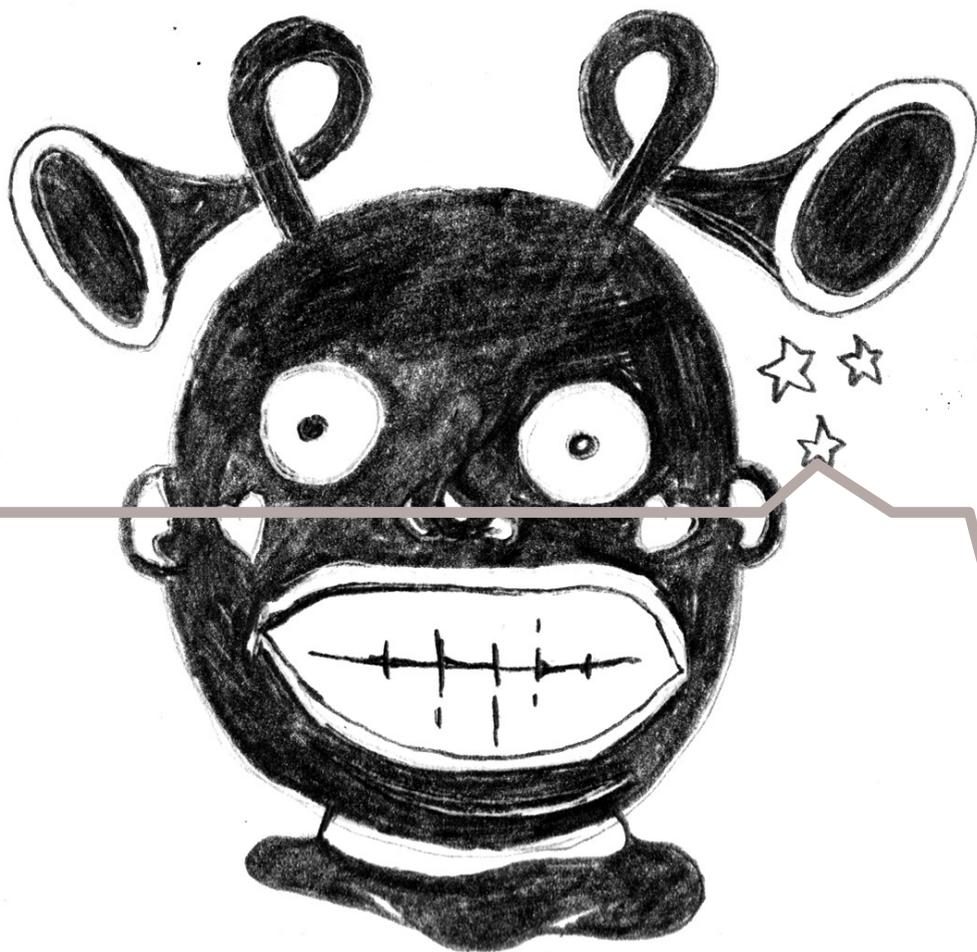


Mercy Flatline: minusSIX



Featuring:

- + Kathryn Cooper
- + Lily Lotus
- + Laura Parish
- + Nick Holloway
- + Ross Sutherland
- + Charles Williams

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New piece by Aisle 16's Ross

EMPATHY FAIL



THIS IS THE NEWS



Bored yet?

Don't be. We've got a load of new collaborators this issue. We're especially excited about finally commissioning good friend **Charles Williams** – whose megacomplex illustrations we've been all over for a good long while.

Thanks also to **Laura Parish** for illustrations, who was on work experience with us recently.

info@mercyonline.co.uk

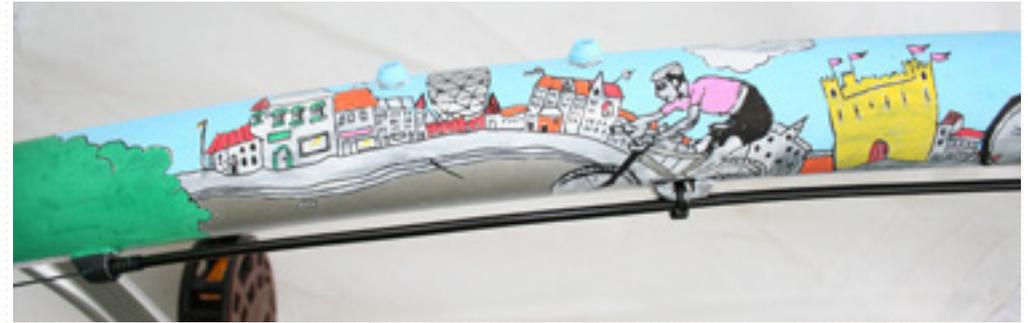
Skyride REDUXE



We despatched **Kathryn Cooper** to that there London last week – to draw on a bike for the pleasure of people.

Part of the **Skyride** event in St James Park, she put in a Tour de Shift with a six-hour session of paint-stripping and marker pen-scrawling. While we gallavanted round Liverpool on a 30th birthday do. Cheers Kathryn!

These are the results ...



Your Results for the Test Series 'Class-A-Lover'

Dear Mr Rocketman,

Thank you for submitting your product *Tarquin Jezobel* to our test series "Class-A-Lover". We hereby present you with the results.

To begin, we would like to clarify what constitutes, in our opinion, a good lover, and what features he should display: Our experience teaches us that a lover of high quality should not only be good in bed - emotionally unburdened, he brings a certain carefreeness into the life of his lover, shows affection to some degree around them (ie small touches) and is genuinely interested in them. In conversation he is polite and varied, but also a good listener and thus socially competent.

As the emotional distance should always be maintained in an affair, the subject of "love" is considered inappropriate. The repeated unloading of accumulated emotional debris, the mentioning of other sexual partners, lack of liquidity and exclusive gratification of ones own sexual needs have a negative impact on the performance of a lover.

We regret to inform you that your product *Tarquin Jezobel*, which you submitted to our test series "Class-A-Lover", failed to meet the minimum requirements in all categories applied by our test team.

To illustrate our evaluation, here are your test results:

Grading system:
1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = satisfactory,
4 = poor, 5 = very poor, 6 = fail.

1. Emotional Stability: very poor (5)

According to our tester, *Tarquin Jezobel* is emotionally very unstable, which was probably due to his high levels of drug abuse and a recently ended relationship. Self-pity and repeatedly striking manifestation of disgust with everything which exhibited some features of the normal or ordinary, would point to an unstable mental condition.

By the failure in this category alone *Tarquin Jezobel* disqualifies as a promising lover.

THIS IS NEW

+ Words by Lily Lotus
+ Pictures by Laura Parish (overleaf)

2. Emotional Distance: poor (4)

Although your product in this category at large has been quite successful, *Tarquin Jezobel* repeated instances of verbal incontinence, characterized by statements like "I love you", "I love you so much" or "Let's make a child", distinguished.

In an affair such statements are unacceptable.

Certain statements she therefore appreciated as tactless ("I'm father to a child on every continent" or "I am Porn Star") and took them, in her own words, "too personal".

The rating in this category will therefore be omitted in the overall assessment.

3. Sexual Satisfaction: very poor (5)

The tester complained that, in all instances of sexual contact, she had to apply the own hand to create attainment of orgasm on her part. The execution of this technique indeed is acceptable if given occurrence is kept to a minimal level, but in no way meets the standard which our tester had lived to in that category, and also feels entitled to claim. Furthermore, our tester criticized general Unkreativität in sexual behavior and the distinct lack of foreplay.

4. Empathy: fail (6)

Derogatory comments concerning subjects that appealed to our tester combined with a lack of tokens of appreciation by the tested product, caused feelings of worthlessness within our tester (not interesting enough? Maybe not pretty enough? Etc.). She stressed that due to lack of self-confidence, in this category she might not have been in a position to judge objectively, and did not test the product in this respect regarded as a lover, but perhaps more as a good friend or partner.

5. Appearance: poor (4)

Citation - our tester: "The retro-look 'concentration camp victim' evokes pity more than feelings."

6. Conversation: poor (4)

In conversation *Tarquin Jezobel* has yet a lot to catch. Subjects were relatively entertaining, but mainly centered around himself, and he proved to be unable to raise a genuine interest in our tester. After all, your product did display attempts of trying to audition, or giving the *impression* of interest, however they failed to convince our tester of their genuineness.

7. Financial independence: fail (6)

Tarquin Jezobel, with minor exceptions, proved to be chronically "financially embarrassed" to the point destitution.

Overall Rating: very poor (5)

Our tester made us know that they wished to prematurely cancel the test series because of the obvious shortcomings of your product. That all her attempts failed, according to her own statement, could be explained by the fact that she, despite, or partly due to the failure of your product in all rating categories, in some way was “in love” with *Tarquin Jezobel*. Your product attributed this phenomenon to a “mother complex” (s.a. rating category “Empathy: fail (6)”), which our tester denied and challenged, however.

Meanwhile the for objective judging very bad emotional state of our tester was successfully eliminated by the behaviour of *Tarquin Jezobel* (our tester: “Then I realized through the condoms he was screwing with a girl on another path. And the same with my feelings.”).

You will be pleased to hear that we will not put the damage caused to our tester at your bill. This damage is of course also a result attributed to the unprofessional behavior of our tester, who unfortunately was not able to maintain emotional distance.

The problem lay, according to our tester, in the initial phase of the test series, which started as a “romantic love story” (we avoid the use of such terms actually in our organisation). She described situations that in no way correspond to the code of conduct applicable to our testing procedure and are characterized by an increased emotionality and inappropriate feelings of happiness.

We regret that we could not perform, in this respect, to our own high standards in testing procedueres.

If you require to take part in another series of tests, it does give us regrets to inform you that for purposes of mitigation we do not wish to discuss any further business relationships with you.

We hope that you can improve your product and distribute it in the future with success on the open market.

Sincerely,

Your test team “Class-A-Lover”



My Gepetto

What artist / human / thing(s) are you most influenced by?

Italian writer, Italo Calvino.

What is it about him that you find intriguing?

His novels are games. In **The Castle Of Crossed Destinies** the characters are struck dumb and have to mime their stories using a tarot deck. **If On A Winter's Night A Traveller** pretends to be ten books that have accidentally got mashed up due to an error at the print works.

His essays also took a crowbar to my brain, introducing me to the likes of French lit group OULIPO, Voltaire, Roland Barthes, and the work of Savinien de Cyrano (who Cyrano de Bergerac was based on, and who wrote **The Other World** - think Gulliver's Travels, but 100 years before and in French). It was a good way to fail a university semester - none of the above were on the reading list.

Nick is the editor of our [blog](#). He is currently working on a pamphlet linking our avian cousins to the destruction of the planet, and why dogs are to be trusted, entitled 'Holloway's La'.

A series of interviews exploring the influences of some of our favourite artists and clever clogses.

This week: Nick Holloway, the Mercy bloggerman and all-round writer / ideas machine

If you were to pick the most important work by this person, what would it be? Why?

His collection **The Literature Machine**, for everything I mentioned in the last paragraph above. But, to pick a collection of stories rather than essays, **Invisible Cities**.

It's told from Marco Polo's POV, describing the cities he's seen on his travels. Again, it's a game, taking the elements of real cities and trying them out in different combinations. Like a city made entirely of pipework:

It has no walls, no ceilings, no floors: it has nothing that makes it seem a city except the water pipes that rise vertically where the houses should be and spread out horizontally where the floors should be. You would think that the plumbers had gone away before the bricklayers arrived; or else their hydraulic systems, indestructable, had survived a catastrophe, an earthquake, or the corrosion of termites.

It's a book every town planner should read. Not that you'd want to live in a city made entirely of pipes and shitters, but you know what I mean. Less Tesco's and retail parks, please, and more quantum-fired jet-bicycles on rails, or something.

What work of yours most bears the most influence?

This question sort of assumes I'm a functioning artist, where really I'm more of a slapdash hobbyist. But there are two blogs I've written that are relevant, [here](#) and [here](#).

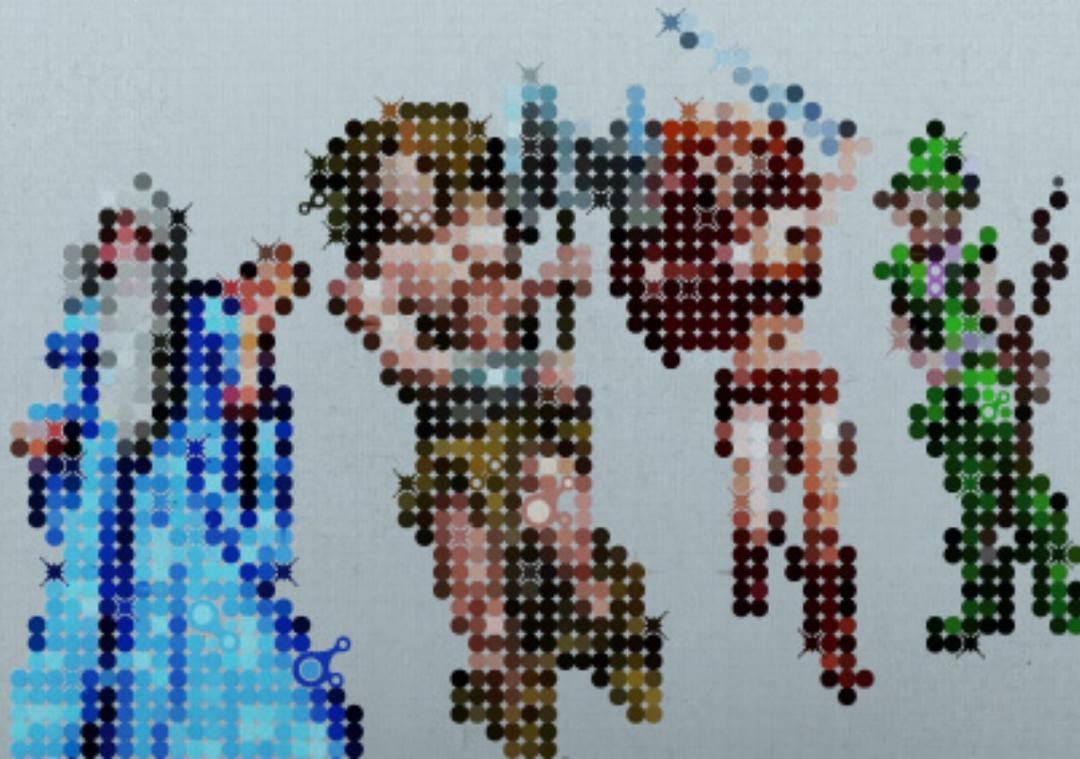
I tried to play around what a society might be like if it wasn't bound by the laws or conventions we know now. I called it 'Liverpool 8002', but it needn't be that far in the future; it could be a Liverpool that comes into being next year or next week, or that exists already in a parallel universe.

Whether I'll get round to doing more, I don't know. But there are plenty of seeds for stories there: a version of the city where St Johns Beacon is a cable car station, with the cars and their cargo strung above the streets like washing; a city where the washed-up carapace of giant lobster becomes a permanent feature, converted into 'luxury flats' maybe, or earthed over to make it into an artificial hill, with catacombs beneath; a Liverpool that sinks, like Atlantis, when the Liver Birds are shooed away, according to the legend that their departure spells doom for the city; or a Liverpool where the two cathedrals are actually mecha, with the Archbishop Of Canterbury encased in one and the Pope the other, battling it out over who's got the better version of Christianity. And so on and so on...



Don't listen to me, Warrior. Please, continue to let your naive sense of purpose pilot you like a crummy, pixelated ghost ship through a grey sea of nothingness. No one can doubt that your trajectory is immaculate, Warrior, unblemished by reality, much like a man falling off a roof, or a dead body crushed against a blaring car-horn. I have no doubt that you will 'hold the course', Warrior. In fact, I have just put the finishing touches on a mural that illustrates your many adventures. The green daubs around your head represents the System that you cannot see yet so cowardly protect.

+ Words by **Ross Sutherland**
+ Picture by **Charles Williams**



Wizard, as an ironist, you alone receive some sense of subjective freedom. Your outré dress sense deprives your surroundings of a finite degree of cognitive reality. In this manner, the dungeon can never truly hold you. Perhaps you expect us to be greatful for this mockery. Perhaps you would like us to bake some sort of special cake in your honour. How privileged you are, Wizard, and yet your surreal brand of comedy is just as reductive as the boilerplate ethics it attempts to negate. Deep down you have never truly questioned the rules. I will wager that you have never had an original thought. In fact, Wizard, you are incapable of fantasy. Your only escape will be from your own bloodstream, and even then your raft will never reach the rim of the ocean.



They say that the show is never over until the fat lady sings (and you, Valkyrie, are unmistakably that fat lady), however, this particular rendition of *Götterdämmerung* is undergoing a series of dramatic rewrites at the behest of your controversial composer, a clownish horror of a man, who is composing a series of new librettos by headbutting a photocopier, an acknowledged unusual choice of collaborator (and one who many feel has overstayed its welcome at the Vienna Volksoper) the photocopier continues to be associated with the opera house due primarily to its prolific output, with you and your fellow singers receiving new pages every day, and although the sheets are all identical, featuring instructions on how to milk dogs, you and your ensemble remain grateful for the work, spending every minute of your waking day trying to bring the text to life, pushing Wagnerian harmony further and further with extreme chromaticism and generous use of dissonance, the production stretching out over days, weeks, years, until eventually the baritone is shot dead by the Slovene conductor Hugo Franck, and the renowned tenor Marco Casolini dies of malnutrition. Indeed, it looks unlikely that you will be winning the Nilsson Prize any time soon. One might even start to form the opinion that the entire production is a sham and a valuable mezzo-soprano's talents would be better suited elsewhere, for example, face-down at the bottom of a swimming pool. Sure enough, spend long enough at the grindstone and all the walls start to look like exits, and Valkyrie, nobody can walk through that door like you can.

Review of Gauntlet

"The original Gauntlet was released with no ending. The hundred or so levels were randomised and looped for as long as play lasted. Atari saw Gauntlet as a process, a game that was played for its own sake and not to reach completion. The adventurers continue forever until their life drains out, their quest ultimately hopeless." - Gamasutra.com

END

*To receive issue minusSEVEN
next week, make sure your
email address is on our **list***