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As killer virus is declared global health emergency, KU Chinese students say...

PLEASE DON'T BLAME US

By **NICOLE PIHAN**
EXCLUSIVE

KU Chinese students have described facing discrimination on campus as coronavirus spreads globally.

The virus's epicentre - in Wuhan, China - means that students from the Far East have reportedly become the target of recent discrimination over fears that they may be carriers.

The University has put plans in place to protect students and has reassured people that the risk to Kingston students and staff remains low.

It has issued students with precautions to help minimise the spread of any infection.

The move comes as the death toll from the outbreak has topped 500.

FULL STORY PAGE 4



Genius Angela gets PhD at 20

FULL STORY ON PAGE 3

Kingston Bridge House halls to close, University announces

By **NATALIE CROOKHAM** and **WILL SAWYER**

Kingston University has announced that Kingston Bridge House (KBH) will not be offered as halls of residence for students applying for the next academic year.

The University intends to sell the accommodation, located in Hampton Wick, and want to focus future investment on existing halls.

A statement from the University said: "Kingston Bridge House requires major investment to bring it to the standard we expect for our students."

"It is the only Kingston University halls of residence not in the Royal Borough of Kingston and is not, therefore, the right location to prioritise significant investment."

The University informed students of their plans for closure on January 27, but many KBH residents said they are happy with the accommodation provided. First-year student Sanne Ronner lives in a refurbished flat at KBH and had positive comments on her experience.

She said: "Maintenance is always ready to help, security is friendly, and the location is perfect for me."

"I'm considering staying for next year too. I'd definitely recommend it to others."

The common room and 16 of the 44 flats were refurbished in summer 2015, the cost of which has not been disclosed by the University.

KBH has proven to be financially troublesome for KU in recent years due to its unpopularity.

In March 2018, The River reported that empty rooms in KBH would prove expensive for the University, with costs potentially exceeding £500,000 for that year.

Business student Fanny Lahire said: "The location is great, and it isn't that expensive for Kingston housing prices."

She also appreciated that the accommodation was good value for money.

Pharmacy student Takudzwa Dirikwe, said she was happy with the opportunities to meet people but wished KBH was more active in university life.

She said: "This hall of residence isn't the most active compared to other accommodations."



Kingston Bridge House will be closed next academic year
Photo: Kingston University

The number of violent acts recorded by Kingston University has dropped this year by 50 per cent

KU action over 53 violent acts

By **STEPH SPYRO**

Kingston University has disciplined at least 53 students who committed acts of physical violence against other students or university staff since 2016.

There was a total of 22 acts of violence recorded during the year 2016/17, which dropped by one incident to 21 for 2017/18 and then plummeted to 10 in the last academic year.

Third-year media and communication student Giulia Gidoni, 21, witnessed two girls "beating the hell out of each other" at a party during her first year of university while living at Seething Wells in 2017.

"We heard screaming, really loud screaming, to the point where we were like 'okay, maybe someone's partying', but then the screaming was super persistent," she said.

She and some friends followed the horrific sounds around the corner where they saw the women fighting.

"My God, I've never seen anything like it. It started one-on-one and then it was two-on-two, to the point that they were on top of each other on the floor. There was blood and hair everywhere."

The information revealed through the Freedom of Information Act showed that during the academic year 2016/17, one incident was a student using physical violence against staff, 15 were students who used physical violence against other students, and six were listed as "other".

The River requested these statistics after the Complete University Guide, an independent guide to UK universities, urged the Office for Students to consider compelling universities to collect and publish statistics on crimes

so potential students could make more informed choices.

During the academic year 2017/18, two incidents of violence against staff were reported to KU, one up from the previous year, while the number of violent acts between students dropped slightly to 11.

For the same year, violent acts listed as "other" had risen to eight.

The University confirmed that "other" meant the incident involved a student and a member of the public who was not part of KU.

The number of students who faced disciplinary action by the University in 2018/19 dropped to just 10, with eight

students using physical violence against students and two incidents listed as "other".

Staff disciplinary records showed that there were no records relating to acts of violence of any kind by staff.

KU did not share the location of the incidents and said some of which may have taken place "away from university premises".

They also said the data was taken from student disciplinary records.

This comes as KU is just one of five universities in the UK that compiles data on crime.

The University of Essex recorded 54 acts of violence in the two years from 2016 to 2018, while the

University of Surrey recorded slightly fewer with 43 incidents.

But Bournemouth University recorded no acts of violence over those two years. Huddersfield University recorded fewer than five, and Salford recorded four incidents which they categorised as "assaults".

KU has not clarified what it meant by acts of violence, but other universities include threatening behaviour or verbal assault.

A spokeswoman for the University said: "Kingston is an extremely safe place in which to live and study and is one of the safest boroughs in London, according to the Metropolitan Police."

"In the Complete University Guide 2018, Kingston University was listed as having the third-lowest level of relevant crime in London."

It said: "The University takes the personal safety of its students and staff very seriously, working closely with the police to provide guidance on how to keep safe on campus and in the local area."

"It has a range of measures in place to ensure the safety of its students and staff, including a 24-hour campus security service and the added protection of CCTV across

Police are regularly called to KU
Photo: RexFeatures



Student dropout rates plunge

By **MILLIE TURNER**

Kingston University student drop-out rates are at their lowest since 2011/12, according to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request by The River.

The data from the number of students who dropped out in the last academic year was 396, compared to 851 in 2017/18 and 1,091 in 2011/2012.

Last year's number was below the average, which was calculated to be 698 students per year.

The majority of dropouts since 2011/12 was said to have been due to "personal reasons".

Despite the decrease overall, the number of students dropping out because of "financial reasons" has more than doubled since 2016/17, with just 16 students then to 45 in 2018/19.

Data published in January by the Press Association found that from 2011/12 to 2016/17, 67 per cent of universities saw an increase in dropouts.

Jaycee Moore dropped out of KU in 2018 to re-apply elsewhere.

"I realised the course I was doing at the time wasn't something I wanted to do anymore," Moore said.

"The university I ended up going to have a better syllabus than if I did the same course at Kingston."

There was a spike in the number of students dropping out from failure to re-enrol in 2017/18.

There were also 190 students who failed to re-enrol that year. The Office for Students last year also found that students who received unconditional offers were more likely to drop out after their first year.

COMMENT ON PAGE 11

I became a doctor at 20

KU genius Angela becomes one of the world's youngest to have a PhD

By **WILL SAWYER**

A KU graduate has become one of the youngest PhD students in the world when she graduated in January.

Angela Medvedeva from Houston, Texas, came to Kingston in September 2018 to research non-invasive brain stimulation and its effects on memory and completed her PhD last July aged 20.

The now 21-year-old said: "I wanted to express my gratitude to Kingston. It offers a tremendous amount of opportunities to grow and discover yourself, to travel, and to make lifelong friends.

"I was really blessed to find kindred spirits who, regardless of their age, some 10, 20 or 30 years older than me, shared my same energy and enthusiasm.

They showed me that age doesn't matter and that it's about the shared interests and living life to the fullest."

Having already earned two Bachelor's degrees in liberal studies and psychology from the University of Houston by 18, Angela wanted to continue to develop her research skills by pursuing a PhD.

"I wasn't just going for a year or for a semester to study abroad. I was signing up to go and potentially stay there and have a job there, which is something I actually considered," she said.

Angela settled on applying for the PhD programme at KU because she thought it would offer her the chance to learn new skills, flexibility, and independence.

As well as conducting experiments here at KU, the PhD graduate was also responsible for supervising a project in Russia, which involved going to a laboratory in Moscow.

Angela, who can speak fluent Russian, English, French and Spanish, was able to visit her family in Moscow while also visiting the laboratory.

"I had to fit in times to visit the labs at the National Research University in Moscow while also visiting my relatives there. Sometimes I'd only



Angela Medvedeva

have a week to visit and see both places," she said. Angela also said she faced many challenges during her PhD, including living up to the reputation she had gained through some press coverage.

"During my first semester at university, I already had this journalism-evoked image to live up to.

"Showing people that sometimes who I am is not completely captured in articles was something I had to deal with as well," Angela said.

Adjusting to life in the UK was another unexpected challenge for Angela, but she grew to love British culture and misses many things from her time here. Angela also said that finding willing participants in her experimental work was another challenge to overcome.

"I needed volunteers who were willing to undergo the non-invasive brain stimulation, but if that's the first time that a person has heard that non-invasive brain stimulation exists, then, of course, it's not always easy to convince them that it's safe," she said.

As part of her time at KU, Angela was able to travel around the UK attending science conferences to present her work in Newcastle, Bangor, and King's College.

She said one of the best things she did while researching abroad was spending five days dissecting human brains at Bangor University in Wales.

On top of her studies, she also took on a lot of different jobs including being a halls connector, student ambassador, and even teaching bachelor's and master's students studying psychology.

"Actually, making that connection, earning their respect, and getting to know them as students, future researchers and peers was really amazing.

"At one point, my age became known to the class, and they continued to respect me which was really amazing," she added.

While it was a lot to juggle around, Angela said doing a lot of work outside of her research helped her to keep her emotional, mental and physical health in balance.

At the start of her second year, she ended up at accident and emergency multiple times.

"It's a balance between how you push yourself with maintaining your health. I think that no degree is worth losing your health over, and your health should really be a priority," she said.

Since earning her PhD, Angela has moved onto a post-doctoral fellowship at the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Texas Medical School in Houston.

She said: "I have this insatiable passion for working with the open brain and contributing to making patients' lives better."



Angela graduating

Photo: Angela Medvedeva

'People are here from across

By **NICOLE PIHAN**

Kingston students are shunning Asian classmates over misplaced fears about the killer coronavirus outbreak, Chinese learners have claimed.

Universities have been put on alert after a Chinese student at York University became the first person to test positive for the flu-like disease that has killed more than 500, mainly in central China.

Public health officials have released advice on battling the potential spread of the virus, although experts have said that the chances of people in the UK developing the illness remain very slim.

But Chinese students have said they are facing discrimination from others who have fears about catching the virus.

Hanyu Wang, a mechanical engineering PhD student as well as president of KU's Chinese Society, said: "The issue is evident on several campuses.

"When I was in China, I heard reports of KU students behaving in a racist way towards Asians and I have members in the society who received the reports of people behaving in a racist manner."

He described how one Chinese girl who studies in KSA noticed that students in her workshop appeared to be deliberately avoiding her when they were given a group project to work on.

She thought her classmates moved away from her because they were worried that they would get sick from sitting nearby.

Wang said: "She got very upset in her class, other students just move the table, in order to not sit with her."

He added that the problem might be worse as Asian students were reluctant to report xenophobia for cultural reasons.

"Chinese students don't want to complain. We don't do that in our culture. So they won't go to the University to tell them," he said.

"If we feel sad about the situation we will go home and not talk about it.

"That is how our culture works. We don't answer back."

Ivy Pei, a Chinese MA graphic design student, said: "I did not suffer from severe discrimination, but people do avoid me in the street.

"Chinese people wear masks not because they are sick, but to protect themselves from catching germs.

"Because the coronavirus has no symptoms during its incubation period, no one knows when or where they will be infected.

"We can understand that people are afraid of being infected but it is incomprehensible to rise to violence and discrimination.

"I want to say that the outbreak in China is now under control, so I hope everyone does not overreact and it will get better."



Chinese wear masks to prevent catching germs, KU student Ivy Pei (insert)

A Kingston University spokeswoman said: "Kingston is proud to be a dynamic and cosmopolitan university, right on the doorstep of one of the most vibrant capital cities on the globe.

"We have a long tradition of welcoming students and staff from more than 140 other countries to study and work on our campuses.

"Just because someone is wearing the facemask, people forget that it is oriental tradition.

"The risk around Kingston is exceptionally low and there is no reason to be alarmed."

Kingston, like other public institutions, has placed information posters around campuses and halls

victims who have been diagnosed with the virus live.

The University added: "We are urging all our students and staff to remember to follow the steps we always recommend protecting themselves and others during the cold and flu season."

Health and travel updates are available on university portals including MyKingston and StaffSpace.

Suggested precautions to minimise the spread of any infections include distributing disinfectant wipes to all libraries and teaching areas with open access computers.

Another student, who wished to remain anonymous, who comes from Wuhan, described how the virus was being dealt with back home.

"My parents went back to our home before the city was isolated, and then they are having to stay there until now.

"My mum bought so many disinfectants to use to clean each room every day," she said.

The student is concerned not only about her own family but also for others.

"Actually it is a real situation for almost all Chinese people," she said.

"Many people have to stay in the cities where they work because

they are afraid of infection so they could not travel to get together with their families for the Chinese New Year celebrations."

Wang, who recently returned from China, described the good management of the crisis from the Chinese government.

He praised the screenings at airports compared to the UK.

"If you have a fever or cough you cannot escape," he said. "There are a lot of screening and checks at Shanghai airport, but not in the UK.

"China put attention to everything.

"There is smooth transition, so it doesn't take long because there are lots of people working in the process.

"There are a lot of staff there to help. And they check everyone for fever.

"Factories produce many face masks and hygienic gels in China. But we need more.

"Chinese students from here try to send them by post. But Amazon have put the prices up and it takes time to send.

"When we were on the plane everyone had face masks. Once we come to the UK people took them off because of fear. We see the news and we know that people are angry with Asians. But there is no help."

"We can understand that people are afraid of being infected but it is incomprehensible to rise to violence and discrimination"

"We expect everyone who is part of our campus community to treat each other with the utmost courtesy and respect at all times and will not tolerate any form of racial harassment."

The University is urging students to report any misbehaviour to the security team by contacting them on 020 8417 666.

KU Professor Mark Fielder, a specialist in rapid detection systems for infectious diseases, said: "There are people at this university who comes from all over the world. Am I nervous? No, I am not!

"They are healthy people and they are fine.

of residence, after the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak a global health emergency.

A Kingston University spokeswoman said: "The University understands that students and staff will be concerned about the ongoing public health implications of coronavirus.

"The health, welfare and safety of all our students and staff remains our top priority at this time."

The posters mainly include advice regarding how to recognise the virus and how to act in order to prevent it.

It also says that people who have been to the city of Wuhan – the centre of the alert and where most of the 25,000

the world. Am I nervous? No'



Photo: RexFeatures / Isabella Ruffatti

Was it because I am white?

By **NICOLE PIHAN**

Some call the coronavirus an 'Asian disease' and they could not be more wrong.

The world is in the midst of a global health emergency, and we should not be allowing racism to overcome the tragedy.

The media focuses strongly on the death toll and has influenced the west to believe that once you have the virus, you are basically done for.

People fear that they will become infected by merely walking past an Asian person.

In the middle of January, the media splashed the 80 deaths from the virus without so much as mentioning the 51 who recovered in China, and it is these numbers that keep rising.

A specialist on rapid detection systems for infectious disease diagnosis said: "I think that is an important message to get across, that this is a disease from which you can recover."

Many facts and myths are circulating because of the way the outbreak is being reported and ultimately, the situation has increased the mistreatment

and discrimination. This is just wrong and shows our ignorance and lack of perspective.

Understandably, people want to be alert.

After all, it seems that this is all the media have been talking about lately.

However, the level of fear spreading across western countries causes people to be more than just alert.

Bullying and oppression have been born off the back of fear, worry and hysteria.

Suddenly the western world has started to interpret standard Asian habits as a threat.

Wearing a facemask to keep a high standard of hygiene and avoid the spread of germs is common practice in Asian culture.

But is now resulting in targeted harassment in the UK.

Attention is drawn to it because of fear that the facial mask is an indicator for carrying around sickness. They forget that this is the way they show their respect to other people and try to avoid the spread of bacteria.

I decided to travel across London during the morning rush hour from Bethnal Green to Kingston wearing a facial mask.

As a white European, I was not sure how people would react, but I was expecting some kind of confrontation.

I have never in my life experienced so many judgemental looks from strangers, and I am a master of controversial Halloween costumes.

Surprisingly, people did not try to avoid physical contact with me as I was still squashed into the carriage and surrounded by people on the Central line.

But has this situation occurred because I am white?

We need to remember that it could easily be this side of the world next time and we might need their sympathy and help.

Instead of creating an uncomfortable situation filled with contradicting information, we should focus on what matters most: uniting the nations to overcome coronavirus and get all those affected back home soon.

Mark Fielder - Kingston professor and specialist in rapid detection systems for infectious diseases

Catch it, kill it, bin it, wash it

Terminology

Fielder said coronavirus is "a member of a group of viruses which causes diseases in humans and animals and this is a 'new brand'".

"At the moment the money is on the fact that it came from a bat and passed onto humans, but we haven't yet fully got the data that definitely confirms it."

He also underlined that people wrongly confuse the coronavirus with the flu, because of the flu-like symptoms associated with it, but "we treat [coronavirus] differently."

Timeframe

The virus was identified in December 2019 with the first fatality on January 9, gaining international exposure only a few days after that.

On January 31 the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus a global health emergency. The number of affected people, as well as deaths, continue to grow and does not seem to be slowing.

According to Fielder, it will be "active for another three to four months before it will start to die down".

He also explained the reason behind this timeline: "One of the reasons why we will see a slowing in the infections and a possible fall in prevalence is 'herd immunity'.

"This term refers to immunity in population, that starts to rise as people get exposed, and slowing as natural immunity develops. Treatments will also get better."

Symptoms & Treatment

As for symptoms Fielder said fever, runny nose, sore throat, coughing and difficulty breathing, as a starting point of recognising the virus.

They do not need to all occur at the same time but once some of the symptoms are present, a phone call to your GP or 111 will enable them to establish any infection.

It is important not to attend A&E or a GP's surgery, but to phone them instead to prevent spread of the virus.

Additionally, a group of international scientists have made huge progress: "As for last Friday, we have developed a test which can identify the virus. That was done by public health groups from the UK

(Public Health England), Belgium, Netherlands and China, and it is based on the molecular test known as PCR (polymerase chain reaction)."

All the actions combined have helped to establish a clearer path to fight back the coronavirus.

Spreading

The coronavirus is the result of a process which we call species jump.

He said: "You have a human and animal mix. We know that 75 per cent of the emerging diseases comes from wild animals and being in close proximity might help facilitate species jump and the emergence of a pathogen into a new host. That's what we call zoonoses."

As for movement from human to human, it travels mainly through touch hence Fielder urges about the importance of washing your hands with soap and warm water - not only to avoid being affected by the coronavirus but any virus at all.

He also explained that the belief that you might get infected from passing by someone on the street is unreasonable: "If you are in the street in a place other than China at the moment, chances to come across the virus are very, very slim."

Dealing with symptoms

"The key thing to remember in a public setting is when you are coughing or sneezing to do it in a tissue. The tissue is poreless, and these viruses can stick to that. Then, you should dispose of the tissue and get rid of them."

Even though the virus can survive on a door handle between 12 to 24 hours, on tissues, it is much less.

Once the membrane of the virus is damaged by sticking into the tissue, then the virus can't effectively affect another person.

"Catching it, killing it, binning it and then washing your hands afterwards," is by far the best way to avoid the virus as we stand at the moment.

Hand hygiene, along with good sneezing and coughing etiquette is a very simple and effective way of limiting its spread. You cannot stop it necessarily but you can help limit its spread.

Student trustee resigns from role after Islamophobia claims at union meeting

'I stood down because of bullying and harassment'



Former student trustee Abby Grant who has stepped down from her position

Photo: Will Sawyer

By **WILL SAWYER**

A student accused of Islamophobia has stepped down from her position as a student union trustee after claiming she felt "bullied and harassed".

Abby Grant, 22, sent a letter to the Union announcing that she was stepping down from her position on the Trustee Board after a vote to remove her was passed at this year's Annual General Meeting.

The third-year politics and economics student said: "I stood down due to the bullying and harassment I was receiving that was affecting my mental health, my physical health, as well as my university studies."

Last month, a motion that was put forward at the Union's AGM by president Feisal Haji to remove Grant as a student trustee was passed.

The four student trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Union is financially stable and efficiently run.

At the meeting, Haji claimed that Grant had been consistently stereotyping the Union's officers and accused them of crimes just because they were Muslims – an allegation she says is inaccurate.

Haji said: "I sat down in a training session one day in September and before I could even put my jacket on

my chair, I got accused of being against same-sex marriage and I hadn't even said a word.

"I asked her why, and she said, 'it's because of your faith'."

Haji also claimed at the meeting that as well as using racist and Islamophobic language, Grant had also revealed confidential information about the Trustee Board on her Twitter account and had not followed the Union's code of conduct.

Some of these tweets were included in Haji's case against Grant at the student meeting. Grant countered during the meeting and said that several of the tweets were posted before the start of her contract with the Union.

After the meeting, Grant said these claims were inaccurate, adding: "It's sad because I would've really preferred if he just sat down and spoke to me rather than it being a witch hunt towards me at the AGM."

"I can understand if people misunderstand what I've written in an email or what I've tweeted because they're words and you don't know the basis behind them."

"If he had just said 'what did that mean?' I would've happily explained, and maybe a lot of this confusion would not have been there."

She maintains that she also never released any confidential information on social media and thought that the use of her tweets against her was an attack on her freedom of speech.

"One of the tweets used was me showing how I had been bullied for four months. As a student, it's my job to hold the union board accountable and to ask questions," she said.

After the meeting, Haji said that having to talk in front of so many people about the alleged racism and Islamophobia that he had faced was "mentally tough as well as embarrassing".

Grant said that defending herself was difficult as she did not

know what would be said other than what was on the motion text, and that there was little time for others to ask questions.

She said: "There were a lot of differences and new information that he said in his speech that wasn't in the text so I couldn't prepare for that."

"I was caught very off guard, and I don't think that two minutes was enough time to defend myself."

At the meeting, Haji and Grant were each given two minutes to argue why the motion to remove Grant should be passed or blocked, respectively.

Many students in the meeting were left confused and unable to make a decision on how to vote as they felt that the time limit was inadequate.

The motion to remove Grant from the Trustee Board also proposed a governance review of the Union and updates to the trustee rules.

After the meeting Haji said: "This motion ensures it won't get to this stage again, and that future students don't have to face the pattern of behaviour that me and others had to

go through while ensuring it is dealt with internally."

During the meeting, Grant said that she had tried to work out the matter with Haji but that he instead took a more drastic route via a motion at the Annual General Meeting.

After the motion went against Grant on a show of hands, she would have faced a vote on her position from the whole student body if she had not resigned. After the meeting, Grant said that she hoped that the referendum that took place at the AGM will be reviewed.

Haji also said that despite being given numerous opportunities to de-escalate, Grant had failed to act with care and in the Union's best interests.

After the meeting, he said: "This pattern of behaviour started before she took the role, and unfortunately she didn't manage to separate her personal animosity towards the other trustees from her role."

Despite no longer being on the Trustee Board, Grant does not plan on letting this issue go.

She said: "I think it's distasteful to air dirty laundry in this way. I'll be using the internal channels to put in complaints, to try and make the Union better because I am still a student."



Union President Feisal Haji Photo: Marie Mannes

KU grad inspires new Cbeebies show for children



Photo: Rachel Bright

By **STEPH SPYRO**

A KU graduate's hugely successful book has inspired a new CBeebies series to teach children that it is okay to make mistakes.

Rachel Bright introduced her character called Love Monster to young viewers last week when he made the leap from the page to the screen in a new animated TV series.

The former graphic design student

said: "I like to think of him as a metaphor for our everyday life."

"Love Monster was always about the things that bring us together, and connect us as human beings like love and kindness, empathy and passion - but also fallibility - the sense that it's okay to make mistakes."

"I think it's an important message for kids that while expectations are high for us to always know what to do, it's

okay to not know and then use that new knowledge into your next adventure."

On her time at Kingston, Bright said: "The course was not like any other graphic design course you might find elsewhere in the country. It was a degree in thinking or learning to unthink."

The children's author wrote Love Monster in 2011 and published it the year after in a series of books which have sold over a million copies and

have been translated into 38 languages.

Bright said: "It's been a bit like living in a parallel universe. Seeing one of your characters leap from the page to the screen, walk and talk and go on adventures is the best thing ever really."

She has been closely involved in the creative development of the show and said that Love Monster's "exciting" journey off-screen, is in the process of being planned.

Students say final farewell to EU at Parliament Square celebration

By STEPH SPYRO

Students joined thousands of Brexit supporters who descended on to Parliament Square last week to mark the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union.

After nearly four years since Britons voted to leave in the 2016 EU referendum and almost one year since the initial leave date of March 29 2019, the UK left the economic and political union at 11pm on Friday, January 31.

But not all KU students were overjoyed with how the night turned out.

Third-year media and communication student Susie Roberts, 21, who is a Remainer, went to the celebrations for the historic event for a university project but said she felt “threatened”.

“I was pretty upset about the referendum result, I cried, and I feel the same tonight, to be honest. It’s horrifying.

“I’ll say it quietly so that I don’t get attacked. I’m not a Brexiteer, and I feel very threatened being here.”

Her comments came after a man told her to “f*** off” for being a “lefty” when she tried to ask him a question for her Brexit-based project.

When asked about what she felt the drawbacks of the UK withdrawing from the EU were, she said: “We’re such a small little country that when we’re completely on our own, there’s nothing to back us up, and I don’t think we realise how small we are.”

But while Remainers like Roberts worry about the end of free movement and the future of the UK economy, young Brexiteers are adamant the benefits outweigh any risks.

Reuben Andrews, a 24-year-old student from Reading, said: “There’s



Thousands celebrated Brexit at Parliament Square while Susie Roberts looks on in despair

Photo: RexFeatures/Isabella Ruffatti

a lot more opportunity after Brexit. I think younger people should wake up and see more opportunities.”

His friend Georgina, 27, said she was proud of her country for leaving the EU and “doing something independently”.

“It’s doing some good and re-writing history,” she said.

The night’s celebrations were a reasonably quiet affair around the

country with no fireworks and no bongs from nearby Big Ben.

But Parliament Square, where Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage joined the crowds from all parts of the country in counting down to the historic moment, was far from quiet.

Brexiteers young and old waved their Union Jacks while others climbed onto statues and even traffic lights in

a scene that resembled the aftermath of a football match.

Downing Street reflected the image of Big Ben in the form of a light show accompanied by the sound of bongs.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Boris Johnson delivered a special address to the nation.

He emphasised “unleashing the enormous potential of British people”

and urged the public to “come together and move forward united”.

On February 1, the Union Jack was removed from outside of the European parliament building in Brussels where all the flags of the EU member states are displayed.

It was replaced by the EU flag after Britain became the first country to leave the EU after 47 years as a member.

River survey reveals students’ worries for the UK after Brexit

By MATT PERRY

Kingston students believe that things will worsen in the UK as a result of Brexit, a River survey has revealed.

The survey showed that two-thirds of 300 students believe that Brexit would have negative effects on the UK, whereas only one in five thought that things would improve due to the UK’s independence.

Drama student Emily Baldwin, 20, said: “Brexit will make Britain worse off because we now look like a country of bigots and no one will want to work hard to go to a country where they will be treated awfully.

“I used to work in a hospital where people always said that they hated foreigners, but they didn’t realise that if you got rid of foreign workers in a hospital, there would hardly be anyone

working and supporting them.”

The survey also shows that just under half of students believe that current Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been the most successful politician throughout the entire Brexit process.

Despite losing two elections, over a quarter of students consider the outgoing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to be the most successful.

On the results of the survey, film making student Carl Bowditch, 20, said: “During Brexit, Corbyn never had a strong viewpoint so people are probably being stubborn as the majority of students are Labour supporters.

“I understand some parts of Brexit, but I still think it will have a negative impact.

“The only way we’re going to survive is if we are subservient to the

EU and find a way to trade with them.”

The United Kingdom left the European Union on January 31, nearly three and a half years after the original referendum took place.

Regardless of the long wait and numerous setbacks throughout the period, over 50 per cent also highlighted that they are not happy that Brexit has finally passed.



Illustration: Isabella Ruffatti

Are KU students wishful or naïve?

By ANTHONY MILNE

At Kingston University, 25 per cent of students think Jeremy Corbyn has been the person who has benefited the most from Brexit.

Are they stubborn or deluded?

At 11pm last Friday, Britain left the European Union, and the country did not crash and burn... yet.

The landscape politically has completely changed since the day of the referendum.

There have been two different Conservative leaders in the last three and a half years.

Despite the fact the Conservative Government had its most decisive win since 1987, a significant number of students believe that Corbyn has been more successful.

How could anyone even think this?

While over half of Kingston University students consider Boris

Johnson as the individual who has benefited the most from Brexit, the fact that anyone could think Corbyn had benefited more is baffling.

This is a man that has attempted and failed several times to become prime minister and the public clearly do not want anything to do with him.

In the last election, Corbyn was at the helm when the Labour party recorded the lowest number of seats in parliament since 1935.

In what world has he benefited the most throughout Brexit?

The fact of the matter is the Corbyn experiment has failed, and it is time for his young followers to accept this and move on to whoever is next.

I do respect Corbyn.

I agree with him on several issues, but there is wishful thinking.

And then there is just lunacy.

New budget for New Slang

By **CHLOE WRIGHT**

Banquet Records plan to invest a six-figure sum into Pryzm's regular New Slang event and are calling for input into what the money should be spent on.

While the exact figure is yet to be decided, Banquet Records tweeted that they are looking to "invest a six-figure sum" to ensure shows provide the best experience for fans and bands.

New Slang is a weekly event at Pryzm where live bands perform every Thursday. Bands like Courteeners, Bombay Bicycle Club, and Stormzy have all appeared in Kingston through Banquet Records.

Jon Tolley, Banquet Records owner and local councillor, said: "There are a regular high calibre of bands who are often playing with gear below their normal level."

KU post graduate student Joe Gallop, 21, said he can sometimes feel quite distant from performances held at Pryzm and suggested there



be speakers around the venue, not just at the front.

Gallop stressed that he did not enjoy Pryzm as a concert arena as much as he did with the Hippodrome which was closed down in July 2018.

He said: "Sometimes the sound quality sounds terrible and it feels like the sound doesn't properly carry

unless you are on the floor area."

Tolley said these types of comments are what the shop wants so they can make the gig experience for both customers and artists as good as it could be.

Banquet Records have encouraged customers with ideas to reach out via Twitter @BanquetRecords Street.

More music on page 16
Courteeners performing at New Slang
Photo: RexFeatures

White men worst drug users at KU, say dealers

By **MATT PERRY**

Anonymous drug dealers who study at Kingston have told The River that their products are most likely to be bought by white middle-class males.

The students, who find time between lectures to sell their illegal substances, also highlighted that their sales are high with an increasing demand for ketamine and crack.

One of the students, who is in their last year of studies, said: "The number of people who will take drugs in Kingston is actually pretty high. If it wasn't, I wouldn't be wasting my time selling to them."

"More people take drugs at Kingston, and in general, than you realise, whether it's a bump of cocaine or they're just chilling and want to smoke."

"I don't want to categorise those who buy drugs off of me and others, but a high number of those who get them at university are white males, probably from a middle-class background who are experiencing freedom for the first time away from home."

"A lot of people probably go to university and want to try things like drugs once, maybe want to look cool in front of other people they've just met, but then keep coming back for more."

In 2018, a study from the National Union of Students stated that around two in five students were drug users, with weed being the most sought-after substance.



A drug dealer offering pills

Photo: RexFeatures

Despite marijuana being the most consumed illegal drug, the drug-dealing students suggested that this was only one of the many illegal substances students at Kingston attempt to get their hands on.

Another student drug dealer said: "I don't actually sell anything other than weed, but I know for a fact that ketamine has become popular with most people. Probably even more so than cocaine recently."

"It seems to me that even if students

don't have much money for things like food and other essentials, they'll still find the money for drugs if they're going on a night out.

"In reality, it's probably cheaper to take a pill or have coke on a night out in comparison to buying overpriced drinks at a club, so there's probably that attraction as well."

Both drug dealers also said that selling drugs was only a temporary thing for them while they were studying at university to make some

money alongside their student loan. Despite knowing the potential consequences of selling the products, they said they just see it as another normal job with high demand.

"The thing is, someone is always going to be selling drugs at university campuses," said one of the students.

"To me, it's the same as having any kind of job while at university."

Another possible attraction for some students is the reduced prices and loyalty bonuses, which apparently come with repeated business.

One former KU student, who has a degree in psychology, said: "What happens with a lot of people at university, like myself, is that you get to know drug dealers pretty well because you've spent time hanging out with them at the start of the year at fresher's events, or they've lived in the same halls as you."

"When I would buy drugs, it would be off people I knew which would mean cheaper prices, especially if it was repeated business."

"In general, I've never met a horrible drug dealer. One time I was picking up drugs but ended up taking my dealer out clubbing with my friends because we got on so well."

"People are definitely not as anxious about meeting a dealer nowadays, especially with all the stereotypes that come with meeting and interacting with one."

No black senior academics at UK universities

By **STEPH SPYRO**

The universities minister has slammed the lack of senior black academics in UK universities as "unacceptable".

Chris Skidmore made the comments after new figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency showed that out of 535 academics employed as "managers, directors or senior officials" in the UK, zero were black.

The data showed that 475 were white, 15 were Asian, five were mixed, five were classed as "other", while 35 people's ethnicity was not known.

The statistics were rounded to the nearest five, meaning that if there were one or two black senior staff, they would be rounded down to nil.

Kingston University won the Guardian University Award for Diversity Initiative in 2014.

In 2019, a report by Universities UK and National Union of Students praised Kingston for its sector-leading work in reducing the BAME attainment gap.

Figures from the University's latest Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report released this year showed that out of the 2,645 staff members, 475 were black while 45 preferred not to say.

Skidmore said: "It is unacceptable that the number of black academic staff in senior positions has fallen, as this does not represent our British society."

KU grad quits law for self-love

By **MEGAN ROBINSON**

A former Kingston graduate has quit her legal career to write self-help books and poetry to support others to heal from heartbreak.

Tene Edwards graduated in 2014 with a 2:1 in law but decided to pursue writing in 2016 following a difficult period in her life.

Edwards was inspired to write by her uncle Lance who was dying of lung cancer and told her not to live with regret.

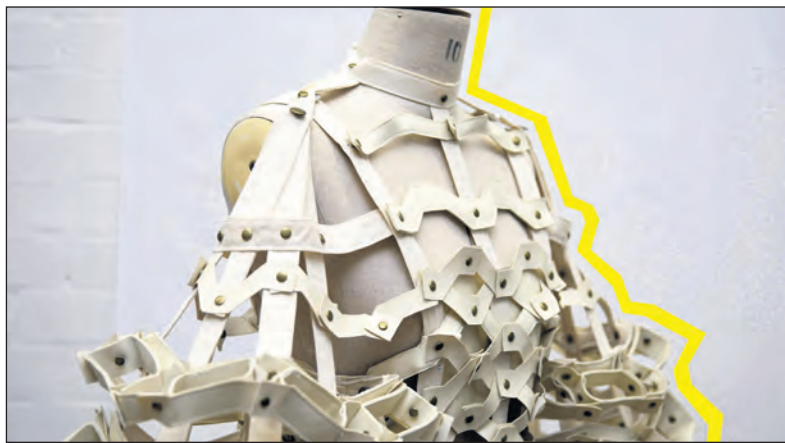
She said: "I remember he was saying 'I haven't even had the chance to go skiing yet or sit in a Lamborghini,' and I just couldn't get the picture of his distressed face out of my mind."

"This seriously inspired me to re-evaluate my life, and it was then that I decided to walk away from my legal career and make writing my full-time job."

The 26-year-old added that self-love is a never-ending journey and not a destination.

Walk With Wings is available to purchase on amazon from £2.33 for the kindle edition or £9.30 for a paperback copy.

Paper clothes are flimsy but fashionably tear-ible



By **CHLOE WRIGHT**

With bravery, imagination and creativity, KU fashion students have used their skills to create designs that would only seem possible in a utopian world where it rains cupcakes, and the sky is made of candy floss.

Using only paper as their primary material, MA fashion students at Kingston University created impressive dresses and designs for their assessed coursework in semester one.

The fashion students could fold, paint and even iron their work, meaning the finished products were all mostly different from one another.

Lèa Bauvais, 22, said the most challenging part of the project was how new the idea was.

She said: "As a fashion student, we usually work with fabric shaped by sewing techniques, but here it was forbidden to sew.

"It was then necessary to find different ideas to assemble the elements together."

The designs were all sketched out by the students who then brought their ideas to life with the paper.

There was not one type of paper that had to be used, allowing the final designs to be as original and creative

as possible.

Richard Sorger, the MA fashion leader at KU, said: "It is about developing a technique of paper manipulation and applying it to the body.

"By using paper, the student is freed up from thinking about traditional construction techniques used for making clothes in fabric."

Qianhuizi Chang, 24, said the fragility of the paper made the project more difficult than working with traditional materials as paper can tear a lot easier, and it can often get dirty.

She said: "The worst part [of using paper] is that it is hard to save.

"But I prefer the shape of my paper and some parts of the bulging, as it cannot be achieved by fabric."

With a rise in fast fashion being abolished, and many people choosing to source their clothes from charity shops, paper could be the new sustainable material.

Bauvais said: "Sustainable fashion is interesting due to the fact it is always looking for alternatives, especially with the material."

The paper designs were used as a springboard for recreating the clothes using fabric which is impressively on display at the Knights Park campus.

Lèa Bauvais paper dress design sits perfectly on a mannequin (left) as model wears the latest environmentally friendly outfit (right)



Photo: Lèa Bauvais

KU students alarmed by 'dodgy' email ad offering paid essay writing service

By **ISABELLA RUFFATTI**

An essay writing firm targeted Kingston University students, offering to do assignments for a set price, in an email sent last week.

The email, which advertised custom written assignments, dissertations and presentations, was sent to at least 20 students, and had disappeared from their inbox by Wednesday.

Renewable energy student Julie Sirvent described the email as "dodgy" and posted a screenshot on a KU student Facebook group to raise awareness before deleting it.

"I wanted to make sure that no one would fall for it" she said.

At first, criminology student Kaitlyn Taylor thought the service was something the University offered, like

CASE, but as she read on, she realised it was an independent company.

Taylor, who struggled with anxiety and depression while working hard to get into university, felt betrayed by the people who offer and use this kind of service.

The first-year said: "Some of us have had to work ourselves to the bone to be where we are now. If you can afford it, other people will give you a free ride through university and do your assignments for you. I was just gobsmacked, to be honest."

The sender of the email appeared to be The Document Co, which boasted clients from Bath University, UCL and Durham University in the email.

An email sent to students on Friday by University registrar Keith

Brennan and Pro Vice-Chancellor Trish Reid stated that the company did not have permission to email students and assured that data protection was taken very seriously by the University.

In its website, the company describes itself as "not just an average content writing firm, we cater to the needs of each and every client individually, ultimately providing you with a unique piece of writing".

The Document Co charges between £50 to £60 per 1000 words for its essay and dissertation writing services.

Master's student Ariel Looper said she would not consider using their services.

Looper, who studies film, said: "Coming to school here, it's kind of that thing where you want to prove it to yourself that you can do it and that

you did that on your own. I guess I wouldn't want anyone to take that away from me."

She added: "My fees here are doubled, so that's like double the loss... getting kicked out of university for plagiarising an essay."

In 2017, Kingston University, along with other UK universities, were urged by university standards watchdog Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Government to crack down on students using "essay mill" services.

On Friday, the University reminded students that cheating is defined as academic misconduct under the University's regulations.

A KU spokesperson said: "Any student found guilty of this offence will fail the module, will not be permitted

a retake, and either will be obliged to repeat the whole module in the following session receiving a capped mark or have their registration at the University terminated."

When Luca Anescu, third-year computer science and game programming student saw the University's first email, he panicked.

He said: "It nearly looked like I was being accused of plagiarism before I read the message in its entirety."

On Monday, the University sent an email to students apologising and clarified that they did not suggest students were cheating.

The River approached The Document Co and Kingston University for comment but has not had a response from either by the time of publication.

American KU students upset with Trump’s trial

By **ISABELLA RUFFATTI**

While some American KU students may not like President Donald Trump, they told The River they would not want to see him impeached because they fear Vice President Mike Pence even more.

President Trump was put on trial for impeachment last December by Congress, and his case has since moved on to the Senate.

Noah Maunchly, a third-year illustration animation student from New Hampshire, said: “I see Trump as an embarrassment to the nation who has unearthed the worst aspects of nationalism and prejudice.”

Trump is being tried on charges of abuse of power and obstruction, and a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate will be needed to remove him from office.

Maunchly, 23, does not think impeaching Trump will make much of a difference as the Senate is mostly made up of conservatives from Trump’s own party, and they will not vote against him.

Creative writing & media and communication student Rachel Domanchich said: “I don’t want him to be impeached all the way because while

Trump’s an idiot, Pence is dangerous. Pence will get stuff done in two months.”

She continued: “He will do a lot of damage, whereas Trump is too stupid to do much damage...



KU students encourage others to help the homeless

By **CHLOE WRIGHT**

KU students have encouraged their peers to help the vulnerable following a rise in homelessness in Kingston.

KU students Emily Hill, 27, and Jasmine Barrett, 22, have both recognised the need to help the homeless.

Hill has been volunteering at a kitchen every Friday, while Barrett created a crowdfunding website.

Barrett said: “Raising awareness and fighting for the rights of homeless and vulnerable people is probably the easiest way for students to help.

“Supporting the charities in your local area by donating cans of food or even just £1 is helpful too.”

Between 2014 and 2019, Kingston saw a 65.9 per cent rise in the use of temporary accommodation, with it being estimated that 2,317 people do not have a fixed address or are sleeping rough.

Hill, a human rights and social justice student, has said that KU should be doing more to promote charities to encourage volunteering.



Groups of demonstrators brought up by the impeachment trial of President Trump Photo: RexFeatures

If Trump gets impeached, we’re screwed.”

Domanchich, who is from New Jersey, said that choosing between Pence and Trump was like choosing between being shot versus being poisoned and that at least with Trump, you had time to find an antidote.

Creative writing and English literature student Joycelyn Frazier, also from New Jersey, felt that the impeachment had come far too late.

The next presidential elections are in November this year and Frazier, who identifies as bisexual, is also worried

that if Pence came to power through Trump’s impeachment, LGBT+ rights would be “flushed down the toilet”.

English and creative writing student Chase Hinton said: “Every president is hated and loved in their own way, and be they vilified or not, the country goes on ticking. I’ll fight for the rights I believe in no matter who’s in office.”

Hinton is from the Southern State of Tennessee, which he describes as a place where “politics get angry really fast”.

Both Frazier and Domanchich were frustrated with the slowness of Trump’s trial, as well as American politics in general.



Jasmine Barrett with some boxes for the homeless Photo: Barrett

She said: “There could be more exposure to local charities and ways that we, as students, can help. There is a volunteer department, but I only found out about this a few weeks ago, so it’s not very well advertised.”

Barrett, an English language, linguistics and creative writing student, volunteered at a soup kitchen in Newbury in September and October 2019 and spent her birthday there.

“I did so as I felt I didn’t need any gifts but wanted my friends and family to help me fundraise for people who needed more things than myself so that I could purchase food and essential things for them,” Barrett said.

Back at university, neither Barrett nor Hill have time to volunteer, but both plan to do so in the future. Meanwhile, they continue to raise awareness through social media.

Domanchich said: “The impeachment was supposed to happen four years ago.”

Frazier added: “No one has patience for this. People have lives.”

Their frustration has led most of them to mistrust and even avoid news stations. Frazier, Domanchich and Hinton could not even recall what Trump was being impeached for.

On January 31 the Senate voted in favour of blocking new witnesses.

On Wednesday night, President Trump was cleared of both charges by the Senate and will stay in the White House for the remainder of his term.

Big Read gets even BIGGER

By **NATALIE CROOKHAM** and **NICOLE PIHAN**

KU plans to make The Big Read a borough-wide scheme for secondary schools in Kingston upon Thames.

The shared reading scheme, Read Up! Kingston, is an initiative born from the success of the KU Big Read, which allows for the smoother transition between educational institutions by introducing a book to all students to create common ground.

The scheme was launched with five secondary schools in Kingston last year.

Founder of the project and lecturer Alison Baverstock said: “It was very successful, and now that’s sort of galloping along, the borough is very keen to do it across all schools.”

Catherine Fenwick, from the partnership scheme AimHigher, noticed the success of the project at KU and reached out to implement it in local secondary schools.

This will be the second year of the scheme for 11-year-olds and Baverstock is encouraging schools to take it forward and make it theirs by selecting their own book and adapting it to meet their needs.

Baverstock has been working with AimHigher to implement the shared reading scheme and said: “I’ve always tried to make it anybody’s project so that anybody can share it.”

However, every school needs a committed coordinator to make it work, which can be challenging.

Fenwick said: “With the funding cuts and time it takes... some of the schools are noticing that they are not quite in admiration to make it work so it will be interesting to see how it grows.”

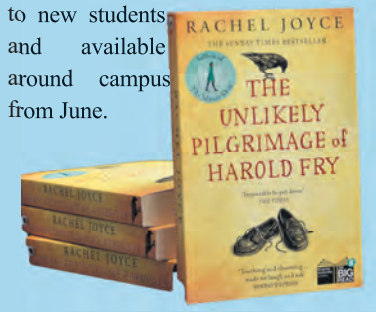
Baverstock is enthusiastic about its development and said: “I’d love to try one for children starting school, four-year-olds.”

The feedback received from schools taking part in Read Up! Kingston showed that the initiative not only helps pupils with their school transition but also significantly helped to improve behaviour, bringing down the necessity of “second-teacher interventions” by 60 per cent.

While the shared reading initiative continues to grow and develop, Kingston University is getting ready for the sixth edition of the Big Read to be announced at the end of June.

From over 130 nominated titles and after following an algorithm, students and staff have narrowed the decision down to six books which will be announced in the next few days.

The chosen book will be sent out to new students and available around campus from June.



THE RIVER SAYS

There is a saying as old as time itself; there are no rights without responsibilities.

It is a value preached upon children from the moment that they are taught that they exist.

Let us cast our minds back because in a highly polarised world, with Brexit dividing Britain and Trump building walls across the pond, we are due a refresher.

A right is something a person has which people think should not be taken away. It is a rule about what a person is allowed to do or have.

We seem to have forgotten that people are allowed to have differing opinions.

Of course, there is a fine line that teeters on the brink of hate speech.

It is a line as thin as a thread but an important concern that is highlighted in this issue's AGM article which tackles concerns of alleged islamophobia versus someone's honestly held opinions and right to freedom of speech.

University students are often accused of being part of the "snowflake generation", epitomised for taking the most menial comments to heart.

But that has come at the cost of our freedom of expression.

Do not become indifferent with your opinions or a coward when you speak in fear of offending people.

Speak out, but remember that as much as you are entitled to your rights, so are others.

THE RIVER IS

The River is written, edited and produced by journalism students at Kingston University.

The River aims to serve the University and the local area. Our mission statement commits us to raising and addressing the issues relevant to students and local people, as well as to entertain and inform them.

It is our aim to celebrate the achievements of students and local people alike. If you have information or a story which would interest our readers, please contact us.

We aim to conform to the standard codes of conduct for the profession of journalism.

It is The River's policy to print timely corrections and clarifications when we have got something wrong.

If you feel we have misrepresented or that we have made a mistake, please get in touch with us:

editors.river@gmail.com

Dropping out? The sooner the better!



Matt Perry's second issue of his KU ID card

Photo: Isabella Ruffatti

By **MATT PERRY**

Before I embarked on my journey as a student journalist, I spent almost a whole academic year studying a different subject at Kingston University.

That was until I decided to quit the course.

This does not seem to be something unfamiliar as according to data analysed by the Press Association, two-thirds of universities have recorded an increase in student dropouts over the last five years.

Some students may find themselves stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to deciding whether they should carry on with something they are not coping well with – I say the sooner you drop out, the better.

On my previous course, I did not really have a clue what was going on, in simple terms.

I knew nothing about the subject, and the teaching was not great either.

But, despite this, I was also not helping myself as I lost interest and enthusiasm. Ultimately, I ended up depressed, anxious and lost in regard to what I should do.

Eventually, around seven months in, I decided to drop out of the course after realising that despite my efforts, I was only wasting time (and money) on something which I was not interested in nor good at.

This was one of my toughest decisions, but inevitably, one of the best choices I have had to make.

Now, I am doing something which I

enjoy and am really good at.

I want others to learn from my mistakes and know that if you really are not enjoying your course, you need to have the guts and the self-confidence to drop out as soon as you realise.

By doing so, it can give you more time to reflect on what else you might excel at as well as what you could still do in the future, such as my decision to switch to a journalism degree since it suited my best qualities while at school.

While on the subject, schools are another issue when it comes to pressure on students.

I do not believe they do enough to help students realise that there are other options to university.

Many friends of mine went on to do apprenticeships in professions

such as electrics and accounting, which are a great alternative.

Some decided to do a gap year which gave them time to reflect on what they ultimately wanted to do in the future – another good option in my opinion, and one which I probably should have made in hindsight.

Overall, I want people to realise that everyone is different.

Young people need to realise that they hold different qualities and should not embark on a degree that they may feel pressured into by family or school.

You should not feel the need to follow the trend pushing young people towards university.

Follow your gut and do not just do something for the sake of doing it.

If it is not for you, it is not for you.

'She was on painkillers, but I never realised how bad it was'

Lucie Skorvagova watched a friend suffering from an opioid addiction, and shares her emotional experience with The River

It was hard to admit that there was something not quite right with my friend.

She was in pain, and opioids were the necessary evil to rid her of the agony she faced.

For a really long time, I thought there was no other way, and that the opioids were a better option than to be suffering.

The problem is that the solution to pain can cause more damage than you are already in.

I wish I knew it had been hurting her this much. Naturally, I preferred seeing her in a good mood rather than

unhappy - I thought pills were helping her.

Back then, I did not realise what was actually going on behind the scenes.

I did not know she was pouring tramadol in with her double shot Jack Daniels. I did not know she was carrying opioids with her at all times and taking them when she was not in pain. I did not see her mood swings as a side effect of double dosing the amount she was supposed to take.

Sometimes her personality changed within minutes.

She was happy, bubbly, laughing all the time and messing around.

Then in a few hours, all of a sudden, she was somebody else - an angry person who did not want to have people near, being awful to everybody who tried to talk to her.

I knew she was in pain, I knew she was on painkillers, but I never realised how bad it had got.

She went through all this all by herself, without any of her friends knowing, and without any help.

All that time, I thought she was just fine. It scares me to even think about how things could have ended up if she had not realised that she was risking her life.

After the first time she experienced withdrawal symptoms, she got so scared that she stopped.

When you ask her about it now, she does not remember most of what happened in the period when she was on opioids and heavy drinking.

What bothers me is that fact that if I had known more back then, could I have helped her?

It is not just the addict who denies the truth.

Yes, painkillers are sometimes necessary but do not let them get in control of you or your friends. You owe it to them and yourself to help.

KU OPIOIDS

How to spot if you have an issue with opioids

By **MILLIE TURNER**

Developing an opioid addiction is very easily done and it is important to recognise the signs.

Dosage

If you feel there is a 'need' to take more than what your doctor has prescribed, then there is a possibility that you may have developed a dependency.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal from social situations is a sign of addiction especially as the side effects of opioids can make people overly anxious.

Opioids tend to immerse you in a world seldom understood through the lens of sobriety.

Reliance

Turning to painkillers to dull emotions can be signs of an unhealthy relationship with your medication.

Dishonesty

If you are certain that you are on the right dosage, then there should not be a need for more. Dishonesty is a sign that you believe you have something to hide.

Alternatively, if you notice someone you love needing a repeat prescription earlier than necessary, then there may be a problem.

Health changes

If the person suffered from mental health issues before taking opioids, and their mental health has worsened since the prescription, it could be a sign that they are dependent on opioids or experiencing side effects.

Experiencing symptoms such as paranoia, memory loss, weight loss, mood swings, agitation, insomnia, sexual dysfunction, and attention problems can all be signs of opioid dependency.

Moving forward

When a problem is acknowledged, speak with healthcare professionals.

Outline any issues and ensure you are on the right dosage and the right drug for you.

Going cold turkey can be detrimental if you have been taking a prescription long-term.

Further support

Surbiton-based Addiction Support and Care Agency: 020 8339 9899.

THE TABOO THAT BLIGHTS LIVES

Just one or two pills to help the pain, but it becomes a habit: students tell **Millie Turner** about their painkiller problems



Laying around on his sofa after damaging the cartilage in his knee during a sports match, Jack popped another white pill into his mouth.

Like everyone prescribed with opioids post-surgery, Jack, a KU student, thought they were going to help him get back to normal after his accident.

And like many, he underestimated the strength of opioids and quickly succumbed to their effects – from then on Jack's 'normal' was very different.

Many well-known celebrities have succumbed to the addictive nature of opioids such as Ant McPartlin and Robert Downey Junior.

"You don't just stop any addiction. You have to hit some kind of bottom where it's the better option," Jack says.

"It's not one moment, but after a while, you take a step back and look at your lifestyle, and say to yourself 'what are you doing', when you're lying half-conscious all day achieving nothing and forcing the people around you to watch you do that."

After surgery, to help his recovery, he was prescribed with the painkiller tramadol which he then became dependant on.

Jack began taking tramadol after his surgery in August 2018 and says his addiction started once he returned to university a month later.

He says: "It was that persistent pain that just kind of wears you down. It hurt to do my normal routine because I needed to walk to do everything, and it hurt to walk."

"I remember I took a pill because I had nothing to do with my day, so I think that's probably where the problem started."

"You don't just stop any addiction. You have to hit some kind of bottom where it's the better option,"

At first, Jack did not want to admit to himself that he was addicted - facing the truth meant quitting and Jack did not want to quit.

"A big part of it is denial I suppose, once you get past that then you're golden," Jack laughs.

He adds: "It wasn't something I wanted to think about, so I just didn't."

I was meant to be taking, I think, three a day maximum, but when I was bad, I was taking well over double that.

"Sometimes, I would take less and just mix with alcohol instead, especially if I was anxious about running out."

But, eventually, that day came.

Jack had to go back home for a check-up at his doctors but soon realised that he could not keep up the lie anymore.

"It was when I ran out that I knew that I wasn't going to be able to blag another prescription out of my doctor, and I had a massive panic attack."

"My mum heard me freaking out in my room and came upstairs and found me."

"There wasn't really any escaping it then."

Tramadol is less potent than its fentanyl and oxycodone siblings and is supposed to have a relatively low risk of addiction.

However, unlike its siblings, tramadol is similar to antidepressants as it increases the levels of serotonin, feelings of happiness, in your brain.

"It's happiness or chemically stimulated happiness," says Jack, and

despite these 'happy' chemicals, the side effects, as Jack experienced, can range from drowsiness and nausea, to constipation.

Jack's university work suffered significantly due to the effects of the opioids making it hard for him to motivate himself to do anything, let alone work.

"I wasn't doing great in my classes."

"My grades definitely suffered, and I never wanted to go out, not even to university."

"I didn't really see my friends besides the ones I live with, but then again there'd be some days when I just wouldn't leave my room," Jack says.

Jack is now receiving counselling but says that at first, he was sceptical of the process.

"In terms of family and friends, it's not nice for them to see you deteriorate."

Jack adds that it is not easy, but you get to a point where you realise that something needs to change.

Often, counselling can be a positive change, after first consulting with your doctor about your prescription.

Jack also says that supportive friends

ADDICTION



Opioid addiction can lead to many side effects including depressive episodes

Photo: RexFeatures

and family are crucial to the success of recovery.

“They’re the ones who supported me to go to counselling and to seek help.

“They were in the dark for quite a long time, but not as long as I thought they were.

“There’s a slight history of it in the family so they were actually a lot more supportive than other families could have been,” Jack says.

Jack believes everyone should be having more open conversations about painkillers, addiction and their impact.

“I think we need to feel more comfortable seeking help if you do find that you’re becoming dependant on opioids without that shame of drug addiction,” he says.

He adds that the shame of addiction likely prevents others from seeking support but it should not.

KU student Stephen Hall, 21, tells *The River* of his experience with co-codamol after a back injury in 2016.

Unlike Jack, Hall says he has never had a problem with the addictive side to opioid painkillers, but the side effects instead.

“I was prescribed co-codamol,

30mg which is the strongest dose, to help deal with the severe pain I was in,” Hall says. “The main effects are that it makes you feel really lightheaded and can ramp up anxiety.”

Last year, Hall began retaking co-codamol because of a foot injury, but he limits himself because of the side effects.

Hall explains: “I only take them if I absolutely have to,” highlighting how sometimes the side effects of opioids can outweigh their benefits, meaning people choose to stay in pain.

Taking opioids is not just dangerous for the addiction, as they can impact and interfere with everyday life.

These painkillers can hinder your ability to work efficiently and as Jack mentioned an inability to concentrate, specifically on your work and assignments at university while under the influence of opioids.



Ant McPartlin openly struggles with addiction

Photo: RexFeatures

Hall also found that opioids did hinder his concentration and ability to work efficiently.

He says: “It means that when I try and do work, I can’t think straight

Opioids: accessible, but should they be?

By **MILLIE TURNER**

I cannot say that I was addicted to my painkillers, but I can assure you that it can be incredibly easy.

In 2016, I underwent spinal fusion surgery on my thoracic spine for my idiopathic scoliosis.

My spine grew in an S shape and was consequently crushing my heart and lungs.

Within two years, I was diagnosed, and had two titanium rods and 16 screws drilled into my spine.

In hospital, I was given an epidural on my torso, a ketamine drip, regular doses of morphine, oral morphine and tramadol.

Those are the painkillers I remember anyway.

Upon my discharge, I was prescribed tramadol, codeine and co-codamol.

I was confined to my bed for 21 of the 24 hours in a day, every day.

When I was finally able to live my life properly, my environment was completely different.

The time I spent essentially sedated, had meant that everything in front of

me had gone unnoticed.

I thought life would stand still, without me there. But the opioid mist cleared and I realised I was wrong.

So, instead of dealing with these issues, I let tramadol and codeine deal with them for me.

They made the world so much softer and manageable.

But their side effects get the better of you before you know it.

Whether it is floods of anxiety or the waves of nausea, the rising tides catch up to you somehow.

The painkillers I had to take to reduce my pain were eventually the downfall of my A-Levels because I simply could not concentrate, and I can only be thankful it did not escalate any further.

If not for painkillers, the agony would have been more distracting.

Chronic pain affects more than 28 million people in the UK, according to the British Pain Society.

So why is the most effective and accessible remedy dredged in tragic side effects and addiction?

and can’t focus.

“When I have to listen to a lecture, I just can’t concentrate at all.”

Although Hall tries to limit his opioid intake because of the side effects, eventually there comes a time when his pain becomes too much.

Opioid addiction has destroyed tens of thousands of lives in the US and the problem is growing in the UK. In January top executives of pharmaceutical company Insys were convicted for fuelling the crisis. Lawyers from another pharmaceutical giant, Rochester Drug Cooperative, are fighting prosecutors over another case, claiming the law intended for drug dealers, is being used against CEOs.

The discussion on opioids has highlighted how people can be at risk of severely misjudging the effects of opioids and the impacts on individuals and society holistically.

Chris Shea, an addiction counsellor with over 20 years’ experience, witnessed thousands of people addicted to prescription painkillers

and heroin throughout the 2000s in the United States.

Shea says: “One of the reasons for the current opioid crisis is the general lack of education in medical schools on the science of addiction.

“This is coupled with the pharmaceutical companies telling prescribers that their opioid pain killers weren’t addictive.

“There are long term side effects to opioid use, and that is part of the crisis we are experiencing today,” Shea adds.

Shea supports the idea of greater monitoring of opioid prescribing.

Shea says that when a prescriber is working with a patient, there is a subjective relationship which could cloud the prescriber’s ability to see the impact of what they are prescribing clearly.

However, the crisis’ culprit remains firmly in the hands of the pharmaceutical companies, not the prescribers. Shea says the need for honesty is paramount: “The pharmaceutical companies need to be honest with prescribers about their products. Had there been honesty a couple of decades ago, we might not be in this current crisis.”

Love for less this Valentine's Day

What do women actually want this Valentine's Day? **Noemi Rodrigues** shares her choice of cheap and cheerful gifts perfect for the occasion



This Valentine's Day it may be better to opt for a card over a Pandora ring.

A recent article by the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology showed that women tend to have a negative attitude towards luxurious gifts, and actually prefer cheaper presents, depending on the type of relationship they are in.

According to article author William Ding, women now prefer to receive "general" gifts instead of luxury ones.

While the expensive gifts were not outright rejected, they did make women feel uncomfortable.

Another new study by ActionAid UK shows despite popular belief, only eight per cent of women would like to receive lingerie on Valentine's Day and almost a quarter, 24 per cent, would prefer no gift at all.

This year, make this day about love again. Here are four ways to make your valentine happy for less.

Make it personal

Why not gift your girlfriend something personal this Valentines?

Personalising a mug with a love note for £14.99 or a Ferrero Rocher box for £22.99 can send a message of affection.

Websites such as Getting Personal and Not on The High street provide affordable and unique gifts that your partner is sure to love.

Quality time for a dime

As an alternative to a physical gift, you could book an activity to spend some quality time together.

Pottery classes for £35 per person



or going to visit some alpacas from £24 can be a good bonding experience while having some fun.

Websites such as Wowcher, Virgin Experience Days, and Obby provide great opportunities to find fantastic deals on activities for two.

Practical is pretty

Beauty boxes are also a cute and practical gift for Valentine's Day.

If your girlfriend has a 10-step skincare routine or loves to experiment with makeup, she would love a gift that she can use day-to-day.

Both skincare and makeup can be pricey, so if you help your girlfriend out by buying a product she really wants, or a lipstick she uses daily, then you will make her day.

Birch Box offers a £12.95 monthly beauty box subscription (which you can always cancel after Valentine's Day).

Just ask

If you are still unsure of what to get your girlfriend, you can always just ask her.

You are not psychic, and women do not expect you to know what they want all the time. Sometimes it is better just to ask.

That way, it takes the stress off of you and her as she knows that she is getting what she wants and will not have to fake excitement.

Do not always assume that women want the most expensive goods, anyone can throw money around, but taking time to think about something unique to her is a gift in itself.



Why you should choose love over money this Valentine's Day

By **SARANGI ANAND**

As February 14 approaches, the celebration of love once again brings us pictures of romantic kisses, roses, bouquets and chocolates.

But, do you not feel these are a bit old-fashioned?

According to ActionAid UK, 69 per cent of adults surveyed said Valentine's Day was "over commercialised" and 21 per cent thought it was "outdated".

Today, Valentine's Day seems to be about buying gifts, and more specifically, expensive gifts. And if it is not as expensive as we expected, then there arises the uncertainty of love. Do they genuinely love me?

Does buying expensive gifts emphasise the meaning of true love? I do not think so. Do not get me wrong, it is a personal choice to spend a lot of money on your beloved but is it not time to think about something a little more romantic?

Love should not be based on expensive gifts. It should be about being a better partner. Love is all about mutual understanding, willingness for compromises, making sacrifices, supporting each other during difficult times and motivating us to go forward.

The survey also showed that 55 per cent of couples choose not to celebrate Valentine's Day, so why buy a gift when you could take your loved ones for a road trip or have a chat while preparing their favourite dinner?

Surprising your loved ones by spending time away from your busy schedule would mean a lot more than purchasing expensive gifts.

However, even if we are happy to receive an inexpensive treat on Valentine's Day, it is not unusual to feel a little bit jealous when you see others with luxury presents.

Just understand your loved ones and find the best affordable way to make them happy.

So, this Valentine's Day is the time to understand the purity of love and plan how much you can value your relationship.

KU Crush: The River will help you find love at university

If you spot yourself in a message from your admirer, drop us an email at editors.river@gmail.com, and we will get in touch.

Maybe you are crushing on someone you have seen around campus? Send us a brief description of yourself and your crush to be featured in our next issue.

"To the blonde Latvian girl who does architecture. I'd like to take you out for a drink."

- The tall ginger wearing Supreme

"To the cute tall girl in glasses and the red sweater. Can't wait to catch us awkwardly looking at each other in the library, to the last hand waving in the food court and many more. I can't wait to see more of you."

-Cute Indian tall guy

"To the guy with the dreads that danced with me at Pryzm in October. May I have another dance?"

- The girl in the orange dress

"To the sweet caramel guy with the blonde braids at the library. Always looking like a snack at Viper."

- Your sexy side dish

"To the guy with the beard that sat on my table in the library that smelt good. You cute or whatevaaaa."

- The girl with the nose

From KU sketchbooks to star of the small screen

KU fashion graduate-turned-actress, Sophie Yip, tells **Tracy Winu Landu** how she became a household name in Hong Kong's most popular comedy drama

"Superficial, girly, emotional and two-faced" - That is how Sophie Yip would describe her character Candy which she plays in hit TVB sitcom *Come Home Love: Lo and Behold*, a Chinese must see watched by millions of viewers every week.

However, her real personality is far from that.

From acting, travelling the world, carrying out charity work for children with cleft lip and palates, to looking after her kitten Cotton, no day looks the same for this 27-year-old actress. Her days of assignments and deadlines may be over, but her weeks are still jam-packed. "I think my life is more hectic now," she says.

With episodes being filmed back to back, she admits: "Sometimes you have no time to rest. I once went 32 hours with no sleep filming three dramas at the same time."

Yip was awarded a fashion design BA by Kingston University in 2016, although her course was taught at Cambridge School of Visual & Performing Arts. A year later, she got the role of Candy.

She earned her way on set by enthusiastically studying her peers.

She says: "With no drama degree or skillset before entering the industry, I knew I would have to catch up as quickly as possible."

"I went to visit an actor friend of mine, Andrea So, who already had a role in the sitcom. I watched her every day and took notes."

"A director saw me and thought I was hardworking and passionate, so he offered me the role of Candy, who is So's friend in the sitcom."

Although she studied fashion design, she learnt to express herself through the arts as well.

"Both fashion design and acting, which is my job now, require me to tap into something deep within emotions, memories and my experiences." But it was a career she least expected.

Back in high school in Hong Kong, creative subjects were not nurtured so instead she had to focus on sciences and humanities, although she did have the opportunity to study textiles and fine art which prompted her to apply for an art foundation degree in the UK.

After graduating from Kingston in 2016, she said there were not many design jobs on her return to Hong Kong.

"I tried to apply and was



Sophie as Candy in *Come Home Love: Lo and Behold*

Photo: RexFeatures

unsuccessful. I actually thought about starting my own brand, but I decided it was not a suitable approach, so I worked in a merchandising and fabric sourcing company.

"That is when I realised the reality is so different from university life."

Students often have great ambitions beyond their degree, and so it may be challenging to finish their studies when they no longer care for it.

But she says: "I don't recommend people to study something they are not into, but I respect their choices."

"If I were in their situation, I might pick another subject and start over."

She enjoyed university life but says she wanted to do something more

"challenging" and that is why she chose to pursue an acting career.

Her advice for art students in particular: "For art students who don't know which particular subject to pick, I suggest they do an art foundation degree."

However, she recognises that it is not that simple, and when it came to support, she faced some opposition.

"At first, my parents were not supportive. But they are happy for me now because they can see my love and passion for my career."

Yip found inspiration by experimenting with things she loves but recognises that it is not that straightforward for everyone.

She says: "I know a lot of graduates struggle to find the path they want before or after their degree."

She advises parents to allow their children to try out differ-



Sophie at graduation

Photo: Instagram

ent activities to help them figure out their future and encourage students to join societies at university: "I was a member of the Acappella group at Cambridge University, and I have participated in a Chinese society singing competition when I was studying in the UK," she says.

When it comes to the next steps, Sophie is always ready to try new things.

"I believe there are a lot of opportunities waiting for me to explore, so I am up for all challenges," she says.

"I love what I am doing, and I am having fun - that is the most important."

She does not like to think of her debut into acting as "luck". She stands by the fact that she "focuses on herself" and gives her "best" every time. Hopefully Hollywood might next for the ambitious actress.

Exclusive: Gengahr gets personal with latest album

By **CATHERINE POOLE**

Indie-rock band Gengahr has told The River that their new album Sanctuary is their most personal and emotional record to date.

After the release of their second album Where Wildness Grows in 2018, Gengahr's frontman Felix Bushe faced emotional turmoil when his mother passed away, and his girlfriend's visa ran out forcing her to return to Australia.

Bushe explained how his heartache inspired the material for Sanctuary, which explores the emotions of grief and long-distance relationships. "Our previous albums have been more focused around escapism," he says.

"Sanctuary is a lot more personal which is not what I intended our record to be. It was circumstantial, but I think, in the end, it was unavoidable."

Gengahr enlisted the help of Bombay Bicycle Club's Jack Steadman to produce their latest album, which was released on January 31.

Bushe said: "We were friends a while ago and we hadn't seen each other for ages. We did a one-off single together, Atlas Please, and it worked really well, so we discussed the possibility of doing an album which he was really up for."

"We thought we would get cracking. We got it wrapped up fairly quickly. Well, quickly by our standards at least."

The day of their album release, the North London band performed an intimate set at Banquet Records in Kingston, debuting their new experimental tracks live.

Sanctuary explores a new sound while still embracing Bushe's trademark falsetto.

Bushe said: "The ambition for this year is to be able to let music sustain our life. We want to be able to do this and nothing else. Not even in a glamorous way, just a way that is comfortable enough."

"I love the span of things that we get to do - make videos, artwork, music, recording, playing live. It's such a diverse role as a musician, and that's the best thing about it."

"When you get bored of one thing, the next thing turns up, and it's all refreshing."

"Any other job I'd do, I'd get really bored because it's too much of the same thing. We get to do a bit of everything which I really like."

The psychedelic group expects 2020 to be a busy year for them, as they are due to embark on a world tour this month playing across the UK, Europe and Australia, and have been announced to perform at several festivals, including Truck, with more in the pipeline.

Blossoms continue to bloom



Tom Ogden
Photo: RexFeatures

By **MEGAN ROBINSON**

Known for their indie-pop style, Blossoms third album Foolish Loving Spaces sees them go down a different path as they experiment with groovy guitars, disco and electro-rock.

The five-piece from Stockport gained popularity in 2016 after releasing their colossal hit Charlemagne from their self-titled debut album.

Their newly released album showcases a joyous, gospel sound, with lyrics exploring broken promises, therapy and ending relationships.

The first track If You Think This Is Real Life, starts abruptly as frontman Tom Ogden sings over a synth piano.

Your Girlfriend is a groovy tune with soft moans of an electric guitar incorporated between verses.

The song is about the forbidden love of a friend's girlfriend and ends with a slow drum beat and the lyrics: "I heard they got engaged today."

Their third single The Keeper is piano-heavy with rhythmic yet subtle drums. It is an optimistic tune that gives a euphoric feeling when it gets

to the chorus as Ogden explains he wants to "spend this life as one" with his lover.

My Swimming Brain has a cool, summer vibe to it, especially when paired with the harmonies of the backing vocals, even though the lyrics are about someone who cannot change.

For their latest project, Blossoms have delved into sounds similar to vintage alternative bands such as Talking Heads and Fleetwood Mac.

The band has previously dabbled into sounds of the 1980s by putting a fresh spin on David Bowie's Let's Dance at Reading Festival in 2019.

Sunday Was A Friend Of Mine emphasises that 1970s sound as it introduces a funky guitar, rhythmic bass and "ooh's" which adds to the smooth lead vocals.

The funky vibes continue through to track six Oh No (I Think I'm In Love) as this dance-like pop number is cheesy yet catchy with a repetitive chorus that will get stuck in your head.

"Come back, Oh come back babe" is the first line in seventh track Romance, Eh?

It is slower than some of the other songs, but they keep their signature guitar and indie-synth sound with soppy and pitiful lyrics.

My Vacant Days is similar to the calm and sombre My Favourite Room from their debut album. The guitar is the only instrument heard until the one-minute mark, where a piano is introduced, creating a beautiful, melodic tune.

Their ninth track Falling For Someone sounds like a soundtrack to a teen flick from the 1980s as it emphasises that dreamlike daze of being in love.

The female backing vocals add to this as they sing: "Here I lay, lost in a moment, when will I wake up?"

The last song, Like Gravity, is unlike anything Blossoms have ever done. This electro-rock track has a guitar reminiscent of noughties rock bands, and the chorus is quite similar to The Strokes 2001 song, Hard To Explain.

Overall, this is the most ambitious Blossoms have been as the band continue to grow with every album produced.

Courteeners in Kingston

By **MATT PERRY**

It felt as if the Manchester-based band had unfinished business in Kingston as they performed at Przym last Thursday.

Their last show, at the now-closed Hippodrome in 2016 ended abruptly after lead singer Liam Fray was hit by a bottle thrown from the crowd.

But, despite the chaos lingering over their last performance, Courteeners have come back stronger than ever to put on a tremendous display for their new album More. Again. Forever.

Drunken KU students packed into the club, ready to warmly greet the band once again. Drinks were spilled, and screams were heard as the group finally made their way onto the stage.

The band kicked off the night with beautifully dark songs Heart Attack and Heavy Jacket. The echoing beats demonstrated the fresh direction the group were taking.

They followed this up in majestic form with classic Are You In Love With A Notion?, while fans yelled back the lyrics at the band in harmony.

Courteeners possess some of the most beloved fans in music, especially in the north of England, and this love was brought down to Kingston, with chants echoing around Przym throughout the night.

The band went on to play other fan-favourites such as Small Bones and



Courteeners playing at New Slang

Photo: Bobby Vasilev

The 17th, with the latter ironically allowing fans to sing along to the lyrics "we're having such a good time, having such a good time".

Like most of their gigs, Fray knows how to send the crowd home happy, coming back on stage for their encore to perform their biggest hit Not Nineteen Forever which gave the crowd a new burst of life as they jumped around with all arms swaying and waving.

The band finished the night strong with the classic from their first album What Took You So Long? which resulted in a long, harmonic chant

from the crowd even as they left the night club venturing back into the cold night.

It can be tough for a band such as Courteeners to revamp themselves each album, especially with a fan base fixated on their early material, but that did not stop Fray thanking the crowd for "being so receptive" towards the group's latest offering.

That being said, More. Again. Forever. has just rewarded the band with their seventh top 10 album in the UK.



Will this be unlucky no. 13 for Green Day?

By **MEGAN ROBINSON**

Green Day have done few interviews since their 2016 album Revolution Radio and have been very secretive about their latest project, Father Of All...

The American punk-rockers 13th studio album is due for release, but will it live up to the hype?

The 10-track album stands at just 26 minutes long. Three singles have been pre-released, and title track Father Of All... shows off distorted vocals that make Armstrong sound unrecognisable.

The catchy guitar riffs and a chaotic drumbeat is different from their older stuff but still very punk.

This album looks into themes of depression, anxiety and money, and some of this is represented in Father Of All... as Armstrong yells "I got paranoia baby!"

Fire, Ready, Aim is less than two minutes long and introduces a low distorted guitar similar to their 2004 song Holiday.

Oh Yeah! sounds different to the first two songs from the album.

It has deep undertones and is lyrically raw as he sings: "I got my money, and I'm feeling kinda low."

Green Day will embark on The Hella Mega tour with pop-punk veterans Fall Out Boy and Weezer from March.

It is hard to see what direction the band will go in. Could this be their biggest album since 2004's American Idiot? Or will it become their biggest flop?

Father Of All... is out 7 February.

Louis Tomlinson's Walls starts strong but ultimately crumbles

By **CHLOE WRIGHT**

Given the death of his mum and sister in quick succession, Louis Tomlinson's debut solo album *Walls* was never going to be the cheeriest album released.

The 12 tracks explore love, pain, sadness, angst, and are remarkably different from his work with pop-group One Direction.

Despite the subject matter, the album has an indie pop-rock vibe to it and is a very easy listen, with Tomlinson having taken inspiration from early noughties artists like Oasis.

The first track, *Kill My Mind*, is an explosive start to the album with Tomlinson singing immediately, with no introductory music.

The upbeat backing track completely contrasts to the moody lyrics.

Don't Let It Break Your Heart is what I can only describe as a feel-good break-up song.

Tomlinson said it is a song about invoking hope, and his voice is incredibly raw, which sounds better than the first track.

Two of Us is by far the saddest song on the album as it is about the death of his mum, Johannah Deakin, who died in 2016 of leukaemia, and how he will now live one life for the two of them, to honour her and make her proud.

It is the first song on the album where he takes a pause while singing as if collecting his thoughts and emotions before continuing with the rest of the song.

The fourth song, *We Made It*, reminded me of *Wonderwall* by Oasis with a similar guitar strum pattern and angst-filled lyrics that are half-spoken, half-sung.

The track highlights success in his career and is more upbeat - a fitting song, meaning, and title for what, so far, has been a successful debut album. *Too Young* starts with the chorus, which is the only song to do so.

The guitar pattern reminded me of very early One Direction and was quite repetitive in a similarly childish way.



Louis Tomlinson, former member of One Direction

Photo: RexFeatures

Lyrically, it explored the idea of falling in love at a young age but not being ready for the responsibilities.

Title track *Walls* was the halfway mark and is a fitting title for the album which explores emotions and the idea of building walls so other people cannot see into your life.

It is a song with a lot more positivity, suggesting that every struggle in life is worth going through, which is very reminiscent of the previous song *Don't Let It Break Your Heart*.

Habit has a similar sound to band *Scouting For Girls*, but like Tomlinson's previous song *Too Young*, *Habit* has used a lot of repetition which took away from the originality of the album.

Always You was similar to the first half of the album with a dance vibe in which Tomlinson was able to show off far more of his vocal ability.

The gang vocals on the track added a refreshing sound not explored previously.

The song *Fearless* experimented with alternative sounds which meant it was probably one of the best-produced songs.

The use of chatter and echoes at the beginning of the song made it audibly pleasing, and the slow keyboard contrasted with his loud vocals well.

Perfect Now finished with loud and powerfully sung vocals but the song marked a noticeable turning point on the album.

Defenceless was quite bland, but

the lyrics reinstated the vulnerability running throughout the album which left it feeling as though it had come full circle.

The final song, *Only the Brave*, had a harsh guitar strum accompanied by crackling which made it have a different sound to anything else on the album and ultimately, was a disappointing conclusion.



Miss Americana: 'I'm definitely not ready for all this grown-up stuff.'

By **SAM MILDENHALL**

From the very first scene of a young Taylor Swift playing the piano to the last of her standing in fame and glory, Netflix's new documentary has managed to capture my emotions in more ways than just one.

Swift tells her story beautifully and shines a light on how the music industry operates behind closed doors.

She allows us to see how those living in the limelight do not always have the life of luxury we think they have.

While the storyline and message is

something we have often seen time and time again, Swift's kind nature and roaring success add a new dimension to the narrative.

I found the most powerful moment was when Swift opened up about her personal growth.

Swift had said: "I'm about to be 29. There's a part of me that feels like I'm 57-years-old, but then there's part of me that's definitely not ready to have kids."

"I'm definitely not ready for all this grown-up stuff."

Swift encapsulates reality perfectly with this statement - fame, money or

power does not determine when you are ready to undertake and achieve your biggest goals in life.

Everyone progresses at their own pace, and everyone needs something different to ready them for their own future.

For Swift, none of these materialistic things is the answer, which draws out her humble and mature personality.

Swift also shares her



opinion on politics, which is something she once swore never to do. I respect Swift for going against her word and fighting for her beliefs.

One aspect of the avid cat-lover pop-idol that impressed me was her openness in expressing her thoughts and feelings even in culturally sensitive situations.

Swift promotes her views and values even when playing at live shows or accepting awards, such as speaking out about the Equality Act after receiving the award at the 2019 VMA's.

Overall, I am very impressed by this documentary and Swift's modest nature. She has helped me gain insight into political values, moral values, and the full story behind closed doors of celebrity and fame.

I would without a doubt recommend this Netflix show if you have 85 minutes spare and are willing to join Swift on a rollercoaster of emotions.

Color Out Of Space needs pigment of imagination



The Gardner family's land after a meteorite hit Photo: Studio Canal Press

By **BEKKA BARNARD**

“Do you know how much those animals cost us? They are alpacas! Alpacas!”

It is a line you would never expect to hear in a film that is essentially about a meteorite hitting Earth.

Unless it was bellowed by Nicolas Cage.

Color Out Of Space is a film adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft’s short science fiction horror novel of the same name - a cosmic tale so famous that horror writer Stephen King took inspiration for one of his books.

Originally written in 1927, the story follows a surveyor attempting to untangle the events that took place years before his arrival on the Gardner family’s farm after a meteorite crash-landed.



The meteorite emitted “globules of colour” outside of any humanly visible spectrum, and infected their crops, animals, and even themselves.

The film has a few minor differences from the book, but in terms of the plot it sticks to the overall concept of the original sci-fi horror classic with a few changes that H.P. Lovecraft himself would be proud of.

Think zany characters, a couple of mutations and a few alpacas thrown in.

At times, Color Out Of Space is a bit of a blood bath, and it is not just humans who face the horrors. No spoilers but animal lovers, beware - this one can get a bit squeamish.

Cage showcases a characteristically unhinged performance, although the bizarre casting choice seemed a little out of place for the tone of the film.

It begins with an ominous monologue from protagonist and hydraulics expert Ward, building tension and a sense of mystery upon the audience.

Viewers will be readily prepared for a freaky horror, but the tone of the entire film is turned on its head.

Tommy Chong makes an unexpected appearance. The comedian, cannabis rights activist and one half of marijuana-fuelled comedy duo Cheech & Chong plays Ezra, a hippy squatter living at the end of the Gardner’s land.

Although the purpose of his character is never really addressed, he provides the perfect dose of comic relief from Cage’s awkward one-liners.

Julian Hilliard, who some may recognise as Young Luke from

Netflix’s The Haunting of Hill House, plays the family’s youngest member Jack.

After the meteor lands, strange noises start to run through the walls and floors of the house and appear to take over his mind. He becomes unresponsive, only interested in the man in the well.

Whatever your opinions are on this adaptation, there is absolutely no denying that this film is visually stunning.

The meteor releases bursts and blobs of fiery pink, purple and blue hues that intertwine to produce a colour that you just cannot put your finger on.

For colours that are not often associated with the horror genre, it creates atmospherically disturbing scenes as light meets dark and bright meets dim.

In UK cinemas February 28.



The Other’s Gold gets bronze review

By **AIMEE MILLER**

As someone who has gone through their fair share of inner friendship turmoil, Elizabeth Ames debut novel The Other’s Gold hit close to home in her realism.

The book is an insightful and sparkling novel that starts on a college campus and follows the friendship of four women across life-defining turning points.

Wearing their past traumas on their sleeves, the friends rely on one another to navigate their way through life.

The narrative blurs between each character, deftly jumping through the past, present and future.

There are dark moments, shockingly dark, but paired with the nostalgic ones, the book ultimately reflects the true joy, and turmoil, of female friendship.

The Other’s Gold will be available in bookstores April 2020.



Daniel Isn’t Real or is he?

By **CATHERINE POOLE**

As a child, an imaginary friend can be a comforting necessity. But carried into adulthood, they can spell a recipe for disaster as is soon discovered in the new psychological horror film Daniel Isn’t Real.

The flick has all the ingredients of a mediocre coming-of-age psychological horror: a stereotypical multifaceted mentality, standard genre tropes, fragmented editing, and a troubled protagonist.

However, director Adam Egypt Mortimer manages to execute a compelling film accompanied by an exceptional cast.

Struggling to deal with his parent’s divorce, things get worse for eight-year-old Luke (Griffin Robert Faulkner) who witnesses the aftermath of a mass shooting in a café and sees the blood-soaked body of the perpetrator.

Almost like a parasite, Daniel (Nathan Chandler Reid) appears and befriends the innocent bystander.



Miles Robbins and Patrick Schwarzenegger Photo: Arrow Films

Luke’s mother Claire (Mary Stuart Masterson) indulges his new imaginary friendship until things are taken too far, and she forces her son to banish him to an old doll’s house locked away in the attic.

Fast forward to his teenage years, Luke (Miles Robbins) is a mopey college student who resurrects Daniel (Patrick Schwarzenegger) in a bid to help him cope with the stress of caring for his schizophrenic mother.

Daniel helps Luke to thrive socially, romantically, and academically until he begins to resist his sinister orders which is when the real horror story begins.

One of the most effective yet also confusing elements of the story is how the audience is unable to grasp whether Daniel is a figment of Luke’s imagination influenced by his mother’s schizophrenia or whether he is a demon parasite searching for a host body to control. Director and co-writer Mortimer said: “I thought about trauma,

self-destruction, and demons — both personal demons and the fantastical ones.”

The cliché and, at times, predictable storyline can be forgiven by the impressive supernatural CGI and disturbing editing.

SpectreVision, founded by Lord of the Rings’ actor Elijah Wood, is the force behind the warped demonic presence that appears throughout the film to torment Luke through swirling vortexes and fantastical dreamscapes.

Robbins perfectly captures Luke’s raw emotion highlighting the struggles and effect of a lack of paternal attention from a fatherless upbringing and being a carer for his volatile mother.

Schwarzenegger excellently demonstrates restrained psychopathic tendencies which are unearthed by Daniel.

Think Donnie Darko meets The Exorcist. In UK cinemas February 7.



KU basketball pay tribute to Kobe

...after LA Lakers legend Kobe Bryant and his daughter died in a tragic helicopter crash

By **NOEMI RODRIGUES** and **MATT PERRY**

Kingston University's basketball team have paid tribute to the sports legend Kobe Bryant after his untimely death at the end of last month.

Before the start of their match, the team honoured Bryant with a minute silence along with the seven others who lost their lives in the helicopter tragedy on January 26.

Kingston Basketball team member Yelle Agunpopo said: "I was so depressed when I heard about Kobe's death, I had a lab report due the day after and I didn't even go to it."

"My mum and my brothers called me saying they were upset because they all loved Kobe and loved his work both on and off the court."

Bryant was widely renowned as one of the greatest basketball players of all time, an eighteen-time all-star, five-time NBA champion and one-time season MVP.

The basketball legend's daughter, Gianna Bryant, was also on board the helicopter at the time of the disaster and Agunpopo was keen to express how Kobe Bryant was trying to expand the women's game which his daughter played.

The Kingston basketball player said: "He [Bryant] was helping to build up both women's basketball and the career of his daughter."

"In all, he was trying to create more of a name for the women's game so that one day his daughter could get to the same level as him."

Bryant was drafted into the NBA straight from high school and spent his entire career playing for the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Kingston basketball team expressed how Bryant's impact has affected them, not only while playing basketball but in their everyday lives.

Tzio Essel, a teammate of Agunpopo, said: "When I started playing basketball he was the best player in the league so a big inspiration for me."

"His whole mentality is about hard work and perseverance, and I feel like that impacts me to become an embodiment of that, and I think everyone in this generation of basketball players feels the same."

"He always strived to be the best, and when you are the best, you have to have an ego, but Kobe had the perfect balance of humbleness and cockiness."

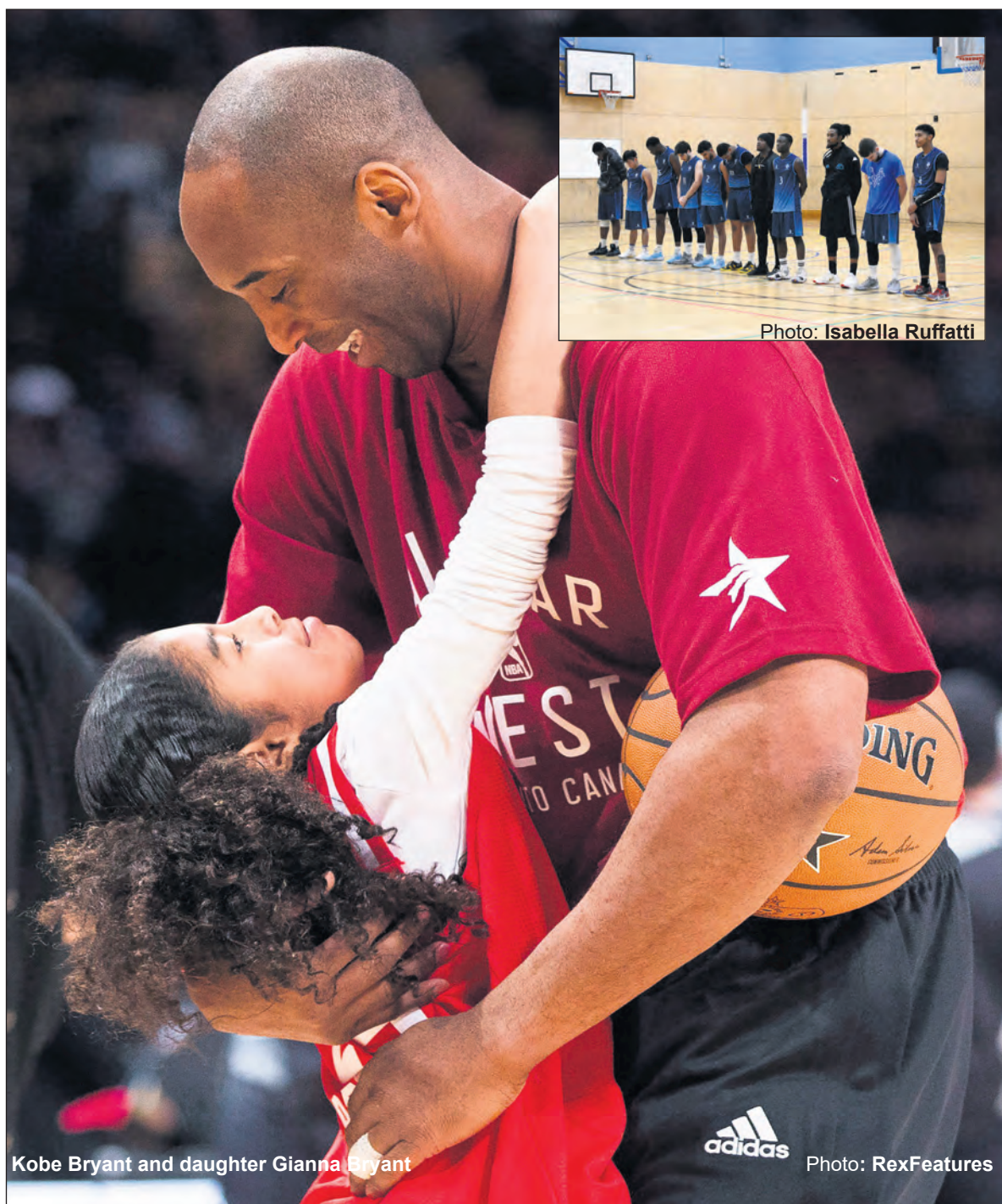
After his retirement in 2016, Bryant found his true passion in life, which was being a good and much-loved father to all of his four daughters.

Both Agunpopo and Essel were quick to highlight the influence that Kobe Bryant had, not only when on the court playing basketball, but also in everyday life and the work which they do.

Agunpopo, who studies biomedical science at Kingston, said: "Kobe taught me to work hard every day, don't stand for second best, be the best that you can and get the best grades you can achieve – basically, just work hard at everything you do."

Essel said: "It puts into perspective how short life can be, you need to make every moment count."

"His legacy will continue on, his academy will become more impactful, and he will always be remembered as one of the all-time greatest basketball players to grace the court."



Kobe Bryant and daughter Gianna Bryant

Photo: Isabella Ruffatti

Photo: RexFeatures

Kingston make short work of Imperial College London

By **NOEMI RODRIGUES**

KINGSTON 112
IMPERIAL COLLEGE 58

KU basketball team triumph against Imperial College with a 112 points win taking home a 54 point lead on Wednesday.

Starting the game off powerfully, the Kingston Cougars scored four points within the first minute thanks to the point guard Tzion Essel.

President of the KU basketball team, Dan Sherlock, said: "We played with heart and great intensity throughout the game, outclassed the opposition from the first tip to the last buzzer."

Their energy continued throughout all four quarters as the game ended with a two-point shot from small forward and power forward Yelle Agunpopo with five seconds to spare.

By the second quarter, KU was leading with 58 points while Imperial had 35.



Tip off between Kingston and Imperial College

Photo: Isabella Ruffatti

Their defence was aggressive and allowed little space for Imperial to score, let alone breath.

Agunpopo said: "The game today was a good win, although we could

have stopped a lot of buckets.

"The team played well together despite not playing for a couple of months. It was a well-deserved win."

A player from Imperial had to be

taken out the game due to an injury after a bad fall when going for a rebound.

The top scorer was point guard Daniel Austin securing over 30

points in the game.

Small forward Stephen Robinson made the crowd go wild with all five of his dunks, one after the other, throughout the whole match.

When talking about the game, Robinson said: "We showcased our versatility as a team by overcoming a few defensive lapses and making sure everyone got involved, but at the same time, the other side had more opportunities than they should have."

"Even though we were down a few players, we still managed to come together and play hard until the end of the game."

"We had fun while winning so I could not have asked for more from my teammates."

Kingston recorded 50 per cent on free-throws scoring five from ten.

This game was a significant win for KU as it puts the basketball team on the same level as Portsmouth, who is first in the 3A league.

Kingston cruise to victory

By **LUCIE SKORVAGOVA**

**KINGSTON 36
BRUNEL 7**

Another victory for KU on Wednesday after the second netball team won 36-7 against Brunel University's sixth team at Tolworth Sports Ground.

Goal attacker Charlene Anthony said: "It went really well, the goal difference is very big. So it is another win. We only lost one game, so not too bad."

Her great work with other members of the team contributed to an easy win and got her player of the match.

The Cougars started the game by scoring in the first minute and showed great teamwork throughout.

Kingston scored 21 times in the first half of the game and did not let Brunel get to the ball with their fast and precise passes.

"We make sure we are always communicating, and we always tell each other where our flaws are. It's just really good communication and teamwork," Anthony said.

Kingston dominated the whole game with controlled passes and excellent communication

between team members.

The Cougars kept the pressure on and maintained possession of the ball.

During the first half, Brunel had very few chances to get to Kingston's goal circle and scored only three times.

Coach of the Cougars, Shan Simpson said: "The girls really put into practice what they do in training.

"They are working better as a team and have been playing together a bit longer now, so it is good to see they do some of the set plays we have been practising in training.

"We have training on Mondays and Tuesdays, plus games on Wednesdays, so we train constantly," Anthony said.

Even though Brunel scored four times in the second half of the game, they were no match for the outstanding defence work from Kingston.

Coach Simpson said that even though the Cougars had almost been undefeated throughout the season there is still room for improvements.

"We need to work on getting higher goals in, we have the capacity to do it, we just need to do it," she said.

The Cougars' precise passing and good communication sealed the win

Photo: **Lucie Skorvagova**

Chichester's goal domination in second half leaves Cougars unable to keep up

By **ANTHONY MILNE**

**KINGSTON 0
CHICHESTER 3**

Kingston failed to break down the Chichester defence as they conceded two second-half goals to take the three points away from Kingston on Wednesday.

The Kingston first team played well but failed to score as Chichester constantly put them under pressure.

First-team coach, Besim Ali said: "When the opposition were out of position they got really tight to us, and they stopped us from playing at times."

Chichester scored 10 minutes into the first half before scoring twice in 20 minutes in the second half.

The second goal was wonderfully worked as Chichester outplayed the defence while the third was a long-distance strike that took a deflection.

Ali said: "They found it quite easy to play one-twos around us in the final third and they passed it into our box and got the shots off without us blocking the shot or blocking the cross or stopping the pass going forward.



Cougars fighting to keep possession

Midfielder Jacob Harder said: "They wanted the ball and they worked as a team. I don't think they were better in playing and possession as we had 60 per cent of the possession, but we didn't create any chances."

Photo: **Marie Mannes**

Kingston struggled to get momentum in the first half but was the better team towards the end of the second half.

Ali said: "I'm disappointed with the result, but I'm happy with the way the players were creating the chances the way they did.

"They just kept on working defensively and sometimes defence wins the games, and this is just the basics, and they were better than us at the basics. Simple as that," said Harder.

Kingston was denied a consolation goal towards the end of the game as Chichester cleared the ball off the line.

This result means the next game is a must-win for Kingston in the league as they reach the half-way mark.

Ali said: "The team needs to come out much stronger. We need to use this game as some sort of lift to progress as the next game is really important."

He added: "I think in the future if we use this game as an example to learn how to get tight and work on that in training, we will be able to progress and maybe get a bit more success out in games.

Harder said: "We have the capability in the team to do a lot better. We just didn't bring it on the pitch today."