



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

ah!



The
FRESHER
Issue
24/25



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Follow @gracroc

◀ cover design
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from the editors

Welcome to The FRESHERS Issue 24/25

Whether you're new to Manchester or returning to the city, this special mini-issue of aAh! offers a hand-picked guide to the best of Manchester's arts and culture scene. Created by students for students, it's designed to give you an *authentic* Mancunian experience.

It's been an eventful year, marked by the worsening climate crisis and ongoing political conflicts. However, with the momentum of the recent general election and the countless ways we've seen communities come together to challenge adversity, positive change is in the air. A new academic year brings new beginnings, and there's no better place to embrace change than Manchester.

This issue is all about keeping it real. We're kicking things off with honest advice, followed by the best spots to match your vibe, from cute cafés to the best nightlife, and natural spots to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. As aAh! celebrates its ten-year print anniversary and our university continues its 200th anniversary celebrations, we're celebrating the creative spirit that makes Manchester unique.

Music lovers, rejoice — the clouds of Oasis ticket queue dramas have cleared, making way for a focus on homegrown bands and fresh new talent. We're highlighting the artists who are carrying the city's musical legacy forward.

We hear from some of the most influential people in Manchester's arts and culture scene, including the creatives behind Factory International's upcoming programme, the city's very first Bicycle Mayor, and Joy Division and New Order music legend Peter Hook.

This issue focuses on inclusivity, exploring Black identity and fashion with new designer Amina Jeng, and spotlights women in Manchester's theatre scene with HER Productions.

As Manchester Literature Festival returns, we round up the authors and poets to keep an eye out for from the Manchester Writing School, and explore how writers are responding creatively to the climate crisis.

This theme of 'Authenticity' is reflected not only in the content, but also in the design of the issue, which has been handcrafted by students at the Manchester School of Art. The headlines use traditional woodblock type printed on our letterpress, while the illustrations incorporate Risograph printing, watercolour paints and other manual techniques, making the most of the workshops and the talent that are the beating heart of our art school.

Every Manchester Met student is welcome to join and contribute to aAh! Magazine, whether you're a first-year Journalism student or a postgraduate Engineer. Join your student magazine and be part of our creative community.

We're thrilled to have you here and hope you enjoy everything this issue — and Manchester — has to offer!

Makenna Ali and Tara Morony
aAh! Magazine Editorial Assistants



featured artist
Ellen Scott
Follow @soubowlart

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the team

WHAT'S ON

A hand-picked selection of the many creative, cultural and community-oriented events taking place across Manchester over the first term.

By Jennifer Grace & aAh! Team
Design Bradley Sansom

SEPTEMBER

Freshers Fair 24-25/09/24

No Freshers Week experience is complete without a trip to the Freshers Fair. Taking place across two days at Sugden Sports Centre, it's an opportunity for you to explore the clubs and societies Manchester Met has to offer — and bag freebies and free Domino's pizza.

Painting Manchester Red 29/09/24

Flow4Equality presents Painting Manchester Red, a new pop-up day festival taking place at Brickhouse Social, designed to support and empower women while raising awareness of period poverty. The event will feature guest speakers, craft stations and art workshops.

Traplord 26-29/09/24

This Olivier Award-winning show from world-renowned artist and cultural innovator Ivan Michael Blackstock comes to Factory International's Aviva Studios. The show fuses dance, live music, and spoken word to explore life, death and rebirth.

Union Film Fest 27/09/24

Sit back and relax at The Union's very own Film Fest. With screenings of classics such as *Shrek 2*, *Dune: Part Two*, *Hot Fuzz* and *The Cabin in the Woods*, there's something for everyone. Enjoy free sweet treats and Domino's pizza with every film.

Manchester School of Art Vertical Gallery Until 30/09/24

Explore the Vertical Gallery exhibition, located in the Manchester School of Art's Lowry Building, as part of the 2024 Degree Show. Students from across the School of Design showcase work addressing subjects such as disability rights, motherhood, identity, workers rights and climate change.

OCTOBER

aAh! The FRESHERS Issue Welcome Social & 10-Year Anniversary 03/10/24

Join aAh! to celebrate ten years of your student magazine! Come along, meet the team and discover how you can get involved with the online and print magazine. Hosted at the Manchester Poetry Library, the editorial team will be on hand to talk you through the new opportunities for 24/25.

Manchester Literature Festival 04-20/10/24

This year's festival returns with big-name authors like Jackie Kay, Matt Haig, and Rebecca F. Kuang. Expect spoken-word and poetry events, author talks, book launches, and more. With events happening across the city, explore the full programme to ensure you don't miss out.

Lights Up: Night-time Bike Ride 09/11/24

Join women from across the city region for an empowering night-time bike ride through Manchester's streets. Leading the event from All Saints Park, Greater Manchester Bicycle Mayor and founder of Bee Pedal Ready, Belinda Everett, encourages participants to decorate their bikes with lights, reclaiming the darkness and our streets.

Homobloc 09/11/24

Depot Mayfield hosts one of the most exciting events on Manchester's LGBTQIA+ calendar. Christine and the Queens, hyperpop icon Shygirl, Swedish singer and record producer COBRAH and many more will perform at this celebration of queer expression and connection.

Qudus Onikeku and the QDance Company - Re:Incarnation 08-09/10/24

The QDance Company presents a vibrant celebration of Nigerian culture at The Lowry, where dance, music, fashion and art joyfully come together. The show delves into Yoruba philosophy through afrobeats, striking visuals and dynamic choreography.

Beyond the Music 9-12/10/24

Manchester's new global music conference arrives at Aviva Studios. Grab a delegate pass for two days of summits on the future of music and content — then enjoy a series of gigs across the Northern Quarter to discover new sounds.

West Art Collective presents: Séance 18/10/24

The historic Antwerp Mansion hosts this annual art event by creative organisation West Art Collective. Expect an evening of performance art, market stalls, workshops, tarot readings and more, in anticipation of the most haunted night of the year.

NOVEMBER

Ark: United States V 12-24/11/24

Fresh off the back of receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2024 Grammys, legendary multi-media artist Laurie Anderson brings her latest work to Aviva Studios. Music, visuals and storytelling will come together in this unmissable stage performance exploring the world as we know it today.

Manchester Art Fair 15-17/11/24

The annual Manchester Art Fair returns to Manchester Central, boasting a huge line-up of independent artists, galleries and studio stalls to explore. Expect tons of stalls, expert-led talks, demonstrations and free art classes. Be sure you make some space on your bedroom walls.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 25/11-10/12/24

Manchester Met presents 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, a mini-festival exploring how poetry can drive transformational social change. The event features Everyday Sexism project founder Laura Bates, psychoanalyst and author Katharine Angel, and poet and playwright Joelle Taylor.

Melanie Wilson - Bunker Talk #144 03/12/24

Join interdisciplinary performance maker Melanie Wilson at The Salutation for Bunker Talk #144. The event will delve into her acclaimed work, which blends sound, experimental composition, language, technology, and live performance, as well as her efforts to elevate sound-led performance as a recognised art form in the UK.

Deep Focus 06-07/12/24

Manchester Met's School of Digital Arts (SODA) presents Deep Focus, an experimental lab featuring a programme of workshops, guest lectures and expert events. In partnership with the arts organisation Abandon Normal Devices, the events will explore themes of misinformation, conspiracies and online communities.

The Warehouse Project Presents: The Hacienda 07/12/24

The infamous Warehouse Project returns for another year of music, movement, and utter mayhem with your mates. The Hacienda event celebrates the legacy of 90s acid house birthed in Manchester. Expect a whopping line-up of big name regulars to keep you bouncing until the early hours.

DECEMBER

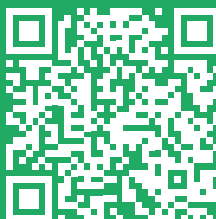
David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (Not Smaller & Further Away) From 10/12/24

Bradford-born creative juggernaut, David Hockney, debuts his latest exhibition at Aviva Studios, marking its first showing outside of London. It promises to be a feast for the senses with art projections, sound systems, and experimental lighting, and students can bag discounted tickets.

Disco Puss: New Years Eve 31/12/24

It's never too early to start planning your New Year's Eve. One of the city's most beloved venues, YES, is hosting a party in their first-floor Pink Room, with DJs Rich Reason and Lariska on hand to usher you into 2025 with a night of disco, house, funk, and soul.

SCAN FOR
MORE EVENTS



Useful Contacts



Academic and Study Skills

0161 247 3330 | studyskills@mmu.ac.uk

Advice Centre

0161 247 6533 | s.u.advice@mmu.ac.uk
theunionmmu.org/advice-centre

Campus Security

0161 247 2222 and via the SafeZone app

Careers Service

0161 247 3483 | careers@mmu.ac.uk | mmu.ac.uk/careers

Chaplaincy

Chaplain Mohammed Ullah mohammed.ullah@mmu.ac.uk
Female Muslim Chaplain Umm Issa u.issa@mmu.ac.uk

Counselling and Wellbeing

0161 247 3493 | counselling@mmu.ac.uk
mmu.ac.uk/student-life/wellbeing

Course Enquiries

0161 247 6969 | mmu.ac.uk/contact-us/course-enquiry

Disability Service

0161 247 3491 | disability.service@mmu.ac.uk

Inclusion Service

0161 247 3491 | inclusion.service@mmu.ac.uk

International Students Group

theunionmmu.org/get-involved/international-student-group

Jobs4Students

0161 247 1402 | jobs4students@mmu.ac.uk

Peer-Assisted Learning

pal@mmu.ac.uk

Residential Life

studentliving@mmu.ac.uk

Student Financial Support

0161 247 1045 | sfsadmin@mmu.ac.uk

Student Hub

0161 247 1000 | studenthub.mmu.ac.uk

The Union

0161 247 1162 | theunion@mmu.ac.uk | theunionmmu.org

MEET YOUR STUDENT UNION OFFICERS

Student Union Officers represent all students at our university and campaign for positive changes on issues that impact student life. This year's team is led by SU President Leila Enoki, joined by Societies and Development Officer Vanessa Nongo, Education Officer Forum Yadav, Wellbeing Officer Gracie Otley, and Sports Officer Sav Dodsworth. We speak to Leila and Vanessa to find out their plans for supporting students this year.

LEILA ENOKI

PRESIDENT



Tell us about yourself.

My name is Leila Enoki. I'm originally from Brazil, and I moved to the UK around seven years ago. I came to Manchester Met to study Forensic Psychology. I recently graduated and have been elected President here at The Union. It's really exciting — we have loads of plans for the year ahead.

What does your role as President include?

I have been elected to represent students. I will be attending meetings with the University, The Union, and external bodies around Manchester, representing the student voice and ensuring that students' views are being taken into account. I will also be running my own campaigns to make students' lives better.

What are your priorities for the year?

We want to create a stronger sense of belonging and community for all students. We want to make sure students aren't feeling lonely, have friends and a sense of community here on campus, creating an environment where everyone feels included, valued and heard. We will be campaigning to improve the cost of living for students as we're in a time now where a lot of students are taking on more part-time work as maintenance loans are no longer enough to cover living costs. It's a really difficult time to be studying, working, and trying to socialise, so we want to challenge the financial stresses students are facing.

Have you got any tips for new students?

Living away from home, your family and friends can be lonely and hard at times, especially when you're craving a hug, a home-cooked meal, or the sound of your own accent. But never forget why you came — and make the most of this amazing experience. My biggest advice for you is to get out of your comfort zone and dive into this new adventure completely: you won't regret it. University can be a great opportunity to discover more about yourself, develop new hobbies and meet new friends.

VANESSA NONGO

SOCIETIES AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



Tell us about yourself.

I'm Vanessa, I am an international student from Nigeria currently studying a masters in Human Resource Management. I am currently the Societies and Development Officer, where I have the privilege of working closely with various groups to support the student community here at Manchester Met. I have strong priorities for the year and can't wait to bring them to life.

Can you tell us more about your priorities for the year?

I will be focusing on three main areas: personal development, networking for events, and creating a strong sense of belonging for all students. I want to create opportunities for students to connect with industry professionals and university alumni so they can meet people they can relate to. I want to organise events that attract students, especially new and international students, and make The Union more visible for everyone, highlighting all the resources available.

What inspired you to go for this role?

When I came to Manchester Met as an international student last September, I didn't have anyone. Then I found out about The Union and it helped me so much. I met new people at events, connected with people on my course, and learned there was always someone ready to listen at The Union. When the opportunity came along for this role, I thought: 'Yeah I want to make people understand that we are there for them.' I know I will be making a positive impact on student lives, which is very rewarding. I want students to know The Union is there for them and that university is not just about studying — it's about finding a sense of belonging.

Can you tell us about events you've got planned this year?

We have so many events coming up this term. Ranging from relaxed opportunities to meet people, to funky roller discos and bingo nights — there really is something for everyone. I'm particularly excited about the Afrobeats/Amapiiano music event we have coming up in October during Black History Month — it will be a great opportunity to get together and celebrate.

Do you have any tips for students looking to make the most of their time at uni?

My biggest tip is to get involved. Join a society, go to events and don't hesitate to step out of your comfort zone. The friendship, skills and the experiences you will gain will be invaluable. I am also here to help make it happen for you — if you have any ideas or questions please get in touch!

Follow @TheUnionMMU on Instagram and visit theunionmmu.org

By Amy Corringham

Photography The Union

Design Monica McManaman

FIVE WAYS TO COMBAT FIRST-YEAR LONELINESS

By George Wainwright
Illustration Georgia Harmey
Design Farrah Pinder

USE YOUR VOICE
LITERALLY!

The first week at university is an extrovert's dream. It's the best opportunity you'll get to strike up a conversation with anyone and everyone as you're introduced to your new peers. Don't be shy to have your say: tell your flatmates about your favourite films, share your favourite songs with the people on your course. I unknowingly met my second-year housemate at a flat party; we bonded over a shared love of music. Sometimes it helps to be a chatterbox, even if you don't consider yourself a loud person by nature.

GET
OUT OF YOUR
COMFORT ZONE

The university social scene can be exhausting at the best of times; know your limits and respect your boundaries. It's important to recognise that it's okay to say no to things that make you feel uncomfortable. That being said, Freshers Week is a perfect opportunity to gently push yourself outside of your comfort zone. Start with trying something new, such as joining a society and exploring the exciting opportunities Manchester has to offer. You'll be amazed how a small step can turn into a giant leap in just a matter of days.

STAY IN TOUCH
WITH LIFE
BACK HOME

One of the hardest parts of moving to university can be leaving everything behind in your hometown. Be it your parents, your pets or your childhood best friends, losing everything at once is a daunting experience. Remind yourself that none of what you had is gone forever — Christmas break is only a few months away. Don't be afraid to phone home once in a while. Staying in touch will help you and your loved ones back home overcome loneliness. You'll never be too old for some comfort from the people who you trust the most.

FIND A HOBBY
AND STICK AT IT

As jam-packed as your first few weeks at university may be, you'll still find yourself with an overwhelming amount of time to yourself. Use your downtime wisely and pick up a new hobby to fill the hours. You could try teaching yourself something new, such as a musical instrument, or use the opportunity to socialise with your peers and find something that everybody can enjoy together. Once you've found an activity, exercise or hobby that works for you, try making it a part of your routine; stick at it until you've got something to look forward to, even when there are no plans to go out.

University life isn't always about relentless partying; it's equally important to be mindful of your studies. Regularly attending your lectures will help you to establish healthy relationships with your lecturers and course mates. Leaving the flat for an hour a day just to hear the sound of somebody else's voice can make all the difference when you're feeling isolated. Don't make a habit of skipping lectures to sit alone in your flat. Take advantage of the course you've chosen and immerse yourself in your next phase of studies.

KEEP
ATTENDING
LECTURES



BUDGET-FRIENDLY SPOTS TO STUDY AND CHILL

You definitely don't need to lock yourself on the second floor of the library to be productive. Set your semester up right by exploring our top picks to study or kick back and relax — where even the more pricey options offer a bargain.

By Jess Berry
Illustration Sarah Beck
Design Kian Godbold

1 The Grove ££ @mcrmetfood

The Grove in Grosvenor East is a fantastic laid-back spot on campus to get some work done, grab a bite to eat or catch up with mates. With affordable hot drinks and delicious hearty meals, you can earn rewards by using the Mcr Met Food App to spend on campus and even bag 20% off food on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays — what's not to love?

2 Central Library £ @manclub_archives

You've walked past this iconic city landmark and probably thought about going inside, so do yourself a favour and cross that threshold! Manchester Central Library is one of the prettiest places to settle down with a book or buckle down on an assignment. The reading room alone holds study space for 300 people and an extra plus is that you'll be supporting your local library. Grab a cheap brew or sandwich at the library café to keep you going.

3 Bring and Ping £

For a completely DIY option, bring your own lunch to 'Bring and Ping'. The free-to-use microwave facilities are situated across campus. Our favourite space is the cosy seating areas on the ground floor of the Geoffrey Manton building — offering the perfect opportunity to unwind between lectures.

4 HOME ££ @homemcr

You know what they say, there's no place like it. A cultural hub housing an independent cinema, theatre and art, HOME has it all. Its ground floor has a café-bar stretching outdoors onto First Street, serving up refreshing soft drinks and a range of coffees. The venue also offers student discounts on film, theatre and more.

6 Moose Coffee £££ @moosecoffee

This spot has something for everyone. With coffees starting at £3.10 and hearty brunches for when there's nothing left in your fridge, Moose's Canadian-American inspired menu will keep you fuelled for even the most dreaded assignment. Whether it's a quick lunch with pals or getting ahead of your reading list, this is the place to do it.

5 Ezra and Gil £££ @ezraandgil

Situated on Hilton Street in the Northern Quarter, Ezra and Gil offer up wholesome, reasonably priced brunch and coffee. Perfect for all dietary requirements, this independent legend is a must for speciality teas, sweet treats and late breakfasts. We recommend the 'Nduja Scrambled Eggs.

7 Fuel ££ @fuelcafebar

If you're new to the city, you might not have ventured as far as Withington just yet. Fuel is a high street icon, perfect for studying, catching a gig, first dates or grabbing a bite to eat. With its laid-back atmosphere and all-veggie menu, with all mains (aside from sharing platters) coming in at under £6.50, there's a lot to love about this ambient gem. If you've never tried a fried pickle, head on down.

queer art market

By Monica McManaman
Photography Livia Lazar
Design Bradley Sansom

Ben Saunders is a queer and trans Manchester-based creative and recent Manchester School of Art graduate. A jack-of-all-trades, the former Illustration with Animation student balanced his studies with co-running the Queer Art Markets, selling art, running creative workshops and even creating hand poke tattoos.

Can you tell us about Queer Art Markets and how you got started?

I've been co-running the Manchester Queer Art Market since 2022, with my friend Ben Hodges – yes, we're both named Ben and yes, it does get confusing! I've just graduated from MMU and I've been selling my work for the last four years. I would do a lot of markets, but they felt inaccessible and weren't providing the right environment for me or my work, so Ben and I decided to create an event of our own. He does queer comedy, so we definitely share an interest in queer-friendly events and spaces.

We held our first market at Feel Good Club, where we still regularly host markets. We were surprised they liked the idea; we didn't expect to immediately work with such a key queer venue in Manchester. Currently, we're excited to start holding larger events. We've got an event at The Proud Place coming up, which will be across all three storeys featuring 37 stalls. That's three times the size of our usual markets!

Can you tell us about the response you've received?

The feedback we get is that our events feel relaxed, friendly and much less intimidating than other events. It's really important to us that people can show up as themselves and feel welcomed. The atmosphere is so much more positive. It's crazy how much of a difference it makes to be in a queer-friendly space. I do queer events exclusively now for this reason.

Do you have any advice for creatives who are considering starting something similar?

It can feel really scary, but it's important to remember most people are learning as they go! You don't need to have the best set up or be well-established – just start selling your work and you will find your audience.

What's your favourite aspect of these events?

This isn't something we ever expected, but every so often, people will come to the stalls and get emotional because of how much it's meant to them that an event like this exists. It's lovely to see the positive impact that this space has on people; it's a reminder of why we keep doing this.

Is there something you're hoping to see more of at the markets?

It's so nice to see a variety of different works – personally, I love to see 3D work because I love ceramics! Another thing I love is interactive stalls. We've had tarot readers and live portrait artists. We held an event for Manchester Trans Pride in August – I'd love to keep doing things like that as I think they're really important. Look out for our Halloween and Christmas markets too.

Follow
[@mcrqueerartmarket](#)
on Instagram.



SALLY SPOTLIGHT

Our beloved campus pub has pulled it out of the bag again...

The Salutation Pub sits in the heart of All Saints campus, hosting everything from traditional pub quizzes and photography exhibitions to live Irish music sessions and academic panel discussions. We shine a spotlight on our favourite local bringing new energy to our campus.

THE SALLY SESSIONS

If you're a music lover, don't miss The Sally Sessions! Launched over summer with Slack City MCR, this new series of live broadcasts from The Salutation is inspired by Brighton's Slack City Social and hosted by musician and writer John Robb and DJ Hannah O'Gorman. The sessions feature lively conversations with key figures from Manchester's music scene, connecting well-known icons with rising stars and providing a platform for student musicians, poets and artists to share their work. The Sally Sessions #2 takes place on Saturday 26th October, with special guest appearances by Bruce Mitchell, the legendary drummer from the post-punk band The Durutti Column, and OneDa, named by *The Face* as one of the key MCs at the forefront of the drum 'n' bass renaissance.

Follow [@thesalmcr](#) on Instagram.

By Tara Morony
Illustration Katelan Evans
Design Bradley Sansom

BUNKER TALKS

The Bunker Talks series offers a deep dive into the world of art, performance and research. Curated by the Performance Research Group at Manchester School of Art, Bunker Talks explore geopolitical, ecological or economic concerns, creating a space for critical encounters, presentations, provocation and dialogue. Originally conceived in the pandemic to explore how artists, writers, curators and researchers continued to make and share their work, live Bunker Talks now take place at The Salutation every month. In 2024, the talks continue to inspire with upcoming sessions featuring artist and designer Andrew Ibi, the boundary-pushing theatre company Chronic Insanity, and award-winning multidisciplinary performance maker Melanie Wilson.

LIVE IRISH MUSIC

Head over to The Salutation for an evening of traditional Irish music fronted by the incredible Folk and Ceilidh Group. Expect a lively performance of Celtic music, with the opportunity to try some traditional folk dancing. Whether you're a seasoned fan of Irish music or a newcomer, this event offers a warm, welcoming experience of authentic Irish culture. Come for the music, stay for the community, and enjoy a night of spirited performances and dance in Manchester's favourite cosy uni pub. Enjoy 10% discount on all draught beers with a valid Manchester Met ID.

THE SALUTATION



FACTORY INTERNATIONAL

By Tara Morony & Makenna Ali
Photography Factory International
Design Bradley Sansom

As the first anniversary of the city's new landmark cultural space draws near, we take a look at Factory International's influence on our city.

October 2024 marks one year since Factory International moved into its new — and first permanent — home at Aviva Studios. As Manchester's new landmark arts and culture space and self-professed “hive of intention and discovery”, Factory International is producing a year-round programme of dance, theatre, music, visual and performance art in the heart of the city.

Since celebrating its opening with Mancunian director Danny Boyle's interdisciplinary live show *Free Your Mind*, created in collaboration with Manchester Met's School of Digital Arts (SODA) students, what have they been up to? It turns out, quite a lot.

Since 2007, Factory has run the Manchester International Festival (MIF) every other year, commissioning world-firsts from artists including Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović and Icelandic singer-songwriter Björk. The difference is that now they have a year-round venue and “roots firmly in our city.”

Sameed Rezayan, Head of Creative Learning at Factory International, has worked with over 25,000 children and young people across Greater Manchester to offer access and opportunity, and develop ways of sharing power with young people. Sameed says: “We've moved into this brand-new, really exciting art space that has kind of taken over the city. There's always something interesting, boundary-pushing and thought-provoking happening here.

“The Festival used to take over lots of

different spaces all over the city, now we have, like — a house! We're able to have a year-round venue for the people of the city to come to our building whenever they want.”

Sameed notes that this strong focus on community practice has been integral for a number of years. “When our director John McGrath came, he brought a lot of that practice to the organisation,” he says. “The community work is strongly embedded in the way that Factory International functions.”

Recently, Factory's work with young people, particularly in formal education settings, has significantly expanded. This includes the Factory Academy, which provides vocational training to help young people over 19 to find work and offers opportunities for artists to develop their practice.

Over the past year, Factory has collaborated with universities including Manchester Met, bringing together students from across creative departments to work on diverse commissions, from a fashion show to a puppeteering project.

Sameed highlights the value of this growing

creative collaboration: “We've worked with many students from Manchester Met and have always had a rich and amazing exchange. Some of those students are now working here. It's been amazing.”

Manchester Met alumna, photographer and visual artist Alina Akbar recently led a creative project titled *My Stomping Ground*, which was a collaboration between Factory, the social inclusion charity Football Beyond Borders, and the gender equality charity the WOW Foundation.

Alina says: “‘My Stomping Ground’ came from the ambition for young people across all of the schools to feel they can occupy space within the parameters they spend so much of their time treading.”

Alina is interested in authentic and ethical working-class representation within art and preserving cultural histories. She set a photography brief for 170 young people from five schools across Greater Manchester, exploring identity and self-expression, which then took shape in the form of a photography zine and exhibition.

“There's always something interesting, boundary-pushing and thought-provoking happening in the building”

Approaching this brief, Alina says: “I wanted to encourage boldness, co-creation with peers and an opportunity to begin to develop their ideas.”

This Autumn promises even more new and relaunched projects, including REFRAME — a groundbreaking partnership to support Black creatives in the UK. Designed to enhance the skills and support the ambitions of emerging Black creatives, the project is supported by Apple and produced by the Southbank Centre, STEAMhouse and Midlands Arts Centre.

Sameed says: “Last year, REFRAME brought together 25 young Black creatives who have been on an amazing journey over the past 12 months. Seeing the impact that creativity can have on a person's life, wellbeing, social skills, and confidence has been a highlight.”

September 2024 will see Factory International launch a new partnership with Adidas and relaunch the Young Factory membership scheme, offering creative opportunities through workshops, networking, and talks. This autumn's line-up is particularly exciting, featuring Ivan Blackstock's Olivier Award-winning *Traplord* in September, Laurie Anderson's *ARK: United States V* in November, and a “beautiful and immersive” David Hockney exhibition in December.

Factory plans to continue engaging the community through initiatives such as their monthly ‘Global Creatives’ drop-in for people from outside the UK and by welcoming some of the world's leading music industry names into the city with the huge Beyond The Music global music conference in October.

There are plenty of ways people can get a taste of what Factory International is doing, says

Sameed: “From participatory opportunities that allow people to become the art, to artist development work, volunteering and curation opportunities, and a People's Forum made up of Greater Manchester residents — there are lots of different ways the people of the city can get involved.”

Follow
@factory_international
on Instagram.



BROADENING YOUR NIGHTLIFE HORIZONS

RAMONA

@ramonamcr

Not just a pizza joint, Ramona Radio goes live every Wednesday night. Laid-back party vibes are guaranteed, with genre weaving and artists encouraged to share their favourite tunes in this intimate atmosphere. Grab yourself a bite to eat before dancing the night away

MATT AND PHRED'S

@mattandphreds

So hardcore techno isn't your thing — we hear you. Matt and Phred's is a jazz club with heart. Boasting live music from Monday to Sunday, there's no better showcase of Manchester's emerging talent. Enjoy seated or standing, with an expertly-made cocktail.

STAGE AND RADIO

@stageandradiomcr

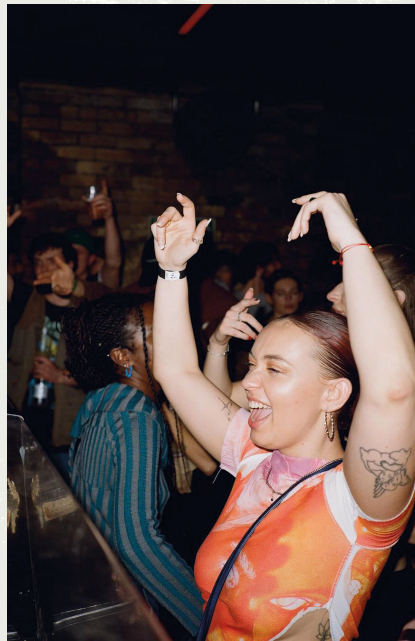
Home to CROP radio, this intimate Northern Quarter venue knows how to throw a party. From gigs, to club nights or live radio, there's something for everyone. Sure to stretch your music taste far past anything you could anticipate.

By the time Freshers Week is over, all you've been left with is a hole in your pocket and a hatred of Playground. In a city renowned for its nightlife, it would be silly to end up in Hotmess every Wednesday without fail. If the same three clubs have left you wanting a bit more, broaden your horizons and check out our top picks for nights out.

LOST CAT

@lostcatnq

If you like cheesy hits and pale ales, this might be the one for you. The top pick for a (very silly) Wednesday night quiz, plus classic club nights every weekend, Lost Cat has it all. Save yourself the freeze from queueing for Freemount.



REBELLION

@rebellionmanchester

The definition of a 'mixed bag', Rebellion has hosted the likes of While She Sleeps, WARGASM and Of Mice and Men, whilst also hosting raves minutes from campus. If it's techno, jungle, death metal or otherwise — Rebellion will probably cover it.

EASTERN BLOC RECORDS

@easternbloc

This is where it all began. Stevenson Square great Eastern Bloc began as a record shop in 1985 before transcending into a cultural landmark. Café by day, effortlessly cool bar by night. Catch local talent, classic vinyl spinning and multi-genre madness at this cosy little number.



OLD ABBEY TAPHOUSE

@oldabbeytaphouse

Self-described 'community hub in a pub', the Old Abbey Taphouse in Hulme is the stuff of dreams. From dub to open mic nights, this hidden gem is one you'll want to get behind. Plus, to beat the end-of-week blues, head down to their renowned Sunday Sessions to enjoy a roast with sounds from guest DJs.

XLR

@xlrmanchester

A classic but a goodun, Withington's best is home to Warped Wednesdays, alongside the best up-and-coming promoters' nights. Your favourite basement rave, this venue is small but packed full of love, no matter the genre.

By Jess Berry
Photography @rebellionmanchester
& @stageandradiomcr
Design Farrah Pinder

FEMALE ARTISTS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

By Gracie Hall
Photography Gracie Hall
Design Sioned Riffel

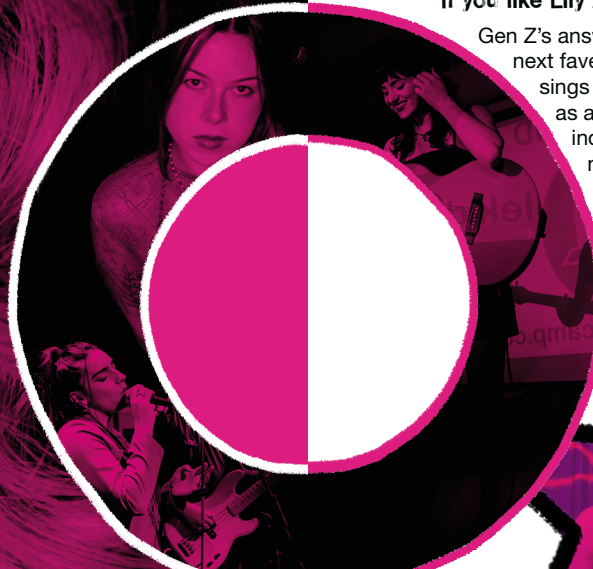
Manchester is host to a talented cohort of female musicians who are making their mark. From interesting live shows to online cult followings, these women are on the up and deserve your interest!

BETH MCKENZIE

If you like Lily Allen and Gracie Abrams

Gen Z's answer to Lily Allen and your next fave queer pop star, Beth sings of her trials and tribulations as a gay woman in the music industry with clever, on the nose lyrics that emulate her frank personality.

Listen to 'Don't Tell My Boyfriend' and 'She's Finally Lost It'



YASMIN COE

If you like Alvvays and Snail Mail

Live performances from Yasmin Coe are a treat! With a catalogue of released and unreleased synth-rock tracks, Coe's rockstar image and voice shines through on stage and takes her music to another level. A frequent staple of the Manchester live music scene, be sure to catch her when you can.

Listen to 'Doubt' and 'Promise Not To Care'

CHLOE CHARLOTTE

If you like Ethel Cain and Olivia Rodrigo

Chloe Charlotte infuses dark academia and religious iconography with a dream-pop sound to create an ethereal experience for any listener. The depth of her music can be felt in many of her tracks and she can also show a diverse, lighter side with more traditional pop-leaning sounds.

Listen to 'Cross My Heart' and 'Killer'



EFFI-NICKI

If you like Raye and Amy Winehouse

With a voice that will transfix you, Effi-Nicki boasts Raye-esque vocals with an RnB sound. Despite having released only two songs, she has a catalogue of unreleased beauties up her sleeve. Effi-Nicki is someone to keep an eye on – and if you can, catch her at Whiskey Jar's popular open mic nights.

Listen to '24/7 Love' and 'Return to Sender'



BELIEVE THE HYPE

MANCHESTER'S MOST EXCITING STUDENT BANDS



By George Wainwright
Photography Gina Jackson
Design Kian Godbold

THE DIVINE

Hailing from Manchester's BIMM Music Institute, The Divine are a tour de force of rock and roll. Complete with era-appropriate haircuts, the three-piece call back to genre icons such as The Stooges and Led Zeppelin. Their debut single 'She's Sublime' features a rip-roaring guitar solo alongside lyrics that are alluring in their simplicity, and the band have spent their summer on the road, performing sold-out shows in Manchester, London, and Hull. Invigorated by the reception to their live material, the band's next move is highly anticipated.

@thedivine.music

ART DECADE

In an industry that thrives on Instagram clicks and TikTok teasers, Art Decade operate under a refreshing veil of anonymity. Making a last-minute appearance at MMU's Indie Society gig night in April, all the band's work in progress is cryptically stashed away on SoundCloud. Pairing sentimental subject matter with guitar-heavy instrumentation, Art Decade have gained early attention for their impressive improvisation on stage. The band have started a slow unveiling on social media, with hints of new music in the coming months. Waiting in the wings, it can only be a matter of time before Art Decade emerges to take the local post-punk scene by storm.

@artdecadeband

SQUELCH!

A self-proclaimed 'North West emo' band, Squelch! celebrated the release of their debut EP *A Professional Lie* in April this year. Combining angular guitar riffs with primal, gut-wrenching vocals, *A Professional Lie* has the makings of a cult classic amongst Manchester's revered alternative scene. Having performed up and down the country, Squelch! have garnered a reputation for their thrashing live chemistry and are supported by a committed following of hard-core fans. The band also shares close ties with post-punk peers Vincent's Last Summer and People Person.

@squelchsquelchsquelch

SALS AND THE OVERTHINKERS

Taking their name from the Salutation pub on Higher Chatham Street, Sals & The Overthinkers released their debut single 'Finally Giving Up' just four months after their first band rehearsal. The five-piece consists of first-year and international students studying at MMU. Bonding over a shared love of the early 2000s British indie scene, Sals & The Overthinkers channel this youthful exuberance of bands such as The Libertines and Arctic Monkeys. They played their first concert at MMU's Indie Society gig night, the frenzied set of DIY covers including 'Creep', '505' and 'Valerie' serving as a fitting tribute to the music that soundtracks the band's tight-knit friendship.

@sals_theoverthinkers

in conversation with **PETER HOOK**

Before his time as the revered bass player for Joy Division and New Order, Salford-born Peter Hook dedicated his adolescent years to frequenting gig venues across the city. “The Hard Rock in Stretford became a B&Q,” Hooky tells me. “I saw Led Zeppelin there and David Bowie. I saw Deep Purple and Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons at the Free Trade Hall; I don’t think any of your students will know these names!”

At a Sex Pistols gig at the Lesser Free Trade Hall in June 1976, Hook became acquainted with fellow Salfordian, Bernard Sumner. Together the two would form post-punk pioneers Joy Division. “It was at the age of 20 for me when it all changed,” he recalls.

By George Wainwright
Photography Mark L Hill & William Ellis
Design Monica McManaman

Hook soon took to the stage with bandmates Sumner, drummer Stephen Morris and singer Ian Curtis. “One of the first venues we played in was The Squat which was on Oxford Road,” Hook remembers, since it was demolished to make space for the expanding university campuses. “Music venues in Manchester were changing all the time. I became more aware of the smaller venues; all the shitholes in Manchester.”

Hook describes his early twenties as a trying time cutting his teeth with Joy Division. “I’d like to say I learned patience,” he chuckles. “Once you’d formed a group the most important thing in the world was getting a gig and of course every other group in Manchester wanted a gig as well. The competition became very intense, real dog eat dog, every man for himself. It was a hell of an education.”

With Hook at the fore, Joy Division jostled for dominance amongst their peers, making their fair share of allies and foes. “My favourite Manchester band at that time would’ve been 10cc [who owned Strawberry Studios in Stockport and had hits including ‘I’m Not in Love’ and ‘Dreadlock Holiday’]. I wouldn’t have known any other Manchester bands until I formed the group, when all of a sudden they appeared like cockroaches out of a drain!” Hook still harbours his decades-old grudges. “I hated every other band with a passion,” he laughs.

Joy Division split following the death of Ian Curtis in May 1980, but Hook still speaks

fondly of his first band: “The strange thing about being in a group is that you have to have a lot of self-belief and a lot of confidence in your group and in your group members. It instantly makes it a very tight family and you become very protective of the music and of the band. I can tell you for a fact that hasn’t changed in 48 years.”

Between his time playing in bands, Peter Hook had a profound influence in fostering the acid house and rave scene in Manchester. The Hacienda nightclub opened in 1982 and was run by Factory Records manager Tony Wilson. Hook recalls his memories of the nightclub: “At that time there was nowhere to go out in Manchester. Manchester is the place it is today because of The Hacienda and Factory Records, Joy Division and New Order.

“THE MOST
WONDERFUL
THING
IN THE
WORLD IS
INCLUSIVITY”

“One of our biggest achievements was that every university or college in Manchester was five times oversubscribed because of The Hacienda.” The defunct nightclub has since been resurrected as Factory 251, a popular student haunt in the old offices of the record company.

The incredible tale of The Haç is told in Hook’s book *How Not to Run a Club*. Inevitably, the club closed its doors in 1997 after problems with drugs, gangs and losing copious amounts of money, and the flats which took its place also bear its name.



For Hook, it’s essential that the punk spirit he pioneered continues to resonate with younger generations. “We were assaulted in the streets for being punks,” he says. “Yet now it’s an accepted tribe of music... The most wonderful thing in the world is inclusivity.”

Hook concludes with a poignant but plainly put message to the students of the city, with hopes of a bright future for Manchester’s next generation: “Students are very important because the world is going to be yours next... Don’t be afraid to do what you want to do.”

Follow @peterhook_thelight
on Instagram.



FASHION ON CAMPUS

By Monica McManaman, Kaitlyn Brockley & Amber Bermingham
Photography Kaitlyn Brockley
Design Monica McManaman

Hugo

Studying @ MMU Business School

Tell us about your outfit: I saw a lot of pictures of Kendrick Lamar recently and he's wearing a cap with a tie and I thought it was really cool — so I've copied that a bit.

How would you sum up your personal style? I'm not very fashion-minded, but I had to put my best garms on to see the amazing work tonight [at the Degree Show]. I'm normally just in my pyjamas, honestly. I look to my friends for inspiration a lot of the time.



Makenna

Makenna

Studying @ Grosvenor East

Tell us about your outfit: My top is from Bershka — I got it on clearance for £3, so I'm really happy about that! My jeans are from Target, and my shoes were a gift from my boyfriend.

How would you sum up your personal style? I love comfort, but I also like looking cute, so I think I would describe my personal style as 'soft girl aesthetic.'



Hugo



MAX²

Max #1

Studying @ School of Digital Arts

Tell us about your outfit: These are the only smart clothes I have really. My trousers are from ASOS, I needed smart trousers because I have a lot of interviews coming up.

How would you sum up your personal style? Honestly, I'd describe my style right now as interview-chic. I don't think much about my outfits, I just throw on whatever I think looks good together.

Max #2

Studying @ School of Digital Arts

Tell us about your outfit: These trousers are from Vinted, a lot of the time I type in '£5 and less' on there.

How would you sum up your personal style? I like braces, and the combination of old and new, past and future. My style is similar to Max's; interview-chic.

Leah

Studying @ Grovesnor East

Tell us about your outfit: My outfit is all second hand, I love finding Per Una in the charity shops. My top says 'sexy since I was born.' I bought it with my mum — she wasn't very impressed. These are the only shoes I wear, my trusty Docs.

How would you sum up your personal style? Honestly, my inspo is little goblin fairy people. I like anything a bit weird. I don't go out of my way to find specific items, I pick up things that catch my eye.

Jennifer

Studying @ Manchester School of Art

Tell us about your outfit: The main focus of my outfit is my white shirt. It's really over the top and looks a bit like a pirate's shirt with the ruffles. I've got a crazy belt that I love. My top and shoes are from a charity shop, and my wide-leg pants are from TK Maxx.

How would you sum up your personal style? I wear what's comfy and fits me! I mostly like to find things in charity shops, it's exciting to find pieces that fit together.



Leah & Jennifer

Amina Jeng: A dive into Fashion and Black Identity

After a long day behind a camera shooting content for her latest project, up-and-coming multidisciplinary creative Amina Jeng's energetic aura still lights up the room. The Fashion Art Direction student is thriving in her studies at Manchester Met.

Starting her journey studying in Leeds with an extended diploma in creative practice, Amina dipped into all elements of fashion, from fine art to fashion design and fashion photography. These experiences have shaped her into the artist she is today.

In her most recent university project, Amina took on the roles of creative director, photographer, and stylist. "I've looked at Black Ivy style, Black cowboys, horse riding and hip-hop maximalism. But what I really like about it is that it's all aspects of my own identity that I've mixed in." The Black Ivy style, a movement in the 1950s and 60s, adds a political dimension to her work, blending personal and cultural narratives.

Amina's face lights up when discussing her interests. "I'm a huge Marvel fan," she says, with comic books scattered around her room. "Music, especially hip-hop and rap, also heavily influences my fashion choices."

Her maximalist approach is evident in her eclectic style and room décor — a blend of electric colours, textures, jewellery, art, and an extensive magazine and book collection. One of her favourites is *Boy, Brother, Friend*, a Black-owned magazine exploring the diaspora and male identities through contemporary art, fashion, and theory. "I love expressing my interests and personality through fashion," Amina explains, dressed in baggy jeans, a FUBU

jersey, and an impressive array of jewellery. Growing up in a predominantly white area was challenging. "It hasn't been fun," Amina admits. "I never felt like I fit in, which has had a big impact on my style and how I communicate my identity through my fashion."

Amina advises young people entering the industry to approach fashion from their own personal perspective and identity: "Bring something new rather than just going down the route of following what everyone else is doing. I like to explore aspects of Black identity that aren't really talked about much, and I use my platform as a way to educate people."

Trends now drive overconsumption too, Amina says: "People immediately want the latest thing. And nowadays, it's often a specific item; like a new brand of jacket, rather than back in the day when it used to be a specific type of jacket which people could search for second-hand."

"Trends often dictate what people wear, but everyone should feel free to wear what they want."

Revealing her secret to creating the perfect but still affordable wardrobe, Amina says: "I can't lie, I'll sit online at home looking up the richer areas around me and go to the charity shops there."

So what does Amina look forward to in the fashion industry? "In the future, I'd like to collaborate with people. My dream collabs would be Pharrell Williams with Louis Vuitton, and Tyler, The Creator with Golf le FLEUR. Their recent collaboration is my dream!"

Follow @amina_jeng on Instagram.



By Sadie Wake
Photography **Amina Jeng**
Design **Farrah Pinder**



BELINDA EVERETT

a catalyst for change

By Makenna Ali
Photography Rebecca Lupton
Design & Illustration Dylan Meek

Belinda Everett is a force of nature. A qualified bike mechanic, workshop practitioner and Manchester's first-ever Bicycle Mayor, she is on a mission to make cycling inclusive and accessible for all. As Manchester celebrates becoming the first European Capital of Cycling, Belinda's work is central to driving forward change in our city and putting Manchester on the global stage.

Winning this significant bid highlights the city's commitment to building a healthier community. From Manchester City Council's 'Pedal More in 24' campaign to the reopening of the National Cycling Centre and miles of new cycleways being built throughout the city, these initiatives are just the beginning of a broader transformation.

"I've always felt as though I was living two lives: my English life and Caribbean life but then I went into cycling and it became a sort of balance."

"There needs to be a cultural shift," says Belinda, citing that 67% of young girls across the UK drop out of any kind of physical activity by the time they reach puberty. "We know the number of women cycling regularly in Manchester is less than 10%. This needs to be looked at as it means the roads are currently dominated in one direction."

For Belinda, cycling has always been a necessity, a way "to get from A to B". But now, she's inspired by the city's changemakers of the past, drawing parallels with Suffragettes like Emmeline Pankhurst, who used bikes to push their politics while campaigning for the right to vote.

Belinda recommends reading *Revolutions* by Hannah Ross where she learned about the 'Bicycle Boom' of the 1800s: "Throughout history, women have had to fight to ride the bicycle. When they were established, it was for white males.

"Over time they started to redesign the bike when they realised they could make more money. The dropped-down bar was introduced and more women began to start cycling, but it was for a certain class. It wasn't for all."

Belinda also highlights the wider economic and infrastructural challenges: "Some women do not have a space to put their bikes, regardless of their economic situation. The few spaces available are often poorly lit which makes it unsafe and puts women off cycling." While the solutions are multifaceted, Belinda is focused on what can be done now, emphasising practical, immediate action.

Through her community interest company Bee Pedal Ready, Belinda provides an inclusive space for women to learn to ride, repair bikes and gain confidence. Belinda trained as a bike mechanic after becoming frustrated that she couldn't fix ▶

Belinda's focus is on breaking down the barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing the benefits of cycling. "Many women feel that cycling isn't for them. They don't feel safe, comfortable or represented," says Belinda. "The mission is to increase the number of women and girls cycling and the visibility of under-represented groups."

Belinda explains the physical aspect of riding a bike can be a barrier for women too: "This comes down to the science behind the design of the saddle — as women, it can feel like it's not made for us and how we sit on the bike."

But safety concerns and harassment remain a significant issue. "We get abuse thrown at us and it's not taken seriously. The number of women who have come up to me and said they've been sworn at or nearly been pushed off their bikes is unreal — it's more complex for us."

According to the National Travel Survey, men make up to three times as many cycling trips as women. Belinda stresses these issues need to be critically examined and addressed before the number of women and young girls in cycling improves.

“People say there’s no diversity in cycling, but if we stand outside McDonalds and Pret, and look out for UberEats riders, we see there’s definitely a lot of diversity on bikes.”



her own bike: “For women, we become very vulnerable if something goes wrong when we’re out on our bikes. It’s important to have these skills because we can make ourselves less vulnerable.

Belinda’s initiative has built a supportive community for female cyclists. “When there is a space that is for them, they open up. They tell us stories and situations which have happened to them which I don’t think they would reveal otherwise. It’s become a sort of safe space where they work together as a collective to empower each other — I think that’s really beautiful. Coming from all walks of life, the one common denominator they all have is the bike.”

As a woman of colour with Caribbean heritage, Belinda has often felt unrepresented in the cycling community. “There’s also the racial element that complicates things,” she says. “Cycling spaces are still predominantly occupied by white males, making it difficult for others to feel welcome.”

To celebrate her culture, Belinda incorporates the colours of her Caribbean and African heritage — black, red, yellow,

and green — into Bee Pedal Ready’s branding. This simple act of cultural expression helps bring people together. “When people see the colours, they come up to me speaking with their Caribbean accent and acknowledge me as ‘sister’. It helps to grow our community,” she says.

“I always felt as though I was living two lives: my English life and Caribbean life, but then I went into cycling, and it became a sort of balance. However, I’ve never felt culturally identified in cycling because of my background.”

This summer, Belinda took part in one of Europe’s biggest community bike rides, the Black Unity Bike Ride in London — a community event ‘riding in the name of unity, empowerment and love,’ which coincided with widespread UK riots and the worst unrest the country has seen in over a decade.

Despite concerns that these far-right, anti-immigration protests and riots might disrupt the event, 3,000 people turned up to celebrate. Belinda says: “It was incredible to see people come together. It

was a very positive affirmation that we are here and we are doing very positive things and we are part of Britain — it’s all of us.”

Belinda adds: “The Black community has been cycling for a very long time — since the 1800s: it’s just you haven’t seen it.”

Belinda wants to change the perception of both the history and current reality of cycling: “People say there’s no diversity in cycling, but if we stand outside McDonald’s and Pret A Manger, and look out for UberEats riders, we see there’s a lot of diversity on bikes in the delivery and logistics side.

“For me, they are also cyclists, they are also on the road, but we’re not having conversations about a collective of people who are predominantly black and brown males who don’t have a voice at the minute and are being demonised every single day.”

Belinda acknowledges that a shift needs to take place to improve visibility and the media has an important role to play: “When we talk about the voiceless, this is something the media can help with — as well as recognising who is actually doing more for sustainability.”

As part of Manchester’s European Capital of Cycling celebrations, Belinda is gearing up for another ambitious project — a second night-time bike ride designed to bring women from across Greater Manchester together to illuminate the streets and ride as an empowered collective.

The Lights Up event offers women and girls the opportunity to engage in cycling, while promoting safe riding at night and raising awareness of the underlying issues. This is especially important as winter approaches, and the number of female cyclists on the roads drops significantly as the days get shorter: “Feeling safe on the roads after dark is important, otherwise women and families are locked in from 4pm.”

Partnering with Manchester City Council and Manchester Metropolitan University, the ride will start at All Saints Park and travel

through the university campus, passing the illuminated School of Digital Arts. Belinda says: “Last year, we purposely rode through Alexandra Park because it was a dark area and it became the most uplifting and empowering part of the ride. When you looked behind, there was this mystic trail of lights behind us just lighting up the night — it was magical.”

Last year, 60 women took part in the ride. This year, Belinda is hoping even more will join, including our university community. Belinda says there’s a lot we can learn from the experiences of international students in the city, many of whom say they don’t feel represented or safe on the roads: “They tell me, ‘There’s no way I’d cycle here,’ yet they cycle all the time at home. This shows us that people coming to this country are just expected to get a bike and ride. We need to have structures in place to encourage people and provide stepping stones.”

Belinda’s personality is formidable and her passion for motivating women is infectious. Sharing a word of motivation for students considering joining the ride, Belinda says: “Come and join us! It will be so fun, uplifting and empowering!”

Join the Lights Up night-time bike ride on Saturday 9 November, starting from All Saints Park. Keep an eye out for upcoming bike workshops designed to help students learn, repair and ride bikes in collaboration with @beepedalready.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE through design

By Amy Kinnings-Smith
Design Bradley Sansom

As part of a growing movement to encourage healthier lifestyles, designer Kate Kent is on a mission to encourage active lifestyles in Greater Manchester. “My passion is building creative design solutions for better health and wellbeing, with a focus on making physical activity more accessible and increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity,” says Kate, who is currently studying an MA in Design for Health and Wellbeing at the Manchester School of Art.

Kate’s interest in this issue led her to pitch an idea to Manchester Met Rise’s innovative 200 Year community fund initiative. The fund aimed to support students to launch community projects across Greater Manchester and make a real difference.

The initiative encourages students to develop ideas to benefit their local community, while providing funding, mentorship and support to help students turn their ideas

into impactful projects that benefit the communities that sit around the University.

“I hope Sportbox will create a ripple effect across Greater Manchester and make sports more accessible.”

Kate pitched the idea for Sportbox – a project which aims to provide communities with the sports clothing and kit they need to take part in physical activity. “Access to essential sports clothing and kit is a key barrier for some communities,” Kate explains. “Through Sportbox, I want to ensure communities are equipped with the resources they need to become more active.”

Over 100 students pitched project ideas to the 200 Year Community Fund, all aimed at making a positive impact on Greater Manchester. Experiential Learning Tutor Elle Simms says: “As part of Manchester Met’s

200-year celebrations, the university invited students to pitch their ideas with access to a budget. Over the last six months, £20,000 worth of community projects have been funded by the university, all initiated by students.” Elle explains the core question that drives the initiative: “We asked students, ‘What does community mean to you, and do you have an idea that could change or positively impact a community you are part of?’ with a real focus on Greater Manchester.”

Each student was paired with a mentor experienced in designing and delivering community-focused projects. “These mentors are crucial in helping our students develop high-quality, well-thought-through ideas,” Elle adds.

For Kate, her ambition is to encourage physical activity for wellbeing and mental health. By making sports and active lifestyles more accessible, Kate hopes to see more people embracing physical activity, leading to healthier, more active, and interconnected communities.

Kate’s idea was driven by her vision to inspire and motivate the 70-80% of Greater Manchester’s population who are not regularly active: “I want to encourage physical activity for all – whatever phase of life people are going through. I hope Sportbox will create a ripple effect across Greater Manchester and make sports more accessible.”

Kate’s passion for sports and design is rooted in her professional experience. She founded KK Sportswear Design and has worked with major brands including Reebok, Calvin Klein, Pentland and JD Sports. In addition to her work with Sportbox, she is involved in other projects



aimed at promoting physical activity, such as exploring solutions to encourage mid-age, menopausal women to stay active as a way to support their symptoms.

Reflecting on her research, Kate says: “My research promotes physical activity through collaborative design. By nature, I am curious about fit, form and function, born from a love of physical activity and the sense of health and wellbeing it provides.”

As Sportbox moves forward, Kate is working with local charities like GM Active to identify areas and groups that would benefit most from the initiative. She is also seeking partnerships with sportswear brands that are committed to social responsibility, hoping to secure donations of clothing and kit.

“By removing the barrier of access to sportswear, Sportbox aims to make active lifestyles more accessible, promoting healthier living and creating a more connected society,” says Kate.

The Rise programme is committed to supporting students and creating strong community ties between Manchester Met

and the wider city, says Elle. “Building good community links between the university and the Greater Manchester Community is at the heart of this initiative and Manchester Met is highly enthusiastic to support more students to deliver their ideas.”

Rise has funded a wide range of student-led community projects this year, from a festival tackling period poverty to refugee education programmes, a pain clinic, a wellbeing programme for new students, and a documentary about the Moss Side community.

Elle adds: “Our students know better than us about the communities that they are from or part of. We see the wealth and value in supporting our students to build the confidence and the skills to be able to run community projects, supporting projects that will truly make a difference. We want students to bring the ideas, and we will support them to become a reality!”

To learn more about Manchester Met’s Rise programme and how to get involved, visit rise.mmu.ac.uk. Follow @ManMetRise and @kksportsdesign on Instagram.

Natural Spots

less than an hour
away from the city

By Freya Barwell
Design & Illustration Dylan Meek

Manchester is such a vibrant and lively city and as much as this brings excitement to our lives, it's always good to find that balance by opting for a more peaceful environment. With some of the country's most beautiful and natural scenery on our doorsteps, the city's versatility is like no other. The public transport links in the city will always come in handy when wanting to escape the liveliness. So, whether you're looking for a place to unwind or a chance to spend some quality time with your friends, here are some of the best natural spots less than an hour away from the city centre.

Fletcher Moss Botanical Gardens

South of Manchester in Didsbury, these gardens provide a picturesque setting without you having to travel far out of the city. With the River Mersey nearby, this makes the perfect secluded space to unwind without the inconvenience of travel as the area is accessible by tram, train or bus. The botanical gardens have features such as mini waterfalls, vibrant flowers and a pond, with curious squirrels and robins checking you out — making it an ideal stress-free environment.

Lyme Park, Cheshire

Part of the National Trust, Lyme Park is in Disley, Cheshire and only a short 15-minute walk from the village's train station. The park is home to Lyme Hall, known to be one of the largest stately homes in Cheshire and is surrounded by 1,400 acres of beautiful grounds, providing incredible views around its home and gardens, along with a variety of scenic walking routes. It is also a great spot for *Pride and Prejudice* fans, as the park was featured as a filming location in the BBC's 1995 series adaptation. But leave before dark — local legend tells of a headless horseman cantering through the woods.

The Edge, Alderley Edge

With beautiful views of the Pennines and over the Cheshire Plain, Alderley Edge is located a 30-minute train journey away from Manchester Piccadilly. The hike provides three viewing points showing the skylines of Manchester and the Peak District, along with plenty of countryside wildlife and a tearoom to enjoy afterwards. This location is also perfect for those with an interest in history — there was an Armada beacon here to warn of the approach of the Spanish fleet — and the area was previously mined for copper, right back to mediaeval times. Before you go, read *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* by Alan Garner.

Lumb Hole Falls, Hebden Bridge

Lumb Hole Falls is a hidden gem of West Yorkshire thanks to its stunning scenery, secluded waterfalls, and a plunge pool — for those feeling a little more adventurous. The walk follows a footpath through the wooded valley to Hardcastle Crag, making it the perfect trip for a weekend getaway out of the city. Situated approximately a one-hour walk from the small town of Hebden Bridge, which is 30 minutes by train from Manchester Victoria.

Edale, The Peak District

Located in the Peak District on the other side of Kinder Scout, Edale is the southern end of The Pennine Way, one of the longest walking trails in the UK. A picturesque 40-minute train journey down the Hope Valley line from Manchester Piccadilly, this tucked-away village has long been popular with walkers and students due to its great location, making it an ideal spot for a weekend hike in the countryside. If you've never climbed Mam Tor, this is the place to start. There is also the bonus of local pubs and a village shop to pay a visit to before the journey home.



green eggs & SHAK

Directly translated from Maghrebi dialect to 'all mixed up', there's really no wrong way to make Shakshuka. This variation is a personal bastardisation of an Austrian recipe and can be paired with honey and lemon tea to top off this comfort meal.

Ingredients

We don't do exact measurements in this kitchen, so go with your heart (and stomach).

- 2-4 eggs
- Broccoli, brussels sprouts, courgette
- Tin of coconut milk
- Cooking oil
- Onion
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Spinach
- Green chillies
- Cumin
- Feta cheese
- Salt and pepper

You will need

- Big pan
- Cutting board
- Knife
- Wooden spoon
- Blender (optional)

Method

1. Finely dice onion, garlic and ginger. Add to a pan with olive oil and sauté until soft but not thoroughly cooked, as you don't want them to burn later.
2. Add one tin of coconut milk, spinach and your sautéed onion, garlic and ginger to a blender. Stir and add a good shake of cumin to taste. *(For a chunkier, blender-free option, you can simply add the coconut milk and spinach straight into the pan.)*
3. If blended, pop this contents back in the pan along with chopped green chillies, keeping the heat on low. The aim is to simmer, not boil.
4. Chop and stir in your green veg. If you prefer softer veggies, partially boil these before adding to the pan.
5. After 5 minutes of simmering, crack your eggs into the pan. Let these poach in your lovely green sauce until the eggs are to your liking. *Less time in the pan = runnier yolks.*
6. To finish, sprinkle some feta cheese and cashews for optional crunch. Season with salt and pepper to taste, serve, and eat in bed with your favourite comfort show.

By Jess Berry
Illustration Sarah Beck
Design Bradley Sansom



eatGOODY review: a jumble sale of flavours and textures

This is the first in a new series in which our intrepid gourmand, Wonky Tooth (AKA aAh! writer Ian Burke) eats his way along the whole length of the Oxford Road Corridor. The only rule, with apologies to Greggs and KFC is: no big chains. First on the menu is the cult Korean canteen, eatGOODY.

The first potatoes in Britain washed ashore from a Spanish shipwreck near Southport in 1575. First grown as a curious ornamental plant, it took a couple of centuries before anybody thought to make chips from their grubby tubers. Fast-forward another 250 years and eatGOODY have perfected what to do with a spud.

It's always dark in here. A trio of poplars, branches extended in sun salutation yoga poses, hog most of the rays that would otherwise pierce the barred windows of this casual eating den. This low-light ambience adds to the venue's mystique. Despite opening more than a decade ago, it still feels like you're stepping into a clandestine operation — one where you procure bibimbap and beef bulgogi by a series of nods and codewords. This is, in part, because its doors only open at lunchtime, Tuesday to Friday.

If you arrive between 12:15–12:45, the queues slither back towards the outside world, firstly because of eatGOODY's deserved popularity, but also because of the unhurried service. However, in a city centre where worthwhile cheap eats are tricky to find, it's well worth the wait.

Daily specials are around the £6.50 mark and come with a choice of rice, fried rice, noodles or — the ingredient that lifts eatGOODY into the stratosphere — potato

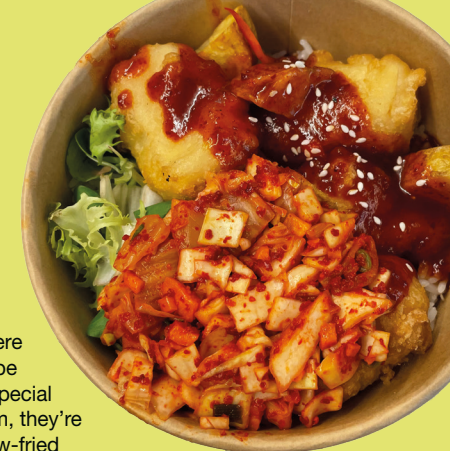
cubes. There shouldn't be anything special about them, they're just shallow-fried skin-on carbs after all, yet you can't underestimate how they elevate practically everything on the menu, from texture and taste to ease of chopstick manoeuvrability.

The downstairs dining room is a singular experience. Midway between a tiki bar and a divorcee's lounge, with rolls of bamboo screening the walls while a pair of incongruous picnic tables lie in the centre. Then there's the slapdash assemblage of accoutrements: chintzy figurines, house plants starved of natural light, and a dusty karaoke machine — a hangover from their discontinued Friday karaoke nights — all soundtracked by jovial K-pop.

The pepper chicken box arrives in a cardboard bowl, with an optional side of kimchi salad (£1.50) adding a sour crunch to what is already a jumble sale of flavours and textures. Most of the dishes rank as high on the healthiness-o-meter as they do for taste, but the fist-sized slabs of chicken on this are unapologetically deep-fried. A mortar of salty chilli paste slathered throughout adds a whisper of heat, with nodules of green pepper providing a subtle juicy balance.

It may not be quite as sensational as their chicken curry box, but after demolishing almost their entire menu twice over since last September, it hardly matters what you order. Just make sure you get the potato cubes.

By Ian Burke
Photography Eloise Billington
Design Bradley Sansom



MANCHESTER WRITING SCHOOL: WRITERS to LOOK OUT FOR

The Manchester Writing School is a thriving centre of creative excellence and one of the UK's biggest and most successful literary centres. Led by Dame Carol Ann Duffy (Poet Laureate 2009–2019), alumni include winners of the Costa First Novel Award, the Forward Poetry Prize and the Yale Windham–Campbell Prize. To celebrate its significant role in supporting Manchester's global representation as a UNESCO City of Literature, we round up the writers to watch in 2024.

Monique Roffey

Monique Roffey is a Trinidadian-born British author, a professor of Literature at the Manchester Writing School and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her accolades include the OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature (2013) and the Costa Book of the Year award (2020). Her most recent book *Passiontide* (2024) follows the story of four women on a Caribbean island who spark a revolution demanding justice after a fellow female is murdered.

Charlotte Shevchenko-Knight

Charlotte Shevchenko-Knight is a poet of Ukrainian and British heritage, currently studying for a PhD at Manchester Writing School. In 2021, her pamphlet *Ways of Healing* was a recipient of the New Poets Prize. Her debut collection *Food for the Dead* has been shortlisted for the highly prestigious 2024 Forward Prizes for Poetry, in the Best First Collection category. The anthology explores the ongoing war in Ukraine through a socio-historical and deeply personal lens.

April Yee

April Yee is a writer, critic and winner of the 2023 Manchester Writing Competition's Fiction Prize for her short story, *Still Blue Thing*. This impactful piece of work explored her experience of pregnancy as a woman of colour. Across her breadth of journalism, essays, poetry and fiction work, Yee captures the issues that currently pervade society through her own unique point of view. On accepting her recent £10,000 prize award, Yee shared that the prize money will “enable [her] to craft more stories”.

Carson Wolfe

Carson Wolfe is an award-winning Mancunian poet and Master of Fine Arts Poetry student at the Manchester Writing School. A teaching assistant on the writing course ‘Poems That Don't Suck,’ Carson is working on their second collection with Forward Prize winner and poet Kim Moore. Their first poetry collection *Boy(ish) Vest* (2022) won the Northern Debut Award for Poetry and can be found in the Manchester Poetry Library.

By Makenna Ali & Jennifer Grace
Design Bradley Sansom

Zodwa Nyoni

Zodwa Nyoni is a Zimbabwean poet, playwright and lecturer at the Manchester Writing School. Her film *The Ancestors* (2023), funded by BBC Films and the British Film Institute, was released in Hollywood in February 2024 at the Los Angeles Black Film Festival. The film follows three Zimbabwean ancestors who descend to Earth to connect with the living and ensure their cultures are not forgotten. Nyoni is also a screenwriter for the cult Netflix anime series *Castlevania: Nocturne* (2023–present). Look out for Season 2 later this year.

Andrew McMillan

Professor Andrew McMillan is a senior lecturer of contemporary writing at the Manchester Writing School. His poetry collections, *physical* and *playtime*, were met with literary acclaim, with *physical* voted one of the top 25 poetry books of the past 25 years. McMillan's debut fiction novel *Pity* is set across three generations of a mining family in Yorkshire and following its release this year, has been reviewed highly by the BBC and *The New York Times*, and featured in *The Sunday Times* Best Books of 2024. The novel is a lament of a lost way of life, but also a celebration of resilience and change.

Susie Wilson

Susie Wilson is an award-winning Scottish poet and graduate of the Manchester Writing School. Crowned winner of the 2024 Disabled Poets Prize in the Unpublished Pamphlet category, her collection of poems focuses on her struggles with autism and melanoma. Susie's pamphlet *Nowhere Near as Safe as a Snake In Bed* will be published in November 2024.

Andrew Michael Hurley

Andrew Michael Hurley is an award-winning British writer and a lecturer at the Manchester Writing School. His novel *Starve Acre* (2019) has been adapted into a film, supported by the BBC and the British Film Institute. The film follows an archeologist as he investigates the mythic folklore surrounding an ancient oak tree, while dark forces invade his life. Featuring a star-studded cast including Matt Smith (*Doctor Who*) and Morfydd Clark (*The Lord of the Rings*), this folk horror was recently released in cinemas.



Green Writing

Against a backdrop of flash floods, heatwaves and hurricanes, distant concerns are becoming a reality. These global challenges have inspired 'green writing', a new creative movement embraced by the Manchester Writing School. The School now offers a Green Writing module developed by acclaimed writers Gregory Norminton, Monique Roffey and Paul Evans as part of its MFA/MA in Creative Writing.

The term 'green writing' exists in different forms and genres, but the important thing is that people are writing about this issue. That's according to Gregory, whose interest in green writing began over ten years ago.

"What unites the various meanings of the term is an understanding that we are beings of planet Earth," he says. "When I started engaging in this stuff, it seemed like the preserve of science fiction, but now it has become our reality. As a writer, if you're not writing about it then you're not engaging in the world as it is."

Monique and Gregory are taking the lead on the postgraduate module, which aims to create a space for students to engage with different approaches to writing and learning about nature, ecology and the environment, to respond to contemporary climate science creatively.

"It makes the Manchester Writing School trailblazers in the genre," says Gregory. "Literature has been concerned with the ecological crisis for some time, but here, we're exploring new territories. It's a voyage of discovery."

Green writing encourages reflection on the enormity of the ecological crisis while

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY INTO THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

By Makenna Ali
Illustration Erin Botten
Design Bradley Sansom

celebrating diverse voices working to raise awareness and celebrating their homes and motherlands. According to the UN, the climate crisis is the biggest threat faced by humanity. Gregory says: "Green writing may be concerned about the global, but it comes from the place of our passion. The Earth may seem too big for us — we are drawn to places we know and we walked as a child."

Students on the course craft their original work, blending non-fiction perspectives into the realm of fiction. Though many of the writers hail from the English-speaking world, Gregory and Monique are committed to expanding the dialogue on green writing. The current programme features work from all three Manchester Met authors, alongside Amitav Ghosh, Ursula Luguin, Ted Hughes, D.H. Lawrence, William Wordsworth and William Shakespeare.

Green writing is also benefiting from interdisciplinary perspectives. One of the first students on the course was an ecologist, Gregory says. For the new academic year, there will be a larger study space and more sessions, plus new areas of study such as ecofeminism, children's writing and film studies.

Additionally, with the Manchester Literature Festival around the corner, Dame Carol Ann Duffy, Creative Director of the Manchester Writing School, is launching a green writing book as part of the festival.

Gregory says: "We're cutting through the jungle and finding new avenues for the course, and in doing so, we're raising awareness."

MFA/MA students can register for the Green Writing module at mmu.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/course/ma-creative-writing



THEATRE SPOTLIGHT

HER Productions

HER Productions is a dynamic Manchester-based company of female theatre makers, dedicated to bringing diverse stories to life through the work of Shakespeare, new writing, verbatim, and digital and published plays. **aAh! speaks to founder and head producer, Hannah Ellis Ryan to discuss how she has created a platform for female-identifying voices.**

Tell us about yourself and HER Productions.

I'm Hannah, a theatre producer, writer and director. In 2019, I set up HER to host my work because freelance producing can be lonely. I also wanted to include all-female Shakespeares and new writing. Our goal is female-focused work — it's a response to the lack of representation, even in 2024.

Can you tell us about your motivations behind creating HER Productions?

It began out of this need to find the joy in the hard work that goes into making a theatre production happen. There were two things happening at the same time when I decided to start HER: I was doing a lot of producing for hire or freelance, and I was meeting so many incredible female artists — actors especially. There's a great saying that goes: "Instead of fighting over crumbs, we need to bake more bread." I thought: "We need to bake more bread for all these women."

How has the representation of women in theatre changed in recent years?

We are still feeling the effects of a lack of female representation over hundreds of years, especially in theatre, which has been dominated for so long by male writers and voices. Women's representation frequently gets bypassed by other important issues. I want to create a space where women's representation is openly spoken about because it still is a huge issue. I don't see loads of female-focused theatre companies — so I'm proud to be in that space.

By Tara Morony
Design & Illustration Lulu Panatti-Reeve

What challenges have you faced on this journey so far?

We've faced one challenge that we definitely turned into a positive. In 2020, during Covid, we received some backlash for the all-female Shakespeare [production], saying that it was exclusionary. We changed the banner to be more inclusive; we now call it the *Unseemly Shakespeare*, so that we're more open and inclusive to non-binary performers. We've worked through some of those challenges in a positive way and we're still learning and growing.

Can you tell us about your ongoing projects?

We've got two projects that we do every single year that I'm totally committed to. One is the *Unseemly Shakespeare*, and the other is called *Vignettes* — six new plays by female playwrights.

What are your plans over the next few months?

From September onwards, we've got a play called *KIN* written by Christine Mackie. It's about two older women and the most important men in their lives. It's an excellent two-hander. From a representation perspective, I was very drawn to this work because representing older women is very thin on the ground, especially in independent theatre. For Manchester people, it's playing at HOME in October.

Describe HER's work in three words.

Joyful, important, theatrical.

Follow @her_productions19 on Instagram.



— EXPERIENCE —

DISCOVERING A NEW CITY THROUGH JOURNALISM



By Makenna Ali
Photography Richard Davis
Design Kian Godbold

Moving to Manchester was one of the hardest things I've ever done. When I think of the mountain range outside my window and the hummingbird that flutters in the garden, my eyes get misty as I reminisce about Trinidad. Still, I know there's no place I'd rather be than Manchester.

When applying to the UK for postgraduate study, I found myself applying to several universities across various English Literature and Language programmes. I almost didn't accept Manchester Met's offer for an MA in Multimedia Journalism, but nearly a year in, I cannot imagine studying journalism anywhere else.

Before moving, I devoured study abroad blogs and created Pinterest boards, romanticising my new life as a journalist in the UK. I was ready for my aesthetic 'English girl' life, but not for the relentless Manchester rain. My first day at Manchester Met was nerve-wracking; I was amazed at the size of the modern, sprawling campus compared to my undergraduate university back in Trinidad, which was located on a former slave plantation in a valley between two mountains.

My first semester was far from what I expected. I wasn't prepared for the heavy workload or being thrown into the deep end of journalism — sitting through Manchester City Council meetings and racing to meet newsroom deadlines. But journalism became my guide to the city, leading me to places I may never have discovered otherwise.

Assigned to report on Hulme as my community patch, I discovered my favourite place in the city: Hulme Community Garden Centre. It has become such a safe place for me. When I'm feeling homesick, I'll visit the garden centre, treat myself to a hot chocolate, and read a book while the resident cats snuggle against my legs.

Getting involved with aAh! Magazine opened up another world of opportunities. As an editor, I met and interviewed writers who felt larger-than-life to me. One of the most memorable encounters was with Malika Booker, an award-winning British poet of Grenadian and Guyanese descent and

Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature (FRSL). The first thing she asked me when we met was: "Where is that accent from? It sounds like home to me." Whenever she spots me on campus, she calls me 'Trini' and greets me with a warm smile.

I also had the privilege of interviewing Monique Roffey FRSL, an award-winning Trinidadian-born author whose novels I turned to comfort when I first moved to the UK to feel a sense of home. The moment she heard my voice, she asked: "Is that a Trini accent I hear?" Monique told me that I was the first Trini she had ever met at Manchester Met, which created an instant connection.

Working on aAh! also introduced me to legendary Hulme photographer, Richard Davis. Meeting at *The LEGACY Issue* magazine launch party and exhibition, we connected over our shared interest in Hulme. Before Richard became the photographer that he is today, he started off as a student photographer for Manchester Met's previous student magazine, *PULP*. He captured Nirvana at their 1989 concert at Manchester Polytechnic Student Union, as well as iconic portraits of the likes of Sir Lemn Sissay, Steve Coogan and Caroline Aherne in and around Hulme.

My time working at aAh! and getting involved with both the online and print issues has allowed me to connect with other aspiring journalists, designers, illustrators and photographers. Through these connections, I've found a community of ambitious creatives who share my aspirations: to gain valuable experience, enter the professional world, and dream big.

As I come to the end of my time in Manchester and reflect on these experiences, I am reminded that, even away from home, my West Indian identity will always find me. Manchester has given me a newfound appreciation for and connection to home through the people I've met and the projects I've worked on. I have always carried a part of Trinidad with me, and this city will always have a special place in my heart because in Manchester I've found a home away from home.

OPINION:

"WE NEED TO AVOID THE TRAP OF OVERCONSUMPTION IN THE AGE OF THE MICROTREND"

By Amelia Masters
Design Monica McManaman

In an age where trends like 'office siren' and 'cherry coke girl' dominate our feeds and 'Brat Girl Summer' winds down, staying sustainable while keeping up with fashion can seem futile. The constant churn of new styles and must-have looks makes it difficult to avoid falling into the trap of fast fashion and overconsumption. But in a world where young people are among the most aware of the climate crisis and the effects of overconsumption, prioritising sustainability has never been more important.

It's easy to fall prey to the allure of rapidly changing, media-fueled desires. Navigating the diverse cultures and subcultures, especially online, reveals a wide range of aesthetics. From Y2K and 'clean girl aesthetic' to streetwear, these fast-moving trends can make frequent shopping exciting, but ultimately unsustainable. Sustainability, however, isn't just about protecting the environment – it's about looking after your finances too. Chasing trends can tempt us to splurge on items we can't afford. But it doesn't have to be this way – planning your purchases and shopping with cash you actually have, will help you avoid buyers remorse and an over-filled wardrobe.

Jessica O'Reilly, a Manchester Fashion Institute graduate and owner of the slow fashion brand J.O. Studios, advocates for a sustainable approach to consumption: "For me, sustainability in practice is inseparable from a sustainable philosophy towards consumption." She highlights how overconsumption is often driven by influencers and the affluent middle class, particularly through fast fashion hauls. Engaging with this content online can distort our sense of normal consumer behaviour. Instead, Jessica encourages people to care for the clothes they already own, emphasising mending and repairing over constantly buying new items.

In her own brand, Jessica repurposes second-hand textiles like old tents and work shirts, turning them into contemporary pieces. Her graduate collection, 'THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS THE TENT FAIRY,' uses old tents to create playful, technical designs, merging fashion and sustainability. Jessica aims to influence not just what people buy, but how they think about consumption.

The key to sustainable fashion lies in buying less, buying more consciously, opting for timeless pieces that can be restyled. Taking better care of our clothes – and if we genuinely do need a new item – buying second-hand from charity shops, is another step. Rethinking what it means to be on trend can help you take enjoyment from wearing the clothes you love without falling into overconsumption. You don't always need to buy something new to stay engaged

"you don't always need to buy something new to stay engaged with fashion."

with fashion – swapping clothes, experimenting with styling, and planning mindful purchases can offer the same satisfaction. Set yourself a budget and stick to it, thrift, donate

or sell unwanted clothes instead of constantly buying more.

Fortunately, Manchester offers many opportunities for sustainable shopping – for when you do actually need something. The city has tons of second-hand and charity shops and vintage boutiques for every budget, including Beg Steal & Borrow – a clothing exchange and thrift shop based at Afflecks where you can swap "gently used" clothes for a gift card. Shopping second-hand can still be exciting, as you discover new finds. Platforms like Vinted and the skill of using a needle and thread can help you become a 'Hot Internet Girl,' as pop icon Charli XCX puts it. It's not a new outfit, it's a state of mind.

— OPINION:

"SOCIAL MEDIA OFFERS A GLIMPSE OF REALITY – BUT DON'T MISTAKE IT FOR GENUINE AUTHENTICITY"

By Imogen Lambert-Baker
Design Monica McManaman

Scrolling through Instagram is a minefield – whether its glimpses of *Love Island* contestants with fake tans, gym rats who manage to work out everyday, or that one person who seems to be abroad every other weekend. Everyone looks incredible. We are enchanted by their white teeth, small waists and ability to do it seemingly effortlessly. However, that's all it is though – a glimpse.

When using social media, it's easy to forget that these posts have been carefully curated. Everyone you know is posting the best parts of their lives online – because why would they post the bad parts? We're currently so invested in what is real and what isn't – to the point where 'authenticity' was Merriam-Webster's 2023 word of the year, defined as "true to one's spirit, personality or character".

This word has become synonymous with advertising, with countless corporations relying on it for marketing purposes. Products are pushed on us so that we can be our 'best selves', but being true to yourself is difficult when we are pressured into following trends and buying the latest thing.

Realness is being marketed through 'authentic' social media apps like BeReal. The idea is simple: everyday, users get sent a notification telling them it's time to take a photo. This is supposed to allow for people to show one real moment from their day. But with the option to retake photos multiple times, there is nothing stopping users from making multiple attempts to take the photo or waiting for a better time to post. Why would you post a picture on your own when you can wait a few hours until they are surrounded by all your friends? We're all guilty of deleting our first try, or maybe even airbrushing some acne off our face.

According to a study by PetaPixel, 33% of 18-25 year olds edit their photos. This also blurs the lines between being authentic and being disingenuous.

Social media is inherently built off engagement. For some, social media is a bubble of lives that are so glamorous, but also so unreachable, that it becomes addictive. We obsess over celebrity relationships, their houses, and their families. When an Instagram celeb decides to 'get real' online, it shatters that untouchable view we have of them and often, followers don't want to hear it. With celebrities not wanting to engage with more sensitive ("real") topics, a cycle of vulnerability and backlash is created which reinforces inauthenticity online.

"it's easy to forget that these posts have been carefully curated"

However, on other social media platforms, the appearance of authenticity is becoming the norm. TikTok users find comfort in watching influencers like Madeline Argy talking about

her exes, and we are finding connections with popular users through their bad days and breakups. Younger users are taking back the meaning of social media – using it to share every part of their lives. With little to no privacy today, it's easier to give into sharing, rather than trying to hide parts of ourselves. Vulnerability is relatable on contemporary social media however this is new, and we are still learning the meaning of being authentic online.

The best part of social media is that we can choose who we follow and interact with. Curate your Instagram for you, not the other way around. Next time you feel yourself doubting your own life, remember that there is a lot more going on than what is shown in a photo dump.

ASK aAh!

By Freya Barwell
Illustration Georgia Harmey
Design Kian Godbold

Have a dilemma that's bugging you? A problem that just won't budge? Student life can bring all kinds of challenges. Fear not, we are here to help.

Q: How do I budget my limited income when I want to get out and explore Manchester?

A: We're with you on this one! Going to university is one of the best ways to learn how to budget and manage your money – but with a rising cost of living and endless opportunities around Manchester, finding the balance and maximising your money can be tricky.

We spoke to Sam Ullah from Student Financial Support for his take on managing a student budget. Sam says: "Student budgets are tight, and Manchester can be expensive. There are several helpful tools online available that can help students create a budget. It's tempting to make big purchases when your loan comes through, but your funding will disappear quicker than you think!"

"I recommend opening an account with a different bank to separate your loan from your day-to-day spending; setting up a standing order to pay yourself your weekly budget. This way you're only ever able to see the money you have for the week. If you've got something already planned; a night out, birthday or gig, budget how much you are expecting to need and put it in a savings pot, so it doesn't get spent ahead of time."

Sam emphasises the importance of getting into the city: "Don't let a tight budget stop you getting involved in Manchester. The city has lots to offer which can be done cheaply, you might just need to take a packed lunch!"

Q: I'm not interested in drinking but feel like I may have to in order to fit in during Freshers Week. How can I avoid peer pressure and still make friends?

A: Not wanting to drink is absolutely OK! We understand the pressure of drinking during Freshers Week, and realistically, it's just not for everyone.

Advice Centre Manager, Lorna Chambers says: "Freshers Week can feel like an absolute whirlwind, and with the added pressure of wanting to make new friends, it can be easy to get caught up in peer pressure. The first few weeks at uni is all about meeting new people and having new experiences but that doesn't mean you need to compromise on your values.

"The first thing to remember is that there is absolutely no pressure to drink alcohol during your time at uni. Drinking at uni is not the be-all and end-all – if anyone asks why you're not drinking, it's perfectly fine to say you just don't want to. If you're ever concerned about peer pressure or your drinking habits, there'll always be help available at The Union's Advice Centre.

Sharing her top tip to make genuine friends, Lorna adds: "Just be yourself. If you're worried about pressure to drink, finding alcohol-free events is a great way to ease your anxieties."

The Union is hosting a lineup of over 30 events over Welcome Week to help you settle in, make new friends, and start your university journey on the right foot. From the Freshers Fair, where you can explore clubs and societies, to themed parties and movie nights, there's something for everyone.



RISE

round-up

Man Met Rise's extracurricular programme offers a wide range of experiences, skills and qualifications, along with opportunities to meet new people and earn extra credits. Featuring self-study programmes, workshops, internships and more, there's plenty to explore.

Go Global

Explore the relationship between attitudes and behaviours while increasing your self-awareness of the barriers to cultural competence with Lorna Colter's Go Global online course. Lorna has worked in the field of mental health for over ten years as a therapist, trainer, and consultant. This study pack will equip you with tools and strategies to support your development of cultural competence. Gain confidence in navigating and responding to issues surrounding cultural competence. Enrol online from Wednesday 30 October, and visit rise.mmu.ac.uk for more information

aAh! magazine

aAh! is Manchester Met's online and print arts and culture student magazine. We're always on the lookout for new student journalists, editors, social media marketers, graphic designers, illustrators, photographers, and filmmakers to join the team. aAh! offers a safe space for students to be creative and have their voices heard, while providing opportunities to boost confidence and skills, build portfolios and enhance CVs. Students earn Rise points for all voluntary contributions, including attending team meetings, workshops, events, editorial duties, and published submissions. To get involved and be part of your student magazine, check out the new roles for the 24/25 academic year online at aah-magazine.co.uk/get-involved and follow @aAh_mag on Instagram.

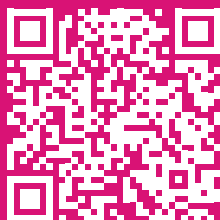


Matchday Live

Interested in sports journalism and broadcasting? This unique project offers students the opportunity to broadcast MMU BUCS sports games weekly. The Manchester Met sports live stream show was launched two years ago at the university's Platt Lane Sports Hub in Rusholme. The team has built a sector-leading broadcast system from scratch, featuring remotely-operated cameras indoors and outdoors, providing live coverage of university sports teams playing football, rugby, basketball, volleyball, netball, lacrosse, and futsal. The show is broadcast live from a dedicated studio, created by student volunteer presenters, commentators, producers, camera operators, sound and vision mixers, marketing assistants, and more. Students earn Rise points for the hours they volunteer and receive recognition for the skills they develop. The season starts on Wednesday 9 October, with shows coming from Platt Lane. Email S.Heitzman@mmu.ac.uk to register your interest.

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