"A BLOCKBUSTER THAT'S OUT OF THIS WORLD"

"A REMARKABLE CINEMATIC ACHIEVEMENT"

"THRILLING"  "A MASTERPIECE"  "AWE-INSPIRING"

RYAN GOSLING  CLAIRE FOY

FIRST MAN

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NEW VEGAN BREAKFAST!

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Virgin trains

VEGAN POT AVAILABLE IN THE SHOP. SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY.
Hello, my name is Ann.

I nearly lost my home last year after being made redundant. It took eight weeks to get my Universal Credit sorted out and in that time I ran out of money. I didn’t even have cash for groceries. Thankfully a good friend and Big Issue vendor helped me out with food and then convinced me to have a go at selling the magazine. I was terrified at first as I have anxiety and I’m very shy, but now I’m so proud that this is my job. Read more about my story on page 46.

INSIDE...

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The government swung into action after we broke the horrifying figures last week

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Not a doctor, but Today host isn’t a bad alternative

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Rami Malek says his background as a child of immigrants took him closer to the Queen icon

WE BELIEVE in a hand up, not a handout...
Which is why our sellers BUY every copy of the magazine for £1.25 and sell it for £2.50.

WE BELIEVE in trade, not aid...
Which is why we ask you to ALWAYS take your copy of the magazine. Our sellers are working and need your custom.

WE BELIEVE poverty is indiscriminate...
Which is why we provide ANYONE whose life is blighted by poverty with the opportunity to earn a LEGITIMATE income.

WE BELIEVE in the right to citizenship...
Which is why The Big Issue Foundation, our charitable arm, helps sellers tackle social and financial exclusion.

WE BELIEVE in prevention...
Which is why Big Issue Invest offers backing and investments to social enterprises, charities and businesses which deliver social value to communities.
Law and order
Jonathan Clark’s solicitor [October 8-14] may charge £200 an hour but that is not what he gets. Out of that he has to pay office rent, business rates, buildings insurance, staff salaries and NI contributions, practising certificate fees, compensation fund contributions, professional indemnity and employer’s liability insurance premiums, professional development courses and updating reference books with all the current legislation and case law – and quite a bit more!
David Lyall (retired solicitor), Royal Hospital Chelsea

Mr Clark has cherry-picked his assertions and, in doing so, has muddied the waters in respect of legal funding. A given local solicitor in Bournemouth may well charge £200 per hour; there is almost certainly a market rate lower than that. As for the point about QCs: there is much more to the job than standing up for £2,000 per hour (where was this figure plucked from?). The legwork behind the scenes is incredible. And neither of the above figures are take-home pay, I can assure you.

The real issue is that of legal aid. Read the book by the Secret Barrister. It will disabuse a lot of people (including me, a practising lawyer) of the myth of the “fat cat” criminal lawyer. Gareth-Lee Smith, email

Bird fan
What a brilliant explanation from John Bird of the arguments and rationale behind his Private Member’s Bill [October 1-7]. A common sense, compassionate, and well-overdue piece of potential legislation that would make a huge difference to the lives of millions. Let’s all hope and pray that it passes through the many hoops without too much difficulty, and becomes law in our immediate lifetimes. I thoroughly enjoyed all the food-related articles, too - again, illuminating and inspiring.
A splendid issue all round! Many thanks!
J Barton, London

Here’s to Harvey
I used to work in Shrewsbury town centre and saw [our vendor] Harvey on a day-to-day basis. Over time I became friends with him – he is extremely polite and approachable and he would do anything to help anyone. A few times I witnessed him giving directions to members of the public and also helping an elderly lady who had fallen down. He tells everyone to have a good day no matter if they buy a magazine or not and he always has a smile on his face no matter if he’s standing in the snow or in the blistering heat. He has changed my view on The Big Issue and I will continue to buy one each time I’m in the town centre.
Over time I have seen how The Big Issue has changed Harvey’s life and it has been an absolute pleasure seeing him on a day-to-day basis.
I am proud to have made a friendship over a cup of tea in the snow!
Sarah Lewis, email

Packham picking
In this era of uncertainty about the planet’s survival, the debate about the ‘correct’ diet to adopt is a fascinating one, and I was pleased to see The Big Issue [October 1-7] discussing both sides of the argument. However, as much as I am a huge fan of Chris Packham, I have to disagree with his reasons for ‘going vegan’, because they don’t stack up environmentally or nutritionally. Yes, we must clearly understand the damage done by the intensive meat and dairy industry but to adopt veganism is not a planet savior. The vegan lobby emphasises the eating of vegetables without telling us that veganism relies heavily on grain and soy production and factory-processed foodstuffs. The answer to the problems of planetary degradation and compromised human health is to return to small-scale, organic farming where animals and crops are rotated in a natural cycle and the food produced from this system is both nutrient-dense and healthy.
Sally Dean, Herefordshire

Giving thanks
Just to say thank you for Chambers Dictionary [Issue 1323 crossword winner]. I didn’t realise how antiquated mine was! (getting like me!).
Jill Warden, Helston

A massive THANK YOU from me, and my office, who are all enjoying the summer reading library (which was 10 times the size I imagined).
Mary Laing, email
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At what point does a good idea become a spiralling mess that will tip people into terrible poverty, ruin and homelessness?

Now? Last week? A year ago? Nobody seems to know. But it’s a reality that is not going to ease.

Last week two significant things happened around Universal Credit. Universal Credit is the Good Idea.

Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey admitted that some people would be worse off under Universal Credit. A percentage of families could lose £200 a month as they fall under the scheme. That is a huge, life-damaging amount for those who need it most.

At the same time her former boss Iain Duncan Smith, the architect of Universal Credit, the man for whom it is less a smart application of benefits and more of an ideological crusade, said the scheme needed a £2bn cash injection. Big injection.

It’s worth rewinding. When the scheme was introduced by IDS in 2012 the idea was simple. Replace the complex benefits system of six payments – including Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Income Support and Jobseeker’s Allowance – with one monthly payment. It’ll cut fraud, they said. It’ll encourage the poorest households to learn monthly money management and it’ll make work more attractive than benefits. There was even a delay in first payment built in (it was six weeks, now it’s five) to echo management and it’ll make work more attractive than benefits. There was no indication of any damage.

The wheels started to come off early into the trial rollout. The plan for full rollout was extended from 2017 to 2023. Last year, around party conference season time, major problems with the IT system administering the payouts were identified. There was also a fear that civil servants who may have been able to help were focused on Brexit. The necessary work of government was being stilled.

And despite all this, the scheme was pushed ahead. Even now, as the people behind Universal Credit admit it’s way short of funds and that it’s going to clobber those in need dramatically, there is no indication of any new or better plan.

Why not? At the heart of broken systems are personal stories. Last week, Home Secretary Sajid Javid announced a major turnaround in government policy on cannabis. From November, 80,000 doctors will be allowed to prescribe medicinal cannabis. The medical advice has been overwhelming for some time. The MS Society said that 10,000 people suffering from multiple sclerosis would immediately benefit. Why take action now? According to Javid it’s because he was so moved by the “heartbreaking cases” he’d come across involving kids with serious illnesses. Good for him.

Homeless World Cup is heading to Wales

The surprise and joy on these faces is clear, as the news was announced that Wales will host the 2019 Homeless World Cup. There were jubilant scenes from the Street Soccer Wales squad, especially Tina-Marie Jones (centre) at Cardiff’s Principality Stadium when the Welsh bid’s success was revealed on big screens.

Hollywood star Michael Sheen, patron of Street Football Wales, led the charge to secure the 17th Homeless World Cup, which will bring 500 players from 50 countries to Cardiff. He said: “I am so excited to have won the rights to bring the tournament to Wales. We are going to deliver the best tournament yet.”

The announcement came ahead of the Wales national team’s 4-1 friendly defeat to Spain at the Principality Stadium.

The 2018 Homeless World Cup kicks off in Mexico City’s Zócalo on November 13.

Abandon bad ideas, not people

WELSH AM Jack Sargeant said his late dad Carl would be “proud of him” for donning a Big Issue tabard to sell the magazine in Cardiff last week.

Communities and Children Secretary Carl tried his hand as a vendor at Queen Street last October, a month before his death.

To continue his dad’s work, Jack joined vendor Mike Hall on the Royal Arcade on Thursday, while Bethan Sayer AM, who took part in the sell-off with Carl last year, accompanied vendor Mark Richards at Charles Street.

Jack, who sold five magazines in an hour, said: “Before he passed away, my dad wanted to focus his efforts on tackling homelessness after selling The Big Issue showed him a lot. Unfortunately he never got to do that.

“The experience showed me the importance of stopping and having a conversation because that can really help someone. Even a smile at someone on the street can save a life.”

THE EDITOR

Abandon bad ideas, not people

Paul McNamee is editor of The Big Issue @pauldmcnamee

JACK SARGEANT FOLLOWS DAD CARL IN BIG ISSUE SELL-OFF

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Photo: ©Francesca Stone Photography

THE BIG ISSUE / p6 / October 15-21 2018
ON BIGISSUE.COM THIS WEEK

• If banks can have their debts cancelled, why can’t the rest of us?

• Romesh Ranganathan’s teenage struggle with poverty was “insane”

• American Vandal makes Sam Delaney recall the notorious Curried Mince Incident of ’89

HEALTH FEARS OVER ‘FOOD DESERTS’

A new study has found that more than a million people in Britain struggle to access fresh food, with one in 10 of the UK’s most deprived neighbourhoods described as ‘food deserts’.

The report, by thinktank Social Market Foundation, found poor public transport, lack of supermarkets and poverty make it difficult for people to access fresh and healthy food. It noted that poor, disabled and elderly people were disproportionately affected and linked it to conditions like obesity and diabetes.

It echoes findings from a probe into food deserts carried out by The Big Issue some years ago. The latest report shows Hattersley in Greater Manchester, Rumney in Cardiff and Dalmarnock in Glasgow are worst affected.

BENCH STANDS UP FOR BREASTFEEDING

More than 60 UK groups have asked for a ‘breastfeeding bench’ to come to Britain, after it was unveiled in Prague by Czech design firm 52Hours.

Created after designers saw a mother shamed in public for feeding her infant, the Heer bench has an enclosed pod for privacy and support, and an adjustable space for friends or family. The designers invited people to request the bench comes to their city online, and were overwhelmed by interest from the UK.

‘Ghost home’ busters target empty mansions

Kensington and Chelsea Council is to crack down on “ghost homes” – including luxury properties worth up to £30m among the 621 houses standing empty in the area – and open them up to council tenants.

Deputy leader Kim Taylor-Smith has called on housing minister Kit Malthouse to relax rules that prevent multi-million pound mansions from being occupied, despite being empty for two years or more. Since the Grenfell disaster, the area has faced a chronic shortage of social housing, while 27 per cent of top-band empty homes in the whole of England are in Kensington and Chelsea.

This week is Empty Homes Week, drawing attention to England’s 605,000 long-term vacant properties, an issue The Big Issue has highlighted since 2015 with our Fill ‘Em Up campaign.

Chris Bailey, campaign manager of charity Empty Homes, said: “Bringing them into use improves neighbourhoods, ends blight and helps tackle the housing crisis. It’s a no-brainer and we need government support.”
Counting the dead: what now?

After we broke shocking news last week about the 449 people who died homeless in Britain in just one year, ministers admitted they need to get a grip. Liam Geraghty reports

The news that 449 homeless people died in the UK last year triggered shock – and a commitment by authorities to do more.

As part of The Bureau of Investigative Journalism’s Dying Homeless project, their reporters spent an entire year digging into the reasons why homeless people can just disappear.

They contacted charities, hospitals and journalists (including those at The Big Issue), attended funerals and spoke to families and friends to arrive at that final, shocking statistic.

Alarming however, the true figure, published to mark World Homeless Day on October 10, is thought to be significantly higher.

After The Big Issue broke the news of the UK-first count there was a major Channel 4 News report, with a detailed look at the life of Big Issue vendor Fabian Bayet, who died in July.

There was also widespread news coverage in major outlets, including the BBC, The Guardian and The Times.

Communities Secretary James Brokenshire responded by calling for more Safeguarding Adult Reviews to be carried out into deaths after branding the figures “utterly shocking”.

“It does not reflect the modern Britain that I know, that we need to be,” the man responsible for implementing the government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy told Channel 4.

But the most telling news came from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Ben Humberstone, ONS deputy director for health analysis and life events, penned a blog outlining how the office is in the final stages of producing its own “experimental” statistics by the end of the year.

Humberstone’s blog was shared on the eve of World Homeless Day.

The ONS statisticians have been taking a different approach to the Bureau since starting work on the project in November last year.

Residents have been poring over death certificates looking to identify wording implying the person was homeless, such as “no fixed abode” or hostel addresses.

And while the Bureau’s dataset will not be used, it will help “develop the most accurate method of identifying all deaths that should be counted,” Humberstone said.

“There has been increasing public interest in homelessness, an important problem affecting some of the most vulnerable people in society, but which is difficult to measure as well as to solve.

“To date, there are no official figures on deaths of homeless people. The problem is two-fold: firstly, that homelessness takes many different forms, and secondly, that there is no specific way of recording homelessness at death registration.”

Meanwhile, Shelter used World Homeless Day to highlight another group...
BEHIND THE NUMBERS.
STORIES LIKE DONATO’S GIVE PEOPLE DIGNITY

The Big Issue will continue to tell the stories of people like Donato Barbieri. We were saddened to learn last week that the Turin-born 72-year-old died on September 14 after a short illness following a spell in a Slovenian hospital.

Donato had sold The Big Issue for three years after arriving in London in September 2015 – his second stint in the capital after time spent as a waiter in the 1970s.

He spent time sleeping rough and sheltering at a Methodist church in Chelsea before turning to The Big Issue.

From there, Donato flourished as he sold the magazine on his pitch at London Victoria station, and he told us that “selling The Big Issue gave an old man like me purpose” in an interview for the My Pitch page in 2016.

Donato was also among the vendors who attended the House of Lords as a guest of Big Issue founder Lord Bird last year, and before his death he had begun a placement with the Wellcome Trust allowing him to sell the magazine while receiving mentoring and training.

It was the latest step in an extraordinary life which saw Donato travel the globe, leaving his native Italy to work in nickel mines in Australia as well as spending time employed on a cruise liner.

“Donato was a well-liked, cheerful, and hard-working vendor,” said Big Issue London distribution team leader Lauren Neale. “We are extremely sad to hear the news, and he will be sorely missed by all of us in London distribution and by his customers alike. He was one of a kind.”

Big Issue London regional manager Chris Stuchbery added: “Donato was a well-loved character wherever he sold The Big Issue. His passing was a shock to all and he will be missed by all who came into contact with him.

“Donato sold in Victoria station, The Wellcome Trust and Angel for the time he was with us and really engendered great support from the public and was valued by the communities he became part of.”

Throughout his time selling the magazine, Donato’s customers were constantly in touch with The Big Issue to tell us how much of an impact he had on their day. Regulars described him as “lovely” and “the sweetest soul” as well as insisting that he “touched hearts” with his unique story.

It’s by telling stories like Donato’s that we can give homeless people the dignity afforded to the rest of society when they die.

@Lazergun_Nun

particularly at risk – single mothers. The charity found 66 per cent of homeless families in England were headed up by single mothers, despite being only 22 per cent of the general population.

And Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon told the SNP conference she was giving a £6.5m boost to the Social Bite social enterprise to bolster its Housing First programme in Scotland. It offers rough sleepers a sustainable pathway off the streets and into long-term housing.

It’s a welcome move in the battle to offer homeless people dignity, and to support them before they fall through the cracks – both in life and in death.

thebureauinvestigates.com
Street Art is created by people who are marginalised by issues like homelessness, disability and mental health conditions. Contact streetlights@bigissue.com to see your art here.

A COASTAL VIEW OF WEST COAST IRELAND

BY GERALDINE CRIMMINS

Geraldine is in her sixties and has struggled with drug addiction and been homeless twice, living on the streets around Victoria in London. Now she’s clean and lives in a housing association flat. She is artist in residence at Old Diorama Arts Centre in London until the end of October. Geraldine sells her artworks at the Bayswater Road Sunday Art Exhibition.

geraldinecrimmins.co.uk

You can buy prints of some artworks featured in Street Art through bigissueshop.com. At least half of the profit from each sale goes to the artist.

Street Art is created by people who are marginalised by issues like homelessness, disability and mental health conditions. Contact streetlights@bigissue.com to see your art here.
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Cathedrals remind us of the feats humans can achieve. Let’s rise to the challenge

The Isle of Ely is no longer an island surrounded by bog and water. Its cathedral, though, stands on some of the flattest land in the UK. Nestled around it is a small, largely unchanged city. Unchanged, that is, since the bog was drained in the 1620s and it became this dried-up isle of today.

But you will not miss the destitution of modern times. The beggars and wretchedness of some of its people. Nowhere seems free of this social collapse; collapse that’s not hidden, but in your face. Bargain shops mix in with others that look prosperous. This is us a few months before Brexit. And it’s Sunday night and the cathedral doors are open for a free lecture.

I am the speaker at this annual Ben Jupp lecture, organised by Amnesty Ely City and in memory of its co-founder. I arrive full of anticipation at speaking loudly in a vast space, parts of which date back to 1083. Not spreading stories of Israelites and biblical events, but in some ways trying to address the age old.

I think I inherited my mother’s mouth. It was always the loudest in the pack. Now I talk loud for social justice. Thank God I turned away from inherited hatreds that would have left me snarling, loudly.

My talk is about spreading the debate about human rights. Often human rights are seen as the cares of people far away. I want to build the argument around the human rights of Ely, and places closer to home.

And the human rights abuse of homelessness, and the fact that we let people simply injure themselves even more on our streets. Injury by leaving people in need to live outside of society, but within our eyesight.

Amnesty International has a brilliant, worldwide reputation built since its founding in London in 1960 by the barrister, Peter Benenson. Mostly seen as concerned with universal prisoners of conscience, it has grown to be seen as the best-known social brand in human rights.

People need rallying points like branding. Logos to understand and to be reminded. Amnesty’s candle surrounded by barbed wire must be one of the most descriptive images ever. It captures the pursuit of hope and truth even when surrounded by threat, inspired by the Chinese proverb, ‘Better to light a candle than curse the darkness’.

I talk loud for social justice. Thank God I turned away from inherited hatreds that would have left me snarling, loudly. How fitting it seems to me to talk again about reconnecting our social and legal systems so that we can take people from the streets and get the demons out that caused them to end up on the street. To talk about such things in a cathedral which once united piety, power and social purpose.

Street living and homelessness are human rights abuses. I cannot see it differently. Poverty is abuse. It robs you of all that makes you human.

So therefore let’s sing a song to its termination, write books and poems, collect money for foodbanks; and do a hundred more things to fight it. But let’s unify our efforts, is my final message this night at Ely.

Our cathedrals are beautiful social engines. They are powerhouses to gather opposition to ignorance and illnesses. They rise above us and remind us what feats humans can achieve. They make us feel we can walk on air; or should.

But let’s get rid of this blasted thing that, like a millstone, we carry round: poverty. That involves the grandest planning, the biggest unified thinking, the most careful husbanding of resources. The jettisoning of the slapdash, temporary, patched-up stuff that poverty-solving seems riddled with.

I left the dark cathedral having tried my best to widen human rights to include the person we see left behind on our streets with no system to support (other than the stop gap).

The bad news last week for the streets is how deadly they are. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has revealed that 449 people died in the last year. This is the worst indictment against street-dwelling I’ve heard in years.

The streets are a place where neglect kills. Death on our streets is a human rights abuse too far.

John Bird is the founder and Editor in Chief of The Big Issue. @johnbirdswords John.Bird@bigissue.com
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How to get leaf and affection

MORGAN DOANE AND ERIN HARDING

It’s heartbreaking to purchase the perfect plant only to bring it home and watch it waste away because it’s not in an ideal environment. Use what you know about your space to select houseplants that will thrive in your conditions.

East and north-facing windows get more diffused sunlight so are typically best for low-light plants. The hospitable zone for these windows is smaller because less light comes in and spreads through the space. Because of this, you may need to use the windowsill, or a plant stand directly next to the window, to provide your plant with enough light. Succulents and cacti probably won’t thrive in these spaces, but many plants will, including certain ivies, ferns and snake plants.

Pairing plants with pots is a way to be creative with your plant collection. Let your personal style shine through with container selections: minimalists may want to stick with plain terracotta or purchase all-white or all-black containers for a monochromatic look. If you tend toward a boho or eclectic vibe, mix terracotta with pots that feature bright colours, designs, and textures.

For every home style, there is a complementary container choice. Containers come in many different materials, from fabric mesh to cement. Porous materials such as terracotta and stoneware absorb water from the soil, so more frequent watering may be required. Plastic pots aren’t breathable, so retain moisture longer. For this reason, you’ll often find plants such as succulents and cacti in clay pots, and moisture-loving plants, such as ferns and begonias, in plastic. The one overriding rule is that indoor plant pots should have drainage holes, no matter what is planted inside.

As plants age, their root systems either outgrow their container or need a soil refresh to stay well fed. Repotting and potting up ensure the long-term health of your houseplants. The best time to follow these steps is right before plants enter their active growth spurt in spring.

For all chores, but especially for watering plants, having the right tools can make all the difference. With no shortage of options, picking a watering can will often come down to utilitarian or aesthetic preferences. Choosing the right watering can is about finding the balance between usefulness and style: for indoor use, a watering can should have a narrow spout with a small pouring hole to let you manoeuvre the watering can within foliage so you can deliver the water directly to the soil. Save watering cans with wide heads and many holes for outdoor use, where spreading water around a larger surface is more appropriate.

Some people whose childhood homes were filled with greenery grew up to become green thumbs themselves. Others fell in love with plants later in life by reading decor magazines, watching gardening shows, or following social media accounts, such as our House Plant Club. Regardless of how you got here, living the plant life can be a rewarding and lifelong endeavour.

Rather than seeing houseplant care as a chore, use it as a time to pause and reflect on life’s small wonders. A flower bud on your hoya or a new blade on your snake plant can provide great satisfaction when you know that, with your loving care, you’re the one who made it happen.

How to Raise a Plant
And Make it Love You Back

By Morgan Doane and Erin Harding

is out on October 22
( Laurence King, £12.99)

Instagram:
@houseplantclub
IN 1989
THE YEAR
MISHAL
HUSAIN
TURNS 16...
The poll tax is introduced in Scotland / The Dalai Lama wins the Nobel Peace Prize / Madonna divorces Sean Penn after four years of marriage

Mishal Husain
Presenting powerhouse
LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

At 16 I was at the stage of wondering what direction I was going to go in. Having a vocation was important in my family. My father was a doctor, his father was a doctor and I felt a certain amount of pressure to go into medicine, though I had a feeling that wasn’t right for me. My family came over from Pakistan and never want to be the kind of person who slacks or coasts, get it out of my head. But I manage and I get through it. I sometimes I worry about a shift the night before and can’t because she’s much more patient, she’d wonder if she’d have moments when she’d just fall apart. And yes, I have moments when I worry about all sorts of things. I get nervous before I go on air every day and nervous before I walked into an important meeting. That can also happen to a man of course, but I know for me having the courage to get over that came later in life. If I could talk to my younger self I’d tell her, don’t worry about being seen to blow your own trumpet, take every opportunity you can and tell people what you’re good at.

I think women who are bringing up sons and daughters now are aware that their self-perception is a big influence on how their children will view their own potential. I remember teasing my aunt once when we were watching Tony and Cherie Blair on the news and she said to me, “Imagine, you being the Prime Minister’s wife one day.” And I said, “What about being the Prime Minister?” That was the difference between her generation and mine. But having that conviction didn’t stop me feeling very nervous before I walked into an important meeting. That can also happen to a man of course, but I know for me having the courage to get over that came later in life. If I could talk to my younger self I’d tell her, don’t worry about being seen to blow your own trumpet, take every opportunity you can and tell people what you’re good at.

If I could relive any day of my life it would be my wedding day in London in 2003. We had a registry office marriage the day before, then a Muslim wedding. I married someone I’d known for many, many years. It was very emotional. I was in pale pink, a traditional Pakistani three-part outfit. And my mother gave me some family jewellery. Everyone sets out on their wedding day full of hope and expectation and happiness and when I look back on it, 15 years down the line, I just feel so grateful for that decision and to have spent the last 15 years with that person. It would be wonderful to relive that day with all those emotions, but also knowing things will work out between us.

If I could have one last conversation with someone, it would be with my father. He died two years ago and it had a major impact on me. I’d want to ask him why he felt so strongly that... Twelve years old is very young to be sent thousands of miles away to boarding school. It must have been a hard decision to make. I’d want to ask him if he ever wondered if he’d done the right thing. I’d also want to tell him his death made me think so much about the way I am and where that comes from. I don’t think I really got to thank him for setting me off on the path I’m on now. You teach your children as much as you can and then you have to let them go, just hoping you’ve given them what they need to make the best of their lives. So I’d want to tell him, I think you did a decent job.

Mishal Husain’s book The Skills: From First Job To Dream Job is out now (Fourth Estate, £16.99).

Interview: Jane Graham @janeannie
They were both children of immigrants with a point to prove. Now it looks like Rami Malek will forever be cinema’s Freddie Mercury. He talks to James McMahon

Rami Malek and Freddie Mercury might never have met, but you get the sense they’d understand each other.

Two children of immigrants – Malek born in Los Angeles, but with Egypt in his veins; Mercury, then Farrokh Bulsara, born in Zanzibar, having relocated to (and reinvented himself in) England in his teens – they are united by the sort of commonality that defines a person.

“I related to Freddie Mercury in a very literal sense,” says Malek, discussing his portrayal of the late Queen singer in soon-to-be-released biopic Bohemian Rhapsody. “When the script was being written, I wanted his upbringing to be an integral part to knowing Freddie Mercury. It was important to see an immigrant household and an immigrant upbringing.”

He pauses, a sharp intake of breath.

“That was so important in understanding his situation. And similarly, my situation...”

Bohemian Rhapsody is a film about the rock band Queen, yes. But more than anything, it’s a film about finding yourself. Loving yourself, even. Being able to look in the mirror and not flinch from your reflection. It’s this innate understanding of a person trapped between cultures that drew Malek to the role.

“It’s true that it did take Freddie a long time to become comfortable with himself. Similarly, I’m still learning to be comfortable with myself. I’m probably going to regret saying this, but I think me taking the challenge of playing this role might be, on some level, me feeling like I have something to prove.”

What do you mean?

“Well, I don’t know whether it stems from my experience as a first-generation American or as someone who is considered ethnic in a business that hasn’t always had people like me in the leads of films or television series. I grew up with the...
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name Rami Malek. I went to a school where that was an unusual name. I would have Arabic music in the car when I was a kid and I’d be nervous about anyone hearing it on the way to school. There comes a point in your life where you can acknowledge the beauty of that. Where you can see how beautiful and poetic that culture is and you want to share it with people. But when I was getting into acting, I didn’t have a role model. Someone who was like me. I wish I’d had Freddie…”

A famously troubled production – announced as long ago as 2010, filming on Bohemian Rhapsody didn’t end with the director it began with. Malek (after Sacha Baron Cohen, then Ben Whishaw) was the third Freddie Mercury to be attached to the project – but it’s likely that the names Rami Malek and Freddie Mercury will now be conjoined in conversation forever. Like Ian Hart is now cinema’s John Lennon, like Jim Morrison belongs to Val Kilmer, it seems unfeasible that any actor will dare to inhabit Mercury’s soul, such is Malek’s prowess in the part.

Incredibly, the actor, best known for his role as depressed hacker Elliot Alderson in the hit TV drama Mr Robot, had only a passing appreciation of Mercury and the music of Queen before taking the part. He ended it “a super-fan”.

“I inhabited him by immersing myself entirely in him. Every idiosyncrasy. Every nuance. The two most important things to me were, I knew I was going to be able to connect with him as a human being – as an actor, I can find those things, it might even be my strong suit. And so his upbringing and things like that, I knew I could relate to that. Who he was outside of the monolith of being a rock god. Where I had to work harder was trying to understand what made him such a brave and bold soul onstage.”

What helped you find that?

“Well I found a movement coach. I told them I wasn’t looking for someone to help me with choreography. That was almost the opposite of Freddie. What I needed was someone to help me understand why he moved in such a unique way. And I hired a physical trainer, because while I’d never compare what I did to them touring relentlessly, ‘playing’ the shows, take after take, was the most physically demanding performance I’ve ever had. I wanted to understand everything from how he moved his hands, to how he covered his teeth with his lips. I had a prosthetic in playing the part and when the make-up artist put them in for the first time, it almost made me giggle. The teeth took me so much closer to inhabiting him.”

With the surviving members of Queen involved at all levels of the film’s production, it also helped having direct access to those who had shared a stage with Freddie. Even those who’d spent time around the living room table during family meals.

“I’d go to dinner with Brian May a lot,” says Malek. “Having his approval early on was everything to me. To hug him after the film was in the can and have him happy with it meant so much. Then on set I met Kashmira, Freddie’s sister, and the physical similarity she has to Freddie just pierces your heart. I heard that John Reid, the band’s former manager, Elton John’s guy, was pretty taken aback by what I’d done as Freddie.

“I’m looking forward to hearing from other musicians about what they think,” he continues. “I heard from Bono the other day, from Boy George, from Sting. Whenever I meet a musician I always ask them if they met Freddie. Bono’s wife told me a great story about Freddie hitting on Bono hitting on Bono in front of her at Live Aid.”

Understandably excited to show the world what he’s done, Malek tells us that finishing the film, which encompasses Freddie’s HIV diagnosis, made him feel “sad, at the premature theft of life”. He smiles. “But there’s real joyous moments in there too. I’m in awe of him. I think I’ll be inspired by Freddie Mercury every day for the rest of my life.”

Bohemian Rhapsody is in cinemas from October 24

@jamesjammcmahon
Queen's rise to rock royalty was recorded by the band's guitarist, singer and songwriter Brian May whose interest in 3D photography resulted in a collection of images that give a unique and intimate view of one of the world's greatest bands. During the making of Bohemian Rhapsody, May took along his camera to document the making of his own band's story. He shares some behind-the-scenes pictures, now included in an updated edition of his book, Queen in 3-D, and talks exclusively about the story behind each image.

THE GREAT PRETENDER – FIRST MEETING RAMI, 13/3/17
"On first meeting Rami I was immediately impressed and felt like we were finally in the presence of the man who could portray Freddie. He just seemed to embody his walk, his spirit, his voice and facial expressions so effortlessly. He completely instinctively 'got' the inner Freddie... the Freddie that was shy and insecure, with a strong need for privacy and warmth. The Freddie that the public saw was built on that foundation, and Rami understands the conflicts that this sometimes brought about. He conveyed a truth beyond what the script alone could convey."

RELIVING LIVE AID, 8/9/17
"The recreation was so incredibly accurate that I felt as if I'd been transported right back to that special day. Live Aid was such a pivotal event in the history of our band and to walk right back into it 32 years later as spectators, observing a group of talented young lads re-enacting our story, was a wonderful and surreal moment. Bob [Geldof] was equally as blown away by the precision and the attention to detail."

Images part of Brian May | Queen in 3-D Collection
THE TWO BRIANS – GWILYN LEE AND ME

“Gwilyn is a joy. I marvel at the way he brought my younger self back to life so skilfully. We spent quite a bit of time together, discussing the history and the emotions that went with the history; but I too realised that beneath that, he was building up a deep knowledge of the way I think, and of my body language without me actually having to give him direct advice. When my children first heard the trailer, they asked me if I had voiced his part! That’s how close he got! I’m actually deeply honoured that he devoted so much skill and passion to getting it right.”

RECORDING HISTORY – BACK IN THE BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY STUDIO, 4/10/17

“In the studio, creating Bohemian Rhapsody, there was certainly no special feeling that this would be ‘the one’. We approached each song as an album track, each with its own style and strengths to be maximised. And, to be honest the complex structure and intricate multi-tracking was not something new for us. The path for all this was paved as early as those tracks on Queen II, like My Fairy King and Father to Son. But as soon as the album was finished and the first plays of Bohemian Rhapsody appeared on the radio, it was obvious that something very special was happening. There is no doubt that the video that we threw together so hastily for Bohemian Rhapsody contributed massively to its acceptance around the world. But the song is a monster in its own right, the mad vision of Freddie’s fevered brain, and I think it would have risen to prominence in the end, at any time and in any place.”

BRIAN MAY’S FAVOURITE PICTURE OF FREDDIE MERCURY FROM HIS OWN COLLECTION

“This captures the essence of Freddie behind the scenes in 1976, away from the public, unguarded and pensive as he so often was. It reminds me of our most glamorous days when we got fully made up for shows, especially Freddie, who would be transformed from the gentle image we see in the photo into a wonderfully flamboyant stage version of himself.”

Queen in 3-D: Updated Edition by Brian May is out on October 23 (The London Stereoscopic Company, £30) queenin3-d.com
We know that Christmas seems to start earlier and earlier every year. **But at Crisis we really have no time to waste.** We have to get planning well in advance. Crisis at Christmas involves thousands of people. With more than 4,700 homeless guests expected over a week at Christmas, tens of thousands of meals, hundreds of health checks and the expert care and support Crisis can provide, we need to be ready.

But it can only happen because of the people who support us. If we’re going to be ready, we need to start work now. This Christmas 236,000 people will be stuck in crowded and unsafe places, sleeping on people’s sofas, living in cars or tents - even out on the streets. They will be feeling lonely, desperate, and in danger.

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He slept in a tent and on the streets. “When it rains it is horrific. You’re damp for days, you have no clothes. You haven’t slept and you can’t think.”

Being homeless left him unable to function. As winter drew in, Tom’s situation seemed hopeless. But then he came to Crisis at Christmas.

At Crisis he found safety, good food, and company. He was able to talk to Crisis about longer-term problems.

“Crisis at Christmas has everything,” Tom told us. “It makes me feel a lot better. I plan to use Crisis in the new year too, and to try and find an affordable room. Crisis has changed my life. Without them I wouldn’t be anywhere.”

**Go online now and bring someone in from the cold this Christmas**

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Tom’s story is 100 per cent genuine, but his name has been changed and a model photographed to protect his identity. Photo: Sam Roberss
Here's our plan for Crisis at Christmas 2018...

Here's what you helped us provide last year:

- 33,659 nutritious hot meals served
- 804 advisory sessions delivered
- 683 health screenings
- 649 items of clothing repaired
- 10,930 volunteers

Reserve a place for someone who's homeless — for just £28.18 — and you'll be providing more than just a hot meal, a chance to clean up and get a health check. Just as importantly, each of the guests can access Crisis' year-round education, training and support.

Crisis at Christmas opens from 22 December. Visit www.crisis.org.uk to donate securely online or freephone 0800 999 2060. Please reply as soon as you can. Thank you.

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Child referrals for gender identity issues have rocketed in the last decade; from 97 in 2009-10 to 2,519 last year, a rise of more than 2,000 per cent. Heated debate continues, but often the loudest voices about transgender issues are not the most informed. On the rise in child referrals, experts say there’s more information about gender issues than ever before, and so a greater awareness.

Now a new TV drama, *Butterfly*, focusing on a young trans girl, is telling the human story behind the figures. Susie Green, CEO of Mermaids, a charity that supports gender-diverse children and their families, and which advised in the making of the new show, says there has been a chilling change in atmosphere in recent years.

“About 18 months ago, it seemed to kick off with a really massive push against trans women and trans kids in particular,” she says.

“The narrative is that ‘children can’t possibly know’ and that it is ‘child abuse’ to do anything other than make them live as their birth gender. That causes an environment of fear,” she says. “The backlash is not from experts. We get a lot of people who have nothing to do with transgender people and maybe have never met a transgender child saying what is best for trans kids.

“There’s more information, it’s more readily available, you can go online and find out about trans kids and there are more visible role models. On top of that you have schools more prepared to support young people and parents more prepared to listen to their children.”

Into this heightened atmosphere comes *Butterfly*, which stars Anna Friel and Emmett J Scanlan as the estranged parents of young Max, played by Callum Booth-Ford.

Max has identified as a girl from a very young age. Enforced football has, unsurprisingly, failed to change her conviction that she is a girl – despite her desire to please dad Stephen. So, at home, after initial resistance from her mother, she has been quietly living as Maxine when the series begins. But when she wants to start living openly as Maxine? That’s when life becomes more difficult.

The series has to perform a tricky balancing act. It must entertain, accurately represent trans children and their families, and educate.

“It could be a real gamechanger for trans kids and their families,” says Green. “It addresses some of those
preconceptions and tells the story from a really human place. You identify with the people and their struggle – and for a lot of families it is a real struggle. It shows this isn't something that happens overnight. Maxine didn’t put on a dress and immediately her mum said, ‘Oh, you must be a girl, then.’ It shows that it is about parents listening to their children. Parents feel so frustrated that they are being misrepresented as people who, at the drop of a hat, decide to switch their child’s gender in terms of how they face the world. That decision to allow the child that freedom is often taken in a very oppositional place with lots of family and friends telling you it is the wrong thing to do.”

Writer Tony Marchant and the cast spent time talking to trans kids and their families ahead of filming. Stories were shared, and the actors were left shocked by anecdotes of grown adults spitting in children’s faces at the school gates.

“One little girl who was nine, her mum was talking about the issues they have had with bullying at the school. She told them about the time her daughter came home from school and there was a size eight footprint in the middle of her bag.”

Green has lived through this. She became involved with Mermaids when her daughter Jackie, now 25, was six. At 13, Jackie was beaten up by two 40-year-old men because she was trans. Proudly, she discloses how her daughter is now seen as “a bit of a rock star” by some of the younger trans girls. “She is tall, she is gorgeous, she is very confident.”

“She had told me at four that she was a girl,” recalls Green. “Everybody was telling me to force boy stuff on her. I was told I needed to make her play with an Action Man. I’d say ‘You are a boy who likes girl things, and that is fine’, but she was really clear about it. ‘No, I am a girl.’

“That is why Butterfly is so important. Because kids know. Children go through periods of gender non-conformity and will express themselves in different ways. But you can’t make anybody trans. And you can’t make anybody not be trans. What you can do is shame people into not talking about who they are because it is too difficult.”

Green’s advice to parents in a similar situation is simple. “Support them. Love them. Make them know they are loved and supported, and they will work it out. “But if you try to force an identity on someone because it doesn’t fit with your sense of how the world should be, all you are going to do is make them ashamed.”

mermaidsuk.org.uk

‘TRANS KIDS WERE SPAT AT... AN ADULT DOING THAT TO A CHILD’

Anna Friel hopes Butterfly’s delicate balance can help to change attitudes

Did this feel like a story that needed to be told?

Absolutely. Everywhere you go, this is something people are talking about. And they have varying opinions. This story beautifully and delicately balances both sides. I don’t want people put off, thinking they don’t want the issue rammed down their throats. It is a love story and it is about a family tackling a subject, which is transgender, and how that can break down their family.

It could scarcely be more timely with the numbers of children referred to the NHS rising. It begs the question, why have those numbers risen? Have they always been that high but we didn’t hear about them because they didn’t know where to go for help? I met lots of families at Mermaids. I left there incredibly moved and wanting to honour their stories.

Do you think it will change people’s behaviours?

I kept hearing that it wasn’t the other children, it was the parents of the children doing the bullying. Trans kids were being spat at, having their nose broken. An adult doing that to a child? Let’s hope that stops. I was dumbfounded to know that could happen.

Younger generations have access to much more information than previous generations did. Gracie, my daughter, is 13. She didn’t think it was a big deal that her mum was doing something about a transgender child. I can’t wait until they are in charge of the world. They have a big job ahead of them!

What would you say to people watching who might be in a similar position to your character in Butterfly?

Ask. For. Help. Call Mermaids immediately. They have wonderful staff and open hearts. Don’t be alone with it, because after portraying someone who is going through this, I know it is not an easy journey. It is a difficult thing being a parent, it has taken me a long time in my life to realise it is all right to say I need help.

It’s nearly 25 years since...

Yep, the [Brookside] kiss! It’s extraordinary, firstly, that 25 years have gone so quickly. But it shows how much we have come on as a society because people were outraged I can go off and do Steven Soderbergh’s The Girlfriend Experience with full leban naked sex and people don’t bat an eyelid. Yet 25 years ago, that tiny, simple kiss – there wasn’t even orgastic – and it was outrageous! We have evolved.

Butterfly is on ITV on Sundays at 9pm @adey70
SHELF ESTEEM

Libraries are vital to communities but all around the country they’re at risk. The Big Issue is taking the fight to Westminster – at the end of the month our founder Lord Bird will present a wealth of evidence to libraries minister Michael Ellis and local government minister Rishi Sunak. But the numbers are just half the story. We need to know what libraries mean to you and how they’ve helped to shape your life. Here’s what you’ve shared so far.

#WHYBOOKSMATTER
@BIGISSUE

My mum started the first library in our village. Books on a trestle table. It was my treasure chest
Pat Curtis (Facebook)

I’m 59, and when I was a child I wasn’t allowed to read books at home and was never enrolled at a library. So I would stay late at school and go to the school library.

When I got to uni I used libraries a lot. And now I often go to talks or workshops at libraries. They have this calm, comforting atmosphere.

As a parent I enrolled my children at the age of two at our local library. They could take 20 books out at a time. My son would... clearing the shelves of his latest passion.

Oh happy days! He is now 32 and a junior doctor.

Libraries are part of the threads that stitch us together.
Wendy Errington, Whitley Bay

Here’s the lowdown about my personal opinion on libraries and why I feel it’s so important to keep them around.

Having a library around when I was younger meant I had a steady staple of entertainment to take out for free when I’d spent my pocket money on sweets and found myself broke in the book sense. It meant I could walk home with my very own adventure (be it thrilling crime novel, sci-fi space opera or ghoulish horror anthology) tucked under an elbow every time I stumbled down to the library. Of course it was always a temporary book loan, but the fond memories of discovering an author or a genre for the first time were the things that stuck with me forever.

Without a library to take shelter in during rainy days or somewhat boring sunny days I don’t think I would’ve read nearly as much as I did. Or had close to as much enjoyment as those fine reading hours the library so freely accommodated brought me.

I write a rallying call of support now for all libraries, because I feel strongly that a library isn’t simply a building, it’s an experience. An experience meant for the primary school kids who can’t afford a book from the Scholastic fair every time it rolls into schools, meant for the old lady who wants to get into Game Of Thrones because she heard it’s good, it’s meant for the tired college students who need a place to sit down and study. Such is the rich and diverse world of the library.

Please continue to fight for libraries in the name of experiences. Everyone has a right to one.
Gemma Jones, email
My local library has been invaluable to me. When my marriage broke up I found myself a flat to rent. Whilst I could manage my basic expenses, things like broadband and laptops were a luxury I couldn’t afford. Having access to the internet every day was vital to sort out my bills and apply for new jobs. I’m about to start my new management role, which I applied for and completed assessment for, at my local library.

Anne, Hampshire

Libraries offer so much to so many. I always order new hardback releases from the library, as not only is it money-saving, but it means the author is then featured in the library and other people will be able to access them too. It also proves that people are making use of their local amenity. The library also has several computers available for those amongst us who do not own one. A library is also a source for quiet contemplation, to sit and read in peace, and for those children who have a chaotic home life it is somewhere to come and study and complete homework in a quiet and safe environment. Whenever I attend a book festival, ie Edinburgh, I always read through the catalogues, which incidentally, is like reading a book in itself and list all the ones that I wish to read, then I order them all at the library, thus getting new authors out to a wider audience.

Miss Amanda Lovell

I was born in 1976 and brought up on a council estate in the Welsh valleys. Work was hard to come by, so when my father’s arthritis got too much he lost his factory job and couldn’t get another. My three brothers and I were brought up on benefits on the “top site” renowned for its poverty. My parents hadn’t finished school as both (we’d later understand) had dyslexia.

My parents understood how important reading was. We couldn’t afford tutors or books but we had a local library. Some of my fondest memories was my dad taking us to the library every week to choose our books. First Asterix comics, then Dick King-Smith, Roald Dahl, Stephen King etc. I learned to love books and reading.

When I went to high school I volunteered to help in the library. Learning and reading became such a natural part of me that going to university to learn and read more was an obvious next step. When my A-level teacher left mid-course and couldn’t be replaced I turned to the school library to teach myself.

Thanks to my dad and the library, I was the first in my family to finish school, to do A-levels, a degree, get a good job, own a car, a house and travel outside of Wales!

I genuinely believe that my library gave me the opportunity to be successful. It gave me access to the tools to help myself. I’d be heartbroken if others didn’t have this opportunity.

K

Libraries are important to me because I benefited hugely from having a local library just across the road from the house I grew up in. There were hardly any books at home but I spent hours in that library and the books I encountered there opened up whole new worlds and on a practical level improved my literacy skills and therefore my exam results. Needless to say that library closed years ago.

Ann Lewis

Libraries are vital community hubs, you’ve made that clear to us. But the impact that good literacy has on children is another side to the story that can’t be ignored.

A recent study by the National Literacy Trust found that a love of reading and writing in children leads to significantly better mental health when compared to children who are less engaged.

Youngsters who read and write daily and have positive attitudes towards literacy are three times more likely to have higher levels of mental wellbeing and tend to be happier with their lives than children who don’t, the study found.

But alarmingly, as children move from primary to secondary school they’re likely to engage less with literacy and there’s a corresponding dip in their mental wellbeing.

“Children and young people today face a multitude of pressures at school, at home and in their social lives,” says NLT director Jonathan Douglas. “Not only does a love of reading and writing enable children to flourish at school, we now also know it can play a vital role in supporting children to lead happy and healthy lives.”

It’s another compelling reason why we can’t sit back and let libraries bear the brunt of funding cuts.

Lord Bird meets government ministers on October 30 and we want to hit them with an arsenal of stories that show them just how important Britain’s libraries are. Share your experiences at editorial@bigissue.com @bigissue facebook.com/bigissueuk
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EXHIBITION

HAPPINESS IS...

...a Peanuts exhibition. Snoopy, Charlie Brown and co head to London’s Somerset House this month to celebrate 70 years of the world’s most influential comic strip. Good Grief, Charlie Brown! investigates the impact of Peanuts on the cultural landscape and asks what its relevance is for readers today. Showcased in their original state and size, just some of the 17,897 Peanuts comic strips created by Charles M Schulz, examining failure, love and loss, will be on display amid keepsakes and memorabilia over the years. The exhibition also features modern pieces from designers, artists, musicians and more, celebrating Peanuts’ enduring impact into 2018 and beyond.

Good Grief, Charlie Brown! is at Somerset House, London from October 25 until March 3
Displaced childhood

John M Taylor was so moved by a book about the harrowing effects of child migration he resolved to help those affected make their voices heard.

Novelists are always looking for a plot until one day there is a spark that points you in a certain direction. Then before you know it, the story takes over and you realise that it found you. It’s an exhilarating experience, especially when it is based on real-life events and you meet some of the people involved. Such was the case with I Will Find You.

For me it started when I read Empty Cradles by the wonderful Margaret Humphreys. It was an eye-opening account of how she had uncovered the shameful injustices of child migration, the damage it caused to the lives of tens of thousands, her fight to have it recognised by governments, who eventually formally apologised and helped victims.

Humphreys’ story made a deep impression and sensitised me to the plight of child migrants and orphans. Then later while living in Australia I had the privilege of meeting some former child orphans, many of whom were senior citizens by then. I’m not embarrassed to say that my own tears fell with theirs as they told their tragic stories. That’s when my ‘spark’ shone through. It was the story of a boy with the character and determination to survive mentally against all odds. He discovers life beyond institutions and an aboriginal village deep in the Australian outback, while at the same time remaining committed to eventually finding his mother.

Though I had already begun to write, I stopped for almost two years, not sure how to tell this story without causing distress yet not diminishing their experiences. Also I had to learn how to handle my own emotions whilst writing. So the decision was made that the book would be classified as fiction, even though the story is based on true events woven together using an author’s licence.

I Will Find You is that story. I hope readers find it enjoyable, stimulating and revealing. It’s the story of a boy with the character and parts of the research were harrowing while others were simply amazing. Both added to my determination to tell this story which begged to be told. Not wanting it to read like a biography or report I imposed rules on myself.

1. Don’t forget it’s a novel, make it flow.
2. Don’t use fancy English, make it easy to read.
3. No padding, every page must be pertinent and contribute to the story.
4. It must be honest and believable. The latter was often difficult to achieve given some facts were so outrageous that even the authorities considered them unbelievable for years.

The most joyful pleasures came in the aboriginal research. I quickly developed a high regard for these people, who have the oldest civilisation in the world. For as far back as 30,000 years they have lived in structured communities with rules and disciplines, an understanding of bush medicines and sustainable resources and considered the creation of their land and where their own spirits go when they die.

I was an incredible experience, and I am pleased to have been able to weave my enlightened understanding of these fascinating people into the story in a meaningful way. Without doubt, producing this work has broadened my horizons in many significant ways.

I enjoyed the contradiction I found regarding aboriginal stereotypes and common derogatory beliefs. For example, I asked an Elder how he dealt with such negative descriptions of his people and his culture. He smiled as though unconcerned while tapping the side of his nose.

“Them white fellas think we stupid but I ask you, if 20,000 years ago white fellas were given a piece of a tree and told to make it so when you throw it away she soars like a bird, flies in a big circle and comes back to you, why did they not know what to do. But we did. Now you cut through an aeroplane wing and you see it’s the same shape as a cut-through boomerang. That shape makes all your fancy aeroplanes fly. We smart see our ancestors learned that shape from birds wings more than 20,000 years ago. See, them white fellas are not so smart. It took them 20,000 years more to work that out.”

He laughed before continuing. “Tell you what is funny. When white fella first come to my land he saw a strange animal hopping around and asked a black fella what is that called? The black fella said Kan-ga-roo. No wyo you cut through a aeroplane wing and you see it’s the same shape as a cut-through boomerang. That shape makes all your fancy aeroplanes fly. We smart see our ancestors learned that shape from birds wings more than 20,000 years ago. See, them white fellas are not so smart. It took them 20,000 years more to work that out.”

He threw his head back and laughed, and so did I.
The Remainder is a novel about what it means to be a hostage to someone else’s past. Set in Chile, it is centred on the grown-up children of three anti-Pinochet militants who are traumatised by a conflict they played no part in. They do not remember the events that haunt their parents, but nor are they ever going to be allowed to forget. As the former dissidents try to exorcise their ghosts by endlessly articulating their pain, their children’s lives become warped and claustrophobic. For Iquela, daughter of Consuelo, the fall-out from the years of dictatorship is all-pervasive. She learns to describe one language – English – to drown out her mothers’ words. But she is trapped by the old stories and the constant reminder that “I do all this for you.”

It is only when Consuelo’s former sister-in-arms dies in exile, and her equally damaged daughter Paloma seeks to reanimate her body, that Iquela manages to escape her mother’s clutches. With the coffin stuck en route in Mendoza, Argentina, she, Paloma and Felipe – the disturbed son of a third dissident – set off in a hearse to track it down and bring it home.

To describe Alia Trabucco Zerán’s debut novel as “dark” would be like calling the Arctic nippy. Much of it is set during an ash storm which renders everything grey and bleeds out the scenery, if not the anguish.

The chapters are narrated alternately by Iquela and Felipe. Felipe’s chapters are a stream-of-consciousness expression of his mental disintegration. He sees corpses everywhere: in doorways, on park benches, floating in the river. Obsessed by numbers, he counts them, subtracting in the hopes of reaching zero, with no remainder. He is also obsessed with the carcasses of birds and with scabs and eyeballs. Felipe’s repetitive and macabre fantasies intensify the stifling atmosphere, but there is perhaps not enough fleshing out of how he became so flesh-fixated.

The other chapters follow the relationship between Iquela and Paloma, which is sometimes sexual. Iquela has been intrigued by Paloma since a fleeting childhood encounter at her parents’ house. Slightly older than Iquela, Paloma is a corruptive influence, but she is also a potential source of liberation.

Yet, in the end, the dynamic among the three protagonists is as destructive as the dynamic between the generations; they are bound by their inability to move on. Despite the political backdrop, The Remainder tells us very little about Chile under Pinochet; but everything about what it is like to grow up in the shadow of other people’s unhappiness.

Though Heavy by Kiese Laymon is very different in style, there are common threads. A memoir of growing up an overweight black boy in Mississippi, Laymon is the victim of his brilliant mother’s hopes for his future. Always conscious of the discrimination he will face, she drives him to better himself and beats him into submission when he disobeys. The book – written in the second person, directly to her, is a deeply unsettling read, exploring the blurred lines between love and abuse and the legacy of familial lies. Like Felipe, Laymon, now an English professor, is preoccupied with bodies, chiefly his own. While his mother gambles, his addiction is food and he swings from comfort-bingeing to starving himself. Along with many other boys born in the years after the Civil Rights Movement, however, the true weight he bears is that of US history.
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If the cap fits

Michael Moore is back and his aim at America and her 45th president lands like a wrecking ball

You don’t have to be right wing to find Michael Moore annoying (although it probably helps). Even if your political instincts align with his, two-and-a-bit-hours of his schtick – the self-righteous indignation, the annoying voiceover, the juvenile stunts, the baseball caps – can feel Moore than enough. But catch him on a good film – and this documentary, Fahrenheit 11/9, is one of his best – and you walk out of the cinema fired up, steam hissing from your ears.

The title here is a spin (literally) on Fahrenheit 9/11, Moore’s 2004 savaging of George W Bush and the Iraq War. The new film is named for the day that we woke up to find Donald Trump had been voted leader of the free world. While his win surprised most people (Trump included, judging from his dazed acceptance speech) Moore called the election early in the campaign – at a time when left-wing pundits were still smugly telling us all that no one would vote for such an idiot. To Moore, Trump is an evil genius and the film takes a swipe at his racism and misogyny, comparing the president to Hitler. (Yep, he goes there). But Fahrenheit 11/9 is not a Trump documentary, ignore the poster. Moore’s bigger question is: “How the fuck did this happen?”

His argument is that American democracy is a work-in-progress that needs to be fought for, and right now it’s in crisis. Donald Trump didn’t just fall out of the sky like a rancid orange. The two major political parties in America, focused on big business and special interests, have for years ignored vast swathes of the country. In return, 100 million people didn’t bother to turn out for the 2016 election – the biggest chunk of voters. With Fahrenheit 11/9 Moore goes on a tour to see what’s going on in “real America”.

In blood-boiling scenes, the director – older, a little frail, still wearing the hat – goes back home to Flint, Michigan (where he shot his first doc, 1989’s Roger & Me) to report on the water crisis. In 2014, tap water in the poor, predominantly black, city was contaminated with dangerous levels of lead, linked to life-changing behavioural and developmental problems in children. He attempts to make a citizen’s arrest of the state’s governor Rick Snyder, a classic Moore stunt, and later shows up outside his mansion with a truck full of Flint water, which he proceeds to hose over the garden. “No terrorist group has figured out how to poison the water supply of an entire city in America,” Moore says with typical hyperbole. But you know what, he’s got a point. For me the film’s most upsetting moment comes in a chance remark by a teacher on strike in West Virginia, who tells the camera she’s listed as “mom” in the phones of eight students whose mothers are not around.

The film ends on a note of optimism as Moore drops by to visit teenage survivors of the Parkland school shooting in Florida, now organising youth marches against gun violence. Like a cool uncle, Moore hangs out at their meetings. He also interviews progressives shaking up the Democratic party establishment, like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a 28-year-old ex-waitress who won the Democratic primary in the Bronx and Queens and may soon become the youngest person in Congress. More depressingly, off camera, in interviews to publicise Fahrenheit 11/9, Moore has been predicting that Trump will be re-elected in 2020.

Fahrenheit 11/9 is in cinemas from October 19

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Words: Cath Clarke @CathxClarke
Being as narcissistic as any performer is destined to be, I often don’t find out about the existence of a podcast until I have been invited on it. Then I feel startled and foolish for knowing nothing about it before. The podcast’s advantage over radio is the freedom to break free of specific time limits and restrictions of taste, decency and cultural limitations which can sometimes be imposed by broadcasting regulations and the pedantry of executives desperate to ensure their murky footprint is somehow on the show, a footprint which can be covertly and stealthily erased should the final product fail to find praise and prizes. The podcast’s freedom can lead to self-indulgence, but this liberation can also create conversations reminiscent of the best nights of low-key drinking, where inebriation is never quite reached, but a freedom of expression is.

Cariad Lloyd’s Griefcast was lauded at the British Podcast Awards. It is a simple format for a difficult subject. Comedian Lloyd’s father died when she was 15. Twenty years after his death, she started talking about him more, part of that strange human process of things coming more into focus the further away we get from them. Much of this talking is done on her podcast where she invites another person, more often than not a comedian, to discuss someone they have lost. In all the bustle of bereavement we can be lost in the arrangements and the attention and then, a few weeks later, after all those times people have said “sorry for your loss” or similar, that attention stops and you’re back to being another person in the world who just happens to have one less person to love or be loved by. Even in the process of grieving, you can become worried and self-critical. Are you grieving correctly? Is this how you are meant to feel? Are people looking at you with scorn and muttering, “Hmm, I don’t think that person is very good at mourning”?

A recent guest was Rebecca Peyton, an actor who had turned her grief into a monologue, Sometimes I Laugh Like My Sister. Her sister, Kate, was murdered in Mogadishu while working for the BBC. She was soon to be married and Rebecca was active in preparing the celebrations. On her way to a fringe play she was in, Rebecca saw the news change from “she’s been shot, but it should be OK” to “Kate is dead.” Creating the monologue, making the grief into something public and something with shape and form, was part of the ongoing process of dealing with the catastrophic. Rebecca’s father had been killed in a traffic accident when she was six. After the first night of her monologue she realised whose voice was being heard during the performance – it was the six-year-old child who hadn’t been heard all those years ago.

Griefcast gives a voice to so many different forms of loss, but it is never po-faced or overly reverent, nor is it facile. In an early episode, comedian Michael Legge moved beyond the human and discussed the loss of his beloved dog Jerk. Lloyd is an empathetic host, not afraid to bring her own stories and feelings into the discussion but neither invasive nor sensationalist. It is a strange thing to be that rare sort of animal that is aware that life is finite and death inevitable, and we are still trying to work out how to talk about this and frequently prefer uneasy silence than social embarrassment. Griefcast is both fascinating and very useful.

Cariad Lloyd’s Griefcast is available on acast

@robinince
Pod of gold

If your old MP3 player’s languishing in a drawer, dust it off and let the iPod Pharmacy turn it into a personal, portable therapist for someone in need.

In one of his early hit stage shows, immortalised for our repeated delection thanks to YouTube, the comedian Michael McIntyre describes the existence of what he dubs the ‘man drawer’. This is a zone where all manner of items – often useless, but deemed too valuable to throw away – are stored. The list includes leads from unknown appliances, ancient mobile phones, batteries of indeterminate life, foreign currency (if a man calls wanting to be paid in drachma, McIntyre is ready), radiator keys and takeaway menus. In the sketch, the drawer is curated by males – but actually, most homes tend to have a similar dumping area. However, now is the time for a clear out, because there’s a creative use for one of the items that is likely to be found in said drawer.

Chiltern Music Therapy has launched an iPod Pharmacy, where people are invited to donate their old players, which are then reconditioned and loaded with personalised playlists for music therapists to loan out to their patients. The iPod, once shiny and cutting edge, has since been replaced by inbuilt listening/speaker facilities on phones, as anyone who has taken public transport recently can testify. Chiltern Music Therapy’s scheme is an excellent way to support charitable giving, plus any means of repurposing items has environmental benefits too. The scheme is supported by Jazz FM and Yamaha, which have pledged to give recipients a pair of headphones for every iPod or MP3 player donated. Music is used not only to help distract from treatment and procedures but is also widely recognised as helping with cognition, communication and connection in patients with neurological conditions such as dementia. You can find your nearest place to donate at chilternmusictherapy.co.uk/ipodpharmacy. Go on, check that drawer...

@claireiswriting

HAUNTING MELODIES

As Halloween prepares to sneak up on us, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RNSO)’s Broomstick Ride, part of the Children’s Classic Concerts series, will be held at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (October 27, 3pm) and at Usher Hall, Edinburgh (October 28). Families are encouraged to grab their Nimbus 2000s and join the RNSO for an afternoon of witches, wizards – and valkyries, suggesting Wagner may appear on the programme. There will also be a performance of We Can Fly, written by Oliver Cox, and performed by young students with additional support needs.

Welsh National Opera (WNO) Orchestra is also hosting a Halloween Family Concert, at St David’s Hall Cardiff (October 28). The event is open to all ages and is intended as an introduction to opera and classical music. There are free pre-concert activities, including the chance to meet musicians and look at props, wigs and costumes.
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For further information or to make a donation contact:

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A patient’s experience of The Mental Health Act 1983

The Big Issue / p41 / October 15-21 2018
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Expert Opinions

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• Raiser’s Edge database experience desirable but training provided
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• Willingness to work independently
• Experience in social media would be desirable but not essential
• An enjoyment of a good cup of tea

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THE BIG ISSUE / p45 / October 15-21 2018
WIN!

THE DARK

ON DVD

The Lovely Bones meets Let The Right One In, with a dash of the Blair Witch Project, The Dark is an unnervingly original chiller that simultaneously pulls at the heartstrings and makes the skin crawl.

In this debut from writer/director Justin P Lange, an undead young woman, Mina, stalks the ‘Devil’s Den’ woods where she was killed. If anyone enters the woods, she kills them and feasts on the body. But when she stumbles on a young blind boy named Alex, who shows signs of horrifying abuse, she can’t bring herself to kill him. As police and locals close in, searching for Alex, Mina’s growing relationship with him changes her in ways she never thought possible.

The first film to be released under the new FrightFest Presents label, The Dark shocked horror fans at this year’s FrightFest London.

To be in with a chance of winning one of five copies, simply answer the question below:

**At which film festival did The Dark premiere?**

**THE DARK** is out on DVD on October 22

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Send entries with THEDARK as the subject to competitions@bigissue.com or post to:
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- Include your name and address.
- Closing date is October 30.
- Include OPT IN on your entry if you want to receive updates from The Big Issue.
- We will not pass your details to any third party. For full T&Cs see bigissue.com
Across
1. Under way, having left the runway (3,3,6)
2. Dad nearly had a daughter as a dunce (7)
3. Dishonestly taking the financial paper (5)
4. To make wealthy men, Richard included (6)
5. In tears over some Greek wine (7)
6. Join international organisation provided journey concludes (5)
7. Two score on the dartboard (6,6)
8. Where one is entitled to sit (5,2,5)
9. One after another continually moving about (2,3,4)
10. How to register indebtedness initially (3)
11. One takes a lot of convincing (7)
12. Lily about to hold head of department to produce a poem (5)
13. I mixed toddy outside – there's a strange thing (6)
14. Visual (7)
15. Gravity and scope of opening moves (6)
16. Urge, in good French surroundings, to produce buds (7)
17. Fruit left one nursing desire (6)
18. Apportion (5)
19. Furniture list (5)
20. London soccer team (7)
22. Tow (3)
23. Performing together (2,7)
24. Binding? It's magic (12)

Down
1. Not amateur (12)
2. One after another continually moving about (2,3,4)
3. Dishonestly taking the financial paper (5)
4. To make wealthy men, Richard included (6)
5. In tears over some Greek wine (7)
6. Join international organisation provided journey concludes (5)
7. Two score on the dartboard (6,6)
8. Where one is entitled to sit (5,2,5)
9. One after another continually moving about (2,3,4)
10. How to register indebtedness initially (3)
11. One takes a lot of convincing (7)
12. Lily about to hold head of department to produce a poem (5)
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16. Urge, in good French surroundings, to produce buds (7)
17. Fruit left one nursing desire (6)
18. Apportion (5)
19. Furniture list (5)
20. London soccer team (7)
22. Tow (3)
23. Performing together (2,7)
24. Binding? It's magic (12)

To win Sad Animal Facts: Baby Talk by Brooke Barker mark where you think the ball is, cut out and send to:
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Issue 1327 winner is Martin Price from Maidenhead
ABOUT ME...

SHORE THING
I worked as a fisherwoman when I lived in Dartmouth. I did crab and lobster fishing on the coast – another adventure I didn’t expect.

IF I WON THE LOTTERY...
I’d take every single Big Issue vendor out for a great big dinner and take them all on holiday. I don’t have anything but utter and complete respect for vendors.

I lost my job last August and had to go on to Universal Credit. In the eight weeks that it took them to sort everything out my life completely spiralled out of control. I went into debt and I nearly lost my flat. In a matter of weeks my whole life went into the gutter. I couldn’t eat, there was no money. I had to borrow off family and friends, but you can’t do that for ever.

One of my best friends was doing The Big Issue in Newton Abbot and he was helping me out, bringing food over for me. He told me about the magazine but because I’m really shy I was scared to death at first. I have anxiety so I don’t really like being in a public space. It can be frightening because people do look down on you. I was astounded really, people don’t know that every vendor who’s out there selling The Big Issue has a story, so why would anybody look down on you when you’re already down? But to counteract that I started meeting all the other vendors, who are absolutely fabulous and some of the best people in the world. I’m so proud to be a Big Issue seller and all the other customers are such lovely people. It’s all these things mixed into one, all these emotions.

I’ve got four children, they’re grown up now and they all live far away. I would never ever have told them the dilemma I was in, I wouldn’t ever want my kids to worry about that kind of thing. After it all passed I let them know and they’re proud as punch of me. Usually if we can we’ll try to get together at Christmas time but if not we’re always in touch on the phone.

I volunteer as a stablehand at the mare and foal sanctuary at Honeysuckle Farm in Newton Abbot. I used to be a groom when I was a young girl so I’m devoting one day a week to doing that because it’s something I absolutely adore. It really helps with my anxiety as well.

Before I lost my job last year I was a retail assistant, but I’ve done all sorts. What I’m doing now every day, getting out and meeting people, is doing me the world of good at the minute. When I nearly lost everything my anxiety went through the roof. Getting an eviction notice takes you to a place where you don’t want to go. But by the skin of my teeth I’ve managed to hold on to my home. I’m in arrears but I can manage it. I’ve started again and I haven’t looked back really. It’s not that I’m not concerned about it, I’m just not at my wits’ end any more.

Interview: Sarah Reid
Photo: Andrew Butler

MY PITCH

Ann Warke, 53
CATHERINE STREET, EXETER

“I’ve started again and I haven’t looked back”
Unlike the magical Harry Potter tales... 
...this ‘cupboard under the stairs’ is REALITY for Vadim.

Love Russia charity supports individuals who take on unofficial social worker roles who help orphanage leavers like Vadim escape what seem to be hopeless situations. Without this help, many orphans are lost to drug abuse, crime and homelessness.

Dependable support from mentors changes the high probability of a wasted future that 90% of vulnerable orphanage leavers face.

By ‘stepping in’ as the parents they never had, meeting practical needs and teaching life skills, mentors help orphanage leavers begin coping with independence. Experiencing love and care changes their hopes and expectations of the future.

Please pray for and support our mentors who literally feed, clothe and give homes to orphans.

£5 can help mentors maintain phone contact for support at all times.

£12 can provide 1 week of fuel for visits, outings and essential support work.

£25 can significantly help with running the Transition Homes that provide emergency accommodation.

Please donate towards this life changing work.

DONATE...
Online: loverussia.org
By Post: Love Russia, Manor Farm, Thrumpton, NG11 0AU
Phone: 0115 983 1100

Text: LOVE04 £10 (or amount of your choice) to 70070 & change a life like Vadim’s

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