



# The RGS Gazette

Issue 4 - December 2021

## COP 26: Final or Futile?



**By Monty Jarvis - Year 13**

COP, or UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties, happens every year and is hosted by different nations. This year's COP marks the 26th time leaders have come to discuss and attempt to solve climate change, with over 25,000 delegates from all over the world from 200 countries, crammed into the SEC centre in the heart of Glasgow. Although this may happen every year, this summit has occurred during a crucial time for the global economy, with the recovery from Covid and the expanding economies of India and China expected to be coal and oil intensive, the need to resolve disputes over climate change is paramount.

The first stage of the summit allowed world leaders and famous environmentalists to voice their concerns about the environment. Leaders were given three minutes to discuss their nations' environmental concerns, although "most leaders were waiting for their turn" said BBC's Adam Fleming, with both

Biden and Boris taking the time to sleep.

Although, there were a few key leaders that weren't present at COP26, notably Xi Jinping, the premier of China and the largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>, and Vladimir Putin, the Russian Premier and the third largest producer of fossil fuels. Although they both sent in their negotiators, the failure of both of them to show up has weakened the authority of this vital meeting.

Along with the swarms of suited delegates came a small army of protesters that amassed in Glasgow's city center. 100,000 young environmentalists with Greta Thurnberg at their head marched past the SEC centre protesting about the failure to act on climate change.

Aside from the emotive speeches by leaders and protestors, the real goal of COP is to find a solution, which is up to the army of civil servants,

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#### Henry on GB News

Henry Anderson discusses the recent downfall of GB News, and if they can ever make a comeback... find out more on page 4



#### Fighting for the Album

With album sales dwindling thanks to music streaming giants such as Spotify and Apple Music, can the classic album be considered obsolete? ...find out on page 10

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advisors and lobby groups who made up most of the delegates. Leaders are surrounded by interests, from poor nations, rich nations, and lobbyists which range from Greenpeace to Fossil Fuel advocates, in which they vote on proposals.

The week started on a high with the pledge to end deforestation by 2030 with an aim to regenerate old forests and jungles; alongside this, the funding of over 100 nations and private capital of \$19.2B combined with \$1.9B from Jeff Bezos. Major nations are to quit coal by 2030, with smaller and poorer nations by 2040, although there was disappointment when India committed to going green by 2070, which, let's face it, is too late.

For the first time, there was a full cash commitment by rich nations and banks to help poor nations transition and mitigate the effects of climate change with a whopping \$100 billion per year! However, poor nations were disappointed by the delay to compensate damage caused by climate change to the

next COP, despite rich nations agreeing initially to implement it this year.

Despite these drawbacks, nobody can deny that this COP has made real tangible and financial pledges that they haven't done before. This event has provided hope to the world, although the effects and how well leaders can keep their promises remain to be seen.

How is our school trying to tackle climate change by doing our part to save the environment? The work of the Estates Team, since Tanya Warner had joined the Resources team, has been steadily picking up pace in the last couple of years. In starting something as basic as the recycling of cardboard, pens, mechanical pencils and batteries. However, there is more that we can do, for example restarting the school Recycling Committee, founded in 2019 but abandoned during Covid. This committee aimed to connect with other schools and lay out new ideas for making our school more sustainable.



*A collection of some of the world leaders who attended*

**Photo of RGS by Gianni Mura**



# The Metaverse: Virtual upgrade or dystopia?

By Aydin Aslam-Denn - Year 10



With our reliance on technology becoming ever more apparent during the pandemic, it is clear that the future of humanity will be forever intertwined with the evolving digital world. Our global use of the online sphere for communication, recreation and commerce has prompted companies such as Mark Zuckerberg's Meta (formerly Facebook Inc.) to begin developing the metaverse: a virtual realm with "anything you can imagine". While the definition remains broad, it is hoped that the metaverse will combine digital environments and allow us to socialise and work in a more immersive manner, using equipment such as VR headsets. However, the development of this construct has received widespread condemnation, with its critics citing privacy and security as the main concerns.

The very nature of the metaverse encompasses a vast amount of possibility, but Meta's Chief Product Officer Chris Cox has begun to paint a picture of what it will look like. The familiar video calls that graced our screens during lockdown would be replaced with rooms of three-dimensional avatars, hosting everything from business meetings to family entertainment. "Spatial audio and body language" has long been something that video-

conferencing platforms have struggled to replicate, according to Cox, who hosted a meeting of colleagues using this very technology. The appearance of avatars in augmented reality is perhaps the best example of Meta's goal to make "the internet less flat".

Gaming and recreation are other areas which are already being woven into the metaverse, with many games already fulfilling the main target of the digital realm: being able to interact in real time with fellow players in realistic virtual universes. Despite plans to employ 10,000 workers for the cause, Meta has conceded that ownership of the metaverse should not be in the hands of just one company. Roblox, a vast game that links many real-time environments together, has expressed its own aspirations for the digital realm, suggesting that a "set of standards and protocols" would be required to create and maintain the metaverse. A notable feature of Roblox is the ability for avatars to communicate with each other. Although this is a social benefit and staple of modern gaming, it has often left users exposed to cyberbullying and harassment. It has been argued that the metaverse, an environment which transcends physical capabilities, would be even harder to police than the existing internet.

Currency is another element essential to the metaverse, with the question of secure transactions being a major point of debate; one demand of the online ecosystem is for transactions to be transparent and readily traceable. Cryptocurrency, according to some, is the answer to all of this. The integration of blockchains, and systems that instantly record transactions made in crypto, provide evidence regarding the activity of transactions within a network. Centralised cryptocurrencies, meanwhile, provide a relatively secure means of transaction for the metaverse due to the robust blockchain technology supporting them.

Clearly, the development of the metaverse is inevitable, and the lack of physical limitations has led Zuckerberg to speculate about processes such as the teleportation of avatars and the purchasing of digital clothing. At the most recent Meta showcase, he announced that being able to bring digital goods "from one experience to another" is a long-term goal of the metaverse. However, the companies responsible must first work hard to ensure that the social and economic challenges presented are addressed, so that we may be more connected in an environment that is beneficial to the human race.

# GoodBye News: The Fall and Fall of the 'robust' Station

By Henry Anderson - Year 12

GB News looked set to change British television news for the better. Carried by a wave of support, it embraced the cultural broadcasting revolution that it claimed so many Britons were desperate for. However, nowadays GB News is a different prospect, trailing by hundreds of thousands of daily viewers compared to its rivals. Andrew Neil himself stated there were a 'vast number of British people who feel undeserved and unheard by their media', and that the channel would champion 'robust, balanced debate'. So, GB News fell well below not only its own targets, but the hopes of its now dwindling viewer base, describing it as nothing other than a complete failure.

Most of this failure lies in the expectations they set and in the launch preparation, not in the channel itself. Funding for the channel was oversubscribed, with millions of pounds being raised from Arab investment firms and hedge fund managers alike. The channel was going to feature a mix of top broadcast journalists including the BBC's Andrew Neil, who took up the role of chairman as well as presenter, Sky News' Colin Brazier, and ITV's Alistair Stewart. Furthermore, to the delight of the right-leaning portion of Britain's media audience, the station was compared to America's Fox News and Australia's Sky News Australia for its predicted brand of opinionated debate. GB News set out to save British television from its steady decline, with viewership across all stations falling by an average 3 to 4% each year since 2016, so as to re-vitalize broadcast journalism and seize public discourse for the right.

Launch day of the 13th of June 2021 was a success, with around 336,000 viewers tuning in. However, the launch was stifled by audio and video problems like mics cutting out



erratically and grainy images at various points during the first 24-hours of broadcasting; these problems unsurprisingly put off a majority of the viewer-base. Moreover, the channel received a bombardment of reviews, with the likes of Chris Bennion of the Telegraph writing that the 'GB News message came through loud and clear'; on the other hand, Jemima Kelly of the Financial Times wrote 'GB News is so tedious... so whiny and frankly so low-quality'. At the absolute nadir of GB News' history, BARB (Broadcaster's Audience Research Board) recording audience figures of 0 twice on the 19th of July. GB News went from having a large and hopeful audience to an increasingly slim one, as dissatisfied viewers dissipated into the greater media audience. Simply, it didn't provide the news they wanted to hear. I think that rather than solely attracted to GB News as this exciting new, their base was more attracted to the proposition of an alternative to the stations they were tired of.

As audience figures dropped, drastic measures were taken to redeem the station from the depths of mediocrity. Technical problems were solved, broadcasters were moved to different time slots and different partnerships, but what stood out was Nigel Farage's move to the channel on a regular basis and a prime-time slot from 7-8 PM

Monday-Thursday. The first episode of Farage's show on July 19th attracted an average audience of 100,000, so Farage certainly restored some competitiveness to the fledgling station. The Farage fervour was short-lived however, when on the 13th of September, Andrew Neil announced he was stepping down as chairman and presenter after just hosting 8 episodes of his show. Somehow, one of the key proponents of the channel, who envisaged what it would come to achieve, was out the door within half a year of its launch.

Many TV News viewers wished for a station we would find both useful and entertaining, something that would appeal to our own viewpoints rather than the stale selection of channels seemingly breaking their promise of impartiality and drifting off to the left. Mark Thompson, former Director-General of the BBC, admitted in 2010 that of the people who worked for the BBC 'in terms of people's personal politics, which were quite vocal, a massive bias to the left'. In that same year, Sky News drew 652 Ofcom complaints due to perceived political bias during the second leader's debate for the 2010 General Election. Simply, GB News' right-wing alternative news could have provided greater balance in political discourse had it emerged without the various problems.

# Features

## Automation: Why is it taking over our jobs?

By Oscar Panayi - Year 9



Automation already exists in a major way in manufacturing. Here, robotic arms manufacture car bodies in a factory in Ontario

Ever since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the capabilities of computers and machines have been increasing at a rapid rate. Moore's Law states that the number of transistors doubles every two years. This has meant that the number of transistors has leapt up from a mere 1000 transistors in 1970 to reaching 50 billion in 2020. All this extra computing power can be used for automation which has numerous benefits over us puny humans, namely that machines cost less to maintain, they are many times more efficient and they do not suffer from boredom.

Just a few decades ago, using computers to complete complex surgical procedures would have been unheard of and potentially dangerous, however Computer Assisted Surgery is relatively commonplace now. With the advanced power of current computers this is not difficult to understand, with computers able to navigate surgical instruments more precisely than a human could through the patient's body.

A major example of this is shopping. In the past shopping used to be a physical thing. People would walk into stores, browse aisles and go to cashier to complete a physical transaction. However, nowadays this process is all automated. A few

clicks result in the goods being delivered right to the doorstep and the only humans involved are the customer and delivery. This automation is so quick and easy to use that it has now become the default way people buy things with 63 percent of goods now bought online. The likes of Amazon and Ebay have brought forward very real-world consequences with the slow demise of the high street leading to almost 50 shops a day closing for the first 6 months of 2021. This automation is present in almost every field now with everything from archeological digs to military operations involving technology that attempts to mimic what humans do, allowing people to focus on the truly important.

The future holds even more uncertainty. As artificial intelligence develops, there is a small possibility that automation itself will be automated. This would result in a world with very little human input and jobs thought unlikely to be replaced by computers such as lawyers and teachers may suddenly become automated. Humans would be sidelined in a world like the above with only Art, Music and

Literature remaining unable to be mechanized. For a large number of the population, this proposition is nothing less than terrifying with reputable sources such as the McKinsey Global institute predicting that over one quarter of the workforce will lose their jobs to computers by 2030.

Despite this, it is important to remember that the increase in software usage and robotics has also opened new opportunities in industry that have never been seen before. The software development industry especially has grown massively, valued at over 4 trillion dollars worldwide. Respected experts such as Amber Rudd say that AI 'driving the decline of banal and repetitive tasks' makes way for roles that require 'human sensibilities.' In essence, a lot of life is automation from cars to get us to places without relying on our feet to washing machines saving us time from washing clothes by hand. It is likely that automation will help humans in the long run as it has so far in human history.



*This Ocado warehouse is entirely run by machines. Customer orders are recieved and the robots move around on grids to pick up groceries and items. It then packages the items and leaves them for human drivers to deliver.*

# How do Curriculums Differ Across the World?

By Oscar Panayi - Year 9

From the memorizing drills of China's schools to the German government's strong opposition to school uniform, every country has a different view on how best to prepare children for adult life. These disparities can often have a widespread effect on the country in question, changing the markets and industry of a nation as well as having a huge social and cultural impact on the children and adults living there. Because of this, it is important to understand the fine balance of factors that govern the creation and maintenance of an educational system.

One such factor is the prioritization of different skills by areas of a country's curriculum. China, for example, stands by its emphasis on memorization of knowledge and vocational skills, employing specific learning techniques and drills to ensure that facts stay in students' long-term memory. This has meant that the agriculture and services industries, where memorization of specific knowledge and skills are most important, have flourished, while fields such as software engineering, which rely heavily on problem solving skills and "outside the box" thinking, are in high demand.

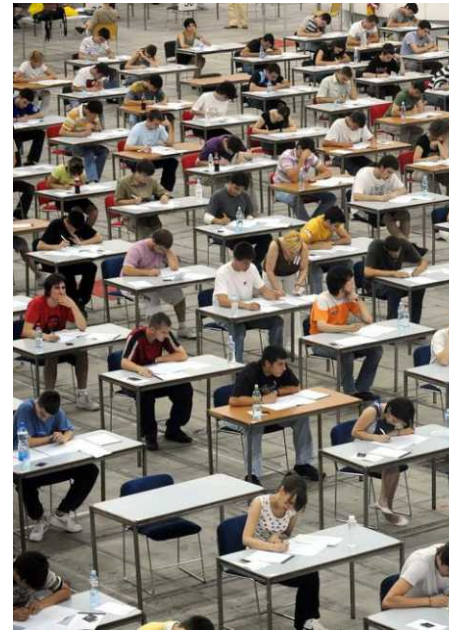
In Denmark the opposite is true, with the country striving to teach innovation, creativity and critical thinking in schools. This is achieved through pairing a small number of traditional classes with a large number of specialized lectures and workshops dealing with creative skills and original thinking. The government does this due to their faith in the importance of new ideas and solutions in the global economy. Whilst however this has ensured a thriving entrepreneurial sector in the country, the more subjective approach to education has led to shortages in vocational industries such as engineering, law and medicine.

Here in the UK, we are relatively neutral on this issue. We teach both problem solving skills (through STEM based lessons primarily) and have exams that emphasise rote learning. Despite this, state education in England has been criticized for its lack of emphasis on practical skills needed in many jobs such as finance management and hands-on applied work. Many believe that this is a key factor in the major shortage of engineers we are currently facing.

Another major point of contention between countries across the world is regarding the interplay between private and state schooling. As you can probably imagine, this also affects different populations on a large scale, with too much emphasis on one system or the other often having radical consequences.

A great example of the extreme end of this is in Macau. A southern region off the coast of China, this state offers an almost fully privatized education, with 95% of schools there relying on fee-paying parents. On one hand, this has allowed the system to make great strides in researching new techniques and methods of teaching, their schools ranked top in the world for the first class experience they offer. The inherent problem with a system like this however is that it can only provide this great education for a limited number of very wealthy people, as exhibited by the fact that only 25% of the employed population of the nation have attended secondary school education.

On the other side of the scale, we have countries such as Australia and Finland that have banned private schooling. This has caused little drawbacks in their quality of education with their school infrastructure ranking 2nd and 6th by OECD reports. However, not much in life is free and this public schooling is paid by extremely high



tax rates in both Finland and Australia resulting in a significantly reduced disposable income in this heavily centralized system.

Another country famous for its approach to education is Estonia where technologies such as VR and Robotics have become integrated into the curriculum. Children learn robotics from the age of seven and teachers use virtual reality to bring geography, chemistry, history and language classes to life. This has been extremely successful with the Programme for international Student assessment stating that Estonia has the best education system in the world.

The UK has a 3-tiered solution to the problem which is riddled with its own controversies. Is going to private school an inescapable advantage in the workplace? Are grammar schools unfair? Do state schools receive enough funding? Despite these questions, this has been largely successful, in spite of some shortfalls in comprehensive state education's approach to learning, especially with SEN.

Overall, the important takeaway is that a good balance in curriculum is needed despite how well radical approaches may work as a good balance advantages the greatest amount of students enabling them to reach their potential in whatever they are skilled at.

# Vaccinations at School: Where Did They all Start?

By Srikar Kalachaveedu - Year 9



Grant Junior High School in Denver, USA on May 27, 1962. Around 350,00 American children took the Sabin vaccine in an attempt to halt the spread of polio

Recently in the UK and many other countries, pupils have been mass vaccinated in schools. They were given the COVID-19 jab and the flu jab and every year, year 8 and 9 pupils are given the HPV vaccine to protect against numerous cancers. But where did the idea of vaccinating children in schools come from? And why are children key to breaking transmission rates of viruses?

During the 19th century, there was not much knowledge of the risk or the transmission of viruses. In classrooms, groups of sixty children were crammed in a very small and confined space, with poor ventilation and hygiene. This allowed lethal viruses like smallpox and diphtheria to spread like wildfire in communities and children. Many adults and children died because of these deadly and life-changing viruses, which ravaged through communities and families; over 20% of children in the 19th century did not live past the age of five. Not only were children dying, but adults were also dying which proved detrimental for the

countries' economies. Current workers as well as future workers were passing away.

Edward Jenner was the first person to inoculate someone with a virus.



A portrait of Edward Jenner, named the father of vaccines

This is what we call today a vaccine. In 1796, Jenner injected a boy, who was 13 years old, with cowpox; this demonstrated immunity towards smallpox. Smallpox ravaged through society during the 19th century but many people refused to take the vaccine due to many conspiracy theories and hesitancy as this was still very new concept at the time. Children were the main spreaders or 'super-spreaders' of smallpox and many children died or went onto infect adults who would

then end up dying themselves. Corpses of children and adults filled the streets; the economy and life quality dipped sharply as there were not enough workers to feed the nation and many people caught the virus in what was quickly becoming a growing epidemic, with children at the heart of it.

Children are quite susceptible to viruses as they are always out and about, going to school and interacting with other people. The other reason is the fact that they have growing immune systems which improve every time they catch a cold however, children can easily transmit viruses to someone who is older and does not have a growing and robust immune system. Deadly viruses, like smallpox, can devastate a child's immune system; let alone adult's and elderly people's. This was also one of the main reasons schools were shut during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although there was a smallpox vaccine, uptake was very low in children; an age group where the virus was most prevalent and an age group which held the key to stopping the epidemic. During the peak of epidemic (the 1850s), people started to take notice of viruses and knowledge of viruses increased resulting in safety precautions such as teachers halting teaching students. As a result, vaccine uptake slowly increased as soon it was mandatory to be vaccinated in order to come to school. Vaccination in schools first began and uptake increased by 90%. This was hugely successful and eventually smallpox faded away from the disease that killed 50 million each year to being one of two diseases that are completely eradicated. This is one of the greatest achievements in the modern age.

Even after so many years, principles to break down transmission and halt an epidemic involve at first closing down schools and then school wide vaccination so that students, often some of the biggest spreaders, can be protected and protect other people.

# The Arts.

## 'It's a Wonderful Life' The Best Christmas Film?

By Eli King - Year 9

As we get into the festive spirit, many families may be compelled to re-watch the Christmas classic *It's a Wonderful Life*. Released in 1946, this iconic film has just celebrated its 75th anniversary. However, I wonder how many young people today have actually seen it? The older members of my family always make time for a Christmas viewing, but I must admit to never having watched it myself. I assumed this old black & white film would be long, romantic and have a slightly cheesy story, hence something of little interest to me. I could not have been more wrong.

*It's a Wonderful Life* centres on George Bailey, a young man who yearns to get out of his hometown and travel the world. However, family duty, a social conscience and circumstance all delay his dreams of adventure. Despite this, he does his

best for the community and helps free the town from corrupt businessmen and unjust class divides. George's selfless sacrifices to help others unfortunately culminate in the bankruptcy of his own business. Struggling to find a way out, he tragically concludes that suicide is his only option. But before he can do so he is confronted by his guardian angel, Clarence, who shows him what life would have been like if he was never born.

Though I was hesitant to watch the film at first, I was wonderfully surprised. Jimmy Stewart's performance as George Bailey feels so genuine, and the long-sustained scenes with little to no cuts allow the actors to really demonstrate their talent. This is particularly poignant in two standout scenes: when you witness the palpable chemistry growing between George and his future-wife, and also as George desperately prays for help,

but in a bar, not a church. His downward spiral from an intrepid, honest and romantic young man to a hopeless and despairing self-professed failure is utterly compelling albeit unsettling to watch unfold.



Classic 'It's a Wonderful Life' Poster



Titular moment from 'It's a Wonderful Life'

Frank Capra's masterpiece originally failed at the box office due to its controversial themes of suicide and anti-capitalism, but after it was released into the public domain its popularity flourished, and 75 years later it is a firm Christmas classic across the world. Ultimately, it is just a story of a man discovering how much good he has brought to others' lives and learning to appreciate that.

For those have not seen *It's a Wonderful Life*, I urge you to add it to your Christmas viewing this year. This festive, fulfilling classic is a powerful tale of hope which reminds how each man's life can touch so many others.



# The Curious Appeal for Nostalgic Media

By Keshav Anand - Year 13

If given the opportunity, would you want to go back in time? It certainly seems that modern creatives would take such a chance in a heartbeat. Indeed, it is apparent that recent media has been overwhelmed with a certain nostalgia.

What initially sparked this investigation was a simple scan of Billboard's Hot 100 last year. Most notably, The Weeknd's *Blinding Lights* stood out in its allusions to 80s pop music, sporting a synth-infused hook with an overall dark aesthetic. The song went on to become the longest charting song on the Hot 100 at 90 weeks and finished as 2020's top song. However, it quickly became clear to me that The Weeknd's megahit wasn't the only example of contemporary music taking inspiration from music of the past. Dua Lipa's *Future Nostalgia* and Miley Cyrus' *Plastic Hearts* are another set of chart-topping albums which are heavily influenced by the 80s, both albums for instance feature songs that heavily sample the iconic *Physical* by Olivia Newton John.

Likewise, a look at Netflix reveals a similar trend of current popular shows donning an older aesthetic. *Stranger Things*, set in the 80s, infuses various references to pop culture whilst seamlessly incorporating tropes reminiscent of Spielberg, John Carpenter and other cinema of the decade. Whilst a show being set in the past isn't revolutionary, *Stranger Things'* highly allusive nature, coupled with the sense of nostalgia it evokes, demonstrates the Duffer Brothers' decision as a deliberate artistic choice. If that's not convincing enough, take the popular *Sex Education* as another example. Despite not being set in the past, its aesthetic draws heavily on the 80's through both its flamboyant costumes and set, reminiscent of much of John Hughes work.

A final point to make is how fashion



*Netflix sensation 'Stranger Things' is full of 80's nostalgia*

seems to be evolving, or perhaps devolving, to incorporate older stylistic choices. However, whilst "devolving" carries negative connotations, the effect is wholly positive regarding self-expression. Indeed, there's been an resurgence of 90s flare in the world of fashion, whether it be in the form of gnarly graphic tees, chunky highlights or the growing sneakerhead population. Moreover, noughties fashion trends are epitomised by TikTok's e-boys and girls, with their signature style essentially being a bedazzled amalgam of alternate and preppy outfits brought about by the millennium.

Despite drawing on only a few examples here, it's clear that the past has some degree of influence upon the present. Whilst this could be explained in a number of ways, a significant reason would be how

## **CREATIVES FEEL A SENSE OF NOSTALGIA TOWARDS THE ERA IN WHICH THEY EXPERIENCE CHILDHOOD.**

For instance, a poll of more than 17000 Americans found the majority of adults agree that the 80s was the best decade for music, the decade many of them had grown up in. Likewise, the millennials favour the 90's while Gen Z prefer the

noughties. This nostalgia is certainly the case for the Duffer Brothers, citing Spielberg, tabletop gaming as well as the conspiracy of alleged Cold War experiments as major influence for *Stranger Things*.

Additionally, the evolution of technology could be suggested to cause this seismic shift in media. As part of technologies rapid growth, it's become increasingly easy to cite earlier work than it would have been in the 50s; audiences are more in tune to spotting references and nods. Moreover, setting media in the primitive time before technology allows shows and movies to explore more sensational themes; things are a lot less interesting when every character has access to Google.

However, the main driving force for the collusion of decades comes from the simple allure of jumping back to the past. The 1960s-2000s are home to the humble beginnings of various tropes, genres and traditions. As such, creatives can enjoy paying homage to the roots of their inspiration in artistic ways. Whether it be as minor as lo-fi hip-hop's 90s anime aesthetic or as major as *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-verse* intentionally animating on twos to mimic comic books from the 80s, it's safe to say that the past's legacy is safe in the hands of the future.

# The Death of the Album

By Will McLaughlin - Year 13

Recently my mother told me of an ancient ritual, something once performed by millions across Britain. It began by passing through the threshold of a very strange shop. Inside that shop would be lined rows upon rows of small cardboard rectangles for sale, each with pictures on the front and black discs inside. After purchasing these, you would take your disc home and put it on a rectangular spinning mechanism, where music would begin to flow out. These alien discs were the only way music was consumed, and explains why albums were so popular, a replayable collection of songs usually organised by some theme, feeling or story. In the era of Spotify and Apple Music however, where the user can create their own playlists from any period or place with a click, where the only separation between 'Gucci Gang' and Mozart is a few taps, is the album becoming an outdated medium?

In 2000, the combined sales of physical and digital album releases reached 700 million. Last year, that number shrank to just 100 million. Whether it's due to the new freedom given by streaming sites, the introduction of user curated playlists, or the collective decline of attention spans to the length of TikToks, it seems people are currently less inclined to sit down for the duration required to listen to an album. Not only this, but where an album's success used to be the benchmark for an artist's credibility, stars of today seem defined only by their singles. Recent phenomenon Lil Nas X is emblematic of this cultural shift. Capitalising on his worldwide hit 'Old Town Road' in 2019, he has catapulted himself into the spotlight with a steady stream of hit singles and social media stunts. This meant that on the release of his debut album in September of this year, he was already an established cultural icon. The road to stardom for aspiring musicians today tends



*A classic record shop selling vinyl*

to follow this slightly predictable formula: Create a catchy and danceable track which becomes popular on TikTok, cement your name into the minds of the masses with social media stunts (public controversy or a feud with an existing celebrity is ideal), and after a stint of singles release your debut album to a horde of adoring fans. Although this process is efficient for creating pop sensations, we must ask whether there is still space for challenging, socially relevant, and thought-provoking music in 2021? Could Bob Dylan rise to fame through TikTok? Should pretentious students everywhere resign themselves to despair, lamenting the decline of modern music, comforted only by wrapping themselves in Tarantino movie posters and assorted Radiohead memorabilia?

Surprisingly enough, the internet has also made now one of the best times in history to be consuming or producing alternative music. This is perhaps displayed best by the YouTube channel 'theneedledrop', where music critic Anthony Fantano films almost daily album reviews for his 2.5 million subscribers. In reviewing a diverse and eclectic array of artists music criticism is consequently thriving in youth culture. This phenomenon has allowed for artists to grow followings purely on the back of their art, without the funding required to advertise new releases. While household names such as Tyler the Creator and The Weeknd

have risen to fame after positive reception on SoundCloud, there are countless other artists such as Black Midi, Death Grips and Daughters, who are indebted to the internet for their ability to continue to create boundary pushing music, without the need for extensive marketing budgets. The thoughtful, socially aware, and avant-garde album is also still healthy within the mainstream. Kendrick Lamar's 2015 experimental 'To Pimp a Butterfly' was a daring blend of hip-hop, jazz, soul and spoken word poetry, commenting perceptively on relevant themes such as masculinity, depression, and institutional racism. The album was streamed 9.6 million times in its first day on Spotify, setting the service's global first-day record, as well as being met with near universal critical acclaim. For me, this is undeniable evidence of an appetite for diverse and exciting music within the mainstream.

While it is easy to dismiss this generation as lazy, uninspired, and phone-addicted, to look to The Beatles, David Bowie, and Queen and conclude that popular music just isn't what it was, there is so much challenging and thoughtful art currently being created. While today singles may overshadow their longer-form counterparts in terms of popularity, it seems there is still strong desire for thought-provoking music within the youth, and as long as this survives, so will the album.

# Culture Interview with Mr Corcoran

**By Kayiza Mukasa - Year 10**

## What is your favourite film?

Movie changes all the time. Most of the time it's *The Good The Bad and The Ugly*. My favourite films are by Stanley Kubrick, David Lynch, Woody Allen, Martin Scorsese and the Coen Brothers.

## What is your favourite album?

So hard to pick one so here's a list:

- *Berlin* by Lou Reed
- *Transformer* by Lou Reed
- *The Velvet Underground* by The Velvet Underground
- *The White Album* by The Beatles
- *Abbey Road* by The Beatles
- *Exile on Main Street* by The Rolling Stones
- *Let it Bleed* by The Rolling Stones
- *Sticky Fingers* by The Rolling Stones
- *Plastic Ono Band* by John Lennon
- *Doolittle* by The Pixies
- *MTV Unplugged In New York* by Nirvana
- *Lust For Life* by Iggy Pop
- *Are you Experienced* by Jimi Hendrix
- *A Christmas Gift For You From Phil Spector* by Phil Spector and various



## Favourite song from one of those albums?

Maybe 'Dead Flowers' from *Sticky Fingers* or 'I'm Waiting For The Man' from the *Velvet Underground* or 'Lust For Life' from *Lust For Life*.

## What is your favourite novel?

Don't have one. I have a favourite short story/novella though which is 'The Dead' by James Joyce. My favourite book series is Raymond

Chandler's Philip Marlowe stories. The best books I've read recently were *The Snow Was Dirty* by Georges Simenon and *Train Dreams* by Denis Johnson.

## What novels should be made into films?

*White Noise* by Don DeLillo; *How's the Pain?* by Pascal Garnier; *Blood Meridian* by Cormac McCarthy; *The Crying of Lot 49*-Thomas Pynchon

# Spider Man: The Film not to be Missed

**By Aadam Ali - Year 9**

Spider-Man is swinging back onto the big screen this Christmas with both new and old characters coming to cinema's December 17th. This will be the third instalment of Marvel and Sony's run on the classic Web-Head's movie with Tom Holland starring as Spider-Man. With the MCU starting a new Saga by tackling the Multiverse with its infinite universes and possibilities (as laid out in Marvel's *Loki* and alluded to in their 2022 *Dr Strange and the Multiverse of Madness*) it was perhaps inevitable they would incorporate the multiverse into Spider-Man. Spider-Man no way home is expected to unite MCU's Tom Holland with past Spider-Men Andrew Garfield (*The Amazing Spider-Man 1 and 2*) and Tobey Maguire (*Spider-Man 1, 2 and 3*), webbing together three different

generations of Spider-Man fans.

Not only are the two original Spider-Men expected to return, but so are the villains. Willem Dafoe's Green Goblin (*Spider-Man*), Alfred Molina's Doctor Octopus (*Spider-Man 2*), Thomas Haden Church's Sandman (*Spider-Man 3*), Rhys Ifans's the Lizard (*The Amazing Spider-Man*) and Jamie Foxx's Electro (*The Amazing Spider-Man 2*) will all return in comic accurate costumes. Charlie Cox's DareDevil from the Marvel Netflix spin-off show has also been rumoured to be returning as Peter's lawyer.

All and all, this film is set to break the box office, perhaps even going over *Avatar* and *Avengers Endgame* net gross. *Spider-Man: No Way Home* is sure to be one not to miss!



'Spider-Man: No Way Home' Poster