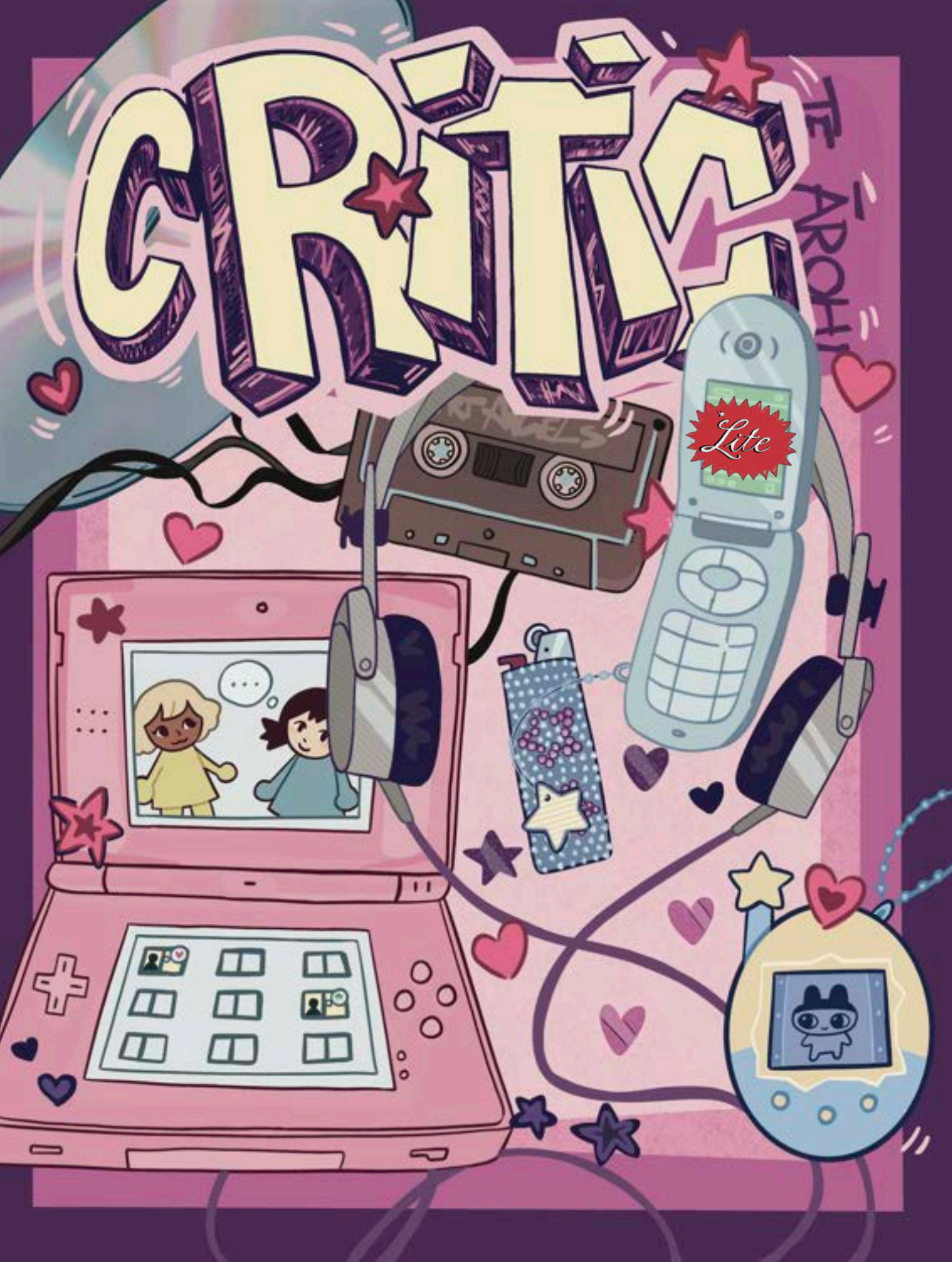


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TE AROHAI

Lite



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Editorial

Dear Otago

Otago, as I write this, I sit in an airport. I'm miles away from you, and I can't help but notice that the colours seem duller and the sky less open without you near. Laughter seems less genuine, and all I can think about is coming home to you. No matter how damp the soil, or how wet the air, there is something about you that I cannot shake.

I first met you in a bad place in my life. I was young, and I didn't know what I wanted. I knew I had to get free and be someone, something, different – but where? I didn't want parents, friends, or anything that I knew. I needed to be an entirely different person. And then I met you.

We were fast friends, and played late into the night. You taught me what real love was. You gave me everything – hope, friendship, freedom. I wouldn't have done anything that makes me myself without you showing me it first. I've woken up many mornings smiling from the sheer happiness of where I am, curled beneath your hills and outstretched arms. If I were to look you in the eye, I would see the emerald that stretches over the peninsula, or the teal that encroaches the shore. I have never known beauty like you.

Sometimes people joke about you – they say they come for the weekend, and then return home. Like you are something to give a try, have some fun with, and then leave. But you are my favourite inside joke, and I like that some people will never understand you. I don't want to leave you, Otago. I choke up just thinking about it – that one day I will need to leave and I will not return as I was. Will you look at me the same?

I know I am just one of many that you see. I know I am probably no different compared to the many that have come before me, or those who will come after me. But you are something special – no matter where I go, or who I meet, I know I won't forget you. But I know I need to move on.

I know I'll find these things in other places, and find a love like I have loved you. There will be other things to enjoy, like how skyscraper lights flicker across the water, or how motorways stretch like arteries. There will be things like noise, scale and freedom to learn – even if that's freedom from you. Admittedly, so much has changed over the years. We're different now, not for better or for worse, but I am not the same person I was when we first met. I have changed.

There's no pressure to respond to this letter. It's just enough to know that you're still out there, and that I still have a place with you – even if it won't be for very long now.

Yours,

Hanna Varrs ✨

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The News

ISSUE 12

KAWEPURONGO

18/05/2026



RUNWAY REVIVAL A RUNAWAY SUCCESS

Dunners taura showcase more than just jorts and uggs

By Te Awhirēinga Heperi
Staff Writer
news@critic.co.nz



Runway Revival 2026 had Errick's packed with Ōtepoti's most fashionable residents (believe it or not, they do exist down here). The fashion show featured a wraparound runway, twinkling lights, and the skilled Dunedin quartet, all put together by Presbyterian Support to showcase sustainable fashion.

The show's competition consisted of 3 categories: 'What's Your Dunedin?' where designers had to interpret the city through upcycled clothing, 'Anything But Clothes' where contestants repurposed second-hand items into innovative fashion, and 'Lucky Dip' where designers were given a random bag of clothing and challenged to channel it into an outfit. After a warm welcome and a karakia, the models hit the runway with style, strutting their imaginative designs with pride and purpose.

The creativity of our Ōtepoti community was obvious, from electric blanket pants, to gorgeous dresses inspired by local gothic architecture, to an upcycled wetsuit. The crowd brought the vibes, showing heartfelt support as the runway erupted into applause with each design. Ōtepoti student Chelsea said to Critic Te Arohi that "everyone is so beautiful and talented." Members of the audience were also pleased with how the event made fashion such a sustainable and accessible space for the public, with Chelsea adding, "I love to see what everyone's come up with, it's just so amazing."

Although much of the crowd were clearly seasoned fashionistas, those who hadn't yet dipped their toe into the world of fashion felt excited and welcomed by this event. Errick's employee Kristen was one such

newbie, commenting that the event was "a very unique thing, and not something I know of happening in Dunedin before".

Critic spoke with organiser Milla-Rose Byron after the runways were cleared, who explained that the models and designers are "spending the night showing off their designs, but also helping the community, our rangatahi and tamariki." It was evident how much went into this event and the atmosphere of kotahitanga and a passion for sustainability ensured that the night was a hit.

Raffle tickets were also available throughout the night, with all proceeds going to Presbyterian Support. A selection of donated and curated items were also auctioned off, and all pieces were claimed by the lucky and enthusiastic bidders. Dunedin's own wholesome version of Project Runway, if you will.

There were winners for each category on the night, arguably securing bragging rights as one of Dunedin's most stylish residents. Mikayla Lindsay took out 'What's your Dunedin?', Hannah and Ed Daniell snagged the win on 'Anything but Clothes', and 'Lucky Dip' was won by Mezza Minx.

Congratulations to all participants, we love to see the dedication to a sustainable future for our community. Fingers crossed you want to give students some fashion tips, our campus needs it. ★

Photos credited to Jonathan Adlem

A PEEP BEHIND THE CAPPING SHOW CURTAINS

Critic would die first in a horror movie

By Harry Almey
Staff Writer
news@critic.co.nz



Twas the week before Capping opening night, and the walls of Central were plastered with missing posters of the cast. As worried as the next guy, Critic Te Arohi put on a brave face and big-boy pants and went undercover to investigate.

Critic understands that the cast of SQUEAL: A Capping Show Horror are not, in fact, missing. Phew. Instead, they were sitting around cross-legged in the Mary Hopewell Theatre like excited schoolchildren eager to tell us what they'd been working on. And, fuck – they've been working super hard. SQUEAL is a product of months of dedication, focusing on the lives of four scarfies – Lindsey, Deborah, Tom and Matty – who will leave their mark on Flat 666 while being "terrorised" by Ghosted Face.

Half of the cast are in their second year of Capping, and another third of them have been around even longer. Critic asked why they kept coming back given how time intensive Capping is. One cast member yelled out that the entire thing is a "cult", before being silenced by another who told Critic "don't put that in", and that it's "culture", not a cult. "That's what we've got," they assured. Right.

Heath, who plays Matty Thompson, says the cast's other motivation is simply the "massive sense of pride" that comes with Capping. It's a labour of love, a whole show made by students for students, and cast member Harriet agrees they are "proud to have a bit of ownership of it." There's also that warm, fuzzy feeling in contributing to a 132-year tradition. "What we're doing is so special," she explained.

Critic observed that traditional community and "culture" (not cultishness) in full force, with the cast exchanging banter relentlessly during our very serious interview. According to Izzi, who acts as main character Deborah, the crew "love to troll each other", but behind that, they're "tight-knit". "You spend so much time [together]," Izzi explained. "You start to really look after each other."

The work that goes into Capping is a well-established pattern: after O-Week, a month-long marathon of writing, pitching, and dance practice begins. The directors then select the side sketches you'll see on stage from the three hundred or so ideas pitched by the cast. That's probably more ideas than the average student has in their entire degree.

What follows after is another grueling month, with stage rehearsals stacking up to thirty six hours per week – on top of video sketch work and the (occasional) lecture. The final practice rehearsals combine stage with tech and involve thirteen hour days. Capping must be something special to get these dedicated taura voluntarily on campus for that long.

For the first time in over a decade, the main sketch isn't linked to a series or a single piece of media, but to the horror genre itself. Paying homage to everything from the slashers to the paranormal, the ethos for the directors and main sketch writer is that there's "something that appeals to everyone" in SQUEAL. Emile, who plays Lindsey, says the show is a chance to step outside of a world where it's pretty "stressful to be a person" right now. Let's see if Capping Show throws us back to killer-clown paranoia from 2016.

So you can escape from the misery and those pre-winter blues, kick back and just have a laugh for once. And for all you diehard Craig Daniels fans out there, we asked if he would return for Capping '26. The official answer from directors Jessica Shoemark and Annabelle Fenn was "maybe". No student left behind!

Get ready, because there will be spooky stuff! This show better be so scary we shit ourselves. ★

SQUEAL: A Capping Show Horror runs from May 14th to May 23rd, and tickets are available from the OUSA website.
<https://www.ousa.org.nz/events/event-details/the-capping-show-2026->

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS REPORT INSURANCE DELAYS

Broke and broken?

By Georgia Hejdková
Contributor
news@critic.co.nz



International exchange students are a staple of the University of Otago's community. However, it's easy to forget to question some of the barriers they may face in getting here. One such barrier is health and travel insurance, which is a prerequisite for international students. While the University of Otago is aiming at making the insurance-related bureaucracy as seamless as possible, Critic Te Arohi has heard reports of struggles within the system.

Patri, an exchange student from the Czech Republic, had an accident on a hike, which incurred an ACC claim of more than \$300. She told Critic that while she submitted her claim to Studentsafe (a travel policy currently tendered for by insurance company Allianz Partners) over a month ago, she still hasn't received a payment – despite claiming to have emailed Allianz multiple times. According to the University of Otago's Director International, Studentsafe Inbound University is a "comprehensive health and insurance policy". This insurance must be "code-compliant", basically meaning it's up to

scratch with a group Pastoral Care Code maintained by all eight New Zealand Universities. Jason added that this group approach "ensures that the best available premiums and policy benefits are in place for international students studying at a university in New Zealand." Universities work through a broker to receive additional support and service when assisting with "claims, advocacy for students, expedited assistance with critical incident response and feedback to the insurer!"

Patri is in a similar boat to Clara*, who's studying abroad from Norway. Clara had a claim of \$450 for dental care (under the StudentSafe policy up to \$500 of dental care is covered), and (at time of writing) she alleged that she had been waiting for over three weeks to receive it. Visiting from Macau, Mary*, reports that she had two claims that were delayed. First, she requested reimbursement for a blood test totalling just over \$450, which was initially denied, despite her eligibility. With the help of International Student Support services this was disputed, and Mary was reimbursed after three weeks. She

continue on to next page →



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also had a broken laptop, which was only partially reimbursed. After further intervention by International Student Support, the claim was apparently resolved after three weeks.

The Studentsafe page on the Insurancesafe website recommends that international students should keep all records and receipts of a loss or event while travelling. "Allianz Partners processes many thousands of claims each year," the website reads. "[W]hen the correct information is supplied by you, assessment of the claim can be very prompt."

Jason explained that while the University is aware of delays experienced by some students, "most" are due to more "complex cases requiring additional documentation or investigation", or due to the student having already left New Zealand. When there are issues with Allianz, the University "advocates, through the insurance broker, on behalf of students". So while the University can't directly control what happens with insurance, think of them like a middle man between you and the sometimes-overwhelming system.

All Otago international students have the option to opt out of Studentsafe and provide evidence of an alternative Code-compliant

policy. However, if students choose to do so, Jason explains that the University would be unable to provide "any support for claims or emergency assistance with private cover", and students who have private cover are not able to access "bulk billing" at Student Health, unlike those students using Studentsafe. Bulk billing in this context basically means that international students have their Student Health visits billed directly to their insurance.

While these claims are certainly not trivial and a several hundred dollar expense is a blow for any taura on a budget, Jason did note that under Immigration New Zealand visa conditions "international students are required to have sufficient funds to cover cost of living for the duration of their enrolment period."

Finally Jason also added that "[t]he University prides itself on ensuring students feel safe and supported while studying here" and pointed to Pūtea Tautoko (the University's student hardship fund) for students struggling financially. Our sympathies to anyone who has had to make an insurance claim – it's never fun, let alone in a foreign country. ★

*Name changed

CRITIC TE ĀROHI 2026 CENSUS



IMOGEN TAYLOR: Hose 2026. Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Left Thomas. Photography by B. J. Deakin

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U-No Juno are undoubtedly one of the most enthralling bands in the current Ōtepoti music scene, pulling from a colourful array of influences to craft their own self-described brand of "post-post-post-post-post hardcore". Since 2024, the band have been carving out a name for themselves, playing shows all across Aotearoa. Rolling Stone AU/NZ even called them "one of the best new bands in the country" – and Critic Te Ārohi agrees.

U-No Juno is made up of Stefan (vocals/guitar), Ramona (vocals/bass), and Jack (drums), and this trio has a massive year ahead. Critic Te Ārohi sat with U-No Juno in their living room, recounting the band's early days, inspiration, and future plans, while Jack was simultaneously locked in on a game of Fortnite.

Stefan and Jack have been playing music together since their high school jazz band, playing saxophone and bass, respectively. The duo began playing some good ol' rock and roll music, and eventually they met Ramona at one of their gigs near the end of 2023, and Stefan asked Ramona to join them – the duo became a trio. "I didn't know how to play any instruments, and Stefan lied to Jack and was like, "Yeah, she knows how to play bass!" Ramona said. "There were so many times I wanted to back out." But she pushed through the frustration, and after countless gigs, Ramona became an absolute natural onstage. And so, U-No Juno was born.

The group's first gig was a lot more daunting than the average band's debut. Dunedin's riot grrrl icons Vagina Dry (and friends of U-No Juno) booked their first ever South Island tour and asked if U-No Juno wanted to join them. "We'd been practicing for a wee bit, and we were like 'yeah, might as well,'" Stefan says. "We're not gonna pass up an organised tour!" The trio played four gigs around the South Island, starting in Invercargill, which turned out to be Ramona's first ever show. "It was a terrible idea," Jack muttered, and Stefan agreed that they "weren't very good". Terrible or not, the group agreed that it was certainly a fun and interesting way to start their career as a band.

In March of 2025, U-No Juno released their first EP, titled "Sex, Socialism, Science and Something Else". The three were quick to voice their disapproval of that release. "It's just so dated," explains Ramona. "Like, we don't sound like that at all anymore. We don't play any of those songs. We've gotten heaps better, I think. Leave it in the freaking dust." This EP was recorded by local music scene legend Sam Charlesworth, but was a true DIY effort – mixed by the band "in the back of a van", and supported by a small run of cassettes. And while they may disagree, the five track EP is a promising showcase of the band's versatility and finesse, from the luscious harmonies on "All, Everything" to the quick, punky blast of "Sorry Jack". Stefan was willing to acknowledge that it's still an authentic record of what U-No Juno was at the time.

2025 saw U-No Juno trying to play as many gigs as they could, gain experience around the country and get their name out there into the scene. So far, the trio has spent the first few months of 2026 cooking up some big plans. They're in the final stages of recording their debut album, and while they're more concerned with finishing it than any real timeline, they are hoping to release it by late 2026 or early 2027. Consisting of ten tracks, this currently unnamed album is more shaping up to be more sonically complex and thought out than their first release. "I think there's a lot of intention, a lot of thought put into the track listing and everything," explains Stefan. "With an album, you sort of want to think of it as one piece. It's one work and it's meant to be listened to in succession." Hopefully they'll like it a little more – everyone hates their first child.

The band has been playing most of these unreleased songs for the past year, refining and perfecting each one with every performance. If you've seen U-No Juno live recently, you'll have heard tracks like "Condor 44", "Tuff Girl", and "Adolescence". These new tracks see the band stretch their musical prowess in new directions, with each one taking its own sonic identity through various tempo changes, angular guitarwork, and ridiculously catchy hooks. Keep your eyes on these ones for sure. ★

**DO YOU LIKE EATING FOOD?
BREATHING AIR?
HAVING GOOD MEDICINES? THANKS, BOTANY!**

Enrol in BIOL123 Plants: How they shape the world now.



Literary Society x Critic Te Arohi Writing Competition

Somewhere Between Leaving and Arriving Phoebe Rodgers

August, 2023 - Portland, Maine

Mom and Dad don't ask where she went.

She observes the tide pulling out slowly,
leaving everything exposed for a moment
before it disappears again.

Her hair remains in knots, she leaves it
unbrushed.

She grabs a speaker out of her 2006 used
Lexus that she hasn't named yet, and lays
down on the cement storm surge wall as the
waves rhythmically crash to the beat of the
first song that comes on. She knows those
hums. The same ones she once built a story
around, never quite finding an ending.

Only halfway through the song and she's
bored.

She pauses the speaker, wraps her sarong
around her waist, tosses her board into the
back of her car and turns the key.

The song restarts. Three minutes and fifty-
one seconds of twangy, crisp guitar strokes
that strike the ear with tones of nostalgia.
Someone humming, like they are suspended
between leaving and arriving, not fully
belonging to either.

The road stretches out, steady and
unbothered. She passes places she's never
seen, now heading toward Portland, Maine.
Her shin, still cut from her fins, stings as
the salt dries tight against it. She's fresh
on her junior operating license, so both
hands stay fixed on the wheel as the window
drifts her sunbleached blonde hair into her
face.

She gets a text from Hope. Wanna stay at mine
for a bit? I've got room.

Waiting tables and helping the prep chefs
back home taught her how quickly three
hundred and fifty dollars will recover—
she'll be set for a while.

The song keeps playing, and for a moment
everything feels suspended. All grown up at
sixteen and a half, she keeps driving. ★



Dunedin Noir Charlie Gardner

O-Week. The city wasn't sleeping, and it had
taken too much MDMA. Now the city was holed
up in a seedy club with a drunken girl draped
over it, and the city was too wired to care. It
was one of those nights that made you want
to smoke—till I remembered that I was out of
cigarettes, because I don't smoke. Never have.

While the delinquent youths—some a bit
too long in the tooth for skulduggery—got
themselves nicked for boosting a couple
shopping trollies from the New World parking
lot, I was gazing longingly into the blank
abyss of a Word doc and praying that I'd
finally think of something clever to say.
Raymond Chandler, I am not.

And in the morning, when the booze hounds
wake up on their stove with half a bottle of
vodka hanging out their mouths and a less-
than-vivid memory of the night prior, I'd
still be sat in this ramshackle, fire hazard
of a \$500-a-week flat, so far from campus it
might as well have been Invercargill.

It was a particularly stormy night, and the
flat was cold and empty, like a fridge with
everything taken out. 11:37pm. My mind, like
a student flat couch—reeking of alcohol
and likely to spontaneously combust—was
turning something over.

The mystery had been festering since last
semester. An earworm gnawing away my sanity.
As much of a mystery as the implementation
of Aoroa, powered by Brightspace™, and just
as functional. I was tortured. Like these
sentences.

Yet, I just couldn't shake the feeling that I'd
missed something, that there was something
I just wasn't seeing. That single question
burned in my head.

Why did the professor give me a B- on that
essay last semester? ★



I'll name your parts for a grade Alena Khan

laid muscle against plastic,
stripped and strewn.
oh how exposed,
and naked and fragile.

reduced fibres of being,
how can one be?
if not just bundled,
bound and bare.

recognise,
must I address clear
by name, my beloved,
limb of unknown.

willing subject of scalpel,
do they observe?
or seek opportunity
of victim or volunteer.

trimmed are the nails,
clinical or care?
who held you?
white coats, bespoke.

passage of time,
pause softly my dear.
walk or run,
do not miss spoken Latin in ear.

forgive me please,
for I shall poke nor stare
as if eyes were present,
might her gaze be shared.

laid reduced now recognise,
how willingly trimmed
the passage of time,
forgive me

please. ★

In the Corners of the Milky Way Lizzie Diamond

Bright red boulders illuminated
By the smoldering fire. Coals burning out,
Twisting upwards, like the bursts of light
Dotting the blanketed sky as if the world
Could fold neatly us into it, like mom's
Quilted blankets. Here, grab your corner
As I grab mine, let's tuck in the corners
Of the Milky Way. Space on one end and time
On the other—bring them together to hug us
Tight, until our breathing matches, our
Hearts warmed. Until light spews
From the delicate seams, stitched by mom's timely
touch.

Place it with the eons organized in our laundry
room,
Stacked neatly on the painted wooden shelves,
cracking
With the weight of time. Hold on tight
As the universe spins on the wash cycle.
Spun smooth from the timely wheel, centuries known
To none. Leave its fraying stitches to dry
On the clothesline, warmed by the sputtering coals.
I'll hold you until it's dried, I'll sing you a
lullaby.

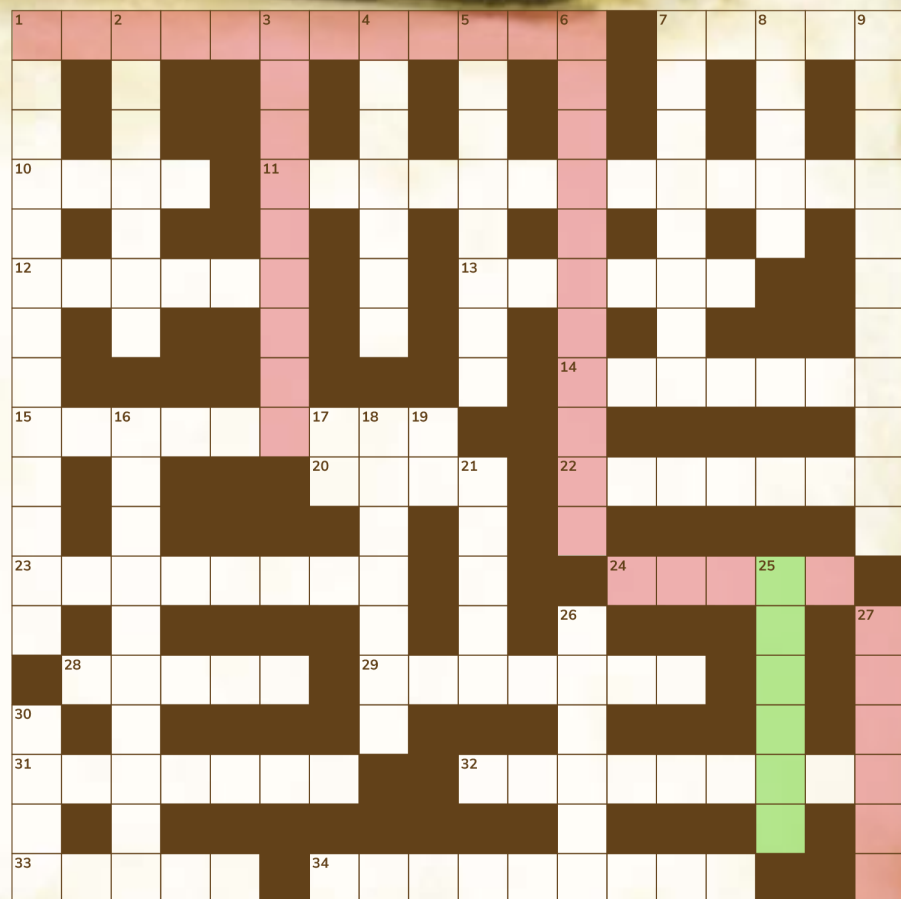
Let's watch as the Milky Way sways. ★



CROSSWORDS

ACROSS

- 1 *Fighting video game franchise (2)*
- 7 Alloy often made into instruments
- 10 Carpet-like green plant
- 11 Manufacturing process involving a product moving through different workstations (2)
- 12 Guitar-manufacturing company
- 13 Sight
- 14 Overwhelmed by great numbers
- 15 Upperhand
- 20 Massive entertainment and technology company
- 22 Odysseus
- 23 Going beyond what is necessary
- 24 *Mario's brother*
- 28 Bathroom sink, for example
- 29 Transcribed or recorded as written music
- 31 One who pilots aircrafts
- 32 Tupperware, for example
- 33 Common game at retirement homes
- 34 Applicant or nominee



- DOWN**
- 1 The process of wrapping the dead in cloth
 - 2 Lifting
 - 3 *Protagonist of the 'Tomb Raider' franchise (2)*
 - 4 Make more money than others from selling your product
 - 5 2007 film, "ya like jazz?"
 - 6 *Award-winning, zombie-themed videogame (4)*
 - 7 Demolish structures
 - 8 Immense pain
 - 9 Queasiness on a boat
 - 16 One who doesn't consume meat
 - 17 "___ above, so below"
 - 18 Known for 'Barbie' and 'La La Land' (surname)
 - 19 Short for English
 - 21 Luxury boat
 - 25 *Answer to this week's connecting clues*
 - 26 Redeemed, made amends
 - 27 *Popular 1980s puzzle game involving blocks*
 - 30 Backward-pointing spike

Puzzle answers on critic.co.nz

SUDOKU

6	4	7						
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Horoscopes



PISCES

Usually you thrive on gossip, but this particular pot of tea isn't to your taste. The amount of grey hairs the gossip train has caused should be criminal. I am prescribing you at least 48 hours of gossip free time. It's okay to feel lonely, but also normal to sit in occasional silence.

Your phobia: Astrophobia (space)



ARIES

You've recently been on a winning streak. Although it's tempting to try to take on the world, be sure not to try your luck too often – it might just run out. No one wants to be 10k in debt because you tried to be a finance bro and invest in a new startup you heard about on Reddit.

Your phobia: Athazagoraphobia (being forgotten or ignored)



VIRGO

The echoes of a past decision haunt your dreams to this day. My advice is that you may never know whether you did the right thing, but it's important to let things go. Free up the mental load of your past decisions and put it towards studying instead.


Your phobia: Tubariphobia (pickles)



GEMINI

This week you will embarrass yourself to a seismic level – whether it's falling down the stairs in Central, or pulling on a push door. Try to play it cool like the main character from a 2000's rom com – there's never been a better time to try being more nonchalant.

Your phobia: Carnophobia (eating meat)



AQUARIUS

Your hunger strike has been going on long enough – binge watching muckbangs in place of cooking is just getting depressing. We all know groceries are expensive, but try moving some of the weekly energy drink budget into something that will actually nourish you.

Your phobia: Koumpounophobia (buttons)



SCORPIO

Someone's forgotten to take their chill pill! Your furious spirit has often landed you in a bit of a pickle, but if you don't mellow out, you're going to make being in said pickle look like a walk in the park. Sort it out before you land yourself a semi-permanent stay in the dog house.

Your phobia: Ornithoscelidaphobia (dinosaurs)



TAURUS

Someone from your past may try contact you again – and it's lowkey your fault! Why didn't you block them when you had the chance? Please remember why they're in your past and not your future, and delete the pic of them on your feed – you're leaving a door open.

Your phobia: Androphobia (MEN!)



CAPRICORN

With exams around the corner, your anxiety has been running high. Although patronising to hear, try to take a minute and actually breathe. Pinky promise that it'll be easy to remember the things you're trying to shove into your mushy brain if you're a bit calmer.


Your phobia: Peniaphobia (being broke lol)



LEO

You've been romanticising things for far too long, and all your friends are well aware. It gets to a point where this kinda shit isn't cutesy anymore and your actions are just plain wrong. Please, for the love of god, find your limit – AND STICK TO IT!

Your phobia: Papophobia (The Pope)



CANCER

You've been putting things off for too long – procrastination wasn't meant to become as normalised as it has. Try starting slow and just hacking away at the pile of assignments. The more you work at it, the better it'll become. The stars told me! But time is ticking.

Your phobia: Nifaliophobia (being sober)



LIBRA

All the roads are beginning to frost over, and you're wrangling your ratty puffer jacket out on a daily basis. Your power bill may make you feel like a double decker bus has hit you, but it'll be worth it to avoid a cough you can't shake off for the rest of the year.

Your phobia: Moral scrupulosity (lying)



SAGITTARIUS

It may be time for a painfully honest reflection into your inner psyche. People tend to take your words seriously so think before you speak! This will help keep you from saying something you regret forever.


Your phobia: Phobophobia (phobias)

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