

ESTABLISHED 1991

THE BIG ISSUE

£2.50 EVERY MONDAY
NO. 1313 JUNE 25-JULY 1 2018
A HAND UP NOT A HANDOUT



INSIDE

LIKE A MUPPET ON A STRING

KERMIT Vs DONALD

THE BATTLE FOR BRITAIN'S HEART

HIT BY A CAR.

IN A COMA

FOR 5 WEEKS.

SAW THE

FACE OF GOD.

THE INCREDIBLE,

INVINCIBLE BUBBLE

**THE BIG ISSUE VENDOR
WHO WOULDN'T GIVE UP**

AQUILA

An advanced and philosophical magazine that's perfect for curious young humans of 8 – 12 years!

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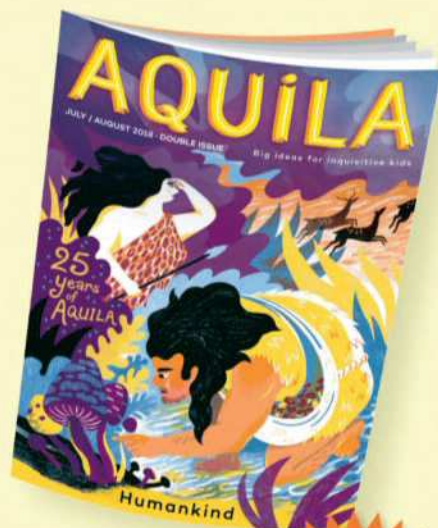
SUMMER DOUBLE ISSUE: Humankind

What does it really mean to be human? This month AQUILA follows a trail that began millions of years ago, when ape-like creatures who had been hanging about in the trees, embarked on a new and **challenging journey**: how did their evolving relationship with fire, the environment and the animal kingdom transform them into modern-day humans like us?

Meet the Neanderthals: have we underestimated the contribution these creative close relations made to our species? We have a go at cave painting, try out a nutritious, **ancient-style recipe** from our friends at **Foodini Club** and discover why dogs really are 'Man's best friend'!

Amazing human bodies: which one of your eyes is in charge? Our **bodies are complex machines** that we often take for granted! How do we grow from a single cell to the trillions of cells of adulthood? – Children can do the maths to see **how tall they will grow**. Cubits, hands and feet: our ancestors used their own bodies to measure and calculate; but did the Ancient Egyptians make the first ruler?

Also in this issue, AQUILA interviews some **talented autistic children** who find it is hard being 'a bit different' to their friends... but also feel it is an advantage. PLUS: enjoy a super-sized portion of **fun quizzes and competitions** in this, our special **25th Anniversary Double Issue!**



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WIN!
THE SHAPE OF WATER BUNDLE
TURN TO PAGE 44

Welcome to The Big Issue.

This week's cover star is our incredible vendor **Karl 'Bubble' Lamsdale**, who has fought back from horrific injuries sustained in a car accident in late January to return to his pitch. His amazing story is on page 20. Elsewhere, with the Fifa World Cup in full swing we take a look at the **alternative sticker makers** who have been busy illustrating the 254 players who are missing from the official sticker album. Find out more on page 29.

INTERVIEW

24 THE MUPPETS

Kermit leads his fuzzy cohorts to London at the same time as President Trump to present a more cuddly, welcoming vision of America



Cover photo: Matt Sheehan

MY PITCH INTERNATIONAL



46 BEN G

How The Big Issue helped the Brisbane-based Scot battle back after bad times

LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF



16 DAME STEPHANIE SHIRLEY

From Kindertransport to business guru, the forthcoming film of her life may well star Emma Thompson

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...

Which is why we provide ANYONE whose life is blighted by poverty with the opportunity to earn a LEGITIMATE income.

WE BELIEVE in the right to citizenship...

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

Write to: The Big Issue, Second Floor, 43 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 1HW
Email: letters@bigissue.com



COMMENT OF THE WEEK

I saw what vendors endure and it shocked me

Today I stopped around 11am to buy my weekly Big Issue from Dave, who works on Market Street in Cambridge. Other passers-by had insulted and abused him: 'get a life', 'get a job' etc, jeers and laughter at his expense. He was at the end of his tether. He said this kind of thing often happens.

Dave is a cheerful, thoughtful and helpful person with a great sense of humour. Many people, myself included, stop for a friendly chat. I was shocked. Dave sells The Big Issue because he believes in it, as a magazine well worth reading and a force for good in the world. I entirely agree. Although some weeks there are very sad stories they're always connected

to ideas and campaigns to make the world a better place. They feature people and ideas that inspire us, brilliant street art and reviews. I usually come away from reading The Big Issue greatly cheered up about people and the future.

I had not realised until today how much Dave has to put up with. Of course, the people who treat him badly will never read this and change their ways. I wonder if there is anything I can do to help. When I see him next I'll ask whether he'd like me to check each time how it's been so far that day so that he gets the opportunity if necessary to talk things over and express how he's feeling.

Janet Toye, Cambridge

Spoiled ballot

I was interested in your article about Grenfell Tower [June 11-17]. The sick thing is that in the May election, Kensington and Chelsea remained Conservative despite Grenfell Tower, despite the council being so incompetent that even a year after the fire families still need to be permanently rehoused. What a cynical lot some of the borough's voters must be. I'm not playing party politics as I spoil my ballot, but whichever party was in power should have been voted out.

Marc Hurstfield, Kent

Re: Marie Brisland's letter about online foodbanks [Correspondence, June 18-24]

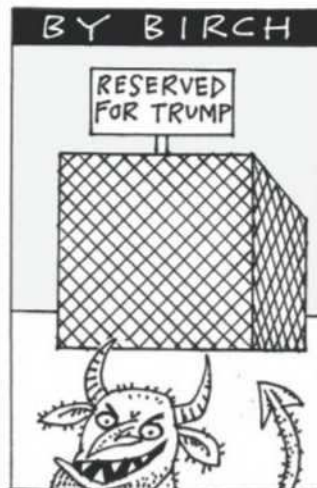
Banking on it

It can be done! Ocado have a system.

Go to their website, enter Food Bank into their search engine and you get the choice of donating £2.50, £5 or £10 (which they then match). You then get a card in your delivery to say that it has worked, and a reminder next time you shop.

It isn't as well advertised as I'd like, and obviously Ocado is expensive to use. But it is possible, and other online retailers could copy.

Lesley Bacon, email



Holy Cows!

I must commend you on your Cowes Big Issue vendor [Dave Champion]. He makes the sun shine in Cowes High Street even on an overcast day. He has become a very acceptable character in the town. He sings for his supper and always appears happy and cheerful. Locals know him and stop for chats with him,

the many tourists stop to be entertained. He proudly told me that he purchased the three-piece suit from the local RSPCA charity shop for £2.50 and he really splashed out on the Ralph Lauren shirt from the Mountbatten Charity Shop, it was £5! His tie is the local Cowes tie. I did comment on the trainers and he pointed out that he was endeavouring to achieve a rock chic look and besides he needed comfort being on his feet all day.

This vendor really works at his job, his entertaining antics must be totally exhausting. He deserves recognition. A great asset to The Big Issue brand.

John Willison, Cowes



Re Bob Mortimer

John McCall Been here and have to do it all again. Massive heart attack then surgery and waiting to have it done again. New Aortic valve and repair.

Steve Dinsdale Triple bypass for me very soon! Seems unreal to say it

Kimmy Bev My dad had a triple heart bypass at 76. He did well. It sounds bad but believe me these surgeons and anaesthetists are amazing Good luck

Like Comment Share



@xxclarkee

I hate having mental health. There isn't any help out there at all even though celebrities keep shouting about it. There might be help for them but not people like me....



@hullabaloo_blog

Great opinion piece by @BarristerSecret in this week's @BigIssue. The cuts we have seen to the criminal justice system in recent years are a false economy: exponential rise in litigants in person; access to justice hindered; & spiraling levels of violence & recidivism in prisons.



@brianma68

Noticed no Big Issue sellers have been awarded an Honour. I know many who have held this job for years, not a thing, yes it is a job and the magazine is good value, not like the non-value of our so called informative press.

SUNDAY 15TH JULY 2018 / GUNNERSBURY PARK, LONDON

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It's no crying shame to shed tears

It started with a few drops. And then it turned into a valley of tears. This World Cup has been notable because of the remarkable Ronaldo and the volume, the huge, undamnable volume, of players crying.

They cry a lot. After the first round of matches, after matches that end in a draw. They may well be crying off camera too. Maybe right now.

My initial response was one of slight confusion. Why are all these lads crying? There has been no disaster. Many of the results are fixable. Are these the millennial snowflakes on a global stage?

I looked to the pundits. They were more of my generation. In the studio, Roy Keane, the former Manchester United midfield general, a player who in his quietest moment could be described as combative, was talking about the Iran manager Carlos Queiroz. Roy is not a man who was ever known for crying. He and Queiroz had a falling-out around 14 years ago. Keane's great regret, he said, was "I should have ripped his head off." He has carried that for 14 years. That, while an entertaining quip, cannot, I thought, be healthy.

I thought about the ongoing battle to have young men not bottle things up, to talk about worries, to be open. And it became increasingly clear that professional footballers crying on the pitch was a good thing, a positive move. Why shouldn't they show it, why should they bottle it up? Why become a ball of lingering rage like Roy Keane, allowing things to gnaw at you for over a decade.

And this goes further. The tears may well be indicative of a generation who feel things a little more. This is fine, because they're doing something about it.

We are seeing a generation of activists, of people who have looked around at the old order and said enough is enough, we will be the agents of change. The rise in crowdfunded grassroots campaigns, the fleet-footed move to effect a positive difference, a desire to make things better, THIS is the product of the snowflake generation. The phrase should no longer be a slight, a pejorative shot in the intergenerational wars.

Pick any campaign or hot-button issue and you'll find a bunch of snowflakes with smart ideas and fearlessness.

And who is to say their way isn't better? Last week it was reported that Theresa May, in desperate need of ideas on how to fund her £20bn NHS cash injection, summoned her senior MPs to have them pitch their thoughts. It was the high-politics version of Alan Partridge's monkey tennis. It is an incredible way to conduct affairs.

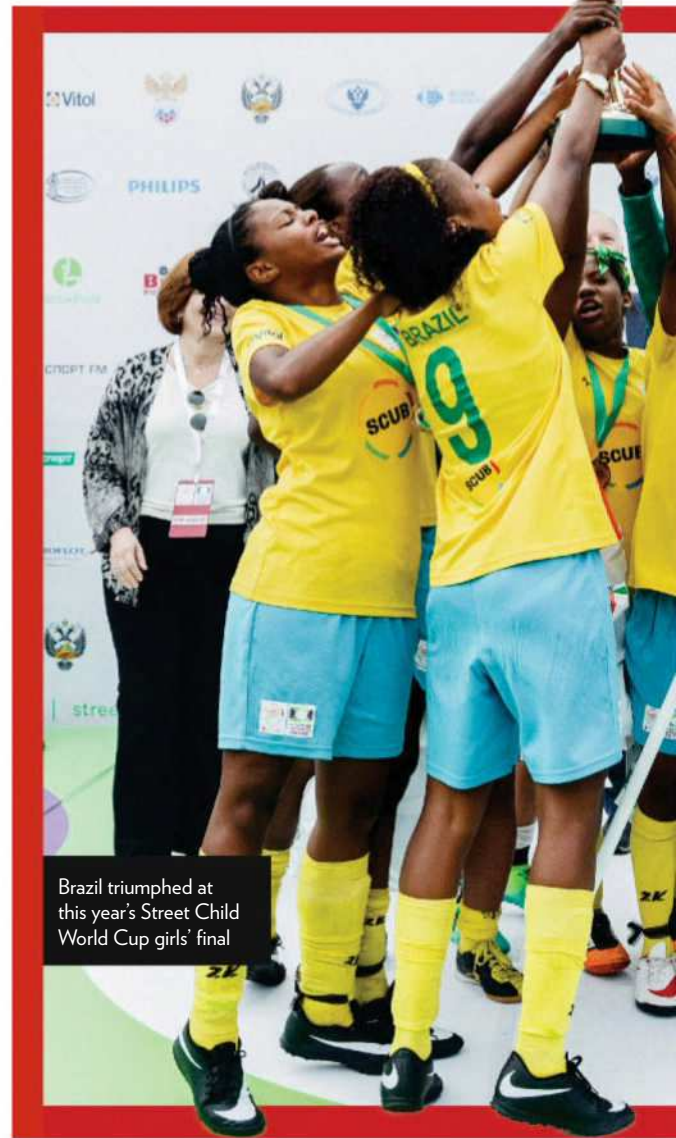
Besides all else, we all cry. Last week, as Donald Trump banged up kids with sneering impunity, the video of Sir Nicholas Winton being surprised on *That's Life* in 1988 starting swirling around social media again.

Winton was surrounded by many of the surviving Kindertransport children he had rescued in 1938 as the Nazis descended on Prague. He saved 669 Jewish youngsters who would otherwise have been murdered in the death camps. He got them to safety, they built new lives – like the remarkable Dame Stephanie Shirley, who we feature in our Letter to My Younger Self this week. Winton never told anybody about this and his incredible actions only came to light by chance. Seeing him surrounded by those people has me bawling, every single time. This week I wondered what would Trump do if those kids showed up at his door today. I worried about the dark direction some major powers are moving in.

And then I realised that this is not the start of something, it's the end. The next generation coming, the teary millennials, are not going to stand for this. They will not allow it.

None of us should stand by.

Paul McNamee is editor of The Big Issue
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Brazil triumphed at this year's Street Child World Cup girls' final

Community brings pub back from last orders

Pubs are shutting around the UK at a rate of two a day – but one community has defiantly refused to ring the bell on their bar.

The people of Banton in North Lanarkshire received the keys to Scotland's first community pub last week, with plans to turn the Swan Inn into a hub, a café and a restaurant that will open its doors in summer 2019.

After the boozer's closure, the People United for Banton (PUB) campaign was awarded just over £1m from the National Lottery, Scottish Land Fund and the European Union to buck the national trend.

PUB's spokeswoman Wendy Dunsmore said: "Over the last few years Banton lost its post office, shop, and its only bus service was threatened. The closure of the pub could have brought an end to the village. But we refused to let it die."





THE ULTIMATE WORLD CUP MOVIE

The greatest sports event on the planet is in full swing in Russia – but it hasn't yet overshadowed the Street Child World Cup.

We brought you the life-affirming stories of street children from all over the world descending on Russia in May for the liberating experience of playing football.

Children who had been held in custody in Kenya were allowed to leave to take part, while others from Mexico City had to overcome two court hearings to make the trip as no one could locate their parents.

Their emotional tale is being turned into a short film titled *Наша история (Our Story)*, featuring video diaries

shot by the players themselves.

Check bigissue.com for an exclusive look at the flick.



Board game to boost prisoners' dicey rep

A fresh way of looking at criminal justice and reoffending

Prisoners making the transition back into public life often have a dicey path – and that's why an artist has teamed up with criminologists and ex-offenders to create a board game.

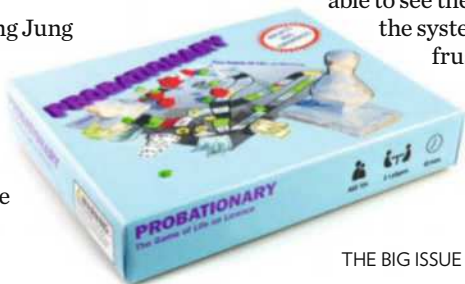
Probationary: The Game of Life on Licence explores the lived experience of the probation process, putting players in the shoes of a prisoner to create a better understanding of criminal justice and reoffending.

Artist Hwa Young Jung teamed up with criminologists from Liverpool John Moores University as well as media arts centre

FACT and men on probation in Merseyside to create the game, which takes cues from Monopoly and The Game of Life. It was unveiled at an OpenLab games-night event at FACT earlier this year, and is being used by the Howard League for Penal Reform to influence policy change.

Jung said: "The men on probation, their officers and criminologists were able to see the emotional impact of the system, as well as the frustrations.

"For the general public, it brought an awareness to a subject that is often hidden."



The continuing adventures of Hugh Grant and the foodbanks

Hugh has 'restored my faith in humanity'

We've been celebrating Hugh Grant's foodbank-donating exploits in recent weeks – and the blogger who inspired him has revealed the star even took time out from his wedding to donate.

Alex Tiffin started his blog, *Universal Credit Sufferer*, in May after going viral on Twitter with a breakdown of his budget on the blundering benefits system.

That piqued the interest of Grant, who helped set up the #foodbankchallenge with wheelchair-bound Alex. As well as donating, Grant encouraged showbiz pals Blake Harrison and Gary Lineker to get involved.

Alex told The Big Issue: "I never thought I'd be working with Hugh Grant on anything but he was so supportive and gave the challenge a bit of a boost.

"Hugh has stayed with it too. In fact, looking at the day when he made the donation to the Airdrie foodbank, he arranged it on his wedding day with my help, which I didn't realise at the time – that's how committed he is, he takes it that seriously."

The Big Issue wants to see more top stars join Hugh Grant in keeping foodbanks fully stocked. If you see any other celebrities getting involved then let us know.

ON BIGISSUE.COM THIS WEEK

- Former vendor **Rocky van de Benderskum** tells us he relies on cannabis to hold a "coherent conversation"

- **Bob Mortimer** reveals why, after his heart surgery, he's hooked on fishing with pal Paul Whitehouse

- Football programmes are under threat. **James McMahon** asks what's next for groundhoppers



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Photo of Jude Owusu by Paul Smart

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The battle to stop Network Rail shabbily selling off 5,500 railway arches is gathering pace. These spaces have offered affordable premises to entrepreneurs and small businesses for several generations. They are unconventional sites, which have allowed communities to flourish. The hike in rents that will follow the sell-off will kill off many of these vital spaces. Here are just two stories of these businesses that are worth fighting for.

'It would destroy the community'

My name is Adam David Ge-Saelis. I have a row of railway arches in Herne Hill. When I started renting the first one, I was homeless.

I saw these arches were all boarded up, they were derelict. No one really wanted them. I saw a sign at the end of the mews, which said Network Rail. I didn't know much about the arches but called them up and they told me I needed this much money to get them. I went to work as a chef, doing 30-hour shifts. Really tough work. And I saved up enough money to get the first arches.

A SOUTH LONDON ARTS CLUB THAT'S FACING A SELL-OFF



The electricity didn't work properly, the toilets were smashed. They were in a really derelict state. I was doing furniture making and writing a book – so I needed a place to work. I was still sleeping in a van. So I could park the van up the mews and work in the arch.

I got artist friends in there and we started a collaboration, almost an arts club. And slowly

started putting more and more people in other arches. So over the years, 350 artists have been in there.

I am now seen as a person who can do stuff from rubbish. I have refurbished these arches, all from waste, single-handedly. And I built this business from nothing – putting all the money I have ever made from the arches back into the arches. It has created a thriving arts community.

Now the area has gone up. They knocked down the building next to us and turned it into luxury flats.

Two of the arches were empty for 14 years. I asked [Network Rail] for 14 years whether I could rent them. No. They kept them boarded up. Now they have let me have them, but on a contracted agreement with no security of tenure. So they know, when the sale goes through, we can't keep them.

If they sold them from underneath me, I would be homeless again and this community would break up. I wouldn't be able to afford a flat any more, it would destroy the livelihoods of at least 25 individuals who work with me and all my neighbours in the arches. It would also bring uncertainty for all the neighbours in the houses that back on to them. The local kids come for painting days and arts stuff – it would destroy the community.

Ongéan Environmental Design Lab, ongean.org. Adam also runs an artistic hub from arches near Brockwell Park, South London

'The high street is dead – boring and homogeneous'

My name is Katie Cullen and I own Block & Bottle – the UK's first combined butchers and craft beer shop located in a railway arch in Gateshead.

As a small business we provide so many functions within our community that go beyond providing people with meat and beer.

Firstly, we have grown from enthusiasts to employers – a year ago there were only two of us employed by the business. Within our first six months we hired someone part-time and six months later they are now full-time and we are about to look for our next employee. The reasonable rents in the arches have allowed us to expand.

Second, within the community we provide a creative and social hub with the businesses around us. The high street is dead, it's boring and homogeneous – railway arches have reinvented the high street – they have built hotspots of creation and collaboration all over the UK, but they are delicate and need nurturing.

We support each other and don't push each other out – we buy local and support other UK businesses that make a change on the ground and move industries forward.

Gateshead is an area which has, in the past, struggled. However the railway arches where we are based have gone from a deserted, less-desirable area to a thriving hub which has given confidence to Wylam and Hadrian Border Brewery – two of the largest breweries in the region set up pubs and a huge shipping container village underneath the Tyne Bridge.

If this sale causes rents to rise further it will only push the small businesses out and destroy hotspots of culture and creativity as is already happening in other places.

The Guardians of the Arches campaign is important as it has not only given us a combined voice but has created a network of businesses that have been able to connect. By selling before talking to us, Network Rail is giving up a long-term reliable income for short-term gains.



THE GATESHEAD BREWERY AND BUTCHER THAT'S REINVENTED THE HIGH STREET

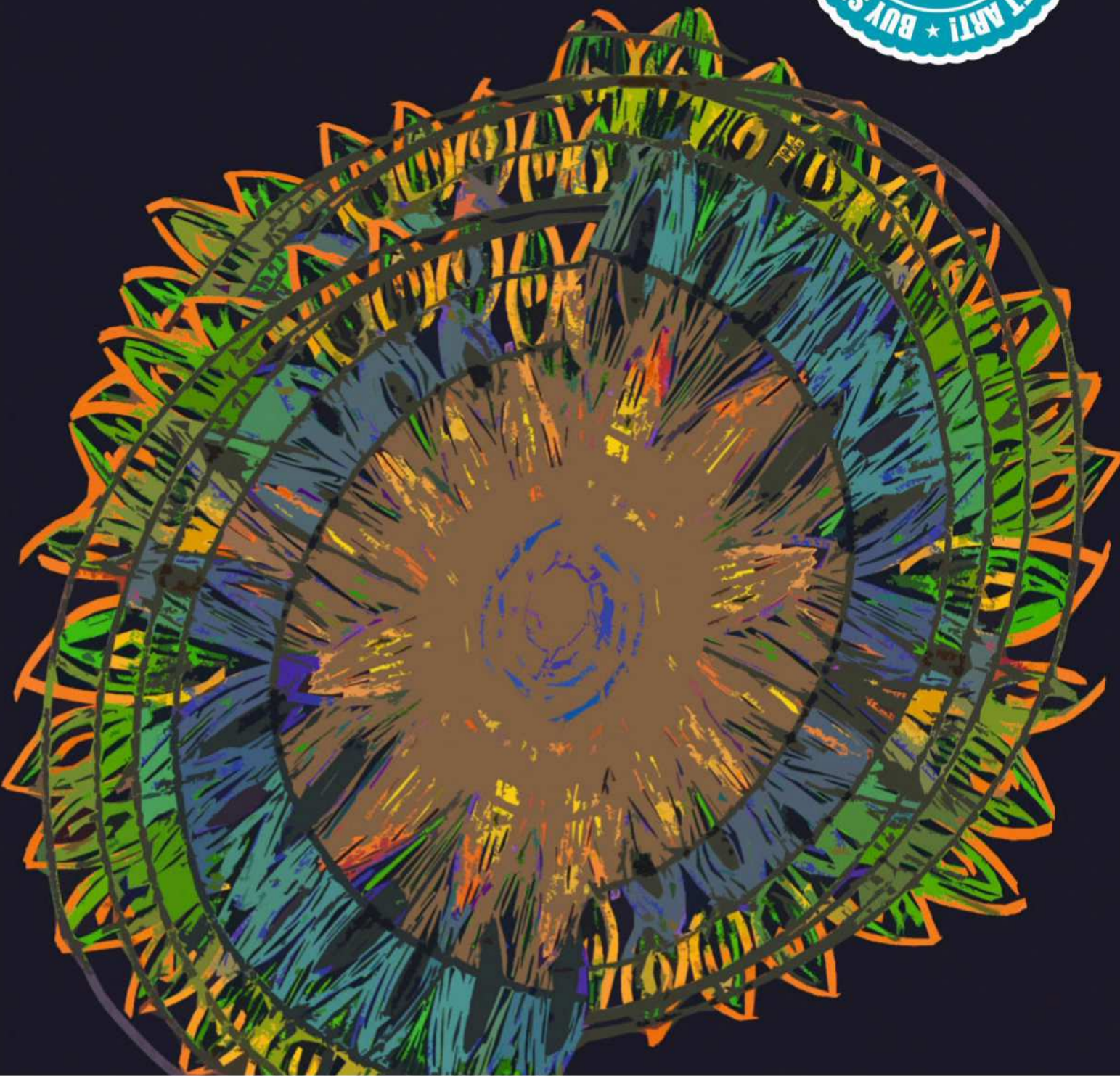
Katie Cullen runs Block & Bottle in Gateshead, a craft beer and free-range butchery business. blocknbottle.com

STREET ART

▼ NIGHTBLOOM

BY ANONYMOUS

This anonymous artist, who submits her work via London homeless charity the 240 Project, describes herself as “a lone wolf”. “My work comes straight out of my head, it’s happy and sad,” she says. “At the end of the day, how you feel comes out on the paper, in the colours and the shapes. I get inspired by people at the project and value their comments, we are like a family. They give you honest advice.”



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.

AMONG LEGENDS

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JOHN BIRD

It'll take a Rolls-Royce service to write off poverty



There is a conspiracy in the world against trying to think differently. I realised this again as I stood on the packed train back to Cambridge. Peering over the shoulders of fellow passengers seated I could see, aside from the odd person doing overtime on their accounts and invoices, a large proportion playing games. Or watching films. Filling time from A to B. Taking time out from life. Perhaps making life bearable.

I was not inconvenienced, standing in my new bright blue trainers that I have bought to support my feet better so I can walk for miles and miles. I hate trainers and hate bright colours but the florid sports shops, which declare your health just by your purchase of some garish item, will not let you have the un-glowing. Or not for the high-arched shoes I needed.

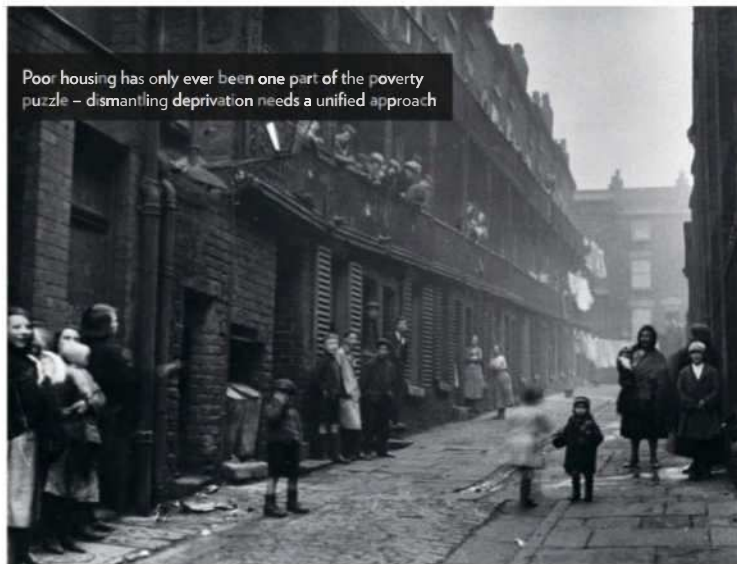
Feet and thinking are very important to me; and very related. If ever I got myself into a tizz or a flap I would set off for mile after mile of walking. Once, aged 18, when I found out I had been betrayed in love I went for a marathon walk from Battersea to Gants Hill, a large chunk of London there, to ease my feeling of 'dumpedness'. And it worked, arriving at the home of a girl who earlier when I was 14 and she was 14 had also dumped me. But that was because I tried to beat up her teacher, who unfortunately was also the PE teacher, so the 'beating up' went the wrong way for me. He had spoken cruelly to her the day before and I and her brother decided to 'sort the buggers out', but he 'sorted' us out.

After the Battersea-Gants Hill trek I realised I didn't really love her, and there were plenty more fish in the sea. I exorcised my love and moved on to the next obsession.

There is a conspiracy against thinking differently in the world because the world is obsessed with doing things in the

time-honoured way. But nature and science and life teach us all the time that you can't just keep doing the same.

OK, I'm not being logical or clear here. I had been at a meeting where they did not say what I wanted them to say. And I found myself turning into the ranting little nutter who hides inside of me. And who has been a part of me for as long as I have known me.



To me the really big thing in the world today that needs to be done is that we have to stop seeing things as 'things in themselves'. We have to stop being separators of life into categories. That if you want to solve poverty, which I am rantingly struggling to do, you can't separate poverty out into separate things. You have to hit poverty square in the eye. You have to give a cocktail of solutions to it, like you might zap a cancer. Yet the world is always dividing poverty up into different parts: literacy, housing, work, wellbeing, health.

You have to have the whole works, the Rolls-Royce service, not some piss-poor bit of relief here and a shoulder to cry on there.

We have to create a science of 'poverty killing'.

It cannot be done as a bit here and a bit there. We have to bring a complete and utterly useful set of tools to converge the energy of dismantling poverty and not

leave it flaring up again; because we forgot a bit of it.

Yet the world of thinking, of society, of government, always breaks things up into things. Like as if we enter the marketplace of goodness and say, "Yes, we'll have a go at human rights in Africa", picking our particular bit of poverty prevention. Or whatever else you are inclined to choose from the panoply of wrongs that you choose to right.

Someone, somewhere though has to bring it all together. There has to be a convergent force, otherwise it's all disparate and uneven, and likely to continue in some new form.

We cannot simply carry on in this brainless, unconverging bit here and bit there.

At the meeting I realised I might still be that little nutter and that really I ought to just go for a long walk and cool my head. But the next morning, and through the night, I could not leave alone the idea that unless you have a coalescence, creating an

ecosystem for the dismantlement of poverty you are reproducing our current lumpy, uneven social life.

With 70 per cent, circa, of government time given to poverty and its alleviation, when Brexit is poverty by another name, or the cause of it, when Grenfell shows what happens in poverty's shadow, then you have to big up and say 'let's get the dirty beast out of our lives'.

Only by converging the fight against poverty, bringing it all home, will we start kicking 10 colours of crap out of it.

Let those who have their 'single issue' continue on their trajectory, while more of us ask, "What can we do to converge the fight against poverty?"

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

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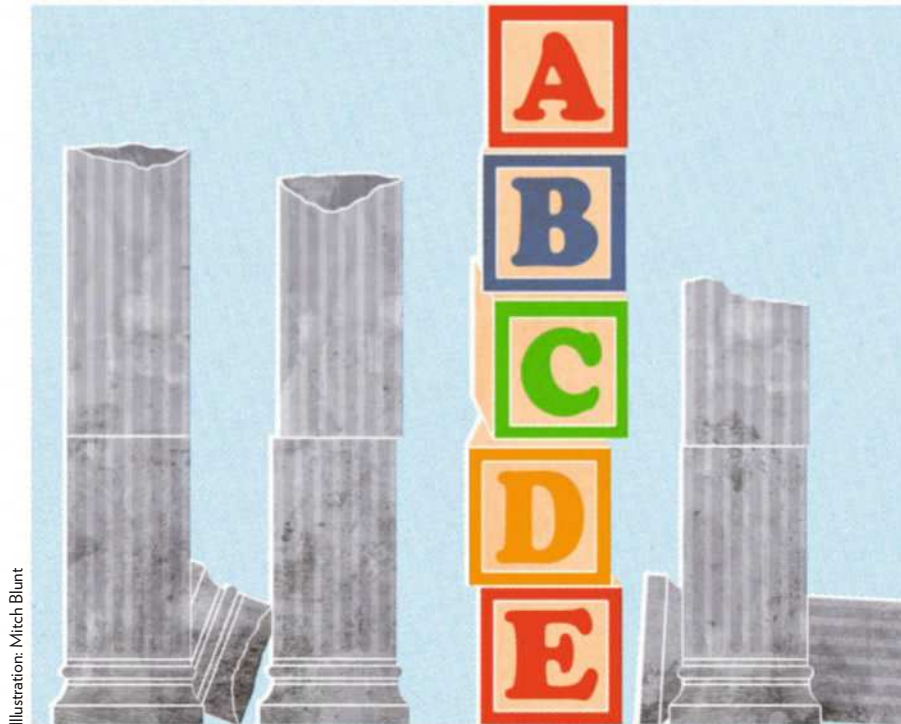


Illustration: Mitch Blunt

ERIC MARLAND

How the alphabet abides

“What is the A-ness of an A?” asked a visiting Belgian letter carver in a lecture he gave in Cambridge. An interesting question for the assembled audience but when spoken out loud it caused some embarrassed titters in the audience so afterwards I suggested he choose any other letter except perhaps P.

It remains, however, an interesting question. Why is the letter A made up of two diagonal strokes which meet at the top with a crossbar connecting them? It turns out the answer is because it used to be written upside down with the point at the bottom and the ‘legs’ sticking up at the top so that they represented the horns of an ox. It slowly got turned by subsequent cultures who adopted the symbol that was eventually given the phonetic sound we use it for today and became the first letter of our alphabet.

In fact, the name for the 26 letters we use to produce the thousands of words in our lives

comes from that first letter which the Greeks called Alpha but was originally derived from the Northern Semitic name for ox, which is Aleph. So, although one can make an A without the crossbar and it still reads as an A, the crossbar is somehow essential to the A-ness of an A.

Every letter of our current alphabet has an equally interesting history. The alphabet is arguably mankind’s greatest invention but because we use it ourselves on a daily basis it somehow disappears behind the meaning of the messages it is used to convey.

Just think how much information you have acquired and dispensed through the writing of words made up of

letters. Imagine if you had been restricted to communicating only with those who were in the same place at the same time as you? That was the reality for

the human race until only about 4,000 to 5,000 years ago, a tiny percentage of our time on earth. It is perhaps no coincidence that the evolution of the human race from just another band of hunter-gatherers competing with many other species for survival to the dominant one on the planet has occurred during the period in which we have

developed the ability to communicate complex concepts over the limitations of space and time.

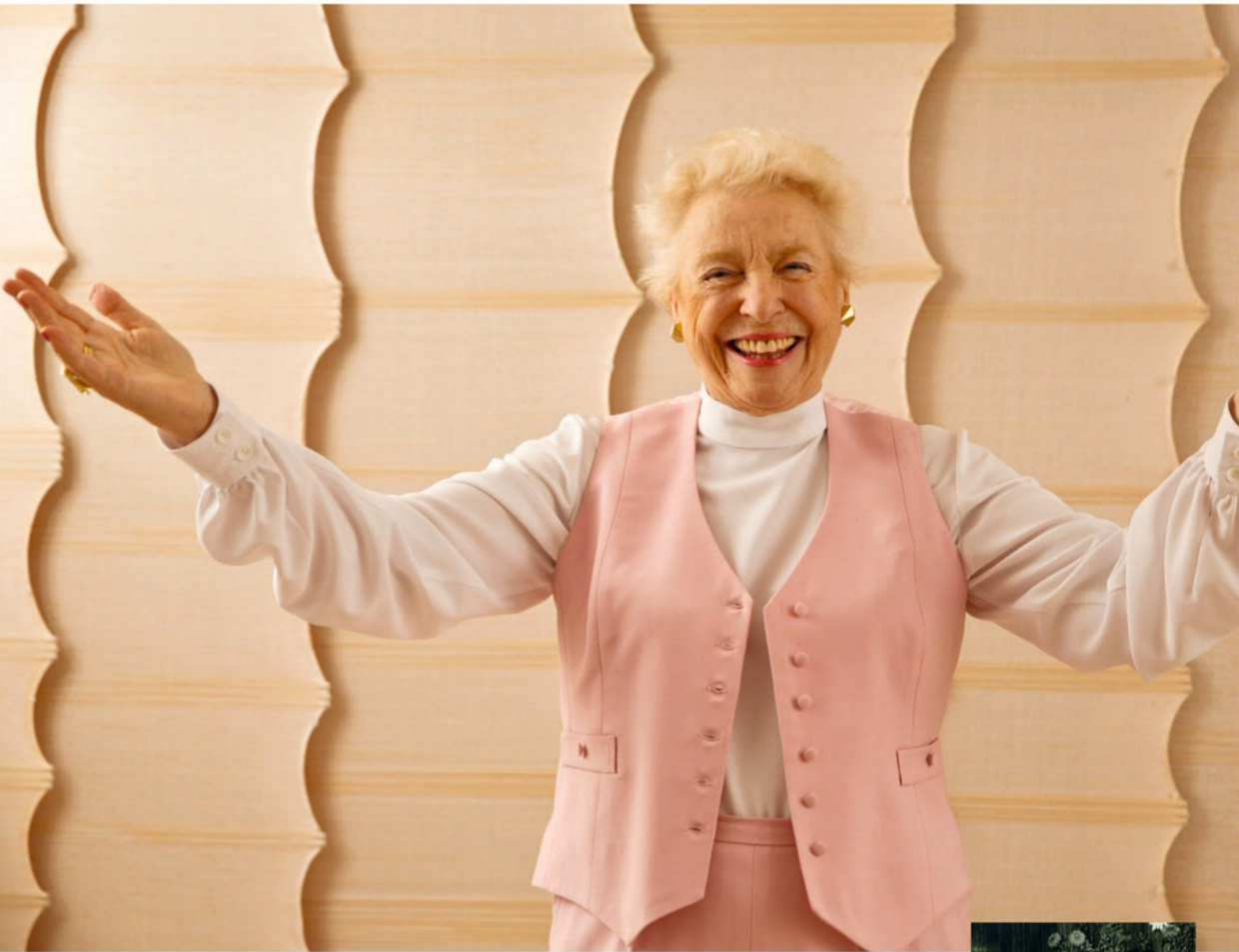
How else could the concepts and collaborations in

technology and science required to send an electric car into space have been achieved and how would we know as much as we do of past cultures if they had not written down and carved their thoughts in writing systems made up of letters?

The Alphabet Museum seeks to create a space in which visitors can appreciate the alphabet as not only a tool for expressing thought but as a thing in itself. An expression of our culture’s long aesthetic and historic development which is contained within those 26 characters. For instance, did you know that the letters X, Y and Z are at the end of our alphabet simply because the Romans needed to add them in order to pronounce words in Greek once they had conquered that land? Our alphabet could be viewed as a historical record of commerce and conquest over millennia, each letter adopted and altered many times throughout its development by succeeding cultures as they interacted with one another.



The Alphabet Museum is curated by master letter carver Eric Marland at the Lettering Arts Centre in Snape Maltings, Suffolk, June 29-September 9. letteringartstrust.org.uk



Dame Stephanie Shirley

From Kindertransport kid to technology titan



LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

I think I was a bit of an odd teenager, desperately trying to conform. I do believe character is moulded very early in life. I was an unaccompanied [Kindertransport] child refugee [sent from Germany to live in England in 1939] and that left me with a very odd childhood. I was five years old when I arrived. I was lucky because I was clutching the hand of my nine-year-old sister, poor thing, who had the responsibility to me as well. We had a new nationality, new food, new language, new parents. It was traumatic and it took me many years to get over that trauma. Literally, six years of analysis at a very good clinic. Because it really mucks your life up.

I remember someone saying to me, aren't you lucky to be saved. Which is not a healthy thing to say to a child. It left me with this strong feeling that I had to make something of my life, that I had to make sure the life that was saved was worth saving. Already in my teens I was beginning to get that serious intention that I mustn't fritter the day away. What was I going to do that day to make it worthwhile, how could I make it better than the day before? That feeling has stayed with me all my life, right up until today.

I think in my teens I was already starting to be charitable. I remember doing things to support a little animal charity. I was aware that so many strangers have given to me that I had to give back. I've done that all my life, whether it's advice or contacts or money. I didn't have much money until recently but those childhood motivators have never changed. Obviously I can get frivolous about clothes and things like that but I do know the spiritual side of life, the non-material things – the art, the literature, the friendship, the love – these are so important to me. I have tried to live a spiritual life. I don't think I would have been very happy if I hadn't given much of my money away [around £70m of her personal wealth]. I could have had a lot of great paintings on the wall and a very nice wardrobe. But my husband wouldn't like that, and I don't think I'd have liked it either.

I had a lovely relationship with my foster parents. I am their child in all but birth. I had all their values. We were lucky in that both of my [biological] parents survived and we were reunited. I lived with my mother again for some years. But we never really bonded again. I was enormously proud, particularly of my father, who was a brilliant man. But I never really knew him as a person.

I went to a Roman Catholic primary school. The nuns were lay teachers, and the values they gave me were terrific. But they were sufficiently professional enough to say to my parents after a couple of years, look, your child is gifted in mathematics. We cannot teach her, she'll have to go somewhere else. So I got a scholarship and went to a very good grammar school. And I thrived there. It was intellectually challenging, I loved it. I would have loved to go to university but again, that wasn't really possible. We were poor and I needed to start making money. When I was a teenager I was going to be the world's greatest mathematician. I was going to work in an academic environment and find out new theorems and theories. I did actually start work after school as a mathematical clerk, but I soon realised I didn't have it in me to do that sort of work. I was lucky that the computer industry came along and I really was able to

contribute. I decided almost overnight, it's not maths, I'm going to work in computing.

When I started my company [Freelance Programmers] I was writing letters to promote it, telling people what we did. And I got no replies whatsoever. So my husband suggested I use the family name of Steve rather than the double feminine of Stephanie Shirley. And I began to get some replies and interviews and eventually things took off.

The culture when I started working was that women were not expected to do serious things. All the emphasis was on home and family responsibility. We weren't allowed to work in the stock exchange, we weren't allowed to fly an aeroplane. There was legislation to stop women working at night. As time went on I began to get really quite aggressive about it. Starting my company was part of a woman's crusade. Every survey we did told us women workers wanted flexibility and family-friendly work. So that's what I did. We all worked from home. We worked as a team. We helped each other out. I knew whose child had measles, whose marriage was in trouble. It was like a family company and it stayed like that for many, many years until there were thousands of us. We had profit sharing, and eventually, when the company went public, 70 of the workers became millionaires.

My son [Giles] was autistic. I think now I'd tell my younger self to talk to other people more about the problems I had. Most of my colleagues didn't even know I had an autistic child. He was extremely difficult. He needed a lot of help. My sister came and lived with us with her daughter. Those were very tough times. For a long time I felt very much, why me? Am I not fit to have a healthy child? And it took two years for me to think, well, why not me? I'm able to fight for him. And so I did, and he did 'well' as the expression goes. He died 20 years ago [after an epileptic seizure when he was 35]. I was very sad and I could hardly work. Sadly, my husband wasn't good at talking. Our son's name is hardly mentioned. Still. The death of a child is unbelievably painful. My husband just has not recovered. I think I have. I work for autism charities now and that pervades every part of my life. That's just my way of coping.

Imagine telling my younger self not only that one day I'd write a memoir of my own life but that it would be made into a film! I only hope I live long enough to see that film. We've just got a screenwriter and a producer – Joe Oppenheimer from the BBC. It's going to be good. Who would I choose to play me? Well, maybe I shouldn't say this, but they're talking about Emma Thompson! She's wonderful isn't she? I know if she was in it then it would be really, really good.

I'm very comfortable in my old age. But if I could go back to any time in my life it would be early married life with a baby. I just could not believe how lucky I was. My marriage was a love match. We'd found a lovely little cottage in Buckinghamshire and I was doing it up. I was starting my company. I had this lovely placid little baby. It was perfect.

Let It Go: The Memoirs of Dame Stephanie Shirley is out now (Acorn Books, £8.99) steveshirley.com
Interview: Jane Graham @janeannie



Photo: © Heitheliff O'Halley / Telegraph Media Group Limited

Clockwise from left: Marrying Derek Shirley in 1959; becoming a member of the Order of the Companions of Honour in October; the couple with their son Giles, whose autism prompted her philanthropy and activism in this field



Photo: John Stillwell/Getty Images



HOW TO STOP ARMAGEDDON

Badgers aren't the only animals that Brian May wants to save. In 2015, the legendary Queen guitarist became a rock star of a different kind, championing awareness of the risks posed by meteorites falling from space by founding Asteroid Day. Taking place on June 30, it brings scientists with different expertise together to plot a way to avoid Armageddon.

Debbie Lewis is a resilience preparedness consultant who looks at the impact a *big* impact would have on society. "Thankfully no large asteroid [at time of writing] has been discovered to be on a collision course with the Earth," she says. "The problems are the smaller ones which are harder to see. This is why we need money spent on additional space-based telescopes to ascertain if one will cross Earth's orbit."



Photo courtesy: ESA/M. Ahmetvaleev



Flash! The vapour trail left by the Chelyabinsk meteor (main pic); Mind your head: the 170m long, 45m deep Barringer meteor crater left its mark in Arizona 50,000 years ago (below); Debbie Lewis and rock royalty Brian May (below left)

The Chelyabinsk meteor, pictured here, streaked across Russian skies on February 15 2013. It is an example of a smaller asteroid, currently difficult to detect, that could land on your head without warning.

“From my perspective there’s a huge risk facing the population,” Lewis says. “Over 1,000 people were hurt as a result of that incident, people had injuries from flying glass because they went to the windows – as anybody would. If you see a bright light streaking across your window then you are drawn to it, and essentially that’s the last place anybody should go.”

Lewis explains that asteroids are minor planets, leftover building blocks of the solar system that happily sit in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. They can be as small as a teacup or as big as the state of Texas – but if one large

enough was knocked out of orbit to cross ours, we’d go the way of the dinosaurs.

“Unlike the dinosaurs we have space programmes,” Lewis points out. “If an object between 140-300 metres in diameter was coming there is a chance there could be 20 years warning time – or planning time as I prefer to call it.

“If you are advised in 20 years this is happening, you would want to know what plans are in place. They’d send a characterisation mission, a spaceship to assess the asteroid’s size and what it’s made of to then determine its trajectory and speed and identify a risk corridor – the likely points across the globe where it might hit.

“They can start to put deflection missions together but of course it takes time to design, develop and build the spacecraft, and as a contingency arrangement then we



Daniel Slim/AFP/Getty Images

need to put plans in place to evacuate people well away from the impact site.”

However, bad news for anyone who wants to live forever. “It’s when not if,” Lewis warns. “Ultimately the larger ones will devastate much, if not all, of the planet.”

For more information on Asteroid Day on June 30 visit asteroidday.org

'SOMETHING LIKE THIS MAKES YOU SEE HOW MUCH PEOPLE ACCEPT YOU'

Birmingham vendor Karl 'Bubble' Lamsdale is lucky to be alive after a suspected hit-and-run. He suffered broken bones, sepsis and two heart attacks – and was so close to death he says he met God. Now, against all expectations he's back on his pitch of 19 years. He tells us about his remarkable resurrection

People are amazed I'm back on my pitch within five months. I saw one of the people who were looking after me in the critical care unit, and he said he couldn't believe I was back there after what I'd been through.

I remember some bits of the accident – I recall getting off the bus, walking up behind it, looking left and seeing the traffic really off in the distance. I thought, 'I've got enough time to cross the road all the way'. I took two or three steps off the kerb, looked left and then I heard the noise. There's a pair of headlights there and I thought, 'Shit, this is gonna happen'. I remember the car hitting me and then going up in the air, but I don't remember landing. When I came round there's people saying, 'Stay still, stay still' and someone was holding my head and my neck – there were quite a few folk around me.

I opened my eyes, and all I could see was red because they were pooled with blood, so I wiped it away. I was saying, 'Leave me alone, I want to go home'. I was trying to get up but I couldn't. My flatmate came round 'cos my neighbour's daughter got off the bus and said I was there, and that it had been me in the accident. He had heard the crash. I passed him my phone and my wallet for some reason, and he said he'd phone my mum. I said, 'No, leave it, I'll phone her later or in the morning – I better go in the ambulance and get checked out'. I didn't realise how bad I was.

I remember getting put into the ambulance and the man said, 'We'll cut your coat off'. I said, 'No, you won't, it was a present from a customer'. I unzipped this really big, baggy coat and my arm sort of fell out of the sleeve as much as I took it out – which made them think I wasn't as bad as I was. I don't remember much else about getting to hospital, except them putting the oxygen hood on me and I was trying to fight them and rip it off, arguing with them.

I got an epidural that didn't work, then I got one that did, and the next day they injected me with ketamine.

That was the strangest thing, I had instant pure hallucinations. It was like a horror film with 3D effects. I suffered a fractured spine, sternum, pelvis, broken shoulder, hip, ankle, nine ribs, had two missing teeth, and had to have an emergency bowel operation so I've got a stoma bag fitted. I won't know for about a year or 18 months if that's going to be permanent.

I had a heart attack during the op, and one afterwards too. I had kidney failure so I was on dialysis for a while, I had pneumonia off the ventilator during the coma, and I also had sepsis. They were picking bits of glass and gravel out my forehead. I saw God too, when I was having one of my heart attacks – he told me to piss off back to my pitch at Snow Hill! He was just like the pictures you see of him – grey beard, long hair and a robe. I haven't seen him since though!

It felt strange being in hospital, I'd never really been in before. Obviously when I was in a coma for five weeks I didn't remember anything and when I came out of it I was all over the place for a little bit. But I was treated really well by all the medical staff, when I was in critical care and on the orthopaedic and trauma ward, when I was eventually able to come off the machines. The nurses and healthcare assistants were fantastic. I've had my money's worth off the NHS!

I've been told that without my attitude and determination I wouldn't be where I am now. The physios were saying that what I was doing in a day would take other people a week. They even said they'd like to film me to use me as an inspirational training video to show others how far and how quick people could get into my position with the right attitude and determination. I've



Back in 2014 before the crash





Bubble back at work last week

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Photos: Matt Sheehan

Bubble greets his customers on the chair he's using while he recovers



BUBBLE'S A MUCH-LOVED AND INTEGRAL PART OF HIS COMMUNITY - AND LOCALS ARE DELIGHTED HE'S BACK

Mo Ahmed, Snow Hill station manager
 "Bubble is an asset to the family at Snow Hill, we admire his diligence and hard work. He's so committed to his job, and is always helpful. It's so nice to see him back, the accident hasn't dampened his enthusiasm and his outlook on life. He's the same Bubble we know and love. He treats that job with passion and with respect. He deserves all the attention he's getting."

 **@judithyates1**
 Delighted to see you are back Karl. Big Issue please give Karl my best wishes when you see him.

 **@LornaGavin1**
 I saw the lovely Bubble this afternoon - in a mad rush 4 train but he managed to give me potted history of his ordeal. Bravo Bubble for getting through this and will make time for proper chat next time. Sending positive vibes to a great fella. X

 **Jemma and Harry**
 "My son has built up a friendship with one of your vendors over the past seven years. Harry has to attend Birmingham Children's Hospital regularly and always looks forwards to seeing Bubble. He has been upset the past few times we have been as he has been missing. Harry was so happy coming out of the hospital today, Bubble's back!"

What does your vendor mean to you? Get in touch at editorial@bigissue.com @bigissue

always been strong and determined. I actually got released on my 52nd birthday, April 27. The hospital staff got me a cake.

I was saying to the physios and occupational therapists that I feel ready to go back to work but I'm not doing the hours I was doing; I haven't got the strength. All your muscles waste away in the hospital, you lose all your core strength. I'm borrowing a chair off the train station at the moment, but I've got a perching stool that's being delivered soon from the rehab case manager. I've got to take that into town but the station say they'll store it overnight for me, save me taking it backwards and forwards all the time. The station staff are amazing, they've been brilliant, they always have been. They let me use the toilet facilities, they'll bring me a hot drink in the winter, they've had collections for me at Christmas time, Chiltern Railways staff left a card at the Big Issue office with money for me from the staff.

It's really good to be back, I couldn't wait, I was going stir crazy in my flat after coming out of hospital. I am used to working seven days a week, and only have three or four days off a year. I'm so used to being out and talking to people. Everybody's been asking about the accident and saying how sorry they were to hear about it. They're glad to see I'm on the mend and amazed I'm back at work. It's been incredible the

response I've had, not just off customers but off everybody, all the messages on Facebook and elsewhere on the internet, all the cards and best wishes, everybody saying to me 'Welcome back, it's really great to see you back, it's not been the same without you'. It's really nice. Quite a

few people have come up and said they'd sent a card, left a message and donated on my GoFund page. I expected a bit of a response but the extent of it is about 100 times more than I anticipated. People are saying, 'I came to speak to you yesterday but there's already a crowd around you talking'.

A lot of my customers I know by face, not by their name, it's only about 10 per cent of the people I speak to whose names I know. It's facial recognition more than names, and loads of customers said they didn't know my name until they saw the newspaper, they just knew me as The Big Issue man! But I speak to a hell of a lot of people. I spend as much time saying 'morning' 'hello' and 'good evening' as I do saying 'Big Issue' now! I'm doing well sales-wise, especially on a Monday when the new issue comes in and all my regulars get it. I was top seller in Birmingham for quite a while. I've built the pitch up over the 19 years I've been a vendor.



I want to say a big thank you for the help and support I've received and all the cards and messages. It's brilliant - it makes you feel more of the community than you thought you were. People around there look out for me, make sure I'm alright, but something like this makes you notice how many people accept you. It's so nice.

Bubble was speaking to Alan Woodhouse @HibernianG42



we
pledge
ALLEGIANCE
TO THE
FROG

Next month London is braced to welcome the most famous Muppet of them all. But besides the state visit of President Trump, Kermit, Miss Piggy and the whole fuzzy crew are jetting in to play their biggest ever live shows at the O2 Arena.

The timing may be coincidental but it means two very different images of America will be in focus; the child-caging leader of the free world will grab the headlines and prompt mass protests, but is the Muppets' celebration of inclusivity, equality, love and wackiness of a wholly different kind a truer reflection of what it means to be American?

The Big Issue caught up with Kermit and Miss Piggy to find out their thoughts on style, greatness and how special the relationship between the UK and US is today.

The Big Issue: You are not the only American over here in July – but I think it's safe to say you're more popular than the other guy.

Kermit: If you mean Sam Eagle, I wouldn't be that tough on him. He really does his best.

Do you feel responsibility to be an ambassador?

I'm a proud Amphibian-American, and I do my best to be a good role model for other Americans, as well as amphibians of all nations. It's a big job, but I get a lot of help from the other Muppets.

What image of your country do you and the other Muppets embody?

I think the Muppets are what we've always been. We believe that: regardless of who you are, what species you may be and what talents you may or may not have we all have something to contribute, and we can all work to make the world a better place. Crazy, chaotic, weird too, but also somehow better.

Are these qualities being overshadowed at the moment?

I don't think so – at least not the crazy, chaotic and weird parts.

The Muppets have a long, glorious history with the UK, how do you think the special relationship is between our countries today?

I still think it's strong. The UK was our home during the making of the original *Muppet Show*, so we're thrilled to be bringing this first-ever live version of the show back here where it all started. Plus, as a frog, I love the weather here. As for the special relationship between the UK and the US, I think it's stronger than ever, especially since Prince Harry married Meghan.

Will it stay strong even after you've 'taken' the O2 Arena?

A very good question. We certainly hope so. Our show is definitely an assault on your senses, but in a good way, we think. If the special relationship between our countries can withstand that, then there's still hope for the world.

Many people would love to see a frog in the White House. Would you consider running for office?

No, I don't think I'll run for office. I spend enough time in the swamp without getting involved in politics.

How many presidents have you met over the decades?

Among frogs, I'm definitely the leader in meeting presidents, but I've never counted up how many I've met. We'll have to get back to you on that.

Were any of them good on the banjo?

I know that Bill Clinton played a pretty good saxophone, but I never saw any president play a banjo. I'm sure that must mean something, but I have no idea what.

Your career has outlasted them all – what's your secret?

Presidents can only serve for eight years, while there are no term limits on frogs who sing, dance and work in showbusiness.

Have you ever met Donald Trump?

No, I haven't. But I know that Sam Eagle wants to meet him to discuss hair subsidies for bald eagles.

You have had decades of experience when it comes to keeping a chaotic crew in check. What makes a good leader?

Be flexible. Appreciate those around you. And give everyone a chance to do what you've asked them to do. And when they don't do it, hold your arms up in the air and yell like this "Yaaaaaaahhhh!" This doesn't necessarily improve their work, but it sure makes me feel better.

Your colleagues are pigs, chickens, bears, in fact all kinds of animals, Animal, a Swedish Chef and whatever Gonzo is. Is diversity a shortcut to success?

I'm not sure it's a shortcut to success, but it sure makes the journey a lot more entertaining.

Is a leader only as good as the team around them?

I think so. But if you want your team to follow you (and not just on Twitter) and work extra hard for you, then you have to believe in them, listen to them, and try to get them to all turn up at the O2 in time for the show.



FIRST PIGGY

The Big Issue: When you're here, there might be thousands of people on the streets...

Miss Piggy: Might be? MIGHT be? Vous mean "WILL BE" thousands of people on the streets... maybe more... and all to catch a glimpse of yours truly.

No, not just to see you – there are big protests planned for President Trump's visit.

Look, buster, if they're out on the street when I'm here, I'm counting them as fans.

If Melania is missing, will you be available to attend state events?

I don't think we wear the same size dress. But I love her hats. I'll have to check my calendar.

Did you find it difficult to maintain a relationship on a global stage?

You mean the frog. Look, that's history. I know we had a relationship or whatever they call it, but now I'm an independent, empowered woman who makes her own way and is enjoying a variety of relationships with a cornucopia of hot-looking guys. On a global stage, dating one guy is difficult, but dating a flotilla of them is fun.

Speaking of romance, Harry and Meghan notably didn't invite any leaders or politicians to their wedding – were you too famous to receive an invitation?

As for my invitation, let's just say that I was there. You may not have seen moi, but I was in the vicinity. And I trust Harry and Meghan will be there when moi stuns the world with my performance at *The Muppets Take the O2*.

Did you play a role behind the scenes?

I'm not saying I helped Meghan with the dress and accessorising... but I'm also not saying I didn't.

How do you sum up your own style in three words?

Style is everything! Without style, we're all just a bunch of boring content providers. But with style, we can turn the world on its head and make everyone want to be just like us! As for my style in three words: More is Better.

How do you sum up the First Lady's style, or Donald's for that matter?

I don't really follow anyone else's style. Others follow mine. So my advice for them and for you and all your readers is simple: Do what I do.

In the past, 'Miss Piggy' has been used as an insult by certain people towards certain people. But you are confident, assertive – not to mention drop-dead gorgeous – surely calling somebody Miss Piggy should be a compliment?

An insult? Surely you jest! You must have misunderstood, because obviously moi's name is synonymous with elegance, independence, and as you yourself stated, confidence, assertiveness and drop-dead gorgeousity! So if someone calls you Miss Piggy, they mean it as a compliment. And if you know anyone who uses it as an insult, please let me know who they are and where they live. I would *love* to go have a nice little *talk* with them, n'est ce pas?

[In September 2016 Donald Trump called former Miss Universe Alicia Machado 'Miss Piggy', and earlier this year Trump official Lynne Patton came under fire after 'fat-shaming' journalist April Ryan in the same way]



DONALD TRUMP & SESAME STREET

We all grew up asking how to get to *Sesame Street*. The long-running children's TV programme came from the same stable as the Muppets, and the New York-set show has, through the years, mercilessly mocked one of the city's most famous residents.

RONALD GRUMP

As early as 1988, Ronald Grump – a grouch with a dodgy hairpiece – cons Oscar into selling up so he can build Grump Tower, the first skyscraper made of trashcans.



DONALD TRUMP

When Trump was best known for presenting the US version of *The Apprentice*, another grouch, Donald Grump, turned up in 2005 looking for an assistant of his own. "His name is on every piece of trash in town!" remarks an impressed Oscar,

before they sing a song with pertinent lines like, "Whose name equals trash to you and to me?" and Grump declaring, "I'm the trashiest! I'm the grouchiest!"



JOE PESCI

But most bizarrely, in a 25th birthday celebrity special in 1994, Joe Pesci, as if he's just strayed from the set of *Casino*, plays Ronald Grump and is interviewed by Julia Louis-Dreyfus about his plans to develop the area. After conning residents (again) it is revealed he plans to demolish Sesame Street. In some outtakes, which are among the most disturbing scenes on YouTube, Pesci/Grump physically assaults Benny Bunny and shockingly spits on cuddly toddler-monster Elmo.

Is this Joe Pesci trying to be funny (funny how?), or is he channelling the true spirit of Trump?

MAKING GONZO GREAT AGAIN

The Big Issue: When did you first realise you were great?

Gonzo the Great: Last Tuesday. Before then, I just thought it was my name, but then on Tuesday it hit me: I'm great. At least I think that's what hit me last Tuesday.

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THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Film
Agnès Varda page 33

TV
State of mind page 35

Kate Nash
GLOW for it page 36

Music
Taking on the critics page 37



#GOTGOTNEED

THE ALTERNATIVE WORLD CUP STICKER MAKERS

The most exciting part of any major football tournament is of course, the sticker collecting. Just as controversial as this year's World Cup was the accompanying Panini sticker album, which Cardiff University professor Paul Harper suggested could cost £773.60 for collectors to complete. And that's before you consider the 254 World Cup players missing from the album.

When the official album was released in April, the makers had to guess who would make the 23-man squads. But they inevitably got a few wrong. The MIFA Project brings together 200 artists from across the globe to illustrate the missing players. Designer Dave Will hopes to collate the final results in a book after the World Cup to raise money for a mental health charity in Liverpool.

► @davewi11
davewilldesign.com

ONLY KILLERS AND THIEVES

A hidden horror

After moving to Australia, Paul Howarth was shocked to discover the bloody history of British colonialism in the country. Its legacy was the inspiration for his new novel

They call Australia ‘the lucky country’, and boy is it: spectacular beaches, incredible landscapes, minerals for mining, good soil for farming, space for grazing, a laidback outdoors lifestyle, and some of the most liveable cities in the world. I write from experience – in 2008 my wife and I emptied our house into a shipping container and put ourselves on a plane to Melbourne, intending to stay perhaps a year but ending up staying six. Even then we were reluctant to leave. We felt like we were the lucky ones for having lived there so long, and may yet move back again in the future some time.

But I very quickly became aware how little I knew of Australia’s history, or of the long legacy that British colonialism had left behind. It wasn’t something we were ever taught in school, and current Australian politics were rarely covered on British news: the same old tropes of long-ago convict settlements and long-held sporting rivalries were about as far as it went.

Now here it was playing out in front of me: prime minister Kevin Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generations; the street names and statues of pioneers; the Eureka Stockade memorial; the giant Ned Kelly sculpture in Glenrowan; the casual everyday racism; the abuse frequently hurled at indigenous football stars.

The story of the American West has been told a thousand times, but as I read about Australian history, and particularly the 19th-century frontier, what surprised me more than anything were not just the many parallels with the old ‘Wild West’ myth but the fact that the Australian version was so little known. The country has been through eras of epic exploration, gold rushes, uprisings and violent conflict on a massive scale, whose stories are easily the equal of their more famous counterpart, and yet have remained – with a few exceptions – largely untold.

And perhaps with good reason. For all the accounts of noble pioneers and the ill-fated heroism of men like Burke and Wills, there is a much darker side to

British-Australian history, no better exemplified than by the Queensland Native Police: an official arm of colonial law enforcement that patrolled the 19th-century frontier, operating on the borderlands of white settlement and ‘dispersing’ indigenous Australians however and whenever they saw fit.



A brutal past: Sergeant James Whiteford with troopers, Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland c1900

Yet this wasn’t some militia: the Native Police, as with its counterparts in other British colonies, was established with the same veneer of propriety as any police force. Overseen by a commissioner, each patrol would comprise a white officer, designated by rank, and a small group of mounted Aboriginal troopers, often recruited from faraway lands. They were stationed at barracks, were well armed and well funded, and, in theory at least, subject to a precise list of operational rules.

But the realities of policing such a vast and isolated territory meant that theory and practice rarely aligned: rules were paid lip service; reports were vague and filled with euphemisms such as that infamous word ‘disperse’; blind eyes were frequently turned. The nature of the work attracted a certain kind of man; officers who, given free rein, indulged their

darkest tendencies and had no interest in following rules. Such was his reputation, one newspaper reported that on merely hearing a particular officer’s name, Aboriginals would scatter petrified into the bush.

Objections to the force’s brutality were raised, but proving wrongdoing was often impossible after the event. There was rarely any evidence. Witnesses were scarce, and scared. Many white settlers supported and relied on the Native Police, and a cloak of silence fell over their work. There were official inquiries, and sometimes a case was proven, whereupon officers would be simply reassigned or dismissed.

And this despite some historians counting the Native Police as the biggest single killer of Aboriginal people in Queensland at that time.

Eventually all these elements – the history, the landscape, the legacy of British rule – would combine in my novel, *Only Killers and Thieves*, which tells the story of two young brothers, Tommy and Billy McBride, living on their family’s isolated smallholding on the very edge of the Queensland frontier. When their parents are murdered and their sister gravely wounded, the brothers are forced

to turn to their neighbour, the wealthy ‘squatter’ John Sullivan, who in turn calls in a detachment of Native Police, led by the sinister Inspector Noone. Blaming the killings on the local Kurrong people, Sullivan and Noone lead the boys on a misguided quest for revenge, deep into the unchartered outback far beyond the settled frontier, each doing so for his own ends. The expedition will leave a stain on the colony and the country it later becomes, and force the two brothers to make choices that define the rest of their lives, devastating the relationship between them, and particularly young Tommy, forever.



Paul Howarth’s *Only Killers and Thieves* is out now (William Collins, £25)



REVIEWS

SABRINA / THE SHEPHERD'S HUT

Searching for a truth

Doug Johnstone is intrigued by two tales which show how the loss of a loved one can force a change of direction on those left behind

The disappearance or death of a character in a piece of fiction has been used for thousands of years as an inciting incident that propels the other characters into action, pushing a story forward. And while these are familiar tropes that often lead to predictable outcomes, they can be twisted into an infinite variety of new shapes in the hands of quality writers.

This week we have two very different books in terms of style and content, but both open with variations of the above. The first is the sublime *Sabrina* by American author Nick Drnaso. *Sabrina* is a large format, hardback graphic novel, and Drnaso comes out of America's indie comic scene. His styles of illustration and storytelling are deadpan and precise, and there are echoes of the likes of Adrian Tomine and Chris Ware in the stripped-back and minimalist visual style which draws the reader in and makes them complicit in the action.

The book starts with the eponymous Sabrina going missing, leaving her boyfriend and family confused, distraught and grieving. The story then switches to Calvin, a divorced Air Force technician who agrees to take in Sabrina's catatonic boyfriend Teddy in an effort to help him get back on his feet.

What could have easily turned into a murder mystery plotline is flipped on its head by a number of quiet revelations as the story continues, and the focus of Drnaso's attention becomes much wider as he looks at the way speculation and conspiracy theories around Sabrina's disappearance impact on those closest to the missing woman.

At times, the author's gaze on his downtrodden and confused cast of characters is painfully unflinching, and there is real brutality here in between the vacant stares and the numbing sense of dislocation and alienation. In an era of fake news, internet trolling and conspiracies run rampant, *Sabrina* feels like a highly relevant story, and a piercing look at how we're struggling to gauge the impact of worldwide connections on individual lives and actions. Powerful stuff.

Next up is *The Shepherd's Hut* by Australian literary heavyweight Tim Winton. In all his fiction, and more recently his



Illustration: Dom McKenzie

excellent non-fiction, Winton has dealt with how individual humans cope and interact with the vast landscapes of Australia, and *The Shepherd's Hut* is no different.

The story begins with teenager Jaxie Clackton coming home to find that his abusive father is dead under a truck that he was repairing. Jaxie's mother has recently died of cancer so with nothing to stop him he packs supplies and heads off into the brutal saltlands of Western Australia. Eventually he meets Fintan, a hermit living in the shack of the book's title, and slowly the two begin to form a kind of bond.

Like much of Winton's terrific body of work, *The Shepherd's Hut* deals with issues of toxic masculinity, and whether sons can escape the legacy of their fathers. It also dabbles in a kind of open-minded and questing spirituality, one tied to the earth and the various ways we connect with the world and the people around us.

Key to *The Shepherd's Hut's* appeal is the narrative voice, at once blustery and vulnerable, explosive and violent one minute, weirdly contemplative and smart the next. It's a voice that's utterly believable, and the book is completely immersive as a result.

Words: Doug Johnstone @doug_johnstone



Sabrina
by Nick Drnaso, out now
(Granta, £16.99)

The Shepherd's Hut
by Tim Winton, out on
June 28 (Picador, £14.99)



TOP 5 BOOKS ABOUT COMMUNES RHIANNON LUCY COSSLETT



WILD ABANDON
by Joe Dunthorne

A comic novel about a commune in rural Wales that is falling apart at the seams, this community farm is no utopian rural idyll – hence why teenage daughter Kate flees to suburbia to escape her mad hippie past, with much comedy ensuing.



ARCADIA
by Lauren Groff

An evocative, wistful portrait of a back-to-the-land 1970s commune in upstate New York, we see Arcadia through the loving eyes of sweet and sensitive Bit, who neither knows nor wants any other kind of childhood.



THE GIRLS
by Emma Cline

Loosely based on the real crimes of the Manson family, this dark narrative tells how listless teenager Evie is transfixed by and absorbed into a group of drifting Californian hippies who become murderers.



FOXLOWE
by Eleanor Wasserberg

Another dark novel, Foxlowe is a neo-Gothic tale of child Green, who lives in a crumbling old house somewhere in the north of England along with hippies and dropouts whose odd rituals hope to keep the outside world at bay.



VARIOUS PETS ALIVE & DEAD
by Marina Lewycka

This warm and funny book shows adult offspring Clara and Serge recovering from their eccentric hippie upbringing in divergent ways – Clara by becoming a do-good teacher, and Serge a loadsamoney banker, a fact he keeps hidden from his anti-capitalist parents.



The Tyranny of Lost Things
by Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett
is out now (Sandstone Press, £8.99)

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Standing out from the herd

Agnès Varda has never allowed herself to be penned in. Now a retrospective at the BFI looks back on a varied and extraordinary career

One of the delights of the Oscars hoopla last year occurred not at the main ceremony but the Governors Awards, a side event in which industry veterans are celebrated by the Academy.

Angelina Jolie and Jessica Chastain stride out to the podium to announce the next honoree: 89-year-old Belgian filmmaker **Agnès Varda**. And so on to the stage bounces up Varda, whose pageboy haircut is a striking two-tone of grey and bottle-dye brown. She makes a breezy, joyful speech, and invites Jolie, in her heels a good head taller than the diminutive Varda, to take part in an impromptu dance. The moment, which quickly went viral, turned a piece of stiff ceremony into a playful spectacle. If you don't know Varda's work, this wasn't a bad introduction.

Well, now there is an opportunity to get to know her even better. The BFI is at the start of a two-month retrospective of the filmmaker, from her early work in the mid-1950s to her enormously vivacious more recent documentaries. This week in cinemas throughout the UK is the re-release of her fiercely moving 1985 drama *Vagabond*. And the Liverpool Biennial is to host a new installation by Varda later in July.

That Biennial appearance marks the latest phase of Varda's career: in her late 70s she reinvented herself as a multimedia artist. Varda, you sense, has never been unduly concerned with restricting herself to one field. She began as a photographer – and a keen eye and snapper's curiosity about the

world and people who live in it animates her work. But she switched to making movies as a young woman, directing in 1955 *La Pointe Courte*: a drama set in a working-class fishing village whose radical style anticipated the aesthetic earthquake of French New Wave cinema only a couple of years later.

Varda would come to be associated with that seminal film movement, with a set of largely male cohorts that included François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard (who himself had a film shown at Cannes this year). *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962), her exquisitely controlled and sensitive real-time study of a pop star contemplating her demise, is a New Wave masterpiece. But she's also too restless and quicksilver a talent to be defined through membership to a single group of filmmakers, however historically significant.

Vagabond remains defiantly hard to categorise, except to say this drama about a homeless young woman (brilliantly played by Sandrine Bonnaire) in rural France is Varda at her finest: emotionally unsparing, stylistically bold, and in keen sympathy with those in the margins of society, especially women.

For me, the documentaries Varda made in her middle age and beyond are just as important. The films she made about her late husband, fellow director Jacques Demy,

are heartfelt, intensely personal works of cinema, made with the rigour you'd expect from a master filmmaker but with the intimacy of a family photo album. And at the turn on of the last millennium Varda moved away from large-scale studio endeavours to pick up a small digital camcorder, exhilarated by the potential for a new way of making films.

Case in point: her 2000 film *The Gleaners and I*, one of the great movies of recent times.

Following a handful of French people who subsist on leftovers – the term refers to unharvested crops but applies more widely to the things consumer society discards

– this is an absorbing, wide-ranging essay film: part documentary, part art history, part autobiography, and especially concerned, like the rest of her work, with the otherwise neglected or taken-for-granted experience of women, it is Varda at her most curious and humane. Her latest documentary *Faces Places* (main image), a collaboration with French photographer JR, earned her an Oscar nomination.

Agnès Varda: Vision of an Artist runs at the BFI until the end of July


FINAL REEL

The world of competitive cycling is exhilaratingly brought to life in *Time Trial*, a visually striking documentary about cyclist David Millar's final year in the sport.



Edward Lawrenson @EdwardLawrenson

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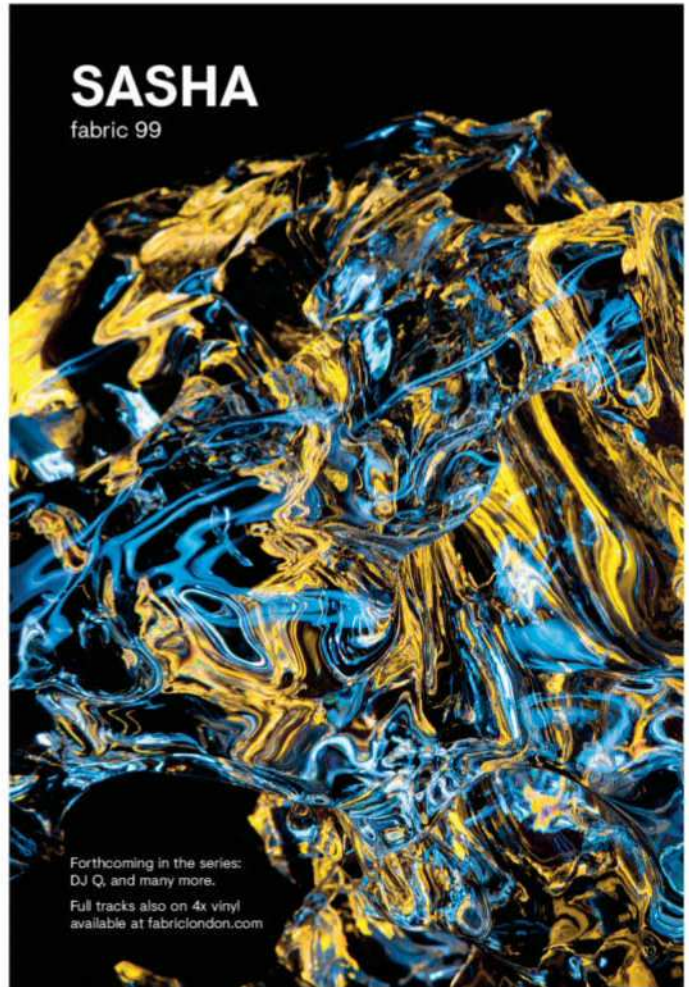
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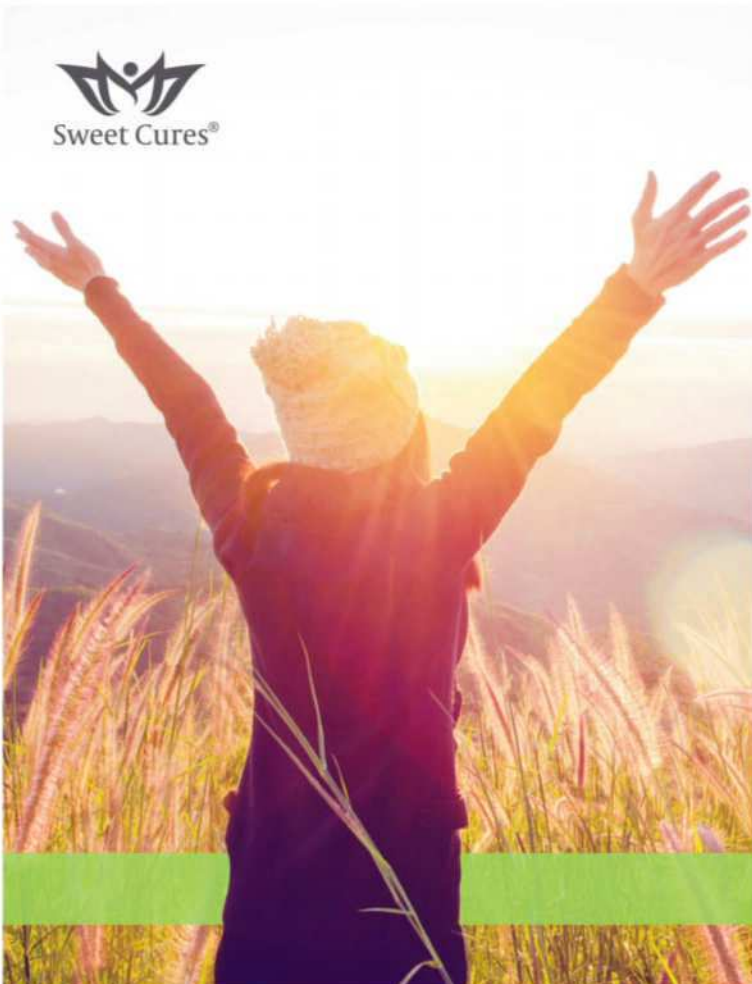
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Saga Norén might not do niceties, but she'll always crack the case

A friend in the dark

TV's venturing into new territory with characters who don't always fit in. And it's not a moment too soon

It might not be the politically correct way to say it – but I am half-barmy. Riddled with anxiety I am. Up to the eyeballs in the stuff, according to the old head-shrinkers. I'm the sort of fella who is up all night worrying that a receipt I forgot to submit in my last VAT return might, through some outlandish sequence of events that seem perfectly rational to me at times of peak-barmyness, land me in the nick.

Who knows why I have such a surfeit of worry buzzing about in my head? I can tell you it's a bloody pain in the arse and I could do without it. But don't worry about me, gentle reader, I've got family and friends and prescription medicine and a nice lady who I see once a week for a chinwag. I'll be fine. And perhaps by sharing the fact that I'm a bit, in the parlance of my dear old mum (herself a fruitcake) "bonkers in the



nut", it might just help a few others struggling with similar issues.

TV is doing its bit too with shows like **Homeland**, where Carrie Mathison's struggles with bipolar disorder have not

“Plenty of us struggle with some sort of bollocks and for years we assumed we were on our own”

stopped her from saving the world from terrorists for seven seasons. Then there are shows like **The Bridge** and **The Big Bang Theory**. One is a mainstream sitcom about science nerds. The other is a dark Scandinavian police drama. Both feature protagonists who are widely perceived as being on the autistic spectrum. Not that being

autistic is a mental health disorder, of course. But the two things can often go hand in hand. In any case, these are likeable, iconic characters struggling with conditions that were rarely tackled in such a way by popular entertainment until very recently. Sheldon Cooper in *The Big Bang Theory* (left) is a highly intelligent physicist who delivers the bulk of the show's laughs by being insensitive to the feelings of his friends.

Over on *The Bridge* there is Saga Norén: a detective whose brilliance at police work is entwined with her seemingly cold and detached personality. Like Sheldon she is oblivious to the impact of her insensitive words and actions. She doesn't mean to hurt people's feelings and when she realises what she has done she feels bad about it. They are both flawed heroes. But just as our TV heroes used to struggle with alcohol or complex love lives, now they are just as likely to struggle with mental health or neurological issues.

The point I'm making is that there are plenty of us struggling with some sort of bollocks and for years we assumed we were on our own. Now there are characters playing prominent roles in popular culture who might be a bit bananas but are admirable, relatable and brilliant all the same.

Sam Delaney @DelaneyMan

On the ropes

Just over a decade ago Kate Nash burst on to the music scene and more recently has played Rhonda 'Britannica' Richardson in Netflix hit *GLOW*, about a female wrestling syndicate in the 1980s. But which career comes with harder knocks?

The Big Issue: From singing to wrestling, how did that come about?

Kate Nash: The casting call said wrestling, spandex and glitter and I just knew I had to go for it.

I'm attracted to anything that is very female-driven. I suppose a lot of what we see that is put out in the wrestling world is very male-dominated. I remember watching it as a kid and it was just all these men and I was just like, 'eurghhh, this is boring'.

Have you changed your mind now you've been in the ring?

Wrestling is a combination of so many things, it's like a mix of dance, performance and fighting. It's an incredibly skilled thing to be able to do. What people are able to do with their bodies is jaw-dropping to be honest, and after watching it live and doing it myself I really get it now.

How do you compare performing as a wrestler or as an actor versus performing as a musician?

Well, there are three different things. Acting is completely different, which has definitely helped me with the discipline in my music career. In music people are so unprofessional, I think it's one of the most unprofessional industries in the world. It's all about emotion and feeling or whatever the thing is you're trying to sell. But I really like the discipline that comes from acting, because there is like 300 people on set and if I don't show up then I'm affecting all of

these people. I guess you could apply the same to music, but there is a selfish kind of entitlement that comes with being an artist and how people around artists treat them.



Holding out for a heroine: Nash with Britney Young in *GLOW*

Since your debut album [2007's *Made Of Bricks*] you've been about empowering women and speaking up, where do you get that from?

I have to say that comes from my family, my sisters and growing up in a very loud female household. Growing up, my mum always challenged us intellectually and we debated political topics at home, but me and my sisters would also scrap a lot. I mean we love each other and are so close. But I almost feel like that physicality between us has meant that we are so close now. My mum is very outspoken. If we were in a hotel or a restaurant and something was wrong, she would always speak up and address the issue. I think a lot of women are taught not to be like that.

With #MeToo and Time's Up, is it better for women now?

I think we are making progress, but there is still a long way to go. It's very important to see how many men have done this to women in the industry, and how many behave like this and how normal it is. Because that's the problem, it's such a normalised culture of disrespect to women in so many different degrees. It's not really shocking for us now, because I don't know a woman who hasn't got one of these stories. Beginning to drag up all the mess is the only way we are going to be able to clean it up and start to change things for the better.

Season two of *GLOW* will be on Netflix from June 29. Kate Nash was speaking to Rhia O'Reilly, a two-time Pro Wrestling EVE (often called the 'real-life *GLOW*') champion, who works on the fundraising team of The Big Issue Foundation. Read more and view clips at [@rdpixie](http://bigissue.com)

MUSIC

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A matter of taste

Is it ever a good idea to take on the critics?
After all, everyone's allowed to be wrong sometimes

Music critics frequently misfire. History often puts these views into comical perspective, as works once ridiculed become revered. Take Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, a well established if not always beloved part of the orchestral repertoire today, but declared by a contemporary to the composer to "put the patience of the audience thorough a severe trial". Well, what artist cares about the comfort of the audience? John Ruskin took an unequally unflattering and broader view that "Beethoven always sounds to me like the upsettings of bags of nails, with here and there an also dropped hammer." Ouch.

Comments like these do not seem to have done Beethoven's reputation any harm: practically every concert hall in the land will feature his music at multiple points during their seasons. Upcoming highlights include pianist Imogen Cooper's Wigmore concert on June 26 (Beethoven's Eleven new Bagatelles for piano, Op.119 and the 'Diabelli Variations', Op.120) and Prom 9, which includes the aforementioned Ninth (the 'Choral' symphony) on July 21 at the Royal Albert Hall. The trial awaits.

Understandably, at times musicians respond to critics. Replies are often direct (thanks, social media) or convoluted (thinly veiled questioning of a reviewer's ability in interview responses or similar). However, the response doesn't often take the form of a full-page advert in the publication that has appeared to wrong them, as Pamela Tan Nicholson did recently. In an open letter, the director of

new stage show *Trioperas* – who also happens to be superstar violinist Vanessa Mae's mother – lambasted *Times* critic Richard Morrison for his review of her company's recent project, and questioned why he attended at all knowing full well it would not be his "dainty cup of tea". (If true, this is a fair point: it does not do to review events or recordings that you suspect you'll hate, it brings too much hidden bias into the writing.)

Tan Nicholson disliked Morrison's assertion that *Trioperas'* reimagining of the genre in their recent production was for the "age of disco and gnat-sized attention spans". Firstly, how thrilling to learn that we are living in the age of disco. Secondly, not everyone – particularly newcomers to opera – wants to sit through the *Ring Cycle*. Unfortunately, Tan Nicholson also accused Morrison of cultural elitism – while apparently missing the irony that her company had presumably paid a premium for this significant publicity. One assumes, given the rules surrounding the right to reply, that the publication would have published the correspondence in its letters section free of charge.

When presented thoughtfully, informed reviews act as a valuable form of peer review – but they are simply one person's opinion. Personally, I agree with George Bernard Shaw, who declared Brahms' Requiem "execrably and ponderously dull"; of course if I was to air that view in print I'd be derided.

Claire Jackson @claireiswriting

Michael Jackson by Andy Warhol 1984.
Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery

OUT AND ABOUT

DAY OF THE JACKO

Michael Jackson: On The Wall (June 28-October 21, Trafalgar Square, London; npg.org.uk) coincides with what would have been the singer's 60th birthday and shows the influence he had not on music and choreography but rather on art. Andy Warhol drew on his image for his work, and this exhibition brings together pieces by 40 artists who used his fame and cultural impact as the starting point for their creations. We are very familiar with his impact as a musician but less so with his impact as a muse.

Staying with music, **The Influence Project** (June 27-August 22, Aldwych, London; somersethouse.org.uk) is a free exhibition of photographic portraits of key figures in R&B, funk, soul, hip-hop and Afrobeat – including George Clinton, Shuggie Otis, Bill Withers, Candi Staton, Michael Kiwanuka and Laura Mvula – showing how their musical and cultural influence still reverberates down the years.

For those focused on flora, **Hampton Court Palace Flower Show** (July 3-8,



Hampton Court, London; rhs.org.uk) should get your green fingers itching, with horticulturalists elevating gardening to fine art.

In the Midlands, it's **Lavender Month** (July 1-31, Birmingham; birminghammuseums.org.uk) where you can wander around the grounds of Blakesley Hall for free (except Mondays when it is closed) inhaling the perfume. There are even lavender scarecrows, which makes a change from ones stuffed with musty straw.

For the eternal child, there are two linked displays on offer in Coventry. **An Exploration Of Toys, Games & Fun** (June 30-September 23, Coventry; theherbert.org) is a free exhibition tracing the history of play back 2,000 years. The items may change, but the fundamentals stay the same. And bringing us reasonably up to date, **Rare: From 8-Bit To Xbox One** (same location/dates) showcases what local company Rare has achieved in terms of video game development.

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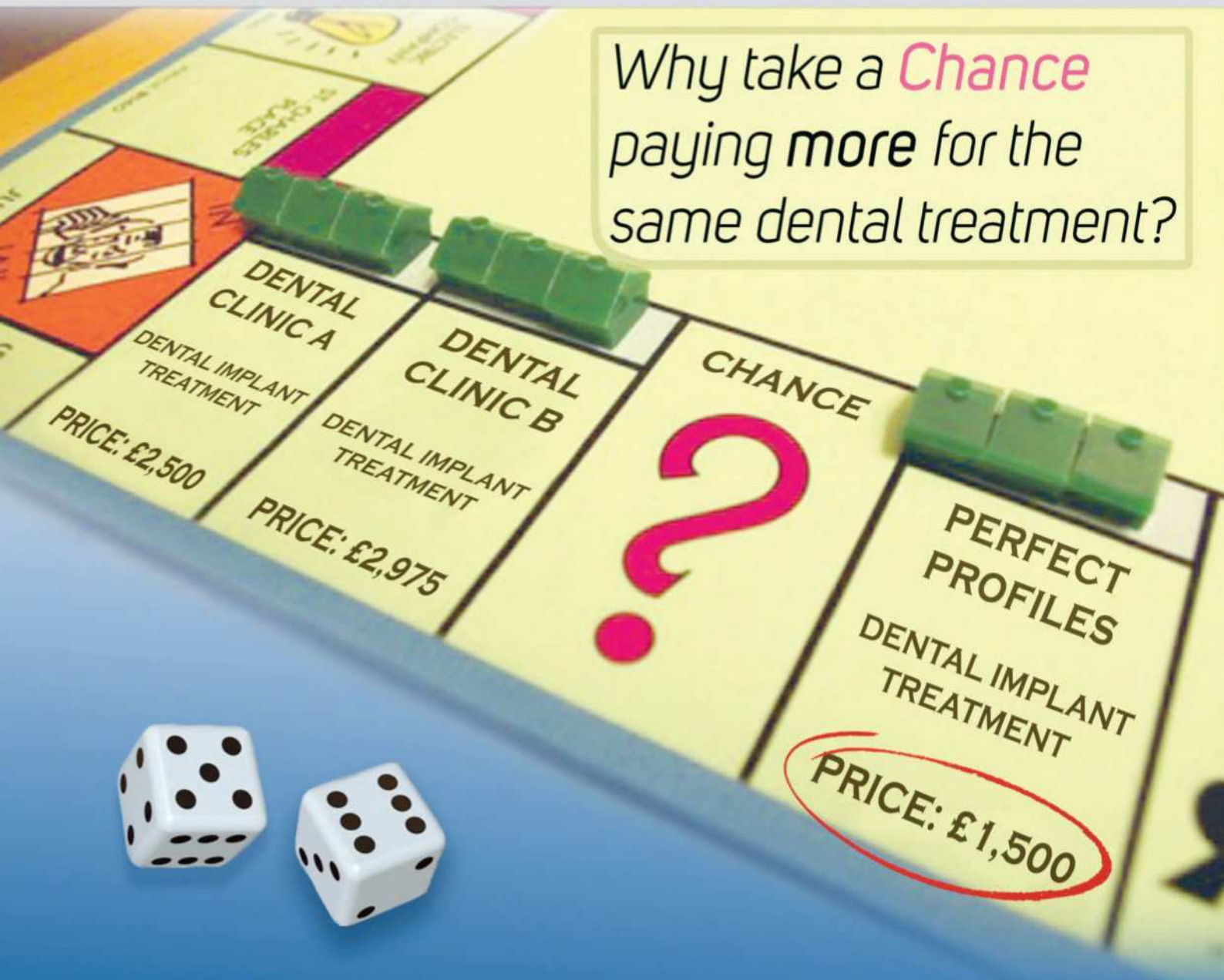
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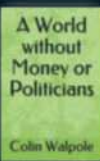
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Dorothy Nicolle

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"The course helped me to discover something I enjoyed and has given me a greater understanding about the way the English language works. I am more confident in my writing and feel able to give advice or make corrections in other people's work."



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The breathtakingly beautiful, otherworldly fairytale *The Shape Of Water* is out now on Digital Download, 4K Ultra HDTM, Blu-ray and DVD.

The film triumphed this awards season with Guillermo del Toro (the award-winning *Pan's Labyrinth*), picking up Best Director at the Academy Awards, Baftas and Golden Globes. It also won Best Picture at the Academy Awards and Best Original Score at both the Academy Awards and Baftas.

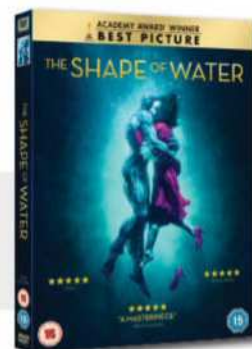
To celebrate the release, we are giving away a fantastic *The Shape Of Water* bundle, including a copy of the DVD, a poster signed by del Toro, a coffee table art book, a colour-changing mug and matching umbrella and a copy of the magical soundtrack.



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

Which other award-winning 2006 film was *The Shape Of Water* director Guillermo del Toro behind?

Send answers with **WATER** 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 10. 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

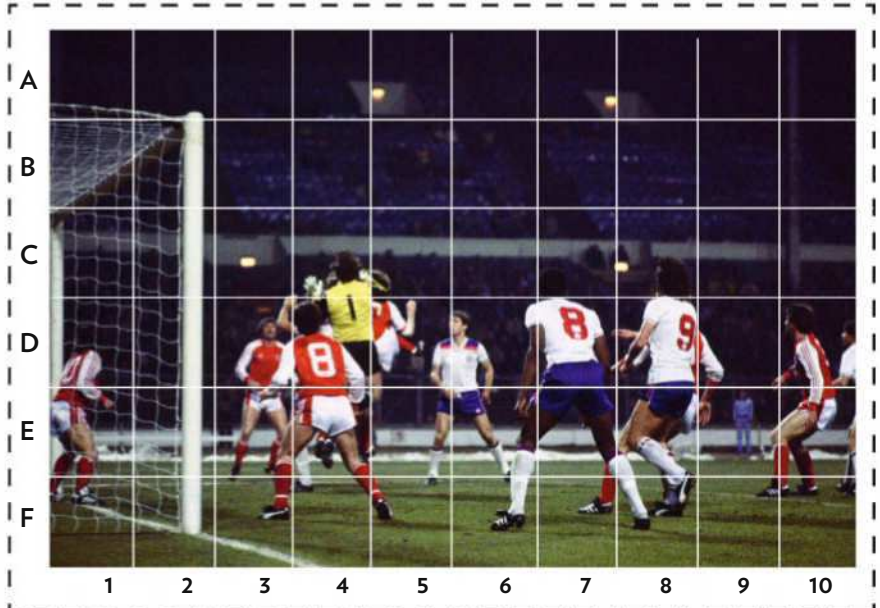
		8						3	5
		3		2	5	6			8
2			7	9					
									6
				3			1	9	
3									1
		5	1		7				
7	6		9						

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 1312 SOLUTION

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

SPOT THE BALL



Photos: Action Images

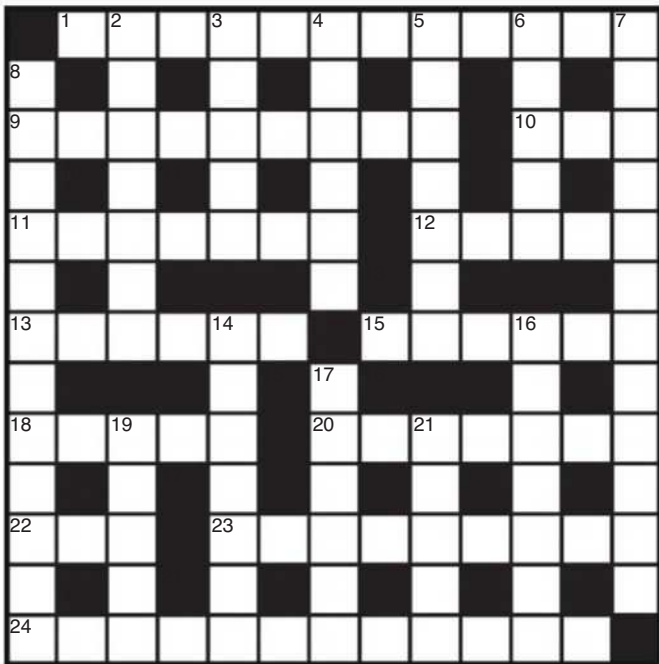


To win *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn mark where you think the ball is, cut out and send to: Spot the Ball (1313), 43 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 1HW, by July 3. Include name, address, phone no. Enter by email: send grid position (eg A1) to competitions@bigissue.com.

(Last week's Spot the Ball revealed: Wimbledon v Liverpool (1989))



PRIZE CROSSWORD



CRYPTIC CLUES

- Across**
- Afflictions that are said to follow trials (12)
 - Ten boats I placed at random, being stubborn (9)
 - Animal going east and west alternately (3)
 - Gifts of old money (7)
 - Flaccid fellow first in the side (5)
 - Complain about the French being weak (6)
 - The prohibition of one from an ancient Greek city (6)
 - Liam's new religion (5)
 - Mechanical device used to catch deserters? (3,4)
 - Incorporating small US company (3)
 - Meet for a fight (9)
 - Become pointedly annoyed (3,3,6)
- Down**
- Decide to do the puzzle again (7)
 - Brian, another Scottish child (5)
 - Establish co-operation with Eli as I collapsed (6)
 - Glorious day or night of comedy? (7)
 - Last character appearing in home game (5)
 - In which actor will be no doubt be saying his piece (8,4)
 - Must this be paid for before the undertaker's fees? (4,2,6)
 - Beat girl to London borough (7)
 - Alternatively there was another blast going round the reformatory (7)
 - Be about right to study Welsh town (6)
 - Allowed some publicity (5)
 - Ceasefire during the curtain-raiser! (5)

QUICK CLUES

- Across**
- Adjustable spanner (6,6)
 - Put too many notes into circulation (9)
 - By way of (3)
 - Bishopric (7)
 - Cove (5)
 - Dangerous (6)
 - Horrified (6)
 - board (5)
 - Italian dumplings (7)
 - Rob ---, Scottish outlaw (3)
 - Feeling a desire for a drink (9)
 - Food shop (12)
- Down**
- Burdensome (7)
 - Cutting implement (5)
 - Sycophants (inf.) (3-3)
 - Staggering (7)
 - New (5)
 - Affections (5-7)
 - Cheerful (4-8)
 - Wild (7)
 - Attribute (7)
 - Self-centred person (6)
 - Pastoral poem (5)
 - Fertile spot in desert (5)

To win a Chambers Dictionary, send completed crosswords (either cryptic or quick) to: The Big Issue Crossword (1313), second floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW by July 3. Include your name, address and phone number.
 Issue 1311 winner is Rosemary Thomson from Wishaw

Issue 1312 solution
CRYPTIC: Across – 1 Lazybones; 6 Cod; 8 Agreed to terms; 9 Hooch; 10 Tidings; 11 Valise; 13 Scythe; 16 Nearest; 18 Might; 20 Fair-and-square; 22 Nag; 23 Slate club.
Down – 1 Lea; 2 Zorro; 3 Beeches; 4 Notate; 5 Sated; 6 Coronet; 7 Dustsheet; 9 Having fun; 12 Leading; 14 Comique; 15 Stadia; 17 Evans; 19 Grail; 21 Ebb.
QUICK: Across – 1 Pottering; 6 Ham; 8 Lepidopterist; 9 Purge; 10 Longish; 11 Nudism; 13 Bungle; 16 Enforce; 18 Cutis; 20 Ornamentation; 22 Toe; 23 Outspoken.
Down – 1 Pal; 2 Taper; 3 Endless; 4 Impala; 5 Glean; 6 Hailing; 7 Matchless; 9 Pentecost; 12 Defence; 14 Unclasp; 15 Rennet; 17 Romeo; 19 Thick; 21 Nun.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH





Ben G

THE BIG ISSUE, AUSTRALIA

“The Big Issue is a symbol of fighting back”

THIS WEEK WE VISIT... AUSTRALIA

My Pitch takes a trip down under to meet Ben G who sells The Big Issue Australia on Victoria Bridge in Brisbane. Our sister street paper has just turned 22 – happy birthday to them!



I've been a musician all my life, and it's one of my greatest inspirations. I grew up in Glasgow, where I had a terrific mum and dad, three younger sisters, a great family. We were very close. I used to listen to the music my dad listened to, like Nat King Cole, Roy Orbison, Bing Crosby. My mum twisted my arm into getting piano lessons. What I really wanted was a guitar! So I convinced my dad to teach me to play when I was about 12.

I stayed in Glasgow until I was about 24, and then the wanderlust hit. I went to London, and spent 10 years there, before deciding I wanted to lead a rural life, so bought a farm with a whole boatload of goats. I didn't know much about goats, but I read all the goat books I could find and farmed for a few years, with moderate success. After farming I went to university. I came away with a Masters, but soon realised a degree in sociology probably won't take you anywhere.

So I turned my attention back to music, and started playing in bands

with the guy who'd go on to be one of my greatest friends. We started supporting big names and doing pretty well. We were getting older, and we hadn't really made it, so I decided to move to Australia and try to reinvent myself.

Moving to Australia was a bit of a disaster. Within 18 months, I had paralysis in my left arm. It was a matter of waking up one day with pins and needles, and by the evening I had a totally paralysed arm and clawed fingers. My wife rushed me to hospital. It's taken years of investigation to work out that I have some sort of degenerative neurological disease. Thankfully I have the best doctor in the world, who's trying to make it degenerate in slow motion. I get injections every few months.

My condition meant that I lost everything. I could no longer work, I lost all my money, I got incredibly depressed and ended up becoming homeless. I discovered in that time that there isn't much demand for one-armed guitarists.

When I started selling The Big Issue I kind of thought that this was the end of

the world, you know? I perceived myself as down-and-out, living in homeless accommodation... it was pretty tough. I still remember standing on the bridge, holding a magazine, unable to move my arm because it was in a cast to try to keep it outstretched. Now I view The Big Issue as a symbol of fighting back, of not giving up. The Big Issue really dug me out of a hole.

The social aspect is just as important as the financial aspect. I'm deeply indebted to my customers, they're the ones responsible for turning my life around. A few years ago, a customer begged me to go and get physiotherapy, and paid for six months of treatment. I eventually got my hand moving. I was able to play guitar again. I can't play to the standards that I used to play, but I can hold down the chords. It's the first step of a long journey, but it's a start. And like all things in life, you'll never get anywhere without taking that first step.

Interview: Kurt Maroske

Photo: Barry Street

THE BIG SLEEP OUT 2018



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9pm - 7am

Friday 16th
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