

Longbenton High School

The Waffle

19 November 2025

Volume II

Issue 3



Mocks, Mocks, Mocks!



Photograph by Lauren Howorth, Year 13

In This Issue . . .

- Elliot goes toe to toe with the Creature from the Black Lagoon.
- Daisy changes her mind about poetry!
- Babymetal!
- Max does his first game review!
- Alesia has some second thoughts about Descartes!
- Kitty thinks all good things about The Evil Dead.

The Book Nook

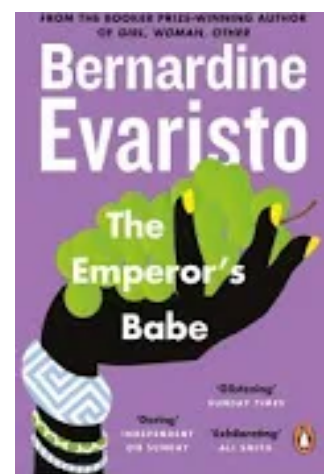
The Emperor's Babe, by Bernadine Evaristo

The Emperor's Babe is a verse novel, set in London (or 'Londinium') in the 3rd century. It's told from the perspective of Zuleika, a young black Roman girl, who is married off to a fat, ugly and selfish emperor, Felix, and is forced to stay at home whilst Felix is off gallivanting with his mistresses.

I picked this book in the library because I liked the cover (and honestly most of the time if the cover looks good, the book will be too). I checked the blurb and knew that I'd have to read it. I read the words 'Back-alley firecracker', 'Slave girls and drag queens', 'Catches the eye of the most powerful man on earth' and was compelled by the vibrancy and strangeness of these descriptions. However, I did not realise that it was written in a poetry style. At home I opened the book, saw the spaced blobs of words, checked to see if it was like that the entire way through, and almost gave up on it before I started. But when I read the first few pages, I realised it wasn't at all like the poetry that I've read—and hated—before (slow, cryptic and boring) but instead flowed perfectly from one sentence, one thought, one image into the other and was simple enough for me to both understand what was actually happening (most of the time) and appreciate the quality of the writing.

The book was the perfect mix of feminism, love, comedy and tragedy. One of my favourite scenes was the night of the poetry party/orgy, which managed to be both very moving and really funny (and reminded me of an episode of 'Plebs'). The book constantly showed Zuleika's graphic, honest and detailed thoughts, which made Zuleika relatable and, at times, inspirational, despite us living many centuries apart. I loved the use of modern references and slang, which exemplify how the many issues explored in the book—immigration, sexuality, misogyny, the class system, racial prejudice and friendship, are as still as relevant today as they were 1800 years ago. I think this emphasises that so much of the world's rules, beliefs and divisions have not changed as much as we'd like to think, or rather haven't changed at all and are just performed in alternative ways.

Daisy Jones, Year 13



Upcoming Dates:

- **17-28 November** - Formal Mocks in the hall for Y11 and Y13
- **19th November** - Y12 Parents' and Carers' Evening
- **21st November** - Staff Training Day. No classes.
- **24th November** - 5 December- Y11 and Y13 Mocks
- **4th December** - Sixth Form Open Evening
- **19th December** - Last day of School for 2025
- **5 January** - First day back at School

Ms Doucet's Poem of the Moment

Finisterre

The road in the end taking the path the sun had taken,
into the western sea, and the moon rising behind you
as you stood where ground turned to ocean: no way
to your future now but the way your shadow could take,
walking before you across water, going where shadows go,
no way to make sense of a world that wouldn't let you pass
except to call an end to the way you had come,
to take out each frayed letter you brought
and light their illumined corners, and to read
them as they drifted through the western light;
to empty your bags; to sort this and to leave that;
to promise what you needed to promise all along,
and to abandon the shoes that had brought you here
right at the water's edge, not because you had given up
but because now, you would find a different way to tread,
and because, through it all, part of you could still walk on,
no matter how, over the waves.

David Whyte



Student Spotlight with Daisy Jones . . .

What is your favourite time of day?

"Probably about 8:00pm. Because it's chill time. I play on my ipad. I play a farm game. It's just peaceful at that time and it's getting dark."

If you could find out one thing for certain what would it be?

"Who was the actual first human on Earth?"

What is your advice to your year 7 self?

"Just keep doing what you're doing."

What is the first thing you'd do if you became invisible for a day?

"I would go to a farm and nick a goat. Or stalk people I don't like".

What colour socks are you wearing?

"Dark grey."

Daisy Jones, interviewing Cara Ward, Y13



Alesia's Deep Dives . . .

Descartes

René Descartes, born on the 31st of March, 1596, was a French mathematician and philosopher renowned worldwide for his contributions to Western philosophy. His mother passed away when he was only 1 year old, his father was a member of parliament at Rennes, France, who then ended up remarrying and leaving René living with his grandparents. In 1614 he began to study law at Poitiers, and only 4 years later did he begin studying Mathematics and Military Architecture in the Netherlands. He would then spend the next 10 years of his life travelling Europe. On a trip to Bohemia in 1619, he invented Analytic Geometry, a way to solve geometric problems algebraically and algebraic problems geometrically.

Descartes' published philosophy relied mainly on the question 'what do I undoubtedly know is true?' shifting people's views on God's existence. This reasoning meant his works were banned from most institutions.

Even though Descartes was educated extensively, he often found many of his studies mundane. Whilst studying law in France, per his father's wishes, René was said to have had multiple mental breakdowns during his lectures. Oftentimes, during the early parts of his life, he only found academic pleasure through mathematics. However when he was 18, he joined the military and became a volunteer. His formal study was mechanical engineering, but he was allowed to study maths, too, under Beeckman, a Dutch philosopher and scientist, famous for his contributions to atomic theory. Descartes was able to fund his education and travels through his father, meaning his whole life, he never had to worry about his finances.

By 1628, Descartes grew sick of his nomadic lifestyle and decided to move to Holland in an attempt to have a calmer life. He did not share this with anyone, only his closest friends. He met plenty of philosophers and scientists there; He enjoyed his time there until, in October of 1630, Descartes was accused of plagiarism. He had a habit of never giving credit for any of his works, he claimed all thoughts were original, and his own, which was oftentimes not the case.

Just as Descartes was about to publish his newest work, 'Le Monde' which challenged the views of the Catholic Church, Galileo was put under house arrest for publishing a similar work to his. In fear of getting the same punishment as him,

Descartes abstained from publishing it even when others urged him to. Le Monde was not published until years after he passed away. Though never prosecuted, Descartes found himself under the scrutiny of the church more often than not. In 1635, Descartes had a child with his own housekeeper, Helena. Their daughter was named Francine and she and her mother would live part-time with him. Due to the fact that the two were not wed, Descartes lied and said Francine was his niece. They planned on living together full-time, however, this was not possible as Francine passed away from scarlet fever in 1640. Helena eventually got married in 1644, and Descartes paid for the wedding dowry.

As not fully published in Le Monde, Descartes only published certain parts alongside his more famous work, 'Discourse on the Method' which was a way for him to explain his way of thinking, some of his points included:

- Be a scepticist
- Doubt until you have sufficient proof to no longer doubt
- Break problems down as small as you can to get the most accurate solution
- Order your thoughts from the simplest to the most complex, and take small steps to the top.



This work also included Descartes' most famous quote "I think, therefore I am" also known as "Cogito, ergo sum" in Latin. This observation directly addressed the lifelong question of "how do we know we exist", to which Descartes is saying here that because he has a brain, is conscious, and has the ability to question his existence, that itself proves he exists. This simple statement revolutionised the way people perceived philosophy for centuries to come. In *La Methode*, lots of scientific theories that I will never be able to wrap my head around had been 'discovered' by Descartes, such as works on optics, and derivation on the law of refraction. History, philosophy and science books will all tell you that Descartes was the main thinker surrounding these theories, but what they don't tell you is that he conveniently, 'forgot' to credit the person he got all of his ideas from, Willebrord Snellius, who actually formulated the law, to which Descartes copied his method and claimed all the credit for.

Descartes played a fundamental role in Geometry and Algebra, which would later massively inspire and help Newton and Leibniz, when formulating their own forms of Calculus. *Discourse on the Method* included a method to find a tangent line to curves, the introduction of his rules of signs, for determining the number of real roots in a polynomial, as well as using abc and xyz for solving unknowns and knowns, respectively. He also introduced the concept of the Cartesian plane; similar work was done by Pierre de Fermat, later. Fermat's work was distributed more than Descartes', which enraged Descartes, thinking it undermined his work, leading him to destroy Pierre's reputation.

In 1641, Descartes published his most famous work, 'Meditations on First Philosophy' which was more focused on Metaphysics, which covers topics such as the existence of God, mind-body dualism, and the reason behind why things exist; many scientists at the time did not agree with Descartes, mainly due to how prevalent religion still was.

In his work published in 1644, 'Principles of Philosophy' where he covers the same things as *Meditations on First Philosophy*, just in much more detail and put into the context of science and mathematics.

By 1649, Descartes was one of the biggest philosophers at the time, and was invited to live in Queen Christina of Sweden's castle, to tutor her on his ideas on love. This decision meant that Descartes had to wake up earlier, which was difficult as he needed more rest due to his poor health. The two clearly did not get along, either. The poor insulation of the castle and his deteriorating health led to his contracting pneumonia. On February 11th, only 10 days after his diagnosis, he passed away due to complications at the castle. He was buried in Stockholm, and in 1666, his remains were transferred to France.

Famous Rene Descartes quotes:

"Doubt is the origin of reason"

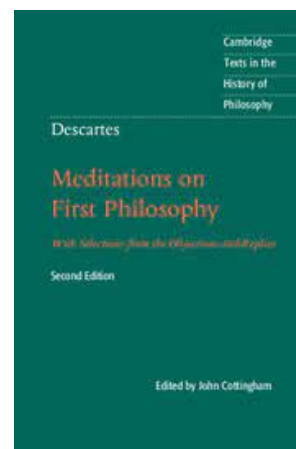
"I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am"

"Am I so tied to a body and senses that I am incapable of existing without them?"

Question:

What do we know, for sure, is true?

- Alesia Macovei, Year 12



Game Review: Batman Arkham Asylum

by Max Eagan, Y12

Batman: Arkham Asylum was a videogame released in 2009 to Xbox 360, Playstation 3 and PC. The game quickly garnered a large following and spawned multiple sequels and spin-offs, cementing its universe in the Batman Hall of Fame.

The Dark Knight came out 1 year ago making it the perfect time for a Batman Videogame and previously, Batman Begins got a tie-in game as well. However, this time, it would be its own thing entirely. Many cues would be taken from the Batman Begins game, but more developed, with a higher budget, with newer technology. Unknown developer Rocksteady Studios was brought on for the job and they most certainly delivered. This game actually had nothing to do with WB games, being published by Eidos Interactive just 2 months before they were merged with Square Enix. The game featured both an in-depth stealth system and a revolutionary combat system, more on those later. The game was released to critical acclaim, pretty much everything about the game was praised, especially the story and gameplay. Paul Dini (who wrote Batman: the Animated Series - another critically acclaimed Batman story and this very game) was honoured as well as the fluid, dynamic combat system. It won the 2009 BAFTA for best game and sold over 4.3 million copies worldwide.

Arkham Asylum toted 2 main gamemodes: Story and Challenge. Story Mode used Metroidvania elements in a 3D environment, exploring Arkham Island to try and thwart The Joker's latest scheme. It features appearances from other iconic Batman characters such as Bane, Killer Croc, Scarecrow, Harley Quinn, Poison Ivy and Commissioner Gordon as well as the voice of THE Riddler and Barbra Gordon as Oracle. There are also countless references to other characters, some of which would be featured in the aforementioned sequels and spin-offs. The Joker's scheme in this game (minor spoilers) involves taking over Gotham with an army of mutant henchmen on a formula derived from Bane's venom named Titan. The Titans have some of the best designs of the game (final boss non-withstanding), with grotesquely altered skeletons, tearing through their own flesh, and impossibly huge muscles. Accompanying the main story is a slew of 240 collectables set up by The Riddler. The trophies are the most iconic and most abundant collectable, almost each one unlocks something extra like a character trophy, concept art or a challenge map. Oh yeah, the challenge mode. The challenge mode consists of either combat levels or predator (stealth) levels. In combat, you must rack up as many points as possible using long combos, gadget variation and attack variation. In predator, each map has its own set of 3 tasks to complete as fast as possible; these ones can get really difficult, trust me.

As stated before, the gameplay consists of 2 separate modes, combat and predator. The combat uses a new technique called the FreeFlow System. This cutting-edge system allows for any move to be seamlessly connected with the next move, making fights seem like one long, beautiful animation, if you don't break your combo. Batman's arsenal consists of default punches, dodging, countering, stunning, a smattering of quickfire gadgets used with a button combination rather than manual aiming and special takedowns which have to be unlocked and only used when the combo meter gets to a certain point. The system is easy to learn but hard to truly master making it beneficial to both new players and veterans alike. Certain enemy types have certain attributes that require special treatment, such as the goons with blades which must be stunned first, guys with stunsticks which must be dodged over and so on. The combat in this game is like an artform, every fight looking choreographed, straight out of a martial arts movie, in a way that none of the actual movies have come close to.



A stark contrast is the predator system, which has much more of an emphasis on stealth than on-to-one fighting. These scenarios are more environment based, exploiting the henchmen to take them out without being spotted using silent takedowns and other environment specific moves. To aid in this is another highly-praised feature of the game I haven't mentioned yet: detective mode. At any point in gameplay, the right bumper (or the x key) may be pressed to activate detective mode. This allows you to see people through walls, follow trails of evidence, and plan out attacks in predator situations. It also makes you see people as skeletons, which is pretty freaky. There is a whole arsenal of gadgets to use as well which are, Batarangs, Sonic Batarangs, Remote-Control Batarangs, Multi-Batarangs, Remote Hacking Device, Explosive Gel, Bat-Claw and the Line Launcher all of which can be used to change the odds in your favour in a room filled with armed guards. In between these segments, there is a small, yet detail-rich, open world. Arkham West houses the Medical Facility and Penitentiary, Arkham North has the Intensive Treatment Ward and Arkham East is home to the Botanical Garden and Arkham Manor. There is also an extensive cave and sewer system underneath the island. All of the buildings are their own, unique areas with the outside connecting them all together.

Batman has the ability to glide across large gaps, making for a visually unique method of transportation across Arkham. All throughout the game, there is a delightfully haunting orchestral soundtrack with its own ominous identity. To top it all off, Batman is voiced by the late, great Kevin Conroy opposing Mark Hamill's devious Joker, both reprising their roles from the Animated Series which are for many, the definitive Batman and Joker voices.

Hidden deep within the Arkham Manor lies a secret room, only accessible by spraying all three charges of explosive gel on a specific part of a specific wall revealing a secret room. This room wasn't found for years as there was no evidence towards its existence but it was there the whole time. Inside are the blueprints for an Arkham expansion, to take over part of Gotham, titled Arkham City.



Elliott's Creature Feature

The Gill Man

Choosing a monster deserving of being the first that I cover was a difficult process. Within the hallowed halls of monster media, there are countless iconic characters to choose from. From literary giants like Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster and The Invisible Man to modern creations like the Pale Man, the Xenomorphs and the Thing. However, for my first dip into the pool of discussing monsters, I decided to cover a monster that I hold close to my heart: the Gill Man of 'Creature from the Black Lagoon'.

Far from the grand origins and long histories of its Universal Monster movie brethren, the Gill Man has been the star of only three feature films. Despite its limited appearance, the Gill Man has still cemented itself as an icon of classic horror, having impacted countless people with its excellent design. In only three films, totalling only 239 minutes of runtime, the Gill Man became one of the most recognizable monsters in the history of cinema.

The story goes that William Alland, who would later go on to produce the film, was at a dinner party held during the filming of Citizen Kane when Gabriel Figueroa, a legend of Mexican cinematography, told him a story about the myth of the Yacuruna. Predominantly believed in by indigenous people of the Amazon, the Yacuruna (meaning Water Man) are supposedly a race of shapeshifting water gods who predominantly prey upon menstruating women. However, they have also been said to provide healing knowledge to shamans and establish trust in the water. The story stuck with Alland and, ten years later, he took inspiration from 'Beauty and the Beast' to write story notes titled 'The Sea Monster'. The next year, Maurice Zimm would expand these notes into a treatment which Harry Essex and Arthur Ross would rewrite to become 'The Creature From the Black Lagoon' and Jack Arnold was brought on to direct.

In 1953 Bud Westmore was approached by Alland, who asked that his department design the suit that would bring the creature to life. Westmore accepted and, remembering her work on 'It Came From Outer Space', chose Milicent Patrick to design the suit. Patrick is an important figure in her own right, a former Disney animator credited with being the first woman to ever work in a special effects makeup department, and would be the one to create the iconic design of the creature. She took inspiration from creatures of the Devonian Period, the geologic period that the Gill Man is supposedly from, to design a creature that looks like an ancient reptilian humanoid. However, it was on a press tour for the film that Bud Westmore stripped Patrick of the credit for the

creature's design and credited himself as the sole designer. Upon returning to LA, Patrick was informed that she had been "let go" from Universal Studios. After this, she would stop working on film production and would instead return to small acting roles. The story that Westmore designed the monster would be believed for years, until the documentary 'Back to the Black Lagoon' would finally reveal to the public that Patrick was, in fact, the true creator of the creature. Unfortunately the documentary would not be released until 2002, four years after Patrick's death, but the story, along with a 1978 article that renewed interest in her career, cemented her legacy as an important figure in film history. Once her design was complete, the bodysuit was created by Jack Kevan, who worked on 'Wizard of Oz' and created prosthetic limbs during World War 2, while the head was sculpted by Chris Mueller Jr.

Capturing the Gill Man was a difficult process due to the semi-aquatic nature of the creature. Two actors wore the suit, with Ben Chapman on land and Ricou Browning in the water, and each of them faced unique challenges. Ben Chapman was rendered unable to sit down while in the suit and was prone to overheating-- an issue which was combated by the crew hosing him down regularly; additionally, the mask massively affected his ability to see, which resulted in scraping his co-star Julie Adams' head against a wall in a scene in which he was carrying her. Browning faced his own challenges with portraying the creature in the scenes in which it is submerged in the titular Black Lagoon. The biggest problem was breathing; unlike the creature he portrayed, Browning could not, in fact, breathe underwater, which made portraying a creature that could quite difficult. According to Browning himself, he could hold his breath for about four minutes, which would cut down to only two minutes if he had to do anything even remotely strenuous. Regardless of the challenges, filming was complete across two sets--one in Universal City and one in Wakulla Springs-- without any major incidents occurring. The film was shot to be a 3D film, a medium I typically find to be a disgusting insult to the art of cinema, but was shown in 3D only in large urban theatres; despite this, it is often credited alongside Avatar as being among the most successful 3D films.

The film was received well and, just like the other iconic Universal Monsters before him, the Gill Man would return for a sequel. Unlike the modern horror philosophy of making every sequel nothing more than a worse version of what they already did the first time, the sequel film 'Revenge of the Creature' sees the Gill Man's status quo disrupted as he is uprooted from his home and brought to an Oceanarium in Florida, in which several ichthyologists and animal psychologists experiment on the creature. I distinctly remember watching this film as it began to cement a feeling I had felt fleetingly in the first film and almost constantly throughout the third: sympathy. It's easy to think of the Gill Man as being a malevolent being, its obvious humanoid features convince our brains to lump it in with the other slimy reptilians of 50's sci fi and assume that it must be of some intelligence, but the Gill Man is hardly a man at all, he's more so an animal. Throughout the first film my sympathy for the creature was limited by the fact that it had been killing people in the Amazon, so defeating it was a necessary measure to prevent more people from getting hurt. However, after the creature survives its injuries and is taken in by the scientists, I felt a mounting feeling that this 'Gill Man' is an animal that was punished for feeding and then captured to be prodded at and experimented with. Furthermore, beyond being the mere subject of scientific curiosity, the creature becomes an attraction to be ogled by the general public. Upon becoming an exhibit, the creature escapes and flees into the ocean; it is after this that my sympathy for the creature dies down but the lingering tragedy of the Gill Man does colour the rest of the film. However, it is after the Gill Man returns to kidnap Helen Dobson that the Gill Man inherits the suggestion of sexual threat that his Universal Monster predecessors regularly posed and therefore the uncomfortable feeling that comes with sympathy for them. Whatever plan the Gill Man had is quickly thwarted when Cleo, Helen's human love interest, arrives with the police and the Gill Man is 'fatally' shot.

Revenge of the Creature was not nearly as well received as its predecessor, cited as being a "fourth-rate" sequel that is generally lacking in creativity. I will admit that it is a fair bit worse than the first Creature but I find that the assertion that it does nothing new or interesting to be obtuse and ignorant; just because it features the same monster doesn't necessarily make it just a rehash of the original. Many things can be said about the declining quality of horror franchises over time but the Creature films avoid the biggest issue plaguing horror movies: being too repetitive. In fact, the next film, The Creature Walks Among Us, shakes up the formula even more and brings the Creature into unfamiliar territory. No longer is he a creature of the Black Lagoon. Now, in his final starring role, he is a creature of... Florida.



The plot of this film is, in a word, ridiculous. The idea that being caught in a fire could trigger the Gill Man to not only shed his gills but to grow human lungs is, in my limited scientific knowledge, bonkers. Regardless of the already paper thin suspension of disbelief being torn to shreds in this film, the creature's final solo outing is an interesting addition to the series' mythos. The decision to make a creature who had been so inextricably linked to the water into what essentially amounts to a strong man with scales should, theoretically, take away a lot of what made him interesting. However, this film brings back that same sinking feeling of sympathy, which we got hints of in *Revenge of the Creature*, in full effect. The 'Gill Man' (whose name now makes precious little sense in light of his not having any gills) isn't really the villain this time around. Rather a human, Dr William Barton, takes on the role of the slimy menace that we spend the whole run time dreading. Rather than being an oversized, prehistoric fish; Barton is a very real threat. A man driven mad with jealousy whenever his wife, who he is particularly unkind to, interacts in any capacity with a man who is not himself. This plot thread leads to the greatest moment of sympathy for the creature; as he is trapped in a cage, miles from his home, unable to communicate with his captors and forced to live in an environment that is not his own. This would be tragic enough, bringing to mind images of mistreated animals in the real world such as those in the infamous SeaWorld parks, but unlike the orca who became the subject of 'Blackfish', the Gill Man did not, in fact, kill anybody (this time around). However, after Barton is driven to murder by his jealousy, he frames the death of his fellow scientist on the Gill Man, who had witnessed the killing with his own aquatic eyes. Enraged by being framed for a crime he was completely innocent of, the Gill Man goes on a rampage, escaping his captivity, killing Barton and returning to the sea. The creature's fate is left ambiguous and, perhaps mercifully, no sequel would ever drag him out of the ocean again.

The Creature Walks Among Us wouldn't be the creature's last appearance, technically, but it would be the last time he would ever be the main monster in a feature film. He appeared in a few books and a couple of animated shorts, he -as several Universal monsters before him had- met Abbott and Costello and appeared in league with Dracula, the Wolf Man, the Mummy and Frankenstein's Monster in the 1987 film 'The Monster Squad'. A few times throughout history, Universal has attempted to bring the creature back; the first endeavor, announced in 2007, would die off in 2009 when the director quit the project.

The second attempt was set up in 'The Mummy' (2017) with the Gill Man's arm appearing in a lab that teased many more monsters that would be part of the film's new connected universe. This so-called Dark Universe, obviously aping the style of Marvel's connected cinematic universe, would begin with *The Mummy* and, despite Universal's hopes, end with *The Mummy* due to the film's poor reception. Whilst it would have been nice to see the Gill Man on the big screen again, perhaps it's best that he hasn't returned. If the quality of 2020's *Invisible Man* and this year's *Wolf Man* are anything to go off, any potential remake made now would almost certainly be absolutely terrible. However, there is one more piece of Black Lagoon media that intrigues me. *Creature from the Black Lagoon: The Musical* was a stage play put on at Universal Studios theme parks that opened in 2009 and closed the following year. There doesn't seem to be any way to watch it online and, due to the limited run, it can't be watched in person. Judging by the Wikipedia description, this show would have been delightfully bizarre and very different from the film, with the Gill Man growing to 25ft tall, being serenaded by his love interest and promptly eating her alive.

Despite being a bit less prevalent than some other Universal monsters, these films have had a massive impact on culture and on several prominent creatives. Stephen King cites the original film as being the first film he can remember seeing; he would even go on to give the Gill Man a cameo appearance in his novel 'IT'. Auteur director Guillermo del Toro would be inspired by the creature to create *Shape of Water*, a film in which a similar fish man finds love, and has previously expressed interest in directing his own revival of the franchise. Then there is, of course, the most important person that these films have impacted: Me. If it wasn't obvious from the fact that I chose Gill Man to be the first monster I cover, he is far and away my favourite monster from this era of classic cinema. Well, save for one exception; another aquatic creature born of the atomic age, but that's for a later issue. While the mystic terrors of vampires and mummies, or the scientific marvel of Frankenstein's Monster and invisible men, may be the creatures that have best stood the test of time, the impact that this prehistoric fish man has had on the world is undeniable.

Evil Dead: The Musical Review

The off-broadway 'Evil Dead: The Musical' is based off of the original 'Evil Dead' trilogy directed by the god-tier director, Sam Rami and starring B movie Jesus Bruce Campbell. This blood-soaked musical has a much needed splash warning at the start. Usually I wouldn't watch a musical inspired by a film however, this may have convinced me to start. I may be biased since the Evil Dead franchise is held very close to my heart but I still think this adaptation fully encapsulates the weirdness and wackiness of the films. The effects and lighting used onstage are breathtaking and the actors are insanely funny and talented. Even if you've seen the films as often as I have, it still has enough changes and new jokes to keep you entertained whilst still having the iconic quotes from the original films.

To the people completely unaware of this amazing series: the first film was made to be a serious film whilst the others are more of a horror-comedy. The producers of the original movies actually coined the term 'splattstick' to describe the other two movies, which I think is the best, most accurate description they could have come up with. Also, another message for the Evil Dead- uninitiated, you are missing out. This is my way of suggesting a musical and film series at the same time (also a tv show if you are actually listening to my suggestions).

Die-hard fan of the films or not, I would fully recommend watching Ash spit stupid one liners, read from the Necronomicon-ex-Mortis (the book of the dead made from human skin), cut off his cursed hand, and kill deadites (kandarian demons) whilst singing surprisingly catchy songs. This musical has completely taken me by surprise and I really thought I wasn't going to enjoy it as much as I did. If just me praising the musical can't convince you enough, Bruce Campbell himself has expressed his love for the musical adaptation, watching it multiple times live and also opening for it one night.



The Melomaniac - Music Recs

BABYMETAL

Few bands have captured my heart quite as quickly as BABYMETAL have. You may have heard of them: an incredibly talented Japanese trio from Tokyo, featuring Suzuka Nakamoto ('Su-metal', lead vocals), Momoko Okazaki ('Momometal', backing vocals) and Moa Kikuchi ('Moametal', backing vocals). These 2010s legends have single-handedly pulled me into the heavy-metal genre, a scene I'd previously ignored entirely.

Formed in 2010, the trio was originally created as a sub-unit of the idol group Sakura Gakuin (whom I also very highly recommend, but alas, that is for another day). Becoming an independent act in 2013, the original lineup included Su-metal, Moametal and Yuimetal (Yui Mizuno, backing vocals). Sadly, Yuimetal had to leave in 2018 due to health issues, though has promised to return one day with a solo career. In her absence, Momoko – a fellow former Sakura Gakuin member – supported the girls as a backup dancer during live performances, eventually officially joining as 'Momometal' in 2023.

BABYMETAL are absolute revolutionaries when it comes to heavy metal and Japanese music in general. They are credited with creating the kawaii metal genre, which blends together elements of heavy metal and J-Pop music. This seems like it should be one of those combinations that would never work on paper, but in actuality, it creates this powerful, mesmerising sound that blesses the ears. Imagine adorable yet fierce voices serenading over syncopated synth rhythms and heavy bass guitars – that's basically kawaii metal. They were conceptualised by world-class producer Kobametal (by far the silliest, goofiest, most hardworking producer I know), who wanted to create a new fusion of sound that would challenge the norms (hence the name 'BABYMETAL', with 'BABY' representing the birth of a new genre). Kobametal brought them all together when Yuimetal and Moametal were 12, and Su-metal was 14, alongside a beloved session band known as 'Kami Band', who go HARD during live performances and have no doubt contributed to BABYMETAL's meteoric rise over the years. Combined with their impeccable choreography, hardworking attitude and radical new sound, it's no wonder the group have shot to cult-like fame and broken an absolute myriad of world records. They even have their own radio show, 'BABYMETAL no ME TA RA DI!', where they discuss music with fellow artists (including some that I am definitely planning on reviewing later, hehe).

Of course, I have to discuss their first album, simply titled 'BABYMETAL'. This eponymic debut was released in 2014 and focuses on the experiences of adolescent girlhood, with songs such as 'Gimme Chocolate!!' lamenting the feeling of craving sweets yet worrying about gaining weight; 'Headbangeeeeeerrrrr!!!!!!' describing the thrill and exhilaration of going to one's first concert; and 'Ijime, Dame, Zettai' being the greatest anti-bullying anthem I've ever heard. I kid you not when I say that every song on this project is an absolute masterpiece: utterly phenomenal vocals and the most substantial bass drops I have ever heard, with relatable lyrics to boot. Each track is one that unfailingly fills you with energy and that could plausibly change your life, which is exactly what BABYMETAL did in my case. My personal favourite is 'Onedari Daisakusen' (Begging Operation), a song by the group's sub-unit BLACK BABYMETAL, which consists of Yuimetal and Moametal after they 'turned evil and began making rebellious music'. This track especially speaks to me due to the duo's adorable vocals and cheeky lyrics about manipulating a parent into buying things for them, coupled with the chaotic instrumentation of classical instruments overlaying heavy bass & drums (10/10, highly recommend). This album is a whirlwind of cuteness and volatile sound, and is, in my opinion, their greatest album so far, though that isn't to say their succeeding projects aren't also god-tier: they most certainly are. They're one of those bands where you could make 5 different lists of what their top songs are, and all 5 would be completely valid.

Now, in their late 20s, the group have just recently released their fifth studio album 'METAL FORTH', and are showing no signs of slowing down anytime soon. This LP breaks the world record for the largest number of international collaborations on an album, including notable works with Poppy, Bloodywood and Tom Morello. This album has brought together metal fans from all around the world and united them (I, for example, wouldn't have found the band Electric Callboy had they not collaborated with them and produced the single 'RATATATA' - another one of my favourites). Their sound is noticeably more power metal and evolved with this project, but without losing that playful spark that distinguished them from the very start. In fact, their sound is looking to expand even more in the future, now that the girls are older and able to write & produce for themselves, which they've been dabbling in with this new project. As a matter of fact, for

all you fellow gamers out there, the band have recently announced a collaboration with the greatest horror game franchise of all time, Resident Evil, to celebrate its 30th anniversary with a project in 2026.

When BABYMETAL first started, they received an unprecedented amount of hate from music fans, and were generally ostracized from the metal community, with claims that they 'weren't making real metal', though I suppose these grown metalheads were intimidated at the prospect of little 12-year-old Japanese schoolgirls jumping around, rapping. Thankfully, nowadays, the hate seems to very much have died down, replaced with an incredibly zealous love by their cult fans, which you can clearly see in their live concerts. There's something magical about the fanbase surrounding BABYMETAL, the pure admiration and playfulness that fills the fans. Of course, the band's radical sound unites people from two very opposite ends of the music spectrum (heavy metal, and then kawaii idol pop), which is amazing in and of itself, but the girl's cheerful and hardworking attitude is what really sells me, matched with the fact that their kawaii side constantly deals with motifs of sweetness and empowerment. In the past, metal music was stigmatised to be demonic and unholy, turning people's children evil and evoking the devil. Now, especially with this new international album, people are saying that metal music is going to save the world and make it bright again with the power of friendship. Similarly, metal used to be a very male-dominated field of music, but after the conception of BABYMETAL, more female metal artists started arising and taking the spotlight than ever before. I know of many young girls who have been inspired by BABYMETAL and look up to them as examples of what they can do, without boundaries, in the future. The switch-up is honestly astonishing, and one cannot deny the profound impact the group have had on music history.

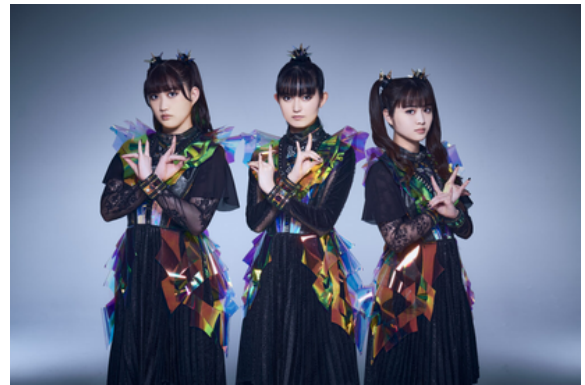
Another fun tidbit of the trio is their iconography. Their trademark hand gesture is the kitsune (a Japanese fox spirit), where you press your middle and ring finger to your thumb, and stick your forefinger and pinky up. You'll see mosh mates doing this EVERYWHERE: in the mosh pit, in photos, in greeting, everywhere. This hand sign ties in with the lore of the band (involving the Metal Fox God and apocalyptic prophecies), though this backstory is entirely optional for enjoying their music. Of course, there are their iconic dresses and choreographies, which are beyond impeccable and always a wonder to see (BABYMETAL are well-known for how amazing their dancing is, and any fan will fight you if you dare to dispute it, including me). They have a habit of trolling each other on stage in front of thousands of people!

there are even some rituals that fans perform in the mosh pit during live shows, running in spirals together and worshipping the trio on the ground.

It's been incredible to see the growth and evolution of the girls over time, from ridiculed, idol-pop pre-teens to some of the most renowned, groundbreaking metal artists in musical history. With each release, their sound and aesthetic becomes more mature but never loses that playful energy that made them so compelling to begin with. If you're looking to get into metal or are just interested to hear what this unlikely blend of genres sounds like, I highly recommend you listen to these pioneers.

Top tracks: 'line!', 'RATATATA', 'KARATE'

By Keira Nightingale, Year 12



Momometal on the left, Su-metal in the middle, Moametal on the right



Yuimetal, Su-metal, Moametal



PERFORM

Caption This



Think you have a funny caption? Let us know over on Instagram or our email: Post16@longbenton.org.uk

Mrs Jennings' Quotes for Life . . .

'What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you'

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

What we're Listening to . . .

Max W



Climbing up the Walls - Radiohead

Ethan M



Seek and Destroy - Metallica

Ryan C



Fall - Alf Hill

Keira N



O Superman - Laurie Anderson

Kitty F



Double Dare - Bauhaus