



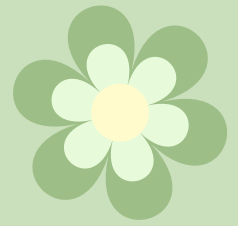
2025

NOVEMBER EDITION



PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY HARRIS

Editors' Notes



Hello readers!

It's been a minute, but The Mo is finally back, and we're so excited to share this new November edition with you all!

If you haven't yet noticed from the front cover, we've got a new team running the show now. Our much-loved previous editor, Daisy, is thriving and living her best life studying Journalism at university, and whilst we'll very much miss all the glitzy pink, we're super proud of and excited for her. Please join us in wishing her well!

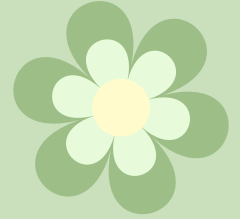
With our return we're bringing you a whole host of new and exciting articles to read, including writing on pop culture, literature, politics, sport, and much, much more. We've really loved putting this issue together, and we hope you'll enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed making it. As always, a big thank you goes out to you, our readers. We couldn't do this without you, and we're so grateful for your continued interest in our work. Keep being awesome!

About our team...

Since this is our first release of the year, we figured we'd provide an introduction to some of the team. Among our newest members is Jenson from Year 12, who has already proved himself to be an incredibly capable writer with a piece on education reform, and Delphine and Abi from Year 13, who have written an excellent joint article. We're also so thankful to all the people who were on our previous team and have stayed on for another year with us. Shoutout to Caitlin, Freya, and Seamus! Finally, this year we now have a group of editors instead of just one — Jasmine, Florence, and Scarlet. We're hoping that our collaborative efforts in editing (on top of writing!) will ensure we're delivering you the best possible version of The Mo that we can.

If you're a sixth former and like what we do, by all means get involved! Shoot Ms Redfern an email, and we'd be delighted to welcome you as a writer, photographer or artist.

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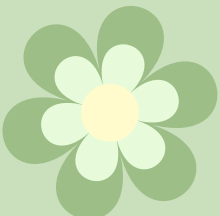
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brats vs showgirls

By Freya Marshall

Taylor Swift released her 12th album *The Life of a Showgirl* on October 3rd, and it has since marked the beginning of many controversies. The one everyone has their eyes on is the drama surrounding the album's seventh track 'Actually Romantic', which fans have speculated is a dig at the new pop it girl Charli XCX. Many fans noticed the track shares a similar title to Charli's 2024 track 'Everything is Romantic', the seventh track on her critically acclaimed album *BRAT*.

Charli is no stranger to the pop industry, having had a number of hits over the years such as 'Boom Clap' and 'I Love It'. Charli even opened for Taylor on her 2018 Reputation Stadium Tour, which then sparked controversy because of her comments about the tour: "I'm really grateful that [Taylor] asked me on that tour, but as an artist, it kind of felt like I was getting up onstage and waving to five-year-olds." It is no secret that the two share different genres of music, Charli opened for Taylor on the backend of her 2017 mix-tapes 'Number 1 Angel' and 'Pop 2' which featured SOPHIE (known for being a pioneer of the hyperpop genre) as the main producer. These mix-tapes are loud, outgoing, and a fresh sound for the times, while Taylor Swift's 2017 album Reputation plays it much safer, and its production is a lot more digestible for casual audiences. Given the difference in genre, and Charli's target demographic being largely much older than Taylor's, it's no surprise that Charli felt out of place.

In 2024, on her album *BRAT*, Charli released the song 'Sympathy is a Knife', a song about feeling insecure while being around someone more powerful than you, and featuring the lyrics "I couldn't even be her if I tried".

Many fans speculated it was in fact about Taylor Swift due to the lyric "don't wanna see her at my boyfriend's show / Fingers crossed behind my back, I hope they break up quick". Swift had a very public two week relationship with Matty Healy, the lead singer of The 1975, one of Charli's best friends, and her now husband's (George Daniel) bandmate. Taylor Swift joined The 1975 on stage at the O2 arena for their At Their Very Best tour in January 2023 to perform her song 'Anti-Hero' and a cover of The 1975's 2013 track 'The City' acoustically — hence the idea of Taylor being backstage at Charli's boyfriends show. The pair were publicly in a relationship between May 2023 and June 2023 and it was seen to have ended badly. Despite some suggestion that Charli's song might have been intended as a diss track, many recognised that this was not at all the case and that the track was instead a display of her own insecurities, adding to the raw nature of the album.



In 2025, Swift announced her album *The Life of a Showgirl* and released the tracklist. Fans were quick to see the similarities between the 'Actually Romantic' and 'Everything is Romantic', and these rumours were only amplified by possible leaked lyrics of the song going viral online. These were later revealed to be true, and subsequently criticised by fans, with one user writing: "if someone wrote sympathy is a knife about me I would probably acknowledge its a song about their insecurities and not necessarily a dig at me I also would not go on to talk about any possible addictions nor say I find it attractive and romantic, but hey that's just me". Neither Taylor nor Charli have spoken on the matter since. If I'm being honest, perhaps they should.

In addition to the poor reception of 'Actually Romantic', many fans have also claimed the album does not feel as relatable as Swift's previous works, and blame this on her billionaire status. Others have called out how her writing has changed since dating footballer Travis Kelce and being seen with allegedly problematic people, which she speaks about in her "tone-deaf" song 'CANCELLED!'.

Overall, it's obvious that *The Life of A Showgirl* has not been received as well as the rest of Taylor's discography, and many question if it's because Taylor is showing her "mean girl" side, taking advantage of those below her in the world of pop music.



Photography courtesy of Freya Marshall

Purchasing Personality & The Culture of Herd Individuality

By Scarlet Sanders

If you've ever been on TikTok during the holiday season, you might have seen the "niche" gift guide slideshows that circle round each year. Each one of them markets itself as catering to a newer, more obscure demographic than the last — cool girls, weird girls, coastal girls, grungy girls, even whimsy twee girls — but the contents within don't seem to change. Search for any convoluted string of strange, vague adjectives and you'll find them: the same five or so items recommended again and again, differing only slightly in colour or style. Often, we are invited to infer certain things about the people they're for. The supposedly "funky" mug tells us that this girl is quirky and different, the nondescript book, that she's cultured, the graphic tee that she's totally on trend (as opposed to, god forbid, basic). It's confusing: these gift guides posture as though they are monuments of individuality, but in reality, they're all identical to each other. What's going on?

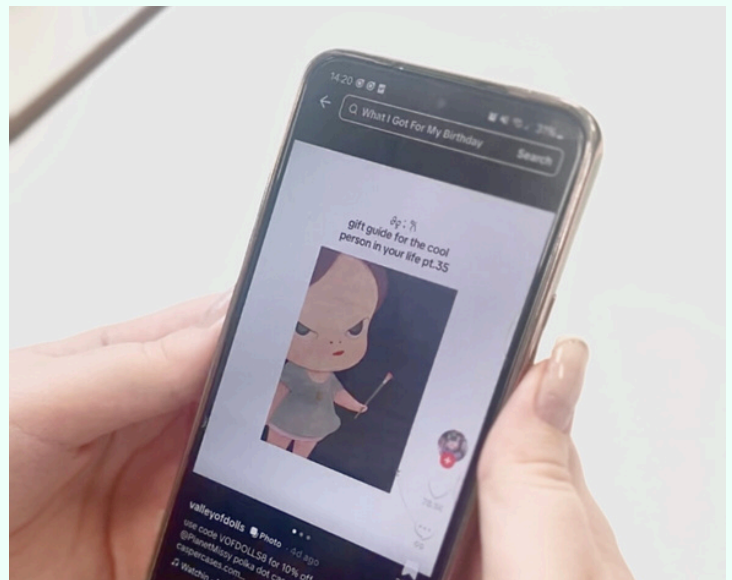
There are two innate yet conflicting psychological needs that, I think, are behind these bizarre kinds of posts. The first is the desire to conform. There's a pair of key reasons as to why people may feel this. The first - normative social influence - describes when someone feels compelled to conform to the mainstream because it is socially rewarding: going along with the majority earns them a sense of belonging or community and ensures their acceptance. Historically, being socially connected has been key in earning humanity our survival as a species. There is strength and safety in numbers, and being apart from the group means singling yourself out as an easy target, leading to the development of an intrinsic desire to belong and be included.

In a modern context this want for connection and community is growing ever stronger. Loneliness is being reported as on the rise (the WHO recognises it to be a "priority public health problem") and the decimation of our third spaces is increasingly becoming a topic of conversation as more and more neighbourhoods see communal hubs for socialisation fade away. The second motivator for conformity — informational social influence — describes when someone conforms to the mainstream because they are driven by a wish to be correct. It occurs when we lack information, when a situation is ambiguous, which urges us to look to others for guidance. Right now, in the midst of rampant online misinformation and the dubious rise of AI, this, too, is more at play than ever.

In conflict with this heightened yearning to conform is the wish to be different. According to Snyder and Fromkin's Uniqueness Theory, although it's true that we feel discomfort when we experience too little similarity to others (since this tends to generate alienation and exclusion) we also experience discomfort when we experience too *much* similarity to others. We have a "need for uniqueness", we strive to maintain a degree of difference to those around us. Especially with our increased usage of social media, this need is making itself more and more present. We are overwhelmingly inundated with other people's lives, and the reality that we are each just another face in the same crowd. In response, we enter ourselves into constant competition and comparison with those we see online.

Arguably, social media is also dominated by youth culture. Returning to TikTok, its popularity has emerged primarily through its majority teenage user base. This bears significance because our teenage years are all about self-discovery — they're the time in our lives when we develop our own identities, decide who we are and who we want to be, and attempt to fashion individuals out of ourselves through rapid, newfound independence. Young people often experience that “need for uniqueness” more frequently than those belonging to older generations, and with increased intensity.

The friction between our need to “fit in” and our need for uniqueness is being exploited to both commodify us and profit off of us in online spheres. On TikTok, we are incentivised by the algorithm to categorise ourselves into endless “niches”, which are often actually just the same thing repackaged with varying aesthetic exteriors providing the illusion of distinction. As products within the “attention economy”, we advertise ourselves through our online presence. Hyper-online identification methods, like the endless different “-core” labels and “xyz girl” tags, allow us to make ourselves superficially distinct enough to satisfy our need for uniqueness, yet “same-same” enough to still sell socially. This simplification of personality, the transformation of personhood into product, kills off any depth of self that could have existed on the app. Identity becomes all about appearance. This sentiment puts us in an increasingly vulnerable position when it comes to advertising. In order to keep up with our product personas, we become pressured to purchase performatively. For example, we may buy a book, not really to read, but to post about, so that we give off the impression of being well-read, and earn social capital within our in-group. This is how we arrive at the peculiar genre of gift guide posts we started with. With this sense of being what you buy, you don't need to be truly cultured or unconventional or any other similarly interesting adjective — you just have to spend money on the items and clothing that suggest you are. It's all about how you package yourself.



Cruelly though, this pretence at personality isn't actually satisfying our needs. The sense of belonging and connection we hope to find through conformity is being crushed by mass inauthenticity. And once you've noticed how similar you are to everyone else on TikTok in participating in your own commodification, that need for uniqueness comes back into play. There's a sense that we're losing ourselves. We want to feel socially accepted whilst also being our own people but that's not what's happening.

So, what needs to change? For me, we need to be purposefully seeking out and cultivating connection beyond just existing in the same online spaces. And, we need to be finding ways of self expression and formulating identity that aren't connected to what we buy. How we achieve these aims can vary. For example, clubs, groups, events, meet-ups and intentional conversation (whether offline or online) are a way of gaining a sense of belonging and acceptance, whilst “uniqueness” might be found through creative endeavours, introspection and exploration, and interacting with smaller or more local independent projects which aren't a part of the mainstream. Above all, we need to stop conceptualizing ourselves as products for social media. Do that, and fulfilment becomes a whole lot easier.

How McLaren negated a wholesome comeback story...

By Seamus Van-Der-Puye

So, the F1 season so far has been... perhaps a bit less than what we expected it to be at the start of the season. The start of the season seemed to promise the fall of Red Bull, McLaren dominance and the resurgence of household names such as Ferrari and Mercedes. And well — we have definitely seen dominance from McLaren — winning the constructors title with a record-tying six races before the end of the season. Everything else however...

Red Bull's death was greatly exaggerated, Mercedes still have a car more inconsistent than the British weather, and Ferrari threw away a perfectly competitive and well developed car to be slower than a literal leek on wheels (the Sauber) at too many points in the season. (Remember: this team got four, count them, ***four*** points over the course of last season.)

If you look at the championship alone, (yes, it has been rather dull so far) we've had a constructors' battle that was non-existent and an intra-team battle for the drivers championship. In a team, I may add, that won't for the love of the racing gods let their drivers fight for the championship. Something you're supposed to do when you lead the constructors championship by 337 points! I want to be happy for them, I really do, but there is clear, blatant and obvious favouritism afoot here. It's just straight up frustrating. Let me explain why this achievement IS something to celebrate and evaluate each of the title contenders' mindsets.

McLaren's fall, rise and (sort of) fall again was interesting. Coming off the back of a sub par 2022, McLaren got rid of the experienced, yet horribly under-performing Daniel Ricciardo in

favour of new talent Oscar Piastri, fresh from the Alpine Academy (which is another hilarious story which I will refrain from telling here) to partner Lando Norris for the 2023 season. Despite this change, their car was on the ropes of great struggle, with neither car finishing higher than 15th. By the ninth race, 33 points had been achieved by the team, with 12 performances below the top 10 between the two cars. They would turn up to Silverstone with upgrades that would hopefully get their car higher in the standings. To every (sane) F1 fan's joy, they jumped from backmarkers to frontrunners, qualifying second and third with both cars in podium positions. As the lights go out, Norris, in second, challenges Verstappen immediately and takes the lead after turn first — an overtake on Verstappen hadn't been performed until this race. Norris would lose the lead on lap 5, due to the simple fact that the Red Bull car that year may as well have been a rocket ship, but he would finish on the podium in 2nd, while Piastri finished in 4th. The rest of the year would bring mostly positive results with nine total podium finishes and a Sprint win by Piastri in his inaugural season, with the team finishing 4th in the constructors championship, and Norris and Piastri finishing 6th and 9th in the drivers championship.

2024 would see more McLaren success throughout the season, with Ferrari not too far behind, and defending champions Red Bull taking a backseat for this season (though that didn't stop Verstappen from claiming his 4th consecutive drivers crown). A nail-biting final race of the season would see Piastri crash with Verstappen on



the first lap to put him languishing at the back of the pack for the rest of the race, with Norris holding the lead throughout the entirety of the race to bag McLaren's first title win since 1998, after a very hard fought season.

In 2025, we have seen further continuation of McLaren being a dominant force, and for a significant portion of the season, be the sole contenders for both the Drivers and Constructors Championships. Now: let the problems and controversy begin. Because McLaren have been so dominant, they shouldn't have to worry about other teams, meaning they can easily let their drivers fight for the drivers title, which is very individual and should not be influenced by team input. It isn't a rule, but it is a heavily favoured preference for both the drivers and the fans. But now McLaren has turned a high octane title fight into something like parents managing two children and deciding who's turn it is on the Xbox (or who gets position priority in this case).

Norris has always been a fan favourite from his debut in 2019 and has had the talent to back up his popularity. However in recent times, it has been proven that he hasn't fully matured and had the ability to be able to 'settle' in a car, especially when the driver's title is on the line. He showed

this in 2024, where at Brazil, he was given the chance to solidify himself as a challenger for the driver's title, with the potential to get a large amount of points to close the gap to leader and eventual champion Verstappen. He would have the chance to challenge for the title again this year, with him now leading by one point over his own teammate after Mexico's race. But, it could have been so much more, he simply just makes too many mistakes caused by hastiness and being too desperate to make a move on an opponent. This was ultimately punished in Canada, where he would try to get an overtake on Piastri, only to fail horrendously by crashing into him, leaving him with a DNF while Piastri got 4th. And while he did take accountability for this specific incident, there have been many times between the end of last year and this year where ego not only seems to get the better of him but just makes him seem so much more unlikeable and easy to hate.

Piastri, on the other hand, is calm, cool and collected, showing off quite a nonchalant character in the paddock. Calm, until pressure starts setting in. Piastri had a very comfortable season, leading the championship right up until round 20, where he is now behind teammate Norris and just seems to not recognise the car he is driving at all, especially compared to the start of the season. Even up until round 15 in the Netherlands, he was absolutely flying, coming off the back of a grand slam: winning from pole position, while leading every lap of the race with the fastest single lap. Evidently, he was in his element, and with a Lando DNF in the same race, the championship should be his for the taking, right? We all know, the answer is no. One horrific weekend in Azerbaijan would be his undoing, with him not being able to even touch the top positions in the past few races. A 34 point lead would disappear in just five races, and now, for the first time since the 4th round of the season, is on the back foot. Another thing holding Piastri back is the fact that McLaren, though they try to be discreet about it, favour Norris over Piastri, as there have definitely been team decisions that have impacted

Piastrì's ability to thrive in the championship. Ultimately: Piastrì needs to step above even his team and race for himself, not a concept that is alien to previous champions.

These two drivers squabbling and fighting over team decisions have given the team quite a bad name as of late, even though they won the championship in emphatic fashion. This really should be an occasion of celebration for all F1 fans but, much like Red Bull's success, controversy just nullifies the want or need for celebration.

But there's a simple solution to all of this. Enter Max Verstappen.

Four time world champion already, and he has a very real opportunity to make it five. Many were anticipating Red Bull to fall off, and while it is obvious the second driver seat is seemingly cursed (although Tsunoda is fighting really well against it) Max Verstappen has made himself one with the car and can possibly upset the McLaren duo. Once berated for his own incredibly rash driving during his rookie years, he has truly developed into one of the best drivers on not only the grid, but of all time. The crucial difference between Max and both McLaren drivers is the simple fact that he has a great amount of experience and even more maturity on the track, and knows how and when to pull off moves without compromising himself. (Most of the time, at least.) As expertly proven in Brazil, he can turn pretty much anything into a good result — even when starting from the pit lane he finished 3rd, and was very much challenging to take 2nd. The championship is a long way away from him, but is still possible for him to win, provided both McLaren drivers make a mistake or two, with him having to make up a 49 point difference in just three races.

So now: three races remain. Qatar. Las Vegas. Abu Dhabi. Each driver has won at at least one of these three tracks but will Norris hang on to the lead? Will Piastrì take back the crown? Or will Max come from behind to take it all?



The Psychology of Having A Sibling In School

By Delphine Sydenham and Abi Melsom

As I come towards the end of my time at Marlborough, I've realised that I will never be back in school at the same time as my brother. This makes me sad, but it also makes me wonder if this will have an effect on him when I leave. As a result, my friends and I, who also have siblings here, have recently been discussing the psychology behind having a sibling in school, and debating the positives and negatives that come with it.

Growing up, my brother and I have always maintained a good relationship; therefore I enjoy seeing him around school and find it fun to talk about and compare our days, our teachers and our experiences. I would say that he has a positive impact on my school experience. But is it mutual? As part of my research I talked to my brother and he told me that he finds it reassuring to have me in the same school as him. In addition, he mentioned that he would prefer to go to the same school as his sibling versus a different school. He told me that this was because he found comfort in knowing that I was there when he first started which gave him the confidence boost to talk to more people and have a positive start to school.

From looking into the more psychological aspect to this, I believe that having a sibling at school is great for a younger child's experience in education. It can benefit younger students in different ways including social skills, emotional support and educational success.

I've done some reading into a study done by Nicoletti and Rabe from the University of Essex

where they found evidence of positive spillover effects from an older sibling to a younger sibling's performance. They mention that the spillover effect is stronger when the siblings attend the same school. However this research doesn't talk about the age differences between the siblings or the gender.

Being the oldest child in the house, meant that I started secondary school with no knowledge of what to expect. In a sense this was better for me as I got to experience the things that I have first hand and not through anyone else but myself. Now being the role model to my younger brother I have provided the expectations that are required within school and made the starting process easier.

This means that as siblings we allow each other to have the safety and reassurance that we are not alone or isolated while at school. This emotional support can help the feeling of comfort and lead to more enjoyment in school when there is a feeling of security and personal resilience from within a family group.

In conclusion, studies and personal experiences have led me to believe that having a sibling in school is very beneficial to be able to have a strong start, however it is not vital. Myself and many others started school without a sibling and would say that we enjoyed our time equally as much as those with an older sibling. It is completely up to interpretation as everyone has had a different experience in school.

Good Artists, Bad People

By Scarlet Sanders



Neil Gaiman is a highly acclaimed and extremely prolific author of short fiction, novels, comic books, graphic novels and screenplays. Amongst his most famous works are *Coraline* (a well-loved children's story which was gorgeously brought to life in a 2009 stop motion film of the same name), *Good Omens* (a collaborative effort with Sir Terry Pratchett which spawned a two series TV show and garnered itself a highly dedicated fan following), and *The Sandman* (which was similarly adapted into a drama in 2022, this time by entertainment juggernaut Netflix). Gaiman has won various awards for his creative endeavours and is much loved for his rich narratives, complex characters, and distinct voice as an incredibly skilled storyteller. Neil Gaiman is a good writer. He is also, allegedly, a serial rapist.

When news of the sexual assault and misconduct allegations against Gaiman first surfaced in July of 2024, fans were shocked. Following the release of the *Vulture* exposé in January of this year, I watched as this same shock and disbelief resurfaced in online spaces for a second time. There is a deep sense of betrayal that goes along with realising that your favourite writer — praised by readers and critics alike for his work — might also be one of the worst people you could possibly imagine. That feeling elicits a reaction.

Among the many common responses I saw on platforms like Tumblr and X, there were two very prevalent ones I found concerning: 1) pretending as if Neil Gaiman had nothing to do with his works, and that they were authored by someone else, and 2) declaring Gaiman's writing to be entirely awful, and insisting that it always has been. Both of these approaches to the issue prioritise our personal comfort as consumers of Gaiman's creative endeavours. In the case of the former, it is much easier to delude ourselves into believing that, say, Hatsune Miku, the cutesy, teal-haired, (and most importantly, entirely made-up) vocaloid "wrote" the works we hold so dearly, than having to confront the fact that we resonate with and find comfort in books written by an rumored real-life rapist. In the case of the latter, we might accept that Gaiman has been accused of several inexcusable offenses, but we deny the possibility that he could ever have created anything of merit. Neither of these approaches actually deal with the truth. *Good Omens* was not co-authored by Hatsune Miku, it was co-authored by an alleged rapist. It's also a great piece of fiction. Allowing these two truths to coexist is vitally important — the supposed morality of a man and the quality of the art he produces do not directly correlate, and it is dangerous to be misled into believing that they do.

Note: all claims referenced in this article are alleged and have not been reliably corroborated.

Sources cited: *Vulture*, "There Is No Safe Word", 2025

So, what do we do with Gaiman? Indeed, what do we do with any remarkable piece of art created by a monster? How do we make sense of the dissonance between books that so often preach kindness, and a man who has supposedly displayed such intense and brutal malice in his actions? Where does the love we have for his stories go? What about our anger, now we might know what was going on behind the scenes? These questions are difficult to answer. Gaiman is an example of an issue that's been debated for years amongst artists and writers. We've seen many similar situations throughout history, with the likes of Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin and Virginia Woolf, among others. Unfortunately, a clear solution has yet to reveal itself. Arguments can be made for a variety of suggestions, but no true consensus has been reached — it's possible it may never be reached.

Ultimately, whether or not we can separate art from artist, and how, is a question most of us will have to answer ourselves.

Maybe you'll try to engage in that strange sort of maths we often find ourselves compelled to do when we encounter situations like Gaiman's — points given for the positive impact of his books and their representation, then deducted for his alleged sexual offences, then added back on for his charity work, and so on and so on until he can be filed into a neat little chosen category of either 'Good' or 'Bad'. Maybe you'll opt for a complete and indiscriminate boycott of the works of any immoral artists, even those we consider important to history. Maybe you'll attempt to make a distinction between artists who are dead and artists who are living, bring up profit or the right to defend oneself to support your argument. Personally, I believe the first and most important move we can make is simply to acknowledge the problem. Engage with the issue. Recognise that good artists aren't always good people. Sit with the discomfort of the fact without shying away from it. Then, maybe, our next steps might be navigated.



Are GCSEs in England purposefully designed so some fail and others succeed?

By Jenson Morris

Which is better: England or Wales?

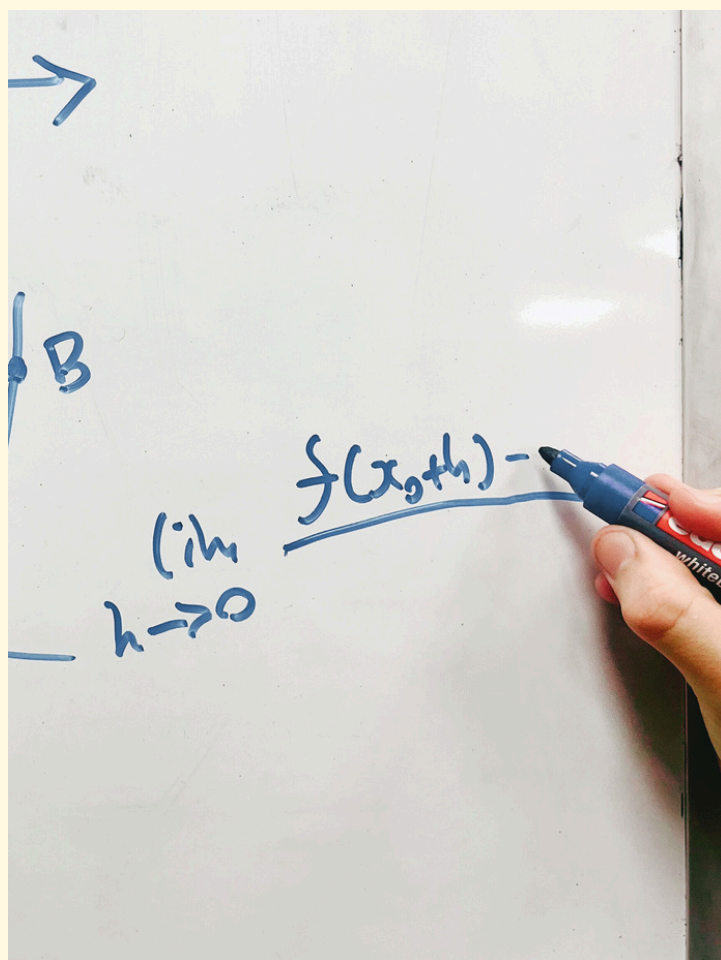
Did you know that, in Wales, students do more or less the same qualifications as those in England with exams spread across both years of learning? Unlike in England, where all exams are linear and bunched up into the last year of learning, Welsh students sit the first paper of a GCSE at the end of year ten, followed by the second paper of a GCSE at the end of Year 11.

This system allows students to focus on specific pieces of knowledge at a time and reduces their workload by 50%, as they only need to know the content they've done recently. This means their revision will be easier (as there's less information to cram in) and, when it comes to the exam, they won't have to remember the entirety of their course, just some parts. These qualities make GCSEs in Wales easier to manage.

However, England forces students to retain knowledge from both years of learning in the space of two months at the end of the course. For most this is too stressful, and eradicates the joy of learning. England has designed this system to adhere to the scarce few whose brains work faster. But at the age of 15 and 16 the majority of children's brains aren't developed enough to be able to retain all of this information and apply it in an exam situation.

Therefore, the majority of students underperform in their GCSEs and don't live up to their full potential because the system is designed specifically for few people, instead of taking into account that students learn differently and recall knowledge in different ways. Whilst a minority do excel in recalling under pressure, for most, it's too much to cope with at such a young age. While the

Welsh system doesn't fully eradicate stress and anxiety, it still makes the process easier for its students. In England it's the opposite — the way the system is designed isn't applicable to every student, and is thus an unfair setup which doesn't benefit everyone.



One way of thinking

However, you could say this was done on purpose. Why are GCSEs in England designed so that some excel and some crumble under the pressure? It may be to encourage that there's a universal way of thinking, and that only this method of thinking will help you succeed in life, when in reality this isn't true.

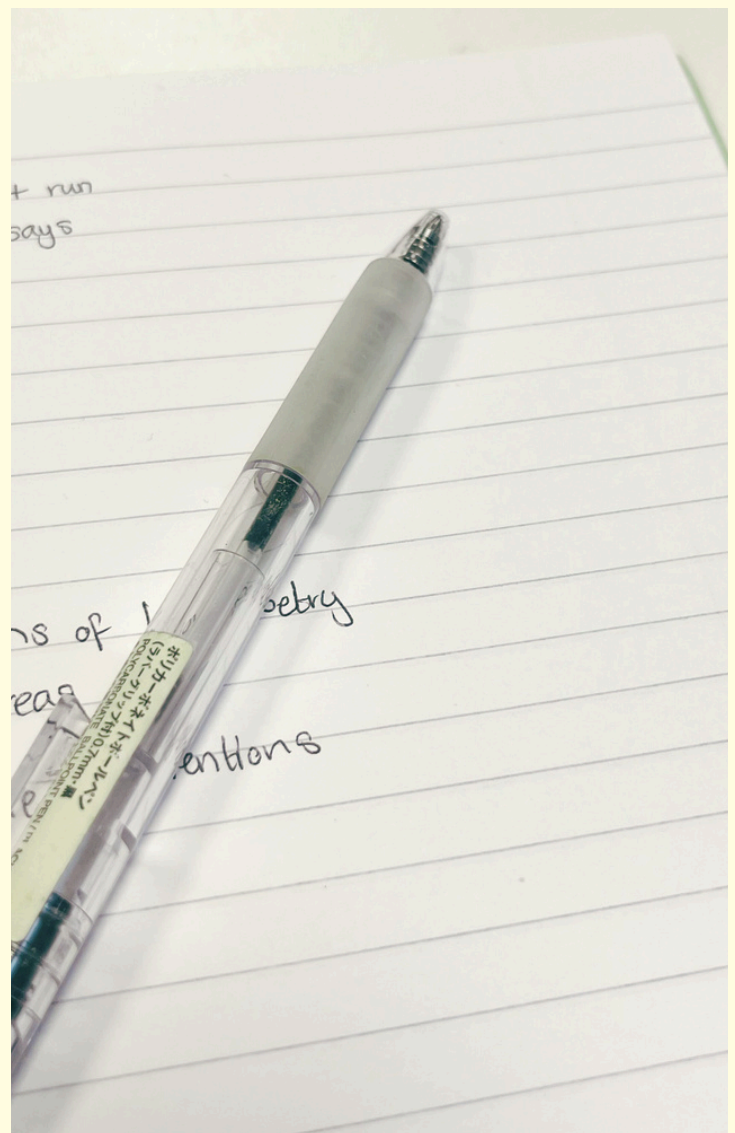


Additionally, this implies that the government thinks that if people don't adopt this way of thinking, they won't succeed in society. This is not the case. People who have unconventional ways of thinking and failed their GCSEs make names for themselves in their workplaces and succeed because they go against what the government has conditioned society to believe. So, people still succeed regardless if they fail at GCSEs, but why should this be the case? Shouldn't the government want everyone to succeed and do well rather than structuring the system so that only a select few can do well because other ways of learning and thinking are seen as inferior?

All I know for certain is that we can only do the best we can with the educational resources we have. If they Government want more, then perhaps they need to explore the wider issues.

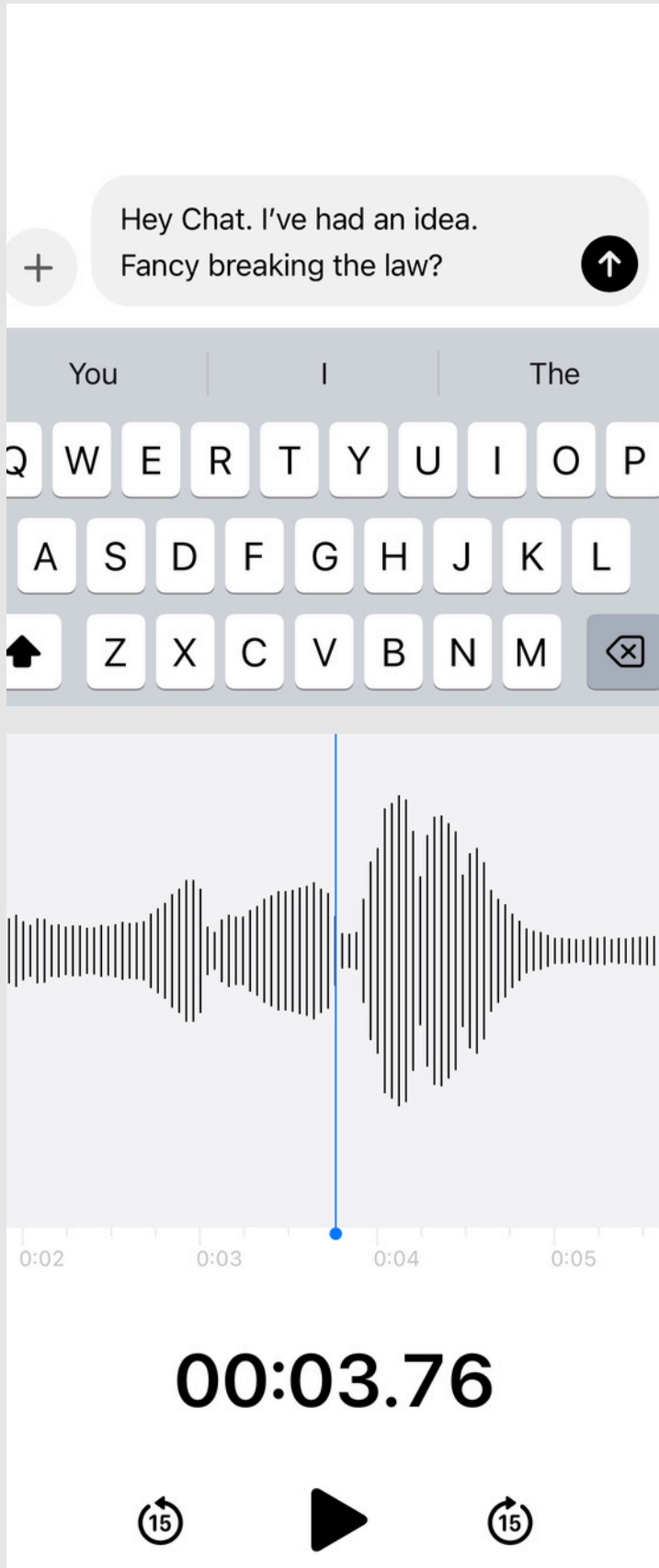
The English government designs GCSEs in a way that is suited to those who are successful at being able to cram and retain large amounts of information at once. This learning style is idolised by the government and indirectly encouraged through the way that GCSE examinations are structured and organised. The problem here is that idolising this learning style means students who have different learning styles question their worth and learning ability. In reality, a person could be very intelligent, but not have this intelligence brought out through GCSE exams in England.

The government conditions some students to think that the way they think isn't the right way. This encourages society to think that there is a universal way of thinking and applying knowledge when really there isn't. There are multiple different ways and the design of GCSEs encourages a universal thinking method that is far from reality.



AI and Crime

By Scarlet Sanders



We've all seen it advertised. AI is happy to take on the role of your teacher, your coworker, your therapist, and your very best friend. It'll even be your partner in crime...

In 2025, crime isn't new. It's been around for a while. Since practically the dawn of time, people have been pilfering, deceiving, killing, maiming, and smashing things up. For whatever reason, the human race has decided it's probably okay with a bit of self-destruction, and if you didn't know that by now I'd be pretty surprised. Crime isn't new.

Neither, at this point in time, is AI. Sure, it's a fair bit younger than the printing press, sure, it's developing very quickly, and sure, it's certainly been branded as "innovative" and "never-before-seen" tech. But the first ever generative pre-trained transformer, which puts the GPT in ChatGPT, launched in 2018. That's seven years ago now. If GPT-1 were a human child, this year of its life would likely include milestones such as learning to ride a bike or tying its own shoelaces. AI isn't really all that new. In fact, it's got a fair few candles on its birthday cake.

So, if crime isn't new, and neither is AI, then why all the fuss? Why bother wasting time writing and reading about things we're all already used to? Well, there's one more part of the equation that I've been leaving out. And that's us. Because although crime and AI are not novel concepts, the ways that we've started using the latter to facilitate the former definitely are. Despite the fact that use of generative AI for criminal purposes is still in the development stage, we've already seen it have an impact on things such as DDoS attacks, phishing, and fraud, according to the Centre for Emerging Technology and Security.

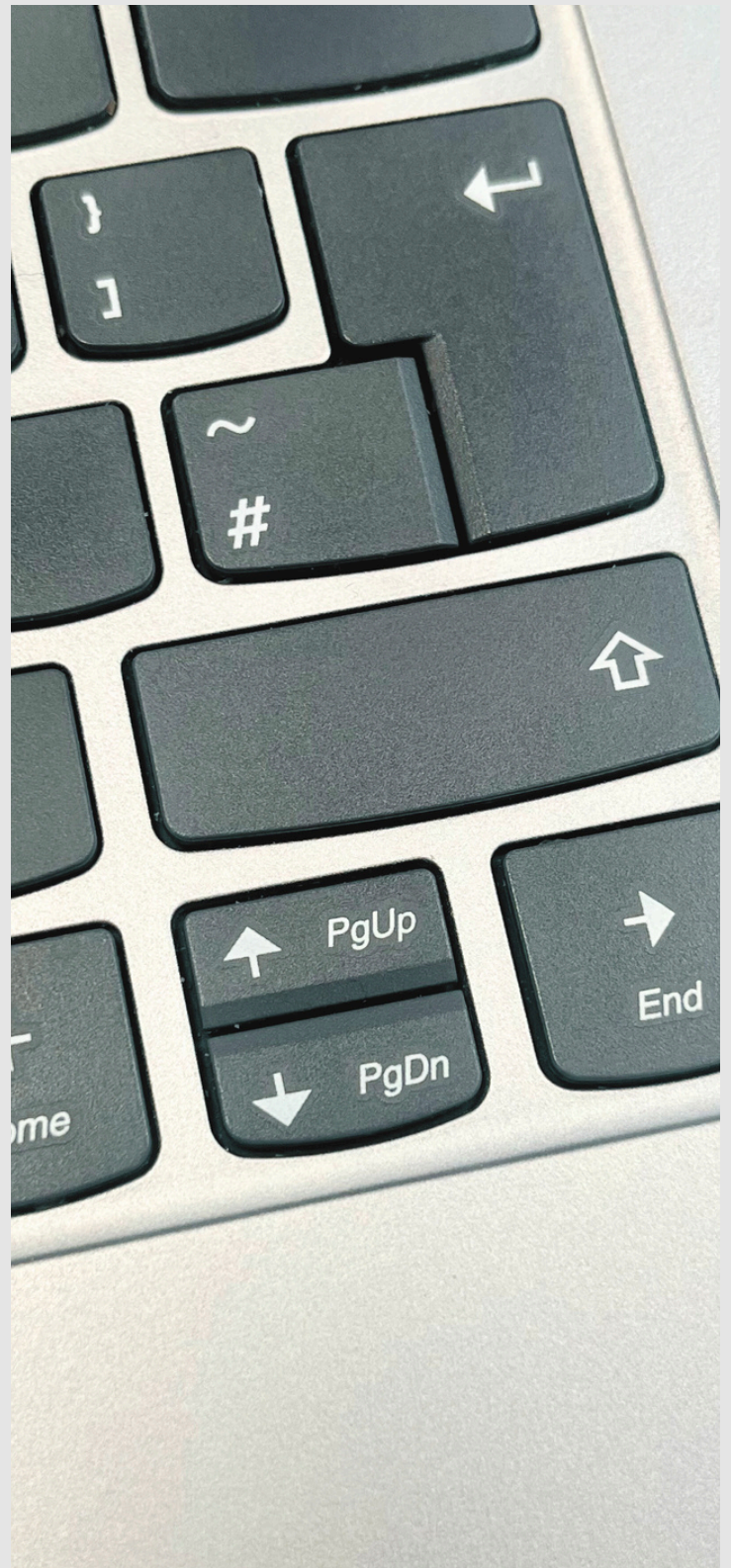
Its involvement in these offences not only makes them easier for established criminals to carry out and get away with, it also handily lowers the barriers of entry for people looking to get started. That means that cybercriminals are seeing more success, and there's a larger number of them floating around the internet than ever before.

What does that mean for students, then? Well, your average Joe isn't likely to be in charge of Amazon Web Services (that title currently goes to CEO Matt Garman). But although we can probably rule out cyberattacks as cause for concern amongst the general public, there's one area where we should stay increasingly vigilant: scams. See, something that AI is remarkably good at is deception. You've probably seen it on your TikTok For You page, you watch a video that looks real, laugh at it or like it, open the comments, and then find out that it's a mere fabrication, conjured up by a computer. Unfortunately, we're becoming increasingly susceptible to being duped by generated photos and videos. It's the ultimate postmodern nightmare. As Joshua Cunningham describes it for *Issues in Information Systems*, we're seeing the rise of "simulacra on steroids".

It's not just images that are getting us, either. AI can steal your voice just as well as it can your face, and criminals are using this to impersonate people's loved ones and persuade them into parting with their money. With as little as 60 seconds of audio, speech patterns can be cloned, emergency situations can be manufactured, and well-meaning family members can be exploited. And whilst in the past these soundbites may have been unable to fool the younger generation, that doesn't look to be the case anymore. In the face of a polished AI voice scam, you could be just as vulnerable as your grandparents who don't know their way around an iPhone.

So, what can be done? Really, the onus is on our governments and police forces to come down hard and fast on inappropriate use of AI tech. The 2024 EU Artificial Intelligence is certainly a step in the

right direction when it comes to regulating this, with most of the remaining stipulations set to apply from August 2026 onwards. In the meantime, we've got to be wary of the power of AI when it comes to crime. Things such as family passwords to protect against voice scams and learning common tells of AI-assisted fraudsters can help keep us safe as the lines between what is real and what is fake begin to blur together more and more.



A Rising Passion for Justice

By Caitlin Kelly

Why has there been a strong attraction to criminal law and what is the passion behind pursuing a career as a criminal lawyer?

In this article, I am going to discuss the subject of law, especially criminal law, and why the subject area is becoming increasingly appealing.

What exactly is criminal law?

Understanding what criminal law exactly is: it's the body of law that defines criminal offences, regulates the apprehension, charging and trial of suspected persons and fixes penalties and modes of treatment applicable to convict offenders. In a nutshell, criminal law deals with crimes and their punishment and defines what constitutes a crime.

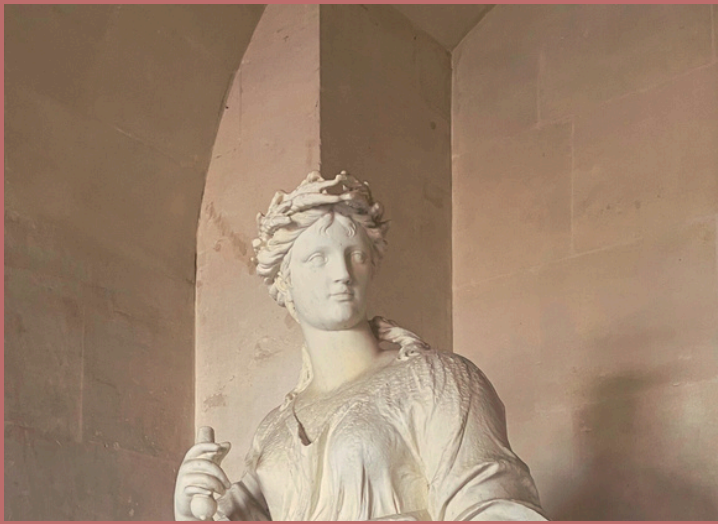
What has been the history of criminal law and law in general?

You may be wondering, where did criminal law originate from? Criminal law is a creature of the common law, that is judge-made law. Some of the most important crimes have their source in the common law. Murder and manslaughter are examples of such. Over time, criminal law has been known for investigating cases, finding relevant sources, evidence and preparing all the relevant documentation for court. In England, the development of common law during the Middle Ages was pivotal. After the Norman conquest in 1066, King Henry II established a system of royal courts, which helped standardise laws across the country. This period saw the emergence of jury trials and the distinction between felonies and misdemeanours.

Now we've covered the background of criminal law, what are the positive passions about the specific subject?

Even though being subject to criminal prosecution is extremely bad, being a criminal lawyer has its perks in helping society. For example, some positive aspects of being a criminal lawyer could include a passion for justice — many criminal defence attorneys are driven by a strong belief in the importance of protecting the rights of individuals. Other examples are the desire to help others, desire for advocacy and a great impact on society you could achieve in this law firm. These passions in criminal law increase the greater impact on society. Your passion and commitment to the subject is important in helping people with their cases and keeping law alive.





If someone is so passionate about criminal law and being a criminal lawyer, what is the attraction that is increasing each year that brings more and more people to the subject?

Normally the attraction of criminal law stems from the interest of criminology and the fascination as to why someone may commit a crime. In A level and GCSEs, the subjects of sociology, psychology, law and criminology have become more accessible which therefore might pique the interest in someone towards the works of crime, deviance and punishment. The increase of pupils in this subject every year highlights that the discovery of criminal law and law itself may be initiated by these courses and motivates students to go forward with this career choice. Overall, the combination of a desire for justice, intellectual engagement, societal impact, diverse career options and the human element makes criminal law an attractive field for many.

There are many positives of being in the criminal law field, but what are the challenges of the profession?

Although being a criminal lawyer may be mostly fulfilling, criminal defence lawyers often experience burnout, depression and PTSD due to the intense nature of their work. Ethical lawyers may constantly wonder if they made the right decision or whether the defendant deserved to be punished for their crimes. It is often that criminal lawyers may question themselves constantly.

Overall, this area of law can be emotionally draining and quite stressful for some. It is always best to check if this career choice is the best and if you are passionate and ready to commit to this specific type of job.

What has caused the increase in popularity for criminal law?

From this discussion, we can gather that the increase in criminal law could be pinpointed on the discovery of the career through the subjects of law, sociology, psychology and criminology that are introduced at GCSEs and A levels. Criminal law has equal positive and negative aspects to the work, so if you are interested in the opportunity, you should really decide if criminal law is really what you want to choose.

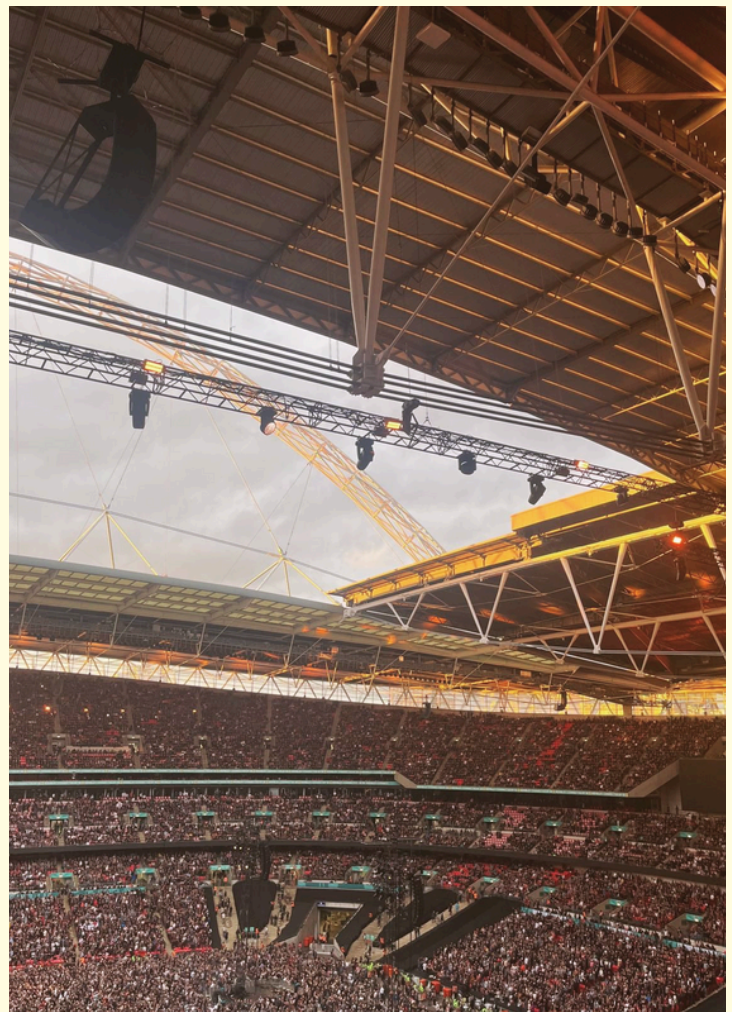


The Folk Resurgence

By Scarlet Sanders

“Here’s a new one”, announces Timothée Chalamet in *A Complete Unknown*, kitted out in his iconic Bob Dylan get-up at a filmic re-enactment of the 1964 Newport Folk Festival. This is his introduction to “The Times They Are a-Changin’”, and even as the movie whisks us back to the sixties with its retro aesthetics and Timmy’s vintage Levi’s, it’s hard to ignore just how hard the song still hits in our current climate. That’s true for a lot of the songs, actually - for folk numbers from about sixty years ago, their lyrics are remarkably relevant in 2025. Maybe this is why these performances have struck a chord with people, as reflected by Dylan’s recent popularity boost; the week after the movie opened, digital and physical Bob Dylan album sales nearly doubled. Additionally, the film’s version of ‘It Ain’t Me Babe’ gained traction on TikTok, and you should consider yourself exceptionally lucky if you’ve managed to avoid the many heart-breaking edits of doomed lovers set to Monica Barbaro’s gorgeous vocals. But *A Complete Unknown* isn’t the only instance of folk music beginning to infiltrate the mainstream. Modern folk singer Jesse Welles, for example, has seen some success too. Videos of him “singing the news” with his guitar went viral earlier this year, with some racking up up to fifteen million views. Folk might just be seeing a comeback. But why now?

To understand the recent resurgence, it might be useful to look at how the genre gained popularity back in the age of Dylan. The 1960s were a time of increased political tension, especially in the United States where the revival took place. Threats of nuclear war, JFK’s assassination, civil rights protesting and a worsening disconnect between



generations, made for a decade of revolution, which has since become famous for its countercultural currents. And the revival of American folk music was intrinsically linked to the political climate in which it was taking off. Folk was for everyone, and it was through folk that many singers were able to resist against the oppression and war of their times. Pete Seeger, a leading figure of the genre who influenced countless other artists, was a dedicated social activist, and made great waves even despite being blacklisted for suspected communist affiliations. In a 2020 essay, scholar Nicholas Booker dubs him “the primary political actor in the second wave of the folk revival”, and Seeger’s music provided somewhat of a soundtrack for many political groups at the time. His songs helped to fuel change, and this was the case for a lot of folk artists working alongside him. Perhaps the most famous example of the intersection between folk music and political protest is the performances given at the 1963 March on Washington, where sixties folk greats including Dylan and Baez joined a vast array of influential figures in activism to perform their music before a crowd of 250,000 people.

This long-standing relationship between folk music and political activism might be able to inform the motivations for the interest in it now. As almost every newspaper article around will tell you, we are living in unprecedented times — indeed, it’s hard for any of us young people to even imagine “precedented” times in the first place. And with the re-election of Donald Trump in America earlier this year, tensions have only been ramping up. Our world is seeing some concerning developments — renewed popularity for AfD in Germany and similar parties across Europe appears to indicate that far-right ideas are gaining more traction, rights for women and LGBTQ+ people seem to be being rolled back in multiple different countries, and antisemitism, racism, queerphobia and xenophobia are all becoming reportedly more normalised. War and conflict in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan have become massive topics of conversation, seeing continued coverage, and 92 countries are involved in conflicts beyond their borders as of June 2024 according to the Global Peace Index. It’s no wonder a lot of people are beginning to feel uneasy when looking to the future.



Folk music has always been the people’s music. In the past, it promoted community, united us, and allowed musicians from all walks of life to find their voices in a powerful way. It’s a tool for both peace and protest, and anyone can join in — if you can sing, no matter how badly, then you can be a part of it. With everything that’s going on in the world right now, it’s frankly not surprising that it’s seen a spike in popularity. And, watching covers of old folk greats multiply by the minute on social media, I’m struck with a real sense of excitement. This music is inspiring people. That’s important. As history has shown us, inspired people can do truly great things, and in a time where it feels like everyone is becoming increasingly more hopeless, it’s refreshing to see protest music begin to return into the public eye. Our times are no doubt a-changin’, just as they were back in ‘64. It’s possible that we’re about to see some major shifts. And folk is on its way back to fuel them.

Carmilla:

Gothic Horror or Lesbian Romance?

By Jasmine Oates

Carmilla is a gothic novel published in 1872 that is argued to be the first introduction of the vampire, predating Stoker's *Dracula* by 25 years. The novel is set in a castle in Styria, and written from the perspective of Laura as a recollection of memories. She experiences inconsistent visits from Carmilla in the form of dreams and visions, from her infancy until the end of her teenage years, when Carmilla unexpectedly bursts into her life in the physical form of a weak, disabled fellow young girl. She is offered refuge by Laura and her father, the sole residents of the castle, and from this point on forms a deep relationship with Laura, to be unveiled at the end of the novel that this is her chosen form of hunt.

The deep bond that Laura and Carmilla form during their time together, is one that exists beyond the boundaries of friendship. There is a clear underlying homoeroticism within their relationship; the two kiss and embrace each other, Laura cries and grows restless during a period of Carmilla's disappearance, and they spend their days close together, both physically and emotionally. But the romance ends with the conclusion of the tale. The father of one of Carmilla's previous victims seeks revenge against the vampire, unveiling that she is a murderous, at least 150-year-old vampire who preys on young women by forming an emotional connection with them. In summary, Carmilla's homoerotic tendencies are twisted to be solely those of the vampire.

The novel was written by Sheridan Le Fanu, an Irish man, married to Susanna Bennett. It was one

of many literary works written and published within the Victorian era, and this had a clear impact on the character development of the vampire. Whilst not being outwardly homophobic in his lifetime, Le Fanu plays on Victorian fears of 'otherliness' to create his monster, and the most prevalent in the novel is sexual otherliness. Homosexuality was feared in the Victorian times. It was seen as immoral and as a threat to societal order, family structure and Religion. Carmilla can be viewed as a homosexual through her relationship with Laura, and, through killing her victims, Carmilla further demonises homosexuality through this undeniable association of lesbianism with death.





So the novel in itself can be seen as homophobic portrayal of lesbianism; Carmilla meets Laura, an innocent young girl, and seduces her, gaining her trust only to murder her. Through her character, Le Fanu demonises queerness in Victorian society, and utilises a preexisting fear of queerness to solidify his character as a monster, and the genre of his novel as a gothic horror.

However, in modern contexts, the vampire Carmilla, and her appointed 'girlfriend' Laura are seen in a positive light — as lesbian representation. Whilst there is an undeniable surge of reclamation in modern queer culture, (such as the word *queer* itself) it is unusual that Carmilla should be included in this. Her homosexuality in itself is what was demonised, and even through modern

readings it is undeniable that the vampire Carmilla twists homosexuality into a monstrous trait to serve the purpose of the creation of a gothic novel. It is Carmilla's homosexual tendencies which accompany her manipulation, exploitation and attempted murder of Laura, in a way, homosexuality is her fatal flaw. And yet, her character is reclaimed, adaptations of her story are made, and the genre of her respective novel belongs no longer solely to the gothic, but to queer literature too.

Perhaps this is due to the abundant lack of lesbian media in both modern and historical times. *Carmilla* offers something rare to modern readers — shameless queer love, tenderness and sexuality, all traits which manufactured this as horror to Le Fanu's original, target readers. And by being written in the Victorian era, the novel offers an authentic gothic quality, which is a stark contrast to modern queer literature. Furthermore, the character of the vampire itself is empowering to modern queer readers. Vampirism offers a unique, shamelessly erotic quality and associating this alongside queerness provides a unique sense of empowerment.

Homosexuality in the novel is blatant and unforgiving, and whilst this previously was used to manufacture fear, it is now empowering in modern times. It is barefaced and proud, existing in harmony with modern pride.



Love, Mr. Milchick: An Analysis of the Typography in Apple TV's Severance

By Scarlet Sanders



It's safe to say that 2025 has been intense. There's been many a blaring headline since the first of January, and most of them haven't been particularly cheery. Despite this, there is at least one thing more positive to celebrate — it's been a great year for TV. In particular, Apple TV's *Severance* saw a renewed popularity around March, with the weekly release of its long-awaited season two fuelling fan theories, think pieces and discussion posts. Its widespread critical acclaim is seriously impressive — the show won eight Emmys in September and even managed to beat out *Ted Lasso* for its host service's most popular asset. One of the big things that I think has really drawn people in is its intentionality. Everything within the world of *Severance* is there for a reason. Each detail is important, which is probably what's motivated the many long Tumblr text posts breaking down the symbolism in the show. This makes each episode a joy to watch. Everyone seems to notice different things. For some, it's picking up that Irving's dog is called Radar, and linking that back to his wellness session with Ms. Casey. For others, it's realising that the elevator didn't complete its three-note chime when Helena entered the severed floor. And for me, it's the typography.

Welcome to Macro Data Refinement.



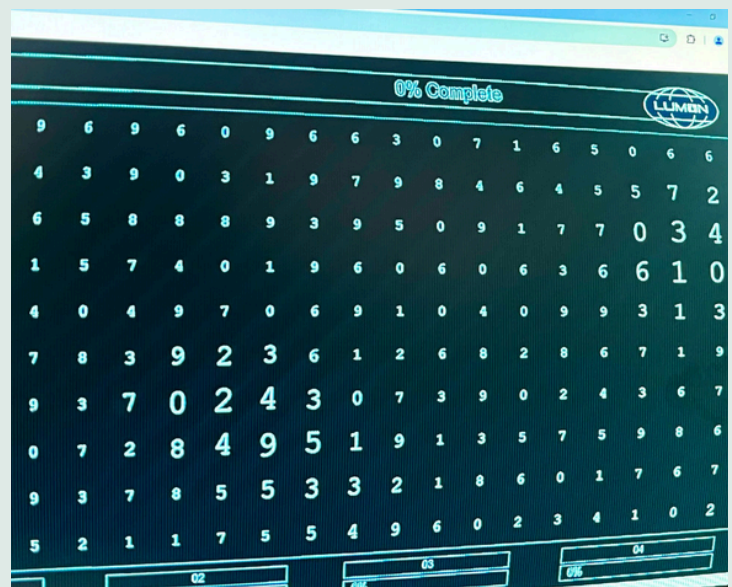
Thank you for choosing LUMON.

Take for example the title card in episode one. *Severance's* title card uses left-aligned Helvetica, and this makes total sense for the show. Helvetica is a staple in corporate spaces like Lumon Industries. If you're going for business-like, this font is your best friend.

It's the bread and butter of thousands of visual identities around the world, and its pervasiveness cannot be understated. Just today, you're guaranteed to have seen Helvetica upwards of at least 10, 15 times in logos, signage, posters, newspapers, websites. You probably didn't formally recognise it as Helvetica (really, who's that much of a font fanatic?), but subconsciously you knew what it was, what it looked like, and that you'd seen it before. Its clarity, uniformity and neutrality has ensured it a place in the typography hall of fame pretty much forever, and we've been implementing it in our corporate design for decades.

As Haefner writes in "Ubiquitous Design: A Study of Popular Fonts and Typographic Understanding", the use of Helvetica has been so widespread for so long that the font "almost exists outside of time". This links neatly with the wider production design on *Severance*. Kier, where the majority of the show takes place, is purposely designed to be fairly ambiguous time-wise. We know where the show is set, but the when is less concrete. Mark drives a 1997 Volvo, Petey carries a 2000s flip phone, and MDR's various tech all skews pretty 70's, even as the team of innies working for the department are the products of exceptionally advanced science. What better font to use then, for a show playing with this kind of blurry-edged retro futuristic aesthetic, than Helvetica, which is practically removed from time altogether?

Except, the font used for *Severance's* title card isn't Helvetica. It looks like it, sure. It's very close to it. If I showed you a picture of the title card, and then a picture of the title set in Helvetica, you'd struggle to tell me the difference. Nevertheless, the font used isn't Helvetica. It's actually a custom font, created especially for the show by typographer Teddy Blanks. Not-quite-Helvetica (as I started calling it in my notes for this article) takes Helvetica as a foundation, then makes subtle changes to it to make it seem ever so slightly "off". This is, at least to me, genius.



A lot of *Severance* is to do with quietly unsettling the audience. Even from the beginning of episode one, we feel already that something is wholly wrong. We might not be able to instantly discern it, but we're aware that things aren't entirely as they seem, and part of the appeal of the show is watching each new puzzle piece slot into place as we work towards discovering the true mystery at the heart of the storyline. This is why Not-quite-Helvetica is so perfect for the title card. We know what that font is supposed to look like — we see it all the time. When it's altered, we feel unnerved, even if we can't consciously explain why. From just the typography, we know that something darker is afoot. Pair that with Shapiro's eerie main theme, Latta's freaky 3D animation, and dubious brain surgery, and you've set the perfect stage for a psychological thriller.

Elsewhere in the show, there's another interesting font that sees a lot of screen time: Forma DJR. This is Lumon's preferred font in-universe. We see it used for the apology note Mark receives after his intercom-induced head injury, in a lot of Lumon's copy and in the booklet Milchick is given during his performance review. It's a fairly unassuming font. It slots in easily with the rest of the show's aesthetic, and nothing about it really draws attention. But during a recent season one rewatch, it stood out to me for one particular reason: Forma DJR is a redesign.

More specifically, it's a redesign of a 1968 Nebiolo font, Forma, which largely disappeared from the design game just ten years after it was released. This had me interested.

A font being a redesign is particularly exciting, because it means that a team of typographers have intentionally altered aspects of it with a precise new aim in mind. What I wanted to know then was this: how does Forma DJR differ from its former (ha!) sixties iteration? And, more importantly, why does it differ? Luckily, DJR's website had some answers. Forma DJR doesn't just take its inspiration from the original Forma drawings — instead, it incorporates some of the imperfections that arise as a result of the physical printing process. Metal, ink and paper don't always abide by the rules, and small imperfections like rounding on the corners of certain letterforms or subtle unevenness are inevitable. But it's these details that can really help to bring a font to life. So, even when afforded ways of circumventing these problems by their digital technology, DJR's team brought a few of these imbalances across for the revival.

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The work is **mysterious** and *important*.

Severance. Severance.

Severance. Severance.

The board has concluded the call.

Personally, I think this gives it a really down-to-earth feel. The businesslike, mid-century modern accuracy of the font is tempered by its slight wonkiness, making it feel real and authentic even as it continues on Helvetica's corporate vibe. This gels super well with how Lumon wants to be perceived as a company. Throughout *Severance*, Lumon works tirelessly to maintain its veneer of faux benevolence. Think Natalie's unnervingly forced customer service smile, the Pip's vouchers which are expected to act as panaceas, or the "please come back!" pineapples Milchick (incredibly stylishly) delivers to the MDR team. Everything at Lumon revolves around image. They forge mythologies and implement sugary rhetoric to allow their torturous treatment of their employees to slip under the radar. Forma DJR supports this agenda nicely. It's professional enough to lend Lumon credibility, whilst also being warm and quirky enough to be endearing.

Typography is a little-known art, and that's kind of by design — good typography blends in. A font being especially noticeable to a general audience usually means something's gone wrong. But it's really nice to be able to highlight and analyse the great work of *Severance*'s design team. Not every show allows for that. *Severance*'s typographic excellence is reflective of its overall quality, and it's exciting to see a series like it come out. It's easy to tell just how much the people behind the show care about creating good TV. And with a third season on the horizon in coming years, I really hope that such artistry will continue to thrive in the world of television.

Photography courtesy of Scarlet Sanders

Make Gothic Chic Again

By Florence van Huet and Freya Marshall

With the 1922 German expressionist classic *Nosferatu* returning to our screens through the eyes of Robert Egger's last year, gothic horror has never been more talked about since the late 18th century. And now, Jacob Elordi has risen into the role of Mary Shelley's 19th century monster *Frankenstein* a year after the first dark film frenzy. But why do modern audiences keep devouring these Victorian adaptations, and what is it about them that makes Emerald Fennel want to join the party with her controversial *Wuthering Heights*?

Nosferatu was a smash hit for both film lovers and horror lovers alike with constant talk online and in critical circles, reigniting the flame of gothic cinema. Most of the excitement was centred around the gripping visuals, both cinematography and costume — evident by the four Oscar nominations for cinematography, costume, makeup and production design. The decadent dresses, striking mise en scène and bruised colour grade all encapsulates a vibe from another world. The Gothic look went mainstream, and it hasn't stopped. *Frankenstein* grasps us with the same attention to detail, most significantly in Elordi's transformation from internet boyfriend to a stitched up monster. As will be explored later, the appeal of internet icons like actresses Lily-Rose Depp and Mia Goth in these films drives their cultural impact. So perhaps these 19th century classics are being modernised by famous faces, that make it relevant and enjoyable to modern audiences, whilst maintaining the gritty and brooding atmosphere that the original architects and authors intended by the original movement.



With the rise of stars such as Ethel Cain and Charli XCX's current gothic turn with the release of 'House' featuring The Velvet Underground's John Cale, it's no wonder that the internet is going gothic for the 2025 winter season. As mentioned previously, films such as *Nosferatu* and *Frankenstein* have majorly inspired Gothic styles within certain niches on social media, many fans stating they wish they had Lily Rose Depp's long black hair, aptly naming it "Gothic Victorian Chic". To circle back to music, Ethel Cain's 2022 album *Preachers Daughter* gained a lot of traction on social media last year causing the internet to fall in love with the Southern Gothic aesthetic. Fans loved the storyline that came with the album: the fact that Ethel Cain is in fact a fictional character basing the themes off of the woman behind the name Hayden Silas Anhedonia's own religious trauma. The music carries a dark Gothic genre alongside the dark gothic aesthetic the album carries. Cain also released two other albums this year, a drone album called *Perverts* inspired by the works of David Lynch, released a few weeks before he sadly passed. The other being named *Willoughby Tucker, I Will Always Love You*. which is the b-sides to the 2022 album *Preachers Daughter*.

Charli XCX's new song has been described as "dark wave" and features John Cale. Her new approach has the entire internet claiming they are ready for "gothic chic winter" and viewing it as a sequel to the stars "brat summer" that occurred last year. Models are also definitely inspiring this uprise, most notably Gabbriette — name dropped in Charli XCX's 2024 song '360' — who lends herself to a very 90's grunge Gothic style inspired by Angelina Jolie. Her look is defined by thin brows, cool tone makeup, leathers, lace, asymmetrical silhouettes and a lot of black.

While it seems a lot of new media is causing this comeback, there are many pre-existing factors that come into it. Notably, the rising popularity of David Lynch films within Gen Z, whether it is *Twin*

Peaks, *Blue Velvet* or *Lost Highway*, many of his films have rather gothic undertones and often lend themselves to the neo-noir genre, especially *Lost Highway* which features a heavy metal soundtrack mixed with jazz elements.

Finally, the rise of Gothic elements within younger generations' aesthetics may be in correlation to the rise of conservatism within politics, typically wearing more alternative styles within liberal space. While many people within the mainstream are leaning towards "clean girl" and "trad wife" aesthetics, which seem to be a reflection of the rise of conservatism and the republican government that is currently in power in America. Many people believe that the "trad wife" aesthetic is inherently harmful as it appeals to patriarchal ideas and possibly reinforces the outdated idea that women should remain to be housewives while their husbands work. Whereas the Gothic style that is rising is mainly picked up by alternative, liberal and often queer people to work as a rejection of republican and patriarchal views and a display of freedom and expression.



*"a rejection of republican and
patriarchal views and a display
of freedom and expression"*



Are the new Beatles biopics everything wrong with the film industry?

By Scarlet Sanders

Short answer: er, sort of?

In case you're not aware, April 2028 was officially announced as the set release date for an upcoming quartet of biopics featuring Liverpudlian legends The Beatles, and people... weren't very happy. And no, it wasn't just the middle-aged men who are weirdly protective of the Fab Four's legacy (although, rest assured, they are definitely not pleased). It was kind of... everyone? At least, I can't say I've ever seen that many people vocally imploring that a cast list be revealed to be an April Fool's joke before. But The Beatles are one of the most popular bands of all time. So, why is no one hyped?

Personally, I think this is bigger than The Beatles (sorry, boys). In fact, I think the issues people have with these films are actually plaguing the film industry at large. Let's run down a few of the main complaints and see what we've got.

Number One: Seriously? They've got baldy from Stranger Things playing George Harrison?

One of the biggest causes for upset so far has been the list of actors lined up to play each of the main focuses. A lot of fans have complained profusely about their resemblances (or lack thereof) to Ringo, George, John, and Paul. From my perspective, they're not really wrong either. Sure, film magic might be a thing, but hair and makeup artists can only do so much. Paul Mescal — or McCartney, in director Sam Mendes' eyes — has not long come off of *Gladiator II*, and although his Greek Adonis-esque bod is fine for daydreaming about, he doesn't really scream

Macca. The difference between the two is apparently so severe that user @gabu_moon took to X to helpfully suggest Mescal begin taking estrogen shots. Elsewhere amongst the four, Joseph Quinn has been assigned the task of portraying the quiet (fittest) Beatle, George Harrison. And although wigs do exist, it's certainly difficult to imagine him sporting George's signature luscious locks when the promotional photos feature him with a buzzcut.

Number Two: Hollywood And It's Six (6) Actors or Dear God, Please Don't Let Barry Keoghan Attempt That Accent Again

It's not just the fact that the cast don't look like their real life counterparts that's bothering prospective viewers. It's also the fact that they're so horrendously famous already. And yes, of course, chucking a bunch of hot celebs in your newest flick is a sure way to bring in an audience, but this is *The Beatles*. They're literally the best-selling band of *all time*. Why not cast a few unknowns for once, and give someone else a chance? After all, The Beatles' whole schtick was the fact that they were a bunch of normal lads from Liverpool. Would it really be so bad to cast, and stay with me now, a bunch of normal lads from Liverpool? That way they might at least get the accents right — although fellow *Saltburn* alumnus Jacob Elordi may have shocked us all in Guillermo Del Toro's recent adaptation of *Frankenstein* with his gorgeous portrayal of The Creature, I remain dubious about Barry Keoghan's ability to imitate Starr's signature Merseyside speech.



The Beatles at the Liverpool Docks, 20 February 1963.



Number Three: Biopic fatigue and jumping on the bandwagon

Never mind the cast list. Why are we even bothering with the films in the first place? Do we *really* need another biopic, let alone four of them? Personally, I don't think so. Let's consider the list of biopics that have been released in recent years. *Elvis*, *Oppenheimer*, *A Complete Unknown*, *The Apprentice*... it just goes on. And as I said, The Beatles were and are *massive* in the music scene. We have tonnes upon tonnes of books, interviews, films, and documentaries delving into their lives. But Hollywood does as Hollywood does, and biopics are easy money. They're familiar, which means they're able to capitalise off of nostalgia to attract big audiences, and they do well at awards. Rami Malek won Best Actor at the 2019 Oscars for his portrayal of Freddie Mercury, and the accolades for the leads of biographical films haven't stopped rolling in since. So, it doesn't matter if we're all sick to death of them — we're getting four more biopics from Mendes, and if they sell, which they no doubt will, you can bet we'll have even more on the horizon.

In conclusion, the upcoming Beatles movies are certainly somewhat of a reflection of the film industry's biggest flaws at the moment. The rotation of the same few celebs from project to project instead of promoting upcoming talent, the blatant miscasting as a result of this, and the money-motivated trend-following all invite critique. That's not to say that the films will be bad — I obviously haven't watched them yet, and they might well be outstanding pieces of cinema. But there's something to be said about the pessimistic responses to their announcements. The people are bored, and the blockbusters are getting stale. For me, it's either Hollywood changes tack, or I'm not going to bother buying more tickets to the films they shove down our throats, especially when the indie film scene right now is so vibrant.