

‘It’s Mizzy innit’: Hackney’s internet prankster is on the line



**Mark Paul
London Letter**

The 18-year-old TikTok celebrity talks about his social media antics and how he plans to move on from his internet persona

It’s Friday afternoon and things are looking up. The clouds have taken the day off and the sun is riding high in the sky. Suddenly my phone judders into life with a call from an unrecognised number.

“Hello?” I answer. “Yeah. Hello,” comes the reply. “Hi. Who is this?”

“It’s Mizzy, innit.”

Mizzy, real name Bacari-Bronze O’Garro, is the 18-year-old enfant terrible of British internet culture, a TikTok prankster whose antics transcend social media. The summer has been cool, but not for O’Garro, who lives in Hackney. He has taken ferocious public heat since May, when he was fined by a judge and roasted by British media for a prank where he walked into a random house and sat on the couch.

The frightened family inside

pleaded with him to leave. O’Garro found it hilarious and posted it online. As well as being banned by TikTok, he was fined £365 in court for breaching a previous criminal behaviour order (CBO), which he received last year for a litany of pranks harassing the public.

In one video he ran off with an old lady’s dog. In another, he leapfrogged the shoulders of a man at a bus stop. He jumped counters at fast food shops and ran around kitchens. He rode an electric bike through a Sainsbury’s.

O’Garro went viral, held up as an example of everything that is wrong with youth internet culture and its obsession with attention. Public opprobrium overflowed.

On the day he was fined, he was interviewed on TalkTV by Piers Morgan, who lambasted him. The presenter, who has performed plenty of cheap

stunts of his own, scolded O’Garro as a “product of his upbringing” and his lack of a father figure. It was an incendiary stereotype to throw at a young black man. O’Garro pulled him up on it.

Morgan roasted him even as O’Garro expressed remorse. If the presenter had listened more, the encounter might have been more enlightening. O’Garro tried to explain “hate brings money, likes and views” and he uses it to build audience.

It’s cynical, but not untrue as social commentary and a reflection on media priorities. In a way, Morgan was also profiting from the outrage at the couch prank video. He was just raking in his coin from higher moral ground.

O’Garro was arrested again for another alleged CBO breach. Soon after, he was on BBC’s Newsnight. Presenter Kirsty Wark pressed him about

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O’Garro went viral, held up as an example of everything that is wrong with youth internet culture

taking PR advice from Andrew Tate, a controversial online influencer derided for his misogyny and accused of rape in Romania. Without fully disowning Tate, O’Garro, raised by a single mother, rejected mistreatment of women. But he said mainstream media also held some responsibility for Tate’s

prominence and profited from it.

Days later, he was on the TalkTV show of Andre Walker, a shock jock who makes Morgan seem refined. Walker exploded at O’Garro and threatened to drag him by his hair in what seemed a performative rant. O’Garro did not retaliate by living up to the stereotype of the angry young black man and walked off set. Public criticism was at its zenith. Even MPs waded in.

The Mizzy saga simmered over summer. Suddenly, last Wednesday, he popped up again. He was given a dispersal order by police on Oxford Street, who were dealing with public disorder by youths, organised on social media. O’Garro denied any involvement but was associated with the story anyway. I noted commentary from him online where he said the Mizzy

persona is a ruse to expose “what happens when culture values nothing but attention”.

“Love me or hate me, you’re still going to watch me.”

I contact O’Garro and he rings me back on Friday. He argues some of the anger he gets is because he represents a stereotype of errant black youth. We arrange to meet on Monday. I show up as arranged at Dalston Junction. He doesn’t.

Mizzing in action

I try the two numbers I have for him. No joy. I walk the area and come back to wait again. Mizzing in action. I look up his Twitter and the accounts of his friends. O’Garro had publicly revealed he was sectioned under the Mental Health Act for 20 days from mid-July, suffering from psychosis.

He was barely out of hospital when he was nabbed

on Oxford Street.

At 10.50pm on Monday, my phone rings again. This time it recognises the number – Mizzy. He says he was arrested again at 7am. “What for?”

“My accounts got hacked and my IP address leaked. Videos were posted on my account that police say breached my CBO, but they’re old videos. I’ve been bailed until October.”

I ask about his mental health. “Much better now,” he says. But he agrees the pressures created by his social media antics and the backlash may have played some role in his difficulties.

He wants to move on from his internet persona and be more himself, Bacari, online. But the Mizzy stuff is always going to be there.

“I have remorse for it. But you gotta make some juice out of it too.”

Russia’s ‘brutal pattern’ denounced as more deadly missile strikes hit Ukraine

Moscow claims Kyiv’s military resources are dwindling

Lviv region hit by six missiles in heaviest strike on area since beginning of war

DANIEL McLAUGHLIN

At least four people were killed and more than 20 injured in another wave of Russian missile strikes on cities across Ukraine, prompting a senior United Nations official in the country to demand that Moscow end its “brutal pattern” of attacks on civilian targets.

Ukrainian air defences shot down 16 of 28 cruise missiles launched by Russia in the early hours of Tuesday, but eight regions of the country were hit, including the western Lviv and Volyn provinces that border EU and Nato states. Several large S-300 and S-400 rockets were also fired at the eastern Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions.

The Lviv region, which bor-



ders Poland, was hit by six missiles in one of the heaviest barrages to strike the area during Russia’s all-out invasion of Ukraine, which began nearly 18 months ago. Nineteen people were injured and 40 buildings damaged in the attack.

Three people were killed and three wounded when a missile hit a factory run by a Swedish industrial bearings maker in the neighbouring province of Volyn, while 1,000km to the east in Donetsk region, one person was killed and one hurt

when a missile struck a warehouse in the city of Kramatorsk. Officials said apartment blocks, schools and a sport complex were among the buildings damaged in the attacks, as well as industrial sites and power and water facilities.

“The daily terror from the Russians has a single goal – to break us and our will to fight. This will not happen. We are all at war and we can win together. Every such strike means that more must be done. Hit the enemy harder, create more technology to stay ahead, help more. The enemy will not manage to defeat our people,” said Andriy Yermak, chief of staff to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

“If Ukrainians die, then Russia should be isolated. And it is also essential to deprive the enemy of the chance to fire these missiles, it must be demilitarised. Because this is the security not only of Ukraine, but also of the world,” he added, noting

that western-made components were still being found in Russian missiles.

Denise Brown, the UN’s humanitarian co-ordinator for Ukraine, said the missile strikes damaged “homes, a kindergarten and other civilian infrastructure that are hundreds of kilometres away from the front line”.

‘Immense human suffering’

“These are the parts of the country where millions of people are seeking safety and refuge after fleeing the horrors of Russia’s invasion. Russia’s persistent attacks hitting essential infrastructure in populated areas cause immense human suffering. This brutal pattern of civilian harm must stop,” she added.

The Kremlin insists its armed forces are aiming only at military targets in Ukraine, and claim that large civilian buildings that it strikes are being used by Ukrainian soldiers and

■ **Locals inspect damage to a building near a rocket strike site in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv on Tuesday.**

PHOTOGRAPH: EPA

that the country’s power stations are a legitimate target because they serve its war effort.

The Russian defence ministry said Tuesday’s attack was “a concentrated strike with long-range air- and sea-based high-precision weapons on key enterprises of the Kyiv regime’s military industry”.

At a security conference in Moscow attended by China’s defence minister Li Shangfu, Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu said Ukraine’s military resources were “almost exhausted” and that the war had exposed the weakness of western arms supplied to Kyiv.

“We are ready to share our assessments of the weak points of western equipment with our partners,” he added.



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Explosion at petrol station in southern Russia kills 30 people

A fire at a fuel station in the southern Russian region of Dagestan late on Monday killed at least 30 people including three children, Russia’s emergency services ministry said on Tuesday.

The fire started at an auto repair shop on the roadside of a highway in the Dagestani capital Makhachkala, on Monday night and caused blasts as it spread to the nearby filling station, officials said. “It’s like a war here,” a witness said.

Images shared by the emergency services ministry showed firefighters trying to put out a colossal blaze as flames rose high in the night sky.

“During the rescue operation in Makhachkala, the bodies of three more victims were found,” the ministry said on Telegram. “According to the updated information, as a result of the fire at the petrol station 105 were injured, and of them, 30 died.”

Witnesses interviewed by Russian news media described an enormous blast. “I was at

home, lying on the couch,” one woman said in a video interview circulated by Tass, a state-run news agency. “I don’t know how I ended up on the floor.”

Thirteen of the wounded were children, Interfax reported earlier, citing the Dagestani health ministry.

It took firefighters more than 3½ hours to put out the fire that spread into an area of 600sq m, Tass reported, citing a statement from the Russian emergency service.

Children injured

A total of 65 of those injured, including 16 children, remained in hospital on Tuesday, the ministry said. Eleven people, including two children, were in a grave condition.

Families of the dead will receive one million rubles (€9,350) each, Dagestan’s authorities said, and those injured will get 200,000-400,000 rubles (€1,870-€3,740). Russian state media said some of those injured would be airlifted to Moscow for treatment.

Makhachkala is about 1,600km south of Moscow.

The Kremlin published a brief message of condolence from Russian president Vladimir Putin, and Dagestan governor Sergei Melikov, declared a day of mourning.

Dagestan is one of the poorest parts of Russia’s majority-Muslim northern Caucasus region. It was a refuge for Islamist insurgents in past decades, but Mr Putin has pushed for an economic revitalisation of Dagestan and championed it as a destination for domestic tourism.

During a visit to Dagestan in June, Mr Putin walked on to a city square and, in a rare move for a president who still demands that many of those who meet with him quarantine first, greeted a crowd that was screaming with delight.

Dagestan has been the site of occasional protests, but there was no immediate indication that the gas station fire would exacerbate tensions. – Agencies

No blessings for gay couples in German church



Derek Scally

in Berlin

Priest censured for including same-sex couple in service for 25 couples

Catholic priest Herbert Ullmann spent most of July on a cycling holiday around Lake Constance in southern Germany. Throughout it all, he had a nagging feeling that something was brewing back home.

Returning a fortnight ago to his western German parish in Mettmann, half an hour east of Düsseldorf, Fr Ullmann found out he was headline news. The reason? The response of his church superiors to his “Mass of blessing for all loving couples” last March.

It was a ceremony with a “concentrated, calm, warm atmosphere”, he recalls, with one obviously same-sex couple among around 25 heterosexual couples attending.

“It was about blessing and showing respect for all forms of responsible partnerships among people of goodwill,” he told The Irish Times.

While other German Catholic bishops have turned a blind eye to similar services in their dioceses, many widely reported in the media, things worked out differently for Fr Ullmann.

Someone attending the ceremony in March tipped off the Vatican, he believes. How is so he sure?

“Rome knew details about the ceremony that were in no newspaper report,” said Fr Ullmann. “There is always a small number of people in any parish with their ‘deep concerns’ who creep to Rome. It’s less than 5 per cent, but they are very spiteful.”

Holy See intervention

Exactly a month after the March ceremony, the Holy See intervened through the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament – the oversight body for Catholic liturgy and sacraments.

It contacted the archdiocese of Cologne, responsible for the parish of Mettmann. In turn the archdiocese general vicar Guido Assmann reminded Fr Ullmann of Catholic teaching, renewed in 2021, which excludes same-sex couples from any blessing or sacraments because homosexual acts – with no prospect of procreation – are “intrinsically disordered”.

“Individuals can always be blessed regardless of disposition and life status,” added the general vicar in a letter. Catholic priests should stay clear of any such blessing services as they were likely to “cause confusion among the faithful about the teachings of the church”.

For Fr Ullmann his service, agreed with the local parish

committee, was a pilot project that responded to the real needs on the ground of his parishioners. The priest told his superiors he hoped that such outreach events might even help lessen departures from the church.

A record 522,000 people left the Catholic Church in Germany last year. With 20.9 million members, the Catholic Church in Germany has lost more than a tenth of its following – nearly 2.4 million people – in the last decade.

Vow of obedience

After the story became public, Fr Ullmann said his vow of obedience to his local archbishop, Cardinal Woelki of Cologne, precludes him from carrying out such blessing services in the future. But he promises that “this issue isn’t over yet”.

His parish is working on new plans and “they know they can count on me pastorally and theologically”.

The campaign group #OutinChurch has accused Cardinal Woelki of operating a “church of fear”, breaking a promise he made in March not to sanction anyone for such



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blessing ceremonies. Cardinal Woelki is a leading opponent in Germany of liberal Catholics’ reform demands – including an end to celibacy, the ordination of women and blessing services for homosexuals.

Pope Francis has so far pushed back against German reform efforts and, in October, will open a gathering of world church representatives to discuss reform and renewal in a so-called “synod on synodality”.

In a statement, the archdiocese of Cologne said Cardinal Woelki was “aware of the deep desire of same-sex couples for a church blessing and has great understanding for their struggle”.

If the world synod changes its position on same-sex couples, a spokesman said, Cardinal Woelki “would of course follow suit”.

For Fr Ullmann, a trained historian, the row over his blessing service reveals less about him and much more about senior Catholic clergy.

“We have bishops and cardinals, many of whom with little or no pastoral experience and no grounding in people’s real concerns,” he said. “And the bureaucracy in Rome... is increasingly saying ‘it’s immaterial who the pope is under us because our system functions as it is’. They have a panicked fear of any kind of synodal understanding of Catholicism.”