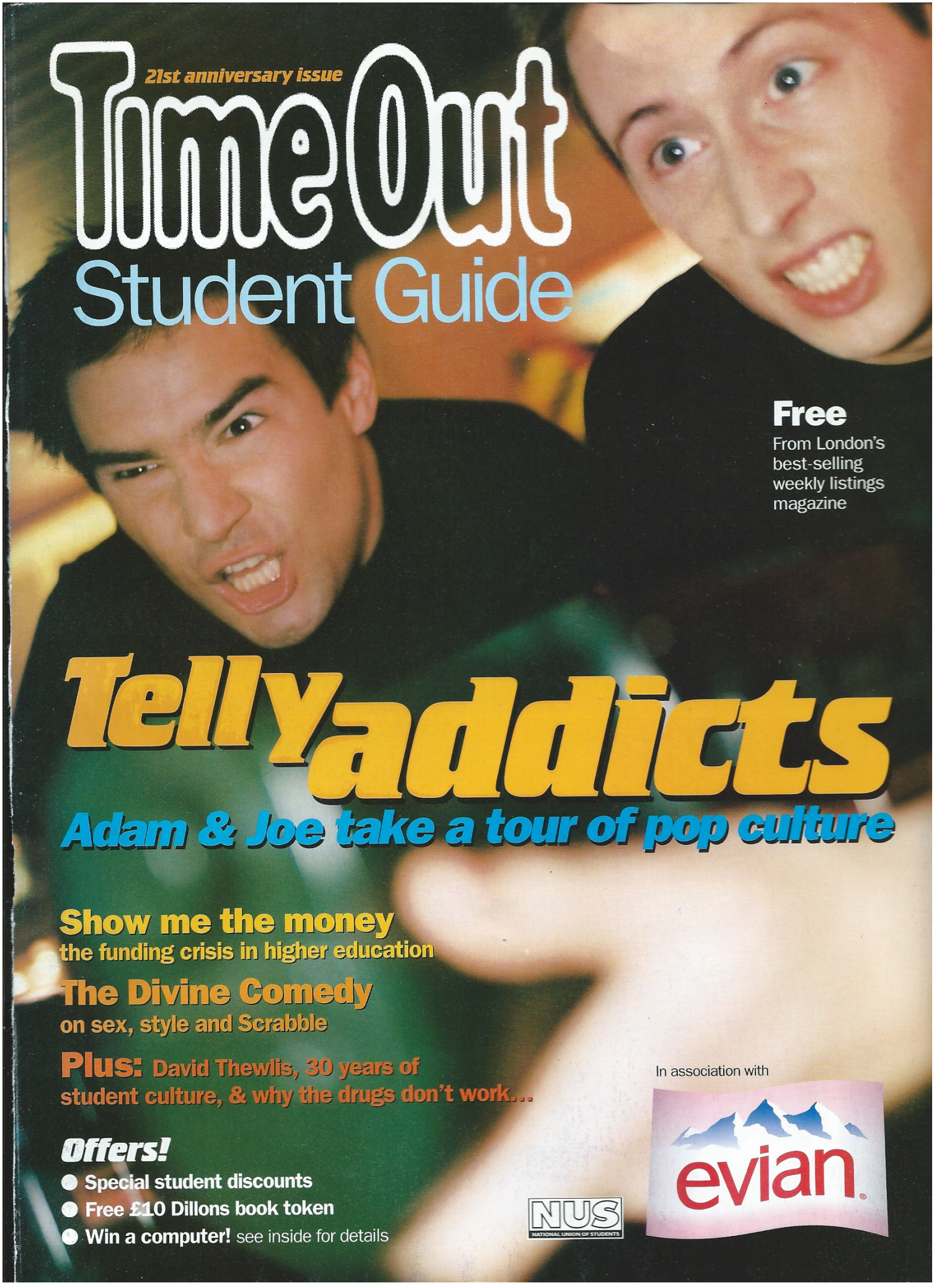


21st anniversary issue

Time Out Student Guide

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the funding crisis in higher education

The Divine Comedy
on sex, style and Scrabble

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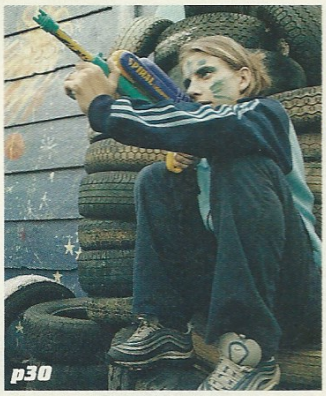
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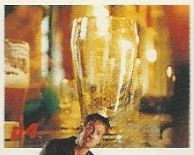
Time Out Student Guide

The Complete Guide to London













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Pubs, clothes, halls of residence, 24-hour garages and Pot Noodles: in short, all you need to stay alive and sane as a student in London.

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The only real education you'll get in the next three years will come from daytime TV. *Sonia Noy* trawls the schedules in search of enlightenment and entertainment.

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Going to university means making a choice between intellectual riches and financial prosperity. *Wendy Granditer* finds out that college ain't no rich man's world.

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26 Who Lives in a House Like This?

Think you can't afford to live in London? Think again. *Lawrence Bede* visits a house in the capital that's home to 25 people. One day, all homes will be made this way.

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The British film industry: thriving business or bad joke? *Daniel Fryer* talks to David Thewlis, star of new Britflick *Divorcing Jack*, and doesn't mention *Trainspotting* once.

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Revenge is sweet, particularly when it's both humiliating and legal. *Daniel Fryer* road-tests the best water pistols in the world and gets very wet indeed.

A fabulous, fully interactive version of the *Time Out Student Guide* is available online at: **http://www.timeout.com**

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And The Back Page: *John O'Connell* on why he hates students...



A round and around

Birthday bashes, the groom's last splash, sorrow swimming, or simply, as pop ingénue Billie put it, 'because we want to'. Yes, the humble pub crawl: not just a celebration of booze and the ability to chunder with aplomb, but of friendships and relationships and even life itself.

It's easy – and fun – to revitalise the pub crawl genre by going for a theme. Our favourite is a trek round the Circle line, running into the nearest imbiberie to each station. But don't blame us for the idea. Check out a tube map instead. Ever noticed how, well, *bottle-shaped* the Circle Line is? *Daniel Fryer*

Photography **John Oakey**

Handy hints for a fuss-free First

So, you thought it would be plain sailing after those nice people at UCAS gave you the green light. Think again. To survive among thousands of other young hopefuls, you will need a foolproof plan, with a ruthless attitude and a sense of adventure essential. Dignity? What's that? This is the real world, and if you want to maximise your time at college, you'll need to learn a few tricks. Try these for starters...

1. To gain respect from your fellow peers, let it be known that you have lived. Even if you've come straight from school, invent a summer of crocodile wrestling in the Amazon, your evenings spent sharing mind-blowing substances with loin-clothed natives. They don't need to know you were on the checkout at Superdrug.

2. Don't miss an opportunity to sleep with your lecturers. This can be exhausting if you're doing a Combined Studies degree, but it will pay off handsomely. Received wisdom has it that this is A Bad Idea. Received wisdom obviously hasn't tried it. Remember, the only way to get ahead is to give good head.

3. Befriend the union bar staff. You will be guaranteed free beer and after-hours drinking. Plus, you'll be top of the list when there's any work going, an advantage when funds are as elusive as an Arts student at a 9am lecture.

4. Lectures. Aim to go to as few as possible, while avoiding a bollocking from your tutor. Of course, you can always sleep with them too, but this option cuts into your precious free time. The best bet is to approach them with stories about poorly pet pythons and UFO abductions. They seem to accept these excuses far more readily than the frankly outrageous claims about delays on the Northern line.

5. Did I mention sleeping with your lecturers?

6. Lead yourself as far astray as is humanly possible. As a student you can get away with plenty of illicit activity, especially if your future plans include being Prime Minister or the head of MI5. You'll rarely be chased up because they know that as a student, you can't afford the fine. After all, bending the rules isn't shameful. It's an art. *Catriona Dean*

Paddington
Pride of Paddington, 1 Craven Road, W2
Looks like a '60s social club, smells like a lavatory. Lots of scary people.



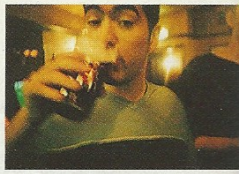
Great Portland Street
Green Man, 383 Euston Road, NW1
Thish pubs great. Great. Y'know what? You know what. I love you. No, I really, really mean that. I really love you. You're great. I love you.



Bayswater
Rat & Parrot, 99 Queensway, W2

Edgware Road
Dickens Tavern, 25 London Street, W2

Baker Street
The Globe, 43-47 Marylebone Road, NW1
'Don't leave me this way, I can't survive or stay alive, without your love, Aaaahhhhhhh, baby...' Um, where's the toilet?





Notting Hill Gate
Devonshire Arms, 90 Notting Hill Gate, W11
Small, dark wood corner pub-type-thing. Statues of Shearer and other footie things rub shoulders with Bart Simpson models.

Sloane Square
Royal Court Tavern, 11 Sloane Square, SW3
A ghastly shade of green, this one, and the toilets proudly present Condom Willy's Passion Pack for the 'Sporting All-rounder'.



High Street Kensington
Prince of Wales, 8 Kensington Church Street, W8

Gloucester Road
Stanhope Arms, 97 Gloucester Road, SW7

Westminster
Red Lion, 48 Parliament Street, SW1

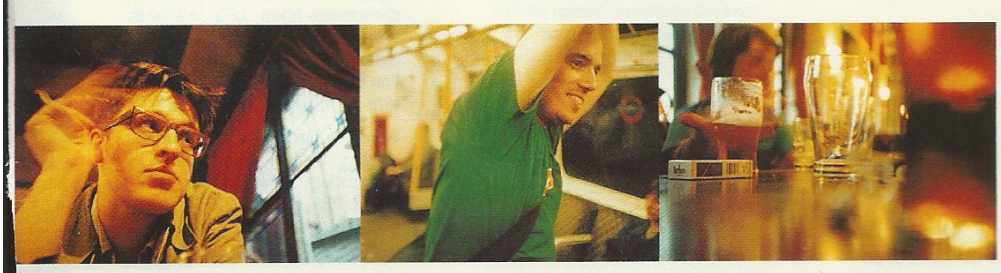
Victoria
Coopers Pub, Victoria Station, SW1

South Kensington
Norfolk Tavern, Kensington Moat House Hotel, 2-10 Harrington Street, SW7
The bar staff here seem to be one keg short of a dray and drinks, the ordering of, was therefore a surreal experience. Full of staff from the museums.





St James's Park
Adam & Eve, 81 Petty France, SW1
A traditional pub, next to the passport office and opposite an army barracks. Guest ales – Waggle Dance, Pigswill and Cocker Hoop – are a speciality.





Farringdon
The Castle, 34 Cowcross Street, EC1
Twenty-sheven shtops on the shircle line. Twenty-sheven pubsh. An thish ish tha lasht one. But itsh okee. No. Ish rilly okee. Fink I'm aliddle drrnk. Sshh. Club. *Lessallgotooaclub.*

King's Cross
Flying Scotsman, 2-4 Caledonian Road, N1

Euston Square
Crown & Anchor, corner of Gower Street & Drummond Street, NW1

Moorgate
Bishop Of Norwich, 91-93 Moorgate, EC2

Barbican
Sutton Arms, 6 Carthusian Street, EC1

Liverpool Street
Hamilton Hall, Liverpool Street Station, EC2



Aldgate
Hoop & Grapes, 47 Aldgate High St, EC2

Cannon Street
The Cannon, 95 Cannon Street, EC4

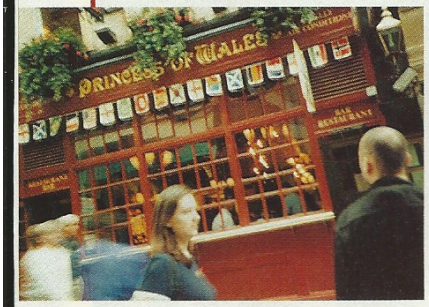
Tower Hill
The Minories, 64-73 The Minories, EC3

Temple
Edinburgh Tavern, 1 Milford Lane, EC2

Mansion House
O'Neill's, 65 Cannon Street, EC4

Blackfriars
The Black Friar, 174 Queen Victoria Street, EC4

Monument
The Ship, 11 Talbot Court, EC3
The John Falstaff, actually the nearest to the tube, was closed for redecoration, so we settled for The Ship. Small, intimate and heavy on the wood.



Embankment
Princess of Wales, 27 Villiers Street, WC2
Light and airy, with cheap and nasty art adorning the walls. The decor also contained breakfast-bar style tables, high stools and was redolent of that not-quite-finished look.





Birthday boy

Its ingredients include wheatflour, peas, several ubiquitous E numbers and extract of Paprika. It comes in a range of flavours from Sausage 'n' Tomato to Chow Mein. It contains appetitetastic texturised soya pieces. It is, of course, Pot Noodle. And believe it or not, this full-on fodder so beloved of students and dolers attains adulthood this October.

Pot Noodle first hit the shelves of Scotland in 1977, reaching England's borders after a successful wet test two years later. Today, there are ten flavours, with Chicken & Mushroom the most popular (50 million pots a year). They're actually jolly good for the constitution: they contain no artificial colourings or preservatives, provide plenty of carbohydrates and are a source of fibre.

Pot Noodles as budget snack? Sure. But Pot Noodle as fashion accessory? Stranger things have happened. One newspaper even proclaimed: 'Forget sun-cream and snorkels – the most essential Club 18-30 holiday item is the Pot Noodle snack'. The image of a bunch of up-for-it groovers havin' it large in Ibiza with a kettle in one hand and a pot in t'other may not tally with the standard cliché of a muddy Glastonbury festie-goer hunched over a tub of noodles and texturised soya pieces, but it only proves that Pot Noodles transcend fashion in ways that other foodstuffs can only dream about.



Their ads have helped, not least the mid-'80s ad which came with reputedly epilepsy-inducing visuals, Motörhead's *Ace of Spades*, and a '50s-style US newscaster whose catchphrase was 'Stay hungry'. The current campaign features a prison inmate forced to do naked press-ups for being caught with a Noodle in his cell. Celebrity Potheads include Noel Gallagher, Shaznay All Saint, Martine McCutcheon, Linford Christie and Zoë Ball. So it's a round of 'For he's a jolly good fellow' followed by some 'Hip hip hoorays' for that sachet-saucy, hip-happy, plastic-packaged, noodle-doodley, fast-food snack. Put the kettle on, mother... *Daniel Fryer*



24hr

Report **Daniel Fryer** & **Lesley McCave**
Photography **Andreas Larsson**

They sell fags and soft drinks, games and groceries, mags, newspapers and... Oh yeah: petrol. There is probably one very near to you. Yup, the 24-hour garage is a late-night lifesaver. But who visits these places and what – petrol aside – are they after? Is the garage a magnet for the mental, or do the wired and weird mingle with the sane and sensible? There's only one way to find out. This is 24 hours in the life of the Shell garage in Islington, from 8am Saturday July 4, to 8am Sunday July 5 1998.












8.05am
A strange old woman is standing by one of the tills and muttering. She does not appear to want anything. Care in the Community is a fine thing.

8.32am
Alarm bells ringing. Is everyone doomed to a fiery death? Nope, false alarm. Till not shut properly.

10.35am
It's Jessie Birdsall. And he's being a twat. Oi, Jessie. You were in *Eldorado* and don't go forgetting it.

11.02am
Couple are Exchanging Words. She is taking too long to fill up, apparently.

12.20pm
Did you happen to see the most beautiful girl in the world, and was she crying? Yes. No. And she bought ten quids' worth of Super Unleaded.

1.00am
'No. I'm not buying you any sweets.'
'Oh, but mum...' 'No.'
Kids give up far too easily these days.

1.07pm
Crumpled lottery forms won't go in the machine. So don't get irate when you're asked to fill in a new one.

1.28pm
'Cutter's Choice. Cutter's Choice. Yes. No. Yellow packet. Yellow. *Cutter's Choice*. Next to the Old Holborn. CUTTER'S CHOICE. Yes. Thank you.'

1.50pm
Wow. People still buy two quids' worth of petrol. Why?

1.58pm
Shift report. Lots of things go 'click' and 'whirr.' Also 'Ee Ee Ee', but that's because something has gone wrong.

3.22pm
Heats the pastie. Takes a bite from the pastie. Hands it over for the barcode to be read. Urrgh.

3.27pm
£30 lucky dip on the Lottery.

4.59pm
'Medium Slush Puppy, mate.'
'We only have small or large.'
'It says medium.'
'But we only have small or large.'
'OK, large. But it still says medium.'

6.16pm
A couple are using the air gun to fill up huge white balloons. It's probably best not to ask why.

8.54pm
Four pissed blonde and giggly bimbos clamber out of a stretch limo, screaming 'I need a wee'. As they leave, they wave and blow kisses.

9.19pm
It's starting to get dark now. And here comes a goth. To buy pickled onion Monster Munch.

9.40pm
Seven ruff 'n' tuff teenagers, allegedly large in the shoplifting area, enter. Staff on alert. After much posturing, however, they leave. Pussies.

10.46pm
Goth man returns for more crisps, a Kit Kat and biscuits. The munchies?

11.18pm
'Oi, wot chewing gum d'ya want?'
'Orbit.'
'Orbit? I wish you'd go into fucking orbit.'

11.21pm
A packet of King Size Red Rizlas.

11.24pm
Two geezers. More King Size.

11.49pm
No people, no purchases, no petrol; just the slow, low soporific hum of the air conditioning going around and around and around...

11.50pm
AARGH! BIG SCARY MONSTER! No. Man in motorcycle helmet and green coveralls. Sorry. Dropped off for a minute there.

11.55pm
Five packets of party ice and eight litres of Coke. Good Lord.

12.45am
A man tries to get two women to autograph his porno mag. 'These women,' he screeches, 'are famous.'

1.00am
Ice cream and King Size red.

1.37am
Raised voices, loud swearing. And that's from the people who work here.

1.42am
Two guys fiddle with the Foster Grants stand and act out their favourite *Scarface* scene. 'You wanna fuck with me? Okay. You wanna play rough? Okay. Say hello to my little friend.'

2.42am
Laydeez and gennulmen, The Lone Ranger has entered the building. He gets chatted up. Jesus.

3.40am
The mad mineral water rush is on.

4.30am
Problems. A minicab driver is too fat to bend down and change his wheel. The passenger leaves in disgust.

4.43am
Past the witching hour. The black hole of existence. The world holds its breath. And someone buys a Mars bar.

4.55am
Daylight.

5.01am
That's a huge laugh. You're on drugs.

5.03am
Hello. There is a door. No, not the window. Door. D-O-O-R. That's it.

5.45am
Paper van arrives.

6.00am
Bored.

6.35am
A car runs out of petrol just before reaching the forecourt and has to be pushed the final few yards. Har har.

6.47am
A gaggle of world-weary goths purchase cigarettes.

7.55am
A man has just bought a map, a burger, a pack of crisps but, strangely, no petrol. Er, can I go home now?

The last laugh

Divorcing Jack is as black a comedy as you could hope to see. But as the film's star David Thewlis tells **Daniel Fryer**, there's humour in everything if you're prepared to look.



Comedy is what David Thewlis was doing when he first started to find success as an actor. It's comedy that has drawn the man – best know for his morose and melancholic characters, despite or even because of a string of roles in Hollywood successes – to his latest rôle.

In *Divorcing Jack*, Thewlis plays Dan Starkey, a hard-drinking columnist on a Belfast newspaper. The film's set in a post-troubles Ireland of the (hopefully) near future, where Prime Ministerial candidate Michael Brinn (Robert Lindsay) is heading for a landslide victory. However, Brinn has a shady past, one that Thewlis' character becomes embroiled in. If it sounds intense, that's because it is. However, it's also a laugh riot.

'I'd got to the point where I'd done so much intense, ridiculous stuff over the past few years, I just wanted to do something funny,' says the man best known for his starring role in Mike Leigh's 1993 masterpiece *Naked*. However, booze, gun-toting nuns, and crazy situations aside, the comedy here is black and the good guys don't always win. In fact, the good guys sometimes die.

'I much prefer that,' says Thewlis. 'With Hollywood, everything has to have a fucking happy ending. Why? Because otherwise people will leave the cinema feeling depressed. Well, let them leave feeling depressed. Some of the best films I've seen have miserable endings. Even the Bible ends in Revelations. Life doesn't turn out all right. You're gonna end up in a hospital bed with an oxygen mask, shitting into a silver bowl.'

'Whenever you laugh, it's at someone else's misfortune.'

Still, black comedy, especially, can be pretty nasty. The laughter is at another's misfortune, another's death, disease, war. 'I think that whenever you laugh, you're doing it at someone else's misfortune,' agrees Thewlis. 'I'm just taking it to an extreme in *Divorcing Jack*. There were several times on *Naked*, having chats with Mike, where I wanted to take comedy to an extreme, to the point of "a little child dying of cancer, hahaha". If it can be intelligently done, then there's humour in everything. There's humour at a funeral, in a murder. I don't think anything should be sacred.'

It's ironic, then, that in real life, Thewlis isn't the most chipper person ('What do you expect from an interview with me?' he asks, rhetorically). He can't sit still for a second: constantly fidgeting, hands roaming though unkempt hair, rubbing temples or reaching for his cigarettes.

If you hadn't already guessed, *Divorcing Jack* is not a Hollywood picture. For Thewlis, at least, Hollywood isn't always the way to go. 'I wouldn't recommend it. If I was giving advice to an up-and-coming actor – God, I hope this doesn't sound pretentious – I'd say "Don't make that your goal".'

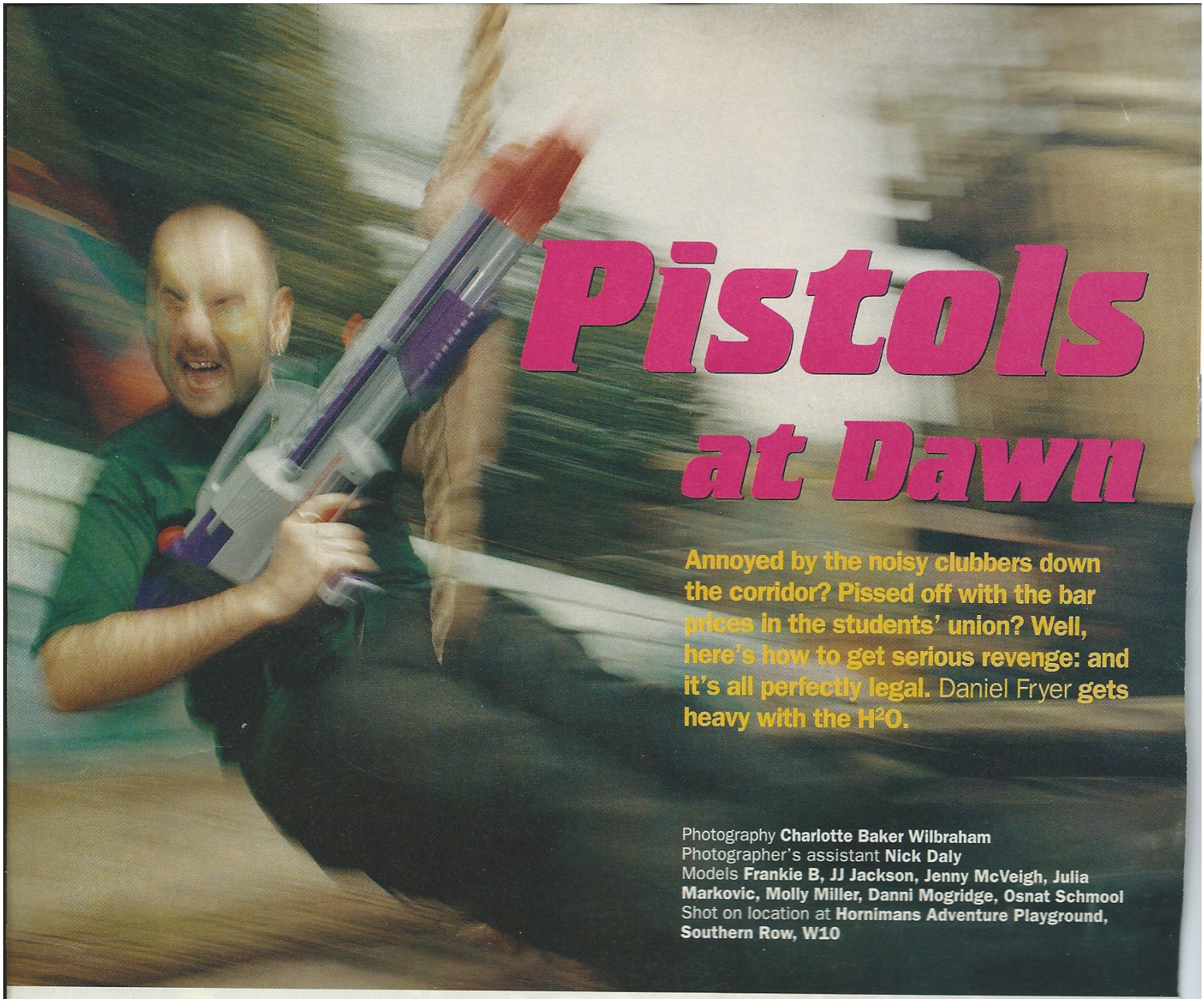
And this is coming from a man who's schmoozed and boozed with the great and the good in La-La Land, 'even taken it up the arse from DiCaprio' (a reference to *Total Eclipse*). But surely the definition of success for any actor, let alone a British one, is to have done what David has done, worked with the people he's worked with? 'No, it's not the answer. At times, it's been absolutely miserable, never more so than on *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. It was Val Kilmer and Brando. On paper, how impressive could it get? But that was the most confusing film of my life and didn't bring any happiness at all.'

His terrified look in *Doctor Moreau* – a film he now sees as the nadir of his career – is actually pretty much how he felt off screen as well as on it. He'd write a book of his experiences on set, he says, but nobody would believe him.

'I actually wrote a short story about it, as a piece of fiction in the third person, and got a contract for a novel. But it'd be too libellous. Even if I changed the names, it would be obvious who and what it was about.' He says that people have read his short story and said it was mad, not realising that 80 per cent of it was verbatim. 'I might have compounded a few things into one, but that's what it was like making that film. Mad.'

Now, he's mainly spending his days writing, but has had to put his current project, a play, on the backburner until next year, keen to do a really good job of it instead of just a nearly good job. 'I don't intend to have a big career as a film-maker. I don't think it's much of a driving force in me. I want to make something that's really wonderful, otherwise why put yourself through the hassle?' But whatever he does next, the scruffy, fidgety Blackpool man will surely have a laugh doing it. ●

Divorcing Jack *opens in London on October 2.*



Pistols at Dawn

Annoyed by the noisy clubbers down the corridor? Pissed off with the bar prices in the students' union? Well, here's how to get serious revenge: and it's all perfectly legal. Daniel Fryer **gets heavy with the H^2O.**

Photography **Charlotte Baker Wilbraham**
Photographer's assistant **Nick Daly**
Models **Frankie B, JJ Jackson, Jenny McVeigh, Julia Markovic, Molly Miller, Danni Mogridge, Osnat Schmool**
Shot on location at **Hornimans Adventure Playground, Southern Row, W10**

Aerial reconnaissance had them positioned to the West, somewhere in the Ladbroke Grove, when they dropped us in. The acrid and bittersweet smell of cordite hung heavy in the air and you could tell the place had seen some action. We'd been following them for days; picking them off, making them nervous, keeping them scared. Now we had them. Time to break out the artillery. We got your Speed Loaders and your Super Soakers; sponge-loaded torpedoes, Spiral Liquidators and more. You wanna know what's best? You gotta ask the best. You gotta ask us.

Okay, so they were grads and we were new recruits. Sure, we were Freshers: but it don't mean we was green. Yeah, the gook in 409 got it in the face. He got heavy with the noise, wouldn't listen, wouldn't keep it down. So we had to take him down. Only the weak fail to survive The Week. Freshers' Week, that is.

We'd all been riding the mad merry-go-round of mania and euphoria, the endless parade of names and faces, drills, instructions, tutors, rules, regulations and, yes, parties. Sleep? Most of us had forgotten what it was.

Now this, now them. Now us. Nothing but the blood and the dirt caked to the soles of our boots, the fear in our guts and the wide open sky above. There were so few of us. Osnat and JJ. Red, Molly, Danni and Frankie. And the little one, got freckles... Markovic. Then our orders came through: take them down. Fifteen gallons of the wet stuff in our artillery, fire in our eyes and hope in our hearts. God, I love the smell of water in the mornings.

▲ **Name** JJ
Weapon Super Soaker CPS 2000
RRP £49.99
Tactical Over ten pounds and 107 fluid ounces of raw water power. This big battalion-bustin' bazookoid from hell can fire a pint of water in one second flat. You're terminated, motherfucker.

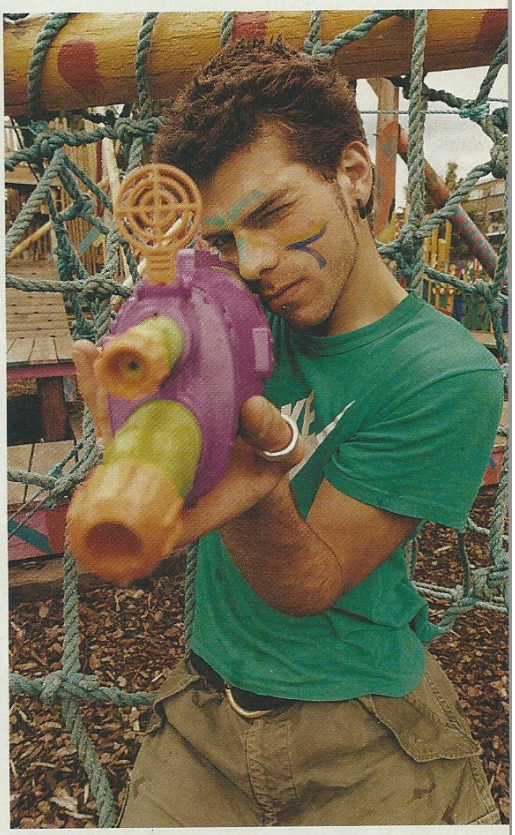


▶ **Name** Julia
Weapon W3 Torpedo
RRP £12.99
Tactical Three-for-all: either whack 'em with water, twat 'em with a dry sponge torpedo or wallop 'em with a water-soaked sponge. Lock and load.



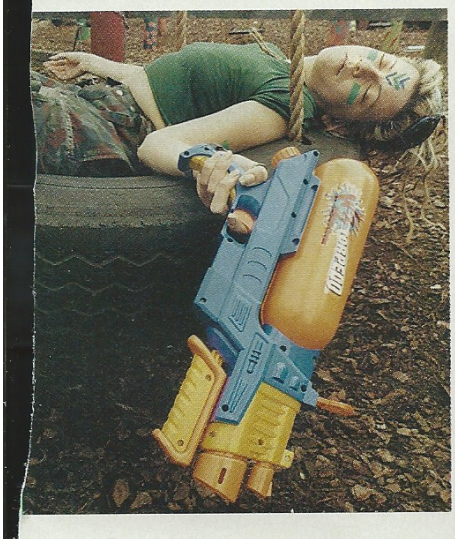
▶ **Name** Frankie
Weapon Super Soaker XXP 175
RRP £24.99
Tactical Low-slung, compact, nasty, double-barrelled, double-bottled, double-drenching damage. Let's rock.

▼ **Name** Danni
Weapon Speed Loader 1500
RRP £14.99
Tactical Constant pressure (no pumping needed), double-nozzle trouble for twice the liquid twatting power, and a cunning hosepipe attachment that allows you to refill in seconds. Bring it on.

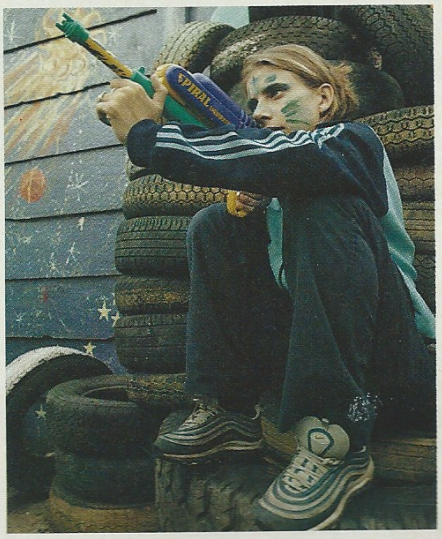


▼ **Name** Osnat
Weapon Super Soaker XP 85
RRP £16.99
Tactical Small but effective. Three rotating nozzles provide 180-degree coverage and round-the-corner surprise. You lookin' at me?



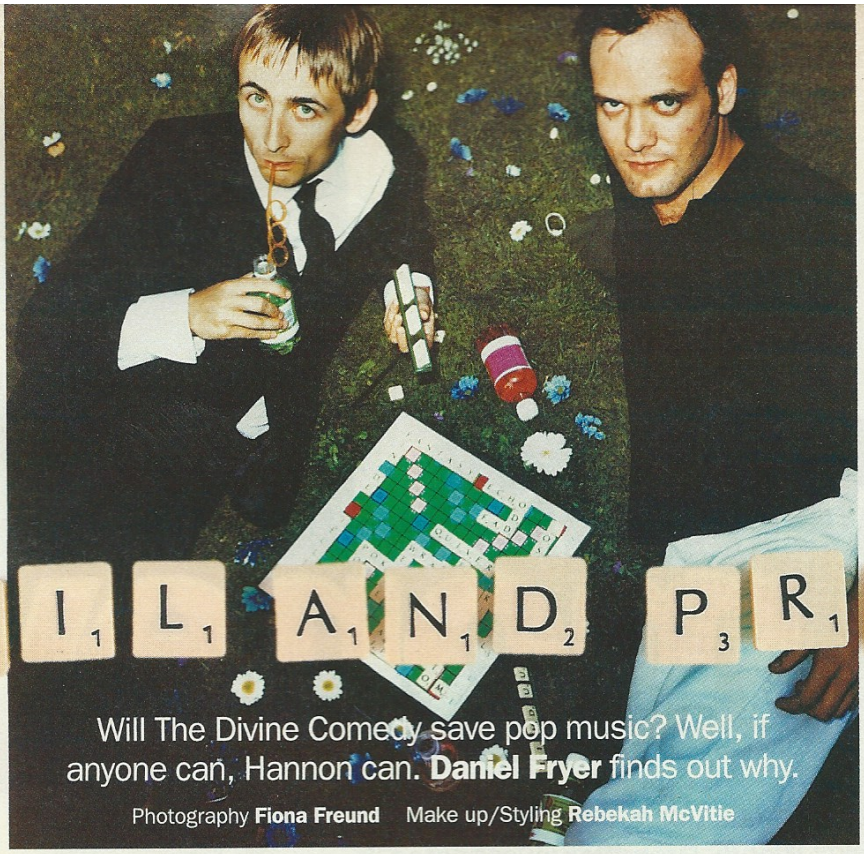






▶ **Name** Molly
Weapon Super Soaker XXP 275
RRP £29.99
Tactical It's big, it's bulbous, and it'll cream the bad guys by giving 'em two barrels of the wet stuff from a choice of four different nozzles. Eat this.

▲ **Name** Jenny
Weapon Spiral Liquidator
RRP £7.99
Tactical Two screamin' barrels of twisting, turning water streams – supplied by a 20 ounce tank – that can fire up to 50 feet. You want some, punk?



Neil and Pray

Will The Divine Comedy save pop music? Well, if anyone can, Hannon can. **Daniel Fryer** finds out why.

Photography **Fiona Freund** Make up/Styling **Rebekah McVitie**

Let's be honest. Pop music has been floundering of late. Weakened by Oasis-ish rip-off riffs, Cream-coloured Ibiza sounds – sorry, *soundz* – and lazy indie pop (Cola, not alco). Enter, then, The Divine Comedy, whose habit of marrying bitter-sweet lyrics to orchestral arrangements is the proverbial breath of fresh. Having hovered around the fringes of the charts with previous releases – including the pop treat *Casanova* and the deeply delicious *A Short Album About Love* – their latest offering looks set for critical 'album of the year' acclaim and pop superstatus. Or it should, at any rate: anything The Divine Comedy produce gives pop a much-needed kick up the bum.

The album in question, *Fin de Siècle*, came out in August. It's a heavier record than their earlier efforts: filled with orchestral flourishes, burlesque, operatic frills and Broadway balladry, with subject matter including the end of the world, archaeology, and that oldest of chestnuts, sex. It's darker than *Casanova*, yet – in places, at least – more accessible, more 'poppy'.

'Do you honestly think it's more poppy?' asks Neil Hannon, the man who ostensibly *is* The Divine Comedy, both shocked and amused.

'I think some of it actually is quite poppy,' says Joby Talbot, Neil's right-hand man and the man responsible for the extraordinary arrangements that fill the album. 'It sounds more contemporary than the other stuff.' It also goes further away from pop than anything else they've done. But that doesn't stop it from being more accessible.

'That's probably because it's better', says Neil, not without justification. 'It's not that we've angled it to be accessible, though. The weird thing is I thought it was going to be an odd avant-garde kind of record.'

Okay, maybe 'poppy' isn't quite right. After all, complex orchestral arrangements, surging with strings, harps and horns, don't ordinarily appear on a pop record.

Neil agrees. Sort of. 'I think it retains the pop structure a lot of the time, but wibbles about on top in a kind of disparate fashion.'

Much has been written about The Divine Comedy, and still more about Hannon himself. Descriptions of the latter include louche, slender, short, foppish and utterly pretentious. Words to encompass the former include cerebral, visceral, literary, difficult, grandiose, vulgar and ironic. Words you don't normally see associated with Neil or Joby are charming and approachable: surprising, because they are.

What The Divine Comedy *are* renowned for are their devilishly sardonic lyrics. But though Neil is usually concerned with subjects such as love, sex, romance, sex, break-ups and sex, part of *Fin de Siècle*'s darker personality comes courtesy of its subject matter: obsession. Obsessions with the past, with death, destruction and thrillseeking.

'I've think I've said all I could possibly say about nookie,' says Neil. 'I'm just averting my gaze up from my navel and towards the rest of the world.'

'What's sex got to do with your navel, Neil?'

'Well, it's close to, um, *the area*.'

'You can't say "area". There might be children listening. There might be *students* reading this.'

Neil and Joby do this a lot: exchange banter, talk drivel, and basically interview each other. Only very occasionally – sensible answers are forthcoming. Doesn't *Generation Sex*, the first single from the album, send us back below the navel?

> **'I think I've said all I possibly can about nookie.' Neil Hannon**

'It's nothing to do with sex; just the way it's used to sell stuff,' replies Neil. 'It's the general public's fault, because they buy it. It's about using sex in its loosest form. There's a line in there about injecting the sperm of worms into the eggs of field mice. I'm sure it hasn't happened yet, but it will eventually. It's about that sort of thing. Hypocrisy; society.'

'Fucked-up stuff,' Joby chimes.

'He said that, not me.'

Collaborations have featured heavily in the life of The Divine Comedy. Aside from the countless orchestral musos who've lent their talents to the group's last three albums, they've also performed with composer Michael Nyman, duetted with Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant, and, most recently, sung on Robbie Williams' new album.

Neil met Robbie, though he's reluctant to admit it, at *An Audience With Elton John*. 'He introduced me to his mother, which is always a good sign. We're destined to be together. He phoned up and said "Do I want to do some backing vocals?" Simple.'

Yes, but this is Robbie, ex-Take That and all that. 'He's definitely a cultural icon, in some way or another. I don't think I would've been able to explain to my grandchildren, if I hadn't done it, *why* I hadn't done it. So I've done it.'

But is there anyone left for the pair to collaborate with? Joby, who almost worked with Orbital this year, lists his inspirations as Stravinsky, Marvin Gaye, Michael Nyman ('I've done things with him, but he's still my hero') and Tom Jones ('he's got such a voice'). Neil's heroes include My Bloody Valentine, Kraftwerk, Cole Porter, and Scott Walker. 'I've kind of done most of the people I would've cared for. I mean, Scott sent me a postcard and that's about as much as I could ever ask. It said: "I won't be at your gig tonight." So I framed it.'

Given the stagey and knowingly dramatic nature of their music, a musical would seem a natural progression. 'We have a plan,' admits Joby. 'Are we allowed to say what it is?'

Neil's reluctant to specify, but does offer a clue: 'It's a very depressing German book.'

The pair once had another plan, formulated when they first met, of organising 'a circle of like-minded bohemian intellectuals who would get together and meet in fabulous hotels and be incredibly witty'. It sounds suspiciously like Dorothy Parker's infamous round table.

'It does,' says Joby, 'but we always wanted to do that.'

'However,' grins Neil, 'We couldn't find anyone as witty as us, so we had to stop. This is total sarcasm, before anyone goes "you pretentious wankers". Which they will, no matter what we do.'

The Divine Comedy: pretentious? A little. This is *pop music*, after all. But also, indisputably, one of the best bands around. And this is far more important. ●

Generation Sex is released on September 14. The band play the Shepherd's Bush Empire on October 4. A limited edition fiftieth anniversary Scrabble set hits the shops in September.

Books

Daniel Fryer reads between the lines of London's literary scene.

A curious process of *Ellen*-isation appears to have taken over many of London's larger bookshops. It's not that shoppers have to now contend with sub-standard humour or staff with squeaky voices, though they may do in some establishments. Rather, it's that we're now encouraged to lounge around on comfy sofas, leaf through books we have no desire to purchase and spend a fortune on little somethings in the 'milk with a subtle hint of coffee bean' range.

Still, this new shopping twist is a good way to read books for free and while away an afternoon that would otherwise have been spent at college. However, the coffee thing will hopefully never reach London's second-hand shops, most of which are unique enough without a café.

And while we're on the subject of free stuff, don't forget your local library: every London borough has at least one, they're free, and some may even stock essential course books. They can save you a small fortune, unless you forget to return the books on time. Then they fine you. And you thought the coffee was expensive…

Bookshops

General bookshops

Blackwell's
100 Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171 292 5100). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 9.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
A good place for textbooks and coursebooks of all shapes and sizes, Blackwell's also has selections of general interest titles, both fiction and non-fiction.
Branches across London: check the phone book.

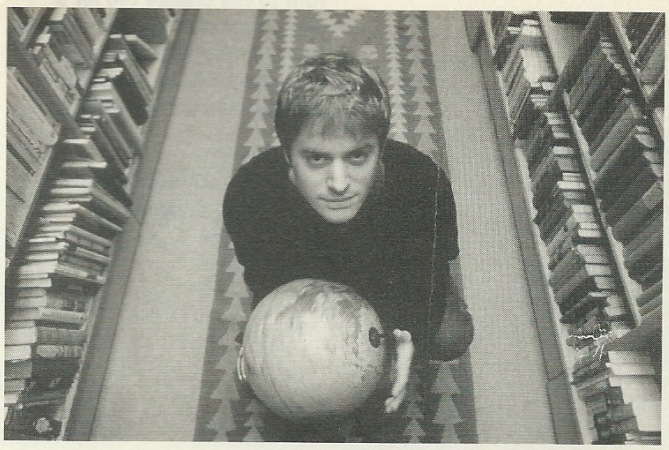
Books Etc
120 Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171 379 6838). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 9.30am-8pm Mon, Wed-Sat; 10am-8pm Tue; noon-6pm Sun.
In-house coffee shops, snazzy window displays, and the Staff Picks, in which booksellers select their favourite books and shelve them together with personal reviews. The funkiest book stores in town? They'd certainly like you to think so…
Branches across London: check the phone book.

Borders
203 Oxford Street, W1 (0171 292 1600). Oxford Circus tube. **Open** 8am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
Brand spanking new superstore on Oxford Street, which does the *Ellen* thing to perfection (it practically invented it in America). The stock is great, the coffee good, and the opening hours unique.

Dillons the Bookstore
82 Gower Street, WC1 (0171 636 1577). Euston Square tube. **Open** 9am-7pm Mon, Wed-Fri; 9.30am-7pm Tue; 9.30am-6pm Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
Dillons's flagship branch far outshines most of its smaller branches: University of London students have no excuse for not possessing all the right stuff as it's situated right across the road. There are sections devoted to just about every discipline, magazines, and even a second-hand department.
Branches across London: check the phone book.

Foyles
113-119 Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171 437 5660). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 9am-6pm Mon-Wed, Fri, Sat; 9am-7pm Thur.
It has, thankfully, become easier for the punter to buy books in this venerable store, and the stacks of rare and out-of-print titles still impress.

Hatchards
187 Piccadilly, W1 (0171 439 9921). Piccadilly Circus or Green Park tube. **Open** 9am-6pm Mon, Wed-Fri; 9.30am-6pm Tue, Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
The opening of a big Books Etc just across the road from Hatchards has had no observable effect on business here, which goes to show that Hatchards maintains some very loyal customers. It still plays to its strengths: history, biography, travel and fiction.



FRANCESCA YORKE

Go round the world without leaving London at **The Travel Bookshop**.

Waterstone's
121-129 Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171 434 4291). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
Split over two stores next-door-but-one to each other, the CXR branch of Waterstone's has decent ranges on most subjects, particularly academic, art, reference, biography and mysticism titles.
Branches across London: check the phone book.

General & local

Bookshop Islington Green
76 Upper Street, N1 (0171 359 4699). Angel tube. **Open** 10am-10pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
Still doing good business despite the looming presence of Waterstone's across the Green, the staff often provide a next-day service when ordering books not in stock.

Compendium
234 Camden High Street, NW1 (0171 485 8944). Camden Town tube. **Open** 10am-6pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
Every -ology you could ever want and then some. There are also shelves dedicated to Gestalt therapy and tarot, numerology and tau, bereavement and assisted suicide. Cheerful.

Housmans
5 Caledonian Road, N1 (0171 837 4473). King's Cross tube/rail. **Open** 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat.
Fiction and non-fiction here, with special sections for black fiction and politics. The rear of the store is devoted to radical publications.

Index Bookcentre
10-12 Atlantic Road, SW9 (0171 274 8342). Brixton tube/rail. **Open** 10am-6pm Mon-Sat.
There's some general stock here as well as a wide range of radical publications, and a strong section devoted to black interests, covering fiction, history and politics in particular.

Pipeline Bookshop
87 High Holborn, WC1 (0171 242 5454). Holborn tube. **Open** 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri.
Excellent service and good, up-to-date stock. Travel, fiction and history live on the ground floor; art can be found in the basement.

Arts

Cinema Bookshop
13-14 Great Russell Street, WC1 (0171 637 0206). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 10.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat.
More books on the movies than you knew existed, including the excellent and ever-expanding range of BFI Classics and Modern Classics.

Dance Books
15 Cecil Court, WC2 (0171 836 2314). Leicester Square tube. **Open** 11am-7pm Mon-Sat.
The place for dance shoes. And books. And videos. And posters.

Dillons Arts Bookshop
8 Long Acre, WC2 (0171 836 1359). Leicester Square tube. **Open** 9.30am-10pm Mon, Wed-Sat; 10am-10pm Tue; noon-6pm Sun.
The fiction section may have gone, but this is still

Preposterous Prospectuses

If you believe what you read, you'd undoubtedly find it quite inspiring that all the universities and colleges of London are centres of academic excellence that can guarantee the best three years of your life. The phrase 'bad marketing' springs to mind. We all know how prospectuses work, whether painting a pretty picture of life in Camberwell, or bolstering the joys of living in Surrey while disguising it as central London. They're there to entice you with truths, half-truths and, well, outright whoppers.

The up-itself London Institute, won't even lower itself by applying the term prospectus. For them it's the lofty heights of 'Portfolio 98/99.' They're also very focused on logic. We're not talking philosophy here, but how the BTEC National Diploma in Printing 'is a course particularly useful if you want a career in printing'. No shit. Nor do you have to be too smart to get into London Guildhall University either, as they make sure we realise accountancy degrees are 'designed for those with a special interest in accountancy'.

With some prospectuses, it's not so much a case of what they say as of what they mean. Take the audacious description of the University of Westminster's BA in English Studies, for instance. It says: 'You will be expected to cover a considerable amount of background reading and other preparation outside the classroom.' It means: 'The lecturers can't be arsed to do their job, so you'll have to teach yourself the degree.' On a similiar level, the obviously arty 'Directory', courtesy of Central St Martins, explains its foundation course as 'a mix of studio projects, workshops' and 'self-initiated work'. Translate, and it becomes apparent that they provide the room and you make it up as you go along. Still worse is the London College of Music, whose prospectus informs students that 'examiners are chosen for their pleasant personality'. Not, then, because they know the first thing about music. They could be deaf, in fact. But at least they smile.

And then there are those unis that make obviously ludicrous claim for their courses. Over at South Bank, graduates of the Language and International Business Studies course will 'be trilingual and have developed skills in international economics and finance'. Three languages? English, the ability to ask the way to the station in French, and, er, English again, we reckon. The London College of Fashion guarantees that the Certificate in Hairdressing 'prepares students to predict and respond to the ever-changing industry of hairdressing.' But predict what exactly? That your cut won't be what you asked for and will cost about forty quid? Doh! Meanwhile, Thames Valley uni employ students to help with their blurb. Linda McDonald, in the prospectus for the Humanities and Social Sciences degree, claims the course 'was the most liberating experience of my life'. Linda: you should get out more.

So after three years, what's left? SOAS may have some answers: one director is 'confident that if you choose SOAS you will join an institution with a tradition of educating graduates who are sought after throughout their lives.' Mine's a Big Mac and fries, then.

Shahla Haque

Eating & Drinking

There's more to life than Macky D's and the uni bar, as **Daniel Fryer** & **Will Fulford-Jones** discover.

Grant life can be a hard lesson in budgeting. You've got your rent budget, your booze budget, your academic budget and your travel budget. And then there's food. Though you may hear scary tales of post-grads who spent a year living off pitta bread, or anorexic third-years who brought themselves to the feathered edge of starvation via a diet of noodles, it is possible to eat well and eat cheap in London. A slap-up meal at Mrs Miggins' pie shop for the cost of a shiny penny may not be on the cards, but look out for all-you-can-eat lunchtime menus.

Attractive though the prices are, only the saddest students spend all their time drinking in the college bar. In a city with more pubs than even Curly off *Coronation Street* could stomach, it's possible to drink 24 hours a day if you plan your day and manage to locate a nice local with a lock-in. With everything from traditional alehouses to designer hangouts scattered across town, only the pickiest drinker will struggle to find a place where they feel truly at home. And don't forget the annual **Holsten Bier Fest**, due to be held in Battersea Park daily from October 12 to November 1 (except October 14). There's free entry for students on Tuesdays before 8pm with an NUS card, nightly entertainment and, well, loads of beer. More information can be gleaned on 0181 963 0940.

While the eateries listed here are at the cheap and cheerful end of the spectrum, should Mum and Dad pop down, then avail yourself of the *Time Out Eating & Drinking Guide* and get them to take you somewhere nobby. Pick up the *Time Out Pubs & Bars Guide* for reviews of London's watering holes. But in the meantime, these should keep you busy.

Central

Restaurants

Al's Café-Bar
11-13 Exmouth Market, EC1 (0171 837 4821). Angel or Farringdon tube/19, 38, 171 bus. **Meals served** 8am-midnight Mon, Tue; 8am-2am Wed-Fri; 10am-2am Sat; 10am-11pm Sun.
A boho, semi-Soho-esque café with niftily late hours and amazing alcoholic milkshakes. The clientele is a mix of suits, stallholders and students; the prices suit the latter perfectly. Look out for the occasional club nights.



As easy as 1-2-3... The super-hip **Alphabet** *bar in Soho.*

Café Emm
17 Frith Street, W1 (0171 437 0723). Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** *lunch* noon-2.30pm Mon-Fri; *dinner* 5.30-10.30pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 5.30pm-12.30am Fri, Sat.
Inconspicuous, inoffensive, inexpensive and lots other words beginning with 'in'. Where else can you have Soho kudos at Pimlico prices? The food is cheap and plentiful, while the music is cool: Tricky last year, Faithless this.

Café in the Crypt
Crypt of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Duncannon Street, WC2 (0171 839 4342). Charing Cross tube/rail. **Meals served** *summer* noon-6pm daily; *winter* noon-8pm daily.
The calm eye of a Trafalgar Square storm, this place offers cheap food, civilised surroundings, classical music and some well deserved tranquillity.

Carlton Coffee House
41 Broadwick Street, W1 (0171 437 3807). Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus tube. **Meals served** 7am-5.30pm Mon-Fri; 8am-6pm Sat.
There are few places better for a lunchtime nosh-up than the Carlton, but you'd better book if you want to munch after 1pm.

Centrale
16 Moor Street, W1 (0171 437 5513). Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** noon-9.45pm daily.
A wee Soho pasta pit-stop, favoured by those after a big feed on a puny budget. The portions are huge and, if your eyes prove to be bigger than your stomach, your leftovers can be boxed up to take away.

Food For Thought
31 Neal Street, WC2 (0171 836 0239). Covent Garden tube. **Meals served** 9.30am-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-4pm Sun.
Veggie heaven. Fresh, tasty and pretty cheap, and – what's more – the menu changes twice daily. Can get a little crowded.

Harbour City
46 Gerrard Street, W1 (0171 439 7859). Leicester Square or Piccadilly Circus tube. **Meals served** noon-11.30pm Mon-Thur; noon-midnight Fri, Sat; 11am-11pm Sun; *Dim sum* noon-5pm Mon-Sat; 11am-5pm Sun.
Dim sum house in Chinatown, with criminally low prices and wonderfully helpful staff.

India Club
Second floor, Strand Continental Hotel, 143 Strand, WC2 (0171 836 0650). Temple tube or Charing Cross tube/rail. **Meals served** noon-2.30pm, 6-11pm, Mon-Sat.
Tucked away above a hotel just near the Aldwych, the India Club is one of London's best-kept secrets. The decor is nothing exciting – lino floors, formica tables – but the food is superb and the service warm and welcoming. While Brick Lane, with its surfeit of Indian restaurants, remains *the* place to go for a cheap curry, the India Club should not be bypassed.

Mildred's
58 Greek Street, W1 (0171 494 1634). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** noon-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-5pm Sun.
Mildred's has become a bit of an institution in Soho. For those who've yet to visit, it's a tiny and charming vegetarian café/restaurant, with an inventive menu and warm, friendly service.

New Piccadilly
8 Denman Street, W1 (0171 437 8530). Piccadilly Circus tube. **Meals served** 11am-9.30pm daily.
Excellent and cheap Italian joint just off Piccadilly Circus. The food is fine and you are cordially invited to bring a bottle (or two) and linger, if that is your wont, and watch the big TV in the corner.

Pollo
20 Old Compton Street, W1 (0171 734 5917). Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** noon-midnight daily.
Pollo is a Soho landmark among students and the financially challenged. Big pastas at little prices is its thing: the menu is exhaustive and the food – surprisingly – really rather good.

Presto
4-6 Old Compton Street, W1 (0171 437 4006). Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** 11am-11.30pm Mon-Sat.
Budget Italian joint just down the street from Pollo. Again, the portions are large and the prices low: Well worth a look.

Star Café
22 Great Chapel Street, W1 (0171 437 8778). Oxford Circus or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** 7am-5pm Mon-Fri.
Much-loved by media luvvies lacking that lucrative expense account. The food is funky caff in style, the decor colourful and the prices attractive.

Stockpot
18 Old Compton Street, W1 (0171 287 1066). Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** 11.30am-11.30pm Mon, Tue; 11.30am-11.45pm Wed-Sat; noon-11pm Sun.
The grandaddy of all London's cheap eats houses. That's not to say the food's superb – it's not, though it's normally pretty good – but rather that prices are low, the service quick and the menu decent. Expect hearty fare in a home-cooked style, and cheap beer.

Tokyo Diner
2 Newport Place, WC2 (0171 287 8777). Leicester Square tube. **Meals served** noon-midnight daily.
The quick-fire service makes this extremely central Japanese eaterie a popular hangout among the financially challenged. Although prices have been raised since last year, special meals are cooked for students between 2.30pm and 5.30pm, when you can get a large meal for £3.50.

Thanks for Franks
26 Foubert's Place, W1 (0171 494 2434). Oxford Circus tube. **Meals served** 7am-6pm Mon-Sat.
Bumper fry-up heaven that's really cheap, not just Soho cheap. There are healthy options, such as lentil, sweetcorn and lettuce salads, if you feel so inclined.

Wagamama
4 Streatham Street, off Coptic Street, WC1 (0171 323 9223). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** noon-11pm Mon-Sat; 12.30-10pm Sun.
Obscenely popular Japanesey feeding house catering to a mix of tourists, students, dolers and luvvies. Both branches are crowded, though the Lexington Street branch has more space.
Branch 10A Lexington Street, W1 (0171 292 0990).

Wong Kei
41-43 Wardour Street, W1 (0171 437 3071). Leicester Square or Piccadilly Circus tube. **Meals served** noon-11.30pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun.
Strangely popular Chinese restaurant whose reputation seems to be built almost entirely on the polite rudeness of the waiters ('Sit THERE, sir!'). Stick to the meal-in-one dishes to avoid disappointment.

World Food Café
Neal's Yard Dining Room, First floor, 14 Neal's Yard, WC2 (0171 379 0298). Covent Garden or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Meals served** noon-5pm Mon-Sat.
Vegetarian café in Neal's Yard, the spiritual home of British veggie eats. The menu is eclectic and full of variety: take your pick from Indian, Mexican, Turkish and a host of other styles. Superb.

Pubs & bars

Alphabet
61-63 Beak Street, W1 (0171 439 2190). Oxford Circus tube. **Open** 11am-11pm Mon-Sat.
Soho might have had some of its thunder stolen by Bloody Hoxton, but it still knows how to make a bar hip, as Alphabet proves. A simple design and the usual Soho crowd of liggers, blaggers and chancers have set this place up nicely.

Cheers
72 Regent Street, W1 (0171 494 3322). Piccadilly Circus tube. **Open** noon-11pm daily.
Peculiar bar themed around the excellent TV series. The irony of a sitcom all about the pleasures of a quiet local bar being commemorated with an impersonal tourist hangout would undoubtedly appeal to Alanis, but not to us. 'Everybody's glad you came,' says the menu. Except you.

Coach & Horses
29 Greek Street, W1 (0171 437 5920). Leicester Square tube. **Open** 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun.
Genuinely legendary Soho imbiberie that propped up notorious *Spectator* columnist Jeffrey Bernard for years, and that now hosts a younger and arguably less alcoholic crowd of barflies.

De Hems
11 Macclesfield Street, W1 (0171 437 2494). Leicester Square tube. **Open** noon-midnight Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun.
Dutch theme pub on the outskirts of Chinatown, serving numerous exotic Eurobeers to a noisy crowd. The seats – if you can get one – are comfy.

Filthy McNasty's
68 Amwell Street, EC1 (0171 837 6067). Angel tube/38, 73 bus. **Open** 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun.
Despite its rather grim 'n' grubby reputation – the name hardly helps, mind – Filthy's is a surprisingly nice establishment close to Angel. Sure, it's an Irish pub, but it's not a theme pub. Therein lies the difference between Filthy's and, say, O'Neills, and the reason why this is such a top drinking hole.

Freud
198 Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2 (0171 240 9933). Covent Garden or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun.
A surprisingly spacious and conveniently central bar that has somehow managed to stay cool since before anyone can remember. It's still going reasonably strong, with a pretty good selection of cocktails among the attractions.

DOMINIC DIBBS

Fashion

Daniel Fryer & **Eva Johansson** spend their cash on looking flash and grabbing your attention.

Fed up with student hardship? Go shopping. Had a bad-lecture day? Go shopping. Worried about that mid-term paper? Hey, go shopping. In short, shop. If you're gonna be in debt, you might as well have something shit-hot to show for it.

Looking good in London need not cost you a well-tailored arm and immaculately-groomed leg. Charity shops continually surprise, especially in the more affluent areas of town, while the cheering plethora of street-sweet second-hand and vintage stores offer a surprisingly good range of old gear. But for those of you who like your clobber lavishly labelled, don't forget that big names can (and do) come cheaper when bought from designer sales, factory outlets or through specialist second-hand shops. However, if you still insist on making a bee-line for the big designers, then we at the *Time Out Student Guide* bow down before the callous disregard shown towards your weeping bank balance.

Budget

Amazon
1-22 Kensington Church Street, W8 (0171 937 4692). High Street Kensington tube. **Open** 10am-6pm Mon-Wed, Fri; 10am-7pm Thur; 9am-6pm Sat; noon-5pm Sun.
Six adjoining shops offering cut-price designer gear. There's 50% off Nicole Farhi menswear and French Connection suits and shirts, while Versace, Ralph Lauren, Jasper Conran and Calvin Klein come in at discounts of up to 70%.

Atlantic
260 North End Road, SW6 (0171 381 5566). Fulham Broadway tube. **Open** 9am-6pm daily.
Unglamorous, but with bargains by the lorryload and an impressive array of funky, club-bunny staples: PVC trousers in chocolate or black, tight army tops and jeans in bright, fruity colours.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Dorothy Perkins
West One Shopping Centre, 371 Oxford Street, W1 (0171 495 6181). Bond Street tube.
Open 10am-7pm Mon-Wed, Fri, Sat; 10am-8pm Thur; noon-6pm Sun.
Classic jackets, trousers and skirts come in three price categories: 'fine tailoring' (wool-blend jackets from £85), 'fashion' (sassier pinstripe jackets, £50 up) and 'basic' (cheap-chic trousers at £20).
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

H&M
261-271 Regent Street, W1 (0171 493 4004). Oxford Circus tube. **Open** 10am-7pm Mon-Wed, Sat; 10am-8pm Thur, Fri; noon-6pm Sun.
For the ultra-fashionable but thrift-conscious, the reasonably priced, eclectic Impuls range here is a distillation of all the latest catwalk trends. Larger women can enjoy the same looks in larger sizes, courtesy of its Big is Beautiful label.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Jane Kahn
4 Pembridge Road, W11 (0171 792 2616). Notting Hill Gate tube. **Open** 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; 12.30am-6.30pm Sun.
This shop boasts a good deal of eccentric stock at market-stall prices. Most of its clothes are the company's own designs, but there's also a vast selection of fun accessories: how about a PVC purse with blue liquid and a plastic sardine trapped in its lining for £5.99?

Mark One
109 Oxford Street, W1 (0171 434 1073). Oxford Circus tube.
Open 10am-7pm Mon-Wed, Fri, Sat; 10am-8pm Thur; noon-5pm Sun.
Mark One now offer more tailored clothing, with jackets from £24.99 and skirts from £9.99. Selected stores stock teenage and kids' clothing, and students with an NUS card get a 10% discount.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Miss Selfridge
40 Duke Street, W1 (0171 629 1234). Bond Street tube. **Open** 10am-7pm Mon-Wed; 10am-8pm Thur, Fri; 9.30am-7pm Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
Miss Selfridge has gone mystical. A major theme for '98 has been 'my-body-is-my-temple' eastern chic, hence the T-shirts screen-printed with solemn-faced Buddhas. But the rails fairly heave with flashy fare, too: rainbow-stripe tops (£15), peppy pea green vests, and denim bandeau dresses (£25).
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Mr Byrite
138-140 Oxford Street, W1 (0171 636 6038). Oxford Circus tube. **Open** 10.30am-6.45pm Mon-Wed, Fri; 10.30am-7.45pm Thur; 10am-7pm Sat; noon-5.45pm Sun.
Although this Oxford Street staple is packed to the rafters, making it hard to focus on individual items, it pays to have a patient rummage. Union Co fatigues in khaki or sand-coloured cotton are a bargain at £14, while the denim jackets in ink-blue or beige cost £18.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

New Look
309 Oxford Street, W1 (0171 499 8497). Oxford Circus tube. **Open** 10am-7pm Mon-Wed, Sat; 11am-8pm Thur, Fri; noon-6pm Sun.
The clothes here are not for the fashion-shy, but are fantastically cheap. When we visited, swanky PVC jackets in white, lilac or cream and fitted jersey shirts in Fox's Glacier Mint turquoise or cornflower blue were both going for a parsimonious £12.99. Other stylish finds included bootleg jeans, A-line minis and stretch-denim trousers.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Pink Soda
22 Eastcastle Street, W1 (0171 636 9001). Oxford Circus tube. **Open** 9.15am-5.15pm Mon-Fri.
This tiny wholesale shop is a budget mecca for fashion sophisticates. Walk out with an armful of its brilliantly cheap, finger-on-the-pulse gear and you'll be kitted out in up-to-the-nanosecond togs for months to come.

River Island
124-126 Kensington High Street, W8 (0171 937 0224). High Street Kensington tube.
Open 10am-6.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri; 10am-7.30pm Thur; 9.30am-6pm Sat; noon-6pm Sun.
River Island is getting sassier these days. Catwalk trends, in the form of glitter-weave strappy denim dresses and lace-trimmed prairie-girl camisoles, have filtered through of late. Boys can opt for the new own-brand Tinderfell label, incorporating boldly striped rubberised nylon windcheaters.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Top Shop/Top Man
214 Oxford Street, W1 (0171 636 7700). Oxford Circus tube. **Open** 10am-7pm Mon-Wed, Fri, Sat; 10am-8pm Thur; noon-6pm Sun.
Examples of own-brand clobber for girls include stretch shift dresses with a slashed neckline (from £45), camisole/cardigan twinsets (£35/£25) and grey techno-style jackets (£75). The menswear is indescribably naff, but fashionable lads do get a look-in with the in-house top-to-toe Moto brand.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Tribe
67-71 Oxford Street, W1 (0171 494 1798). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 10am-7pm Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat; 10am-8pm Thur; noon-6pm Sun.
'The man of the 1990s is taking more trouble when going out, compared with ten years ago,' declares manager Richard. Hence the shop's slinky Simon shirts (£32.99), '70s-style wangy-collared shirts (£39.99) and Hush Puppy suede loafers (£65). For all this, Tribe's clothes aren't particularly well made, but students do get a 10% discount.
Branches are too numerous to list here. Check the telephone directory for your nearest.

Factory shopping

InWear
100 Garrett Lane, SW18 (0181 871 2155). Wandsworth Town rail. **Open** 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat; 11am-4pm Sun.
Up to 70% off Matinique, InWear and Part Two jackets, trousers, dresses and shirts.

Street fashion

555 Soul
63 Camden Road, NW1 (0171 424 0538). Camden Town tube or Camden Road rail. **Open** 11am-7pm Mon-Sat; noon-5pm Sun.
A genuine mecca for hip hop devotees. Most of the stuff is own-brand clobber: Ts cost from £22, jeans from £55. But it also stocks limited-edition New York brands you'll be hard pushed to find anywhere else in Britain: the likes of Mecca, Fubu and Phat Farm. Other labels include Enyce, Naughty by Nature and Walé.

AdHoc/Boy
10-11 Moor Street, W1 (0171 287 0911). Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road tube.
Open 11am-7.30pm Mon-Thur; 11am-8.30pm Fri, Sat; 1-6pm Sun.
An hallucinogenic pick 'n' mix of workwear, gothy S&M and brassy kitsch. At the kitschy, kinky end of the scale are fab fur Love Handcuffs (£3.50), snakeskin G-strings (£3) and chainmail bras (£115). If all this sounds too frivolous, fret ye not: workwear stalwarts will go a bundle on the military-style skirts (£56) and Teflon-coated combats (£58) by comparatively sober label Million Dollar.

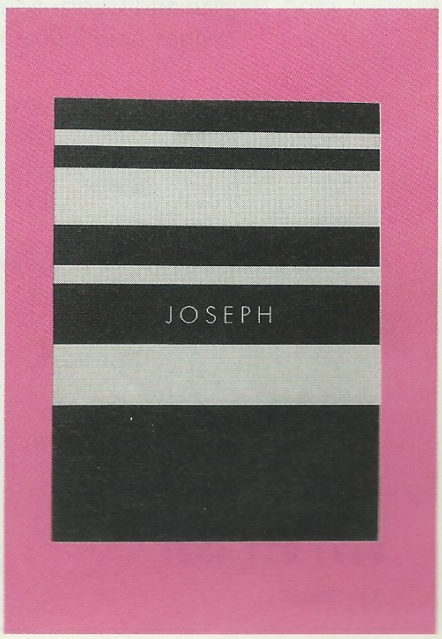
American Classics
398 & 400 King's Road, SW10 OLJ (0171 352 2853/3248). Sloane Square tube/11, 19, 22 bus.
Open 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; 12.30-5.30pm Sun.
Bare floorboards and scaffolding racks give this treasure trove of second-hand US togs an authentic spit-and-sawdust feel. Particularly popular are 'South Sea Pacific' Hawaiian shirts (£30), geek-chic golfing trews (£30), velvet tuxes (from £30), vintage denim jackets (from £25) and beanie hats (£5).
Branch 20 Endell Street, WC2 (0171 831 1210).

Apocalypse
Pitch 8, Earlham Street, WC2 (0171 379 6807). Leicester Square tube.
Open 12.30-7pm Mon-Sat.
Apocalypse gives great value on some of the coolest labels around. Current bestsellers are the Centrepoint photoprint T-shirt from Reference Point (£15) and the No Pain No Gain tattoo T-shirt. There is also a fantastic selection of accessories and novelty items, including syringe pens, Bruce Lee wallets and Miss Kitty hair clips and purses.

Burro
19A Floral Street, WC2 (0171 240 5120). Covent Garden tube. **Open** 10.30am-6.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri, Sat; 10.30am-7pm Thur; 2-6pm Sun.
Veering away from the fitted, retro look of past seasons, the shop's current mainly own-brand stock is baggier and, colour-wise, more austere. ▶







Comedy

Knock knock. *Who's there?* Daniel. *Daniel who?* Er, **Daniel Fryer**, with a round-up of comedy in London.

A sense of humour is, indeed, a rum old thing. We've been accusing the Americans of not possessing one since, oh, before the war. The thing is – *the thing is* – why is it that their TV situation comedies are so sublime in wit and so superb in delivery, while ours are, by turns, banal, twee, trite, unfocused and devastatingly unfunny? Come on: we're still proud of our *Dad's Army* repeats, for Chrissakes. If you want repeats, go watch *Frasier*: a script more full of finely-crafted wit, irony and deliciously evil post-prandial put-downs you will never find. And *Friends*... There's a reason why *Friends* is popular: it's fucking hilarious.

Then there's *The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill* and *South Park*. And we say the Yanks don't understand irony. What's so ironic about our sitcoms, other than the fact that we actually sit down and watch the bloody things? No matter which way you look at it, *Keeping Up Appearances* is not funny. Nor is *Dressing for Breakfast*. Oh, and then there's *Game On*. *Drop The Dead Donkey*. *Chef*. *A Prince Among Men*. Turkeys, one and all. 'But what about *Only Fools and Horses*?' I hear you cry. 'Or *Absolutely Fabulous* and *One Foot in the Grave*?' And how long ago were any new episodes of these made? Okay, so the transition from comedy to situation comedy is not an easy one (are your ears burning, Nick Hancock?) but is *Holding The Baby* really the best we can do?

You want British comedy? You want to know why it's so great, want to know how to retain pride in our international ability to make others piss their pants with laughter? Forget the TV, mate: it ain't gonna happen. Where we reign supreme is on the comedy circuit. With stand-up. And London, with its hundreds of comedy gigs each week, is where it's at.

Where to head

If you want to play with the big boys, then you could do no worse than pay a visit to the **Comedy Store**. Sure, the prices may not be student-friendly and the clientele may be a tad touristy, but you're always guaranteed a top night out. The other big 'uns include the three branches of **Jongleurs** (in Battersea, Bow Road and Camden) and the **Improv**, a new venue on Tottenham Court Road.

The so-hip-it's-actually-unhip area around Shoreditch is home to the **Comedy Café**, another custom-built venue. It's a fun and funky place which pulls in some top-notch acts, though Wednesdays are try-out nights, reserved for the new talent and talentless. Some acts will soar, some will suck, and some will die deaths so painful they can actually rival the funny bits.

Other regular clubs, such as **Banana Cabaret**, the **Canal Café Theatre**, both **Bound and Gagged** nights, **Downstairs at the King's Head** and **Screaming Blue Murder**, are normally good for a damn good laugh. There are, however, a practically endless supply of bars and clubs hosting comedy nights, and venues tend to open and close before you can say 'I don't know, why *did* the chicken cross the road?'. Check *Time Out* magazine's comedy listings every week for a comprehensive list of who's doing what and where.

Finally, look out for adverts concerning free events. TV and radio types are always on the lookout for audiences for the recordings of shows like *Have I Got News For You*, *They Think It's All Over* and Radio Five's *The Treatment*. Get on the blower quickly, and you could bagsie yourself a top night out and 15 minutes of fame for the price of a phone call.

Central

Chuckle Club
LSE, Houghton Street, WC2 (0171 476 1672). Holborn tube. **Doors** 7.45pm Sat. **Admission** £7; £5 students and concs.
Host Eugene Cheese (seriously) continues to bring on some of the strongest acts in the country at this termtime Saturday-nighter.

Comedy at Soho Ho
Crown & Two Chairmen, Dean Street, W1 (0171 437 8192). Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Doors** 8pm Sat; *show* 8.30pm. **Admission** £4-£5.
A small and buzzing pub venue with a great central location and strong line-ups week in, week out.

Comedy Spot
The Spot, Maiden Lane, WC2 (0171 379 5900). Covent Garden tube. **Doors** 8pm Mon; *show* 9.30pm. **Admission** £3-£8.
The raw rub shoulders with the experienced at this weekly West End gig.

Comedy Store
Haymarket House, 1 Oxendon Street, SW1 (01426 914433/bookings 0171 344 4444). Piccadilly Circus tube. **Doors** 6.30pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 6.30pm, 11pm, Fri, Sat; *shows* 8pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 8pm, midnight, Fri, Sat. **Admission** £10-£12.
Whaddaya mean, you've never heard of it? It opened in 1979, it's the granddaddy of them all and it presents an international bill of comedians, including the Comedy Store Players who do improv on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Improv
161 Tottenham Court Road, W1 (bookings 0171 344 4444). Goodge Street tube. **Doors** 7pm; *shows* 8.30pm. **Admission** £5-£15.
Brand new purpose-built comedy joint in the centre of town, whose line-ups are normally of a pretty high standard. It's still yet to really find its feet, but the next year should be interesting.

Oranje Boom Boom
Upstairs at De Hems, Macclesfield Street, W1 (0171 275 0118). Leicester Square or Piccadilly Circus tube. **Doors** 8pm (nights vary); *show* 8.45pm. **Admission** £4-£5; concs available.
A Dutch-style coffee bar – no, not *that* kind of coffee bar – that also does comedy and sells booze (the bar downstairs is open until midnight).

West

Big and Daft Comedy Night
Viaduct Inn, 221 Uxbridge Road, W7 (0181 567 1362). Boston Manor tube **Doors** 8pm Sat; *show* 8.30pm. **Admission** £5;£4 concs.
Brand new weekly, way out west. It's held on Saturdays only at the moment, but there are tentative plans for a Friday night slot in the autumn.

Canal Café Theatre
The Bridge House, Delamere Terrace, W2 (0171 289 6054). Warwick Avenue tube. **Doors** 9.30pm Thur-Sat; 8.30pm Sun; shows 10pm Thur-Sat; 9pm Sun. **Admission** £6, £4 concs.
Housed in an upstairs room next to the picturesque canal running through Little Venice, the Canal Café plays host to a weekly updated news-based show, offering topical comedy with sketches and songs.

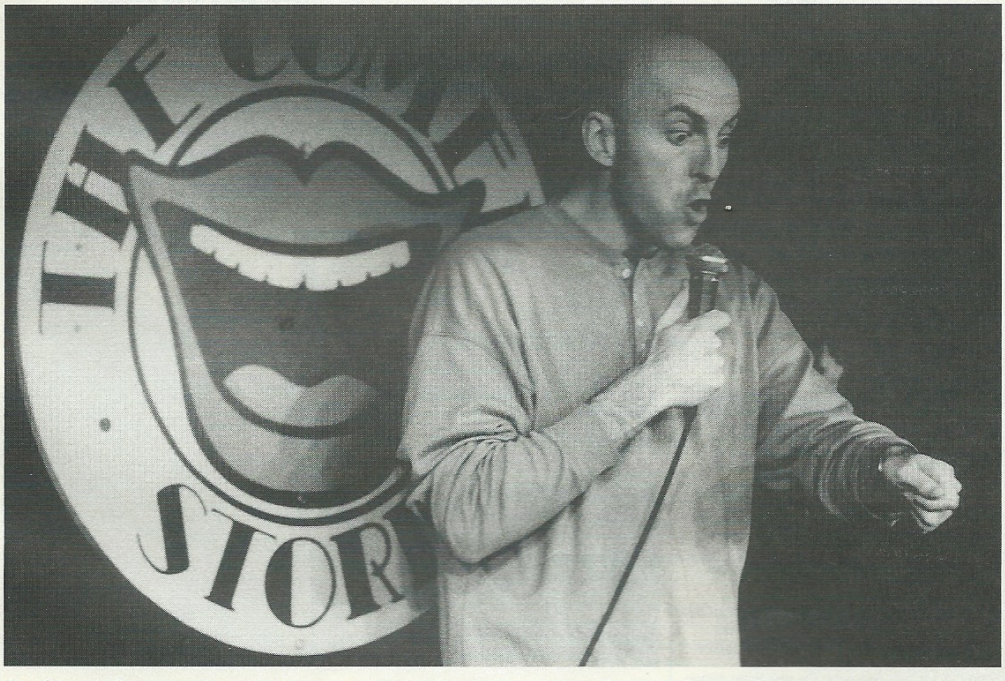
Cosmic Comedy Club
177 Fulham Palace Road, W6 (0171 381 2006). Hammersmith tube. **Doors** 8pm Mon-Thur; 7.30pm Fri, Sat; *shows* 9pm Mon-Thur; 8.30pm Fri, Sat. **Admission** free Tue, Wed; £3 Thur; £7-£8 Fri, Sat.
This purpose-built and comfy club devotes Tuesdays to untried acts and Thursdays to open mike slots. Thankfully, the pros take over on Fridays and Saturdays.

Ha Bloody Ha
The Viaduct Inn, Uxbridge Road, W7 (0181 567 1362). Boston Manor tube. **Doors** 8pm Fri, Sat; *shows* 9pm. **Admission** £4-£5.
Four up-and-coming acts perform twice weekly at this comfortable pub venue.

South-west

Banana Cabaret
The Bedford, 77 Bedford Hill, SW12 (0181 673 8904). Balham tube/rail. **Doors** 8pm Fri; 7.30pm Sat; *shows* 9pm. **Admission** £7; £5 concs.
One of the most enterprising and enjoyable clubs in London, with two separate spaces hosting some unquestionably classy acts. One of the comics' favourite venues.

Jongleurs Battersea
The Cornet, 49 Lavender Gardens, SW11. (bookings 0171 564 2500). Clapham Junction rail. **Doors** 7.30pm Fri; 6pm, 10.30pm Sat; *shows* 8.45pm Fri; 7.15pm, 11.15pm Sat. **Admission** £8-£12 Fri; £7-£10 Sat.
Along with the Comedy Store, this is one of the leading London comedy clubs. Entertainment is not limited to stand-up alone, but you may be unless you book in advance.



JON PERUGIA

*The **Comedy Store** may be a top venue, but Lee Hurst is hoping his new Backyard Comedy Club will have the last laugh.*

TOP TEN

Dodgy catchphrases you'll say endlessly

1. Doh!
2. Ohmigod! They killed Kenny! You *bastards*!
3. Ulrika-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka!
4. Arse! Feck! Girls!
5. Kick him to the kerb!
6. ...Which was nice
7. Oi! You! Nooooo!
8. Oww, go on, go on, go on, go on, go on, go on...(repeat ad nauseum)
9. End of!
10. Mind the gap

NUS Card



FULL TIME member of:
KINGSWAY COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION 1978-81

Time Out

NAME: Kathy Burke
OTHER DETAILS: studied in Drama & Film studies
Now an actress

F 459218

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'I remember wanting to start my own fanzine. I was already the so-called Music Editor on the college paper, which meant that I just nicked everything from the *NME*. But I wanted to have my own rag, concentrating on the Two-Tone movement, as this was very big at the time. I didn't have a typewriter, so I nicked one from the college. It was a massive, old-fashioned office thing, and I nearly broke my neck in getting it home. The fanzine was called *Needles & Pins*, the title taken from a '60s song. I was hoping that the title would not only appeal to mods but, because of the needles and pins reference, interest the punks and skinheads as well.

'The magazine only lasted for two issues. I worked on them with a guy called Ken: I had wanted to go it alone, but Ken's dad had a photocopying machine, used by us without his dad's permission. The first issue was filled with nicked reviews and an "exclusive" interview with a band called The Variations. We got the interview because the lead singer was my best mate. We also ran a full-page advert claiming that issue two would have an exclusive interview with Paul Weller. This was a lie. We sold all the copies of issue one because it was new and all the copies of issue two on the strength of the lie. There were no more issues after that because people said the magazine was shit. And Ken's dad found out about the photocopying. I made a small profit and bought a new Ben Sherman shirt.'

First time unlucky

Just a thought. While you're outside Wyld Pytch records, trying to get hold of an import white-label copy of the Fatboy Slim remix of Funkmuffin's hip hop opus *(I'm In An) 808 State (Mate)* – £25! A snip! – remember: being cool wasn't always this easy. Lurking in the back of even the hippest clubber's record collection are some best-forgotten discs, not least of which is the dreaded first purchase. We cornered some of London's top DJs and asked them how they lost their vinyl virginity…

DJ Ritu *T-Bones at 333, Club Kali at the Dome*
● *Dahlin'* by '70s sex god David Cassidy
How old were you? 'I was about 12 or 13.'
Do you still have it? 'Oh yes.'
Red hot or red face? 'It's still a good song – a classic – but not one I'd play at the moment. It's probably got too many words…'

Claire Sturgess *Top Xfm totty*
● Abba's disco classic *Dancing Queen*
How old were you? 'Quite young! I bought it from WH Smith in Salisbury; I was with my mum and had saved up all my pocket money.'
Do you still have it? 'I think it's at home in Wiltshire with my mum.'
Red hot or red face? 'It's weird. I'm slightly embarassed but, in a kitsch sort of way, it's popular again. Actually, I should be proud so no, I'm gonna stand by it instead!'

Mimi Freestyle *Sonic Mook Experiment at 333, Dogstar*
● *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* by the ludicrous Elton John
How old were you? 'No idea: five or six, maybe? I know I was with my gran, who really liked Elton John.'
Do you still have it? 'I certainly do, but I haven't played it in years.'
Red hot or red face? 'I'm not embarassed by anything I've bought, and I've bought some *really* mad stuff…'

Pete Tong *as in 'it's all gone Pete Tong'*
● *Slider* by the still-cool T Rex
How old were you? 'Very young. I remember I bought it at about 11am on a Tuesday.'
Do you still have it? 'Yes.'
Red hot or red face 'I still stand by it and I still like it. Embarassed? No!'

Mr C *little blond bloke out of the Shamen and owner of The End*
● *Instant Replay*, by '80s nonce Dan Hartman
How old were you? 'I was about ten. I bought it from Chapel Market in Islington.'
Do you still have it? 'I don't know.'
Red hot or red face 'It always brings back good memories.'

Blinking, bright and on the go

Museums. Big places with lots of stuff in them. You look, you learn, and you leave with, hopefully, some sort of lasting impression. This is particularly true at the best museums, some of which contain an array of audio-visual (AV) elements to entertain and engage, with, say, touch-screen quizzes, roaring creatures and spinning globes. The Natural History Museum is one such example.

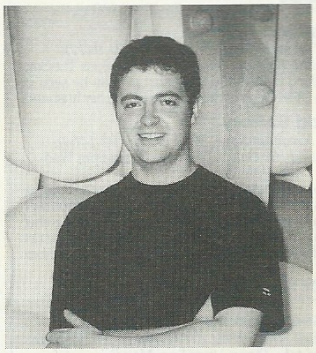
Covering 14 acres and containing over 68 million specimens, the museum is in the top five most heavily visited tourist sights in Britain. All those AV elements, then, need a lot of looking after, which is where Jez Burn comes in. Burn (pictured) is an Electronics Engineer for the Special Effects Sections, and the chances are that if an exhibit groans, growls, lights up, twists, turns or talks, then he has helped design the controls. As he points out, 'It can involve a lot of finicky work.'

His least favourite – and most finicky – exhibit is the one that causes the most problems. Excitingly entitled exhibit C60, it features a man and a camel. 'A model sun rises and heats them both,' explains Burn. 'It shows that in the desert, a man's temperature quickly rises while a camel's rises more slowly. The man is supposed to fall over and die, while the camel survives, but it's always going wrong.'

Burn has also worked on some well-travelled giant robotic insects. 'I've helped to set up exhibits featuring them, and a couple of sets of dinosaurs, in Cairo, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, Berlin and, er, Norwich.'

Biggest in the wow! department must be the entrance to the Earth Galleries, which features an escalator journey through a £350,000 rotating iron, zinc and copper globe. 'Travelling through it is really disorientating: when you look ahead or behind, it's the rooms and not the globe that seem to move,' explains Burn. 'It's the most impressive exhibit, if not quite my favourite.'

That accolade is reserved for exhibit number E8, the leaf food factory. Replete with white plastic bubbles and green glowing LEDs, it would look at home on the set of, say, *The Prisoner*, but in fact is designed to educate visitors about photosynthesis. 'It's one of the first exhibits I worked on: it's probably got sentimental value.'



So, the next time you find yourself at the Natural History Museum, fiddling with a rotating 3-D display of the solar system or being menaced by a massive scorpion, spare a thought for the engineers like Burn. 'What I design is there, working for people, on a daily basis. You can physically see what I make and lots of people use them every day. That's job satisfaction.'

Daniel Fryer

NUS Card



FULL TIME member of:

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE 1987-90

Time Out

NAME: Sam Taylor Wood

OTHER DETAILS: studied for BA (Hons) in Fine Art

Now an artist

F 4593218

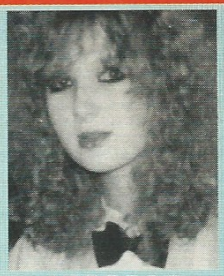
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'I attended the North East London University for my first year, but felt that it was very isolated and that the mentality was '60s and very formalist. So I transferred to Goldsmiths, which was much more on the ball. I broke my leg as soon as I got there, but not while at the college: I got drunk at a friend's wedding and fell down the steps of the Polish Embassy. I was on crutches for six weeks and made a definite impression as "that new girl: the one on crutches." It used to take me three hours to hobble in to college and three hours to hobble back. On some days I'd only be in classes for an hour. Mind you, I soon got to the point where I could run faster than anyone else.

'At the time I was living on Green Street in Upton Park with my then-boyfriend, Jake. It was a squat and I lived there for the whole three years of the course: I didn't have to spend any of my grant money on rent. But it was so damp there that if you bought a can of beans on the Monday, they were all rusted up by the Friday. And we had a weird woman living upstairs: a 20-stone clubber, out every night, who used to come home and bang on heavy dub reggae from four until eight in the morning, pounding on the floorboards as she danced. She broke the bathroom once: the floor gave in due to all the water that landed on it. She was so fat that whenever she took a shower, the water just bounced off her, missed the bath and landed on the floor.

'We just used to go and get pissed all the time, though never in Upton Park as it was just too weird. When coming home from Goldsmiths at night, I used to dress up as a boy. If you were a girl and were out and about our area after eight at night, you'd get followed. There were three murders in our area in one year. The first was the local sweetshop lady, killed for a packet of fags, another was a domestic, and the third was in a shoplifting. I haven't put anyone off living in Upton Park, have I? Have I?'

NUS Card



FULL TIME member of:

MANCHESTER POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL OF THEATRE 1978-81

Time Out

NAME: Jenny Eclair

OTHER DETAILS: studied for Diploma

Now a comedienne

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'It was a weird place, Manchester. To qualify for your diploma, you could do a project on almost anything. One girl did hers on knitting blankets for mental patients, and I did mine on clowns. I copied the whole project word for word from a Ladybird book of clowns. Even down to tracing the drawings.

'The course was a strange one: a very mixed bag of people, like some sort of social experiment gone wrong. There were seven women in my year and they all ended up either with an eating disorder or going mad. At one time, I was living with a girl whose dad was a butcher. He'd send her regular packages of meat that'd arrive, bleeding, through the post. We'd usually end up making a curry with it as, by the time we got it, the meat had gone off.

'I used to go down the disco at Manchester University, which had better ents than us. I pulled this bloke one night and went back to his house. Thing is, he had an outside loo: you have to remember this was the north of England in the '70s. I was really hungover the next morning and needed to go to the toilet. While looking for the loo, I took a wrong turn and ended up walking out on to the street, naked, with all these commuters walking past. I spent most of my time either getting pissed, pulling men or having eating disorders, actually. I don't think it was so much "girl power" as "cow power".

'My career took off because of the pubs and clubs at that time. I used to be in a band called Cathy La Créme and the Rum Babas. We played all the gay clubs in Manchester, but split up because the singer kept stealing. I arrived at one gig and was the only one who bothered to turn up, so I did some punk performance poetry. I seem to remember being asked to clear up behind the bars a lot after the shows.'

Clap your hands

'I realised something was amiss because my willy had begun to itch. When this horrible, cream-coloured goo came running out, I knew I'd caught a venereal disease. It was the Christmas holidays. I'd been out clubbing a couple of days previous and had met this girl...

'The trouble was that I was at my mum's house. The local doctor's surgery had really eclectic hours. Asking for the telephone number would have invited a barrage of questions, so I kept quiet. When I got back to halls, I paid my local hospital's genito-urinary clinic a visit. Thankfully, the clinic was anonymous – they always are – but I was still dead nervous.

'I was eventually led by a female nurse into a small medical room. The last thing I wanted was a woman poking around, but I guess she'd seen enough of them in her time. Still, dropping my pants was humiliating. And when she inserted a long thin probe into my urethra, I yelped. "Don't be silly," she said. "It doesn't hurt." Maybe not, but it's a huge shock seeing something like that shoved up places so precious and sensitive, especially as those places were mine.

'Sample taken, I was told to wait on the examination bed, pants and trousers down, fresh tissue over my groin, while the results were analysed. Eventually the nurse returned. "It's gonorrhea," she said, before adding: "Well, at least it proves you're a man." Like attitude was exactly what I needed at that time. I was given a prescription and told to come back a week later, but after two days of antibiotic pill-popping, the discharge had cleared up. I went back to the hospital for another scrape and was given the all-clear.

'If it happened again, I would visit a clinic immediately. Waiting as long as I did was stupid. And if someone gave me attitude, I'd give it right back. This is the '90s, for God's sake. I'd done nothing to be ashamed of.'

Joe Norton was talking to Daniel Fryer.

Deeper and down



It's a new magazine aimed at the skate 'n' snowboard, drum 'n' bass, hip hop fraternity. It looks plush, but for £3.50, so it should. The first edition hit the shelves in June, but what is going to ensure *LoDown* is still there in a year or two's time?

LoDown was started in Berlin three years ago by designer Thomas Marecki. Bremen-born Götz Werner came up with the idea for a UK version while at college in London. 'It was better than getting a real job,' he says, not without justification.

But how does it differ from the myriad other mags competing in a very crowded market? '*LoDown* is very graphics-led,' points out Werner. 'It was started not by a publisher or by a group of journalists but by a graphic artist. Visually, it kicks arse.'

Placing style over content is not always a surefire hit, as many a publisher has found. If the readership hasn't got anything to read, surely they won't buy it? 'The content of our magazine is hot and has a very international flavour,' counters Werner. 'We've got features on UK skateboarding, US hip hop, German graffiti and snowboarding in New Zealand. The content is strong and the look stimulating. Kids don't just want to read: they want to look at things, be absorbed by them.'

The biggest problem with getting *LoDown* on the shelves was, um, getting it on the shelves. A lot of retailers wouldn't stock it as it comes in a landscape format as opposed to the usual portrait shape (ie the wrong way up). 'We do have deals with quite a few retailers, including Virgin Megastores, so it should be seen in quite a few places,' says Werner. *LoDown*: super-slick and arty. Look out for it. Somewhere.

Daniel Fryer