

UCU strike over planned cuts to pay, pensions and jobs

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Academic staff and students from Queen's University took part in a strike on Monday 21 and Thursday 24 March as part of the University College Union's (UCU) industrial action against the planned cuts to pay, pensions and jobs.

QUB sent letters to staff and students stating that the University does "not accept strike action" and declared the intention to carry on "business as usual."

A QUB lecturer and member of the UCU stated, "I strongly support industrial action over the issues of pensions, pay and redundancies. I am opposed in principle to the so-called 'reform' of higher education initiated under New Labour and now being implemented by the Con-DEM government."

A great deal of controversy has surrounded the strike action as QUB threatened that any member of staff who participated in the strike would have



Students and academic staff across the UK protested against recent proposals on pension reform

Jodie Prenger
interview
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porting the strike action, proposed by NUS-USI Deputy President, Lorcan Mullen, was carried at the last meeting of Student Council. The motion called for the solidarity and support of the Students' Union and Queen's students. In the same meeting, VP Community, Jay Downs stressed that if fees do not increase in Northern Ireland then the University will cut a total of 400 jobs. Students were urged by representatives not to cross the picket lines and not to attend class on the days.

On both days, staff and students met after the picket in the Students' Union to discuss further action against what was described as "the government's assault on ordinary people."

Numerous speakers took to the stage to voice their concerns and support for the cause. One speaker stated, "The main feature of the recent budget is giving businesses a hand to increase their profits. The public sector has been targeted. The government has no idea or

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O'Neill to co-operate with PRP measure despite concerns

JAMES DOUGLAS

Incoming SU President Jason O'Neill has said that while he is "against PRP on principle", he will co-operate with the measure if it represents the "popular consensus" of student representatives.

Reacting to Student Council's almost unanimous support of performance related pay on Wednesday 16 March, O'Neill has warned it would "undermine the sense of a team" and could lead to "animosity among the executive".

O'Neill expressed his concern that sabbatical officers could potentially have their wages cut as a result of their stance on controversial issues, should they be "in the minority around the executive table". O'Neill is wary of the "subjective" nature of such a system, which he believes is

"open to abuse".

The implementation of PRP would mean that next year's sabbatical team could have their salaries either raised or lowered based on appraisals from colleagues and superiors. Whilst the specifics of the plan remain unclear, it is possible that the student-elected representatives could lose over £1,000 in annual earnings. Sabbatical officers will however be guaranteed a minimum salary which PRP will not impact upon, with minimum wage legislature acting as an additional safeguard.

PRP would see sabbatical officers appraised regularly by the SU President, SU Director Andrew Dodge and a Students' Union councillor, the outcome of which would dictate whether or not their wages would be modified. Meanwhile, the SU President would be appraised by the

Director of the Students' Union in conjunction with an SU councillor and one Vice President.

The specifics of the policy will be decided upon over the course of the coming months, during which time it will be made clear to what extent sabbatical officers' earnings will be affected.

O'Neill has vowed to implement an online suggestion box through which students can state any concerns over the effectiveness of the elected sabbatical team, and believes that this, in combination with student media and the SU Council, exposes the sabbatical officers to a suitable level of 'scrutiny'. He also cited the team's initial 'plans of work' as an example of how the efforts of sabbatical officers can be evaluated without the need for appraisals conducted by a three-person committee.

The row over pensions has escalated and the UCU have stated that the University employers must get back around the table and negotiate

their wages docked and "further action" would be taken, undoubtedly leaving lecturers with the difficult choice to either stay loyal to the picket line or teach classes. According to NUS-USI President, Ciaranan Helferty, this is a standard tactic used by the universities.

An emergency motion sup-



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The Independent Student Newspaper at Queen's since 1955.

Monday 28 February 2011
The Gown is available every Monday fortnight across the Queen's campus.

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With thanks to our printers, The Bangor Spectator, our advertisers, and everyone who contributed to the making of this edition.

The views expressed within this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors. The Gown is based in the Students' Union building, but is independent of both the Union and Queen's University Belfast.

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experience of living in the real world.

VP Campaigns and Communication, Fiona Kidd was also among the speakers at the meeting. Kidd pledged the Students' Union's support to the UCU by saying, "I am proud of being a Queen's University student and I wouldn't be the person today without my education here. Let's work together... We know they (University employers) can do better."

The row over pensions has escalated and UCU have stated that the University employers must "get back round the table and negotiate."

Seamus Heaney not to run for Irish presidency

CONNOR DALY
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Seamus Heaney has recently turned down a request by the Republic of Ireland's governing party Fine Gael to run as a candidate in this year's election to succeed Mary McAleese as Irish President.

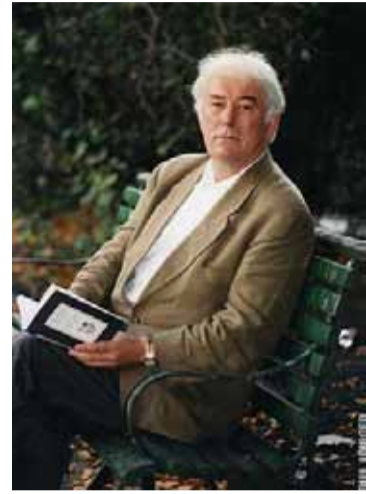
It has been reported that Heaney, the Nobel Prize in literature winner and former English lecturer at Queen's University, was interested in running as a cross party candidate but declined to run when talks between parties broke down.

Fine Gael now look set to choose from three other high-

profile figures, these being former Taoiseach John Bruton, former president of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Sean Kelly and Mairead McGuinness - all of whom are Members of the European Parliament.

Three figures have already expressed their willingness to run for the presidency, these being Labour Party's Michael D.Higgins and Fergus Finlay and independent Senator David Norris.

The Fianna Fáil party is likely to select MEP Brian Crowley to run as candidate. Sinn Féin is yet to announce a candidate.



Seamus Heaney

Burglaries on the rise in Holylands

RACHEL MARTIN

The Holylands area of South Belfast has seen a recent crime wave with several burglaries within the past few months. PSNI figures show that there has been a rise in domestic burglaries by 13.6% during the first three months of 2011. This figure comes in comparison to the same period last year, despite a 9% drop in overall crime in the area.

According to a police spokesperson, there has been 32 burglaries in the Holylands in the last three months. PSNI has responded accordingly, increasing the number of police officers assigned to the neighbourhood and officials say response policing delivery roles rose by 14.1% from this time last year. In spite of this, fear of crime in the area is rife, with many student residents already experiencing burglary first hand.

A PSNI spokesperson stated, "Multiple-occupancy houses, such as those occupied by students are potential targets while residents are away and care should be taken with this." He

went on to suggest that students use timer switches or leave lights on in order to make their accommodation look occupied when they are out at night or away for the weekend.

One group of students living in the Holylands stated that three laptops, an iPod and £80 cash had been stolen from their property. A recent investigation into similar cases found that the theft of laptops and other electrical equipment is commonplace. Members of the household interviewed were able to point out another three houses along the same street which had been targeted within the last few months.

A pair of female students living on University Avenue were also interviewed and explained how one of them had been the victim of a "near burglary" only a few months ago, after they had inadvertently disturbed burglars entering their home. Like the first household interviewed, they explained how the perpetrators gained access through the back of the house; another disturbing trend seen among interviewees.

Report shows student numbers in Holylands falling

VERITY CHYNOWETH

The Holylands area is becoming less popular for students to live in according to a draft report into student accommodation and disruption conducted for Belfast City Council.

According to the report, an estimated 60 per cent of students living in the Holylands are from the University of Ulster with only 28 per cent being from QUB despite the close proximity to the University. The report states that a high number of flats and houses are lying vacant and displaying 'To Let' signs, with one in five student houses in the Holylands without a tenant.

VP Community, Jay Downs, said this is a trend recognised by the Students' Union. He argued that "grants should be offered by the government to convert the empty properties into modern family houses to try and balance out the nature of the area."

It is believed that parents, due to stories of anti-social behaviour in the press, may be encouraging their children to find accommodation elsewhere. However, there also seems to be a desire for many students to

escape the excessive noise and to move to a safer area. Downs stated that the problems in the Holylands stem from the "high density of people."

A local estate agent stated that this year has been harder than most years to get students to even view houses in the Holylands. He blamed the "stigma" surrounding the Holylands for this development. He also stated that the popularity for areas outside the Holylands such as Botanic or Stranmillis is increasing.

Last year the Students' Union commissioned research with the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) and Ipsos MORI to analyse the issues with student's accommodation. This research concluded that 66 per cent of students were satisfied with the Holylands as a place to live compared to 37 per cent of long term residents.

Declan Boyle of the Landlords Association claims the Holylands is "as popular as ever" and argued that Belfast City Council are "massaging the figures" to prevent students living together.

THE HOOD
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Well stroll on down to Buggerytown. I was anticipating filling my 400 words with witty tales about Paddy's Day, and the total ineffectiveness of the University to stop the culchie invasion, but it seems I was wrong, and the University is making considerable inroads into strangling the life out of the Holylands. Perhaps next year we can get the CU to do cumbayah on rugby road YEO! *ahem*.

So instead, I find myself looking out of Café Krem watching assembled lecturers from

the pretend subjects picking their holes. But hark, today is no ordinary day, gentle reader. They're picking their holes on strike, making inroads against the dastardly Gregson by unifying nine or ten idealist lecturers fresh out of the crèche. Of course Law and Medicine weren't striking, but then again, the day the faculty of Law works for its fellow man is the day Nathan Anderson wants a non-white in his videos (ask Lorcan Mullen).

To be fair though, this lecturers strike will probably be about as well received as a Halal Bacon sandwich or a Polysoc formal with a £50 door fee.

In lieu of talking about St Patrick's Day (and therefore actual news) I'll fall back on my go to material. SU Council (that being to proper news what a matchbox is to a cathedral). It seems I must stand corrected. Niall Bole wasn't behind the diarrhoea spray of Council motions; it was Jafar Downs, lately of RAG, Lately presidential candidate, and latter day apprentice to Snidely Whiplash. But that wasn't the main event, oh no. there were two contenders for main event. Firstly a rather bemused looking Jason O'Neill (in his first appearance) standing to aggressively harangue

the idea that Sabbs should earn their pay and clutching at straws like a lobster in a haybale, Well done lad, good to see those colours nailed firmly to the mast of ineptitude. But still the motions went through. Secondly, after defending Downs Dastardly, a number of councillors left without looking to further business. Hey! Just like last year with the GAA councillors and the Chuckle brothers.

Right, now that that's over, I'm going to hunt down the rascally children that are doubtlessly somewhere in the SU, still, beats watching yet another whiny film about Israel

SU survey shows international students positive for university life

SEAN ASHFORD

A recent survey carried out by Queen's Students' Union and VP Equality and Diversity, Samantha Tan, shows that many QUB students believe international students have a very positive effect on university life.

Home Secretary, Theresa May has recently announced the coalition government plans to cut the number of international students attending UK universities by over 25 per cent, a cut of between 80,000 to 100,000 students.

The plans are part of the government's wider scheme to reduce immigration and have targeted what have been described as "bogus courses" where students come to work rather than study, taking advantage "of a broken and abused immigration system". Since the formation of the coalition, 64 colleges have had their right to sponsor overseas students removed with more to follow in the wake of these plans. May went on to say that tightening the rules to prevent false applications would be "in the best interests of legitimate students".

The plans were criticised by shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper who states that these plans would endanger a £5 billion industry in the UK, as international students pay significantly higher fees than the standard for UK and EU students. In addition, the plans to increase the threshold of English a person must speak to be allowed a visa opposes the Home Affairs Select Committee recommendation that the government should abandon plans to raise the level of English required to

gain a visa.

VP for Equality and Diversity, Samantha Tan had a mixed reaction to the Home Secretary's announcement. She stated that whilst the plans are far from perfect, they are significantly better than what had been originally intended by the government. Following a meeting with Ian Paisley Jr., Tan stated there was still significant work that needed to be done, and further meetings have been scheduled over the next four weeks to seek further clarification on how this would apply to the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland.

However, Tan was keen to stress that both she and VP Education, Nathan Anderson would continue to campaign for international students in opposing some of the more infringing aspects of the proposed legislation. Citing the examples of the USA and Australia, Tan showed how these countries' economies were weakened in the wake of bringing in similar legislation, with local economies in Australia especially suffering as a result.

The announcements came only days after a brief survey carried out by the sabbatical officers had shown that the overwhelming consensus amongst students in QUB was that international students have had an extremely positive effect on university life at Queen's. Indeed, the only issue which was raised by a small number of students was a problem with integration, something far removed from the government's plans. Moreover, the survey showed that the majority of Queen's students regard international students as

vital to the fabric of the university experience.

These feelings were echoed by incoming VP for Equality and Diversity, Treasa Harkin who stated, "The contribution which international students bring to not just our University, but society, is invaluable. They help make Queen's to become the diverse and multicultural environment which it should be, enabling a shared learning experience through bringing different ideas and cultures than that of our own".



Commonwealth Day celebrated at Queen's

STANLEY GAMBLE

Commonwealth Day was celebrated at Queen's University Belfast on Monday 13 March with a Gala Banquet in the Great Hall. The event was organised by Queen's University Belfast Orange Society, and witnessed members of civic society join with University staff and students to celebrate "the family of nations."

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Gregson welcomed guests to the banquet before prayers were said for those affected by the recent natural disasters in New Zealand, Australia and Japan by Rev. Adrian McLaughlin, Curate of Bangor Abbey, and Chairman of the Pipe Organ Preservation Company.

Lord Rana MBE, Honorary Consul for India in Northern Ireland, addressed the gathering and spoke about the benefits

of the Commonwealth. He urged newly elected Taoiseach Enda Kenny to lead the Republic of Ireland back into the Commonwealth.

Lord Rana said, "I believe membership would benefit the Republic immensely in economic terms and the country could make a huge contribution. 94 per cent of the Commonwealth's population live in Asia and Africa combined. After India, the next-largest Commonwealth countries by population are Pakistan (176 million), Bangladesh (156 million), Nigeria (154 million), the United Kingdom (61 million) and South Africa (49 million). It presents a massive business opportunity for Ireland."

Following his keynote address, Lord Rana invited guests to make the Loyal Toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth.

Mr Willie Hay MLA., President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association at Stormont, then spoke about the parliamentary work done by the Commonwealth communities, after which a toast was made to Kamallesh Sharma, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth and the people of India. The Indian National Anthem was played by Dr. Sujit Bhattacharya, Research Fellow at the university.

A strong Indian theme ran throughout the evening with Miss Yagnaseni Bhattacharya showcasing both Indian classical and folk dance, before Rev. Adrian McLaughlin closed proceedings with "Commonwealth Proms."

QUB Orange Society Chairman, James Mills, hailed a successful event and said that it would become an annual event on the University calendar.

Sport

QUB retain title in University Pool

Championships

DAMIEN EDGAR

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QUB Pool club retained their University Championship title recently in Dundalk, bringing home the trophy ahead of 50 competitors. The winning team was comprised of Fra Mallon, Martin Quigg, Emmet McGuire, Aedan McCotter and Gareth Quinn.

The teams were separated into groups of 5, with Queen's A Team finishing top of their group. Emerging from the group stages, the team faced fierce competition in the form of Dublin rivals, Trinity University.

QUB made light work of the team to progress from the round of 16 and into the last eight, where they paired off with DCU. The team were able to brush their opponents aside, progressing to the semi-finals, but their tussles with Dublin based teams were not at an end. They met the Dublin Institute of Technology and despite an even contest, it was QUB that sealed victory and secured a place in the final.

Remarkably, it was yet another team from Dublin in the final, in the form of DCU. However, Queens' experience from last year stood them in good stead and they were able

to hold off their challengers and notch up an 8-5 victory, ensuring the trophy was theirs to keep for another year.

QUB have faced many obstacles this year in their role as a sporting club, not least the closure of the pool and snooker rooms in the Students' Union, with no obvious prospect of them reopening. However, the dedication of their membership in training elsewhere is ensuring continued prosperity for the club and they will hope to maintain that level of competition next year.

QUB Boxing exhibition night

DAMIEN EDGAR

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QUB Boxing recently held an exhibition night at their training facilities on Sandy Row. The event was aimed at raising funds for equipment, as previous events have allowed the club to spend on new training equipment and a new ring. The event was also aimed at promoting the upcoming 'Fists of Fury' event which is to be held in King's Hall.

This 'Fists of Fury' event will feature a face-off between two Sandy Row boxers, Joe Hillerby and Ian Boyd, who were in the corner for the QUB team at last year's Irish Senior Intervarsities and have helped coach the team throughout the year.

Boxing for QUB at the exhibition night were JP Corrigan, Simon Reid, Dwayne Moore, Damien Gates and Niall Hodgen. The boxers all wore Sandy Row colours alongside the amateur boxers of the facility, as they fought 10 bouts with members of various local boxing clubs.

Speaking to *The Gown*, JP Corrigan said he thought the night had been a great success and expressed gratitude to their training team, in particular Ian Mc Sorley. Corrigan went on to say that he believed the club's access to the Sandy Row facilities was the key factor in helping put QUB Boxing on an even footing with the likes of Trinity, UCD and NUIG.

An interview with 'Lady of the Lake' Jodie Prenger

SARAH MULGREW

It's just after 2.30pm and I'm waiting for West-End star Jodie Prenger to return from lunch. Arriving just after 2.40, pictures don't do her justice. She smiles and introduces herself, "Nice to meet ya, I'm Jodie," she says in a thick Lancashire accent: 100 per cent pretention proof.

There's something theatrical about her sweeping camel coat and Chanel red lips and yet she comes without a hint of conceit.

"We're going to the round table," I'm told, "I only talk at round tables!" she jokes in light of her current medieval role.

We arrive and sit down over cups of tea. I could be in my neighbour's kitchen for a gossip, that's how easy she makes it.

Apparently her debut in *Bel-fast* was in the Kremlin and didn't go down so well. Laughing, she says, "They hated me. They only wanted dance numbers!"

And this wasn't her only unfortunate experience in a gay club, "I won't tell you that one...oh go on then!" Jovially,

giddy almost, she describes a time when, while performing, she toppled off the stage sending her 'chicken fillets' flying out of her dress, into the audience and whacking some unfortunate drag queen in the face.

However, Jodie's recent successes sweep all embarrassments swiftly under the carpet. She reclaimed herself as the victor in *I'd Do Anything* winning the part of Nancy in the West End revival of *Oliver*. "It was my last crack at the whip and the odds were stacked against me. Never mind Miss World I was misshapen, sorry that was a terrible joke!"

She's entirely open about her anxieties during the competition: "I was the oldest girl, the fattest girl. Wrinkle cream – bish bash bosh!"

If she hadn't been successful on *I'd Do Anything* Prenger would be "probably still singing in gay clubs!" she laughs, "I've always thought of myself as a drag queen in a woman's body."

However, she was successful and as a result is now performing in the UK tour of Monty

Python's *Spamalot* and will be featured on a UK cast recording. "I'd never heard audiences laugh like that. There's a big audience participation thing with it."

Spamalot is described as being 'Lovingly ripped off from Monty Python and the Holy Grail', a far cry from Nancy's doom, gloom and tragedy. Jodie assumes the role of 'Lady of the Lake' and with it all the farce, hilarity and insanity that is Monty Python. She's not a stranger to it either: "I watched it every Christmas growing up."

I imagine Python fans to be a loyal bunch therefore they'll be glad to know that Jodie is no comedy virgin: "I used to do a lot of comedy, people don't always know that about me."

Is *Spamalot* for Monty Python fans, even if they hate musicals? "Definitely - It changes every night. Beautiful new show, brilliant cast and I'm really not just sayin' that!"

She speaks with passion – there's no doubt she loves what she's doing and it honestly sounds like a blast. She describes how the audience

regularly dress up as characters from the show, sing along and ad lib. One particularly fervent fan even brought a live rabbit to be autographed; "The rabbit was not signed!" she assured me. I promise not to get on the phone to PETA.

She's played alongside Rowan Atkinson, now Phill Jupitus and Todd Carty. The list is endless but she doesn't get star-struck anymore, saying, "At first you do but then you realise, they're just people," but "I very nearly dry humped Gerard Butler! [Who wouldn't!?] The words he whispered in my ear were security, security, security!"

"But it's okay because I've got a man now," she adds, smiling almost shyly. It's been going for about 9 months, they'd known each other for a while and it just sort of came together.

Bubbly up front, Jodie is grounded in reality all the same: "It was never a hunt for fame. I am so far from wanting to be Jordan or Kerry Katona." A woman who knows exactly what she wants and how to get it, she's never been afraid to



West-End star Jodie Prenger

dream. Offering advice to budding theatre actors she simply says: "Keep going no matter what. Busk!"

Before I go and because it's that time of year I have to ask if she's giving anything up for Lent to which she replies, "Oh... chocolate, coffee... feel the pain when you're writing this...alcohol and swearin'!"

Brave, I certainly do feel the pain...

Spamalot will run in Belfast's Grand Opera house from Monday 16 May until Saturday 21, tickets ranging from £16-£38.50. You can also catch Jodie in the sparkling new BBC1 comedy *Candy Cabs* later this year.

Reviews

Check out more reviews at www.thegown.org.uk

Film Norwegian Wood

Watanabe is a disillusioned student unwaveringly devoted to the beautiful Naoko, a childhood friend with whom he shares the tragedy of their best friend's death. Naoko's sudden disappearance is matched by the enchantingly confident Midori who marches unassumingly into Watanabe's life. He soon begins to come to terms with his feelings for the two women and embarks on a quest for soulful gratification.

There's only room for so much in just over two hours. It would seem cramming in all the elements that make Murakami's novel a spellbinding read is just too daunting a task, nonetheless, it looks stunning.

It's deeply unsettling that there was no genuine misery shared alongside Watanabe as he struggles through love and loss. Almost wooden acting is forced upon the viewer.

Featuring an original score by Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, the music explores the purpose of the soundtrack, but comfortably allows an entertaining viewing.

The merits of *Norwegian Wood* are few, but endearing qualities and the signs of skilful filmmaking practice help pull the wool over your eyes. LS



Album Jessie J Who You Are

Jessie J's album *Who You Are* has won fans worldwide with her catchy songs and infectious personality.

Featuring chart smashers like 'Do it Like a Dude' and number one single 'Price Tag', it presents Jessie J as a breath of fresh air into a chart beginning to sound generic. The album's full of consistent, soaring vocals, teamed with lyrics with enough depth to fulfil Jessie J's confident persona.

For example, 'Who's Laughing Now' is a powerful song about forgetting anyone who ever laughed at you but will want to know you when you reach the top. No album would be complete without life affirming lyrics; such as 'Who You Are' with "It's ok not to be ok. Be true to who you are." It's a beautiful song that young girls everywhere will relate to, while weaker tracks such as 'Abracadabra' are forgotten because the rest of the album is brilliant.

Part of the attraction is Jessie J's ability to reinvent herself through every song; particularly evident in the contrast between the feisty 'Do It Like A Dude' and the relaxed 'Price Tag'. CW



Album Noah and the Whale Last Night on Earth

Noah and the Whale's 2009 album *The First Days of Spring* is arguably the quintessential heartbreak album. Written and recorded in the wake of singer Charlie Fink's breakup with Laura Marling it's filled with beautifully sorrowful songs about loneliness and desolation.

Their latest album *Last Night on Earth* could not be more radically different. The opening track 'Life is Life' with one of Fink's many evocative couplets "And it feels like his new life can start/And it feels like heaven" sets the tone for an album filled with infectious sweet and exhilarating songs about life and hope. Despite Fink's melancholy voice, lead single, 'L.I.F.E.G.O.E.S.O.N.', is the sort of song that automatically makes you feel good, even though at first it sounds a bit hackneyed.

Some fans may be scandalized by the change in sound as 'Life is Life' opens with synths, while others use gospel choir choruses over the folk sound of their previous albums. However, the result is an irresistibly euphoric album that is sure to brighten up even the dullest day. AL



Album Elbow Build a Rocket Boys!

When Elbow began recording *Build a Rocket Boys!*

one can only imagine how the elephant-in-the-studio of *The Seldom Seen Kid* might have affected the band's confidence in approaching their next record but, thankfully, it's quite good...

It marks a departure in sound, but nothing radical. For (seemingly) the first time Elbow seem happy, almost optimistic; Guy Garvey has reconnected with his inner-child.

Case-in-point, *The Birds* swoops in; a seductive hymn-like patter, overlaid with the poetry of nostalgia, before turning into an eight minute sunny delight to wash over your head.

Curious about the sunny side of the street, Elbow are daring to rouse a 21st Century optimism. They now inflect their tunes with a sense of African exotica and lush expanses of stadium sound compete with the likes of Arcade Fire. Unfortunately, it's not as consistent as *The Seldom Seen Kid* and falls off somewhere around the halfway point.

This, perhaps, isn't quite the follow-up that *The Seldom Seen Kid* deserved, but the band's abiding message of positivity is certainly a refreshing change. JP



Album Lykke Li Wounded Rhymes

Having a Bella Moment? Been left in the woods by Edward? This is the break-up record for you! Lykke Li's *Wounded Rhymes* speaks volumes for the heartbroken. Li's voice has gotten deeper, grown stronger and been wonderfully tinged with a hint of despair.

A step away from the electro-undertones of *Youth Novels* lends cohesion not felt before. Matured, honed-in on a sound, and yet retaining an experimental edge, Li's sound has grown along with her. Flowing, seductive bass-vocals signify a sadness that echoes throughout the album.

The quiet and intimate 'I Know Places' softly pleads, Li's distinctive voice trembles and it feels so lonely. Fittingly, it falls into an ethereal instrumental. 'Sadness is a Blessing' witnesses a surrender to the song, reflecting deeply personal feelings, but there's a strength and conviction in the music; the honesty of the lyrics reflects that.

Wounded Rhymes isn't all about the break-up-blues. 'Get Some' mixes a buzzing bass line with spaghetti-western guitars luring you deeper into the song. It isn't brash, so you might not catch all that honey-laced innuendo the first time around. JL



Have you met the new Miss Jones?

CATRIONA BURNS

When Renee Zellweger returns as Bridget Jones for the third time, she will leave behind her colossal underwear and indulgent relationship with wine and chocolate as the film opens with Jones stepping onto the scales, satisfied with her weight-loss and new slim-line figure.

This change in script follows Zellweger's refusal to put on weight as she has done twice before for her most famous role. For a film whose heroine is a podgy, neurotic chocoholic, this raises questions as to who, if anyone, can be over a size eight and celebrated for it. Is the film industry intolerant of normal sized, healthy women?

This would not be as debated a topic if it was for example, Emma Watson refusing to put on weight for her role in the Harry Potter films - her weight is irrelevant to the role. With Bridget Jones however, her character is partly determined

by her size, her charm accentuated by the fact that she is a plump, un-polished figure in the midst of pristine, graceful and intellectual contemporaries. This distinctiveness, which her figure symbolizes, is the source for many comic scenes in the film - hurtling into a mud pit or plunging down a fireman's pole would not have the same comic relish if it was a small, petite figure.

The character's creator, Helen Fielding, deliberately made Bridget Jones the size she is for a reason, with copious reference to her protagonist's weight which is intrinsic to her persona and widespread success. Fielding's creation is representative of thirty-something singletons, habitual to unsuitable men and an urban family of boozy friends rather than kids.

Of course, the character can still signify this, but her size and struggle with it was a physical depiction of someone whose life was far from perfection - it

gave the role a real sense of humanity.

In the recent Oscar winner, *Black Swan*, Natalie Portman was required to train and inevitably lose some weight for her role as a ballet dancer; her refusal to do this would undoubtedly have cost her the part. True, Bridget Jones is not a professional dancer, but her position as a chubby fantasist should not be undermined. In an interview to publicise *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* Zellweger admitted, "The job was to put on weight to play the character so that I would look like the person, Bridget Jones". It is understandable that the actress does not want to put on weight to then have to lose it but it would seem that she is sacrificing the authenticity of the character for vanity the third time round.

Beyond this is the question of what constitutes as being overweight. In the opening scenes of the first film, Bridget steps on the scales and groans, disheart-

ened when it reveals her to be nine and a half stone, a healthy, average weight in reality yet apparently nearing obesity in film. It probably doesn't register with her decision, but Zellweger

actually looks better that bit bigger so maybe she should just eat some chips and give us back the true Bridget Jones that as she says, "will always be that little bit fat".



All is fair in oil and war

BEN FINCH

arts@thegown.org.uk

The war in Libya is driving the cost of fuel up at a rate that beggars belief. The price of petrol has been predicted to hit £2 per litre by the end of the year, which will lead to a seventies style fuel crisis. At the same time nuclear power plants in Japan are at risk of a catastrophic accident, which would set the debate on nuclear power back thirty years. Currently nuclear power is the only option over green power that can viably produce enough energy for our needs. These crises mean it is becoming ever more important for major investment in renewable energy so we can sustain our lives in the way we have become accustomed.

At the time of writing, two nuclear reactors in Japan have suffered explosions of hydrogen gas, one of which has its plutonium rods exposed from the cooling tank and there are three others in critical condition. This is not because of the earthquake itself, but because of inadequate tsunami defences; the sea wall wasn't high enough to stop the wave and the generators to cool the plants were located on low ground. Nonetheless, there is a chance of Japan suffering a catastrophic nuclear incident for the third time in seventy years.

This is Japan, the image of efficiency, planning and safety, whose cars run for hundreds of thousands of miles before even thinking about breaking down

(my Honda has 160,000 on the clock with no serious problems). If they cannot run nuclear power without accidents, especially in an area so prone to earthquakes and tsunamis, then questions are going to be asked. Switzerland has already put the building of new nuclear power plants on the back burner. If this becomes a trend worldwide then we become wholly reliant on fossil fuels.

Currently wind farms, solar panels and wave generators are all in their infancy, with little infrastructure or funding provided by the state or the private sector. They will be unable to pick up the slack caused by any fluctuations in the price of oil, and this stands for the foreseeable future. And the foreseeable future is bad. The war in Libya, a second tier oil producer, has

shown just how vulnerable we have become. The Saudi's clearly don't have as much oil as they've been claiming, if they did then prices wouldn't be rising as fast as they are. Add to that the increasing demand in China, India and third world countries attempting to become industrialised nations.

If the price of oil does rise to the extent that it is prohibitive to run a car, heat a house or even watch the telly then we are in for major changes. And this could happen before the end of the year. There needs to be major investment in green technology and its infrastructure or else we are quickly heading towards massive power cuts, an inability to travel to work or study and the loss of the comfortable life as we know it.



Freedom to say anything?

AOIFE LAUGHLIN

Anger and frustration towards the controversial Westboro Baptist Church has been heightened in recent weeks with online commenters especially vitriolic in their condemnation of the hate group. The Church, made infamous for its extreme protests against homosexuality, has been the subject of much media attention as the US Supreme Court, in an 8-1 ruling which called on the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech, has upheld the WBC's right to picket military funerals with their anti-gay messages.

With hate-filled slogans such as "God hates fags" and their audacity in capitalizing on grief to highlight their message it is tempting to react emotionally to the verdict and assert that such a group should be silenced. However, while the actions of the group may be tasteless and offensive their right to free speech must still be protected. To paraphrase Noam Chomsky, it is easy to support freedom of speech when we like what is being said, we demonstrate our commitment to the principle by supporting freedom of speech for speakers and opinions we find repulsive.

That is not to say that anything goes, nor is it to say that the views of the WBC should go unchallenged. However as long as the group follows the laws for



Such protests have received much media attention

peaceful protest they should be challenged through debate and discussion rather than through the criminalization of distasteful opinions. Freedom of speech is a precious commodity that we sometimes take for granted but one that people across the world continue to die for. The recent murder of Pakistan's minorities minister Shahbaz Bhatti in retaliation against his attempts to reform Pakistan's blasphemy law attests to this fact.

In explaining the court's decision Chief Justice John G. Roberts asserted that "Speech is powerful. It can stir people to action, move them to tears of both joy and sorrow, and - as it did here - inflict great pain." It is precisely because of this power of speech that freedom of expression needs to be protected. The US Supreme Court's ruling in *Snyder v. Phelps* therefore shows an admirable dedication to the principle of freedom of speech and is an attitude that ought to be emulated throughout the world.



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Performance related pay only complicates things

An SU sabbatical officer is elected on a one-year term; if he or she fails to live up to expectations then Student Council can call a vote of no confidence, and in most cases one would assume a resounding defeat for that sabbatical officer would make his or her position untenable. If poor representatives decide to run for re-election at the end of the academic year then the electorate can use their vote to ditch them. That's politics. It's as simple as that. Performance related pay seems only to complicate matters.

Past Gown editorials have focused upon the need for unity within the SU executive ahead of what will be a challenging year. The focus of student representatives should, as always, be on maintaining vital services at Queen's and helping students to make the most from their University experience. This coming year in particular the campaign against a hike to tuition fees will be of huge importance. Unity among executive members who in the past may have run against their colleagues on a different electoral ticket is essential. Only distrust can come from procedures which threaten to dock wages.

In this fortnight's issue, incoming SU President Jason O'Neill has voiced his concerns about the implementation of PRP. The specifics of the policy are yet to be decided upon but it seems a fair prediction to make that, as president, O'Neill is unlikely to force through the reduction of his team's wages; and why would he? Animosity and disquiet would be sure to follow; made far worse if imposed upon members of his own 'Change' ticket. If imposed on other colleagues this may easily be interpreted as being biased and unprofessional.

Each incoming sabbatical officer has been elected by Queen's students to a specific portfolio. It is the job of each officer to represent students, whether it be in dealing with students' welfare, education queries or setting up a club or society. Performance related pay seems only a distraction, and the last thing the SU needs is a split executive. Elections are about mandates, and if representatives fail to perform then voters can vote them out of office. In the mean time Council exists to hold officers to account. That's politics.

dents' Union to pass a motion stating "that because of Presidential misconduct in matters of Union finance, frivolous spending and mismanagement in the Union, the President should resign."

The meeting was told of how Tom Lynch used funds to pay for



Irish Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore. Illustrator Brian John Spencer

Dear Gown,

I worked as a chef for 10 years, mostly in Tel-Aiv Hilton, and I grew to love the people and country of Israel during my time there during some turbulent times when I witnessed suicide bombings at close range and had a gas mask and underground bomb shelter like all my Israeli neighbours.

I have since returned home to my native Northern Ireland, but with a story to tell.

When I heard of the treatment of Mr Solon Solomon at Queen's the day after I heard him speak so eloquently and sincerely at Belfast Synagogue the previous evening my heart was grieved. Other friends from the Synagogue event who attended Queen's were taken to an upper room for their own safety, whilst Solon's car was attacked in a most undignified manner.

This poem was written in response to what turned out to be a very unpleasant incident. Sometimes when words fail, poetry helps express what is felt...

Israel has friends. A poem by Colin Nevin

Israel has friends...but also enemies too.
Last week in Belfast we found

quite a few;
A dignified audience heard an Israeli speak,
with the friends of Israel in Belfast that week.

That well-mannered academic was giving a speech,
at a university where they educate and teach;
But Israel's enemies were in that room,
And began to expostulate,
bellow and fume.

This violent behaviour continued until,
This gentleman speaker soon left at will;
His car was attacked, he was verbally abused,
a contrast from the night before – he must have been confused

He'd received an Irish welcome and a Belfast open hand,
But this had turned out into nothing but a pouting vicious band.

To our shame the friends of Israel pause,
To consider this tragic incident incited without cause.

With the history of the pogroms, when the Jews they lived in fear,
Who'd have thought that such events could still take place here;
To have Jews or Israelis hurdled

away like this,
Shows an anti-semitic spectre just teetering on the abyss.

Do we want to descend to this level, in a place of education?
But sadly these spats occur all around the nation;
The UK universities are now hotbeds of hate,
And we need to address it now, before it is too late.

This anti-Israel hate is lurking in the wings,
And when events like this are held, the bitter insect stings;
Are these disruptive actions considered to be 'fine,'
For the unruly and demonstrative friends of Palestine?

Israel has her friends...and her opponents too,
That week in Belfast her friends were just too few;
A dignified response is needed, and someone needs to speak,
Against the anti-semitic attack that took place here that week.

Dedicated to Mr Solon Solomon who spoke in Belfast in February 2011 and those who were harassed with him.

Colin Nevin

THIS MONTH... LYNCHED BY HIS OWN MOB, March 1980

Tom Lynch, President of the Students' Union, has resigned because of financial misconduct. That was the outcome of a lengthy and often bitter Union General Meeting held on Tuesday 4th March.

About 250 students crammed the Elmwood Room in the Stu-

entertainment at the wedding of Terry Gault, last year's Deputy President. A motion reprimanding the Students' Council was also passed.

The Special Union General Meeting was called after 50 signatures had been presented to the Union Secretary. There

were four motions on the agenda, though one of these was later withdrawn.

The first motion, calling for the President's resignation, was proposed by Mark Durkan. During his speech it was revealed that last March the President had signed a cheque paying for

disco equipment used in the Wellington Park Hotel after the wedding of the then Deputy President Terry Gault.

QUEEN'S STUDENTS' UNION

ENTERTAINMENT



Queen's
Students'
Union

QUEEN'S COMEDY CLUB
Colin Murphy hosts a
FATHER TED COMEDY SPECIAL
Wednesday 6th April
Mandela Hall

RADAR / RED ROOF PRESENTS
ESBEN AND THE WITCH
SATURDAY 9TH APRIL
SPEAKEASY

JOSH RITTER
AND THE ROYAL CITY BAND
with special guest
Titi Meru
Wednesday
13th April
Mandela Hall

T GO LIVE radar
RADAR PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH BBC INTRODUCING:
RADAR 07.04.11
AXIS OF
PLUS:
GASCAN RUCKUS
LANTERN FOR A GALE
QUBSU SPEAKEASY | 9:00PM | FREE ADMISSION
NON STUDENTS WELCOME



PROFESSOR GREEN

Sunday
10th April
Mandela Hall



The View

Tuesday
12th April
Mandela Hall



GLASVEGAS

Wednesday
27th April
Mandela Hall



AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR
OFFICIAL LP LAUNCH

Friday
29th April
Mandela Hall

radar presents
boyce avenue
mandela hall
thursday 19th may
14+ SHOW



PETER DOHERTY

Sunday
29th May
Mandela Hall

RADAR PRESENTS
FUTURES
SUNDAY 29TH MAY
SPEAKEASY
14+ SHOW

Parkway Drive
+MONUMENTS & GACYS THREADS
WED 22ND JUNE
SPEAKEASY



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