# Tracy Brabin takes on musical legacies at Spin City Showdown amid Blavatnik School’s bird damage controversy



The recently held Spin City Showdown at the O2 Arena showcased a lively DJ battle among several UK metro mayors, with contributions from notable figures such as Andy Burnham of Manchester and Steve Rotheram of Liverpool. This year's event, part of the UKREiif conference and designed to support the Regeneration Brainery, introduced West Yorkshire’s mayor, Tracy Brabin, into the mix. This inclusion prompts a tantalising question: can Brabin hold her own against the rich musical legacies of her fellow mayors? Expect classic hits from famed bands like the Kaiser Chiefs and Soft Cell to elevate the competition.

In a related note, the characteristics of modern architecture have come under scrutiny in an unusual twist involving Herzog & de Meuron’s Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University. Recently, the university faced a peculiar incident involving a seagull that disrupted operations by damaging a glass roof. This event brings forth wider discussions about the reckoning between architecture and the natural world. The school’s design, which intends to harmonise the stark modernity of its glass facade with Oxford's historic context, now faces unexpected challenges, particularly concerning its impact on local wildlife. Initial concerns have already been voiced about the potential hazards posed by reflective surfaces in urban developments, echoing critiques related to the expansive mirrored walls planned for Saudi Arabia’s Line megacity.

The Blavatnik School has been a focal point of controversy since its inception, sparked by a £75 million donation from Russian billionaire Leonard Blavatnik. Critics argue that accepting funding from sources linked to controversial practices poses ethical dilemmas for academic institutions. Speaking on the matter, critics, including Russian dissidents and prominent academics, have raised alarms about the implications such funding might have on academic integrity. This raises pertinent questions about the values institutions uphold in the face of financial offering, a debate that remains vital in the current socio-political climate.

Architecturally, the Blavatnik School features a striking design—composed of stacked cylindrical and horseshoe-shaped volumes. This arrangement not only provides a modern flair but also aims to encourage interaction and visibility among different academic disciplines. The building’s extensive use of glass is strategically employed to bring natural light into a central forum that serves as the connective tissue of the structure. Enhancements like automated natural ventilation and a ground source heat pump reflect a commitment to sustainability, ensuring that modern architectural advancements do not compromise ecological considerations.

Through these varied lenses—culture, ethics, and sustainability—the UK's contemporary landscape reveals a complex interplay between heritage and modern innovation. As events like the Spin City Showdown bring communities together in a celebration of regional diversity, the ongoing evolution of architectural elements invites critical reflection on how these constructs may impact both society and the environment at large.

As the future unfolds, it becomes clear that the dialogue surrounding urban development will remain crucial, inviting continual reassessment of both architectural practices and community engagement.

### Reference Map

1. Lead Article: Spin City Showdown and UK metro mayors
2. Bird attack on Herzog & de Meuron’s Blavatnik School and ethical funding debates
3. Architectural critique and design features of the Blavatnik School of Government
4. Sustainability features and design critique of the Blavatnik School of Government

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/astragal-metro-mayors-in-dj-battle-at-ukreiif> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/oxford-draws-fire-over-oligarchs-funding-of-herzog-de-meuron-building> - This article discusses the controversy surrounding Oxford University's acceptance of a £75 million donation from Russian-born billionaire Leonard Blavatnik for the construction of the Blavatnik School of Government, designed by Herzog & de Meuron. Critics, including Russian dissidents and academics, have raised concerns about Blavatnik's business practices and alleged involvement in state-sponsored harassment in Russia. The university's decision has sparked debates about ethical funding sources and the potential implications for academic institutions.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/25/blavatnik-school-of-government-a-corporate-temple-among-oxfords-dreaming-spires> - This article provides an architectural critique of the Blavatnik School of Government, designed by Herzog & de Meuron. It highlights the building's bold design, which consists of stacked cylindrical and horseshoe-shaped volumes, and its double-skin facade of thin glass panes. The design aims to balance modernity with the historic context of Oxford, drawing subtle references to nearby architectural landmarks while maintaining a distinct identity.
4. <https://www.designboom.com/architecture/herzog-de-meuron-blavatnik-school-of-government-oxford/> - This article details the design and features of the Blavatnik School of Government by Herzog & de Meuron. The building is composed of stacked cylindrical and horseshoe-shaped volumes, with a central 'forum' space that connects all levels and programs. The design emphasizes openness, communication, and transparency, with extensive use of glass to maximize natural light. The building also incorporates sustainable features, including automated natural ventilation and a ground source heat pump for heating and cooling.
5. <https://www.architecturalrecord.com/articles/15676-herzog-and-de-meuron-designs-an-unlikely-pair-of-buildings-for-a-venerable-art-school> - This article discusses Herzog & de Meuron's design for the Royal College of Art's Battersea campus. The project aims to create cohesion across the school's disparate campuses and improve the surrounding neighborhood. The design includes two distinct buildings that blend modern architecture with the historic context, providing state-of-the-art facilities for the art school while enhancing the urban environment.
6. <https://www.archdaily.com/949103/herzog-and-de-meuron-design-switzerlands-first-middle-school-on-the-roof-of-a-shopping-center> - This article covers Herzog & de Meuron's design for Switzerland's first middle school located on the roof of a shopping center in Basel-Stadt. The project aims to set a precedent for future urban developments by integrating educational facilities into mixed-use developments. The design includes classrooms, a multipurpose gymnasium, and outdoor spaces, promoting a sense of community and connectivity within the urban environment.
7. <https://www.wallpaper.com/architecture/herzog-de-meuron-complete-blavatnik-school-of-government-building-for-oxford-university> - This article announces the completion of the Blavatnik School of Government building by Herzog & de Meuron for Oxford University. The building features a shimmering facade and is situated in the historic context of Oxford's Walton Street. The design includes subtle nods to the city's historic architecture, blending modern elements with traditional surroundings. The official opening is planned for Spring 2016.