

Rage against the Machine – So that was 2016...

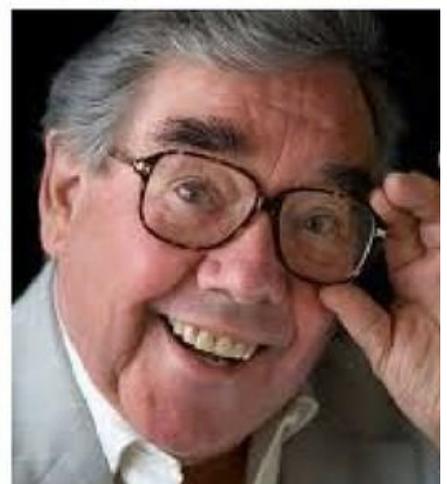
Today is the last day of 2016. This was the year that brought us events such as the first British man in space (well done Tim Peake), Brexit, a man becoming US President whose name sounds like an amusing bodily function (I'm looking at you Trump – you had better live up to your name and come up trumps when you get into that White House next year), Team GB coming 2nd in the medals table in Rio, unspeakable horrors of humanity in Syria which are sadly still ongoing, the passing of many famous faces (too many to name here sadly but, in this respect 2016, you've been an absolute Cockwomble) and a [giant cock causing controversy in a front garden](#) in Scotland. Yes, you read that right, a giant cock...

I don't know what's wrong with it myself. Beat that Edward Scissorhands!



It's been a year that's been unkind to many and one that most can't wait to see the back of. I've had my fair share of ups and downs this year, as have my friends and loved ones, so I am feeling ever hopeful that 2017 won't be as much of an arsehole as it's predecessor. As I just mentioned, 2016 took away many famous faces from us, which I know in the grand scheme of life isn't the end of the world, but it is truly saddening to hear of the passing of these folks. The people who you grew up seeing on TV, hearing on your radio, reading about in your newspapers. I may not have known them personally, but they have all, in some way, helped shape my life and make me who I am. I have vivid memories of my mum singing along to George Michael, hearing Wham! brings memories of family parties as a child (and perms, oh god, the perms!) and watching Harry Potter with the dulcet tones of Alan

Rickman echoing through the corridors of Hogwarts will now forever be etched with sadness. Too many people and faces to mention, but here are just a few of those greats we leave behind in the class of 2016. Rest well folks.



As well as saying goodbye to some well loved famous faces (many of whom I sadly couldn't fit in my montage above) we have also had major changes in our political climate. The biggest seen for a generation in fact. Here in the UK and Europe we had Brexit and, in the US, we had Trump v's Clinton. Two major political events which have managed to cause a monumental tidal wave of rage, anguish, disbelief and a barrage of opinions. It's been pretty ugly at times if truth be told.

"Nobody saw it coming!" say the headlines.

"How the hell has this happened?! I don't know anyone that wanted Brexit!" I see on my Facebook timeline.

Opinion poll results and predictions were hideously inaccurate, and in many cases, just plain wrong.

But why?

Firstly, what are opinion polls? Well, they are just that, polls to gauge opinion. So clever aren't I? No, you're right, I'm not. Bear with me...

Companies and groups, such as ipsos MORI, YouGov and ComRes ask the public to divulge their views and opinions relating to certain questions and then they collate them into a results poll and give us stats based on their findings.

But why do we even bother with these polls? Who is it they're actually polling?

Well, here's the thing, there are lots of factors which meant the polls we saw this year were inaccurate. It wasn't just one reason.

People like polls.

They also like stats.

They like to be able to plan for the future, they like to know what lies ahead. We are creatures of comfort and habit and by preempting these vote results, we can at least try and plan for what our next steps are going to be financially and personally. Here are just a few of the reasons as to why the poll results we saw weren't as predicted;

1. The people polled aren't from a nearly wide enough selection. Too many graduates, too many upper and middle class people and not enough poorly qualified, elderly or working class voters are asked. Therefore we only get a fragmented view in the poll results.
2. The polls aren't done over a long enough time span. They are usually only done over a 3 day time frame and that's not nearly enough time to ensure a wide range of people are reached and questioned.
3. Lots of people just don't want to stop and answer poll questions. Too busy, don't want to divulge their opinion, etc.
4. Voter turnout predictions were wrong. They were underestimated and, in the example of Brexit, it was the remain voters who actually came out in force and who weren't polled that helped contribute to the inaccurate poll results.
5. The number of people that answered, "I don't know yet", when asked if they were voting leave or remain regarding Brexit were quite high. Sadly, you can't use "I don't know" as an option in a referendum so these unsure votes were allocated into one camp or another based on their answers to other questions asked in the poll. Sadly these reallocated results weighed too heavily in favour of the remain camp when, in actual fact, a large number of them ended up being leave votes.

So, as we have seen from the headlines this year, these polls aren't a particularly reliable way to gauge opinion regarding these big political events anymore. They didn't foresee Mr

Orange is the new Black getting into the White House. They can help the country to keep ticking over in the meantime, until the actual result is announced, but they aren't Mystic Meg. They cannot ever be 100% accurate so we shouldn't take their results as gospel, nor be surprised if they turn out to be wrong.



The problem with Social Media

The biggest bug bear for me this year, and this is ironic given I am a blogger and I am CONSTANTLY on social media, is Facebook.

I'm not going to treat you all like you're idiots, because you're not. Of course you're not! You read my blog!

(Only joking, I'm the biggest idiot of them all to be honest. Just ask my husband).

The thing is, Facebook lies. There. I said it.



Everything on your timeline has been *put there* by the powers that be at Facebook because their 'clever algorithm' notes

what it is you like and dislike and tailors what you see accordingly. If you like seeing cats, Facebook will show you more cats. If you like seeing toddlers fall asleep in their chocolate mousse, Facebook will show you that...oh alright, and so will I. This little dude of mine went a bit viral earlier in the year with this stupid video (it's not even funny and I got a MASSIVE amount of grief from people for letting my toddler eat a chocolate mousse. I am apparently setting himself up for a short life full of pain, rotten teeth and diabetes. See, I am totally smashing the doo-dahs out of this parenting malarkey)...

But, back to my point which was, do not trust what you see on Facebook.

Facebook is not a newspaper, nor a news website, and it doesn't claim to be either. The thing is, we have changed. We don't need to go to the shops every day to buy a newspaper to find out what is happening in the world, we can just reach over and grab our iPhone and there it is, at our fingertips. We also don't need to look very far for news. Who has time for that these days? People often, myself included, wake up, have a shower and read Facebook whilst drinking a cup of tea or coffee. It's part of the routine of our day. We like to check in with friends and loved ones, we like to see what people are up to. It's an ever changing online diary of people's lives and I am all for that which is why I use it. That said, it is not a reliable means of obtaining news. Facebook doesn't vet news stories on there. if someone wants to make something up, they can and as long as it isn't offensive, nobody can stop them. You can write what you want.

'Facts' can be made up. There is no automatic fact checking on there. And this is where it gets dangerous.

During the run up to Brexit and the US election, people were on Facebook more than ever. In fact there was a social media

frenzy. People were sharing posts with quotes of 'facts and figures' which were often heinously inaccurate, people were liking and sharing things that they agreed with and all the while, they were blissfully unaware that by clicking 'like' (or 'love', thanks to the new Facebook reactions – an even better way of filtering our opinions on things eh?!) on all these posts that they agreed with, they were slowly but surely filtering out any alternative opinions that would differ from their own. They were creating their own little bubble and when that bubble burst in epic style, yep Brexit and Trump, I'm talking about you, people were stunned.

"I don't know anyone that voted leave!" said some.

"All my friends and family were voting Clinton. All the polls said she was ahead. What the hell happened?" said others.

The fact is, if we had taken time to step out of our social media bubbles, stopped clicking 'like' on all the Facebook posts saying what we wanted to hear, found other news stories from reliable sources away from Facebook, actually spoken to people face to face, we would probably have not been so surprised with the results after all. The differing opinions were out there, we just chose, or should I say Facebook chose for us, not to see them.

It shelters us from seeing what we don't want to see. A kind of 'social media utopia' if you will.

This year, there was rage against the machine. People rebelled against the media machine which was feeding us information, they went against what social media and reporters were telling them and they voted for change. That is the overwhelming thing to take away from 2016.

It really was the year of change.

Whatever way you voted, the cards have now been dealt and it is up to us to ensure that, going forwards, we educate

ourselves in a way which means we are informed, that we take the time to read up on things before just hitting that like or share button on Facebook to ensure they're factually correct and that we don't just dismiss other peoples points of view.

Think before you click.

Here's to a less eventful, and less hate and anger filled, new year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for reading my rambles this year and I want to wish you all a happy and healthy 2017.

Now, where's that Gin? New years eve beckons...

[Stop. Think. Remember – My reaction to the EU Referendum, via The Huffington Post](#)

“For the dead and the living, we must bear witness. For not

**only are we responsible for
the memories of the dead, we
are also responsible for what
we are doing with those
memories”.**

**Elie Wiesel, Holocaust Survivor,
Political Activist.**

I had a bit of a ‘moment’ shall we say on Saturday. It was just over 24 hours after the EU Referendum results had been announced and the country was still confused, shocked, and digesting the news which was unfolding before us.

As you all know, I write (well, I try to write) a humorous, lighthearted blog, full of baking, silly children, family moments and Gin. Not necessarily in that order.

This event which was happening before our eyes however, didn’t call for any of those things. Well, maybe the Gin but not the rest. My Facebook feed was full of hate, anger, hostility and resentment. People unhappy with the result, people unhappy with friends and family who had voted differently to themselves, people unhappy with our Politicians and the fact we had been asked to vote on this in the first place.

This life changing decision.

This decision that we had to make, based on misinformed information, banded about by our leaders left, right and centre.

This decision which would have an enormous impact on our children and their lives, to the point that was difficult to comprehend the gravity of what we had been asked to do.

People were hurting, understandably so, but that still does not make any excuse for some of the things I read and saw posted over social media in those 24 hours after the news broke.

Our country was broken, our people were divided, and our once UNITED Kingdom, was now anything but that.

The thing that caused me to snap, was the constant remarks about the elderly being allowed to vote because, "they'll all be dead soon". The 'baby boomers' being allowed to have a say who have apparently, "had it so good" that they don't care if they stuff the country up", because the decision doesn't matter to them either. It made me *mad*. So mad that I sat there in my PJ's, with my family, eating my bacon sandwich Saturday morning and did the only thing I know I can do, which is write.

I didn't write for any reason other than to get a whole lot of things off my chest.

I didn't think for one minute that anyone would read it.

I didn't think for one moment that anyone would agree with me.

I didn't think anyone would care.

...how wrong I was.

Since posting it Saturday morning, it has had approximately 18,000 shares on [Facebook](#). I have had messages from people old and young, thanking me for putting into words exactly how they were feeling. Those that had voted remain, and those who had voted leave, both messaging me and agreeing with what I had said.

Uniting again.

I think in the chaos of it all, and in the midst of the anger, it is easy to forget why we have this freedom, this voice, in the first place. But I didn't forget, and I never will.

To read what I wrote, click the link below.

[Stop. Think, Remember – My Reaction to the EU Referendum, via the Huffington Post.](#)

If you agree with it, fantastic, if you don't, good for you. That means you have an opinion and kudos to you for sticking to your guns and holding onto the values which are dear to you.

Thank you for reading my ramble, for sticking with me, and for letting me go a little 'off piste' with my post. Normal service shall be resumed once I have had a G&T later ☐

Gems.x

[Keep Calm and Carry On...](#)

“Keep Calm and Carry On”.



Never before has this most British of quotes meant so much.

Today is EU Referendum day here in the UK, as I am sure you'll all know unless you've been sat rocking in the corner of a room swigging neat Gin from a bottle for the last year...crikey, I almost described myself then.

Sobering... ☐

It's been a horrible few months of listening to Politicians on the TV and Radio argue, of seeing brain-frazzling facts and

figures in the newspapers, seeing neighbours and friends turning on each other in heated debate and feeling utterly depressed by it all. It's safe to say this referendum campaign has driven me to Gin. Ok, ok, I was already a Gin drinker before all this, you got me...

We are so lucky to live in a country where democracy is allowed, where our opinions can be heard and where we aren't punished for having an a voice and using it. This is a privilege, and one we shouldn't take for granted.

That said, I am angry beyond words that this decision that has fallen before us here in the UK today. For once, I am not happy that we are allowed a say.

This may seem like a ridiculous point of view to some, and you might think me a complete idiot (not a problem if that's the case, my children reliably tell me all the time that I am really silly and ask Daddy for his opinion instead because of that) but I honestly don't think that this referendum should have been bought before us in the first place.

Politicians work very hard to educate themselves, to make sure they are representative of the people in this country and we vote them in because we believe they have our best interests at heart.

I strongly believe that this EU Referendum should have been decided by the Politicians and not by us, the public. We shouldn't have been given this choice. For me, decisions like this, that are so enormous, are the reason we have a Parliament and MP's. I truly think that they should have voted on our behalf, in our best interests, on this one. The intricacies of all the parts that make up this referendum decision are so complicated, it would appear that even the Politicians themselves are confused on the matter.

I'm not saying we are all morons, I am not saying that we are too silly to make an informed choice, but I do think that the

waters have become so muddy, the facts so hard to come by, that it has been nigh on impossible to make an informed choice on the matter. People are voting with their hearts because that's all we have left after the complete shambles that has been the In/Out campaign. My brain has been bombarded with facts, with information and opinions over the last few months. I have tried my very best to educate myself on it all so that I am certain that when I put my mark in that little box, I am sure of what I am voting for and why.

Sadly, I'm not entirely sure everyone in our country will have done the same. For some, this decision was black and white from the start and no amount of rallying, information giving and arguing was going to change their opinion. This is what I think has been dangerous about giving the vote to us, the public. Not everyone cares. Not everyone fully understands the consequences of their voting and because we have been fed information based on 'what if's' and 'maybe's', it's been pretty difficult to come to a fully informed decision.

I totally need one of those 'Bullshit" buttons that the guys on The Last Leg use. It would have had at least 45 sets of batteries replaced in it by now after all the crap I've heard spouted from both sides over the last few weeks/months.



I'm not going to say how I voted this morning.

That's irrelevant and not what I am here to discuss.

All I will say is that it was an informed choice I made, completely uninfluenced by others, and one that I didn't make lightly. I realised the gravity of the situation as I put my cross in the box. I felt a bizarre feeling of being emotionally overwhelmed as I did it (over dramatic, maybe) and posted my seemingly insignificant, little piece of paper into the Ballot Box. I walked out of our local church, our polling station, wondering what news we are going to wake up to

tomorrow morning. What kind of world we, as a country, are choosing to create with the swish of a pencil, and all the while, the whole time I was doing this, I was thinking of my kids. My family. Our future.

This cross in a box is going to affect us all, but most of all, our children.

Our children are the ones who will grow up influenced by those marks we made today on those pieces of paper, and I think that is why I have found the whole thing so awful. My 8 year old has been asking lots of questions, been getting very passionate about it all and has an opinion. An opinion which, sadly for him, cannot be heard because of his age. I'm proud that he has paid an interest in it all, that he has wanted to learn, to understand, as many of his friends and peers also have, and although it is sad and worrying that we have had to make this decision on their behalf, on the behalf of the next generation, I am really encouraged by the fact they have wanted to know what is going on and what it all means.

Sadly I didn't have all the answers to his questions (amazingly, for once, neither did Daddy) because it is all hypothetical. This MIGHT happen. This MIGHT NOT happen. You get the jist. The fact is, nobody knows.

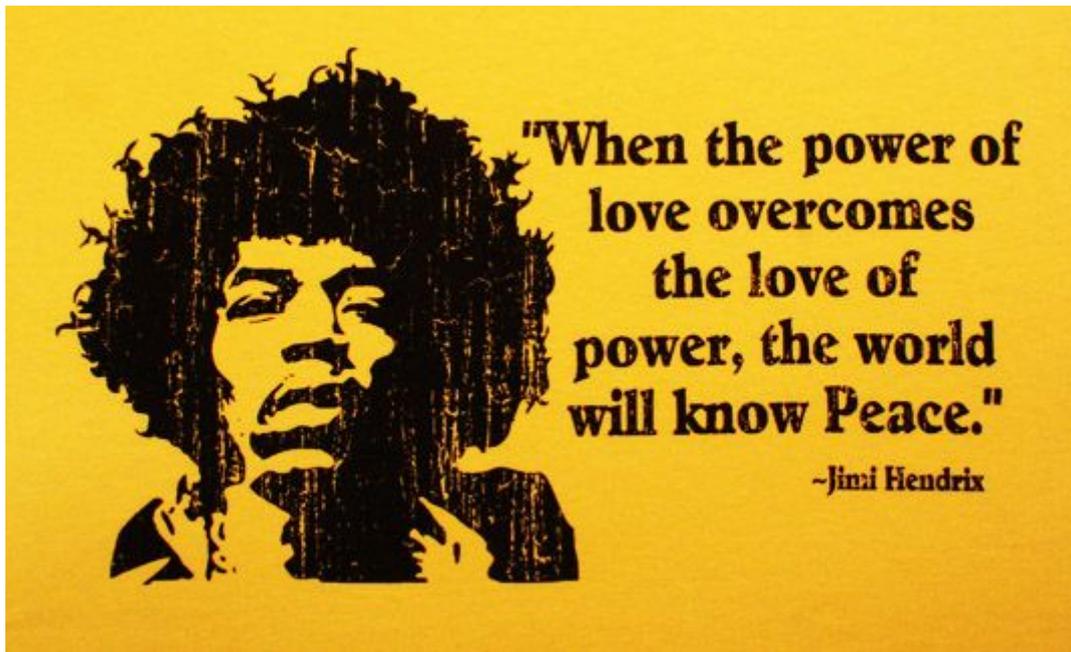
So, all I can say to him is, Keep Calm and Carry On.

Tomorrow, the U.K. May wake up and be a different place, but then again, it might not be. But what I do know is, most of us have made the decisions we have made today with our kids and family's best interests at heart and regardless of the outcome, I know that we as a country will make it work and ensure our children have the best future possible.



Tonight, I will read a story to my kids, tuck them into bed, kiss them goodnight and wake them up in the morning by tickling their feet and singing a silly song I've made up on the spot, the same way I do every day. And I will do the same tomorrow, regardless of what news we wake up to. We will make this work, regardless of the outcome, for their sake.

Here's to being a UNITED Kingdom. Standing together regardless of the decision that awaits us in the morning and ensuring that the future remains as bright as it can, for the sake of the future generations.



Peace and Love Knutters. Peace and Love.x