

remanded in custody

Man charged with shocking theft from rucksack of dazed student

By **David Jarvis** and **Abul Taher**

A MAN has been charged with the robbery of a young Malaysian student that shocked the world.

Mobile-phone footage of the callous attack, branded 'disgusting' by British PM David Cameron, showed a gang of looters pretending to come to the aid of injured Asyraf Haziq Rosli, 20, who was lying on the ground. The looters played 'good Samaritans' by helping him to his feet – then robbed him.

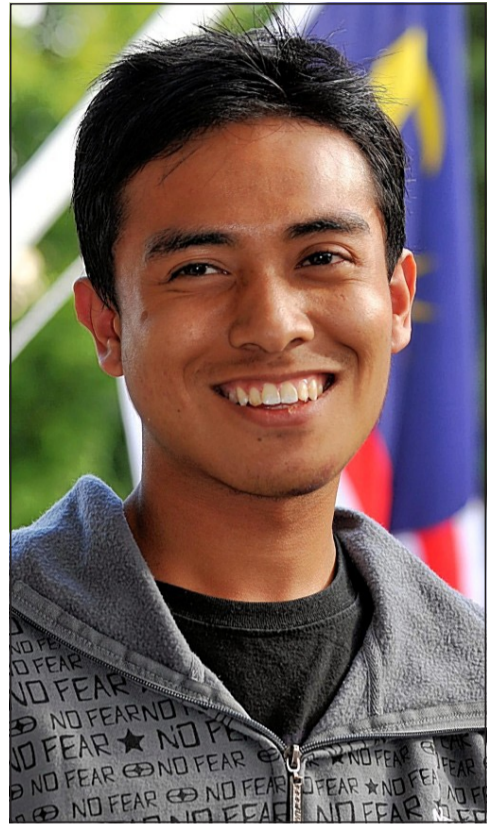
Reece Donovan, 21, of Romford, Essex, appeared yesterday before magistrates in Westminster in central London, accused of robbing Mr Rosli of his Nokia mobile phone and a Sony PSP console.

Donovan is alleged to have been one of a gang who posed as good Samaritans as the student lay bleeding on the ground after his jaw had been broken by thugs in an earlier attack. Instead of helping him, Donovan is alleged to have sneaked behind him and removed possessions worth £300 from his rucksack while other gang members distracted him.

Millions of television and



CHARGED: A sketch of Reece Donovan in court, left. 'Samaritans', above, robbing Asyraf Haziq Rosli, above right



YouTube viewers saw the culprit kiss his fingertips in a sick salute as he swaggered off with the stolen goods.

Last night, Donovan's neighbours claimed their lives had been blighted by him playing loud music. One neighbour said that his favourite tune was a version of In For The Kill by La Roux, which he played at high volume every night.

The woman, who did not want to be named for fear of reprisals, said: 'He listened to Eminem a lot but his favourite was In For The Kill.'

During a 10-minute hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court, Donovan – shaven-headed and wearing a grey hoodie, dark-blue T-shirt and grey tracksuit bottoms – sat expressionless, staring at the floor. When the clerk to the court read out his name and address, he replied: 'That is me.'

Mr Rosli had been cycling along the Northern Relief Road in Barking, East London, when he was approached by a gang of 60 to 100 youths. He was punched with such force that his jaw was broken in

several places. As he fell to ground, his bike was stolen.

Later, Mr Rosli was approached by another group of youths who helped him on to his feet. As some members of the group appeared to assist Mr Rosli, Donovan allegedly rummaged through his rucksack and took the phone and the Sony PSP.

The incident was captured by a member of the public on a mobile phone, and was shown on news channels around the world.

Mr Rosli's parents begged their

son to go back to Malaysia. But at a press conference last week, Mr Rosli said he will stay in London and complete his studies, despite having to have surgery and have metal plates fitted in his jaw.

Yesterday, the court was told that Donovan had denied the charges.

District Judge Nicholas Evans told Donovan that he was remanding him in custody and ordered him to appear before Wood Green Crown Court in North London on August 19.

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I saw plenty of riots growing up in Belfast: but at least you didn't have to worry about being mugged on the way

MY sister in Belfast texted me on Monday night in Crystal Palace. 'Holy s***! London is going mad! Are you OK?' Yes we are fine, I assured her: the only incident in leafy Crystal Palace that I knew of so far, via other intertextual communication, was a brick through the window at Blockbusters.

However, not one to miss an opportunity to milk some concern from family back home, I did go on to say that the towering inferno, that was now Croydon centre, was only three or four miles away. In fact I had indeed visited that furniture shop on a few occasions. Why would anyone want to do that? I asked.

'Arsonists, anarchists and pyromaniacs,' was my sister's reply. Relieved to hear that I was all right, she then politely started to gauge if all would be OK for her trip over this weekend. I told her I was sure that it would all be fine. Hey, we know what it's like from growing up in Belfast: these things blow up and then calm down again quite quickly. A pause in the texting.

Did my sister disagree with this or was she upset at the Belfast/London comparison? Neither, it would seem. Her text back requested the equivalent of a Falls Road black taxi terror tour round the hot-spots of Croydon.

Of course the irony did not escape me that the boot was on the other foot and that there had been some kind of role reversal. She was in Belfast giving me



ANALYSIS

By **MAEVE MURPHY**

BELFAST-BORN FILM MAKER LIVING IN LONDON

TLC, and it was me in London who was now in the war zone. Belfast, in the form of my sister had become wise and mature, knowing how things are, from how things 'used' to be. London was now reduced to being in the grip of hordes of rampant out-of-control teenagers intent on looting shops for the latest PS3 consoles.

At least in Belfast when I was growing up, the riots had some kind of 'cause' behind them. It was

actually about something. Where was the principle behind all this?

Apart from the initial protest in Tottenham, this seemed to be an uprising about TVs and trainers. In Belfast no rioter would ever have mugged you, or burgled you. Riots in Belfast were savage affairs and extremely dangerous: but while you might have been seriously concerned about getting caught in the crossfire, you were never concerned about the whereabouts of your purse, let alone a violent assault on you for being a passerby.

There was something deeply amoral and cynical about what was fuelling this. This was how it differed entirely from the Belfast equivalents. There was no idealism driving this and

instead an awful lot of greed. It was cold-hearted right at the core. The sight of the poor, injured guy getting mugged by the youth who seemed to be going over to help him was just sickening.

THE image of the woman in Croydon jumping for her life from her burning flat is one that has lingered with me. People have died, people have been made homeless and people have had their businesses ruined. And in the name of what? Pure unadulterated thuggery. Forget the underclass, this was the criminal class. This was a revolt that was truly revolting.

One man however, who showed true integrity and moral strength in the midst of all this, was Tariq Jahan, whose 21-year-old son was killed in Birmingham. His appeal for calm and his request for people not to seek revenge reminded me of Gordon Wilson after his daughter was killed in Enniskillen. It was inspiring and it had impact.

Though the circumstances that led to this were tragic, Mr Jahan showed strong, clear, moral leadership. Is more of this needed?

We did have our little moment in Crystal Palace. On Tuesday I was in a furniture shop talking to the assistant when a man burst through the door saying that 200 youths were on Crystal Palace Parade and were making their way up to Sainsbury's. With visions of a mob of hoodies, with scarves around their faces, rounding the corner and bearing down on me, I pretty much legged it down the street.

The rumour spread up Church Road and Sainsbury's closed. Needless to say the 200 youths never materialised, but the local Tesco did get a battering that evening. The attempt failed, but the cardboard on the windows the next day, was sobering.

Normality seems to have returned to London now, but who knows for the future. To be honest, I'm thinking of going back to Belfast for a couple of weeks. I'm in need of a bit of peace and quiet.