

HYPE

FEB - JUL 2014 ISSUE 38

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VINTAGE DRESS-UP

'60s BAND REUNION

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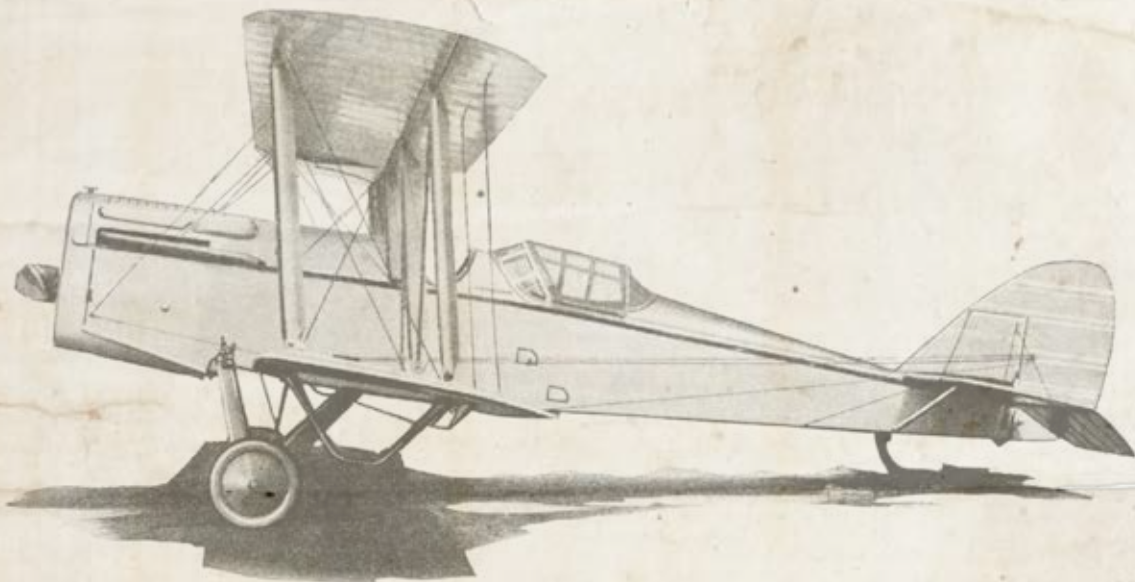
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EDITOR'S NOTE

“The bad news is, time flies. The good news is, you're the pilot.”

– Michael Altshuler

Do fasten your seatbelt – but slowly – as **HYPE #38** takes you on this long-haul journey into **NOSTALGIA** land.

With our laptops and phones, we are just a text away from one another. In this digital age we want to be fast, we desire convenience, but digital advances are taking over our lives and the enjoyment of snail mail is slowly forgotten. We ought to take a breather and look back on our tracks. And we are glad to know that there are some who think alike, as we follow the trails of youths whose pet pursuit is the search for lost time.

In this issue of **HYPE #38**, we take a step back – actually several steps back – to explore **vinyls** (pg 43), **letterpress machines** (pg 44), and **typewriters** (pg 46).

We've got to take our hats off to **The Silver Strings** (pg 16) – a '60s band that is still jamming since they began 50 years ago. And who knows, perhaps **The Pinholes** (pg 18) will be a reflection of them, with their undying love for their self-composed '60s music.

We give a pat on the backs to our local stars who have come a long way. Stepping out of the shadows is **Gentle Bones** (pg 11), the Youtuber who killed the local iTunes music chart with a super single, “Until We Die”. Our cover girl, **Ming Bridges** (pg 22) is eager to show what she's got in **Morphosis**. She spreads her wings on her album cover, trying out a new style of upbeat pop rock songs.

We are also giving you a bit more choice for your wardrobe with the black and white tones of **Androgyny** (pg 50) and the **vibrant colours** (pg 56) that signal the creative energy of our local designers. **HYPE** has also put together vintage and vintage-inspired items to bring back the good ol' fashion.

Last but not least, our bunch of **passionate writers' life laments** (pg 95) may strike a chord with you. Tell us if you agree, because we are just one Facebook message away.

Charmaine Lim
Editor



MUSIC

GENTLE IN NAME, RELENTLESS IN PURSUIT

Local singer-songwriter Joel Tan swung up the ranks in the music industry with one single hit. He is a bright music star, as **YEAP YI XUAN** discovers.



Photo courtesy of Evan Tiang

Wearing a collared shirt and skinny jeans, his neatly combed hair shows off his slightly boyish features, bringing to mind the boy next door.

But Joel Tan, 19, isn't your ordinary neighbour. He topped the local iTunes chart with debut single, "Until We Die", for three days straight – barely 13 hours after the song's release on Dec 11, 2013.

Going by the name Gentle Bones (a cryptic name that stuck around after an acoustic project), Joel beams at the unexpected results.

"It's so awesome, I'm happy that I'm getting recognised and number one on the charts is good," he says.

"When I just started out, I would be so happy if people even had my song in their iPods but now it's number one on iTunes, it's just crazy. It's quite shocking," he recalls.

Joel has uploaded song covers and original compositions on his YouTube channel (Gentle Bones Joel Tan), but he confesses, "I don't want to just be known as a YouTube cover artiste but rather a musician as a whole. I'm more into song writing than anything."

His first original, "Waking Up", is a melodic and soothing song about love, was uploaded on YouTube in 2011. Joel reveals the reason why most of his originals are about that theme.

"Love hits me the hardest. All youngsters feel a lot for that topic and it's the easiest to write about as I feel

that I don't have a full understanding of deeper topics," he shares.

His unassuming personality is refreshing. "I'm really not talented. I just think that I have a flair for songwriting. I'm just lucky with the songwriting part. Technically, I suck," he laughs self-deprecatingly.

On top of Joel's self-composed, debut hit single on iTunes, Joel has performed at the Mosaic Festival in 2012 – just two years into playing the guitar. He also performed for the Singapore Writer's Festival last year, and various gigs in bars.

To him, making music is not always for the money but for passion, and people.

"I've always enjoyed people listening to the stuff that I do. Of course I love doing it but when people hear it, it's the best thing in the world," he says.

Having completed his A levels and already halfway through his National Service, balancing music and studies was never a concern for Joel.

"I didn't have to struggle because I always gave music priority so I let go of my studies a bit," he says sheepishly but hastens to add, "But it turned out for the better because my studies still did okay."

Needless to say, investing his time in music was a good move.

"I'm super lucky to be working with one of the greatest producers, Roland Lim. I'm just one man and I have a lot

of ideas but no way to put it out there. That's where the producer comes in and I think that both of us work really well together."

"Roland does everything, he shoots me down, brings me back up and the good thing is that we're friends so we're open to everything. He suggests something and if I don't like it, I'll just tell him."

He pauses, and says with a somewhat mischievous smile, "If I love it, [I will] give him a hug."

Very much inspired by Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran, Joel has composed a number of original songs that he hopes will gain wider recognition.

"I'm more interested in getting my original material out there rather than playing for a crowd," the singer shares his desire to cut an album, something that he is currently working on, as well as another single to be released later.

The album was part of the reason why he released "Until We Die" on iTunes.

"All the profits from my single would fund my album... if people bought my song, it would support my album and I need it because I wouldn't be able to finish it on my own," Joel shares.

Perhaps in the future he will perform at gigs but for now, his goal is just to finish up his album, which will consist of originals and a few new songs "yet to be shown to the world".



Photo courtesy of Universal Music Singapore

EVERYTHING IS REALLY GONNA BE = ALRIGHT =

ANNA ELIZABETH ISIP unravels Shane Filan's journey and vision as he ventures out as a solo artiste.



Breaking out of the boy band mould, Shane Filan was here for his first showcase as a solo artiste.

He released his debut solo album, *You and Me*, on November 4, 2013.

Ending off his 12-year career as the lead singer in renowned boy band, Westlife, and coming out of his bankruptcy, Filan themed his album around positivity and "feel good"-ness.

With over 50 million albums sold worldwide, the band has been responsible for the songs that 90s kids have grown up jamming to.

Familiar hits include, "Flying Without Wings", "Seasons in the Sun" and "I Lay My Love On You".

When the band performed their final concert together in early 2012 and put an official close to their 14 yearlong run, Filan had to make an immediate career decision.

"Singing was all I ever wanted to do," he said.

Now, Filan has his first album as a solo artiste and is travelling the world for his promotion.

"I want to go on stage and lift people's hearts. I want to make people feel happy," says Filan.

Those positive vibes stay true throughout the 34-year-old's solo album, *You and Me*. The songs feature Filan's newly-found musical style of country and folk.

As Filan flies around the globe to promote his album, the father of three has to juggle family and career.

Thanks to his understanding wife, Gillian Rose Filan, she supports him and understands his career choice.

"She holds the fort back in London. She brings the kids to school and all that kind of stuff," he gushes.

He goes on to say that his wife tells him to "go and sing" and she'll "look after the rest".

It was a great plan as the singer steps out from the bleak situation – the Irish singer fell victim to Ireland's property crash, which forced him to file for bankruptcy in 2012.

Singing became the silver lining when he underwent the ordeal.

"The album was actually a form of therapy, probably, to bring me to a happy time," Filan reveals.

"Song writing became an absolute bonus. I never knew I had it in me. I got to write really honest songs and really true stories."

One of the topics he could really write about was his wife, who was also his childhood sweetheart.

"A lot of the songs [in the album] are love songs. Some of them are quite fast, but they are still love songs. They are like love letters with music," says the pop star.

Indeed, the 13-track album does feature a number of upbeat and cheery songs, like "Everything To Me", "Knee Deep In My Heart" and "Everything Is Gonna Be Alright".

In regards to his next step in the venture of a solo career, Filan remarks, "I want to make this album last and I think it's strong enough to do that."

"Hopefully somewhere at the end of it we'd be somewhere doing concerts and getting excited for a second album," he adds.

PAN'S FUTURE PLANS

Photo courtesy of stars.udn.com



LIM JIA YING catches up with Taiwanese singer Wilber Pan and finds out that he wants to educate the next generation on the meaning of success.



Wilber Pan, 34, was in Singapore in November 2013, as the official Asia region spokesperson of Microsoft Store.

The American-born Mandopop star also kick started the Singapore Hit Awards 2013 at Suntec City with an electrifying opening performance.

Apart from his singing career, Pan won the best male lead at the 2011 Golden Bell Awards, and also designed game applications for Camigo Media – a mobile application company he co-founded in 2010.

Being a well-known celebrity, Pan feels the need to give back to society too.

"I think to me, becoming well known is not just about your own success, but it's also about doing something for the world, doing some things to help people in need," he says.

The singer has been active under World Vision Taiwan. In 2013, he was the ambassador for 30 Hour Famine and visited Nigeria. Through these events he hope to spread awareness of issues Third World countries are facing.

Earlier this month, Pan became the first Chinese to own shares in a NBA team — the Brooklyn Nets.

When asked if there's anything he wants to do but has yet to, Pan shares

in fluent English he's interested in the movie industry.

"Movies [are] something I'm really into. I've received a lot of scripts, and definitely there are some scripts that I like but I'm actually in the process of selecting them... hopefully [there will be progress] next year."

In 2012, Pan expressed his retirement plans in an interview with Chinese entertainment site *ynet.com*.

He aims to retire at 35 years old.

However, he's now unsure of that statement as he sees the potential of staying in the entertainment industry and wants to see how far he can go.

"35 years old is almost equivalent to going through half of your life. You can't possibly stay in this industry forever and give up some things that you want to enjoy in life."

"But there will be times when your plans can't catch up with the changes around you. It doesn't mean it must be 35; it's just a time I set for myself," Pan explains.

If Pan isn't going to continue as an entertainer, he foresees himself being an artiste agent to allow himself to find new talents and "walk them through their entertainment road".

One of the reasons behind his retirement plan is that he finds fame being something which is easily achievable now and people are confusing it with success.

In his generation, when Internet was not as advanced, superstars like Mandopop heavyweight Jolin Tsai and Jay Chou made their way to fame through a decade of experience.

Hence, he feels the need to teach the new generation to understand the meaning of fame.

"Sometimes I think success nowadays comes instantly. It comes so fast that people probably don't really know how to react to it, or even build the character on it," he explains.

With technology, fame can easily be gained by just uploading a video on YouTube. Pan disagrees of such fame.

"That's not real fame, I don't think fame is something that comes so fast, there has to be a process, there has to be steps taken," he says.

"And when we become successful, fame is something else, success doesn't come from fame, success comes from your inner achievements, your inner motivation and everything else so that's what I hope I can bring out to the next generation."



ASIAN & PROUD

Back on home ground for the Aliwal Urban Art Festival, **ANNA ELIZABETH ISIP** sits down with Singaporean-Canadian rapper Masia One as she shares her journey as a female Asian in the rap industry.

Photo courtesy of Jason G Lewis Photography

At eight, she left Singapore with her family. Masia One, whose real name is Maysian Lim, heads back home and plans to stay for a while.

"It's always good to be around where I come from and [to connect] with my roots," shares Masia.

The rapper, now in her late twenties, adds, "On the other hand, I'm really re-learning my whole culture because Singapore is so different from when I was here as a kid."

Masia spent her childhood in Canada and studied at the University of Toronto, majoring in Architecture.

The rapper came back in January for the Aliwal Urban Art Festival, as part of Singapore Art Week, and performed with her Singaporean band.

Despite her absence from Singapore, she's been making the country proud.

She was nominated for five awards at the 2013 VIMA South East Asia Music Awards, of which she clinched three.

She acknowledges that her career switch from architecture to rapping is something "Singaporean parents would get a heart attack" from.

"So I really have to thank my parents for being so understanding. Not at first, but eventually," she laughs.

Masia started performing at open mic sessions during her university years. Though she was shy and reserved then, she says, "I wanted to prove to myself to just take one chance and get up in front of people."

Her risks paid off, landing a commercial spot on *Much Music* – Canada's own version of *MTV*.

Soon, she started receiving emails and letters from girls in Canada.

She reveals that some of these emails were from girls who are of Asian ethnicity and are facing racism every day in their lives.

“ I started to realise that this is not just fun hip hop time. But it's really representing an unspoken demographic.

Being one of the first female Asian rappers in Canada, Masia found herself becoming a role model to young Canadian-Asians.

She explains that Asians were expected to only be "Harajuku girls or car models" and the idea of being an Asian rapper was foreign.

"I started to realise that this is not just fun hip hop time," the female rapper explains. "But it's really representing an unspoken demographic."

Back then, Masia did not want to be labelled as a 'female Asian rapper'. She used to say, "I just want to represent hip hop".

"But then you start to realise that... you do have a responsibility because people are looking at you."

Over the years, she has travelled around, using music and art as a "passport to the world", visiting places like Los Angeles and Jamaica.

"In travelling so much, you begin to see that cultures have so much to teach one another," she observes.

Masia reveals that she has plans to set up a business in Singapore to bring in international music opportunities for local talents.

Masia hopes to see the local music and rap scene gain enough success to be able to give back to the community and aspiring rappers.

"I would love to see it come full circle around," she aspires.

"Where hip hop... is not just about 'big'-ing up ourselves but... about building community."

GOLDEN RIFFS OF THE SILVER STRINGS

In the vivacious and developing music scene in Singapore, **BENEDICTA J. FOO** watches as the '60s band comes back to recreate the shore's audio waves.



Just about a hundred people gathered within the icy, dimly lit Platinum World Music Disco Bar, from husbands and wives to grandparents with their hands intertwined, swaying their hips, tapping their feet and clapping rhythmically to the songs from The Silver Strings that painted their youth.

One would never experience a show with such vibrant tunes and glee as infectious as this.

Inspired by The Shadows, The Silver Strings started as an instrumental band sans any characteristically suave front man in 1963.

Back then, talent time competitions came with titles to be won, and soon the band found themselves with Singapore's Paul Anka on their front – Andy Lim, 73, who's more affectionately known as Andy Young.

Andy had paved the way for a swing of titleholders. The band had the best names of the region working with them, including Mike and Herb Van Dort, who were dubbed as The Beatles of Malaysia.

For Andy, leaving the band for a teaching career was, and would never be his choice.

During those days, civil servants could not moonlight as band members, some passionate ones even took drastic measures to continue performing.

"There were band boys who took part in bands who wore masks; they were all civil servants," Andy recalls.

Shortly before Andy quit, Veronica Soon, 65, joined in 1964. Her stage name was then decided to be Veronica Young.

Together, they ventured further and won the title of Millie Small – a Jamaican singer-songwriter whose

rendition of The Cadillacs' "My Boy Lollipop" topped charts in US, UK, Canada, and even Australia – putting yet another credential upon their rapidly growing resume.

Their success brought them a performance at Stadium Negara in Malaysia, where they played to an audience of 20,000 for a Miss Universe Pageant.

Shortly thereafter, Veronica, now 65, had to leave for a job in Kuching. The Silver Strings couldn't accompany her as some of them had day jobs and they couldn't leave.

“ We were all more fun and games; money wasn't in the picture.

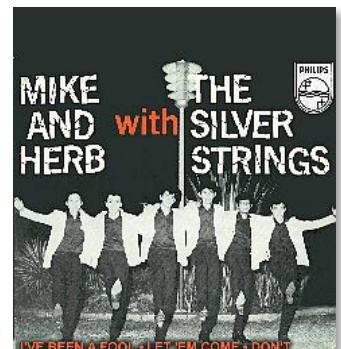
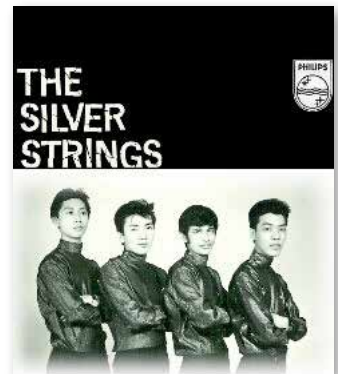
- Andy Lim, then frontman of The Silver Strings

"At that time my purpose was to start a career and to help [my] family... anything that I can to start a living," Veronica explains.

Her departure brought along the presence of Shirley Nair, as well as Mike and Herb into the band, including Anita Sarawak and Paul Cheong in the later years.

They went on to release albums and tour Malaysia.

While it seems like ardent fan girls would never devote their lives to local bands nowadays, it wasn't a strange phenomenon back then in the 1960s.



Album photos courtesy of Audie Ng



Bass player of the Silver Strings, Audie Ng, putting up a reunion performance at the World Music Disco Bar.

Audie Ng, 71, The Silver Strings' bass player and last original member, tells us that they even had fans knocking on their hotel doors after their shows.

"The way they treated us [was] just like the way they treated international stars. Today, they're not that crazy. Or maybe the younger ones, they're crazy about Korean stars," Audie laughs.

"Can you imagine that era when TV started and all the bands came out, following the Shadows' style and music?" Andy recalls.

"It was a really different experience; we had all these fans screaming and shouting all over."

Perhaps what contributed to this legendary band's success was their sheer enjoyment for music.

"We were all more fun and games; money wasn't in the picture," Andy recalls his glorious days.

Like many others in the 70s, the band split up in 1971.

The new decade demanded for sounds that were more of the pop and disco genres, and these bands had to either adapt or wait for gigs.

However, Andy and Veronica were called back by Audie in 2008 to do a reunion show, which led to the Silver Strings pleasing the hearts of fans who had been waiting for just about half a century. This restarted the band's occasional gigs.

Andy also started *singapore60smusic.blogspot.sg*, to document the crevices of 60s culture and provide a window for the younger generation to take a peek into the rarely documented golden era of Singapore's music.

The band is currently planning to bring back all the musicians they've worked with and looking for sponsors for their 50th anniversary show this year.

"If I can do it, I'd be very satisfied," says Audie, who's still in the music business and is the managing director of Supreme Musical Connections.

"We hope that even young ones will come to see the shows," he comments.

With an amazingly colourful repertoire of songs and talented musicians, there's little for the band to worry.

"60s music is always everlasting and evergreen, and we're only glad to have one of Singapore's pioneer bands introduce us to it," says Veronica.

Silver Moments...

1963 Was formed by music teacher – Mr Harry Martinez.

1964 Became popular when Andy Young joined (for one and a half years), followed by Veronica Young.

1965 Performed in Kuala Lumpur for Miss Universe Pageant.

Recorded few EPs with Shirley Nair and Mike & Herb, after Veronica left.

Opened for the Rolling Stones concert at the Badminton Hall.

1967 Performed nightly at Serene House. Shirley got married and was replaced by Paul Cheong. Anita Savanah joined too but left after six months.

1968 Performed nightly at Hotel Marco Polo back to back with Pietro Atilla & The Warlocks.

1969 Performed at Wisma Indonesia Noyse Club for opening of Oasis Club at Kallang Airport.

1970 Left for Hong Kong with Mustapha, replacing Paul Cheong to perform at Showboat Hotel.

1971 Disbanded.

“ The way they treated us [was] just like the way they treated international stars.

- Audie Ng,
bassist of The Silver Strings



Reliving The '60s

LINDSAY CHONG talks to The Pinholes about their new album – *Bring Back The Vibe*.

"I wouldn't say I was into the 'retro' look; I'm more of an 'alternative guy'. [My music] is neither purely pop nor rock, it's alternative," says Famie Suliman, the lead singer of The Pinholes.

"I love the 60's vibe though. Singapore had a lot of homegrown bands at the time too, but this generation doesn't have a clue about them. Our aim is to bring back the vibe of that era."

Donning a bright red jacket and round orange-tinted sunglasses, Famie is the first to arrive for the interview. It's easy to see why he is the frontman of his band; the 33-year-old oozes charisma.

Next, guitarist Didi Hanafiah (or better known as DD) walks in, dressed entirely in black and carrying a faded white tote bag printed with John Lennon's face.

His cool composure never breaks, allowing Famie to take the lead but adding in from time to time.

Lastly, the youngest and newest member of The Pinholes enters – Shari Ismail, 21, is the band's brand new drummer. He may look like a young'un, but he's fresh out of National Service (NS).

The only Pinhole missing is the bassist, Ridhwan Roslan (or Wando), who's currently serving his National Service.

Since the band's genesis some 10 years ago, members never stayed for long. Famie is the only original member.

"I'm the only survivor," he jokes. "So if I die, the legacy dies with me!"

Mutual love for music made finding new members a matter of chemistry.

"It was an easy fit, me and Famie," says DD. "The first time we met, we talked for four hours straight about music. He didn't even mention The Pinholes until some time later."

Both DD and Famie cannot read music notes, but had taught themselves to play the guitar.

Because he was his own teacher, there was never any pressure on Famie to learn the instrument.

Passion, however, kept him disciplined.

He started with single chords, practising routinely till he knew them by heart. Over time, he progressed to learning melodies.

"I would always practice a few chords before leaving for school in the morning," he says. "[After school I'd] come home immediately after to practise some more, singing while I did it."

DD's first instrument may be the drums, but after watching his elder brother jam out on the guitar, he was sold on it.

"We're just like typical *kampung* boys under the void deck playing guitars," says DD with a grin.

As for Shari, his induction into the band was a funnier story.

"When Famie asked me to play the drums, it was actually through a prank call," Shari recalls. "During my last two weeks of NS, he called pretending to report a crime. I worked in the Public Transport Security Command, and the number he used looked like my headquarters'. I was already on my way to the scene when Famie admitted who he was."

The last time Shari played the drums was in secondary four, in his school band. His uncertainties were soon put to rest when he found mentorship and guidance in his older band members.

February is an exciting month for The Pinholes, with the release of their album, *Bring Back the Vibe*. It's a first for the band and they plan to do it in style.

"We plan to go all out and do some guerilla marketing," Famie reveals.

One of the ways to do this is to bring their music out to the people.

"We'll probably rent a lorry to drive around, play [on it] for about 15 minutes, then move on. It sounds stupid but somebody has to do something stupid to get attention."

In a country where foreign content gets more headway than local music, the boys lament the lack of support from the shores of their own home. They aren't waiting for a big radio hit before counting

themselves successful. Their definition of a hit is simply having the audience enjoy their music and being on the radio is a bonus.

"We were in Kuala Lumpur performing once, when a Chinese man in his 40s told us he had driven two hours from Pahang just to watch us play," says Famie. "How heartwarming is that!"

Not all gigs are as empowering though. DD tells of a time they played in a backpacker's pub in Singapore, and was stopped mid-song by a staff member who complained that they were too loud and that the police were on their way.

"I think they didn't have a licence to let us play live," says DD. "Needless to say, we were completely stunned. The unprofessionalism [of the staff] really affected our enthusiasm that night."

As The Pinholes are true blue Singaporean homeboys, they are a patriotic bunch, which is evident in *Bring Back the Vibe*.

"The songs tell about friendship in places around Singapore. Basically the fun side of being a Singaporean," says Famie.

Hopefully The Pinholes will still be rock and rolling in 50 years.

"If I'm still alive, why not continue with music?" says DD.

"If there're still people who want to listen, sure. Even if there are none, we will still continue to do what we love to do," says Famie.

THE PINHOLES ALBUM GIVEAWAY CONTEST

HYPE is giving away three copies of The Pinholes' newest digital album: *Bring Back the Vibe*

Simply answer the question below and stand to win!

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MAGICAL COMEBACK

Daphne Khoo lives life like it's a roller coaster – Never sure of what's around the corner. **JEREMIAH JOEL PETER** hops on the wild ride.



Photo courtesy of Lauren Desberg

Striking celebrity status at merely 16, Daphne's career began when she emerged as the third runner-up in *Singapore Idol Season 1*.

Now in her mid-twenties, Daphne's life has been filled with many ups and downs – a journey she doesn't regret.

"Maybe I do live my life a little *YOLO* (You Only Live Once)," Daphne admits, chuckling with a smile.

Sporting heeled leather boots and a matching checkered shirt, the petite singer was all smiles, blurring away any distance her rockstar demeanour might have created. More relatable however are her humble beginnings.

Daphne shares about her music band from her early teen years.

"We would pay to set-up a stage... throw a show... and invite all our secondary school friends to come... But that was the local scene then! Nobody listened except your friends."

Those early days were good training for her when she started landing bigger gigs after *Singapore Idol Season 1*.

"I did voice-overs, I did shows, I was hosting... Since I had started poly right after *Idol*, I had been working and studying gungho, like six [or] seven jobs [in three years]."

After travelling to Australia to earn a Degree in Media Communications, she later pursued a three-month summer programme at the Berklee College of

Music in USA. She later went on to pursue another degree, majoring in professional music.

However, her path to musical success took a detour in March 2012 when she was diagnosed with Dysgerminoma, a rare form of ovarian cancer.

"It was kind of scary," she says, recounting her initial thoughts about her condition.

"But when it did come, I thought, 'Oh God, [maybe] this is Your way of saying, take a break'," Daphne says.

Being an optimist, her ability to look on the brighter side saw her through the treatment period into recovery. Her darkest days ended in late 2012.

**"LIFE IS AMAZING,
LIFE IS WONDERFUL,
I JUST HAVE TO
SEE IT THAT WAY
AND LOOK FOR
THE WONDER."**

Now in the pink of health, Daphne returned last January from her New York base to promote her latest album, *Wonderland*, which is launched in partnership with Starbucks.

"'Wonderland' was the song I took the biggest chance on," she says, talking about choosing her title track.

"It was the furthest from my comfort zone and that's how my life has been in the past few years. Scary and wonderful... [Yet,] I'm trying to find wonderland in my present and in everything I do," says Daphne.

"Life is amazing, life is wonderful, I just have to see it that way and look for the wonder," she says.

The EP of five songs is a reflection of the tumultuous course that her life has taken, as evident in the tracks "I'm Not Giving Up" and "Weak".

She shares about the highlights during her performances at various Starbucks cafes across the island.

"There was this little boy... He just stood in front of me... And after four songs, he walked away... to grab a chair and sat there in front of me."

Content with these small things in life, Daphne reveals that the uncertainty of the future did seem daunting.

"It definitely does [seem scary]... But I like to have set goals... [Living life] a step at a time is less stressful."

Sharing about her plans for 2014, Daphne remains ambiguous.

"I'm going to start a YouTube series. [But] I always say that, then something in my life erupts... and I have to stop..." Daphne shares. "I've been begging for a new camera for my birthday, and hopefully... I can do regular weekly shows."



MING MORPHIS

AUDREY KANG and **PARVEEN MAGHERA** take a walk in Ming Bridges' shoes and find out about her endeavours in both the Chinese and English market.

The Australia-born Singaporean, whose father is British and mother Singaporean Chinese, has come a long way in the entertainment industry.

She debuted at 13 years old when she won Teenage magazine's Teenage Icon singing competition in 2006.

Two years later, she moved on to acting in detective drama *R.E.M: The Next Generation*.

Ming later moved to England where she secured a performing arts scholarship when she was 17 – which explains her lilting British accent.

Now back in our sunny island, Ming is a familiar face on magazine covers and in variety shows.

YOUNG AND AMBITIOUS

She's only 22 years old, but Ming has thrown her hat in the ring as a singer, songwriter, actress and model.

She is also very much a poet and a girl who wants to show the world that she has grown up.

Instead of the demure-looking Ming whom we are used to, the cover of her new English album, *Morphosis*, shows

her with tousled hair, leather pants and a smize (smiling with eyes) that will make Tyra Banks proud.

Awfully surprised by the cover of *Morphosis*, some of her friends in the United Kingdom even asked if her management approved of such a drastic change.

To that, Ming says, "It's important for my fans to know that I will never change, I will always be Ming Bridges, but I will never stay the same as well."

"I'll always be evolving and growing. It's a different side of me. This one is just me showing my extroverted side."

SEXING IT UP

One of the most eyebrow-raising tracks on *Morphosis*, titled "Sugar High", is a clear announcement that Ming is growing up.

With lyrics such as "give me sugar all night", one might be quite justified in thinking that she is singing about sex.

However, despite her change in image and more experimental songs, Ming insists that she is still the same. And "Sugar High" is only about her love for all things candy.

Her favourite confectionaries – Twix bar and self-made chocolates – inspired her to write the song that has got her parents questioning her.

"I always wanted to write a song about food because food is such a big part of my life, but everyone misunderstood the song to be about sex!" she says, laughing heartily.

Besides "Sugar High", Ming also wrote a number of songs on *Morphosis*.

She says song writing to her is a very important aspect of being able to express her feelings, and would rather be remembered as a songwriter than a singer, actress or model.

Ming's first album, *Who Knows*, featured songs she wrote when she was in her early teens, while tracks in *Morphosis* also featured lyrics extracted from poems that she wrote when she was just 11 years old.

Ming has performed at various Starbucks locations in Singapore to promote *Morphosis*.

Besides promoting locally, she states that more promotions will be done in Indonesia and Malaysia. In January, she flew to Jakarta, Indonesia for a Chinese New Year celebration.

TAIWAN ADVENTURES

While building her music career in Taiwan last year, she enrolled herself into a Mandarin course in National Taiwan Normal University to improve her Mandarin efficiency.

"I feel that the best part of any song is the lyrics," she says, "When I was young, I used to listen to songs that could express my frustration and the lyrics mattered a lot to me because I could relate [to them]."

Mandarin album, *Ming Day*, ranked high on notable Taiwanese music charts, G-Music and iRadio, while its first single, "Tears Like Rain" had been featured in several Taiwanese dramas as well.

Two of her Mandarin tracks, "Some Guys" and "Mosaic World", from her debut bilingual album, *Who Knows*, were well received by local radio channel, Y.E.S. 93.3 FM.

Moreover, "Some Guys" was chosen as the theme song for a Taiwanese drama series, *Ren Ming Ba Jin Qian Niu*.

BRIDGING HER CULTURES

"I feel that I'm different in a way that I'm doing English and Mandarin," Ming shares.

"I bring a bit of the English vibe as well to the Mandarin side because I love it. I want to be seen as this young girl who loves singing Mandarin because she thinks it's so beautiful."

"Mandarin songs have a way of expressing emotions," Ming says as she beams, unveiling her true love for the language.

"It's just a different type of aura, different type of feeling."

"There are so many ways to say 'I love you' and if you could fully understand the translation, you'd be like 'Wow, how do they do that?'"

After *Morphosis*, Ming is taking on the Chinese market once again.

Fans can look forward to her new Mandarin album, which also explores a more experimental and edgy theme.

“ Mandarin songs have a way of expressing emotions. It's just a different type of aura, different type of feeling.

- Ming Bridges
on her love for Mandarin

Glowing with excitement, she lets in on one of the tracks she had fully written by herself.

"It's very 'dancy' and completely different from anything I've ever written before and I'm so happy about that!"

It would be released later in 2014.

NEVER SAY DIE

While she has a strong fan base in Taiwan and her Mandarin numbers are making it big in Singapore as well, Ming reveals that entering different markets has yet to benefit her but she carries on because of her passion.

Her fans have also been appreciative and supportive of both languages.

"I quite like the idea of having a mono album but the best thing behind the bilingual one is that my Mandarin fans, [can] listen to my English songs... some English fans have liked my Chinese tracks as well," Ming says.

"I think that's quite cool that other people have that learning experience and hear different sides of you in different languages. Nowadays, language can surpass all borders!"

Ming has also been in talks with some K-Pop artists and is looking into acquiring movie opportunities as well.

But she's giving more priority to her singing at the moment. Looking forward, she hopes to head to China to share her music.

Photos courtesy of Funkie Monkeys Productions



IT'S IMPORTANT FOR MY FANS
TO KNOW THAT
I WILL **NEVER CHANGE**

I WILL ALWAYS BE MING BRIDGES BUT
I WILL **NEVER STAY THE SAME**
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He's Just So

BONAFIDE

With 13 years in R&B and Hip Hop, Mark Bonafide proves dedication.
PARVEEN MAGHERA sits with the rapper, singer and songwriter
to uncover his music journey.

The man expresses truth with real emotions, through crafts of words and ear for rhythm. Mark Bonafide is an artiste who keeps true to his stage name – Bonafide.

“[Mark Bonafide] is not my real name but I’d like to keep that as a professional name because you need some kind of mystery, you know,” says Mark with his eyes twinkling.

In January 2014, two of Mark’s latest singles, “Issues” and “Finally”, were nominated for Best Pop Song at the VIMA South East Asia Music Awards 2014, to be held in March.

“Issues” was also selected as one of TuneCore’s *25 Songs Of Summer 2013* compilation album last August. These two singles are part of his latest EP, *Love/Rebel* (stylised as *LV/RBL*).

THE BEGINNING

Coming from a music-loving family, Mark sourced his biggest inspirations from legendary American musicians, Prince, and the late Michael Jackson.

“They try to push a lot of boundaries... and they don’t stick to one genre. That’s what I really admire about musicians,” Mark highlights.

Due to disagreements with his R&B/ Hip Hop-influenced music, Mark was told to leave a rock band during his secondary school days. He later paired up with his then classmate and Singapore Idol winner, Taufik Batisah, to perform P. Diddy’s “I’ll Be Missing You” at a Teacher’s Day celebration.

It was the first time Mark showcased his rapping skills on stage.

Mark and Taufik formed a group called Bonafide, and fused both R&B and Hip Hop together.

“[Hip Hop] was just rap, rap, rap and beats, beats, beats. We wanted to make proper songs instead of just putting a beat [to rap],” says Mark.

The biggest highlight was their opening act for Singapore’s first Black Eyed Peas concert in 2004, performing alongside Vintage Flav’r.

When Taufik went solo after winning Singapore Idol, Mark joined Vintage Flav’r to form Bonafide Vintage Flav’r. Though they released an EP with two radio hits, “Feels Good” and “Disco Love”, they later disbanded due to their creative differences.

THE SOLO TRACK

Being a solo artist gave Mark the creative freedom to deliver his own music. It didn’t take long for him to

set his direction after meeting local music producer-singer Don Richmond.

“We really felt the chemistry and I felt that [cutting a solo album] was what I was going to do.”

Mark released his debut album *The Bonafide Experience* in July 2009 with eight record-breaking singles, receiving massive local radio airplay, which made him the first Singaporean artiste to achieve such success.

One of his singles, “So Bonafide”, also won him the Compass Award for the Top Local Song Of The Year in 2010.

Mark is the only Singaporean who has performed at the first Russian Music Festival, Vladivostok Rocks.

“Russia was one of the best places I’ve been to because the people were very passionate when they spoke to [me],” he expresses. “I’m sure they have never ever heard about me but [they] came up... after the shows to talk to me, take pictures and try to get to know me well. You don’t really see that often right?”

THE FUTURE

Mark shares that *Love/Rebel* includes themes of betrayal, obsessions and complicated relationships.

One of the singles, “Finally”, is about domestic violence. When Mark was taking a break in Australia, he met many people who experienced domestic violence.

“I was getting these messages and I thought I need to write a song... for the girl to get out of that stupid relationship and just be with somebody who’ll respect her than try to mentally and physically abuse her.”

Mark is particular about choosing the perfect words to illustrate emotions in a song and that takes both time and effort, and lots of creativity.

“You have that three minutes to grab and impress people, so why not make good use of those three minutes than try to record and release the song just for the sake of it?”

While preparing *Love/Rebel*, Mark was also working on another EP, which he started a couple of months ago.

It will be released in late 2014 and will explore what Singapore has never heard before.

“Every song [in the album] is going to be really different from each other. It’s something I’ve been wanting to do for a really long time... creatively and experimentally,” Mark reveals.



Photos courtesy of Steve & Chris

// THE CHOSEN ONES

FELICIA TAN speaks to Laneway Festival Singapore's pioneer batch of homegrown acts – namely Gema, Vandetta and The Observatory – and finds out what makes each of them notable.

Photo courtesy of echoprince.com

Handpicked by Danny Rogers (one of the founders of the Australia-originated Laneway Festival), Gema, Vandetta and The Observatory put up quite a show when they performed at Laneway Festival Singapore 2014 at Gardens By The Bay on Jan 25.

Touted as one of Asia's biggest indie music festivals, the Singapore leg of St. Jerome's Laneway Festival has been making waves around the region for the past four years, bringing in some of the biggest names in the international indie music scene.

This year, we saw three homegrown acts light up the stage as first local performers of the annual event.

"We've wanted to showcase local talent since we started but this year, with an addition of a 3rd stage, we finally had the room to do it," Danny Rogers tells **HYPE**.

"I felt (the acts) all had a genuine international feel to them," he adds. "I was assured that all of them could more then hold their own on a festival stage."

HYPE talks to Gema, Vandetta and The Observatory and gets to know the stellar homegrown acts a little better.

GEMA

"It's hard to pinpoint a genre; it's easier to use a feeling instead," Gema Putra explains. "The keywords I want to project are... those a bit more on the downside of emotion, like love and heartbreak," he describes his music.

The DJ produces mellow beats that take you to another realm with their lush and dreamy sound – most notably on his rework of fellow Laneway alum and Mercury prizewinner James Blake's "Life Round Here".

Despite owning an impressive collection of sub-bass-and-synth-filled tunes, including the debut five-track EP *Before*, as well as performing at The xx's gig in Singapore last August and Zoukout 2013, Gema has no plans to stick to solely deejaying.

"Performing live was what I started out doing and I was excited that Laneway gave me a chance to perform what I really wanted to, instead of just DJ gigs," Gema says.

The musician, who started producing at the tender age of 13, is incorporating singing and songwriting into his upcoming album, due for release this year. It will be the first to have vocals, setting it apart from his previous instrumental EPs.

"There will be more live shows from now on – it's something I want to concentrate on for awhile, and have fun with."

VANDETTA

Through Vanessa Fernandez's effervescent personality and vibrant voice, it's no surprise that she is also a radio DJ on LUSH 99.5FM.

After going through phases of being in local bands Parking Lot Pimp and Urban Xchange, Vanessa – who goes by the stage name of Vandetta – exudes a smooth, soulful voice that blends of R&B, hip-hop and electronic music.

Turning 32 this year, the former 987FM DJ speaks about balancing between her two passions.

"When I was at 987 in 2010, I was probably not at the right level of maturity to handle it, so I chose to focus on music eventually. Now, I'm doing both because I think I've grown up a bit," she says.

Despite being busy with performing and producing, she's staying on radio.

Photo courtesy of Rosalyn Lee



Photos courtesy of The Observatory Music

“I WAS ASSURED THAT ALL OF THEM COULD MORE THAN HOLD THEIR OWN ON A FESTIVAL STAGE.

- Danny Rogers, one of the founders of Laneway Festival

“I decided to come back to radio because I have a very big love for the music community in Singapore,” she answers. “There is lack of support in the media as people do not know about the scene.”

The songstress, who performed at the Gilles Peterson World Music Festival 2011 in France, stepped out of her comfort zone again by producing and engineering her debut solo work in Los Angeles, which released last October.

This new path seems to be one that Vandetta will be embarking on.

“If you want control over your own destiny [and] art, you need to make it yourself. I’m at a place that makes me more assured and happy,” she says.

THE OBSERVATORY

Unapologetic, no-frills and void of nonsense – The Observatory sticks closely to their gritty musical roots that have put them in a league of their own for the past 12 years.

The experimental rock band has gone through multiple member changes and genre progressions, but remains distinct with their avant-garde sound and raw, enigmatic lyrics reflecting “the human condition”.

Multi-instrumentalist Vivian Wang says, “For the most part, it’s sheer hard work and a determination on our part to focus on the creative aspect of musical life as opposed to the monetizing of this business.”

Having recorded in Norway for their latest album *Catacombs* in 2012, and performed in Oslo, Japan and Thailand, the band has experienced music making at its best.

However, the band remains unfazed and stands strong by creating music purely for artistic purpose.

“We’re happy to have been invited... [however] this isn’t about raising the Singapore flag. Neither is it about scoring a one up over those of smaller indie venues we’ve loved playing



in,” Vivian says about performing at Laneway Festival.

“It’s about music... [and] about fans and lovers of interesting new stuff,”

Working on a new album that is slated for release in 2014, the band looks to carry on their legacy of creating dark and brutally honest music that reach into the depths of our souls.

“Play your music without compromise,” electric guitarist Dharma advises budding musicians.

“Don’t take advice from record companies, A&R [executives] or any corporations,” he adds.



HOUR OF THE CAT

After their hit debut *Mannequins* in 2011, MONSTER CAT returns with a bang, speaking in one voice to FELICIA TAN about their new album.

Photo courtesy of Callum Aldrin Smith

Enter Hentai Cat, Meta Cat and Psycho Cat, who form the current line-up of the eccentric internationally acclaimed folk-rock act – MONSTER CAT.

After releasing their first EP, *Mannequins* in 2011, MONSTER CAT has been featured in global platforms like *MTViggy*, online series *Snakeweed Sessions*, and most notably, on popular torrent site, *The Pirate Bay*.

The band also include countries such as Japan, USA and Germany in their gig repertoire.

On hindsight, it's no question that MONSTER CAT is Singapore's indie pride and joy.

TREADING NEW WATERS

Freshly back from recording their latest full-length album *The Violet Hour* in Sydney, Australia, the band continued their reign with ARIA award-winning producer Tim Carr – who has worked with renowned artistes such as Matt Corby and Julia Stone.

The 13-track record, *The Violet Hour*, is inspired by their experiences over the past few years and will be a reflection of how they have grown as a band and as individuals.

"We're moving forward with a confidence in our voice and opinion that we didn't have with *Mannequins*," MONSTER CAT says.

"We always believed we could take our music to different shores."

MONSTER CAT reasons that a new environment brings about clearer minds and new perspectives.

The members agreed that Sydney allowed them to focus fully on the music as they could momentarily put aside responsibilities and individual worries back home.

“ We hope everyone is ready for the crazy palette of sights and sounds we're about to set upon them.

PENCHANT FOR PRIVACY

Despite having chalked up an impressive musical CV, the band remains guarded about their true identities and personal lives.

They hardly reveal real names or ages in press releases, only going as far as to show their faces.

"Our alternate identities help us to exist outside of social constraints that can sometimes lead to us holding back or self-censoring during the creative process," the members say.

"You're right to say that these personas free us from being overly self-conscious," they continue. "We felt it would be interesting to present ourselves to the public with these personas intact."

BACK IN SINGAPORE

"A big issue we have is not with the [local] scene, but with the lack of a proper industry to support the kind of music that these bands are making," they continue.

MONSTER CAT's tour schedule for the year includes China, Australia and Europe amongst other countries. But local fans need not feel left out.

"We're gonna put up a special show for everyone back home 'cos we'll never forget our roots," they promise.

The band will still be keeping their signature mellow sound, but this time round they are giving it a fresh spin. It's set to be characteristically dark, yet much more vibrant and diverse than their first offering.

"We hope everyone is ready for the crazy palette of sights and sounds we're about to set upon them."

The whole Cat theme looks destined to stay, too.

"We always wanted to be like the Spice Girls," they unanimously chime.

ALBUM REVIEWS

You And Me

Artiste: Shane Filan
Genre: Pop / Folk Rock
Availability: Borders (\$18.95), HMV (\$20.90)
Rating: 3.5/5

Filan's debut album is filled with a great deal of positive songs, which revolves around his life and wife. Other than the typical love ballads, some upbeat songs uses ukulele which creates a cheery mood. However, it may get a little repetitive.

It's a pity that tracks such as "About You" and "Baby Let's Dance" felt like something in a Westlife album. Nonetheless, *You and Me* was a great effort by Filan to kick start his solo career. - *Lim Jia Ying*



Word of Mouth

Artiste: The Wanted
Genre: Dance-Pop / Pop-Rock / Contemporary Pop
Availability: HMV (\$18.90), Borders (\$20.95)
Rating: 3.5/5

An eclectic mix of singles and a few songs that missed the mark, The Wanted's newest album depends much on fans' word of mouth.

The highlight of the album comes with "I Found You". Largely similar to previous hit "Glad You Came", this hit single has already proven its worth with number one spot on Billboard's US Hot Dance Club Songs.

While the singles do jump out and grab at the listeners, much of the other songs might prove to be slightly less memorable. - *Audrey Kang*



LV/RBL

Artiste: Mark Bonafide
Genre: R&B / Hip Hop
Availability: TBC (March 2014)
Rating: 4/5

With songs from his debut album making rounds on the radio, this EP would no less be a marvel. Mark's new EP already includes hit singles such as "Finally" and "Issues" and the rest are just waiting to snag the airtime.

The album's undoubtedly a perfect entertaining and attractive package of Mark's song-writing skills, topped with his signature R&B and Hip Hop style and featured voices of local artistes such as Don Richmond and Kim Olsen. - *Parveen Maghera*



The Best of Keane (Deluxe Edition)

Artiste: Keane
Genre: Alternative Rock / Synthpop
Availability: That CD Shop (\$27.90), HMV (\$22.90)
Rating: 4/5

All of Keane accomplishments are culminated neatly in this release, celebrating 10 years since their debut.

Familiar songs will take fans back to the early years of the band while new songs, along with unreleased ones, are a real treat.

A compilation of such meticulous effort isn't only one for the fans. This tremendous value-for-money endeavour is also for those looking to be acquainted with one of the world's biggest British bands of the decade. - *Theodore Woon*





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PRINT TO SCREEN

HUNGER FOR BOOK SAGAS

The *Harry Potter* series and the *Twilight* saga have passed us, **HON LIANG YI** finds out if *The Hunger Games* trilogy will be able to fill the huge shoes left.



Photo courtesy of Lionsgate

Harry Potter finished off his longstanding duel with Voldemort in July 2011. A year later, Bella and Edward found eternal peace together with their daughter.

With these book series titans down, more top-selling young adult books series are entering the fray, eager to snatch the troves of fans waiting for the next big thing.

With series like *Percy Jackson*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Divergent*, competition is thick.

From the looks of the box office, none seem to compare to the girl on fire, Katniss Everdeen, the main character of *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

Written by Suzanne Collins, the trilogy revolves around District 12's Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), who volunteers to participate in the brutal 74th Annual Hunger Games in place of her sister, Primrose Everdeen.

Alongside Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson), they are pitted against

22 other 'tributes' from 11 other districts and the last one standing alive wins.

"*The Hunger Games* trilogy tells us that you have to live with your responsibilities and whatever you have done. There's no cheat code to life and it [depends on] how you make it," says Ms Maisarah Bte Abu Samad, 30.

She was one of the 50 'tributes' who participated in The Hunger Games Singapore Challenge, in a bid to fly to Los Angeles for the premiere of *Catching Fire*.

During the challenge, 'tributes' pair up and engage in physical challenges like squats, sit-ups and crunches.

The five administrators of the Singapore Facebook page for 'The Hunger Games' – Patrice Rojas, Magashastini M Kumar, Poh Zhuo Heng, Taara Kumar and Rebecca Ee – agree that the all too realistic political undertones that may remind history buffs of Stalin and the likes, may have been books' charm.

As Taara, 16, sums up for her fellow administrators, "I can relate to it. It's creepy [that it's so realistic] but that's what draws me to [the books]."

In any case, it has won the hearts of Singaporeans and global moviegoers.

It's the 12th most lucrative premiere in history, raking in \$307.7 million by the end of its first weekend, trailing behind *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* by \$22.3 million.

The face of the rebellion stands much taller than recent franchises – the second installment of the *Percy Jackson* series, as well as the greenhorn *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*, both released in 2013, brought in a meek \$14 million each.

It also helps that the first and second instalments seem to have skirted past the pitfalls and traps that most print-to-screen adaptations fall into.

"It's not a visual vomit of the book," says Magashastini, 20. "We read the book from Katniss' point of view, but the films show us what happens beyond that, like President Snow, Haymitch, Gamemakers, and even Gale's reaction to the events."

The film adaptation adds credible value to the book and plot. Alongside the usual romances and drama that draw in the mainstream audiences, *The Hunger Games* trilogy has shone in the arena of book franchises clamoring for fans.

***Mockingjay* is set to release worldwide on Nov 21, 2014.**

DIVING INTO THE DIVIDE

ANNA ELIZABETH ISIP submerges herself into the dystopian-cum-utopian world of *Divergent*, where they immortalise the individual's choice to be who they want to be.



Photo courtesy of Jaap Buitendijk / Summit Entertainment

Marked as the “new Hunger Games”, *Divergent* is the first instalment in Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* trilogy.

In the hopes to preserve peace, the dystopian city of Chicago is split into five factions – Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Dauntless and Erudite.

Each of these factions represent a specific value of humanity: Abnegation for selflessness; Amity for kindness; Candor for honesty; Dauntless for courage and Erudite for knowledge.

Regardless of the faction the teens were born in, an aptitude test is required at age 16 to decide where they truly belong.

They are then required to publicly declare their resulted faction in the Choosing Ceremony.

However, there are those who show an aptitude for multiple factions, they are called the “Divergent”.

Beatrice Prior, with her brother, Caleb Prior, is born into the Abnegation faction but has never really fully felt like she belonged in her faction.

Her brother however, possesses selfless traits of an Abnegation effortlessly.

The aptitude test had the youths injected with a mental stimulation serum that will allow their brains to lay out specific situations. How they react will determine their faction.

However, Beatrice’s results show that she has the aptitude for three factions – Abnegation, Dauntless and Erudite. This makes her a divergent.

Her Dauntless stimulator, Tori, who would become an ally in time to come, warns her to never speak about her results to anyone, as it’s a matter of life or death.

To the surprise of her family and friends, she decides to join Dauntless. The ceremony marks the start of the 16-year-old green-eyed heroine’s journey in her new faction.

Beatrice throws away her old Abnegation ways, alongside her name and decides to go by the name Tris.

Apart from struggling to survive with her three aptitudes in an one-aptitude world, Beatrice learns the way of the Dauntless in a brutal initiation process, where she’s trained under a mysterious boy named Four, initially known as Tobias Eaton. Throughout the initiation programme, a romance is formed.

The lovebirds find out about a plan to overthrow the city’s government, and seek out a way to stop the revolution.

The book explores the journey youths take to choose who they want to become; whether it’s of their upbringing, or something else entirely.

It won Favourite Book of 2011 in 2011’s Goodreads Awards and was

voted number one in Teens’ Top Ten vote, sponsored by Young Adult Literary Services Association.

Despite those accolades, *The New York Times* does note how *Divergent* “does not exactly distinguish itself”, especially in comparison to Suzanne Collin’s opus, *The Hunger Games*.

Both series share similar themes and plot, including unconventionally pretty, young heroine and the inhumane battles for survival.

The film adaptation for this three-part series has been slated under Director Neil Burger, known for his 2011 thriller *Limitless*, to bring out the dystopian world into visual reality.

The cast boasts a promising bunch, with Shailene Woodley as Beatrice Prior and Theo James as Four.

Initially, the role for Four had several actors for consideration such as, Alex Pettyfer, from science fiction flick *I Am Number Four* and Alexander Ludwig, from the much compared to series, *The Hunger Games*.

Joining the bunch are Maggie Q from hit television series *Nikita*, as Tori, and Ansel Elgort who was in the 2013 remake of *Carrie*, as Caleb.

***Divergent* is set to open on Mar 20, 2014.**

PRINT TO SCREEN

THE WARM WINTER TALE

Winter's Tale, is another print to screen romantic fantasy with a star-studded cast. Follow **AUDREY KANG** as she submerges into the world of romance.

Taking place in mythic New York City and spanning more than a century, *Winter's Tale* is an adaptation of the 1983 book of the same title by accomplished author and journalist Mark Helprin.

Critically acclaimed by critics when it was released, *Winter's Tale* was praised on the front page of *New York Times Book Review* and in 2006.

It was one of the 22 books that received numerous nominations for one of the best American fictional works since 1981.

A fantasy novel with hints of romantic elements, the book tells a story of the protagonist, Peter Lake, falling in love while discovering powers that he never expected himself to possess.

Peter Lake is a ruffian thug in all sense of the world, an orphan that had been forced to become a burglar.

Somewhere along the way, Peter makes an enemy of the gangster boss and is constantly on the run from them.

Played by Golden Globes award-winning actor Colin Farrell, Peter was running away from these gangsters when he was saved by a mysterious white horse, Athansor, which Peter looks to as a guardian.

While attempting to rob a house, ruffian Peter then falls in love with an heiress named Beverly.

Played by actress Jessica Brown Findlay, the dying Beverly possesses mystical powers that prove to change Peter's fate and keeps him safe, even from beyond the grave.

The cast of the 2014 blockbuster boasts veteran actors such as Will Smith, who acts as a judge, as well as Russell Crowe, who plays the role of the gangster boss, Pearly Soames.

The gangster boss bears strong resemblance to notorious real-life mob bosses and ruthlessly hunts down Peter. In the midst of trying to take a hit on Peter's life, it causes Peter to travel through time and arrive in the modern day New York City.

The movie is poised to be much more impactful than the book, with its stunning visuals and contrast between modern New York City with all its bright colourful lights and technology, as well as the old New York City, where men are dressed in dapper clothes and people still travelled on horses.

Directed by Akiva Goldsman, who's also behind notable movies such as *I Am Legend*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Mr & Mrs Smith*, the movie promises screenplay that is sure to captivate its audience.

***Winter's Tale* opened in cinemas on Feb 13, 2014.**



Photo courtesy of The Weinstein Company

VAMPED^{UP} ONCE MORE

Lovers of mythological bloodsuckers get bitten once more. **HON LIANG YI** prowls into *Vampire Academy: Blood Sisters* on Valentine's Day.

First it was Edward Cullen, with his suave and sparkly ways. Then it was the sultry *Vampire Diaries*, the television drama series spanning five seasons that earned eight Teen Choice Awards nominations last year.

Now a half-human, half-vampire (also known as a Dhampir) and a mortal vampire (called a Moroi) are set to please in *Vampire Academy: Blood Sisters*, which released in Singapore on Feb 13, just a day before Valentine's Day.

Based on the best-selling book series Vampire Academy, the movie revolves around the Dhampir Rosemarie "Rose" Hathaway, who is training to be a guardian to the Moroi princess, Vasilisa "Lissa" Dragomir.

Two years ago, Rose and Lissa ran away from St. Vladimir's Academy, their boarding school.

However, guardian Dimitri Belikov dragged them back and subsequently became a mentor to Rose, especially

after he saw the close bond between the two girls and decided that Rose would be a perfect guardian.

As Rose and Lissa struggle with the brutal hierarchy of the Academy, they learn of a darker force beyond the walls – the Strigoi, undead vampires that attack them.

Rose and Lissa may have the entire month of February to entice moviegoers, but other book adaptations will be popping up throughout 2014.

The highly-anticipated *Divergent*, the first installment of the trilogy in March 2014, followed by John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* – the bittersweet romance movie in June during the later part of the year.

To end off 2014 with a spark, Katniss Everdeen kicks off her rebellion in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1*.

In short, the blood sisters have a lot of work to do.

Thankfully, it has been blessed with what seems like a promising cast, though not necessarily star-studded.

Rose is played by Zoey Deutch, fresh from her role as Emily Asher in fellow book adaptation *Beautiful Creatures* in 2013, while Lucy Fry portrays Lissa, her first major role on the big screen.

Russian actor Danila Kozlovsky, who plays Dimitri, was one of the European talents honoured at Kilkenny's Subtitle Festival in December 2013 with the Angela Award.

There's also Ukrainian actress Olga Kurylenko; the *Oblivion* actress is set to be head mistress Kirova.

Let's keep in mind how Director Mark Waters, the man behind the cult classic *Mean Girls*, is directing a movie based on a vampire school.

He may just draw moviegoers with the right balance of sass, together with romance and of course, one great blood-sucking adventure.



FEATURE

ART & CRAFTS OF COSPLAY

Behind the intricate costumes are passionate youths who toil with their blood and sweat. Follow **ANNA ELIZABETH ISIP** and **PHOEBE LOW** as they uncover the trade skills.

With an auburn bob-cut wig, furry ivory tails, and oriental silky scarlet kimono, he is no longer your average guy.

Maverick Vellinguez, 22, transforms into Ahri, the female nine-tailed fox from multiplayer online battle arena, *League Of Legends*.

GENDER KNOWS NO BOUNDS

He explains that this spark to cross-gender cosplay has been an idea brewing for quite a while.

"[I did it] to challenge myself," the seasoned cosplayer quips. "I was sick of guy cosplays."

"Definitely everyone in the scene will attempt to do it (cross-gender cosplay). Especially for girls, [it's a] guarantee," Maverick adds.

But not everyone can pull it off like this experienced cosplayer.

Maverick's Ahri cosplay received positive reviews during its debut in 2012 and it made an impression in the community.

This led to Maverick pursuing his next female character – Ruby from *RWBY*, an anime-style web series.

He finds that the major differences between the process of transforming himself into a female character, versus a male one, is the tedious make-up process and styling of the wig.

"I hate... eye lashes," he adds. "And eye liner. Blush. Countouring."

Pausing his tirade on the list of make up products, Maverick shakes his head in disbelief, "I really don't know how you girls do it."

However, despite the cosmetic hurdles he has to pass, the passionate cosplayer watches YouTube tutorials to educate himself on the nuances of

maquillage as his arsenal of beauty products increases.

On top of that, Maverick also confesses, "I hate... sewing."

In order to escape this dreaded activity, he tailors his outfits instead.

Maverick goes out to source for the materials to make up his ensemble and proceeds to one of his trusted tailors to stitch the piece together.

This routine, though slightly less dirty on the hands, is pricey. He reveals that a near \$400 was forked out for his Ruby Rose costume.

Maverick shares that the first time he cosplayed was at his secondary school's costume-themed graduation night. This marked the night Maverick donned on his first costume – L from the *Death Note* series.

Maverick reveals that the hardest part about cosplaying is the physical task of lugging the different pieces of a costume to the cosplaying venue, and back home.

The National Serviceman jokes, "I sweat more than when I run 2.4km."

However, that sweaty chore doesn't deter the avid cosplayer from taking part in as many cosplay-related events as he can.

He recently braved the hot afternoon sun during the End-Of-Year Cosplay Festival (EOY), held on Dec 15, 2013 at Marina Barrage.

Cosplaying another favourite male character of his, Maverick graced the event as Kirito from *Sword Art Online*, a light novel series.

As a constant participant in local cosplay events, his longstanding dedication to the cosplay scene has made him a *senpai* (Japanese for senior) in the eyes of other cosplayers.



Photos courtesy of Joey Png



ARMOURS & COSTUMES

"You usually can't recognise cosplayers when they're in normal clothes! It's like two different people!"

With such an exclamation accompanied by enthusiastic hand gestures, Joel Png Zhi Hao, 27, or more affectionately known as "Joey" to his peers, is miles away from the silent and stoic Date Masamune from *Sengoku Basara* he cosplayed at Anime Festival Asia (AFA) 2013.

Even without the anime character's striking strawberry blond hair and green eyes, Joel still attracts a few curious glances with his own slightly long hair and a dangling black cross earring, which is a fashion staple of many young Japanese men.

The designer at Neo Tokyo Project (NTP), a cosplay news site, did his first project at the age of 17.

He made an enormous human-sized sword from *Naruto*, with a pole, two styrofoam pieces, tape and white cloth.

"It just looked horrible... people kept calling it, 'Eh, ironing board!' and I was like, 'Damn!'" says Joey.

"When you look for stuff outside... there are just some that you can't buy... you have to make it yourself."

The cost of buying a prop compared to making one is not all that different.

"You count a full suit of armour... buying everything from scratch... materials, paint and everything... [it's] about a few hundred?" explains Joey, who also laments the hefty cost of spray paints – six dollars a can.

Joey adds that it's also possible for the cost to be close to a thousand, depending on the need for finer materials such as resin, and extra items like metal chains and lights.

He's all too familiar with the steep prices of spray paint with his most expensive project ever – a cosplay of Pandaren Brewmaster, a panda, from the online multiplayer battle game *Defense of the Ancients (DotA) 2*.

A few NTP staff worked with him over a few weeks to create the costume for *World of Warcraft (WoW)* expansion with Blizzard Entertainment – an entertainment software company.

The red panda suit was completed but the team had to remake after their client decided that it would look better in black and white. Loads of spray paint were used but it was to no avail. The team finally sewed a new suit from scratch, together with scrap materials to make it look fatter.

Joey mentioned that through this project, he learnt a lot about the usage of fur as it was his first experience with it.

His team's efforts paid off, with the panda cosplay being well-received at the Gaming Entertainment, E-Sports, Exhibition (GE3) in December 2013.

Only with hard work and no procrastination were those results obtained, rather than practice.

"The so-called practice is when you actually make your stuff; so the more you make, the better you get," the seasoned cosplayer explains.



GETTING REAL WITH COSPLAY

Cosplayers make for a lively sight anywhere, but behind pretty faces and lovely wigs lie a tremendous amount of time, money and shamelessness, as **HON LIANG YI** finds out by becoming one of them.

Japanese cosplayer Reika Arikawa shaved part of her hair for cosplay, Malaysian cosplayer Ying Tze played with fire and dived underwater for cosplay while one middle-aged woman stirred a fight with a Singaporean cosplayer over a revealing outfit. Cosplay is visually amazing, but seemingly illogical. Why would someone spend so much time and money to dress up for a day?

To see what is it that keeps cosplayers going, I decided to cosplay as the human version of the Pokémon, Delphox, for the End-of-Year Cosplay Festival 2013 (EOY).



4 WEEKS TO EOY



SKIRT, JACKET, AND SLEEVES

It was my self-proclaimed sewing week with my sewing machine. At first, I worked like Aurora from *Sleeping Beauty* – I cut out a shape of a flare skirt from my cloth, much to my mum's amusement. "It won't even fit you if you cut it this way!" she chided me. Instead, she told me to cut a rectangle, and then fit in an elastic band at the top.

Not as easy as it sounds. Sewing one skirt took me three hours. For the rest of

the outfit, a yellow turtleneck shirt and maroon sleeves, I spent four hours.

They were so badly sewn that after EOY, my mum told me, "When I saw your costume, I thought, 'Is she really going to wear it?' but you were so proud of it that I couldn't say anything!"

Mother certainly knows best, including what to keep to herself.

Money Spent: \$9 (3.5m of maroon cloth and 2m of yellow cloth)
Time: 7 hours



3 WEEKS TO EOY

Ordered a wig from Taobao, and got a secondhand wig from a friend.
Estimated Time of Arrival: 2 weeks



2 WEEKS TO EOY

When I established that I wouldn't be getting the wigs soon, I decided to learn about make-up.

I asked my senior, Li Wenxiao, 22, or Li Hoshiko, for a cosplay make-up lesson.

"Actually, cosplay is all about spamming make-up for the camera," she says while demonstrating a basic cosplay make-up on half of my face.

According to Wenxiao, she spends about an hour putting on make-up for cosplay.

She let me try it on the other side of my face. When I was done with all 11 steps prescribed by her, I asked how I fared.

"8 out of 10," she responds, but then she looked closer. "Wait. You didn't apply mascara! And you put too much eyeliner. How are you going to survive?"

Money Spent: \$20 for assorted make-up materials
Time: 3 hours



MAKE-UP

1 WEEK TO EOY - MAKING EAR HAIR

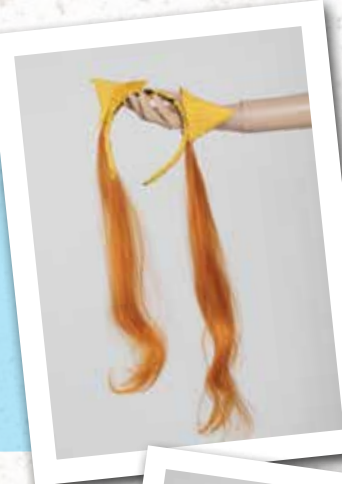
When I finally got hold of my wigs, I worked on the ear hair, which requires halving my orange wig. I texted fellow cosplayer Yang Zheng Di, 19, if that would turn out fine. "No, it may turn out pretty badly," she advises. Instead, she said I should cut the wig up layer by layer.

I wasn't too sure what she meant until I looked at the wig closely. A typical wig is

basically made up of layers of synthetic fibres, sewn to a wig cap. I had to unpick the stitches one by one to separate the layers.

I started at 6pm, and finished at 1.30am. I snapped a photograph of the result and sent it to a friend, who replied by asking what animal I skinned alive.

Money Spent: \$25 for secondhand orange wig
Time: 7 hours to dissect wig and roll into ear hair



3 DAYS TO EOY

EARS AND STICK

I combed my estate for a stick to use as Delphox's weapon. I then used a hair clip to shave off its rough bark. Despite how brutal the process sounds, the stick was smooth to the touch and a perfect prop.

I then began figuring out how to make the Pokémon's ears with my yellow wig. At first, I tried to follow a tutorial on making ears out of hair,

but synthetic fibre tangle so easily that I gave up.

I decided to dig up a pair of pony ears I bought and wrapped some yellow cloth around them. I shoved a roll of orange synthetic hair between the cloth and the ear before gluing them all onto a black headband. It was sloppy, but I was just relieved I was done with the ears.



Money Spent: \$10 for yellow wig
Time: 5 hours to comb and cut wig, 1 hour to glue fabric onto hairband, and 2 hours to find, shave, and trim stick

SHOWTIME!

I invited my cosplayer friends over on the pretense of "helping each other with our costumes" but, as my friends soon found out, it was a ruse to make use of them.

One helped with my wig, because my yellow wig was "too shiny" and had to be visually tamed with baby powder.

The other helped with my make-up, because despite the two-hour tutorial I spent with Wenxiao, I forgot that you couldn't put dry powder when your face was slick with moisturiser.

I changed to my full costume in Marina Bay Sands, before walking to EOY at Marina Barrage.

It was a 15-minute walk, but it almost convinced me to ditch my cosplay plan. When someone breaks the social norm by dressing up outrageously, people make no qualms about staring, laughing, and even pointing at you.

I felt even more out of place at EOY. The cosplayers were amazing – they either had a stunning costume, or so much charisma that cameras clicked every time they stopped walking. All one female cosplayer had to do was to sit down on the floor and seconds later, a horde of photographers formed a semicircle to snap away.

Only five photographers took photos of me, which was remarkably low, so right after an hour I decided to change out and go shopping as a normal convention goer instead.

Despite what I deemed as a cosplay failure, when my friends tagged me in their photos on Facebook, I realised that I actually looked like a very beautiful Delphox-like female.

I seemed to nail everything in the photos, from the serene half-smile to the cute ears.

And at last, I felt a sense of relief, content with the work I put in.

Cosplaying is like that crazy rollercoaster you've heard about from your friends. Riding in it is fun, but sometimes it makes you want to cry from doing all that work.

It may be the process that gets you to your destination, but it is your final product – the photos, the compliments, the 'likes' on Facebook, the adrenaline rush – that compels you to jump on the cosplay rollercoaster all over again.





VINYLLY BACK IN OUR LIVES

LINDSAY CHONG grabs hold of vinyls and turntables as they make a comeback with the latest music.

Free Source Image

The big black discs that brought groovy music and righteous dance moves are making their way back into the mainstream music stratosphere.

Before buying music off iTunes, we had CDs and earlier still, cassette tapes. Then rewind a good 30 years when vinyl enjoyed its heyday from the '50s to the '70s, before cassettes and CDs came into existence.

In the past year, at least three different stores have popped up on the red dot: Hear Records at Burlington Square, Retrophonic Records at Chinatown Plaza, and Vinylicious Records at Parklane Mall.

Unlike digital recordings on CDs, vinyl records are analogue records. Digital recordings are merely pieces of an analogue recording put together.

Therefore, by definition, digital recordings do not contain complete sound waves. This means that the sound vinyl records produce is clearer, sharper, and fuller.

Hear Records owner Nick Tan, 42, compares the differences in digital and analogue recordings to watching a movie.

"Let's say if you're watching a movie like *Lord of the Rings*, would you rather watch it on your iPad, or in an IMAX theatre?" he says.

"That's what listening to a vinyl record

is like. Listening to the digital version seems to me like an injustice to the music."

If you've ever had the immense pleasure of experiencing a live version of "Hotel California" by the Eagles played on vinyl, and listening to the same song played from a computer, you would wholeheartedly agree.

Though vinyl records conjure up the image of rusty old gramophones, they are not for for the old and obsolete.

One should never feel stuck with the Led Zeppelins and the Pink Floyds.

Current major artistes like Lady Gaga and Adele are releasing their brand new albums on vinyl, while others have started with re-issuing old albums.

Last year, Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories* was Hear Records' highest selling record.

With many pop artistes releasing on vinyl now, it piques the interest in young collectors. Mr Tan shares that his youngest customer to date is merely 15 years old.

Nathaniel Tan, 19, who grew up listening to vinyls, own a collection of over 250 vinyl records together with his father.

Most of which are old-school rock and roll music from bands like The Beatles, Queen, and Pink Floyd.

The collection began when Nathaniel's father bought his first record (The Beatles' *Abbey Road*) at a store when he was younger.

Local vinyl stores were in abundance then and records were everywhere.

As technology took over, records became harder to find. The father and son either bought them secondhand from other collectors or ship them over from overseas.

Nathaniel hopes to expand on his father's growing collection, but will never sell for profit. "Music was a big part of both his life and mine," he says. "Therefore the vinyl holds some sentimental value."

Naysayers might argue that the medium doesn't matter when the music is the primary factor, and technical differences should be left to the audiophiles. No doubt in this age of convenience, a substantially sized record could be off-putting.

Mr Tan begs to differ; he strongly feels that the amount of effort it takes to maintain vinyls evokes a stronger sense of physical ownership.

"Nowadays people download music and, with any luck, buy CDs. There is no physical sense of ownership,"

"You could have 3,000 songs from your favourite singer, and not own a single one of his albums."



— the — SOUL OF LETTERPRESS

DEBBIE NG dissects the old craft and uncover the passion inked in youth's hearts.

For a handful of Singaporeans, nothing beats the intoxicating smell of ink and kerosene, soft buttery paper and the crisp sounds of a vintage printing machine.

THE HISTORY

Johannes Gutenberg is said to be the creator of letterpress back in the 15th century and was made to bring books to the common man, but with less manual labour.

Before the letterpress, texts were carved into wooden blocks, smeared with ink and had paper rubbed on them to create impressions.

Letterpress printing is no walk in a park. The intricate process starts with a design in mind.

The design is whisked away for polymer plate making, and then placed snugly in the machine of choice – favourites include a Chandler & Price and a Heidelberg.

Inks are then mixed together meticulously until the perfect hue is achieved. The machine will run only once for each colour.

After the first colour, the machine is cleaned up, before the second colour

is smeared over the ink rollers and the thorough process repeats.

The letterpress method not only sped up production, but also paved the way for rapid dissemination of information and education.

By the 1950s when offset printing took over, letterpress machines were then left in the corner of warehouses and gradually forgotten.

HERE AT HOME

Today, small pockets of young and passionate individuals are picking up the age-old craft again.



Holding on to a rare printing method, some revel in the art of letterpress, where they affirm that they are prepared to commit for a long time.

Jacqueline Goh, 25, or better known as Jackie to her friends, is the director of Fingersmith Letterpress.

Her company dabbles in invitations, business cards, and original works like Christmas cards and coasters, all hand-lettered by Jackie herself.

"It started when I saw a documentary that my lecturer showed us in second year, about letterpress in England," she recalls.

"I liked the idea of slowing down, [and] just getting in touch with craft[ing]."

Upon graduation in 2012, she flew to Australia to learn more about the art.

The LASALLE graduate stayed above a pub in the countryside for three weeks to pick up all she could of the trade, before returning home and acquiring her first letterpress machine, the Heidelberg Windmill.

The metal beast, which cost her a few thousand dollars, now sits comfortably in her studio, located in her backyard.

When asked if she could rely on this business as her only source of income,

she admits, "I teach kids how to paint, and it funds [Fingersmith Letterpress]. You won't really get rich doing this, but it's more like [a way] to keep me sane, instead of doing a nine to five job."

Ian Koo, 34, and Corby Tan, 32, a couple who runs a full-fledged print house called PapyPress, agree.

"To run an entire company based on letterpress, at this point of time, [it's not possible]. Singapore's market is too small – it's not like [in USA] where they can sell from one state, to the next and so on."

What drives Ian forward despite the elbow grease required is steeped in his family's history.

Ian's grandfather passed the printing business to his father 25 years ago, who left it in his hands in 2010.

"Before I could even walk, I was already smelling inks and had paper all around me," he relates.

Fortunately for PapyPress, the print house offers other commercial printing services like offset printing, digital printing and foil stamping.

This helps to keep the business afloat, allowing Ian and Corby to continue their love affair with letterpress.

MODERN TIMES

A signature element of a modern letterpress piece is the indentation left on the paper. Running your fingers along the impressions made on freshly printed cards is like no other; the textured typography can never be replicated by inkjet printers at home.

Ironically, this was not a feature when letterpress was the only form of printing back in the 1400s.

"This 'impression' originated at a later stage. Letterpress used to be more about kissing the paper," Ian says.

Back then, if there were any indentations made at all, you would be considered an inadequate printer.

Emily Loke, 28, who runs a five-year-old letterpress company called Paper Tiger Press, specialises in creating wedding invitations and stationery.

Instead of letting pressure swallow her, she embraces with unrelenting vigour.

"It's a grueling but simple philosophy," Emily explains.

"If you're prepared to work hard to make your clients happy, there's never the stress of worrying [that] your clients will be unhappy,"

“ Before I could even walk, I was already smelling inks and had paper all around me

- Ian Koo, PapyPress

When the need arises, Emily willingly puts sleep behind her and always prepares to work through the night and even over the weekends.

Afraid that courtesy has gone out the window with 'Thank You' text messages and Facebook wedding invitations, Emily explains her worries.

"I worry that as a society, we're losing touch with the physical aspect of social interaction and with it, our manners," she says.

"What I love about letterpress is that it's so humanising," Emily adds.

"For me, [letterpress] will always be about spreading the delight we all feel when we find a card in our mailbox."





Clackety-Clack is Back

PARVEEN MAGHERA unravels the beauty and the reviving trend of these ancient typing machines.

A “bumbling sucker for nostalgia”, Xiangyun Lim, 23, already love typewriters before purchasing her own from the Thieves Market at Sungei Buloh. Her “dirty, dubious and rusty” Columbia 300 has since then become one of her precious possessions.

“Being able to polish the frame, hear each key’s metallic imprint of ink and dye my skin black and red when I change the ink ribbon just led to me falling in love with it irrevocably,” Xiangyun shares.

Before the advent of computers and laptops, people like professors, writers and journalists slammed away on the key tops of their Smith Coronas and Olivettis while the clackety-clack of the keys complemented their writing experience altogether.

Typewriters were a forgotten piece in the ‘90s when computers gained popularity. But thankfully, the younger generation is welcoming back these fragments from the past.

Rebecca Wong, 37, works in a publishing firm and runs By My Old School, a vintage collection store, with her father.

She observes that mostly young people between 20 to 30 years of age were coming into the store to view or purchase the typewriters.

“It’s the whole romance of having a typewriter. It’s something they didn’t grow up with,” Rebecca says.

“There is [also] this whole interest in handmade and crafts, especially with the younger generation going back to

crafts and working with their hands. It’s the big interest of nostalgia after all!” she adds.

Rebecca adds how parents are part of developing the interest of typewriters among teens.

“There are young teens who come down with their parents and it’s always nice to see parents telling them how to use the typewriters, what this button or that key is for,” she says.

“Some teenagers asked us what to do when a ribbon runs out and we’re like ‘just reload it!’ It’s just the different generation,” explains Rebecca.

Jason Chong, 35, collector and owner of Vintage Empire, also noticed the similar interest for typewriters among the youths.

“I also see more younger visitors who express great fascination and attraction to these old but novel machines,” Jason said.

Jason loves language and reading. Hence he was intrigued with typewriters when he saw them displayed in museums and films. To him, writing poems with a typewriter was something “whimsical”.

After buying his first typewriter, Jason began researching on these ancient writing machines and since then, his obsession never ceased.

“Like [the youths], typewriters were not part of my ‘personal history’,” Jason said. “Films like *The Great Gatsby* and *Populaire* romanticised the typewriter. Many of us start with one

Need a typewriter?
Locate it at:

By My Old School
Blk 16, Normanton Park
#01-169F
Website: www.bymyoldschool.wordpress.com
Email: bymyoldschool@gmail.com

Vintage Empire
Blk 77, Marine Drive
#18-46
Singapore 440077
Website: www.facebook.com/J190178

typewriter and in typical Singaporean 'kiasu' fashion, the collection grows exponentially!"

The aesthetic result of typewritten materials is also the reason why typewriters are still sought after today.

Typing at constant pressure results in a nice and uniformed ink impression while sporadic typing will show an uneven impression.

"The more pressure you put on the keys, the ink impression would be different," Rebecca says. "That's the charm of it. Every piece of writing that you do is different."

Xiangyun adds that typewritten words on paper are unique and beautiful, and are "instantly recognisable".

Unlike the laptops and computers that come with multiple functions, the typewriter's sole purpose of printing words on paper have allowed writers to focus on their work.

"The typewriter makes writing a more deliberate experience because typing is not as easy as the computer keyboard," shares Zhu Qing Olivia, 23, a medical student from National University of Singapore.

"You have to make a concerted effort to see where you place your fingers and this makes writing slower but thoughtful," Olivia adds.

"You can't just backspace if you make a mistake," Olivia says. "You will have to think [of] what you want to say before you type," she explains.

Typewriters might not completely replace computers. But, Xiangyun and Olivia welcome this marvellous antique into their lives by typewriting letters, labels and quotes, or simply writing with it for leisure.

"There's a rhythm and tempo to your writing with the typing sounds," Olivia says. "It's... quite romantic in the way it's being used like in the old days."

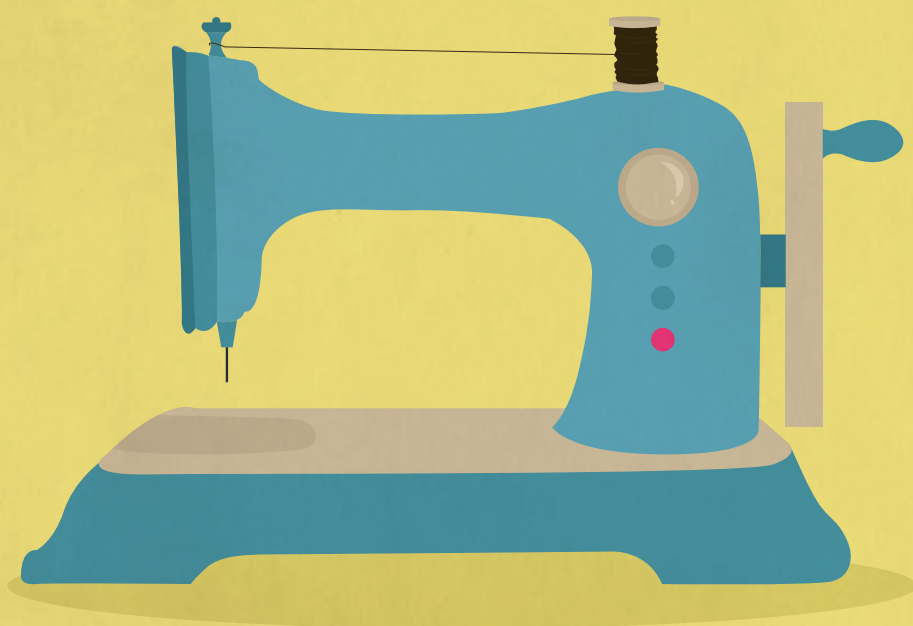
"It's always a fascination to watch the metal type bars strike the ribbon and print on the page instantaneously," Jason added. "If you haven't already tried using a manual typewriter, I strongly urge you to!"

Fast Facts of Typewriters:

- + In 1714, Henry Mills created and patented an artificial writing machine similar to a typewriter.
- + In 1870, Danish inventor Rasmus Malling-Hansen created the first typewriter called Hansen Writing Ball. Only 180 machines were sold.
- + In 1874, the first modern typewriter emerged.
- + The Sholes & Glidden Type Writer was designed by Christopher Latham Sholes alongside Samuel Willard Soule and Carlos Glidden.
- + The typewriter only typed in capital letters.
- + Initially the keyboard was designed in an alphabetical order. Commonly used combination of letters like S,T and E,F were positioned close together that resulted in the keys jamming up.
- + The QWERTY keyboard was introduced to ensure that the letters were separated and the keys wouldn't jam up.
- + "Typewriter" can be spelt out using the top row of alphabets on the QWERTY keyboard.

Source:
www.todayifoundout.com





FASHION



STRUTTING *the* WORLD'S RUNWAYS

AUDREY KANG speaks to young local designers who have made their mark at overseas fashion weeks.



RÉVASSEUR

"Fashion is one of the most exhausting things I've ever done," says Gilda Su, 30, owner of local brand Révasseur.

Having showcased at Seoul Fashion Week in 2013, as well as having one of her pioneer collections displayed at New York's Saks Fifth Avenue, Ms Su's label is now stocked in five countries, including USA, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia.

The then-Junior College student faced opposition from her parents.

"They kept telling me not to do [fashion], and it took a long time for me to convince them," she says.

After her parents sent her to Bunka Fashion College in Japan, she then headed to New York City to study at Parsons the New School of Design.

While on an unpaid internship during her studies, she entered and won a competition and had her first fashion show at New York Fashion Week 2010.

Ms Su then returned and took part in a local fashion tradeshow.

"Putting together a collection costs at least \$10,000. Not to mention flights, meals when we showcase overseas," she says, grimacing slightly as she recalls the accumulated debt.

Ms Su is planning on starting a new concept shop, SUPERSPACE, in Orchard Gateway in April this year.

MILS

Among local designers who have showcases abroad, Sunny Lim, 25, is one of the youngest.

His brand, MILS, has been invited to take part in the 2012 Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in Sydney, Australia.

His designs are now sold in Indonesia, Japan, Australia and London.

"One of the most challenging [things] about being in fashion at this age is really having to be taken seriously," Sunny admits.

"I always did well in school, but in secondary school when I told my parents I wanted to do arts, it didn't sit well with them," he says.

Sunny studied Graphic Design at Laselle College of the Arts, but switched to Fashion Design after guidance from his lecturer and his parents saw his determination.

Starting a label in a country where fashion isn't as prominent, Sunny says trying to sustain his business in Singapore has its challenges too.

His brand, located at Temporium in Little India, has a strong following in Japan where he says they are more willing to spend on outerwear during autumn and winter.

Since his debut at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in Australia, MILS have also taken to the runway in Seoul.

COUPÉ-COUSU

Alex Yeo and Xie Shangqian, both 29 and with no experience in fashion, started Coupé-Cousu five years ago.

One accountant and the other a business degree holder, formed the brand as they couldn't find affordable clothes they wanted to wear.

Mr Xie says, "Clothes for men in Singapore [were] mostly cheap and tacky, boring straight-laced work wear, or really nice but crazy-expensive designer labels."

That was when they wanted to fill the gap in the market with an affordable but well-designed menswear label.

"It was very trying at times and we stumbled quite a bit with no prior experience in both fashion and running a business," says Mr Xie, "[We were mistaken] that fashion is about expensive photo-shoots, expensive look books and flashy runway shows."

Located in Tannery Lane, it took them more than a year before they were given recognition both locally and abroad. Since then, they have been featured in Taiwan, Japan and Korea.

Despite what many say about the local fashion industry, the designers are determined in pursuing their dreams.

The hard work and challenges these youths face were a hurdle in their journey to success, but their passion and love far outweighs these obstacles.

an · drog · y · nous

{an 'dräjənəs}

Having characteristics of both male and female.
Neither specifically feminine nor masculine.
Suitable for either sex.

Gender equality has been fought for with much fervour
in recent years. **AUDREY KANG** and **DEBBIE NG** show
you just how flexible fashion is when it comes to
traditional gender-aligned looks.

PHOTOGRAPHY KLIX
PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT KIAT TAN WEI JIE
STYLING AND TEXT AUDREY KANG, DEBBIE NG
HAIR AND MAKE UP ANNA ELIZABETH ISIP
MODELS CHARMAINE LOW, DEREK ONG

ON DEREK:
RÉVASSEUR WHITE TOP, \$109. **COUPÉ-COUSU** SLIM-FIT NAVY
PATCHWORK TROUSERS, \$359.

ON CHARMAINE:
MAX.TAN COLLARED BUSTIER HANDKERCHIEF DRESS, US\$225.





The swinging '60s abolished the corsets and feminine silhouette, and saw the rise of 'hippie' fashion – men growing their hair longer, and both genders wearing largely similar bell-bottom jeans and shirts.

Instead of classic styles, androgynous fashion has been gaining steam steadily with its cutting edges and ironic sense of aesthetics.

Brands such as Victoria Beckham and DAKS have been incorporating hallmarks of men's fashion in their women's collection, and vice versa.

Ladies:

Pair two toned shirt with suspender shorts and a pair of shiny metallic and burgundy oxfords, this outfit makes you look good without even trying.

Gents:

Forget the black, grey and navy that everyone seems to love – the baby blue, v-neck shirt tells people that you're not afraid of breaking the stereotypical colour choices.

ON DEREK:

SUNDAYS URBAN DECAY SHIRT IN SKY, \$119. **MR.HOWARD** PASTEL PINK TROUSERS, \$389. CONVERSE BLACK HIGH CUT SNEAKERS, STYLIST'S OWN.

ON CHARMAINE:

COUPÉ-COUSU BOKEH PRINT T-SHIRT, \$89. **EPISENE** SUSPENDER SHORTS, \$99. **CHARLES AND KEITH** METALLIC BURGUNDY BROGUES, \$49.90. GOLD NECKLACE, STYLIST'S OWN.





ON DEREK & CHARMAINE:
MAX.TAN MONOCHROME CAFTAN
 SHIRT, US\$179. **MR.HOWARD**
 REFORM SHORTS, \$248. **CHARLES**
 & **KEITH** MONOCHROME PUMPS,
 \$56.90. **STAR WARS X ADIDAS**
 ORIGINALS BOBA FETT SNEAKERS,
 PHOTOGRAPHER'S OWN.



ON CHARMAINE & DEREK:
COUPÉ-COUSU BLACK BLAZER, \$899.
COUPÉ-COUSU BOKEH PRINT T-SHIRT,
 \$89. **CHARLES AND KEITH** METALLIC
 BURGUNDY BROGUES, \$49.90.
EPISENE SUSPENDER SHORTS, \$99.
 GOLD NECKLACE, STYLIST'S OWN.
REEBOK CITY CLASSICS PHILADELPHIA
 SNEAKERS, PHOTOGRAPHER'S OWN.





ON DEREK: **MR.HOWARD** FLANNEL SWEATER, \$248.
RÉVASSEUR DOG QUILT PRINT LEGGINGS, \$99. **CHARLES & KEITH** FOLD OVER CLUTCH IN BURGUNDY, \$69.90. **JEFFREY CAMPBELL** LYKKE LI SHOE, STYLIST'S OWN. **DOC MARTENS** X **RAF SIMONS** MONK SHOE, MODEL'S OWN.

ON CHARMAINE: **MAX.TAN** DECONSTRUCTED TOGA SHIRT DRESS, USD\$215. WATCH, PHOTOGRAPHER'S OWN.

Ladies:

A grey button-up shirt typically screams boring middle-aged male accountant, but when adorned by a lady with a plum lip and minimal accessories, the result is a part classy, part spontaneous get-up that will turn heads.

Gents:

Slink into these comfy, stretchy tights and you'll (secretly) never want to take them off. A long, draping sweater balances out the spandex, and flannel restores a smidgen of testosterone.

an·drog·y·nous

{an'drəjənəs}

ON DEREK: **YOUYOU** FLAP FRONT TRENCH DRESS, \$75. **RÉVASSEUR** ADOPT CAT T-SHIRT, \$109. **SUNDAYS** OLIVE GREEN SHORTS, \$89. PURPLE SUEDE SHOES, PHOTOGRAPHER'S OWN.

ON CHARMAINE: **MR.HOWARD** GERAR PRINT UTILITY JACKET, \$319. **COUPÉ-COUSU** NAVY SHORTS, \$159. BLACK T-SHIRT, MODEL'S OWN. FELT HAT, STYLIST'S OWN. HIGH-CUT LEATHER SNEAKERS, STYLIST'S OWN.



Ladies:

To make up for the rebellious phase you never grew into, play up the adolescent troublemaker guise with messy bangs, an oversized patterned jacket and leather kicks. A pair of tailored shorts maintains a boyish, more-classy-than-crass aura that Mum would approve of.

Gents:

The shirt and shorts combination remains to be a man's reliable option, but when paired with a clean, flared trench coat, it exudes a softer, less domineering feel than a box-standard blazer. Women love themselves a tender, emotive guy, don't they?

ON JUSTIN: **RÉVASSEUR** HOT AIR BALLOON DOGS TEE, \$109. **CAROUSEL** HAREM PANTS, \$139. **DEPRESSION** CLOUDS NECKLACE, \$45. GREEN STUDDED RING, \$15. ORANGE STUDDED RING, \$15. **PEDRO** FREDERIC SAI X PEDRO ZIPPER DRESS SHOES, \$149. SHADES, STYLIST'S OWN.



AT GLORY'S EDGE

STYLING & TEXT: CHIN ZEI KEI & THEODORE WOON

ART DIRECTION: THEODORE WOON

HAIR & MAKE-UP: MUFÉ

MODELS: CHERIE NG, JUSTIN TAN & TRICIA TAN

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOLIE GOH

CHIN ZEI KEI and THEODORE WOON navigate the local fashion scene to showcase Singaporeans designers on the edge of greatness.

As Heidi Klum famously said on Project Runway, "In fashion, one day you're in and the next, you're out."

Endurance, passion and talent are definitely a pre-requisite for the arduous journey to the top.

Rather than looking overseas for avant-garde design, why not look locally, where the fashion scene is bustling.

Although consumer support is sporadic in Singapore, our fashion industry has embraced local designers consistently.

With spots in multiple Singapore fashion weeks like Audi Fashion Festival and Digital Fashion Week, these young talents are highly exposed to industry professionals.

However, even with all the media attention, it's not easy to gain access to these local designers and brands.

Spring/Summer is the season where colours rule the runway with vibrant designs of our homegrown talent.

Reflective of this geographical and palette advantage, Singaporean designers focus their creativity on creating stunningly unique prints, like the nature-inspired ones from L'île aux Ashby, and impossibly bright colours from Rêvasseur.

Silhouettes like Kae Hana's bodylicious pencil skirts and crop tops, as well as Depression's free-spirited unicorns, shows our stable of local talents seamlessly.

Incorporating the essence of youth, their collections are no doubt bursting with a dream-like positivity.

Keeping the temperamental local weather in mind, the clothes range from light with maximum breathability to snug and warm, as for the eccentric bouts of heavy downpour and impossibly warm days.

There is little that encapsulates youth and its promise of hope better than an explosion of these kaleidoscopic collections on the skater boys – fearless in their domination of gravity-defying stunts.

Not forgetting the quirky girls, who are unafraid of bold expressions and a little experimentation.

Look sophisticated and edgy while injecting fun with colours and an owl print on the top. For the strong independent woman, this metallic pink ensemble is for you.



ON CHERIE: **L'ILE AUX ASHBY** METALLIC OWL TOP, \$253. METALLIC PINK SKIRT, \$329. **PEDRO L'ILE** AUX ASHBY X PEDRO GREEN GEOMETRIC BAG, \$83. SOCKS & SHOES, STYLIST'S OWN.



Look fun and sexy in this striking mask-inspired printed crop top, paired with a matching pencil skirt from Kae Hana without showing off too much skin.

ON TRICIA: **KAЕ HANA** MASK CROP TOP, \$99. MASK SKIRT, \$179. **PEDRO** L'ILE AUX ASHBY X PEDRO FUCHSIA GEOMETRIC BAG, \$83. **FOREWORD** SOLID BLUE FERRIS NECKLACE, \$159.

ON JUSTIN: **EVENODD** RED & WHITE PULLOVER, \$129.
DEPRESSION BLUE MESH BERMUDAS, \$79. CAP,
SOCKS & SHOES, STYLISTS' OWN.



Colour blocking is not reserved for the ladies. Guys, stop playing it safe and inject some colours in your wardrobe with a red and white pullover as well a pair of blue mesh shorts.



Unicorns on a lady paired with neon pink horned hi-cuts make the outfit pop while a statement necklace and metallic dumpling clutch sparkle with whimsical goodness.

ON TRICIA: **DEPRESSION** BAT-SLEEVED UNICORN BLOUSE (WORN AS DRESS), \$99. PINK HORNED HI-CUT CREEPERS, \$165. **FOREWORD** TRIO NECKLACE, \$139. **YESAH!** PINK DUMPLING CLUTCH, \$52.



Who says unicorns are reserved for women? Live on the edge with this ensemble of matching unicorn shirt, kilt shorts and leggings.

ON JUSTIN: **DEPRESSION** ASYMMETRICAL UNICORN SHIRT, \$99. UNICORN LAYERED KILT SHORTS, \$95. UNICORN LEGGINGS, \$45. SHOES, MODEL'S OWN.



Look like a million bucks with this fun and chic two-piece from L'île Aux Ashby by Rayson Tan. There's only one way to describe this get up: Prada-esque Parisian chic.

ON CHERIE: **L'ÎLE AUX ASHBY** GEOMETRICAL SWEAT TOP, \$234. GEOMETRICAL SKIRT, \$212. **DEPRESSION** OPTICAL ILLUSION BLOCK HEELS, \$185. SOCKS, SCARF (WORN ON THE HEAD) & SHADES, STYLIST'S OWN.



SHOP

MINC

Let **PARVEEN MAGHERA** guide you through the best way to touch your partner's heart with creativity, innovation and bubbles of love.

"A gift that you took time and effort to make based on his or her personality and preferences speaks better than a gift off the shelves," says Aisah Dalduri, 22, co-founder and creative director of Fictive Fingers (handmade textile and design label company), and co-founder of the Handmade Movement Singapore.

HYPE surveyed 100 youths aged 18 to 24, of which, 61 per cent feels that chocolates are too common and 40 per cent would appreciate a handmade gift that's personalised to the receiver.

Priyanka Gupta Sarvaiya, 26, is an avid quiller and conducts quilling workshops locally. She is also the founder of Just Love Crafts.

"I always tell my students that even if [you've] never held a [pair of scissors] in your life, I can still teach you how to quill," she says.

Quilling, or paper filigree, is relatively easy and an inexpensive craft that uses strips of paper, a twirling tool and glue.

We're ready to get crafty with quilling!



BASIC QUILLING



1. Cut thin strips of paper of width not more than 3 - 4 mm and paper thickness of not more than 120 gsm.
2. A slotted quilling tool is useful because of the slotted compartment. However, you can also create one with a toothpick.
3. Take a toothpick and cut a slit on one of its ends. Cut off the pointy edges to prevent them from poking into your skin.
4. Fit a paper strip through the slit in the tool/toothpick. Start twirling the strip to make a coil. The fingers should prevent the coil from slipping off the toothpick and going out of shape.
5. Take the coiled strip off the slotted quilling tool/toothpick slowly and place it in one of the circles of the template. The strip will uncoil to the circumference of the circle.
6. Once satisfied with the size of the coil, use a toothpick to apply glue to the end of the strip to maintain the shape. Pinch one end of the coil to make a teardrop motif.

PHOTO FRAME

Materials needed:

Coloured paper, scissors, glue, toothpicks, aluminium cake base, crepe paper, tweezers, clear plastic, photograph.



①

Use an aluminium cake base of any shape and wrap it with crepe paper of your desired colour.



②

Glue your photo to a piece of cardboard and wrap with a clear plastic to protect the photo. Next, glue the photo to the wrapped cake base.



③

Pinch one end of the coil to make a teardrop motif. REFER TO BASIC QUILLING. To make a heart motif, glue two teardrop motifs together at the sides.



④

To make a double swirl motif, twirl one end of a strip half way and twirl the other end in the opposite way.



⑤

Use a pair of tweezers to position your motifs on the frame. Apply some glue on a toothpick to dap one side of the motif. Use the tweezers to place the motif back to where it was arranged.



⑥

To make your teardrop motif denser, simply glue two strips together and twirl. You can also make a multi-coloured teardrop by gluing two strips of different colours together.

PERSONALISED GIFT BOX

Materials needed:

Coloured paper, scissors, glue, gift box, paper, tweezers, pins, Styrofoam/cushion.



①

Take a cover of your gift box and place a paper on it. Draw a heart that fits within the dimensions of the cover.



②

Place the paper on a cushion or Styrofoam. Insert pins along the drawing but not completely into the cushion or Styrofoam.



③

Cut a strip of paper and curve it around the pins to form a heart shape. Glue the ends together. Use fingers to gently dap glue on top of the paper.



④

Take the box cover and place the top part down on the heart shape. Press gently. Let the glue dry for 5 minutes before you lift the cover and turn over.



⑤

Use another paper or a toothpick to remove excess glue that may have seeped out.



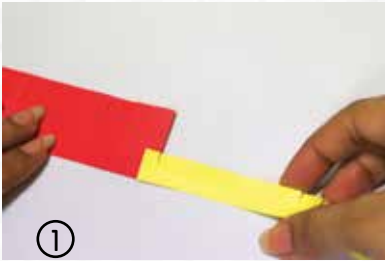
⑥

Create a variety of motifs: teardrop motifs, leaf motifs, heart motifs, and double swirl motifs. Arrange and glue them within the heart shape.

MINI FLOWER VASE

Materials needed:

Coloured paper, scissors, glue, ruler, slotted quilling tool/toothpicks, office clip, candleholder, clay, wire ties.



FRINGE FLOWER MOTIF

1. Cut a strip of red coloured paper with width of about 25 - 30mm. Cut the paper into fringes of about 2 - 3mm. Repeat for a strip of yellow coloured paper with a width of 10mm. Glue the two strips together at their ends.
2. Use the slotted quilling tool/ toothpick to twirl the strips. Apply glue consistently to ensure the strips are in place. Apply glue at the end of the coil as well.
3. Open the fringed strips outwards and you have a quilled flower.
4. Take one wire tie and apply some glue at the top. Insert it into the bottom of the flower.

TEARDROP FLOWER MOTIF

5. Glue six teardrop motifs together, with alternating colours to form a flower motif. REFER TO BASIC QUILLING.
6. Once done, turn over and gently bend the motif inwards. Be sure to let the glue dry for 5 minutes afterwards.
7. Create a tight coil and insert a wire tie in, and secure it with a knot.
8. Next, glue the coil into the centre of the motif at the back.



9. Cut a strip of paper and curve it around the pins to form a heart shape. Glue the ends together. Use fingers to gently dap glue on top of the paper.
10. Wrap the bottom of the wire ties with clay. Pour some glue in the centre of a candleholder. Secure the clay on glue and leave dry for 5 minutes.
11. Meanwhile, make green coils to create leaf motifs by pinching on both ends. They can come in different sizes.
12. Drop the leaf motifs into the holder. To further decorate the vase, create a few tight coils and glue them to the base of the vase.

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In this nostalgia-themed issue of **HYPE**, we scour for the best vintage threads in Singapore's vintage boutiques that will make you swoon. And for anyone who's averse about wearing secondhand clothes, we've also sourced for vintage-inspired outfits, so that those timeless rad style will still be achievable for you.

INSPIRED



SACHEL BAG
FürMUSE \$39

VINTAGE



RED WING BOOTS
Tuckshop & Sundry Supplies \$800

VINTAGE



SQUARE CLIP-ON EARRINGS
Granny's Day Out \$99

INSPIRED



CLUB MASTER SUNGLASSES
FürMUSE \$59

// Accessories

Add a touch of old-school charm to any outfit with our eclectic mix of pearly wristlets and jewelled clip-ons for the ladies, as well as dapper bowties and pristine silk pocket squares for the gents.

// Shoes

Make a statement with a pair of old leather kicks. Court pumps designed with intricate detail and classic vintage Red Wings emulate an allure that is hard to find in modern-day footwear.

// Bags

Ditch the heavy backpacks and burdensome handbags for a light, cross-body that will be perfect for a leisurely weekend stroll or a casual meal.

VINTAGE



GUESS BLACK-RED SHOES
Dustbunny Vintage \$95

VINTAGE



RED - WHITE NECKLACE
Dustbunny Vintage \$15

VINTAGE



LIZ CLAIBORNE GREEN BAG
Granny's Day Out \$99

INSPIRED



SHORT NECKLACE WITH
GREEN FLOWERS

Flea & Trees \$89

VINTAGE



WHITE CLUTCH WITH STRAP

Flea & Trees \$45

VINTAGE



MULTICOLORED FLORAL
CLIP-ON EARRINGS

Dustbunny Vintage \$38

INSPIRED



BOW TIES

FürrMUSE \$29 each

INSPIRED



DAISY STUDS
JEWELLED DROP EARRINGS

Flea & Trees \$45 & \$55

INSPIRED



BLACK CAPTOE DERBY SHOES

Zappier Leather \$20

INSPIRED



CHUNKY PEARL BRACELET

Flea & Trees \$69

VINTAGE



BROWN GIAN MARCO VENTURI SHOES

Granny's Day Out \$109

VINTAGE



HERMÈS POCKET SQUARE
GIANNI VERSACE POCKET SQUARE

Dustbunny Vintage \$109 & \$65

VINTAGE



YELLOW-WHITE STRIPED SHIRT
Dustbunny Vintage \$75

VINTAGE



SEPIA CARS AND TREES SHIRT
Lunakins \$25

VINTAGE



MONTAGUT TOP
Granny's Day Out \$49

INSPIRED



SMITH PANTS (ORANGE)
FürrMUSE \$79

//Tops

From coral, girly knits to tacky-chic, palm tree-printed oversized shirts, these tops scream "LOOK AT ME!" in the most tasteful and classy fashion.

//Bottoms

We've thrown in a few colour block and floral skirts in the brightest of shades for the quirky and elegant girl in you, and some classic chinos and 70s denims for the guys who like to keep it simple.

//Dresses

A cute sweater dress and sophisticated emerald peplum to take you from girls' day out to swanky dinner date.

//Outerwear

Throw on a World War II bomber jacket or an Ironheart shirt for some vintage head-turning sexiness.

VINTAGE



BEACHES AND PIN-UP GIRLS SHIRT
Lunakins \$25

VINTAGE



'70s JEANS
Tuckshop & Sundry Supplies \$300

INSPIRED



BEIGE BLAZER
FürrMUSE \$129

VINTAGE



WWII BOMBER JACKET
Tuckshop & Sundry Supplies \$1,000

VINTAGE



'80s FLOATY PINK SKIRT
Granny's Day Out \$69

VINTAGE



WAGONS AND TREES SHIRT
Lunakins \$25

VINTAGE



'70s GREEN PEPLUM DRESS
Granny's Day Out \$129

INSPIRED



SMITH PANTS (YELLOW)
FürrMUSE \$79





Art of the Spoken Word



The local spoken poetry scene has been quietly forming up gradually. **DEBBIE NG** seeks the speakers out.

He shuffles onto the small bar stage with crumpled papers shaking fervently in his hands. Managing a meek smile as he looks down at the intimate crowd, he takes a final glimpse at his poem, the words on his wrinkled script blurs due to pent up adrenaline.

He accidentally taps the microphone a little too loudly and curses silently at his clumsiness. As he clears his throat and begins to recite, words flow out smoothly like nerves were never there in the first place.

Spoken word poetry refers to poems that are performed for an audience, where the poets surface from beneath their black and white text to deliver passionate verbal masterpieces.

Marc Smith, a construction worker in Chicago, started an open mic night in 1984 and trudged on despite criticism from traditional poets.

He went on to create the poetry slam format, a competition where poets perform their works and are then rated by members of the audience.

With globalisation, it's not that hard to find local poets performing their hearts out on our sunny little island.

Today in Singapore, monthly poetry slams are held at BluJaz Café.

Organised by Word Forward, a nonprofit literary arts company, slams have been around since 2003 but have only picked up in recent years.

"It's becoming super popular," says Deborah Emmanuel, 26, a seasoned local poet who has devoted her time to shaping up the local poetry scene.

"We're filled up for the poetry slam within 12 hours. [In the past], you had to dig people out of the ground to participate," she adds.

Deborah had previously worked with Word Forward as an associate artist, where she managed spoken word events and brought spoken word into the classrooms.

Monthly poetry collectives have been popping up around town, where poets – seasoned or new – perform original works for anyone who swings by.

Pooja Nansi, 32, an educator who has two poetry collections under her name, runs one of them called Speakeasy.

When curating the selection of poets, she tries to maintain a healthy balance of new and old.

"I try to feature people who are up and coming. I think it's important to give young writers a space," says Pooja.

"I also try to feature them with very established poets... I think it's good for both sides to see new work and also learn from old work," she adds.

The open mic feature allows younger poets to jump the gun and share even their most vulnerable works to a room full of strangers.

Werner Kho, 20, a student, recently performed his works for the first time at Poetry Slam.

"I was totally nervous!" he recalls.

"Public speaking is not my forte and performing my own piece made it even more nerve-wrecking," Werner adds.

Poetry means a lot more than slamming a bunch of profound words together and making them rhyme.

"I consider spoken word poetry to be a craft that needs the marriage of performative subtlety and emotional or conceptual depth," says Benjamin Chow, 24, an acting student at Lasalle.

He first picked up poetry in primary school, and then spoken word in 2007.

His passion made him a co-founder of an open mic session, Sound Up.

"Although it doesn't make me any money, it's still one of the many forms of artistic expression that adds value to my work as a writer and as an actor."

Catch Them In Action

If you're intrigued by the ways of spoken word, here are four main monthly poetry collectives in Singapore you can attend.

SPEAK.

Home Club
20 Upper Circular Road
Free entry

Speakeasy

Artistry Café
17 Jalan Pinang
Free entry

destination: INK

BluJaz Café
12 Bali Lane
\$4 at the door

Poetry Slam

BluJaz Café
12 Bali Lane
\$5 at the door

THE FRENCH MAKING A Scene

Will the alluring charm of France mix well with our local theatrical slapsticks? **PHOEBE LOW** finds out.

Photo courtesy of Anne Valluy



I'm sure you've heard of Hossan Leong, the local entertainer who has won over hearts for his knack in comedy.

Off-screen, Hossan, 45, is known for his presence in Singapore's French theatre scene and belongs to a bevy of local stage actors, like George Chan and Robin Goh, who acts in such French-inspired theatre productions.

Hossan's fluency in French (which was so good that he was awarded the Francophone Ambassador Award in 2006) allowed him to debut in a 2007 joint production between Alliance Française and Sing'theatre – the remarkable *No Regrets, A Tribute to Edith Piaf*.

He then continued on to perform in the wildly popular *A Singaporean in Paris* to a 5,000-strong audience.

"Learning French has really opened up a world for me, and really broadened my horizons. And therefore being an artist, doing a French-inspired show... makes it more personal for me," says Hossan.

In late 2013, he starred in *A French Kiss in Singapore* – a theatre production by Sing'theatre.

The founder of Sing'theatre, Nathalie Ribette, 50, relocated from France to Singapore in 2006. The production house focuses on staging performances that draw on the rich French cultural heritage. It's known for productions like *A Singaporean in Paris* (2010) and *8 Women* (2013).

According to Ribette, *8 Women* was one of the few localised productions which featured a Singaporean family.

A French Kiss in Singapore, on the other hand, was more skewed to the French culture, by focusing on the craft of France's most beloved contemporary songwriters and performers. Hence some songs were performed in French.

"France seems to have a special place in the collective imagination; it stands for elegance, quality and established traditions," says Sabrina Zuber, 46, founder and director

of Bellepoque, on the growing attraction for these French-inspired productions.

"French culture – be it theatre, music, ballet, or gastronomy and fashion – has long been a reference both in Europe and worldwide," she explains.

Like Ribette, Zuber also moved to the little red dot to achieve her dream of connecting European and Asian cultures.

"So far I have been producing shows where the script is in English while the songs are sung in French," says Zuber.

"I need to give time to the audience to get familiar with our culture and with our way of doing theatre. Establish a bridge and then build up step by step," she adds.

Indeed, the humour between French and Singapore productions differ as well.

"[Our humour is] a very wide spectrum," Hossan says.

"We've got the slip-of-the-banana-peel laugh, bang-wall laugh, and we've got the 'Phua Chu Kang' kind of humour, Jack Neo's kind of humour, to Mr Brown's kind of humour, very sarcastic, ironic, satire," he explains.

"The French people... their kind of humour is very satirical. They like to play with words, they like to make you think," he adds.

Perhaps French-inspired theatre will soon find a niche in Singapore's theatre scene.

For now, bonne chance (good luck)!

Here are some upcoming productions to check out!

A Singaporean In Paris : Mar 11 – 23
Cardboard : Mar 20 – 22
Dangerous Liaisons : May 28 – 31
A Family : Sept 24 – 27
Learned Women : Nov 20 – 22

DIY AUTHORS RISING



In the world of high-cost publishing, rejections are the order of the day. **BENEDICTA J. FOO** talks to aspiring authors who choose self-publishing to make their voices heard.

Picture this: You have written the next bestseller, and you swear your romance novel will sell better than Nicholas Sparks and Cecelia Ahern combined. You wonder if it will see the light of day and a single thought creeps into your mind – self-publishing.

“When people hear that someone is self-published, people tend to imagine a writer who can’t get a publishing deal. That is why being self-published carries a somewhat negative connotation,” says Eliza Teoh, 42.

But increasingly, even established writers are getting their own works self-published,” she adds.

The author of *Ellie Belly* also pointed out, “All the local fiction out there was either horror or *Mr. Midnight* – which is fine, but that shouldn’t be the totality of Singapore fiction”.

Ms Teoh, who has worked at *The Straits Times* and *TODAY*, ditched journalism to set up her own publishing company called Bubbly Books. Inspired by her bubbly daughter, she created a series of *Ellie Belly* books.

The protagonist Ellie Belly is a seven-year-old with a curiosity that often leads her to trouble. Since its launch in 2011, 45,000 copies of the books have been sold.

Euginia Tan, 23, has self-published two collections of poetry books – *Songs about Girls* and *Playing Pretty*.

She laments on the misconception – “if you self-publish, you have no talent or credibility”.

Instead of sending copies of manuscripts to publishers, self-

publishers tend to complex processes of editing, designing of book cover, finding printers and distributors.

She says, “As a self-publisher you have to do everything on your own... you have to do the launch [and] market your stuff on your own.”

According to Ms Tan, self-publishing gives her more creative freedom.

“[Publishers] would want you to write for an audience, which... limits your writing by quite a bit,” she explains.

“Don't lose your **idea**,
your storytelling **ability**,
your personal **voice**,
in an attempt to guess
what the market wants

- Shamini Flint, Author

Founder of Ethos Books Fong Hoe Fang, 59, agrees to a certain extent.

The experienced and respected publisher says, “I look at [the book] and see that there are certain ways to make it work and [saleable]; I would have to control a little bit of the way you write. In that sense, creativity is controlled by the market.”

“If you go into self-publishing, what it means is the author believes very strongly that he or she has something that she wants to put out to the public. She’s willing to put out his or her money where her hand is,” he adds.

Ansen Goh, 21, founder of *Obscured.sg* – an online platform that showcases local works, says, “I guess it marks an achievement for a writer – to see their works in print and having that potential of people reading their works, as opposed to them being covered under a blanket of obscurity.”

The biggest challenge of self-publishing is getting the book’s name out.

Don Bosco, 42, who authored books like *Diary of Young Justice Bao*, advises, “The more hospitable you are, the more opportunities open up, the more people give your book a chance, and the more they offer to collaborate with you or promote your stuff.”

Shamini Flint, who is in her forties, is the author of book series *Inspector Singh Investigates*. She had “a genuine belief that there was a niche that [she] strongly wanted to fill”.

“I love the control and the flexibility and the fact that you can put out a niche product that the bigger world might not choose to publish... [but] the advantages of being published by a publisher are manifold,” she says.

She elaborates, “You don’t have to do anything except write the story... [and] you get advantages like translation; they can sell translation rights.”

However, she advises, “Don’t lose your idea, your storytelling ability, your personal voice, in an attempt to guess what the market wants.”

Ms Teoh, Mr Bosco and Ms Flint were the only three writers invited to the self-publishing panel at the Singapore Writers Festival in November 2013.

THE VIEWING PARTY

Author: Yong Shu Hoong
Publisher: Ethos Books
Price: \$18.00 w/o GST
Rating: 2/5

By Jeremiah Joel Peter

Featuring an amalgam of micro-fiction and prose poems, the book boasts several riveting pieces of literature nestled between other lacklustre creations.

Divided into six scenes, author Yong Shu Hoong plays host, inviting readers into his domain of death and cinema through his thoughts, curiosities, anecdotes and anxieties.

Stories conveyed through the prose poetry can sometimes also seem unique to the speaker, becoming difficult to relate with, and flying off the top of readers' heads without leaving much of an impression.

On a whole, the book is probably worth a browse, although perhaps not a keeper.

THE DICTATOR'S EYEBROW

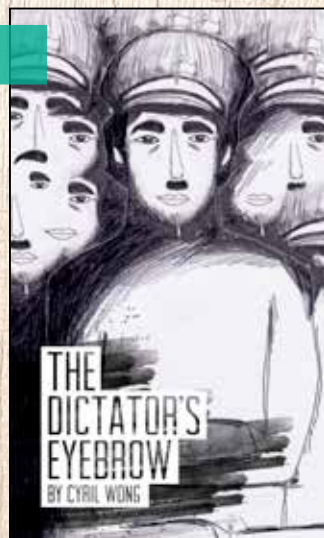
Author: Cyril Wong
Publisher: Ethos Books
Price: \$14.98 w/ GST
Rating: 4/5

By Benedicta J. Foo

The poems are written in the point of view of one of the eyebrows. While the concept is certainly absurd – no one would think of eyebrows having a voice, let alone such power – author Cyril Wong writes wonderfully, making the voice of the poems strong and demanding with full, coherent sentences, just like those a confident leader would, without damaging any poetic merit.

The authoritarian voice is supported by non-lyrical and prosaic words unmasked by fancy vocabulary, the ideas behind these poems will certainly be picked up by any reader.

If you've wondered what goes on behind Hitler's signature moustache, or the second chin that accompanies Kim Jong-un's stoic applauses, this is a great book to read.



THE INLET

Author: Claire Tham
Publisher: Ethos Books
Price: \$24.61 w/ GST
Rating: 3/5

By Lindsay Chong

Author Claire Tham uses truly Singaporean anecdotes to weave a commentary on the state of the country's progress. Subplots serve as further additions to the analysis of the Singaporean society.

Using viewpoints of characters to carry a strong plot, she crafts an in-depth exposition into the lives of Singapore's diverse inhabitants, both local and foreign.

The quest to expound on its many characters may have caused the plot to drag, distracting readers from the main story. The consistent breaks in the central storyline, however, work in Tham's favour, keeping the reader eager to stay on.



AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED

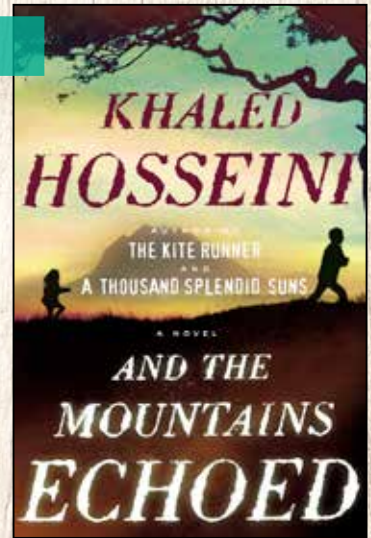
Author: Khaled Hosseini
Publisher: Epigram Books
Price: \$35.90 w/o GST
Rating: 5/5

By Parveen Maghera

The captivating novel effortlessly breathes life into its fictional characters underpinned by the history of war-torn Afghanistan.

Author Khaled Hosseini's abundant knowledge of the political and social landscapes of Afghanistan makes his writing credible and enticing. *And The Mountains Echoed* is a beautiful, emotional and provocative novel that questions the way we love and care for people. Can we selflessly give up everything to someone like a stranger or will we go an extra mile to fulfil an unspoken wish for a loved one?

A delicate reflection of the lives of many ordinary people around the world, this novel expresses multiple emotions and themes through the tangled lives of characters.



DURIANS ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT

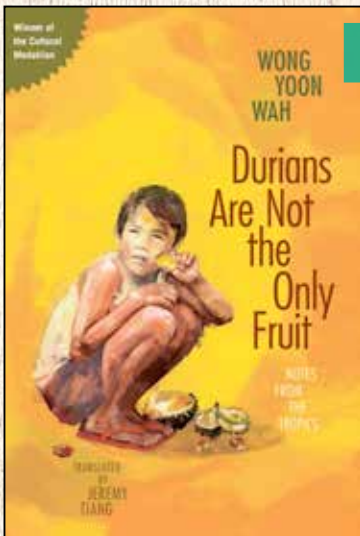
Author: Wong Yoon Wah
Publisher: Epigram Books
Price: \$17.90 w/o GST
Rating: 4.5/5

By Phoebe Low

Renowned writer and poet in the Chinese literary world, author Wong Yoon Wah brings readers on a nostalgic ride through his childhood memories in Malaya, in this combination of memoir, lyric essay and nature writing.

The winner of the Cultural Medallion peppered the book with personable and funny anecdotes, making it an easy starter. Pockets of poetry tucked away in each section also makes the reading much enjoyable.

It's quite particularly relatable with the inclusion of both Malay and Chinese expressions (the latter not translated to retain authenticity), which reflects well with Singapore's multi-racial society.



LITTLE THINGS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY

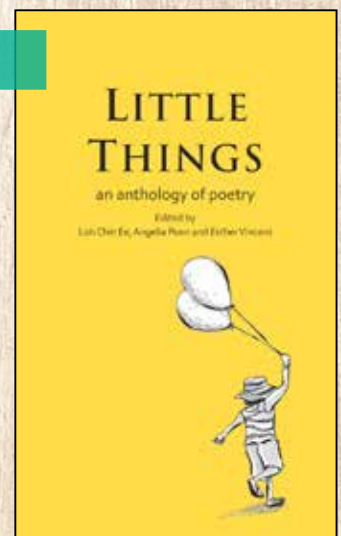
Editors: Loh Chin Ee, Angelia Poon and Esther Vincent
Publisher: Ethos Books
Price: \$17.12
Rating: 3.5/5

By Debbie Ng

Editors Loh Chin Ee, Angelia Poon and Esther Vincent have curated poems from Singapore and abroad, reminding us about the little things that used to delight our childhood minds, or still hit us hard today when we let them wander.

Separated into six sections, this compilation of relatable poems highlights the highs and lows of living in Singapore and beyond.

The first section, named after the book, strips away the stress of daily life, leaving behind intricate observations of what we've overlooked, such as the hunched movement of a passing cyclist, or a heartbeat produced by the sound of a grandfather's nail clippers. Inanimate objects come to life, bringing attention to feelings and actions perhaps not noticed before.





Ethos Books was established in 1997 with the vision to create books which would capture the spirit of a people and reflect the ethos of changing times. It has since given voice to emerging and exciting writers from diverse backgrounds and helped nurture the growing literary community in Singapore.

As one of the earliest indie literary publishers in Singapore, Ethos has a list of more than 200 literary titles of poetry and fiction developed during the years when Singapore poets and writers were just beginning to come into their own, and a current catalogue of published titles which lists some of the best known Singapore writers of poetry, prose and theatre of the day.

Find out more about Ethos Books:

www.ethosbooks.com.sg | www.facebook.com/ethosbooks | www.youtube.com/user/ethosbooks



Events

Join us in our regular *AfterWords* session at the Marine Parade Library, Level 2 from 7.30pm to 9pm every last Friday of the month (second Friday of the month with effect from April 2014). Engage in provocative and exhilarating discussions with our authors over complimentary cups of coffee and snacks.

AFTER
Words

Books

Stretch your imagination with stories from some of Singapore's best writers. Curl in bed with one of our books (instead of a mobile device) as you delve into the musings of Alfian Sa'at, the quirky stories of Felix Cheong, or the haunting lines of Alvin Pang's poetry. Join the Ethos Book Club (free admission) for up to 20% discount off our many titles during sales events. There's a book for everyone.

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TRAVEL

How To Turn Back

TIME

Set your grandfather's clocks decades back. Follow **BENEDICTA J. FOO** around our sunny island and discover that old is gold.

Accompanying boutique and hipster cafés are electronic cash registers and 30-inch desktop computer screens – telltale signs that you still live in the 21st century.

While longing for authentic retro vibes originating from the times of The Beatles and Beach Boys, here's what **HYPE** did: we crafted an entire day-tour itinerary in travel agency style. Get ready to uncover some classics.

8:30 AM

CHIN MEE CHIN CONFECTIONERY 204 EAST COAST ROAD

Start your day in Chin Mee Chin, a sparsely decorated kopitiam with tessellated off-white and grey tiles, together with steel cake displays.

Order their handmade kaya toast; the butter melts perfectly, immersing all the *kaya* and sealing the flavour into fluffy buns. The butter's saltiness combined with the *kaya*'s sweetness is an amazing explosion of flavours that will get you even more immersed in this coffee shop's ambience.

Take away some of their pastries too as the sugée cakes go at an affordable price of 80 cents apiece.

Start



9:00 AM

CARNIVAL BEAUTY SALON 6 CEYLON ROAD

A mere five-minute walk away from Chin Mee Chin Confectionery, this salon seems almost defunct from the outside and its only signs of life are the dust-free windows.

With the curtains drawn inside, it's as if time has been kept from escaping. Tacky carmine leather covered chairs, posed together with aged posters, decorate the shop. A dye job by practiced hairstylists will set you back just about \$50.

The salon has operated dutifully for almost 50 years. Book an appointment soon if you'd like to experience what it was like to have your hair done in the '60s, because the owner has no plans of keeping the business alive much longer.



12:00 PM

YET CON CHICKEN RICE 25 PURVIS STREET

Make your way down to Purvis Street after that rad hairdo, and spot an unassuming, monotonous restaurant whose queue seems to never dwindle.

The inception of Yet Con Chicken Rice was in 1940, and the establishment still stands strong today, attracting throngs of crowds on an hourly basis. While the chicken's texture may come off as a tad too dry, the rice is perfect – not too oily or soggy at all.



2:00 PM

KAMPONG LORONG BUANGKOK

The one and only kampong left in Singapore is masked beneath HDB flats and a petrol kiosk. The flamboyantly coloured houses give shelter to families of all races, as well as foreign workers.

If you go early enough the chickens will still crow, and occasionally you can even catch whiffs of *sambal belachan*, or the distinct smell of burning joss sticks in the air.

Talk to the residents as they lounge by their porches and soak yourselves in their memories. Despite their varied backgrounds, they share their common love for the idyllic, unrushed nature of the place.

Rumours of new highways replacing the kampong have been around, so make sure to visit Kampong Lorong Buangkok before it truly disappears.

4:00 PM

PEK SIN CHOON PTE LTD 36 MOSQUE STREET

The very first tea merchant in Singapore resides in the heart of Chinatown, and its employees have been packaging tea with their own hands for at least 50 years.

Pek Sin Choon set up its shop in 1925, but long before that, Mr Kenry Peh's great-grandparents were already going door-to-door selling blends of oolong tea.

Eventually, these blends made it into Singapore's *bak kut teh* houses. Pek Sin Choon now supplies close to 80 per cent of them. These exquisite, delicate tea concoctions are available from \$10.50 for 150 grams.



5:00 PM

THE HERITAGE SHOP 93 SULTAN ROAD

What good would a tour be without souvenirs? The last stop on our list belongs to Mr Patrick Phoa, who runs The Heritage Shop – a treasure trove waiting to be discovered.

Mr Phoa started collecting stamps at age 11, and by then he had already developed a healthy interest in all things old. His collection eventually grew to what it is today, and this tiny shop is simply stunning.

Antiques are piled from the ground right into every single nook and cranny of the shop, and all sorts of things from all over the world inhabit this place, including vintage bottles of perfumes, old books, toy watches, the most classic of typewriters and film cameras.



Photos by Benedicta J. Foo



The World's Your Oyster



FELICIA TAN grabs a map and outlines the trails of three youths who have embarked on adventurous graduation trips.

Many would rave at the idea of travelling overseas with their *besties* after graduation. It's the perfect excuse to let your hair down and trips are so popular that they have become a mandatory item on every graduate's to-do list.

Climbing up sulfur-laced volcanoes, getting a full Indian head massage by a road and leaping from roof-to-roof atop buildings – what better way to celebrate the end of a toiling education journey with a graduation trip like this?



Southern India

Ryo Yamamoto, 20, embarked on a 16-day trip to India with six friends.

They scoured rural Southern India and visited places such as Kerala, Alleppey, Bangalore, Munnar and Goa.

"We happened to stumble upon an orphanage [in Nagrachoy] while driving around town one day and we were so surprised!" Ryo recalls.

Eyes shining, he continues, "Out of curiosity, we decided to pay a visit and joined in a game of soccer... We spoke mostly in sign language and a bit of basic English... It was one of the best things that happened during the trip."

Ryo says, "It sparked the idea for us to go back to India next time to volunteer and do charity work, so that was a start of something."

"When you choose to cross the line and see what life is like on their side of the grass, it's when we are 'naked' and so human that we can talk to each other," he adds. "Just like we were meant to be friends."

Don't Miss: Kerala

Alleppey (also known as Alapuzha), has been touted as the "Venice of India". Visitors travel the sixth largest city in Kerala by taxi to sightsee places like Ambalappuzha Sree Krishna Temple and Alapuzha Beach.

Cruise through Kerala in a houseboat (known as a *kettuwallam* used to transport rice and spices in the olden days) and enjoy the ride with the well-furnished bedrooms, living rooms, kitchen and even a balcony.

For a true taste of living in India, taking the trains is a must.

"It's on the trains when we actually felt like we were really travelling in India – sharing bunks with strangers and talking to them," Ryo muses.

But beware! The doors can open any moment during the ride.

Also check out the tea factories, local markets and eat the local vegetarian food at Munnar, which was a favourite vacation spot amongst the British during colonial days.



Aceh, Indonesia

Lee Xue Er, 20, accomplished a series of firsts during her weeklong trip to Aceh. The province and special territory of Indonesia is a great place for hiking, mountain biking and all things nature.

"We trekked up [an] active volcano, but had to turn back midway as the path started to get dangerous and there was [a] high risk of falling," Xue Er says. "We did get to see some parts of the volcano though, and it was incredibly majestic."

Don't Miss: Pulau Weh Island

For those who want to relax and tune everything out, the pristine clear waters and spotless sands at the Pulau Weh Island Beach will provide you with the perfect backdrop for sun tanning or a book reading session.

Xue Er went snorkelling for the first time – in an open sea.

"There was no lifejacket," says Xue Er. "The waters were amazingly clear and fishes came in all sizes."

Regular visitors, who prefer a quieter spot to snorkel, can rent a boat to another part of the island. Boat and rental equipment costs come at a steal for no higher than \$10 per person.

Bring out the adrenaline junkie in you and bask in the glory of Mother Nature's bathtub – take a dip in the waterfalls at Pulau Weh.

You can travel to Pulau Weh by boat, which operates only twice a day.

The trip to Aceh made Xue Er feel a definite sense of serenity, or in her words, 'zen'.

"It's an isolated place with breathtaking views," she adds.



Photos courtesy of Lee Xue Er



Photos courtesy of Koh Chen Pin

Europe

Who says you must travel with a bunch of friends for your graduation trip?

Koh Chen Pin, 20, travelled around Europe in 70 days. He stopped by seven different cities – Amsterdam, Belgium, Paris, Barcelona, London, Copenhagen and Vienna – all in the name of Parkour.

"Now, I can continue satisfying my wanderlust even more confidently in the coming years. No more excuses like, 'I can't find someone else to travel with me'."

The ardent traceur (a parkour practitioner), travelled alone for most of his journey.

"It seemed daunting to do so at first, but I met so many different people around the world who showed me around," says Chen Pin.

"Every city has its own community that trains with different styles," he explains. "So it's always good to go to different places to learn from different people, and train on different terrains and areas," he says.

Chen Pin's proudest moment in Europe was when he climbed a 60-foot crane.

"The view... was amazing," he says.

Ultimately, Chen Pin's passion towards parkour paid off during the trip. "It was all about meeting like-minded practitioners of the discipline and learning from them, having a deeper insight, improving my level," he says.

Don't Miss: Park Güell

Travelling with expedition, Chen Pin hardly travelled to tourist-dominated places, but a hop to Park Güell at Barcelona left an impression.

"It has the nicest view of the city – from a bird's eye view," he says.

The Park Güell was a failed housing project by architect Antoni Gaudí, only which two out of 60 houses were built.

Gaudí lived in one of the houses for 19 years. It's now called the Gaudí House Museum and some of his personal belongings are still being displayed.

Instead of visiting the same old shopping haunts, take a chance and attempt activities you would never try! They could just be the biggest takeaway on your graduation trip.



APPETITE

What's Bean In Your Coffee?

LINDSAY CHONG surveys the coffee menu of a fancy novelty café and is left baffled by unfamiliar Italian words. She just wants a *kopi*.

One of Singapore's most endearing traits is its kopitiam culture.

"Kopi" is the Malay word for "coffee", while "tiam" is Hokkien for "shop". The neighborhood coffee shop, or *kopitiam*, is a hotbed of Singapore culture, where people of different cultures gather to dish out the hottest gossip and latest news.

Alas, enter the new age of coffee drinkers where you'd be hard-pressed to find teenagers casually hanging out at a local coffee shop. But turn round the corner to the nearest Starbucks and you have them flocking for a table.

HYPE did a quick survey, and it turns out that fans of the cheaper local *kopi* and the pricier western cup of Joe are almost equally divided.

47 per cent would gladly opt for the *kopi* that's easy on the wallet, while 53 per cent sheepishly admit that they are willing to pay the extra amount due to brand consciousness.

Mr Shaun Chong, 28, is a coffee aficionado who grinds fresh coffee beans by himself.

"*Kopitiam* coffee is more functional. Western coffee is more about enjoyment," he says.

Mr Chong enjoys buying different coffee beans and grinding them with a manual coffee bean grinder, simply for a cup of freshly brewed coffee.

"If you compare the local *kopi* and western

coffee that the average coffee drinker [consumes], it's pretty much the same because [they're] just looking for that perk-me-up," he explains.

The coffee may look similar but the difference between a cup of local *kopi* and a western cup goes beyond the fancy names, as well as the milk and sugar combinations.

What sets the coffee and the *kopi* apart are, in fact, the Arabica beans and Robusta beans.

Western cafes commonly use Arabica beans, which is a popular choice for its many layers of aroma and low caffeine content. This fragile species grows at high altitudes, and is known as the go-to bean for gourmet coffee.

Arabica beans give out distinctive flavours of a sweet and fruity nature. They are specifically shaped by the unique characteristics of the soil and environment in where they are grown.

Majority of *kopitiams* use Robusta beans, which contain double amount of caffeine as Arabica.

The Robusta, on the other hand, is a much hardier species resistant to diseases and can grow at low altitudes.

The beans are set even further apart with the way they are prepared.

Ms Teo Hsin Fern, 22, an ex-barista, describes how western coffee is normally prepared. Ground coffee powder is first poured into the espresso machine and then filtered through with hot water.

Fresh milk is next poured into the steamer of the espresso machine to make it hot and frothy. Additional latte art is determined by how well the barista pours the milk into the coffee.

Kopi, however, is fuss-free and uses either condensed or evaporated milk, which is easily stirred into the brew.

Mr Tan Hong Jie, a coffee shop tenant, explains that the coffee powder is first soaked in hot water for a few hours, and then drained through a filter net to separate the coffee from the remnant powder. The next steps of preparation will depend on the customer's order.

For some, the gourmet coffee is a relief from the bitter coffee brewed from machine-harvested Robusta beans.

For others, the latter is true to its name with the robust and rich flavour as it hits the tongue.

The next time you need a good economic perk up, you know which coffee shop to go to.

The local one, that is.



For The Love of Fries

YEAP YI XUAN gets thrilled with crispy French fries dipped in lip-smacking sauces.



marmite honey aioli

Appetiser – Combination of sweet and salty with a tinge of sour.



sweet onion bakwa

Those craving a sweet fix, this sauce will satisfy your taste buds – along with tiny savoury bits of grilled *bak kwa*.



smoked cheddar & blue cheese

You can't get any cheesier than this.



tartare with chopped gherkin

Your regular tartar sauce with chopped cucumber. Still yummy!



laksa pesto with roasted cashew

Crunchy, creamy, tangy, spicy...



spicy melted tomato with chinchalok

Think salsa – Singaporean style. Sweet, sour and spicy with an utterly delectable hint of shrimp.



curry mustard aioli

Fragrant blend of curry spices with the bite of mustard – A surprising blend of two flavours!



vegetarian chilli crab

Still thinking of the chilli crab you had at the *tze char* stall? Here's a perfect replica, satisfy your craving here.





Photos by Hon Liang Yi

HYPE sought the opinions of 100 youths aged 16 to 25 and discovered that 80 per cent have a fondness for fries, but were bored of the usual fast food french fries.

Recently, fries of different variations have been popping up around the island. 40 per cent of the respondents voiced that their favourite unusual fries are truffle fries, while the remainder of the votes were equally divided between places such as Best Fries Forever and Carl's Junior, which serves normal fries but with toppings.

House @ Dempsey

8D Dempsey Road

Mon to Fri: 12pm – 6pm, 6pm – 10.30pm

Sat & Sun: 11am – 4pm, 6pm – 10.30pm

An elegant dining space nestled in Dempsey Hill, the Pumpkin Hazelnut Fries (\$12) and shoestring Truffle Taro fries (\$8), alongside the classic truffle fries (\$11) are the bestsellers of House.

Straw cut pumpkin fries with crunchy hazelnuts – the crispy batter of paprika lends the fries a savoury, addictive flavour to complement the soft, sweet pumpkin within.

The truffle fragrance and the lightness of the Truffle Taro fries is unforgettable as well. Other fries include: Curry Mustard fries (\$9) and Carrot Fennel Fries (\$9).

The Factory

22 Lim Tua Tow Road Singapore

Mon to Thu: 1pm – 10pm

Sat and Public Holidays: 11am – 11pm

Fri: 1pm – 11pm

Sun: 11am – 10pm

This hidden gem has an intriguing range of dips, mostly inspired by condiments and local food. To fully savour the dips, the thick fries proves to be a better scoop than their skinny counterparts.

The fries are served in portions of 4oz (113g) with a choice of one dip for \$7.50. Hungry patrons can opt for 7oz (198g) with a choice of two dips for \$11.50, or a jumbo platter with all eight dips for \$19.50.



Photo by Maryrose Aviado

Best Fries Forever

Cathay Cineleisure
8 Grange Road
#B1-00

Raffles City Shopping Centre
252 North Bridge Road
#B1-55

Daily: 12.30pm - 10pm

Mon to Sat: 12pm to 10pm

Sun: 11.30am to 10pm

Best Fries Forever (BFF) is one of the pioneers of modern fries in Singapore. They are known for their freshly cut American potato fries with potato skin and drizzled with a generous serving of signature sauces.

New flavours such as Smokey Bandit and Lady Marmalade made their appearance in March 2013. BFF is priced at \$4.50 for a regular serving and \$5.30 for a large one.

Delectable

CLEAN EATS

DEBBIE NG tosses salads away as she finds out that they aren't the only way to get your healthy fix.



Years ago, any potential of you eating healthy might have been crushed from all those times you were force-fed mouthfuls of greens.

Veggies are said to prevent cancer, lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease. Why all the hate for what might save your life, then?

According to a survey conducted by **HYPE** for 100 youths aged 15 to 26, 33 per cent don't eat healthily due to compromise in taste.

Lucky for you (and your body), we've discovered five food joints that will make you change your mind.



MEDITERRANEAN MEETS MIDDLE EAST

Pita Pan, a quick service Mediterranean bistro, opened just over a year ago in the Marina Bay Shoppes. It now has two outlets in Singapore and one in Macau.

Celebrity chef and owner of the Pita Pan chain, Reena Pushkarna, 54, passionately notes, "The [Singapore] market is ready for 'different'."

Start with a pita pocket and five crispy falafel balls (ball-shaped chickpeas which are baked or fried) and fill it with your preferred salad items like corn, broccoli and carrots.

These pockets not only pack a flavourful punch unique to Singaporean tastebuds, but are also filled with fresh ingredients procured at the beginning of each day.

Most might chomp their way through without even realising the absence of meat in them.

Try their: Vegetarian Shawarma Pita Pocket. Mock meat haters don't worry – the shawarma soy pieces taste like actual grilled marinated meat.

MEXICAN BURRITOS AND A SALSA KICK

At Baja Fresh, a flour tortilla is warmed up quickly before guacamole, cilantro, Mexican rice, pinto beans and your choice of meat are wrapped up snugly.

Their hearty burritos are chock-full of protein, and provide a myriad of flavours in one sitting.

The quick service Mexican grill restaurant chain, which originated from the United States, lives by its motto of 'Eat Well, Live Fresh'.

Jaya Kanoria, 27, Director of Gloria Foods and master franchisor for Baja Fresh Singapore, adds, "We take our motto a bit too seriously. Hence, our menu is full of freshly prepared, never frozen, hormone-free, MSG-free food."

Try their: Baja Burrito with fire-grilled shrimp – Melted Jack cheese, juicy shrimp, fresh hand-made guacamole and pico de gallo wrapped in a warm flour tortilla.





CLEAN FOOD FROM SCRATCH

Put a packet of sausage franks from a supermarket in front of the Real Food team, and they'll shove it back at you.

Started by a trio of strong-headed and passionate individuals, Real Food goes out of its way to serve up fresh vegan dishes – even if it means waiting a little longer or paying a bit more.

You won't find a trace of meat or processed food in their kitchens.

Instead, a lot of time goes into sourcing for high quality, ethically-produced ingredients before it is prepared and served to you.

Reflecting Real Food's thirst for knowledge, magazines and second-hand books line the shelves at all outlets for customers to peruse as they wait for their food.

Try their: organic fried rice – made up of brown rice stir-fried with garlic, pineapple, capsicum, French beans and carrots.



ICE CREAM SANS CREAM AND MILK

Most of us love a good creamy milkshake, or a generous serving of cookies and cream gelato.

But when things get out of hand, we find ourselves looking away from the increasing number on the scale.

Vegan ice cream at Brownice calls for guilt-free indulgence.

Brownice's ice cream is strictly made without dairy products, catered for those who are cutting dairy from their diet or are lactose intolerant.

Denise Lim, founder of the three-year-old business, aspired for a healthier alternative to usual dairy ice cream.

"We experimented with many dairy substitutes, including soy milk and coconut milk," she says. "We eventually chose brown rice milk because it has the lowest fat and has many [healthy] properties."

Possibly the first and only to produce vegan ice cream in Singapore, you'll find yourself licking the spoon clean in disbelief – while telling yourself there's no need to feel guilty.

Try their: Best-selling flavours – dark chocolate, strawberry and even pumpkin coconut.

WHOLESOME, JUICY BURGERS

Burgers have a pretty bad reputation – they are greasy, fat-laden, and rich in sodium.

However, that doesn't mask the fact that they're deliciously addictive.

The guys at Veganburg figured a healthy fast food revolution was in order, and have created six burger masterpieces comprising soy or mushroom patties free from preservatives or trans fat.

Each burger has its own personality, from the comforting Creamy Shrooms burger to the rich and nutty Char-Grilled Satay creation (a favourite among locals).

Apart from health concerns, Veganburg also encourages patrons to go meatless once a week to ease environmental pollution caused by animal agriculture.

Earth loving, delicious and unique – this burger joint has it made.

Try their: Char-Grilled Satay burger, with nutty satay sauce drizzled over a soy patty, topped with crunchy lettuce and onions.



where to find them

PITA PAN

The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands
2 Bay Avenue L1-87

Marina Square
6 Raffles Boulevard #02-183A

BROWNICE

Sin Ming Centre
8 Sin Ming Road #01-03

Zhong Shan Mall
20 Ah Hood Road #01-08

BAJA FRESH

Singapore Rendezvous Gallery
9 Bras Basah Rd #01-03

VEGANBURG

44 Jalan Eunus

Marina Bay Financial Centre Tower 3
12 Marina Boulevard #02-05

The Grandstand
200 Turf Club Road #01-32

REAL FOOD

The Central
6 Eu Tong Sen St #B1-52/53

Square 2
10 Sinaran Drive #B1-105/106/129

Tai Wah Building
110 Killiney Road

West Coast Plaza
154 West Coast Road



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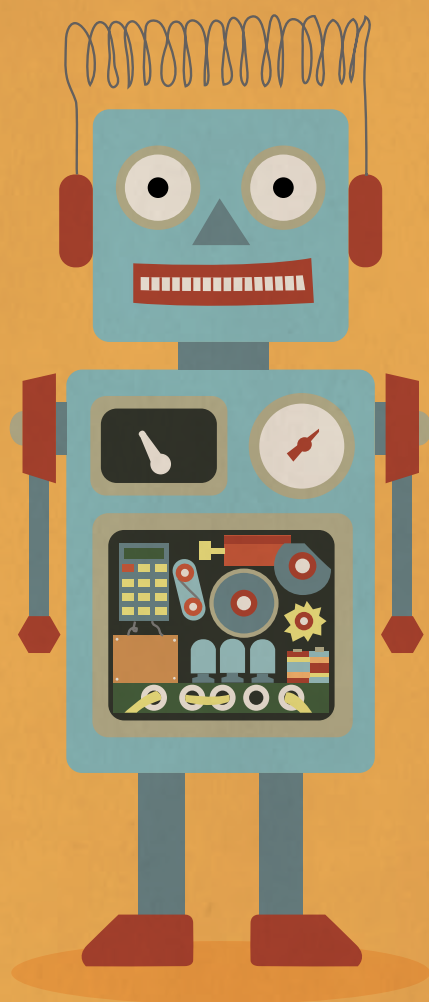
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WIRED

PHOTOGRAPHY IN CONVENIENCE

LIM JIA YING speaks to three professional *phoneographers* on what it takes to be more than someone with a mobile phone camera.



Mobile phones are no longer used simply for text messaging and calling; they now contain the part and parcel of a one's life.

Capturing a moment is so easy that photography has taken on a new name in this revolving age – *phoneography*.

The New York Times even ran photos taken with phone cameras on their front page.

WHY PHONEOGRAPHY

What used to be for keepsake has become a pride of personal creativity.

Mr Bryan van der Beek, 37, an editorial photographer based in Singapore, shares that he even gets client requests to take commercial photos with mobile phones.

Founder of the local *phoneography* community Singapore Instagram (SGIG), Mr Ivan Kuek, who's in his early forties, has executed wedding photo shoots also using his mobile phone – upon request by his client.

We all know how convenient taking photos with our mobile phones can be. Instead of bringing bulky cameras on vacation trips, many are content with just a phone because the fun lies in the editing to create a style of your own.

Mr Chia Aik Beng had no background in photography before he started *phoneography* in 2007.

"I like the process because... once you take a picture, you can edit and upload [it] using the phone immediately," says the 45-year-old designer.

Although Mr Chia also makes use of filters and photo-editing apps, he tries to keep his editing to the minimum.

Mr van der Beek agrees strongly, "Filters [are simply] an easy way to make [the photo] look the way you felt."

"When the edited photo doesn't resemble the actual place or item captured, the photographer is bending the truth."

As a professional photographer himself, Mr van der Beek says, "When you take out your phone camera nobody really bothers, but when you take out a big camera, everyone starts to freak out."

TREND SETTING

A simple search of the word "photo" on the iPhone's app store can easily garner over 2,000 results.

With more photo-editing and sharing application platforms available such as Instagram and Hipstamatic, it's hard to define *phoneography* when everyone has a mobile phone.

Mr Kuek agrees that *phoneography* is a vague term to define.

"If you define that shooting on a phone makes you a phoneographer, then everyone is one. [Just like how] it doesn't mean that if you hold a camera you're a photographer," he says.

"Now, almost everybody has a smart phone, even a primary school kid!"

Mr Chia thinks that *phoneography* is a sub-genre, just like lomography and film photography.

"Everyone can do [*phoneography*], but it takes practice... you have to keep shooting and understand what you want to shoot," he says.

Pushing on the trend, apps like Foap provide a platform for users to sell their own *phoneography*.

"I don't think the market is ready but... with technology, maybe [people] can become a full time Instagrammer [in the future]," says Mr Kuek.

Partly curated by Mr Chia, *SIN: A Singapore Instagram Exhibition* has helped to promote *phoneography* by showcasing works from phone users.

With rapid technology advancement, perhaps the next possible photography trend might come when Google Glass officially launches.





With massive gameplay changes and new ways to battle fellow trainers in the latest *Pokémon X* and *Y*, **HON LIANG YI** revives the Pokémon journey you've abandoned in your childhood.

When we first started Pokémon, there were 151 Pokémon we could use to become the Pokémon Champion. 17 years and six generations later, we now have 718 Pokémon to choose from.

SMASHING HIT

The worldwide simultaneous launch on Oct 12, 2013 was the first of its kind, and both games smashed records – Four million copies were sold within the first two days, making it the fastest-selling Pokémon game and Nintendo 3DS game of all time.

With gameplay and aesthetic changes, the games helm what competitive Pokémon battler Low Wai Yin, 22, describes as “the start of a new age of competitive Pokémon in Singapore.”

“The people who grew up with Pokémon are now about 20 years old, so they can spend their own money on *Pokémon X* and *Y*.”

“Social media influence and in part, nostalgia may also be why they're so popular,” says Chong Kah Yi, 22, the creator of the 4,000-strong ‘Pokémon X/Y Singapore’ Facebook group.

The new games have thrilled many competitive players, eager to form Pokémon teams to compete.

“Pokémon is a mind game – you have to think of which six Pokémon to use, what moves they will use, what stats they should be having, and even

what natures they should be having to complete your strategy,” says competitive player Louis Lim, 20.

“In *Pokémon X* and *Y*, the games made Pokémon training much easier, and it drew a huge market as compared to the other versions,” he adds.

GAME LEAGUES

He is the mastermind behind Facebook group ‘Pokémon X/Y Cube’ – dedicated to establish a Pokémon League in Singapore by February 2014.

Aiming to “bring Pokémon gaming to a new level”, they plan to hold monthly tournaments for Pokémon players to fight against their in-house Gym Leaders, Elite Four and Champion.

The winners of the monthly tournaments and random tournament participant will gather to battle.

The winner will be crowned Champion, while the players in second, third, fourth and fifth places will fill up the slots of the Elite Four.

The other players will become the lower-ranked Gym Leaders, to ensure the league gets tougher each time.

Louis is not the only one with such an idea. Ken Chen, 24, has plans to start his own version of the league too.

With five other team members, Ken is planning to establish Singapore as a

continent with five regions instead of a single region that one Pokémon game revolves around.

Each region will have its own set of Gym leaders and Elite Four, as well as what he terms the Elemental Elites, who have teams similar to Gym leaders but specialise in double battles, which pit two Pokémon against two, and the Specialty Force players with Pokémon teams according to certain themes.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

With the league competitions aside, let's not forget what Pokémon really entails – having fun with friends and with your Pokémon.

You can now pet your Pokémon and feed them food, as well as play games with them. If your bond with your Pokémon is strong, it lands more critical hits and dodges more attacks.

With Internet accessibility, it's now easier to connect with friends, or make new ones, and battle them within the comfort of your home.

A new feature called ‘Wonder Trade’ allows any trainer connected to the Internet to trade Pokémon with another player living across the globe.

Pokémon director Junichi Masuda summed it up, “One of the central themes of *Pokémon X* and *Y* are bonds – the bonds between people, and the bonds between people and Pokémon.”



OPINIONS



The first time I chose my own outfit, I was seven.

It was between a bright, blinding orange jumpsuit and an attention-seeking hot pink blouse with my favourite Disney princess, Belle, on it.

And being the fashionista that I was, I decided to do what any sane seven-year-old would do. I tucked the blouse into the jumpsuit, paired the outfit with a glittery headband, a Winnie the Pooh handbag, purple polka-dotted socks and red Mary Janes.

My mother grew pale as she told me I would embarrass myself if I had the nerve to show up in that ensemble at my father's cousin's daughter's wedding.

We ended up settling for a plain navy dress that matched hers, but as far as I was concerned, my sensational outfit could have won all the awards.

When I was 10, I clad myself in a long yellow dress for an emceeing audition with shorts underneath. By the end of the audition, I had done what any sane, hyperactive kid would do: tuck my dress into the shorts underneath. It had puppy paw prints on it, so I thought that was acceptable and actually really cute.

Needless to say, my mother had a semi heart attack when she saw what I did. "You are not a boy," she reprimanded, "What will people think of you?"

I then grew into a pimply teenager whose face was an oil-producing factory, and my mother frantically searched for the best oil control products in the market, claiming that a girl should always have her face clean and bright.

"You want to look like a pearl, not the oyster," she'd say.

And as a rebellious teenager my entire wardrobe was filled with black shirts and jeans as dark as my soul. My parents were only grateful that I hadn't yet lined my eyes with kohl, and that their friends couldn't judge on account of their children going through similar phases.

When I first started using eyeliner on a daily basis, the first thing my father asked me was if I was trying to impress the man of my dreams.

And curiously enough, neither my brother nor my male cousins have had to go through endless criticisms the way my female cousins did.

It is curious to see that the idea of women having to look good for someone has been so indoctrinated into our society that even my mother, who is all sorts of amazing and nurturing, agrees without questioning much.

While I would never have approved of myself in that *Disney* princess blouse and jumpsuit, I sometimes wish I got to wear the many dresses I wanted to wear without ever worrying about making an impression.

So this is what I'd tell my children. I'd tell them that they're beautiful. And even if nobody thinks so, it's okay. I'd tell them there are a million other better things to be than beautiful. I'd let them grow into intelligent, talented human beings with the weirdest outfit combinations known to mankind.

But until then, will you please let me wear my '60s disco frock, ma?



The Bootycall

Anna Elizabeth Isip

Lately, it seems that flashing boobs and booty in music videos (MVs) is the way to go if an artiste wants to stay relevant in the music industry.

Robin Thicke's MV for his hot single "Blurred Lines" had three scantily clad female models parading around the three male artistes, who remained fully clothed.

There were two versions, uploaded on YouTube, of the single's music video – one censored and the other not. What caused more controversy was the uncensored one that was uploaded despite the rated content.

That version sported the same concept with the female models dancing and strutting their stuff around the male artistes, except with their knockers out for all to see.

There was something about the blatant topless fashion that didn't sit quite right with me. I neither advocate nor support nudity as a form of expression.

When confronted with the regular myriad of provocative MVs, I usually roll my eyes and ignore the latest addition to the already overly populated list of immodest videos.

However, after discussing with a friend, I realised what was so jarring was the stark contrast between the women and the men in the video. The juxtaposition between the topless ladies and the dapperly dressed men degraded the women to mere sex objects for the men's pleasure.

Following "Blurred Lines" was the release of pop-sensation Miley Cyrus's music video to her single 'Wrecking Ball'. The music video had scenes of the 21-year-old singer clinging onto a swinging wrecking ball stark naked.

Despite the intentional placement of her arms and purposeful camera angles to prevent a nip-slip, the video

still portrayed the singer in an unfavourable light. Many viewers commented on the distasteful display of skin.

Miley, however, explained that the concept for the video was to show her vulnerability through the nudity. Some of her fans continue to cheer her on and defend the singer's choice of artistic expression.

That raises the question: When did artistic expression begin to justify nudity? And also, when did nudity become a statement of empowerment?

The line that divides expression and objectification has invited debate over the years.. Not too long ago, the debate revolved around how women, especially in rap videos, were displayed in an unfavourable light - wearing scant clothes and dancing provocatively.

Now, the problem is that they can't seem to keep their clothes on anymore. Wearing a bikini would be considered modest in recent times.

As music videos with artistes objectifying women through nudity keep rolling in, the fight against nudity will diminish as well. Any protest would be seen as "backward" as nudity in videos become the norm.

As artistes grow in their craft, they need to think deeper about what they're trying to achieve through their MVs. Nude artistic expression could very well justify promoting themselves using their bodies, or other people's bodies.

If we allow artistes to keep pushing the boundaries of decency, what would stop these singers from producing music videos with flagrant sexual content?

Don't let MVs use songs as background music for (near) soft-core porn. This is not the reality you need to settle for.



Blogger Misconduct

Theodore Woon

An article published in *therealsingapore.com* on Nov 12 last year was circulated on various social media platforms, exposing the ugly side of bloggers and the power they wield.

In this article, a local blogger is said to have made various demands on a Singapore salon for a complimentary haircut in exchange for publicity on her blog.

The blogger's request for sponsorship was rejected.

What followed was a counter offer made by the blogger, as well as her demand for a timely response from the hair salon's manager.

She threatened to "blog about him and damage the reputation of the hair salon" otherwise.

Since its birth in the early years of the digital revolution, blogging has been embraced individuals blogging on various levels. Its advantage: Everyone has a voice.

From the wealthy chronicling their daily exploits to the lonely and misunderstood living in their parents' basement, blogging has allowed for anyone's views and opinions to be published and, hopefully, heard.

Communication today has never been easier with distance between people, both physical and social, being done away by the boundlessness of cyberspace.

Therefore, virtually anybody in the world, with access to the Internet, is able to read a complete stranger's reviews and comments on a particular subject matter anytime.

This has prompted companies, whose primary target audience is the masses, to sit up and pay attention to what is being written about them by bloggers.

The power of citizen journalism has since risen, with bloggers basing opinion on personal experience that will appeal to the common man.

With everyone in the world being connected to the Internet, thanks to smartphones and tablets, bloggers are suddenly imbued with the power to move masses and have since found themselves at the forefront of new media.

Bloggers today are determined by their power to influence consumer preferences and valued by personal site traffic and statistics. These are landmarks of a blogger's popularity and influence, both of which are proportionately linked.

From clothing to gadgets, corporations today are trying to gain favour with these vanguards of citizen journalism.

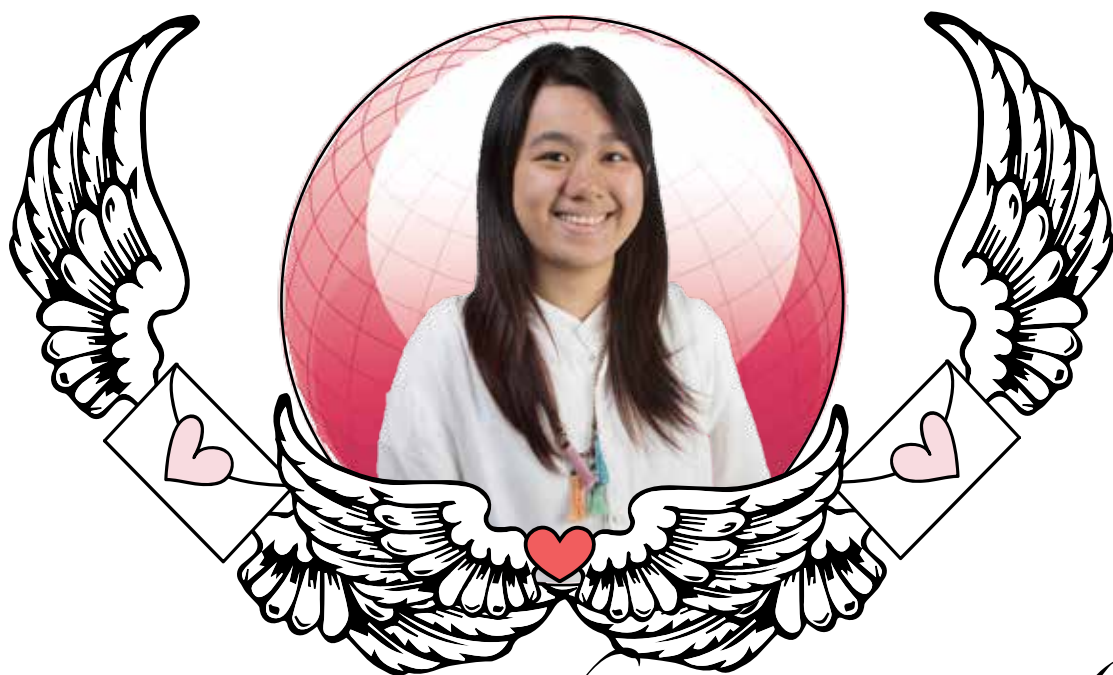
Sponsorships and perks enjoyed by influential bloggers today include front row seats at fashion shows that are usually reserved for highly-regarded editors of traditional media, and free-of-charge goods and services — depending on the nature of the company and blogger.

These attempts are aimed to obtain good reviews that will in turn provide publicity and earn sponsors the Internet dollar.

The actions of the abovementioned blogger, however, prompt the question: Should bloggers then be governed by a code of ethics to prevent reckless abuse of the power they possess?

An obvious solution for prevention, the code should clearly outline the boundaries a blogger should take into consideration when soliciting sponsorships.

Other than protecting the interests of companies dealing with blogger-based publicity, it will also ensure that citizen journalism is ethical and will not spiral out of control.



Romance in the New World

Hon Liang Yi

In 1979, The Buggles lamented that Video killed the Radio Star. Today, society believes that romance has been murdered, and fingers are being pointed at technology, the poor suspect in this riveting case.

This seems to be undisputed with tons of research done on technology and romance. The research that struck me the most was done by National Trust in the UK.

According to their research, 53 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women indicated a desire to receive love letters, but yet, 62 per cent of the respondents have never sent or received one.

This is ridiculous, I thought. Couples want love letters, but they don't write them?

Then I realised that I was calling myself ridiculous. I am part of the tech-obsessed majority – I've sent "luv u too" far too many times without a single thought. Yet, I've written a grand total of one love letter – given to him on his birthday, because a text probably wouldn't cut it.

I guess that's why I'm single now.

Technology has made it all too convenient for couples to express their love – and this perpetual connection that we have with our significant other makes it just as convenient to take our relationships for granted.

It's much easier to confess to a crush, to flirt with that cutie you've been eyeing and it's much easier to remind your loved one that yes, you still love them.

It is apparent in Singapore, where we've seen confession pages cropping up for almost everything – there are school

confession pages, army confession pages and even a cosplay confessions page.

The multitude of confession pages share a striking similarity – they have seen at least one romantic confession from a shy social media user yearning for his or her crush, unafraid to let the world know but no courage to tell the one person who really matters.

Perhaps technology is not the murderer – it is the murder weapon. And we're wielding the weapon in our hands.

When I was still dating, we texted more than talked. We went out for lunch in school, and on special occasions we met up to celebrate, but that was all.

Eventually it seemed that I was more likely to open up to him online via Facebook, than offline over a meal.

That thought was upsetting — and perhaps that was why I ended my relationship with him after seven months. We broke off online too, mostly because we tried breaking up twice offline and both times he ended up wailing.

Romance, at its very core, is all about labours of love.

For me, I didn't bother taking the effort to go out more often – that seemed to be our definition of romance.

But to the readers in their own relationships, what do you both define as a labour of love? The number of SMSes sent at two in the morning... or the effort taken to set up an incredible offline date?

It's time for couples to re-define what romance means to them – and act on their idea of romance to make things work.

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