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Notre NEWS
Notre Dame Sixth
Form Newspaper



Head Editor – Patrick Murena

I hope everyone's been having a great half term so far. We're introducing a lot of new faces with this issue of the newspaper, so everyone's been working exceptionally hard and I'm excited to show you what they've done. This edition is special for me as it's my first as Head editor so I hope you find this collection as engaging to read as it was for us to create!

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Editorial Team

Noah Jackson	Amy Foster	Chelsea Jaba
Isabelle Reeder	Miko Filipski	Eleanor Eglinton
Emilia Sawicka	Harley Bowman	Scarlett Horwood
Lucy Mulhall	Niamh Toulson	Lucy Plant
Osato Ufumwen Aibangbee		Phoebe Dowthwaite

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Want to join?

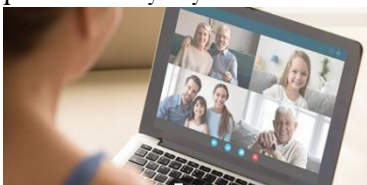
The newspaper club is open to all sixth form students interested in writing articles, or helping others in doing so! Meetings are every **Monday** lunchtime in **S30**, starting at **1pm**

Was Life Really Better 20 years ago?

PHOEBE DOWTHWAITE

A phone vibrates on the table. A group chat explodes with messages. Someone scrolls through videos while waiting for a reply. In a room full of people, nobody is looking at each other. This is modern life. Fast, connected and constantly switched on. It is easy to romanticise the early 2000s. People remember a slower world where conversations were uninterrupted, and evenings were not dominated by glowing screens. Friendships felt simpler, memories felt more private, and the pressure to constantly respond did not exist so it raises a question people ask more often: **was life actually better 20 years ago?**

While modern life may feel overwhelming at times, it would be unfair to say that the past was automatically better. The truth is that daily life has not become better or worse. It has simply become different. One of the biggest changes is the speed of communication. Twenty years ago, making plans often meant calling a landline and hoping someone answered. If a friend was late, there was no instant way to check where they were. Letters and emails took time, and patience was part of everyday life.



Today, communication is immediate. Messages arrive within seconds and replies are often expected just as quickly. Group chats keep friendships active throughout the day, and people can stay in constant contact no matter where they are. This speed can feel exhausting, but it has also made staying connected easier than ever before. Friends and family who live far apart can speak daily instead of occasionally. Video calls make distance feel smaller, and important moments can be shared instantly.

The internet has also transformed access to information. In the early 2000s, homework often meant searching through textbooks or hoping the

school library had the right resources. Learning new skills required lessons, books or expensive courses. Now, almost any question can be answered quickly. Students can watch tutorials, read articles and access free courses from anywhere in the world. Knowledge that once felt out of reach is now available to anyone with an internet connection.



Technology has also created new opportunities. People can share art, writing and music online without needing publishers or agents. Small businesses can reach customers across the country. Young people can discover communities of others who share their interests, even if those interests are rare or unusual. For many people, especially those who once felt isolated, this ability to find connection online has been life changing. Modern technology has also improved safety in subtle ways. Parents can contact their children easily. Navigation apps help people avoid getting lost. Emergency services can be reached quickly, and important information can be shared rapidly when needed.

However, there are also reasons why people look back fondly on the past. Life twenty years ago often moved at a slower pace. Waiting was normal. People had time to think without constant interruption. Boredom sometimes encouraged creativity. Without endless entertainment available at the touch of a screen, people found their own ways to fill the time. Privacy was also easier to protect. Photographs were not instantly uploaded; teenagers could make mistakes without worrying that those mistakes might appear online years later. Social life often centred more strongly on face-to-face interaction. Meeting friends meant fully meeting them, rather than sitting together while scrolling separately. Conversations were less likely to be interrupted by notifications.

Perhaps one of the biggest differences is the rise of comparison culture. Social media allows people to see carefully edited snapshots of other people's lives. Perfect holidays, perfect friendships and perfect appearances appear constantly on screen. Even when people understand that these images are selective, it can still be difficult not to compare.



Twenty years ago, people still compared themselves to others, but the scale was smaller. Most comparisons were limited to classmates, neighbours or celebrities in magazines. Today, comparison can happen endlessly, at any hour of the day. This can make modern life feel more pressured, especially for young people growing up in a fully digital world. Yet technology itself is not the problem. A phone can be a distraction, but it can also be a tool.

Social media can create pressure, but it can also create connection. The internet can waste time, but it can also expand knowledge and opportunity. Life twenty years ago was quieter and more private. Life today is faster and more connected.

The new normal

Neither world is perfect. Instead of asking whether the past was better, a more useful question might be how we want to live now. Technology is unlikely to disappear, but the way we use it is still a choice. We can answer messages without letting them control our time. We can use social media without measuring our worth against strangers. We can stay connected online while still making space for real conversations. Life has not become worse than it was 20 years ago, and it has not become better either. It has simply changed. The real question is not whether we would rather live in the past. It is whether we can learn to live well in the present.

Chicago Play review

ELEANOR EGLINTON AND
NIAMH TOULSON



performance

From the 28th to the 31st of January, students, teachers, and members of the public had the pleasure of watching the school's performance of *Chicago*, and we can honestly agree it was one of the most entertaining school productions this schools had.



From the people who played the leads, to the ensemble, everyone was full of energy and loving being part of the production. From the gripping introduction of "all that jazz" to the vibrant choreography of "we both reached for the gun", cultivating in a courtroom scene that left the audience in stitches, the cast kept the audience engaged and excited.

All of the reviews I've collected from various people who saw the play have been extremely positive, and the day after the opening night, it was the topic of many conversations, praising the actors, talking about the highlights, which were different for everyone, showing how unbelievably amazing the performance was, which

led to the rest of the nights becoming sold out.

Chicago tells the story of Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly, two women who end up in jail for murder and try to turn their crimes into fame. Instead of focusing only on the crime itself, the show highlights how the media can turn criminals into celebrities.



In *Chicago*, the "razzle dazzle" is a theatrical smoke screen. The songs are so catchy and the dances so flashy that they act as a distraction, making us forget the characters are criminals. By turning the courtroom into a stage, the play shows that if you put enough sparkle on a lie, the public will applaud instead of seeking justice. The themes still feel modern. It makes people think about how people today can become famous for the wrong reasons and how public opinion can be easily influenced.

One of the strongest parts of the performance was the music.

"It was amazing, the whole performance was brilliant, the dancing was awesome and so was the music" - Anonymous Reviewer

Songs like "All that jazz" immediately grabbed everyone's attention and set the tone. The opening number felt bold and confident, and it really showed how talented the cast was. "Cell block tango" was another standout moment. Each performer brought their own personality to the stage, and it was cool to see how they made their characters feel unique while still working together as a group. The opinions of sixth formers who went to watch *Chicago* were fully positive, and many

agreed that the musical elements were a highlight.

The choreography was also impressive. Dance numbers in *Chicago* are known for being sharp, and the cast did a fantastic job capturing that. The movements were clean and confident, and it looked like they had practiced a lot. Even during complicated group numbers, everyone stayed on point making it look flawless and effortless. The directors and behind the scenes team did an excellent job at matching the musical elements to the current mood of the play, as everything seemed to run smoothly.

Lots of people have also said that the acting was another highlight, a review we kept getting was that the actors had strong stage presence and confidence while performing. *"Acting in Chicago was brilliant, being able to make and create this character to put on stage is so empowering and really helps improve yourselves in a positive way" -Hollie*

Many thanks need to be given to the lighting and staging team, who captured dramatic elements of the play with how they manipulated the stage, and brought attention to certain actors in the right moment.

"The lighting was impressive, it seemed to capture the moments of each scene" -Emilia





The costumes looked polished and added to the overall aesthetic of the production. Even small details, like accessories and hairstyle choices, helped bring the 1920s setting to life. The ensemble wasn't in full costume but matched the overall vibe of the performance.

Overall, my school's production of *Chicago* was a tremendous success. It was entertaining, energetic, and thoughtfully performed. The cast showed confidence and talent, especially in the musical numbers and big dance scenes. Even though it was a student production, it felt well organized and fun. The show managed to balance humour, drama, and important themes about fame and media influence. Watching this performance showed me just how talented the students at my school are.

I think we can all agree that we are proud of the students who took part in this production. It was a memorable night of theatre that proved school productions can be just as engaging as professional ones.

I would definitely recommend going to watch the next play, as this one has had such a positive outcome. The play chosen for summer is *Animal Farm*.

100 Years Ago: Still Inspiring Us Today

LUCY PLANT



This year, International Women’s Day falls on Sunday 8th March and the theme of this year’s campaign is ‘Give to Gain’. This theme emphasises the importance of celebrating the achievements of women who have paved the way for greater equality, giving time, dedication and effort, to gain greater equality for future generations. As said on the International Women’s Day website, ‘giving is not a subtraction, it’s intentional multiplication’, emphasising how seemingly small actions can have widespread, beneficial effects on the lives of women who may not even know that the events have occurred.



To celebrate International Women’s Day, I wanted to commemorate the centenary since the groundbreaking actions of women like Gertrude Ederle, Lady Heath, Violette Anderson and Margaret Bondfield, who helped to gain greater gender equality through their brave actions which challenged perceptions and broke down barriers a hundred years ago. Without their bravery and desire to challenge traditional gender roles, women today might not have the same level of gender equality.

Gertrude Ederle



Ederle broke gender boundaries when she became the first woman to swim the English Channel in 1926. On 18 August 1925, Ederle made her first attempt to swim the English Channel. Before the swim, her

coach gave Ederle beef tea which he had spiked with alcohol to sabotage her attempt. Eight hours and 43 minutes in, Ederle hit rough seas and she took in some seawater. Her coach demanded one of her supports grab her and pull her to safety, but this immediately disqualified her attempt.

Ederle hired a new coach and made her second attempt at the swim on the 6th August 1926. This time she was more prepared for the swim, wearing a swimsuit of her own design which allowed her to propel herself through the water faster and sealing her goggles with wax so that salt water didn’t leak into her eyes. Ederle was successful and after 14 hours and 31 minutes, she reached Kingsdown on the English coast. Not only was she the first woman to swim the English Channel, she also smashed the world record time set by previous male swimmers by over two hours. Her inspirational swim revolutionised public perception of women's athletic capabilities and inspired over 60,000 women throughout the United States to earn Red Cross swimming certificates.

Lady Heath



In 1926, Lady Mary Heath became the first woman to achieve her commercial pilot’s license and make a public parachute jump from an aeroplane. Lady Heath was the first female member of the London Light Aeroplane Club when it opened in August 1925, however the International Commission for Air Navigation banned women from obtaining commercial pilot’s licenses. Incensed by this, she bombarded the commission with statistics on women’s fitness and offered herself for medical tests. The commission took her up on her offer and Heath passed the tests, becoming the first woman to get a commercial pilots license in January 1926.



But that wasn’t enough for Lady

Heath, and in April 1926 she became the first female pilot to make a parachute jump in public when she jumped from a plane at an altitude of 1,500 feet. This stunt was part of her efforts to break down barriers for women in aviation. Lady Heath was an aviation pioneer for women and her success led to the authorities in Britain and in several other countries withdrawing their ban on female commercial pilots, paving the way for more women to follow in her footsteps.

Violette Anderson



Violette Anderson made history by becoming the first African American woman admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court. Her achievement shattered existing barriers and inspired countless others to follow their passions. In 1920, Anderson earned her law degree, becoming one of the few Black women lawyers of her time and she launched her career by becoming the first woman to open a private law practice in the US. Anderson quickly gained recognition for her legal expertise, and her accomplishments caught the attention of city officials, leading to her appointment as assistant prosecutor in Chicago—making her the first African American and the first woman to hold the role.

One of her most significant achievements came in 1926 when she was admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court. This milestone was both a personal triumph and a significant moment in American history, inspiring generations of women and minorities to pursue careers in law. In addition to her legal work, Anderson was a tireless advocate for social and economic justice, working tirelessly to improve the lives of African American women and children, championing causes such as access to education and equitable opportunities.

Margaret Bondfield



Bondfield was born in a time where there were few job opportunities for educated girls in England and her personal experiences of shop work in Brighton angered her, encouraging her to join the Shop Assistants, Warehouse Men and Clerks' Union as its full time assistant. She was soon elected to the Union District Council, and this started her lifelong interest in political organisations and unions. Bondfield dedicated herself full time to doing union work and at this time, she was also active in the Women's Cooperative Guild who were campaigning on pioneering issues like minimum wage legislation, child welfare and improving infant mortality.

In 1923, the same year as she was chairman of the Trade Union Congress, she became one of the first women to be elected to the House of Commons when she was elected Labour MP for Northampton. When Ramsey McDonald became Prime Minister in 1924, he appointed her as parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Labour. When Ramsey McDonald became Prime Minister for the second time in 1929, she was appointed as his Minister of Labour, making her the first women to gain a place in a British Cabinet.

All these women shattered gender stereotypes and paved the way for future women to rebel against the constraints of a society dominated by men, achieving things they had previously been told they were incapable of. Without their revolutionary actions forcing change and promoting gender equality, who knows whether we would have the same level of gender equality today?



An important part of celebrating International Women's Day is commemorating the often-forgotten women who fought for change and paved the way for more equal opportunity. As Malala Yousafzai says, 'we cannot succeed

when half of us are held back'. Clearly, their actions have forced dramatic change and International Women's Day gives us the perfect opportunity to look back and reflect on their sacrifices. Eileen Brown says, 'looking back and learning will enable you to move forward' and throughout history, there have been countless inspirational female achievements which have shattered expectations and proved stereotypes wrong, enabling millions of women today to follow their dreams.

Websites: [IWD: About International Women's Day](#), [International Women's Day | United Nations](#) and [The origins and history of International Women's Day - BBC Newsround](#)

2026 Trip to Rome



From the 13th till the 16th of February, Philosophy, Ethics and Christianity A-level students had the exciting opportunity to visit Rome, Vatican City, the colosseum, the pantheon and so much more! This trip has been done yearly for the past 2 years and has acted as a fantastic opportunity to help put the students course content into perspective and explore the place where Christianity grew so fast.



Rome is the most populated and capital city of Italy and has acted as the 'Capital of faith' for over a millennium. It is regarded by many as the first ever imperial city and metropolis. In 2019, Rome was the 14th most visited city in the world and the most popular tourist destination in Italy due to its numerous historic attractions such as the Pantheon, The Vatican museums including the world-renowned Sistine chapel, The colosseum, Saint Peters Basilica, Castel Sant'Angelo and more.

Day 1

- Visited the Pantheon – A 2000-year-old temple, now a church, considered one of Rome's best preserved ancient monuments

Day 2

- Visited Castel Sant'Angelo - A remarkable fortress that once protected the pope in time of danger. In the modern era. It guards an

impressive collection of art

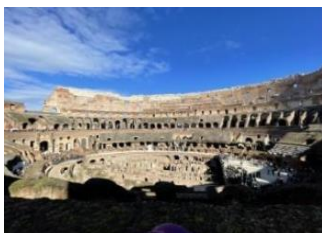


- Visited St Peters Basilica – Italy's largest, richest, and most spectacular basilica (Title of honour given to specific churches by the pope due to their architectural and historical importance)
- Visited the Vatican museums



- Sightseeing in central Rome. This included The Trevi fountain, Navona square, the Spanish steps and much more!

Day 3



- Visited The colosseum – known as the most impressive building of the roman empire, originally known as the Flavian Amphitheatre.
- Visited Palatine Hill – It is thought that Rome has its origins on the Palatine. Recent excavations have shown that people have lived on the site since approximately 1000BC
- Visited Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere- The first official place of Christian worship in Rome, the Basilica was commissioned

by Pope Callistus I and founded during the third century

Day 4

- Visited the Villa Borghese gardens - No one can resist the lure of Rome's most celebrated park. It covers about 80 hectares of wooded glades, gardens, and grassy banks
- Visited the Capitoline museums



Alongside this, students also received free time to explore and the opportunity to dine in authentic Italian restaurants such as *Ristorante Insalata Ricca*, *Origano Campo de' Fiori* and *Ristorante Casa mi*

We talked to a few of the people who went on the trip to discover what their personal favourite part of it was.



Emilia Sawicka - "When we went to the Vatican museums and saw all the art and sculptures because they were amazing and all the churches and free time because we got to know each other better and have an enjoyable time, spiritually and in general.

Reverend Otieno - "My favourite part was seeing Pope Francis' tomb – it was so simple and humbling. It truly represented what Jesus calls us to be like".

Talitha Rose - "Discussions with people. Each night at the end of the day, we all go out onto the patio and just have great talks and discussions. These 3 responses sum up the attitude of everyone that went on the trip. To those who have an interest in Philosophy,

Ethics, Religious education, I would highly recommend taking the opportunity to go.



Ethical beauty: The Future Looks Bright

HARLEY BOWMAN

What is ethical beauty?

It is a common misconception that ethical beauty only involves the correct treatment of animals, but it also entails the proper treatment of humans and the environment during the making and distribution of beauty products.

What is PETA? PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), founded in 1980, is an organisation that promotes the protection and fair treatment of animals. They are against the use of animals for consumption, clothing, animal testing or any form of abuse. They believe that animals are not ours to use and that we should treat their lives just as important as we treat ours. You will have probably seen PETA's logo on many beauty products before that indicate that it is ethical in terms of treatment of animals. This useful trademark allows people to choose animal cruelty free products with ease and tells different brands apart based on their methods.



Unethical beauty methods have been around for an exceptionally long time, paying low wages to workers is often overlooked under the umbrella term of 'ethical beauty.' You will often find that most products that are mass distributed in the UK are often made in other

countries such as China, Vietnam and India, which are all NEEs (newly emerging economies). Big companies often have factories in other countries to save money because there are usually lower minimum wages and less regulations on work environments. Unfortunately, for people who work for big companies on low wages often experience poor working conditions and find it very difficult to find other work, for example in the tech industry, most of Apple's factories are in China and people have raised several complaints about wage manipulation, poor working conditions and exposure to harmful chemicals over the years. The same goes for the beauty industry where many workers are often underpaid by their employers and expected to work in harmful conditions. Animal testing: a widely debated topic, but most agree that there is no need for it to be used in the beauty industry. Animal testing is often done to observe how chemicals react on the skin. Sadly, some animals are bred for animal testing only, for example, dogs are used frequently because they are the most forgiving. Testing these chemicals on animals are often cause extreme discomfort and pain, causing blindness and burns. Environmental carelessness: Cheap products, but why are they so cheap? Cheap materials are often obtained using methods that are careless towards the environment. Mica powder is a quite common material used in eyeshadow and lipstick, giving them an irresistible glimmer. But such products come at a cost, not to the price, but the environment. The extraction of mica powder causes the destruction of habitats via deforestation. By taking away habitats for even tiny

insects, it could cause entire ecosystems to collapse, just so your eyeshadow can shine that bit brighter. The distribution of beauty products is also a toll on the environment on a bigger scale, transported in large containerships to ports, taken to storage areas, then delivered to shops or homes. After all this transportation, the carbon footprint, a measure of how much carbon is released into the atmosphere by human activities, starts to add up.



Why do companies use such unethical methods?

To put it simply, the only reason that companies use such methods is to reduce cost and maximise profit even if that means exploiting labour, animals and the environment only so a product can have a 3-year shelf life and be simply chucked into landfill after its use. Often companies are very secretive about their usage of these methods; companies are legally required to include where beauty products are made on the packaging, but they don't have to give details of the factories or the conditions the people work in, for that you have to do deeper research. It is illegal for companies based in the UK and Europe to use animal testing, but that does not prohibit companies from importing their non-cruelty free goods from other countries. Companies often manufacture their products in China, where labour costs are low. China requires "special use beauty products," which are things like hair dyes, perming products and sunscreen, made in the

country to be tested using animals. The use of animal testing for beauty products in China is legal, but it is not mandatory, meaning that companies can choose to not test on animals depending on the product. Animal testing has been used since the early 20th century, it's hard for companies to move away from such a rehearsed practice. Scientific developments have found cheaper alternatives that are initially expensive but over a long period become cheaper and are cruelty free. Some of these newly developed alternatives include testing on a small number of human cells and computer models capable of replicating human reactions to chemicals used in beauty products.

Does paying more for products mean its ethical?

You would expect that higher prices mean that you are paying for cruelty free products that are sustainable and high quality, but that is not always the case. Dior, an extremely successful brand known for its fragrances, beauty products and its dazzling fashion that appears on the runway, was founded in 1946 and has become renowned amongst the beauty industry. A brand well known for being luxurious must match its reputation to its prices. But what are we paying for exactly? Well, we certainly are not paying for cruelty free products. PETA states that Dior is not cruelty free, although they do not do the testing themselves they "rely on their suppliers to do so." So, what are you paying for if they choose to test on animals? Dior is prestigious and glamorous, their brand is what you are paying for, which in my opinion is unacceptable. For such high prices, people should be paying for ethically

sourced and tested products.

Although it's not always the case, most products that are deemed ethical are more expensive since they are usually manufactured in the UK and other European countries, where animal testing for beauty products is illegal and people are required to have decent working conditions. Brands such as revolution and lush are both very ethical brands that prices range from around £5-

£20. This demonstrates that it's not always the case for companies to be more expensive just to be ethical and shows that we are headed for a more ethical future in the beauty industry.

How can we be more ethical?

We can be more ethical by only buying products that are PETA certified or certified by other organisations like it. This ensures that we are not encouraging the making of beauty products by harming animals. We could also be more ethical by trying to minimise our consumption, only buying things that we need when we need them and using refills minimises our carbon footprint. Making sure that we are buying products that are manufactured in the UK helps to minimise our carbon footprint. For example, the company Lush prides itself on being ethical, making products in the UK, is against animal testing and claims to want a "great place to work for everyone." Buying from lush and companies with similar policies means that we could take a step forward into being more ethical as a society.



What is the future for ethical beauty?

People may argue that as individuals we cannot make a change, but by starting off small, doing our due diligence we can help to take a big step forward in the beauty

industry. By boycotting large companies such as Dior, Maybelline and Clinique we can discourage and hopefully change their methods. Companies are becoming increasingly more ethical as we have found new ways to test products. Biodegradable packaging, organic materials, new policies and scientific research that will allow us to move away from animal testing all show a bright future for the beauty industry. With new scientific research into how we can adapt testing to exclude animals, governments are changing policies. So, it's clear to say that we are taking a step forward in the industry.



A short horror film rating!!

By Scarlett Horwood And Chelsea Jaba

Symbolism.

The house as false safety. The house typically symbolizes safety, comfort and protection. But in this short film the horror is inside the home. This suggests not only that danger doesn't only come from outside, but that Fear can live within familiar spaces. It also falls under the category of psychological horror and so the threat may represent something internal (trauma, anxiety, mental fear).



"The Kid And The Camera."

Summary.

The film follows a young boy who finds or is given a camera and begins filming himself around his home. At first, it feels innocent and playful—he records ordinary moments, experimenting with angles and reacting to what he sees through the lens.

However, things quickly become unsettling.

When the boy reviews the footage, he notices disturbing details in the background that he didn't see while filming—brief glimpses of a strange, shadowy figure watching him. Each time he rewatches or records again, the figure appears closer.

The tension builds as the presence becomes more aggressive and invasive. The boy grows frightened, realizing something supernatural is inside the house with him. The camera, which first seemed like a toy, becomes a way to reveal a horrifying reality he can't escape.

The short ends on a grim and disturbing note (typical of Hardcastle's work), implying the entity reaches him—leaving the audience with a sudden, violent final moment.

Scare factor and our personal rating.

This short film is unsettling rather than scary, giving it a scare factor of 5/10. We rate this an 8/10 purely because of its detailed stop motion animation, analogue horror vibe and mix of real-life photos.

“The Other Side Of The Box”

symbolism

The symbolism is in the rule, “Don’t Look Away”. The one rule is that the ‘creature’ can only move or get out of the small box when you stop looking at it. This represents different, deeper meanings. The topics it portrays are: *Avoidance anxiety*. Problems grow when ignored. *Trauma or guilt*. If you stop confronting it, it overtakes you. *Responsibility*. Once you’re aware of something dangerous, you are burdened with watching it. The horror isn’t just the creature in this short film; it’s the constant vigilance. It’s exhausting being constantly tormented by the fear and anticipation. That exhaustion is part of the metaphor.



Summary

A couple, Ben and Rachel, are at home one night when their old friend Shawn shows up unexpectedly with a mysterious gift, a plain box containing nothing visible. But inside the box is an unnerving void of pure darkness. There are a set of Strange Rules. Attached to the present is a note explaining a terrifying rule: you must never look away from what’s inside the box. If you do, it seems something bad will happen. When Ben peers into the box with a flashlight, the darkness swallows objects (like a pencil) that fall inside. they vanish without hitting a bottom. Soon after, part of a man’s head, wet, dishevelled and eerie, begins to emerge from the void. The couple realizes there is something alive inside that box.

Scare factor and our rating

We decided that the scare factor would be 7/10. It is a nerve-wrecking short film, and despite its simple cinematography, we found that it has you on the edge of your seat the entire time. Our rating would be 7.5/10 and we recommend you watch it, just maybe not alone!!

“Pleasant Inn”

Symbolism

The name “Pleasant Inn” is intentionally ironic. Motels typically symbolize temporary refuge and lack of real security.

Unlike a home, a motel is impersonal and exposed. The film suggests that just because a place is labelled “pleasant” doesn’t mean it’s safe. This reflects how danger can follow you and the fact that changing locations doesn’t erase threat. The creature is also symbolic of predatory evil. The monster is grotesque and unnatural, but what’s important is that it acts like an apex predator. It stalks, it follows, it hunts quietly. Symbolically, it can represent

trauma that follows you and the persistence of danger and inescapable fear. Some interpretations see it as embodying the real-world fear many women experience, like being followed, watched, or targeted.



Summary

The story begins with a woman driving alone at night on a deserted road. During her journey she notices a strange, limping figure walking along the roadside, something feels off about it, so she chooses not to stop or offer it a ride. She continues onward and eventually finds a small, isolated motel called the 'Pleasant Ride'. Tired, she checks in and settles down for the night, believing she’s safe. However, the eerie figure from the road has followed her to the motel. It’s no ordinary person. It turns out to be a monstrous, grotesque creature with unnatural movement and disturbing features. What follows is a tense chase scene inside and around the motel, as the creature stalks the unsuspecting woman and other guests. The monster is shown to be violent and relentless, targeting people in and around the Pleasant Inn.

Eventually, after a terrifying confrontation and narrow escape attempts, the woman manages to escape the creature by fleeing in her car. Though the monster loses her temporarily, it is implied that it continues its hunt elsewhere, often suggested to take on disguises or use bodies of victims to lure new prey.

Scare factor and our rating

We think that this short film has a scare factor of 8.5/10. This short film was Chelsea’s favourite one as it was very well put together and didn’t have any unrealistic standards of humans and monsters like there are in many horror films, like a brave hero or an unrealistic escape scene. Overall, we rate it 9/10 and believe it’s definitely worth a watch despite its gruesome animation.

Honourable mention:

Symbolism

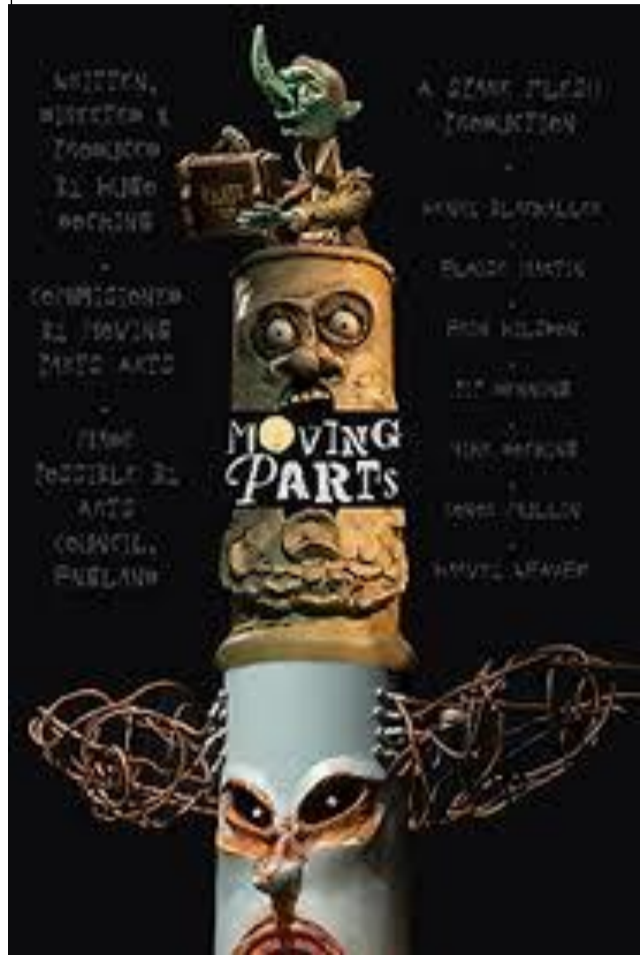
“Moving parts” usually refers to mechanical components. However, In the short film, human body parts are treated the same way as materials to be bought, sold, and repurposed.

Symbolically, this film heavily portrays Capitalism reducing people to labour or products. It shows the idea that we now have to sell ourselves to make a living. This commodification of humans in moving parts represents Dehumanization and Exploitation for profit or art. This makes humans talents and qualities seem invaluable nowadays and rather humans are treated as interchangeable pieces in a big system run by the upper class. The unknowing and desperate salesman participates in this trade, showing how completely ordinary people can become implicated in dehumanizing systems. This representation of the common man falling susceptible to the need for more and consumerism shows that this short film carries a much more deeper meaning. The music in this film makes the whole thing seem like a show or something for entertainment, portraying the lack of care shown by higher classes. This film itself is stylized and artistic, and it may even be self-aware, questioning whether horror art itself “uses” violence for impact.

Scare factor and our rating

This short film has a scare factor of 8.9/10. It is a gruesome and unsettling short film. It carries deep meaning and its musical theme makes it stand out. and its graphics and stop motion animation made it Scarlett’s top film. Our rating is 6.5, but only because its short in length.

“Moving Parts”



Summary

A traveling salesman enters a bizarre industrial realm. He meets a massive, singing monstrosity and other bizarre figures. They tempt him with a deal that involves turning human body parts into art. The salesman is lured deeper into this “business,” and the film becomes increasingly grotesque and unsettling, blending horror with musical elements and dark comedy.

The upbeat musical number contrasts sharply with the disturbing visuals — puppets, gore, and body parts — creating a surreal vibe where the protagonist’s humanity is commodified, and he becomes entangled in a world that treats people as raw materials for art or profit.

Marie Antoinette

LUCY MULHALL

Introduction

“Qu’ils mangent de la brioche.”

For most people, this phrase is irrevocably reminiscent of Marie-Antoinette, a cruel French queen who ignored the cries of her people and laughed in the face of their starvation; a timeless symbol of despotism, heedless decadence, and the injustice of the *Ancien Régime*. However, it was first recorded in 1765, long before the queen had become a queen- before she had ever set foot on French soil.

Attributed to Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it refers not to the callousness of nobles but to a genuine ignorance: if the peasants had no savoury bread (*“pain”*) then surely, they could eat sweetened bread (*“brioche”*) instead. False accusations and misinterpretations recur throughout the life and legacy of Marie-Antoinette; truth and lies are unfortunately blended in the culture surrounding her, and while there are instances in which she *was* to blame, we have to ask: *was Marie-Antoinette really the demonised figure who has become a byword for tyranny? If not, who was she?*

Background

To understand who this queen was, we have to understand where she came from. Marie-Antoinette was born Maria

Antonia of Austria, fifteenth child of the powerful Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa and HRE Francis I. She was raised at the Austrian court in Vienna- which was radically informal compared to that of France. However, the Hapsburg family conquered not through war but through marriage, and at ten Maria Antonia was betrothed to the Dauphin (crown prince of France)- Louis. Preparations for the move to France began, and she soon set off, with over one hundred servants in tow.

At the Austrian border, Maria Antonia left behind everything and everyone she had brought with her, including her beloved dog, and after bursting briefly into tears, she began to receive training for the suffocatingly formal traditions and etiquette of the French court. It was not long before she married Louis (the couple were then 14 and 15, respectively) and thus she was thrust into the alien world of Versailles, where she was horrified by the constant ceremony of life there, as well as at the loose moral ways of the courtiers. Four years later, Louis’ grandfather died, and the young couple became King Louis XVI and Queen Marie-Antoinette of France.

The accusations against Marie Antoinette

French queens were never popular for long, and while at first the only criticisms Marie-Antoinette received were from petty enemies at court, by the late 1780s her reputation across France was on its way to ruin. Poor harvests and

bad winters had left the peasants starving, and politicised radicals in Paris began printing pamphlets accusing the queen of decadence and adultery: she overspent the king’s money; she had two new yards of taffeta to cover her gloves every day; she had affairs with numerous men at her own small palace, the Petit Trianon; she ordered a large and inordinately expensive diamond necklace from a Paris Jewellers and then didn’t pay. One of her most notorious offences- for which she is still hated- is having a *“petit-hameau”*, a clean and romanticised replica of a small farm on the grounds of Versailles, where with her friends she playacted the lives of peasants, while real peasants were starving due to her decadence. She was also Austrian, and was maliciously labelled *“Autrichienne”*, a word which meant both *“a woman from Austria”* and *“Ostrich-dog”*. Perhaps what she was hated most for, however, especially during 1788-89, was her influence on Louis.

Defence for Marie-Antoinette

Of all of these accusations, none can be considered legitimate reasons for the amount of hatred that Marie-Antoinette continues to receive even to this day. The queen *was* decadent, but in fact she was *far less* extravagant than most French queens, and favoured simplicity; when she did dress simply, however, she was criticised brutally by the court; she was known to abhor the public ceremonies that surrounded her, for

example the fact that whenever she ate or dressed, she was watched by potentially hundreds of nobles.

As for the Diamond Necklace Scandal, the whole thing was a conspiracy by a greedy noblewoman and a man convinced he was immortal (and in any case, Marie-Antoinette wouldn't have wanted the necklace, as it was not her style and it had originally been made for Louis XV's mistress, whom she hated). The widespread circulation of vulgar literature detailing her personal life and accusing her of adultery were absurd; she was devoted to Louis, and there is no real evidence of any of the affairs of which she was accused; instead, sources reveal her to be chaste and loyal.

She *did* spend too much time at the Petit Trianon, which was unwise as it had traditionally belonged to the mistresses of previous French kings, and accidentally put her into that position- if the French hated their kings' wives, they hated their kings' side chicks even more. She did have extravagances such as new cloth to cover her gloves every day, but that was how things worked at Versailles; a nobleman or woman would have the "rights" to the cloth and sell it each day. It is true that she had her play farm; they were fashionable among the nobles of the country at that time, and had not the revolution escalated the way it did, it would likely be considered by modern historians as nothing more than a charming eccentricity; one

also has to understand that Marie-Antoinette was genuinely ignorant of peasant life, and nobody told her that it was not as perfect and Rousseauesque as she had been allowed to believe by her sheltered life at Versailles- and in fact, in the few instances where the queen *did* meet peasants, she was kind and generous to them, genuinely trying to help. Even the xenophobia surrounding the fact that she was Austrian isn't really justified- she had more French blood in her than most previous French queens had. And as for her influence over Louis, there are few instances where she had any real effect; in reality he was too indecisive to act on almost *any* advice.

Conclusion

So, why was Marie-Antoinette blamed for the discontent and all that led to the Revolution? In short, it was because people did not *want* to blame her husband King Louis, who was really the one at fault: it was his indecision, his blindness, his willingness to walk away from his country's problems, which were the cause of so much suffering; but the French had always hated on their queens; it was tradition; and Marie-Antoinette was a perfect target for their hatred: she was a woman, it was thought that Louis would do anything she said, and the sheltered life she led and (at times) detested, but which she was unable to escape, gave her an ignorance that meant that she made foolish, innocent decisions, the consequences of which were taken out of her hands, and blown out

of proportion- turning a young girl who genuinely wished to help the country she had been forced into, into the sexualised and demonised idol of all that was evil about the Ancien Régime that popular culture still sees her as today. Marie-Antoinette was executed in 1793, aged only 37, and her last words were not to cry about the injustice of her execution, nor to cast blame onto the peasants that cheered as she ascended the steps to the guillotine, but rather to apologise to the guard who was there to stop her from escaping as she accidentally stepped on his toes. This event can be seen as a microcosm for Marie-Antoinette's reign as Queen of France: she never could escape the situations she was thrown into, no matter how she hated them, but rather than casting blame, she tried only to improve things- things that were ultimately out of her control.



Marie-Antoinette's "Petit-hameau" at Versailles, a romanticised version of real peasant life.



Marie-Antoinette with two of her four children. The dress she wears here was considered radically simple by the court, and along with the natural setting and flowers demonstrates her love of nature, simplicity, and all things Rousseau.



Marie-Antoinette being taken to her execution, by William Hamilton. She is portrayed in white and practically glowing, symbolising her innocence and dignity, and emphasising the contemporary sympathy of the British upper classes for the French aristocrats.

LEARNING INSTRUMENTS AS A KID

OSATO UFUMWEN
AIBANGBEE

Children learning an instrument are often seen as child prodigies from an adult's perspective, wondering what is to become of this child who has miraculously picked up a musical instrument! This will often excite parents/carers knowing that their child has picked up on a hobby that may bring them a lot of benefit on the long run, but with great talent, comes greater pressure. Sooner or later parents will begin to see other children who have picked up an instrument too, same, similar or different to that of their child's and do one of many things, such as:

- Take inspiration from that child to continue encouraging theirs to excel
- Pretty much ignore them and continue to focus on their own child
- Compare that other child to their own



Unfortunately, the most common of these is the child comparison, which turns an innocent hobby that was picked up into a competition. For some parents, this may have been with an inoffensive intent, others do genuinely want to compete and looking through the child's perspective, whilst still being under their parents, few options are available.

Common results:

They children adopt their parent's mindset, which is probably most likely when the child is quite young such as how a 6-year-old may be more likely to do so than a 10-year-old for example, which then strips off the joy of being able to play simply for the feel. Everything is now a competition and being top is the only goal in mind, except when will that ever actually be?

They will probably begin to lose interest and drop the instrument, so then, with them wanting the pressure to be gone, they will turn to refusing to

attend rehearsals or even speaking about the topic of playing their instrument with hopes of their parents forgetting they ever picked up that instrument in the first place.

On the other hand, they might continue to play the instrument, alongside either learning to resist the parental pressure or feeling they have no choice but to continue in order to make their parents proud, who are unaware of how much they are crushing their child who only wants to have fun with an instrument.

A former young musician coach, Charlotte Tomlinson has stated "These demands can be incredibly pressurising for the young person in question who might show it by getting incredibly nervous for exams, recitals or any other performance, with unpleasant symptoms like feeling nauseous, shaking or even crying at the thought of performing." Things like this can often even lead the child to not want to even bring up any subject related to the instrument.



Charlotte Tomlinson has also said "They can feel they need to play perfectly, beating themselves up if they don't and music becomes some horrible chore they have to get through." and with that, they reject performing at the first possible opportunity, turning away from what could've been an instrument of relief. Lastly, what most young musicians end up doing is to push through, with the thought that if they do not progress, they have wasted finances that were spent on them to learn the instruments as music lessons and the instruments themselves do not come cheap. In an article by Ellie McLaren - Off The Record, she speaks on a mindset known as "Impostor Syndrome" stating that "This is when an individual doubt their talents and abilities to an extreme and they have an internal feeling of being classed as a fraud, despite the successes and achievements they may

have." Which ends up being a leading cause for many musicians to no longer enjoying playing their instruments and only see it as a source of stress and negativity. The most saddening part about this is that this induced pressure does not only come from parents but from all around them, school peers, mentors themselves and even their own mindset.

Possible solutions:

The way out of this all seems to be to reach out to young musicians, with that being support, reassurance and someone to confide in. Often, worries are met with the same varied lines of "It's just nerves", "You're not usually nervous". "Fear is not real; it can't hurt you" meanwhile the fear itself is eating them up from the inside out. Many of most young musicians may seem fine on stage, but are completely disintegrating on the inside, worrying too much on hitting the correct note over having fun on stage or enjoying themselves. But some small talk that belittles their feelings fixes nothing, they also want to be heard for what is

in their mind too, not just an instrument.



In conclusion, children often face the trouble of constant increasing pressure when they pick up on an instrument often leading to withdrawal and performance anxiety.

Where parents are meant to be supportive, there is just dismissal and high expectations, but the solution requires understanding and patience to allow for growth and having fun with the instrument.

I believe learning an instrument is important, but the attitude of most parents needs to change as for classic pressure and comparison is unhelpful for children to flourish but rather to diminish their confidence.

THE GRAMMY'S: A REVOLUTIONARY NIGHT

AMY FOSTER
AND EMILIA
SAWICKA



The Grammy Awards, stylized as GRAMMY, and often referred to as the Grammys, are awards presented by the recording academy of the United States to recognize outstanding achievements in music. They are regarded by many as the most prestigious and significant awards in the music industry worldwide, and thus the show is frequently called "music's biggest night". Although "music's biggest night" seems to create a sense of inclusivity, you'd be silly to think that the average person can

take part in such a 'prestigious' event. If you'd like to even sit and watch from 10,000 meters away, you've still got to pay the 36 dollars, but if you really want to treat yourself, be prepared to spend over two grand for the real 'platinum' tickets. Did I forget to mention that only those who are nominated, invited or an academy member can enter.

However, let's not be too pessimistic as there's still the option to watch from afar on the good old TV.

Now, while there are many awards presented, there are 4 categories which are considered the most important and are often called the "Big Four". These include:

Album of the Year – awarded for the best overall album.

Record of the Year – recognizing the best overall recording.

Song of the Year – honoring the songwriting.

Best New Artist – Celebrating emerging talent.



I think we've all got to agree that a highlight for all the Brits must have been Olivia Dean winning best new artist, and then again, her incredible number of awards at the Brits where she was presented with Artist of the Year, Mastercard Album of the Year and Pop Act, and performed an elegant rendition of 'Man I Need' during the show. Finally, a fourth award win was added to her haul with victory in Song of the Year with Mastercard for 'Rein Me In'. Although her 'effortlessly cool' demeanor is highlighted by many fans you would be criticized to think that her "down to

earth” authenticity does not illuminate onto others and emphasize her true character not only as a singer/songwriter. Her ability to evoke a diaristic style of songwriting that navigates the complexities of love and independence must have been one if not the key aspect as to why many agreed on the extensive number of her awards. Whilst collecting her reward Olivia also used her speech to address tensions around immigration as she quoted; “I’m up here as a granddaughter of an immigrant”- as her grandmother was part of the Windrush generation, as well as, “I’m a product of bravery and i think those people deserve to be celebrated. We’re nothing without each other.” This simple sentence carried much depth within it and touched many viewers as it became a widely shared sentiment.

Although the famous actor Ricky Gervais stated that “If you do win an award tonight, don’t use it as a political platform to make a political speech. You’re in no position to lecture the public about anything. You know nothing about the real world” many celebrities opposed this and used their voices to make thoughtful and personal comments providing hope for people, such as SZA’s comment: “We need each other. We need to trust each other and trust ourselves. Trust your heart. We’re not governed by the government. We’re governed by God.”

Now, although celebrities may not appear to be politically informed or aware, who are we to judge how informed they are. The courage and confidence required to stand in front of thousands and

millions of online viewers can serve as an example to anyone who fears to stand up to what they believe in.

Personal commentary:

Now, here are some of the most relevant and talked about categories, who won and who we personally think should’ve won

RECORD OF THE YEAR

The winner- ‘Luther’ by Kendrick Lamar and SZA.

Who we believe should’ve won- We personally believe this win was deserved! It serves as a romantic, tender homage focusing on intense commitment, protecting a partner and building a better future which contrasts with other album’s combative tone.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

The winner- DeBÍ TiRAR Más FOTOS by Bad Bunny.

Who we believe should've w

on
– Chromakopia by Tyler the creator. It's a deeply introspective, mature album where Tyler grapples with fame, aging, fatherhood and past trauma, showcasing raw vulnerability.

SONG OF THE YEAR

The winner – Wildflower by Billie Eilish. Who we believe should've won – Manchild by Sabrina Carpenter. Firstly, wildflower came out in 2024, so should not even be considered for the 2026 Grammys. Manchild explores the frustrations of dating men who refuse to grow up, something I'm sure many listeners can relate to, using irony to mock their arrested development and Sabrina's tendency to attract them.

BEST NEW ARTIST

The winner- Olivia Dean.

Who should've won - The Marías. The Marías' music is simply beautiful. Throughout 2025 many of their songs such as 'no one noticed' and 'heavy' have gone viral on TikTok. Each song has a deep, tragically beautiful meaning behind it- songs such as 'Sienna' being about the child María was meant to have with her ex, the drummer of the band, which is something many of the listeners can relate to.

BEST SOLO PERFORMANCE

The winner- Messy by Lola Young. Who should've won - Manchild by Sabrina Carpenter. The only way people listened to Messy is through TikTok or to make fun of it so it is certainly not the best solo performance, especially compared to Manchild, which not only displays Sabrina's incredible vocals but is a fun

and relatable song to dance to in your kitchen or sing with your friends in car.

BEST DUO PERFORMANCE



The winner- Defying Gravity by Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo. This is 100% deserved, in our opinion. Not only is it such an iconic and powerful song which requires levels of talent only one can dream of, it also truly depicts the frustration Elphaba is feeling in the scene, which is one many listeners can relate to on a personal level, feeling isolated and different as a result of something you can't control.

BEST ALBUM COVER

The winner- Chromakopi a by Tyler, the creator. Who should've won - The Crux by Djo. I

believe Djo's album deserves more recognition from the Grammys as it truly represents Joe Keery's emotional turbulence once breaking up with his girlfriend of 6 years.

The album cover signifies a shift towards themes of personal growth, change and navigating the unknown. In fact, each section of the, seemingly

chaotic, album cover symbolises each song from the album, emphasising the time and effort put into creating this album as a whole.