

# Reader's Digest

A stylized illustration of a person with a backpack taking a photo of a scenic landscape. The person is in the foreground, wearing a white hoodie, orange pants, and a dark backpack, holding a camera to their eye. The background features a valley with a river, two hot air balloons (one yellow, one red), and mountains under a blue sky with clouds. The overall style is vibrant and artistic.

JULY 2023

**BEAUTIFUL  
BRITAIN**  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
COMPETITION  
WINNERS  
REVEALED

**Sadiq Khan**

“I Want To Arm  
People With  
Knowledge”

**Geezer Butler**

**16** Memories  
Of A Heavy  
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# Reader's Digest

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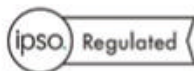
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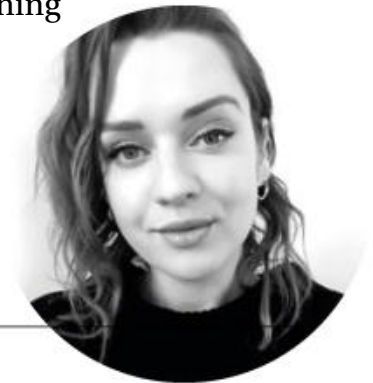
# Picture-Perfect

**A**fter months of meticulous consideration, we are thrilled to finally unveil the winners of our highly anticipated “Beautiful Britain” photo competition. The entries captivated our senses with their awe-inspiring portrayal of the diverse and mesmerising beauty found in our country’s dramatic coastlines, magnificent wildlife, and serene waterways. Turn to p82 to discover more about the talented winners, and don’t miss the chance to glimpse the winning photograph on the back cover.

And if you’re still yearning for more breathtaking scenery, turn to p54 and delve into the extraordinary tale of one adventurous family’s trip around the world. Edith and Sébastien embark on an exhilarating journey of a lifetime, taking their four children on incredible escapades such as hot-air-ballooning in Turkey, camping in Namibia, and kayaking in Cambodia. Along the way, they immerse themselves in the astonishing vistas and natural wonders, cherishing these moments before their children’s vision is affected by a rare genetic condition.

*Eva*

EVA MACKEVIC  
*Editor-in-Chief*



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*Reader's Digest* is published in 23 editions in 10 languages

# Over To You

LETTERS ON THE *May* ISSUE

We pay **£50** for Letter of the Month and **£30** for all others

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### EXPERIENCED EMPLOYEES

I agree absolutely with Helen Lederer's "If I Ruled The World" about more joyful opportunities for people over 60.

We are mostly living longer, healthier lives and have the opportunity to think differently about working as we get older. Some have to still work to support their families, others do it so as not to get bored after retirement.

Recent years have seen more older people in employment than ever before. Although age discrimination is against the law in many industrialised countries, it's still a common phenomenon in hiring. Because chances of



being hired are lower for older people, employers need to search for potential factors and circumstances to counter disadvantages that older people have to face in hiring. And employers also need to deal with the way younger employees treat the older ones.

Having a mix of generations in a workplace is, as Helen points out, a benefit to a workplace because the older ones have a lot of experience. Most hiring managers and HR professionals would tell you that there is no ageism in their company, but reality isn't this straightforward—sadly.

AMANDA GEORGE, *North Wales*

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## Hard Reigns

Love him or hate him, King Charles has been crowned and what big shoes he has to fill as the eldest son of Britain's longest-reigning monarch, as you wrote about in the cover story "The Life Of King Charles III".

Like Edward VII (who also waited a long time to ascend the throne), Charles will most probably be a good king, but not a particularly popular one. It was hard in bygone days for anyone to follow Victoria's act, as it will equally be as hard for Charles to follow his late mother's act. Some of the media do not like Charles, partly for having had an affair when married to Diana, and partly for speaking his mind when what he comes out with is unusual or unpopular. But he has done a lot of good work as Prince of Wales and Duke of Cornwall.

I would like to see Charles take on climate change and protecting the planet—and do this as a priority. He's clearly a very intelligent man. Hopefully he will be sensitive to people's needs, to nature and all humanity. And if he gently brings on William to take over one day then that will be a step in the right direction, I think.

SHULAH CLARKSON,  
*Great Yarmouth*



## Facebook Fun

I am glad your columnist Olly Mann thinks social media still has its uses, as he wrote in his piece, "The Social Network". I, myself, am very grateful for Facebook.

How would I know what my nephews, nieces, cousins, relatives and friends living abroad were up to if it weren't for Facebook? We don't live in each other's pockets but it's good to know how they are doing. Then there are some specific groups in which like-minded people can join and discuss or share their views or works. I love going to The Cloud Appreciation Society every day. Photos from all over the world of glorious cloud formations and sunsets. It makes my day.

Its other benefits are finding and inviting your friends to connect, sharing moments of your personal life with contacts, advertising your business on fan pages and playing games with friends and family members (I play Scrabble). And the best part of Facebook is that it's free.

I try not spend too long on Facebook but I'd be very sad to see it go. I pray that it will be around for many more years.

GEENA COOPER, *London*

## Clinically Speaking

I was most interested in your article “Team Player”, and why we should consider volunteering for clinical trials. I’ve been a blood donor for many years and like to think I am giving back to the NHS for all they’ve done for me in the past—I’ve had 14 operations in total. I was intrigued to learn about the writer’s five-year clinical trial studying emotional response to the results of genomic sequencing to do with DNA. Good for her.

You may ask yourself: why should I try something that researchers are not sure will work? But being part of a clinical trial, although it may have risks, has benefits. Past clinical history has led many to hesitate to sign up for research. However, today there are strict rules in place to keep your health and privacy safe.

I’m going to ask my doctor’s surgery about volunteering. I’m not against testing on humans, but I am on animals. I am totally against animals being exploited by research facilities and cosmetics. The pain, suffering and deaths of animals are not worth the possible human benefits. No animals should be used in research. They cannot volunteer and they wouldn’t. But I can.

KAREN YETTON, *Cambridgeshire*

## Kings And Queens (On Coins)

I enjoyed Andy Webb’s article, “Minted Majesty”, which threw up one big surprise for me. I hadn’t realised that the reigning monarch’s head didn’t appear on our banknotes until 1960. My parents weren’t well off, so maybe I never saw any as a child.

What I do remember, though, is the fact that my pocket money could include coins going back as far as Queen Victoria and they were all still legal currency. The images of two queens, Victoria and Elizabeth II, and three kings—Edward VII, George V and George VI—are still fresh in my mind (Edward VIII’s reign was very brief, and I don’t think that I’ve ever seen a coin minted for it).

My first job was as a Saturday girl in a Woolworth’s cash office and the weight of the coins I had to collect from 20 tills at a time is another memory that has stayed with me. They were much more substantial than today’s equivalent and, of course, went much further. As I was only paid 15 shillings and 11 pence for the day with three pence taken off for National Insurance, that’s just as well.

MAGGIE COBBETT, *North Yorkshire*



## POETRY CORNER

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### **Daily Walk** by Gloria Wilding, *Merseyside*

No one need feel lonely if they go for a walk,  
You will always meet someone to whom you can talk.  
To those looking troubled, give them a smile,  
It could perk them up, at least for a while.

Fresh air helps to improve the mood,  
And you really appreciate what you have viewed.  
There are many things to be thankful for,  
So the daily effort is rarely a chore.

You can have a circle of friends along every route.  
Meeting up with them is always a hoot.  
So, forget about other things for one hour a day,  
And glory in nature's grand display.



### **Honeymoon** by Donal Clifford, *County Cork, Ireland*

5.30am in Ravello, the Med is grey in the dawn,  
Bald eagle looks down on Maiori, and Joyce awakes with a yawn.

The lights of Minori below us, all's quiet save the bells of the clock,  
And a dog in the distance, replying to the crow of Caruso's cock.

Today we will go to Amalfi, to buy some ceramic pots,  
Thereafter we drive to Paestrm, to see Greek forget-me-nots.

This siren coast is magnetic, so much to ensure we're not bored,  
England seems far, far away now, and Joyce has forgotten Ford.

9.30am in Hertford, we're home again by the Lea,  
The flowers are dead in the courtyard, but it's nice to be back from the sea.





**SEE THE WORLD...**

*turn the page →*



## ...DIFFERENTLY

**Want to swim** across the street? The acrylic Sky Pool in London's Nine Elms district allows you to do just that—at a lofty height of 115 feet. However, the world's first "floating" swimming pool is only available to residents of exclusive flats in the complex. Opened in 2021, the open-air pool is controversial for another reason: open all year round, it gobbles up a lot of energy, with a water temperature of 30 degrees.



PHOTO: © SIMON TURNER / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO





# Saturday Sabbath

*With two young children at home, Olly Mann keeps one day per week for relaxation*



Olly Mann presents *Four Thought* for BBC Radio 4, and the podcasts *The Modern Mann*, *The Week Unwrapped* and *The Retrospectors*

**M**Y COLLEAGUE, let's call him Luke, keeps his weekends free for "family time". Or at least, that's what I thought.

He does not reply to emails on a Saturday or Sunday, or answer the phone. If you text him, you'll receive back the auto-reply: "Luke has his notifications silenced". Come Monday morning, he'll regale you with tales of weekend exploits: long lunches with friends, rambles in the Gloucestershire countryside. All very convincing.

Fair play. It's not easy to keep two whole days of your life aside for leisure and relaxation, especially in this world of constantly-connected devices and international clients. *Well done Luke*, I used to think.

But then, last week, Luke let the mask slip. He has not, as it turns out, actually been "off" on Sundays: merely "out-of-office". For a few hours each Sunday, Luke has been surreptitiously sneaking downstairs, logging

onto his computer and scheduling emails for the following day.

A chink in his armour! "It's just much easier, working six days per week", he confided. "There are so many people sending emails at the weekend! If I wait until Monday morning to respond, there's a mountain to get through. This way, I have more laid-back weekdays."

His confession aroused in me a potent mix of sorrow (that Luke's life is not as perfect as it seems) and

example, related to its readers in 1879: "In Staffordshire, if a person leaves home at the end of his week's work on the Saturday afternoon to spend the evening of Saturday and the following Sunday with friends at a distance, he is said to be spending his 'week-end' at So-and-so."

So, for centuries, we Brits subsisted on one day "off" per week: and that, of course, was a day during which we were expected to be spending at least a couple of hours in church.

## AT MY HOUSE, SATURDAYS ARE SACROSANCT. RULING OUT PLANNED ACTIVITY IS LIBERATING

delight (he's as fallible as I!). And it got me thinking about my weekends. Since 2008, when I made my first appearances on Saturday night radio, I've hardly ever had two continuous, work-free days in my "weekend". Does that matter?

It's enlightening to discover that the two-day weekend only became ubiquitous in the late Victorian era—thanks to a combination of government legislation, the rise of trade unions, pressure from commercial leisure companies, and an inordinate number of staff turning up hungover each Monday morning.

Prior to this, the word "week-end", if deployed at all, was uncommon—and, when defined, was not considered to last 48 hours. The journal *Notes and Queries*, for

Suddenly, my predilection for doing a small amount of work at the weekend doesn't feel shameful. The crucial thing, surely, is to safeguard the *quality* of time one does actually have to oneself? And I definitely do ensure there's one day per week on which I drink booze at lunch, read actual newspapers instead of Twitter, and go on pointless walks. But... maybe one is enough?

In my current schedule, this Day of Nothing (I hesitate, as an atheist, to call it "Sabbath") has come to be Saturday. A little out-of-sync with the Christian calendar, but, hey, my ancestors were Jewish; and anyway many early Christians apparently also practised a Saturday Sabbath until Constantine came along and aligned Christian and Pagan

traditions together, some 1,700 years ago. Also, I personally prefer the Saturday newspapers.

At my house, Saturdays are sacrosanct. Otherwise, with two young kids at home, it's horribly easy to sleepwalk into a situation where life becomes an orgy of birthday parties, football squads, supermarket shopping and street markets: not work, of course, but certainly not relaxation either. In any case, our boys, knackered after five days at school, become diffident and tired when we try to organise a trip out. Actively ruling out planned activity is massively liberating.

Our typical Saturday involves all the things you probably associate with Sundays: we lie in, the kids watch a movie, we make a late brunch, we do a spot of gardening, we play with the dog. That's it. It's so much better than darting around doing stuff.

Then, on Sunday mornings, we're up with the lark, darting around

doing stuff. While everyone else is having their booze-fuelled lie-ins, we're off to the swimming pool at 9am, beating the traffic. We're early into the Toby Carvery, ahead of all those basic 1pm-ers. Then perhaps a visit to Grandma, back home for a spot of homework with the kids and—no shame!—a small blast of work for me.

In fact, I'm actually writing this now on a bright Sunday afternoon; a time I can work more clear-headedly (having got a bit of rest the day before) than on a bleak Monday morning. Try it yourself! I appreciate, if your job involves working down a mine, or cleaning up blood and vomit, this advice will sound, at best, naïve. But my job, as for millions of others, is essentially sitting on the internet.

However, if you do follow my advice, please don't cause a traffic jam on my street, or near my local Tesco, on a Sunday morning. That's *my* time. ■



## Wimbledon Championships

This year the famous tennis tournament in London will be between July 3 and July 16, with Novak Djokovic and Elena Rybakina among the defending champions

The historic grass-courts championship is the oldest in the world, dating back to 1877, when Spencer Gore won the first championship

SOURCE: WIMBLEDON.COM

**Mayor of London,  
Sadiq Khan, chats  
to participants and  
revellers of the  
Pride in London  
2022 Parade**





IMAGEPLOTTER / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

## *Sadiq Khan*

# “Change Is Possible At A Local Level”

By Simon Hemelryk

The Mayor of London on politics,  
pollution and penning his new book  
on climate change

**I**N SEPTEMBER 2015, Sadiq Khan was a recently re-elected MP, with a record-winning margin, and the front runner in the race to be London Mayor. He should have been elated. But he was heartbroken. His GP had just revealed that he had developed adult-onset asthma, aged 43.

A year earlier, he'd completed his first London Marathon. “I finished in good time,” he recalls fondly. “More importantly, I beat Ed Balls!”

But, in the months that followed, he had found himself wheezing after a run, developed a cough and felt increasingly run down. He'd put it down to working too hard. But the diagnosis showed it was a lung condition brought on by decades of breathing in air pollution in his beloved Tooting, the area of south London he had spent his whole life in.

“My dad had been a bus driver, and one of my earliest memories is sitting on the top deck of the 44 as he drove from Tooting to Battersea,” says Sadiq. “But I now

realised he'd been spending his days in a diesel vehicle, breathing in poison for 25 years. Things I enjoyed doing, like running, in the city I adored, had made me sick. Neither my dad [who died of pancreatic cancer in 2013] or I had been fully aware of the dangers of air pollution.

"But, knowing he would have been lobbying for change with me, had he still been around, I knew I had to do something."

**Sadiq was elected mayor** in May 2016. Further motivation to do something about air pollution came when he learned about the case of Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah who died in 2013, aged nine, following an asthma attack. Though medical professionals didn't accept it, her mother, Rosamund, believed Ella's death was caused by pollution from the main road outside their Lewisham home. Sadiq lent his weight to her campaign to find the truth.

"Ella could have been my parents—or me," he says. "I was worried about my own teenage daughters, Anisah and Ammarah, too."

As mayor, Sadiq introduced the world's first Ultra Low Emission Zone, in inner London, where a fee is charged for driving the most polluting vehicles. It has been bitterly opposed by many, including businesses and drivers, as have current plans to extend it to all London boroughs. However, Sadiq

points out that, since he became mayor, London has seen a 94 per cent reduction in the number of people living in areas with illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide. His administration has also planted 440,000 trees and created Europe's largest fleet of zero-emission buses.

But Sadiq wants to take his work beyond the capital. His new book, *Breathe*, seeks to empower people throughout Britain and beyond to take action against pollution and climate change. It's estimated that air pollution causes 40,000 premature deaths a year in the UK and illnesses like cancer and poor lung development in children. It also contributes to climate change.

"Most books by politicians are self-serving memoirs," says Sadiq, as we chat in his publisher's central London office. "*Breathe* is designed to be a handbook for change."

"Only one of the 196 countries who signed up to the Paris Agreement on climate change have met its requirements. But two thirds of cities worldwide in the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group have, including London. So change is possible at a local level and I want to show people what can be done and give them the tools to make sure their local authorities are doing enough. I want to arm them with the confidence and knowledge to take on the hostile, loud minority who oppose change, too."



**Sadiq, now 52,** has, he says, always been motivated by social justice and improving the lives of those around him. Before entering politics, he was a human-rights lawyer. “I reckoned that my dad or neighbours might need someone who knew about things like employment or discrimination law, at some point. Plus, I wanted to be Jimmy Smits from *LA Law* or Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird*.”

He worked on some high-profile cases—including cases of police assault of Black suspects and overturning an exclusion order on US activist, Louis Farrakhan—and was a partner in a legal firm by his mid-twenties. But when Tooting’s sitting MP, Tom Cox, resigned in 2005, Sadiq decided to run for his seat.

(Top) London Marathon 2014; (Right) Khan unveils the world’s first double-decker hydrogen bus



“When you’re the child of Pakistani immigrants, your parents want you to be one of three things: a doctor, lawyer or engineer. So telling my mum and my wife, Saadiya, that I wanted to go into politics was a difficult conversation. Particularly as there was a massive pay drop!

“But I explained that I didn’t want to be an MP for the sake of it. I wanted to be the MP for Tooting. I couldn’t pass up the opportunity.”

Sadiq went on to serve as Tooting’s MP for a decade. Gordon Brown appointed him Minister of State for Transport and Sadiq became a key shadow cabinet minister under the next Labour leader, Ed Miliband. His mum was

still not entirely convinced by his career change, though.

“When I won the election to become mayor, she said, ‘Well, now you’ve done that, will you go back to becoming a lawyer?’” Sadiq chuckles.

**Politicians are savagely criticised** by the press and public and are often seen as arrogant or self-interested. You don’t always hear what effect this has on them. Has being a senior political figure changed Sadiq?

“As a mayor or MP, when you go to a meeting, you’re often the most famous, important person there. But it’s really important that you decompress between work





(Right) Khan waiting to find out whether he would be elected Labour's candidate for London Mayor in his south London home; (Bottom left) At Tooting station



## “I’M NOT ALLOWED AIRS AND GRACES IN OUR HOUSE”

and home. Things like running or listening to good music.

“I’m not allowed airs and graces in our house. We have a rule not to discuss work and I’m always the guy that has to put out the bins or Hoover up downstairs.”

Saadiya, a solicitor, Anisah, 23, and Ammarah, 21, are encouraged not to look at any social media about Sadiq.

“Unless you live like a monk, it’s impossible to escape it completely,” says Sadiq. “Especially when the leader of the free world is tweeting nasty things about you.” In 2019,

former US president Donald Trump called Sadiq “a national disgrace who is destroying London,” because Sadiq was critical of his policies.

“But I tell my daughters not to take it personally. And they were lucky that their dad was at his most popular when they were at school and university!

“You mustn’t let the small amounts of badness in political life cloud the huge amounts of goodness. My dad drove a bus and my mum made clothes to help the family make ends meet. My kids are well aware of their roots and their privilege.”

Is it possible to have fun as a modern prominent politician?

“It is!” Sadiq enthuses. “People think—and the likes of Matt Hancock don’t help—that being a politician is all about celebrity. But that’s not the fun bit for me.

“I get to plant trees! I get to meet families who are in a new home because of me and my team’s policies. I now get primary school children lecturing me about climate change. It’s brilliant.

“If you want to flourish as a politician, you have to have mental fitness, or criticism makes you angry. I have to accept that it’s perfectly acceptable for people to be unhappy with some of my policies. I think one

of the explanations for Boris Johnson losing his rag when the House of Commons Privileges Committee quizzed him about COVID-19 rule breaking, is that he didn’t fully understand that they were fully entitled to ask him tough questions, given that he was a rule maker.”

Sadiq says he has to “pinch myself and laugh in this job on a regular basis. I was a kid, aged seven, who

**“I NOW GET PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN LECTURING ME ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE. IT’S BRILLIANT”**



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



**King Charles walks with Sadiq Khan as they meet key workers from Transport for London, who have worked throughout the Covid-19 pandemic**

was waving a Union Jack on my council estate for the late queen's Silver Jubilee. Now, I get to spend time with her son, King Charles III.

"My mum can't believe it. She finds it funny. Her kitchen still has spoons with Charles and Diana's heads on them from their marriage. I come home and tell her I've just been with the King and she'll say, 'Really? Can you go shopping for some milk?'"

**But Sadiq believes there's** a lot of pride in his family for what he's achieved in politics and the environment. In 2020, a coroner ruled that toxic air played a role in Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's illness, making her the first person in the UK to have "air pollution" listed as a cause of death. Sadiq is now calling ministers

to introduce "Ella's Law", which would force the government to greatly reduce particulate pollution.

"My mum worries that I don't get enough sleep and that I don't spend enough time with her. But I suspect my family would worry about me if I was a lawyer, too. Worrying how to spend all that money, for instance!

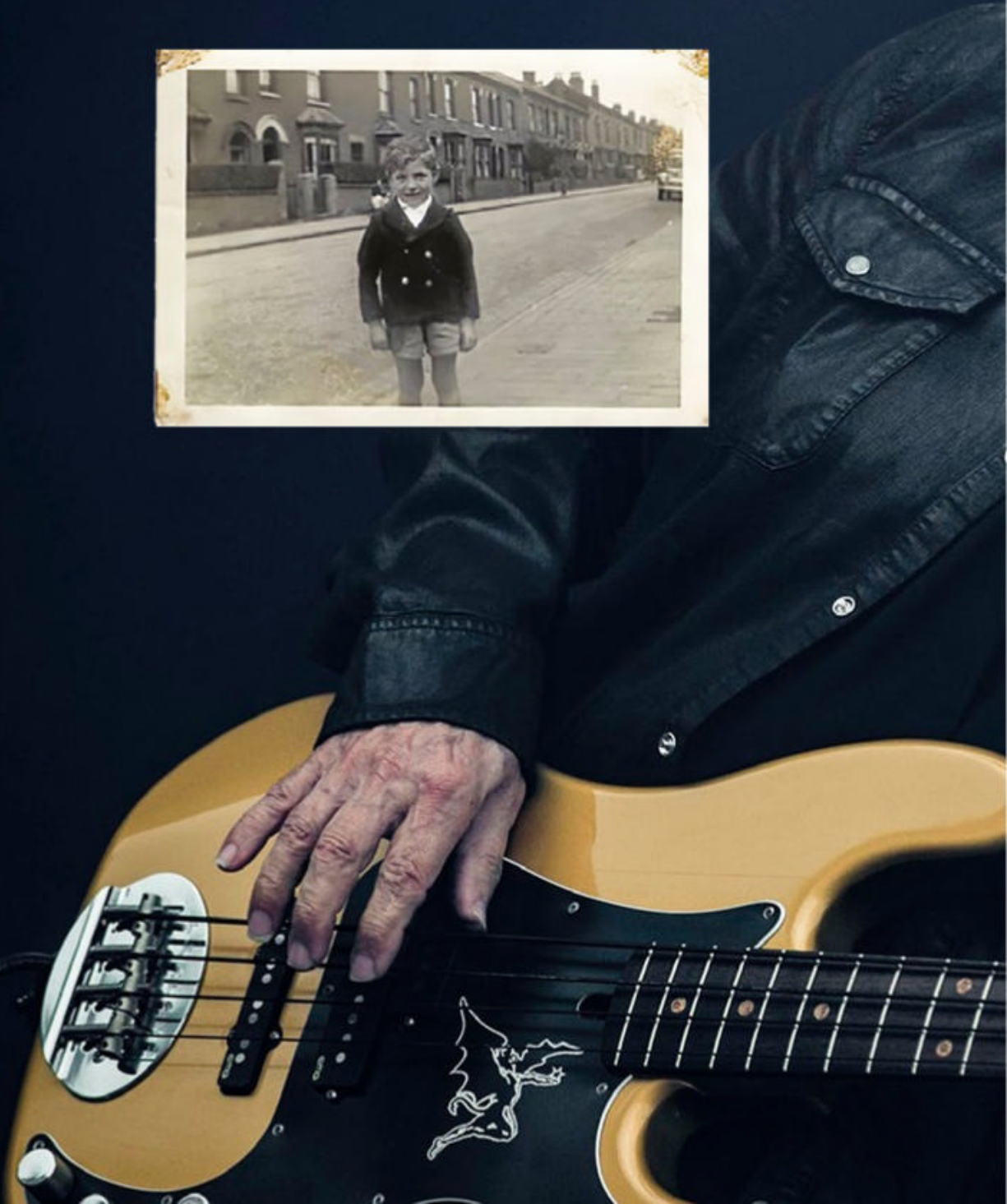
"But my daughters' generation could be the first that is less well-off than the previous one, due to things like climate change and the cost of having a home, and I want to help try to prevent this. To leave things better than when I arrived." ■

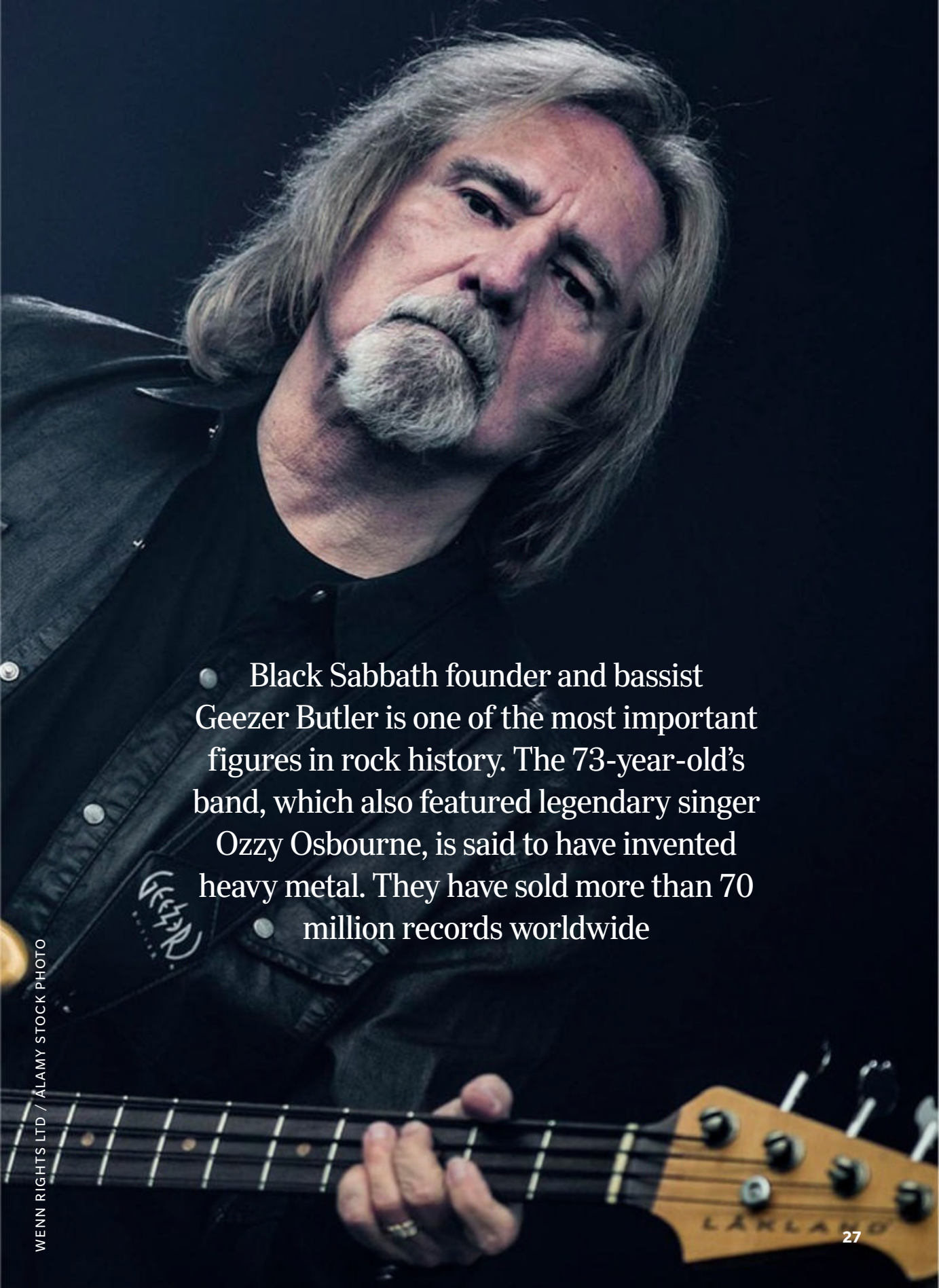
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*Breathe: Tackling the Climate Emergency* by Sadiq Khan is out now in hardback, eBook and audio (Hutchinson Heinemann, £16.99)

# I REMEMBER...

## *Geezer Butler*





- Black Sabbath founder and bassist Geezer Butler is one of the most important figures in rock history. The 73-year-old's band, which also featured legendary singer Ozzy Osbourne, is said to have invented heavy metal. They have sold more than 70 million records worldwide



**BEING AMAZED WHEN I REALISED NOT EVERYONE SUPPORTED ASTON VILLA.** I grew up very close to the ground and went to my first game with older brother, Jimmy, when I was about six. The away team scored and I couldn't understand it when their fans cheered. How come they didn't love Villa like I did? I found them very disrespectful.

**WALKING TWO MILES TO HANDSWORTH PARK WITH MY DAD, JAMES.** He loved walking, and we didn't have a car. He'd take me to the cinema to watch cartoons, too. Tom and Jerry bashing each other was my favourite.

**SPENDING MY POCKET MONEY ON ROSARY BEADS AND CROSSES.** I was ultra-religious. It wasn't

surprising as my dad and mum, Mary, were strict Catholics and our house was covered in pictures of Jesus and Mary. At school, the nuns would tell us we were going to hell, if we didn't behave. Terrifying. But when I was a teenager, I got into the occult. Magazines, horror films with Vincent Price and books like *The Devil Rides Out* by Dennis Wheatley. There were lots of immigrants with different religions coming into Birmingham, too—Muslims and Hindus. It was fascinating to see new perspectives.

**A TWO-STRING GUITAR CHANGED MY LIFE.** When I was about 11, a lad brought an old acoustic guitar to school and asked if anyone wanted to buy it. My dad worked packing steel tubes and I thought affording an instrument was

Geezer in Aston;  
(Far left) A young  
Geezer with his  
mother and sibling;  
(Right) Geezer  
playing bass



beyond me. But the lad only wanted ten shillings. When the Beatles came along, I learned how to play their hits using the guitar's only two strings. Then I formed a band with a mate. I didn't enjoy my grammar school much, so this was my escape. I got into alternative culture and, when I was older, I would go down to a club in Covent Garden in London called Middle Earth. It was full of hippies and loonies—people covered in silver paint dancing to Captain Beefheart. There was nothing like that in Aston!

**ACCOUNTANCY TURNED ME TO DRINK.** After I left school, I went to work for the accounts department at Spartan Steel in Aston. But music was what I really wanted to do, and the firm had me doing difficult work I wasn't properly trained for. I would

come in later and later, then, to make it through the day, get absolutely legless in the pub at lunchtime. One day, I came in at 4:30pm. They finally sacked me.

**MEETING A YOUNG ECCENTRIC CALLED OZZY.** I was in a band called Rare Breed. After getting sacked by Spartan Steel, I wanted to do music full time. But the singer went off to perform on cruise ships, so I contacted someone who'd put a note in a guitar shop saying they wanted to join a band. He was called "Ozzy Zig" and the next day, there was a knock on the door. Stood there was a skinhead with no shoes on, carrying a chimney brush over his shoulder and pulling a training shoe on a dog lead. He was obviously a complete nutter. I burst out laughing and said, "OK, you're in." Rare Breed



Heavy metal pioneers Black Sabbath in 1970

broke up soon after, but Ozzy [Osbourne, vocalist] and I [bassist] teamed up with drummer Bill Ward and guitarist Tony Iommi in 1968 to form Black Sabbath.

**REALISING WE HAD SOMETHING SPECIAL.** We played on the blues scene in Birmingham, but the first songs we wrote together, “Wicked World” and “Black Sabbath”, were very different. Audiences would talk and drink while we played the blues but they concentrated and looked amazed when we did our own tunes. When our first album, *Black Sabbath*, was released in 1970, the music press slagged us to death. But Alan Freeman made “Paranoid” his single of the week for four weeks running, later that year. When *Paranoid*, the album, came out we

were doing a gig in Belgium. Our tour manager came up to us and said, “Guess what, lads. You’re number one in the UK!”. We all went “Yahay!”. It was a great night.

**MY DAD WASN’T VERY PLEASED WHEN HE SAW THE INVERTED CROSS ON THE SLEEVE OF OUR FIRST ALBUM.** But, generally, nobody in the UK or Europe cared that much about our Satanic imagery. In the US, though, people would threaten us and turn up at our gigs with crosses and bibles. In Nashville, someone jumped on stage and went for Tony with a knife. Fortunately, Tony had turned around to kick his faulty amp at that point, saw the attacker and got out of the way. The police arrested the attacker, though we don’t know what





Geezer Butler  
and his wife,  
Gloria

happened to him. But he wanted to sacrifice Tony. Lunatic.

**CHASING THE LOVE OF MY LIFE AT THE AIRPORT.** I decided to fly to a gig in St Louis in 1978, as I was fed up with all the arguing and the mess on the tour bus. When I arrived, I saw Gloria waiting for a friend. It really was love at first sight. They went outside and got into a Porsche—her dad was a car dealer. I told my limo driver to “follow that car”, like I was in some stupid rom-com film. We pulled up alongside her car at the lights and I asked her to come to the gig. The next day she drove me to my next concert in Kansas City. My first marriage ended—amicably—and Gloria and I have been together ever since. God knows how. Maybe it’s all my

touring—we haven’t had time to get fed up with each other.

**I ALWAYS WANTED A CHILD AND WHEN OUR SON, BIFF, WAS BORN IN 1980, LIFE SEEMED COMPLETE.** Plus, it meant I could go to Disneyland. I took Biff there so often that he eventually said to me, “Dad, not again”.

**HEARING ASTON VILLA WIN THE EUROPEAN CUP FROM A PHONE BOX.** When they made the European Cup final, in 1982, I was on tour in America. I phoned home and a friend held the receiver up to the TV so I could hear the commentary of the match over the phone. I was in that phone box in the US for around two hours. It must have cost me about \$1,000 in quarters.



**A RAINBOW HELPED ME MAKE A HEART-RENDING DECISION.**

When my second son, James, was born in 1984, blood wasn't flowing into his lungs properly. The doctors asked me if they could operate, but there was only a 50 per cent chance of success. It was a dark, rainy day outside, but as I asked God for some guidance, a rainbow appeared. The operation went ahead and, after several more operations, James was eventually OK. I took a couple of

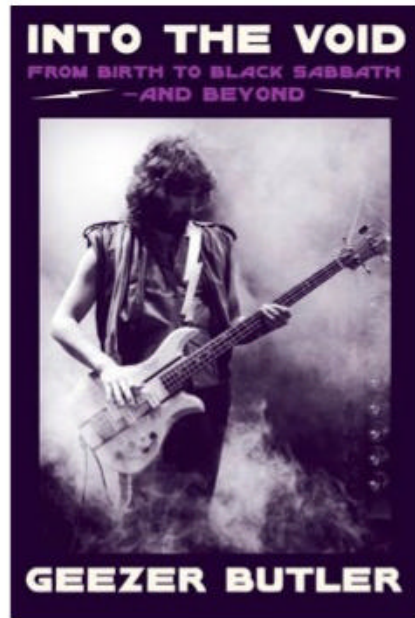
years off touring, as I didn't want to leave James. I eventually joined Ozzy on one of his solo tours. His wife, Sharon, had told him to stop taking drugs and drinking, or she'd leave him. To my relief, it was a very calm tour, after all I'd been through.

**IT WAS LIBERATING TO DO MY FIRST SOLO ALBUM, *PLASTIC PLANET*, IN 1995.** Tony had written most of the music in Black Sabbath, but now I could take the lead. It was

brilliant when Tony, Ozzy, Bill and I got back together for a proper Black Sabbath reunion in 1997, though. We'd performed and recorded as Sabbath with other singers, like Ian Gillan, but it wasn't the same. We played at Milton Keynes Bowl, but Bill had had a heart attack and couldn't join us. Instead, he introduced us. Tony decided to pull his shorts down—for fun. But Bill wasn't wearing underwear and the crowd got quite an eyeful. Especially as Bill was very well endowed.

**BEING PERPLEXED AT BEING CALLED A LEGEND.** In the Nineties and Noughties, younger bass players in bands would come up and tell me I was their hero. It was odd, because I thought I was a pretty average guitarist. In the Seventies and Eighties, we thought everyone hated Black Sabbath. Now we had this reputation as the inventors of heavy metal. But in 2017, we broke up for good. Tony had been diagnosed with lymphoma and was absolutely knackered after each gig, and it just felt like the right time. Our final concert was in Birmingham, where it all started. I'd been sober since 2015, so I celebrated afterwards with, I think, a lemonade.

**FALLING IN LOVE WITH UTAH.** I've still got a house in Warwickshire, but Gloria and I spend most of our time at our home in Utah, surrounded by



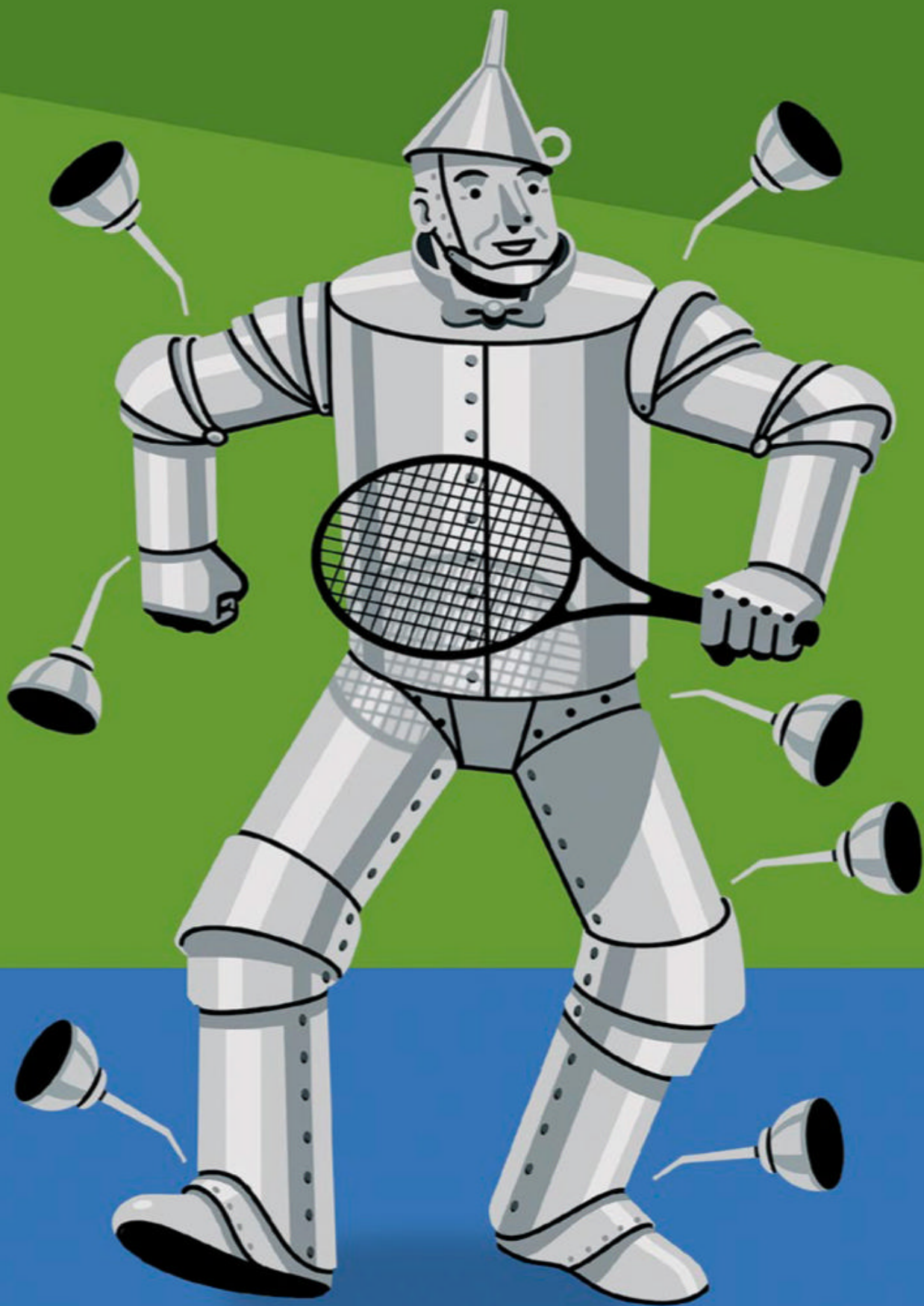
incredible mountains. My grandchildren love to come here and ski, though I tried it once and really panicked.

**LEARNING TO CALM DOWN A LITTLE.** I've always been a worrier, but it doesn't achieve much. I was in a rock band that sold millions of records. I've been married for 43 years. Biff [Butler's eldest son] is now an award-winning video editor. James [Butler's younger son] went to Oxford University. I've no idea what he does, but he's very successful at it, too. I've taught myself to just be happy to be alive. ■

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**As told to Simon Hemelryk**

Geezer Butler's new autobiography, *Into the Void: From Birth to Black Sabbath—And Beyond*, is published by Harper Collins (£25), out now



# NO MORE ACHES?



How we may  
(finally) be  
outsmarting  
joint pain

BY *Patricia Pearson*

IT MIGHT BE IN YOGA CLASS when you first feel it—when did downward dog start getting so hard on the wrists? Or it could be at your weekly squash or tennis game that you notice your knees screaming back at you whenever you pivot. Chances are, it's arthritis, which isn't just an "old-people" problem: it usually kicks in between the ages of 40 and 60.

By far the most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis. It's usually the result of decades of physical activity that wears down the cartilage in our joints. That's the rubbery, frictionless tissue that acts as a shock-absorber between bones. After years of wear and tear, or an injury such as a fracture or dislocation, that cushion can harden and fray like a dried-out rubber band, causing the entire joint to become inflamed and painful (the word arthritis comes from the Greek word *arthro*, which means "joint," and *itis*, which means "inflammation").

Osteoarthritis, or OA, is diagnosed in two-thirds of people who experience any sort of joint pain. According to a nation-wide survey done in 2022 by the University of Michigan, 30 per cent of

diagnosed OA (eight per cent of respondents were diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, which is an autoimmune disease). Women are more likely to suffer from it than men, for reasons that remain unclear. The World Health Organisation estimates that 528 million people worldwide have OA, and an increase over the next decade is projected as the world population ages.

The joints that bear the brunt of OA are most often the knees, knuckles, base of the thumb, lower back and hips. Sufferers might notice swelling or even feel a grating sensation in the joints, and some people experience aching that's deep enough to wake them up at night. Stiffness is common, particularly in the morning, and things like opening a jar or bending down aren't as easy as they used to be.

Fortunately, some innovative solutions may be on the way.

## HOW CAN YOU EASE THE PAIN?

Maintaining a healthy body weight helps, since it'll mean less load on your joints. Keeping extra weight off also minimises your risk of getting OA in the first place. Exercise is often the first treatment doctors suggest. If you're not already active, low-impact options like walking, biking or swimming are good ways to start moving more. Exercise helps ward off stiffness and keeps muscles supple around the joint.

Yoga might bring relief, too, according to the Arthritis Foundation. Experts there also recommend seeing a physiotherapist, who can teach you some movements to improve mobility and increase your strength to support the affected joints. But most people find that these things don't eliminate pain, or they help only if symptoms are

“DIET HAS BEEN CRITICAL FOR ME. THE FEWER INFLAMMATORY FOODS I EAT, THE BETTER I FEEL”



mild to moderate.

Over-the-counter pain relievers, such as ibuprofen and naproxen, relieve pain and stiffness, but aren't a long-term solution because they can irritate the stomach. Doctors might prescribe an oral corticosteroid such as prednisone, but it can cause side effects such as weight gain, mood swings and high blood pressure, so should be used only briefly.

For some, corticosteroid injections can offer temporary relief, but two recent studies, one from the University of California, San Francisco, and the other from Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science in Chicago, found that they might actually lead to a progression of OA.

Doctors may also recommend hyaluronic acid, which is injected into the joint to act as a viscous fluid replacement for the cartilage, like oil in a car engine. But it's no cure. While the injection may temporarily relieve pain and even slow down progression of the disease, according to a landmark study published in the *BMJ* last year, it provides little to no long-term benefit for most patients.

Another injectable treatment, which has been used since the 1980s to treat torn tendons and joint injuries, is platelet-rich plasma. Your own blood is removed, enriched with platelets and then injected. Some athletes have tried it for sports injuries—notably, Tiger Woods. But it appears to have mixed success, according to the *American Journal of Sports Medicine*, and much more research is needed to find out how to make it work better.

So far, the only truly effective osteoarthritis treatment is a complete joint switch-out, whether it's the replacement of knuckles, knees or hips. Millions of people around the world undergo the surgery, but the catch is that the new joints last only so long—15 to 20 years—so many doctors don't recommend it for anyone who is under the age of 60.

## HE FOUND POSITIVE WAYS TO LIVE WITH IT

Ben Bebenroth, a Cleveland, Ohio-based farm-to-table chef, didn't have much relief from OA pain until he

underwent knee-replacement surgery. His osteoarthritis started when he was 15, after he injured his left knee in a snowboarding accident. For a long time, he self-medicated with alcohol and over-the-counter painkillers so he could keep up with his busy lifestyle and stay active. "I dealt with my pain that way for 25 years," says the now 45-year-old, a former Marine.

Aside from exercising and keeping his weight in check, he tried hyaluronic acid injections, steroid injections and even three arthroscopic, or "keyhole," surgeries (sometimes recommended when the OA was caused by injury). Nothing worked. Finally, Bebenroth underwent a total knee replacement at the unusually young age of 40. "When you reach the point of bone-on-bone contact, you just grin and bear it until you can't anymore," he explains.

Bebenroth knows it's inevitable that he'll develop some degree of arthritis in his right knee—that's what happens if one joint takes the brunt of wear and tear when the injured one is long favoured—but in the meantime the surgery has allowed him to return with new enthusiasm to his work, and to the hiking and snowboarding he loves.

He also avoids all sugar and alcohol, and supplements his diet with nutrient-dense, anti-inflammatory foods like turmeric and ginger from his organic farm, where he grows ingredients he uses at his restaurant. Featuring many foods from the Mediterranean diet—fish, nuts, beans,

lean meats, lots of leafy vegetables—an anti-inflammatory diet is well established as being joint friendly.

“Diet has been critical,” Bebenroth says. “The fewer inflammatory foods I eat, the better I feel.” Stretching, meditation and movement have also helped. “This way of living helps me move away from being in a reactive state, when you’re angry at your pain and end up soothing yourself with a sweet treat.”

## NEW HOPE

Given how many people suffer from OA around the world, a lot of researchers are working on solutions—and are at last finding some. At Duke University in North Carolina, researchers are planning to launch a clinical trial this year for a knee gel made of water-absorbing polymers that simulates cartilage.

Using stem cells derived from our own bodies to treat arthritis also shows promise. In 2018, researchers at Stanford University School of Medicine managed to isolate skeletal stem cells in adult humans, a significant step toward regenerating cartilage.

“We thought skeletal stem cells existed for some time, but we weren’t sure,” says Charles Chan, an assistant professor of surgery at Stanford. “We used a technique called FACS, which is sort of like a jelly bean sorter. It allows us to separate types of cells based on the protein on their surface. There were around 100 types.”

To understand which was which, the researchers transplanted the cells into mice to see what they differentiated into. Some turned into bone.

Chan and his colleagues then discovered that they could foster the growth of new cartilage with these cells by sending them a new set of instructions. In their experiments, they

## RESEARCHERS ARE WORKING ON AN INJECTABLE MEDICATION TO CURE THE DISEASE



created a microfracture by drilling a tiny hole in bone tissue. “This provokes skeletal stem cells to gush up in a blood clot,” Chan explains. “Left on its own, this would turn into scar tissue, or what we call fibrocartilage. It acts like a plaster, holding everything in place. But it’s not as bouncy or slippery as regenerated cartilage.”

What if, the team wondered, they somehow changed the chemical signalling that was telling the cells what to do? “We thought maybe we could interrupt the cells as they developed into cartilage on their way to becoming bone—coax them to finish their work at the cartilage stage,” explains Chan. The chemicals the team used to try this have prior approval and safety profiles from the FDA for



other applications, such as Avastin for breast cancer.

It worked. The result of their experiment in laboratory mice, and then in human joint tissue infused into mice, “is that you get a nice piece of cartilage,” Chan explains. “It’s durable. And the subjects get dramatic improvements in their pain and in their movement.”

The team is now raising funds for human clinical trials, where they plan to start with osteoarthritis in patients’ thumbs and fingers. If all goes well, they may be able to bring an injectable medication to market that doesn’t just ease the symptoms but actually cures the disease.

## INNOVATIONS IN REDUCING PAIN

Meanwhile, the Melbourne Stem Cell Research Centre in Australia has conducted trials on the use of adipose- (fat-) derived stem cells in the treatment of osteoarthritis. Similar experiments are taking place in Italy and Ireland. The idea is to work with our mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), which are important for making and repairing cartilage and bone. They seem to have multiple positive effects, including calming inflammation set off

by the body’s immune response and reducing of nerve pain.

“Patients undergo a mini-liposuction,” says principal investigator Julien Freitag, a Melbourne-based musculoskeletal specialist. Then, the fat tissue is transferred to an accredited laboratory, where the MSCs are expanded and injected into a patient’s joint; a second injection is given six months later.

While it remains unclear exactly how MSCs weave their healing magic, says Freitag, “our clinical research conducted over the last nine years has been incredibly promising.” That research, which includes a randomised controlled trial and data collected from actual cases, shows pain reduction and improvements in joint function. “We are seeing significant benefit to patients, whether they have mild, moderate or severe osteoarthritis.”

Given that other research centres are also deep into treatment research, a government-approved breakthrough therapy will probably emerge in the next ten to 15 years. If it proves to be as safe and effective as it has been in research so far, millions of sidelined athletes will be able to get back out onto the field, or just enjoy everyday life more. ■



### Summer Days

**My advice to you is not to inquire why or whither,  
but just enjoy your ice cream while it’s on your plate**

THOMAS WILDER



# Holiday Health Essentials

*How to make sure your holiday is an enjoyable, life-enhancing experience*



Susannah Hickling is twice winner of the Guild of Health Writers Best Consumer Magazine Health Feature

## Plan before you go

Not only is it stressful organising your break in the first place, there's the added angst of remembering to buy and pack everything you need, as well as getting where you need to go on time.

To avoid this, as soon as you've booked your holiday, list the travel documents you'll need, including passport, EHIC or GHIC card and travel insurance. Check you have them and they're valid. Then start packing several weeks in advance, giving yourself time to buy essentials like toiletries and sun cream, and order medication.

On departure day, leave more time than you need to get to an airport or port. Consider staying in a hotel nearby the night before, if you need to travel a long distance to get there. Being extra prepared might seem like a chore, but it reduces anxiety.

## Go with the flow

Given that 96 per cent of people consider holidays as being extremely important for mental health, according to a survey last year from Medical Travel Compared, look after yours when you're there. Try to chill when you first arrive and don't cram in too many activities. There's a physical reason for this too: blood pressure is higher for three days from the day before travel, according to an Austrian study in the *Journal of Travel Medicine*. Wake up naturally without an alarm and relax in the sun (but not too much!) in order to increase your levels of serotonin, which reduces anxiety.

## Do a digital detox

Try to forget the cares of everyday life by ensuring you don't check emails or social media, or feel obligated to use it to chart your best holiday moments. Ideally, turn off notifications, limit your screen time and try to focus on the present moment. That will enable you to relax and make special memories.

## Eat and drink well—and mindfully

Part of the fun of going away is experiencing the cuisine of other countries and cultures. Take time to really savour your meal, enjoying all

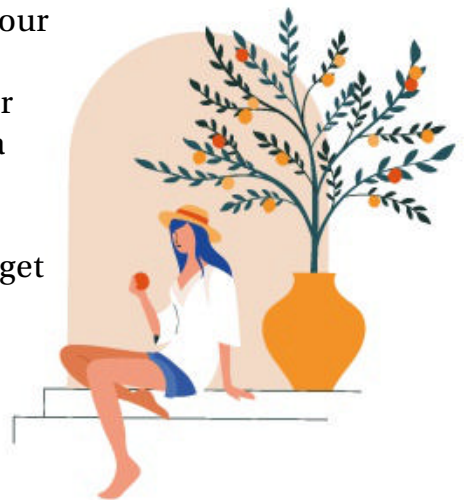
the flavours. And, beware: too many alcoholic drinks can cause “holiday heart”, characterised by an irregular rhythm or palpitations. Too many tipples can also result in dehydration if you're holidaying in a hot climate.

## Get active

Consider walking and swimming, and why not paddleboarding or tennis? If you're somewhere hot, it's best to take exercise in the early morning or evening. Being active will make you feel fitter and more refreshed once you're back.

## Bring healthy habits home

What did you particularly enjoy when you were away? Did you find that bike ride along the seafront or a daily walk in the evening an invigorating experience? If so, aim to do something similar on a regular basis when you return. Try to make it part of your everyday routine, for example, a 20-minute workout when you get up, a lunchtime walk or do errands by bike. ■



# Still Or Sparkling?

*Some waters may be healthier than others*

**Tap water** is thirst quenching, contains no calories or sugar, and we're always being advised to drink more of it. But how healthy is the H<sub>2</sub>O that comes into your home? It's treated and monitored to ensure quality and freedom from contaminants, but some UK water is likely to contain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a family of around 5,000 "forever chemicals" used widely in packaging, non-stick products and other processes. Two have been linked to health problems, including cancer, thyroid issues and high cholesterol, and while water companies test for these, some of the others might well be harmful to health. Home filters won't remove them, but under-sink reverse osmosis and two-stage filter systems are more effective.

**Still bottled water** Even with bottled water you might not be safe. Research has shown that water in plastic bottles contains higher levels of microplastics than tap water. Microplastics have been found to damage cells in the

body and provoke allergic reactions. So avoiding plastic containers could be a good idea. Natural mineral and spring water must come from a recognised underground source.

Mineral water has to be able to demonstrate its original purity, whereas spring water is allowed to undergo certain treatments to remove undesirable substances.



**Sparkling** Some people prefer a few bubbles in their aqua. Sparkling mineral or spring water is naturally fizzy, whereas ordinary sparkling water—known as seltzer—has had carbon dioxide added and is unlikely to have the same mineral content. Beneficial minerals include magnesium and calcium. Anything effervescent can cause burping and bloating, so fizzy water is best avoided if you suffer from irritable bowel syndrome. It's slightly more acidic than the still stuff, but if you don't down too much, it's unlikely to have a detrimental effect on tooth enamel.

**Flavoured waters** Delicious, but some contain a lot of sugar. The citrus-flavoured ones are likely to be more acidic than other fruit flavours. To avoid damage to teeth, they might be best quaffed with a meal when saliva can help neutralise the acidity. ■

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# Ask The Expert: Hip Replacements

Hugh Apthorp is a consultant orthopaedic surgeon specialising in hip replacements at London Bridge Hospital, part of HCA Healthcare UK

**How did you come to specialise in hips?** Sometimes in medicine you come to something that is so interesting and life changing that it gives people their normal life back. When I first became an orthopaedic surgeon, patients were so happy with their hip replacements that I was drawn in. Back then, people would come in in a wheelchair and were just happy to walk to the shop after surgery. Now people play tennis, golf and even kickbox, and the recovery time has reduced from nine to two days.

**What are the main hip problems to affect people?** Younger patients might be born with abnormally shaped joints or suffer trauma, infection or joint inflammation from rheumatoid arthritis. But mostly people have osteoarthritis and suffer pain and stiffness.

**What are the causes?** Osteoarthritis is a wear-and-tear process. Most people who have an arthritic hip might also have a bit of arthritis in

their back or knee, but the hip is very difficult and painful to live with.

**How can it be treated?** A lot of people in the early stages manage well with painkillers, exercises and physio to keep them moving. But eventually most get to the point where the correct thing is to suggest surgery. Patients who come earlier have a better outcome. If you are fit and active and lose that, you won't get back to it so easily. Anaesthetic techniques have improved and the operation is much less risky. We get people up the same day and they go home more quickly, which brings health benefits, including less risk of thrombosis. Choose a surgeon who does mostly hips and ask how many they do.

**What can people do to prevent hip issues?** Avoid smoking, keep your weight under control and take regular exercise. Even with a worn hip, you should keep active, as it will last longer. You're not going to harm yourself by using it. ■



# Hope In The Darkest Of Places

*Two drug addicts  
surprise Dr Max  
with their friendship*

**A**S A DOCTOR I have become accustomed to making judgements based on evidence. Much of medicine appears to operate on the premise that what is observed in one individual can be extrapolated and applied wholesale. But the more I work as a doctor, the more I realise that this does not always do the patient justice. The exciting thing about working with people is their ability to constantly surprise so that even in the bleakest of human terrains there is hope.

When I met them, Fergal and Anthony had been living on the streets, sleeping in a disused shed on an allotment, for over a year. Fergal had been homeless for longer. He used to be a waiter but had begun drinking heavily after his mother died. He was fired from the restaurant where he worked and was eventually



evicted from his flat. He started going to local parks during the day to drink until, one day, sitting with a group of fellow alcoholics and worrying about where he was going to sleep that night, someone offered him something to smoke. He smoked it and for the next half an hour nothing seemed to matter. It was heroin. After a few weeks of smoking it every day he was not only addicted, but also had started injecting it.

When I worked in an outreach project for homeless people I met many drug addicts and many started injecting heroin this way—they started off by smoking it, then as the addiction took hold and they needed more in their system, they progressed to injecting. It was certainly easier and cheaper for Fergal to get wasted on heroin every day rather than alcohol. But the success rate for getting people in treatment off heroin is about five per cent a year. That's pretty poor. There are numerous

factors that make people more likely to succeed: good family support networks, stable accommodation, using only one substance, motivation and drive. Fergal and Anthony didn't tick any of these boxes.

In fact, both he and Anthony were injecting two packets of heroin a day and occasionally using crack. Neither of them had been in treatment for their addiction before, and both of them seemed rather indifferent to the idea. They had only come to see me because they had been arrested for possession of heroin. But something about their story did make them stand out.

He had met Anthony a year ago while sitting on a park bench and they struck up a friendship. Life on the streets is harsh and brutal. There is no honour among thieves, or drug addicts, and allegiances are fragile—only existing as long as they served the interest of the individual. But Fergal and Anthony were different; they were like brothers. They were inseparable, protecting each other, sharing their food and money.

They funded their addiction by stealing things, mainly copper wiring but also tools and sheet-metal from building sites and selling it to scrap merchants. Despite operating outside of the law, they had their own strict moral code which involved no burglary from people's homes, no mugging and no begging. They reasoned that stealing from

businesses was OK because they were wasteful and had insurance anyway. While I couldn't condone this, it's at least a change from the usual ways my patients made their money. In an environment where the only currency given any importance is drugs, it was heartening to see two people place value on their friendship.

But this didn't change the fact that they had not attended by choice, and to date, no one who had come to the clinic under a court order had returned for a follow up appointment. Instead, they vanished back into the underworld of life as drug addicts. I knew that they would never return, all the evidence pointed towards it. I signed the form, prescribed them both the starting dose of methadone and they left the unit.

But to my great surprise Fergal and Anthony did return. While many of the patients I had thought would be able to kick the habit relapsed, they stuck with it. In fact, a year on, they were no longer dependant on drugs and both had jobs. However uncertain the world may seem at times, you learn in medicine that people can surprise you, and that there is always hope. ■



Max is a hospital doctor, author and columnist. He currently works full-time in mental health for the NHS. His new book, *The Marvellous Adventure of Being Human*, is out now

# The Doctor Is In

*Dr Max Pemberton*

**Q: I have so many small skin tags around my neck, they are driving me crazy. I successfully removed a few large ones on my body by tying thread around them, then they dropped off a few weeks later. These are too small for that. What's the best way of removing them and why am I getting so many?**

*- Christopher*

**A:** Skin tags are a very common problem. They are small, soft, harmless growths that hang off the skin. It's estimated that about half of all adults will have a few over the course of their lives and for some people, it's a recurrent issue. We aren't sure exactly why some people get them and others don't, but they do tend to run in families so there's probably a genetic factor. Other risk factors for skin tags are diabetes, skin disorders and obesity.

They are most common on the neck, armpits, groin and under the breasts. They are caused by the skin producing extra cells in the skin's top layers and usually occur in skin creases or areas where friction or rubbing occurs. Occasionally they are in other areas, such as the eyelids. They are not

cancerous and aren't dangerous so don't usually require medical treatment, but some people find them unsightly or irritating, or they bleed, and so they want them removed.

While some do just fall off on their own, it is possible to remove them yourself by tying thread around them. This works by stopping the blood supply to them and they die and drop off. However, this isn't usually recommended. There's an increased risk of scarring, bleeding and infection by trying it yourself.

Something that looks like a skin tag can be something else—such as a wart, mole or skin cancer—so it's worth showing them to a doctor to check what it actually is. A doctor can usually remove them easily either by freezing them off or using a scalpel or sharp surgical tool to shave or cut them off.

I'd suggest that you go to your doctor and show them the remaining skin tags you have. They will be able to help with getting these removed. ■



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# Are You Training Yourself To Forget?

Real learning starts when teaching ends,  
says our memory expert, Jonathan Hancock

**M**Y FRIEND JAMES did some first-aid training at work last week, to learn the fundamentals of CPR, and he asked if I'd ever done the same.

"Yes," I said, "...and no."

Because, yes, I've attended several resuscitation sessions over the years. But no, I don't exactly feel "trained" to save lives. In fact, despite being shown all the key information at various points in my career, I don't think I can remember any of it now.

What's the problem? Every time I've had this type of training it's been a perfectly good opportunity to learn: an important topic, taught well, in a focused environment, with plenty to see, hear and do. I've always taken it seriously, too, and been focused.

And I've always come away with a wealth of information. Yet virtually nothing has ever made it to my long-term memory.

Here's what I should have done—and what you can do now—to make sure any training doesn't go to waste.

- **Test yourself before you start.**

You might be surprised to find that you've got some foundations of

knowledge to build on. Pre-testing sparks your curiosity and puts you in a frame of mind to remember.

- **Write questions as you learn.**

Don't waste time making notes. This can trick your memory into thinking that it doesn't have to work, because the information is all stored in your notebook. Instead, write yourself questions for the future.

- **Challenge your recall later.** Wait a day, then see how much you still know. If it's hard to remember, but just about possible with effort, then that's perfect. You need that little bit of struggle to start embedding information in your brain.

- **Keep coming back.** Put a note in your diary to test yourself again in a week, then ten days after that, then a month on...leaving longer gaps between checks. Use the questions you wrote on the day to keep challenging yourself.

Talking to James has inspired me to book myself onto yet another CPR course. But this time I'm determined to do it right.

Remember that it's the next day when the real training begins. ■

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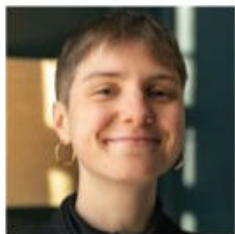
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## Does "Maintenance Sex" Keep The Spark Alive?

*Can going through the motions with sex to satisfy a partner's needs really work? Or is unwanted sex a sign of compliance rather than consent, and to be avoided?*



Monica Karpinski is a writer and editor focused on women's health, sex, and relationships. She is the founder of women's health media platform *The Femic*

WHEN I WAS in high school, the boys tried to convince us girls that if they didn't have sex when they wanted to, their genitals would start hurting.

They had their facts wrong, of course—what they were thinking of is actually a benign, yet uncomfortable sensation that can happen during arousal—but their message rang loud and clear: it would harm them to not have sex whenever they pleased.

Today, a version of this logic can be found in arguments for “maintenance sex”, which is when you have sex with your partner despite not wanting to, ostensibly to keep the spark alive. It's billed as a kind of relationship admin that sustains intimacy between you while keeping both your libidos satiated.

Call me sceptical, but I'm not totally convinced it works. Can simply going through the motions really lead to a better sex life?

For those in the “yes” camp, maintenance sex is about pushing through your initial lack of eagerness

to get to the bit where you start having fun.

Among those in favour is comedian Caitlin Moran, who in 2018 wrote in *The Guardian* that “you need to ‘do a sex’...to keep everything ticking over... for the first ten minutes or so, you’ll be a trifle desultory...but then, sex being what it is, you’ll suddenly get into it”.

Here, the partner who wasn’t keen initially changed their mind once play began—and so happily went through with sex in the end. By being open to sex, they were able to give desire the time and space to develop.

This can absolutely be a great thing for your relationship, but I’d argue that it isn’t maintenance sex. It’s just how sex drive works for some people.

Desire bubbling up after there’s been some physical stimulation is normal, and in fact, most women experience libido in this way. It’s a myth that if you fancy your partner, you should spontaneously want to tear their clothes off all the time.

OK, so in this case, you’re nurturing your sex life by giving intimacy a chance and ultimately, getting frisky because you want to. Doing it because you feel like you have to is another thing entirely: when you consent to sex despite not wanting it, what we’re talking about is compliance.

## UNWANTED SEX IS STILL A THING: WE CAN THANK THE PATRIARCHY FOR THAT

Many folks who comply with unwanted sex—mostly, this is women partnered with men—do it because they believe it will improve their relationship by keeping their partner happy.

But studies have shown that sexually compliant women are less satisfied with their relationships. If

you felt you had to please your partner, would you feel respected? Would you trust them and feel safe?

And yet, unwanted sex is still a thing. We can thank the patriarchy for that: the idea that women should be available to satisfy their male partners stems from centuries-old notions of gender roles—men have higher libidos and need sex; it’s a woman’s duty to please. It still plays an implicit role in our bedrooms today.

In one study of 41 women partnered with men, 27 per cent gave in to unwanted sex because they felt it was easier than getting into an argument. Twenty per cent said they “knew what would happen” if they didn’t agree—they’d be psychologically or physically pressured into it.

A dynamic where one partner is obliged to “top up” the other isn’t a healthy one. And I’ll let you in on a secret: it’s trusting, mutually-respectful relationships that are the true foundation of a great sex life. ■

# Relationship Advice

*Monica Karpinski*

**Q: I am always the person in my friend group that everyone goes to for advice. In some ways it's nice, but sometimes I feel that I give too much and no-one makes the same effort for me. I don't like it but I think I'm stuck being "too nice" to say anything. What should I do? - Jen**

**A:** Feeling that you're always giving and not getting anything back isn't a healthy or sustainable friendship dynamic. It's not OK to be stuck as everyone's soundboard, even if they have good intentions in seeking out your counsel.

But what's most concerning is that you feel you're "too nice" to do anything about this. Because, believe it or not, the friendships probably aren't going to change unless you do speak up.

Your friends need to be aware of what they're doing and that it can't continue. You don't necessarily have to spell it out for them; sometimes a hint is all that's needed for people to realise how they're coming across. For example, next time they ask for advice, you could signal that you aren't perpetually available by saying that you can't talk right now.

Or, try asking them for advice and see what comes back. It sounds like you're so afraid of upsetting your friends that you aren't voicing your own needs at all, but you might be surprised at how willing they are to show up for you.

There may come a point where you need to confront them directly. This might sound scary, but remember that you're a participant in the friendships, too, and it's your responsibility to communicate your boundaries. Just be honest and open about how you feel, without making any personal digs at them—otherwise you'll probably just end up arguing.

If, after giving things a chance to change, you're back to square one then it may be time to reflect on what you're getting out of these friendships. Are you being treated with trust and respect? Do you feel happy after seeing them?

Making new friends can be an effort, but I'd argue that it beats spending time with people who don't make you feel good about yourself. ■

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# VISION QUEST

This family is travelling the world—  
before the kids lose their vision to  
a rare genetic condition

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BY *Lisa Fitterman*





The Pelletier children  
(pictured in Damaraland,  
Namibia) travelled  
to 13 countries over  
the course of a year



# HIS

mouth open in both wonder and horror, Laurent Pelletier stares at the carnivorous armoured bush cricket that has landed in front of him on the picnic table. The boy is camping with his family near Fish River Canyon in Namibia, in southwest Africa. The insect, yellow and light-green, has a collar of spikes and six spindly legs planted in a boxer's stance. It's as big as the five-year-old's hand.

"Can we eat it?" he asks his mum, Edith Lemay.

"I don't think so," she says, laughing.

"Can I take it as a travel companion?"

"No, but you'll meet many more."

And Laurent did, over and over again during the first few months of a year-long trip through Africa, Asia and the Middle East with his parents and three older siblings, Mia, 12; Léo, ten; and Colin, seven. Bush crickets, ground crickets, baby crickets, crickets whose chirping lulled them to sleep at night; they became talismans, part of a panoply of encounters during which the kids experienced the world in technicolour and surround sound. Imprinting memories by horseback riding across the bright green steppes of Mongolia, kayaking on the azure sea off Cambodia, camping under the soaring, brick-red peaks of Namibia and hot-air ballooning over the

brown, almost lunar-like landscapes in Turkey.

Far from their home in Boucherville, Quebec, the children's experiences, steeped in colour, shape, touch and smell, are especially important to them. Because unless science makes a breakthrough soon, three of the four siblings—Mia, Colin and Laurent—will become blind, likely in adulthood. They have been diagnosed with a disease that has no effective treatment, as it gradually robs them of their sight.

**FOR THE CHILDREN'S PARENTS**, Edith Lemay and Sébastien Pelletier, the diagnoses came after a four-year search for the reason their eldest child couldn't see at night. Then a toddler, Mia banged into furniture that her mum and dad could make out once their eyes adjusted to the dark.

In 2013, when Mia was three, the family began a frustrating series of visits to doctors, none of whom had an answer for her lack of night vision. In 2015, as a last resort, a paediatric ophthalmologist enrolled the family in a research project in which their entire genome was mapped out. After two interminable years, the mapping was completed.

The family was called into the ophthalmologist's office. "It's retinitis pigmentosa, a mutation called PDE6B," they were told. The gene was inherited from both Lemay and Pelletier, who didn't know they were carriers.

RP, as it is known, is a catch-all term for a group of about 50 inherited genetic mutations that affect the retina, tissue at the back of the eye that interprets images in both black and white and colour. The cells at its edges, called rods, crucial for peripheral and night vision, die first. As the disease progresses, the cells in the middle, called cones, used for seeing in colour and for everyday activities like reading, writing and driving, die off, too.

“Right now,” the doctor continued, “there is no cure.”

Awash with emotion, Edith stood up, excused herself and walked to the nearest bathroom, where she locked herself in a stall. *I can't cry in front of*

*Mia*, she told herself. *She wouldn't understand.* There, alone, she cried gasping, heaving sobs.

After a few minutes, Edith splashed cold water on her face before returning to the ophthalmologist's office, where her husband and daughter were waiting, and they talked about next steps and options.

While it was tempting to seek a second opinion, Lemay and Pelletier knew that genetic mapping did not lie: the results were definitive, irreversible and life changing. Soon tests would show that Colin, at the time just an infant, and Laurent, yet to even be born, had PDE6B as well. Only Léo, the couple's second eldest, didn't have the gene mutation.



Back: Sébastien and Mia.  
Front, left to right: Laurent,  
Colin, Léo and Edith in  
Walvis Bay, Namibia



"Everything we hope for our children, for their future, for what they could become, has to change," Edith said as she and her husband embraced one evening, in tears. "How will they cope?". They vacillated over explaining to Mia what her condition meant. Should they let her be a kid, innocent and unaware, for as long as possible?

A few weeks later, it just came out, part of a conversation about disabilities in general while having lunch at their kitchen table. "You know the problem with your eyes?" Edith asked Mia. "You're probably going to be blind when you're an adult." The revelation was more abrupt than Edith had hoped, but at least it was done. Edith held her breath as she waited for Mia to respond.

"Oh, that's not fun," the seven-year-old said before changing the subject.

Later that week, Mia approached her, saying she needed to keep her bedroom especially clean from then on. "In the future, I'll need to know where things are," the little girl explained to her mother.

Edith and Sébastien watched as Mia continued, unprompted, to feel her way around the house with her eyes closed to see what it was like to navigate without sight, up the stairs

and down, through the kitchen, living room and basement, memorising shapes with her fingertips. "She is finding solutions on her own," the couple told each other. "We need to follow her lead."

And so the idea of a year-long trip was born, one that would show the kids the world, not through two-dimensional picture books and lectures in a classroom, but in person and close-up, from windswept vistas to waterfalls and warhogs. A trip that would show life in all its grandeur and gritty detail—while the kids could still see it.

When Edith and Sébastien first broached the idea in the spring of

## BEING BLIND DIDN'T MEAN THE END OF THE WORLD. RATHER, THE WORLD WOULD BE DIFFERENT FOR THEM



2020, the kids didn't understand. A whole year away from school, their grandparents and friends? "It was hard to imagine," says Léo. "I didn't think it was real."

For the next two years, Edith and Sébastien continued to work—she in health logistics and he for a financial start-up. They saved money, researched places to visit and asked their children what they wanted to do

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**Clockwise from top left: Laurent and an armoured cricket; Stone Town, Zanzibar; Colin with a chameleon in Zambia; resting at a guesthouse; Etosha National Park, Namibia; Léo and Colin learn to start a fire with the Maasai in Tanzania**

on their big trip. Mia wanted to ride a horse. Colin wanted to sleep overnight on a train. Laurent thought it would be fun to drink juice while riding a camel. Léo wanted to tour Pokémon attractions in Japan.

IN EARLY 2022, they were ready. Edith and Sébastien quit their jobs, rented out their home for the next year and gathered textbooks so the kids could study French and mathematics a few times a week. The rest of the time, they'd be learning from the world around them—the best teacher of all. Travelling with four children wouldn't be cheap, but they'd save money by camping, staying in hostels, guest houses and even a Mongolian yurt made from goatskins.

On Monday, March 21, they flew out of Montreal, with no set itinerary save for a meandering initial trip from the southwest coast of Africa to the east, through Namibia, Botswana and Tanzania. Once there, they would make plans on the fly. "How we adults see the world and how kids see the world is so different, and we had to respect that," says Edith. "That was clear from the start. It would have to be less about temples and museums and more about whatever caught their eye."

Over the months, that world constantly unveiled itself, sometimes in a cacophony, sometimes in a whisper. There was the shouting of hawkers selling bananas at each stop of a 24-hour train ride through



Tanzania. And then there was the near-cathedral silence of Namibia's Dead Vlei. Once a marsh, it's now bone dry, with sand dunes rising over 1,300 feet and trees that are black skeletons against a cloudless sky.

They played pat-a-cake with uniformed schoolchildren in Botswana, and while in Tanzania they danced with Maasai tribesmen and stayed on a banana farm. In Borneo, they went parasailing over the South China Sea. In Thailand, Mia touched



an elephant, calling out in surprise at how rough it felt. In northern Cambodia, Colin, who had always been more withdrawn than his siblings, mugged like a miniature pirate while brandishing the wooden sword a guide had carved for him on the spot from a piece of mahogany they'd found while hiking.

Each day, Edith and Sébastien watched their kids change, physically and emotionally. Mia grew taller and, on the cusp of adolescence, needed

more independence. Both Léo and Colin became more confident and outgoing, unafraid to engage with strangers, kick around a football with locals and try new food, like red ants in Laos gathered from under a tree. "They taste like lemons," the kids chorused.

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**Clockwise from top left: In Turkey, an Istanbul mosque; Léo in Cappadocia; in Indonesia, Mia and Laurent in Sulawesi; the rice fields on Flores; in Mongolia, the Orkhon River; meeting an eagle**



went up in a hot-air balloon on July 1, in celebration of Laurent's fifth birthday. Or the visit in January to the Tad Fane waterfall in Laos, when the family ziplined across a gorge.

Rarely did they talk about why they were abroad in the first place, with one exception. While travelling along a dusty Mongolian highway last summer, Laurent, who had seemed unaware of what was to come, asked: "What does it mean to be blind? How will I cross the street? Will I be able to drive a car?"

"It's like when you have your eyes closed," Edith said. "It won't happen overnight, but slowly, over years." Being blind, she continued, didn't mean the end of the world. Rather, the world would be different. Nothing would prevent them from doing most things, including skiing, swimming or even becoming scientists who worked on cures for their condition. Laurent nodded, then went back to making up his own games to pass the time.

By the time the trip began to wind down early this year, the family had travelled over 52,000 miles and visited

The family itself grew more tight-knit and protective of each other, which helped when they faced situations that were difficult to explain. One example came when they drove past villages in Cambodia that were the sites of massacres, the "killing fields" during the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s. Their guide told of how he was abandoned as an infant in the nearby forest, likely hidden by his parents to protect him. Edith and Sébastien held their children close, to make them feel safe.

Other times, the goal was pure fun and adventure, like when the family



**Clockwise from top left: Peeling cocoa grains to make chocolate in Sulawesi, Indonesia; Laurent in a temple in Luang Prabang, Laos; Léo in a flower market in Bangkok, Thailand**

13 countries. The kids reflected on what they had learned about the world and themselves. “There’s a lot of suffering and poverty, but lots of good and interesting things, too,” says Colin. “Kids are kids everywhere, just like us, but with their own customs and traditions.”

Léo’s take was a bit less philosophical. “I am not fond of durian,” he says, wrinkling his nose in distaste at the thought of the spiky fruit he tasted in Indonesia that has a reputation for smelling like rotten eggs, old onions and raw sewage—combined. But that hasn’t stopped him from wanting to travel more. Mia nods her head. “This has been a magic year we’ll remember for the rest of our lives.”

**RETINITIS PIGMENTOSA**, which affects between one in 3,000 to 4,000 people globally, was once considered untreatable. But over the last 20 years, science has seen considerable breakthroughs. While there is not yet a cure for PDE6B, the mutation the Pelletier kids have, genetic research has resulted in the development of a successful treatment to reverse the effects of another mutation, RPE65. Basically, it’s a surgical injection behind the retina. This, says Dr Robert Koenekoop, a paediatric

ophthalmologist in Montreal, has given science a clear road map for developing treatments for other forms of RP.

Until then, science has managed to temporarily slow the progress of RP in many cases by injecting antioxidants, such as vitamin A and omega-3 fatty acids, at regular intervals. And, in 2022, two different studies found that acupuncture can improve vision, possibly by increasing blood flow to the retina.

“This is the most exciting time in

## **EDITH AND SÉBASTIEN WANT THEIR KIDS TO LEAD FULL LIVES, WHETHER THEY’RE BLIND OR NOT**



terms of advances for treatment of RP. The chances of kids like these three children getting help are good,” explains Koenekoop.

Edith and Sébastien know there is some hope. But they downplay the possibility because they want their kids to lead full lives, whether they’re blind or not. The trip has reinforced what Mia showed them all those years ago when she wandered the house with her eyes shut. They will find their way.

“Today, my vision is good and I’m going to make the most of it,” says Mia. “We will rise to the challenge.” ■

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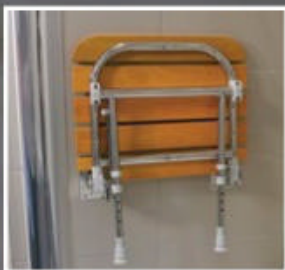
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## My Britain: Robin Hood's Bay

**T**HE STORY GOES that Robin Hood went out fishing and came across some French pirates who had come to pillage his boat. He made them surrender and returned what they'd taken while plundering the northeast coast of England to the village now known as Robin Hood's Bay.


It's a picturesque village made up of a maze of tiny, stunning streets, once walked by sailors, fishermen, smugglers and press gangs. Beneath the village's cosy cottages there is a network of subterranean tunnels which 18th-century smugglers used to transport contraband, including silk and alcohol.

Aside from its smuggling history, the village is known for its fossil-flung beach and moody moorland. Robin Hood's Bay is perfect for exploring nature and enjoying cafes, pubs and shops. **Alice Gawthrop** and **Ian Chaddock** talked to residents to find out more. →



Brian Allanson





**Brian Allanson, 64, is the creator of Robin Hood's Bay Walks and the guide for the Smugglers Tour of Bay. He has lived in the village for 20 years**

[rhwalks.co.uk](http://rhwalks.co.uk), [baytownwalks.com](http://baytownwalks.com)

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FARM-RAISED FURTHER UP the coast, the rural life, the coast and the North Yorkshire Moors seemingly seeped into my bones from birth. After 20 years of living in London, having moved there at 23, time came to leave the rat race in search of a better quality of life, somewhere rural and familiar.

Here in Bay, everything is in one location—coast, cliff and beach, woodland, valley and stream, moor, dale and wilderness. So, we upped sticks and escaped to Bay.

Even with all the wonderfully varied scenery to explore, one aspect stands above and underpins it all—the people of this fair community. Some have been here a generation or three, and a few families trace their roots here back over 500 years and more. Semi-isolated from the outside world, the community spirit and connections are flexible and strong. Even with our tradition of independence, we locals are always nearby to lend a helping hand and contribute to the continuing local traditions and life where needed.

Robin Hood's Bay began as a small fishing village 600 odd years

ago. "Silver Darling" herring was the lifeblood of the village, with pack horses transporting surpluses across the bleak, forbidding moors. By the 1700s, with rising taxes and duties on tea, brandy and gin, this isolated, free-spirited community took to "free trading" (smuggling) like ducks to water. It would come to have one of the richest incomes in the country. This independent, free-wheeling outlook on life still bubbles through the Bay today.

Through Robin Hood's Bay Walks I experience the freedom of rambling this beautiful scenery, creating photographic walking guides so you "never get lost again". The Baytown Walks site deals with the guided Smugglers Tour and the local history of smuggling in the 1700s. This brings me so much fun: helping visitors, especially the younger ones, to understand, through local stories, how very different those seemingly wild, profitable times were.

I have far too many favourite locations, so I'll name two for now. The Cleveland Way cliff path to Ravenscar is a sheer delight. A seal colony below and ever-changing scenery above, walking the magical boundary between land and sea. For a shorter walk, the old trod ways of Bedlington's Lane and Bowman's Lane lead you along the hidden paths of centuries past, protected by hedgerow and tree—it's pastoral bliss indeed.

**Jane Tennant runs the Robin Hood's Bay Bookshop—a small, family-run business that they have owned for 13 years**

[facebook.com/robinhoodsbaybookshop](https://facebook.com/robinhoodsbaybookshop)

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I WAS BORN HERE. I grew up here, went to the village school and had a wonderful, wild childhood exploring the beach and surrounding countryside. I went away to university and stayed away for about ten years before making my way back home. It was always home. Even

when I made a life elsewhere, Bay was always home.

Robin Hood's Bay is one of those beautiful, timeless places you come across which roots itself into your memories. The old narrow streets with crooked houses jumbled on top of each other lead to unexpected glimpses of hidden gardens or views of the sea. There's a small museum in the old coroner's rooms and lots of independent shops, cafes and pubs. And the beach is just paradise. There is sand for sandcastles—mostly wet but on neap tides it becomes

powdery by the cliff base. The rock pools can be tiny, sandy and full of tiny flatfish or deep, rocky and weedy with crabs and fish. Fossils too can be found lying on the sand along with Whitby Jet.

Bay is a real community. There are lots of families—enough for a school within walking distance. There are people who can trace local ancestors back hundreds of years and those who arrived a few months ago. There are arts clubs, the history society, the Women's Institute, tennis and bowls club, cricket club,





football club, folk club, walkers, dog walkers and cyclists, along with three different faith churches within the village. It's easy to find your community and to feel at home here. There's always a community event of some sort happening.

Robin Hood's Bay Bookshop is in the heart of the old village on Chapel Street, in what was the butcher's shop for over 100 years. It's full of shelves packed with books of all genres and ages. Whatever you're interested in there's a good chance we have something relating to it. We stock a few new local books, but the vast majority are good quality second-hand books.

I do everything from buying and selling the books to cleaning, categorising and endless reorganising. My mum loves creating

the window displays so we always have a fun Christmas window display, for example.

I love books. I have always loved reading and collecting books. In working here, I combine my love and knowledge of books. Every day is different, the people who visit are lovely and when I'm sorting fresh books out it's a complete lottery as to what there is. I have to be strict with myself not to take the beautiful books home! One or two slip through the net sometimes though.

I love the beach. I love how it's never the same. It changes with the tide, the weather, the season. Who you share it with changes how you see it as well. I love bringing my friends down as you see it anew through their fresh eyes. I don't think I'll ever tire of a walk on the beach.

**James Lambeth and his wife Freya own and run Brambles Bistro, where James cooks and Freya is the face of the bistro**

[bramblesbistro.co.uk](http://bramblesbistro.co.uk)

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WE MOVED TO Robin Hood's Bay in December of 2021—so we have lived here for around 18 months, and the bistro has been open for a little over a year.

For my wife Freya, the area holds a special place in her heart—she spent many a childhood holiday visiting Whitby, Robin Hood's Bay and the surrounding villages, as a big family group. They explored the area getting lost on long hikes, interspersed with drinks in pubs and barbecues. For her, it's a sense

of nostalgia—and the area holds a special place in her heart.

I had never been to Robin Hood's Bay before we viewed the bistro, which had been closed and empty for a couple of years, but we came away after that first viewing understanding why Freya loved this place—and knowing that we had to buy it! We put our house on the market the next day, and soon after, we were in.

We love having space to relax on the beach and get on the water, or to spend time eating and drinking around the village. It's a picturesque place nestled on rugged coastline, carved into the cliffside by sailors and smugglers long since gone. The winding streets lead to charming cottages, and quaint shops, pubs and







restaurants, that evoke a sense of old-world charm. We love being centred right here, part of a wonderful and welcoming community, and with easy access to all of the wonders of the Jurassic coast. We love to get out on walks and explore the local area, and there's great cycle routes too.

The sense of community in Bay is strong—much more so than in the city, where we used to live. We know our neighbours well, and all care about each other's well-being, making the village feel like a true home and a special place to be part of. There's a real, genuine buzz of community, with locals chatting in the street, amid the buzz of a vibrant tourist trade.

There are around 50 of us who live in Lower Bay year-round, many of whom are regulars in the bistro. We feel that we've been welcomed into the community really well, and it's as if we have been here for years.

There's a big sense of freedom from modern pressures in the

village. It has such a timeless feel with the lack of cars, the cobbled streets, the dim glow of the Victorian streetlights, and the old stone buildings. Much of the village dates back to the early 1600s.

Brambles Bistro is a cosy and casual steakhouse bistro, nestled in the bottom of the dock, right in the heart of Robin Hood's Bay. The local area influences our menu—we're proud to use local suppliers for our produce. All our beef comes from farms right here in the North Yorkshire Moors, our fish is from Whitby, our breads are baked fresh locally, and we forage for seasonal ingredients. We use local coffee, beer and gin suppliers, so you'll be able to eat and drink a real flavour of the area.

We're proud to say that we employ locally too—our team all live in the village, and we're providing much-needed, well-paid and rewarding jobs to local young adults, which means they don't have to travel for work. You'll be greeted warmly when you visit—our team are great at giving top tips about the local area or helping to find lost cottages!

My favourite place in Bay is right here, in the dock. On a warm summer's evening, we take a bottle of wine down to the shore and sit looking out over the sea. Last night the sea was calm, with wisps of mist. In the distance, a pod of dolphins jumped out of the water. ■

# If I Ruled The World

## Candi Staton



*Candi Staton is the “First Lady of Southern Soul” whose chart topping disco and soul hits have garnered four Grammy Award nominations*

### **I would spread the love of God all over the world**

I think that’s what’s missing—love in the world. There’s a lot of division. If we just had the love of God in our heart, we would be able to treat each other with respect and honour instead of hate. That would be the first thing I would try to do.

### **Women would be responsible for their own body**

Men in politics would have no right

to our bodies. Right now, we have men and politics, men in high places, controlling women. Women have always been kind of neglected or looked down or mistreated in our world. We were the lesser people. We were not respected. We were used. Men had all of this power, and women had absolutely no power. We were born and raised to respect and obey. But women are very smart. We know our bodies. Men think that they know our bodies, but they don’t.

### **There would be no hunger for anyone in the world**

No homeless people. No poor people. Everyone in the world would have more than enough. Now, we don’t have more than enough. Children are starving. Seniors are

neglected. There's no equality, even in our jobs. Women make less money. But the rich have more than enough. They throw away more food than we could ever eat. If we had equality, our hearts would go out to the poor, instead of taxing them over what they can afford.

### **Everybody in the world would have health insurance**

There would be no premature death. We could afford good healthcare. It wouldn't be overpriced, like insulin was a few months ago. Our government saw to it that the medicine came down so people with sugar diabetes could afford to have insulin at \$35 a month, when before it was hundreds of dollars. They couldn't afford it and people were dying and people were getting sick. Big Pharma would have to be a little bit more lenient towards the poor.

### **There would be peace in the world**

No more wars. No more school shootings. No guns for kids underage killing each other. We would find a way to get the guns off the street, so kids would stop buying them. Here in Atlanta, we have three or four teenage shootings a week, 15 and 16-year-olds shooting each other. They don't fight like we did when we were their age. I'm 83. When I was going to school, if you were bullied, you just had a fight. We didn't shoot each other. We

didn't have knives. We didn't kill each other. They just fought until they got tired. The bullies were beaten, some of them, and they didn't try to be bullies again. That would be one thing that I would try to stop.

### **Education for everybody that wants it**

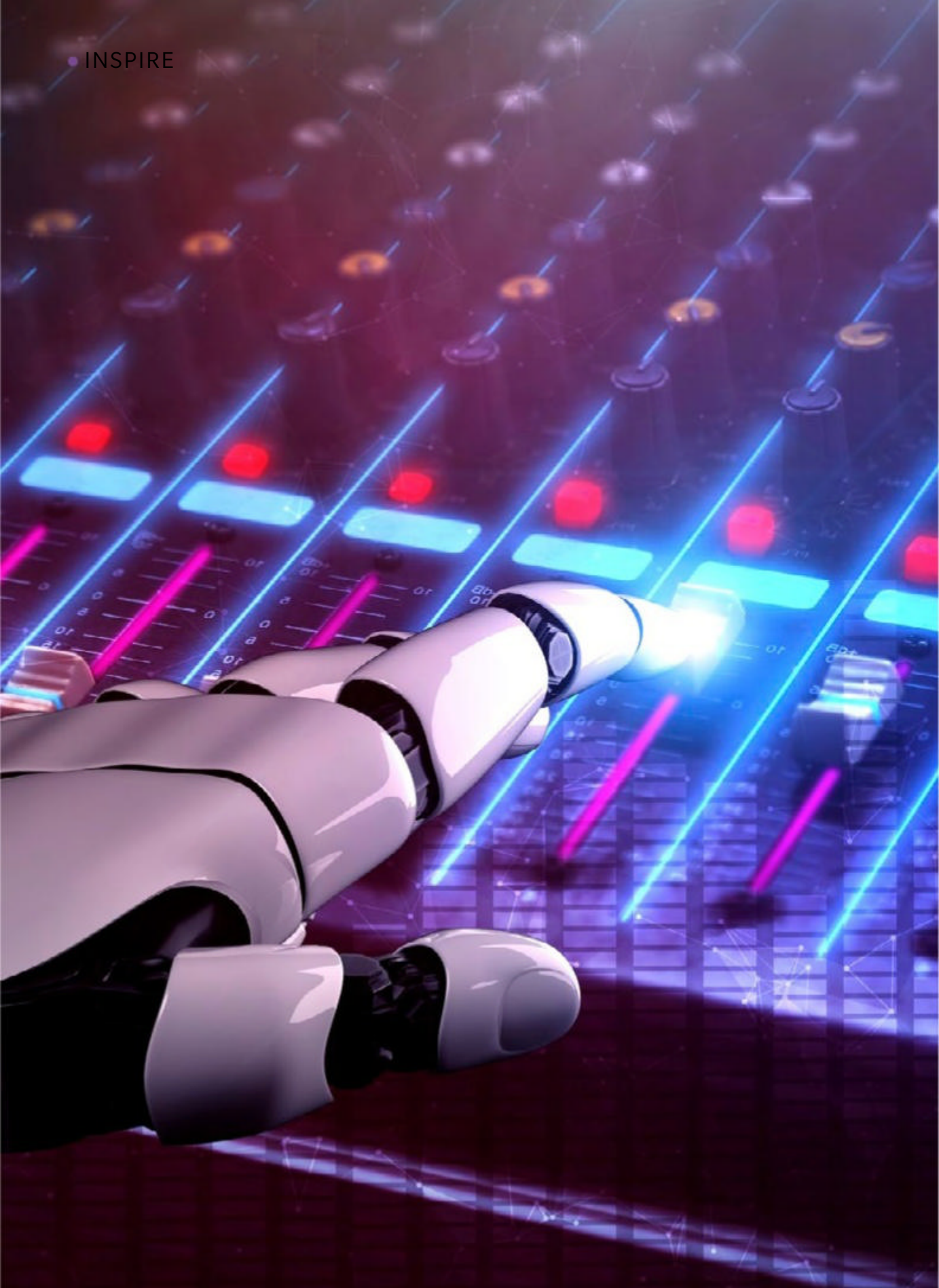
Colleges would drop high interest rates on loans, so students would not have to work the rest of their lives trying to pay off their loan. That's why a lot of kids don't go to school, because they can't afford it. And that's why we have so many gangs in the streets, because parents can't afford to send their kids to college. They can't afford to get them into sport. They can't afford a lot of stuff. And so the kids make their own families per se. They end up in gangs and spreading violence in the streets, because they get bored. They don't have anything else to do. We're working on that even now, to try to get kids in different types of environments. There are buildings going up that will teach kids how to do sports and how to play basketball and do things after school, so they don't get into trouble on the streets. ■

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AS TOLD TO BECCA INGLIS

Candi Staton performs at the Love Supreme Jazz Festival, East Sussex, June 30 to July 2 ([lovesupremefestival.com](http://lovesupremefestival.com))

INSPIRE



# WILL AI DESTROY MUSIC MAKING?

*Video killed the radio star—will AI finish the job, or could it help future musicians?*

BY Neal Sawyer

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## **What is AI?**

AI, short for Artificial Intelligence, is a computer simulation of human intelligence. As Phil Tee, CEO of AIOps company Moogsoft highlights, we already use it in our daily lives. "You have AI on every device you own, from your Apple watch to your smartphone."

Truth is, for many years, the music industry has put AI to use. Ever asked a smart speaker to play a song? Or ever streamed Spotify's new DJ AI, which plays music catered to your exact taste? This is AI at work.

So maybe *Terminator 2* was catastrophising AI in true Hollywood fashion. Tee continues: "The truth is very mundane. It has absolutely no self-awareness or intent, it's no more malicious than the car in your

garage. And, at the end of the day, every computer has an off switch!”

### Technology drives musical innovation

So, in the words of an AI expert, there's nothing to fear just yet. What's more, we need to remember that technology in music is nothing new. In fact, the past has looked kindly at the early innovators.

Born out of Birmingham in 1963, the Mellotron was one of the first mass-produced sampled keyboards. The Beatles adopted the revolutionary sound in no time. A mere four years later, in 1967, the whimsical, dreamy tones were prominent on “Strawberry Fields Forever”, a song that helped to

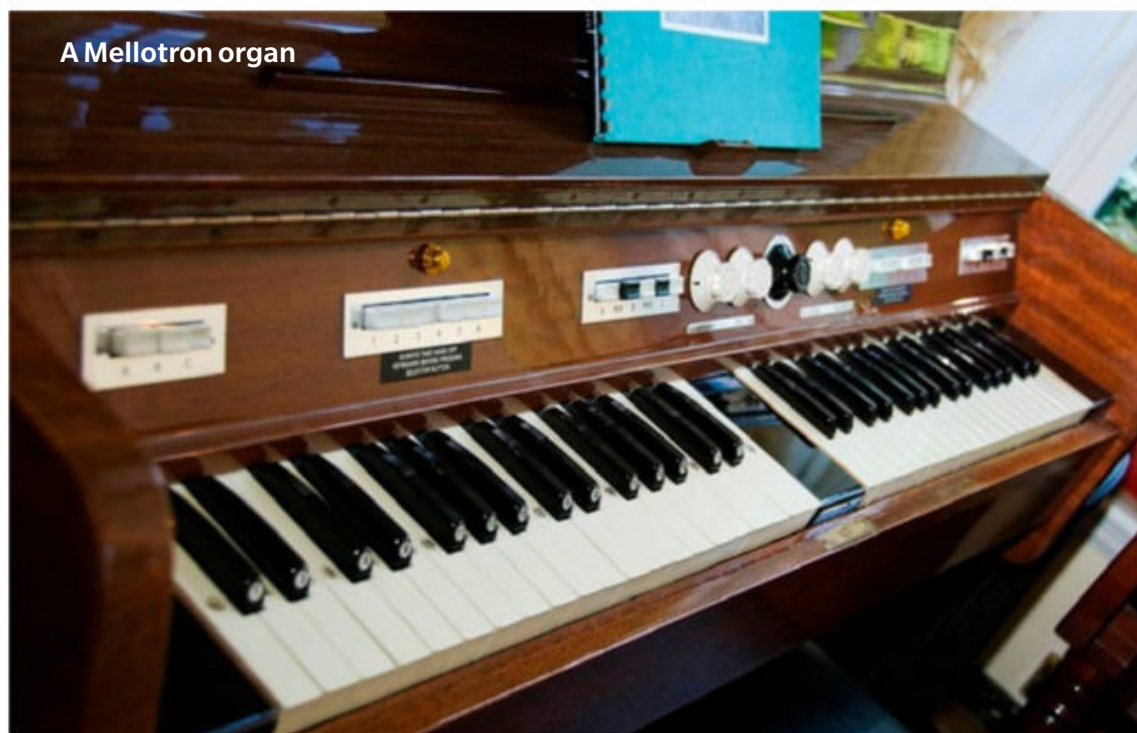
## I TOLD ALL MY ENGINEER MATES TO BUY HARD DISK RECORDING SYSTEMS OR GET LEFT BEHIND

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spearhead a psychedelic movement.

Talking of The Beatles, music writer Rob Bowman said “one of the two most influential bands in the history of postwar popular music” alongside the Fab Four was Kraftwerk—a band who embraced a full electric soundscape, changing the course of pop music forever.

Multi-platinum-selling music Producer TommyD is open to AI and believes it’s the next step in the



RENEGADEPHOTO.NET / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

ongoing relationship between tech and music. “Electric guitars have been on sale for nearly 100 years, but not everyone is Jimi Hendrix. When the hard disk recording came in, I told all my engineer mates to buy systems or get left behind. Those who did are still in the business, those that didn’t are selling insurance. Learn to use the tech or get left behind,” he states.

### AI to the rescue

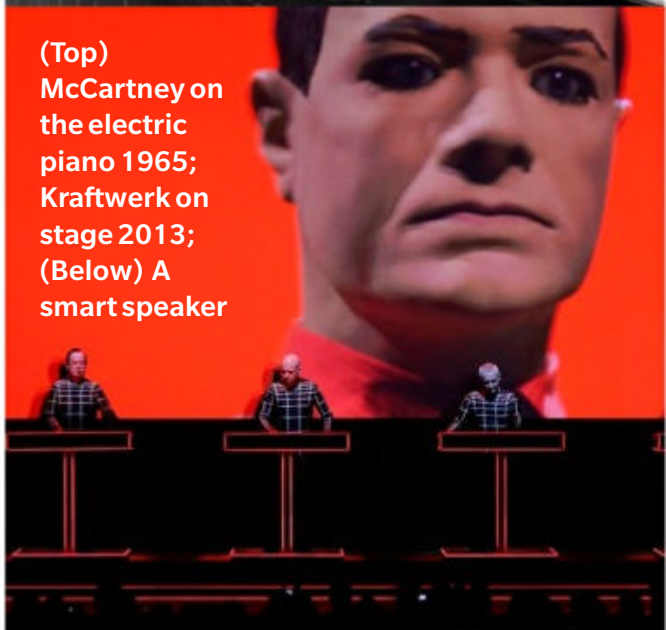
Is it high time for musicians to consider the benefits of AI? Above all, the latest tech boom could offer a helping hand for time-consuming tasks. There’s so much more than music-making needed to get your name heard. Crafting social media content to keep an online persona is a job in its own right—not forgetting the creation of music videos, artwork and gig posters thrown onto the to-do list.

With streaming royalty rates too low to supply vital funds, the money isn’t available to outsource the workload. Perhaps it’s time to lean on AI to help. Truth is, AI can complete these tasks in seconds. This should appeal to musicians who can then concentrate on what’s most important: the music.

When probed on the use of AI in music, Tee cited plagiarism as a key area. “ChatGPT is already very good at spotting when two pieces of text are the same or from the same author and it is a short step to do the same in music.”



(Top) McCartney on the electric piano 1965; Kraftwerk on stage 2013; (Below) A smart speaker



Songwriters are no strangers to lawsuits. Even one of the world's most streamed artists, Taylor Swift, found herself embroiled in a dispute over lyrics at the turn of the year. Writers Sean Hall and Nate Butler brought the case to court having written the 3LW song "Playas Gon' Play" containing the lyrics "Playas, they gon' play, And haters, they gonna hate." Sound familiar?

Swift denied lifting lyrics for her

## YOU NEED HEARTBREAK BEFORE YOU CAN WRITE A SONG ABOUT LOST LOVE



smash hit "Shake It Off". That could well be the case. It's impossible for a songwriter to know the lyrics of every song ever written. With that in mind, there's a chance of imitating phrases unknowingly when scribbling ideas in the studio. A plagiarism-detecting tool could become a vital part of a songwriter's arsenal. It would make sure new tracks are original, plus prevent legal fees and stress from future lawsuits. If the tool could alert plagiarised melodies, songwriters would embrace AI.

### Overstepping the lines?

Speaking of lyrics, they're resistant to generative AI, right? Well, it turns

out not. AI can write lyrics. We prompted ChatGPT to "write me song lyrics about lost love in the style of Leonard Cohen."

Reams of original lyrics rolled down the screen in a matter of seconds. Verses, choruses, an outro, the whole nine yards. Evidently, AI can write lyrics. Moreover, write lyrics in a similar vein to one of the world's favourite songwriters. Here's a sample of the results...

*"I met her in the autumn  
With leaves of gold and red  
Her eyes were like the ocean  
Her hair, a crown on her head  
I try to fill the void  
With cheap whiskey and cigarettes  
But nothing can replace  
The love I can't forget"*

Songwriters use words to release their own emotions. When heartbroken, they'll write about their vulnerabilities and pain. Once on record or played live, it's an insightful glimpse into their soul. The listener who shares the same sentiments takes solace, and that's one of the many beauties of music. The purity of human connection. But if AI writes the lyrics, then surely that's at risk. Furthermore, as AI becomes wiser, it'll become harder to distinguish words that come from human emotion or not.

It's a concern that resonates with Leon Luis, owner of AltarBoy Music





DJ David Guetta has embraced AI as a collaborative artist

Publishing. “It’s a loss of humanity. Songwriting is spiritual. You put pen to paper and write what the world tells you. You need heartbreak before you can write a song about lost love. You can’t substitute human experience with code.”

### **The rise of the deep fake**

Artificial lyrics are the tip of the iceberg. In February this year, The (Not So) Real Slim Shady featured on a song with DJ David Guetta in front of thousands of ravers. As punters danced and rejoiced at hearing the new collaboration, most were unaware it wasn't Eminem at all.

Having asked AI to write a verse in the style of Eminem, Guetta then put those lyrics into another generative AI program to recreate

the voice. The result was a close likeness, indistinguishable to most. Now, the floodgates are open and AI can rap and sing in the style of your favourite artists.

Later, an AI duet featuring Drake and The Weeknd landed on streaming platforms. It soon went viral, rattling the music industry at the same time. Drake, the golden goose of the Universal record label, had been cloned. Universal responded by banishing the song off Spotify and others. A statement by the label called the song “a breach of our agreements and a violation of copyright law”.

It's not only the digitised pop genre that has fallen victim to AI deep fakery. A set of songs by AI'sis, an AI Oasis, complete with fake



The cover of *The Lost Tapes Volume One* by Aisis

Liam Gallagher, took the internet by storm in late April. It poses an enormous question about copyright. Luis, who deals with music law, had this to say: "With AI, we're in completely uncharted territory. We're talking Wild West. Like Arizona in the 1880s during the Gold Rush."

AI has stepped into murky, dangerous waters. It's safe to say, Universal has nailed their colours to their mast when it comes to AI deep fakes. Their statement continued with defiant wording. "Which side of history [do] all stakeholders in the music ecosystem want to be on? The side of artists, fans and human creative expression, or on the side of deep fakes, fraud and denying artists their due compensation?"

## WITH AI, WE'RE IN COMPLETELY UNCHARTED TERRITORY. WE'RE TALKING THE WILD WEST

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### **The death of the songwriter?**

When doomsday merchants warned of an AI influx, we thought the creatives would be the last to fall. But the warning signs are there. The sophisticated nature of modern AI has the potential to take the job of songwriters.

Yet, as it stands, even AI has its limitations. Phil Tee concludes, "For all the hype surrounding ChatGPT and AI, what it is incapable of is novelty. Having the sum total of all

knowledge and an excellent pattern repetition algorithm just condemns you to repeat the past. We may have a more efficient production process for music...but making the next Bob Dylan or predicting the 'Whispering Grass' hit is a long stretch."

With no law to abide by, the next few months will determine the future of AI in music. Questions loom over the intellectual property of AI-written lyrics while, for all intents and purposes, deep fake AI tracks appear to be on the wrong side of the law.

Moves are being made to protect the songwriter. The Human Artistry Campaign is a petition calling for the responsible use of AI in music.

It has the support of powerful organisations in music and sets out seven principles where AI and human creativity can live side by side. Because, let's face it, while AI has its place in the music industry, in the wrong hands, it can do damage.

I guess we need to hear from one more "person" in this conversation. Over to you ChatGPT..

"No, AI will not destroy music making. While AI technology has advanced significantly in recent years, it is still not capable of replicating the full range of human creativity."

Maybe it's not quite "hasta la vista" for the songwriter after all. ■



## Dog Days of Summer and Sirius

The "dog days" of summer refers to a period of hot and humid weather during July and August in the Northern Hemisphere

The term "dog days" comes from Ancient Greeks noticing Sirius (the "dog star") appears to rise alongside the Sun in late July, they believed causing hot days

Sirius is a star in the constellation Canis Major ("Greater Dog") and other than the Sun, is the brightest star in the night sky

The name "Sirius" stems from the Ancient Greek word *seirios*, which suitably translates as "scorching"

In ancient Greece and Rome, the dog days were believed to be a time of drought, bad luck and unrest, when dogs and men would be driven mad by heat

source: [nationalgeographic.com](https://www.nationalgeographic.com) and [almanac.com](https://www.almanac.com)

# "Beautiful Britain"

## Photo Competition

**THE THEME OF** this year's photo competition was "Beautiful Britain", and we asked you to share images that encapsulate the beauty of Britain. You more than delivered! We received thousands of entries that interpreted the theme in exciting and original ways. Rugged beaches, misty mornings and moody sunsets from all over. And there were some great prizes to be won! Our first place winner will receive a £400 Amazon voucher and a Royal Photographic Society membership for a year, and will find their photo on the back cover of this issue. Our second place winner will receive a £250 Camera World voucher, and our third place winner will receive an Experience or Workshop and Course voucher from Jessops.

The entries were judged by award-winning photographer **James Eckersley**, an expert in portraiture who has worked with some of the most prestigious magazines, publishers and record companies across the world. His work is held



*After thousands of entries and months of deliberation, we're excited to reveal the winners of our photo competition!*

in the permanent collections of both The National Portrait Gallery and The Royal Collection, and has featured in many books and gallery exhibitions.

He is a qualified photography lecturer, running practical workshops.

Of the entries, he says, "The standard of photography in this year's competition has been exceptional. The creativity and technical ability has shown the true beauty of Britain. One of the things I particularly love about Britain is its diversity of landscapes, wildlife and people. This has been shown with great eloquence in so many of the competition entries and has made it a challenge for me to pick winners."

Without further ado, we present the winner and runners-up of the *Reader's Digest* 2023 "Beautiful Britain" photography competition!



▲ **First place: Mark Caldon "Home to Rest", Maldon in Essex**

**Our judge says:** "Having grown up in neighbouring Suffolk, I know very well the beauty and drama of the Essex coast and waterways. Mark has captured the atmosphere at this scene in Maldon with technical excellence and great sensitivity.

Every aspect of the image has fallen into place beautifully, but the most striking element of his photograph is the composition. Our eyes are led around the image by the clever use of leading lines, taking us through a myriad of colours, tones and textures, finally resting our gaze on the perfectly positioned boat. Mark clearly has a great eye for composition."

**Mark says:** "I was delighted to learn that my photograph "Home to Rest" had been selected by the judges as the winner of the competition. The shot was taken on the river Blackwater at Maldon, Essex, a town with a proud maritime history and home of the famous Maldon mud race. This rotting wreck, one of many along the shores of the estuary, offers a perfect focal point for photographers. Patience is a virtue for photographers and I was fortunate that all the conditions—the tide, the clouds and the light—combined on the day to create this fabulous vista. But, oh the mud!"



### ▲ Second place: Liam Willis. Stag in Richmond Park, London

**Our judge says:** "As soon as I saw this photograph I fell in love with it. The stag is one of the most majestic creatures on our islands and perhaps represents many of the qualities found in our wildlife, landscapes and people. Liam has captured this magnificence with such drama and eloquence one cannot help but be in awe of this photograph.

Every aspect of this image I find breathtaking. The lighting is simply perfect, highlighting the warmth of the

creature in the cold frost, and the golden hues of the sunlight silhouetting the stag against the rising steam are depicted with such luminosity. This is all brought together with the simple (and so effective) use of composition and negative space.

Liam's picture has captured the beauty of Britain on so many levels and in such a seemingly simple way, but behind this is a technical and creative talent that is truly impressive. I love it!"

### ▼ Third place: Chris Mole. Waves at Newhaven

**Our judge says:** I lived for many years directly on the beach, and have always been drawn to bleak and emotive landscapes. Each year I longed for the drama and spectacle of the roughest storms hitting the coastline I love so much. Chris's picture of huge waves at Newhaven captures this excitement perfectly, and reveals the natural power and beauty of so many of Britain's coastal areas.

The foreboding atmosphere he has created in this shot is so brilliantly achieved by his use of dark, brooding

tones in the background, which perfectly highlight the white crests of the crashing waves. This is all captured through the great choice of shutter speed, giving a perfect combination of movement and sharpness. The tonal range further adds to this atmosphere and drama, along with the subtle inclusion of the lighthouse in the background.

A magnificent photograph which not only resonates with me personally, but really does sum up an aspect of our beautiful Britain."



# Win a two night beach hut suite stay in Sussex for two worth £895

**The Beachcroft Hotel, on the beach in the beautiful South Downs of West Sussex, is the ideal seaside bolthole for couples, families, friends and four-legged companions.**

Situated on a seven-mile coastal footpath, the local area has secluded beaches, award-winning seafront with a Grade II listed pier and green-flag parks.

To celebrate the launch of Doorstep Discoveries, one lucky reader can win a two-night stay for two in a Beach Hut Suite. Each of the four seafront suites, has a stylish lounge area, their own terrace overlooking the pebble beach, a mezzanine master bedroom (and there's even a small bunk bed room at the back of the suite for kids).

Doorstep Discoveries is a one- or two-night stay that encourages guests

to discover Sussex's hidden gems. This county boasts a wide variety of activities and attractions from getting active on the coast and on the South Downs, exploring the region's best gardens, to history and heritage, as well as Sussex Vineyards and craft ales and beers.

There are three restaurants at the hotel: the garden terrace restaurant Blake's with outdoor dining pods, offering stone baked pizzas, light bites and traditional afternoon tea; Tamarisk Restaurant and Bistro Restaurant serving locally-sourced, traditional British fare.

**Win a two-night stay in a Beach Hut Suite at The Beachcroft Hotel for two people including full English breakfast, and Afternoon Tea in Tamarisk Restaurant for two people including a bottle of Tinwood Sparkling Wine.**

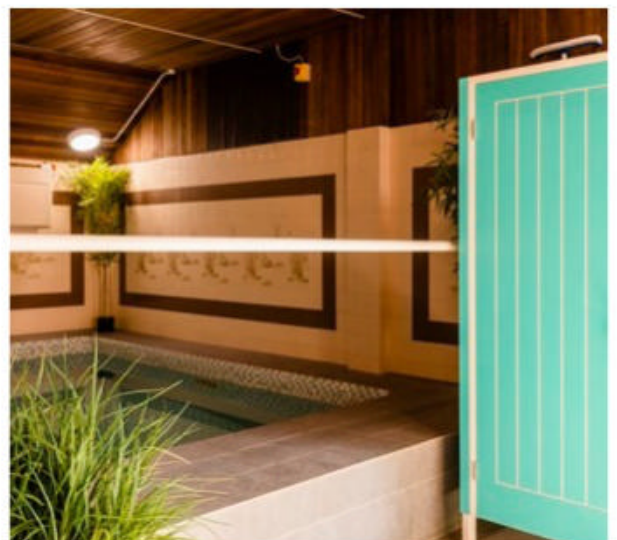
[www.beachcroft-hotel.co.uk](http://www.beachcroft-hotel.co.uk)

**Question:** Where is the beautiful Beachcroft Hotel?

**A. Surrey    B. Essex    C. Sussex**

Simply answer A, B or C on the entry form or enter online. See page 151.







# The. SWISS Miss Marple

*A husband with a whip in his car.  
A conman eyeing an elderly woman's  
wealth. It's all in a day's work for  
Louisa Erismann, private detective*



BY *Juliane Schiemenz* FROM REPORTAGEN

**A** BLONDE WOMAN in her mid-sixties walks through an exclusive Zürich neighbourhood. Well-groomed and slender, she is wearing a dark quilted jacket, black jeans, stylish but inconspicuous sneakers, discreet jewellery and fashionable glasses. She doesn't particularly stand out. People her age tend to fade into the background.

She smiles as she squints into the sun. Traces of a curious, sassy girl can be seen in her face—a girl who is pleased because no one can find her during a game of hide-and-seek. Her expression seems to say, *If they only knew!* The woman's name is Louisa Erismann, and she has been a private investigator for the past six years. I'll be accompanying her for the next week as she does her investigative work.

"Great that you're coming along with me!" Erismann whispers as we walk together through the residential area. "Two people together are less noticeable. And who would ever suspect they're being staked out by two women?"

We're doing what's called reconnaissance. Casing a place. I learned that from reading the books *Guide to Surveillance* and *Profession: Detective*, which Erismann gave me to help me prepare for our week together. She advised me on the kind of clothes and shoes to wear; I, too, am in dark colours.

Today's reconnaissance involves a dispute between a man and his female neighbour. I am not permitted to share all of the details about this or any other assignments mentioned in this article. But this much I can say: Erismann has been hired to watch the neighbour.

**ERISMANN COMPLETED** A one-year vocational training course in private investigating, which cost her about 8,000 euros, at a school in Zürich. For her assignments she studies the target's daily routine, then puts him or her under observation. She'll watch them at 5am, again at noon, then in the afternoon. Sometimes stakeouts take up to 15 hours.

In her unremarkable car Erismann keeps a pair of binoculars, and jackets, toques and scarves with which she can quickly disguise herself; they also help her stay warm during long periods of surveillance. There are shopping bags in the boot, so she can open it and make it appear as if she just came from the supermarket. Her detective kit also includes wigs, a change of shoes, thermal underwear, vitamins and bananas.

In her office she has manuals on surveillance methods and forensics, along with a copy of the *Swiss Civil Code*. Erismann always obeys the law when conducting her investigations, and respects the privacy not only of her clients but also of the people she investigates. "Once, a client wanted me to record a video through a keyhole.

That is prohibited, and I won't do it. In proper surveillance work, you don't have to violate people's privacy."

Once, she signed up as a guest at a Tupperware party because she was surveilling the host. Another time she was hired by a filmmaker who desperately wanted to buy a mansion, so she tracked down its owners. On another occasion, she was assigned to watch a woman who had been on sick

## ERISMANN DOES THE RECONNAISSANCE WORK AND TAKES PHOTOS, THEN GIVES THE BAD NEWS



leave for more than a year due to a broken foot; Erismann discovered an up-to-date photo on social media of the woman walking her dogs.

Erismann always has several cases on the go. A recent one involved a lawyer who disappeared once a month. His wife had no idea where he was going, but then she discovered that one of his Viagra pills was missing. The wife hired Erismann, who followed his trail to Germany, where she found he was frequenting various hotels. In the wheel well of his car, she discovered a bag containing a whip and other sado-masochistic paraphernalia.

Indeed, Erismann mostly investigates wealthy men suspected by

their wives of cheating; about two-thirds of her clients are women. "In my experience," says Erismann, "if a spouse suspects something is going on, they are usually right." Only once in her professional career has a suspicion of infidelity proved unfounded.

"Wives wait until they can't bear their suspicions any longer," she says. "They don't want to believe it. And some don't figure out that their partner is cheating until they get an STD."

Erismann's cases often include gathering evidence of infidelity, which can be used to substantiate financial and custody-related claims in the event of a divorce.

Erismann does the reconnaissance work and takes the photos, then delivers the bad news. The emotionally charged nature of her assignments quickly creates a friendly, even maternal, bond with her clients. Sometimes, she later accompanies them to court, not only for divorce hearings but also for cases of alleged stalking or rape.

In one case, a lawyer hired Erismann because his elderly mother was at risk of being defrauded. A German man had weaseled his way into the mother's heart and wallet; she had already given him more than 100,000 euros. Her son told Erismann he thought she was going to change her will to include the man. The son didn't want to stand by and watch his inheritance disappear.

But his mother refused to share the suspected conman's identity with him,

so Erismann followed him. She discovered that this wasn't his first scam: he'd assisted other wealthy seniors with their tax returns and financial transactions so he could obtain their credit card and bank information. Erismann took photographs of relevant account statements sitting on his car's dashboard, and forwarded the evidence to her client. He was able to convince his mother not to change her will.

**ERISMANN DOES MOST** of her work from her car, but she also has a small office in Seefeld, one of Zürich's priciest districts. It looks nothing like those smoky *film noir* detectives' agencies, with light streaming in through slanted blinds. Instead, it has a desk, chair, computer, telephone, files and law books. No plants, no personal touches. There is a meeting room with a long table, metal chairs and a flip chart. "People come to see me because this is a good address," says Erismann. "If I were somewhere else no one would notice me."

Before setting up her one-woman detective agency, Erismann worked for 20 years in sales at a large German optometry group. Before that, she and her then-husband owned a photography and optometry store. Erismann had trained as a photographer, taking photos at events, company parties and weddings, and became skilled at close observation

and taking photos when her subjects were being themselves and not paying attention to her.

Then, two painful events led her to the profession that she took up at an age when most people are thinking

## YEARS AGO, ERISMANN TAILED HER OWN PARTNER. "I COULDN'T TRUST HIM ANYMORE"



about retirement. The first was 12 years ago, when Erismann tailed her own boyfriend, "because I couldn't trust him anymore," she recalls. "I had asked him many times if there was another woman, and he always said no. But I could tell by his facial expressions, by how he answered, that something wasn't right. I said to myself, 'No more questions. Time to make a plan.'"

So she set up camp in a cornfield that gave her a sightline to his home and observed it from a Saturday morning until the next afternoon. She wore black to camouflage herself, and brought along binoculars, a camera and a notepad.

Her thoughts tormented her. "If you think someone is cheating on you, it's horrible," she says. "That's why I understand my female clients. There's this awful self-doubt: what did I do wrong? Why am I not enough

anymore?." There in the cornfield, Erismann felt torn. "I thought, *What I'm doing here isn't fair*. But on the other hand, I wanted to find out, even if it was going to be bad." Erismann discovered the truth: her partner was indeed seeing another woman.

The second big shock in Erismann's life was her youngest brother's murder at the age of 40. She doesn't like to talk about it, saying only that she helped solve the crime. She and her family suspected who the killer was, and that it had been a contract killing. It was her only murder investigation, but it proved to be a turning point: Erismann wanted to become a detective.

**WHEN WE ARRIVE** in a labyrinth of semi-detached houses, we walk to the one where the woman in the dispute with her neighbour lives. Suddenly Erismann whispers: "Someone's coming." I want to turn around, but have been told that it would make us look suspicious. A man crosses our path, looking at us. The last thing we want is for him to question our presence. We talk loudly about buying a house and how convenient it would be to have a playground right outside the front door.

Next, we reconnoitre the clothes shop where the woman works. I enter first, but I'm not sure of the plan; do Erismann and I know each other or not? The target asks me if I need any help; I tell her I'm looking for a



Louisa Erismann,  
private detective

poncho. As I browse, I see that Erismann is also pretending to be a customer. Wearing a bright red hat, she poses in front of a mirror.

Erismann comes over and tells me that I should try on the fringed poncho. Ah...so we *do* know each other! I play along and put on the poncho. The target looks at me, then busies herself with another customer. These stakeouts, as banal as they sometimes seem, help Erismann get a feel for the people involved in a case.

After a few minutes, I leave the shop and head for the car, but Erismann waves me off. Never go straight to your car, she tells me later, because someone could be watching, and maybe noting the number plate. Once a detective's

vehicle has been “made,” the only option is to change to another one.

Erismann has a penchant for acting. When she is surveilling residential areas, she takes a lead with her. “If anyone asks me what I’m doing on their property, I say I’m just looking for my lost dog.” Having received threats

## A MAN HAS HIRED ERISMANN TO WATCH HIS EX-WIFE; HE SAYS SHE MISTREATS THEIR CHILDREN



during investigations, she always carries pepper spray.

She hasn’t had a holiday in six years. And her personal life? “I’m always busy—what man would put up with that?”. Erismann shows me photos on her phone of her cats, Fellini and Flash. “It’s nice to come home and they’re both there. They cuddle my hurts away. Humans can be quite cruel.”

So has her view of love and relationships changed because of her work? No, says Erismann. She doesn’t like to think in terms of victims and perpetrators in cases involving infidelity. “Both sides have a part in the failure or success of a relationship.” Nevertheless, she spends hours comforting clients, recommending lawyers and giving practical advice

such as the need to copy records of the husband’s assets.

**THE NEXT DAY** we are back on “recce,” as Erismann calls it, and this time it’s about a custody battle. We’re in a middle-class suburb of Basel, with its residential flats, garages and gravel-covered backyards. A man has hired Erismann to follow his ex-wife. He claims she treats their children badly, often leaving them at home alone. He says she makes him pay full spousal maintenance despite the fact that she works as a housecleaner. She also claims not to own a car, but Erismann discovers that she does have one.

We keep a lookout for the younger son at his school, until Erismann recognises him by his backpack; she has been told it has a green dinosaur on it. We follow the boy to his front door. He rings the bell, but no one answers, so he crosses the street to a playground and sits on a railing. A while later, the mother arrives, and she and the son enter the flat.

Erismann and I sit on a wall across from the house and pretend to talk. After about ten minutes, mother and child appear on the balcony. Erismann signals to me that the mother has noticed us, so we walk to the entrance of the next building, where we can’t be seen.

“In moments when I have to take cover, I sometimes get a huge adrenaline rush,” says Erismann. She’s proud of the fact that she’s



never been busted while investigating a case.

We take the long way back to the car and pass a bus stop. Erismann sees a teaching opportunity: "What would I do if I was on a stakeout nearby and someone spotted me?" She sits down in the bus shelter and assumes the air of an innocent passerby. "I wait for the bus." A few times she has had to jump on a bus or tram to maintain her cover.

Back in the car, we settle in to watch the woman's flat. Erismann

## FOR A SECOND ROUND OF SURVEILLANCE, SHE PUTS ON A HAT AND WEARS A DIFFERENT JACKET



looks out for residents in the building who might be watching us. "Old folks behind sheer curtains are the most dangerous," she says.

When the mother leaves with two children, Erismann takes pictures and contacts the father. Then she decides to do another round of surveillance alone on foot, since we may have already been seen together. She pulls her hair into a ponytail and puts on a hat and a different jacket. "Call me as soon as they return," she says.

I peer through the car windows. It's 1.45pm and drizzling. A cyclist passes. Two boys walk by on their way to the

playground. I stare at the raindrops on the window. I'm not allowed to look at my phone; I could miss something.

But nothing happens, and about 15 minutes after she leaves, Erismann swings open the car door. We decide to break off for the day and head back to Zürich. On rainy days like this, when people aren't coming and going, Erismann typically does her paperwork: reports, photos, files.

That evening I leaf through the detective books again, which also contain ads: one is for a ballpoint pen with a spy camera and built-in microphone; another features "search gloves". The ads promise the sort of thrill that this afternoon did not deliver.

Sitting in a car for hours, waiting, watching, taking pictures. Disappearing into the background, far from the excitement and drama of private-eye movies and novels. Is that the daily routine of a detective?

And yet there is something Erismann has in common with those famous fictional detectives: they are nonconformists whose curiosity leads them to the truth. That is what drives her, too. Her lifestyle is unconventional and she is interested in human nature. In a world focused on youth and beauty, on those who stand out, Louisa Erismann knows that staying in the background is an excellent place from which to observe. ■

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Gtech

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**Travel**  
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## How a guided tour can offer more

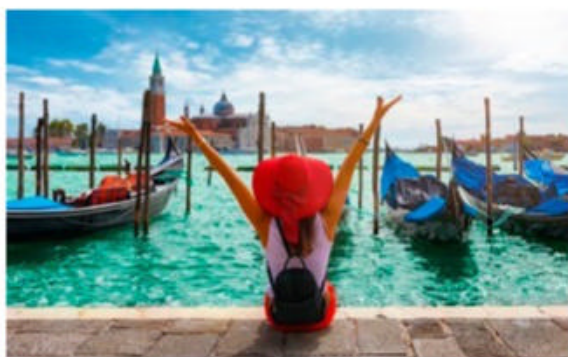


## — *Intro*

# Let us guide you on a holiday you'll never forget!



**Visiting new places, seeing new cultures, meeting new people, trying new things....** it's always exciting dreaming of your next travel experience. If you have a bucket list of destinations you have always wanted to visit, make your travel dreams a reality and start planning your holiday with Travel Department. With over 25 years – and counting - of experience curating dream holidays worldwide, they know the best spots and have expert local guides to talk you through every aspect, hidden gem, and cultural experience. Plus, everything is included from flights, accommodation, transfers, and guided excursions, so all you need to do is relax and enjoy! Need more convincing? Here are some top reasons why you should consider a fully guided holiday.



### 1. See incredible destinations

Leave the planning to the experts. They know destinations inside out, so you can be sure to have the best holiday itinerary possible and see the main highlights wherever you travel. You may want to experience the unseen beauty of a classic destination such as Italy or uncover more unusual places like Slovenia with the wonderful Lake Bled, or the ancient sites in Turkey or Greece. Perhaps you'd prefer a river cruise down some of the most iconic rivers in Europe and beyond, docking at exciting places along the way. Or maybe more far-flung destinations; exotic India, Vietnam or South Africa. Wherever you travel, on a Travel Department fully guided holiday you'll have everything planned for you - ideal for anyone looking for stress-free

experience especially in places where the culture or language may be unfamiliar.

### 2. Enjoy authentic experiences

Guided tours can also give you a more authentic travel experience. Travel Department have spent years perfecting their itineraries with tried and tested research so you can trust them to put together a highly enjoyable schedule. Their local, expert guides have a huge wealth of local knowledge to give you the best and most authentic insider information. You can also travel with peace of mind, knowing that every hotel, bar and restaurant has been inspected and the area you're staying checked. With each trip created carefully around the diverse needs of different travellers, Travel Department's guided tours offer the very best of each destination, ensuring you don't waste a moment.

### 3. Be guided by the locals

A knowledgeable and helpful guides can make your holiday even better. Accompanying you throughout your holiday, they will be on hand to offer useful tips and insights into your chosen destination. They bring a sense of authenticity which you won't find in any guidebook, allowing you to really get under the skin of the place. Through sharing hidden treasures, wonderful facts that only locals know, recommending the best restaurants, and introduce you to the most interesting local characters means you won't just come away from your trip with just a few

touristy snaps on your phone. Instead, you'll have a deeper appreciation for the destination.

#### 4. Enjoy stress-free travel

With a guided tour, you can step out of your comfort zone and embark on an adventure knowing you're in safe hands. Travel Department take care of everything from the start to the end of your holiday, so there's no hassle or stress. Simply board your flight and one of their guides will be there to meet you on arrival at your destination. They'll also make sure every transfer and hotel check-in goes through without a glitch. And if something does go wrong during your holiday, they'll be on hand to help.

#### 5. A cost effective trip

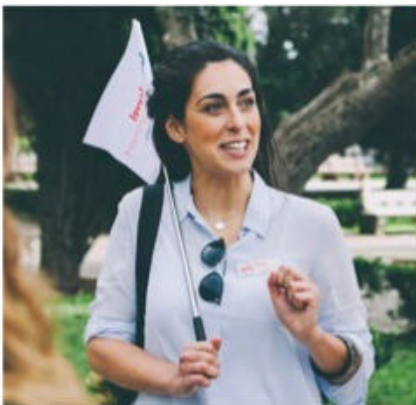
Worried about spending? Flights, accommodation, transfers, guided excursions and often meals are all included in the main price of Travel Department tours, meaning you can budget more effectively during your holiday.

#### 6. It's all about you

A guided tour isn't all about sticking to a schedule. Travel Department trips also come with plenty of free time, giving you the flexibility to enjoy your own time too; sipping coffee at a pavement café, exploring winding city back streets or unearthing historical sights. There's also often extra time before or after the tour, for you to linger longer or move on and adventure more.

#### 7. Meet fellow travellers

It's often the people you meet on holiday that are the highlight of the entire trip and on a guided tour, you'll have amazing memories of the shared experiences you had together. If you're a solo traveller, it's also a wonderful opportunity to make new friends. The holiday mood is upbeat and friendly making for a fun, inclusive group where everyone feels welcome. Sometimes fellow travellers get along so well that they even arrange to meet up after the trip or go on another Travel Department holiday!



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Mum, Melody, and  
daughter, Sara,  
rediscover their shared  
adventurous spirit on  
an island escape

BY *Melody Wren*



A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER TANGO IN  
**BARBADOS**



**M**y daughter Sara and I have always been close, and now that she has her own family it's rare to get one-on-one time. We get together often with our partners and her two adorable small children. Sunday dinners and riverside hikes are fragmented with snatched conversations in between shouts of "Nana, come play with me." During COVID-19 we dreamed of an escape to an island together. As we both have a love for the Caribbean, Barbados was calling and we finally answered, eventually making a plan for a seven-night getaway.

On the day we were leaving, my daughter had stayed overnight at my house and we were both feeling a bit groggy and apprehensive about the journey ahead. Our dance started during our 4am breakfast while chatting about our seat assignments on the plane, which had another passenger between us. I said, "I'll ask them to change seats, which would be in their best interest or we'll be chatting over their head."

"Mum, don't explain why, just ask," Sara replied firmly.

And so our trip began. Our charming seat mate jumped at the opportunity for an aisle seat, and was eager to share local intel of his home island. At one point we all laughed as I expressed remorse that I hadn't packed an extra sandwich for him.

"Oh, Mum," he said to me, "just give me half of yours."

We were warmly ushered into the O2 resort with welcome drinks as we checked in. After touring the property, Sara and I changed quickly and headed to Brisa, a bar on the eighth floor. "Can you believe that we're finally here?" she said.

I felt a rush of emotion, the culmination of planning, with multiple texts discussing what clothes to pack, and Sara repeating, "Really, we're just taking carry-on?". We clinked glasses and marvelled at how beautiful and surreal everything was.

That first night we settled into our luxurious suite, eager to begin the week's adventures. I quickly realised that we had to re-adjust to the realities of mother and daughter sharing space



Clockwise from top: Sara leaps between two rocks on the beach; Brisa's pool and ocean view; Melody and Sara as a young mother and daughter



together once again: me, listening to the hum of her watching TikTok videos from her hotel bed in the evenings; my not uttering any syllables before my back-to-back cups of tea in the morning.

**THE FIRST MORNING,** I unintentionally slipped into mothering mode. “What are you thinking for breakfast?” I asked as we got ready in front of the mirror, knowing a lavish Caribbean breakfast buffet was waiting for us.

She replied “I’m craving fresh fruit.” I suggested that she needed protein to fuel our busy day ahead. “Mum, I have been taking care of myself for years,” she reminded me.

After breakfast, we set off for Earthworks Pottery. As driver Shawn whisked us past mango, coconut and breadfruit trees, Sara begged us to stop to climb a mango tree. I whispered that the travel insurance wouldn’t cover that.

At the pottery studio, we met owner David Spieler, whose mother started the business over 40 years ago when she moved to Barbados from Canada. Former science teacher David has perfected their pottery-making process, while his mother continues to provide creative input. Sara observed that they worked together like they were both sides of the brain. David made the process look easier than it was, but led us through each intricate step. We took turns getting our hands

dirty, loving the experience, both of us filled with pride that we had cobbled some reasonable-looking bowls.

Stopping for a delicious lunch, neither us wanted to overeat as ziplining was next.

“I think I’m going to vomit,” Sara said as she peered over the platform edge at the Chukka Adventures’ zipline. I nodded in agreement. Even though I had ziplined in several countries before, my nerves were surfacing as well. I cheered loudly for Sara as she breezed across. I felt protective, ensuring she held on correctly even though our guide

Melody and Sara go ziplining at Chukka Adventures



Malakai was on the job. On the landing platform, Malakai mentioned she would be fine on the other four lines.

“Holy crap,” Sara blurted, “I thought there was only one.” But the rest proved easier, effortless, and even enjoyable—the first time we bonded through a mutual fear.

From acrophobia to claustrophobia—both of us balked at the tram ride through Harrison’s Caves. Shawn convinced us to do it. As the tram descended 150 feet, beautiful stalactites and stalagmites multiplied above and below, some dating back 7,000 years. Two large stalagmites

resembled a couple at an altar about to get married. As the man in front of us stood up with one hand in his pocket, we quietly gasped at exactly the same time. The guide then remarked that many tourists propose at that site, but that “proposals are discouraged as many rejections follow.” The fellow sat back down, and we looked sadly at each other.

At the end of the day, weary from our adventures and filled with stories, we began the routine of evening drinks at Brisa on the eighth floor. With a pool and an ocean view that went on for days and comfy seating, Brisa became



our go-to secret club house. Looking at the choice of venues at O2, we would glance at each other and say “Brisa?” We laughed over outrageous topics, building magical moments, and talked honestly. Sara noted our similarities and kept saying, “I am you.”

**ON LATER DAYS**, Shawn drove us to several of the rugged, beautiful beaches in Barbados, with names such as the Soup Bowl, describing the carved-out curve of the beach. The immense rock formations frame the beauty. Sara scared Shawn when she threw off her sandals and leapt between two large rocks. My mothering mode returned as I shouted to her to be careful and then bit my tongue, watching her adventure.

Touring Andromeda Gardens felt like walking through a living children's

book. The Bearded Fig tree had curtains of vines dripping down, reminiscent of *Tarzan*. Single flowers on long, sturdy stems marked the trail like gateposts, while palm trees with elephant-like legs and hairy roots looked as though they might scuttle away. Long vines replicated witch's hair, hanging down to grab anyone walking by.

Sara picked up a fallen coconut and Shawn suggested that throwing it would break it. She threw it and it accidentally veered towards me, breaking in two, splashing coconut water onto my legs and skirt. Sara laughed loudly. Though I was worried about my skirt staining, I loved seeing her in a carefree moment, laughter spilling out of her.

We spent time touring PEG farms, speaking with the owner, champion rally-car driver, Paul “Surfer” Bourne. I told him, hand on heart, that I had

Melody tries her hand at race car driving



## "MUM, DON'T LET THIS GO TO YOUR HEAD, BUT YOU'RE SOMETHING OF A BADASS"

always wanted to go in a race car. He said that he would make a couple of calls to see if he could make it happen, and to meet him at Bushy Park race track. That morning, I was nervous in anticipation. Sara said to me, "Mum, don't let this go to your head, but you're something of a badass."

I was strapped oh-so tightly in the car that I felt physically sick. Sara could see it in my eyes and she became the protector her own children know well, shouting, "Just breathe." I gave her a thumbs up to squelch our shared nervousness. She stood beside the racetrack with now-friend, Shawn, and took videos to show me later. Her nervous laughter can be heard on the videos over the roar of the race car.

Back in the pit, after six laps at over 100mph, I took off my helmet, and shook out my hair. Sara immediately asked how it was. "Amazing," I said and added, "I would go again right now if I could." She and Shawn looked at each other and he muttered, "She's good."

Late one afternoon we embarked on a sunset and snorkelling tour on a Calabaza catamaran. Snorkelling together was a novel experience for us and Sara's excitement was infectious.

When it was time to enter the water, I admitted to her that I wasn't a confident swimmer and opted for a buoyant noodle. Surprisingly, Sara said that she wasn't either and also grabbed one. As I slipped into the water, she guided me towards large sea turtles, rays and a huge tarpon. It was a lovely choreographed snorkel together. During our sail back, the promised sunset was dazzling and the skies surprised us all by showering us with rain that turned into a double rainbow. Nonchalantly, Captain Chad stated, "It's the Caribbean, we get rainbows every week."

Sara and I were both fuelled by rum punches at this point and she replied, "It's f\*\*\*\*\* magical".

**EARLY MORNINGS**, I would work on my laptop, sipping tea, when Sara's sleepy "Morning, Mum" announced her arrival on the balcony to watch the sunrise. Despite my attempts to get back to work, Sara urged me to join her outside. We would talk about our plans for the day or simply sit in companionable silence. Those quiet moments never lasted long, since we both love to talk.

After dinner one night, I was weary and ready for bed when Sara asked if I wanted to go to the beach and look at the stars. Squashing my exhaustion, I said "Absolutely!" with no hesitation. The stars above were waiting and it seemed as if I had some lucky ones to count. ■

*My Great Escape:*

# Back In Brontë Country

*Our reader Sharon Davies-Patrick walks in the Brontë sisters' footsteps in Haworth*

**"OUT ON THE WILY, WINDY MOORS..."**

Kate Bush famously sang, depicting the haunting, classic love story of *Wuthering Heights*, written by Emily Brontë. At the age of 14, my first visit to the village of Haworth in West Yorkshire ignited my passion for this picturesque, strangely evocative place that inspired the novel and song.

We arrived in my dad's old classic car, a black 1938 Austin 7. I vividly recall sitting on the back seat while "Oz" (the car's nickname) huffed and puffed to reach the top of the steep hill. Quaint weaver's cottages, antiquarian bookshops, teashops, Brontë souvenir shops, and pubs and inns lined the route on our wobbly ascent over the cobbles. I was instantly intrigued by this curious little place. The soot-blackened stone buildings loomed some three



storeys high. At the top of the street, the moors bestowed a beautiful yet sometimes bleak backdrop to the weathered grey rooftops and ornate chimney pots jutting up into the sky.

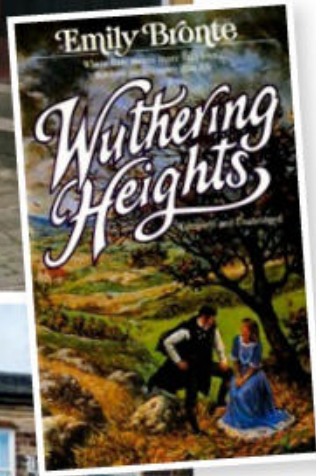
Fast forward 38 years and my latest weekend break with my husband and daughter felt like I had come home again. We stayed at The Old





welcoming 18th-century pub has a resident ghost it seems. At closing time we heard one member of staff say to another with a shudder, “Will you come with me? Ain’t no way I’m going in there on my own!”

The parsonage museum, where the Brontë sisters lived over 160 years ago, recently provided the setting for the film *Return of the Railway Children*. Stepping inside the museum takes you back in time, walking alongside the sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne. It feels like you’re peeping over their shoulders as they secretly write their stories into the night.



We enjoyed a tranquil ride on a steam train to Keighley. The engine was built in 1899 and the coaches were post-war. As we passed through Oakworth station, children dressed in old fashioned clothing waved at the train as they re-enacted scenes from both of the films set there.

I liken my initial journey along the main street with the Brontës’ arrival at their new home in 1820. They travelled by horse and cart, the horses huffing and puffing, slowly climbing up the hill. I wonder what the sisters first thought of this peculiar place? ■



White Lion Hotel and it felt just as it always has done on my many stays over the years. We sat enjoying a lovely evening meal in the cosy bar with the Beatles’ music playing in the background. I tried to explain to my daughter how Haworth feels, but she summed it up in one word: “Magical!” This warm and

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Tell us about your favourite holiday (send a photo too) and if we print it, we’ll pay £50. Email [excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk)

# STILTSVILLE

## MIAMI

ONCE UPON A TIME, Miami's coolest clubs weren't in South Beach or Coconut Grove; instead, they were in a lonely, unusual community of stilt houses just about visible from Cape Florida's tip.

Built on wood or reinforced concrete pilings, Stiltsville's first shacks were erected by Prohibition Era gangsters and bootleggers. A decade or so later, the village, which is located in shallow waters one mile offshore and numbered 27



structures at its peak, had become a magnet for Miami's elite. Affluent lawyers, bankers and politicians frequented speakeasies or invite-only gentlemen's clubs here to drink, relax and, so the persistent rumours went, illicitly gamble.

Among the most famous venues were the \$150-membership Quarterdeck Club, with its dock slip for yachts, and the invite-only Calvert Club. A subsequent arrival was the boat-based Bikini Club, a swinging Sixties playground where

women in the titular swimwear scored free booze as others lined a topless deck.

Eventually fires, storms and licence revocations took their toll and the hedonism came to an end; since Hurricane Andrew in 1992, only seven restored houses remain, now as part of the Biscayne National Park. These had been due for demolition in 1999, only for a 75,000-signature petition to cause that decision to be overturned.

With docking permits hard to come by, the easiest means of access is on a cruise from Miami. These usually feature guides who'll point out *Miami Vice* or *Dexter* filming locations and provide colourful anecdotes from Stiltsville's halcyon days. ■



## HIDDEN GEMS

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By Richard Mellor

MONEY ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR

# SUMMER HOLIDAY

*There's more to planning your holiday money  
than currency exchange*



**W**ITH THE EXCITEMENT of a holiday, it's easy to focus on beachwear and books when packing for your trip, but there are some financial essentials you need to include in your suitcase too.

First, ensure you have a debit or credit card that won't charge you for spending or withdrawing cash abroad. The vast majority of banks don't offer this saving, which means you'll likely pay around 3% more on the exchange rate, plus extra charges on each transaction.

The majority of the fee-free debit cards do require you to have a smartphone. The pick of these is Chase Bank, as you'll earn 1% cashback for most purchases on top. Starling and Virgin Money's M Plus also won't charge you.

It's worth having a credit card on you when you go away, even if you've got one of the debit cards. That's because things like car hire and hotel incidentals often require a holding deposit on one of your cards. Using a debit card will lock that cash and you'll be unable to spend it until the lock is released.



Andy Webb is a personal finance journalist and runs the award-winning money blog, *Be Clever With Your Cash*

The best one is the Barclaycard Rewards credit card. This also offers cashback, though at a lower rate of 0.25%. Another option is Halifax's Clarity credit card, though this will charge interest on cash withdrawals.

Just bear in mind that some local ATMs might have their own charges that can't be avoided—even on a fee-free card. And when you do pay in shops and restaurants, don't agree for the amount to be converted to pounds. You'll want to pay in the local currency to ensure you're getting the top rates offered by the cards above.

Thanks to these cards, you don't need to take much money with you—at least not for most destinations. But personally I like to take some foreign currency with me, just as a backup for places that don't take cards.

Don't just pop to your local bank or bureau de change, as you'll be able to get more favourable rates if you shop around. And don't leave this to the last minute either. You'll save on charges if you order the cash in advance, while the airport will be one of the most expensive places to swap money.

**Another really important card** for those going to Europe is the GHIC. This is similar to the EHIC, and was introduced following Brexit. This Global Health Insurance Card will get you access to healthcare at the



same price as the locals (don't be fooled by the word "Global"—it's just the EU and Switzerland). It could be that your EHIC is still in date, in which case you don't need the new version.

These cards aren't a replacement for travel insurance, but an addition. Most insurers will only pay up a claim for health issues overseas if you've been able to access cheaper or free care first with the GHIC.

And, of course, travel insurance isn't just about medical emergencies. It can be useful in case of cancellation, loss of possessions and much more. But only if your policy actually covers these. And if it does, there could be limitations or exclusions that make it hard to claim.

Take a look at your policy ASAP, so you can see if it's fit for your needs.

If you don't already have something in place, use a comparison site to compare prices, but this is one area where cheaper doesn't mean better. Read about what you get before clicking to buy.

Remember, you might already have cover from a financial product such as a packaged bank account, or even via your home contents cover. If you're going to go away a few times a year, then annual cover might work out cheaper.

Don't leave buying this until just before you jet off. Get it now and the cover will protect you if anything happens that prevents you from going away, even if you've only

selected the dates for the trip itself when buying.

You might also want to get some car hire excess insurance that will be far cheaper than buying it from the car hire firm itself when you collect the car.

**Away from your wallet**, it's worth looking at your mobile phone too. Most of the big networks have stopped free roaming in Europe, so you'll get charged for calls, texts and data use. That can be very expensive. Some will also charge you when someone leaves a voicemail—even if you don't listen to it.

If this is the case for your tariff, there are a few options. Some networks will let you buy add-ons that let you use your allowance when away or give you a new one for your trip. These often aren't cheap, but they are better than not having anything at all.

Or, if you want to avoid this, you can turn off roaming on your handset before leaving the UK and

only connect when you have access to Wi-Fi. It's possible to download maps too, so you can still make your way around.

It's also worth seeing if you can pre-book things like airport parking, transfers, car hire and attraction tickets for a discount before you go. And if you've got hotels lined up with a free cancellation policy, see if you are able to get a better place for less as you approach the departure date.

If you're leaving it to the last minute to decide where to go, try to be as flexible as you can. Not just in destination, but looking at various departure airports and dates could help you find that bargain break. Though don't leave it too late—packaged holiday firms try to sell off spare spots a month or two in advance, so there could be very little choice with a few weeks to go.

Finally, make sure your passport is valid and you've got all the visas you need for your trip. Without these, you won't be able to go. ■




## I scream, you scream...

The Persian empire invented an ice cream-like treat around 500 BC, when Persians began mixing ice with fruit juice

SOURCE: ZMESCIENCE.COM

# COULD YOU ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS with equity release?



Whether you want to achieve your lifelong goals or welcome the chance to see where your later years could take you, retirement can be costly. If you are a homeowner aged 55 or above, you could fund your freedom with the UK's most popular equity release tool, a Lifetime Mortgage.

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It's common to have an outstanding mortgage beyond the age of 55; many of us are in work for longer and choose a mortgage with a longer term. It is a requirement of equity release to clear any existing mortgage. However, the cash you release can be used towards helping you pay off your mortgage.

## **2. Renovate**

If you plan to stay in your home for life,

why not consider using its value to pay for some improvements? You could redesign and adapt with a new kitchen or bathroom or create a garden perfect for all the family.

## **3. Help out**

It can be difficult for first-time buyers to get onto the property ladder, so you might be wondering if you can support your loved ones with a financial boost. You could release equity to gift an early





inheritance and enjoy seeing your family benefit from it within your lifetime.

#### **4. Enjoy**

If you're adjusting to the free time that comes with the retirement lifestyle, you could look into whether a Lifetime Mortgage could help. Whether that's purchasing a new car, taking the trip of a lifetime, or investing in hobbies new and old, give us a call today and discover your budget.

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#### **Find out more**

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An adviser will also be able to explain that releasing equity will reduce the value of your estate and could affect your entitlement to means-tested benefits. You'll never be pushed to proceed, and your adviser will work with you to find the best solution to suit your individual circumstances.

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Or call 0800 029 1233

Reader's Digest Equity Release is a trading style of Responsible Life Limited

Only if your case completes will Responsible Life Limited charge an advice fee, currently not exceeding £1,690.



# Road Dogs

*Planning on travelling by car on holiday with your furry friend this summer? Here are a few things to consider before taking your dog on a UK-based break*

**W**ITH SUMMER IN full swing, national pet charity Blue Cross has some advice for pet owners who are taking their dog on holiday with them this year.

Here's a handy checklist of practical things to consider before heading away with your pet:

- Make sure your mobile number is on your dog's tag
- Check contact details of nearest vet and pack a doggy first aid kit—just in case
- Pack their blanket or bed
- Always have clean water for the journey and time away
- Pack their favourite toys and plenty of poo bags
- Pack any medicines your pet needs
- Make sure their flea and worm treatment is up to date
- Pack their food, treats and a chew to help them relax
- If they might go in the sea, or other water, take a towel and brush

## Accommodation

Many hotels, AirBnBs and B&Bs are now dog-friendly, but your dog may still appreciate their favourite

blanket or toy to help them settle into their new surroundings. It's a good idea to take their regular food with you too as diet changes may cause your pet to get ill.

## Camping

If your dog has never been camping before then practise with your pet in your garden before you go, to get your pet used to the experience.

As your dog will be sleeping in the tent with you, you'll need to get them used to being inside it. This may seem strange, but dogs are often not used to such a confined space and the lack of windows may worry them.

Your dog can be encouraged inside the tent with lots of praise and treats and calmly sitting next to them inside. Leaving the tent up all day and going in and out with them in short bursts will be the best way to get them comfy. You can



even give them their favourite chew toy when they are lying contently in the tent with you.

Find a camping spot in a shaded area and never leave your dog in a hot tent. Remember to keep your dog in the shade during the hottest part of the day and think about ways you can keep your pet cool—there may be a river, lake or dog-friendly beach nearby for them to take a dip.

### Travelling with your pet

- Never leave your pet in the car unattended, even with the windows open, as this can be fatal very quickly.
- Dogs need to be secured either in a crate or harness clipped into the seatbelt—it is actually a rule to

abide by in the Highway Code.

- Pets must always be able to stand up, sit and lie down in comfort. If it is not possible to have a cage for your dog, then either secure them on the back seat with a purpose-made seatbelt harness, or behind a fitted dog guard in the space to the rear of the back seat if in an estate or hatchback.
- If you are going on a long journey, make sure your pet has the chance to go to the toilet and exercise, and access to food and water.
- Keep pets out of the sunlight—your pet may have started in the shade but it might not be by the end of the trip. Dogs can suffer heatstroke.

For help visit [bluecross.org.uk](http://bluecross.org.uk)

## READER'S DIGEST'S PET OF THE MONTH



# Rufus

**Age:** Six years

**Breed:** Shih Tzu

**Owner:** Chani Saunders

**Fun Fact:** He absolutely hates being washed. I mean, just look at his face! Is that the face of a dog enjoying itself?

Email your pet's picture to [petphotos@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:petphotos@readersdigest.co.uk)



**WIN!** £100 gift voucher to spend at Pet Planet

Enter our monthly Pet of the Month contest at the email above



# Cool Colours

An expert on environmental horticulture, Dr Ross Cameron, explains how to use plants of different shades to create a relaxing garden

**C**OOL COLOURS (greens, blues and whites) are deemed calming, while hot colours (reds, oranges and yellows) are seen as exhilarating. Research studies tend to bear this out when it comes to flower and foliage colour. Cool colours are relaxing and create harmony in a planting composition. Sometimes less is more, and limiting yourself to two or three colours can provide better synergy and bring out the subtle effects of individual plants more effectively.

If you have a semi-shady corner in the garden, or want to cover an unsightly wall or shed, consider planting a mix of small trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and annuals to create a harmonious effect with cool colours. If you have a lightly shaded spot, choose one of the green Japanese maples. The types with dissected leaves, such as “Emerald Lace”, have a refined, dainty appeal.

To provide a little contrast through a bolder, stronger leaf shape you might add *Hydrangea paniculata* “Limelight”, with its large plumes of pale lime-green flowers maturing over time to white and sometimes pink. In a similar vein is *Viburnum opulus* “Roseum”, with its balls of sterile flowers in pale green or cream. Consider planting one of the mock oranges (such as “Beauclerk”) to add to the white floral theme, but also bring the luscious scent of orange to the mix. For a delicate late summer effect, *Fuchsia* “Hawkshead” has simple white bell-like flowers. Ivy can be used to screen a wall, and *Hedera hibernica* “Hamilton” stands out with its distinctive leaf shape, providing an attractive mid-green facade.

Herbaceous plants can be dispersed among the shrubs, or positioned slightly in front to take centre stage when they flower. Continuing the white theme, you can achieve early flowers with the Christmas rose in late winter and the pheasant’s-eye daffodil in spring. *Dicentra spectabilis* “Alba” provides an arch of heart-shaped flowers in early summer, and this can be followed by *Phlox paniculata* “White Admiral” and *Physostegia virginiana* “Alba” (“Alba” means white, so you will come across this word a lot when searching for white flowers).

Maintain late summer interest with *Anemone × hybrida* “Honorine Jobert”,

its anthers creating an amber wheel at the heart of each flower, which is reminiscent of the pheasant’s-eye daffodil. Bold-textured Hosta provide ground cover throughout the growing season and add to the relaxing mantle of green.

White and green alone are both dramatic and soothing, but blue can be added for a different effect. *Veronica spicata* “Royal Candles”, with its deep-blue spires, will do well in a more open position near the front of the border. Jacob’s ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*) has a mauve-blue flower and fern-like foliage, while *Tradescantia virginiana* “Blue ‘n’ Gold” throws up strap-like green-gold leaves set off with blue button flowers. Finally for the perennials, I would squeeze in *Aquilegia coerulea* (or *caerulea*), from the Rocky Mountains, for its blue-and-white flowers.

If there is any space left, add some annuals and biennials. In fact, even if there isn’t any space, placing a few pots in front of the border gives you an excuse to grow more plants and provides additional summer interest.

The star-white flowers of the white *Beacon Impatiens* (busy Lizzie) will



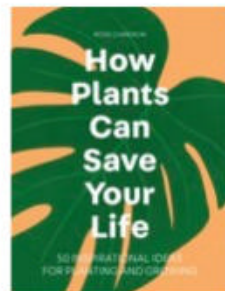
**From top: Hydrangea paniculata, Christmas rose, Veronica spicata**

simply glow out from a background of deep-green foliage. White snapdragons, such as *Antirrhinum* “Sonnet White”, have a fresh appeal, and Nicotiana Cuba strain comes in pure-white or lime-green flowers, so either will fit into the scheme.

For the blues we have the classic *Lobelia; L. erinus* “Crystal Palace” is deep blue, and although *L.e.* “Cambridge Blue” is not Cambridge blue at all, it is a very attractive denim-blue, and warrants its place on that basis. A plant that prefers a bit more sun is *Nigella damascena* “Moody Blues”, but I’d

take the chance and include it here. If you want the best of both worlds, the amusingly named *Viola hybrida* “Sorbet Yesterday Today & Tomorrow” has flowers that come out white but after two or three days turn mid-blue. It’s fairly uncommon—and thus

spectacular—to see a variety of hues all on the same plant. ■



Extracted from *How Plants Can Save Your Life* by Dr Ross Cameron (Greenfinch)

# Win a stay at room2 Chiswick!

We've partnered with the world's first fully net zero homotel located in West London, room2 Chiswick, to offer one lucky reader the chance to win the fantastic prize of an overnight stay for two adults with breakfast and a welcome hamper of sustainable goodies included.

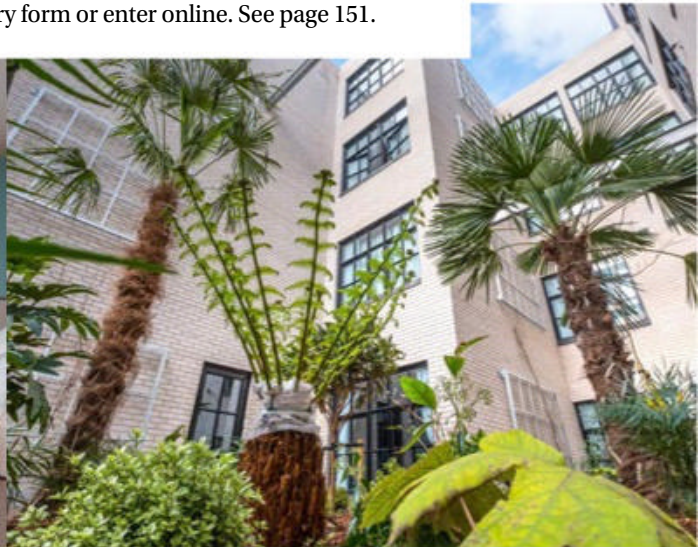
Proving that sustainability doesn't mean sacrificing style, convenience or comfort, room2 Chiswick is the first hotel in the world to fully account for its entire carbon footprint, making it 'whole life net zero', and offers a home away from home just outside of the bustling capital.

Inspired by the arts and crafts movement with dedication to supporting local artists as well as like-minded, eco-friendly businesses and local suppliers, the homotel is beautifully and characterfully designed with marble wallpaper, handcrafted mirrors and locally sourced furniture. Relax in the comfort of your modern room and take advantage of the in-room kitchen facilities, enjoy a 24-hour check-in service and even bring your pet along!

*We've partnered with the world's first...*

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Simply answer A, B or C on the entry form or enter online. See page 151.



To book visit [www.room2.com/chiswick](http://www.room2.com/chiswick)

Terms & Conditions: Bookings subject to availability at the hotel at the time of booking. Blackout dates apply including key London calendar dates of London Marathon, Chelsea Flower Show and Wimbledon 2023. Full terms available online.

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# How To Season A Salad

*Tamar Adler explains how thinking outside the box (and other than lettuce) can unveil delicious salad options*

Tamar Adler is a contributing editor to *Vogue*. Her writing has appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New Yorker.com*, and other publications



**A** SALAD DOES not need to be a bowl of lettuce. It simply needs to provide tonic to duller flavours, to sharpen a meal's edges, to help define where one taste stops and another begins.

Italian salads are often just a single raw or cooked vegetable, sliced thinly and dressed with a drizzle of vinegar and olive oil. In France, they are happy little mops of celery root, doused in vinegar and mixed with crème fraîche and capers. In Greece or Israel, salads might be cucumbers and mint, or roasted aubergine, or spiced boiled carrots. There is a delicious Palestinian salad made only of preserved lemons, roughly puréed, and eaten cold with warm pita bread. Elizabeth David suggests, after a lament about her native England's bad salads, "a dish of long red radishes, cleaned, but with a little of the green leaves left on."

Cold roasted beets, sliced or cubed, drizzled with vinegar, and mixed with toasted nuts and





olive oil are a wonderful salad. So is roasted broccoli, tossed with vinegared onions and a light smattering of dried chilies. So are green beans, boiled until just cooked, cold and sliced thinly, tossed with peanuts and crisp scallions and rice wine vinegar and sesame oil. So is boiled cauliflower or potatoes, already nicely salted, drizzled with vinegar and oil, with a big handful of chopped olives and capers mixed in.

Anything, cooked or raw, cut up a little, mixed firmly with acid, salt and a little fat, laid carefully on a plate, or spooned nicely into a bowl, is a “salad”. Because a salad can be made of anything, make one

of an ingredient about which you get excited, or of whatever looks most lively, or of whatever you have around already. Do that instead of automatically buying lettuce, or wishing you were happier eating the sallow lettuce you have.

Parsley makes a very good salad. I have seen the humble leaves do a salad’s duties on several occasions. In summer, the ingredient you see piled high and regally on Italian tables is raw courgette, soaked through with lemon and good oil. Slice courgettes in half lengthwise, so that you can put a flat surface on a cutting board, then slice toward the board, safely and thinly.

Try to make the slices leaflike in aspiration, if not appearance.

Put the slices in a mixing bowl, add a big squeeze of lemon or a drizzle of white wine vinegar and a small handful of salt, let it sit, then dress with olive oil, mixing it through with your hands, and lay the salad out on a platter, making sure everything is well coated and glossy. A handful of herbs will do nothing but good, as will a scattering

that needs the least dressing and mixing, and the one that often gets overdressed while ingredients that need dressing end up neglected. Salads of more than one ingredient should be dressed in stages, with the hardier ingredients dressed in the salad bowl first, then the more delicate. The first ingredient, well dressed, in turn dresses the second. Lettuce is always the most fragile ingredient in a salad. It

## BECAUSE A SALAD CAN BE MADE OF ANYTHING, MAKE ONE OF AN INGREDIENT ABOUT WHICH YOU GET EXCITED, OR OF WHATEVER LOOKS MOST LIVELY

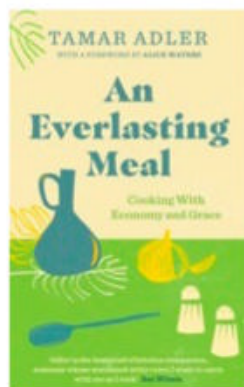
of toasted walnuts or almonds, or a grating of hard Parmesan.

Lettuce salads should be simple, with only one or at most two other ingredients. Thinly sliced cucumbers or thinly sliced radishes, and if you twist my arm, OK to both. If you add other ingredients to lettuce salad, keep in mind that you are never dressing the dish “salad,” but rather dressing each ingredient. If you were making a stew, you’d season the stew, not its carrots in one corner of the pot, then the meat, then the potatoes. A salad is the opposite: you season its carrots, its meat, its potatoes.

An irony of default lettuce salads is that lettuce is, of all salad ingredients, the ingredient

should always be added last, when everything else is already dressed and ready to go.

We must choose our salads well and put seasons of dreadful salads far behind us. When we do we’ll find ourselves, all assumptions pushed aside, already and always in our *salad* salad days. ■



Excerpt from  
*An Everlasting Meal—Cooking with Economy and Grace*  
by Tamar Adler  
(published by Swift Press)  
hbk £14.99

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FILM OF THE  
MONTH



★★★★

## ASTEROID CITY

**THE ACCLAIMED DIRECTOR** of *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*, Wes Anderson, is back with another meticulously manicured meta-universe. Think of it as a story about a 1950s-era teleplay. In black-and-white, we see behind the scenes as playwright Conrad Earp (Edward Norton) frets about his creation and various actors (Jason Schwartzman, Scarlett Johansson) live out their own backstage dramas.

In longer, colour segments, we get Earp's play *Asteroid City*, all set in the titular desert town where families have gathered for a Junior Stargazing contest. Among them, Schwartzman's war photographer/father-of-four Augie Steenbeck, who is dealing with the death of

his wife. Living opposite him in the local motel is Midge Campbell (Johansson), a diva of the screen who has brought her only child to Asteroid City.

Anderson's ensemble is huge here—Margot Robbie, Tom Hanks, Jeff Goldblum, Matt Dillon and many more appear. But somehow he and co-writer Roman Coppola weave them all into a tragi-comic story that deals with loss and “otherness”, which comes after the town's inhabitants all witness an alien arrival. Like the most stylised B movie you'll ever see, Anderson's film has a sunny disposition—aside from the occasional atom bomb test in the background. But, hidden away, you'll find touching emotional depths.

ALSO OUT THIS MONTH

★★★★

## THE DAMNED DON'T CRY



**MOTHER AND SON**, Fatima-Zahra (Aïcha Tebbae) and Selim (Abdellah El Haggouji) lead a nomadic, desperate existence, moving from city to city, sharing a mattress on the floor, and waiting for some small flare of hope. Fatima secretly relies on her waning beauty to pave the way out of poverty, running from one scandal after another while lying to her son about his perfect father who never was.

When adolescent Selim abruptly discovers that his mother has been selling sex all these years, he decides he's going to take control and find a better life for them both, only to experience the same sordid, transactional and unjust world as his mother.

The winding soap opera-like narrative meets close-up, porous

realism as director Fyzal Boulifa constantly flips loyalties. Everyone is awful and selfish, and everyone is tragic and broken. It's thrilling and bleak, full of punishing discordance: Fatima-Zahra's desire to be a modern woman is muddied by patriarchal misogyny, valuing herself purely based on her sexual appeal. Selim's attempts to be the patriarch and earn for his mother are confused by the fact that those with the most money behave in direct opposition to what he has been taught is right. Modernity fights traditionalism, familial devotion fights survival of the fittest. Clashing cultures overlap and disapprove, both in the cities in which Fatima-Zahra and Selim live, and within themselves.

Flashes of intense colour bejewel a dusty, stark landscape while Nadah El Shazly's score layers a dreamy slow-plucked harp over slippery horror-style strings, fantasy and miserable reality clawing at one another throughout. It's the breathy promise of a better life scattered among the gloom and despair that makes this story of perpetual outsiders so gripping and gut-wrenching.

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By Miriam Sallon

## • TELEVISION

We're back among old friends this month. A quarter-century after their biggest triumph, Sheffield's foremost troupe of steelmen-turned-strippers reform for a new eight-part streaming series of *The Full Monty* (Disney+), older but nowt wiser. The Britain around them, meanwhile, continues to fall apart. The hospital in which Gaz (Robert Carlyle) volunteers is sorely understaffed; the school employing Mark Addy's Dave as a janitor really needs a miracle worker. Lacking the film's bethonged focus, the show has more peaks and troughs than the Sheffield skyline, issue-y one minute, zany the next. Yet whenever writers Simon Beaufoy and Alice Nutter assemble the returning players (and newcomer Miles Jupp) in the same room, it reminds you why the film charmed the world as it did. That's the thing with old friends: they can pick up exactly where they left off.

Sometimes that means lapsing into bad habits, of course. *Platonic*



(Apple TV+) reunites 40-something former college pals Rose Byrne and Seth Rogen, then sits back to observe the effect their boozy, loose-lipped nights out have on the placid domestic bliss Byrne shares with husband Luke Macfarlane. While never as profound as the Judd Apatow comedies it aspires towards, this collaboration between real-life partners Francesca Delbanco and Nicholas Stoller—2023's second couple-derived comedy, after the delightful BBC import *Colin from Accounts*, to centralise a microbrewery and namecheck *When Harry Met Sally*—proves genial viewing. It's an excuse for Rogen to mistreat e-scooters while laughing that buoying, Fozzie Bear-like laugh of his, and for two expert comic performers to crease one another (and thereby us) up on a semi-regular basis.

---

by Mike McCahill



### *Retro Pick:*

#### ***Four Weddings and a Funeral S1*** (Channel 4)

The other big Nineties Brit blockbuster-turned-telly show, retooled in 2019 by *The Office*'s Mindy Kaling, and newly added to Channel 4's on-demand service. Brace yourself for some very American views of British life.



## Chineke! Orchestra

### *Florence Price*

**BOB MCQUISTON OF NPR** once wrote that Florence Price's *Symphony No. 1 in E Minor* was an "early American symphony worthy of being rediscovered." Presented more than ten years after this retrospective review (and 90 years after it was first performed), Price's groundbreaking symphony has been rediscovered yet again thanks to this warmly interpreted rendition of her work. Chineke! Orchestra—Europe's first majority Black and ethnic minority orchestra—pay tribute to the first African American woman composer to have a symphony performed by a major orchestra by bringing three of her monumental compositions to light.

*Piano Concerto in One Movement* summons the talents of pianist Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, who unrolls the traipsing piano cadenza—once played by Price herself—with an effortless poise among the violin section's jubilant flourishes. The traditions of African American music shine through on *Symphony No. 1 in E Minor*, particularly in the third movement, named "Juba Dance," where gentle pats on African drums and rhythmically plucked strings imitate the stamps and claps of body percussion performed by slaves in America's plantation fields.

The chosen samples from Price's repertoire are a reminder of a mind overflowing with ideas and influences, manoeuvring between upbeat jazz one moment and lofty spiritualism the next. But the closer, "His Resignation and Faith" from *Ethiopia's Shadow in America*, pulls everything back with mournful, aching strings, reminding its listeners of the gravity and the dignity of the African American experience that Price sought to capture.

By Becca Inglis

## Blur

### *The Ballad of Darren*

Blur come together only rarely now, making the difference between each record more stark—just as the passage of time from one friends' reunion to the next highlights new grey hairs, so it marks a shift in musical inflections. The 1990s Britpop bravado was already on its way out on 2015's *The Magic Whip*,

replaced by a time-worn slant that may reflect their maturing



years, or a more jaded epoch. Eight years on, they're settling into that sentimentality, foregoing swaggering riffs for tender piano keys on "The Ballad" and acoustic strums on "The Everglades". Yet some of their old strut remains in the guitar-driven indie of "Goodbye Albert" and "The Narcissist". Rather than fall into the trap of replicating the past, Blur works out where they are right now, continuing to invent while retaining their essence.



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| <b>ANT</b>     | <b>LIGHT</b> |
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| <b>BBQ</b>     | <b>PATIO</b> |
| <b>BIKINI</b>  | <b>SAND</b>  |
| <b>BOAT</b>    | <b>SEA</b>   |
| <b>DAISY</b>   | <b>SHADE</b> |
| <b>FAN</b>     | <b>SUN</b>   |
| <b>HEAT</b>    | <b>SWIM</b>  |
| <b>HOT</b>     | <b>TAN</b>   |
| <b>HUMID</b>   | <b>TENT</b>  |
| <b>JULY</b>    | <b>WALK</b>  |
| <b>JUNE</b>    | <b>WASP</b>  |



# There are many reasons to leave a gift in your Will to medical research

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# July Fiction

*A classic whodunit meets reality TV in this month's twisty and clever page-turner*

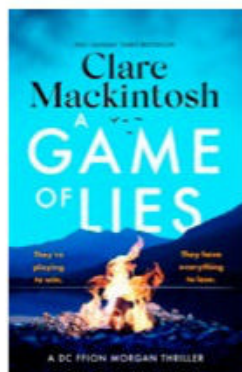
## ***A Game of Lies***

**by Clare Mackintosh**

(Sphere, £16.99)

**A** TRADITIONAL ASPECT OF any whodunit is that all the suspects have secrets, but that only one of those secrets is having committed the murder. In *A Game of Lies*, Clare Mackintosh neatly cranks up this ruse—because the setting is a reality TV show where the contestants must battle it out to conceal something terrible from their past.

Not that they knew this when they signed up. Only on the first night in camp is it revealed that they're not taking part in a standard survival series in rural Wales. Instead, the producer Miles has dug up dirt on all of them,



and they must guess each other's skeletons before their own is broadcast to the nation. True, they can leave if they want to—but if so, they'll lose the hefty appearance fee that Miles knows they badly need.

In the circumstances, it's perhaps not surprising who the murder victim is. Yet who could have killed Miles when everybody appears to have a rock-solid alibi?

This is the puzzle facing the spiky but likeable DC Ffion Morgan, here appearing in her second Mackintosh novel, and developing nicely as a character with a lot more than just detective work to worry about. There is, for example, her daughter Seren to get through A Levels; day-to-day life in her nearby Welsh village where secrets



James Walton is a book reviewer and broadcaster, and has written and presented 17 series of the BBC Radio 4 literary quiz *The Write Stuff*

aren't easy for anyone to keep; and a "will-they-won't-they?" romance with fellow officer Leo (or, more accurately, a "why-on-earth-don't-they?" romance, given that they're both obviously smitten).

Mackintosh juggles these many elements with aplomb, making for a far richer read than the average police procedural—but without ever sacrificing the procedural bit, which twists unguessably along in the approved manner. She also pays due attention to every character in a large cast, while still finding time to show us how reality TV operates (pretty scuzzily, on the whole) and, as an ex-copper herself, to spill a few beans on police-station politics.

Ever since her first book *I Let You Go* won a Crime Novel of the Year Award in 2016, Mackintosh's reputation and sales have both been growing fast. *A Game of Lies* seems deservedly likely to continue the process. ■

## Name the character

Can you guess the fictional character from these clues (and, of course, the fewer you need the better)?

1. His original job was forensic psychiatrist.
2. His creator has the same initials—and first name—as the author of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.
3. He's been played on screen by Brian Cox and Anthony Hopkins.

## Paperbacks

### **Madness: A Memoir of War, Fear and PTSD** by Fergal Keane

(William Collins, £10.99). The much-admired foreign correspondent Fergal Keane looks back on his incredible career covering global conflicts, and realises what it has cost him.

### **Love Untold** by Ruth Jones

(Penguin, £9.99). A warm and touching account of generations of mothers and daughters from the same Welsh family—this heartfelt book confirms what a truly accomplished novelist Ruth Jones (*Gavin & Stacey's* co-writer and star) has now become.

### **Just One Thing** by Michael Mosely

(Short, £9.99). This book explains how introducing a range of simple items and techniques into your life can transform it in amazing ways.

### **The Love of My Life** by Rosie

Walsh (Pan, £8.99). A wife of ten years isn't what she first seems in this terrific romantic thriller (or possibly thrilling romance).

### **Terry Pratchett: A Life With Footnotes** by Rob Wilkins

(Penguin, £10.99). The official—and long-awaited—biography of bestselling author Terry Pratchett by his friend and former assistant.

## RECOMMENDED READ:

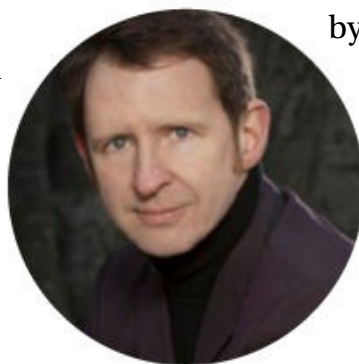
## Disco Fever

*Diving into the history behind the fascinating cultural phenomenon that were the Bee Gees*

**F**EW GROUPS IN history have been as successful as the Bee Gees. And yet, as Bob Stanley acknowledges, at almost no point in a career of five decades, and 220 million records sold, have they been considered cool. Instead, they've often been unfairly mocked and derided.

Which is where *Bee Gees: Children of the World* comes in. "I've written this book," Stanley tells us, "to give them their rightful place at the very top of pop's table." And from there, he makes a case that feels utterly indisputable as he reminds us of just how many greatly beloved songs they've written.

Meanwhile, the band's story is great too. Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb were born in the Isle of Man but grew up in Manchester as somewhat unlikely juvenile delinquents, with arson a speciality. Advised (strongly) to leave the city



by the police, the family moved to Australia, where the singing brothers—still not teenagers—got their first break, and one of the wildest up-and-down rides in showbusiness began. In 1967, they returned to Britain, where they were soon being hailed as rivals to the Beatles. By 1974, they were playing half-empty variety clubs. A few years after that, they were "the Kings of Disco," when *Saturday Night Fever* swept the planet. But then came the disco backlash, which left them so unfashionable that they were obliged to hide behind other singers, writing—among much else—"Islands in the Stream" for Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton. There were also plenty of battles with drink and drugs along the way, before the Bee Gees finally got recognition they deserved, winning four Lifetime Achievement Awards in 1997 alone.

But here they are as excited young expats in the Queensland town and suburb of Redcliffe...

“ The biggest thrill came when they discovered Redcliffe's Speedway. By the beginning of 1959 Barry and his schoolmate Ken Griggs were selling Coke and Fanta there on Sundays. The roar of the bikes and the cars, and the smell of the dust flying off the red, sandy track were irresistible. Gaps between races were long and uneventful, so Barry got the brothers to do what they loved to do, singing 'Lollipop', 'Wake Up Little Susie' and the odd Barry Gibb original for good measure. A crowd formed, and the crowd bought more Coke and Fanta.

This got them noticed by the track's owner, Bill Goode, a natural-born car nut whose hands were always covered in oil and grease. The day the Gibbs started their impromptu show, he was doubling

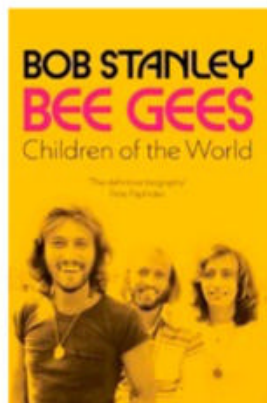
up as a mechanic because his marshal hadn't arrived, and he came out of the pits to see what was going on. 'When I heard these beautiful, melodious voices coming through the speaker, it stopped me in my tracks. I thought, *Geez, they're really good.*'

The following day, Goode invited the Gibbs back down to the track and asked them to sing him another song. What would he like to hear? Well, how many have you got? Twelve-year-old Barry Gibb told Bill Goode that he had written around 180 songs.

'They sang me an Everly Brothers song and I was absolutely amazed.' Sensing something special, Goode quickly got in touch with radio station 4BH disc jockey Bill Gates to check he wasn't hearing things. Goode wanted to sign the boys to a contract, but required a second opinion.

Like Goode, Bill Gates loved his cars. More importantly—as 'Swingin' Gates'—he was the most popular DJ in Queensland, the host of 4BH's *Midday Platter Chatter*. Gates just happened to be driving a car in a charity meeting at Redcliffe. He heard the brothers' harmonies over the Tannoy. He confirmed that Goode wasn't hearing things: 'Even under such primitive conditions,' he recalled, 'their sound was remarkable.' Goode remembers Gates being

**Bee Gees:**  
***Children of the World*** by  
*Bob Stanley* is  
published by  
*Nine Eight*  
Books at £22



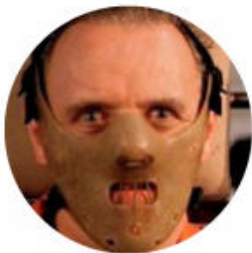
‘pretty stoked. I asked him if he wanted to join in the [management] company and promote them and he said yes please!’

So Bill Goode introduced Barry Gibb to Bill Gates, whose sign-off happened to be ‘BG on BH.’ Gates was taken aback by the older brother’s brio and confidence. He also suggested a new name. It was goodbye to Barry and the Twins, goodbye to Johnny Hayes and the Blue Cats, goodbye to the Rattlesnakes. The trio re-named themselves for the fourth and final time at Redcliffe’s speedway track: Bill Goode, Bill Gates and Barry Gibb—all the main players had the initials B.G. They became the BGs. It would take a while for an official spelling and house style to settle in, and later the name would be retro-fitted to stand for Brothers Gibb, but Goode and Gates were the first people—aside from their parents—to believe the brothers were a significant talent. ”

### *Answer to Name the Character:*

#### **Hannibal Lecter**

(*Tess* is by Thomas Hardy). Hopkins first played him in 1991’s *The Silence of the Lambs*, the most recent winner of all “Big Five” Oscars: picture, director, actor, actress and screenplay.



### *Bob Stanley’s Choice Of Great Music Books*

#### **The House That George Built by Wilfrid Sheed.**

The “George” being George Gershwin, this is a beautifully easy, deeply knowledgeable read about the Great American Songbook writers, many of whom Sheed knew personally.

#### **Careless Love by Peter Guralnick.**

The second of two volumes on Elvis Presley: still the greatest story in pop, and Guralnick’s interpretation will likely never be bettered.

#### **Be My Baby by Ronnie Spector.**

From meeting the Beatles to virtual imprisonment by her husband Phil, this autobiography by one of *the* great pop voices is occasionally a horror story but ultimately a tale of survival.

#### **Awopbopaloobop Alopbamboom by Nik Cohn.**

Cohn wrote this in 1969 when becoming disillusioned by the pompous direction rock ‘n’ roll was heading. Brave, unprecedented—and still very funny.

#### **Incidents Crowded With Life by John Howard.**

A memoir by a singer-songwriter who could have been another Elton John, but had to settle for cult status when rediscovered in the 1990s. A wonderful, parallel read to Elton’s *Me*.

# Books

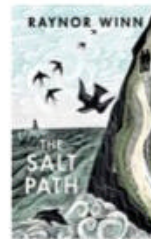
## THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Wendy Mitchell is a bestselling author and dementia advocate. Her book *One Last Thing: How to Live With the End in Mind* is published by Bloomsbury on June 22



### *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn

It was the last full-length book I ever read before my dementia took away that ability. I was sent the book by Raynor herself. I'd been diagnosed with dementia for four and a half years. I'd published my first book, *Somebody I Used to Know*, so I knew how life-changing stories could be. We all have a story to tell, but often, it takes a life-changing moment to put pen to paper, as happened to me and Raynor. What this book re-instilled in me was the power of human resilience. You either give in to bad situations, or you turn them around to make yourself a new life—a different life.



### *Under the Duvet* by Marian Keyes

*The Salt Path* was the last full-length book dementia allowed me to read. But I loved reading, so I had to find an alternative.

I tried a few short story books, but I couldn't find any that held my attention, until I found *Under the Duvet*. The book consists of glimpses into the hilarious and sometimes traumatic life of the author. From travelling, to family and friends, to food and her love of shoes. Each time I read this book I go to bed happy, feeling like I've had a chat with an old friend. From the very thumbed pages I can tell I've re-read it lots of times. You see, that's a gift from dementia. I can read a book and not remember anything, so reading is like the first, joyous time, every time.

### *Fox 8* by George Saunders

This deceptively childlike story offers us a glance into the environmental disaster through the eyes of nature. George cleverly disguises the seriousness of the messages by humanising Fox 8 and his communication with "Yumans". The simple sketches that accompany draw your eyes away from the text and cement the words around them into visual clues. Once you get used to the misspellings of the Yuman language by Fox 8, it all slips together nicely. Another well-thumbed classic in my drawer.





# Key To Access

**How phone technology is becoming more inclusive**

—  
BY James O'Malley



**ONE OF THE** best things about new technology is how it makes the world more accessible to people with disabilities.

For example, both iPhone and Android have a “magnifier” app that turns the camera into a magnifying glass, to help people with limited vision read things more easily. And both have “voice-over” modes which will read out any text on the phone screen aloud—making it possible for blind or partially sighted people to use phones and apps fully.

And then there’s my favourite hidden iPhone feature—“live listen”.



Simply connect your Bluetooth headphones and place your phone near the person you're speaking to, and it will use the microphone to relay their voice directly into your ears. You can even programme an iPhone to listen for the sound of your smoke alarm and alert you if it hears anything, which is great news for people who are unable to hear.

And there are plenty of other phone features that aren't specifically designed for accessibility that open up the digital world too. Take Siri or Alexa, for example.

For most people, they are a convenience or even a toy. But if you're blind, they're potential life savers, capable of sending messages or receiving instructions, entirely through the power of your voice.

What's truly exciting though is how advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are enabling the creation of even smarter accessibility features.

On the most recent Google Pixel phones, for example, it's possible to turn on a feature called "Live Captions". This listens to whatever sound is coming from your phone, and automatically transcribes what it hears—displaying the text on the screen as subtitles. This means that deaf people can easily watch videos—or even make video calls.

**For most people,  
phone features are a  
convenience or a toy.  
If you're blind, they're  
potential life savers**



And similarly, the next version of Apple's iPhone operating system (which you'll be able to install on the newest iPhones later this year) will offer an accessibility feature where you can point the camera at, well, anything, and it will pick out any words it sees and display them more clearly on the screen.

And perhaps more magically, it will reportedly even let you create a simulation of your own voice and have it speak for you—the idea being that people who have conditions where they lose their speech

will be able to use their iPhone as a substitute, giving us all technology similar to what Stephen Hawking used, but in the palms of our hands.

What I think is most striking though is what all of these clever accessibility features mean for the rest of us, who may not need to use the features for their intended uses.

This isn't just because the ravages of age means that it's likely that sooner or later, you will require some



James is a technology writer and journalist. A former editor of tech website Gizmodo UK, James can be found mostly on Twitter posting jokes of variable quality @Psythor

sort of accessibility help, but because how the core technologies that drive them will also be crucial to making the next big technological leap after the smartphone happen.

For example, by the time you're reading this, it is likely that Apple will have announced its own mixed reality glasses—imagine a pair of smart glasses that will overlay digital information onto the real world, so that you won't need to look at a

you look at a shop, the headset would automatically display the opening hours floating above it—we know that recognising what shop we're looking at is possible, because the iPhone's camera vision feature can already do it. Or if we wanted to tell our headset to pull up a price comparison with other shops in the area—we know we can do this with our voice, because Siri can already do something similar.

## MIXED REALITY GLASSES WILL WORK ALMOST AS AN EXTENSION OF BRAINS AND BODIES

phone—all the information will appear just there in front of you.

The idea behind such headsets—if they're ever going to be truly useful—is that they will work almost as an extension of brains and bodies. We'll want them to give us directions when we need them, and help us understand our surroundings. And we'll need a way to interact with headsets without buttons or a touchscreen, using our voice or by gesturing with our hands.

This is for sure a tricky technical challenge, but it's actually possible to imagine how such headsets might work, because these fundamental technologies already exist thanks to accessibility features on smartphones already on the market.

For example, say a headset maker wanted to build a feature where, if

And from the other perspective, it's possible to imagine how accessibility will be even better on these future headsets too. It's not inconceivable that in the next few years, we'll start to see headsets that automatically listen to everything and transcribe it—essentially providing live subtitles for our real lives. And if people with limited vision want help spotting obstacles as they walk, then it's possible a headset with a camera could help them avoid collisions too.

Ultimately, this is a great way to think about accessibility features and why they're so important on our modern devices. Because they don't just help the people who need them—they help make our technology even better for everyone else too. ■

# Ask The Tech Expert

James O'Malley

**Q: Help! I've just fallen victim to a scam—what should I do next? -Neil**

**A:** It's all too easy to do: you get a text that appears to be from a real delivery company, so you click the link and fill in your details...and then realise you've made a terrible mistake. The scammers have your login credentials and an enormous opportunity to cause chaos in your life.

## 1. Lock down what you can

If you still have access to whatever was compromised, log in and change your password immediately. The next step, however, is just as important.

Your goal in the immediate aftermath should be to lock down your most important apps. Though it is annoying if hackers get into your takeaway app, it could be actively devastating if they get into something more important like your emails, banking app, or Facebook account. If a hacker gets into your emails, they can use them to break into other parts of your digital life.

If you use the same password to log in to other services, then it is important to change your password everywhere else that you use it too.

It's worth digging into the account settings on your most important apps. Big players like Google, Facebook and Amazon let you see which devices you've logged in on. You can remotely log hackers out if there's a phone or computer you don't recognise.

And if the hackers got your credit card details? Contact your bank—but don't forget to check your banking app, as many let you freeze your card in seconds just at the tap of a button.

## 2. Plan for next time

Once the initial panic is over, think carefully about how you can stop the same thing happening again.

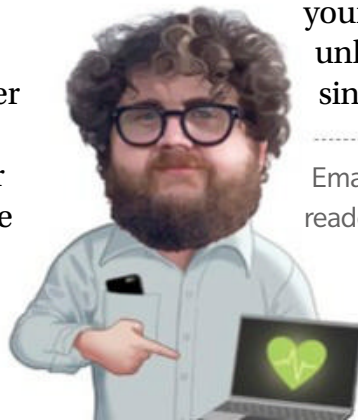
Enable two-factor authentication (2FA). This means that, for example, when you log in to Gmail, you'll get a text with a code that proves you really are who you say you are, and not just someone who knows the password.

Make sure you use unique passwords for every service you use. There are apps called Password

Managers in which you can store your login credentials—and unlock by remembering only a single password. ■

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Email your tech questions for James to [readersletters@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:readersletters@readersdigest.co.uk)



# £50 PRIZE QUESTION

## FRIENDS

What do the following words have in common?

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NATAL

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ANSWER TO JUNE'S  
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**WILLIAM CHEUNG, *Bracknell***

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A friend contacted me to say she wanted to visit me in Southend, as she had the funeral ashes of a relative. This person had requested that her ashes be scattered from the end of Southend Pier, as she had spent so many happy times there. Knowing that I lived there, she arranged that she would do the deed and then come to my house for a meal.

The day came and I waited and waited, but there was no sign of her. The mobile was switched off and I had no way of contacting her. Increasingly I became worried that there had been an accident.

At last, several hours late, the friend turned up. She was absolutely covered in ash. It was all over her hair, down her clothes, she was coughing and choking, and looked a terrible mess. Apparently, she had taken them to the pier only to find that, as it was winter, it had closed early. She had then wandered along the seafront trying to find a suitable

place to fulfil her relative's request. Finding a pontoon, she dutifully walked down it and threw the ashes out into the wide blue yonder.

Unfortunately, just at that moment, a huge gust of wind blew up. The whole lot blew straight back and covered her in ash—as she was looking up with her mouth open at the time, she also swallowed a lot.

JACQUEE STOROZYNSKI-TOLL, *Southend*

**I sat at my desk**, picked up the phone receiver and tried to dial the numbers on my computer keyboard.

It seems I am not alone. One of the other secretaries said she often sits in her seat in the office and wonders why she can't find her seat belt...

MARGARET ANNE ROBERTSON, *Kent*

**When I was younger**, my parents and I lived near the outskirts of Epping Forest. I would often take our dog for walks there. But due to him being half Greyhound, I never dared let him off the lead, just in case he took off.

One day we were walking along when he started pulling on the lead. At first I was able to hold on, despite the ground being wet due to a recent shower. But the more I tried to stop him pulling, the more things turned into a tug of war. One which, thanks to the wet ground, I lost.

Trailing his lead, he shot off like a bullet. I tried to run after him but lost my footing and fell face first into some mud. I staggered to my feet but in the



"DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE TO RATE OUR SERVICES?"

fall I sprained my ankle. There was no way I could go after him, but looking ahead I saw I did not need to; he was running back towards me. I thought he was going to stop and give me his "Sorry" look. But instead the dog shot past me, being chased by a cat.

Luckily the cat gave up the chase and I was able to catch him. Just.

My dog knew he was in trouble. But he also knew how to wrap my mother round his paw. As soon as we got home he started to whimper and shake. My mother was all over him with a warm towel and a doggy treat. I thought seeing me limping and covered in mud, I would also get a warm cup of tea and a motherly kiss. Instead, I got a very loud lecture about letting the dog loose in the forest. I swear the dog was smirking at me during my mother's angry tirade.

NORMAN STRONG, *Herts*

# Reader's Digest

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*Fairy tales and legends resonate with the beguiling language of wizardry and wonder. How much of their lore have you absorbed?*

BY ANITA LAHEY

**1. oaf**—A: pretender to the throne. B: elf's child. C: troll.

**2. wyvern**—A: winged, two-footed beast with a barbed tail. B: demon with hypnotic powers. C: witch.

**3. accolade**—  
A: bravery in battle.  
B: gesture conferring knighthood. C: royal seal on a letter.

**4. Melusine**—A: wood-nymph queen.  
B: wicked stepmother.  
C: maiden with a serpent's tail.

**5. caitiff**—A: cowardly wretch. B: sorcerer.  
C: fairy godmother.

**6. bugbear**—  
A: mischievous pixie.

B: goblin that devours ill-behaved children.  
C: human raised by animals.

**7. valkyrie**—A: Viking ship. B: beast that is half human, half raven.  
C: maiden who escorts slain heroes to the afterlife.

**8. kobold**—A: cave of treasures. B: sprite who dwells underground.  
C: rapier metal.

**9. eremite**—A: beggar.  
B: crusader. C: recluse.

**10. rampart**—  
A: defensive wall.  
B: woodland clearing.  
C: central altar in a Druid circle.

**11. banshee**—  
A: female spirit

whose wail is a harbinger of death.  
B: angry mermaid who has been lured from the sea.

C: singing wraith who enchants its victims.

**12. varlet**—A: knight's attendant. B: fencing master. C: decorative shield for display.

**13. bard**—  
A: longbow archer.  
B: composer or reciter of heroic verse.  
C: master craftsman.

**14. philtre**—  
A: curse by a witch.  
B: secret passageway.  
C: love potion.

**15. auspice**—  
A: wizard's lair.  
B: favourable omen.  
C: moral.

# Answers

**1. oaf**—[B] elf's child; The milkmaid swore her baby had been exchanged for an *oaf*.

**2. wyvern**—[A] winged, two-footed beast with a barbed tail; Whether or not the *wyvern* is a type of dragon depends on whom you ask.

**3. accolade**—[B] gesture conferring knighthood; The *accolade* could take the form of a sword tap on the candidate's shoulders, an embrace or even a blow to the ear.

**4. Melusine**—[C] maiden with a serpent's tail; Now the face of Starbucks, *Melusine* is found in tales dating back almost 1,000 years.

**5. caitiff**—[A] cowardly wretch; King Arthur swore revenge upon the *caitiff* who sent him on a fool's quest.

**6. bugbear**—[B] goblin that devours ill-behaved children; Once upon a time, parents used *bugbear* tales to foster obedience.

**7. valkyrie**—[C] maiden who escorts slain heroes to the afterlife; Norse folklore has it that the northern lights are the shimmering of the *valkyries'* shields and armour.

**8. kobold**—[B] sprite who dwells underground; Hans and his fellow miners suspected the impurities they found in the silver were the work of troublesome *kobolds*.

**9. eremite**—[C] recluse; The *eremite* retreated to his remote cave; even the monastery was too populated for this hermit.

**10. rampart**—[A] defensive wall; Approaching the castle, Sir Fendrel saw his lady waving to him from the eastern *rampart*.

**11. banshee**—[A] female spirit whose wail is a harbinger of death; Morgan trembled when the *banshee's* lament rose from the mist-covered hills.

**12. varlet**—[A] knight's attendant; Sir Gawain was in need of a new *varlet* after Lancelot poached his skilful servant.

**13. bard**—[B] composer or reciter of heroic verse; The *bard* was rewarded for his song about the deeds of the queen's ancestors.

**14. philtre**—[C] love potion; No *philtre* was required to spark passion between Buttercup and the Dread Pirate Roberts.

**15. auspice**—[B] favourable omen; The villagers saw the lilies blanketing the river and interpreted them as an *auspice* from the fairies.

---

## VOCABULARY RATINGS

**7-10:** fair

**11-12:** good

**13-15:** excellent



# Reader's Digest Competitions – Enter today for your chance to win!



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You will find this photograph somewhere inside this issue of the Reader's Digest magazine, but can you find it? Once you have, simply write the page number on your entry form, or enter online.

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### JULY 2023 ENTRY FORM

**Reader's  
Digest**

Fill in all your answers below:  
(enter as many as you like – one entry per competition per person)

Page 86 **Beach Hut**

Page 124 **Room2**

Page 134 **Wordsearch**

Page 151 **Photo Finder**

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Brain GAMES

SHARPEN YOUR MIND

## Key Digits

**MEDIUM** You're facing a locked door with seven keyholes. You also have seven keys, engraved with the numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9. Can you open the door by matching each key with the correct keyhole using these clues?

- ◆ The keys for figure A form a two-digit perfect square (that is, a number that is the result of multiplying a number by itself, such as  $25 = 5 \times 5$ ).
- ◆ The keys for figure B form a two-digit perfect cube (that is, a number that is the result of multiplying a number by itself twice, such as  $64 = 4 \times 4 \times 4$ ).
- ◆ The keys for figure C form a two-digit multiple of 8.
- ◆ The key for figure D is more than 4.



A



B



C



D

## Time Will Tell

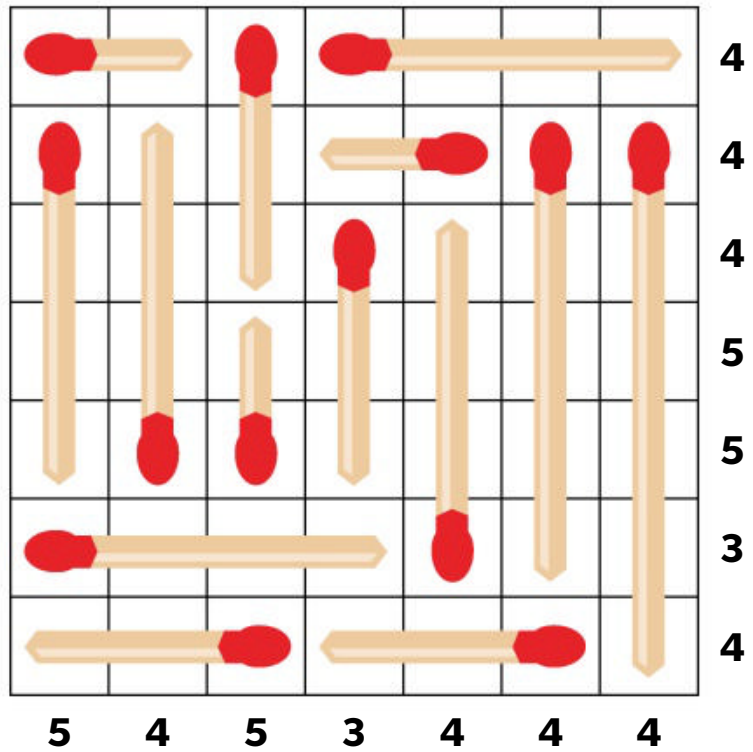
**EASY** The times on the clocks below follow a particular pattern. Based on this pattern, what time should be on the fourth clock?



KEY DIGITS BY DARREN RIGBY; TIME WILL TELL BY EMILY GOODMAN

## Match Play

**DIFFICULT** This grid contains matches of different sizes, any of which may be completely unburned, partially burned or completely burned. Matches burn from the head (rounded end) to the tail, without skipping segments. The numbers outside the grid indicate the number of burned segments in the corresponding row or column. Can you shade in the burned segments to “match” the numbers?



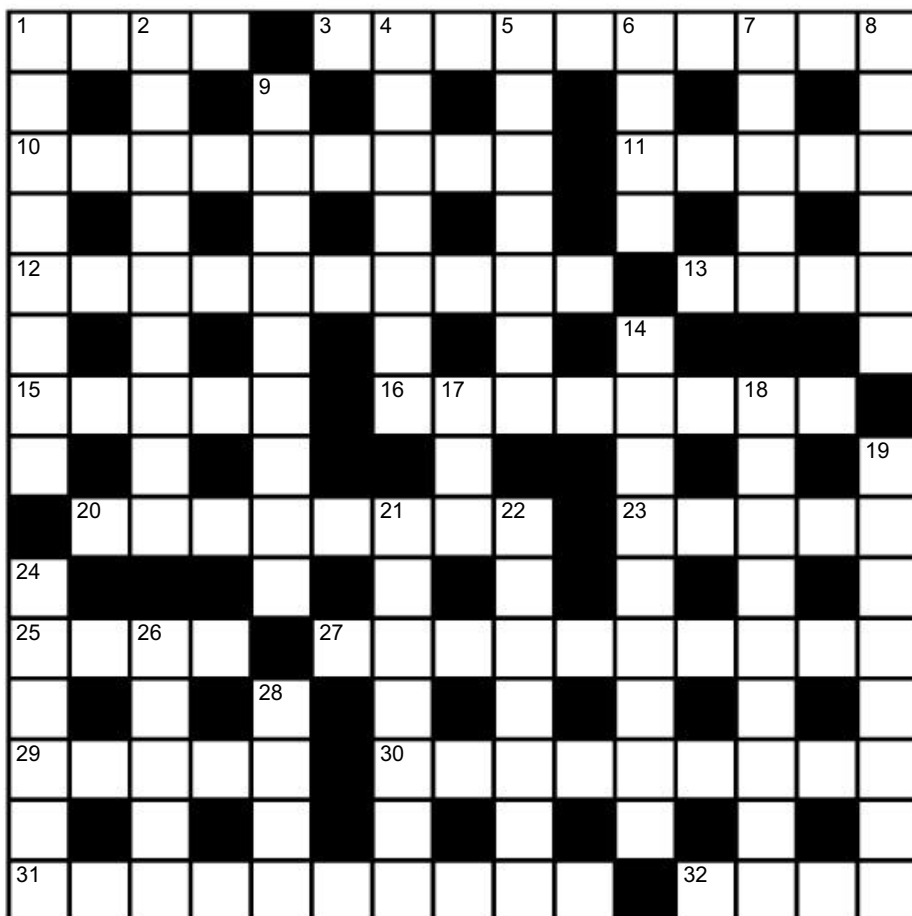
## On the Run

**MEDIUM** The Banik family—Priya and her children Sami, Lina and Kamal—ran in a charity fun race, each starting at a different time. Using the following clues, put them in order of age, starting place and finishing order.



- ◆ Although the eldest and youngest started in the first two places, they didn't win.
- ◆ Sami said he wouldn't have come last if his shoelaces hadn't broken.
- ◆ Lina, who started last, joked that Sami really lost because he was too old to beat her.
- ◆ The youngest, Kamal, who started and finished in the same place, said he would win the next year if he could start first instead of Priya.

For answers, turn to PAGE 155



## CROSSWISE

Test your general knowledge. Answers on p158

### ACROSS

- 1 It preceded the CIS (1,1,1,1)
- 3 Comes before a sentence (10)
- 10 In a higher bracket (9)
- 11 School tool (5)
- 12 Taggers' normal medium (5-5)
- 13 Ore vein (4)
- 15 *Mission Impossible's* ----- Hunt (5)
- 16 Those who change to suit the circumstances (8)
- 20 Eternity is about the whole (8)
- 23 South American ruminant (5)
- 25 One of five on D-Day (4)
- 27 Two-sided (10)
- 29 *The Man From* ----- (5)
- 30 A quarter (3-6)
- 31 Silver lining (6,4)
- 32 Reply request (1,1,1,1)

### DOWN

- 1 Not cleaned (8)
- 2 Spiky creature on the seabed (3,6)
- 4 Site of major WW2 battle in the Pacific (7)
- 5 Roofed open gallery attached to house (7)
- 6 Known in Eire as "the rebel city" (4)
- 7 Icehouse? (5)
- 8 Fibres in the body to trasmit impulses (6)
- 9 Avoiding the outdoors (7,2)
- 14 Small daggers (9)
- 17 Foundation of pointillism (3)
- 18 Comforts (9)
- 19 Business that gives loans for goods (8)
- 21 People who decide on book content (7)
- 22 Important period for accountants (4-3)
- 24 City satellite (6)
- 26 American code for computers (1,1,1,1,1)
- 28 Growing computer-based industry (4)



BY *Louis-Luc Beaudoin*

	3	5		2				8
		7					2	
1			4					
	2			5	6		1	
			3		1	9		
9					8	3		
	7				5		8	1
		3				6		4
			8	9				5

**To Solve This Puzzle**

Put a number from 1 to 9 in each empty square so that:

- ◆ every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numbers (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- ◆ each of the outlined 3 x 3 boxes has all nine numbers, none repeated.

**SOLUTION**

5	3	7	4	6	8	9	1	2
4	6	9	2	1	7	3	8	5
1	8	2	5	3	6	9	4	7
9	4	3	8	7	2	1	5	6
2	5	6	1	3	8	9	7	4
7	1	8	9	5	6	4	3	2
3	9	5	7	8	4	2	6	1
6	2	1	3	9	5	7	4	8
8	7	4	6	2	1	5	3	9

**BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS**

FROM PAGE 152

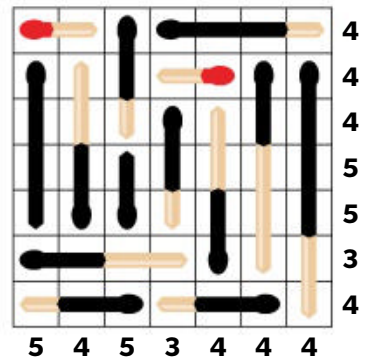
**Key Digits**

Figure A: 49; B: 27; C: 16; D: 5.

**Time Will Tell**

It should read 8:05. With each successive step, the hour hand's value doubles and the minute hand's value halves.

**Match Play**



**On the Run**

Age (from youngest to oldest): Kamal, Lina, Sami and Priya.  
 Starting order (from first to last): Priya, Kamal, Sami and Lina.  
 Finishing order (from first to last): Lina, Kamal, Priya and Sami.

# Laugh!

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Go to [readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us](https://readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us)  
or [facebook.com/readersdigestuk](https://facebook.com/readersdigestuk)

**Why can't you trust an atom?**

Because they make up  
literally everything.

TARA MCGEARY, *Essex*

**What is the ideal dog for a magician?**

A Labracadabrador!

JOE CUSHNAN, *Nottinghamshire*

**I told a joke on a Zoom meeting today, but no one laughed.** Turns out I'm not remotely funny.

MATTHEW SMITH, *Sheffield*

**I once made a lot of money cleaning up leaves.** I was raking it in.

LUKE ITHURRALDE, *County Durham*

**I spoke to a Dalek only yesterday who was from Devon.** When I asked where, the reply was, "Exeter mate".

JANET WORSLEY, *Lancashire*

**I just burned 2,000 calories.** That's the last time I leave brownies in the oven while I nap.

MATT COOPER, *Devon*

**If anyone needs an ark,**  
I happen to Noah guy.

SHANNY PARKER, *North Wales*



## ASK A COMEDIAN

# Andy Parsons

An experienced comedian and regular panellist on *Mock the Week*, Andy Parsons is set to return with his new stand up show *Bafflingly Optimistic*. **Ian Chaddock** asks him about his funniest experiences...

### What stand-up or film stands out as making you fall in love with comedy?

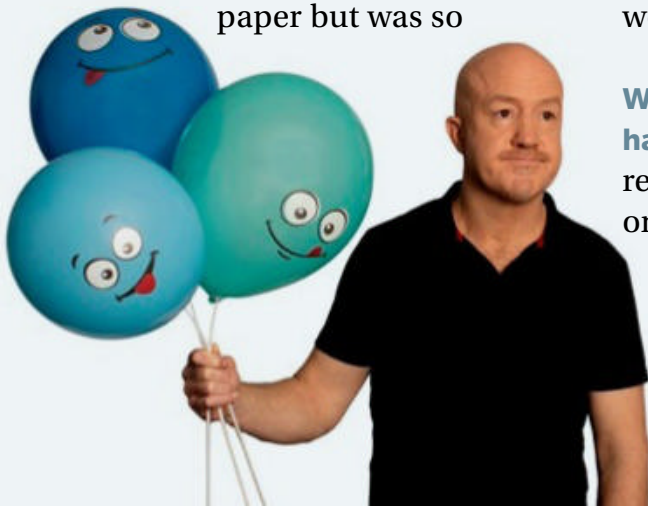
The first comedy film I remember falling in love with was *The Blues Brothers*—it had great music, memorable dialogue, brilliant car chases and a scene where a bunch of marching Nazis were forced to jump off a bridge into a river.

**What do you remember about your first time doing stand-up?** I was doing a five-minute open spot at the Chuckle Club before Sean Hughes, who had just won the Perrier Award. I had a piece of paper in my back pocket with a list of jokes on. After a couple of minutes I forgot the next joke—so I took out the bit of paper but was so

nervous I dropped it. A lady in the front row picked it up and for a moment my future was in her hands. Thankfully, she gave me back the piece of paper, saying “Keep going, you’re doing really well”. That’s a heckle you can deal with.

**What is the weirdest job you’ve ever found out someone in the audience does for a living?** I don’t tend to ask audience members what they do for a living, but I once had a bloke in the front row with a broken foot who turned out to be a mechanic—one of his co-workers had been driving a car into the work’s garage and had forgotten it had no brakes on it. Apparently the handbrake still worked, but he’d forgotten that too.

**What is the craziest thing that ever happened on *Mock the Week*?** We recorded the pilot for *Mock the Week* on July 7, 2005 in front of a studio audience of zero, because that was the day of the 7/7 bombings in London. Jack Dee was also



scheduled to record a *Live at the Apollo* that night and ended up performing it to an empty Apollo, with the producers cutting in a studio audience from a different show.

**Who was your favourite puppet on *Spitting Image* and why?** Our favourite idea for a puppet that we came up with was for Tony Blair before he became the leader of the Labour Party. We portrayed him as a giant plastic smile with limited principles—some puppets stand the test of time.

**What's your new stand up show about?** We have been visited by the Four Horsemen, in the form of Disease, Death, War and Greedflation, so what hope is there? Nobody asks to be born, it's a struggle to get a job, a partner, a house and a mortgage. Crime is on the increase, there are strikes and an energy crisis, a cost-of-living crisis and climate change. Then as if life wasn't bad enough, they've come up with AI. Life is tough economically, environmentally, medically, historically and emotionally—what sort of an idiot would be optimistic in the current climate?

*Andy Parsons is set to play a run of shows at Edinburgh's Pleasance Courtyard for Fringe from August 14-27 and will tour the UK this autumn*

---

## CROSSWORD ANSWERS

**Across:** 1 USSR, 3 Conviction, 10 Wealthier, 11 Ruler, 12 Spray-paint, 13 Lode, 15 Ethan, 16 Adapters, 20 Entirety, 23 Llama, 25 Utah, 27 Bipartisan, 29 Uncle, 30 One-fourth, 31 Bright side, 32 RSVP.

**Down:** 1 Unwashed, 2 Sea urchin, 4 Okinawa, 5 Veranda, 6 Cork, 7 Igloo, 8 Nerves, 9 Staying in, 14 Stilettos, 17 Dot, 18 Reassures, 19 Pawnshop, 21 Editors, 22 Year-end, 24 Suburb, 26 ASCII, 28 Tech.

## Summer Scorchers



**Twitter users share their funniest thoughts about the hottest season**

**@imegordon:** Summer learning loss is real. My kids have only been out of school for six weeks, and I am definitely dumber.

**@CollegeStudent:** Summer kind of stresses me out because I feel like I have to be doing something at all hours or else I'm wasting summer.

**@MyMomologue:** Welcome to summer with kids. You wash towels now. That's it. That's your whole identity.

**@hashtagcatie:** What is hot girl summer? Is that just slang for when it's so hot in the car that your thighs stick to the seat?

**@SarahMansford:** It's that time of year again when I should really check in and see how my friends with pools and boats have been.



# Beat the Cartoonist!



Think of a witty caption for this cartoon—the three best suggestions, along with the cartoonist's original, will be posted on our website in mid-JULY. If your entry gets the most votes, you'll win **£50**.

Submit to [captions@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:captions@readersdigest.co.uk) by JULY 7. We'll announce the winner in our August issue.

## MAY WINNER



Our cartoonist's caption, "Feels like a moment in history for King Charles Spaniels" failed to beat our reader Janet Worsley, who won the vote with, "**It looks like the human 'Best in Breed' wins a crown and a fancy day out!**" Congrats, Janet!

## IN THE AUGUST ISSUE



### Rufus Wainwright

The musician on festivals, Judy Garland and being the son of iconic folk singers



### I REMEMBER...

### Justin Webb

One of the most recognisable voices on BBC Radio looks back

## VINTAGE VEHICLES

The stories behind five quirky classic cars and their even quirkiest owners



## Twenty-six animal species are back from the brink of extinction in Australia

**I**T SEEMS LIKE we're always hearing about new animals that have become endangered, but there's some good news in Australia: 26 animal species no longer meet the criteria to be listed as threatened.

Australia's biodiversity has been in decline, with more than 1,700 species and ecological communities known to be at risk. In 1999, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act was passed to introduce protections for endangered animals.

Seemingly these are working, as a recent study published in the journal *Biological Conservation* reviewed the animals that were previously or

currently listed as threatened between 2000 and December 2022, and found that 26 species have recovered to no longer meet the criteria. Species that have seen improvement include the charmingly named burrowing bettong (also known as the boodie), the golden bandicoot and the bulloo grey grasswren.

Factors behind this improvement include habitat management, control of introduced predators and translocation of endangered animals to predator-free islands.

However, the species have not been officially delisted at this time. The EPBC Act only allows species to be delisted if doing so will not have a negative effect on their survival, and researchers believe that conservation gains could be lost should management efforts be stopped.

Dr Michelle Ward, a conservation scientist at WWF Australia, explained to *The Guardian*, "The key problem with delisting species is that then they no longer have monitoring and are no longer eligible for certain funding schemes."

It is nonetheless promising that researchers have found signs of improvement. Hopefully this will continue among these and many other animal species!

**BY ALICE GAWTHROP**

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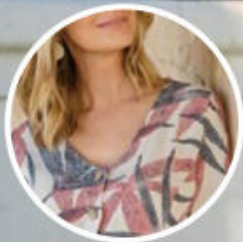
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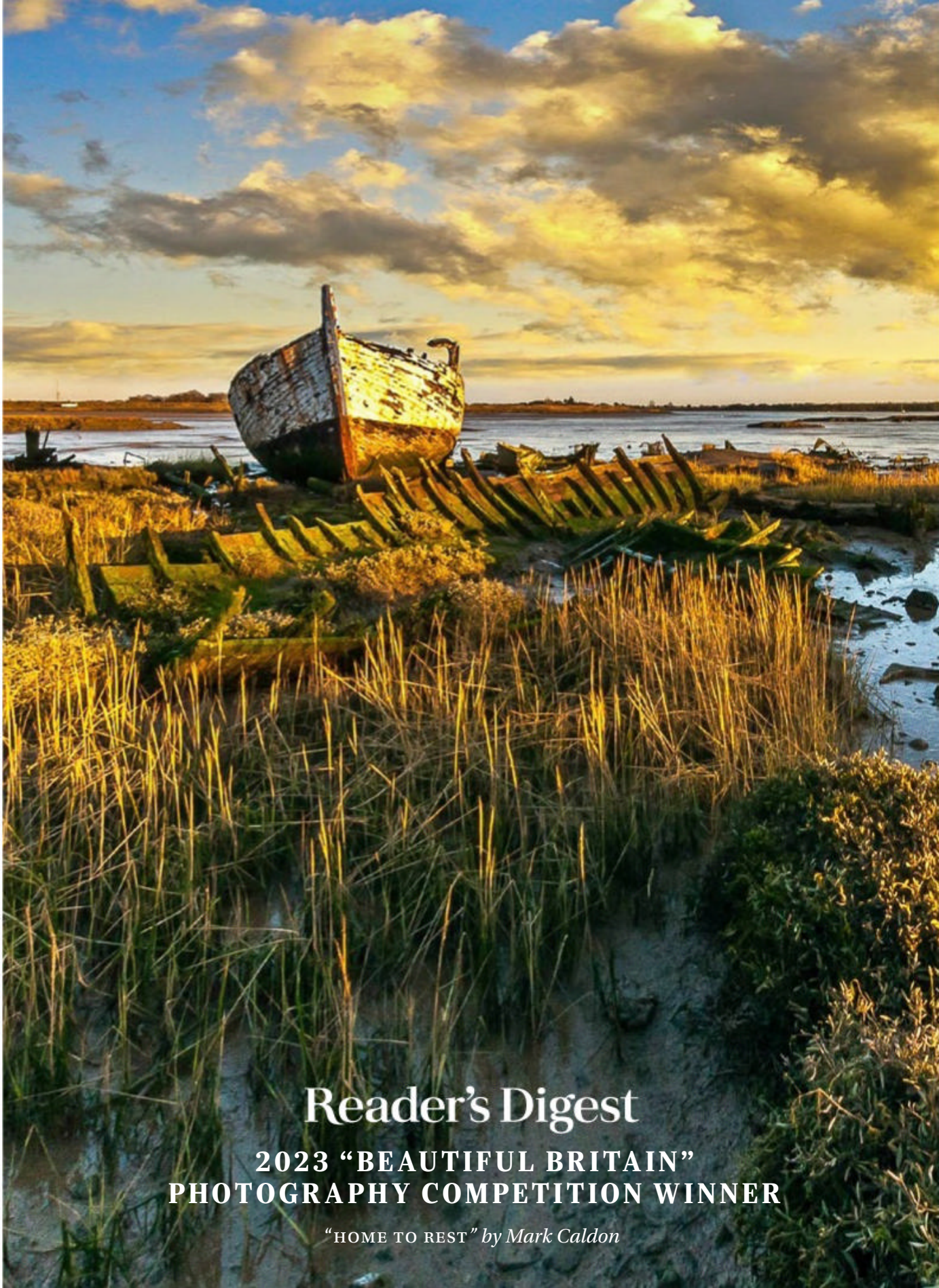
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# Reader's Digest

**2023 "BEAUTIFUL BRITAIN"  
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*"HOME TO REST" by Mark Caldon*