

ESTABLISHED 1991

THE BIG ISSUE

£2.50

EVERY MONDAY

NO. 1312 JUNE 18-24 2018

A HAND UP NOT A HANDOUT

INSIDE

Bob Mortimer

Laugh? I almost had
a massive heart attack!

Page 24

Arches of prosperity

Fighting the government's
cynical cash grab

Page 9

I am your friend



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Hello, my name is Allan.

I'm a nature lover, and watch all the wildlife programmes on TV, so I'm disturbed to hear our **insect** population is at risk. A wee spider has as much right to live as any of us. You can read more about this on page 20. **Bob Mortimer** has taken to fishing, and has even joined forces with his pal Paul Whitehouse to make a TV show about it, which he talks about on page 24. I love fishing, but it's been a while since I did it. I'm also a football fanatic, and a big Celtic fan. I see buying a **programme** as a big part of the day. When I go to Celtic Park, it's the first thing I look for. But they may soon be gone – read more on page 37. My own story is on page 46.

INSIDE...

9 SAVE BRITAIN'S RAILWAY ARCHES

As the government launches a cynical cash grab, we fight back

15 PAUSE

How to get kids to laugh at the things you did as a youngster

16 LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Don Letts on getting harrassed by cops and hired by Paul McCartney



Cover image: Keith Trueman

Vendor photo: Karen Thorburn



THE BIG ISSUE MANIFESTO

WE BELIEVE in a hand up, not a handout...

Which is why our sellers BUY every copy of the magazine for £1.25 and sell it for £2.50.

WE BELIEVE in trade, not aid...

Which is why we ask you to ALWAYS take your copy of the magazine. Our sellers are working and need your custom.

WE BELIEVE poverty is indiscriminate...

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Which is why The Big Issue Foundation, our charitable arm, helps sellers tackle social and financial exclusion.

WE BELIEVE in prevention...

Which is why Big Issue Invest offers backing and investments to social enterprises, charities and businesses which deliver social value to communities.



CORRESPONDENCE

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Email: letters@bigissue.com



COMMENT OF THE WEEK

Prevention's better than cure

John Bird has given me a new perspective on the NHS crisis [June 4-10]. He's right that the idea was that the creation of NHS was intended to improve our wellbeing to the extent where we need less healthcare. He's also right that consumerism and our consumption of sugary and fatty food is putting a strain on the NHS, particularly for those in poverty. This great organisation needs to be allowed to return to being a bastion of preventative education, as well as world-class care.

Mark Faulkner, Barry

Check it out

I was interested in the article about Hugh Grant's donation to the foodbank [News, June 4-10]. I shop online and have for years. I would really like to be able to add extra items to my shop each week for the local foodbank but there is currently no way to do this. I have suggested it to my supermarket but they said it was too hard to arrange. I think it would be a great way of increasing foodbank donations as an extra few pounds on tins of fruit or toiletries is small compared to the average online shopping cost so why shouldn't online retailers take advantage of this? Surely someone in the big online

supermarkets or working in the computing industry can come up with a way to sort this out?

Marie Brisland, email

Dave's a rich man

Do you have room in the Issue to print a thank you? It's about Dave, our Big Issue seller outside Sainsbury's in Bretton, Peterborough. He's a great bloke, always there with his dog, Jack, with a friendly word and an upbeat outlook. He has started painting, and his stuff is really lovely.

I've just moved away from Peterborough and I went to say goodbye to Dave. He gave me this painting as a parting gift.

There is something profound about being given something by someone who has so little. Certain sections of society would have us view the homeless as 'takers' or 'scroungers'; I want to thank Dave, not just for the beautiful picture that I will treasure, but for turning the traditional relationship around. It should be those

who have much who give to those who have little, but I wonder how many who 'have much' really do. Well, they are the losers. Dave may be poor in worldly goods, but in the way that matters he is a rich man. Thank you Dave!
Kate, email

The other side

I was really interested to read your article on mental health care [May 28-June 3]. It was informative and timely, albeit I was very sad to hear that your reader who wrote in was suffering anxiety and not able to access support quickly on the NHS.

I am also suffering from stress and anxiety and as you requested, I am writing in about my own NHS experience which has been actually very positive.

I have been suffering from work-related stress and anxiety for the last couple of years, mainly due to an accumulation of working in a stressful industry (television) for more than

25 years.

To summarise, my own personal experience with NHS accessing mental health support has been excellent. I worry it is because I am based in Wandsworth,

one of the more affluent London boroughs. It would be comforting to think that this support was available for everyone who has access to the NHS and needs it.

But clearly from your article, this isn't the case and I really hope the situation can improve. Thank you for the awareness. I hope my experience helps to give you

the whole picture of what support is or isn't available and in turn helps your readers to get the support they need.

Deborah, London



Out for a squawk

Hi, we were doing a walk round with our parrot Jo Jo and co and we have had a good pic to show you.

Mandy, email



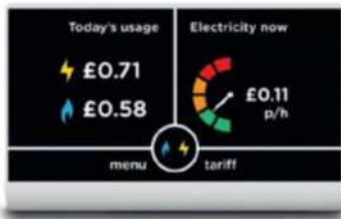
Another cover of the decade potential... @BigIssue #Grenfell



Just the best moment ever seeing @BigIssue vendor Karl aka Bubble back on his pitch outside #SnowHillStation months after an appalling hit and run accident. Welcome back Karl; you have been so missed. @WestMidRailway - prepare a welcome pack for him #dedicatedvendor

Celebrate Bubble's return with us in next week's magazine!





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THE EDITOR



We're making the Arches campaign our business

Years ago I used to work on the newsdesk of the *NME*. It was very good fun. Much of the brief was as you'd expect – 'Make sure we get the news of that Oasis single FIRST!'; 'What do you mean Granddaddy have given *Melody Maker* an exclusive?!' But there was always the chance of a tip and a lead that could generate something more.

One of the people who rang me frequently was Peter Tatchell. He rang more or less every week. He was a tireless voice for gay rights a long time before the mainstream press were listening.

Initially, he was great. He could be relied on to deliver a useful line or two. But as time went on, he became more and more of a pest, increasingly trying to confect a story that felt more like a stunt. Hardly surprising from the man who attempted a citizen's arrest on Robert Mugabe.

That was all nearly 20 years ago. I still think he knows the value of a stunt. But boy, is he brave.

Last week, he travelled to Moscow, on his own, to stand in the middle of the city and campaign for LGBT rights. He clearly knew that the world's media was heading to Russia for the World Cup so there would be some attention, but he still ran the risk of arrest, and who knows what, by his actions. He did it anyway.

Calmly, peacefully, without a rent-a-mob around him, he headed towards Red Square and set out his belief in the injustice and prejudice LGBT people face in Russia and Chechnya. And then he was led away in the back of a police car.

That's a hell of a thing to do. It takes some balls. And while the mechanics are similar to other stunts by other people, it should not be seen in the same light.

This is an era when it is easy to sit in front of a computer and claim you're standing up for rights. It is easy to get a mob behind you by being arrested and jailed (legitimately) for contempt of court and then having that mob claim you are a freedom fighter and being held illegally for nothing more than speaking the truth. Which is one way of couching naked prejudice, Tommy Robinson.

This is the time when smug millionaires who claim to speak for those without a voice can refuse to answer questions in parliament, including about where their money came from – money that helped fund the Brexit vote – and be saluted as agitators for the common man, sticking it to the self-serving liberal elite.

This week we back the Guardians of The Arches campaign to keep thousands of small businesses thriving. So many men and women across Britain have worked, frequently for generations, in the space under railway arches. They've created livelihoods and communities.

Now, they could be sold out by a government keen to make a quick buck.

The Big Issue is proud to speak up for them. We will continue to fight for them and for any others, whose just cause we can amplify and hopefully help them deliver change.

Up from the street, we rise.

Paul McNamee is editor of The Big Issue
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GONG SOUNDS ON TAX TO HELP HOMELESS

This defiant gesture by angry Seattle residents clangs against Amazon's greedy move to overturn a levy designed to help the most deprived in the city.

Seattle councillors approved plans to impose an annual \$275 (£205) tax per employee on the online giant and Starbucks to raise \$47.5m (£35.3m) that would be ring-fenced to fund housing and homelessness services to tackle the growing rough sleeping problem.

However, Amazon and others balked and said they would rather pay a paltry \$25,000 (£18,800) instead.

The founder of Seattle street paper *Real Change* Tim Harris joined vendors and

supporters to ring the gong 6,320 times in protest at the abolishing of the city's head tax – once for every person found unsheltered in Seattle during a January head count. The numbers of rough sleepers unable to find shelter exceeded those who were able to find room in temporary accommodation.

Approved last month, the proposal imposes an annual per-head tax on the multinationals. But the business titans turned the tables last week when seven out of nine Seattle City Council chiefs voted for a U-turn on the new homelessness levy, with one council member, Lisa Herbold, commenting that it was "not a winnable battle at this time".



Real Change vendor and board member Shelly Cohen rings the gong

ON BIGISSUE.COM THIS WEEK

• **Tiago Alves** was home on the 13th floor of Grenfell Tower when it caught fire. Read his story one year on from the disaster



• **English language** Wikipedia's food and cookery content is controlled largely by male editors. Meet the women who are tipping the scales

• **After Trump and Kim's historic handshake**, Tom Farrell takes a peek over the border to explore the North Korean leader's motivations

WHAT'S HOT IN THE BIGISSUESHOP.COM

WE ARE ONE COLLECTIVE

It's the UN's World Refugee Day on June 20 and The Big Issue Shop has just the thing to help you support those fleeing war-torn nations across the globe. We Are One Collective's colourful drop earrings are made by Syrian refugees in Istanbul's Olive Tree Women's Craft Collective, with 100 per cent of proceeds from each sale going back to them. **£15.**





Universal Credit's crunched

Benefits plan feeling heat from auditors and the courts – but is hot property in Finland

The troubled Universal Credit rollout was slammed last week by an independent audit that described the system as “no value for money and uncertain it ever will be”.

The National Audit Office revealed that the DWP has spent £1.9bn on the project so far – just short of the £2.2bn promised when it was announced in 2011 – to get 10 per cent of total caseload (815,000 claimants) claiming Universal Credit.

It's costing £699 per claim, four times more than anticipated, while the NAO estimates that between 270,000 and 338,000 new claimants will not be paid throughout 2018.

The DWP remained defiant, however, calling Universal Credit a system “fit for the 21st century”.

But these issues have not deterred Finland. The progressive Scandinavian nation, frequently a beacon for new social thinking – especially around libraries and housing – indicated they intend to bin their flagship Universal Basic Income trial after two years and instead look to Universal Credit. From January they will ditch a plan that provides 2,000 long-term unemployed people with £490 per month tax-free.

But one year in, the Finnish government has announced it will turn back on the plans, and may bring in a model similar to Universal Credit in the UK instead.

In a further damaging blow, a landmark High Court ruling has found that the roll-out is unlawfully discriminating against people with disabilities.

It was judged that two severely disabled men who saw their benefits slashed to around £178 a month when they moved over to Universal Credit had been “condemned to destitution”.

Show your support for indie bookshops

The Big Issue has been backing independent bookshops as they take on the big boys.

We are fully behind the Independent Bookshop Alliance – the “social Amazon” launched by Big Green Bookshop's Simon Key (pictured) with the help of Big Issue founder John Bird earlier this year – and you can show your support during Independent Bookshop Week,



running this week until Saturday.

There are scores of events across the country, whether it's Philip Pullman's fantastical book signings, Carol Ann Duffy's renowned Shore 2 Shore tour or kid-friendly events

at the Mainstreet Trading Company in St Boswells in the Scottish Borders.

Get involved and support these pillars of your community!



The continuing adventures of Hugh Grant and the foodbanks

Earlier this month we brought you a story About A Boy called Hugh Grant and his generous donations to foodbanks.

Since then, the Hollywood star has been busy keeping the #foodbankchallenge rolling by visiting his local site in Hammersmith and Fulham, before following that up with another donation to the Airdrie foodbank where he started out and getting former Inbetweeners Blake Harrison and Gary Lineker involved (right).

More big names should be following in Hugh's illustrious footsteps, so we want you to keep an eye out for him or other stars helping out. Get in touch!



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CAMPAIGN

The government's plan to sneakily sell off thousands of railway arches across Britain is hugely damaging to lives and businesses. The fightback has begun, reports Adrian Lobb

The government is “selling off the family silver” with damaging plans to privatise railway arches across the UK. Underneath the arches a huge political row is brewing as the plans to seek a short-term cash injection by selling out small businesses – by the party that always claims to speak for enterprise – has been blasted by butchers, bakers, mechanics, artists and gin makers.

Government-owned Network Rail is in the advanced stages of plans to sell its 5,500 railway arches for £1.2bn. But the business owners who have thrived in these spaces are now fighting back. The uncertainty over their premises being sold to a hedge fund or multinational corporation could be devastating for thousands of businesses. Many of the traders have recently reported rent increases of more than 300 per cent (presumably to make them look more profitable, readying for a sale).

A group called Guardians of the Arches, made up of traders from Gateshead, Leeds, London, Manchester and beyond, gathered in Parliament last week to launch their campaign to #SaveOurArches.

Ronnie Grant is 93-and-a-half years old. He has been renting railway arches for more than half a century for his Clapham North MOT business, which is now run by his son George.

“I have been a tenant of Network Rail since 1960 – they have done absolutely nothing to our arches except put the rent up,” he said.

“My rent has just increased by 350 per cent but we have not come to an agreement yet. We have got to stick together and make a big force to beat Network Rail and the government.”

Like many arches businesses, Ronnie has done a lot of the work to rebuild and

repurpose the previously unwanted and neglected spaces under the arches himself. Now the spaces are seen as desirable, the government and Network Rail are keen to cash in.

Katie Cullen is a newer tenant, as co-owner of Block & Bottle in Gateshead. Cullen opened the UK's first dedicated free-range butcher and craft beer shop in April last year. “We have gone from enthusiasts to employers,” she said,

£70m per year for Network Rail. “The fact that so many senior politicians are here is a sign of concern that the government is selling off the family silver,” she said, while stressing the need for a cross-party solution.

The proposed sale not only threatens thousands of small traders, it also represents bad business. The gathering of entrepreneurs in Committee Room 10 know this better than anyone.

“The sale and threat of rent increases is creating uncertainty, which is the exact opposite of what we need at the moment,” said Cullen.

“Network Rail is giving up reliable long-term income for short-term gain.”

Big Issue founder Lord John Bird, a vocal backer of the campaign, also spoke out against the planned sell-off – accusing the government of a return to feudalism.

In a letter to Grayling, Lord Bird described the arches businesses as one of the jewels in Britain's publicly owned crown.

“The arches have long been places where unique and enterprising small businesses have flourished,” he said. “These small businesses are

the lifeblood of Britain's economy, and I am deeply concerned that such sharp rental increases and proposed sale of the properties will mean that few, if any, of these businesses will survive.”

The campaign is ongoing, with the arches businesses supported by the East End Trades Guild and the New Economics Foundation. We will bring more on this in the coming weeks.

See over for more from John Bird on ‘medieval landlordism’

guardiansofthearches.org.uk @adey70



Above: The Guardians of the Arches have taken their fight all the way to Parliament; right: Ronnie Grant has rented his arch for more than 50 years

before praising the creativity and collaboration that has transformed the arches community in Gateshead into a thriving landscape.

Political big-hitters joined the Guardians of the Arches campaigners. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and a group of shadow cabinet MPs listened to supportive speeches, while Liberal Democrat Baroness Catherine Bakewell was also in attendance and added her signature to the open letter to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. Meg Hillier, MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch, told the meeting that income from the arches raises



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JOHN BIRD

The Guardians of the Arches... battling to save us from an urban abyss



After a long cycle, we got to Cambridge and, over porridge, discussed with the cafe owner the disintegration of Cambridge.

The colleges that (when lumped in with their Oxford counterparts own property worth £3.5bn) own much of the city centre, and are intent on upping rents – seemingly randomly.

The cafe owner is astonished as he watches bigger rents drive out smaller traders, with only chains and posh shops able to absorb the increases. The local council seem equally intent on making life more unliveable and unprofitable for the small trader.

Is this a conspiracy to produce a lifeless, stress-laden cityscape where kindness, ease and civility are dumped for the needs of money?

Of course, we know that ‘austerity’ looms like a T. rex over the finances of the local council and (presumably) the colleges. We know that budgets must be met. But this big

squeeze on the little trader is un-thought through, and will finally kill what’s so special about Cambridge.

And because of higher rates and harder rents, only the estate agents, the chain stores and the college bursar’s coffers (supposedly stashed full via charitable status) remain in good health.

A cab through London makes you wonder if there’s a conspiracy against all forms of civility and wellbeing in modern, urban life. Buildings going up, with upped rents and rates, and – for the cabby – hundreds more minicabs freed up by Transport for London to flood the streets. A worrisome unhappiness ensues.

The prosperous South of England – where I recently spent a few days – compares drastically to the time I’ve spent in the hard-hit Midlands and knocked North. Where austerity, again, robs communities of sustenance and chance. Where councils don’t seem the evil villains

of the piece, but victims of government budget cuts.

The last two weeks North and South seemed to me to show how hard life is under prosperity – and also under poverty. How the under-resourced North seems a world away from a thriving South, where local authorities are renegeing on their duties to encourage and spread the prosperity of small businesses.



Arches businesses at Brixton Station in London – before rents were tripled in 2015 and they were forced out

But as if to put the kibosh on the North-South divide, along comes Network Rail about to sell off 5,500 railway arches; Britain’s little businesses, spread north, south, east and west.

So there’s me banging on about a divided country in terms of threats and levels (and kinds) of pressure, and Network Rail – with no consultation – undermines thousands of our little businesses in one fell swoop.

Network Rail, and before it, British Rail, neglected to provide anything other than the rent invoice. A contemptible landlord that gave little but increasingly demanded higher rent increases. And now, this summer, they are intent on selling off the railway arches, under a legal ruse for 999 years. To a company who will no doubt be more indefatigably intent on getting more, and more returns on their investment.

Bakers, garages, gyms, kitchens, salons, distilleries, studios strewn all over the

country, like a central nervous system where small businesses thrive.

The feudal-like landlord, Network Rail – who gave little – now wants to cash in and cover up their deficit by raising just over £1bn by selling off the 5,500 arches; places that have harboured and encouraged the small business to grow for generations.

Neglect is now seen as a resource. And even though railway lines (and, at times,

redundant lines) run above the heads of the traders in their arches, a gigantic cash cow has been espied. What was a property embarrassment – with no discussion, no consultation, no togetherness – can be put up for sale to presumably the highest bidder.

Network Rail has been hiking up rents, on occasion, to over 300 per cent. They have flagrantly ignored even the most basic discussions with the business people who now face a future in peril.

I was privileged to speak at a cross-party meeting in Parliament last week where the Guardians of the Arches

campaign set out their plan to fight this medieval bit of landlordism, demonstrating the spirit of people who won’t take this lying down.

But there seem to be so many signs now that national government, local government, real estate holders – and the likes of the Department for Transport and Transport for London – are pushing us towards an urban abyss.

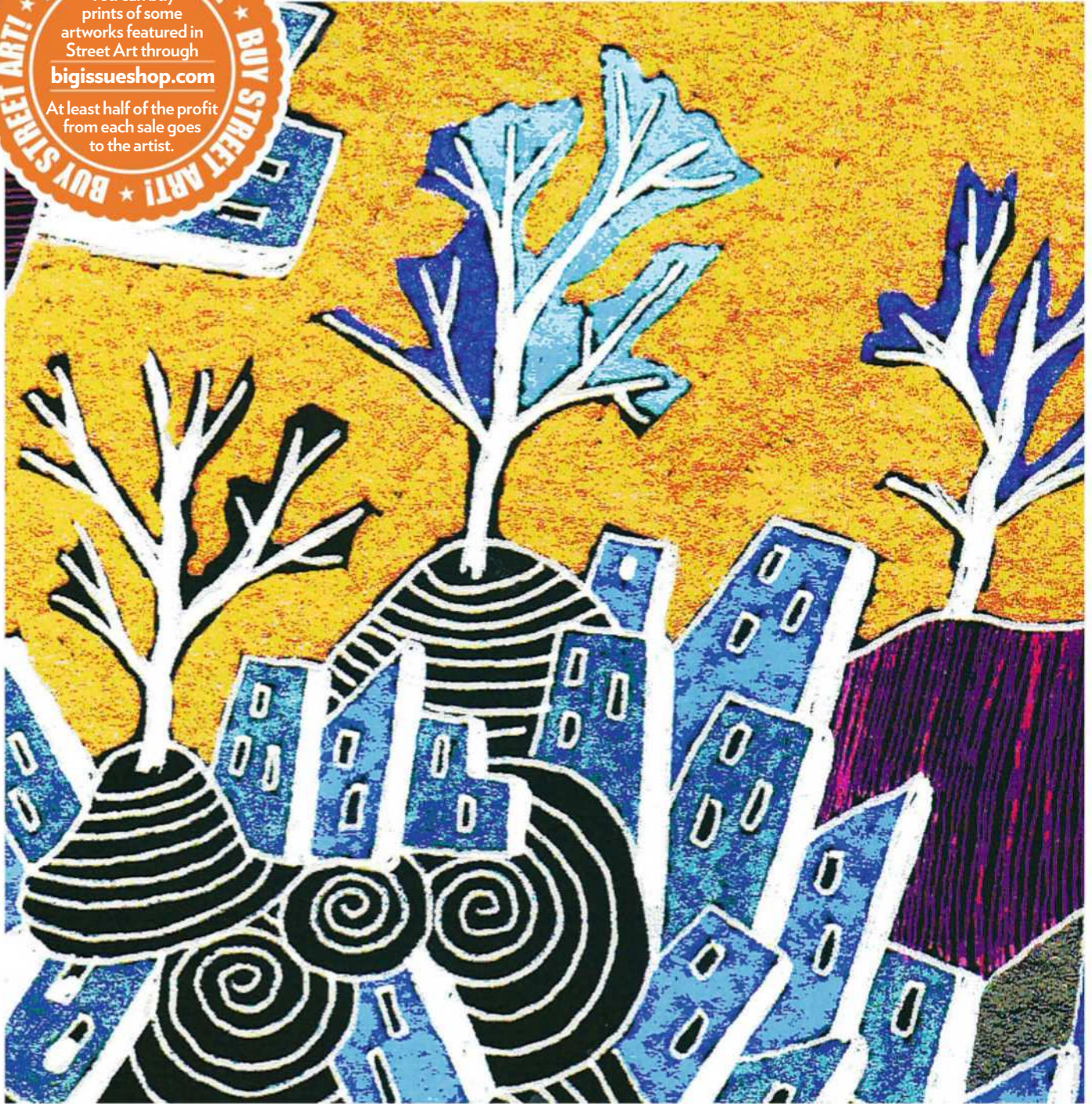
Each party seemingly pushing their own interests. Cambridge colleges not caring for local trade. Custodians of our cities ignoring city users. And behemoths like Network Rail sacrificing the prosperity of the many on the altar of short-term budgetary respite.

A confederacy of dunces prevails.
#SaveOurArches

John Bird is the founder and Editor in Chief of The Big Issue. @johnbirdswords
john.bird@bigissue.com

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▲ **UNTITLED LANDSCAPE (DETAIL)**

BY CHRIS BIRD

“I did these in a recovery unit that does art therapy,” comments Chris, a prolific and longtime contributor to Street Art, regarding his latest batch of artwork. “I suffer from mental health problems. My art is part of an attempt to survive and make a contribution. I believe in equality and diversity and hope.”

Street Art is created by people who are marginalised by issues like homelessness, disability and mental health conditions. Contact streetlights@bigissue.com to see your art here.

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THE ROCKET DOLLS • GORILLA RIOT
DEAD MAN'S WHISKEY
ICARUS FALLS • THOSE DAMN CROWS

PLANET ROCK
WHERE ROCK LIVES
MAIN STAGE

★ SUNDAY ★

THE CULT

HALESTORM

**BLACKBERRY
SMOKE**

SONS OF APOLLO

TYLER BRYANT &
THE SHAKEDOWN

THE LAST INTERNATIONALE

BLUES
STAGE

GOV'T MULE

CHIPS & DAVE

JIM JONES AND THE RIGHTEOUS MIND
LAURENCE JONES • KRIS BARRAS BAND
CONNOR SELBY BAND

PROG
IN THE PARK

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SUBJECT TO LICENCE



PAUSE



Illustration: Mitch Blunt

MICHAEL ROSEN

How to have a laugh with your inner child

If you want to make children laugh, the best place to start is to remember what it was that used to make you explode with laughter when you were little. Think back to those jokes, songs, rhymes, facial expressions and body moves. What amused you then will inevitably be the kind of humour that you will be most able to perform yourself.

Start with the comedians in films and TV programmes you used to watch that made you laugh. When I was a boy, I loved a character called Mr Pastry. These were slapstick films, with Mr Pastry ending up covered in whatever he was supposed to be working with. The gag was that he would start off with the best of intentions but then would show himself to be useless at it – that’s a situation that many children have experienced, so Mr Pastry relieved me of feeling like a klutz. He was also an adult (of a kind) so it was extra funny because he was a

grown-up doing what I, as a child, might have done.

You’ll find that your voice, face and body have remembered the rhythm, timing and tone of those jokes from your childhood. Solemn and laborious though it sounds, it’s worth making lists of these.

Now add to your list real people in your family or at school who amused you. Think of those characters who had distinctive ways of talking. Recall their gestures and facial expressions, even their body shapes. I did this with my dad in particular, who had all sorts of gestures which seem to come from another time. If he was amazed by something, he would stroke his hair back from

his forehead, while saying “Extraordinary! Extraordinary!” My brother and I loved imitating him: “Extraordinary!”

Think of things that you and other children did at school that made you all laugh. I was lucky enough to be friends with several kids who could pick a single gesture copied from a teacher or relative and this made the rest of us laugh.

All of this is your core comic material. What you’re doing here is ‘harvesting’ what is already in your head and in your

body. It’s what will come most easily to you if you’re performing funny material as a grown-up for children. It’s also helping you remember what is funny to a child, something that

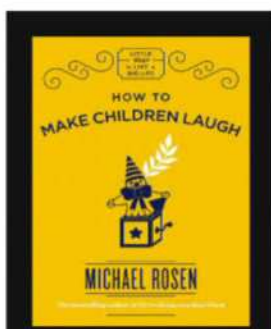
becomes harder to grasp as we become adults.

Next step: ask yourself why and how this stuff was funny to you as a kid. Come up with your own theories about why or how the material you loved used to tickle you.

The next thing to do is to look at what is making children laugh out there right now. And it has to be about what makes children laugh, not necessarily you – it’s always the child audience that counts. Just because there’s a book or a show that you think is funny, that isn’t necessarily what’s going to entertain children. You need to find out what makes them chuckle.

The more you are a student of the material from your own childhood and the material that is out there now, the funnier you will be. Whether it’s cracking jokes, singing silly songs, reciting funny poems or telling real-life stories, just give it a go.

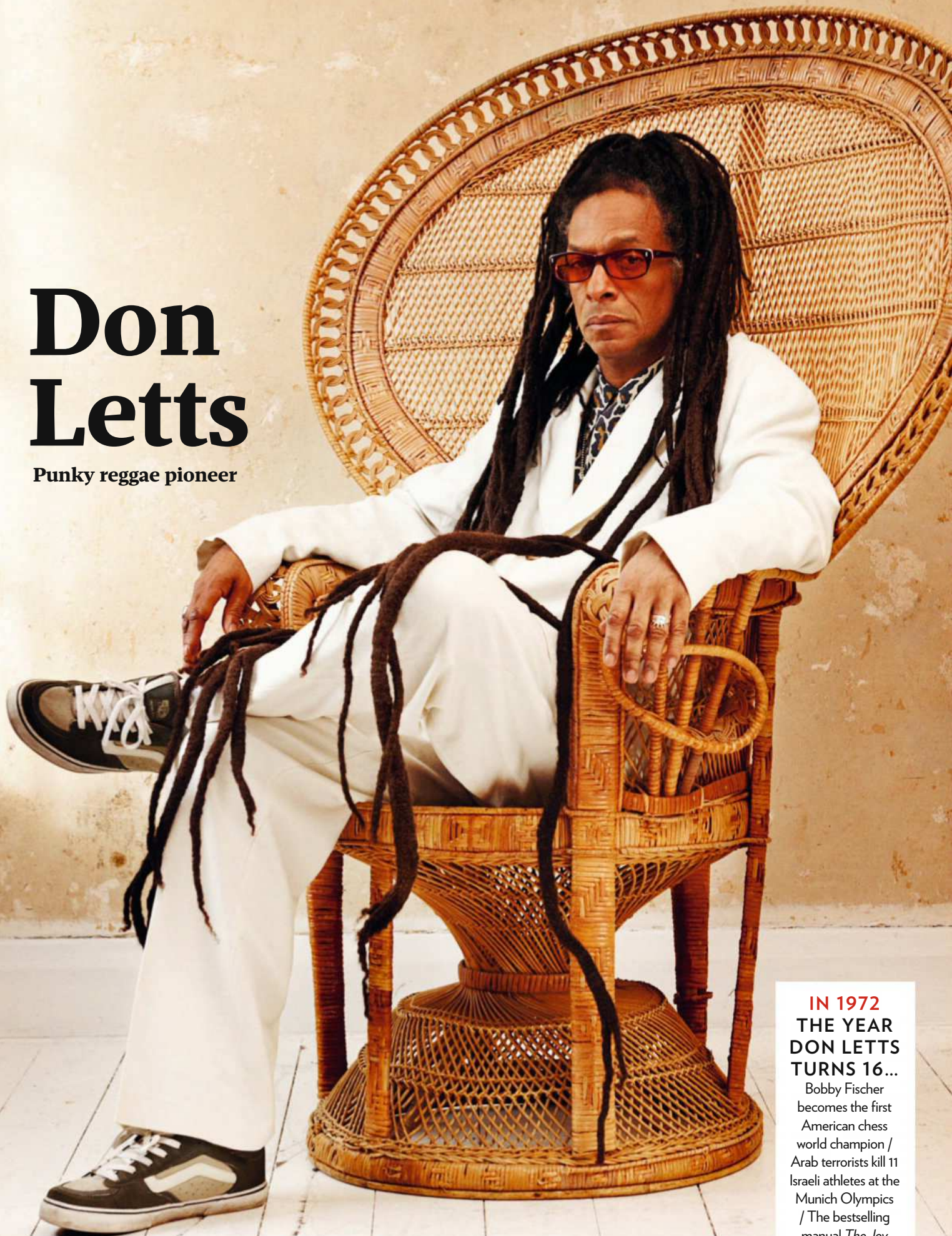
@MichaelRosenYes



How to Make Children Laugh by Michael Rosen (Quercus, £9.99)

Don Letts

Punky reggae pioneer



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TURNS 16...**

Bobby Fischer becomes the first American chess world champion / Arab terrorists kill 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics / The bestselling manual *The Joy Of Sex* is published

LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

What were my interests at 16? The same as every other 16-year-old boy – music, clothes, girls, girls and girls. I was living in South London and loving it. I was a soul boy, doing the whole black and beautiful thing. Big afro like Michael Jackson. I was working on the King's Road, Chelsea. To be quite honest, I was a flash bastard. If you'd met me then you'd probably think I was an arrogant dick. Or at least, if I met the young me now that's what I'd think. But the girls were into my black magic. I had the clothes, the dance moves. I wasn't into sports or beer – I didn't do the lads' thing. I've always preferred the company of women. So it was quite easy to out-cool my white mates. You'd say, I'm not into football, I don't drink beer – let's go and see a French movie with subtitles. And you were the coolest motherfucker on the block.

I went to a private school, Archbishop Tenison's in South London. I was really good at art, and woodwork, really good. But when we were asked to choose our subjects my parents said, you can't take the artistic subjects because black people aren't artists. You need to get a trade and get a job. They made me drop all the subjects I was good at and take physics and technical drawing and a load of bollocks like that. I had my rebellion – in my chemistry exam I wrote, 'a chemist I was not to be, that I clearly state; cos I've got a splitting headache and I cannot concentrate'. I handed that in. For technical drawing I drew a naked woman and wrote 'curves are better than straight lines'.

In 1971 I had a musical epiphany. I saw The Who play. At the Young Vic in Waterloo. It was a full production rehearsal where they go through exactly what they'd do at a real gig, by way of practising. And they sent word of mouth around the schools in South London that there was a band playing at the Young Vic that night. I walked in, in my school uniform, and there I was about 15 seats away from The Who. I could see the whites of Keith Moon's eyes. [Pete] Townshend doing his windmill. Dry ice, lasers. And that was me fucked for life. I didn't know what I would be, but I knew I wanted to be in that world.

When I was growing up graffiti consisted of six-foot letters: KBW. Keep Britain White. In the Seventies I drove quite a nice car. I'd get pulled up two or three times by the police on every journey. Especially after I got my dreadlocks. Me and cops – Jesus, I have a few things I could tell you. The whole stop-and-search thing – I had this thing I would do. Remember in those old American cop shows they made people stand spreadeagled across their car, legs apart, hands in the air? I used to do that and they'd be like, Mr Letts, that's not really necessary. But the minute you stand like that on the street everyone stops and looks and then you're in control of the situation. I used to get on the hood of my car and start taking my clothes off and shouting, 'Why are you crucifying me?' just to get attention. I totally rocked their world. I'm black and British and well educated. I knew all about my culture, which they were completely ignorant about. I also knew everything about their culture 'cause it was being shoved down my throat. So I was deadly, man. I had thunder and lightning in my hands.

My parents were part of the Windrush generation. I'm a child of Windrush. They came over here with their hopes and their dreams and their culture – most important – and basically got through by denying their roots, completely assimilating. They were invited here after the Second World War to help rebuild the country and us, their kids, saw this wasn't working out; our parents were getting screwed. We were looking at America, the messages of black power, black and proud, the Black Panthers, who spoke so much to me. That, coupled with the growing reggae culture, made us mad as hell and we weren't going to take it any more.

My ambitions, my rebellion in my exams, they drove an ever-growing wedge between me and my parents. It was a rocky road. When I first got my dreads they kicked me out of the house. From their perspective Rasta was something to be shunned. In the Fifties and Sixties Rastas were social pariahs in Jamaica. It wasn't until the arrival of Bob Marley that they began to see it differently. And once they saw me on *Top of the Pops*, on TV, all of a sudden I made some sense to them. I was being accepted by white people and the mainstream and that had value to them. It took a bloody long time. But I think before my dad died they were proud of me for, I dunno, doing something for the Letts name. And now I give maximum respect to my parents, who denied themselves everything and made me the man I am today.

If I could go back and tell the 16-year-old Don about his future, I think hanging with Bob Marley would go down a treat.

Working with Paul McCartney was pretty cool. Writing songs with Mick Jones in Big Audio Dynamite, touring the world, getting my gold discs. Making the film *Dancehall Queen* is definitely one of my proudest achievements. I can safely say that film is now Jamaica's most famous. It is a phenomenon to anyone who knows the culture. I am very proud of that.

There are people I miss. Joe Strummer, Ariane from The Slits, she died far too young. Amy [Winehouse] – that still does my head in because we

were friends. That really hurts, it's painful, like it was yesterday. Thankfully John Lydon's still around. I owe him big time. Not only for the whole Pistols thing, because that really did kick-start the whole thing here. He was the first person to take me to Jamaica! That was a mind-blowing trip, probably the most exciting thing I've ever done in my life.

I've thought about what I would tell my younger self and I thought, Don, you were right to ignore your parents. Because the climate was changing and what was right for them was totally wrong for me. If I went back to the younger me I'd say, go forward young man and prosper. Follow your heart and your instinct. For me it's kinda worked out. I'm not rich but I make a living doing something I enjoy. And as far as I'm concerned that makes me very rich. Music still drives me, I still believe it can be a force for social change. It certainly changed me. So all I would tell myself is, keep doing what you're doing, just do it harder, faster and longer

Don Letts is taking part in Trojan Records' 50th anniversary celebrations, with a box set due out on July 27.

Words: Jane Graham @janeannie



From top: The 16-year-old Letts, in his words 'a flash bastard'; with Bob Marley during the reggae legend's London 'exile' in the late Seventies

SUBTERRANEAN

Hostile environments take many forms, some more tangible than others.

This windowless underworld – basic, cramped, noisy and with Tube trains rumbling overhead – was built to shelter Londoners seeking refuge from the Blitz during World War Two. And when the migrants of the Windrush generation arrived in the UK from 1948 onward, and the authorities realised they had nowhere to house them, this labyrinth of tunnels under Clapham South became their home.

Around 236 migrants, many of whom helped in the effort to rebuild Britain after the war, were given temporary housing there, and placed in homes above ground within four weeks.

As part of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of these British citizens from the Caribbean one of its former residents went back at the invitation of London Transport Museum and the Windrush Foundation. Returning for the first time in 70 years, John Richards (pictured above and on the right

in the main image), now 92, recalls his first London home: “There were beds all around that had crisp white sheets. They had a tea cart at the station... pie in the evening. I survived, because friends know friends.

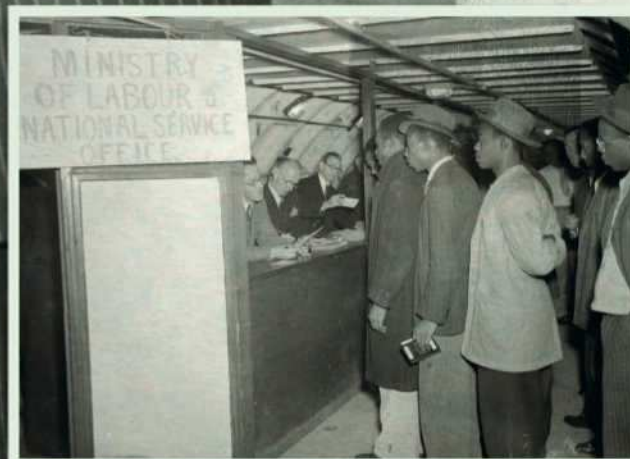
“It was hard, but in the long run you find a way.”

The Clapham South Subterranean Shelter will be open for public tours from August 11-September 16, Wednesdays to Sundays. Tickets priced £33.50-£38.50. More information at ltmuseum.co.uk/hidden-london



Photo © TopFoto

HOMESICK BLUES



This isn't backstage at a jazz club. It was home in 1948 for John Richards (standing, far right) and his friends in their digs under Clapham South Tube. Inset: New arrivals queueing at the Ministry of Labour and National Service



Photo: Robberfly by TienHeng Low

LOOK ME IN THE EYE AND TELL ME YOU WON'T MISS ME

Summer's here, so it's time to complain about the number of bugs. But the reality is our creepy-crawly friends face an unprecedented battle for survival. Vicky Carroll finds out what we can do about it

Honey bees: we all know that without them sticking their noses into plants and spreading the love/pollen, humanity would cease to exist. But they're not just promiscuous pollinators; scientists recently discovered that they are also busy little mathematical whizzes, for not only do they have some facility with numbers – possessing the ability to count landmarks as they forage – they also have a rudimentary understanding of numbers including the concept of zero. Only relatively recently grasped by humans (the earliest evidence probably dating to Babylonians), the idea of 'zero' is understood by primates, dolphins, birds and humans beyond nursery age. And, we now know, bees.

Insects are a mighty, complex universe of wonders, one in which entomologists are immersed and the rest of us swat, squish and squirm our way through during summer's peak picnic-bothering bug season, oblivious to the amazing alien life around us. There are 27,000 species of insects in Britain, among many millions on Earth. Beetles, flies, bees, ants, bugs, butterflies, moths, mayflies, dragonflies, grasshoppers; from imposing stag beetles to tiny wasps, each has an important role to play in the ecosystem, in which we humans are merely one species playing our part, for good and ill.

What is an insect? Conservation charity Buglife ("Saving the small things that run the planet") defines them as an arthropod – that is, an animal with a segmented body and external skeleton – with six legs. They can be apterygota (without wings) or pterygota (with wings), and have a basic life-cycle of egg, larva and adult, with adaptable lifestyles at different stages which allow them to exploit food resources.

But the chance to discover the joy of insects is slipping from our grasp. Last week a report by The Mammal

Society stated that development of buildings and roads, intensive farming and invasive species mean that at least one in five wild mammals in Britain faces a high risk of extinction within a decade, including the Scottish wildcat, mouse-eared bats and water voles. Ahead of the report, nature-lover and *Springwatch* presenter Chris Packham warned of a "national catastrophe" as our "green unpleasant land" becomes increasingly barren. As greenbelt and brownfield are gobbled up by urban sprawl, and agriculture increasingly changes, taking place on industrialised scales, species of flora and fauna – and clever bugs – are disappearing at an unprecedented rate. Alongside changes in plant diversity, the warming climate has also played a role.

A recent study in the UK, Netherlands and Germany found that insect biomass – the volume of insects measured by weight – recorded on nature reserves between 1989 and 2016 declined by 76 per cent from March to October, and by a horrifying 82 per cent in midsummer, when insects should be at their peak.

Thirty-five of the UK's bee species are facing extinction, while 71 per cent of British butterfly species are in decline and 66 per cent of larger moth species have seen their numbers fall in the last 35 years, according to Buglife. And when insects disappear, birds and other creatures that rely on eating them also vanish. "You can be very sure if you lose three quarters of the insect biomass, a significant portion of animals higher up in



Very hungry: the privet hawkmoth caterpillar (Ayla Webb)

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food chain – birds, bats and amphibians – will be affected,” says Caspar Hallmann, of the Radboud University, Netherlands, lead author of the study which identified the dizzying decline of insects. “There are bound to be consequences.”

This spring social media has been a-twitter with reports of once-common birds such as swifts now absent from the skies, and the songs of nightingales noticeably unheard. Jamie Wyver, life-long birder, conservationist and communications executive at the RSPB, says nightingales have been particularly hard hit by loss of habitat, resulting in campaigns by the charity to save their breeding grounds and raise awareness through a National Nightingale Festival. “A lot of insect-eating birds have declined, because loss of biodiversity has caused loss of insects in the UK,” he explains. “An example is the ring ouzel, an upland bird that is vanishing from the countryside in Scotland. In 10 years from 1990 to 1999 we lost 58 per cent, through climate change affecting the insects they eat, and loss of places where they live.”



Snout and about: the exapion fuscirostre weevil (Timothy Sexton)

Since World War Two the UK has seen the obliteration of 97 per cent of its wildflower meadows, where invertebrates flourish – perhaps Environment Secretary Michael Gove’s promise that post-Brexit we will see blooming wildflower meadows springing up across Blighty thanks to new farming

incentives was not so fluffy after all: it could be what it takes to restore the sovereignty of our bug life.

The flip side is the EU’s partial ban on neonicotinoid insecticides, which Friends of the Earth, among others, say has contributed to the loss of bees, affecting their breeding success, resistance to disease and navigational skills. Since 1990 beekeepers noted sudden and unusually high disappearance and collapse of honey bee colonies, and Greenpeace found that, alongside loss of biodiversity and climate change, chemicals introduced to kill off pests at industrial agricultural sites were “the most direct risk to pollinators”.

The ban, introduced in 2013, was challenged in the General Court of the European Union earlier this year but the insecticide producers’ bid to overturn it was unsuccessful. It is just as well: with nearly one in 10 of Europe’s wild bee species facing extinction, they need all the help they can get.

The economic impact of the humble bee and other pollinators is huge. One third of all our food depends on their pollination and their work is worth £232bn to agriculture globally each year. In the UK, the net value of their unpaid work to our food production industry annually is £700m, or 13 per cent. In 2015 it was noted that bees contributed more to the UK economy than the Royal Family.

Last month Ben Bradley, MP for Mansfield, presented a Bill in the Commons calling for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to introduce a framework for ‘pollinator corridors’ – encouraging farmers to adopt wildlife-friendly practices and local authorities to plant wildflowers in grass verges to encourage insects to thrive.

But governments local and national, farmers and highways authorities are not the only ones who can bring us – and our invertebrates – back from the brink. The

RSPB, Woodland Trust, Eden Project and many other organisations have guides on how to build ‘bug hotels’, ranging from a few rolled-up tubes of newspaper to extravagant stacks of constructed habitats to appeal to all manner of creepy-crawlies. Even just planting wild flowers in a patch of the garden can encourage insects to return.

Campaigners and groups like Buglife and the Royal Entomological Society are working hard to encourage us to learn to love our bugs, to learn more about them and to stop swatting them. Because nobody wants those bees (or the other arthropods) to number zero.



Larvalous beasts: the sun fly or *helophilus pendulus* (Zach Haynes)

If you want to join the fight back on behalf of bugs, now is the time – it is National Insect Week (June 18-24) and the Royal Entomological Society has launched its 2018 Photography Competition to capture the UK’s best bug snaps. Find out more at nationalinsectweek.co.uk

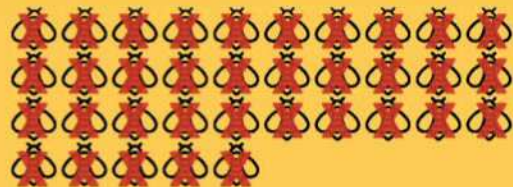
@vcarroll100



THE REAL BRITISH QUEEN?

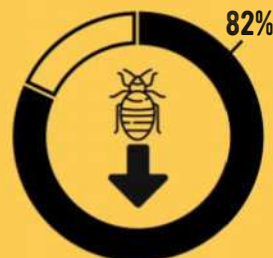
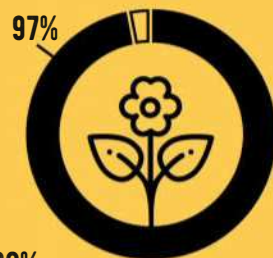


IN 2015, BEES WERE WORTH MORE TO THE UK ECONOMY THAN THE ROYAL FAMILY



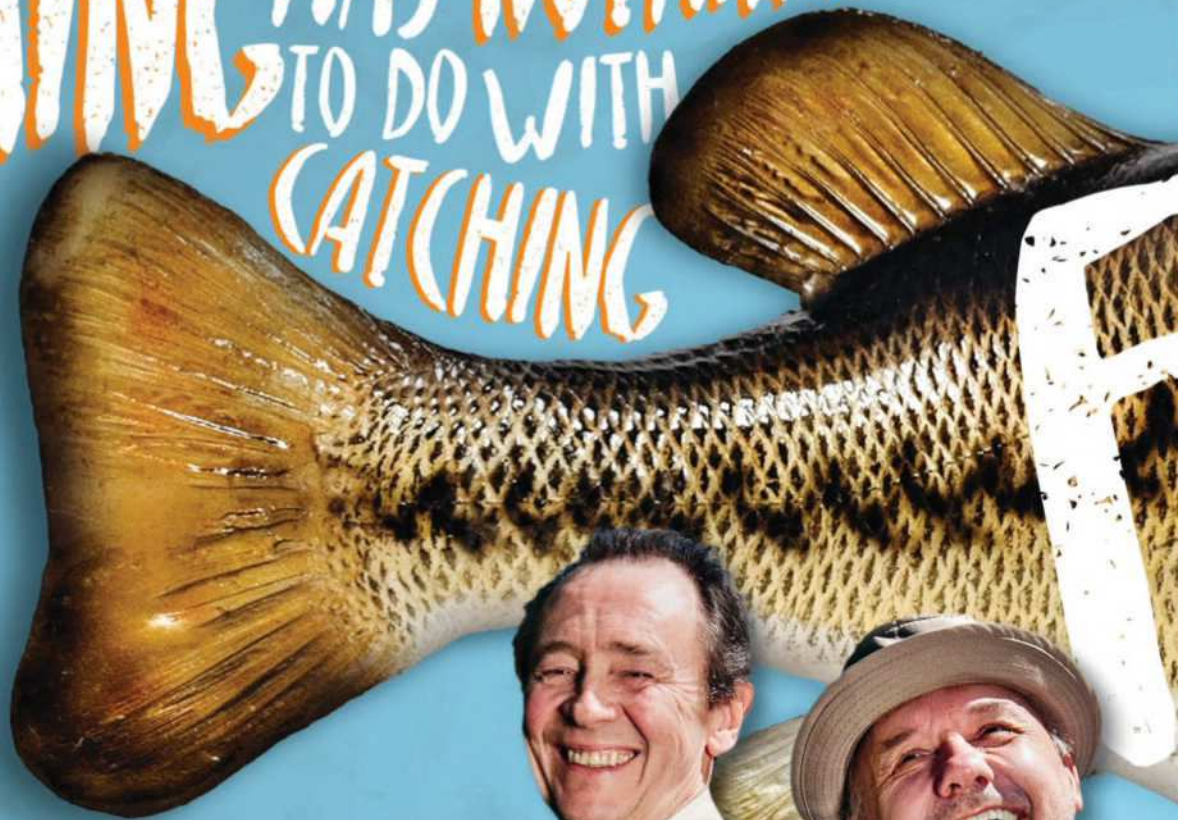
35 UK SPECIES OF BEE FACE EXTINCTION

SINCE WW2 97% OF UK WILDFLOWER MEADOWS HAVE DISAPPEARED



MIDSUMMER INSECTS ON UK NATURE RESERVES DOWN 82% FROM 1989-2016

'FISHING HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH CATCHING



A life-saving triple heart bypass left **Bob Mortimer** at his lowest ebb. He tells **Adrian Lobb** how his old pal **Paul Whitehouse** shook him out of his torpor by taking him fishing – and now they've made a TV series about it



M

My doctor told me that I would have had a heart attack on stage. He looked at my tour schedule and said I would most likely have gone down in Southampton.”

The year was 2015 and it was shaping up to be a big one for Bob Mortimer. Alongside

his comedy partner Vic Reeves, he was all set to embark on a 25th anniversary *Poignant Moments* tour – celebrating the longevity of a comedy duo who went from upstairs at a pub in New Cross to TV in record time with *Big Night Out*, and have shaped and changed the comedy landscape ever since.

If it wasn't for the impending mammoth tour, playing concert halls across the UK, Mortimer admits he would have ignored the chest pain he was experiencing. It's what men so often do, trained by years of 'manning up' and 'boys don't cry'.

Instead, he came face to face with mortality. And it shocked him.

“When I came home from being told I had to have heart surgery, it feels so dramatic. You think it is over. Heart surgery just sounds... it was weird, the things that would make me cry were my favourite egg cup, my cats,” says Bob, when we meet at the Union Club in Soho. “Four days later they were cutting me open.

I was 95 per cent blocked. It is amazing when you see the pictures, because it is an incredibly resistant organ – if there is a gap it will fucking push that blood through it.”

Middlesbrough-born Mortimer, who turns 60 next year, is fun, youthful, and entirely unstarry, despite being “dead posh” since he left Peckham to live in leafy Tunbridge Wells.

And he's made a full recovery. At his first show after his triple heart bypass, a ramshackle warm-up to test new material at the Leicester Square Theatre, he regularly looked at the monitor on his wrist to check his heart rate.

“Me and Jim [Moir, aka Vic Reeves] could watch it going up before the show as the nerves kicked in. It was fun.”

The second half of the tour went ahead to great acclaim. And the pair are all set to record new episodes of their iconic breakthrough show, *Big Night Out*, to air later this year.

“I am really looking forward to it because it is fucking nuts,” he says. “It is fucking nonsense.

“We were not expecting to get the show. We are certainly not expecting to get a second series. So it really is exactly what we want to do. We did a pilot last year and we put in a spoof of *First Dates*, just as a nod to the mainstream. This time we asked permission not to do any of that. It could go either way.”

But first, we see Mortimer in a whole new arena, with a different comedy partner. *Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing*, as the title suggests, features the funnyman alongside fellow comic Paul Whitehouse visiting various rivers across the UK. Two men talking and fishing. That's it.

If the show is about anything, it is about male friendship. We see the way emotion is hidden beneath jokes, any excuse to avoid difficult subjects is latched onto – a timely tench interrupting Mortimer's discussion of his triple heart bypass in episode one. But Mortimer is serious when he talks of Whitehouse, who had stents fitted after his own heart scare – lifting him out of his post-op slump.

"Paul brought me out of my malaise," he says. "I have always been a bit of a recluse, but I really was after the heart thing. And everyone knew."

"He is an extraordinarily lovely human being and sort of enticed me out under the guise of fishing. I don't fish but had always wanted to after doing it as a kid. We went fishing for the pleasure, him teaching me to fish. He is very serious about it. And I like that."

"The show is quite authentic. We were fishing in some lovely places. Then me and Paul went to the BBC and said that we had these lovely days and found it really interesting – these two old men, thinking about what is friendship like when you are that age."

And how does it compare to the intense friendships of youth?

"I look back on my friendships before this and I have great friends, but what that actually equates to is occasionally bumping into them somewhere and maybe going to someone's birthday do and catching up with them," he says.

"That is not what friendship was when I was younger. It was a right laugh having a friend then. I found myself fishing with Paul and recapturing a bit of what it was like to have a proper friend. Passing our time together. We are at a crossroads in our lives. We have both been told it is the beginning of the end. And it made us think we should do this for telly, because it was interesting."

Mortimer's friendship with Whitehouse goes right back to *Big Night Out's* early days. Whitehouse was a friend and painting and decorating partner of Charlie Higson, whose university pal was part of Vic Reeves' gang.

Surely Mortimer bares his soul to his old pal Reeves, who he describes as "honestly, a fucking genius", in between writing their madcap, farcical "nonsense"?

"No. Never. What can I say, it is weird, isn't it?" he says.

"I don't talk to anyone and haven't for 30 years. I mean, I have very close friends – I am very close to Jim [Vic] and we write most days."

"If there was a fly on the wall, actually we probably do talk about things, hidden under layers of work and jokes. So I do have this friendship with Jim but it is mixed in with work. There are all hidden subplots. We are actually there to write something – and I suppose me and Paul were there to catch fish."

"I soon learnt that fishing has nothing to do with catching fish," says Mortimer, very much the angling



On a big night out: Bob and Vic Reeves in 1990

'WE HAVE BOTH
BEEN TOLD
IT IS THE
BEGINNING
OF THE END'



amateur of the partnership. "The best day we had was for the last show. We don't catch a thing. But that did not matter in the slightest."

Instead, the fewer fish, the more talk of ailing health and ageing and why men don't get themselves checked out by doctors.

"I am a bit evangelistic because fellas are such fuckers for it," says Mortimer.

"I asked the nurse what the typical profile on the ward was of the heart attack person. She said "55-year-old marathon runner". Looking back I realise I was absolutely set for it. I was so tired of an afternoon.

"I just wish more people were aware of it. Because if every bloke when they were 50 went to the doctor and asked for a treadmill test, it would save so many fucking lives. You get on a treadmill, they monitor you and see how quickly the blood is going in and out of your arteries, and they can say, 'You're fine, son'. And you can forget about it."

For Mortimer, he had a lucky escape – and he's filling his time with the things he loves. "I got married before my op, I got a special licence. It is hard not to think about what you might have missed. But it is a little bit of a gift as well. Do you like football?"

And off we go, into reveries about Middlesbrough and Derby County, our respective play-off disappointments and lifelong love of the game. From life and death to something famously much more important in a heartbeat.

Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing starts on June 20 on BBC Two at 10pm @adey70



IT WAS THIS BIG!

Fishing's a hit with lots of Big Issue vendors too. We speak to three who know that good things come to those who wade



CARL FELLOWS SELLS THE BIG ISSUE IN MIDDLESBROUGH

I find fishing very special. It's great to catch a fish but you don't have to, it's just a good way of killing a few hours.

There's always one or two people about and even if you don't catch anything you've still had a good time.

I fish with a few of my friends in a park in Middlesbrough where there are koi carp. Catch and release! My friends are people I've met through fishing. I didn't know anybody to begin with, then people come up and start talking to you. They'd come up to me and say, 'You're doing it wrong!' Or they'd give me tips and you just get talking to them.

It can be a relatively cheap hobby. It all depends what you're doing, whether it's freshwater or sea fishing. You can pick up a rod and reel for a fiver, or you can spend £500.

I also do a lot of sea fishing, for cod or flatties. Then I can come home with something for my dinner and if I've caught any extra I can give them to my mum or sell them.

I used to live on the streets and eventually I had a mental breakdown. Fishing is great for my mental health, it really does help. If you're not having a good day, you go fishing and it takes your mind off things. If you need to talk to somebody you can go out with one or two friends, and if you don't want to talk you can go out alone.

It beats just staying in. That's why I do it.



TOM PIERCE SELLS THE BIG ISSUE IN BOURNEMOUTH

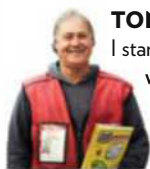
I love fishing because I get to go to some really secluded places – the type of places where you can't hear any traffic.

Sometimes I've gone fishing and I've been walking along the riverbank and I haven't even bothered casting a line into the water because just being there with the river and the trees is so relaxing. It's just about being out there surrounded by nature.

I fish in the New Forest and I'll go for anything, but it's always catch and release.

I'd say fishing is essential for my health and wellbeing but I don't get to go as often as I'd like, just every other month or so. At the moment I need someone to come with me because I've just had an operation on my ankle and my mobility's affected.

But for me it's just about getting away from it all.



TONY FLYNN SELLS THE BIG ISSUE IN EXETER

I started fishing around the age of 12 in South Africa. I went with friends and we just had basic fibreglass fishing rods, the old type with the pin release. I've also done some extreme fishing and I once caught a quarter-ton shark in a cart with a line attached to it. There weren't the same conservationist ideas back in the Sixties and Seventies as there are now.

These days I fish in Brixham for mackerel. There's a quarry where you can fish into the sea. I take them home with me and you can smoke them or freeze them. They're great on the barbecue. And I also fish at Seaton. I get right in the surf there.

Fishing calms you really well. When you're fishing you're spending so much time out in the environment and you're just focusing on what you're doing, so your every involvement in the world is put on the back burner.

If you've got any troubles in your life you put them to one side while you focus on trying to get a good bite. It's quite a thrill when you get it. Then you scale it, fillet it and fry it. It's a lovely pastime.

As told to Sarah Reid @frutepastel



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THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Film
Fighting the Right page 33

Music
Pop's home page 34

TV
Hate *Island* life page 35

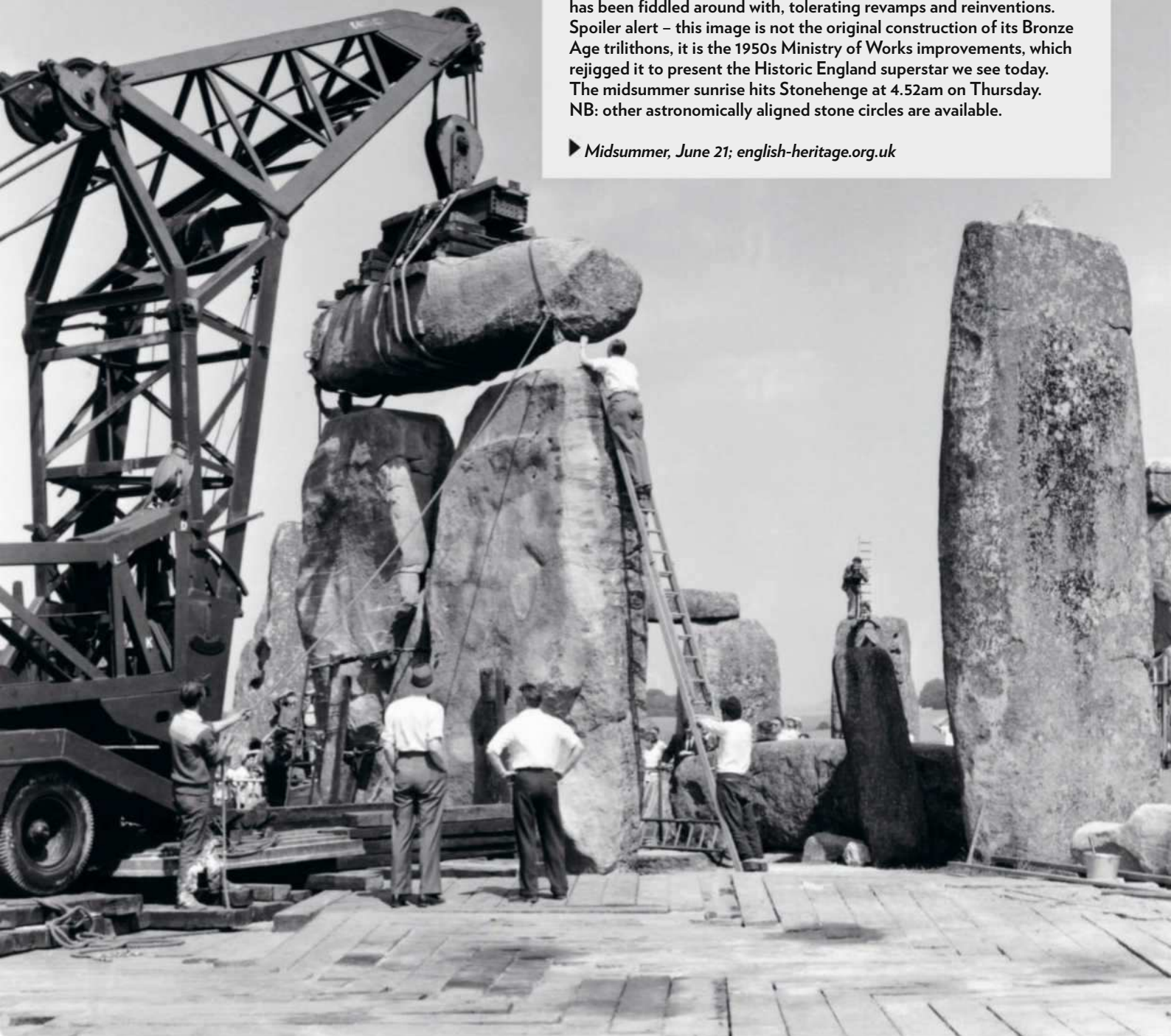
Collectibles
Footy programmes page 37

MIDSUMMER

ROCK OF AGES

Poor Stonehenge, always the heart of midsummer madness, whether at the hands of modern-day druids or the current battle over a massive tunnel being built next door. For millennia the heritage icon has been fiddled around with, tolerating revamps and reinventions. Spoiler alert – this image is not the original construction of its Bronze Age trilithons, it is the 1950s Ministry of Works improvements, which rejigged it to present the Historic England superstar we see today. The midsummer sunrise hits Stonehenge at 4.52am on Thursday. NB: other astronomically aligned stone circles are available.

► *Midsummer, June 21; english-heritage.org.uk*



Jurassic arc

Dinosaurs are widely thought to have died out due to a destructive meteorite – but biologist Brian J Ford has a different explanation for their demise

We all know about dinosaurs: they bounded across the deserts, were social, intelligent animals, cared for their young, and they stomped about aggressively, just as we have seen on those Jurassic Park films. There are drawings in books showing massive 20-ton monsters poised on one foot. I have studied dinosaur research for 50 years, and my new book explains a radically different view to that currently accepted by mainstream palaeontology.

These are the facts. The largest land carnivore in the world is a polar bear, at about a ton. And the biggest land animal in the world is the 10-ton elephant. I think that's how big terrestrial creatures can be – well, perhaps a little larger, but certainly nowhere near the 100 tons-plus that dinosaurs reached. That is the size of a whale. And why? Because (like whales) dinosaurs evolved in water. They weren't swimmers, like the whales, but they lived instead in a habit of shallow lakes and seas. It was this that gave them the buoyancy to develop to such colossal sizes. The largest skeletons ever found would have been of dinosaurs weighing perhaps 120 tons, which I have always been certain was impossible on land.

Those terrifying theropods (like T. rex) were so accustomed to a buoyant life that they completely lost the use of their forelimbs, which shrank to the size of twigs. Had they been terrestrial, then – like an elephant or a rhino – they'd have needed four limbs on which to walk. Many of the sauropods, like Camarasaurus, those gigantic herbivorous dinosaurs, had forelimbs that were longer than their hind limbs, and many fossilised trackways have been found with footprints left only by the front feet. This is because they were half-floating, and the shorter hind limbs did not reach down far enough to leave an impression. Even though many dinosaurs had a tail weighing 10 tons (which would

consume half their daily intake of energy if it were held clear of the ground) we don't find impressions left by a dragging tail. Obviously, it was buoyant and helped with movement.

A 20-ton theropod cannot easily change direction on two legs because of yaw – the same effect you experience when carrying a long ladder on your shoulders, and you wish to turn a corner; or when you try to change direction with a supermarket trolley at the end of an aisle. In water, it takes a simple movement of the tail to face in a new direction. The watery environment also solves the

doubt the theory. First, although the skies were darkened by the explosive impact, sunlight was back to normal after five or six years and there is evidence that the dinosaurs may have lived on more than 300,000 years. If a cataclysmic catastrophe wiped out the dinosaurs, every other reptile would have similarly suffered. Turtles and crocodiles, snakes and alligators, tortoises and lizards all survived. If the asteroid spelled the end of the reptiles, they would all have vanished too.

Something else was happening at the same time – the ancient continent of

Pangea had broken up and hunks of surface rock the size of continents, propelled by convection currents, were moving across the globe as fast as your toenails grow. The Indian tectonic plate was on a collision course with Asia, and would crash into it headlong, throwing up the great crumple-zone we now call the Himalayas. That's why geologists visiting the world's tallest peak find, at the summit, fossilised sea creatures.

Iridium – signature element for meteorites – is abundant deep in the Earth's crust. The huge volcanic eruptions at that time blew iridium up into the atmosphere, forming deposits across the land. This is where the rogue element came from; not just from space.

With plate tectonics ripping the world apart, the dinosaurs' habitat was disappearing. Eventually they, and all the lifeforms that depended

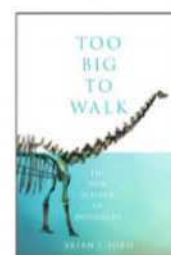
on that environment, faded into fossils. They died out simply because of habitat.

Brian J Ford's *Too Big to Walk: The New Science of Dinosaurs* is out now (William Collins, £25)



warm-blooded controversy. No reptile has ever evolved a mechanism to maintain a constant body temperature but, immersed in water, it would be the same as the surroundings. How warm was the sea around that time? About the same as our body temperature today.

My theories explain why dinosaurs died out – and it was not because of that meteorite. The popular theory is that a melting mass of rock 12km in diameter smashed into the Yucatán Peninsula 65 million years ago, carving out a crater almost 200km across. The resulting devastation – heat, massive floods, blackness, fumes – led to the demise of the dinosaurs. Evidence is provided by deposits of iridium, a rare element in the Earth's crust, which is found in strata from around that time and which occurs in meteorites. I think there are reasons to



Damn fine coffee

Paul Whitelaw finds *Twin Peaks* creator David Lynch's autobiography reassuringly unconventional

Like most abstract artists, David Lynch is wary of explaining his work in literal terms.

Nevertheless, he reveals quite a lot about himself and his creative process in this engrossing autobiography. The clues are all there, you just have to join the dots.

Co-written with journalist Kristine McKenna, **Room To Dream** is a hybrid. McKenna provides biographical chapters featuring contributions from Lynch's friends, family and colleagues, which Lynch augments with chapters inspired by what he's just read. This approach almost certainly delivers a better sense of who he is than if he'd written the book alone. Occasionally, he'll gently contradict someone quoted in the previous chapter, but he mostly uses McKenna's extensive research as a springboard into his memories. He doesn't need much encouragement; this is a man who can clearly remember the "out of this world" taste of a cappuccino he drank 37 years ago.

Lynch writes like he speaks. He's disarmingly direct, cheerfully profane and prone to bursts of giddy enthusiasm. Famously, he uses sweetly archaic expressions like "peachy keen". However, at the age of 72, he now seems comfortable with exposing the steely single-mindedness behind that semi-affected public persona. He's no naïf.

The chapters covering his boy scout childhood in 1950s Idaho are particularly revealing. The 'Lynchian' aesthetic was born there: a wholesome suburban environment plagued by creeping unease. Dead animals and dark roads feature heavily. Where did this morbid streak come from? "A lot of who we are is already set when we get here," writes Lynch, a devout believer in Transcendental Meditation and reincarnation. It becomes clear, however, that several formative experiences triggered his acute understanding of horror and violence.

No one, not even his many former lovers, has a particularly bad word to say about him. He comes across as generous, loyal, funny, inspiring, driven and charismatic; in another life, he could've been a very persuasive cult leader. He also displays some bitterness and occasional lapses of self-awareness. He's quite selfish too; Lynch's work takes precedence over everything else in his life. According to his wife Emily: "David is kind, he has integrity... he's not good at close relationships, though."



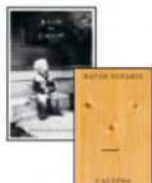
Illustration: Dom McKenzie

Presumably out of politeness and a belief that it's nobody's damn business, Lynch doesn't write extensively about his family. All he says about Emily and the birth of his fourth child is: "One thing led to another and now we have Lula."

We gain an abiding impression of a man who was born to live the uncompromising art life. He's constantly creating via films, photography, painting, music and carpentry. He also really likes coffee, cigarettes and curtains. "There's something behind the curtain and you don't know if it's good or bad," he writes. You couldn't ask for a more concise explanation of his work than that.

American humourist David Sedaris is the antithesis of Lynch when it comes to writing about his personal life. His latest anecdotal compendium **Calypso** is once again told through the prism of his large yet dwindling family. His mother is dead. His father, with whom he has a strained relationship, is nearing the end of his life. His estranged sister, Tiffany, recently killed herself. Tiffany's death and his own advancing years form the basis of a crisply self-deprecating set of droll and tender ruminations on mortality. However, the standout chapter, in which Sedaris eviscerates banal conversational tics ("awesome" etc), has nothing to do with his central theme at all.

Words: Paul Whitelaw @paulwhitelaw



Room to Dream
by David Lynch and Kristine McKenna, out on June 19 (Canongate, £25)

Calypso
by David Sedaris, out on July 5 (Little, Brown, £16.99)



TOP 5 BOOKS ABOUT MEDIEVAL BRITAIN KATE INNES



MORALITY PLAY
by Barry Unsworth

During a harsh winter, an impoverished group of travelling players arrives in an unknown town, hoping to perform. Instead they become entangled in a real-life drama involving a murdered boy. So beautifully written you can feel the snow crunch under your bare feet.



MEDIEVAL COMIC TALES
by Derek Brewer

Like *The Canterbury Tales*, but without the tedious chivalry. This bawdy collection includes a cruel stepmother punished with uncontrollable farting, a talking dog promoting adultery, and a stupid new husband trying to exert his authority. *The Holy Grail* meets Benny Hill.



THE HANGED MAN
by Robert Bartlett

True story of a convicted Welsh rebel who died on the gallows and was later resurrected. But was it miracle or machination? With all the verve of courtroom drama, Bartlett dissects testimonies from ladies, bishops and criminals, exposing a surreal and brutal society. Unputdownable non-fiction.



COMPANY OF LIARS
by Karen Maitland

For those who like their history spiced with a strong dose of the supernatural, this well-researched thriller explores the psychological cost of the Black Death. A tale of twists and menace.



THE TIME TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO MEDIEVAL ENGLAND
by Ian Mortimer

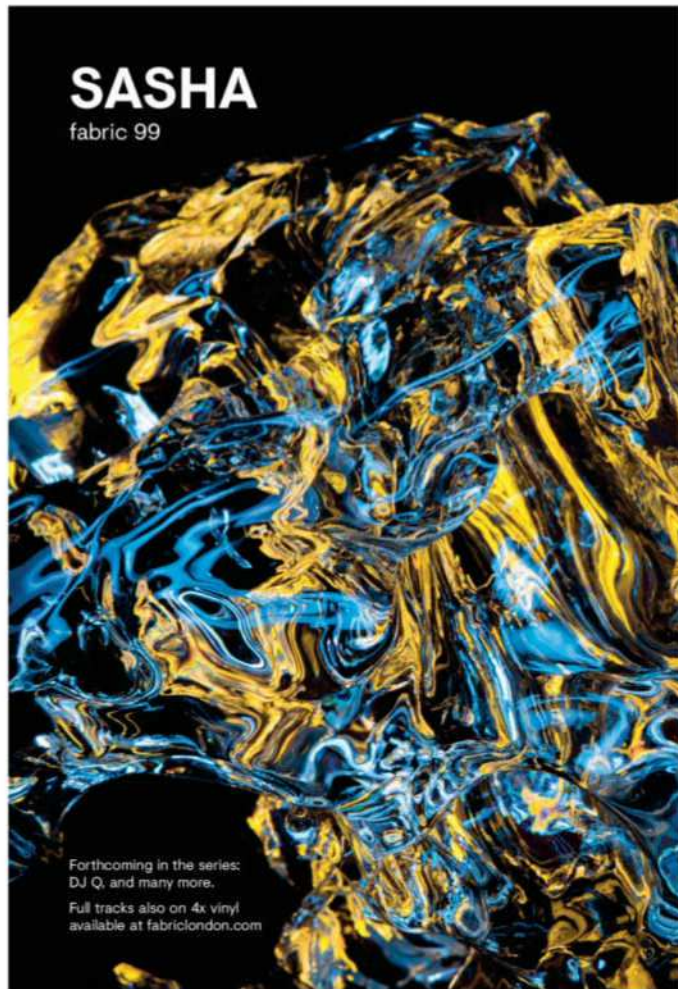
In chapters on eating, drinking, clothes and travel, Ian Mortimer addresses the real questions we have about the past, eg. "Where can I find the toilets?" and "How much will a decent sword cost me?" Amiable and illuminating.



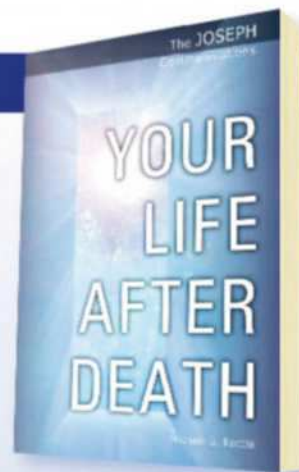
All the Winding World by Kate Innes is out on June 22 (Mindforest Press, £8.99)

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Mother courage

Diane Kruger is breathtaking in her first German-language role, as a woman bent on justice for the neo-Nazis who killed her husband and child

In *the Fade* comes to a close with a title card, conveying some sobering facts. Set in contemporary Hamburg, writer-director Fatih Akin's new film is a work of fiction, but it signs off with stark reference to real-life events in modern Germany: the tally of people from an immigrant background murdered by neo-Nazis because of their 'non-German origins'.

This information is relevant because *In the Fade* is a fictionalised account of exactly this kind of attack. It's not a perfect movie – Akin pitches it as a thriller but it lacks the propulsive narrative energy to work on those terms. Still there is an unanswerable force to this angry, unblinking depiction of the consequences of far-right violence in Europe today.

There's also the matter of the central performance by Diane Kruger. In her first German-language role, Kruger is extraordinary as Katja, wife of Kurdish-born Nuri (Numan Acar), who is killed along with their young son Rocco in a bomb attack by neo-Nazis. Winning the Best Actress honours at Cannes last year, Kruger is fiercely compelling and moving in the role, an ordinarily happy wife and mother whose life is suddenly overwhelmed with feelings of raw grief and cool, determined revenge.

That transformation comes when she returns to Nuri's office, where she left him and Rocco for an evening at a spa with her friend. She finds the road closed off, filled with police and ambulances, and in a sharp moment of realisation, Katja comes to understand that Nuri's office has been

bombed. Akin's camera sticks close to Katja as the news progressively worsens that night. A few hours later the Hamburg police are informing her, with mournful formality, that the bodies found on the scene belong to Nuri and Rocco.

The police assume a drug motive. Nuri had a record for dealing and the cops speculate gangs from Eastern Europe are responsible. Katja is quick to blame this impulse by the authorities to pin the blame on immigrants as reflex racism. In passing she mentions studying German history at university but she doesn't need to reach into the past to understand the ugly, intolerant forces at work in her country today – being the German-born wife to a Kurdish man, she's experienced enough prejudice directly.

Almost by instinct she blames the attack on neo-Nazis, recalling a blonde woman who parked her bike next to Nuri's office in the hours before the explosion. The cops don't believe her, and Katja, numb with loss, attempts suicide, a bloody business involving razors and a hot bath that Akin films with a kind of dreamy, unreal languor. But a phone call snaps her back to reality: as Katja is drifting out of consciousness her lawyer

reveals that a white, German couple with far-right views have been arrested for the murder. Katja's gut feeling was right.

What follows is a court case, which Akin films with procedural detachment – even the squeak the chairs make on the floor when the lawyers rise to make a point adds to the atmosphere of uncanny tension. It is the film's most compelling section.

When the couple are acquitted, the film's final episode sees Katja follow them to a Greek holiday spot to plot revenge.

The ancient Greek dramatists knew all about the elemental tragedy of vengeance – especially as pursued by grieving mothers. But the setting has a further significance: it is with an activist in Greece's far-right Golden Dawn party that the acquitted couple have taken shelter. The point is clear: don't think that the violent prejudice we see here is a problem unique to Germany.

FINAL REEL

Self-styled as the longest continually running film festival in the world – which is a charmingly qualified boast – the Edinburgh International Film Festival is Scotland's pre-eminent (arguably – to introduce another qualifier: Glasgow is nipping at its heels). It kicks off this week, with *Puzzle*, starring Kelly Macdonald as a jigsaw-obsessed New Yorker.



***In the Fade* is in cinemas from June 22**

Edward Lawrenson @EdwardLawrenson



Good taste:
 Scots post-punk
 legends Orange
 Juice in 1983



Rip it up

A new exhibition in Edinburgh examines Scottish pop history. Glaswegians may object, but Malcolm Jack finds it's one of many cities which struggle to preserve their great musical legacy

There's a new exhibition opening at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh this week titled *Rip It Up: The Story of Scottish Pop*. It's the first major exhibition dedicated to exploring the musical culture of the Scottish nation over more than half a century, from influential indie pioneers like Franz Ferdinand and Belle & Sebastian to global superstars such as Simple Minds and Lulu.

In the interests of appealing to a general audience, I suspect more space might be given over to the Bay City Rollers' baggy tartan trews than, say, Glaswegian post-punk cult heroes Orange Juice – whose biggest hit lends the exhibition its name. But with the broad backing and input of the Scottish music community, *Rip It Up* sounds well put together and I'm excited to give it a look. I've got just one bone to pick – why is it happening in Edinburgh, and not Glasgow?

Edinburgh has undoubtedly done much over the decades to enhance Scotland's reputation as a music nation, with for instance Young Fathers currently blazing a trail. But surely few Edinburgh residents would argue that Glasgow isn't where it's at nor has always been for music in Scotland. So much so that Glasgow is officially recognised as a Unesco City of Music, "the musical capital of Scotland... the largest music economy in the UK after London." By that measure, *Rip It Up* going to Edinburgh is a little like Glasgow poaching an exhibition on the history of the Fringe.

I'm aware that all sorts of commercial, logistical and other considerations factor in the staging of a large exhibition, and this

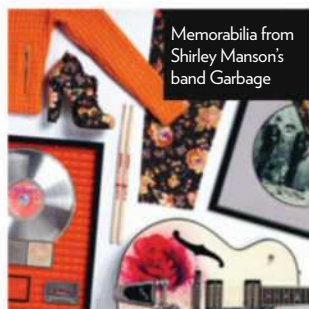
would never have been a straightforward either-or choice. I live in Glasgow and have no desire to do it down – I love the city, and its reputation as a home of music has in my experience proven nothing but true. My gripe is I suppose a broader one about how music cities tend to be much better at trumpeting their global superstars and music economies than they are at endeavouring and coughing up to preserve and celebrate pop's physical heritage, in particular its built heritage.

Perhaps using the *Rip It Up* collection as a starting point, Glasgow could consider creating a permanent home for artefacts pertaining to Scotland's rich musical heritage? But then pop music history only ever lends itself so well to being stuck forever in a museum. Liverpool has done much to capitalise on its Beatles legacy with Magical Mystery bus tours and The Beatles Story museum, albeit in a touristy, slightly tacky, way. The National Trust has done well to

preserve Paul McCartney and John Lennon's childhood homes, but snooping about in teenagers' old bedrooms feels a touch weird to me, however famous they grew up to be.

Perhaps pop's inherent characteristics of disposability, ephemerality, youthful energy and fickle, fleeting cool just don't suit the static fustiness of a museum environment, and are best left to fade into myth and memory. Either way,

we don't want the tactile legacy of pop's golden age to in large part be shortsightedly lost and forgotten and reduced to one day being dug up and reconstructed in the manner of, say, Shakespeare's Globe. A space which I'd argue future generations will judge to have had only so much more significance in the cultural history of the nation than do our current day palaces of pop. Cultural custodians of music cities from Glasgow to Manchester, London and beyond take note before they rip it up and start again.



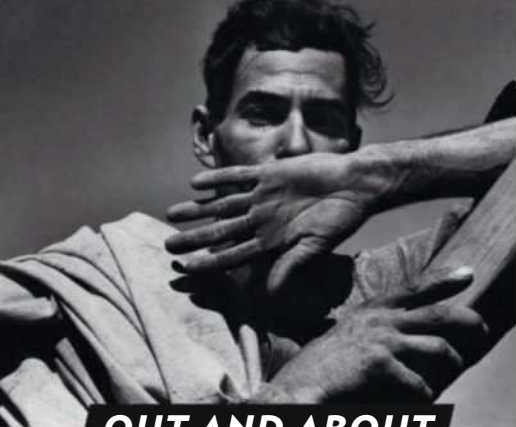
Memorabilia from Shirley Manson's band Garbage



Simple Minds' guitars

Various iconic Glasgow venues such as the Apollo have long since been demolished or disappeared, marked by not so much as a plaque. But Glasgow is far from alone in allowing once-hallowed music spaces to vanish from view. Manchester's iconic Hacienda nightclub has become a block of posh flats. In London the BBC earlier this month announced the pending closure of Maida Vale Studios, host to the John Peel sessions among much else over the decades, while the iconic Abbey Road Studios were very nearly lost to developers back in 2009. Until recently Abbey Road lacked so much as a gift shop for the hundreds of thousands of tourists who descend on the well-to-do St John's Wood neighbourhood every year.

Rip It Up: The Story of Scottish Pop is at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh from June 22–November 25, nms.ac.uk/ripitup
 Malcolm Jack @MBJack



OUT AND ABOUT

SNAP HAPPY

One of the biggest photography exhibitions of 2018 arrives as a double whammy in the shape of **Dorothea Lange/Vanessa Winship** (June 22 to September 2, London; barbican.org.uk). It is made all the more special as it is the first retrospective of Lange's work, including this shot of a migratory cotton picker in Arizona from 1940, ever in the UK. It is also Winship's first major solo exhibition in the UK, so you can trace how the form has evolved.

Meanwhile, the **Greenwich+Docklands International Festival** (June 21 to July 7, various locations, London; festival.org/gdif-2018) sees a vast range of outdoor commissions and events take over the former maritime heart of the capital. The schedule is admirably diverse and has everything from a performance and soundscape on the arrival of the Windrush to a celebration of the centenary of the Representation Of The People Act by the country's only female high-wire walker and 1,500 trained pigeons swooping through the sky to create an "airborne installation" reflecting the role they played as messengers in WW1.

There are plenty of other outdoor events this week now the evenings are warmer. **The Blenheim Palace Flower Show** (June 22-24, Oxfordshire; blenheimflowershow.co.uk) returns for its sixth year and celebrates gardening with show gardens and talks by celebrity experts.



More outdoor music, albeit of a very different stripe, is at **Opera Holland Park** (until July 28, Holland Park, London; operahollandpark.com) with a programme that includes Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, The Royal Ballet School and al fresco screenings from Luna Cinema.

Finally, the **Brighton Wine Rebellion Tour** (June 23, brightonfoodtours.com) aims to expunge the snobbery associated with the drink as a sommelier guides you through the city's best independent wine hotspots over a three-hour walking/staggering tour.

Eamonn Forde @Eamonn_Forde

TV

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Displeasure island

Love Island is one of the year's big TV hits. But watching it just makes Lucy Sweet feel old, annoyed and depressed

I forced myself to watch *Love Island* last week, telling myself it is now an important modern phenomenon. A phenomenon akin to a mountain of plastic in the sea, but important nonetheless. I watched it because I am weak and impressionable and young people at work were talking about it as if it was a brave, unheralded, innovative tour de force.

I resisted at first, but the pressure was relentless. "It's addictive!" they cried. (Like cheap synthetic drugs bought off the internet?). "It's brilliant!" (Like Trump's 400-watt dog teeth?). "It's so funny!" (Like a comedy night compered by Lee Hurst?) "You have to watch it," was the battle cry, and I didn't want to seem like a desiccated fuddy-duddy, so I thought I'd give it a bash.

Now, I know the deal. This isn't my first reality TV rodeo. I know that *Love Island* used to be, and still very much is, a traditional ITV2 idiot buffet. It's a Jet2 holiday to Halkidiki where you get botulism, Legionnaires' disease and a tattoo of Tweety Pie. But because we are in the global doldrums, *Love Island* has become a thing. It is 2018 in a nutshell. Bold, brash, too orange and dimmer than David Davis – it's essentially what we deserve. Even George Osborne watches it.

I'd never actually seen it properly though. And when I did, it scared me. Now I don't

want to piss on their chips, because young people are our future and I might need them to sign a consent form on my behalf one day, but I think the time has finally come when I JUST DON'T CARE what they get up to. I'm sick of the sight of them, bouncing around, not knowing how to spell properly, flaunting their permatanned flesh in lime green bikinis and silver budgie smugglers.

So full of a sense of their own importance in the social firmament, completely oblivious to the concept of receding gums, spouting the biggest amount of shite you've ever heard in your life, rutting and preening and generally just being absolute tools.

I used to be able to handle it, back when reality TV young people were my peers, and I could accurately deconstruct how crap they were using up-to-

date reference points. Now I don't even know what those things are on their faces and why they have lumpy filled lips like balloon animals. I don't understand the PLOT of *Love Island*. Are they sex workers? What are they doing?

I am so alone. Stranded. Without food or water or a friend. I can see them all from here, playing Truth or Dare and jiggling their sausagey bodies, but I'm on another island entirely. Help. Help me.

Lucy Sweet @lucytweet1

"I don't understand the PLOT. Are they sex workers? What are they doing?"

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Could You Be A Writer?



The Writers Bureau's
Writer of the Year 2017
Sarah Plater

Marian Ashcroft talks with Susie Busby, Principal of The Writers Bureau, Britain's largest independent writing school, about what it takes to be a writer.

Who do you think can be a writer then, Susie?

Well, a writer is someone who communicates ideas through words. And most of us do that every day via social media ... so we're all writers to some degree.

But can you really say someone is a writer if they text and tweet?

Not really. I suppose when we talk about a 'writer' we usually mean someone who's earning from their writing. But telling stories to friends online is writing too. And even there, you come across people who craft their sentences and play with words, which is a good indication that writing is their thing.

So, do you need to be a 'special' person to study with The Writers Bureau?

Not at all! WB has been going for 29 years now, and though some people come to us with very clear objectives, others have little more than a vague desire to do something creative. Our students come from all sorts of backgrounds, and all sorts of cultures - leafy home-counties villages, bustling African cities, and everywhere else between. The majority haven't really written much before, so we give them skills, and a safe space to explore their options, then prepare them for approaches to the editors, agents and producers who'll eventually push their work out into the world.

But you must be looking for something ...

Determination. Apart from a reasonable level of written English, that's all we're after.

Not talent?

Well, that helps. But talent's no good if you won't put the hours in. It's the same in all the creative industries. Like Mo Farah said back in 2012 - 'Anything's possible, it's just hard work and

grafting.' And in our experience, grafting beats pure talent every time.

Okay, but if someone already has that 'grafting' spirit, where does The Writers Bureau fit in?

Well, to stick with sporting analogies, for any student ready to go for it, Writers Bureau is the coach in the background. Our courses and tutors build a new writer's confidence and help them find out what they're good at. We then show them how to get pieces ready for submission, so they've got the best possible chance of turning whatever talent they may have into proper, paid work.

Is that what happened with last year's Writer of the Year - Sarah Plater?

Exactly. When Sarah first joined us she wanted to write novels (still does). But on her course she discovered a talent for non-fiction. She's now onto her fourth non-fiction book, earns half her income from writing, and runs a writing business with her husband - Mr and Ms Creative. We're so proud of her. She's worked hard and run with opportunities as they've arisen, which just goes to show what a little confidence and determination can actually do.

Any final words of advice for aspiring writers?

Apart from taking one of our courses, you mean? No seriously, I believe a writer must do three things. Firstly, read lots, and widely. Next, write as much as possible - ideally every day. And finally, learn to edit. Anyone who can do these three things is well on the way to producing great work.

If you'd like to find out more about The Writers Bureau, take a look at their website: www.writersbureau.com or call their freephone number 0800 856 2008. Please quote SZ18618

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2nd floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW

Distribution/London 020 7526 3200

Printed at William Gibbons

BSME Cover of the Year 2017, PPA Cover of the Year 2015, PPA Scotland Cover of the Year 2015 & 2017

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Paul McNamee
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WIN!

**FOOTBALL! FOOTBALL!
 FOOTBALL!
 GO SPORTS TEAM!**

Did you know there is a massive football tournament taking place right now? Neither did we. (Kidding!) To help celebrate we're giving one reader the chance to bag a Big Issue Shop World Cup goodie bag.

To kick things off (sorry, we couldn't help ourselves), get your very own Bala ball – back of the net! Take it for a kickabout in the back garden and know that while the players are getting millions for their skills on the pitch, skilled workers in India and Pakistan are being paid a fair wage for hand-making these high-quality Fairtrade footballs. Whether you're inspired to get outdoors or prefer the slob-life, the World Cup is definitely thirsty work. Fill up your very own Jerry bottle for half-time refreshment. They're also perfect for collecting tears when your sweepstake team flops. For every bottle bought, the not-for-profit enterprise funds water projects around the world. To complete the look, your very own T-shirt from The Big Issue Shop's World Cup collection. Wear it during your kickabout, or just lying about the couch – we won't tell.



To be in with the chance of winning simply answer the question below:

In which country is the 2018 Fifa World Cup being held?

Every purchase from The Big Issue Shop helps use your spending power to make a difference all over the world. Visit bigissueshop.com for more.

Send answers with **WORLD CUP** as the subject to: competitions@bigissue.com or post to The Big Issue, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW. Include your name and address. Closing date is July 2. Include OPT IN if you want to receive updates from The Big Issue. We will not pass your details to any third party. For full T&Cs see bigissue.com



GAMES & PUZZLES

SUDOKU

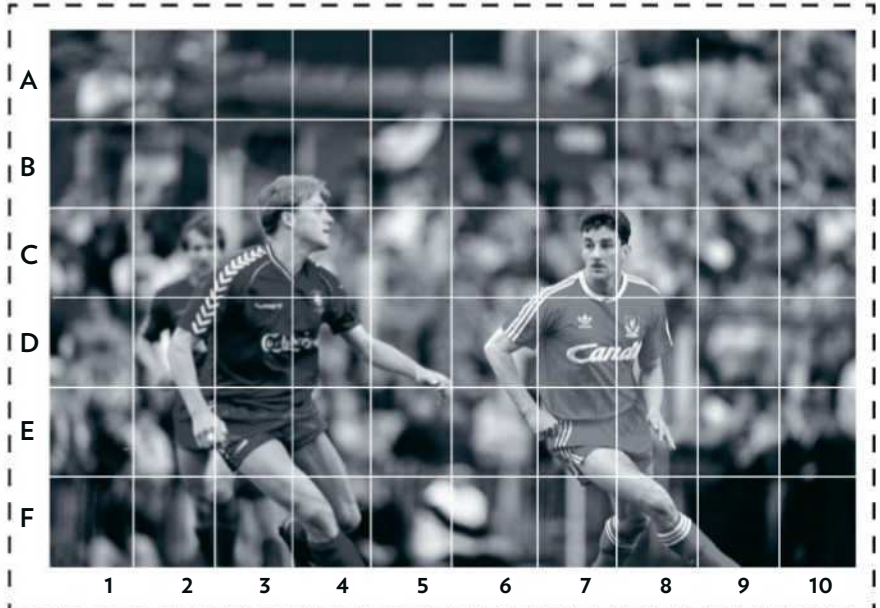
6									
			8	9	4	6			
		4				8			
1		5							3
		3	2	1					
	6	7						2	
		8			9			7	
					5	3			
	1			3					

There is just one simple rule in sudoku: each row, column and 3 x 3 box must contain the numbers one to nine. This is a logic puzzle and you should not need to guess. The solution will be revealed next week.

ISSUE 1311 SOLUTION

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

SPOT THE BALL



Photos: Action Images

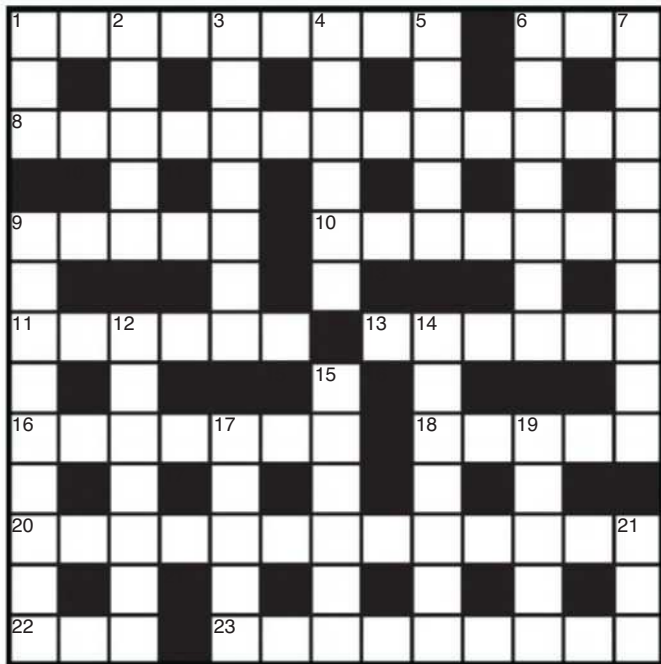


To win 401 by Ben Smith mark where you think the ball is, cut out and send to:
 Spot the Ball (1312), 43 Bath St. Glasgow, G2 1HW, by June 26. Include name, address, phone no. Enter by email: send grid position (eg A1) to competitions@bigissue.com.

(Last week's Spot the Ball revealed: Oldham v Chelsea (1991)



PRIZE CROSSWORD



CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

- Idle person averse to working with a skeleton (9)
- Short way to pay for fish? (3)
- Consented as to how the school year is divided (6,2,5)
- During the ballyhoo charged for crude liquor (5)
- Items of good news at Christmas (7)
- Case is found in the valley (6)
- It can cut through chesty affliction (6)
- Immediate family are in comfortable accommodation (7)
- Could provide the power (5)
- Just with old-fashioned person who is honest (4-3-6)
- Managed to contain the horse (3)
- Organised saving for a night on the tiles? (5,4)

Down

- Pleasant part of the countryside (3)
- Bishop in the animal park finds the fox (5)
- Trees found by worker over half the county (7)
- Write music at Eton perhaps (6)
- Weekend journalist fully satisfied (5)
- Nothing in an ice cream container but a crown! (7)
- Thus steed damaged protective cloth (9)
- Enjoying oneself while in possession of most of the money (6,3)
- This article is badly aligned (7)
- On the intercom I questioned part of humorous actor (7)
- A staid construction for sports centres (6)
- Welshman in the van slipped up (5)
- Platter a girl removed (5)
- Drop of salt water (3)

QUICK CLUES

Across

- Moving around aimlessly (9)
- Gammon (3)
- Student of butterflies and moths (13)
- Cleanse thoroughly (5)
- Rather lengthy (7)
- Naturism (6)
- Botch (6)
- Compel (7)
- Skin (5)
- Decorative work (13)
- Foot digit (3)
- Forthright (9)

Down

- Forgive (6)
- Chum (inf.) (3)
- Diminish gradually (5)
- Everlasting (7)
- Type of antelope (6)
- Angle (anag.) (5)
- Greeting (7)
- Incomparable (9)
- Whitsuntide (9)
- Means of resisting attack (7)
- Unfasten (7)
- Milk curdling substance (6)
- Shakespearean lover (5)
- Dense (5)
- Sister (3)

To win a Chambers Dictionary, send completed crosswords (either cryptic or quick) to: The Big Issue Crossword (1312), second floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW by June 26. Include your name, address and phone number.

Issue 1310 winner is **Barrie Barton** from Bristol

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Issue 1311 solution

CRYPTIC: Across – 1 Ferrying; 6 Fork; 8 Flea; 9 Guidance; 10 Accident-prone; 11 Stab; 13 Nile; 17 At the same time; 20 Earliest; 21 Trot; 22 Lynx; 23 Relished.

Down – 2 Enlace; 3 Realist; 4 Ingle; 5 Glisten; 6 Flair; 7 Recant; 12 Besmear; 14 Litotes; 15 Steady; 16 Impose; 18 Helix; 19 Metal.

QUICK: Across – 1 Open-plan; 6 Lick; 8 Bren; 9 Test case; 10 Comprehending; 11 Anna; 13 Tuft; 17 Consequential; 20 Whetting; 21 Gift; 22 Drop; 23 Tendered.

Down – 2 Pardon; 3 Ninepin; 4 Lethe; 5 Nascent; 6 Laced; 7 Casino; 12 Asquint; 14 Fatigue; 15 Bother; 16 Raffle; 18 Set up; 19 Elgin.

MY PITCH



Allan John Harper, 53

TESCO, DINGWALL (BRITAIN'S MOST NORTHERLY VENDOR!)

“Speak to everyone. You don’t know the last time they talked to someone”

ABOUT ME...

MY PASSION

Celtic FC. I go to quite a lot of games thanks to my customers. I save up my money in a coin bottle. My favourite players are Kieran Tierney and Callum McGregor.

MY TIPS FOR VENDORS

Communicate. I speak to everybody who walks past me. You don't know the last time they talked to someone. That's the nitty gritty of it. Smile and say hello, and help them if they need it. I gave an old lady a hand with her shopping trolley earlier, and when she came back out she bought a magazine off me.

I started selling The Big Issue the year it began, 1991. I was living in London then, had been on the streets there since 1988. I was begging and had nowhere to go, but thanks to Mr John Bird, The Big Issue came out and gave me something to focus on, something constructive to do. When we first started selling, it was only 50p, and we were paying 10p for them. I did that for nine years before moving back to Scotland.

Things started going badly wrong for me in 2006 – I had cancer and lost a kidney. After that I started drinking heavily along with taking my medication, just to kill the pain and ended up in rehab. I moved to Inverness and got a job working as a chef, but things weren't working out and I packed it in. I then started abusing drink again, I was getting through loads of vodka and getting depressed – and

I had no focus in life at all. I thought to myself, 'I've got to get out of the fire'. I turned to The Big Issue again five years ago, and they took me back on. I've been doing it ever since – first in Inverness and now in Dingwall, where I'm selling on average 160 issues a week, which I'm told is very high. I've been told I'm one of the biggest sellers in the country.

The Big Issue have been a solid force in my life. When my brother passed away two years ago The Big Issue Foundation gave me financial assistance to fly down to London to bury him because I had no money. I'm so grateful to them for all they've done for me. They've helped me immensely.

I love selling the magazine, it's my job. I don't get benefits, this is my only source of income, and I travel up on the bus here

from Inverness every day to do it. I'm always on my pitch. I love it, I'll moan and groan when it's snowing but apart from that it's great.

My customers are amazing, I'm well looked after and I have good banter with them. I feel like a part of the community here. People bring me stuff all the

time – recently I was given a bag of clothes – not all of them fitted me, so I took the rest to a charity shop so they could use them.

And just today one of my customers has bought me lunch. The staff at Tesco always ask how I'm doing – I get on really well with Steve, the manager [inset], he tells me I'm good with the punters. I want to thank the people of Dingwall for all they've done for me.



Interview: Alan Woodhouse
Photo: Karen Thorburn

ON MY PITCH...

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