

HYPE

#41

Aug-Jan 2016



AH GIRL TO MA'AM
WOMEN SERVING THE NATION

ARTS RESURRECTS OLD SPACES
BREATHING LIFE INTO FORGOTTEN PLACES

PASSING THE TEST OF TIME
PRESERVING SINGAPORE'S FOOD FAMILIES

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50

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The Shoppes@MBS #B1-83J

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HYPE

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48 Arab Street

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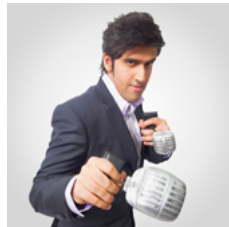
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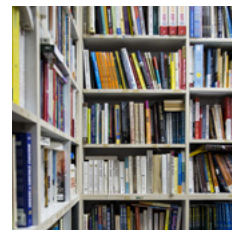
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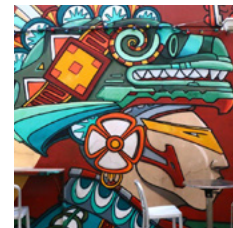
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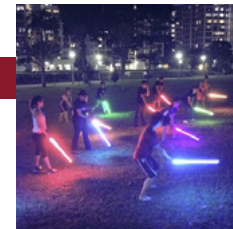
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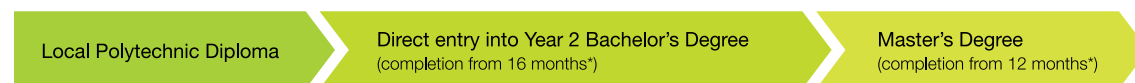
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Small in stature but by no means in spirit, Singapore has proven time and time again that, yes, big things do come in Little Red packages.

For the special occasion that is Singapore's Golden Jubilee, HYPE #41 celebrates the Singapore of today and tomorrow.

In true SG50 fashion, we revisit things you never thought you would. Embrace the homely feeling you get browsing the aisles of secondhand bookstores (p. 48), or playing old records from bands of Singapore's golden age of music (p. 12). Or even reminisce about the times your parents brought you to the hawker centre for family dinners and you drooled over the lovingly made food from families dedicated to giving you their best dishes (p. 74).

Of course, we need to look back from time to time. But it's been 50 years, and before you know it, it'll be 50 more.

Perhaps its not too early to think about how we will celebrate the Singapore of tomorrow as well.

Young people share what they look forward to in SG100 (p. 42). Maybe it could be a happier Singapore, as seen in our thriving comedy scene (p. 32). In the past 50 years, we definitely need to applaud ourselves for being more receptive to the arts, allowing the arts into the comfort of our homes (p. 30) and providing more stepping stones for young, local talents to make names for themselves locally and internationally.

Here's to 50 years, and many, many more.

Majulah Singapura. Onward we will continue to go.

Sophia Hyder

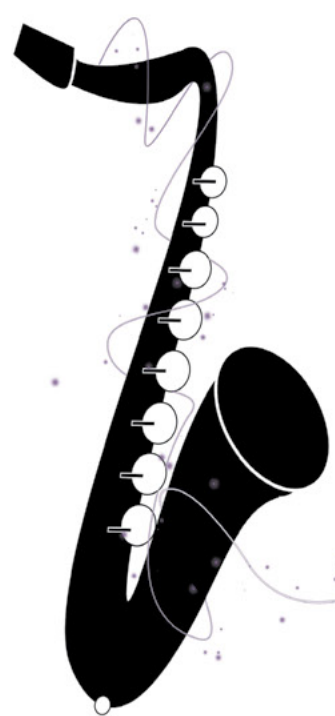
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JAZZ STARS ARISING

FRANCIS LAW takes a look into the local jazz scene to explore its resurgence in Singapore

In the recent months, events such as the Singapore International Jazz Festival have been popping up, as well as young local jazz artists making their debuts. NParks even organised All that Jazz – a concert featuring local jazz artists.

The question: Is this genre back on the rise in Singapore?

Jazz on a Cycle

While jazz today is considered as somewhat of a niche genre, there was a time when it flourished in Singapore. According to Dale Cheong of High Notes Music Solutions, which provides 'live' music for events, the jazz scene used to be much more vibrant in the 90s.

Dale says: "10 to 15 years ago, we used to have really good venues like the Somerset Bar and Jazz@ Southbridge. Those places used to be beaming with audiences and really good musicians."

However, rising rental rates made it difficult for such venues to survive and soon, many had to close down because of financial reasons. This then resulted in the "collapse" of jazz during that era.

On the bright side, more jazz bars are rising to provide new venues for jazz artists to perform. In the last few years, venues such as the SingJazz Club and B28 have emerged.

Jeremy Monteiro, prominent jazz pianist and a Cultural Medallion winner, describes this as "a natural cycle".

"It's a cyclical thing, even internationally. I would say [the jazz scene] hit rock bottom about two years ago. We are on the rise now, but we're still far from the zenith."

The Struggle With Living

"Oh, it's really easy to get into the music industry," says Dale with a wave. "Here in Singapore, you can easily get the resources you need. But it is hard to make a living."

As Singapore gets more affluent, there is an increase in returning artists as well. The increase in the number of musicians in Singapore makes the competition much tougher, making it difficult for professional musicians to stay afloat.

"It will never be the same as before, but there is enough of a cult following for jazz to survive. That's our only hope."

- Jeremy Monteiro



Local musicians' worries extend past Singapore's shores too, with music coming from internationally renowned artists as well.

Furthermore, with a widening pool of "talented and tenacious" musicians both in Singapore and internationally, musicians desperate to get their music heard are willing to be paid less. Venues capitalise on this desperation, lowering the market rate and adding on to the difficulties for musicians who rely on music for a living.

Radio is Key

To Jeremy, the key to the proliferation of jazz in Singapore is radio.

"The taste of a nation is defined by their radio stations. There has to be more bravery in making sure that local music plays on air."

"In Canada, they legislated that local music has to be played on air. So if Canada, one of the most 'free trade'

nations in world can do it, why can't we?"

At the moment, there is no quota for local music on radio. Unlike radio stations in countries like Canada and America, Singapore's radio stations hardly air local music, let alone local jazz. As a result, local jazz artists are unable to receive the coverage they need.

Jazz Will Survive

While it may not be the most ideal time for jazz artists to make their mark in the local music scene, things are looking up. More venues are opening up for local jazz artists and more festivals are being organised to increase the public's exposure to jazz.

Newer local jazz acts such as the Steve McQueens and Melissa Tham show promise for Singapore's jazz scene, with the latter having made her debut earlier this year.

Places for Swingin' The Blues

SingJazz Club

Tucked away in the rather charming Kampong Glam area and taking over what used to be the Sultan Jazz Club, the team behind the SingJazz festival has revived the place, maintaining its warm, cosy feel. Featuring music from both local and international guest acts alike, this place offers a wide variety of jazz not to be missed.

101 Jalan Sultan #02-00, The Sultan Hotel
When: Wed to Sun, 9 pm - 1 am.
singjazzclub.com | facebook.com/singjazzclub

Blujaz Café

Just a stone's throw away from Bugis MRT station, this is a popular spot for both jazz heads and people who are looking to have some fun. Enjoy 'live' acts from both jazz and indie artists on the first floor or, if you're in for more excitement, head up to the second floor and move to the funky reggaeton beats.

11 Bali Lane, Historic Kampong Glam
When: Mon to Thu, 11:45 am - 12:30 am. Fri, 11:45 am - 1:45 am. Sat, 4 pm - 1:45 am.
blujazcafe.net | facebook.com/blujazcafe

As Jeremy puts it: "It will never be the same as before, but there is enough of a cult following for jazz to survive. That's our only hope. I can't give any prophetic word on the future of jazz in Singapore, but just like classical music, there is enough of a critical mass for jazz to be a sustainable genre."

While the future of jazz as a popular genre is uncertain, one can be sure that jazz is here to stay.

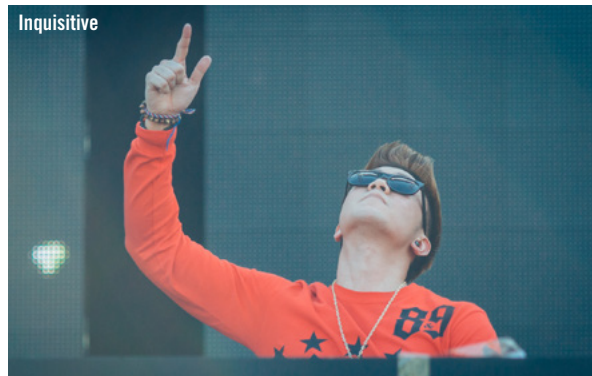
"The taste of a nation is defined by their radio stations. There has to be more bravery in making sure that local music plays on air."

- Jeremy Monteiro

B28

Classy and sophisticated, B28 offers a wide array of drinks that matches their similarly wide variety of jazz artists. While the prices may be quite steep, the quality of 'live' music there is worth it. Unlike the other two venues, B28 features only jazz artists, making it the perfect place for jazz enthusiasts with a buck or fifty to spend.

Basement No. 28, Ann Siang Road, The Club Hotel
When: Mon to Fri, 6 pm - 2 am.
Sat, 8 pm - 2 am.
btwentyeight.com | facebook.com/b28singapore



The Other Side of the Disc

With Electronic Dance Music rising up the charts, DANIAL GOFAR finds out just how the disc is spun



According to deathandtaxes, an online magazine for music, media and internet news lovers, Electronic Dance Music, or EDM, has been increasing in popularity.

But the question is whether it is worth paying hundreds of dollars for DJs at main stage, when many think that it doesn't take much effort to do a set.

Faris Shafawi, 21, says that all EDM DJs ever do is just stand and "act busy". He adds, "I go to clubs very often, and although I enjoy the atmosphere there, I just can't see what they (DJs) do. They choose songs, and we dance, that's probably it," says the Kaplan graduate with a Diploma in Counseling.

Deadmau5, the well-known progressive-house music producer and performer from Toronto, Ontario, once said that all DJs ever do 'live' was hit play. Writing on tumblr, a popular social networking site, he said, "it's not about performance art, nor is it about talent".

"Besides the usual turntablism, people rely on you to set the mood of the party."

- Daryl Tan



However, Inquisitive, one of Singapore's home-grown DJs and winner of the DMC Championship, an annual DJ competition hosted by Disco Mix Club (DMC) in 2008, says, "Even though nowadays it's a little easier as some DJ's can rely on technology to keep them going, it still takes more than just hitting the play button. Swapping records, adjusting speed, manipulating the turntable with your hands for different effects are just a few things DJs do," says the EDM whizkid.

He explains that DJ-ing can become as complex as you want it to be, with many tools and techniques at your disposal.

Beat mixing is one example. This refers to mixing two beats exactly over each other during a certain period. Since different songs have different tempos, hence it is only possible when the two songs are playing at the same speed. While synchronizing two songs is one problem, keeping them synchronized is another. Therefore, one needs to bring the tempo of one song

to the beat of the other song.

Another example would be various crowd pleasers like sampling and scratching. Daryl Tan, an aspiring DJ, says: "People want to hear new things that go well along with what they are used to". Sampling, a difficult technique to master, involves the use of live sequences and samples taken from other songs to complement the current song playing.

Scratching, on the other hand, is a sophisticated technique of using physical hand movements to alter the pitch and speed of a song to complement the song playing. This requires a lot of time to master and requires intense dexterity.

Daryl agrees that it's really much more than pressing buttons. "Besides the usual turntablism, people rely on you to set the mood of the party."

He says the best part is seeing the crowd having a great time at the party you control.

Photos courtesy of Justin Choo and Samuel Ow

Electronic Music Storm Brewing

AMANPREET SINGH finds out why EDM is everyone's dance music

There was a time when people went gaga over catchy pop songs from the likes of Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake, but Electronic Dance Music, or EDM, has taken the world by storm in recent times.

EDM's catchy, repetitive vocals and electronically produced sounds often get stuck in the listener's head after the very first listen. If anything, EDM is exceptional at one thing – getting people hyped up.

EDM is produced on a computer and a synthesizer that work together to produce fresh, new sound effects using only the fundamental qualities of sound.

For some, EDM is the cause for a throbbing electro migraine, mainly because of its primary focus on repetitive synths and high level 'drops'. 'Drops' are when the music breaks and there is a sudden switch in rhythm or bass line. In other words, a 'drop' is when people start to go 'eh wah'.

To Kerwin Choo, 19, who prefers country music and the occasional Bruno Mars hit, EDM is confusing. "I don't quite get all the fuss over teenagers hyper-ventilating to fast-paced music. It's tough to understand what the lyrics mean," he says.

As EDM is frequently played at nightclubs or dance music festivals like Tomorrowland and World Music Festival, some people think that all EDM listeners are wild, diehard partygoers who get drunk and dance sloppily to this intense, pulsating genre.

"I am a staunch Buddhist, so clubbing is certainly out of the question. EDM helps me to relax and gives an added meaning to my life."

- Joven Phang

While there's no denying that clubbers and EDM go together like Batman and Robin, there are lesser known sub genres of EDM that are not commonly played at clubs.

Popular nightclub, Zouk, for example, plays mostly Progressive House, where the music builds up for 40 to 50 seconds before a 'drop' comes

in. Genres such as Dubstep, where the sub bass is often reverberated or repeated in the form of an echo, and Trance, which consists of huge melodies that are repeatedly built up and broken down, aren't commonly played in most Singaporean clubs.

Online music streaming sites such as Spotify and Soundcloud play a huge role.

According to the 2014 International Music Summit report, EDM was the only genre (overtaking Pop and Rock) to achieve positive growth in digital track sales. On average, EDM disc jockeys also experienced a 77 per cent rise in Twitter followers. More and more people are being exposed to them online rather than on the dance floor.

Joven Phang, 18, has been a massive EDM fan since 2009. However, Joven certainly isn't a clubber. "I am a staunch Buddhist, so clubbing is certainly out of the question. EDM helps me to relax and gives an added meaning to my life," he says. "I found lots of comfort in EDM, it's hard to describe but all those thumping beats were like an escape from reality."

So, the next time you notice someone with headphones blasting high level music don't just assume he is your typical wild partygoer.

Ultra Music Festival, one of the most popular annual EDM festivals held in Miami and boasting the World's best DJs, is heading to Marina Bay Sands on Sep 19. Tickets (from \$118) available now on UltraSingapore.com



Techno Party designed by Freepik.com
Sultry DJ Music Wallpaper from Wallpower.com

MUSIC WE ONCE LOVED

CHRISTA CHOO and SAMANTHA CHOONG go in search of musicians from the 60s, to learn more about why many still call it the heyday of Singapore music

When we think about the music from the 60s, Singapore bands would not usually come to mind. But put aside Marvin Gaye and the Beatles and step into the world of The Quests. The 60s was essentially the heyday for local music. A number of bands gained record deals with the help of radios lauding the music they produced.

Rewinding back to the past, there was indeed a whole lot more support for local music then.

Mr Andrew Lim, 75, better known by his stage name Andy Young, who runs singapore60smusic.blogspot.com, won the Paul Anka competition in 1959, and led Silver Strings shortly after. His music career only took flight for all of two years, when he decided it would clash with his teaching career. He says that he “had some time free in between, because teaching then was only half a day”.

“Silver Strings started in the band leader’s house and from there we got

contracts to play in nightclubs,” says Mr Lim. “We only played for a few miserable dollars. It was more for the fun of it.”

Mr Lim recalls how parents would warn their daughters to stay away from band boys. “Musicians today are backed up by society, it wasn’t so then,” he explains. “Today’s musicians are accepted, in a sense, because now we have so much backing by the authorities, the government.”

Mr Lim adds: “You can go for a full music course or degree at Berklee College of Music. At that time, there was no such thing. If you were a musician, you were on your own. Those were the days.”

Alvin Khoo, 36, guitarist of the band 53A, says: “My uncle was a musician [in the 60s], and it was very tough as music was associated with drugs then, so the government shut it down for like, 10 years.”

In the late 60s, the Singapore government came down hard on the music scene because music events were a hotbed of gang activity in addition to the references to drugs in Western music. The highly conservative mood then also saw the trend of having long hair as bad and went to the extremes of banning those with hair that went beyond shoulder length from entry into concert venues.

While music in other countries continued to blossom, the progress came to a screeching halt there. Alvin remarks: “Singapore is actually 10 to 15 years behind in [music].”

Much has changed since then. The ban on music has long since been lifted and a career in music is celebrated. Unlike most countries, the government provides plenty of support to local musicians with grants to propel their album creation.

There are also several events and festivals that provide opportunities for bands to be heard, thus encouraging young talents to perform. The National Arts Council (NAC) also has subsidies to help budding artists start up

“You can go for a full music course or degree at Berklee College of Music. At that time, there was no such thing. If you were a musician, you were on your own. Those were the days.”

– Mr Andrew Lim

professional careers, and production grants to help those who have established their careers.

Take Two, a five-piece band, recently launched their EP, Pairs, made possible partly through an NAC grant. Paddy Ong, lead singer for the band, says that the help they had received really contributed to the production of their EP.

Events, like the annual three-day alternative music festival Baybeats, are also part of the effort to promote and nurture local music. The festival calls for budding bands to audition for a place in their line-up and those who are chosen are paired with a mentor who then helps to hone the band’s skills. Bands are given support to grow as musicians and gain recognition along the way through this festival.

The support from the government might encourage production of music, but music wouldn’t be where it is without the support of fans and listeners, and that might be what Singapore is lacking. With the domination of Western entertainment, music from the West fills up the majority of playlists on our iPods.

While many bands are producing original songs, Paddy admits that sometimes, taking up cover gigs at bars is the only way to earn money for musicians to sustain themselves. The demand for bands that do cover gigs is much higher than for those who perform their own original music.

This is a contrast to the 60s, when bands mostly played original music and were recognised for them. Some songs from local bands even made it into British airwaves.

For instance, The Quests was best known for Shanty, which knocked the Beatles out of the number one spot



“Singapore is actually 10 to 15 years behind in terms of [music].”

– Alvin Khoo

on the Singapore charts when it was released. This instrumental piece was the first tune that shot them to stardom. Backed by the British label, EMI Records, The Quests became a household name in Singapore and went on to release more singles.

Music in Singapore is vastly different now, but the change might be for the better. Popular local bands such as Plainsunset and Cashew Chemists might not all be picked up by record labels, or make it to the hottest songs on our radio stations, but they still maintain a loyal following. While it’s certainly not a booming industry, music in Singapore is definitely growing.

Local Bands of the 60s

Here are some of the bands that rocked the charts in Singapore to satisfy your curiosity:

The Quests

Best known for their instrumental track Shanty, The Quests was one of the most popular bands at that time and started off by playing covers of British and American pop music.

The Crescendos

Fronted by Susan Lim, the band made their name on a TV talent show. The first band in Singapore to be signed by an international record company, their hit songs include Mr Twister and The Boy Next Door.

The Silver Strings

At their peak, their hit song You’re The Boy was all the rage. They were also the opening act for The Rolling Stones and will come together again this November for another hurrah.



Riding High on Oceans

Singer-songwriter Deon Toh has just launched Oceans and already has enough songs for the next album, he tells FRANCIS LAW

Deon Toh performing on the
Chillout Stage at Baybeats 2014.

Mayer Made the Difference

There, in 2008, Deon attended a talk by one of the school's most prolific alumnus, American singer-songwriter John Mayer.

"He was answering a lot of questions from the students and because we were all musicians, everyone kind of picked up questions that was on each others' minds – what inspires them, why do music," Deon says.

This really struck a chord in the young Deon.

"It helped me realign, focus on what was important and question myself. I wouldn't say that was the best experience, but that was definitely the most important experience in helping me think deeper into what I wanted to do in my life and what I wanted to do with music. Not just the standard dreams of 'play music, get big and live like a rock star'."

After what Deon calls his life-changing experience, he struggled with his choices as a musician.

Despite having finally made it to the college of his dreams as well as making it onto the dean's list, Deon continued to wrestle with himself about what he wanted to do in the future.

Slurping down a bowl of *mee rebus* with a glass of iced *teh* and dressed in a simple T-shirt and jeans, one could hardly guess that this unassuming young man is, in fact, one of Singapore's talented singer-songwriters.

Starting with playing the drums for his brother's band at bars, Deon Toh, in his late 20s (he's shy about his age), now has his own act, under the moniker of DEON (see story on Page 19). And while he mainly plays the guitar and keyboard at gigs, the multi-talented Deon also plays the drums and saxophone.

Deon, who launched his second album, Oceans, in July, attributes his interest in music to his solitary lifestyle.

"Growing up I didn't have many friends around; I only had a lot of dogs at home. So I either played with my dogs or played the instruments that were lying around," he shares.

"Ever since I was 15, I told myself 'I'm going to Berklee College of Music, no one's going to stop me,'" he says with a huge grin.

"[Drumming] came naturally to me and I was self-taught until I was 18 when a mentor stepped in. Until then, I practised for five hours, six days a week."

With his unwavering determination, he enrolled into Berklee College of Music in 2008, one of the world's most prestigious music schools, as a drummer. Little did he know, his time at the college would change his life.

"[There were] a lot of questions, a lot of panicking, a lot of waking up in the middle of the night wondering what the hell I'm doing there," he recalls. "I told myself: 'Maybe this is not what you want.' So, I left the school and started all over again."

"If I didn't make that decision, I would not have started writing songs."

Thus began Deon's journey in becoming one of Singapore's most popular singer-songwriters, writing hits like Summer and Little Lives.

"There's no time to bask in the limelight you think you're going to get. I'm not the kind of person who will enjoy [the limelight] and show off. I'm always thinking of what's next."

- Deon Toh

Photos courtesy of
Donald Soh and
Farand Ngho

Oceans Tell His Story

Making waves locally and internationally, Deon has also performed on stages in Canada and the United Kingdom. He launched his second album, *Oceans*, in July, following the raving success of his debut album, *Antiphobic*, launched in May 2014. While his debut album features tracks that helped the musician come to terms with things he couldn't face, *Oceans* tells a story.

The album follows the protagonist, a lion, that grows more courageous as the seasons go by, finally reaching a point where it is calm and at peace with itself.

To Deon, *Oceans* is about his growth as a musician through his travels in Europe.

"It was very much in line with me travelling to places that I've never been to before but wanted to see," he explains.

"The tracks are all labelled under seasons, because when [DEON was] travelling to Iceland, Canada and the UK for tours, being in line with nature and seeing all these places with magnificent views, [I felt compelled] to write. It was like an amalgamation of all the things that influenced me over 2013 to 2014."

Recalling his travels with producer Leonard Soosay to Iceland, he describes his songwriting experience as "organic", with many of his songs written as soon as inspiration hits.

He recounts one incident, when he woke up in the wee hours of the morning to write what was to be the song *Lights*.

"[In Iceland], you see all sorts of magnificent views like the northern lights, you come back to your apartment to rest, but inspiration hits you and you wake up in the middle of the night or at 5 am. Everyone's still asleep. I get to the kitchen and I take out my keyboard and guitar and start writing. Whatever you're hearing in the album, that is exactly how it happened."

With recurrent rhythms and melodies, the entire album also follows what he refers to as a "circles and cycles" theme.

"I was telling myself that life goes on. It comes in circles and cycles. You make this trip out there, but in the end, you want to go home and that is where you want to be."

Wanting to ensure that *Oceans* sounded good not just musically, but technically as well, Deon recruited the help of world-renowned mastering engineer Scott Hull to master his album.

He says: "One of my favourite bands is a now defunct local band, B-Quartet. Once I found out he mastered one of my favourite albums by them, I was dead certain I wanted Scott to do it."

Besides Scott Hull, Deon looks up to other music veterans, like The Beatles and the Bee Gees, and younger game-changers like Coldplay and Oasis. But as a musician who is constantly seeking to improve himself, Deon continues to draw inspiration from the bands he watches at festivals or concerts.

One of his inspirations is Ásgeir Trausti, an Icelandic singer-songwriter whom he watched during the Canadian Music Week.

"When my band and I watched him play, we were blown away. We just stood in awe being amazed. I've never had that experience before. After that, I swear by his music," he gushes, hardly attempting to hide his enthusiasm.

With the many experiences he wants to share through the album, Deon hopes for listeners to "walk the journey" with him, stressing on the importance of listening to the album without any distractions.

In order to enjoy the album in its entirety, he hopes the listener will "take the album, go to a quiet corner, put the CD in, just close his eyes and listen from track 1 all the way to track 11".

Although he has just released *Oceans*, Deon is already looking forward to the next step in his journey as a musician.

"[I've written] enough songs for the next album already. I'm a songwriter. I write. That's my job," he says. "There's no time to bask in the limelight you think you're going to get. I'm not the kind of person who will enjoy [the limelight] and show off. I'm always thinking of what's next."

"At the end of the day, though, I just want to go home and drink my *teh*."



From left:
Deon Toh, Stasha Wong,
Jovin Tan, Mindy Koh, Lim Jie

Deon on DEON

With Deon for his past few tours are lead guitarist Lim Jie, 28, keyboardist Mindy Kon, 22, bassist Stasha Wong, 23, and drummer Jovin Tan, 28.

Lim Jie has known Deon for almost 10 years, their friendship dating back to their Junior College concert band days. Thereafter, they were in the same platoon while serving their National Service and even attended the same university.

Jovin joined the group in late 2012 as their drummer. Deon's colleague at the Thunder Rock School, Jovin, was the ideal choice, his chattiness adding more life to the already jovial bunch, completing DEON.

A while later, Deon convinced Mindy to join the group. A former intern at the Thunder Rock School, Mindy got to know Deon through his previous bassist. She also signed on as a producer for his latest album, *Oceans*.

"The thing he used to bait me was 'My chords are all four chords only.' It's a lie! His songs are not four chords only!" Mindy claims, staring daggers at Deon.

Along with Mindy came her polytechnic course mate, Stasha.

"Oh, we found her in the dumpster," Deon deadpans before bursting into laughter. "I'm kidding! She played for this band, The Good Life Project, now she plays for Gentle Bones also."

Together for three years and having gone on several tours together, crazy times are bound to happen.

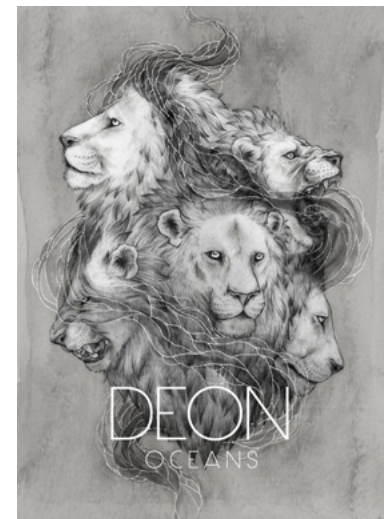
During the last set of their last tour, Lim Jie tried shifting a medium-sized amp by himself and sprained his back – five minutes before the show.

"He looked at me with that constipated face," says Jovin with a chuckle. "I said, 'Jie, I know something's funny, but what's wrong?' He said, 'I cannot move my back!'"

"We started to panic, but Jie is a real trooper. He never complained, even during the parts when he had to change effects which really strained his back."

"After that we had to send him to A&E (the accident and emergency department)," adds Mindy. "At least we got to get some rest at the hospital."

Songs to Look Out For



Summer

The first single Deon released has electronica, rock and folk influences. A song about his growth and memories as a musician, it embodies the entire album, making it the perfect song to kick-start *Oceans*.

Oceans

The last song he wrote for the album was written near the end of his tour of Europe at the Cavern Club in Liverpool. Inspired by his time at the docks there, he recorded the song on his phone before touching it up.

Lights and Stars

Often coupled together, Deon refers to them as "probably the strongest songs in the album". Like *Summer*, they embody the album, but in a more general sense. Both songs were influenced by elements of the night sky: the northern lights and stars. *Lights* represents Deon looking at the northern lights and reflecting on his life. According to Deon, these two songs were what made him push for the album.





Looking Back For Inspiration

Boasting 14 years in the industry, art rock band The Observatory talks to VANESSA KANG about staying true to tradition and self

While most musicians often confine themselves to a particular genre, The Observatory does not like to be bound by such barriers.

Since the beginning, The Observatory has constantly pushed the frontiers of music, going from folk-rock to avant-rock and now, are testing the waters with a more cultural approach, evident in their seventh album, Continuum.

Released in July this year, Continuum features gamelan, a traditional ensemble of mainly percussion instruments originating from Java and Bali in Indonesia.

Founded in 2001, The Observatory consists of four members, synth bass player Vivian Wang, lead vocalist and electric guitar player Leslie Low, drummer Cheryl Ong and synth and electronics player Yuen Chee Wai. Vivian and Leslie are the original band members.

Explaining why they called themselves The Observatory, Vivian says that they “decided to name ourselves after a creative idea... a metaphorical space to allow us to have some freedom of pursuing any artistic direction we want, saying anything we want”.

While their creative direction can change when the urge arises, one thing remains constant: the message they wish to put across. Vivian says: “I think it [music] needs to serve some type of societal function, it needs to illuminate injustices and at the same time be musically challenging.” In Continuum, the spotlight is on

“We don’t set any expectations on ourselves, we just do what we feel like doing.”

- Chee Wai

traditional musical instruments that have been cast aside for more modern, westernised sounds.

The percussive instruments were the main inspiration behind the album as Leslie says that they had always been fascinated by the Balinese gamelan music. They found, and they believed that, something so rich in rhythm and native to Southeast Asia was not largely portrayed in music today.

As Vivian says: “We all grew up on a diet of Western music and television.” Gamelan music was used “to discover what is within our heritage, our region, and our collective past” so that we are able to draw inspiration from our own multi-cultural background instead of looking towards the West for ideas.

Part of the reason the album is called Continuum is that The Observatory members were deeply affected by a gamelan composer and player, Dewa Alit, whom they met in Bali working on another project. He told them: “Culture is not a museum, it is ever-changing.”

Those words resonated with them and they decided to do something that merges past and present.

Leslie says: “We were kind of tying in what’s old with what’s new.”

Adds Vivian: “What we’re trying to do is, we see our past, our present, our future. We see all these cultural influences that we have, [and] we’re now in the present so we want to just be doing something interesting during this entire long history.”

With their new album, The Observatory stays true to their experimental sound while sounding darker and more traditional.

The Observatory is currently working hard on their next album, slated for release in May next year.

The Observatory is still going strong 14 years down the road. Their story gets richer and perhaps their secret is this: “We don’t set any expectations on ourselves, we just do what we feel like doing,” reveals Chee Wai.

AHEAD OF TIME/SPACE

Boy-next-door folk-rock sensation Charlie Lim talks to SANDRA YIM about his new double EP and the reality of a musician’s life

With the release of his latest double EP, Time/Space, a string of performances leading up to his London tour in June, and his upcoming gig at the Brisbane Festival, the independent music artist, 26, is on a roll.

With beautifully overlapping melodies and heartfelt lyrics, Charlie’s music and live performances often tug at his listeners’ heartstrings. His long awaited double EP is no exception in showcasing his exquisitely crafted works.

His double EP draws a clear division between two distinct styles. Time reflects his folk-rock songwriting sensibilities while Space reveals his personal approach to experimental pop production.

He says: “I wanted to frame Time/Space as two distinct identities based on their production aesthetics.”

A self-proclaimed slow writer, Charlie admits to spending many sleepless nights on his computer trying to make things sound coherent. The song that has the most meaning to Charlie on Time/Space is I Only Tell the Truth and he even calls it “the strongest one I’ve written”.

“It’s not a catchy radio-friendly hit [...] What makes a good



song for me is how all the elements of melody, harmony, lyrical themes, arrangement and production meticulously come together and live in a mutual space without having one element overshadowing another,” he says.

Returning to Melbourne, where he first ventured to further his studies at the age of 14, Charlie went back to the place he calls “his second home” for the production of Time/Space.

“Not everything I wanted to pull off could be done in my bedroom. Melbourne was the only option that had the luxury of space and dedicated sound mixing engineers,” he says.

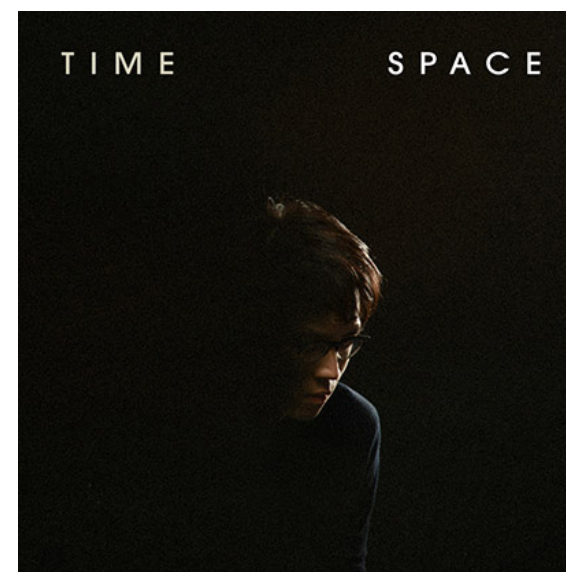
Apart from writing and producing music, Charlie’s career involves touring and making a name for himself overseas. He boasts an impressive seven-city tour across Asia under his belt and appearances at key festivals such as Urbanscapes and Mosaic Music Festival.

However, it’s not all glamorous. Although some of his tours have been subsidised by grants and investors, he’s had to foot the bill for plenty of the trips.

“Money aside, I don’t think people realise how difficult it is to live for your art, and they assume that being a musician is a glamorous thing. It’s actually a terribly lonely journey that requires a lot of sacrifice and dedication to your craft.”

Now that we know where Charlie was and what he was up to, the question is, where is Charlie now? You can actually look forward to seeing more of him on social media.

He says: “Honestly, I’m not even that active on social media and YouTube and whatnot, although at this stage I realise I have to get more on top of it.”



MAKING PLEASANT CONNECTIONS

RAPHAEL ONG talks to the quintet that travels through the channels and terminals of the world to share their music and to inspire musicians to do the same

Shimmering arpeggios, crisp cymbals and soaring vocals drench the Chicagoan music venue, Subterranean, in a pleasant, dreamy melancholy. The bassist, Isa Ong, 25, stands there, almost dazedly, as if soaking in the fact that his band is standing where countless musicians they adore once played.

"We're Pleasantry from Singapore," he says. "And it's our first time in Chicago!"

Fresh from their North American tour in mid-May and comfortably back at home, this same unassumingness shines through as I meet the band in an equally unassuming roadside Indian eatery.

"We used to play really weird music," laughs lead singer Samantha Teng, 25, at the music she played with her classmates Isa and guitarist Ahmad Ariff, 25.

They outgrew the indie-pop days of their previous band, Postbox, only to start the more polished and ethereal Pleasantry five years ago.

"We want to be artists and musicians more than anything else, because that really drives and directs us in what we want to do."

- Isa Ong

Driven by their desire to make music dearer to them as individuals, the 'supergroup' marries talents from Postbox, Lunar Node, Amateur Takes Control and ANECHOIS (which guitarist Haziq Hussain, 27, fronts). In the words of drummer Daniaal Adam, 26, Pleasantry "crafts an imaginary landscape" and "creates soundtracks for people's lives".

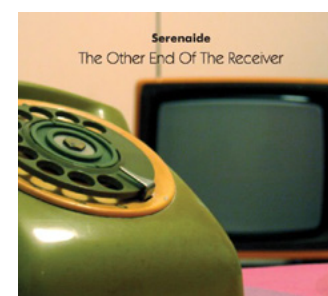
What began as opera playing on Samantha's father's hi-fi, a guitar lying around Isa's house and Ariff's dad blasting 80s metal almost 20 years ago evolved into a burning love for music. This love was what brought



Past and Pleasant

Pleasantry muses on their favourite band from Singapore's vibrant past.

Twee-pop outfit Serenaide's album, *The Other End of the Receiver*, has remained one of Pleasantry's favourites. With songs like *The Girl from Katong*, Isa describes their music as indie-pop with a "Singapore touch, from the themes, down to lyrics and the way they sing".



them from a Teachers' Day concert at their secondary school to opening for indie giants Belle and Sebastian to a 7,000-strong crowd, and gracing stages in Canada, America and London.

"I still think I'm doing it for fun," Isa says. "That's why I'm still doing it."

Beneath Pleasantry's twinkling chords and gossamer harmonies lie dreams and experiences close to their hearts, and listening to their songs is to be privy to those things.

"In *Synapses* (their debut album), some songs we just dream up, coming up with scenarios we wish would happen or feel are happening in our lives, while other [songs] are influenced by conversations with friends," explains Isa. "We always try to make them as realistic and close to home as possible to try to maintain that connection with the listener."

True enough, they refuse to pigeonhole their music into a particular genre. Samantha says that putting a painting next to their music will make more sense than putting a label to it. And like a painting, the brush strokes that colour Pleasantry's music couldn't be more organic.

"We never think of our music as having an end point – a lot of our songs change even after we record it," says Isa as Samantha interjects with an enthusiastic: "We go by feel, man!"

Pleasantry sees no end point for themselves either, pushing beyond the confines of Singapore to share their music abroad. After a successful application to play at Canadian Music Week, they managed to secure a North American tour where they played in New York, San Francisco and Chicago.

"A standout memory for us was when we spoke to someone who travelled five hours from Boston to catch our show," recalls Daniaal. "It was all very heartwarming."

In a year characterised by a new wave of local music with the sudden rise of homegrown indie talents, Pleasantry's place in the scene has remained a constant, as they choose to focus on their craft. "We want to be artists and musicians more than anything else, because that really drives and directs us in what we want to do," says Isa.

Pleasantry will continue to fill spaces with a quiet grandeur even beyond our shores, but the band hopes to leave a legacy that transcends space to echo through time.

"[By showing] people that you can do things and create opportunities for yourself – like travel overseas and put Singapore on the map, you make them believe that they can achieve the same," Daniaal says.

"If we manage to inspire the younger generation to write better music, and if we pave the way for younger musicians to go further or push harder – that's what we want."



Heading Upwards in the Rabbit Hole

Up-and-coming singer-songwriter
Theodora Lau tells STEFANIE YEO music
is a big part of what she is

*“I’ll always sing. I’ll
always create. It’s a big
part of who I am.”*

- Theodora Lau

Music has always been a major part of Theodora Lau’s life. “Before I finished my ‘O’ Levels, my dad told me, ‘If you want to sing, if that’s what you feel you want to do for the rest of your life, then just drop out of school after ‘O’ Levels, just make sure you can feed yourself,’” the singer-songwriter recounts with a smile. “So I guess his drift was ‘Do something with your life.’”

At first glance, Theodora looks like any other teenage girl, but the 18-year-old is making waves in the local music scene. She is, after all, one of the eight finalists of the music mentorship programme that is part of Baybeats, an annual music festival, and the only singer-songwriter among them. With her soulful vocals and wisdom beyond her years, Theodora has proven that she is an emerging talent to keep our eyes on.

“She is a small, diminutive person in appearance but with a powerful and mature voice, and we were all blown away. She’s got an amazing talent and voice, and she can go quite far,” says Mr Errol Tan, co-owner of Kitty Wu Records and Theodora’s Baybeats mentor.

An artist with a vision and immense respect for her craft, Theodora does not let her youth get in the way.

“She has her own stand and she knows what she wants, but she’s also flexible,” says Auzaie Zie, 22, the synthesiser player for local band Aquila Vasica, who is collaborating on a song with Theodora.

Theodora, a second-year polytechnic student, says: “I started as a singer-songwriter when I auditioned for Noise Singapore in 2014. Before that, I just really liked to sing, so I just sang anywhere I could.”

Theodora credits her parents for her love of music. Her mother used to sing in an acappella group and was a songwriter herself, and her father has always been very encouraging.

While music has always been an integral part of her life, Theodora only started writing songs in 2014.

“I draw my inspiration from experiences – either my experiences or someone else’s experiences – or generally what I think about something,” she explains.

Her song Rabbit Hole, for example, was inspired by a concept. “It’s the idea that sometimes when you allow someone in, [when] you buy into their beliefs, and allow them to influence your thoughts and what you believe in, [then] when the two of you are ripped apart, you find yourself very lost and you can no longer identify who you are,” explains Theodora.

Currently working on an EP with Mr Leonard Soosay of Snakeweed Studios, Theodora says that her (as yet) untitled EP is “a compilation of all the work I’ve done so far, so it’s how I chronicle my journey, something I get to look back on”. The five-song EP is set for release by end 2015.

“It’s too early for me to see whether or not it’ll be a full-time thing, but it’s something that I will do for the rest of my life, whether or not I release stuff, or whether or not I choose to continue building it as a career,” she says with a laugh.

“But it’s something I will always do. I’ll always sing. I’ll always create. It’s a big part of who I am.”

Photo courtesy of Raphael Ong



Taking Music to Heart

The Sam Willows talk to JOLAINE CHUA about their latest single,
which they say is a track record of their little achievements

Stop any youth on the street and ask if he knows The Sam Willows, and chances are, he does.

Perhaps it’s their kind of music – pop – that is the draw. But it must also be their passion for the music industry and their love for music.

The three-year-old indie band, comprising Narelle Kheng, Sandra Riley Tang, Jonathan Chua and Benjamin Kheng, officially released their newest single, Take Heart, in May which shot up to #1 on the iTunes charts just a few hours after its launch, and they were ecstatic.

“It’s all about the little things, the little milestones that we achieve,” says Benjamin Kheng, or Ben, the rhythm guitarist and vocalist of the group.

Just three years ago in 2012, the Sam Willows released their very first EP. Since then, they have taken part in several gigs such as the *SCAPE Invasion Tour and were the opening act for The Script’s concert in Singapore in April.

“We realised how we grew as people, it’s not just all about the work,” says Narelle, who is also Ben’s sister. “The

last three years have been an amazing opportunity,” the bassist adds.

Jonathan, or Jon, lead guitarist, says their listeners matter to them. “It’s not just about the views, the subscribers, or the followers. If our music has helped them through a certain tough time, then that to us is a win,” says Jon.

The Sam Willows, who say they have been friends since “forever”, have also attracted their fair share of “haters”.

“Of course we receive hate comments, but they say that once you get your first hate comment, it’s a sign that

you’ve actually reached that level,” says Narelle.

Jon adds: “It’s important to stay true to who you are, and it took me a while to realise that.”

Sandra, keyboardist, agrees, saying: “Hate helps you to build character and awareness. You have to see if the comment is true and not be easily swayed by it. Take it and become a better person.”

“At the end of the day, you can’t please everybody and you just have to learn how to accept it,” concludes Narelle.

The band will be releasing an album in the last quarter of 2015, which will be a compilation of the band’s best work, from the songwriting to the recording.

The Sam Willows’ music has changed over the years, from the tempo, to the beat, to the meaning behind their songs.

Narelle says: “We have changed so much, but one thing that hasn’t changed is that element of ‘Sam Willows’ evident in our songs that none of us can pin down.”

***“We have changed so
much, but one thing that
hasn’t changed is that
element of ‘Sam Willows’
evident in our songs that
none of us can
pin down.”***

- Narelle Kheng

Benjamin Kheng
(Rhythm Guitarist)

Jonathan Chua
(Lead Guitarist)

Narelle Kheng
(Bassist)

Sandra Riley Tang
(Keyboardist)



Photos courtesy of Sony Music Singapore



From left: Song Tan, Saiful Idris, Fandy Razak, Khairyl Hashim, Magdelene Han

EXPERIMENT'S OVER

Singapore's veteran indie rock quintet tells STACEY LIM why, after a decade together, it's finally time for the band to go their separate ways

When The Great Spy Experiment took to the Baybeats Powerhouse stage three years ago, the band was already on the verge of breaking up. However, that memorable performance changed their decision – or so they thought.

“We did a big band hug after the show, and drummer Fandy cried on stage,” keyboardist Magdelene Han, 38, recalls. “The energy backstage was crazy and it was my favourite moment because I thought ‘Everything is going to be okay.’”

The band even released their second album, *Litmus*, in 2013, in the hope that staying together was a final decision.

Yet, in April this year, the band revealed that the decision to split was finally cast in stone. They decided that the House of Riot's Triple Bill show on Jun 6, where they performed alongside local indie artists Inch Chua and Charlie Lim, would be their last.

The Great Spy Experiment has definitely come a long way: from developing their surging indie rock sound showcased in their wildly successful debut album, *Flower Show Riots*, to garnering international acclaim by performing in numerous overseas festivals from Malaysia to New York.

Vocalist Saiful Idris, 35, says: “It has been on our conscience for maybe four, five years now, actually even longer than that. Every once in a while we would bring it up. At some points we would take turns to say that we wanted to stop.”

“I will never play with another band,” Magdelene shares. “The Great Spy Experiment will not be as it is if any of us is out of the equation. So, the only decision to end this is to go our separate ways.”

Over the years, events in their personal lives had left permanent scars on the

“The Great Spy Experiment will not be as it is if any of us is out of the equation. So, the only decision to end this is to go our separate ways.”

- Magdelene Han

band. Putting a strong emphasis on the band's relationship, Saiful says: “The band is not just about music. It is about the relationship within the band, relationships outside the band. The music is based on stories, which are based on life experiences.”

Guitarist Song Tan, 39, explains: “We need to heal. Honestly, it's the



relationship between us that has been affected and it's the right time to call it a day so that we can go away, get our own space, and heal. Maybe when we have healed properly then we can come back. I won't put a certainty to it. We might not come back. No one knows.”

In 2010, the band was forced to face the fact that perhaps they should focus more on their families.

“There were some times when I wanted to stop playing because my first girl had some medical complications and she had to go for a very major brain operation during [one of] our band travels,” Magdelene reveals.

Song adds: “We have reached the age where we have to consider other things in our lives – starting families, getting careers on the road. You start prioritising. It's not just doing things for fun without considering your future.”

Drummer Fandy Razak, 35, agrees, saying: “I switched careers somewhere in the middle and I was trying to make it work. At the same time, I was a father, so there was a lot of pressure there. I still want to do music, which has no monetary gains at all. Not

“Above everything else, we had a good run for the 10 years. We gave our best, we got more than we deserve, and we are very, very thankful for that, especially to our fans.”

- Khairyl Hashim

enough, at least.”

Yet, there is no trace of ill will. You can see it in the smiles of greeting after a long day of work, the handshakes they offer, the charm with which they clap their hands playfully at questions thrown their way. “Above everything else, we had a good run for the 10 years. We gave our best, we got more than we deserve, and we are very, very thankful for that, especially to our fans,” bassist Khairyl Hashim, 38, says.

Extenuating circumstances there may be, their determination to set the ever-

soaring benchmark in the local music scene has never crumbled. Describing the situation as a “cultural cringe”, Saiful comments that it makes sense for Singaporeans to be critical of local music because they are used to products from all over the world.

“We were really conscious of raising the standards of the music, songwriting, production, as well as the level of professionalism,” he adds. By showing Singaporeans that taking local music overseas can be done, Fandy believes that The Great Spy Experiment has inspired younger musicians to believe in local music.

With 10 years of making music together, has The Great Spy Experiment, as they have so loudly proclaimed on their band biography pages, really left a mark on the local music scene? Fandy taps mischievously on the café table's indent: “What kind of mark? This kind of mark?”

Easy to suss or not, The Great Spy Experiment is a homegrown legacy that will continue to live on for decades to come.

And if you still don't get it: yes, that kind of mark.



Right Time to Write Now

As Singapore celebrates 50 years of independence, VANESSA KANG and STEFANIE YEO explore the growth of her literary scene and its writers

There's more to Singapore's literary scene than you might expect. You may not have any Singaporean writers' names reeling in your head. But the fact is, the literary scene here has actually earned quite a reputation in global literary circles.

Mr Alvin Pang, 43, an award-winning local writer reveals: "Very often, overseas readers and writers are very impressed. They want to hear our point of view. This is something our people don't understand: if you come from elsewhere, you want to know what makes Singapore tick and how Singaporeans think."

Mr Pang, who has been writing since he was in secondary school, has published over six books of poems and one of prose, among which are *When The Barbarians Arrive* (published in the United Kingdom in 2012), and *What Gives Us Our Names* (published by Math Paper Press in Singapore in 2011). He is a self-employed editor, writer and consultant.

Mr Pang adds that Singaporeans' feelings towards

*"I put aside the books I'd read,
and hadn't read, they took flight
as endless stairs, circling
beyond my years. But I loved
most of all the quiet
Sundays, when fingers of rain
would write themselves
on the clear page of my window,
dying to tell me their stories."*

- Excerpt from *In The End* By Alvin Pang, *City Of Rain*
(Singapore: Ethos Books, 2003)

NO STOPPING STOPGAP

Exploding onto the local music scene last year, the groovy five-piece band is finally dropping an album. MUHAMMAD MUHAJIM SUZAINI finds out more

Facing the restless crowd at Orchard Central, the band members of Stopgap prepare themselves. Sound check: done. Equipment check: done. Lighting check: done.

It's show time.

Four years ago, afraid of stepping out and unsure of themselves, they would not have imagined that this was possible. Bassist Calvin Phua, 24, says: "At the start, we knew we were okay, but [it] didn't feel it."

The band got together in 2011 while studying at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. Over the years, Stopgap changed drastically, rendering the band nearly unrecognisable. As Calvin puts it: "If you were to see the band today as compared to four years ago, they are two different bands."

Initially, most of them were rather paralysed from terrible stage fright. "Most of us were a bit shy on stage and we were not used to being in front

of a crowd," he says with a laugh. "It's not that we don't get stage fright now. We know how to handle it better."

From playing at Baybeats to releasing their first single, *Crossing Swords*, and having it air on Lush 99.5FM, 2014 was a good year for them. But during their early days, they struggled to find themselves as a band, only figuring out what Stopgap really is after three years.

"When we started writing, we found the sounds, we found the image [and] we finally found our confidence," guitarist Grayson Seah, 24, says.

Vocalist Adin Kindermann, 24, says: "We set out to do what we wanted to do. We overcame certain problems and learnt together along the way." That, to him, is the spirit of the band.

Starting with a rudimentary layer, they built on each other's ideas that gave rise to their single. Soft-spoken drummer Eldad Leong, 24, says:

"Everyone writes his own parts. [...] Different emotions are attached to it."

After countless hours of toiling in the studio and putting music over all else, there is nothing like hearing your work on the radio.

"We needed this sort of reinforcement," Grayson admits.

Stopgap plans to release their first album in November. The response from it determines their next step. Guitarist Lee Yew Jin, 24, says: "We've made it this far... It's an accumulation of four years of our work and input as a band. I'm really looking forward to it."

Calvin says: "We finally have a definitive product that people can point to and say 'Check out Stopgap.' Finally, we have something that has 'legs' – it'll go out there and help us spread the word."

For this young band, it's not time for curtain call yet – it's show time.

Photos courtesy of
Lenne Chai



**"When we started
writing, we found the
sounds... [and] we finally
found our confidence."**

- Grayson Seah

local literature is a classic example of how a prophet is never welcome in his hometown. He explains: "Singaporeans consider the arts as entertainment that is subjected to either commercial or moral norms... which is kind of heartbreaking."

He adds: "We have grown up with the idea that writing from elsewhere is better, where 'the only writer worth reading is Shakespeare'... which is what Australians call cultural cringe."

Cultural cringe refers to an internalised inferiority complex, which causes people to dismiss their own cultures as inferior. "We're suspicious of stuff coming from home, [and] we look elsewhere for validation," explains Mr Pang.

Dr Kirpal Singh, 66, associate professor of English Literature at Singapore Management University, echoes that sentiment: "We feel that others are always better than us. It's a colonial hang-up. So we got to break that, we got to go beyond that."

Mr Fong Hoe Fang, 60, managing director of local publisher Ethos Books, also thinks that Singaporeans in general are indifferent towards reading and literature. He says: "I think Singaporeans don't think much over local literature. Maybe because they're caught by a different imagination. Firstly they don't read, [thus] they don't think very much of other literature."

Despite the lack of support from locals, Singapore's literary landscape has progressed significantly over the



Alvin Pang

*"Rough beast, you are neither idol nor ideal.
Your heart is hollow, cold, and open
for admission, but we have nowhere else
to hide our dreams. Take what names
we have to give, and hold our secrets well.
Keep what matters and what counts;
The rest you can spit as spray."*

- Excerpt from *Merlign* By Alvin Pang, *City of Rain*
(Singapore: Ethos Books, 2003)

years. "I think [it has changed] by leaps and bounds. When I started writing, there was hardly anybody writing poems in English," Dr Singh says. "But today, we have writers like Alfian Sa'at and Robert Yeo."

Changing times have led to different themes in local writing. In the past, early poems and stories featured themes of independence and patriotism. Mr Fong says that writers such as Edwin Thumboo and Lee Tzu Pheng used to write about "nation building, struggling for independence...throwing out the colonists".

In recent years, the themes of poetry have changed. There has been more commentary on social issues and Singapore life.

"You get poems by people like Alfian Sa'at – you have his poem *Singapore You're Not My Country*. Many people were stunned, and they began to see how poetry could be used to inform people about our country," remarks Mr Fong.

Dr Singh feels that the pioneer generation of Singapore writers from the 1960s played a pivotal role in documenting Singapore's transformation into an independent nation. He says: "They tackle new themes, break new grounds [and] show younger writers and others around them what people can actually achieve when they apply themselves to literature and to good writing, and so they educate us."

"Literature transcends time and space, you pass it down, because history repeats itself, so the lessons need to be re-learnt over and over again."

- Mr Alvin Pang

Photo courtesy of Alvin Pang

While the local literary scene has come a long way, more can be done, especially in helping our young writers develop, as Dr Singh says: "Many of our writers don't try to break the barrier of the national sensibility."

Mr Pang reiterates that view, saying that society today "look(s) for the tried and tested [method], they don't look out for the new". He remarks that it is important to develop young writers as "young people are different". He adds: "I'm hoping this will change, because of the hunger and thirst for something new and something that's our own."

"Write well, write about something you know and care about, and you can do well. Even if it's fresh, better still. Publishers like fresh," says Mr Pang. "People write because they're driven by a compulsion, to talk about something, to think about something."

Mr Fong also feels that schools have an important role to play in encouraging the love for literature among Singaporeans. "I think the schools are realising that they need to do something, because some of the local titles are being used as examination text [for Literature in schools]," he says.

However, Mr Pang feels that it is difficult for schools to really incorporate local literature into their curriculum. He feels that the schools "often catch material that is controversial, and a lot of our best work is either socially or politically controversial in some way or another".

He adds: "If you think about the arts, it's always frontier work, so you are always going to be on the edge. The best work is always going to be along the edges of what is not said and done and that's going to make it difficult for mainstream authorities or institutions to play with."

Apart from schools, the media also plays a part in ensuring that Singapore's literary scene continues to flourish, as Dr Singh says: "[Writers] can be better promoted first by being more present in the media. Very often the people in our media are foreign writers."

*"like birds on a tree
we perch and sit and try to sing
longing for wings to fly
knowing how many will die
living in sin, guilt and unfathomed grief.
like birds on a tree
we will never reach the ground beneath our feet."*

- Excerpt from *Like Birds On A Tree* By Kirpal Singh

Photo courtesy of Kirpal Singh

Like Birds On A Tree by Kirpal Singh is a copyright of Epigram Books and is available for purchase at major bookstores as well as from epigrambooks.sg



Kirpal Singh

"They tackle new themes, break new grounds, [and] show younger writers and others around them what people can actually achieve when they apply themselves to literature and to good writing, and so they educate us."

- Dr Kirpal Singh

However, while Mr Pang does agree with that idea, saying that "the media tends to be conservative", he also notes that one shouldn't just sit and wait but should instead, actively pursue it.

He adds: "I think it's up to us and up to the young people to say 'Hey, there's a lot of interesting stuff happening', and write about it, and, you know, find ways to celebrate it."

And that is where the importance of literature lies in.

Mr Pang says: "Literature transcends time and space, you pass it down, because history repeats itself, so the lessons need to be re-learnt over and over again."

Literature does that.



ARTS

Resurrects Old Spaces

The arts has breathed new life into many forgotten, forlorn places in Singapore, transforming them into unique spaces and personalities, as RAPHAEL ONG discovers

"I can perform at a café some other time," quips Sherlyn Veronica, frontwoman of Disco Hue, recalling her experience performing at rooftop music festival *Getai* Electronica. "But to perform there, the noise of traffic and wind... it felt like an authentic indie concert!"

Many ordinary places around Singapore have been given a new lease of life, reinvented as new platforms for artistic expression. This year has seen The Henderson Project, an underground art event set in a disused industrial park, and Remember Dakota Crescent, a block party that rekindled the *kampong* spirit in a 60-year-old estate through music and photography, amongst others.

These initiatives have attracted an increasing number of people through the years, but this year's clear winners are *Getai* Electronica and *Getai* Ethnica.

Inspired by heartland *getai*

"Deep within or around our concrete jungle are pockets of spaces with character, history and a life of their own."

- Su of *The Diarists*

performances, audiences were treated to music, graffiti and a screening of the Cantonese classic, *Moon Over Malaya*, as the moon rose over a thousand people on the rooftop carpark of People's Park Complex.

"What more could you want from a gig?" says Tim De Cotta, likening the experience to a Beatles gig on a London rooftop. Driven by the passion to foster support for local music, his band, TAJ, and local eatery, Lepark, organised *Getai*. "It has an old charm which is almost becoming extinct in

Singapore, as old things are made new and new things are made newer."

Music in Singapore, too, seems to find its way into every nook and cranny, breathing new life into living rooms, warehouses awaiting demolition and even under flyovers by turning them into intimate concert venues.

Local collective The Diarists is behind this bringing of music to typically mundane places. "Deep within or around our concrete jungle are pockets of spaces with character, history and a life of their own. We wanted to fill these venues with music and give a backdrop with personality to the musicians," says Su, one of the four Diarists.

"Technology has always opened up new avenues for artists to explore, and

at times even pushes the boundaries of art itself," explains We Are Social, the social agency behind Light And Seek, an event that featured projections around Arab Street.

Leveraging on technology to transform decrepit alleyways into canvases, artists took their creative potential beyond traditional mediums, portraying Singapore in a different light. "We tend to overlook the little things that give our city its intricate, unique personality," We Are Social says. "So we wanted to create an experience where, through art, people can look at their city in a different way."

In the case of DECK, despite being built on a derelict plot of land, it has set the stage for a new way to experience art. The art space is made out of old shipping containers and visitors feel at home because it does not have the perceived barriers of typical gallery spaces.

"It's a very organic arts space and emphasises that galleries do not necessarily have to be in a proper institutional building," says Tanya Lee, who organised an exhibition at DECK.

"DECK is about possibility," says founder Gwen Lee. "It represents

creativity outside of the system and the expected norm."

Polytechnic student and frequent patron of events such as *Getai*, Jurvis Tan, said all this is "a re-emergence of the arts scene in Singapore after years of industrialisation and development".

Says art student Stephanie Teo: "This intermingling of past and present prevents our history from fading away, reclaiming and preserving the Singapore that our parents knew."

Looking towards the future, Daviest Ong, Vice-President of dance crew New Revolving Age, believes dance events held in alternative venues would be "not only a different experience but a breakthrough for the dance industry".

Similarly, Nicolette Sankara, an arts management student, sees potential in how there is "more room for artists to come up with something different".

See Singapore in a different light! Noise Singapore will be holding an exhibition at DECK from Sep 18 to Oct 11, a showcase of the visual art pieces by artists under the National Arts Council's Apprenticeship Programme.

"We tend to overlook the little things that give our city its intricate, unique personality, so we wanted to create an experience where, through art, people can look at their city in a different way."

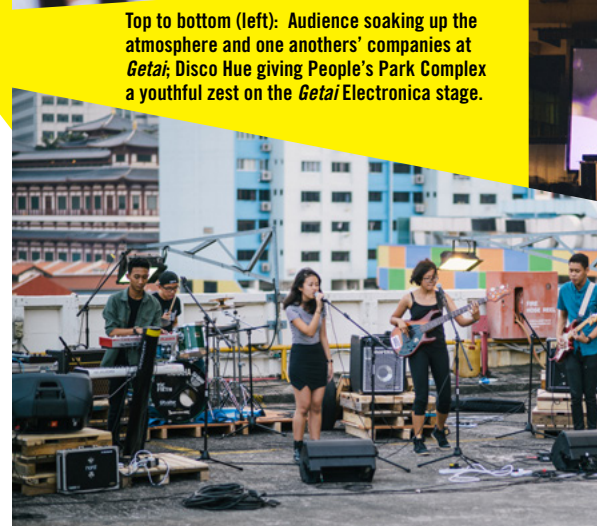
- We Are Social



From left: Qilin Group rocking the stage before the sun sets on *Getai*; Gallery-goers learning more about the exhibits at DECK.



Top to bottom (right): Vandetta taking the *Getai* Ethnica crowd home with her robust vocals; *Getai* Ethnica audience enjoying Cantonese classic, *Moon Over Malaya*, as the moon rises overhead.



Top to bottom (left): Audience soaking up the atmosphere and one another's companies at *Getai*; Disco Hue giving People's Park Complex a youthful zest on the *Getai* Electronica stage.





Rishi Budhrani

LAUGH OUT LOUD LAH

Laugh along with VANESSA KANG as she takes you through the last 20 years of Singapore's stand-up comedy scene

The pub may be dimly lit, but the atmosphere is palpable. Loud chatter fills the room and people pass time with alcohol and cigarettes, all waiting for that moment a comedian takes the stage before laughing their hearts out, in what is sure to be a great night out.

The comedy scene here in Singapore is growing at a rapid pace, with four shows a week in clubs put up by companies like Comedy Masala and The Comedy Club Asia.

Selena Tan, founder of Dream Academy Productions, attributes this rise to Singaporeans' hectic lifestyles, as they turn to comedy to "relieve the stress of everyday city life".

Stand-up comedy refers to a comedian performing a comedy routine in front of a 'live' audience, usually in a club, armed with nothing more than his voice and stage presence.

About 20 years ago, the scene was completely different.

Rishi Budhrani, 30, one of Singapore's rising young comedians says: "If you look at the 90s, it was more [of a] cabaret form from someone like Kumar." Kumar is known for cross-dressing and performing lavish dance routines in even more outlandish costumes.

Soon after Kumar, people like Irene Ang and Hossan Leong came along and did "more theatrical monologues in stand-up comedy form". He added that Singaporeans "are taking very well to" the stand-up comedy of today, where the focus is solely on the jokes and not on the theatrics.

Today, clubs are the quintessential starting point for comedians. According to Rishi, clubs "are relatively low-pressure rooms". Here, comedians get to explore creativity

"People always think that stand-up comedians are political, vulgar, racists or sexists... My comedy is more observational."

- Hossan Leong

"I don't put myself in the highest position possible to think that I'm here to educate the audience... but there's an underlying message behind certain jokes that I say."

- Fakkah Fuzz

without being restricted in content. "They are more for you to train, to get better and deal with the craft," adds Rishi.

Fakkah Fuzz, 28, a comedian since 2009, echoes the sentiment adding that due to the 'live' audiences in clubs, "you learn more from the bad shows than you do from the good shows [because] that's when you learn what not to do".

Besides the style of comedy, the topics featured have also evolved through the years. Hossan Leong, for instance, writes jokes about everyday Singaporean affairs.

The seasoned comedian of 22 years explains: "People always think that stand-up comedians are political, vulgar, racists or sexists... My comedy is more observational."

The ability to turn the seemingly ordinary into hysterical anecdotes being a rare gift, Leong says his main objective as an entertainer is for audiences "to laugh and enjoy themselves". He avoids focusing on social issues as he doesn't like to make particular groups feel uncomfortable because of certain topics.

For Fuzz, all he wants is for the audience to leave his show with a takeaway and he tends to centre his jokes on racial and cultural differences. He clarifies: "I don't put myself

in the highest position possible to think that I'm here to educate the audience ... but there's an underlying message behind certain jokes that I say."

While audiences are more open-minded now, certain topics remain taboo, even for stand-up comedy. Sam See, 22, occasionally discusses sexuality in his routines and says that older people are not as accepting of such topics.

"Nothing kills your soul more than having a hundred people looking at you with [a] look in their eyes that say[s] 'you're going to hell,'" he confesses.

The prospects look good for the stand-up comedy scene.

"We've paved the way, opened it up, and given so many opportunities to the next generation," says Leong.

Get Your Laughing Pills

HYPE put together a list of comedy shows to check out from Mondays to Thursdays. So, head down to these clubs with your friends for a few drinks and hilarious comedy shows!

Acts change on a weekly basis, so stay up-to-date by 'liking' the Comedy Hub Singapore Facebook page!

Mondays

Muddy Murphy's, 111 Somerset Road, #01-02 TripleOne Somerset
Entry: 8:30 pm, \$5/ticket

Tuesdays

HERO's Bar, 69 Circular Road, #01-01
Entry: 8:30 pm, \$10/ticket

Wednesdays

Barber Shop By Timbre at The Arts House, #01-04, 1 Old Parliament Lane, The Arts House
Entry: 8:30 pm, \$15/ticket

Thursdays

Prince of Wales (Little India), 101 Dunlop Street
Entry: 8:30 pm, \$10/ticket



Fakkah Fuzz



Sam See



The Substation

Carry On Indie

SAMANTHA CHOONG talks about the niche market of independent filmmaking in Singapore

When Hollywood blockbuster movie plots start to feel a little cliché and boring, indie cinema holds the key to a whole new world of film.

Free from the pressure to earn money for major production studios, indie filmmakers have the freedom to make their movies as their artistic vision sees it. Generally funded by crowd funders or even from the producers' and directors' own pockets, indie films are created with a significantly smaller budget and production crew.

Without a corporation looking to make a profit behind the project, the filmmakers won't need to produce a film that fits the mould of a "successful" Hollywood movie. Indie films are also usually distributed by independent entertainment companies, to a limited release in cinemas.

In Singapore, the support for indie cinema isn't strong, despite the fact that numerous cinemas do screen an array of such films. The lack of interest and knowledge about the indie film scene, has created a bubble of obscurity around it.

Vincent Quek, programme manager of Moving Images at The Substation, said that while the indie cinema market is small in most countries, in Singapore, it is particularly small. But this hasn't stopped the handful of indie cinemas around from carrying on over the years.

Indie films have tried to find traction since 1978, with the opening of Premier in Orchard Towers, and later on in 1990, Cathay opened The Picturehouse. Both of these establishments are now closed.

There is a good crop of locally produced films, and we are not talking about Jack Neo's Ah Boys to Men series or Anthony Chen's Ilo Ilo. Singapore is home to the talents of Tzang Merwyn Tong, Chris Yeo Siew Hua and Royston Tan, amongst others.

Having produced everything from short films, feature films, documentaries and even some music videos, these directors are not lacking in experience or talent. Tzang's first feature film, called Faeryville, is set in a dystopian society. Unlike commercial movies with similar settings (think Divergent and The Hunger Games), Faeryville is set in Singapore and takes place in a very real world.

Daryl Ngai, 19, an Arts Business Management student from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, says, "We don't listen to local music all day, in the same way, we still prefer major blockbuster movies."

While the viewer support for local indie films is far from ideal, the support from the

government for filmmakers is strong. The Media Development Authority of Singapore provides monetary grants for local filmmakers and also hosts the annual Singapore International Film Festival, a platform for filmmakers to showcase their work to an international and local audience.

"The only thing about that is which films get the grants," says Chris.

There are two film festivals you can look out for – the 5th Singapore Short Film Festival from Sep 13 to 21 and the 26th Singapore International Film Festival from Nov 26 to Dec 6.

Indie Cinema Locations

In Singapore, indie cinemas can be found in a few places.

For Local Films:

The Substation
45 Armenian St
substation.org

The Projector

6001 Beach Rd, Golden Mile Tower #05-00
theprojector.sg

For Foreign Films:

Alliance Francaise
1 Sarkies Rd
alliancefrancaise.org.sg

Bombay Talkies

100 Beach Rd, Shaw Towers #02-00
in-movienetwork.com

Photo courtesy of Teo Zi Lin

DRAWING ATTENTION

RACHEL TOH retreats to Paradise Shores to talk to local artist collective, Tell Your Children

"Tell Your Children" sounds like parents' rally call to perpetuate good values. But it is really about a team of artists working together, building upon creative synergy.

Started in 2013, Tell Your Children is a Singapore-based artist collective that comprises four illustrators and poly-mates – Deon Phua, 23, Russell Ong, 23, Lydia Yang, 23, and Kevin Too, 25. Each has his/her distinctive drawing style, but that is secondary to the execution of their finished product. They've collaborated with organisations like Zalora, Sailor Jerry and Hendrick's Gin.

"I wanted to do something that one cannot achieve on [his] own, thus, the idea of a collaboration; a collective," says Deon, the brain behind Tell Your Children.

The 1936 film, Reefer Madness, inspired the collective's name. The film ended with the three words, 'tell your children'. Deon felt that the phrase implies "leaving a legacy" and "feels like a brand recall – 'tell your children what?'".

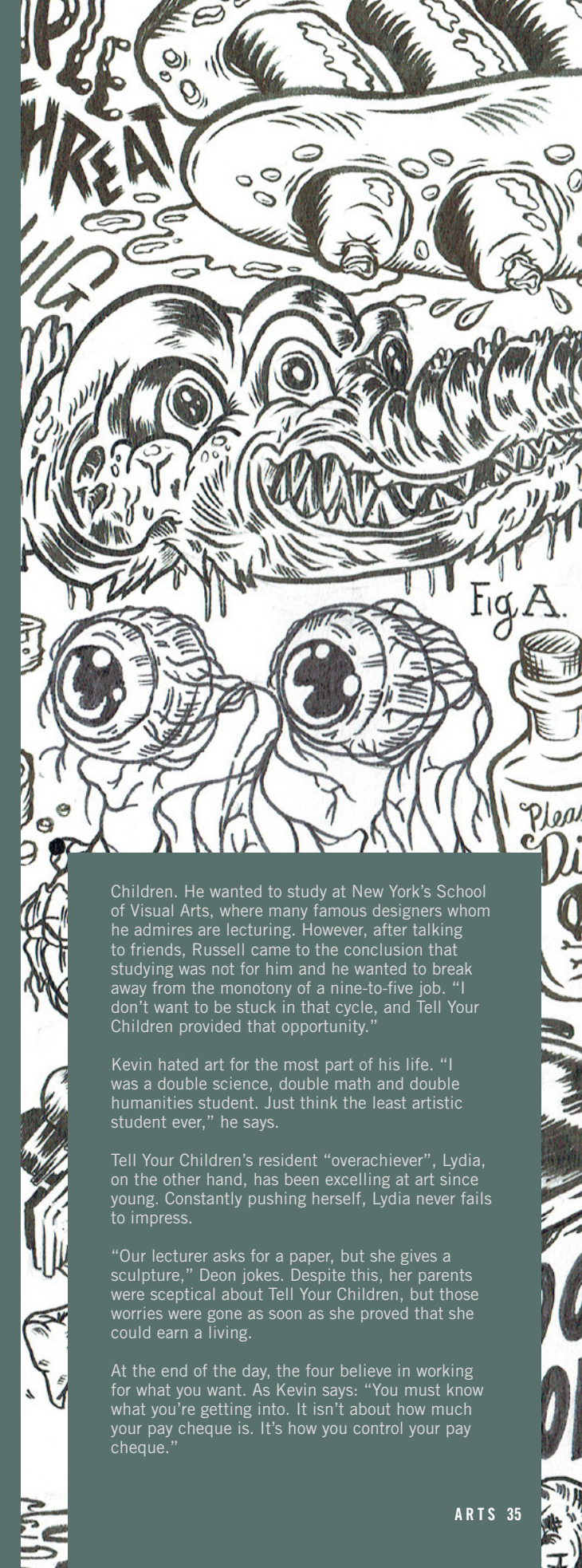
The group launched their art show, Paradise Shores, and studio at GLITCH Singapore at Tanjong Katong Road in May. The exhibition received a turnout of around 200 people.

The art exhibition explores the impact of large corporations on native communities in the form of a narrative, where the viewer follows the vibrant wall mural and slowly discovers the harm that S.M.I.L.E. Corporation has brought upon the aboriginal community of a once enigmatic and alluring island.

Bursting with wild colours and bold illustrations, and pushing the audience to think about pressing issues, Paradise Shores appeals to those adventurous at heart.

In order to channel his energy into building the collective's brand, Deon took a break from drawing. "I'm the sort who gets up at 3 am with an inspiration and I'll stay up 'til I finish it. It takes up a lot of energy, so I'd rather focus on one thing – Tell Your Children," he says.

Similarly, Russell put some things – even his university plans – aside to work on Tell Your



Children. He wanted to study at New York's School of Visual Arts, where many famous designers whom he admires are lecturing. However, after talking to friends, Russell came to the conclusion that studying was not for him and he wanted to break away from the monotony of a nine-to-five job. "I don't want to be stuck in that cycle, and Tell Your Children provided that opportunity."

Kevin hated art for the most part of his life. "I was a double science, double math and double humanities student. Just think the least artistic student ever," he says.

Tell Your Children's resident "overachiever", Lydia, on the other hand, has been excelling at art since young. Constantly pushing herself, Lydia never fails to impress.

"Our lecturer asks for a paper, but she gives a sculpture," Deon jokes. Despite this, her parents were sceptical about Tell Your Children, but those worries were gone as soon as she proved that she could earn a living.

At the end of the day, the four believe in working for what you want. As Kevin says: "You must know what you're getting into. It isn't about how much your pay cheque is. It's how you control your pay cheque."

Illustration by Tell Your Children

"We don't listen to music all day, in the same way, we still prefer major blockbuster movies."

– Daryl Ngai

The Man Behind the Monster

In the latest adaptation of the classic horror story, Frankenstein's faithful assistant Igor draws you into the heart and mind of the mad scientist, reports SAMANTHA CHOONG

One of the precursors of modern horror stories comes to life in Victor Frankenstein, the 2015 film adaptation of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Starring Daniel Radcliffe of the Harry Potter fame as Igor, the assistant to the mad scientist Victor Frankenstein (James McAvoy), the story follows him as he accompanies Frankenstein through his youth.

Written by a young Mary Shelley in the early 1800s, the novel is what some consider the first true science fiction book that has exerted a strong influence on horror stories thereafter.



Frankenstein is commonly misunderstood as the Creature, when it is actually the name of its creator. A monstrous being created by a mishmash of parts from cadavers and animated by electricity, the Creature is the result of Frankenstein's experiments in trying to give life to non-sentient matter.

Driven by grief over his mother's death, Frankenstein puts all his efforts into his experiments – the result of a long-time obsession with the recreation of natural wonders. The eventual success of his work is the creation of a large being with a horrifying appearance.

The original telling of this story is Frankenstein's recount of the trouble that followed the result of his experimentation. The first few film adaptations of the book were similar, with emphasis on the horror that the Creature brought with it. Victor Frankenstein, however, takes a different direction.

Unlike other adaptations and the original story that focus mainly on the Creature, Victor Frankenstein puts its emphasis on the friendship between Igor and Frankenstein.

Directed by Paul McGuigan, the man behind Sherlock episodes, The Hounds of Baskerville and A Scandal in Belgravia, this film promises to reveal the untold story of Frankenstein. With a script that McAvoy calls "funny, but also very dark, in a cool way", it is sure to introduce viewers to a whole new world.

Whether this new retelling of the classic story will impress audiences or not remains to be seen. With a fresh take and a star-studded cast, this film is one to look out for. Victor Frankenstein goes beyond the Creature and gives the titular character and his assistant a backstory that has never been seen before.

Opens in Cinemas
Nov 26

Photo courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox
Illustration by Chloe Tan



The Lost Boy

Take a peek into the other side of Neverland with DINIE ARYAL

"This isn't exactly the Neverland story you know," says the Atonement and Pride & Prejudice director, Joe Wright about upcoming movie Pan, the film adaptation of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan.

The adventures of the boy who wouldn't grow up was re-enacted in a previous film adaption of the book but the real reason behind his immortality and the start of all the Peter Pan adventures has never been discovered.

Peter (Levi Miller) is an ordinary, mischievous 12-year-old boy with an uncontrollable defiant streak. However, in the desolate London orphanage where he has lived his whole life, those qualities do not exactly fly. One night, he gets whisked away and magically transported to a fantastical world of pirates, warriors and fairies known as Neverland.

Venturing into Neverland, he fights numerous battles while trying to unveil his mother's secret, and earn his rightful place in this magical land.



Photos courtesy of Warner Bros. Singapore



Together with Tiger Lily (Rooney Mara) and a new friend, James Hook (Garrett Hedlund), Peter must defeat the pirate Blackbeard (Hugh Jackman) to save Neverland and fulfill his true destiny - to become the hero who will forever be known as Peter Pan.

Wolverine star Hugh Jackman undergoes a major transformation for his role as a fearsome pirate, Blackbeard. He amuses his fans by captioning his Instagram photo with: "Blackbeard is born. #PAN". Fans of Jackman can anticipate another side of the talented actor in this movie for sure.

Pan also features a talented cast including Adeel Akhtar (The Dictator) as Smee; Nonso Anozie (Son of God, Atonement) as Bishop; Kathy Burke (Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy) as Mother Barnabas and Jack Charles (Mystery Road) as Tiger Lily's father.

Besides the quality actors, supermodel Cara Delevingne is also making an appearance in the movie as a pair of mermaid twins. She expressed her excitement on her Instagram saying: "Mer-mazing! So excited for you to see the Pan trailer! It's gonna be a wonderful movie!"



"This isn't exactly the Neverland story you know."

- Joe Wright

Opens in cinemas
Oct 8



Post-Apocalyptic Love Affair

Put on your safe-suits as **CHRISTA CHOO** ventures a closer look at the complications between the last few survivors on Earth in this dangerous futuristic world

On first impression, Burden Valley, the setting for both book and movie, is not a very suitable name for a refuge. However, in *Z For Zachariah*, it serves as a haven for the few survivors of the nuclear holocaust.

A scientific explanation comes in the form of Mr Loomis' assessment – suggesting that air only rises in the valley, sparing it from radiation exposure and contamination. Its weather system prevents the extinction of mankind.

This film, the very first Sundance dramatic competition entry by director Craig Zobel, reveals the gripping conflict among Earth's last survivors and a love triangle that develops amongst a thickening web of lies and secrets.

Unlike other post-apocalyptic films, this one focuses on themes like the destructiveness of science when separated from conscience, the fatalistic flaw of the insatiable desire for power, as well as the moral value of individual freedom.

The diary-style novel by Robert C. O'Brien, published posthumously in

1984, stars only three main actors - Margot Robbie as Ann Burden, Chris Pine as Caleb, and Chiwetel Ejiofor as Mr Loomis in its film adaptation.

The minimal cast makes the film slightly more compelling in its visual appeal. Set in the lush greenery of New Zealand, the film takes a different route from the usual abandoned buildings and presents a more sophisticated overall look.

The story centres around Ann Burden, whose family and neighbours never returned from a search effort, and has lived alone for a year on their family farm. The sanctuary named after Ann's early ancestors turns into a dangerous territory when Mr Loomis, a scientist who has been driven to madness by his tireless search for signs of life and his ingrained fear of contamination, shows up on the farm one day.

The arrival of Caleb serves as a linchpin for the majority of the movie's tension, introducing elements of danger as he and Loomis constantly try to outdo each other in a bid for the affections of the last woman on Earth. The sexual undertones throughout the film makes it more appropriate for



mature audiences, something author Robert C. O'Brien intended while working on the novel.

The movie features award-winning actor Chiwetel Ejiofor's on-screen prowess as well. Famous for his role as Solomon Northup in *12 Years A Slave*, fans can definitely anticipate his appearance as Mr Loomis in this film adaptation not to be missed.

Opens in Cinemas
Oct 8



A Different Kind of Cancer Love Story

SEOW YUN RONG submerges herself into the anti-social world of Greg in the upcoming indie flick, *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*

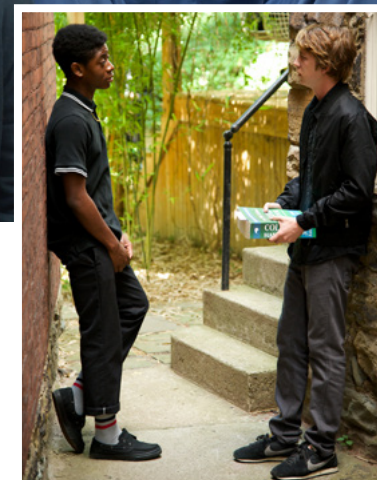
The premise of *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* may seem very familiar. Boy meets cancer-stricken girl and they become inseparable. Love maybe blossoms.

It sounds like a hybrid of print-to-screen favourites *The Fault In Our Stars* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* – which is pretty accurate. However, this witty film, adapted by Jesse Andrews from his novel, *Me and Earl*, focuses on true friendship, and how cancer can bring people together and teach them how to express themselves.

Winner of the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the

2015 Sundance Film Festival, critics question the film's ability to transition from a Sundance smash to a mainstream hit as dozens of this film's festival predecessors have flopped at the box office. The three young actors – Thomas Mann, Olivia Cook, and RJ Cyler seem unfazed by this all as they believe in the tearjerker.

Being a wallflower or a loner in school may seem like a miserable and dreadful thing, but Greg (Thomas Mann) deliberately avoids deep human relationships so that he doesn't have to get attached to anything. He even calls his best friend, Earl (RJ Cyler), his 'co-worker' simply because they make bizarre short films together.



Greg's mother (Connie Britton), worried about his social life and wellbeing, persuades him to befriend Rachel (Olivia Cooke), a girl with leukaemia. Reluctant at first, Greg finally decides to give it a shot. Of course, he drags his best friend, I mean, co-worker, Earl, along.

After hanging out with Rachel for a while and getting more and more attached to her, the two decide to make a film for her. This is where their friendship starts to blossom as they try to distract her from her worsening condition.

Known for directing episodes from television series *American Horror Story* and *Glee*, Alfonso Gomez-Rejon applies his offbeat camerawork and artsy compositions to this geeky coming-of-age story, making *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* a feel-good indie flick not to be missed.

Opens in Cinemas
Sep 3



Uneasy Alliance of Law and Disorder

DANIAL GOFAR delves into the alliance between an FBI agent and Irish mob godfather that later goes terribly wrong

"It's not what you do, it's when and where you do it, and whom you do it to. If nobody sees it, it didn't happen."

One of the most anticipated films of this year, *Black Mass* captures the essence of corruption in government bodies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Based on the true story of one of the most notorious gangsters in US history, *Black Mass* is a mind-blowing crime-drama blockbuster. Directed and produced by Scott Cooper, the film is set in the 1970s in South Boston. It depicts the true story of Irish mob godfather cum FBI informant Whitey Bulger, FBI agent John Connolly, and a secret agreement between them to take down the Italian mafia, a plan that would eventually spiral out of control.

The trailer looks promising, with similar scenes and vibes as Martin Scorsese's classic *Goodfellas*. Apart from the solid plot, the movie also packs a loaded cast, with the multi-talented Johnny Depp as Whitey Bulger and Joel Edgerton as John Connolly. There are also well-known actors in supporting roles such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* star Dakota Johnson as Lindsey Cyr, Whitey's lover and Sherlock's Benedict Cumberbatch as

William Bulger, Whitey's brother.

The movie is based on the 2001 non-fiction tome *Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, The FBI And A Devil's Deal* by Dick Lehr and Gerard O'Neill. Fans of the book will be delighted to see a similar yet different story, as Scott Cooper promises to make it a performance for the ages. This might just be Depp's ticket to another Oscar. At least, we hope so.

Opens in cinemas
Sep 17



An Otherworldly Journey

Science fiction moves closer than ever to reality as we're taken on an out-of-this-world battle for survival on the Red Planet. Step into *The Martian* landscape with RAPHAEL ONG

"To see *Alien* on opening night in 70 mm was to feel you were on that spaceship, and no one had ever done that in science fiction before."

- James Cameron



Since the earliest civilisations, the human race has been driven to discover new worlds; and Mars is our best shot at that. With today's scientific advancements, we'll be seeing humans on Mars as soon as 2027 – and it's this curiosity that inspired countless extraterrestrial epics, from *Gravity* to 2001: *A Space Odyssey*.

"It's space, it doesn't cooperate," says Mark Watney, protagonist of software engineer Andy Weir's breakout bestselling novel *The Martian* – and the novel's premise is exactly that.

The *Martian* follows a manned mission to Mars – but it all goes awry after a fierce sandstorm, where astronaut-botanist Mark Watney is marooned on Mars, presumed dead but still very much alive. We follow his struggle to survive as he, in his words, is "left with only one option: to science the sh*t of out of this."

It's a premise done to death, but Watney's ingenuity and wit; the plausibility and scientific accuracy and meticulous lengths that Weir took to ensure this – even earning praise from NASA engineers – made *The Martian* a singular story.

With an equally otherworldly road to success, Weir, a self-professed space nerd, went against astronomical odds – giving up hope of professional writing – and when *The Martian* started as a free self-published story, it made waves that opened six-figure deals; giving

birth to the upcoming film adaptation of the same name.

It's not every day one sees a free, independent novel turn into a multi-million dollar Hollywood blockbuster helmed by legendary sci-fi director Ridley Scott.

Redefining sci-fi as we know it with *Alien* and *Blade Runner*, Scott has been enshrined as a visionary director in science fiction. "To see *Alien* on opening night in 70 mm was to feel you were on that spaceship," James Cameron told *Variety*. "And no one had ever done that in science fiction before." We won't be seeing any xenomorphs, but one can expect Scott to push the boundaries of science fiction in *The Martian*.

Just like where *The Martian* is set – in space – its cast is just as star-studded. With Matt Damon anchoring the cast as Mark Watney, he is supported by *Interstellar* star Jessica Chastain, *The Newsroom*'s Jeff Daniels, England's most versatile actor Sean Bean, *Saturday Night Live* veteran Kristen Wiig, and Donald Glover of rapper Childish Gambino and *Community* fame, amongst others. Shot by cinematographer Dariusz Wolski, who shot *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Prometheus*, *The Martian* is set to be a visual spectacle.

Opens in cinemas
Oct 1

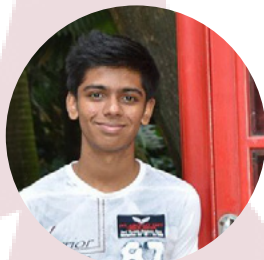
ALTERNATIVE

SG
50

Going above and beyond the SG50 hype, AMANPREET SINGH, FRANCIS LAW and SHINTARO TAY uncover alternative perspectives and the aspirations of Singaporeans of all ages

Singapore's golden jubilee is finally here and it's a time where Singaporeans from all walks of life come together as one big family to celebrate 50 years of progress as a nation. Once an island fighting for independence, Singapore is now one of the most developed countries in the world and it's the togetherness of Singaporeans that has gotten us this far as a nation.

With so much going on in the past 50 years, there is much to celebrate. As such, many unsung heroes and less told stories are overlooked. Not wanting to leave them out of the picture, we took the opportunity to find just what Singaporeans feel can be celebrated in SG50 that has not been celebrated yet.



Yash Rawal, 17

"I would like to see a laser show that shows a brief history of Singapore. It can be shown before the National Day Parade to show the vast improvement Singapore has made in 50 years of independence, from a fishing village to one of the most financially stable countries in the world."



Natasha Tan Rey, 17

"Everyone gets to go watch the National Day Parade. Now, we have to ballot for tickets, but not everyone is entitled to watch it at the Padang to experience the atmosphere."



Nickie Mak, 17

"Something that has not been celebrated yet is the food and hawker culture in Singapore. It's not as appreciated as it should be by youths and it plays a big part in creating Singapore's unique identity."



Noel Low, 18

"The hopes and dreams of our citizens these past 50 years. I feel it is [the hopes and dreams] that motivate and inspire us and themselves to strive for a better life and a better Singapore."



Reuben Wang, 20

"The grumpy but often compassionate nature of our people allows us to be resilient. The more we try to find what is Singaporean to celebrate, the more dilute what we are celebrating becomes. For what it's worth, let's celebrate our grumpiness, for complaints in the end lead to better discourse and improvements in our country."



Samuel Lim, 20

"A lot of Singapore's families are 'alternative families' – single parent households, single mothers raising their children. We have more or less neglected these families. Our country's policies focus on 'traditional family units', which is one father, one mother, and many children. As part of SG50, the policies to support such families [can be tweaked]."



Ngoi Kai Han, 19

"We should celebrate the humble foreign workers and cleaners who maintain the places we love in Singapore."



Ariffin Sha, 18

"I would like to see people on the ground that have helped Singapore go through moments of anguish, like the SARS outbreak, the Hotel New World disaster or the commandos that shot down the hijackers [of SQ 117 in 1991]. All these moments that gripped the nation. People should know more about their stories."



Aloysius Tok, 19

"I think it'd be great to celebrate the team working behind the scenes for the SG50 celebration. As someone who worked backstage at SG50, I noticed that there are a lot of workers who set up the stage, tents and even portable toilets. These people should get some recognition for their hard work."



Nisha Shankar, 15

"I would love to see residents' day for each residential block, as it will help to improve the relationship among the residents of the same area. Although there are such events happening, they don't take place regularly enough to foster a bonded spirit amongst residents."



Shauna Goh, 18

"The feeling of unison. Although there may be complaints here and there, at the end of the day, we are still humble enough to come together on this day to really appreciate that it is not about being sentimental, or that it is unrealistic to dwell in the past. We are not dwelling in the past – we are celebrating it. All that matters from this point forward, is what we can do to continually make this an inclusive community we can call home."



Shanice Yeo, 18

"Remembering the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew as he is one of the forefathers of Singapore... People from the younger generation do not really appreciate what he did, so maybe we could come up with something that could impact them [and showcase] what he did to develop Singapore from a third world country [to what she is today]. It shouldn't only be visuals, it should be something more impactful than that."



Abel George, 19

"[Change still] isn't celebrated. Beneath the outward displays of how far the landscape and economy have evolved, Singaporeans recognise that our society embraces a particular kind of conservatism that favours familiarity over change. Change is difficult as it requires that people shift their mindsets, embrace new ideas or alter their way of living. Even as much as SG50 parades the things that have changed, the attitude of celebrating change rather than the familiar ought not be repressed."

MY WISHES FOR SG100

With 50 years behind us, we ask Singaporeans what they hope to see by the end of the next 50 years

"My wish for SG100 is for more freedom of speech to be given to everyday Singaporeans. While I feel that the government is currently doing a great job to help the country, it needs to take the time to listen to the concerns of the general public. Not everyone has negative things to say about the law and legislations, and I hope in the future, there will be more equal opportunities given to everyday Singaporeans to raise their concerns."
- Ralf Tan, 32

"I hope for a more tolerant and inclusive society. Tolerant – in being quick to appreciate instead of being known as a city that is quick to complain. Inclusive – in valuing every single person in our society (foreigner or resident – we all belong to a community) and I would love to see the *kampung* spirit come alive again. I hope for Singapore to be a more righteous city that continues to be a beacon of light to the rest of Asia."
- Jynn Chee Chooi, 21

"I hope in SG100, Singapore will remain a role model for racial and religious equality to all the nations, where the most valuable resource on this tiny piece of land, is the people."
- Sean Nicholas Loh, 18

"I want Singapore to be an island hub in Asia, bringing prosperity and opportunities for all its citizens."
- Carl Matthias Wong, 19, NSF

THINGS WE LIKE ABOUT

Taking in the sights and the sounds of the many festivities around Singapore, we came up with the things which we absolutely loved about our golden jubilee celebrations



1. "Building My SG" Lego Sets

If you're a student, you probably received a commemorative "Building My SG" Lego set. In 244-pieces, there are various combinations which enable students to create a Lego replica of either the Supertrees at Gardens by the Bay, Cavenagh Bridge or the control tower of Changi International Airport. The aim of the set was to get students to collaborate in class to work together to learn more about Singapore in a fun manner. Mr Heng Swee Keat, education minister, said, "This is such a special and unique keepsake. I encourage all our students to keep this and to treasure this, because it will be something very special that they can look back when they grow older."



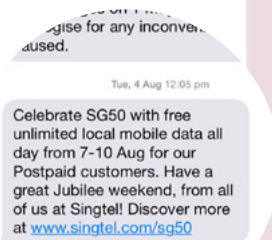
2. National Day Funpacks

Every year, Funpacks are designed to mark our nation's birthday. These packs serve not only as goodie bags, but as souvenirs reminding us of the celebrations of that year. In the past, the distribution of these Funpacks was limited to attendees of the National Day Parade. However, this year, every household is entitled to one Funpack each, with 50 designs picked from the NDP 2015 Funpack Print Design Contest. From the lyrics of Home, to even a *teh tarik* recipe, each design showcased uniquely Singaporean aspects designed by citizens from all walks of life, making these Funpacks ones that we will never forget.



6. Home by Homes

Wanting to celebrate the concept of 'home' for everyone, telco company, StarHub, invited people from different homes to participate in their latest music video. Residents of elderly homes, children's shelters, halfway houses and special needs homes all played a part in this touching collaboration for a remake of the NDP favourite, Home. Mobile users registered with StarHub can even redeem their reward points to make a donation to these homes at \$5 for every 50 reward points.



7. Unlimited Mobile Data

Mobile phones are a part of our everyday life, we bring them everywhere we go to stay connected with one another. Telco companies M1 and Singtel decided they wanted to increase this connectedness over the National Day period by providing their users with unlimited mobile services. This means unlimited calls, SMSes and even the ever important mobile data. Users all over the country rejoiced with many taking to social media to share this wonderful news with their family and friends.



4. Free Transport on Aug 9

Subconsciously, many stuck to their daily routine of taking out their cards to tap before taking their modes of transport. However, on this special day, many realised that the sensors ignored their actions. It was part of SMRT and SBS Transit's initiative of commemorating the special day. As reported in The Straits Times on Apr 27, Mr Desmond Kuek, president and group chief executive officer of SMRT Corporation said that it was their aim to "add to the celebratory atmosphere and encourage everyone to get out of the house to celebrate as one united people".



9. The #SG50 Buzz on Social Media

Popular social networking site Twitter added two emojis to their database. Users who tweeted the #Singapore and #SG50 hashtags will notice that the Singapore flag and the SG50 logo appeared next to them.

Over on Snapchat, a segment called 'Singapore National Day' was set-aside for Singaporeans to snap photos and videos of Singapore on National Day. The top uploads were then selected by the Snapchat team and made available for snapchat users all over the world to view.

Home by Homes screenshot courtesy of StarHub

CREATING NEW REALITIES

SHINTARO TAY delves into the art of surrealism through photography

Akin to the obvious differences in reality, surrealist photographers aim to create an imaginative dreamscape in their photographs that oppose the norm in life.

Surrealistic photography came as a result of the surrealist art movement in 1924. Surrealism is about using creativity in art mediums to lure the unconscious mind to open up to dreams, intoxication, chance and madness.

Marvin Tang, 29, who recently graduated with a major in Digital Imaging and Photography at Nanyang Technological University, shares: "Good surreal images would often make me want to have a second look. Beyond being just aesthetically beautiful, they should feel strange as well and question the image and the purpose behind the strangeness."

In Singapore, there are only a few photographers who have made their names known in this field of fine art.

Analog

Chow Chee Yong, 46, a photographer, curator and lecturer at Temasek Polytechnic, is a pioneer in the field of surrealistic photography. He is famous for his works – 30th Feb, Light Trails and Senseless Spaces.

Although set against a backdrop of digital technology, he stays true to

his belief and passion for film. With this technique lies his most obvious surrealistic body of art – 30th Feb.

As the title suggests, it refers to an imaginary day that does not exist in any calendar. It consists of black and white photographs, which have been manipulated with the use of old darkroom methods. Here, two different objects or scenes are combined together by chemicals to merge into an impossible dreamscape image.

He shares: "My goal is always about making viewers take a second look at my pictures or spending the extra two seconds looking at them. And thereafter, walking away wondering if it was real, where would this be, and how it can impact what I do, how I think."

Tristan Chong, 17, who saw the works of Mr Chow says: "It makes me interested as to why it was put in a certain way, and gets me thinking about what the meaning behind the picture is. Because it can't be that the photographer put two random pictures without a certain meaning."

Digital

Chia Aik Beng, 47, is an acclaimed street photographer who began on his iPhone five years ago. He is best known for his mobile photography, which has gained international recognition.

Although he does not specialise in surrealistic photography, his experiences as an illustrator impacted the way he approaches his subjects.

He says: "Most of my illustrations were already influenced by surrealism because I connect with reality and dreams. Things that I saw as an artist, while illustrating, tended to have a very surreal and whimsical kind of look. In a way, these influenced the way I photograph things."

With a surrealistic foresight, Mr Chia is always constantly observing the world around him to find subtle nuances. He does not really use much manipulation to achieve what he wants. Most times, he only uses

Photos courtesy of Chia Aik Beng and Chow Chee Yong



The Floating Arrow at WMU 1992
by Chow Chee Yong



Escape Thru The Closet 1999
by Chow Chee Yong

digital black and white conversions to highlight the sombre and moody undertones of his surreal images.

But, he did experiment with a series that combines two different photographs on top of another with a software to make an image that is seemingly unreal and dark.

His technique is simple but it evokes a lot of questions on reality and how something cannot be fathomed, but can be envisioned in a photograph. He shares: "You can fake it but you can't lie in photography."

"Surrealism is something that people often relate easily to images that are photoshopped. But in reality I feel surrealism is beyond just photoshop. It comes with an idea and overarching concept," Marvin adds.

If you are interested to see some works from Mr Chow's latest surrealism series, *Senseless Spaces*, they will be on display at TWENTYFIFTEEN.SG The Exhibition from Aug 7, 2015 to Jan 3, 2016.



SG BRAND GOES GLOBAL

The Little Red Dot has continued to make inroads into the global arena with its products, talent and unique flora and fauna.
DINIE ARYAL and JOLAINE CHUA find out more

Homegrown brands are leaving impressions around the world, venturing beyond the shores of the Little Red Dot. This may not be news to some but this year being Singapore's Golden Jubilee, it is perhaps appropriate to do a stock-take of people and places who have given us reason to be proud on our country's 50th birthday.

Hidden Gem Polisher

Singaporeans often believe that local talent cannot go far, but that's certainly not the case for Xiao Han. If you're a fan of Chinese pop songs, then her name might be familiar to you. Xiao Han has written songs for Taiwanese and Hong Kong celebrity singers like I for Jolin Tsai and Plane for Sandy Lam.

Constantly nominated for the annual Singapore Hit Awards, she has also won several other awards such as the Best Local Chinese Pop Song at the Singapore Compass Awards in 2006, and the Best Local Lyricist Award at the Singapore e-Awards in 2012.

"I was actually 'forced' into songwriting," explains the lyricist.

When Xiao Han was 16 and still a student, she asked her friend to teach her how to play the guitar in an attempt to try to be a "cool kid".

"When I told [my friend] I was unable

to pay a fee, she asked if I could help her with the lyrics of her songs, so that she could take part in a Chinese High School songwriting competition," recalls Xiao Han.

However, when Xiao Han won the Best Lyrics Award from her school, she took it as a sign to continue competing in songwriting competitions.

Many years later, she found herself working with "like-minded people from competitions", and then joined a music publishing house, allowing her to collaborate with fellow songwriters Eric Ng and Tanya Chua. This led her to start publishing her lyrics overseas in 1998.

Inspiration comes from all over the place when it comes to Xiao Han's songwriting. She explained how she could get songwriting inspiration from her own imaginative mind, her personal circle of friends, random blogs, and even subtitles from films.

Ayam Brand New

If you have yet to watch the YouTube video by FungBrosComedy, where the Fung Brothers sing and dance to songs featuring Singlish as well as our famous food, you are missing out. The YouTube video was a collaboration between Ayam Brand and the Fung Brothers to publicise the brand through singing about the charms of Singapore and Malaysia.



"When I told [my friend] I was unable to pay a fee, she asked if I could help her with the lyrics of her songs, so that she could take part in a Chinese High School songwriting competition."

*- Xiao Han
on how she began songwriting*

The resilient food brand has endured through World War II and also the fight for Singapore's independence in 1965. During these hard times, when families did not have refrigerators in their homes, the Ayam Brand canned sardines were a popular staple.

Today, Ayam Brand sardines is part of the food given to our soldiers in the army. It is therefore no surprise that Ayam Brand has also won the hearts of health enthusiasts overseas as the products are made with no preservatives, no MSG and are halal, to help people eat healthily.

Priscilla Tan, marketing manager of Clouet Singapore, says: "Ayam Brand focuses on innovation and stringent quality controls to ensure its products are safe for consumers, taste delicious and interesting." Ms Tan attributes the success of Ayam Brand overseas to this focus.

As part of SG50 to celebrate Singapore's 50th birthday, the local food brand is also "supporting community clubs and organisations in their SG50 celebrations by offering these limited edition SG50 cans at preferential rates".

"Ayam Brand focuses on innovation and stringent quality controls to ensure its products are safe for consumers, taste delicious and interesting."

- Ms Priscilla Tan



Nature Island in the Sun

While Sentosa is a well-known attraction on the international arena, there is another island that many tourists count among places not to be missed in Singapore.

"It's not an officially preserved spot so it might go anytime," says Chin Li Fah, 40, a National Parks Board (NParks) volunteer.

That is how precious Pulau Ubin is to the people who are fond of the island. Pulau Ubin draws Singaporeans and foreigners alike with its unique and rustic charm. Home to only 24 households and a few businesses, the island is known across the region for its rich biodiversity and as a place for simple leisure activities.

Exploring the island preferably by bicycle, you will revel in the laidback nature of the place. But don't be disturbed by the poor Internet network if you really wish to bask in the natural beauty of Pulau Ubin.

However, it was not always the way it is now. Once, Pulau Ubin was bustling with life and quarry activities. Now, the place is bustling on weekends with Singaporeans from the main island who come to relax and foreigners curious to see the flora and fauna. Clean and green Pulau Ubin gets electricity from solar panels set up around the beautiful island.

"Being in Pulau Ubin brings back good thoughts and it feels like I'm going back to my *kampong* days," recalls

Chng Peck Keang, 36, who was on the island with his wife and children one weekend.

Protected and managed by NParks, Pulau Ubin has preserved many of its unique diversity such as the Chek Jawa Wetlands, and the endangered species of flora and fauna on the island. One feature of Chek Jawa would be the house that many visitors would stop by to sit at the patio to enjoy the sea view and breeze.

"It does take away the rustic feeling when they add developments, for example the board walk at the Chek Jawa house. Now, that's not natural," says Vivian Wong, 42, a visitor.

"Being in Pulau Ubin brings back good thoughts and it feels like I'm going back to my kampong days."

- Chng Peck Keang



A New Look at Old

With a sense of nostalgia and curiosity, SHINTARO TAY delves into the almost forgotten trade of secondhand books

Each person's approach to secondhand books is very different. To some, it may be simply buying books at a cheaper price, while to many others, it is a passionate quest for books that are out of print and treasured gems.

No one actually knows when the secondhand book culture in Singapore began. According to the National Heritage Board, the earliest records of secondhand book trading dates all the way back to the old two-storey shophouses along Bras Basah Road, which were known for selling secondhand fiction books as well as textbooks in the 1950s.

Staying true to this trade is Mr Michael Low, 64, who owns the Books & Magazine Store. His secondhand book business began in 1967 at a roadside flea market at Sungei Road. He then moved to the upper level of Golden Mile Food Centre in 1975 and continues today at the very same place.

Although he only completed his Primary 6 education, he shares fervently about the importance of passing down knowledge through books that help people to learn. This has kept him going strong for close to 50 years.

A Quaint, Intimate Experience

"As [the store] is really small, you get a sense of being in a room that is very intimate, which you don't normally get in major bookstores that are spacious but not as familiar as you think [they] would be," says Yeo Jing Wen, 18, a polytechnic student who frequents Evernew Bookstore at Bras Basah Complex.

"I love the books [so] much that I want to pass it to the next generation. If they are thrown away, it is very sad for the author as you don't see how many hours are placed into the books."

- Mr Tawahar Ali
Director of Book Point



Secondhand bookstores in Singapore all seem to have a similar characteristic. Although varying in shop sizes, each shop has a quaint and organised clutter – according to type, genre and popularity.

New bookshops have rows of similar books in bundles, creating a uniformity of colour. At secondhand bookshops, however, there is usually just one copy of the book. The placement of different books with different bindings next to one another creates a unique polychromatic colour scheme that is pleasing to the eyes. As you browse the titles, you will feel a sense of wonder, and yet, familiarity at the same time.

Books Battered and Beloved

Out-of-print classics attract the attention of Jing Wen. She constantly looks out for old classic books by authors like William Shakespeare and Mildred D Taylor, all of which are sold at a fraction of the original price and are not as easy to get in new bookstores.

Secondhand bookshops are great places for students to save money on textbooks – a trend since the 50s which has carried on until today.

Vanessa Lim, 18, has been shopping for secondhand textbooks at Bras Basah Complex for the past six years. She saved "more than \$50" one year.

She says: "Sometimes the books are very new [and other times] they are old, tattered and torn, but I find the writings inside them very useful for my studies as they tell me what I should look out for and what I should avoid."

There are also people who look out for specific books that serve a purpose. Just like Mrs Sng-Fun Poh Yoke, who is always on the look out for old cookbooks. She shares: "I want to revive traditional recipes."

Besides cookbooks, Mrs Sng also looks out for old copies of the Bible and Christian books to give away to her friends as well.

Hidden Treasures Overseas

Mr Kenneth Yeo, 40, is an archivist and librarian who collects antique and valuable secondhand books. Besides visiting secondhand bookshops in Singapore, he has travelled overseas to places such as Charing Cross Road in Central London with its fascinating secondhand bookstores.

There, he found one of his most prized purchases – an antique first edition colour illustrated copy of Richard Adams' Watership Down which was sold for £1.

Mr Yeo says: "A well crafted book is an art by itself. When one compares a modern book with that of a slightly older book, it is easy to dismiss them as being the same. After all, a book is a book. But this is far from the truth. The differences between the two are startling."

"The quality of the paper used and the care and effort put into assembling the book; the effort used to bind the book to the spine and to attach [it to] the covers, and then after to cloth or leather – there is a certain elegance in an antique book that cannot be found in the modern machine assembled books," he concludes.

Passion Reigns Despite Uncertainty

Book Point (not its original name) is a 50-year-old bookstore that used to sell new books. However, it made a drastic

"A well crafted book is an art by itself. When one compares a modern book with that of a slightly older book, it is easy to dismiss them as being the same. After all, a book is a book. But this is far from the truth. The differences between the two are startling."

- Mr Kenneth Yeo
Archivist and Librarian



change to sell secondhand books in 1995.

Mr Tawahar Ali, 50, director of Book Point, says: "I love the books [so] much that I want to pass it to the next generation. If they are thrown away, it is very sad for the author as you don't see how many hours are placed into the books."

Interestingly, his huge bookstore, which integrates three stalls into one, as well as another branch one level below at Bras Basah Complex, only holds a small portion of the books that he has accumulated over the years. In fact, he has "three million books in a 20,000 square foot warehouse".

Presently, secondhand bookshops are closing as they are very difficult to sustain, with fewer people buying books, old or new. There are fewer than 20 stores left. In fact, most of the secondhand bookstores that moved from the old shophouses at Bras Basah Road to the complex are no longer around.

Ms Deyana Goh, owner of GOHD Books, which specialises in the sale of secondhand antiquarian rare and collectible books, shares: "I hope there are more youths who read. If they read, I'm very happy regardless of what kind of book it is."

"Students should know great writers who have changed history in so many ways, [but nowadays] nobody knows about [them]," she adds.

Mr Ali agrees, observing that "the more you read, the more kind and polite you are", and shares that his customers who buy classic books regularly are always considerate about the environment.

AH GIRL TO MA'AM

The stereotypical image of women being gentle, emotional and over-sensitive is challenged as more women are now joining the army in Singapore. DINIE ARYAL finds out more

A working day in the army starts at 8 am. Usually it ends at 5 pm but there are days when the working day stretches to 24 hours, five to six days a week.

You would think that's peanuts for the guys but the Ma'am in green are showing that they're as physically – and mentally – fit as the men.

In the Singapore army, women go through the same amount of physical and mental pressure in the Basic Military Training (BMT) programme that is compulsory for everyone..

Owing to the physical build of women, there are some – but minimal – exceptions on requirements for the Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT). However, some women have outdone the men physically and mentally, proving that women are fit for the army and do not compromise the strength of Singapore's armed forces.

"Women and men are different in physical build, so in terms of IPPT; men have to fulfill more requirements such as the number of push-ups," says Staff Sergeant (SSG) Pauline Pang, 26, who has been in the army for six years and is on an education scholarship awarded by the army. However, she adds: "But in terms of training and the treatment of job, there is really not much of a difference."

1st sergeant (1SG) Oh Pui Cheng, 25, who has been part of the 23rd Singapore Artillery for three years in the army says: "The majority of the guys who have to go through the army usually *chao keng* (to fake and come up with excuses in

order to run away from responsibilities) to get out of army; only the minority would go on to enjoy and learn in their two years in NS."

1SG Oh Pui Cheng adds that conversely: "The majority of the females [who] sign on have the attitude to serve the nation. So we try our best to make sure we are physically fit; and that as a commander, we put our men as priority to make sure they learn the required skills, making their NS journey an enjoyable one."

It is perhaps ironic that the gentle nature of women – that raises eyebrows about them not being tough enough – actually serves a very useful purpose in army. The feminine and motherly image of a woman enhances bonding and understanding during their training with NS men, who may be challenged in the face of the tough environment of BMT.

"I believe ladies in the army may provide a motherly touch to the masculine environment; we can also contribute a different viewpoint on certain things," says Lieutenant (LTA) Nur Atiqah, 27, who has been in the Army for five years and recently became a proud mother.

Adds Third-Sergeant (3SG) Cin Lee, 24, who has been in the army for two years: "Probably, I've been seen as an angel because when the other sergeants *tekan* (push the limits) [the NS men or cadets], they would approach me to seek for mercy but I'll still try to be firm."

Socially, women who are in the army have received a vast range of reactions when they first announced their decision to join the army.

"First reaction was definitely disbelief, maybe due to my petite physique so they wouldn't expect me to be in the army," says LTA Nur Atiqah who seems very passionate about the subject of being in the army.

"I believe ladies in the army may provide a motherly touch to the masculine environment; we can also contribute a different viewpoint on certain things."

- Nur Atiqah,
Lieutenant (LTA)



Nur Atiqah (right) posing with her section mates during their Basic Military Training (BMT) Passing-Out-Parade (POP) in April 2010.

"I've been seen as an angel because when the other sergeants tekan them [the NS men or cadets], they would approach me to seek for mercy."

- Pauline Pang
Staff Sergeant

"My guy friends often don't understand why I chose this path because they don't really like NS," says SSG Pauline Pang with a laugh.

"Being in the army is not a surprise for [my family] as they know I'm the sporty kind and I did express [that I had an interest to join the army]. Therefore I have the support from them," says Military Expert 1 Trainee (ME1T) Esther Yeo, 23, on her new job of seven months.

As Singapore celebrates its Golden Jubilee this year, are more women ready to join the army?

Although there have been much debate on the topic, women are still not permitted to serve National Service like NSmen in Singapore. However, as of 2013, there were 1,500 women who hold full-time jobs in the army, making up the 7.5 percent of the army. Also, there were 60 new female sign ups for positions like officers, warrant officers, military experts and specialists every year.

Says 1SG Pui Cheng: "Recently, statistics have shown that



Pauline Pang (left) receiving the army diploma scholarship award from the Chief of Defence, Major-General Perry Lim last year.

more females are joining the army but I can't say that all of us are ready." She adds: "However, if our nation needs us, I'm pretty sure all of us (male and female) will do our part."

"It's fully dependent on each individual; the guys who join the army through NS, they're not ready too but they don't have a choice. If you feel like you want to protect the country then come and sign up," says 3SG Cin Lee.

Part-Time National Hero

The Army is not just about shooting rifles and going through intense training. In 2014, the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) launched the recruitment for SAF Volunteer Corps (SAFVC) where people once not liable to serve the nation can now do so in many ways.

To join SAFVC, only two weeks of Basic Military Training (BMT) is required. There is an option between serving 10 Saturdays of BMT or going through two continuous weeks of BMT in camp. This is then followed up with two weeks of Qualification Training and Advanced Training for the specific role that one is volunteering for.

Here are some of the many roles you may take on in SAFVC!

Information

Being part of the InfoMedia Staff means the volunteer gets the chance to support SAF's public communication; it's like being a journalist with a rougher and more exciting job scope.

Medical Trainers

It is important that SAF has volunteers with skills to train NSmen in the Combat Support Hospital in being a doctor, nurse, radiographer or even a medical technologist!

Naval Operations

Which other job lets a volunteer perform navigational duties onboard a Landing Ship Tank as a Bridge Watchkeeper, or even allows you to show off your seamanship by engaging volunteers on a fast craft?

Legal

The coolest way to practice law has got to be supporting the SAF and providing legal support during operations.

Command, Control, Communication & Computers (C4)

This role engages the volunteer's niche expertise in Satellite and Radio Communications and Network to support the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) by recommending the best commercial practice and technology.

Still Breaking Gender Stereotypes

This may be the 21st century, but perceptions that certain careers are for men and others for women continue to persist. STACEY LIM and MIRABELLE KOH find out more



Nurulhuda toils away in her workshop, sanding and cutting wood blocks to design and create intricate furniture.



Timothy holds a pose with the strength and grace that only comes with years of blood, sweat and tears.



Sumithra wields a tattoo machine expertly, inking an elaborate design with skill and precision.

It is one thing to achieve your career goal and quite another to convince people that the job is what you love to do – and you do it well – when the world perceives that some jobs are meant for men and some for women.

For the brave ones who dare to swim upstream, against the flow of society's perceived "norms", it takes a whole lot of perseverance to succeed.

Describing ballet as an art form that "strives for perfection", Timothy Ng, 24, decided to pursue ballet as a professional career at the age of 21. He recalls that he got a rude shock when friends from his all-boys school started calling him "gay" and "chao ah gua" (a Hokkien derogatory term meaning disgusting transvestite).

Being mocked at is only one problem.

In the case of Dinah Farhanah, 24, carpenter, there is also hostility within the working environment.

"They look down on us, and think that we are lowly educated ... [or] doing community service," shares Dinah, who is currently working at furniture store, Arthur Zaaro.

Her colleague Nurulhuda Izyan, 26, adds: "You can see it when they flinch. 'Can she do this? Can she even last for a week?'"

Sumithra Debi, 34, a veteran tattoo artist at Exotic Tattoos and Piercings, was as naive as a "little goose" when she first started. She recalls being surrounded by gang members and people who "swear a lot" when she was an apprentice at her uncle's shop at the age of 16.

She says: "It's no place for a girl who's just there for the sake of art. And at that time, there were no female tattoo artists at all."

She adds: "During my apprenticeship, everybody was waiting for me to mess

up and throw in the towel. Because yes, I'm just a girl. Everyone would be waiting for you to say that it's too difficult and then they will say that you're just not strong enough to handle it."

Yet, despite the frowns of disapproval, their passion for their professions remains constant.

"The passion for just drawing itself is what brought me all the way to this point – where I don't get tired of my job and I love it," Sumithra says fervently.

Similarly, the thought of giving up has never once crossed Timothy's mind, and the professional ballet dancer from Cheng Ballet Academy has been dancing almost every day for four years. "Despite having to stay up 'til 2 am to do work or give up on dinner dates with friends, I never felt the need to stop. I never felt tired of ballet. I just wanted to keep doing it. If

I don't, it feels funny."

Referring to Lego blocks as her "guilty pleasure", Dinah divulges that carpentry has been her dream profession since young. "To me, carpentry is a whole new level of Lego – you get to put together the wood pieces to make something that is different; something that people will enjoy using."

Realising the meaningfulness of the industry also helps to fuel their passion. For Sumithra, she believes that there is always something tattoo artists specialise in – whether it is "scratchy scratchy" works, beautiful massive back pieces, or perfectly executed small tattoos.

Specialising in small, delicate works and cover-ups, she says: "As long as the client is happy and thinks that the tattoo is amazing, that's all I need."

As for Timothy, he is drawn to the fact

that there is "always something to improve on" in ballet. "There could always be a nicer footline, a better turnout, or a higher jump. For the jumps and moves that involve more strength, the males do it better. For the delicate and graceful moves, the females do it better," he explains.

Regarding the career stereotypes based on gender, all three agree that the perception is still apparent.

Nurulhuda says: "Stereotypes are just a fraction of your whole job. If you are going to worry about stereotypes, they're everywhere, every time. So, if you really concentrate on your work, the stereotypes matter little to some degree. You can't just blanket yourself with the worry of the stereotypes. At the end of the day, the bigger goal is to make better furniture to improve our craft."

A teacher from Pathlight School, Justin Han, 30, further reaffirms: "We

are in an era where there are no longer much gender differences. Most of the roles are now intertwined. Each and every gender is recognised. We are looking at work, not the gender."

Adds Sumithra: "If you are as hardworking and gifted as the next person, people will recognise you. Sometimes I feel that this is nothing. It is all in the mind – are you already good enough or are you going to set a bar higher for yourself to work at?"

Confidently, she says: "At any time people say that I am just a female tattoo artist, I'll show them my portfolio and say that the work speaks for itself, you take it or leave it. It's as simple as that."

With people continuing to prove that one can be equally successful after challenging existing gender stereotypes, there is really nothing left to lose.

"You can't just blanket yourself with the worry of stereotypes... The bigger goal is to make better furniture to improve our craft."

– Nurulhuda Izyan

"They look down on us, and think that we are lowly educated... [or] doing community service."

– Dinah Farhanah

"I never felt tired of ballet. I just wanted to keep doing it. If I don't, it feels funny."

– Timothy Ng

"Everyone would be waiting for you to say that it's too difficult, and then they will say that you're just not strong enough to handle it."

– Sumithra Debi



Shirt Up, Singapore

Tired of red shirts for Singapore's jubilee celebration? CELINE SEAK suggests some uniquely Singaporean statement tees

The Singaporean identity may be expressed in red and white but there are now many more ways to show off quirky Singaporeanisms – in the evergreen T-shirt.

Sporting tongue-in-cheek one-liners, local statement tees have hit it off with Singaporeans for their creativity and unabashed humour. For instance, popular satire website SGAG saw overwhelming support for its set of mildly subversive T-shirts (shamelessly featuring some Hokkien expletives), which were all snagged merely minutes into their launch on Facebook.

With at least eight statement T-shirt companies springing up here in recent years, there certainly are interesting ways to proudly exhibit the Singaporean identity.

Desmond Chua, 27, co-founder of local T-shirt label, Statement, says: "If you look at all the different local T-shirt brands, you'll notice very

distinct voices and characters in each of them, like how there're many different groups of communities co-existing and thriving in Singapore."

As one of the labels that started the concept of self-expression through apparel, Statement drew inspiration from local lingo and signage. One of their shirts, Guilty Pleasure, is a satirical take on people who don't give up their seats on the MRT, playing on the MRT reserved seating sign.

Sought after by locals as souvenirs for their foreigner friends and by Singaporeans abroad, these T-shirts, priced at \$29.90, are "uniquely Singaporean". People have even posted pictures of themselves wearing the tees on social media.

"Who knows, an 'eh sia la' T-shirt might end up in our local museum in the future," chirps Desmond.

The newest label on the block, Wet Tee Shirt, founded last November, features designs inspired by local humour.

With playful collections like SG50 Shades of Grey and Colloquial Singapore, this cheeky label resonates with Singaporeans aged 18 to 40 with "a wicked sense of humour".

"Locally designed tees are not just your typical 'I love SG' touristy tees. They're designed with a story and a

"If you look at all the different local T-shirt brands, you'll notice very distinct voices and characters from each of them, like how there're many different groups of communities co-existing and thriving in Singapore."

- Desmond Chua

purpose behind [them]," explains Wet Tee Shirt owner Brandon Lee, 33.

Sure enough, Wet Tee Shirt's SG50 T-shirt line, priced at \$25, conveyed a meaningful notion in contrast to their usual lighthearted designs. Boldly emblazoned with the phrase '50 Majulah', Brandon said that the latter word was a reminder for Singaporeans to "push forward even though we have lost our founding father".

Temasek Clothings, the brain behind the viral local celebrity puns, like 'Pierre Cai Png' and 'The Sam Pillows', is showing off their pun prowess once again in the form of a T-shirt titled *Mari Kita*, which flaunts the words 'That's What Zubir Said'.

As the nation gears up for her 50th birthday, embracing these humorous statement tees could not be more apt. It's about time we wear our love for Singapore on our sleeves.

T-shirts can be purchased only online from statement.sg, wetteeshirt.co, and temasekclothings.com

Just For You!

Wet Tee Shirt is offering their shirts at \$22 (U.P. \$29.90) for all HYPE readers!

Just type in the code **HYPE22** upon checkout at wetteeshirt.co! Promo ends Sep 20, 2015.

PINNING DOWN FASHION

Fashion is a business like any other. JOLAINE CHUA weaves the story of setting up a label with local designers Angelina Lim and Sabrina Goh

People only see the glitz and glamour of being a fashion designer. Going for high-profile events, sitting in the front row at runway shows, and better yet, seeing their pieces modelled and sold. But much more happens behind the scenes.

Angelina Lim, 31, founder of the local label Ange Revolte, didn't want to be a fashion designer at first. She started out as an image consultant and was involved in fashion styling. Once she learnt the ropes, Lim decided that it was time she started her own business.

"I was once given a straight 'no' from a prospective partner just because they have never heard of my brand."

*- Angelina Lim
Founder of Ange Revolte*

Founded two years ago, Ange Revolte has crafted many milestones, such as participating in TMRW-Coterie Tradeshow in New York and the Blueprint 2014 Fashion Trade Show.

Lim says: "My apparels are not so feminine, but it aims to signify women nowadays, and bring a balance between different styles."

She never studied design, but learnt by immersing herself in the fashion design world and teaming up with existing designers.

For Sabrina Goh, 30, designer and founder of Elohim by Sabrina Goh, it all started out as a dream she had in secondary school, and she never thought that she would actually develop her own label.

Goh says: "I [enjoy] the process of creating clothes from a conceptual idea, hence I decided to start my label Elohim in 2009."

But with every success comes its challenges. Goh found that establishing her brand name was not easy, especially with the rise of many "fast fashion brands and blogshops that offer the market affordable clothing with compromised quality".

"Some Singaporean designers have been around for more than 20 years. However, few of us can name these brands," she says. Regardless, she was inspired by the "perseverance and belief in your own designs" in the local fashion scene.

"People look down on brands without a well-known name," explains Lim. "I was once given a straight 'no' from a prospective partner just because they have never heard of my brand."

Goh adds that Singaporeans often think that local designers are inferior and therefore would not go far.

"However, we should not be put down by such perceptions," says Goh. "Instead, we should make it a motivating factor to push us even further and to prove people wrong."

Lim says that those thinking of going into the fashion scene will need to think the idea through and make sure that they have the "time, effort, money and experience".

"It's not just about design, it's about being focused," she says.

"Persevere, persevere, persevere," Goh urges. "Resilience matters."



MORE WITH LESS

SEOW YUN RONG
and MUHAMMAD
MUHAIMIN SUZAINI
explore the beauty of
minimalistic fashion for
women and men

Metallic Angular Jewellery

You may have heard of and seen the trend of 'bling' statement jewellery, but for minimalists, it is the opposite. Instead of loud colours and sparkling beads, jewellery is reduced to metallic shapes and lines. The subtle and chic angles bring out the essence of the look when paired with minimalist clothing.

"Looking sloppy is definitely not fashion because there are alternatives to replacing, let's say, flip-flops with a nice pair of sandals."

- Shane Tan

Minimalism has become more prevalent in the local fashion scene and has made its way into many wardrobes, but what exactly is the minimalistic fashion style?

Simple, stripped down, elegant and presentable – these are the essential elements of minimalistic fashion.

Like other minimalist concepts, "less is more" is the phrase minimalists hold dear. Unlike the typical Singaporean way of casually slipping on clothes, minimalistic fashion is the deliberate piecing together of basic apparels, where muted colours bring out a smart, classy look.

Clayton Theodore Lau, 22, a junior stylist and former fashion writer for Cosmone, explains: "Minimalism is all about the structure and the usage of colours. Commonly seen are very fixed structures [and] colours used would

Loosely Structured Apparel

'Loosely structured' may sound oxymoronic, but it's what brings out that minimalist look. These clothes are structured, boxy and slightly loose on the body. Pieces such as an oversized button-up basic top and three-quarter pants form a loose silhouette that has an established structure, creating an effortlessly classy look.

Strapped Open-toe Sandals

Strapped open-toe sandals present ladies with an airier and more comfortable option. At first glance, these sandals may look unappealing, but when paired with a little black dress or three-quarter pants, the look comes together. The lines and simplicity of the sandals accentuate the angles in a minimalistic outfit, thus completing the look.

be in the spectrum of black, white and grey."

"Minimalistic fashion can be either keeping accessories to a minimum or wearing monochromatic colours. Looking sloppy is definitely not fashion because there are alternatives to replacing, let's say, flip-flops with a nice pair of sandals," says Shane Tan, a fashion blogger who runs fashion blog, My Mom Hates Fashion.

It is about going back to the basics. For the women, Theodore Woon, 26, co-founder of minimalist movement, MinimalustSG, said it could be "a little black dress with intricate detailing somewhere on the garment... You can play with lines and silhouettes as well but there cannot be loud prints and all that".

For men, a good start is a simple, black suit.

Fixed Structures

Contrary to ladies' minimalist fashion, finding and accentuating your body's silhouette is important. Since men's bodies are usually more angular, catching these angles and showing them off is essential to minimalism. The structure, texture and silhouette of the apparels should compliment your body type.

Monochromatic Accessories

Out with the complicated and loud wristbands or watches. Remember: simplicity is key. Instead of loud colours, accessories are reduced to geometric shapes and lines that are, once again, monochromatic or metallic. The lines and angles bring out the essence of minimalism.

Dress Shoes

Oxfords, blüchers, or monk shoes – it doesn't matter what kind. If your shoes sport a slim, not painfully skinny, contour and a slightly rounded toe, it's perfect for minimalism. The simple nature of these types of shoes makes them easier to pair with apparels of any texture or silhouette.

Clayton shares: "A black blazer, pants, white shirt, [and] black oxfords... These four add up to give the perfect minimalist look for every guy out there."

The combination of clean lines and silhouettes create versatile and timeless outfits, which can be dressed up or down for various occasions – from school to work, or from brunch to a night at the theatre. You'll be able to feel the lightness of the clothes, which sport clean structures and reduce ornamentation to the bone, allowing you to pull off that low-key yet fresh look.

However, as deceptively straightforward as minimalism may sound, the concept behind it is more complex.

Leong Kai Jun, 20, a student and avid minimalism enthusiast, explains: "Minimalist fashion revolves around

the structure and fabric of the clothing, which, when put together, will create an amazing outfit. God is in the details."

Indeed, the attention to detail sets minimalism apart. Careful planning of the outfit is essential. Kai Jun added that the silhouette of the outfit should "compliment the figure of the wearer".

At the same time, the texture of the piece of clothing must also be taken into consideration. "Each piece of clothing can easily make or break the outfit," says Kai Jun.

While some fashion designers say minimalism limits the range of prints and colours in fashion design, they tend to forget that that is the beauty of minimalism.

Don't be afraid to try this style because you can still say more with less.

Photos courtesy of Raphael Ong



RETROGRADE

Back when you were little, you would open up your parents' tall wardrobe and explore a dazzling new world of clothing and fashion. You start putting on the clothes, feeling satisfied no matter how oversized they may be, begging your parents to let you wear them when you're older. Finally, when you're all grown up, you look at the racks of clothing and realise that with some changes here and there, the fashion cycle restarts where the old becomes new again.

Looking at the iconic styles, fabrics and prints of 1960s Singapore, there are so many ways to reimagine them in a modern setting. Fusing the loud, cluttered, and colourful with the muted, humble and doe-eyed, we create a meaningful collision of colours, layers and proportions that showcases the vibrancy and diversity of Singapore.

MIKI WEARS

DRESS: ACTUALLY, \$79
BRACELET: FLESH IMP, \$23
SHOES: MODEL'S OWN

NAAVIN WEARS

TOP: FLESH IMP, \$39
BOTTOM: CELIO, \$74.90
BRACELET: GNOME & BOW, \$88
SOCKS: MODEL'S OWN
SHOES: MODEL'S OWN

JANELLA WEARS

TOP: ACTUALLY, \$89
BOTTOM: OCCASIONAL GLIMPSES OF BEAUTY, \$410
SHOES: MODEL'S OWN



MIKI WEARS
 DRESS: HUSH PUPPIES
 APPAREL, \$89.90
 SHADES: MODEL'S OWN
 SHOES: MODEL'S OWN



NAAVIN WEARS
 TOP: SIFR, \$39
 BOTTOM: FLESH IMP, \$49
 OUTERWEAR: SIFR, \$149
 BRACELETS (MODEL'S RIGHT): GNOME & BOW, \$45, \$88
 BRACELETS (MODEL'S LEFT): MODEL'S OWN
 SHOES: ACTUALLY, \$245



JANELLA WEARS
 TOP: FEMMEX, \$19
 BOTTOM: FEMMEX, \$27
 OUTERWEAR: HUSH PUPPIES
 APPARELS, \$72.90
 SHADES: FLESH IMP, \$25
 SHOES: ACTUALLY, \$245

MIKI WEARS
 TOP: FLESH IMP, \$39
 BOTTOM: FEMMEX, \$19

JANELLA WEARS
 TOP: FEMMEX, \$29
 OVERALL: FEMMEX, \$27



NAAVIN WEARS
 TOP: FLESH IMP, \$39
 BOTTOM: FLESH IMP, \$39
 BRACELET (MODEL'S LEFT):
 GNOME & BOW, \$88
 BRACELET (MODEL'S LEFT):
 MODEL'S OWN
 SOCKS: MODEL'S OWN
 SHOES: MODEL'S OWN

MIKI WEARS
 DRESS: HUSH PUPPIES
 APPAREL, \$89.90
 GLASSES: MODEL'S OWN
 SHOES: MODEL'S OWN





JANELLA WEARS
 TOP: ACTUALLY, \$59
 BOTTOM: ACTUALLY, \$109
 GLASSES: FLESH IMP, \$25
 BAG: GNOME & BOW, \$375

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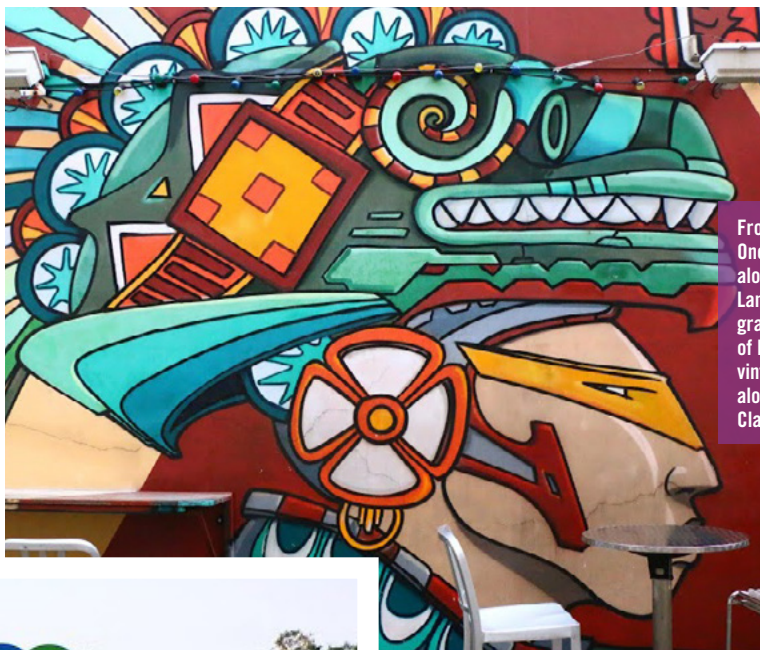
NAAVIN WEARS

TOP: SIFR, \$39
 BOTTOM: FLESH IMP, \$49
 OUTERWEAR: FLESH IMP, \$39
 BRACELET (MODEL'S LEFT): GNOME & BOW, \$88
 BRACELET (MODEL'S RIGHT): MODEL'S OWN
 GLASSES: FLESH IMP, \$25



TRIP DOWN SINGAPORE LANE

SAMANTHA CHOONG explores the history behind the usually frequented places of our Little Red Dot



From top to bottom: One of the shophouses along the famous Haji Lane; The #ootd-worthy graffiti wall at the end of Haji Lane; Colourful vintage shophouses along the banks of Clarke Quay.



Clarke Quay wasn't always a haven for late night activities. It was once a dock where cargo shipments made their stops. When it reopened in 1993, it was dubbed a family-friendly attraction

as the banks of Singapore River were lined with many restaurants and shops. Later on, it received a new look from British architects, becoming the Clarke Quay many know and love today.

Another popular haunt today that's steeped with history is Bugis Street. The crowded shopping centre has always been a magnet for tourists. The tourist attraction was once the "parade of transvestites" and the haunt of gangsters and commens.

"Heritage is a form of remembrance," says Jan, 22, another NTU student. "It allows the younger generations to have something to look back on and remember the past."

Walk Through History

Looking to explore our island but not sure where to start? Here are some guided tours you can sign up for:

Archiwalks: Uncover hidden stories behind the buildings in Singapore's neighbourhoods. *Free, registration required.* archiwalks.com

Food Tours: Let your stomach lead! Appreciate our country through the food. \$75, *registration required.* foodtoursingapore.com

Singapore Walks: Walking tours around the culture-laden neighbourhoods. From \$35, *registration required.* journeys.com.sg

When travelling abroad, many will notice the architecture of the buildings in the city and instantly pull out their phone or camera to take a quick snapshot of the facade. But how many of us would do the same on our own little island?

This being Singapore's 50th birthday, take a day to explore and delve into our rich heritage.

There's history to be found everywhere, even in the places we visit frequently. For example, Haji Lane was once an empty street of shophouses, built before World War II. Now, it has been transformed into a row of quirky little shops. The architecture has stayed the same, keeping the first-generation design from the late 1800s.

Even though there's been a lot of change over the years, it doesn't mean that the past can't be revisited and appreciated. Cherrine Ong, 20, a Nanyang Technological University (NTU) student, says: "I notice interesting buildings [sometimes] but never really think of the history."

Photos courtesy of Samantha Choong

HOLIDAY AT HOME

Taking a break at home is becoming a trend, especially when there are so many hotels with a unique history of their own, as MELANIE HENG finds out

While the white sandy beaches of Krabi entice, and the mouth-watering food in Bangkok continue to exude their allure, there is still much to enjoy right here if you want a fuss-free holiday. Some places in Singapore promise to pack the same punch and bring you "away".

"I choose staycations because they serve as a platform to spend quality time and bond with friends and loved ones without having to be away from home."

- Eugene Loh

Singaporeans are no strangers to staycations, the trend being a fairly recent one. "It's a really good way to take a break from the hectic daily lifestyle here in Singapore," says Eugene Loh, 21, a regular in the Republic of Singapore Air Force.

"I choose staycations because they serve as a platform to spend quality time and bond with friends and loved ones without having to be away from home," says Eugene.

Andrea Tan, 19, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic student, said that she would recommend staycations for youths as it's a "cheaper alternative" and is "rejuvenating".

Eugene added that a short trip locally requires "less hassle" and is "much easier to plan".

There are a few hotels and resorts that can give you the feeling of being "away from home", where you can enjoy a break from the hustle and bustle, without burning a huge hole in your pocket.

Photos courtesy of Siloso Beach Resort, Sentosa, Hotel 1929, and Shophouse Hostel Empty road by Ryan McGuire

Siloso Beach Resort, Sentosa

This retreat is just a few steps away from Sentosa's Siloso Beach, where you'd be able to sip a chilled beverage while watching the world pass you by.

This eco resort has a rustic and serene feel to it, and is surrounded by lush foliage, with a spring water landscape as its attraction. Offering a comfortable stay, you'll be able to get a retreat and enjoy some respite from work and school.

Price: from \$190/night
Address: 51 Imbiah Walk, Sentosa



Hotel 1929

Singapore's first boutique hotel opened in 2003, promising to bring back nostalgia and encouraging a learning experience for old and young alike.

"Keong Saik Street, where the hotel is located, was a daring move as it used to be a red light district. Both local and overseas guests now enjoy this rich culture and history. The street is bustling with activities – a nice juxtaposition of old and new," says Ms Lyndel Joyce, from the Communications and Marketing team of Hotel 1929.

The hotel features a selection of unique classic chairs from the owner's private collection, and highlights, including a Joseph Hoffman Kubus sofa designed in 1910, and Arne Jacobsen's Swan and Egg chairs.

Price: from \$150/night
Address: 50 Keong Saik Road



Shophouse: The Social Hostel

It's the first indie-themed boutique hostel in Singapore. This beautiful hostel along Arab Street has a good mix of culture, fashion, food and the arts.

Its Arabic-themed rooms feature carpets and a small lounge for you to relax. Take advantage of the discounted local tours for guests and you'll be able to unleash the inner "tourist" within you, and perhaps discover places in Singapore that you've been too busy to visit!

Price: from \$30/night for a 6-bed mixed dorm
Address: 48 Arab Street



Living Out the Unusual

Trust Singaporeans to ditch five-star hotels for that unique – perhaps once in a lifetime – experience in salt hotels, cave houses and treetop houses. VANESSA KANG finds out more

With Singaporeans travelling overseas whenever the occasion presents itself – either the annual vacation or a long weekend break – travel agents are hard pressed to seek out the most unusual and bizarre destinations.

Thanks to the Internet, information is literally at your fingertips. Anything that spells “unique” or simply “new” is a carrot for the travel-hungry Singaporean.

HYPE looks at some options that may be worth a try:

Treetop House in South Africa

Africa brings to mind wild animals and deserts. Best known for its numerous safaris and vast diversity of endangered species from Riverine Rabbits to Grevy's Zebra, there's no better way to meet these animals than to live amongst them.

Miss Joyce Koh, 47, stayed in a treetop house while in South Africa and compared the whole experience to living in what she calls Jurassic Park. The lush vegetation makes for a “very unspoiled and wild” backdrop.

She was advised not to venture out at night but was told that if she really needed to leave the house, a guard armed with a rifle would escort her.

The brief stay in the treetop house really enabled Miss Koh to be one with nature. She adds: “I’ve never come this close to wildlife.” She explains how she had to keep her windows locked at all times to prevent monkeys from entering and eating the food in her room.

Staying in a treetop house is something Miss Koh will never forget as she reminisces: “It’s very different because you wake up [to] birds chirping and the air is very fresh in the morning. It’s the air...the sound of nature and frankly the smell of nature.” All that made the trip the most memorable.

Ravineside Lodge

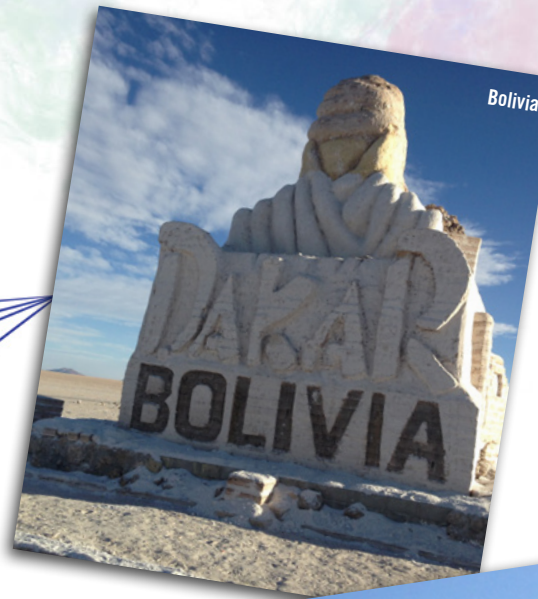
While this may be the costliest among the types of unusual accommodation, it is also perhaps the closest to that of a hotel. Equipped with full-fledged amenities such as air-conditioned rooms and private toilets, it will set you back by some 1760 ZAR (S\$191) for a twin room.



Hostal De Sal Los Lipez



Ravineside Lodge



Bolivia

Hostal De Sal Los Lipez

A hostel accommodating up to three people in one room is ideal for larger groups. It costs B\$35 per night for each person, which is about S\$48, depending on the exchange rate. If you intend to use hot water to shower, be prepared to fork out an additional USD\$5 to USD\$10 (S\$7 to S\$14).

“It’s very different because you wake up [to] birds chirping and the air is very fresh in the morning. It’s the air...the sound of nature and frankly the smell of nature.”

– Miss Joyce Koh



Santorini, Greece

Salt Hotel in Bolivia

One cannot mention Bolivia without bringing up the famous salt flats, Salar de Uyuni, located in south-west Bolivia. Dubbed the ‘World’s Largest Natural Mirror’, and being 3,600 metres above sea level, “all you see are either flat salt landscapes or [you can be] in the mountainous regions [and] everything just looks flat”, says travel buff Hendric Poh.

It only takes a little water and sunlight to capture that magnificent reflection Bolivia is famous for. Mr Poh says: “I felt like I was on another planet because the scenery was really out of the world.”

Not only is the panorama breathtaking, the accommodation is unique too! Mr Poh reveals that the salt hotel he stayed in was entirely made up of salt, including “the walls and the bed frame[s]”.

Mr Poh, who says that the place is completely safe, explains: “The blocks are really thick and they’re really solid. In fact...they’re even rougher than granite walls. He cheekily adds: “Of course we licked the walls just for a taste and it was a [little] salty.”

Cave in Santorini, Greece

While Greece may be in depression, its beauty definitely isn’t. Reputed for its view of the Aegean Sea, Santorini is the perfect place for couples or anyone looking to get away from the city.

While staying in a hotel is luxurious, living in a cave house, carved out of the cliff face, is an experience of a lifetime. Ong Tze Xiang, 19, decided to stay in a cave house as “hotels are more or less the same wherever you go”. He adds: “It has a much nicer view as compared to a hotel as the Aegean Sea was right outside our house.”

To Tze Xiang the cave house felt like home. He says: “I felt that it was very cozy because the place was very small and it was very comfortable. Everything was laid out...[including] a stocked up kitchen.”

Currency stated in the article was accurate at the point of production.

Cave Hunting

It’s easier and cheaper to find caves to stay in through Airbnb. One person you can look out for would be Elvira in Sensyo Home, who lives in Thira, South Aegean, Greece. You can rent the entire cave for two at S\$148 per night. Although rather pricey, there have been many rave reviews about her hospitality.

Another tip for big groups of travellers is to rent a car to travel round the island as the public bus only comes once every half hour. Furthermore, buses stop a distance away from the different villages, so renting a car would save time and effort.

Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia



Photos courtesy of Ong Tze Xiang, Joyce Koh, and Hendric Poh

midea

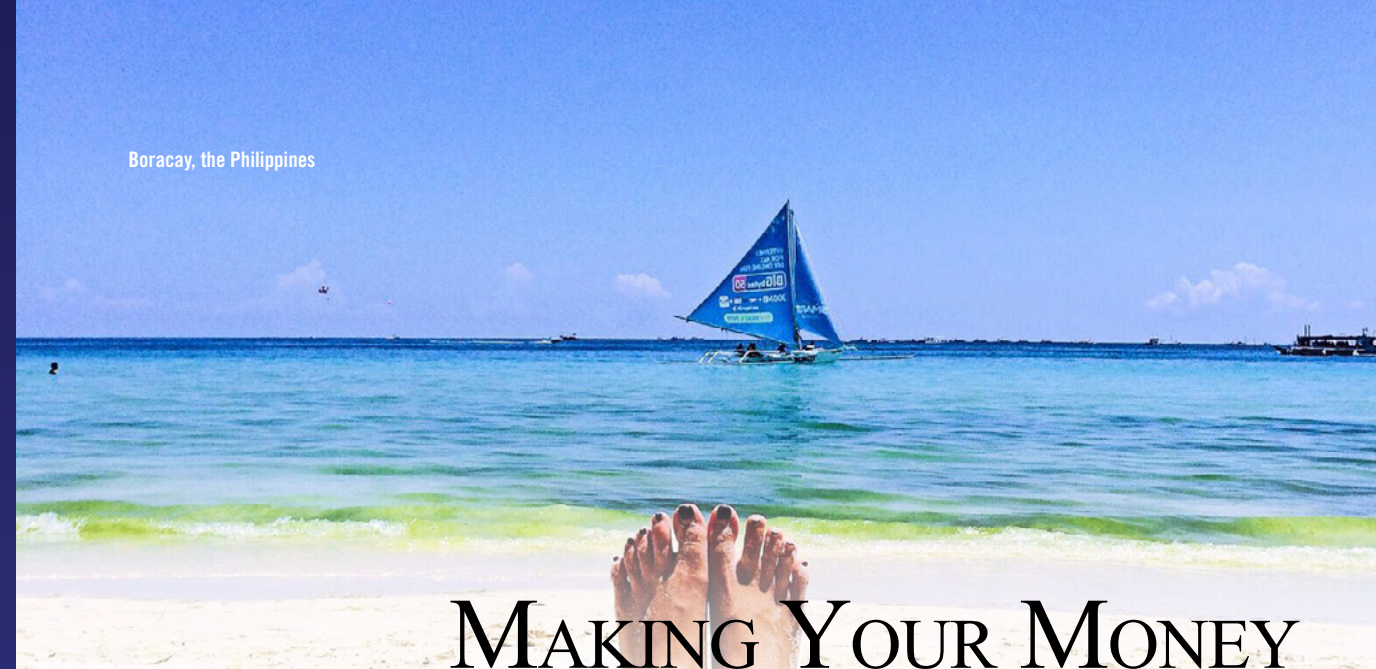


Singapore's first youth-led media conglomerate, midea, was established in 2009, at the School of Film & Media Studies in Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Through six media units (Trimedia Publishing, CTV Productions, Radio Heatwave, Inspire Design, Klix Photography and midea marcomm), we offer editorial, media production, creative and campaign management services as well as media platforms for advertising placements.

For more information visit us at fmsmidea.com

Boracay, the Philippines



MAKING YOUR MONEY GO THE DISTANCE

SANDRA YIM finds out that you don't have to miss out on memorable moments just because you're travelling on a budget

Every year, more youths are going on post-graduation trips – after completing their polytechnic or university education – and this has almost become an urban tradition.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), youth tourism is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing markets in the global tourism industry. To put that into perspective, in just five years, there will be an average of 300 million international youth trips a year.

"We are definitely noticing a steep upward trend in youth travelling. In fact, 90 per cent of our customers are youths," says Ms Dora Thang, marketing executive of Start The Adventure (STA) travel.

Being fresh graduates means that these youths are on a pretty tight budget. STA understands the woes of travelling on a student budget and their packages are specially catered to youths.

HYPE suggests places to explore on three different budgets and all these prices are inclusive of airfare!

\$500: 6 Days in Cambodia

Surrounded by traditional architectural gems are the budget-friendly cities

of Siem Reap and Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Immerse yourself in Cambodia's authentic culture by visiting the Grand Palace in Phnom Penh or the world-famous Angkor Wat in Siem Reap. Work your way through their bustling market place or simply take a cruise down the Mekong and Tonle Sap Rivers. With lodging costing as little as \$55 per night on TripAdvisor's travel guide, Phnom Penh makes a unique and affordable getaway destination.

If you're looking to do something more meaningful with your time, you could also do some charity work while you're there.

Jocelin Poh, 18, backpacked and spent six days with \$500 in Cambodia volunteering at an orphanage. Staying at a guesthouse, known as Trailblazers Cambodia which is dedicated to housing volunteer groups, Jocelin made her time worthwhile through giving back to the less fortunate children in Phnom Penh by teaching them English.

"I believe there's more to travelling than just shopping, eating and going to the usual touristy places. Volunteering in Phnom Penh is the least I can do to help the less fortunate there and I'm always reminded of how simple happiness can be," shares Jocelin.

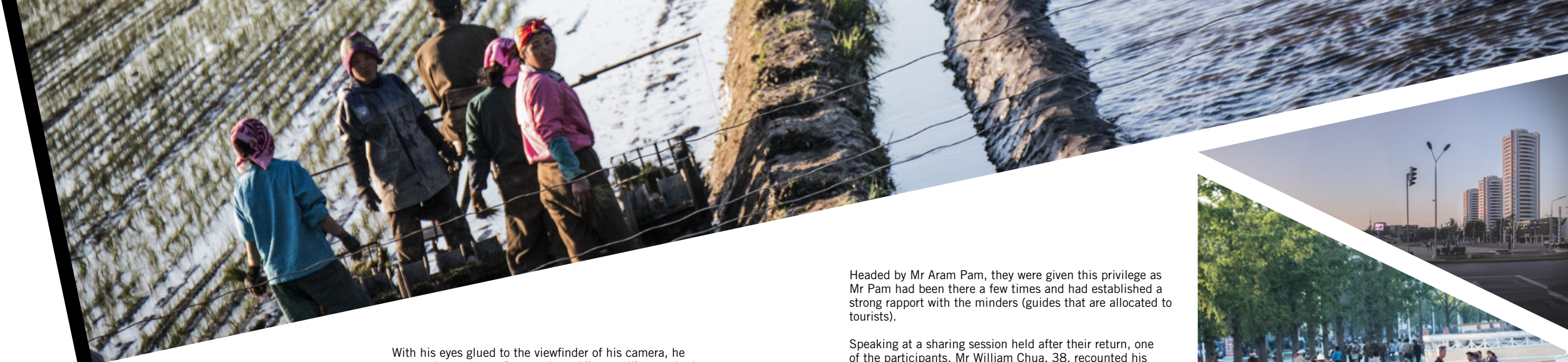
\$1,000: 5 Days in the Philippines

Move aside Bali! If you're looking for a more unique place to enjoy the sun, sand and sea then Boracay in the Philippines may be the place for you. Awarded "World's Best Island" in 2012 by Travel + Leisure, Boracay is becoming a popular destination for youths today. Offering a whole list of adrenaline pumping activities like cliff diving, parasailing and jet skiing alongside crystal-clear blue waters, pristine white sand and breathtaking sunsets, Boracay is the epitome of a beach vacation.

Natalie Choong, 19, who recently went on her graduation trip to Boracay, spent \$900 for her five-day getaway. The second-year National University of Singapore student maximised her schedule with her friends with tons of water sports, island hopping and even attempted a pub-crawl.

\$1,500: 8 Days in Adelaide

While many youths would head for Melbourne, Australia, you can head south to Adelaide. STA has an eight-day package that includes lodging, eight meals, a hike at Kings Canyon and even biking, rafting or kayaking for about \$1,147.



North to Hermit Kingdom

MUHAMMAD MUHAIMIN SUZAINI
experiences North Korea through the eyes
of Singaporeans

With his eyes glued to the viewfinder of his camera, he snapped one photo after another while travelling on the bus. The roads were empty and the streets were spanking clean. Outside, the view of vast paddy fields greeted him. They were littered with tiny specks of labourers harvesting away.

Still, he refused to succumb to whatever talk he had heard. His goal was clear: to give any country that he visits another perspective. Furthermore, it was a rare opportunity for an outsider to explore a country known to the world as the hermit kingdom.

“I chose to go in with an open mind. It’s a very intriguing place, full of mysteries and secrets,” says Mr Richard Yew. He was one of the lucky few given the opportunity to go to North Korea.

For seven days, he, along with 15 other Singaporeans, embarked on a journey to capture and uncover what North Korea is truly like. The photography trip, held on the last week of May this year, was the first of its kind organised by an Asian country. The trip was held by ClubSnap (an online community where shutterbugs gather) to allow Singaporeans to see firsthand what the situation is like in North Korea.

Headed by Mr Aram Pam, they were given this privilege as Mr Pam had been there a few times and had established a strong rapport with the minders (guides that are allocated to tourists).

Speaking at a sharing session held after their return, one of the participants, Mr William Chua, 38, recounted his experience of being cut off from the outside world. “The internet was down for the whole time we were there. I wasn’t used to it as I’m always on my phone, checking mail. But it’s not too bad,” says Mr Chua.

Indeed, power outages and limited connection to the rest of the world are common in a country where economic sanctions are enforced and isolation is key to self-sustenance – one of the reasons “the locals are very hardworking”, observes Mr Yew.

But one thing they can definitely be proud of is their craftsmanship. If you ever need a craftsman that specialises in poster designs, North Korea is one of the best in the business. Each and every propaganda poster is painstakingly drawn up.

Mr Kuan Yee Han, 30, recalls how the posters caught his eyes and how they were “the best posters hands down”.

The participants were also amused by the similarities between Singapore and North Korea. Imagine walking through Queenstown’s old estates – that is how Pyongyang’s (the capital of North Korea) apartments looked like.

Ms Brooke Thio, 38, one of the few female participants, wrote on her website fuguetastic.com: “From what I could tell, some of these apartments had front windows backed by yet another set of windowed walls, forming a sort of narrow enclosed balcony in between.”

One prominent feature throughout the entire trip was the prevalence of the military. The sheer number of military personnel seen almost everywhere boggles the mind. With a few nods around, the participants agreed with Mr Yew that they had never been so intimidated by the sight of so many military personnel. They were deployed almost everywhere – fields, roads and subways to name a few places.

The highlight of the trip, however, was interacting with the locals. Most of them were pretty welcoming, but rather quiet most of the time. “They were very reserved and don’t talk a lot but they were friendly,” says Mr Yew.

With a new airport in Pyongyang that just opened, the participants agree that North Korea is in the midst of a transition, signifying its shift towards opening up to foreigners.



Tips for the Trip!

Visa Matters

Contrary to popular belief, it is not that hard to enter North Korea. Singaporeans have to apply for a visa beforehand. Enclose your details to an accredited tour agency and let them do the paperwork for you.

Electronic Gadgets

Upon reaching Pyongyang, you will need to surrender phones and electronic devices that transmit GPS signals to the authorities. Cameras are allowed but lenses have to be restricted to a zoom range of less than 200 mm.

Currency

Only locals are allowed to pay in Won. Foreigners and tourists can pay either by US dollar or Renminbi (the official Chinese currency), though it is recommended for Singaporeans to pay with Renminbi as they are generally able to garner higher rates.



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PASSING THE TEST OF TIME

Hawkers have come and gone. But some food families have stayed strong despite the uncertain future. MELANIE HENG, DANIAL GOFAR and MUHAMMAD MUHAIMIN SUZAINI talk to three people who have boldly carried on the family business

They and their family members have spent more than three decades continuing their family businesses. And although they have not made inroads into the international arena like some Singapore brands, they have something to be proud of, that many Singaporeans can be proud of – good food that is simple, authentic and that truly comes from the heart.

Keeping the Family Recipe Alive

Mr Talib Bin Selamat meticulously checks the equipment and ingredients needed for the day. Assured that he has everything he needs, he places his old, trusty pot on the stove. One by one, he begins to add the ingredients needed for the recipes passed down to him from his parents. He peeks outside of his stall. All is quiet and empty. Time check: 6 am.

This has been the norm for 35 years for Mr Talib, 64, owner of Selamat Muslim Food located at Tekka Market. The ever-cheerful hawker is usually the first to reach Tekka Market at dawn. He prepares his signature *mee rebus* gravy and other dishes, fresh daily.

“I have two children... I have asked them initially to take over this stall but they don’t want to.”

- Mr Talib Bin Selamat

Where to Go For Your Traditional Fix

Tong Heng Confectionery

285 South Bridge Rd
Tel: 6223 3649
Opening Hours: Daily,
9 am - 10 pm
Price: \$1.50 per egg tart

Anna Dosai

#01-244, Tekka Centre,
665 Buffalo Road
Opening Hours: Daily, 8 am to 6 pm,
Closed on Mondays
Price Range: \$3.50 - \$8

Selamat Muslim Food

#01-227, Tekka Centre,
665 Buffalo Road
Tel: 9769 3410
Opening Hours: Daily, 8 am to 6 pm,
Closed on Mondays
Price Range: \$3 - \$5



“People my age are only keen to take on the business, but are not interested in the hands-on. You need to know what to do, learn all the skills and start from scratch.”

- Ms Ana Fong

“Our *mee rebus* stall started off at Jalan Dusun. When I was still in school, whenever I had free time, I would help my father,” he gleefully recalls.

He experienced the pains of having to make ends meet by following his father around. Back in the 1950s, his father cycled a trishaw, piled high with food and cooking equipment, from their house in Jalan Dusun to Cairnhill Road.

“Around 1:30 pm, I’ll start helping out. It helps [that] my father also bought me a bicycle. I’ll meet him (midway) at Anthony Road, off Cairnhill Road. I followed him all the way until Orchard Road,” adds Mr Talib.

Similarly, Mr Ravichandram, owner of Anna Dosai, can attest to this hardship. With sweat dripping down his face, Mr Ravi ensures that the filling of his *masala dosai* is always cooked to perfection. His customers eagerly wait as he scoops a ladle of batter and pours it onto the hot stove.

Mr Ravi was 22 when he took over his uncle’s small business – a stall selling *dosai* at Tekka Market. Now 50, he

says he’s proud to take over one of the pioneer stalls in the market.

In 1987, Mr Ravi’s uncle wanted to go back to India and was looking for a successor to his business. Mr Ravi says: “My father convinced him to let me take over the stall since he couldn’t find anyone.”

“Many know how to make a *dosai*, but it actually takes decent skills, dedication and passion to make the perfect one. It’s an art,” says Mr Ravi, who has been manning the stall with his brother, Mr Selvam, for the past 28 years.

Tong Heng is another traditional food icon like Selamat Muslim Stall and Anna Dosai. While Tong Heng might not be a name that youths are familiar with, it’s one that is synonymous with traditional pastries – especially its egg tarts – among older Singaporeans.

You might think that such an iconic egg tart would comprise complex ingredients and a tedious recipe. Yet, this pastry is made with the simplest and most basic ingredients: flour, lard, water and sugar for the crust; and egg, water and sugar for the custard. Tong Heng’s traditional Chinese pastries

remain the same throughout the generations, such that no dairy product is included in any of their pastries.

Ana Fong, who’s in her 30s, is the niece of Tong Heng’s third-generation owners, sisters Constance and Rebecca Fong. She handles several things within the business, including production, retail, human resource and media relations.

She carefully demonstrates the making of their egg tart, kneading the dough into perfect diamond moulds, a shape that has been around since the shop’s inception in the 1920s. As she pours the rich yellow liquid into the distinctive moulds, one’s tummy would definitely be left rumbling in anticipation of the freshly baked egg tarts.

Looking Towards an Uncertain Future

Unfortunately, the interest in being a hawker and carrying on family traditions among the younger generation of Singaporeans is not apparent. Hope for the continuation of these pioneer hawker stalls in Singapore may now be on the line as the younger generation prefers to focus on other career options.



“You can’t possibly be eating at cafés everyday. You will go broke! I know they will grow up and come back to the market to buy good, reliable, cheap food. We will stay here as long as the government gives us a space to run it.”

- Mr Ravichandram (Right)

Mr Talib’s smile turns into a taut sombreness as he says: “I have two children. Both aren’t interested in this. I have asked them initially to take over this stall but they don’t want to.”

His daughter works in a bank and his son is a lecturer at Temasek Polytechnic. To add on to his list of worries, his sister is also not interested in this business.

Mr Ravi is also worried about this trend. Even though his *dosais* are extremely popular among the older generation, it doesn’t get much hype from youths. “With cafés trending around all parts of Singapore, very rarely would you see a group of teenagers having lunch here,” says Mr Ravi.

He adds that the only way teenagers would patronise his stall is when they are with their parents.

Ms Fong also shares Mr Ravi’s sentiments. She says: “People my age are only keen to take on the business, but are not interested in the hands-on. You need to know what to do, learn all the skills and start from scratch.”

She adds: “We [Tong Heng] focus on

take away because the turnover is higher. We don’t focus on café-goers as the concept is different.”

Indeed, her reference to cafés resonates well with Mr Ravi’s views. With new cafés selling pastries and cakes sprouting out every now and then, one may doubt the life span of traditional confectionaries like Tong Heng.

Still There is Hope

All hope is not lost as there are a handful of young hawkers who took on the challenge and have continued the legacy of their parents. Mr Habib Mohamed, 27, owner of Habib’s Rojak, took over his hawker stall as he felt the need to “continue the family’s tradition”.

He adds: “If I don’t continue this thing [the hawker stall], it’ll be gone forever.” None of his siblings wanted to continue their father’s legacy as they have built careers for themselves. His older brother is working as a civil servant and his younger sister is a housewife.

The second-generation *rojak* seller wishes that more young people will take on the challenge of running

a hawker stall. Only then will they understand and appreciate the difficulties that hawkers face.

Following rumours that Tekka Market has been bought over by a company and will be closing down, a downcast look crosses Mr Talib’s face as he says: “I’ll still try to convince my kids to continue this. [It’s] up to them to make the decision.”

Mr Ravi hopes to pass on this stall to the next generation of his family. He is optimistic that his stall will remain alive, as he knows how cheap these foods are as compared to restaurants and cafés.

“You can’t possibly be eating at cafés everyday. You will go broke! I know they will grow up and come back to the market to buy good, reliable, cheap food,” says Mr Ravi poignantly. “We will stay here as long as the government gives us a space to run it.”

Despite taking over the established brand, Ms Ana is unsure of the future of it, as she has never thought so far ahead. She adds: “I would like Tong Heng to be a heartland brand, and [I hope] that tourists will regard this shop as the go-to for traditional pastries.”



Something New’s A-Brewing

MIRABELLE KOH looks at cafés that give you more than just a cuppa

New concept cafés bring you much more than a good roast and delectable sweet treats. These new places have one thing in common – they give you not just a pleasant dining experience but also retail therapy and baking lessons.

Retail Therapy for Brunch

We all appreciate a really good brunch at a pretty place, but add a fashion boutique just a few steps away from your table and your meal becomes a brand new experience.

The founders of Boufé Boutique Café started up their space together with Ohvola, a blogshop business turned international online women’s label that has been in the fashion industry for eight years.

“Café hopping is a trend that won’t be going away with the growing foodie community, and we thought that a collaboration with Ohvola would double up the treat as majority of these café-hoppers are girls,” says Sean Lee, 26, co-founder of Boufé.

Sean adds: “The ladies shop while waiting for their food, and the men don’t have to stand around [waiting]. Instead, they can just sit back with a cuppa or a book. Isn’t that the best of both worlds for everyone?”

308 Tanglin Road
Tel: 6734 7656
Opening Hours: Tue to Sun, 9 am - 10 pm

Home Away from Home

If afternoon tea, cute trinkets and vintage-inspired houseware are your thing, Kki is definitely your perfect choice. Known for its mousse, Kki features novelty Japanese-inspired French cakes and sweets.

“All this while, we had in mind to introduce other lines of products as we grow. So, when we relocated to the School of the Arts [from Ann Siang Hill], we saw the opportunity to start Kki Home with the bigger space, and products [sold] in the café can be part of Kki experience,” says Delphine Liao, 38, co-founder of Kki.

The shop’s interior décor was decided by the husband and wife team that started Kki. Motivated by the belief that you should “do what you love, and love what you do”, the couple furnished the shop with warm

woods, as they want their staff to “feel at home instead of at work”.

School of the Arts, 1 Zubir Said Drive
Tel: 6225 6650
Opening Hours: Tue to Sun, Noon - 8 pm

DIY Cakes and Bakes

At Baker’s Brew Studio, you’re the chef in charge of your cakes and bakes. Or you could just munch on the cakes that come fresh from the oven.

“I think it’s the perfect get-together session with your pals, whether it’s baking or just having a cake. They also have an open-air kitchen concept which is pretty interesting,” says Brandon Tan, 19, a frequent patron of Baker’s Brew.

Whether it’s the classic Earl Grey Lavender or a cheery funfetti cake for a birthday bash, the founders have the recipes and equipment ready. For those up for a challenge, try the *Ondeh Ondeh* cheesecake.

6 Jalan Tampang
Tel: 9069 5096
Opening Hours: Mon to Sat, 11:30 am - 10 pm



Photos courtesy of Mirabelle Koh, Ohvola, and Kki Home

WHEN YOU TIAO MEETS SATAY

Laksa, mao shan wang, and gula melaka have given a whole new meaning and flavor to typical Western fare such as sandwiches and waffles. CELINE SEAK picks out the choicest

With the rich tapestry of cultures in Singapore, our food-scape embraces a kaleidoscope of cuisines, one that combines quintessential local flavours with modern approaches – known as Modern Singaporean cuisine, or “Mod-Sin”.

While traditionalists may frown upon this culinary concept, the fusion of local flavours into Western dishes has indeed spiced up Singapore’s food scene with unconventional creations.

Lawyer-turned-chef Willin

Low of restaurant Wild Rocket pioneered Mod-Sin. He was inspired by local flavours, hawker dishes and food that he grew up with.

Journalists and guidebooks writing about his fusion fare often had to find a way to describe it. Chef Willin eventually coined the term “Mod-Sin” in 2006 as that term suited the style of his cooking best.

The “Mod-Sin” movement has now trickled down from upscale restaurants to more casual eateries, offering localised western food.

Tucked in the corner of Icon Village at Tanjong Pagar, The Quarters boasts a uniquely Singaporean take on Western dishes. Inspired by traditional recipes and local exotic ingredients, the dishes are as much loved as the ambience of the bistro.

One popular example is the Duriancanboleh (\$7.00) which is a creative twist of durian *crème brûlée*. Created by Quarters owner Chung Deming, 34, the dessert features the much-loved *mao shan wang* durian as its base. The dessert delivers a strangely addictive bitter-sweetness that is attributed to this king of durians, yet is free of its strong scent.

Mr Chung felt the luscious *mao shan wang* durian truly epitomises the Mod-Sin

cuisine that The Quarters stands for.

Harking back to Singapore’s history is *Ma Jie’s* Indulgence (\$18), a chilli crab linguine topped with crabmeat, as Mr Chung wants people to remember the efforts of past female workers even as they revel in today’s luxuries.

Offering dishes such as fries with salted egg (\$8.50) and *buah keluak* ice cream (\$9.80) that locals can identify with, The Quarters still feels a need to explain their Mod-Sin cuisine.

“People are excited by it but they’re also challenged by convention,” observes Mr Chung. He says that “there’s some amount of local expectations” of truly local food.



The Quarters

Icon Village 16 Enggor Street #01-09

Mon to Fri: 8 am - 10 pm
Sat: 10 am - 10 pm
Sun: 10 am - 6 pm



Ma Jie's Indulgence

Duriancanboleh



Flee Away Cafe

70 Dunlop Street

Tues to Fri: 11 am - 9 pm
Sat: 11 am - 9 pm
Sun: 10 am - 5 pm
Closed on Mondays

Get whisked away to your childhood idyll in this retro café at bustling Dunlop Street. Adorned with knick-knacks and toys from yesteryears, nostalgia is further echoed in its menu.

Their signature is the *Le Char Kuey* (\$10.80 – \$13.80), a dough fritter or *you tiao* similar to a baguette with fillings like dry *laksa*, chicken *bak kwa*, and *satay*. Unlike the usual *you tiao* that is soaked in oil, the Flee Away Café version has no oily sheen, making you feel you’re not ingesting deadly calories.

The brains behind the idea of a *you tiao* sandwich is café owner Ms Fann Hui Ling, 41, who feels that *you tiao* is “a neglected food” as people usually have it in *rojak* or with porridge.

“It’s hardly eaten like a meal on its own unless it’s a snack,” she adds.

Try also their Waffle with *Gula Melaka* Sago (\$7.80). Drizzled with *gula melaka* and coconut milk, this refreshing combination gives a tropical twist to the traditional waffles with ice cream.



Gula Melaka Sago

Le Char Kuey



Miss Molly's

2 Craig Road Singapore

Mon to Thurs:
12 pm - 11 pm
Fri & Sat: 12 pm - 12 am
Sun: 3 pm - 11 pm

This whimsical café along Craig Road revamps its menu every six months although some popular fusion dishes have stayed on its menu.

First making its appearance during the café boom, the kitchen crew explains that the fusion style was a way to differentiate itself from its counterparts. Therefore, the café dedicates itself to rolling out Mod-Sin dishes that complements the local palate.

The *Har Jeong Kai Burger* (\$13.90), that used to be prawn paste chicken paired with sandwiches, is now only available as a burger or a bar bite that will be

perfect together with a pint of tall ice-cold beer.

The crowd favourite *Laksa Pasta*, with a choice of prawns (\$18) or soft-shell crab (\$19), packs a piquant punch with its thick flavourful broth.

Observing that majority of the current generation prefers dining at restaurants and cafés to hawker centres, Ms Jennifer Estrada, 31, marketing executive of the café, explains that fusion food entices them to learn about local flavours and “hopefully they will go back to trace their roots and try out the original dish” at the hawker centres.



Har Jeong Kai Burger

Laksa Pasta

“People are excited by it but they’re also challenged by convention. There’s some amount of local expectations.”

- Mr Chung Deming

Making Dull Char Kway Teow Instagram-Worthy

CHRISTA CHOO talks to two experts to find out how to make local food look as good as it tastes

Many of us know that Instagram-worthy plates of food do not always taste as good as they look. Everyone drools over the photos nonetheless.

With food hashtags like #foodporn and #fotd (food of the day) flooding your Instagram feed, it is evident that many don't mind if their food turns cold while they try to find the perfect angle, filter, and caption for their food photos.

HYPE conducted a poll with 98 Singaporean youths aged 15 to 23 and found that more than 70 per cent would post photos of food even if the food does not taste good.

The irony is that great tasting food – especially what we affectionately call “hawker food” – seldom looks good especially when it's plated on melamine.

How then do you get that dull brown *char kway teow* and pale yellow Hokkien fried prawn noodle to achieve that Instagram #fotd aesthetic?

Chef Joanne Chee Choy Fong, 45, lecturer in NITEC Asian Culinary Arts at ITE College West, who has more than 25 years of experience in culinary skills and managing restaurant menus, suggests some ways to present local food.

1. Start with Basic Colours

Ensure you always have these five colours in your dish – white, green, black, yellow, red. Making use of green and red chilli already helps you with two colours. Also, if, for example, the hawker provides black sauce or any other sauces, you can make use of that too.



2.

Plate Size Matters

It is important to understand how proportions of food and size of plate can affect the presentation of a dish.

Ask for an empty plate to go with your order of *char kway teow*. On the empty plate, place a strip of *kway teow*, some ingredients, chilli, and make a design with some sauce, and voila! You have a classy-looking plate of *char kway teow* for your Instagram feed.



3.

Be Creative with Arrangements

You can balance a fork and spoon [on your plate of *char kway teow*] such that they cross each other diagonally. Use the fork to twirl a piece of *kway teow*. This technique gives your food a three-dimensional effect, making it more appealing.

A Quick Snap!

Even good looking food requires good camera skills to bring out the drool factor. Shots good enough to eat require skill and thought.

Dr Leslie Tay, 46, says it takes more than a good camera to capture good photos of food. Dr Tay, also known as blogger *eatishshootipost*, says taking that delectable shot is not impossible if you:

1. Start with a Good Camera

What's important is a good lens and a good camera. Some people like to use their hand phones to take reasonably good shots and is convenient to carry around. But if you want to be recognised as a good photographer, you have to use a proper camera.

2. Make the Effort

The difference between a good photographer and an amateur is the one who makes the most effort. I carry my camera and lens with me every time I take a photo. If there isn't good lighting, you move your food to a place with more light.

3. Shoot Sharp

Photo quality creates perceived food quality. Therefore the photos [you take] must be sharp, making you salivate just by looking at them.

4. Pursue with Passion

If you don't enjoy food or are not passionate about your subject, your photos won't turn out well.



PASTE THE DIFFERENCE

MUHAMMAD MUHAIMIN SUZAINI sniffs out some unconventional foods that go well with different chilli pastes

Ask a Chinese, Indian or Thai chilli lover where chillies originated from and most of them will swear that chillies are native to their homeland. So integral is the spice to their cooking and so deeply embedded in it, that chillies have become part of their culture.

In Singapore, almost every cuisine contains some form of chilli. Chilli crab, *Tom Yum* and *Laksa*, among many others are foods with chilli in them. Here are some uncommon foods that go well with different kinds of chilli pastes.



Sambal Belacan

A bottle of home-made *sambal belacan* is a handy condiment to have. It consists of chilli *padi*, *belacan* (shrimp paste), *calamansi* (lime), salt and sugar (to taste).

Putting its pungency aside, *sambal belacan* is one of the simplest condiments to make and is conventionally eaten with local dishes such as fried *bee hoon* or fried rice.

But eat it with fruits and vegetables, and you immediately get that extra oomph to your salad.

A housewife who has been making *belacan* for over 20 years, Madam Khadijah Binte Tarmugi, 67, explains that *sambal belacan* has quite the unique taste that blends well with salads.

“The slight tinge of salt adds flavour to a salad. And it is healthy too,” she says.



Sambal Tumis

Known as the ‘mother of all chilli pastes’ by burpappetit.com, this highly regarded paste can be eaten with almost everything. Made from dried red chilli and blended with ingredients such as turmeric, *sambal tumis* can be consumed with generally anything – *Nasi Lemak*, *Mee Goreng*, *Sambal Kangkong* – you name it.

However, foods such as crackers and tortillas go well with *sambal tumis* too. Its sweet and spicy flavour compliments their plainness, making it a tasty dip.

Madam Mariam Binte Marhom, 65, a housewife, shares that her family consumes *sambal tumis* with practically anything. She says: “*Sambal tumis* can be consumed with a lot of food. Even white bread. It is that versatile.”

Chicken Rice Chilli Sauce

Chicken Rice. The go-to meal for most Singaporeans should they not know what to eat. The overall balance of diet – chicken for protein, rice for carbohydrates and soup as an appetizer – makes it a perfect option for most.

Made from a blend of bird's eye chilli and red chilli, this sauce can go well with other foods as well. Especially with “seafood and fish” says Mr Jimmy Ho, 46, owner of Xin Kee Hainanese Chicken Rice, as it provides a slightly spicy and mild saltiness to the seafood.



Welcome to New York

The humble salted egg has never enjoyed such glory as now with fans slurping it up in the most unlikely dishes, as MELANIE HENG discovers

The salted egg yolk, the humble accompaniment in a traditional Teochew rice porridge meal, has been elevated to star status in recent years.

Crushed and blended with butter and sugar, it becomes the “flowing sand” filling in the sweet steamed bun called *liu sha bao*, a popular choice in a dim sum meal. Or fried in butter, it becomes the delicious coating for crab, prawns and even crispy salmon skin.

Perhaps that’s not surprising or creative enough, but the salted egg is turning up in many Western dishes with many cafés and restaurants letting their imagination run. Now we have salted egg in Eggs Benedict, muffins and cupcakes, and even ice cream.

“It’s [salted egg] something that seems to appeal to everyone.”

– Justin Ang
Co-owner of The Burger Bar

Jonathan Loong, 22, a food enthusiast, says that the love for this golden orb has become a trend that is motivating more food places to add salted egg dishes to their menus.

Mr Barnabas Chan, assistant manager of the Saviour group of restaurants, feels that social media has increased the awareness of lesser used ingredients and “people are constantly exploring, or in cases like these, rediscovering” these foods.

He adds that some ingredients are enjoying a new surge of popularity or are incorporated in modern dishes.

According to him, his customers visit the restaurant just for their salted egg yolk cake.

From Burpple to Ladyironchef, there are plenty of guides online to show you where to find salted egg dishes. It’s no

wonder many eateries are jumping on the salted egg bandwagon.

Justin Ang, one of the owners of The Burger Bar, says that many of his customers have suggested including salted egg yolk in their burgers. “It’s something that seems to appeal to everyone. One thing’s for sure: no one dislikes it at all!”

Jonathan, who has tried making his own salted egg sauce, says: “This salted egg fad is something that’s promising and won’t fail to deliver.”

Su Yiying, 21, an undergraduate, however, feels that this fad might die out, “just like yogurts, cupcakes and bubble teas”. However, she admits that the liking for salted egg is likely to stay because many youths are accustomed to the taste and texture of this Asian delicacy. “Some of the food [that] contain salted egg are food that we hardly get sick of, like *liu sha bao*,” she adds.

No one knows if the hype for salted egg will stay, but one thing’s certain: salted egg is a versatile ingredient. As Justin says: “You can have it with anything! Fries, spam fries, onion rings, salad, wings. It can be dipped, spread or dunked with anything!”

Photos courtesy of Drury Lane, BLACK&INK, and The Burger Bar
Texture by Carina

Keep Your Cool

Vanilla Bean and Cookies and Cream can step aside. JOLAINE CHUA gets the scoop on deliciously local ice cream flavours

The ice cream uncle who goes around the neighbourhood on his bike, peddling durian, coconut or red bean *potong* ice cream on sticks, announcing his arrival with the familiar tinkling of his bell, is not a common sight anymore.

While many of us would now go to an air-conditioned mall for some salted caramel ice cream, inside us, we long to go back to our roots and the flavours we have grown up with.

Homegrown ice cream shops Island Creamery and Tom’s Palette are known for their handmade cream and local flavours, so we can get the good old-fashioned flavours without having to sit out in the sun waiting for the ice cream man to make his rounds.

“When I first started Island Creamery in 2003, I realised that there were no local ice cream stores that produced local dessert flavours.”

– Mr Stanley Kwok
Founder of Island Creamery

Island Creamery is famed for its uniquely Singaporean *Teh Tarik* ice cream. *Teh Tarik*, which literally means ‘pulled tea’, is commonly served at coffee shops and food stalls. Island Creamery also serves up other local flavours like *Pulut Hitam* (black glutinous rice porridge), *Cendol*, *Milo*, and *Tiger Beer*. Yes, even our beer has its own ice cream.

Mr Stanley Kwok, founder of Island Creamery, says he was inspired by

popular Malaysian and Singaporean desserts. “When I first started Island Creamery in 2003, I realised that there were no local ice cream stores that produced local dessert flavours,” he adds.

Mr Kwok also explains how his customers were “surprised by how close [the local ice cream flavours] tasted compared to the original”. Not contented with five local flavours, he intends to continue creating brand new flavours to add to his already extensive list.

Tom’s Palette is another local ice cream shop well known for its wacky, homely flavours. Customers’ favourite is the Salted Egg Yolk flavoured ice cream.

“We called it a ‘mystery flavour’, because we believed that no one would be willing to try it if we called it Salted Egg Yolk,” says Chronos Chan, co-founder of Tom’s Palette.

“Eventually, people started trying out this ‘mystery flavour’ and when they started coming back for it, we knew that they were willing to accept a new and wacky flavour like this one,” he adds.

Besides the Salted Egg Yolk ice cream, another of Tom’s Palette’s interesting creations is its *Dou Jiang You Tiao* flavoured ice cream, which is based on the Chinese breakfast favourite of soya bean milk and crispy, fried crullers.

With creative entrepreneurs injecting the Singaporean flavour into this Western dessert, ice cream has certainly evolved into a happy, surprising encounter.



Try these flavours today!



Island Creamery



Cendol



Milo



Teh Tarik



Pulut Hitam



Grandma's Favourite



Salted Egg Yolk



Savoury Crunch

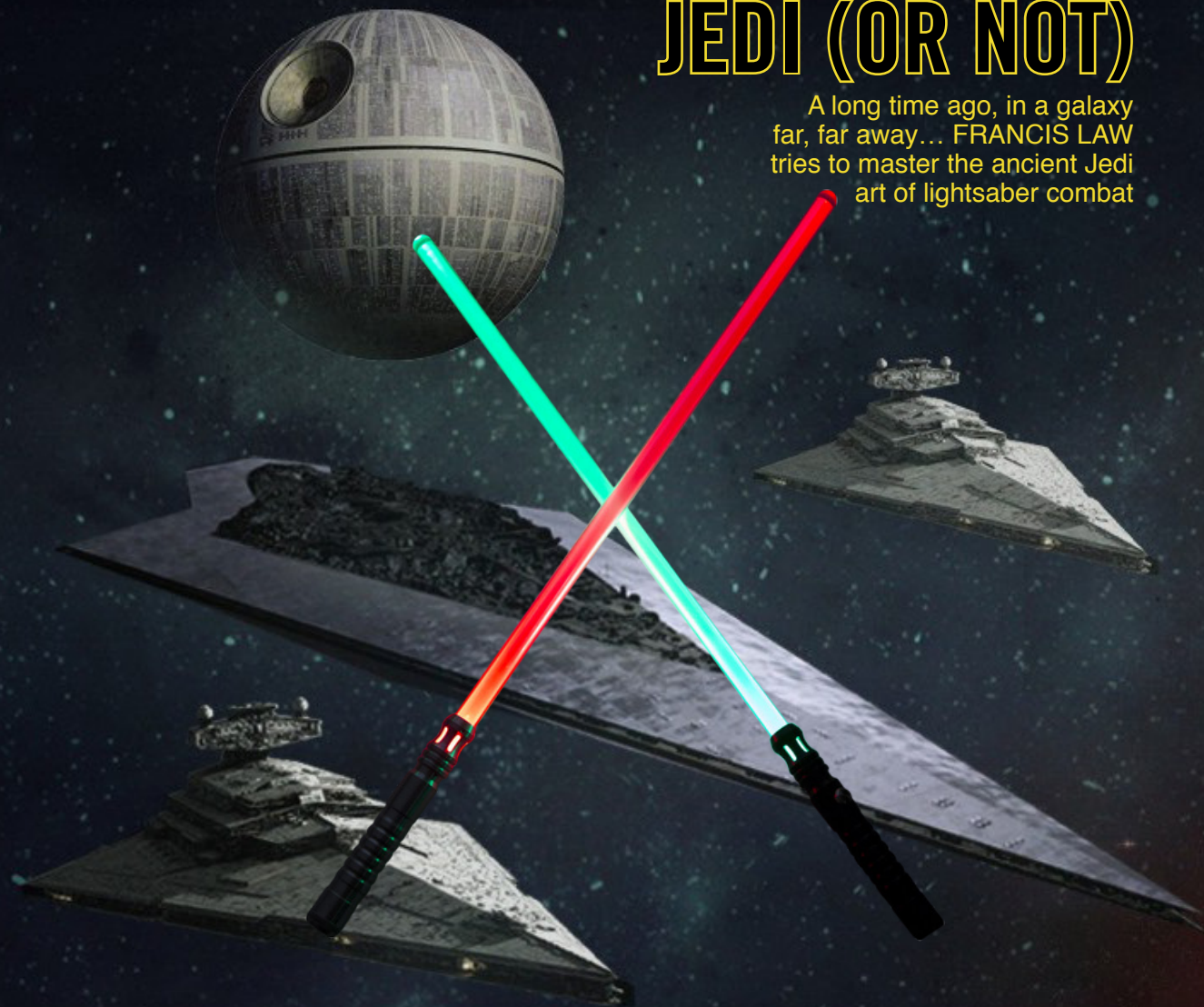


Dou Jiang You Tiao

Tom's Palette

THE PATH OF A JEDI (OR NOT)

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... FRANCIS LAW tries to master the ancient Jedi art of lightsaber combat



This was it. I couldn't believe it. I'd waited my entire life for this one chance and now it was right in front of me.

Today was the day I could begin my training as a Jedi.

Brimming with anticipation, I arrived at Ang Mo Kio eager to embark on my journey as a Padawan, a Jedi apprentice, training to protect the galaxy from evil. As I approached the training site under the train tracks, whirling lights greeted me. Flashes of green, blue, purple and even red? I didn't know they trained Sith here too. They are, after all, the polar opposite of the Jedi.

Sabre instructor Ming Jie handed me a training sabre. Excitement coursed through my veins as I wrapped my fingers around the cold metal hilt. When the blade lit up with a swish, buzzing and crackling as I swung it around,

I knew that this is what pure joy feels like. That, in my hands, was the weapon of a Jedi - light, agile and very cool.

However, there was no time for admiring my newly acquired weapon; it was straight to vigorous training.

My fellow Padawans and I formed a circle as Jedi Master Reza Emmanuel took centre stage. With over 18 years of experience in martial arts, Master Reza is trained in disciplines such as aikido, kickboxing and *tai chi* and draws inspiration for the lightsaber combat style and choreography from the Filipino blade art of *pekiti-tirsia kali*.



Reza, along with Ming Jie, founded The Force Academy under The Saber Authority. Priding themselves in being the most realistic lightsaber duelling programme in Singapore, The Force Academy provides opportunities for students keen to learn the art of lightsaber duelling. Since its launch in 2014, their numbers have grown rapidly. Now, they have an average of 20 students per lesson.

Calling on an experienced Padawan to join him in the middle of the circle, Master Reza proceeded to demonstrate basic lightsaber combat techniques. I couldn't wait to show off my lightsaber prowess to the rest of the Padawans.

At the first swing of my saber, however, all confidence I had in my skills crumbled. Crossing blades with my equally bewildered partner, we stumbled around clumsily, lost and graceless like two droids wandering the desert planet of Tatooine.

Is the Force Strong with You?

Training sessions are on Sundays from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm at The Deck, opposite Ang Mo Kio MRT station.

Single training session (Sabers Provided): From \$25
Monthly Membership (Sabers Provided): \$80
Monthly Membership (Bring your own saber): \$60

Sabers starting from \$390 can be bought online from the Saber Authority website thesaberauthority.com

Photos courtesy of The Saber Authority
Vanishing Point by Alexandru M. Daniel

Taking a break from the tiresome training (and unimaginable embarrassment), I looked around and was relieved to discover I wasn't the only first-timer. Newcomers Janine and Debbie had heard about the academy through a friend and decided to give it a try. Despite it being their first lesson, they were still doing a much better job than I was. Determined to match up to them, I got back to training.

Soon, it was time for sparring. Soaked in sweat and worn down from the training, adrenaline coursed through my body as I turned to face my opponent. Tired as I was, I was positive I would win.

Boy, was I wrong.

As soon as Master Reza signalled the start of the round, I started flailing about, mindlessly slashing my lightsaber through the air in hopes that a stray strike would land on my foe. However, my opponent easily slashed at my wrist, ending the sparring session. Thankfully it wasn't a real lightsaber, or my hand would've been sliced right off!



With this, Master Reza called us together again. Crossing sabres, we shouted The Saber Academy's Creed: Respect, Harmony, Purpose.

At the end of the hour-long training session, my body was giving way, I was drenched in perspiration and handless after a sparring session. Maybe I wasn't cut out to be a Jedi after all.

Oh well, I guess I could always join the Empire; I heard the dark side of the Force has cookies.

Can't Live Without You

Singapore's golden jubilee set RACHEL TOH and CELINE SEAK thinking about five innovations that have changed our lives, creations that existed only in the minds of the most imaginative 50 years ago

The world has witnessed a slew of gadgets that changed the landscape of our lives. Being a YouTuber as a career, dating via mobile applications and downloadable eBooks are just some things that have been infused into our lives. Technology has definitely enhanced our lifestyles, opened up choices and changed our habits.

Here are five things that only existed in our imaginations 50 years ago.

YouTube

Struggling to share a dinner party video they had, three former PayPal employees set out to create a video sharing platform, marking the start of this California-based company in 2005. With many taking to this video-sharing giant, some – dubbed as YouTubers – have found popularity making their own videos.

A YouTube career entails flexible working hours and doing what you love. "It's a very new industry so there're a lot of advertisers and brands who

“Making videos is definitely a sustainable business. Maybe making videos on YouTube is not going to last forever, because video platforms always change, but video content will always be in demand.”

- Aaron Khoo
Co-Founder of TreePotatoes



director of Tusitala, a local-based digital publishing company.

Ms Wong hopes to empower writers to “tell their stories digitally without having to worry about waiting for their manuscripts to be picked up or rejected by traditional print publishers”.

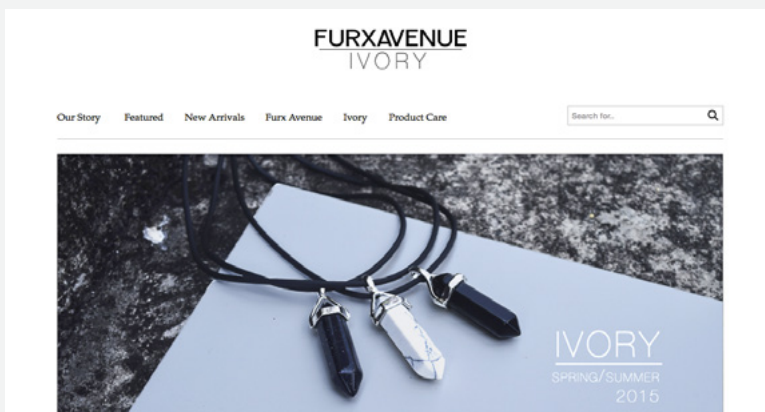
For readers who are conscious about what they're reading in public, Ms Wong says: "No one will know what you are reading since there is no book cover displayed."

As much as it is increasingly common to read eBooks, the fact that local e-bookstores like I Love Books and Skoob fell flat within a year of launching shows that just being interested and downloading them is not enough to sustain the industry.

Technology may breed new concepts but not new mindsets. People are still at a stage where they aren't ready to pay for it. "There is a sense that if the content is digital, it should be free," she says.

Airbnb

Whether it's lodging at apartments or in treehouses, Airbnb connects travellers to homeowners around the world. In an attempt to earn money to pay for their rent in 2007, co-founders



Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia, 34, devised the idea of renting out a lodging that eventually developed into the San Francisco-based company.

Kerin Goh, 29, an Airbnb user, said that the pricing was a plus point for giving “travellers the feeling of home, [something] hotels cannot provide”.

Another Airbnb user Timothy Koh, 25, feels that sharing the same accommodation and forging relationships with the locals add to the travelling experience.

Sharing a place with strangers does come with some risk as well. While travellers may be unable to reject the accommodation even “if one feels that it’s very different from the online description”, says Timothy, the hosts also face the underlying concern of possible damage to their property.

As technology continues to revolutionise the travel industry as well

“It’s hard to get people to do online purchases unless there’s some form of reputation existing. Breaking the market is difficult this way because a lot of good brands are already ruling the online retail world.”

- *Marcus Nai*
Co-Founder of Furx Avenue

as enhance our travel experiences with more consumer-catered services, the responsibility to safeguard our welfare is still as heavy as ever.

E-commerce

Back when the Internet first started gaining popularity, the concept of e-commerce was unthinkable – until the birth of pioneers like Amazon and eBay in the mid-90s proved otherwise.

Besides the low overhead cost, co-founder of online fashion shop Furx Avenue, Marcus Nai, 19, reasons that an online platform entails more time-flexibility and "a better reach to our target audience".

As more online shops enter the retail landscape, reputation becomes paramount especially among retailers of homogeneous products. "It's hard to get people to do online purchases unless there's some form of reputation existing. Breaking the market is difficult this way because a lot of good brands are already ruling the online retail world," observes Marcus.

Pushcart turned online fashion store, Ohvola, has both an online platform and a brick-and-mortar boutique to showcase their weekly online launches. Co-founder Lucinda Zhou, 27, says: "I feel that having a retail presence makes you more reliable as an online store so I think this is the first step to gaining the trust of customers."

An ardent online shopper herself, Lucinda enthused about getting a dress she wants “with just one click [of the mouse]” but at a tradeoff for the waiting time that ensues from the mailing process.

In this sense, Ohvola has provided the best of both worlds for consumers.

Lucinda advises her customers to shop online for “more competitive prices”, otherwise the physical retail platform will be more beneficial if “you want the item urgently or want to know if it’ll definitely fit”.

Dating Apps

Online dating has been around for two decades and is now on mobile apps as well.

Mobile dating apps had its breakthrough in late 2012 in America. It became a smash hit after the first dating app created – Let's Date – received skyrocketing responses, having set up more than 25,000 people within the first two months.

Most Singaporeans jumped on the bandwagon last year, discovering various dating apps such as Tinder and HowAboutWe. Locally developed mobile dating apps then surfaced, the first being Paktor, which means “dating” in the Cantonese dialect.

Mr Joseph Phua, CEO of Paktor, says: "Mobile dating offers people the opportunity to reach out to a very wide database of people that extends beyond your usual network of friends, to help increase the chances of finding more people [you] can connect with."

Weighing traditional dating against online dating, the perks of the latter include “the ability to tap into [a] large database, as well as the convenience and ease of connecting with these people”. On the other hand, there are safety issues and fake profiles.

To reassure users, Paktor has ensured a clean and healthy database by tracking fake user profiles and providing a feedback channel for users to flag suspicious activities as well.

The FUTURE is NOW

Science fiction has always pushed the boundaries of human imagination, and fiction is slowly becoming a reality, as STEFANIE YEO discovers

Science fiction is the fertile ground of human imagination, with space travel and futuristic inventions that seem almost impossible.

The Back to the Future trilogy, popular for its lighthearted take on space and time travel, predicted that hoverboards would be a mode of transport by 2015. Although not as common as the movie made it out to be (bummer!), hoverboards are being made in labs now, with companies such as Hendo Hover rolling out Kickstarter campaigns to fund their research.

Lexus is also working on creating a hoverboard, using magnetic-levitation technology similar to the one used for the Shanghai Maglev Train. Magnetic levitation technology uses repelling magnetic forces to “levitate” the train, minimising friction and enabling the train to move at faster speeds.

“Science fiction... is the richest genre in terms of writers,” says Mr Yuen Xiang Hao, 37, a local science fiction writer. “People want things, and writing stories where people get those things are usually pretty good indications of the future. Good science fiction might explore how getting these things change the world, or failing that, how they change our lives.”

Fellow local science fiction author Ms Mint Kang, in her early 30s, agrees: “Isaac Asimov said that ‘Science fiction is that branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance on human beings.’ I feel that the best science fiction concentrates not so much on the shiny gadgets as on the way those gadgets change us.”

“As long as people recognise science as being important and relevant, then science fiction will be the way to explore the world of ‘what-if’, and that’s great.”

- Mr Yuen Xiang Hao



Once fictional inventions, 3D printers (left) and tablet computers (bottom) are now a part of modern life.

This is exactly the case for three-dimensional (3D) printing. While not as cool as the replicators from Star Trek which could conjure up things like spare starship parts and even food from thin air, modern 3D printing technology is opening up a new world. Its intended use is to produce replacement parts on space stations and produce food for future space ventures.

Isaac Asimov, the man behind science fiction classics like I, Robot and Bicentennial Man, predicted that appliances would function without wires and be powered by long-lasting batteries in his 1964 article, Visit to the World's Fair of 2014. Looking at the plethora of battery-powered gadgets around us, like phones and laptops, Asimov was right on the money.

Likewise, with the ubiquitous iPad and other similar tablet computers. In Star Trek, the crew of the Enterprise had Personal Access Display Devices, which were hand-held computers that worked with a stylus for tasks we now use our own computers for, such as compiling duty rosters and looking up information. Now, tablet computers can be found everywhere and are used for a variety of purposes, from entertainment to collecting data.

In the 2002 film Minority Report, the police used facial recognition technology to track down potential criminals before they could commit crimes. In 2015, advertisers are using similar technology to identify potential customers and tailor digital displays to specific individuals. While this sounds like a boon for the advertising industry, it also raises concerns about privacy and surveillance.

Looking at how technology has advanced so rapidly over the years, science fiction has a role to play in predicting how technology and humans will interact in the years to come.

“As long as people recognise science as important and relevant, then science fiction will be the way to explore the world of ‘what-if’,” says Mr Yuen.

Photos courtesy of Microsoft Singapore and 3DSystems

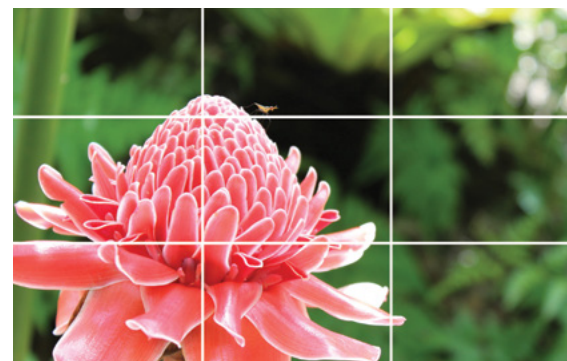
Mobile Photography

Learn some simple tricks to take better photos as AMANPREET SINGH guides you through the art of mobile photography



1. Exposure is key

This is a feature applicable especially to iPhone users. You should have noticed by now that whenever you tap on your screen to focus while taking a photo, a mini sun icon appears. Don't neglect this. This icon enables you to adjust the exposure (brightness or darkness) of your image. Simply snapping away may cause your image to look over exposed or far too grainy. Do spend some time tinkering with this tool to get your ideal shot.



3. Don't let the grids get to you

Most people find it annoying when they see grids on their screen while they are trying to take a photo. You really shouldn't get annoyed as they help make your photo all the more appealing. These grids act as the rule of thirds.

You should compose your shot in a way that the most striking element of your photo meets at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical lines in the grid. Sounds complicated? Not really. In fact, it helps to make your photo seem less complicated. Go try it out!

Photos courtesy of Tay Yu Yan and Teo Zi Lin

Photography is a beautiful creation that helps to capture moments the human eye will never get to relive again.

With the emergence of Apple and Samsung mobile products in the market, there has been a huge rise in the number of people opting to make use of their handphones to take photographs rather than invest in the latest DSLR.

One evident example of this is the photo sharing application, Instagram, which exceeded 300 million users as of December 2014, overtaking Twitter, and that says a lot about how serious people are taking mobile photography.

However, not all of them are experts and most randomly snap away, relying on sheer luck to get that ideal shot.

Here are four ways you can maximise the potential of your mobile phone's camera:



2. Angle it up

One common mistake that most people make is that they simply snap and go while taking photos of an inanimate object or of their surroundings. Always remember, you can utilise your camera any way you like, so don't be afraid to turn your phone 180 degrees or tilt it at an acute angle.

The more variations of the same photo you have, the more experience you will get in finding out which angle is the most ideal for capturing photos.



4. Ditch the flash

The flash function on smartphone cameras is often seen as a saviour for those shooting in dimly lit places but you will soon start to realise that the photos turn out really over exposed.

So turn off your flash and try making use of natural lighting (or even LED lights from nearby handphones) and let your camera work its magic without any special effects.



Apple Watch



Pebble Steel



Tech on Your Wrist

STEFANIE YEO talks about the up-and-coming trend in wearable tech – smart watches

A watch is no longer just a timekeeping device. With the arrival of the Apple Watch on the wearable tech scene, smart watches are being thrown into the spotlight.

Tom's Guide, a technology website originating from the United States, defines smart watches as "a multipurpose device, generally worn on the wrist, that runs computing applications".

However, tech blogger Mr Justin Lee of justinlee.sg, who reviews new products on the tech scene, feels that the smart watch still has a long way to go before mass adoption occurs.

"For now, to me, it's just a glorified push notification device, with pedometers, GPS tracking and all of that stuff. The rest of the ecosystem, with regards to it, is not there in order to push that forward, but it is a

good start as a smart watch," says Mr Lee. He has a vision for the future of smart watches – one where the watch communicates with your smart phone and the environment.

"I definitely think there is a lot of untapped potential in smart watches," says Mr Desmond Koh, a technology writer for TechGoindu.com, a technology blog that covers segments from personal computing to Internet culture. "Every major player is waiting with bated breath for the niche that smart watches can serve."

Given that smart watches are on the rise, here are three currently on the market:

Apple Watch

Price:
\$518 - \$1,598

Operating System Compatibility:
iOS 8.2

Dimensions (H x W x T):
38.6 mm x 33.3 mm x 10.5 mm
42.0 mm x 35.9 mm x 10.5 mm

Display:
1.32-inch, 272 x 340, 290ppi
Retina display

Battery Life:
1 - 2 days

The Apple Watch has a 'Digital Crown' – a small button at the side of the watch that allows you to toggle between apps on the watch. You can also make calls on the watch, as well as change watch faces (there are 10 that come with the watch, including Mickey Mouse).

Moto 360

Price:
\$279 - \$330

Operating System Compatibility:
Android 4.3 or higher

Dimensions (H x W x T):
11.5 mm x 46 mm

Display:
1.56-inch, 320 x 290, 205ppi
Backlit LCD

Battery Life:
1 - 2 days

The Moto 360 has a very clean and minimalist design. It has a touch screen display as well as a heart rate sensor, and is water-resistant as well. You can change the watch face of the Moto 360 by downloading watch faces from Android Wear's extensive collection.

Pebble Steel

Price:
\$329

Operating System Compatibility:
Android, iOS

Dimensions (H x W x T):
46 mm x 34 mm x 10.5 mm

Display:
1.26-inch, 144 x 168
ePaper display
LED backlight

Battery Life:
About 4 days

The Pebble Steel boasts a monochrome ePaper display, same as the Amazon Kindle. It has the longest battery life and works with both Android and iOS devices. However, its visuals are not as sharp and it does not support touchscreen.

Photos courtesy of Apple and Pebble

MOBILE S(T)IMULATION

More simulation games are being created for the mobile phone, as NGAU KAI YAN discovers

An increasing number of simulation-based games has been taking over mobile device platforms, as the same games stagnate on the personal computer.

Simulation games attempt to create real world situations for gamers to experience, as a form of entertainment. With ever-increasing smartphone capabilities, mobile game developers see this as an opportunity to create fresh and unique content in the simulation game genre.

The mobile platform offers a simplified and convenient gaming experience literally anywhere. Simulation games on mobiles are not only easier to pick up, but also retain the very details of similar games on the desktop.

This increasing number of simulation games helps the mobile market thrive. "This in turn would push mobile device manufacturers to push the processing and graphical limits of these devices," says Rayner Tan, 17, a game developer who has developed four iOS-based games so far.

There is no doubt simulation games will soon become a large mainstay category in the app store – for the casual fan and the hardcore gamer.



Football Manager Handheld

(Available on Android and Apple store, for \$10.98)

One of the most successful games on mobile devices to date, Football Manager Handheld (FMH) is heralded as the brainchild of the original Football Manager series, which has been around for 23 years.

As the name suggests, FMH allows players to take control and be the manager of any football club they want – managing the players, team finances, transfers and of course, match days. With its large database, renowned match engine and highly detailed content, FMH retains the key features that made Football Manager the most successful football simulator in the gaming industry. "FMH is not as detailed and as intricate as the real football manager, but it's still intensely engaging for the casual player," says Clement Yue, an avid fan since 2011. Clement said that he could play the game almost anywhere, even in camp during National Service.

Photos courtesy of Christian West, Laminar Research, and Sports Interactive Ltd.



X-Plane

(Free to download for Android and Apple platforms. Additional purchases can be made in-app, for extra planes and maps!)

This mobile flight simulator is so detailed and accurate that it has an accreditation from the Federal Aviation Administration. Utilising very simple tilt and touch mechanics, X-Plane allows gamers to assume control over planes, helicopters and fighter jets. "X-Plane has great implementation of its physics, it is reasonably easy to stall, like in the real world if you try to attempt flips and stunts," Rayner says. Placing gamers in the cockpit similar to that of a real life aircraft, X-Plane brings out the best in mobile simulation games. Not forgetting the 50 types of aircrafts and the 20 locations around the world - it's a wonder that X-Plane is a mobile simulator with all its comprehensive features.

Motorsport Manager

(Available on Android and Apple store for \$2.98)

Motorsport Manager brings a whole new dimension to Formula One (F1) Racing. A unique standout of simulation games, Motorsport Manager allows fans and non-fans of F1 alike to simply pick up this addictive game and get to grips with the motorsport world.

Starting out from amateur leagues, gamers work their way up to world championships. Managing your own drivers, investments in training facilities and aiming for that podium finish – it's all in a day's work for a Motorsport Manager.

"Motorsport Manager was designed for portrait play and the user interface makes it possible to play with one hand and just your thumb," says Christian West, the developer of Motorsport Manager. This mobile application has had over 100,000 downloads on the Android store alone.



Youths' Singa-pathy: Don't Know, Don't Care

RAPHAEL ONG

"Has the younger generation of Singaporeans gone soft? Look at yourself in the mirror and ask: Am I a stayer or a quitter? Am I a fair-weather Singaporean or an all-weather Singaporean?"

These were the words spoken by the then-Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong at the 2002 National Day Rally. Though 13 years have passed by, the fact remains that Singapore's youth is, more often than not, slapped with the label of being apathetic. Young people are seen as being blatantly uninterested in and disparaging towards anything local. Youths are portrayed to adopt an individualistic stance on socio-political issues.

A survey conducted by The New Paper in 2011 among 1,003 Singaporeans aged between 21 and 35, showed that two in five would not bother voting if it was not compulsory. A problem that goes beyond one person's indifference; this political apathy makes way for a future generation that cares little for the progress of the country.

But this disinterest, sometimes bordering on cynicism, culminates during one of the largest events in Singapore to date – her 50th birthday.

With everything-themed SG50, young people take to social media to voice their opinions on the Golden Jubilee. Tweets flooded the SG50 hashtag with statements like, "SG50 is overwhelmingly annoying", "SG50 is really quite pathetic" and "This whole SG50 campaign is starting to be really annoying. *Simi sai* also SG50. Like... *diam la*". Translation: Every single thing is related to SG50, just shut up.

Is it any wonder that Singapore's millennials are pegged as disinterested and contemptuous?

There is another end of the spectrum that must be brought to light, though.

Amidst the hecklers of SG50, non-profit organisation Youth Without Borders, set up by 24-year-old Joseph Tay and Kenneth Yong, set out to accomplish 50 social projects to celebrate Singapore's 50th birthday.

"As Singapore celebrates her 50th year of life on 9 Aug 2015, we who are now citizens, should play our individual parts to shape the destiny of our country for the next 50 years, [working] towards the goal of making our generation count for something," the Youth Without Borders site read.

On the note of "making our generation count for something", our generation has been responsible for a renaissance in local arts and music. Local music festivals like Baybeats have been chalking up an average attendance of 77,000 since it first began in 2011. Rising local artists like The Sam Willows have been signed on by major labels, thanks to unending support from young Singaporeans.

Caring about local music may seem insignificant, but it helps foster a society of greater creativity. In supporting local arts, these youths show that they bother about the future of Singapore's arts scene. Perhaps that love may be the platform for our youth to fall in love with Singapore.

If anything, being surrounded by so many talented musicians and artists in Singapore has been instrumental in making me proud to call her home.

Young people of Singapore are fully aware that they can surrender to discontent and indifference. Perhaps it is because we never knew Singapore well enough to love her as much as our parents or grandparents do. We never saw her rise to become what she is today. We never felt like we were part of her story.

It is important for youths to appreciate

"Whether fostering an interest in politics, helping the less fortunate, or appreciating her as a whole, everything is a form of love for Singapore."

this country because Singapore's legacy falls on our shoulders and the torch will be passed to us to forge the Singapore story of tomorrow.

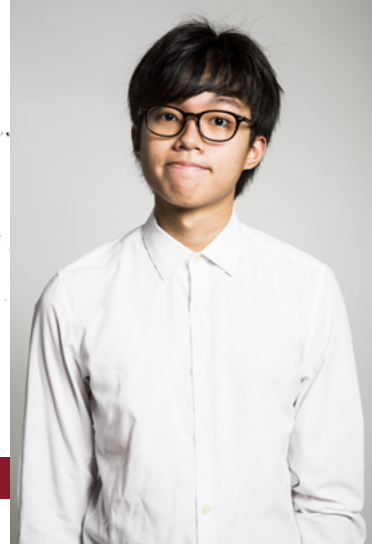
Those who bother are invested in their home and in making it a better place for others. Whether fostering an interest in politics, helping the less fortunate, or appreciating her as a whole, everything is a form of love for Singapore. Every little step is a step in the right direction for our future. In loving, apathy ceases to exist.

As I watched this year's National Day Parade, I flicked through my Twitter feed which presented tweets that ranged from the occasional cynic that deemed it all propaganda, to photographs of Singapore overlaid with sentiments of "I love Singapore".

But a part of me knows that the day after, we will all go back to complaining about how Singapore is not as "hip" as the US.

We definitely have our differences, but one thing is for sure: we can stand in unity against that one awful National Day Lady Gaga funpack song, and together in support for that one poignant National Day song, Home.

That is what makes us, us. And we should be proud of being us.



Texture by Carina

Harvesting the Strawberry Generation

CHRISTA CHOO

"We could sit around and embody the woe is me attitude of a loser, or we could choose to look at how we can harness the traits of this generation to circumvent our strawberry-ness."

[*straw-buh-ree*] [*jən-uh-rey-shuh n*] – noun
Millennials or people belonging to Generation Y and after, who wilt under pressure or hard work

The term "Strawberry Generation" is actually derived from a Chinese neologism for Taiwanese people born after 1981 who "bruise easily" like strawberries.

The perception is that members of this generation have grown up under their parents' wings and in an environment of economic prosperity, similar to how strawberries are grown with much tender loving care in greenhouses. According to inventors and adopters of the term, a generation of softies was born as a result of what is seen as overprotection.

Questions surrounding the generation's ability to sustain the level of economic growth Singapore has been enjoying, and articles like 'Millennials aren't good at shaking off work stress', published on TODAYonline on Apr 11, all add to the sharpening image of a doomed generation unable to cope with the stress of life.

As part of this generation, even I, along with many of my peers, agree with the strawberry analogy to a certain degree.

On the other hand, there are others who feel that we are still young and need more time to discover who we are, that we should be given a chance to prove our mettle before we are deemed soft or not. This whole idea hinges on that coming of age moment. What if we never find ourselves? What then do we do?

We could sit around and embody the woe is me attitude of a loser, or we could choose to look at how we can harness the traits of this generation to circumvent our strawberry-ness.

As Will McAvoy from The Newsroom said, "The first step in solving any problem is recognising there is one." The older generation has done us a favour, alerting us to a possible problem that will have a major impact on our future. Now we can only chart a path in the way of change for the better.



Strawberries are perennial. This means if you plant one now, it will come back during spring the next year and the following and the year after that. It may not bear fruit immediately, but once it does, it will remain productive for about five years.

I wonder if those who coined the term "strawberry generation" considered this plus side to strawberries when they dubbed a whole generation after this fruit.

Mr David Ang, executive director of Singapore Human Resources Institute, once said, "The older generations will always say that the younger ones are getting soft."

Yes, we respect that the older generations who have been through the war and who have experienced living hand to mouth emerged stronger. It was them who built our successful nation state.

But I also believe the term "strawberry generation" should not be something that condemns us to this fate foreseeable by our older generation but instead, spurs us on, to break free of anything holding us back, and achieve.



Passion Alone Cannot Feed Artists

STEFANIE YEO

“As it stands, the traditional mindset of art as a hobby or a side job is still prevalent in our society, which is why it is not valued as much.”

“It’s just art, why pay so much money?”

If you’re an artist or if you’re friends with one, you may hear this comment fairly often. Many people think that passion alone can feed artists.

Passion has the potential to fill an empty stomach – but that’s only if artists are paid what they are worth so that they can make a living and sustain themselves.

One of my friends does commissioned drawings, and charges about \$10 per drawing, done in full colour and mailed to the commissioner. She has often heard remarks like “it’s just a drawing, why is it so expensive?” The fact is she’s barely breaking even after factoring in costs like materials and postage.

“Artists are the people who are willing to put up with a job that doesn’t pay the bills and spend their days applying for grants that may offer as little as \$1,000. They do this all for the joy of making art,” writes Paddy Johnson, executive director of blog Art F City, for The New York Times.

Many artists in Singapore hold day jobs, and work on their passion for the arts in the evening to pursue their dreams, but they still deserve to be accorded the respect that is given to any other profession.

One Singaporean artist who has managed to make a living from his art is street artist Trase One. When asked in an interview with The Muse on how he survived as an artist, he said that

one key factor would be his versatility. This enabled him to get involved in many projects including those with corporate clients, which then helped pay the bills.

With Singapore trying to propel itself forward as an arts hub (look at events such as the Singapore International Festival of Arts and Singapore Biennale), more needs to be done in order to make the arts a viable career. This will enable Singapore to produce more artists – involved in no matter what art form, be it dance, music or visual art – that will boost its standing on the world stage.

As such, here are three key reasons why artists in Singapore should be paid what they deserve:

1. Materials are not cheap. In Singapore, good quality paints cost around \$20 per 200 ml tube, and elaborate costumes (such as those for *getai*) can cost up to \$10,000. For artists who work with watercolours, high quality watercolour brushes can cost hundreds of dollars. Artists need to recover such costs, as with any business that wants to make a profit.

2. Time is money. As with any other profession, artists should be compensated for their time. For example, a part-time retail salesperson in Singapore can earn about \$7 an

hour for their work. In the case of my friend who charges \$10 per drawing, she earns something like \$2 an hour, not factoring in material costs.

3. Experience is invaluable. Each artist’s work is the result of years of study or training – one does not become a dancer, musician, or painter overnight. When you pay an artist, you’re paying for the years of effort they’ve spent honing their craft and the hours of blood, sweat and tears.

In order for artists in Singapore to be paid what they deserve, a shift of mindset is required. As it stands, the traditional mindset of art as a hobby or a side job is still prevalent in our society, which is why it is not valued as much. Additionally, Singaporeans suffer from “cultural cringe”, which means that they perceive our local work to be inferior to those from other countries. As such, Singaporeans at large often still undervalue local artists.

However, measures are being taken to change this perception. The establishment of the School of the Arts in 2008 is one. The plethora of local arts events, including Baybeats, an annual music festival, and the Singapore Affordable Art Fair, which promotes accessibility to the arts, have definitely caused a noticeable shift in the perspectives of Singaporeans.

Let’s all pay artists what they deserve. They’re professionals as well, and should be treated as such. Also, if artists are happy and able to make ends meet, they can focus more on their craft and produce better work, which would be a win-win situation for everyone involved.

So let’s progress as a society, and give artists the respect they deserve.

A Senseless Clutter

SHINTARO TAY

“Rather than simply allowing for a rapid-fire camera generation, sensible and thinking photographers who appreciate the process of making an image in the analog days should be nurtured.”

The constant onslaught of superficial photographs on the Internet continues to dilute the value of photography in today’s world. This has inadvertently resulted in a senseless clutter of images on the Internet.

Photography was never exclusive. Although it was more expensive in the past, analog film photography was an intricate process which gave people a chance to document. This was widely promoted in instant cameras and even the Brownie cameras which were a hit.

Photography was pretty much akin to sailing in uncertainty. Analog photography established and honed certain skills in individuals which were quintessential in ensuring that each picture was worth the dollar. The people then were not always as blessed as the people of today, who are in an era of instantaneous results.

This taught people to be patient before hitting the shutter. It encouraged people to think about the significance of the image, to get the best out of each frame with proper composition. If a mistake was made, it would be irreversible and irretrievable with money going down the drain. If an image was blurred or if the exposure was wrong, it would be painfully obvious. Maybe it was this sense of uncertainty that made photography

much more meaningful in the past.

Indeed, technology has made it so much easier for people to make images within the palm of their hands – maybe so easy that people become complacent. Just look at the humongous billboard-sized Apple ads at places like Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station that feature photographs taken with iPhones. It creates the perception that anyone can take great photographs with just a single click and nothing more. The emphasis now is on the tools that make the craft, rather than the craftsman.

In today’s social media landscape, being a photographer is akin to being a pop star. Some people end up trying to become “photographers” due to the strong culture of instant gratification from one another. Many are spurred on to make photographs based on an agenda and not because of a genuine interest in photography itself.

In a conversation with Tay Kay Chin, an internationally renowned photojournalist and former picture editor, he shares that “having a handphone and a camera does not make one a photographer. I think the bar just got raised. If you want to be a photographer, you need to be better than anybody with a handphone camera. A photographer needs to have a product to show. A weekend shutterbug does not. If you want to call yourself a photographer, you better have something to show.”

When someone finds something unique, it easily ends up being duplicated because it brought a person success.

Michael Ernest Sweet, a Canadian writer and photographer, agrees: “The vast majority (however, by no means all) of street photography making the rounds on social media and Flickr is simply poor photography – it’s tired, boring, repetitive, visionless digital noise.” All the “digital noise” does



not do justice to masters such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank and Vivian Maier as people are merely copying their styles.

Conversely, the senseless clutter on the Internet may not be a bad thing too. Renowned Singaporean photographer with international accolades, Edwin Koo, shares: “I think it adds to the value of photography because now that everybody is a photographer, they will know how hard it is to make an image that will stand the test of time. I mean everybody can compose. With the mobile phone, everybody can start to learn composition and to add filters but the essence of it is that – what is the substance in your photo? What is the story that you are trying to tell? ... The image that stands the test of time may not be the most liked photo on Instagram but it is something that is etched in one’s mind.”

Although technology rapidly moves ahead with better megapixels and cheaper cameras, the process of photography should be slowed down. Rather than simply allowing for a rapid-fire camera generation, sensible and thinking photographers who appreciate the process of making an image in the analog days should be nurtured.

To counter this, camera apps that encourage individuals to think about the images that they are making, such as “1-Hour Photo” which only allow people to view their images an hour later, are available. It would be even better if phone makers would be willing to adopt such options for their in-built cameras. People may then pick up good photography skills and foster patience.

Although everyone can take pictures, photographers are the ones who decide what to frame and how they should go about doing so. It is not just a process of snapping away senselessly.

Is Singapore's Heritage Fading Away?

RACHEL TOH

I was spending some time at my grandparents' home recently, when it struck me how inept at Hokkien I was. How much of my dialect can I actually speak? In fact, scratch that, am I worthy of being a Hokkien? I can't even have a proper conversation without adding English and Mandarin words to the mix.

Many young people in Singapore already struggle with learning their mother tongue, is it really necessary to learn their respective dialects – especially when they're not even part of the curriculum?

Despite that, the sentimentalist in me emerged. Chinese dialects being a part of Singapore's heritage, it is essential that we retain them.

There are more than 20 dialect groups in Singapore, but the main three are the Hokkiens, Teochews and Cantonese, as stated by Edmond Lee in the 2001 Statistics Singapore Newsletter.

According to IndexMundi, a data portal, despite having a largely Chinese core here in Singapore, at 74.2 per cent, most of them are unable to speak their dialect proficiently. Ask any Chinese teenager on the street and chances are, they can only speak the fundamental words of their dialect.

That, however, shouldn't be the case, because our dialects provide us with insights into our past. Most Singaporean youths only know the basic 'the Chinese come from China', when there is in fact, so much more to that. Many take their dialects for granted and they don't see the dialects as being part of their identity unlike their name.

To further elaborate, dialects are important because each dialect is indicative of where our respective ancestors came from. For example,

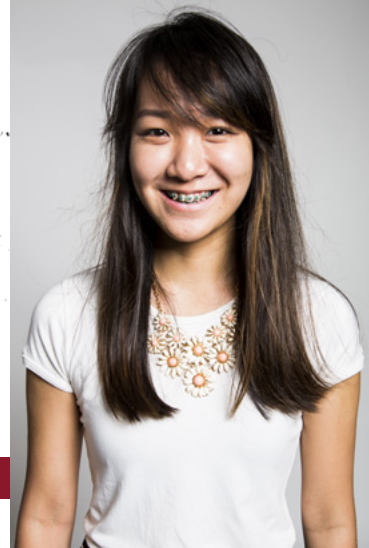
“Many take their dialects for granted and they don't see the dialects as being part of their identity unlike their name.”

the Hokkiens are from Fujian Province and the Teochews are native to the Chaoshan region in Guangdong Province. Yet, Singaporeans simply categorise themselves as Singaporean Chinese without reference to their dialect groups, according to the Singapore Democratic Party website.

Similarly, the Malays in Singapore classify themselves as Singaporean Malays, when in fact they have various races such as Javanese, Acehnese, and Boyanese. The Indians too, have different languages such as Punjabi, Hindi, Sindhi, yet they are often known as Indians in Singapore.

If young people in Singapore are nonchalant about ethnic dialect, it could be due to the fact that there is little emphasis placed on dialects. In an April 2013 article in My Paper, Education Minister Heng Swee Keat said that dialects are an unnecessary burden to students, and that the main focus is to achieve a good standard of English and their mother tongue.

Granted that it is more realistic to learn our mother tongue and the English language, as the former binds the ethnic group and the latter is the key to development. However, our Education Minister's views might not reflect the views of all Singaporeans. There have been online petitions, such as the calling for the re-introduction of dialects on local television and radio programmes in 2013.



The main reason behind this particular petition was to ensure that the elderly are not alienated from society and are still able to keep up with current affairs and have access to entertainment.

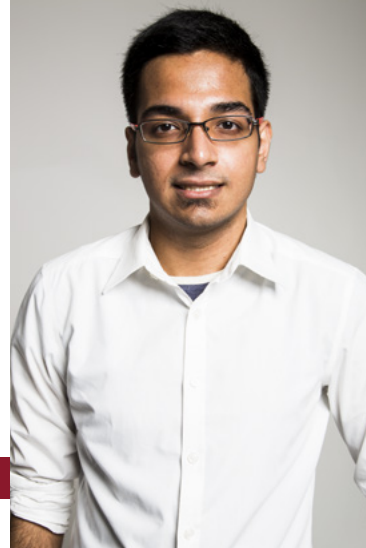
If we lose our dialects, the most significant point is the loss of communication with our elderly grandparents. The Singapore government stresses on the importance of families and taking care of the pioneer generation, yet if we lose our dialects and they are not proficient in Mandarin or English, how do we talk to them and cultivate family bonding?

Dialects aren't only limited to language, they cover food and traditions as well. The Hokkiens have dishes such as Buddha Jumps Over the Wall, which is a complex dish consisting of various ingredients. The Teochews are known for their soups, local favourites such as *bak kut teh*, and not forgetting their porridge as well as steamed pomfret. Singaporeans might have had these dishes, but are unaware of which dialect groups these dishes originated from.

Those who are concerned about the disappearing of our dialects can thus learn to create these dishes and spread word about the respective dialect groups.

Those who are interested in improving their dialects can also visit the Chinese Clan Association, which organises dialect classes. Similarly, there are also YouTube channels that have tutorials on our dialects.

Through various initiatives taken by the people themselves, Singaporeans can hopefully see the significance of dialects and learn them once more.



Internet Best Friend: Not Always a Bad Thing

AMANPREET SINGH

Most people find the notion of having an Internet best friend weird, but in the society we live in today, the chance of us making an Internet best friend is significantly higher than a real life one.

With the rise in popularity of social media sites amongst teenagers, it's inevitable that they come across people from all parts of the world. Of course, some are bad influences or 'Internet trolls'. This is where issues such as cyberbullying come into play. Cries of “don't trust people over the Internet” are always emanating.

However, people fail to realise that there are nice people on the Internet as well and they are not too hard to come across at all. Look at it from this perspective: you have a Twitter account, you tweet about something interesting and then someone else sees it. Before long, a conversation begins and if things get intense, so does a direct message conversation. And in most cases, there is the exchanging of handphone numbers, followed by Whatsapp conversations.

Most people think it's insane to have an Internet best friend because of time differences. Imagine someone living in Singapore and someone living in the UK. That's a seven-hour time difference right there. But when it comes to friendship, time difference should not be a barrier. You can be having lunch while someone else is waking up for school but that doesn't hinder the conversation. Once you are close to each other and share common interests, it doesn't matter what time of the day it is.

Having an Internet best friend doesn't simply mean giving your number to a stranger and then spilling the beans about your entire life. Just like a real-life friendship, it requires time and patience. It can take a long time to build a trustworthy rapport with

“For someone to be living in a totally different environment, yet be able to relate to whatever hardship you are going through is really eye-opening and touching.”

someone. After a while, you realise that this Internet best friend of yours is really precious.

Sometimes, having an Internet best friend is more comforting than having a real-life one. Often in life, we find ourselves needing advice, and confiding in our family and friends is not always the way forward. If one has a best friend on the Internet whom he or she can open up to about anything, then there is another alternative source that can be of use.

Internet best friends of the same age have undergone similar problems at some points in their lives and, hence, they can relate better. The fact that they are from another country means they see things in a different way and can offer a different perspective on a certain issue.

The fact that someone living in London can have a conversation with someone living in Lahore, and talk about things such as studies, relationships, social issues, and the trials and tribulations of life, is really quite remarkable.

I have an Internet friend whom I met on Twitter. She lives in Pakistan, which is three hours behind Singapore. We share many common interests and feel comfortable talking about anything. There's no friction between us and at one point she seemed like the

most amazing person in the world to me, simply because she understood whatever issue I was going through and gave me relevant advice.

I talk to her about my assignments in school, what I had for lunch or dinner and what I am planning to do for the rest of the day, almost every day for the past seven months.

I felt better confiding in my Internet best friend than my friends in real life. And that changed my viewpoint on things a lot. For someone to be living in a totally different environment, yet be able to relate to whatever hardship you are going through is really eye-opening and touching.

However, there are also cons of having an Internet best friend. There are dangers attached and these have to be taken into account because at the end of the day, the Internet is not entirely a safe place. People have to choose their friends wisely and not be silly enough to reveal information that is too personal, which can reveal important life details.

The one personal downside of having an Internet best friend is the fact that you may never get to see him or her in real life. You can have all these conversations with each other but the chances of you both meeting in real life are not high at all. Maybe in that aspect, people have a point about Internet best friends being a waste of time, but then again, no one can predict what happens in the future.

I feel that this stigma attached to the Internet best friend being “non-existent” is misplaced. Most people don't even make the attempt to open up online and come to conclusions based on common perceptions. If that's the case, why should we even bother making friends anymore?

Deon Toh

SINGER-SONGWRITER

1. You're (unfortunately) stuck in a zombie apocalypse and a hoard of zombies starts attacking your base. You:

- a. Go trigger happy on them while cackling
- b. Cry, lay down and accept your fate
- c. Offer to join their army
- d. Take them down - Bruce Lee style

2. If I had a super power, it would be burning fats without any health implications because I LOVE MY FOOD.

3. I would call my blockbuster biopic DEON: The Life (in reference to deontheband, my social media handles, haha).

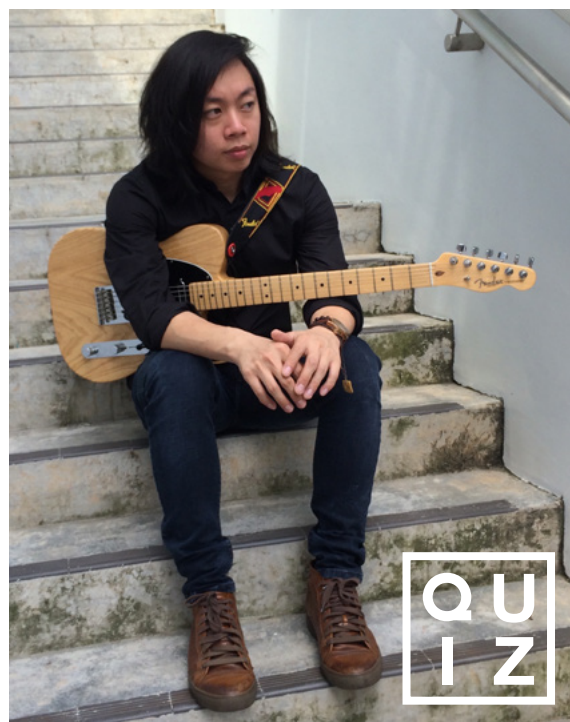
4. What is the most astounding animal fact you know? In-bred farm dogs have a high chance of genetic abnormalities. Adopt strays, guys!

5. When I go to the *mama* shop, I must buy Pocky.

6. What SG50 merchandise would you have liked to see? Canned Kopi or Teh SG50 style. Think Coca-Cola cans.

7. My Singaporean rapper name is D-on.

Singapore is crazy hot, so cool off with Deon's really cool MV, Winter. Set in the beautiful landscapes of Iceland, his video is sure to send you on a trip you wish you'd went on. Check it out on YouTube!



8. Who would you rather be stuck in a lift with?

- a. That annoying relative who keeps asking when you're getting married
- b. Your aunty who constantly compares you to her son
- c. The businessman who doused himself in cologne
- d. Kopitiam uncle who reeks of Tiger Beer

9. When I have *zi char* (Chinese home-style dishes cooked to order), I always, without fail, order prawn paste chicken.

10. I can't sleep without making sure I'm entirely hydrated.

11. The bus is too full to get on, and the next bus comes in 30 minutes. You:

- a. Wait for the next bus
- b. Take a cab
- c. SQUEEZE onto the bus

PART-TIME STUDIES, NEW PROSPECTS



"THIS COURSE PROVIDES ME WITH HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE BY WORKING DIRECTLY WITH INDUSTRY STANDARD NETWORKING DEVICES THAT INTERCONNECT COMPUTER DEVICE."

Mr Ibrahim Ali
A student from
Northumbria University (UK)
BSc (Hons) Computer and Network
Technology programme at MDIS

Real-world education gives young professionals like Ibrahim Ali an edge over their peers

When associate engineer Ibrahim Ali decided to go back to school and further his education, he wanted a course of study that offered a real-world approach to learning.

The 27-year-old has been working in the telecommunications industry for the past five years and is currently doing a Bachelor of Science (Honours) Computer and Network Technology programme at the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS).

Founded in 1956, MDIS is Singapore's oldest not-for-profit professional institute for lifelong learning.

"What attracts me to this course is that it offers me a practical-learning approach over a theory-based approach," says Mr Ibrahim, who has a keen interest in computer networking, software development, building and managing information technology (IT) infrastructure within various operating systems.

The part-time programme he is studying for is awarded by Northumbria University in Britain. The programmes in Britain are accredited by the British Computer Society. Students have the option of taking the Cisco Certified Network Associate examination upon completion of the course.

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Working with industry

For Mr Ibrahim, choosing a course of study that meets his needs and interests was an important first step and he was careful to compare all available programmes in the market.

He picked the MDIS programme because it relates closely to his field of work and promises to impart real-world knowledge.

"It allows me to learn all types of modern enterprise computer systems used today to provide critical IT support for many businesses," says Mr Ibrahim.

"Other similar IT courses tend to have a very deep focus on mostly the technical aspects of IT. Although this is good, it steers away from the real-world applications of the technologies in the IT industry," he adds.

Also, this course allows him to hone skills that go beyond network computing, such as project management and business.

Programmes from Northumbria University (UK)

BSc (Hons) Computer and Network Technology

BSc (Hons) Computer Security



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