

HYPE



**FASHION:
PRINT POPPIN'**



THE VAMPS

TAKING THE WORLD BY STORM

ELLIE GOULDING
ELECTRO-POP HEROINE

CAVALIA
EQUESTRIAN FANTASY

KENNY KHOO
HIS "STOREY" TO SUCCESS

TIANJIN SPECIAL
FOOD, BARGAIN, CULTURE

“We’re moving out of the Ice Age, the Iron Age, the Industrial Age, the Information Age, to the Participation Age.”

- Scott McNealy, former CEO of Sun Microsystems

Computers are everywhere: be it in the form of a smartphone, laptop, personal computer or a server in the cloud, networked computers are becoming increasingly important to every aspect of modern life, from the political to the professional and, of course, the personal. There has never been a greater demand for computer and network technology than today, and that demand is set to only continue growing as network computing becomes increasingly popular.



Bachelor of Science (Hons) Computer and Network Technology

Awarded by Northumbria University, UK

NEW

Designed for students who wish to unlock their full potential when it comes to computer networking, the course aims to produce graduates with the necessary skills to become next-generation computer and network engineers. Students will not only be taught how to analyse networking hardware and software, but also how to design, build and implement a modern computer-based network system from the ground up. They will also be armed with a big-picture understanding of computer networking through exposure to the economical, professional, legal, ethical and social structures surrounding the industry and field.

This course is aligned with the CISCO Certified Network Associate (CCNA) industrial qualification therefore students have the option to enrol in the CISCO academy course.

Intakes: 22 Sep 2014 (16-month full-time programme)

22 Sep 2014 (20-month part-time programme)

For Ngee Ann Polytechnic students who study the following courses:

- Diploma in Financial Informatics
- Diploma in Information Technology
- Diploma in Network Systems & Security
- Diploma in Electronic & Computer Engineering

They may be awarded exemptions for up to two modules in Year2.*

* Terms and conditions apply.



www.mdis.edu.sg

THINK SUCCESS. THINK **MDIS**.



Management Development Institute of Singapore
Reg No. 201001793H
20 May 2014 to 19 May 2018

A member of the Singapore Association for Private Education (SAPE)



6247 9111 / 6372 1000



etc@mdis.edu.sg



Add us 'MDIS School of Technology and E-Learning'



Visit the STEL Blog!
www.STELnetwork.wordpress.com

WHERE TO FIND HYPE

COMPLIMENTARY COPIES OF HYPE ARE AVAILABLE AT THE FOLLOWING PLACES

ACTUALLY
orchard gateway #03-18

ARTISTRY
17 Jalan Pinang

BEER MARKET
3B River Valley Road
#01-17/02-02

BERRYLITE
80 Parkway Parade Road #B-83J
Bugis+, 201 Victoria Street #05-03
Greenwich V, 1 Seletar Road, #021-08

COLD ROCK
313@Somerset #02-50
2 Bayfront Avenue #B1-60

CUPCAKES WITH LOVE
10 Tampines Central 1
Tampines 1 #03-22

CUPPLETS
Ngee Ann Polytechnic
535 Clementi Road
Blk 16, #01-03

DULCETIFG
41 Haji Lane

EIGHTEEN CHEFS
Cineleisure Orchard #04-02
Tiong Bahru Plaza #02-K1/K6
The Cathay #B1-19/20

ESPLANADE
The Esplanade Co Ltd
Esplanade Reception Office
1 Esplanade Drive

FIVE & DIME
297 River Valley Road

HANSEL
Mandarin Gallery #02-14

ICE CREAM CHEFS
Ocean Park Building #01-06
12 Jalan Kuras (Upper Thomson)

ISLAND CREAMERY
Serene Centre #01-03
Holland Village Shopping Mall
#01-02

KOMBI ROCKS
66 Yio Chu Kang Road

LEFTFOOT
Cineleisure Orchard #02-07A
The Cathay #01-19

M:IDEA OFFICE
535 Clementi Road
Ngee Ann Polytechnic
Blk 53, #01-01

ROCKSTAR BY SOON LEE
Cineleisure Orchard #03-08
22 Orchard Road, Ground level

SABRINAGOH
Orchard Central #02-11/12

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
1 Zubir Said Drive

SECTS SHOP
orchard gateway #04-14

ST GAMES CAFE
The Cathay #04-18
Bugis+ #03-16/17

TAB
442 Orchard Road
#02-29

THREADBARE & SQUIRREL
660 North Bridge Road

TIMBRE@THE ARTS HOUSE
1 Old Parliament Lane
#01-04

TIMBRE@THE SUBSTATION
45 Armenian Street

THE MUFFINRY
112 Telok Ayer Street

THE GARDEN SLUG
55 Lorong L Telok Kurau
#01-59/61 Bright Centre

VICTORIA JOMO
9, 49 Haji Lane

VOLTA
The Cathay #01-18

WALA WALA
31 Lorong Mambong



Take Off With Tourism!

Located at the economic and geographical crossroads of South-East Asia, Singapore is a prime tourist destination that attracts more than 15 million* tourists on an annual basis: a figure that translates to a contribution of approximately S\$18.8 billion dollars to the country's GDP every year. As an industry, tourism has been consistently growing for the past few decades, and is projected to grow even more over the next few years.

The only question now is: where will you be when it takes off?



**University of
Sunderland**

Bachelor of Science (Hons) International Tourism and Hospitality Management (Top-Up)

Awarded by the University of Sunderland, UK

Ranked 4th in The Guardian University Guide 2015: League Table for Hospitality,
Event Management and Tourism

NEW

Designed for students who wish to pursue a career in the tourism and hospitality sectors, this course seeks to provide students with a deep understanding of the domestic and international sectors. Students will be introduced to the business, financial and industrial aspects of modern tourism, as well as learn how technology has and continues to change the way in which the modern traveller sees the world. Other topics explored include: the impact of local and international law on the tourism and hospitality industry; research and management methodologies; and the unique challenges that a professional in the industry would face.

Students who have a **Diploma in Tourism and Resort Management** may enter the top-up programme and complete your degree in **9 months**. Students from other courses may also be accepted into the top-up programme on a case-by-case basis.

Intake: 27 Oct 2014 (9-month full-time programme)

**MDIS graduates from the University of Sunderland, UK
are highly employable!**

79% of the graduates[#] surveyed were employed with most
holding full-time job appointments soon after their graduation.

* Source: Singapore Tourism Board
Graduating Classes 2013



www.mdis.edu.sg

THINK SUCCESS. THINK MDIS.

MDIS
founded 1956
Management Development
Institute of Singapore
Where lifelong learning begins

edutrust
SINGAPORE
Cert No: EDU-2-2016
Validity: 30/12/2010 - 29/12/2014

TUV
SUD
Cert No: 0742017
ISO 9001:2008

Management Development Institute of Singapore
Reg No. 201001793H
20 May 2014 to 19 May 2018
A member of the Singapore Association for Private Education (SAPE)

6247 9111 / 6372 1000 etc@mdis.edu.sg

Add us 'MDIS School of Tourism and Hospitality'

IN THIS ISSUE

24 Time to Vamp It Up

They began as strangers but are now superstars. Just how did The Vamps make it all happen?

26 Storeys to Success

Local singer-songwriter Kenny Khoo returns home after his success in Taiwan

32 Stay Gould

Electro pop heroine Ellie Goulding reveals her vulnerable side

50 Riding Into New Grounds

HYPE speaks to the Founder of *Cavalria*, entering a world of equestrian fantasy.

64 Fashion: Killer Rave

The latest runway print obsession has been all the rave. Now, it's our turn to make those heads turn.

78 Tianjin Special

Never been to Tianjin? **HYPE** brings a little bit of what this glorious city offers.



ON THE COVER





theurbanwire.com
current...connected

music • film+tv • food • contests
nightlife • events • fashion • people
tech • books • games • sports

MUSIC

14 The Face of Fauxe

DJ Fauxe throws aside superficial considerations and focuses on what matters most – music.

15 Deliberately Mysterious

American instrumental post-rock band Russian Circles spills their unconventional approach towards music.

21 Goot Music in The Current

No longer just star envy from behind your screens as Youtubers Alex Goot and Against The Current are swimming towards our island.

23 The Mcqueen of England

Singapore's neo-soul group Steve McQueens is all set for a recording adventure in London.

28 Getting By With Guy

Australian singer-songwriter Guy Sebastian gets a little personal with HYPE.

PRINT TO SCREEN

56 Making It In Holy-wood

Why do filmmakers search the Gospel for screenplays?

58 The Maze Runner

59 The Hundred Foot Journey

60 Gone Girl

61 Dark Places

SHOP

62 Bright and Beautiful

APPETITE

72 Fusion Intrusion

With the introduction of fusion cuisines, maybe, two really is better than one.

74 Not Your Plain Old Pastries

WIRED

76 The Hidden Good

Doing for the society might just be the next big thing.

77 A Whole New World

New gadgets bring gaming to life.

ARTS

36 Cookin' Up A Beat

Toss those knives, pots and pans. The kitchen gets fancy and messy with Cookin' Nanta.

40 On Their Way to Broadway

These little ones are doing more than just staying cooped up in classrooms.

48 Coming Together For A Laugh

Local fresh comedy faces share whether being a comedian is really as light-hearted as it seems.

52 25 Years of Unconventional Photography

He throws all rulebooks aside and creates his own photography game.

FEATURES

84 Stories of Old, Not Being Told

What happens when our local heritage gets forgotten?

86 But First, Let Me Take A...

Why do you keep taking pictures of yourself?

88 Delish Dialect Dishes

Looking into the culinary world of our dialects.

OPINIONS

92 Hug O'War

93 Instagram is Depressing

94 #No Such Thing As Bad Activism

95 The Music Snob Killed The Radio Star

96 Good Films Finish Last

97 Graffiti: Art Or Crime?

Why Men Need Body Love, Too

98 The Banality of Horror

HYPE

editor	jovita ang
deputy editors	kia nicole noakes nur khalisah
designers	clara xu shanelle chong
photography	shermane eng
writers	angela low ang jia yun choo mei fang claudia tan daniel chan denise wong emillio rodrigues heng hui mei hyliana mohamed ian ng
contributing writers	janine tan nathania tirtaputra nina gee nur amalina nur ardillah oliver tan robin choo samantha ng sarah chu
advertising sales	elizabeth phua ivy lee melanie ho
editorial consultant	amelia ang nurul suhaila petrission teo shariel ng
photography consultant	sng-fun poh yoke siew kee liong

HYPE is a free bi-annual production by final-year Mass Communication (Print Journalism) students at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film & Media Studies. HYPE is part of m:idea, Singapore's first student-run conglomerate.

m:idea
School of Film & Media Studies
Ngee Ann Polytechnic
Blk 53, #01-01, 535 Clementi Road
Singapore 599489

Printed by Oxford Graphic Printers Pte Ltd
11 Kaki Bukit Road 1
#02-06/07/08 Eunos Technolink
Singapore 415939

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue is a ride into The Great Beyond. A dedicated journey into bringing you the best of our best, faces and acts that, we feel, are worthy of the spotlight.

We came face-to-face with electro pop diva **Ellie Goulding** (pg 32), scratched past the surface glamour and delved deep into what she's all about. Who knew that she wasn't always this confident goofball? After which we were busy talking with British pop band **The Vamps** (pg 24) and sussed out what they really think of their fans. Honour or horror? You'll know.

Dive into all that musical glitter and sing along to the songs of **The Sound of Music** (pg 40). If travelling back in time with this childhood favourite is not adventurous enough, fret not. We've pulled forth those gears, bringing you an exclusive interview with equestrian director of the theatrical spectacular **Cavalria** (pg 50).


As with the past issues, we continue to shine light on our homegrown talents as they brew up more exciting concoctions. Having just topped the Taiwan G-music album charts (and beating Mandopop giant Eason Chen), singer-songwriter **Kenny Khoo** (pg 26) returns home for the first time ever, and shares his "storey" to success. Bound for a London recording adventure, neo-soul group **The Steve McQueens** (pg 23) is all set and ready for more milestones.

We're not blind followers of trends but we sure love a good one when it comes along - prints. Head turning prints have been seen making a killing all over the runway and well-loved by fashion giants like Marc Jacobs and Anna Sui. Time to kill it our way in **Killer Rave** (pg 64).

Now, jump onboard and ride onwards with us to the uncharted territories.

Jovita Ang
Jovita Ang
Editor

Our experiences and thoughts can always be linked back to external stimulus, events, or in this case, music, working like a seamless recollection instrument. This playlist inspired us while working on this issue, and we hope it'll inspire you as well. Above and beyond.

- 
- 001 last night | **The Vamps**
002 shuffle | **Bombay Bicycle Club**
003 riptide | **Vance Joy**
004 brother | **Matt Corby**
005 changing of the season |
Two Door Cinema Club
006 go outside | **Cults**
007 walking on a dream |
Empire of The Sun
008 boom clap | **Charli XCX**
009 cool kids | **Echosmith**
010 you caught the light | **Chvrches**



It Takes Two

Introducing emerging band Take Two is ANGELA LOW, who learns about these makers of unapologetic music and mentees of Noise Singapore



If Two Door Cinema Club had a Singaporean counterpart, it would be Take Two.

This five-piece indie dance outfit establishes a sound that paints the local landscape with a slight British pop edge. They deliver lyrical brilliance, creating poetry out of ordinary experiences like overindulging in barbecued pork.

Take Two has conquered international music festivals such as the Chiang Mai Music Festival 2014, and, more recently, been selected as a Noise Singapore music mentees.

In 2012, the quintet started off in the National University of Singapore (NUS) as a quartet known as the "Eusoff Hall" band. Bassist David Siow, 26, shares, "We were from this orientation group called 'T House'... we wanted to create an alliteration with T's like 'tantalising tickler'." And it turned out their answer was right on a pack of Aspirin, 'take two as required'.

Hello, We Are...

It took two years of adjustments for the band to reach their current line-up of five.

Like a walking encyclopedia, Peng Sing is unceasing in sharing bits of trivia with those around him. "You will

learn a lot of things just by having one dinner with him," says Jonathan. Likewise, guitarist Johnathan Lim, 24, is chock-full of quirky and useful life skills that range from bread making to guitar building.

Hiding behind the drums is Jeryl Yeo, 23, 'the spell-checker', according to Peng Sing. His incurable inclination for detail has him sorting out all the paperwork. As for David, Jonathan says, "If the band was a car, then he's the driver."

The Noise

Before scoring a mentorship with the front man of The Great Spy Experiment, Saiful Idris, 35, they had to make a decision of paramount importance. Baybeats or Noise? With scholastic and vocational commitments, it'd be unwise to spread themselves thin. Evidently, they went with the latter.

"Saiful was perfect because he's so experienced. He's the pushing force behind Great Spy and that's why we chose Noise over Baybeats. It was a slightly more structured approach to mentorship," says David.

Despite being an informal introductory session at a coffee house, Saiful had much food for thought to offer during his first powwow with Take Two.

"We're more or less known for pumping out energetic songs but we want to take that to the next level."

- David Siow, Bassist

Jonathan recalls what he'd mentioned, "Go back and figure out what your mission statement as a band is."

"We're more or less known for pumping out energetic songs, but we want to take that to the next level – energetic songs that sound like they belong to Lush 99.5FM," David conveys.

In relation to the final Noise showcase concert at the Esplanade, the sole game plan on their minds is to keep up with traditions. "We'll probably be throwing candy at the audience," spills Peng Sing, who has distributed them twice before whilst performing, "and it's legit candy. It's not like Fruit Plus," David interjects.

Besides Noise, the band played at Madrid, Spain from Aug 5 to 11 for the Ecopop Festival. "[It] must've been like 50 applications to get that one," shares David.

Sounds like this quintet is slowly gaining momentum, but will it preserve? It takes only two words for David to answer that, "We'll see."

Having only been a band since 2011 Anechois has already accomplished more than most established names in the local music scene that have been around for more than twice the length. The post-rock band has played shows in Indonesia, Philippines, and more recently Japan. The group also already has three releases, A Shadow of a Sound, Circles, and POLYMORPHOUS (a spit tape with Singaporean hardcore band, Paris in The Making).

Post-rock has been part of the local music scene for sometime now, with the first few generations consisting of bands such as I am David Sparkle and Amateur Takes Control.

Currently one of the most established bands in the local music scene, the quintet was birthed from humble beginnings. Anechois' journey started early 2012, when they were selected to perform for Esplanade's annual Baybeats festival and immediately won the hearts of audiences with their unusual brand of instrumental music (which their ex-guitarist Justin Koh, 25, liked to call "post-progressive"). Their music started out as a unique mix of ambient, classical, heavily layered guitars, and minimal vocals, also known as *rojak* (which means mixture in Malay).

Passion drove the five boys to venture on their first self-funded

The Echo of A Sound

Introducing Anechois, post-progressive rock band, as DANIEL CHAN finds out how they express what entails being in a thriving Singaporean instrumental driven band

tour to Manila, Philippines. All five of them got day jobs and skimmed for months before saving enough to set off to play two shows. "We spent more than \$600 each just on flights and lodging, but the satisfaction of having both shows packed to the brim was more than satisfactory," says lead singer Haziq Hussain on the strain of touring.

Feeling that the limited amount of venues to play at in Singapore restricted their reach, the band left for another tour in Indonesia and then to another named The Wonder Rain tour in Japan in 2014. Haziq explains, "Audiences overseas

are rowdier and more receptive, both of our shows were at 2am but both venues were completely filled."

After befriending Japanese emo act Start of the Day during Baybeats 2012, Anechois flew over to the land of the rising sun and followed them on tour.

With three releases already under their belt, a full-length set to be launched early next year, and a thriving overseas fan base, it's nerve wrecking to imagine where Anechois will be in the coming years. Just like their lyrics go, "The future is and is to be".



Photo courtesy of Nabil Nazri

The Face of Fauxe



Follow **DANIEL CHAN** unmask's Singapore's mysterious electronic DJ Fauxe

Seated on a chipped concrete pavement in the depths of a gloomy alley sporting a hoodie and his iconic "golf wang" hat, his mask lit by a single street light, and with a cigarette hanging loosely in between his fingers.

Fauxe recounts his musical endeavours through a voice muffled by his thick plastic mask. Fauxe's rare brand of electronic music has given him the reputation of being one of Singapore's most alternative DJs. However, before diving into the world of electronic music, he tells a story of his humble beginnings and the mistakes he wished he hadn't made.

"I used to sing for a band and I was very a proud musician," Fauxe confesses with a sigh, "I would play a show with six strings and end a show with none and I'll still go on like the proud guy I was, and it wasn't good for me."

With encouragement from his girlfriend who told him that he was becoming exceedingly "attention seeking", Fauxe came to a realisation that music mattered more than one's image and thus decided to become anonymous.

Fauxe explains his personal philosophy, "I don't think people should concentrate on my face or how I look, I think the music should be more important." In his final year of school, he was introduced to a MIDI (music instrument digital interface), an interface that is widely used in electronic

music and was intrigued by the fact that musical elements to a song can be created electronically without the use of the stereotypical guitar-drums-bass setup.

"It was just love at first sight," he chuckles.

For the past two years, he had expanded his equipment from just a Macintosh laptop, to keyboards, turntables, MIDIs, samplers, synthesisers and several microphones. This led to the birth of stranger sounds and tracks that were eventually noticed by local radio station Lush 99.5FM. His track "Change is The Only Constant", which was written alongside alternative singer-songwriter Chris Tang, 21, also known as Bravepaper, was one of the songs that was featured by the station.

Despite his mysterious demeanor and song titles that sound like poetry, Fauxe confessed that he doesn't actually care about his titles and that "they're mostly bullshit". This can be shown extravagantly through the title of his latest EP "Oh F*ck Another Beat Tape".

For every single show, without fail, Fauxe will show up masked. "I'll hide in dark alleys, just like this," he gestures to his surroundings, "and put on my mask before anyone notices me," he continues.

Slowly but surely, he's showing the world that a person's exterior should not affect how others view their music. His tagline speaks the truth, "Nothing much to be said, nothing much to be seen, nothing but only music."

Deliberately Mysterious

In their 10th year, Russian Circles visits Singapore for the first time and shares with **ANGELA LOW** the rationale behind their enigmatic ways

There is a sort of mystique that surrounds Russian Circles – an intense mystery, a reasonable first impression for an outfit whose tracks carry neither lyrics nor vocals. Putting music at the forefront in place of themselves as musicians, the lack of a front man makes it a challenge for us to pin them down.

The American instrumental post-rock trio, comprising of bassist Brian Cook, guitarist Mike Sullivan and drummer Dave Turncrantz, weaves soundscapes often described as experimental, elegiac and heavy. They play with the dark side and seduce listeners into a trance that thrives on brooding escapism – the type that fit in with the dim environment of nightlife destination Zouk where Russian Circles made their Singapore debut on July 20, 2014.

And even on the live stage, the enigma attached to their works transcends. Nine times out of ten, they perform in near darkness without uttering a word to the crowd. But instead of enchanting audiences with their cryptic

nature, they come off pretentious and, at times, uncongenial.

"I know it bothers some people. We've been criticised for not engaging with the audience more," Cook admits, "And I can understand that, in some ways. I came up in the hardcore scene, where audience interaction and participation was crucial. You didn't go to hardcore shows to be a spectator; you went to sing along and stage dive. But ultimately, that's not what we're going for. We're not trying to establish some sort of distance from the audience, but we are trying to create an all-encompassing experience. We don't want to interrupt the aura we're creating by pulling out some stupid rock-talk."

Behind closed (studio) doors, however, their aura seems less intense. "Our writing sessions are 75 per cent conversation," Cook reveals of their systematic, almost humdrum, routine. "I bring this up because I don't want people to think we're in some candle-lit room, burning incense, eyes rolled back in our heads."

"I hate to de-mystify the process, but I think the discipline and deliberateness of what we do is what differentiates us from a bunch of bands that just get stoned and play with effects pedals," he adds.

It is with this utmost deliberateness that they continue to push themselves out of comfort zones in search of ideas. Ideas that saw the inclusion of brass and string instruments on their third record, Geneva (2009), and the incorporation of vocals, courtesy of American singer-songwriter Chelsea Wolfe, on their fifth album, Memorial (2013).

There is but one thing that Russian Circles will not attempt. "We'll never write a happy song," Cook declares. "Triumphant songs are one thing, but triumphant still requires adversity and darkness. A straight-up uplifting song? Never."

Perhaps, pure joy is unrealistic. Perhaps, it's in the nature of their harsh genre to be dark and adverse. But whatever they do and wherever they go, one can always count on Russian Circles to be mysterious.



Photos courtesy of Sargent House



Back to Kampong Days

Gabriel Lee and Jonathan Shin, violinist and pianist, from the Lorong Boys shares with SAMANTHA NG about how they began their musical journey as a group and their plans for the future

Photo courtesy of Nick Tan

If you've seen five boys decked out in street wear or in formal wear playing classical instruments accompanied with a guitar and a cajon during your daily commute, then you've just met the Lorong Boys.

This local band, consisting of two violinists, Gabriel Lee and David Loke, a flutist, Rit Xu, a pianist, Jonathan Shin and a percussionist, Joachim Lim, is definitely making a name for themselves in Singapore.

After a video of them playing their classical instruments spontaneously on the train (entirely sober) went viral in May, the Lorong Boys have been gaining a steady stream of fans of all ages, all around Singapore.

Before their viral video, the boys previously had band names like 'Ballz 2 U' and 'Your Grandma', were five aspiring musicians from the Yong Siew Toh Music Conservatory (YSTMC) from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The boys were performing at a senior party the night the viral video was filmed. After the event they felt they had not performed enough which led to them just getting on the train and playing for the commuters.

Since then, they have been featured on Channel 8's Frontline series, Channel News Asia's (CNA) Outliers series and even Channel 5's "On The Red Dot" series with popular local indie band, The Sam Willows.

Jonathan, 22, the pianist and guitarist of the band, was more than willing to share about how the boys went through a couple of names before finally settling on Lorong Boys.

Their very first band name was 'Ballz 2 U'. It was meant as a joke as they wanted to make the commentator feel awkward when inviting them onto stage. But because it was too crass they switched it to 'Your Grandma' and the school administrators made them change their name again. They also apologised to the public as the title was too inappropriate.

"We finally settled on Lorong Boys because we really liked the kampong feel to that name," shares Jonathan.

The Lorong Boys was formed just last year because they were looking to join the Sparkz 2014 Competition organised by NUS. SPARKZ is an annual NUS-wide talent show.

"The five of us were just walking pass the bus stop one fine day and saw the advertisement for the competition saying that first prize was \$1,000.

That was the day we came together officially as a band instead of just five friends who met in Jazz class," shares Gabriel, 26, one of the violinists.

The band takes pride in performing a wide range of musical styles, taking their audience through classical pieces, Broadway musical numbers and today's top 40 pop charts.

"You start to gain mastery of an instrument around 10 years in. What we do may seem rather easy and straightforward, but it really took a long time to get to where we are now. The key is years of practice. But it is really fate and luck that we managed to get this band together," says Jonathan.

Little known fact is that the boys never have a set list. They are all in sync; usually someone from the band will lead into the next song and everyone else just follows.

"We're only as good as the person beside us and it's really about who takes initiative to lead into the next song," Jonathan says.

The Lorong Boys are looking to spread the kampong spirit, meaning to bring people closer together with their music.

According to Jonathan, the band is mainly doing what they do in the interest of giving back to Singapore. He sees Singapore as a large part of himself and is really looking to lessen the distance between each person and to bring joy to people. "At the end of the day it is about human connections and finding your audience," he says.

The quintet are currently performing at weddings and events, but they promise to still perform spontaneously in public from time to time. In the end, they are just five instinctive and passionate musicians looking to put smiles on people's faces with their music anytime and anywhere. You never know when you'll be surprised by The Lorong Boys.

Sincerely Yours

Pianist forte chats with ANG JIA YUN about what struck a chord with her en route to her noted success

No Venture, No Gain

Bespectacled, inquisitive and wide-eyed, 14-year-old Abigail Sin steps into the stifled halls of Asia's top university, the National University of Singapore (NUS), ready to begin her bizarre four-year diploma stint.

Leaving behind the conventional route of secondary school, the lionhearted preteen went on to pursue a full-fledged musical career, and became the youngest student in the history of NUS to enter the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.

"At 14, what did I know what the [arts] industry actually meant?" the wunderkind confesses. "It was not a decision to be taken lightly."

With a prospective PhD and a handful of concerts in the works, like the upcoming *PLAY!* on Sep 9 with violinists Loh Jun Hong and Gabriel Ng, the modestly attired pianist claims that it is always "better to be busy than not".

PLAY! is a concert that weaves in "spontaneous, creative and fun" fantastical elements to entice the audiences, by exploring free expression of art in the form of "improvisations" and "own arrangements".

Aimed to evoke one's senses with "vivid images and scenes", the pieces lined up include the "Debussy L'Isle Joyeuse" (Island of Joy in French) inspired by the painter Antoine Watteau, which depicts a heart-stirring love story about travelling to the "mythical birthplace of Venus" by boat.

"[While] working on [the music] honestly and searching for that sound, you make it your own in the process. Even if it is an emotion that I don't relate to at that point in time, it's like being an actress. It doesn't have to be beautiful or pretty, it's not always just about beautiful things," Sin admits.

"[Abigail's] performance has a very magical quality. With great sensitivity and great ears, she controls the balance of all the harmonies perfectly to create wonderful nuances," Loh raves.

All the same, her abundant experience doesn't make the gifted individual any less susceptible to mistakes.

The opening Handel-Halvorsen Passacaglia was riddled with slip-ups – "messy in the faster parts and had numerous intonation issues". But Sin doesn't let that get under her skin.

Don't, however, take her self-assurance for conceitedness. Despite being deemed a "bona fide prodigy" and hailed one of Asia's Small Wonders by TIME Magazine at the tender age of 11, her humility outshines whatever labels tossed upon her name.

Her mentor then, Mr Thomas Hecht, a renowned American pianist and pedagogue, focused on "building a foundation that will take [her] much further than that stage".

"...it's not always just about beautiful things,"

Ends of the Earth

Priding her triumph on curiosity and intellectual open-mindedness, the 2010 Verbier Festival Academy in Switzerland was a treat for Sin.

Twice, she was one of the eight gifted pianists selected from all around the world to attend the summer masterclasses and workshops with highly acclaimed professors and artists themselves – leaving her utterly "star-struck".

"They call it 'the best and the worst' of the classical music industry. It has the superstars, but it does weird things to young people; in terms of how they talk and how they want to be noticed. They try really hard, because they want it, but they lose sight of what they should be doing," she remarks.

With the emerging arts scene in Singapore, Abigail ponders the weightiness of being identified as a classical musician here. She is grasping the ropes of "building an identity from various influences while navigating the politics of home", all while still "being true to [herself]".

"They try really hard... but they lose sight of what they should be doing."

- Abigail Sin

Photo courtesy of Abigail Sin

Cadence with the Fiddle

As a young blood in an elitist industry, DENISE WONG finds out how local violinist intends to reinvent the perception of classical music in Singapore



Photo courtesy of Esna Ong

"For any instrument or art, there is a huge amount of time spent on mastering it. Hard work always has to come first before talent."

- Loh Jun Hong, Violinist

Classical music may be given ample exposure here in Singapore through frequent performances by our very own local ensembles, but the gifted Loh Jun Hong still considers them to be futile.

Funded by big corporations to garner publicity, many of these concerts feature only amateur musicians. Although their efforts are admirable, such performances are mostly of inferior calibre, leaving audiences with a less than satisfactory impression of classical music. "If performed badly, it's the most boring thing ever," he cringes.

As a remedy to this problem, Loh and pianist Abigail Sin started *More Than Music*: a series of unorthodox classical music concerts, in 2013. These performances adopt a more casual and interactive approach, with the sole purpose of giving the audience a magical and intimate evening to remember.

The latest *More Than Music* concert held on May 24 saw their efforts come to fruition. With a full house, the crowd was left contented as the evening drew to a close.

"It was not love at first sight," Loh confesses, who upon his parents' request, picked up the violin at age 7. Learning to appreciate the complexity of emotions and the range of expressive techniques in classical music at such a young age did not come easy, but it was Loh's competitiveness that prevailed.

It was when he entered Yong Siew Tong Conservatory of Music at National University of Singapore that his love for the violin grew into devotion. "Being surrounded by my friends and other musicians, I started learning the nuances, hearing the emotions and the history behind the pieces," shares Loh.

At only 15 years old and a proving virtuoso at his instrument, time spent at university was socially difficult, with the age gap proving to be an obstacle to overcome.

"Music is about the life you lead."

With the constant pressure for excellence weighing down on musicians, he shares on how some get greatly traumatised from bad experiences such as performances gone horribly wrong, resulting in them tossing their instrument aside and love for the music lost.

When asked how much of being a violinist is nature rather than nurture, he chuckles and gives a knowing smile.

"It's always a debate isn't it? For any instrument or art, there is a huge amount of time spent on mastering it. Hard work always has to come first before talent," answers Loh firmly.

Ultimately, he believes that having a natural flair for music makes up only 10 per cent and the rest depends on time and practice put in to "deepen the relationship".

Having recently graduated from Juilliard School, Loh decided that it was time to come back home. "I experience music and the arts at its best and thought what such a culture could be like if I brought it back to Singapore," he shares.

Bound for Switzerland to play at the imminent Verbier Festival, an annual international festival for the classically inclined, he leaves his two cents worth.

"Music is about the life you lead."

Our Very Own Chopin

Local piano prodigy returns home for his debut solo recital and JANINE TAN finds out more about this young talent

His debut concert was extra special to him because his friends and family were part of the audience this time. Classical pianist Shaun Choo, 23, felt only excitement for his debut solo recital, *Shimmering Sounds of the Soul*, held at the Esplanade Concert Hall on Jun 28. Beyond the cherubic appearance, the extrovert captured the hearts of many that evening.

Despite having performed widely in Europe and Asia, and in numerous grand concert halls, Choo enjoys performing more in intimate settings as compared to bigger halls. "Every performance and competition is a different experience, a new feel," says the virtuoso.

Choo completed his Grade Eight in piano in just five years at a tender age of 12 – a feat as it usually takes eight years to complete. At a fresh age of 14, he became the first Singaporean to attend Salzburg Mozarteum in Austria, one of the most prestigious and respected universities specialising in Music and Dramatic Arts. Citing Polish pianist Frédéric Chopin as his biggest classical music influence, four out of seven of Choo's wins were at the International Chopin Piano Competitions – the most recent one being the "Chopin Competition Daegu, South Korea" where he was rewarded with \$32,000. He first became mesmerised by the music of Chopin when his piano teacher showed him a DVD of the 2000 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, Poland.

An overseas education also leads to greater responsibilities. Living away from his parents meant Choo had to learn to take care of himself, and his stomach. "At the beginning I would always be on Skype with my mom while she taught me how to cook over video calls," he laughs. Besides trying out new recipes in the kitchen, Choo is also a tech-geek and a nature-lover who often takes long walks in the scenic countryside of his neighbourhood in Salzburg, Austria.

Choo's passion goes beyond the black and white keys. Apart from seeking

perfection in piano playing, he also dedicates time to composing. Choo gets his inspiration from his emotions and surroundings at the time he is writing his music. "When I get inspired, I can sacrifice three days just for a new composition," he muses. He commends "The Time Traveller's Sonata" as his greatest composition yet. This masterpiece is comprised of classical music styles spanned across more than four centuries across all three movements.

"My dream is to connect with my audience and to inspire the non-musicians as well, that's the magic of music anyway," he chimes.

Choo started composing his own songs at age 7, the same year he was introduced to the piano. One of which was "Voice of the Battlefield", the anthem for Singapore's Military Signals Formation which he served at for National Service.

Having lived in Austria for a significant seven years of his life, Choo could have acquired an Austrian citizenship but instead chose to return home and serve the two-year requirement. "Singapore is home after all, it is here where all my family and closest friends are," he affirms.

Not only did he write and sing, but also produced and directed the music video for "Voice of the Battlefield", even after he reached his Operationally-ready Date (ORD). In early August this year, Choo also composed a classical piece titled "Fallen Heroes". It was written for Kranji War Memorial in tribute to the men and women who died defending Singapore and Malaysia during World War II.

As Choo returns to Austria in late August to continue his education in piano performance, he hopes to stay true in his interpretations and remain well communicated with the audience while pursuing his dreams of being a concert pianist. "For my greatest happiness is when I can convince the audience and they share my feelings."



"My dream is to connect with my audience and to inspire the non-musicians as well."

- Shaun Choo

A Whole Lot of Heart

Country singer and Guinness World Record holder Hunter Hayes shares with SAMANTHA NG what motivates and excites him

Blonde hair, blue eyes paired with a baby-face are not the only things appealing about the young and accomplished Hunter Hayes, 22, he's also an extremely personable and passionate individual.

It's uncommon to really see young artists nowadays venturing into the country music scene, because it is often misunderstood as the "old people" genre. With that, Hayes was more than ready to address this particular misconception.

"Everyone has their own versions of country music. They all assume it's about the same topic. But the reason why I love this genre so much is because it is about life. Country music is about what matters to you. I see it as a series of stories about life," says Hayes.

This particular genre is all about sharing a story and a connection because of the sharing of that story. Which is why Hayes named his new album 'Storyline'.

It is definitely not just for old people, because he is "literally convinced there's something for anybody". He believes that there is a country song out there on a record for anybody. To



him that song is the soundtrack for that one person.

"That's a very exciting moment for me, introducing them to the genre and them checking it out and learning for themselves what it is (about this genre) that is so appealing," says Hayes.

To him having someone express interest in the country music genre is his "mission accomplished". 10 points to you Hunter!

Earlier this year the young singer broke the Guinness World Record for the most concerts played in multiple cities in 24 hours. Hayes set out to break the record with the intention to raise awareness on child hunger.

"It was a really cool thing to get to work with them (ConAgra Foods) and to even be part of a campaign about world hunger. I loved that they chose me to work with them and I was really glad to have the opportunity to be able to bring awareness to child hunger, period," says Hayes.

The heartthrob recounted that even after they broke the record with 10 shows, the only thing he and his band wanted to do after was to continue playing. "The adrenaline from the fans kept us going," says Hayes.

He discussed the possibility of breaking his own record because he feels that he could have played an 11th show.

Hayes deliberately chose the song "Invisible" to be performed when the record was broken. Based on Hayes' own experience with bullying during middle and high school, he feels that "bullying can take on different forms", and that it can "exist in a lot of different ways".

"I was always feeling like a complete outcast because there was no place for me to fit in," he says. However, he felt fortunate that he was "lucky enough to share the story from being the outcast to being someone kind of cool".

Throughout the song, Hayes wanted to show the good side of coming out of bullying – strength. By using the example of himself being able to do what he loves – music.

"I want to give them the power to believe in themselves by sharing my side of the story," he says.

The fact that there is no guarantee the success of one song would lead to the success for subsequent songs is what keeps this passionate young country singer grounded.

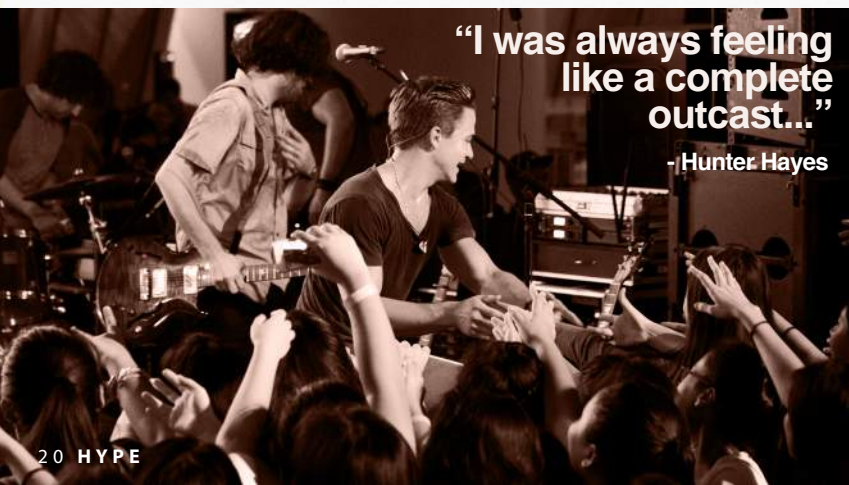
"I think it's what excites me, drives me and scares me," he said. Hayes shared that he liked to search and explore when writing music because it is simply "not exciting" to just, write a song that has already worked. He describes that as working backwards.

"I like moving forward and finding new things," he says, adding on the fact that even if he did "fall on his face" at least he would be discovering things about himself along the way and get up with new lessons.

Hayes is really inspired at the moment and may start working on a new album mid September after his tours end. Let's just say, 'Invisible' is the last thing Hunter Hayes will ever be.

"I was always feeling like a complete outcast..."

- Hunter Hayes



Goot Music in the Current

We've seen them online but we finally got to see them live here in Singapore and ANGELA LOW couldn't contain her excitement



Photos courtesy of Impact Entertainment Group

From Sam Tsui and Kurt Hugo Schneider to David Choi, Singapore has played host to a number of touring YouTube musicians in the past. Now, it is the turn for Alex Goot and Against The Current to make an appearance in this sun-drenched city-state.

Aug 21 is the date to note. It is the day singer-song writer Goot and pop rock trio Against The Current co-headlining their debut concert in Singapore. Both hailing from New York, they will be embarking on a joint tour around Asia and Australia from Aug 19 to Sept 5 this year.

Like most YouTube musicians who have made it to the little red dot, Goot and Against The Current have garnered a respectable amount of online following. Goot, with more than 1.8 million YouTube subscribers and Against The Current with about 560,000. For the 26-year-old solo artiste, it began 21 years ago when he first tickled the ivories at age 5. 11 years after, he tried his hand at music recording for the first time at 16 years of age.

Today, seven years after creating his YouTube account, Goot has grown into a multi-talented multi-instrumentalist, known for putting out one-of-a-kind renditions of top 40 hits. One of them even landed him a Best Fan Cover Award from Viacom's 2011 O Music Awards – it was his interpretation of Britney Spears' "Hold It Against Me".

So, don't be fooled by his coy countenance. Behind those run-of-the-mill, black-framed glasses is a man on a mission. With two original full-length albums – In Your Atmosphere (2012) and Wake Up Call (2014) – selling better than his cover tracks, Goot has proved the online community of his capabilities as more than just a cover artiste. Consider his mission accomplished.

Gradually rising through the ranks as well is Against The Current, fronted by Chrissy Costanza and backed by Daniel Gow on the guitar as well as William Ferri on the drums. They have been on YouTube since August 2011, but were only officially formed in 2012. Despite their youth as a group, they are gaining traction increasingly day by day in the online sphere.

The powerhouse pipes of Costanza liken itself to those of Hayley Williams, singer of pop-punk outfit Paramore. And paired with their hardedge, head-banging style of music, Against The Current is swimming closer to the mainstream, especially with the release of their debut Infinity EP this summer.

Besides 'goot' music, expect the great company of fan girls and boys (this writer, included) flooding *SCAPE The Ground Theatre when the co-headliners momentarily exchange their video recording equipment and the virtual world for a night on stage in Singapore.

Tools of the Trade

The three C's of making a YouTube video

Camera

As long as it does the job, the price and quality of the camera doesn't matter.

Content

Whatever you do, always remember to be creative and entertaining.

Computer

Besides uploading videos, computers are good for editing them as well.

A Star Is Born

HENG HUI MEI learns more about a rising star as she chats with Mario Ogle from South Africa

Meet Mario Ogle, the South African pop artist whose debut album was nominated in the category of Best R & B / Neo-Soul Album of the South African Music Awards 2010.

Many female fans will scream and ogle at Ogle. He sports a snazzy but laid-back look, which seems to work for him. This young star was featured in CLEO magazine as one of the 50 Most Eligible Bachelors in 2010. I must say Ogle is a heartthrob even up to now.

Besides the 25-year-old chap's fab looks, his first album, Can't Stop Loving You, achieved Gold status in South Africa, which meant the sales had exceeded 20,000 copies. Together with his second album, Superman, he had garnered sales of more than 35,000 CDs.

This boy next door described his first album as a "labour of love". He felt its authenticity had led it to attain the Gold status. "I think people can sense that realness in the music and it's so much more relatable that way," says the musician with a twinkle in his eyes.

Working on his third release which will probably be out in August, it will be an Extended Play (EP) of five new tracks. Ogle elaborated that he took an "organic approach to the creation". With aims to expand himself and switch things up, he took a different approach in his writing style. "There's definitely gonna be a shift in sound, melody and production. It's music I love and grew up listening to, so it's really gritty and natural," he enthuses.

Would he be worried that his fans might not like this sense of unfamiliarity? He replies, "I think the people who enjoy my music will love

it because it showcases who I am as a musician, singer, songwriter. I also think that this new approach will garner more listeners because it's more authentic to me."

This EP is being recorded with one of South Africa's top pop producers and will be released on iTunes worldwide.

The multi-talented Ogle writes, produces, engineers and does the behind-the-scenes jobs for his works. Not only that, he composes songs for other celebrities. He divulged that he was in touch with Tabitha Nauser, finalist of Singapore Idol in 2009, and had written a song for her to perform.

Being a songwriter, where then does he get his inspiration from? Ogle fleshes out its sources, "I normally write about what's going on in my friends' lives, my friends' breakups or makeups [in their relationships], or what I see in a movie. The film could spark an idea in my brain or I could see something scrolling through Tumblr."

A fanatic of South African tunes himself, he feels that they have shaped his music. Living in this culturally-diverse society, he dubbed his music as a "melting pot and eclectic combination of all these genres".

On how he views his compositions thus far, he reveals, "Being content and satisfied with what you're doing is the worst thing ever. I'm constantly seeking perfection and that's how you end up being better. Even though perfection is not possible because nothing's perfect, you've got to want it. The finish line is being moved forward all the time, but all of a sudden you look back and you've done so many great things."

"Even though perfection is not possible because nothing's perfect, you've got to want it."

Photo courtesy of Adventure Music



Photos courtesy of Roddie Chua

Young and a breath of fresh air, The Steve McQueens tells ANGELA LOW of their plan to set out for a recording adventure in London

The Mcqueen of England

Much like the quintessential Singaporean rojak (Malay for 'mixture'), local band The Steve McQueens is an eclectic union of young talents and industry veterans.

Besides keyboardist Joshua Wan as the oldest at 47 and drummer Aaron James Lee, 19, as the youngest, there's vocalist Eugenia Yip, 25, bassist Jase Sng, 27, and saxophonist Fabian Lim, 41. The quintet shares an extensive array of influences. From Amy Winehouse to James Brown and Thelonious Monk to name just a few. But all differences aside, their individual uniqueness harmonise impeccably like a well-balanced platter of pineapple cubes, mango slices and you tiao (Chinese crullers) chunks – a few crucial ingredients of the dish.

Their compatibility is evident in the swift release of their debut album, Einstein Moments, within five months of their formation in April 2013. Now, barely two years old, they are bound for London in August 2014, driven to conquer more milestones.

"Common ground is aplenty. We share new music we are currently listening to so everyone is aware of our individual leanings," says Wan, "but it really isn't hard to come up with commonalities. I guess almost from the beginning, our 'individual styles' came together to form the Steve McQueens sound, and that new 'group sound' was immediately a cool sound in all our ears."

This very "group sound" is what they call 'NeoVintage' Soul, an original genre coined by the members. Wan describes, "It's sort of jazz infused neo-soul, heavy on the improvisation of jazz and also the groove of good vintage soul."

"We almost never play the same song the same way, but we always make sure the grooves feel good. So, NeoVintage Soul, to us, is a sort of groovy melange of tight and loose feel-good jazz, funk and vintage soul or R&B."

It didn't take long for the music scene to take notice of the band. In early 2014, they were invited to perform at the Singapore International Jazz Festival where artistes from around the globe popped by between Feb 27 and Mar 2.

Luck was on their side on the day of their show as among the crowd lurked members of the British jazz funk group, Incognito. Considered legends in the jazz arena, they have been helmed by front man Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunick throughout their longevity of 35 years.

"[They] really dug our music and invited us to go hang with them and check out the scene in London," Lee shares.

"[Maunick] is a producer we want to work with and maybe see where it goes from there."

A recording session with Maunick above all else, their August trip to the capital of England will be dedicated to the development of their sophomore album. Lee says, "We've recorded nine new songs at Beep City (Beep Studios). We'll bring these tracks to London with us and maybe some will develop into material that we can collar on with Bluey."

He continues, "[It's] exciting to see what the scene is [like] overseas, get new influences in our ears, and be exposed to new creative communities."

Expanding their horizons and adding new flavours to their music, The Steve McQueens is one "rojak" of a band that's bound to do more than please the aural palates of local listeners.

"We almost never play the same song the same way, but we always make sure the grooves feel good."

- Joshua Wan, Keyboardist



Time to Vamp It Up



Photos courtesy of Universal Music Asia

James McVey, lead guitarist of The Vamps, talks to **ANG JIA YUN** about forming a word-class boy band: the Internet, fan girls, and touring

The camera shutter blinks at him, its muzzle agape and anticipating. Strumming his trusty guitar, the 16-year-old boy sings about lost love and soldiers at war. He translates 480 pixels on a computer screen into sheer emotion with blissful, self-composed music.

One day, James McVey, 20, is recording in the confinement of his bathroom, and the next, the sound of camera shutters are amplified by thousands, and he's playing in his own band, The Vamps.

The Vamps is a British boy band of the "acoustic-driven indie pop" genre, who debuted two years ago, according to their official Twitter ("TheVampsband"). It consists of lead guitarist James, lead vocals Brad Simpson, 19, drummer Tristan Evans, 19, and bass guitarist Connor Ball, 18.

They garnered a wealth of attention and admiration for their song covers on YouTube ("TheVampsOfficial") from both fans and famed artists alike. On top of featuring Demi Lovato in their fourth single "Somebody to You", they've also performed as opening acts for several pop artists, like Taylor Swift, The Wanted and Selena Gomez.

This autumn, The Vamps are taking the United Kingdom by storm, and headlining their own tour, to the delight of 11 major cities. Despite establishing themselves as a cover band, they've progressed to playing original songs from their debut album Meet The Vamps.

"We're very excited, [as] we've never toured on our own before. It's something new to us, and it's something that for the whole year, [we've been] looking forward to very much," James professes.

Counting down the days till September 2014 when the tour officially kicks off, the lead guitarist is living the life he has always dreamt of – "to be able to have best friends, who can travel around the world as a band".

At the beginning, James scouted high and low for potential band members at various gigs, only to discover his current label – or rather, soul – mates "from [his] house".

"I literally saw Brad one day on the Internet. It was a video of Ed Sheeran's cover, 'Lego House'. He also had his own song called 'Loaded Gun' that I thought was really great. As for Tristan, it was a video of him drumming in a competition [that won me over]," he shares.

Although youngest member Connor met the rest "through a mutual friend" according to Yahoo Celebrity UK, the entirety of The Vamps aren't strangers to independent musical production on their respective YouTube channels. TheCelebrityCafe.com reported

However, the surge of online rivalry doesn't hinder the boys' collective ascent. "We're just doing our thing, we're just writing music. We don't think about the competition too much, because we want to make friends with as many people as we can. We hope that people will enjoy our music for who we are, and like us," James explains.

These days, the search for individuality among British boy bands is a long and tedious process, especially with ceaseless comparisons, like with popular English-Irish pop group One Direction. Strangely enough, despite all the chatter about being "the new One Direction", wrote about in a Metro News article published on Apr 11, 2014, James clarifies that they "have never met before", though they're a "big fan of the guys".

One thing for sure is that the 'fan girl culture' is part and parcel of every thriving boy band. "We're very lucky that a lot of fans follow us around and stuff, and it's quite crazy how fans jump on our van. If we're driving down the road, there are people running down the road," the Dorset-born gentleman divulges.

The social media enthusiast is also, surprisingly, a romantic at heart, where the fans are concerned. "When we're given notes that people have written or made, or when they're spending a lot of time creating things – that's my favourite thing."

The wild ride of stardom perseveres, and time and tide wait for no man. The Vamps are working on their second album as we speak, and they're also in talks for a world tour – which most importantly, includes Singapore – thanks to, once again, "the Internet".

"It's great, because it shows us that on the other side of the world, in places like Southeast Asia – Singapore, and even Indonesia – we've a lot of fans out there, which is crazy, so it's something that we're really trying to do [and] plan," James expresses.

Well, boys, you can count on HYPE to cheer you on when the time comes, because even 1080 pixels can't satiate us.



"We are just doing our thing, we're just writing music."

- Guitarist, James Mcvey

Storeys to Success



A triple threat in the entertainment industry, Kenny Khoo, fills HENG HUI MEI in on how he tops music charts in Taiwan with his debut album, Ten Storeys



“It still feels like a dream.”

An average guy who used to perform at clubs and pubs in Singapore, Kenny Khoo, 25, has now made it big in the Taiwan entertainment scene and is lauded by the media as a “notable emerging new Singapore talent”.

This talented newcomer spoke about the 10 songs that made up the record and the idea behind his album. The inspiration that he got for the songs ranged from his personal romances, his friends' breakups to his dreams. Since Singapore is a city with a majority living in high-rise flats, the concept is that every level represents the different stages of love: happiness, warmth and anger.

Khoo's album was launched on Apr 28 in Taiwan. Just a month after its release, it shot to number one on the Taiwan G-Music CD sales chart and ranked first on the iRadio weekly music chart, beating A-list artistes who launched their albums at the same time, such as Hong Kong singer-songwriter-actor Eason Chan.

Locally, you might find his face pretty familiar if you had watched the local comedy-musical film, “That Girl In Pinafore” because he was one of the lead characters. You might also have stumbled upon his appearance on Taiwan's 100% Entertainment hosted by Taiwanese actor-singer, Show Luo.

Khoo remembers his invitation to the variety show with Luo, “It's very intimidating because I've seen them since young. To be honest, I was quite shaken by the whole thing. I can't imagine I was standing right next to him, but I enjoyed every bit of it.”

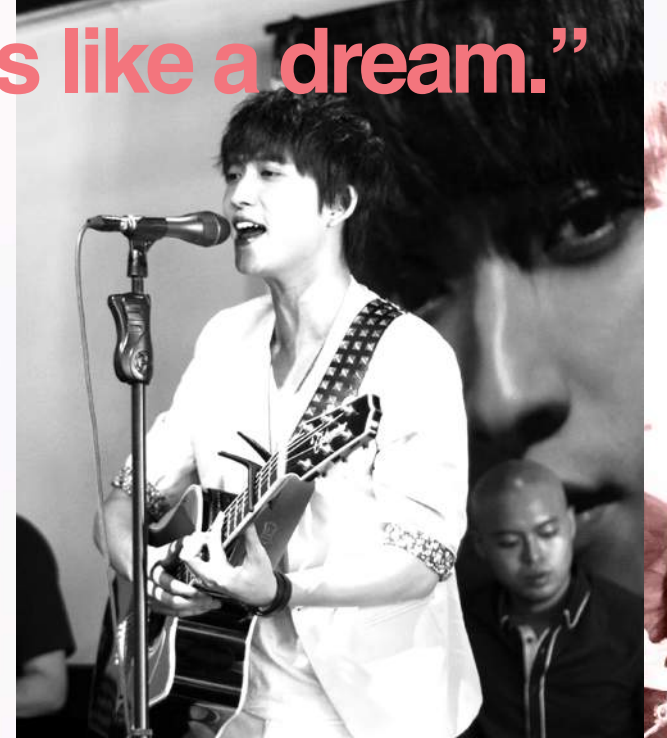
When asked about how he felt being praised in Taiwan as a Singaporean singer with great potential, he glanced at the floor and shook his head. “I am honoured. I still cannot believe it and I don't dare to hold this position because it's too much for me to handle,” remarks Khoo.

His Taiwanese fans have created a fan club for him, and dubbed themselves ‘Barbies’. Ken is how we address the male doll that is the boyfriend of Barbie but in Taiwan, Ken is known as Kenny. That clarifies why his fans label themselves as such. However, it would be strange for his male supporters to call themselves Barbies. To avoid neglecting them, Khoo has come up with another title for them, his ‘Buddies’.

Although he is at the peak of his musical profession, he does not forget his fans. “It's my fans' ardent support that I am very thankful for. When they told me they heard my song over the radio, I was very touched,” Khoo humbly says. “Even though I didn't tell my fans the time of my flight, my fans waited for me from the wee hours of the morning at the airport. I was shocked and moved at the same time.”

“It still feels like a dream. I am very fortunate to be able to do what I like to do,” Khoo expresses. He is also grateful to his mentors, Eric Ng and Xiaohan, who have moulded him into what he is today.

Apart from vocal training, they have contributed quite substantially to the success of his album. After Khoo had come up with his compositions and lyrics, Xiaohan would tweak them to match the concept and overall idea of the album. “The whole process was fast and joyful because Khoo input his own thoughts [on how to improve the songs] and he was willing to accept new ideas,” recounts Xiaohan in Mandarin.



On the reason why people enjoy his work, Khoo comments, “I guess [it's] the sincerity because I put my heart and soul in every song I sing and I try my best to write as catchy a melody as possible.” When HYPE quizzed him further about his definition of “catchy”, he elaborates, “When it raises goosebumps and if you feel it stirs the gut. If it's a rock song, you feel like moving. If it's an emotional song, you feel like crying.”

As to whether he had successfully accomplished that, he told the story of how he fought back tears in the recording studio for the song, “Looking back”, because the lyrics tugged at his heartstrings.

Being reserved in nature, he reveals his challenges in this industry so far, “The ability to capture audience attention because everything you do has to be magnified. You have to amplify your body language, the way you speak. You've gotta be very thick-skinned because you're not [just] singing for yourself.”

He continues, “Hitting the high notes [is also a challenge], which I guess goes for every singer.”

Challenges aside, it seems Khoo has garnered quite a bit of support in the local music scene. On top of having his posters put up at bus stops all across our little red dot, Singaporean artistes have sent him congratulatory messages for his first album and bright musical career.

In May, local singer Do Cheng Yi, more commonly referred to as A-Do, graced Khoo's press conference in Taiwan. In Khoo's first-ever Singapore press meet the following month, local singer Joi Chua also conveyed her best wishes to him through a video clip.

With much diligence, dedication and determination, local artiste Kenny Khoo's future looks very promising. He has a lineup of bookings for his performances, including his recent visit to Ngee Ann Polytechnic in July. Nevertheless, he welcomes more opportunities to perform as he hopes to scale the next ‘storey’ to success.



Getting by with Guy



Join music aficionado EMILLIO RODRIGUES as he explores the personal life of former Australian Idol winner Guy Sebastian

Photos courtesy of MTV Asia

Australian singer-songwriter Guy Sebastian may be best known for his chunky physique and over-the-top Afro hairdo but the former Australian Idol winner has shed that bulky image in an attempt to rebrand himself.

Sebastian has a certain air of confidence and modesty about him. Lolling back in his armchair after an early morning, the 32-year-old was dipped top-to-toe in ripped denim, with a black cap to complete his boy-next-door look. Sebastian was raised in Australia and sounds just like your typical aussie (except for the beautiful singing voice of course) too, so much so that he is often confused for being born in the land down under as well.

Despite falling in love with music at a very young age, Sebastian insists that he would be in disbelief if someone told him he was going to be a musical sensation in the future. According to The Adviser, Sebastian was allowed to learn instruments and sing at church with his brothers. His parents could sing too, but he says, "It was no Jackson Five upbringing."

Sebastian adds, "Dad used to play the guitar and I didn't know until recently. He never used to pull out the guitar or anything and play for us."

Abiding by his parents wishes, Sebastian took a degree in Medical

Radiology but knew right away that it was just not his calling card. After numerous nights of watching the sick suffer, Sebastian decided he had to take a year off to do music.

A decade or so later, Sebastian has transformed into one of Australia's best male artists. He has released seven platinum albums with six number one hits in the ARIA Charts landing him in third place amongst all Australian acts for number one hits.

The hunky singer hit up our shores in collaborations with MTV for an episode of MTV Sessions to record his performance at the Waterfront Studio. In front of over 250 fans, the singer's debut performance here in Singapore left the crowd urging him for more. The 32-year-old artist sang hit such as "Battle Scars" and his latest single "Like A Drum" to promote his upcoming album. Catching the audience on their heels when he broke out into a cover of Macklemore and Ryan Lewis' "Thrift Shop" midway through his second set.

Sebastian ended the night with a song initially not on the set list – "Art Of Love". With the help of back-up singer Carmen Smith, he delivered a tantalising performance that left the crowd eating out of his fingertips. With pictures with audience members and a kiss from a diehard fan.



Sebastian solidified his stature as a wonderful performer with a charming personality to boot in my eyes.

"I love performing here in Asia. I see it as a way to reconnect with my fans on this side of the globe. It's funny because some of them would go up to me and ask, 'Where have I been?' like I've been on a really long holiday or something. I've just been writing a lot of music."

It seems that fans were not affected by his 'disappearing act' with many female fans staying after the concert to get a photograph as a memento for such a special night.

Despite being a household name when it comes to pop music and ballads in Australia, Sebastian is keen to continue to explore different music genres. With "Battle Scars" gaining international success, Sebastian has a positive first step in his conquest of music genres. Fans can expect diversity in Sebastian's new album as he hints to include more up tempo songs while not forgetting the occasional rap and ballad as well.

"I owe my change in music to the influence I get on the radio. There is a huge country-folk mix with dance movement going on right now. I guess for me, it's a natural progression. I change with every album, and my music does as well."

Catch Sebastian's MTV performance clips online at web2.mtv.com/microsite/mtvsessions-guy-sebastian/



"There is a huge country-folk mix with dance movement going on right now. I guess for me, it's a natural progression. I change with every album, and my music does as well."

- Guy Sebastian

Still 'Shining'

With Japanese 'Visual Kei' rock band Alice Nine back in Singapore for a full-out live concert, SARAH CHU finds out how the band manages to keep going strong, even after 10 years

As part of their first-ever Asia tour 'Supernova Symphonia', in commemoration of their 10th anniversary since debut, Alice Nine landed on Singapore's shores for the second time – only to be greeted by a horde of screaming fans who have been patiently awaiting their arrival during the fan meeting at JCube on Jun 27.

Being one of the most popular Visual Kei rock bands in Japan, most would presume they would have the cool and stoic image of being unapproachable, but they were very friendly during a closed-door media briefing.

Consisting of members Shou, Saga, Hiroto, Nao and Tora, the Visual Kei band was formed in 2004 and has released many singles and albums that have peaked the Oricon music charts.

Having been in the industry for 10 years now, their secret to success is simply by having no secret at all. "We talked about anything and everything, there are no secrets between (the members), so that's probably the thing – we don't hide anything from each other," remarks Shou, the lead vocalist of the band.

As if emphasising this, drummer Nao made silly actions, and the entire band to convulsed with laughter.

Shou mentioned that their lifestyles have not changed much; they are still people who love music, and people who love their band a lot. "We are still putting in (much) effort, as we feel we are not there yet," he responds.

This must be one of the reasons why it was easy for them to be so bonded even after 10 years, which is a significant milestone for a band in an unpredictable industry such as this.

Appearing as such a closely-knit and immensely popular band, it seemed as if there was no period in time when any of them felt inferior, or lacked confidence in themselves.

It seemed they did, however, when bassist Saga replied in broken English that he would sing songs by legendary Japanese rock duo B'z at karaoke sessions whenever he felt down.

"Singing (their songs) makes any Japanese happy," he exclaims, which resulted in spurts of stifled giggling.

The Coliseum situated at the Hard Rock Hotel in Sentosa was in uproar the night of Jun 28, as the five member rock band took to the stage and swooned fans with their powerful presence, charisma and endless fan service, from shaking their hips to constantly hugging each other.



Kick-starting the concert with their latest hit single, 'Shining', the whole concert was an adrenaline rush and left no time for rest as they went full force into their upbeat, fast-paced rock songs. Other hit songs performed included "Shooting Star", "Shunkashuutou" and "The Beautiful Name".

Still keeping their A-list status in the Visual Kei world after 10 years, as to which was more important, having fun while making music or popularity, Nao burst out, "While enjoying making music, we also create popularity!" Guitarist Hiroto adds, "Aren't they both equal?"

Looking at the band's perfect chemistry, it is no wonder they have been together for 10 years, and might even continue making good rock music together for many more years to come.

"There are no secrets between us,"

- Shou, Lead Vocalist

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Strap on to your seats and expect to be enlightened as NATHANIA TIRTAPUTRA unfolds popular new genres in Singapore's music scene

Just like a seed planted in fertile soil, so is music when it is placed in the hands of an eager artist. Shower it with an abundance of love and attention and I assure you, your music cannot help but sprout where it is planted.

An increasing number of music enthusiasts (people who listen to music for at least three hours a day) are taking things into their own hands by producing what they call 'new music'. Besides its literal meaning, 'new music' is an umbrella term coined by the music industry during the 1980s to describe acts that had come to commercial success.

Besides big leagues like Alternative, Rock, and Pop-Punk, waves of fresh, uncharted genres have begun to make their presence known in the industry.

This can be seen through the birth of genres such as Electronica, that was established during the late 1970s.

Electronica makes full use of advancements in music technology. It encompasses the usage of instruments such as synthesizers, music sequencers, drum machines and digital audio workstations to produce songs. In layman terms, it's like producing ground beef with a grinder instead of churning it with your own hands.

Despite only being around for thirty years, artists who have emerged from the Electronica genre have grown vastly eminent in the music industry.

For example, Daft Punk – an electronic music duo. After accomplishing their first commercially successful single 'Da Funk' in 1995, they continued to thrive along the years, winning a Grammy for 'Best Electronica Album' in 2007 and even more recently, 'Best Song' at the 2013 MTC Europe Music Awards. Madonna – incorporating the technical aesthetics of Electronica during its early stages (1998), Madonna kicked Electronic music off from its underground status into the mainstream music scene with her album, 'Ray of Light'.

Besides Electronica's eminent growth in the music industry, it has too, started its own wave here in Singapore. Many are indulging in the Electronica scene and harvesting a new appreciation for it.

"At least half of the tracks on music lists now are made by Electronic producers," observes Singapore Electronic

producer, Gema, 23, who started fueling his passion for music at 13. "There are tons of Electronic producers in Singapore, all with talents and beautiful tracks."

"I realised how intriguing it was to create sound and musical elements electronically," claims Singapore Electronic producer, Fauxe, who has been active in the scene for two years. "So I went into the recording game because I wanted to mix electronic and live adaptations into one," adds Fauxe.

It doesn't end here. Since Electronic music pushed itself to shore – touching listeners by generating a love for the genre, waves of new sub-genres are beginning to emerge from it.

An example of this is genre Alternative Ambient Chillwave. Guitar, drums, keyboard, and synthesizers are some of the musical instruments used to stitch this genre together.

"It's an infusement of all the genres we like put into one," shares Indian Ocean, a start-up duo playing Alternative Ambient Chillwave. Cinematic sounds and organic instruments (sounds not generated by a computer) heavily inspire the two. "We incorporate various bands, take a little bit of everything and put it in our music," claims Indian Ocean.

Singapore's addition of providing a supportive platform helps musicians venture into different genres. Case in point: the Support Local Music movement, which recently ended its run on Mar 16, 2014. This movement helped to promote local music and musicians, and encouraged them by providing a platform to show off their talent.

"If it was five years ago, I would have been hesitant about Singapore being a good platform of music exposure. But recently people are starting to notice the industry," believes Singaporean YouTuber, Jean Goh, 23. Starting as a pastime in 2009 by writing original pieces and covering songs, Jean has fostered her passion for music into something tangible, an internship with a music management publishing licensing company. She hopes that she can "turn my hobby into something I do for a living".

"Music is influenced by what the musicians themselves listen to, and partly the culture that they belong to as well," exclaims Jean.

Be expectant of new genres expanding throughout Singapore as we continue to open our arms to new music.

Photo courtesy of MTV Asia

Photos courtesy of MTV Asia

HEART OF GOULD

En route to stardom, lean in as **NATHANIA TIRTAPUTRA** shares more about Ellie Goulding and her journey as an electronic-pop artist

Electro-pop heroine, Ellie Goulding, ensconced herself on a brown linen couch after gracing the room with her arrival. The singer, who previously came to perform her debut studio album 'Lights' in 2013, now continues to galvanise her fans in Singapore by returning this year on Jun 13 to perform her latest album 'Halcyon Days'.

"I had this whole idea in my head that I was going to write about science," admits Goulding when asked about her journey behind Halycon Days. The 27-year-old artist confessed to having a love for mathematics and science but was never really good at it. "I've written songs about break-ups, relationships and love, but I'd like to write less romantically," Goulding reveals her closet geek disposition with a sheepish smile.

Since her eminent success in the music industry – winning the Critics' Choice Award (just a year into her career) and Best British Female Solo Artist at the 2010 and 2014 BRIT Awards respectively – Goulding has made it to the forefront of her career. Her presence in the industry was further established by touring through various continents such as North and South America, New Zealand and Asia.

"There was a point where I was pretty down and I didn't think I could continue to tour," says Goulding. She runs her fingers through her hair, crinkling a slight smile, almost as if she was scared of letting her fans down.

A look of jolly followed when the singer-songwriter shared her moment of clarity in the midst of a bus ride through Canada. "I thought I couldn't continue, but I looked out the window and it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen," smiles Goulding. "I pulled myself together and thought 'I'm so lucky to be in such beautiful places.'"

Onstage, Goulding displays the same mix of goofiness and glam that she does during conversation. But this was only after overcoming one of her greatest challenges – insecurity.

"I would've not been able to walk into this room this time three years ago," says Goulding. Her early years were spent learning and adjusting to the new lifestyle this career would bring her. "I didn't think it came with having to look a certain way or having to be pretty or wearing designer clothes," adds Goulding.

"I got to a point where I stopped really caring," shares Goulding, investing her attention solely to her music instead of focusing on what people say about her.

Growing out of her shy persona has evidently helped her towards being the popular artist she is today. "My voice is my instrument," says Goulding humbly, fiddling with her bright blonde hair. Musical experimentation is "key to what I do" while she ventures to create a new record.

Goulding admits that writing something that isn't very good or silly is risky, but she does it anyway. "Sometimes I sing things that are just crazy, but then one take out of 20 will be really cool and I'll keep that one!"

But first, some time off is in order. "I'd like to stay in one place for more than a week," admits Goulding. She plans to travel and inherit some inspiration for the next record after this round of tour in Oct 2014. Let's hope Goulding lets loose during her travelling time, before she busts out a running man for her next record.

"There was a point where I was pretty down and I didn't think I could continue to tour."

RADIO HEATWAVE

HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?

We've got shows to suit all your interests. Like gaming? *GeekOut* by Razer is the show for you. Need some girl talk? *Femme Fatale's* got your back, ladies! Boys, don't feel left out... the *Muscle Hustle* show will show those girls who's boss. Or if you just need the latest details on campus, tune in to *Campus Craze*.

Giveaways, guest interviews, events and more! Tune in to Radio Heatwave today. *It's the hottest thing on campus.*

 Hear us live at radioheatwave.com

 facebook.com/radioheatwave

 [@radioheatwave_np](https://instagram.com/radioheatwave_np)

 [@radioheatwave](https://twitter.com/radioheatwave)

 [MicroHeatwave](https://youtube.com/MicroHeatwave)

RADIO HEATWAVE

HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?

We've got shows to suit all your interests. Like gaming? *GeekOut* by Razer is the show for you. Need some girl talk? *Femme Fatale's* got your back, ladies! Boys, don't feel left out... the *Muscle Hustle* show will show those girls who's boss. Or if you just need the latest details on campus, tune in to *Campus Craze*.

Giveaways, guest interviews, events and more! Tune in to Radio Heatwave today. *It's the hottest thing on campus.*

 Hear us live at radioheatwave.com

 facebook.com/radioheatwave

 [@radioheatwave_np](https://instagram.com/radioheatwave_np)

 [@radioheatwave](https://twitter.com/radioheatwave)

 [MicroHeatwave](https://youtube.com/MicroHeatwave)

The background of the entire page is a dark, textured surface with several bright yellow and white lightning bolts striking across it. The top half of the page features a large, bold, white title "RADIO HEATWAVE" in a sans-serif font. Below the title, there's a section titled "HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?" in a stylized, handwritten font. This section contains two paragraphs of text about campus shows and a promotional message for Radio Heatwave. At the bottom left, there are social media links for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The right side of the page is a vertical strip containing a collage of various items: a silver boombox, a black camera, a white mask, a red bow tie, a small framed picture, a red cup, a black swastika symbol, a book titled "BROADWAY'S", a pair of orange shoes, a blue book titled "na F+", and a red ribbon tied around a clear glass bottle. The overall aesthetic is retro and artistic.

RADIO HEATWAVE

HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?

We've got shows to suit all your interests. Like gaming? *GeekOut* by Razer is the show for you. Need some girl talk? *Femme Fatale's* got your back, ladies! Boys, don't feel left out... the *Muscle Hustle* show will show those girls who's boss. Or if you just need the latest details on campus, tune in to *Campus Craze*.

Giveaways, guest interviews, events and more! Tune in to Radio Heatwave today. *It's the hottest thing on campus.*

 Hear us live at radioheatwave.com

 facebook.com/radioheatwave

 [@radioheatwave_np](https://instagram.com/radioheatwave_np)

 [@radioheatwave](https://twitter.com/radioheatwave)

 [MicroHeatwave](https://youtube.com/MicroHeatwave)



RADIO HEATWAVE

HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?

We've got shows to suit all your interests. Like gaming? *GeekOut* by Razer is the show for you. Need some girl talk? *Femme Fatale's* got your back, ladies! Boys, don't feel left out... the *Muscle Hustle* show will show those girls who's boss. Or if you just need the latest details on campus, tune in to *Campus Craze*.

Giveaways, guest interviews, events and more! Tune in to Radio Heatwave today. *It's the hottest thing on campus.*

Hear us live at radioheatwave.com

facebook.com/radioheatwave
 @radioheatwave

@radioheatwave_np
 MicroHeatwave

[illegible]

RADIO HEATWAVE

HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?

We've got shows to suit all your interests. Like gaming? *GeekOut* by Razer is the show for you. Need some girl talk? *Femme Fatale's* got your back, ladies! Boys, don't feel left out... the *Muscle Hustle* show will show those girls who's boss. Or if you just need the latest details on campus, tune in to *Campus Craze*.

Giveaways, guest interviews, events and more! Tune in to Radio Heatwave today. *It's the hottest thing on campus.*

 Hear us live at radioheatwave.com

 facebook.com/radioheatwave

 [@radioheatwave_np](https://instagram.com/radioheatwave_np)

 [@radioheatwave](https://twitter.com/radioheatwave)

 [MicroHeatwave](https://youtube.com/MicroHeatwave)



RADIO HEATWAVE

HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?

We've got shows to suit all your interests. Like gaming? *GeekOut* by Razer is the show for you. Need some girl talk? *Femme Fatale's* got your back, ladies! Boys, don't feel left out... the *Muscle Hustle* show will show those girls who's boss. Or if you just need the latest details on campus, tune in to *Campus Craze*.

Giveaways, guest interviews, events and more! Tune in to Radio Heatwave today. *It's the hottest thing on campus.*

 Hear us live at radioheatwave.com

 facebook.com/radioheatwave

 [@radioheatwave_np](https://instagram.com/radioheatwave_np)

 [@radioheatwave](https://twitter.com/radioheatwave)

 [MicroHeatwave](https://youtube.com/MicroHeatwave)



The image is a complex collage. On the left, there's a dark purple background with a silver boombox and the words "RADIO HEATWAVE" in large white letters. Below that, it says "HOTTEST HITS & LATEST NEWS ON CAMPUS?". Further down, there's a paragraph about campus shows like GeekOut, Femme Fatale, and Muscle Hustle, followed by another paragraph about giveaways and guest interviews. At the bottom left are social media links for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The right side of the image is a white background filled with various objects: a red velvet dress, a white mask, a red bow tie, a small camera, a film strip, a pink shoe, a black swastika symbol, a Broadway show poster, a book titled "F+", and a red ribbon with a diamond.



Photos courtesy of Red Spade Entertainment

cookin' up a beat

These boys and girls turn comedy and percussion into a serving of greens, ANGELA LOW takes the first peek behind the scenes

It's bad manners to play with one's food. But in *NANTA (COOKIN')*, all manners are abandoned. The only place where these supposed shenanigans are wholly encouraged and cheered for, *NANTA* originated as Korea's first non-verbal musical and blossomed into the country's longest-running show.

Founded by Mr Seung-whan Song, the producer of *NANTA* and Co-Chief Executive Officer (co-CEO) of PMC Production, it has been serving audiences stomp-worthy treats since 1997.

The traditional rhythms of the Korean Samulnori genre is given a finger-licking facelift to "make it more approachable to the global audience", says Mr Yong-seok Choi, the director of PMC Production.

He explains, "Mr Song wanted to spread the culture of Korea through sounds that can be heard in the daily lives of Koreans. That's why all the rhythm and beats of *NANTA* were inspired by the sounds every

Korean remembers from their childhood... made by the mothers slicing, mincing and dicing to prepare delicious meals for the family."

Since hitting Singapore shores in 2001, the production has made regular returns, the latest being this year in July, at Resorts World Theatre.

Its story tells of three chefs: Head Chef, Sexy Guy and Hot Sauce, who are flung into a frenzy when tasked at the eleventh hour with preparing to prepare for a wedding reception, only to be put in-charge of the manager's rascally nephew. Clearly, it's a recipe for hilarity of a catastrophic scale.

The collection of *NANTA* actors is split into nine sets of cast members. The group that recently graced the Resorts World Theatre our shores comprises of Han-beom Lee (Manager), 43, Chang-hwan Go (Head Chef), 43, Hwi-joo Cho (Hot Sauce), 26, Dong-hyun Yoo (Sexy Guy), 34, and Dong-won Lee (Nephew), 35.

The Starter

Save for dance major Hwi-joo Cho, the performers were mainly actors first with minimal musical background. That's where *NANTA*'s six-month training programme came into play. The brutal boot camp called for intense dedication of at least 12 hours every day – six hours of drama, six hours of drumming – moulding potential performers into adept percussionists and actors.

"The worst part of the training was practising by drumming on rubber tyres," Han-beom Lee laments.

Yet for Cho, the best and worst memory comes in a blend of bittersweet encounters. "The best and worst parts are the same. When you cannot master a certain skill, you feel depressed and lost. However, when you complete the skill through continuous practice, you feel like you are at the peak of a mountain."

"During my training period," Cho shares with good cheer, "I practised at home almost every day. The funny thing is that I wasn't the kind of person who cooks every meal, but one day, I found myself chopping vegetables and ingredients like a professional cook."

To attain the calibre of international entertainers, one had to learn from the best. And who better to learn from than the now retired, original cast of *NANTA*?

"They always told me that *NANTA* is not a performance that can be understood through a short period of one to two years," recalls Go. "They said that when you become comfortable with your skills and are acclimatised to the rhythm and beats, each time you perform you will experience a whole new world of *NANTA*. That is what I am experiencing each time I perform."

The Maincourse

Besides the cabbages and cucumbers, the actors play with pots, pans, knives and other silverware as well, turning them into drumming apparatuses of sorts.

"In order to play percussion with kitchenware, you need to find and make the unique rhythm and beats. The actors bang and bend the kitchenware in search for the right sound," says Go.

Sounds like fun on the surface, but there's nothing frivolous about the process. Precision is key.

"The most important part of rehearsing is tuning. The sound director communicates with each of the actors and checks the overall sound of the performance," notes Han-beom Lee.

As a daily rehearsal routine, the actors take two hours to prepare their ingredients, work in some stretching exercises, and warm up by practising the chopping board scene – real knives included. When tummies get rumbling, they even use the props to rustle up a dish sub rosa. With more than 200 props on hand, stage mishaps are only natural. But a 20 strong staff "work and cooperate together... skillfully (taking) care of the problems so that *NANTA* can keep going".

"When you cannot master a certain skill, you feel depressed and lost. However, when you complete the skill through continuous practice, you feel like you are at the peak of a mountain."

- Hwi Joo Cho
Cooking Nanta Cast



The Dessert

Their stage presence chalks up to the chemistry built over time among performers. From inventing games between shows to holding wedding ceremonies in a *NANTA* theatre, these memories and bonds come at a price to boot.

Han-beom Lee admits, "To be honest, this is the most difficult part. With all the performances scheduled abroad, we actually spend more time with the *NANTA* cast members than our families. Therefore, we try to respect and care about each other as much as we can. It's important."

Nonetheless, *NANTA* gave many a reward to the cast. And it's an exhilarating experience for the actors as it is for the audience. Yoo describes it best, "When the audience watch *NANTA*, they are taking a 90-minute vacation and travelling through the traditional rhythm and beats of *NANTA*."

Set for a two-month gig in Korea's Jeju Island, they continue spreading the timeless novelty of *NANTA*'s offerings. So, who says it's no good to play with food?

Secrets of storytelling

The ancient art form is getting a revival in Singapore, with more people becoming increasingly aware of its different facets, CHOO MEI FANG finds out more



Once

upon a time, storytelling was associated with grandparents regaling their grandchildren with tales from the past. Now, it is taught as a management tool in organisations, a method to engage children in school, and it is even used to challenge audiences' perceptions of certain traditions.

Storytelling ranges from casual stories to highly choreographed performance pieces, which includes myths and folklores.

Earlier this May, renowned storytellers Ms Mara Menzies and Mrs Sheila Wee were invited to be part of ACE! Festival 2014, conceived with the aim of inspiring and stimulating creativity and artistry in families with children ages 2 to 18.

Ms Menzies, 35, is the founder of Toto Tales, a theatrical storytelling company based in Scotland that is passionate about bringing African stories to life. To her, storytelling is a direct communication between the storyteller and the listener.

"In Scotland, we have a saying that it's done eye to eye, heart to heart, and mind to mind. [Storytelling is] the ability to engage with somebody else to communicate and share your story," she explains.

Businesses are eager to tap into the potential of storytelling, and have already begun turning to professional storytellers to improve communication and instill confidence in their employees.

Mrs Sheila Wee, 56, is hailed as one of the pioneers of storytelling in Singapore. She has noticed an increasing demand from the corporate and government sector for customised workshops, and encourages this progression as it helps to "humanise the workplace". Teachers from mainstream educational institutes and special needs schools are amongst her clientele as well.



There is a realisation that for branding and leadership, you need to be able to tell a good story. It's all the soft skills that people are paying attention to. [The workplace used to be] very task-oriented, and people are now noticing that it is not the best way to get results," she elaborates. "For schools, teachers are recognising that it brings joy to the children, which helps them in their learning."

Besides helping businesses grow, stories can also be used to empower women and challenge traditions. Storytellers can introduce stories where women are depicted to have more powerful characters, for audiences who are accustomed to hearing stories that portray women in weaker roles.

"This empowers women to feel stronger, braver and more intelligent. Stories are valuable in terms of making people change their behaviour and their mindset," Ms Menzies says.

For new storytellers, the good news is that there is no fixed formula to telling a good tale. Based on Mrs Wee's 15 years of experience in the industry, she suggests imagining the story repeatedly until it becomes almost like a memory.

"Visualise it, sense it, smell it, and taste it, if necessary," she chuckles. "When [the story] is internalised, then you can tell it in the moment, and it will come alive."

Ms Menzies advises budding storytellers to cultivate a sense of empathy. To her, this requires being able to gauge the type of people in the audience you are performing

"Stories are valuable in terms of making people change their behaviour and their mindset,"

**- Mara Menzies
Professional Storyteller**

are performing to. "You need to be able to read your audience well. You never know which stories you are going to tell until you see the audience, because the story you prepared might not be suitable for them," she shares.

Effective storytelling is a craft that requires time to hone and perfect. Gone are the days when the art form is seen as child's play. It has now evolved to something much more serious. If you wish to explore the magical realm of storytelling, there's no better way to start than uttering these words. You'll never know where it might take you: "Once upon a time..."

on their way to BROADWAY

Local young talents star in the award-winning musical, join HYLIANA MOHAMMAD as she finds out about the reason behind this decision and how our little talents are coping under the spotlight

Doe, a deer, a female deer... This famous line from the world's best-loved musical, *The Sound of Music* is sure to evoke fond memories of music classes back in kindergartens. While you lay back and relive those childhood times, our young stars are living right in the moment: the golden opportunity to play as the Von Trapp children.

Our young actors and actresses are playing six out of the seven Von Trapp children, and they're performing in rotation as the rowdy but lovable siblings Gretl, Marta, Brigitta, Kurt, Louisa and Friedrich. The lucky 18 were picked from a pool of over 400 other hopefuls at the audition, and represent 50 local and international schools here in Singapore.

Jaime Chew, 8, who's playing the youngest Von Trapp child Gretl, shares, "The audition was tiring but it wasn't quite scary." This little darling, who may look cute as a button but has a nimble mind, didn't think her audition for the role of Gretl was at all intimidating since it wasn't her first time auditioning for a role.

"I auditioned for *Annie* [when it came to Singapore in 2012]. I got down to the last ten children, but then I couldn't say a certain line," she says, looking dejected at the thought of being rejected. But she swiftly brightened up a few seconds later, perhaps at the thought of being able to play the coveted role of a Von Trapp child.

"I feel really lucky to have been chosen but I feel sorry for everyone who wasn't chosen," she adds. "It's fun and tiring. We'll practise our choreography, and then we do some singing, and we'll play a game," Jamie says.

Rehearsals started from Jun 16, and ran full time until the show opened, from 10am to 5pm. But nearing the opening night, they rehearsed from noon to 11pm. There are four breaks in between to keep the children's energy level up.

The long rehearsal hours did not shake Felicity Bertram, who plays the sharp-witted maverick Brigitta. She has watched the film version of *The Sound of Music* many times, and even has it on shuffle. "I love Julie Andrews, she's amazing! She's like my idol," Felicity gushes like a true fan.

"But we were told not to watch the movie during our rehearsal period, because that will be trying to copy how they say it [the lines], and how the musical was produced," she shares.

The children cast get to take naps after their lunchtime, bringing sleeping on the job to a whole new level. "I guess if you're doing something you love, it's not as tiring as doing something you don't love," she explains.

Our talents may be young, but they sure are professional. What do you do when your on stage character reflects far from who you really are? You do as a professional would, and give your best of course. Playing the second youngest Von Trapp children Marta, 9-year-old Selma Hansen reveals a little something about her character. "I don't really like Marta because she's really girly, loves pink and is very sweet," she says. Marta is essentially what Selma's not. But not liking the character doesn't mean she can't get in character. "I'm not tomboyish, but I'd rather swim instead of playing with dolls," she adds.

Selma, who comes from a musically talented family, cited her older sister, who is 11, as her favourite actress. Her adoration for her big sister is simply charming. "My sister does everything: singing and acting and dancing. We [may] fight a lot but we are very close," she says.



Producer of the musical David Ian, who founded David Ian Productions in 2006, shares that the children cast were picked in Singapore for emotional and practical reasons. "I think it's a good thing as much as you can to cast people from home [Singapore], it connects the audience a little bit more. It's also very difficult to bring young children away from their home [London]."

He continues, "At the end of the day, *The Sound of Music* isn't a local story, it's an Austrian story set just before the Second World War. Some of these actors are from South Africa, England and Singapore. I think it's nice for the audience to think three of four children here are from here, from Singapore."

The Sound of Music tells the story of Maria, a spirited novice nun who was sent to be the governess of the seven Von Trapp children. She managed to capture the heart of the children and their father.

With the arrival of Maria, Captain Von Trapp, who used to be stern and harsh after the death of his first wife, learnt to be kinder and to love his children. Maria married the Captain, and as a family, they tried to escape from Nazi-occupied Europe.

Resident director, Anton Luitingh, says, "People think it's a frothy, lovely, feel-good show which it is, in a number of ways. But essentially it's a story of a dysfunctional family and how a father is not relating to his kids, and how a death of a mother creates a kind of friction and distraction between a father and his kids. And we watch how this brilliant Maria character comes in and seals that bond between a father and his children."

The original Broadway musical won six Tony Awards during its run in 1959, and the film version won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture in 1965.

Luitingh says, "If a father can go home after the show, and hug his kids a little tighter, then it's achieved what it's done and what it was made to do. Then you add to that a love story between two adults, and you add to that the political story of having to leave Austria because of the Nazi invasion, and suddenly you'll realise that *The Sound of Music* is layered with storytelling that appeals to our humanity."

Bringing *The Sound of Music* to Singapore was not a hard decision to make - sales of tickets have been so overwhelming, which led to a season extension till Aug 10. "Singapore is a great place for musicals. You [Singaporeans] understand musicals and you appreciate them. But it's also a scary place, because you know the difference between a good and bad musical," says Ian.

"...suddenly you'll realise that *The Sound of Music* is layered with storytelling that appeals to our humanity."

- Anton Luitingh, Resident Director

small circus big attitude

Itching to know more about circus troupes? Read on as NATHANIA TIRTAPUTRA shares more about Pants Down Circus: Rock and their glistening journey

A gush of wind breaches through the gaps of your meticulously buffed-up '80s rock hairdo as you gather up your last burst of fire: a hard streak across your air guitar while your partner trapezes across the stage. The crowd roars, rallying their palms together with whistles tossed across the air. It's your big break; you've finally caught it.

Pants Down Circus, made up of the merge of two duos (Hannah Cryle and Caz Walsh along with Joshua Phillips and Idris Stanton) wowed our locals with a perfectly executed performance, while they were in town from May 30 to Jun 1, as part of Esplanade's Flipside festival. Their mesmerising display of acrobatics, balance and humour reels the audience in, spreading roars of laughter throughout the edgy rock-themed show.

To spice things up, they have incorporated a "Rock" theme this time round. Expect big stunts, big hair and big attitudes for a marvelous '80s glam rock era. "It's a fun way to make us feel like we're in a rock band!" exclaims Cryle, who plays the role of both the base and the trapeze artist, a wonder woman with the strength of equivalent to five men.

Having met in 2007 at the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne Australia, this four-person group is immersed with talent, each built with the gift of doing multiple acts in their show.

"We try to make sure that the energy goes up and up and up," added Walsh. "We start with something big and powerful and just try to sky rocket from there."

True enough, Pants Down Circus had their audience at the edge of their seats throughout, with energy levels bursting the measure metre as they performed tricks after tricks to high-energy rock soundtracks.

"We're sort of self-managed, we book our own tours and it's nice to have that control over what we do,"

- Joshua Phillips, Ladder bouncer

Toss The Girl is the most crowd-friendly act in the bulk of their performances. The scenario places Walsh between Cryle and Phillips, tossed to and fro across the stage using the strength of their arms and the grit of their teeth, giving rise to an array of applause and hoorays!

They may look effortless trying to pull the act off, but beneath that glamour lays dedication, time and hard work to make every performance worthwhile.

Equally impressive is the 3 High Trick, which consists of three people stacked atop each other. Cryle takes bottom ground, holding the weight of two others on her shoulders. "It took us over a year to get from me being able to get the weight of them on my shoulders, to controlling it enough for them to climb up," reveals Cryle.

Being a small circus group doesn't stop them from making it big.

Within two years, Pants Down Circus has worked with prominent names such as Scott Maidment, director of various sensational circus shows such as LIMBO and Cantina, and won various awards including "Best Circus Award" and "Best Emerging Circus Performer" in Melbourne Fringe 2012.

"We're sort of self-managed, we book our own tours and it's nice to have that control over what we do," mentioned Phillips, the ladder bouncer of the group. "Also, we want to conquer the world!"

Within three years of performing together, they have gotten the ball rolling; creating their aim into reality.

This year, they will also be touring to Newman and Edinburgh Fringe, UK – home to the world's largest arts festival.

Pants Down Circus may be a small group of circus artists, but haven't you heard? Less is more.

The crowd watched Kai Leclerc in bewilderment as he walked through his prop doors and danced around with his ostentatious pink umbrella. It wasn't Leclerc's actions that caused such a reaction, but rather, the fact that he was 30 feet off the ground, completely upside down.

Parkway Parade mall brought two world-class circus artists to Singapore for their very first time for a performance at the mall, as part of their Great Singapore Sale activities, entertaining the shoppers from May 31 to Jun 8. Kai Leclerc, 45, presents the world's original upside down act, while the talented and beautiful Katrina Graholska, 26, left the audience in awe of her contortion and aerial silk performance. Together, they bring their audience an epic showcase of bizarre oddity.

Along with the rest of his company, Leclerc shares a deep love for performing aerial acts. He explains, "Why we do that? Because everybody is crazy! I am crazy my way, I like to see the world upside down, so I decide to do that."

Being the first of his kind, Leclerc took two years to develop his act, "To develop this you need a lot of passion, time, and training. But we love to do that, it's also part of our job too anyway."

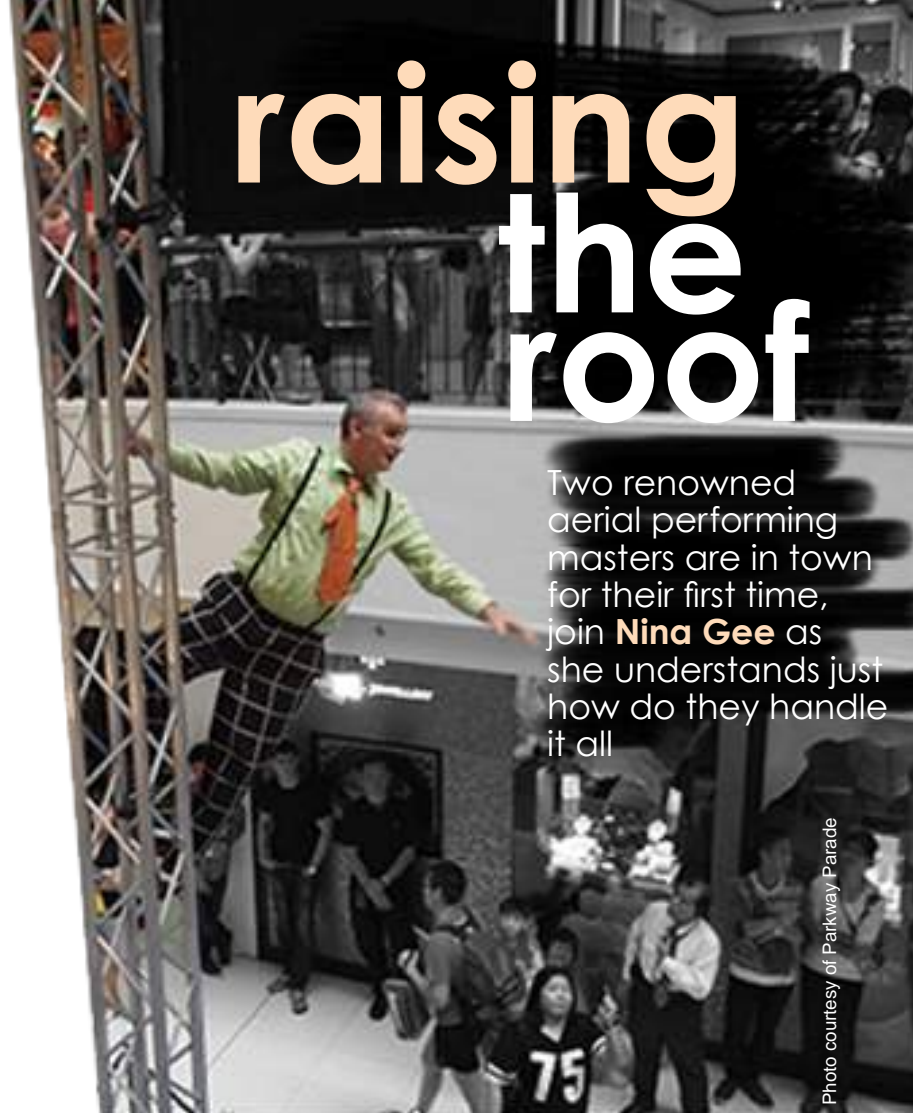
He has been charming audiences around the world with his upside down juggling and dancing for almost 20 years now, earning him awards at the international festivals of Monte Carlo and Moscow.

Helping him steal the hearts of many audiences, his partner-in-crime, Graholska, has travelled and performed with him around the world for five years.

Graholska entered the enchanting world of circus performing when she was 20. But her passion in dancing and gymnastics started earlier when she was 12, giving her the flexibility and co-ordination in her performances.

raising the roof

Two renowned aerial performing masters are in town for their first time, join **Nina Gee** as she understands just how do they handle it all



Despite the circus's whimsical and cheery front, the real dangers of aerial acrobatics are far from that. Hanging above the ground at an astounding 30 feet, it's amazing how they do not let fear control them.

Graholska explains, "Our job is to reduce the risk to the minimum so that we can live longer." Like any other high-risk performances, bruises are often inevitable. "In the moment of the performance you don't feel the pain but after when you have to take shower, it does hurts," Graholska confesses.

Leclerc added, "For us, it is more safe in the aerial because we try to control the danger. I said always it's more dangerous to walk on the street than to do an aerial act." He also keeps himself updated on the latest technology to improve the safety of his acts.

If one thing is clear, it is that nothing can stop these entertainers from doing what they love.

"In the moment of the performance you don't feel the pain but after when you have to take shower, it hurts,"

- Katrina Graholska, Circus Artist

"When you see the wonderful people around you, you forget everything. You really just enjoy the moment," says Graholska.

The dynamic reveals that they are having an upcoming circus show titled KA-DOME. KA-DOME will begin their tour in France next year.

Photo courtesy of Parkway Parade



Photo courtesy of Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay

Woman on a Mission

Samantha Scott-Blackhall clues ANG JIA YUN in about her penchant for controversial plays, motives behind directing them, and her upcoming theatrical production Vision

A callow troop of teenage boys stranded on an island; a congregation of mock prisoners and guards involved in an eye-opening experiment-turn-disaster and a manic-depressive abstract painter wrestling with contemporaries at the guidance of his amateur assistant.

Not particularly your feel-good Sunday morning stories through the grapevine. But thankfully, Samantha Scott-Blackhall, 36, artistic director of local Theatre company, Blank Space Theatre, isn't just out to tickle your fancy, or make you giggle for a fleeting moment.

By the virtue of this storyteller, who also presented the dramatic plays of Lord of the Flies, Das Experiment: Black Box, and Freud's Last Session, you get anecdotal theatrics with "a vivid and emotionally charged story that any audience can appreciate".

Vision is no exception, which is a "theatre meets magic show" that Samantha wrote and directed three years ago about an enchanting father-daughter relationship. By travelling to alternate dimensions, the two kindred spirits explore "psychological scars" and smooth out their differences throughout the story.

Samantha told Time Out Singapore on Jul 19, 2011, that Vision is "like no other production in Asia". It made its grand debut at the Esplanade Theatres, and ever since, Samantha has been improving its script with every performance. Next stop, this September, is Shanghai.

"I'm inspired by stories of struggle. I'm inspired by real people. I love honesty on stage. When you have characters [whom] have lived a life, and use that, there's something very rich about it," the director of two consecutive Life! Theatre Awards declares.

According to Esplanade.com, she graduated with a First Class Honors Degree in Drama and Directing from Flinders University in Adelaide South Australia. With the original intent of launching her career in Australia, she "applied for [Permanent Residency] over there".

Instead of twiddling her thumbs while waiting, she took on the job offer as Assistant Director in the Luna-id Theatre here in Singapore instead, where she staged Quills, The Physicists and Agnes of God.

"I was successfully freelancing as a director, and found it hard to find time to leave. My career had taken off. Needless to say, I decided against moving to [Australia], and focused my energy on building my career and passion here in my own hometown. I have no regrets," the risk-taking female warrior says.

After wrapping up her latest production Red this July, Samantha confesses that her appetite for bio-dramas has burgeoned, and her hunt for yet another subject ensues.

Red is the critically acclaimed Tony Award-winning bio-drama written by John Logan. The story is based off Mark Rothko (Daniel Jenkins), who was a renowned Abstract Expressionist.

"I love scripts that challenge the audience intellectually, philosophically, or emotionally. Plays that provoke thought or pose debate mean the audience is invested in the outcome, and therefore the play's journey is worth their while," Samantha explains.

Or in the words of Mark Rothko in Red: "Where's the discernment? Where's the arbitration that separates what I like from what I respect, what I deem worthy, what has – listen to me now – significance?"

A self-professed enthusiast of "investing human behaviour and societal issues", Samantha bestows audiences with the gift of consideration into the intricacies of human relationships within her plays of "universal relevance" and "effective storytelling".

However, fleshing out complex characters is no easy feat for Samantha, especially since they often involve the "discovery into the psychology of someone with a lot of passion", as well as their perplexing ties.

As there was an absence of video and audio recordings of Rothko, sufficient reading had to be done, like of Mark Rothko: A Biography written by James Breslin, to shape the "physical idea of whom the man was". Furthermore, the cast, who had no artistic background prior to the play, had to start from scratch.

"We spent a week just appreciating the various artists that are mentioned, learning how to paint, learning how to stretch canvases, [and] meeting artists to get into the headspace of an artist, and to apply that to these characters," admits Samantha.

Another personal favourite of hers is, Das Experiment: Black Box, inspired by psychologist Philip Zimbardo's prison experiment in 1971. The play required Samantha and her crew to operate within a "site-specific space", to "[delve] into the psychology of the script", and "[run] around [continuously]".

"I can only hope we continue to push ourselves, learn from each other, and make a mark for ourselves as a thriving industry locally and overseas," the freelancing television commercial and short film director pledges.

It is not obligatory to be "pretty", "beautiful", "nice", or "fine" – as Mark Rothko so disdainfully describes modern art in Red – momentous plays can be comparatively conflicted, nuanced, trouble, "diseased, doomed, or "anything but fine", and be as equally riveting, like those of Samantha's.

SIFA: Four Festival Picks



A gap year and a festival facelift birth the all-new Singapore International Festival of Arts, ANGELA LOW seeks out five shows worthy of note

It's been an enduring, prosperous run of 35 years for the Singapore Arts Festival. And when 2012 came around, it decided to take a break – a year-long interlude. This year, it returns a reincarnation christened the Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA). Along with this development, startup company Arts Festival Limited will replace the National Arts Council as the organiser, and jumping on board as festival director is TheatreWorks' artistic director Ong Keng Sen. From Aug 12 to Sept 21, the inaugural edition of SIFA will deliver a hodgepodge of international acts, four of which we've sifted out for you to get started with.

Disabled Theatre

Whatever your perceptions are of people with learning disabilities, Theater HORA and French choreographer Jérôme Bel are here to broaden them with one of Theatertreffen's (a Berlin theatre festival) top 10 productions in 2013. With live translation from Swiss German to English, Disabled Theater features a cast of professional actors with Down syndrome, performing various tasks and acts on an empty platform. This format casts away artistic conventions and centres the spotlight on the performers' abilities and disabilities.

September 3 - 6 | 8pm | SOTA Studio Theatre

Peter Pan

A theatrical display of the visual arts, Indian artist Nikhil Chopra performs a 50-hour piece, in which he recreates World War Two in India through the painting of landscapes in black and white. The title of the act originated from India's then-military leader Subhas Chandra Bose's battle cry, "Give me your blood, and I will give you freedom." In response, an army of women, otherwise known as the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, assembles with a plan to overthrow the British colony. Follow Chopra as he creates a masterpiece before you.

August 14 - 16 | SOTA Studio Theatre

Give Me Your Blood and I Will Give You Freedom

A theatrical display of the visual arts, Indian artist Nikhil Chopra performs a 50-hour piece, in which he recreates World War Two in India through the painting of landscapes in black and white. The title of the act originated from India's then-military leader Subhas Chandra Bose's battle cry, "Give me your blood, and I will give you freedom." In response, an army of women, otherwise known as the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, assembles with a plan to overthrow the British colony. Follow Chopra as he creates a masterpiece before you.

August 14 - 16 | SOTA Studio Theatre

Mystery Magnet

A theatrical display of the visual arts, Indian artist Nikhil Chopra performs a 50-hour piece, in which he recreates World War Two in India through the painting of landscapes in black and white. The title of the act originated from India's then-military leader Subhas Chandra Bose's battle cry, "Give me your blood, and I will give you freedom." In response, an army of women, otherwise known as the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, assembles with a plan to overthrow the British colony. Follow Chopra as he creates a masterpiece before you.

August 14 - 16 | SOTA Studio Theatre

Digital Dawn of Film

IAN NG proves that everyone with a vision and an idea can now show the world their masterpieces

The spotlight is currently on the Singaporean film scene – deservedly, of course, due to the unprecedented success of Anthony Chen's *Ilo Ilo*. This possibly opens the door for a horde of young, aspiring filmmakers in Singapore who are eager to leave their mark on the world.

"I think it definitely made a lot of people, not just overseas but in Singapore, stand up to pay a little more attention to stuff that is being produced," states Ms Aishah Abu Bakar, programme manager for The Substation.

The Substation hosts First Take, a monthly programme targeted at anyone who wants to showcase his or her films. The programme is a celebration of creativity, welcoming amateur filmmakers to screen their works to a captive and discerning audience. They then receive feedback from their viewers, which sculpts their confidence in making future films.

For many years, this has been one of the few platforms for local enthusiasts alongside other staples such as the Singapore International Film Festival, Singapore Short Cuts, and the Fly By Night film competition organised by Objectifs.

"It was a real challenge, trying to shoot something in the span of 24 hours with a given theme," says Jeremy Chua, 19, a participant in the 2012 Fly By Night film competition.

The competition kickstarts when Objectifs releases the year's theme, and contestants have exactly one day to shoot a short three minutes film. Following that, they all gather at a cinema where every short film is screened and the winners are chosen.

Many local directors propelled their careers forward by utilising such mediums, and it is a place where aspiring content producers can make mistakes, and more importantly learn from their mistakes. Of course, the joy of watching your personal opus on the big screen also helps.

Shelly Chan, 20, recalls, "The applause you receive after they screen your film, it makes all the effort and time worthwhile."

Shelly is an aspiring filmmaker who currently pursues a degree at LASALLE College of the Arts.

She belongs to a group of like-minded people who believe that these local platforms significantly help to exponentially increase the exposure that budding filmmakers receive in Singapore.

The issue with these competitions and screenings is that it does not reach out to a wide audience.

Every cog in the machine that allows such platforms to happen are people already in the filmmaking scene, from the organisers to the participants to the audience themselves.

Ms Aishah also added that people aged 14 and below may not attend such events due to "school restraints" or "parental restrictions".

"Everyone tells you to put your film on YouTube.com to reach a global audience, but there are tens of millions of videos on YouTube.com. It's really hard to find good quality content if you don't know the filmmaker's name,"

**- Mr Ho Jia Jian,
Founder of Viddsee.com**

To counter these issues, Mr Derek Tan and Mr Ho Jia Jian formulated Viddsee.com, an online film portal that showcases user submitted works from around Asia. Ms Elaine Huang dubbed it as a website "(in) between user generated content, like *YouTube.com*" and "Hollywood-produced content found in cinemas".

"Everyone tells you to put your film on *YouTube.com* to reach a global audience, but there are tens of millions of videos on YouTube.com. It's really hard to find good quality content if you don't know the filmmaker's name," commented Mr Ho in an interview with *TechCrunch.com*.

Viddsee.com is completely based online, differing vastly from more traditional mediums due to its easy accessibility. This alleviates the restrictions that younger people may face and encourages this group of people to find out more about other filmmakers' works and also craft their own.

Alongside cine65, The New Paper Film Fest and the 48 Hour Film Project, *Viddsee.com* is one of the newer platforms created as the Singaporean film scene is opening up. Anyone even remotely passionate about film will now find it hard to resist picking up a camera and... well, shoot.

coming together for a laugh

Grab a laugh or two with **EMILLIO ROGRIGUES** as he explores the world of stand-up comedy



Seeing a performer prepare to go on stage is always a thing of beauty; when he is not facing the crowd, he is himself. Rishi Budhrani, 30, co-founder of Complete Communicators, an events company that also provides corporate training for schools and companies, has been doing comedy for a couple of years, performing gigs all over the world. Yet, when he faces a crowd nowhere near three digits, he gathers his jokes on a piece of paper and practices them repeatedly while pacing up and down.

"I get nervous whenever I perform. The day I stop feeling nervous is the day I'll stop being a comedian," Budhrani preaches.

Budhrani sparks the next wave of Singaporean comedians, along with Jinx Yeo, each coming from different backgrounds but with a same goal – to be successful Singaporean comedians. Before the aforementioned stumbled into the world of comedy, they each led contrasting lives. Being a comedian was not a childhood dream, but they were soon drawn to the opportunity of making people laugh for a living.

"I always liked making people laugh but I had no idea there was such a thing as stand-up comedy. Once I had my first five minutes of fame, it just became an addiction and that's what led me here," recalls, Jinx Yeo, 34, copywriter.

Yeo has been in the industry for as long as Budhrani and has gone on to being the 1st Runner-Up at the 2011 Hong Kong International Comedy Competition. Yeo is one of the most accomplished comedians to come out of Singapore, having performed shows at the famous Melbourne Comics Lounge as well as the Sydney Comedy Festival 2013. He also shared the stage with other professional comedians such as renowned comedian Paul Ogata and Hollywood superstar Rob Schneider.

What started as a hobby has now become a lifestyle. They spend their day in the office, like regular adults, but when the sun sets, the jokes come out. Their gigs begin in the evening and can go on until the wee hours of the morning. Then, the harsh cycle repeats itself again. Despite claiming regional success for their work, the comedians still feel the need to sustain two jobs here, or at least until they become more popular.

While the stand-up comedy scene in the United States (US) has always thrived, its counterpart in Asia, more importantly, Singapore, has not had such luck.

Stand-up comedy may seem like a good way to earn the extra bucks but it is not as easy as it seems. Besides having a flair for speaking, a lot of effort happens behind the scenes. Normally, comedians will base their jokes on a current issue and attempt a humorous spin to it. It's not always that the audience are humoured though. A comedian has to be prepared for a bad joke as well. They have to think of an impromptu joke on the fly to cover up their mess. This makes practice essential and they have to watch their intonation and delivery on jokes for the audience to fully appreciate them.

"The best comedians are also the best writers. A lot of editing and analysing goes into even a simple five-minute set," believes Shahrul Sharulahanna, 27, Singapore's first female comedian.

With the comedy scene in Singapore slowly gaining popularity, local comedians have ventured overseas to put their stuff against the test in front of an international crowd.

"With an international audience, comedians have to change their stuff. What might work in Singapore, doesn't necessarily work in a place like the States. I learnt that the hard way the first couple times I went on stage," Budhrani recalls.

The stand-up acts in Singapore have tons of experience beneath their belts with new comedians coming up with new materials everyday. And without a doubt, they are definitely here to stay. These comics perform every Wednesday at the BluJaz Café, at 8.30pm. Tickets are priced at \$10 per entry.

The stage was set. The crowd was swarming in after a hectic Wednesday in the office. They were boisterous, getting impatient with every extra minute they had to wait.

He grabs a glass of warm water and gulps it down to calm his nerves one final time. The spotlights were beaming as it traced his movements up on stage.

"I always liked making people laugh but I had no idea there was such a thing as stand-up comedy. Once I had my first five minutes of fame, it just became an addiction and that's what led me here,"

- Jinx Yeo, Local Comedian

"I saw this online detective program and I thought why not? I paid the fees and I never heard from them again. I either got scammed, or I'm on my first mission!"

The crowd burst out laughing and another night of comedic affairs begin.

"The best comedians are also the best writers,"

- Shahrul Sharulahanna,
Singapore's First Female Comedian

what else can stand-up comedy do?

Besides ending your day with a good laugh, stand-up comedy also allows you to know more about a country. Be it in Asia or any part of the globe, jokes are tailored to strike an audience based on subjects they relate to.

"I learnt so much about Singapore just from a night watching their comedians perform," said BJ Fox, 32, UK Comedian.

So, the next time you're off globetrotting be sure to hit up a comedy gig and be amazed at just how much you'll find out.

Riding

INTO NEW GROUNDS

Saddle up for a spectacular ride on a whole new scale as NATHANIA THAPUTRA shares more about *Cavalía* and its opening in Singapore



“I feel like I have invented something that didn’t exist, this is what makes me very proud.”

- Normand Latourelle, Creator of *Cavalía*

Worldwide renowned production, *Cavalía*, opened its doors to Singapore for the first time on Aug 12, 2014. Centralised on horses, this feel-good production places zero limits to its viewers by integrating the performing arts with the equestrian arts world; it doesn’t matter whether you are 4 or 40, this colourful show will leave you wildly entertained.

An idea sparked within creator of *Cavalía*, Normand Latourelle, 18 years ago in the midst of a *Cirque du Soleil* performance, a dramatic mix of circus arts and street entertainment. Latourelle noticed a horse that was intended as a supporting role receiving more attention than the circus acrobats themselves. From there, he crafted *Cavalía*. Born in 2003, this equestrian spectacular has been taking the world on a wild and magical ride ever since.

Cavalía is a celebration of beauty and nature, a lavish production that brings the audiences’ imagination to a whole other level. You feel as though you’re travelling across the globe, witnessing the various landscapes through the majestic display of equestrian and performing arts. A constantly changing digital background and sound effects are also used to support the portrayal of the animals. “Some of the acrobatics are specifically choreographed to fit in with the horse,” reveals Latourelle enthusiastically.

Acrobats are flung and landing on the horses galloping around the 55 metres wide stage. After which they fly again but this time, are caught by riders riding the horses. “People have never seen such a big bond formed between humans and horses, they’re like friends,” says Latourelle.

Despite its overwhelming success, the idea to develop *Cavalía* only came after a long four years of careful consideration. Although Latourelle was the co-creator of *Cirque du Soleil*, his exposure to the aesthetics (such as music, images and technology) of creating a show played no part in aiding the creation of *Cavalía*. On top of all that, he had dwindling knowledge about horses.

“It took me four years before I myself was convinced that I could do a show with animals,” confesses Latourelle. “Along the way I found that horses are domesticated animals, like dogs.”

“I strongly believe that horses are the most beautiful animals on earth,” says Latourelle confidently. “Treat them well and they’ll give you back 10 times more.”

This spectacular production did not achieve its fame easily. After four years of hesitation, Latourelle took another 11-year-plunge of planning to execute his hearty idea into a tangible production.

“Space has always been a difficulty, we can only perform in locations that provides the space for us to do the show,” admits Latourelle, unwilling to compromise anything for a good performance.

Like any other success stories, there’s always a desire to do better, and an ideal goal to reach. In many interviews, journalists ask Latourelle: what is your dream?

Latourelle dreams big! “One day we’re going to read a description of *Cavalía* in the dictionary,” professes the Canadian man, “it’s such a unique show that it needs its own definition.”

Apart from the far-reaching vision, many other aspects have been thoroughly incorporated to make *Cavalía* the success it is today – within 11 years has created a reach of 4.5 million audiences worldwide.

“We have pushed the limits of what could be accomplished with projections,” claims Latourelle. Assisting visually is a backdrop (projecting high definition images) two point five times the size of an Imax theatre. Through the show, the screen projects “images that makes you go on a journey” of landscapes all around the world.

Cavalía exudes happiness from the very moment its curtains open, which is portrayed through Latourelle himself. “The thing I like the most is to see the public happy after the show,” says Latourelle honestly. “I feel like I have invented something that didn’t exist, this is what makes me very proud.”

DID YOU KNOW?

The horses consume
795KG
of carrots annually

Giving you over
15,000 servings of stew

Photo courtesy of cavalía.net

25 YEARS OF UNCONVENTIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

“I don’t believe that fine art photography should be perfect. It’s about how it makes you feel,”

After a quarter-century, fine art photographer releases his collection, and **Robin Choo** finds out more



“This is not good, that’s not good, and that’s terrible,” these are the words that young Lalin Jinasena would hear each time he brought a stack of freshly developed photos to show his father. Each critical comment stung like hornet’s sting, but his Dad, Dr Nihal Jinasena, had his reason. “I’m being very honest because I want you to improve, I want you to be as good as you can be.”

Lalin Jinasena, 37, describes his father as a very honest and blunt man. Although painful, his words helped influenced the way the young photographer captures his stunning images. From snapping stills of elephant bums to photographing the tenderness between a lion and lioness in the Serengeti, it was clear that Dad’s hands had shaped the mold well.

It took Jinasena 25 years before he finally showcased his collection, launching Lalin Gallery in July, at the iconic Raffles Hotel. The collection changes every two months, each time housing up to 40 images. Never intending to take photos for commercial purposes when he first pressed the shutter of his father’s Nikon FE2, Jinasena saw a lack of fine art photo galleries in Singapore, despite what he feels is an already saturated arts scene. Thus, he decided to set one up on the little red dot, where he and his family now call home.

Apart from the lessons Father taught him, Jinasena never truly attended classes on photography or picked up books by prominent photographers, he shied away from other’s influence. Instead, he threw the rulebooks aside and shot from the heart. Take the photo of a lone buffalo by the river made gold from the rising sun for example, “I would have been told don’t take that, because you shouldn’t shoot into the sun, but I do that a lot.”

“I don’t believe that fine art photography should be perfect,” says Jinasena. “Everything should be in focus, no pixilation, that’s making postcards.” The multi-talented designer defines art as about what the artist was creating that moves people, “It’s about how it makes you feel.”

Shooting in Africa has by far been his favorite, and has returned to African jungles repeatedly, each time coming back with eye-catching images.

“It was early in the morning and we were tracking a pride of lions, we spotted a lion slowly making its way towards the pride,” recounts Jinasena on his experience on Kenyan plains.

This majestic beast with its golden fur and mane would walk right up to a female and stop in front of her. They gazed into each other’s eyes, sharing a precious instant. “It was a very touching and poignant moment, and I was lucky to capture it.”

That one photo took four hours of patient shadowing of the lions. It was all done from safety of a jeep, driving right next to them. “They don’t interact jeeps, but if they see a human form, then it’s a very different story.”

Jack-of-all-trades, Jinasena has no preference of subject. The gallery exhibits his photos of wildlife to architecture. Nature and people was immediately obvious for Jinasena, having grown up in the culturally rich and bio-diverse island country of Sri Lanka. However, the keen-eyed gentleman only began appreciating the lines and construction complexities of buildings and bridges after studying Product Design at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom. Photos of the Golden Gate Bridge and interiors of hotels line some of the panels of the exhibit.

Photojournalist Steve McCurry, known for his photograph *Afghan Girl*, is one photographer that Jinasena admires. “It’s a very simple photograph, but it’s the look in her face, in her eyes.” Just like the rest of the world, her piercing gaze enraptured Jinasena.

“Taking a photograph is a skill any photographer should have, but having the eye for a picture coming into creation, the anticipation is what makes the best standout,” feels Jinasena. In an age where almost everyone has a camera phone, any regular Joe can take a snapshot, but a photographer “identifies” the moment.

When asked where he would explore next with his trusty camera, South America got the nod. “It’s a very photogenic country; the people, the incredible country and culture there.”

50th
Anniversary





Photos courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

Making It In Holy-wood

Hollywood is turning to the Bible for inspiration more frequent than not. CHOO MEI FANG and ANGELA LOW bring to light how Hollywood directors blur boundaries between biblical accuracy and artistic license

Imagine large meteorites with blazing trails of flames falling from the sky, plus rock giants made up of volcanic boulders, and then tsunami waves crashing over earth with a colossal ferocity. Sounds like your typical Friday night fictional Hollywood epic?

These are actually elements in Darren Aronofsky's biblical blockbuster, *Noah* (2014).

Book of Genesis

The film traces the tale of how *Noah* (played by Russell Crowe) builds an ark to protect his family and himself from a catastrophic flood. Raking in nearly US\$2 million in local box office, it yielded an even more remarkable sum of over US\$359 million worldwide. But the film industry is not done with the Bible yet.

Following in *Noah's* footsteps, Hollywood rides on the rising trend of scripture-based films and prepares for the release of three additional movies based on the Good Book. Heading to the cinemas in December 2014 is Ridley Scott's *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, a story based on the leadership of Moses as he brought the Israelites out of Egypt. The Redemption of Cain, which has been in production since July 2013, backtracks to the book of Genesis and zeroes in on Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve. As for *Mary, Mother of Christ*, dubbed the prequel to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), it will see a launch in 2015.

Biblical movies are not new.

The earliest ones such as *Samson and Delilah* (1903) were produced not long after the advent of motion pictures. Then came *The Ten Commandments* first hitting the big screen in 1923. Cinematic adaptations of Bible stories kept appearing with many other adaptations, such as *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) and *The Nativity Story* (2006) hovering on the fringes of Hollywood, enjoying comfortable box office success. Today's adapted flicks have bigger budgets, coupled with star-studded casts and generous embellishments of digital effects.

Top 6 Most Successful Biblical Films

- 1 The Passion of Christ (2004)
US\$611,899,420
- 2 Noah (2014)
US\$359,200,044
- 3 The Prince of Egypt (1998)
US\$218,613,188
- 4 Ben Hur (1959)
US\$90,000,000
- 5 The Ten Commandments (1956)
US\$65,500,000
- 6 The Nativity Story (2006)
US\$46,432,264



Book of Numbers

But of all places, why are filmmakers searching the Gospel for screenplays? The answer: It's a money making machine. It sells like hotcakes on a cold, theologically apocalyptic day.

"Smart filmmakers and producers know their audience and marketplace," says local film writer-producer Justin Deimen, 28. "People spend money to watch and immerse themselves in what they believe in and what they would like others to believe in."

Jesus is no stranger to both secular and religious audiences. Characters like him and *Noah*, "have in-built recognition and branding all on their own", command a wide and tight-knit group of supporters, according to Deimen.

Assistant editor of Persistent Productions, Mark Chua, 22, puts his two cents in, "On the one hand, artistic, [or] maybe even secular interpretations and presentations of biblical stories would attract and score points with the militantly secular, atheistic [or] liberal group. Yet, on the other hand, the premise of the film and the film itself would attract interest, whether well or ill-intentioned, from the conservative or generally religious group."

"This is not even mentioning the middle group of casual cinemagoers who weekly, catch the latest blockbusters," he continues, "In this way, biblical adaptations already do not count as a specific type of film. They are indistinguishable from *Transformers*."

Indeed, the Bible has supernatural phenomena that echo the superhero narratives overrunning the theatres of late. Throw in a few good-looking, illustrious actors and a bucket load of special effects, it will become an epic, action bestseller in the same league as *The Avengers* or *Spider-Man*.

Evidently, viewers lap it up, with *Noah* grossing a total of US\$43.7 million during its opening box weekend in North America. This is Aronofsky's highest opening weekend to date, and the film was generally well received all over the world as well.

Book of Lamentations

Despite this, Muslim countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Malaysia and Indonesia have blocked the screening of the movie on the grounds of religion. It is said the Koran proscribes any visual portrayal of its prophets. However, the controversies raised by Christians were of a different sort.

"I understand the need for drama and stuff, but *Noah* is ridiculous," voices Matthew Wong, 21, a believer of Christ. "It gives people a warped perception of God and of *Noah*. To me, the filmmakers are simply spinning their own film with ideas from the original biblical account."

According to Wong, *Noah* portrayed "weird creatures", like the rock giants that broach mythical realms, "[and] people who don't exist".

In spite of the outrage that broke out amongst Christians on *Noah's* doctrinal erroneousness, Animation student from Nanyang Polytechnic, Jonathan Chow, 19, points out, "The film did start with a 'warning' that it is a creative adaptation."

"If the inaccuracies totally mislead people from the fundamental message of the story, then the film is crap. If [*The Passion of the Christ*] had depicted that Jesus survived the ordeal of the cross, then that's too much. But if the inaccuracy is about something like the nails being in the palms or wrists [during Jesus' crucifixion], then I would sweep that under the carpet because the central idea is not lost."

After all, Hollywood flicks aren't meant to depict "documentary-style accounts of the stories", according to Chow.

This scripture-to-screen trend has both supporters and detractors, and it will be impossible to placate both. For now, it seems that the profit-driven industry will continue to churn out biblical adaptations as long as audiences continue to flock to the theatres.

So, don't be fooled the next time you see a movie trailer with jaw-dropping special effects – it might just be yet another box-office hit in the form of biblical epic.



Photos courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

The Labyrinth Experiment

New York Times best-selling novel, *The Maze Runner* is set to hit the big screen and **DENISE WONG** anticipates what's to come in the latest young adult dystopian work of fiction

Lost and uncertain, young and afraid. Paranoia ensues as fear devours. The only way out might just be to run – into the arms of death himself.

This dystopian tale takes readers to 'The Glade', a wide godforsaken expanse enclosed by tall forbidding walls of a maze and home to a group of amnesiac boys.

Thomas, played by *Teen Wolf* star Dylan O'Brien, is the latest victim to arrive at The Glade with nothing, but the memory of his name.

Hell bent for answers, Thomas and his merry band of lost lads are put to the ultimate test of survival as they attempt to solve and escape the sinister maze inhabited by 'Grievors', strange biotic creatures that kill whoever passes through.

As author James Dashner has always been an avid fan of thrillers, films such as *Ender's Game* and *Lord of the Flies* inspired the creation of *The Maze Runner*. Constructed in a cinematic mindset, the book does not fail to keep readers in gripping suspense.

Nevertheless, Dashner is not worried if the film adaptation develops a life of its own. An interview with *Hypable*, an online entertainment magazine, had Dashner sharing about how encapsulating the spirit of the story supersedes staying literal to the book.

Morality, the novel's overarching theme where what may undeniably be for the greater good becomes the undoing of humanity, is one realistic element fans can relate to.

"In real life, sometimes the decisions you make are right and sometimes it's more complicated than coming to a decidedly black and white conclusion, and that was something I found in *The Maze Runner*," ponders Elizabeth Ceballos, 19, runner of *becareful-dontdie.tumblr.com*, a fansite for the novel's enthusiasts.

Expect the plot to deliver a sense of authenticity and realism as you delve deep and become lost in the maze, that is *The Maze Runner*.

The Maze Runner opens in cinemas on Sept 18.

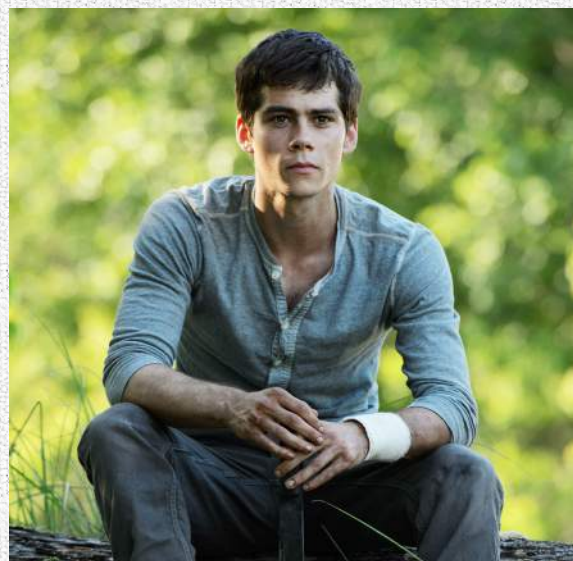


Photo courtesy of © DreamWorks Distribution Co., LLC. All rights reserved.

Clash of the Cuisine

What happens when French and Indian cuisines have a face-off? **CHOO MEI FANG** checks out the charming film adaptation of *The Hundred-Foot Journey* that is sure to make your mouth water

Hailed as '*Slumdog Millionaire* meets *Ratatouille*' by The New York Times, *The Hundred-Foot Journey* is an eclectic mishmash of culture, food and relationships.

The international best-seller novel by Richard C. Morais follows the story of the Kadam family who moved to Southern France after getting displaced from India. They opened an Indian restaurant a hundred-feet across the street from a Michelin starred French restaurant, ran by the imperious Madame Mallory (Helen Mirren), which ensued a culinary rivalry.

Madame Mallory's iciness towards her new neighbours melted as she slowly realized Hassan Kadam's (Manish Dayal) gift as a chef. She took him under her wing, and taught him the subtlety of the French cuisine as opposed to the bold and rich flavours of the cuisine he grew up with.

In an interview with *Leite's Culinary*, a recipe and cooking blog, Morais revealed that the intimidating Madame Mallory was modelled after his very own "formidable" grandmother.

"[She had] very high standards, and also a little unforgiving of others when they didn't meet her seemingly impossible expectations," he explains.

He later added that his grandmother "had a spiritual side that softened with age", so Madame Mallory was probably inspired more from "severe, elderly Swiss women".

Produced by Oprah Winfrey and Steven Spielberg, Winfrey chose the book as a "favourite summer read" in 2010. She described it as a book about "human beings coming to understand other human beings", and indeed is heartwarming to watch Madame Mallory and her young protégé transcend cultural and age barriers to form an unlikely friendship.

Majority of the film was filmed against the backdrop of Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val, an elegant centuries-old village in southern France. Another key location was the town's real market, which was filled with organically grown produce, artisanal cheese and wine, and freshly caught fish. These picturesque locations breathed life and colour into the storyline.

With the visual feast of scenic locations, delectable dishes, and vibrant characters, *The Hundred Foot Journey* is a heart stirring tale that is sure to leave a pleasant aftertaste.

The Hundred-Foot Journey opens in cinemas on Aug 28.

The Hundred-Foot-Journey is Mr Morais' first novel and is published in 29 territories across the globe.



Photo courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

Devoted to Deception

A marriage of suspense and deception, ANGELA LOW dives into the story of upcoming film *Gone Girl*

When a marriage sours and the idealistic ‘happily ever after’ seems miles away, how many couples stay committed to their relationship enough to make the ultimate compromise?

A product of the recession, laid-off journalist Nick Dunne transplants with an unwilling wife, Amy, from the bustle of New York City to his drab little hometown in Missouri. Renting a house Amy disdains and dubs the “McMansion”, Nick makes ends meet by opening a bar with his twin sister, Margo, using \$80,000 from Amy’s trust fund. The longer they stayed together, the more they longed to separate.

Alas, on their fifth wedding anniversary, Amy is nowhere to be found and Nick becomes the prime suspect. It is the easiest conclusion to jump to, given his unsatisfying relationship, his surface indifference, and his debts to Amy that one can consider as spousal theft. But is it all as it seems? Or is there a plot twist down the story, ready to catch us off-guard?

Gillian Flynn’s third and best-received novel, *Gone Girl* (2012) is a psychological thriller based on themes a far cry from those of her previous books.

“*Sharp Objects* (2006) and *Dark Places* (2009) dealt with unattached people,” she told the Chicago Sun Times. “I’d thoroughly explored dysfunctional loneliness and isolation and the inability to make connects, and I kind of wanted to get into the opposite – what happens when you choose to yoke yourself to another human being and those attendant issues.”

In 2012, *Gone Girl* topped the New York Times Bestseller list and won Salon’s newly established What To Read Awards. Its success swiftly snatched the attention of producer Reese Witherspoon, making possible the movie adaptation of the same name. Bringing the characters to life are the likes of Ben Affleck (playing Nick), Rosamund Pike (playing Amy), Tyler Perry and Neil Patrick Harris.

Despite the iffy casting choice of funny man Harris in this morbid mystery, director and Academy Award winner David Fincher (credited for *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* and *The Social Network*) vows to do it justice, in sickness and in health, until death does them part.

Gone Girl opens in cinemas on Oct 2.

Happy Author, Dark Stories

There is nothing dark or morbid about the aura this author exudes. Yet, it is everything her books are associated with. Happily married to lawyer Brett Nolan with a four-year-old son, Gillian Flynn – novelist of three thriller mysteries, *Sharp Objects* (2006), *Dark Places* (2009) and *Gone Girl* (2012) – leads a comfortable life. Even her golden handshake from her dream job at Entertainment Weekly turned into a golden opportunity when two of her books earned movie adaptations set for release this year. Now, when she’s in Entertainment Weekly, she occupies the role of the one being written about.



Transversing Dark Places

Enter the sinister world of Gillian Flynn’s second novel with ANGELA LOW

It takes a certain kind of reader to go through 452 pages of Gillian Flynn’s *Dark Places* (2009), without tossing and turning at night.

In the remote town of Kinnakee, Kansas, chaos and carnage ensues during a massacre spearheaded by a cult of devil worshippers. After watching the execution of her mother, Patty Day, and her two sisters in a savage ritual, then 7-year-old Libby Day takes to her heels and testifies against the only other survivor, her teenage brother, Ben, believing he was guilty.

Fast-forward 25 years, Libby is forced to recount and relive this traumatic episode, also known as *The Satan Sacrifice of Kinnakee, Kansas*, when she chances on The Kill Club, a group of amateur detectives who believes in her brother’s innocence.

Following debut novel *Sharp Objects* (2006), writer Flynn penetrates some harrowing territories in crime fiction *Dark Places*, drawing on issues of extreme poverty, the occult, notably influenced by the Satanic Panic of the ‘80s in the United States, as well as false arrest.

“We certainly have had cases where family are not only suffering the loss of a loved one, but turned into suspects for no other reason than that they are available and there is no one else,” said Flynn in an interview with The Orion Publishing Group.

Dark Places earned Flynn the Black Quill Award under Dark Scribe Magazine’s Dark Genre Novel of the Year in 2009 and continues to score a cinematic adaptation. Directed and written by Gilles Paquet-Brenner, the film boasts a star-studded cast sure to entice audiences: The silver screen’s Charlize Theron (playing Libby) and the small screen’s Christina Hendricks (playing Patty), British heartthrob Nicholas Hoult (playing Kill Club member Lyle) and everyone’s favourite Kick-Ass hero, Chloë Grace Moretz.

Dark Places opens in cinemas on Sept 25.



Photos courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Bright and Beautiful

Sprawled across these pages are items for the young and spunky. And those who don't fancy simplicity. From quirky notepads to laptop sleeves, **HYPE** has curated a collection of stationary and other printed paraphernalia for everyday use.

This season, it is out with the achromatic and in with the polychromatic. Perk those essentials up with bold, patterned fabric or quirky, harlequin motifs. To match these prints, flip to the fashion spread for a killer guide on what to wear.



1. Canvas Travel Wallet, kikki.K, \$49.90 2. Metal Twist BP Pen: Here & Now, kikki.K, \$16.90
3. Everyday Gel Pen: Let's Eat, kikki.K, \$4.90 4. Thank You Card, kikki.K, \$5.90 5. Inspire iPhone 5 Case, kikki.K, \$16.90 6. Komono Wizard P. Red Paisley, Rockstar, \$119.50 7. Mociun x Baggu M Shopping Bag, Rockstar \$18 8. Metal RB Pen: Arrow, kikki.K, \$19.90 9. A5 Feature Journal: Here & Now, kikki.k, \$24.90 10. iPad Mini Sleeve, kikki.K, \$24.90 11. Style Trap, Rockstar, \$145 12. Tile Print Clutch, Topshop \$49 13. The Matriarch's Oath (Bracelet), Claine Online \$18.90 14. Morrissey, Penguin Classics, \$12.30

WORDS: Angela Low
STYLING: Kia Nicole & Jovita Ang
PHOTOGRAPHY: Sherman Eng

KILLER RAVE



Taking a 180 degree turn from last season's cropped tops and pastel palate clothes, this time we're bringing in an array of wild bodacious prints. How much rave prints does it take to overthrow a chic look?

We say - there's no such thing as too much.

on Hosin
top: the editor's market, \$29
skirt: femmex, \$39
shoes: pedro, \$62.30
earring: claine online, \$14.90
necklace: claine online, \$48.90



photographer Sherman Eng
assistant photographer Daniel Chan
art direction & stylist Clara Xu
Kia Nicole
writer Nathania Tirtaputra
hair stylist Reno from Hairloom
make-up Sarah Ee
models Gary Ng
Ho Sin
Jonathana Seah

special thanks to Christopher
Emillio
Kerong
Nina
Rebecca

on Gary
top: topman, \$79
bottom: topman, \$69
shoes: depression, \$269
shades: sects shop, \$35



on Gary
top: flesh imp, \$39
bottom: topman, \$89
cap: charms, \$46.50
bracelet: clain online, \$18.90



on Jonathan
top: topman, \$69
outerwear: topman, \$59
bottom: topman, \$89
shoes: rockstar, \$127.20

on Hosin
top: topman, \$66
outerwear: topshop, \$139
skirt: femmex, \$32
bag: pedro, \$73.10
earring: claine online, \$16.90
shades: sects shop, \$45



on Hosin
top: femmex, \$19
skirt: femmex, \$19
shades: sects shop, \$35



on Hosin
top: revasseur, \$160
skirt: topshop, \$56
shoes: pedro, \$59.40
necklace: claine online, \$17.90

on Jonathan
top: sects shop, \$79
outerwear: flesh imp, \$65
bottom: topman, \$79
shoes: pedro, \$123



Appetite



Fusion Infusion

Discover three new restaurants offering the best of both Western and Eastern cuisines, ANGELA LOW tosses out traditional flavours for a bite of fusion delicacies

DIBS Restaurant & Bar
Meat Butter
\$16

Asparagus Salad
DIBS Restaurant & Bar
\$14



Modern Yaki
Miam Miam
\$14.80



Matcha Soufflé
Miam Miam
\$10.80



Ramen Burger
BBQ Bacon Bleu
Little Hiro
\$11.90

They say variety is the spice of life. In the world of gastronomy, it's been taken in its literal sense. The result: the popularisation of fusion food where just one type of cuisine is not enough.

Traditional flavours are lobbed together to concoct a new one. 2014 has seen at least 10 new fusion eateries popping up on the shores of this city-state. Here are three that opened not too long ago.

DIBS Restaurant & Bar

The newest addition to the row of bistros along Duxton Road, DIBS Restaurant & Bar opened in April 2014 with offerings of Eastern and Western cuisines.

Served on thin charcoal slates with uneven edges, the Meat Butter (\$16) is a sinful treat peppered with teriyaki and bonito. The crunchiness of fresh baguette slices and the jelly-like consistency of the marrow merge into a dish seemingly fit for higher-level taste buds.

A healthier alternative is the Asparagus Salad (\$14). Far from tasteless and dull, its greens are coated with miso butter and thick dressing that drips from every bite. The tiny chunks of feta cheese are to this dish, what icing is to a cake. Most of its mains are priced between \$30 and \$50, but a few affordable starter plates are enough to fill up two tummies.

Address: 51 Duxton Road
Opening hours: Mon – Fri (12pm – 3pm and 6pm – 12am),
Sat (6pm – 12am)
Tel: 6223 3784

Miam Miam

Early this year, this Japanese-French joint unveiled its second outlet at Westgate, delivering classic recipes with a unique Japanese twist.

An example is the Modern Yaki (\$14.80) where Aglio Olio spaghetti is topped with Shimeiji mushrooms, a pile of seaweed strips and a mouth-watering omelette. The dessert to try is the Matcha Soufflé (\$10.80). Instead of the usual chocolate, it incorporates the flavour of Japanese green tea that resembles foamy kaya, but ultimately, an acquired taste.

Address: 3 Gateway Drive #01-21/22, Westgate
Opening hours: Daily (11.30am – 10pm)
Tel: 6837 0301

Little Hiro

Along King's Road stands a new eatery where the much-loved Burger Shack used to be. The menu features a fusion of Hawaiian and Japanese bites, as well as the burgers that old customers enjoy.

Food hybrids such as the Ramen Burger BBQ Bacon Bleu (\$11.90) aren't too far apart from their conventional counterparts. Its meat patties mostly subdue the noodles. But when the ramen reaches your taste buds, it triggers a sense of confusion. Having grilled like a burger, they feel much firmer and greasier. The easier plate to digest is the Luau BBQ Pulled Pork Teppanyaki Rice Plate (\$7.70). This moves Asian ingredients to the forefront, complementing the explosiveness of the BBQ sauce with the familiar plainness of rice.

Address: 559 Bukit Timah Road #01-01, King's Arcade
Opening hours: Sun – Thu (11am – 9.30pm),
Fri – Sat (11am – 10pm)
Tel: 6466 3477

Not Your Plain Old pastries

NUR ARDILLAH ZULKIFLI finds out how bakers are turning their passion into profitable online bakeries

The online bakery industry is fast becoming oversaturated with more start-ups using social media as a platform to reach out to the masses. Here's what some bakers have done to be remarkable – carving out a niche business by being unconventional.

Pastries are still one of the favourite sweet treats for many here. A survey done by **HYPE** for youths aged 15 to 35 shows that about 62 per cent know of at least one online bakery while 43 per cent order their pastries online.

Daniel Tay, 44, went into the online business of selling gourmet cheesecakes with affordable price tags after resigning as the Chief Executive Officer of Bakerzin. He says, "The current rental situation is a little bit absurd. I realised that [an online cheesecake store] could offer a reasonable price [and serves] as an alternative to consumers." He is now the proud owner of Cat & the Fiddle and the Facebook page has garnered more than 5,000 likes.

With over 10 unique flavours, from mango cheesecake fused with vodka to the all-time favourite strawberry cheesecake, he decides to open a niche online store as it is "easy to manage" and there is a market for cheesecakes due to its popularity.

Manning a physical patisserie shop could be a hectic and daunting task for many. As for Mr Tay, setting up an online store was the "least risky decision" he has ever made. "I think it's great. I can have my own 'life' now," he chuckles.

Home baker Jae Reez, 33, has a quirky habit of having cupcakes with leftover dishes like rendang. That sparked off an idea of baking exotic and savoury cupcakes before she started experimenting with a few fillings and frostings for more than 10 times, then eventually putting a cupcake out for sale. One of her savoury creations is Oishi Voom, a white chocolate cupcake with chicken teriyaki filling and wasabi frosting, topped with seaweed slices.

Launching [instagram.com/onecupcakeaday](https://www.instagram.com/onecupcakeaday) last October, she has more than 1,000 followers ever since. "From Instagram, it widens with word-of-mouth. When you post or repost, it gets spread easily. The power of social media is quite strong," Mrs Jae says.

Rather than baking the widely favoured cupcakes like salted caramel and red velvet, she takes on the challenge to create a novelty. "It's good to have a niche as that makes you different and sets you apart from everyone else. When other people start following you, you [become] a trendsetter."

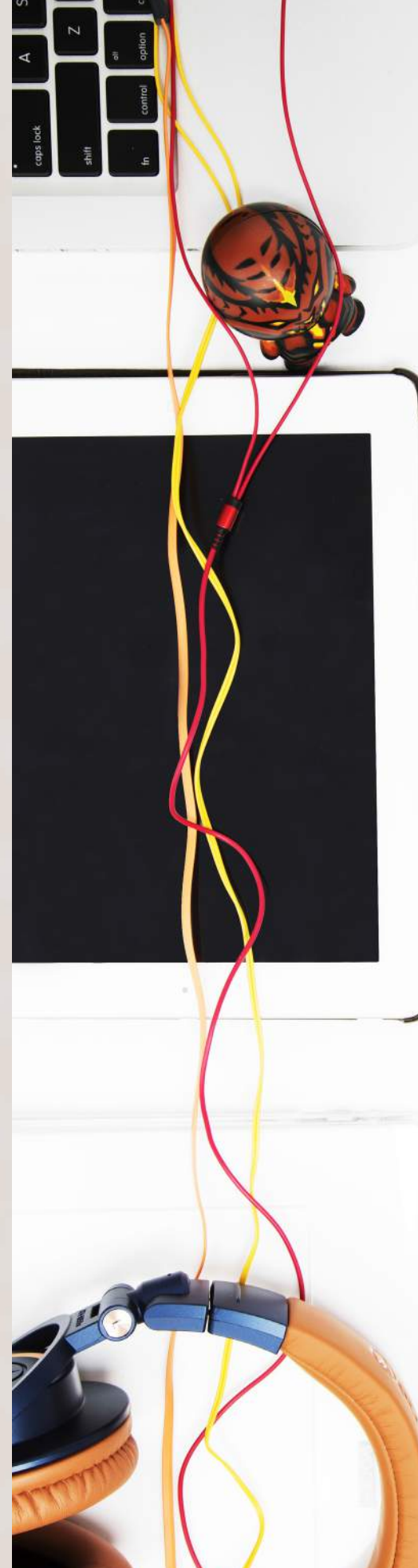
"From Instagram, it widens with word-of-mouth. When you post or repost, it gets spread easily. The power of social media is quite strong,"

- Jae Reez, home baker

One would be amazed at how Nur Ashikin Abu Bakar, 35, juggles her work as a full-time teacher at an enrichment centre and her online bakery business. She currently manages her bakery Facebook page, 'So Diva Cakes', which has over 8,000 likes.

Offering eggless, dairy-free and gluten-free cakes, she says, "It all started because my friends are intolerant to gluten and they got frustrated that they could not eat most of the typical desserts like cakes, brownies, cookies and bread, so I see an opportunity there."

As some are still struggling to find a special element in their online bakeries, consumers are spoilt for choice. It's only a few clicks away to discovering a diversity of online bakeries in the comfort of one's home.



Wired



The Search for The Hidden Good



Join **DENISE WONG** as she uncovers how a movement that seeks to capture the unceasing good in today's society has inspired many others to do the same

It all began when gung-ho friends Rovik and Leon Heng, 21, found themselves in a crowded train cabin with a vacant reserved seat.

Puzzled as to why passengers onboard deliberately evaded the empty space, the two lads were left to wonder: Were people afraid of being condemned if they sat there? Has society developed a prejudiced mindset to pass judgment without care? With that in mind, the two pals decided to start a social initiative aimed to restore faith and hope in the Singapore community.

The Hidden Good is an independent youth social enterprise, which celebrates the intrinsic good in society that would otherwise go unnoticed. Itinerant and versatile, the organisation comprises of a core team of 40 people, with many more that come and go with each new project.

One of their first ever pursuit was their online video series, The Hood Factory, where they conducted amusing, yet harmless social experiments on unsuspecting Singaporeans, hidden-camera style.

One video in particular, which featured actors asking strangers to help tie their shoelaces and ties, caught the attention of Channel News Asia. It evoked several intriguing reactions from the public and it was not long before the video went viral.

"Not only are we shaping how people see society now, but also shaping what society can become," says Rovik.

ON is another project The Hidden Good has recently embarked on. As many of the discussions online are steered towards politics and scepticism, ON is a satire youth talk show to which Rovik describes as "taking issues that exist in the sphere and try to find some moderation to it".

Inspired by The Daily Show with John Stewart, Rovik intends for viewers to watch these videos in hopes of understanding more about the issues that society faces.

Nowadays, everyone's a critic, but to Rovik, it takes a lot more to understand someone else's views and circumstances. Websites such as STOMP and HardwareZone Forum shared articles and comments that

were both cynical and dismissive, which made youths question what it meant to be a Singaporean. In the midst of all the pessimism, Singaporeans should not let it define them and instead, procure and embrace a hearty Singapore spirit, culture and vibrancy.

"If I am going to inherit this society, I want to make sure this society will be positive; that's how I want to live it," voices Rovik.

Although Rovik and Leon were fervently motivated to create a movement of positivity, they were just a pair of National Servicemen who had no clue on how to go about it. However, what they did have was a strong vision and a clear goal of what they wanted to stand for.

With blind faith, the duo dived headfirst into Youtube and created a channel to share their fresh and exciting content with others. Soon after, The Hidden Good came to be part of the Youtube community, which placed them into a position of influence and were known as "the good guys on Youtube".

The Hidden Good continued to gain ground steadily and developed a following across various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Moreover, The Hidden Good often collaborates with media personalities like blogger Eunice Annabel, Youtuber Hirzi Zulkiflie and deejay Ahmadi Fai – and those are just the recent ones. By persuading influencers to jump onboard the spirited bandwagon, Rovik believes that it helps to spread awareness and garner support, in turn establishing The Hidden Good as a legit youth movement.

Rovik hopes The Hidden Good will bring about the idea of "activism" and "lifestyle volunteerism", whereby youths are able to make a conscious choice to devote themselves to a cause they feel strongly for, consistently without pretext.

Besides the highly classified guerilla campaigns they have in store, The Hidden Good will be launching their official website soon enough. Rovik anticipates that it will serve as a solid and unified hub for inspirational content, where he and his team can continue to engage with youths and hopefully become a sustainable brand and legacy.

stepping into a new dimension.

Discover how new emerging technologies may now allow gamers and moviegoers to be a 'part' of their entertainment, with **ROBIN CHOO**

Imagine playing Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare, where you literally run to take cover using a brick wall, while watching an enemy zip past your eyes and to feel the heaviness of the rubble from a collapsed building when you try to move it to clear your blocked path. Imagine standing at the crux of the action in an epic battle between the Autobots and Decepticons in Michael Bay's Transformers: Age of Extinction.

All these are beginning to seem not so far fetched from Facebook's very public acquisition of Oculus VR and its brainchild, the Oculus Rift, in March this year. The idea behind an 'immersive' experience is to allow users to be present visually in the virtual world, to feel and also to interact with the virtual environment.

Oculus VR is an independent technology company that created the Oculus Rift, a head-mounted display for immersive virtual reality (VR) – the sole reason for Mark Zuckerberg's \$2.5 billion shopping spree.

Facebook is not the first to step onto the bandwagon. Microsoft got into the whole idea of immersive gaming with its Kinect motion-sensing device on its Xbox gaming consoles. Sony also recently unveiled a VR headset for its PlayStation 4 gaming soles.

Massive technology firms investing hundreds of millions of dollars to develop these technologies alone are only the first few steps to bring a paradigm shift in the gaming and entertainment experience, making it more immersive and realistic, where gamers and entertainment consumers are more involved and engaged in what they watch and play.

With so much money being poured into developing these immersive technologies, wouldn't these large technology companies be very confident about bringing the ever-changing gaming and entertainment industry to the next step?

They have every right to be so. The Oculus Rift raised over USD\$2.4 million over a period of a month on Kickstarter, a crowd-funding platform. With some individuals pledging USD\$5000 or more, it is a sign that there is a growing demand for VR technologies and the immersive experience it offers.

Real Life Escape Games has been described as a '5D experience'. Originating from Japan three years ago, it has since garnered a growing international following. Teams

of four to six people are locked in a room and must figure their way out through careful observations and by solving mind-boggling puzzles. Each room is centred on a theme with an accompanying storyline that aids the players in escaping.

The innovative concept has also caught on in Singapore for the past year. Zhuo Zhengjie, 33, the co-founder of BreakOut, one of the pioneering game providers of this attraction, thinks that the reason for its burgeoning popularity is because it is "fun, addictive and a good way to spend time with friends and families". Returning players like the challenge and its multi-sensory experience.

Frequent player of Real Life Escape Games Rina Tan, 28, shares that the games' "fresh and engaging" qualities entices her to return time and time again to try the other themes.

"It requires the analysis of clues and puzzles, unlike the more straight forward video and board games," she says.

Consumers who want more from their gaming and entertainment experiences supports the innovations. However, they are "unsure of how it should be used", according to freelance game and technology writer Nicholas Tan, 20. Despite improvements in terms of portability due to even smaller but more powerful technologies, issues still plague the immersive VR technology.

As video graphics quality begin to reach an upper limit, consumers fear large technology firms will disregard social responsibilities and use the technology as cash cows, and as of now, costs are not consumer-friendly. Zhuo feels that currently, implementing such technology into his business may "incur too high a cost". Consumers may not be willing to fork out the extra cash for his service.

Yet, with more people entering the industry and more cash flowing into developing immersive VR technologies, it could become a big thing in the next five years. Tan foresees that it will "change the rules to how we consume games and entertainment," becoming "integral" due to its adaptability.

With touch being the next sensory element to be developed as part of the whole immersive experience of virtual reality, we can only expect the unexpected on how we will watch, listen, feel, and interact with our games and movies. From here on, it can only get more real.

Spending in 淘宝街

Shop through clothing and accessories with MELANIE HO and master the art of bargaining

Photo courtesy of Yonas Ngaturi

A fundamental part of travelling to a foreign country is shopping. Tianjin is not too far from Singapore, but it is at a whole other level in terms of how they shop. In the comfort of malls like ION Orchard and Somerset@313, most Singaporean youths would not have any opportunities to learn how to bargain.

This practice is not as common in Singapore as in other Asian countries, as stated on travel.cnn.com. Even businesses found at Far East Plaza, Lucky Plaza, Salvation Army and the night markets in Singapore rarely accept bargains.

As said on travelchinaguide.com, bargaining is a social trend that is increasing in Tianjin.

Ms Liu Yue, 18, a local university student, says, "I have been going to Taobao Street to bargain every week since I was 9 years old. Shopping here is a big part of my life, and I am good friends with many of the shop owners!"

With opening hours of 10am to 5pm daily, these areas attract youths in multitudes, with their

imported Korean and American-influenced apparel up for grabs.

Ask any Tianjinese about where they like to shop and they'd jump right in this: Binjiang Avenue. Frequented by both young and old, this popular shopping area is heavily influenced by foreign countries, as shown on the giant billboards that read labels such as Sephora and H&M. One would feel as if they're in Times Square, New York, walking along Binjiang Avenue. That's how modernised and Western-inspired it is.

In time, bargaining may no longer be a simple haggle for lower prices, but it could evolve into straight-up lying to get what you want. There are people who purposely pretend they don't have sufficient money (when they actually do) just to get the item for less. Just how far will people go with their bargaining?

"I don't like to lie or put on a show when I shop. The shopkeepers don't deserve that," says Ms Fang Yuxin, 19, another student. Then again, Mrs Ma Ruixue, 30, a shop owner at Taobao Street, says, "I get a thrill off the sense of accomplishment when people believe my acting." This goes to show that there are a select few who actually thrive on dishonest dickering.

The Walk Away

State your price, then say:

wo yi jing shuo le wo de yao qiu. ni mai wo jiu na zhe, bu mai wo jiu zou.

I've already made my request. If you're willing, I'll take it. If not, I'll go.

After that, start walking away and the seller will relent if they are desperate for sales and clearance.

The Blame Shift

When sellers are tough and do not accept your offer unless you give a valid reason, that's when you say:

zhe zhong cai liao kan qi lai bu shi hen hao, ke yi mai gei wo shao yi dian ma?

The material doesn't look like it is of good quality. Can I have it for less?

Excuses, Excuses

lao ban, wo shi xue sheng, zai pian yi dian ba. Boss, I'm just a student, please sell it for less.

wo xian zai bu gou qian, ni ke yi mai gei wo ma? I'm short of money, will you still sell it to me?

ru guo wo mai duo ji ge, ke yi pian yi yi dian ma? If I buy more, can I get the items for a lower price?

The Ultimate Bargaining Guide

The Chopping Board

Cut off 5 yuan (\$\$1) bit by bit from the stated price until the seller is completely unwilling to accept your offer. Don't despise the small differences. A little goes a long way!

There is a limit, though. Mrs Guo Shuxin, 50, a shop owner who works at Da Hutong, says, "As shop owners, we will only agree to slash the price until the profit mark, which is the amount that I had bought the items for."

名家淘宝街 TAOBAOJIE

Uninterested to be Interested

State your anchor price and don't ask how much it is. When you look interested, the seller will charge you more because you are more likely to buy it even if it is expensive. This method is also effective because it steals the seller's chance to state their price first. Be harsh about it because they can only auction upwards slightly until you both agree on a single price.

The Short and Simple

shao duo shao qian bu mai? How low can you go?

ke yi mai ba shi ma? Can you sell it for 80 instead?

Due to the repeating items throughout the stores, one can go to a few other stores to ask for the price of the same object, and take the best offer of all.



Colourful STROKES

Join ELIZABETH PHUA to unravel the story behind calligraphy artist Wang Fusheng's works

He pulls out his dusty foldable chair and shakes it until the joints lock into place, then sits.

Having just moved his portable stand from the edge of the road to a secluded area in a parking lot, his current position blocks him from a police car that has just pulled up across the road.

The surrounding vehicles form a makeshift wall, shielding Mr Wang and his stand from any suspicion of the police.

"Most people call this form of calligraphy dragon-phoenix calligraphy, but it's also known as flower-bird calligraphy," says the 63-year-old artist.

Invented in the Tang dynasty, dragon-phoenix calligraphy is a style that requires the use of a variety of colours. The sides of the brush are first dipped in different coloured paints before delicate strokes paint a blank scroll.

Chromatic strokes soon merge to form vibrant Chinese characters, followed by the adding of details with a black felt-tip pen.

A simple request to paint one's name becomes a prismatic jaw-dropper as the canvas transforms into a visual spectacle with captivating flora and fauna.

"[I] learnt this back in 1957, when I was in primary school," says Mr Wang. Having picked up the skill in his hometown in the Anhui province, he moved to Tianjin later on in 1986 to continue the calligraphy art.

With no other means of supporting his family and being the only member who knows the art, Mr Wang faces much hardship just putting food on the table.

"I try to move my stand to famous tourist spots. The risk [of being caught by the police] is higher but I get to earn a little more," he adds.

For a man who has been shifting his stand from one area to another just to evade the police for well over 47 years, it is heartwarming to see him still love the craft as much as he does, despite his harsh circumstances.

One thing that keeps him going is the curious look on the faces of tourists and children who pause by his stand and admire his works of art.

"There was this girl, around the age of four who watched me intensely. She refused to move. Her mother kept tugging her arm," Mr Wang demonstrates as he explains.

"She pulled away to watch me paint four scrolls. When I stopped to look at her, she smiled at me."

While he's filled with adoration for inquisitive people, he does have a certain peeve about some.

"Once, I changed my location to Mt. Panshan. A man requested for an idiom. But once I finished it and asked for 10 yuan, he started an argument. He ripped the painting and trashed my stand," he says.

When asked about his biggest nightmare, Mr Wang lets out a sigh. "I've dealt with [the police] twice. The first time, they caught me and made me pay a fine of 500 yuan. They even confiscated everything like my stand, my tools and my scrolls. The second time, they made me pay even more."

He points to a sign hanging next to the stand that reads "10 yuan a piece" and adds, "I don't earn much through this. I have a family of six to feed."

Mr Wang pauses in thought for a minute upon being asked about his views of the future of this street art. Then, he shrugs his shoulder. "I'll probably work for another 10 years. I'm getting tired of [the police]."

Explaining that he has yet to teach the art to anyone, he strongly believes that his skills will not be handed down to a new generation.

Another police vehicle pulls over at this point of time. Mr Wang hastily gets off his seat and closes his stand. He stuffs the chair into a large blue bag, collapses the portable stand, then tucks it under his arm.

"It's rare to find people to continue doing this job. I don't think you'll find people like me in Singapore."



Dog Ignores, Tianjin Ad**res**

Sink your teeth into the *goubuli* bun and savour the stories behind the food with IVY LEE

He strides into the restaurant and takes a seat. He does not glance at the menu; he has long memorised its contents by heart. Gesturing to a waiter, the man orders the same item he's been getting monthly for some 46 years.

"The fragrance of the buns used to envelop the whole street," recalls Mr Hua Zi, 52, a local art merchant who has been faithfully eating *goubuli* buns since he was six years old. "It was great for us common folk. The buns were very affordable and far tastier than anything I could make. Till today, I feel oddly sentimental whenever the *goubuli* bun is brought up."

One variation of a legend, consistent with zhidao.baidu.com, states how its creator, nicknamed Gouzi, or 'Dog Boy', was so busy selling them that he had no time to talk to anyone. This led to the term *goubuli* – Dog Ignores Everyone. Known as one of the three great foods of Tianjin – the other two being *erduoyan* (fried rice cakes) and *mahua* (dough twisted with a variety of spices) – the *goubuli* bun has carved a name for itself within Tianjin, the rest of China, and beyond.

In anticipation of marketing this food icon to the world, following the 2008 Beijing Olympics, *goubuli* adopted the English name 'Go Believe'. However, the moniker attracted much backlash from Chinese netizens. Nonetheless, many still love a meal of *goubuli* buns.

"There was nothing like the joy I felt when I got to have *goubuli* buns. It was a treat that I looked forward to very much," says Mdm Zhao Chanzhen, 61, a drinks storeowner. "It's a pity that the bun's taste is different now – the oil never overpowers the fragrance of the stuffing. Even so, at least it's still around."

"The *goubuli* bun will always have a special place in the heart of Tianjin's people,"

- Mr Hua, art merchant

"*Goubuli* buns don't really taste special – but it forms part of Tianjin's identity, and this is what makes it iconic," says Xia Jiali, 20, a student at Tianjin University of Technology.

When eating *goubuli* buns for the first time, it's best to stick to the original pork stuffing. Perhaps the 70 yuan (S\$14) bundle with eight buns, side dishes of chicken wings, cold mixed vegetables and millet porridge, at the main store at Heping district will satisfy your ravenous stomach.

If you're not too peckish, the 46 yuan set of eight pork buns at the Italian Style Street might be the one for you.

The skin of each bun is soft but chewy, and the pork filling juicy and tender. Although the vinegar enhances the taste, it's best to have the first bite without it – experience the *goubuli* bun in its most authentic glory.

"Eat it slowly, savour the rich taste of Tianjin's heritage, and reflect upon its rich history" is Mr Hua's suggestion to fully enjoy the *goubuli* bun.

For more adventurous taste buds, there's seafood and beef stuffing. However, Mdm Zhao says, "Don't buy too much at once, you might not like the way it tastes."

This minute bun is bursting with a history worth appreciating. As Mr Hua fondly declares, "The *goubuli* bun will always have a special place in the heart of Tianjin's people."

DID YOU KNOW?

Each *goubuli* bun has 16 - 22 folds, a distinct characteristic only possible if the maker is extremely skilled.



Features

Stories of Old,



As Singapore's heritage fades into oblivion, ANGELA LOW and OLIVER TAN uncover its repercussions and remedies

Within this city of concrete, metal and fumes lies a treasure trove of heritage and stories. The hundred thousand stories that our parents' and grandparents' generations have lived through are slowly being paved over to make way for towering skyscrapers, expatriate condominiums and innumerable MRT stations.

The early years of Singapore were incredibly colourful; a mixture of multiple racial cultures complemented by a peppering of beautiful gotong royong (kampong spirit). However, "as (Singapore) changes, the times change and erosion is inevitable," explains Tan Huay Peng, 23, one of the organisers of Avenue 1960s, a heritage appreciation campaign.

There are many stories to be told of Singapore's past – stories that paint a picture of how people lived back then. These stories are left untold because in the past, the people who lived these stories found them to be mere tales of their daily lives. They found little purpose in sharing these stories with the youth.

"They throw away things, they throw away memories, because they didn't know that these stories are actually precious," says Karen Koh, 23, another member of the Avenue 1960s team.

Furthermore, the older generation may find their stories difficult to tell without the use of their original dialects, which the youth may not understand. "Having an author to really get down and talk to people to document everything is not easy because you have to know so many dialects," says Karen. This is part of the reason behind the scarcity of literature regarding Singapore's kampongs of past.

"Having an author to really get down and talk to people to document every aspect is not easy because you have to know so many dialects,"

- Karen Koh, member of Avenue 1960s

So, what then is the problem with not knowing Singapore's heritage?

"You lose your sense of rootedness to the country. You won't know how it all came about," explains Huay Peng. The true definition of being a Singaporean is lost somewhere between being the "richest country" and the "least emotional" country.

Beyond all the economical mumbo jumbo and the strict regulations, what does it truly mean to be Singaporean?

"At least now we still have the chance to grab hold of our parents and ask them, but if we don't have anyone to ask in the future, it's going to be Singapore as an empty shell," says Karen.

A bleak picture indeed. The youth of today has to look beyond the waves on the beach, and observe the changing tides in the ocean before the situation can be improved.

Taking the initiative to learn more about one's heritage "makes us appreciate what we have today even more", says Phang Su Hui, 24, another member of the Avenue 1960s' organising team.

"The heritage scene is very alive," Su Hui observes, "especially during this period building up to next year."

Not Being Told



With Singapore's 50th birthday coming up in 2015, a significant number of heritage-related events and activities have been put in place in the hopes of igniting patriotism. The second half of 2014 saw programmes such as the Singapore Heritage Festival (Jul 18 to 27) and The Heritage Race (Jun 12).

As for ongoing initiatives, the Singapore Memory Project (SMP) remains one of the longest running, its inauguration in 2011. Organised by the Ministry of Communications and Information in collaboration with the National Library Board, it focuses on the assemblage, preservation and sharing of historical memorabilia, taking the form of personal memories of Singapore.

Nearly 370,000 of these little stories have been gathered hitherto, despite being far from the SMP's goal of amassing an ambitious five million by 2015. The 30 campaigns under its belt are a testament to its wide-ranging and tireless efforts. One example is Books That Moved Me, in which long-lost paperbacks like Russell Lee's horror titles resurface and recall the sentimental parts of our childhood.

Utilising social media platforms, it saw immense success, especially among those of younger age groups. Alas, the same results cannot be seen in most other initiatives where the nation's youth are left largely untouched.

"There are many heritage campaigns now, but none of the campaigns are targeted at youths. They're all targeted at the masses," Su Hui agrees. Karen adds, "When a campaign is not focused enough, youths are not receptive towards it." Perhaps, it is then less a problem of indifference and more an issue of inaccessibility.

It is a mistake to assume that the current generation of Singaporeans neither cares for the local heritage nor the preservation of it. They just are unequipped with the know-how and unaware of the available avenues. Fortunately, it doesn't always take a campaign to learn about our country's past. A mere visit to long-standing, historically steeped shop houses or places of attraction might be enough to leave one with new knowledge of old, yet intriguing information.

Places such as Chin Mee Chin Confectionary, a bakery with over 60 years of history, is still open on a daily basis, warmly welcoming patrons with their signature brand of old fashioned service. Even the infamous Haw Par Villa, a theme park-cum-museum that illustrates a gory and nightmarish journey through the 18 levels of Hell, is surviving till this day.

Pulau Ubin, the last remaining kampong island in Singapore, still bustles with thrill-seekers every day.

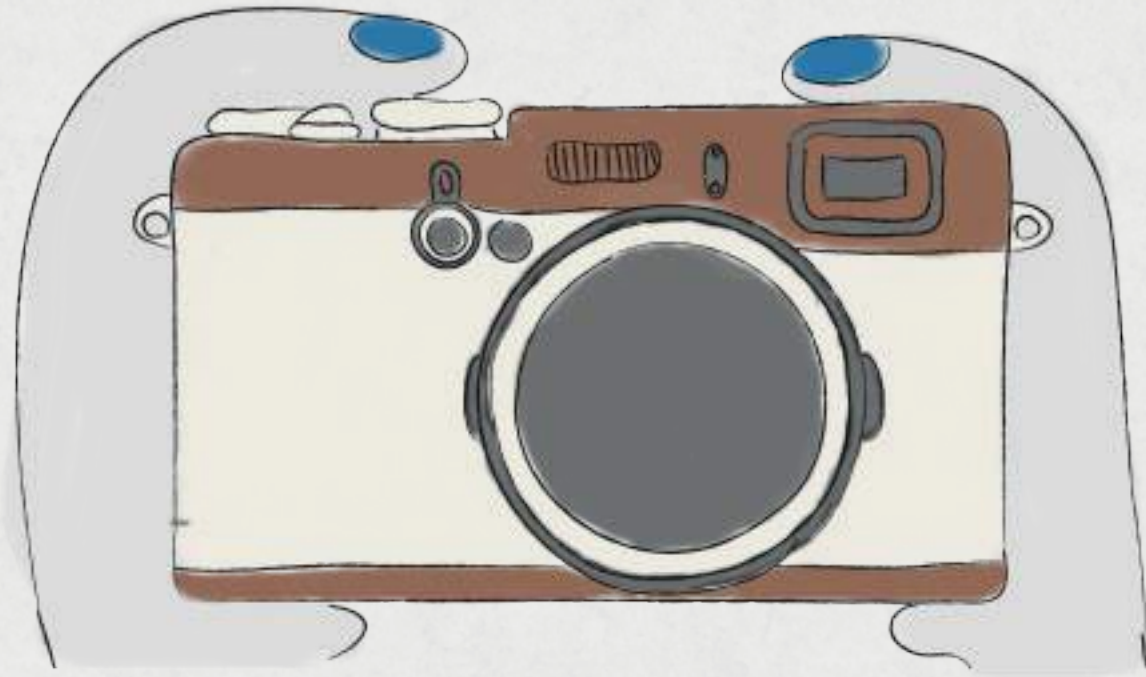
Angie Heng, resident of over 40 years and owner of Yak Hong Convenience Store, explained that they merely "want to make enough to survive". As these businesses continue to ply their trade, the local Singaporean owes a debt of gratitude to them for staying true to their roots.

In a country that encourages forward-looking mindsets, it seems a challenging task for the young to look beyond their concrete estates and digital hardware to take note of Singapore's rich heritage. But the answer may lie simply in our parents, or a walk around the island. Theirs are the stories rarely told, yet closest to our hearts. And we need only ask.

"They throw away things, they throw away memories, because they didn't know that these stories are actually precious,"

- Karen Koh

But first, let me take a...



The reason behind posting your selfies can say a lot about you, join CLAUDIA TAN and SAMANTHA NG as they find out more about the selfie phenomenon that is taking the world by storm

British teenager Danny Bowman, 19, loved taking selfies. He would wake up in the morning to take selfies and wouldn't leave for school until he took at least 80 selfies.

It was a norm for him to take at least 200 selfies everyday.

Bowman's obsession with self-portrait photographs also known as, 'selfies', caused him to drop out of school. He didn't leave his house for six months because he spent all his time continuously taking selfies under different lighting. That's not all, he also lost nearly 13kg trying to make himself look good for the camera.

His obsession reached an unfortunate climax in March 2014. After failing to take the perfect selfie, Bowman tried to kill himself by taking an overdose of drugs. Even though he eventually survived and went on to help other youth with mental issues, he is now dubbed as Britain's first selfie addict.

Bringing It Back Home

Cue Carrine Low. A local blogger with a following of near 5,000 people on her Instagram account, a portrait of herself can easily get 1,000 likes in a day.

She got her first 100th like on Instagram when she was in secondary school and her popularity has never stopped growing since.

Currently enrolled at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, her friends will occasionally tease her about her popularity, but she insists that her popularity was "accumulated over the years and not just a sudden thing".

However, she doesn't think that she takes selfies often. Carrine says, "Sometimes, I ask my friends to help me take an outfit of the day (OOTD). If I feel I look really good that day, I will take one or two and post it on Instagram. But there are some days when I will take a lot of selfies. So I will filter and choose what to post on social media."

But unlike Danny Bowman, Carrine is less likely to face negative consequences from her selfies.

According to Ms Agnes Seah, 36, a Medical Social Worker who works with teenagers on self-esteem and body image issues, different people have different reactions towards the comments they receive on social media.

"A celebrity blogger may not be as affected by a negative comment on her photo than a normal teenager their age would. The celebrity blogger probably already has a large following that can outweigh the impact of one or two negative comments, unlike your average teenager," Ms Seah explains.

Ms Seah notes that teenagers are more likely to not be fazed by the negative comments that they receive because they are self-confident. "It all lies in their intention in posting that photo," she says. "If they do it because they feel that they look good in their photos, then they won't really care."

Indeed, in a survey conducted by HYPE, more than 70 per cent of the respondents said that they only post a selfie of themselves when they feel that they "look good that day" or "have an outfit that they really like and want to share" because they do not want to look silly in their photos. These respondents also commented that they hardly get negative comments when they do so, and even if they did, they would either ignore the comment or block the user.

Ms Seah added that in the past, most photos served as a memory of time spent with friends and family.

However, with social media, some people might choose to post their photos on social media to gain peer approval, on top of having a keepsake or memory of their time spent. Such photos might include them showing off their latest haircut or outfit and asking people what they think of it.

Selfie Isn't Just A Girl Thing

Of course, guys are no exception when it comes to selfies. Nicholas Eugenius Lim, 24, with a following of more than 3,000 on Instagram and an average of 100 likes per photo uploaded, sees his selfies as "just a random shot to go by". However, he prefers uploading photos that "have a purpose in life" to him. Being a triathlete and a pastry student, his passions are reflected on his Instagram feed, alongside photos of his family and friends.

"I do put a lot of thought into the decision of which selfie to upload. The clarity and lighting is important thus I usually use the rear cam to take selfies and not the front," Nicholas confesses.

The number of likes he gets per photo does not matter to him, but rather who likes it is what he looks out for.

Nicholas explains, "For example, I would rather have someone I know like my pictures or some high profile person rather than a stranger."

Carrine and Nicholas are youth belonging to Generation Y, otherwise known as the 'Millennials'. Being born post-independence, Gen Y youth face much less hardship compared to their parents and forefathers.

Instead, they are fed with the freedom of the Internet and are highly tech-savvy, or as often coined by the media 'digital natives'. Thus, it is no wonder that a social media trend like the selfie would have taken these youth by storm.

With the different photo applications on the Apple App Store and the Google Play store, there is a wide range of filters available to edit your photos with, to soften blemishes, or even to make your eyes look bigger. This gives regular people a control over how they project themselves to the rest of the world, much like how girls would use makeup everyday.

The word 'selfie' originated from an Australian online forum in 2002 and has come a long way from being a social media buzzword to mainstream shorthand for a self-portrait photograph. It was also announced as the Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2013, and inspired the song "#SELFIE" by American DJ duo, The Chainsmokers.

#Selfie for A Good Cause

To date, there are nearly 143 million posts on Instagram hashtagged 'selfie', with variations like '#selfiesunday' and '#selfiequeen'. There are also selfie trends like the cellophone selfie, where people tape their whole head and take a selfie. There's also the selfie Olympics, which happened in conjunction with the Sochi Winter Olympics where people displayed their physical prowess while taking a selfie.

Selfies have also been used for a good cause. One example would be the #nomakeupselfie that was used by the Cancer Research UK to raise funds through support from friends via text messaging. Within 6 days, the campaign raised £\$8 million, which is around SGD\$16.8 million.

Of course, while these youth may be dubbed 'digital natives', they still have to be careful of what they share with their friends online. After all, it is up there for the world to see, and that includes your future employees, who might conduct social media background checks on you. So before you post that selfie up, do think twice about the image that you are projecting to the rest of the world!

"Can you guys help me pick a filter? I don't know if I should go with XX Pro or Valencia. I wanna look tan."

Delish Dialect Dishes



Many Chinese youths today may not speak dialects but certainly know the distinctive dishes of their respective dialect groups. **ROBIN CHOO, DANIEL CHAN and IAN NG**, explore the specialties of dialect cuisine

ni so fon le ma (have you eaten in hakka)

“Hakka Ngin, Ji Ka Ngin”, a common phrase amongst the Hakka folks, directly translates to “Hakka people, our own people”. It says a lot about how important family is to my dialect group. From cooking meals, to preparing for the Lunar New Year, any affair is a family affair.

For more than two decades I have not taken any care to know my heritage, more concerned about what Western cultures can offer. Yet, as I grow into adulthood, a yearning curiosity begins to creep into my head. A calling. I begin to embark on my journey of rediscovery.

Like any true blue Singaporean, food enraptures me. The door to any new culture for me, is its cuisine. Hakka is known for its *Suan Pan Zi* (Abacus Beads), a savory yam dumpling dish shaped in round balls resembling the seeds of an abacus.

The *Mei Chai Rou* (Preserved Vegetable Meat) uses the pig’s fatty underbelly and is stewed with salt preserved vegetables for several hours before serving, allowing the meat to become tender and flavourful. Pigs trotters braised in black vinegar is normally served to women during their pregnancy as they believe it provides some of the much needed nutrients for a growing foetus. Braised over a period of time, the sourness of the vinegar helps cut the fattiness of the dish.

These traditional Hakka dishes are all high in salt. Most Hakka people were tillers of the land, often living in the poorest and most rural provinces of China. They worked long hours in the rice fields of Guang Zhou, losing a lot of salt in the process. A high sodium meal compensates for the loss.

However, the dish that fascinates me the most is what my family calls *Kiam Teh*, more commonly known as *Lei Cha Fan* or Thunder Tea Rice. A meal in itself, the typically vegetarian dish is served with beancurd and leeks stir-fried with garlic, long beans, french beans, chinese celery, roasted peanuts and *Chai Poh* (preserved turnip).

The tea is a paste made from a blend of Chinese green tea, peanuts, basil leaves, mint, sesame seeds and salt. Ingredients are placed in a thick clay pot with deep grooves on its inner walls. A method unique to only my family, my Third Aunt would use a wooden pole carved from the stem of guava tree to grind them down into a thick brown paste. Boiling hot water is then poured and the tea is done.

First Aunt would shout, “Ready! Come and eat!” Three generations of family members crowd round, filling their bowls with rice and choosing their toppings. They finally drown the rice and veggie mix with the savory tea soup. No two bowls of *Lei Cha Fan* are exactly the same.

As with all Hakka recipes, it is a time consuming process. It is also labour intensive, which is why First Aunt rarely bothers whipping up these amazing fares. “Aiyah! Take too long to make, and not everyone is around to help.”

The ladies of my family have already begun discussions of whose house to go to next Lunar New Year to carry on the family tradition of baking pineapple tarts, who is to buy the eggs and flour and how many to bake this time round. Again all are involved; women working tirelessly in the kitchen, the men doing the taste testing.

I look forward to the next big gathering.

By **ROBIN CHOO**

jiak pa buay (have you eaten in teochew)

Classy dishes that are beautifully decorated, ranging from steamed fish to pork jelly, are eaten with plain and watery thick-grained porridge. The sweet taste is a gentle reminder of a mother’s cooking.

Similar to the dishes of the Fujian cuisine, probably due to Chaoshan and Fujian’s cultural and language similitude and geographic proximity, Chaozhou cuisine, and Chaoshan cuisine are several names that Teochew cuisine is known by. Emerging from Chaoshan region – East Guangdong province, including cities such as Chaozhou, Shantou and Jieyang, the Teochew cuisine is widely appreciated across the region.

Popular for it’s seafood and vegetarian dishes, Teochew cuisine is “healthy” according to *teochew-cuisine.com*, due to its seasoning being much less harsh than most other Chinese cuisines. Dishes are more focused on the freshness and quality of ingredients for textures and flavour.

As a tender cuisine, oil is usually used in small quantities and key techniques are poaching, steaming and braising, as well as the common Chinese practice of stir-frying.

Similar to Cantonese cuisine, Teochew cuisine is also known for serving dishes along with congee, other than steamed rice and noodle alternatives of your choice. However, the Teochew congee is much rather porridge than congee due to being extremely watery and with it’s grains floating about in the bowl instead of a thin gruel.

Traditional Teochew restaurants serve very strong oolong tea called Tieguanyin in miniscule cups before and after the meal to cleanse the palate. The tea tastes thick and bittersweet, but is excellent for whetting the appetite.

Seemingly an innocent, clear and hearty looking soup from a distance, it turns out to be filled with pig innards: boiled pig’s intestines, kidney, stomach, tongue and blood cubes, topped off with a sprinkle of salted vegetables and chopped onions. The pig’s organ soup is thick and peppery, fused with a lingering aroma of liver and the iron of the blood. It’s a unique broth, but some might consider this “exotic” and would much rather keep it at an arm’s length.

“This was one of my favourite dishes when I was a child, but now teenagers think that eating intestines is disgusting, but they’re delicious!” drooled Mr Bernard Chan, 61.

Another dish that has dropped ranks in popularity in recent years is Pork Jelly or some might call Pork Aspic. The translucent cubes infused with pork slices are usually served cold.

The amount of time and effort it takes to make the dish is one reason why its so rarely seen on our dining tables. Pork Trotters are stewed for at least eight hours to turn the collagen into gelatin. After which, the meat is left overnight to set before being placed in the fridge for an entire day. So all in all, it takes at least two days to prepare just one single dish.

So if you ever get the munchies for some traditional goodness, Chui Huay Lim Teochew restaurant at Novena offers some mouth watering steamed grouper fish, but if you’re on a budget, Soon Soon Teochew Porridge along Simon Road welcomes you with open arms with their array of braised and poached dishes.

By **DANIEL CHAN**

sik bau mei (have you eaten in cantonese)

From the ancient woks of the Guangdong people to the plates of contemporary Chinese restaurants – Cantonese food does indeed transcend time. What is normally referred to as Chinese food in the United States of America is actually one of the eight great culinary traditions of Chinese cuisine.

Immigrants from Guangdong province in the southeast of China spread all over the world, bringing along with them their exquisite food. It is not a surprise that most top 10 culinary lists place this cuisine as their numero uno, and a staggering 14 Cantonese restaurants are Michelin-starred. Most impressive on this list is Lung King Heen, a restaurant located at the Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong, which has the maximum rating of three stars, the only Hong Kong restaurant to hold this prestigious distinction.

Dim sum, undoubtedly the most famous type of food in the cuisine, is now loved by plenty across the globe. These small bite-sized portions of food served in steamer baskets are meant to be savoured in the early hours of the day. Vital to this traditional breakfast is the drinking of tea, which led to the eating of dim sum to be coined *yum cha* (drinking tea).

Popular dishes served include *har gow*, a delicious shrimp dumpling wrapped up in thin, translucent wheat starch skin and *chee cheong fun*, a steamed rice roll doused in sweet soy sauce and filled with either shrimp, beef or *char siu*. (barbequed pork)

Mr Low Yoon Pheng, a 56-year-old Cantonese, recalls, “My father used to tell me stories about how my grandmother made the best *dim sum*. It is good that there are more *dim sum* restaurants in Singapore now as it now reminds me of my father’s stories.”

Another prominent member of the Cantonese cuisine family is the noodle dishes. *Chow mein* (stir-fried noodles), the noodles most commonly found in Chinese takeaway boxes, has its roots in Guangdong. Another dish is wonton noodles, served in a hot broth and filled with juicy wonton dumplings. Ms Woo Boh Chun, 50, states that “the topic of best wonton noodles in Hong Kong” is “highly debated” and that when she visits she “has to try them all because they are all so good”.

If you’re feeling adventurous, opt for deep-fried options like the marinated pigeon. A dish sought-after in Hong Kong, it tastes like chicken with the skin of a duck, giving a unique combination of both flavour and crunch. Diners are given gloves when eating pigeon because it can become a really greasy affair.

Of course, the best Cantonese food will be found in its home region. Fortunately, excellent Cantonese food can be found on our shores. One such restaurant is Wing Seong Fatty’s, located at the Burlington Square. According to *travel.cnn.com*, their Prawn Paste Chicken “coats your fingers with just the right amount of grease” and venison “not too spicy and very tender” – sounds like heaven on earth to me.

These traditional foods are very much a part of culture as is the dialect spoken. It represents our historical beginnings and tells the stories of our forefathers through the depths of flavours of each dish. The complexities of the processes in making these masterpieces have given us a greater appreciation of our food heritage. They are part of our past that has persisted into the present, and it is our turn to bring it into the future for the next generation to enjoy.

By **IAN NG**



Options

Dare to be
different.

Curtin University offers creative and challenging courses in digital design, fashion, screen arts, mass communication, creative advertising and graphic design, and photography.

When you study at Curtin, you gain practical skills and engage with industry, taking you beyond the classroom and into the real world.

Dare to be different. Visit humanities.curtin.edu.au

Make tomorrow better.

Aaron McPolin, photography student.
Curtin University is a trademark of Curtin University of Technology. CRICOS Provider Code 00301J (WA), 02637B (NSW)



Curtin University



HUG O' WAR

BY
**NATHANIA
TIRTAPUTRA**

The doctor hastily grabs the soft, disinfected blanket set on the sterile table. Using his left arm, he gently lays the newborn above it, while his right simultaneously wraps the delicate being comfortably, tucking the end of the blanket in the middle of its miniature frame. The newborn is handed gently to its enervated maker; its hands and feet combined make up the size of the mother's palm.

What's the first thing a Mother does after giving birth to her child? She embraces her newborn.

The mother gazes at her child taking in light, muffled breaths, barely clinging on to her chest; the only contact its body has come to know, as her baby emanates captivating purity. It has no walls built from disappointment, no doubt or feeling of inadequacy. It can only do two things: breathe and cry.

We came into this world vulnerable. Given no cards to defend ourselves, but only to depend. From the time we were born our family's touch shows us that we're loved and cherished.

If there was a book on 'My Life as an Infant', it would all say the same thing: I spend the first few months of my life being embraced and carried around.

MindBodyGreen emphasises eight reasons why we need hugs every day. Number five stating that associations of self-worth and tactile sensations from our primary years are still embedded in our nervous system as adults. Blame it on your parents for cuddling you as a baby, but their actions has shaped the way we receive love today.

However, the sad truth is, most parents discontinue the act of embracing as their child begins to mature (usually during their prepubescent years where they grow distant and awkward). We build excuses saying 'I'm too old to be cuddled by my parents!' or 'it's weird because I'm grown up now'.

Yet sometimes... all you need is a hug.

When was the last time you enjoyed a warm physical embrace? Think again before you say yes. When I say warm embrace, I mean a proper (one to two minute) meaningful hug. Not a touch and go squeeze.

It can be exchanged between anyone – your companion, friends or family members.

Many Singaporeans perceive hugs as a stranger; it's foreign to them. Only

one out of four Singaporeans has the habit of practising hugs daily. The remaining majority gives them out scarcely, mainly on special occasions such as birthdays.

If you face the mounting pressure of attaining academic excellence or succeeding in life in terms of relationships, studies and finance (like I do), Virginia Satir, a respected family therapist – voted as the most influential therapist in two social national surveys – highly suggests we hug it out.

Hugs are like a myriad of genies granting you wishes of happiness. They boost self-esteem, balance out the nervous system, and teach us how to give and receive.

Holding a hug for an extended time also lifts one's serotonin levels, elevating mood and creating happiness. It sounds too good to be true, because it is!

Long embraces are proven to instantly boost oxytocin levels, which heal feelings of loneliness, isolation and anger. If a bad day comes knocking on your door, charge at it with a hug to soothe out the tension.

INSTAGRAM IS DEPRESSING

BY
CHOO MEI FANG

As I scrolled through photos of drool-inducing meals, a friend's graduation trip to Korea, and another friend's shopping haul on Instagram, I became increasingly miserable with the lack of action in my life.

"Why is everyone out there having fun? I want to live an Instagram-worthy life too," I whined to a friend.

Instagram started out as a simple photo sharing application before evolving into something much more complicated. It used to be effortless and quick, but now almost every photo you see on your Instagram feed has undergone a certain amount of scrutiny and editing.

Through meticulously composed snapshots, Instagram users are able to construct a certain reality of their lives. The images that users upload paint a picture of their lives that they want people to see. It would seem everybody wants to create an illusion of a perfect life.

This has resulted in "Instagram envy" which occurs when you find yourself wishing for the lifestyle that your friend has portrayed through his/her photographs.

It's hard not to be hit with a slight pang of jealousy when you scroll through another photo of a sumptuous sushi buffet while picking at your bowl of instant noodles.

A 2013 study conducted by Humboldt University in Berlin and Technical University in Darmstadt associates feelings of envy with Facebook use, and this aspect is linked strongly to photo sharing. The study further elaborates that it might be due to the phenomenon of social comparison.

This social comparison theory was proposed by social psychologist Leon Festinger in 1954, and it explains how individuals evaluate their own abilities by comparing themselves to others. In this case, comparison is done using the photos we see on Facebook (which might be a warped representation of our friends' lifestyles) and our own lives.

This study relates to Instagram, which is a photo-based application. Unlike Facebook where photo uploads can be swallowed by status updates and shared articles on your news feed, Instagram provides a continuous stream of images.

With a single scroll down your Instagram feed, you are now aware of the achievements and happenings in the lives of your friends. This leads to the torturous comparison and feeling of inferiority that everyone's life seems to be better than yours.

Earlier this year, the 100 Happy Days Challenge started making its rounds on Instagram. For 100 days, the user would snap and upload a photo of something that made him happy. This was to encourage the habit of positive thinking.

However, it seemed like yet another avenue to show off. Pictures of extravagant lifestyles and glowing images of friends and family were like a thinly veiled attempt to boast about their social life.

At the end of the day, we need to be aware that pseudo realities can be constructed through the photos we see on Instagram. Take a breather from the application, and talk to your friends instead relying on their Instagram uploads for updates on their lives.

After all, it sure beats staying at home and moping around.

#NO SUCH THING AS BAD ACTIVISM

BY
DENISE WONG

Social media is more than just a platform for vanity selfies and daily heated rants. It is now a stage for people to stand up for what they believe in and to demand change for the better.

This form of contemporary activism is in every way as legitimate as its traditional counterpart in communicating the diversity of problems in our society.

However, not everyone are in favour of social media activism. Critics label it as “slacktivism”.

Many see as slothful work done by activist wannabes who lounge in comfort behind their LCD screens to inflate their self-esteem, achieving nothing significant.

People who participate in social media activism have also been accused of creating superfluous hype that is often short-lived. The notion is that change cannot possibly happen within the fleeting life cycle of a hashtag.

Nonetheless, despite the sceptics, social media activism can determine the success of an entire movement – if done right. Social media is a vital instrument in getting the word out.

Digital activism continues to grow each day. While conventional activism movements may find it difficult to persuade, social media proves hard to ignore.

With #BringBackOurGirls, Nigerian advocates took to Twitter when terrorist group Boko Haram kidnapped 200 schoolgirls from the village of Chibok in April. Hoping to spur on a rather obstinate government to seek justice, the activists decided to raise awareness of the kidnappings not only within Nigeria, but also beyond its borders.

The result: a hashtag that caught on like wildfire across the globe. According to BBC, the phrase was used 3.3 million times on different social networking sites in the month of May alone, garnering support from celebrities and world leaders. Support was so evident that it even appeared at the World Cup, the biggest and most watched sporting event of 2014.

Yet it is more than just gaining awareness and creating news value. The global reach of the Internet means that people can now rally together on a single podium for a common cause.

Conversation starter #YesAllWomen was sparked off by the Santa Barbara

shootings of women in May. Achieving 700,000 tweets on its first day, this thread brought renewed vigour to an age-old predicament that women face.

In an interview with CNN, political analyst and activist Zerlina Maxwell remarked on how this social media crusade influenced the mainstream public in ways typical feminist campaigns do not, where simply tweeting about it was an act of activism by itself.

Even world dialogues such as The Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict have turned to social media to encourage the international community to engage and interact under the hashtag #TimeToAct.

Virtual activism expresses the desire for action and demonstrates that the world is not an entirely cold and unfeeling place. Driven wholly by the masses, it is the stepping stone to bigger and more empathetic movements that have the potential of going further than merely gaining awareness.

For once, being inseparable from our smartphones may not be such a bad thing.

THE MUSIC STAR KILLED THE RADIO STAR

BY
HYLIANA MOHAMED

“OMG, do you like Rent too?” was my friend’s ardent response when I broke out into the song ‘Seasons of Love’ from the movie-musical Rent.

“No, I know the song from Glee,” I said. He gave me a look of such horror, you’d think Glee and the Dark Lord of Mordor were the same person. I knew from that moment he was going to rage on endlessly about Glee, and how Glee ruins all the good songs. He’s not the first person to tell me this.

But just because Glee modernises classic songs doesn’t mean the song is ruined. Glee never intended for their covers to sound exactly like the original, so if a song from your favourite artist or musical appears on Glee, dismissing it straightaway just because it sounds unfamiliar is pretty unfair.

The music snob, like my friend, appears to have been awakened by the advent of the Internet. Anyone can comment on music but not everyone is a music critic.

With music-sharing sites and music blogs becoming commonplace on the worldwide web, listeners moved away from radio and MTV where mainstream music reigns to listen to independent artists.

The music snob hates songs that can be found on the radio or on the Hot 100 Billboard chart. But does it matter whether you discovered a song from the radio or an alternative music blog as long as it is a good song?

If you watch some of the live, acoustic performances of Ke\$ha or Miley Cyrus, you’ll realise that they can sing pretty well. But most people confuse talent with attitude, so even if these artists can truly sing, the music snob will refuse to admit it.

Mention ‘One Direction’ or ‘Nicki Minaj’ and music snobs will give a look so sour that chewing 10 lemons might be a better alternative than listening to 10 seconds of ‘Superbass.’

Other signs you’re a music snob is when you always complain that you are born in the wrong generation, you knew an artist before he became a sell-out, a band’s earlier work is the best or a band’s live shows are always better than actual recordings.

I listen to the work of – even though I’m not a huge fan – of Justin Bieber or Lady Gaga. And believe me, I do listen to non-pop genres like indie – I love bands like San Cisco and The xx.

I’m just tired of defending my music choice to the music snob who goes around judging people by their music taste. I believe that we are all entitled to listen to the music we want without being lectured about our generation’s “crappy” music. Unless you want to be known as a pretentious know-it-all, if you don’t have anything nice to say about today’s music, then don’t say anything at all.

GOOD FILMS FINISH LAST

BY
IAN NG

You will be hard-pressed to find a “greatest movies” list without Citizen Kane on it. The masterpiece that shaped modern cinema received glowing reviews but failed miserably at the box office.

Citizen Kane is not alone. Almost Famous, the film that highly respected movie critic Roger Ebert called the best film of 2000, bombed and did not even break even. The Shawshank Redemption, currently sitting cosily on top of imdb.com's Top 250 movies chart, barely covered its budget.

This list is unceasing when we take into account the films in the festival circuit; many of these films, no matter how brilliant, will never be marketed enough for them to sell.

Juxtapose these with Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen (19 percent rating on rottentomatos.com) that grossed over US\$600 million and Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest (53 percent rating on rottentomatos.com) that earned a whopping US\$1 billion, one simple question becomes apparent – why would more people pay more to see (supposedly) inferior movies?

In a perfect world, Palme d'Or and Sundance Grand Jury Prize winners would be topping the moneymaking charts, with a discerning audience able to sift out the cookie cutter, cliché laden Hollywood blockbusters from the real, gritty movies with impeccable storytelling and excellent cinematography.

We live in a world where Michael Bay has grossed more than Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick and Woody Allen combined.

The disparity between critical acclaim and commercial success ultimately boils down to a single reason – perspective. A movie critic and a regular moviegoer will walk into a cinema with two distinctively different mindsets. The former, with battle-worn eyes, will dissect the movie and analyse all its parts. The latter simply expects to be entertained, and whether or not the movie has fulfilled that expectation determines how good the movie is.

Money speaks loudest and great marketing makes a movie sell better than the views of the most highly regarded critic. This leads to the

production of “safe” movies, the kind that audiences have grown to expect, the kind of movies that do not push the boundaries of cinema as an art form but instead treats it like a tool to rake in profits.

Popular movies pandering to the taste of mass audiences are like fast food – easier to digest and understand.

It is no wonder then that badly panned movies can become commercial successes. A simple formula, tried, tested and obviously works, is reproduced under different guises. Ultimately, it is pointless trying to determine a winner between the two contestants as they are in completely different weight classes.

The intentions of a movie should dictate the way a movie is judged. This makes The Hurt Locker as much of a classic as the Transformers series.

The movie buff is unlikely to abandon the burger or stop longing for it. Gourmet food, like the good art movie, will just have to remain a rare treat.

GRAFFITI: ART OR CRIME?

BY
SARAH CHU

In dictionaries, graffiti is defined as “writings or drawings scribbled, scratched, or sprayed illicitly on a wall or other surfaces in a public place”. But to artists, graffiti is a form of artistic expression.

Well, it depends on whether you are given permission to do so. Then again, that may not be defined as graffiti.

In the United Kingdom, many “free walls” or public places allow artists to create their artwork without breaking the rules.

With only the Scape Youth Park made available for graffiti artists in Singapore to draw legally, the space might run out sooner or later, or their work might not be able to stay on the walls for too long.

Even if there are other spaces to use, graffiti artists might not be aware of them; there are just too few places over here for graffiti artists to let their creative juices flow.

I am not a graffiti artist myself, but I understand artists create their work to be shown to people, and without more platforms, the graffiti art culture cannot grow in Singapore.

Surprisingly, even in New York City, graffiti is banned in some public areas, like subway stations. This is why most artists become anonymous – they “draw-and-run” to avoid being caught. Though not the wisest way to express themselves artistically, they do this because they believe graffiti should never be called vandalism but art.

I can understand why Singapore has extremely limited space for graffiti. One reason could be that graffiti is being used to spread political messages. In the recent case in May, five youths were arrested for drawing graffiti which went against the People's Action Party (PAP) on a flat in Toa Payoh.

Mr Sufian Hamri, a Singapore graffiti artist, told The New Paper in 2012 that he only does graffiti where it is legal, and believes that art and crime are two completely different things.

Artists should be free to express themselves. Graffiti can become art and not labeled as vandalism, as long as there is more room on our little red dot for this beautiful art form to develop.

Women's body issues are overrated. We are told to conform to impossible beauty standards. We have diet fads shoved at us to strive for that “perfect” figure. The media tells us to reinvent ourselves in their ideal.

But – surprise, surprise – women are not the only ones under pressure to be image perfect.

Men are also given the blueprint for perfection: A man should be strong, muscular and show no emotion. He has to constantly “Man Up” and “Be a Man”.

One will almost never see a heavysset man appearing on the cover of a fashion catalogue or on an in-store poster. It is the taut, toned, and well-endowed man who graces the glossy advertisements in stores, on TV and in magazines. And women, of course, love the way these male models look,

which adds oil to the fire in the male mind. Like women, they become programmed to think that they have to conform to this extreme standard in order to be considered attractive.

And nowadays, hitting the gym is in. The goal is to grow muscular. At least, women have ladies-only gyms and ladies' hours that promote friendship and acceptance among all. The men who are less than the perceived ideal have to grin and bare it.

Men need body love, too! “Be a Man” is something that is easily said, but packs a load of strain. If he cries, he is weak and a wimp. Slamming a man with this phrase is telling him that he has to conceal his emotions and his feelings.

I think women's body issues are overrated. And to assume that men don't have them is think is absurd.

WHY MEN NEED BODY LOVE TOO

BY
JANINE TAN

THE BANALITY OF HORROR

BY
OLIVER TAN

A scantily clad girl is washing her face in a bathroom. An eerie silence pervades the room. The moment she snaps close the medicine cabinet, violins shriek and a devilish face appears in the mirror.

Sounds familiar?

Mainstream horror movies these days repeatedly make use of the same formulae. It doesn't take a creative genius to come up with jump scares using eerie music or to craft gory scenes where limbs are chopped off to the melody of piercing screams.

These elements seem to be a given for the modern horror film merely because viewers accept these elements as "scary" when all they truly do is shock.

Mainstream horror films are like zombies today. They shuffle along with little energy or effort and only serve to feed on us humans. Even if these scenarios are the founding principles upon which the great horror empire was based, they've lost their potency and spark.

One of my favorite horror films is *Misery* (1990), Rob Reiner's adaptation of the Stephen King novel about obsession and imprisonment. In the film, Kathy Bates' innocuous, chirpy character is, in reality, a murderous, obsessive fan of James Caan's Paul Sheldon.

The director and the cast succeeded in portraying the isolation and hopelessness of the protagonist. This notion of being helpless is truly scary, to me.

For a horror movie to be truly innovative and timeless, it needs to go beyond ghosts, demons, poltergeists and serial killers. *The Shining* (1980), for example, introduced the concept of being isolated for so long that you lose your sanity and see your loved ones as enemies. The unpredictability of human nature scares me more than ghosts standing next to a person in a photograph.

Many modern horror films are not original to begin with. A whopping 62 percent of box office takings for horror movies made between 1994 and 2013 is earned from adaptations, remakes and spin-offs (stephenfollows.com). This is, of course, the case for most Hollywood fare these days.

Worse, sequels just don't stop coming! There are 12 movies in the *Friday The 13th* franchise, 10 *Halloween* flicks, nine grueling episodes of *The Nightmare On Elm Street*, and my personal favourite: 12 zombie movies that have stemmed from George A. Romero's original *Night of The Living Dead* (1968).

The studios can milk these cash cows until they're scrawny and bone-dry but

no ounce of originality ever re-enters the stories. But they do reap big at the box office. It is a business, after all.

But it is time for us to support the growing small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs). SMEs here, of course, referring to "indie" horror film directors who are willing to take the genre in a different direction à la *Wolf Creek* (2005) and *REC* (2007).

Films like 2010's *Frozen* renew my faith in today's horror films. No, I'm not talking about the beautiful Snow Queen Elsa and her sister Anna. I'm talking about the indie horror film about teen tourists trapped on a ski chair far above the ground. They use their human instinct for survival to fend off the bitter cold and relentless wolves. The film was innovative and fresh in concept, depicting a scenario where one has to go to extreme measures in order to survive nature's cruelty.

Such a story trumps the generic haunted house routine that we've grown so accustomed to. Creative visionaries have the capability to take us to new depths of horror and new dimensions of fear. We wait with bated breath.



midea

for youth, by youth

m:idea is Singapore's first youth-led media conglomerate from the School of Film & Media Studies in Ngee Ann Polytechnic. With youths as the heart and soul of our enterprise, **m:idea** has a proven track record of helping many brands and organisations reach the youth audience effectively.

Through six media units (Trimedia Publishing, CTV Productions, Radio Heatwave, Inspire Design, Klix Photography and m:idea marcomm), we offer editorial, media production, creative and campaign management services as well as mediums for advertising placements.

To know more about **m:idea**, go to www.fmsmidea.com



Take the Lead

with a Group of Eight University Degree



Part-Time & Full-Time Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Programs offered in
Singapore @ NAA are of **equivalent status** as onshore degrees offered in Adelaide

BACHELOR OF COMMERCE

General or specialisation options in
International Business, Management
or Marketing

BACHELOR OF NURSING

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

- Singapore Nursing Board (SNB)

BACHELOR OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

- Australian Computer Society
- Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers
- American-based Association for Computing Machinery

BACHELOR OF INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

[Advanced Standing for Polytechnic Diploma Holders]



AACSB Accreditation
is a Hallmark of Excellence
in Business Education

ASSOCIATED WITH

5 NOBEL
LAUREATES

REGULARLY RANKED
IN TOP 1%

OF UNIVERSITIES
WORLDWIDE

PRODUCED

106

RHODES
SCHOLARS

PRODUCED

122

FULBRIGHT
SCHOLARS

2014 | OPEN FOR
ADMISSION | APPLICATION

ENQUIRIES or
CONSULTATION BY APPOINTMENT
e: registrar@NAA.edu.sg
t: 6738 2910

PROGRAM PREVIEW ON EVERY SAT
PREVIEW SCHEDULE & REGISTRATION

www.NAA.edu.sg