

THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 107



Back from study leave and exams finally over, it's a good feeling to be writing these opening notes again at half eleven on a Thursday night. Summer holidays are just around the corner, and many exciting things are starting to fill up the weeks before it, such as sports day, and the school musical, Whistle down the Wind. And, while many exciting things are happening, this has become a semisweet transition period for The Columns team; excited as we are to be back, we are coping with the fact we are going to have to say goodbye to so many fantastic writers and a truly extraordinary editorial team in just a few weeks. The amount of gratitude I have towards these people is inexplicable, it's truly been a joy working together.

Editor, Megan

Whistle Down the Wind: Behind the Scenes

With opening night looming, rehearsals are well underway to smooth out any final kinks before the curtain rises. Amy, who plays Swallow said she is so happy to see how the musical is coming together and just can't wait for opening night! She said that her favorite part is the song she does with Brat and Poor Baby, "I never get what I pray for." When talking to Zara, a member of the adult chorus, she says that she loves her part as a member of the mob who is hunting down the escaped convict. She says her favorite part of the musical is the bar scene where she takes part in the big dance number, "Cold." Our AMAZING stage manager, Shan, said that he absolutely loves getting to communicate with the crew and handle all of the props and set. He said he has loved learning how everything behind the scenes works and can not wait for opening night! If you still want to get tickets they are available for most of the nights next week, so go ask Mr Darby and we'll see you there!



A CATASTROPHE ON REFORM ST

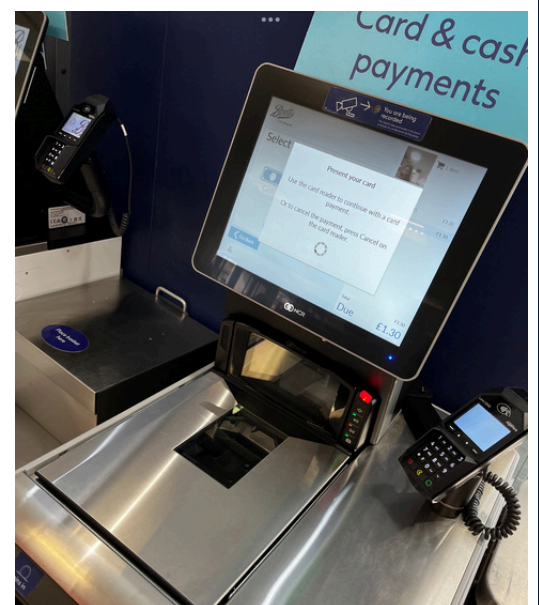
Meagan Dailly

Something catastrophic has happened. It has upturned the sacred universe in which we reside. Boots has got rid of the cashiers and now have... self-checkouts. The friendly faces that once greeted you as you purchased your sandwich and deodorant have been exiled. They have been banished to the depths of the store, forever lost to the endless aisles to stock meaningless meal-deals and make-up.

We have been plunged further into the alienated abyss dominated by technological advancement. We are told that these changes, these removals of human interaction are beneficial. But how can they be? To remove the smiling face that queries my possession of a boots card every time I get moisturizer is to remove humanity from the domain of an individual's existence.

When asking those most effected by these disturbances they express their profound grief at the loss of their "boots buddies." Can it be that these cyborgs are all that shall remain as the parting faces of this great establishment once you have paid for your dandruff shampoo. Great no more.

Slowly boots will change. The humanity of it will be expunged and it will harbor nothing but the desolate misery of an AI operated checkout. There will be no joy in the purchasing of hair removal cream, ear-wax removal drops or your ladybug travel potty. Boots as we know it shall dissipate into extreme nothingness. We shall know the void as we know the world we currently inhabit.



STAGE FRIGHT

Roena Seenarine

How is it that the most famous love story of all time can be associated with such a raw and brutal form of hate? Recently, Tom Holland, best known for his role as Spider-Man, took to the west end stage in a unique adaptation of the infamous Romeo and Juliet, acting alongside emerging actress Francesca Amewudah-Rivers. The uniqueness of this production comes from the fact that it involves a modern twist to the plot. Regardless, this has become overshadowed by all the attention that has gone to her race rather than her talent.

Almost immediately after the advertisement for the show went up on social media, comment sections began to flood with hateful and rude remarks about Francesca, many of them with crystal clear racial origins. From just a few pictures, people have compared her to a man and completely degraded her appearance. As usual, some try to claim that this has nothing to do with race, "she simply doesn't suit the role" but be realistic, even if they picked a white woman who had zero acting experience and 100% was not suitable for the role, there is no world in which we'd see her face anywhere near as much scrutiny as Amewudah-Rivers has. Mind you, the majority of these people had no initial intention of seeing the 12-week play anyway but still felt the need to express judgment. With one quick Google, I was able to find the casting director, Stuart Burt, who is surely who you'd be after if you truly felt like the casting was that diabolical. On this very same page was what looks like a never-ending list of Francesca's credentials and experiences where the words "diversity-hire" were nowhere to be seen.

People are quick to cry for "historical accuracy" when making their claims but the complex history of William Shakespeare's iconic love story completely disputes this. While yes, the original story is set in Italy, a cascade of details have drastically changed over the years, or centuries even. For instance, the role of Juliet was originally not played by a woman at all, not to mention that we rarely see adaptations these days where Juliet is just 13 years old. To take this further, in 2011 Miramax made millions of dollars from a (pretty phenomenal) adaptation in which the protagonists weren't even human!

This is in no way a one-time issue, we've been seeing similar cases to this practically every few months. Another incident interestingly also involves Tom Holland. He stars in the Sony film alongside Zendaya who plays the iconic role of MJ. However, many people took issue with a mixed-race woman taking on the role with hashtags such as "#notmyMJ" circulating on Twitter after the movies were initially announced back in 2016.

To add to the irony of people disliking a well-known white actor such as Tom Holland having black love interests on screen/stage, he's currently dating Zendaya in real life, who seems to be very aware of these issues. She's often gone on record to say that while proud of her achievements, she recognises that as a lighter-skinned actress, she's often seen as a more "palatable" display of blackness by Hollywood which often puts her in more privileged positions than dark-skinned actresses. This sheds light on how present not only racism but also colourism are in all walks of life.

In the worrying case that you're still not convinced, allow me to provide one or two more examples... Halle Bailey was described as aggressive and talentless in her role as a fictional mermaid. The director of the 2015 Fantastic Four film received death threats for his involvement in Michael B. Jordan's lead role. Leah Sava Jeffries was criticised for playing Annabeth in the Disney+ Percy Jackson series. Quvenzhané Wallis was described as not cute enough for Annie in 2014. Amandla Stenberg received an intense amount of hate for her portrayal of Rue in The Hunger Games (at the age of 14 BTW) EVEN THOUGH the character is described as Black in the books. But race has nothing to do with it, right?

The internet has increasingly become a tool for brutal bullying without any of the consequences. If someone were to address a person of colour in such a manner in a professional setting, they would likely face severe repercussions, with even the possibility of being let go. Yet, hiding behind a screen seems to give individuals a misguided sense of confidence. Racism in any form it may take is still harmful and violent. This is why the backlash against all these actors is neither a joke nor a coincidence. By challenging these toxic behaviours and advocating for inclusivity, we take a stand against hate and pave the way for a future where diversity is not just acknowledged, but celebrated by everyone.



Many came in for Taylor, but some were driven out

Megan Beckham

Tens of thousands of people sit in front of a screen. Watching the seconds tick on a clock. Attentive, focused, prepared for combat. Credit cards and bank numbers at the ready, as the number of people in the queue in front of you decreases. A rave at its peak. Tens of thousands of dedicated fans preparing to storm Edinburgh.

The fight for Taylor Swift tickets widely talked about by fans shows the sheer numbers of her fan base, as well as the demand for a spot at what is widely considered the concert of the year. Swift's Eras tour kicked off in March of 2023, a 3 hour long show covering all her 'eras' of music, covering in one way or another, every album she has created, including re recordings. It is no doubt that Swift has admirably fought and overcome many obstacles and for her place in the music industry, and has become a beloved figure to many fans. Tens of thousands of people flooded to Edinburgh last weekend for her concerts, the ones that had come out on top of the extreme scramble of tickets.

However, no matter how famous, genuine, or loved any major figure is, does that warrant people being moved out a city because of her presence?

Many homeless people in Edinburgh were moved out of the city to 'make room' for all of the tourists expected to flood Edinburgh due to the concert. Hotel rooms were snatched up early, and arguably became even harder to get than tickets to the show themselves. As a result, many homeless people were moved outside of the city so hotel rooms would be free for fans and would not be offered as emergency temporary accommodation

When a person declares homelessness in Scotland, it is a legal requirement to have some sort of emergency temporary accommodation offered, and in an ongoing housing emergency during a time of record homelessness, as reported by the Edinburgh city council. Even though many were moved to temporary accommodation in other cities, the Edinburgh city council stated that they were "absolutely not" moving tenants out of temporary accommodation they were already in to make room. However it is clear that by moving people out of the city, this was a move to prevent further hotel rooms being offered as temporary accommodation to deal with the influx of visitors

According to Shelter Scotland, many homeless people the organization supports were moved to places such as Aberdeen, Glasgow, and even Newcastle, not even in Scotland, far away from where families, local communities, jobs, school. Why is this considered an acceptable sacrifice for a concert?

Yes, this was considered the gig of a lifetime, and there were many people traveling in to the city to come, but it is barbaric that a person's living circumstances is drastically being changed for the purpose of other people's activities. Even as a last resort, which is what the Edinburgh City Council called this, this is still unacceptable.

For a purpose as trivial as something as a concert, it is absolutely barbaric for local homeless people to be deemed as second rate when a hotel room is free. People who are struggling, fighting a no doubt distressing situation every day, were pushed aside so a fan can attend a concert.

Taylor Swift has no doubt brought many tourists to Edinburgh, (and this situation is not directly her fault) as tourism is finally starting to bounce back from the pandemic, which will increase the local economy. However who decided that these benefits were seriously worth the uproot of human lives?

Unfortunately, this is not even a one time occurrence. Edinburgh will without a doubt get unbelievably busy during the Fringe Festival in August and this 'last resort' may become a more normal occurrence. How are we going to continue to deem a person's access to local accommodation less important than a tourist?

GENERAL ELECTION PARTY PROFILES

Jack Mitchell

As the general election is less than a month away, I thought I'd take a look at the five highest-polling parties: the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, Reform UK and the Greens. All but the Green Party have released their manifestos which include the policies they would put in place should they be elected to government.

The Conservative Party, led by Rishi Sunak, had 346 seats in parliament before the dissolution (parliament is shut down until the result of the election). This made it the largest party in the House of Commons. It is seen as a centre-right to right wing party.

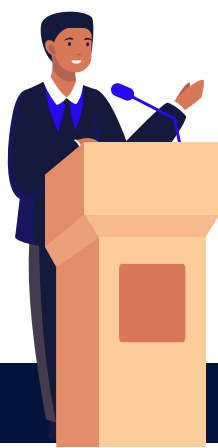
Its manifesto was released on Tuesday and included tax cuts for the self-employed, increased defence spending, a limit on immigration levels, new NHS dentists and tougher prison sentences.

The Labour Party, led by Sir Keir Starmer, had 205 seats in parliament before the dissolution. This made it the second largest party and therefore the opposition. It is seen as a centre-left to centre party. Its manifesto was released yesterday and included pledges to create a national state-owned energy company, reform planning to speed-up house building and cutting NHS waiting lists.

Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, had 1 seat before the dissolution. This made it the joint-smallest party in parliament. It is seen as a right-wing party. It has not yet released its manifesto (and will do so on the 17th of June) so we don't know that what they have said before will end up in writing. Potential policies could include reducing immigration, using private healthcare to help the NHS and scrapping Net Zero plans.

The Liberal Democrats, led by Sir Ed Davey, had 15 seats in parliament, making it the fourth largest by number of seats. It is seen as a centre-left to centre party. It released its manifesto Monday and included bringing the Net Zero target to 2045 (5 years earlier than the Conservatives and Labour have pledged), rejoining the single market and changing the voting system to Proportional Representation.

The Green Party, led by Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay, had 1 seat in parliament before the dissolution, which made it the joint-smallest party in parliament. It is seen as a left-wing party. Its manifesto was released on Wednesday and included policies such as building more social homes, raising taxes to raise public spending and phasing out fossil fuels and nuclear energy.



Welcome To Elections! Population: Tossspots

Charlie Grewar

Roll up, roll up, ladies, gentlemen and those who would prefer not to be designated/all those in between, it's the British political event of the year, possibly the decade. That's right it's the UK 2024 general election, July 4th! Who will win the star prize of ten Downing Street and who will have to settle for a job in Silicon Valley?

Ugh.... Well let's see.

The main parties are of course the Conservatives, led by Rishi Sunak (possibly the worst person at winning an election) and Labour, led by Keir Starmer (who won't shut up about his toolmaker dad). Given the Tory's truly impressive levels of incompetence and poor judgement, it seems very likely that Labour is going to win. By a lot. I will literally try eating my hat if they lose.

Let's go over some of the latest Conservative disasters...

Nothing screams "we are completely out of ideas" like bringing back national service. This ended in 1963 and the only people alive who did it will be at least seventy-nine. Sunak wants the people who did not do national service to vote for the next generation to it.

Except it is not quite national service as you can get out of it with one weekend volunteering a month. So the choice is between 12 months in the army or 12 weekends volunteering, which to be honest is not going to be much of a choice for many.

Then, just last Thursday, the Prime Minister left the D-day anniversary celebrations early to film an interview with ITV. I think he might actually want to lose, that's the only plausible reason I can think of for why he is so appallingly bad at running an election campaign. If the Tories are to have any chance of winning, then Sunak needs to do the decent thing and jump ship. Figuratively or literally would do.

It hasn't all been smooth sailing for Labour either, with confusion over whether or not Diane Abbot will stand. Oh, and they plan to put a tax on private school fees, basically making it less affordable and more elitist, while increasing the pressure on the already crowded public school system.

All of this insanity is happening while Liberal Democrat's Ed Dave conducts publicity stunt after publicity stunt. Oh well. In the off chance he wins at least it will be entertaining.

Meanwhile across the pond, it's the battle between a convicted orange in a wig, and a man who couldn't see an orange two feet in front of him. By the time this is published, Trump's sentence will have been passed. Let's hope the courts aren't lenient.

summer reading list

Maisey Lafollette

I don't know about you, but as summer fasts approaches, I'm always looking for a good book to read over the holidays, so I thought I would share some of my favourites from this year.



Good Girls Die First by Kathryn FoxField- an exciting story about ten teenagers that are trapped at an abandoned carnival, and they are forced to share their secrets or die.

Call of The Wild by Jack London- a classic where a dog called Buck has to survive the cruel world by becoming a wild animal and faces harsh realities about the world.

Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros- Violet Sorrengail wanted to be a scribe but is forced to become a dragon rider even though she had no training. How will she survive? This book is recommended for older teenagers due to some of the content.

History Hit Miscellany Facts, Figures and Fascinating Finds by Dan Snow- A nonfiction piece with almost everything you want to know about history, from wars to world records and everything in between.



The Magpie Society, One for Sorrow by Zoe Sugg and Amy McCulloch— Illumen Hall, a prestigious boarding school is struck with tragedy when a student is murdered before summer, and when the next term starts an American transfer named Audrey tries to help solve the case to gain her new roommates trust.

Death in the Clouds by Agatha Christie— Hercule Poirot is on a plane, when a woman dies and of course he is the best man to solve this mystery.

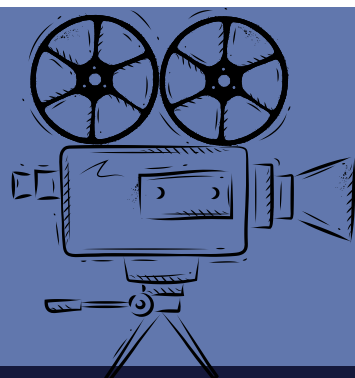
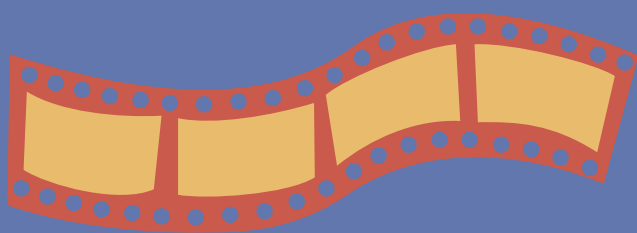


FILM REVIEW

- THE PRESTIGE -

Grace Cunningham

Despite perhaps being overlooked in comparison to Christopher Nolan's more favoured films, Nolan's 2006 psychological thriller "The Prestige" has surfaced on BBC iPlayer, allowing me to finally cross it off my list. Set in London in the late 1800s, this perplexing film follows the story of two rival stage magicians, and their escalating attempts to deceive and outwit one another. As with many of Nolan's films, the chronology of "The Prestige" is unique, with the mystifying near ending shown at the very beginning. As storyline unravels, the tension builds in anticipation of some sort of explanation to the extremely confusing and intriguing beginning. The lives of the two magicians become entangled as their competitiveness and determination grows, and their performance attempts intensify, both in ambition, but also in terms of what is physically possible. This parallel narrative keeps the suspense high until the last few moments, the reveal, and in the last moment we are told that despite looking for the secret, we were never going to find it. In fact, we weren't even really looking.



The Red Shoes

Bea Bates

In the world of dancing films, very few have left a mark quite like Powell and Pressburger's "The Red Shoes," released in 1948. The cinematic masterpiece captivates audiences with both its enchanting story, and its profound and long-lasting influence on the world of ballet in film.

"The Red Shoes" tells the gripping story of a young ballerina, Victoria Page, torn between her desire to perform ballet and her romantic relationship. The film explores the demanding and often disruptive world of ballet, showing the sacrifices necessary for artistic perfection. The main theme revolves around the beautifully haunting pair of red ballet shoes that compel Victoria to dance until she meets her tragic fate.

One of the film's most significant influences on the ballet film genre was the use of Technicolor, an outstanding breakthrough in technology at the time. The vibrant and visually striking colours brought the world of ballet to life on the big screen, setting lofty standards for the aesthetic quality of ballet films to come. "The Red Shoes" proved that ballet could be both visually stunning and emotionally provoking, leaving an undeniable mark on the expectations of audiences and filmmakers alike.

The ballet scenes in "The Red Shoes" is often celebrated for its impact of dance in film due to the famous dance sequences. The effortless combination of dance into the story has an extreme symbolic significance, which influenced many other movies known for dance, such as "Billy Elliot" and "Black Swan," which explored the relationship between art and the artist.

The influence of the film goes above and beyond the world of cinema and ventures into the realm of fashion and art. The image of the red ballet shoes has been referenced and remade in various forms of media, becoming an iconic symbol of passion for art and the sacrifice made by artists. Photographers, fashion designers and artists often make tributes to "The Red Shoes," highlighting just how much of an influence it has had on artistic culture.

Overall, "The Red Shoes" remains a timeless masterpiece that has undeniably shaped the world of ballet films. Its influence can be seen in the careful attention to detail, the integration of dance and storytelling, and the exploration of the challenges faced by those dedicated to the art of ballet. As ballet continues to captivate audiences across the world, the enduring legacy of "The Red Shoes" continues, confirming its place in the minds of audiences and filmmakers alike.

Doctor Who; The New Season

Charlie Grewar

We are officially six episodes in to season 14 of doctor who, starring Ncuti Gatwa and Millie Gibson. With only two more to go, and the election too boring to write about, here is my thoughts on the series so far:

Unfortunately, the two premiere episodes are the weakest of the series.

Space Babies: A (mostly) delightful romp involving talking babies and snot monsters. Bit too whimsical for myself tastes, I saw the big twist coming a mile away. Some repeated exposition. The babies themselves were a bit uncanny valley.

The Devils Chord: The Beatles episode! With no Beatles music and minimal screen time for the Fab Four, the marketing was a bit off. The big musical number at the end was just a bit...I want to say ridiculous and contrived but something tells me that was the point. More of a 'What the bloody hell am I watching' moment than anything. The villain Maestro was good, as was the image of the destroyed London.

Fortunately, it soon got even better.

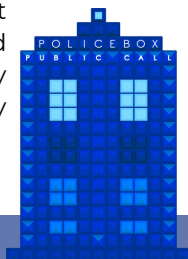
Boom: The doctor is stuck on a landmine while a group of religious soldiers unwittingly fight their own hardware. Former showrunner, Steven Moffat makes his return to the show and it's great! Makes you think and also packs some great characters in as well. Spending the whole episode standing still, the doctor resorts to using wonderful Moffat dialogue. Next seasons companion, Varada Sethu makes an unexpected appearance in a seemingly unrelated role.

73 Yards. The doctor steps in some wool on the ground and disappears. Then Ruby finds that a strange woman is always standing seventy-three yards away and if anyone goes up to them, they are sent running, terrified. Ruby is forced to live out her life with the woman always seventy-three yards from her. Eventually time all resets or...something. Very confusing episode. Confusing, lots of loose threads, but I liked it. Some guy from Peaky Blinders plays the prime minister in 2045!

Dot and Bubble. And episodes about social media and echo chambers and giant slugs eating people, which is honestly the weaker parts of the episode. At the end it turns out that the episode was about something completely different, and all the surviving inhabitants of the future Utopia are huge racists. Suddenly you don't feel so bad for the thousands of people eaten by slugs.

Rogue: The doctor gets a boyfriend and shapeshifting alien owls play Bridgeton by killing people and 'cosplaying' as them. Says it all really. Really enjoyed this episode, felt more in the traditional vein of 'ridiculous monster shows up, Doctor stops monster' that this season hasn't been doing as much. Jonathan Groff was great as the titular character, never heard of him before this episode, but apparently, he is in Hamilton.

And that is the series so far. Mostly solid stuff if you can get around the midnight release onto IPlayer, I look forward to the final two episodes, entitled the legend of 'Ruby Sunday' and 'empire of death.' Actress Susan Twist has played a small part in all episodes so far, and I cannot wait to see how this mystery will culminate. Ncuti Gatwa has been wonderful as the doctor, and I hope he will remain in the role for some years to come. Unfortunately, episode's 4 and 5 didn't feature him that much and there hasn't been as much interaction between the doctor and Ruby as you would expect. A slight issue, but more significant given the reduced number of episodes this year (only eight instead of twelve, because that seems to be the way tv's going). Otherwise, I have largely enjoyed this series. Now, if only the Acolyte's release didn't overlap...



Pipe Band

Last Saturday, our pipe band competed at their first major championship of the year. They travelled the long haul to Forres to compete in their new form, combining both of the bands from last year to create the new and improved Novice B band we saw. For some competitors it was their first ever competition, while others were more experienced having been part of the band that won the worlds in 2022.

There were good performances from section, with both pipes and drums placing in the top six. However, no band is free of mistakes. There were some instrument malfunctions and too many wrong notes leaving the band in sixth place of sixteen. It was the strongest performance the band has had since 2022, and with so many fresh players the performance was remarkable.



Have
a
Good
Weekend

From The
Columns Team