

NO.1347 · 20 - 26 JULY 2020

DIGITAL EDITION £2

# BIG ISSUE NORTH

THE INDEPENDENT STREET PAPER | WORKING NOT BEGGING

A close-up portrait of Julian Clary, a middle-aged man with light brown hair and blue eyes, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark blue blazer over a white shirt with a blue floral pattern. The background is a plain, light grey.

## Julian Clary

**Compulsion  
to amuse**

**BOUTIQUE HOTEL**  
Housing Sheffield's homeless

**OPIOID CRISIS**  
Prescriptions rise



# The New Issue

*Real stories—  
beautifully told.*

Long form, insightful content to take time over and savour, in a beautiful package.

Page after page of high-quality journalism and stunning photography, and no advertising.

All profits go to Big Issue North, changing lives for people who have the least



The New Issue is made from the same team who make Big Issue North. Although it is sold directly to readers, all our profits go to enabling us to do more to support our vendors, and to create more opportunities for people not currently earning an income, and facing homelessness and vulnerable living situations.

*An annual subscription to The New Issue costs £40.*

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20 - 26 JULY 2020  
No. 1347

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# BIG ISSUE NORTH

THE INDEPENDENT STREET PAPER | WORKING NOT BEGGING



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***"I admire young people saying:  
'We're not going to engage with you,'  
until they try to cancel me!"***

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# He's in my phone

Will, who sells Big Issue North in Doncaster, writes about a customer and now friend of his, photographer Andy Lynch

**This is in no way a planned Tarantino, Irvine Welsh-esque portrayal, jumping from one memory to the next with no sense of sequence. But memories very rarely follow the traditional timeline – I write them as they appear. More often than not one memory brings with it a thousand friends.**

As I sit alone in a hospital bed – no TV, single room, crying – I think to myself: “Where did it go wrong?” Visions of her eyes when happy were what made my inner turmoil worthwhile. The radiant blue, accentuated with that glimmer that compared to the finest cut diamond. As I left the home that we began together, I couldn’t look back, knowing that she was leaving to sell her body. I couldn’t watch her leave. With every step towards the main door another piece of my heart/soul/reason for living was destroyed. Did it really mean that little?

William Burroughs said “Heroin is a great lover, but a cruel mistress”, which is true on so many levels. Great, amazing when it’s there, but absolute torture when it’s not. Add to this a physical dependency on alcohol and it consumed me. Life became the pursuit, procurement and consumption of illicit substances. I was driven by the need to not be ill. In R, I found someone, something to get better for. I was just making the minimum amount, eager to get home. I lived on junkie promises – on payday we’ll do this, etc.

My heart wasn’t in *Big Issue North* anymore. It has been my saviour so many times. I didn’t want to commit crime, I wasn’t well enough for real work. But I was oh so ready, in love like I’ve never been before. It scared me and excited me at the same time. Then Covid-19 – no work for anyone, two people to feed. She left with my heart in a bin bag. Desolate, lonely and beat. Will died. I was just a shell.

My aim was to be abstinent by summer – go out on day trips, show her real life, real love. I had even arranged two tickets to the wildlife park with vouchers from a customer.

After my suicide attempt and beating, I met Andy Lynch. He showed me people really do care. I decided to fight. *Big Issue North* was coming back. I couldn’t wait to show my appreciation to those who helped me, by smiling and laughing again. BANG – I got really ill, hospital ill. A blessing in disguise. An alcohol detox, no non-prescribed drugs and a few pounds in my pocket. Andy visited me every day. Lent me a DVD player. Brought me films, conversed with me, all out of his own time. A true gentleman. I have him in my phone as “God sent”.

## After my suicide attempt and beating, I met Andy Lynch. He showed me people really do care

Now I’m determined to repay that faith. That’s all I was waiting for with R – get better and show her what life can be. I’m really looking forward to doing the papers again, but this time money’s in the bank. I need clothes, shoes and pride, which I’d long since forsaken in order to keep us, and us only. But through Andy’s intervention I’ve found peace within myself. I drink coffee, not alcohol, eat sweets, not scraps – and am looking forward to that first cig. I’d love to take Andy to see Paul Weller next year. It was one of his epiphanous songs that gave me fight:

*I’m gonna clean out my yard  
I’m gonna knock down the door  
I know it’s never too late  
To make a BRAND NEW START*

I woke up – in a trance-like state. My only objective was to not wake up.

For two weeks I had not eaten, slept or acknowledged anything. After seeing images of the woman who I lived and breathed for doing unspeakable things with strangers, for money, I was truly haunted. I was 9st 2lbs in the end, begging and borrowing to keep her happy – for no love, emotional or physical. I was ashamed to take my t-shirt off, but I couldn’t make enough to keep her. But I loved her, still do. Waiting for her to try.

Two weeks a zombie, 60 diazepam, methadone, heroin, alcohol and I WOKE UP. What do I do now, where do I go? Lonely, scared, no direction, how do I achieve that final sleep? With all my money spent, not thinking I’d wake up, I picked a cigarette out of the bin, to the amusement of some NEDS (non-educated delinquents). After goading me to no reply – to me I was dead, a ghost – they proceeded to follow and attack. I didn’t even try to defend myself, nothing can hurt me anymore, if anything

it was soothing. After the first headbutt, darkness. I wanted to stay there, waiting for the light to call me. Walking aimlessly along. HE APPEARED – like a guardian angel. Someone cared, actually cared, with no ulterior motive. I have never had that care, especially not for myself. Dry and thirsty I absorbed that care. A man who talked to me for 10 minutes. Gave me the care I’ve never had. It scared me, overwhelmed me and this time I WOKE UP.

Call it kismet, call it fate, I call it love. We talked about music, films, bands and he understood me, shared my eclectic tastes – another first – nobody’s ever understood how a relationship with music is the spirit of life itself.

*I’m gonna find a heaven on the ground.  
Not something distant or unfound  
But something real to me  
(Paul Weller)*



# as 'God sent'



Photographs of Will by Andy Lynch. "I met Will at a very low point, he was suicidal and really suffering," says Lynch, who helped him get back on his feet, obtain some photographic ID and made sure he had food and clean clothing. When Will was hospitalised due to an infection, Lynch visited him almost every day to make sure he had everything he needed for his stay. The second image was taken after Will had recovered and was able to return to selling Big Issue North on his pitch in Doncaster

## ABOUT US

**Big Issue North** is a business solution to a social problem. Vendors buy this magazine for £1.50 and sell it for £3, keeping the profit they make. Vendors also receive support from our Trust charity (visit [justgiving.com/bigissuenorth](http://justgiving.com/bigissuenorth) to donate).

Vendors selling *Big Issue North* must abide by the code of conduct – a set of rules governing how they work. Visit [bigissuenorth.com](http://bigissuenorth.com) to find out more.

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## FROM 10 YEARS AGO



There was a more conventional start to the summer 10 years ago and we provided a round up of the best family days out in the region as well as a comprehensive festival guide. Elsewhere Frank Field MP looked into poverty, we looked at menstrual hygiene problems in developing countries and we interviewed bassman Jah Wobble as he reflected on his musical career. Asked if he owed as much to luck as talent he was admirably frank. "I'd say that's about right. It was a large part of being in the right place at the right time."



# HAPPY TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS



Grant and Anne Kangley were initially dubious about putting homeless people up in their hotel but say the “vast majority have been very friendly”

## Hoteliers speak of positive experience

### Kangley couple make offer for the long-term

The owner of a Sheffield city centre hotel that has been accommodating homeless people through the lockdown says he would be willing to continue supporting them after the pandemic if he had the backing of the government and local authority.

At the end of March the government followed the lead of California by funding the accommodation of rough

sleepers in hotels and offices. Around 45,000 people, many vulnerable to Covid-19 because of respiratory and other health problems, were housed under the Everyone In policy.

#### 24 hour deadline

Sheffield City Council asked Grant Kangley to accommodate rough sleepers at the 16-bedroom Dalbury and Palmer Hotel in Sheffield's Antiques Quarter.

Kangley, who bought the hotel five years ago to add to the two he and his wife Anne own in North Wales, said: “After meeting the council it

was decided after discussions with staff that because of the often chaotic nature of homeless people we should play safe, take just three people and see how it went. We were also concerned that some local residents would complain if all the hotel was used by homeless people.”

But the council wanted to take over the entire hotel. People needed to be taken off the streets and safely housed within 24 hours. Family rooms at the hotel were converted within eight hours into single rooms. Almost before staff knew it homeless people were at the hotel.

“I must admit that the first week was slightly scary,” said Zoe Burke, aged 27, who had just been appointed manager, with her partner Jordan also employed with responsibility for security. Having always worked in hospitality, she had been looking forward to priorities such as building up business in the new restaurant.

“We had been told only negative things about the people we were now hosting. I suppose the council has to highlight the problems that homeless people are facing, such as drug and alcohol abuse, but also there was a



# HOMELESS



suspicion amongst people that we would police them and keep them permanently indoors.”

In normal times, rooms at the boutique hotel – “each with its own story, with some nice finishing touches”, according to Kangley – cost £85-£95 during weekdays and more at weekends, when it had generally been fully booked. But all visitors had cancelled reservations just before the lockdown.

Kangley and Burke admit they had never previously considered homeless people’s needs but they soon began to understand their new guests,

some of whom were asylum seekers while others had been recently released from prison.

“A mutual respect was quickly established. I heard some difficult stories and soon realised many homeless people have just fallen, often very quickly, on hard times and can’t recover without help,” said Burke.

## Begin living a better life

One of those who moved into the hotel was Nick, a trained chef who had become homeless after losing his job, becoming ill and then getting into difficulties with claiming benefits he was entitled to. As well as sleeping rough Nick had been staying with friends. They had to turn him away once the advice on how to tackle Covid-19 included telling people not to accommodate anyone outside their own families.

After the council agreed with Kangley’s request for the hotel to provide everyone staying there with breakfast and an evening meal, Nick was asked to do some cooking. The council has since found Nick permanent accommodation and he hopes to find work again once as a chef.

Nick is grateful for his accommodation at the Dalbury and Palmer. “I hope anyone who needs it can be moved into the room I was using. Having a place to live, even temporarily, makes it easier for other agencies including the council to make contact and start helping homeless people to begin living a better life.”

Ann Clarkson moved from Grimsby to Sheffield a year ago. She had worked full time for over three decades. Her last job, for 13 years, was a supervisor at Howden Kitchens. But she got breast cancer, which damaged her mental welfare, even though she overcame it. She loved her dog and, when it was stolen and the police refused her request to investigate the person she believed had taken it, she sought her own revenge and was arrested.

This first ever offence resulted in just over a month

in prison and she was living on the Sheffield streets when Framework, a street outreach project run by a local housing association, found her outside Sheffield Cathedral and gave her a bus ticket to get to the Dalbury and Palmer. She too helped make meals at the hotel, laughing that it kept her out of mischief. But she knows she would otherwise have been living in a squat or doorway this summer.

“Covid-19 might, if projects such as this can continue for a while, really help homeless people,” said Clarkson. “But I am concerned that if people are moved on without ongoing help they won’t be able to cope. The manager and staff here have helped create a community and people feel safe.”

She wants to use her considerable work skills to set up a café as she likes cooking and has arranged to meet the Together Women Project after lockdown has ended to discuss how to take her ideas forward.

Like Clarkson, Burke fears for homeless people if this support is removed.

“This is the best thing I have ever done,” she said. “I can get quite emotional about it and I have developed some great friendships. For some guests this experience will help greatly in the future but I worry about others who currently have support, including being able to discuss things that worry them.”

Kangley added: “The vast majority of homeless people who have stayed at the hotel have been very friendly, kept the place clean and also done many spare jobs such as gardening. I’d be happy to continue doing this for a while but that is up to the government and the council. Whatever happens I intend taking a keen interest in tackling homelessness in the future.”

Sheffield City Council did not respond to *Big Issue North*’s request for comment.

MARK METCALF

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### PLAY ON

Children’s play areas and playgrounds in Leeds have begun to open. The reopening programme is being done gradually to ensure the 200 play areas meet cleaning and social distancing guidelines. Signage regarding usage has been installed but the playgrounds and equipment will not be supervised, said Leeds City Council, “and will rely on people acting responsibly”.

### INVESTMENT RISKS

Councils have exposed themselves to commercial investments that risk cuts in local services and a big bill for local taxpayers, according to the Commons Public Accounts Committee. Financial pressure on local authorities has seen risky investments in commercial property “balloon” 14-fold in three years, said the committee, warning that the government was “blind” to the risks.

### CONFERENCE CALL

Joe Anderson, Liverpool’s mayor, has urged the government to allow conferences and business events to resume because of their importance to the city’s economy. In a letter to the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, Anderson said business events can be held safely in the same way regulations are allowing Parliament, shopping centres, cinemas and retailers to operate.

### HULL HOUSE BUILDING

More than 1,000 new homes have been created in the city in the past 12 months against an annual target of 620 homes, according to Hull City Council – figures that put it in the top 20 UK local authorities for the delivery of new homes. The council said it had exceeded its target for the fifth year in a row.

Got an event, campaign or story from your area? Email [news@bigissuenorth.co.uk](mailto:news@bigissuenorth.co.uk)

When non-essential businesses reopened across the UK on the 15th of June, we were delighted to welcome the first of our vendors back to work. These were people who are not shielding and do not live with anyone who is, and we only reopened pitches where social distancing can be maintained.

The safety of our vendors and customers was our top priority, so we have provided each of our vendors with hand sanitiser, PPE, including gloves, a mask and a visor, and a contactless payment device. We have also purchased ID for vendors who did not previously have any, allowing them to accept contactless payments.

These are long-term investments, allowing our vendors to increase their earnings in our increasingly cashless society, and to use their ID to apply for new accommodation, education and employment, all with the support of our staff.

For vendors who are still shielding, our hardship fund will be available for as long as they need it to cover their cost of living until they can safely return to work.

Without your incredible generosity, this would not be possible. If you would like to help, please complete and return the form below, or text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5.

Thank you.

# BIG ISSUE NORTH TRUST



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*thank you for your donation*

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When you donate to Big Issue North Trust, we'd love to keep in touch with you to tell you about the difference you've made to our vendors. If you're happy for us to do this, please tick here. ☐



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Please keep letters brief. We reserve the right to edit them for length. Include your full name, town or city and phone number.

### BEST OF TIMES, WORST OF TIMES



I was brought up in a single-parent Nigerian household on one of the toughest council estates in Hull and raised by two amazing black women. My mum and my big sister worked all the hours under the sun to provide for me. Because my mum had to work long hours my sister had to grow up quickly and take on the role of my second mum. Our resilience and unconditional love got us through some extremely tough times.

I was like any kid, outside all day playing games like block or bulldog and I loved football. I would play for hours on 5th Ave Field. I look back at these times as some of my happiest memories – an innocent boy playing with my friends, not knowing how cruel the world could be. These were also some of my darkest memories as I was very quickly reminded from a very young age that I was different.

I was left feeling alienated for being black and I remember being frightened and ashamed of my own African culture. I remember just wanting to be like everyone else. It wasn't just the fact that being called the n-word was the normal terminology used to describe a black person in North Hull in the 1990s – it was that no matter how hard I tried to be accepted, someone would come along and remind me that I wasn't their equal.

***This is an extract from Hull rapper Chiedu's blog in which he praises his city's BLM protest and calls for it to build on William Wilberforce's legacy and do more to tackle racism. Read the full piece in the Comment section of our bigissuenorth.com***

## Why Don't We Just... Take A Break From Twitter?

ASHLEY "DOTTY" CHARLES



**The problem with Twitter is that we all feel so entitled. Entitled to brag, to share, to scold, to critique. We've been emboldened by a platform that is built entirely around the concept of unsolicited opinions. And so we engage. We engage incessantly.**

But, and this is a bit of breaking news here so hold onto your hats: nobody cares, love.

I'm sure we've all made the mistake of thinking out loud online. It's all part of the delusional self-importance you need in order to survive on social media for longer than a day. Perhaps you decided to share a photograph of your new house plant on Instagram. Maybe you thought your Facebook followers ought to know it's your labrador's second birthday. Or, if you're a Twitter user, maybe you decided that what your network of followers really needed was a five-tweet thread detailing how appalled you were at the never-ending Regent Road roadworks.

Yes, there's nothing we Twitter users love more than a bit of well-phrased outrage. A scathing post with just the right balance of exasperation and eloquence; a measured and pre-meditated monologue that makes us come across as both political and poetic.

You see, most people find it easier to be a mouthpiece for outrage than a conduit for actual change. And because of this we often find ourselves over-compensating for our real-world inactivity by becoming insufferable narrators of rage on the internet. We use our Twitter feeds to protest against the rising cost of

parking and the gentrification of our neighbourhoods but do we boycott the high-street chains that have displaced independent vendors? We call out billionaires for their paltry donations to charity in times of crisis, but how much of a contribution are we actually making ourselves?

Maybe you're even one of those PR types who have convinced yourself that your blog posts and Twitter essays about climate change are "building awareness". Maybe you even gave yourself a little fist bump in the mirror after exposing your local MP for driving a gas guzzling 4x4 on the school run. But I promise you: you're no Greta Thunberg.

So here's an idea. Why don't we just take a break from Twitter? And I don't just mean logging out for a day. I mean detaching ourselves, even temporarily, from the very idea of it. This notion that we need to rant, drag and cancel in order to reaffirm ourselves as benevolent, well-meaning and progressive. This self-righteous habit of using 280 characters to insert ourselves into every contentious topic. What if we just... stop?

Let's not complain about things that we aren't actively trying to change. Let's not use real issues as an opportunity for self-promotion. Let's type less and do more. It's high time we stopped shouting online and started talking offline. ■

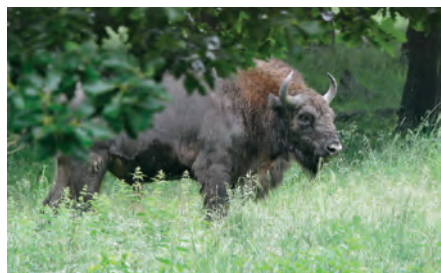
**Ashley "Dotty" Charles is the author of *Outraged: Why Everyone Is Shouting and No One Is Talking* (Bloomsbury, £14.99)**

## LAST WEEK

### I get lockdown...

But I get up again. One of the messages Banksy sprayed onto a Tube carriage in his Covid-19-inspired takeover of the London Underground. In a video posted on his social media the master of disguise dressed as an industrial cleaner and moved people off carriages while he sprayed his trademark rats in a variety of poses, including sneezing and spreading the virus.

## Go on, bison



Wild bison are to be reintroduced into UK woodlands after a 6,000-year absence. The ambitious new rewilding project will oversee a small herd of European bison introduced to an ancient Kent woodland in an effort to improve the natural ecosystem. The bison are expected to help naturally regenerate the woods through their grazing, sand baths, and felling trees by rubbing against them and chewing the bark.

## €13bn

The amount Apple won't have to pay in tax after the General Court of the European Union (GCEU) annulled a decision by the European Commission that Ireland had given the tech giant illegal tax breaks. The court said the commission failed to prove that Apple received preferential treatment, amounting to illegal state aid. Ireland in effect petitioned the court not to be paid the huge sum.



## 100 miles

The distance an Andean condor can fly without flapping its wings. With a 10 foot wingspan, the world's largest soaring bird flaps its wings for just 1 per cent of its flight time, according to a team of scientists who strapped recording equipment to eight condors in Patagonia.

## SHE HAS ISSUES

### Childcare should be fertile ground for policymakers, says Saskia Murphy

Once upon a time, in a pre-lockdown world, I'd often find myself wondering how people with kids manage to cope. I'd be there, washing dishes at 11pm after a hectic day at work, looking at my diary for the week ahead and panicking about how I was going to fit everything in – all while finding time to feed myself three times a day, shower, exercise, sleep, read, fold washing and keep my dog alive.

So last week's news from the University of Washington that there has been a "jaw dropping" global crash in children being born really came as no surprise.

According to the research, the global fertility rate nearly halved to 2.4 children in 2017, with researchers predicting it will fall below 1.7 by 2100.

Those behind the research said the world is "ill-prepared" for the impact the fall in births will have in future. Twenty-three nations – including Spain, Italy, Portugal and Japan – are expected to see their populations halve by 2100, and experts described how the world could face a crisis of an inverted age structure as young people are burdened with looking after the old.

The Mail Online commenters had a field day. Sorry, I couldn't resist having a look – it's something I do regularly to gauge the thoughts and feelings of those whose political opinions differ from my own. It's a defence mechanism I use to protect myself from the shock and despair I experienced after the Brexit referendum and again after last year's general election.

In the comments section of doom, there was no mention of

women's rights, choice, education and what the news of a declining birth rate means for the environment (less humans = good). Instead, there was fear about migrants arriving on dinghy boats, and one commenter lamented over the good old days, when his great-grandparents had 20 children and people spent less money on luxuries, which can also be read as "lived in poverty".

There was also little mention of how hard it is to raise a family in the modern world. The cost of living comfortably in most developed countries often requires two people working. That means long days of juggling work, school runs, kids' hobbies, kids' homework and older family members' needs. Couple that with the added financial pressure of feeding a family and keeping a roof over their heads and it really is a lot.

And of course poorer countries pay the price for our fast-paced lives, regardless of how low our birth rates are. In developed countries we are overly reliant on the earth's resources to make our lifestyles work. We drink water out of plastic bottles, we use cars to travel one mile down the road, we buy fruit that has been peeled, chopped and packaged in single-use plastic just because we're too busy or lazy to prepare it ourselves.

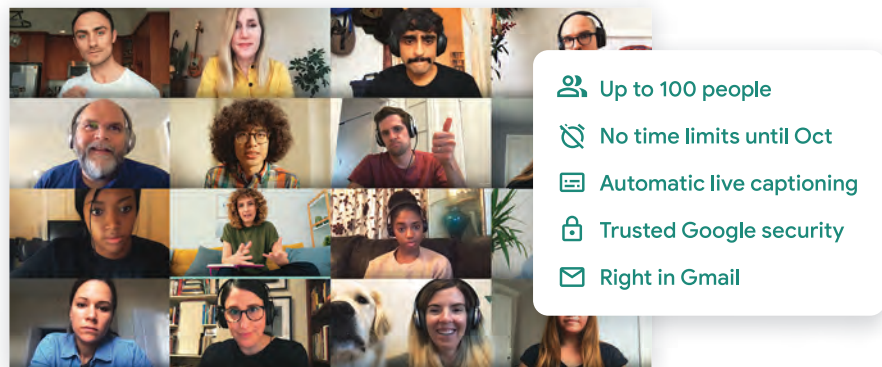
So I guess we're left with two options. We either vote for parties that recognise the importance and value of raising children – offering policies such as enhanced maternity and paternity leave, free childcare and extra employment rights. Or we finally learn to share resources and stop being so precious over borders. Either is fine with me. ■



Saskia Murphy is a Manchester-based freelance journalist. Follow her on Twitter @SaskiaMurphy



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# Bolds encounter

From shock comic to popular children's author, comedian Julian Clary knows a thing or two about pleasing audiences of all ages – and displeasing others. He tells **Simon Bland** why he's raring to get back to stand-up despite the pressure of cancel culture

**"They don't even know who I am," chuckles comedian turned hit kids author Julian Clary, discussing his newest batch of fans. "Children are less cynical but they're not going to humour you. Writing for them is a bit like doing panto – you're ostensibly a children's entertainer but half the audience are adults," he smiles. "You can do things ambidextrously."**

Clary's two primary fan bases couldn't be further apart. His new book *The Bolds Go Wild* is the fifth instalment of his colourful children's series, which follows a family of hyenas secretly masquerading as humans in suburban Teddington. While Clary's young readers may be happily oblivious to his innuendo-heavy humour and racy, phrase-turning talents, odds are his other demographic – their parents – are in on the joke. It's likely that many of them grew up with this outrageous comic dominating their screens – pun intended.

Born in Surrey and raised in Teddington, Clary started his career with a glam stint on the alternative cabaret circuit in the early 1980s, first under the alias Gillian Pieface, then as The Joan Collins Fan Club with his whippet co-star Fanny The Wonder Dog. Openly gay and utterly fearless, his candid style demanded attention. When he was behind the mic, no one was safe. Unsuspecting spectators found themselves pulled on stage only to have their bags rifled through, with Clary's arched eyebrows inspecting whatever oddities he found within. As his star rose, so did his television presence. His 1989 quasi-game show *Sticky Moments with Julian Clary* cashed in on his take-no-prisoners attitude, before 1996's faux-courtroom comedy *All Rise For Julian Clary* placed the uncensored star in the role of judge, jury and executioner, dishing out forfeit sentences to guests in a bawdy slice of Friday night viewing.

For Clary, it was a whirlwind of success and irresistible scandal – until an ill-

timed gag during a live broadcast of the 1993 British Comedy Awards brought everything crashing down. Targeted by the tabloids, ostracised by showbiz and banned from live telly, Clary's explicitly over-the-top (yet certainly tame by today's standards) joke about his fist and former Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont signalled an abrupt end to his thriving career. Cut to 2020 and the now 61-year-old comic has emerged from this dark period stronger than ever. After making a welcome return to stand-up and TV, Clary has gone on to publish a number of books, conquer theatre with 2007's West End hit *Cabaret* and emerge as a giant of the panto scene at London's Palladium. However, of all the labels thrown at him throughout his flamboyant four decade career, perhaps "popular children's author" is the most shocking of all.

**"It's horrible and vindictive – although having said that, I'm not above cancelling people myself."**

"The nice thing about the books is they'll always be there," says Clary when we speak to him from his home in Kent, where he lives with his husband in a house once owned by playwright Noël Coward. As a young adult, the vivacious funnyman dreamed of being an author long before he lit up the stage as a shock comic – but today Clary views his two main professions as different means to the same end.

"I love being on stage and being a comedian but the moment the laugh dies down it's lost to the ether," he tells *Big Issue North*. "I just like entertaining people, whether they're at home reading a bedtime story or in the theatre late at night. It's a kind of compulsion to amuse."

With a father who was a policeman and a mother who was a probation officer, you might assume Clary's upbringing was one of strict rules and regulations – but

the star assures us it was full of humour. When the time came to dream up his own fictional family for *The Bolds*, he was keen to borrow from the lighter aspects of his childhood, using his hairy next door neighbours as an inspirational jumping off point.

"The idea of animals living as humans was a day dream I had as a child to do with my neighbours – but the actual characters are more like the Clary family as I perceived them while I was growing up," he reveals. "The whole idea of silliness and laughter being the answer to any problem reminds of my family, my mother in particular."

This light-hearted thread can certainly be seen in *The Bolds*, with family patriarch Mr Bold making a living by writing cheesy Christmas cracker jokes. Plus, as secret refugees from Africa the family are especially welcoming to

anyone who crosses their path, something Clary identified as a common trait among today's youngsters that was scarce during his own childhood.

"I try to forget about my own school days," he says, remembering his time struggling to fit in at Ealing's religious school St Benedicts. "But things have changed a lot for the better, I'd say. Children have a much better time now. There's much more of an emphasis on creativity and such a choice of books. I always find when you're writing, you don't know what you're trying to get across until you've finished. It was when I'd finished the first *Bolds* book that I thought: 'Oh, that's what they're like.' Because of their own experiences they're very accepting, liberal and helpful to everyone. I thought that was a nice thing to tell children."

Although this warm and welcoming ethos is instilled in each page of Clary's







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Julian Clary under one of his aliases The Joan Collins Fan Club with Fanny the Wonder Dog in 1987

children's books, it can be quite rare in his other line of work. So-called cancel culture has stripped many comics of their livelihoods after falling foul of online audiences and things have become increasingly tense for comedians. As someone who's spent years revelling in surprising audiences with graphic depictions of sex, does Clary feel this moment of social justice is overdue or overkill?

"I'm a bit conflicted about it. I quite admire young people saying: 'We're not having this or we're not going to engage with you.' I think that's bold – but I do think life is short. The problem is when it means they're not having any kind of discussion about it. I probably think good for them – until they try to cancel me!"

Having faced the brunt of social shaming first hand after his experience in 1993, Clary knows full well the impact being cancelled can have.

"It's horrible and vindictive – although having said that, I'm not above cancelling people myself. I think you need a good clear-out every now and then. It's not quite the same as someone saying one thing wrong and having their whole life obliterated. It does make you cautious and I'm careful what I say on Twitter."

Much like the now-infamous joke that damaged his career, context is a key factor that comedians must now bear in mind whilst on social media.

"Sometimes people like me are being flippant but there's something about that form of saying something that can be misinterpreted. It's sometimes difficult on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms to judge the tone of a communication."

Does he ever wonder what life would've been like had Twitter been around when he was starting out?

"I'm glad it wasn't. Coleen Nolan came off social media because she got a lot of

abuse. I remember her doing an interview and saying: 'Why would you give your private phone number out to random people so they can send you direct insults?' I'm well aware that anyone can contact me on Twitter and say something upsetting and I can block them but the damage is done. I'm very wary of it."

Has outrage culture made it easier to shock audiences? "It's hard for me to say because my audience enjoys a bit of outrage," says Clary with a wry smile. "If I wasn't talking about fisting or graphic homosexual acts, they'd probably be a bit disappointed."

That said, fans of Clary's comedy will have to wait before they can see him perform live once more. Earlier this year he was due to tour his new show *Born To Mince* across the UK but like many stand-ups he's been forced to postpone his plans due to the Covid-19 crisis. Instead, he's used his lockdown time to pen a sixth instalment of *The Bolds* – a process he finds gets easier with each new adventure.

"They're very alive in my head. Each time I sit down to write a new book they speak to you and all I have to do is write down what they're saying. The creative process is quite interesting. I've done a stage version as well and that's been fun. I've written some songs and it's been nice to bring them to life on stage. It'll be really exciting when that happens."

Having spent his professional life making audiences laugh on stage, Clary can't wait to get back to doing what he does best. "It's heartbreaking," he says of the impact coronavirus has had on the theatre sector. "We can't live without theatre – on any level. It's needed. It's a house of cards too because if that's gone then so are all the things that are dependent on it. I'm very much full of

## Clue's in the titles

Julian Clary's work as an author extends far beyond *The Bolds*. Get a load of these glittering literary gems

### A Young Man's Passage, 2005

Hidden behind a very Clary-esque title, *A Young Man's Passage* was the comedian's first book release and candidly chronicles his rollercoaster life story. From difficult school days at the strict and religious St Benedicts, to uncovering his sexuality and finding a taste for showbiz via the stage and screen, Clary bares his soul about his early years.

### Murder Most Fab, 2007

Maintaining a successful career in the industry can be murder – as Clary's first work of fiction proves. Told in the form of a confession and packed full of black humour, *Murder Most Fab* follows rent boy turned entertainer Johnny Debonaire and the bloody and boundless lengths he'll go to in order to hold on to fame.

### Devil In Disguise, 2009

Continuing in the vein of camp comedy noir, Clary's second fiction novel tells the tale of childhood friends Simon and Molly, two fame-hungry youths who have their friendship fractured by a mutual love interest. As their rift deepens and their quest for stardom intensifies, things take a deadly turn.

### Briefs Encountered, 2012

Inspired by his home, which was once owned by English playwright Noël Coward, Clary's final novel before *The Bolds* took over tells a story that's part fiction and part reality. It follows a Coward fanatic who moves into the artist's former home with his new lover, only to discover things going bump in the night – and not in a good way.

admiration for all those who are trying to find a way through."

While lockdown may have favoured the future of the Bolds, Clary's counting down the days until he can return to shocking audiences with stand-up. "I need it. It's all very well being at home and being a recluse – but it's not fulfilling the other side of me. I'm certainly looking forward to picking up where I left off." ■

Julian Clary's fifth children's book *The Bolds Go Wild* is now in paperback (Andersen Press)







# A CREEPING DEPEN

In the US the opioid crisis is wrecking communities and has brought convictions for pharmaceutical executives that might lead to jail. With usage climbing steadily since the 90s **Ciara Leeming** investigates how far behind the UK might be

**Katie Bedford was 16 when she was first prescribed opioids: morphine in hospital and codeine upon discharge. She then took dozens of painkillers a day for 10 years.**

"I could get 100 tablets a week without setting foot in the surgery by ordering repeat prescriptions online," she says. "I never even got a phone call to ask what they were for."

That first dose of morphine was administered intravenously while Bedford was in agony with a burst ovarian cyst.

"It felt amazing. The walls seemed to turn pink," she recalls. "I suffer from endometriosis but was misdiagnosed for years. They kept prescribing me co-codamol though and if a doctor says take something, you do it."

In reality, she was a mess. After losing her dad to cancer when she was 20, her dependency worsened. She would top up her prescription with over-the-counter codeine with anti-inflammatories, which can cause stomach problems – and at her worst was taking 30 tablets a day. She performed poorly at work

and was regularly sick, lethargic and moody.

Bedford, 27, is lucky to live close to one of only two free specialist services for patients like her. The Bridge Project, in Bradford, runs mainstream drug treatment programmes and boasts a prescription medication service. Patients are often referred by GPs and sessions take place in local surgeries.

Recovery co-ordinator Michael Ritchie helps people taper off the drugs safely while unpicking the psychological issues that often compound their dependency. His 70-strong caseload has more women on it than men and ranges in age from 20 to 80.

Bedford's surgery told her to call the Frank helpline, which suggested a rehab centre that cost £2,500 a week. Eventually she learned about the Bridge Project.

She began her programme in 2018 and was opioid-free within two months. The





**A skeleton of pill bottles stands with protesters outside a courthouse, in Boston, during the lawsuit against Purdue Pharma over its role in the national drug epidemic. The skeleton was created by Frank Huntley from prescriptions he said he received while addicted to opioids. Photo Charles Krupa/AP**

# DENY

emotional issues were harder to tackle though and she still speaks to Ritchie.

He says: "These people have been prescribed these drugs for a legitimate reason but found they also helped them cope with some trauma they'd experienced. Dependence creeps up on them. They can initially be quite resistant – they think their world will collapse without the tablets. They get lost in the system because they aren't committing crimes."

Millions of adults in the UK are thought to live with chronic pain – defined as lasting three months or more. But there are few effective treatments available.

Opioids – which originate from the poppy plant but are now often synthetically produced – are best suited to treating acute, end of life and cancer pain. But from the 1990s, the number of patients being prescribed them for

chronic pain soared – peaking at 24 million prescriptions in 2016, before dropping slightly. In 2017-18, 5.6 million adults received at least one opioid prescription, while 540,000 non-cancer patients had been on them for at least three years.

The reasons behind the rise are complex. Partly it can be attributed to an ageing population and more people living with pain. General practice is under strain – with short appointment times and patients who expect to be medicated.

But experts say opioids are being used inappropriately in many cases. In the nineties they were promoted through pharmaceutical industry-sponsored educational events, sold as the great new weapon against pain. GPs were told they were being used in pain clinics, so why not primary care too?

By the mid 2000s, concerns were being raised but as Dr Roger Knaggs, of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and British Pain Society, puts it: "These messages are taking a long time to get through to everyone. There are so many influences which affect prescribing habits, it can be like turning a juggernaut."

Opioids can cause a range of problems, including depression, anxiety, headaches, hyperalgesia – heightened sensitivity to pain – and overdose and death.

Dose levels are an issue, with the overdose risk rising fast as pills become stronger. While overall prescription numbers went up by 34 per cent between 1998 and 2016, researchers from the University of Oxford found that when drug strength was accounted for, the rise increased to 127 per cent.

Ritchie has seen people on the equivalent of over 1,000mg of morphine a day – a dose that would kill most people who have not been exposed to opioids, and five times what is considered to be a high dose in clinical practice.

In the US – where 130 people die from opioid overdose every day – a judge in Oklahoma last year ordered Johnson & Johnson, the maker of oxycodone and fentanyl patches, to pay the state \$572 million (£457 million) for the destruction wrought by prescription opioids.

Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, and its owners, the Sackler family, have offered to settle more than 2,000 lawsuits against the company for \$10-12 billion (£8-9.6 billion). The lawsuits – brought by states, cities and counties – allege they are responsible

for starting and sustaining the country's opioid crisis. Purdue Pharma has earned more than \$35 billion (£28 billion) from selling Oxycontin.

Although some way off that scale of crisis, UK hospital admissions and deaths have been creeping upwards. NHS data shows almost 9,500 patients were treated for poisoning from opioids such as codeine and morphine in 2018-19 – up from 7,400 in 2012-13. The number of people admitted for heroin or opium poisoning, by comparison, was 1,850.

While heroin accounts for the largest number of opiate-related deaths – 1,336 in 2018 – opioid medications are increasingly prevalent. Figures from the Office of National Statistics show deaths from other opiates – including methadone – hit 872 that year. Codeine was linked to 169 deaths, up from 70 in

## A month's worth in a few days

Michelle Murray began to recognise she had a problem when she overdosed and ended up in hospital.

She'd become hooked on codeine following an operation in 2006 but when a new GP looked at her records, he began tapering the dose down.

"He asked me if I had a problem and I denied it," she recalls. "I started topping up with over-the-counter tablets and ended up in A&E. I wasn't ready to face it but was referred onto a short drug programme."

Like many people who become addicted to opioids, Murray, 43, had other problems – including being in a controlling relationship. The tablets made her feel calmer.

She says: "I got to the point where a month's worth of tablets was only lasting a few days and I was making up excuses to get more. I'd say I was going on holiday and needed my prescription early or that I'd lost it – anything I could think of."

"At one point the doctor split the codeine from the paracetamol, which meant I could take up to 20 of codeine at a time. It's amazing I'm still here really."

The drug programme was wrong for Murray and she relapsed, before finding the Bridge Project two years ago. She has been clean for over 12 months and plans to start volunteering for the project later this year.

She says: "The physical withdrawal is tough but it's nowhere near as severe as the compulsion to reach for a tablet. That pressure builds up and it's unbearable. My recovery hasn't always been smooth but I'm using all the tools I've learned."

"When you're in the addiction, you risk anything – I've put my employment at risk, my life at risk, I've left bills unpaid, sold jewellery and technology, all to pay for drugs. It's as insidious as an illegal drug addiction."



## 'Duped into addiction'

It was a photo project about people experiencing homelessness and opioid addiction that first brought Liz Moore to the subject.

The author was fairly new to Philadelphia when she was invited to interview people who had been photographed for Jeffrey Stockbridge's Kensington Blues project. Their stories captured her attention and she began returning to the dilapidated neighbourhood to run writing workshops and get to know people better.

Their experiences became the inspiration for her fourth novel, *Long Bright River*, which is set in Kensington and examines the US opioid crisis through the eyes of two sisters – one a police officer and the other an addict.

She says: "I felt very moved by the people I met and very concerned for them and I felt a strong emotional pull to the neighbourhood.

"My own family has a history of addiction, so there was a personal connection to the subject. Some of the clients at the women's centre where I worked were experiencing homelessness, some were involved in substance abuse and some were facing domestic violence and poverty.

"The characters in my novel are not based on real people, but the stories of how people become addicted to opioids in the US are often similar. It usually starts with a prescription for pain medication and once that runs out it turns into buying heroin from the street. The victims of this epidemic were almost duped into addiction by pharmaceutical firms which were untruthful about the addictive potential of their medicines."

One of the things Moore could not help but notice about Kensington – once a prosperous neighbourhood but now synonymous with drugs and dotted with abandoned buildings – was the sense of solidarity among residents. That feeling of community can be both a blessing and a curse, she says. In 2017 in Philadelphia, 1,200 people died from overdose. The following year the numbers fell but still averaged three people per day.

"Some people told me their best shot of overcoming addiction for good would be to get out of Kensington altogether," she says. "But few have the resources to do that, and in any case that would mean leaving behind their friends and in some cases their family. There is an almost gravitational pull back to the neighbourhood and their life there over and over again, but unfortunately sticking with the same routine can lead to relapse."



2008. Dihydrocodeine was associated with 97 deaths in 2018, up from 79, and oxycodone with 79 deaths, up from 22.

Tramadol was reclassified to a Schedule 3 controlled drug in 2014, after deaths climbed to 240 but was still linked with 220 deaths in 2018. Reclassification meant prescriptions are only valid for 28 days and automatic repeat prescriptions are banned.

The subject of dependency is under-researched – with estimates of people who may be addicted to opioids ranging from the tens of thousands to almost a million.

Despite the risks, no monitoring is currently required for patients on repeat prescriptions. Should someone need help, there is no network of specialist addiction services to which GPs or pain doctors can refer.

Unless patients live near Bradford or North East Wales – or can afford private treatment – the only support available is through mainstream drugs services. Although users are not excluded from these, stigma means they are unlikely to attend.

Patients who live in poor areas are more likely to be prescribed opioids – with GPs in the north dishing out some of the highest levels. GPs in Blackpool and St Helens prescribe more than anywhere else in England, according to research by the universities of Manchester and Nottingham. Knowsley, Barnsley, Halton and Doncaster are also among the top 10.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is developing guidelines on safe prescribing and withdrawal management of medications, including opioids, and packaging will soon carry warnings about the risk of addiction.

But pain management requires more than drugs and experts say greater access to mental health support could lower prescribing levels. Last year, Public Health England published a report on prescription medication. The widespread prescribing of opioids, benzodiazepines and sleeping pills needs to change, its authors warned – adding that that GPs should instead consider social prescribing. Other recommendations included referrals to mental health teams, psychological therapies, support groups, pain clinics and addiction services.

Ritchie, a cognitive behavioural therapist, has worked with hundreds of people since his prescription drugs service launched five years ago. Tailored counselling is a key feature of recovery, alongside support with withdrawal. The service, which is largely funded by Bradford Council, is over-subscribed.



Although few in number, treatment programmes are backed by evidence. In the 2017 Drugs Strategy the government pledged to support local authorities and clinical commissioning groups so that people dependent on medicines can access suitable programmes. They provide good value for money, with every £1 spent on structured drug therapy saving local services £2.50.

The agency We Are With You – formerly Addaction – occasionally supports users of prescription medications in its clinics. It also runs an online web chat where people can log on and talk to a recovery worker.

Director of pharmacy Rachel Britton recalls a woman who had become hooked on tramadol following an operation overdosing at one of its services. She was given naloxone to reverse the overdose.

She says: “While we’d need to modify how we support people with these different dependencies a bit, in terms of the psychosocial interventions there are similarities. That’s the bit that makes the difference in drug treatment – giving people the tools to deal with psychological pain, without needing to take a pill or pick up a needle.”

In the US, several studies have shown chronic pain patients who use medical cannabis reduced their use of opioids by anywhere between 64 and 97 per cent. Another harm reduction approach is the deregulation of naloxone. Australia is currently trialling a scheme where this

“Our interviews revealed that patients were often respectful, resentful and resigned,” he says. “There were themes of resentment of medicines, respect for doctors and a resignation to pain. They felt there was no way out and had an enduring sense that their situation was not going to get better.”

Cooper would like to see more prevention – training and educating prescribers about alternatives to opioids, for example. GP surgeries could be audited to check which patients on their lists have been on opioids for long periods of time and to look at doses. This work could be done by community pharmacists, he believes, if funding was available.

To this end, a team from Durham University has developed a toolkit to help GPs treat chronic pain safely and effectively through psychosocial interventions and reduce their reliance on painkillers.

The team has also launched an interactive website, Ten Footsteps, aimed at supporting patients to self-manage their pain and improve their quality of life. The resource looks at ways people can learn to live with their symptoms.

The initiative was developed as part of research into persistent pain and the high levels of opioid prescriptions in the North East.

The team – which is working with the highest-prescribing GP practice in County Durham – found evidence of a “pain divide” behind regional variations

## “Dependence creeps up on them. They think their world will collapse without the tablets.”

is being made available free of charge to users of prescription opioids, to help prevent accidental overdoses.

Britton says: “I think there’s something quite interesting here around prescription opiates. The question I would ask is are we talking to these people about naloxone? In an ideal world where we had the funding, we would absolutely be making it available. If they could go to a local pharmacy and get a supply that could work well.”

Dr Richard Cooper, a former pharmacist who is now a senior lecturer in public health at University of Sheffield, surveyed more than 800 patients from 13 GP surgeries who are on opioid prescriptions and found about one in seven participants could be classed as dependent. They experienced delays getting referred to pain clinics and for other treatments, which could reduce the reliance on pills.

in data. Rather than being an issue of inappropriate prescribing, they found people in their region were more likely to experience chronic pain.

Dr Paul Chazot, associate professor in the department of biosciences, says: “Pain is the single biggest reason people see their doctor and GPs need help to deal with this. They cannot measure it and cannot treat it effectively. We need to develop primary and community care clinician confidence to manage chronic pain and safe prescribing effectively. Persistent pain cannot be fixed or cured at the moment. We need a person-centred management to help people live better lives with it.

“More needs to be done – at a national level – to support prescribers to manage people who have chronic pain, without the need to initiate opioid analgesics, perhaps using more non-pharmacological pain management strategies.”



**Katie Bedford developed an opioid dependency**

Back in Bradford, Ritchie would agree. One of his clients, who was taking huge doses of fentanyl, can walk upright for the first time in 20 years after processing the emotions linked to being abused as a child. Another hopes to walk again after years in a wheelchair due to leg problems which were a physical manifestation of trauma.

“I see people with a lot of trauma and the mental health services they need are just not there,” he says. “We help them process what we can. I would never say there isn’t genuine physical pain but the people I work with have been given painkillers when actually some of them needed psychological support, which is hard to get.

“Some GPs are amazing at checking through their records – they can see the benefit of this work and are very proactive. It’s cost effective too, because people’s physical health gets better, their mental health improves, they aren’t taking bucketloads of medication they don’t need and they aren’t seeing their doctor for every ailment under the sun. We need more services like this across the country.” ■

## Grizedale



Internationally acclaimed artist **Gerry Judah** brings together a striking body of work built over nearly a decade for *Bengal: The Four Elements*, at Grizedale Forest Gallery, 21 July-9 Sept. Visually forceful, Judah's detailed sculptures engage with issues of climate change in India whilst also exploring the artist's personal history. ([forestryengland.uk/grizedale](http://forestryengland.uk/grizedale))

## London



**Art Enthusiasts London** is hosting a series of webinars and online workshops for all ages. Highlights include Fauvism for kids age 6-9, Impressionism for ages 10-13, stained glass painting for 5-6 year olds and Kandinsky webinars for children age 10-13 and separately for adults. ([eventbrite.co.uk/o/art-enthusiasts-london-12917494907](https://eventbrite.co.uk/o/art-enthusiasts-london-12917494907))

## Manchester



The **Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair** goes online this year to support designer-makers through the pandemic. Some 160 participants will show their work on 25-31 July, with viewers able to buy jewellery, textiles, ceramics, glass, print and furniture. ([greatnorthernevents.co.uk](http://greatnorthernevents.co.uk))



## Scarborough

A programme of **seaside and animal-themed stories, crafts and activities** to keep children entertained through the summer holidays is available from Scarborough Museums Trust between 22 July and 20 Aug. The highlight each week will be a new audio story written by Jan Bee Brown (pictured), released each Wednesday. The stories will bring paintings from the museum's collections to life, weaving together folk tales and local characters and landmarks, from Dottie the Donkey to the Hispaniola. ([scarboroughmuseumstrust.com/learning/family-resources](http://scarboroughmuseumstrust.com/learning/family-resources))



# THINGS TO DO ONLINE THIS WEEK

## Los Angeles



Afghan Whigs frontman **Greg Dulli** appears live from Gold Diggers in Los Angeles on 1 Aug. Using material from his recent solo record *Random Desire* as well as other songs from his career, Dulli plays the set twice – once to accommodate UK fans at 8pm GMT. ([dice.fm/greg-dulli-europe](https://dice.fm/greg-dulli-europe))

## Settle



Guest-directed by Joanne Harris\*, **Yorkshire Festival of Stories** hosts over 80 events online for free. Marking the 10th anniversary of Settle Stories the event is on 1-31 Aug and features big names including Jenni Murray, Yorkshire Shepherdess Amanda Owen and Booker-Prize winner Ben Okri, alongside workshops in storytelling and chocolate making, and a packed programme for children. ([yorkshirefestivalofstories.com](https://yorkshirefestivalofstories.com))

## North Yorkshire



**North Yorkshire Moors Railway** is firing up the engines to welcome passengers aboard from 1 August. The reopening on Yorkshire Day sees the beginning of four departures daily from Pickering to Levisham and from Grosmont to Goathland. Tickets must be pre-booked for a specific time slot before visiting. ([nymr.co.uk/welcome-back](https://nymr.co.uk/welcome-back))

## Blackpool



The **Virtual, Arty, Art B&B Pyjama Party** on 24 July is an online event marking the end of lockdown and the imminent reopening of the art hotel. Associate artist Mykey J Young will host and broadcast the final episode of his *Weekly Kiki*. He'll be joined by artist Jez Dolan, comical cabaret musical act Black Liver and one of Blackpool's most famous fortune tellers. ([buzzradiouk.online](https://buzzradiouk.online))



\*Read a Q&A with Joanne Harris, about her latest book, in the Reading Room section of [bigissuenorth.com](https://bigissuenorth.com)



TELEVISION

## THE REAL EASTENDERS

Channel 4, Tuesday 21 July, 10pm

Every community is a microcosm, defining itself through values and strengths that feel unique to those on the inside. That's the common thread laced through this charmingly simple one-off documentary about life on London's Isle of Dogs, narrated by local singer-songwriter Hak Baker. Filmed across one summer, the focus is on three different kids.

Nine-year-old Willow is precocious and outgoing, already dreaming about how she's going to grow up to be rich and famous, living in Essex in the sort of luxury only the Queen can dream about.

Twelve-year-old Brendan is verbose and endearingly awkward, and has been raised by his nan rather than going into care, aged four, after his mum was arrested. He only sees his mum sporadically now, but he hopes to visit her – and his new baby brother – for a family birthday.

Tearaway lad Leslie, also 12, also endured a forced separation from a parent after the death of his dad, also called Lesley, who went to prison for drugs offences. Leslie Jr has already been excluded from school three times and mum Tina worries he's easy prey for the estate's dodgier characters, always looking for an eager kid to lure into their petty criminal schemes.

Each of these kids comes from families that have history on the Isle of Dogs going back five or six generations, and Baker's poetic narration draws a strong but subtle line from the island's heyday, when the docks provided a trade for every family, to today, as the skyscrapers of City finance creep ever closer. Such complaints of an end to old ways of life can often come couched in reactionary politics, but Baker's vision of his home turf is multi-generational and multi-racial.

The interesting part is that in making a film about what makes his particular scrappy working-class neighbourhood so special and unique, he's actually made a film about what makes every British working-class community so strong – and the threats they face.

There are, thankfully, no horrific calamities or bleak poverty tales here – just ordinary people and ordinary kids doing their best with the uninspiring hand fate has dealt them. It's hard to tell that kind of story without lurching into mawkish sentiment or tub-thumping screeds, but Baker's clear-eyed celebration of working-class childhood ends on a sweet, hopeful and most of all cheerfully honest note.

DAN WHITEHEAD



GAMES

## GHOST OF TSUSHIMA (PS4)

**GROUNDED** (Xbox One, PC)

**DESTROY ALL HUMANS!** (PS4, Xbox One, PC)

A predictable blockbuster gameplay template gets a Kurosawa makeover in new PlayStation exclusive **Ghost of Tsushima**. You're playing as Jin Sakai, one of the few Samurai still surviving on Tsushima Island during the Mongol invasion of 1270. It's up to you to strike back against the enemy, roaming a luxuriously detailed open game world, rich in historical detail, while alternating between open combat and sneaky stealth to achieve your goals. So, yes, it is a fairly naked copy of the best-selling *Assassin's Creed* series, although the Samurai setting maps well onto that formula and the Kurosawa comparisons are openly acknowledged – you can play the game in moody black and white to better match the style and tone of the movie maestro's films. It's a game that gives you exactly what you expect but does so with no small amount of style and depth, so the lack of originality is easier to swallow.

A similar relationship between generic concept and charming aesthetic can be found in **Grounded**, another of those multiplayer survival games that have become so popular in recent years. You'll work together online with friends to harvest resources, build defences and fight off attacks from fiendish enemies. The difference this time is that you're playing as a quartet of teens who have been shrunk to the size of an ant, and the landscape you must survive is your own back yard – giant bugs and all. And, yes, once again there's an obvious movie influence here – *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids* – and the game's 1990s setting pays tribute to that in winking style. There's a story of sorts, as you try to find out why you're so tiny, but mostly it's the familiar but fun rhythms of the co-operative gameplay and the chunky tactile cartoon visuals that seal the deal.

Finally, there's yet more cinematic riffing in **Destroy All Humans!** This is a remake of a cult 2005 game, spruced up with modern graphics. You play as Crypto-137, a bulbous-headed alien tasked with invading the US in the 1950s. No B-movie trope goes unused as you rampage around a kitsch Americana sandbox, using your array of sci-fi weaponry to bamboozle and roast the locals, or hopping into your flying saucer to wreak havoc from the skies. The result is simple, silly satirical fun.

DAN WHITEHEAD





MUSIC

## LIANNE LA HAVAS

*Lianne La Havas* (Warner)



Lianne La Havas has been covering Radiohead's song *Weird Fishes* in her live shows for years, but it was only last summer that the singer and her band laid down a studio version of the fan favourite *In Rainbows* track.

Delighted by the results, La Havas decided that her third album had to be made in the same spirit, featuring just her regular band and a small close-knit group of collaborators. The result is a career-best work that strips away the polish and gloss of her first two records in favour of an intimate live feel that gives her soulful vocals and earworm melodies ample room to shine.

"Bittersweet summer rain/I'm born again," she sings on the imperious opening track, a sultry break-up song – underpinned by crisp

drums, jazzy organ chords and floating gospel harmonies – that culminates in the anguished cry "No more hanging around."

*Can't Fight* and a husky *Paper Thin* mine a similarly laidback and loose 1970s soul groove, while *Seven Times* incorporates Spanish flamenco, contemporary jazz and 2000s R&B (ala Lauryn Hill) into a sassy tale of a failed romance.

At times it feels like south Londoner La Havas is in the same room singing direct to you, at others like you've stumbled into a private studio jam by a bunch of people freed from commercial expectations, revelling in the pure joy of making music.

RICHARD SMIRKE

## THE CHICKS

*Gaslighter*

(Columbia)



Arriving a few weeks after Dixie Chicks dropped the first part of their name due to its association with the Civil War-era South, *Gaslighter* finds the country trio in indignant mood. "I hope you die peacefully in your sleep/Just kidding, I hope it hurts like you hurt me," sings Natalie Maines on a breezy *Tights On My Boat*, one of several songs about betrayal and heartbreak. Others include the banjo-driven *Sleep At Night* and an aching *For Her*, which marries a soaring chorus to velveteen harmonies and warm Wurlitzer chords. *March March*, loosely about social injustice, stirs different, but no less passionate emotions.

## JUICE WRLD

*Legends Never Die*

(Grade A/Universal)



When Chicago rapper Juice WRLD died in December aged just 21 he was one of the rising stars of American hip-hop, known for both his prolific output and candid emo trap sound that countered the genre's trademark machismo. *Legends Never Die*, his sprawling first posthumous album, showcases the artist's obvious strengths but, like so many post-death records, lacks focus, stretching out the hour-long running time with guest features and meandering filler. Great songs still occasionally cut through (*Life's A Mess*, a gently soothing *Righteous*), although too few to warrant more than a cursory listen.

## THE BLINDERS

*Fantasies Of A Stay At Home Psychopath*

(Modern Sky)



"There are children in cages on Monday's front pages," wails The Blinders' Thomas Haywood on *Lunatic (With A Loaded Gun)*, a vitriolic condemnation of President Trump's treatment of Mexican migrants. Other targets of the Doncaster-via-Manchester band's ire on their searing second album are capitalism, populist ideology and existential despair, all of which are tackled in a blitzkrieg-like assault of grinding guitars, bruising drums and menacing desert blues reminiscent of Nick Cave. The overall mood is one of anger, despair and fury, sweetened by punchy hooks and monolithic choruses.



CINEMA

## STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

Bringing scares back to the big screen, **The Vigil** (from 31 July) is a low-budget supernatural horror film rooted in Jewish mythology. It takes place over the course of one night in a Hassidic Brooklyn neighbourhood where Yakov, a former Hassid who has lost his faith and who isn't eager to go back to the insular religious community he has only recently fled, is offered money to watch over the dead body of a recently deceased Holocaust survivor. Desperate for the money, he reluctantly accepts the job and gets much more than he bargained for.

The opening of the film slowly builds up the tension with a nerve-shredding soundtrack that drills into you that poor Yakov is not in for a good night as he enters the spooky town house where you wish for his sake the owners had invested in some better lighting. The next half an hour is full of creeping horror. Did the body move under the shroud? Is that a face leering out of the darkness just behind him? Already traumatised by an antisemitic attack that devastated his life, Yakov starts to suspect he's losing his grip on reality until he (and we) learns from some clunky exposition about the force that he is facing and why it's there.

While there are plenty of traditional off-the-shelf horror tropes here, the jump scares and the shadowy terrors are backed up with a lovely performance by Davis and a script by writer and director Keith Thomas that takes things beyond the supernatural and into the real horrors perpetrated upon people and the terror they leave behind. *The Vigil* is a dark fable that is simply told, but which gets under your skin and lingers with you after the final shot. Well worth seeking out.

Opening its doors again after the shutdown, Ambleside's excellent Zeffirellis cinema returns this month with **The Rifleman: Blizzard of Souls** (from 26 July) as one of its first offerings. Adapted from the book by Aleksandrs Grins, which was based on his own teenage experiences, the film examines the brutality of the First World War, as seen through the eyes of a 17-year-old farm-boy turned soldier. After losing his mother and his home, Arturs joins Latvia's first national battalion to fight for the Russian Empire, but his hope of finding glory on the battlefield is soon replaced by horror.

CHRISTIAN LISSEMAN





**A young woman sits sideways in a bubble bath, her hair bundled unceremoniously atop her head. Her skin, dewy and without a trace of makeup, already pinked from long hot days, is made rosier still by the hot water and the hot, muddy tea that she nurses in a mug half-submerged in the bubbles. The moment of unselfconscious peace is broken by an omnipresence and the woman defiantly casts her eyes skyward.**

The image is lockdown incarnate. *Brewing* was painted by 20-year-old Abigail McGourlay from Sheffield, winning of the Arts Society's national Isolation Artwork competition for young artists.

"This piece captures a real moment of comfort, in both my two favourite things – a warm bubble bath and a hot cup of tea – and in myself," says McGourlay, whose work was selected by public vote and is part of a virtual exhibition on the Arts Society Connected digital platform.

"I am never usually the subject of my own work and this piece has allowed me to explore my own features in ways I have never felt comfortable to do before."

McGourlay was one of eight artists shortlisted for the prize by judges including Rebecca Hossack, Charlie Waite and Dan Evans. All artists' works feature in the digital exhibition, which runs until the end of the month.

Young artists entering the competition were asked to respond to the theme of isolation and have produced new works that reflect their experience of lockdown. Many explore feelings of uncertainty, isolation, loneliness as well as nature, connection and love.

"I've struggled with the current situation both mentally and physically. The uncertainty of lockdown put me in quite a stressful mind set, and I found it, at first, difficult to feel motivated," says McGourlay, who was in her second year of studying fine art at Leeds University and was working as a swimming instructor when lockdown hit.

She decided to take control of the situation and, applying herself to her work, turned a corner.

## IN THE FRAME

# Abigail McGourlay

The 20-year-old student from Sheffield has won the Arts Society's national Isolation Artwork competition with a captivating self portrait, **Antonia Charlesworth** writes





**Left: Brewing by Abigail McGourlay and the artist. Above: shortlisted works – Ella Sambrook's Orb (top) and Annie Doron's My Future**

"I started sketching out this self-portrait at the beginning of my first year of university but as I started to develop and focus on my sculptural practice many of my painting projects were put on the back burner.

"Through the time I've been given in lockdown I have rediscovered my love of the painting medium. The sense of utter consumption in a piece of work, like an almost hypnotic state is how my dad used to describe me when I painted, and I feel I have once again experienced that relationship with painting."

Waite, a landscape photographer known for his painterly approach, says McGourlay's talent for realism fooled him.

"My very first response was one of admiring her skill in being able to photograph herself from above. Then, after that first second, I knew it was paint and not photography that had created this extraordinary, skilled work. Being one to always enjoy detail, it was the remarkable attention to her lighting with accompanying shadows that struck me, resulting in such a powerful three-dimensional image.

"The whites of her eyes and near black pupils haul the eye and the mind of the viewer into a sense of being confronted and challenged, resulting in a feeling of being deeply unsettled, bordering on fear."

**The work of all eight shortlisted artists can be viewed at [connected.theartsociety.org/isolation-artwork-competition](https://connected.theartsociety.org/isolation-artwork-competition)**

# Please help us find

## Glyn Taylor - Spalding, Lincolnshire



Glyn was last seen in Spalding on 11 July 2001. He was 21 when he disappeared 19 years ago this month.

Glyn is urged to call Missing People on 116 000 or email [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk) for advice and support, including the opportunity to send a message in confidence.

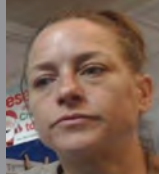
## Finn Layland-Stratfield - Tintagel, Cornwall



Finn has been missing from Tintagel, Cornwall since 08 July 2017. He was 17 years old when he disappeared 3 years ago this month.

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

## Joanne Sheen - Southampton, Hampshire



Joanne went missing from Southampton on 22 Feb 2020. She was 44 years old when she was last seen.

Joanne, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk) for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready

## John Bowkett - Doncaster, South Yorkshire



John has been missing from Doncaster since 12 July 1992. He was 37 years old when he disappeared 28 years ago this month.

John, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk) for advice and support whenever you feel ready.

## Edele Tipping - Abersoch, Gwynedd, North Wales



Edele was last seen in Abersoch on 10 July 2019. She was 40 years old when she went missing one year ago this month.

Edele, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

## Gareth Jones - Fareham, Hampshire



Gareth has been missing from Fareham since 08 May 2020. He was 39 at the time of his disappearance.

Gareth, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

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

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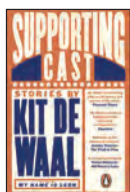
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## Author Q&A: Kit de Waal

**SUPPORTING CAST**

(Penguin, £8.99)

**As she walks out of her marriage, a woman remembers the day her husband rescued a boy from drowning. A blind man on his wedding day celebrates the pursuit of love. And a young man leaves prison with only one desire – to see his son again. Revisiting some familiar characters from her acclaimed books, as well as new ones, the author and advocate for working class voices in literature spans the decades and the country in this collection of short but engrossing vignettes.**

**Tell us about the form of *Supporting Cast*. Would you like to see them on the stage, where they would seem to sit comfortably as monologues or scenes?**

Yes, I think most of them would work well on the stage. *The Wedding Speech of Big Tom Fallon* has already been recorded for Radio 4 and many of the others, particularly those in the first person, would be great monologues. I can't wait to hear the audiobook as I've handpicked some of the narrators.

**Can readers who haven't read any of your previous books come to *Supporting Cast* first?**

Yes, *Supporting Cast* is a standalone collection and you don't have to know any of my other work to read it and understand it. Obviously, if you do have a recollection of some of the characters from a previous life you would know what they were doing then but these stories are just about normal people doing normal things.

**Have these shorts from supporting cast members added a new dimension to your existing books that they featured in?**

I think every character in a book is important and has a life off stage. They don't just serve a purpose in your novel and then disappear – not to me anyway. Some of the characters from my novels were just not finished with me, nor I with them, and it's been a joy and a luxury to be able to write about them again.

**The stories are set between the 1950s and the present day – what are the constants for your characters across the decades?**

The constants for these characters is that they all want a kind of peace because that, I think is the human condition: this longing for stasis and lack of drama. There are the big highs and lows of life – birth, death, celebrations, funerals, marriages, high days, holidays and dark days – but actually our lives are lived in the gaps between those things, in the many, many days of normality when nothing big happens. And on those days we, most of us, want to be content with the people and in the places we love.

**The characters of Byron and Castro are black prisoners in the UK and the US. There is a spotlight on racism in the police since the killing of George Floyd. Do you think the BLM protests can effect change?**

I think every single moment of activism and resistance has the power to effect change. The Black Lives Matter movement is a moment in history and so, of course, is important. But way after the spotlight turns away from it – as it inevitably will – there will remain the need to keep at it, calling people and institutions to account and still saying our lives matter.

**With your advance for *My Name is Leon* you set up a writing scholarship and have since gone on to be a voice for working class writers. Have you achieved what you set out to?**

I have only partly achieved what I set out to do. The scholarship has been fantastic and has made a difference to a few writers. Common People has made a difference to a few more people but there are still lots of working class writers who need a hand to navigate the world of publishing and a hand up the ladder. There's lots more work to do.



Photo: Sarah Lee

**How has coronavirus and lockdown impacted on you as a writer?**

The lockdown hasn't impacted me over much apart from the low level anxiety I have for the world, for my friends and family, and for everyone working so hard to keep us safe. It has also made me extremely angry with this government although it has to be said, I was angry before the virus and I'll be angry after!

ANTONIA CHARLESWORTH

## OFF THE SHELF **DUBIOUS MIRACLES** **CLARE CHAMBERS**

- The seed for *Small Pleasures* was planted by a tabloid sensation from the 1950s. The *Sunday Pictorial* launched a competition to find a Virgin Mother and a body of eminent scientists was brought in to devise a series of tests to authenticate any claims. Various women came forward and were ruled out, but one, Emmimarie Jones, was harder to dismiss. She had been in hospital, completely segregated from any men at the time of the "conception" of her daughter, and a series of experiments on their blood and saliva failed to find any evidence of a father's involvement. This struck me as a fascinating springboard for a novel. Was she a miracle or a fraud? Or was something darker at work? My novel concerns a sceptical journalist's quest to uncover the truth.
- In my reading I find I am often drawn to these stories of the apparently miraculous and the fragile boundary between rationalism and a yearning to believe in the supernatural.



## OFF THE SHELF SIBLING DYNAMICS HOLLY SMALE



My fascination with the sibling dynamic has inspired both my reading and my writing: there are less than two years between myself and my little sister, and I've been fascinated in seeing this play out in fiction since I was a small child. Our relationship is unlike any other in my life. It is complex, nuanced, powerful, essential. We are incredibly close – we have helped to create each other and form how we see both ourselves and our places in the world – but we also

fight like hell hounds and can destroy each other in seconds flat, even now we're in our thirties.

**Little Women** by Louisa May Alcott (Wordsworth Editions) was an early love for me. Sisters have a language nobody else understands – an entire vocabulary that holds decades of fights, gestures and confessions – and this book captured it so accurately. The chapter where Amy throws Jo's manuscript on the fire in a fury and then dissolves into remorse felt so real, and as a kid I felt relieved that my intense scrapping with my sister wasn't a total anomaly. **Ballet Shoes** by Noel Streatfeild (Puffin) – while less antagonistic – really exemplified the way sisters take on different roles in a family and end up on different paths, and I connected to that element of individuality and freedom.

With *Far From Perfect* – indeed, the entire Valentines series – I wanted to focus on the relationship between three very dissimilar sisters: to try and capture that complexity and closeness, but also the darkness that can bubble up and spill over as well. **King Lear** by William Shakespeare (Wordsworth Classics) is a great example of the potential toxicity and resentment between siblings, while **My Sister, The Serial Killer** (Atlantic Books) by Oyankin Braithwaite is frankly unprecedented in how it captures the intensity, passion and loyalty between sisters, regardless of the dark consequences.

While my books are often described as "romances", for me it is the love between families that has provided the backbone of all my writing. With *The Valentines*, I finally made this relationship centre stage: celebrating and shining a light on the irreplaceable bond between sisters, and how magic that tie is.

**The Valentines: Far From Perfect by Holly Smale is out 23 July (HarperCollins Children's Books, £7.99)**



**The Wonder** (Picador) by Emma Donoghue\* is also based on an apparent miracle – the phenomenon of the "fasting girl", who can live without food for months. In this case the rational observer is an English nurse, tasked with keeping the child under surveillance to either validate her extraordinary story or expose her as a fake. But this is 19th century rural Ireland and poverty, religious fanaticism and family secrets form an unholy trinity in this literary page-turner.

Sarah Waters is one of my favourite contemporary writers and **Affinity** (Virago) is perhaps my favourite of her books. An unhappy Victorian woman, doubly betrayed in love, undertakes some therapeutic prison-visiting, and comes under the spell of a charismatic spiritualist among the female inmates – with devastating consequences. Waters manipulates the reader's sympathies until you are ready to believe anything.

A different century and a very different tone – **Imaginary Friends** (Vintage) by Alison Lurie is a satirical comedy about two professors of sociology who infiltrate a wacky cult in upstate New York, whose adherents believe in an extra-terrestrial messiah from the planet Varna. The conduit for this cosmic codswallop is an attractive teenage girl; ethical conflicts soon ensue, and academic rigour is not the only casualty.

**Small Pleasures by Clare Chambers is out now (W&N, £7.99)**



\* Read a Q&A with Emma Donoghue about *The Wonder* here: [bigissuenorth.com/reading-room/2016/09/author-qa-emma-donoghue](http://bigissuenorth.com/reading-room/2016/09/author-qa-emma-donoghue)



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# LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

## VINNIE JONES

*Actor and former hard man footballer, aged 55*

When I was 16 I was in love with football. That was my whole life. I loved the outdoors: the fishing and the shooting and the woods and the rivers. But paramount was always football. You'd never, ever see me without a football. When I was in a classroom I'd just be looking out the window at the playground, working out who would play against who at break time. That's all I'd look forward to. I left school at 15 and I went straight into working on the building site with my dad.

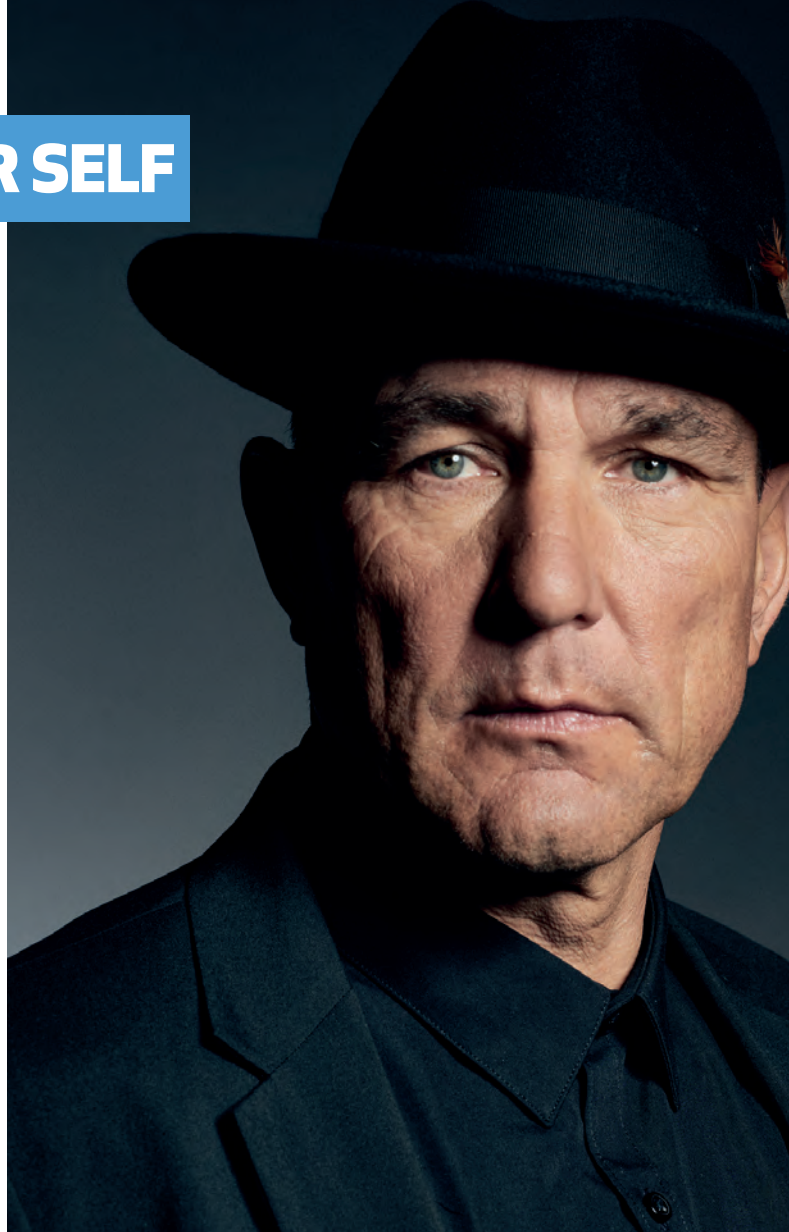
I'd been signed to Watford as a schoolboy. There were about 15 of us who'd been taken on and it was a great honour. I remember the headmaster getting me up at assembly and saying congratulations. So when I got released, when I was 15 – that's like a bombshell. You feel like it's the end of the world. For 10 years your whole life is playing football and then you get the devastating news that they're not going to take you on. I remember it well – they called me and my best mate Graham in together. And the manager said, Graham, if you keep playing and keep your head down you could maybe be a professional one day. And he turned to me and said, Vinnie, your problem is you treat life as one big joke. I said thanks very much and laughed. I went out and I was working on the building site the next day. Reality hit hard but there was no one to talk to who could help you. It was just, get on with it.

Sixteen was already a hard year because we had just gone through a very bad divorce with mum and dad. I'd had a great life, I was always laughing and bubbly, really happy until the divorce, and then I became angry. I rebelled against my dad, which I suppose was partly because of my age, going through puberty and all that. I got angry and at the same time I started drinking and then fighting came into it. I think young men have a lot of anger and in them days a curry and a fight on a Friday night was the norm. And this all came at the same time as the divorce and being dropped by Watford. And also moving away, with my dad, from all my lifelong friends – that was another devastating blow. So it was a hard time for me.

I thought about joining the army for a while. I just wanted to be around a lot of blokes. All the camaraderie, I craved that. So when Dave Bassett finally signed me to Wimbledon in 1986 it was great. Thirty blokes every day, all the banter that young blokes do. I was very happy. But I was also a really hard trainer. People said, oh, he's lucky. There was nothing lucky about it. You need breaks, but when you get them you've got to make the most of them. I think winners get stronger and losers get weaker. When I had to go to Wealdstone [where his semi-professional career began] I used to get two buses and a train. It was pouring with rain and about a mile-and-a-half walk home. There was nothing lucky about that but I did it and I did it and I did it.

I don't feel guilty about anything I did when I was younger. There was a lot of beer drinking and that but that was the norm. You can't control bombs. My life was bombarded. The biggest devastation in my life was when my mother and father split up and I had to go with one or the other. At that age it's like incisors in your guts, and it takes years and years and probably now I still haven't got over it. That's why I always say, don't be quick to judge people when you don't know what their background is. Unfortunately the press and everybody else have been very quick to judge me. They never asked about my background. No one said, oh, actually, bloody hell, you went through all that? But anyway, I move on. I won't let the grass grow around me. I don't feel sorry for myself; my glass is always half full.

I still remember the first time I saw Tans [his wife Tanya, who died of cancer last year]. We were 12 years old in Watford. We'd gone to a



cricket match, and we met while the dads were playing cricket. And then we met again when we were 16 and I walked her home from the pub. I was showing off. Was she impressed? I think so, because we stayed together forever. Now I take things day to day. I get up in the morning and I have a little chat with her when I'm making my bed. And then I somehow muddle through the day. And I think of her in the evening. It was a year since she passed and it was our 26th wedding anniversary on 25 June, so it's been a hard couple of weeks. The grief sort of creeps up on you like the fog. And you have to get through it and get to the sunshine on the other side. I just want to get through it.

Everywhere I've gone in football I've loved it. I was always popular with the lads, always up for the craic. Leeds was great, Sheffield United I was captain – that was fantastic. Chelsea was great fun. With Wimbledon we won the FA Cup but that was all so quick it was kind of a blur. Winning the league with Leeds was fantastic and it took all season so you could take it in a bit more. Gordon Strachan was our captain. I got close to him and I'm still close to him now. He's a very good man, I have a lot of admiration for the wee man.

Getting into films was a complete random accident. I got a phone call from Matthew Vaughn and Guy Ritchie and they said, we're going to do this movie [1998's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*] and we've got a little cameo for you. I said yeah, no problem, and I went and did a couple of days' filming. At the end of the film Guy asked me to do some reshoots and they made my role bigger. I didn't think I'd be especially good at it but I just related the character to a couple of angry people I knew. It was, as the Watford manager said, just one big joke really, and then look what happened.

***I don't feel guilty about anything I did when I was younger. You can't control bombs.***

Gareth Cattermole / Getty

When *Lock, Stock* first came out there were a couple of articles that sort of crapped on us, then all of a sudden, the whole public turned. So obviously the couple of journalists that had shit on us disappeared and the other journalists that were savvy enough to wait for the verdict came out and everybody was, way hay, this is what we've been waiting for, this is British. I think it's up there with *The Long Good Friday* and *The Italian Job*. I think it's a British gem. And I think the British people own it now.

After *Lock, Stock* I had people like Bob Hoskins and Michael Caine say to me, you've got a career in this, and I said really? And they said, you have got a massive screen presence – the minute you come on screen you just take over, no matter who's on the screen with you. Bob Hoskins and Michael Caine both said that to me. And now with *The Big Ugly* I'm an actor, producer and writer. And I'm really excited about the future.

If I could go back to any moment in my life, I think it would be just after *Snatch*, and I took everybody – the whole family – out to LA when I was doing *Gone in 60 Seconds*. Actually I took friends and family, housekeeper, laundry lady, gardener – I booked 62 return flights to LA that year. I remember when me and Tans went to sign the deal, flying into LAX, and going straight to a meeting with Nicolas Cage and Angelina Jolie. I turned to Tans and said, is this really happening? And she was laughing and she said, I hope so.

Reproduced from The Big Issue UK (@bigissue)

INTERVIEW: JANE GRAHAM

***The Big Ugly is in cinemas and on digital from 24 July***



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## BIG ISSUE NORTH

THE INDEPENDENT STREET PAPER | WORKING NOT BEGGING

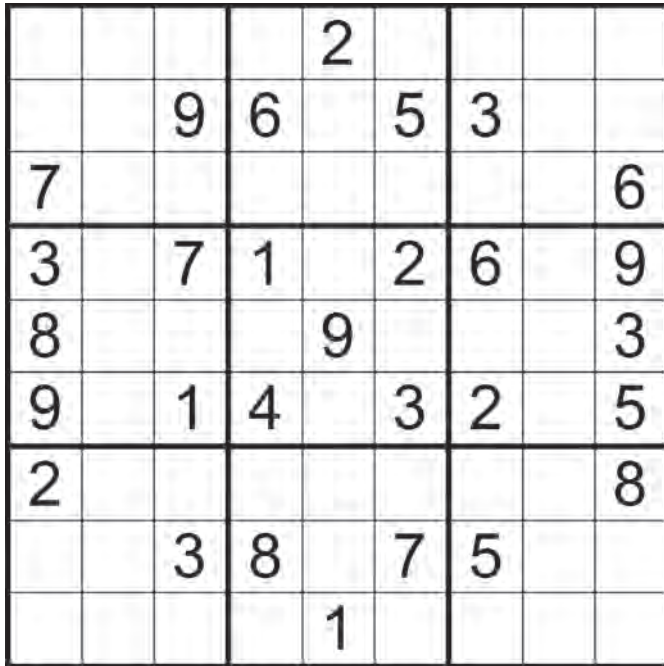
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# BRAINWORK

## SUDOKU



Complete the Sudoku puzzle so that each and every row, column and region contains the numbers one to nine once.

The solution to the last Sudoku is shown on the right.

8	4	3	1	5	9	6	7	2
7	6	9	3	8	2	5	1	4
5	1	2	6	4	7	9	3	8
3	9	4	7	1	5	2	8	6
2	8	1	9	6	4	7	5	3
6	7	5	8	2	3	1	4	9
4	3	7	2	9	1	8	6	5
9	5	8	4	7	6	3	2	1
1	2	6	5	3	8	4	9	7

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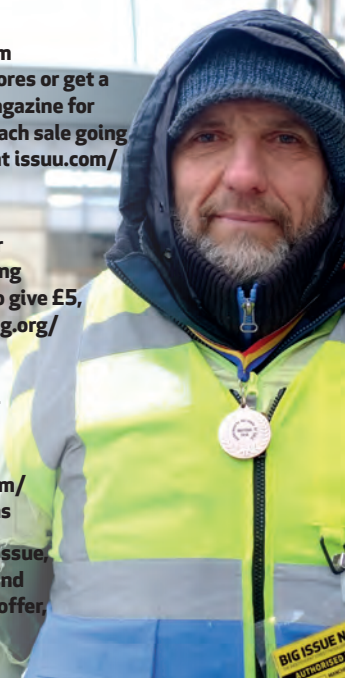
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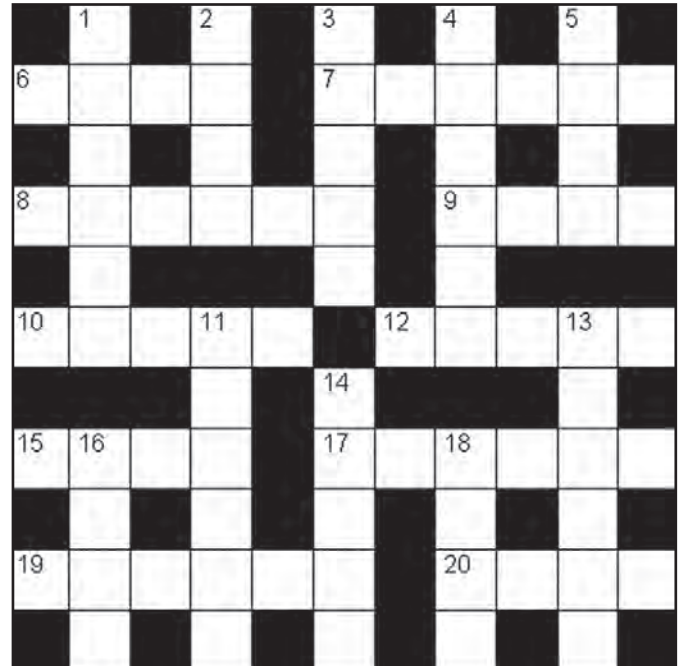
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## CROSSWORD 1347



SUPPLIED BY PANTHERS

### CRYPTIC CLUES: ACROSS

- Keen on horse without power (4)
- Was irritating to the ear to have low evaluation (6)
- Sleuth in Rio, top mystery (6)
- Oddly, choose to charge (4)
- Chant second in pocket (5)
- In high dudgeon, thrawn, cut off - outrageous! (5)
- For starter, bake 10 without afterthought, to soothe (4)
- Not a dual carriageway in France, say? (6)
- Unsettled, pun disentangled needs help (6)
- Fine in empty potty with insufficient space (4)

### CRYPTIC CLUES: DOWN

- Girl with some lads gets on one's nerves (6)
- Othello, say with spectacles in title (4)
- Gemstone a barrier (5)
- Scare badly about universal dish (6)
- First person to ship's canteen (4)
- Of the back line with hesitation to pub (6)
- Thinks I'm going out but a replacement offers grateful word (6)
- Comic fop (5)
- My uncles wife's a nut, crazy (4)
- Artist with extra note knocks on door (4)

### QUICK CLUES: ACROSS

- Indicating mathematical division (4)
- Shredded (6)
- Fictional detective (6)
- Notional value (4)
- Anthem (5)
- Fury (5)
- Embrogation (4)
- In a foreign country (6)
- Voluntary (6)
- Cramped (4)

### QUICK CLUES: DOWN

- Exasperates (6)
- Tie up a boat (4)
- Chalcedony (5)
- Support for cup (6)
- Untidiness (4)
- Spinal (6)
- Ta (6)
- Fine for an American (5)
- Female relative (4)
- Recites modern verse (4)

### LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

**ACROSS:** 1. Sour, 3. Crouch  
8. Olive, 9. Dishy, 10. Condiments  
12. Tenderloin, 16. Ebola, 17. Nutty  
18. Dryest, 19. Free

**DOWN:** 1. Scotch, 2. Union  
4. Red herring, 5. Upset, 6. Hwyl  
7. Behind bars, 11. Enzyme  
13. Ebony, 14. Otter, 15. Mead



## News from the Intrepid Wool Grower



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### Banghail Cardinals

Years ago I established a coral reef in a marine aquarium. It was really hard work but I succeeded in creating a hugely diverse micro-world from which I learnt so much. Of all the residents, my Banghail Cardinals fascinated me, mainly because of their elaborate breeding habits.



So every 3 months, somehow, because I never witnessed it, the male would scoop up a package of fertilized eggs and proceed to mouth brood them for 21 days. Of course, during this time he couldn't eat and so visibly lost weight, but looked like he had a bad case of mumps. Towards the end of the gestation period, if he turned to face me full on, I could actually see the babies peeking out. And then he would spit them out, secretly in the dead of night – perfect tiny replicas of himself. As they were very smart, the babies would make a bee line for my black sea urchin where they would hide among his 12 inch spines. They knew that all the fish around them, including poor dad (who hadn't eaten in 3 weeks), would see them merely as passing snacks.

Even though I waited up overnight on day 21, I never saw him delivering his brood but I knew exactly where to find them the next morning. I then had to extract them from the spines of the sea urchin and keep them safe while I hand fed them until they were big enough to fend for themselves (a story in itself because the spines of the sea urchin were poisonous). I eventually had 4 generations of Banghail Cardinals living in my tank.

Why am I suddenly reminiscing about my marine tank? Well during lock down, I realised how much I missed it. But then again I think we all realised how much we missed what we previously might have taken for granted.

Jessica







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