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EDITORIAL ★ PITO KŌRERO



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EDITORS
Hanna Varrs
Gryffin Blockley

DESIGNERS
Ash McFarlane
Stella Caulton

VIDEO EDITOR
Hunter Jolly

NEWS EDITOR
Stella Weston

FEATURES EDITOR
Tilly Rumball-Smith

CULTURE EDITOR
Molly Smith-Soppet

ÉTITA MĀORI
Heeni Koero Te Rerenoa

SENIOR NEWS REPORTER
Bella Bates

MUSIC MEDIA INTERN
Ethan Montañer

STAFF WRITERS
Dylan O'Connor, Harry Almey,
Imogen Perry, Jesse Valpy,
Te Awahirāinga Heperi

CONTRIBUTORS
Jonathan McCabe, Salome Prekopa

BOOZE REVIEWS
Swig60

HOROSCOPES
Otago Oracle

ILLUSTRATION
Gemma McKinney @worms.ink
Jimmy Tannock
Eddie Fenton @boyorfeo
Eleanor Walker @furbys_is_alive

PHOTOGRAPHER
Zion Baptist

FRONT COVER
Hunter Jolly (olympic swimmer)
Ash McFarlane (designer)

CENTREFOLD
Ash McFarlane

ONLINE
Charlotte Williams

DISTRIBUTION
Pedals Dunedin

ADVERTISING SALES
sales@planetmedia.co.nz
03 479 5361

READ ONLINE
critic.co.nz
Issuu.com/critic_te_arohi

GET IN TOUCH
critic@critic.co.nz
Instagram @criticmag
Facebook/CriticTeArohi
TikTok @criticmag
03 479 5335
P.O.Box 1436, Dunedin

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EDITORIAL:

An Obituary to \$4 Lunch (2021-2025)

It was the first day of O Week last week, and underneath the (short-lived) sun of a packed-tent city, our shit was rocked. After innocently opening an Instagram story from our friends OUSA Clubs & Socs, \$4 Lunch had been unceremoniously rebirthed as \$5 Lunch.

What seemed like the last bastion of inflation had devastatingly come to an end. It was a good run, with the \$4 Lunch era lasting right around half a decade. According to the Reserve Bank's inflation calendar, \$4 worth of food at the start of 2021 would be worth approximately \$5.04 today due to inflation. So while the extra dollar sucks to spend (especially if you've had to buy butter recently), it's not like it was a decision made out of the need for profits or greed.

OUSA puts in the hard yards to make sure all their students have access to an incredible range of services. There's few other places around the motu where you can get a free brekkie, \$5 lunches and dinners, free support, a full calendar of events, and a range of recreation programmes for cheap too. The point is, it's okay to be disappointed, but don't hate the players, hate the game - the systemic issues that make your bank account balance a jumpscare when you see it.

This initial disappointment reminded us of a common feeling many tauria experience at the beginning of the Uni year. For our seasoned students, coming back to campus and seeing change in the air feels jarring and makes you reminisce about the 'good old days'. Once your mates start to leave, shops down George Street shutter and you feel too old for Pint Night; it's easy to just want to go back to those simpler times.

Likewise, if you're only joining us this year (welcome! How's the fresher flu going?), you may hear more seasoned students complain about those good old days again. People always like to mention how Castle is dead, student pubs are gone and the Otepoti music scene will never rival its prime Dunedin Sound era. But we need to remember, we are living through our own 'good old days' right now. In a couple years, the rose-tinted glasses will appear, and suddenly you'll be nostalgic for your old flat that used to be colder indoors than outside. Once we're past our prime, chances are we will be going on to someone random about how good our Uni days were. Plus, odds are that those same students who lived through these good old days were doing the exact same thing - wanting to experience a student life from a bygone era.

Critic Te Arohi isn't immune to this change either. As returners will see, things look a little different around here. It's a new year (heck, actually a new century for us): we're sporting a new logo, fresh look, and a changed print structure. Every other week we will be printing a smaller Critic with 16 pages - but still crammed with puzzles to complain about, news to gossip over, horoscopes to live your life by and the culture articles that are loyally read by our readers to procrastinate. In this issue, Harry's block-by-block review of George Street and Hanna and Jesse's deep-dive into the Highlander's storied history gave us Critic's own chance to reminisce about the changes to student life over these past few weeks.

So whether you're a North D veteran feeling like you barely recognise the glass-strewn streets of your neighbourhood anymore, or a fresher grappling with the massive change that comes with starting Uni - take every opportunity right now to make memories you will reminisce about.

You can strive to make being a student the best experience it can possibly be, while appreciating every host you attend, lazing around with your flatties or going on those random late-night side quests. Just remember, change may be inevitable, but you are living through a period of time where you get to try new opportunities, fuck around and find out.

Your few years at Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka will go by in the blink of an eye. Cheap OUSA lunches will always be by your side, fuelling your online shopping spree during lectures - just don't let the years waste away while you yearn for those 'good old days'.

Hanna Varrs ★
+ Gryffin Blockley ☺

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THIS PUBLICATION IS AI FREE.

Apology Letter:

In a letter to the Editor of Critic in Issue 25, 7 October 2024, reference was made to Mr Daniel Stride. That reference was in the context of correspondence from third parties to Critic responding to an earlier letter from Mr Stride. Critic is a magazine for all students and any student can seek to have a letter to the Editor published.

The letter to the editor referred to Mr Stride as a "convicted sex offender".

Critic accepts completely that Mr Stride was not convicted and therefore was not a "convicted sex offender". Critic unreservedly apologises for the error and apologises to Mr Stride for this publication and any humiliation and hurt that occurred as a result.

LETTERS UNIVERSITY BOOK SHOP

Yo critic

Just a suggestion for the magazine. Would loooveee it if the paper you used was scented. Maybe lavender? Geez, idk, maybe even caramel or sum?

Anyhow, hope you write me back. I feel like Stan writing this letter (Eminem ref).

Editor's response: "That type of shit'll make me not want us to meet each other"

Send a letter to the editors at critic@critic.co.nz to be in to win a \$25 UBS voucher.

Dear The Critic

i loooooove thhe critic! Im soo druuuunk and i miss u guyss, it's been so long since youve printed a magazin like what octobre last year!?!? hope we catch up soon and that we can maybe be more then friends this yeaar maybe but alg if not, live laugh love journalism baby!

sincerity,
recent graduate

Editor's response: okay

Dearest Critic,

I am writing to you whilst on my travels in Peru. The oranges here are rather splendid. Please Publish an orange soon!

Cordially,

Lord Orange

(of the Orange Estate)

Editor's response: your travels sound lovely! Orange sends kisses xxx

LETTERS POLICY

Letters should be 150 words or fewer. The deadline is Thursday at 12pm. Get them into Critic by emailing us at critic@critic.co.nz. Letters of a serious nature directly addressing a specific group or individual will not be published under a pseudonym, except in extraordinary circumstances as negotiated with the Editors. Critic Te Ārohi reserves the right to edit, abridge, or decline letters without explanation. Frequently published correspondents in particular may find their letters abridged or excluded. Defamatory or otherwise illegal material will not be printed. We don't fix the spelling or grammar in letters. If a letter writer looks stupid, it's because they are.

TLDOR!

The famous Otago Computing Students Society (OCSS) Barbeque returns!

Join us on Friday the 6th March, 5:00pm, at the Owheo Building for some free kai and a chance to meet other computing students!

Auditions for The Capping Show are on Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th

The first kākāpo chick of the breeding season hatched on Valentine's Day! Manifesting a bumper breeding system for (one of our fave) native birds.

Bloom, a new experimental music and arts space has recently opened! Come find them at 150E Kaikorai Valley

EXPLORE THE GALLERY OVER AN EVENING AND ENJOY A PROGRAMME OF SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES THEMED AROUND THE EXHIBITION **MEET THE ZAVROS'S.** THIS EVENT BRINGS TOGETHER PEOPLE, ART AND MUSIC WITH FOOD AND DRINK TO ENJOY THE GALLERY AFTER HOURS.

art night

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Critic Co-Designer (Ash) has a show on Radio One 1pm on Mondays!!

Otago Volleyball are looking for **IPC coaches, managers and players!** Visit volleyballotago.nz

Local young Riot Grrrl band SEEK HELP! are opening for Foo Fighters!?



FREE LATE NIGHT AT THE ART GALLERY

The News

ISSUE 1

KAWA PURONGO

23/02/2026

FUNDRAISING FOR MENTAL HEALTH: A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT (LITERALLY)

A mighty effort for the Mitey Foundation

By Molly Smith-Soppet

Culture Editor // culture@critic.co.nz



On March 7th at 5am, while the rest of Ōtepoti is fast asleep or stumbling home after a big Friday night, Philip Yeardeley will be up running in circles. For 100 kilometres.

Having already completed a marathon, a 50km run, and the Three Peaks challenge, men's mental health advocate Phil has decided he will push himself further than ever before. A 100km track ultra run means roughly 250 laps of the Caledonian athletic track down at Logan Park. That's more than enough time to thoroughly question his life choices several times over.

Phil estimates it will potentially take him up to 14 hours. He plans to run almost continuously, stopping only for the essentials: food, bathroom breaks or switching shoes when his feet inevitably swell. His fuel will consist of gels, electrolyte drinks, sandwiches, wraps, and a "fuck-load" of lollies.

Although this is one of the more unhinged side quests of any 20-something, it's all in the name of raising money for mental health. Phil's fundraising goal is \$25,000, with proceeds going directly to the Sir John Kirwan Foundation's "Mitey" programme. Mitey works with primary school tamariki to equip them with the skills and knowledge on how to understand and nurture their own emotional wellbeing and those of others.

Phil challenges himself "every year – mentally and physically," but last year he began looking for something that could bring people together as well as push himself to new levels. He's motivated to "create something for the community", organising stalls from local vendors, and even a surprise bagpipes performance (though it's not a surprise anymore, given we just wrote about it). He's encouraging everyone – friends, students, strangers – to join him for a few laps and a chat. It's not like he'll have much else to do that day.

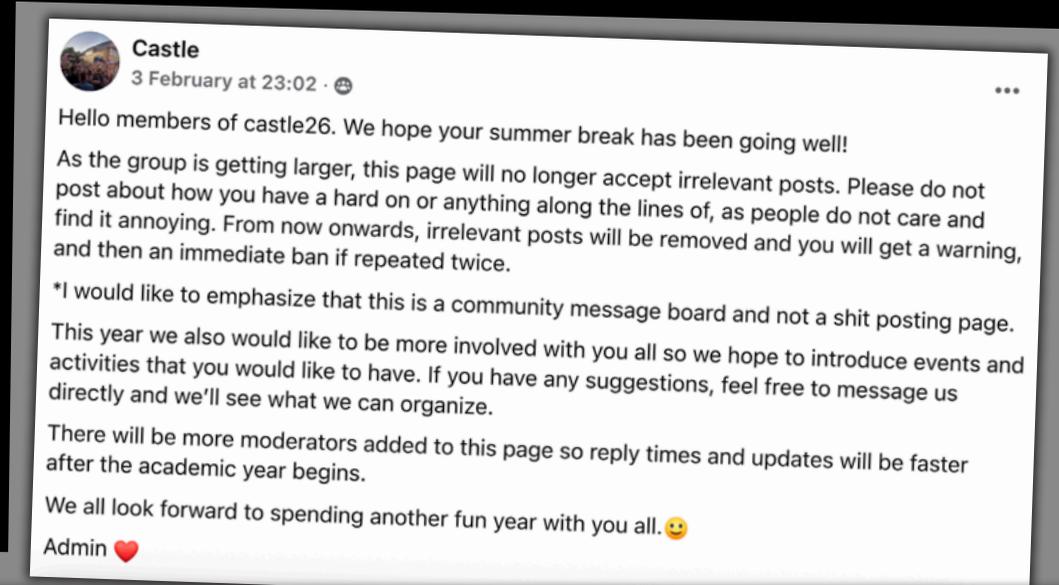
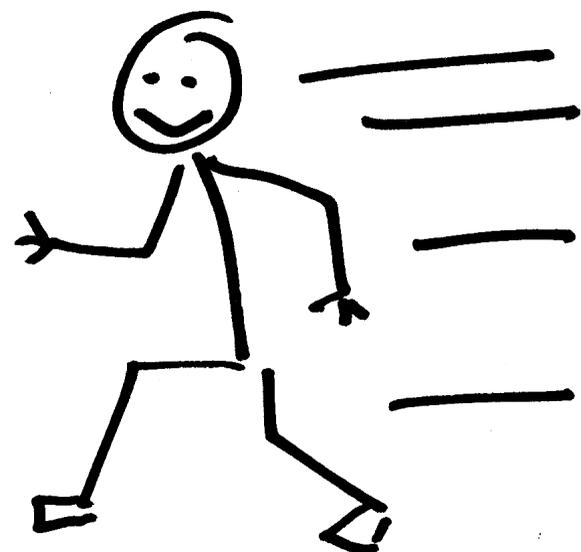
Ultrarunning, often described as a test of the mind even more than the body, is an endurance sport built on persistence, self-motivation, and a questionable relationship with pain. But for Phil it's also a metaphor for the slow, sometimes lonely work of maintaining mental health. Ultrarunning and mental health means putting one foot in front of the other, even when you really don't want to.

When he's not running ultramarathons, Phil runs a candle business, SeaZen, focused on natural, essential-oil-based products. It's a fitting job for someone who clearly knows how to find calm in the chaos of life.

On March 7th, from sunrise to sunset, Ōtepoti will have the chance to show up. Show up for mental health, for community, for our little brothers and sisters at school, or simply to watch a man attempt 250 laps powered by conversation, grit and sugar.



Donations to Phil's cause can be made on givealittle.org or through the QR code above.



CASTLE26 ADMINS TELL ALL ABOUT SHITPOSTING CRACKDOWN

By Gryffin Blockley
Co-Editor // critic@critic.co.nz



Nobody wants to read your four paragraph essay about having a wank

Castle26: arguably the cornerstone of the North D community. The sixteen thousand strong membership (allegedly free of freshers) have provided an important space to find a random Facebook flatmate, sell your Electric Ave ticket for exorbitant prices and laugh at your mates license being held ransom for a box on return.

However, over the summer, the shitposting began. A page once awash with dry chat about spare rooms in flats was transformed. With the power of anonymous posting fully manifested, chaos began to unleash. Commenters with names that sound like the default replacements for inappropriate nicknames on Kahoot began sharing their deep thoughts to the North D community. The range of nonsense stretched far and wide: brainrot, philosophical bars and gooning discourse quickly becoming the norm.

As a particularly prolific anonymous member liked to call it, this was "prime Castle25". But as Castle25 became Castle26, and the student quarter slowly began to show signs of life once more, an admin post on February 3rd changed everything. The admins announced that Castle26 was a "community message board", not a "shit posting page". "As the group is getting larger, this page will no longer accept irrelevant posts. Please do not post about how you have a hard on or anything along the lines of, as people do not care and find it annoying".

The response to this post was that of overwhelming disappointment. Not one, but two commenters both agreed that the decision was "literally 1984". Critic Te Arohi hit up two different admins of Castle26 to get the scoop on the decision. One of the admins, Charlie*, told Critic that they weren't "trying to be the fun police". "It's a community page, and if someone wants to post something funny, I think that should be encouraged," he continued. "It's Castle after all!"

Charlie explained that the admins want to see less "plain stupid, racist or derogatory shit on the page", with posters thinking they could get away with it under the guise of anonymity. According to Charlie, around 90% of posts that were removed were blatantly racist, sexist or talking about having a wank. From Charlie's perspective, taurira seem to support the decision. "I don't think most people really care about the crackdown to be honest. Most of the people I've seen complaining have been the shitposters themselves".

Another admin, Alex*, shared similar sentiment to Charlie. "There are some posts that need more attention like lost items or genuine questions," Alex told Critic. "These get viewed a lot less due to irrelevant posts blowing up." Aside from this, moderating posts can be a timely activity for Castle's admins. "We also have to moderate a lot more, and go through the spam folder, which takes up a lot of personal time," Alex explains.

Despite the crackdown, it's never gonna be that serious – we are talking about a student-run Facebook Group after all. Charlie brought up a Castle26 post from earlier in the month, where somebody took a lost ID on a trip around Japan. "I guess that's technically shitposting, but it would never get removed," he assures. While the admins are keen to minimise irrelevant posting, Alex still wants members to "go ham on commenting".

Whether you believe your right as a Castle frother to shitpost has been impeded on or not, it looks like our Facebook feeds will continue to be filled with all sorts of weird shit. Just don't be a dick, and your anon account should be safe from the wrath of Castle's admins.

* Names changed



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BY-ELECTION BRINGS OLD WORMS OUT OF THE WOODWORK

By Molly Smith-Soppet
Culture Editor // culture@critic.co.nz



Hey Aaron Hawkins!

Dunedin is heading back to the ballot box... Again. A by-election is being held to fill the vacant seat left by the tragic passing of Councillor and former Mayor Jules Radich. Nominations are currently open and will close on March 2nd, with voting beginning April 10th.

This unexpected gap has triggered the return of some familiar Dunedin faces looking to make a comeback into local politics, such as former mayor Aaron Hawkins. Hawkins formally announced his bid for the by-election on February 8, positing himself as a steady hand in tough economic times. Hawkins ran on a Green Party endorsed ticket in 2019, but this time round is running as an independent candidate.

Hawkins is not running unopposed – former Councillor Andrew Whiley has confirmed that he too is attempting to jump back on the political pony that is the Dunedin City Council (DCC). Narrowly missing re-election last year, Whiley has now made balancing rates and maintaining disciplined spending central to this campaign.

Conrad Stedman, Richard Knights and Pamela Taylor are among others who have publicly announced their candidacies. But some figures from the October election – such as Bruce Ranga, the highest-polling unsuccessful candidate – have opted out.

OUSA Political rep Flynn Nissbett encourages students to get out there and vote. "We need a big student turnout to show the council that they are making decisions for students too. By-elections historically have low voter turnout, [but] OUSA will be doing its part. Do yours and vote!" Students, who make up a huge chunk of the city's population, have more skin in the game than they might think. From rent and buses to cycleways and cultural identity, the names on this ballot will help decide what Ōtepoti looks and feels like for the rest of their degrees.

Across Aotearoa, By-election voter turnout often slumps into the low 20-30% range. When only a third of eligible voters bother, outcomes skew toward the most motivated groups of voters: landlords, ratepayer groups and the politically hyper-engaged. Politics Students Association Vice-President Ella Grayson urged students to "make sure your voice is heard. If you don't vote, you aren't represented."

Voting details are due to drop closer to April. Until then, keep an eye on the hoardings, the hot takes and whichever candidate's face ends up glued to the nearest power box on Castle Street.

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OUSA \$4 LUNCH SURGES TO \$5 LUNCH

Think of it as a koha to the best student association ever

By Hanna Varrs & Gryffin Blockley
Co-Editors // critic@critic.co.nz



Cheap lunch over in OUSA's Clubs & Socs building has been a mainstay of campus life for decades now. Brought to you by St Kilda's Tandoree Garden, \$4 Lunch has looked the same since 2022. However, four years later, 2026 brings a change in price as well as menu: a \$1 price increase, and a fortnightly menu rotation. Lunch hours will also be extended, from 12:00-2:30pm – that's an extra thirty minutes to stuff your face in between those pesky lectures.

While week one of the menu has remained the same, there's some slight deviation in week two. While there are some wholly new dishes (vegetable biryani, lentil soup) the majority of the dishes are lowkey the same. Monday's "Chickpeas & Rice with Potato and Vegetables" has been swapped in week two with "Chickpea Curry with yellow rice & potato curry", and Tuesday's "Vegetable Pasta with Mixed Salad" swaps to "Creamy Tomato vegetable pasta with coleslaw". It's a bit like spot the difference, but for your taste buds. Rest assured, taurira are still able to grab their fave add ons (samosas and onion bhaji) for a cool \$2.50, and a butter chicken any day of the school week for \$7.

"OUSA remains committed to keeping student wellbeing at the centre of all decision-making," Critic Te Arohi was told in a statement. "[The menus] rotate fortnightly to improve selection, consistency, and variety for students."

However, some students are adamant that the change is for the worse. Avid OUSA lunch goer Ella spoke to Critic about her feelings on the change. "I think I'm gonna have to meal prep going forward – it's just too expensive. It's only really worth \$4. Any more and it's just not really worth it in terms of portion size, or taste [...] There needs to be more competitors on campus for the low cost lunch." Ultimately, she reckoned that Miga Hako's \$4 rice balls may displace OUSA lunch, especially

due to the 50c increase in onion bhajis and samosas. "People who wouldn't go on Tuesday or Thursday because the pasta and soup isn't as filling would get a couple of samosas instead [...] But now they're adding on an extra dollar!"

"The decision to move from \$4 to \$5 is directly linked to the current economic landscape," the OUSA told Critic. "Like many organisations operating in this environment, the OUSA lunch offering has been impacted by inflationary pressures across food, supply chains, and operational costs." OUSA noted that their lunch programme recently underwent a "formal tender process" to make sure they continued to partner with providers who can deliver value at scale. "The current provider demonstrated they could continue providing the service at the most sustainable and competitive rate."

The price increase effectively guarantees that OUSA can continue putting on cheap meals for the University's hungry learners. "Alongside Free Brekkie and our dinner service, it remains one of the most affordable food offerings available on campus." That much is definitely true – when purchased in tandem with a Bowling Club dinner for \$5, you've just fed yourself three meals for \$10.

"We understand that any price change can be challenging for students," OUSA the statement continues. "As the service has only just commenced for the year, we are continuing to collate and assess student feedback." So give the new \$5 lunch a go – and let Critic know your thoughts.

HARRAWAYS
Extra Creamy
YOUR BREAKFAST JUST GOT
Extra Creamy

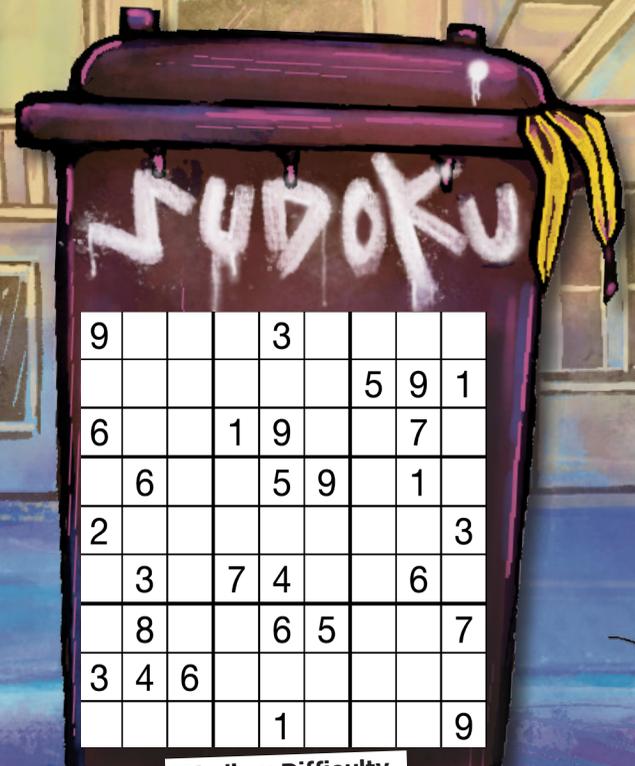
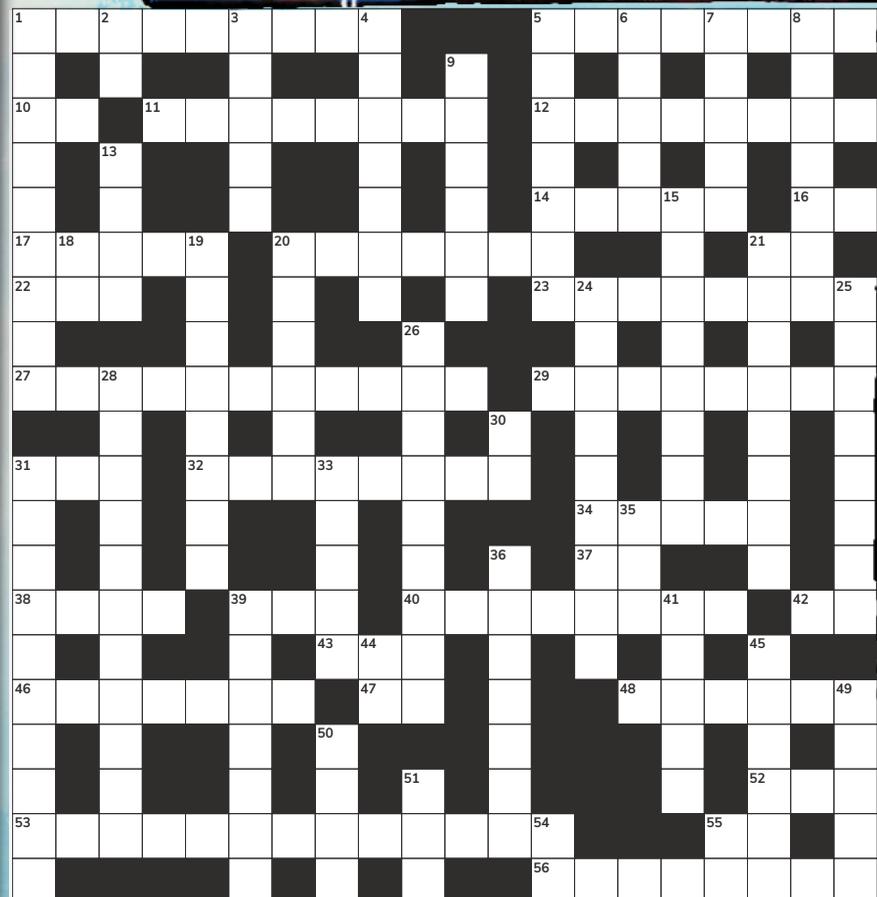
ACROSS

- 1 Villain portrayed by Nicolas Hoult in a 2025 film (2)
- 5 Grammy-winning DJ producer
- 10 A positive remark to end a game on (acr.)
- 12 Drug
- 14 Female mammoth from the 'Ice Age' franchise
- 16 Famous horror novel
- 17 Consumed (liquid)
- 20 Horror movie genre popular in the 80s
- 21 ISO 639 code for English
- 22 New Zealand political party
- 23 Useful app on your phone
- 27 Famous American national park
- 29 Ghastly
- 31 Muddy, moistened ground
- 32 You don't want yours going off during a movie
- 34 Animal that apparently often walks into bars
- 37 2009 animated Disney film
- 38 Song by Harry Styles
- 39 Tavern-owning character from the Simpsons
- 40 Name of the Ninja Turtles adoptive father
- 42 Handheld Nintendo console from the early 2000s
- 43 American governmental agency
- 46 Small, wrinkled fruit
- 47 Popular video game studio (abbrv.)
- 48 Bloke who was famously big on evolution
- 52 A show of appreciation (abbrv.)
- 53 Actor from 'The Rookie' and 'Superman' (2)
- 55 A device or feature that keeps you cool (abbrv.)
- 56 Running event

DOWN

- 1 Epic in status
- 2 T-shirt size
- 3 Old English dynasty
- 4 Like a road for locomotives
- 5 Critically acclaimed 2025 film
- 6 Away from urban areas
- 7 Slack or unattached
- 8 Making adjustments to something
- 9 Iconic horror film from 1960
- 13 Unit of time in music
- 15 Interpoler
- 18 Controlled via separate device
- 19 Common unit of measurement
- 20 Super strong Old Testament character
- 21 Enrolled into the military
- 24 World-saving character portrayed by Tom Cruise (2)
- 25 Academically-qualified nerds
- 26 Country that created beef rendang
- 28 Unable to tolerate large quantities of alcohol (slang)
- 30 Iron's symbol on the periodic table
- 31 The space behind the main subject
- 33 Emotion felt during a loss
- 35 To make a choice
- 36 Spider-Man villain played by Jamie Foxx
- 39 Western US State
- 41 Remove
- 44 Word missing from: "To__ or not to__"
- 45 Popular livestreaming platform
- 49 President in office during the end of the Vietnam war
- 50 To follow closely
- 51 Everything
- 54 Actually, don't worry (abbrv.)
- 55 "Come here __ once!"

Crossword St



9			3						
						5	9	1	
6			1	9				7	
	6			5	9			1	
2									3
	3		7	4					6
	8			6	5				7
3	4	6							
				1					9

Medium Difficulty
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Quiz St

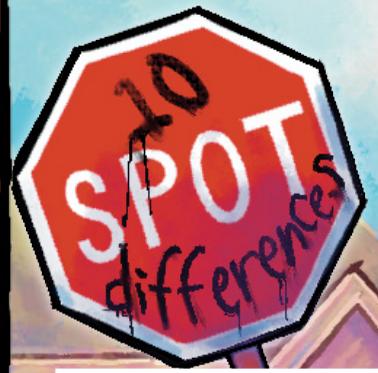
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36 MORAY PLACE, DUNEDIN

Toy Story 3 features a diabolically evil antagonist. What is this menace's name?

Dunedin has 3 cinemas, with 'Reading' and 'Rialto' being most popular, what is the third one called?

What is the name of the adorable tree-dwelling, fox-like mammals located in South Western China?

Puzzle answers on critic.co.nz

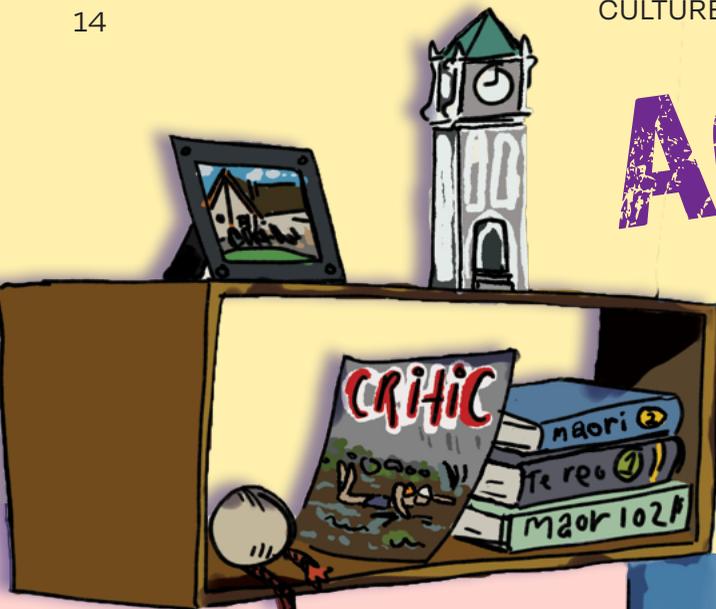


There are 10 differences between the two images
Illustrated by Eleanor Walker



ACTIVATING THE MĀORI RADAR

Nā Heeni Koero Te Rereoa Ngāti Hine, Te Rarawa, Te Waiariki



Illustrated by
Jimmy Tannock



I remember making the big move like it was yesterday. Spoiler: it wasn't. What I do remember the clearest is how quickly uni can make you feel anonymous – like everyone else got a handbook you somehow missed. Don't worry, you haven't. Most people are just better at pretending.

The good news is, the important stuff at uni isn't obvious in Week 1 anyway. You figure it out slowly: where to spot other taira Māori, who knows what's going on, and which spaces make the whole place feel less like an institution and more like somewhere you can exist without overthinking it. So if it feels like everyone else already found their people while you're still decoding your timetable – relax. No one has it sorted. And no, you probably don't need all the textbooks.

Here's what I wish I'd known earlier – and who I wish I'd known about sooner. Consider this your unofficial guide to activating the Māori Radar: the people and places that make uni feel smaller and far less intimidating than it first seems.

#1 START AT TE HUKA MĀTAURAKA - THE MĀORI CENTRE

Most Māori students find Te Huka Mātauraka, the Māori Centre, eventually. The difference is whether you find it early or when things get hard.

Te Huka Mātauraka offers academic and tutorial support, tuakana-teina learning, and guidance that starts as early as the Year 13 to first-year transition. It also recognises that uni challenges aren't always academic – sometimes you need more than encouragement, and there is clinical and therapeutic support available when things feel bigger than deadlines. What makes it different isn't just the services, but the feeling of being somewhere you don't have to explain why you're here. Sitting in that space between lectures, you realise quickly that everyone else is figuring it out too. Radar says: don't overthink it.

#2 YOU'RE ALREADY PART OF TE RŌPŪ MĀORI - TŌ KĀINGA RUA

A lot of students don't realise this, but every taira who enrolls at Otago as Māori automatically becomes a member of Te Rōpū Māori (TRM). There's no sign-up moment – you just show up.

TRM exists to support and encourage education for taira Māori at Otago and to keep connections strong with the wider Māori community locally, regionally, and nationally. In practice, it means there's usually something going on. The O-Week shenanigans, like the infamous Mystery Bus, are only the start – throughout the year, there are study wānanga at local marae, beginner and intermediate te reo Māori classes, sport nights, and exam-season breakfasts when everyone suddenly remembers they need fuel and company. Te Rōpū Māori is also home to Waiata Wednesdays (formerly Cultural Hour), where taira can learn the TRM classics, meet new people, and scratch their haka itch. Of course, you don't have to go to everything. But knowing it's there means uni doesn't feel limited to lectures and deadlines, or that the fun is restricted to O-Week only.

#3 TAKE A FUN PAPER - FRIENDS HAPPEN HERE

The 'f' in Fresher stands for friends – and they're not just the people you meet in your hall or first-week circles. Finding a solid group can actually be harder than people admit, especially if you're only looking in the usual places. In my experience, it happened in the unexpected ones.

In particular, 100-level papers pull people from across different disciplines and backgrounds, so you're not stuck only knowing the handful of people in your core classes. I took MAOR108: Te Timatanga in my first year on a whim, mostly because it fit my timetable, and it ended up being one of the best choices I made. Not only do you learn an entire kapa haka bracket according to traditional practice – learning in the dark, rather than off slides or a screen – but it's also practical, collective, and a good reset from the usual uni rhythm of reading and typing. Papers like MAOR108 – and its 200 and 300-level counterparts – introduced me to a lot of people I'm still close with now, simply because you spend time doing something together rather than sitting silently in a lecture theatre.

If you're unsure what to add to a first-year timetable, this is an easy recommendation. An elective paper won't derail your degree, and it makes uni feel a lot less narrow early on.

#4 KNOW YOUR KAIĀWHINA - THEY'VE GOT YOU

Every division has Kaiāwhina Māori and support staff whose job is to help you navigate the parts of uni that aren't clearly written down. Between paper selection, workload issues, extensions, and simply figuring out who you're supposed to talk to when something goes wrong – they've seen it before. What feels new and overwhelming to you is often something they can untangle quickly. I ignored everything Kaiāwhina Māori related in my first semester and paid for it in stress later. Learn from me – say hi early.

The key is not to wait until things are already piling up. Most older students will tell you the same thing: it's much easier to introduce yourself early than to explain everything mid-semester when you're already stressed and behind. A short email, a quick visit, or even just putting a name to a face makes it far less daunting to reach out later. Think of it less as asking for help and more as building a relationship early, so you are not navigating the system on your own.

#5 FIND YOUR NETWORKS - FOLLOW THE NOISE

Your people aren't only found in halls of residence or lecture theatres. In fact, many taira Māori find their strongest friendships and support systems through co-curricular spaces connected to their divisions. These groups, collectively referred to as "Ngā Rōpū", like Ngā Taira o Te Kete Aronui (Humanities Division's Māori Students' Association), Ngā Mōkai o Ngā Whetū (Māori Dental Students' Association), and Te Rōpū Whai Pūtake (Māori Law Students' Association) bring together Māori students who are walking similar academic paths, which makes conversations about study, pressure, and future plans a whole lot less isolating.

ALL SET - YOUR MISH AWAITS

At the end of the day, activating your Māori Radar isn't about ticking boxes or following a handbook, but about noticing where the people, the spaces, and the kauapa are. This week, your mish is to take action: follow the TRM socials, swing by Waiata Wednesday, and make yourself known at your next Ngā Rōpū event. Kururaki! Good luck – your radar's officially switched on.



GEORGE STREET

Illustrated by
Gemma McKinney

BLOCK BY BLOCK

by Harry Almey

Sitting in Woodhaugh Gardens on a lovely summer day, I got to thinking — being a Dunedin local is a funny thing. I mean, it has to be, right? You spend at least five years perfectly aware of the drunken shenanigans, Boganmobiles, and broken glass everywhere. If you were unfortunate enough to attend Logan Park High School, you'd walk past it every day. And at the end of it all, I thought, "Yeah, I'll have some more of that." I enrolled in the University of Otago.

Besides that madness that afflicts almost every local student, there is something else unique to us. We see what most students don't — summer in Ōtepoti. The glory of George Street sans spit and abandoned bottles, vape shops hauntingly empty. No, no — stop shaking your head in violent disbelief. I swear, Dunedin is warm! Occasionally. You just don't believe me because you miss it. So, as the year and my undergraduate study both came to a close, I thought to share with you a sweatin' stroll down George Street.

But does Dunners miss you? With a 99% decrease in broken glass and firework firefights, probably not. I certainly don't miss those boys across the road, always waking me up at five in the morning with that newfangled music and shouting. Grumble grumble. In sharing a little piece of my summery Dunedin with you all I thought I would take inspiration from ex-Critic Editor, Joel MacManus, and write a bit of a love letter to the most iconic street in Aotearoa, block-by-block.

George Street Gardens

Starting early on a sweltering January morning, I made my way through an eerily-silent Leith Street, past sixty carparks and only six cars. This brought me to the intersection between the North Road Op Shops, Botans, New World Gardens, and Bank Street (really the start of George Street to us locals).

Verdict: North D is dead. Reflection over.

In full seriousness, it would be easier if it were just dead. Then it would be straightforwardly miserable. But the grass is shooting up, and the sun is truly out. From tourist to bee, man and beast are both very much alive and busy. It's windy, a lovely, hot, fragrant sort of windy.

But it's funny, the things you notice are missing when you actually start looking. Most of the year, this spot was a meeting between the diverse and disparate worlds of students and pensioners. But there I was, slowly noticing how the young to old person ratio did not fall in my favour. It's like you've stepped into the pool, found it was far more shallow than you remember, but just as wide as it was before. Everyone can see you, being there is conspicuous, and you're thinking, "Hey, where's everyone gone?" The world has less depth, less vibrance, and not just in terms of vibes. Five North Dunners shops are closed for another week, the rest halfheartedly open with barely a customer inside.

Still, it was nice. Positively dreamy for us sensible people who see a nice bit of sunny peace and quiet, without a bit of rain in sight, and sit under a tree with a book. But after a few weeks of intense lighting and hail, it's like the world is out of balance. It certainly felt that way when I reached the bridge mural. On one side, Dunedin with its bikes and Baldwin Street, painted all colourful; on the other, Uni clock tower, rendered in black-and-white. The only evidence proving that the University wasn't just ancient history were the signs adorning the jaded fences of student flats — for rent, for rent, for rent.

Hotel Land (Dundas Stairs – Albany St Intersection)

There is no joke. This block is dry. Hearing this, other locals are doubtless saying, "Well, yeah, what's new? There are barely any shops, how different could it possibly be?" That's just because they never walk the street. But this part of the street must be a favourite for tourists. The houses were like pretty shells for them to pick up and marvel at. You'd be forgiven for forgetting that something ought to be living in them.

So despite the lovely weather and views, the total lack of human life made the walk mind-numbingly boring. Only the modest archaeological discoveries light up my eyes. A table and chair are left on Inverleith Street, ruined by rain, and there's a burnt couch in someone's property. "So the nomads did live here!", exclaimed the delighted archaeologist.

It's here that I realise that it's missing. Whatever you want to call 'it': the blemishes, the chaos, the students — it's missing. Because on a walk free of all the bad shit students supposedly bring here, the only memorable bits were student-related. I watch a stray student push around a wheely chair, and observe a table left on the road that is so water-damaged that it appears to have contracted the Bubonic Plague.

Those amusements soon became bittersweet. Because in every bit of furniture on the road that you think about nicking, someone else's Dunedin chapter has closed. Who were they? What did they study? Everything is just missing. The episode's over, and there'll be no repeats. And like some subliminal message, all the hotels (even during tourist season!) are showing vacancy, vacancy, vacancy.



Retail Street (Albany St Intersection – Octagon)

For the first time in human history, life starts back up again at the LJ Hooker Property Management office. There, at the intersection with Rob Roy, you find a more diverse bunch. Families are out, enjoying the coffee, shopping and ice-cream in the sun. And for once, there isn't any congestion at the intersection near the Bog!

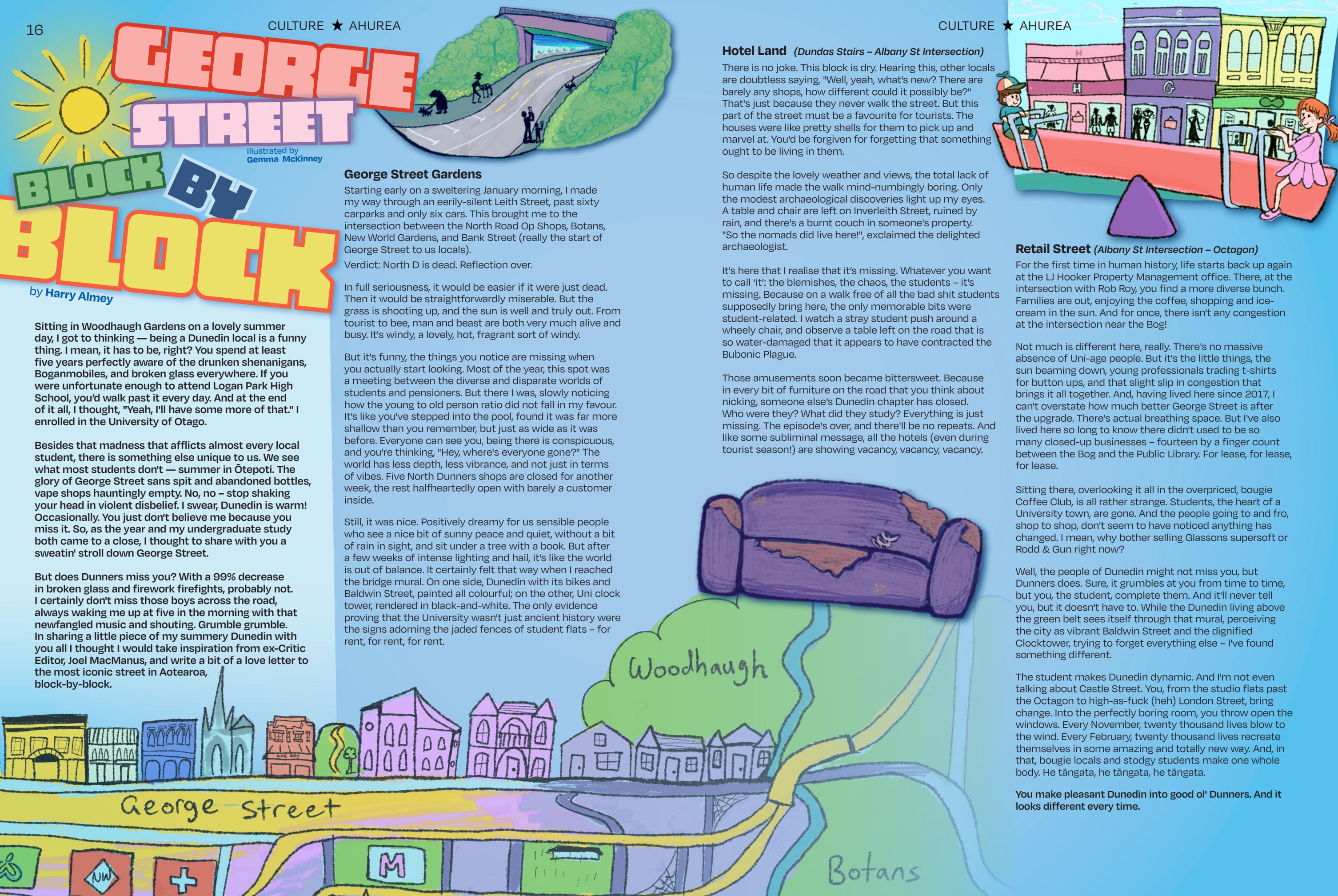
Not much is different here, really. There's no massive absence of Uni-age people. But it's the little things, the sun beaming down, young professionals trading t-shirts for button ups, and that slight slip in congestion that brings it all together. And, having lived here since 2017, I can't overstate how much better George Street is after the upgrade. There's actual breathing space. But I've also lived here so long to know there didn't used to be so many closed-up businesses — fourteen by a finger count between the Bog and the Public Library. For lease, for lease, for lease.

Sitting there, overlooking it all in the overpriced, bougie Coffee Club, is all rather strange. Students, the heart of a University town, are gone. And the people going to and fro, shop to shop, don't seem to have noticed anything has changed. I mean, why bother selling Glassons supersoft or Rodd & Gun right now?

Well, the people of Dunedin might not miss you, but Dunners does. Sure, it grumbles at you from time to time, but you, the student, complete them. And it'll never tell you, but it doesn't have to. While the Dunedin living above the green belt sees itself through that mural, perceiving the city as vibrant Baldwin Street and the dignified Clocktower, trying to forget everything else — I've found something different.

The student makes Dunedin dynamic. And I'm not even talking about Castle Street. You, from the studio flats past the Octagon to high-as-fuck (heh) London Street, bring change. Into the perfectly boring room, you throw open the windows. Every November, twenty thousand lives blow to the wind. Every February, twenty thousand lives recreate themselves in some amazing and totally new way. And, in that, bougie locals and stodgy students make one whole body. He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.

You make pleasant Dunedin into good ol' Dunners. And it looks different every time.





UNIVER
sity

Flatwarmings:

How to Keep the Pāti Hearty

by Te Awhirēinga Heperi

Illustrated by Eddie Fenton



DON'T talk shit. Seriously. There's nothing that screams "I suck" more than finishing a conversation and walking over to your mates with a "that guy is weird as fuck". Um... Ew? Y'all are at the same party, in the same space, with the same people. No one is better than the other, and if someone were to be, it definitely isn't the guy dogging on someone he's too dense to try to understand. **So don't be a dick.**

DON'T exclude. Yes, this means anyone in attendance has the right to socialise, and it is our duty as committed party-goers to ensure everyone has the space to do so. And furthermore, don't exclude yourself. If you don't know anyone at the party, you won't get to know anyone if you stick to the wall all night. Nobody likes a wallflower, and you are just as important as everyone else there, champ. So slap on a pair, and get to mingling, like the social butterfly I know you can be.

Now that we've identified the big three dealbreakers of a good party, let's figure out what really makes the pāti hearty.

DO designate an aux champ. Good lord, if you follow any of this advice, let it be this gem. Music is mandatory, and every vibe must be curated expertly. None of that drum and boobies or whatever they call it. When you connect to that speaker, you hold the world at your fingertips. Whatever you play could make or break the night. Ask yourself: will you be the hero of the party, or the villain? Think about the music you and your friends listen to jointly, not just whatever niche genre you enjoy. A Spotify blend goes a long way, and be generous if people want to queue up a banger.

DO pre(pare). If you're not preing before you show up, what are you doing? Pres can be a lot of things: getting ready in the mirror with the flatties, drinking a few with friends before the whole host starts, or getting takeaways and admiring your pre-party setup together. Like I mentioned before, hosting pres for the actual host with your closest friends can be a great way to get the vibes up so newcomers feel welcomed when they rock up a bit later. Anything to warm up those socialisation muscles. Nothing's worse than showing up to a party stone cold sober, or after having crawled straight out of bed after not talking to anyone all day, only to remember that drunk people suck when you're not one of them. Your night won't be a movie if you don't do some creative directing.

DO drugs (safely, of course). If it's up your alley – give it a go, whānau! Always make sure you feel safe before trying, never use as a result of peer pressure, and make sure you're mixing safely. Testing your drugs and other harm reduction methods such as TripSit are always there to make sure you are having a great time, safely. There is a wonderful world of uppers, downers, and psychedelics out there. If that's not your buzz, there's always caffeine. Knock back a Monster, lock in for a yarn, and unleash the conversational beast. If you are using, make sure you're using the right drug for the right occasion. K-holing at pres? Not on. A cheeky few lines before you hit town? So on. Remember: a box, a bag, a bong will never do you wrong (not in that order though).

Let's recap, tauira mā. When we struggle to connect through avenues such as class, race, gender and sexuality, some sweet jams and substances could be the key to overcoming increasingly looming social divides. While it seems superficial, they're things in common that can get the ball rolling. You don't need to jump straight into deep conversations when making new friends at parties: an easy "what are you drinking?", "where'd you get your top from?" or "want a cone?" are sometimes the key to breaking the ice. So whether you're a North Shore trust fund baby drinking from daddy's money, or a straight-up broke reaping the gifts of student allowance, fear not. There is always a friend to be made – you just have to extend the right question (or the right line). So bottoms up breatheas, sheathas, and everyone in between – here's to keeping the pāti hearty!

E te whānau, it's that time of year again. Whether you're with last year's crew, a new flat group entirely, or you've just scrolled past your fifth Flatpack ad of the day, we all have one thing in common: flatwarmings. Your very first host. Yes, one of the most illustrious events of the year, certainly not one to miss. The crisp crack of your first can in your new abode, the fresh hole in the wall the next day your mate doesn't remember making, and the inevitable scramble to finish your drinks before the Uber arrives, as well as packing a roadie or two. All of these things are quintessential to the Dunners student experience. But sometimes things don't go so smoothly.

Interacting with new people sometimes means awkward banter filling the living room, and strained silences before you figure out what random shared interest you could pivot to in conversation. If you're anything like me, you'll have learnt to navigate these potential social pitfalls, but it's something I've only picked up over the course of many years of flatting.

This year I have the privilege of flatting with five of the dopest wāhine. We decided to test the flatwarming waters with a micro-flatwarming, only inviting our nearest and dearest, like the sensible wāhine we are. Now, all that skuxx under one roof means our parties have to be awn, right? Wrong. We overlooked one thing: our mates don't know each other. Our flat this year is a combination of varied socioeconomic backgrounds, races, and sexualities, which brings in an equally diverse range of friends. We expected them to click instantly, and unfortunately, it was a bit like water and oil. People were unsure what to talk about, or how to act. It was awkward! But this was a learning opportunity before we christen the flat with the real deal.

First off, let's start by clarifying that although differences in these areas can be uncomfortable, it doesn't mean we can't get along. However, it does affect the way we understand and navigate the world. So naturally, not everyone is going to see eye to eye from the jump. Cool – we can work with that. But how do we close the divide between our social circles? Well, you're in luck. I've got all the answers – here's a list of everything that I've learned to keep the pāti hearty.

DON'T assume. Assumption is the enemy of connection and it makes an ass out of u and me. Relying on preconceived ideas and not first-hand experience stifles the social flow – lighten up tāngata pāti! If you find yourself in conversation with someone you wouldn't usually talk to, good, listen to them. Let that conversation be authentic – you might be best friends in the making.

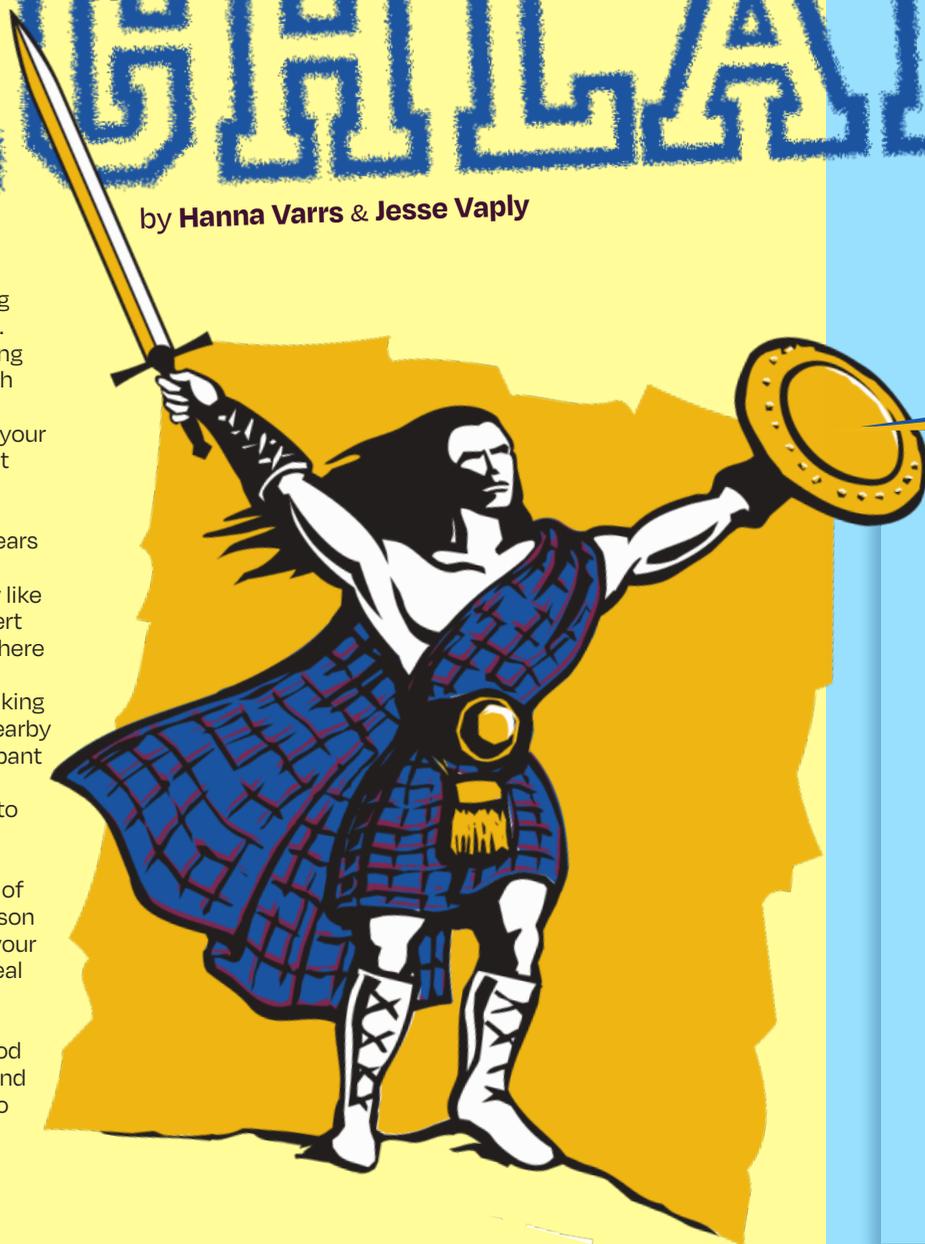
THE CHANGING GAME: 30 YEARS OF THE HIGHLANDERS

by **Hanna Varrs & Jesse Vaply**

Most will remember the first Sunday morning they woke up in their single bed at their first-year hall. For many, it probably felt like coming up for air after holding your breath, with O-Week stretching out in front of you. Endless, scarfie possibility. With so much going on during orientation, many may struggle to know what to do with themselves. So many events, IDs to photograph, and lecture rooms to find. But if there's one thing you do in your first week of Uni, it should be attending a rugby game at Forsyth Barr.

2026 marks thirty years of Super Rugby. That's thirty years of the Highlanders – thirty years of the games that are integral to student culture. Even if you don't even really like rugby, we reckon that the Highlander's Zoo could convert anyone into being a fan. 'The Zoo' is the nickname of where the rowdy supporters of the Highlanders are seated – mostly Otago University students with beer in hand, flaking blue and yellow facepaint, cheering at players on the nearby ground. It's loud, fun, and if you asked a random participant after a game who had won, there would probably only be a 50/50 chance they could answer correctly. Going to the Zoo isn't about the rules of the game, or the names of the players – it's about the atmosphere. You can get hot chips, beer, scream your lungs out and feel a sense of camaraderie that rivals the Pint Night line. The only person who doesn't like The Zoo is your dad watching it from your hometown. Or maybe the security guard who had to deal with vomit and shit (literal) on the stands.

Otago student culture and the Highlanders are childhood best friends. They bounce off each other, inseparable and charming. Critic feels like a proud mum by being able to document the thread of that friendship for 30 years.



30 YEARS OF OTAGO'S GREATEST FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF MARC ELLIS AND LUCAS CASEY

The Kickoff: 30 Years of Highlanders

The Highlanders team was founded in 1996, drawing its name from the Scottish founders of Ōtepoti Dunedin. Despite the love for Forsyth Barr and The Zoo, before them was Carisbrook and the Terraces – and they are sorely missed.

Carisbrook (known locally as 'The Brook') was the Highlanders' home turf from its inception. Located in Caversham, the venue had a capacity of around 29,000 – on par with Forsyth Barr's 30,750. Nicknamed the 'House of Pain', Carisbrook had an intimidating, Spartan-esque atmosphere. The conditions on the turf were often difficult and wet, presumably instilling a healthy fear of trenchfoot in any visiting team. The Highlanders played their first-ever Super 12 Game at the ground in 1996. Carisbrook was demolished mid-2011, superseded by Forsyth Barr. It was a day of mourning when the giant fell, even from across the world. Eddie Butler, former Welsh captain, was ultimately upset to hear of its demise (despite the Welsh enduring a fair round of pain at the hand of Carisbrook). "There is nothing the outside world should like to see more than [Carisbrook's] closure... but hell, we need these special places, where opponents tread with trepidation."

It has always been difficult to not love rugby in Dunedin – the generous rounds of frost and the steaming of your breath encourage pulling a blue and yellow striped scarf tighter around your neck, or huddling closer to your seat. During the early years of the Highlanders, a railway embankment above The Brook offered fans a clear view of the ground, coined the 'Scotsman's Grandstand'. Passing trains would slow to a crawl or stop on the track, giving fan passengers a chance to watch the thrall. Toward the Eastern end of the ground sat The Terraces, an uncovered concrete embankment where students sat to watch the game. With no proper seating, students often brought sacrificial couches along with them to avoid sitting on the freezing concrete. If the Zoo is filled with animalistic supporters, the Terraces were feral in their turnout. Given the high student population of our city, many non-locals become loyal to the Highlanders as well as their hometown teams – making for a confused, but passionate crowd. Students were jammed shoulder to shoulder, sometimes stealing the playing team's thunder through burning their couch seating and running unchecked onto the field to get high fives and autographs from players. Love it or hate it, the Terraces were the birthplace of Otago symbols such as the rugged up Scarfie, and controversial couch burnings.

Marc Ellis: Scarfie to Player

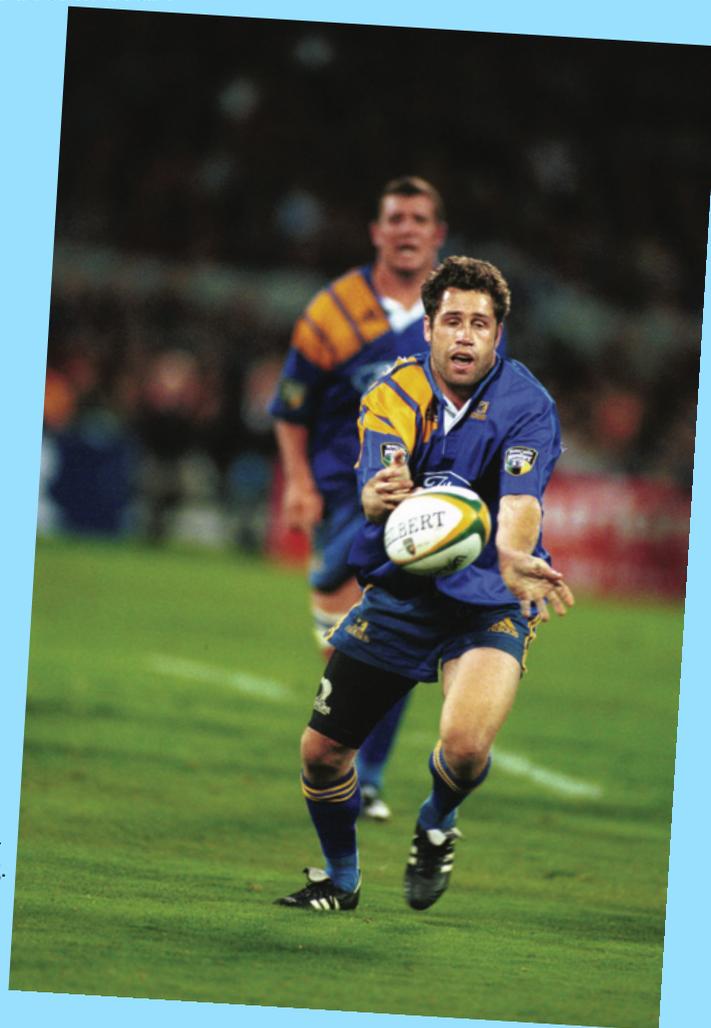
As mentioned, the threads of student culture and rugby are intertwined – not just restricted to brief, glorious streaks across the field. I'm unsure if you've ever stopped to ask where rugby players come from, but a lot of them are actually students when they first start playing professionally. Take Marc Ellis for example, the epitome of Scarfie to player, who came to Otago to study. Marc was originally a Wellington boy, but became a proud Otago rep when he moved to Dunners for University. He was 19 when he first began playing rugby, with bright blue eyes, a confident smile and striking dark hair, staying in University College ('UniCol'). He was studying fulltime toward a Bachelor of Commerce, though it "may as well have been part-time", given it took him 5 years to get the degree. Happens to the best of us.

Juggling playing for the University and Otago was "fun", but meant that he was often off to bed early on a Friday night when all of his mates were out at one of the many student pubs of the 90's. He recalls cooking up lamb chops and tomatoes on a grill his Mum had gifted him – his pregame meal of choice (lamb chops are a "cornerstone" in his life, apparently. He made a Scarfie cookbook if you're interested). Trying to get in the correct mental headspace for a game the next day when there were parties going on his floor wasn't always easy, and sometimes even shutting his door on it wouldn't stop him from being exposed to "social temptation". Critic imagines Marc like Lightning McQueen in his trailer, chanting "I am speed", while his hall-mates slur the lyrics of Bliss, the walls of his room vibrating.

However, it doesn't seem like Marc actually missed out on too much in terms of Scarfie antics. In his book *Crossing the Line*, Marc references an extensive list of escapades during his time at Uni – a kind of breatha Bible in terms of fun you could get up to. One night involved leaving the Cook, getting naked and dancing around some street signs which had been set on fire, then having to leg it when the police soon arrived. Further intriguing yarns include graciously receiving a small kunekune for his 21st, which quickly became a key part of the Footrot Flats whanau, with a nest in the bathroom. However, Marc's female flatmates lacked the same level of appreciation, and the writing was on the wall. Thankfully for them, the next time they saw the pig was in the form of pork chops. What goes around comes around.

Marc remembers looking out his window on one of his first nights at UniCol, and seeing a bunch of guys drinking out of large beer bottles on the street and throwing that at a concrete wall. "If the bottle didn't break, they'd yell 'super-bottle!'" He knew he'd come to the right place, describing UniCol as "magnificent", but that he'd often end up just closing his curtains and turning his lights off to shut it all out – even when the guys began teeing up golf balls and aiming them at the UniCol windows. His arm has gotten more rubbery with age, but at 19 years of age his worldview was "myopic" – no amount of super-bottles could distract him. Rugby was what he wanted, and it's what he got.

Marc was a Carisbrook gladiator, playing many games at the venue. He'd walk into the changing rooms, and an hour later run out to greet 30,000 people filling the amphitheater-style grounds. The Terraces were teeming with students – couches burning, people dressed in all



sorts of absurd outfits or occasionally "nothing at all." One time, he observed a streaker running across the field in the middle of a game. 'Look at this prick', he remembers thinking, before realising it was his flatmate. "They were fun times [...] I recall [Carisbrook] with much fondness – the sort of loose aspect – and the student support thereof." He reckons what makes rugby as a game great is the people who enjoy the atmosphere of it all – as the students on The Terraces did. It's the social aspect of the game, and the people that come in appreciation of that. "They're paramount," he insists. Creating games that are fun enough to drag your un-sporty flatmate to is what matters. There's a genuine showmanship in a good game of rugby, well aside from the rules, shareholders or technical prowess of the players.

Marc played rugby up until the 2000 season before retiring for other, more entrepreneurial pursuits. He established the iconic Charlie's juice brand in 1999, and went on to become an iconic television personality. When asked what inspired the change of occupation, Marc observes the shift from amateur to professional rugby. "I played five years of amateur and five years of professional [rugby] in the end, and three years playing League, and then I went back to rugby and the rugby I went back to was four years into its professional era [...].". The professionalisation of rugby began in the early 1980s, when advertising became more prominent in rugby. The Ranfurly Shield was first sponsored in 1985, and Japanese telecoms company Kokusai Denshin

Denwa was the principal sponsor of the inaugural Rugby World Cup in 1987 (hosted in Australia and New Zealand), which went on to be won by the All Blacks. It was this event that solidified the commercial potential in rugby, and incentivised News Corporation to secure the television rights for the game in 1995. The revenue gained from this deal meant that the New Zealand Rugby Football Union contracted the All Blacks as well as players for the new Super 12 competition (now known as Super Rugby). This kickstarted a wave of sporting professionalism felt right across the globe.

By that point, there were teams of nutritionists, psychologists and physiotherapists to catch up with after games – no doubt messing with Marc's strict diet of grilled lamb chops and tomatoes. "I've always said that in professional rugby you have to be so smart that you can turn off, or so stupid that you're not turned on," Marc says. "But if you're somewhere in the middle, it becomes quite burdensome." Rugby for him had become less of a passion, and more "like a job". That's the potential risk of following your passion, and monetising what you love. Nowadays, he reckons students that do get into professional rugby achieve no small feat. "I'd be impressed with the students who do it at a top level while continuing their degree. It's literally a 40 hour a week job, you know?"

The path for students into a gig with the Highlanders is relatively wellbeaten. The Uni solidified their relationship in 2014 with an advertising deal, and many of their current team are ex and current students. You don't have to be keen to get on the field either – the Highlanders offer internships for marketing, communications and commerce oriented students. For Marc, getting involved in professional rugby from a young age was all about balance. "Therein lies a little bit of a challenge," he admits. "If you shoulder tap a kid who's fifteen with a bit of talent who's not inclined to study or prefers to run around, they may hang their hat on one hook." His advice to younger players coming into the profession is to elicit support from people who have already been around the block – "the Council of Years". Those who have been in that position before usually have a valuable perspective on what life holds beyond rugby. Marc emphasises that even Christian Cullen ("the best player I ever saw") only had six years with the All Blacks. "It's a very short window of opportunity", he says. The Highlanders now benefit from a Personal Development Manager, there to explore and enable extra-curricular interests outside of rugby, ensuring that there are future career pathways setting the players up for life.

As of June of 2023, Marc bought shares in the Highlanders with some of his fellow ex-teammates, and was appointed as a director. "Any reason to spend more time in the best part of the country with solid Southern folk needs little encouragement," he said in a statement. "As the late great Gordy Hunter would say, 'Don't forget your roots lad, and don't be afraid to give back'". Marc seems to have stuck by this rationale, telling Critic that the further South you go, the better people get. Despite his varied career, he still ultimately reckons that the Highlanders have something special to offer. People down South consistently support the team, and have done so for a "very, very long time", whereas he reckons that if the Warriors lose a few games, the seats might be "pretty empty". But so long as the Highlanders keep being supported, they'll keep winning.

"Success breeds success," Marc says, with a sense of finality.

Lucas Casey: The Rising Star

22-year-old Lucas Casey is one of the youngest players on the Highlanders, recently graduated from the University of Otago. He's tan with dirty blond hair, and an easy-going demeanor. In the spirit of thirty years of Super Rugby, Critic asks Lucas if there's a player he models himself off of. "I think everyone who plays number 7 always goes Richie McCaw, but I always remember Michael Hooper as well. And Dan Carter." Despite being from up North, Lucas also reveals that he didn't really grow up supporting the Blues. "It always felt like there was a gap," he says, explaining that his Dad is from Timaru, and an avid Crusaders supporter. Despite being physically from up North, it seems like Lucas was always destined to become a Southern man. He lets us in on how he became a Highlanders fan as well: "I forget the exact game, and I wish I could point it out, but there was a game where the Highlanders beat the Crusaders – and they just should not have won at all. They were massive underdogs [...] And then as soon as I was in the under 20s, I was just like, 'this is where I want to go!'"

Lucas just finished his Bachelors degree in Management and Marketing last semester, taking four years, and plans to graduate soon this year. "Hopefully not on a home game weekend," one of his colleagues laughs. Lucas has already checked the dates: it's when the Highlanders are playing the Chiefs away, and they'll be back in time for graduation. These are the things you worry about as a young professional rugby player. For him, no other University stuck out like Otago: he'd had uncles that had attended in the 90's who couldn't speak higher of their experience, and the whole culture felt completely student oriented. He reckoned he'd fit in pretty well.

Lucas was selected and debuted for the Highlanders against the Crusaders last week, something that many aspiring players from his hometown of Kerikeri dream about. Lucas had been going along to his local club since he was about four or five. "In small towns, there's not a whole lot to do," he explains. "So filling your weekends with sports and mates is how you meet people." He loved it, and just never really stopped doing it. Rugby is "all [he's] ever done."

When he got to Otago, he didn't have anything lined up rugby-wise. He knew he wanted to keep playing, but felt like a small fish in a very big pond. "Being from a small town, you never know how good you are until you start playing against [other schools]." He began playing for Kaikorai Rugby Club and it turns out he was pretty good at it, quickly rising from the Colts to the main side. Last year, he captained the Demons to Premier Club Rugby glory in the Speights Championship Shield in July, to kick start an extensive whirlwind season culminating in the Log O' Wood (the Ranfurly Shield) safely stowed away for the summer, and a Highlanders contract just around the corner.

Lucas is someone you'd probably refer to as a rising star – and he has the right temperament to cope with it. When he was selected for the Highlanders at 21, he didn't feel overwhelmed, but excited. "Grateful for how

it all panned out. And I got a degree under my belt as well." When asked how he learnt that he was in the running for the Highlanders, Lucas tells us that he was playing NPC when he got a text from Jamie Joseph, current Head Coach of the Highlanders (soon to be All Blacks!), asking to catch up. "It was a bit of a shock, a bit out of the blue," Lucas laughs. Lucas had a standout performance in his 2025 Bunnings National Provincial Championship (NPC) season, highlighted by a memorable two-try performance in Otago's Ranfurly Shield victory over Canterbury. Maybe that text from Jamie wasn't as out of the blue as he might think. Reflecting on the collective Ranfurly Shield performance, Lucas described the experience as "awesome." He explains that being from a smaller region, there was never really much heard about the Shield (Northland last won as "North Auckland" in 1978). "And then you come down [to Dunedin] and you look at the history against Canterbury and it puts it into perspective how cool it is, and how important. The feeling around Dunedin was pretty priceless." Lucas says it's something he'll never forget. Players and fans alike understand the historical significance of what the Ranfurly Shield means to our national game, inspiring excitement and 'Shield fever'. The boys had successfully pulled off their first triumphant shield challenge against the Red and Blacks since 1935. The shield clocked upwards of 2,000 kms last season, changing hands five times before settling in Sam Gilbert's warm embrace. The log has been an important cornerstone of the NPC resurgence, amidst a struggling climate where maximising fan engagement has been a key focus for those at the helm of NZ Rugby.

Initially, Lucas felt a bit under pressure knowing that he was being watched for recruitment, but that feeling soon switched to relief. Jamie didn't really ask him to do anything different, or give him anything to touch up on – just keep playing how he was playing. It was a "confidence booster" more than anything. A few weeks later, it was all done and dusted: Lucas was set to be a Highlander. Nowadays, most of his time is spent at Highlanders HQ, filled by meetings, gym sessions and various trainings.

Lucas had his first pre-season game the other week against the Crusaders in Timaru, which he described as "fast, hot and good" (that's what she said). He already had some strong minutes with the NPC side, which he felt was good in bridging the gap. He says there is still a jump between the two, but he finds it helpful to remember that he's "here for a reason", as opposed to just being "happy to be there". Jumps in standards become the new standard for him – he says that he now plays to "make an impact". In terms of personal goals for the season, he reckons he would love to run out once this season and get a debut in front of a pumping home crowd. Safe to say he ticked that one off pretty quickly, getting the nod to start in Round One against the Crusaders last Friday, playing a key role in an unreal home win over our neighbours from up the road. The 'Landers looked like a well-oiled machine, while the Zoo was in fabulous form, evoking strong nostalgia from years past. Lucas might need to set himself another goal for the season, but clearly the sky is the limit for the young man from Kerikeri!

Like Marc, Lucas is aware of the need to strike a balance between playing professionally and being a young bloke in Dunedin. "I was pretty lucky it didn't kick off too soon," he admits. "Some boys come down and they're straight into it in first and second year, but I didn't join an NPC team until my third year." He spent his first years at Uni with mates, at the pub, and enjoying his time like many others. He reckons other young players might miss out on that aspect, but it's been a "huge" part of his life that he's made the most of. "I've made lifelong friends, and achieved some of that balance." In saying that, he admits that he doesn't do a whole lot outside of rugby nowadays, something he blames on his upbringing. "Growing up in a small town, all we did was play rugby. You go about your week, play rugby, maybe have a few beers afterward, and repeat." It's a habit he might never shake, but he says that Dunedin is a "pretty awesome place" with lots to do. There are always people to catch up with too – either at Baa Bar or the Bog, his two favourite pubs.

Now that he's a fifth year, many of his University mates have moved on, and things are beginning to mellow out. He's ditched student flatting, trading glad-wrapped windows for double glazing, opting to live with his girlfriend in a "much nicer house". He's now looking forward to growing as a person, but isn't super fixated on any major personal goals. Given he's done with his degree, he's able to fully focus on rugby for the next while – something unique to him compared to many of his teammates. There's heaps of players who are still enrolled in part time study. "It's worked out well," he says. "Now it's just figuring out what else I'd like to do alongside rugby [...] I'm just so grateful for how it all panned out. I wouldn't change anything, the people I met [...] Going to Kaikorai Rugby Club, I love that place as well. It all just felt like the perfect last couple years. I guess my advice would be to keep enjoying it, keep making mates."

30 Years Under The Belt

In some ways, so much of the game has changed – but in others, not at all. The blue and yellow still wrap tight around our necks, but the couches don't burn the way they used to at Carisbrook. The cold concrete of The Terraces has given way to the polished roof of the Forsyth Barr Stadium.

Professionalism may have ironed out some of the chaos, sure. There's at least an attempted reduction in feral streakers, and pork chops have been traded for nutritional plans. But the pulse is still there. It's in the roar of the Zoo, in numb-fingers clutching hot chips, in first-years finding their people in a sea of strangers. The game's grown up – and the student culture has too. But the love affair between childhood best friends? Still kicking.

Critic will be giving away free Zoo tickets to all of the home games this year, so keep an eye on our socials to be in to win.

THESE ARE THE BINS YOUR FLAT SHOULD HAVE:



- Yellow-lidded mixed recycling bin
- Red-lidded rubbish bin
- Green-lidded food scraps bin
- Blue glass bin
- **NO** rubbish bags



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Blue bin: Collect a new one from Campus Watch.
Yellow, green or red-lidded bin: Contact your property manager/landlord.

HOT TIP!

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radio one

RADIO ONE 97FM

ATTENTION STUDENTS!

We can't really believe Critic let us have a page for another year either tbh, but here we are! This Summer has been a pretty hot (vibe-wise, not weather wise) time for **Ōtepoti music**. If you didn't catch it already, **Rolling Stone AU** is running an on-going scene report series on the Dunedin music scene. Sick!

Writer **Conor Lochrie** has been covering a wide range of local artists and genres, from **DJ Bax's** donk revolution to the Riot Grrrl energy of **Vagina Dry**. Even documenting local hero and gig photographer **Dunedin Sound**, and giving us not one but TWO articles on **U-No Juno**.

Aside from it just being neat seeing Ōtepoti music getting its well-deserved flowers again, the series has already made a big impact on the muso community. Lochrie's article **'All-Ages Shows Are Big in Dunedin. But the Scene Still Needs Help'** coincided with a (very successful!) Boosted campaign to upgrade the soundsystem at **Pioneer Hall**, a mainstay of the all-ages gig scene. Off the back of its triumph, a similar fundraiser kicked off for **Yours** venue.

If you're in need of a wikihw on local music, we recommend checking it out. There's a good chance you could find your next favourite artist, and then realise they play at **Pearl Diver** like every other weekend.

In other news, a new weekly gig guide has made its debut! **'The Plan'** can be seen across town plastered up and adorning shop/venue windows. Created by a (semi) anonymous team, the E-grunge, DIY look-and-feel of the A3 poster is sure to be a new favourite of blank bedroom walls in need of some creative decoration.

It even includes a rotating programme of Radio One shows, in case we weren't already saturating your music media market. Anyway, submit to it by hitting up:

theplanotepoti@gmail.com



MUSIC FEATURES

Why Kane Strang Feels 'So Lucky' to Have Come Out of Dunedin's Music Scene

The indie rock musician tells us about his favourite venues and bands in his hometown, from the Crown Hotel to Dale Kerrigan

BY CONOR LOCHRIE

MUSIC FEATURES

Album You Need to Know: U-NO JUNO, 'Sex, Socialism, Science and Something Else'

Inspired by '90s music, The Mint Chicks, and Dale Kerrigan, U-NO JUNO could be Dunedin's next breakout rock band.

BY CONOR LOCHRIE

TOP 11

- 1 **scapegrace (Dn)**
bomber jacket (in your headlights)
- 2 **Mic Sure (Dn)**
Paper
- 3 **Becca Caffyn (Dn)**
Late Day Sun
- 4 **Takatapunani (NZ)**
FILTHY BASS ft. Coco Solid
- 5 **HOPE (NZ)**
Taukaea
- 6 **Flax Hubzzy (Dn)**
Blue Jacket, She's holding a little dog in the kitchen
- 7 **Ripship (NZ)**
Bon Voyage (Alphabethead Remix)
- 8 **Fazed on a Pony (NZ)**
Heart Goes Blank
- 9 **Havening (NZ)**
nx.o
- 10 **Hamish Waddell (DN)**
Old Friends with Biblical Names
- 11 **Toroa (NZ)**
Te Pū



GIG GUIDE

- RĀTŪ TUE 24TH**
Electric Open Jam Night @ Inch Bar.....7pm
- RĀAPA WED 25TH**
Stand Up Comedy @ Inch Bar...7.30pm...\$5
- RĀMERE FRI 27TH**
Prosa w/ Sivle Talk + SEEK HELP! @ The Crown.....7.30pm
- Paul S. Alan**
@ Inch Bar...7.30pm..koha
- RĀHOROI SAT 28TH**
Dolly Possum, Bunchy's Big Score, Phaedra Love @ Inch Bar...7.30pm...koha
- Exsanguinating Symphonies w/ Blood Cauldron, Wet Specimen, Festering Death**
@ The Crown...8pm...\$10
- Lockie Bennett Trio**
@ Hanover Hall...7.30pm

WANT TO WRITE A REVIEW? EMAIL PROMO@R1.CO.NZ :)

USA EXEC DANIEL LEAMY



Kia ora students,

I hope everyone has recovered from the recent lashing of rain and enjoyed O-Week. It's always chaotic, exciting, and at times overwhelming, but it's also one of the things that makes being an Otago student so special.

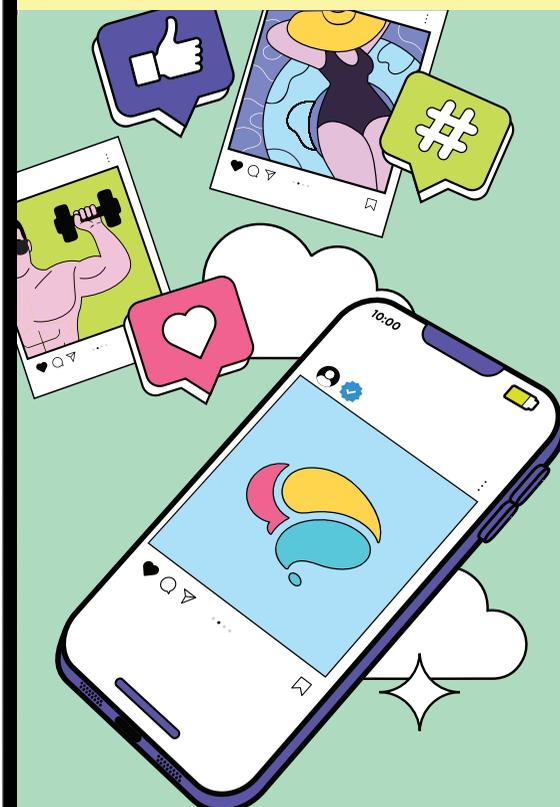
You're part of an incredibly unique student community here in Dunedin. If you've been on social media or read the news in the past few weeks, you've probably seen a fair bit of student bashing. Headlines calling Otago students 'unruly' or 'feral', often based on the actions of a select few, and without any real context. I've been actively defending our community, because those narratives do not reflect who we really are.

Otago is made up of over 20,000 students from all different backgrounds and experiences. Reducing an entire student population to a lazy stereotype isn't accurate. And besides that, students are allowed to have fun. Whether your version of fun is scrolling reels, playing games with flat mates, hitting the gym, or going out for a drink, you have every right to enjoy yourselves safely and responsibly.

So remember that whatever dramatic link your parents have sent you on Facebook doesn't truly reflect the Otago experience. Trust what you see in your own life, and you'll likely find that we are a vibrant, supportive, and yes, occasionally chaotic community.

As Semester 1 kicks off, look after yourselves, look after your mates, and remember that being an Otago student is more than just going to classes. It's about finding your place and your people, and a sense of belonging.

Ngā mihi,
Daniel Leamy
President



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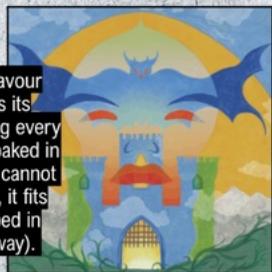
ALBUM REVIEW

DUNGEON VISION
EARTH TONGUE (NZ)

Review by Lily Jane.

The Pōneke born, Berlin-based duo return with even more of a psychedelia flavour on their third album. Produced by *Ty Segall*, lover of all things fuzz, it balances its sludge-y elements alongside tight, needle drumming - impressive, considering every track was recorded live to tape, no click track in sight. When it's heavy, it's soaked in thick reverb, yet always lifted by *Gussie Larkin's* layered melodies. I seriously cannot communicate how good the fuzz is across this thing. When a synth comes in, it fits delicately within the thunderous instrumentation. Makes me feel like I'm trapped in an old school dungeon crawler game, or *The Never Ending Story* (in a good way).

Fave Track: *Body of Water*



THE PROPR Māori students association

Tumuaki Takirua

Co - Presidents



JARNAL FLINTOFF

Ngā Rauru, Ngāti Uenuku, Te Āti Hau Nui ā Pāpārangi, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāti Tūwharetoa

Born and bred in Whanganui, in my 4th year on the grind of getting my tohu, jumping on Te Rito this year was an easy decision. Giving back to my whānau in the South and developing new skills to take home to my whānau in the North.

Kaipāpāho Matua

Communications Officer



BRADY SIMEON

Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi

I'm currently studying a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Māori Studies, with a strong passion for te reo Māori ōna tikanga. I grew up in the Naughty North, in my hometown of Moerewa, and I joined Te Rito to do my part in uplifting and supporting all taura Māori.

Āpiha Ahurea

Cultural Officer



MAIONA ANAE

Te Rarawa, Ngāti Tiipa, Ngāti Pīkahu Waewae, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Ira

I come from the mighty kokonga of Te Awakairangi, Lower Hutt, and I've lived there since the great year of 2011. Since then, I have been working to achieve my tohu: a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Media and Māori Studies. I joined Te Rito to share my mātauranga about Te Ao Māori, from my days as a wee child right through to today. However, I also see this as an opportunity to build a hononga motuhake with all taura, staff, friends, whānau ko wai atu, ko wai atu. Arā, ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga nōnā te āo.

SAMI HARRISON DUNN

Ngāti Whatua ki Kaipara, Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Maru ki Hauraki, Ngāti Ruanui Mo'aoa

Kia ora mai tātou! E tipu ake au i te korowai o Te Kāhui Maunga mai i Whanganui me Te Hāwera hoki. He akonga o te tohu BASci: Neuroscience, Indigenous Development me he tohu iti o Hauora Māori. He aha te mea nui o tenei whare wānanga? He taurira nē? Ae, tērā te mea nunui mō Te Rōpū Māori, mō Te Rito o tenei tau, me au ano hoki.

Translation: Hello everyone! I was raised in Whanganui and Hāwera, under the mantle of Te Kāhui Maunga. I am currently studying a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Indigenous Development, with a minor in Māori Health. What is the most important thing at this university? It is the students, of course. That is what matters most to Te Rōpū Māori, to Te Rito this year, and to me as well.

Kaiwhakahaere Kaupapa

Social and Events Officer



DENNIS KRISTEL

Waikato-Tainui

Being a local has its perks; studying a Bachelor of Arts is fun, and being able to plan events is even better. Bringing bigger and better events to let our taura enjoy their time at Ōtākū Whakaihu Waka.

Ngā Āpiha Hauora

Recreation and Welfare Officers



SAMUEL MOKOMOKO

Te Whakatōhea, Ngai Tūhoe

I'm from a small town in the Eastern Bay of Plenty called Ōpōtiki, but I went to school in Tauranga and Hamilton. Growing up in Tauranga, there were a lot of summer vibes, and I think that's why I always enjoy swimming. I'm studying a BSc in Physiology, and the reason I decided to join Te Rito was to give back to TRM.

Kaihāpai

Treasurer



TIA FLEMING

Ngāti Apa (Ngā Wairiki, Rangitikei), Ngāti Kahungunu, Samoa (Falelima, Sapapali'i, Manono, Fasito'o Uta, Vailoa Aleipata), Cook Islands

I whakapapa to Kauangāroa, Whanganui, but was born and raised in South Auckland. My whānau moved a lot, and we lived around Auckland, Melbourne, Samoa, and Hamilton, and now I live here in Ōtepoti with my own little whānau. I study a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and really enjoy it. I joined Te Rito to be an advocate for our taura and continue to have our voices heard throughout the university.

Āpiha Mātauranga

Education Officer



JAQUELINE MANKIWELL

Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāpuhi

I grew up in Gisborne, a proud Kura kid for most of my life, and finished off my schooling at a Catholic school. I wanted to join Te Rito to help our Māori students thrive and make their whānau proud! I am studying a Bachelor of Law & Arts to hopefully become a lawyer or work in the Indigenous Development space.



JONNEE HARRIS

Waikato Tainui, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Hikairo, Ngāti Korokī Kahukura

I'm from Te Awamutu in the North Island, a place that has shaped who I am and keeps me grounded in my values. My tohu is to lead with integrity, mana, and aroha in all that I do, staying connected to my culture and uplifting those around me. I ran for Te Rito to help strengthen our Māori presence at Ōtago, to create a space where taura Māori feel supported.

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Thinking of standing in the Dunedin City Council by-election?

Nominations are now open and close on Tuesday 2 March 2026.

To stand for election, candidates must be enrolled to vote and a New Zealand citizen by the close of the nomination period.

For more information phone 03 477 4000 or visit www.dunedin.govt.nz/elections



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Illustrated by Eleanor Walker

COLLUMNS ★ RANGITAKI

Horoscopes

PISCES

Don't give up, queen! You may be going through the trenches now, but you have so many people loving and supporting you from the side lines. Keep shooting and you will get that dream job in this economy, even if it feels impossible.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Beach/PJ party

ARIES

You have grown so much in the past year, and will continue to grow in this coming one. People will come and go, but real friends will be there for the long haul — like when shit hits the fan and you catch the Fresher Flu for your 3rd year in a row.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Jungle/Camo

VIRGO

I'm manifesting a successful and healthy year for you. Time to swap those vodka shots for kombucha ones. Lock the fuck in this year, because it's time to make good on that New Year's rez and get your ass into a seat at the library for those A+++.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Brides/Grooms

GEMINI

You are starting to scare your friends — it's time to start prepping for uni. Try selecting those papers already, and seeing how far you will have to walk to get that random 6pm lab you have every week.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Disco

AQUARIUS

The new year means it's time to live boldly. Remember that embarrassment is an underexplored emotion. Go do that thing that's been nagging at the back of your mind and make some of those core uni memories your parents keep telling you about.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Back to school

SCORPIO

A new year means new you. Look inside and evaluate your pros and cons. Honestly, you may just need to grow the fuck up and learn how to eat a baddie out properly.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Golf Bros/Tennis Hoes

TAURUS

It's a new year, so try to open your mind. Try to remember some thoughts are inside thoughts... Like deep, deep inside thoughts. We need more good vibes in 2026, so go spread some of that for a change.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Cowgirl/Cowboy

CAPRICORN

You will be tempted by all the free stuff this week. So fuck it — go all in and grab all that shit. But at the end of the day, remember you don't need 50 totes. Keep your head on, and eyes on the real prize: a barely used three-seater couch.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Pimps/Hoes

LEO

Watch out this week - eggs might come flying your way when people think you're still a fresher. Make sure to keep an eye out for bushes on your way to O-Week hosts so you can make a quick retreat, and maybe keep some spare ammo on hand to return fire.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Frat Party

CANCER

Hey... It's still the summer break before your first assignment is due, so stop stressing so much. Go to the farmers market to grab some local devils lettuce, furnish your room, and maybe "accidentally" acquire another cone for the flat.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Day At The Races

LIBRA

The love bug is in the air, and baby — you just caught it. Keep an eye out because that long term friend likes you back, whether you know it or not. So maybe take that shot in the dark and see how much noise those Flatpack beds can really make.

O-Week Theme You Ate: White Out

SAGITTARIUS

Time to whip out that 'Am I Gay?' quiz again. What happens during Ori stays in Ori, so maybe break your celibacy with a steamy night out with that person you've been making eyes at in the club.

O-Week Theme You Ate: Goth

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