

### Careless driver is banned

A MAN has been banned from driving after he "skidded to a stop" in front of a police officer carrying out a speed check. Alberto Hurzum 32, failed to notice the police officer on August 26 last year in Witham. Colchester Magistrates' Court heard he was clocked driving at 49mph in a 30mph limit before he "skidded to a stop". Hurzum, of Greenstead Road, Colchester, admitted speeding and driving without due care and attention. He was banned from driving for 12 months and ordered to pay £222 in costs, a fine and surcharge.

### Power turned off in village

VILLAGERS were left without power to their homes due to "emergency work". UK Power Networks confirmed an unplanned power cut was affecting properties in Tiptree on Tuesday evening. The outage, which is affecting residents in the CO5 0 postcode area, was reported shortly after 6pm. A statement on the UK Power Networks website says: "Due to a safety issue on our electricity network, we may need to switch off some power in your local area. "We do normally contact our customers in advance, but as this is for emergency work and in the interest of public safety, we're unable to provide you with much notice."

### Supermarket gets top rating

A SUPERMARKET has received five stars following an inspection from the Food Standards Agency but only after it scored the lowest possible rating two months earlier. May Oriental Supermarket in St Botolph's Street, Colchester, is now fully compliant with legal food safety requirements following an inspection on July 12. Four recommendations were made for the supermarket to improve its health and safety standards further, with the damp spots on the ceilings still needing to be rectified.

### Breakfast challenge

A POPULAR restaurant has created an 'impossible' challenge giving diners a chance to receive a free meal. The Bungalow Diner, in Marks Tay, has launched its Big Breakfast Challenge. The challenge offers a free meal for a participant if they will be able to finish a massive platter of English breakfast foods in under 45 minutes. This includes eight of each item, including staples like baked beans, toast, bacon strips, sausages, black pudding, eggs, tomatoes and hash browns. If you fail to finish the dish you have to pay £40 for the meal.

# We unite Blur's



■ Sign, sealed, delivered - Damon with (left to right) reporter George King, David Garlick, Alan Gray, Jason Chamberlain and Kelly Clark

# So, it really, really, really did happen...

AN iconic songwriter has been united with an old music shop sign after the *Gazette* teamed up with Blur fans and the store's former owner to make his wish come true. Back in May Damon Albarn expressed an interest in acquiring a sign adorning the front of the long-closed Axe Music shop, in High Street, Colchester. The legendary musician, 55, had noticed the decades-old blue and white signage after taking a stroll ahead of band's historic homecoming show at Colchester Arts Centre. Axe Music, which was run by Alan Gray, 77, who moved the

business out of the city centre back in 2000, was frequented by Damon when he was a young musician. The former Stanway School student, also the mastermind behind Gorillaz, had purchased some of his earliest instruments at the shop, including his first synthesizer. Following the efforts of the *Gazette*, lifelong fans of the band and shop owner Alan, Damon is now the proud owner of a piece of Colchester history. After Blur's triumphant Wembley Stadium gigs and the

release of new album *The Ballad of Darren*, the sign was delivered in person at his London recording studio. Alan, who was taken aback by the visit and has received a donation from Damon for his church clock fundraiser, said: "I was really quite surprised at how much of a deep feeling person he is and I felt like we had a lot in common. "When we came out, it was like 'what have we just been through?' "I found him to be such a nice and interesting bloke and he went to so much trouble - it was quite amazing and it really was a one-off day.

"I am so pleased he has got the sign and it has gone to a really good place." David Garlick, a devoted Blur and Damon fan who helped to retrieve the music shop sign, was left over the moon after meeting his hero. He said: "Words cannot describe what has happened - it's been emotional. "They say don't meet your heroes but I just did and I can honestly say Mr Albarn is a beautiful human being. "A passionate musician, a connoisseur of many things, humble, and a super cuddler. I will never forget, Damon Albarn."

## Cash up for grabs for projects in green spaces

BRAINTREE Council is offering up to £3,500 for groups looking for funding for green spaces projects in their communities. Community and voluntary groups are being invited to share their vision of a community green space in their area and apply for money to make the project a reality. The Braintree Community Garden and Open Spaces Fund offers grants of up to £3,500. The scheme has been made possi-

ble through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is part of the Government's 'levelling up' agenda. It aims to improve people's pride in where they live and increase life chances, investing in communities, and supporting local business, people and skills. Applications for the grant are now open. To apply email community.gardens@braintree.gov.uk. The deadline to express an inter-

est is 5pm on August 18, with the final application to be submitted by September 15. Council environment boss Tom Cunningham said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for all those who wish to create an inspiring green space in their neighbourhood which will benefit everyone in their local community. "Community gardens and green spaces bring people together and contribute to the general commu-

nity feel of neighbourhoods. "They also play a vital role contributing to environmental sustainability and promote biodiversity, whilst providing an opportunity to incorporate sustainable practices such as rainwater harvesting or composting. "We look forward to receiving many interesting applications over the coming weeks and we anticipate the unveiling of many community gardens in the future."

# Albarn with shop sign

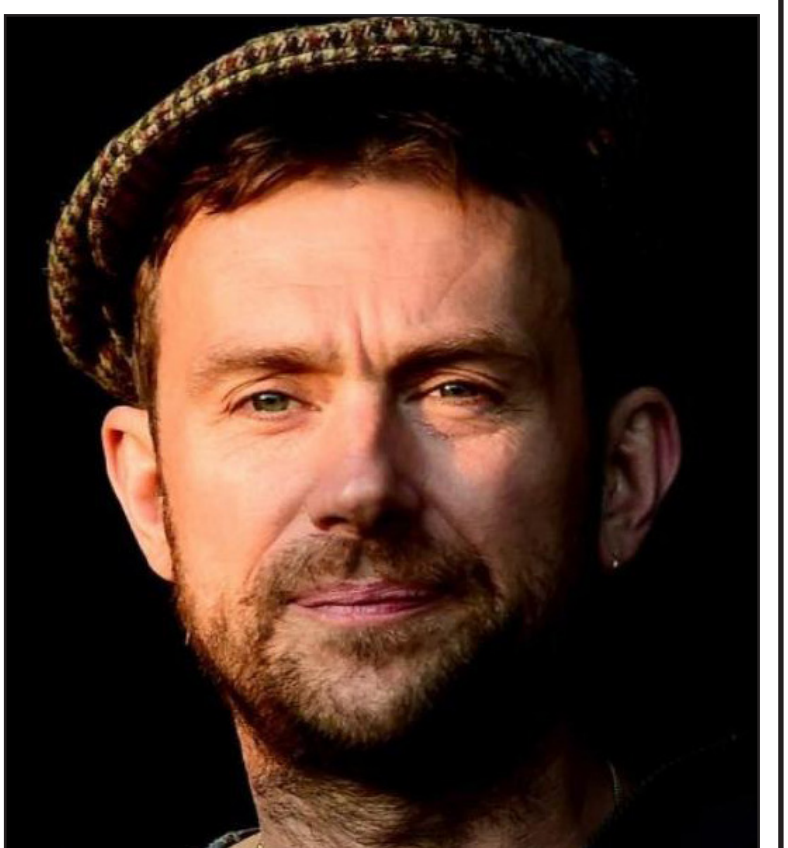
By GEORGE KING  
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"CAN I reserve the old Axe Music sign?" Blur frontman Damon Albarn asked me during an exclusive Q&A before their Colchester Arts Centre gig two months ago. "I would like to buy that and [The Gazette] are obviously hooked up and have influence [in Colchester]... it is where I bought my first synthesizer." Slightly flummoxed by the request, not least given it had come from such a legendary musician, I jokingly reassured him I would, of course, make it happen. Within seconds of promising the award-laden hitmaker his piece of childhood, I convinced myself the possibility of acquiring the sign was a pipe dream. But the following day, I thought to myself: What if? What if I could actually retrieve this sign and gift it to the Damon Albarn? A cultural icon who means so much to so many. As is the case whenever a buzzing bee starts ping around my bonnet, the seed had been planted and whether I would embark on this journey was no longer a question. From that moment on, obtaining this sentimental slice of Colchester music shop history became a primary - if not slightly obsessive - focus. Following a few Google searches

## Blur frontman enquired about sign before homecoming gig in city

I rather quickly managed to track down Alan Gray, the now 77-year-old former owner of Axe Music. Alan fondly recalled the numerous times when a young Damon would visit his store to purchase some of his very first instruments. Little did he know the global star and revered songwriter he would go onto become. With not much, if any convincing, Alan soon agreed to assist me in my quite frankly bizarre quest to come good on my promise and soon started hitting the phones. Before long, the former business owner and keen musician (who, by the way, really is a magnificent soul), had been given the greenlight to reclaim his old shop's sign. After enlisting the help of relatives and lifelong Blur fan, David Garlick, we managed to safely dismantle and remove the Axe Music sign from the store's facade. During the weeks which followed, emails were exchanged and arrangements were made in relation to how the sign would make its way into Damon's hands. Much to our delight, Damon agreed to us meeting him in person

to complete the exchange and conclude the most magical of tales with the most remarkable of endings. Huddled in a campervan, with the precious sign securely in our grasp, we embarked on a pilgrimage of sorts to the former Colchester schoolboy's London studio. As we entered and made our way up the staircase, a nervous silence and sense of trepidation washed over us. But we needn't have worried. Over the next 40 minutes or so, after presenting him with the sign he had set his eye on some two months prior, Damon was gracious, thankful, warm and welcoming. He happily spoke with Alan, David, van driver Jason Chamberlain, fan Kelly Clark and I as if he had all the time in the world, despite having an important gig in the evening. Never meet your heroes, the old saying goes, but I am so, so glad we did. We left the studio with a combination of huge grins and disbelieving looks sprawled across our faces. What at first seemed like an utter impossibility had just become a reality. See, it really, really, really can happen...



■ Music legend - Blur icon and Colchester's own Damon Albarn

ADVERTISING FEATURE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TfL

# Research shines a light on impact of air pollution on heart health

Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. But while the effects of air pollution on the lungs have been known for more than half a century, researchers are now seeing the range of its impact on heart health. Dr Mark Miller, a research scientist funded by the British Heart Foundation, said: "A lot of people think that what comes out of a vehicle exhaust is just soot, but it is not, it is actually hundreds of thousands of different chemicals, many of which are likely to be harmful to the body."

Thanks to funding from the British Heart Foundation, Dr Miller has focused on how breathed-in particles contribute to cardiovascular disease. The effects of air pollution can include stopping blood vessels relaxing and contracting, as well as increasing blood pressure, which affects the flow of blood around the body. Air pollution can also increase the risk of blood clots, alter the rhythm of the heart and make the heart more susceptible to damage from blocked arteries. Dr Miller stresses that even short exposure to air pollution can cause these to happen in healthy people. Long-term exposure to nitrogen dioxide, another pollutant from vehicle emissions, is linked to cardiovascular disease. According to Dr Miller, there are ways to limit your exposure to air pollution. If you're walking or cycling, alter your journey to avoid



**'Long-term exposure to nitrogen dioxide is linked to cardiovascular disease'**  
Dr Mark Miller, British Heart Foundation-funded scientist researching the effects of air pollution

busy roads or travel at quieter times if you can, for example. But the measures individuals can take to avoid polluted air are limited which make reducing

the amount of air pollution so important - and that is why the British Heart Foundation supports the expansion of the ULEZ and similar measures.



## About the ULEZ expansion

■ From 29 August 2023, the ULEZ will be expanded to create one single zone across all London boroughs, to help clear London's air and improve health.

■ 9 out of 10 cars seen driving in outer London on an average day meet the ULEZ standards, so their drivers will not need to pay the charge.

■ To check your vehicle and to see the support available visit: [tfl.gov.uk/ULEZ-2023](https://tfl.gov.uk/ULEZ-2023)

