

UNIT

6

COUNTERCULTURE SHOCK

**Artistic expression, creativity
and shock value.**

**The music business
and the film industry**



**“Perfection is not achieved when there is nothing more to add,
but when there is nothing more to take away”**

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

About this unit

In this unit we get to address a favorite topic of yours truly: art, in the several forms it can adopt. One of the most fascinating aspects about an artistic creation (be it a painting, sculpture, a musical composition, a theater play, a movie...) is that, besides the obvious, minimal technical skills required to produce a work of any worth, well, the appreciation of a piece of art is going to be extremely subjective and will largely depend on the beholder's experience, sensibilities, and values, all of which will lead to a greater (or lesser) propensity to be positively (or negatively) impacted by a given work.

That is, precisely, the underlying idea behind the first part of the unit, "**Modern Art**". Contemporary works of art have, for the most part, not shunned experimentalism and an open defiance of classic conventions of beauty, proportion, and quality, and that is why it is hard for many people (both the uninitiated and some **art connoisseurs**) to relate to it. It is like everyone could do that, right? Well, that might be a bit too bold of a statement, but the controversy stirred by the **alleged** lack of technical and artistic quality of some works, and the ridiculous sums of money paid for some of these works always make for a nice discussion. And in the C2 Mastery method, we are all about fascinating and enlightening conversations. **Gotcha!**

The second part "**Creativity, Freedom of Expression, and Shock Value**" is the logical extension of the previous one. If it is hard to determine the quality of an artistic work, given the subjective component that molds one's assessment, to try to define and set the line of what is moral, immoral, or amoral, to decide what should be expressed and what should be avoided altogether is also a tricky endeavor. Like does **anything go** in the name of freedom? Are there some topics, images, or words that are too reprehensible and disgusting to be acceptable and be part of mainstream culture? We will get to debate that in this second section.

"**Popular Music**" is the title of the third part of the unit. Just for your information, music is my art of choice, so it is a topic I could speak and write about ad nauseam. I do not only enjoy listening to music, but also reading about it, researching about it, finding connections between this and that artist, and this and that genre. Like a true music nerd, in the good (passionate about and certainly acquainted with) and the bad (you know, the **geeky** thing) sense of the word. I do not know if teachers and students reading this share this **passion-turned-obsession**, but if you do, lucky you! You will enjoy yourselves

throughout these pages. If your relationship with music is a more, say, occasional and detached one, you will find some interesting topics to discuss, on top of some challenging tasks to do, as usual. The last section of this unit deals with the state of today's **Film Industry**. The arrival of new forms of media entertainment (**Netflix** and other platforms and streaming services) have revolutionized the way users consume entertainment. And Hollywood had to take note of this, of course. This, along with the sad scandals revolving around sexual harassment which erupted in 2017, and a new **penchant** for remakes of superhero movies have influenced not only the way new entertainment is made (photography, length, format, films being broken down into episodes so as to accommodate to increasingly shorter attention spans), but also the contents and the stories themselves. Whether this has resulted in higher-quality films is a personal conclusion that you will have the opportunity to discuss.

Enjoy!

Table of Contents

Throughout this unit you will practice the following skills:

Reading

Shock Me if You Can. (Gapped Text)

In Praise of the Computer Algorithm. (Multiple Matching)

Fear in Post-Weinstein Hollywood. (Open Cloze)

Listening

Should the arts be publicly funded by governments? (Multiple Matching)

Can we Separate Art from the Artist? (T/F)

“El Mal Querer” by Rosalía. Review by Anthony Fantano. (Sentence Completion)

The Truth about Popular Music. (Matching Headings)

“Allied” Review by Chris Stuckmann. (Multiple Choice)

Oral Mediation

Contemporary Art Exhibition (Intra-linguistic)

What's on Guide. (Intra-linguistic)

Written Mediation

Should the Arts be Publicly Funded by Governments? (Intra-linguistic)

Speaking

Modern Art. Plastic Arts

Arts, Free Speech and Shock Value

The Music Business

The Film Industry

Writing

Written Interaction: A comment in an online newspaper story.

PART 1

MODERN
ART

“But the emperor has nothing at all on!”

The Emperor’s New Clothes

SMALL
TALK

Discuss the following ideas with your group:

What is your art of choice? Painting? Photography? Architecture?
Sculpture? Performance Arts? Music? Literature? Other?

Do you think artistic talent can be measured? Is it something completely
objective?

British philosopher **Roger Scruton** made a case for “**Why beauty matters**”
in a popular documentary. Do you agree that beauty matters? Do you agree
that “**beauty is in the eye of the beholder**”?

Some forms of contemporary art which are highly popular strike many
people as something that anyone could do. Do you agree with that
sentiment?

GROUP WORK/ SPEAKING INTERACTION

The Dictionary Game

WHAT MAKES “A WORK OF ART”?

Create your own definition of the phrase “work of art”. Try to define it so that it could pass for an actual definition such as the ones you could find in a dictionary, but make sure it also reflects what you actually believe makes a work of art. Cut your written definition into a strip of paper and give it to a group member. He/she will mix the different definitions.



a) Vote for the definition you think it is the one found in an actual dictionary

RULES

- I. (You cannot vote for your own definition)
- II. (If you guess it right, you score ONE point.
- III. If someone mistakes your definition for the “official” one, you score TWO points.
- IV. If you guess it right AND yours is mistaken for the official one, you will score THREE points.

b) Try to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5) to which extent you agree with each of the definitions according to your opinion. Discuss your decision in your group.

SPEAKING

Look at the following news items (true stories!).

Have you ever been to an exhibition where you didn't get what made the exhibits so amazing? Has any work of art that you have seen at a museum struck you as something as simple as these objects?

“Students left a pineapple in the middle of an exhibition and people mistook it for art”



“Someone put glasses on museum floor and visitors thought it was art”

“BUT..., THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES!”



Listen to a [graphic designer](#) talking about modern art. What fault does he find with it? Do you agree with him?

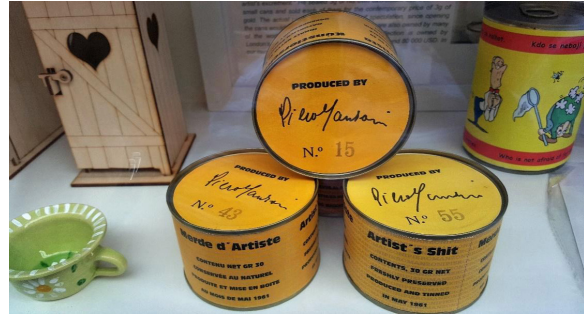
! Source: [Brian Holdsworth YouTube Channel](#)

Mastery. The Ultimate Advanced English Course. Unit 6. Counterculture Shock

Has modern art degraded the word "art" itself?

Do you think modern works can **hold a candle** to those of the past (Neoclassical, Renaissance, etc?)

Look at the following picture. It shows 1961 artwork "Artist's Shit" by Italian artist **Piero Manzoni**, consisting of 90 tin cans, each of which contained actual feces from the artist. Does it strike you as an actual piece of art? Why (not)? Do you think there is genuine talent involved or just cultural snobbery? **What makes, in your opinion, a true work of art?**



LISTENING AND SPEAKING: DISCUSSING MODERN ART

Listen [to two people talking](#) about modern art exhibits in Los Angeles.

- What is the two guys' criticism on modern pieces of art they recently saw at an exhibition?
- What examples do they give of how terrible they think it is?
- Do they despise art exhibitions altogether?
- What is funny about the anecdote regarding a family visit to the museum?

! Source: [JRE Clips](#)

SPEAKING/ VOCABULARY ACTIVATION

Which would you say is the most **stunning/mesmerizing/dazzling** work of art you can think of?

Do you agree with the saying "**beauty is in the eye of the beholder**"? That is, can something be deemed beautiful or hideous depending on someone's opinion of it?

Do you instead believe there are some **objective standards** of beauty (in arts/aesthetics, architecture, etc.) that no amount of media influence or social engineering can obliterate?



Are you particularly fond of **cutting-edge/avant-garde** art? Why?

What do you think is more important in an artistic creation (of any kind, music, painting, sculpture, performance...)? **Skill/technical ability/mastery**? The artist's right to **self-expression**? **A novelty factor/originality**?

Do you think **art-for-art's-sake** is of any worth? Should it comply with certain standards of aesthetic excellence or beauty? Can beauty be found in ugliness?

Some suspect that in these works' **patronage/auctioning/investment**, there could be some form of **tax evasion/money laundering**? Do you agree? Why?

What should be prioritized in architecture? Form or function? Why? Do you think that modern architecture pays more attention to **aesthetics** than **functionality**?

Can you think of an artist for whom **the sky is the limit**? Why?

Can you think of a time when a plan/approach/action did not turn out the way you intended and you had to **go back to the drawing board**?

Check Speaking Mastery:

Modern Art. Plastic Arts

LISTENING/WRITTEN MEDIATION/SPEAKING

Should the arts be publicly funded?

Multiple Matching

Listen to six people giving their opinion on whether art should be publicly funded by governments.

Which speaker(s) state(s) the following ideas? There are FIVE statements too many.

- A. Art is vital for a nation's identity.
- B. Being selective with the works is key.
- C. Giving a chance to those without an innate artistic inclination
- D. Government subsidies leave little room for private investment.
- E. In the past art's success did not depend on funding
- F. Lack of funding forces artists to produce quality work.
- G. Other branches/sectors should be prioritized.
- H. Public funding can conceal indoctrination of the public
- I. So much focus on the economic factor seems rather inhumane.
- J. The economy needs to be in good shape.
- K. Up-and-coming artists have no opportunities otherwise.

- Speaker 1. _____
- Speaker 2. _____
- Speaker 3. _____
- Speaker 4. _____
- Speaker 5. _____
- Speaker 6. _____



WRITTEN MEDIATION

Should the arts be publicly funded?

Context

Your teacher has told you to write an entry on the course blog on the advisability (or not) of publicly subsidizing different arts (films, exhibitions, galleries, etc.). You will take sides with the option you prefer (IN FAVOR/AGAINST), taking into consideration the following opinions expressed by different participants in a forum discussion.

Task: Read the following entries and summarize them in your blog entry according to the position you side with (75-100 words)

Emma: “Subsidies can crowd out private funding, as comparisons with the United States seem to suggest. Indeed, in the UK over recent years, as government subsidies for the arts have declined in relative terms, private finance has increased.”

Joey: “It is viciously wrong to take the money of rational men for the support of ideas diametrically opposed to their own. This is a profound violation of an individual’s integrity and conscience.”

Ivy: “I am convinced that the arts are a significant public good, that civic well-being is damaged when the arts are unsupported and, while they make an important economic contribution, their profitability is not a sufficient measure of their quality or their success.”

Geraint: “When the government is not the paymaster, the key relationships are between the providers of the arts, those attending performances and those giving voluntary donations. Accountability is strong. When people are voluntarily financing the arts, the provision of culture will be intrinsically linked to the community. But when the government is financing the arts, bureaucratic attitudes will dominate”.

Kendra: “Artists and educators are and should be obliged to create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to encounter the very best artistic experiences. When we do this well, the results are staggering - individual confidence soars and life opportunities are radically improved.”

Justin: “There are many branches which are not able to survive without additional support from the state authorities. Therefore, governments should fund some kind of the arts which should be scrutinized before. The governments should be assured that they do not support low quality art.”

Write your entry here

Discuss in your groups the following topic. Should artists of different modalities be publicly funded?

**SPEAKING****Topic. Modern Art**

- Have you **grown to appreciate** art that in the past you found too **impenetrable**?
- What do you think of the works of modern art that you have seen in museums? Do you acknowledge the talent behind it, or do you sometimes **snub your nose at them**?
- Do you think modern artists – painters, sculptors, etc.- can **hold a candle** to those from previous eras?
- Is there any item/picture/photo/gift that you are very fond of and have given **pride of place** in your house?
- Do you think you have to **wise up** to the newer trends in music, art, movies, technology, or even free time activities, or have you concluded that they are just not for you?
- When someone openly despises modern art, how do you decide if their opinion is legitimate and genuine, or it is just a form of **philistinism**?
- Can you think of a public figure- artist, sportsperson, businessperson, etc.- that has opted to **keep a low profile**? Why do you think that is?
- Have you ever seen a work (architectural, artistic, etc.) that you would describe as an **eyesore**? What makes it so hideous?

PART 2

CREATIVITY,
FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION AND
SHOCK VALUE

“You’ve got to scale down your monstrosities.
A scream is not a discovery.”

John L’Heureux

SMALL
TALK

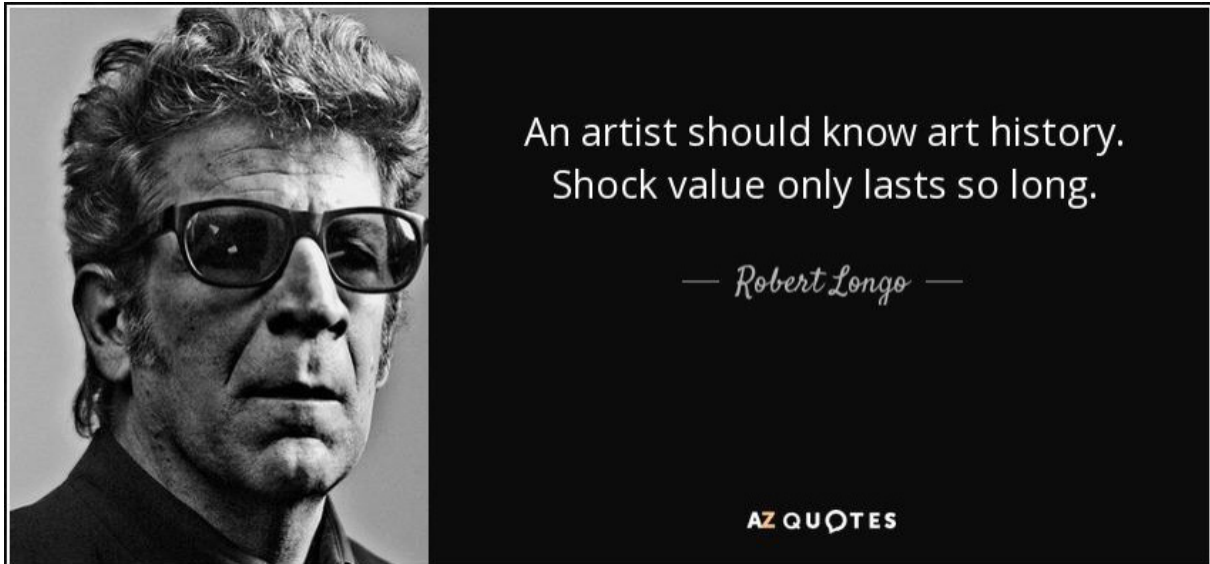
According to the **First Amendment** of the Constitution of the United States of America, freedom of speech should be an **inalienable right**. Do you agree that free speech **should always prevail**? Even if some individuals or collectives are offended/denigrated?

How can we judge what is acceptable- **on the grounds of free speech**- and what is not?

When an artist creates a work which is disturbing, vulgar, or obscene, do you think there is genuine talent involved, or are they trying to disguise its lack or absence with **shock value tactics**?

SHOCK VALUE

Definition (Wikipedia.org) “the potential of an image, text, action, or other form of communication, such as a public execution, to provoke a reaction of sharp disgust, shock, anger, fear, or similar negative emotions.”

**Debate**

Look at this quote by American painter and sculptor **Robert Longo**. Do you agree?

Given the controversy stirred by some artworks- some of them mocking religious figures- and the violent backlash in some Muslim countries ensuing from some comic strips where religious icons were being mocked, as well as the fact that some people believe artists sometime create their works purely for **shock value**, an online social platform has asked their members to take part on a debate on the subject “**art and controversy: is freedom of speech sometimes taken too far?**”.

Check Speaking Mastery:

Arts, Free Speech and Shock Value

READING

Shock me if you can

Context

Gapped Sentences

Read the following article and choose from the statements below A-J the five that fit best in each of the gaps (1-7). There are three statements you do not need.

Freedom of expression has become a rather contentious issue these days. Most agree that it is a valuable asset, and many even think it is an inalienable right, so long as they are the ones who can exert it, unilaterally, usually with little regard for those getting offended, hurt, vilified, or pointed at. 1. _____. But freedom of expression comes with a price, and the possibility of being mercilessly abused by a legion of online thugs, disgusted by the vileness and amorality of a given tweet, or revolted by the gut-wrenching, gruesome descent into horror and sheer ugliness of a work of art – film, painting, sculpture,...- is the one you pay when actual freedom exists.

As a long-time Punk Rock enthusiast, I always understood (and took for granted) that contempt, mockery, even blasphemy, and an unequivocally irreverent, sacrilegious, and iconoclastic nature were all part of the equation. But hey, even punks knew that you can only be so punk, punk. The legendary Sex Pistols got their arse kicked by The Stranglers (other punks) who were setting the score with the former, as the Pistols had dissed them (they may have been called “old pricks” or something along those lines). 2. _____. One exercised their right to express their disdain, and the other reacted to those disdainful words.

Do you know what else exemplifies that law? The infamous terrorist attacks on the (French satirical magazine) Charlie Hebdo premises, in November 2015. And by no means am I justifying the brutal reaction of a fanatical, murderous mob to some satirical vignettes, even if some may find that mocking Mohamed, Buddha, or any other figure of religious worship is a bit mean-spirited. But that tragic incident showed how values vary in the importance different cultures and people give to them. 3. _____. And the preservation of the unblemished, immaculate nature of their deities is more important to them than your entitlement to deride them. 4. _____ (after all, in many Western countries there is separation between church and state, religion has ceased to be a fundamental part of many people’s lives, and Christ putdowns are not an anomaly), but you need to understand that a violent, vengeful backlash may be on the cards. I still prompt you to do it, if you need it so badly. At your own risk.

I don’t really know whether this has to do with the “you cannot cheat Karma” principle, because being killed for throwing some random insults at icons of spiritual cult is rather disproportionate and, thus, would violate the sacred principles of Karma. What I mean is that when we are uttering some words, disseminating a certain message, or coming up with our own creation, and we want those words or creations to impact on others, we may need to think about WHAT TYPE of impact we intend to have. If we are aiming for notoriety for its own sake, 5. _____, it is not unthinkable to imagine the recipients of that hatred fighting back in some way. “When you spit in the sky, it falls into your eye” says an old Jamaican proverb. And you know Jamaicans mean business, boy.

This brings to mind the work of shock artists. I understand and applaud that conventions of artistic quality, aesthetics and good taste need to be constantly challenged. 6. _____. I even welcome artists' desire to explore the darkest underbellies of the human psyche, reminding us of our monstrous side, which could rear its ugly head if we give in too much to our basest, selfish instincts. It is just that if the sole purpose of a work is to revel in the pain, suffering and brutality it evokes, I am not interested. I concede that the creator's adventurousness and defiance make it a commendable endeavor, and hey, if it sounds like that type of stuff is up your alley, go watch it. The bad aftertaste does not make it worthwhile for me, though.

With all this being said, I am really glad that free speech and limitless, unrestrained artistic expression are cornerstones of Western civilization- where I happen to belong-, even if that implies turning some stomachs and enraging some religious zealots.7. _____. These can and should be articulated, no matter the outrage they stir. We can always pay no mind to them, and we can also take the jerk to court if they cross the line. However, the world is one big place, with almost 8 billion people, and hence, with a multitude of perspectives. Assuming that everyone abides by the same principles would be a bit naïve, and probably ethnocentric. Should that dissuade you from your legitimate right to shock? That is something for you to figure out, mate. By the way, you may also want to ask yourself why you are so bent on shocking others.

- A. After all, they are known for being a wee bit thin-skinned.
- B. And to attain it we spare no contempt or hate for individuals or collectives.
- C. But that is not even the core of the matter.
- D. Even if we have seen a decrease in online vitriol since then.
- E. It is the ultimate act of selflessness and tolerance towards the other and their opinions.
- F. Some people do not like it when you make fun of their Gods.
- G. They may not be so keen on being mocked, ridiculed, satirized, satanized, or dehumanized by others, though.
- H. This unimportant anecdote evidences the unimpeachable law of action and reaction.
- I. To do otherwise would render newer artistic creations too conservative, conformist, derivative and uninteresting to even be of any worth.
- J. You still can persist in your right to mockery and satire.

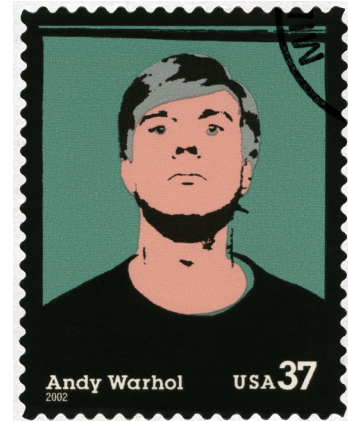
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Source: © Javier Blanco Pérez

WRITING

An exhibition about Pop Art and the darkest side of **Andy Warhol's** catalog is being held in town. Warhol did himself indulge in some debauchery (drugs, promiscuous sex, orgies...) during **The Factory years** (1962-67) and these works precisely focus on that era. The issue is that in order to advertise the exhibition, a poster of **Andy Warhol's "Fellatio"**- depicting the graphic image of a man performing oral sex on another man- (1978) is being used and displayed in different parts of the city (billboards, street furniture, etc.), where everyone can see it (children, the elderly, etc.).

Conservative groups have launched a campaign voicing their outrage and demanding the cancellation of the exhibit. You have seen the piece of news on the local newspaper's website and want to give your opinion on the comments section.



- Should the exhibition be cancelled?
- Should the posters be censored?
- Should at least the most explicit parts of the image be covered/blurred?
- Wouldn't that be a modern form of puritanism?
- Have the organizers gone too far in the shock value factor?

(200-300 words)

UNIT 6

WRITING GUIDE

A Comment on an Online Newspaper Story

The goal of a comment/thread on an online newspaper

Well, this is pretty self-explanatory: you are voicing your opinion on an issue. It turns out that, just as in the case of that cartoon and the backlash ensuing from the dismissal of the cartoonist, this very story is one which will leave no one indifferent. Whatever your position is (either in favor or against its prohibition), you can expect other users replying to your comment, so make sure the tone is appropriate.

Text Organization and Layout

The language and stylistic features found on a comment like this are not dissimilar from those you would find in an argumentative text:

Discourse markers to introduce opposing arguments: *There's no denying that..., while I believe free speech should be...*

Useful expressions: *where can we draw the line (between X and Y), ... this is one step too far,... all this puritanism/degeneracy is beyond me...*

Colorful/emphatic language: *pre-modifying adverbs: downright obscene, undoubtedly gifted artist, hands down inappropriate, laughably prudish...*



LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Can you (and should you) separate art from the artist?

[Listen to a radio show](#) about artists and their past controversies. **SIX** of the following ideas/concepts are mentioned in the clip by either of the speakers. There are 5 statements you do not need.

- A. Doubt is being cast upon the cult status of a star.
- B. Accusations of sexual abuse proven wrong.
- C. Attitudes towards religion totally spoil somebody's enjoyment of the author's work.
- D. Not being aware of the accusations on Bowie allowing him to enjoy his music.
- E. Stating that the leader of a popular Heavy Metal band is a flat out conservative.
- F. Bowie being aware of the actual age of underage female fans.
- G. Acknowledging not being affected by artists' actions beyond their works.
- H. Distinguishing truly reprehensible acts from petty misbehaviors.
- I. Not disqualifying Mel Gibson entirely.
- J. An artist's political views will prevent you from enjoying their work.
- K. Disagreeing about the limits which would impair the appreciation of a work.



1	2	3	4	5	6

 Source: [The David Pakman Show](#)

- Can you think of an artist whose work you appreciate, but dislike on a personal level?
- Is there a **dividing line**, regarding an artist's behavior or ideas, that would totally impair your enjoyment of their work? What would an artist do that would make you abhor the person and not even give their art an opportunity?
- On the other hand, have you ever started taking into consideration an artist that you had previously ignored, due to liking them at a personal level?

**SPEAKING****Topic. Free Speech and Shock Value**

How can “**hate speech**” be regulated? What do you think would objectively qualify as “**hate speech**”? Who do you think should be in charge of labeling someone a **hatemonger**? What should they do about it? Should their freedom of expression **prevail** or not?

In which circumstances do you think it is ok to **cancel** someone on social media/ **shut down** their accounts, or to **deplatform** public figures?

Should people with a huge following online repress themselves because they can **incite** violence or bad behavior? Do they have to **answer for** the actions that their words ensue, or should the blame be put exclusively on the perpetrators?

Is there any food that **grosses you out**?

Do you remember any scene in a film that you had to **flinch away from**?

Have you heard of anyone that has been **slandered/defamed** online lately? What have they done about it?

When you are on holiday (Christmas, summer...), do you usually **go overboard** with spending, eating, drinking, or do you manage to do those in moderation?

What kind of smell/images/news **turn your stomach**?

With some artists/public figures that only seek **notoriety** by relying on **shock for shock's sake**, do you think the media should not publicize them, as people are sometimes **drawn in** by that controversy? Should the right to information prevail?

PART 3

POPULAR
CULTURE, THE
MUSIC BUSINESS.
CULTURAL
APPROPRIATION

“I wish there had been a music business 101 course I could have taken.”

Kurt Cobain

SMALL
TALK

Are you a huge fan of music or just a **casual listener**?

Would you describe your musical taste as “**eclectic**” or are you partial to a specific **music genre**?

Do you think the **golden era of music** is long gone or are there exciting, talented new artists making great music these days?

With all the recent events borne in mind, how do you predict the future of the **music business/industry** will look like?

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY: SPEAKING

What's great about this song?

Look at the following words and phrases; they are used to describe music and are often used by music journalists and found in online music magazines, such as [Mojo](#), [Pitchfork](#), [NME](#), or [Alternative Press](#) (to name but a few).



Slick
Tuneful
Rough around the edges
Derivative
By the numbers
Epochal
Sickly sweet
Raspy
Syncopated
Minimalistic
Puerile
Dry
Gross

Affected
Sound-alikes
Harmonized
Unique time signatures
Also-rans
Over the top
Groundbreaking
Underwhelming
Grating
Snarling
To be a sucker for
Formulaic
Over-hyped

Angular
Heartfelt
Faux
Second-tier
Genre-defining
Cringe-worthy
Interplay
Drunken
Dissonant
Doesn't do much for me
Stuffy-nose
Tight
Overproduced

Which ones are used to describe...

- An album/song?
- A musical genre?
- Vocals/singing style?
- Musicianship/The music itself?
- A band/artist?
- Lyrics?
- Production/Sound?

What do you think they mean? Can you describe them using other words? Which ones have a positive or negative connotation?

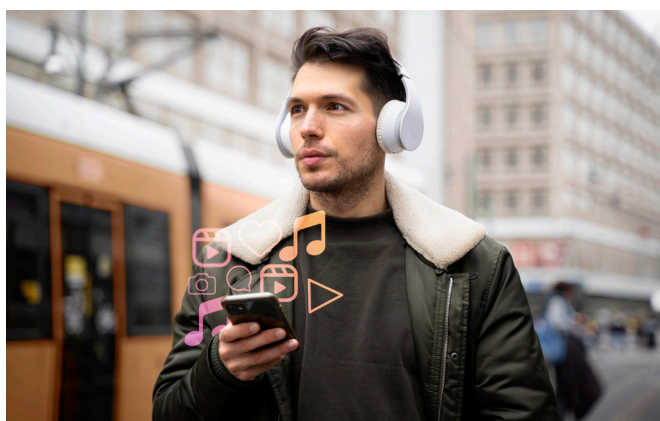
Can you think of bands/artists/songs or albums where you could use some of these words and phrases to describe them?

The popular YouTuber [Rick Beato](#) is a studio musician and music educator who has lectured at numerous universities, such as the prestigious **Berklee College of Music**. To say that he is extremely knowledgeable about music would be an understatement.

On his YouTube channel (with more than 3 million subscribers) he has a section called “**What makes this song great?**” where he breaks down, dissects and analyzes popular songs from a musical, vocal and lyrical point of view to find out why people seem to love them so much.

SPEAKING

Think of a song that you are loving at this moment. It could be an all-time favorite, or a recent earworm that you cannot get out of your head. Either way, you love it and think it deserves to be shown, talked about and shared with other people.



What's so great about this song?

- Its lyrics? Do they have an interesting message? Are they **childish, but fun nonetheless**?
- Does it **bring back nice memories**? Does it **strike a chord with** you? Why can you relate to it so much?
- The **sheer musical quality**? Is it musically memorable in any way?
- The **vocal hook/melody**/the vocals? Does it have a **hooky/catchy chorus**? What about the verse? Is it catchy/hooky **all the way through**?
- Does it have a **memorable guitar riff** that you can hum? Does it have a **bouncy, gripping bassline**?
- Is it an **obvious winner**, an **instant hit** from the very beginning, or is it instead more of a **slow burner** that eventually **grows on you**?
- Does it get you in a good mood? Does it get you **fired up**?
- Is it somehow unique and different to other songs or records of the same **genre**?
- Do you know whether it is relevant in its social, historical and cultural context? Would you say it is a **genre-defining song**?
- Is the rest of the album this good, or is this one the only **standout track**, and the rest of the album is mostly **filler**, riddled with **throwaway tracks**? Is it, on the other hand, a solid, consistent record that you can listen to **front to back/back to front**?
- Would you recommend delving into this band/artist beyond this record/song, or was this the **peak of their career**? Was the artist/band **in their prime** when they released this record? Did they **hit their stride** by the time of this release?

Cultural appropriation

Do you know anything about the term "Cultural Appropriation"?

Wikipedia defines it as "the adoption of elements of a minority culture by members of the dominant culture. Because of the presence of power imbalances that are a byproduct of colonialism and oppression, cultural appropriation is distinct from equal cultural exchange. This is often seen in cultural outsiders' use of an oppressed culture's symbols or other cultural elements, such as music, dance, spiritual ceremonies, modes of dress, speech, and social behavior, notably when these elements are trivialized and used for fashion, rather than respected within their original cultural context. "



The most ardent supporters of the idea of cultural appropriation have denounced its existence in different cases, such as hairstyles (dreadlocks, Mohican hairstyles), music (hip-hop, Flamenco...), fashion and costumes (Native American outfits, for instance, during Carnival or Halloween) or even tribal dances during sport events being adopted by those (generally, white people) not belonging to the culture/ ethnic group in which that custom originated (generally, those historically disadvantaged minorities).

Is there in your opinion any difference between cultural appropriation and simple cultural exchange?

Watch the following [video](#) where stand-up comedian **Jonathan Pie** mocks the idea of cultural appropriation.



- How does he define the concept?
- Why does he think it is laughable? What examples does he give?
- He says the whole idea is rather "patronizing" towards minorities. Why?
- Why would some people end up deeming Adele racist, according to Pie?

LISTENING TEST (Sentence Completion)

Incidentally (and accidentally), the Spanish singer **Rosalía** generated some controversy, as she was accused of "cultural appropriation" on social media. Are you familiar with her? Do you enjoy her music?

Listen to the following [review](#) of Rosalía's second album "El Mal Querer" by YouTube celebrity **Anthony Fantano**. Complete the statements below with a word or short phrase.

1. The evolution experienced by the singer since her last album has happened in a _____.
2. This change implies becoming a pop sensation after mainly performing Spanish and gypsy _____.
3. She has managed to be peerless in _____ international interest.
4. Traditional Flamenco features (singing, handclaps) along with more modern ones, like the sensual pop production, synthetic beats and base and _____ are present in Rosalia's hit singles.
5. "Di mi nombre" is cited as an example of successfully combining different styles in a song without having to _____ the production so as to appeal to a larger audience.
6. Fellow musician (and producer), **El Guincho's** usual musical style (Neo Psychedelia) is evidently not her _____.
7. In the song "Que no salga la luna" her vocal performance is described as " _____, wild bravado".
8. In contrast to the more hit-or-miss moments in the record, often the modern production and complementary instrumentation turns out _____ and _____.



! Source: [The Needle Drop](#)

EXAM PRACTICE. READING COMPREHENSION TEST (MULTIPLE MATCHING)

In praise of the computer algorithm

Read the following short reviews of songs of a random playlist on Spotify and match each question below with the corresponding review. There is just one statement which matches each review.




1. [“Sister Surround”](#). **The Soundtrack of our Lives** (Behind the music, 2001).
The spirit of **Jagger** and **Richards** looms over this monster of a song. And I mean it in a good way. Sure, everything here screams Stones, circa 1969-72 (and that is saying something), but writing off these Swedes as mere clones would be a sacrilegious mistake. **The Dandy Warhols** tried that out and failed miserably. It was all swagger but nothing else. Not the case of this one, which combines that early 70s Stonian finesse with early 2000s Indie Rock sensibilities.
2. [“Raisans”](#). **Juliana Hatfield** (Forever Baby, 1992)
A minor classic from the late 80s College Rock (pre-Indie Rock) scene re-recorded, watered down, and slicked up for the early 90s Grunge generation (also labeled Generation X back in the day, remember?). What a beautiful rendition, Juliana! I swear by J Mascis’ signature fuzz guitar sound and slacker earnestness, but Hatfield’s girly voice (music does not sound that different really) really makes one shiver with earnestness 2.0 skills.
3. [“Golden Brown”](#). **The Stranglers** (La folie, 1981)
How this gorgeous ditty bypassed me (a so-called Punk Rock connoisseur) bears no defense. True, this early 80s album eludes the well-deserved acclaim of their Rattus Norvegicus/No More Heroes/Black and White crowning trifecta, but not even that should extenuate my unawareness. What a song. And if someone is not reminded of Van Morrison, they should declutter their eardrums, for everything here (the keyboards, the vocal melody, the odd-tempo-ed riff) is a dead-ringer for Belfast’s best. Go get a clue!
4. [“Tight Jeans, Loose Leash”](#) **Turbonegro** (Sexual Harassment, 2012)
Mighty frontman **Hank Von Velvete** quit the band (amidst rumors of heroin addiction and affiliation with Scientology) at the end of the 2000s and many would just give them up for dead. They returned in 2012 with Tony Silvester as a replacement and quite a few would still be uninterested. Forget the naysayers (I was one!), because this is a SOLID rock and roll record. Greasy, raunchy,

loud, and still retaining their trademark darkness in their sound and a penchant for good ol' debauchery in their lyrics. A recycled take of the "**Brown Sugar**" lead riff with way more oomph for the 21st century audience.

5. "[Disparate Youth](#)" **Santigold** (Master of my Make-Believe, 2012)
The untrained listener might be reminded of **Rihanna**, and I am not going to scold them for doing so, but Barbados' sexiest export does not get hailed in the hip music press as Electropop's great black hope as this Brooklyn prodigy does. Is there any reason- besides the critics' "file Rihanna under guilty pleasure category" self-indulgence- for that? Well, actually there may be, for this hit is a bit of a detour from the rest of the record and there are enough standalone tracks to grant Santigold- a one-trick pony she is not- the tag of pleasure, period, with no pre-modifying adjectives attached.
6. "[Walk, Idiot, Walk](#)" **The Hives** (Tyrannosaurus Hives, 2004) A hooky riff that is a dead ringer for **The Who's** "Can't Explain" propels this kickass song. Not kickass in the slam dancing-pogo hopping-breakneck thrashing sense of the word, but in the "heck this is SO catchy" one. This self-appointed "best band in the world" may have a flair for the art of the overstatement, but boy, if I told you this track gives their 2000 scorcher "Hate to Say I told you so" a run for its money, you should believe me.
7. "[Gotta Get some Action Now](#)" **The Hellcopters** (Supershitty to the Max, 1996)
No wonder that, after 25 years, this still tops their fans' pick lists. A textbook example of how to kickstart your debut album and take the whole Garage Rock community by storm. A wall of way too hyper-distorted for their own good guitars blast off a couple of seconds into the song and kinda bury a great memorable lick into obscurity, though. But song wise, this is a downright classic. It earned that status already in the late nineties and surely it proudly retains it to this day.

Which review mentions...?

- A. A band has weak songwriting. _____
- B. A band is overrated. _____
- C. Production could have been even better. _____
- D. Some may secretly like an artist. _____
- E. The album is not as hyped as others. _____
- F. The artist is probably too hyped-up. _____
- G. The music is a little bit too aggressive. _____
- H. The music is a little bit too commercial. _____
- I. The song is a cover. _____
- J. The song is as good as another by the same band. _____
- K. The song reminds one too much of another band. _____
- L. The reviewer justifying himself for not knowing the song. _____
- M. The writer was skeptical of this record. _____

 Source: Javi Blanco.

MUSIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Talk in your groups about some of these questions. Add more information. If surprised by your classmates' choices, express your surprise (Really? How come? You've got to be kidding!), but remember, there's no accounting for taste:

- Your musical **coming of age**.
- A band/artist/song you have completely **grown out of**.
- Can you think of an artist/band who is/was a **one-hit wonder**?
- A band/song/record you grew out of, but you still have a **soft spot** for
- A musical "**guilty pleasure**".
- A **riff** you can hum/ you think is memorable.
- Your favorite artist/band/album ever/ your **desert island** record/records.
- Music somebody (a relative/friend/the media) **turned you onto/got you into**.
- A genre you cannot stand/ a band you have tried but can't **get into**.
- Music to **chill out to** vs. Music to **lose your head to** (in a good way)/music to **jog to**.
- An **overplayed** song by an artist/band you like, that you got sick of hearing.
- An **overplayed song** that you still like anyway.
- A **mainstream**, successful star with **no musical talent whatsoever**?
- An artist/band which you think are **samey/ a one-trick pony**.
- Have you ever felt like you were **playing second fiddle** to somebody?
- Do you remember ever **hitting the wrong note** with something you said?
- Do you know anyone who just **dances to somebody else's tune**?
- The media where you listen to music (mp3, CD, radio, Spotify, vinyl records, cassettes)
- Do you think that modern technology and media (**itunes, Youtube, Spotify, p2p file sharing software, social media** etc.) benefits or harms music and musicians?



MUSIC AND MEDIA
BY VYALISI



Check **Speaking Mastery**:

Popular Music

LISTENING

The Truth about Popular Music

You are going to hear a **report** on modern popular music. Match the number of the extracts (1-10) with the statements. There are **FOUR** extra statements you will not need to use.



- A. Algorithms being used to make hits.
- B. Artists and bands in the past were more willing to take risks musically.
- C. Lyrics of the most popular songs being an example of how music is gradually dumbed down.
- D. Modern music's homogeneity rendering litigation attempts useless.
- E. Modern production values sacrificing subtlety.
- F. The music industry in the 1960s allowed for more adventurousness.
- G. A need for modern music to be incessantly catchy.
- H. Record labels chastising the artists' songwriting attempts.
- I. Sentimentality has always been a constant in popular music.
- J. Sex being a recurrent topic in modern music.
- K. Studio tricks masking modern stars' incompetence.
- L. Striving for uniqueness in popular music is an anomaly.
- M. Successful producers plagiarizing each other's hits.
- N. The subject matter of songs today being even more inane than in the past.

! Source: [Paul Joseph Watson's YouTube Channel](#)

Extract 1. _____

Extract 2. _____

Extract 3. _____

Extract 4. _____

Extract 5. _____

Extract 6. _____

Extract 7. _____

Extract 8. _____

Extract 9. _____

Extract 10. _____

SPEAKING

Topic: Popular Music

Do you **get your kicks from** listening to any particular style of music? If that is not your main choice, what do you get your kicks from?

Can you think of an artist whose music you liked at the beginning, but whose subsequent records were a **letdown**?

What is the last song that you know which has **hit the charts** recently? Do you like it? Why/why not?

Can you think of a song which you like and **whose melody you can hum**, but do not know the lyrics? Is it sung in your mother tongue or in a foreign language?

Have you ever bought tickets for a gig from a **ticket scalper/tout**? If so, did everything go well?

What is the highest ticket price you would pay to see an artist you really like?

If a band that used to play non-commercial music (Hard Rock, Heavy Metal, Noise Rock, or Experimental music) or used to write really provocative/irreverent lyrics, all of the sudden turns to a more commercial style or **mellow out**, do you think they are **sellouts**?

If you are into live music and festivals, can you remember one whose **lineup** was particularly good? Who were the **headliners**? And the **opening acts/supporters**?

PART 4

THE FILM
INDUSTRY.
HOLLYWOOD
IN THE POST-
WEINSNTEIN ERA



“I have ten commandments; the first nine are thou shalt not bore.
The tenth is thou shalt have right of final cut.”

Billy Wilder

SMALL
TALK

Do you still go to **the movies** as much as in the past? If not, what is the reason?

Do they make great movies anymore?

Do you think that, because of Netflix et al., the days of movie theaters **are numbered**?

When comparing your favorite movies or series of the 80s/90s/00s with today's Netflix/HBOs, and other similar services' megahits, do you think the former **stand the test of time**?

Cinema, Hollywood in the Post-Weinstein Era

The always irreverent and downright Un-PC English comedian and actor **Ricky Gervais** has been the presenter of the Golden Globes ceremony for the last five years prior to Covid-19. Last year's opening [speech](#) was especially biting and scathing, **leaving no punches pulled** (i.e.: no room for political correctness or fear or offending anyone). It certainly made the headlines. Here are some bits of his speech.

Discuss in your groups to see if you can guess what the puns were referring to. What is supposed to be funny about each? What is each making fun of?

"In this room are some of the most important TV and film executives in the world. People from every background. They all have one thing in common: They're all terrified of Ronan Farrow. He's coming for ya. Talking of all you perverts, it was a big year for pedophile movies. **Surviving R. Kelly, Leaving Neverland, Two Popes.**"

"We were going to do an In Memoriam this year, but when I saw the list of people who died, it wasn't diverse enough. No, it was mostly white people"

"No one goes to cinema, no one really watches network TV. Everyone is watching Netflix. You could binge-watch the entire first season of *Afterlife* instead of watching this show. That's a show about a man who wants to kill himself 'cause his wife dies of cancer and it's still more fun than this."

"Seriously, most films are awful. Lazy. Remakes, sequels. The actors who just do Hollywood movies now do fantasy-adventure nonsense. They wear masks and capes and really tight costumes. Their job isn't acting anymore. It's going to the gym twice a day and taking steroids, really. Martin Scorsese made the news for his controversial comments about the Marvel franchise. He said they're not real cinema and they remind him of theme parks. I agree."

"Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, nearly three hours long. Leonardo DiCaprio attended the premiere and by the end his date was too old for him. Even Prince Andrew was like, "Come on, Leo, mate. You're nearly 50-something."



"Apple roared into the TV game with *The Morning Show*, a superb drama about the importance of dignity and doing the right thing, made by a company that runs sweatshops in China."

"So if you do win an award tonight, don't use it as a platform to make a political speech. You're in no position to lecture the public about anything. You know nothing about the real world. Most of you spent less time in school than Greta Thunberg."

"So if you win, come up, accept your little award, thank your agent, and your God and fuck off, OK? It's already three hours long."

Anthony Mackie explains why modern Hollywood movies suck

Watch this video with actor Anthony Mackie, who plays Falcon/Sam Wilson in the Marvel franchise Captain America, talking about what is wrong with today's film industry.



What are the main takeaways from his talk?

Four horizontal lines for writing the answer to the question above.

SPEAKING

Do you agree that the quality of Hollywood movies (cinema in general) has declined over the years? Do you believe the topics/themes of modern films are getting lamer/more boring?

Do you think that the abundance of superhero movies (Marvel franchise et. al) betray/reveal a lack of ideas/ the infantilization of modern culture?

Do you think actors/stars should refrain from using their position as a platform for making political speeches/social commentary or should they take advantage of their position to make a difference?

Can you think of a movie you used to love but think has not aged well/doesn't hold hp/does not stand the test of time? Why do you think so? (Acting, special effects, plot, dialogues...)

Check **Speaking Mastery**:

“The Film Industry”

LISTENING

Multiple Choice [Listening Test](#)

For the questions below, choose the right option (a, b or c).



1. **About the two main characters' relationship, the reviewer says:**
 - a. It will be hard for them to hide their romance.
 - b. People doubt that their relationship is real.
 - c. They naturally belong to each other.
2. **About Robert Zemeckis' film-making career, he says:**
 - a. Dialogs are carefully planned.
 - b. Most of his films feature computer-generated (CG) scenes.
 - c. There is usually little filler in the scenes of his movies.
3. **About “Allied” he highlights:**
 - a. Camerawork is somehow unusual.
 - b. Costume design is the most remarkable aspect of it.
 - c. It lasts longer than recent Hollywood productions.

4. About reminiscences of classic films, according to the reviewer

- a. It feels like Zemeckis is plagiarizing them.
- b. They can turn out to be a downside.
- c. They help this movie have its own character.

5. He also says that:

- a. Most people will enjoy Allied much more than he did.
- b. The final result would have improved with shorter shots.
- c. The romance between the characters is not intense but is convincing enough.

6. The scene with Brad Pitt walking into a room

- a. Is an example of one of the movie's flaws.
- b. Only works because he is a handsome actor.
- c. Should have been left out of the movie.


7. The use of special effects in this movie

- a. Is excessive.
- b. Makes the viewer think of Casablanca.
- c. Blends in well with the old-fashioned feel of it.

8. His final judgement on Allied is that...

- a. It is an average film.
- b. It should have focused on the romance between the protagonists.
- c. The most important sequences of the film are rather weak.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

 Source: [Chris Stuckmann YouTube Channel](#)

**SPEAKING****Topic: The Film Industry**

Would you describe yourself or anyone you know as a **nerd/geek/fanboy** in relation to any movie saga/genre/music band?

Is there any recurrent theme/topic in contemporary cinema which you think is a bit **hackneyed**? Why?

Can you think of any filmmaker who has a flair for interesting/beautiful **photography**?

When was the last time that you heard that an artist had a **standing ovation** from the public? What happened?

Can you think of a director whose films **are reminiscent of** other, older films/genres? Is that a good thing, in your view?

When was the last time that you heard of accusations of **plagiarism** between musicians/directors/artists?

Have you seen a film lately that you thought was too long and could have improved provided it had been **edited**/some scenes had been **cut**?

Can you think of an actor/actress who tends to be **typecast** as a given role?

Can you think of one who was **miscast** in a specific movie?




ORAL MEDIATION TASK

Instructions

You are friends with a couple of guys and girls from the US and UK who are working as language assistants at different primary and secondary education schools, universities, and language schools in the area. During the last couple of weeks and months your leisure time together has been limited to just hanging out at the bars, eating tapas, drinking, and chatting and little else. You all agree it would be good to do something different, for the sake of variety, as all of you also enjoy arts and culture. And there are plenty of those activities in the town.

While having breakfast at a café, you flick through a newspaper (written in English, as it is aimed at the British community residing in the area) and find inside it a “**What’s on Guide**”, with most of the cultural events taking place over the weekend described in it (see page 2). Unfortunately, you have neither taken your mobile phone with you, so you cannot snap a picture of it and send it to your friends, nor can you take the newspaper with you or rip up that page. Therefore, you are going to ask for a pen so as to take notes of the different events and later inform your friends about the most plausible options.

Take notes first of how likely each of the options are to appeal to your friends, and then use those notes to pass the information (via voice message or any other means) to them.

<p align="center">WHAT'S ON? - 24 H LEISURE GUIDE</p> <p align="center">21st- 23rd December</p>		
 <p>SATAN KLAUS, one of the world's most renowned and horrifying Black Metal bands present their last album "<i>Satan Klaus is coming to town</i>". It has scared away children, elders and sensitive people alike as well as caused a sensation in the UK. Are you going to miss their Christmas tour? Thursday, 21st, Rockers Inn. 15€</p>	<p>BLUES BROTHERS BANNED live at the Musik Jazz Club. Eleven young musicians give their own twist to the <i>Blues Brothers</i> classics ("<i>Everybody needs somebody to love</i>", included, of course). In their last year's gig, they packed the club, so if you're interested in watching them nail those songs (and you should) don't show up late! Friday 22nd^l, Musik Jazz Club 10€</p>	<p>Basque climber Izaskun Aguirre is a household name in the mountaineering world after having climbed the Earth's highest and most challenging peaks.</p> <p>At the conference centre of the local savings bank, BMN, she will give a lecture and present the book which gives account of her experiences, THE CHALLENGE OF A LIFETIME Saturday 23rd , Free admission while seats are available</p>
<p>WISE BLOOD (1970), by John Huston. Part of the John Huston exhibition session, the film will be shown in original version. Free admission while seats are available Thursday, 21st, Fnac Film Library</p> 	 <p>THE NUTCRACKER, as performed by the <i>Russian National Ballet</i>. Friday, 22nd^l. Theatre Romea Prices range from 15 to 30€</p>	 <p>Rivalling <i>Justin Bieber</i> for the throne of Teen Pop kings and led by teen- <i>though no longer a teen</i> (29)- heartthrob Kevin Major, NANCY BOYS play their only Spanish gig in our town, supporting their last CD "<i>Mother didn't say Growing up would be so hard</i>". Fans of <i>Bieber, Jonas Brothers, Westlife</i>, take note! Saturday 23rd. Sala D, 20€</p>
<p>RE/LANDSCAPE- IMPOSSIBLE PHOTOGRAPHS: illusory photographs of coastal landscapes in Spain. Using mirrors when photographing each landscape, Aitor García blurs the boundary between the real and the imaginary. Thursday 21st-Sunday 23rd Almudí Museum. Free Entrance</p>	<p>WELCOME TO THE BUTCHERDOME: the always irreverent theatre company "<i>La Fura dels Baus</i> presents their brand new spectacle, full of guts, blood and other delicacies. Audience participation encouraged! Friday 22nd^l. Victor Villegas Auditorium, 25€</p>	<p>ICE WORLDS. Discover the important role ice plays throughout the Solar System in the fascinating <i>Ice Worlds planetarium show</i>. Take an awe-inspiring journey exploring the earth's frozen extraterrestrial neighbours and see how the existence of ice shapes the landscape. Sunday 23rd Buccaneers Theatre. 10€</p>
<p>THE ART OF FEMINIST SELF-DEFENSE</p> <p>Feminist activist duo Vale and Kutxi, widely known on the social media present their talk "<i>Kick that sucka hard in the groins</i>" with a subsequent crash course (2 hours long) aimed at women who had it with stalkers, predators and rowdy, foul mouthed men.</p>  <p>Thursday 21st-Friday 22nd Buenavista Social Center- 15€</p>	<p>Portuguese Avant-garde artist Braulio Gomes presents his latest exhibition ALLEGORY OF THE NOTHINGNESS, a collection of empty canvases, which encourages the visitor to think for themselves, enhance their creativity and project their own imaginary artistic creations. Art or fraud? You decide. Friday 22nd, Almudí Museum. 20€</p>	<p>DEPRESSION AIN'T REAL</p> <p>If you're looking for the warm embrace of political correctness, look elsewhere! For stand-up comedian Andrew Dorian (aka "<i>the surrogate father</i>") has had his Twitter accounts suspended on many an occasion, due to his stubbornness in compromising any of his self-appointed right to free speech. Entertaining? For sure. Not for the faint-hearted, though. Sunday 23rd- House of Laughter- 12-15€</p> 