thought that it should have a connection to charities for Christmas," he said. "There is always a good atmosphere at it, of course it is always a bit of work for us but the

atmosphere makes it worthwhile," he added. Tickets for Christmas Days sold for about €10 each, and included a free pint, santa hat and finger food.

Of the money raised, €5000 went to Fr Gerry Daly Poor of Limerick Fund, €3000 to Milford Hospice, €1000 to the Oncology Unit at the Mid - Western Regional Hospital and €1500 to Special Olympics.

Daughters of Charity received €2000, SOFT Ireland €1500 and Chernobyl Munster and Cancer Ireland were donated €500 and €300 respectively. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Stables Club, which has been raising money for charity for many years.

NUIG Continues Link with UL

Siofra Mannion

Since the establishment of the Strategic Alliance between UL and NUI Galway the programme has gone from strength to strength, says UL President Prof. Don Barry. There have been many new developments with the alliance partners, such as the launch of the Translational Research Institute with Georgia Tech in 2010.

2011 saw the alliance partners made co investors in a €10m Bank of Ireland MedTech Accelerator Fund, which was Ireland's first Seed Fund to concentrate solely on the indigenous medical tech sector. Since September, several projects have been progressed. President Barry says "the development of joint programmes is a

major milestone in the partnership". In total there are now seven programmes delivered in conjunction with NUIG, one of these programmes MSc in Finance and Information Systems is to commence from this year on.

President Barry also reveals that through the use of the latest video-conferencing technology, students from both institutions can share ideas and benefit from the teaching and learning experiences with the launch of the Link to Learn initiative.

There are a range of modules currently delivered through video conferencing including industrial biochemistry, oceanography, nanotechnology, radiation and medical physics.

Additionally, Bachelor of Commerce and BBS students may benefit from full semester exchanges and a shared summer school provided to MBA students from both institutions.

A joint web presence has been established to provide an information portal for all alliance related activities. The site also includes a joint Technology Transfer section, providing a virtual hub to best present the initiatives of the Alliance and the shared expertise across both institutions. The alliance site including the Technology Transfer Hub can be accessed by going to www.nuig-ulalliance.ie

University Offers Scholarship to Mark Anniversary

Sharon Whelton

UL has announced that it will mark its 40th anniversary in style, which will see the university awarding €2,000 scholarships to 40 incoming students.

The news will provide a much-needed boost to prospective students, following the Government's recent announcement that university fees are to increase once more.

The scholarships will be offered to students who will begin their undergraduate studies in the Autumn semester of the academic year 2012/2013.

The UL40 scholarships will be awarded to incoming students based on their Leaving Certificate results.

All CAO applicants will be automatically included in the selection process, provided they have not already received another scholarship or bursary from UL.

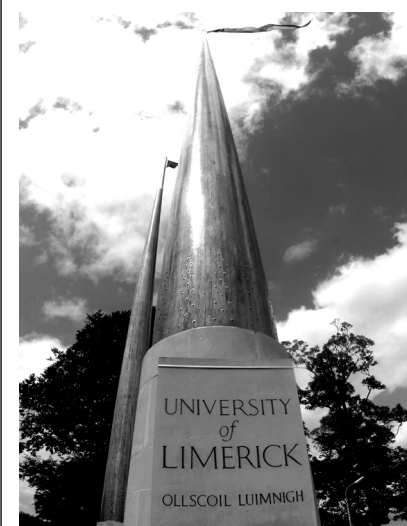
Speaking about the UL40 Scholarships, Vice President Academic Registrar of the University of Limerick Professor Paul McCutcheon, said that the scholarships celebrate 40 years of academic endeavour in UL.

"UL has grown expansively into an internationally renowned university and produced talented and high calibre graduates. The UL40 scholarships are an ideal way to recognise UL's academic achievements over the past 40 years since it first began by helping

40 entrant students to begin their academic lives." The scholarships will be offered across all disciplines in the university, and includes nine scholarships for each faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Education and Science; Kemmy Business School; and Science and Engineering.

In addition, two scholarships for the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, as well as two scholarships for inter-faculty programmes such as BA Law and Accounting, will also be offered to prospective students.

The scholarships of €2,000 each are funded by the University of Limerick, to recognise its 40th year in existence as an educational institution. It was established as the National Institute for Higher Education in 1972 and in 1989 the University of Limerick was established as the first new university in the history of the State.



Comment

Saying Goodbye to Barack

James Bradshaw

ON 2 February 2009, President Barack Obama sat down with the press. He had won a comprehensive electoral victory, and was basking in the glow of overwhelming public support as well as favourable media commentary.

However, the economic and financial crisis loomed large, and America and the world looked to the new president to set things right. He had been elected to fix the problem, and was in no doubt about it. "I will be held accountable," he said. "If I don't have this done in three years then there's going to be a one term proposition."

And how right he was. In the three years since his inauguration, the man Oprah called "the One" has been a huge disappointment. The unemployment rate was 7.7% on the day he took

office, and in spite of Obama's almost trillion dollar economic stimulus, unemployment is at 8.6%.

His signature healthcare and financial reform packages have been unpopular, and the man Oprah called "the One" has managed to add more to the national debt than any of his predecessors. The Iraq War has come to a close, but in its place Afghanistan has emerged as an ever more costly conflict that is slowly spreading into neighbouring (and nuclear-armed) Pakistan. Whether one chooses to focus on domestic or foreign policy, it is difficult to avoid coming to the conclusion that Obama, judging by his results, has been little better than George W. Bush.

Is all this Obama's fault? No, he inherited an awful situation both at home and abroad, and the Republicans have been less than eager to work constructively with him.

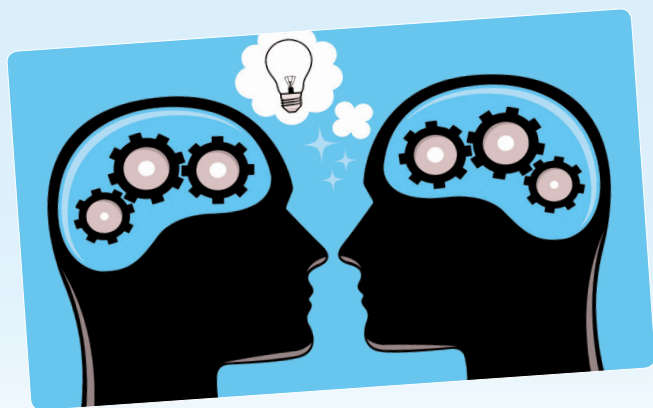
Yet he had two years with large Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, and during this period of dominance their economic policies failed to achieve the desired results. All presidents, Democrat and Republican, have to develop a positive relationship with the other side in order to achieve

results: Bill Clinton proved himself to be a master of this task when he had to contend with a hostile Republican Congress while president. Yet Obama has not demonstrated the same political skills that Clinton had, and political stagnation has been the result. None of this is good news for an incumbent president facing into a re-election campaign.

What about the opposition? The media in this country has been eager to pour scorn on some of the Republicans' more eccentric candidates, yet when it boils down to it the GOP was never going to nominate the likes of Michelle Bachmann. Mitt Romney will be the nominee, and unless the economy improves drastically he will become the next president as well. With his proven leadership abilities and private sector experience, the former Massachusetts governor can offer the American electorate the change they yearn for in Washington. As for Obama, he will have to pack his bags and say farewell to the Oval Office. In truth, he only has himself to blame.



US President Barack Obama



HEAD TO HEAD

If you would like a topic discussed here, please email sucommunications@ul.ie

Emigration is now a way of life for many recent graduates. But with so many different destinations to choose, we ask: Where is the best place for Irish emigrants to go?

Deirdre Allen

Canada!

"WAITING for the Australian budget because that's the one that matters now": This well-liked comment on Facebook is a sign of the times. Although we may laugh and joke about it, when all is said and done we know it's serious.

And, as thousands have already left our shores in search of employment in Australia, it's becoming a bit of cliché.

There is a need to highlight that there are, in fact, numerous opportunities all around the world, not just in Australia. Perhaps the best prospects of all for Irish people lie in Canada.

Canada offers excellent infrastructure, a vibrant nightlife, a fantastic shopping experience and a range of extreme sports. Within Canada, there is already a good mix of nationalities and an understanding and acceptance of different cultures. Canada sports cleaner living and safer communities as opposed to the United States. In 2009, Mercer

ranked Vancouver, a coastal city in western Canada, as the fourth best quality of life city in the world.

Obviously for these reasons alone we won't all be hopping on a plane there, but the three words that will arouse everyone's interest are these: excellent employment prospects.

These are not words that we associate with recessionary Ireland, nor are they as commonly mentioned when speaking about Australia as before.

Canada has one of the oldest populations in the world, for this reason there are thousands of job opportunities.

The Canadian government is aiming to issue 250,000 Canada Work Permit visas this year alone.

Opportunities exist for tradespeople, health service professionals and engineers. For those who meet requirements in critical skills shortlists, then fast-track visa processing exists for you.

So if you're thinking why not give Canada a go, then you'll be delighted to know that Canada has seasonably

good weather with highs of 30 degrees Celsius in the summer months and falls of below freezing point in winter. And unlike Ireland, Canada can continue to function when it snows.

However, Canada is not as cold as it is made out to be with the south-western coast experiencing a relatively mild climate in the winter months.

Canada also offers an unbelievable landscape and wildlife unknown to us here in Ireland. It is common to find bears and wolves roaming the mountains and plains of the great outdoors.

Word to the wise, Irish citizens do not require a visa to enter Canada as a visitor, or on business, for a duration of up to six months.

And best of all, Canada is a cheaper option than Australia. The USIT 12 month Work in Canada 2012 Programme is only €299.

James Crowe

Europe!

THERE'S no denying the allure of the shining cities of North America. We've all grown up with images of New York, tales of Irish Boston and half-formed impressions of Chicago, Seattle and others, mainly taken from '90s sitcoms. As we graduate and flow out of the country, America might seem the place to go. Somehow we forget that an entire continent sits on our doorstep, with major cities, a wide variety of locations and climate and possibly most important of all, jobs.

Germany is leading the EU for a reason. Its economy is strong and its standard of living is high. Since the fall of the Wall, Germany has made rapid advances, and Berlin leads the nation. The once divided and ignored capital pulsates with life. As ever more foreigners flock to it and it embraces cosmopolitanism, Berlin is looking like the place to be for the next decade. Like Paris in the 1890s, artists, writers and

lovers thrive here. But other German cities are no less remarkable, from Cologne to Hamburg to Munich, beautiful surrounds, hopping nightlife and a growing economy are just the beginning for a resurgent Germany. The Eurozone crisis has dampened expectations across the continent, but most nations have pulled tightly together to overcome their difficulties. Predictions of a decade-long slump in Ireland are not mirrored everywhere. Political changes are expected in the next two years that may see new ways to tackle debt and decline. While the US finds itself gridlocked, all European countries, with the exception of Britain, walk the same course towards recovery. A closer, more centralised Europe is beneficial for EU citizens leaving Ireland behind to build a new life. For all those who miss the comforts of home, nights out at old Leaving Cert hangouts and Mammy's cooking, European destinations are only two or three hours away. Flights remain cheap thanks to economising airlines and relatively short distances. Move to Australia, and you

may be able to come home every few years, move to Europe, and you can come back for Christmas, Easter and the odd weekend. The stereotypical heart-wrenching emigration stories don't need to happen. It takes longer to get from Limerick to Dublin than from Dublin to Berlin. Naysayers talk about the language deficit. It's true, if you live in a European country, you will eventually need to learn the language. This shouldn't seem too daunting. In Western Europe, many people speak English and the best way to learn a language is through immersion. Still more say that Europeans are "culturally" different. This varies from place to place and from person to person and should not be a factor in choosing Europe. After all, the average New Yorker has less in common with an Irish person than the average Frenchman.

Emigration is difficult. Choosing where to move your life to is not a decision to be made lightly. But ignoring Europe, a sprawling, thriving civilisation just a few hours away, would be foolish indeed.

Comment

Is Thatcher dead yet?

Darragh Roche, Comment Editor

HOLLYWOOD resurrected a grim spectre this month with the release of Phyllida Lloyd's "The Iron Lady". Not 1982's Best Actress winner Meryl Streep, but rather the woman who led Britain when Streep won that Oscar, Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, formerly Mrs Margaret Thatcher, or simply "Maggie", to her fans, and various expletives to her detractors. The film may win Meryl another Oscar, but its real effect has been re-opening the discussion about Thatcher, and reminding people why she was so hated. Thatcher ran Britain longer than any prime minister of the 20th century, was the first woman to lead a party (the Conservatives at that), become prime minister and was one of very few women leading nations during the 1980s. She would be remembered for all these things alone had she not destroyed British manufacturing industry, caused huge unemployment, massive income inequality and been almost universally despised at home and abroad (to name only a few of her achievements). Since her ignominious resignation in 1990 and the long and often disastrous government of Tony Blair's New Labour, Thatcher has become yesterday's woman, a grim memory. This new film has reminded everyone of something they would rather forget: Thatcher is still alive.

Thatcher lived controversially and she will die controversially. Plans have been made for a state funeral when the Iron Lady finally dies. This may seem unremarkable. In Ireland, all former Taoisigh receive state funerals, which are generally small affairs. In Britain, however, state funerals are major events, almost exclusively held for

members of the Royal family. Since Elizabeth II came to the throne, there have been five state funerals: two former queens, Prince Philip's uncle, Princess Diana and Winston Churchill. The Queen herself will receive a lavish state funeral. Thatcher's supporters claim Churchill sets a precedent, detractors claim that too, but that Thatcher doesn't meet it.

Churchill was a hugely flawed individual, personally and politically. He was hated by the South Africans, Australians, New Zealanders and Irish, among others. But he led Britain through its most difficult war, kept morale high and won the everlasting affection of the British public and the right-wing press. Though he may not have "won" World War II, his contribution to British public life was enormous. Thatcher, by contrast, can boast no such achievements, nor the love of her people. Claims of Britain's economic success during her tenure have long been dismissed as right-wing mythologizing – the rich got richer, the poor stayed poor.

There is a website called "Is Margaret Thatcher dead yet?" Poor taste aside, it echoes what many on the right and left must be feeling. A Thatcher state funeral would be a PR disaster for the current Tory-led government, already imposing Thatcher-like policies (with Thatcher-like results). Thatcher's death may finally let Britain step out of her very long and dark shadow. Some people will have parties, others will sincerely mourn but most will breathe a sigh of relief, the wicked old witch at last is dead.



Thatcher ran Britain longer than any prime minister of the 20th century

We need to give, but charities need to change

Aoife Coughlan

THIS past year "recession" has been the word on all our lips. As they say, the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and this Christmas that was never more evident. Recession sprouted legs and arms, worn faces and brows; it became hungry mouths and cold flesh. It became our neighbour, our friends or our own selves. Recession was not just an affliction of council estates and inner city neighbourhoods but it became an issue for almost everyone in the country. But if we are all affected then who is left to help? Are charitable donations a luxury that only a small few can afford?

The recession is used as an excuse for all kinds of things, from unemployment and emigration to questions of charity. It is easy to walk past "The Big Issue" seller knowing your shopping bag is full of own brand goods instead of luxury items and your purse heavy with change and not stuffed with bank notes. You can wallow in self-pity instead of

guilt. You are feeling the belt tightening but the homeless man, the beggar, the "do-gooder" with clinking box has been dealt a blow greater than a mere tightening purse strings.

Everything is relative, and so is the recession. This slump we are experiencing has meant life changing experiences for some and trifling inconveniences for others. I have overheard conversations between students who claimed the recession had not affected their families at all. In the same breath they discussed an imminent vacation to Boston. This reflects the sociological make up of Ireland and there can be no denying that there will always be sectors who can afford charity no matter what economic difficulties hit the country. Therefore, charity should not fear and those of us with means should not forget.

With this in mind, we should still maintain some degree of charity in society. However, we cannot assume

the same amount of money will go on charity cases as before, but we can give what we can afford. Problems arise when we are expected to donate outlandish sums in this challenging time. There is a degree of impertinence in the requests from some charitable organisations through television. Asking people to commit to a set sum of money a month is unacceptable in a climate that means uncertainty for many. Moreover, the way a visual guilt trip is presented is an irksome method no matter what financial time we live in. I am not being elitist when I suggest that we are still able to afford charity nor am I being unsympathetic when I argue against the culture of commitment charity. Charity is something that is a responsibility of all people. That is for those more fortunate to look after their fellow man, not matter how small a donation and also for charities to respect the fact that poverty is a plight affecting all.

Is Facebook running your life?

Darragh Roche, Comment Editor

IT'S become part of life, a key business tool and a primary means of communication. It holds masses of information about us and changes all the time, rarely asking our permission. Facebook now has more ways to share everything you like, everything you've read, every event you've ever claimed to attend. The more it 'improves', the more information it demands.

The evidence is clear: Facebook wants to divide your life into manageable chunks, fitting them into pre-determined boxes. It takes your human experience apart and slots those parts into place. It's made cataloguing life a full-time job.

Sites like Facebook have imposed a system of etiquette on us more effectively than our parents ever could. Things that happen or don't happen on Facebook affect the real world: delete someone as a friend, and you'll hear about it pretty quickly in the flesh. Friendships and relationships are played out in public, problems are exacerbated

and tools of communication become weapons of verbal warfare. There was a time when we didn't count our friends. Facebook has turned friendship into acquisition, encouraging us to increase our numbers and 'connect' with people we hardly know. Today, a five minute conversation warrants a friend request, though the idea of 'requesting' someone's friendship is odious. And then there's deletion. Deleting a friend on Facebook has become a form of punishment. For many, it is a way to end a real life friendship, usually because of some dispute. What's worse is people have become so invested in the Facebook experience that deleting someone is a big deal. In these cases, things that happen online decide events in reality and not the other way around. Now, Facebook encourages us to lie about ourselves by editing our history. Self-definition is one thing, but re-writing your online interactions seems paranoid and extreme. We can now delete past mistakes and indiscretions and erase evidence of now regrettable friendships. Facebook has changed our lives, in many ways for the better. But its dominance may be short lived, particularly as it continues to change and annoy its users. It's the Internet, not Facebook, which keeps us in touch with people we don't see every day. Social networking as a concept isn't going away, but Facebook's ideas about interaction may drive people away. Users should drive websites, not the other way around.

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Read about forgotten footballer Hidetoshi Nakata on Page 9.



Garry Irwin explains why 2012 will be another year of sporting underachievement on Page 10.

Luis Suarez, the epitome of flawed genius

Liam Togher

ON 31 January 2011 Liverpool were involved in three transfers involving strikers, the fees accumulating to over €100million. The shock departure of Fernando Torres made the headlines, with the swift arrival of Andy Carroll also getting plenty of focus. With most of the attention on these two, the signing of Luis Suarez went almost undetected.

Since then both Torres and Carroll have been disappointing for the seismic fees they commanded, but Uruguay striker Suarez has taken very little time to make his mark at Anfield. He scored in his very first game for the club, a 2-0 win over Stoke, and then ran rings around Man Utd in a famous 3-1 victory.

The general consensus after his first half season in England was that he was Liverpool's best player as they restored respectability to a campaign that had threatened to become embarrassing.

In the first half of this season Suarez has rarely been out of the news. He has been the Reds' star man by a considerable distance, with a consistent supply of goals and all action performances. The first of his two goals against Stoke in the Carling Cup was simply outstanding, deft control before slipping the ball through Ryan Shotton's legs and then

curling an exquisite shot into the top corner. Pure footballing genius and well worth a look on YouTube for those yet to see it.

For all his undoubted talent, though, there is a dark side to the Uruguayan. He is constantly throwing himself to the ground at the first hint of contact and dramatically showing off his frustration whenever a decision doesn't go his way.

A shameful moment came when he slammed to the turf in the Merseyside derby in the incident that saw Jack Rodwell sent off. He now has to ride out the storm of racist comments made at Patrice Evra for which he has been banned for eight games by the FA.

To Liverpool fans he can do no wrong. Opposition supporters regard him as a scourge on the game. Neither viewpoint is true, really. Suarez should be lauded as he has a gift like very few others in world football. It is players like him who make us want to watch the game.

Sadly he will never be held up as a true great if he doesn't grow up and stop sullyng his reputation with ridiculous petulance. Luis, please do the right thing and concentrate on what you're best at – football.



Suarez sizes up to Patrice Evra, who accused the Uruguayan of making racist comments.

Plum ties for UL as Fitzgibbon and Sigerson get going

Liam Togher

WHEN the draw for the 2012 Fitzgibbon Cup was made just before Christmas, one pairing stood out among all the others - the placement of both UL and LIT in Group C, along with Dublin college St. Pat's/Mater Dei. The Shannonside derby is a repeat of last year's extraordinary final in Waterford, when UL recovered from nine points down in the first half to snatch the title with an injury time goal.

It's never a dull occasion when the two sides come face to face and it promises to be the tie of the group phase. St. Pat's, who lost to UL in this stage of the Fitzgibbon in 2010, are expected to finish bottom but both big

guns know they cannot afford to take them lightly. Elsewhere in the 100th edition of the Fitzgibbon Cup, a very competitive Group A brings together CIT, WIT and UCD, all of whom have serious aspirations of participating at the finals weekend in the Mardyke in Cork on 2/3 March.

UCC, the record champions who will host the finals, take on GMIT and DCU in Group D while 2010 winners NUI Galway are pitted against DIT and the rapidly improving Carlow IT in Group B.

While UL will be seen as one of the favourites to retain the Fitzgibbon title, this college's footballers will begin the Sigerson Cup under the

radar. As first round draws go, the Limerick side could hardly have asked for tougher opponents than former winners and last year's finalists UUC.

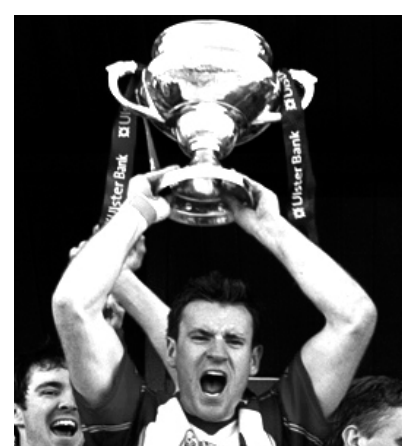
The fixture, which is due to be played at a neutral venue, will necessitate a lengthy trip for UL, for whom the dream is to earn a crack at the finals weekend, which this year takes place in Galway on 24/25 February.

If UL can cause an upset and beat the Jordanstown college, they would lie just one win away from achieving that goal.

Holders UCC begin the defence of their crown at home to GMIT while a tasty fixture is in prospect when CIT travel to 2010 champions DCU,

meaning the removal of at least one big name from the competition before the quarter-finals.

UCD host Athlone IT and NUI Galway will need to beat St. Mary's Belfast to maintain their hopes of appearing at the finals in their own backyard. Completing the first round ties are DIT v Carlow IT, Queen's University Belfast v NUI Maynooth and IT Tralee v Sligo IT.



Can UL retain its 2011 Fitzgibbon title?

Sport

Lesnar legacy is short lived



Lesnar's faults were exposed by Overeem.

Fionnbarr Thompson

AFTER years of plaguing Dana White, MMA fans across the globe have got what they wanted. We finally discovered what indeed happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. The result of course, is absolute carnage in the Heavyweight division of the UFC.

Any individual who has ever shown an interest in the dealings of Dana White and his multibillion dollar franchise knows, he is not one to miss the opportunity to bring home the big bucks. Yes, the UFC had finally gotten their man, their star attraction, but the stage was not yet set for "The Demolition Man" to make his debut. Already proven at the highest levels, boasting arguably the best standup game in Heavyweight Kickboxing and MMA history, he was also feared inside the Octagon throughout his time on the Strikeforce promotion.

Over the past two years Alastair Overeem has held both the K1 World Title and Strikeforce Heavyweight Title simultaneously, but the UFC still needed a hook for this living legend in the sport.

The answer to this problem sifted across the mouths of MMA pundits worldwide. What this match needed was Brock Lesnar. The match was proposed, the date was agreed, the contract was signed and suddenly we had ourselves a Super Fight.

Coming off a string of losses, Lesnar looked to have proved UFC Hall of Famer Royce Gracie's theory that a man can't hit you if he's on his back. Fortunately for Brock, he boasts possibly the best take down offence ever to grace any MMA stage.

Which would come out on top? Overeem's "Sprawl 'n' Brawl" tactics or Lesnar's unrivalled cardio and take down power. After a tentative start from both fighters, Overeem's experience shone through and exposed Lesnar's inability to take a shot to the mid-section as he thundered in a roundhouse kick that had years of Muay Thai experienced written all over it.

This led to Overeem being declared the victor due to TKO.

Overeem already seems destined for the UFC title. Further ramifications of this fight include the surprise retirement of the former wrestling great, speaking after the event he failed to cite his exact reasons, but like anything in the MMA community, the truth will soon surface. Some sceptics couldn't help believe that in taking this fight, Lesnar was more hook, line and sinker as opposed to just the hook to make this one of the greatest matches in history.

Editorial

Robert McNamara, Sport Editor

ARRIGO Sacchi, the legendary Italian manager of the great early 90s AC Milan team, believes that sport should reflect society. If that was the case in our society, we would be lingering on the edge of disinterest with a string of lacklustre performances and distinct lack of effort. It is a testament to the sporting people of this country that they continue to defy the odds on the world stage and represent us so well.

While the Irish Government was bowing down to the might of France and Germany, our athletes were performing giant killings at the rugby and cricket World Cups. While the airwaves were filled with overwhelmingly bad economic analysis, Katie Taylor was picking up more European and World titles. While TV panellists spoke of austerity measures and the death of the Euro currency, Fionnuala Britton was winning the European Cross Country Championship and Darren Clarke and Rory McIlroy were claiming golf majors. That is what sport is - An escape, a chance to leave the monotony of the social world behind and bask in glory. It is the shame of all shames that two of our most

talented athletes, Katie Taylor and the inspirational hand cyclist Mark Rohan are funded by scholarships from British broadcasting company Sky Sports. Sport is ridiculously underfunded in this country with a complete lack of facilities from grass roots level. Just think of Limerick. What affordable amenities do we have available to young kids?

If you want to kick a ball around with your mates it will cost you €50 to book a pitch. There is little access to public tennis or basketball courts despite our city being the European city of sport for 2011. Still, the year ahead provides us with two mouth watering prospects. Giovanni Trapattoni and his Republic of Ireland soccer team will battle it out at the



European Championships in Poland and the Ukraine. Some say the draw was unkind to us. Sure. It was a tough group to be landed in but the prospect of Ireland facing the world champions is something we should be very much looking forward to.

The challenge is to compete and getting beyond the group would constitute a major success for our Italian manager. Ireland's Olympians will be hoping for a better medal haul than 2008 and Katie Taylor will be aiming to achieve her ultimate goal of Olympic gold. Welcome to 2012.

If it's half as successful as 2011 was for Irish sport then we are set up nicely for a very exciting year.

Niland hoping to become a household name

Robert McNamara, Sport Editor

IRELAND has never had a tennis hero to whet the appetite of the casual sports fan in the country. Last year however, Limerick tennis pro Conor Niland came achingly close to changing that.

He fought through the qualifying rounds to gain entry to Wimbledon proper, and then found himself battling it out with world number one Novak Djokovic at the US Open.

Niland is hoping to improve on that showing and shoot up the world rankings in 2012. An Focal caught up with him as he prepared to embark on the qualifying rounds of the first Grand Slam of the year, the Australian Open in Melbourne.

"If I can get into the top 100 in the world, that would be great because it would mean I would get into the

Grand Slams by direct entry, and not have to win three qualifying matches. It's a big year for me. My goal really is a ranking goal. The more matches I win, the higher my ranking goes. That's my goal, top 100 by the start of the summer."

Niland may not yet be a world renowned name, but some of the world's top players are aware of the potential threat he poses. He regularly defeated Roger Federer at youth level and Andy Murray is a fan of the Irishman.

"It's nice to get respect from Andy Murray, I've trained with him a few times over in London and really enjoyed the sessions and I suppose there's not a lot of lads around from Britain and Ireland on the circuit. I'm an Irish guy and he's a Scot, so maybe he sees a

Celtic Connection or whatever and he probably likes that. It's nice when you get that kind of respect from guys at the top of the game."

Having set himself a number of goals for the year, Ireland's number 1 is keen to capitalise on last year's momentum.

"I've been able to tick a few boxes and say that I've done Wimbledon, I've done the US Open but it would be nice to complete the set and play in all four grand slams and win a round in each, so that would probably be my next goal. Hopefully I can keep motivated and keep on improving."

If 2012 starts as well as it ended for Niland in 2011, he will be in an excellent position for further grand slam success. Respect may turn to fear for many of his opponents.



An Focal caught up with Niland as he prepared to embark on the qualifying rounds of the first Grand Slam of the year, the Australian Open in Melbourne

Sport

Forgotten Footballer: Hidetoshi Nakata

Liam Togher

THE late 1990s were very good times for Japanese football.

After winning the rights to co-host the 2002 World Cup with South Korea, they qualified for their first World Cup four years earlier, even if they did lose all three group games in France.

The national team also produced a player who would go on to be regarded as the country's greatest midfield genius Hidetoshi Nakata.

Nakata was one of Japan's better performers at the 1998 World Cup and from there he earned a move to Italian club Perugia, owned by the ever-eccentric Luciano Gaucchi.

After impressing with the Umbrian side he was signed by Roma in 2000 and it was with the capital club that he had the best spell of his career. Under the management of Fabio Capello,

they won Serie A in 2001, with Nakata one of their standout players, and not only because he dyed his hair red. He famously scored against Juventus in the match that secured Roma the title.

He then made a surprise switch to Parma that summer, where he changed hair colour again to yellow, once more in accordance with the team's kit. He had become Japan's pinup boy by the time the 2002 World Cup came around and he played in all four of their games, scoring in the 2-0 win over Tunisia. From then on his career stalled somewhat, with Parma loaning him to Bologna in 2004 as his first-team appearances dwindled.

He went to Fiorentina for a year before another surprise loan move, this time to Bolton Wanderers. His arrival was in accordance with Sam Allardyce's knack

for bringing in big-name veterans such as Youri Djorkaeff, JayJay Okocha and Fernando Hierro. He featured at his third World Cup in 2006, when Japan fared poorly and he was no longer the star man. Nakata announced his shock retirement from all football after the finals in Germany at the age of just 29.

Despite his short career, Nakata was a pioneer for the game not just in Japan, but the whole of Asia. His success in Italy carved out a whole new fan base for the league in the Far East, with millions of fans glued to their national hero. He was Japan's first real superstar and he did as much as anyone to raise the profile of the beautiful game in the Land of the Rising Sun.



Nakata was one of Japan's better performers at the 1998 World Cup and from there he earned a move to Italian club Perugia, owned by the ever-eccentric Luciano Gaucchi

SPORTS QUIZ

Garry Birtles

1. How many times in succession did Bjorn Borg win the Men's Tennis Singles at Wimbledon?
2. How many players are there in an Australian Rules football team?
3. At which ski resort would you see the cresta run?
4. Which footballers autobiography is titled "Red"?
5. Which team was Liverpool playing in the 1985 European Cup Final when the Heysel stadium disaster happened, banning all English clubs from European Football for 6 years?
6. Cross country skiing and rifle shooting make up which sport?
7. Which game can be "Lawn" or "Crown Green"?
8. Which 2 continents battle it out for the Ryder Cup?
9. Which 2 continents battle it out for the Ryder Cup?
10. How many red balls are on the table at the start of a frame of snooker?

ANSWERS
1. 5
2. 18
3. ST. MORITZ
4. GARY NEVILLE
5. EUROPE AND USA
6. BOWLS
7. BIATHLON

Van Persie - Best striker on the planet?

Michael Ramsay

BOOS rang out across the stadium. Jeers and whistles screeched down from the heavens, grown men displaying their anger and disgust. Their unequivocally brilliant unbeaten run had come to an end the previous weekend.

Now Arsene Wenger's army were staring at the possibility of consecutive defeats.

Trailing 2-1 at home to unfancied Southampton looked like the sparks of a confidence-derailing implosion. The seconds were ticking down, as the linesman signalled for just three minutes left. But then, something incredible happened. Youngster Cesc Fabregas sidled a pass into the box, before an unknown Dutchman confidently checked inside his opponent, before exercising a perfectly delicate curler

into the top corner. This was the day before Halloween, seven years ago, and this is where it all started for Robin van Persie. There have been some fantastic players that have graced the pitches of Highbury and the relatively new Emirates Stadium, but Robin van Persie can surely be placed up there alongside the greats of Thierry Henry, Dennis Bergkamp and Ian Wright.

Ever since that fateful day where the aspiring young Dutchman waltzed into the battlefield, salvaging a point for the North London side, the lad has gone from strength to insurmountable strength.

Blessed with audacious skill, a delicious left foot, as well as being an aerial threat, van Persie has lit up the Premier League, with goals and assists galore. Is van Persie the best

striker in the world? Not many players are blessed with his ingenuity, and his goalscoring record holds up against anyone. Van Persie scored 28 goals in 27 appearances in 2011, including a sumptuous hat-trick at Stamford Bridge. He has also slalomed his way into the Dutch top-scorers list, with 25 international goals.

The summer of 2011 was Arsenal's season of discontent, as talented playmaker Samir

Nasri was lured away from the Emirates. However, what surely must have hit van Persie more, were the departures of Gael Clichy and Cesc Fabregas, the only remaining 'Invincibles' from the fond memories of Southampton in 2004.

Van Persie is now the sole survivor from that squad, burdened with task of leading new waves of Arsenal talent to the pinnacle of world football. Following these key departures, and a shaky start to the season, Wenger must realise that events have come full circle, and that he needs van Persie now just as much as he did on that fateful introduction seven years ago.



This was the day before Halloween, seven years ago, and this is where it all started for Robin van Persie.

Sports

2012 - Another Sporting Year of Underachievement Ahead



This summer's European Championships will again see the usual contenders vie to be the winners.

Garry Irwin

SOME say in sport that the weight of history can be your greatest opponent. That the big teams get all the decisions, there are no breaks for the little guy. How can an underdog expect a fair shake when even the referee assumes a certain outcome is inevitable?

This was made apparent during the recent rugby World Cup when far too frequently penalties were given against the smaller nations while similar offences by the 'better' team went unpunished. This was a cup that didn't see a single upset to the perceived world order. Tonga may have beaten France, but the Tongans were flying home when the French were heading to a World Cup final (their third). That they lost that final while being the better team is neither here nor there. They lose finals, it's what they do. Correct?

And as for Ireland, the golden generation, came up short, just like every other generation before them. The quarter-finals are the furthest we've ever been, the same stage as Fiji and Samoa have managed. And it's not just in rugby Ireland aim to underachieve. In football too it seems like we'd sooner send a man up Everest than win a group we've been placed in. In all our qualifying campaigns, this has only

happened once, that was in 1988 and was largely thanks to Scotland. This summer's European Championships will again see the usual contenders vie to be the winners. Talk to any Irish player and they will regurgitate the same spiel about trying their hardest and hoping for the best. Dare I say that the first player to say he wants, no expects, to win the tournament would be the first name on my team sheet. This plucky Irish defeatist mentality is hugely damaging to Irish sport and sells Irish sport fans short. Is it not time that the fans, and by extension the media, demand the best from Irish athletes?

The other major sporting event this summer is the Olympic Games, where Ireland hold an abysmal record. With the games being held so close and coming off our third best Olympics ever (3 medals, none gold, all boxing!), surely there is some hope for an improvement?

But I wouldn't hold my breath. I can see them returning to a hero's welcome after they limp out from early qualifying. Are we capable of asking the hard questions after a defeat or would that mean looking at ourselves?

Special Report - A Passionate Affair (Part 1)

Andrew Cunneen

"WHILE one may question the passion validly, the curiosity will never be satisfied until experienced."

That quote will fairly much sum up any League of Ireland supporter's answer to the snarling bar-stoolers ignorant outbursts towards the league we all adore. While even the most educated of outsiders could find a psychological reason as to why the Airtricity League has so many hard-line followers, none can ever fully understand. Perhaps that's why it's so important to those involved, because they, a minority, are actually involved.

I'd always wonder how certain people can think that sitting behind a bar watching the global giants of football on a television screen can beat the first-hand experience of raw emotion up and down the country. It bemused me for so long, until I finally gave up caring. I'd established that it's each to their own and what is mine, is mine, and that was why I loved it.

A personal connection to the players, whether it be due to their locality, or due to their long term commitment to "your" club, is something no person could feel for a player cross-channel whilst camped in the glum surroundings of a public house watching his every move on the latest digital miracle feature produced by a company only interested in the revenue they can make off it. Whilst I would never condemn people for supporting English teams, I would question the credibility of an Irish



man's claim that they support the club, because they "love" it. It's blatantly obvious to everyone that the quality of football isn't as good as our neighbours across the Irish Sea. It is also obvious however, that in terms of passion, no matter how small a crowd may be, one man's passion here, can equal that of a dozen sunshine supporters.

Those experiences, which were witnessed first-hand by the people who were there, will stay with them forever, while sitting in front of a television listening to the constant murmurings of a stranger developing his opinions as your own can feel quite repetitive.

The social aspect of the game is also a major factor -the sense of belonging. You fly your colours high for your team, they represent you on that football pitch, represent the feelings the club has given you throughout the years and even your upbringing if a relative forced it down your throat when you were younger. Read part 2 in the next edition.

Super blues hoping to make the Premier leap

Andrew Cunneen

THE off season in the League of Ireland is more heart-in-mouth than any mere ninety minutes of football. The Premier Division fixtures and licenses have been awarded, but for poor Limerick, the waiting will have to go on. Since the collapse of Galway United, a Supporters Trust has been established, and a club given the name Galway United Supporters Trust Football Club has been set up.

Reports are flooding in of their rejection from the First Division setup. What does this mean? It means there will be no Galway United competing in senior competition in this country in the foreseeable future. Cobh Ramblers, FC Carlow and Tralee Dynamos all await the verdict regarding their licensing application.

Meanwhile for Limerick, coming off the back of a season where a league technicality and an ineligible player played by a different club has cost you promotion, the goal is to win the league, and win it comfortably.

Up until a fortnight ago, whispers tainted the club's solemn state of mind due to a rumour of the Blues qualifying for a place in the Premier Division due to financial problems with Bohemians. That rumour has since been obliterated, and Limerick have made steady progress in creating a title winning squad for the coming season.

Established Premier Division centre half Shane Guthrie arrives on Shannonside from Inchicore. Alongside

him, comes the most versatile player in the country. Often a nemesis to Limerick throughout the years in Munster derbies, Seamus Long joins from Waterford United. Limerick's back four looks to be completed. While filtering out some of last year's flops, Limerick had their losses in terms of personnel also. Jeffrey Judge and Thomas Lyons have opted for moves back to junior football while last year's player of the year John Frost swaps sides with Seamus Long, and heads back to Suirside. The majority of last

years' talent has been re-signed which should see Limerick win the league by an impressive margin. The closest rivals to Limerick will most likely be Waterford; a side who finished twenty-four points behind them last year.

With Limerick having improved their squad with their new signings, many predict a landslide victory. Having watched League of Ireland football for the last ten years, I can promise, nothing is ever that simple.



While filtering out some of last year's flops, Limerick had their losses in terms of personnel also.

Gaeilge

Eagarfhocal

Féilim O Flatharta

Tá seimeastar 2 anseo cheana féin agus tá muid ar fad tagtha ar ais ón briseadh fada na Nollag. Is aoibhinn liom a bheith ar ais ar choláiste agus ar ais i saol na mac léinn. Ar an gcéad dul síos ba mhaith liom mo mhíle buíochas a ghlacadh le chuile dhuine a thug cúnaimh dom leis na píosaí Gaeilge don nuachtán i seimeastar

a haon. Tá mé fíorbhuíoch daoibh ar fad. Tá súil agam go mbeidh sibh sásta tacú liom arís an tseimeastar seo agus má tá aon duine eile amuigh ansin a bhfuil suim agat píosa a scríobh nó do thuaraim a thabhairt ná biodh drogaill ort ríomhphost a sheoladh chugam ag feilim.mozzy@gmail.com.

Saoire sa Sneachta

Ó bhí mise i mo ghasúr óg is maith is cuimhin liom a bheith ag dul ar saoire le mo mhuintir agus mo dheirfiúr.

Sna blianta sin d'fhan muid ar saoire in Éirinn. Sea, rinne muid na gnáth cinn, Cill Áirne i gCiarraí, Dún Garbhán i bPort Láirge agus na cinn craiceáilte ar nós Trobolgan i gCorcaigh agus Mosney i gCo. na Mí.

An chéad ceann a bhí againn thar lear ná Malta agus mura raibh sé sin thar a bheith te ansin ar feadh seachtain, teocht de 42 céim celsius. Sna blianta a lean chuaigh muid chuig an Spáinn, an Fhrainc, na Stáit Aontaithe, tá a fhios agat féin na háiteanna a bhaineann muid ar fad amach. Ach cé gur maith liom an ghrian agus an teas, bhí suim agam I gcónaí dul ar saoire sa sneachta agus mo chuid ama a chaitheamh ag sciáil.

Faraor, ní raibh an chuid eile de mo chlann ar an intinn céanna liom. Ach i mí Feabhra 2010 fuair mise mo dheis ar an sneachta agus ar an sciáil nuair a d'eagraigh an scoil turas go Lillehammer san Iorua agus thap mise mo sheans agus as sin a fuair mé an bug.

Nuair a thosaigh mé amach ar mo dara bliain in Ollscoil Luimnigh, bhí sé i m'intinn saoire a chaitheamh sa bhFrainc tar éis an Nollaig agus sula dtiocfaínn ar ais don dara seimeastar. Cheannaigh mé ticéad ar eitilt Aer Lingus go Lyon na Fraince d'óiche Chinn Bliana agus chuir mé coicís in áirithe dom féin in árasán i La Plagne sa Fhrainc. D'fhág mé an baile ar 5 ar an mhaidin deiridh de 2011 agus thug mé m'aghaidh ar aerfort Bhaile Átha Cliath chun eitilt a fháil go Lyon na Fraince. Tar éis landáil i Lyon fuair mé an bus a bhí curtha in áirithe agam a thabharfadh ón aerfort mé go La Plagne, 200Km soir ón aerfort.

Agus mé ag taisteal chuig mo sprioc, chonaic mé cuid de na radharcanna is áille a bhfaca mé i mo shaol go dtí seo. Bhí siad thar barr ar fad agus muid ag taisteal suas an sliabh.

Níl aon dabht faoi ach go bhfuil daoine maithe sa saol, is cum cá bhfuil tú. Bhí sé deireanach go maith nuair a shroich mé La Plagne agus bhí an oifig dúnta, rud a chiallaigh go raibh orm dul áit éigin eile chun eochair a bhailiú. Casadh an fear cairdiúil seo ón Ghearmáin orm agus thug sé síob dom síos chuig an áit a raibh an eochair le bailiú agam.

Is maith an lá domsa gur casadh orm é mar bheadh siúlóid de 20 nóiméad síos agus 20 nóiméad eile aníos orm

murach é, mo mhálaí ar iompar agam chomh maith. Nuair a bhí mé socraigh isteach i m'árasán, bhuaill mé síos chuig an beár agus chaith mé an oíche ansin ag ceiliúradh an bhliain nua I gcuideachta na daoine eile a bhí ar saoire san áit agus mura raibh oíche go maidin againn. B'é seo an chéad uair agam as baile don bhliain nua agus cé go raibh mé uaigheach, bhain mé antaitneamh as. Ba thaithí nua dom é.

Tá seachtain iontach caite agam ag sciáil ar na sléibhte sna hAlpa. Cheannaigh mé pas sciála dom féin ar chostas €38 sa lá. Oibríonn sé seo díreach mar a oibríonn an toll ar mótarbhealach tollán Luimnigh. Ceannaíonn tú an creidmheas agus gach uair a theann rú tríd an geata, baintear as do chreidmheas é. Caithfidh mé a rá gur obair mhór é a bheith ag sciáil. Dúnann na fána gach lá ag 5:00 agus nuair a bheadh uaireanta an chloig caite agat orthu, teastaíonn an scíth uait san oíche.

Tá do chuid matáin ar fad ag obair ar bhealaí nár chuimhneamh tú orthu agus tú ag teacht anuas na fána sin agus tá do inchinn ar ragobair chomh maith. Cé go bhfuil sneachta i ngach áit thimpeall ort, ní airíonn tú an fuacht chomh mór sin. Bhí neart áiseanna eile ar fáil san áit ina raibh mé ag fanacht, rudaí ar nós beár, bialann agus linn snámha. Ní raibh mórán deis agam a bheith díomhaoín le bheith fireannach. Bhí dhá lá nach raibh mé in ann dul amach de bharr maidhm sneachta ach b'iontach an rud é a bheith ag breathnú amach ar an sneachta mór seo ag titim síos an sliabh agus ag clúdach gach a raibh thimpeall air. Sea cinnte, tá sé contúirteach ach is iontach an rud é a fheiceáil ag tarlú.

Ceann de na scannáin is mó a bhain mise sult as le fada an lá ná an scannán Cool Runnings. Scannán a bhí anseo faoi foireann as Iamáice a ghlac páirt i gcomórtas an Bobsleigh sna Cluichí Oilimpeacha Geimhreadh. Bhí sé i m'intinn i gcónaí trial a bhaint as seo agus fuair mé mo sheans i La Plagne. Ar chostas €40 an duine, fuair mise agus triúir eile síob síos i gceann de na carranna speisialta seo agus is é an dá nóiméad is fearr a chaith mé i mo shaol go dtí seo. B'iontach an taithí a bhí ann agus mholfainn do dhuine ar bith é a dhéanamh. Bhí an buzz thar barr.

Is féidir leat blas a fháil má bhreathnaíonn tú ar an suíomh www.fibt.com agus www.la-plagne.com. Is saoire é nach ndéanfaidh tú dearmad ar sula i bhfad.



Lifestyle

Facing the Facts

Roisin Curran, Beauty Columnist

WHEN we think of chemicals, what often comes to mind is the bleach under the sink or the oil rigs out in the North Sea, but most people forget about the chemicals going on their face.

Some chemical exposure is inevitable for our bodies, and it doesn't matter if you're a chain smoker or not. But the biggest chemical parasite lurking in our bodies and on our faces is makeup. For all you know, that expensive new foundation of yours is slapping a big biohazard sign on your forehead instead of the great coverage that the nice sales lady promised you.

It's hard for a girl to find out what the big industry is putting in her products since even the ingredients are a game of cloak and dagger. Women typically use over more than 250 chemicals on their face daily, from crushed beetles to animal fat. The cochineal beetles in South America are full of cactus juice,

so when crushed they add the red tint that you put on your lips and cheeks. But the scariest part is that cosmetic companies don't have to disclose any bug ingredients. It seems we're going to be playing bug roulette with our lipsticks for a little while longer.

Animal fat is the stuff that makes your foundation spread and your lips glossy. The animal in question can range from road kill to strays to expired meat. For the sake of womankind's compassion, I won't disclose the journey from stray doggy to sparkly lip-gloss.

But don't worry; a simple switch to organic products can quickly remove the ick factor. Zuii organic range is good for skin, with 95 % pure ingredients and against animal cruelty. Make the switch to this or any brand like it, and sleep with a little less toxins and a lot less horror at night.



Women typically use over more than 250 chemicals on their face daily

When Jealousy Strikes

Aoife Mc Loughlin

THE green eyed monster; who hasn't experienced it? That surge of bubbling anger, possession and various other emotions that mix together to create the perfect cocktail - jealousy.

But what is jealousy? It is perceived as a negative emotion but when broken down and understood it can be used for positives too.

Jealousy can often be mistaken as love in relationships. "I am jealous and possessive over this person therefore I must love them", but this is not the case. Jealousy is a fear and insecurity of losing love, losing a loved one and fundamentally about comparison.

Jealousy is one of these tell-tale emotions that can urge us to look at ourselves in the face of its object. It is from here that we can decide to address

the insecurities we've been avoiding or oblivious to. For instance, one may feel quite jealous should a colleague be promoted to a coveted role above you. When you break it down, you may realize that the reason for this jealousy is that you know that colleague worked hard and deep down you know you hadn't made the effort or just do not have the aptitude for that role.

Changes can be made from here on in to strive to be at you best or more accepting. According to Freud this is known as competitive or normal jealousy.

This "normal" jealousy is just the tip of the iceberg for all of us, but it's according to the individual just how deep we delve into the other layers of our emerald eyed little monster. Projected jealousy is the urgent defense strategy we use when faced with feelings of guilt triggered by thoughts of infidelity. It's the classic maneuver we have all experienced be it through

feeling projected jealousy or being at the receiving end of a paranoid partner.

But jealousy, as all other emotions can be far more intense a feeling than this and can often become dangerous. Pathological jealousy: the monster that creates a monster.

Pathological jealousy is the belief that an individual has exclusive ownership over another and will do what it takes to maintain this. It is extremely dangerous and can lead to abuse, violence, stalking and even homicide. It's the most frightening and torturous form of jealousy as the individual can never be reassured or appeased of this neurotic emotion as its stems from deep levels of anxiety and fear and becomes completely narcissistic.

But all in all, as extreme as jealousy can become for a minority of people, a little bit of normal jealousy in everyday life can be nice and gives us all a little kick up the bum.



Herbal Remedies

Karen O' Connor Desmond,
Lifestyle Editor

HERBAL remedies have been used by mankind for thousands and thousands of years. In fact, instructions for using medicinal plants can be found in the records of King Hammurabi of Babylon, 1800 BC. Considering the amount of unnatural substances that we put into our bodies every day, it is no surprise that there has been a gradual interest in the old ways of healing.

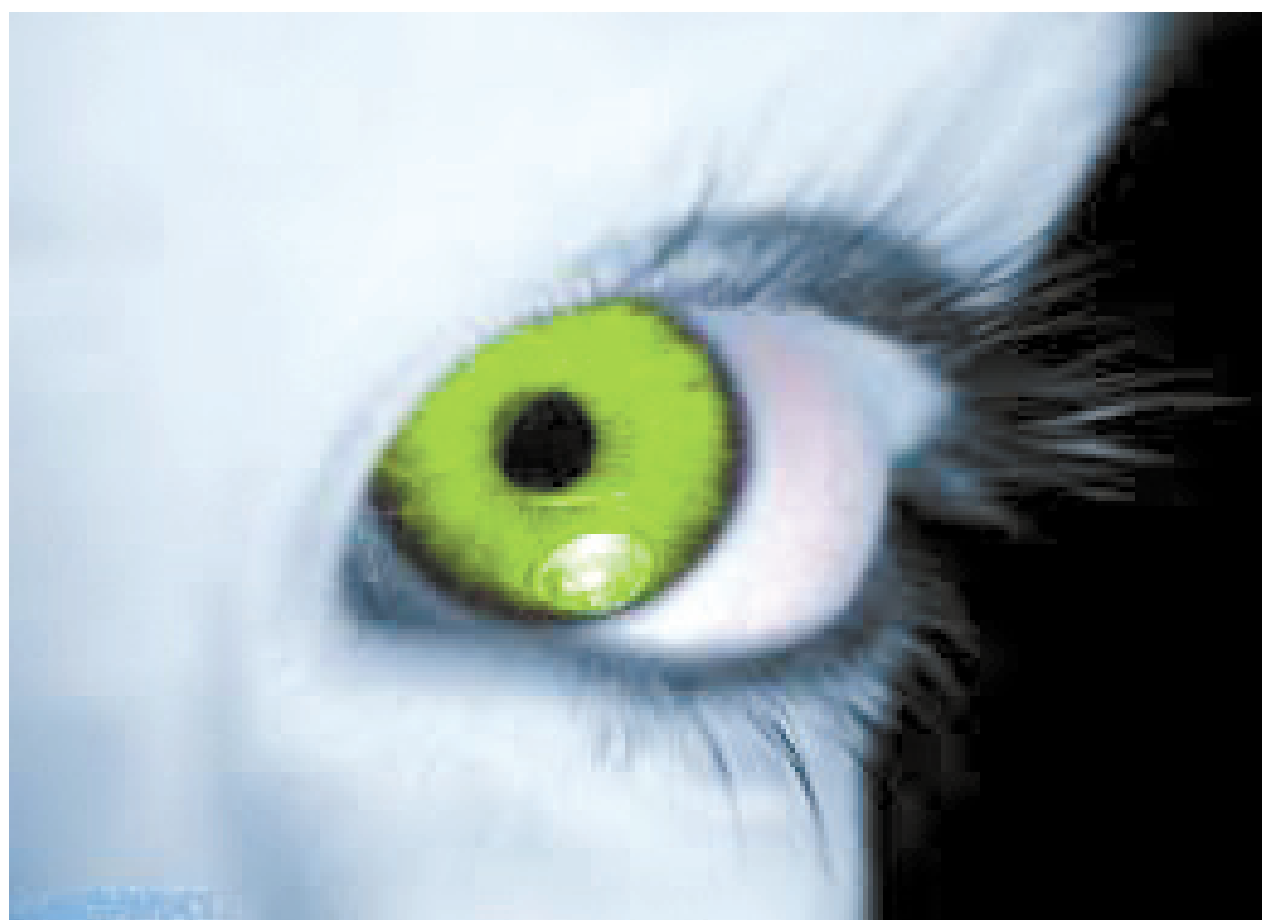
Herbal remedy is defined as "a medication prepared from plants". With a long and respected history, many herbal remedies have proven to be effective against a range of health problems. So before you say "out with the old and in with new", don't throw the herbal remedies bandwagon on the side of the road just yet.

Life's hectic pace has led to more and more people reporting an increase in anxiety and stress, often accompanied by sleeplessness. A popular herbal remedy for treating this is passionflower. Passionflower is known to have a soothing effect on both the body and mind. One tablet of passionflower extract (taken with water), in the morning is the recommended dosage for tackling these problems.

The common cold or flu is a niggling problem for the majority of us, at

least a couple of times a year. An extremely popular herbal remedy to alleviate these symptoms and help fight infection is echinacea. Echinacea is known to greatly reduce symptoms such as lethargy, coughing, headache and aching limbs. It is believed that this herbal remedy is an "immune stimulant" which increases antibody production. The recommended dosage is 2-3ml of echinacea juice, three times daily. For those of you travelling abroad this semester, if you're prone to travel sickness, fear no more - its ginger to the rescue. This nifty herbal remedy is used by pregnant women and even astronauts at NASA to prevent nausea and sickness. The recommended dosage to treat travel sickness is 1000mg, taken four hours before travelling.

As with anything medicinal, there are sometimes side effects and certain circumstances under which herbal remedies should not be used. Sometimes if combining two different herbal remedies, mixing them with medication or an underlying condition, they can do more harm than good. So be sure to double check with a pharmacist or doctor before trying them.



Jealousy is one of these tell-tale emotions that can urge us to look at ourselves in the face of its object.

Lifestyle

New Year's Resolutions

Sophie McDermott

TRADITIONALLY New Year's Resolutions exist not to make you feel bad about what you "forgot" to accomplish last year but to motivate you to really think about what you want to get out of next year.

What we sometimes forget when in the process of making these resolutions is that WE ARE ONLY HUMAN! We can't do absolutely everything we want in 2012. This is why New Year's Resolutions should be seen as a step-by-step guide to get your life on track the way you want it.

Firstly, you might as well face the fact that world peace is just slightly out of your grasp of achievable things to do this year. Instead, start looking at the small, niggling things in your life such as bad habits you want to stop or hobbies you've always wanted to take up. The key to making realistic New Year's resolutions is thinking small. Honestly, over time you'll see that the smaller changes develop into big ones. It is true, in this case, that good things come in small packages. For example, do you think you could make it as a

singer? Well, instead of packing your bags for Hollywood and making it as far as the living room television, why not promise to make YouTube videos and get yourself noticed? It worked for Justin Bieber didn't it?

Another vital factor in making your New Year's resolutions stick is to be specific. We can all promise ourselves we'll be muscular and thin by summer but unless we resolve ourselves to a plan of action, that flubber is going to remain. Instead, look at yourself and think, "How am I going to achieve this?" Make a plan of action that's reasonable and accessible and you'll find yourself looking like an A-lister's body double. However, no man or woman has ever been successful in doing anything without the "I can do it" mindset necessary to motivate and determine. This even applies to resolutions. In order to accomplish what you want, you must believe in yourself and believe that you can do it and when you have that done, you can look forward to a new you.



GINGERGIRL'S FOOD UL LOVE...

Helen Keown, Food Columnist

This chilli con carne recipe is my absolute favourite.

It definitely has that rich tomato depth that you're after with a freshness from the coriander that stops it feeling too heavy.

Easy Chilli Con Carne!

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 stick of celery, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 heaped tsp of hot chilli powder
- 1 tsp of paprika
- 1 tsp of ground cumin
- 1 tsp of ground cinnamon
- 1 small bunch fresh coriander, chopped

- 500g lean minced beef
- 1 beef stock cube
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 410g can red kidney beans

Put your pan on the hob over a medium heat. When warm, add the onions, stirring frequently until they are soft and translucent. Add the garlic, red pepper, chilli, paprika, cinnamon and cumin. Cook for another five minutes, stirring occasionally.

Turn the heat up a little, add the meat to the pan and break it up with your spatula. Keep stirring until all the mince is in uniform, mince-sized lumps and there are no more pink bits. Make sure you keep the heat hot enough for the meat to fry and brown but not stew. Crumble your stock cube into 300 ml of hot water. Pour this into the pan with the mince mixture then add the

tomatoes. Add the oregano and sugar and season. Squirt in roughly two tablespoons of tomato purée and stir the sauce well. Bring to the boil, give the chilli a good stir and put a lid on the pan. Turn down the heat until it is gently bubbling and leave for twenty minutes. Stir the chilli occasionally. If necessary, add a little water. After simmering gently, the chilli should look thick, moist and juicy.

Drain and rinse the beans in a sieve and stir them into the chilli along with the roughly chopped coriander. Bring to the boil again, and gently bubble without the lid for another ten minutes. Want some cooking advice and tips? Email helen@gingergirl.ie

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Fad Diets

Ann Styles

AS Mark Twain once said, "There is a charm about the forbidden that makes it unspeakably desirable." When it comes to dieting, desire is our worst enemy and Christmas its partner in crime.

At the dawn of a new year we want nothing more than a fresh start with a nice new fit body to match, but how to get it after the excesses of the festive season? With a fad diet of course. There are literally hundreds to choose from and each one professes miraculous capabilities. So how do you choose? Three days of sipping cabbage water or a week of all you can eat meat and butter. It's a fad fest out there.

As a species we are prone to excesses so what can we do about it? If we can pick up bad habits then surely we can pick up good ones. The problem is, as Mark Twain said, desire.

We have to want these new healthy habits so there has to be a reward, and it has to be tangible. A bar of chocolate smells, looks and tastes good.

A carrot stick just doesn't hold the same appeal so we must be clever and inventive to trick ourselves into feeling, seeing and tasting the good in a healthy diet. Fad diets are, by their very

nature, temporary and unsatisfactory. They fulfill our need for quick results but often fall far short of our dietary requirements and in some cases can even be damaging to our health.

As boring as it sounds we need small permanent changes and an ethos of moderation if we are to have any long term success. To achieve this, we must desire the reward that these changes bring. Experts say visualization is key with professional athletes keen practitioners.

The answer, therefore, for successful health changes, is to visualize your success, a nice healthy body and the rush of endorphins that exercise brings. Feel it and you will believe it.

Believe it and you will achieve it. So to get started draw up a plan that includes daily visualization of achieving your goals. Props can be helpful so let your imagination run wild. Pictures, skinny jeans, affirmations - it's all good. Make it a morning ritual and before you know it you will be making healthier choices as a matter of course and the appeal of quick results from 'miraculous' fad diets will be a hazy memory.



Fashion

A Year In Fashion

Sarah O'Dwyer

The trends of 2011 ranged from colour blocking to androgyny, and these were certainly both worn well and worn terribly. Kate Middleton has, without doubt, become one of the most elegant women in the world in 2011 and her fashion is now avidly followed by many women the world over.

Anne Hathaway had 12 outfit changes at the Oscars without a single faux-pas and thanks to this; she made British Vogue's best dressed list of 2011 with Alexa Chung, Natalie Portman, and unsurprisingly, Victoria Beckham. Adele has had a great year, making Vogue's best dressed list this year, thanks to her vintage style at the Brits, and her first ever Vogue cover shoot. The most interesting scandal occurred back in February. Controversy rocked the house of Dior when John Galliano was arrested for anti-Semitic comments against a couple after an apparent drunken binge. However, when arrested and breathalysed it was proven that Mr. Galliano was just over the legal limit, and not as drunk as previously stated. He was suspended from Dior and the company's

chief executive, Sidney Toledano commented by saying: "Dior affirms with the utmost conviction its policy of zero tolerance towards any anti-Semitic or racist words or behavior. Pending the results of the inquiry Christian Dior has suspended John Galliano from his responsibilities."

Even Natalie Portman, the face of Dior, and Karl Lagerfeld were quick to condemn the designer, who was found guilty on charges of making the racist comments in a Parisian café. However, many in the fashion industry lamented his departure, and his successor Bill Gaytten is sure we haven't seen the last of Galliano yet.

One of the youngest girls to ever appear in Vogue Paris sparked controversy during 2011.

Some found the images of the ten year old model unsuitable and too provocative for her age.

Thylane Blondeau graced the pages of Vogue back in January and the so-called seductive imagery provoked disgust among many parents, their argument being that she was being overly sexualized for her age. Others spoke out in favour of the images,

stating that there was nothing wrong with them, she was fully clothed at all times, and that the poses were high-fashion, not provocative.

No fashion article from 2011 would be complete without Gaga. Only Lady Gaga would wear the most curious, bizarre designs exactly as they were designed for the catwalk, and she took the trends of 2011 to a whole other level. It is safe to say her dress sense is an acquired taste, you either love it or hate it, and the CFDA (Council of Fashion Designers of America) certainly love it. Lady Gaga was named fashion icon of the year at their annual award ceremony held in New York City back in June.

2011 has been an interesting year for fashion in many respects. Fashion icons were made and destroyed thanks to their clothing choices this year. Here's to a thought-provoking and fascinating year in fashion and here's hoping 2012 will bring even more memorable moments in the fashion industry.



Thylane Blondeau, the child model who caused a stir in the fashion world

I now pronounce you...

Keira Maher

2011 WAS a very special year in the world of weddings and we witnessed the matrimony of three British queens: the queen of pop, Lily Allen, the queen of fashion, Kate Moss and the future queen of England, Kate Middleton. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were first to tie the knot in April while Moss and Allen had summer weddings. It was no surprise that the Royal Wedding was going to be special.

What was kept a surprise was the designer of Kate Middleton's dress. Nobody knew who she was wearing to the wedding and when she got out of the wedding car and presented herself, I think the whole world gasped in awe.

Amazing, beautiful, incredible, these are all words that sprang to mind when I saw her wearing the lace bodice, high collared, long sleeved Alexander McQueen dress designed by Sarah Burton.

The second dress that Kate wore that day was spectacular, quite easily as beautiful as the first. The white satin strapless evening gown with a circle skirt and diamante around the waist was another McQueen creation.

While it was Kate's big day, I don't think we could leave out her little sister Pippa. She was dressed in an ivory satin based crepe dress designed again by the talented Sarah Burton. Did she steal the show? I'm not convinced but I know others who'd disagree!

Having a princess wedding of her own, Kate Moss tied the knot this year to Jamie Hince of the Kills. I have been a major fan of Kate Moss for years, and it was no surprise to see what she wore on her big day.

The 37-year-old model looked stunning in her vintage cream gown. The floor length dress and veil was designed by Moss's long time friend John Galliano. With such elegance and grace, Kate pulled this one off

and her dress rivals Middleton's and as for the 15 bridesmaids, they looked superb. Lily Allen also got hitched last summer to Sam Cooper.

The singer who was pregnant at the time looked amazing in her French designed Delphine Manivet gown. The top half of the dress resembled Kate Middleton's dress as it was long sleeved and laced and the curvy singer filled the dress beautifully.

The only thing I didn't like was the veil. It looked very vintage but was not my cup of tea at all. Together the bride and groom looked dashing.

The bridesmaids at the occasion looked wonderful as well in their plain simple peach dresses and the flower girls look adorable in their white laced dresses as well. As we embark into 2012, I can't help but wonder which wedding will catch our eye this year.



Kate Moss wearing a Galliano dress at her summer wedding

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Fashion

It's All About The Money, Money, Money

Aoife McLoughlin

LOOKING back to 2007, cities and towns all over Ireland and the UK hustled and bustled with consumers. The high streets and shopping centers were laden with fashionably clad men and women as well as shiny new units popping up here and there, donning the latest brands.

We look to 2012, and we are left with dying cities and ghost towns echoing of a time not so long ago. The remnants of a Sasha store, the skeleton of a Vero Moda unit, who's windows are now only used to check ones reflection on our way to Penneys. Every week we hear of one of our beloved shops being plucked from our grasp. But who's to blame?

With the rise in taxes and the cost of living, decline in consumer spending and online shopping becoming the more popular way to access brands we once shared a city with, what can we expect?

In Limerick alone, we live with the daily threat of our beloved Brown Thomas falling victim to this recession.

Roches Stores was taken over by Debenhams (but for how long), Benetton, Monsoon, Miss Selfridge, the list goes on.

We entered the New Year with the threat of lingerie chain, La Senza. It the firm went into administration followed by the collapse of Barrett's shoe store earlier last month.

As the rumour mill churns, whispering of more and more stores shutting down, our wardrobes dwindle in quality and slowly fill with the more affordable names such as Penney's and H&M. Tastes and expression through our clothes is now becoming more uniform.

The once feared situation of seeing 20 people on a night out in the same outfit becomes an ever-increasing reality.

Arcadia group's plan to close 260 of its stores within the next three years across Ireland and the UK has already become evident. Top Shop lovers will now have to travel outside of Limerick since the closure of its store in the Crescent shopping centre last month.

Dorothy Perkins, Evans and Burtons are all operated by Arcadia Retailing Group, thus meaning these too are at risk of closure.

What is the fate of our wardrobes, should the domino effect not cease? Already the bartering and hand-me-downs have commenced. Vintage and retro trends have dominated catwalks and stores and long may it continue in the hopes that both these trends can be pulled off by 5 year old flares from A|Wear and grandpa blazers from second hand shops.

The saddest thing about all of this is the effect the economy is having on our indigenous stores and Irish designers, who have already dedicated themselves to a highly competitive industry, but an industry that is now being crippled by an ever decreasing consumer market for our designer labels and high-street stores.



La Senza, the popular lingerie chain has now gone into administration

Hollywood's funny girl shows off her fashion credentials

Dearbhaile Houston

WITH her husky voice and red hair, you may know her as the girl who was head-butted by Jonah Hill in 'Superbad' but Emma Stone has moved far beyond that. 2011 was her definitive year as she scored roles in some of the biggest films of the summer, as the star of 'The Help' and getting a chance to admire Ryan Gosling's six-pack in 'Crazy Stupid Love' to filming her part in the latest Spider Man reboot alongside Andrew Garfield. Her style has continued in the same trajectory as her career. Stone has started taking some risks and it has paid off big time. Her casual look is feminine and edgy and she's frequently seen in skinny jeans and simple tops pepped up with unusual accessories. On the red carpet, however, she has stepped it up and is working the big-name designers. Her personal style has not gone unnoticed by the fashion world and she has been featured on the covers of magazines from Elle to W.

Stone's style is sleek and experimental. Take the dress she wore to last year's Golden Globes. The peach Calvin Klein long-line dress was simple but amid the very feminine gowns that usually make their way down the red carpet, it came across as fresh and different.

She wore a sculptural strapless Lanvin dress with a monochrome rose print to the Met Gala. The effect was modern but also harked back to the Hollywood broads of the past. She favoured Lanvin again at BAFTA awards in London. The one shoulder two-tone gown with a flowing skirt was paired with gold and nude accessories.

Stone's style is classic but youthful. She manages to stay on the right edge of quirky without straying into got-



Stone works the polka dot trend at the premiere of 'The Help'.

dressed-in-the-dark territory. In the land of stylists and manufactured looks, it's refreshing that Stone continues to retain her own personality with her clothes. She wears even the stuffiest pieces of couture with a sense of humour and casualness. Towards the end of the year she began experimenting in a more directional vein. To the premiere of The Help in London she wore a Luca Luca white polka dot dress with draped cut-away sleeves. At the Los Angeles premiere for the same film, she rocked

a mid-length chiffon Chanel creation with a quirky lady like vibe. It will be interesting to see where Stone goes next with her style. She has said in interviews that she likes the "whimsical" style of Miu Miu and I'd love to see her in Marc Jacobs or Prada. Whatever she decides to wear, I have a feeling that Emma Stone will keep her title as fashionista well beyond the New Year.

Written In The Stars

Emily Maree, Fashion Editor

There isn't much talk about male style icons these days, since the days of Sean Connery, Marlon Brando and the Rat Pack are gone with nothing but their legacy behind them.

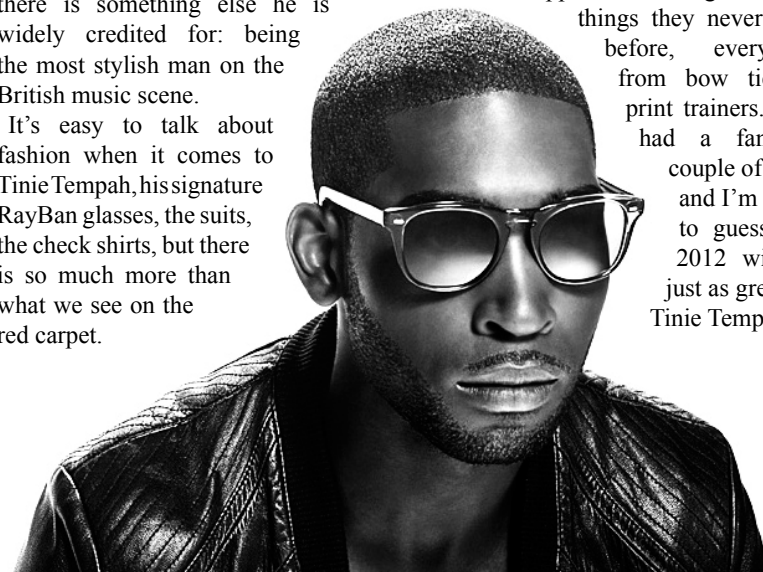
However, there is always someone to pick up the slack and this year, the spotlight has been shone on British rap star Tinie Tempah. The dapper lady's man has been on our radar since late 2009 and hasn't left it since we are still figuring out how he can pull off a bow tie and master geek chic so perfectly!

The 23-year-old from Plumstead in London, real name Patrick Chukwuemeka Okogwu, began singing in 2006 and his debut album, DiscOverly was Number 1 in the UK charts in October 2010. But while we could talk for hours about his musical achievements and his amazing lyrics, there is something else he is widely credited for: being the most stylish man on the British music scene.

It's easy to talk about fashion when it comes to Tinie Tempah, his signature RayBan glasses, the suits, the check shirts, but there is so much more than what we see on the red carpet.

Not only does he style himself perfect, but is now aiming to do the same with us. Tempah and his management company Disturbing London have collaborated with label MHI to created a London-inspired range of clothing available on his website but is keen to be seen as individual in his designing and his designs can definitely be seen as different. In two short years, men all over the globe have begun to aspire to be as stylish as Mr Tempah. From the streets of London to Italy, from Russia to the US, everyone wants a bit of the geek chic action that he has made so famous. In a scene of the Inbetweeners, Simon is told to buy a shirt, bow tie and shorts by his girlfriend Tara which he looks decidedly ridiculous in, but you can bet a small fortune that that wardrobe malfunction was inspired by the one and only Tinie. He's so much more than a stylish man, or even a designer, he is an absolute icon when it comes to fashion.

He inspired a generation of men to appreciate suits again and try things they never tried before, everything from bow ties to print trainers. He's had a fantastic couple of years and I'm going to guess that 2012 will be just as great for Tinie Tempah.



Tinie Tempah, the most stylish man on the music

Student Speak

STUDENT SPEAK



Just before the start of the semester, An Focal reporter and dedicated News Editor Jason Kennedy, took to the courtyard to find out about your New Year's resolutions.

Evana Downes - *"To not wake my housemates up in the morning when I make smoothies"*



Kevin Daly - *"Me gusta"*



Amanda Dickerman - *"Learn how to drink whiskey"*



Mark Conway - *"I don't make any. If you want to change, why wait until the first of January"*



Daniel Fox - *"To have the best ULEM radio show in the world"*



Conor James Keane - *"Be more Awesome"*



Karl Breen - *"Stop smoking"*



Nicola Sutton - *"Not to miss an episode of Fair City this semester"*



Jack Brolly - *"To have the best ULEM radio show in the universe"*



Colm Fitzgerald - *"To make it through my co-op in one piece!"*

AN FOCAL

Will the Kindle see the end of the humble book?
Turn to page 18 to find out.



Issue 7 FREE
Volume XX

24th January 2012

New Music for The New Year

Jack Brolly

EVEN if 2011 didn't give you the girl, the money or even the grades you wanted, it certainly delivered some great music.

We were treated to some brilliant releases, surprised by some and infuriated by disappointing ones. Mastodon went from strength to strength with 'The Hunter', Kate Bush delivered with '50 Words for Snow' and Irish music was treated to the likes of And So I Watch You From Afar's 'Gangs' and Tieranniesaur's self-titled debut.

There was a lot to celebrate and a lot to scratch your head about (I'm looking at you Justice).

Now that we've dipped our toe into the sea of 2012, what bands can we expect to deliver?

MMOTHS is the project of 18 year old Jack Colleran is a native of Kildare. Last year he gave us a small taste of what is to come from him and, oh boy, did it taste good.

His brand of organic electronica went down very well with pretty much anyone who heard it.

This year he is set to release his debut album and it's sure to be a good one. The Cast of Cheers' first album, 'Chariot' was received very well by critics and fans alike.

Now they're gearing up to release album number two. If you heard the first single from the album, "Family" then you're probably excited already as Zane Lowe proved when he played it twice in a row on his BBC radio show.

Lana Del Ray took the world by storm last year with her debut single, "Video Games". More recently the single "Born to Die" was released and it has gone down well.

The 30th of January is the day when Lana reveals if she has what it takes to be mentioned in the same breath as the likes of Florence & the Machine.

Baroness are a metal band who take their cues from the likes of Mastodon and Alice in Chains.

Their last two LPs, 'Red Album' and 'Blue Record' showed that they have the ability and determination to be as good as any of their contemporaries. 2012 will see the release of their 3rd album which remains untitled. My money is on 'Green Album'.

Expect impressive releases from the likes of Adebisi Shank, BATS, Converge, Kid Cudi,

The Mars Volta and plenty more. 2012 has the potential to be a great year for music. Let's hope it delivers.



One to look out for - Northern Irish band And So I Watch You from Afar

Rock 'N' Rollin' Through the Punches



Paul Sullivan

Canadian Rockers Nickelback

NICKELBACK are easily one of the most contentious bands on today's music scene. Somehow over the last fifteen years or so they have managed to create, and maintain, a sharp divide within the music community.

There appears to be no safe middle ground for listener and no sitting on the fence. Generally, they are either hated or loved. A number of sparks have reignited this division in recent times. The end of 2011 saw Nickelback release their seventh studio album entitled "Here and Now".

It also saw them entangled in an intense controversy over their performance at the NFL Thanksgiving Day game in Detroit where they promoted their latest single.

Over 55,000 disgruntled football fans signed a petition insisting that

Nickelback be removed from the half-time show. But the show went on regardless. So why does everyone hate Nickelback? In no way will this article deal with some of the more unreasonable opinions circulating online. For example, Nickelback are not a bad band because they are Canadian! Most critics would argue they are far too generic. Their work is seen as no more than radio friendly hits without any real substance. What's more, they fail to show innovation. Other critics argue Nickelback have discovered a formula which works

and have chosen to recycle it on each record. An ardent supporter of the band might suggest the band is consistent with the quality of their music. If the formula works, then why wouldn't they stick with it? They offer the listener a mix of anything from hard-rocking party anthems to songs about love, life and loss.

Their musicianship cannot be questioned. Their melodies are catchy. Their songs have substance, even if they happen to be radio friendly.

Recently, Patrick Carney from the Black Keys was quoted "Rock 'n' roll

is dying because people became OK with Nickelback being the biggest band in the world". This writer would argue that it is naïve to think one band destroyed rock 'n' roll single handed.

While I do feel that some of their songs can be quite generic and cheesy, when they do rock songs, they do them right. With their explosive guitar riffs, thundering drums and aggressive vocal melodies, I would argue that they are one of the few bands today that offer the sort of energy that rock 'n' roll is all about.

The Humble Book Shall Live On

Colm Fitzgerald, Deputy Editor

KINDLES, e-readers and iPads all claim to make the reading experience "easier" and "less stressful".

No longer is a room top to toe with books a requirement when you can have your prized lifetime collection on a device that fits in your handbag (or manbag, depending!). Sales of such devices have proved that like a dog to a bone, savvy consumers have to have a Kindle. Two and two does not equal five though. It's fairly obvious that if you find the reading experience stressful, you're doing it all wrong. What's more, claims of things like dictionary definitions whilst you read is quite bizarre and somewhat inappropriate. Not to mention the price; many Kindle books I've seen are more expensive than a paper copy including delivery! Being an English scholar at UL I will admit that having e-books available in .PDF format is of

some aid when working under pressure to finish an assignment, and it helps cut to the chase in locating material within a particular work. This though does not negate the need for a physical book itself. The physical properties of a book are irreplaceable. The freshly textured, newly smelling books contrasted with old, musty and faded books are a core part of the reading experience. It pleases me to see creases along a book's spine, corners of pages turned. It is a sign of an enjoyed book, one which wasted an hour or five, a book which aided procrastination or a book which kept you awake all night. I cannot place a single holiday or weekend with a relative that did not feature a book in my suitcase, and that's a tradition I want to continue.

Can you imagine the UL Library banished of books? Assignments would feature your laptop and a kindle, no more photocopying cards and troublesome self service machines. In the grand scheme of things, of course Kindles will have their heyday. For the seemingly savvy and for those who like to travel on the bandwagon, they will be served well. But for the rest of us who like a little bit more when we read, the book will reign as king.

2012: A New Dawn

Evan O'Grady

WHAT'S on offer in 2012 for gamers you ask? 2K Games are famous for their offerings in the shooter genre and this year they have plenty to go around, including the 'Borderlands' sequel, with its improved story, afro sporting Gunzerker class and many more weapons on offer.

'Spec Ops: The Line' with a very Apocalypse now feel and randomised environmental hazards in a ravaged Dubai. Also 'The Darkness' gets a sequel; with anti hero Jackie's powers only growing more bloodthirsty

sporting a cel-shaded look in an effort to be more faithful to its comic book roots. Finally we will see the anticipated 'Bioshock: Infinite' which promises the narrative, gameplay and innovation that the studio is famed for all rolled into one as you attempt to survive in a beautiful metropolis being destroyed by civil war.

Coming from Naughty Dog is 'The Last of Us'. This game has gathered a lot of notice despite scanty details as to its actual gameplay.

Despite this, Naughty Dog are known as a developer that delivers when it comes to quality so this Omega Man-like scenario may yet captivate just as much as its predecessors in the 'Uncharted' series did.

Square-Enix delivers entries from two beloved franchises. 'Hitman: Absolution' brings Agent 47 out of

his hiatus over the past few years and back to his baldy murderous best, while 'Final Fantasy XIII-2' addresses issues that made its debut a powerful but ultimately divisive game.

Kojima Productions' 'Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance', sounding as awesome as it is odd, will bring back MGS2 hero Raiden to his time as a cyborg ninja.

What more could you ask for; The concluding part to Commander Shephard's spacefaring epic 'Mass Effect'? Well you can have that too! Less well known but deserving of notice is 'Ni No Kuni'. Why do I mention this? Studio-5 develops it, which is the good reason. Studio Ghibli designs it, which is the great reason. An RPG set in a dream world that provides the same enchanting storytelling provided by one of the most well received Japanese animation studios the world over.

This could be 2012's most overlooked game, and that would be a real shame. Just when gamers thought they were spoiled during 2011, 2012 comes along and does it yet again.

Lana del rey: the real thing?

Lisa Blake

LANA Del Rey, AKA Lizzie Grant is from Lake Placid, New York and right now she is in the process of taking Europe by storm. It would be stating the overstated at this point but it has to be said that she is the one to watch in 2012.

It's clear to anyone after a quick Googling that she has music journalists everywhere baffled as to whether she is the real thing, or is she a puppet that music moguls have moulded into a sultry pouty-lipped crooner of mesmerising Adele-esque songs such as 'Video Games' 'Born to Die' and 'Blue Jeans'. Like the many Gaga fans who are better known as 'Little Monsters' or the Justin Bieber ones known as 'Beliebers', Lana Del Rey fans have taken upon calling themselves 'Lanatics' and 'Video Gamers'. This has not gone down too well among the indie crowd who are fighting to claim Lana as one of their own in the battle of 'is she pop?' or 'is she alternative?' In interviews, Lana, whose stage name was admittedly made up by her managers and lawyers, comes

across as a deer caught in headlights. She's shy, timid and clearly not used to the attention. She claims her much debated lips are real.

The old Hollywood nostalgia that oozes from her video for 'Video Games' was put together from a combination of old clips that Lana herself compiled, as she states she is attracted to a certain timeless era around the '50s and '60s.

Can Lana's authenticity be verified from seeing her perform live? It's obvious that the voice, the melodies and the lyrics are all there. The sceptics can't truthfully deny that there is something special about her.

But when you watch her poolside performance of 'Born to Die' at the Chateau Marmont in West Hollywood, and compare it with her performance of

'Video Games' on The Jonathan Ross show, it's painfully obvious that she is more suited to an intimate audience.

In front of the large audience of Jonathan Ross you could hear the nerves and shakiness in her voice. However, she still delivered the hauntingly beautiful sound of her debut single.

Hopefully when her album "Born to Die" is released on January 30th on our shores, the critics will be quietened of cries that she is a phony and the music will speak for itself.

Having already claimed a number one spot in Germany, selling-out gigs and winning a Q award for 'The Next Big Thing' it's safe to say that 2012 is the year of Lana Del Rey.



Lana Del Rey

Imelda May Rocks Limerick

Louise Harrison

IMEDLA May's velvet agile voice, dynamic band, vintage style and quiff were all present in Limerick on the 23rd December at her energetic gig in the new Big Top venue at the Milk Market.

There was a fantastic atmosphere at the venue as people wrapped in their warmest clothes drank hot chocolate or pints, ate hamburgers or crepes from the stalls which remained open throughout the evening. The audience ranged from 18 up to 70 or more. The anticipation of a great gig mixed with Christmas cheer tenable as Imelda lookalike fans weaved through the crowd.

The band took to the stage and Imelda emerged and went straight into a song. As the gig progressed you could hear audible gasps of excitement amongst the crowd when they heard introductions to familiar songs like "Mayhem".

Their music is the fusion of blues, jazz and 50s style rock, embellished by solo guitar riffs, drum rhythms, double bass and brass, brought together in Imelda's own compositions like "Psycho" to her more reflective songs such as "Kentish Town Waltz".

Imelda's version of "Tainted Love" showcases her talent in being able to take a classic and put her unique style on it. It's evident for Imelda that it's all about the music. There was some audience interaction, where she would sing and encourage the crowd to copy her, until she would do some incredibly difficult vocal gymnastics and then the crowd would just laugh. A little banter when Imelda asked why a lady

in the audience was pointing at the man beside her. The lady mouthed that her husband was her number one fan, to which Imelda replied, "No he's not, cause my Dad is my number one fan," to the audiences delight.

She wore a full length leopard print fur coat over a black and yellow stripe bandage dress. She dramatically threw her coat off before picking up the bodhrán for "Johnny Gotta Boom Boom", the crowd cheered and someone shouted, "There she goes."

For their encore Imelda sang a gentle "Have yourself a Merry Little Christmas" accompanied by one of the band playing the Ukulele, followed by a few more popular Christmas songs with the full ensemble.

Singing professionally since she was 16 Imelda exploded onto the music scene after appearing on the Jools Holland show in 2008. In 2009 she won Best Female Artist of the Year at the Irish Meteor Awards and in 2010 performed at the Grammys.

Her growing popularity is due not only to her immense talent but also her down to earth personality and attachment to her family who she speaks about regularly in interviews. It is this unique combination that makes Imelda popular with such a wide audience.



Imelda May in action

Children are the future?

Cliona Walker

THE days of playing Cowboys and Indians, tea parties and camping are coming to an end. They've been replaced by discos, drinking, and, for lack of a better word, shifting.

Recently I discovered one of the many sources to the problem; mind you I never thought Nickelodeon was going to be the culprit that was promoting such behaviour.

When I was feeling a bit childish and in the mood to watch a few cartoons like the "Rugrats" or "Spongebob Squarepants", Nickelodeon sprung to mind, but I was bombarded with overly annoying, loud teens wearing less clothing than the average female on a night out in Molly's.

A young girl of just seventeen years of age was being sprayed with water by a group of boys and giggling about like she was enjoying it (and judging by her face she was!) I was appalled to see this sort of content on what is known as a popular children's channel.

Research showed that parents do not approve of the show "Victorious" in the slightest as they voiced their opinions on commonsensimedia.org; some even compared these girls to whores. Not exactly something you want your young daughter watching now, is it?

The episode with the so called "hot redhead" in her bikini caused the ratings to increase dramatically because of known sex offenders in the US tuning in to watch. Not exactly the attention the show should be looking for and quite frankly, it is disgusting.

Why are these shows on Nickelodeon? And why are they allowed continue?

Young girls aspire to be just like the teenagers in these kinds of programmes. I don't see how this content where seventeen year olds are talking about

having sex for the first time, or are kissing repeatedly in the middle of school, is appropriate television for the youths of today. Parents are relentless in their complaints about teenagers and their provocative clothing, their bad behaviour and their incessant need to grow up so quickly, if they have such a problem with the way their children are turning out maybe they should pay a bit more attention to the programmes they are watching.

Young girls are turning into attention seeking Barbie dolls, while the young boys are turning into womanising, unintelligible cavemen. Nickelodeon may no longer a safe environment for children and if these kinds of shows continue to be promoted we can say good bye to the saying "children are the future" because at the moment the future is looking fairly bleak.



Then 17-year-old actress Ariana Grande in 'Victorious'

Film

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

Anthony O'Brien

AN adaption of the Swedish novel *Men Who Hate Women*, is the latest film directed by David Fincher.

The film revolves around disgraced journalist Mikael Blomkvist, played by Daniel Craig with an intermittent Swedish accent, and his eventual partner Lisbeth Salander, the titular tattooed girl.

Lisbeth is a misanthropic and socially rejected outcast, having grown up mentally ill in an abusive household. Rooney Mara gives a great performance and draws us into her character, which we get to know for a long period before she crosses paths with Mikael, though she's familiar with him from the start.

Some things that happen to her do seem a little contrived, but they certainly shock and upset, and give a very strong impression of her resolve.

Mikael and Lisbeth are strong characters, and the film is more about them and their complicated relationship than the central mystery of a young girl, Harriet Vanger, who seemingly disappeared, presumed murdered, on a family-owned island some decades

ago. It's a locked-room mystery, as the island was inaccessible at the time of her disappearance, although due to its size she could likely be buried anywhere and never have been found.

Mikael is hired by Henrik Vanger, Harriet's uncle, who wants to find out which of his relatives killed his niece all those years ago.

The central plot isn't very complicated. Although certain reveals were unexpected, I wasn't amazed by them. It almost left me feeling like I had seen a fantastic TV pilot, but as a movie, it feels a bit deflated and unresolved.

Expect to feel very squeamish at some scenes, but admire Fincher's directing, especially in a very strange and indescribable intro. But it won't have you trying to puzzle it out and second guessing everyone as much as *Zodiac* did.

Sequels seem likely, so it's worth going to see it, but perhaps lower your expectations to avoid disappointment. It doesn't stand alone like *The Social Network*, and it certainly isn't as widely accessible.



Lisbeth Salander played by Rooney Mara

A Film that doesn't do the Lady Justice

James Bradshaw

MARGARET Thatcher was, without doubt, the most influential Prime Minister since Churchill, and also the most divisive.

When whispers of a biopic began to be heard, many close to Thatcher feared that such a film would mount an attack on her, and the opening scenes showing a confused old Margaret having an imaginary discussion with her long since deceased husband did little to erase such concerns.

Indeed, had a viewer left the cinema after half an hour, they could easily believe the subject of film was dementia. At the outset, director Phyllida Lloyd chooses to focus on Thatcher's supposed mental frailties, hammering home the point at every opportunity.

Thankfully, after this unfortunate opening, we do get to see the real Thatcher. Flashbacks reveal how as a young woman (ably played by Alexandra Roach) she set about climbing the 'greasy pole' of politics, before eventually becoming Britain's first female Prime Minister.

Eyebrows were raised when Meryl Streep was cast in the leading role, but the Hollywood great turns in a powerful performance from beginning to end. We see how Thatcher faced the challenges posed by the coal miners and the Argentinean junta, all the while fighting against forces inside and outside her cabinet, before ultimately being betrayed and ousted.

At all times Streep is immense, and the star of 'Kramer-v-Kramer' and 'The Deer Hunter' is more than deserving of an Oscar nomination.

But Streep's brilliantly accurate portrayal is not enough to paper over the cracks. All biopics are to some



The Iron Lady

extent dishonest, but the dumbing down of history here is inexcusable. Defining moments from the Falklands War to the Poll Tax riots are lazily jumbled together between the flashback sequences and real-life archival footage, in what seems like a poor crossover between 'Lost' and 'Reeling in the Years'.

The film ends as it began, with a dotty old woman wandering around her house, aimless and alone. Whatever you think about her politics,

Thatcher was an iconic figure. Through sheer strength to personality she changed the Conservative Party and Britain. No Prime Minister after her has had anything near as much of an impact, and yet this film says little about what she was, while speculating at length about what she might be now.

The *Iron Lady* wasn't called that for nothing, and she deserved better than this.

Ferris Bueller, Timeless Classic?

Keith Beegan

Edward Cullen. John Tucker. The entire cast of *High School Musical*. These are some of the 'icons' that have dominated film pop culture for the past 10 years. Aside from Danny Zuko, there are not many names from the past that are instantly recognisable by younger generations.

Ferris Bueller is one of those iconic names that chained itself to the teenage generations of the 80s and tailgated into the 2nd decade of the 21st century. Released in 1986, the movie became one of the highest grossing films of that year and has retained some of its popularity through cult-followings.

One notable scene features Ferris being enthralled by a painting spawned a parody by Stewie Griffin in *Family*

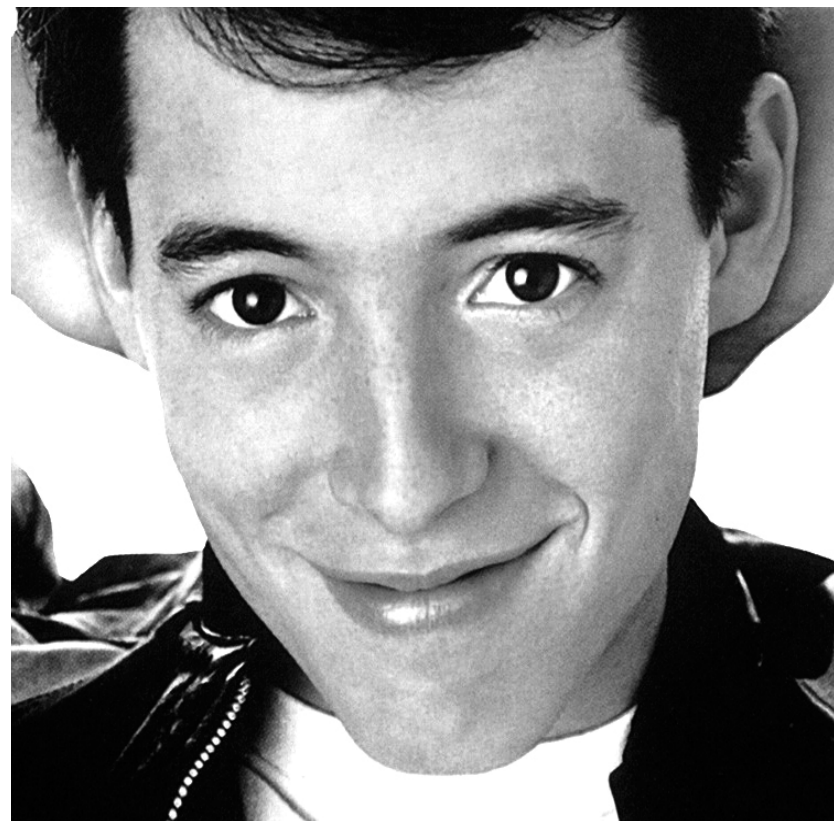
Guy, and even the First Lady Barbara Bush paraphrased Ferris's famous pep talk during one of her speeches: "Life moves pretty fast; if you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it!"

The plot could not be simpler: the title character, Matthew Broderick, decides to skip a day of school and hang out with his girlfriend, Sloane and his best friend, Cameron. The result: classic!

The movie was directed by the late John Hughes and follows the blueprint of his preceding film *The Breakfast Club*, which focuses on a group of students spending a day in detention. *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, however, is more action-packed and rich-in-culture: the rebellious trio visit Wrigley

Field, Sears Tower, the Art Institute of Chicago, and who can forget Ferris' lip-synched rendition of 'Twist and Shout' on a float during the Von Steuben Day Parade. Sure, similarly themed 'coming of age' teen comedies have graced the silver screen in the past decade, films like *American Pie*, *Mean Girls*, *40 Days and 40 Nights*, but there's something different about Ferris.

The movie does not rely on awkward sexual encounters or excessive female nudity. Maybe the desensitised mentality of our current youth appreciates the innocence of this film. Or maybe we just relate with the main character: we have always wanted to skip school and go crazy but generally never had the guts.



Film

Crappy New Year War Horse

Keith Beegan

Halle Berry. Bon Jovi. Jessica Biel. Robert DeNiro. Josh Duhamel. Zac Efron. Katherine Heigl. Ashton Kutcher. Lea Michele. Michelle Pfeiffer. Ludacris. Sarah Jessica Parker. Ryan Seacrest, Hilary Swank... Not even this star-studded ensemble cast could salvage the movie.

WITH the apocalypse just around the corner, watching this film was not the best way to ring in the last year before we all die. I am certainly more confident that the world is going to end in light of this apocalyptically bad film proving that the movie-industry is at least submerged if not completely dead in the water.

The film's slogan reads: "The one night anything is possible"... but surprisingly nothing really happens aside from random non-cohesive events. The film is comprised of a series of vignettes that showcase one unlucky woman who decides to quit her job, a cancer-patient who develops an emotional attachment to two nurses before he dies, an aspiring singer who gets stuck in an elevator, a desperate mother who craves her daughter's

company on the big night, old lovers who rekindle their romance, and two couples that compete for a financial bonus if their babies are the first born in the new year, but the film offers nothing original.

Somehow producers thought that recycling passé storylines and embroidering them with a variety of rom-com clichés would prove a success. Wrong! The basis of the movie has potential to be a post-modern masterpiece but lacks any substance and falls short of being barely watchable. And the dialogue is cringe-worthy in the worst possible way. It is hard to believe that Garry Marshall was responsible for the film's direction. As the man behind the heart-wrenching *Beaches* and the utterly charming *Pretty Woman*,

it disappoints me that in his late 70s he is reduced to directing two films that make a mockery out of two national holidays. In 2010 he directed *Valentine's Day*, which in similar fashion to its successor is heavy with stars and light with plot. Aside from Marshall directing both films, it also worries me that Ashton Kutcher is these film's common denominator, having starred in both.

We can only pray that Marshall and Kutcher are not reunited in the future for a sequel called 'My Birthday' or 'Christmas Eve', and if we are lucky Marshall made a new year's resolution to avoid directing badly written films altogether.

Jennifer Armstrong

FROM the moment the John Williams score settles over the 'Dreamworks' logo, a guarantee of the brilliance of this movie can be resolved upon. If Steven Spielberg's attachment isn't quite sufficient, a plot revolving around a horse and World War I is surely enough to guarantee most girls, and emotionally available guys will be weeping well into the first hour.

The movie however starring newcomer Jeremy Irvine provides much more than a few tears and a hollow feeling in the stomach. The Spielberg epic follows the story of one bewildered horse from the ploughing fields of the English countryside into the trenches of the Somme. It crosses hands from the English to the Germans, to civilians in France as it fights for survival in the gruesome existence that was World War I. However, the story goes far beyond that of a horse, and reveals quite heartbreakingly the kindness and honour to be found in a harsh world of death and cruelty. The cinematography is breathtaking, and the battlefields are not clouded in any notions of valour or worthiness but exposed as the harrowing fields of mortality that they were. Animal lovers will most certainly appreciate this remarkable

story, but in truth, anyone with a soul should find themselves admiring the beauty of this tale. While it's far from Tarantino, there are a few horrid scenes that will break your heart, but these are nursed tenderly by the moments that will warm it. While the 'triumph of the human spirit' narrative has been told repeatedly and not always well, this film truly does deserve credit for telling an uplifting story without the need for severe cheesiness. Perhaps it's the grace and beauty of the creature mixed with the secret strength they hold, but regardless, this movie will surely give you an appreciation for this gorgeous animal if you didn't feel so already. Although most unknown, the cast is excellent. This almost adds to the film as the story becomes less about the characters but more about a single soul's journey through the war.

While men battle from different sides, the film shows how one horse can bring out the compassion in anyone and by doing this, bring even the most sworn enemies together, even if just for a moment. You've done it again Sir. Spielberg, you made a nation hope an alien could win the Oscar, and now, a horse...I guess you could call that a step up.

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Union

THE
PRESIDENT'S
COLUMN

Derek Daly,
President

So with essentially 10 weeks to go there is a lot of work to be done until focus switches to handing over to next year's team.

The main things to be achieved are: The constitutional review to make the Union more effective, more student run and less officer focused; Plans for the new student centre with all the services you need under one roof as surveyed last semester, a campus venue and some relaxation space; Budgetary re-evaluation and efficiencies across the Union's operations to bring spending to a sustainable level from the next financial year and Working on a solution to the withdrawal of state funding for The Glucksman Library Phase II. A General Meeting is scheduled to discuss the necessary actions for these changes. They're not sexy, may not all be popular, but I will need your support.

As always, Thursday afternoons are my Getting Out And Talking time and I want to hear what your issues are. There are more than 80 positions available for next year, whether you are interested in being President, Chair of Council or a Department Rep, contact Roisin.Monaghan@ul.ie for details.

As always I'm on Supresident@ul.ie or follow me on twitter [@ah_lads](https://twitter.com/ah_lads)

Mind yourselves!

Derek Daly
President
061 202326 | 086 043 5300
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WELFARE
WATCH

Tara Feeney,
Welfare Officer

Howdy folks,
Welcome back!

Hope you had a festive and relaxing Christmas break.

I'm very excited about the next semester, trying to get as much done before my year as Welfare Officer is up. If you have any suggestions of what you want to see coming from the Welfare Office, please let me know.

I'll be working again with Paddy on all the Welfare campaigns. We will be putting a lot of effort into Mental Health week again. It will hopefully be as good as last semester.

We are always looking for students to get involved, if you are interested or have any good ideas for the week please let us know.

Applications for Childcare Bursaries for this semester are available from the Union reception from week one. The closing date is Friday of week four. Please drop into me if you need any information regarding the application.

Think that's about it. Please get in contact if you need any help with any non-academic issues. I'm here for you and no problem is too big or small. A problem shared is a problem halved....

Toodles,

Tara Feeney
DP/Welfare
061 202519 | 086 043 5301

ENLIVENING
EDUCATION

Aoife Kenny,
Education Officer

Hey everyone,

Can't believe Christmas has been and gone. Hope everyone enjoyed their break but now it's back to the studies and away from the drink (and off to the gym for me away). I hope everyone is happy with their exam results.

If you have any problems please contact me. You have the opportunity to view your scripts, get a recheck and if you're still unhappy with the result I can help you apply for an appeal. So please don't hesitate to pop into the office if you need a hand with anything.

So the last few weeks without students have been weird, finally got paper work done along with a few other things. Semester 2 Class Rep training has been finalised, the SU Constitution has been stripped down and completely reviewed and I've finally gotten around to doing a report on the Student Advisor system in UL.

At the start of this semester it's important to remember that your performance in semester 2 will have a big impact on your overall QCA, so even if it's just an extra hour in the library 2 evenings a week, start now and Week 12 won't be so scary. Enjoy Week 1 and 2 and get to the Lodge!

Later,

Aoiffs
Aoife Kenny
VP/Education
061 203491 | 086 043 5302

CAMPAIGNS
BRIEF

Paddy Rockett,
Campaigns and Services Officer

How ye all!?! Can I first say a huge welcome to the new students and an equally huge welcome back to the rest of you. We've been working hard over the past couple of weeks and in the first semester and you have quite a bit to look forward to. Fecking Fivers events are in full swing thanks to Keith and events will be a regular thing keeping you occupied into Charity week and beyond. Speaking of Charity Week... I cannot wait! At this moment in time, Keith will be finalising the events and mad stuff that you can do in order to raise much needed funds for charities. Make sure if you have any ideas or wish to know any information about Charity Week to give Keith a shout, our Events and Promotions Manager.

Things are mad crazy at the moment so keep up to date by following my blog... where there are NEW giveaways and Student Specials. I bet you are all wondering about acts but that, like tradition will be left for ticket release. Be warned though, the budget this year is much smaller but we're putting on quite the show. We wouldn't go into this without something quite epic up our sleeves. The focus of that week will be YOU having the craic and a full awareness of the Charities we are donating to. This week is Know your Union week and we are coming to visit you be sure to check out the information videos on our Facebook site and know that your feedback is always welcome. Again have a look at my blog to see full details of campaigns and events for the semester. Contact me for anything you want to see over the next semester. Great to have you back...

WORDS
FROM THE
PSU

Sarah Jane Hennelly,
PSU President

Hello Everyone,
Happy New year to ye all!

I hope you all had a lovely relaxing break? The biggest event of the Postgrad calendar is coming up this semester, the PSU Winter Swing Ball! It will be Friday of week 3, February 10 at 9pm. It will be in Thomond Park, with amazing views over-looking the pitch. There will be live music from Limerick's finest funk band The Funk Junkies, with live DJ after.

Tickets are €40 and are available from the SU Reception or from my office in the PSU Common Room. It really will be a night not to be missed... and its 50's Swing, so get your glad-rags on and get ready to dance the night away! In addition, the PSU General Election will be held Week 6 this semester. The role will be for PSU President, and is open to all postgraduate students. I really could not recommend this role more. It is a full-time paid 13 month position.

It is such a fantastic opportunity for students in any area, with such great experience involved. I will send out an all-student email with the details, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to know more.

Here's to a good year,

Sarah Jane Hennelly
PSU President
061 203473 | 086 043 5305

SU Set for Major Constitutional Changes

Jason Kennedy, News Editor

FOLLOWING from major changes which have been taking place throughout the academic year, the Students' Union are putting forward a number of key changes in its constitution.

These changes have been brought to the union's executive board and will be voted on at the next General Meeting. This meeting is expected to happen in Week 8.

The changes will see the establishment of a new management committee, a new executive and a new student council, while also removing some of the current executive officer positions.

It will also change the articles on elections, while will allow for electronic voting, which was introduced in last year's sabbatical

elections. Articles relating to the Secretary General position will also be changed, as the job was removed last year and replaced with a Financial Accountant and General Manager.

The constitution is being changed to adapt to the controversial motions to abolish the positions of CSO and CO within the organisation should those motions pass, as well as to suit operational changes.

They will also reflect the political climate and poor financial situation that the union is in.

The proposed changes mean that

the union's constitution will become easier to read, as the layout will be changed and terminology will be removed.

The new constitution will also clear up liability issues relating to "poor decision making" when it came to the union's finances, which have recently led to the closure of both Dromroe and Cappavilla shops.



Success at varsities rounds off the semester for UL Trampolining

Grainne Ni Hodhrain

Another fantastic semester was had last year by the UL Trampolining Club.

The success at the Munster Open was carried through to Varsities though the glory was somewhat overshadowed by sadness. The untimely death of the mother of one of our members led to a number of notable absences from the final Varsities line up. Kathleen Browne RIP, mother of Denise Browne, passed away on 23 November 2011.

Denise has been with the club for a number of years and as such friends of hers from the club flocked to support her at the funeral. The club as a whole offers its sincere condolences and continued support to Denise and her family. Even with the absences of some of our super tramps, and a little worse for wear after an epic comic strip themed shindig the night before the competition, UL still managed to kick ass at Varsities.

Those present really did the club proud with Linda Byrne, James Downey, Mike Bathke and Shannen Minter coming second in the team competition. UL also came away with a number of medals including first place of forty-seven competitors in Novice Ladies taken by trampolining newbie Jordan Bush, second place in

Intermediate Ladies taken by Shannen Minter and Mike Bathke coming second in Intermediate Mens. Serious celebrating was done on the Saturday night in the UCC new bar after medal presentations. Memories are a bit blurred and heads were quite fuzzy for the synchro competition the following morning but none of our mighty tramps were fazed and UL continued its success. In first place were the combined UL and UCC synchro team in the form of our wonderful secretary Dave Ryan and Gavin Dillon (UCC). Dave really was on fire as his and Shannen Minter's combined effort also landed UL second place in the synchro competition bringing 2011 varsities to an end on a high. There's loads of space for anyone new interested in bouncing this semester. Training is on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the PESS building and there's still time to get some routines together. If interested we'll be at the Clubs and Soes recruitment in the Foundation Building on Tuesday of Week 2 (31 Jan) or e-mail us at ultrampolining@gmail.com. There's a load to look forward to this semester as we set about training for the Scottish Student Trampoline Open in Edinburgh at the end of February and the Irish Student Trampoline Open in Belfast at the end of March. Here's hoping we can continue the success from Semester 1 and make this year better than ever!



UL Tramps - proud owners of many awards!

UL Handballers Pick up National & International Awards



Padraig O'Carroll and Catriona Casey as Young Male Player and Young Female Player of the Year respectively

Mark O'Donovan

The National GAA Handball All-Star Awards for 2011 proved to be another resounding success with the highest attendance at the prestigious black-tie event to date. Two UL players were nominated as Munster All Star Award recipients: Padraig O'Carroll and Catriona Casey as Young Male Player and Young Female Player of the Year respectively. Padraig had 3 All-Ireland title wins in 2011. He stepped up from Minor to win the Junior Handball Singles and teamed up with Pat Murphy to win the Junior Handball Doubles.

He also partnered CJ Fitzpatrick to win the Munster and All-Ireland U21 doubles 60x30 title. He won 2 county senior doubles titles in 2011, and was the Irish 60x30 Nationals runner-up. Casey also had a successful year securing the 40x20 and 60x30 All Ireland Minor singles and doubles titles for the second year in a row. She also won the minor One Wall title for the first time and made a promising start to her Senior career, winning the Munster Senior singles and doubles in 40x20. The previous weekend Casey had success at the Irish Junior 40x20 Nationals in Kilkenny, which doubled as trials for the Irish team heading to Tucson, Arizona for the US Junior Nationals over the Christmas period. As a result, she travelled stateside, where she was a hot favourite in the Girls 19 & Under event and captained what was labelled possibly the strongest girls team ever to travel to the US event. Casey was simply in unstoppable form and her key victories over Brittny Bidgain (San Diego), Cheryl Chen (New York), Shirley Chen (New York) and Maleyna Moriel (Texas) ensured another impressive title win for the gifted Ballydesmond teenager.

The ride of your life!

Sharon Burke,
Equestrian Club Chairperson.

Whips and spurs are on the minds of the UL Equestrian club as they prepare for an action packed semester.

Next weekend is the biggest weekend on the Equestrian IntersVarsity Calendar and the UL competitors are simply rearing to go! Two teams of three are entered to compete in the featured show jumping event which takes place on the Saturday and Sunday of Week 2 in Duffy's Equestrian Centre, Galway, while several other students are intending to compete in Dressage, Prix-caprilli and individual competitions over the weekend also. But it's not all work and no play. NUIG have a host of entertainment organised including the much anticipated 'My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding' Theme for the

Fancy Dress Night and The Gala Ball and Awards evening on Sunday. 2011 was a resounding success for the UL Equestrian Club, and they prepare to make 2012 an even better one.

For the first time in a long time UL had competitors back on the IntersVarsity circuit when competing, and placing, in the National Tetrathlon Championships in Thurles last November.

IntersVarsity Officer, Ciara Quinn, is very excited about the team's prospects for Galway, and hopes to discover some more talented riders during the trials for the remaining team places in Clonshire this week. Several fundraising events have been planned for Semester 2 including table quizzes, a race night and a bake sale so keep an eye out for them. The committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul and Liz for all their help, and give a warm welcome to incoming students and anyone who may be back from Co-op or Erasmus!

If you or anybody you know would be interested in becoming a member of the club, or in taking part in the Championships, drop us an e-mail at ul.equestrian@hotmail.com

A Madden, A Dwyer(B Runners-up) LA Furlong, L Loughnane
(A Plate Winners) C Casey, D Donohue (A Winners)



A Successful Year for UL Archery

Eoin Murray, ULAC PRO

The UL Archery Club has had a successful year so far. Our beginners are now honing their archery skills, some have even been competing. We have brought home medals and excelled in our competitions.

On 12 November, the UL Archers were victorious at the DCU Intersarsity. The victory is owed to the dedicated training within the club, which was reflected in the score. The final score was an impressive 2531, closely followed by DIT in second with 2529 and DCU in third with 2526.

The winning UL team consisted of Steffan Ashe (537), Lorcan Crean (533), Rory Thornburgh (514), Michael Curtin (477) and James Daly (470). On 14 January, the UL Archery Club attended the NUIG Intersarsity. New records were broken within the club. Thomas Brouder came 1st in Beginner Recurve, breaking his 400. Conor Souness came first in Beginner Barebow, breaking his 400 too, Lorcan Crean came 1st in Male Compound and Michael O Callaghan came 4th in the indoor FITA for senior Recurve.

Conor Souness became the new Irish Junior Barebow Champion. Overall UL finished in second place thanks to our highly dedicated archers.

If you think that you would like to be involved in a club that trains hard, and plays hard then ULAC would like to encourage you to join. Everything you need to become a top class archer is provided. Our archers are never pressured to compete in competitions. So if you are the type of person who shies away from competition, don't worry because you can just shoot for fun and meet new people in the process.

Anybody wishing to join UL Archery can do so at the C&S Recruitment Drive or you can call into our training sessions in the Main Hall of the P.E.S.S Building. Previous experience in archery isn't needed. Most of our archers had never picked up a bow before joining the club and now they can't put it down. It is truly an addictive and fun sport.

Our training times are from 20:15 to 22:30 on Monday, and from 19:30 to 22:30 on Wednesday nights in the Main Hall of the P.E.S.S Building and can be accessed through the C&S website, www.registercs.ul.ie. If you need any extra information about UL Archery Club you can check out our website, www.ulac.tk, or you can e-mail us on ularchery@gmail.com.

We look forward to meeting potential members this year and forming friendships with them that will last.



A tense moment for a UL Archer

Basketball Competition heats up

Noreen O'Connell

This semester is a very important one for the UL Basketballer's. Currently we are lying top of the Men's and Women's league table so it is looking like we will have a League semi-final home draw.

Training started back on Week 1 with great numbers in attendance. The men and women are training hard for Easter weekend where UL will host the intersarsities. This is a great honour for UL, with thirty-four teams descending on campus. There will be over eight five games played over three days.

Over the coming weeks you will see notices about league games and such so please attend as you are guaranteed a good match. On another note, congratulations to our students who are also playing Superleague for the UL Club on winning their respective

games to reach the National Cup Finals. The Women's Superleague team will be playing DCU Mercy with student Aoife McDermott. We also have a number of alumni who all played colleges basketball with UL; Louise Galvin, Miriam Liston, Cathy Grant, Loretta Maher and Aine Staunton. In the Men's Superleague team we have five students; Andy Dawson, Scott Kinevan, Ciaran O Gallchoir, Bobby Reidy and Eoin Quigley with alumni Stephen King, Neil Campbell and Aidan Holden. Well done to all involved. The finals are on the last weekend in January in the National basketball Arena, Tallaght. The basketball is second semester is all go so keep an eye out for regular updates.



Soaking up the pre-game atmosphere in the moments before a match in the UL Arena

UL Rowing Update

Nicola Griffin

After a long break, the UL rowers returned last week for some intense training.

The Novice Women squad, overseen by Rachel Meehan, took to the water with energy after the Christmas holidays.

They will compete in their first Head of River on January the 28 in Castleconnell along with the Senior squad and Novice Men.

ULRC are glad to announce the return of the Run Series for the coming season. It will consist of six 5k runs; leading up to the ULRC 10k Paddy's Run on the 17th March. More details are to follow.

time to turn over a new leaf
time to join a club or society

* your largest social network on campus



A Memorable New Year with the Outdoor Pursuits



Two of our members stop and enjoy the view while on Glen Nevis.

Katherine Davis, Outdoor Pursuits PRO

This year, when the Outdoor Pursuits Club planned our annual Scotland trip, we decided why not go for the New Year? Leaving on the 30th, we spent eleven days hiking, climbing and training in the not-so-cold Scottish Highlands. New Year's Eve was a memorable one, where we happened across another college mountaineering club in the area and welcomed in 2012 with them in the local pub. This year's trip was a bit different. We introduced a new level of training, so members could choose from Beginner if they've never gone, Advanced if they wanted to hone in on their skills, or a new choice, Intermediate, which helped you to develop lead skills with a guide while reviewing the basics if need be.

While the weather wasn't brilliant, it cooperated enough for everyone to get a good few days of training in at the beginning of the trip. From beginner skills like using ice axes and walking with crampons, to things like dry tooling with technical axes and climbing multi-pitch winter routes, the trip catered for a range of abilities. But after a few days, our luck with the weather started to end as the freezing level rose and all the snow started disappearing.

Knowing the OPC, we trudged on. The rest of the trip saw groups going out every day, with one communal rest day where we all took a hike to a waterfall, which you got to by crossing

over a wire bridge. This worked out perfectly as it was after the last day of training so everyone was together for the first time.

Special thanks must go to one of our members currently living in Scotland, Conor McCarthy. Conor, who used to go to UL, moved up to Scotland this past year to start working at Ice Factor, a local climbing and outdoors centre. After taking off work, he stayed with us for most of the trip and helped to lead groups on different climbs. On the day, we climbed Ben Nevis. With white out conditions on the summit, Conor helped to get everyone up and down safely. Thanks Mac!

Other than our time in the outdoors, another highlight was in the good old bunkhouse, where all twenty of us snugly fit into one big room. For a week and a half we all cooked, ate, and lived together. At the end of it all we had a Kangaroo Court, hosted by Dave O'Connell who brought the idea to the group, and our President, Paul Lowndes. Dave had set out a list of rules for the trip, and here at the court you were charged with breaking them, or for just generally anything you did that someone didn't like. The idea was a success and needless to say it was a great way to end the trip and created some great memories. You know what they say... what happens in Scotland stays in Scotland. Guess you'll just have to join us next time!



A very cold, white and windy summit, where we stayed for a total of probably three minutes!



Tomas Walsh gets some snow in the face during Advanced Training.



Sometimes you get a surprise and step into some deep snow. For Bri Maloney, this seemed to happen a lot.

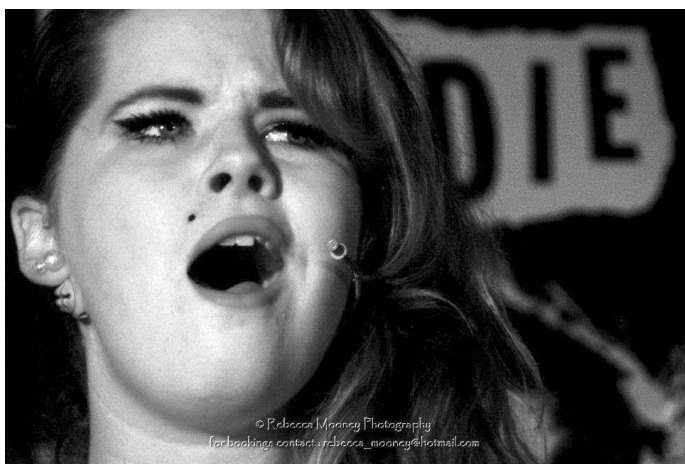


Po-yen Chen on his way up a ridge route.

Never a Dull Moment with UL Drama



A selection of photos from Pop Goes the Indie, a musical treat held by UL Drama Soc last semester. Images: Rebecca Mooney



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Jennifer Armstrong

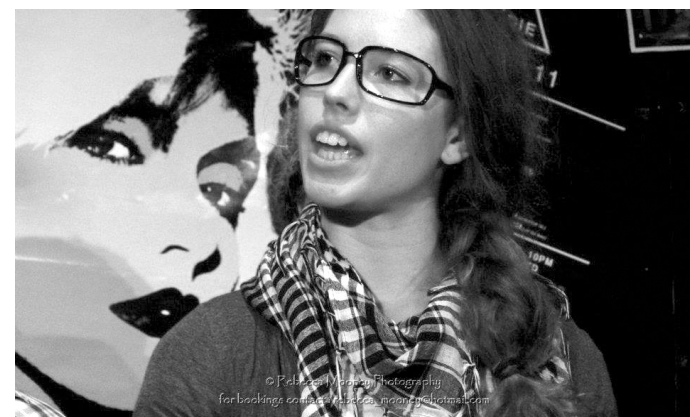
Alfred Hitchcock wisely remarked 'What is drama, but life with the dull bits cut out'. UL Drama Soc can certainly not promise you stardom or fame, money or riches, admiration or glory, but without a doubt, you shall truly never encounter a dull moment if you choose to join our humble society. Last semester was one of our best yet; we produced two plays, held a host of workshops, went on various trips to see other productions, held a mystery tour, and in truth, had ourselves some serious fun! Allo'Allo, a play based on the popular sitcom was our first production of the semester and proved to be a huge success.

This was followed by Pop Goes the Indie, a UL drama society original story featuring music from a range of popular artists. We would be more than pleased to welcome some new members this semester so if you'd like to get involved and haven't had

the chance before, then now is the time. Perhaps you've just arrived in UL on Erasmus, if so, drama is a great way to improve your English and make some great friends. We are looking for writers, directors, actors as well as anyone with an interest in sound, lighting and production.

This year we hope to run two major shows, hold a variety of different workshops and make as many trips as we can to see other drama societies in action around the country. Don't be scared if you've never tried drama before, most of us haven't either, our main aim is to have fun, while maybe learning a few things along the way.

We plan to be at this semester's recruitment drive which will be taking place on Tuesday the 31 January in the University Concert Hall. Please come and meet some of us in person with any questions or queries! Otherwise feel free to contact us at info@uldrama.ie



© Rebecca Mooney Photography
for bookings contact: rebecca_mooney@hotmail.com

ULSAC Cross Over to CFT (Irish Underwater Council)

Rose Barrett

For the University of Limerick Sub Aqua Club (ULSAC), 2011 has been an exciting year full of transitions and new beginnings. In September, members voted to become affiliated with the Irish Underwater Council (Comairle F6-Thuinn - CFT), joining 84 other diving clubs throughout Ireland. This has already proved one of the best decisions the club has ever made.

Previously, ULSAC was affiliated with the Scottish Sub Aqua Club (ScotSAC). However, over the last decade, we have grown to include between 50-70 active divers and even a new RHIB, the Plassey Bird. With so many qualified members, large annual groups of trainees, and a new emphasis on boat diving, ULSAC required more local support.

During the summer of 2011, ULSAC's committee, led by Cathal Mullane (Diving Officer) began a thorough audit of potential affiliate organisations. Mullane spoke with representatives from ScotSAC, CFT, the Professional Association of Diving Instructors

(PADI), and the British Sub Aqua Club (BSAC). After careful consideration and deliberation, the committee and the ULSU decided that CFT was the best option for ULSAC. The ULSAC membership enthusiastically agreed, unanimously approving the motion to affiliate with CFT.

Our members can now avail of CFT's highly structured, tiered training system, their unparalleled local knowledge of dive sites and frequent inter-club trips. CFT also offer a wide range of domestic specialty courses such as search and rescue, underwater photography, gas blending and wildlife courses. Further, CFT have an inter-club examination system requiring clubs use external instructors. This policy has already significantly helped our own instructors while building strong inter-club friendships. Since acquiring the Plassey Bird, ULSAC has experienced a natural shift away from shore diving towards more boat diving. Unlike ScotSAC, the CFT community is more boat-centric and offer a number of boat

handling courses for members.

The "crossover" process has been a very positive experience, much to the credit of ULSAC's endlessly cooperative members, tireless committee, and most importantly, CFT's national, regional, and local leadership. Specifically, we would like to thank the members and instructors of CFT's Auginish and Limerick Sub Aqua Clubs, especially Martin Keily (National Diving Officer), Brian Donnelly (Southwest Regional Diving Officer), Louise Gilligan, Mike Orth, Jean Kelleher, Aude Richard, Darak Rossiter and Peter Bradley.

We are truly grateful for the assistance, support, and encouragement we have received from CFT leaders, instructors and members throughout this on-going process. CFT fosters a true sense of solidarity and friendship amongst clubs throughout Ireland; we consider ourselves very fortunate to have been welcomed so warmly into the family.



Arena training for ch UL SAC

Young Fine Gael Round-up

Anthony Woods, YFG PRO

UL Young Fine Gael has had a packed year so far with meetings or events almost every week. Soon after the recruitment drive we had a full committee up and running and ready for the year.

In mid-September, we headed off to Dail Eireann where we got special access to Government Buildings and a quick meeting with An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny. October saw YFG's annual Oktoberfest come to UL and Limerick with members from all over the country down for what was a great night for all.

November was a busy month for us with the Presidential Election but also with a number of great events to keep members occupied from the thought of the dreaded exams.

In early November we held a table quiz in the Sports Bar as a fundraiser for the branch. There was a great turn out and the craic was had by all!

Close to the end of the month we held a special presentation by the Collins22 Society who came down to discuss the enduring legacy of General Michael Collins. As the exams closed in we held our final meeting of the semester.

With the Arab Spring making headlines all over the world the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Pat Breen TD, gave us an insight into the on-going events in the Arab regions and his on-going work around the world.

With the new semester upon us we have much planned. Soon after we're back we will be holding numerous meetings in order to prepare for the highlight of the young Fine Gael Calendar, The National Conference.

National Conference see's young Fine Gaelers from all over the country come together for debates, socializing and

the very important National Executive Elections. It also gives members the chance to meet many ministers who will be chairing debates and speaking at events and also An Taoiseach Enda Kenny who will be hosting a banquet on the Saturday night.

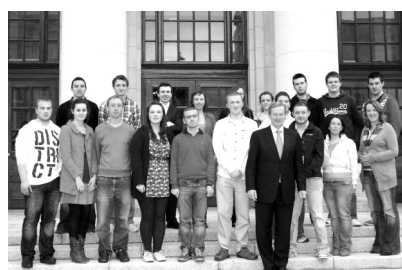
The upcoming Conference will be held in Tullamore, Co. Offaly on the 17-19 February and promises to be a great weekend!

However before we head off to Tullamore we plan on debating possible motions to put forward for debate at Conference and also any amendments to the Young Fine Gael Constitution, this is planned for Tuesday at 7:30pm in Week 1.

Finally on Tuesday of Week 4 at 7:30pm, we will be inviting all candidates for the National Executive to the UL hustings where candidates will have the chance to garner support and votes.

Anyone interested in coming along to either event is more than welcome. Keep an eye out on our Facebook page and our Clubs and Socs page for any updates.

UL Young Fine Gael has another packed semester ahead and is always happy to accept new members so join us in rebuilding Ireland!



UL YFG with An Taoiseach on the steps of Government Buildings

No Turkey Hangovers for UL Athletes

Kevin Moore,
UL Athletics Club PRO

Since we left for Christmas, many of our athletes have competed at home and abroad in the colours of their respective clubs and even the green of Ireland.

Jake O'Regan was a member of the Irish under 20 squad that won the team event at the recent Edinburgh Cross Country. Jake also defended his Munster Junior cross country title in some style in Beaufort. While Una

Britton was sixth in the under 23 race at the Edinburgh Cross Country.

Michael Carmody won the Munster Senior Cross Country in emphatic style in Beaufort from a quality field to add to his impressive list of wins in 2011.

Well done to all UL AC athletes competing over Christmas. Let's hope this semester is just as fruitful as the Christmas break. The club would like

to wish all our members a happy new year and are looking forward to a very successful semester.

Training will continue as of last semester for all groups. Check out www.facebook.com/ULAthletics and ulathletics.webs.com for updates.

UL Boxing Club Update

Eoin Scanlon,
UL Boxing Club PRO

We hope all our members had an enjoyable and relaxing Christmas break and are ready to hit the bags hard again this semester!

Last semester we had well over 30 students attending our sessions each week, with 22 availing of club gear. According to the club's chairman James McDowell, the first semester proved to be a huge success, 'Everything is going great, we had 12

or 13 weeks of hard training the last year, with a nice mixture of novices and experienced boxers'. Plans for this semester include entering a team into the Irish intervarsity's competition, and organizing a tournament in March or April. 'Were going to continue with the sessions as usual, hopefully recruit some new members, and if all goes well stage a tournament here in UL'.

Training will be on each Monday and Wednesday as usual commencing week 1, contact James (0862659399), Peter (0851211334) or Eoin (0873216573) for more details. New members welcome.

UL Eagles celebrate their win

Sean Reidy

Last Saturday was a great day for UL basketball, with both the UL Eagles men and the UL Women's team qualifying for the Superleague National Cup Finals at the end of this month.

The Eagles will play UCC Demons in the Cup Final. Demons defeated Neptune in an all-Cork derby yesterday by 84 to 66.

The UL Women's team comfortably defeated Team Montenegro Hotel by a score of 71 to 59. They will play DCU Mercy in the final.

Congratulations to both teams and their management. It is a great achievement for UL to have reached both the men's and women's basketball cup finals in the same year.

UL Taekwondo: Beginner's Welcome!

Emily Stickland

To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the highest skill. - Sun Tsu

Having decided that first year was a bit of a write off for joining clubs and societies, I looked at second year as a fresh start. I wanted something that would make me fit without making me cry in agony. Taekwondo caught my eye at the recruitment drive being that it is one of the longest run martial arts in UL. I thought "This club must be popular for a reason!"

Ten weeks on and I'm delighted I joined. Although the days after training I'm left unable to walk up stairs, the stiffness is worth the fact that I can now kick higher than my waist. The Emily Stickland that was as flexible as a brick in August can now attempt

the splits. Taekwondo is not just about discipline though. Through this martial art I have made new friends and learnt the importance of self-defence.

Being that I'm 4ft flip-all and generally unimpressive in muscle capacity, I still feel more powerful and able which makes all the difference and leaves me with a new found confidence.

To top it all off, I participated in the Martial Arts Fight Night demonstration in the Stables Club on Tuesday of Week 11. Eleven weeks after I had started training and I was taking part in a Taekwondo demonstration and breaking boards and, along with all the other great martial arts clubs such as Karate, Krav Maga, Boxing and Fencing, promoting Taekwondo whilst having fun. To put it into perspective, if you're looking to get fit whilst

genuinely not feeling how gruelling it is, come to Taekwondo. If you're looking to protect yourself whilst also knowing how to be disciplined then come to Taekwondo. If you're looking for an opportunity to make friends, go new places and just have a laugh, then definitely come to Taekwondo!

The UL Taekwondo Club train on campus in the PESS Building at the following times: Mondays 6pm-8pm, Wednesdays 9pm-10:30pm and Thursdays 6:50pm-8:15pm. Most people make two training sessions a week. Training starts back Monday 23 January (Monday Week 1).

If you are interested in joining or finding out more about the club, email us at ul.taekwondo@gmail.com or find us on Facebook by searching "UL TaeKwonDo Club".



Taekwondo members in the throws of training

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TUESDAY
31st JANUARY 2012

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ULTV Needs YOU!

Evana Downes, PRO

ULTV is a relatively new society that seeks to capture all of UL's triumphs and glories through the medium of film.

Since its establishment in 2008, the members of ULTV have dabbled in news podcasts and documentaries, movies and trailers, reality TV shows and soap operas, leaving few video genres undiscovered and no creative minds untapped! #

We interact with students and other clubs and societies more than any other society on campus, whether we're filming university events or just asking students and staff for their opinions on the latest news stories.

The winner of last year's 'New and Improved Society' award at the Clubs and Societies Ball, ULTV consistently strives to maintain a cycle of development influenced by its members, who alone dictate what

projects we undertake. Last semester, ULTV returned to its origins with the reissuing of its weekly news podcasts, which recorded changes on campus and sought answers to questions of student interest. These included such gems as "What is that tent-like structure that's been erected in front of the ski-slopes (Main Building)?" and, during the presidential election, "What is your view of Dana Rosemary Scanlon?" We filmed a zombie apocalypse movie starring a number of our members, on location in the Students Union, Main Building and university grounds, and captured society events such as Forum Soc's Zombie Walk and Out in UL's Rainbow Week festivities.

We found talented writers and journalists, actors and actresses, dancers and singers, cameramen and camerawomen, editors, musicians, playwrights, makeup artists and costume designers, all within the ranks of our members, and put their skills to good use producing videos now available to watch on our ULTVSOC

Youtube channel. We also set up a Facebook page for our members to interact on and receive updates.

This semester, ULTV will be branching out from its parody video comfort zone into serious journalistic endeavours (Journalism, English and New Media students in particular – for this we need your expertise!), to be launched with our documentary covering the 'Occupy' movement. We'll also be taking steps towards establishing a university based soap opera, "The Living Bridge", for which we'll need aspiring actors/actresses and screenwriters for repeated roles. All this, in addition to continued brainstorming sessions every week, can only be achieved with your input – so be sure and come find us at the Recruitment Drive in Week 2, and keep an eye on our ULTV Facebook page for more upcoming events.



A still from ULTV's Zombie Apocalypse

Debating Celebrates as University Turns 40

Darragh Roche

THIS year the Debating Union (Deb U) celebrates 40 years of debates on campus.

Since the foundation of the NIHE Limerick in 1972, students have held debates on issues of the day and UL's founding president, Dr Ed Walsh, has often said that a debating society was the first society that students wanted to create. Deb U has hosted Taoisigh, ministers, presidential candidates and international journalists, among others, and has sometimes flirted with controversial topics, such as abortion and gay marriage.

Minister for Finance Michael Noonan will be Deb U's first guest this year, speaking to the society on Thursday, Week One. Mr Noonan topped the poll in Limerick at last year's election and has been a major figure in Limerick politics for decades; as finance minister, his role is more important than ever, especially in these dire times. As always, this is a public event and all are welcome to come and hear the minister speak. Previous speakers include Senator David Norris, former minister Eamonn O Cuiv, Guardian columnist Julie Bindel and former Prime Time host, Mark Little.

Later in the semester, UL President Prof Don Barry will address the society and receive an honorary life membership. This will be a unique opportunity for students to hear the head of the university speak at an event organised

by students. The most recent honorary life member is controversial journalist Max Keiser, who addressed the society to great acclaim last semester.

Former Taoiseach Dr Garret FitzGerald received Deb U's Auditor's Medal last year shortly before he passed away, while former UL president, Dr Ed Walsh received the prize in 2010. The society is in the process of choosing this year's recipient, who is guaranteed to be a compelling public figure. It is hoped that this year's event will be even better than last year's.

Debating's competitive side is still key to the society's annual activities. Two Limerick teams attended the world championships in the Philippines over New Year's and the society has attended European championships in Estonia, Turkey, England, Amsterdam and Galway over the last five years. Deb U has also travelled to all Irish universities as well as Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow and London in the last year.

As the Debating Union prepares to host a series of interesting guests and attend competitions leading up to the European championships in Belgrade in the summer and the world championships in Berlin at the end of 2012, things are looking bright despite the economic gloom. As the University celebrates 40 years of higher education on campus, it is only right that its students celebrate the contribution they have made and continue to make to campus life.

Games... We Play Them

Games Society Committee

HOPE you all enjoyed the Christmas break and are ready for another game filled semester. Welcome back to all those returning from Coop or just plain welcome to any new International students.

The Games Society is one of the Universities oldest and most active Societies. We run two weekly events along with off campus trips throughout the year to go paintballing and attend Conventions around the country, caffeine fuelled lock-ins for both consoles and P.Cs and this semester the much awaited campus wide games of Assassin.

With each of the current generation consoles to placate all fan boys and a selection of retro consoles to bring you back to your childhood, we cater to all tastes. With a large collection of games, Wednesday's Console day is sure to have something for you.

It runs from 12pm – 6pm in Room 3 of the Students' Union. Games Night is laid back with board games, card games, tabletop wargames and RPGs. Monopoly, Risk, Magic: the Gathering, Settlers of Catan, Twister, Apples to Apples and Warhammer are just a few of the games that make a regular appearance on a Games Night. If you're looking to get into a particular games system or just want a game to pick up and play, swing by EG-0 on Monday night from 6pm – 11pm.

Our aim is to provide those in UL who enjoy gaming in all forms a way to relax and enjoy their experience while a part of the University of Limerick. Whether you're fully prestiged in COD or you don't even know where to find Mayfair on a Monopoly board, feel free to drop on by.

You can join by stopping by our stall at the Recruitment Drive in week 1 or just talk to a committee member at any of our weekly events. Don't forget to pre-register at www.ulwolves.ie to make this faster and easier.



LOOK CLOSER

Explore your future

Postgraduate Open Day

Wednesday 1st Feb 2012

Bailey Allen Hall, Áras na Mac Léinn

12 noon–4 pm

BOOK YOUR PLACE:

www.nuigalway.ie/postgraduate-open-day

Alternatively you can just turn up and register on the day.

Find out more: postgrad@nuigalway.ie

Travel



Paris: The City of Light

The City of Light

Amy Grimes, Travel Editor

Paris: it's beautiful, enchanting, inspiring and romantic. It's also pretty pricey.

The price of a flight pales in comparison to what you can end up paying for accommodation, sight-seeing or transportation, not to mention food.

However it is possible to manage the City of Romance on a student budget, you just have to put a little thought into it.

I was there last April and had one of the best weekends of my life. I could marvel at the grandeur of the city but instead I'm going to offer some small pieces of advice.

If you're a bargain hunter you'll revel in Paris, trust me. As an example, we'll take something Paris is famous for: the food. Now, I've actually suffered partial memory loss due to the prices in some restaurant windows.

I'm sure the food is amazing but one meal would have been my entire budget for spending money.

If you'd like to be able to eat something other than 'le McDonald's Euro Menu' I cannot stress the importance of never eating in a restaurant

on a main street. Near Notre Dame there are loads of small cafes and restaurants on little cobbled streets competing to attract tourists – a lunch with a starter and main course was €10.

Similarly, the Champs-Élysées is an infamously expensive street. I wandered around for five minutes down some side streets and came across a three course dinner for €20.

You obviously can't go to Paris without popping in to at least one of the charming bakeries you come across and sampling the éclairs or colourful macarons.

For the rest of my trip I stocked up in the supermarket and used the minibar in my 'hotel' room to chill delightfully cheap wine. My room was actually more of an attic bedroom that looked like it was straight out of the last century.

When it comes to accommodation in Paris, you don't pay for luxury, it's all about the location.

No matter what the pictures online look like, prepare yourself for something smaller and a bit retro. The only things you should worry about are cleanliness (read reviews before booking) and how close the nearest Metro

is. Grab a daily or weekly pass (€6 to €16) for the Metro; this is invaluable since it enables you to fit in tonnes of sight-seeing.

The great thing about Paris is that all the amazing sights, the churches and fountains and sun-dappled squares – that's all free. There are some things you'll want to pay for, like the Eiffel Tower or the Arc de Triomphe.

You should plan your trip around public holidays and school breaks to avoid having to queue for hours.

If you don't want to go up the Eiffel Tower, visit at midnight when it's lit with sparkling white lights for just a minute, it's mesmerizing. Notre Dame, the Jardin des Tuileries (an amazing park near The Louvre), La Défense (the modern business district, with some amazing architecture), the Panthéon and Hôtel de Ville (City Hall) can all be enjoyed for nothing and navigating the city is half the fun, since you never know what picturesque scene you'll stumble upon next.

Dating Down Under

Sinead Keane

EVERYONE knows that finding the man of your dreams doesn't happen like it does in the movies.

In real life there are no moments of love at first sight and no quirky but charming chat up lines. What's more, there are certainly no slow-motion entrances accompanied by sexy Marvin Gaye-inspired music. How do I know this? It has never, ever happened to me. Moving to Australia has definitely been one of the best decisions I've ever made.

I love being a city girl with a big city job and a big city life. I've got the house, the job and the lifestyle.

All you need now, I hear you say, is a man to enjoy life with. How many times have I heard that line?! Believe me, I am trying. How could I resist scoping the Australian horizon for a bronzed, muscular boy to live life with Down Under? When there are this many potential Ryan Goslings about

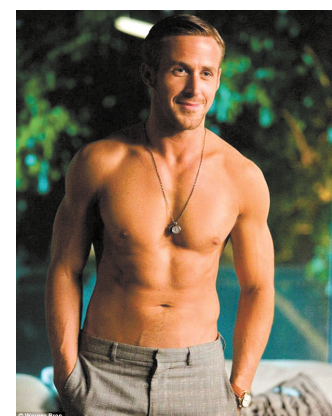
the place, what could I do but track one down for myself?

I have to admit that my recent attempts at snatching a trendy Australian have not gone exactly to plan. First there was the tall Aussie boy from work who seemed awfully chatty for someone so very much out of my league. I was thoroughly enjoying his attention, yet was also suspicious.

Why was this super-hot guy being so nice? The breaking point came when he asked for my number. Of course, being such a confident, self-assured person, I blurted out that I was late for my next shift and couldn't possibly chat any longer. Strike one.

Strike two came not long after. I was on a girly night out (i.e. a 'sexy and confident, hope for a man' night out) with my cousin in the extremely trendy Penny Black bar when a guy walked up to me from behind and asked how my evening was going.

The Penny Black is a hotspot for gorgeous Aussies; it feels like a scandalous season finale set of Home and Away. "Great, thanks!" I replied to my admirer cheerily, turning



Australia's beaches and bars are just buzzing with lookalikes!

to face the guy that I was sure would be my own personal Hugh Jackman.

I know what you're thinking! This is your moment from the movies; this is the Prince Charming who will sweep you off your feet, right?

Hardly. The guy so very eager to speak to me looked less Home and Away and a little more Glenroe. That pale skin, those brown eyes, that all too familiar accent... "How's it going, I'm Pdraig! What part of home are you from?!"



Photo credit: Florence Earle

The UL Photographic Society is recruiting new members.

Sign-up and get useful information at the Clubs and Socs recruitment drive on Tuesday of Week 2 in the Concert Hall.

photoul@gmail.com

Phot
Society



NEW YORK *here I come!*



Brige Newman

Snowy Central Park

WHEN I first started in UL I couldn't believe I would get the chance to study abroad.

Finally, my chance is here. Not only that, but I get to go to New York, I'm like a little kid at Christmas. Most of my class opted for the more traditional Erasmus destinations; Malta, Spain,

Sweden, Budapest and other European hot spots but I have never been one for the traditional.

Instead I am flying 3,089 miles in the other direction, right across the pond.

Admittedly, I did drag a lot of work onto myself by deciding against a European Erasmus placement.

None of the others had to worry about visas, just accommodation and flights.

While they were checking out cheap living arrangements I was sitting in

the US Embassy for six hours so that I could have my finger prints taken and be asked if I were a terrorist, a great way to spend a day. Before being intimidated into a terrified puddle of a person by the Embassy, I had to fill out a filing cabinet worth of forms online, get two inch by two inch photographs taken, post office cheques, call a hotline to organise the interview and a million other things. Then I had to organise forms for the college in the States,

telling them what vaccines I've had, what illnesses I've had, what classes I want to take, if I will be living on campus, organising food plans (oh yes, no cooking for me when I get there) and last, but not least, wire transferring money to them.

Unfortunately now my bank account is a sad shell of its former self having been totally cleared out, and now sits empty and dejected. I can't even apply for the grant which other Erasmus students can

get when they study in Europe. Remind me why I chose America again? Oh yes, it is New York, that'd probably be why I'm going. Oh, and that great learning opportunity. That too, of course. So now I am in the middle of packing. The temperature in New York is currently 3°C so I am packing for cold and I have my snow boots at the ready. I have no idea if I need a quilt or pillows so that could get interesting when I arrive. Here goes nothing.

Erasmus in Spain

Alana Walsh

MOST students who were on Erasmus last semester are now returning home or have already arrived.

However, there are a number of us that cannot do this as the academic calendar at the host university is quite different.

The Christmas festivities are well and truly over and now I must fly back to Spain to attend final classes and start exams with the University of Granada.

I don't finish there until 18 February, several weeks into the semester at UL, not the most ideal situation in the second semester of 3rd year when the workload is not only getting heavier but harder. But I had best not complain too much as the general

consensus amongst those I recounted this was; "Sure isn't it well for you jetting back off there again".

So I'm clearly fortunate enough to be able to leave the miserable Irish weather behind me.

That said, I'm not going to sun myself. Granada is inland and winter does require a jacket, hat and scarf. I will admit that I do prefer winter there though, clear, bright skies even when it is cold and it only rains occasionally.

In the brief time that I have left in Granada there are a few typically Spanish cultural activities I want to do and see.

Flamenco dancing is a huge Spanish tradition and I have passed many shops with windows filled with colourful, ruffled and elaborate dresses which the dancers wear.

Flamenco in Granada often has a unique twist as performances go on in the caves and lairs of the city,

further enriching the experience for the viewer. Granada is also home to a "Plaza de Toros" which is a bullring. While bull fighting is an extremely controversial issue, this is an active ring and friends of mine have attended an event there.

Personally, I don't think I could watch such an event but I appreciate that it is a part of old Spanish culture and for this reason alone I would like to do a tour of the ring and see the venue, just not the carnage.

I loathe having exams post-Christmas but the return to Granada shall not be too bittersweet, it is an amazing city and has been recognised as so by many.

In the words of Ernest Hemingway, "Were we to visit a sole city in Spain, this one should be Granada".



A dazzling Flamenco dancer

Interview

The Longevity of Radio: An Interview with Ruth Scott

Jack Brolly

RUTH Scott is one of Ireland's most popular radio DJs and she's also a former student of UL. An Focal caught up with her recently to see how it feels to have a regular slot on Ireland's biggest radio station and more.

We met her in the lobby of a hotel, before her appearance at the Halloween Ball. She was wearing a bright pink princess dress. "I'm ready to go, can't you see by my gúna?" she laughed.

Her friendly demeanour is exactly as you'd expect from listening to her on the radio.

What made her want to become a DJ in the first place? "I originally thought I wanted to be a journalist or work in law because I seemed to be able to string a sentence together" Ruth began.

"I applied for Communications in DCU but I didn't get enough points and I ended up going to UL to do European Studies. My cousin was in UL at the time and she said, 'Oh do European Studies. It's great fun!' and that's pretty much why I ended up in UL" she continued.

"It was only when I was in 3rd year that I got involved with the Radio Society," she added. "I entered the 'DJ for a day' competition and I won. That's when I realised that maybe I could do this. So I tried to get as much experience as possible with local radio stations. So it's not that I wanted to work in radio, I kind of fell into it".

When did her "big break" arrive? Was it the time she spent in local radio trying to gain experience? "I turned up to a meeting [for the Radio Society] and I was the only female there. They said that since they needed X percentage of females that I was it. So I did a lot of radio for the while and I

think that was my big break. After that I sent my tape into 'DJ for a Day' and it all spiralled from there."

Other forms of media have come and have proved to be more popular than radio but yet it endures. We asked if Ruth knew why radio is so reluctant to let go and become obsolete.

"It is still surviving but I wouldn't say it's going strong. The ratings have shown that the number of people who are listening to radio in Ireland has decreased. Sorry, what was the question again?" she asked.

She seemed slightly worried when discussing the ratings and the longevity of radio.

Ruth has helped many charities over the years; we wondered what inspired her to get involved?

"It's awful easy for me in one regard. I do a lot of stuff for charity because, I guess, I can. I probably have more spare time than most people.

"If you can draw attention to a cause and you can do it easily without any major hassle and it's something you're into, you'd be mad not to!

"I probably spread myself a bit too thinly sometimes with charity things but I do whatever I can." she says. "Sure I do shag all else with my life... (laughs)"

All of this work must really take its toll; does she ever feel under pressure?

"All the time." she says with a nod. "It's a really fun job. I love working with Paddy McKenna! The two of us go in and we just chat and laugh and he's such a lovely person. That's all really fun but there are time when it takes its toll. For example, when the listener ship figures are out each year you do feel like you're under a magnifying glass. It doesn't seem to be a pressure job but there's more to it than us just sitting in a room joshing.

I love it, though." *You can listen to Ruth and Paddy McKenna on Saturday at 4 and on Sunday at 2 on 2FM.*



Ruth Scott at the Halloween Ball

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