

Business
Post

Magazine

October 11 2020

Acting out

Is it all over for
Irish cinemas?

A happy House

Gillian Nelis dines by
the sea in Waterford

Experimental jogging

Emer McLysaght
steps into motion

Dreaming the Future

How Dubliners believe
Grafton Street can be
reimagined for a new era

Report: Killian Woods



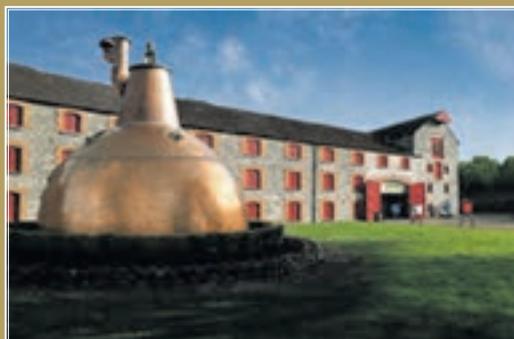
CASTLEMARTYR
RESORT
★★★★★

Escape to Castlemartyr Resort THIS AUTUMN

Experience 5-star hospitality and exceptional craftsmanship in East Cork with Castlemartyr Resort and the Jameson Experience this Autumn.

- 2 Nights Accommodation in a Deluxe Room for 2 adults
- 2-Course Meal in the Bell Tower Restaurant • Full Breakfast
- Complimentary entry for two to the Experience Tour at the Jameson Distillery Midleton

The Jameson Experience at Castlemartyr Resort is priced from €479 for 2 nights. For more information or to book your stay, call our reservations team today on 021 421 9000, or visit www.castlemartyrresort.ie.



**T&Cs apply. Subject to availability.*



Col Campbell, managing director of Bewley's Oriental Cafés

BRYAN MEADE

Features

- 8 **INTERVIEW**
Actor Clare Dunne's rollercoaster path
- 10 **ZEITGEIST**
Will cinemas still be with us in 2022?
- 12 **COVER STORY**
Grafton Street enters a new era
- 16 **FASHION**
Folkster's designs on the future
- 18 **CHILDREN'S BOOKS**
Shane Hegarty reads the room

Regulars

- 5 **EMER MCCLYSAGH**
Our columnist experiments with jogging
- 18 **RHYTHM NATION**
Singer-songwriter Oliver Cole picks the playlist
- 30 **DESIGN FOR LIFE**
Should your children move out of home to go to college?

Eat & drink

- 20 **WINE**
Cathal McBride on the best supermarket wines
- 21 **RESTAURANT REVIEW**
Gillian Nelis on the Cliff House

Arts & Books

- 23 **HISTORY**
Dermot Bolger on an Irish novelist worth re-examining
- 24 **MUSIC**
John Lennon's life under the microscope
- 28 **FILM**
John Maguire reviews Kajillionaire
- 29 **TELEVISION**
Emmanuel Kehoe on Tommy Bowe's Ireland

Nadine O'Regan

Most of us haven't stuck to the small tasks we set ourselves at the beginning of lockdown. Instead, we binge on things we know to be terrible and low-quality. Why?



@NadineORegan

There are small things that I am grateful for about the Covid-19 pandemic. To wit: being easily able to duck acquaintances in the supermarket because of the giant masks and my tiny face; getting to work from home; spending less on make-up because of the aforementioned masks (lipstick is having a bad pandemic); and being able to clothe my

hoofs in trainers every day – blessed, comfortable trainers!

These are all good things. But the list of bad things, well, once we leave out the glaringly obvious, there's a list of minor-key bad things which deserves attention, and most of it has to do with maintaining intellectual and physical rigour.

Now that we're not around each other all the time, for plenty of us, standards have been allowed to slip – and there's a part of me that wonders if they'll ever return.

I'm not saying that we're all going to emerge from this pandemic hairy-eared, slanket-clothed and flabby of body and mind. But depending on how much longer this all drags on for, it certainly feels possible. The physical effects of the pandemic have been well documented: I don't know a healthy person in Dublin who isn't regarding the weighing scales as a feared enemy.

But what about the intellectual effects of the pandemic? Sure, we all planned to spend our downtime at home reading War and Peace. But has it happened? Put it this way: do you plan to read poetry by Louise Glück, the new Nobel Prize-winning laureate over the next week? Or will you dive into, say, Emily in Paris, the number one Netflix hit in Ireland last week, and thoroughly enjoy it instead?

Emily in Paris is – in the words of one contributor on Sean Moncrieff's Newstalk show last week – “utterly stupid, terrible, predictable and makes absolutely no sense”. He was being kind. The comedy-drama stars Lily Collins (superstar Phil's daughter) as Emily, an American twentysomething marketing executive who arrives in Paris with the intention of converting the French to social media, despite not speaking a word of the language.

In a pre-Covid-19 world, it's possible that Emily in Paris would have been cheerfully ignored by most of us. But now we're falling on the series like a bunch of seagulls on a dropped 99. With Normal People and Connell's chain but a lingering memory, we're ravenous for beauty, romance and foreign destinations, or at least destinations outside our home

county. And there's more escapism on the way: the soapy thrill of Riviera returns next week, and Dermot Bannon is also back for a bit of let's-pretend-it's-not-Covid-era gorgeous houses light relief.

In the case of Emily in Paris, it doesn't matter if the script is as wonky as Gérard Depardieu's nose, or if stereotypes about French people abound – it's easy on the eye and easy to absorb, and that's what matters. Even as I find myself thinking that it's terrible, I'm still clicking to watch the next 20-minute episode in the season, just as I did with Cobra Kai, the Karate Kid spin-off that has been recommissioned for a fourth series and become another Irish hit.

But does all that airy-fairy lightness ever wind up having a more profound effect on our thinking? Sometimes, in bleaker moments, I find myself wondering if the worship of light entertainment has created a new model for politics, in that all we want now are cartoonish scenes that give us virtual watercooler moments.

Take Tánaiste Leo Varadkar's digs at Tony Holohan, chief medical officer, on television last week; they were shocking, but also entertaining, and pundits seized on the interview like a plot twist in an episode of EastEnders. And no wonder: in a world of Zoom meetings, where no one has anything of import to talk about because of the restrictions, it was the televisual equivalent of a juicy steak.

It's a reality TV show scenario that Donald Trump knows well – much as liberals might not want to admit it, the man is – in the manner of a car crash if the whole world was in the car – rather entertaining. “Look at what Donald Trump did now!” we all tweet to each other, aghast, as we forget about everything else, so excited are we by the drama. This column comes to you, bear in mind, in a week in the US presidential campaign where a fly that landed on Mike Pence's head during the

vice-presidential debate commandeered more attention than anything the candidates said to each other. We want gate-crashers and show-stoppers, not real political debate. We want Trump-style nonsense to keep us agog.

If it's a dangerous trend, it's also, in a pandemic era, an entirely understandable one. We're all bored. We're all shaking fists at the plexi-glass and feeling a little depressed by our masks. We all feel like we're putting on physical calories while simultaneously losing intellectual heft. The challenge will be to stop the rot before it gets out of hand. And in the meantime, until we muster up the resolve, there's always Emily in Paris. ■



Lily Collins in Netflix's Emily in Paris

Editor: Nadine O'Regan **Email:** nadine@businesspost.ie
Designer: Louise Spotten
Picture editor: Bryan Walshe
Email: bwalshe@businesspost.ie
Chief sub-editor: Maeve McLoughlin
Staff writer: Sarah Taaffe-Maguire

Advertising: Lorcan Hanlon **Email:** lhanlon@businesspost.ie
Editorial director, Magazine Brands: Elaine Prendeville
Online: businesspost.ie; tel: 01 6026000
 Published by Post Publications, Second Floor, Block B, The Merrion Centre, Dublin 4
 Printed by Webprint, Mahon Point Retail Park, Cork



2021 SKI HOLIDAYS

Award Winning Ski Holidays from Ireland's No.1 Ski Tour Operator.

RETURN FLIGHTS WITH
20KG BAGGAGE
INCLUDED AS STANDARD

RETURN
TRANSFERS
TO YOUR RESORT

HAND-PICKED
ACCOMMODATION
IN THE BEST RESORTS

EXPERIENCED
IN-RESORT
TEAM



Hotel Jakobwirt ★★★★★ Westendorf, Austria

Westendorf is a beautiful little village with unspoilt scenery and a warm, cosy atmosphere. Set in the heart of the Brixen Valley, it's linked by gondola to the SkiWelt circuit boasting 90 lifts and 284km of prepared piste.

What's Included

Accommodation

7 nights at the 4 star Hotel Jakobwirt. A traditional, family-friendly hotel that is a true favourite of Topflight guests, many returning year after year, as this hotel guarantees a warm welcome and a very high standard of service.

Board Basis

Half Board

Transport

- Return flights from Dublin
- Return coach transfers from airport to Westendorf

Location Features

- ✓ Close to the resort centre
- ✓ Nearest lift 200m
- ✓ Ski school 100m

20th February 2021, prices from

€1099PPS **€1129**PPS **£999**PPS
ex Dublin ex Cork ex Belfast



Sporthotel Austria ★★★★★ St Johann in Tirol, Austria

Small but perfectly formed, St. Johann has 60km of slopes and 17 lifts to a maximum height of 1,600m; perfect for beginners and intermediates. The resort is extremely popular with families and Irish skiers alike.

What's Included

Accommodation

7 nights at the 4 star Sporthotel Austria. Set in a perfect location so you get the most out of your ski holiday and with a top notch restaurant on site, you are sure to enjoy your stay at the homely Sporthotel Austria.

Board Basis

Half Board

Transport

- Return flights from Dublin
- Return coach transfers from airport to St. Johann in Tirol

Location Features

- ✓ Close to the resort centre
- ✓ Nearest lift 500m
- ✓ Ski school 400m

9th January 2021, prices from

€1079PPS **€1099**PPS **£969**PPS
ex Dublin ex Cork ex Belfast



Hotel Patagonia ★★★★★ Arinsal & Pal, Andorra

Located high in the Pyrenees on the western side of the principality, the lively resort of Arinsal is very popular with families and younger groups of skiers who enjoy the 'après' as much as the 'ski'!

What's Included

Accommodation

7 nights at the 4 star Hotel Patagonia. Located right at the foot of the slopes in Arinsal this modern, yet traditional in style accommodation provides stunning alpine views, and is a great place to relax after a day on the slopes.

Board Basis

Half Board

Transport

- Return flights from Dublin
- Return coach transfers from airport to Arinsal

Location Features

- ✓ Close to the resort centre
- ✓ Nearest lift 50m
- ✓ Ski school 800m

21st February 2021, price from

€669PPS
ex Dublin

Business Post

EXCLUSIVE READER OFFERS

Call our ski holiday experts on **01 240 1700**

LICENCED BY THE COMMISSION FOR AVIATION REGULATION TO 074 & TA 055



ProudBoys after Donald Trump told the bigoted Proud Boys group to “stand by” for further instructions after his first debate with Joe Biden, the hashtag was reclaimed by the LGBT+ community on Twitter

The West Wing no, not the Covid-infested one, the telly one. The cast are reuniting for a reunion special on October 15 in an effort to get out the vote. They’ll be doing a version of the Hartsfield Landing season three episode, with Sterling K Brown playing Leo McGarry

Movie nights every cloud has a silver lining, and with the introduction of countrywide level 3 restrictions came the return of Alison Spittle’s CoVideo Parties. She’s hosting a classic film watchalong every Tuesday night. Follow #coveidoparty to get involved

Music festivals they’re back! Well, kind of. Dunderry Park in Meath hosted a series of socially distant concerts called Sofft Nights last weekend featuring CMAT and Paul Noonan. There were twinkly lights, marquees and well-lies. Just like old times

Culture Counter

Skinny eyebrows Instagram make-up and beauty pro Katie Jane Hughes has been spotted giving instructions on the latest trend: pencil thin brows. We’re dragging every dreadful 1990s fashion trend back, but the over-plucked look needs to stay away.

Glow the Netflix show is the latest victim of the pandemic. Fans were devastated to learn last week that the fourth and final season had been scrapped. Star Marc Maron is pleading for a two-hour feature episode to give the viewers closure

Skin if you’re struggling with mask-related pimple problems, you’re not alone: “maskne” is just another way 2020 has found to stoke this dumpster fire of a year. At least the masks serve to cover up the spots. What a cruel, vicious cycle



Emer McLysaght

Week one, I thought I might die; week two was no better, but four weeks in and I’m in danger of becoming a proper pavement pounder

@EmerTheScreamer



I’ve been racking my brains, but honestly can’t remember the last time I ran on purpose. I especially can’t remember ever running anywhere with no destination in mind. What a preposterous notion. And then four weeks ago, to my own incredible surprise, I decided to take up jogging.

I am not an athletic person. My eldest brother was a talented runner when I was a kid, and he’d get to compete at events like the National Community Games finals in Mosney, back when Mosney was still a place where you could sit in Dan Lowry’s pub and enjoy a pint while taking in the glorious vista of plasters floating in the swimming pool on your annual staycation (now, of course, functioning as a direct provision centre, it’s anything but a holiday camp, despite what some racists might have to say about it).

It’s not that I’m exercise-averse. In fact, I’ve engaged in problematic levels of overexercising in my time; an occupational hazard when you’ve been living with an eating disorder for 20-plus years. Walking was always my poison, though. Just walking and walking and walking, and then checking the numbers and walking some more. “You’re only allowed to walk for 30 minutes a day,” said my doctors. “Sure, no problem,” I said, entering hour three of an open-ended stroll.

So that’s how I came to running. I needed a hit of exercise with a clearly defined timeframe. But, more than that, I needed to understand what all the running bores were so bonkers about. All of those disgusting pavement pounders sweating and breathing on me at the height of lockdown when I was out on my grim walks. Those pals on Instagram talking about how good it is for their head.

So I spent a small fortune on the best sports bra the internet swizzed me into, downloaded the Couch To 5K app, and got up at the crack of dawn on week one, day one so nobody would see me.

It was absolutely awful. The lunatic robot woman inside the app expected me to run for 60 seconds at a time. After what was surely ten minutes of intense athleticism, I glanced down at

the app and saw that I was 27 seconds into my jog. My throat was burning up into my ears and my breath was catching at my tonsils.

I desperately wanted to stop before I ended up in the news for dying on the street on Week One Day One of Couch to 5K. The only thing that kept me going was shame. There was an old woman coming out of the morning mist ahead of me with a shopping bag, and I couldn’t face her witnessing me just stopping in my tracks. So I ran for 60 seconds. And then another 60, and another, until the half-hour was up. And I didn’t die.

I arrived home drenched in sweat, and felt simultaneously useless and exhilarated. I was so wrecked after a junior infants version of interval training, and there were people out there casually running marathons. And yet I felt like I had really achieved something. There was only one thing for it: get better.

I completed week one. I made the mistake of looking forward to see what week two had in store. Run for 90 seconds? You must be having a laugh, mate. But I did it.

Week three escalated to a ludicrous three minutes of running. I nearly gave up, but a lout of a man roaring: “You’d be quicker on the bus” gave me the motivation I needed. He was the type of man

who tells you: “Smile, love, it might never happen.” The type of man who’s always carrying a battered Bag for Life not by the handles, but around the neck like a dead turkey. I suspect carrying it by the handles is “for women”.

Week four has humbled me. The introduction of a five-minute running interval has defeated me and the eye-wateringly expensive Asics I impulse bought in week two because I am now A Runner.

I’ve consulted the internet and given myself permission to repeat week three. The three minutes of running seems so manageable, now I know how horrific five is. I assume there’ll be a time in the not-too-distant future when I’ll feel that way about the five, and then the eight, and then the 20. Twenty minutes, that is, not kilometres. Let’s not get carried away. ■



EMER SAYS ...

Subscribe to The Creep Dive. The hilariously morbid Irish podcast is bringing back its Thursday night lockdown Zooms

Read The Glorious Guinness Girls, a peek into 1920s Dublin society by Emily Hourican

Listen to Graham Norton on Blindboy’s podcast. A delight.

This week you will love...

Compiled by
Mary Cate Smith

High-tech hydration

Keen to reduce your ecological footprint? **LARQ** is a new self-cleaning bottle with purifying technology and a mercury-free water portable sanitization system. No replacement filters are needed and the vacuum insulation keeps your water hot for up to 12 hours and cold for 24. Anticipating what we already knew (that hands are not made to fit inside water bottles), the LARQ bottle self-cleans every two hours. We're here for anything that spares us the washing up. From €109 at livelarq.com, this smart bottle is well worth the hype.



Unboxing joy

Combining expert craft knowledge with intuitive self-care wisdom, Clare and Laura of the **Irish Design Shop**, Dublin, have mindfully curated gift boxes for loved ones. These wellness boxes inspire self-care activities with natural beauty products for botanical bathing including bath salts, body lotions, a bog cotton candle and snug wool socks (your feet will thank you later). If your loved one is craving the caffeine hit that lockdown can't satisfy, the coffee/homeware box comes packed with ethically traced coffee, local honey and Caroline Dolan's hand-painted coffee cup that equally serves as an objet d'art. Proving that joy really can be delivered, we think there is just a bit of magic in these boxes, available from irishdesignshop.com from €50.

Ethical threads

While the fashion industry is a notorious pollutant, the spirit of the sustainable vanguard is embodied in Irish designer Lia Quigley. Having earned her stripes designing for Calvin Klein and Zara, Quigley grew increasingly uneasy with the fast fashion model dominating the retail sphere. The seeds for an eco-friendly, ethical brand had long been germinating and Quigley launched her own fashion label, **Made Obvious** during lockdown. A medley of pattern and colour, the natural world serves as her muse. Garments are handmade and printed on organic cotton in Madrid where Quigley is based. Employing a zero-waste policy, leftover fabrics are fashioned into weighted pillows and eye-masks. Layer the Anna top (€60) over a colour-blocked polo neck and pair with the Ruthie skirt (€120) for a trans-seasonal look. Shop at madeobvious.com.



Digital opera

Crowned Saoi of Aosdána just last year, Roger Doyle is to electronic music what David Lynch is to film. Constantly breaking new ground with sonic innovations, the forefather of electronica has released a new studio-only opera, **iGIRL** (featuring Olwen Fouéré, *above*) explores the depths of female grief and is narrated by two characters - a contemporary woman and one living in mythical times. Marina Carr, whose plays are saturated with female rage and macabre humour, has composed the libretto. It's available on the RTÉ player or on rogerdoyle1.bandcamp.com.





Chain mail

Imagine a chain so popular, so ubiquitous that it's sold out globally (for now - with more on the way). No, we're not talking about Connell's chain, although it's just as much a breakout star. Stylist Karen Perez founded **Second Wind** amid the worldwide lockdown. Barely managing to pay her rent, she launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for the supplies and materials involved in creating beautifully crafted, organic masks and chains. The interior sleeve has space for removable filters and the chains can be re-worn as necklaces. US congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has been spotted wearing the Tina version with denim-on-denim, giving it her stamp of approval. Featuring three luxe styles in sizes small to extra-large, secure your place on the waiting list now at shopsecondwind.com. Unisex chains and masks start at approximately €28 and ship worldwide.

#Trending

LOCKED IN

Hankering for a way to keep your contoured cheekbones as flawless as your permanent record? Brown Thomas and Arnott's newest billion-dollar beauty brand has the solution. Morphe's Continuous Setting Mist locks in moisture and sets liquid or powder make-up with a radiant sheen. Ultra-lightweight, this mist releases microfine dewy molecules, leaving your face looking fresher for longer. Buy online at brownthomas.com and arnotts.ie.



Ritual cleansing

If you're long overdue some spiritual SOS, consider procuring a copy of Chronicle Books' **Moon Bath: Bathing Rituals and Recipes for Relaxation and Vitality** (€13.80). Compiled by Dakota Hills and Sierra Brashear, this Ayurvedic bible encourages its readers to slow down and reintegrate with natural elements. Using the lunar cycles as a guide, the wellness duo describes 16 bath and shower rituals to align oneself with the rhythms of the universe. Featuring meditations, affirmations and plant-based healing remedies, this lush tome invites you to reconnect with your body and mind. We're currently brewing the eucalyptus and bentonite clay concoction to expel any corona-related negative energy. Here's to the bathing renaissance! Nab your copy at bookdepository.com.



Inclusive activewear

Lunges in the time of corona have helped keep the black dog at bay for many sports enthusiasts during lockdown. Loving your body does not stop at a certain size and the correct compression wear can actually prevent injury and accelerate recovery. So, is all sports gear created equally? We're getting there. Just last year, Nike launched para-sport and plus-sized mannequins to their stores. Hot on Nike's Achilles' heel was Adidas, whose collaboration with Universal Standard in 2019 pledged a commitment to diversity going forward. **Lifestyle Sports** has followed suit and now stocks sports bras from 32A-44F and activewear from size 6 to 34. With more than 34 styles to choose from, here's hoping brands become more inclusive and spark a cultural shift in how we represent and champion diversity - see lifestylesports.com.



RINSE, RE-USE, REPEAT

Cost-effective and eco-friendly, Jo Browne's new make-up remover pads are your ethical alternative to disposable cotton pads. Handmade in Carlow from organic bamboo, these pads are sustainable and can be hand or machine-washed at 40 degrees. At just €9.95 for six, these re-usable pads reduce landfill build-up and the excessive water use generated from the production of cotton. We're swapping single-use beauty products for sustainable alternatives like these pads. Available from Meadows & Byrne and jobrowne.com.

THREE-PIECE

Want to swap dark, dramatic lashes for a more natural look? Eyeko has the triumvirate of tools to do just that. The newly launched Black Magic: Cocoa Edit features Eyeko's legendary mascara, pencil and liquid eyeliner in a rich, hazel hue. The Korean-inspired range comes with fool-proof applicators and promises long-lasting definition. The last Rolo, coffee beans and Labrador puppies - some of the best things in life (and our make-up bag) are brown. Shop the edit at eyeko.com.



‘Whether it’s a small indie in Ireland or a big set on London or LA, everyone’s trying to do the same thing. We’re all just trying to tell an amazing story’

Lockdown derailed many careers, but actor and writer Clare Dunne is rising to the challenges of 2020, as seen by the warm reception given to her self-penned feature *Herself*

Interview: **Tanya Sweeney**

This was going to be Clare Dunne’s year. After laying the brickwork for years, the actress/writer’s labours were bearing fruit in spectacular fashion. Her self-penned feature, *Herself*, was an audience hit at the Sundance Film Festival, and closed out the Dublin International Film Festival in February. On the acting front, she was due to start filming in Ireland alongside Matt Damon, Ben Affleck and Adam Driver on the Ridley Scott movie, *The Last Duel*.

And then March came, and we all know what happened. With *The Last Duel* on pause, Matt Damon famously got locked down in Killiney. And for Dunne, a dazzling career trajectory was interrupted.

“At the beginning of lockdown, I was focusing on the small stuff, like what I’m getting for dinner, and walking around my 2km radius,” she recalls. “I was getting ready for everything to be put on pause – bracing myself for the worst, but hoping for the best.”

In the ensuing weeks, Dunne initially became more productive, reading potential projects for adaptation and getting a “huge burst” of writing done.

“I didn’t actually finish anything – I know a lot of people were talking about Shakespeare writing *King Lear* in a pandemic, but I had to move house four times,” she says. “It was kind of weird. I was sort of busy, but never got a run with one thing, writing-wise.”

Yet there’s a sense that Dunne is wearing her talents lightly. The release of *Herself* is happening in the near future: current events and restrictions on cinemas have nudged it out of the autumn release schedule, though it had already been well received at the Sundance Film festival and enjoyed its British premiere at last week’s BFI London International Film Festival. Earlier this year, Dunne also signed with a new agency, United Talent Agency, home to the likes of Mariah Carey and Johnny Depp.

“It feels like I’m stepping into my dream,” Dunne says. “I remember when I was on the set of *Spider-Man* a couple of years ago, I just wanted to be on those big sets so much. It was just so much fun and no stress at all.

“Whether it’s a small indie in Ireland or a big set on

London or LA, everyone’s trying to do the same thing. We’re all just trying to tell an amazing story and have the craic while we do it. Once you realise that, you feel free. You just talk to people as people – you meet them where they’re at, on the day.”

There will also be a top-secret TV series to shoot in the next six months. It may seem like the dizzying tale of an overnight success, but Dunne is anything but.

In 2009, she graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff, then worked at Druid Theatre. “What ensued after that was six months of doing nothing,” she laughs. “I had written a very loose piece for an assignment in college, and I got a prize for it – £1,000. As I was moving to London, I decided to put on the show, and I rented Smock Alley and put on *Living With Missy*. Looking back, it was one of the happiest times of my creative life.”

Dunne then spent some time in New York. “I was auditioning and waitressing and thought: ‘Well, this isn’t going great,’” she says. “But I was reading so many scripts that I developed an eye for knowing a good one in the first couple of pages.”

The story of *Herself* – a single mother, struggling to provide a home for her daughters, takes matters into her own hands – soon began to percolate.

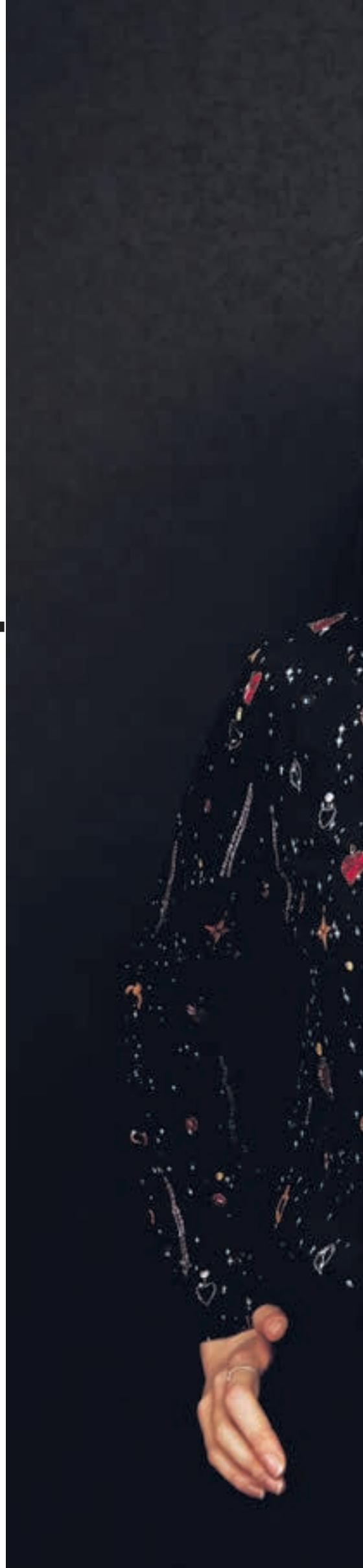
“My friend is a single mother with three kids, and she rang me telling me that her landlord was trying to evict her within the month,” Dunne says. “It was in 2014, just as the housing crisis was really starting to grow. She felt this huge sense of shame, having to declare herself homeless. I remember one night just googling ‘How to build a house’, and realised you could build a house for about 25 grand, once you had the land.

“Then I had this flash out of nowhere – a woman decides to help herself and therefore the right kind of help comes to her. It’s a really redemptive story of this woman going from darkness into light.”

In *Herself*, Dunne’s character Sandra escapes an abusive husband (played with compelling menace by Ian Lloyd Anderson) and attempts to build her own house on land gifted to her by an ailing doctor that Sandra cares for (Harriet Walter).

After a lengthy research session with Women’s Aid,

Interview





Clare Dunne: 'Once you've proved you can do your first film, it really does change things' GETTY

Dunne's script was on its way.

Dunne applied for Irish Film Board funding in 2015, and the project was initially passed over. Undeterred, she applied in 2016, and secured development funding. Dunne decided to send her fledgling screenplay to producer and *Catastrophe* star Sharon Horgan.

"I sent an email saying, 'Hey, I'd love to submit this to you and see if you think there's anything to it,'" recalls Dunne. "I woke up to two emails from her: the first said, 'I'm really sorry, I won't get to read this for months', and the second said: 'I started reading the script. Can you take a phone call?'"

With Horgan attached in a production capacity, *Herself* began to gather pace. Lloyd, with whom Dunne was working on a theatre project, soon got on board as director. Malcolm Campbell (*What Richard Did*) was drafted in as co-writer. The project was developed under Horgan's Merman production company, alongside Element Pictures.

Between the current housing crisis, the domestic violence strand, and the strong message about community and connection, *Herself* is certainly more prescient than most films.

"Ed Guiney [of Element Pictures] rang me and I was like: 'What's going to happen with the film?' He said, 'I don't know what's going to happen, but I know in my gut that people are going to want to see a story like this within the next few months'. I figured, 'Okay, Ed is who he is for a reason. He knows what people's hearts and souls want'."

On working with Element Pictures, she says: "They try and really support in a very professional way. They took so much care of me, even when I wasn't aware. They were guiding me energy-wise. They knew I was going to take the lead on the set of *Herself*, so they would nurture you by getting an apartment sorted for you a few weeks before the shoot. Before then, I'd been living with housemates.

"Even during lockdown, Ed rang and was like: 'How are you? Do you need support?' They want to make sure anyone they want to work with is feeling okay."

Horgan, meanwhile, "always sends the lift back down for others: she's generating stuff all the time, and you learn an awful lot from just being around her. In group discussions, Sharon is always first to talk about the elephant in the room. And everyone will die laughing with the relief that someone finally said it. She has an insane work ethic – it could power an entire city".

A successful showing at Sundance – followed by the Amazon Studios snapping up the North American distribution rights – opened several doors for Dunne. "There were a few general meetings," she says. "I've noticed I'm definitely going to be writing for people. I think once you've proved you can do your first film, it really does change things.

"I would love the experience of working in America. I would love to learn a little more about working in the studios. I wouldn't mind living here for six months of the year, and then maybe spending six months somewhere else. Yep," she smacks her lips decisively, like a woman ready to step into her dream life. "That would be grand." ■

See *herself*.film



Clare Dunne in *Herself*: 'It is a really redemptive story of this woman going from darkness into light'

A bleak PICTURE

Cinemas were open for a brief period over the summer, but with new restrictions in place and larger operators announcing more long-term closures, few see much cause for optimism in the industry. **Nadine O'Regan** reports

One of the greatest reasons to go to the cinema is for the escapism it offers. Sink into the plush seats, grab yourself some popcorn and an insanely large soft drink, and pretend, for a few hours at least, that you're in another world entirely.

In these troubled times, cinema seems to represent exactly the escape-hatch we all crave. But as Covid-19 infiltrates the structures of everything we hold dear, our cinemas are falling victim to a related existential crisis. Faced with delayed movie release schedules, budget-thwarting social distancing measures, and unpredictable governmental decisions, many cinema operators now fear the worst.

In the past few days, Cineworld, the cinema chain, has announced that it will close its cinemas in Ireland and Britain in the coming weeks. The move will directly affect 5,500 staff, including staff in Dublin at its Parnell Street site, where it has the biggest cineplex in Ireland, with 17 screens and four floors. The pathway towards the cinemas' reopening at a point in 2021 is currently unclear.

The Odeon cinema chain, meanwhile, which operates 120 theatres across Ireland and Britain, has said that it will change the opening hours for some of its cinemas, reducing them to opening between just Friday and Sunday, in line with reduced movie release schedules. The move will affect a quarter of its cinemas.

The Savoy cinema in Dublin's city centre has not opened since lockdown. And now that level 3 has been introduced countywide in Ireland as of last week, the cinemas that had been open outside Dublin, like the Pálás in Galway or the Gate cinemas in Cork, have been forced to close again, in line with governmental restrictions.

For those within the industry, it's a nerve-racking and stressful time. "It's disheartening," says Charlene Lydon, programmer with the Light House Cinema in Dublin and its sister cinema Pálás in Galway. "We were really looking forward to reopening the Light House. Now, not only is it not reopening, we have to close our other cinema, Pálás, for another three weeks. It's devastating for small companies."

Many industry insiders point to the delayed release of the James Bond film as the beginning of an assault on confidence in the cinema world. As with many industries, 1 per cent of product can be responsible for 99 per cent of sales – and there are certain tentpole releases, such as Bond, Dune and Black Widow – that get cash registers ringing.

"They do huge business and that's where all the money comes in," Lydon says. "Distributors

choose their dates selectively and their movement impacts other films that were due to come out."

On March 4, it was a surprise to many within the industry that MGM and Eon Productions would choose to push No Time to Die, the 25th film in the 007 franchise, back in the release schedule from April to November 12. Some observers felt it was an overreaction to Covid-19 which, at the time, was only beginning to spread its tentacles across the world.

Now it is with a certain gloomy sense of inevitability that the news comes through of other delays. Dune, the big-budget adaptation of Frank Herbert's novel, directed by Denis Villeneuve, has been moved from its release date of December 2020 back to October 2021, while Bond itself has now been pushed back again in the schedule to April 2021.

This past summer also saw delays around the release of films including Top Gun: Maverick, Black Widow and Fast and Furious 9. The big-budget Disney flick Mulan, meanwhile, was first delayed and then released via the small screen.

Distributors are anxious to avoid putting made-for-cinema releases out at a time when big film markets – such as New York and Los Angeles – are closed to them, so large-scale box-office proceeds can't be made. But a chicken-and-egg scenario is now in play: every time the release of another big-budget movie is delayed, it puts further pressure on the theatres which are there to support such releases, endangering the very future of the cinemas themselves.

The Tenet factor

When Tenet emerged recently, it played 29 times a day in one Irish cinema alone (Cineworld on Parnell Street), such

John David Washington in Tenet: the blockbuster that failed to ignite this year



Daniel Craig as James Bond in the long-awaited, and long-delayed, No Time To Die



will be closed.

“When you love films as much as I love films, you’re protective of them.”

Those films are directed by, respectively, Rose Glass, Miranda July and Sofia Coppola. All are a perfect fit for the Light House cinema audience, but now they will be lucky if they get an airing when the theatre reopens once more.

In the Irish film circuit, another expected 2020 indie hit has been hit hard by the pandemic. The film *Herself*, starring and co-written by Clare Dunne, was expected to be a breakout success, having already played to receptive audiences at the Sundance Film festival and been backed by Sharon Horgan with her Mer-man film production company in tandem with Element Pictures, of Oscar-winning *Room* fame.

A few days ago, the decision was taken to delay the release of the film, ten days before its intended arrival date into Irish cinemas.

“It’s a decision we’ve taken very reluctantly,” says Andrew Lowe, co-founder and co-managing director of Element Pictures, which owns the Light House cinema.

“It’s a difficult enterprise to release a film – you have to put a lot of money into it. It’s a great film, but there’s no sense in releasing a film when there are no cinemas open in Ireland.”

The blanket ban nobody wanted

Lowe is critical of the Irish government’s decision to place a blanket ban on cinemas in level 3 restrictions. “Where I would criticise the government is, having decided to shut down cinemas, other areas of hospitality are allowed to operate on some sort of basis,” he says. “Cinemas are just closed now, on level 3. There has been no thought given to how those businesses might be supported in any way, in contrast to what they’re doing in Britain.”

“The British government brought in a measure over the summer to support independent cinemas in England. There’s a stg£30 million fund made available to smaller chains of cinemas: they can apply for economic support. I think there’s an onus on the Irish government to start thinking on those terms too.”

“There are about 100 cinemas on the island of Ireland. About 85 per cent are Irish-owned. It’s an Irish SME sector and all those businesses are seriously affected by what’s going on. I think it’s more just a lack of prioritising, frankly.”

Lowe points to the tough but necessary measures that Irish cinemas including the Lighthouse put in place to ensure safety throughout their theatre environments. “We’ve had very strict social distancing rules, with people seated two metres apart,” he says. “For every one ticket we were selling, we were giving up 15 seats – so already that was not tenable. So it’s an extremely challenging time for the sector.”

It’s a thought echoed by Lydon, who had been delighted to be part of the re-opening of the Light House cinema, while ushering in new social distancing rules, back in July. “We had a great reaction to

our reopening,” she says. “Our staff felt safe, our customers felt safe and then we got shut down again. It jolted us.”

A sunny-dispositioned person by nature, Lydon finds it hard to know what to do next. “How do you plan?” she says. “How do you make a survival plan?”

It’s a question that everyone in the sector is asking. ■



Tom Cruise in *Top Gun: Maverick*



Timothee Chalamet and Rebecca Ferguson in *Dune*

“**For every one ticket we were selling, we were giving up 15 seats, so that wasn’t tenable**”

was the understanding by the cinema’s managers that this was a film that the Irish public actually wanted to see.

If the release of *Tenet* was a relief after so many delays and disappointments elsewhere, the truth is that it was mere good luck that the Christopher Nolan-directed film managed to slip onto the schedule at a point when at least Irish cinemas were open to accommodate it. “We closed on March 16, then we reopened on July 27, then we closed again on September 18,” says Lydon. “We didn’t have very much time.”

She feels particularly downcast that many of the films that are still being released in 2020 are the smaller or more alternative offerings, made by directors who particularly need support. “I jotted down a few films that we probably won’t be able to share and almost all of them are made by women,” she says. “*Saint Maud*, *Kajillionaire*, *On the Rocks*: it’s just a shame. *Saint Maud* is supposed to be out on October 16, but we

Shaping a future for the street of dreams

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to rage, Grafton Street is struggling, with shop closures and lack of footfall. What can be done to revive Dublin's premier retail thoroughfare? Some prominent figures in the city put forward their solutions, writes **Killian Woods**

Photography: **Bryan Meade**

Grafton Street means many things to many people. To some, it's simply a high street. To others, it's their place of work. When Catherine Claffey was a child, Grafton Street was her playground.

For 60 years, her mother Sally pushed a pram full of flowers from their home on Golden Lane to the corner of Duke Street. That was where she set out her stall. When school was finished, her children would join her. Every day, young Catherine was collected from St Brigid's in the Coombe and walked the 15-minute trail to Grafton Street. The daily pilgrimage is one of her earliest, and also fondest, memories.

Raising children on Grafton Street sounds like chaos, but Claffey's mother ran a tight ship. She always had a plan to keep them safe. When the weather turned cold, she would send her children to the old Green Cinema on St Stephen's Green.

"My mother knew the usher. She would put you in the back row and mind you. We would be watching the same film every day for a week. I remember seeing Bugsy Malone, it must have been a dozen times," Claffey says.

"There used to be a shop beside our stall that sold books and magazines, a bit like Hodges Figgis, as well. I remember going in there and looking through all the books. I'm sure I had half of the shops tormented on that street when I was a small child, but all I have are happy memories on Grafton Street."

Now, like her mother and grandmother before her, Grafton Street is where Catherine earns a living. For nearly 40 years, she has pitched her flower stand on the corner of Duke Street, continuing a family legacy.

Last year, her presence on the street was threatened. Hines, a major landlord in the area, wrote to Dublin City Council recommending that casual traders should be relocated to St Stephen's Green to "reduce street clutter". Being referred to as "clutter" didn't sit well with Claffey or other flower sellers.

It was David versus Goliath. Hines, one of the world's biggest real estate firms with €100 billion in assets, went up against a handful of street traders. The battle



Catherine Claffey at her flower stand on the corner of Grafton Street and Duke Street: 'I miss the five o'clock rush because that's when you start to sell a few extra bouquets'

BRYAN MEADE



was a complete mismatch – Hines never stood a chance. Dublin rallied around its flower sellers and the company eventually apologised.

“We couldn’t believe the amount of support we got from people,” Claffey says. “In the end, Hines apologised. I think they realised that the people of Ireland would not be putting up with it.”

Where Claffey and street traders persevered, other businesses have wilted on Grafton Street. She has watched shops in the area come and go – and cars too. The street has evolved before her eyes, and it’s doing so again. Stores are being boarded up in preparation for long-term vacancy, footfall has depleted to previously unimaginable levels, and the typical hum of activity on the street is barely audible.

“At five o’clock in the evening, the street would be bustling with people and movement. Now at five o’clock, it’s like a ghost town. I miss that five o’clock rush because that’s when you start to sell a few extra bouquets,” Claffey says.

The pandemic has exposed Grafton Street’s frailties. Many of its already embattled retailers have buckled due to the economic strain. Meanwhile, the previously bustling pubs and restaurants struggle on, hoping fortunes will turn around soon.

Grafton Street has not been shy of change in the past. The street came to life in the form we know today when O’Connell Bridge was built in the late 18th century. That road link between the north and south of the city turned the largely residential street at the time into a bustling retail area. In the mid-1980s, the traffic then disappeared when Grafton Street was pedestrianised, to much uproar.

The pandemic is likely to accelerate the next big reimagining of Grafton Street. Three well-known figureheads of the city, all renowned Dubliners, feel a new agenda can be set for the area, an agenda that gives the street a chance to emerge from the pandemic stronger and with a more sustainable purpose.

Here are their visions for Grafton Street.

Hazel Chu

Lord Mayor of Dublin

A few years ago, Hazel Chu was buying flowers for a friend on Grafton Street. It’s an experience that stuck with Chu because when it came to paying, it dawned on her that she didn’t have any cash.

“Ah love, you’re grand. Just get me back,” the florist told her. Chu did just that. She went back the next day and paid what was due. The whole encounter had a very local community feel, not one you would typically have on a capital city’s bustling high street.

“She had an element of trust in me, that’s something you see in communities. The traders on Grafton Street bring that community feel to a street. Imagine if we could build on that even more. Right now the street is missing

a community.”

Chu is speaking to the *Business Post* during a casual stroll around Grafton Street and its many side streets. As she walks, her eyes are drawn upwards to the empty second, third and fourth floors on the street.

She points out a sign advertising “Last remaining office space to let on Grafton Street”. It’s a relic of a pre-pandemic time; more such spaces are likely to come to the market on the street very soon.

“That should be used as residential accommodation,” Chu says. “If people lived there, it would bring footfall to the area. If you look at the northside of the city, the footfall is a lot higher than the southside now because there’s residential blocks. Whereas we look at the southside, there aren’t many central apartments because we’re not using the spaces above the shops.”

In 1994, the Living Over The Shop tax incentive scheme was first proposed by the government. The initiative fell flat, with the costs of ensuring buildings comply with required fire regulations proving a stumbling block.

The scheme never gathered steam again. Lorcan Sirr, a housing lecturer at Technological University Dublin, has estimated that there is potential for 4,000 homes to be built above shops in Dublin city.

“I think we can do that,” Chu says. “It will take time. If you have those buildings worked out in terms of fire escapes and everything is within regulation, then it will be easier to look at bringing more residential to Grafton Street.”

Chu admits that high streets don’t tend to have communities, but adds that this doesn’t have to be the case for Grafton Street.

“My mum and dad are from Hong Kong. Whenever I went back, I saw that any place they have built residential, there will inevitably be retail in the bottom of the apartments. Even one of the main shopping districts, Mong Kok, is predominantly a mix of residential and retail. There’s a place called Times Square in Hong Kong where there is a massive shopping centre – and what’s above the shopping centre? Apartments.”

Standing on Johnson’s Court, the laneway that links Grafton Street to Clarendon Street, Chu has a vision for how this narrow passageway would fit into her idea for a Grafton Street living quarter. Partly because it reminds her of little alleys scattered across Hong Kong and New York, where she used to live.

“In Hong Kong and New York, people would be playing chess or cards on a sidestreet like this,” she says. “There would be an awning over it, with tables and people chatting. What I imagine for Grafton Street is if you have a mixed-use of residential and retail, people would use the space to live. There would be a community.”

“I remember when I worked in New York, I went to Union Square for the shops. I came out of the subway and before I even got to the shop, I noticed that there was a group of chess players, kids skateboarding, a market. It was this little hub of a community surrounded by big



Hazel Chu, Lord Mayor of Dublin: 'If you have a mixed-use of residential and retail on Grafton Street, people would use the space to live'

retail on four corners. I don't see why we can't do this here. I think we need to be brave and start reimagining what could be different in our city centres."

It's a case of power in numbers, Chu says. Giving Grafton Street a base level of activity from people living on the street would in turn help retail survive. That passive community would create a new vibe on the street and its surroundings, bringing even more people to the area.

Part of that vision for a Grafton Street which people call home should involve other basics, such as public seating and toilets. Beyond the pandemic, outdoor mini festivals also fit into the vision.

As she stands on the pedestrianised end of Wicklow Street, Chu poses a question: "What is this space?" It's typically empty, but she sees a space for mini outdoor events or gigs, which could even be workable in a pandemic.

"This part of Wicklow Street is just a wide footpath. On one side you have Brown Thomas, on another AIB, but that's it. There is this massive space that could be used for so much more. I would like to see a lot more public seating or a space for a small food festival. Kildare Village has spaces like this and they use it for pockets of food trucks and coffee huts. Imagine an airstream or temporary pop-up stall here with some seating, that makes it a lot more usable."

The problem with public seating and food trucks is Grafton Street's daily traffic – not cars, but people. Prior to the pandemic, more than 8,000 pedestrians walked from one end of the street to another every hour.

"I can imagine this not just being a street in terms of going from top to bottom, I see it as a place where people come here and enjoy it," says Chu. "The problem is: people don't like change. If you look at Grafton Street, it used to have cars on it. When they first said: 'We're gonna change it', people were up in arms then. But now look at it."

"These things take time. It wasn't until about the third weekend of the College Green pedestrian trial that things really picked up. The first weekend wasn't disastrous, but it wasn't amazing either. We need a bit of patience because no one likes change, but we're in a year where, if we don't adapt and change, it will make things harder for everyone."

Anthony Flynn, chief executive of Inner City Helping Homeless and city councillor

Walking down Grafton Street towards Trinity College, a particular section of the thoroughfare grabs Anthony Flynn's attention. He points it out.

"For the money that's being spent in and out of these streets, that looks disgraceful," says Flynn, the chief executive of Inner City Helping Homeless (ICHH).

What he's looking at is a tar-filled hole in the ground. In 2015, more than €4 million was spent on the re-pavement of Grafton Street, but sections of the side streets are still dotted with patchwork road repairs. Some cracks have also appeared in the newly laid path.

"There are loose foot slabs and cracked bits of pavement too. The council needs to step up to make sure maintenance work is being carried out."

In pointing out the issue, Flynn is, in a sense, calling himself out. He was elected a city councillor last year and admits the local authority needs to do better for businesses – now more than ever.

Earlier this year, data released by Dublin Town showed that footfall on Grafton Street declined by 75 per cent. The levels of activity somewhat rebounded during the summer months, when pandemic-related restrictions were eased, but they are nowhere near normal levels.

Businesses have suffered as a result. Several retailers on Grafton Street, such as Cath Kidston, Monsoon, Urban Decay and Aldo, have closed in recent months. Staples of the street are also in trouble, with stores like Brown Thomas forced to cut some staff.

Flynn has stopped at the bottom of Grafton Street to take a look up the thoroughfare. What he sees is a creep of vacancy and dereliction slowly setting in. The first two units on either side of the street are at present empty storefronts, while the Burger King outlet has also been closed. That means five of the first six stores on the street are dead storefronts.

"Somebody owns these buildings," Flynn says. "They could be given back to the community, let's see what

Anthony Flynn, head of Inner City Helping Homelessness: 'Businesses need to communicate better with the council. They have a role and responsibility as well. Rates on this street are not cheap, but we have a social crisis that is only going to get worse'



can be done in order to try to improve the area. We don't want to see dereliction, but that's what will happen. It'll happen across the city."

The majority of units on Grafton Street are owned by large pension funds and property investment firms, with large tranches snapped up in the aftermath of the recession. Since 2013, there has been nearly €442 million-worth of transactions relating to properties on Grafton Street and Henry Street alone.

Cushman and Wakefield, the real estate firm, said Grafton Street was the fifth-most expensive main shopping street in the world in 2008, with rents at €5,621 per square metre annually. Naturally the recession took a toll on rents. Now the street is the 13th most expensive in the world at €3,794 per square metre per annually – with no increase between 2018 and 2019.

"Rents are not going to come down," Flynn says, as he looks at the empty buildings. "The council has got some responsibility to ensure that businesses are able to operate. Obviously, rates are going to be a serious issue for businesses and making sure the rates are at a decent level for businesses is important. Then again, we have to fund the city. We have to fund all of those services that Grafton Street uses. The cleaning and street sweeping that goes on."

Last year, a glimpse at the rates paid by Grafton Street shops was given when the unit formerly occupied by Fitzpatrick's Shoes was advertised to let. It noted that local authority rates payable for 2019 on the small store were more than €55,000.

It's hard to know how the immediate onslaught

retail has faced during the pandemic can be stemmed by the council, according to Flynn. But what local government can create is a better platform for future retail to prosper on the street, he says. "We've got to understand that businesses on this street are paying a hell of a lot of money in rates. That means the council has to help them to operate and trade."

For the good money businesses pay, they deserve a council that addresses issues they face. One issue on the street that Flynn is acutely aware of, due to his role with ICHH, is homelessness. His organisation doesn't run the homeless cafés that appear intermittently on Grafton Street, but ICHH does perform outreach support with rough sleepers in the area.

"Grafton Street has become somewhere that people believe they are safe at night due to the footfall," he says. "We probably have up to 40 people per night that we engage with, and I've seen that demographic of people totally change in a short number of years. We've seen a major influx of eastern European individuals sleeping on Grafton Street, who just lost their jobs. They came here for work and lost their jobs and had nowhere to go."

He adds that there has been a sharp 20 per cent increase in women sleeping on Grafton Street, something that he wouldn't have typically seen.

Rough sleepers are an issue many businesses refuse to talk about in public, but last year, the Disney Store applied for and secured permission to erect gates in front of its doorway. In a submission to the council, the store said its entrance had been "used by the

Col Campbell, managing director of Bewley's Oriental Cafés and chairperson of Dublin Town: 'Grafton Street always was a place for Dubliners, it just got a bit smothered due to the focus on the tourists'



homeless for sleeping, alongside apparent drug use being reported”.

Flynn thinks Disney has been harsh in terms of its approach, but he understands that businesses need to be able to open their doors each morning.

“It’s not nice coming in in the morning and there might be drug paraphernalia in your doorway. It is a situation where businesses need to work with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive and the outreach support teams to see what can be provided,” he says.

“Businesses just need to communicate better with the council. They have a role and responsibility as well. Rates on this street are not cheap, but we have a social crisis that is only going to get worse.”

Flynn would like businesses to do their part, but isn’t just finger-pointing. He admits the different homelessness groups need to work in collaboration more often in the area.

“At the last count, there were more than 27 soup runs in Dublin. What we have is an overpopulation of services that are not coordinated correctly. We’re funding so many services that we probably don’t even realise what we’re funding any more.”

Coordinating these services might free up funds for what is really needed in the city centre, according to Flynn.

“Something that has been suggested previously, which some of the European countries have, is 24-hour access to services. What we need is some kind of a centre where people can go to get some food and can be checked out for doctors.”

Col Campbell, managing director of Bewley's Oriental Cafés and chairperson of Dublin Town

When Col Campbell was growing up, he was raised on stories of Grafton Street. The tales he was told by his grandfather painted a picture of an exotic high street, full of mystery and characters from different pockets of the globe.

Campbell’s grandfather was head waiter in the grill room of Jammie’s, a French restaurant based on Nassau Street. It was an establishment frequented by

Dublin’s elite and visited by Hollywood royalty when they came to town.

The tales made a clear impression on Campbell – he has gravitated towards Grafton Street for his whole life. His first job was as a delivery boy for Bewley’s.

“I had just got a provisional licence and I was put to work bringing the chocolates at Easter time around to the different shops. We had 20 shops around Dublin back then. The smell when I would walk into the chocolate factory on that top floor, I won’t forget it.”

Now Campbell leads the business his father bought in 1986. It has faced some uncertain times over the years, and recently weathered a potential closure in the current pandemic. Last year, he also took on the chairperson role at Dublin Town. He says he wants to take a proactive stake in improving the city centre realm.

“I like that idea of businesses being part of the public realm,” he says. “I think that’s one of the things that’s really worked well with Dublin Town. Everyone has a stake in this to make sure that the streets are clean and putting up the Christmas lights.”

Campbell is acutely aware of the problems faced by retailers on Grafton Street. He feels his own establishment is more public realm than business – an institution that very much belongs to Dubliners. That is the ethos he wants to bring to the wider Grafton Street area, he wants to make it an area not just for transient shoppers and tourists, but a place Dubliners want to visit. That is what will make it sustainable. “I feel Grafton Street always was a place for Dubliners, it just got a bit smothered due to the focus on the tourists.”

Campbell draws on St Patrick’s Day as an example to hammer home his point.

“The festival came along and it created a huge draw and brought millions and millions of euro and tourists to Ireland,” he says. “The lived experience for us in the city centre was that it went from being one of the best days of the year to one being one of the worst. It was just about the television spectacle and the parade. Families got squeezed out.”

He adds that problems with street drinking also made the city not very hospitable. “In the last three or four years, the drink problems have been sorted out, but the families didn’t come back. There is still that mentality: that the city centre is a venue, that has

to change. If streets become about cars and security, we’ve lost it. It has to be about people wandering in, window-shopping, socialising.”

And if those shop windows are empty, or the shutters are pulled down for the foreseeable, they should be donated for cultural use, Campbell says.

“When the pandemic came along, there were things that were already going to fall over,” he says. “In the transformation of Grafton Street, for something to change, something has to fall away. And the big plate retailers, like Debenhams, they were already under pressure. It’s heartbreaking for the people who work there, but just because some parts of Grafton Street or the city are changing or shutting doesn’t mean there won’t be something to replace it.”

“If there are shops that are not generating rent, they should be put to a cultural use in the meantime. As a gallery space or a common room where people can do things like play chess.”

Over the next number of months and years, the narrative around Grafton Street could become toxic. More store closures are expected as retailers reassess how their bricks-and-mortar presence can compete with online shopping.

Campbell says it’s important not to let the negative trends hide the strides Grafton Street has made over the years.

At times, he can be absorbed by his nostalgia for the Grafton Street of yesteryear, but he is very clear when he says it is better in its current form today.

“Grafton Street back then was a place for the few, rather than all Dubliners. I don’t believe that’s the case any more,” Campbell says. “For about 20 minutes’ work at the minimum wage, you can come in and you can have a coffee and experience Bewley’s, for instance. Grafton Street is much more democratic. You can eat for a tenner or €100 on the street, and that’s fantastic.”

The anecdote he draws upon to show how times have changed is one very close to home.

“Many people have probably heard of Kathleen ‘Tattens’ Twomey. She is an icon of Bewley’s, the queen of the cafe. She’s from Glasnevin and I remember she told me that the first time she came onto the southside of the city was when she came for her interview in Bewley’s. I don’t think the city is like that any more. Dublin is a much more diverse place.” ■



Changing times for a brand with designs on the future

Folkster has taken over three floors in Dundrum Town Centre to provide a spacious and welcoming space for its customers, writes **Nadine O'Regan**



Blanaid Hennessy, co-owner of Folkster

Is it a bad idea to mention the 'C' word? And no, I'm not talking about Covid-19. On Thursday, Irish fashion and homeware brand Folkster launched its new pop-up shop at Dundrum Town Centre in Dublin, offering three floors of fashion, homeware and gifts, which are ideal for the – whisper it – Christmas season.

Offering a sense of welcome escapism to its customers is key for the months ahead, according to Blanaid Hennessy, co-owner of Folkster. "We're trying to create a magical environment," Hennessy says. "We want the customer to feel that this is a shop I can spend an hour in and enjoy the time."

Folkster first opened in Kilkenny in 2006. The brand grew incrementally, with Hennessy operating first as a vintage store, before developing to offer contemporary designs and expanding into Dublin's Temple Bar.

In recent years, the Temple Bar shop has become extremely popular as a much-loved destination to find occasion-wear and bridal designs, as well as quirkily beautiful Conor Langton movie and musician-based prints and a selection of cards, candles, holders and other homewares.

Of course, that was all until the pandemic kicked off. Faced with the option to renew the lease, Hennessy took the difficult decision to shutter the Temple Bar shop last weekend, with Folkster's city-centre staff transferring to the Dundrum store, which will be open until March as a pop-up.

"For me, it was vital that we stay with our team," Hennessy says. "Our lease came up for renewal and, with the size of the store, we knew that when social distancing came in, we physically needed that open space."

The large, high-ceilinged Dundrum space includes the Folkster bridal collection, along with an ever-ex-

panding homeware and gift selection. "We follow our instincts," Hennessy says. "We started toys last year and it was really popular. We have wooden toys, educational toys, loads of books, and we've introduced a record and vinyl mini-collection. We also have the return of our cosy-ware – soft sock and loungewear, and our dried flower bouquets."

The pandemic hasn't been easy for Folkster, but Hennessy is determined to look on the bright side. "With Covid, it focused us," she says. "It was an opportunity to press the reset button for Folkster." ■





Selection of mugs from €9.95



From left: Grace wears the Fabia gown in sage, €149.95; Katya wears the Shay top in sage, €44.95 and the Sarena skirt in sage, €119.95; Li-An wears the Siofra top in sage, €54.95 and the Sarena skirt in sage, €119.95



From left: Katja wears the Maye gown in sage, €139.95, with Imperial belt in silver, €39.95; Li-Ann wears the Paloma beaded top in sage, €89.95, with Tessa skirt, €119.95, and Delilah heels in cloud, €49.95; Grace wears the Maven gown in sage, €159.94

Rhythm Nation



Oliver Cole

When Oliver Cole was frontman with the hard-rocking indie band Turn in the early 2000s, he generally went by the monicker Ollie. For the music he is making these days, however, the more grown-up version of his name seems entirely appropriate. Exhibit A is the Meath man's new single *You Were the Right Turn*, described by its creator as a song about "recovery and redemption, the healing that begins after acceptance of loss". It's an intriguing taster for his forthcoming third solo album, *Father Brother Son*, which promise to further explore themes of grief, healing and rebirth.

Here's a playlist of the songs that have inspired Cole's lifelong love affair with music, and his reasons why.

1. Fleetwood Mac: *Big Love* (live version)

The live performance of this song is the last track on one of Fleetwood Mac's greatest hits compilations. It's a spine-tingling performance from Lindsey Buckingham with just guitar and vocal. His playing is killer and he's singing like his life depends on it. It never fails to inspire me. Simply awesome.

2. Joni Mitchell: *Help Me*

From her 1974 album *Court and Spark*, this is a classic. I was late to the party with Joni Mitchell. I remember we were going on a family drive to the west of Ireland and dropped into HMV on Grafton Street to pick up some tunes. We bought a copy of *Blue* and it got stuck in the car's CD player for six months, after which the whole family knew every word. *Court and Spark* was our next commitment – such sublime writing and musicianship.

3. Simon & Garfunkel: *America*

I'm going with all the classics here. I love Paul Simon as a songwriter. He's also a beautiful guitar player and singer, not to mention a fantastic lyricist. There is a line in this song where he sings: "Cathy, I'm lost, I said, though I knew she was sleeping." I love this line, it's so sad and really captures something.

4. Ron Sexsmith: *Strawberry Blonde*

Another masterclass in songwriting. Six verses and a middle eight and he manages to capture a whole vivid world. I like this style of storytelling more and more the older I get. *Strawberry Blonde* is a poignant tale, expertly told.

5. Paul Brady: *Arthur McBride*

This is an old folk song, collected and archived by Patrick Weston Joyce in 1840. There are a few versions of this around, including one by Bob Dylan, but this is the definitive treatment. I spent about three months learning how to play it on guitar and drove everyone around me mental.

6. Elvis Costello: *I Want You*

This song has always struck a chord with me. It's so open and raw, the sound of a man in agony who's reliving every moment of a betrayal in his mind. It's simple, visceral and sharp. The guitar solo cuts right through you, and seems to express the subject matter almost better than the lyrics do.

7. Bright Eyes: *We Are Nowhere and It's Now*

Musically, this is not reinventing the wheel or anything, it sounds like regular indie or Americana. It's the lyrics. Conor Oberst was in his early 20s when the album *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning* came out and that makes it all the more impressive. It's one of those records that you can just put on and read the lyric sheet as you listen. The words are full of beauty and enlightenment.

8. Elliott Smith: *Last Call*

This is from Smith's first album, *Roman Candle*. It's intimate and close, like someone whispering in your ear. In fact, his vocal rarely goes above a whisper. He made this album using a very primitive four-track tape recorder, and the hiss is as loud as the music. His production would get a lot better as his career progressed, but his songwriting is as good as it gets here.

9. Laura Marling: *The End of the Affair*

Although this is the only contemporary song on my list, it sounds more like something from the 1970s. You can hear all of Laura Marling's influences here. The similarities to Joni Mitchell are stark, but also wonderful. Song for Our Daughter has been my lockdown album. It helped to keep me sane and got better and better with every listen. I can't recommend it highly enough.

10. Weezer: *Say It Ain't So*

Today, Weezer's *Blue Album* is currently stuck in my own car CD player. My little boy loves the band and we are all forced to listen to this one loud. It could be worse, *Say It Ain't So* is a pretty rocking tune.

Oliver Cole's new single *You Were The Right Turn* is out now. The album *Father Brother Son* will be released on October 30. To hear his playlist, visit the *Business Post's* user profile on Spotify



Brought to book by my kids' changing reading habits

For **Shane Hegarty**, consuming books together is only half the story when it comes to keeping kids interested in reading

My youngest children have discovered reading. Reading on their own. Grabbing books to thumb, dog-ear, read and re-read, get bored of, obsess over. Seven-year-old twin girls, they lie in their respective bunks reading under the warm glow of their *Star Wars* and *My Little Pony* lamps until it's lights out and they switch to squinting at the words through the dim light leaking in from the hallway.

Some day down the line, the last glow of light before bed will come from a phone. But for now, they select from books inherited from their 15-year-old brother and stolen from their nine-year-old sister.

One twin carefully scales the stories from first page to last; the other leaps from book to book, reaching for a wobbling pile of current reads to knock off a chapter before moving on to the next one. I tell her that's not a great way to get through stories. She ignores me, finishes a chapter and grabs another book.

When kids discover reading and books, it can hit with fierce enthusiasm. They laugh uproariously at the funny bits, copy the illustrations, plead for extra time before lights out. Young readers will often come to know stories and characters better than the authors. This is the happy intensity into which my twins are falling right now. I envy that, as I pick clothes off their floor with one hand while checking Twitter with the other.

Meanwhile, I too often worry my teenage son is clinging on to reading for pleasure by the fingertips, just hanging in there until he eventually emerges into full adulthood with the joy of reading as part of his

Entertainment

Albums

POP/R&B

Mariah Carey

The Rarities (Columbia Legacy)



Released to coincide with the publication of her memoir *The Meaning of Mariah Carey*, *The Rarities* is a flick through the pop diva's back pages. Such is the quality of these previously unreleased or low-profile songs, however, that there's no sense at all of being palmed off with secondhand goods. The first two tracks, in particular, are beauts: Here We Go Around Again is bouncy Jackson Five-like pop/R&B, while Can You Hear Me is an extraordinarily lavish ballad. Inevitably some duds surface here and there, but mostly this is buried treasure finally seeing the light of day. ★★★



distractions beyond a printed page.

I read, of course. Books shaped my life, and continually reshape it. Stories are my job.

But there was a time when the hours were endless and every journey needed filling. Books were a constant companion, curled and stuffed into coat pockets, ready for the commute. The last glow before bedtime came from the reading light, not the phone screen. The thumb was inky from pages, not sore from scrolling.

I fight the distractions. Leave the phone in another room, turn off the internet, sink into a story until I've briefly lost interest in whatever odious events are unfolding in the endless scroll.

Once upon a time, a table of untouched books would be a reminder of how there wasn't enough time to read them all. Now they're a reminder of how much time has been wasted on very little else, not least opening the phone, scrolling, closing it, picking it up a few seconds later without even being conscious of it.

Even while writing this, there are self-inflicted interruptions caused by the lure of what might be on a social media feed somewhere and my weakness to the impulse to have a look. So, I work with a timer during which I'm not supposed to break focus. I know another writer who used to hand the modem to her partner as he left for work each day. There are others whose novels have included thanks to internet-blocking software.

It's bad enough wondering what books you could have read without the distractions of devices, but to wonder what books you could have written.

And the next time I'm asked by a parent how they might keep their child reading, or interest them in the books, or move them away from their hours of screentime, I wonder if I shouldn't answer with a question of my own: how do you do it for yourself? ■

Shane Hegarty is a children's author and the host of the Tall Tales podcast series, a books podcast for adults and teenagers aged 13+, for the International Literature Festival, Dublin, which will be released on October 22. For more details, see ILFDublin.com

brain's muscle memory.

He does still read because we learned long ago, through my abandoned experiments in telling him what to read, that the chief rule for choosing books is that it must be just that: a choice. The books a young person "should" read or the books a parent wants them to read will look like gruel when served up as being "good" for them.

So the teen reads mostly graphic novels and comic books. These were brought in as heavy artillery against the devices that threatened to overwhelm.

Graphic novels offer a half way between novels and Netflix. They're also sophisticated, innovative, brilliantly told and illustrated stories that draw from characters

and lives all around the world, across history. They have been accidentally "good for him". And for me.

I used to read to my son. Now we share books – and our opinions on them – and I've discovered more through him than I would have on my own path. There is still an inevitable deflation if I buy a book that ultimately doesn't grab him, as if it has endangered the whole reading-for-fun "project". But we move on. There is always something else.

As a children's author, I am asked a lot about the problem of distraction and devices and what books might grab what child – especially teenage boys. The irony is that, while I worry about my children's reading, I'm in my own constant fight with the universe of

Shane Hegarty: 'The chief rule for choosing books is that it must be just that: a choice' BRYAN MEADE

Reviews by Tony Clayton-Lea

DISCO-POP

Melanie C

Melanie C (Red Girl Media)



The sometime Spice Girl Melanie Chisholm continues her exceptionally successful solo career with an eighth album, and to say she has gathered around her a team of consummate collaborative songwriters is an understatement. From Shura to Sacha Skarbek (co-writer of Miley Cyrus's Wrecking Ball and James Blunt's You're Beautiful), Chisholm's self-titled collection is an assured, distinctive disco-pop return to form after the generic flavours of 2016's Version of Me. A bolder, more mature lyrical stance can be found here too, making it a record that lifelong fans should embrace without fear of being branded nostalgists. ★★★

SYNTH-POP

Future Islands

As Long as You Are (4AD)



Known for rarely permitting levels of intensity to drop, US synth-pop band Future Islands maintain the pressure with their sixth album, which is a piece of work so moody you'd best be in the right frame of mind while listening to it. Lead vocalist Samuel T Herring doesn't so much sing the candid lyrics as enunciate them, virtually one syllable at a time. Predictably, this lends the songs a lofty sense of theatrical performance. Once you allow the insinuating synth-led melodies to guide you from start to finish, however, an immersive experience is assured. ★★★½

Wine ratings

This is the international marking system for wine ratings. The 100-point scale works on a percentile, not a percentage scale, which is based on the US educational grading system.

95-100: exceptional, of world-class quality
90-94: very good quality
88-89: average but lacks greatness
85-87: average to modest
80-84: below average
70-79: poor
Below 70: unacceptable quality

Market forces can save you money

A hefty price tag doesn't always mean a quality bottle of wine, and perusing the supermarkets' budget sections can turn up an unexpected delight



Cathal McBride



I wrote recently about the advantages of embracing the relationship you have with your local wine merchant, so it may seem paradoxical to now start waxing lyrical about the best of supermarket wine.

We must also acknowledge, however, that the vast majority of wine and other alcohol purchased in Ireland is from those very sources. Supermarkets have inculcated, fostered and enriched my love of wine. The progress of supermarket portfolios has also increased accessibility for the masses and developed a burgeoning desire to learn.

Part of my philosophy around wine, and indeed food, is breaking down the barriers that block accessibility. I am not, of course, not talking about the physical access to produce which at this time could not be greater. Instead, I'm focusing on the worries around language, potential elitism and sense of inferiority that many can experience in the wine aisle.

I remember being blown away by a Fitou from Aldi some years back that

was available for a mere €7.49. I subsequently purchased another from an independent wine shop that was twice the price and half the quality.

Then there was a herbaceous and fruity Saint-Joseph AOC from Lidl, and a succulent Moulin-à-Vent from the same supermarket. Both were, from memory, less than €12.

This really changed my perception about the part that supermarkets can play in our introduction to wines. They are particularly helpful, I think, for those who are just beginning their tasting education.

It's important to note that there is a place for both the general and the specialist.

Supermarkets can afford us (pardon the pun) the opportunity to step outside our wine comfort zones, introducing us to the possibilities of new regions and grape varieties.

That can only be a good thing. The world is too small a place to limit oneself to the confines of pinot grigio or malbec. Wine merchants can gently hold the hands of connoisseurs by informing, educating, and guiding us to

potential pleasures.

So, on to the wines: what can you expect to find in the aisles? As mentioned last week, Aldi has just recently launched its new autumn/winter range, including quite a few labels of note, particularly the German blaufränkisch and German pinot noir.

Blaufränkisch is mostly associated with Austria. This dark-skinned grape is akin to pinot noir and common in many wine-growing regions of central Europe.

The cooler climes of this German version produce a light wine full of bramble and peppery spice that's round and elegant. Try it with a Toulouse sausage casserole for a warming slice of autumn. Excellent value at just €7.86.

The Castellore Italian Passerina is an indigenous grape to the Marche region just above Abruzzo, named after the Passero sparrows that indulge in the juicy grapes. It's another great value wine with aromas of baked peaches and notes of citrus and apple. While it makes for easy drinking on its own, you can also try it with an antipasti

board of cured meats.

Elsewhere, Lidl has launched a French wine sale and its Bourgogne pinot noir is worth investigating.

Light in colour with mild notes of cherry, this doesn't quite possess the mushroomy, forest-floor undergrowth you'd expect from a good Burgundy pinot. However, it has balanced acidity, and costs just €10.99.

Surprisingly for a pinot, this one benefits from a decanting 30 minutes before serving.

Marks & Spencer has always provided a solid portfolio, particularly with French wines. Staying on the topic of pinot noir, for something different try the Coppersmith, 2018.

Usually thriving in cooler climates like Burgundy, Californian pinots produce wines with a little more fruit forwardness offering notes of raspberry and mellow spice. This does not have immense body, but is still a good alternative at €13.

Good wine can and should be enjoyed by anyone who takes an interest in it. From there, you have a basis from which to learn – and then flourish. ■

TO TRY, BUY AND PUT BY

To try

Les Closiers Lirac, 2018
(ABV 14.5 per cent)

Generally a grenache and syrah blend with a touch of mourvèdre, Lirac emanates from the Mediterranean climate of the southern Rhône. It produces a rich and fruity appellation with medium tannins and balanced acidity. Mild on the nose, it opens up with a good long decanting which is recommended. Dark fruits to the fore are balanced with a mild peppery finish, making this perfect with Saturday night steak or a lamb tagine.

Available from all Marks & Spencer supermarket stores nationwide, RRP €15



To buy

Vallis Quietus Viognier, 2019
(ABV 13.5 per cent)

Native to the Rhône Valley, viognier is a grape quite commonly found as a blend in red wines. It is often paired with shiraz/syrah and said to soften the spicy elements of that grape. On its own, this dry wine is interesting on the nose, with aromas of woody herbs, mild pine and roast chicken skin. It produces notes of mild honey sweetness, finishing with a touch of salinity and white pepper for a savoury feel. Ideal with roast chicken.

Available from all Lidl supermarket stores nationwide, RRP €9.99



To put by

Carlos Lucas Portuguese Dão
(ABV 13 per cent)

Surprisingly only coming to the attention of supermarkets in recent years, Portugal produces some superb value-for-money wines (particularly reds). Besides the fortified Porto, of course, Dão and Douro are two of the more commonly known regions. This offering from Aldi's new stock is bursting with red fruit, notes of summer cherries and a herbal fragrance. It's easily quaffable to enjoy on its own or with a succulent, slow-roasted shoulder of lamb.

Available from all Aldi supermarket stores nationwide, RRP €7.86



Wine

WATCHING THE PENNIES

Eight-course tasting menu: €115 per person
Wine: Cliff Trebbiano, Cantina Tollo, Italy, €30
Dinner for two: €260

BREAKING THE BANK

Eight-course tasting menu: €115 per person
Wine: sommelier's pairing selection with glass of Champagne €100
Dinner for two: €330



House at the Cliff House Hotel in Ardmore, Co Waterford: the glorious food will live on in the memory during the latest lockdown

ASPECT PHOTOGRAPHY

House offers place on a plate in superlative style



Gillian Nelis

@gnelis

House at the Cliff House Hotel
Ardmore, Co Waterford
024-87800, cliffhousehotel.ie
Chef: Ian Doyle

Many years ago, an unexpected snowstorm almost left me stranded overnight in a very swanky Dublin wine bar. Tragically, the good people at Irish Rail managed to keep the trains running, which meant I did eventually have to leave and go home.

Last week, a storm of a different kind had me fantasising about being stranded in Ardmore in Co Waterford, where I'd travelled to in less restricted times to review the Michelin-starred House restaurant under the stewardship of new chef Ian Doyle.

"Wouldn't it be lovely," I thought as I listened to the news of the country's latest lockdown, "to just stay here and pretend things were normal?" Ah well, at least I had the memory of a pretty superlative meal to sustain me as I followed the government's

instructions and returned to my own county.

Doyle, who comes from Myshall in Co Carlow, took over the kitchen at House, which is located in the Cliff House Hotel, in May, having been recruited from the two-star Oaxen Krog in Stockholm.

In an interview at the time, he told me he would be focusing on great local produce, cooked simply. On both fronts, he has over-delivered in some style.

At various points in the evening, we eat oysters from Harty's in Ring, just down the road, sea beet foraged from Ballyquin beach across the bay, monkfish from Ballycotton, lamb from McGrath's in Lismore and grapes from Doyle's mum's garden.

This is place on a plate, on steroids, but it's also utterly delicious and completely unpretentious.

Of the three snacks served at the start of the evening, my favourite

is the strips of dried pollock skin topped with pollock belly mousse. Himself reckons the oysters, which are served with smoked beef tea and alexander buds, are the stars of this particular show.

Tiny buckwheat crackers topped with onion jam and sea beet precede the arrival of the first course proper, grilled local lobster with Goatsbridge smoked trout roe and a gloriously green oil made with pepper dulse.

A toasted corn broth is poured at the table and is the first of a number of superlative sauces we will eat – drink? – that night.

There's the one made from horseradish and alexander oil that is poured over an achingly pretty circle of langoustine tartare.

Another sauce, served with that perfectly cooked Ballycotton monkfish, features Ardmore carrot juice, more of those local oysters, and butter. It is utterly divine, and a spelt-

and-seaweed bread roll on the side ensures that not a drop is left behind.

Grilled saddle of deer sits on a bed of puréed Ardmore potatoes, with an onion gravy cream sauce lending richness, and a sharp wild blackberry and elderberry jelly balancing it out. It is my favourite course of the night, the stuff that autumn food dreams are made of.

Roast rack of lamb comes with a cabbage purée, some sea truffle butter and another superb sauce, this time made with roasted lamb and chicken bones as well as treacle from Highbank Orchard in Kilkenny.

Those grapes grown by Harris's mum in Carlow sit atop a sliver of Ballyhooly blue cheese, with a spruce syrup drizzled over them. A pre-dessert of a set cream with lemon geranium and lemon verbena is topped with caramelised Flahavan's oats and caramelised celeriac.

It's only the second time I've been served celeriac in a dessert – the first was by Grainne Mullins at a charity dinner in Dublin back in February – and it works so well that I'm hoping I get to eat it again in this way very soon.

Strawberries, both ripe and unripe, from Glen's Fruit Farm in Dungarvan with cream and a syrup made from tagetes (they're a member of the marigold family, and grow abundantly in Ardmore) make for a simple but lovely dessert. And yes, Harris did mean to put the unripe ones in; he reckons it balances out the sweetness.

Between the glorious view, the equally glorious food, and the fact that for a few hours at least all seemed well with the world, it had been a soul-restoring evening.

Dinner for two, with four glasses of wine and two cocktails, came to €323.75. ■



Cathal McBride

The wine list rated

There are more than 100 wines on this stellar list, which sommelier Alexandra Raitaneva describes as an evolving project. It has a strong focus on biodynamic and organic options. By the glass, you can choose from six reds and whites (including a non-alcoholic option), two rosés and two dessert wines, ranging from €7.50 to €16. The clever use of ogham symbols – with different variations guiding diners through

factors like body style and fruitiness – makes this list a pleasure to navigate.

For white, I'm plumping for the Le Clos de Grand-Père Maçon-Vinzelles from Bret Brothers (€87 a bottle or €13.50 per glass), a fine example of chardonnay from southern Burgundy that's a perfect pairing for some of the delicate fish and shellfish dishes on offer. For red, I've chosen the Coma Vella, Priorat by Finca Mas (€93 a bottle or €14 per glass). Full-bodied but with a silky finish, this would be ideal with game and winter vegetables.

Rating:
★★★★

RIVER CRUISES
FROM
€709PP

UP TO €400 OF ON-BOARD CREDIT PER CABIN
ON SELECTED RIVER CRUISES*



Discover Europe's most fascinating destinations on a spectacular river cruise

Riviera Travel's award-winning river cruises include everything you need for an exceptional experience. Cruise Europe's most beautiful waterways aboard the finest ships, featuring superb dining on board and spacious suites and cabins – many with a French balcony for unrivalled views. Choose from 19 fascinating river cruises that take you to the iconic highlights as well as lesser-known gems in destinations such as Cologne, Trier, Koblenz, Heidelberg, Strasbourg, Basel, Lucerne, the Douro Valley, Vienna, Budapest, Amsterdam, Avignon, Arles, Bruges, Paris or Rouen.

SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

- Fascinating tours and excursions with expert guides
- The services of our experienced cruise director and concierge
- Return flights, plus all hotel transfers
- Spacious and beautifully appointed suites or cabins with hotel-style beds and river views
- All meals on board including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner

River Cruise	Duration	From
Enchanting Rhine & Yuletide Markets	5 days	€709PP
The Danube's Imperial Cities & Yuletide Markets	6 days	€819PP
Amsterdam, Kinderdijk & the Dutch Bulbfields	5 days	€989PP
Rhine Cruise to Switzerland	8 days	€1,949PP
Rhine & Moselle	8 days	€2,009PP
Rhine, Strasbourg & Heidelberg	8 days	€1,909PP
The Blue Danube – Vienna, Budapest & Salzburg	8 days	€1,849PP
Vienna, Bohemia & Treasures of the Danube	8 days	€1,849PP
Burgundy, the River Rhône & Provence	8 days	€1,879PP
Bruges, Medieval Flanders, Amsterdam & the Dutch Bulbfields	8 days	€1,809PP
The Seine, Paris & Normandy	8 days	€2,479PP
The Douro, Porto & Salamanca	8 days	€1,919PP
Medieval Germany	8 days	€2,119PP
Budapest to The Black Sea – Gems of Eastern Europe	15 days	€3,379PP
Cruise the Heart of Europe	15 days	€3,359PP
Christmas on the Rhine	8 days	€2,059PP
Christmas on the Blue Danube	8 days	€2,009PP
New Year on the Rhine	6 days	€1,519PP
New Year on the Blue Danube	6 days	€1,459PP



For more information or to request a brochure:
Call **01 905 6313** | Visit **www.sbpriviera.ie**

Holidays organised and operated by Riviera Travel, Chase House, City Junction Business Park, Malahide Road, Northern Cross, Dublin 17 (ATOL number 3430). A company independent of The Sunday Business Post, whose booking conditions apply. Prices are based on two sharing a twin room subject to availability. Single rooms and optional insurance available at a supplement. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Additional entrance costs may apply. Price correct at time of print. *See website for full terms and conditions.





Construction workers on a crane above London's Berkeley Square in London: many Irish emigrants were unwilling to talk of their lives away from Ireland

GETTY

A master of his craft defines the experience of the emigrant



DERMOT BOLGER

It is impossible to over-estimate the impact of emigration on Ireland in the 20th century. Around 80 per cent of Irish children born between 1931 and 1941 needed to leave, with nothing here for them.

They left to the unspoken relief of successive ministers for finance, who could factor emigrants' remittances as an invisible export into budgets. Ten-shilling notes sent home from English cities subsidised Ireland by the equivalent of €1 billion every year. Yet they also left to the disdain of Éamon de Valera, who proclaimed: "Work is available at home, and in conditions infinitely better from the point of both health and morals . . . than they find in Britain."

In reality, agricultural workers worked 12-hour days for a pittance and many apprentices were sacked the moment that they qualified for a proper wage. Emigrants took the boat, and – apart from their remittances keeping Ireland afloat – were written out of history.

This makes Dónall Mac Amhlaigh an important voice in Irish literature. Joseph O'Connor once noted: "At the heart of the Irish emigrant experience there is a caution, a refusal to speak, a fear of the world."

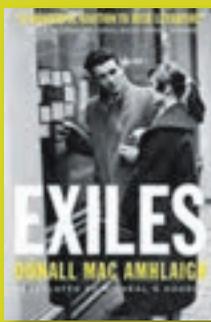
That caution meant that Mac Amhlaigh's superb 1960 memoir *Dialann Deoraí* (*An Irish Navvy: The Diary of an Exile*) was a literary and social landmark, breaking the silence around the Irish emigrant experience.

Born in Galway in 1926, Mac Amhlaigh was raised in Kilkenny. He returned to Galway to join an Irish-speaking army regiment, then emigrated to Northampton to seek work in 1949. He spent the rest of his life there,

FICTION

Exiles

By Dónall Mac Amhlaigh
Parthian Books, €14



Exiles by the Irish-language poet Mícheál Ó hAodha and published by the Welsh company Parthian. Like *Dialann Deoraí*, it deals with the Irish post-war experience of emigration which, thanks to books as diverse as James Ryan's *Coming Home* and Philip Casey's *The Water Star*, is now better represented in Irish literature.

However, Mac Amhlaigh's work possesses a uniquely raw and bitingly insightful authenticity which is well conveyed in Ó hAodha's translation. What was already an important book in Irish is a truly welcome addition to the canon of work available in English.

All that said, the novel is curiously structured. It contains three distinct stories which, beyond one brief moment, never interconnect. One is so tangential that the publisher's blurb only mentions the other two,

a committed socialist who laboured on roads and building sites and was highly active in the Connolly Association. He produced newspaper articles that conveyed an emigrant's perspective on social issues, and wrote several acclaimed Irish-language books.

The last of these was a novel entitled *Deoraithe*, published in 1986, three years before his death. It has now been superbly translated into English under the title

which relate to the physical and emotional emigrant experience.

The more tangential narrative suggests strong autobiographical roots, focusing on a naive youngster called Niall, who (like the author) leaves an Irish-speaking Galway regiment to return to Kilkenny. Here, he seems in danger of succumbing to the soul-destroying despair that drains hope and initiative from his unemployed neighbours. The novel never reveals if Niall emulates his creator and breaks free to start a new life abroad, or whether his spirit is snuffed out amid that suffocating inertia.

In contrast, the other two narratives soar. One concerns Trevor, a Connacht man who parks his family back in Galway while he leads a tough but liberating life in London, sharing a boarding house bedroom with a couple of fellow navvies.

Trevor earns respect from his peers as the toughest worker rebuilding that devastated landscape. He wants to be the toughest fighter too, and confronts a hated ex-boxer in a vicious showdown. He lives by his own moral code, finding freedom in exile even as family responsibilities close in. He is brilliantly drawn as a compulsive, single-minded character.

The final narrative concerns a young Galway woman, Nano, unable to marry until her fiancé's mother dies. She emigrates to work in an English hospital. Mac Amhlaigh brilliantly captures Nano's slow emergence from a cocoon of feeling so trapped inside her old life that she barely leaves her bleak bedroom. Gradually, she realises the possibilities of creating a new life in a place where she is exiled and yet free to start afresh.

Readers wanting to know what life was like for Irish emigrants in the 1940s are unlikely to find a truer or more vivid description than in this fine novel.

Dermot Bolger's first collection of short stories, Secrets Never Told, is published by New Island Books

Books

A self-indulgent attempt to get inside the head of the Nowhere Man



ANDREW LYNCH

In a parallel universe, John Lennon celebrated his 80th birthday last Friday on the Co Mayo island that he bought at the height of Beatlemania. “I hope [Yoko Ono and I] are a nice old couple living off the coast of Ireland, looking at our scrapbook of madness,” he once told an interviewer who asked him to predict the future.

Instead, he fell prey to an assassin outside his New York apartment and has now been gone for almost as long as he was alive. Ever since, he has been extravagantly mourned, not just as a brilliant singer and songwriter, but a great humanitarian too.

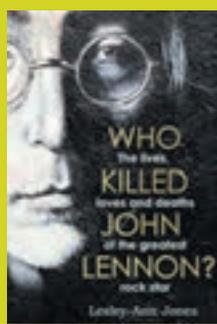
It seems that no amount of revelations about Lennon’s drug abuse, violent rages and emotional cruelty can shake the saintly image that his widow carries on cultivating to this day.

At first glance, the title of Lesley-Ann Jones’s new investigation *Who Killed John Lennon?* seems redundant. Every self-respecting fan knows the answer is Mark Chapman, a psychotic drifter from Texas who fired five shots and then calmly stood reading JD Salinger’s novel *The Catcher in the Rye* until the police arrived. Last month, Chapman apologised to Yoko Ono for his “despicable act”, a gesture that might sound more sincere if he wasn’t still trying to secure parole.

In fact, Jones’s question is hinting at something a little deeper. She presents Lennon’s life as a series of

Who Killed John Lennon?: The Lives, Loves and Death of the Greatest Rock Star

By Lesley-Ann Jones
John Blake, €16.99



accidental betrayals by loved ones that left him spiritually dead long before his murderer came along.

His eccentric mother Julia was killed by a car, his closest friend Stuart Sutcliffe died from a brain haemorrhage and his devoted manager Brian Epstein took an (officially accidental) overdose of sleeping pills. Lennon also kept deliberately sabotaging relationships with fellow Beatles, family members and business partners, Jones argues, which means his

demise can also be seen as a kind of psychic suicide.

This is a pretty awful book in many ways. Jones warns against Lennon disciples who practise “amateur psychology” on him, then spends much of her 400 pages doing exactly that. Her narrative is overblown, melodramatic and littered with long-winded diversions. To take just one example, she breaks off from an account of Lennon’s schooldays and examines



Who Killed John Lennon? could have been a perfectly good biography if Lesley-Ann Jones had pared back the narrative

the latest scientific studies on corporal punishment in mind-numbing detail.

Jones also has an irritating habit of constantly urging her readers to speculate about things that never happened. Could Bob Geldof have persuaded Lennon to play Live Aid in 1985? What would he think of Donald Trump today? “Where were you when you heard [Lennon was dead]?” she asks at one point. “That is the question. Echoing the opener of Prince Hamlet’s famous soliloquy, it is arguably the question of our times.” Is it really?

Most frustratingly of all, there is a perfectly good biography here trying to get out. Jones boasts that, as a Fleet Street journalist, she has met “most of the rock stars most people can name”, which is a little egotistical but borne out by her command of the material. The crucial facts about Lennon’s extraordinary life are all present and correct, bolstered by some 80 interviews, including a particularly touching one with his first

Less would have been more for a sprawling



JENNIFER GANNON

Eleanor Wasserberg’s debut novel *Foxlowe* was an exploration of the ideals of family and home. It told the story of a cult leading a makeshift existence in a dilapidated country estate and the encroaching menace of the outside world. For her second book, Wasserberg has transplanted this notion of an assembled group battling against a changing society into a historic setting.

Based on her own family history,

FICTION
The Light at the End of the Day

By Eleanor Wasserberg
4th Estate, €13.99



it sees the affluent Oderfeldts’ comfortable lives in Krakow disrupted by the arrival of World War II. They are scattered throughout Europe and forced to rely on the kindness of others.

Woven into this account of upheaval and loss is a painting of the youngest Oderfeldt daughter, Alicia, commissioned by her doting father. Jozef Pienta, a young artist employed to create the portrait, is thrust into the bourgeois world of the Oderfeldts. He observes their dinner parties and listens to their conversations about the troubles in Germany, which are initially told as frantic gossip with a frisson of excitement and an element of danger.

As Jozef starts to see this wealthy

Jewish family in their purest form, the slow “peeling away of layers” is already beginning to occur outside the safety of their luxurious apartment.

Wasserberg excels at describing the small, unsaid fears that can leak into a family’s life. Jozef stays silent as a fellow artist insults the Oderfeldts with barely concealed anti-Semitism. Anna, the powerful matriarch, fails to tell her neighbour of a troubling incident with a stranger in the city where she felt fearful. They talk around their dread in a “tiring dance”, “always circling, never speaking in any real way” and instead becoming lost in bland pleasantries.

When Alicia witnesses her father

being beaten on the street one night, the darkness of the event overshadows everything in her mind and she becomes obsessed with completing the portrait. To her, it is not only an expression of love, but also a symbol of her family’s place in society, something she believes cannot be extinguished despite the political chaos swirling around her.

The novel is at its best when Wasserberg concentrates on these early years, describing the subtle dehumanisation of this Jewish family with great precision. As the plot moves from whispered anecdotes to terrified people abandoning their houses, she deftly captures the panic and confusion.

The Light at the End of the Day



Nicola Tallant speaking to Joey O'Callaghan, who lives in fear for his life

NICOLA TALLANT/ERNIE LESLIE

A criminal life cloaked in the darkest shadows



JOHN WALSHE

wife Cynthia (now deceased).

Jones is also capable of some shrewd judgments, even if they are couched in bombastic and overwrought language. Her strong focus on Lennon's childhood skilfully explains why such an outwardly successful man could write self-lacerating songs like I'm A Loser, Help! and Nowhere Man.

She vividly describes key moments such as the tormented Beatle winding down a limousine window and screaming at his fans: "What do you want?" It all ends with an impressively thorough timeline, a collection of telling quotes from others and musings on the author's favourite Lennon tracks.

Clearly a huge amount of work has gone into Who Killed John Lennon? It's just a shame that Jones undermines it with so many passages of shocking self-indulgence. "Did the world need yet another book about him?" she wonders. "Perhaps not. But I did." Even the 80-year-old John would have had a good laugh at that.

Holocaust epic

could have been more successful, however, if Wasserberg had stayed with the minutiae of these anxious days as terror swept throughout Europe. Unfortunately, it develops into a sweeping intergenerational drama that moves between the horror of conflict and pre-war Poland too. As a result, it loses its potency.

The narrative is chopped up between family members and other characters, becoming so thin that any substantial interior life is lost. A romance between Jozef and the eldest Olderfeldt daughter, Karolina, fizzles into nothingness beyond an embrace, yet is still supposed to fuel a deep, unforgettable passion that sustains them throughout the war.

Alicia is imprisoned along with

her mother in a Russian work camp, but the narrative switches to the post-war years so quickly that she becomes a fully formed adult within a chapter. Later on, Wasserberg resorts to the Dan Brown school of plotting, leaving readers on a cliff-hanger from chapter to chapter that feels highly artificial.

If only the author had trimmed her story, its message could have been more powerful. The lost painting of another life becomes a splinter in a young girl's mind, a talisman that suggests art is not a retreat into fantasy, but instead the one thing that survives beyond trauma, war and death. It not only offers solace and beauty, but keeps the flame of the previous generations alive.

Most young people get involved in crime for two reasons: money and power. But Joey 'The Lips' O'Callaghan never made much cash, despite spending years dealing drugs and stealing for an up-and-coming criminal on Dublin's northside. He enjoyed little in the way of power either.

Instead, Joey was lured into a life of crime by a man he saw as a father figure, who used and abused a young boy's trust in the most callous manner imaginable. His voice is brought to life in *The Witness* by Nicola Tallant, using both his words and his accent.

Winner of the Crime Journalist of the Year award on three occasions (she's the current holder), Tallant has been delving into Dublin's gangland underworld for over two decades. She understands the frightening characters behind the tabloid nicknames, along with the trail of devastation and death that follows them. Joey's story, she declares, has always stood out and she wanted it to be heard.

Growing up between Ballymun and Blanchardstown, Joey's family life was far from idyllic. His father struggled with alcoholism and was prone to violent rages: "Ma remembers three occasions when he tried to smother her as she lay asleep."

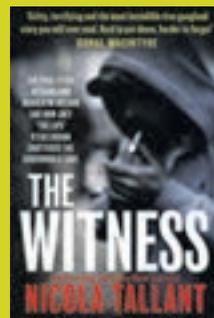
Ballymun is described as "a bit like the Serengeti, with predators everywhere", and young Joey was easy prey. He also recalls a scene of sexual abuse when he was just a child. Sadly, this was far from the first time he would face such problems as another predator later exploited his vulnerability.

TRUE CRIME

The Witness

By Nicola Tallant

Mirror Books, €15.99



When he started a part-time job collecting milk money with the charming Brian Kenny, it seemed like 12-year-old Joey had avoided the lure of gangland. In truth, it was the worst move he could have made. Kenny wasn't just supplying milk, as Joey discovered the following summer. He was also couriering heroin and cocaine through the letterboxes, and soon coerced his young helper into looking after these "special deliveries".

From that point on, everything changed: "There was a darkness to Brian hiding behind the smile and the happy demeanour, and that nearly made it worse because who would believe what he really was?"

Kenny's deceptive nature meant that Joey's mother trusted him, even allowing her son to spend nights at his house. What began as an innocent part-time job took over the boy's life and he was gradually groomed into a life of crime.

At one point, Joey saw Kenny

attack a former child employee with a hammer, a sickening scene which he credits with triggering PTSD. Terrified of his employer, but more frightened of what might happen to his family, Joey told nobody even as he alleges Kenny engaged in tremendous acts of violence against him, plying Joey with cocaine and Valium to keep him numb throughout the following years of physical, psychological and sexual torment.

It's a grim tale, compellingly told. Tallant narrates Kenny's rise through the criminal underworld as he forms alliances with well-known names including Martin "Marlo" Hyland and "Fatpuss" Bradley.

Kenny eventually partnered with the Clondalkin kingpin Thomas Hinchon and, in 2004, the two of them gunned down 25-year-old Jonathan O'Reilly outside Cloverhill Prison. Cold-blooded murder was a step too far for Joey, who escaped their clutches and went to the Gardaí. Becoming a "rat" was a decision not taken lightly: "Within many working-class communities, there is actually no more serious offence you can commit."

At just 18, Joey became the youngest ever person to sign on for the Witness Protection Programme. His evidence was crucial in convicting Kenny and Hinchon. However, his story doesn't end there. Years of abuse had taken their toll and he felt "hung out to dry" by the state. "They didn't do right by me and I lost everything all over again."

Joey attempted suicide twice in the years following the trial. He eventually found the help he needed at the Priory mental health hospital in London, his treatment paid for by An Garda Síochána, but still lives in fear for his life. His story is a sad but insightful glimpse of the darkest recesses of Irish society. ■



SAM COLLINS

Wesley So vs Leinier Dominguez Perez

Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz 2020

Wesley So and Magnus Carlsen tied for first place in the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz, an elite online event with an attractive prize fund. So won the rapid section before being caught by Carlsen in the blitz.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5 Be6 9.Nbd2 Nc5 10.c3 d4 10...Be7 11.Bc2 d4 is the recent fashion.

11.Bxe6 Nxe6 12.cxd4 Ncxd4
This line was extensively tested between Anatoly Karpov and Victor Korchnoi in their 1981 World Championship match in Merano.

13.a4 Bb4
A more active development than Korchnoi's 13...Be7.

14.Ne4 0-0 15.Be3 Nf5 16.Qc2 Nxe3 17.fxe3
White's structure has been spoiled in return for promising attacking chances on the kingside.

17...Qe7 18.Nd4 Nxd4 19.exd4 Rad8 20.Rad1 c5 21.axb5 axb5 22.Qd3 cxd4 23.Rf5 g6 24.Rdf1 (D)



Although the chances are objectively balanced, the position is very difficult for Black to play, especially at a fast time control. It's notable that the bishop on b4 has no real function.

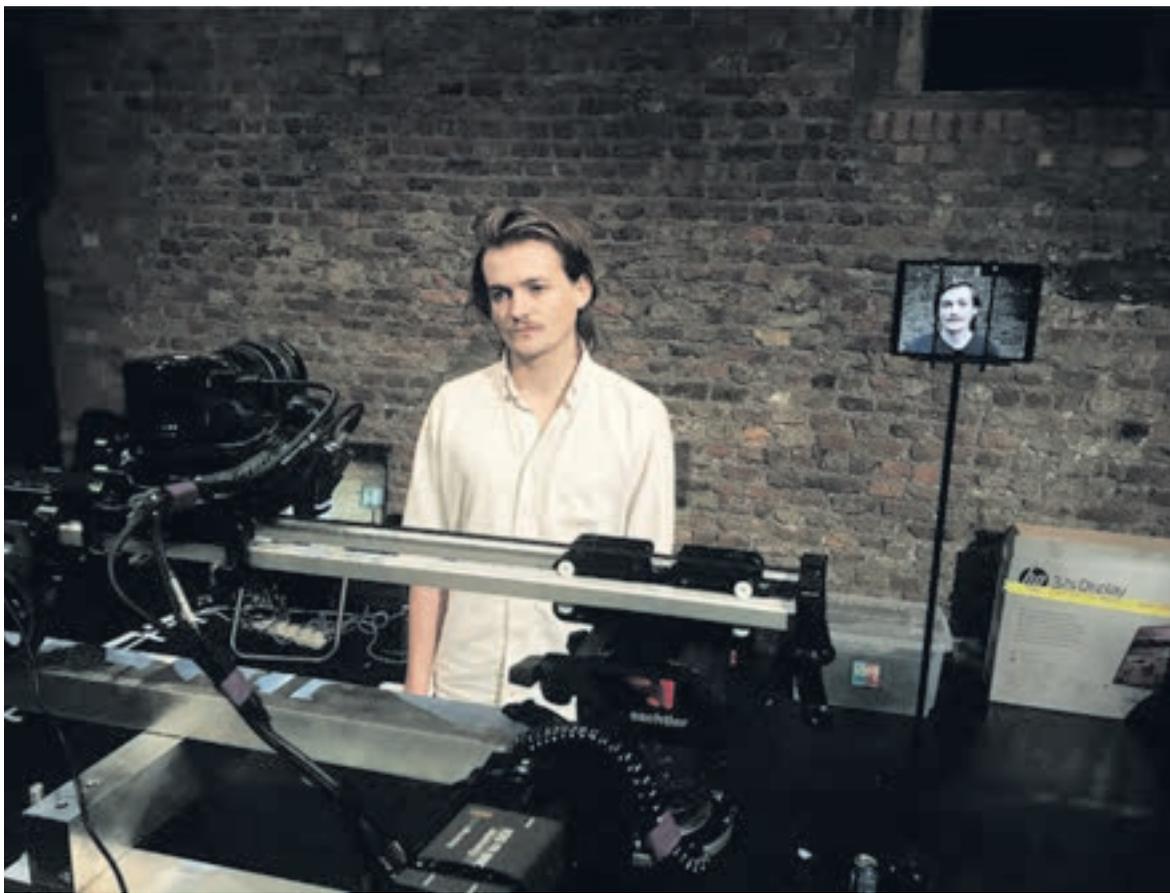
24...Kg7??
The rook on f5 is untouchable: 24...gxf5 25.Nf6+ Kh8 26.Qxf5 and Black must give up his queen to avoid mate on h7.

24...h6! would have held the balance.

25.Ng5! Kg8
25...gxf5 26.Qxf5 Rh8 27.Nxf7 with a decisive attack.

26.Qh3 h5 27.Qg3! d3 28.Nxf7! Bc5+ 29.Kh1 Rxf7 30.Rxf7 Qxf7 31.Rxf7 Kxf7
White should win in any case, but in the game Black rapidly lost further material.

32.Qf3+ Kg8 33.e6 Kh7 34.Qf7+ Kh6 35.Qf4+ Kg7 36.Qc7+ 1-0
Winning the rook and the game.



Jack Gleeson in *To Be a Machine (Version 1.0)* by Dead Centre and Mark O'Connell as part of Dublin Theatre Festival **BEN KIDD**

Man and machine form an uneasy connection



To Be A Machine (Version 1.0)
Project Arts Centre
Run finished
Rating: ★★★★★

What is the best way of maintaining a connection when physical closeness is no longer possible? If trends in international and Irish theatre are anything to go by: Zoom.

Just as we have all migrated to the platform for work calls and social events, so theatre has exploited its potential for connection. Theatrical innovators Dead Centre, however, take virtual life as both the form and subject of their new production, *To Be a Machine*, adapted from Mark O'Connell's book of the same name, in collaboration with the author.

To Be A Machine is performed live at the Project Arts Centre. Ticket holders are asked to submit a series of short video recordings of themselves in advance of the performance. We are

asked to simulate normal audience behaviour: to watch, to laugh, to close our eyes. On the day of performance, these videos are uploaded onto iPads in the audience. As we watch from home, we see our avatars take their seats and come to life in our place to watch the performance unfold.

Jack Gleeson, meanwhile, is Mark O'Connell's avatar. Standing casually, hands in pockets, on the Project's empty stage, he introduces us to the protagonists of O'Connell's book via video: the cryogenic specialist freezing people's bodies until the technology is developed to bring them back to life; a man "upgrading" the machine of his body by implanting computer parts under his skin. What is the boundary between us and the machines we use every day to enhance our experience of living, Gleeson as O'Connell asks.

Indeed, is it not possible to programme audience responses to even a live theatre show? Is genre, form, audience etiquette not just an algorithm artists like Dead Centre tap into all the time to ensure the viability of their shows?

These suggestions are chilling in their manipulative implication, particularly given Gleeson's deadpan delivery of his lines and the gently sinister sound design from Kevin Gleeson (the slick technical direction from Jack Phelan needs to be acknowledged too).

Perhaps the most heartening result of their experiment, however, is the fact that it does, improbably, offer us some sense of communion; that solidarity a theatre audience shares when it is sitting in the same room together.

As the camera pans across the seating bank, you see faces, familiar and

strange, all as engaged as you are, all laughing at the same parts, dozing at the same time. It's fake, sure, but I did find myself texting some of those faces I had spotted to see how they enjoyed the show.

There are some moments when it all gets a bit intertextual (the *Game of Thrones* gags wear thin), but this is Version 1, so directors Bush Moukartzel and Ben Kidd have basically given themselves permission to revive this intriguing, provocative production (and they must) in an upgraded form.

Fishamble's Embargo continues online

After the cancellation of the live performances of Deirdre Kinahan's new play **Embargo**, Fishamble Theatre will stream the production online this evening instead. *Embargo* is based on the real life civil resistance undertaken by dockers and railwaymen during the War of Independence, when they refused to transport armed troops or handle any weapons arriving from Britain.

Set in 1920, this centenary production was designed to speak to the sites of performance: Connolly Station and Dublin Port's Pumphouse, where this streamed version will be broadcast from. Starring Callan Cummins, Mary Murray and Matthew Malone, under Maisie Lee's direction, *Embargo* commemorates the complexities of civic and political action. Ticket prices are €10. The virtual curtain will be raised at 7pm. ■



Veronica Dunne and Diarmuid Hegarty, president of Griffith College and chairman of the Veronica Dunne Bursary committee watch opera singers Aebh Kelly and Matt Mannon perform in the Gardens of the MoLI Museum of Literature in Dublin ROLLING NEWS

New bursary is a wish come true for Dunne



Dick O'Riordan

Veronica Dunne was born on August 20, 1927, at a time when the country was getting used to hung Dáils and James Larkin was campaigning for a seat in the next election, Kevin O'Higgins had just been assassinated, Countess Markievicz had just died, and Éamon de Valera had just declared war on the Oath of Allegiance. Probably the most uplifting event was that the Irish-born (and largely forgotten) Mary Bailey became the first woman to pilot a plane across the Irish Sea.

So what has all this got to do with opera singing? Nothing, except to put in perspective the lifespan of this wonderful woman who has never stopped giving to music and singing, is unfailingly courteous, and only gets tetchy when asked about her age (to which she unfailingly replies: "Enough").

She can still be as tough as nails when it comes to getting the very best out of her singing pupils, but also as soft as a tissue when they succeed. Regulars at her annual fundraisers at Killruddery House will recall the emotional sluice gates opening on hearing that Miriam Murphy had won the inaugural World Wagner Competition in Seattle in 2006, and exactly a year later at the same venue when Celine Byrne won the Maria Callas International in Athens.

Ronnie has another great interest as well: horses. When I interviewed her in her home as far back as her 80th birthday, she interrupted the conversation to ask a friend to put a bet on for her in the local bookies

"and to run down as quickly as possible". It was the gee-gees that, in a strange way, led to her own singing career. As a young girl, she competed in gymkhanas and went to the races with her horse-owning dad, who always allowed her to lead his horses into the winner's enclosure.

When he had a big winner at Galway, Ronnie was asked to sing at the inevitable party afterwards. The partygoers were stunned into silence by the quality of her voice. She was on her way to singing studies and, eventually, to operatic training in Nazi-occupied Rome where she came under the protection of the revered Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty. And the rest, as they say, is history: her career has been festooned with honours and acclaim.

Now, even at the age of 93, this national treasure is still giving her best through the launch of a new bursary and mentoring initiative to help young singers flourish in professional careers.

The Veronica Dunne Bursary for Young Irish Singers is being funded by the Department of Arts and Culture. It has to be seen in a generous light, but it is a pity that the Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition, a truly prestigious event that reflects so well on our country around the world, still has to eke out its funding through self-help and contributions since its inauguration in 1995.

At the announcement of the new bursary, Ronnie expressed her delight and thanked Catherine Martin, Minister for Arts, for delivering the funding of €15,000. She said that each bursary "would be tailored to suit the individual needs of the successful applicant in a bespoke way."

The bursary committee president, Diarmuid Hegarty, said that the future of our young singers depended not just on the best we can do for them in Ireland, but that the solidity of their careers depends on education abroad in the great opera countries of the world.

Hegarty, president of Griffith College and a pillar of Ronnie's long-time endeavours, said the fund would be dispensed at the discretion

of the jury. The inaugural bursary is open to singers born on or after February 1989, who live in Ireland or abroad, and singers of any nationality who are resident or studying in Ireland.

When assessed on recent recordings of two arias and a CV, up to 30 singers will be short-listed and invited to compete in live rounds in front of an international jury. Ten will then be chosen for a second round. Full details at vdiscompetition.com.

Beethoven makes a comeback in Galway

As we have pointed out before here, Beethoven got a raw deal in his much-awaited 250th birthday anniversary year. And nowhere was that more keenly felt than in Galway, which had placed the mighty one at the very heart of its tragically doomed European City of Culture festivities.

But, all is not yet lost, and Anna Lardi Fogarty, director of Music for Galway, reports that Beethoven is being put back where he belongs through a partnership with NUI Galway, which provides an online concert and symposium built around the illustrious Emily Anderson, one of the university's most intriguing alumni.

"Through her tenacious work and uncommon gift of deciphering, editing and translating Beethoven's letters, Emily has gifted us huge insights into his thinking," said Fogarty. "It's a fantastic legacy to leave to today's performers, filmmakers and music lovers. And who better to illustrate that than Ireland's own Beethoven maestro, John O'Connor, who will perform the final three piano sonatas."

The concert and symposium – which includes O'Connor's "life with Beethoven" takes place in the Hardiman Hotel at 2pm to 8pm on Thursday, October 15. The symposium is via Zoom. Tickets (limited) cost €25. Call 091-705962. ■



Appetite for Distraction

TV PICK OF THE WEEK

The Trump Show

Thursday, October 15, BBC Two, 9pm-10pm

As Donald Trump continues to baffle and alarm with his strange Covid-19 tweets, the BBC attempts to unpack the psyche of the most polarising US president in recent history. The first episode provides viewers with a unique perspective, as key players Steve Bannon and Sean Spicer guide us through the first 18 months of this unexpected presidency.

Trump's inauguration and shift in lifestyle is well documented, including his desire to relegate White House briefings to the occasional post on Twitter. From this moment, Trump's use of language begins to change as emotive, repetitive phrases such as 'fake news' dominate conversation in the political discourse.



DEMAND PICK OF THE WEEK

The Trial of the Chicago 7

Friday, October 16 Netflix

Netflix is renowned for amassing a heavyweight cast for their occasional original films – such as with Triple Frontier and The King, to name just a couple. The cast assembled for The Trial of the Chicago 7 is especially impressive. The film follows a group of anti-Vietnam War protesters charged with conspiracy and inciting riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Directed by Aaron Sorkin, Sacha Baron Cohen leads the Chicago Seven ensemble, which includes Eddie Redmayne, Michael Keaton, Jeremy Strong and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II of Watchmen fame.

PODCAST PICK OF THE WEEK

WTF with Marc Maron

Available now on Spotify, Apple Podcast and WTFPOD.com

Marc Maron is considered a pioneer in the podcasting world. Coupling his radio credentials with his comedic nature, Maron has cultivated a style that has influenced the countless podcasts listed in our phone libraries.

This week, the comedian sits down – via Zoom – with actor John Cusack. His filmography is a fascinating topic of discussion, particularly the creation of Being John Malkovich. But it's Cusack's necessity to "stay engaged with the world" that sets this interview apart. At a young age, he went through a political awakening. These experiences have shaped Cusack's perception of the world, and by extension, influenced the characters he portrays.

Jenny Murphy Byrne

Reviewed this week

Kajillionaire
Directed by
Miranda July
Nationwide, 12A
Rating: ★★★★★

Henry Glassie: Field Work
Directed by
Pat Collins
Nationwide, G
Rating: ★★★★★



Gina Rodriguez and Evan Rachel Wood in *Kajillionaire*

MATT KENNEDY/FOCUS FEATURES

Plenty of darkness behind the sunshine



John Maguire

I keep thinking about the office. It's a tattered space beside a bubble factory in Los Angeles where impoverished, middle-aged con artists Robert and Theresa Dyne (Richard Jenkins and Debra Winger) live with their daughter Old Dolio (Evan Rachel Wood). It's also a cheap place to lay their heads after a long day traipsing the streets looking for people to rip off, an unguarded door or an unattended post box.

To make the office habitable, the Dynes must scrape the endless overflow of pink foam from the adjoining factory wall and tip it down the sink using whatever they have to hand, a waste paper basket or an old manila folder. They do this every morning before leaving for their day's grift, and every evening on their return, automatically and in unison, without speaking a word.

The bubble-filled squat serves as a handy litmus test for whether the musically titled **Kajillionaire**, Miranda July's third feature film, will induce a sense of quirky delight or foaming annoyance. July, a multi-hyphenate artist whose work includes music, writing, painting and photography, previously made the well-regarded *Me, You and Everyone We Know* back in 2005 and, six years later, the coy and experimental *The Future*.

Now July has moderated her idiosyncratic view of the world to incorporate human emotions such as love, empathy and togetherness to tell a story about our innate desire for family and the pain of life lived without connection.

Wood's Old Dolio (named after a lottery-winning hobo her parents

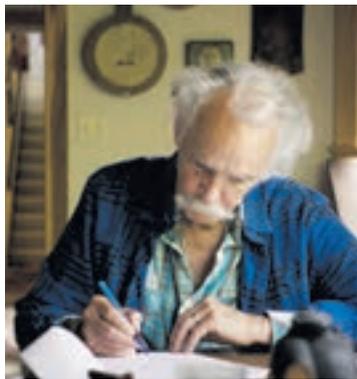
thought would leave them money, but didn't) is both an only child and long-suffering accomplice to her parents' schemes.

Following them around the city from scam to scam, Dolio has been starved for attention and affection all her 26 years. They live on the margins, scraping together whatever they can find or steal: gift certificates, discarded aeroplane snacks, other people's birthday cards.

Things change when Dolio's parents meet and befriend Melanie (Gina Rodriguez) while flying cross-country on another of their crackpot rackets. Melanie is a bit of a chancer herself, claiming to be an assistant to a famous ophthalmologist when she actually works at a sunglasses concession store. In any event, she essentially adopts Old Dolio and teaches her how to be a young woman: to dress herself, eat in a restaurant, shop for food in a supermarket and pay for it.

There's a nagging sense of something darker and more poisonous lurking behind July's sunshine-bright images and eccentric characterisation, hiding her real feelings in Dolio's gradual realisation that Mom and Dad have been conning her as much as anyone else. As all four get involved in swindling a dying man out of his unclaimed fortune, a curious family unit is formed whose potential can only be fully realised by confronting long-avoided truths.

The shabby office can become a



Henry Glassie: *Field Work* is a portrait of the folklorist and anthropologist

home. You just have to scrape off the foam to see it.

● There's a gorgeous moment in *Song of Granite*, Pat Collins's biopic of the sean-nós singer Joe Heaney, where an archivist arrives with a tape recorder to preserve the voices and songs of 1940s Connemara. It also serves as an inspiring thread in the weave of Collins's extraordinary follow-up documentary.

Henry Glassie: Field Work is a portrait of this renowned American folklorist and anthropologist, along with the people who inspired him in turn. Immersive, keenly observed, and frequently breathtaking, it's another luminous work from the pre-eminent Irish film-maker of his generation.

Over a 50-year career in the field spanning five continents and more than 20 books, Glassie has studied folk artists, their creative processes and the work they produce. Still, almost 30 minutes of the film elapse before we catch a glimpse of him with his impressive handlebar moustache, sitting quietly watching a Brazilian sculptor craft a figure from scraps of metal and a home-made welder. Up to that point we had witnessed potters and craftsmen from around the world silently at work, the only noise coming from Collins's trademark ambient soundscape.

From Brazil, we travel to North Carolina, western Turkey and, most engagingly, learn about the decade Glassie spent in Ballymenone, Co Fermagh. He lived there among the people and surveyed the three square miles of their townland.

Glassie's aim is to graph how each community defines and appreciates excellence, particularly though its artistic output. At a certain point, he says: "I don't study people, I stand with them and study the things they create. What do they choose to present to me as emblems of their being?"

In these disorientating times, it can sometimes feel as if all reference points have been scrambled. This striking, thoughtful tribute grounds us in those things that speak directly to the soul. We need it, and we're lucky to have Collins to provide it. ■

Also On



I Am Woman (VOD platforms, 15A)

A biopic of the recently-deceased Australian singer Helen Reddy (Tilda Cobham-Hervey), whose power anthem *I Am Woman* became a rallying call for the 1970s feminist movement, tells the story from her arrival in New York in 1966 at the age of 24 with just \$200, to becoming one of the most popular singers of her era with eight number one singles and her own TV show.



Making Tracks (VOD platforms, no cert)

This British romantic comedy concerns a thirtysomething couple (April Pearson and Chris Willoughby) on the edge of breaking up who take a fortnight's holiday inter-railing around romantic Europe, hoping to rekindle the spark.

Rialto (nationwide, 16)

Tom Vaughan-Lawlor plays a Dublin dockworker going through a midlife crisis who finds himself involved in a potentially devastating relationship with a young male hustler (Tom Glynn-Carney). Mark O'Halloran's adaptation of his stage play *Trade* is directed by Peter Mackie Burns.



Eternal Beauty (VOD platforms, no cert)

Craig Roberts' comic and moving drama finds Sally Hawkins in top form. She plays a fragile, schizophrenic woman, beset with anxieties real and imaginary, who has to deal with her vile family, an unexpected love affair and the daily struggles of her diagnosis.

Enola Holmes (Netflix, 12)

A lively and charming period adventure with Millie Bobby Brown as the younger sister of famous detective Sherlock (Henry Cavill). Trained from birth in self-defence, science and deduction, she is drawn into a deadly conspiracy when her beloved mother (Helena Bonham Carter) disappears.

Reviewed
this
week

Des
ITV, Virgin
Media One

Adult Material
Channel 4

Ireland's New
Normal with
Tommy Bowe
Virgin Media
One



David Tennant as Dennis Nilson in Des

Unsettlingly compelling story of the making of a serial killer



Emmanuel
Kehoe

Virgin Media, which often runs ITV series shortly after they've been first shown, has picked up **Des** (Virgin Media One) the story of serial killer Dennis 'Des' Nilson who murdered 15 homeless or vulnerable men, many of them gay, in London between 1978 and 1983.

Nilson was caught after complaints about the smell from the drains in his street in Muswell Hill: large quantities of human remains were found to be blocking the pipes. To say that Des is unsettlingly compelling is an understatement. David Tennant gives a consummate performance as Nilson, who worked in a job centre after stints as an army cook and a trainee police officer.

Why did he become a killer? The source material for this excellent three-part series, written by Luke Neal and directed by Lewis Arnold, is *Killing For Company*, a study of Nilson and his crimes by Brian Masters, published in 1985. I read it then, and it put me off the subject of serial killers for life.

When the police arrived, the stench in Nilson's flat was so strong that one of them simply asked him: "Don't muck about. Where's the body?" Nilson, entirely calm and seemingly wanting to clear the whole business up, showed them the remains of several victims in plastic bags. A parboiled human head rested in a stockpot on the cooker.

Nilson didn't just kill his victims, he stashed them under the floorboards of his flats, occasionally taking

the corpses out, dressing them up, sometimes putting make-up on them and sitting them in an armchair as he watched television.

Eventually, he disposed of them by cutting them up, flushing them down the drains or burning them in the garden.

There is no graphic visual detail of this behaviour in *Des*, which may persuade you to watch what is a restrained attempt to understand something that is almost beyond comprehension. Nilson, incidentally, died in prison in May 2018.

● **Adult Material** (Channel 4), a somewhat problematic attempt at a comedy-drama set in the British porn industry, opens with orgasmic sounds, the camera pulling back to reveal porn professional Jolene Dollar (Hayley Squires) sitting in her violent pink Audi faking it on her mobile phone for the benefit of her fans.

She's never really off duty; at home, her partner Rich (Joe Dempsie) helps her make foot fetish videos for online clients.

Mother-of-three Jolene is paying hefty fees for her eldest daughter Phoebe (Alex Jarrett) to go to a good school, but when her daughter tells her she's had non-consensual sex (she was asleep) with her boyfriend, Jolene suggests that Phoebe should have been clearer, after waking, about telling him to stop. Whether Jolene's response has been conditioned by her profession is up to us to decide.

If *Des* has its grotesques, there are plenty more in *Adult Material*. The studio is a bleak unit on an industrial estate, under the eye of director Dave (Phil Daniels at his slippery best). Boss of the show is Carroll Quinn, an almost unrecognisable Rupert Everett looking grisly in a long blond wig and ankle-length kaftan.

When Amy (Siena Kelly), a girl the same age as Phoebe, arrives on set for her first porn shoot, Jolene notices scars on her legs that may mean she's self-harming. After the shoot, Dave suggests Amy might deputise for another performer who hasn't turned up for a particularly graphic scene, but while

Jolene objects because of her age, she also then leaves to collect her kids from school.

● After that dark vista, what happier sight on screen than the engaging smile of Tommy Bowe? In **Ireland's New Normal with Tommy Bowe** (Virgin Media One), the former Ireland rugby international visited independent businesses around the country, from the Connemara Smokehouse in Ballyconneely, to shops in Clifden, Letterkenny and Kinsale, the last being a town with a long tradition of attracting foodies. And you couldn't leave out Dublin, with Bowe standing in a closed Grogan's pub on South William Street and talking to its despondent owner and his son.

Bowe, wearing a different garment from his XV Kings clothing line in almost every shot, eventually got to meet Leo Varadkar in the courtyard of Government Buildings to give him a piece of his mind about the state of the nation's small businesses. "I have to be a voice for those who are struggling," Bowe said as he headed for the meeting.

Varadkar held his ground, emphasising the extended cost of paying for the pandemic, the huge taxes that multinationals bring in, and the increasingly online future of business.

"I don't know how that went, to be honest with you. I feel a little bit flat after it," Bowe said. "We've visited so many towns and villages and businesses, and I would have loved to have had something really positive to bring back to them.

"I don't know if [Varadkar] has a real sense of what it's like in those communities, in those villages, but if he's being so real about online and the way it's going to go, what's going to happen to those independent shops? What's going to happen those retailers who've been on the high street for 50, 60 years, who have a good viable business? Where does that leave Irish town centres? Where does that leave Irish independents? Where does that leave Irish families?"

The programme, incidentally, was funded by Bank of Ireland. ■

Television

Design for life

How can we get on better with our daughter at home?

This week, psychotherapist **Siobhán Murray** advises on how to get round the problematic situation of a family squabble caused by the coronavirus crisis



Dear Expert,
I hope you can give me a bit of help. Our youngest is starting college this year, and she was supposed to be moving out of home. But now she's staying here to take her classes by Zoom.

My husband says it's the right thing to do financially. What's the point of her renting in the city if there's no college to go to?

However, everyone in the house is feeling a bit low. She was meant to be starting a new life, and we had teed up plans of our own. (I was hoping to do a bit of renovation on the house, for starters!)

A lot of stupid arguments are breaking out, over everything from the wifi to damp clothes left in the washing machine. We're all feeling angry and claustrophobic.

Do you think we may have made a mistake in not pushing her out the door to live her own life, even if it's expensive for us having to support her?

Name withheld

Dear Reader,

Firstly, congratulations on getting your youngest through the last six months of uncertainty around the Leaving Cert. Starting college is a huge achievement and a big milestone in your daughter's life, but doing it from home and on Zoom was definitely not how any of you imagined things would turn out.

For now, I think the decision for her to study from home is the right one – and not just from a financial point of view.

Understandably, there may be feelings of disappointment for everyone. I suggest that, rather than ignoring those emotions, it may be a worthwhile idea to discuss them openly between the three of you.

Each person will be experiencing the same situation, but from different viewpoints, and it would be good to communicate to each other how you all feel, rather than letting that tension fester into anger and resentment.

I would also suggest laying down some new ground rules in the house. See it as re-contracting with a new person, not your daughter who has been living at home all her life!

If she was moving away, she would have to take on new levels of responsibility for herself. These are behaviours that she can still make while staying with you.

I find the term “new normal” to be more stressful than helpful right now. However, adopting a sense of order and routine each day lets everyone know what to expect.

In re-contracting with your daughter, perhaps you could suggest she cooks one or two evenings a week and uses the washing machine on certain days. Allow her to be part of the re-contracting, rather than it being a set of rules devised by parents.

I think it's also important to remember that the family dynamic has evolved. While your daughter may still be a child in your eyes, she is also an adult – so the rules you had for the family home while she was in school should change accordingly.

With regard to the house renovations, I think this would be a perfect opportunity to continue with your plans. They would give you something to focus on while your daughter is at home.

One of the biggest issues we have right now is the sense of lacking control. So I would be focusing on what you can control and not what you can't. That includes renovating the house, reconnecting with your daughter and including your husband in those discussions.

Discuss the impact of remote college learning, which is new for your daughter. Give her that sense of responsibility she would have if she moved out.

I think what's really important to remember is that this is not for her entire college experience. Focus on the time between now and Christmas. There will be an opportunity then to perhaps review things for the next term. Or look at it this way – “For the first year, that is what we're going to do, but going into second year we're returning to the original plan of supporting her with rent.”

I also think it's important to remember that your daughter's expectations of her first year in college have been dashed. Empathy from you as her mother needs to be there. But you also need to communicate your own expectations and the plans you

had for yourself.

For now, unfortunately, college is going to be delivered remotely. Although your daughter may not see it, the loneliness and isolation of living alone could have a more negative impact on her mental health than living at home.

Your decision was very much the right thing to do in the current situation and I think your letter shows compassion and empathy. Identify what you can control, be kind to yourself and create a working contract within your household. ■

Got a problem or something you'd like advice on? Email anonymously by contacting us at businesspost.ie/ask-an-expert, and we'll match your query with the best expert we can find on the subject. You can also drop an email in confidence to nadine@businesspost.ie.

MY BEST TIP FOR LIVING WELL IN LOCKDOWN

Create a manageable routine for each day and avoid setting expectations for yourself that you won't be able to sustain.

THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE I'VE EVER BEEN GIVEN

Bend with the wind and choose your battles carefully. Don't get sucked down rabbit holes of other people's anger.

A BOOK THAT I FOUND HELPFUL DURING TOUGH TIMES

An oldie but a favourite – *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom.

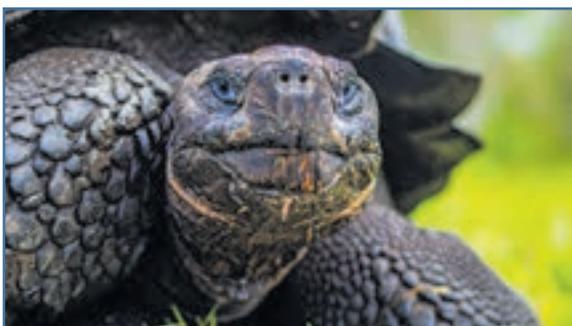


Siobhán Murray

Having spent years in the London music industry, working behind the scenes with stars such as Elton John and Goldie, Siobhán Murray retrained as a psychotherapist and set up her own in 2010 in Dublin. In 2018, she published her first book, *The Burnout Solution* (Gill Books), which is aimed at offering people a plan for preventing and overcoming the condition of burnout. For more details, see twistingthejar.com.



NATURALLY OUT OF THIS WORLD



Galapagos Outer Loop

10 nights - 3rd September 2021

Itinerary:

- Quito, Ecuador (hotel) x2 • Baltra, Galapagos
- Daphne Island • Gardner Bay (Española)
- Punta Suarez • Cormorant Point • Post Office
- Punta Moreno • Urvina Bay • Punta Espinoza
- Punta Vicente Roca • South Plaza • Dragon Hill
- Puerto Ayora • Baltra • Quito, Ecuador (hotel)

Includes:

- ✓ 7 nights onboard the brand new 5★ *Celebrity Flora*
- ✓ Superb dining on a full board basis & onboard drinks
- ✓ Twice-daily shore excursions included
- ✓ Use of equipment including snorkelling equipment, mini wetsuits, binoculars and hiking sticks
- ✓ Daily briefing by Galapagos National Park certified
- ✓ Expedition Leader & lectures by Galapagos experts
- ✓ Gratuities included ✓ Galapagos fees included
- ✓ Wifi onboard

Sky Suite with Infinity Balcony

Seamlessly blending indoor and outdoor living the Sky Suite with Infinite Balcony allows you to walk right to the water's edge for a greater connection to the sea and the islands.

From **€10,499pp**

DISCOVER EXCITING DESTINATIONS

There's nothing like the thrill of discovering a new destination. Spectacular scenery, friendly locals, majestic wildlife, intriguing customs and envy-inducing photo-ops.

The inspiration for Darwin's Theory of Evolution, the Galapagos host an incredible array of extraordinary wildlife; on land, sea and air!

Find out more about our carefully curated holidays at cruisescapes.ie/holiday-type/expedition/



Galapagos Inner Loop

10 nights - 3rd September 2021

Itinerary:

- Quito, Ecuador (hotel) x2 • Baltra, Galapagos
- Daphne Island • Puerto Egas • Rabida
- Elizabeth Bay • Caleta Tagus • Sullivan Bay
- Bartolome • Las Bachas • North Seymour
- Puerto Baquerizo Moreno • Punta Pitt
- Puerto Ayora • Baltra • Quito, Ecuador (hotel)

Includes:

- ✓ 7 nights onboard the brand new 5★ *Celebrity Flora*
- ✓ Superb dining on a full board basis & onboard drinks
- ✓ Twice-daily shore excursions included
- ✓ Use of equipment including snorkelling equipment, mini wetsuits, binoculars and hiking sticks
- ✓ Daily briefing by Galapagos National Park certified
- ✓ Expedition Leader & lectures by Galapagos experts
- ✓ Gratuities included ✓ Galapagos fees included
- ✓ Wifi onboard

Sky Suite with Infinity Balcony

Seamlessly blending indoor and outdoor living the Sky Suite with Infinite Balcony allows you to walk right to the water's edge for a greater connection to the sea and the islands.

From **€11,099pp**



Your Ship Celebrity Flora

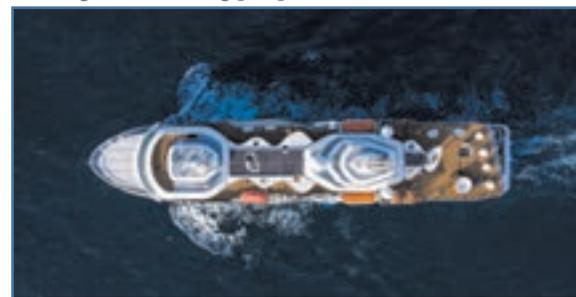
Celebrity Flora marks an evolutionary turning point in the approach to ship design, featuring an innovative outward-facing design that makes the destination the centre of attention. By focusing the direction of spaces outward at every opportunity, we virtually erase the boundaries between ship and destination. Join us onboard the most state-of-the-art ship to ever sail the Galapagos Islands.

All-Inclusive

Our all-inclusive packages to the Galapagos have everything you need for an incredible adventure. On board, you'll enjoy menus crafted by a Michelin-starred chef, unlimited beverages, Wi-Fi, room service and more. For your experiences off the ship, you'll have use of snorkeling equipment, wet suits and excursions led by Galapagos National Park certified naturalists. And that's not all.

All Itineraries Also Include:

- ✓ All flights from Dublin to Baltra, Galapagos via Quito
- ✓ All overseas transfers airport - hotel - port
- ✓ 3 nights in the JW Marriott hotel in Quito, Ecuador
- ✓ City Tour of Quito, Ecuador
- ✓ 20kg Check-in bag per person



For more information or to book call: **01 294 1000**

www.cruisescapes.ie
book@cruisescapes.ie

Est. 1992. 100% Irish Owned. Carrickmines, Dublin 18 • Prices based on 2 sharing • Low deposit of just €330pp due at time of booking. Full payment due 16 weeks from departure • Optional insurance available • Prices are subject to availability • Fully licensed and bonded by CAR (TA 0348)





The Ideal Gift

THE GIFT OF DISCOVERING IRELAND.

Our suite of vouchers are the perfect gift for retirement, birthday, anniversary, a company reward, a thank you, incentive or promotion.

Can be used in a choice of 29 independent Irish hotels in superb locations throughout Ireland, your gift can be used for a Staycation or towards accommodation, food & beverage and spa treatments.

Select Hotels Voucher Collection:

- Gift Cheques (Valid for 5 years)
- 1 Night B&B
- 2 Nights B&B with bottle of wine on arrival
- The Ultimate Gift
- Staycation vouchers

Buying is easy with eVouchers for instant delivery or postal vouchers delivered in a gift envelope.

#GiveTheGiftofChoice



Business
Post

Magazine

March 7 2021

Standing out from the crowd

Anne O'Leary, Hazel Chu and
Catherine Martin reveal their
attitudes to leadership

Roisin Kiberd

Why love online is not
always what it seems

Fiona Heaney

How fashion label
Fee G came to be

Megan Nolan

The origin story of a
confessional writer



THE BUSINESS POST'S WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Get the new leadership podcast from the Business Post, hosted by **Nadine O'Regan** and featuring interviews with **Hazel Chu, Anne O'Leary, Catherine Martin** and more.

Find #HowIDidIt
on Spotify, iTunes
and www.businesspost.ie/podcast

**Business
Post**



Features

- 8 INTERVIEW**
Debut author Megan Nolan on the genesis of her new novel
- 10 COVER STORY**
Hazel Chu, Anne O'Leary and Catherine Martin reveal their attitudes to leadership
- 14 LOVE ONLINE**
Roisin Kiberd delivers an extract from her powerful new book
- 18 FASHION**
Fee G designer Fiona Heaney on her creative inspirations

Regulars

- 16 ARTS INTERVIEW**
Andrea Cleary meets rapidly rising singer and actress Slaney
- 27 RADIO**
Rory O'Neill and Celine Byrne account for themselves on the airwaves
- 30 DESIGN FOR LIFE**
Our expert advises how to navigate between your partner and your parents

Arts & Books

- 16 ALBUM REVIEWS**
Edel Meade, Zara Larsson and Kings of Leon are in the spotlight
- 24 FICTION**
Lauren Oyler delivers a tech-driven saga for the modern age
- 28 FILM AND TELEVISION**
Who Am I?: Ireland's Illegal Adoptions and Netflix film Moxie reviewed

Eat & drink

- 20 WINE**
Cathal McBride celebrates the birthday of Riesling
- 21 RESTAURANT REVIEW**
Gillian Nelis on a meal with a Bang

Nadine O'Regan

From Denise Chaila to Roisin Kiberd, brilliant Irish women are today at the forefront of our culture like never before



@NadineORegan

No way." With those words, Denise Chaila summed up her feelings online, on her Twitter feed, when the announcement came through on Thursday that she had won the Choice Music Prize, the honour that is awarded annually to the best album made on the island of Ireland, voted on by a panel of 12 judges and based on artistic merit, regardless of genre or sales.

As the flurry of congratulations came in, from fellow musicians and fans, in truth, the only person who seemed genuinely surprised by the announcement was Limerick's own Chaila herself. There are some years where the Choice Prize – Ireland's equivalent of the Mercury Prize – is hotly contested; the eventual victor uncertain. (I've been a judge on the awards twice, so I'm speaking from experience.) This year, there could have been no more deserving winner.

Last summer, when Chaila appeared on the cover of the Business Post Magazine, she was a virtual unknown; this year, she has chalked up a number of Late Late Show appearances, duetted with Sharon Shannon, been interviewed by Cillian Murphy and spoken her truth powerfully. You can't watch an advert for Littlewoods without singing her name: "C.H.A.I.L.A." – and I can't be the only one doing my 5km and accidentally chanting lines like "Can't be looking like dial-up/I'm Wifi".

She has done it all in the face of some spectacular racism. Recently, she even asked RTE, who had promoted some of her interviews on social media, to restrict comments on her videos, because of the volume of hate she was receiving. "I need space from racism while celebrating my music once in a while," she said, offering a typically measured response to a very depressing situation.

The timing of her victory is sweet, coming a matter of days before International Women's Day on Monday. Like many women, I have some occasional misgivings about seeming to need 'a day' (although, before any men start protesting: International Men's Day is November 19, so you haven't been left out) for us women. It's up with the "little Christmas" as the day when females are supposed to put their feet up – to which I'd say: couldn't you sort out the gender pay gap first, so we didn't have to work for part of the year for free?

But the truth is that – occasional problems of tweeness aside – we do need the structure and the space to cheerlead for women. And we need it particularly for the year that's in it, when those in all areas of industry, but particularly the arts,

have suffered so much and yet, at the same time, so many brilliant female artists have emerged to provide a light in the darkness. While Chaila is a flagbearer in music, in writing, Irish voices making strides internationally include Naoise Dolan, Roisin Kiberd, Megan Nolan and Sally Rooney, all of whom are aged between 28 and 31. While there's been a lot said about the millennial demographic, much of it condescending, there's a more interesting tie that binds these voices together. They are all part of the internet generation.

As Roisin Kiberd writes in her excellent non-fiction debut *The Disconnect*, she arrived on this earth at the same time as the internet. "I was born in Dublin, the same month and year [March, 1989] as the internet as we know it." She reflects on how her love of the internet consumed her. "The internet instils in us a conspiratorial worldview," she writes, "a kind of maniacal self-involvement that comes from seeing friends on a list described as 'followers'." She later, rather chillingly, taps into the idea that we're like corpses at our laptops, dead to those around us, as we live in the gaze of the screen.

I feel that way too sometimes. The internet has created a wonderful point of connection for us; it's also created isolation. It's turned us into mini-brands on Facebook or Twitter or your social media poison of choice. It has radicalised some of us. It has healed more of us. It's a paradigm shift that is fundamental and irreversible. Maybe these writers and artists are emerging now, not only because there's space for them, but because there's something important for them to say about ourselves in this context; something new.

Both Kiberd and Megan Nolan feature in the Magazine this week, and I'd highly recommend that you read their new books. Nolan deals in acid-sharp honesty about relationships; Kiberd takes a long and lingering look at how we have reshaped ourselves around the deity that is the internet. Elsewhere in the Magazine, speaking to the theme of Women's Day, three female leaders – Anne O'Leary, Hazel Chu and Catherine Martin – talk honestly about their experiences and vulnerabilities as they have emerged in their careers. (You can also listen to them on our new podcast series #HowIDidIt, the first episode of which is available on podcast platforms from today.)

We live in difficult times. But Irish women are brilliant every day of the year. Supporting them is both easy and necessary. ■



Denise Chaila claimed the RTÉ Choice Music Prize last week

Editor: Nadine O'Regan
Email: nadine@businesspost.ie
Designer: Louise Spotten
Picture editor: Bryan Walshe
Email: bwalshe@businesspost.ie
Chief sub-editor: Maevie McLoughlin

Advertising: Lorcan Hanlon Email: lhanlon@businesspost.ie
Editorial director, Magazine Brands: Elaine Prendeville
Online: businesspost.ie; tel: 01 6026000
Published by Post Publications, Second Floor, Block B, The Merrion Centre, Dublin 4
Printed by Webprint, Mahon Point Retail Park, Cork

Topflight®

Dreaming of your next ski holiday?



Return Flights with
20kg Baggage
Included As Standard

Return
Transfers
To Your Resort

Hand-Picked
Accommodation
In The Best Resorts

Experienced
In-Resort
Team



8 DAYS · HOTEL / HALF BOARD

LTI Alpenhotel Kaiserfels ★★★★★

St Johann in Tirol, Austria

The 4 star Alpenhotel Kaiserfels prides itself on being the most modern hotel in St. Johann and features excellent facilities and elegantly furnished rooms.

Location

Beside the Eichenhof ski lift and providing direct access to the Sankt Johann in Tirol ski area, LTI Alpenhotel Kaiserfels is ideally located.

Resort Centre: 2000m | Nearest Lift: 10m

Accommodation

The excellent 4 star Alpenhotel Kaiserfels offers modern accommodation and is located directly at the Eichenhof Lift in St. Johann. It provides the perfect base for a ski holiday in St. Johann, with direct access to slopes. The hotel bar and restaurant boast beautiful interiors, with a unique blend of modern and alpine furnishings. The hotel is well suited to families.

Date of Departure & Price

5th Mar 2022	5th Mar 2022	5th Mar 2022
from €1049pps Depart Dublin	from €1079pps Depart Cork	from £939pps Depart Belfast

Price based on 2 person sharing & departing from Dublin, Cork or Belfast



8 DAYS · HOTEL / HALF BOARD

Sporthotel Austria ★★★★★

St Johann in Tirol, Austria

In a perfect location to get the most out of your ski holiday and with a top notch restaurant on site, you are sure to enjoy your stay at the homely Sporthotel Austria.

Location

The Sporthotel Austria is in the perfect location at the foot of the piste in St. Johann, and only a short 4 minute walk from the village centre. It allows ski-to-door access!

Resort Centre: 450m | Nearest Lift: 500m

Accommodation

Sporthotel Austria is a firm favourite with Topflight customers, and you can expect to be very well looked after during your stay. The staff are both friendly and dedicated, helping to ensure that your stay here is extra special. Enjoy a swim in the large indoor pool looking out into the beautiful gardens that surround the hotel. The wellness area also consists of a steam bath, sauna and an infrared cabin.

Date of Departure & Price

15th Jan 2022	15th Jan 2022	15th Jan 2022
from €1159pps Depart Dublin	from €1169pps Depart Cork	from £1029pps Depart Belfast

Price based on 2 person sharing & departing from Dublin, Cork or Belfast



8 DAYS · HOTEL / HALF BOARD

Hotel Norica ★★★★★ PLUS

Bad Hofgastein, Austria

Enjoy a wonderful ski holiday in the elegant 4 star plus Hotel Norica, which boasts a wonderful location in the centre of Bad Hofgastein.

Location

In the pedestrian centre of Bad Hofgastein, 400m from the nearest lift and ski school meeting place. The ski bus stops 20m from the hotel.

Resort Centre: 100m | Nearest Lift: 400m

Accommodation

The rooms in this stunning hotel are spacious and luxurious, and the facilities are superior. One of the hotel's main attractions is its connection to the world-class Alpentherme Thermal Spa. Guests have free entrance to this wonderful facility through an underground tunnel.

Date of Departure & Price

15th Jan 2022	15th Jan 2022	15th Jan 2022
from €1329pps Depart Dublin	from €1339pps Depart Cork	from £1169pps Depart Belfast

Price based on 2 person sharing & departing from Dublin, Cork or Belfast

Topflight's Book With Confidence Guarantee.



Book now and pay later

Book your ski holiday today and pay your holiday balance 28 days before travel.



Change your mind

Up to 28 days before your travel date, you can postpone or change your holiday free of charge.



Covid protection

Should your holiday be impacted by Covid-19, you can choose to receive a full refund or a voucher for 120% of the amount you paid.

BusinessPost

EXCLUSIVE READER OFFERS

Call our ski holiday experts on **01 240 1700**

LICENCED BY THE COMMISSION FOR AVIATION REGULATION TO 074 & TA 055



Cereal it's been having a boom during this pandemic. After years of cornflake advertisements telling us we can have a bowl for lunch or dinner or whenever we want, that's exactly what people have done as they rattle around their homes 23 hours a day

Cecilia Ahem (pictured) Roar, her book of short stories, is being turned into a fancy new series for Apple TV featuring an ensemble cast which counts Nicole Kidman, Cynthia Erivo and Merritt Wever among its numbers. The duo behind the Netflix series Glow will be showrunning

Agatha All Along the catchy song from Marvel's Disney+ hit WandaVision has become a hit on TikTok and everywhere else, really. Not surprising, given that it was written by the same people who wrote Frozen's Let it Go

Pets at the Golden Globes the awards themselves were thwarted by awkwardness and technical issues, but thank God for the dogs and cats of Hollywood. Regina King's dog slept through her entire appearance, while the Best Actress in a TV drama category was overshadowed by The Crown's Emma Corrin's cat

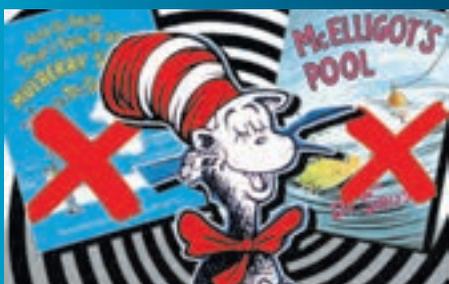
Culture Counter

Primavera the iconic Barcelona music festival has confirmed that the 2021 event, which was to be its 20th anniversary, has been cancelled for the second year in a row. Metal festival Download has also been cancelled, while Glastonbury was called off earlier this year

Married couples' sex lives another victim of the pandemic. Intimacy between married couples is down by 50 per cent, according to a study by the Kinsey Institute. Maybe watching the other half eat cornflakes 23 hours a day is a turn-off?



Dr Seuss six of his books are being pulled because they contain insensitive portrayals of people of colour: If I Ran the Zoo and The Cat's Quizzer are among the titles being dropped



Emer McLysaght

Almost overnight, voicenotes have replaced Netflix as the drama provider of choice



@EmerTheScreamer

We've been gossiping for millennia. Did you see what your man said about the other fella's pyramid? Have you heard that so-and-so left her husband's cave for another woman's cave? You'll never guess what the

king was caught saying about his nephew's woefully boring harpsichord recital and now the child's mother is threatening to burn the wheels of his best carriage, etc. However, in all those years of hearsay and whispering, there has never been a medium more deliciously and perfectly suited to gossip than the voicenote.

Voicenotes as a feature are most commonly associated with WhatsApp, although platforms like Instagram and Twitter have their own versions. A trifecta of ideal conditions – increased distrust and dislike of phone calls, the eternal quest for convenience and a global pandemic – has led to voicenotes evolving into a top-tier way to communicate. They work best for delivering gossip and news.

There is nothing like the thrill of a text message from a friend saying "I have gossip" followed by the notification that "Louise is recording audio". The voicenote allows an uninterrupted telling or retelling of the news, with as much or as little breathless intensity as the voicenoter sees fit. They can impart tone in a way a text message never could. They can tell the story in parts. They can leave cliffhangers, to be continued in the next voicenote.

Of course, the "I remember when all this was fields" part of my brain is going: "But what's wrong with a simple phone call? Why not just ring a friend with this news? Wouldn't it be nice to react and converse in real time?" But what the voicenote gives you is control.

There's no need to pre-arrange a time to make the call – because, as we all know in 2021, making an unplanned phone call is as aggressive as sticking your finger in a stranger's ear. You can listen to the voicenotes at your leisure. You can store them up like little podcasts or save them

for the multiple five-minute breaks you grant yourself from being chained to the working from home desk.

It's not just gossip that's zinging around. I'm in a WhatsApp group with two friends who are busy mothers and who do a lot of writing and typing as part of their jobs. Over the last few months, we have evolved into sending about 60 or 70 per cent of our communication via "voiceways", as we call them, often using them to sum up our days, or give our thoughts on a problem or deliver the pièce de résistance: "I have gossip."

We can record our voiceways while walking, or unloading a dishwasher with one hand, or just lying down on the couch,

free from the constant tapping of keyboards. If it's been a busy day and there are multiple voicenotes awaiting you, they can play out and wash over you like a reassuringly unrelenting stream of Netflix episodes.

In a way, voicenotes are to phone calls what streaming is to telly.

Of course, with all gossip, there's a tipping point where it can go from relatively harmless to dangerously disseminated within moments. Just last weekend, I was out for a walk (what else?) with a friend when she stopped dead in her tracks, pulled out her phone and said: "I have amazing gossip about X celebrity".

She then proceeded to pull out her phone and play a breathless and hugely enjoyable voicenote from her cousin which was lukewarm in its scandal but piping hot in its delivery.

In this case, the gossip was fairly harmless and wouldn't cause any ructions if it had spread more widely, but there have been cases where voicenotes have gone viral with hilarious and devastating consequences. From tales from a lads' holiday to former politicians showing up on Tinder to accusations of infidelity, and even to fear mongering about the army taking to the streets to control Covid-19 crowds, voicenotes can become memes in the blink of an eye.

Voicenote culture is here to stay, though, and I love it. I love the gathering around the phone to hear the gossip. I love receiving little podcasts from my friends. I love throwing out a problem and getting back thoughtful advice that's had time to percolate. Never, ever phone me again. ■



The voicenote allows an uninterrupted telling of gossip, with as much breathless intensity as the voicenoter sees fit

EMER SAYS...

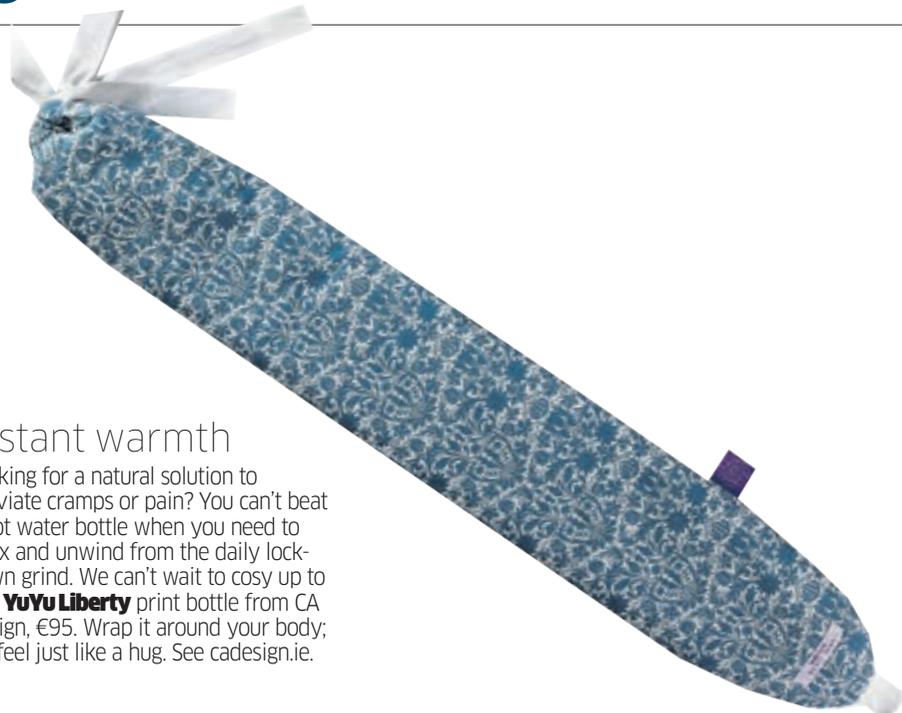
Listen to: Weightless by Marconi Union, a piece of music designed to make you feel less anxious

Watch: the Billie Eilish documentary on Apple TV and have a good cry

Tune into: Home of the Year on RTÉ One on Tuesday evenings. Good, cosy, nosy telly

This week, you will love...

Compiled by
Mary Cate Smith



Instant warmth

Looking for a natural solution to alleviate cramps or pain? You can't beat a hot water bottle when you need to relax and unwind from the daily lockdown grind. We can't wait to cosy up to this **YuYu Liberty** print bottle from CA Design, €95. Wrap it around your body; it'll feel just like a hug. See cadesign.ie.

A smart mug to snap up

We're dying to get our hands on the world's first temperature-controlled mug, **Ember**. Set the cup to your desired temperature, control it from your smartphone, and sit back. Prices start at €119.95 from ember.com.



Think pink

Ahead of International Women's Day, designers **Jill & Gill** have teamed up with Style Unravels Breast Cancer to raise funds and bolster awareness. The dream team created a limited-edition T-shirt - its vibrant design represents the power of hugs for cancer survivors. Made from organic cotton, these tees are €50 with all proceeds going towards Breast Cancer Ireland. Order now from styleunravelsbreastcancer.com.



The designer/ high-street collab

We love **Simone Rocha's** unique vision of femininity. Her collaboration with H&M includes menswear and children's wear alongside the designer's signature neoclassical-inspired womenswear. Think romantic details like billowing sleeves and beaded embroidery offset by rough-around-the-edges details. Our favourite piece is this deconstructed trench coat, priced €179. Shop the full collection from March 11 at hm.com.

Reduce, refill, reuse

If you like your scents with a side serving of sustainability, try **Max Benjamin's** new candle refills. The first Irish company to create reusable candle inserts, the wax refill can be used in the same glass jar to prevent waste. Gift sets are €40 and there's 20 per cent off on the website now, in advance of Mother's Day. Visit maxbenjamin.ie.





Star jewels

The North Star is the one constant light in our galaxy: it stands still while the whole sky revolves around it. Just like the star that shines so bright, so too does our love for our mothers, aunts and guardians. Surprise your female role model on Mother's Day with **Chupi's** gold North Star necklace, €599, or honour her memory and treat yourself at chupi.com.



Bold lobe energy

Known for her "jugs" vases and booty plant pots, jewellery/ceramics designer **Anissa Kermiche** draws inspiration from the feminine form. For International Women's Day, the bra is her muse. Call us gold-diggers, but we need this statement earring, €215 at matchesfashion.com.



Silken slumber

For more than 40 years, **Roisin Cross Silks** has been a haven for those seeking luxe silk fabrics that will stand the test of time. The hiatus of weddings during lockdown inspired company director Judith O'Sullivan to create pillowcases and facemasks from leftover fabrics. Known for its rejuvenating properties for the skin and hair, the silk pillowcase, €130 for a pair, is the hero product du jour for skinfluencers and beauty acolytes alike. There's 25 per cent off right now at silks.ie.

Skin-tone inclusive shades

The hottest eyewear brand of the moment, **Shades of Shades** encourages us to embrace our unique complexions with aplomb. Each pair of sunglasses is designed to complement 14 different skin tones, from milky to mocha. These sunnies are the real deal with polarised or gradient lenses and 100 per cent UVA/UVB protection. Find your new nude at shades-of-shades.com. Prices start at approximately €189.



Comfort foods

As Irish people, we're genetically predisposed towards high levels of tea and soda bread consumption, and it seems that lockdown has only strengthened our love for Irish produce. **Michael McCambridge** of the brown bread dynasty has come together with **Flahavan's**, **Barry's Tea**, **Keogh's Crisps** and **Butlers Chocolates** to create a mouthwatering hamper of all our favourite Irish-made goodies for 1,000 lucky recipients. Nominate your bestie (or indeed yourself) at thanksthousand.ie; go on, go on, go on.

#Trending



STEPPING SOFTLY

We've never been more aware of the 5km radius, and chances are our feet could do with a little TLC. That's where **Patchology** comes in. The Poshpeel Pedicure treatment is a nourishing balm that exfoliates dead skin. Pour into the foot masque socks provided, and let it soak for some guaranteed happy feet. Available to purchase from Brown Thomas, Arnotts and selected pharmacies.



MINERAL DUST

Seaweed is one of our favourite superfoods and **Note Cosmetics'** new mineral blusher, €14.95, is packed full of it. Coral in colour, light in coverage and silky in texture, this powder will give you a royal-looking flush. Available from pharmacies nationwide.

SILVER FOX

Prevent your hair extensions from going raggedy with **Great Lengths** hair care kits. Designed specifically to treat extensions, the gift set, €29.95 contains shampoo, conditioner and a moisturising hair mask. For blonde hair, this silver set is the business - it banishes all traces of brassiness. Available at greatlengths.com.



'I thought the kind of ways I write and the kind of things that I write about weren't polished enough for the mainstream literary world'

An intensely confessional writer, Megan Nolan has drawn high praise for her debut novel, *Acts of Desperation*, which deals with the 'emotional minutiae' of relationships. Interview: **Tadhg Hoey**

Few writers are as honest about their own obsessions and foibles as the author and journalist Megan Nolan. From revealing the role that alcohol has played in her romantic relationships to describing how the pandemic has stripped away the pleasures of being single, her writing is both self-lacerating and deeply assured.

At 30, Nolan's intense, confessional style has helped propel her into the upper echelons of British and US journalism, with her essays, criticism and feature pieces appearing in publications such as the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, and most recently, the *New Statesman*, where she has a bi-monthly column.

Now comes her debut novel, *Acts of Desperation*, which was written in London and Athens, and picked up in 2019 by Jonathan Cape as part of a two-book deal. A searing and deeply uncompromising look at love and one person's capacity to suffer in the pursuit of it, the novel has already received high praise in early reviews.

"Megan Nolan is a huge literary talent, and her first novel, *Acts of Desperation*, is a love story like no other," said the author Karl Ove Knausgaard, adding his endorsement to a slew of positive notices.

Despite all of this, when I catch up with Nolan for the purposes of this interview, she seems a little surprised by just how well she is doing in her career as a journalist and author.

"I didn't expect the book to be published by a mainstream publisher," she says, over the phone from her apartment in London. "Until we sold the book, really, I thought that the kind of ways I write and the kind of things that I write about weren't publishable in a serious sense, would be like more for the internet, mainly. Just not polished enough within the mainstream literary world."

Anchored by an unnamed female narrator, the novel takes place in Dublin and details the character's toxic relationship with Ciaran, her Danish-Irish boyfriend. The plot unravels between 2012 and 2014, and is interspersed with short, almost meta-fictional reflections which take place in Greece, in 2019, where the narrator reflects, with the benefit of emotional distance, on their relationship.

Nolan was born in Waterford, but she has spent most of the past half-decade living in London. Because of the book, she is doing lots of press at the

moment, she tells me, and feels "adrenalin-filled".

In just two weeks, she has gone from having never been interviewed to doing several each week. She is slightly nervous about how she is being perceived – she feels more control over this in writing than in speaking – and I get the feeling that she is much more comfortable with being the interviewer rather than the interviewed.

I first encountered Nolan's writing in 2013, on a blog she used to host, which featured short, essayistic pieces that were intensely confessional in tone. At that time, Irish literature was on the cusp of undergoing a resurgence, and I hadn't encountered anything by a writer in their early 20s, writing about an Ireland that I could immediately recognise – a distinctly post-Celtic Tiger Dublin – that was quite as visceral or as lucid as Nolan's early essays.

Some of that writing made it onto Medium, a platform for self-publishing. Medium also features curated, themed sections – one of which is *Human Parts*, in which Nolan's early essays often featured. She is quick to say that she didn't consider herself a writer back then and that, until she moved to London, she hadn't thought of her writing as "something serious".

After being commissioned to write an op-ed for the *London Independent*, she began to feel as though journalism, and writing more generally, could be a viable career path.

Her writing has drawn attention for the honesty with which she approaches her subjects. Take, for example, her essay, 'Aborted?', from 2014, which chronicles a trip she made, aged 18, to England to get an abortion; or a piece from 2016 in the *Guardian* backing mandatory sexual consent classes for undergraduates, in which she discusses her experiences of being sexually assaulted and subsequently dropping out of Trinity College, where she had been undertaking a degree in French and film studies.

A little over two years ago, the *New York Times* published an opinion piece by Nolan entitled "I Didn't Hate The English. Until Now", in which she described the microaggressions and general ignorance towards Irish people she has experienced while living and working in Britain.

"What kills you is the ignorance," Nolan wrote in the piece. "What grinds you down is how much they don't know about the past and, if they do

know, how little they care. It's a strange and maddening thing to discover about the people who shaped your country's fate and who are poised to do so again. [...] England keeps on making itself matter to Ireland, against our will."

The article caused a stir (the headline, it should be noted, was not her decision).

Nolan's transition to fiction makes sense because she has always been interested in wider forms of creativity. Prior to her debut novel, she had written poetry, performed in a band (indie group *You're Only Massive*) and, as a younger person, had been involved in *Little Red Kettle*, a youth theatre company in Waterford. An early inspiration in regard of the latter may have been Nolan's father, the playwright and theatre director Jim Nolan.

When she moved to London, she began crafting fictional pieces in tandem with writing journalism, and she would read them out at performances at galleries and reading series. First begun in 2016, *Acts of Desperation* was originally conceived as a "collection of related essays" dealing with trauma and mental health, body dysmorphia and intense, all-consuming relationships.

I ask her how she found the process of writing something fictional and book-length. "It was really hard," she says, but adds that receiving feedback and advice from her agent, Harriet Moore, meant the process was a rewarding one.

Already, comparisons have been drawn between *Acts of Desperation* and the novels of Sally Rooney and Naïse Dolan. Reading it put me in mind more, though, of Eimear McBride's stunning debut, *A Girl Is A Half-Formed Thing*, or



Megan Nolan: to trace Nolan's writing from the novel back, one gets the impression of someone who has already lived many lives - and is still only getting started

DANIEL LYNCH

even perhaps the early works of Edna O'Brien.

Nolan says that she sees *Acts of Desperation* as a book that's more in conversation with works like Chris Kraus's genre-bending *I Love Dick* (which she loved for its "portrayal of female debasement and desire"), Karl Ove Knausgaard's *A Death In The Family*, and Gwendoline Riley's *First Love*. In an essay for the *Guardian*, Nolan wrote that reading Knausgaard gave her permission to write about the "emotional minutiae" of relationships, which, in a sense, is what *Acts of Desperation* is a masterclass in.

One of the most remarkable aspects of *Acts of Desperation* is how little pity the narrator has for herself and for the grim situation in which she finds herself. She seems entirely unconcerned with presenting herself as likeable, either to the people in her life, or to her readers.

"If you distill that need into one person," Nolan points out of her protagonist and her uneasy relationship with her boyfriend, "then you don't need validation from everyone else as well."

Since writing the book, Nolan has begun work on her second novel and, along with Amanda Feery, has written a libretto, *A Thing I Cannot Name*, for the Irish National Opera. The opera, which is to be directed by Aoife Spillane-Hinks is due to take place in June 2021, though Nolan is unsure in what capacity, due to further possible restrictions.

In her *New Statesman* column, Nolan has been bracingly honest about how she has managed in terms of dealing with the ongoing restrictions brought about by the pandemic, and particularly what it means in the context of living alone.

I ask whether the column has been harder to write during lockdown. It's become more about the "minutiae of what we're all going through right now," she says, which, she points out, "is not the most exciting thing to write about, but people do want to read about it, I think, because everyone is so bored and they want that validated."

Whatever happens next, at just 30, Nolan has amassed an impressive body of work. To trace her writing from the novel back to those early essays, one gets the impression of someone who has already lived many lives - and is still only getting started. ■

Acts of Desperation by Megan Nolan is out now

Taking the lead

To mark International Women's Day and the launch of a new Women in Leadership podcast with **Nadine O'Regan**, we bring you extracts from the first three interviews in the series, with Hazel Chu, Anne O'Leary and Catherine Martin

Leadership is tough. That's true for anyone, but it can be particularly the case for women, who often battle prejudice to make it to the top.

With that in mind, the *Business Post* today launches a new podcast, released to coincide with the arrival of International Women's Day on Monday March 8. Entitled #HowIDidIt: the Business Post's Women in Leadership podcast, the series features interviews with women who have achieved success in their fields, and who want to share what they have learned with others.

To listen to the first episode in the series, which is available immediately, you can go online to Spotify, Apple podcasts, Google podcasts, or to the Business Post's website at businesspost.ie.

Ahead of the release of all of the podcast episodes, which will arrive on a weekly basis, the Business Post is pleased to offer you a sneak-peek of extracts from the first three interviews in the series, with Hazel Chu, Anne O'Leary and Catherine Martin.

From discussing their early beginnings through to their career peaks, these three leaders share their experiences in the hope that it will help to influence and guide others on their paths.

HAZEL CHU Lord Mayor of Dublin

Perhaps Hazel Chu's greatest strength is her openness. The Firhouse-raised Lord Mayor of Dublin is disarming in conversation. She'll tell you about her more difficult experiences as a woman of colour, the better to have important conversations about society as a result.

Chu's first job was working part-time in her mother's restaurants as a student; she studied at UCD, where she undertook a degree in politics and history, and she trained as a barrister with King's Inns. Pre-public office, her roles included working as a production manager at Electric Picnic, and later becoming head of brand and corporate communications at Diageo.

A first-time candidate in 2019, standing for the Green Party in the Pembroke Ward of Dublin City Council, Chu topped the poll. In June, the councillor, whose parents came to Dublin from Hong Kong in the 1970s, became the ninth woman and the first person of colour to become Lord Mayor of Dublin.

Engaged to Green Party TD Patrick Costello (the pair hope to marry this summer, Covid-19-permitting), Chu has brought a dash of flair and spark to the role – she's as likely to be seen sporting red hi-top Reeboks as her mayoral chains of office.



“

People always advise you to not make decisions during periods of massive change. I obviously didn't listen to that!

When I went into multinationals, I discovered that the gender issue was a huge issue. I saw it at board level. When I went into a meeting, I was automatically presumed to be the person taking the notes, when I was the one there to lead the meeting. I've heard that from so many female colleagues in different industries. In politics, the Dáil is 21 per cent female; the Seanad is about 30 per cent and local authorities and councillors are 22 per cent female. That's nothing when you look at the census which is that men and women are about 50-50.

NO'R: You decided to enter politics in 2017, when you became pregnant with your daughter Alex. Was that timing purely coincidental?

HC: People always advise you to not make decisions during [periods of] massive change. I obviously didn't listen to that! I had been watching Patrick [Costello, Green Party TD], my partner, through the council, doing his job. And I realised, there's a lot that I can contribute in terms of society. I spoke to some friends, and thought, 'Do you know what? This is it.' One of the reasons was also that I knew there's not many people who looked like me. And I knew Alex would have fewer people to look up to that look like me in politics.

NO'R: What strategies would you give to women who want to succeed?

HC: A blunt phrase for that would be: 'Spiky elbows go a long way'. There are times when I've wanted a job and come in second, I would then go back and ask people to give me honest feedback, because there's going to be the next job interview, there's going to be the one after that. I need to know what it is [that meant I didn't get it]. With an honest answer, you can build to the next thing. Once I get the job, I've learned to get people on side and get them on side early. If you're willing to sacrifice the credit part as well, then people are more happy to move along with things. There's a lot of managing people's expectations in any role.

NO'R: As Lord Mayor of Dublin, your visibility as a woman of colour is an important part of effecting change in Irish society – do you have a sense of how meaningful that is for other people?

HC: That brings a tear to my eye: it's lovely, thank you. I've had people say how great it is and people sending cards. I've equally had lots of people who don't like it. As you said, the role is normally quite ceremonial. I'm lucky that managers in the council have worked with me to do more in terms of the policy space, but I've also been lucky in that the media has been interested in having that conversation about gender and diversity, and let me have that airtime.

NO'R: What's coming next for you?

HC: I want to be in the Dáil. From [the experience of] the last year, with being in contact with communities, I think there needs to be more people in the Dáil that represent the rest of society and I want to be one of those people. So I'm going to be running, preferably for my party, but I'm going to be running one way or another. That's what I plan to do.

ANNE O'LEARY

Chief executive, Vodafone Ireland

A spirited and enthusiastic talker, brimful of insight, O'Leary is a natural leader and has become one of Ireland's best known faces in business.

Raised in the Blackrock suburb of Cork city, O'Leary began her career as an office manager in Nixdorf Computer, while studying marketing at night. A quick move to London later, with her accountant boyfriend, now her husband, and O'Leary found a marketing role with Reuters news agency.

When they returned to Ireland, O'Leary worked for four years at a pre-internet age Golden Pages, before moving to Esat Telecom, where she became regional director. When, in 2000, the company was bought by British Telecom, O'Leary stayed at BT as managing director, although it meant moving to Dublin, a tough accommodation for the Corkwoman, who retains a home in west Cork. In 2008, she was headhunted by Vodafone, where, in 2013, she became chief executive.

Nadine O'Regan: You became chief executive of Vodafone Ireland in 2013, having been a senior player in the company for five years as the business and enterprise director. How did you feel when you got the job?

Anne O'Leary: When I got the phone call to say I got the job, I remember looking in the mirror going: 'Oh my God, I'm going to be found out, I'm a fake'. I wasn't the first woman, but I was the first Irish person ►

Nadine O'Regan: How did you regard the subject of ambition when you were a young girl growing up in Dublin?

Hazel Chu: As a girl, when you're ambitious, people will tend to go: 'Oh, you shouldn't step out of line', or 'You shouldn't be too ambitious', or 'You should try to rein it back'. But I was lucky. I grew up in a household where my immigrant parents worked two jobs and strived to do as much as they could to get by and put me through education. There was a very hard-working ethos there.

On top of that, when my mom separated and divorced, she was the one supporting and minding us. For her, it was about how we can do better. It was grounded in the fact that she came here from Hong Kong during a recession to find a better life. When she had children, it was to find a better life for them. So success and ambition for me was being like my mom, almost, as cheesy as it sounds. Because she came with nothing and built a life for herself. And she managed to build a string of businesses.

NO'R: Did you observe gender or diversity issues as you started off in your career?

HC: The only time, going into jobs, that I felt that gender or diversity wasn't a barrier was in the music business. The music business was so cut-throat that it didn't matter where you came from, you were going to be landed in it. My years on the festival circuit taught me quite a bit.

Hazel Chu, Lord Mayor of Dublin: 'I've found that spiky elbows go a long way'
MARC O'SULLIVAN

in the role. From a Vodafone perspective, a lot of the CEOs had come to Ireland from abroad. It probably took me two or three years in the role, successfully in it, hitting all my KPIs and metrics, to realise, 'No, you're not faking it any more. You're doing it'.

At the time, a lot of people said to me: 'Are you mad? Why would you take the job? Are you not successful enough?' It's what we call benevolent bias. It's when people that care about you hold you back. Parents can do that with children. They think they're minding them, but they're actually limiting their ambitions. Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In* was the first book I read that I connected with, and it was about what you could do and how you need to seize opportunities. I remember sitting up in bed one night, and I said, 'Anne, you're 100 metres from the finish line, you've trained for the marathon. I'm going for it and I'm going to go all in.' And I went all in.

NO'R: What does the concept of leadership mean to you?

AO'L: It's a complex area. But leadership, to me, ultimately, is about creating followership. And it's very hard to do. Leadership is when you create an environment where you can attract amazing, talented people, you can empower them, and you trust them; for them to be their best or for them to reach their full potential. And you're creating psychological safety for them to give their opinions and environments of learning.

I say all these words, but the depth of what they mean is huge. Having everyone's opinions and input on the decisions we make is absolutely key. Whether that's male, female, young, old, introvert, extrovert, a legal opinion or an engineering one. Leadership is ongoing, you have to constantly work and get 360-degree feedback.

NO'R: You've experienced setbacks too. Could you take me back to a time like that and what you did to move on and get over it?

AO'L: Like everyone, I've had setbacks and things have not worked out for me. People have different ways of looking and dealing with setbacks. Some people get really set back by them, and it lives with them, and they can find it hard to get over them. I move on quickly. And I actually often forget about them. Sometimes people would remind me of things. 'Do you remember in that meeting when you cried?' And I'm looking at them going: 'No'. Something about my optimism or positivity in my character has helped me.

There have been other times, in organisations, where I've felt I was the best person for the role. And I haven't got it and I still feel I probably was the best person for the role, but there were other biases like proximity bias, which is when people put people they're more comfortable with [in the role]. Usually that's male appointing male.

NO'R: What strategies would you adopt in that circumstance?

AO'L: I definitely had an experience where I hadn't got a role and I felt that I should have, and also that many appointments were being made where there was a gender bias and proximity bias. And I made it very clear that I believed that was going on, in a very professional way, backed with data. It was hard for people not to agree with my point of view, because the facts were there. I said, 'Are you sure that you've looked at all the options there? Are there biases inherent in your decision-making? Were you willing to take the same risks on me, as a woman, as the man? Did I have to have every bit of the criteria, while the other candidate didn't? Have you been open in how you should have looked at this and really fair?'

You do need to stand your ground. You need to think about how you go about it and how you are saying things. I feel an onus to do not just right for me, but for the next wave of women that are coming along.

NO'R: Do you believe in quotas to correct subconscious bias?

AO'L: Yes. And the reason is, if it's not happening naturally or organically, there is a problem. A lot of people, when it comes to gender, they don't think it's a problem, because they've never had any biases against them. But the fact is: if boards or organisations at this stage don't have 30 per cent women, there's something wrong because 50 per cent of the population is out there. If they haven't reached it, they need a target. They need a quota. If you have a metric, sometimes that's what motivates people.

Some people, until they do it, don't understand that it's right. Some men have said to me: 'This diversity and inclusion thing, I didn't understand it until I had a diverse management team'. How we dealt with problems, how we dealt in crisis, the quality of the discussion: they didn't know what they were missing. I understand that people aren't often intentional in it, but in this day and age, it's 54 per cent female in my leadership team at Vodafone, and that's because I've been working on it since I joined the company 12 years ago. This isn't something that's a short-term thing, it is a systemic thing that you need to be watching, just like you look at profitability or revenue growth.

NO'R: Women sometimes find it difficult to get ahead, whether asking for promotion or improved salaries or simply to be heard at a Zoom meeting. What advice would you give?

AO'L: In relation to salary, I would encourage women to reflect on the work they do, the role they do, and ensure that they are questioning it and ask nicely, 'Where do I fit?' It's a fair question. In meetings, I think the first thing is to ask the people. 'Can I ask you: what am I like in a meeting? When I speak, what do you hear?'

Often we don't ask people how they perceive us. People might say: 'You speak too fast. You make five points instead of one.' And then if they say things like, 'No, I think you make great points', you can say, 'Well, the next time in a meeting, would you acknowledge my points and and say, "That was a very good point" because it would be good for my confidence? Can you help me?' And it changes the whole dynamic of the meeting. It works wonderfully.

NO'R: You're well known as a keen fan of sports, from running to swimming to biking – why is exercise so important to you?



AO'L: For me, it's about my mental and physical wellbeing. I'm in much better form when I do some exercise. In lockdown, every second day, I run 6km. I can get up at half seven, run for 35 minutes, come back, jump in the shower. And I'm at my Zoom all day. And I feel great. It's just to get outdoors, to get those endorphins going. And just to feel good because I lead a huge company and I don't know what I could be hit with every day. You have people that might need help or support. You have issues in the business and I need to be at my best.

Some people like to clean the house on a Saturday from nine to five. My house could fall down; I don't care. I eat anything my husband has to cook because I don't care. I love food, but I'm not going to be cooking all night. I've made those decisions about what makes me work better.

NO'R: What's next for you?

AO'L: Well, at the moment, I've just gone on the Greencore board. So that's exciting and that's a Ftse company. I've also been put on the Vodacom board; that's South Africa and I'm also going to start a coaching course in UCD, in March, so I'm looking forward to that. I'm going to do that and hopefully get a qualification, which I think would help me to be more structured in my leadership, whether from a board perspective or a chief executive perspective. I want to continue to learn and develop. I'm open to different opportunities that come my way.

Anne O'Leary
chief executive
of Vodafone
Ireland: 'I want
to continue
to learn and
develop'
MARC O'SULLIVAN

CATHERINE MARTIN

Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Catherine Martin has a ministerial brief so extensive you'd fear for the designers of her business cards. Deputy Leader of the Green Party since 2011, she is Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Growing up in Carrickmacross in Monaghan, she was drawn to the stage from an early age – as a classically trained singer, she performed around the country; later, as a secondary school teacher of English and music, she served her public on a different platform.

Martin was elected a councillor in 2014, and won a Dáil seat in 2016. She is married to Francis Noel Duffy, also a Green Party TD. The couple have three children together. Martin has long described herself as a collaborator and a team player; in 2017, she founded the Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus in the Oireachtas, a cross-party forum for Irish female parliamentarians, and also pressed for anti-bullying measures in the Leinster House campus. In interviews, she has a combination of smiliness and steeliness that serves her well.

Nadine O'Regan: You entered public life in 2014. What advice would you give to your younger self, knowing what you know now?

Catherine Martin: Mine was a very unpredictable path. I think anyone who went to university with me would have fainted when they saw me being elected in 2016. At university, I was only in the music societies. And yet, everything you experience in life stands to you. I would say: don't be afraid of participating in anything, because you never know what skills will help you. At school I loved to debate – that stands to me in a career in politics.

I taught in a Deis school, in St Tiernan's in Dundrum, and that taught me about inequalities and how I wanted to fight to give everyone a fair chance. Don't be afraid of challenging people. Asking questions is a sign of strength not weakness, so don't be afraid to put the hand up and ask that question. Sometimes, lowering your voice strengthens your argument. Sometimes, the greatest points are made in a quieter voice.

NO'R: Did you have a mentor who was very important for you?

CM: If I was to look to a mentor in my life, it would actually be my parents. They're both deceased now. And unfortunately, when I was elected in 2016, they weren't alive to see it. And my first reaction, when I got elected, was to burst out crying because I missed them there. And because I realised what they had done for me. And it was that equal partnership that they had, and that sense of equality they instilled in us, with two boys and two girls in our family. There was never a question of gender. It was like you can be whatever you aim to be. My mother in particular, advised me and encouraged me never to let failure act as a debilitating experience; never to let it be a reason not to try.

NO'R: Women in politics are often criticised harshly on social media for their appearances on radio and TV. How do you deal with that?

CM: You always have to be prepared. And that moment that you described [of being criticised] can happen to anyone at any time. You have to be conscious of it, never to criticise anyone else, because it can happen to you. There will be hurtful comments. And it will be tough. That's where the support network is important. I would say, if you see that happen to someone else, reach out to them and give them support, because that's what I would seek.

I have my husband, my family and my very close friends who support me. If there's negativity, I turn to that support, who will ground me and remind me of my strengths, as well as everything else. And you have to be prepared to fail. You have to be prepared to learn from failure as well. And you have to dust yourself down very quickly and get on with it. Because it's a job of work to do.

NO'R: There's a tendency by women to think that they should pull the ladder up once they have succeeded, because there's a sense of an invisible quota – how do you react to that?

CM: Yes, and we can never do that. If a woman achieves success, the last thing that she should do is pull the ladder up behind her. The job is to reach out and to encourage more women to join her. So, for example, in Leinster House on my first day in the Dáil in March 2016, there was a lot of jubilation at the time. So many women had been elected, it was the most women ever in the history of Irish general elections.

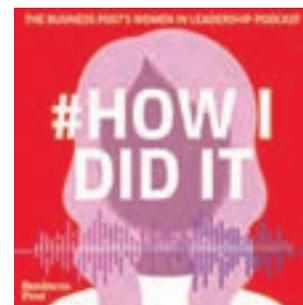
But when I sat in the Dáil that day, I looked around me and I was drowning in a sea of suits. I believe in bringing women together. That's why I founded the Women's Caucus [in 2017], so that you'd have women from all political parties and none working together; to be seen. Our role is to reach out and encourage each other and support each other. The more we're seen, the more young girls will enter that world.

NO'R: What are the most pressing issues for you, in relation to gender in Irish society?

CM: Equal pay. The average Irish woman earns 14.4 per cent less than her male counterparts. We need more diversity: women need to be at the decision-making table. Diversity and representation are crucial to introducing policies and creating a more inclusive workforce. We need more flexible working hours. In politics, voting is still in the evenings. Who makes that decision? You look at the business committee in the Dáil who meet every week. They're all male. It's astounding. It's not family friendly. I'm committed to empowering women to bring up the visibility of women across the board.

NO'R: Can you recommend some strategies to women to help them move forward in their chosen careers?

CM: If you're considering stepping up to do something, then do it. Don't question yourself. There are great organisations there you can reach out to, for encouragement, for example, in the world of politics, Women for Election do fantastic training workshops. Get involved in other ways, in community groups. I always say to women: 'Come and canvas with me. See what it's like.' Find that support network. It's about finding those networks, and not being afraid, but believing in yourself. ■



Episode One of #HowIDidIt: the Business Post's Women in Leadership podcast series with Nadine O'Regan, featuring Anne O'Leary, is available now on podcast platforms including Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google Podcasts. New episodes from the series will be released weekly in March and April



Catherine Martin, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media: 'Women need to be at the decision-making table'

FERGAL PHILLIPS

In an extract from her powerful new book *The Disconnect*, Irish author **Roisin Kiberd** writes about the internet and its shadowy role in shaping her relationships

‘It might not be love that keeps us typing. It might be mutual boredom, or loneliness.’

Roisin Kiberd
TESSY EHIGUESE

My first email to you is dated October 3, 2016. Since then, we've exchanged 1,681 more. In the beginning, threads would drop off after ten or fifteen messages. Then it was twenty, seventy, ninety; layer upon layer of text, links, pictures, in-jokes and, for me at least, unspoken desperation.

I carried your ghost on a screen in my pocket. I think I might even have summoned your tulpa. You existed to me as words, alerts and unread messages, hints and possibilities, and occasional heartbreaking meetings in real life, where I could never bring myself to tell you how I felt.

It wasn't clear where we were going, but I'd write to you with any excuse. We only dated for three months, but we stayed in contact for three years afterwards. During that time, I retreated from the world – I broke down, went into treatment, then I started writing and recovering. I became suspicious of technology, but I couldn't detach from it, not when it was my only means of talking to you.

I found myself trapped in the screen's parameters. I couldn't make the first move; I lacked confidence, even when I was able to hide behind a laptop. But I always wrote back eventually, fuelled by the things I couldn't say: that I was thinking about you, constantly; that I loved you; that all this love had appeared, and I didn't know what to do with it.

Over those three years I tried, and failed, to have relationships with other people, and your messages continued. I'd read one and feel myself swallowed, the world outside the screen falling away. They offered fragile comfort, the suggestion of a future. I made myself lonely, tethered to a device that connects only as it distances. My phone became a tiny casino, an oracle, a source of habit-forming terror and elation. I poured love into hundreds of emails, and hoped you could read in them their hidden meaning.

I have a history of keeping men at a distance, although none of my past online relationships lasted as long as this one. There was the Gchat boyfriend in my late teens, the long-distance relationship in my early twenties, and the Irish guy who lived in another county, whose WhatsApp messages became so constant, and increasingly intrusive, that I deleted my account immediately after we broke up. I downloaded the data first; together we'd produced 304,101 words over three and a half months. Despite so many messages, and so much interaction, it felt like we didn't know each other at all.

There's a danger in gauging someone's feelings for you by their online behaviour, because it might not be love that keeps us typing. It might be mutual boredom, or loneliness. It might even be the platform itself, because apps are engineered to keep us using them.

What if I'm addicted to the medium, and not the message? What if, over all these years, I've been in love with Gmail, or Twitter, or Facebook, and the version of myself these platforms allow me to present?

I've been disheartened by the direction my online relationships have taken; somehow our interests never aligned. Sometimes all the other person wanted was photos, or Skype sex, or meticulously typed-out sexual fantasies. Sometimes it was another kind of fantasy, that of a loving, attentive internet girlfriend, but not one they wanted to meet in real life.

What are the gender politics of online communication? They loom over us; they haunt and warp our interactions. They hide under a veneer of neutrality, the false promise of a level online playing field, where men and women are equal. Somewhere in our past, we were conditioned to accept surveillance as love.

Years ago, I bought a Tamagotchi from a toy shop as an experiment in time, and care, and mediated affection. This was after another of my failed online relationships: after talking to someone online for almost a year, I finally met him in real life, accidentally.

He lived on another continent, and hadn't told me he was visiting Ireland. But now, running into him on a night out with mutual friends, he was suddenly, physically here, and had nothing to say to me. We hugged, awkwardly, and I tried to make small talk, but he gave me a blank look and moved on.

All my life, I've been warned that men would try to use me for sex; I always assumed that the sex in question would be physical. That's not always the case. Men also want a kind of disembodied, digital companionship – the infiltration of a woman's screen, as well as her body.

They want connection, recognition, an ear and a comforting reply, all delivered over the internet, where she can be kept at a safe distance. They want a small, unobtrusive presence in their inbox, one that hints at sex, but which mostly exists for the purpose of making them feel less alone.

Sometimes women want that too. I want that; a rehearsal for love, without ever looking the other person in the eye. I want it against my better nature, because the love I get, and give, on the internet never seems to reach its target. It only leaves me feeling more alone. It becomes neurosis fuel; the email alert, the 'unread', then 'read' and 'unread' button pressed again, so that days later the message still feels shiny and new.

It's the hours or even days I count before I send a reply, because I don't want the recipient to know how much I care. It's the love I carry around and keep to myself, the kind that alienates me from other people, because digital love is a love confounded.

A Tamagotchi grows a year for every day, bypassing the complexities of development. It communicates only the simplest of needs ('I'M HUNGRY', 'LET'S PLAY!') and when these are satisfied it begins to love you. I mourned my failed relationships by raising the Tamagotchi. It hatched from a pulsating egg, and the alerts taught me to pay it attention. Over the days, trained by

its polyphonic beeping, I cultivated tenderness towards a pixelated beast.

Some relationships start as amorphous blobs, then later they grow legs, or turn into monsters. The problem with getting close to someone online is that you're required to remain on the same wavelength; this is patently impossible, a mutual illusion entered into for fun. You might not be in the same time zone. You might not be in the same mood. Sometimes you just have to pretend and go along with conversations, letting the other person speak. Other times all you want is to vent, and all they want is to ask what you're wearing.

Over the years, through online relationships, I allowed messages to take over my life. I composed new ones by the hour and then by the minute, staying up late to talk to someone in a different time zone. I spent my days zombified, drunk on alerts, ignoring real-life conversation. I was as isolated as a Tamagotchi in its little shell.

As with anything requiring consistency, I rapidly began to resent the Tamagotchi. It got out more than I did for walks. It ate a more balanced diet. I envied the ease with which it fell asleep at eight o'clock each night, and I loathed its loud beeping when it woke up precisely twelve hours later. I thought having a Tamagotchi might help me make peace with those lost hours of online flirting. But instead it deceived me into becoming a full-time digital carer, by being needy and adorable, just as its designers intended.

Throughout my history of talking to men on the internet, they have mostly asked for the same things. They want me to listen, to see the two WhatsApp blue ticks or the 'Seen' alert on Facebook. They want to be asked about their day, and consoled, and agreed with. Then, at some point, they want to talk about sex. It's about the chase: hormonal hits from text alerts take the place of real affection. If you conduct a relationship over WhatsApp, then you are going through the motions from the start.

The name 'Tamagotchi', a portmanteau of tamago ('egg'), and uotchi ('watch'), always makes me think of ovulation. As a child, my friends and I were given baby dolls, Barbies, Sims and later Tamagotchis; while some digital pets were designed with a male audience in mind (namely, the Devilgotchi and the Tamahonam Gangster Pet), the Tamagotchi was marketed as a toy for girls: "Initially, Bandai designed the pets to appeal to teenage girls, and to give them a taste of what it is like to care for children."

Children, or men, or our technocapitalist overlords? Those teenage girls will now be closer to middle age, maintaining online profiles as a form of hyper-employment that goes beyond office hours. They remain, as ever, tethered to tiny screens, locked in a permanent third shift which began long ago with a Tamagotchi.

The internet makes it all too easy to morph into an impossible cool girl, who can be all things to all men: waiting for alerts night after night, I kept one foot in life and the other in virtual space. A pet is kept: its owner dictates the world it lives in, instead of its natural habitat. "To call a member of your own species 'a pet' is profoundly insulting," writes philosopher Gary Verner in a paper titled 'Pets, Companion Animals, and Domesticated Partners', addressing the dehumanisation which comes with trying to make somebody live on your own terms.

After bending my life around someone for months only to be blanked in public I felt disposable, like someone had allowed my batteries to run out.

There are no accidents in the digital pet's world; there is only loving care or its inverse, fatal neglect. It disturbs me that when one Tamagotchi dies, another takes its place on the same device's screen.

Before I met you, I thought I was the one who kept the Tamagotchi, that men were a drag on my time, like distant needy animals. Today, I think of the roles as reversed; I'm a digital pet. I'm yours. You can leave me to die if you want, or you can feed me and keep me alive.

One evening, back when we first dated, we sat at a kitchen table in front of Chatroulette. The website was already an old joke by then, a video chat service that pairs users at random. We found it intermittently sordid and boring.

I came down on a train to visit you, in a house on the side of a cliff. I walked up the path carved into its steep side and you came down, in the dark, to meet me halfway. We drank a bottle of wine and had sex on your sofa, then we gravitated to the dark heart of the internet, the land of disembodied appendages, giggling incoherent drunks and bodies with their heads cut off by the camera. Lonely people; it felt almost cruel to visit a site so full of lonely people together.

After clicking around for a while, we started talking to a man from Italy. He was fully clothed; unexpectedly, he seemed to be there purely for the conversation. When he found out we were in Ireland he asked us if we'd read James Joyce. Then he asked what we were doing on Chatroulette, and if we were a couple.

Were we a couple? We'd never talked about it, although we'd been seeing each other casually for two months. I was dazzled by you, but I couldn't assume that I was your girlfriend. A few weeks later we got drunk again, and argued, and stopped seeing each other. But that night, I watched us on screen deflecting the question, laughing awkwardly before switching the laptop off. We were that thing described so often online: "It's complicated."

Communication breeds loneliness. You are always somewhere else, and I am, as ever, alone. ■

The Disconnect: A Personal Journey Through the Internet by Roisin Kiberd is published by *Serpent's Tail*, priced €12.99

Rhythm Nation



Feeka

“All it took was a global pandemic for me to get my act together,” jokes Jack Frimston, the former frontman of indie-pop hopefuls the Tailormade.

When that band broke up, he jammed his way around the United States and Australia before heading home to Britain last year and planning a solo career under the moniker Feeka. Judging from his Manchester-inspired debut single *Portland Street*, it's proved a wise decision.



“Moving to a new city can always be daunting,” Frimston says. “I would wander around Manchester daydreaming, longing to reconcile with a lost love. And that is where *Portland Street* came from. It's essentially a big sad song about rainy cities.”

Here is a playlist of tracks that have inspired Feeka over the years, along with his reasons why.

1. Wet Wet Wet: Goodnight Girl

I guess our first taste of music is through our parents. My father was a huge Marti Pellow fan and *Goodnight Girl* was number one when I was born, so it became one of those special songs. My first ever gig was Dad taking me to Wet Wet Wet at Manchester Apollo and I was in awe of Marti's stage presence. A few years ago, a friend was supporting them and got us free tickets so I took the old man. Everything seems to come full circle in the end.

2. Otis Redding: Try a Little Tenderness

Music has always been a huge part of my life and I remember my mother playing *Try a Little Tenderness* while I danced around the living room. When I was 14, she bought me my first suit and I made her film me in the bathroom singing this song with the tags still on.

3. Bette Midler: Wind Beneath My Wings

I'm a sucker for a sad film and Mum introduced me to *Beaches*, which has a great soundtrack. The standout is this huge ballad sung by Bette Midler, who my mother convinced me was my Jewish aunt. I can't hear *Wind Beneath My Wings* without thinking of Mum – it's one of the most beautiful songs ever written.

4. Jamie T: If You've Got the Money

There was a lad in my drama class when I was 14 called Ramin. I'd never spoken to him, but had seen he played guitar and was a fan of Jamie T. I marched up to him and basically said, “You like Jamie T, I like Jamie T, wanna be mates?” We started my first band called *Bootleg Frimon* and basically became a Jamie T tribute act.

5. Bowling for Soup: Girl All the Bad Guys Want

The first concert I ever went to without a parent was *Bowling for Soup*. These guys were crazy, running round on stage and throwing up in hats like a circus show. I bought myself a *Bowling for Soup* hoodie that I wore to school every day – I still have mates who make jokes about it.

6. Elton John: Tiny Dancer

I've always been a huge fan of Elton John, but somehow I didn't discover this song until I was about 23. I became obsessed with *Tiny Dancer* and played it over and over again – my friend came to stay for a weekend and was begging me to put something else on.

7. Madness: NW5

I was in a band for many years and we got to tour with Madness and the *Lightning Seeds* during the 2018 World Cup. It was a crazy experience as I'd loved Madness when growing up. *NW5* was a song I'd never heard before and it became a bit of an anthem for me and my bandmate Aaron. We'd be at different places in the crowd and run to find each other so we could dance and sing along.

8. Chas & Dave: London Girl

Growing up in London, I loved artists that sang in their real accents. I ransacked Chas & Dave's complete collection. It's real party music. When I was in a band, I really pushed to cover one of their songs and this was it.

9. Willie Nelson: On the Road Again

After the band, I ran off to Australia and had one of the craziest years of my life. I used to look after the music in the place I worked. I'd wake up hungover, play this song on repeat, look out at the beautiful ocean and just feel content.

10. Chris Stapleton: Tennessee Whiskey

After my year in Oz, I got a job as a singer in Miami. They sent me a list of songs to learn and this was like nothing I'd ever heard before. The same day, I was in Liverpool having lunch with my father and a busker on one of those free-to-play pianos performed *Tennessee Whiskey*. I loved singing this song and it opened my eyes to the world of country music.

Feeka's debut single *Portland Street* is available now. To hear his playlist, please search for the *Business Post's* user profile on Spotify



Entertainment

Rising with



Albums

ROCK

Kings of Leon

When You See Yourself (RCA)



Kings of Leon formed in 1999, but it wasn't until the arrival of songs such as *Sex On Fire* and *Use Somebody* that they snagged arena-size attention. There have been diminishing creative (not commercial) returns ever since, with internal conflicts not helping the band's cause. Their first album in five years isn't without its sleek middle-of-the-road virtues, but for the most part it's little more than a casual rehash of archetypal US southern rock that avid fans should love and doubters will dismiss. ★★½

the tide

Steeped in music from an early age, singer/actress Slaney is on a mission to combat the lockdown blues with a healthy dose of pop optimism. Interview: **Andrea Cleary**

Slaney Power has spent her whole life surrounded by music and musicians. Her father, the drummer Niall Power, has appeared in all corners of the Irish music scene, from Bob Geldof's band to Westlife, while her mother, Shelly Power, is also a singer-songwriter.

At 24, the rapidly rising singer and actress – who goes simply by the name Slaney on her records – credits both her parents with giving her an early entry into music.

“There was always music around the house, and it felt very normal to play an instrument,” she says of her upbringing in Tullow in Co Carlow. “I remember my Mam and her guitar, and her teaching me my first chords. They influenced me a lot growing up.”

Having released her debut single in 2019, Slaney is now making breezy, low-key pop tracks, with the aim of lifting spirits during a long lockdown. From an apartment/studio in Kildare, where she collaborates with her writing partner Michael Hopkins (formerly of the band Planet Parade), she has set out on a mission to release a song every month in 2021.

And why not? The pair had enough time on their hands to collaborate, and for Slaney, it's a perfect means of escapism. “It's a tropical-pop sound,” she says, laughing slightly at how foreign the concept of “tropical” is right now. “We figured that we must have been looking for some kind of escape and found that sound. It's about wanting to get away from it all. Wanting to feel good.”

It's an ambitious task, evoking the tropics as we prepare for our second summer stranded on a grey and mild-at-best island, but embracing escapism is important to Slaney; it helps her to remain positive. “Pop music is so important. It helps you connect with feelings of positivity, and it can take you away, out of your situation, even just for a little while.”

The latest release in her project, Chameleon, is a gentle pop-infused track with clean electronic production. The writing process gives a good indication of the kind of spontaneity and sense of play at work between the two collaborators.

“The lyrics came because Micheal came into the room and asked me to say the first word that came into my head, and I just said ‘chameleon’ – it was very random! Through that, we found this story of falling out of love with someone after discovering their true colours. We wanted to keep it upbeat, but when you're working around one word it's interesting to see what comes out of it.”

This is Slaney's fifth single, and with another ten on the way before the end of the year, is there an album in the near future? “An album is something I would

definitely like to work on at some stage,” she says.

In addition to a burgeoning music career, Slaney has also been making waves in the world of acting. Last year, she appeared in the BBC and Hulu production of *Normal People*, adapted from Sally Rooney's bestselling novel. The show was a zeitgeist-defining moment in Irish television, with record-breaking numbers of viewers tuning in week by week, and controversial conversations taking over our national airwaves regarding the sexually explicit content of the series. It was also her first professional role.

“I had been doing short films and things like that, but this was the first time I was cast in a role in a big production,” she says, excitedly. “I couldn't believe it when I found out. You go for so many roles and never hear anything back, so you just have to get used to that – sending your self-tape and then forgetting about it. So when I got the email to say that I had been offered the part [of Sophie, a student at Trinity], it just felt crazy.”

“I was a huge fan of the book. To be part of that story in any way made me so happy.”

As she embarks on a career in two separate areas of the arts, I wonder if she is tempted to go all-in on one or the other. Would acting need to be on hold, for example, if her music career takes off?

“With acting, you never know when you're going to get your next role, so you can end up having a lot of time between jobs,” she says. “I use that time to work on music. It keeps me occupied, and the two seem to balance each other out.”

This coming year will see her balancing act continue. As well as releasing music, Slaney will also appear in the highly anticipated adaptation of Isaac Asimov's Foundation, the seminal science-fiction book series. The adaptation, produced by Apple TV and starring Jared Harris (*Chernobyl*, *The Crown*) and Lee Pace (*The Hobbit*), is due to be released this autumn and is sure to see Slaney's star rising further.

“We filmed it last year on a huge set,” she says. “It was a completely different experience to *Normal People*, which was on location.”

The set was part of Limerick's Troy Studios, Ireland's largest production facility, and saw more than 500 people in Ireland employed across all areas of the production. In fact, Foundation is set to be one of Ireland's largest ever productions.

Two years, and two roles in huge productions; but Slaney is quick to assure me that there is a lot of failures hidden in the life of an actor. “There's a lot of rejection, and you go for so many parts that you don't get. But the way I see it is that the part that you do get makes up for everything.” ■

Chameleon is available to stream now

Slaney: ‘Pop music is so important. It helps you connect with feelings of positivity, and it can take you away, out of your situation, even just for a little while’

Reviews by **Tony Clayton-Lea**

ELECTRO-POP/DANCE

Zara Larsson
Poster Girl (Epic)

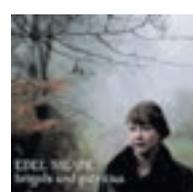


Although she's 23, Sweden's Zara Larsson is no ingénue – she released her debut single at the age of 10. Since then, she has become a Scandinavian teenage pop sensation and advanced across the globe with an impressive series of hits. Judging by the evidence presented on *Poster Girl* (her third album), that commercial run won't stop any time soon. It's as banger-friendly as a barbecue on *Guy Fawkes Night*, making resistance to earworm tracks such as *What Happens Here*, *WOW* and *Stick With You* completely futile.

★★★

FOLKLORE/SPOKEN WORD

Edel Meade
Brigids and Patricias (self-released)

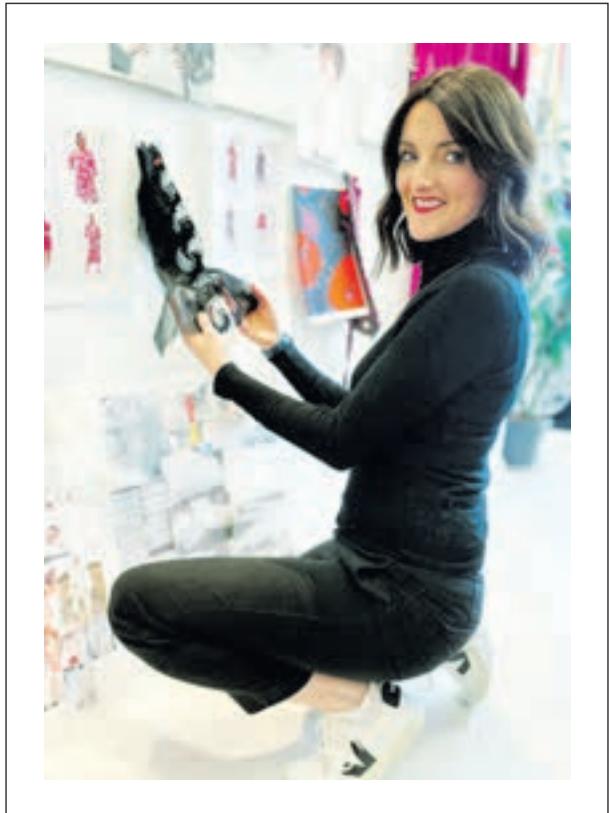


With a grounding in jazz composition, Tipperary native Edel Meade spent part of 2018 singing in Spanish in Cuba, and then made a decision to (in her words), “connect with traditional Irish music and figure out what it means to be an Irish woman living in Ireland, informed by historical events, Irish folklore and contemporary society”. The result is a suite of songs intuitively underscored not only by found sounds, samples and prose, but also by a fearless delivery that celebrates womanhood.

★★★★½



Style: 818/S
 Sizes: 8-16
 €246



Fiona Heaney: 'I don't tend to sit still, I'm always sketching'

OPTIMISM IN

The lockdown has liberated designers to create more versatile pieces - and Fiona Heaney's Fee G SS21 collection is what wanderlust dreams are made of, writes **Mary Cate Smith**

Knitting might not be the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of your family's patriarch, but for Fiona Heaney, it's one of her fondest memories. While she was at home sick from school one day, her grandad brought out his knitting needles and taught her the plain and purl. The creative streak ran in both sides of her family; her aunt was a painter, her grandmother, a dab hand at needlecraft, her father drew as a hobby. "I don't tend to sit still. I'm always sketching, making or crafting and I can see that following through in my own kids," she says.

So, it was no surprise when a young Heaney went to the National College of Art and Design to study fashion design. A mecca of trailblazers in a pre-smartphone era, NCAD has alumni of international calibre: treasured heritage designer Orla Kiely and Alexander McQueen menswear designer Daniel Kearns, to name just two. While technology hadn't permeated into the university landscape at that time, the focus was on craftsmanship and skill. "We certainly wouldn't have been using electronics. Even pattern is graded on a computer now, but back then, everything was done by hand," Heaney says.

An asymmetric art-school fringe and a perm later, she graduated with a first-class honours degree in fashion design. She cut her teeth designing for David Jones in Australia. Keen to increase her business acumen, she returned home and took up a position as a buyer with a major retailer. This, however, was not for her. "I really missed hands-on fashion; designing fabrics



Style: 815/S Sizes: 8-16 €249



Style: 816/S Sizes: 8-18 €168



Style: 817/S Sizes: 8-16 €238

SARTORIAL FORM



Style: 7463/212
Sizes: 8-18
€243

“**I really missed hands-on fashion: designing fabrics and colours was much more me**”

and colours was much more me,” she says.

Were it not for a gentle push from her husband, Heaney may not have started her eponymous label in 2003. Fee G, in its first iteration, offered stylish occasion wear, producing collections twice a year for the boutique market.

Coming from a technology background, Heaney’s husband Don Gormley (the G in Fee G) pointed out that she was equipped with the skills to start her own label.

“He said: ‘You’ve proven that you can commercially design fashion that checks out at retail. The most important thing is that you have a customer and you have that.’”

Heaney’s vision is clear: bright prints and clearly defined colours. Her clothes are optimism in sartorial form.

Fee G produces up to 80 pieces a season, and the new spring/summer 2021 collection is reflecting our new normal. Silhouettes are less tailored, more versatile. Most of the dresses can be paired with trainers and a denim jacket or dressed up with heels and a blazer, Heaney tells me.

“We’re softer: longer in length, less restricted, more free. I was thinking of Paris and Milan; of nature and museums and galleries.”

Heaney designed her new collection in the guest bedroom of her house in Sandymount in Dublin 4, on account of Covid-19 restrictions. “I put so much into this collection,” she says. “I wanted to make it the brightest and most creative collection I had done in years.”

Pre-Covid-19, Heaney attended several workshops on making her brand more sustainable. She shies away from throwaway fabrics, favouring silks, viscose and naia (recycled polyester made from plastic bottles).

Heaney is shipping her autumn/winter collection to agents and buy-

ers as we speak. Her daughter is a great help, putting on swing tickets and creating barcodes. Her sons help out too.

“It’s important that your kids see how hard you work,” she says. “I don’t think it does them any harm at all.” Hard work truly does run in this family. ■

The new collection from Fee G is available online at Arnotts, Feeg.ie, Jonzara.com and selected boutiques nationwide



Style: 7456/202
Sizes: 8-18
€308

Wine ratings

This is the international marking system for wine ratings. The 100-point scale works on a percentile, not a percentage scale, which is based on the US educational grading system.

95-100: exceptional, of world-class quality
90-94: very good quality
88-89: average but lacks greatness
85-87: average to modest
80-84: below average
70-79: poor
Below 70: unacceptable quality

Recognising Riesling as the real deal

March 13 is Riesling's official birthday, which gives us a chance to reassess a much misunderstood grape



Cathal McBride

Riesling is one of the world's most widely grown and recognised grapes. First mentioned in a document as long ago as 1435, it's been given an official birthday of March 13 by the trade group Wines of Germany.

So, with the special day approaching, what better time to revisit a variety that's often misunderstood, and offer some suggestions for your table?

I have previously written about how as a child, Le Piat d'Or was the height of sophistication in my house. Readers of a certain vintage will also recall the other exotic wine option available back then, Blue Nun.

Up until the late 1990s, it was classed as a Liebfraumilch, so packed full of residual sugar that it was too cheap and sweet for the domestic German market and produced almost entirely for export. To put this into context, a Liebfraumilch was required to contain at least 70 per cent Riesling.

First impressions can have long-term impacts, positive and negative. Some Irish people were put off rosé



A worker harvesting Riesling grapes above the river Mosel in Germany

GETTY

by the experience of saccharine and cloyingly over-produced Californian examples. Thankfully, that changed when we got to taste light, fruity and dry rosés from France and elsewhere in the New World.

The same is true of Riesling. I am still often asked if this is a sweet wine, and it can be – but it has the potential to make bone-dry wines too.

Riesling is easily identifiable from its tall and slender bottle shape with drooping shoulders. Originating from the Alsace and Mosel, it's unclear why this shape was designed, but one theory is that it allowed for more bottles to be stacked in the boats that transported them along the Rhine.

While the best modern Rieslings come from Germany, you can also buy many quality ones from the Alsace, Austria, New Zealand (check out Pegasus Bay) and the United States.

O'Brien's has a fine example of what's being produced on the west coast of the US, in the shape of Château Ste Michelle Riesling, 2019 (obrienswine.ie, €16.68) from Washington. Off dry with a slightly steely, mineral and citrus nose, this has refreshing notes of pear and a good finish.

Elsewhere in O'Briens, the Robert Weil Riesling Trocken 2019 (obrienswine.ie, €24.55) comes from the German Rheingau (which literally means Rhine district). It is dry in style with a slight effervescence (not a fault), which can happen in bottle fermentation.

Containing kiwifruit and pineapple on the nose, with good acidity and a green apple finish, this is a suitable match to savoury foods.

The fertile, rich and mountainous Rheingau offers a distinct terroir that grows almost 80 per cent of Germa-

ny's Riesling grapes. Another excellent example, meanwhile, is Schumann Nagler Riesling Kabinett 2018 (wh2gwines.ie, €18.90). With aromas of sour sweets, this is dry with excellent minerality. It has notes of Conference pear, lip-smacking acidity and a long, thoughtful finish.

Austria is also producing some fine Rieslings. One such vineyard is Weingut Türk, which I mentioned a few weeks back when describing how it places labels at the base of its bottles.

Weingut Türk's elegant Riesling has a stunning golden colour with meadowy aromas, benefiting from the terroir's high altitude and cool autumns. The Türk Riesling Kremser Weinberge 2018 is a seriously dry variety, with ample acidity and refreshing notes of acacia honey and melon (Whelehans Wines, whelehanswines.ie, €22). ■

TO TRY, BUY AND PUT BY

To try

Weingut Max Ferd. Richter Veldenzer Eisenberg, Riesling Kabinett, 2018 (ABV 9 per cent), 91

Coming from 50-year-old vines grown in a formerly abandoned Mosel riverbed and immediately from the cork, you know there is something a little different here. It is enchantingly perfumed, with floral and honey aromas, notes of lemon curd, good minerality and a lasting finish. This would be ideal with spicy Asian dishes or sushi.

Available from 64 Wine (64wine.ie), The Corkscrew (thecorkscrew.ie), SIYPS (www.siyps.com), Mitchell & Son (mitchellandson.com), Redmonds Ranelagh (redmonds.ie), Wine Upstairs (wineupstairs.ie), €24



To buy

The Wine Buff Pierre Henri Ginglinger Ollwiller Grand Cru Riesling, 2016 (ABV 12.5 per cent), 91

Emanating from southern Alsace, this has beautiful, intoxicating aromas of lemon sherbet and apricot jam. Not entirely bone dry, its notes of fresh apples and pears offer the illusion of sweetness which is counteracted by lively, racy acidity. A thought-provoking and extended finish makes it an excellent pairing with oysters or other shellfish.

Available from The Wine Buff off-licences nationwide (thewinebuff.com), €31.99



To put by

Steininger Riesling Reserve Sekt, 2017 (ABV 13.5 per cent), 90

For something a little different in this category, how about sparkling wine? Sekt is the German word for sparkling wines made in Germany and Austria. This example fulfils a dream that Kurt Steininger had after a trip to Champagne. Using only Riesling from Premier Cru vineyards, it is made in the traditional Champagne style with honeydew melon, toast and vegetal aromas. Dry with citrus and white peach notes, it's a good accompaniment to fish and chips.

Available from Wines Direct, Mullingar (winesdirect.ie), €39.25



Wine

WATCHING THE PENNIES

Starter: cucumber, mint and feta green salad, €8
Main course: ravioli of ricotta and roasted onion squash, €18

Dessert: Ryan's rhubarb set vanilla custard with lemon curd and blood orange shortbread, €8

Wine: Escencia Davina, Albarino 2019, €22

Dinner for two: €90

BREAKING THE BANK

Snacks: Bread 41 seeded sourdough, smoked cultured butter, smoked almonds and nocellera olives

Starter: roast carrot and nduja salad with carrot mousse, fennel, pickled raisins and walnut dukkah

Main course: côte de boeuf with cep butter, pressed potato, Irish shiitakes and red wine jus

Dessert: 'Ferrero Rocher' salted caramel parfait, rolled in hazelnut dacquoise then dipped in milk chocolate

Set menu for two: €78

Wine: Château Castera, Medoc 2015, €50

Dinner for two: €128



Chef Niall O'Sullivan & Richie Barrett of Bang Cafe

FERGAL PHILLIPS

Bang sets out its stall with a range of fine dining options



Gillian Nelis

@gnelis

Bang
11 Merrion Row, Dublin 2
01-4004229, bangrestaurant.com
Collections from the restaurant,
delivery available within a certain area
Chef: Niall O'Sullivan

It's a Sunday evening, and Christmas has come early – or late, depending on how you look at it – to our house.

No, we haven't lost the plot and put the decorations up again, but we are sitting on the couch groaning happily as we digest a particularly fine meal. We are also, about ten minutes after declaring that we were so full we'd never eat again, digging into dessert.

It came, like the rest of our dinner, from Bang on Merrion Row in Dublin city centre, and it comprised

a chocolate spelt brownie base that had been topped first with chocolate mousse, then with a salted chocolate ganache. How could you not eat that? It'd be a crime against humanity.

There's a particularly good range of options to take home from Bang: meal kits that you finish at home, hot dishes that are ready to eat, and set menus for occasions like Mother's Day, along with wines and cocktails. We'd gone for the set menu for €50 a head, and if there's one thing you won't be after eating it, it's hungry.

Snacks of Bread 41 sourdough, smoked cultured butter made in the Bang kitchen, smoked almonds and coppa with pickles were substantial, but the two starters that followed were beautifully light.

A salad of Kilkee crab meat was

topped with togarashi, a Japanese spice mix made with sesame seeds, orange peel and seaweed, among other elements. Later, O'Sullivan tells me that he upped the citrus and seaweed elements in the mix for this dish; it worked wonderfully with the horseradish and pickled apple that were also in there.

Another pickle, this time of quince, was a highlight of the second starter of Iona Farm beetroot from north Co Dublin, stracciatella, watercress and chicory.

A huge amount of work had gone into this simple-looking dish, with the beetroot cooked with a raw honey and apple vinegar, and that gorgeous quince slow-cooked for five hours before being pickled.

From the light to the indulgent, in the shape of a main course of trian-goli filled with Parmesan fondue, and served with Jerusalem artichokes, a sauce of shallots, thyme and crème fraîche, and a wild garlic oil. It was richer than Bill Gates, and worth every calorie.

It's hard to argue with O'Sullivan's claim that Peter Hannan's beef is "the best in Ireland". The fillet he'd used in the other main course just needed searing and heating before being served with a red wine and Irish shiitake jus, pressed potato and mushroom ketchup. When meat tastes this good, the simpler it's cooked the better.

With the snacks, starters and dessert coming ready to eat, this is a good takeaway option for anyone who doesn't fancy doing much cooking – or any cooking at all, if you opt for the ready-to-eat choices.

I've already got my eye on the slow-cooked beef shortrib with wild garlic risotto and a salsify salad from that list. Dinner for two was €100; collection is from the restaurant, with home delivery available within a certain radius. ■



The wine list

Bang has assembled a compact but quality collection of 17 wines ranging in price from €18 to €80, although they are not displayed brilliantly on the website. There's no separation into red and white categories, for example, nor is there any information about any of the bottles bar the basics of region, vintage and price.

This is a shame, as there are some excellent food-matching wines available on this list. Both the Borsao Rubick Blanco 2018 (€18) and the Escencia Diviña Albariño 2019 (€22) are decent

choices from the white selection. But I reckon a sauvignon blanc, particularly one from the Loire, would be a good all-round match for the starters as well as the pasta main course. So my white pick is the Domaine Reverdy Cadet Les Chanterelles Sancerre 2019 (€30), which would have lively citrus notes and refreshing acidity.

For red, I am staying decidedly classic, and opting for the good-value Bordeaux blend of merlot, cabernet sauvignon and petit verdot in the Château Sainte-Marie Alios 2016 (€22). Its dark fruit and silky smooth tannins would be ideal with this delicious piece of beef, along with all the accompaniments and red wine sauce.

Rating:
★★★

Cathal McBride

UP TO €400 OF ON-BOARD CREDIT PER CABIN
ON SELECTED RIVER CRUISES*

RIVER CRUISES
FROM
€709PP



Discover Europe's most fascinating destinations on a spectacular river cruise

Riviera Travel's award-winning river cruises include everything you need for an exceptional experience. Cruise Europe's most beautiful waterways aboard the finest ships, featuring superb dining on board and spacious suites and cabins – many with a French balcony for unrivalled views. Choose from 19 fascinating river cruises that take you to the iconic highlights as well as lesser-known gems in destinations such as Cologne, Trier, Koblenz, Heidelberg, Strasbourg, Basel, Lucerne, the Douro Valley, Vienna, Budapest, Amsterdam, Avignon, Arles, Bruges, Paris or Rouen.

SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

- Fascinating tours and excursions with expert guides
- The services of our experienced cruise director and concierge
- Return flights, plus all hotel transfers
- Spacious and beautifully appointed suites or cabins with hotel-style beds and river views
- All meals on board including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner

River Cruise	Duration	From
Enchanting Rhine & Yuletide Markets	5 days	€709PP
The Danube's Imperial Cities & Yuletide Markets	6 days	€819PP
Amsterdam, Kinderdijk & the Dutch Bulbfields	5 days	€989PP
Rhine Cruise to Switzerland	8 days	€1,949PP
Rhine & Moselle	8 days	€2,009PP
Rhine, Strasbourg & Heidelberg	8 days	€1,909PP
The Blue Danube – Vienna, Budapest & Salzburg	8 days	€1,849PP
Vienna, Bohemia & Treasures of the Danube	8 days	€1,849PP
Burgundy, the River Rhône & Provence	8 days	€1,879PP
Bruges, Medieval Flanders, Amsterdam & the Dutch Bulbfields	8 days	€1,809PP
The Seine, Paris & Normandy	8 days	€2,479PP
The Douro, Porto & Salamanca	8 days	€1,919PP
Medieval Germany	8 days	€2,119PP
Budapest to The Black Sea – Gems of Eastern Europe	15 days	€3,379PP
Cruise the Heart of Europe	15 days	€3,359PP
Christmas on the Rhine	8 days	€2,059PP
Christmas on the Blue Danube	8 days	€2,009PP
New Year on the Rhine	6 days	€1,519PP
New Year on the Blue Danube	6 days	€1,459PP



For more information or to request a brochure:
Call **01 905 6313** | Visit **www.sbpriviera.ie**

Holidays organised and operated by Riviera Travel, Chase House, City Junction Business Park, Malahide Road, Northern Cross, Dublin 17 (ATOL number 3430). A company independent of The Sunday Business Post, whose booking conditions apply. Prices are based on two sharing a twin room subject to availability. Single rooms and optional insurance available at a supplement. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Additional entrance costs may apply. Price correct at time of print. *See website for full terms and conditions.





Muslims praying at Mecca in Saudi Arabia: Islam and its adherents face many prejudices in the modern world GETTY

A convincing and cogent analysis of Islamic identity



NIAMH DONNELLY

“Close your eyes and imagine a terrorist. What do you see? A dark-skinned, ‘Muslim-looking’ man? Of course you do. We’ve been conditioned to think like this, to subscribe to the western archetype of what a terrorist is supposed to look like.”

In this meticulously researched and thought-provoking book, Manchester solicitor and human rights activist Tawseef Khan lays out an utterly convincing treatise on Muslim identity. It concerns not only Islamophobia from outside Muslim communities, but also the religious dogma within them.

The title is deliberately pitched to sound derogatory. It sounds like an anti-immigration slogan, but has an obvious double meaning. Are we talking about the problem of Muslims, or the problem for Muslims? Herein lies the book’s central tension. A perceived problem of Muslims is undeniably a problem for Muslims, true or not.

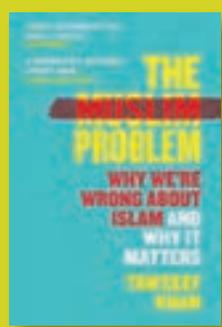
Each chapter is named after a slur: ‘Muslims Don’t Integrate’, ‘Islam is Violent’, ‘Muslim Men are Threatening’, ‘Islam Hates Women’, ‘Islam is Homophobic’. Khan untangles each with patience, clarity and intrigue.

He defines Islamophobia as “a type of racism which

NON-FICTION

The Muslim Problem: Why We’re Wrong About Islam and Why It Matters

By Tawseef Khan
Atlantic Books, €17.55



targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”, and shows how it has wormed its way into our collective psyche. He also explains the ways in which Islamophobia has been used as a tool of oppression for political gain.

“This is how it always works,” we are told. “Mainstream politicians launder Islamophobic discourse, making it palatable for the masses, believing it will aid their chances of seizing or sustaining power.”

Even readers who consider themselves sympathetic and well informed should find food for thought in the depth of analysis Khan offers. 9/11 is used as a touchstone throughout, reminding us that “one of the less talked about legacies of that catastrophic moment in American history is the transformation of every single Muslim person into a potential terrorist”. The subsequent “war on terror” – even this shorthand reads like an oxymoron – has had a crippling effect on Muslims’ lives.

Topics such as the European Enlightenment (which, Khan argues, “marked the secularisation of Christian prejudice”), “counter-radicalisation” programmes (and the racism inherent within them), the Salman Rushdie controversy (and how Muslims were “victim-blamed” for the fatwa) and more are used to bolster his case that “the growing appetite for anti-Muslim hatred has very little to do with Muslims.” Instead, he believes, it represents “a growing anxiety around western identity”.

If this sounds overly polemical, it’s important to note that the book’s defining characteristics are humanity and hope. Some of its most affecting parts describe the experiences of real people. We are told of one 26-year-old gay Muslim, for example, who died of HIV after concealing it from his friends and family. “His death,” Khan points out, “was almost entirely due to internalised shame.”

This chapter in particular (‘Islam is Homophobic’) illuminates what’s so impressive about *The Muslim Problem*. Khan leans into difficult arguments.

He takes what previously might have seemed like full stops in debate and opens them wide. The “we” voice throughout is important. One is not Muslim or western, Muslim or homosexual – humans are many things at once.

Ultimately, the book works because it is not a bow to the status quo, but a thoughtful look at why certain prejudices exist and how we can change them.

Khan writes that he is “willing to get [his] hands dirty in the work of dismantling racist structures”, balancing conflicting ideals while staying true to both his faith (he is a practising Muslim) and his personal beliefs. The reader (who, let’s not forget, might come from a multitude of faiths and backgrounds) trusts him because of this.

Interestingly, *The Muslim Problem*’s acknowledgements section hints at its possible effects. Khan thanks “Black feminist thought, which has done so much for my political consciousness and my ability to understand and articulate the language of justice”.

In other words, discourse works. Movements speak to movements and there is power in arming people with the language they need to seek equality. ■

A critical analysis of the IRA's leading role in the Troubles



PAT RABBITTE

How many people under 50 are aware that before the Troubles, most of the Catholic community's substantive demands had been conceded due to the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA)? This is a historical fact that runs counter to the more common narrative that "the war" was necessary because of the oppression of "the nationalist people".

Formed in early 1967, NICRA was, as Liam Kennedy's book puts it, a coalition of forces "composed of radical younger nationalists impatient for change, a smattering of reform-minded unionists, republicans (old and new style) and a small but active gaggle of communists and socialists".

In keeping with the temper of the time, NICRA was not just "channelling deeply held grievances within the Catholic and nationalist community", but also influenced by the civil rights movement sweeping the United States. Its success in winning reforms throughout 1968 and 1969 from a reluctant Stormont government "resulted in a spectacular series of changes".

In the opinion of Kennedy, emeritus professor of history at Queens University Belfast, "more might well have followed".

Kennedy's list of the civil rights movement's successes includes:

- The abolition of the discredited, unionist-controlled Londonderry Corporation.
- "One man, one vote" universal adult voting rights in local government elections.
- Housing reform, based on a fairer points-based system for the allocation of public homes.
- An agreement that the Special Powers Act would be abolished once security conditions permitted.
- The sacking of the hardline Stormont home affairs minister William Craig.
- An outside head of the RUC and the Hunt Committee set up to consider policing reforms.
- Local government electoral boundaries to be drawn up by an independent commission.

Although its achievements over such a brief period were remarkable, NICRA does not escape critical analysis. Kennedy also rolls out what he calls his "parade of candidates" to answer the book title's question:



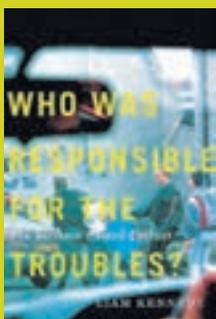
British soldiers on patrol in Belfast: almost 4,000 people lost their lives during the Troubles

HISTORY

Who Was Responsible for the Troubles?: The Northern Ireland Conflict

By Liam Kennedy

McGill - Queen's University Press, €26.95



"Who was responsible for the Troubles?"

His possible culprits include the Orange state, the security forces, the Ulster Unionist Party, the DUP and Paisley-ism, the Official IRA, the Irish state, the loyalist paramilitaries, the British state and the main churches.

Each in turn is scrutinised over its culpability for the catastrophe that followed. None gets an entirely free pass and even history itself ("the conflict of ethnicity, nationality, religion and culture in these islands goes deep in time") is examined.

Having weighed the evidence with scrupulous care, Kennedy's unavoidable answer "must be that the Provisional IRA was primarily responsible for the direction, methods of engagement, scale and, above all, the longevity of the Troubles".

This conclusion is arrived at after assessing the varying "justifications" advanced by Sinn Féin when defending the "armed struggle".

It was not a quest for social justice, because the key reforms

in housing, local government and voting had been conceded "by the time the Provisional IRA went on the offensive".

It wasn't communal defence, an "almost wholly mythical conception, which is why the same few examples from 1969/70 tend to be recycled in republican and loyalist narratives".

In Kennedy's view, the "simple and incontrovertible fact is that Sinn Féin and its 'cutting edge', the IRA, sought to coerce the Protestants and unionists of the north into an enlarged nationalist state". The sanitised version that Provisional IRA violence "was little more than a continuation of the campaign for civil rights by other means" simply does not bear historical scrutiny.

Almost 4,000 people lost their lives. Almost 40,000 were maimed or injured.

American experts have claimed that those traumatised by the conflict make up most of Northern Ireland's near-4,000 suicide victims since the Good Friday Agreement.

"Town centres were blasted; civilians were placed at risk; children were exploited as part of the armed struggle; suspects were tortured and sometimes disappeared; opponents were executed... this was communal power with a vengeance."

Perhaps the next study for a historian should be "What was it all for?" By way of contrast, Kennedy notes that the Irish Women's Liberation Movement was founded at roughly the same time as the Provisional IRA and looks at the major reforms that feminists "carried off triumphantly".

As Seamus Mallon sardonically summarised it, the achievements of the "long war" were effectively "Sunningdale for slow learners" - with, of course, the principle of consent enshrined in international law.



Lauren Oyler: has she written the first great novel about social media?

Mischievous satire in the age of social media

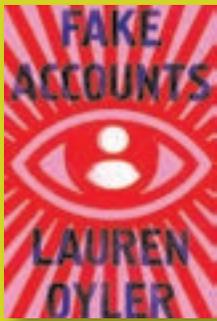


ANDREA CLEARY

Sally Rooney has been called - rather annoyingly for other writers, one presumes - "the first great millennial author". Perhaps this is true, and Rooney's novels in which not much happens plot-wise, but a lot happens character-wise to sometimes unlikeable but fashionably "relatable" people is the push which modern fiction (led, let's be honest, by women) has

FICTION

Fake Accounts
By Lauren Oyler
4th Estate, €15



needed. While politicising about “intellectual” topics such as Marxism, class and feminism has become a signifier of the millennial voice, there has not yet been a book that captures the internet’s stranglehold on the last generation who remember a world without smartphones.

Lauren Oyler’s *Fake Accounts* might well be the first great novel written about social media, not as a background feature or communication tool, but as a critical lens for analysing the modern self. Oyler, herself a young, white millennial whose byline has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times* and the *Cut*, is a skilful and biting critic of these aforementioned literary trends.

Here, the unnamed protagonist is cut from a similar cloth. She is a writer too, for content farms and shock-click forums (Oyler was once an editor with *Broadly*, a now-defunct website featuring articles on gender and identity). She mines her everyday life and relationships for copy, constantly berating herself over her online presence which, like many women of her generation, she finds both necessary and embarrassing.

In the opening pages, she decides to snoop through her boyfriend Felix’s smartphone while he is asleep and discovers that he has been running a successful, anonymous Instagram account which spreads fatuous conspiracy theories. She decides to break up with him (we suspect this has been coming for a while anyway).

Before she gets the chance, however, and while attending the Women’s March in Washington after Donald Trump’s 2016 election victory, she receives a phone call from Felix’s mother informing her that he has died in a road accident.

Our narrator decides to move to Berlin, the city where she first met Felix. She begins playing with her own invented narratives, joining the dating site OKCupid and telling a different story to each person she encounters.

Why is *Fake Accounts* so enjoyable? First, it’s the brilliant writing. Oyler is unafraid of long sentences – in fact, she hurls them at you, daring you to look away. In one chapter she parodies the fractious novel form through fragmented snapshots of a series of dates, inventing personalities based on each sign of the zodiac.

“What’s amazing about this structure is that you can just dump any material you have in here and leave it up to the reader to connect it to the rest of the work,” she writes, holding masters of this modern genre by the jugular.

What’s more, *Fake Accounts* is deeply funny. Its literary structure is punctuated by the kind of snappy observations that go viral on Twitter and serious questions about how we form identities online. Oyler’s sharp political and personal humour shines through, highly individual yet wholly relatable.

This protagonist is bored by other people. She struggles to make friends or form deep connections because, in truth, she is more interested in herself. She is outwardly unreadable, and what a joy it is to be allowed access to her inner thoughts precisely for this reason.

Fake Accounts is not, as its blurb might have you believe, a mystery-drama that delves into the darker side of internet conspiracy theories. I’m hesitant to even call it an “investigation” into the topic of inventing the self, for the fear that this would sound stuffy or like too many other novels.

Fake Accounts is, for now at least, a one-of-a-kind voice telling a universal story, unburdened by any sense of literariness and basking in the joy of its own language. It’s essential reading for anyone who fears our new, tech-driven society, if only to offer a moment of respite from its actual, world-forming seriousness.

needed.

While politicising about “intellectual” topics such as Marxism, class and feminism has become a signifier of the millennial voice, there has not yet been a book that captures the internet’s stranglehold on the last generation who remember a world without smartphones.

Lauren Oyler’s *Fake Accounts* might well be the first great novel written about social media, not as a background feature or communication tool, but as a critical

lens for analysing the modern self. Oyler, herself a young, white millennial whose byline has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times* and the *Cut*, is a skilful and biting critic of these aforementioned literary trends.

Here, the unnamed protagonist is cut from a similar cloth. She is a writer too, for content farms and shock-click forums (Oyler was once an editor with *Broadly*, a now-defunct website featuring articles on gender and identity). She mines her everyday life and relationships for copy, constantly berating herself over her online presence which, like many women of her generation, she finds both necessary and embarrassing.

In the opening pages, she decides to snoop through her boyfriend Felix’s smartphone while he is asleep and discovers that he has been running a successful, anonymous Instagram account which spreads fatuous conspiracy theories. She decides to break up with him (we suspect this has been coming for a while anyway).

Before she gets the chance, however, and while attending the Women’s March in Washington after Donald Trump’s 2016 election victory, she receives a phone call from Felix’s mother informing her that he has died in a road accident.

Our narrator decides to move to Berlin, the city where she first met Felix. She begins playing with her own invented narratives, joining the dating site OKCupid and telling a different story to each person she encounters.

Why is *Fake Accounts* so enjoyable? First, it’s the brilliant writing. Oyler is unafraid of long sentences – in fact, she hurls them at you, daring you to look away. In one chapter she parodies the fractious novel form through fragmented snapshots of a series of dates, inventing personalities based on each sign of the zodiac.

“What’s amazing about this structure is that you can just dump any material you have in here and leave it up to the reader to connect it to the rest of the work,” she writes, holding masters of this modern genre by the jugular.

What’s more, *Fake Accounts* is deeply funny. Its literary structure is punctuated by the kind of snappy observations that go viral on Twitter and serious questions about how we form identities online. Oyler’s sharp political and personal humour shines through, highly individual yet wholly relatable.

This protagonist is bored by other people. She struggles to make friends or form deep connections because, in truth, she is more interested in herself. She is outwardly unreadable, and what a joy it is to be allowed access to her inner thoughts precisely for this reason.

Fake Accounts is not, as its blurb might have you believe, a mystery-drama that delves into the darker side of internet conspiracy theories. I’m hesitant to even call it an “investigation” into the topic of inventing the self, for the fear that this would sound stuffy or like too many other novels.

Fake Accounts is, for now at least, a one-of-a-kind voice telling a universal story, unburdened by any sense of literariness and basking in the joy of its own language. It’s essential reading for anyone who fears our new, tech-driven society, if only to offer a moment of respite from its actual, world-forming seriousness.



Adam Grant’s new book is light on Eureka moments, but otherwise thought-provoking

BRET HARTMAN/TED

Why changing your mind is often the clever thing to do



ANDREW LYNCH

Eamon Dunphy is happy to admit that he has changed position on one or two issues over the years. “Consistencies are the hobgoblin of the mediocre mind,” the outspoken pundit declared in a recent interview, quoting the poet Patrick Kavanagh.

“Consistency is an overrated thing, unless you’re a liar . . . not with regard to values or principles, but certainly with regard to opinions and your responses to people.”

According to Adam Grant’s wise but faintly underwhelming new book, Dunphy is bang on target. No matter how intelligent you are, the University of Pennsylvania psychologist warns, you will struggle in life without the ability to challenge your assumptions and learn from mistakes.

Think Again is his invitation to “let go of knowledge that is no longer serving you well... and anchor your sense of self in flexibility instead.”

If Malcolm Gladwell is king of the popular social science genre, then Grant must be at least mid-ranking aristocracy. His CV is an impressive litany of academic awards, Ted talks and commendations from the likes of Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey.

His previous bestsellers include *Option B*, a study of bereavement co-written with the Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg who had suddenly lost her husband.

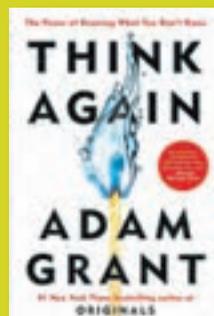
At first glance, Grant’s latest subject seems a little flimsy. In his genial introduction, however, he convincingly argues that pig-headed thinking is an age-old problem made worse by 21st-century trends.

Social media is the obvious culprit, over-simplifying debates,

PSYCHOLOGY

Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know

By Adam Grant
WH Allen, €21



locking us into binary positions and encouraging us to hang giant “Do not disturb” signs on our brains.

As usual with this kind of lecture in book form, Grant makes his points through case studies or “teachable moments”. One of the most sobering revolves around Mike Lazaridis, who created the BlackBerry and led his company to reach a value of \$70 billion by 2008.

Unfortunately he also suffered from what Grant calls “founder syndrome”, the conviction that an early success means you can do no wrong. Lazaridis scoffed at the rise of the iPhone, insisted that email was the only mobile device feature anyone really needed, and ended up watching Steve Jobs eat his lunch.

Ideally, Grant writes, we should analyse issues like scientists who simply want to discover the truth without any ego concerns. Instead, we usually slip into one of three modes: preacher (delivering sermons to protect an ideology), prosecutor (trying to prove another person wrong) or politician (seeking to win over an audience).

The last category comes in for

some particularly heavy criticism here. Presidents and prime ministers are usually terrified of being seen to commit a U-turn, with Margaret Thatcher famously declaring: “You turn if you want to, the lady’s not for turning.”

In fact, some of history’s greatest achievements were technically broken promises – not least Abraham Lincoln’s decision to abolish slavery after repeatedly telling voters that it would tear the United States apart.

Grant is particularly adept at dropping attention-grabbing nuggets of research into his breezy narrative. Having a high IQ can actually hold you back, he reveals, since it makes you faster at spotting patterns and therefore more likely to fall for stereotypes.

He provides a useful explanation of the Dunning-Kruger Effect, illustrating how amateur enthusiasts are far too quick to assume they know everything about a subject (as Alexander Pope put it, a little learning can be a dangerous thing). He cites experiments that suggest it is far easier to win over (say) an anti-vaxxer by asking respectful questions rather than bludgeoning them with facts.

For all its virtues, *Think Again* also shows why Malcolm Gladwell’s crown is secure. Grant’s anecdotes can sometimes feel colourless, while his insights are rarely the sort of ‘Eureka’ bombshells that make you want to immediately tell others about them.

All too often, he uses contrived labels to mask bland advice, for example, telling employers they should hire “disagreeable givers” who will offer them constructive criticism.

One other caveat: Grant doesn’t provide nearly enough instances of himself realising he has got things wrong. Even so, his self-satisfaction is at least partly justified – this is a shrewd, thought-provoking blast against intellectual complacency that, if nothing else, will help you to get in touch with your inner Eamon Dunphy. ■



Tara Erraught portrays Tenducci in *The Trials of Tenducci – A Castrato in Ireland*, which was recorded in St Peter's Church, Drogheda and published by Linn Records

A modern treat dressed in a baroque 'n' roll scandal



Irish Baroque Orchestra maestro Peter Whelan has just released an intriguing record that adds to our growing store of knowledge surrounding the very early days of baroque and classical music in Dublin. It's called *The Trials of Tenducci* and it is to be welcomed, following as it does his compellingly interesting *Welcome Home, Mr Dubourg*, which not too long ago focused on the English violinist who dominated Dublin's music scene right across the Handel years.

Says Whelan: "I am intrigued by Tenducci's story, his larger than life personality and his wide-ranging influence on opera. We're also thrilled to have our own opera star Tara Erraught portraying Tenducci and the recording comprises modern-day premieres and orchestral music, songs and arias, which were familiar to 18th-century Irish audiences.

"There are probably very few people nowadays who can remember what Tenducci's trials were all about. There are even fewer who know who Tenducci was in the first place. Yet, this was one of the most extraordinary, sensational and scandalous affairs to take place during the early years of high society music in Ireland; shameful enough, in fact, to be worth a headline today, over 250 years later."

Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci was a famous Italian singer of the early baroque period who seduced the teenage daughter of a leading Dublin lawyer while helping her with singing lessons at her father's mansion in South Molesworth Street.

Tenducci had become famous in 1760s Dublin and in select places countrywide. He had built his fame in London and charged vast sums to appear in castrato roles composed by Handel and the likes. He was incredibly successful since arriving from Italy, where castrati were already extorting ridiculous sums in fees from theatre managers.

His career in Britain had marked him out as a dodgy businessman and he apparently did some time in a debtors' prison before taking the boat to Ireland where his fame was ignited again and he was the toast of Dublin Castle and the great aristocratic mansions at his disposal. His amazing voice, it is said, could make maidens and ladies faint, or at the very least go weak at the knees. He also boasted that he taught singing to the young Mozart – a claim that would count a

lot, even at that time.

Anyway, he ran away with his lover and they had a child. After they had eloped and married in a Catholic church, her papa raised a posse of some kind and captured the couple and brought them to trial. But not before he persuaded them, thank heavens, to remarry in a Protestant church. There's a lot more, of course, to this saga, that is well worth reading about. It even has allusions to Diarmuid and Grainne's gallop across Ireland. Netflix would undoubtedly get a box set out of it.

But pending a conclusion to the whole epic tale, which also includes a secret spy-hole episode in a hotel bedroom – we will pass you back safely into the blessed company of the IBO and its doggedly curious and adventurous artistic director Peter Whelan who is chiselling out our musical past with relentless enthusiasm.

The Trials of Tenducci – A Castrato in Ireland was recorded in St Peter's Church, Drogheda and published by Linn Records. It includes works by Pierre Van Maldare – the first composer of symphonies in Dublin – Tommaso Giordani, Johann Christian Bach, Thomas Arne and Mozart (*Exultate, jubilate*). See Irishbaroqueorchestra.com or linnrecords.com



Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci, a portrait by Thomas Gainsborough

Clarification

My article last week regrettably omitted well-deserved credit due to the Sounding the Feminists Working Group for the major role it played in the Female Commissioning Scheme. The group is in partnership with the NCH in the conception, development and marketing of original music by women. It comprises Dr Karen Power (chair), Dr Ann Cleare, Dr Laura Watson and Dr Ciara Murphy. ■

Chess



SAM COLLINS

David Howell vs Thomas Rendle Online Bunratty International 2021

One of the jewels of the Irish chess calendar, the Bunratty International, has run for decades and features world class GMs playing Irish opposition in a very sociable atmosphere. This year, the event took place as an online blitz tournament on chess.com, streamed by several participants. English GM David Howell took first place ahead of several grandmaster colleagues.

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 dxc4

White has sacrificed a pawn, but obtains promising play due to his lead in development.

5.0-0 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Nb6 7.Na3 Be6 8.Ng5 Bg4 9.Nxc4 Bxe2 10.Ne5 Bh5 11.Re1 h6 12.Ngxf7!?

An enterprising piece sacrifice. Objectively, chances should be balanced but in practice (especially at a blitz time control) all three results are possible.

12...Bxf7 13.b4 e6?

This pawn will simply be lost, after which White obtains overwhelming compensation for the sacrificed piece. Instead 13...a6 was played in a blitz game in 2020 between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Maxime Vachier Lagrave while, in his black repertoire published on Chessable, Sam Shankland recommends 13...Qc8.

14.Bh3! Bd6 15.Nxf7 Kxf7 16.Bxe6+ Kf8 17.Bb2 Nbd5 18.b5!

Howell proceeds calmly, undermining the black queenside. Despite his extra piece, Rendle can't bring his rooks into play and his king remains vulnerable.

18...Qc7 19.bxc6 bxc6 20.Rac1 Rb8 (D)



21.Bd4

21.Qg6! wins immediately based on the idea 21...Rxb2 22.Rxc6! when the queen can't abandon her defence of f7.

21...h5 22.Qf5?

Although counterintuitive, capturing on d5 or c6 would have left White with a large advantage.

22...Rh6?

22...Ne7! gives Black defensive chances.

23.Bxd5

Black can't recapture due to various pins and is completely lost, though there is always some hope in a blitz game.

23...Qa5 24.Be6 Qxf5 25.Bxf5 Bb4 26.Rxc6 Bxd2 27.Re2 Bb4 28.Bxa7 Ra8 29.Be3 Rh8 30.Bg6 Rd8 31.Bb6 Ra8 32.a4 h4 33.Rc4 Bd6 34.a5 hxg3 35.hxg3 Rh6 36.Bd3 Nd5 37.Kg2 Be7 38.Be4 Nxb6 39.axb6 Ra1 40.b7 1-0



Rory O'Neill: as a publican and performer, he has seen his economic life 'totally decimated'

BRYAN MEADE

A sobering reminder of the devastating effects of Covid on the arts world

Sara Keating

This week we celebrated a milestone we would all rather forget: the anniversary of the first coronavirus case documented in Ireland. The pandemic has issued seismic changes in all aspects of our lives, from how our children are educated to how we consume and create cultural products.

The unique challenges faced by those who work in the live arts emerged this week – by accident, rather than design – on Sunday's **Brendan O'Connor Show** (RTÉ Radio 1, Weekends, 11am-1pm). O'Connor was joined by Rory O'Neill, aka Panti Bliss, for the weekly newspaper panel. O'Neill, like the other panellists, was present to give his views on the big news stories (the government's competence, the progress of vaccination). However, it was when O'Neill was invited to bring his own perspective into the conversation that his contribution became memorable.

He described his experience over the last year as "absolutely crushing". As a publican and performer, he has seen his economic life "totally decimated. I have zero income and zero ability to fight for my survival. At least during the [Celtic Tiger] crash you could do things. You could innovate and change, but we are literally not allowed to fight for [our] survival".

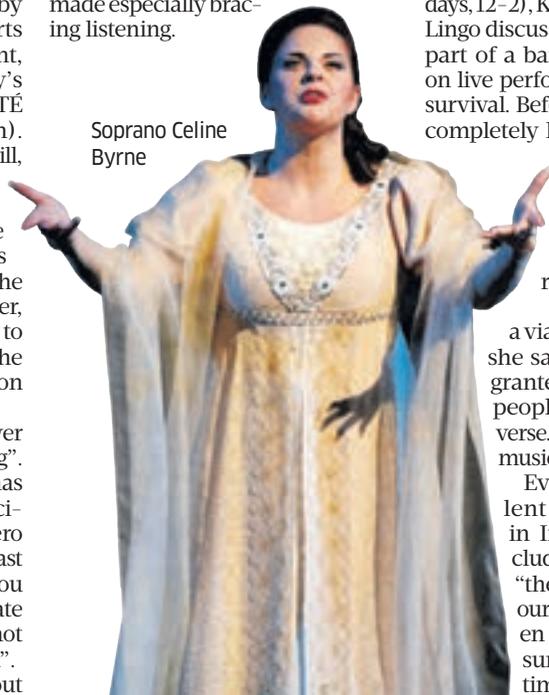
O'Neill was brutally candid about

the effect this has had on his own emotional health, as well as that of his friends and colleagues in the entertainment and hospitality sector. "At first I thought, 'this is an easy thing. We are not in a war with guns in our hands'. But the longer it goes on, the harder it gets."

O'Connor immediately realised the importance of O'Neill's honesty. "I think that is the most enlightening contribution I have heard in this debate in a while," he said. "There are so many Rorys all over the country going through this right now."

Soprano Celine Byrne is one of those Rorys. Speaking on Tuesday's **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Weekdays, 9-12) she described a year of loss: loss of earnings and loss of loved ones in Covid-related tragedies. Kenny gives most of his attention to the Covid aspects of the story, but it is Byrne's experience as a freelance artist at the peak of her career that made especially bracing listening.

Soprano Celine Byrne



Most of her contracts, she said, are subject to force majeure: in insurance terms, the pandemic counts as "an act of God, so employers don't have to give you any compensation". This brutal reality sums up the very particular precariousness faced by artists at this time.

The segment is, however, really a good news story. Byrne is currently "cocooning" in preparation for a live-streamed performance of *La Bohème* with Irish National Opera this Saturday at the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, "with an orchestra, a chorus and soloists!", Byrne said with palpable excitement.

"We were one week away from staging *Carmen* there last year when the theatres closed," she reminded us by way of conclusion, "so it is poignant that [our performance] will open up the theatre again."

Later, on **Lunchtime Live with Andrea Gilligan** (Newstalk, Weekdays, 12-2), Karen Cowley of Wyvern Lingo discussed what it is like to be part of a band that is dependent on live performance for economic survival. Before the pandemic "we completely lived off touring", she

said. The collapse of the arts industry in Ireland during the pandemic is one reason why the band is relocating to Berlin.

"Working in the arts is a viable option over there," she said. "It's not taken for granted. There's a lot more people, and it's hugely diverse. The way they consume music there is just different."

Even with the "excellent funding schemes" in Ireland, Cowley concluded somewhat grimly, "there's a lot of artists like ourselves that are just driven out, because we can't survive here a lot of the time". ■



Appetite for Distraction

PODCAST PICK OF THE WEEK

Renegades: Born in the USA
Available now, Spotify

Bruce Springsteen and Barack Obama surprised fans last week by launching an eight-episode Spotify podcast all about their greatest shared love:



the United States. Featuring deep and revealing conversations between the two friends, it finds them discussing various topics including race, fatherhood, marriage and society. In episode three, Springsteen recalls the odd jobs he worked to pay for his first guitar. Obama also tells the story behind his celebrated "Amazing Grace" speech, when he gave an impromptu performance of the hymn while delivering a eulogy after the 2015 Charleston church shooting.

DEMAND PICK OF THE WEEK

Last Chance U: Basketball
Friday, March 12, Netflix

One of Netflix's most popular sporting documentary slots, *Last Chance U* has provided a platform for many marginalised US cities and communities. The series highlights the importance of sport and its ability to break cycles of poverty and crime, but also the crippling reality of what happens when things don't work out. Despite the upper echelons of the NFL being ultimately unattainable for most athletes involved in the show, their stories of resilience, determination and companionship are wholly inspiring. Following five seasons of community college football, the creators are now turning their attention to junior college basketball in East Los Angeles.

HISTORY PICK OF THE WEEK

Irish History Podcast - The Irish War of Independence
Available now, Spotify and Apple Podcasts

For more than a decade, the *Irish History Podcast* has been a firm favourite of history nuts and casual listeners alike. Presented in a style that manages to be detailed, interesting and digestible, the podcast has covered landmark moments in Irish history, from the Norman Invasion to the Great Famine. This year, the podcast is focusing on the story behind the Irish War of Independence. Episodes unpack the key events and characters throughout the period, while contextualising the impact of World War I and the 1916 Rising. The next two episodes analyse the ambush at Soloheadbeg in Tipperary, Eamon de Valera's escape from Lincoln Jail, and the self-declared Limerick Soviet.

Jenny Murphy Byrne

Reviewed this week

Moxie

Directed by Amy Poehler

Netflix, 15

Rating: ★★★

Raya & The Last Dragon

Directed by Don Hall and Carlos López Estrada

Disney+ Premium, PG

Rating: ★★★★★



Hadley Robinson as Vivian in Moxie

Poehler blasts the patriarchy in a po-faced girl power polemic



John Maguire

Fresh from co-hosting the Golden Globes with long-time collaborator and pal Tina Fey, the effervescent Amy Poehler directs and co-stars in **Moxie**, which describes itself as a “coming-of-age comedy drama” about a 16-year-old student (Hadley Robinson) discovering feminism and using her new-found knowledge to effect long overdue changes at her backward-thinking, conservative high school.

Robinson’s Vivian is a shy, nerdy teenager who, together with lifelong best friend Claudia (Lauren Tsai), keep their heads down in the corridors and dream of escaping to “a lab in Berkeley” on graduation.

A confident new student named Lucy (Alycia Pascual-Peña) arrives at the school and is immediately harassed by the captain of the football team, the obnoxious Mitchell (Patrick Schwarzenegger), a swaggering, predatory bully being protected by the school principal (Marcia Gay Harden), who curates a wall of his photographs outside her office and rigs every student vote to allow him to win.

She also tolerates an event known as “The List”, where the boys rank the girls in a widely shared social media post: “best kisser”, “most bangable”, “best rack”, and so on. Vivian is voted “most obedient”. Obviously she’ll have to do something about that.

As Lucy’s situation deteriorates, Vivian discovers that her mother Lisa (Poehler) was part of the underground feminist punk movement known as Riot Grrrl in the 1990s. Her political awakening comes about in the tried and true method of putting on a leather jacket with a lapel full of badges and listening to very loud guitars.

Having found Lisa’s trove of hand-made, photocopied underground zines (which are probably worth a fortune), an inspired Vivian creates a zine of her own to expose the sexist, toxic culture in the school community and secretly distributes it around the girls’ bathrooms. The zine – titled Moxie after one of the principal’s favourite aphorisms – sparks protests, campaigns and eventually a full-blown revolution.

Moxie is an earnest attempt to rejig the girl power of Election or Booksmart for contemporary audiences, but doesn’t compare well to either of its inspirations – and it’s hard to get over how old it makes you feel to have the underground culture of the 1990s discussed like that of ancient Greece.

While Poehler is right to take a serious subject seriously, she might have found room for her charming ensemble – made up of actors in their late 20s playing teenagers – to crack a few jokes. Later attempts to shoehorn discussions of rape culture, racism, and discrimination into the story feel like glib attempts at box-ticking.

● At first glance, Raya, voiced by Kelly Marie Tran, seems like just another in the long line of animated Disney princesses: her dad (Daniel Dae Kim) is the king, her mother is dead, she’s got a special talent she keeps hidden and a cute animal friend forever by her side. Except in **Raya & The Last Dragon**, this princess is more interested in martial arts than in musical numbers, in staying alive than await-

ing a prince’s kiss, and in re-uniting a land divided by a curse than flouncing around in a ballgown.

When the fabled Dragon Gem is shattered by Namaari (Gemma Chan), Raya’s counterpart from another tribe, a purple cloud known as the Druun returns to turn everyone in the land, including Raya’s father, to stone. Setting out on a quest to find Sisu (Awkwafina), the water dragon who can restore the gem, Raya must then locate each closely guarded fragment and restore the kingdom.

Having described the five different corners of this expansive world and given each tribal land a distinctive look and ethos, directors Hall and López Estrada make a point of having Raya and Sisu visit each in turn; from the smooth, almost sci-fi world of Fang to the rough and tumble Spine, where the giant Tong (Benedict Wong) agrees to join his enormous battle axe to their effort. Raya goes on to pick up a stray comrade at each stop, from ten-year-old ship’s captain Boun (Izaak Wang), to alarmingly cute and devious toddler Noi (Thalia Tran).

With a stirring message of unity and cooperation, this colourful adventure contains more surprises than you might expect. There’s no Prince Charming, no evil Stepmother, no singing whatsoever and no talking animals (unless you count the especially loquacious Sisu).

Told at a pace just below lickety-split and filled with energising jokes and visual invention, thanks to the curse stalking our own land Raya & The Last Dragon won’t be screened in cinemas, but as a paid addition to subscribers’ Disney+ package before being made more widely available later.

While the film’s often breathtaking imagery is reduced somewhat on the smaller home screen, that’s not going to be much of a concern for the pre-teen target audience. ■

Also On



Coming 2 America (Amazon Prime Video, 12A)

Reunited with his Dolemite Is My Name director Craig Brewer, Eddie Murphy reprises one of his most enduring characters, Prince Akeem of Zamunda, for this three-decades-in-waiting comedy sequel. It sees the new king, happily settled in his lush and prosperous kingdom, pack his bags once again for New York’s Queens, with loyal retainer Semmi (Arsenio Hall) in tow.



Notturmo (MUBI, no cert)

Oscar-nominated Fire At Sea director Gianfranco Rosi spent three years filming in areas adjacent to war zones in Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan and Lebanon, following people fleeing invasion and terrorism who are trying to deal with ongoing trauma while restarting their lives.



Poly Styrene: I Am A Cliché (IFI@Home, no cert)

The late Marianne Joan Elliott-Said, better known as Poly Styrene, was the first black punk rock lead singer, the frontwoman for X-Ray Spex and cultural touchstone for the Riot Grrrl and Afropunk movements. Ruth Negga narrates the story of her life as daughter Celeste Bell explores her mother’s previously unopened archive.

Sisters With Transistors (IFI@Home, no cert)

Lisa Rovner’s documentary, narrated by Laurie Anderson, celebrates the achievements of women electronic musicians, from early pioneers liberated by the emergence of new creative technologies in the 1960s and 1970s to today’s innovators.

The Stylist (VOD platforms, no cert)

Professional hairdresser turned filmmaker Jill Gevargjian’s debut psychological thriller has Najarra Townsend as a brilliant but lonely salon stylist whose obsession with the lives of her clients triggers a descent into murderous madness.

Reviewed
this
week

Who am I?
Ireland's Illegal
Adoptions
RTÉ One

Capitani
Netflix

Your Honor
Sky Atlantic

Detecting the dead hand of De Valera in old traumas



Emmanuel
Kehoe

William Wordsworth found himself wondering poetically about what a Highland lass was singing as she worked in the fields. Was it about “old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago” or “Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain, that has been, and may be again”?

Well, for a considerable number of Irish people, old, unhappy and far-off things have become the battles of today. Filled with a sense of sorrow, loss or pain, they try to find out who they really are, often frustrated by fake entries in the birth register and an interpretation of GDPR regulations which may soon be changed.

Who am I? Ireland's Illegal Adoptions (RTÉ One), presented by reporter Aoife Hegarty, turned out to be eye-opening in a number of areas. One was the fact that the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes turned up only 126 illegal adoptions where adoptive parents were registered as birth parents. Another was the extensive involvement of Professor Eamonn de Valera, consultant gynaecologist to the National Maternity Hospital and son of Dev, in facilitating the miraculous conception and birth of babies to women who were not pregnant.

The story emerged as long ago as 2015 but, six years on, the extent of Dr de Valera's involvement will have come as a surprise to many viewers.

One letter, from his rooms on Fitzwilliam Square to the adoptive mother of Line of Duty and Game of Thrones actor Patrick Fitzsymons, read: “I shall be very pleased to look after you for your confinement.” It was not the only time that de Valera arranged an ante-natal visit for a woman who was never pregnant but who, on entering one of several private nursing homes in Dublin, left with a newborn infant – the child of a single woman who had just given birth there.

Mary Flanagan, whose adoptive mother had endured eight miscarriages, was told she was a Lough Derg baby, conceived and born after a pilgrimage to St Patrick's Purgatory. A miracle. But the real miracle worker was Professor de Valera.

“He was her gynae for years because of the fact she had so many problems, and she went to see him privately: it must have cost her a fortune, and we



Who am I? Ireland's Illegal Adoptions (RTÉ One): each private adoption arrangement left an emotional timebomb

weren't a wealthy family, by any means,” Mary said.

She did not learn until 2019, from Tusla, that she and the two other children in her family, Anne and her deceased brother Seamus, were also miracle arrivals by the same route. Like others who have learned in recent years of their adoption, she feels she has no roots.

Brenda and Brian Lynch were two of four children adopted into the same family over the space of five and a half years. The adoptions were facilitated by de Valera. Brenda is bitter: “No one is above the law. Who does this person think that he is? That he can just decide: ‘Oh yeah, here is a baby, we will take her from her and give her to a good family, middle class’. It is incredible.”

But Brian says of his adoptive mother: “It was quite a substantial sacrifice to make so that the children would not be discriminated against [as being adopted]. And also, it was a very lonely sacrifice to make, because obviously her husband knew, and only one other member of her whole extended family knew. So to say it's illegal, to them it's really insulting. Because they did everything they should do. They weren't responsible. De Valera and the Church were responsible.”

De Valera, as a child, was abandoned by his mother and left to grow up with her family, the Colls, in Bruree in Co Limerick. Whether he brought that experience of childhood to bear on his desire for cosy firesides and stable families is a reasonable question. But it's also reasonable to assume his son was working altruistically. However, each private adoption arrangement left an emotional timebomb for the children in

question.

The grasping nature of some institutions, many run by religious orders, is also shocking. In 1950, a year after Susan Kiernan was adopted (though there was no provision for adoption here until the Adoption Act of 1952, which was given the once-over by éminence grise Archbishop John Charles McQuaid), her birth mother was struggling to pay St Patrick's Guild the £85 maintenance fee for her baby, who had been placed with a family within four days of her birth. In 1950, the average weekly wage was under £6, and women might expect to earn just over half that.

The nuns threatened to send back the “friend” as they called Susan, though she had long before been adopted and persisted in ringing her birth mother in Arnotts on Henry Street, where she worked as a shop assistant (the Guild's offices were directly across the street). The balance was £82.10 shillings. “If you do not send, my collector will call to see you. She would prefer not to have to do this as it might be embarrassing for you and we want to safeguard your reputation. We have not failed you; you have failed us.”

This RTÉ Investigates programme, produced and directed by Isabel Perceval, shone light on such questionable practices by religious orders, and on illegal baby export/adoption rackets for cash (some also run by religious orders). In the mid-1950s, these led to an urgent communication from the US Embassy in Dublin to the government about

the remarkable numbers of American women giving birth in Dublin and applying for passports for newborns.

● At 12 episodes, a new thriller set in a sleepy village in the exciting, tax-friendly Grand Duchy of Luxembourg may initially strike you as something you might not necessarily want to commit to. But bite the bullet: **Capitani** (Netflix) is a slick, complex and atmospheric murder mystery.

Luc Capitani (Luc Schiltz), a spectacularly rude and arrogant senior investigator, an infuriatingly arrogant git, finds himself by chance and circumstance investigating the death of a 15-year-old girl in a village in which as he says, exasperatedly, “Everyone knows everyone, but nobody knows anything about anyone.”

Brigadier Elsa Ley (Sophie Mousel) is the local police officer whom Capitani recruits as his assistant. Ley is smart, unlike most of the other coppers who seem either dozy or out of their depth as they investigate the death of a girl whose twin sister has gone missing.

It's a village that wouldn't be out of place in an old Claude Chabrol movie, the kind of place where the postmistress steams open everyone's letters and characters have complex, compromised relationships. I liked it.

Capitani keeps jumping to the wrong conclusions and Ley, in a relationship with a soldier in the tiny Luxembourg army, is frequently at the receiving end of his sarcasm. It's directed with panache by Christophe Wagner, and a second season is on the way.

● **Your Honor** (Sky Atlantic) may not be Breaking Bad standard but, two episodes in (all are available to stream), watching Bryan Cranston play an upright New Orleans judge shedding his principles to save his son (Hunter Doohan), who has killed another young man in a hit-and-run, is something of a treat. Two episodes in – with eight to go – the judge's judgment is already hugely in question. Improbable, but entertaining. ■



Luc Schiltz in
Capitani (Netflix)

Television

Design for life

How can I stop my parents dumping their old furniture on us?

This week, **Aisling Leonard-Curtin** has advice for a reader who, having moved into his dream house with his girlfriend, is inundated with offers of unsuitable furniture from his parents



Dear Expert,
My girlfriend and I recently bought a house. We moved in a couple of months ago and we love it - it needs a bit of work, but it's ours and we're really happy. The only problem is my parents.

It seems like every other week, they ring me up and tell me they have an old chair that would be perfect in the bedroom, or a table that would be just right for the kitchen. Then we get landed with these items from their house that are totally unsuitable, old, rickety and awful. I've tried to say no, but often I get told that the chair belonged to my grand-aunt and has great sentimental value so we should never throw it out.

To be honest, I suspect the problem is that charity shops aren't open. My parents just want to throw things out and are using our house as a dumping ground. My girlfriend is getting increasingly frustrated and she wants me to tell them to stop. But how do I do it without them getting annoyed? And what if the furniture really is of sentimental value?

My parents know we have a high mortgage, so maybe they are just trying to be helpful.

Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

First, congratulations to you and your girlfriend on buying a house together. Second, the broader issue of balancing the needs of your birth family and your girlfriend is one that many people struggle with.

It can be really helpful to reflect and consider what kind of partner you want to be. For example, do you wish to be supportive, loving and validating of her emotions and responses?

Just like your home needs solid foundations, how you respond to your parents, especially in these early stages, will either help or hinder your future. The old saying of "start as you mean to go on" has a lot of merit here.

It's also useful to consider that your actions can be motivated by your desire to move closer towards the type of partner and child that you want to be. Or they can be motivated by trying to get away from something that you don't want to feel, in this case the annoyance of your parents or frustration of your girlfriend.

Trying to keep everyone happy at all times is an impossible task. And your attempts to do this could have a detrimental impact, both on yourself psychologically and also on your relationships.

Remind yourself that you are not responsible for your parents' emotional responses.

This being said, it is worth considering how you can respond in a way that honours their feelings and also the needs of you and your girlfriend.

Taking the furniture and being resentful, or voicing your frustrations without any sensitivity about its possible sentimental value, are both likely to have unfavourable consequences.

It is wisest to balance having the courage to say what you need with being compassionate towards them.

In this case, you could experiment with saying something along the lines of "I really appreciate you thinking of us and our new home for this piece of furniture, especially since I know it's a family heirloom. However, it's really important for us to co-create this new home together".

The key here is that you clearly acknowledge your parents' kindness, even if you suspect they may have ulterior motives such as charity shops being closed during Covid-19, but not at the expense of expressing what you and your girlfriend want.

Unfortunately, there is no magic formula to ensure that your parents don't get annoyed. You can, however, reduce the chances of this by the tone of your delivery.

If your parents do become cross, acknowledge how this physically feels. Most of us experience some discomfort in our bodies and minds when we feel responsible for someone else's unwanted emotions.

Ultimately, from a psychological standpoint, some short-term annoyance is preferable to the long-term resentment that will build up whenever you and your girlfriend see a piece of furniture that you both regard as an eyesore.

Remember, that in order to live a life that's true to yourself, you are likely going to cause some discomfort for others. This is perfectly normal and natural.

Give yourself space to notice if you have unwanted emotions around your parents' responses. If they are cross, this might bring up sadness, anxiety or anger in you. It may remind you of moments from your younger years.

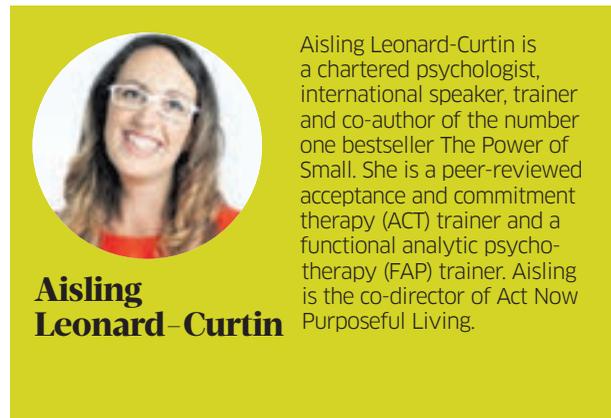
Many of us find it excruciating to believe that we have upset our mother or father. Take time to make room for and validate your thoughts, whatever they may be.

Remember: it is not your job to keep everyone happy. This is a recipe for sleepless nights and

mental health struggles.

Breathe deeply and take a look at your girlfriend and the new home you have bought together to ground yourself in the present moment. Remind yourself of the kind of partner and child that you want to be - and the kind of home that you want to co-create. ■

Got a problem or something you'd like advice on? Email anonymously by contacting us at businesspost.ie/ask-an-expert and we'll match your query with the best expert we can find on the subject. You can also drop an email in confidence to nadine@businesspost.ie



Aisling Leonard-Curtin

Aisling Leonard-Curtin is a chartered psychologist, international speaker, trainer and co-author of the number one bestseller *The Power of Small*. She is a peer-reviewed acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) trainer and a functional analytic psychotherapy (FAP) trainer. Aisling is the co-director of Act Now Purposeful Living.

WHERE I'D BE IF I COULD GO ANYWHERE

I would love to go to Peru. I've been learning Spanish on Duolingo and Preply throughout Covid-19, with dreams of taking a trip once that's possible again.

WHAT I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO AND LOVING LATELY

I love Ayla Nereo. She has the voice of an angel and I find her songs really soothing, nurturing and nourishing.



Low Deposit
Just
€50pp

Dream with us
**Caribbean
SALE**



**PRINCESS
PLUS**

All-Inclusive
For Just €39pppn



Premium Drinks Package



Unlimited Wi-Fi



Gratuities Included

worth over €80pp per day

St Kitts, St Thomas & Bahamas

8 nights - 8th January 2022

Cruise Itinerary:

- Ft. Lauderdale, Florida • Princess Cays, Bahamas • Cruising • St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands • St. Kitts • Cruising x2 • Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

✓ 7 nights onboard 5★ *Caribbean Princess*

✓ 1 night in a Miami hotel, pre-cruise

✓ All flights and transfers included

Inside Cabin from **€1,199pps**

Oceanview Cabin from **€1,359pps**

Balcony Cabin from just **€1,579pps**



Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic & Grand Turk

8 nights - 7th January 2022

Cruise Itinerary:

- Ft. Lauderdale, Florida • Princess Cays, Bahamas • Cruising • San Juan, Puerto Rico • Amber Cove, Dominican Republic • Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos • Ft. Lauderdale

✓ 7 nights onboard 5★ *Sky Princess*

✓ 1 night in a Miami hotel, pre-cruise

✓ All flights and transfers included

Inside Cabin from **€1,249pps**

Balcony Cabin from **€1,579pps**

Mini-Suite from just **€1,999pps**



Mexico, Honduras & Grand Cayman

8 nights - 14th January 2022

Cruise Itinerary:

- Ft. Lauderdale, Florida • Cruising • Grand Cayman • Roatan, Honduras • Costa Maya (Mahahual), Mexico • Cozumel, Mexico • Cruising • Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

✓ 7 nights onboard 5★ *Sky Princess*

✓ 1 night in a Miami hotel, pre-cruise

✓ All flights and transfers included

Inside Cabin from **€1,269pps**

Balcony Cabin from **€1,599pps**

Mini-Suite from just **€2,029pps**



Bahamas, Jamaica & Cayman Islands

8 nights - 1st January 2022

Cruise Itinerary:

- Ft. Lauderdale, Florida • Princess Cays, Bahamas • Cruising • Ocho Rios, Jamaica • Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands • Cozumel, Mexico • Cruising • Ft. Lauderdale

✓ 7 nights onboard 5★ *Caribbean Princess*

✓ 1 night in a Miami hotel, pre-cruise

✓ All flights and transfers included

Inside Cabin from **€1,249pps**

Oceanview Cabin from **€1,369pps**

Balcony Cabin from just **€1,599pps**



✓ Flights
with check-in bag

✓ Transfers
from airport to port

✓ Entertainment
while onboard

✓ All Meals
onboard the ship

✓ 5★ Service
and facilities

For more information or to book call: **01 294 1000**

www.cruisescapes.ie
book@cruisescapes.ie

Est. 1992. 100% Irish Owned. Carrickmines, Dublin 18 • Prices shown include all reductions and offers • Prices based on 2 sharing • Payment plan available
• Low deposit of just €50pp due at time of booking. Full payment due 16 weeks from departure • Optional insurance available • Prices are subject to availability
• Fully licensed and bonded by CAR (TA 0348)



The art of escapism



Renowned for our spectacular waterside location, overlooking Kenmare Bay, Sheen Falls Lodge is the perfect escape.

Explore acres of beautiful countryside, or relax and unwind in our luxurious rooms. It's time to let us look after you.



SHEEN
FALLS
LODGE



+353 (0)64 664 1600

sheenfallslodge.ie info@sheenfallslodge.ie

Sheen Falls Lodge, Kenmare, Co. Kerry, Ireland