



What a year it's been: *Britain in Hong Kong* reviews the highs and lows of 2016, and looks forward to brighter – if no less controversial – days in 2017.

– By Gina Miller

In our January 2016 article, “Sign of the Future”, we noted that the year of the Fire Monkey (2016) represented the “most active and aggressive of the Monkeys... a dominant animal that gravitates towards leadership roles, is constantly competitive, and aims to control every situation.”

“The Monkey’s goal is to reach the top and stay there, and is considered creative, dynamic and especially gifted at drawing people to him,” we wrote.

In the bright light of hindsight, it is easy to read descriptions like these as spookily prophetic. But whether or not one takes any stock in horoscopes, what most journalists, bloggers, and soap-box aficionados do seem to agree on is that 2016 ushered in a massive shift in global politics and alliances, and has sadly marked the deaths of many beloved and controversial artists, scientists, astronauts and world leaders.

It’s been a tough year; now it’s time to take stock.

2016: A Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Year?

January

It all went horribly wrong straight out of the gates. January took rock superstar David Bowie, iconic actor Alan Rickman, and veteran broadcaster Sir Terry Wogan from the world.

The WHO announces an outbreak of Zika Virus.

Syria – a tragedy that continues throughout the year.

On 24 January, the Hong Kong Observatory reports temperatures of 3.1 degrees Celsius, the coldest in 59 years. Nearly 130 hikers and marathoners on Tai Mo Shan require rescue and 67 were hospitalised for hypothermia.



February

Chinese New Year brought us the Fishball Revolution, instigated by a clash between the FEHD, police, and illegal hawkers in the market streets of Mong Kok.



Albert Einstein's general Theory of Relativity is proven valid when scientists announced they had heard and recorded audio of two black holes colliding into each other a billion light-years from earth.

March

The four-game Google DeepMind Challenge Match between Google's AI program, AlphaGo, and South Korean professional Go player Lee Sedol, ends with AlphaGo winning the final match.

President Barack Obama visits Cuba; it was the first visit from a US President to the country in 88 years.

Three bombings in Brussels, Belgium kill 32 and injure at least 250 more people. ISIS claims responsibility.

April

The Panama Papers are leaked, revealing details of how some of the world's richest people moved their assets to secretive shell companies in lightly regulated jurisdictions.

American pop star Prince is found dead at his home in Minnesota.

May

Fort McMurray, an oil town in Alberta, Canada, burns in a massive forest fire. Amazingly, emergency services successfully evacuate 88,000 people without loss of life.

Using the Kepler telescope, NASA announces the discovery of 1,200 new planets, an important step in finding earth-like planets.

Leicester City, starting the campaign with 5,000-to-one odds, win the English Premier League Football title in what was billed "the most unlikely triumph in the history of team sport."

Maverick anti-crime candidate Rodrigo Duterte wins the Philippine presidential elections.

June

In a shocking upset, the UK votes to leave the EU. Betting markets had assumed that "Remain" was in with an 88% chance of winning.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron resigns following the "Leave" vote.

Muhammad Ali, former Heavyweight Champion of the World, dies.

July

Pokémon Go launches internationally, sending thousands into the streets chasing digital avatars.

"Remain" voter and Home Secretary Theresa May is confirmed as the new Prime Minister of Britain.

The Philippines wins its case against China at The Hague over the legality of China's Nine-Dash-Line claim in the South China Sea.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate, author and Holocaust survivor Elie Weisel dies.

Turkey experiences an attempted coup by a group of soldiers within the country's military. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan promises payback to the traitors.

August

Britain enjoys an amazing outcome at the Summer Olympic Games held in Rio de Janiera, Brazil. The British team won a total of 67 medals: 27 Gold, 23 Silver, and 17 Bronze.

Astronomers announce the discovery of a new, earth-like planet. Proxima b is a rocky planet with a surface that has the potential to sustain life and is only 4.2 light years away from earth.

The Columbian Government makes peace with the FARC rebels in an effort to end 50 years of conflict.

Some 2,000 murders are reported in the Philippines due to extrajudicial killings at the behest of President Duterte.



September

Pope Francis canonises Mother Theresa, making her Saint Theresa.

Hong Kong's legislative elections have the highest voter turnout in the territory's history. For the first time, Localists win seats.

The US and China ratify the Paris Global Climate Agreement.

October

Britain invokes "Turing's Law" and announces the pardon of thousands of gay and bisexual men. A total of 65,000 men were convicted of "gross indecency" under the legislation, 15,000 of whom are still alive today.

The Maldives votes to leave the Commonwealth.

The King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej, dies.

November

The High Court in Britain rules Parliament must approve Brexit before the process of leaving the EU can begin.

The Hong Kong High Court disqualifies pro-independence legislators Sixtus Leung and Yau Wai-Ching from taking their seats in Legco after they refused to pledge allegiance to China during the swearing-in ceremony.



Donald Trump wins the 2016 US presidential election and will become the 45th President of the US.

Fidel Castro, former President of Cuba and revolutionary communist leader of Cuba for more than five decades, dies at age 90.

Leonard Cohen, beloved Canadian poet, songwriter and artist, dies at age 82, shortly following the release of his album *You Want it Darker*.

December

French President François Hollande announces that he will not seek re-election. Meanwhile, Italy's Prime Minister Renzi and New Zealand Prime Minister John Key resign from office, and South Korean lawmakers vote to impeach President Park Geun-hye, the first female president of Korea.

Hong Kong Chief Executive CY Leung announces he will not seek re-election when his current term ends in July 2017, citing family reasons.

AA Gill, writer and *Sunday Times* critic; John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth; British actor Peter Vaughan, American actresses Carrie Fisher and her mother Debbie Reynolds; and beloved singer, songwriter and record producer George Michael, all died in December, rounding out a grim year of lost icons. **B**

Elections to watch in the Year of the Rooster

Regarding the upcoming Year of the Fire Rooster – a horoscope animal characterised by the traits of confidence, pompousness and motivation – we can only say: "Bring it on."

"Roosters are extremely sociable and prefer being the centre of attention, always bragging about themselves and their accomplishments. They continually seek the unwavering attention of others which can be annoying," says an online guide to Chinese astrology and the Chinese zodiac.

"The Rooster's bossiness and honest 'tell it like it is' approach doesn't work well with sensitive individuals. Roosters need to partner with those who are tough-skinned." Fortunately, after 2016, we are almost fully inured. Here is what we have to look forward to in 2017.

- 26 March – Hong Kong Election for CEO;
- 15 March – The Netherlands's general election, March 15;
- 23 April and 7 May – France's presidential election (two rounds);
- 19 May – The WHO's director-general election;
- October or November – China's Politburo Selection at the 19th National Congress;
- 22 October – Germany's federal election;
- 20 December – South Korea's presidential election; and
- Late 2017 – Thailand's general election.