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Dublin Institute of Technology

2001-10

DIT Independent, 1st.-31st. of October, 2001

DIT:Students Union

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Recommended Citation

Dublin Institute of Technology Students Union; DIT Independent, 1-31 October, 2001. Dublin, DIT, 2001.

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Director appointed to tackle industrial strife

By Aoife Stokes

DIT has announced the appointment of a Human Resources Director in an effort to combat major industrial relations problems highlighted in a recent Labour Relations Commission (LRC) report.

The report, which was published in May of this year, was brought before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) at the behest of the committee's Chairman Mr Michael Finucane TD. At the PAC meeting in May following the publication of the report, Mr Finucane said that the report was a "shocking indictment" of the college. Speaking to the DIT Independent, Mr Finucane said that "As chairman of the PAC I used the opportunity in the context of exploring the overall difficulties that

LRC report damns DIT management methods

the Comptroller and Auditor General had with the DIT."

The Comptroller and Auditor General, Mr John Purcell, speaking at the PAC following the publication of the report criticised a number of questionable practices in the running of the college.

These practices, which were uncovered during audits conducted in 1998 by his office included the purchase of a rare piano worth £85,500, which was not used for three years by the college.

Mr Purcell also criticised DIT in relation to the institution's preparation of accounts, saying that his office still hadn't received completed accounts for 1999. "That the accounts were way behind was a diffi-

culty. Bringing the report before the PAC was an opportunity to ask about the LRC report on a general basis.

The report indeed appeared to be extremely critical. "DIT had fallen behind in their annual reports however the Comptroller and Auditor General has since indicated that he is very happy with the progress," added Deputy Finucane.

DIT President Dr Brendan Goldsmith, attributed some of the accounting problems to the merging of the six DIT colleges and said that a new management information system would help. Fianna Fail TD Sean Ardagh, a member of the PAC, expressed specific concern

at the committee meeting that £12,000 worth of cleaning fluid, £5,600 worth of light bulbs, £3,400 worth of blue pens and £3,300 worth of first aid materials by an employee in the college's school of music. This same person, who has since left that position following disciplinary action by DIT, had also ordered plastic sacks worth a total of £5,400.

The report from the LRC's

advisory development and research service says the college should immediately introduce a range of reforms, including sending some of its managers on "people management" training. Aloof management has undermined morale at DIT at all levels according to the report which also identified politically motivated agendas and lack of consultation between management and the college's several hundred staff.

Commissioned by the governing body of DIT and the

Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), the main academic union in the college, the report was welcomed by the TUI although they were critical of its appearance in the public domain.

Some 140 staff across the college's sites were interviewed by LRC officials. Speaking at the PAC, Dr Goldsmith said that whilst some staff had aired grievances, the 140 interviewed represented only 10 per cent of the total staff members.

Continued on page 4

Rain can't halt Sportsday fun

By Dermot Keyes

It rained and rained and rained, but DIT's Sportsday was its usual fun-filled event, offering something for the dedicated sporting buff to the disinterested college dossier!

Be it soccer, bouncy castle (surely a candidate for an Olympic sport), our great national games, be it with the size five or the ashplant, everyone that made the trip to the ALSAA Complex, near Dublin Airport had an enjoyable day. Of course, the more serious side of Sportsday provided DIT's coaches and selectors with a look at what the year ahead on the competitive field of action could hold in store.

Sportsday was as always an integral part of the Freshers' Week experience and provided plenty of energy output for students who spent the rest of that week raising pint glasses as opposed to hurleys or hockey sticks!

The ALSAA complex was as always a superb venue for DIT Sportsday and credit must be given to all that were



Here goes my lunch: Velcro clad student prepares to hit the wall and hurl his elevenses

involved in the organisation of the day. There were so many sports catered for as always that it is always encouraging to see students taking part in such massive numbers.

It remains a shame that those who enjoy their sport, be it competitive or otherwise, do not have the facilities or provisions available to them that the biggest third level institute in this country really should have at its disposal.

Alas, such thoughts were far from the thoughts of the wannabe Keanos, DJ's and Woddies that strutted their stuff despite the inclement conditions that the day seems to throw up almost annually.

See inside this month's edition for what lies ahead for some of our sporting outfits as well as what the rest of Freshers' Week threw up (throwing up during Freshers' Week - there's a rare occurrence!) for our new and not so new students.

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Paula McIntyre

Mon/Wed/Fri

AIB Campus Bank 10 am - 12 noon

Bolton Street 1 pm - 4 pm

(Telephone: 8740409) Tue/Thur

10 am - 1 pm

Liz Moore

10 am - 12.30 pm Daily

AIB Campus Bank

Kevin Street

(Telephone: 4759680)

AIB Campus Bank 1.30 pm - 3.30 pm Daily

Aungier Street

(Telephone: 4759654)

Students of DIT Cathal Brugha Street & Mountjoy Square may visit the Student Officer in Bolton Street Campus Bank or alternatively visit AIB Bank, 37/38 O'Connell Street, Dublin 1.

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The Overall View

Hello all and welcome back or welcome to college and indeed to the DIT Students Union (DITSU). It's the start of another year and I wish you all the best of luck in your studies and your pursuits. It's going to be a busy year as far as the Students Union is concerned with plenty of campaigns to run and battles to fight! We're at an important time of the year with class rep training and clubs and societies training taking place shortly, watch this space. We've just had our Part-Time Officer Elections and on behalf of the SU executive, congratulations to all and we look forward to working with you through the year. The SU is conducting Part-Time Officer Training this year for the first time on October 25th, so we hope to see the newly elected there.

I hope you all enjoyed Fresher Week and are ready for a hectic social year with Halloween events coming up across the sites. All our Clubs and Societies will be convening their first meetings over the coming weeks so watch out for posters in your college and don't hesitate in joining something that takes your fancy. If you need any information about clubs, societies, entertainments or anything just call into your local Student Union office.

The Student Union officers in your local site have undergone extensive training during the Summer months to prepare them for their positions. They have taken a year out from their studies to help make your year at college more comfortable and enjoyable. Whether it is a financial, educational or personal problem the President or Welfare Officer will be more than happy to help. They may not have the answer but they'll know someone who has. There are plenty of ways of getting involved with the Students Union. One can participate as a class rep, part-time officer, DITSU councillor, or member of the Ents Crew.

The SU continue to provide many services, including ISIC card production, photocopying, pool and video games and our shops run by DITSU Trading. Please continue to use these services as all money spent goes back into providing even more and better services for you the students. If you have any ideas of further services that the SU could provide please don't hesitate in letting us know. The SU is only as good as you make it! It's your money paying our wages and organising the events so have your say as to how that money is spent. Enjoy your year and remember to work hard as well as all the playing hard. Take care and I look forward to meeting you and working with you over the coming months, *lis mise le meas,*

Marguerite Fitzpatrick

DIT student fees hiked by £20

By Darragh Clifford

Third level fees have once again increased this year, this time by the above-inflation figure of seven percent.

The £312 that full time students of DIT paid this year represents an increase of £20 on last year's £292 charge. In 1996, college fees stood at just £150. Four in ten third level students in receipt of the grant are exempt from the levy.

The non-tuition fee goes towards various student services, outlined by DITSU President Marguerite Fitzpatrick elsewhere in this month's issue. Within DIT this year, £70 of the total has

gone to exam fees, with the remaining £242 forwarded to student welfare services, clubs and societies, medical fees and to DITSU's six site offices. What sets DIT and all IT's around the country apart from Irish universities is that Institutes of Technology are not in a position to agree on the level of their non-tuition fees without consulting the Department of Education.

Section 40 of the Universities Act, 1997 states: "A university may determine and charge fees for student registration, courses, lectures, examinations, exhibitions or any other event, service or publication held or provided at or by, the univer-

sity."

Section 18 of the DIT Act, 1992 illustrates the freedom of the Institute in relation to the capitation charge.

It states: "The Institute may charge fees or admission charges and such other charges of such amounts as may from time to time be determined by its governing body subject to such conditions as may be specified by the Minister (of Education and Science) from time to time for courses, lectures, examinations, exhibitions and other events held at or by the Institute and for other activities." The Union of Students in Ireland has react-

ed angrily, saying that if the fees continue to double every five years, it would amount to the reintroduction of tuition fees "by stealth".

Colm Jordan, Education Officer with USI told the DIT Independent that "under the terms of the RTC and DIT Acts the Minister for Education can stipulate where the extra resources generated by the increase in the student charge are spent in the Institutes of Technology."

In 1999 Dr Woods' predecessor, Micheal Martin, directed Institutes of Technology to invest the extra money in projects to

combat the problem of non-completion and to ensure greater equality of access." Jordan has called on Dr. Woods to use his legislative powers to direct the extra £2.4 million generated by the increase in the charge into these areas. In 1995 a charge of £150 was introduced with free tuition fees.

This fee was allocated for student services and exam fees. However the fee has doubled in five years, yet for DIT, many student services remain below a satisfactory level, including a lack of sports facilities and adequate computer terminals.

European Business Seminar hosted by DIT

DIT recently hosted the 31st European Small Business Seminar (ESBS) forum, entitled 'An Enterprise Odyssey 2001' from September 12 to 14 in the CityWest Hotel, Dublin.

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Harney opened the three-day forum. Keynote speakers included Dr. Rudy Berger, CEO MediaLab Europe, and Dr. Walter De Brouwer, CEO Starlab, Belgium, both of

which are leading players within the technology sector. The ESBS is Europe's premier forum for the exchange of ideas and the networking of players in the Small and Medium Enterprise sector.

The theme of this year's forum was the link between Technology, Education, and Enterprise in the new Millennium.

Technology based enterprise and its development was one of the many areas discussed. This was particu-

larly relevant in light of the recent concerns over the continuation of the Irish economic miracle, which has largely come about based on the success of such enterprise.

"We in the DIT, as providers of third level education to over 21,000 students, are profoundly aware of the changes created by the technological revolution on our economy and our society," said DIT President Dr Brendan Goldsmith. "However, the challenge for

the DIT and all other institutions is identifying our role in managing this technology to create further wealth in the future."

In addition, delegates explored the role of organisations, knowledge centres, enterprise agencies, policy makers and others committed to entrepreneurial and managerial development in the decades that lie ahead.

Student/computer ratio must be addressed - Fitzpatrick

By Aisling Casey

A *DIT Independent* investigation has illustrated the serious shortage of computers at the Institute, with 2,500 computers available for over 22,000 students.

This news followed the publication of a report disclosed by the Union of Students in Ireland, which indicates an appalling shortage of computers at Irish universities, with some operating a ratio of one Personal Computer for every 33 students. Although DIT's ratio is quite low by comparison, the Institute is still nowhere near meeting the target of one computer for every three students as set out by the Department of Education five years ago.

DITSU President, Marguerite Fitzpatrick stated that students must be catered for by every means possible to ensure a satisfactory standard of computer access was guar-

anteed for all. "We definitely should have more computers," she said. "In my six years in DIT, there has always been complaints about the lack of computer facilities for students." She added that it was very important that all students had access to computer facilities. "It is not fair that students have to buy their own computers when they should have access at college." If DIT is to be granted university status, management will have to make a range of improvements to meet Government standards. Commenting on computer shortages as a criterion required to gain university status, Fitzpatrick said, "we are the biggest third level college in Ireland and the facilities should be there for our students."

However, USI figures show that none of the colleges surveyed is even near to meeting the standards. In the five years that have passed, it

appears that there has been a national failure to meet the target. Students, who choose to study at third level, are being denied access to the necessary resources to achieve maximum computer literacy. The survey shows the ratio of students to computer varies from 13:1 in Dublin City University to 33:1 in Trinity College and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

USI President Richard Hammond was disappointed by the report's findings. "Ireland is one of the world's leading exporters of computer software and hardware and yet our university students are struggling with inadequate facilities," he said. "The figures are truly shocking," added his Education Officer and former DITSU Aungier Street President Colm Jordan said. "The extremely poor provision of computing facilities in our third-level colleges adds to

the growing concern in relation to the emergency of a 'digital divide'. He added that "in the absence of adequate facilities in our third level institutions, those with the resources to provide themselves with their own computer and printer have a great advantage over those who must wait in line for the use of college facilities."

These figures are of great concern, at a time when students need to be attracted into the sciences, with two-thirds of CAO computer and IT courses falling in popularity this year, despite a shortage of information technology graduates. "If we want to reverse the fall-off interest in computing we must ensure that students have the facilities and equipment necessary for their course," Jordan concluded.

Wheelchair accessible transport 'inadequate'

The inadequate level of wheelchair-accessible public transport has forced several students with disabilities to abandon their dream of going to college, the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) claimed at a recent protest in Dublin city centre.

More than 150 wheelchair-bound students and supporters staged rallies outside Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann offices and a taxi rank, to highlight the inadequacies in public transport. President of USI, Richard Hammond, emphasised the importance of public transport for students to maintain independence and quality of life. "Yet, anyone unsteady on their feet, the elderly, the visually impaired or those with some degree of mobility are effectively excluded from the transport which they pay for through their taxes," he pointed out.

"We can put men on the moon, but people with disabilities can't get from one side of Dublin to the other," he said. Joan Cullen, Disability Rights Officer with USI, and wheelchair-bound, described her experience in hailing a taxi as soul-destroying. "The only way I can guarantee that I won't have to wait for several hours and watch taxis turn off their roof signs as they approach, is for someone else to hail the taxi for me while I wait out of sight," she explained. She said people using wheelchairs were effectively barred from the DART after 8pm because there was no member of staff to give assistance. The Government has undertaken to have the entire Dublin Bus fleet fully wheelchair-accessible by 2008. In the meantime, Ms Cullen called on the Government to adequate resources to Vantastic, an affordable accessible transport service run on a membership club basis for people with a mobility disability. - *Campus.ie*

Q&A - MARGUERITE FITZPATRICK, OVERALL DITSU PRESIDENT

Vinny Dooley's Presidency of DITSU was an eventful, problematic term. Difficulties at Union HQ and a host of other problems last year ensured whoever succeeded Dooley would have a major task on their hands. New President Marguerite Fitzpatrick spoke to DIT Independent Editor Dermot Keyes about what 2001/02 holds in store

Dermot Keyes:

Firstly congratulations on winning the election for the Presidency of the Union. What exactly is the remit of the position of DITSU President?

Marguerite Fitzpatrick:

As Overall President, my job is to make sure that the sabbatical officers of the Union in each site have the resources and the training that they need to perform their tasks to the best of their abilities.

I also represent the Students' Union on a national level and act as the public voice of the Union when attending the various meetings and conferences that come with the job.

I am responsible for DITSU Council and act as the principal spokesperson of that body. The Students' Union must represent the needs of the students of DIT and I am responsible for seeing that this happens.

DK: The small turnout at last year's DITSU Election seemed to be indicative of the largely apathetic attitude that prevails among a large proportion of DIT students, who look at the Union and believe that it doesn't really do anything. What would you say to such students?

MF: That's a fair point. A lot of people do seem to think that DITSU doesn't do anything and this sort of thing, which really isn't the case.

One of the main objectives of my year as President is to improve the level of communication in DIT between the Union and the students.

We've got to get the officers out more often in all of the sites and we hope that our poster campaigns during the year will also serve to bolster and publicise the profile of DITSU to a far greater extent than what has previously existed.

If students have this attitude that the officers and the Union as a whole are not doing that much, then I say to them use your vote at election time.

They should get involved and change this if they feel so strongly about it and stand in elections and see the work that needs to be done and is being done.

Our officers sit in several DIT committees and are



Marguerite Fitzpatrick: "If students have this attitude that the officers and the Union as a whole are not doing that much, then I say to them use your vote at election time. They should get involved and change this if they feel so strongly about it and stand in elections and see the work that needs to be done and is being done."

committed to doing as good a job as they can do with the various projects and campaigns that they are involved in.

You can get stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to this kind of attitude.

DK: Do you aim to raise the profile of DITSU this year and if so how?

MF: Definitely. We are going to be getting around to all the first year classes over the next few weeks through our sabbatical officers to establish the class reps system. This is very important because when we show those new to the college what we do and what we can do, then we have a greater chance of engaging with the students and showing what we can do.

DK: For want of a better expression, what possessed

you to get involved in Students' Union activities?

MF: When I was in first year, I ran for language officer and I wasn't aware that this was a position on the executive of DITSU.

But since then I have been involved to greater and lesser degrees in some years before I decided to stand for the President's position in Bolton Street when I was in third year. Last year, I thought why not go for the Overall Presidency went for it and here I am today!

DK: A lot of students I expect are not aware of what happens to the capitation fee that they pay at the start of each academic year. What exactly is done with our money?

MF: The capitation is put towards the provision of student services. Clubs and societies, the chaplaincy, the

sport clubs and so on all receives percentages of the money as we do.

The main part of the money would go towards the salaries for officers and the training of officers each year. For the first time ever this year we are going to have training for part-time officers, which the capitation is also helping to fund.

The money also goes towards the entertainments that we provide during the year and is also put towards stationary used by the Union, insurance and the other bits and pieces that need to be bought and used during the year. The capitation is very important in the running of the union and it is important that students realise that their money is helping us work for students as best we can.

DK: Last year's DITSU was plagued with difficulties and it really was a year to forget. What do

"One of the big problems last year was the lack of communication between the Executive and the officers . . . this two-way process just wasn't happening last year. Communication is very important to the running of the union."

you aim to do to avoid the problems of last year's Presidency?

MF: Having being on the Executive last year, it was clear that one of the big problems was communication between the Executive and the officers and as a result of that, between the officers and the students.

All decisions I am making as President are made following consultation with the Executive and one of the problems last year was that this two-way process just wasn't happening.

Communication is very important and hopefully this will make the running of the Union and its other functions a lot easier for everyone.

DK: Thanks for your time and good luck with everything this year.

MF: Thanks very much.

Swiftcall, Usit NOW launch student phone service

A NEW telephone service for third level students by Swiftcall and usit Now is up and running, exclusively to usit NOW ISIC holders.

'RINGO' offer's 20% off Swiftcall's standard rates and major savings when compared to the major market competitor, Eircom. The service offers the lowest rates on international calls and calls to mobiles.

The service can be purchased directly from Swiftcall, any Service Plus Post Office or on the web at www.swiftcall.ie/ringo. Students who open an account for £25 receive £5 worth of free calls.

For example, if one is making a call to an Irish mobile using the Eircom service, it costs 23 pence a minute, compared to just 12p with Swiftcall.

RINGO is a prepaid telephone service and can be used from any landline, payphone or mobile phone.

As RINGO can be used from any phone, students can save both the monthly line rental from Eircom (£14.25 per month) and monthly landline call bills at their residences.

Swiftcall will also be offering discount call-cards via the usit NOW website and visitors to www.usit-now.ie can purchase call-card e-pins comes at a discount of 10%.

The £20 call-card e-pin comes with an extra £5 free calls at a special discounted price of £18. Users will receive an 11-digit pin number which will allow them to make calls immediately. To sign up, call RINGO at 1800 718 900.

Director appointed to tackle industrial strife

Commenting on the PAC considerations of the LRC report, DIT Student Union President, Marguerite Fitzpatrick stated, "I know that DIT were put in front of the Public Accounts Committee recently. I do feel that they (the management) should continue to strive for university status for DIT. I believe that attaining this status is something that is truly worth fighting for. We should be confident that the Governing Body of DIT is taking the various problems that currently exist."

(As Overall DITSU President, Ms Fitzpatrick sits on this Governing Body of DIT.) The report has since been circulated to DIT staff.

DIT Independent

Young, Irish and drunk

It is disappointing but hardly surprising to learn that the Irish student possesses a greater propensity for drunkenness than any of their European counterparts. The latest figures suggest that both the 11-15 and 16-24 age groups have been targeted by drinks companies as the most easily exploited and profitable niches in today's market.

This is both alarming and worrying but since we Irish tend to have such a laugh about our obsession with alcohol, such statistics are brushed aside by students, which leads to another thought.

Freshers' Week is intended to provide students with an introduction to what college life is all about - the fun, the laughter, all of course fuelled by alcohol. It is after all, impossible to enjoy one's self without being inebriated, or so one could be led to believe by some of the posters that tend to litter our walls at election time or through television advertising campaigns. 'Join Club X for free beer,' 'play sport Y to get plastered,' these messages may evoke humour for most of us who don't give a spare thought to just how many problems alcohol can create.

But the reality of having one too many all too often is something that many students really don't want to face up to because of the severity of the alcohol problem in third-level life. While this paper does not wish to come over all pedantic, pleading for a life of student sobriety or anything of that sort, students simply drink too much. Fact. Many of these students who like to take more than the odd tippie are the same students who despair at the cost of life away from home, who whinge about the paltry student grant and any other monetary matter.

It is hard to feel sorry for those who feel more inclined to give a conscious free publican a fatter wallet as opposed to giving themselves a full stomach.

Most students enjoy a drink and rightly so. But enjoying life and getting through college with respect to one's liver should be slightly more of a priority for a student than wondering where the next pint comes from.

DIT Management difficulties to be addressed?

Following the public humiliation of the Public Accounts Committee and the Labour Relations Commission Report that followed thereafter, DIT's internal management structures are already being improved according to Brendan Goldsmith.

It is a pretty damning indictment of the Institute's main decision-makers that it took the inquiries of Leinster House deputies to coerce management into putting the DIT house in a semblance of order. To many students throughout the sites, this dirty linen washing did not come as any great surprise when one considers how difficult it can be to have something as routine as a classroom opened. Other issues, such as the upkeep of equipment and the poor computer/student ratio are issues that pledges have been made about but rarely delivered on. It now appears that improvements have to be made and will be made, because the veritable Big Brother that represents the PAC has forced Dr Goldsmith and the Governing Body of DIT into a corner from which there is no running from.

Politics has been the subject of much deserved criticism in this brown paper-bagged era we live in. But one must applaud the good work of the Committee in relation to this particular investigation and the more famed DIRT inquiry that it also conducted. Their findings are proof alone that when called upon, Dail Deputies can act in a manner that befits what citizens deserve from elected public servants. Perhaps the findings of the Public Accounts Committee, the LRC report and the subsequent appointment of a Human Resources Director in DIT will guarantee that the management of the Institute will act in an appropriate manner forthwith.

It is the policy of the DIT Independent to correct any inaccuracies as soon as they occur. An corrections or clarifications will be printed in the next edition of the newspaper. It is also the policy of the DIT Independent to offer the right of reply to any person who feels aggrieved by comment or opinion contained within. Please forward any such comments in writing to the Editor. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Students' Union.

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The DIT Independent is produced by

foresight 
communications

And printed by The Meath Chronicle,
Navan, Co Meath

DIT hopes for massive support for Chernobyl walk

By Jon Lee

DIT and the USI hope that this year's 10-kilometre walk in aid of the sick children of Chernobyl will receive even greater support than the same event last year.

The event will take place on 15 November and will be a joint effort between 40 third level institutions throughout the whole of Ireland.

Richard Hammond, President of USI, said that this year the organisations involved "are asking each student to raise as much money as they can by getting their parents, brothers, sister, relatives, work mates and friends to fill their sponsorship card."

Joe McGrath, a marketing lecturer in DIT Mountjoy and executive director of DIT's involvement with USI and the Chernobyl Children's Project, told the *DIT Independent* that the organisations "are looking for every student and every staff member to be out on November 15".

Last year's event was attended by around 10,000 students and staff members in Dublin, but this is a figure that organisers hope to surpass this year.

Roughly twice as many women than men took part last year, and this imbalance is set to be repeated this year.

Mr McGrath said that although the message did not seem to get across to male students, the effort put into raising sponsorship and taking part in such an event could not be seen as 'wussie'

Student trip to Chernobyl

TEN Irish students recently travelled to Chernobyl to see first hand what conditions in the region are like at present, one of these was Joe Walsh, a student in DIT Mountjoy Square.

Speaking to the *DIT Independent* he said that while he had "seen a lot of hurting stuff," he also urged students to get involved this year, commenting, "given the state that Belarus is in, money

By Aisling Casey

In an effort to establish a political consensus on abortion among DIT students, an internal referendum is due to be held before the turn of the year.

The internal abortion referendum is being held to establish a policy on whether DIT students are pro-life or pro-choice. Although no date has been set for the vote, the referendum must take place before the next USI National



Above: the students who visited the children still suffering the effects of the world's worst environmental disaster

or 'wimpy'. In the radiation zones of Belarus today, the birth rate is now just half the figure that it was before the disaster in 1986.

There have been 24 times as many cases of thyroid cancer and a 250% increase in the number of cases of children born without limbs.

If the trend of death rates exceeding birth rates contin-

ues it is feared that there will be no inhabitants of Belarus by 2030. Treatment in the country is severely hampered by a lack of medical supplies, such as anaesthetic.

Yet for as little as IRE200 a child from the region could spend a month in Ireland, which would increase the average life expectancy of a person by two years.

goes an extraordinarily long way. People need to realise that."

These students will be making themselves available to speak in colleges, to inform other students of the situations that they witnessed to further improve support for the project.

The organisers of the project plan to distribute sponsorship cards for the walk through the students

unions of colleges and through class representatives, as well as making cards freely available throughout colleges in communal locations such as canteens.

Information will also be available from students unions, and in the form of a poster campaign within colleges and on Adshel bus stops throughout the city.

Walk route

THANKS to support from the Bank of Ireland, providing financial services as well as funding for promotional campaigns, there is a guarantee that every penny the event raises will go toward the care of children still suffering from the effects of the world's worst environmental disaster. The event will involve a gathering of students from all Northside colleges, beginning at DCU, before moving on to St. Patrick's, Drumcondra, DIT Bolton Street and DIT Cathal Brugha Street, then converging with the Southside colleges who will gather at Trinity College. The walk will continue towards O'Connell St, and along the quays, ultimately culminating at the Papal Cross in the Phoenix Park.

There have also been plans to have a Guinness Gig Rig installed at the end of the walk for the students that have taken part, and unconfirmed rumours suggesting the possibility of a '10 Kegs for Chernobyl' drinks sponsored event also being held. Whereas last year sponsorship cards expressed a preference of a minimum of £75 in sponsorship collected, this time around colleges are asking students to set themselves their own target for what they can collect. There is no amount too high, but also, no penny collected will be wasted.

Figures released from USI, in conjunction with the Chernobyl Children's Project reveal that for only £3 the project can acquire a year's supply of Thyroxin, the necessary medicine to treat victims of thyroid cancer. An ambulance can be bought for £10,000 while £9,500 will serve to re-roof a children's home in Minsk.

Perhaps most importantly of all, for only £75 the project can have the necessary funding for a trained nurse's wages for a year. This is relevant considering the system in Belarus where certain prisoners are given the opportunity to perform community service by tending to children suffering from radiation exposure, from which has arisen several suspected cases of abuse of children. Mr Karl Bonner, President of DITSU Aungier Street, said that the sponsorship is for a good cause, and is encouraging everybody to take part.

DITSU to hold internal abortion poll

Congress. The call for an internal referendum was agreed to by DITSU Council at the end of the previous academic year, four months before the Government announced its intention to hold a third national poll on the issue, which is scheduled for next Spring.

The decision to have a referendum was taken after the abortion issue was raised by delegates at USI National Congress last year, when DIT

could not comment on its abortion policies without the consensus of its students. Commenting on the decision to hold an internal referendum, DITSU President Marguerite Fitzpatrick said: "The issue has been discussed by the executive and at the moment we are trying to put in place a structure to establish the policy of DIT students."

However, before DITSU can continue the campaign,

legal advice will have to be sought on the issue.

"We hope to hold the referendum before Christmas, so that we don't have confusion when the national vote on abortion is taken", added Fitzpatrick. "When we have the referendum and the final result we will then be clear on our new policy and on what we can stand up and say at congress next year", she added.

Irish students drinking above EU average

By Colin McGann

A CONFERENCE, entitled 'Alcohol in Young People', has been told that the number of Irish students who get drunk regularly is well above the EU average.

Dr Bruce Ritson of the Alcohol Problem Service at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital delivered the address at a conference organised by the Irish College of General Practitioners. He cited a rise in the level of alcohol intake in girls between 1995 and 1999, with beer remaining the most popular drink among students.

Dr Ritson told delegates that "there is clear evidence that the alcohol industry has two target groups, starter groups between 11-15 years and established drinkers aged 16-24. Both of these areas are large enough to provide the industry with a sustainable return on investment."

The Republic of Ireland currently sits on top of the international league of binge drinkers but is only middle of the league of general alcohol consumption. Measures to aid Irish improvement in this



Aungier St Welfare Officer, Noel Renehan said the time had come to act on the issue at all levels of student life

matter will include attempts to reduce the number of young people who start to consume alcohol and prevent the illegal sale of alcohol. Alcohol Project Director, Dr Rolande Anderson said "attitudes to alcohol use and abuse must change urgently or there will be an epidemic of people seeking help for alcohol dependence in the next ten to twenty years."

This address comes at a time when the Minister for

Health and Children, Micheal Martin, is attempting to develop a national third-level college alcohol policy. The new framework document invites all third level institutions to formulate guidelines and policies.

The aims of the document include offering support services to those with alcohol problems, providing education for students and staff on the use and abuse of alcohol, how the advertising of drink and alcohol related events should be carried out and finding alternative sources of funding to alcohol sponsorship. "Going to university is a wonderful experience and for some students, particularly in their first year, a stressful and difficult experience," said Minister Martin.

"Making the best of college years is greatly complicated by high risk drinking and by dependence on alcohol."

Richard Hammond, President of the Union of Students of Ireland welcomed moves being made by the Government to address the problem.

"The key group to benefit

from this process will be the students themselves as it will positively affect both their health and welfare," he said.

"And because we've been involved from the start, students' views have been taken on board in its development." Guinness was unaware of rumours circulating DIT's sites that drinks companies would be discontinuing their sponsorship of student events. Brewery spoke-spersion, Pat Barry, said that such

a decision would be left up to each individual college.

"Up until now there has been a code of practice in place to ensure that events are dealt with in a responsible way," stated Mr Barry. "As of yet there have been no cancellations."

DITSU Aungier Street Welfare Officer, Noel Renehan said that the time had come to act on the issue at all levels of student life.

"I think it is very good idea," he told the *DIT Independent*. "In general the alcohol consumption level in colleges needs to be reduced. It's just a question of how far it will be taken."

However Renehan added that "alcohol companies sponsor a lot of student events and it would be a shame if they stopped supporting us."

Freshers' Week musings

By Eoin Murphy

Once more a new breed of first year students has been herded through the glass doors of our fair Institute to start their college career. In order for them to get acquainted with the long and industrious third level road ahead they are given the opportunity to partake in the great event that is 'Freshers' week.'

The Fresher's ball in Courtown was anything but a damp squib. It was well organised and I can honestly say that if any club in Dublin could boast such a vibrating dance floor then I would most certainly frequent it.

The Beacon was able to facilitate the hundreds of DIT students that braved the almost monsoon rain and the horrible two hour journey in a dank bus to celebrate their birth into third level education.

And while many students ended up pregnant with drink after furiously downing shots, pints and cocktails, there was no sign of any aggro. It seemed a little harsh that the bouncers would cast you out of the club for having the courtesy to get sick in the toilets and not on the miraculous vibrating floor but hey that's Courtown. I suppose credit



DIT Independent reporter looking slightly inebriated with better half during Fresher's Week

again has to be given to our esteemed site president, Karl Bonnar and his associates.

They took an idea, which is so unoriginal and has been flogged more times than the karting clubs' cheque book and made a huge success of it. I am talking about the Hawaiian night in Dicey Reilly's.

The place was packed and not even the attitude of the snotty bouncers could ruin the atmosphere for hundreds of drunk and happy teenagers (and the odd twenty-something guest).

Through the use of heat lamps and many loud shirts, an atmosphere that Magnum would have been proud of was created. "Then what is your beef with Freshers' Week?" I hear our readers cry. Well I shall tell you. My beef lies in the shameless advertising and promotion of a certain city nightclub, not a million miles away from our south side sites.

I warn you, if you wish to avoid the therapy that my esteemed sports writing colleague Miguel Delaney is going through to restore his sanity, you will steer clear of this place like Ally McBeal does a doughnut. It would be no great surprise to learn that the 'hot' spot (I jest) in question is pumping some money into the humble S.U. coffers, thereby inspiring an obscene amount of plugging the venue by DITSU, but the sight of young Miguel

should serve as a warning for all. Lately he can be seen walking mindlessly through the halls of Aungier Street, head flailing about, all the time wondering will he ever be fully recovered from his palatial phobia. This phenomenon was not just limited to one night of the infamous DIT Freshers' Week, which would have been bad enough, but to subsequently host crap quizzes there was just plain cruel. One of the best nights of the Freshers' Week line-up was a table quiz in the Garda club, and unfortunately it was one event that people chose to avoid. While saving their money so they could queue for an hour outside the Palace on the Wednesday night, they missed a hilarious quiz.

The closely fought contest came down to two teams, one involving yours truly and the other headed by a mellifluous Simon Clarke. In a dubious tie-break, Clarke and company won, inciting a pants-down protest from an angry member of the opposition (no names please).

To be fair to the union, a task like organising Freshers' Week is not easy and I doubt that any one would relish it. Do not be swayed by the portraits of Podge and Rodge that adorn the Aungier Street pool room; life exists beyond the confines of our socialising surrounds.



Just the Ticket: The bould Kevin St President strikes a cheesy pose as he grasps the golden ticket

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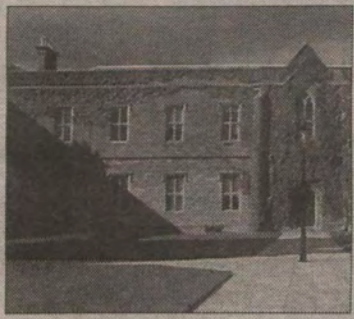
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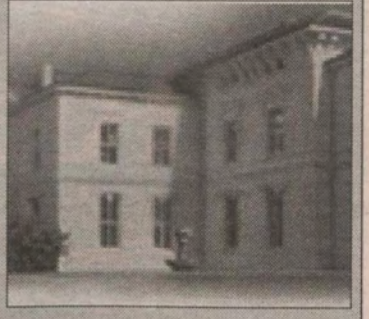
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Third level tales

Campus.ie takes the DIT Independent on a trip around Ireland's colleges for a look at what's making inter-varsity news

campus.ie
the complete website for students



Harvard supports Ireland's leading e-programme

America's prestigious Harvard University, (HMI), is partnering with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) to provide specialised medical training over the Internet, for medical professionals.

With high demands on the medical profession, online programmes allow medical trainees to remain in the hospital where they are posted,

instead of travelling long distances to lectures. The new Dublin-based entity, IntuMed, will develop e-learning programs online in the postgraduate medical specialties and in some allied health care professions, such as nursing and pharmacy. Together the colleges will develop interactive and fully integrated educational programs available to medical students 24 hours a day, 365

days of the year.

The new partnership will significantly strengthen the expertise of both colleges. RCSI's 200-strong faculty members will have the opportunity to learn from HMI's 7,500 faculty members in the States.

The RCSI e-based learning programme, BeST, - the world's only on-line tutoring system for trainee surgeons -

acted as the springboard for the latest development. Harvard approached the RCSI, having come across the BeST programme in the Middle and Far East, where they engage in similar work.

The new partnership is breaking new ground to enhance the understanding and exposure to advanced medical training globally, said Michael Horgan, Deputy

Chief Executive of the RCSI. "Our partnership with Intuition and RCSI continues Harvard Medical International's tradition of pursuing excellence in medical education as one key factor in advancing health care globally," says Robert K Crone, MD, President & CEO of Harvard Medical International.

Students Inventing the Future

OVER £1m is being made available by the Government to further collaborative research between Irish third-level institutions and MediaLabEurope (MLE) - Ireland's spin-off of MIT's well-known Media Lab in Boston. This brings to £2m the total amount provided since the programme began last year.

The innovative institute explores interdisciplinary approaches to the way in which new techniques can impact on peoples' lives and environments. Research generally brings together areas that can be tied into technology, including music, cinema, psychology, video, and linguistics.

Last year some 11 projects by six third-level institutions were funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). NEC is currently sponsoring MLE to examine the potential use of a sensor chair as a car safety device for child passengers.

The chair uses electricity created by the human body to create music. NEC researchers realised that they could apply the same principles to build a safety device that would detect the presence and position of a baby in the front seat of a car. This information could be used to control or limit the deployment of an air bag during a collision, preventing babies from being smothered.

Some of the other pioneering projects under development include virtual reality as rehabilitation practices for patients, and the development of new technologies to help children learn music.

Acknowledging the Institutes' achievements to date, HEA Chairman, Dr. Don Thornhill explained that the scheme provides opportunities for third level researchers to explore new frontiers in multimedia and related fields. The research laboratory is at the centre of a multi-million pound digital enterprise area centred in the Liberties and the Coombe. In time, the entire area around James Street is set to develop into a digital media district - Digital Hub

UCD wins centre in honour of Clinton

UCD will house the new £2.5 million William Jefferson Clinton Centre for American Studies, honouring the former US president, Mr Bill Clinton, and his work on the peace process and his interests in Irish affairs in general.

UCD beat off competition from four other universities, to gain the centre, seen as one of the most attractive in the third-level sector.

While the money

involved is small, the centre will raise the profile of the university in the US and among US corporate donors.

The president of UCD, Dr Art Cosgrove, last November offered UCD as a site for the centre, but the HEA argued all universities should be allowed to bid.

As such, a panel was established, headed by former US education secretary Mr Richard Riley, with assistance from the

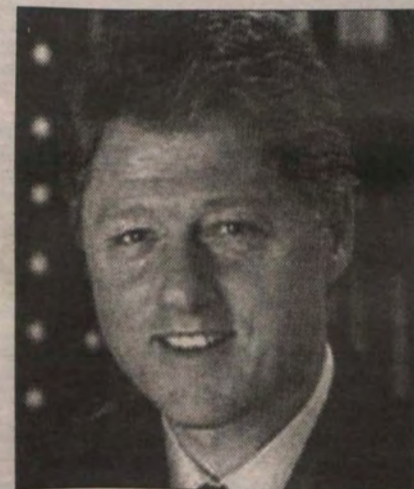
Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Department of Education.

The Centre will bring together scholars and students from all aspects of American life, literature, history and culture and will further strengthen the bonds between Ireland and the United States.

During the Clinton years, the study of Ireland and the Irish in American universities

reached new levels, with over 40 major programmes currently in place.

There is however no comparable American Studies programme in this country. Previous efforts to broaden and deepen the connection between Irish Universities and our US counterparts gave rise to the Mitchell Scholarship Programme.



Former US President Bill Clinton: A Centre for American Studies named in his honour is to be built in UCD

Beijing University and WIT join forces

A pioneering International Education Programme has just been launched which will see the setting up of joint research projects, and exchanges of students and lecturers, between Waterford Institute of Technology and Beijing University.

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Harney, marked the official launch of the International Education Programme, when she welcomed 16 students from Beijing University, in the People's Republic of China to the Waterford campus.

The students will study a number of subjects such as marketing, engineering and computer studies as well as participating in the post-graduate Masters degree in Internationalisation. An Tánaiste hailed the new initiative as a promising venture which will make a positive contribution to the multicultural diversity of both WIT and Waterford City. Speaking at the launch, Ms Harney commended WIT's new Director, Dr Kieran Byrne, on the new international strategic plan for the Institute, commenting "the fact that he will take full ownership of the international strategy, demonstrates the total commitment there is to these plans."

The International Education programme was established following Enterprise Ireland's Trade Mission to China last year. The Mission proved vital in helping to establish invaluable personal contacts between the two institutions.

A follow up visit to China by WIT's Noreen O'Keefe and College Registrar, PJ Downey, resulted in the signing of a formal agreement with Beijing University at the Irish Embassy.

UCD introduces online Driver Theory Testing Programme

The Smart Media Institute at University College Dublin have come up with an innovative personalised free web-based training application that helps students study for the recently-introduced Driving Theory Test.

The main selling point of "My Driving Test" (MDTT) is that it poses different questions to each individual student, depending on his or her personal abilities and knowledge.

MDTT uses information retrieval technology to automatically determine which questions a student will find difficult. By exploiting statistical regularities

in students' answers, the programme is able to predict any particular student's answer to any given question. My Driving Test Tutor then focuses the student on the challenging questions - helping them to study more effectively.

"Our skills and abilities in any given subject tend to be correlated with some of our fellow students. MDTT notices these correlations and uses them to help people study more effectively," MDTT designer Clodagh Moriarty explained.

When a surfer logs on, they are immediately faced with a "Rules

of the Road" multiple-choice question. Thereafter, the surfer predetermines the level of the subsequent question by selecting a "random", "harder" or "easier" option.

"View your Result" shows the surfer how many they got right, detailing the question, the correct answer, your answer and the result. The Smart Media Institute also conducts advanced research in artificial intelligence, information retrieval, multimedia and advanced Internet technologies.

Check out the website on: www.smi.ucd.ie/MDTT

International Student News: Arab students leave US fearing backlash

Middle Eastern students are leaving US universities because of fear of a backlash against Islam or Middle Easterners by angry Americans in the wake of terrorist attacks on Washington and New York. Up to 40,000 college students from Arab nations' study in the USA. Dozens of foreign

Arizona State University students continue to return to their homelands weeks after Sept. 11, the Arizona Republic reports. Islamic leaders had warned Arizona Muslim students to stay home, fearing that some Americans might compound the tragedy by seeking scapegoats. The propor-

tion of Arab students leaving US colleges has been high in Washington State University, which has some 18,000 students, because the Arab students who are leaving are largely from the United Arab Emirates, where television coverage of the attacks has been intense, administrators

and Arab students have reported. The University of Missouri, the University of Colorado at Denver, and California State University at Long Beach have each lost 25 Arab students. Scores of other campuses have reported smaller numbers.

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Officers happy with election despite low turnout

By Colin McGann

THE elections for part-time officers in DIT went off without a hitch on October 17, as did the count, which was held at The Vatican nightclub in Hartcourt Street the following day. While the turnout was low, which seems to have become a regular occurrence come election time in this Institute, but all the candidates seem to be satisfied with their appointments.

The lack of students willing to apply for positions in

DIT Mountjoy Square, namely none provided DITSU with the surprise of this year's campaign. Brian Whitney, studying in DIT Rathmines, set a new record receiving 124 'yes' votes and 0 'no' votes.

Whitney, a second year student of Social Care and Practice, was elected Entertainment Officer without official opposition. "The inequality between Rathmines and the rest of the DIT centres provided my incentive to run for election," he said. He believes

that his election will pave the way for him to start "sorting out the discrimination, injustices and lack of facilities that Rathmines has to put up with. This year I will be focused on making the students of Rathmines feel more involved in DIT, as a whole." The Entertainment position was the only DITSU part-time office to be filled in DIT Rathmines for the forthcoming year.

DIT Kevin Street was by far the scene of the most intense electioneering across the sites on both sides of the city.

Fergal Connolly, who was elected as Equality Officer, wants to inform all the students in Kevin Street about the validity and importance of DITSU.

"People are being informed of their rights if they happen to hang out around the Students Union," Connolly told The DIT Independent. "The students in the rest of the college only get the information when they really need it," he said.

Connolly, who works in a popular city night spot, said he is aware of the abuses that



Aungier Street part-time officer election winners from left to right: Bill Casey (Participations Officer), Steven Hickey (Ents), Conor McDermott (Clubs and Societies) and Iseult Fitzgerald (Irish Language).



Bill Casey, who will serve as Participations Officer in DIT Aungier Street.

students are being exposed to on several fronts. "All people should be aware of their rights of law, lectures and landlords," he said. "I know I can't change people's minds but this year I can inform them," added Connolly.

Other students elected to office in DIT Kevin Street were: Geena Daly (Irish Language Officer), Mark Murphy (Participation's Officer),

James Carroll (PRO) and Cathal Gallagher (Entertainments Officer). James Carroll, an Applied Science and Computers student, complimented the outgoing officers saying that all previous incumbents had done a very good job.

This year, Carroll aims to provide an even better service. "Students still aren't aware of all of the Union facilities. Everyone knows we can organise great social events but some students don't even know they can get their USIT cards in the Students Union," he said.

In co-operation with Mark Murphy he hopes "to get students involved even more, get them thinking about the student union, after all they are part of it."

DIT Cathal Brugha Street will be served this year by the elected Barry McLoughlin (Entertainment Officer), Orla Cosgrove (Clubs and Societies Officer), Corrie Soden (PRO) and Dawn O'Sullivan (Employment Officer).

While DIT Aungier Street appointed Steven Hickey (Entertainment Officer), Ian Murphy (Equalities Officer), Deborah Flood (PRO), Iseult

Fitzgerald (Irish Language Officer), Conor McDermott, Clubs and Societies Officer and Bill Casey, Participation's Officer.

Second year Electronic and Control Engineer student was voted Entertainment Officer for Kevin St.

His main reason for running for election was working with the students union last year, "It takes a lot of work to keep all the students happy and I wanted to do my part."

A true diplomat he thanked all that voted for him and says he will "try to cater for

all tastes and give the students a great year." In DIT Bolton Street three candidates assumed the part-time positions. Darren McArden, William O'Donoghue and Kate Melady were appointed to the Entertainments, Clubs and Societies and PRO posts.

Overall DITSU President Marguerite Fitzpatrick, congratulated all those who were elected and wished them the best of luck for the year.

"I hope those who weren't elected aren't put off and return to run again next year," she said, expressing her enthusiasm for the forthcoming year.



Iseult Fitzgerald, who was elected as Irish language officer at DIT Aungier Street.

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Life tastes good

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Almost Famous? . . . Not!

As I slouched onto the sofa in my humble abode in Dublin on a wet October evening, I unlaced my shoes, let my feet breathe and said to myself "sheesh, what a day." My quest to become the next superstar of the Irish pop world had ended as abruptly as it had begun.

No, that's a lie. There is nothing abrupt about queuing in a hotel car park for virtually the sunlit duration of the day of rest. Having arrived at Jury's Tara Towers Hotel in Booterstown shortly after ten o'clock that morning, yours truly was immediately struck by the mini-skirted, tank-topped troupe that were already forming a massive line at the rear of the hotel. The male masses were also doing their bit in the vanity fair stakes, some boasting hairstyles reminiscent of something that last saw light in the Cretaceous period. This was truly a day when, rather disturbingly, one too many girls resembled real-life Barbies and just as many boys were fitting the Ken mould. Napalmed in make-up, collateral mascara damage was an unavoidable uncertainty for those who would not get the nod from Louis Walsh or Linda Martin later that day.

Popstars Irish Style held its final round of heats in Dublin on October 14. Cunningly disguised as a hip swinging pop-singing wannabe, Dermot Keyes braved the cameras after a ten-hour wait. Mad, sad or both? Read on!

Lo and behold my novice soothsaying proved as accurate as a smart bomb on a good day. This was the closest many of those who surrounded me would come to achieving a dream come true. For others, it was rather like a social illustration of Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes of fame claim, only rather than fifteen minutes; it was more like ten seconds of singing an all-too played out 'modern classic.'

One such hopeful was a Dub called Denis, who had also attended the Galway heats where he had reached



A chat about the state of the pop industry with Kian Egan of Westlife in a urinal was not something I had counted on

the third round. "I just love to sing and this is what I want to do and with a little bit of luck, I may do a little better here today than I managed in Galway," he said as we spent the majority of the day talking and laughing in the queue. It was difficult to avoid 'When You Say Nothing At All' and 'I'm Like A Bird' for the eight plus hours that we were herded in the car park. Some songs never leave one's head for good reasons, but the pop pap that perferated my cranium glued in my mindset for all the wrong ones. 'How

Can I Live Without You' was sung with more (or less depending on one's disposition) gusto than 'The Fields of Athenry' on a green-clad Glasgow terrace, only far more annoyingly.

Slowly, but slowly but slowly we moved closer to the inwards of the hotel and the audition room where the adjudicating luminaries awaited. After a quick scribble through the registration form, which entitles everyone who is used in the TV footage to a payment of one pound, it was off to call nature and loosen the larynx a little. One can imagine my surprise as I listened to Denis belt out a Billy Joel number in the company of urinating men that one of these was in fact Kian Egan of Westlife. So there we were Kian, Denis and I, discussing music over the sound of nervous stomachs and flushing toilets. There is something surreal about a communal musical wee-wee with a chart topper. Ah sure it's something to tell the grandchildren about when the inevitable, 'hey Grandad did you ever go to the toilet with someone famous?' question pops up during a game of ker-plunk fifty years from now. After a few swigs of water and registering in

reception, I became contestant 1240 and entered the audition auditorium. If the smell of fear was all too stenchy in the gents, then the over-perspiring of a room more made up than the cast of the Rocky Horror Picture Show was a different pungency sensation altogether. Imagine for a moment a room where Christy Moore, beating the life out of a guitar while singing Lisdoonvarna, has been cloned three hundred times? Getting the picture? For the first time in my life, I imagined what it had been like for the Irish soccer team during their stay in Orlando at the last World Cup we played in. This was dead heat, no doubt fuelled by nervous (gaseous emitting) tension, a veritable whelk of armpit clung droppings. In other words, yuk!

Sitting there, listening to the good, the bad and the just plain awful, one wondered what it must have been like to be a judge in such an event. For however long the day was for those who entered, it must have felt like the stereotypical match gone into stoppage time at Old Trafford for Louis, Linda et al. There were no 'you're wonderful' or 'you're not' to the contestants from the judges; merely the passing

of a slip of white paper which confirmed that one had made the next phase. Eventually, my time to sing arrived, some 10 and half-hours after my day as a wannabe had begun. I sang a few bars of 'Angels' from Robbie Williams (a song written by an Irishman by the way) and did my utmost to make love to the camera. Alas it was not enough. Three down the line from my position was a female of Amazonian dimensions. While not boasting a particularly good voice, she provides the sort of eye candy that Louis Walsh needs to shift CD's and magazine covers off the shelves. Surprise surprise then when she was the only one from our particular quintet selected for the next heat. As 'Popstars' is a television programme just as it is a quest for talent, image is everything and sometimes true talent, true singing gems are overlooked at the expense of appropriate physical dimensions.

But life is full of such stories and good luck to those who are eventually selected. The rest can dream and flies on the walls of life like me will scribble about the famous and every now and then the almost famous.

The capital's classiest (and classless) fry-ups

A good old Irish fry may seem like a relatively simple affair, that is until you actually try to make one whilst suffering the torment of the special offer alcopop hangover. Janice Gaffey reports

Under these circumstances, the only answer is to scrape together your left-over loose change from the night before, and pay someone to cook it for you. But there's nothing worse than a dodgy fry on top of an even dodgier stomach. Purely in the name of research, the *DIT Independent* selflessly inflicted hangovers upon its' staff to find the best hangover fry in Dublin.

The "under no circumstances" fry. Bewley's, Westmoreland Street.

Oh dear. Oh dear, oh dear. The term rip-off doesn't come close to describing this one. Only God knows how far in advance it's cooked, but it's long enough to be as solid as a rock by the time it hits the plate. And then there's the fact that by the time you get your little pot of tea/cup of coffee, and queue to pay £6.95 for this misery on a plate, whatever slim chance there was of eating hot, no, even warm food is long gone. Leave this one for the tourists.

The 'grand, if unremarkable' fry. Yum Yum's, Aungier Street.

Not a bad fry at all, though it can be inconsistent. Good sausages and bacon, good coffee and great orange juice. Not so sure about the beans, although the fried potato is a welcome addition. The off-putting feature of the fry is the fact that the egg is fried in a suspiciously perfect round shape, immediately calling the horror that is McEgg to mind. Otherwise, thumbs up. Plus, the cafe is always full of builders, and

if anyone knows their fry/breakfast roll, it's a construction worker. The price ranges from £3.95 to £4.50.

The 'very close second' fry. Lemon, South William Street.

Strictly speaking, this isn't really a fry, it's a pancake filled with stuff you might get in a fry. It's one of the nicest things you can possibly eat with a hangover, not to mention one of the most filling. If you're not feeling up to the challenge of pork products or egg, there's numerous sweet and savoury alternatives. The coffee is good, and if you think you can face daylight without dissolving, you can sit outside. As if that wasn't enough, it's a bargain, ranging between £2.65 and £2.85.

The 'hangover? What hangover? I'm brand new' fry. Probe, Georges Street Arcade.

The kind of fry that makes you believe that there really is a God and that he's smiling down upon you. No less than seven different fries available, including a vegetarian and vegan option, but us hearty folk recommend the deluxe fry. It's £5.85 for more food on a plate than most students see in a week, but if you're feeling a little delicate, there's smaller versions, from £3.85. Featuring hash browns, Clonakilty pudding, mushrooms, sausages, and great bacon, among other things. And the staff is friendly, which is exactly what you need the morning after the night before.

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A Hard Day's Night

It's half past seven on a Wednesday evening when I meet Dymphna Dolan, a Simon Community volunteer at the group's building on Usher's Island. I'm here to accompany her and her colleagues on the nightly soup run around the streets of Dublin.

My guide for the night is Frank, who tells me that since it's a rainy night, there may be less people on the streets. We load up the car with sandwiches and thermos flasks of tea and oxtail soup. We've also got some fruit, ten cigarettes and a sleeping bag. With the car sufficiently laden, we head for Dublin's most affluent shopping district.

I've never done this before and I'm not sure what to expect. Frank tells me that he rarely sees any trouble, although he's "occasionally been verbally abused. I've had tea thrown over me because I didn't have any soup left. But aggro is rare".

There's nobody around Clarendon Street or South King Street, so we head for St. Stephen's Green. There's a man standing in the doorway of the Unitarian Church, but we can't decide if he's homeless or just sheltering from the rain. While we're deciding whether or not to approach him, he solves the dilemma for us and walks over to the car. He tells us that there was a group of homeless people around but they've moved on. Frank asks if he would like a sandwich, to which he replies that he would. We get out of the car and give him tea and a couple of sandwiches. His name is Liam* and he's from Galway. I'm struck by how shy and soft-spoken he is. He's on the street for the night in the rain, and everything he owns is in a small plastic bag in his hand. After a brief chat about Galway's GAA performance, we move on.

Further along the Green, we find our next port of call. There's two lads sitting down

and we go over and ask if they want something to eat. They're not too impressed with the offer of oxtail soup, but they take it anyway. Frank asks if they want a cup of tea, which Jim refuses, but he'll "take that banana there". A third person joins the group, and asks for a corned beef sandwich. He's quite indignant that we can't find one in the box, and decides to have a look for himself. Eventually he settles for ham, and then he

and Jim ask for a cigarette. Jim is most upset with the ration of one per person, telling me that "we usually get two". He asks us to ring around for a hostel for him for the night, which Frank does to no avail. Jim then launches into the difficulties he has getting a hostel bed, primarily because he freely admits to having a drug problem. He needs a doctor's letter to say he "has clean urines" before he can get a bed. The problem is finding a doctor. Having done as much as we realistically can for Jim and company, we move on towards Dawson Street.

Driving down Dawson Street, we spot a body in a doorway on South Anne Street. It looks like the person is asleep, but when Frank calls out, a head is raised. This is Tommy*. He's not fussy about what he eats, once it's not messy. We have a chat about the weather getting colder and how the doorway isn't exactly the most sheltered of spots. He tells me that he's seen much worse. We give our only sleeping bag to Tommy, and then prepare to head further up South Anne Street. Tommy tells us to be careful, because "there's a lot of scumbags around there, junkies and alcos. If you see anyone, don't let them know I'm here. I've been attacked already".

A quick check along the street's dark alleys draws a blank, but hanging around the public phones we find Robert*. Frank has met Robert a few times before

Come rain or shine, the Dublin Simon community volunteers visit homeless people throughout the city 365 nights a year, doling out soup and sandwiches and in many cases, just having a chat. Janice Gaffey spent a night with the group to see what a night as a community volunteer entails

and we ask Robert to come back to the car with us for some food. "Aw, but I'll lose my spot" he says, so I leave him and Frank there and run back to get his order - "anything but pork". When I return, Frank and Robert are sitting on a step, and Robert, who turns out to be Australian, is giving Frank travel advice. He knows all the best spots for surfing and parties in the

Southern Hemisphere. As he says, "you need a holiday, don't you. I'm just back from the South of France meself". For a split second we're a couple of customers in a travel agents discussing our upcoming holiday plans. And then Robert laughs, and we're back on a cold step in Dublin on a rainy Wednesday night.

Back up to the Green again and we pull in to a spot near Kildare Street. The guy we've stopped for turns out to be one of Jim's friends from earlier, but he points us towards another person across the road. It's Canadian Patrick* and he ambles over to the car. All he really wants is fruit, so we give him the last of what we have, and some soup. A friend of Patrick's joins the gathering and they have a mumbled conversation, from which I gather that Patrick wants his mate to check on somebody. His friend says "I don't have time to baby-sit" and wanders off. We ask Patrick if he knows of anybody else around. "Yeah, my friend

Shane*, he's up around Ely Place, I kinda carried him to bed. But I left him there, cos I didn't wanna fight and that's what he was tryin' to do".

So off we go to Ely Place, and it's entirely deserted. There's three of the darkest alleys I've ever seen, and we drive slowly into the first one. It's pitch black and I'm scared witless. The alley opens into a car park and in the far corner there's a tiny shed, with a couple of mattresses. It seems empty, then we see him. We're pretty sure that it's Shane, lying on his back at a strange angle and in bad shape. Frank calls out, and Shane lifts his head, without opening his eyes. His head drops, and we call out again. The same thing happens, and it's like watching the living dead. But he's breathing regularly, and Frank has sufficient experience to know that this is not unusual. We start driving out of the alley, and encounter Patrick's friend, who has had a rethink about babysitting. We tell him what we've seen, to which he replies, "if he lifted his head he's probably all right. It's only a mild OD". We say that we'll wait for him to check and start reversing back down the alley, losing a wing mirror in the process. The babysitter calls from the bottom of the alley to say that everything is ok. So we check the opposite alley, and as we drive back out onto Ely Place, we witness a Lazarus-style miracle. There's Shane

and the babysitter walking past us, right as rain and having an argument. Shane is telling the babysitter to "stop wrecking me buzz" and off they go into the night.

Our next patrol region is Camden Street, where we meet Peter*, Ciaran* and Mary*. A fair amount of alcohol has been consumed, and Mary is verging on hysterical. She wants us to find her a hostel, but is very specific about where she's willing to go, and it can't be anywhere "full of prostitutes and junkies". And she seems to think that this description applies to most places. She and Ciaran are a couple, and it takes very little to start a row between them. Ciaran tells me he's been on the streets all his life and in and out

of prison. He asks us to look after Peter, "he's an old man, take care of him". I'm really impressed until Peter pulls me down and whispers that Ciaran is responsible for the bruises and swelling all over Peter's face. He asks me to call an ambulance, because he's fallen and hurt his arm and back. His leg is already in a cast, and he can't walk. He tells me that he wants to get away from Ciaran and Mary, and then, changing the subject entirely, recites a poem he wrote for his mother. After a quick consultation with Frank, we

decide to take Peter to hospital. It's easier said than done, since Peter needs to be carried and is not co-operating because we've dropped his cider and he's going nowhere without it. Ciaran and Mary try to help with the lifting, which at first glance seems to be quite noble of them. Then I realise that they're going through Peter's pockets in search of his vodka. It all has the potential to turn nasty, but we persuade Peter to hand over the vodka. He does so grudgingly and not without taking a healthy swig from the bottle first.

The safest bet seems to be to head for St. James's

Hospital. As we drive past the queues outside the night clubs on Camden Street, Peter tells us a little about himself. "That pair use me. Just because I've a broken leg and can't get away from them. They rob everyone. I drink, I'm an alcoholic but the one thing I don't do is insult people." An ambulance passes the car, and Peter blesses himself. He does this every time he sees an ambulance, he says,

"because you don't know who's in it. It might be someone worse off". He claims that he paid for the vodka he gave to Mary, and I feel like I've betrayed him for asking him to hand it over. As we drive into the hospital grounds, Peter tells us that he will be 58 this year, and then starts playing air guitar, and singing Eric Clapton songs.

Checking him into the hospital is far from easy. Getting him out of the car is an ordeal, and there's further upset when hospital security confiscates his cider. His earlier request to be brought to hospital seems to have been forgotten, and he's not co-operating with the staff. It turns out that he was here the previous night with the same injuries, but there's nowhere else to bring him. "So he's ours for the night again then", the nurse says wearily. We leave them to it and head back to town.

Our final stop is at the AIB Banklink on Dame Street, where we hand out the last of the food. We drop the flasks back to the shelter and head home.

I spend a while wondering what will happen to Peter. If he's discharged from hospital, where will he go? How will he get there? The following morning, I see Peter in the same spot we found him in the night before. Ciaran and Mary are with him. They're laughing and drinking.

*Names have been changed to protect identities.

The Force is strong with this one

At last, at long last, *Star Wars* has been given the DVD treatment. **Dermot Keyes** takes a look at what the double-disc 'Episode One - The Phantom Menace' has to offer. And no, there isn't a 'delete Jar Jar' option, not that you will even care..



Let's get it on: Qui Gon Jinn and Obi Wan Kenobi challenge the evil Sith Lord Darth Maul in the climactic lightsaber battle in 'The Phantom Menace.'

The biggest DVD release of recent times promises to be the most impressive movie release on the format to date, even allowing for the computer-generated jiving of the one called Jar Jar Binks. 'Star Wars: Episode One - The Phantom Menace' looks a pretty safe bet to become the biggest unit shifter in DVD history during the run-in to Christmas, boasting an extra six hours of footage detailing the production of the first instalment of the Skywalker saga.

It's taken Lucasfilm eight months to put this baby

together and if online reviews are a barometer of how good 'TPM' is on disc, then this promises to be truly something special. The movie itself boasts several new sequences, including a taxi ride around the urban beauty of Coruscant, new introductions to the pod race and a whole new section of the second lap in the race around Boonta Eve. The movie itself is divided into 50 chapters, a lofty number never before attained in a DVD production. This allows the viewer to shoot straight to the scene of particular interest, be it the Jedi battling droidekas, the intro-

duction of Anakin and Obi Wan or the climactic lightsaber battle between Obi Wan, Qui Gon and Darth Maul. All the menus on 'TPM' are fully animated and reflect the various worlds visited during the movie.

So what of the extras, those scenes and other tidbits retrieved from the cutting room floor by Lucas and his cohorts for the goddamn interested movie buff or plain old X-wing spotter such as yours truly? George Lucas, producer Rick McCallum, sound designer and editor Ben Burtt as well as a host of the special effects boffins from

Industrial Light and Magic all offer lively and insightful insider info on what it took to put 'TPM' together. One of the major highlights of the DVD is the one-hour documentary entitled 'The Beginning.' Filmed exclusively for the DVD, the documentary provides viewers with a taste of what it was like on the set and just how much thought, time, sweat and tears goes into making a Star Wars film. This may well become the selling point of this version of the movie as this is the only place where once can watch a Star Wars production of this kind. There are seven cut scenes from the original movie included in the set, ranging from Sebulba's flamethrowing of rival podracers around the sands of Tatooine, to Jar Jar and the Jedi's escape from a waterfall upon entering Theed. These are Star Wars

scenes never before viewed anywhere. C'mon people, if you ain't getting excited now, you're a Sith!

The usual theatrical and tv trailers are included, as are the mini-documentaries that www.starwars.com first posted in the production stages of 'The Phantom Menace' back in pre-1999 land. The superbly composed 'Duel of the Fates' by composer John Williams is included with its video, while information is provided in relation to a DVD-ROM link that Lucasfilm has yet to divulge all relevant data on. All in all, this DVD is likely to be the benchmark for all future movies on this format and certainly makes the future releases of Episodes, Four, Five and Six all the more enticing. It's all so brilliant I've almost forgotten about some movie that opens in cinemas next July. I'm sure

the name will come back to me!

Just before we went to press, yours truly got a peek at what the DVD in its beautiful entirety. It is truly magnificent, the blue ribbon release on the format to date and is a must see for absolutely anybody that wants to get a peek at what digital technology is going to treat filmgoers to both in the cinema and at home in the years to come. The hour-long documentary is a fascinating look at the five year process that went into making 'Episode One' a reality and the slightly concerned looks on the faces of Lucas and his cohorts at the end of the first rough screening of the picture is pure theatre. The movie may not have been to everybody's liking, but this edition and all its extra dressing make it a must-buy. Absolute magic!

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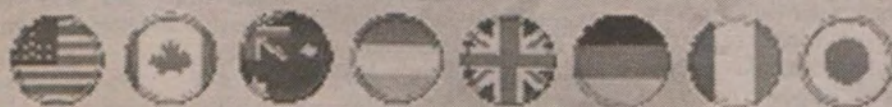
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Napster lives on

By **Bryan Collins**

IF IT'S cheap or if it's free there's a student to be found. Perhaps that explains why students made up the bulk of the users of the world's leading free music website, the one and only Napster.

For months, students everywhere were downloading mp3s from the site at www.napster.com and onto minidisks, portable mp3 players or burned CDs. For those not up to speed on techie jargon, an mp3 is a technological feature which can compress a song into a very small file hence making it attractive to download.

The music industry didn't sit idly by however. Last March the major record labels won a lengthy court battle against the site. The result was a neutered version of Napster, which was forced to filter or block copyrighted songs. The music industry is still worried and they have every reason to be. Napster's demise didn't mean the end of free downloadable music.

Within weeks of the court order, dozen of sites had sprung up, fighting to take Napster's place. These sites

proved much harder to fight as many were based outside of the United States.

One of the more popular music swapping sites can be found at www.audiogalaxy.com. Once registered you have access to a wide selection of high quality, and often rare, mp3's. It also boasts an ability to resume downloads that have been interrupted from where you left off so, unlike Napster, you never need to attempt a download more than once.

Another highly proper file sharing programme can be found at www.limewire.com. Once installed, it allows you to download music, pictures, movies, programmes and documents. In other words you can get your hands on anything from U2 to Stephen King and of course in true Napster style it's all free.

In an effort to combat piracy, the music industry has announced it will ship CD's with software which will prevent a computer from reading the CD. However game manufacturers have used similar software for years with relatively little success. Games can be recorded with

ease after a simple download from sites like www.gamecopyworld.com.

It's not only the music industry that's worried. Hollywood looks set to go a round or two with file swappers. Currently, downloading entire movies is impractical. Today's unwieldy dial-up modems mean downloading one would require the patience of Buddha. This is all set to change over the next few years. Eircom recently announced the launch of their high-speed, or ASDL, Internet connection. This is up to a hundred times faster than a standard dial up modem.

At the moment the service is affordable only to those with a fat bank balance. However as prices drop and access increases, the ability to download entire movies should become a reality. Couple this with the arrival of DVD burners, and you can see why Hollywood is breaking out in a cold sweat.

One thing is clear. The battle over file swapping is far from over.



Viva J. Vegas

By Laurence Mackin.

SOMETIMES you feel a bit low. Things aren't going your way and you don't have anyone you can really talk to. So you start drinking. Just one or two now and again. And suddenly, your popping down the local every day.



His appeal is in his demeanour and slurring northern English accent, that of an overweight, ageing alcoholic with a body destroyed by years of misuse and abuse

The barman doesn't even say hello anymore, he just pulls a pint and lines up a scotch on the bar and gives you a smile. And then, eight hours later, you fall off the stool, stagger over to the bathroom, hurl some chunks and then its out into the cold

night. You would go home but your girlfriend kicked you out so there's nothing for it but to go hang around the hospital and try and score some surgical meths until the early house opens.

But there is help at hand. Don't fall into that trap. Who do I go to? The A.A.? The Samaritans? The Catholic Church? No, my child. Seek out the one they call Johnny Vegas.

Johnny Vegas became famous on Irish shores for all the wrong reasons. During a routine in the Temple Bar Music Centre, Vegas had a nervous breakdown on stage and started to babble and cry. He didn't work for another six months and watching him onstage, it's impossible to forget this fact.

He lumbers around, double vodka and coke in one hand, can of Guinness and fag in the other.

Bedecked in a gold jacket, beige flares and little else, his stomach, well honed on years of careful boozing and abuse,

doesn't so much peek out as leer ominously.

Anyone foolish enough to sit near to the stage was subject to a public humiliation that makes going to school with no trousers on positively appealing by comparison.

I was one of those unfortunates, but it was the girl he serenaded I felt sorry for. He asked her for a kiss, voice breaking with emotion. When she declined his advances, he staggered away heart broken. "I could have loved you," he said. "I'm terribly lonely."

Don't get me wrong, he is funny. Sweet divine Jesus is he funny. The crowd loved it and he was on stage for more than 90 minutes with a kind of encore.

He talked non-stop, sang, danced and fell over, but never actually told a joke, or one you could tell to your mates in the pub later.

His appeal is in his demeanour and slurring northern English accent, that of an overweight, ageing



All man: Johnny Vegas does his funny thing at his recent show in the Shelter

alcoholic with a body destroyed by years of misuse and abuse. Vegas is everything you don't want to become, but all this is forgotten when your stomach is hurting from laughing so hard at him falling off a stool while singing an Irish ballad.

It's when your in bed think-

ing about it that you start to feel a little guilty. Then again, maybe it's all an act. Maybe, he's not really a drunk, it's just a stage persona.

If so, he's the best method actor I've ever seen. And one of the best comedians to boot.

Kitt sings another love song

By Debbie Flood

With his current album *The Big Romance* riding high in the charts, an appearance at Witness and supporting tours with *The Frames* and *The Tindersticks*, David Kitt's star is shining brightly. The newly refurbished Ambassador proved to an interesting venue to showcase Kitt's musical talent.



Judging by the mixed audience that night Kitts music has begun to reach a much larger, more varied crowd

David Kitt wandered out on stage shortly after nine, dressed more like a teenage fan of *Wheatatus* than a mel-low singer/songwriter. He opened the night with the most well known singles from *The Big Romance*. It went in Kitts favour, as the crowd began bopping and hopping along to *Song from Hope Street* and *You Know What I Want to Know*. The rest of the set continued to be on a fairly balanced mix of tracks from both his current album and his earlier debut *Small Moments*.

The bands unusual set up was surprisingly striking, with a noticeable absence of a drum and bass rhythm section. Simple and honest music seems to be at the core of Kitts music, and he was accompanied on stage by just two others, Diarmada Mac Diarmuid playing sax and clarinet and Paul Smyth on keys. The sampler behind Kitt was doing most of the work on the night, adding a consistent dimension to the

set. Kitt's dreamy music loses none of its warmth and charm for the live treatment. If anything, his voice reaches tender new levels on songs such as *Step Outside in the Morning Light* and *Strange Light in the Evening*. He uses all the typical ways of drawing in the crowd to good effect, chatting easily with the audience and taking sips from his pint of Guinness between songs.

The most consistent feature of Kitts concerts is the appearance of his younger brother Robbie, who on Friday sang with him on a moving performance of *Another Love Song*, adding a touch of familiarity and intimacy to the night's proceedings.

Standing for two hours proved draining for my weary limbs, so I sneaked upstairs to feel the vibe from the balcony. Unbeknownst to

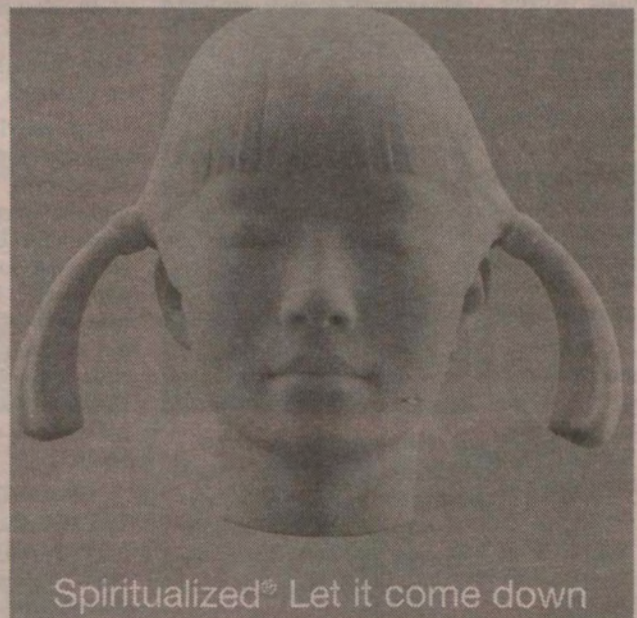
myself, I had stumbled into Kitt clan territory. Sitting next to me, a middle-aged couple, not quite fitting the type for the Kitt fan club, watched the singer silently, who I later found out was their son. I looked around at his friends and relatives and realised that these people knew 'Kittser' as he is fondly called by friends, whereas I knew only his music.

Judging by the mixed audience that night Kitts music has begun to reach a much larger, more varied crowd. The low ebb of the evening came when he drifted off with his guitar into a world of his own, quite forgetting the paying fans in front of him. Luckily, he resuscitated the ailing crowd with a bemusing acoustic version of *Blackstreets' No Diggity*. Is there not a law against gentle, soft singers attempting hip-hop rap? Apparently not.



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The Watcher - don't bother



Video reviews with **Eoin Murphy**

The Gift

Over the past year we have been bombarded with a séance load of supernatural thrillers, ranging from the chilling to the greatly defrosted.

Stir of Echoes opened the doors of intrigue and fear and then Lost Souls slammed it shut in your face.

Sam Raimi's 'The Gift' offers another perspective on things that go bump in the night.

In the heartland of America also known as Brixland Georgia, Cate Blanchett plays a fortuneteller who tries to keep her family alive by helping locals with all their supernatural needs.

But unlike most understanding rednecks some of the towns' folk take offence towards her unusual career choice and threaten her and her children.

One such Cletus wannabe is Donnie Barksdale (Keanu Reeves) who takes personal offence to Annie (Blanchette) telling his wife to leave him, by branding her a witch and threatening her life and that of her kids.

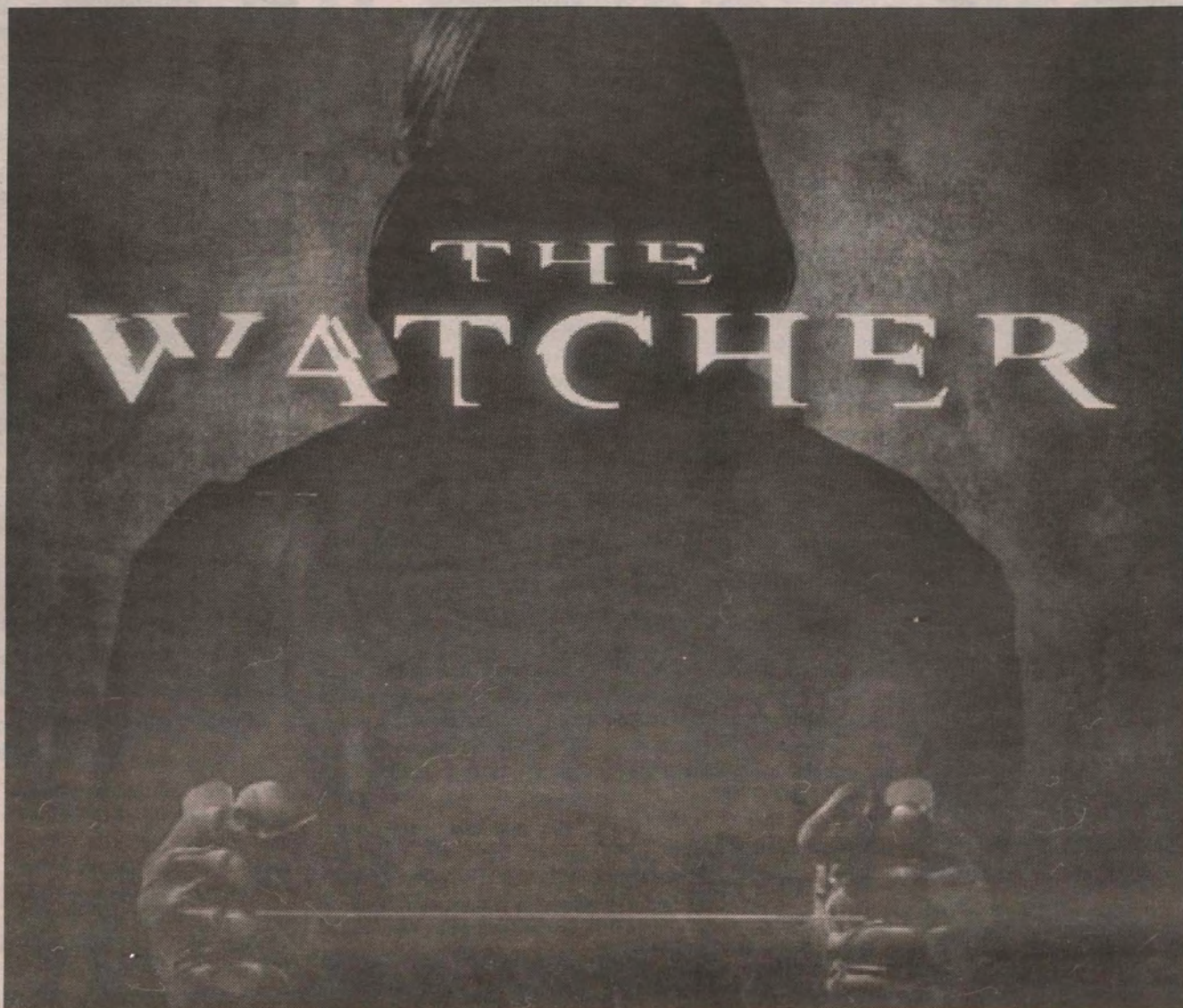
When the daughter (Katie Holmes) of the town's most promising businessman goes missing and Annie senses foul play, Donnie is the prime suspect.

The plot is more of the 'whodunnit' genre and at times lacks the surreal dialog present in the Sixth Sense, but that is probably the worst thing about this movie.

Blanchett is stunning in her role as a woman possessed and in his role as Donnie, the vicious, ignorant, wife-beating redneck, Reeves is palatable.

Look out for Giovanni Ribisi who puts in an almost certain Oscar nomination worthy performance as a troubled mechanic who befriends Blanchett.

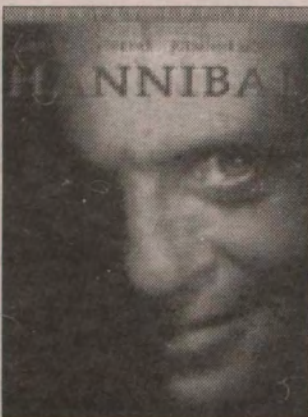
There are twists and turns all throughout the story and



The Watcher: Director Joe Charbanics' picture fails to capture any level of suspense or drama and always leaves you searching for a point

while you are always left guessing as to whom the real murderer is, (partly because Holmes has slept with half the town) it is almost obvious who it actually is.

So if you are looking for a night in without the demons (well drink anyway) and really want to just sit down and be entertained, the Gift is well worth a viewing.



Hopkins is as always excellent in his portrayal of the macabre Lector and Moore picks where Foster left off with a very competent performance

Hannibal

Well he's back and this time he's even hungrier. Hollywood's most loved cannibal is back as the eponymous villain in the film version of Thomas Harris' novel 'Hannibal.'

The much-awaited sequel

to 'The Silence of the Lambs' was destined for criticism the minute Jodie Foster refused to play the returning Clarice Starling as she felt that the script was ruining the character set up in the first movie. Thankfully Hopkins had no such problems returning as the charming yet deadly Hannibal Lector.

Julianne Moore plays FBI agent Clarice Starling, the one honest person left on the earth, befriended by the one polite cannibal roaming free on the earth.

The movie plays off the apparent love Hannibal has for Starling and the assumption that he will never let her catch him. Unfortunately for Hannibal one of his old patients, Mason Verger (played by Gary Oldman), is out to catch him and do horrible things to him. Why? Because he made him peel off his face and feed it to his Dogs.

Cheers Doc! Despite the fact that this movie is only very loosely based on the book and several important details are left out, it is certainly entertaining.

Hopkins is as always excellent in his portrayal of the macabre Lector and Moore picks where Foster left off with a very competent performance.

For me the film's soundtrack is the crowning glory along with the half an hour spent in Florence Italy. The

fantastic architecture and statues along with haunting melodies and great acting made me forget all the psychological brilliance of the first instalment

Apart from the two main characters watch out foe an amazing performance from Oldman as Verger and also Ray Liotta, who plays Paul Krendler, a dirty Department of Justice employee who will do anything to ruin starlings career unless she sleeps with him.

While 'Hannibal' was never going to be better than 'The Silence of the Lambs,' it is a worthy sequel and while the movie's ending was altered from that of the book, like so many other changes, it has allowed the powers that be to complete a ravenous trilogy. If Hopkins signs up, you can count me in.

The Watcher

Have you ever come out after watching a film and realise that there just went two hours of my life that I'll never see again? Well welcome to the world of 'The Watcher.'

It is a slow paced, utterly uneventful and as much fun as eating rice cakes. Director Joe Charbanics' picture fails to capture any level of suspense or drama and always leaves you searching for a point.

Unfortunately there wasn't

one to be found. It is almost like a terrible rip off of David Fincher's 'Seven', where the killer taunts the police by leaving a trail of clues to taunt them and also help them in the hunt to save the victim.

Again it failed to capture any of the menace portrayed in 'Seven' and the dialogue dried up instead of flowing between the principle characters.

To my great shock I saw one of my favourite Brat Pack actors, James Spader, faltering around as a burned out FBI agent, hooked on painkillers and therapy. The only reason he hasn't killed himself is because he's in love with his therapist, Marisa Tomei. Keanu Reeves plays the psychotic Killer whose only pleasure comes from killing young women and taunting Spader

Bottom ten: what to miss.

- 10. Pay It Forward: Sentimental rubbish and can someone get that kid to smile.
- 9. Contagion: An Xtra vision exclusive, enough said.
- 8. Urban Legends 2: There was a first one?
- 7. Exit Wounds: Steven Segal just won't leave us alone.
- 6. Dark Prince, legend of Dracula: HaHaHaHaHaHA
- 5. Castaway: Please just open that bloody box you Robinson Crusoe wannabe.
- 4. Men of Honour: Please America no more stories of one man's struggle against....blah .
- 3. Dude Where's My Car?: Where's my brain is more like it.
- 2. The Watcher: Just don't, it's not worth it
- 1. The Wedding Planner: More like the funeral maker.....of comedy.



to the brink of a meltdown.

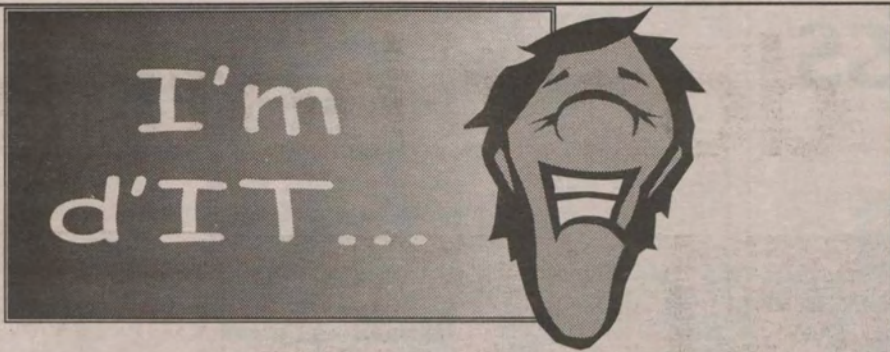
This is a terribly predictable film with little or no surprises.

Reeves is extremely pedestrian in his role as the baddie ruining all credit gained from his sparkling performance as Neo in 'The Matrix.' Spader is bearable but just has nothing to work with in this truly awful movie.

In truth I would rather watch old re-runs of Glenroe than be made see 'The Watcher' again. If you have the chance to do anything else rather than see this film do it, philately can be rewarding on at least one level!

The Watcher: Keanu Reeves plays the psychotic Killer whose only pleasure comes from killing young women





By Fiachra Rocco-Goveny

Oh you lucky things you! Legions of the great unwashed rejoice! There is a divinity among you! Having noticed that the majority of ye poor students, although having a plethora of useless qualifications and pieces of paper, you are missing something vital: Style. Sadly, the je ne sais quoi, which I have in abundance, is not on the curriculum in college, so it is up to me to spread the love and show you how to live! Oh, the enormity of the task. Now I know how Mother Theresa felt when she first entered Calcutta.

As always it's been a hectic week for Dublin's favorite funboy. On Monday my VBF FiFi and I went to the opening of a new art gallery somewhere or other. Honestly, these gallery types are so stiff, they just wanted to mope about looking at pictures and talking.

I mean, hello, we're not dead yet. So, in order to calm the stress levels, we sped off in FiFi's new 4x4 to B.T.'s for some retail therapy. After a quick facial by the divine Grainne at the LeCoc counter it was up up and away to the menswear dept., with a quick stop off at Louis V.'s natch.

Unfortunately, the whole experience was nearly ruined when we saw some blatantly middle class people browsing, with obvi-

ously no intent to purchase. I mean, this isn't some sort of fruit market!

Well two words to my NBF in securitè and they were soon out on their ear. I mean, I hadn't actually seen them shoplifting but standards must be maintained.

However, our ordeal wasn't over yet. While at the counter some pesky street urchin wanted to pay by cash. Hello, are we living in the dark ages? I didn't even know they still printed those cute little £10 notes.

The day was practically a disaster so we tried to resuscitate it with a quick dinner date at Bistro Bong. I stuck to the fillet of tofu but FiFi was positively roughing it with some chips and aioli.

We just had time to finish the Chardonnay and dash across town to Phillies, the new place to be seen. No sooner were we spotted outside then the owner had whisked us through the velvet rope and into the V.I.P room where cosmopolitans and a whole roomful of new VBF's awaited us.

I mean it has a non-VIP area but we had had enough poverty for one day.

Well that's enough for now, I can't be giving away all my secrets. And besides dictating to my secretary is just sooo dull. So until next month, au Renoir.

FRG

City sounds

With Laurence Mackin

I could spend the first paragraph welcoming you all back for another year and greeting first years for the first time into college, etc etc., but no, I won't, that is not my job. If you want some sycophantic drivel I suggest you read the editor's column (but it's good sycophantic drivel! - Ed). That's what he is there for.

I, on the other hand, am here to tell you all that's good and wonderful and happening on your doorstep. But first, a little look back at what you may have missed during the summer.

This isn't an excuse for me to gloat. It's to remind you what you missed so you won't make the same mistakes next year. Alright, it's just to gloat.

Dublin was awash with international acts throughout the summer. The E.S.B Jazz Festival saw some truly legendary performances even if the main attraction, Charlie Haydn, couldn't make it due to the events on September 11th. The Doclands Film Festival ended on 29th of September, a novel addition to the calendar of film festivals in the Irish Film Centre. Gig-wise there were just too many to mention, but recent

highlights included Spiritualized at the Ambassador, and St. Germain in the Olympia. You don't know who these people are? Then go forth and find out! You will not be disappointed.

But enough reminiscing and Wonder Years nostalgia (it was at that point I could feel my childhood slipping away...). The year is young, the bar is full and we've all got our hip cat threads on. So get up and get down and get out there.

The legendary Sparklehorse play the Ambassador on Friday 2nd November with Gemma Hayes. Their most recent release, It's a Wonderful Life is one of the most interesting pieces of rock you'll find at the moment, and support from the up and coming Hayes will make for a really strong combination on the night.

The awesome Mogwai play the Olympia on 7th November. Anybody who was at their gig in the Red Box will know that it was one of the gigs of the year.

One of my sources backstage told me that Mogwai themselves reckoned it was the best gig they had ever played, so this is one to be

missed on peril of death. Also playing the Olympia will be Ron Sexsmith on 18th November and the Cowboy Junkies on 23rd October.

The Ambassador is a welcome addition to the country's venues. Reminiscent of the Olympia in layout, the venue is split over two levels with standing on the ground floor and seating on the upper.

Although the prices at the bar are among the most expensive in the city, the Guinness is good even if it is in the dreaded plastic cup. The acoustics are excellent and the stage is impressively large but thankfully the crowd are not fenced off a huge distance from it. Although it has been just concerts so far, the Ambassador will play host to a number of late night clubs a la the Olympia and the Gaiety, the first of which is School Disco.com on 27th October.

So if boys and girls in school uniforms is your thing than report to your local Garda station you sick puppy. Oh, it's all good.



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DIT looks to progress on Gaelic front

A NEW college year and a new season for DIT Gaelic Games brings with it a pool of freshers to choose from, which compensates for the loss of last year's graduates. After mixed performances in the past, DIT GAA Development Officer Des O'Donnell speaks to Miguel Delaney of his expectations for the coming year.

In football, this year's All-Ireland Football final showed that the potential is there for DIT teams. Ollie Murphy, Richie Kealy and Evan Kelly head the list of past DIT students victorious in the final. However, while DIT football has benefited from the contribution of County players before, many of them forming the backbone of teams, Des believes the problem has been that these players have never come around at the same time.

As for this year, DIT senior football manager Joe Moran has some adjustments to make, with 11 of last year's side having graduated. Although DIT has a campus of over 15,000 students, Des claims that it is still difficult to get a squad together. "I could go around the different colleges now and get over 200 willing footballers, but this will always be whittled down as students just don't have the time."

The fact that DIT has centres scattered all over Dublin, combined with the distance of facilities, causes further problems. While arranging a fixture and notifying every centre is troublesome enough, potential players can be put off as the pitches are out in Terenure. "The facilities we have are adequate, but they are not central enough. If the pitches were in Islandbridge, only a mile away from most centres, more players might be attracted as they could walk down." At the moment, the senior football team has been forced to draw from the fresher's team, an idea that Des dislikes but is forced to accept. "There is a big difference between coming up against an 18 year-old fresher and a 22 year-old senior. It would be nice to protect freshers for a year, but sometimes that's impossible."

However this year it might not be such a bad thing, with the emergence of some promising talent. On Wednesday October 10th two freshers' teams were sent out to Belfield to take on two UCD teams. For the first time ever both DIT teams won, showing that progress is being made. It could be an interesting year for the First Year side.

In hurling, the senior side has also been weakened by the loss of graduates, with many of them hav-

ing formed the core of previous years' teams. However, the squad is a dedicated bunch and is boosted by the fact that Colin Cowen, whom plays for Galway's senior side, is still available for selection. Senior Hurling manager Damien McDonald will be hoping to improve on last year's performance, as the side were beaten in the first round of the Fitzgibbon Cup by NUI Maynooth. This year however got off to a bad start with DIT hurlers losing two matches to the Galway and Mayo IT teams.

As for the ladies, Des believes those playing for the football and hurling sides are just as enthusiastic as the men. However like always, the numbers just aren't there. In camogie it's the same problem, as there wasn't enough available players to get a team together. This time around, DIT will participate in the Leinster Higher Education Colleges Freshers' Blitz in DCU on Monday 22nd October. Des expects to send out two teams, hoping that a good turn out at the event will put DIT camogie on the road this season.

Finally, as well as wishing all teams good luck, Des has one final request: Could all players please bring back last year's jerseys!



Volley good show: Students indulge in appropriate spiking during DIT Sportsday.

Badminton club prepares for busy year

By Ciaran McKeon

After being crowned the Best New / Most Improved Club of the Year, the DIT Badminton Club is back with a far busier schedule of events for the year ahead.

Along with the HESF Tournament and the Intervarsities, we will now be competing in the B.U.I Dublin & District Leagues over the coming months. With the mixed league draw having just been made, DIT will face the challenge of CIE, Celbridge, Epworth, An Caislean Nua and Dundrum during the new campaign. This is certain to prove a testing challenge for all involved but if last year's effort is anything to go by, then our players should be more than capable of rising to the occasion.

The mixed cup competition will get underway before the Christmas holidays. After the fes-



sive break, we will also be entering into the Mens' and Ladies Leagues. Inter DIT Competitions are also being planned for the foreseeable future, which is an integral part and logical progression in the development of badminton in DIT. Competitive play aside, beginners are always welcome to come along to our training sessions. All equipment is supplied, and we have an excellent coach to teach all levels, so no one should feel too inadequate or out

of place. Badminton is a great sport, provides a superb way of keeping fit or indeed getting fit, and the club is a great place to meet friends and to have fun.

We will also be holding many mad social nights out. Watch out for posters, or check out our website for more information in the coming weeks. You can log into our activities at <http://indigo.ie/%7Emckeon/homepage.htm>. Pay us a visit and see what we are all about!

Our Training Times for the year ahead are as follows: Aungier Street YMCA 12:30-2:00pm Mondays Belvedere Gym 7-10pm Tuesdays

* Ciaran McKeon is the Treasurer of DIT Badminton Club.

Whistle Blowers



GAA: Beneficiaries or Mercenaries?

WITH another successful season of Championship action behind us, attention will more than likely return to the thorny issue of professionalism in the GAA. It's a debate that divides opinion equally, be it in our newspapers or in the pub. Many feel that if footballers and hurlers were paid, the spirit of the games would suffer. Players would be more concerned about their next pay-cheque than performing to the best of their ability for their club and county.

It is an understandable concern. The GAA is a part of our tradition, therefore it is difficult to just slap a price tag on it, without appearing to devalue its cultural significance. But it is clear from the emergence of the Gaelic Players Association that not all players are happy with the current situation. And why should they be? Every summer the GAA replenish their money mountain with gate receipts and TV rights, while the players that attract the huge audiences are overlooked.

Playing at the highest level in GAA requires extreme dedication. Night after night players travel the length and breadth of the country to train regardless of the temperamental Irish weather, and they still have to get up for work the following morning.

Of course a vast majority of players would not swap their lifestyle for anything, but surely their sacrifice deserves some financial reward. The argument that professionalism will turn our wholesome GAA stars into money-grabbing mercenaries with an eye for cash rather than goal, is over simplistic. Roy Keane earns in excess of £50,000 a week, yet no one could ever suggest that he is not a hundred per cent committed to every game he plays in. Therefore why would a GAA player be any different? If anything professionalism may improve the aptitude of players by making them feel more accountable to the clubs that pay their wages.

Brian Healy

Game for a www. gaffe!

SPORTS commentators mourning the retirement of Murray "Look up there! That's the sky!" Walker for his unerring ability to make them sound good may stop worrying, for there is a website guaranteed to make even the worst feel confident. Concentrating on football, Danger Here (www.dangerhere.com) is a celebration of the sport's finest commentating gaffes.

Updated every Monday, leading with the week's most baffling pieces of football analysis, the website takes an alternative look at the football world. Speak Ron Atkinson's own language, Ronglish, through an easy to follow step-by-step guide, eventually leading to text-book sentences such as "Spotter's badge to Beckham who's spotted the little eye-brows and sent it over early doors". Learn from Glenn Hoddle's gems of wisdom: "his tackle was definitely pre-ordained" and simply laugh at Keegan's comments like "despite his white boots he's quite fast".

The centrepiece though is undoubtedly the tribute to Ireland's finest, George Hamilton. The Madness of Commentator George includes all his classics from "the Baggio brothers of course, are not related" to his more recent: "nobody within an asses roar of him". Danger Here also calculates that George was directly responsible for 87% of the goals Ireland have conceded during his time as commentator through some of his vintage invitations for opposing teams to score.

The site also analyses the football world each week by asking essential questions such as "Barry Venison, why?", musing on Dunphy's latest actions or peering into John Giles' psyche in Being John Giles. A serious side is included, with a news centre and columns on the latest football topics. Though not a completely original idea, Danger Here is one of the best websites of its kind at the moment and a hilarious way to waste half an hour. "And Bonner has gone 165 minutes of these championships without conceding a goal. Oh danger here..."

Miguel Delaney

Beckham in the hunt for Golden Ball

The status of Mr Posh in the global football context has often been a contentious point for those of us who have queried why our own Roy Keane has yet to have been mentioned as a serious contender for European Footballer of the Year.

But following his majestic ninety minutes against the Greeks, David Beckham is certain to be among the favourites for the award come Christmas time. This year's top player prize on the continent is really up for grabs, as it is difficult to think of a host of players who have delivered both for club and country during the past year. Stefan Effenberg was an outstanding captain for Bayern Munich during their march to Champions League success, but his retired status from the German national team will probably prove counter productive when it comes to his Golden Ball credentials.

The other European trophy winners are in much better shape and it would be a surprise if at least two Liverpool players were not nominated; most likely Steven Gerrard and Michael Owen, whose recent hamstringing injury has curtailed a stunning goal scoring sequence. Roy Keane has once again exuded class for both club and country and no one would deserve the honour more than the Mayfield man, but one feels his lack of goals as well as the occasional bout of red mist will be held against him. But Beckham must be a warm favourite after a superb year as England captain and an excellent start to the current campaign with Manchester United. Stunning goals against Finland, Greece (away) and the magnificent equaliser at Old Trafford against the same opposition have made him the top World Cup headline grabber of the year. Figo and Zidane have had relatively quiet times of it this past year. David Beckham's time may well have arrived, sadly at the expense of his superior club captain.

Dermot Keyes

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