

MILL

016

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Inside Alexander Stoddart's Studio
Linwood's return to prosperity
An in-depth interview with China Crisis

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1.15pm-2pm: **Join the Invest in Renfrewshire & Business Development teams.**

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WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

Although the calendar may have inferred otherwise, it's safe to say that this issue serves as a primer for the first real summer that we've had in years.

Left grounded, stifled and sequestered away from what we'd come to expect from those treasured months of sunshine, it feels like this time, we're all hellbent on making it count.

Whether that's returning to an itinerary that's chock-full of festivals, taking the kids away on scenic day trips or simply sitting as still as humanly possible on a sunlounger for two straight weeks, the joy that was withheld is now within our grasp. Yet as this issue will prove, it's the hard work which makes our preferred form of respite so sweet in the first place.

Across the 68 pages of this issue, we celebrate those who have the courageousness to eschew any intrusive fears that they're not on the right path in order to enrich their communities, forge ahead with a bold, new idea or plant their flag in our ever-evolving cultural world.

From those who took the leap into self-employment and charities who refuse to let despair prevail to a young artist who refused to take no for an answer in her pursuit of telling a vitally important story, this issue is founded on the sort of grit and determination that our local community thrives on.

So, without further ado, whether you're reading poolside with cocktail in hand or over your afternoon coffee, please dive in.

All the best,

Robert Blair

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Alexander Stoddart cover photo by Graeme Hewitson

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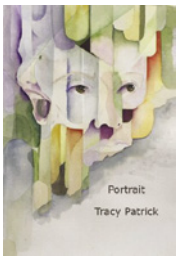


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WHAT'S ON

We pick out some of the highlights taking place on your doorstep in May, June and early July.



THU 12 MAY 7pm

PORTRAIT: A POETRY COLLECTION BY TRACY PATRICK LAUNCH NIGHT

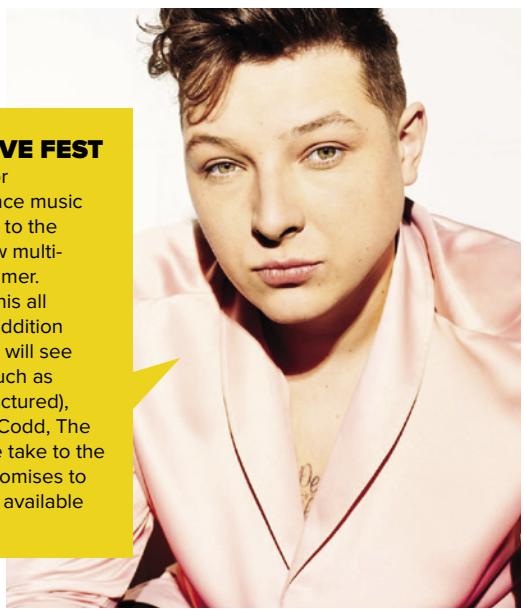
Penned after the talented writer's diagnosis with cardiomyopathy at age 42, Tracy Patrick's debut poetry collection is set to be launched with an evening at Paisley Central Library. Featuring a set from fellow wordsmith Graham Fulton, this intimate night will see the author of the renowned, Paisley-centric *Blushing Is For Sinners* will put attendees through their emotional paces with works that capture "the fear of dying, vicissitudes of change, and the sheer joy of being alive. Register now for free via earthlovepoetrymagazine@yahoo.com



1 JUN TO 12 JUN

WILD SUPERSTARS

Billed as a "self-led activity for families", the Lochwinnoch branch of the RSPB is enabling patrons to engage in some wildlife "super spotting" with a newly decked out trail. After acquiring your activity book from the visitor's centre, budding explorers will be tasked with finding the "super stars" and collecting letters to reveal a mystery word along the way. At just £3 per adult and £1.50 for children plus entry fees, it's a perfect activity to help beckon in what should be a summer of fun.



SAT 4 JUN 12.30pm

ELECTRIC LOVE FEST

A hallowed spot for generations of dance music fans, Braehead will play host to the inaugural instalment of a new multi-act show at the onset of summer. Dubbed Electric Love Fest, this all day extravaganza and new addition to Scotland's music calendar will see a plethora of popular stars such as Joel Corry, John Newman (pictured), Tom Zanetti, Regard, Shane Codd, The Goodboys and Carla Munroe take to the Waterfront Arena for what promises to be a special day out. Tickets available now via Ticketweb.

SUN 5 JUN

RENFREW GALA DAY

A staple in the diaries of local residents, Renfrew's annual gala day is returning for another fun-filled year. Held within the always idyllic Robertson Park, organisers have promised an entire afternoon full of free family fun and entertainment. Never short on activities, this community-led event is always an occasion which brings local people together and this year is sure to be no different.



THU 19 MAY 10am

RENFREWSHIRE CHAMBER'S ANNUAL B2B EVENT RETURNS

Renfrewshire's largest free business event returns to Paisley for the 10th year on Thursday 19th May at the Lagoon, Paisley, and is now open for registration. "Business Matters in Renfrewshire" – your local B2B event – is organised by Renfrewshire Chamber and is open to all members and non-members, business people, start-ups, senior school pupils and students. With 50+ exhibitors confirmed so far and six seminars running throughout the day, the event is sponsored by Paisley.is, the ambitious destination brand for Paisley and Renfrewshire.

SEMINAR LINE-UP:

- **10.15-11.00** *Paisley.is: Future Paisley's cultural regeneration, investments & AMIDS, home of manufacturing innovation* with the Paisley Is team and Renfrewshire Council.
- **11.15-12.00** *Connect & Grow* with Renfrewshire Chamber.
- **12.15-13.00** *Embrace the Space – a mini masterclass on effective social media for business* with NSDesign.
- **13.15-14.00** *Support for your Business* with the Invest in Renfrewshire & Business Development Teams.
- **14.15-15.00** *How to win business using LinkedIn* with fatBuzz.
- **15.15-16.00** *Five Ways to generate more profit and develop a growth mindset* with ActionCOACH.

Chief exec Bob Grant said: "B2B is an excellent way to network with over 50 companies in one go and with six informative seminars it's a great use of time. I encourage you to book now." To register your place please visit the Chamber events page at **renfrewshirechamber.com.** The event is free to attend (there is a cost to exhibit).

SAT 11 JUN 8pm

REPUBLIC OF SOUL/CLUB SOUL

If you're in the mood to spend an evening dancing to the classic sounds of Motown, Stax and more, then this joyfully rambunctious evening at The Bungalow is exactly what the doctor ordered. Featuring a performance from iconic Glaswegian octet Republic of Soul, the evening will also play host to the pioneering 'Club Soul'. For the uninitiated, this consists of an "audiovisual Northern Soul club night" which will bring the sights and sounds of the subculture directly to Paisley for one night only. Tickets are available now from £6.





FRI 17 JUN 7.30pm

MAMA'S BROKE

A folk outfit whose transatlantic influences extend all the way from Canada to Ireland via India, Mama's Broke, lesser known as the duo of Lisa Maria and Amy Lou Keeler, are critically lauded within their genre for not only their heart on their sleeve songwriting, but the inventiveness which exudes from it. Having performed all around the world, the duo, whose sophomore album, *Narrow Line*, is set to arrive on the 13th May, will head to Renfrew Town Hall for what is sure to be a sublime show.

Morrisons *Community Champion*



A HELPING HAND

As the cost-of-living skyrockets, Claire Cunningham, community champion at Morrisons Falside Road, talks us through what they're doing to assist and bring people together in one fell swoop.

At the moment, we've just seen our staff display their solidarity with colleagues that celebrate Ramadan by agreeing to fast for a day each week. It's a way of showing our support and on top of that, we've also put together a celebratory hamper of food which will soon be delivered to a local mosque.

Recently, we've seen a massive response to our Easter campaign with hundreds and hundreds of eggs being donated and we've provided them all to West Primary School and Madras Family Centre in Neilston. The school in particular is an entity that we're doing a lot of work with, as a lot of families are really struggling.

Just now, we're taking in nearly £500 a week in food bank donations too.

In terms of upcoming events, we've got plans for a summer fair in the car park. The goal would be to get a couple of rides similar to what took place at Anchor Mill last year.

We're also working with our new charity partners, Young Lives, and we're hopefully going to visit one of the hospices in the summer to deliver toys and other things. We just want to do what we can.

Keep up with everything Claire is up to on facebook.com/morrisons-falside-road



SAT 18 JUN Midday

BARSHAW GALA DAY

The Barshaw Gala Day is primed to bring families from across Renfrewshire together for an action-packed event in what will hopefully be balmy summer climes. Free to attend for all – including face painting for the wee ones! – revellers will have free rein of the park for the day. On top of that, there will also be fun inflatables, children's workshops and community and craft stalls as well as entertainment from a string of local artists.



©Churros Barcelona

25&26 JUN

RENFREWSHIRE FOOD AND DRINK FESTIVAL

Held in Robertson Park, this brand new event is one which is tailor-made for those with a passion for all things gastronomic. Featuring street food, cooking demos, food & drink stalls, a craft market and live entertainment, the inaugural edition of the Renfrewshire F&D festival is aiming to be a full-scale love letter to all things food and drink. The entire weekend will be hosted by Clyde 1's Cassi and is sure to be a two-day spell that'll guarantee a return of the event in years to come.

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KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE

After reverting to a virtual model for the past few years, Paisley's Sma' Shot Day celebrations have finally awakened.


Burning of the cork



The Charleston Drum

If there was ever an annual occurrence on the calendar that feels intrinsically ours, it's Sma' Shot Day. Embedded in the consciousness of Renfrewshire locals from their formative years while remaining a complete mystery to anyone beyond its county limits, the annual celebrations are always a time in which not only does the atmosphere around the town experience an increase in buoyancy, but our collective civic pride does too.

A tale of triumph over the tyranny, the weavers' historic victory over the manufacturers birthed one of the oldest workers' festivals in the world and now, after two years of pared back, online-only commemorations, the return of Sma' Shot Day feels like the final piece of the puzzle in the town's sporadically derailed road back from the pandemic.

As is customary, this year's festivities will get underway on Saturday 2nd July at 12pm as the parade begins to make its procession through the town from Brodie Park. All led by the bellowing sound of the Charleston Drum – which was originally used to summon the weavers out for protests – the parade is produced by Bridgerman Arts who will be ensuring that the carnivalesque you recall remains intact. After it halts at Abbey Close and Bridge Street, attendees will be welcomed to the next phase of the celebrations which features performances from PACE and Starlight alongside the all too pivotal "burning of the cork". Supplemented by musical acts, aerial displays and assorted family fun, it's safe to say that it'll be a joyous time for all involved.

Elsewhere, The Bungalow – whose owners helped produce a mini-musical on the subject in 2021 – will host a day full of entertainment from 1pm onwards. Not least of all, the Sma' Shot Poetry Slam. In addition to what's occurring inside, Shuttle Street will also play its part in keeping the energy at a fever pitch with a busking area that'll give those in the local food and drink establishments a chance to get a slice of the celebrations. Plus, there's a makers market in the Art Department on the ground floor of The Paisley Centre.

For more info as and when it arrives, head to paisley.is

Photos by David Cameron


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BUILDING HOPE

With their upcoming event fast approaching, Stevie McCallister and The Cave's Jen Sloan take us inside "Bands for Malawi".


Stevie with one of the pupils



Bands for Malawi at The Cave


Stevie and Jen in Malawi

When it comes to genuine acts of human kindness, geographical boundaries are of no consequence. Sparked by a council initiative, Stevie McCallister headed to Africa with Classrooms For Malawi. Several trips later, he and Jen Sloan of Paisley pub The Cave have fostered deep bonds with the area known as William Village.

"I've been over three times now," Stevie revealed. "Since then, we've even built a nursery and now, we sponsor an organisation known as STEKA (Step Kids Awareness) that helps to provide housing for street kids. Without Classrooms for Malawi, they just don't get to go to school. In terms of education over there, it's like an 11-plus exam. Afterwards, some will go onto the secondary school and after that, they can receive sponsorships to go to university. Some of them have even ended up in Edinburgh University and visited the pub before returning home as doctors and nurses."

With over 900 pupils passing through the doors of the school they helped build, Stevie and co have provided hundreds of thousands to William Village. In Stevie's estimations, very little of this would be possible without the support of Jen – who has also taken the trip to volunteer – and the annual Bands for Malawi fundraiser.

"It's become a big thing," she proclaimed, "as soon as I start planning our music for the year, nearly every one of them will say to me 'remember we're free for Malawi day'. Last time I had 14 bands in one day, but I've scaled it back to eight (laughs). They all do it for nothing and every year, Stevie and Helen from Wreckless supply all the equipment and do the sound completely free of charge. A lot of the bands even put money in the bucket!"

"Without Jen having this pub, it would've fallen flat on its face," Stevie chimed in. If she hadn't stepped in, we wouldn't get this sort of encouragement."

"Everyone gets involved," Jen continued. "I just open the doors, it's everyone else, whether it's the bands or the people that come along, that make it what it is."

The Bands For Malawi all-dayer will be held on Saturday 2nd July at The Cave. Entry comes with a donation.



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THE TIES THAT BIND

As the theatrical world eagerly awaits its debut in Renfrew, we take a look inside the world of Kick The Door's *Thread*.



When a piece of art or culture truly has the capacity to realign our perspectives, broaden horizons and open eyes to untapped approaches to our everyday lives, it very seldom arrives overnight. Sure enough, *Thread* – the newest stage show from Paisley-based production company Kick The Door – was no different.

Initially slated to receive its first airing – albeit in embryonic form – during the New Space Festival at Paisley Art Centre in 2020, the pandemic meant that those plans had to be shelved. Instead of being brought to life before the eyes of locals in a physical sense, the team at KTD opted to share a brief 20-minute segment of the show in the form of a Facebook live stream back in March. Even in this format, and with the world engulfed in turmoil, its original folk-pop score and naturalistic yet affecting lyricism made it abundantly clear that they had something special on their hands. Now, almost two and a half years later, all of the planning, retooling and determination will come to fruition when it is unveiled on Saturday 28th May at Renfrew Town Hall.



Devised by Paisley's own Fraser Scott and Iona Ramsay alongside musician and performer Bethany Tennick, *Thread* tells the story of sisters Ellie and Sarah Stewart. While one was compelled to leave Paisley at the earliest opportunity, the other stayed put. Beset by a sudden tragedy, the two must reconvene in the place they call home and the end product is a story that is "about family, community and finding your place in the world when everything you know is turned on its head".

Written and performed in the colloquial language that's an intrinsic part of both our town and way of life, to actively use the dialect that so much of the world tries to stigmatise or downplay, was of pivotal importance to the team during the production of the musical and KTD's work as a whole.

"We're all really passionate about using Scottish language, so that's why we write it into a lot of our stuff," director Fraser Scott said during a recent profile with *Mill*. "It's important to us to embrace that and for it to be celebrated. It's such a unique culture, so it only makes sense for us to celebrate that and there's a lot of different elements that come across. For me, as a director and artist, it really underpins the stories I want to tell. That Paisley, West of Scotland culture."

Presented in collaboration with OneRen, tickets for Thread's hotly anticipated debut are available now via renfrewshireboxoffice.ticketsolve.com

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SUPPORT & SOLACE

As they begin to decompress from the most strenuous years that the organisation has endured, Renfrewshire Carers Centre is as undeterred as ever.





For some people, the enormity of what it means to consolidate your time and effort into someone's wellbeing will never fully dawn on them. For the team at the award-winning Renfrewshire Carers Centre, it's a dynamic they are not only well-versed in, but aim to lighten the load however they can.

Whether it's advocacy services, practical skills, simply providing carers with a chance for a brief respite from the demands, both mental and physical, of caring for another, the team went all out to ensure that even as we were disconnected by lockdown, they were still providing that crucial helping hand.

"Over the past two years, our staff have had to adapt," says Deputy Centre Manager Elaine Grealey. "We moved a lot of our training sessions online to ensure that our carers were still included and supported. On account of having young carers aged eight to eighteen, the restrictions meant that we were still able to carry out our walking, allotment and football groups as normal. A lot of organisations shut down, but we tried to deliver our services as best as we could, whether that was delivering PPE to telephone befriending and even online activities like yoga, facials, cake decorating and evenings with music from local musician Johnny Barr."

Freshly equipped with new, more accessible premises, the RCC is always keen to expand their reach and now, they're focusing on ensuring that the lifeline they afford is available to everyone that needs it.

"For us, it's all about adapting and modelling our services to what carers really need. At the moment, we're looking for people to join our carers panel. We're hoping to reach out to new voices, hidden carers and people that haven't necessarily interacted with us a lot. There are still people who don't know we're here or don't necessarily see themselves as carers and this is one of the key strands for us going forward. Whether that's because they need support from us, or if they need assistance from elsewhere that we can help to facilitate.

"It's been a really tough time for carers and it's not for us to fix everything," Elaine continued, "but we can provide feedback to let everyone know what people in Renfrewshire need. Our key focus is on looking after unpaid carers and making sure they've got everything they require. So, if you think you might be a carer, don't hesitate to phone us and have a chat!"

Renfrewshire Carers Centre , St James House, 25 St James' St, Paisley, PA3 2HQ. To find out more, visit renfrewshirecarers.org.uk.

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Eilidh LOAN

As her debut show, *Moorcroft*, receives universal acclaim, Eilidh Loan talks to us about realism, Renfrew, telling her dad's story and more.

For most people, the successful opening run of your play would be a time to take the foot off the gas. But for actor, director and writer Eilidh Loan, who is self-professedly "terrible at sitting still", the critical acclaim that her debut play, *Moorcroft* is receiving has only compelled her to do more.

Derived from the real lives of her father, Garry, and his friends during their days of playing football in Renfrew, 24-year-old Eilidh's creation is a work of immense beauty, sorrow and humour. And to her mind, authenticity was everything.

"My target audience was working class people coming to the theatre," she revealed, "and if they were going to come and it be anything less than raw, gritty and honest, they'd be like 'you're kidding us on' (laughs). So, it was important that we created a real team where you could believe that all of the actors were best friends. This was the best show I've ever worked on in terms of the company of actors. They were just the most amazing group of lads. It was unbelievably special, even the Tron said 'we've never had a group like that in here.'

"I FEEL LIKE I'VE DONE RENFREW AND ERSKINE PROUD KNOWING THAT I'VE PUT THEM ON A STAGE"

"It was amazing when they would actually get the chance to meet people who'd played for *Moorcroft* who would say 'aw I knew Sootie or I know Garry'," she continued. "It really made them realise that they were dealing with real people and real lives.

"It's a dream for actors to get a role like that which comes from a real town and a real place. It's everybody's dad, grandad or brother. Never for a moment did we shy away from the hard-hitting stuff or the funny stuff, because that's how we deal with everything. I'm totally biassed, but people from the West of Scotland are the funniest people in the world (laughs)."

With its name now adorning billboards across Glasgow and the performances garnering rave reviews, it'd be easy for an outside observer to see the show as an overnight sensation. But for Eilidh, it was actually the product of a lengthy process that came about through a mixture of courage and persistence.

"It's been about seven years in terms of getting it from the first initial idea to getting it onstage. I always really wanted to write something about my dad and we did this module at drama school about creating your own work. I'm really dyslexic, so I never thought that writing was for me. But after I got into it, I realised 'I love this'. I was looking at people like Michaela Coel and Pheobe Waller-Bridge who were actors, writers and directors. So, I realised that I wanted to do it all. From there, I just started doing wee small things to practice with some of my mates who wanted to try things out too. Then, in 2018, I won the Alan Bates Award, which meant that they gave us space to put on my own work.

"I invited my teacher, Carl Prekopp, who is now like my mentor. It was only half an hour at the time but he came and asked for the script. He then sent it to David Pugh and I was like what? This is mad, that's like a really big West End producer," Eilidh declared. "Soon, I heard that he wanted to have a meeting and he said 'I'd like you to finish the play and then we'll sit down and have a read-through'.

"I brought my dad down from Scotland and that was the most amazing experience. We had a group of like seven actors and when he walked in, everyone clapped. He was so confused by it (laughs). At that point, I was like 'even if this goes nowhere, at least my dad gets to feel like the most special man on earth for once' because to me, he is.

"Behind everything was six years of me trying to find what I wanted to say, that was the hard bit. My dad made me aware from a very young age that nothing would be handed to me and it's very true. You just need to be persistent and know your abilities. He knew what it was like not to live his dream, so he always said that 'as long as it makes you happy and you give it your best go, I'll always support you.

"No matter where you go in life, you never want to forget where you come from," Eilidh says of the play's ties to Renfrewshire. With *Moorcroft*, I feel like I've done Renfrew – where I spent most of my childhood running around Robbie Park – and Erskine proud knowing that I've put them on a stage.

Q&A

DREAM COLLABORATOR?
Michaela Cole and Stephen Graham are my heroes so to work with them would be a dream.

FAVOURITE PLAY?
Such a tough one but *Road* by Jim Cartwright will always hold such a special place in my heart

FAVOURITE ALBUM?
Currently it's *Parallel Lines* - Blondie

FAVOURITE PLACE IN RENFREWSHIRE?
Got to be Robbie Park!


Eilidh with her dad

Now people can come and see it and say that's my town."

Despite the fact that the camaraderie of a football team may serve as its backdrop, this show isn't about wins and losses in a sporting sense. Instead, it faces down topics such as toxic masculinity, homophobia, race and mental health with an unflinchingly candid lens.

Far from being a relic of its time period, Eilidh acknowledged that what is seen on-stage is still symptomatic of the complicity and that goes on in our communities today.

"Quite a lot of what the *Moorcroft* boys do in the play is sit there in silence and not say 'mate, that isn't right' or 'mate, are you okay?" Eilidh proffered. "In some ways, that's worse than saying something. When I spoke to a lot of them about growing up in the 80s during the AIDS epidemic, they remembered being terrified because nobody had resources apart from the big gravestone that you saw on TV. It's a time period which is so full of colour and love yet so deep-rooted in hatred, so it was important to have characters that people could come and feel connected to. Young gay men can watch Tubs' story and say yeah, that's me. We've got a huge responsibility with art to hold a mirror up and say 'check yourselves.' It's been overwhelming to speak to people who've gone through things that the boys do, whether that's cancer, racism or homophobia, and for the first time in a long time, feel represented. It makes us think about the times that we didn't step in with things and take accountability. "



Eilidh with the cast of *Moorcroft*

With an abundance of stories still left to tell, it seems that *Moorcroft*'s legacy is far from complete. In fact, Eilidh even has ambitions of bringing people further into the world with potential adaptations.

"I still see it having another theatre life, first and foremost. Whether that's back at the Tron or somewhere else, I'd like to finish its life there and then maybe write it for a film or a series or something. It'd be unbelievable to get these boys represented on screen. If I did, I'd love to have the original boys or the families have cameo roles in it.

"It's so close to home," Eilidh affirmed, "so whatever media it goes into, it's always done with respect, love and sensitivity."

Keep up with Eilidh on Twitter & Instagram @eilidhloan

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SEIZING THE MOMENT

Unwilling to stand idly by, Linwood's residents are taking matters into their own hands and improving their community on a daily basis.

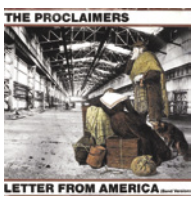


ON-X Linwood ©OneRen

Over the years, local areas, often through no fault of their own, can find the perception of their area skewed. Led by external forces and extenuating circumstances which ultimately fall to people beyond their grasp, these towns, once regarded as bastions of industry and thriving centres of commerce, are now assigned pejorative terms and, sometimes, defaming titles to go along with them.

A site of prosperity and expertise since the advent of cotton and flax mills which were built in the area in the late 18th century, Linwood's propensity for production would transfer over to the automobile industry. Home to both the Rootes car plant and the adjacent Pressed Steel factory from 1960 onwards, it was said that by 1967 they were producing over 2,000 Hillman Imps a month. With locals fondly recalling the days where the iconic shape of this economy car would populate the overhead conveyor, the factory would eventually be taken over by American manufacturers Chrysler in the mid-70s before its eventual closure under the stewardship of Peugeot/Talbot.

Ever since, there has been an eagerness by some to depict the abolition of this industry within the town as a clear-cut sign of decline. Immortalised in The Proclaimers' *Letter From America* among a whole host of once flourishing areas that had been deemed



Letter from America by The Proclaimers was released in November 1987 and peaked at number three in the UK chart.



Tweedie Hall and Linwood Library ©Tobermore



Kilbarchan AAC Training Centre



©Tobermore

rudderless by the absence of their main employers, the notion of the area as having fallen on hard times would only grow.

Then, in December of 2011, this idea of Linwood operating as a shadow of its former self would be compounded when it was awarded Urban Realm's infamous "Carbunkle Award". Assigned to the most "dismal" town in Scotland, its judging panel maintained that the intention behind the "plook on a plinth" was to encourage redevelopment.

However, like the Reid brothers and many onlookers who presumptuously assumed that the spirit of Linwood could be defined by either the presence or lack of a major export, the locals are proving in the present day that the sense of shared identity and community, as well as the desire to thrive in newfound ways, is alive and well.

"SINCE THE 1400s, LINWOOD HAS BEEN MINED, FRACKED, CHEMICALISED, DUMPED ON, RETAILED, ENGINEERED, MANUFACTURED, DE-POPULATED AND THEN ABANDONED BY THOSE WHO EXTRACTED WHAT THEY WANTED"

In recent years, it's been all hands on deck in Linwood and through grit and determination, this Renfrewshire borough has taken the initiative and strived to not return the town to former glories, but to create a new era entirely. Devised with a twinned focus on wellbeing and ownership, Linwood Community Development Trust has played →


Photo by Ronan Donnachie


Sculpture at Tweedie Hall ©Thomas Nugent

an instrumental role in the ongoing resurgence of the area. For them, it all came about through nothing more than a shared discontentment with how the area they called home had been – both historically and contemporaneously – treated.

"Since the 1400s, Linwood has been mined, fracked, chemicalised, dumped on, retailed, engineered, manufactured, de-populated and then abandoned by those who extracted what they wanted," detailed Charity Manager Kirsty Flannigan. "They left us with a legacy of social and environmental problems and no policy of the polluter or the exploiter paying has ever been enforced.

"The other side to Linwood was and continues to be a lively, resilient, fun-loving community. Made up of decent folk. It's ours, the others are always just passing through.

"Our town was asleep for a while, not really noticing things creeping up on our community, simply because we were concentrating on our daily lives. However, when friends from Linwood gathered in my house in the autumn of 2009, we finished up having a right old whine, with some wine of course! It centred around the news that our community centre was to be demolished," she recalled. "We also discussed how Tesco had set up a company to land bank our shopping centre and turn it into a slum. These two issues were the catalyst for us to look at our town from a different angle. That night, once we concluded, six women decided it was time to have a voice for what Linwood's people wanted for our town. However, very quickly, we woke up to the fact that our priorities were being blocked and ignored, so we decided to take back control and take action."

Since that fateful night, the LCDT has positioned themselves at the fulcrum of the area's regeneration and in a relatively short space of time, this non-profit organisation devised an "assets based" approach which would "nurture ambition, aspiration and creativity to support the building of resilience, confidence and skills of all ages and groups".

"More than 16 years on, and with the support and financial assistance of funders, we have achieved our goal of building a £3million community-owned, all-weather football pitch and community centre, known locally as "Mossedge Village".

"We have also established three social enterprises," Kirsty continued. →

> **"OUR TOWN WAS ASLEEP FOR A WHILE, NOT REALLY NOTICING THINGS CREEPING UP ON OUR COMMUNITY**

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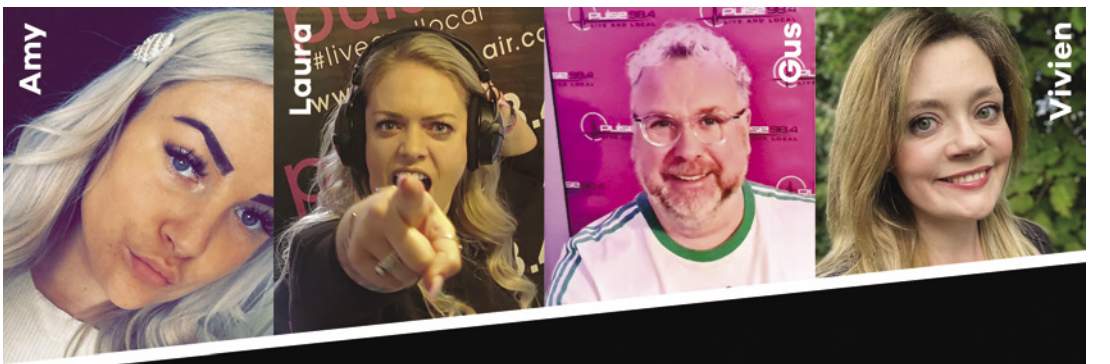
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LIVE AND LOCAL

"The first is Roots of Linwood, a fruit and veg grocery which saw an annual turnover of £16,000 in year one, £165,000 by year four and a projected income of £200,000 this financial year. There's also Kit & Caboodle which provides a laundry service to our local football teams and Mossedge Development Ltd, our trading company which manages the bookings for the pitch income. All surpluses are reinvested back into the town in projects such as Linwood in Bloom, supported by volunteers and providing over 100 planters throughout Linwood to make it beautiful again.

"We have described our 10-year experience as 'rolling jelly up a hill' as it has been a very difficult journey with many crossroads and barriers. It's been no mean feat!"

Firmly of the belief that "it shouldn't have taken Linwood the length of time it has taken to deliver on our community's agenda" and that there remains a need for "a level playing field to enable us to hold power to account and to assert our rights to challenge", Kirsty and her fellow members of the Linwood Community Development Trust see the route to further progress as one which eschews middle men in favour of getting technical expertise firsthand.


©Collective Architecture


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"IT'S ABOUT EQUALITY, IT'S ABOUT EMPOWERMENT, IT'S ABOUT OWNERSHIP, IT'S ABOUT BEING GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO GENERATE OUR OWN INCOME"



Tesco Linwood ©Tobermore

"It's about equality, it's about empowerment, it's about ownership, it's about being given the opportunity to generate our own income," they said of their wellbeing-led approach. "But most importantly it is not about letting the blockers get in the way, not about doffing the cap to those who have their own agenda and it certainly is not about asking for permission to do things to bring about change.

"It took a lot of guts for six women to get up off our backsides 12 years ago to say 'enough is enough' and take on the corporate giants, to say 'no, this is what is needed to regenerate the wellbeing of our town'. This is where the change, with the right →



Riverbrae School


©Tobermore


Mossedge Village, photo by Rebecca Mann

support, needs to happen. Because after all, who knows what the community needs better than the community itself?"

Rather than being solely led by the LCDT, this bold, DIY approach to enacting a better life for the citizens of Linwood has been mirrored by that of the award-winning, grassroots mental health organisation, Kickin' On. Run by Dave McKenna, this peer support group quickly evolved from football therapy and boot camps to hillwalking and cold water exposure. "As someone who was born and raised in Linwood, the changes have been quite dramatic," Dave said of the town's self-prescribed regeneration. "As a group that's based here, we have been on the receiving end of great generosity from the community and that's something Linwood is known for, its a brilliant community to be a part of."

Far from the only person to have taken matters into their own hands, William and Suzanne Robb of Linwood's resident pet food supplies and accessories store Animal Station saw a gap that needed filling in the town and, much like their peers, funnelled their time, money and energy into it with the goal of improving their local area.

> **"LINWOOD CAN FLOURISH IF ITS RESIDENTS BUY LOCAL AND SUPPORT ALL OF OUR FANTASTIC, HOMEGROWN BUSINESSES**

"Over the last 10 years or more, I have seen many changes all for the better in Linwood," remarked the owners of this Napier Street store, "ranging from the new Woodlands Primary School built on the playing fields of the former Craigends Primary School to the On-X Sports centre. Not to mention the fantastic Roots of Linwood and our new shopping facilities as well as the continued presence of longstanding businesses such as the opticians [Hill Eyecare].

"Looking forward, I hope the community will support local people like many of the businesses in Mossedge to the butchers, bakers, plumbers and joiners. Linwood can flourish if its residents buy local and support all of our fantastic, homegrown businesses. It's definitely not "Linwood no more", they affirmed. "These days, Linwood has more."


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BEAUTY

Susie Cormack Bruce is back with her regularly scheduled round-up of new cosmetic essentials.



HEAD START

Arkive, the brilliant head care line from celebrated session stylist Adam Reed, is now available at Boots. The pared back line includes a shampoo and conditioner duo, a scalp scrub, mask and four styling products. Suitable for all hair types and genders, the aim was to turn hair washing into a pleasure rather than a pain and we reckon Reed's succeeded – just wait until you smell the shampoo. Range priced £10-£14.





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If you're curious about collagen supplements but don't want to commit to a £40 plus programme, Gold Collagen's Multidose Hairlift 20-day course may be of interest. Priced at £27, you should be able to see a difference (or not) after you finish the bottle and from there, you can make a decision based on personal experience rather than testimonials. Buy online at gold-collagen.com

DREAM BUY



If you're finding the change of season is wreaking havoc with your beauty sleep, get yourself down to Aldi and pick up a pack of these Lacura Self Heating Chamomile Eye Masks. It may sound like a weird concept, but the sensation helps release tension and you find yourself lulled into a deep, relaxed sleep. Priced at just £4.99, they're available in-store now.

For more from Susie, visit sincerelyyourssusie.com or follow her on Instagram at @sincerelyyourssusie

A NEW VISION

Freshly kitted out in their new showroom, Spex Appeal are taking the optical world by storm.



Although it can seem like a daring leap of faith to branch out on your own, stories such as that of Spex Appeal's Lynn Leitch make the benefits of betting on yourself all too clear. After her 20+ years in the world of optics pointed to a better way, the family business began to take shape in 2012. Four years later, she made the "daunting" step of going full-time and by 2019, Lynn's husband Alan came on board too.

Initially operating with a DIY mentality, the duo recently moved into their own fully fledged showroom and now business is booming.

"For four years, we were in the back garden," Alan remarked, "it was all sparked by a friend of ours who was selling a summer house and drove it down from Dundee and assembled it for us. During lockdown, it saved us. When we weren't allowed to go to people's houses to provide our mobile service, we still had a place to conduct appointments when restrictions permitted."

With Lynn proclaiming that they were "fighting a losing battle" in which their inventory was taking



over their home, their business' ongoing prosperity necessitated new premises. Courtesy of their new location, they can do everything, right through to a fully qualified optometrist-backed Kids clinic for under 16s to get free frames. As a result of their reputation for increased affordability across 12 major brands, they're seeing people travelling from far and wide to seek out value.

"It's brilliant," said Lynn, "and it's not even just people from Renfrewshire. We had customers in from Helensburgh, Stirling, and Motherwell last weekend, we still operate the mobile service too, this weekend, I'm up in Arbroath, Carnoustie and Dundee!

"A prime example of why people are making the journey happened this morning. Earlier on, a woman came looking for frames. She was quoted £270 at a high street optician, while we provided the same product for £180.

"Recommendations from friends and family has been what's kept us going," the pair continued. "We carry a lot of designer brands such as Armani, Michael Kors, Ralph Lauren and Ray-Ban. If you went into a high street optician for those, you'd be looking at £250... our designer frame and lens package starts from as little as £99 complete, with our budget package at £30 and mid-price from £70.

"New customers are coming from far and wide and we've been very busy but we're not complaining. After the way things have been for the last two years, we know we're very fortunate to be in the position we're in just now."

Spex Appeal, Studio 1018, Abbey Mill Business Centre, Paisley PA1 1JS, instagram.com/spex.appeal

Turning a Corner

After over a decade of hard work, Nik Makeup Artist is getting the recognition she deserves.



Nicola on her wedding day, photo by Steven Allan, stevenallanimages.com

Generally, the impending arrival of a new baby would mean that relaxation takes precedence. But when you're as committed to your craft as Nicola Blackstock, minimising physical exertion must be married with the realities of running a business. Tough as it was, all of the graft and less strenuous workarounds paid off in February when Nicola was named Freelance Makeup Specialist of the Year at The Scottish Hair & Beauty Awards.

"There were a lot of sacrifices," Nicola recalled. "When I was pregnant, I'd be getting up at four in the morning and fighting morning sickness to honour my commitments to clients. At times, it felt like it'd never end.

"When I went to the awards ceremony, I was basically just going for a night out. I didn't think I'd win, so I just burst into tears when they called my name."

"By the second trimester, I was allowed to work and it just went mental," she said of working while pregnant with baby Skye. "There was one week where we had a wedding every day and while my husband could put my kit in the car for me, I didn't even know how I was going to get it out. At that point, I realised that I might need an assistant and after getting my teaching accreditation during my first trimester, I could fulfil my dreams of providing the on-the-job experience that I felt was lacking after I left my course. You're always scared to give your trade secrets away, but it's been so worth it."

Having recently made it to the finals of The Scottish Beauty Awards, Nicola is planning on "pushing on" for the remainder of the year from her brand new premises on Orr Square. A decision informed by putting herself "in her clients' shoes", she is able to not only carry out her day-to-day operations there, but offer accredited makeup courses, upskilling and is even working on her own brush line.

"I was two or three months away from giving birth when we moved in," Nicola said of her premises on Orr Square. "People thought I was crazy, but I felt like a weight had been lifted when I could finally open the door."

Nik Makeup Artist, 4 Orr Square, Paisley, PA1 2DJ, nikmakeupartist.com

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SPECSAVERS AMARANTH SUN RX
Made from crystal clear acetate plastic with a dusty pink hue. These ReWear frames are partially made with recycled and bio-based materials. **£XX**



CONVERSE CV525S SUN RX
Deep brown tortoiseshell acetate sunglasses by Converse with a teacup silhouette and flat brow line. The temples feature the iconic Chuck Taylor All Stars logo. **£99**





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A TOUCH OF GREECE

With holidays looming large, Kike Pawlik explains how to inject a fresh breeze of Greece at home.

Mediterranean style refers to the aesthetics of Southern European countries that border the sea which shares its name, particularly Greece, Italy, France, and Spain. However, it's important to keep in mind that true Mediterranean style is just as likely to come from Israel, Morocco, and beyond.

My main focus is bringing a warm breeze into indoor-outdoor living inspired by the beauty of Greece. Grecian styled interiors are simple, elegant, functional and give way to a relaxed and cheerful mood.

The key to recreating the atmosphere of Greece is the correct selection of the colour for walls, flooring, furniture and fabrics. This design tends toward light and warm tones inspired by the sun, and fresh and rich shades of blue sea; as well as the extensive use of natural materials such as ceramics, wood, rattan, linen and cotton. In terms of interiors, the hallmarks of the Greek spirit can be easily distinguished by light and cold shades: milky white, crisp lemon, saturated blue, neutral beige, light brown, pale pink, soothing olive and light terracotta.

This Greek colour palette is favourably combined with white plaster walls or finished with stone panels. Allowing natural imperfections on walls to show through will effortlessly add texture to the whole space. For finishes, consider raw materials such as natural stone, bamboo, cement or rough, bleached wooden planks. When decorating walls or floors, use ceramic tiles with Greek ornaments. Mediterranean-style tiles can be laid out in a mosaic fashion and can be enlisted inside and outside the house, as well as in the kitchen, bathroom and hallway.



Interior by Dunelm



Chair, £239, cuckooland.com

Concrete table, £29.99, tkmaxx.com



Dining chair, £169, Cult Furniture







Cushion, £12.99, tkmaxx.com



Display cabinet, £529, cuckooland.com



Lemon tree, £59.99, tkmaxx.com

Bud vase, £6.50, National Trust



Wall Mirror, £99, cuckooland.com



Dining Set with fire pit and chairs, £2,999, Furniture Village

Mug, £12, Oliver Bonas



French Connection sofa, £899, DFS



Art print, £10, Abstract House

Look for inspiration in the blue shades of the sea and the sky, the lush flowering of pink flowers and the warm muted sands of the coast. Using various warm colours will make your space even cosier during a winter season. Popular elements of the ceiling decor are massive wooden beams of grey and dark brown which are ideal for spacious rooms. If you want to add a little playfulness to the room, mimic arches with paint, or incorporate arched window mirrors or bookshelves.

Use open shelving in the kitchen to show off dishware, glassware, and vases. To emphasise the Greek Mediterranean style in the interior, choose curtains and cushions with Greek motifs or a selection of ornamental flower pots, mirror frames, vases, dishes, and wall art. When choosing accessories, focus on the essentials to keep clutter at bay as this style is known for its unpretentious beauty, functionality and minimalismz. To create the atmosphere of a house on the coast, incorporate natural materials for furniture and decorative objects, such as rattan, wicker, straw, rope, jute and linen.

Maximising natural light and views of the outdoors will keep your space bright and airy. Furnish outdoor spaces like a patio, balcony, or terrace with the same care you would use to decorate the interior spaces. By doing so, you can ensure a cohesive aesthetic between indoor and out. To fill your dwelling with the freshness of Greece, add some Mediterranean greenery like potted olive or lemon trees. Your outside space is an extension of your house and as Leonard Cohen – who famously spent seven pivotal years of his life on the island of Hydra – once sang on *Days Of Kindness*," Greece is a good place to look at the moon, isn't it, you can read by moonlight, you can read on the terrace."

PROPERTY

Callum Stewart from Corum provides you with his top tips for buying and selling your home.



RENFREWSHIRE MARKET REPORT

The spring market is in full swing and the demand for all property types from one bedroom flats to five bedroom villas are still far outweighing supply. The assumption that the number of viewers per home would perhaps lull over the Easter holidays as more people travel away for holidays was short-lived and the market remained as buoyant as before. During this ongoing boom period, the importance of being registered with a proactive estate agent and having alerts switched on for major property portals has never been greater, as they will keep you updated with properties of interest as they become available which may not stick on the market very long.

GETTING YOUR HOME READY FOR MARKET



The properties that look the best online get more interest, so it's worth making sure your own home looks the best that it possibly can prior to going to market. Decluttering and clearing worktops of surplus items is worth doing to help create a crisp and clear image, as well as aiding in helping discerning buyers focus on room size and layout. Touching up paint to walls, skirting boards and doors helps create a better first impression for viewers coming into the property and, as the nicer weather comes in, it's always a good idea to keep on top of the garden.



PREPARING FOR A CLOSING DATE

For some, the prospect of a 'closing date' strikes fear into the mind of a buyer as the thought of 'bidding' against others for their dream home could result in disappointment. All in all, the harsh reality is that closing dates are incredibly common within the current climate and ultimately, only one person will be lucky enough to secure the property. Although there is no exact science of where to pitch an offer, here are some things to ask the estate agent prior to closing that may act as a guide. For one thing, how many notes of interest does the property have? The more offers the client is expecting will mean more competition and will ultimately push the price up. Is the vendor under offer with another property and will your own position have a bearing on which offer the owner considers? All of these factors – and more which we can enlighten you on – should be taken into consideration.

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MADE IN BRITAIN

CAPTURING GREATNESS

Featuring images from the the latest edition of the Renfrewshire Inter Club Competition, photographer *Eddie Middleton* takes us inside Renfrewshire's photography clubs.



Dwarfed by Nature by Ken Lindsay (Eastwood PS). A spectacular image showing the scale and beauty of the ice shelves. COP26 in Glasgow last summer highlighted that these sights may become increasingly rare.



Morning Light by John Ayton (Paisley PS). The group of three boats in the mist at the Knapps presents a classic view on the Renfrewshire border.

In February, Paisley Photographic Society hosted the 2022 Renfrewshire Inter Club Competition (RICC), an annual event where clubs from the Renfrewshire area compete for the RL Borbasket Trophy. The images here featured in the competition and while they depict a range of subjects, what they all have in common are that they are the work of talented local photographers

The catchment area covers the historic county of Renfrewshire, with the clubs ranging from Eastwood in the east to Greenock in the west, with the two Paisley clubs (Paisley Photographic and Paisley Colour) and Houston's Gryffe Camera Club sat in the heart of Renfrewshire.

Photographic societies have been around almost as long as photography itself. Indeed, Paisley Photographic Society, established in 1857, holds the distinction of being Scotland's oldest club. These groups provide a forum for those with an interest in photography to meet, share ideas and help the members develop their craft. The RICC is, therefore, not simply a competition for local bragging rights, it's also an exhibition of some of the best photography by club photographers in the area.

Once again, the winners this year were Eastwood, with John Hannah's →





ABOVE *Red Deer Stag* by Duncan McEwan (Paisley Colour PC). An iconic shot of an iconic subject by Paisley Colour's longest serving member.

LEFT *Red Fox in Action* by John Hannah (Eastwood PS). The top rated image on the night is a perfect illustration of the wildlife opportunities available locally across Renfrewshire and the wider area.







TOP *Red Kite* by Hugh McMillan (Gryffe CC). A reintroduction scheme has brought these magnificent birds back to many parts of England and central Scotland. **ABOVE** *The Dominator* by Colin McLatchie (Eastwood PS). An excellent capture of a bird of prey in flight. There are a number of sites a short drive from Renfrewshire where you can see these magnificent birds in action. **RIGHT** *Cloch Lighthouse Sunset* by Allan Donaldson (Paisley PS). This is a familiar location for many, but the evening light and viewpoint highlights the beauty on our doorstep.

Red Fox in Action selected as the top image. The image illustrates a trend we've seen recently, namely a reduction in the images from far-flung places in favour of images taken closer to home. I am a relative neophyte to the club photography scene. 2020 gave me an opportunity to devote a little more time to my own work. As the pandemic raged and travel was not an option, I began to cast around for ideas on how to improve my skills and technique.

The internet is, of course, a brilliant resource. There is no end of technical advice and 'how-to' videos on platforms such as YouTube, while Facebook seems →

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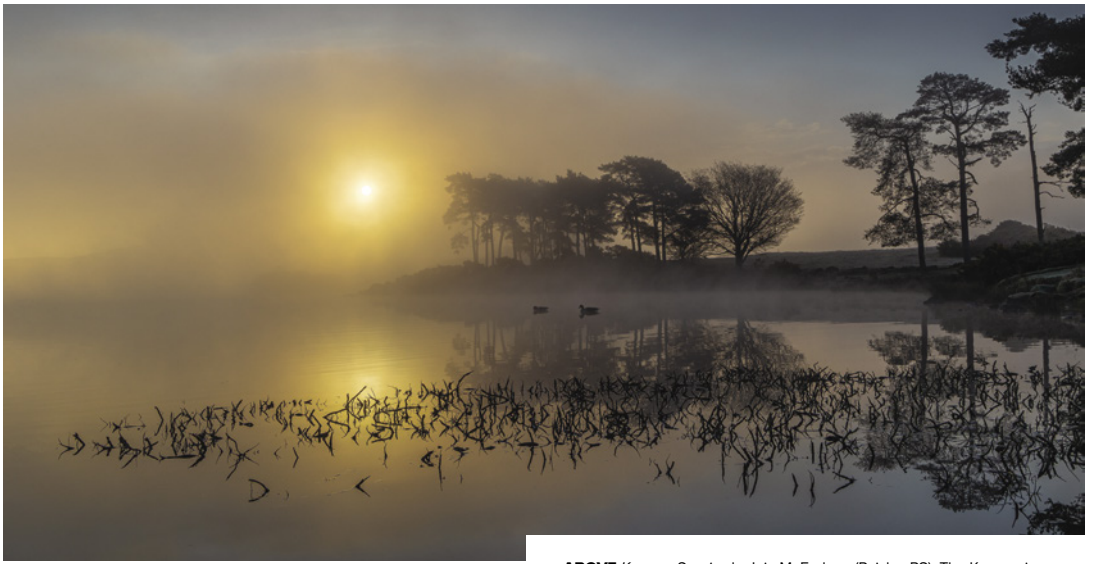


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ABOVE *Knapps Sunrise* by Iain McFadyen (Paisley PS). The Knapps is a regular haunt for dog walkers and photographers alike. The early light and mist transforms the familiar into the mystical. **LEFT** *Great Crested Grebe Family* by John Hannah (Eastwood PS). Another image from John Hannah captures the family interaction. These birds favour lowland lakes and reservoirs, such as Lochwinnoch RSPB. **BELOW** *Grey Heron with Stickleback* by Jim Murdoch (Paisley Colour PC). These birds are very common across the country, typically favouring any water from ponds to lakes. This apparent eye contact between the bird and the fish makes the shot.



to present endless opportunities, at a cost, to participate in technical courses. However, there appears to be few outlets providing informed guidance and critique, which is what I needed. This is a gap that club membership can fill.

While many photographers will profess to be self-taught, the creative and technical benefits that come from examining the work and thoughts of other photographers are widely accepted.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Flickr or 500px can provide some instant gratification or validation, but rarely elicit constructive feedback or critique that you can use to improve your own photography. The teach-ins or critiques provided by the club format allow for specific feedback or advice covering all aspects of the photographic process. Competitions are also a regular feature and even if you're not particularly competitive, it's instructive to see the work being produced by your peers and hear feedback and suggestions from the judges.

The final aspect of club membership, and one that shouldn't be under-estimated, is the social aspect. Being part of a group that shares a common interest is about more than sharing tips and images; there's typically a formal or informal programme of activities that provides opportunities as well as the company of like-minded individuals.

My main concern prior to joining my club is that they don't always harbour the best reputation. →

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YOUR LOCAL CLUBS

Paisley Colour Photographic Club
paisleycolour.com
Established 1955, meets on Thursdays between September to the end of April in Renfrew.
Email: enquiries.pcpc@gmail.com

Paisley Photographic Society
paisley-photographic-society.co.uk
Founded in 1857. meets on Tuesdays between September and April in Paisley.
Email: paisleyphotographic@virginmedia.com

Eastwood Photographic Society
eastwoodps.co.uk
Established in 1943, meets on Thursdays between September and April in Newton Mearns.
Email: epssec20@gmail.com

Greenock Camera Club
greenockcameraclub.com
Founded in 1888, meets every Thursday between October and April in Greenock.
Email: greenockcc.info@gmail.com

Gryffe Camera Club
gryffecameraclub.co.uk
Founded in 1986, meets on Wednesday nights between September and May in Houston.
Contact through the website.





TOP RIGHT *Squabbling Jays* by Gary Bradley (Greenock CC). The most colourful of the crow family, Jays can be seen across the country and, with the right setting, it's possible to catch them in your own back garden! **RIGHT** *Dipper* by Mike Cruise (Paisley Colour PC). Although on the RSPB's Amber list, these birds are widespread across the country and are typically found along fast-flowing rivers.

They can be seen as being fussy, staid and set in their ways. The truth is somewhat different and it's worth pointing out that many of the older generation were pioneers of digital technology, rather than the neo-luddites that are portrayed in popular culture.

What you will find is a group of photography enthusiasts with the aptitude and skills – as the images here demonstrate – to explore the capabilities of camera technology, and the knowledge and experience to support others.

Many clubs also demonstrated adaptability through the pandemic by shifting to Zoom in place of physical meetings. Indeed, online meetings now look set to become a feature as they give access to a wider range of speakers. Last year, we even had a speaker from Lebanon, which is something we wouldn't have conceived of two years ago.

So, for anyone with an interest in photography, whatever your standard, I'd recommend looking at your local club. Most of them will allow you to 'try out' two or three meetings for free, so the most you have to lose is a couple of evenings. You never know though, you may learn something new and, more importantly, you just might enjoy it!

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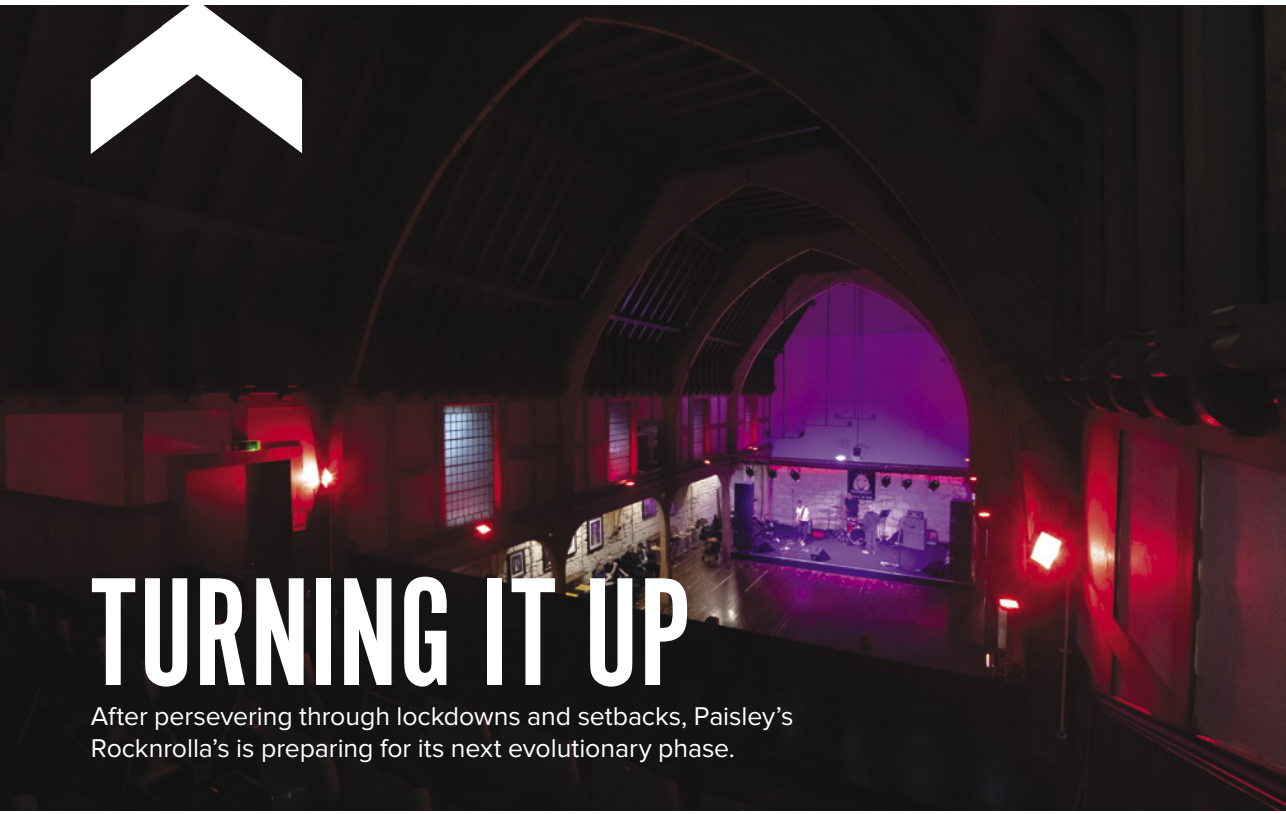
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TURNING IT UP

After persevering through lockdowns and setbacks, Paisley's Rocknrolla's is preparing for its next evolutionary phase.

Given its rich lineage of creativity, the arrival of a new outlet for expression and revelry is always welcomed with open arms in Paisley. Run by veteran DJ Boab Williamson, Rocknrolla's is the town's latest venue and for its owner and booker, it's the culmination of a lifetime of passion for music.

"Years ago, I used to work in The Bungalow. So, when that came to a natural end, I was kinda lost," Boab explained. "I was going to watch some gigs with my pals, but what I really love is putting them on and seeing people enjoying themselves.

"I owned a deli at the time and I said to someone that worked with me that I'd love to get my own venue. At that point, she said to me, 'what about the old Myles Camping Centre?'

"As soon as I walked through the doors, I thought 'this is it.' It was nothing like how it is now, I didn't even know that it had another floor downstairs at that point!

"We plodded on, had a few gigs and then Covid came didn't it? It killed the momentum for a bit. Now, I'm working alongside Margaret Patterson from The Patter Bar and that's been great. Getting her perspective on things has been really useful she actually reinvigorated my drive for the place and got me to focus on it. Everything happens for a reason and now it's all fallen into place."

Since its inception, Boab has been keen to make Rocknrolla's into a venue that can coax esteemed bands away from Glasgow and into Renfrewshire. Now, courtesy of scheduled shows with the likes of renowned outfits such as Big Country, Sham 69 and Goodbye Mr Mckenzie, it appears that his goals are coming to fruition.

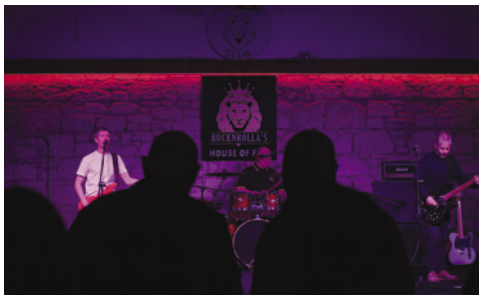
"We're just constantly adding to it," Boab proclaimed, "whether that's booking big bands or even the best tribute acts available. It's all about elevating it down to the artwork on the walls, our own PA, a new lighting rig, everything. It's all coming together now."

Eager to liaise with people and organisations from across the community in order to maximise the space's potential, Boab's philosophy is one that isn't so much fixated on individual prosperity. Rather, he aims to positively contribute to the vibrancy of the town's creative eco-system as a whole.

Photos by Graeme Hewitson, Monument Photos







"KEEPING PEOPLE HERE IS THE MAIN REASON FOR ME, IT'S A PASSION TO GET PEOPLE TO STAY HERE RATHER THAN ALWAYS HEADING TO GLASGOW"

"I'm in competition with no-one, as there's just no point in that. As far as I'm concerned, another venue just means that there's more choice for people in the town. Of course I'm going to push my own place, but I push Paisley too. Keeping people here is the main reason for me, it's a passion to get people to stay here rather than always heading to Glasgow. There's food in the town, there's gigs here, there's even stuff for kids. Support your own town and Renfrewshire as a whole.

"This is now the biggest venue in the town that isn't a council building, we can fit 400 people in here. Once we expand downstairs, that increases to 600.

"We've got big plans for that downstairs space actually," he continues, "the plan is to make it a rustic café/bar with food and a performing area. It'll be open seven days a week and we'll build a wee stage for acoustic performances and duos. We've just taken over the car park next door as well, so we're aiming to turn that into a beer garden. There's nothing like it in Paisley and we're intent on enhancing the place and pushing the boat out."

With the venue beginning to emerge from the toll exacted by lockdown and things beginning to take shape as he'd intended, Boab believes that 2022 will serve as a signifier of big things to come for both Rocknrolla's and the town at large.

"To see your vision to come together is great and Mags has the exact same attitude as me. The way I see it is that we're getting to where we want to be, but there's still a hell of a lot to do.

"To me, what it says is that the Paisley music scene is gelling like never before," he says of the emphatic response to the venue and its recent run of capacity crowds. "Even if it's an unspoken thing. I think this place is the missing link as you've got the smaller venues and the big council shows, so we essentially serve as level two. There's a great crop of acts coming up in Paisley and our way of getting unsigned artists on here is that once they play CC's [Callum's Cavern on Old Sneddon Street], I'll try and pick an event where they can perform here on the support bill. It's almost like a feeder system. We just want to push everything to the next step. We're even looking at putting on some festivals ourselves!"

Rocknrolla's, 5 Wellmeadow Street, Paisley, PA1 2EF, facebook.com/rocknrollas, buy tickets to events at ispyevents.bigcartel.com

MUSIC

The soundtrack to a fantastic summer awaits in the shape of these essential releases.



ALBUM ANGEL OLSEN - BIG TIME

Ever since her career began in earnest with 2012's *Half Way Home*, Angel Olsen has been steadily cementing herself as one of the foremost purveyors of folk and Americana that the world has to offer. Trading in soul-bearing compositions which are evocative, incisive and laden with no shortage of emotional epiphanies for the listener to unravel, her career has been nothing short of prolific. Now, six records into a career which has run the gamut of sound and sentiment, she's set to return with *Big Tie* and If latest single *All The Good Times* is any indication, she hasn't missed a solitary step. **Released 3rd June.**



ALBUM JACK HARLOW - COME HOME THE KIDS MISS YOU

Hailing from the suburbs of Louisville, Kentucky, Jack Harlow is certainly an unlikely person to become one of the flag bearers for hip-hop's new era. Yet somehow, it appears that it's precisely the position he's found himself in. Equipped with an innately catchy flow and a boatload of charisma, Harlow has quickly ascended the ranks in recent years and, fresh from garnering his first number one single courtesy of his feature on Lil Nas X's *Industry Baby*, it seems like he's primed for superstardom. For this reason, his sophomore studio album is a fascinating proposition that could herald the arrival of hip-hop's biggest mainstream phenom since Drake. **Released 6th June.**

ALBUM FOALS - LIFE IS YOURS



Photo by Edward Cooke

Among the few bonafide arena-level bands that the world has produced in recent years, Oxford's own Foals are anomalous in that rather than getting to that stature by playing up to the tropes of the overwrought stadium fare of the day, they simply burrowed further into their own sonic wheelhouse. In doing so, they've formulated a bountiful musical world in which their attentive fanbase will marvel at each and every reinvention that they put into motion. Described by frontman Yannis Phillpakis as a conscious attempt to "engineer the music so that it was for full physical potential - to be played live and for it to be raucous", previously aired tracks such as *Wake Me Up* and *2am* would infer that they're going to deliver on that promise and more by the time that *Life Is Yours* rolls around. **Released 17th June.**



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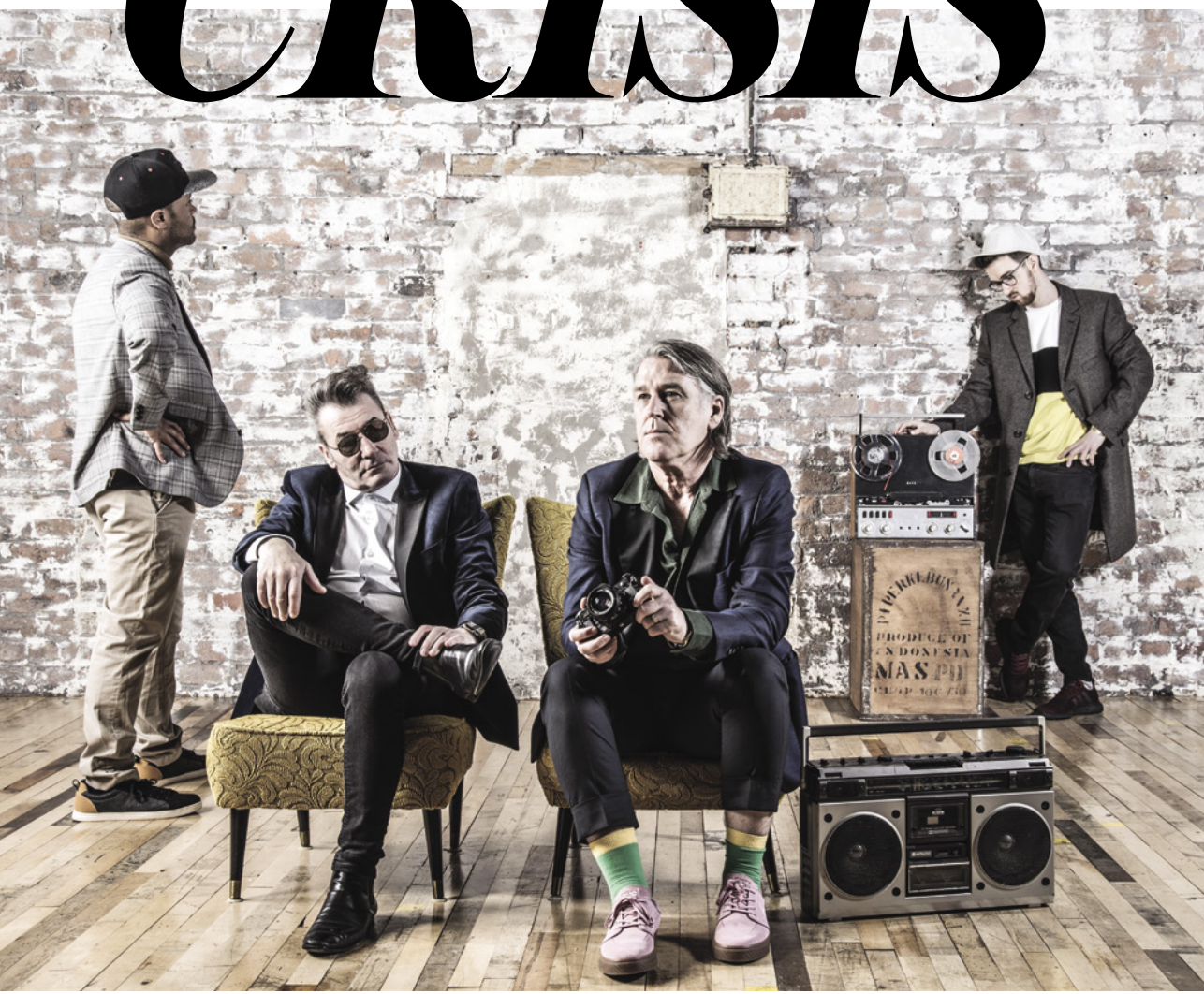
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CHINA CRISIS

Ahead of the legendary synth-pop outfit's show at The Bungalow in Paisley, Gary Daly talks to *Mill* about being a "working band", recreating their iconic tracks, Scottish ties and more.



After all this time, China Crisis remain as busy as ever. Has your love of performing stayed intact? We're one of those bands who have to work to generate work, we don't just turn up once every year and it's all big theatres.

It was about twenty years ago when we realised that, even though we'd had hit records, we didn't really have a following. So we had to go out and play every gig we could. It's really quite nice actually, we turn up in so many towns where people are amazed to see us playing their local village hall or arts centre. We're able to do it, whereas other people are a bit too work-shy. They'd rather just be in the pub and tell their David Bowie stories. Get to work you f****s! (laughs)

We're coming up on the 40 year anniversary of *Working With Fire & Steel*. How does it feel to have made records such as that which have stood the test of time? Mike Howlett, who produced the album and was the bassist in *Gong*, is actually going to join us in London for a few tracks and that's what the 40th has been like really. Our old manager Bruce Findlay came out to see us in Edinburgh too. So, it's nice hooking up with everybody and just appreciating that you got through it.

It is quite a thing to survive, really. We were basically out of school and the next thing you know, we were in this mad business. So, to have music to accompany that story is great.

Even though you've got a massive discography to draw from, it seems like you're still driven to make new music. Is this the case? Yeah, I've done about three albums in the last seven years. The last China Crisis album [*Autumn in the Neighbourhood*] was 2015 and then I did *Gone From Here* and *Lunar Landings*. China Crisis would've had an album out a year back in the day (laughs), so it's not that much. Having said that, it is always about the quality.

At the end of the day, we enjoy travelling and performing. We go to America for the whole of June and go back to places that we haven't been for 25, 30 years. I fully expect excitement in these towns and we've worked hard to do that. It's still special for us. I think it's in us and there's things to be sung, it's just about finding the right voice.

Although your sound has changed over the years, it seems like youhave always rigidly stuck to your vision for China Crisis. Was this a conscious decision? I think that vision is a collective thing, it all comes down to the people we work with. For Eddie Lundon [founding member of China Crisis] and I, we wanted to get people who could come in and interpret our very naive chord-making or synth basslines. They could tell us what was around that. Gazza Johnson (bassist) was great at that, so was Brian McNeill (keyboard) and Walter Becker [Steely Dan].

It's always about following the song as it encounters new people and ideas. See how it blooms and blossoms and if it doesn't, it's in the f****g trash (laughs).

Have you always had an affinity for playing Scotland? God, yeah, we were managed out of Edinburgh and had a Glaswegian keyboard player. We're still very much still connected to Scotland, Oran Mor is always our biggest Christmas show. Honest to god, you'd think we were in Liverpool. We have always had ties to Glasgow since the very beginning, we would've been in Tiffany's in 1982 with Simple Minds when they were finishing the *New Gold Dream* tour.

TOP 5 HITS

WISHFUL THINKING
Released 14.01.1984 | Chart Position 9
CHRISTIAN
Released 15.01.1983 | Chart Position 12
BLACK MAN RAY
Released 16.03.1985 | Chart Position 14
KING IN A CATHOLIC STYLE (WAKE UP)
Released 01.06.1985 | Chart Position 19
BEST KEPT SECRET
Released 21.04.1987 | Chart Position 36

What can those at The Bungalow expect from your set? Jack, our keyboardist, has been in charge of programming a lot of the early electronics, so now we get to play a lot of the songs that we never got to do as a full band. So, we really can go back to the first album and play four or five off it, same with *Fire & Steel* and *Flaunt* [*The Imperfection*]. We talked him through, gear wise, exactly what it is that we used, then he basically researched it over the past few years. When you hear the early stuff now, it actually sounds better than it did back then.

After four decades of working together, how have you and fellow founding member Eddie Lundon retained your dynamic, both on and offstage? Do you know what? We make each other laugh. We're the total opposites. He's football, I'm opera. But, I've always managed to make him properly laugh to the point where he's like crying on-stage. That's the bit we enjoy. You've got to have a laugh at work because if you didn't, you couldn't possibly clock in (laughs). We still know that we're so lucky to be onstage at all, so we properly enjoy it. It's the best bit of the day.

China Crisis play The Bungalow on Saturday 9th July, with tickets available now via Eventbrite.

LITERATURE

New literary developments that demand your attention



BOOK REVIEW

Hex

By Jenni Fagan

Reviewed by Lisa-Marie Hughes

Hex is visceral and poignant, depicting the final night of the life of Geillis Duncan. Convicted of witchcraft during the infamous North Berwick Witch Trials, it remains one of the darkest times in Scottish history, the echoes of which are felt here in Renfrewshire.

Outlander fans will recognise the name Geillis Duncan from the books and show (I'll say no more for fear of spoilers!).

On the night of December 4th, 1591, Geillis is visited in her cell in Edinburgh by Iris, from the future. Through their discussion, we are taken on Geillis' journey from arrest to trial. Jenni Fagan has such a talent for connecting past and present, and the similarities in the demonisation of women or anyone a bit different 400 years ago and now are a stark example.

Hex is a vivid imagining of a young woman persecuted by the fear and superstition of others, one of thousands. It is at times brutal, upsetting and angering, but it is also full of empathy, hope and perseverance.

Hex *is available now via Birlinn General.*

Mammy Roon thi Firepit

By Michael Mullen

During the days of lockdown I was going through a drought of inspiration. My neighbour was barbecuing for her whole family and it was something so simple yet very powerful. I wanted to create an ode to something as mundane and beautiful as a Mother and her ability to fortify and nurture with a meal in the sun.

Reality's wobblin
as thi barbeque burns tae a smoulder
smokes ur flittin
stinkin lit dinnur.

She stokes thi coals wae her tongs
lit a shaman fire tamer, she prods
it thi blaze, askin ye
- ye wahntin sauce oan it aye?
plump-blue mists
column er gerdens.

Breathin in thi hazes
as if thi chicken wings
wur fullae premonitions.

Hades-hoat bi thi spit
wi her pinnie oan as armour,
grills gloam wi thi shriek ae the meat,
scarred burgers
n thi burst
ae hoatdogs oan thi rack.

She's in aboot it
lit a priestess, ur a seer.

Here's mammy oot the back
communin wae fire
- Right c'moan, aht's yer dinnur ready

Michael Mullen's work has appeared on Sky Arts and he participated in the inaugural Poets in Paisley collective which was set up by Donna Matthew in 2021 to create a space for new and emerging Poets. Contact @donnamatthewpoet on Instagram or donnamariematthew1@gmail.com

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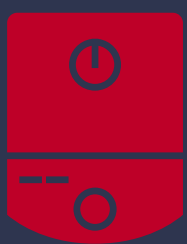
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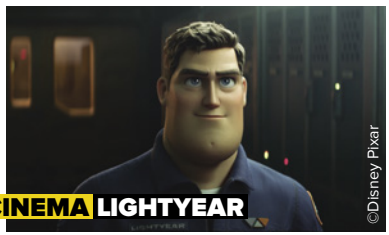
ENTERTAINMENT

The big screen blockbusters and small-screen stories to check out in the coming months.



CINEMA BENEDICTION

Helmed by the revered Terence Davies, the director's latest project is a sprawling biopic which charts the life of wartime poet Siegfried Sassoon. A man that contained multitudes, Siegfried became both a powerful voice against armed conflict and a noted socialite. All the while, struggling with everything from the lingering trauma of he's seen to his bisexuality in an era where it was still subject to vilification. Starring Jack Lowden, the critically acclaimed *Benediction* also sees Peter Capaldi play Siegfried during the latter stages of his life. **In cinemas 20th May.**



CINEMA LIGHTYEAR

Brought to life by the artistic masterminds at Pixar, their latest animated feature film charts the exploits of the man who'd go on to inspire *Toy Story*'s Buzz Lightyear. Focusing on the human whose likeness inspired him rather than the action figure itself, this unlikely prequel has been in the works since 2016 and will star Chris Evans as the famed astronaut. In addition to the former Captain America, Lightyear will also feature the vocal talents of Taika Watiti, James Brolin, Keke Palmer and more. **In cinemas 17th June.**



CINEMA DR STRANGE & THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS

Set in the debris of the seismic events from *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, Dr Steven Strange is primed to be held accountable for his dimension-warping actions in the sorcerer's second standalone adventure. Starring Benedict Cumberbatch as its titular character as well as Elizabeth Olsen reprising her role as Scarlet Witch, the latest installment of the Marvel Cinematic Universe marks director Sam Raimi's first foray back into the world of comic books *since Spider Man 3* back in 2007, a prospect that has long-time fans excited. **In cinemas 6th May.**

TV OBI WAN KENOBI

For *Star Wars* fans, the question of precisely what the jedi known as Obi Wan Kenobi did during his years in exile on Tatooine has always been a fascinating what if? Now, courtesy of Disney+, the ongoing speculation over what course his life took while keeping a watchful eye on a young Luke Skywalker will be formally put to bed. With Obi Wan Kenobi reprising his role as the quick-witted hero, the series will also provide Hayden Christensen (Anakin Skywalker) with the opportunity to step inside the suit of Darth Vader once more. **Disney+ 27th May**.



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Bianco Nero Coffee Shop
27 Gauze Street, PA1 1ES
Black & Lizars
6 New Street, PA1 1XY
Blend Coffee Lounge
25b Causeyside Street, PA1 1UL
Bull Inn
7 New Street, PA1 1XU
Burger & Keg
15b Gilmour Street, PA1 1DD
Café Fairfull
12A High Street, PA1 2BS
Café 77 Barshaw Park
77 Glasgow Road, PA1 3PE
Caffè Pronto
96 Causeyside Street PA1 1TX
Caffè Royale
71 Glasgow Road, PA1 3PE
Cardosi Espresso Bar
65 High Street, PA1 2AS
Castelvecchi
10 New Street, PA1 1XY
Cloud 9 Deli
9 Gauze Street, PA1 1EP
Comicrazy
45 Old Sneddon Street, PA3 2AN
Courtyard by Marriott
Marchburn Drive, Glasgow
Airport Business Park, PA3 2SJ
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7 Mill Street, PA1 1LY
Doghouse Grooming
4 Johnston Street, PA1 1XG
DP Group
119 Renfrew Road, PA3 4EA
Elixir Lounge
12 New Street, PA1 1XY
Emulate Hair Studio
Brick Lane, PA3 4DW
Finishing Touches
7 Johnston St, Paisley PA1 1XQ
Frangelinos Fish and Chips
26 High Street, PA1 2BS
Gael Interiors
4 Orchard Street, PA1 1UZ
Gantry
12 New Street, PA1 1XY
Graphic Hair Design
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Grumpy Monkey
22 Moss Street, PA1 1BA
HeadLox UK
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Hilton's Hair & Beauty
8a St Mirren Brae, PA1 1UA
Iain Stewart Hairdressing
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Iconic Fitness
10-12 Lawn Street, PA1 1HA
Incube Shop
9b Gilmour Street, PA1 1DG
Ironed Out
20 Wellmeadow Street, PA1 2EE
Ivad Gifts
29 Gauze Street, PA1 1ES
Jam Jar
16 Shuttle Street, PA1 1YD
Japan Street Food
9 Renfrew Road, PA3 4AF
Kaoss Hair and Beauty
29 Gauze Street, PA1 1ES
Karis Massage Therapies
5 Hunter Street, PA1 1DL
KB's Café
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Kenneth Edwards
45 Causeyside Street, PA1 1YN
La Banca
63 Neilston Road, PA2 6NA
Malatso
50 High Street, PA1 2DJ
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FOOD NEWS

The latest culinary developments across Renfrewshire



SIGNATURE DISHES AT CAFFE ROYALE

On top of their well-honed staple menu, one of the reasons why customers are so eager to return to Caffè Royale is the intermittently-appearing creations that head chef Colin – who learned his trade over in Barga – serves up on a nightly basis. Spanning everything from slow-braised rabbit with porcini and artichokes to perfectly crafted apricot tarts, it's no wonder that customers pop in just to find out what they'll be dazzled with on any given day.



GASTRO GRUB FROM M&S

If you're after the glow of dinner in a local hostelry at home, Marks & Spencer's Gastropub range is, in their words, "date nights, Friday nights or I-just-fancy-a-treat nights". Amid a tempting array from this new range, the pièce de résistance is most certainly the Gastropub steak and chips pie. Rather than being your run of the mill offering, this new innovation is made with slowly braised cuts of British beef in a rich ale gravy, layered with smoky tomato chutney encased in all-butter pastry. As if that wasn't enough, it's also topped with cheesy chips!



DARGAVEL BREWERY

Stationed at Langbank's Mid Glen Farm, Dargavel Brewery are purveyors of masterfully crafted real ale and now, it's available in more familiar locales than ever before. Featuring snappily titled beverages such as Swatch O' Yer Sasquatch, Haud Yer Wheasht and Moo-Lin Rouge, these ales are available in *Mill Magazine* stockists: Carriages, La Dolce Vita, Paisley Craft Beer Co and the Fox & Hounds among others.

SUNDAY LUNCH WITH A KICK

If you're an avid reader of our magazine, you'll know we're big proponents of the Anise Indian restaurant at Crosslee's The River Inn. Renowned for their tasteful yet daring fare, the team have taken things one step further with their new Sunday roast of tandoori chicken. Presented as a "duo of roast breast and leg, methi mushroom, Makani Cauliflower Gunpowder Bombay potatoes, Indian bread, spiced Yorkshire pudding with a jug of salan gravy", this mouthwatering offering also comes with a any dessert you like!





Photo by Thomas Elliott

DINNER AT **JAM JAR**

Cherished by Renfrewshire residents from far and wide, our core team heads to the Shuttle Street favourite for a veritable midweek feast.

Despite the fact that it's only now closing in on its ten-year anniversary, Jam Jar have pulled off the remarkable feat of already feeling like a generational staple that has enlivened both childhoods and revelrous nights out alike.

Capable of catering to all age ranges, budgets and demographics, it has long been defined by both the consistent quality of its cuisine and the unreservedly buoyant atmosphere that greets you when you step over the threshold. Sporting an innately homely feel that provides the same sort of comfort that's commonly associated with American diners in tight-knit communities, Jam Jar always feels familiar and yet there's never so much as a sliver of complacency among its staff. Plus, the fact that it was practically packed to the rafters on a Tuesday is a testament to the deep-seated affection that local residents harbour towards this intimate eatery and inventive cocktail bar.

When it comes to fabled Paisley dishes, few can rival Jam Jar's "hawf and hawf" offer of pizza and pasta. Consequently, it'd have felt downright negligent if one of us didn't opt for it. A joyful crash-course in comfort food, I went for the vegetarian supreme pizza and an arrabbiata. As bountiful a plate as ever, the toppings of courgettes, aubergines, sweetcorn, onions, peppers and mushroom ensures that the pizza is bustling with flavour. In terms of the penne dish, its sumptuous Napoli sauce intermingles with a generous helping of jalapeños to provide the perfect level of kick for those whose palettes stray toward the spicier side.

With a whole other facet of the menu to explore, Paul went for the "Jam-Packed Stacked Burger" which contained a homemade beef burger atop a grilled cajun chicken breast, melted mozzarella and cheddar cheese, salsa and onion rings on a bed of crisp salad. Supplemented by homemade coleslaw and a portion of cajun-spiced curly fries, Paul didn't hesitate to describe it as "unreal" and his commitment to finishing this mammoth assortment of food told me all I needed to know.

Considering that we both nurse sweet tooths that'd rival just about any kid in the place, Paul and I overcame any sense of fullness in order to sample Jam Jar's renowned dessert menu.



Photo by Lauren McKinnon

JAM JAR ALWAYS FEELS FAMILIAR AND YET THERE'S NEVER SO MUCH AS A SLIVER OF COMPLACENCY AMONG ITS STAFF

For Paul, a white chocolate and strawberry cheesecake proved to be exactly what was needed to satiate the urge for something sugary. Served in a massive glass, my ice cream sundae seemed daunting at first, but it's safe to say that its infallible combination of whipped cream, ice cream and fresh strawberries ensured that I consumed every last morsel.

Although we didn't opt for cocktails on this occasion – the magazine deadline was fast approaching – previous visits left me wishing that I didn't have a mountainous amount of work to attend to. Purveyors of everything from Long Island iced teas to frozen daiquiris, their extensive "tuck shop" provides some of the most refreshing beverages that you can get your hands on anywhere in Renfrewshire.

At this point, it's no secret that Jam Jar has a winning formula on their hands. However, what sets them apart is that they never seem to take it for granted and will always look to uphold their reputation as one of the most popular spots in Paisley's town centre. Striking the perfect balance between excellent food, attentive service and all of those little endearing qualities which all but ensure repeat visits, you'd be hard pushed to envision anyone leaving Jam Jar without a full belly and a feeling of contentment to go along with it. Suffice to say, we, just like everyone else who's popped in over the years, will certainly be back.

Jam Jar, 16 Shuttle Street, Paisley, PA1 1YD, 0141 848 0898, jamjarpaisley.co.uk

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Brisket Loaded Fries

LUNCH AT **THE ROLLIN PIG**

Harbouring one of the most robust and distinct menus in Renfrewshire, *Suzanne Oswald* heads to Johnstone's latest street food phenomenon for an afternoon feast to remember.

There's no denying that Renfrewshire's resurgence as a hotbed for culture and cuisine can be largely attributed to the lofty ambitions and creative zeal of its residents. One such enterprise, fuelled by a real passion for the area, as well as a desire to offer something entirely unique, is The Rollin Pig.

Spearheaded by the McShane family in Johnstone, who initially made their name through their events company (The Entertainment Company) and high-end catering business (Inside Out), the takeaway project began in lockdown last year as the world was brought to a halt. However, refusing to rest on their laurels, they decided to gather the knowledge and resources they had gained from years in the food industry and channel them into a new realm of BBQ and street food.

Of course, with a name like the Rollin Pig, you have a vague idea of what kind of diner they cater to. So, as resident carnivores, it was down to Paul and I to get acquainted with the mouth-watering menu.

The takeaway is housed on Ann Street, Johnstone, just a short walk from the High Street – and it's fair to say that the modest surroundings belie the culinary marvels that lie inside.

With a small, characterful seating area in the front yard, we were given the opportunity to make the most of the rare March sunshine as we perused the menu.

On first glance, it's clear that the Rollin Pig isn't your standard takeaway. Emblazoned with the slogan 'Amazing food, not fast food!', their ethos is one founded on real, genuine quality, as well as an all-encompassing passion for local produce. As we ran through what was on offer, we were assured that the ingredients for each and every dish were sourced locally – from the hogs which are provided by a farm in Neilston to the haggis and black pudding made by Marshalls Butchers to the fruit and veg supplied by Harry's Fruit and Veg, both in Johnstone.

With a multitude of mouth-watering options available, the menu ranges from inventive street food dishes, juicy burgers, gourmet loaded hot dogs, chicken wings, loaded

Photos by Ronnie Murphy

fries to toasties and much more. However, it's important to note that vegetarians are accounted for too with personally crafted bean burgers and veggie dogs.

During our visit, we were lucky enough to taste numerous plates, with some of their signature meals on show. We started with a Smashed Cheeseburger, which featured tender and flavourful Scottish beef, hand rolled and pressed, alongside liberal helpings of cheese, burger sauce and fresh salad. Of course, everyone has a say on how to craft the perfect burger, but we were both in agreement that The Rollin Pig have decisively mastered the art.

Next up was the Scottish Craft Hot Dog, which featured a prime cut of Scottish pork, doused in mustard, ketchup and crispy onions. As someone who has never been swept away by the humble hot dog, I am delighted to confirm that I'm officially a convert after this sumptuous experience. Please be warned though, napkins are advised!

The Brisket Loaded Fries were perhaps the star of the show, at least if their disappearance from the plate was anything to go by. With loaded being the operative term here, we were treated to a near-cavernous plate of fluffy chips topped with tender brisket, haggis, black pudding and a truly delicious peppercorn sauce.



Smashed Cheeseburger and Scottish Craft Hot Dog



The Buffalo Wings and Salt & Chilli Chicken Strips

"THEIR ETHOS IS ONE FOUNDED ON REAL, GENUINE QUALITY, AS WELL AS AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING PASSION FOR LOCAL PRODUCE"



Chicken Shawarma



Much to our collective awe, the dishes kept coming. The Buffalo Wings and Salt & Chilli Chicken Strips arrived with an assortment of home-made sauces – each as vibrant and flavourful as the next.

With room for one final plate, the Chicken Shawarma topped off our highly enjoyable excursion. Highlighted to us as a local favourite, it was beautifully presented and packed with healthy goodness; the flatbread adorned with tastefully marinated chicken, colourful, fresh salad and tangy sauce.

With each indulgent dish, the Rollin Pig discards any preconceived notions of takeaway food and elevates it to a whole new level. An exciting and unique addition to Renfrewshire's food and drink scene, there is already talk of their plans for the future. Given the quality of their food and what they've accomplished so far, they seem primed to become a staple of the area.

The Rollin Pig, The Yard, Ann Street, Johnstone PA5 8EZ, 01505 367161, therollinpig.co.uk



Alexander STODDART

For over three decades, Alexander Stoddart has been regarded as one of the finest sculptors in the world. Speaking exclusively to *Mill*, he talks about his childhood, his works, and his hopes to make more statuary and monuments for Paisley.

In the depths of The University of the West of Scotland's Paisley campus, one of Renfrewshire's greatest artistic exports is, as ever, hard at work. Despite the fact that he could be located in Edinburgh, Florence, the United States – or any other place where his work is in high demand – Alexander Stoddart chooses to make his highly lauded, neoclassical sculptures in the town he has always called home.

The seventh person to be honoured as Sculptor in Ordinary to Her Majesty The Queen in Scotland, his works can be seen everywhere from the Royal Mile in Edinburgh to the private collections of his many patrons, notably in England and America. From the foundry in Nairn which casts his multi-tonnage monuments, to the stone-cutting workshops in Carrara which translate his full-scale models into their final marble form, the man known to his friends and colleagues by the diminutive 'Sandy' keeps an international economy afloat from within the very campus before which stands his statue of John Witherspoon, the Scots-born cleric and American revolutionary.

Standing in his cavernous studios, filled with blank-eyed works gazing across empty space, this informal gallery can't help but remind you of our own impermanence – and it's a feeling that terrifies some while proving oddly comforting to some others, depending upon each person's core disposition.

Above all, visitors are left bowled over by what can be accomplished through manual labour and an intense professional devotedness.

During our visit, Sandy reveals that a pressing commission is in hand, to make the largest crucifix in Europe (for a hilltop site near Venice, Italy). A five-year project, it will be completed as a 46-tonne bronze, to be transported by a Renfrewshire logistics company in a convoy of four lorries by sea and land. This follows his recently-completed colossus *The Spirit of Duty* now erected before the headquarters of George W. Bush, in Dallas, Texas. He tells us that he has had this latter work in mind since he was a child of eight or nine, when he first read of the 'winged sentry' in Henry Vaughan's poem Peace, written around 1650.

Photos by Graeme Hewitson, Monument Photos

Q&A

FAVOURITE PLACE FOR COFFEE?
UWS Café

FAVOURITE PLACE FOR LUNCH?
Allan's Traditional Fish and Chip Restaurant

FAVOURITE PLACE FOR DINNER?
Kwang Tung

FAVOURITE VIEW OF PAISLEY?
Looking down from the top of Gallowhill Road, by the roundabout

FAVOURITE PIECE OF ART?
Tristan and Isolde, an opera by Richard Wagner

Sculpture has been a fixture in his life for as long as he can remember. "My mother's people are from Wick, up in Caithness. For holidays we'd drive up the Great Glen and throughout the journey we would see the memorials to the Dead of the Great War with their bronze and stone soldiers. As I grew into consciousness over those childhood years, these monuments would become 'milestones'. I would anticipate the Crianlarich memorial in its comfortable aedicule, the icy Ballachulish soldier (white marble) by Loch Leven, and, above all, the heroic Commandos Memorial above Spean Bridge, a work of the 1950s by the Caithness man Scott Sutherland.

We were always moving by, in a rushing vehicle, bound by time and space – but these figures stood stern at their post, chivalrous, faithful and loyal. When we came to Golspie on the north-eastern coast, Ben Bragghie rising to our left, the parental chat in the car would turn dark. '...still a great deal of bitterness' and 'you wouldn't mention it in company...' and so on. We were beneath the statue of the Duke of Sutherland, perched on the mountain 's summit, the monument to the villain of the Clearances. I learned in this way of the special seriousness of monumentalism, and how it was not a matter of fun and games.

"Growing up in Elderslie, my friend Derek Shields and I would arm ourselves to the teeth as a gang of two, and fight for Sir William Wallace, the monument to whom stands at the bottom of the road where we lived. I remember my mother taking me around the base of this modest fane, telling me the story of the hero and his great struggle against tyranny and for the Scottish Crown. I conceived the idea that this was Wallace's actual house, yet could never find the door."

His late father was a graphic designer, also a son of the manse. As such, he had been forbidden to go to Art School, since such places were regarded in close Church circles as "dens of iniquity". He was put to the printing trade in a Christian firm. The force of Sandy's parental support was immense, with a crucial emphasis on musical culture. He attended the John Neilson school out by Ferguslie. Then, there was

the Glasgow School of Art and a First Class Honours degree which was originally to be a Third, but by some error became a low First.

Defining himself as a 'perceptualist' rather than a 'conceptualist', Stoddart, who has so often been characterised as an art-world rebel owing to his traditionalist commitment, has rebuffed the notion that he is in any way subversive. "An arts-commissar recently told me that I like to be different and to upset people," he remarks. "That's terribly wrong. In fact, what I like to do is get to the studio at a respectable time in the morning, fulfil my work obligations, pay my taxes and make some kind of contribution to the community."

Considering that his work stands in diverse locales around the western world, it's fair to say that Stoddart isn't a man with an abundance of unfulfilled ambitions or regrets. However, when it comes to Paisley, here is one of the areas in which he has felt peculiarly frustrated. "Perhaps it is all to do with my still being here, and working in my hometown, that makes for the difficulty. I mean, I successfully reorganised the street outside the National Museum of Scotland, to make a new square for our capital city, yet there is an absolute silence from the arts authorities in Renfrewshire. I await the 'Wow!' signal each day... but nothing."

Stoddart is enchanted by such artists as the poet Tannahill and Glasgow's Alexander 'Greek' Thomson; artists who were 'incredibly localised.' His longest-held Paisley aim is to make a serious monument to the Communist MP William Gallacher,



"GROWING UP IN ELDERSLIE, MY FRIEND DEREK SHIELDS AND I WOULD ARM OURSELVES TO THE TEETH AS A GANG OF TWO, AND FIGHT FOR SIR WILLIAM WALLACE"



and also one to the architect Thomas Tait, a Paisley boy who built the Sydney Harbour Bridge and became the most famous British architect of his time. Nevertheless, Sandy believes there will "sooner be a manned mission to Mars" before these plans come to fruition.

He remains facetious and cheerful, however, and is still working on plans to build, in Paisley, a Gipsoteck museum (a collection of plaster models and studies) to hold his vast collection after his death.

"This would allow people to see works in their original plaster form," he details, "here in Paisley, even though their bronze and marble versions are widely dispersed across the world. Many sculptors have left their collections to their hometowns; this would be my contribution."

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