

The fragmentary grace
notes of Kathleen Jamie

Robin Ince:
My Glasto diary

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ISSUE 1623 / 08-14 JULY 2024

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Change

Kwajo Tweneboa

Britain's top housing
campaigner delivers
home truths for
new government

Page 18



A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT

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ISSUE

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THIS WEEK'S BIG ISSUE

EDUCATION

A years-long strike in further education threatens the futures of working-class students. Page 10

FILM

How horror movies reflect the politics of the day and speak to our fears in turbulent times. Page 35



Cardboard Citizens' new short film series, *More Than One Story*, explores the many faces of homelessness. Page 24

COVER FEATURE

Activist Kwajo Tweneboa has sound advice for the incoming government on how to fix the UK's housing crisis. Page 18

MUSIC

As Travis return, frontman Fran Healy says the band have unfinished business. Page 38

MY PITCH

Vendor Sean Cullen is 20 and enjoys DJing music from all eras for customers on his pitch in Bath – he even takes requests. He hopes that one day he can learn to play the guitar. Page 46



HOW THE BIG ISSUE WORKS

● Our vendors buy magazines for £2 and sell them for £4, keeping the proceeds and working their way out of poverty. Every vendor has a unique story – they may be homeless, at risk of losing their home, long-term unemployed or dealing with mental health issues.

What they all have in common is they are earning a legitimate income while gaining valuable social and transferable skills.

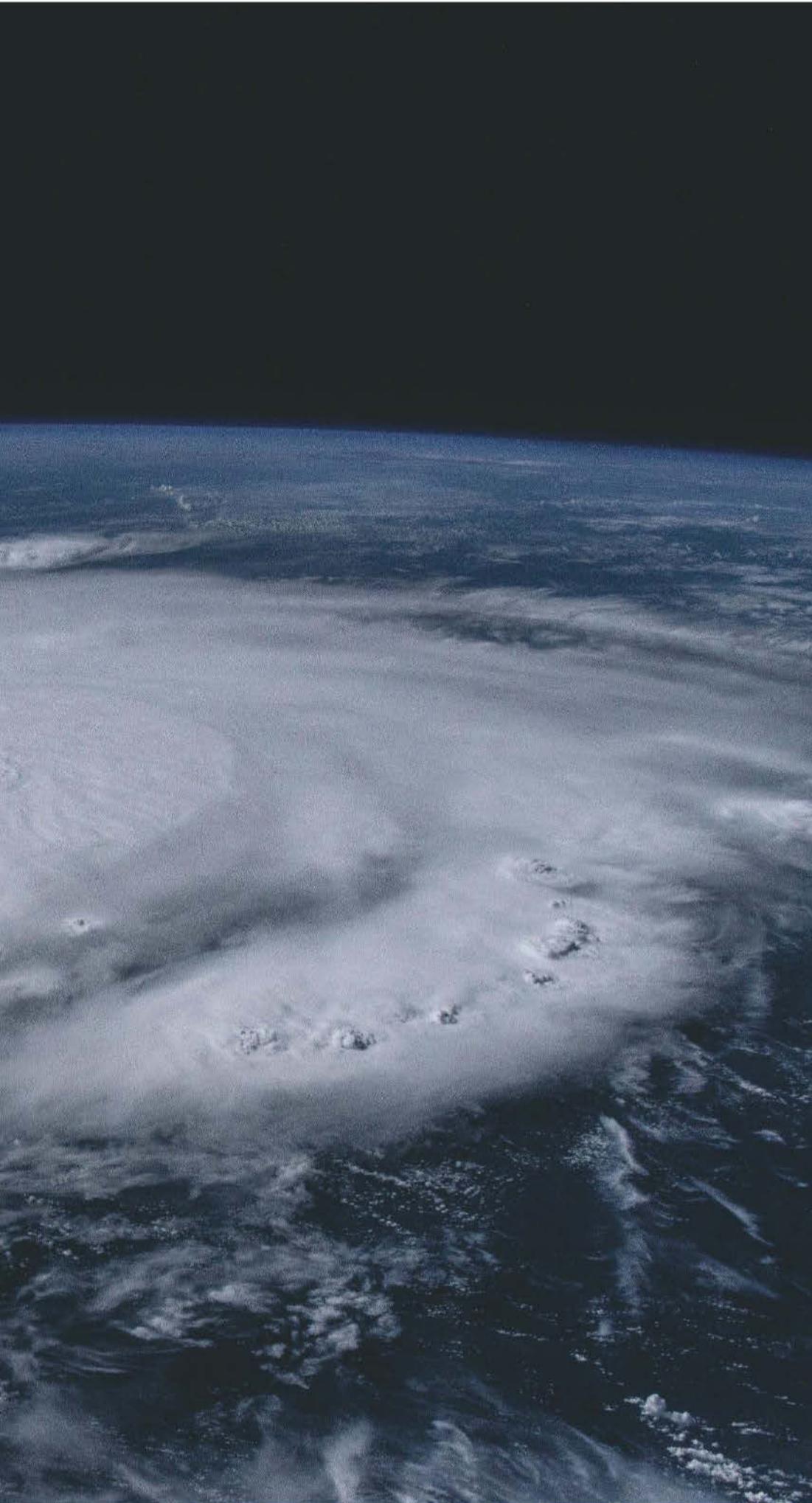
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Stormy times

● Hurricane Beryl rampaged through the Caribbean from early last week, with sustained winds reaching 160mph/257kph. Thousands were made homeless across Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, while Barbados and Jamaica also suffered extensive damage.

The Atlantic hurricane season tends to last from June until November, but storms do not tend to grow so strong this early in the season. Beryl became the earliest category five hurricane in recorded history.

Warmer sea temperatures are to blame. Hurricanes need a surface sea temperature of 27°C to form, and the water in Beryl's path was well above that, fuelling the storm's intensity, and signalling a potentially devastating season to come.

The Alliance of Small Island States represents many nations on the front-line. It released a statement calling for urgent action to be taken to prevent the crisis worsening.

It read: "This monstrous storm is still sweeping through the region and the full extent of the losses and damages are yet to be ascertained.

"We continue to be sacrificed on the frontlines of a climate crisis we did not cause. Our sea temperatures grow warmer, encouraging storms to strengthen at alarming speed and increasing the dire threat to our developing countries. The increased danger is evident for the world to see.

"If the world does not stand with [us] now, it is only a matter of time before we are all lost."

THE DISPATCH

News, views & miscellany

ROUGH SLEEPING

'You can't criminalise your way out of homelessness': UN warns of politicians demonising rough sleepers and rise of far-right populism

By Sam Gelder

● "You can't criminalise your way out of homelessness. How many people are you going to keep arresting?"

This is the message Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, will deliver to representatives at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

His new study finds growing evidence that people experiencing homelessness and poverty are facing criminal penalties for simply sleeping, washing, cooking, eating, begging and working on the street. The report was published on 25 June. Just a few days later on 28 June, the US Supreme Court ruled that cities can punish unhoused people for sleeping in public, even if they have nowhere else to go. The judgment, described in the US as the "most consequential decision in history on homeless rights", ruled that criminalising rough sleeping does not constitute "cruel and unusual punishment".

We see it in the UK, too. Only last year Suella Braverman as home secretary called rough sleeping a "lifestyle choice" while announcing plans to crack down on the pitching of tents in city centres, which she largely blamed on individuals "from abroad".



Demonstrators rally in front of the US Supreme Court on 28 June after it was ruled unhoused people can be punished for sleeping in public

These draconian measures, which included threats of prison or £2,500 fines and at one point pledged enforcement action over "smells", formed part of the Conservative government's controversial Criminal Justice Bill.

"It happens in too many countries," Rajagopal tells Big Issue. "Busting people's shacks and using violent force to clear their encampments or their lean-tos and throw them into the back of a truck, leaving them with nothing."

Rajagopal, a professor in the department of urban studies and planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), blames resurgent far-right or right-wing governments that have little interest in tackling the

root causes of homelessness. "Instead of addressing the global affordable housing and inequality crises governments are increasingly turning to outdated and vague vagrancy laws, many of which have their roots in colonial rule, to move people off the streets and make them disappear," he says. "It is politically convenient, and bows to populist pressure."

As we've seen in the UK, migrants are often scapegoated when it comes to the housing crisis, and that's also the case elsewhere, including the global south, Rajagopal says. "It's the foreigners that are demonised, although they are not the root cause of housing problems people are facing. People are facing housing problems because of gross mistakes and errors and violations of the law that have been committed over decades. But it's more convenient to blame somebody who doesn't look like you. It's a common strategy."

Not only will these tactics not solve homelessness or poverty, they are in "direct violation" of the international human right to adequate housing.

What's more, as we've seen in the UK, there's a push back against human rights in general, let alone housing as a human right. Housing First has proven to be a successful model in some countries, but it's a non-starter in places without the resources to implement it. So how can these problems be fixed? After all, a lot of the recommendations in his report will be seen as too radical – such as banning evictions that cause homelessness and reforming the justice system. Rajagopal knows this, and admits: "If those with a xenophobic tendency to defend the status quo who don't want any kind of positive change continue to retain or increase power it's going to be much harder to achieve progress." But he says there are ways to realistically shift the dial.

One is to reframe the issue as "a struggle to keep and safeguard everybody's existing constitutional rights... These are things everyone should care about, because if they can do it to some people they can do it to others," he says, citing the recent election in India and last year's vote in The Netherlands as examples where this had an impact.

Rajagopal has a message for supposedly left-of-centre parties. "You don't create a fair society by constantly demonising a group of people," he says. "The idea that being in the centre is a good thing is a strategy that has been seen as the most acceptable path by too many people. But they don't ask: 'What does society gain, if the centre is defined in a way that excludes so many people?'"

@samgelder

IN NUMBERS: HOW ROUGH SLEEPERS ARE CRIMINALISED IN THE UK

It's **200** years since the Vagrancy Act came into law – it remains in force until it is replaced

It's **three** years since MPs called for a repeal of the Vagrancy Act and over two years since it was repealed by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act

2,947 people have been charged with an offence under the act in England and Wales since 2021 (Source: Lib Dems)

People who are black are **68%** more likely than people who are white to be arrested under the Vagrancy Act (Source: Generation Rent)

THE BIG NUMBER

& \$140

That's how much a typical household's disposable income has risen a year since 2010, according to a report by the Resolution Foundation think tank.

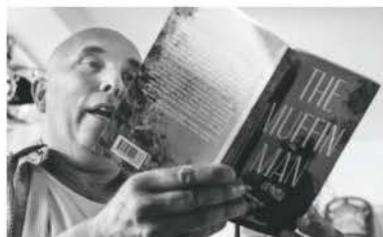
Households' spending power rose by just 7% over the 14-year period, rising by only 0.5% annually. By contrast, disposable incomes rose by 38% in the 14 years up to 2010.

BOOKS

Do you know the Muffin Man?

● The book, that is. *The Muffin Man* is Big Issue vendor André Rostant's debut – a powerhouse of a book looking at how social and economic alienation affects individuals and communities. It is set in Soho, Central London, where Rostant has his pitch, but reflects a pretty much universal experience.

At the book's launch, in Soho's All Is Joy, the author told Big Issue, "I hope my being published changes a common but wrong perception of homeless people – in fact, of all poor people – as being voiceless and helpless. I want the book to make people challenge their own personal assumptions about street sleepers. Selling the Big Issue has brought home to me how



powerful the stereotypes attributed to homeless people are. Vending is no different to any other form of trading yet every day you're told to 'get a job.'"

The Muffin Man has been praised by critics, including Anton Gill, author of the *Assassin's Creed* series. He said: "André Rostant's sense of character and place is astonishing, and the picture he paints of life on the streets of modern London gives us a view

of the town from the underside not matched since the time of Dickens or Henry Mayhew.

"After reading this book, you'll never pass a homeless person or a Big Issue seller again without sympathy. You may even feel your own sense of humanity bolstered."

The Muffin Man by André Rostant is out now (Arkbound, £12.99)

ROUGH SLEEPING

Record high number of people sleeping rough on London's streets

● Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has promised to end rough sleeping by 2030, but statistics released last month showed just how far he has to go with record numbers of people homeless on the English capital's streets.

A record-high 11,993 people were seen sleeping rough by outreach workers in London during 2023-24 – a 19% increase on the previous year's count.

Khan described the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (Chain) statistics as "a

stark symbol of the Conservatives' failure in government".

The figures showed a surge in the number of people sleeping rough after being evicted from rented properties and kicked out of asylum accommodation.

That comes after the failed Conservative promise to scrap no-fault evictions, as well as efforts to clear the asylum backlog that saw a sharp rise in people presenting to local authorities after being granted refugee status.

Crisis chief executive Matt Downie said the figures were "deeply shameful" and the current situation is a "perfect storm" for rising street homelessness.

He added: "The next government has the power to change things. By rapidly increasing the supply of good-quality, genuinely affordable housing, alongside investing in specialist services, we can help people to leave the streets behind."



Rough sleeping in numbers

11,993

people were counted sleeping rough in London during 2023/24 – 58% higher than a decade ago

7,974

were classed as 'new' rough sleepers – a 25% rise on the previous year

1,231

people were on the streets having left the private rented sector, with 1,103 saying they had been kicked out of their home

A further **410** of the 1,514 people classed as 'returning' rough sleepers also said they were back on the streets after being evicted by their landlord

The number of under-25s rose from 856 in 2023 to **1,139** in 2024 – a 33% rise, more than any other age group

951 people seen sleeping rough for the first time had been evicted from asylum accommodation – 17% of the total

OPINION

Now the election is over, our PM must make sure a trip to the food bank isn't the new normal

By Dame Clare Moriarty

Chief executive of Citizens Advice and an ex-permanent secretary in the UK government

● The first leaders' debate in this election frenzy kicked off with a simple question. Paula, from Huddersfield, is finding it very difficult to make ends meet. She asked Starmer and Sunak: "What can you do about that?"

Both spoke in vague terms about bold plans and fixing the economy. Neither addressed the concrete ways they would help people like Paula so she doesn't have to scrape by week to week. After 45 seconds, the debate moved on.

It's a moment that crystallised the failure of political parties to address living standards during this short campaign, despite this being a top priority for voters. In fact, nearly half said the cost of living or living standards were among the most important factors that influenced their decision at the polls.

At Citizens Advice we're helping 6,000 people a day with cost of living issues – that's one person every five seconds. Sadly, Paula's story was no surprise to us. We hear day in, day out what's keeping people awake at night. How do I pay the rent? Cover the bills? Put food on the table?

We're breaking records every day. There's now five million people trapped in the red, no matter how hard they try to balance their budget. Our staff and volunteers are helping nearly 50% more people with cost of living issues than a decade ago.

They use all their expertise to try and make money stretch that little bit further. But too often, for too many people, it's not enough. Where a referral to a food bank or a crisis charity grant was once an emergency measure, it's now often the default because the people coming to us have already cut back on everything they possibly can.

Some of the worst hit are disabled people and people whose circumstances mean that a steady job just isn't an option. We recently supported Mark, who wants to work but has a serious mental health condition and has been turned down by employers.

He's £75 short each month and says he feels like he's at the bottom of a pit, with no ladder out. These are the real people behind the rhetoric of 'sick note culture'. The ones calling our advice line and queuing for a drop-in appointment because they've nothing in the fridge and can't top up their meter.

As a former permanent secretary I understand the difficult choices about spending the government has to make. But it rings hollow to suggest that people like Paula and Mark are at the whim of huge forces that no one can control – that they need to sit tight until 'growth' emerges. There is an opportunity here to do better.

The ambition for our new PM has to be that a trip to the food bank isn't the new normal. That people can provide for their families and have enough left over to do more than just survive.

@ClareMoriarty; @CitizensAdvice

FRANK COTTRELL-BOYCE

"A book that you love has this power to point you towards small pleasures. Whatever is happening in Moominland, Moominmamma is there making coffee. To this day, whenever I smell freshly ground coffee, I'm there"



New Waterstones Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce recalled that the first book he truly loved was from Tove Jansson's *Moomin* series. In an interview with Big Issue, he also pledged to dedicate his tenure to pushing children's reading to the top of the national agenda. Head to bigissue.com for more.

EDITOR'S CHOICE
5 PIECES YOU NEED TO READ ON BIGISSUE.COM



1. Poverty and inequality are slowly poisoning Britain. It could lead to a far-right victory in 2029

2. 'I haven't voted since Blair': How politics failed one of the most Tory places in Britain

3. *Supacell* star Calvin Demba (above) on race, male bravado and breaking the modern superhero formula

4. I help refugees with their mental health. This is the toll our asylum system takes

5. LGBT+ homelessness is worse than people think. This charity is 'on a mission' to create safe spaces

EXCLUSIVE

'She is not a scrounger': Labour's Jess Phillips on terminally ill sister-in-law's fight for benefits

● When Labour Party stalwart and former shadow cabinet member Jess Phillips talks about disability benefits, she clearly has some skin in the game.

"To me, when the Conservatives talk about people on PIP (personal independence payment) as being 'those people over there' – that isn't what it is to me," the Labour firebrand told Big Issue.

"Those are my people."

Phillips' sister-in-law – who is living with terminal cancer – is one of the 2.6 million British adults who receive the monthly allowance.

In April, Rishi Sunak's Conservative government proposed replacing these payments with vouchers, part of a broader crackdown on so-called "sick-note culture".

But Phillips described this as "unrealistic", slamming the use of conditionality to push people into unsustainable employment.

"The idea that my sister-in-law should be given vouchers... I would die in a ditch," the politician said.

"She's living with terminal cancer. She has two children.

"She has to have blood transfusions, she's always on chemo.

"The idea that she would be able to work, well, it's unrealistic, completely and utterly unrealistic. When she did get a job recently, she immediately ended up in hospital having an operation on her womb."

Sunak previously claimed that benefits are becoming a "lifestyle choice". Phillips is not impressed by this characterisation.

"When [my sister-in-law] had her initial breast cancer, which then spread all over her body, she was doing a degree in social work to become a social worker," she says.

"The way that [people on PIP] get talked about, like she's a shirker, it couldn't be further from the truth. That upsets me, the idea of people being pitched against people like her. Like she's some sort of scrounger. She is not a scrounger."

PIP fraud stood at 0.4% in the financial year ending 2024.

A MODEST PROPOSAL

PPE from one Covid contract worth £1.4bn has just been incinerated. Here's how the new government could have put that cash to good use



Remember all that personal protective equipment (PPE) the government bought during Covid but never used? Ever wondered what happened to it? Well, it turns out £1.4 billion worth of it has been destroyed or written off. And that's just from one supplier. An investigation by the BBC has revealed at least 1.57 billion items of PPE provided by Full Support Healthcare, an NHS supplier in Northamptonshire, has gone to waste – despite being manufactured to the proper standard. According to the BBC this is understood to be “the most wasteful government deal of the pandemic”. And that's saying something. How else could this have been better spent? Let's take a look.

Lifting 233,000 children out of poverty



The two-child benefit cap, which stops parents from claiming child tax credit or universal credit for more than two children, was introduced by the Conservatives in 2017. The End Child Poverty Coalition estimates that removing the policy would lift 300,000 children out of poverty, while reducing the depth of poverty for a further 800,000 children, at a cost of £1.8 billion. So £6,000 a child. Some crude maths suggests £1.4bn would therefore lift around 233,000 children out of poverty, easing the burden on the NHS.

Build 8,750 social homes



A recent study by consultancy firm JLL estimates that the cost of providing social housing for all 1.284 million people on a waiting list in the UK would run to £205bn. The cash could provide homes for 8,750 of them. The lack of social housing is a key driver in the housing crisis, which is putting people off public sector roles because they don't pay enough to be able to afford a private-rented home.

Uprate local housing allowance next year



In the 2023 autumn statement, Jeremy Hunt announced local housing allowance (LHA) will be uprated to the 30th percentile of local rents in April 2024, at a cost of £1.3bn. Housing benefits are supposed to help renters cover the bottom 30% of market rates – meaning tenants who receive LHA should have access to this. But when this is frozen – and rents continue to rise – it means fewer homes are available to them. The freeze is set to return next year despite private rents rising 8.7% in the last year on average. Going by the cost of the scheme for this year, £1.4bn would allow the government to keep the rates unfrozen for another year.

Scrap NHS hospital car park fees for a decade



In 2022, the NHS took £145.8 million from patients and visitors in car parking costs, the equivalent of £400,000 every day. There have long been calls for this cost to be scrapped altogether. You may not be able to do that with £1.4bn, but you could wipe them for almost 10 years.

Build a reservoir after 40 years of trying – and not fill it with sewage



Thames Water is trying to convince locals in Oxfordshire to let them build a reservoir near Abingdon. The company have long argued that the reservoir is needed to supply water to people in London and the South East and help tackle droughts and climate change. The project would cost £1.4bn. Ensuring the reservoir stays sewage spill-free might be wise.

GAMING



Rent is even too high in video games. The solution? Remove landlords

Even in video games there is no escape from sky-high rents.

Cities Skylines II is a detailed city building simulator which lets players build and manage their own city, controlling everything from roads to taxes to where sewage goes. But so many players were being inundated with complaints of high rent from virtual citizens that developer Colossal Order was recently forced to step in.

Developers updated the game to “remove the virtual landlord” to change the way rent is paid so a building's upkeep is covered equally by all renters. They also tweaked how renters react to not being able to afford rent. Rather than complaining about high rent when they don't have enough money in their virtual accounts, they will, grimly enough, “spend less money on resource consumption” ie cut back on food and bills. Unfortunately, fixing Britain's broken renting system will take a little more than patching a video game but the new government could press start by scrapping no-fault evictions, as Big Issue's Blueprint for Change calls for.

CARTOON



FURTHER EDUCATION



The years-long pay dispute that's become a fight for the futures of working-class students

In the last 20 years, the further education sector has contracted in the face of underfunding, leaving working-class students without avenues to learning

By Laura Kelly

● An ongoing row over pay and funding for further education (FE) lecturers across Scotland is having a significant impact on students' futures through a huge loss in teaching hours and marks not being registered. Amid a once-in-a-generation cost of living crisis, lecturers have not had a pay rise since 2021. But those at the heart of the industrial action say this is not just a fight for pay, but for the future of education in working-class communities.

"FE was always the place for working-class kids to go, people who maybe wouldn't consider university as a first step, or who need good training to get a better job," says English and Spanish lecturer Paula Dixon, speaking to Big Issue from the picket line of Glasgow Clyde College's Anniesland campus in late June. "But year on year they're cutting the funding."

Dixon has been working at Glasgow Clyde College for more than two decades and now represents her colleagues as branch secretary for the Educational Institute of Scotland – Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA). In the last 20 years, she's seen the FE sector contract in the face of persistent underfunding. Courses have been cut and jobs lost for

lecturers and support staff. “The difference is unreal,” she says.

Like most people who contributed to this article, Dixon sees FE as a “Cinderella sector”, overlooked by politicians in favour of both schools and universities. According to official figures, funding per full-time student in 2022/23 was £5,054 per year at FE colleges, compared to £7,558 at universities and £7,657 at secondary schools. College leaders – most of whom are paid more than £100,000 – have been too willing to let it happen, she argues.

This is not just a problem in Scotland. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) in December 2023 found a “long historical pattern [across the UK] where further education receives the smallest increases when overall spending rises and the largest cuts when governments are looking to reduce spending”. The number of adult learners in England has plummeted by 47% since 2010, according to a study by the Learning and Work Institute, as the government cut per-person funding by 28%. The IFS also warns of “silence on the inevitability of cuts” from Labour and other major parties during the general election, with further education identified as being on the chopping block. In recent months some universities have reportedly begun axing arts and humanities courses, such as anthropology, in a bid to save money, with others like Goldsmiths University in London looking to sack at least one in six academic staff.

‘A lot of further education lecturers can’t pay the bills’

The current pay dispute for FE lecturers in Scotland started in December 2022, when College Employers Scotland (CES), the national body for colleges as employers, tabled a 2% annual salary increase offer. That month, inflation was sitting at over 13%. EIS-FELA rejected the offer.

After 18 months of negotiations, the offer from CES now sits at £5,000 over three years. This represents an 11.5% pay increase for most lecturing staff in the sector by the end of the three-year period. But it will be a real-terms pay cut, says EIS-FELA, since prices have already risen by more than 10.4% since negotiations began. FE lecturers’ pay increases would also lag behind other groups of public sector workers – including police officers, firefighters, NHS workers and school teachers.

Gavin Donoghue, director of CES, says colleges are “determined to reach a lecturer pay settlement that is fair and affordable, and which supports our staff as we emerge from the cost of living crisis”. But, he adds, the sector is facing “exceptionally difficult and deteriorating financial circumstances, with an 8.5% real-terms cut in government funding since 2021/22 and a further cash cut of £32.7 million in the Scottish government’s budget for 2024/25”.

“Employers cannot afford to go beyond it,” he says.

Dixon remains unimpressed. “A lot of us can’t pay the bills,” she explains. “I’ve got three jobs, I work in here full time, so 35 hours during the day. Then I do a night class. I’ve had to take on private work, I also do SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) marking and I’m still not able to pay the bills.”

As industrial action has ramped up, her employers’ union-busting tactics have got more aggressive, she says. In response to EIS-FELA’s ‘resulting boycott’ (in which lecturers agree to continue teaching, marking and completing the rest of their work but refuse to enter students’ results into the official systems), some colleges have started ‘deeming’ staff pay – withholding up to 100% of salaries from staff taking industrial action short of strike.

“It is scary,” admits Dixon. “It’s meant to be scary. I’ve had a few sleepless nights, but we’ll get through it because they need to find a solution. We need to get back into work, doing our job teaching the students.”

CES defends the decision of colleges to deem staff pay, saying they are “unashamedly seeking to protect the interests of their students”. While results information is still being gathered for this year’s students, the impact of EIS-FELA’s resulting boycott is understood to be significant.

Some students ‘support the striking lecturers 100%’

Ryan Donachie is one of the students whose education has been hit by the strikes. “We’ve lost a significant number of teaching hours,” he says. “But I am fully clear on where I stand. I support the lecturers 100%. My lecturers and the support staff in the college have supported me through some incredibly difficult times.”

He returned to education at Glasgow Kelvin College this year as a mature student, after having to leave



Colleges are a significant route out of poverty for many people in Scotland

RYAN DONACHIE



None of them want to be taking this action. They are striking against massive cuts to contact time and courses

SHER KHALID-ALI

his job in the ambulance service following a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder. This year he has been studying a pathways course in humanities with the view to continuing into a degree course. Donachie plans to continue fighting for FE. “I come from a working-class background. I’m disabled. I would never have been able to go back to education and on to university if I didn’t go through college,” he says. “Colleges genuinely are a significant route out of poverty for many people in Scotland. They’re also great for widening access to education.”

Like Donachie, Sher Khalid-Ali didn’t think she would ever have the chance to go back to education after leaving school at 15 with no qualifications. “I was unemployed for a long time,” she says. “My life did a 180 when I went back to education.”

Khalid-Ali finished an access course at New College Lanarkshire in June last year, but her final course marks were not registered by her lecturers, so she feared she may miss out on her university place. She was staunch in her support for the strike action. “None of them want to be taking this action. Obviously they are striking for pay, but they’re also striking against massive cuts to contact time and courses.”

An agreement was finally reached whereby universities accepted partial marks from some students, and Khalid-Ali is now studying social sciences at the University of Stirling. She remains active with Student Action, a group set up to support FE lecturers.

“This matters so much to me because it literally saved my life – and I’m not a one off,” she explains. “Of the girls that went to uni from my class – you’re talking single parents, people who have had mental health issues, ex-drug addicts. These are people whose lives have been completely changed, and that’s just one class in one college. So when you imagine the actual impact of colleges on the wider community, it’s just incredible to me that they’re so under-appreciated and so under-funded.”

Scottish colleges have now finished for the summer, so the picket lines will pack up for a while. EIS-FELA members are being balloted over a pay offer that would add a 3% pay increase to the fourth year of the “full and final” CES offer. For now, the fight goes on.



Emeldah's stall helped her to send her children to school and make improvements to her home

© Peter Caton/CARE/2019



Maria's honey business helps her to support her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren!

© Ana Caroline de Lima/CARE/2018



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EDITOR'S LETTER



We should be Keane to make a connection

The Euros have not been great so far. Quite a number of average matches, no breakout players and an insistence on high-pressing football as the ONLY way to address the modern game has meant it's not been a classic.

So far, it's the sublime beauty of England's creative flair that has, alone, moved the dial. Only kidding! They've been terrible! By the time you read this, they might be out. If they are, and you support them, I commiserate with you. It must be frustrating to be promised so much and to see so little so timidly delivered. And yes, that's a very obvious bald political analogy – thank you, thankyouverymuch.

In truth, only the freewheeling, frantic chaos of Türkiye has offered genuine never-know-what-to-expect-next excitement.

One benefit of Euro 2024 is the increase in Roy Keane on screen. I loved Keane as a player, as a manager and now as a pundit. The essential Roy Keane-ness has always been at his core. Relatively small, wiry, taciturn, tough, brilliant, terrifying. In later years he introduced a beard that, during his period as second in command of the Republic of Ireland team, was so grey, wild and insistent that it seemed to inhabit its own even deeper realm of Roy Keane-ness. If you were a player subbed for an under-par performance, and The Beard moved towards you, even Martin O'Neill, the boss, with his lifebuoy of bonhomie, could not save you.

One thing that punditry has brought out in Keane, that wasn't always clear, is a sly humour. And also, despite it all, a warmth. And this warmth has resulted in a genuine affection for him by those around him.

This was particularly obvious last week when he was recording a podcast with Gary Neville, Ian Wright and Jill Scott. They were admonishing Neville for being constantly on the go,

for having huge success but not really taking time to be in the moment. Keane was clear. The measure of success in life was not millions in the bank but how much time you made for your friends and family. "If you can't do that," said Keane, "forget about it."

Recently, in Big Issue, Sarah Cunningham, boss of the World Wellbeing Movement, wrote about the deficit in focus on national wellbeing during the election campaign. Wellbeing, she said, was not a luxury but a basic human right. She saw it in every aspect of how we live, tied, for example, to housing provision and added that it also included things as varied as "encouraging grassroots sports, to designing housing and transport systems that facilitate social connection, creating affordable housing close to green spaces (known to be good for our mental health)". At its core, though, as Keane was getting at, it's about connections. Recently, my family went through a period that was very challenging. It was the connection with family and friends, and sometimes those a little less known, that carried us through. People made time. They didn't have to, but they sent out connective threads that began to lace together and make an impossible-to-break safety net. It was moving and remarkable.

Frequently at Big Issue we are clear that a great thing you can do with one of our vendor colleagues is to simply stop and chat. Even if you don't buy a magazine at that moment (though, why wouldn't you?!) being there makes a difference. In a period when time is a luxury, making time is a proper gift.

Time is limited. You can never be sure that a second chance to make a connection will come. So, listen to Roy Keane. It's the way forward.

Paul McNamee is UK Editor of Big Issue

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One thing that punditry has brought out in Keane, that wasn't always clear, is a sly humour. And also, despite it all, a warmth



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BIRD'S WORDS



New government, new opportunity for a social security rethink

I suppose I identify mostly with those who are leading a drifting and broken life of poverty. Those who in my younger days I was most like. Moneyless, hopeless and often antisocial. Restless, reckless, feckless and lost. Not sure of anything other than trying to get by. Appalling education, appalling social skills and appalling futures.

The big difference between now and my young times is that there was, then, no government relief to rely upon. You were on your own. You had to fit in, get a job, find unsavoury work; you had to find the means to pay your way.

All that has changed through the years since the '70s when I was a young man. Now, especially since so many redundant workers were put on social security when Thatcherism closed down basic industries, social security has become the place to warehouse people. To keep them ticking over. Never to lift them out of the poverty that they find themselves in.

But so much else has also changed. Even a ne'er-do-well could always get a reasonably cheap room and find a job that enabled you to make enough to support yourself. More difficult for families, especially large families, often dependent on one wage earner. Then, poverty ate away at life and made people old before their time.

The state increasingly encroached on poverty – did not get rid of it, but made it almost liveable. But still it was poverty, and social security was used as a means of keeping people out of the streets and homelessness.

The rescue packages that various governments of different political persuasions handed out to people in poverty rescued no one, but took away the wretchedness of destitution. Took away

the worst vestiges of slum dwelling – but not its entirety.

What social security has done for the kind of restless lostness I suffered from as a youth and young man has been to support the condition but not end it. An underinvestment in getting people out of poverty has enabled people merely to survive in this underfed, under-employed, under-utilised life. Millions await the opportunity that never arrives.

State-funded and state-supported poverty has meant tying up billions not on changing a situation but on maintaining it. The status quo rules OK. And virtually every government since the loosening of social security provision has accepted this waste of human talent because they do not seem to be able to get people out of the poverty they suffer from.

Yet if we had kept the strict rules that stopped people from getting social security, meaning that even the most unsavoury job would have to be taken, we would have done nothing to get rid of poverty. People would still live poverty lives. And even today, with over 60% of universal credit recipients in



THIS WEEK JOHN WILL BE

Reading:

Dr Johnson's Dictionary by Henry Hitchings

Watching:

Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F (2024)

Listening:

Vivaldi's *La Folia* (Madness), Concerto for Two Cellos

Doing:

Speaking at a financial inclusion conference

work, you can see that all the support offered through social security has failed to address the central problem of how you get people out of poverty.

Poverty dismantlement has been made more complex and less attainable because all of the big social intervention money is spent on just holding the hands of the poorest and not on getting them out and way beyond the reach of poverty's pernicious toxicity.

None of us now, or certainly none who have a heart, would stop social security. But unless we face up to how little it has done to get people out of poverty then we are kidding ourselves that our social security pound is doing some magic and wondrous job.

What I see when I see people lost with nothing to do because they have their rent paid and some money given to live on – never enough – is desperation. I see mental illness. I see self harm.

So let's not kid ourselves that giving people some form of support that does not help them get beyond poverty is enough. We have to revolutionise state support so that it can bring people out of poverty through education and social training. It cannot leave them empty and devoid of opportunity.

Will the new government tackle the 'treading water' reality of social security that does not give people anything secure, other than a pittance?

When I see young men lost and seemingly outside of things I only wish we had spent more time since the creation of the welfare state on breaking their poverty. Too much emphasis has been given to relief but not to social transformation. For too long we have failed to provide the schooling that embraces the proficiencies needed for the new industries that we need. And our governments have not looked at examples from around the world that have shown other governments committing themselves to social justice through raising people out of poverty, not maintaining them in it.

Will the new government embrace breaking people out of poverty by education and child support, by skilling into new jobs – and creating industries that will provide the well-paid jobs that have to go with any exit out of need? Let's hope it's not more of the same, which would be a great shame. Most of us look for poverty to be ended, not maintained on the state-sponsored drip feed.

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Survivor stories

In response to the story of the male domestic abuse survivor [on bigissue.com]: What a very strong man! Well done Max. My three children and I were victims of domestic abuse by my ex-husband. Where he says he 'felt like giving up' I understand that fully. I felt like I was in a dark tunnel with no way out and it was horrendous. I got custody of my children (as they were then) and a court order for life against my ex. I put up with the abuse for 17, almost 18 years, but my son said something that shook me by the shoulders. "Either he goes or I do."

I contacted the police and Women's Aid. I had kept the abuse quiet as I had nowhere to go, no money and was worried about nobody believing me.

I'd been too scared to go to the police for fears that they'd have my children taken away. That wasn't my outcome at all. I had an amazing support network of professionals from the GP to an IDVA [Independent

Domestic Violence Advocate] and an incredibly supportive police friend.

It's taken me 12 years to rebuild my life, I'm still not where I need to be but little by little I am getting there.

Lissia Morris, Southwold

Big issue, big thanks

I've been buying the Big Issue for quite a few years now, and I found the issue of 17 June [Disabilities week special, Issue 1620] absolutely compelling. I thought that it was the best issue I'd ever read.

All my life there has been someone in my family with a disability whether physical or intellectual. Most people notice the disability and don't see the person – times without number I've been out and about with one or other of my disabled family members, only to see them patronised or ignored.

Well done, Big Issue, for putting people with intellectual disabilities front and centre.

Kate

RE: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FUNDING SHORTAGES

[Issue 1622, 01-07 July]

● I have a son, five years old, recently diagnosed with autism and ADHD. We have finally had an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) granted but the council took so long to grant the EHCP that we lost our place in the specialised school around the corner from us and are now having to look hours away from the area for any school that will take my son.

On top of this, his school has permanently excluded him for punching a teacher on the stomach. Bear in mind he is only five and hasn't got the power to break a twig let alone hurt an adult. I am now struggling with working from home while caring for my son as I'm an only parent after my wife died of brain cancer last year. I am now at the mercy of the council finding a school for my son before I lose my job.

Rudi Ries, Polegate

● The government signed a contract with Newton Europe to cut new EHCPs by 20%, keep children with SEN in mainstream school, and reduce specialist school placements. The safety valve programme started in 2021 where local authorities signed to receive bail-outs, which meant cuts to SEN support. They talk about early intervention but there are so many issues with accessing assessments for children with SEN.

There's been a rise in children's EHCPs being ceased, a rise in EHCP requests automatically declined. A continuing decline in services, an increase in school avoidance, mental health issues, school age suicides, family breakdown. Often blamed on austerity, poverty, bad parenting, but research shows that its professional involvement, lack of commissioned services.

Georgina Robertson, Nottingham

ISSUE 1622

Fantastic cover!
@BigIssue still
holding the
bar high

@KathrynBtweets



Big Issue caught up with our cover star outside Westminster in the final hours of the election campaign

Headline axe

I wonder if the 'See it. Say it. Sorted' campaign is another example of government manipulation to distract attention from issues like the lack of affordable housing. Here in Oxford there are a large number of people living on the streets and clear social deprivation in many areas. I see little going on to address that.

Meanwhile, terrorist watching and refugee bashing gets headlines. The fostering of public hyper-vigilance can go badly wrong. I recently had a squad of 10 armed police officers come to my home. I had a taser pointed at me, was handcuffed and temporarily arrested.

Someone, probably from the nearby school, had reported that there was a man waving an axe in the street. Actually, I am not a Viking. Given my cultural background it would be surprising if I were (though there is a film about it; *The 13th Warrior*).

I'd bought a long-handled wood-scraper from Wickes and was holding it in my hand as I cycled home. There seems to be hysteria in Britain at present.

In my opinion, the politicians that deserve power are those who do not hop on the bandwagon. They are the ones who keep speaking on and dealing with real issues like housing, the environment, racism, Islamophobia, sexism, pay disparity... in ways that can effect genuine change.

David Al-Fahmi, Oxford

In last week's issue we reported that schools are struggling to provide SEN services for all who need them



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Kwajo Tweneboa and his man

ing to

The nation's highest profile housing campaigner tells Big Issue why building social housing and having more tracksuits in parliament can address the UK's biggest housing crisis since World War II

Britain

Interview by Liam Geraghty

ifesto for change

● If the new government fails to take any decisive action to end the housing crisis that's been growing for decades, they can't say they weren't given every opportunity.

Big Issue's Blueprint for Change (see over the page) has already laid strong foundations for political leaders to do what generations of MPs have failed to do: ensure everyone has a safe and affordable home.

That won't be the only plan the prime minister can build on – he'll have Kwajo Tweneboa's too.

Britain's most high-profile housing campaigner now has his own book *Our Country in Crisis*, released just two weeks after the country voted for who would sit in Number 10 for the next five years.

The book goes broader than Tweneboa's own experiences and those of the hundreds of tenants that he has helped hold their landlords' feet to the fire since rising to fame on social media in 2021.

It is a comprehensive breakdown of the problems with housing in the UK and its causes, from a failure to build much-needed social housing and the impact of Right to Buy, to stigma and housing being treated as a wealth asset rather than a basic necessity.

It also offers a solution, while at the heart of the book, much like Tweneboa's work, are the people living with the everyday horrors of the housing crisis as it exists today.

"It's not just a coming-of-age book, but also a manifesto for change," Tweneboa tells Big Issue.

"If in five years' time things are completely pear-shaped, nobody can say they weren't warned."

It's been less than three years since Tweneboa's tweet went viral about the horrible conditions he was living in while caring for his terminally ill father on the Eastfields estate in Mitcham, South-West London.

His demand for landlord Clarion to help after months of complaints falling on deaf ears saw him go into his neighbours' homes and film the conditions they were living in. Then tenants elsewhere got in touch and Tweneboa started calling out failing councils, housing associations and private landlords across the country.

Now he's a full-time housing campaigner, still fighting for tenants living in misery, giving talks around the UK and lobbying government ministers ►

for change. Ironically enough, a former government cabinet minister has endorsed his book and provided a quote for the sleeve: none other than Michael Gove. The former housing secretary called the book “a must-read for anyone who cares about the state of the nation”.

It is perhaps testament to how Tweneboa has gone beyond screaming into the Twitter abyss to becoming a respected authority on how to get a grip on a crisis politicians, including Gove, have failed to halt for decades.

“You know what, I was glad and I was surprised. He sent me a really nice message beforehand and said he would really love to write a quote for the book. In all honesty, he didn’t have to,” says Tweneboa.

“I hope now he’s no longer an MP as he’s stepped down, he is more open and critical. He wasn’t your typical right-wing Conservative politician. I think he had common sense and a working pair of eyes and he could see where people were suffering.”

The state of housing is the biggest crisis we’ve faced arguably since World War II

But there’s still no one quite like Tweneboa. When Big Issue meets him in Brixton, he’s come straight from helping his mum solve a problem with her home.

And in the hour or so he spends with us, he gets a tonne of missed calls and WhatsApp messages. It’s a sign of just how in-demand he is and just how deep the housing crisis goes.

In the time he has been campaigning, private rents have hit record highs, house prices have peaked, mortgages

Are young people still dreaming of owning their own home?

By Sam Gelder

It was more than an hour into the first televised election debate when Keir Starmer told Rishi Sunak “the dream of home ownership is dead for young people”.

Big Issue asked Tweneboa, 25, when the dream died for him.

“Even at 10 years old, I wasn’t thinking I wanted to own my own home. That idea was just completely gone,” he said.

“I have no real ambition to want to own my own home. I think this is a notion that they’re ramming down our throats constantly when, in fact, young people have struggled so much and been dealt such a bad card, especially from politicians and politics, that this is just completely out of touch with their realities.”

Polling from youth homelessness charity Centrepoint, shared exclusively with Big Issue, showed exactly what young people want from the next government from its housing plans – and owning a home was not on the wishlist.

The Opinium survey of 1,000 16- to 25-year-olds found that 86% want leaders to make private renting more affordable, while 91% said it was important to build more social housing.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of young people said combating the cost of living crisis should be top priority.

Centrepoint is urging the next government to prioritise the building of social homes, including one-bedroom properties for young people on waiting lists.

Balbir Kaur Chatrik, Centrepoint’s director of policy, said: “With skyrocketing private rents and social housing stock drying up, the next generation has clear expectations of the next government.

“This crisis needs to be addressed once and for all as too many young people, especially those with experience of homelessness, are seeing their lives held back by a lack of truly affordable housing.”

145,800

children are growing up in temporary accommodation in England. The 112,660 households living in that situation rose 12% in 2023 alone

£1,262

a month is the average UK private rent in Great Britain as of May 2024. That’s a record high and up 8.7% in a year (ONS)

£281,000

is the average UK house price in Great Britain as of April 2024. That’s 1.1% higher than a year ago (ONS)

have soared, the number of households living in temporary accommodation has hit new heights and thousands of renters have been evicted from their homes.

In response, the number of homes, particularly much-needed social rent homes, has failed to hit delivery targets, the Renters Reform Bill has collapsed, the target of ending rough sleeping has gone unfulfilled and Grenfell survivors’ and bereaved families’ wait for justice goes on.

That was the grim backdrop in a general election campaign where housing was down the priority pecking order.

Both parties largely focused on home ownership to appeal to voters with precious little commitment to building the 90,000 social rent homes per year needed over the next decade to end the housing crisis, according to Shelter.

Neither of the parties committed to ending Right to Buy either, much to Tweneboa’s chagrin.

It’s a sign that politicians are out of touch, he says, and the class of 2024 need to look back to the days of Beveridge, Attlee and postwar Labour to meet the challenge they face.

“Political parties often worry about winning an election and the next election and the next election and there’s a lot of short-termism,” he says.

“People want delivery. People want stability. People want genuine change for the right reasons. People want politicians with integrity and morals, empathy and understanding for what it is they need behind their closed doors. I think the next government really has an opportunity to change things.

“The state of housing at the moment is the biggest housing crisis we’ve faced arguably since World War II. We’re going to need a similar response, similar to what happened after World War II, which really is going to fix things.”

Tweneboa’s book sets out why it doesn’t need to take a war on British soil to fix the housing crisis and why solving it delivers everything the incoming government should want.

How making homes safe and more affordable could shorten NHS waiting lists or boost education to benefit Brits.

How more class diversity in Westminster could boost political will to build social housing and stymie the stigma attached to it. The discomfort Tweneboa experienced when in parliament “wearing my Air Maxes and wearing my tracksuit” summed up the disconnect for him.

I want people to realise that there are solutions and in a lot of cases it doesn't cost a lot

Reading his manifesto for change should also instil a sense of anger at how far away we are from fixing housing.

"I want people to understand – even if they've not been through it – that it's completely fucked up what's happening and what's happened for so long, how people have been failed," says Tweneboa.

"A lot of the issues that we see as a society, you can directly link back to housing, especially when it comes to young people, especially when it comes to crime, when it comes to poverty, when it comes to education and health-care. I want people to really understand that and be angry at what's happened.

"I've said for the last few weeks that the current state of housing, the housing crisis, is the biggest barrier to economic prosperity in this country. I firmly believe that, and if they don't fix that, they can forget about talking about delivering economic prosperity."

But, as Britain embarks on a whole new political era, Tweneboa is like all of us: hoping for a future where a generation will one day be born without a housing crisis.

"I want people to realise that there are solutions and in a lot of cases it doesn't cost a lot," he says. "It starts with getting rid of the stigma that we currently have around housing and social housing, it starts with sitting down and having the right people around the table. And it starts with politicians actually respecting the idea that we need to be speaking to the people affected by the policies that were implemented.

"And, actually, if they deliver the right things, it's going to be attractive to their voter base, it's going to win the election, because people are sick and tired of the same old."



Our Country in Crisis by Kwajo Tweneboa is out on 18 July (Trapeze, £20) @LGeraghty23

Politicians promised to build at least 1.5 million homes – but figures show they have an uphill task

By Sam Gelder

300,000

homes built in a year was the last government's housebuilding target. The elusive figure featured again in Labour's manifesto while the Tories promised to top it

90,000

social rent homes are needed every year for the next 10 years, according to Shelter and the National Housing Federation

15%

the number by which social rent homes are forecast to fall in the next year based on government and GLA figures

The incoming government has promised to deliver the planning reforms needed to build more than 1.5 million homes over the next five years.

But ministers will be on the back foot from day one with a series of gloomy forecasts for Britain's housebuilding prospects.

A combination of planning laws, labour shortages, inflation's impact on the prices of homes and materials as well as the cost of building safety work has construction across the country "grinding to a halt".

The number of "affordable" homes funded by the government or the Greater London Authority has plummeted, for example. Work started on just 31,425 homes in 2023-24, down 43% from the 55,169 starts in 2022-23.

Within that, there was also a 15% reduction in the number of homes being built for social rent, with 6,483 starts in 2022-23 and 5,536 in 23-24.

Housing associations have also stopped building. Work started on just 6,990 homes in the second half of 2023, compared with 16,270 the previous year.

Data from the G15 group of housing associations in London has found its members were expected to start work on 1,769 affordable homes in London this year, down from 7,363 last year.

G15 chair Fiona Fletcher-Smith told a City Hall meeting in December there was a "refocus" from housing associations because of the

substandard condition of the country's housing stock.

"That refocus is on existing homes, our existing residents, and investing in their homes," she said. "The G15 will spend £1.5 billion per year over the next 10 years on existing homes and getting them up to a decent standard."

Andy Hulme, chief executive of G15 member Hyde Group, said the current system setting social housing rents is a "verging on madness". He said: "We spend £200 million a year maintaining and improving our homes, yet we don't know until three months before the start of the financial year what rent we can charge and therefore whether we've got the money to do that."

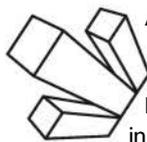
Generally, housebuilding is set to fall to half of the Conservatives' 300,000-a-year target, according to Savills.

Figures from the National House Building Council for the first quarter of 2024 saw the number of new homes registered to be built slumped 20% from 27,619 in the same period in 2023 to 21,967 while the number of homes completed dropped 13% to 26,240.

A wet winter was partially to blame, and there may well be stormy waters ahead for the new government too after making big promises to boost housebuilding on the election trail.

@samgelder

Big Issue's Blueprint pledge



And so it begins. After the promises comes reality. The decline in housebuilding, the crisis in housing affordability, no-fault evictions, the seeming impossibility of ending street homelessness, poverty rising like an engorged river – we have all lived through 14 increasingly hard years. With a new administration, there is a new positivity – along with a pressure to deliver. Big Issue will continue to agitate for positive change.

Through the election period, we challenged the runners and riders with our Blueprint for Change – our plan to get to grips with corrosive

poverty in Britain. Now, we want to see the number one ask on our blueprint, housing, to be met. In the first 12 months, we and thousands of you who signed our petition, demand significant moves on the following:

- Build more social and affordable housing and commit to providing high-quality public services.
- End Section 21 no-fault evictions.
- Increase universal credit to £120 a week for a single adult and £200 for a couple as an 'essentials guarantee'.
- Reform the energy price cap to make it fit for purpose for low-income households and pensioners.

We'll let the new government know that we are going to keep on with this.



‘OUR PRIDE’ – MEET THE CITR

Most brands have a following, but some inspire generations-deep loyalty. As Vicky Parrott discovers, Citroën’s fan base is as eclectic and adventurous as the cars themselves

Illustrations by Adam Avery

Citroën has always been a brand apart: a company that isn’t afraid to strive for different solutions to improve the lives of everyday motorists. Its human-centric attitude dates back to the company’s founder, Andre Citroën, who founded the brand in 1919 and broke new ground for employee welfare by offering an on-site creche, as well as dental and medical cover.

Maybe it’s that core ethos of bettering the lives of the masses that has gained the brand one of the most fervently loyal global fan bases of any car company. Don’t take our word for it, though. Take theirs...

‘It’s taken me six months to restore’

Dominic White

I own a 1993 Citroën AX. I grew up around classic Citroëns, and the AX

always caught my eye. Now that I’m old enough, I’m learning to drive. I’ve driven the car a little bit on private land – it’s surprisingly smooth! I’m going to take the car to the Citroën Owners Club meets, as well as a few other events. It’s taken me six months to restore; I started with the brakes, then moved to bodywork. Along the way I personalised small details such as orange indicator lamps and a new gear knob. Citroën has always stood out to me for the unique designs and engineering – especially the hydropneumatic suspension system of the ’70s.

‘I wanted something fun to drive’

Melik Shash & Vanessa Willis

We currently own two Citroën Saxos, both of which are modified. I got the first one as I wanted something fun to drive, and I also wanted a modified car as I’ve loved the Max Power car scene since I was in my teens. The Saxo’s always been great for this. They’re affordable to buy and keep, parts cost pennies and they’re great to drive. Both of our cars were bought already modified, and my partner and I have since done more to them. Everything’s been done on a budget, but the cars are our pride and joy.



I own a Saxo and a new Ami – and the Ami is my daily driver!

Zoë Bond-Pinner



My daily driver is an £800 Citroën C5, and I also own a 1989 Citroën BX GTi 16v.

Mark Smith



My GSA X1! A fantastic European cruiser.

Chris Salter





'E AND JOY' ROËN SUPERFANS



'Citroëns, to me, are special'

George Payne

My 2000 Xantia Estate HDi has done 140,000 miles. It's a cruise liner on the motorway, and I've no issue with trusting it to do my commuting. I also use it as a camping car; it's taken us the length and breadth of Wales in the last months, and we're away in it for another eight weekends over the summer. Citroëns, to me, are special because they feel like the designers and engineers just agreed to make things happen. Single-spoke steering wheel? No problem. Insane slalom capabilities that are the envy of sports and supercars of the future? Easy.

'Citroën has such a strong community'

Clare Howorth

I have always been a Citroën fan – ever since I was a child, when my parents put me and my sisters in the back of their DS Estate. I eventually got my own 2CV when I was 17, a red and white Dolly known as Georgie.

That's not the only Citroën in the family – my parents owned various DS models, my kids have a Citroën C1 and a Cactus, and my

daily runner is a C5 3.0 V6 petrol. I've had loads of adventures with my cars. I once stuffed the kids in my 2CV, attached a trailer to it for all our stuff, and drove to Spain. That was a good trip. When I was young I took my 2CV to Germany on a whim. Travel just doesn't scare me, really.

My best trip was to Croatia for the 2CV World Meeting in 2019. I'm a member of the Citroën Car Club, but most of my time and efforts go into the 2CV GB club. I drove my 2CV down and I was able to drive many of the 96 cars there, up and down the mountains and into Split. I've had so many adventures that I've made a couple of Instagram channels about them – @Citroënnaddict and @Retrocardesigns.

It is true that it's all about the people, as well as the cars, and Citroën has such a strong community. So, if you love the brand, do join the clubs. It changes the ownership experience so much for the better.

With thanks to all at the Citroën Car Club and the 2CV GB club, who generously gave more stories and photos than we were able to share

Find your local Citroën dealer at citroen.co.uk

I have a life-long love of Citroëns and currently own three, including an Ami Super Estate.

Ragnar Ragnarson



Meet Sonny Jim. He's a 50-year-old Citroën Mehari, with a story to tell...

Shane Rooney



My daily driver is a 2012 Citroën DS5 Hybrid, with 252,000 miles on the clock!

Stephanie Gribbin

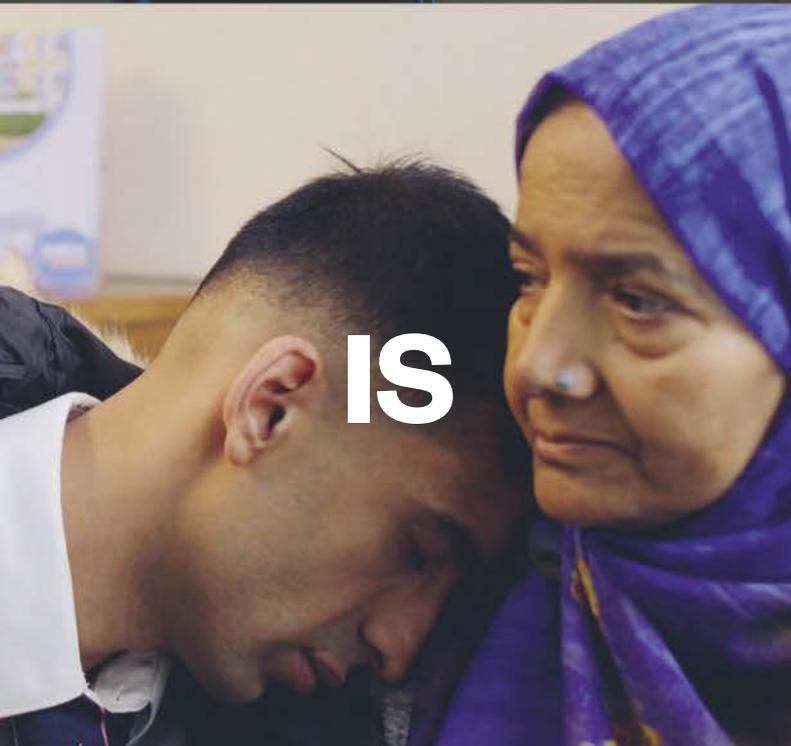




BEHIND



EVERY



IS



A



WAITING



TO BE



STATISTIC



STORY



TOLD

Big Issue and Cardboard Citizens are proud to present a new series of short films that show homelessness is More Than One Story

As a supporter of Big Issue, you know as well as we do that every vendor has their own story. Homelessness is not the big issue in itself, rather the result of other problems, prejudices and failures in the system. Cardboard Citizens is a charity that uses drama and performance to transform the lives of people experiencing homelessness. Like Big Issue, they were founded in 1991 and have likewise spent more than three decades supporting those on the margins and amplifying their voices.

They have created a new series of short films in collaboration with Black Apron Entertainment, called *More Than One Story*. Each of the nine monologues explores a reason for somebody becoming homeless – from domestic violence to failures in the care or prison system.

Written and performed by 18 artists, each with their own experience of homelessness, poverty or inequity, *More Than One Story* challenges misconceptions around homelessness in the UK today.

Chris Sonnex is artistic director and joint CEO of Cardboard Citizens. He said: “Many of us with lived experience of homelessness know all too well that there are many variables outside of us that create these inequities. This is why we have commissioned a raft of fearless and talented writers to help us better interrogate the systemic failings and biases that lead to the stark division between the haves

and the have nots. We’re collaborating with writers who understand homelessness, poverty and inequity from the inside, who can bring stories that are hidden from view into the light with an authenticity that resonates with their own experiences.”

The *More Than One Story* series shines a spotlight on the human side of homelessness and Big Issue is proud to be a media partner. In the magazine each week we will bring you a new film, with the story behind the story and a link to watch via our website where they will be available to watch from Thursdays. The first monologue is called *Sandwiches*. It gives a frank, first-person perspective on what living on the streets is really like. The storyteller Ellie, played by Oriana White, tells us about the world-shrinking that goes on and the performative pity of passers-by who overload her with sandwiches.

“Whatever I need from you, and whatever I want from you, it’s not sandwiches,” Ellie says. “I reject your half-hearted, minimal possible effort, shoulder-length attempts to make me part of your world via your sympathy.”

Sandwiches was written by Naomi Westerman, a writer and anthropologist with experience of homelessness, whose work has been performed in theatres across the UK. Over the page, she explains what inspired her to write the piece. ▶

(Left to right, from top row) Natasha Sparkes in *Boiling Frogs*; Noah Silverstone in *And For Once, I Just Let It Be Nice*; Shahab Awad and Community Company in *This Is What It Means*; Mansa Ahmed with Noor Bashir in *Sabbir at the Estate Agents*; David Olapoju in *Ozward Boateng, If You Must*; Michael Quartey in *No Walls, Still Trapped*; Sonia Singh in *The Surviving Room*; Yvonne Wickham in *Snakes and Landlords*; Oriana White in *Sandwiches*

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- 07:10 BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
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- 10:10 WALSALL ARENA
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MORE THAN ONE STORY

1/9

Sandwiches



By Naomi Westerman

● Becoming a playwright is never easy but my journey to success was more winding than most. Growing up, I loved to read Shakespeare but had little access to anything cultural. I left school aged 12 and spent my first night on the streets not long after. By 17, after a disastrous stint in foster care, I was being housed in B&Bs.

I went back to education when I was in my early 20s, passing exams via correspondence course before applying to university as a mature student, going on to a PhD in Neuroanthropology. Despite being a STEM student I discovered acting at university, founded a fringe theatre company during my Masters, and wrote my first play during the first year of my PhD. Theatre changed my life, and when that play was accepted for production, a whole new world – certainly a new career – opened up.

That's why I was so thrilled when Cardboard Citizens commissioned me to write *Sandwiches*, which was inspired both by my own life, and by the sense I'd swum across a vast ocean and didn't realise until I reached dry land how many sharks I'd avoided.

Which is to say, this monologue explores what so nearly could have happened. I'm acutely aware of how privileged I am to have been given these extraordinary opportunities. I obviously had benefits: My late dad (a gifted mathematician) escaped poverty via education, and he gave me a road map. But it was still so hard. Years of living in flats with mould all over the walls, unable to buy food till food became the enemy. Nights believing I would die because I couldn't stop shaking from



Oriana White

Sandwiches is performed by Oriana White (pictured above), a playwright, actor and poet. London-based with Mexican-Indian, Spanish and Welsh heritage, she lives with deafness, Crohn's, osteoarthritis and CPTSD. Oriana has lived with the lifelong impact of homelessness since childhood, which inspires her own writing.

the cold, not being able to remember when I'd last eaten. But I was able to fight, and a lot of people simply can't – and they shouldn't be expected to. I was 'lucky' I guess in that my coping techniques were anorexia and self-harm – things that don't necessarily contraindicate a successful academic career! – not drugs or sex. But avoiding addiction doesn't make me a morally better person, just luckier.

And that's why I wrote *Sandwiches*. To show the path from foster child to adult rough sleeper. To show that the care people pretend to show to the most vulnerable in society is conditional. A sandwich says, "I think if I give you cash, you'll spend it on drugs." A sandwich says, "I want to think of myself as the kind of Good Person who helps the homeless, but..." A sandwich says, "I think I know better than you."

And this has to be addressed, because no one ends up on the streets without having been profoundly failed by the system. Repeatedly. For years. But I also wrote *Sandwiches* because the world needs to see homeless people as people, not poverty porn. Oriana White beautifully brought to life Ellie's childlike optimism and love of nature. My deep love of animals grounded me throughout my own journey and it grounds Ellie in her rejection of other people's condescension and her sandwiches, enabling her to live life on her own terms.

Because homeless people need more than sandwiches: they need and deserve to be seen as unique individuals. I hope *Sandwiches* can play a tiny part in that.

naomiwesterman.com



To watch this film scan this QR code or visit: bigissue.com/news/housing/cardboard-citizens-more-than-one-story-homelessness-sandwiches

Sandwiches will be live from Thursday afternoon, with a new film following each week.



SPECIAL SCREENING

● This weekend, on Saturday 13 July, Cardboard Citizens will be hosting a special screening event at the Barbican Cinema featuring all nine monologues and followed by a panel discussion on social justice inspired by some of the issues featured in the films. The panel includes multi-award-winning author, former Children's Laureate and Cardboard Citizens Ambassador, Malorie Blackman (more from her on p28), *More Than One Story* director, writer and artistic director of Cardboard Citizens Chris Sonnex, and Big Issue Ambassador Sabrina Cohen-Hatton (all pictured above), alongside other writers and performers. For more information visit barbican.org.uk/whats-on



MALORIE BLACKMAN

She used to suppress her instincts, but when the acclaimed author discovered she was neurodivergent everything finally made sense



At the age of 16, my preoccupations were reading and writing. I was writing poetry for my own amusement and just getting through school. I was studying chemistry, classical civilisation and sociology. Within two weeks of chemistry I realised that, as much as I loved the subject, there was no way I could do an A level in it. So I changed it to English and thank god I did. I think when I was choosing, I was thinking about getting a good job. Instead of choosing stuff that I enjoyed. If I had to speak to my younger self, I'd say choose the things you're interested in in life.

My mum taught me about resilience from an early age because she had to dig deep when she and my dad split up. Suddenly she was responsible for paying all the bills and looking after me and my brothers. We were stony broke. Relationships in the family were fractured but it was much better when we finally had our own place. It wasn't brilliant by any measure. But it was ours, and it was certainly better than some of the places, like homeless hostels, that we'd lived in before. My mum was working really hard to make ends meet and put food on the table. I had Saturday jobs to try and help out. I was thinking, should I just leave school at 16 and try to get a job? Then out of the blue came a letter about an educational maintenance allowance. And I was eligible for it. If that hadn't come we wouldn't be having this conversation now. It was a lifeline.

My mum and dad told us about Barbados. And when relatives came around they would talk about "back home in Barbados" and so on, but they were just stories I avidly listened to. I didn't actually go to Barbados myself until I was in my early 20s. Whenever I explicitly asked my mum about Barbados, she would say it was a while ago. Later on she became more forthcoming about her childhood.

When I did go to Barbados I felt less of a connection that I'd hoped. The experience was soured a bit because I went on a package holiday and I was the only black person on the plane. And when we got off I was the only customer they pulled aside to look in my bags. So it wasn't a great start. But then I had a lovely two weeks. It was just so nice knowing that this was where my parents were born, and here were all the places I'd heard so much about. But I expected to feel like 'yes, I'm coming home'. And I didn't.

1978 THE YEAR MALORIE TURNS 16

Film director Roman Polanski skips bail in the US and flees to France

The world's first GPS satellite is launched

Synthetic insulin is developed

I'd tell my teenage self to embrace who she is, and don't be embarrassed by it and don't be ashamed of it. I was strange. I was weird. I would do things like, if I set out of the house on my left foot one day, I'd have to set out on my right foot the next day. I wouldn't walk on the cracks. If I was sitting reading I didn't realise I was rocking back and forth. I was overly literal and didn't get a lot of jokes. I'd be thinking, why is everyone else laughing? I don't get it. Why have you said that? I would take people and words at face value. I used to try and suppress my instincts – I knew it wasn't how other people thought or felt or acted. Only years later, when I was reading about neurodivergence did I think, ah, that's what I am. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with that and I should actually embrace that part of myself.

I think my younger self wouldn't believe that I actually made a living out of something I had never even considered as a teenager. I never read any books written by black authors or about black characters. The first play I read with a black character was *Otello* when I was 17. The first book was *The Color Purple*, and that was when I was 21. So even though I'd been writing for myself since I was eight or nine for my own amusement, it never occurred to me that I could actually make a living out of it.

If I could go back and speak to my younger self, I would say, don't be afraid to take risks. If you think you know what you really want to do, just get on with it. That was a lesson that took me a while to learn. And don't be afraid to be laughed at. Some people might laugh at you when you say this is what you want to do. Just do your own thing.

The first big breakthrough when it came to writing was when I finally got published after 82 rejection letters. I was 28. I had eight or nine different books rejected, one after the other. Years passed and everyone was still saying no. But still I would knuckle down and get on with it. As soon as I finished one book and sent it off, I would immediately start the next. I would always have four or five ideas on the go in my head. Then I got a letter from Live Wire books saying "Dear Malorie Blackman we would love to print your stories". After all those rejection letters it felt truly amazing, completely joyous. Because I'd started to wonder if I was wasting my time. I made a deal with myself that if I got 100 rejection letters I would have a rethink. But I only got to 82. Then later I had

a real breakthrough with *Noughts and Crosses*, because that was picked as a BBC Big Read. And it won the Federation of Children's Book Award, which is voted for by tens of thousands of children. That really changed things for me.

If I could have one last conversation with anyone I think it would be my brother because he died during the Covid pandemic.

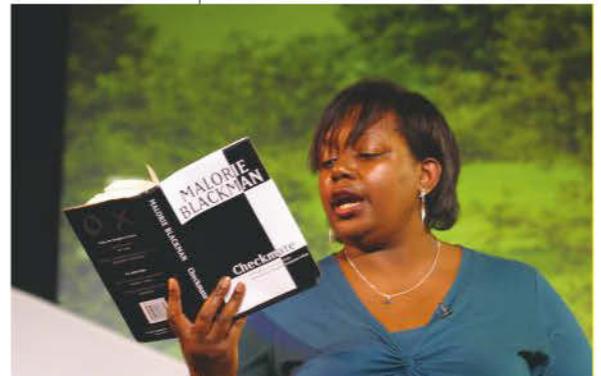
We weren't close and I kind of regret that. It would have been nice to sit down and have a proper conversation about his life, and just be closer than we were when he died. That would have been good.

Stories are so important in engendering empathy in people, they give you a chance to walk in someone else's shoes for a while and see life through someone else's eyes. One of my books, *Boys Don't Cry*, has a character who's gay and I've had letters from teens saying the book helped them to come out to their parents. I've had letters from people about the Troubles in *Noughts and Crosses* with people saying, ah, you're actually talking about the situation in Ireland, between Protestants and Catholics. I love that: readers relating it to their own circumstances. That's why I think there needs to be more emphasis on the arts in schools. I'm not saying science subjects are not important, of course they are. But I think this emphasis on STEM is the wrong way to go. You can understand yourself and others better through drama and music and books and films. We ignore them at our peril, because they are vital, for our relationships and for our mental health.

I was thrilled to be even considered for writing for *Doctor Who*. And the fact that I got to write about Rosa Parks – she's such a hero, I just find her so amazing. She had such courage to do that [Parks was a black woman who refused to give her bus seat to a white passenger in segregated Alabama]. And she knew what the repercussions would be; she lost her job, she had death threats, she had to move state. So writing about her was in itself a dream come true. That was definitely one of my happy moments, just being in the writers' room of *Doctor Who*, being part of that process. I look back and there have been so many times that I just had that 'pinch me' moment. Am I dreaming? Because this is a really lovely dream.

Malorie Blackman is an ambassador for Cardboard Citizens. Her autobiography *Just Sayin'* is out now (Merky, £10.99) Interview: Jane Graham @janeannie

I MADE A DEAL WITH MYSELF THAT IF I GOT 100 REJECTION LETTERS I WOULD HAVE A RETHINK. BUT I ONLY GOT TO 82



▲ 2006 Reading from her book, *Checkmate*, at the Hay Festival of Literature



► 2013 Becoming Children's Laureate, with Krishnan Guru-Murthy and predecessor Julia Donaldson

▼ 2023 Speaking at the Merky Books Literature Festival



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BOOKS

Scotland's national poet Kathleen
Jamie fears for humanity
Dani Garavelli

FILM

In trying times, horrors bring
hope that we can survive
George Francis Lee

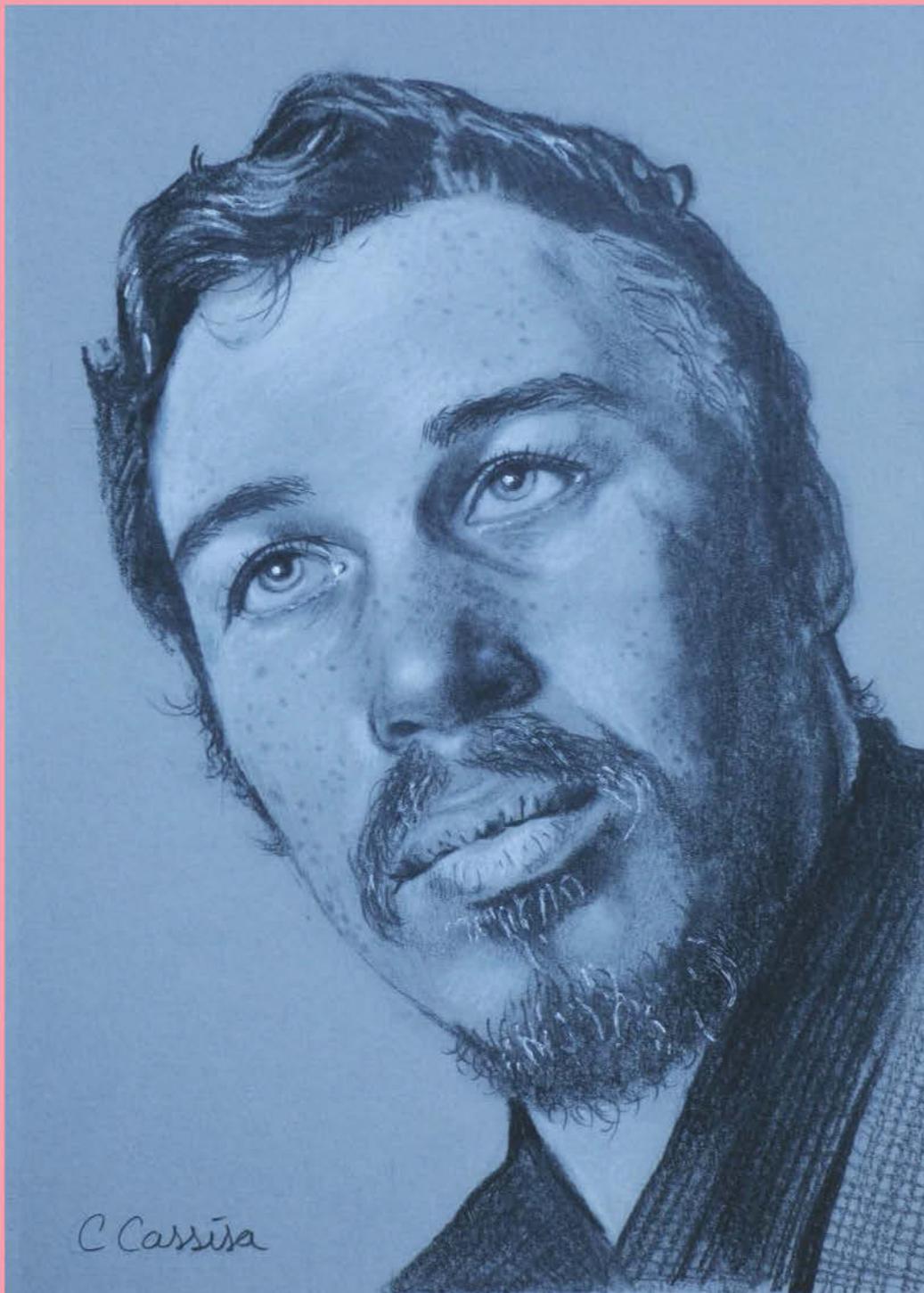
INTERVIEW

Michelle de Swarte's new show
echoes her own homelessness tale
Adrian Lobb

ON THE ROAD

At Glastonbury, cynicism is not an
option when there's so much to see
Robin Ince

CULTURE

**ART**

THE WRESTLER
– TONY CASSIO
by Christie Cassisa

Regular Street Art contributor Cassisa's latest work is a very personal portrait drawn in graphite on grey tinted paper. It's of her father, Tony Cassio, who died in 2017.

"My father came from a troubled past and had many issues from his childhood," says Cassisa. "He became a professional British wrestler in the 1960s, which he retired from in June 1980. He was a single parent bringing up my sister and me in Hastings. His struggle as a single parent with a manic disposition meant that mine and my sister's childhood was at times deprived, traumatic and terrifying.

"With therapy, I have learned to understand the effects of PTSD that can be triggered in stressful situations, and have found that it is safer for me to work in solitude, creating my art as a message to the outside world. I am so thankful to Big Issue who provide a platform to artists like me who find it difficult to be seen in the fast-moving and often commercially driven art world. Sometimes, the most powerful message in a piece of art appears as a whisper."

Books



By Dani Garavelli

INTERVIEW: KATHLEEN JAMIE

'There's something fragmentary in the air'

On the first floor of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh hangs a photograph of the country's Makar (National Poet) Kathleen Jamie. It was taken in 1994 when Jamie was in her 30s and shows her bent forward on a chair, her head bowed, her eyes half-closed in thought. Though most of her body is in shadow, the sun catches her face and plays on the wall behind her.

Thirty years on, I meet her in the cafe downstairs. She still has that pensive air, but time has taken its toll, as it does on us all. The cafe is noisy, and we are both slightly deaf, so we move into the echoey Great Hall, then neither of us can find our glasses. She remembers the photograph being taken. "I'd like to be painted, though," she says. "It would be good to just sit still and watch the light change."

Jamie is also the author of three acclaimed essay collections: *Findings*, *Sightlines* and *Surfacing*. Her latest book *Cairn* is a celebration of life's small arc set against the vastness of deep time. The precision and beauty of the language remains undimmed, but the writing thrums with brokenness. That brokenness is embedded in its very form: a mix of poems and micro-essays, assembled like boulders to mark a world in which nature is no longer capable of redeeming human sorrows.

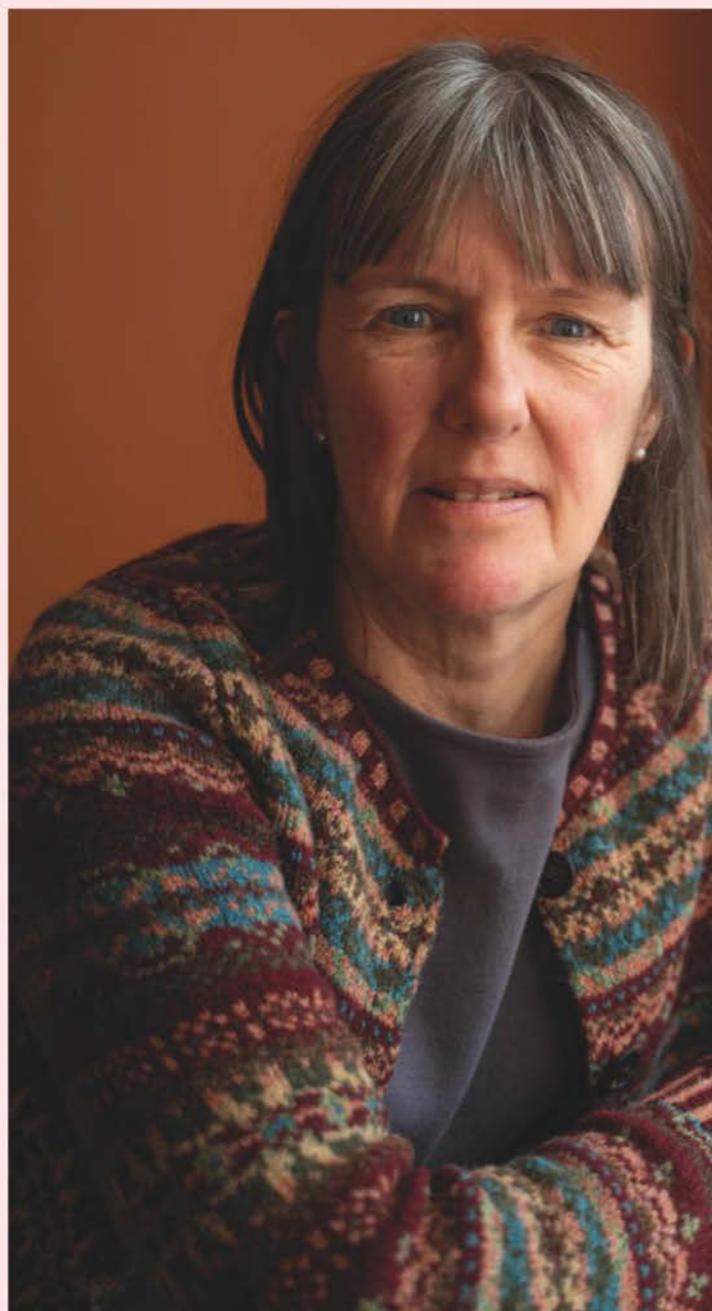
"It's maybe a symptom of shredded concentration," Jamie says of her move towards flash nonfiction. "It's impossible to focus for more than short chunks now because of all the internal and external noise. But there's also something fragmentary in the air."

In the prologue to *Cairn*, Jamie describes how, several decades ago, she tried to decipher the message being sent out in the dot dot dash beams of two lighthouses at Scapa Flow, Orkney. "Never, ever harm this, you never could," she imagined them saying in the resulting poem. Today, those lighthouses still send out their beams, but the flooding, the wildfires and the hurricanes that ravage the globe threaten the message and make it less likely humanity will be guided safely into shore.

"Our human lives with their ups and downs have always played out against a greater natural system, which we used to turn to in times of grief," she says. "We were able to say: 'Yes, I am heartbroken right now, but the geese are returning and spring will come again.' That's breaking down so we can no longer go to the natural world for solace."

What does being stripped of that solace do to us? I ask. "I think the complete bloody mess we are in – all the conflicts, the warring with each other, the polarisation – has its roots in environmental breakdown. People's unconscious fears are manifesting themselves in defensiveness, aggression and activism, which is tipping into coercion."

The activism point is interesting. We're speaking less than a week after Hay Festival dropped sponsor Baillie Gifford due to pressure from Fossil Free Books, which claims it invests in companies involved in Israel and the oil and gas industry; hours later, the Edinburgh Book Festival will follow suit.



I think the mess we are in has its roots in environmental breakdown. People's fears are manifesting as aggression

Jamie's writing has never been polemical, but as climate change has intensified, it has become more politically charged. So you might expect her to have some sympathy with Fossil Free Books. Instead, she says the move is counterproductive. "I don't want Baillie Gifford investing in oil and gas," she says, "but I think book festivals are the wrong target. Our public discourse is collapsing and book festivals provide a space for civil and frank exchange."

Jamie is not against activism. But she is not someone who would glue herself to an oil tanker; nor does she believe writers have a responsibility to be activists in a narrow sense. "An activist knows what they want and goes out to get it," she says. "Writers like me have no idea what we want. But



when everything is so parlous, we need all hands on deck, and that includes people who live in their imagination. It includes novelists, who can work out dialogues. It includes poets who are always pressing into language.”

A writer’s contribution could be to advocate for other species. You can see that in *Cairn* where Jamie imagines what it’s like to be the flowers of the yellow hawkbit who “know nothing of what is to come”. “Other species, especially other species in crisis, need to be brought to the table, but they can’t speak,” she says. “It’s up to us to speak for them, not in a Disneyfied way, but trying to [work out]: if a river system or an endangered butterfly had rights, how would they express them?”

On human mortality, *Cairn* is equally profound. “One by one the

parents are leaving now, he reaching for that same saggy jacket, she her depthless bag,” Jamie writes. One of the book’s most touching passages sees her clearing her parents’ house and unwrapping the Doulton figurines many of us remember from our own childhoods: “Lasses trigged out in velvet gowns, poke bonnets, ermine muffs.” She takes comfort in the fact their deaths came “in the natural order”, and in her relationship with her children Freya, 26, a nurse who is living and working in New Zealand, and Duncan, 28, who is doing a master’s degree in planetary science at Aberdeen University. “When he comes home I say: ‘What did you learn today? Tell me all about the moons of Jupiter’.”

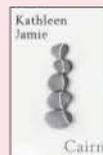
Now in her seventh decade, she says the “shape of [her] life’s arc is becoming visible.” Brought up in Midlothian, her early days were marked by overcoming discrimination and the cutting down to size of her Presbyterian background. “I felt shame for a long time,” she says. “I was brought up in an environment where you were supposed to know your place. The act of writing could be done in secret, but when you published it, it was like: ‘Who do you think you are?’. It took me until my 40s to slough that off.”

Turning 60 brought, not so much a panic, but an acknowledgment that the decades ahead were finite. Jamie says she is not afraid of being dead, though she believes in life after death “only in the sense that we continue to exist in each other’s memories”. Nor is it a question of what she still wants to achieve. “I just like being alive,” she says. In the short term, she is looking forward to “staying up all night and watching the Tories be obliterated”.

One highlight from her three years as Makar, a role which ends in August, was the creation of a national poem – *The People of Scotland’s Address to World Leaders* – constructed out of lines sent to her from across the country. She has made several since, including one not yet published by prisoners on the theme of “hope”, which she describes as “the most powerful yet”.

“We have been talking about the collapse of public discourse,” she says. “Poetry is a place where people, even if they don’t write it, even if they don’t read it, think language is speaking truth. The words are not in the mouths of politicians or advertisers. It maintains an integrity people respond to. We have to try to keep that: a place where language is capable of nuance, capable of subtlety, capable of feeling, capable of truth.”

@DaniGaravelli1



Cairn by Kathleen Jamie is out now (Sort of Books, £9.99)

TOP 5

Books by Latin American writers

Selected by Richard Gwyn
Writer and translator

1 Wars of the Interior

by Joseph Zárate

A powerful account of lives lived on the front line of environmental catastrophe in the Peruvian Amazon region. The prizewinning translation by Annie McDermott is exceptional. A vital book for anyone concerned about the future of our planet.

2 Slash and Burn

by Claudia Hernández

Claudia Hernández’s big, tumultuous and troubling novel about women living with the legacy of war in El Salvador reels the reader in with multiple and overlapping stories.

3 Retrospective

by Juan Gabriel Vásquez

Vásquez, Colombia’s finest contemporary novelist, tells the extraordinary story of the film director Sergio Cabrera and his family in this brilliant demonstration of the art of ‘faction’.

4 Brickmakers

by Selva Almada

Not for the fainthearted, this brilliant, gripping novel by the exceptional Argentine writer recounts the hallucinations of two murdered men as they lie dying.

5 Las Biuty Queens

by Iván Monalisa Ojeda

Intimate and touching stories that follow the lives of addicts and ‘locas’ (trans and gay people) in New York City during the 1990s. Absorbing, sad and tender tales of life on the margins.



Ambassador of Nowhere: A Latin American Pilgrimage by Richard Gwyn, is out now (Seren Books, £14.99)

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* as special guests to Hugh Cornwell

Film

By George Francis Lee

Horror holds up a mirror to our terrifying times

From presidential debates to any discussion on social media, politics is often absolutely horrifying. Watching the news can be like watching a horror film.

Or is it the other way around? Are the terrors on screen simply a reflection of our political reality? That's the argument made by Jon Greenaway, author of **Capitalism: A Horror Story**. In his new book, Greenaway painstakingly details the last 200 years of capitalism and gives example after example of how each era's social and political landscape has actively shaped what makes us squeal and squirm.

"The reason the horror film is the way it is," he says, "is because it's speaking to what it's like to be alive under a political system that is violent, increasingly fragile, and out of our control."

There is a constant stream of scream-inducing films released in cinemas and streaming platforms. Coinciding with our own general election is *A Quiet Place: Day One*, the prequel explaining why the world had to turn silent – which around the election campaign sounds like solace rather than a horror. Over the next couple of months we'll be revisiting the universes



of *Alien* (*Alien: Romulus* is released on 16 August) and *Beetlejuice* (*Beetlejuice 2* is out 6 September). At Christmas there will be a resurrection of the ultimate cinematic vampire, *Nosferatu*, in a Robert Eggers remake – you can draw your own parallels with the US election candidates.

Greenaway has been studying gothic media for more than a decade. He finished his undergrad at the time of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis. "It's not a coincidence that the big film franchise that kicked off at that time was *Paranormal Activity*," Greenaway says. "At the time you would turn on the news and see homes being repossessed. Then you'd go to the cinema and see a story about a house being possessed." Your home being taken from you, whether from a ghost or the bank, was terrifying.

Greenaway has an impressive, encyclopaedic knowledge on horror cinema. During our talk, he references everything from the camp Spanish social commentary of *The Platform* to refugee horror of *His House*, and he finds it effortless to draw out the politics in every case: "It's the background that informs the writing, production and design of these films, either implicit or explicit."

One example Greenaway gives me is Eli Roth's *Hostel*, which was released in a US still scarred by 9/11, and that he calls a "nasty, gory, little horror movie". According to him, the film coming out in the throes of George W Bush's presidency is right there in the script: "It's about Americans who end up in former-Soviet Eastern European countries being tortured to death. This is in the context of emerging American anxiety about the war on terror, right? What's going to happen to the good American boys who go overseas?"

Two successful franchises that encapsulate the most pressing political issues of our time are the *Saw* and

Cutting crew: John Kramer, aka Jigsaw, in *Saw X* (below)

The Purge series. "On one level *Saw* is mindless entertainment," Greenaway says, "but if you actually pay attention to the films, they're clearly about for-profit healthcare and the idea of human life being disposable if you don't have enough money to literally stay alive."

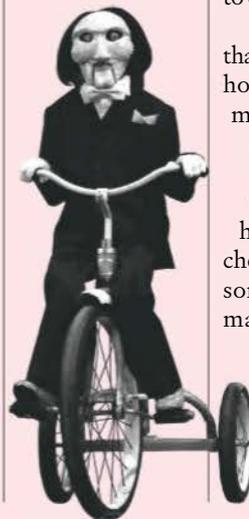
The Purge series – in which America holds a holiday once a year whereby all crimes are legal for one night – is perhaps more overtly political. Greenaway points out the films have interesting critiques of capitalism sprinkled through, but they ultimately reflect our own inability to imagine something new.

"*The Purge* films can't talk about a potential solution to capitalism, so the only way out for them is to escalate the violence. The final film (thus far) ends with America literally self-destructing in an orgy of violence. People get so addicted that the country descends into permanent chaos. It's very telling that that film came out during the Trump presidency."

Art reflecting the politics of the time in which it was created is not a new idea. But Greenaway believes horror cinema isn't just a way to reflect the terror of real life, it's an artistic and creative way to explore what could exist beyond.

"I think we're in a cultural moment that can be very bleak," he says. "What's hopeful about horror is that in the midst of pain, blood and disaster we can come out the other side."

"That isn't an easy process or even guaranteed. In other words, horror doesn't buy its hope on the cheap. Things don't just get better – sometimes we go through a nightmare, but horror shows us that we can survive."



Capitalism: A Horror Story by Jon Greenaway is out now (Watkins Media, £10.99) @Editor_GFL

INTERVIEW

Michelle de Swarte



‘SOMEONE HAD TO TELL ME I WAS HOMELESS. I WAS IN SUCH DENIAL’

Michelle de Swarte's new BBC Two comedy series *Spent*, about a former top model who becomes homeless, has its roots in her real life story

By Adrian Lobb

“When you grow up with no money and then you get a big chunk of money, you have to spend the poverty out of your system... to celebrate.”

Meet Mia Sinclair, central character of new BBC Two comedy *Spent*, a story of homelessness unlike anything we've seen on television. It's no accident that the working title for the series, created by and starring Michelle de Swarte, was *High-End Homeless*. Because before finding herself sofa surfing and staying in a

hostel, Mia lived the high life as a successful catwalk model in New York.

Fancy hotels and designer clothes were her life until, like many before her, she aged out of modelling. With no income and nowhere to call home, Mia returns home to South London to a rude awakening at the start of the five-part series from the producers of *I May Destroy You* and *Such Brave Girls*.

The story mirrors de Swarte's own. After growing up with little money or

stability, she was spotted by a modelling agency and swept into a different world as a runway model for Gucci, Versace and Burberry. But when that career ended, so did the high life.

“I was technically homeless but didn't realise it,” says de Swarte, when she meets *Big Issue*. “I didn't understand the severity of my situation. I was staying at people's houses, but I did it for years.”

De Swarte still recalls when reality finally dawned on her.

“Someone had to tell me I was homeless,” she continues. “I was keeping up the pretence that I was ‘travelling’. But I was only meant to stay with my friend for a few days and had my whole life with me.”

“She joked about me being this chic bag lady and said: ‘You know what? You're high-end homeless.’ I laughed. But she said, ‘well, you don't live anywhere’. I was in such denial. If I'd admitted it to myself, I probably would have had a breakdown.”

De Swarte was used to a transient existence, in and out of temporary accommodation as a child. So it did not come as a shock.

“When I started school, my mum, my brother and me were living at a Women's Aid safe house,” she explains. “My school was the other side of London. I was scared people would find out I lived with seven other families. And I couldn't give my number out because it was a payphone. I was quite insecure, but how that played out was me being a bit of a dickhead. That was probably the start of comedy for me, finding ways to avoid certain conversations.”

De Swarte left school at 14.

“I wanted a Naf Naf puffer jacket. I wanted clothes,” she says, still using humour to deflect trauma. “It was an achievable goal, unlike getting GCSEs or a career. I did all the jobs you do as a teenager in London – bartending, working in shops, cafes, market stalls, cleaning. Then, at 20, I got scouted to model. I moved to New York and got my head firmly jammed up my arse.”

How long did that take?

“Ooh, I give it a solid three months,” she grins. “When I made my first big cheque, my agent said, ‘you have to buy a designer bag’. And when you start to look like you're a model, you see how society treats you differently. It's like being a rich, white man – you get to sail through life.”

De Swarte describes the contradictions of the industry.

“There's a lot of weirdness in the modelling industry. There's a seedy underworld – you've got young girls without a chaperone or a parent.

“I wouldn't say I liked it. But I knew I was having a Cinderella moment. This

was what we used to call then ‘a fucking touch’. I didn’t yet realise the money they tell you you’re making is very different from what you get in your pocket. But it was still more than I’d ever seen.

“I wanted to share it. Especially with my family. It was like: ‘we’re going to Magaluf!’ or ‘who wants trainers?’ It was like winnings. I’d gone from a Women’s Refuge to the Four Seasons Hotel. I was like a kid in a ’90s film, jumping around on the bed.

“Then it stops, and you’ve got a lot of tat that cost a lot of money. Even if you’re broke, you’ve got a nice bag, good shoes, a fancy coat.”

De Swarte began performing stand-up comedy using her life story in her routines. “I didn’t have any roots to put down, so I poured it into writing,” she says.

And her script for what would become *Spent* impressed *Peep Show* creators Jesse Armstrong and Sam Bain at VAL (Various Artists Limited). The way *Spent* deals with complex families and mental health issues is as smart as it is funny and original.

De Swarte has a winning way with words – as a writer, performer and interviewee. So what has she learnt along her journey?

“If I could tell my younger self that by the age I am now you’re going to be unmarried, childless, have made a TV show, be a stand-up comic and will have done journalism, modelling and a bunch of other stuff, she would be ecstatic. I would have been over the fucking moon to hear that. I’d have felt immense relief. Because I was so fearful that I didn’t have any real foundations.

“I’ve learnt humans have a bigger ability to adapt than we might think. When I started stand-up, I’d stay in a Holiday Inn and think, this is a shithole compared to hotels I’ve stayed in. Fast forward a few years and I’m staying on my mate’s sofa, covered in cat hair, thinking, thank fuck for this.

“And now I’ve got a flat of my own. I am so happy – I don’t think I’ll ever get over it.”

Spent is on BBC Two and iPlayer from 8 July @adey70

Joseph Ollman as David and Michelle de Swartas Mia in *Spent*



ROBIN INCE IS AT GLASTONBURY



Oh Look, there’s Charlotte Church singing *We Shall Overcome* beautifully. And there’s Billy Bragg leading a chant-along of *A New England* with an eager crowd. And there’s Bow Anderson performing a song about eating disorders and how we can damage our body due to our fears of having the right shape.

And that is all within 10 minutes.

It is the time of year for people to say, “Glastonbury! What’s all the fuss about?” Let me tell you.

There is no other festival like it.

Watching on TV you might just think it is a bunch of well-known bands, but it is so much more than that. First of all, it is a wonderland of stone circles, sculptures, towers and art.

There are the most beautiful and eccentric costumes and vehicles. Tents with death-defying circus acts, tents with poets. There is a band on stage that features woad covered warriors, cattle skull-faced prophets and pounding percussion from every corner (Heilung).

My weekend starts by giving a talk in the LabOratory science tent and explaining why ghosts really do exist, before going to perform with a bunch of poets in a tipi for the brilliantly named Tongue Fu. The light is getting low, so I have to read my poems like an ancient man trying to search for the vegetarian option on a menu.

Friday begins by recording a show about alien life possibilities in the Cabaret tent. A very low number of our audience believe alien overlords walk among us, which suggests that the Glastonbury demographic has changed in the last three decades.

I rush to the crafting field to meet Kate from This is the Kit and make a garland crown out of willow, ivy and rosemary. (I am pleased to say that Kate wears my creation during her set that afternoon.)

I host a panel discussion on the nature of consciousness and definition of intelligence which, unsurprisingly, talks of the ingenuity of puzzle-solving crows (maybe they are our overlords).

My tasks for the day done, I rush to the Pyramid stage to experience noise but instead I am treated to one of the rarest occurrences in Glastonbury: silence – seven minutes of it. It is

asked for by Marina Abramovic. It is willingly given.

Some years, there would be people eager to spoil the moment, but it says a great deal about the kind of people who come to watch PJ Harvey that the field is so quiet.

Then, Emily Eavis bangs a gong and Harvey walks on, as alchemical as ever.

Tanita Tikaram ends her set with a sing-along of the ’70s pop classic *Love is in the Air*, then it is the Heilung runic ceremony, The Bootleg Beatles and a bit of Dua Lipa. But IDLES are calling me and their vigour, passion and humanity inspire the crowd. Then, I go to my tent and to bed.

NO.

Then, I move towards my tent, but I am waylaid by a band called Us who

A very low number of our audience believe alien overlords walk among us, which suggests that the Glastonbury demographic has changed in the last three decades

look frightening young and play with ferocious energy and joy. They look about 15 on stage, but I am relieved that off stage they look like they might be nearly 20.

And that is just one day and a bit, and that is what the fuss is about, and that is barely more than a scraping of cells from this vast Somerset beast.

I must mention Cyndi Lauper. She was magnificent, though hampered by tech issues. Do not believe what you read. She was enchanting and wonderful, and my friend Grace Petrie, who was magnificent later on in the weekend, sang along to every song.

A shout-out to the Glastonbury workers who collected litter, worked gates, gave directions, sorted stages. They were so happy and helpful.

My Brigadoon is gone now; the power of its enchantment remains circulating in me and pumping through my heart.

These fields are not for cynics.

Robin Ince is an author and broadcaster @robinince

Music

By Steven MacKenzie

INTERVIEW

Fran Healy's snow globe is well shaken

● In the 25 years since *Why Does It Always Rain On Me?* was released by Travis, precipitation in Glasgow has increased by 10-20%. The song is more relatable than ever to those in the west of Scotland, as thousands belting it back at Travis on stage at the OVO Hydro prove.

It's become an "unofficial anthem of this city," Fran Healy tells the crowd, "because it's aye pishin".

Travis (Healy with bandmates Andy Dunlop, Dougie Payne and Neil Primrose) are back home supporting The Killers on an epic arena tour. It was at a Travis gig in Las Vegas in 2001 that Killers frontman Brandon Flowers decided to re-dedicate himself to forming a band. Travis were touring with Oasis at the time, so they can share credit for him becoming a rock 'n' roll star.

At the turn of the millennium Travis's second album, *The Man Who*, made them one of the most listened-to bands in the world. Smoothing down the brasher side of Britpop, they replaced sneering swagger with a delicate introspection that remains hugely influential.

Travis paved the way for Glastonbury saviours Coldplay. Healy and Chris Martin are friends. "Chris's mission – he's a force for good," Healy says. "His thing is going out and making people forget for a second that they're stuck on this plane. It might involve putting wristbands on [but] he's created this realm for people to enter into.

"I remember Chris and I were chatting when The Killers were

coming through in around 2005. He's like, 'That Brandon guy has got it. You can tell it in his eyes.'

"Every single person that I know in our business – what they all have in common is not musical talent. That's a given. You need to be able to do keepie-uppies to play football, right? You need to *want* it, that's the thing. And if you want it, you can have it."

It sounds simple, but Travis have never had it easy.

The Man Who emerged in 1999 after "tectonic plates had shifted in my life" and, still on songwriting duties, Healy says that similar shifts have led to Travis's new album, *L.A. Times*, released this week.

Healy reflects on the early days of the band. "Back then my granda passed away. He was a tectonic plate in my life – gone. That loosened me up. There's no such thing as permanence. Let's move the furniture around, it's not screwed to the floor.

"I changed the band. We got rid of [original members] Chris and Geoff [Martyn], which was really hard because it was their band. Their mum and dad had let us rehearse in their house forever. But it just wasn't right. So we got Dougie [Payne, bassist] in. He looked great and he was a mate. Suddenly the band became four mates.

"Moving to London, getting a record deal, managers. Your snow globe is well shaken. Eventually the snow settles, and a new landscape appears. This time around it feels the same. It's been a fucking storm. My mate Ringin, who did the *Turn* and

Coming Around videos died. Ringin was the most amazing human, one of my best mates. Nora [Healy's wife] and I separated.

"Covid happened. We sacked our manager of 25 years. You go whoa, hold on a second. You don't love us... I knew there was something missing in this relationship. Right, fuck off. It's like a football manager that doesn't love his team. Imagine. But it took a while for us to pick up on that.

"Ironically, the father of the two boys that we had to lose years and years ago, gave me one of the best bits of advice. At dinner before rehearsal one day he's like, 'You're a very instinctive young man'. I was maybe 18 at the time. He said, 'You need to listen to that voice 100%. Don't ever, ever question it.' So I did. In the end his sons get ejected from the band but he understood why I had to do that.

"I stopped trusting that voice for a very long time," Healy continues.



L.A. Times is released on 12 July. Travis tour the UK in December travisonline.com



The men who made it big. Travis are (l-r) Andy Dunlop, Fran Healy, Dougie Payne and Neil Primrose

“Now my laser is focused firmly back on the band. I’ve got this pure clarity about what I want.”

Big Issue meets Healy in an exclusive West End hotel, fizzing with energy despite fighting off a throat infection. He’s currently responding to a thinning pate by dyeing the remaining tufts flame orange. Last night during their set, he directed the spotlight towards a section where his family were sitting, each in their own orange clown wig. “Strong genes,” he said, quite self-deprecating about how he stands out in a crowd.

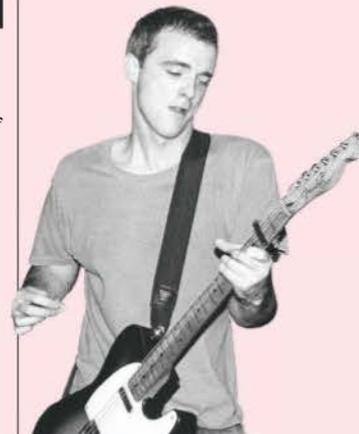
Healy grew up in Possilpark, only a couple of miles or so away from the plush hotel, but distant in other ways. Being working class “never leaves you”, he says.

“The music business is predominantly middle class. And I don’t hold it against anyone for being middle class, but I think being working class is a superpower.



“I know how hard it is to get a record deal. But the struggle for kids to get to that point – Brandon is working class, Noel and Liam [Gallagher] are working class – the struggle happens a lot earlier because you don’t have these options on the menu. I remember hearing about art school and going, what’s that? I didn’t know. You’re not given the menu because it’s not meant for you.”

(Above) Healy with Chris Martin recording the 20th anniversary version of Band Aid’s *Do They Know It’s Christmas?* in 2004; (right) on tour in Cardiff in 1999



On the new album, the title track is inspired by the contrast between rich and poor that Healy sees in the city he moved to a few years ago. “The homeless situation is unlike anything I’ve ever seen,” he explains.

“The whole place feels like it could explode at any minute.”

It’s one of several tracks that signal a resounding return to form. *Bus* is a beautifully melodic opener, *Gaslight* already a sing-along fan favourite. On *Raze The Bar* Chris Martin and Brandon Flowers join the chorus. Travis are well connected, respected and after a bumpy ride – that included drummer Primrose breaking his back – are set to return to previous highs. This time better prepared.

“I think Travis are like a Cessna. A beautifully built lovely little single-prop aircraft, good enough for four people to fly in at 5,000 feet,” Healy says. “We flew that at about 60,000 feet and shit was flying off. We managed to pull it down and repair it. We’ve had an amazing career. But I really feel like giving it another go. I feel as competitive if not more than I did when I was 23. Unfinished business, there’s no other way to explain it.”

“I really have to stress that we’re really special,” he adds emphatically. “I love my band so much. Four people, we’ve been together for 32 years. And if a band stayed together that long, and they’ve done no bad, written some pretty decent songs, you can never write them off.”

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Citizens Advice Cardiff & Vale is an independent charity and member of the Local Citizens Advice network.

Role overview
You will be part of one of our team of caseworkers working from our office in Barry. You will provide advice and casework assistance to clients over the telephone and via face-to-face appointments on housing matters including eviction, landlord disputes, and homelessness.

How to apply
Please upload your CV to www.cacv.org.uk. We welcome applications in the Welsh language. Closing Date: 15/07/2024

Citizens Advice Merthyr Tydfil, Adviser

Location: Based in the main office in Merthyr Tydfil and at various outreach locations across the borough.

Hours: Up to 37 Hours Monday – Friday (Full time / part time hours will be considered)

Duration: Permanent

Salary: Up to £24,018 (dependent on experience)

Hours: pro-rata based on FTE



Job Purpose
The role involves being an adviser in your field of advice. The adviser is responsible for delivering high quality advice services to clients, via face to face, telephone and digital channels including email and webchat.

To apply please find the application form on our website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk



Independent Chair of Hub Cymru Africa

Hub Cymru Africa is seeking an independent Chair for its Partnership Board.

Hub Cymru Africa is Wales' leading international development and global solidarity organisation. We were formed in April 2015 to bring together the work of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Fair Trade Wales, Wales and Africa Health Links Network and the Sub-Saharan Advisory Panel.

Currently, the partnership board comprises two trustees from each participating organisation. It is responsible for the strategic leadership and oversight of a programme of activities supporting international development initiatives in Wales.

How to apply
Applicants interested in this position should provide a CV and Cover letter outlining why they are applying for the role and, using the person specification, outlining the skills that they will bring. **These should be sent to enquiries@hubcymruafrica.wales by 09:00 BST on 12th of July 2024.**

hubcymruafrica.wales

Cadeirydd Annibynnol Hub Cymru Africa

Hub Cymru Africa yw prif sefydliad datblygu rhyngwladol ac undod byd-eang Cymru. Cawsom ein ffurfio ym mis Ebrill 2015 i ddod â gwaith Canolfan Materion Rhyngwladol Cymru, Cymru Masnach Deg, Rhwydwaith Cysylltiadau Iechyd Cymru ac Affrica a'r Panel Cyngori Is-Sahara ynghyd.

Ar hyn o bryd, mae bwrdd y bartneriaeth yn cynnwys dau ymddiriedolwr o bob eglurhaol sy'n cymryd rhan. Mae'n gyfrifol am arweinyddiaeth strategol ac am ddarparu trosolwg o raglen o weithgareddau sy'n cefnogi mentrau datblygu rhyngwladol yng Nghymru.

Sut i wneud cais
Dylai ymgeiswyr sydd â diddordeb yn y swydd hon ddarparu CV a llythyr eglurhaol yn amlinellu pam eu bod yn gwneud cais am y rôl a, gan ddefnyddio manyleb y person, amlinellu eu sgiliau. Dylid anfon y rhain at enquiries@hubcymruafrica.wales erbyn 09:00 BST ar 12fed Gorffennaf 2024.

hubcymruafrica.cymru





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85

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1.5 million

people supported by our 140 investees



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Please help us find

Stephen Thompson - Norwich, Norfolk



Stephen Thompson has been missing from Norwich since 25 June 2013. He was 45 at the time of his disappearance.

Stephen, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Catrin Maguire - Holyhead, Wales



This week is the birthday of Catrin Maguire who was 22 when she went missing from Holyhead on 15 November 2021.

Catrin, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Laura Haines - Bristol, Avon



This week is Laura Haines' birthday. Laura was 30 when she went missing from Bristol on 23 February 1997.

Laura, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Finn Layland-Stratfield - Tintagel, Cornwall



This week is the seventh anniversary of Finn Layland-Stratfield's disappearance. Finn was 17 when he went missing from Tintagel on 8 July 2017.

Finn, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Fatima Nunes - Hayes, London



Fatima Nunes has been missing from Hayes since 10 May 2024. She was 57 at the time of her disappearance.

Fatima, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Andrew Gosden - Doncaster, South Yorkshire



This week is Andrew Gosden's birthday. Andrew was 14 when he went missing from Doncaster on 14 September 2007. He was last seen in London's Kings Cross station. Andrew, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

Call or text **116 000**

Email **116000@missingpeople.org.uk**

It's Free and Confidential

Missing People would like to thank The Big Issue for publicising vulnerable missing people on this page.

To help Missing People bring them back to safety text FIND to 70660* to donate £5.

Our free 116 000 number is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

*Texts cost £5 plus network charge. Missing People receives 100% of your donation. Please obtain the bill payer's permission. Missing People will send regular updates via text and may contact you at any time to ask for your contact preference.

missing people

Registered charity in England and Wales (1020419) and in Scotland (SC047429)

www.missingpeople.org.uk/help-us-find

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News from the Intrepid Wool Lady

Poo Pragmatism

It's taken me over 6 years of writing this blog to get around to the subject of poo. In short and, in general, I have no problem with poo. My farming years, when I shared space with sheep, dogs, cats, chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl and quails, as well as all the wild animals of the English countryside, organic waste was the norm. It never bothered me, with the possible exception of fox poo, especially after it had been rolled in by a dog and the dog had come into the house and tried to jump on the sofa. In fact, being aware of the state of the poo on my farm, especially that of my Southdown sheep, was an important lead indicator of their health.

Now 2 years off the farm, the subject has cropped up twice in as many weeks. The first was the piece in the Guardian (June 2) about George Frandsens's Poozeum in Arizona, an exhibit of over 10,000 coprolites. The idea of a museum dedicated to fossilized Diplodocus droppings and T Rex turds, et al, amused me no end. However, on a more serious note, the value of analysing this material for the clues it reveals about the diets, habits, and physiology of these long-gone creatures, is not lost on me.

This article appeared just as I have hopefully succeeded in house training my 14 week old puppy called Bear. The Maremma mountain dog appears to have read and understood the manure memo for which I am very grateful.

But this all reminded me of the ultimate urban legend which involved an outraged London cab driver who stormed into his local police station and furiously bellowed: "Come and see what a fare left on the back seat of my cab!" Apparently, the duty officer dutifully peered into the back of the cab, and then, with a deadpan expression on his face said: "Well, if no one has claimed it within 14 days, consider it yours."

Jessica



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Puzzles

Crossword

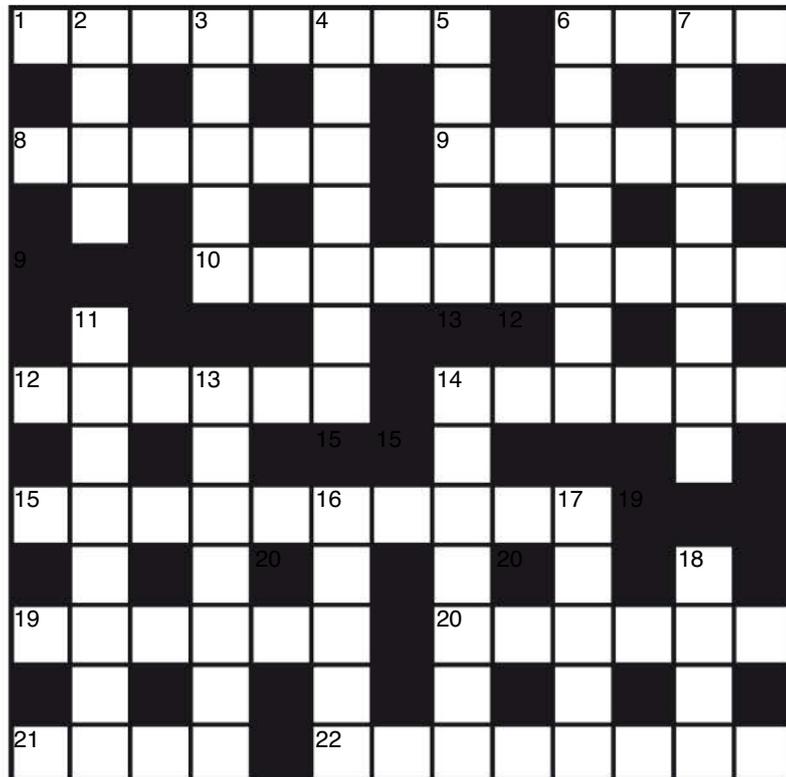
CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

1. Ban for bomb with which I take part (8)
6. Nimble pair in Surrey disheartened (4)
8. Call off involvement in American celebrations (6)
9. A Greek character with paintings returned with emotional shock (6)
10. Mark left at home with a fever (10)
12. Old drink to sell abroad (6)
14. Pierced another candle (6)
15. They represent the bare truth (5,5)
19. Girl friend in France has garlic sausage (6)
20. Girl on the piano (6)
21. In summer expected to find a lake (4)
22. Don's away performing today (8)

Down

2. Bay horse galloped around the ring (4)
3. Deceive with half a conjuring spell (5)
4. Weighty material nearly all blown away in explosion (7)
5. Complete sum (5)
6. Old Greek taking part in hospital (7)
7. Another letter concerning a babysitter (8)
11. Dig out a tonne in an old hollow (8)
13. Too old despite being on time (4-3)
14. Rugby player gives long talk on disease (7)
16. Broken finger for the most part is sham (5)
17. Pulls up the turf (5)
18. Just coming from Lyon (4)



QUICK CLUES

Across

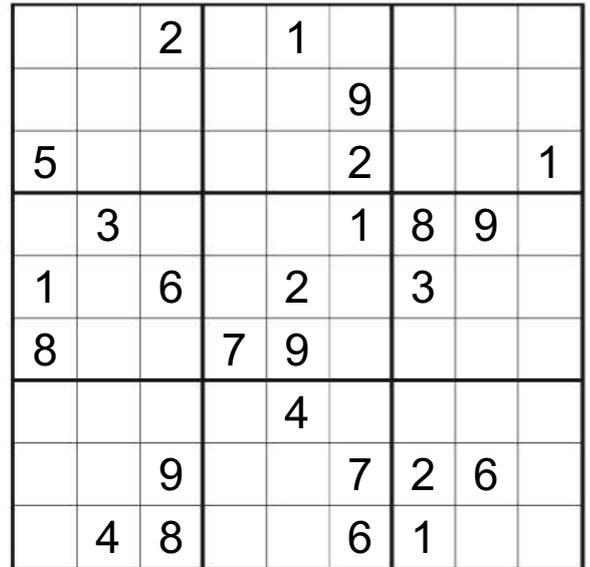
1. Shortage (8)
6. Cut short (4)
8. Reheat (4,2)
9. Smoked herring (6)
10. Fascinated (10)
12. Marked with blemishes (6)
14. Tremble (6)
15. Clumsy in speech (10)
19. Bet (6)
20. Alliance (6)
21. Vortex (4)
22. Walking unsteadily (8)

Down

2. Layer of paint (4)
3. Brother of Romulus (5)
4. Lack of reverence (7)
5. Country bumpkin (5)
6. Certificate of qualification (7)
7. Purifier (8)
11. Iberian (8)
13. Chest of drawers (7)
14. Subdued (7)
16. Search (5)
17. Lag behind (5)
18. Scottish stream (4)

Sudoku

The second-toughest Sudoku in Britain



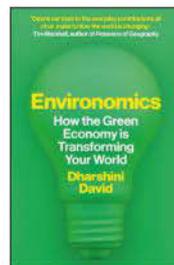
ISSUE 1622 ANSWERS

CRYPTIC

- Across** - 1 Below stairs; 7 Tenon saw; 8 Lock; 9 Over; 11 Scorched; 13 Holly; 14 Paris; 16 Ladybird; 18 Tour; 21 Vera; 22 Adroitly; 23 Decelerator.
- Down** - 1 Betrothal; 2 Lunge; 3 Wend; 4 Trance; 5 Reluctant; 6 Acme; 10 Relay race; 12 Destroyer; 15 Bridal; 17 Aver; 19 Octet; 20 Four.

QUICK

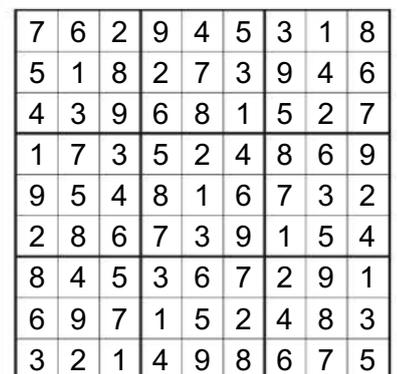
- Across** - 1 Undertaking; 7 Taciturn; 8 Room; 9 Mark; 11 Diameter; 13 Truth; 14 Navel; 16 Musician; 18 Drug; 21 Ulna; 22 Well-to-do; 23 Belatedness.
- Down** - 1 Ultimatum; 2 Decor; 3 Ruth; 4 Adroit; 5 Nursemaid; 6 Fore; 10 Kittiwake; 12 Religious; 15 Caveat; 17 Ugly; 19 Rhode; 20 Fled.



Win

The first correct drawn entry to the crossword will win a copy of this week's random book selection, *Environomics: How the Green Economy is Transforming Your World* by Dharshini David

Send entries to:
Crossword Competition,
The Big Issue,
43 Bath St,
Glasgow, G2 1HW



MY PITCH

*Green Park Station, Bath
Every day, any time of day*

SEAN CULLEN, 20

I became homeless in December. For me, it was better than what I was going through at home. It felt like freedom. I stayed at mates' houses and then eventually ended up at the YMCA. I met another vendor there who helped me with food and set me up with Big Issue.

It's more than about making money for me. It's about bringing joy to people and putting a smile on their faces. I enjoy watching people be happy and making their days better.

I play music on my pitch from speakers. It's mainly about putting on music that everyone wants to listen to – and I'll take song requests for 25 pence! But mostly, people enjoy what I'm already listening to. I tailor the music to people around me, and often that's the older generations. I play stuff like the Eagles, The Police, The Beach Boys and Elvis Presley.

I tried to learn to play guitar in the past but due to financial circumstances throughout my life, I couldn't really afford to pay for proper lessons. But I would like to learn. I'm always willing to learn anything and everything.

The biggest way I've coped through the cost of living crisis has honestly been with the support of Big Issue. If it wasn't for the team in Bath and Bristol, I wouldn't even be able to afford food.

They've helped get me set up with the right support that I didn't even know I could get. It's helped push me forward. Even for everyday advice, the Big Issue team is the first port of call for me.

I will admit I did start to make some money but since then, I do it because I love the feeling of community. Whenever people come past me, everyone's

SUBSCRIBE



Scan the QR code to subscribe to the Big Issue, with 50% of the proceeds going straight to Sean.

subs.bigissue.com



I used to aim big, but now I just hope to have somewhere I can call my own one day

always happy and enjoying themselves. If people want to have a moment where they can just forget about their lives, come past my pitch and enjoy the music. I put the music on to see people's smiles, not for myself.

I also want to remind other Big Issue vendors to enjoy themselves while they're selling the magazine. We're all in the same boat and we're all trying to help each other out. Just enjoy the time you have.

Honestly, if I didn't sell the Big Issue, I'd probably be on the streets, not able to afford food, not able to afford anything. I recently moved to a privately rented place with a live-in landlord, and I'm getting housing benefits to help me afford it.

Even if I can't call it home, I know I have somewhere to go which is safe and that makes every day worth it. I used to aim big, but now I just hope to have somewhere to call my own one day. It can be small. I just want somewhere I can finally call my own.

Before I ended up in this situation, I really enjoyed streaming on places like Twitch and YouTube. That's where I wanted my life to go. I've had my computer set back up with the help of charities, and I still fight to make that my career. It gives me the same feeling as the Big Issue. I use it to put a smile on people's faces and make them forget life for a while.

If I could go back and speak to my younger self, I would tell myself not to make the stupid mistakes I was about to make. I would go through each moment with myself and explain why it was a mistake so I could avoid it. But I feel proud of myself now and I am pushing myself every day. Nobody else is going to push me. If I don't do it, I'll just be stagnant in life.

I've just got one more thing to say to anyone reading this and that is to have a good day!

Interview: Isabella McRae

Photo: Frankie Stone

Peter Hook & The Light

THURSDAY 17TH
OCTOBER 2024
PARR HALL WARRINGTON

FRIDAY 1ST
NOVEMBER 2024
ST GEORGE'S HALL
BRADFORD

THURSDAY 7TH
NOVEMBER 2024
CHEESE & GRAIN FROME

FRIDAY 8TH
NOVEMBER 2024
TRAMSHED CARDIFF

PETERHOOKANDTHELIGHT.LIVE
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Fri 11 **MANCHESTER** o2 Ritz Sat 19 **BIRMINGHAM** o2 Institute
Sat 12 **LINCOLN** Engine Shed

HUGH CORNWELL

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR TOUR

NOVEMBER 2024

20 READING SUB 89	27 SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK
21 LEEDS OLD WOOLLEN	28 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
22 EDINBURGH QUEENS HALL	29 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
23 SUNDERLAND FIRE STATION	30 NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDER

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KRIS BARBAS BAND

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HALO EFFECT TOUR 2024

07 NOV BURY ST EDMUNDS	THE APEX
27 NOV CHESTER	THE LIVE ROOMS
29 NOV HOLMFIRTH	PICTUREDROME
30 NOV LINCOLN	DRILL HALL
01 DEC EXETER	PHOENIX




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SUNDAY 15 : HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
WEDNESDAY 18 : FROME CHEESE & GRAIN
THURSDAY 19 : NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
FRIDAY 20 : NORWICH WATERFRONT

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