



# MICKELODEON

## All struck out

# Green to the core

**H**ave you not been separating your plastics? Been leaving your television on standby? Taking the odd bath? Well, you might as well have just kicked this panda to death in a foot-crazed killing spree, you monster.

Or at least that's the impression that I've been getting recently. Being a highly impressionable lad, the BBC's Climate Chaos season and persistent badgering by every newspaper about either jetting off to foreign climes, or how far my runner beans have been flown to make my dinner is giving the impression that the world is on the verge of collapse because I forgot to recycle my Coke can at lunchtime.

Well, I'm not going to argue with the 'world is on the verge of collapse' bit. But the coverage of green issues has recently got to such hysterical levels now that it's totally unsustainable. By this time next year the BBC can look back on its climate change season in self-congratulation before completely forgetting it and moving on to something else; eco-tourism will (mercifully) be forgotten as an exercise in page-filling. The words 'food miles' will elicit a blank look from even the most hardened environmentalist.

### Why do people say captive bears are miserable? You never see bears in the wild dancing

Indeed, one of the worst offenders has to be eco-tourism. Rather than working out how regular tourism could be changed to be better for the environment, eco-tourism has been hived off into its own bizarre little self-contained world.

It's obvious that few would go on (or even be able to afford) suggested green travel. But it's become impossible for the *Guardian* in recent weeks to have a travel section that is anything but an eco-tourism special. It's all or nothing; either you spend a fortnight self-flagellating with willow sticks in Djibouti (having swam there to prevent using, horror of all horrors, a plane) or you have to stay at home in your grimy lives for the summer.

All reporting on any environmental front has taken on *Newsround*-esque qualities (this columnist's premier source of current affairs). News editors are faced with having to incorporate an environmental dimension to stories that wouldn't normally have to accommodate it, so it just gets ostracised into its own screeching, self-important world.

It's easier to shoehorn all your conscience's need to provide coverage of climate change *et al* in one foul swoop



**PANDA:** By not recycling this paper this second you're killing the cutesy

than bring it into reporting on a wider basis (re: *Newsnight's* Ethical Man).

It has become impossible to report on environmental issues in any real context. The real questions about how to deal with environmental catastrophes such as the Three Gorges dam are easily ignored because coverage of it is hived off from the wider picture. If the economic benefits and reasoning behind why the Chinese government were brought into the equation then the monstrous end result would not be so easily brushed aside as eco-ravings, but more easily understood as an exercise in autocratic wielding of power.

Students' Unions are, in many ways, the apex of flagellation with no resulting benefits (although there are mercifully many that are much worse than us). We've debated about condemning far away companies for their environmental and social policies. Yet do we have decent recycling facilities? Do we heck. After venting so much green steam, few have the time left to put anything in place.

In the end, environmental issues are always going to play second fiddle to bigger stories, be it the importance of the economy, or maintaining a secure energy supply. But at least that puts it in a context that is absent from the current round of green noise.

In the mean time, we might as well just settle down to some enviro-baiting and wait for sanity to revisit the debate. So what if you're a-kicking the panda from this great distance? At least you'll be able to cross Djibouti off your holiday list this year.

# Springer ban y'all

**I**t's just two weeks now until the wonderous musical extravaganza that is *Jerry Springer: The Opera comes to town, amidst ecclesiastical heckling from the Archbishop of Wales and various Christian groups.*

So far the Culture Minister in the Assembly Alan Pugh has stayed out of the affair, leaving the Wales Millennium Centre to make their own 'artistic decision' to let the show come to town.

But it's a useful little example to illustrate the problems with the new funding system the Assembly Government will bring in for the arts I wrote about a couple of weeks ago (*Arts with a Capital F*).

Arts Council Wales currently gets money from the government to allocate to the arts organisations. But the government is setting up a new system that will mean they control the pursestrings to the major arts bodies in Wales.

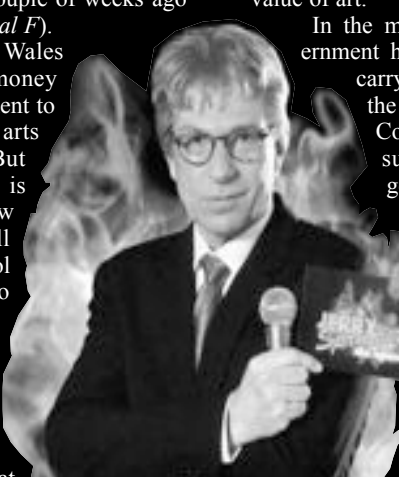
The new system would mean that it would be incredibly hard to create anything that raises as much con-

troversy as *Jerry* in Wales, be it through literary agency Academi or the national theatre organisations.

The government could threaten the future of funding for an organisation that tried to do anything risky. Or, in the more likely scenario, the bodies wouldn't even attempt to stage anything controversial for fear of what it might mean.

It would pretty much guarantee the end of anything *Jerry Springer*-esque being made in Wales. Instead we can expect plenty of touring around schools and the Valleys in the name of equality to access. It's a triumph of social engineering over any intrinsic value of art.

In the meantime, the government has been forced to carry out a review of the future of the Arts Council, to try and suss out what's going on. But it's worth going to see *Jerry* in the meantime; if the government gets its way, Wales is unlikely to produce anything similarly challenging out of sheer fear.



**JERRY:** Paul O'Grady's twin

## DOCTOR WHO

Episode 11: Testing Times

*Billie Piper & David Tennant are on the Woody Road*

**BP:** Bloody hell, it's not Cardiff in 2006 again, is it?

*A Welsh bit part actor, dressed as a Pearly King, wanders past an Underground sign outside Hyper Value with 'London Station' written on it*

**BP:** I mean, London. Hello, are you common? Can we be friends?

**WBPA:** Yes. Tidy. All my friends have gone missing, isn't it? They all took delivery of these things called 'exam timetables', and vanished into that ominous building.

*Gestures at the Arts & Social Science Library*

**Audience:** Why does everyone everywhere in the universe have a Welsh accent?

**Russell T Davies:**

Shut up, that's why.

*Scene opens in the library. Rows of ill-looking, expressionless students work in silence*

**DT:** Oh no, these poor students are being forced to work despite the fact that there's no point. It's as if someone has taken all the humanity out of them.

*AUT General Secretary Sally Hunt enters. Extra tentacles provided by BBC Graphics, powered by the Spectrum ZX*

**DT, as boggle-eyed and shouty as possible:** WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? YOU'VE MADE THEM LEARN DESPITE THE FACT NO ONE'S GOING TO MARK THEIR WORK!

*The Doctor presses a button or something equally stupid*

**SH:** No! I'm filling up with humanity and caring about other people! It is making me die for some reason!

*Sally Hunt explodes. The library celebrates quietly.*

**Audience:** Hang on. Isn't this what basically what happens every week?

**Russell T Davies:** No.

**Audience:** Oh, okay. \*claps and lauds with critical praise as most original thing that has ever been made\*

*Next week: some calculators steal people's emotions, before the Doctor destroys them by filling them with the humanity they have suppressed, whilst Rose befriends yet another Welsh prole*

