

# *The* ACADEMY STAR



*The Creative Industries charity Fashion Show was a resounding success.*

## A Passion for Fashion

*Written by Oliver (S4)*

On the 13th March, the S4 Creative Industries team hosted their most ambitious project yet: a charity fashion show. The group had partnered with The Fountain in Port Elphinstone, a local clothing store which specialises in ladieswear, to bring the show to life.

Before the event itself, the group had to first create their own ideas and pitch them to see which would be the best. The winning idea focused on Spring Met Gala which could showcase a variety of fashionable items while also

raising money.

It was during the planning stages of the fashion show that the class had decided to donate all of their money to a worthy cause. It was decided that Cancer Research would be the chosen charity, especially as this was the last event created by the group.

On the evening of the fashion show the class had welcomed 130 people to the event including representatives from Cancer Research and The Fountain. During the event the models showed off lots of different types of clothing and accessories like summer wedding, tartan, evening wear, prom and so

much more.

It was a fantastic show with a huge amount of support shown for all who took part. It was slightly bittersweet for the S4 Creative Industries team as they knew this was the final event they would do together, however it was clear that they were going out with a bang, having already done the wellbeing event, heritage walks, audio guides and Battle of the Bands.

In total, the fashion show raised £620.06, a fantastic achievement for the team, its sponsors, and everyone who kindly donated their time and money to the charity.



With Easter just around the corner, the latest issue of The Academy Star brings with it both celebrations and inspiration from the school and wider community.

Within our 20 pages of news, you will find a wide variety of articles focused around current events, sporting and academic achievements, as well as some exciting visits and trips for students and staff.

Our top spot for the front page this term focuses on the recent Fashion Show in aid of Cancer Research UK. See Oliver Greig's coverage to find out more.

Across page 2 and 3 is a fantastic spread from S6 student Rachel Boyle, a recent alumni of the Career Ready programme, who talks about her and the rest of the group's experiences preparing for the world of work.

A pair of visits for junior students can be found on pages 6 and 7: the Literacy Ambassadors had the opportunity of being visited by Scottish author Brian Conaghan, while the Production club travelled to Livingston to Sky Studios for an unforgettable experience.

There were plenty of achievements from January to March, including the recent Barista champions who were crowned victorious (page 8), while several teams were successful in their respective sports as well as a worthy sporting fundraiser in aid of the football fund (page 10).

Finally, two of the current NPA Journalism students offer new additions to The Academy Star in the form of more in-depth features: Saturn Townend brings a behind-the-scenes look at the recent GYMS 90s musical at Inveurie Town Hall, while Grace Pratt recently interviewed local band Redshanks for an exclusive scoop.

## Getting Career Ready

*Written by Rachel (S6)*

For the past two years, a group of current S6 students have been embarking on a unique opportunity to kick-start their chosen career through a programme called 'Career Ready'.

In 2022, the then-S4 cohort were told first about the programme during a school assembly. The scheme was marketed as a chance for students to experience their chosen career through a series of workplace experiences as well as being given the opportunity to gain a network of support from

those in the industry.

The group included myself, Paula, Olivia, Kirsty and Sophie. The group was supported by Ms Milne and Dr Drysdale who had been involved in the Career Ready programme in their previous schools and knew how successful it was to students.

Over the course of the two years, the group had to participate in a series of skills masterclasses including communication, networking and interview skills. Furthermore, each student was allocated a mentor from the world of work who could guide within their ➤



*Olivia (left) and Paula (right) at Aberdeen City Council to receive their awards.*



*(Left-Right) Sophie, Rachel and Kirsty looked proud with their certificates as Career Ready alumni.*

chosen field and provide advice and support. Finally, each student had the opportunity to complete a four-week internship during the summer holidays as well as take part in workplace visits.

The programme provided every student with the chance to make new contacts within the career they wanted to go into, as well as developing workplace skills such as resilience, responsibility, collaboration and problem-solving. More than anything, it offered every student involved the chance to see what their chosen career was actually like and whether it was right for them which was invaluable.

On the 7th March, the successful group were invited to attend a graduation ceremony hosted by P&J Live where each student was given a certificate as a mark of their achievements on the programme and celebrating their

status as a Career Ready alumni.

Speaking after the graduation, Olivia said:

“The programme definitely offered lots of opportunities to see what our potential careers might look like. It was inspiring getting to work with professionals and see exactly what the job involved. It was also really lovely getting to do the programme with the other girls in my year.”

Paula added: “The internship was one of the best experiences of the programme along with the people I met there.”

When asked about how successful this programme had been at Inverurie Academy, Ms Milne explained:

“I think the programme is an excellent opportunity for S4 pupils to explore the world of work and develop skills for life. How do you think the student’s did? the first cohort have just finished their 2

year placement and thoroughly enjoyed the Career Ready journey. They have built up excellent relationships, experienced the world of work and gained confidence for the road ahead.”

The next Career Ready group are already hard at work in their chosen fields, having started their journey in 2023. The current group includes Hamish, Cian, Abi, Aidan, Euan and Ben who are all currently in S5 and will graduate next year. As someone who has been through the two-year programme, I hope they have found it a rewarding experience and that they enjoy their graduation ceremony in 2025!



# Standing Together: The Heart of Respect and Inclusion

*Written by Mr Fuller*

**T**o the spirited students of Inverurie Academy, our journey through school is not just about grades; it's about living our values of Ambition, Inclusion, Integrity, and Respect. These values align perfectly with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), guiding us towards a community where every voice matters and every individual is valued.

**Ambition and Article 12:** Our ambition drives us to be heard and make an impact. Article 12 of the UNCRC empowers us, ensuring our opinions on decisions affecting us are considered. It's a reminder that our aspirations are valid and our contributions meaningful.

**Inclusion through Article 2:**

True to our value of Inclusion, Article 2 of the UNCRC protect every young person from discrimination and ensure every one of us can participate fully in our community. These articles reflect our commitment to creating a welcoming environment for all, where every young person has the opportunity to thrive.

**Integrity with Article 2:** Upholding Integrity, Article 2 also stands against discrimination, challenging us to be fair and honest. It calls on us to respect everyone's rights, ensuring we act with moral courage, especially when confronting injustice.

**Respect and Article 13:** Respect is foundational to our school community. Mirrored in Article 13, the UNCRC champions our freedom to express ourselves and access information. It encourages

us to listen to and value diverse perspectives, fostering a culture of mutual respect.

At Inverurie Academy, we're not just preparing for exams; we're building a future where Ambition, Inclusion, Integrity, and Respect guide us in making positive changes in our world. By embodying these values and embracing the rights outlined in the UNCRC, we can create a stronger, more inclusive community both within our school and beyond. Let's stand together, respecting each other's voices and dreams, as we forge a path towards a brighter future for all.





## A Warm Welcome

*Written by Hannah (S1)*

**T**his term we have welcomed a few new teachers. Some coming back from other schools, others are starting completely new. But we need to know our fair share of things about them. I interviewed a few of the new teachers to get to know them and here is what I found out about the new staff members.

Starting off strong with Mr. Matthews. He left Inverurie Academy at the end of last year to join a nearby school located in Kemnay. But after the February half term he came back again and seems like he's getting on well being back again.

***Why did you become a teacher?***

I became a P.E teacher mainly due to two reasons. The first being my passion for learning, watching and playing all types of sports. Additionally, I wanted to be a teacher as I enjoy being a key part of the pupil's experience when learning and developing new skills. Being able to help and witness pupils fulfilling their potential is a great feeling!

***Have you missed being at Inverurie Academy?***

Yes, however the pupils and P.E department made it feel like I never really left!

***What has been your favorite part about returning to Inverurie Academy so far?***

I have enjoyed returning to Inverurie Academy greatly. The P.E department has been welcoming and helpful, while the chat has been both funny and terrible. The pupils reminded me there is never a dull moment in Inverurie, giving me lots of laughs! I have also en-

joyed being able to use the amazing facilities the school has on offer again, forgetting just how good they were.



Mr. Dempsey has been teaching for a number of years and recently joined Inverurie Academy's Science department. We asked him:

***What has been your favorite part about returning to Inverurie Academy so far?***

My favorite part of Inverurie Academy so far has been the pupils. They have shown a lot of interest in science and have made teaching more enjoyable.

***Why did he become a teacher?***

I been teaching for 45 years, and I was inspired by my physics teacher at school and wanted to do the same thing as him.

The newest PSA to join the school is Mr. Wood. We asked him a couple of questions to find out more:

***Why did you become a PSA?***

My background is in Architecture and development management and I am now planning a career change into teaching. To

increase my experience working in Schools, I have started my new role as Pupil Support Assistant, splitting my week between Inverurie Academy and one of our local Primary Schools.

***Why did you choose to come to Inverurie Academy?***

Inverurie is my first choice of where to work. I live in the town and I'm a former pupil of Inverurie Academy. Involvement with the local community is very important to me. I volunteer as Scout Leader, Community Councillor and as a local charity trustee.

***What has been your favourite part about being at Inverurie Academy so far?***

My favorite part of working at Inverurie Academy so far has been meeting the fantastic community of pupils, and the staff team who are working hard to support everyone to fulfil their potential. I have been made to feel very welcome here and look forward to meeting more of you as I work in each faculty around our school.



## A Virtual Visit



*Written by Grace (S3)*

Inverurie Academy Literacy Ambassadors recently attended a virtual meeting with the acclaimed Scottish author Brian Conaghan to discuss reading for pleasure with pupils. Conaghan shared some interesting stories about his own relationship with reading over the years and how he came to be such a successful author. Chosen to partake in this project as one of only 7 Scottish schools, Inverurie Academy shared all the work they are doing to promote reading across the school community.

Of course, we also intently listened to what the other schools' reported and have taken some inspiration for brand new ideas in the future. Brian Conaghan also answered the many questions, schools put to him. We learned that growing up Conaghan was never a keen reader and often found himself in trouble. At 16, he

had a reading age of just 6 years old and had not read a full novel until he was the age of 24. He disclosed that it was not until he found himself in a library one day and the librarian recommended a literacy course for adults that

he discovered his love for reading and started to write books. This has changed the course of his life drastically as he has now published ten novels and is working on more. This highlights how reading and communities within places like libraries can really have a positive impact on people's lives. Even if you are a reluctant reader, you could be surprised by the enjoyment of a book.

Speaking after the event, Inverurie Academy's school librarian, Mr Foley, said:

"Literacy ambassadors were delighted to be among one of 6 schools in Scotland to have the opportunity to hear from Brian Conaghan and his inspirational journey to literacy and becoming an award-winning author. The conversation between our ambassadors, the author, and the other schools generated a lot of ideas and our team left inspired and ready to work on further projects towards our progress to becoming a Silver Reading School."







## Lights, Camera, Action!

*Written by Noah (S2)*

The Production Club students at Inverurie Academy embarked on an extraordinary trip to Sky Studios that left them inspired and awe-struck. This experience took them on a journey through the world of film and television production, providing them with exclusive insights into the inner workings of one of the leading studios in the industry. The trip included a guided tour of Sky Studios, where the students were given a behind-the-scenes look at the various facilities. They had the opportunity to witness how Sky Studio's operates.

One of the highlights of the trip was a special workshop conducted by industry professionals, where the students were able to learn about the art of storytelling, scriptwriting, and editing. They were given hands-on experience with state-of-the-art equipment and technology, allowing them to explore their creativity and hone their skills in a professional setting. Throughout the trip, the students were able to interact with established professionals who shared their experiences and insights into the industry. They

gained valuable knowledge about the creative process, the business side of production, and the importance of teamwork and collaboration in bringing a project to life. The trip also included first hand experience, where the students got a glimpse into the editing and visual effects work that goes into creating a seamless final product. They learned about the importance of attention to detail and the role of technology in shaping the cinematic experience. As the students immersed themselves in the world of Sky Studios, they were inspired by the passion and dedication of the professionals they met. They were encouraged to pursue their dreams and to strive for excellence in their own

creative endeavours.

Overall, the trip to Sky Studios was a transformative experience for the Production Club students. It opened their eyes to the possibilities of a career in the production and sparked their imagination and creativity. They returned to their school with a newfound sense of purpose and determination, ready to apply the knowledge and skills they had gained to their own productions. The amazing trip to Sky Studios was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Production Club students. It broadened their horizons, expanded their understanding of the production industry, and inspired them to reach for the stars in their pursuit of a career in drama.





## A Fab-Brew-Lous Win



*The recent Inverurie Academy winners were thrilled with their trophy at the recent Scottish School Barista Championships, pictured alongside Ms Lopez (far right) and Tim Sturk (far left).*

Inverurie Academy's own team of budding baristas were crowned the Scottish School Barista Champions this month.

The team, made up of students from both junior and senior phase, have been busy working from the beginning of this year to bring a selection of delicious drinks to staff at Inverurie Academy.

Despite being new to barista making, the team were determined to succeed at the Championships where they would be competing against five other schools: Elgin High School, Mearns Academy, Bridge of Don, St Machar Academy and The Gordon Schools.

The competition was produced by Aberdeen-based Caber Coffee who wanted to highlight the hard work being done by students as well as offering support and training.

Maryculter House was the des-

ination for the competition and each team had just 30 minutes to produce an espresso, a cafe latte, or a cappuccino alongside a signature drink. The team were also judged on how good their customer service was, the cleanliness of their station, and how they handled the equipment.

Not only that, each team was also tasked with a design element where they had to produce a job advert focusing on the role of the barista and an infographic to show their understanding of the coffee industry.

While every team produced incredible drinks and designs, it was Inverurie Academy who were ultimately chosen as the winners which is a fantastic achievement, particularly as they had only been practicing for a few months.

Tim Sturk, Head of Coffee at Aimers Coffee & Tea Ltd as well as a World Barista Championship judge, was tasked with deciding

the winner. When discussing Inverurie Academy, he spoke about what a pleasure it was to watch the winning team's presentation and performance. He also said that the team had produced one of the best mochas he had ever tried.

Even more exciting, Tim Sturk has offered the winning school a space on a SCA Foundation Barista course that will be held in James Aimer (a coffee roasters in Dundee) or in Caber Coffee Aberdeen studio. Tim said he is looking forward to seeing the Inverista Team soon. If you are interested to see the winning trophy, it will be available in the school display cabinet.

Speaking about the event, Mrs Lopez said:

"We started our Barista journey only two months ago in January 2024, however the Barista programme at Inverurie Academy has been a hit from the beginning and our young people have been ►



## Exploring the Outdoors

engaging with all the training and the barista skills that this involves.

“All the young people involved have worked really hard in learning the right skills to make different types of barista drinks, but also food hygiene, organisational skills and most importantly customer service.

I have to say that I am really proud of how well our young people worked together on the day of the competition, showing professionalism and commitment while having lots of fun!”

Aoife, one of the S5 students involved, explained further:

“On the day I felt excited before the competition, it was exciting to be doing something different but I was also quite nervous. I had only started doing the Barista a few weeks before so it was hard getting used to different coffee machines I had never used before. When we got there I became less nervous and was more excited about getting to our turn at making the coffees. I couldn't believe it when we found out that we had won. We were the only school that hadn't won a certificate yet, but then they announced that we had won the overall prize and everyone was so excited. I felt so proud of all of us, especially the younger pupils who had only been learning for the last 2 months.”

Sophie, also in S5, added:

“I was so excited when I found out we were going to be competing in the Barista competition, I have been really enjoying learning about how to make the different coffees and use the different machines. I felt so proud of us as a team when we found out that we had won and I can't wait to go back next year.”

*Written by Charlotte (S2)*

A large selection of S2s recently got the opportunity to go on the Outward Bound trip which is located just fifteen minutes outside of Fort William.

The trip looks at trying to get students and even teachers out of their comfort zone, encouraging students to get involved in things they wouldn't normally be able to do and become closer with their classmates after doing the activities.

The trips took place on two separate dates, with the first group leaving on the 22nd of January, while the other half headed out on the 24th.

In the morning, we all met inside the school with our bags and suitcases at around 7:30am to get on the bus. Throughout the bus journey we were singing and clapped when ever we got into a new town. It was a very bumpy and windy road north and some students felt a little ill but the journey was still a success.

When you arrive you all go into a room and wait for your name to be called by a group leader. Once your name is called you and the rest of your group head back to your meet point either in one of the tents or the building itself. You speak about everything that you

will do on those three days. Once you have discussed and spoke about what the things are your leaders will give you an opportunity to go to your rooms and settle in your room.

The food was really good: for breakfast you could have toast, pancakes, cereal, fruit and there was even more.

There were so many exciting and terrifying activities - some of them you did on your own, others you had to work as part of a team. It was definitely a challenge for students because you had to push yourself a lot out of your comfort zone but once you got started there was no stopping us!

Speaking after the trip, Miss Bell (one of the group leaders) said: “Despite the less than ideal January conditions, I'm sure that the Outward Bound experience is one that I will never forget. I hope the young people feel the same - maybe the adverse weather made it even more memorable! Activities like abseiling down a giant rock face and swimming in Loch Eil (without a wet suit!) in frigid temperatures certainly put us all out of our comfort zones and taught us some invaluable lessons about resilience. It was incredible to see everyone working together and encouraging one another to try something new, and ultimately grow from it.”





*Inverurie Academy's English faculty went all out this year with a sinister selection of villainous characters from some of their favourite novels.*

## Reading Your Way

*Written by Liam (S4)*

World book day is all about trying to encourage young people to get involved in reading, from magical fairytale stories to adventurous and serious books, anyone can be a part of World Book Day. World book day is an international event that happens at different points in the year all around the world. This year, in the United Kingdom, World Book day took place on the 7th of March with a fantastic theme of Read Your Way.

World Book is a charity organisation that works alongside the book trust in Scotland. World Book Day is to get young people involved and encouraged to start reading. They provide packs to schools, academy's and colleges with a selection of promotional materials to showcase the theme of the year and to show how enjoyable and relaxing it is to switch off the screen and get lost inside of your imagination whilst reading a book. World Book also provide £1

book tokens to schools, libraries and many national retailers to give out to young people. These tokens can be used to claim a free £1 World Book Day book or you can put the token towards taking £1 off of ANY book.

This year the English Department at Inverurie Academy went above and beyond by dressing up as their favourite book villains, with the likes of Scar from the lion king (Mr Williams), Captain Hook (Miss Ross) and even Horrid Henry (Mr Simpson). They were also asking students to let them know which book that they had read that had made them smile, made them laugh, made them sad and a book that has changed their life.

Mr Foley, the school's new librarian, ran various different activities throughout the course of the day for young people to get involved in, these started as soon as the bell went at 8:40am. In the daily morning bulletin Mr Foley was testing young peoples riddle skills by saying this: "What has roots as nobody sees, is taller than

trees, up, up it goes, and yet it never grows?". During the interval, there was a world book day photo shoot where all of the English department got their photos taken in front of Mr Foleys World Book Day display in the library, where there were also some cupcakes to enjoy alongside. During lunchtime Mr Foley held a literacy quiz in the library to test students literature knowledge, many prizes were put up for grabs. Mr Foley told us that he enjoys World Book Day and that he is happy it allows anyone to have some fun, chill for five minutes to indulge in the adventures of a great book.

World Book Day happens all around the world to get children and young people to fall in love with reading and also to encourage parents to read to their children. World Book Day takes down some barriers that some people may face with reading. By giving out £1 book tokens it means that everyone can have a chance to experience the magic of reading.



## Studying for Success

By Fiona, Cara, Molly and Yasmeen (S5)

**A**s Inverurie Academy's prelim season comes to a close for S4-6, students' results are rolling in rapidly, either easing or increasing students' possible worries for the SQA exams set to take place this spring. There has been a wide range of responses to this year's prelim diet, with some such as the Higher maths papers being described as "Hellish", to the Higher History paper 1 prelim being described as "Beautiful". Furthermore, this year was the first set of prelims where all seniors were being assessed in the same three-week period. Previously, S4's assessments would take place around November, and they would remain in school instead of receiving a 2 week study period during this time; another development to the year.

In response to gaining study-leave this year compared to studying in school the past one, a current S5 commented, "I feel like study leave helped me revise more than last year without it." This emphasises the fact that time away from school is largely beneficial, and is something you should take advantage of. This is because of the array of options available for you to carry out at this time: including your own focused revision, with many students who previously sat exams resorting to methods such as using flash cards, to completing past papers (found on the SQA website) to even listening to a recording of themselves to get the information into their heads.

While prelims are never an uplifting experience (with many students having mostly negative

ideas about the concept), it can be argued to be an immensely useful learning curve, as well as a motivator to improve and exceed expectations for the future exams. Supported study is another important method to help relieve the stress of exams. Teachers often run these sessions both during lunch and after school, with some even offering support during the Easter holidays (the timings and dates for which can be viewed on the bulletin). It is crucial especially in the build up to exams to ask questions of anything you are unsure of, therefore not only increasing your knowledge of the subject but it also allows you to build your confidence, making the whole thing seem like a much less daunting task.

Mentally, prelims and exams, as well as the results, can be very toiling on individuals' mental health, however, nobody is alone in their anxieties, and many (even small) things can be done to help manage any anxiety you may feel. Inverurie Academy hosts an exam stress group (timings of which can again be found on the bulletin), led by Inverurie Academy's Pupil Support Workers Shona and Suzi Sherriffs, who, when asked about tips on how to relieve stress, replied:

"The Student Minds website is a very helpful resource that provides many tips on tackling exam stress". Many of our teachers have extremely helpful tips when tackling exam stress. English Teacher, Mr Williams said "Don't panic is the main tip I can provide you. It's a lot harder in Scotland than in England because of the Scottish students being younger than those in England." Mr Williams also

mentioned, "Exams are not the end of the world and using prelims can really help coping with the stress of it all as doing well in your prelim can reassure your ability that it can be managed in a small 3 week period" Mr Williams expressed his likeness for exams, he finds them "essential to showcase abilities" and the pressure drives students to perform the best they can. Other ways to reduce stress during exam time can be simple things such as getting some fresh air/exercise and coming back to revision with a fresh mind, breathing exercises, eating a healthy and balanced diet, as well as taking the time to prioritise things other than revision, including friends, family and, most importantly, yourself.

Exams can feel like a never ending weight on your shoulders but you are not alone in your stress or your feelings and it will get better. Many find the best way to cope with their stress is to just look forward to a better, stress-free time, such as summer. With a six week break to look forward to at the end of June, you can plan many revision-less activities for the break. We and everyone at Inverurie Academy wish all those sitting exams this April and May the best of luck and a stress-free study leave.

## Victories All Round



*The Junior Girls football team were crowned the victors after their recent match against Turriff.*

**T**his term, there has been a huge amount of sporting success for students at Inverurie Academy.

The Junior Girls football team reigned supreme on the 14th of March against Turriff Academy, remaining unbeaten with an outstanding 4 wins and 1 draw. Not only that, but the team are now officially through to the finals in Glasgow where they will be up against the best teams across Scotland. We are certain their success will continue!

Meanwhile the boys S2 team played against Ellon Academy on March 20th, taking a 2-2 draw after a fierce and nail-biting match. They showed real determination and sportsmanship on the pitch.

In netball, the Girls Junior team

remained unchallenged with their latest win, meaning they are officially undefeated in the league, while the Seniors finished an admirable third.

Finally, a group of students from S1 to S5 travelled to Leeds on 22nd March to compete in the York City Baths National Qualifier meet. The 11 students competing were there to see if swimmers could achieve any more qualification times for SNAGS (Scottish National Age Group Championships) being held in Aberdeen during Easter holidays. The group secured a number of personal bests and there was some excellent swimming all round.

Inverurie Academy was also involved in an important fundraising event in aid of the school's

football teams. The event included a raffle with a very exciting prize: AFCCT generously donated a signed Dons shirt for one lucky winner. All monies raised will go towards the provision of school football at the academy, with association and transport fees. Raffle Tickets were sold to staff at the cost of £2 per strip, with the winning ticket selected on the 9th of March in S35. Ms Ritchie from the TVE department was the lucky winner; a big Dons fan herself who has said that shirt will take pride of place amongst her collection of memorabilia. Mr Dair, who organised the fundraiser, issued a thank you to all staff who took part, stating that a total of £306 had been raised for the football fund.



## Local Band Rocks the Stage

Written by Grace (S6)

School-based indie folk-rock trio 'Redshanks' have recently completed their first of four gigs at Aberdeen music bar Krakatoa. The sixth year band consists of vocalist Isaac Chirnside, bassist Poppy Reith-Thompson and saxophonist and keyboardist Jamie Mitchell, with fifth year Mark Noblett who is stepping in as their drummer for the live shows.

The success of their first show was as expected by the band - "We didn't really expect much, you know, it's our first gig" Isaac said. However, the abundance of an audience wasn't their focus for the night: "We also just wanna put ourselves out there, so, for turnout I'd say it was good - our parents were there, and that's what mattered," Isaac said, on the subject of turnout. Despite a slightly underwhelming start, the band remain hopeful for a larger turnout over the next three weeks of shows, and an improved overall success with each gig.

The bands setlist consists of mainly original songs by the band with a couple of covers to make up the set. The trio have made it clear that putting their original work out there rather than being strictly a cover band is important to them as performers. On the topic of performing original songs, Poppy said: "I think it was really cool, especially for the first night, just that we could perform so many of them, we only did three covers that night so, it was really good" With Isaac being the lyricist of the group, their bandmates recognise the efforts they put in and how that affects their opinion on performing the originals. Jamie touched on this saying (to Isaac):

"It's mainly been you that's written the lyrics for these songs and then being able to come up with the chord progressions and then, be able to make these songs up and be able to perform them".

Due to Isaac being the vocalist, main composer and lyricist of the songs, they can be seen as the front of the band. However, they themselves do not view their role in the band as the 'front' or 'lead'. "I wouldn't see myself as the front of the band, because I like making the songs with all the input so it's Jamie and Poppy and drums from Mark, so I would say it's an effort from all of us." Despite not seeing themselves as the lead of the band, they do appreciate the nervous feeling that comes with being front and centre on the stage. "But doing that, it was pretty nerve-wracking, all I did was really focus." The idea of everyone in the room having all their attention on you is an anxiety-inducing experience for most people, and Isaac revealed their way of handling this: "It's kind of a character

that I put on, it's definitely not me when I'm on stage. I'm a lot less confident off the stage". Like most performers, Chirnside is a different person to who they are on stage, channelling the much-needed confidence to get through the pressure of being the centre of everyone's attention.

The making of a setlist is very important when it comes to concerts. The order and placement of each song is meticulously calculated to make sure the band provide the best show they can. In Redshanks case, it was a much more simple process with an equally exceptional result. "We kind of just went through all the songs we knew, and then as a group decided 'let's do that one, that one sounds good, lets do this there'. And then Isaac worked out the tunings and which order was best to put them in" said Jamie. The bands setlist comprised of 4 original songs and 3 cover songs to make up their 30 minute set, with the covers being of bands of a similar genre to them, making sure they kept up their style throughout the performance. For example, one of their covers 'Satanist', is a song by ▶





'boygenius', who have reimagined the style of folk rock by making it modern and giving them a unique, recognisable sound. This is exactly what Redshanks aim to do, to create their own sound.

The most valuable part of being in a band is that you work well together, you have a connection to each other and a strong bond. Otherwise, it would never work due to a lack of communication and passion. This is especially important when starting a band with school friends, as Redshanks are. "I think we work really well together - I think all of our different music tastes kind of combine when we're playing, especially for the originals, cause it's kind of in the genre we all like. I think our playing reflects that and it works really well in the songs" Poppy said. The importance of playing music you enjoy is evident in every band, and Redshanks displays this notably well. With the trio's combined love for folk, post-rock and indie music, they have created an array of songs categorised in these styles, meaning they actually enjoy the music they are writing and performing, which is the most important aspect when it comes to being in a band.

Due to being a trio with a mixed

skill set of vocals, guitar, bass, saxophone and keyboard, the band quickly realised that they would need an element of percussion for their show. This required them to appoint Mark as their drummer. However, this call-in was a relatively last minute decision which made this a slightly stressful ordeal for Mark. Despite the nerves, Mark still saw the positives of the situation: "It was a good opportunity to play with people I haven't played with before and it's really putting myself out there as a musician." This made all the stress worthwhile as it meant Mark could improve his sense of stage presence and experiment with other musicians other than himself.

Due to this being their first ever live gig, there will be aspects of the performance and preparation that the band could improve for next time. "I think if we had more opportunities to practice, it would have been a lot better," said Mark. The band felt as though they didn't really have enough time to practise leading up to the show, especially with the addition of Mark who faced a lot of work constraints as well as learning the songs in a shorter amount of time than the other three. Mark's lack

of time was not the only constraint however, as Poppy explained: "It's also to do with being a school band, whilst we're all still here, we don't really have much time outside of school." The group have busy schedules due to all four still being enrolled in full-time education, making it more difficult to find the time and energy to put into the band. Despite this, (and two out of four members living outside of Inverurie) they still make every effort towards the band, and this is evident in their performances.

Even though the groups first gig went well, there is always room for improvement and over the next few weeks, the band have time to work on their performance for the upcoming shows. "I think they'll go way better because different people will turn up - hopefully more people. We'll have more support and we'll feel better about it because we will have experienced it before" said Mark. "It'll get better with every show, like by the last show we'll be really good". There's no denying that practise makes perfect, and with the already successful first performance, the band will surely prove this theory true by the end of their gigs.





*The entire cast of GYMS before their performance at Inverurie Town Hall.*

## Popstars: The 90s Musical

*Written by Saturn (S5)*

A performance of 'Popstars The 90s Musical' was recently performed at Inverurie Town Hall between the dates of the 15th-17th of February 2024. The ending of the show was one to remember, filled with adrenaline and excitement. Everyone bowed and got the applause they very much deserve before breaking into one last dance to the song 'Let's get loud' by Jennifer Lopez. On the final night, some tears were shed. All the months worth of rehearsals starting all the way back in August 2023, leading up to these 3 performances.

Let's look back a little, many months of rehearsals and preparation went into this; The cast itself is made up of wonderful actors and amazing people.

Once our Musical Director had told us which Musical we were doing, everyone started preparing for

the auditions. Overall, there are 3 auditions to do.

The first one is the dance audition where we were taught choreography and it was filmed so they could see who the 'better' dancers were. The 2nd audition was the acting one, our director placed us into random pairs with people we have never spoken to/interacted with. Then we were given 3 scripts to choose from which we would have to learn and perform with each other. And finally, the singing

audition. We were given 4 songs, 2 that can be sung by anyone for any role, 1 for people wanting a lead male role and 1 for people wanting a lead female role. You had to do 2 songs or more, as to allow the directors to fully hear your voice range when singing.

After they finished with all auditions, they took some time to discuss with each other before coming down and telling us who got each role. This was my first ►





GYMS performance, so any role I got would have been fine. I ended up getting 2 roles, The Host and Carrie. Both speaking roles which I was very happy with. The casting for this performance was perfect, everyone fit their characters one way or another and slowly adapted to being like them fully.

All cast members and backstage people had to be at the town hall for 6pm, an hour before doors open to allow our Musical Director to speak to us about anything that went wrong or well in the previous performance as well as giving us a vocal warmup. The atmosphere of both dressing rooms and backstage was thick with

in the performance that night.

Act 1 opens with 'Larger than life' by the Backstreet Boys before moving onto the host introducing some of the characters/groups, then a black out happens and our attention is moved to the extensions where Shannon, Tina & Steffi are speaking amongst themselves about the school talent show and how a special guest is coming to host it. Fast forwarding, Shannon breaks up with her boyfriend, Mark, in order to have a better chance of winning the talent show. Mark is then heartbroken before he gets the idea to enter the talent show with his boy band in order to beat Shannon. The boys quick-

wonderfully singing "Everything I do, I do it for you". Afterwards we move to the boy band and Ella in patricks garage practising "I'm too sexy" while Ella tells them some tips on how to be a proper boy band before Shannon, Tina & Steffi show up resulting in Patrick and Shannon arguing before she storms away in annoyance. Once the rest of the boy band go to grab 'drinks', Mark and Ella stay back to speak to one another, ending up with Ella speaking about her past relationship and singing "You gotta be" making the moment heartfelt for the two of them. The scenes moves onto the start of 'All star' with a few different pieces of



nerves and excitement (especially on opening night), but once the first night was over it changed to more excitement than nerves.

Many memories were made in the dressing rooms, which in my opinion; is one of the best parts of being in the show.

Our backstage crew would inform us of when the doors had opened, the 10 minute warning, the 5 minute warning and finally the bell which would go off just before the curtains opened signalling the start of the show meaning silence backstage keeping the atmosphere a little tense but mainly optimistic of what would happen

ly realise that none of them can dance or even know where to start to become a boy band, so Shane decides to take them to a 50's diner where they then meet, Ella. After her performance of 'Man, I feel like a woman' with Chef Joey and her friend Carrie, she goes over to the boys table with their order and that's when Mark asks her if she would help them with their boy band. Reluctant at first, she ends up saying yes. Skipping a little again, Shannon holds auditions for a singer to join their group as none of the 3 girls can sing well, ending up with them adding Charlie to their girl group after

dialogue happening throughout such as DJ Prince opening the start of the schools talent show, Ella and the boy band practising again and Tina & Steffi showing Shannon, Charlie after her 'glow up'. Then we go to Ella and the boys backstage as Ella gives them some words of encouragement before leaving, letting the other boys tease Mark about his feelings towards Ella. Quickly after the teasing Shannon walks in and asks to speak to Mark alone where she apologises to him for the breakup and said that he doesn't need to do all of this to win her back, to which Mark isn't happy ►





and proceeds to call her a 'Prized B\*\*\*\*' just before the performance of 'Bye Bye Bye' as their first heat performance. Once they finish we move to Ella and Shannon on the extensions where they're speaking to one another before the boys walk out looking sad saying that they didn't place before Mark shouts excitedly that they did not place because they won the heat which leads onto Patrick singing 'Who let the dogs out?' in Shannon's face. While all of this is happening the stage is set for the final scene of Act 1 which is set in the diner again; once Patrick stops singing in Shannon's face the music turns into 'Let's get loud' as everyone starts to move back onto stage into the diner. The final scene quickly starts with the whole

cast dancing and singing before Patrick starts having his little solo which leads back into the chorus and then onto the first dialogue part between Carrie and Shane, where Carrie admits her feelings to the mute boy to which all he does is nod. The second part of dialogue is between Mark and Ella where they also confess their feelings to one another before everyone goes back into the dance and finally everyone finishes in the hamilton pose, concluding Act 1.

After a 15 minute intermission, Act 2 finally starts. We open with the Candy Girls practising 'Stop', to which Charlie messes up a dance move resulting in Shannon and her having an argument and Charlie being kicked from the group. Then it moves back

to Patrick's garage where Mark is feeling bad for not telling Ella about the actual prize of the talent show which leads to Vinnie giving him advice and ending up singing 'Love is all around', using Shane as his muse. Vinnie gets very into it, even getting down onto one knee for Shane before breaking his heart by turning away from a kiss, leaving Shane sad. The next scene starts with Shannon and Ella on the extension speaking to one another about the talent show letting Shannon mention Simon Austin and the real prize which shocks Ella as Mark hasn't told her about this making Ella feel betrayed. Shannon however, uses this to her advantage and gets Ella to join her girl group to replace Charlie ending up with Ella performing 'Believe' with the Candy Girls. Moving on from that, we move to the school hallway where the group of boys are trying to help Mark get Ella back and convince him that singing to her is his best option which ends up with Ella slapping him and Mark starting to sing '...Baby one more time' leaving Ella and Carrie to feel second hand embarrassment while he sings and dances to try and win Ella back (it doesn't work). Afterwards we see Charlie in the library where Tia and Steffi come in saying that they miss her and hope to see her soon which leads into a three-way harmony of 'Iris' between Charlie, Mark and Ella. We then have a quick scene in Patrick's garage where the boys manage to convince Mark to continue the talent show before we move onto Simon Austin's introduction where he raps 'You can't touch this' and gets interviewed by DJ Prince. Next, we see all the Candy girls gathered together with Ella and Charlie being there as Shannon surprises them with Charlie joining the group again and Ella ►

being kicked from it which confuses/annoys everyone but once they start to back talk Shannon she brings out a laptop which has some embarrassing images on it of each of the girls which makes them shut up quickly. Once the girls leave, Ella remains on stage while Shane and Mark are on the extension where Shane bursts into song singing 'You gotta be, reprise' to try and help his friend get Ella back. Mark pleads for forgiveness from Ella before asking her to take over the boy band, to which Ella at first says no but then changes her mind when they agree to have a mixed band instead of a boy band, inviting Ella and Carrie to join at the last minute. Nearing the end of the show, we have the Candy girls performing 'Genie in a bottle' and Y2K performing 'Everybody' before everyone gathers back onto the stage to hear who the winner of the talent show is. The winner ends up being a girl on violin which surprises some people and causes Shannon to have a tantrum and for Charlie to show everyone an embarrassing photo of Shannon making her storm off and letting everyone else move into their positions for the second last dance. Once the dance is over, everyone leaves the stage and the bows begin. First is the ensemble who bow to 'Lets gets loud' & 'Stop', then we have Chef Joey and Carries bowing to 'Achy Breaky Heart', then we jhave SImon Austin bowing to 'You can't touch this', following up with Tina and Steffi bowing to 'Wannabe', then we have the 3 boys: Patrick, Shane and Vinnie bowing to 'Everybody', our second last pair is Shannon and Charli who bow to 'Believe' and finally we have Ella and Mark who bow too '...Baby one more time' before it smoothly transitions back into 'Lets get loud' for the final dance. Once the dance is

complete we all do a group bow before pointing to our tech people and our band for the audience to applaud them as well before doing our final bow and concluding the show.

My personal experience in this show was absolutely amazing. Since this is my first show I was happy with any role I got but being able to have 2 character, both with speaking lines, made me very happy. Rehearsals was great as well, I got to meet and work with so many talented people as well as gaining some friendship. This performance was definitely a big part of me, it gave me something to look forward to every week and I think everyone played their characters wonderfully. The family you make when you are part of a show is unlike anything else, there is no judgement or negativity as everyone is there for the same reason, very unexpected things can come from performances such as friendships. Now, enough of me. I have the very talented Erin Main's experience on the show and on her first leading role as Shannon

Van De Witt.

Looking back at the performance, it is a little sad. All those hard months of rehearsals just for it to be over in 3 days is a lot, but, you always leave a performance with something you didn't start with, a lot of friendships. We at GYMS currently don't have any plans for our next show, we do however have a Showcase coming up some time before the summer which we have every year to showcase everyone's talents whether it be singing, acting or dancing. I would also like to thank everyone that did come to see the show in person and also took part in the raffle, we managed to raise £375.52 for our chosen charity which was, musicALL. Everyone at GYMS hope you enjoyed and are very thankful for your support!



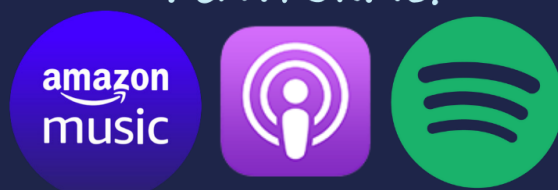


# INVER ramble

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