

ISSUE 3 - 2025

CRACCUM

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT MAGAZINE SINCE 1927

DRUGS & SEX

DRUGS

THE FALL OF HOUSE DUTERTE: FROM HERO TO HITLER

Justin Foronda Agluba

I JUST WANNA BEAT
MY GODDAM MEAT

Tim Evans

INTERVIEW:
NEW BLOOD POP

Lewis Matheson
Creed

PORN AS FANTASY
AS SEX AS HEIL

Bailey Larkin



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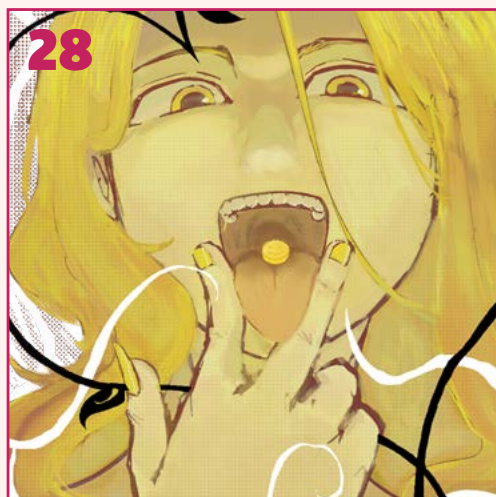
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We need your help!

We need your help to reach
75% contribution for Issue 4!



THANK YOU!

Well done everyone! We smashed our goal for Issue 3!



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STUDENT UNION
BUILDING
34 PRINCES STREET



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AN EDITORIAL ALL ABOUT SEX! (AND DRUGS)

FROM CRACCUM
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



HARRY SUTTON

ART BY LEWIS MATHESON GREED

And just like that, we are in week five! Assignments are piling up, the drinking is starting to become a weekly thing, and expeditions to Munchy Mart for Red Bull to pull off the academic comeback are becoming more frequent! But do not worry, we at CRACCUM headquarters are still out here working hard to give you the best possible news stories and hopefully provide some entertainment in this time of need.

This week's issue is about two of the top recreational activities that people go to university get up to: drugs and sex! Whether you indulge in both, or neither, I can guarantee that one or two of your friends, or someone you know, are very active in at least sex or drugs.

Because let's be serious, we are young, in the prime of our lives, and thanks to the joyous drinking culture we have here in little old Aotearoa, we or someone we know enjoys a good drink (some of us more than others).

Drinking is like a rite of passage in New Zealand, as soon as we all turned 16, we were all going to wee high school parties, having two Coronas, thinking we were drunk and then vomiting in your parent's car on the way back from said party because it turns out that wasn't two Coronas, but vodka mixed with wine mixed with god knows what else. I'm sure everyone has had this experience, right? No? Oh well, me neither.

Anyway, moving on. Drugs are a whole different box of frogs, from a cheeky cone that the one random bloke has at a flat party, to that bag of MDA that you did at a festival, only to realise later it was actually just bath salts.

Drugs are something that needs to be done in moderation, preferably, getting it tested is a good idea and making sure you are in a good mindset before doing it because the last

thing you want is a bad trip. At the same time, we all are in university, so you must go out and have some fun because money comes and goes, but memories last a lifetime.

Ah, sex, the thing that everyone likes to talk and boast about in first-year halls, the nights of doing your rice purity tests only to find out your score is 90 and your mate is in the 50s. The thing that every single guy thinks they are good at until they realize they aren't.

"Oh, she came, bro". Mmmm, no, she probably didn't; you just kissed her neck for all of ten seconds, then her lips for a minute, then decided that was enough for you and went straight into the actual sex part, then you came and probably thought you were the man and went to sleep. Sound familiar? Spoiler alert, sex is a two-way street.

Look, all I'm saying is if you don't satisfy her, her brand-new Satisfier 300 most definitely will!

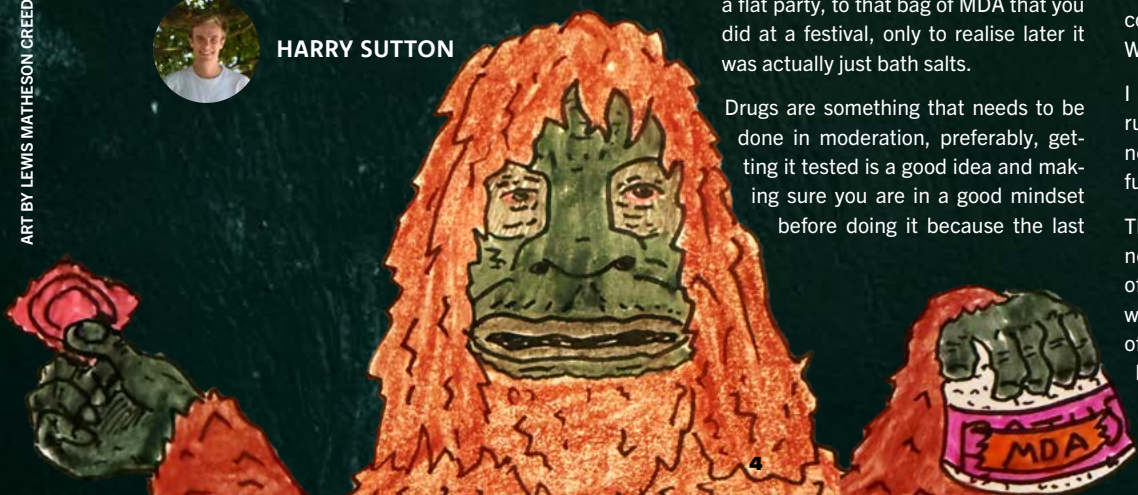
Also, guys, wear protection if you don't want a child, wear protection if you don't want an STD, and, for god's sake, just wear protection because the last thing you want to find is the girl you hooked on at the Long Room a lifetime ago is now 6 months pregnant, and it's your kid! It's better to be safe than sorry.

Also, just a quick PSA: if he or she isn't into it, as the great cup of tea video once said, "don't force tea down their throat!" You do not force tea or coffee down people's throats. Consent is always the most important thing and if they don't feel comfortable, then DO NOT HAVE SEX WITH THEM. It's not rocket science.

I hope you will survive the assignment rush that is now upon us. But until the next time, here's a quote to sum up how fun we should have as students.

The great icon Pitbull once said, "Life is not a waste of time, time is not a waste of life. So, let's stop wasting time, get wasted all the time, and have the time of our lives!". See you again soon, you horny fuckers!

Harry.



WHAKARONGO MAI

Art Credit

The topics of sex and drugs were for a long time, taboo, and rarely ever talked about. Nowadays, especially with the rise of social media, calls for open discussion and conversation around such topics has been encouraged, especially amongst university students.

We invited students from the University of Auckland to share their thoughts and opinions surrounding sex and drugs.

Q: IF YOU WERE TO GIVE SOMEONE THE SEX TALK, WHAT WOULD YOU WANT THEM TO KNOW?

"STIs and STDs are a normal thing. They just happen. It's something that can be treated and it doesn't mean you're dirty. It's not something to feel whakamā about, it's normal." - **Hine Hotties**

"To women, prioritise your pleasure over [a man's]. I just hate how sex ends when they've had a round. Don't let men dick-tate your pleasure." - **Hine Hotties**.

"It's okay if your consent changes throughout your encounter. It can be an enthusiastic yes at the beginning then become a nervous no right before, and your choice should still be respected. Never let someone push you to do something you're uncomfortable to do." - **Anonymous**.

"Do not take your knowledge of sex from porn. Sex doesn't have to start immediately, it's more than just physical pleasure and your body is fine the way it is. Don't compare the two." - **Anonymous**

"How to masturbate." - **Anonymous**

"Anatomy 101, diagram of the clitoris and why it does what it does." - **Anonymous**

"Plan B doesn't kill the baby, it delays ovulation, if you're ovulating and he finishes inside, it won't work." - **Anonymous**

"How they can practice safe sex and have healthy relationships as LGBT." - **Anonymous**

"Foreplay starts outside of the bedroom 🍌🍌🍌+ do your pelvic floor exercises." - **Makayla, Medicine**

"I can have sex with a disability, I'm not a child." - **Riley**.

"If sex continuously hurts every single time, please go and see your GP." - **Anonymous**

Q: TELL US ABOUT A TIME YOU TOOK DRUGS.

"No, you'll tell my mum." - **Anonymous**

(Authors Note: We promise we would never snitch. You can trust us besties.)

"Smoked for the first time at uni, everyone was talking Simlish for a straight 3 hours." - **Anonymous**

"Weed makes Burger King taste really good. I can account for this." - **Anonymous**

"I lowkey felt like I was having a stroke." - **Anonymous**



"HAVE YOU EVER TRIED THIS ONE?": BEHIND SABRINA'S BACKLASH

Sabrina Carpenter's latest tour has created some debate over the sexual nature she displays in her performances. While many fans praise her humour and confidence, there are those, mainly parents, who criticise her for going too far. This controversy raises questions of artistic freedom and how this interacts with audience expectations.

Carpenter has been launched into popularity in the past year or so, the height of which being due to the release of songs such as "Please Please Please," "Espresso," and "Taste." The performance that seems to be getting the most scrutiny is her song "Juno," which is about intense romantic attraction to the point of wanting to be impregnated. The backlash is focused on a specific line in the song, "Have you ever tried this one?" in which Carpenter would then include choreography simulating a different sexual position with each performance. The most notable, and recent one to make headlines, was on Monday 17 March at her concert in Paris where she and two backup dancers struck a suggestive pose that gave reference to a popular landmark. When in Paris, as they say.

The majority of comments from fans criticising her performance stem mainly from parents who deem her actions inappropriate for kids. Some comments voiced on X, formerly known as Twitter, were "I'm sorry but there are little kids in the audience and this is taking it way too far." Another comment read, "Sabrina is one step away from starting an OnlyFans at this point."

This was however battled with by some of her other fans, with comments replying, "Her music is not for children and if you as a parent don't monitor what your kids are listening to that's your fault." Another prominent comment made targeting parents was, "All her concerts are like this when are people going to start holding parents accountable instead of the entertainer that clearly caters to adults." The debate over responsibility sits divided, with parents blaming Carpenter and fans blaming parents. Carpenter responded in an interview with Time magazine stating, "And to that I just say, don't come to the show and that's OK."

Carpenter has made it clear that she will not adjust her performances for audiences she does not intend to cater to. Meanwhile, fans continue to debate over who is responsible, the parents or the artist. As the debate continues, the question remains: what did you think you'd be tasting when he's kissing you?



NEWS



TE HIRA MAYALL-NAHI (SHE/HER)

THE MORNING ROUTINE

Social media has been buzzing with activity lately due to a very specific morning routine video from Ashton Hall, a fitness influencer, uploaded to Instagram on Saturday 8th February. This video left viewers confused, but amused, with his 3:52 am start time and rubbing a banana peel on his face. But why has the internet been taken by storm due to this video?

Hall starts his day at 3:52 am with a very methodical skincare routine, including mouth-taping, and then moves into a series of workouts, journaling, facial ice baths, and then repeating those. What truly stands out about this routine is the highlighted banana peel skincare step, which has no scientific basis whatsoever. The video brought in millions of views, but it left many questioning whether Hall's routine was genuine or a satire of influencer culture.

Viewers had a lot of opinions to share, ranging from comments on the video pointing out, "why does he put his rolex on to go sprinting haha," to The Rolling Stones and GQ releasing articles about the memes this video has influenced, and ranking the wildest moments from the video. This video reinforced the questioning of how authentic life is portrayed by online influencers. The absurdity of these activities has brought viewers together, sparking a wave of humour online referencing the banana and the clear personal attachment to a singular bottled-water brand. Another viewer commented on the video, "bro spent 4 minutes mid-air." This was in reference to the very specific timings that keep showing up throughout the video but also how this time changes to a 4-minute difference as Hall is seen diving into a pool. These tidbits of humour allow viewers to make their own assumptions about the reality of his routine and choose to pick and take what they want to incorporate for themselves.

Despite the mixed reactions online, Ashton Hall's video has clearly captured the attention of millions. Whether this comes from a genuine wellness trend or it's satirical commentary, one thing's for sure: don't wake up before 4 am for anyone except your kids.

Shit 2 Do

What's going on this week? Wash your face and go find out!

MONDAY

CRACK UP – COMEDY PUB QUIZ

7:30PM – 9PM
THE CAV, PONSONBY

GRAB YOUR MATES AND HEAD ALONG TO A PUB QUIZ, YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A GENIUS TO WIN BUT IT JUST MIGHT HELP! JUST CALL THE BAR TO BOOK YOU TABLE.

MARCH

31

TUESDAY

APRIL

1

STUDY NIGHT

IT MIGHT BE TIME FOR YOU TO GET STARTED ON THOSE ASSIGNMENTS BABE, TRUST ME NOW IS BETTER THAN NEXT WEEK.

APRIL

2

WEDNESDAY

FOOD TRUCK WEDNESDAYS

12PM – 2PM
TAKUTAI SQUARE (BRITOMART)

EVERY WEDNESDAY IN TAKUTAI SQUARE, HEAD OVER TO SEE WHICH FOOD TRUCKS ARE BRINGING YOU THEIR BEST MIX STREET FOOD.

FRIDAY

APRIL

4

BULL RUSH IMPROV

10PM START TIME
BASEMENT THEATRE
\$12 MINIMUM TICKET COST (CHOOSE WHAT YOU PAY)

SHOWCASING A ROSTER OF TAMAKI'S BEST AND BRIGHTEST PERFORMERS, YOU CAN GO ALONG AND SEE SPIT-TAKE-WORTHY GAGS, GREAT STORIES, AND EVEN LIVE IMPROVISED MUSIC.

THURSDAY

APRIL

3

VOLUNTEER EXPO

11AM – 2PM
STUDENT QUAD

COME ALONG AND FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERING!

SATURDAY

APRIL

5

FRENCH MARKET

9AM – 1PM
131 REMUERA ROAD, REMUERA

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN A LIVELY TRADITIONAL FRENCH MARKET ATMOSPHERE. WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR FOOD OR JUST A DAY OUT AND ABOUT, THIS MARKET WILL HAVE SOMETHING INTERESTING FOR YOU.

SUNDAY

APRIL

6

CULTURE FEST

11AM – 5PM
MT ROSKILL WAR MEMORIAL HALL
FREE

HARRY'S BI-WEEKLY SPORTS RECAP!

FROM CRACCUM'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Another two weeks of sports done and another two weeks of quality events happening locally and globally. Let's dive in!

KIWI SENSATION SAM RUTHE SETS HISTORY AS HE BREAKS THE FOUR-MINUTE MILE RECORD.

New Zealand just keeps on producing world-class athletes. At just 15 years old, local Tauranga sensation Sam Ruthe becomes the first and youngest 15-year-old to run an under 4-minute mile at a blistering time of three minutes and fifty-eight seconds. For reference, that's running a two-minute and forty-eight-second Kilometre! That is insane for someone at 15 to do this!

The previous record holder and running legend Sir John Walker, who was the first man to ever run an under 4-minute

mile, even reached out to Sam before the race. His parents couldn't have been prouder.

ALL WHITES WIN AGAIN TO STEP CLOSER TOWARDS QUALIFYING FOR THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP.

After beating Fiji 7-0, the All-Whites are now just one win away from qualifying for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. It didn't take long for the All-White star Chris Wood to get his name on the scoresheet as he scored the opening goal within just six minutes of the game. The goals kept coming and coming, and by half-time the All-Whites could cruise for the rest of the game.

It was so cruisy for them that Chris Wood, during the game, went into the stands and started taking selfies and signing autographs. Something that I

don't think I have ever seen while watching a sports game. The final score showed their dominance with a 7-0 in favour of New Zealand.

If the Whites do win their last game against New Caledonia, this will be not only the first time in 16 years that they have qualified for the tournament but also only the third-ever time in FIFA history that the men in white would play. Let's hope they can do it!

WHITE FERNS LOSE TO AUSTRALIA IN THE T20 SERIES AT THE MOUNT.

It's just not the best year for our nation's cricket teams. Australia have won this T20 series against the White Ferns with a game to spare in this three-test series.

The White Ferns did everything they could to provide a deciding game back in the capital, but the batting of Beth Mooney was too much for the Kiwis as she hit 70 runs off just 42 balls. It was simply too much of a lead for the Kiwis to catch.

Star batter for the White Ferns, Amelia Kerr, tried to make it a game by hitting 40 runs of her own off 36 balls throughout her innings, but it wasn't enough as the rest of the team struggled to get a form of momentum. The defending T20 world champions have now lost eight



games in a row to the Aussies and will look to win the final constellation game in Wellington.

BLUES SEASON IN DESPAIR AFTER LOSS TO THE CRUSADERS AT EDEN PARK

If you were to tell even the biggest Blues hater at the beginning of this Super Rugby Pacific season that after six games of Super Rugby as the reigning champions the Blues would have just one win, I don't think even they would believe you.

That's how badly this season is unfolding for the men in blue. This is their worst start to a season since 2019 and the championship from just last year seems like a lifetime ago. Now they look lost, they play like they have no confidence, and to top it all off, injuries are starting to pile up. Nothing has gone their way.

The game against the Crusaders started so well, with Dalton Papalii scoring the opening try within the first five minutes, giving the Blues some hope that they could win this game and maybe turn this season around. The Crusaders then responded with try after try, with the Crusaders putting 27 straight points on the Blues and a lead they never relinquished, winning the

game 42 to 19.

The Blues now need to find something in this bye week because if they don't, they won't even make the playoffs at this rate.

IT'S THAT TIME: MARCH MADNESS IS UPON US!

It's that time again, time for the "madness." If you don't know what I'm referencing, the NCAA tournament, or "March Madness", is the biggest college basketball tournament that happens at the end of the college basketball season in the United States. It is what every single college basketball team wants to win. All of the hard work that the teams have done builds up to this.

How it works is out of the thousands of colleges in the US, sixty-four of the top college teams are chosen to play in the respective men's and women's tournaments, and the teams are seeded from one to sixteen. Every game is an elimination so if you have a bad game there are no second chances. You are gone. This is what it makes it so good to watch: teams are giving it all, from players diving on the floor, to furious comebacks to upsets like a lower seed beating a powerhouse number-one seed: these are always given with this tournament.

Although this year's tournament hasn't started as action-packed as normal, it still has had upsets.

The reigning champs of the men's tournament, the University of Connecticut, is out after losing in a thriller against Florida, and a twelfth seed, McNeese, beat a powerhouse college in Clemson College, which was a fifth seed.

In the Women's tournament, it has been ever more lopsided, with the University of Connecticut beating Arkansas by 69 points behind their star Page Buckers. That is insane for a college basketball game!

It is truly one of the great sports tournaments and if you haven't been keeping up, I suggest you start now! Because it will soon be over, and you will have to wait a full year to watch it again.

That's all for now, see you again soon!



CLUBS



CAMPUS

Check out these cool clubs on campus, come back for new clubs each issue.



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TIM EVANS (THEY/THEM) | @TIMOTHYRAEVANS

If your brain is truly rotting from the inside out, you've probably heard the term 'gooning' before. It comes along with a barrage of Gen Alpha internet slang which truly means absolutely nothing to anyone above the age of 25. In the words of iconic drag queen Katya Zamolodchikova (yes, I love her okay), "Did you munt my grandma in the skibidi toilet?" Like ... girl what the actual fuck does that mean. Besides the point, gooning is now a common word to hear on absurdist internet entertainment - so what actually is it and why the fuck are teenagers bringing this word into the mainstream entertainment world?

Gooning, verb: the action of prolonged edging, usually in solo masturbation but not strictly, which results in a state of bliss caused by intense sexual stimulation.

To be *gooned out* is to be so braindead from whacking off that you're almost totally incoherent, with your mind only able to focus on sexual pleasure. Importantly, when gooning with others, it is not usually a BDSM kind of thing; gooning is a pleasure focused experience which, while still being an alternative sexual interest, does not explicitly fall into the BDSM category. It is different from other kinds of edging, though many people who like one will like the oth-

er, in that it usually is done alone, and the focus is not on denial of an orgasm, rather the intensification of sexual feelings and prolonging of the encounter. According to *Watts The Safeword*, a YouTube channel hosted by an older gay couple, it's a hypnotic state focused on pleasure. This channel notes the connection between the etymology (which seems intense for a slightly meme-y sex thing) of "goons" as a persona and gooning as a verb. It's pretty obvious to see the connection between gooning as a sexual thing and goons in media or literature - big dumbos thugs usually used for their physical skills and with absolutely no intelligence. It is also much more common for people with dicks to get into it, but not strictly, and often uses the iconography of the "alpha penis" as a central theme in gooning porn.

Gooning has gained massive traction post-COVID, mostly because by nature this is a sexual habit that takes a longer time. With people being stuck at home all day with loose supervision, people had the time to explore this kind of masturbation. At this point in time, gooning is extremely common in the queer community and even among straight men who are interested in the pleasure focused approach in this world. In pornography, there are two major trends

at the moment in gooning: watching people goon out themselves (usually by making extreme faces, drooling, and masturbating for long periods of time) or being instructed in gooning (using often edit style videos with overlaid clips, vivid imagery, and instructions). It is also extremely common in the gooning world to use poppers (amyl nitrate huffing - the same active chemical as nangs), with the effects of these chemicals enhancing the dazed and hypnotic mental state which gooners aim to achieve.

If you're interested in trying out this practice, explore your boundaries safely and responsibly. As someone not particularly invested in this practice, it's easy to see how gooning could impact you negatively. Knowing your body is important, don't ignore negative feelings in your body, don't put yourself in risky situations unnecessarily. This kind of practise might more easily lend itself to sexual addiction given the nature of extended sessions and the pornography (the notion of becoming nothing but a goon is very prevalent).

Always be safe, always have clear boundaries, and always focus on having fun. Because if you can't have fun when you're jerking off, literally when can you?

The Fall of House Duterte: From Hero to Hitler

Drugs, Deaths and Deals that brought the Philippine “Punisher” to heel



JUSTIN FORONDA AGLUBA

“A warrant of arrest? You will just have to *kill* me if I refuse,” said the defiant Duterte, standing on the cabin’s aisle of Cathay Pacific (CPA907) from Hong Kong, which landed moments ago. Outside, a phalanx of guards was stationed within Manila Airport’s Terminal 3, facilitating the arrest. At a distance, his supporters chanted his name. Duterte and his entourage were carted off to the nearby Villamor Airbase, handing the Ex-president to the Interpol hours later. Duterte boarded a Gulfstream G550 (RP-C5219) bound for Rotterdam, Netherlands.

On 14 March 2025, Duterte first appeared before the three judges of the ICC (International Criminal Court). **Rodrigo Roa Duterte**, former President of the Philippines, became the first Asian head of state to be tried by a global tribunal. Known as the “Trump of Asia” and for his “war on drugs,” barely three years out from office, he ended up incarcerated in a Dutch prison facility in Scheveningen for alleged crimes against humanity.

From President to prisoner, Duterte’s arrest on 11 March 2025 marks the precipitous death knell to a sadistic regime. On the surface, this is a milestone in the rules-based international order; another doddering tyrant is brought to account. At closer inspection, Duterte’s dramatic downfall, from glory to infamy, is the culmination of the political rivalry between two warring Filipino dynasties. House Duterte misjudged the ruthless cunning of House Marcos. The blunder would cost the former its patriarch and future. Duterte is fated to rot in The Hague, leaving House Marcos unopposed, feasting on the spoils of war.

Modern New Zealand politics pales compared to the Pearl of the Orient Seas. In the Philippines, democracy is a blood sport. While Aotearoa dwells in the developed realm of *House of Cards*, Philippine politics is the spitting medieval world of *Game of Thrones*. One with spectacular betrayals and ever-changing loyalties,

there will be blood. This story is the stuff of *Netflix*. But what I can say for certain is **this is not a movie**.

When the dust settles and memoirs are published, historical annals will likely say more. From the sidelines, I recount this *Dance of the Dragons* through *Dutertismo*’s gaping *Heart of Darkness*.



“My God, I hate drugs... I have to *kill* people because I hate drugs.”

Rodrigo Duterte won the 2016 presidential race, vowing to quash the narcotics trade by hook or by crook. Then incumbent, House Duterte, is the fiery and splenetic spawn of the Southern Philippines known for their fury and vulgar rhetoric. Davao City was its turf, where the technique of *extrajudicial killing* (EJK) was perfected to a tee. Davao Death Squad (DDS) was his personal militia. The arrangement was simple: the more drug suspects killed, the higher the reward. This was known as the “Davao Model.” One DDS hitman admitted receiving a ≈\$2000 monthly stipend on top of the blood money. Duterte had

a literal *Death Note* of people linked to drugs. His critics were silenced and jailed on fabricated charges. If the foul-mouthed macho Mayor willed it, it shall be done.

Indeed, the anti-drug crusade was waged in earnest: “Davao Model” writ large. Project Double Barrel, widely known as Oplan **Tokhang**, had instructed the police for a nationwide “neutralization” of illegal drug personalities. Signed by Duterte’s long-time lieutenant, it was proof of the State’s directive against the civilian population. The imagery was all too vivid for me; I was in Manila during this unholy war. But, as

the prevalent syllogism goes, “If you’re not a drug addict, why worry?”



Drug suspects were abducted, summarily executed on the sly. They were dumped in the streets for onlookers to see; limbs hogtied, heads duct-taped, visibly tortured, bearing a scribbled cardboard sign: “Adik ako, wag tularan (I’m an addict, don’t imitate).”

On average, 34 people were murdered daily. By the end of January 2017, the Philippine National Police (PNP) revealed that there were at least 7,025 casualties related to this ferocious campaign against illegal drugs. Children were not spared; the youngest victim is age three. At the end of Duterte’s term in June 2022, the death toll was estimated to be **30,000**. There are disagreements with the actual numbers, but the mass liquidation was hard to dismiss. It was Duterte’s official *raison d’être*; otherwise, he would not have been President to begin with. In 2016, he promised a bloodbath and a butchery there was. Duterte was elected by 16 million with a resounding mandate to implement his murderous vision.

Duterte supposedly purged the streets of *durogista* (drug users) at the cost of human rights. Nonetheless, it garnered Duterte popular support, peaking in 2020 with a 91% approval rating. Tyranny of the majority? For some, he is the bold anti-hero, “the Punisher,” who would cure our national maladies of drugs and corruption with the necessary iron fist. Why? Because Filipinos had supposedly turned recalcitrant from the law in decades of “frail” democracy. Drug cartels purportedly sprouted like weeds. We somewhat forgot to “fear” in the peacetime lull. Duterte barged in, banging the bedroom doors like a strict father to a wayward child. Wake up! We needed to be disciplined for our own good: sparing the rod would spoil the child. Duterte urged his audience to *kill* drug addicts because it’s painful for the parents to do it themselves. He’s no father figure.

Duterte, in his household, is a violent man—a womanising wife-beater. His marriage with his first wife, Elizabeth Zimmerman, was dissolved. According to her, their relationship was “miserable and unhappy,” adding to Duterte’s volatile temper. A court-ordered psychiatric report substantiates her claims. It found Duterte as a “highly impulsive individual”

who suffers from a long-term “antisocial, narcissistic personality disorder” with behavioural patterns that resembled “insensitive self-centredness, grandiose self-entitlement, manipulative behaviours, a tendency to violate rights of others” and general lack of empathy. The diagnosis suggests that Duterte is a psychopath.

Why did Duterte hate drugs? According to a leaked diplomatic cable from the US Embassy-Manila, a close friend of Duterte revealed that one of his two sons is a drug addict. Duterte channelled his rage from failing as a father towards drug users, leading him to adopt vigilantism. Unbeknownst to Duterte, his daughter was also abusing drugs. Recently, after the arrest, her dump account was leaked online, unveiling a diary of her “wake-and-bake” habits, the goodshit kush she publicly blazed in Pampanga, and the way she gloats about the “high” life when her father ordered pogrom over the great unwashed.

Perhaps the most revolting hypocrisy in this whole scenario is that the anti-drug caudillo himself is a drug user: cannabis and fentanyl. Of the thousands slain for

mere drug use, House Duterte forgot to glance in a mirror. They were addict-hating addicts. I would be remiss not to mention that the Führer was a junkie. Is that how a mass murderer copes? Duterte was also accused of involvement in Davao’s illegal drug trade. The narco-war was a façade to establish a state-wide drug syndicate. Seven hells! The Lord “Punisher” is a drug lord himself?! The rapacious hobgoblins had struck gold: coins be their opium. With this, House Duterte’s mortal sin of greed would lead to their rancorous row with House Marcos.



ART BY @RICKS RACKET

“If I get killed, *kill* Marcos... No joke. No joke.”

Duterte’s downfall was the crest of his bitter rivalry with his vulpine successor, **Ferdinand Marcos Jr.**, the current President, with whom Rodrigo’s daughter, **Sara Duterte**, chose to ally in the 2022 elections. House Marcos is the figurative “King in the North,” with fervent political support in Northern Philippines, but hounded by the spectre of human rights violations and oppressive Martial Law past. In the 2016 elections, Duterte swore to authorise the divisive burial of House Marcos’s late patriarch to a national hero’s grave, which he did: a gesture House Marcos paid with their endorsement and loyalists’ votes. An entente cordiale was formed.

In the 2022 elections, to secure victory, House Marcos forged a formidable but fragile alliance with House Duterte, which has a draconic grip over their fiefdom down South. Duterte disapproved of their coalition because he had his own lackey groomed as Sara’s tandem. But Sara is a headstrong woman with goals of her own. Duterte’s pick has a smattering of supporters compared to Sara’s chosen consort. She spurned the arranged wedding and eloped with Marcos regardless. And thus, the two powerful dynasties fused in wedlock. Marcos’s sister described it as a “marriage made in heaven.” Combining their voter base resulted in their landslide victories.

This is *A Song of Ice and Fire*: uniting Westeros for a higher call. But the steps to the Iron Throne were barbed with treacherous blades as avarice kicked in. Ice and Fire were simply not meant to be; they annihilate each other upon contact.

After his inauguration, Marcos started to deviate from Duterte’s brand of leadership. He reversed significant Duterte policies, including his strategy in anti-narcotics enforcement. One thing that I avoided for the sake of amity but risked censoring a crucial pinch point was the Philippines’ foreign relations with China, the South China Sea dispute in particular. It was no secret that Duterte favoured the pro-China approach, even swearing he would never set foot in the US, our traditional security ally. In his 2016 State visit to Beijing,

Duterte declared that “China, Philippines, and Russia... three of us against the world.” He went as far as his treasonous jest to make the Philippines a “province of China” in front of the giggling Chinese ambassador. Xi Jinping was delightfully touched. Duterte is a chink in Uncle Sam’s first-island-chain armour.

Marcos, initially, was pliant to a pro-China stance and treated Xi Jinping as a regional partner. However, shortly after his three-day Beijing tour (January 2023), Marcos pivoted his foreign policy back to the Americans. Xi Jinping rejected Marcos’s proposal to drill for natural gas in the troubled waters of the South China Sea. The Philippines’ major energy reserves are expected to dry up in 2027. It would ravage our economy. Unlike Duterte’s negotiations with Beijing six years prior, Marcos returned from China empty-handed. But Marcos will not be denied. After all, this was his redemption arc: a time to prove House Marcos had the skills to govern, not just the glorified toff they were. When Marcos negated Duterte’s diplomatic legacy, it was a slap in the face. House Duterte gears for war as bitter divorce ensues.

The Marcos-Duterte grand alliance of expediency spotted its early cracks. Marcos denied Sara control over the military (Defense), handing her the intricate and tedious Education department instead. This was apparently a test and a trap. Sara is the Vice-President, one heartbeat away from the throne. Marcos was said to have been forewarned about Sara’s ambition to oust him. In a Balesin Island jamboree in November 2021, Sara confided to some guests that she agreed to be Marcos’s deputy since he might “die or get into an accident” before his term ends. Marcos was counselled not to grant Sara her legions.

Although this was not public knowledge, I suspect the informer was an ex-Duterte ally inside the security cluster. This was bolstered by Sara’s confirmation that she had never been invited to any intelligence meetings. Marcos was likely informed about Sara’s involvement in illegal drugs and the death squads. Filipino presidents,

once elected, are only allowed a six-year single term. Unseating Marcos, mid-tenure, would open a one-decade incumbency for Sara to grasp. But Marcos was several moves ahead of their gambit since the opening.

Education bureau was proved to be a poisoned chalice. Sara was criticised for rulerless management, failing to improve the dismal conditions of Filipino learners, assessed to be worse than our developing neighbours. Then came the “confidential funds” that Sara had royally mishandled, suggesting corruption had occurred. Sara thought a copious public allowance was the reward for her union with Marcos, who should give her the suns and stars as her pound of flesh. But it seems House Marcos had intuited that House Duterte was hoarding a war chest, from the loot, for its very demise. Golds beget Goons that beget Guns. One can’t be too cautious. The patrician House Marcos will not bend its knees to the parvenue, House Duterte. And thus, Marcos stood watch as Sara, green with greed, was picked to the bone.

When efforts had failed to elicit from Sara a truthful answer—where did all the money go?—a fact-finding committee was launched. Receipts on which the funds were disbursed were signed by junk foods. The fiasco has thrown Sara into the pit of mockery. Her foolish faux pas became a national laughingstock. Sara is unamused with the punchline of her own making. She resigned from her Education post in June 2024. But she didn’t resign, expecting accountability to die down, did she? Apparently so. Marcos’s congressional vassals further cranked up the heat.

November 2024, in a pre-dawn video conference with her team of propagandists, a fuming Sara Duterte roared, “*Putang-ina ninyong lahat! (Sons of bitches, you all are!)*”. Her coarse tirades pertain to a trinity of her arch-nemeses: President Marcos, the First Lady, and the Speaker of the House (all from House Marcos). One month before, Sara admitted that she fantasised about beheading Marcos after their relationship went “toxic.” She would later disclose hiring an assassin to murder

the three. “*Wag kang tumigil ha, hangga’t di mo mapatay sila (Don’t stop until you kill them),*” she candidly confessed in a dimly lit room inside the Parliament’s compound. This is House Duterte’s act of war against House Marcos and the Speaker’s Parliamentary dominion.

That night, Sara Duterte reportedly planned to stage an assassination attempt on herself inside the Legislative grounds to “court public sympathy” and stoke a revolution from a wrathful mob. It was thwarted when her suspicious “walking exercise” request was rebuffed.

Sara’s public meltdown was the crescendo of a months-long feud between Houses Duterte and Marcos. Knowing she’s in line to succeed her target, the veep’s confessions are not a threat House Marcos and its vassalage had taken lightly. Palace security was on red alert, identifying potential cut-throats. Rumours to expel her from office spread as early as 2023, but this time, it was the logical conclusion. The Philippine impeachment process mimics that of the US: the Congress impeaches while the Senate convicts. Only in February 2025 that Congress finally impeached Sara with prayers for her removal and a lifetime ban from occupying public office. Seven articles of impeachment assailed her seditious conduct, criminal collusion (drugs & EJK) and corruption. With the Senate on the President’s sway, Sara had no more moves left. She fell to a familiar checkmating pattern, likely to die on this hill.

Duterte, meanwhile, showed that, even in retirement, he’s a devious fox. When Sara went mano-a-mano with the Parliament over her budget woes, Duterte came to the rescue. Coming out of the 2022 elections, Duterte’s party of PDP-Laban had gathered a sizeable army of solons; it was the dominant party then, in fact. Earlier, he plotted to install his collaborators to the Speakership, blackmailing Marcos of impeachment from thereon. This is to ensure that the Parliament’s “power of the purse” is at their beck and call. But alas! There’s a snitch. Marcos’s cousin, the current Speaker of the House, is the Night’s Watch of coups. When he learned of Duterte’s conspirators in May 2023, he stripped them of their daggers—demoting them to

the lower rungs. They tried again in late 2023, but this time, Duterte’s bannermen charged uncloaked. House Marcos raided PDP-Laban, bleeding it of its members and absorbing the deserters into the Marcosian faction. The macho Duterte was hobbled and emasculated.

Desperation drove Duterte to raise hell. Greed had pervaded his system. Draining him from his precious power is like an opioid withdrawal. He would rather see this country burn if he could be the king of the ashes.

In late 2023, there were rumours of military grumblings that challenged the rule of Marcos. House Duterte craves the intoxicating nectar of power, which House Marcos had coveted for so long after their own unceremonious exile in Hawaii almost 40 years ago. In 1986, the ruling House Marcos was toppled in a popular revolution, ending its two-decade reign. Now President Marcos, “the prince that was promised,” had longed to regain the Red Keep after his father, the Mad King, was dethroned. He would not share the palace fortunes, his tropical “birthright,” least of all with a bilious man who rebuked his government. Duterte called Marcos a “drug addict” who should have been wrapped in a body bag during *Tokhang*. One of Duterte’s sons even proposed pulverising Marcos’s home province of Ilocos Norte into dust, should they return to power. He even alluded to the doomed tsarist House of Romanov, massacred by the Bolsheviks, as House Marcos’s eventual comeuppance. House Duterte crossed the Rubicon.

Duterte wanted Sara to replace Marcos pronto. House Duterte fomented desta-

bilisation to agitate the masses while it surreptitiously recruited the military for its coup d’état. *Chaos is a ladder*. Duterte admits chatting with retired soldiers but denies hand in hatching a putsch. However, Marcos’s top commander revealed that “a group of retired military officers” were coaxing active military personnel to overthrow Marcos. Given Duterte’s penchant for violence, House Marcos recognised this as an existential threat. Duterte wanted to incite an open rebellion which would plunge the country into a civil war. Marcos resolved to lop the head of the allegorical snake. This is where the ICC came in.

The ICC has been tailing Duterte since 2018 after he was repeatedly warned about his drug war. House Duterte’s top brass, including Sara, were all under ICC’s crosshairs. Duterte thought himself untouchable. He withdrew the Philippines from the ICC that year, hoping to evade scrutiny. But Marcos hung a thread of horsehair over Duterte’s head. His proverbial Sword of Damocles had just come into play.

Marcos said before that ICC envoys can only visit the Philippines as tourists. But in late 2023, Marcos quietly allowed the bloodhounds in, leading them to Duterte’s trail of gore, scaling every inch of his war on drugs. The surprising *démarche* was evident when Marcos’s allies suddenly called for the government’s cooperation with the ICC. But, publicly, Marcos maintained the ICC had lost its authority over the Philippines. In the months leading to Duterte’s arrest, the government announced that it would not hinder Interpol from serving the ICC warrant—priming the nation for the climactic battle royal.



“You have to *kill* me to bring me to The Hague.”

When Duterte heard about an impending ICC arrest, his knee-jerk reaction was to abscond to China. On 6 March, he scampered from Davao City Airport, under the cover of the night, via Philippine Airlines (PR 2829). Duterte’s henchman and *Tokhang* executioner-in-chief received intel on an ICC arrest warrant, presumably on 7 March. That day, Duterte boarded an early morning flight (CX 912) to Hong Kong. Duterte’s retinue comprises his partner and close advisers of generals and politicians. He was reminded how Marcos’s pawns had captured House Duterte’s slippery bishop, imprisoned for multiple sex crime charges. This was after Marcos had cleansed pro-Duterte constables from the rank and file of the Davao police division. Duterte is vulnerable, even in his own stamping ground.

“You have to *kill* me to bring me to The Hague.”

Perhaps this was Duterte's last hurrah: savouring his final gulps of freedom or a foot in the door to a life on the run. But in November 2024, Duterte was the same man who taunted the ICC to “hurry up” before he kicked the bucket. Yet, he still fled with an excuse to attend a Thanksgiving rally for Filipino expats.

March 11, a napping Marcos received the Interpol's red notice at three in the morning, an ungodly hour. D-day had dawned before sunrise in Manila. Marcos had been preparing the arrest since January, named “Oplan *Tugis* (Pursuit).” At 6:30 AM (PHT), he quickly convened his *small council*. The few he trusted were the Interior and Defense secretaries and Marcos's spy chief, who maintained cordial ties with Duterte. On 10 March, a day before the arrest, Marcos's general unleashed his two battalions, a “7,000-strong force” report says, to await for Duterte. It was a decoy deliberately leaked to the press for a “psychological warfare” to spook Duterte from landing in his bailiwick of Davao. Police downplayed it as a simulation exercise (SimEx) as part of its larger ploy. The non-event had dissuaded Duterte from his Southern barony, leading him to Marcos's trap, as we shall see shortly.

The “Master of Whisperers” had planted a mole inside Duterte's close circle, shadowing them in Hong Kong. House Duterte was torn between two choices: to leave or stay. Hong Kong is an island in Southern China: could Duterte have chosen his own Napoleonic Elba? However, it was said that Xi Jinping, Duterte's bosom friend, may not be too eager harbouring a renowned fugitive in his yard. An elite Hong Kong police squad was deployed to the hotel where Duterte had checked in. At his supporters' rally in Southorn Stadium (March 9), Duterte shared that he was told by Hong Kong authorities to refrain from discussing politics. China is still an Interpol member. By sheltering Duterte, Beijing risks its working relationship with Interpol when it pursues its own Chinese fugitives abroad with the latter's resources. Duterte sought sanctuary from the Dragon but was declined. House Duterte faces another dilemma.

In a three-day sojourn in Hong Kong, Duterte deliberated on his options, skedaddling or calling Marcos's bluff. Supposedly, House Duterte was fed with reliable intel, but they couldn't determine whether it was another Marcosian subterfuge. Marcos's cordon sanitaire made it difficult for them to surmise if there was any arrest warrant at all. Their propagandists kept insisting it was all “fake news.” One of Duterte's sons posted a message online, hinting at their doubts. Duterte's lawyers advised him to head to the Chinese hills while the children reasoned otherwise. Self-exile is political hara-kiri. The spymaster's *little birds* had crooned: Duterte's children prevailed, and the rest is history. On 11 March, Duterte departed Hong Kong at exactly 7:45 AM (HKT/PHT). Destination: Manila.

Despite his gentle demeanour, Marcos is a calculating man. He was reared in the halls of power, the Palace protégé of his deposed autocratic father. He is a self-confessed Machiavellian. The “Marcos Restoration” in 2022 was the fruit of their long game after years as a global pariah. He aimed to redeem House Marcos from its inglorious despotic reputation by embracing democratic reformism. He stutters in extemporaneous talk, unlike his blathering but charismatic foe. But his feigned meekness is misleading, a foible that his macho opponent underestimated by magnitude. In the hour of reckoning, Marcos, dubbed by fans as the “Tiger of the North,” drew his feline claws. Duterte's arrest was cold and methodical. ICC arrests often take years, if they occur at all, but Marcos seized the vengeful firebrand within a day. Converging political will and interest can do wonders for an able democrat.

On the morning of March 11, news of Duterte's imminent arrest was abuzz. The earliest public scoop I could find was around 8:20 AM (PHT). At this time, Duterte is currently above the South China Sea, while the Manila Airport is swarming with cops. From the date ICC had issued its warrant, Duterte had been stalked by four Filipino agents in Hong Kong. They planned to arrest him there, but Hong Kong authorities refused to cooperate.

Instead, Chinese police escorted Duterte to ensure that he would leave. Duterte's closing attempt at self-preservation was through deception. He tried to conceal his movement by booking five flights in a row. But the ruse was in vain. By the time he had landed, they had met him at the tube and read him his rights.

“A warrant of arrest? You will just have to *kill* me if I refuse,” said the defiant Duterte, standing on the cabin's aisle of Cathay Pacific aircraft. When he realised his fatal blunder, Marcos had backed him into a corner.

He was hauled off to the nearby Villamor Airbase. There was little fanfare, no perp-walk, virtually a media blackout. It was done to prevent mass outcry from his base. Even now, Duterte maintains a passionate following—a personality cult. He would have played the crowd like a fiddle if the pressmen were around. Early information mainly came from Duterte's daughter, posting Instagram stories about the event. Once the affair was over, we learned more.

His moments of petty resistance came when they asked for his fingerprints, questioning the procedure's legality. Duterte was given a moment to read his warrant of arrest; he then relented. All of these were recorded in police body cams. When the time came for Duterte to go, the room was flooded with a special police unit, all women, to flush Duterte out. His partner and daughter hurled profanity-laden invectives at the arresting officers, but the geriatric Duterte capitulated—accepting the hammer to fall.

At around 4 PM (PHT), Duterte's minions tried to impede the arrest through the Supreme Court, but such is *fait accompli*. The appeal turned moot and academic before the Magistrates were even called into session. At 11 PM (PHT), Duterte was flown to Dubai with a five-hour layover. Word from the grapevine is that they pondered to escape and seek asylum at this juncture. But Duterte had a change of heart. A few minutes from touchdown to Rotterdam, a gloomy Duterte delivered his “*Mi Ultimo Adios* (My Last Farewell),”

claiming he accepted his destiny. In his speech in Hong Kong, he wanted to be remembered like José Rizal—a Philippine national hero.

Marcos justified Duterte's arrest, saying his duty was to uphold the rule of law. But in the past, he reiterated that ICC overtures will not be entertained, a striking volte-face. His explanation was the country's commitment to the Interpol. The ICC retains residual jurisdiction over crimes committed before the withdrawal, in years the Philippines was a member (2011-2019), as is indicated in the warrant. After Duterte was jetted off, Marcos privately told his *small council*: "There's no reason to celebrate." A memory came to the fore, a déjà vu, when they were whisked away to Guam by the Americans in 1986, beginning their exile some forty-odd years ago. But now, he had every reason to celebrate, for justice and politics at least. It was a carefully calibrated conquest; a great House was vanquished. And *now the rains weep o'er his hall, and not a soul to hear*—that garrulous Lord of Castamere.

On 14 March, Duterte appeared before the ICC. He was not Duterte cursing the Pope, bad-mouthing Obama, and blaspheming God. He's no longer "the Punisher" that terrorised the streets of Davao. He answered the Judge's question in a quavering voice like a kid about to get caned. Machismo no more. He is naked with defeat; he is out of his element. The ICC French translator mispronounced his name, the dreaded "Du-ter-te" reduced to "Doo-turd." How the mighty have fallen. Rodrigo Duterte, the sexist macho-fascist who told soldiers to shoot female rebels in their vaginas, sat before three women Judges—holding his fate to the gavel. Poetic justice, indeed.

Sara followed her father to The Hague, and at the time of writing, she was still there, forming a defence team led by a British-Israeli Barrister. While Duterte languishes overseas, House Marcos besieges his remaining stronghold. When Sara returns, an impeachment trial and dozens of criminal charges await her. A senatorial election looms in May, the coda to this royal rumble. House Duterte is in

tatters, worse for wear. Greed for guns, goons and gold was their hamartia. From allies to adversaries, their joust with House Marcos left a ruinous blow. They can strive to recover their status, but the vigilant and victorious House of Marcos will keep the gates guarded.

When the ICC renders its guilty verdict, the result will not be up for debate that Duterte fanatics can contend online. The blood-soaked reign of Rodrigo Roa Duterte will simply be a matter of fact. His name is numbered with the likes of Hitler. After all, Duterte compared his drug war to the Third Reich's genocide against European Jews. He would be "happy to slaughter" drug addicts as the Nazis relished in their Holocaust. And lest we forget, Duterte advised Netanyahu to flatten Gaza into "the biggest cemetery in the world." Mad minds think alike. The House of Duterte was laid low, forever mired in the concern of history. We were shown that, in the end, Power is the most addictive drug of all.

Sic semper tyrannis

La Pietà: An artistic rendition of Jennilyn Olayres cradling the dead body of her partner, Michael Siaron, who was gunned down by unidentified culprits in July 2016—the launch of Rodrigo Duterte's brutal war on drugs. For all the victims of extrajudicial killings, may justice prevail.



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Porn as Fantasy as Sex as Hell

A Pedagogical Inquiry Into How We Like to Fuck



BAILEY LARKIN (SHE/THEY)

If you had never learned what love is, would you even want it? This question shook me the first time I heard it asked. Because no, I don't think I would.

Maybe I'd want affection, maybe I'd want to be cared for. I might want someone to share music with, to tell me that I look pretty and to tell them the same — I might want a friend, who maybe I kiss a bit, maybe I hold hands with, maybe I, you know, do other shit with, but I don't know if I would want love.

Because love is a construction, it's not just a feeling. It's a label that we apply to a specific set of hopes, practices, and assumptions of something that loosely resembles closeness, and a very un-specific, widely defined closeness at that.

And the same can be said about sex.

Imagine you're some isolated monk, and some hot lady or hot guy or hot fucking whoever comes up to you and takes all their clothes off, and they say "*oh, fuck me, do me, screw me and woo me*" — you're probably just gonna be confused.

Because you might not know what sex is, and even if you knew about it conceptually, you'd hardly know about it in practice. It would be, at best, an abstracted, largely symbolic, representation of what sex might be — not any kind of reality.

And we're all born like that. Hopelessly, or blissfully, unaware of what it means to fuck.

But now, more than ever before in human history, we can "learn," about sex via voyeuristic observation — since pornography, the predominant subject of this lovely piece of writing, is more available than it has been since the dawn of time.

Between the commonality of personal devices, and the accessibility of Pornhub, AO3, fucking whatever, you're always just a couple clicks away from an orgasm — an enticing, yet potentially devastating reality.

Now, I'm gonna bring up some psychology before I continue, and, I'll warn you, this essay is about to get even more unsexy than it already was.

If you don't feel like reading about behavioural analysis, and how maybe you're not quite as intrinsically kinky as you think you are, then don't go on.

But if you'd like to (and I don't necessarily recommend that) then let's check in with Rene Girard.

Girard, a French philosopher, posited that human desire is rooted in mimesis — a fancy word for imitation. We see an action performed, and we want to imitate it and experience it for ourselves. This is, theoretically, a primary basis for human development.

Baby sees mum eating chicken, baby wants chicken. Baby sees dad watching TV, baby wants to watch TV. Baby hears a specific word, baby wants to use it to figure out what the hell it means, because this is how baby learns and grows.

We need to be intrigued, and we need to desire, before we can act — or else we'd have no reason to do basically anything, and everyone would be lifeless and/or stupid.

In conjunction with mimesis is the concept of mimetic rivalry, an addition to the theory that suggests that there's a jealousy involved in watching, or hearing of, someone do something that we ourselves don't partake in — and this jealousy, too, drives human behaviour.

But there's a problem with this.

A big one.

In order for that desire to remain consistent, we must constantly have a reference point for that which we do not have — a sort of "other," acting upon a subject, object, or experience, that drives us to continue challenging our own selfhood.

So if you recover from one jealousy, you adopt a different one — or find someone else to be jealous of, who's already performing that initial thing you desired, just in a different way.

You see where I'm going with this?

Because if you open the front page of any sort of pornographic distributor, written, audial or visual, you'll be walking into Freud's wet dream.

Thirst, thirst as far as the eye can see — for all variety of topics, all variety of characters, the majority of which would make your average sixteenth century peasant cling to his rosary and invoke the Mother

Mary.

And there's a reason for this — and it all has to do with taboo.

Michel Foucault, another French philosopher, and a renowned historian/pervert, asserted that taboo is a response to any established social order — that sexual deviance as a whole is a way of saying fuck you to the status quo.

Go back to the Victorian era, and the sexiest thing you could find in pornography was a priest or nun doing the dirty, because that was just about the crudest thing imaginable at the time. Go back to the French revolution, and you'd find poorly drawn images of Mary Antoinette with her shirt off, because she was a renowned, and equally hated figure of political authority — an "untouchable."

In essence, taboo is a stab at social standing and politeness.

So, what's happened in the past few decades is that humans have begun building a new collective taboo, based upon the millions of images, videos, stories, and other erotic mediums that are uploaded online each year.

We get filthier, and filthier, and filthier, because we're always in a state of mimetic rivalry, wanting new experience, wanting more; and our taboo is always developing based on what's considered socially appropriate — which, as porn grows more commonplace, and the average consumer becomes desensitised to pre-existing social perversions, also shifts.

So, porn gets dirtier, darker, and more disturbing — and ultimately, more and more antisocial as time goes by.

And I'm not a puritan, don't get me wrong. I don't hate porn, I don't hate fetishes, I don't hate weird sex — do whatever the fuck you want, so long as it's good for all involved.

But what I'm trying to assert here is that we're building up a Library of Alexandria when it comes to pornography, and that the library hasn't been cleaned out in a long time — so the pornscape grows, and grows, and grows, to one hectic beast of excess.

ESSAY

Because we aren't just getting off to priests or political figures anymore. Just open any distributive platform and look at the most popular results.

We get off to illusionary incest. We get off to vulnerable minorities. We get off to imitations, or direct examples, of violence, blurred consent, and verbal and physical degradation.

So, with imitative behavioural theory in mind, this poses a massive problem.

I'm sure plenty of you who've gotten this far might know what I'm about to say — but I'll assert here that the following passage may be triggering.

Since we learn how to perform sexually by observ-

ing, and by partaking, an antisocial sexual society produces undesirable sexual outcomes.

Because just how many of you have done something in bed that you didn't really want to?

Pandered to some specific fetish, played a certain role, been treated in some way you didn't really like — and did this feel like sex, or did it feel like something else? A stab at a fantasy, something you never would have engaged with in the first place had the other person not suggested it?

And, simultaneously, how many of you have asked for something in bed, but not known why? Maybe you developed some kink, or requested some specific act because you saw it performed once and

thought, huh, alright, let's give that a go — and how did it feel? What pleasure did you gain from it?

And I'll state it assuredly, taboo can be appealing. It can be fulfilling. And for those who have suffered sexually, it can be healing — so I don't want to discredit any of these outcomes.

But I think we need to be critical of what we ingest, what we enact, and perhaps most importantly, what we imitate; because porn isn't sex, it's socially constructed fantasy.

And when we engage with fantasy, we need to know what story it is that we're trying to tell — and what that means for those who read it.

ARTS

Interrogating the right to pornography (yes you read that correctly)

C V (SHE/HER)

As our news article covered in more detail, Sabrina Carpenter asked the internet a very simple question, “Have you ever tried this one?” Evidently for some people, the only answer is a resounding *no*. And not only do they have no interest in trying, but they're knee-bent on making sure no one else gives [REDACTED] a try too. [REDACTED] can mean many things in this context but given that this issue's theme is about sex and drugs, I'm relatively certain you already have a good idea. Don't worry, dear *innocent* reader, I won't *punish* you for leaving your brain in the gutter *this time*.

All this to say, the debate around obscenity, censorship standards and the liberal freedom of expression remains alive and well today. Even if the internet has come a long way from the reactionary days of Miley Cyrus' ‘Wrecking Ball’, the overwhelming influx of scorned viewers, crying “O-B-S-C-E-N-E” following Sabrina Carpenter's unapologetically provocative stage

performance at London's O2, suggests otherwise. In typical absurdly paradoxical fashion, society has simultaneously progressed and regressed regarding popular views on obscenity—and in particular—the question of how much obscene content we can, and in fact should, justifiably tolerate.

Prominent American radical feminist writer and activist Andrea Dworkin for example, fiercely rejects pornography and characterises its regulation as a civil rights issue for women. She adheres to the view that pornography openly portrays extreme violence and problematically normalises the degradation of women. Dworkin accuses free speech laws of shielding the porn industry and its complicit institutional partners from public scrutiny, thereby perpetuating mass harms against women.

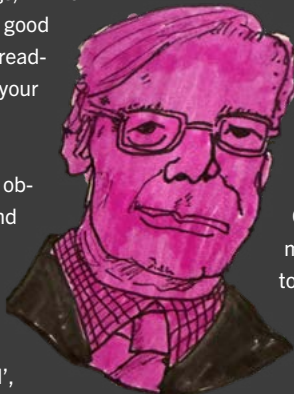
Her argument draws attention to the strong correlation between pornography consumption among male offenders and corresponding violent sex crimes against women. On a broader scale, Andrea Dworkin makes a case for the net losses incurred to society, when pornography continues to reinforce systemic patriarchal attitudes which treats female subjugation as not only desirable, but irresistibly sexy.

On the other side of the spectrum, we have re-

nowned legal philosophers like Ronald Dworkin (their last name might be the singular thing they have in common) leaning towards a more classic liberal approach, in that government should not police morality unless substantial harm is caused. He errs on the side of protecting individual freedoms, even if this concerns the right to consuming obscene content, having emphasised that any state censorship typically establishes a dangerous precedent for prohibiting other forms of free expression. Ronald Dworkin remarks that people reserve the right not to be punished or constrained simply because other people might doubt their personal moral choices. And considering our collective history of treating deviant behaviour with banal moral disgust, merely by virtue of such conduct being *different*, perhaps there is true force in what Ronald Dworkin suggests.

But within this ideological battle between the Dworkin's, I presume most people would be hard-pressed to easily determine where on the spectrum of “woefully obscene to chronically sheltered” they personally land. It's no coincidence that we've observed a hostile return of paternalistic censorship over the years with the rise of book bans and the relentless streak of divisive Trump policies.

Perhaps the next time you find yourself opening incognito mode, you can give weighing up the pro's and con's a try too.



newbloodpop Interview

Brad Novak is one of New Zealand's most internationally recognised artists, whose urban art pieces have hung in galleries overseas. He is the first artist in NZ's history to exhibit with global pop and street art superstars such as [Andy Warhol](#), [Keith Haring](#), [Brainwash](#) and [BANKSY](#) (Toronto, 2015).

Brad has carved out perhaps one of the most unconventional yet successful careers, splitting his time between being a Public Health Medicine Specialist and a Professional Artist. Over the summer, I met with him to discuss both his careers and his advice for young creatives. Craccum and I would like to thank him for his generosity and for opening up about his art journey. Follow his art on Instagram [@newbloodpop](#).

What colour are you feeling today?

It's grey outside today, but I'm feeling a cool blue, it's my favourite colour!

What was the last album you listened to?

We don't tend to listen to full albums that much anymore, do we? [Laughs] I think the last one would have been [The Car by The Arctic Monkeys](#). It's a breakaway from their previous style, but it's awesome.

Favourite restaurant?

I love [Wagamamas](#). Sadly, the Auckland one closed down. I got introduced to it when I lived in the UK. It's Asian fusion, very relaxed, and yum.

How does a doctor end up as an artist?

Well, how long have you got... that is an unusual story!

I guess, a good place to start is me as a young teen at [Auckland Grammar School](#) (AGS) in the late 80s and early 90s. I loved my time there, and the school taught me to work hard! I was deemed an "academic" and was streamed into the top class. Back then, AGS, unfortunately, had limited subject choices for the A stream, so I literally couldn't take art, design, or graphics. I was on the proverbial 'achievement train' doing physics, Latin, sports and stuff, and I remember coming to the end of 7th form and having no idea what I wanted to do after school. All my classmates were going to be doctors or lawyers, so even though I lacked specific career aspirations, I thought it'd be smart to keep my options open. I applied for and got into medical school. So, it might sound crazy but I kind of fell into medicine as a career.



Being a junior doctor at 22 years of age was an interesting experience to say the least, and that's where life can open exciting new doors when you least expect it. My girlfriend at the time (now my wife) wanted to do an OE. After 2 years working in hospitals, and still lacking career aspirations, I was up for that!!

This is where happenstance takes over. Fortunately, Katrina, who is a primary school teacher, had studied the different genres of art to teach kids. At that time, I was incredibly naive about art. I thought good art had to be realism. One day, fed up with my narrow-minded thinking, she took me to the [Tate Modern Art Gallery](#) (in London) to start my creative education.

That visit was like a lightning strike, awakening my inner artist. I spent 2 hours discounting the quality of art, saying, "That's crap, I could do that" and Katrina keep repeating "But you didn't do it, Brad". Finally, I came across an artwork in which I saw that art can be an idea, not just a pretty picture. My enthusiasm must have been obvious, as Katrina then basically challenged me to become an artist! [Laughed]

I owe Katrina a lot! It's ironic that the artists I was ignorant of then ended up becoming some of my major influences over the course of my art career so far (Warhol, Banksy, [Basquiat](#))!

So, how did you learn how to make art?

I'm entirely self-taught. It began with photography on my OE (2000-2002), as we were doing heaps of travelling. This helped me learn about composition and seeing the world with an artistic eye. It was an invigorating exploratory period.

I started painting on my return to NZ around 2003.

But a pivotal moment happened in 2008, when I wanted to get some prints of my works created. I found this place [\[Artrite Screen Printing\]](#). Glenn Taylor (the director) and his team are real hidden gems of the New Zealand art world. They do screenprints with some of the best proponents of art here, like [Michael Smither](#), [Max Gimblett](#) and [Karl Maughan](#), amongst others. I now have my studio in their factory, which is amazing creatively. I'm intimately involved in the making of my screenprints. It's a beautiful craft and sits alongside my painting practice like a well-loved friend.

Did your medical skills ever come in handy doing art?

Ha. Not at all. Unfortunately, there's not much room for creativity in clinical medicine. Although, I was fortunate to be introduced to Public Health Medicine during my OE and upon return to NZ I started to specialise in that branch of medicine. 'Public Health' deals with much more than individual disease. It strives to tackle health in society more broadly. Its evidence based, but from my perspective there's much more room to bring your own personality and interests into the actual practice. I guess it's the most creative branch of medicine e.g. there's not only one prescribed way to make society healthier.

I'm grateful to still be practicing (public health) medicine part-time, as it's part of who I am. I've built that into my art practice at times too e.g. using medical iconography, like the Caduceus or Snellen eye chart, in my work. The "blood" in my moniker "New Blood Pop" references the vitality of life.

Overall, it's been an interesting, and not always easy, journey finding my true authentic identity. Am I just Dr Novak? Or Brad, who is an artist, too? What does it mean to live a creative life? I'm excited to still be asking myself those questions to this day!!

What advice do you have for young people who have a creative hobby and would like to do it as part of their career eventually, like you did?

This advice is for young people in general, not just those with a passion for creating. If you're not sure what to do, take your time. We rush into decisions at a young age (I certainly did) and sometimes it's a process to get to know yourself and find what really excites you.

I never believed I'd have a career that has provided me with so much joy and satisfaction as I have now. That's not to say that being an artist is "all roses". Like any career there are challenges. But I feel it can be as 'rosy' as any career can be. Balancing two careers also has its challenges, but it can be done if you want it to work!

Because of my journey, I'm also a big advocate for artists to define success in ways that work for them. There's this romantic idea that you must be a full-time artist to be successful. I completely disagree with this premise. I consider dual careers as a bonus. Purely from a financial point of view, having another source of income (no matter where it's from) can take the pressure off your creating. Not having to worry about how much work you sell, or don't sell, has the wonderful side effect of helping you create more authentic art. You can create pieces that you love, not that you think other people might like.

Also, I believe, nobody can define whether you are an artist or not. You can be an artist and never show your work to anyone (although I do see major bonuses from encouraging yourself to take that step). You can be an artist whether you sell work or not, and you can still be an artist even if you aren't currently creating. Being an artist is a way of life, self-defined by each person. Don't let anyone ever put you in a box to try to limit you!

Your portraiture shows clear inspiration from pop artists like Andy Warhol. Who are some other artists who have influenced your style?

Aside from Andy Warhol, other pop artists from the UK and US in the '60s inspired me (e.g. [Lichtenstein](#)). More recent artists, such as [Shepard Fairey](#) (Obey Giant) and Banksy, are major inspirations. I look up to several senior artists in New Zealand as well, like Michael Smither and Max Gimblett. I was fortunate enough to be asked by Michael to accompany him in a two-person portraiture show. His first-ever show of this kind in his long and distinguished career. I still pinch myself that that happened.

I was also grateful to meet Max Gimblett in New York around 2009. That was a key point in my career. Katrina and I spent many hours with him in his studio, and at dinner at this local Italian restaurant afterwards.

During that visit, Max said to me "Brad, you are a real artist". You can't under-estimate how hearing something like this, from someone you respect, can literally help change the course of your life.

Do you have any art hanging in your house? If so, what kind?

Definitely. A little of my own work, but I have a lot of art gifted, swapped, or bought from friends who are artists as well. I've got work by [Ben Frost](#), Copyright and [RYCA](#) amongst others. Katrina and I have similar tastes, but we also buy work that just speaks to us individually too.

In such a globalised world, much of our pop and urban culture here in Aotearoa is imported. How does your Kiwi identity interact with your art?

Many of us Kiwis are outward-looking, I believe. We love to travel and learn about other cultures. Personally, I consider myself an "artist based in New Zealand" rather than a "New Zealand artist". I've always been heavily influenced by international artists and international pop culture. Showing with galleries in the UK, Canada and the USA (such as [Vertical Gallery](#) in Chicago) has made me realise that the world is smaller than we think.

Your ongoing and popular 'DIGITAL DILEMMA' series explores the encroachment of technology on our lives. What are your thoughts on the recent rise of AI art?

I grew up in the generation before smartphones and the internet. My "Digital Dilemma" series is trying to challenge and remind viewers about how much the world has changed.

You'll notice one eye on my portraits often has a digital lens over it, and the other eye doesn't. This is to remind us that we can't just continue seeing the world through technology, that we must keep engaging with the "real world" offline, and look through the other eye so to speak. If not for the sake of this generation, then for the sake of generations to come...AI is likely going to be very disruptive to many things that we take for granted. There will be many positives, but I think there'll also be job losses. I'm hopeful that humanity will continue to adapt and create more rewarding jobs. It'd be great if AI gave people more time to follow more creative and spiritual pursuits... but, we will see if I'm showing some naivety there.

Regarding AI in the art world, I see issues that AI can "train" on images without credit or consent being given. I think being transparent about your inspirations is important as an artist, ethically. I think AI will need to be regulated in some way.



"If you'd told me that I'd have solo shows with top galleries overseas 20 years ago, I'd never have believed you."

I don't want "the Terminator" to happen in real life either! [Laughs]

How do iconic celebrities play into your works? What is the selection process like, and how do you choose the photos on which to base your portraits?

Urban Pop Art is about making potentially high-brow art off low-brow everyday things. Andy Warhol used images of famous people from newspapers, which caused a stir back in the 1960s. For me, celebrities are a metaphor, a generic but easily recognisable subject which I can create distinctive commentary around (such as the Digital Dilemma, and my Hybrids series which deals with "identity"). There are important messages in my work if someone is prepared to engage past the superficial.

I choose subjects based on two main criteria: they must be thought-provoking, or people I personally respect. For example, I've utilised Queen Elizabeth for over a decade in my work, because she's been so ever-present in Western society, and technology has changed so rapidly over her lifetime. Alternatively, I've painted Audrey Hepburn many times. She was not just a beautiful actor but also a wonderful humanitarian who spoke multiple languages. Much of my work focuses on heroes from my youth. I'm a pop culture geek, who grew up on the original Star Wars movies, so icons like Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher (for example) feature regularly.

Do you ever encounter copyright issues using IPs like Star Wars and Marvel in your pieces?

Before I was a doctor or an artist, I was a Dungeons & Dragons playing geek. [Laughs] I liked these things before they were cool or mainstream. Regarding copyright, I haven't had any issues. I think you're okay if your work is authentic, transformative, and you're open about the source material. You don't want to breach any merchandising or licensing agreements. Warhol paved the way, and I am only one of many artists, worldwide, following in his footsteps.

Have you met any of the subjects of your art? Do you know if any have seen it?

Wow, I wish I'd met Prince or David Bowie!!! Does it count that I saw Prince in his last NZ concert ever?

One of my early works from the Hybrid series in 2009 was based on the Reservoir Dogs movie poster. It featured the guys walking in the black suits but with NZ birds' heads topping their bodies. Around that time, the movie's director, Quentin Tarantino, came to NZ for a premiere, and during that trip, he acquired a couple of my "Reservoir Dogs" screenprints.



He gave one to his muse, the actor and stuntwoman Zoe Bell. But he also signed one for me, with the message "Love the birds. Good on ya, Brad". There's no better endorsement for that work I'd rather receive!

You've recently done a series of painted flowers against your signature backdrop. Does this signal a new direction?

Yes, and no. I've used the iconography of flowers in the backgrounds of my work for many years. But, more recently, after my father John passed away, I've featured them more centrally to honour him since he was a big gardener. I'm of the opinion that your life should feed into your art, so for me my art is a bit like a diary of my life.



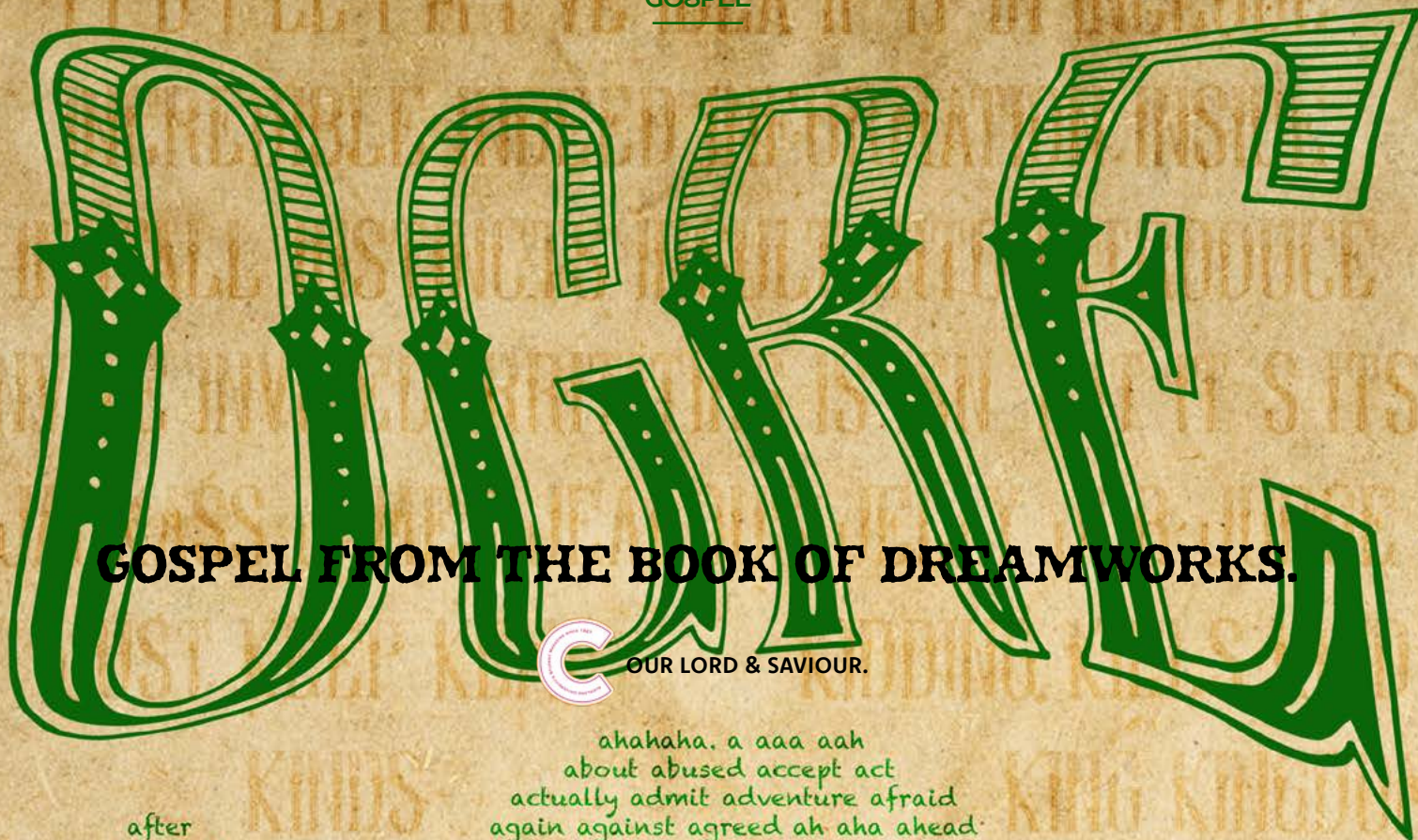
Last, is there anything you want to plug or shout out to our readers? How can we support your work?

Don't give up! You can still live a semi-conventional life and create art too. You can define what success looks like. I love the autonomy my art career provides. I can work on what I want, when I want, where I want, and with whom I want. It can be so rewarding. Finally, take time to work on yourself; a creative life is a marathon not a sprint. It's a very worthwhile journey!

You can check out my art on my Instagram or my website at www.newbloodpop.com. Feel free to DM me if you want to chat @newbloodpop.



Interview by Lewis Matheson Creed.
All images and art provided by New Blood Pop.



GOSPEL FROM THE BOOK OF DREAMWORKS.

OUR LORD & SAVIOUR.

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SSRIS

Ngā Pire Āwangawanga



WHIU

Ngā Painga me Ngā Tino Mate o te SSRI

Hei timata, he aha tēnei mea te SSRI's? Ko te 'selective serotonin receptor inhibitor' he momo rongoā Pākeha e whakaroatia te tia o te serotonin e whakaawetia i te tinana. Mō wētahi tāngata, nā te tere o ngā paerongo (receptor) e tangohia ana i te serotonin, kāre e tāea te tino rongo i ngā painga o taua taiaki (hormone). Anā, ka puta mai te rongoā nei.

Kia tika te kōrero, he uruparenga hoki tā te kai i ngā SSRI. He mahi tā te serotonin ki te pūnaha ioio me te hinengaro, te pūnaha toto, te pūnaha nakunaku kai, te pūnaha taiaki, tērā ētahi atu hoki. Nā konā, e kitea noatia ana i te serotonin e whakararu i te nuinga o tōu tinana. Pērā ki tōu puku, ōu aronganui, tōu āhua moe, tōu taumaha, tōu paemahana hoki. Me tino whiria te tangata mēnā he whaihua kē ake ngā painga o wēnei pire i ngā hē. Ēngari, he ahurei ia tāngata — tē tāea te mōhio i tōu uruparenga i mua ake i te kai.

Ngā Whakaaro Papā me te Ngākauruatanga

He tokomaha ngā tāngata — ngā mea mōhio, ngā mea rorohipi hoki — kua wānanga mō te kai i te pire. Ki ngā rorohipi, he ngoikoretanga kai roto i tēnei momo āwhina. Nō te hurihuringa, ka mārama ahau ko tēnei taku māharahara. Kua paitinitia i au wēnei whakaaro ko te pire he mea tinihanga, he mea whakaingoatia i te tangata rororori, he mea e paranitia i te koretake. Ēngari koena te pai o te kōrero me ngā tāngata tino māhorahora. He mea tino whakamāharo te kite i ngā momo tāngata e ran-

gona i te hinengaro tino pōkikī (chaotic). He mea whakahāngaitia i ngā whakaaro, he momo turupou i ngā wā pouri, he mea whakamana i te tangata.

Anō hoki, kei reira ētahi tohenga mō te rongoā: kāre wēnei pire i te mea taketake. Ki ahau nei, he tino hononga tā te hauora o te tangata me tāna ake whenua. Koena te mātāpuna o ngā mea whakaora tāngata: te wai hei hīkina i te tapu, ngā otaota hei hanga rongoā, te whakatinanatanga hoki o a mātou nei atua. I pū mai wēnei pire i te whakaaro Pākeha me te taiwhanga pūtaiao, ā, koenei tētahi o ngā tino tauārai e mawehe ana i a tātou me te hauora.

Ngā mea kua Pūkekotia Ahau

Nā te pēhi o ngā raruraru kai (disordered eating) ahau i toro atu ki a UHCS kia whai āwhina mō tēnei āhuatanga. Tekau mēneti noa iho te roroa o tā māua kōrero. Kātahi, i whakamārama mai te tākuta nei he wāhi whakaaro aewa tōku mähunga. Ko te raruraru kai te hua o ngā momo whakaaro e rongona ahau, ā, ka whakamauritia e te kai i ahau.

Ki ahau nei, ko aku whakaaro me aku aronganui ngā mea e rongona te iwi whānui. Kua mahue ahau i te pahi — ko te crash out te whakautu, nē? Te whakatakoto tōku ara rerenga kia kore e whakahōhā i aku hoa — ka mahi tatou katoa nē? Nā te tino taumaha o te mahi, ka hūhē ahau — ēngari ko tērā te āhuatanga o te tauira... nē? E ai ki te kōrero o tēnei tākuta, kāo.

Nā konā, i tūtohutia a ia he SSRI māku. He āhuatanga tātā aku uruparenga ki ngā pire nei. Mō te roanga o te rā, kai te harotu ahau i muri i te kai i ngā pire. I te pō, tērā te ohoroa e tatari ana mōku.

Ēngari ngā painga?! BRO. Ki au nei, he momo tau ārai kua whakatūria i waenga i ahau me te maurirere. E tāea tonu ahau te rongo i te ahotea (stress), ēngari kāre ka tae ki te taumata o te hauā mau tonu (immobility).

Ko tāku whakataunga, he nawhe te rongoā mō Te Ao Māori. Ēngari me whai whakaaro hoki tātou katoa mō te horopaki o te ao nei: Nā te Pākeha rawa o ngā whakaaro, ngā tikanga, te arotahi hoki ka pēhia a mātou. Nō reira, ki ngā wāhi e whakamāori tonu ana, me whakamahia i ngā rauemi kei mua i a mātou. Anō hoki, nā te whakawhiti kōrero e whakanoa i tēnei mea te tautokona i ngā āhuatanga o te hinengaro. He mea e whakapuakina i ngā kōrero hangarau, ēngari me tino whai wāhi ngā kōrero pono kia hīkina te tapu mai i tēnei kaupapa kōrero.

Ko taku whakaaro whakamutunga: Kia tūpato e te iwi — kua whakahoua te tangata nei i wēnei pire! Nōku te ao!



1. Ringlets - Heavenly Wheel [NZ]
2. Swallow the Rat - Face Unpopular [NZ]
3. Memory Foam - Hangry (Sushi Train) [NZ]
4. Voom - I Love You Girl [NZ]
5. Tom Lark - Fuselage [NZ]
6. Vera Ellen - sangria (demo) [NZ]
7. Transistors - Country Music [NZ]
8. Mammalien - I Don't Want to Live on This Planet Anymore [NZ]
9. MĀ - DECAY [NZ]
10. Grecco Romank - Bootlicker (Body Beat Ritual Remix) [NZ]



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2025 Auckland Arts Festival in Review



AUCKLAND ARTS FESTIVAL

BE
SURE
NOT
TO MISS
NEXT YEAR'S
AUCKLAND
ARTS FESTIVAL!



SMASHED – THE NIGHTCAP

Music is the ultimate lubricant!

TIM EVANS | THEY/THEM
@TIMOTHYRAEVANS

The glitziest, sexiest and most outrageous gig of the Auckland Arts Festival: *SMASHED - The Nightcap*. This show quite literally had everything you want and more. It'd be enough to scare your dad and get your mother properly sloshed on a weeknight. It'd be enough to have you wondering, why can't I do the splits 3 meters in the air hanging from a rope?

The show had 5 leading showgirls, all of whom are both stunningly gorgeous and extremely charismatic, plus our show master Victoria Falconer (known as Daddy for the duration of the show, of course). Through the expert art of circus and burlesque, the performers bought us the best of southern comedy and get you in on all the fun.

Elektra Shock was probably the highlight of my night. Her number had her dancing all around the tent, even right back in the booths where people are absolutely hiding from being involved in audience participation. She kicked, twirled, and burpee-d her way around the stage, flirting with everyone in eyesight and choosing a devilishly handsome 30-something to join her for aerobics on stage.



SIX THE MUSICAL

*Divorced, Beheaded, Died,
Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*

ROSE TAYLOR-MEADE

SIX the Musical presents King Henry VIII's six wives reimagined as a modern pop group, retelling their story within the context of modern dating and relationships as they frivolously compete with one another to be the leading lady. The show was written in such a way it was a clever fusion of pop concert and musical theatre, the music and queens themselves being based on real pop artists.

There is a certain irony in being presented with a story about six English queens who all speak in slight Australian accents; I'm sure it's still a better option than American.

Along the same vein, there is also a fatalist irony in hearing the queens, who look very much alive and well, talking about their marriage to Henry and eventual deaths. Who doesn't love continuously referring back to that time you got beheaded?

The Queens, declaring themselves Ex-Wives in their opening number, fight back against the story that had always been told about them: the story that centered around the man they had married years ago. They unanimously reject the notion that their existence should be defined by their past relationship with the same man.

*"Listen up, let me tell you a story
A story that you think you've heard
before*

We know you know our names and



our fame and our faces
Know all about the glories and the
disgraces
I'm done 'cause all this time
I've been just one word in a stupid
rhyme
So I picked up a pen and a micro-
phone
History's about to get overthrown"

Through their individual musical numbers, they set the record straight on their own experiences and the trauma that came from it. By setting the record straight through their individual songs they reclaim their own personal agency. They are able to call out the misogynistic double standards and patriarchal structures that caused them harm.

Anne Boleyn's number Don't Lose Your Head highlights the double standards around sexuality. As Anne chides, Henry had multiple mistresses, "Just sleeping around, like, what the hell?" Yet when she does anything remotely similar, "maybe I'll flirt with a guy or three, just to make him jell," she becomes the second part of a rhyme.

Anne of Cleaves story in Get Down alludes to the common complaint men have of women not looking like their dating profile, after Henry swipes right. Despite matching, he still selfishly complains. As if it was her fault that portraits painted by male artists from the Middle Ages up to the Renaissance adhere to patriarchal beauty standards rather than accurately showing her likeness.

The song All You Wanna Do from Katherine Howard epitomises the idea of women as objects to please men.

"'Cause all you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby
Is touch me, love me, can't get
enough, see
All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby
Is please me, squeeze me, birds and
the bees me
Run your fingers through my hair
Tell me, I'm the fairest of the fair
Playtime's over
The only thing you wanna do is..."

We see the queens all collectively poke a little fun at the man that had caused them years' worth of trauma in the form of a subtle jibe about the size of Henry VIII's prick.

Before their final number they almost conclude that their story is what it is, but ultimately they have to remind themselves that this is their show and they're in control of their own story. And they fucking own it. They take back control as they rewrite their own stories. SIX creates an imaginative and dignifying alternate reality of what they would have become had they lived in a later time.

"It's the end of the show, of the
historemix
We switched up the flow and we
changed the prefix
Everybody knows that we used to be
six wives
But we want to say before we drop
the curtain
Nothing is for sure, nothing is for
certain
All that we know is that we used to be
six wives"



DELBERT ANDERSON QUARTET

Ya like indigenous jazz?

LEWIS MATHESON CREED (HE/HIM)

Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and Duke Ellington. These are three (of many) jazz deities with Native American ancestry. Jazz is a genre of music born from the chaotic convergence of colonising cultures from Europe, transported African traditions and indigenous practices of the United States. Often its practitioners have been impoverished, fringe and minoritized. Yet it has been and still is most definitely appropriated, and today sadly has an elitist reputation that precedes it for many. Nevertheless, jazz is an inherently spiritual fusion of sounds that is eclectic and conflicted, yet somehow it works: much like the great human improvisation we call society.

The Delbert Anderson's Quartet is a slick, expressive and captivating contemporary jazz band that I had the pleasure of experiencing at the Auckland Arts Festival. Band leader Anderson, who is of the Diné people (New Mexico) was insightful and

fascinating. He explained how he interpreted the music of his culture through jazz in consultation with elders, with the hopes of engaging the next generation. Parallels have been drawn between Anderson's style on the trumpet and Miles Davis. While I don't have the technical knowledge to comment on that, their set list covered a range of styles varying from more funk-esk pieces to nearing the ambient.

They just dropped a live album the other week which really captures the energy of their live performance. Criminally, they only have 50 monthly listeners on Spotify, so give them a spin and support indigenous music! I recommend their tracks *Iron Horse Gallup*, *To'tah* and *Opener*.

A worthy closing act for the last day of the Auckland Arts Festival. If you missed out this year, the festival will be back in 2026, so keep your eyes peeled for more amazing performances! And thank you to Auckland Arts Festival for their support of Crac-

ecstasy ecstasy

The highest highs last forever — until the lowest lows crash the party



PAIGE TURNER

It's a night like any other.

You're on the dancefloor getting it on, listening to the DJ playing a trance mix, getting real into it. Sweat streams down your body, in all the cracks and fissures where the sun doesn't shine; sweat sits in puddles on the bar counter, evaporating into the club air with every pounding of the bass. The low tones thrum in your ears, back and forth, back and forth, a ping-pong ball bouncing across a tiny court in all the cracks and fissures where the sun doesn't shine; sweat sits in puddles on the bar counter, evaporating into the club air with every pounding of the bass. The low tones thrum in your ears, back and forth, back and forth, a ping-pong ball bouncing across a tiny court.

You can't count how many guys you've had to turn away tonight before you see her. Gorgeous hair, stylish clothes, just the right type for you. She stretches out her hand to you just as you do to her — it's funny, isn't it, the way her smirk looks under the flashing lights — what an honour it is to meet someone of the same mind.

"Come on, let's get out of here."

You take the outstretched hand and leave the packed club for somewhere quieter, more comfortable, more appropriate.

In a few minutes you're in the sheets, feeling every inch of her, rubbing the smoothness up and down. Grinding angles, rocking back and forth, savouring the sensations.

"Here," she says, sticking out her tongue for a French kiss. A pale-yellow tablet lounges atop the pink eminences, a bright little smile pressed into pill form. The country of lovers, the drug of your love. Love. Love. You shiver in anticipation of what's to come.

You accept her invitation with an RSVP, *répondez s'il vous plaît*, and attend to her lonely mouth with your own. Between both pairs of lips, the tablet dissolves into your saliva, lending its powdery texture to your natural flavours. She tastes alcoholic; sherry wine, *vin jaune*, champagne — utterly intoxicating. You wonder what you taste like; sparkling water, perhaps. You make up your mind to ask her at some point. Maybe.

Sweat dissolves into your tongue as you lick her body; spit intermingles with spit — the party's complimentary refreshments. Bodies intertwine into hors d'œuvres; you imagine a gigantic version of yourself being presented with the two of you upon a silver platter, devouring both whole, inseparable even while chewed apart by colossal dentition.

You shut your eyes tight. The world is dark, and bright — bursting forth in neon polychrome — better than that stuffy club's mediocre lighting — yes,

yes, bring it on! Give it to me! This is it, the highlight of the night — this is what it's all about, baby!

Colours more colourful, music more musical, tautologies of tautologies of intensity, intensity, insanity, the mind a speeding bullet ripping down the freeway. A bullet rippling through the brain, a bullet of pure, concentrated joy tearing through the forest



of neuronal trees — the sensations going straight to your head — oh, oh, oh, it feels so good, who could ever resist this? Who would ever want to retain their inhibitions, to choose misery over happiness...

Deeper, deeper. It's like you've been plunged into an ice bath, you can't stop shivering, but she's so hot, her skin against yours warming the cold away, the chills backing off when she's around...

Closer, closer. You feel your heart's BPM going sky-high; a sports car in a road race, mowing down pedestrians, swerving into traffic, fleeing from the cops; an endless highway, a billion miles an hour with no rules — and you its queen, the master of speed — shouting your love freely from the top of your lungs.

Harder, harder! Exhilarating, tantalizing; more, more, more! Can't get enough! Overwhelmingly, all-consumingly, the high kicks in as she tightens her embrace around you, tightens around your fingers — skin on skin, skin so soft and fuzzy, skin like a warm blanket, skin you wish you could wrap yourself in... if only you could become one being, let the atom-wide space between you become nothing at all... enmesh yourselves into a singularity, and—

"Don't let me go," she whispers, "don't leave me — follow my voice and I'll follow yours—"

Follow, follow. The breadcrumb trail through the dark woods that leads to a candy house. What can you do with a voice? Call and response. *I love you I love you I love you... I love you too...*

Serenade, serenade. Your fast-beating heart in a song. *Sing for me, my angel of music.* The quickened breathing and the delirious moans are all the music the two of you need to hear. You don't even know each other's names (what's her name? Emma, Molly, Mandy? Maybe, maybe, maybe...) — but nothing in nature has names, reduced to animals as you are — "oh God, oh God," spurts out, no religion attached, a cry of bliss more than a prayer, a prayer to make this moment last forever...

The crescendo arrives. The conductor throws hands hither and thither, the baton penetrates the air — you're as close to her as you'll ever get, desire devouring you whole, eyes locked solely on each other — Lord, let this song never end, let the churches play their organs and the angels strum their harps, we'll provide the choir for the rest of this moment of eternity, Lord — Nirvana in a seashell, a maelstrom in a teacup!

Forgotten but not lost, the moment of eternity is only a moment; inevitably, the mania subsides; invariably, it always ends. The climax comes and goes as do you. The song ends after the final chorus.

At some point, you've fallen asleep, exhausted from the overexertion. You're getting older. You can't do this as much as you'd like to.

That's a problem for you tomorrow, though. For now, you're asleep; a deep and dreamless sleep like a baby in the womb.

When you wake up the next morning — clutching the blanket to your chest, trying to hold the lingering warmth a little bit closer — she's long gone, faded away after the outro. That's okay. You're both very busy women. You get how it is.

On to the next one, the next one, and the next high after that.

You haven't felt that good in forever; maybe the stuff was laced. Does it matter when it feels so good? Does it matter that Halloween candy has razor blades in it if the taste stays the same? Who cares if a little blood gets in? You don't care. Back to the waking world now. You yawn, sluggish and weighed down. Tuck your hair behind your ears. Steady your still-beating heart. Call a cab to go home.

Sunlight comes through the window and falls on the carpet, falls heavy on its face. You watch it stumble with empty eyes.

A morning just like any other.

For the love of god. Be able to take direction.

This is not an attack on your manhood, or abilities.



ANONYMOUS

Every person is different. (This is common sense.)

Now while I'm sure you've caught on to the fact, I'm gonna say it anyway just to be safe. The clit exists for one reason and one reason only. Fucking use it. Consent first, obviously, you horny bastard. Ask her what she likes. Take notice, how does she respond?

Guys can have a hard time finding it. Or so I'm told. See again, taking direction. Personally, I can't relate. They say no one goes down on a woman like a man on the spectrum. Can confirm.

Be comfortable being naked with them. Forget whatever ideas or expectations you have or think exist, there's no timeline you have to adhere to. Don't overthink it. You don't need to put pressure on yourself, that will make things harder. And not in a good way.

Harder doesn't mean faster, just so you know. Straight men, I'm talking to you. Having said that, both can be good. Maybe not every time, whatever works.

If she's responding well. Do not, I repeat, *do not* change a thing. Whatever you're doing is working. This is not your invitation to stop, slow down, speed up or anything else that pops into your head at inopportune moments.

Please stop acting like period sex is the most awful thing. It's just a bit of blood. For any ladies or people with periods reading, menstrual discs are a great solution (I say this for your own benefit, not his). Following on from that, not wanting period sex 'cause blood is gross, but wanting to go in the backdoor seems a little counterintuitive. Use your brain.

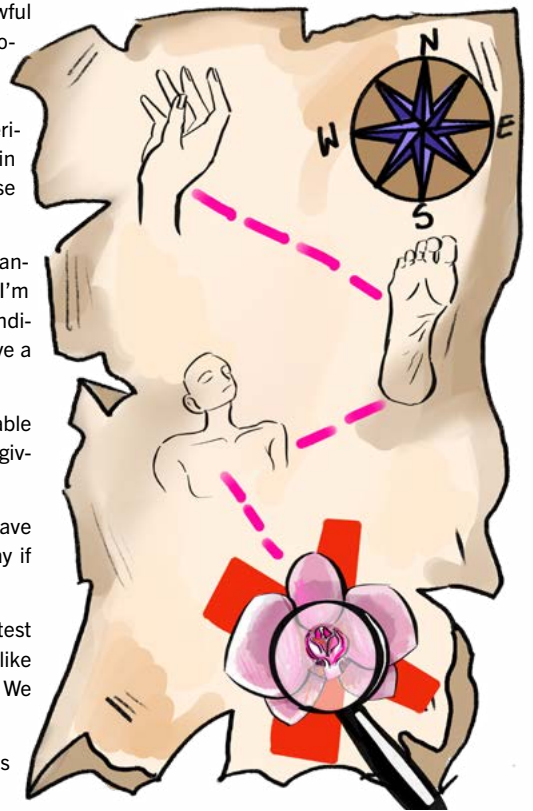
"What did you have in mind?", "What do you wanna do?", "How far do you wanna take this?" I'm looking for some sort of indication here. Some indication as to where this is potentially going. Have a fucking opinion, make a fucking decision.

Responding with "Whatever you're comfortable with," I mean, sure, it's a great start. It's also a given. Do we really need to recap consent, guys?

A little more direction would be good. Don't leave me wondering whether this is going all the way if you don't plan on taking your pants off.

"How do you feel about?", can be good to test the waters. "Do you wanna?", "Do you like?", if you want to be a little more direct. See? We have options.

Communicate, ask for what you want. No one is a mind reader.



What's that smell?

Sniffies is the hot new girl on the block ;)



TIM EVANS (TTHEY/THEM) | @TIMOTHYRAEVANS

"Horny moms... in my local area?? Sign me up!" It's a tale as old as illegal internet torrents filled with an egregious number of tit pics and crappy gifs. People love the knowledge that there are in fact horny sluts in their area, even if they know they won't do anything about it, or that they're not actually real (the true tragedy of it all). As a horny local slut, I know a thing or two about how you can find the action you so desire - and today's modern technology has made it easier than ever to get your rocks off within a 1km radius.

If you're gay or annoying (or both... and I'm guessing your both if you're an avid Tim Evans: Sexpert reader - 4 years and going strong babyyy), then you'll definitely be aware of Grindr. Grindr

takes the anonymity of 4chan and mixes it with the horrors of straight men on dating apps and presents you with man-made horrors beyond your comprehension: a collection of mostly middle aged gay and bi men all scrambling desperately to have below average sex. Actually, that's not all bad really. Those man-made horrors will suck your dick usually, and for the most part aren't emotionally manipulating you as well.

But Grindr as an app is tired at the best of times. We know the rigamarole and we're over it as a society. Young people are all about innovation, so let's explore the brand-new innovation in mass transmission of sexual diseases for at risk groups - *Sniffies*! This app has it all - unsolicited and graphic nudity, a novelty robot detection captcha, and totally anonymous profiles with no logon required. It brings even the filthiest sexual habits into the golden age of staring at your phone screen instead of talking IRL.

Sniffies uses a location-based system and presents you with a scrollable map of the general vicinity you're in. If you're in Auckland, you'll be able to see every user around you (including as anonymous ones) as

a profile on the map. Registered users can upload photos, usually explicit, and message other people around them. The website also includes hotspots for gay cruising and if any users have been there recently - like Centurian sauna for example.

But if you're thinking you've just found the next wonder drug after poppers and ketamine, there are a few downsides to *Sniffies*. Firstly, it is web based and can't be installed on your phone. While some people may enjoy this element, most #woke Gen Z's want something a bit more streamline. The location services are also slightly unspecific for safety reasons. If you leave the website, your profile stays up for a little while, and you don't want people just showing up unexpectedly. For that reason, the cruising basis it was inspired by is kind of lost. Finally, the user base isn't really that big in comparison to Grindr, but we as a collective can change this by posting our holes and poles online, right?

So, try it out and see if your pussy will go crazy like in *Scary Movie 2*, or if you'll be stuck tight and dry. Sniff ya later!

CONFESSIONS OF A TIKTOK-AHOLIC

DOPAMINE IS MY DRUG AND THE ALGORITHM IS MY DEALER.



HOPE MILO (SHE/HER)

I remember my first hit like it was yesterday. My sister passed me her phone. *"Just try one,"* she said. I watched a fifteen-second clip, maybe Charli D'Amelio doing the *Renegade*, maybe a lockdown study vlog. My brain fired up like a Christmas tree. I needed another. And another. Before she knew it, this ex-Muser (Musical.ly user) had relapsed. Five years later, I'm now chronically online with an average daily screentime of eight hours and a maximum battery capacity of 74%.

TikTok isn't just an app. It's a highly potent, unregulated substance, carefully engineered to hijack your dopamine receptors and leave you fiending for *just one more scroll*. The algorithm is your dealer, waiting in the shadows with a fresh supply of content tailored just #ForYou.

Think you're in control? Think you can quit anytime? Here's how to tell if you, too, are a full-time TikTok addict.

SYMPTOM 1: YOUR ATTENTION SPAN IS... NONEXISTENT?

Back in my day, I could sit through an entire movie without checking my phone. I could read a book without a sped-up AI voice narrating every scene for me. But now? If my brain doesn't get instant gratification in 0.5 seconds, my thumbs start twitching like junkies in withdrawal.

A TikTok doesn't immediately grab me? Swipe! A Netflix show doesn't jump-cut every three seconds? BORING. My professor explaining something that will definitely be in the midterm? Sorry, I can't pay attention without Subway Surfers gameplay or random soap cutting videos taking up half the screen.

SYMPTOM 2: YOUR BRAIN DEFAULTS TO TIKTOK SOUNDS

I should be able to process emotions like a normal person. Instead, my brain auto-generates a TikTok soundbite for every real-life experience.

Fail a quiz? *It's a TEMPORARY setback, it's a momentary lapse, but conveniently my ego doesn't bruiseeee.*

I walk past the most basic white man in Hiwa? *BOOM SHAKA LAKA YES LAWD.*

My TA lowers the grade singlehandedly keeping my GPA afloat? *You're just thinking it's a small thing that happened, the world ended when it happened to me.*

At this point, I don't even think in words anymore—just never-ending sped-up indie songs and Gen Alpha references I am definitely too old for. This week, I caught up with an old friend and all we could say was *"Six, seven"* between each other's major life updates.



SYMPTOM 3: YOUR PHONE BATTERY CAN'T KEEP UP

I start every morning with a fully charged battery. But the moment I open TikTok? It's over. *"Just five minutes,"* I tell myself. Then suddenly my iPhone 12 is burning the skin off my hands, my battery is at 2%, and I've lost three hours of my life watching AI-generated day-in-the-life videos of Roman soldiers in Pompeii.

The scariest part? I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT I WATCH. Just a haze of Preminger impres-

sions, Role Model edits, Utah Mormons opening their mission calls, and 74-part Abbott Elementary episodes that have a total of three pixels. An hour into my brainrot binge, I've already scrolled for so long under a search that I don't even remember what the blue comment said.

SOBRIETY IS IMPOSSIBLE

They say the first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem. Fine. I AM AN ADDICT. But does rehab even work?

I try watching a movie like a normal person. But every time a character dares to dramatically pause for more than five seconds, I instinctively reach for my phone.

So I try reading a book. But the moment I open one, my brain panics. *Where's the flashy multi-font text? Can I hold my thumb down on the side of the page to speed it up? Where can I find the CapCut filter to create my own ranking of this love triangle?* My eyes dart ahead, desperate for something, ANYTHING, to keep me hooked. I physically cannot do it.

My last resort? Touching grass. I step outside. The sun is shining, the air is crisp, and I am... bored. No #Nassie or whatever the new influencer ship is, no American commenters beefing about something that is common sense to the rest of the world, no "For You" page curating the world around me. I find myself scrolling through life, waiting for something to happen. Nothing ever does.

Some say a full detox is the only way out. Delete the app, they tell me. FREE YOURSELF. And for a moment, I uninstall TikTok. Take a deep breath. My brain is quiet. And then? I open Instagram Reels. The cycle continues.

Maybe one day, TikTok will get banned and we'll all be forced to go cold turkey. But until then? We will keep scrolling, feeding our addictions, waiting for our next fix.

Because, fellow addict, let's be honest. *None of us actually want to quit, do we?*

Are you actually having good sex?

The myth of the "gifted" man: Why everyone seems to be dating one.



CHLOE THERESEA

I feel like I'm always hearing stories about men who are *particularly gifted*. Confessions over brunch about how my girlfriends have finally found the magical man who can **really** get them there. Honestly, I get a little sceptical. Do I really, hand on my heart, believe 100% of my friends are sleeping with straight men who can actually get them off without any certain man-made objects entering the room? I'm not trying to point fingers and cast out the word liar, but in this day in age where most of our sex education comes from porn and social media, I find it hard to believe that everyone has stumbled across someone who is a grower AND can also find their g spot.

Now maybe they aren't lying. Maybe we're too young to know what good sex actually is. Maybe we need to start by defining what is 'good sex'. When we ask ourselves the question, I think a majority of us measure good sex in orgasms; but that can't be the only way. When talking about sex, and the goodness of it, we have to take into account emotion. Blah blah boring I know, but surely sex cannot be good sex if we do not feel, to some extent, some grand emotion while having it. Desire, love, anger, desperation, hunger whatever it is, emotion plays a key role in how enjoyable sex can be. The same exact physical sex can be amplified by being in love with the person rather than feeling nothing for them. But I guess we can't really boast to our friends about how much love we felt for our partner whilst having sex with them.

I don't think there is a single topic out

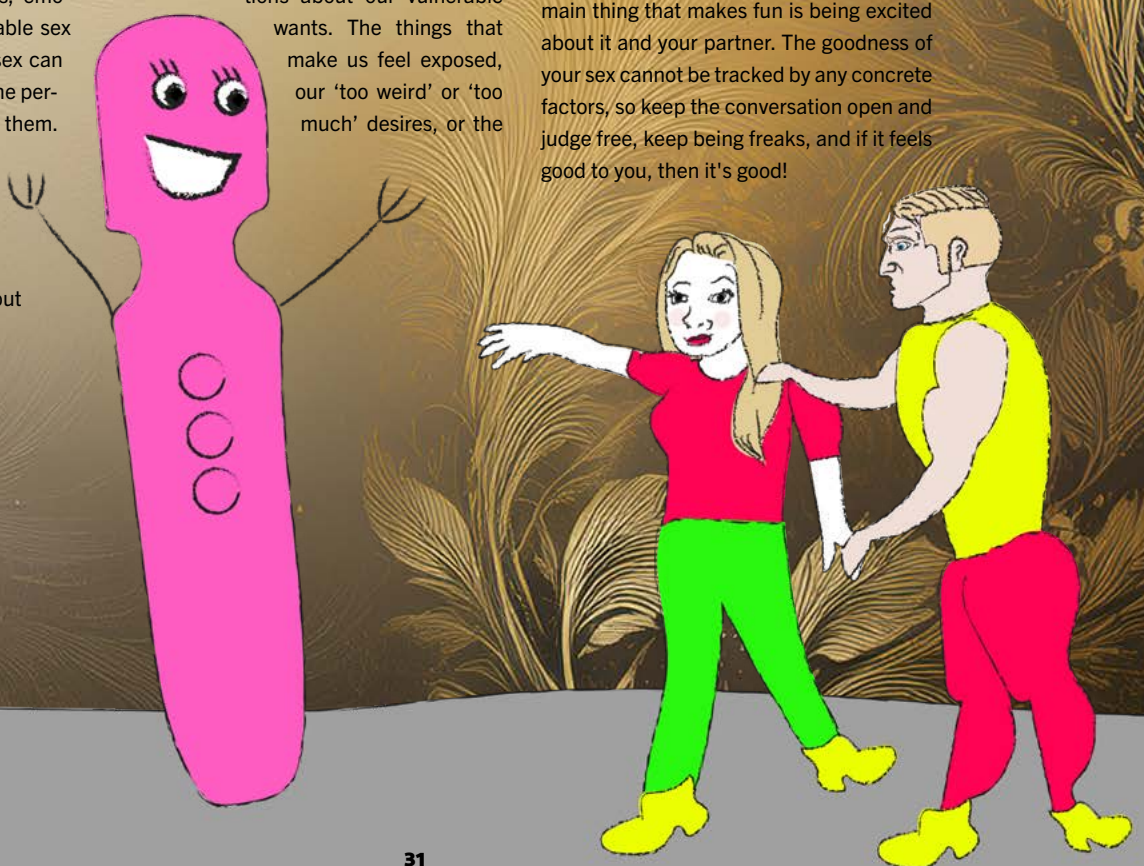
there today that isn't influenced or affected by media and online spaces, and sex is no exception. Online culture has created its own markers of sex. From the exaggerated performances in porn to the idealised, one kiss then stick it in and they're both cumming at the same time, love scenes in movies; media has created a distorted view of what sex looks like. Because of how sex is discussed in online spaces and portrayed on screen there is pressure to perform both in and out of the bedroom. We all want our friends to think we're getting it good and often. Many can feel as though we're doing sex 'wrong' and that we're the only ones not having mind blowing experiences. This can lead to people faking pleasure, exaggerating their experiences, or even convincing themselves that what they're having is "good sex" just because it looks or sounds good on the surface. We're turning our sex into a checklist activity in which as long as we're hitting certain marks that the media has set, it must be good.

In reality, true satisfaction comes from communication, personal comfort and a knowledge of what actually brings us pleasure. We loooove to talk about sex, but we rarely engage in honest conversations about our vulnerable wants. The things that make us feel exposed, our 'too weird' or 'too much' desires, or the

moments when sex doesn't feel as good as it's supposed to. Speaking about sex to a partner or even friends in this way feels terrifying. There's an unspoken pressure to already *know* what we like, to perform confidently even when we're unsure, and to never admit when something isn't working. Sex has become a game we're expected to win without ever hearing the rules, and instead of learning through open, honest conversation, we often fumble through trial and error, hoping we're getting it right.

At the end of the day the question shouldn't be, "are you having good sex?" but "what is good sex anyway?" Are you truly experiencing pleasure, or have you convinced yourself that you are because it fits a certain narrative? Too often, we judge our sex on external factors like what we see online, what our friends are saying, or what we **think** we should be doing rather than listening to our own bodies and desires.

A world in which we are all sexually satisfied starts with challenging the myths we've been taught about sex, it's about prioritising real personal pleasure over the illusion of it, letting go of performative expectations and embracing what feels good rather than what just *looks* good. Sex is fun, and the main thing that makes fun is being excited about it and your partner. The goodness of your sex cannot be tracked by any concrete factors, so keep the conversation open and judge free, keep being freaks, and if it feels good to you, then it's good!



“Kindness is free.” No, it isn’t.

SOME TIPS ON HOW TO BE NICER EVERY DAY.



JUDY ZHANG

I’m not talking about the good manners type of kindness, like holding the auditorium door open for the student filing in behind you, or giving up your seat on public transport for someone who needs it more. Could you recall the last time you were in hot water and someone really helped you out? A true act of kindness requires us to be thoughtfully intentional. It can feel like a free will workout, even if it only physicalises as a small gesture. But it always takes a whole lot of bravery.

Recently I’ve come to see kindness not simply as ‘being nice,’ but having love for the person you are engaging with. Even strangers? Say what? Hear me out. Last month I picked up the book *All About Love: New Visions* by bell hooks (wait, you haven’t read it yet? Get stuck in! It’s available online through the UoA library catalogue, the same place as where you access your course readings). The biggest shocker was that it made me realise how romantic love, which I incorrectly assumed the entire book would be discussing, constitutes only a small part of the spectrum of what it means to love. In fact, the section “Romance: Sweet Love” doesn’t come in until Chapter Ten. hooks draws attention to the fact that we tend to avoid holding serious, intellectual conversations about love - and even when we do, we speak of it as something that naturally happens to us rather than an action we choose to take. She also borrows a quote from American psychiatrist M. Scott Peck, defining love as “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.” Things like attraction, affection, and even care, hooks says, are all “ingredients” of love, but alone they are not the same as love itself.

Let’s come back to kindness. When you’re interacting with a stranger, showing kindness from a place of love could be as small (but as transformative) as remembering that they also get tired end of the day, or seeing that they’re just like you: somebody’s child.

About the same time as I had finished reading *All About Love*, I was recommended another New York Times bestseller, *The 48 Laws of Power* by Robert Greene. To be honest, I did not have enough time to read more than just the chapter titles listed in the contents page, but what I saw horrified me. “...Law 7: Get others to do the work for you, but always take the credit... Law 14: Pose as a friend, work as a spy... Law 20: Do not commit to anyone... Law 39: Stir up waters to catch fish...”. I’m not making this up. I have no doubt that Greene’s book holds at least some observational truths and clever insights, but I am seriously concerned by the lens it argues you should look at the world through (they are literally prescribed as “laws”).

The type of action it encourages. What narrative about the relationship between ourselves and others does it compel us to believe?

I’ve heard plenty of anecdotes from friends study-

ing in competitive fields such as biomedicine and computer science: the horror stories of gatekeeping, backstabbing, even snitching on fabricated stories just to get ahead of the cohort. Even if there is distrust, abuse of power, and broken respect in the world - and it’s true, we can’t change that as an individual - here’s the thing. The way you choose to think about it does.

All throughout my first and second years at UoA, I bought into a fractured narrative. I thought the institution only wanted to profit off me and that other students were only interested in finishing their degree and getting out of there. Needless to say, the story I told myself about the world severely hin-

ing, and receiving opportunities of kindness, I feel empowered and ready to make the most of the resources provided by UoA to grow as a person, whilst contributing back to our community of students and staff.

Do you still need some evidence of your own to be fully convinced? Pick one or all of these experiments to try this week.

Experiment I:

Do you take the bus to uni? Great! Next time you catch one, say “hello” to your driver before you tag on, and smile at them in that little snatch of an interaction. Not a lipped smile. One with teeth, a real one you can feel in the corner of your eyes. (If the driver is looking elsewhere as you’re hopping on, you may abort the mission for that one particular ride). Do this for the entire week. Okay, I know this might sound to you like a social anxiety nightmare or just downright stupid, but bear with me on this one. It is near impossible that your human driver won’t acknowledge a genuine smile by returning it back to you, and the effects it has on other passengers is profound (I say this because I was one of the other passengers). Try it and see.

Experiment II:

Execute one thoughtful act of service for someone in your family or someone you live with. This could be offering to pick them up after a long day, or fixing them a hot meal or a tasty snack they can come home to, especially as we’re hitting a point in the year where it’s getting chillier, drizzlier, and darker out earlier. And make a portion for yourself so you can eat together! If your loved one thinks you are gift-wrapping some pending bad news or about to ask for something difficult, assure them that you’re not and stick to your word. (If you live alone, please accept my challenge to cook yourself your all-time-favourite meal).

Experiment III:

If you think you’ve been a little harsh on yourself lately, this one I learnt from a friend. Find a photograph of yourself as a child. Place it somewhere salient in your everyday space. When you have a slight hunch you’re berating or discouraging yourself more than you need to, go and stand in front of that photo. How would you talk to yourself now? Observe the difference.

By and large, we should at least award some credit to the adage “kindness is free.” It’s on the right track. Financially, kindness *is* free - and thank goodness for that, because we are on student budgets after all. But kindness is also a provoking thing with radically pivotal chain reactions. It challenges the space we fashion between ourselves and others. It costs our time to think, and occasionally our ego. How big is that price to you? If that’s a question you don’t wish to answer right now, at least take this with you: try it and see, observe the difference.



dered my participation and overall student experience. I didn’t join any clubs. Didn’t feel compelled to talk to other students in my lectures because I assumed in-class friendships were unlikely to last. Never made the effort to ask my questions

to my lecturers. Then one week, I decided to challenge myself to attend an office hour, just show up as myself, with the goal of holding a genuine conversation, just once. I had never expected my lecturer to be so generous with his time and expertise (shoutout to Dr Ethan Plaut)! I walked away buzzing with ideas, leads, and eye-opening evidence for a new narrative to view student life, one which actually works. Fast-forward to today, numerous papers I had my eye on in the course lists have been cut, professors are still striking for fair pay, and the entry for competitive programmes remains dauntingly slim. But because I now believe in looking for, giv-

BENEFITS OF COOKING SLOW

WHY THE CROCK POT SHOULD BE YOUR NEW BESTIE



JAIME WATSON | @BIMANATOR

The feeling of coming home from school to the slow cooker on the table, filled with the smell of a hearty meal, is something many of us can relate to. At times, it wasn't the most appealing dinner to end the day with. Don't get me wrong—I'm incredibly grateful for the many meals my family provided. But there was always a slight sense of disappointment that came with walking through the door to find another stew cooking away in the slow cooker.

Fast forward to today, and at twenty-two years old, working full-time and balancing university on the side, I get it. The crockpot is no longer a symbol of boredom—it's my best friend. Now, I come home, and the first thing I notice is the familiar, comforting aroma of a meal waiting for me, not prepared by a parent but by my past self. It's a feeling of accomplishment, as though a previous version of myself lovingly cooked it just for me.

If you have access to a slow cooker, or if you find the odd opportunity to use one, I would highly recommend giving it a go. Here's why:

Nutritious & Delicious: You can create essentially anything in a slow cooker - for yourself or for a crowd, sweet or savoury, meaty or vegan. The creative freedom is immense. And bonus, because the crock pot doesn't require oils to cook and retains the nutrients of the foods it is heating, whatever you make ends up being healthier than if you had chosen to cook it in an alternative style!

Slow but Speedy: We are busy people and a lot of us struggle to find the time to cook a well-balanced meal. With a slow cooker, say goodbye to spending hours on complicated concoctions. Once you've got all your ingredients, you might spend 15-20 minutes cutting things up and throwing them into the pot. That's it! Dinner/lunch/snacks sorted for the whole week. Tidying up is also quick because fewer dishes are involved in the process.

Save \$\$\$: Slow-cooked meals are incredibly affordable, especially if you stick to vegetarian or vegan recipes. With seasonal ingredients and careful shopping, you can create hearty, nutritious meals that cost under \$5 per serving.

Where to start? Anywhere really! Put some of your favourite foods into the pot and see how it goes. Here is an example of a vegan (or vegetarian) go-to

'wing it' recipes I often make:

- 1-2 pieces of kūmara
- 3 Carrots
- 1 cup Frozen vegetables
- Tin of coconut cream
- Tin of crushed tomatoes
- 450 grams of Tofu (or 300 grams of paneer)
- 2 tbs ground cumin (I love cumin)
- Tsp of Ground chili
- 2 tbs any sort of curry powder/curry paste
- 2 tbs vegetable stock powder

**The amount of how much of each ingredient to add is dependent on how many meals you would like, whether you would prefer to add rice or bread with it, and how much you enjoy eating the ingredient.*

Start by chopping the tofu/paneer, carrots, and kūmara into bite-sized pieces. Then, simply throw all the ingredients into the slow cooker. Cover and set it to cook on low for 6-8 hours—it's that simple!



So, go ahead and take the plunge! Experiment with your favorite ingredients, and let the slow cooker do the hard work. You might just find that the simple things, like a homemade stew, are the best part of your day

ART CREDIT: INARA RAY | @INARARAY_ART



STUDY BREAK



TUATERRA_ART



PUZZLES

Across

3. Switch it up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, like Nintendo
4. Where you can get free condoms on campus
6. Wadiyatalinabeet
7. Website that tells you where you can get your drugs tested
8. Giraffe known for his anti-smoking messaging

Down

1. The most important part of sex
2. Walter White's alter-ego
5. How Aussies pronounce the sum of 2 + 4
6. Cringe student mag that used porn for a cover
7. The nearest country where you can legally buy weed

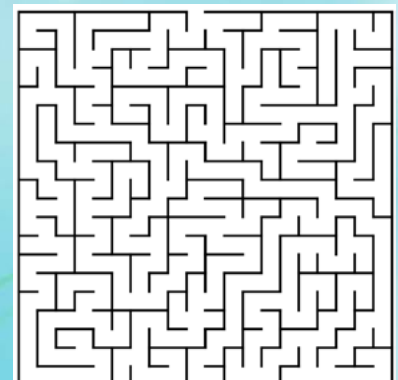


CHESS PUZZLE

Provided by
Auckland University Chess Association

Checkmate in 2!

Medium: White to Move.
Hard: Black to Move.



ART BY MARIE MENDEL



AQUARIUS

(JANUARY 20 – FEBRUARY 18)

Neptune is giving your brain a temporary stat boost this week. You, an intellectual? Yep, should be acing those weekly quizzes right about now, right? But don't kid yourself kid. Studying is the only way to escape this hellhole. That mid-sem is lurking with a shank behind its back babes.



PISCES

(FEBRUARY 19 – MARCH 20)

Feeling like a million bucks? Well you shouldn't, even if you do. You forgot you're reading a shitty free student mag you schmuck. Check your pride, loser. Heard of KiwiSaver? By the time you're retired there isn't gonna be NZSuper, so I'd count your pennies you rich bastard.



ARIES

(MARCH 21 – APRIL 19)

You'll find yourself behind the wheel this week. But beware! I know your natural impulse will be to doing donuts and pulling wheelies when you should focus on showing everyone some serious shit. When your baby hits 88 miles per hour, it's gonna send you back to your glory days. Yeah, you peaked in high school. Just don't be an Oedipussy hitting on your GTA, even if they were impressed with your group project, it doesn't mean they swing that way cuz.



TAURUS

(APRIL 20 – MAY 20)

blushes *looks up nervously* Honey... I. This week you've got some serious sexual healing headed your way this week. But it's looking kinda kinky ngl, even for your standards... I'll share with you the naked truth: I keep seeing the number 3 and you hanging out with "friends" when I think of you. Not sure if they're related but it's looking pretty sussy, you dirty freak. Oh, but you've been sooo, soo, soo stressed. I can turn a blind eye. Just this once.

GEMINI

(MAY 21 – JUNE 20)

STFU. No serious keep your big mouth sealed tight this week. Mercury is retrograding so all comms this week will be cooked. It's try not to get cancelled tier. Headphones on. Mouth shut. Phone away. Lock in and catch up on those missed lectures this week babes.



CANCER

(JUNE 21 – JULY 22)

Ngl, the progress you've been making towards your career is gonna stagnate pretty hard this week like an algae bloom from Neptune's asshole, and it's here to stay. Yuck. Just retreat inside your blanket burrito and practice self care this week like Achilles darling.



LEO

(JULY 23 – AUGUST 22)

Geocaching. Have you tried it? Might become your new personality trait this week you little Dora. Double check you've topped up your Hop card tho. Dusk ain't about fare evasion. Retracing your steps this week will reap rewards, so call your family goddamn it.



VIRGO

(AUGUST 23 – SEPTEMBER 22)

Hate to break it to ya, but you're gonna get scammed this week. Watch your back at the ATM, don't make that online purchase you've been eyeing up and don't give your mate \$5. Breath, you'll be fine. Only Dusk is allowed to steal your money ;)



LIBRA

(SEPTEMBER 23 – OCTOBER 22)

I prescribe you with blue balls/ovaries this week babes. Ringing your ex for a quickie will most definitely go so wrong a 12' inch thick rubber would be powerless against the clusterfuck the stars have with your name on it. Even if you like it, then you definitely shouldn't put a ring on it. Yet.



SCORPIO

(OCTOBER 23 – NOVEMBER 21)

Fuck dude. For the love of Dusk, please: stop saying yes to everything or you're gonna burn out like a supernova. You're fine seriously. I got you. Please, please, please listen: it's okay to be a No-person this week. Get some sleep. I'm proud of you.



SAGITTARIUS

(NOVEMBER 22 – DECEMBER 21)

If you're a writer, singer, artist, stripper, whatever: girl I got great news for you. Picture Mario with a super star running through all your creative blocks. That's you this week baby! You're about to be struck with so much inspiration and I'm all for it. Finish that passion project with the might of Goose.



HOROSCOPES

FIND OUT WHAT WEEK 5 HOLDS FOR YOU ;)

DUSK STALESTUARY

CAPRICORN

(DECEMBER 22 – JANUARY 19)

Sorry but the melancholy strikes back this week. Feeling a bit homesick? Don't keep busy and push it down. Feel the feels you need to feel. Clean your room. Yeah, I know it's messy. Every piece of litter you pick up this week earns a good karma bonus. Invest now! *hug* A hug can be an investment right?



Get on the level

Be in the know

Know what to expect, dosage and danger signs to avoid a bad time.

Get it checked

It's easy to find out what's in your drugs at a free, legal and confidential drug checking clinic.

Strip for free

Order free test strips to check your drugs at home for dangerous surprises like nitazenes and fentanyl.

theLevel.org.nz
Straight up drug info

