

Honi Soit

WEEK 1, SEMESTER 1, 2021

FIRST PRINTED 1929



Voices of resistance in the Pilliga / P 12

Mardi Gras to hit
the streets / P 5

Decolonising our
food systems / P 10

Fascism in
Australian metal / P 17



Acknowledgement of Country



Honi Soit is published on the sovereign land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, who were amongst the first to resist against and survive the violence of colonisation. This land was taken without consent and sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Indigenous students and staff at the University.

As a team of settlers occupying the lands of the Gadigal, Dharug, Wangal, Bidjegal, Kuringgai and Wallumedgal

people, we are the beneficiaries of ongoing colonial dispossession. The settler-colonial project of 'Australia' and all its institutions, including the University, are built on the exclusion of First Nations peoples and the devaluation of Indigenous knowledge systems. Beneath the sandstone buildings of USyd lie thousands of years of Aboriginal history.

Colonialism is not a one-time event that occurred in the distant past; it is an ongoing structure. The genocide of First Nations people is perpetuated

and enabled by the government, who push ahead with the forced removals of Aboriginal children from their families, their Country, and their cultures. Aboriginal peoples are the most incarcerated on earth, and there have been nearly 450 documented Indigenous deaths in custody since the 1991 Royal Commission.

We pledge to actively stand in solidarity with First Nations movements towards decolonisation through our editorial decisions, and to be reflective when we fail to do so.

We commit to being a counterpoint to mainstream media's silencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We remain cognisant that Honi's writers and readership are predominantly made up of settlers, and aim to platform Indigenous voices in our paper.

There is no justice without Indigenous justice.

Always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Editor-in-Chief:

Deandre Espejo.

Editors:

Vivienne Guo, Marlow Hurst, Jeffrey Khoo, Juliette Marchant, Shania O'Brien, Claire Ollivain, Max Shanahan, Alice Trenoweth-Creswell.

Writers:

Iggy Boyd, Danny Cabubas, Victoria Cooper, Alexandre Douglas, Oscar Eggleton, Isabel Freudenstein, Niamh Gallagher, Nishta Gupta, Ariyana Hossain, Rohan Kalyan, Amelia Koen, Tasia Kuznichenko, Patrick McKenzie, Angeliq Minas, Angelina Nguyen, Amelia Raines, Khanh Tran.

Artists:

Lauren Lancaster, Dmitry Kuznichenko, Isla Mowbray.

Cover artist:

Lauren Lancaster.

Editorial

As we were laying up the first edition of Honi last weekend, our internet server woefully crashed, killing all our InDesign files as well as our hopes of a breezy weekend. Some of us made the responsible choice of going home. The more naive editors — including myself — stayed up all night in the hopes that the server would miraculously connect again. Of course, while that miracle never arrived, those waking hours of defeat were incredibly formative.

At dawn, three of us sat atop the empty Law Building in silence, watching the sun rise up from behind the clouds. As the sunlight caught on the trees, it seemed as though they were embossed onto the landscape, immemorial guardians watching over the sleeping beast of the city. With all my walls down, I was able to fully appreciate for the first time just how beautiful this land, Gadigal land, is.

This edition is my ode to Country and to all those in the fight against

colonisation.

In Vivienne Guo's feature on page 12, she writes about her trip to the Pilliga Forest, highlighting the stories of those on Gamilaraay land fighting against mining giants. On page 10, I write about Australia's native foods which have protected life for millennia. On page 16, Tasia Kuznichenko reflects on the untold history of Cooks River, which has long been a place of sustenance and survival for First Nations people.

Decolonisation necessitates the dismantling of all institutionalised hierarchies. On page 8, Amelia Raines examines the patterns of sexual assault fuelled by the university institution. On page 17, Iggy Boyd interrogates the fascist and white supremacist imagery endemic in Australian metal. On page 5, Alice interviews activists reclaiming Mardi Gras as a street protest. On page 11, Rohan Kalyan critiques the dehumanisation of jobless people in

Centrelink training courses.

Of course, this edition contains too many brilliant articles for me to mention. Thank you to all of the writers and artists who have made this edition possible. In particular, Lauren Lancaster's stunning cover art ties together this edition with its evocative depiction of the poisoning of sacred land and ecosystems by fossil fuel companies.

It's pretty daunting to be writing the week one Honi editorial of 2021. For something that most readers gloss over, there's an odd expectation to galvanise or inspire people in these four hundred words. We are expected to be irreverent but tasteful, funny but poignant, a little bit deranged. But I write this editorial with a newfound confidence, and if our first two editions are indicative of what Honi will be like this year, I can't wait for what's to come.

Deandre Espejo

Letters

Honi's Love Letter

Dear Honi Soit,

Like the jacarandas flowering in spring and the first chilly breeze down Eastern Avenue, the arrival of the first Honi edition signifies a new beginning, a renewal and revitalisation of the university community. For the 50 years I have been prowling Eastern Avenue, the smell of fresh print in February never fails to invigorate my senses. I wish you the best of luck in all your editorial endeavours, and I leave you with this quote from Giovanni Boccaccio:

"You must read, you must persevere, you must sit up nights, you must inquire, and exert the utmost power of your mind. If one way does not lead to the desired meaning, take another; if obstacles arise, then still another; until, if your strength holds out, you will find that clear which at first looked dark."

Kind regards,
Anon

In defence of Garton

Dear Editors,

I was very excited to pick up the Welcome Week edition of Honi Soit, however I have some major gripes. Your piece on USyd sharing the float with the NSW Police was offensive

to say the least. Stephen Garton has been nothing but a loyal ally to the LGBTQI+ community since he stepped into the role of Vice Chancellor. The USyd Mardi Gras profile picture is a massive step in the right direction. Your appropriation of the pride flag, however, was in poor taste, as was the limp hand. The voluntary redundancies are a major issue on campus. To make light of them is simply bad satire. 'Boots the house down'...what does that even mean. You've lost a loyal Honi reader.

Yours Begrudgingly,
Anonymous

Crime without punishment?

Dear Abe,

I am an impoverished student who came to you late last year regarding a moral quandary I was experiencing in relation to the activities of a rapacious elderly pawnbroker living in the upstairs bedroom of my Newtown sharehouse. While your advice to axe-murder the elderly lady initially sated my disgust at her predatory tactics and gave me an animalistic thrill, I have since been wracked by nerves and guilt. I urgently need your advice: should I hand myself in to atone for the horrible crime I have committed, or

can I afford to live with the guilt? Also, could you please forward me some prison abolition literature?

I await your response eagerly.
Cheers,
Rodion Raskolnikov

Stipend Saviour

Dear Honi Soit,

I have long been an ardent supporter of Honi and their ceaseless mission to expose wrongdoing, achieve justice and produce juvenile jokes. I have heard word of your noble struggle to overcome the austerity politics of SRC President Swapnik Sanagavarupu and achieve a rightfully deserved stipend increase. I was incensed at the callous attitude he displayed on Page 2 of last week's edition. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that I will be donating a large sum of money to you — the poverty-stricken, truth-seeking editors of Honi Soit.

Please forward me your bank details.

Thanks,
AS

Write us letters!



Email us at editors@honisoit.com

Save the Date: Honi Soit party

On Wednesday 10th of March, Honi will be hitting the pub to celebrate the start of Semester. See our Facebook page for more details.

Write, create and produce for Honi Soit

Interested in reporting or making art for Australia's largest and best student newspaper? Email us at editors@honisoit.com or message us over on our Facebook, Twitter or Instagram pages.

What's on this week

Filmsoc drinks and opening night screening

4 March 2021
Courtyard Restaurant and Bar

Join Filmsoc for drinks and pizza (FREE for members, \$5 for non-members) at Courtyard at 5pm before heading to a screening of Bong Joon-ho's *Memories of Murder* at New Law Lecture Theatre 101!

SUDS Slot 3 Rotare

29 March - 3 April
The Cellar Theatre

SUDS acting auditions for a first year showcase, no experience necessary (only prerequisite is enthusiasm)! Auditions are this week and we can't wait to see you! Scan the code for more info!



HOW MANY? TOO MANY! USyd WoCo demands a rape-free campus

3 March
Front of Quad, USyd campus

Join a protest organised by USyd WoCo drawing attention to the reality that during Orientation Week, 1 in 8 of all incidents of sexual violence on campus are perpetrated, and calling for the colleges to be dismantled and replaced with affordable student housing.

Mardi Gras March 2021: Take Over Oxford Street

2pm Saturday 6 March
Taylor Square

A Mardi Gras with No Cops, No Corporations, No Conservatives. Pride without compromise, for and by the community - a free-to-attend, real Mardi Gras for the liberation of everyone. Demands are:
#KilltheBill
#NoPrideInDetention
#DecrimSexWork
#LegaliseAllDrugsNow

Enviro Collective's Welcome Week Drinks

4pm 5 March 2021
Royal Hotel,
370 Abcrombie Street

A get-to-know each other event for members of the USyd Enviro Collective with free food and drinks. There is a limit of 50 people in indoor venues so fill out the contact tracing form on their Facebook event.

Disclaimer: Honi Soit is published by the Students' Representative Council, University of Sydney, Level 1 Wentworth Building, City Road, University of Sydney NSW 2006. The SRC's operation costs, space and administrative support are financed by the University of Sydney. Honi Soit is printed under the auspices of the SRC's Directors of Student Publications (DSP): Jayfel Tulabing-Lee, Shiyue (Stephanie) Zhang, Shiqi (Josie) Jiang, Paola Ayre, Xi (Joe) Guo and Ben Jorgensen. All expressions are published on the basis that they are not to be regarded as the opinions of the SRC unless specifically stated. The Council accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of any of the opinions or information contained within this newspaper, nor does it endorse any of the advertisements and insertions. Please direct all advertising inquiries to publications.manager@src.usyd.edu.au.



Miss Soit

Sydney Uni's SAUCIEST socialite!

Dear plumptious beauties,

While Eastern Avenue might have been quiet this week, my sources certainly haven't been! This is just a taste of the sordid secrets I am privy to....

Server crashes - sabotage?

It was just before the stroke of midnight, and Miss Soit was applying the finishing touches to her column before settling in for a night of epicurean delights. When to my surprise, the Honi server — containing all my slippery secrets — finished early once again! Who could be behind such a sinful act... and what have they got to hide?

Secret snacks

USU Directors have been strangely secretive about their eating habits, refusing to release their meal cards. I wonder what our devilish Directors could be gobbling down their throats? Someone tells me that Horny Hines was 'very much' against the motion.

BO\$\$ BITCH

Interfaith Officer Jayfel Tulabing is rumoured to be running for the executive of the Women in STEM Society, despite being in a completely different faculty! We love a minx who can get anything she wants.

Water sports

USU Director Receding Rigby made a hasty exit from last week's Board meeting, citing "family reasons." Imagine my surprise when Receding Rigby was spotted swanning about on the Hawkesbury River — with a boatload of silver foxes — while the meeting was still ongoing! Perhaps his fellow Board members aren't giving him the attention he craves.

Tankies gone WILD!

Sydney Socialist Alternative's finest specimens took a cute day trip down to Wollongong last week, to join Juicy Jack Mansell's new outpost. It seems that Mansell's membership isn't as big as it seems...

Deep, deep web

Cheeky Chuyi, of FIT fame and fortune, failed to deliver not one but TWO pitched articles on time! He certainly had Honi editors BEGGING for him to deliver.



Art by Shania O'Brien

Facebook to reverse its ban on news in Australia

Jeffrey Khoo reports.

Facebook is set to reverse its ban on news content in Australia after the federal government agreed to concessions on its proposed media bargaining code.

After a tense wait for Australian media outlets, Facebook promised on Tuesday afternoon to restore news for Australian users in the coming days.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Communications Minister Paul Fletcher have signaled that the code may not apply to Facebook if it has struck enough deals with news outlets.

However, the company has warned that it may pull news from Australia again if the government later decides to apply the code to Facebook.

Facebook restricted Australian

users from viewing or sharing news content on Thursday morning, after negotiations with the government broke down.

The ban was applied to news outlets not covered under the code, such as student media organisations, and seemingly unrelated pages such as the Bureau of Meteorology and emergency alert pages. Facebook apologised and restored non-news pages, but kept student and independent media pages locked.

The National Union of Students, alongside 27 student media and representative organisations, released a statement criticising the ban and highlighting how students depend on social media platforms to access news.

The proposed code requires digital platforms with substantial “market power” like Facebook, Google and any platforms they own to negotiate revenue deals with major Australian news outlets for publishing news content on their platform. Before the ban, Facebook received a significant share of advertising revenue when an Australian user clicked on or read a news article.

It also includes what is known as “final offer arbitration” – if a deal cannot be reached within three months, an independent arbitrator will make a binding decision on which of the two proposed deals will apply.

Other amendments proposed on Tuesday include that the government

must notify digital platforms if it decides the code applies to them, taking into account any deals they have struck.

Google signed a \$30 million deal with Nine (publisher of The Sydney Morning Herald) last week, backing down from its initial threat to remove its Search function from Australia. A number of other news organisations have since made similar deals.

Frydenberg promised that Facebook will now engage in “good faith” negotiations with relevant media outlets. The code is likely to pass the Senate this week.

The Board is back

Max Shanahan reports.

The USU Board held its first meeting of the year yesterday afternoon, considering reviews, revues and revenues. The Board was joined for the first time by a new Senate-Appointed Director (SAD), David Wright, whose dual role as the University’s Director of Treasury and Financial Control has drawn the ire of some. New CEO Andrew Mills also attended his first board meeting.

SAD

Over summer, David Wright was appointed to the Board by the Senate, replacing Jane Drummond. Wright is also the University’s Director of Treasury and Financial Control. The appointment of a high-ranked University decision-maker to the Board represents a marked change of approach from the Senate, whose recent appointments have generally not been involved in the day-to-day affairs of the University. Current and former Directors told *Honi* that they could not recall a SAD with such close connections to University management.

The appointment may foreshadow closer involvement from the University in the affairs of the USU. Last year, in a significant shift, SADs intervened in executive elections to swing the Presidency in favour of Irene Ma. Wright’s appointment appears to be a continuation of this trend, with his secondment to the Finance Committee especially important as the USU seeks to navigate out of choppy financial waters with the JobKeeper cliff approaching.

One person familiar with the USU told *Honi* that “if the USU was serious about its independence with the University, it can’t have university

decision makers also be USU decision makers.” Tom Raue, who has had his own well-publicised battles with University administration while a USU Director, told *Honi* that it was “deeply inappropriate” to have a University decision-maker on the board.

A University spokesperson said that “Given the work that David had been doing with the USU last year in responding to the challenges of COVID-19 he was considered well suited to be a Senate nominee.”

Revues

Revues will go ahead in 2021.

Elections

Despite the return of students to campus and relaxed COVID restrictions, the USU election looks likely to be an online affair this year.

SSAF funding for an in-person election was not made available by the University, which, according to President Ma, necessitated online polling. The SRC has faced similar reluctance from the University to fund in-person elections.

In-person campaigning will be allowed in accordance with COVID guidelines.

Simone Whetton, a former SAD, was appointed as Returning Officer. Dr Penelope Crossley, a former USU Vice President and current Law Faculty Associate Professor, will be the Electoral Arbiter.

PULP

Today’s meeting was presaged by the appointment of three new editors to PULP. Enjoying the privilege of an \$8,000 stipend each, *Honi* looks forward to seeing PULP’s editors working 37.5% harder than us! Curiously, no PULP representatives were sighted by *Honi* at the Board meeting. Your student dollars, not at work!

motions were not included in the motion. Former USU Secretary Dane Luo, in his recent resignation letter, pointedly urged all Directors to “seriously consider all of the Secretariat’s recommendations and swiftly make recommendations that will benefit the membership.”

Interestingly, the USU advertised for four editors, in addition to a newly created ‘Senior Editor’ position. Only three editors were appointed, with no Senior Editor. President Ma said “upon consideration of regrowth and rebuilding, we need to consider the needs of students and the effects of COVID.” Cost, therefore, appears to be the reason for the scrapped appointments.

The three editors are Mia Castagnone (who?), Emily Graetz (who?) and Fabian Robertson (who has written a couple of *Honi* articles). None of the editors have a background in student politics, which is a departure from previous years in which Madeline Ward and Ellie Stephenson have occupied editorial positions. *Honi* understands that Ellie Stephenson and Oscar Chaffey – both Grassroots affiliated – applied for the position but were rejected. Irene Ma denied that the USU was moving PULP in a more moderate direction and told *Honi* that editors were chosen on the strength of their applications alone. Given the strength of Ellie Stephenson’s CV and her breadth of experience, *Honi* wonders...

Abbey Shi redux

Director Eve Wang called into the meeting via Zoom from China to apologise for her recent absences. Wang, promising to rectify workload issues, took a leaf out of Abbey Shi’s book, and offered to generously forego her stipend for the rest of her term. *Honi* watches this space with interest.

Pride in Protest returns Mardi Gras to its radical roots

Alice Trenoweth-Creswell reports.

Thousands of people are taking to the streets of Darlinghurst on the 6th of March for Pride in Protest’s Mardi Gras March.

Pride in Protest is a radical queer collective who campaign for a Mardi Gras with “No Cops, No Corporations and No Conservatives.” The group have organised a counter-protest to the official Mardi Gras Parade. It has several key demands including killing the religious freedoms bill, supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and decriminalising sex work.

“The event on the 6th will be really big and colourful,” says Pride in Protest member Charlie Murphy. “It is a rally, but since it’s on the day of Mardi Gras, people will bring the celebratory aspect – a drive and passion to fight for queer rights and a

better world.”

The official Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade has historically been held on the first weekend of March. It started in 1978 as a protest against police violence and discrimination, met with 53 arrests and protesters being beaten in lock-ups. Since then, thousands have flocked to Oxford Street each year. Floats pass by: Dykes on Bikes, Rainbow Families, and the 78ers alike.

In recent years, however, the official Mardi Gras parade has been criticised for its increasing corporatisation, and many argue the parade has lost its political soul. In 2020, the crowd cheered as the ANZ float made its way down Oxford Street. And in 2021, the official Mardi Gras parade was relocated to the

Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), now costing \$20 a pop.

“Many individuals believe the true home of Mardi Gras is on Oxford Street,” says Murphy, a member of Pride in Protest. “Pride in Protest has decided that we want to have a march on the Mardi Gras day that is free and accessible to any member of the community.”

For the last three years, Pride in Protest has been working to disband the police float due to the history of police violence, particularly against queer First Nations people.

Since the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* in 1991, nearly 450 First Nations People have died in custody. This includes Veronica Baxter, a trans woman who died in a men’s prison just days after

the 2009 Mardi Gras Parade.

“It’s not actually just the police who march in Mardi Gras...” Murphy says. “Corrective Services have blood on their hands when it comes to deaths in custody as well... Trans women are still put in male prisons here in NSW.”

At the 1978 Mardi Gras, protesters chanted “Stop police attacks on gays, women, and blacks.” This year, it seems that the political spirit will return to Oxford Street with Pride in Protest.



A protester outside court on June 26, 1978. Source: Fairfax media



Source: Fairfax media

Cut to welfare ‘disregards students and young people’

Deandre Espejo reports.

Students have criticised the government’s decision to permanently raise the base rate of welfare payments by only \$50 a fortnight – \$3.75 per day – when the \$150 Coronavirus supplement ends next month.

This means there will be a net decrease of \$100 to current fortnightly welfare payments.

In a statement released this afternoon, the National Union of Students (NUS) said that “it is clear that this so-called new chapter is one of renewed disregard for students and young people.”

“There are eight Australians on JobSeeker for every job vacancy. Effectively, the Government is ensuring that 243,770 people are institutionally kept in poverty.”

The NUS also criticised the government for “prioritising] the

amount of cash in the pockets of the top end of town,” pointing to Social Services Minister Anne Ruston’s comment that the welfare system must be “fair and sustainable for the people who need it and the taxpayers who pay for it.”

Lia Perkins, Welfare Officer of the

Students’ Representative Council at Sydney University, told *Honi* that “An extra \$3.57 a day is inadequate to live on and will have a devastating effect on students. It’s difficult for many students to study full time and work, and finding a job is often impossible.”

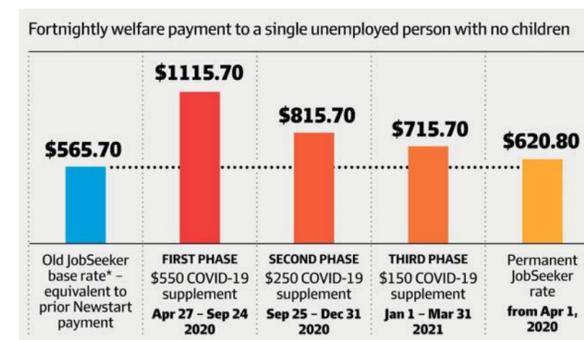
“Not raising the rate to \$80 a day is

appalling because it’s the bare minimum students and the community need to not have to forego food, medication, or rent.”

This figure is in line with the Australian Unemployed Workers Union’s (AUWU) #80aDay campaign, which seeks to push unemployment payments to the poverty line.

“We will not go quietly or be cowed by this open attempt to beat us into submission.” the AUWU said. “We will fight the Morrison government harder than we ever have before for social security above the poverty line and an end to the brutal ‘mutual’ obligations regime.”

The changes to welfare payments will commence on 1 April and will apply to JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY and parenting payments.



Source: Financial Review

New Darlington Terraces: more affordable student housing?

Khanh Tran considers whether increased rent looms in the distance.

Earlier this month, the University of Sydney and the NSW State Government announced a \$40 million refurbishment of Darlington Terraces, owned by USyd. It will entail the construction of four new buildings directly behind Victorian-era housing between 86 and 131 Darlington Road. Once finished, it will be sandwiched between the Business School, Aquatics Centre, Storie Dixon Wing and Darlington House.

The redevelopment will contribute single and double-occupancy rooms for 336 students and visiting academics, adding to the 151 residents already living in Darlington Terraces.

Architectural drawings of the proposal indicate that the new extension will be connected to the Darlington Terraces via a planted outdoor corridor. This aims to preserve heritage features whilst modifying interiors to reflect the entire complex. Each standard 15-bed floor is anticipated to feature 10m² rooms and three shared bathrooms, while upper floors will host an assortment of twin occupancy lofts and premium ensuite rooms. Finally, akin to arrangements at Regiment, informal study spaces, a communal dining hall/kitchen, and a

rooftop terrace will form part of the new development's social offerings.

Following the project's approval, USyd Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Garton praised the plan as an improvement on USyd's affordable housing stock. "The cost of housing in Sydney can be prohibitive... [we want to] provide a range of affordable housing options for the community," Garton said.

However, given the wide-ranging renovations and upgrades to facilities, the project will likely result in an overall increase in rent. For instance, a small room in the Terraces cost \$225 per week, whereas Regiment charges \$338 per week. The latter's more expensive fees are attributed to extra study and social facilities that the Terraces lack.

Drawing from a 2017 submission the University made against the City of Sydney's proposal of a 12m² minimum room size, there is a strong possibility that the University will set prices to align with Regiment, the Queen Mary Building, and Sydney University Village. In that submission, the University argued that such requirements would constrain universities from delivering housing



at "25% below the private student housing market."

In response to the announcement, SRC Welfare Officer, Lia Perkins, argued that: "Affordable housing for students would be welcomed, but if the suggested price is similar [to] other programs called 'affordable housing for students', it's not affordable." "Why is the university focused on this development rather than lowering fees for offshore students and keeping staff jobs?"

Felix Faber, SRC Student Housing Officer, said: "While more affordable student housing is always welcome, the University's track record of providing such accommodation is patchy at best."

"The University hasn't provided a

figure for how much rent at the new accommodation will cost — if current rents are anything to go by, the rent for the new development will well exceed 30% of the typical student's income."

"Further concerns must be addressed around what arrangements will be made for the current residents of the terraces during construction, and the likelihood that such a development would ramp up the already out-of-control gentrification of the area."

As of the time of writing, it is unclear whether USyd or a third-party organisation such as Campus Living Villages will preside over the new accommodation.

Sydney Timetable: A solution in search of a problem

Patrick McKenzie asks why we have a new timetable system.

One Thursday afternoon in the thick of Semester 2 exams last year, every USyd student received one of those weekly Student News emails that I assume no one ever really reads.

Nestled a few paragraphs down, it loftily proclaimed: "From Semester 1 2021, our brand-new timetabling system, Sydney Timetable, will make it easier for you to plan, schedule, and adjust your timetable."

After clicking the hyperlink a smoothly copy-written announcement on USyd's website questioned me: "Timetables are changing next year - what do you need to know?"

The only question I had was: Why? How, between accepting hundreds of staff redundancies, suppressing legal student protests, and releasing its own version of Monopoly (RRP: \$99.95) did USyd find the time — and more importantly, money — to overhaul a timetabling system that, many would argue, didn't really have anything wrong with it to begin with?

Though some might disagree, I would describe the 'old' timetabling system as deceptively simple, even ingenious: block out the times of the week when you don't want to have a class — for instance, nothing before 10am or on Fridays — and assign yourself to your preferred tutorial time. For the first three years of my

university life, this mostly worked a treat. Sure, the process of arranging a swap was a bit clunky but, as one friend remarked, "getting the classes you wanted was like solving a puzzle." The system was thoroughly exploitable, to the point where you could block out all of the times around your preferred classes, effectively guaranteeing you exactly the timetable you wanted.

Then came the change. When re-enrolment opened in mid-January, the 'new and improved' system awaited: the trendily-named Allocate+. The king is dead; long live the king. Gone was the refined aesthetic of the old interface, replaced by a far more visually-perplexing grid of sans-serif fonts and masses of dark grey.

Under the Allocate+ regime, students must now submit so-called preferences. 'So-called' because, for units that may only have three tutorial times, you're still made to indicate three 'preferences.' So, for a class that only has one Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday time, you still have to indicate all of them as preferences, even if you only want the Tuesday class; an illusion of choice that essentially allows the almighty algorithm to place you wherever it 'prefers.'

I found my disdainful sentiment echoed through the annals of popular Facebook page USYD Rants 2.0. As one

rant eloquently put it: "new timetable interface bad."

This trend is no flash in the pan either. At the time of writing, of the 140 rants posted since the beginning of February, 18 of them were about the timetabling system, 13 (72%) of which expressed some sort of negative sentiment towards it. These ranged from the straightforward ("The new allocate system is the fucking worst,") to the elaborate ("To whoever on earth invented the new USYD Timetable platform, I truly hope from the bottom of my heart that you die a very slow and painful death...").

Most friends I asked had similar feelings, with two calling it far less "streamlined" than the older system. Another said, "[Why not] fix the current issues with Sydney Student and subject selection? Why did they change it? What was the point?" Two others missed the ability to block off times, another said they had received an email asking them to swap into a newly-opened tutorial time or else they may be randomly reallocated to it anyway, and one just said "I hate it." It also meant that students who had enrolment difficulties, often through no fault of their own, missed out entirely on submitting preferences before the deadline and were left at the mercy of the algorithm, like me.

The veritable Dr Frankenstein

Finding awe and wonder on campus: reflections on Phosphorescence

Victoria Cooper gives a run down on the best green spaces around the Camperdown campus.

Life is hard. Crumbly and unsteady, we are routinely overcome by self-improvement trends that undeniably find ways to pull us apart and make us feel awful.

As we are routinely reminded by conservative newspapers and rouge Twitter hounds, our position as the unfortunate prototypes of the internet-plugged world leaves us primed to gobble up poisonous advice out of a coaxing, pixelated hand. Fourteen ways to wear this very specific bum-bag, what I eat in a day (for weight loss, hehe), how to retire by thirty, best ever skin care routine, etc. etc. We are obsessed with image, and addicted to self-improvement. Rarely satisfied, preachy, but critical — we are puffed up and deflated by ourselves.

Although the sticky tendrils of internet trends continue to pull us into a well of unforgiving self-obsession, being a University student is an experience that is fraught with self-evaluation and doubt in a manner that, I would argue, is more visceral than the stabs launched at us by hot TikTokers. Between classes we fret about our career progression and our abilities, we flip our skin inside out comparing ourselves to our peers, we question our reputation, identity, friendships, word choices, lunch choices, and cry about essay deadlines. And for each of these deficiencies, there's advice to make us better — drink more water, use this study method, revise before bed.

It seems we are compelled to make ourselves better, to keep turning our eyes to face our own insides, and when we do, everything goes dark.

Against the darkness of introspection, Julia Baird's *Phosphorescence* (2020) is strong and luminous. *Phosphorescence* is difficult to describe — a sort of philosophical masterwork, lyrical memoir, and tolerable self-help guide rolled into a deliciously readable book. Among her expansive wisdom stoked from multiple near-death experiences, Dr Baird's primary recommendation to soften hard lives is to hunt for awe and wonder. She writes,

"we spend a lot of time in life trying to make ourselves feel bigger — to project ourselves, occupy space, command attention, demand respect — so much so that we seem to have forgotten how comforting it can be to feel small and experience the awe that comes from being silenced by something greater than ourselves, something unfathomable, unconquerable and mysterious."

This advice, to look outside of oneself, is not only a Romantic's dream, but compelling advice. Of course, for the existentialists among us, such advice is heady — feeling like an insignificant blotch on the face of human history is indeed a risk. But there is something soothing about feeling dwarfed that makes the pangs of day-to-day self-consciousness feel manageable.

So, where can we go hunting for awe and wonder on a campus so unrelenting and loud?

The Quadrangle is difficult to ignore. Its immensity, to begin, does a good job of making even the tallest students feel short. There, I often struggle to suppress a lick of elitism that makes me feel mighty,

but I'll equally get lost in tightly knitted spindly vine leaves, rows and rows of old names engraved on plaques, humming echoes of briefly amplified conversations in hallways, immaculate lawns and gargoyles. If experiencing awe means appreciating details, the Quad will inevitably hold you captive.

Ideally, we are all here motivated by insatiable intellectual curiosity, committed to sinking into the intricacies of human anatomy, the expansive sky, conflict or complicated ethical dilemmas. Realistically, we are worn out and unbothered. Still, wonder is very accessible. A short trip to the

thoughts, and loud everything else, dribble into tiny bubbles and pitter-patters. Few things are as freeing as feeling completely weightless and yoke, encased by noise cancelling water.

Phosphorescence stresses that seeking awe, wonder and silence can be as simple as finding inspiration in the ordinary and the temporary. This is resourceful. Micro-doses of reprieve are available in the brief life of wispy clouds, recognising yourself in your friends, a surprisingly good muffin, a compliment, seeing the moon at 2pm.

Taking this advice, I'm fighting the impulse to whip myself for

Phosphorescence stresses that seeking awe, wonder and silence can be as simple as finding inspiration in the ordinary and the temporary.

Chau Chak Wing Museum is usually enough to slap me with a sustaining sense of wonder. It is hard to care so much about all that I have and have not when faced with centuries' old artefacts, dense with clues about who we are and have always been. Busts representing people who were also likely wrapped up in their own lives — feeling unfulfilled, completely neutral and exuberantly joyous — are now used to piece together meaning for ours.

Silence is less easily discoverable. Sydney is encased by an unrecoverable hubbub. Trucks grumble on City Rd, coffee shops whistle, people talk (even in the library, geez). For those seeking silence, an underutilised resource is Victoria Park pool. Get in it. Swimming has a way to make loud

being deficient — for not seeking an acceptable quantity of awe or checking off a daily quota of silence so as to ensure that I'm constantly becoming a better person. Life advice, no matter how it is delivered, is a trap in that way.

Perhaps we ought to digress from the impulse of seeking awe and wonder as a way to self-improve, and suppress the apparent burden that partners self-cultivation. Self-improvement need not be scheduled and regimented. It need only be a shift that takes the edge off. A light in an internet-addicted student lifestyle that can so often turn dark. Phosphorescence.

Art by Isla Mowbray



Just another bourgeois revolution

Oscar Eggleton interrogates the News Media Bargaining Code.

As a long-time “old man yelling at a cloud” on the subject of digital rights and the power of the tech companies, I was initially cautiously in favour of the News Media Bargaining Code when it was announced last year. I have long written about how tech companies are eroding democracy and heightening socio-economic inequality. I’ve been waiting for some time now for the backlash: for the revolution against big tech.

I was disappointed, however, to discover that the revolution was being spearheaded by Josh Frydenberg – surely the least-interesting person in Canberra – and that it was merely another age-old story of two groups of elites wrestling for power. The code effectively ensures that Facebook upholds the Murdoch media monopoly by paying major news sources for the content they provide on their platform.

While I am no fan of the Murdoch empire, the precedent this code sets is interesting: making social media companies pay for the data that has so far been freely given to them. Facebook claims that the bargaining code “fundamentally misunderstands” the relationship between its platform and media companies. It argues that Facebook functions as an advertising platform that media companies can choose to use in order to increase their viewer base.

Here, Facebook is deliberately

misrepresenting its business model.

Facebook markets itself as a free-to-use product financed by advertising revenue. In this understanding, the “product” is Facebook itself, and we are the user. What this explanation misses, however, is how we pay for this product. In return for “providing” us with a service, Facebook collects our data. At first glance this may seem fairly benign. It is important to remember, however, that Facebook is not a charity but a business, and the goal of any business is to grow: to accumulate capital. Thus, as Facebook generates capital by collecting data, its business goal is to accumulate data.

This means that the Facebook platform is not the product: it’s the machinery that manufactures the product. Instead, we are the product; the product is our data. Shoshana Zuboff, Harvard professor and author of *Surveillance Capitalism*, describes how social media platforms have thus become “extractive operations” that quantify and commodify human experiences online in order to accumulate user data. They build complex profiles of us to present perfectly curated news feeds that will draw us in and maintain our engagement for as long as possible. This practice results, at best, in addictive behaviours that distance us from each other socially. At worst – as Nolan Higdon describes in *The Anatomy of Fake News* – this business model encourages

the spread of content that appeals to “strong lower emotions that have been shown to increase user engagement” like hate speech, misinformation, and conspiracy theories.

The first step to ending this dangerous and exploitative business model is to regain control of our data. One thing the *News Media Bargaining Code* gets right is it recognises that the labour input in the process of data accumulation comes from the user, not the platform provider. When we share a post or care react to a puppy photo, we are freely providing Facebook with our data. Likewise, when news media companies share their articles on Facebook, they contribute to Facebook’s data collection efforts. The *News Media Bargaining Code* thus attributes the labour of data accumulation to the companies who create the content and rewards them as such.

The problem with the code, however, is that it takes a good premise – making Facebook pay for data – and twists it to solidify other hierarchies of capital accumulation. This is the bourgeois revolution: Australian media companies are piggy backing on legitimate criticisms of social media companies to increase (or, perhaps, reclaim) their own power, just as the urban bourgeois of Europe inspired the revolts against aristocracy in the 18th and 19th centuries.

What Australia needs, instead, is a



version of the European Union’s

General Data Protection Regulation, which gives users more control over who can access their data, and obliges tech companies to be transparent about how user data is collected and stored. Tech firms must explicitly ask for users’ consent to collect any data, and privacy settings are automatically set to their highest. We don’t need more bargaining power for big media companies, we need legislation that asserts these rights of the digital citizen. It truly shows the lack of imagination in Australian politics that our first national confrontation with big tech is merely a defence of big news media. I had hoped the revolution would be a little more original.

Art by Deandre Espejo

From Carslaw to Canberra

Amelia Raines examines the patterns of sexual assault fuelled by universities.

TW: Sexual Assault

Over the past few weeks, and in the wake of International Women’s Day, Australia has witnessed inconsistencies in how we treat women and how we approach conversations about sexual assault.

We have seen several ironies unfolding over the past few weeks. Grace Tame, an advocate for survivors of sexual assault, was announced our 2021 Australian of the Year. She founded the #LetHerSpeak campaign, calling for survivors of sexual assault to have a voice – a vessel of dignity among the demeaning legal processes. Weeks later, Former Liberal Staffer Brittany Higgins came forward with an allegation of rape in Parliament House; a place meant to represent and radiate probity, dignity, and governing.

We witnessed a feat of linguistics in Scott Morrison’s apology to Brittany Higgins, which omitted any mention of the alleged perpetrator’s name, and contained tactical uses of passive language, including “there should not be an environment where a woman can find herself in such a vulnerable situation.” This seems to subtly avoid the issue at hand. There should not be any environment where predators can assault or attack their colleagues.

Scott Morrison uttered the now infamous words, “You have to think about this as a father...What would you want to happen if it were our girls?” – An insular association that forged an abrasive start to Brittany Higgins’ apology. The Prime Minister

has foundationally orientated the sexual assault narrative around a male perspective, contributing to the systems that render many survivors voiceless.

We’ve witnessed the mishandling of this attack, rhetoric of insularity, and a lack of acknowledgement that every survivor’s story should warrant empathy.

This sequence of events has unleashed a sense of turbulence in the realm of sexual assault discourse. It has unravelling the ironies of sexual assault victims feeling muzzled in Parliament

women subject to assault having to endure convoluted complaint processes, only for the perpetrator to be met with meagre consequences; “internal Investigations” and college self-governance which dispense little accountability.

USyd groups such as the Women’s Collective (WoCo) and End Rape on Campus (EROC) have organised activism against sexual assault on campus, and the enduring culture that allows for sexual assault to occur.

In 2016, members of the Women’s Collective penned an open letter to

of the petition, Chanel Contos, was inundated with testimonies from young women who had experienced rape or sexual assault during their high school years, perpetrated by boys from other Sydney schools. Some testimonies recall sexual assault occurring as young as 13.

Links can be made between the testimonies in the consent petition, the absence of accountability, and our federal politicians’ predatory behaviour. We can see here a progression. Predatory behaviours that aren’t extinguished at a high school level can extend onto university campuses. These behaviours can build upon each other in insular environments, where predators justify each other’s actions. They carry on into the workforce, even into Parliament House.

The crusade against sexual assault must begin with an attitude shift. The pervasiveness of rape culture reveals a compromised set of ideas towards women – and bolsters narratives that blame the victim for others’ violence.

These attitudes must be phased out at every aspect of life – through schooling, university, and the workplace. It must be actively shunned. Our schools, universities, and workplaces must cultivate an environment where survivors can feel as though they can speak out, and be heard – regardless if they’re someone’s daughter or not.

Without respect for consent, there is no respect for one’s agency.

Australia’s involvement in the Myanmar Coup

Isabelle Freudenstein unpacks the current political events.

In the wake of the worsening military coup in Myanmar, which left a university student dead during protests, the Australian government remains unwilling to fully sever military funding with the Tatmadaw. Instead, some human rights critics argue, Australia has further legitimised the military leadership by engaging in direct contact with Vice-Senior General Soe Win.

On February 1st, during the first sitting of the newly elected parliament, the Myanmar military, the Tatmadaw, accused the National League for Democracy political movement of election fraud following the November elections. Despite constitutionally having 25% of seats in the parliament reserved for the military, Tatmadaw leaders categorised the elections as having been unfairly won. As such, the state councillor Aung San Suu Kyi, and other leaders have been deposed, placed in detention, and the country has been declared a state of emergency.

The Australian government’s response, or lack thereof, is jarring in the context of the global outcry against the coup. The Morrison government has been heavily criticised by Labor, the Greens Party and Human Rights Watch Australia for a lack of proactivity in responding

to the military coup. Penny Wong of the Labour Party has called on the government to send a ‘clear signal to Myanmar’s military leaders’ that the deposition of a democratically elected government will not be tolerated. Historically, the Australian government has sanctioned six members of Tatmadaw, but no new sanctions have been announced since the coup. Internationally, the US has announced sanctions against coup leaders, blocking access to 1 billion USD held in America.

The Australian government has long had military ties with the Tatmadaw. It has been one of the few countries to continue to cooperate with their armed forces since the ethnic cleansing and genocidal actions against Rohingya Muslims in 2017, having spent around 1.5 million dollars in funding in the last five years.

This funding was provided under the rationale of aiding to smooth the transition to democracy and further educating officers. Australia aimed to be an example and highlight the importance of international humanitarian law, but this influence has not proffered the desired effects. The military in Myanmar continues to reject democratic elections, and a coup has been staged through the

utilisation of force to overthrow the first freely elected government since 1965. Thus, the question stands, should Australia maintain these ties?

Although on the surface, withdrawing support and following international suit may seem appealing, this option is not as simple as it may appear. Such a withdrawal, whilst fundamentally rejecting the actions of Tatmadaw, may further drive them to form closer alliances with China. This, according to the Australian government, is the biggest risk in changing tact. China and Russia have blocked a UNSC statement to condemn the military coup, and the strategic position China holds, sharing a border with the nation, makes it likely that the Tatmadaw will return to China as a key partner in trade and policy.

Surely, the current game plan, to ‘stop, pause, see what is going on, and then... make further decisions’, according to Trade Minister Dan Tehan, is not enough to prevent considerable damage to a new democracy. Surely, any ‘business as usual’ becomes untenable when it fails to avoid violating constitutional law and constrain the rights of citizens.

As tension heightens and pressure from the international community continues to mount, Australia’s

government has attempted to secure the release of detained Professor Sean Turnell, an Australian academic working as an advisor to Aung San Suu Kyi. In a recent phone call with Soe Win, Vice-Admiral Johnston urged the Myanmar military to refrain from violence. This call again emphasises the precarious position that Australia is navigating. On the one hand, by using the Australian military, Aaron Connelly suggests that Australia has avoided legitimising the Tatmadaw as government. Nonetheless, human rights critics, such as the Australian Centre of International Justice suggests that this directly undermines the coordinated global effort against the Myanmar military.

The growing complexity of the coup only increases interest in Australia’s stake in the conflict, and brings attention to the decision that Australia ultimately has to make. Will Australia maintain a relationship with a military that has long prioritised power over the citizens they govern? Or by refusing to normalise the coup, will Australia side with nations such as the US, Canada and the UK in an attempt to prevent further atrocity

Mischief, riot or terrorism

Ariyana Hossain considers the politics of identity and terror.

The Capitol Hill insurgency was unprecedented in many respects. Historically speaking, the attack not only had the potential to be one of the deadliest right-wing terror attacks on American soil, but it was also an overt demonstration of white supremacy. While the actions of the mob on January the 7th were significantly propelled by the rhetoric of Donald Trump at his ‘Save the Steal’ rally, their frustrations were preceded by months of misinformation and rallying from a number of public officials to reject the results of November’s election. As developments unfold and we learn of the lethal possibilities of that Thursday morning, these figures have entirely evaded responsibility for their role in fostering dangerous ideologies.

While swift condemnation came from both sides of the aisle—Democrat and Republican alike—numerous conservative commentators failed to condemn the riot and acknowledge Trump’s role in inciting it. They all but missed the point, instead blaming Antifa and Black Lives Matter protestors, and stressing that no “true” supporters of Donald Trump would commit such violence.

The media discourse we notice in the United States is not unfamiliar within the Australian context. Conservative media pundits here drew direct links from Capitol Hill to the condoning of “leftist

violence” earlier this year; maintaining that leftist politics normalised and contributed to the violence on Capitol Hill. Deputy PM Michael McCormack similarly equated the riots to BLM protests, suggesting that the two events were somehow equally insidious and dangerous.

What we recognise from this commentary is a persistent narrative of ‘both sides’ being equated as one. Whether it be Charlottesville or the Capitol Hill riots, attempting to lessen the culpability of perpetrators by shifting the blame to the other side serves little merit. And ultimately, these narratives refuse to recognise right-wing violence and the increasing threat it poses to society.

Reports published last year detail a considerable rise of right-wing activity in Australia across physical and online spaces. COVID-19 particularly has been utilised by numerous right-wing groups to recruit members and increase the scale of their operations—with groups such as The Proud Boys making appearances at anti-lockdown protests).

In spite of the growing threat of far-right terror, the term ‘terrorism’ itself has persistently been reserved for established perceptions of people of colour—particularly Muslims.

While offenders such as the Capitol Hill rioters are spared harsh labels in the coverage of their actions, non-white

offenders are often branded terrorists before proven guilty. When Ashli Babbitt

died during the riots, media coverage highlighted her status as a former-veteran, and her service to the United States. When Raghe Mohamad Abdi was shot dead by police in December, headlines centred upon his status as a terror suspect. Pointing out these discrepancies within media coverage does not serve to condone or legitimise any form of violence over the other. The intention is to simply emphasise the continued double standard present between coverage of white versus non-white individuals. Moreover, it is important to

recognise the stereotypes pertaining to people of colour, as they equally play a part in fuelling right-wing ideologies akin to those we witnessed at Capitol Hill.

American scholar Khaled Beydoun remarked that white Americans have all but evaded responsibility over the Capitol Hill attack; emphasising rather that this “burden of collective guilt is only assigned to communities of color”. For people of colour, when acts of violence are committed by members of their ‘community’, they are tasked with the additional burden of demonstrating their allegiance to peace and non-violence.

Growing up as a Muslim in Australia, I’m familiar with the relief that is exercised by Muslims upon learning that an attack was not committed by an individual invoking Islam. Contrary to what Islamophobes may believe, the Muslim community experiences the same shock and sorrow as others when acts of terror are committed. In the aftermath however, there often comes an inevitable tide of backlash against Muslims, stoking resentment and hateful ideologies.

Tides of backlash are not unfamiliar to other minorities. One does not have to look far to confront the continued backlash against movements such as BLM, as well as the resurgence of hate crimes against East Asians post COVID-19. When it comes to events such as Capitol Hill, it does not do justice to merely notice these events and dismiss them as quickly as a week’s worth of headlines. Confronting the lingering threat of right-wing terrorism requires critical engagement and a shift in the discourse around terror; and this simply cannot be fulfilled without realising the link between harmful discourses and irresponsible media coverage.



We seek her on the basalt plains, wild and free

Deandre Espejo on native plants and decolonising our food systems.

Upon first glance, the murnong plant can easily be mistaken for a common dandelion. Its long, narrow, and toothed leaves sprout yellow flowers during the year's warmer seasons. Yet, despite its common appearance, the murnong carries thousands of years of Aboriginal history. Prior to colonisation, the murnong was a crucial staple in the diets of First Nations people. With sweet and coconutty edible roots, the plant was abundant across the grassy plains of south and southeast Australia. Historical observations from settlers reveal that there were 'millions of murnong... all over the plain' and that First Nations people had complex methods of harvesting and managing them. But over the past two centuries, the murnong has been decimated by invasive pasturing and introduced species. In particular, they were palatable to sheep and rabbits, and the hard hooves of livestock damaged the soil in which they grew. Today, while they may be found on roadsides and rock crevices by the sharp forager, wild murnong has virtually disappeared.

Indigenous knowledge surrounding food production derives from a mutually beneficial and caring relationship with the non-human, allowing the land to replenish itself of what has been taken. It's a different way of looking at food; not just for nutrition, but as something innately spiritual that connects people with Country. In Lou Bennett and Romaine Moreton's essay *Looking for Murnong*, they write that "Murnong is more than a plant. Murnong is an Ancestor. To speak her name affirms our place and our belonging as Original peoples." They reflect on the Jaara women who grew Murnong in the basalt plains and cooked their roots in Earth ovens: "The ancient hands of the Jaara have fashioned these necessities with intimacy, love and familiarity."

Native food systems have protected human and natural life for millennia. Though much of this wisdom has been erased through dispossession and genocide, historical accounts from settlers — detailed by Bruce Pascoe in *Dark Emu* — reveal sophisticated farming practices that demonstrate First Nations peoples' intimate knowledge of native species, soil and climate. For example, nardoo, a species of waterfern which produced sporocarps used to make bush bread, was grown in otherwise inhospitable regions by being planted in the beds of waterways.

shallow lakes. When the lakes dried, seeds were swept back into vast stockpiles. People would move seasonally from camp to camp in order to ensure that the landscape had time to heal. Even in land of extreme heat and aridity, they were able to produce grain surplus to their need. Charles Sturt, in his travels to northern Australia, described 'grassy plains spreading out like a boundless stubble field.'

Because the relationship of First Nations people with nature was one based on reciprocity, the land also gave back by generating healthy and nourishing foods. In their *Paddock to Plate* project, research scientists at the University of Sydney recently discovered that dhunbarbilla — native grains and seeds — are highly nutritious, containing many macronutrients that provide energy to the body and micronutrients to protect against disease. Grains such as kangaroo grass, which has seeds that can be ground and mixed with water to make damper, were found to have 40 per cent more protein than the bread wheat we consume today.

When Indigenous lands were pillaged and destroyed, so too were these sacred food systems. Due to the importation of European crops, grazing animals, and extractive farming practices which were not ecologically compatible with Australia's natural environment, there has been widespread erosion of soil. Today, about two thirds of agricultural land is degraded, producing low crop yields while preventing many native plant species from growing. Further, with the rise of agribusiness, food has become commodified, produced for the purpose of sale and profit rather than use. While native food systems provided sustenance to all members of the community, millions of people today live below the poverty line despite a surplus of food production and 7.3 million tonnes of food waste annually. Where food-bearing plants were once gifts of the Earth, wealth is now extracted from them at every point of the production process — farmers to buyers, to packagers, to wholesalers, then to retailers — all before it reaches the people that need (or can afford) them. As Bennett and Moreton write, "Western colonial industry has always relied on the exploitation of storied

lands of Indigenous people," thus poisoning the symbiosis between humans and nature.

While many settlers died due to starvation or nutritional disease, there are also documented stories of settlers raiding Indigenous food stockpiles, stealing their crop in order to survive. Pascoe tells the story of explorer Ernest Giles' brother, who came across huge stores of grain on platforms three metres high: "He was lost, and he was angry. He took the grain that had been stored for the harvesters." It is even more harrowing to trace how colonisers have weaponised food against Indigenous populations. When First Nations people were forcibly relocated into missions, they were cut off from their native food sources and forced to subsist on nothing but highly processed food rations. These rations often comprised only white flour, refined sugar and alcohol, which resulted in nutritional diseases and health disparities that persist on today, food coercion continues to exist, most evidently in prisons where predominantly Indigenous inmate populations across the country are underfed and malnourished. It is difficult to

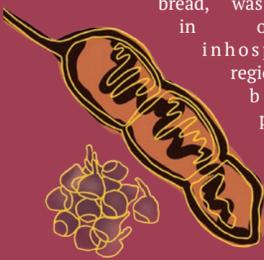
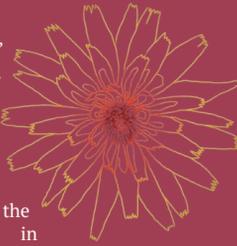
forget the story of David Dungay Jr, an insulin-dependent diabetic, who was killed in Long Bay Prison by guards for eating a packet of rice crackers. Restoring native foods through ecologically sound food systems, as well as allowing communities to directly control and receive the benefits of their own agriculture, are vital aims of decolonisation. This concept has come to be known as "food sovereignty" which, as Professor Kyle Whyte of the University of Michigan envisions, gives First Nations people the capacity to self-sustain and adapt to environmental and economic changes. In Yuin Country, Pascoe has started a small-scale farming project known as Black Duck Foods, which seeks to restore traditional knowledge and farming practices by growing native crops in the region. The farm, which employs First Nations people, has been able to harvest mandaryan nalluk — or "dancing grass" — for the first time in what is believed to be over 200 years. "That's what this farm

is all about," Pascoe says. "[T]rying to make sure that Aboriginal people are part of the resurgence in these grains, rather than being on the periphery and being dispossessed again." Similarly, *Paddock to Plate* seeks to breathe life back into a native grains industry — one that is owned and managed by local Aboriginal Land Councils rather than corporations. They are currently in Gomeri researching its agricultural ecosystem and cultural practices of caring for Country, uncovering thousands of years of traditional knowledge that has been lost.

We must be wary of conceiving food sovereignty as something primarily concerning remote communities, as this upholds the colonial imaginary that "authentic" Indigenous people are from the bush. It is important to also consider what food sovereignty can look like in urban contexts. In Eveleigh, the first Indigenous-run rooftop farm atop Yerrabingin House has brought 30 species of native foods back to the local community. It adopts elements of Indigenous permaculture, planting species such as finger limes and old man saltbush which can thrive in harsh conditions of high sun and wind. Much of the produce goes to local chefs who incorporate native ingredients into their cooking, and the community is also taught how to grow plants in their own spaces using traditional practices. However, in order to expand urban agriculture to an extent that would sustain communities in cities, challenges such as soil erosion, the high price of land and strict regulation, directly linked to colonial structures such as private land ownership and expansion, must be addressed.

While hope can be drawn from these acts of resilience, there is a deep sadness in how much has been lost since colonisation. We may never bear witness to the overgrown plains of dancing grass, or relish the taste of wild nardoo. In *Looking for Murnong*, Bennett and Moreton return to their Country of Djadjawurrung in search of the yam daisy. They speak the language of their Ancestors and listen to the messages that the wind brings, pulling them closer towards the yellow flower. But they do not find it. "For now, our search for murnong continues. Growing in those spaces where she is safe from hooves, cars, colonialism and whiteness. We choose not to purchase murnong seeds. How can this be a right relationship? We seek her on the basalt plains, wild and free."

Art by Lauren Lancaster



A summer with Centrelink: Bad training and worse policy

Rohan Kalyan critiques Centrelink's new Employability Skills Training.

The three-month summer break, for most students, is usually a time spent hanging out in the sun with mates or, more importantly, watching cricket. However, as someone unemployed since the early days of the lockdown last year, I had the misfortune of being 'mutually obligated' to participate in the new Employability Skills Training (EST) course: a 3-week intensive course aimed at young jobseekers under the age of 25. Although being forced to participate in the program was a rather grim prospect, I maintained a cautious optimism that I might learn something useful. The training I ended up receiving was anything but.

The EST is part of the New Employment Services Trial, a massive bureaucratic overhaul of the current JobSeeker system. Under the new model, the government is substantially increasing funding for private third-party job providers and training organisations, for providing their 'services' to job seekers. On the flip side, job seekers like me are forced to participate in intensifying mutual obligation requirements, including training programs such as the EST.

The course content itself involved teaching basic common knowledge, such as communicating clearly, and following a procedure properly. Participants had to demonstrate such 'skills' as

irrelevant to the course (as though they kept running out of material), most interactions with the trainer involved them providing faux self-help psychology advice. This advice was deeply patronising, pathologising our joblessness as a consequence of merely being depressed or disheartened. They claimed that simply being positive and doing things to get ourselves into good moods, like listening to music or going for walks, could fix these issues and increase our productivity. Being patronised in this way had the opposite effect.

Clearly, dominant attitudes towards unemployed people had permeated into the course's content and the instructor's attitude. But further to that, the course's problems were indicative of further government policy failures addressing youth unemployment. Years of propaganda stigmatising unemployed people have fostered harmful attitudes, which were reproduced in the course. These attitudes have allowed the government a platform to enact similarly harmful policies.

Forcing job seekers into arbitrary and unhelpful training courses while maintaining payment rates below the poverty line is not only cruel, but fails to take stock of the current state of the labour market: young people are intelligent and knowledgeable, and jobs simply aren't available. At present,

other more useful options defeats the purpose of the JobTrainer policy. It demonstrates a desire to patronise rather than trust young people to obtain practical training for themselves.

dob-in line (an all-new mechanism of punishment and surveillance for jobseekers) reflect this ethos.

Putting full faith and stock in young people's autonomy involves allowing them access to training

Forcing job seekers into arbitrary and unhelpful training courses while maintaining payment rates below the poverty line is not only cruel, but fails to take stock of the current state of the labour market

The drastic increases in the JobSeeker rate during the pandemic period of mid-2020 showed that the government could eradicate poverty. However, by funnelling resources into redundant and inadequate training programs and punitive surveillance bureaucracy, the government maintains the cruel welfare apparatus keeping young jobseekers in poverty. The recent meagre increase to the JobSeeker payment, along with the employer

programs that will suit their skills and experience, instead of forcing them to participate in degrading and patronising courses. It also involves properly increasing the JobSeeker rate, so that young people can provide themselves with the tools and equipment they need to create support structures for themselves and their community.

**Do you have a legal problem?
We can help you for FREE!***

Police Matters
Court Appearances
Immigration & Visa Referrals
Student Advocacy
Civil Rights
...and more



**SRC
LEGAL SERVICE
APPOINTMENTS
ARE NOW
AVAILABLE
BY PHONE OR
ONLINE**



Level 1, Wentworth Building (G01),
University of Sydney NSW 2006
PO Box 794 Broadway NSW 2007
p: 02 9660 5222
int: 12871
w: srcsudy.net.au

*This service is available to USYD undergraduate students and cases that meet eligible criteria

Voices of Resistance in the Pilliga



Vivienne Guo spoke to the activists fighting Santos on Gamilaraay land.

Six hours north of Sydney, a straight shot up the Newell Highway, lies the Pilliga Scrub: the largest remaining stretch of native forest, west of the Great Dividing Range. Pilliga (or Billarga) is a Gamilaraay word meaning 'swamp oak,' reminding visitors that these woodlands are sites of unceded Gamilaraay land. During a trip up to Narrabri in February alongside a group of students from universities across Sydney, I had driven up to rural northern New South Wales with (admittedly) little-to-no knowledge as to what to expect. As our car convoy trundles into the forest, tracing deep tire tracks left by trucks and ranger utes, I notice that the wiry native grasses seem to shimmer like fine satin. The mirage hides coarse stalks that catch on your clothes; the woodland is beautiful and resilient.

The sun beats down on ephemeral creeks, disguised as sandy dunes that break up a semi-arid backdrop of white cypress pine and eucalyptus.

Yet, this seemingly harsh landscape is a place of

extraordinary conservation value, providing desperately-needed refuge to endangered fauna such as squirrel gliders, barking owls, koalas, black-striped wallabies and the iconic endemic Pilliga mouse. The Pilliga is also one of the handful of areas that provides significant groundwater recharge to the Great Artesian Water Basin, the largest and deepest artesian basin in the world. This natural wonder provides essential freshwater to rural Australian communities and a vast network of ecosystems.

But looking at the native landscape, peppered with pipes and Santos signs, one can't help but dread destruction on the horizon. In 2018, the Pilliga was approved by the New South Wales Independent Planning Committee (IPC) as the site of a controversial \$3.6 billion coal seam gas project (CSG), spearheaded by Australian mining giant Santos. Under the Morrison government's promise of a 'gas-led recovery' for Australia — a supposedly sustainable and less harmful alternative to fossil fuels — the project will see the construction of 850 new CSG wells in the region. However, CSG is hardly a sustainable alternative.

CSG refers to the natural gas found in coal seam formations deep in the

earth, contained by underground water pressure. Despite years of unwavering community opposition, Santos has been extracting CSG from the Pilliga for twenty years under exploration licenses, granted by the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*. These 'explorations' are leaving devastation in their wake. CSG wells bring untreated production water up to the surface in order to release the natural gas from the seam, which is often contaminated with salt, heavy metals and other toxic contaminants. In addition to this, hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) is frequently used to stimulate gas flow in the wells, allowing companies to drain the land. Well-known for its devastating environmental impacts, fracking increases the likelihood of contaminating precious groundwater sources. The problem is that coal seams are often linked to underground aquifers, such as the Great Artesian Water Basin, and extractions risk the poisoning of the entire water source as well as the innumerable ecosystems that rely on them.

The Pilliga is not expected to go down without a fight, and it has become a battleground against Santos for First Nations people, citizen scientists and passionate members of

the local community for many years. The fightback is often unglamorous and seldom reaches the ears of city-centric, mainstream media, but there is a rich history of protest on this land.

On the ground, lock-ons and protest camps have held the line against Santos and the encroachment of gas extractions as far back as 2014, camping along highways and in the scrub to delay or halt Santos' advancements. Additionally, a battalion of citizen scientists and locals, as part of a community gas watch, make regular trips into the scrub to check on existing gas operations, test soil and water and check for new sites of pollution.

I had the privilege of chatting to Dan, a dedicated local who makes regular trips into the scrub as part of the community gaswatch. He tells me about a protest camp in 2014 that occupied a strip of the Newell Highway for 3 months. The protest camp would not have been possible if not for the community banding together from far and wide. The local Roads and Traffic Authority looked the other way when asked to remove protesters, and truckers driving down from Northern Queensland would drop off food and supplies for the protesters, including watermelons, mangoes

and one time, even a second-hand couch. With this community effort, the protest camp held the line against Santos' encroachment on the Pilliga. But despite their efforts, Santos has continued to quietly extract gas from the land.

Before we drove into the scrub to investigate Santos' gas operations, we were given an information pamphlet to prepare us for what we might find, detailing the location of the gas wells and water treatment plants, and types of pollution that we should look out for. On a visit to the Bibblewindi Water Treatment Plant, we discovered infertile topsoil as well as an unlit flare which is supposed to burn up unusable combustible vapours and liquids to prevent pollution. Oddly, there was not a worker in sight. One of my companions made the comment that Santos had promised jobs to the local communities, yet all sites of operation that we encountered were being run by automation.

Local workers aren't the only ones to lose out if Santos moves ahead with their controversial gas project; Santos' operations have already and will continue to inflict damage on sacred Indigenous sites.

The Pilliga is a sacred place for the Gamilaraay people, and while the IPC requires all relevant information regarding the land to be disclosed publicly, there is much information regarding the Gamilaraay relationship to the Pilliga that is culturally sensitive. In the process of discussions with the IPC, councillor Kodi Brady from Warrumbungle Shire Council believes that there has not been sufficient respect for First Nations culture and sovereignty of the land.

"There has been a total lack of engagement and respect for First Nations people of these communities. The conversation needs to be had and led by First Nations people," says Mr Brady, who is a Gamilaraay man himself. "We [the Gamilaraay people] don't own the Pilliga, the Pilliga owns us as a people and we're a part of it."

As a step towards platforming Indigenous voices in the fight to protect the Pilliga, Mr Brady believes that discussions between official bodies such as IPC and Gamilaraay people should occur on Country, in the Pilliga itself.

Anna Christie, an anti-CSG advocate from the North West Protection Agency, believes that places like the Pilliga should be at the forefront of climate justice movements. The imperative of frontline activism is felt less in cities, where we often see thousands rallying for climate justice. In Narrabri and the Pilliga scrub, where sights of environmental and community

destruction are unavoidable, the urgency mounts. Anna tells me that Santos patently understates its environmental impacts.

"They don't calculate the roads they're going to build and they underestimate how much clearing there is. It's not just about adding up how many square kilometres they're going to clear, because if you're fragmenting the forest, that has impacts of its own. Fragmentation is really harmful for small animals that need shelter. It creates 'super-highways' for ferals."

It is worth noting that if an area is fragmented by deforestation and other developments, it becomes harder to revive and restore. Fragmentation destroys the blueprint for what an ecosystem should be, thus destroying the ecological history of the area. "There is no intent to restore," Anna says.

While the case of the Pilliga has been touched upon by the mainstream media, it is certainly not the first of its kind. As we venture into the scrub, Anna tells me about the town of Tara in Queensland, which has already fallen to the coal seam gas rush.

"It's over. They've wrecked the place, the people have left, the place is polluted. Seriously, you don't hear a bird sing. The only birds you see are crows, and they are the most sick-looking birds. It's like a science fiction apocalypse. It's dead."

As Anna talks, I hear it then; the twittering of unseen birds in the trees that surround the ephemeral creek that we'd taken momentary refuge in. While much has been lost, there is still life in the Pilliga, still hope for restoration.

"It's sad because out in Tara, there were a lot of dreams," Anna reminisces. "Here in Narrabri, they're still drinking the Kool-Aid. Despite the fact that it's happened in Roma, Miles, Tara, they still think that Narrabri is going to do well."

My trip to Narrabri brought me into contact with many locals within the community, painting a picture of a town divided by their hopes and fear of what Santos may bring. Given the looming threat of environmental devastation, it would be easy to assume that the community would stand as a united front in opposing further CSG developments. However, it quickly became clear that the shadow of Santos hung over the local community, masquerading as a selfless benefactor. Anna tells me that 98% of around 23,000 submissions in a local survey were opposed to Santos, yet the reality doesn't seem to line up with the statistics.

Recently, Santos sponsored and commissioned a Santos Festival of Rugby in Narrabri which was welcomed by many people in the community who rejoiced at the financial influx that the rugby would inevitably bring. On the other hand, local activists argue that Santos has long been trying to drive a stake through the community, splitting the

people with their promises of prosperity. To Dan and Anna, Santos' Festival of Rugby represents community division. "The town's tearing itself apart," says Dan. "It's been a nightmare."

Anna admits that within the local community, Santos' CSG projects are taboo to talk about let alone oppose, as many locals fear retribution from Santos in the form of withdrawing economic support and investment in the town. More than that, many fear retribution from their neighbours and friends in the local community. Indeed, in the days leading up to the Santos Festival of Rugby, an Extinction Rebellion protester who had grown up in Narrabri was verbally assaulted by an enraged local, who accused the protesters of wanting to take away the harmless recreation of rugby away from her kids and the wider community.

Experiences like this are sadly not uncommon, and I heard many similar stories as I met more climate protesters who had worked to keep up resistance on the frontlines. These kinds of misunderstandings run deep in the community, as misinformation runs amok. On another day, I was chatting to a vendor at the local market, and we got on the topic of the CSG projects. "They're not fracking though," she said to me. Yet, fracking is used to stimulate the gas flow in about 40% of CSG wells in Australia, allowing gas companies to extract as much as possible from the land.

As our little troupe left Narrabri, we took with us fresh hopes and



renewed vigor for change. Anna hopes that future generations of activists will make more efforts to bridge the divide between the city and the frontlines. "If they get their foot in the door, we're sunk," she tells me.

In the face of encroaching climate catastrophe, it is difficult but important to envision a future free of mining giants, a future where we aren't constantly immersed in a ubiquitous sense of doom and desperation. Yet, such a future is possible. "We've kicked them out of everywhere except here," says Dan. "We've kicked them out of Gosper, the Northern Rivers, we've stopped them drilling in Sydney, we've wrapped up the rest of the state and every other [gas] company except this one, and that's because it's Santos. They're a big company, they're backed by the government and they've got a lot of power."

On the long drive back to the city, one memory sticks in mind; Anna handing me a small flyer with a map of the Pilliga forest on the back and a collage of wildflowers on the front. "We don't like to just talk about the bad stuff," she says. "We like to remember the good stuff too."

Art by Claire Ollivain
Photography by Vivienne Guo



Reflections on *Moon in a Dewdrop*

Angelique Minas recounts Lindy Lee's celestial exhibition.

A major survey exhibition by artist Lindy Lee recently showed at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Informed by Zen Buddhist philosophies of Master Dōgen, she represents existential meditations of the self and one's place in the universe. Lee explores a sustained motif of celestial reverence in *Moon in a Dew Drop*, uniting juxtaposing notions of worldly and metaphysical infinity and finiteness. As a Chinese-Australian artist, Lee's work is centred on a personal interrogation of self, articulating her sense of cultural identity and personal displacement. However, Lee extends this discourse beyond individual experience and connects her art to a larger understanding of an inextricably intertwined cosmos. As an appreciator of Lee's most recent exhibition, I will review her installation pieces and a meditation on the personal journey her work prompts in audience members.

Greeted by her piece *Seeds of a New Moon*, viewers are immediately introduced to the crux of Lee's exhibition, featuring an elaborate circular design of polished, flung bronze. Epitomising the rich symbolism of Lee's work, the materials of this piece demand critical appreciation and reveal the direct influence of Dao and Zen Buddhist ideas, encouraging an intuitive and deeply personal recognition of the interconnectedness of humanity and nature. In previous interviews with representatives of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lee explains that her proximity to bronze is entirely

militant, associating her protective gear with the thick armour of a "great warrior" and the act of flinging bronze itself as mimicking a dangerous battle. Each movement is imbued with purpose and intention, as Zen values dictate, and the finished work reflects every external and internal influence of that moment as it flows through her. A creation unlike any other whose existence is threaded within all other lives – Lee the artist, us the audience, the liquid bronze which formed that shape. This art style is repeated in *Strange Condensations and Buddhas and Matriarchs*, each illuminated in sections by downlights, emphasising the reflective surfaces. Acting as a fragmented mirror, these regal creations provoke a subconscious introspection, almost preparing us for the spiritual journey ahead.

Central to Lee's exhibition is the large-scale, polished bronze sculptures and installations, including *Open as the Sky* and *Exploding Suns*. Her use of abstract contours exemplifies the mutability of the 'dew drop' and her use of bronze encompasses the central Buddhist principles of adaptability as the elemental medium is able to move beyond a single artwork style. Effectively, Lee captures the dewdrop's organic and constant movement to immortalise it for audiences. The sheer scale of these pieces is intimidatingly engrossing; I found myself drowning in their reflective depths. The sculptures instigate a realisation of

an interconnected universe, inspiring audiences to deliberate how many people had viewed this same artwork. My mind was soon occupied by thoughts of others' personal experiences and interpretations; how had this piece impacted their lives and manifested in their journey of self? Solidifying an understanding of our limitless universe, Lee highlights the delicate bounds of individuals. I found myself appreciating the essence of Lee's work, and by consequence the Buddhist philosophies which informed it. It is the nature of dewdrops to evaporate; no moment can be a recreation of another, everything is alive, constantly changing and flowing freely.

The immersive *Moonlight Deities* installation is a visually stunning and profound inclusion to Lee's exhibition. Encapsulating the 'moon' in the dewdrop, sheets of reinforced paper hang from the ceiling, full of variously sized, burnt holes. Carefully illuminated, the room allows these circular patterns to cast intricate shadows on the walls and floor and the moving audiences, leaving no surface uncovered. The piece represents all threads of life intertwining, creating the fabric of the universe, continually changing and shifting as the shadows lift off the walls and onto the skin. The large room allows this symbolism to be literally personified in the multitude of viewers that gaze upon the installation at one time. Under Lee's artistic guidance, the piece inspired me to understand how every moment is

influenced by surrounding moments in an intricate, living and mercurial astronomic web.

The final large-scale piece of Lee's exhibition is *Listening to the Moon*, a suspended sphere of polished stainless steel. It radiates a warm glow from the LED light placed in its centre, projecting through the small holes that litter the entire circular surface. Symbolising the moon, the piece is maybe the smallest of her sculptures, subverting natural metrics of the 'moon' and 'dewdrops.' These separate installations also bring the astronomic to the earthly. Personifying Sōtō Zen Buddhist imageries of an infinite and finite universe, Lee draws our attention to the mutuality between corporeality and transcendence. These pieces prompted me to think about spaces of belonging and un-belonging, the subjectivity of my individual life experiences, the communities I felt a part of, and others where I felt my presence left a greater absence. These works evoke a spiritual ecstasy, bringing the vast expanses of our cosmos to the forefront of the conscience, where our place is narrowed, seeming almost inconsequential. We are reminded that each thing is living and significant, entirely unique to a specific moment that can never be recreated, continuously shifting and evolving. Lee's exhibition represents an intricate cosmic tapestry within which all things are tied to one another.

TikTok's Renaissance

Amelia Koen unpacks Gen Z's nostalgia for the past.

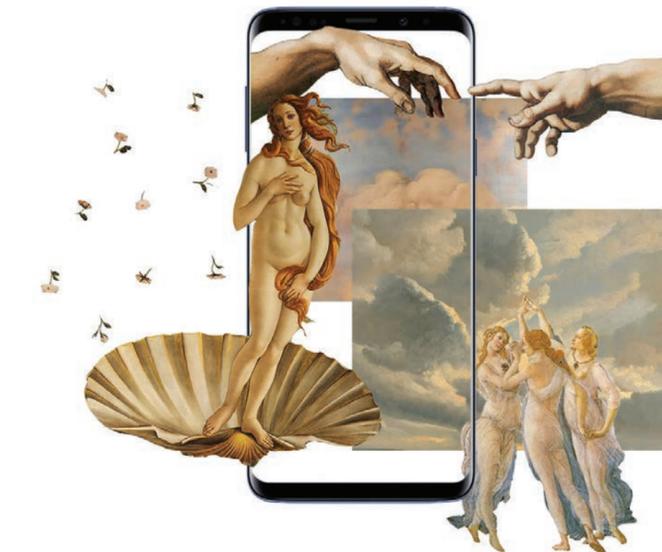
In the past year, it's safe to say that many of our lives stagnated as the world found itself in an endless house arrest. Repeating days of online learning and choking-down 'unprecedented times' for breakfast, a glance to the future elicited nothing but an anxiety-laden fog and a queasy feeling. Many of us, turned inwards on ourselves, falling back into the soundtracks of 2012, revisiting our teen emo phase, and picking up old hobbies like skating. It appeared to be the standard way young people coped; when the present became too much to bear, we turned to our past. If you're anything like myself, you may have also turned to TikTok, the Gen Z dominated app that seems to be everyone's new vice.

Over the summer, I couldn't help but notice videos tagged #renaissance popping up all over my feed. At first, I was pretty pleased with the fruits of my labour (read: mindless scrolling) because I had finally reached Art History TikTok. Except, there was one small problem. Virtually none of the art used in the hashtag was actually from the Renaissance period. Most of it appeared to be Mannerism or Neo-Classical. The trained eye may immediately pick out the anachronisms of TikTok's Renaissance, but it is easy to see how ordinary viewers may think otherwise. To defend Gen Z's historical inaccuracy, Renaissance iconography re-appeared in varying forms long after the period officially ended. Though, how can it be that a trend with a cumulative 764 million views on the app is entirely

historically inaccurate? This sticking point got me thinking about what Gen Z does associate with the Renaissance period; I concluded that the ideological connotations matter more than perfect historical accuracy. The trend reveals an entire generation's relationship with the Renaissance, how we relate to it, and how we understand it as a cultural beacon.

It's easy to suggest that the #Renaissance trend is appealing on social media for the romanticised opulence we associate with the period, but this still begs the question: why are these images still relevant at all? For me, the Renaissance is one of the most prominent symbols of cultural change in western history. Credited with bridging the gap between the modern-day and the Middle Ages, the Renaissance saw rapid innovations in scientific thought, culture, and politics, all of which paved the way for our modernity. The bold new imagery characteristic of the Renaissance bursts with themes of prosperity, individualism, and humanism. The fact that a TikTok trend has associated just the word 'renaissance' with its intellectual and lavish themes is indicative of the gravitas these artworks still hold today. I believe this is the crux of the trend's motivation, and the reason for its comeback. In a year of pain, uncertainty, and loss, the Renaissance trend was a much-needed escape for an entire generation.

In itself, the gravitation of young people to the romanticised past trend is symptomatic of late-stage capitalism,



Art by Claire Ollivain

The ways in which 2020 was ravaged by the knock-on effects of centuries of capitalistic greed were devastating and – even more devastatingly – predictable. Many young people became 'essential workers' or 'frontline heroes' – a thinly veiled way of sugarcoating the choice to work in a pandemic or not be able to pay rent. Further, the isolating format of online 'learning' only exacerbated students' monotony and disillusionment everywhere. TikTok's return to the Renaissance was a yearning for the past, a resounding outcry for escapism, with

needs far surpassing lost high-school hobbies. To create or watch a TikTok that re-imagines the Renaissance is a therapeutic fantasy.

So sure, Gen Z got the art wrong, but they got the ideas right. Young people whose lives felt lost by the wayside in the stifling pressure cooker of 2020, turned to a time in history emblematic of creative expression and life's beauty. Beyond this, it's a yearning for a hopeful future, a possibility other than the nine-to-five and more years like 2020 to come.

The songwriting spectre: Connie Converse and the hauntology of Spotify

Niamh Gallagher introduces you to the ghostly Connie Converse.

Listening to my Spotify Discover Weekly playlist in May 2018, my hem was snagged on the briar of Connie Converse's singular voice and lilting guitar. Compared to the phosphorescent pop that had played prior, the song was diminutive; a melancholic, yet wryly playful sound. Herein laid its inimitable charm. The entire album, *How Sad, How Lovely*, wanders through lyrical thickets of loneliness, sexual longing, and the desire for simplicity and beauty, doing so through surreal and fantastical images of fisherman's wives, playboys, lilies and magic trumpets.

I was stumped. Where did she come from? Undeniable are the distinctive references to 1950s Americana, with Converse meticulously combining the 'stylistic hallmarks of rural blues, country, gospel, folk, pop, jazz, hillbilly, parlor songs, and early jazz,' as Howard Fishman contends. Yet simultaneously, the nostalgic, lo-fi production coupled with the album's lyrically and emotionally raw, female-driven sound was reminiscent of mid-2010s indie singer-songwriters Karen O, Angel Olsen and Mitski. The disjunction between these elements drew my assumptions away from the possibility of Converse's work being truly vintage.

As Go-Betweens singer Robert Forster astutely observes, in the 1950s, women "weren't writing songs so desperate or pure of feeling, or so flippant and wild." And the album's Spotify release date was only 2009. The sweetly hand-painted album cover struck me as a classic bit of slightly-tinge early-naughts-does-retro branding. Even her name; Connie

Converse. How naff, how American, to name yourself (alliteratively no less) after a brand of shoes. Here's the kicker. The whole album was recorded in the early 1950s. Mitski should be reminiscent of Connie Converse, but her enduring obscurity has rendered her timeless; a ghost whom we play dress-up with in the present.

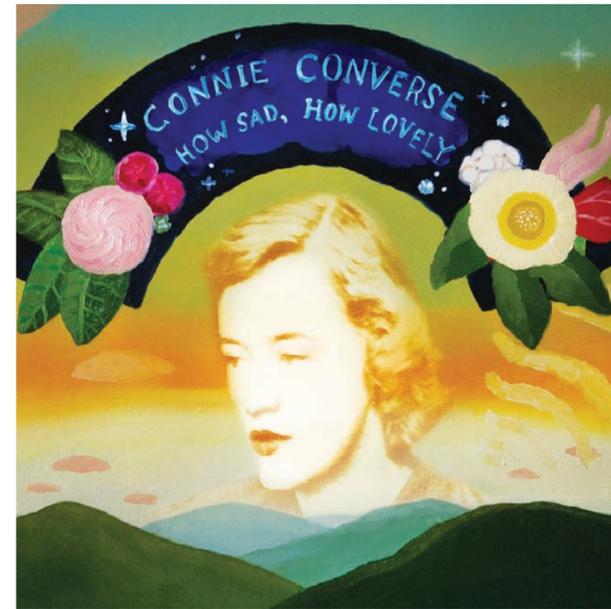
Aiding this is Spotify's inherently hauntological structure. Through

the platform, dead artists become ghosts, who, in the words of French philosopher Colin Davis, are "neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive." In Connie's case; the ability to 'follow' her, the section for merch and the "Artist's Pick" recommendation create the sense that she controls and curates this cyber-space, yet she also feels removed from it. Hauntology is a term first used by philosopher Jacques

Derrida in his book *Spectres of Marx* (1993). At its core, hauntology captures the sense that time is not experienced as linear. Mark Fisher writes that time "has a way of using us to repeat itself," and this can be seen in our collective obsession with nostalgia. TikTok users' appropriation of vintage love songs into Gen Z anthems, including the mildly terrifying "Tonight You Belong to Me" (1956) by Patience and Prudence, and the resurgence of film photography are but two examples of this. Technology plays an integral role in this collapsing of time, as it allows for seemingly infinite possibilities for recycling and repetition.

Connie Converse is ghostly indeed. When she moved to New York, after dropping out of her second year of college, to pursue a writing career, she taught herself guitar and began writing and recording songs. The cartoonist Gene Deitch invited her to his music night and recorded her work, and she performed once on CBS's *Morning Show*, but she never enjoyed the glow of commercial success. A week after her 50th birthday in 1974, she drove away from her home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, never to be seen or heard from again.

Her music lay deep in fairy tale slumber until 2009. Squirrel Thing Records released *How Sad, How Lovely* after one of the producers heard Gene Deitch play an old recording of Converse on a radio show. Converse's 'new' EP *Sad Lady* was released in 2020. If you listen, perhaps she'll float out of her grave and perform on *Jimmy Fallon*, a translucent hand plucking her guitar.



Mother tongue or mine?

Angelina Nguyen is learning to love her mother tongue.

A few weeks ago, I stood in line at my local newsagency behind an elderly lady as she was being served by the storekeeper. The storekeeper addressed her directly with a clear, but not patronising, air to his voice. Her words were pronounced slowly, but they eventually came together and arrived where they needed to be. At that moment, I was unsure why their ordinary exchange about the price of a lottery ticket had managed to catch my attention.

In hindsight, I realised that the reason was simple. I recognised and understood the language they were speaking in: my mother tongue. To others in the vicinity, it was just some foreign speech. For me, though, I had permission to listen in on their public, but also entirely private, conversation.

After the elderly lady left, I reached the front of the counter and declared to the storekeeper that I had a package to collect in Vietnamese. A polite degree of disbelief arose in his eyes. He responded in English, with an accent that resembled an Aussie's but was not exactly there.

"You know how to speak Vietnamese?"

This familiar churning in my stomach gave rise to a nervous laugh. I was not sure whether to say "yes" or "đạ." Neither was wrong, but neither

was right either. Both options were wrapped further in an entanglement of questions. Did he not expect it of me? Did I mispronounce something? Did I not look like someone who could speak Vietnamese? It was as if I was being tugged by two halves of myself, two different voices that commanded me to yield to only one of them. Even though I wanted to say something, the feeling of wanting to run away grew stronger. I settled for a nod.

My relationship with my mother tongue has been a complex struggle. I never presented my surname in its actual form with the dip and rise in tone, the nasal beauty. "Nguyễn" was reduced to "win", "new-in" and "new-yeen" or whatever worked best for the person I was introducing myself to. Whenever I would eat at a phở restaurant, I rehearsed the orders, letting them glide from my mind to mouth, ready to impress my friends, only to be met with a "Hi, how can I help you?" I should have been thankful that their service was adjusted for my convenience but instead, I was upset, frustrated, lost. Even my parents continue to be surprised when they hear me belting out Vietnamese songs in the car. Their shock admittedly was warranted at first, considering I spent most of my youth opting out with a pair

of headphones to listen to anything and everything else. Yet each instance repelled me further away from singing what I deemed 'their' music at family karaoke nights.

For a long time, I avoided any situation where I would need to utter a single syllable of Vietnamese. It was not out of protest, nor out of ignorance that I muted myself. It was because I was uncertain. I never felt qualified enough to call it my mother tongue. Although my fluency was cultivated from my childhood, my Vietnamese vocabulary existed solely to communicate with my family. Beyond the walls of my home, my mother tongue only manifested itself in whispers, ranging from covert complaints and curses about the rowdiness of others in the same train carriage, to detailed translations for my parents about the prices, policies and promises that retail sales assistants would offer in stores. I restricted my use of my mother tongue and did not think it could be anything more.

But now, I refuse to set Vietnamese aside, to simply label it my "second language." After all, I had learnt it before English. I had attended a school to strengthen my proficiency in it and when I travelled overseas to visit my relatives, I spoke it exclusively. Placing it within a hierarchy of languages meant it would have to reside on a

runner-up podium, perhaps gracious on the surface but harbouring a secret resentment for the victor. It is seeking equality. It is calling to me and more than ever, I feel compelled to respond. It is slowly, but surely, becoming something more.

My desire is to embrace Vietnamese as a partner language, all its idiosyncrasies, mysteries and wonders. Rather than resorting to English when confronted with the limits of my mother tongue, I resolve to consult my family, relatives and community for the right words, expressions and phrases to elevate the dialogue I am having with others in it. Most of all, when I summon the words of my mother tongue, I no longer want to feel sadness. I wish to assert, find pride in and transcend barriers with it. I want to exercise Vietnamese, claim it as my own, over and over again until it becomes mine.

I could not remember the details of what happened that day at the newsagency except the hasty passing of coins from my hand into his, and the pockets of silence that demanded to be filled but remained empty. What stayed in my memory after the incident was his reply to my shaky "cám ơn", my "thank you."

"I wish my daughter could also speak as well as you."

The double-edged sword of Marvel's monopoly

Marlow Hurst ponders the innovation of domination.

WandaVision is an absolute hoot. But while it's a hoot, it also symbolises a shift in Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) programming; away from the traditional feature film format, but pre-eminently away from the safety of the MCU formula. While most Marvel movies (and most big-budget blockbusters in general) sell themselves on grand action set pieces and fast pace, moment-to-moment combat, *WandaVision* doesn't. In a departure from the MCU of winter's past, *WandaVision* presents itself as a psychological thriller - exploring character and aesthetic more than anything else. In the heaving behemoth that is the Marvel machine, this is innovation.

This innovation isn't just a creative decision made in isolation, though. Marvel, as a studio, and the creative risk it's willing to bear, has always been directly linked to its stages of development. Phase 2, a period of consolidation for Marvel, has many of the most formulaic films of the MCU - namely *Thor: The Dark World* (2013) and *Age of Ultron* (2015) being the top offenders. Phase 3, on the other hand, has some of its most vibrant entries. According to traditional economic and cultural theory, monopoly and market homogeneity breed stagnation. Yet the more Marvel consolidates its dominance over mainstream entertainment, the more risks it's willing to take. *WandaVision*

is a product of this.

Starring two less than central characters, streaming on Disney+, and with a main hook that's less appealing to a casual audience, *WandaVision* could only have happened in Marvel's present stage. I like to call it their post-consolidation secure growth stage. Right now, Marvel Studios is too big to fail. Literally. I cannot envisage Marvel content being anything less than significant. That might seem naive of me, but I think they've proven themselves. If *Age of Ultron* (2015) and *Thor: The Dark World* (2013) didn't kill the franchise, nothing will. Monopoly has always been an incentive for innovation in a market economy and that same rule applies to the MCU. Intellectual property laws, a form of legal monopoly, have long been considered necessary for private corporations to invest in research and development. Conventional wisdom is that innovation isn't a financially sound decision without the legal assurance of exclusive profit. Without innovation several life saving, world changing, and genre defining products and services might never exist. Sounds pretty good, right? Now, the development of a new vaccine or the aeroplane's invention aren't exactly on par with a Disney+ content drop. But the primary principle remains the same: risk is encouraged when security is assured. Just as intellectual property laws protect the products of

research and development (and the Disney corporation, for that matter), so does the market dominance of the MCU defend it from the consequences of a programming risk.

WandaVision follows *Endgame's* record-breaking box office earnings and Disney's acquisition of Fox. Both signifiers of the corporation's absolute market domination. And that dominance is manifesting itself in other media as well. *Black Panther*, *Captain Marvel*, and the *Eternals* all represent firsts for representation in the MCU. They also all appear in later phases of the franchise or, in the case of the *Eternals*, have yet to be released. All of this is innovation in the shallowest terms, but for a franchise that has often been criticised for stagnation, things are changing for the better.

As much as I'd love to finish off by saying that media diversity is a small price to pay for the absolute romp that is *WandaVision*, I can't. As much as a monopoly has giveth, it has taketh some too. Almost 40% of the US box office figures went to Disney productions in 2019. On principle alone that's something that isn't exactly tolerable. As a member of any fandom, it's important to remember that the characters we watch and the shows we consume aren't just art in isolation. Disney's acquisition of Fox was adored by the Marvel masses (myself included). The opportunity

for the Fantastic Four and X-Men to enter the MCU was simply too tantalising a prospect to ignore. But these aren't just characters - they're representative of an ever narrowing media ecosystem. So while it's fun to contemplate whether monopoly might actually encourage innovation, just remember that Quicksilver isn't the only thing the Disney corporation owns now.



The untold histories of the Cooks River

Tasia Kuznichenko reflects on the river's little-known past.

The Cooks River holds a special place in my heart. I grew up alongside its cluttered depths; elusively beautiful. Sometimes it glittered blue and other times it smelt like rubbish. I used to roll down the miniature hills of Ewen Park, its playground and soccer fields located in the largely overlooked suburb of Hurlstone Park which cocoons the river - I still live there today. I celebrated many birthday parties at the wooden picnic benches that are dotted along the waterway and made some of my first childhood friends on the swing sets that are grounded amongst brown mulch chips.

My relationship with the Cooks River slowly waned as I grew older. Although I still had fond memories of the hours spent in Ewen park, I now viewed the river as a space for recreation - to ride my bike or walk my dog and I think a lot of other people are similar. This understanding of the Cooks River has also been fuelled by the recent experience of COVID-19, which drove people out to explore their local parks and green spaces, as

they realised that staying inside had its limits.

However, this has not always been the river's main narrative. An enduring collective memory recognised by those who live in Sydney is one of floating shopping trolleys, an overpowering stench and murky brown depths. The Cooks River has an indisputable history of pollution. It has been dammed (and damned), used as a dump for toxic waste from the nearby factories and developed upon with the expansion of Mascot Airport and surrounding neighbourhoods built along the river.

I only began to learn more about the river's secret past last year when I undertook a public history project with the Cooks River Alliance. I learnt that the Cooks River first and foremost belongs to the Gadigal, Wangal and Darug Peoples of the Eora nation, as well as the Gameygal people, who lived by the river and relied on it for sustenance and survival almost 20,000 years ago. Gum from different trees alongside the river was eaten at

any time of the year. Medicines were made from plant oils of Eucalyptus, Boronia and mint.

With European invasion in the 1790s, the river became a place for recreation and sport. The idea of trading the dirtiness and 'sin' of the city for the tranquillity of nature was fulfilled at the bank of the Cooks River. Illegal boxing matches took place in the new pubs that popped up along the river in the 1850s. Hunting of deer and kangaroo was a popular sport, and hordes of young people swam, picnicked and skinny-dipped at bathing spots in the suburbs along the river (one bath was aptly named Starkey's Corner). Annette Kellerman, a professional swimmer in the early 20th Century, frequented the river and was one of the first women to wear a swimming costume rather than pantaloons!

The little historical stories I read left me spellbound. From how limestone was discovered by burning oyster middens in the 1800s, a resource not previously available in Sydney, to the fact that the river was once so clean that visitors used its water to make tea.

I feel that the Cooks River deserves to have these stories told and to be heralded as an important place

within Sydney's history. As historian Anna Clark's states, "place literally locates our individual and collective historical consciousness in the world around us." These mementos shine a light on Sydney's historical depth and provide a stronger connection to place and belonging. It's something I feel that anchors my own identity and that I hope one day will be felt by all.

Art by Dmitry Kuznichenko



Black sun over sunburnt country

Iggy Boyd takes a look at fascism in Australian metal.



In 1997, Virginian black metal act Grand Belial's Key released their debut LP *Mocking the Philanthropist*. It was met with widespread controversy and boycotts; Rough Trade Records Germany refused all distribution of the album, the band played only nine gigs in its first nine years and their label, Wood-Nymph, collapsed after poor record sales. Irrespective of the reactionary content of the album itself, controversy stemmed predominantly from the CD booklet which featured band members wearing the merch of prominent National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) acts. One of these acts was Spear of Longinus, who formed in 1992 in Brisbane, Queensland.

Fascism, in a legislative sense, never did take root in Australia - its self-contradictory nature and endlessly vacillating convictions struggle to appeal to populations without a more conventional ancestral-national chauvinism and predisposition to outward displays of military might. But fascism was always, above all else, a political aesthetic; subscription to the ideology itself or relevance in Parliament is not necessarily reflective of sympathy towards its particular end goals. Australia has long embraced a watered down fascist imagery of soft white nationalism, subtly scapegoating minority populations and celebrating jingoistic approaches to foreign countries such as China. This is all to say, the way people talk about fascism within music is wrong (at least in Australia). People tend to imagine scenes straight out of Green Room in which nazis come together in dirty, recondite locations and perform their music for each other in very insular, gatekeeping scenes; sort of a burgeoning underground Fourth Reich. This is not the case in Australia, and only ever tends to manifest in countries where fascism is prevalent and not ostensibly untenable, such as with early 2000s Ukrainian Black Metal or Polish Black Metal over the last decade. In these cases, political facism isn't underground, and nor are its musical manifestations.

Most likely the first Australian white supremacist band was Quick & The Dead, who formed in Perth

in 1978. They were tied to the Rock Against Communism (RAC) scene abroad. Other acts such as White Lightning, White Noise and Fortress followed suit. They played hard rock and Oi! and were all essentially defunct by 2000, alongside RAC at large. Searching for bands with explicit ties to white supremacist organisations or ideologies yields very few results. In terms of artists that have been operating this century, the most notorious are Deströyer 666 and Spear of Longinus, but there are smaller acts such as Denouncement Pyre, Vomitor, Lustration and Abyssic Hate. These acts largely play black and trash metal and have members that have expressed fascist sentiments in the past. For example, Abyssic Hate's first demo is titled 'Cleansing of an Ancient Race' and features a Reichsadler on its cover. K K War Slut, lead singer of Deströyer 666, once screamed to a crowd "[t] his one's for all the Muslim immigrants that are invading [...] everyone's busy being anti-Christian... fuck being anti-Christian, let's be fucking anti-Muslim for once!" whilst performing a seig heil. This display, at DeathKult Open

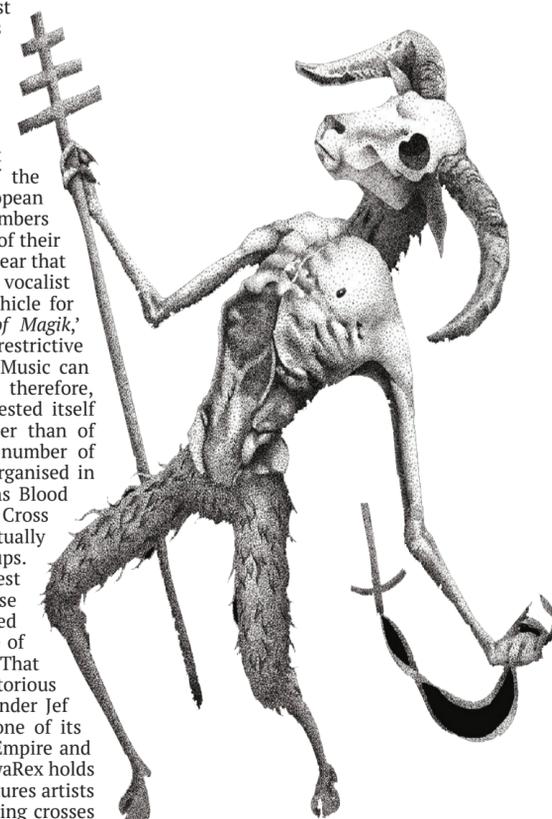
Air Festival in 2012, was met with thunderous applause. Deströyer 666 continues to perform today. All aforementioned bands have performed at festivals and released on record labels that neither cater to nor exclusively host neo-nazi work-- they are by no means marginalised. They exist side by side with "apolitical" metal outfits across Australia.

This is where fascist aesthetics permeate Australian music. Spear of Longinus is professedly NSBM but its lyrical content is largely that of the superiority of pre-Christian Indo-European philosophies and traditions. Its members have disagreements over the meaning of their name; some believe it to refer to the spear that pierced Jesus' side on the cross while vocalist Camazotz claims that its merely a vehicle for other ideas such as Odin's 'Spear of Magik,' liberation of the human soul from restrictive morality, and ancient Roman justice. Music can not communicate manifestos and, therefore, fascism in metal has generally manifested itself as an exploration of the occult rather than of specific fascist ideological points. A number of neo-Nazi music festivals have been organised in recent years by skinhead organisations Blood & Honour Australia and Southern Cross Hammerskins, but it is rare to find actually recognisable bands among their line-ups. Take, instead, Kommodus - one of the best new black metal acts in Australia, whose leading man Lepidus Plague has enjoyed increasing popularity since the release of his debut self-titled album last year. That debut album features artwork from notorious domestic abuser and accused sex offender Jef Whitehead (of Leviathan fame) and one of its key themes is worship of the Roman Empire and its aesthetics. Kommodus' label GoatowaRex holds no claimed political allegiance and features artists that range from Zss, who feature burning crosses

on their artwork, to Kūka'ilimoku, an indigenous Hawaiian anti-imperialist. A peek at Plague's instagram reveals a chaotic smorgasbord of Roman imagery, pictures of himself in corpse paint, and Australian WWII-era nationalism. I have very rarely seen Kommodus considered a fascist band; in fact, I've much more seen it celebrated in anti-fascist communities.

It's not uncommon for bands in Australia to invoke Roman imagery, such as Rote Mare or Dawn of Azazel, as they can't claim the same ancestral connection to paganism as Eastern Europeans can. In fact, Australian bands can rarely claim ancestral connection to much of anything. This makes worship of pure ancestry, a common fascist dog whistle, difficult to pull off. On account of this, the aesthetic dog whistles within Australian music are more scattered, much like the aesthetics of Australian fascism. This makes it difficult to easily identify which bands may be potentially problematic in a way that it isn't with Eastern European music. This, coupled with the relative lack of a true anti-fascist presence in the Australian metal underground and an absence of "Nazi hunters" such as slackbastard leaves the proliferation of quasi-fascist dogwhistles and imagery in sections of the Australian underground essentially unchallenged.

Certainly, Australia is not on the verge of coup staged by bullet-belt toting fucking nerds with skintight leather pants hiked up their arses, but it can't be said that Australia is hostile to such expressions. Fascism's favourite ecosystem is one in which it is taken as a joke and left unaddressed, and the Australian underground black metal scene continues to tolerate dalliances with fascist aesthetics. Sympathy for fascism, particularly eco-fascism, grows across the world and those in high places seem only too willing to pander to it; anti-fascism now is more important than ever than ever.



Sycco's sounds of psychedelic sleeplessness

Nishta Gupta interviews Brisbane indie pop artist Sycco.

Brisbane-born Sasha McLeod, better known as Sycco (pronounced 'psycho'), entered the indie pop scene with a distinctly psychedelic and infectious sound. She has seen success globally with over 9 million streams and her song *Dribble* placing at #29 on Triple J's Hottest 100 Chart last year.

Sycco's new single *My Ways* epitomises the sleepless, liminal experience of quarantine with poppy electronic beats paired with honest lyrics. This week, I got the chance to speak to Sycco about her creative process, songwriting over Zoom, how TikTok is changing the music industry, and her Torres Strait Islander heritage.

So, you've just realised a new song, *My Ways*. Could you tell us a bit about it and where you drew inspiration from?

S: Well, I wrote it in lockdown last year, so it was about being cooped up and not having the best mental stability. It was just a big release. For me personally, that was the first song where I actually dug deeper, instead of just talking about surface level kinds of things.

How else has COVID-19 impacted the way you write music?

S: It's actually helped me connect with some people overseas to do Zoom songwriting sessions, which have been really fun. Although, it's also kind of hard because it's just a tunnel and you have to make a song through a laptop. Well, I guess songwriting is always on a laptop! [Laughs]. But it's been good and exciting to have more opportunities. And because I was in Brisbane where the lockdown was pretty quick, it allowed me to spend quality time with my friends which was really beneficial.

How did you pick your stage name, Sycco?

S: I was in high school and I was just writing words — I love the word psychedelic because I was listening to Pink Floyd at the time and I came up with Sycco because it was spelt differently. I think Sycco with one C was taken, so I just added a C.

I've noticed with *My Ways* and a lot of your other songs, sleep and insomnia are common themes. Where does that come from?

S: I think I feel unsafe when I sleep with other people, so I can't sleep until I'm comfortable. That's a big thing in my life, and I'm understanding it more. When I wrote those songs, I didn't realise that was happening at the time, or that it was a security thing, but now I know!



Could you take us through what your creative process is like, from the songwriting to the actual production of the song?

S: If I'm just writing in my room, that's just me producing. But sometimes, I'll do a Zoom session with others and we'll go back and forth with ideas, or we'll be in the actual room together. I love working with other people because it's two brains trying to work it out, even though I do like working on my own. It's just another thing that makes it exciting.

You performed on *Like a Version for Triple J* too. What was your approach to covering PNAU's *Embrace*?

S: I wanted to make it a lot more melancholic. I also desperately wanted to put in Tame Impala because they're my biggest inspiration. It was just inevitable to put that ending in. I just produced it in my room one day and then we played it!

Are there any other artists you draw inspiration from?

S: Definitely all my friends from my hometown, I'm surrounded by musicians and they all inspire. Last year, I was hitting Clairo heaps, she's amazing. And Charlie XCX — two different

sides of the world. I love their songwriting and how they have pop sensibilities in all their songs, even if it's not definite mainstream pop.

That definitely comes through in your music as well. Not only do your songs sound evocative, the visuals of your album covers and music videos are so vivid. What's the connection between your music and visuals?

S: I've always wanted my music to feel like there's heaps of colour — a bit trippy in a way. So I wanted the music videos to also do that. I've also worked with the same people since the beginning so it's been a cohesive project.

And what has it been like connecting with your Torres Strait Islander heritage? Has this affected your music or you personally?

S: It's been good. It's been a new thing, so I haven't had heaps of time to hear stories or meet new people. But it's nice knowing people support me and my journey because it's super interesting and so important as well.

Where do you see your music going in the future, in 2021 and beyond?

S: World domination! [Laughs]. I don't know, I just want to keep doing it and keep loving it, and playing lots of shows. And just keep having fun.

We've got four shows in Brisbane, which are sold out. There's four shows in Sydney with some extra tickets that are out now at the Lansdowne. There are four shows in Melbourne, and there's some extra tickets at the Northcote Social Club.

*Sycco goes on her Dribble tour in 2021, performing at the Lansdowne in April. Her new single *New Ways* is streaming now.*

Review: SUDS' *Cyrano De Bergerac*

Alexandre Douglas sniffs around SUDS' latest production.

I was not sure if I would enjoy Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. So, some French dude in the 17th century has a big nose, what of it?

To my surprise, I left the theatre feeling genuinely moved. Director Annie Fraser has taken a script, parts of which have not aged well, cut and modified it, and put on a production that, unlike the original, does not exult its protagonist but rather meditates on the consequences of his narcissism (i.e., he can't see beyond his own nose).

That protagonist is Cyrano, a brilliant poet and swordsman. He's in love with the intellectual Roxanne, but is reluctant to confess his feelings due to having a nose that "precedes him by fifteen minutes." Upon hearing that Roxanne is interested in a soldier named Christian, who is, unbeknownst to her, "shit" with words, Cyrano has an idea — he'll write love letters, Christian will sign, seal and deliver them, and at some point, he'll tell the truth.

Things, needless to say, don't go to plan.

I must admit I was a little disappointed when Cyrano (Eduard Geyl) first came on stage — his nose! It wasn't bulbous, grotesque or large in magnitude, it was just a plain old nose. But as the play went on I felt that a prosthetic would have been unnecessary. Geyl never leaves the audience in doubt that he knows he is incapable of being loved. Nor does he let anyone else eclipse him on the stage. Indeed I was surprised that his bravado could give way to trepidation.

He was so confident at the beginning of the play that I could not have imagined he had any insecurities.

Carla Field as Roxanne demands your attention. I particularly enjoyed her performance in the last scene when, contrary to the original script, it is implied that Roxanne was aware of the truth, suggesting that, to some degree, she was implicit in her own deception.

Roman Koteczky as Christian bizarrely reminded me of Keanu Reeves. His deadpan delivery, clashing with the more verbose Roxanne and Cyrano, was endlessly entertaining. He was also subtle enough in his performance to convince me that Christian, more than just being a tool of Cyrano's, had a conscience that doubted the morality of the play.

Michael Kaufmann as De Guiche was excellent at being a douchebag. What really endeared me to him though was how he portrayed De Guiche following the fifteen-year time jump — stricken with guilt. Still, I did find it, in spite of the knowledge that time had passed, a very sudden change of heart. I would have liked more of an explanation as to why he went from hating Cyrano, to be willing to shake his hand. But the fault lies with the script in this case, not the director.

I could also tell the members of the ensemble had a fun time rehearsing and performing the play. The camaraderie between them seeped into their performances like cadets in a regiment downing pinot. I particularly enjoyed Kimmi Tonkin's performance. Though she was in the



Credit: Alan Fang

background for the majority of the play, she often drew my attention with her hilarious reactions.

There is a moment when the play falls flat. In a scene where Cyrano stalls De Guiche by pretending to be a fool, the decision was made to project a pre-recorded video of Geyl onto the set instead of having the two actors interact in person. Whilst I did appreciate the cinematography, the audio was often out of sync, leaving me detached from the events on stage.

The set, while bare, was clever in its design. The far wall had been defaced and signed by the characters of the play. It was also adorned with posters of past SUDS productions, but their actors had been replaced with those of this production — blurring the

line between the fictional setting of a theatre and the audience's reality. Paris was right to realise that most of his work was already done for him. Morrissey on the other hand, had her work cut out for her with only a couple of lights at her disposal. One moment I was in a homely theatre, the next it was nightfall and an infinite chasm separated Cyrano and Roxanne, bridgeable only by words.

This production surprised me, made me chuckle and moved me at times (a rendition of *La Vie en Rose* was a tad on the nose but I still enjoyed it). SUDS has delivered again, keep your nose to the ground for upcoming productions.

Review: *My Mum's Dead and I Wanna Sing About It*

Danny Cabubas reviews the final show of the SUDS summer season.

With a set made to look like a funeral parlour and a cast and band made to dress in all-black funeral clothing, it's a bit difficult to imagine what a show titled *My Mum Died and I Wanna Sing About It* will be like. I most certainly hadn't prepared myself for a night of dazzling cabaret and a rollercoaster ride of emotions.

Not that these are bad things, quite the contrary.

I'm of the opinion that *My Mum Died* would not have worked nearly as well as it did were it not for its sole star, who was also writer and director. Jack Francis West commanded the stage and audience with a black hole-like charisma that draws you in from the word go. His perfectly cultivated persona was the ideal mix of self-confident, self-deprecative, and most importantly, profoundly authentic.

Of course, it would be difficult to write and perform a show discussing one's trauma without baring one's soul; but what Francis West did exceptionally well was explore the ugly side of grief in a completely

unabashed way. One moment the audience was being regaled with tales of drunken visits to gay sex saunas and consequent gastro-

three days Francis West spent with his mum.

Emotional whiplash of that calibre would typically be quite jarring, but



related emergency room visits that had us howling with laughter, and then the next we were being read journal excerpts detailing the final

My Mum Died took us on a journey, guiding us through the many twists and turns that come with such a traumatic event.

Further guiding the audience's emotions was the excellent selection of musical performances speckled throughout the show. Aided by a wonderful band, Francis West shone especially during these various cabaret-style numbers; kicking off the show with a dazzling performance of 'Dead Mom' from the Broadway musical *Beetlejuice* and then ending it with the beautiful and tear-inducing 'The Goodbye Song' from *Smash*. By the time the lights dimmed, the room was filled with a chorus of sniffles.

One line that particularly stuck with me was, "we don't talk enough about death." To me, this is a painful truth that *My Mum Died* tried its darndest to change. Utilising a brilliant mix of humour and seriousness, the show dove deep into one of the best explorations of grief and the trauma that comes with it I've ever seen. Francis West should be commended for his magnificent performance and his willingness to discuss such a personal and intimate topic.

REVIEWS

Review: On The Line

Max Shanahan probes Joseph Pontus' French bestseller.

Joseph Pontus' *On the Line*, a French bestseller to be released in English translation on March 31 by Black Inc, is a deeply unpleasant read. Shunted around the abattoirs and fish processing plants of Brittany by an unfeeling temp agency, Pontus lays bare the indignities of late capitalist labour in stark, unguarded language which leaves the unfortunate reader fatigued and with a vague sense of nausea.

The book follows Pontus as — after failing to find work in his professional field of social work — he signs on at a temp agency and is sent to and from various food processing factories without consistent hours or security of employment. Pontus' life is delegated to the whims of the agency's contractors, who dole out work with mere hours notice, and end jobs with less. No

chance for loyalty or promotion, and most definitely no benefits.

Pontus contrasts the modern aesthetics of gleaming factories — mechanised, computerised, and governed, at least in theory, by reams of safety regulations — against the unavoidable brutality of manual labour. He writes: "Triumphant capitalism has learned the lesson well that to best exploit the worker/You have to look after them/Just a bit," Face masks, steel-caps and half hour breaks are a small tonic against the pig shit, blood smatter and bovine detritus: "mind you don't find yourself under the pipe when the hooves fall."

In the break room: "I shake hands that have been sliced/I see/Wooden legs/That blokes put on before putting on their work coat and their chain mail protective gear."

In this modern Dickensian atmosphere, Pontus seeks escape from labour in literature. Accepting his first temp job, he quotes from Victor Hugo: he can start work "tomorrow at dawn when the countryside pales; counting down the minutes until clock off time, Dumas appears: "the sum of all human wisdom is contained in these two words: Wait and hope!" Apollinaire is a frequent companion over the battle of a long shift. Waiting for knock off: "with eyes fixed on my watch I await the moment when we'll go over the top."

Frequent recourse to poetry grates on the reader when followed by recollections of workplace banter/tall tales: 'Bloody hell mate you should have seen/The tub of yoghurt I delivered to her.' Despite sharing shifts, lifts and smokes with his colleagues, Pontus

is unable to discard his professional managerial background, and too frequent literary allusions are a method of maintaining class distinction between him and his "incompetent full-of-shit alcoholic" workmates on the line: "I'm dying to go see the boss and tell him on the quiet/Eh you do know it's bozo over there and not me."

Stephanie Smee's translation — although emotively conveying the fatigue and horror and resignation of the workplace — occasionally feels out of place. For example, it is difficult to imagine Pontus "bumming a ciggie" or looking forward to "smoke-o."

Despite its flaws, *On the Line* manages to evoke disgust, fatigue and fear in the reader. Don't read over dinner.

President

Swapnik Sanagavarapu

This time of year is always one of the busiest for the SRC - it is the culmination of our efforts over the summer and often determines how engaged students are with us over the year. The past week was less busy than the last, but was by no means uneventful. This report outlines just some of the things I've been up to.

The major thing in the past week has been the SRC's preparations for the USU's Welcome Fest, occurring from the 1st - 4th of the March. I spent much of the time taking stock of the various goodies that we've ordered for students: SRC branded tote bags, SRC

branded reusable masks, SRC pens, stickers and our renowned wall planners. Having ordered over a thousand of each item, our dedicated contingent of volunteers has been working tirelessly to assemble the bags that we'll give to you this week. Many thanks to everyone who volunteered to help out. Our collectives have also been hard at work, preparing their materials for Welcome Week and planning their activities for the year. You can find us on the far side of the Fisher Lawns, close to the Quadrangle. Looking forward to seeing you there!

The past week has also been one in which we were able to showcase our services to students. Our Legal Service successfully held an information session on Wednesday. The Principal Solicitor, Jahan Kalantar, explained to a contingent of students their rights under Australian law and how best to navigate the legal system. Our Caseworkers have also been keeping themselves busy. We recently said goodbye to our longstanding Casework and Policy Manager James Campbell. Enjoy retirement James! I also wish best of luck to his replacement Mel De Silva, who I'm sure will be

more than capable of steering the ship. I also spent some time this week working with SUSF, SUPRA and the University to set up a free textbook distribution service for students. Thanks again to the many volunteers who gave up their time to help sort through all of the textbooks. Watch this space for more details about this initiative. As always, you can find more information about what we're doing over at our Facebook page (facebook.com/usydsrcc) and you can get in touch with me personally via email at president@src.usyd.edu.au.

Vice Presidents

Roisin Murphy and Maria Ge

Roisin Murphy

Hello! For those of you who don't know me, I'm Roisin - one of the Vice Presidents for 2021. It's undoubtedly a very weird time to be a student - between COVID-19, the course cuts and the fee hikes, it might feel like you're getting none of the university experience you signed up for.

Rest assured, there's still a lot to be gained. There are lots of ways to engage in campus culture and kick start some activism. Getting involved in the fight against the course cuts is one of those, so make sure you're at the rally on March 24.

Sometimes going to Sydney Uni can feel like you're expected to live up to a million things. The best way to combat that is to not worry about what you're not doing, and focus instead on what you are. My advice is to find a few solid mates, figure out your favourite spot to grab a beer/non alcoholic bev on campus (I'd say a beer tower at Hermann's, but that comes from a place of bias), do subjects you enjoy, and get involved with an SRC collective that fights for issues you're passionate about. There is nothing more fulfilling than making a difference alongside like-minded people.

If you're fresh faced or old and crusty, I sincerely hope to meet you at some point during what will no doubt be quite the year for activism.

In Solidarity,
Roisin

Maria Ge

Hi this is Maria Ge, I am the Vice President of SRC for this year. It is my fourth semester to get involved in SRC related activities. This summer break, I am working on getting familiar with my new position and working with my new colleagues. We have already done many preparation works so far and we are making a general plan for the coming new semester. We have also arranged a fixed time for both of us to meet and work together every week in the next year in order to achieve our plan. Here is what I (Maria) am doing during this summer break.

- SRC official website: Raised the issue that SRC website should do more advertising of caseworkers on executive meeting and got the change happen. I will continue to pay attention to this, collect students' feedback and improve

the way it serve students.

- Working with caseworkers to do some multi-language versions of the leaflets, articles and social media posts, and some multi-language versions of some videos as well.

- [Remote learning support]
 - Discussed VPN issue in Meeting with Uni on Remote Learning, working with Grace and Haomin to make a survey. Now we have got more than 200 replies and done the report. We are going to submit it to the Uni in Academic Board Committee as soon as possible.
 - Working on testing the feasibility to make a voting page integrated to SRC official website in order to help handling academic appealing.

- Raised the issue that it is important to make videos for remote learning students to learn how to make full use of university's resources like canvas, library, CareerHub and so on.
- [Mental Health Training]
 - Get help from Student Service Liaison Officer to prepare for a training for officers.
 - [Volunteer project]
 - Working with President on creating a volunteer page on SRC website, so that the students can register and get newest events informations from it. Also I am working with

another Vice President. Our focus is on building different volunteer groups among different social media platforms.

- [Liaise with International Student Officer] for organising O-week activities and working on financial aid for remote learning students.
- [Other Day to day operation]
 - Cleaned the Ob room
 - Completed the Publications Training and Media Law training.

- Worked with General Secretary related to O-Week
 - Take part in all 6 executive meetings and one council meeting during the holiday.
 - Had a meeting with Julia to make our plan achievable for the next year.

- [Committee]
 - Meeting with Uni on Remote Learning
 - Raising the issue that for first year international students, it is important to teach them how to use university's resources, such as canvas, library, CareerHub.
 - Student Life Committee
 - Now we have more videos for first year students even the mandarin version for international students.

composed of student representatives who fight for your interests. Come along to the rally against sexual assault held by the Women's Collective (3rd March, midday, Eastern AV), or the forum on housing access held by the Welfare Collective (17th March, 4pm, Forest Lodge hotel) to learn about some of the issues we are working to address. We also have caseworkers and solicitors who can help you for free with issues like dealing with centrelink, tenancy issues, and police or court matters.

To talk to some of these lovely people,

check out our Welcome Week Stall (in front of the Quad), where you can also pick up a tote bag, some goodies, and the Orientation Handbook we have made for you to help figure out what exactly this place you have committed 3+ years to actually is.

University looks different for everyone. We recommend physically coming into uni if you can, and joining a collective to get involved in the struggles happening around you. Whatever you do in your time here, the SRC is here to help you.

A Queers of Faith space

The Interfaith Officers are considering creating a Queers of Faith space within the portfolio in order to reach out to LGBTQ+ students of faith within The University of Sydney and beyond. This draws from individual religious group's own LGBTQ+ spaces in Sydney such as Dayenu (Judaism), Uniting Network Australia (Uniting Church), Acceptance (Catholicism), Sydney Queer Muslims (Islam) and more. The space hopes to feature a dedicated online landing space, host dialogue events, talks and interreligious advocacy for LGBTQ+ affirmation in religious communities on- and off-campus. The distinction being that as an interfaith space, a Queers of Faith space will be able to aggregate interest and function as a safe space in which students could

share their stories and advocate for LGBTQ+ affirming policies within their respective faith communities.

De-colonising theology by integrating Indigenous spirituality

Interfaith is planning to host reading groups and dialogue events to gather on-campus religious groups to learn about Indigenous spirituality, Dreamtime, the importance of connection to the environment, and inclusive sovereignty. The aim is to decolonise religious groups' theologies and put Indigenous justice at the forefront of religious life at Usyd.

Should you need to contact us about anything, please email us at: interfaith.officers@src.usyd.edu.au

Refugee Rights Officers

Drew Beacom and Isabella D'Silva did not submit a report this week.

HOME TRUTHS: Things you should know about tenancy & accommodation



It would be great if we could trust everyone we met, or even just the people who seemed trustworthy, but sadly, we can't. That's where receipts and contracts come in.

When you pay a deposit, or rent, or any other bill, get a receipt. A printed receipt. On paper. Preferably in English. Take a photo of it, and email it to yourself, just in case you need it in the future. Email serves the dual purpose of filing and time stamping. I know that phones have a time stamp for photos, but an email is preferred by most tribunal members, in case you need to ask them for your money back. Having a record of the electronic bank transfer will not necessarily substitute for a receipt.

The SRC has had many cases where students have paid bond for their home, then moved out, and had their landlord refuse to refund the bond, saying that they didn't pay any. Similarly, we have seen landlords claim that students were behind in rent.

If you live in a home where the landlord or (their agent) does not live, you are considered a tenant and should have a lease. Other types of renters are probably boarders/lodgers, and should have a contract. This should show what the address is, the cost, your move in date, your move out date, and hopefully what penalties you need to pay if you move out earlier. It is very

important to keep a copy of your lease or contract, so that you can prove if there is a breach of the lease or contract. Again, you could email yourself a copy.

As a renter, you are responsible for the care of your home. Just before you move in, take photos of anything that is damaged, not working, or dirty. When you move out, take photos of every floor, window, wall, oven, bathroom, etc, to show that you have left them in clean, good working order. Email those photos to yourself, so you can prove that you were not the one that damaged or dirtied that part of your home, and that you left the place clean and undamaged. This will make it very difficult for the landlord to blame you for any repairs or cleaning bills, that they can take out of your bond.

The SRC has had many cases where students have paid bond for their home, then moved out, and had their landlord refuse to refund the bond, saying that they didn't pay any. Similarly, we have seen landlords claim that students were behind in rent. We have even seen landlords agree that a student could move out of the home early and charged them extra money for this. In all of these cases, written records would have helped the student at the tribunal.

The SRC has a leaflet with more details on things you should know about tenancy and accommodation, available on our website. See: <http://src.usyd.net.au/src-help/accommodation-issues/accommodation-guide/>.

We also have professional caseworkers who can help. Make an appointment by calling 9660 5222, or if you prefer, email your questions to help@src.usyd.edu.au.

Contact an SRC Caseworker on 02 9660 5222 or email help@src.usyd.edu.au.

Ask Abe

SRC caseworker help Q&A



Abe talks about the University's Disability Support Unit

Dear Abe,

I have difficulty in reading some words and numbers - they kind of jump around the page a bit. My friend thinks I am dyslexic, and I was wanting to know if there is anything I can do about it.

Thanks,

Alphabet

Dear Alphabet,

The first thing to do is to speak to your GP about your options for getting a diagnosis. This will enable you to then investigate what accommodations you might need from the University. This might

include a coloured lens to place over your written word, access to assistive technology, or just some extra time to do assessments. You can also explain your situation to your lecturers and ask them what they are able to do to help you. Most of them will only do what they are instructed to do by the Disability Support Unit, but there is no harm in trying. Finally, be aware of your study load and deadlines. Often doing fewer subjects will help to spend less time on those tasks, and knowing when you need to withdraw from a subject you are struggling with, will stop you from getting a fail.

Thanks,

Abe

KEY DATE! The last day to add a subject is Friday of week 2!



Grab a 2021 Student Year Planner today!

THE 2021 YEAR PLANNER IS HERE!

2020 really did suc(culent) so join us in celebrating this new year with the SRC's 2021 year planner. It's an A1 size with all of the semester dates marked in, with room to add your own important events. You can get your copy from the SRC Welcome Week stall, or some spots around campus including: Fisher Library, Sci Tech Library, and the FMH building. Alternatively, if you are studying from home we have a limited amount available to post. Email your name and full address to: help@src.usyd.edu.au with the subject header "wall planner".

Available for FREE while stocks last!

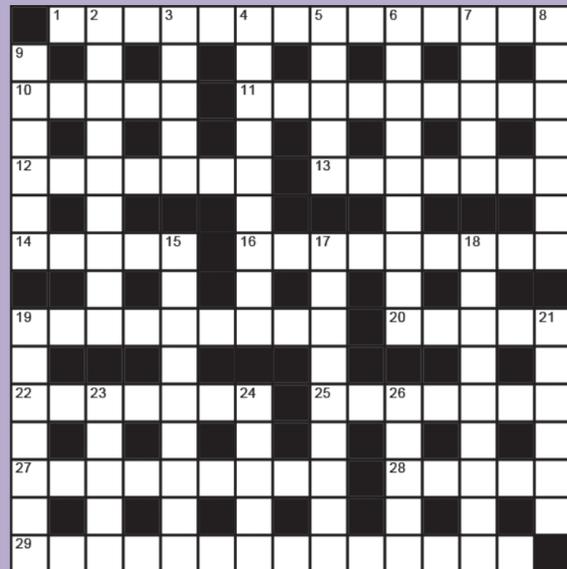


Available at the SRC Welcome Week stall, various locations around campus or by mail (limited). FREE while stocks last!



Puzzles by Tournesol

Quick Crossword



Across

- 1 Extinct Australian animal (9,5)
- 10 Japanese noodle dish (5)
- 11 Egg-laying mammal (9)
- 12 Purveyor of meats (7)
- 13 Frank, truthful (7)
- 14 Welkin, nimbus (5)
- 16 Viciousness, often demonstrated by police (9)
- 19 Christ's companion, Mary (9)
- 20 Pigs (5)
- 22 Blood-sucking worms (7)
- 25 Sport of the Australian Diamonds (7)
- 27 Strict adherence to religious ceremony (9)
- 28 Unspecified item (5)
- 29 Feat, achievement (14)

Down

- 2 Jazz virtuoso, Louis (9)
- 3 March, for example (5)
- 4 Able to be counted (9)
- 5 Little orphan of musical renown (5)
- 6 Uni classes (9)
- 7 Nearby suburb, north of Parramatta Rd (5)
- 8 The act of going back in (7)
- 9 Language of the Qur'an (6)
- 15 Muscle that regulates breathing, important when singing (9)
- 17 These are required before passwords (9)
- 18 Mimicry, copy (9)
- 19 Disease transmitted by the Anopheles mosquito (7)
- 21 Funereal speech (6)
- 23 Loft (5)
- 24 Talent, ability (5)
- 26 Spiritual emblem of an Aboriginal group (5)

Quiz!

All answers begin with the letter B.

1. In which country are the cities Brussels, Antwerp and Bruges located?
2. What mythological creature is said to live in Australian rivers and waterholes?
3. What substance is composed of plasma, platelets, erythrocytes and leukocytes?
4. By what name is Siddhārtha Gautama better known?
5. Who is the titular character of J. R. R. Tolkien's The Hobbit?
6. Which of Maurice Ravel's compositions did he describe as 'orchestral tissue without music' and 'one very long, gradual crescendo'?

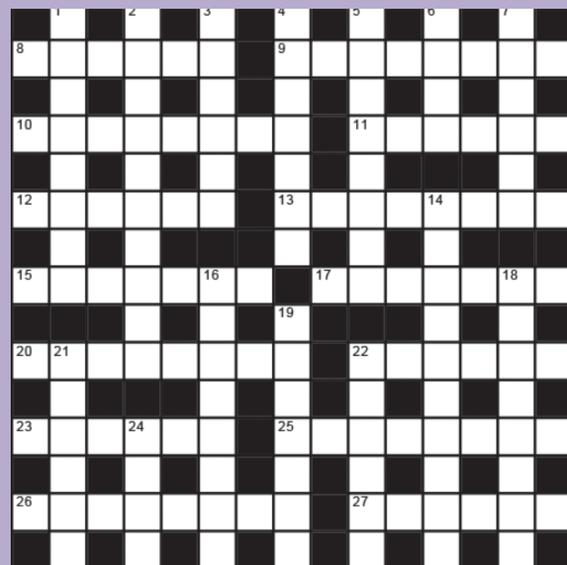
Across

Down

- 8 Second Osama cooked pastry (6)
- 9 Australian Islamic College has boat and plane (8)
- 10 Essential staff kneels to restructure (8)
- 11 I learn to become straight (6)
- 12 Spotted you with Tom (6)
- 13 Ring irrational reverend to say 'nightingale' (8)
- 15 A dance around 5? Go ahead! (7)
- 17 Sam receives terrible scar from something dry and sharp (7)
- 20 Ducks to shopping centre to get a really top gameboy (8)
- 22 Bad beer glasses lead to disproportionate head (2-4)
- 23 Oracle led back to Greek character (6)
- 25 In the Top 1 with friend! (8)
- 26 Stupid Ron went back in the giant assembly (8)
- 27 Sexy hero tickled discreetly (6)

- 1 Sponsor orphan in reverse (8)
- 2 Lovely ensemble dance competition (10)
- 3 Clergyman talks of noodles (6)
- 4 Dirty lake with headless fish (7)
- 5 Loud, high-pitched newsreader reported from island nation (3,5)
- 6 Smile throughout endless grind (4)
- 7 Matter, just after, to a great degree (6)
- 14 Game before pork loin (10)
- 16 Come on, Wicked sounds fair (8)
- 18 Homiest ingredients take love to make into a refreshing beverage (8)
- 19 Helps St Francis' birthplace to swap pole for crosses (7)
- 21 Exact retribution for Maria's precursor with core anger (6)
- 22 Jizz on me head, Ginger Spice (6)
- 24 Defecate on deck (4)

Cryptic Crossword



Lateral Thinking Puzzles

Puzzle by Sarah Purvis

Seven men get out of two cars and start along a footpath when it begins to rain. Six of the men walk faster to get out of the rain, but the seventh man did not. Ironically, it was the seventh man who remained dry while the rest got soaked. All seven men arrived at the destination together. How is this possible?

Answer: The seventh man was being carried in a coffin.

A ship sets out on its maiden voyage. Just before it arrives at its destination, it was involved in a serious accident and wrecked. Although no one is injured in the wreck, the accident is very costly and highly embarrassing. Later it turns out if the owners of the ship hadn't been Americans, the accident probably would not have happened.

Answer: In 1998, the Mars Climate Orbiter was lost because calculation of the orbital trajectory were done in two software systems, one which used metric units, and another in non metric units.

THE BOOT

How to befriend the poor in 10 easy steps!

1. Obvious signs of wealth scare the poor. Do not wear any recognisable brands or shiny jewelry that would attract the attention of a magpie whilst in their vicinity.
2. You must always talk down to the poor. They love to know that they have room to grow, and that one day they can be like you - rich!!
3. Only talk to poor people if they study law, commerce, medicine or engineering. All the others are swine that are destined to be poor forever.
4. Offer to buy them a coffee. They love charity, it makes them feel better about their sad lives. Slip change into their pockets if you're feeling extra generous.
5. Don't ask what school they went to, they will be threatened when you flash your North Shore or Eastern Suburbs private school in their faces and hate you instantly. This is not how you make friends.
6. Leave the boat shoes and RM Williams' until Week 3. By then you will have befriended members of the poor community and they will like your glowing personality enough to get over your shoes.
7. Ask where the poor have come from - they love discussions about geography. Tell them about your trips to their place of origin - show them that you're empathetic.
8. Catch public transport. It's where the most poor people are. You can also show your appreciation for Gladys and the Liberal party's enterprise by utilising their services.
9. Comfort the poor in times of need. They don't need money, they just need a hug to make things better.
10. Donate blood and sperm to the poor. We all know that being rich is hereditary. Give them a taste of your glory!

Get the look: Melissa Caddick's washed up New Balances



Look drop dead gorgeous too on p. 31!

USyd welcomes first nonhuman student

The University of Sydney has today made an important step in overcoming anthropocentrism, welcoming its first equine Economics student to Camperdown. Contacted for comment by *Boot*, Meghan T. Stallion said "I am looking forward to commencing my studies at this prestigious insitution. NNEEEEEIGGGHHHHH!!!"



Pictured: Meghan T. Stallion

In this issue

Government announces massive cuts to HandJobSeeker / p. 69

Best places to spank your child on campus / p. 98

Oops! Pfizer vaccine switched with Cialis; Australians get huge cocks / p. 123

Women removed from Parliament to end rape crisis / p. 167

10 best airstrikes by women of colour / p. 193

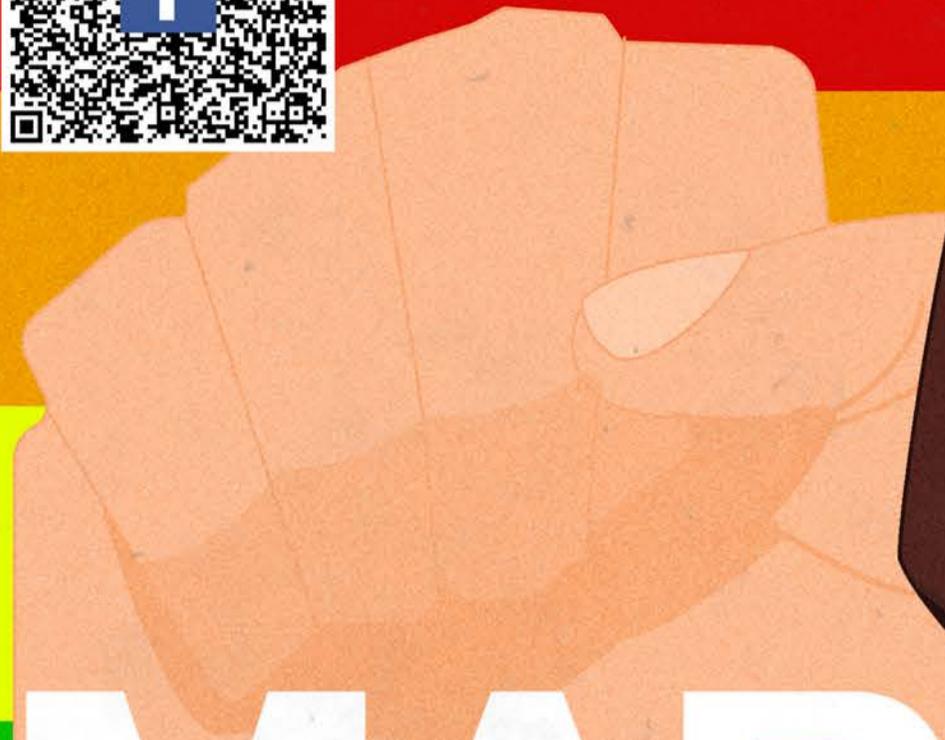
Craig Kelly becomes Independent, runs for USU Board / p. 193

DIY: Bedazzle your skid mark for Mardi Gras!



Stay glamorous all night long! Turn to p. 54...

TAKE OVER OXFORD STREET!



MARDI GRAS MARCH

**TAYLOR SQUARE
2PM SATURDAY
06/03/21**

DEMANDS:

- Kill The Bill!**
- No Pride in Detention!**
- Black Lives Matter!**
- Decriminalise Sex Work!**
- Legalise all drugs now!**

...and the
...that com-
... Together
... with pride
... homophobia,
...phobia, and racism.

To-
with