

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...

Bedtime Trumps

Things that annoy me: Episode 4...

When you are exhausted after a busy day chasing around after the family (have drunk a few too many gins) and all you want is your bed, you jump in under the duvet only to have, seconds later, your nostrils burnt by the smell of fart.

Why men wait to trump once under the duvet is a mystery to me. Nothing more annoying than a duvet stifled, stealth fart...

