

# HYP



#44

Feb - Jul 2017

## SINGLIT

SPOTLIGHTING  
LOCAL WRITERS



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# HYPE

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## HYPESG



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# First-Class Decision

Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL) Graduate Gets Ahead with First Class Honours Degree

**W**ith numerous business-related undergraduate programmes available today, deciding on a suitable one could prove challenging. For Aloysius Tay, the consideration was based on two key factors – the programme's impact on his career prospects, and the quality of teaching. He found the right match in Royal Holloway, University of London's (RHUL) Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Management with International Business programme.

Aloysius decided to further his studies when he recognised how a degree would be pivotal in achieving his career aspiration. "I found out through my thorough research that University of London is well-known for its high assessment standards. The RHUL professors are also experienced specialists in their respective fields, with the ability to foster critical thinking. As part of the curriculum, the University's

lecturers travel to Singapore to conduct lectures and workshops. This means as an offshore student, I don't experience compromise on the assessment and the teaching quality is consistent," shared Aloysius.

Going back to class after an eight-year hiatus was not without its challenge. However, his initial fear of difficulty to juggle between work and studies was dispelled with the programme's flexible structure. The lectures and workshops were arranged to fit working professionals' schedules. Aloysius could also catch up on his lesson through pre-recorded materials availed on the University's portal.

Aloysius' keenness to learn saw great pay-off. He enthused how the programme equipped him with both knowledge in understanding the dynamics of international business and soft skills that improve his communication ability to make compelling business presentations. Best of all, opportunities started knocking right after his graduation with a first-class honours degree. He received calls from head-hunters and was promoted to the role of a Client Manager with Thomson Reuters.

For more information, visit [rhulatkaplan.com.sg](http://rhulatkaplan.com.sg).

**"I don't experience compromise on the assessment and the teaching quality is consistent."**

**Aloysius Tay**  
Client Specialist, Thomson Reuters





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## FILM

Chasing Dreams: Nearing Nirvana	28
Paint the Town White	32
Ready, Set, #Beastmode	33
The Legend Lives – Again	34
Guardians Misfits Turn Stellar Heroes	35
Baywatch is the One to Watch	36
Time to Take to the High Seas	37
Girl Power	38
Marvel Welcomes Web-Slinger Home	39
Back to the Future	40



## STAGE

10	Long Live SingLit
14	Unreal Reality
15	Soul Far, Soul Good
16	Though She Be But Little, She is Fierce
17	Slam (Poetry) Dunk
18	Taking the Road Less Travelled
19	Fixated on Words
20	Preserving Malay Writing
21	Time Travelling with Words
22	Let's Be Alone Together
23	Not All Glitz and Glamour
24	A Woman's Touch
25	Recreating Reality
26	Innocence Lost
27	Starving Local Musician: Fact or Fiction?

## EAT

41	A Taste of Character
42	A Chocolate Affair
43	Confection Confessions
44	To Granddaughter From Grandmother
45	Experience Dumplings
46	No Batter Joy than Baking
48	High on Tea
50	Oh My Cod
52	Whisk Whizz
53	Timeless Treats



# 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](http://fmsmidea.com)

# STENTS CONTENTS

## PLAY

Tomes of Tomorrow	65
Finding Love Online in London	66
Hi River	68
Monochrome Mania	70
Listen Up	71
Game of Love	72
Gamer Jocks	73
Staycations: Here to Stay	74
Freedom at a Cost	76
App-solutely Social	80

74



54

## LOOK

54	London Lovin'
----	---------------

## SHOP

59	Rok It with Thrift Stores
60	Barter is Better
62	Back(pack) to the Basics
64	Contain Your Grains

## TOUCH

82	(Para)Sporting a Difference
83	Diamonds in the Rough
87	Born to be Global Citizens
90	Paper Chase Out of Place
91	Stop Picking on Food
92	Why Personal Mobility Devices Should Be Banned
93	Stop Looking Down on "Unglamorous Jobs"
94	Too Rough for You?
95	You've Got Mail
96	Privacy, A Right or A Privilege?
97	Feminism Not Defined by Gender



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

From Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* in 800 BC to Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* in 2016, literature has continued to be representative of different stages of society and cultural growth.

There is no better way to understand the makings of a society and its people than to read the literary works it produces. In this issue, we focus on **SingLit** to better understand our Singaporean identity and our writers.

Our cover story **(p.10)** is an in-depth look at the current state of Singapore's literary scene and the writers who create the scene.

To understand our Asian roots, we looked into the makings of Chinese television dramas **(p.28)**, dissecting this fast-growing medium of storytelling in China and how it differs from its counterparts.

We also give you a special spread on Britain's capital where food, fashion and shopping abound. From traditional scones and high tea **(p.48)** to searching for hidden gems in London's secondhand bookstores **(p.65)**, we show you why London is still a top city for visitors.

Scraping the veneer of gloss and glitter, we delve into what it means to be an inclusive society that looks after itself and its kind without fear or favour. Find out how at-risk youths **(pg.83)** in London and Singapore go about their day-to-day lives.

While we live in a global community, we must remember to return to the heart of the matter and embrace our origins – starting with a book about the society which we inhabit and will inherit.

Christy Heah

## Long Live SINGLIT

Dust off your bookshelves and make way for new reads as the #BuySingLit campaign rolls out in full force. Rediscover reading and writing for the Singaporean audience with CAMILLIA DASS and CONSTANCE GOH and get the insider's look on nine up-and-coming local writers in HYPE's exclusive 13-page spread on the latest literary movement to rock the Lion City





Photo courtesy of National Library Board

A 19-year-old student reads 10 to 19 books a year. None is a Singaporean work. A 21-year-old student reads about 50 books in a year. Yet, he can only name two local authors. Another student who reads about 50 books a year claims that he does not read local books because he is “not interested” and that “nothing is good enough”.

The new #BuySingLit campaign aims to change these statistics.

The year-long campaign launched in February this year is spearheaded by the National Arts Council (NAC) and is supported by local publishers such as Ethos Books and Epigram Books.

It hopes to encourage Singaporeans to pick up books written by people who’d grown up in the same environment as them – authors who would understand their reality much better than international ones.

“#BuySingLit is another platform to promote Singapore literary titles, writers and book businesses to the public.

It is an industry-led movement to celebrate stories from Singapore. Home-grown book publishers,

retailers and literary non-profits have come together to encourage more people to discover and embrace Singapore’s literature,” says Ms May Tan, acting director (Literary Arts) at the NAC.

It is the first time writers, publishers, book distributors, bookshops and the NAC are coming together for such a large-scale initiative.

“The end goal of #BuySingLit is to reflect the Singaporean society, its people and the issues – past, present and future – that drives its development. It contributes to our national consciousness and our culture,” says Mr Goh Eck Kheng, the publisher of Landmark Books.

HYPE conducted a survey with 60 respondents between the ages of 10 and 40 and found that only 56.7 per cent of them have read a piece of Singaporean literature before.

Even worse, half of the respondents have not read any local books in the past year.

One of the biggest contributing factors towards Singaporeans supporting more writers around the world is the fact that bookstores and libraries offer better placement and promotion for international books than Singaporean books. “Local books aren’t really recommended on bestseller lists,” says Angelique Lee, 19, a student at Ngee Ann

**“The end goal of #BuySingLit is to reflect the Singaporean society, its people and the issues – past, present and future – that drives its development. It contributes to our national consciousness and our culture.**

– Mr Goh Eck Kheng, publisher of Landmark Books



Polytechnic. “Hence, when I’m looking for new books to read, local books don’t stand out to me.”

However, Mr Matthias Low, the retail merchandising manager of MPH bookstore, Singapore’s oldest book retailer, offers a reason for local titles not receiving much publicity.

“Our efforts as a retailer to promote local literature are always subjected to commercial consideration. Limited shelf space and the competition from internationally well-known and proven bestselling authors [leave] our local writers with very little selling proposition,” he says.

Singaporeans can expect to see a change in the way local literary works are promoted with events such as book sales, author meet-and-greets, sidewalk poetry and even a heartland scavenger hunt for books.

“We hope the #BuySingLit movement will encourage more readers of all levels to support by purchasing and reading Singapore literature and to see this project as a positive initiative by the book industry to reignite the joy of reading and [to] celebrate our local writers and works,” says Ms Tan.

## ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY

Oftentimes, Singaporean students first come into contact with local works during English and Literature classes in secondary school.

But this interest rarely extends beyond the classroom. HYPE’s survey respondents cite the demands of the nation’s rigorous school

system as a problem – students have to juggle between seven and 10 subjects alongside reading the required materials, leaving little time for leisurely reading.

Moreover, a career in writing is generally frowned upon in Singapore, which could inadvertently affect students’ perception and interest in local works.

“The education system should be more encouraging towards aspiring writers. I’ve had teachers tell me to give up writing as it’s not a practical job,” says Adelena Oh, 19, a student at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. She reads about 40 to 50 books a year, none of which are local books.

Perhaps the problem lies in the singular style of writing adopted by writers here.

Focusing solely on Singapore with a poetic slant, this particular style does not appeal to the majority of the survey respondents who prefer reading about issues that extend beyond the country’s borders.

Kiran Makwana, 21, a Singaporean law student based in London, says: “I think that the local literary scene is still very young and therefore still quite ‘inward-looking’. The focus is often a commentary on or reaction to the political and social atmosphere of Singapore.”

She recognises that local literary works are an expression of the nation and her people but feels that there is room for exploring topics and themes not limited to the little red dot.

“While I do appreciate that writers tend to write about what they know best, the next stage is to move beyond a Singapore-centric approach and tackle material that is more universal.”

Adelena agrees: “Many Singaporean authors have a very similar voice and it’s not a voice I’m a big fan of, which also leads to a lack of variety in interesting literary voices.”

## BOOK BIRTHDAYS

2017 is set to be a big year for the literary scene in Singapore with an exciting line-up of book launches. Check out the titles slated for release in the upcoming months:

### MARCH

*NTU Chapbooks*

### APRIL

*17A Keong Saik Road* by Charmaine Leung

### JUNE

*The Story of Chew Joo Chiat* by Philip Chew

### JULY

*UnFree Verse Anthology*

### AUGUST

*The Birthday Book: 2017*

### SEPTEMBER

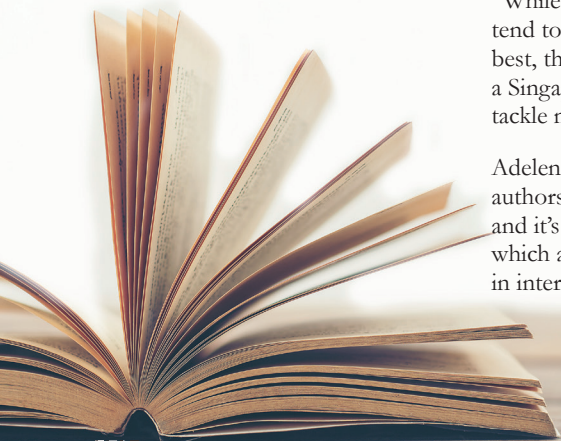
*The Untold Story of the Lancing Girls: Life in the Big Three Worlds* by Adeline Foo

### OCTOBER

*The Southeast Asian Anthology of Poetry and Prose*

### NOVEMBER

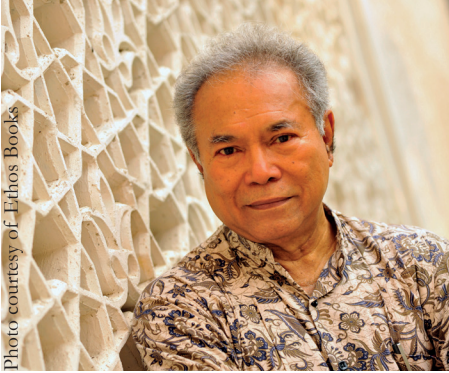
*The Magic Circle* by Charmaine Chan



# SINGLIT'S

## Pioneers

Every day, new voices emerge in the ever-growing pool of local writers – but it would not have been possible if Singapore's literary pioneers had not taken the first bold step to carve out Singapore's literature scene. Take a look at two of the country's most prominent writers:



### EDWIN THUMBOO

Mr Thumboo started writing poems at the age of 17 and is highly respected as the unofficial poet laureate of Singapore.

His most famous piece of work, *Ulysses by the Merlion*, was published in 1977 and won the National Book Development Council Singapore award a year after it was published.

At 82, he is now the Emeritus Professor of English at National University of Singapore's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.



### ALFIAN SA'AT

Mr Sa'at, 40, is an established poet, writer and playwright. He published his first collection of poetry, *One Fierce Hour*, at the age of 21.

A year later, his first collection of short stories, *Corridor*, bagged the Singapore Literature Prize Commendation Award.

Mr Sa'at is known for his distinct style of provocative writing which he continues to publish unofficially on his social media accounts. His works have been recognised internationally as well, with two of them on the recommended reading list by the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. 

# UNREAL REALITY

As postmodern fiction spreads through the Singapore literary scene, ADELENA OH sits down for a chat with one of the editors of a Singaporean anti-realist anthology

Turn to **page 25** for the review on *this is how you walk on the moon: an anthology of anti-realist fiction*



Photo: Charlene Koh

Imagine putting out an open call for short stories and checking your email for responses alongside your fellow editors. The days drag by, as a mere five submissions sit in your inbox for months.

That was the struggle Patricia Karunungan, 24, and her two other editors Samuel Caleb Wee and Wong Wen Pu faced as they juggled compiling a collection of anti-realist fiction stories alongside their schoolwork as undergraduates at Nanyang Technological University.

Fortunately, over a hundred short stories came in towards the end of the six-month submission period, erasing the trio's fears of failing themselves and their publisher Ethos Books.

The shortlisted works would become *this is how you walk on the moon: an anthology of anti-realist fiction*, which also features Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) graduates Arin Fong and Audrey Tan.

"A question we got asked a lot in the process of compiling the book was what if we got a really, really good story in the style of [Anton] Chekhov? It's brutally realist – not anti-realist at all – so what would we do?" says Patricia, who had been a HYPE editor

while studying in NP. "The simple answer is that we take [the story]."

She elaborates that she and the other two editors felt fiction with strong realistic elements could still be categorised as anti-realist.

"For example, when you watch a play, you know everything that's happening onstage is fake," she explains.

"When you actually look at what goes into your theatrical production to make that story come alive – all the various technical details – and the more you know about what fiction does to prove to you it's [realistic], you realise that the reality it tries to present is quite artificial as well."

Haruki Murakami, Gabriel García Márquez, Jeanette Winterson and Luigi Pirandello were cited as muses of the anthology. However, Patricia and her team had also consulted postmodern narrative theorists like Brian McHale to ensure "a balance of the creative and the critical".

"We wanted to give readers a good reading experience [but] we also wanted to challenge them," she says.

It did result in a couple of stories that audiences either passionately loved or

hated – mainly one titled "Weapons of Mass Destruction". Patricia cheekily says: "About the blowjob [in the story], we got a lot of feedback that it's great, it's funny, it's clever, but we've also got some apprehensive responses."

The anthology may seem unintended for the average reader and the editors had been aware of that from the start.

"To be quite frank, we knew we would be appealing mostly to people who already have knowledge of the kinds of literature we're engaging with," says Patricia.

"Ultimately, I think for the writers to get the exposure they deserve, we do have to put the enjoyment of readers first."

The English major also hopes to locally publish her own collection of fiction within the next few years.


She advises budding local writers: "Honestly, if you're not prepared for hardship, you shouldn't go down this route. You definitely still need a day job. If you want to quit your job and spend a whole year just writing a book, I hope you have financial support or enough savings to tide you through that. But well, hardship builds character." 



Photo: Charlene Koh



# Soul far, Soul Good

Articulating emotions clearly on paper is not always easy, but Daryl Qilin Yam proves it's possible in a full-length novel. CAMILLIA DASS speaks to the author of *Kappa Quartet*

**T**his was what a friend of Daryl Qilin Yam, 26, said after reading a short story written by him: “[Your work] is like looking into a bowl of clear water.”

But it wasn't all that easy for Daryl to express his emotions clearly when he first started writing.

He describes his first poem as “emo” with “a lot of anger and anguish”.

“I always believe that every piece I write comes from an emotional point of view but it morphs into something more calculated, more calm. It took a long time [for it] to ‘distill’ to ‘clear water’. Lots of time to get it ‘clean’.”

Daryl had struggled with feeling like an outcast when he was 13 and sought solace in reading and writing.

“I chanced upon *The Persimmon Tree* by Marjorie Barnard when I was in secondary three. The moment I read it, I knew I would spend the rest of my life trying to emulate what she had achieved in those few thousand words,” he says.

Daryl has published five short stories in the Quarterly Literary Review Singapore. The first two, *It's Not Valid*

and *Love is a Killer*, were written in 2010 and published in 2013.

“Looking back, I think it's so emotional and cynical,” he recalls. “If you look at the latest stories, you can see how different it is – much more cold and clinical but also contemplative.”


Daryl's first full-length novel, *Kappa Quartet*, was largely written while Daryl pursued a degree in English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Warwick in England. The story, which was inspired by what Daryl saw in the world, follows a soulless young man, Kevin, who is holidaying in Tokyo.

“There's a deep sense of emptiness in people and I realised that. Some people have never been in love before. Some don't have a purpose or have been emotionally numbed in a way. I was drawn to this and the idea of spinning something out of nothing. How do you write about something that people can't even articulate? That was very interesting to me.”

He entered the book in the Epigram Books Fiction Prize Award 2015 and while it did not receive an award, he was contacted by an editor at Epigram who was keen on publishing his novel

as part of the prize's longlist. *Kappa Quartet* was launched at the Singapore Writer's Festival in 2016 and is set to be released in the UK in May this year.

Daryl is currently working as an arts organiser at Sing Lit Station and hopes to put out a new book in 2018.

Sharing a piece of advice for budding writers, he says: “There are a lot of things to fear going into this industry but if it's your calling, why should you stop? If you leave a calling unanswered, you'll always be unfulfilled in some way. It's only then that you have really failed.” 

*Additional reporting by Jasmine Loke*

**“I always believe that every piece I write comes from an emotional point of view but it morphs into something more calculated, more calm.”**

– Daryl Qilin Yam, author



Photo: Charlene Koh

## Though She Be But Little, She Is **PIERCE**

Diana Rahim talks to ESTELLA MONTEIRO about writing boldly about her beliefs on empowering women – especially those of Islamic faith – in Singapore

Upon meeting Diana Rahim, 24, for the first time, don't be fooled by her small frame and easy-going personality – the literature graduate is not afraid to speak her mind and is passionate about feminism, classism and reformist issues in the Islamic context.

From fiction to poetry and articles, her works have been published in multiple online forums and organisations such as United Nations (UN) Women, National Library Board and Hedgebrook.org.

She wrote two chapters, "Too in Love with Love to Marry" and "Can I Have My Body Back Now", in *Perempuan: Muslim Women Speak Out*.

A joint effort between 31 writers, *Perempuan* gives readers an insider's look into the expectations women face regarding gender and sexuality, body image and cultural identity. The book aims to spark conversations about the lives of Muslim women in Singapore.

An excerpt of the treatment she received as a result of being "unconventional" reads: "I do not wear the hijab and even though I do not wear it, its cultural weight is still present in the very fact that it is not there.

Because I do not wear it, the opposite values are ascribed to me. Muslim women who do not wear the hijab are often viewed as less pious and the practice of our faith is viewed as incomplete."

Diana describes her writing as "personal is political" and hopes that she can reach out to individuals who feel isolated regarding taboos and controversial issues. She also hopes to provide an alternative view on issues to those who share different perspectives and sentiments.

"People tend to say that I have a more personal slant to things," she says. "I try to be as real and honest, but not too polemical because I think there is enough of that in the world already.

I realised creative writing and poetry are non-polemical forms to tease out social criticism. That way, I can say what I want to say."

Among her muses is local poet and fictionist, Cyril Wong.

"When I first encountered Cyril Wong's poetry in junior college, it was the first time I ever cared about Singapore's literature. It is writers like these whom I love because they tend to be more personal and confessional who really embody the phrase 'personal is political'."

When asked to share about her best piece of work, she referred to her poem *The People You Love Do Not Stay Dead*. She cites her writing in it as a mystery: "I'm not this good. I don't know where it came from – I probably got possessed or something".

As for future plans, Rahim hopes to be more comfortable in expressing herself through causes that she feels strongly about. **F**



Photo: Charlene Koh

# SLAM (poetry) RUNK

Charismatic Shivram Gopinath talks to DANIA AMIRIL about conquering the spoken word

**B**eing the champion for the Singapore National Poetry Slam Championship for two consecutive years is no easy feat, but Shivram Gopinath, 32, has proven that it is possible.

Despite his confident demeanour and comedic nature in delivering slam poetry, Gopinath is actually a man from humble beginnings.

Growing up in Chennai, India, he only immigrated to Singapore in 2002 to pursue a degree in business from Singapore Management University.

He shares his nerve-racking experience of taking part in his very first poetry slam competition: “The first time I came on stage, I said the first verse and completely blanked out after. I repeated it over and over to make it sound like it was intentional.”

Luckily, he bounced back from that incident when he came out top in the competition and was inspired to take writing more seriously.


With the support from the local writing community, he pushed himself to take part in more competitions.

When asked what spurred him to start writing, he jokingly says that he wrote poems “to pick up girls” during his university days. Little did he expect to continue pursuing his passion for writing alongside being the creative director at UltraSuperNew, a creative Japanese start-up company.

Some of his works include *Archemelay* (‘no fear’ in Tamil), where he used existing poems from his favourite Tamil poet, Subramania Bharati, to write spin-offs and *Love is Like a Packet of Potato Chips*, where he shares about his dating experience in Singapore.

For now, Gopinath has not set his sights on publishing his works internationally as his main focus is on writing.

He advises budding poets, saying: “If you want to be a good writer, you definitely need to be a massive reader. Expose yourself to different

types of writing – you shouldn’t be afraid to read anything.” 

**“The first time I came on stage, I said the first verse and completely blanked out after. I repeated it over and over to make it sound like it was intentional.”**

– Shivram Gopinath, author

Stand a chance to win 5 Singlit Books! Turn to **page 98** to find out more.



# TAKING THE Road Less Travelled

It was an unconventional jump from corporate to creative writing for Euginia Tan. MEGAN CHEAH sits down with the author to discover the workings of her creative muse

Writing was already a way to earn money when then-22-year-old Euginia Tan self-published her first poetry collection, *Songs About Girls*, in 2012.

"I started writing when I was 13, because my mother was a magazine editor and she needed someone to do [Chinese to English] translations for her," Euginia, 26, says. "To me, writing is something calculated as you can give value to the number of words, as [clients] pay me by word count."

As such, it wasn't until the editor of a journal she'd been writing for, Storm, suggested she pursue creative writing that Euginia delved into the local literature scene and discovered how vastly different the two worlds were.

"When I [first] looked at local literature, I was quite detached," Euginia says. "So when I actually got into the scene, I didn't have a sense of what was considered respectable or any creative influences, because all the reading I ever did was [written by] Western authors."

Despite that, she decided to self-publish *Songs About Girls* and her second poetry collection, *Playing Pretty*, in 2013. It then took her three years before Ethos Books published her third book, *Phedra*, in 2016.

"It's a painful journey because you make many mistakes along the way, ... and so many times, you wish that you can take some things back, but you realise it's already out there so you shouldn't regret," she says.

Like most emerging writers in Singapore, Euginia's writing draws clearly from her own experiences and observations of people around her.

"As a writer, you tend to become more observant and you become sensitive to people and spaces and how we interact with the space. A lot of things in the environment play a part in it, even simple things like trees and water."

Music also plays an important role in her writing, as she finds that rap and poetry often have "the same rhythm and beat".

"There are many great rappers out there, but I personally listen to [American hip hop artist] QuEST, [American neo soul band] The Internet and the earlier [tunes of American rapper] Jay-Z."

Although she would not encourage self-publishing, Euginia says that doing so helped her "get her voice back out" as she had been recovering from depression during that time.

"[A few] years ago, the stigma [against mental illnesses] was pretty

strong, [so] I wanted a piece of work that would tell [others that] people with mental illness shouldn't be stigmatised against," she shares. "It was a release of emotion, so I guess today, it would be considered a bit ranty, but it helped me then."

Ultimately, Euginia hopes to make a mark in the Singapore literature scene and while she might have once counted her words for money, the lack of a stable income in creative writing does not deter her from publishing future books.

"My main motivation [to do creative writing] was to contribute to the scene here, which has often been misunderstood and misinterpreted," she says. "[Although] the arts industry here is hard to make ends meet, I think a lot of artists know what they are getting into [and] they still continue because they really can't imagine doing anything else." ■

As a writer, you tend to become more observant and you become sensitive to people and spaces and how we interact with the space.

— Euginia Tan, author

# FIXATED ON *Words*

To Nurul Wahidah, language creates the landscape of the mind, as ANTHEA WANG discovers



Photo: Charlene Koh

While most writers are inspired by their beliefs, opinions or even personal experiences, Nurul Wahidah, 25, writes because she is intrigued by words. Her poem, “Rain Ropes”, was featured in *From Walden to Woodlands*, an anthology of poems focused on nature, published under the imprint Ethos Books in 2015.

Claiming that words are her muse, Nurul shares her recent fixation with how meanings are attached to certain words because of their pronunciation.

“Words are not really as arbitrary as they seem,” she says, citing the Bouba/Kiki effect discovered by German-American psychologist Wolfgang Kohler as an example.

In this experiment, two shapes are drawn: one sharp and the other round. Participants are then tasked with matching the shapes to the appropriate sounds – either “Kiki” or “Bouba”. Majority of participants usually pick the sharp object to be “Kiki” and the round-edged to be “Bouba”.

“There’s something about the ‘i’ and the ‘k’ that is very sharp, and about the ‘o’ and ‘u’ sounds that match [the round shape],” she explains.

Her fascination with the psychological aspects of language can be attributed to her knowledge in the field. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Nanyang Technological University, she decided to pursue a master’s degree in literature at the same university after taking a creative writing module.

Despite switching subjects, she hasn’t forgotten her roots in psychology.

“I’m still interested in psychology, especially in how it pertains to writing,” she says.


Nurul draws inspiration from anything around her at the most random of times, but she always tries to pen her thoughts down as fast as possible. Because of the way her poems are structured, she has switched over from Microsoft Word to Adobe Photoshop to move the words around.

While she finds it difficult to narrow down the authors she likes, she cites a research paper about the experience of beauty titled *Beauty and Emotion* by Armstrong and Detweiler-Bedell that “blew her mind”.

“I spent one whole year with that particular paper and it helped me with my FYP (final-year project). I

felt that it was the most life-changing thing I read,” she says, “One of the things that changed when I read that paper was that it made me think about the difference between what is ‘pretty’ and what is ‘beautiful’.”

Regarding the growing literature scene in Singapore and the recent Buy SingLit event, Nurul says that the panels were “a lot more diverse” this time round.

“That’s good because people have this conception that only a certain group of people [write] and it’s very interesting to hear from people whose voices haven’t been heard, and people whose voices need to be heard.” 

**... it’s very interesting to hear from people whose voices haven’t been heard, and people whose voices need to be heard.**

– Nurul Wahidah, author



Photo: Charlene Koh

# Preserving Malay Writing

Budding writer Nur Aisyah Lyana talks to CHERYL TANG about bagging big literary awards and building the local Malay literature scene

**E**very young writer has probably dreamed of being published in a local newspaper and winning at least one prestigious writing competition.

As for Nur Aisyah Lyana, 20, that was a dream come true. Her short story, *When I Grow Up*, was published in *Berita Harian* when she was just 14, being the youngest recipient of the Golden Point Award in 2013 alongside receiving an honourable mention in the Malay short story category.

While it is no easy feat accomplishing such milestones at an especially young age, Aisyah remains extremely humble about her achievements.

"I don't see myself as a writer yet," Aisyah expresses. "I haven't really published anything. I'm quite competitive so I'm more into competitions and I'm still learning."

Her short stories are mainly thrillers, which cover topics such as war and the death penalty.

Her inspiration stems from her mother, who also serves as a harsh but well-meaning critic.


"She's the most blunt person when it comes to writing – she'll just blatantly point out all the bad things," the National Junior College alumnus says with a laugh. "It's quite difficult to match up to her standards because she sets the benchmark so high. It's a challenge to get to her level!"

Another source of inspiration comes from fellow Singaporean writer Noor Hasnah Adam. "The way she writes and conveys messages is very easy to understand, so I wanted to try and do something like her."

Aisyah wishes to educate Malay youths and preserve the culture through her writing, but there is little interest in the local Malay literature community.

"It's quite sad, because if you ask youths about Malay literature, the first thing they'll think of is school, like *sastera* (Malay literature), or old people's writing."

However, she sees potential in expanding the community. "I'm quite sure that there are a lot of budding writers out there. They just don't know how to tap on their potential or the platforms available to display their work."

Aisyah will begin her university education later this year and hopes to pursue journalism. Meanwhile, she intends to push for more interest in *sastera* in Singapore and hopes to eventually bring her work to the Malaysian audience. 

**It's quite sad, because if you ask youths about Malay literature, the first thing they'll think of is school, like *sastera* (Malay literature), or old people's writing.**

– Nur Aisyah Lyana, author





# TIME TRAVELLING with words

Daryl Lim Wei Jie talks to ANIKA NALE about fusing history and his family in his poems



Photo: Charlene Koh

**H**ow did a young man with a master's degree in history from the University of Cambridge end up becoming a poet?

As a young boy, Daryl Lim was never interested in writing. Instead, he was captivated by reading and researching on both local and international history. In fact, his passion drove him to pursue multiple history degrees from renowned universities such as Oxford and Cambridge.

It was only after successfully acquiring his master's degree, that he decided to translate his acquired knowledge into poetry works.

"I love reading, but I always thought something was amiss. So I decided to write something that I would read," Daryl says.

With no formal background in literature, he felt somewhat undermined and unfamiliar with the literature scene in Singapore. His challenge was breaking away from mimicking the voices of well-known writers such as Geoffrey Hill, Toh Hsien Min and Arthur Yap.

"[It's difficult to] find a voice that is yours," he elaborates. "When you start writing, you usually imitate [the] people you like."

He soon realised that he could not do it alone. In a mere three years, with the help and warm welcome of the local arts community, Daryl discovered his voice with people who were more than willing to listen.

"I joined a workshop of writers from Math Paper Press, as I believe that opportunities and constructive feedback can only be given by a community," he says.

"They are my friends, my critics and my inspiration."

Daryl, who is in his late 20s and works as a civil servant in the day, says: "There's something about the Singaporean perspective of the world that is interesting and should be brought out."


According to him, the local literature scene has been shaped by culture, history and even public housing, which are reflected in his first published collection of poetry, *A Book of Changes*. Daryl describes the anthology as a "collection of history, memory and being an individual in the flow of time".

His favourite suite of poems starts with "21st July 1964," where national history meets his family.

"21st July 1964 symbolises the start of the racial riots during a Malay

procession for Prophet Muhammad. I discovered that my grandparents were involved, trying to run away from the riots," Daryl says.

Finalising the manuscript of *A Book of Changes* was a painful journey. Discarding many poems that did not make the cut was essential in ensuring that he achieved his final vision of the product, which had evolved over time.

However, that feeling is not uncommon. Daryl shares a piece of advice for budding writers: "Read a lot, then write a lot and discard most of it, because you will constantly change until you find your voice. Don't write to be famous or to earn money. Write because you have something to say, provide a perspective no one has provided." 

**There's something about the Singaporean perspective of the world that is interesting and should be brought out.**

— Daryl Lim Wei Jie, author

# Let's Be alone together



Photo: Charlene Koh

NG JING ZHI talks to Benedicta J. Foo about capturing the unique loneliness of metropolitan cities in her poems

**B**linding neon lights glow stark against a background of dark, quiet streets adjacent to red-light districts. The distant murmur of people rises occasionally, before settling into deep, heavy silence.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of densely populated cities, there is a certain biting loneliness one feels from prolonged exposure in such a landscape – as if everyone is isolated within their own little bubbles despite being interconnected.

All her life, Benedicta J. Foo, 23, has been drawn to this “lo-fi art movement” that she seeks to portray in her works. Perhaps it is the fact that she has lived in multiple big cities – namely Jakarta and Singapore – that cultivated her fascination with solitude.

“As much as I can, I do strive for the same kind of suffocation and liberation you’d feel watching a Wong Kar-wai movie,” she says, referring to the Hong Kong filmmaker who is best known for his highly stylised and impassioned films.

“The feeling of loneliness within cities is very amplified there [Hong Kong] and it’s ridiculously depressing,” she says with a laugh.

It all started with English homework in primary school – while many

students bemoan having to write essays, it was a form of escape that felt more of a hobby than a chore to her. This followed through secondary school, before she grew more serious about writing when she took up a module in Creative Writing at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Now, whenever she’s not busy copywriting advertisements for transportation company Uber, she’s off capturing cityscapes and late night drives in her poems.

“It’s cathartic,” she says. “I would say my writing is turbulent and tumultuous. I tend to write a lot about water elements, such as the ocean.”

And just like how water moves freely, she prefers to not set strict guides for herself so that she doesn’t restrict the freedom and creativity of her writing.

“I like to think of the content before moving on to the structure. You can force things into a medium, but it might not work.”

Benedicta has had her fair share of struggles with writers’ block, but the recurring feeling that her writing is “juvenile” and much like “stargazing” often leaves her frustrated.

“People out there write meaningful things that will change the world as opposed to me. Take Eric Valles for example: he writes about war


and trauma. I address very universal themes, but I just don’t know how to elevate them.”

Despite winning the top award at the National Poetry Festival last year for her poem *Cordelia*, she is unsure of whether she will publish her works in the near future.

“It’s mostly cathartic for now, and a lot of my poems are very mismatched. But if I think something is publishable, I’ll try to string them into a book,” she says.

She also cites the difficulty of selling poetry unless it is written to cater to a specific audience – much like what Lang Leav, author of *Love & Misadventure*, does.

While Benedicta feels that the new wave of local literature is “definitely good” as more writers are moving towards experimental and exploratory pieces, there’s definitely still much room for improvement.

“We need to include new audiences and new material. A lot of the work feels a bit like stargazing and sometimes it feels almost echo-y and I feel like a majority of the active readers you see are also our own writers. It’s good that the writers now do seem to be getting younger and younger, but we need a healthy balance of young readers to come in and start reading SingLit too.” 

# NOT ALL GLITZ AND GLAMOUR



US author Timothy O'Grady tells JASMINE LOKE the gritty stories behind the glitz of Sin City

**M**ention Las Vegas and one would think of casinos, vibrant nightlife and vices of all kinds. The lives of the children in Las Vegas, however, are often almost unheard of.

Timothy O'Grady, author of *Children of Las Vegas*, wanted their stories to be heard. "I thought it was an emergency," he says, during his book launch in Singapore last November.

According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, more than 42 million visitors flock to the city every year. This is almost three times the number of annual visitor arrivals to Singapore.

For O'Grady, the "superficial" city is the "loneliest place to be". "It never appealed to me," he says. He finds "no beauty in the buildings", and feels that the casinos were boring and unhappy.

During his book launch at The Pod at the National Library, O'Grady says that Vegas has an "aura of distress, anger and shame", where "human pain lurked in the air".

Las Vegas was the "last place" he expected to be.

A fellowship from the Black Mountain Institute brought him to Vegas, and he stayed another year to teach. But even after staying for a year, he could not understand how the city functioned.

"There was a lack of sign of human life," where "windows were always closed," he says. But little did he expect that one of his many classes would become a starting point that changed his understanding of the city. When his students started to share about their personal life stories, he began to understand what he previously struggled to grasp about the city.

O'Grady was shocked when he first heard them. He thought: "What kind of place is this? It seemed like a reversal of nature," he says, where young people had to take up the responsibility of looking after their parents. He saw that almost three-quarters of that class "had stories that strained imagination", and felt a strong conviction to share these "stories of human transcendence" with others.

However, finding a publisher for *Children of Las Vegas* turned out to be a major challenge.

He had initially wanted to feature these stories in a magazine but all the editors rejected his proposal. Not wanting to give up despite the setbacks, he developed the stories into a book, and proposed it to several publishers. It was not well received. One Las Vegas publisher even told him that tourists and residents would not want to read such stories.

He eventually met Mr Fong Hoe Fang, publisher of Ethos Books, in 2012,

who agreed to publish *Children of Las Vegas* without hesitation, because he felt strongly about the topic.

O'Grady hopes that readers of his book will "think about themselves just as much as he thought of himself" when he wrote the book. He hopes readers would better understand how easy it is to be lured into the vices of Vegas which would then inspire a process of self reflection. **F**

**What kind of place is this? It seemed like a reversal of nature.**

– Timothy O'Grady, author



Photo courtesy of Marc Nair

Turn to **page 26** for the review on *Children of Las Vegas*



## BOOK REVIEW:

# A WOMAN'S

## touch

To leave a lasting impression, sometimes all one needs is to bring out the voice of a woman – and emerging author

Eugenia Tan does exactly that with *Phedra*, her third poetry collection.

Highlighting significant moments in her life through a feminine lens and being inherently personal in nature, the poignant retellings ring true for those who have gone through similar experiences and draw the rest in by placing them in her shoes.


It follows themes from her previous two collections, *Songs About Girls* and *Playing Pretty*, with the mood progressing from wistful to intense.

*Phedra* touches on the topic of death as Tan penned poems for her late grandmothers. “They Are Waiting For Me To Ask Her To Die” is one such piece, with the speaker being coerced into a decision to let a loved one rest: “you will break to everyone else that / she will have to die. / while the rest of us can shed our tears in peace”.

As blunt as it is about a sensitive subject, it displays the situation in a raw, unveiled manner without flowery descriptors to sugarcoat the voice.

That is not to say her other poems are simply put as detailed narrative pictures in the reader’s mind which will keep one turning all 84 pages to the end. Singaporean author Grace Chia commented that her works “turn angst into art and the prosaic into the poetic, balancing such tension on a bed of unusual and unforgettable metaphors”.

She also weaves in mythology, with *Phedra*’s eponymous poem referencing the character from Greek folklore. By combining legend with everyday tales, the book is able to open a new window for readers to look at their own experiences – though it is likely to hit closer to home for females, with the speaker’s identity clearly that of the fairer sex.

Thoughtfully wrought, *Phedra* is a sensitively compiled page-turner that resonates with readers while being completely personal at the same time. 

... turn angst into art and the prosaic into the poetic, balancing such tension on a bed of unusual and unforgettable metaphors.

- Grace Chia, author

BY MEGAN CHEAH



Photo courtesy of Ethos Books

**Phedra**

By Eugenia Tan

Ethos Books

\$16 (including GST)

84 pages

Available at Kinokuniya and  
[ethosbooks.com.sg](http://ethosbooks.com.sg)

# Book Review: Recreating Reality

BY ADELENA OH

Photo courtesy of Ethos Books



## this is how you walk on the moon: an anthology of anti-realist fiction

Edited by Patricia Karunungan, Samuel Caleb Wee and Wong Wen Pu

Ethos Books  
\$20.56 (including GST)  
320 pages  
Available at major bookstores

Breaking the stereotype that local literature is limited to tales of the good old *kampung* (village) days or books with a political agenda, *this is how you walk on the moon* features characters that never react the way you expect them to and environments that defy the laws of reality.

The 25 short stories compiled are bound by the common trait of having a narrative, although the storylines present in the book range from clear to obscure.

While most of them had a good dose of sci-fi elements, the speculative tone that was present throughout the anthology made it a clear fit in the anti-realism fiction genre.

Displaying many traits of experimental fiction, readers are recommended to gear themselves for more artistic and “trippy” narratives that stray from the traditional plot structures they’re used to.

The malleable vibe of the anthology’s texts might make it hard to digest for the average fiction reader but in some cases, it provides plot twists or situations meant to tickle rather than shock minds.

Dry humour was mixed with an improbable apocalypse in “Weapons of Mass Destruction” that some might interpret as uncouth but ultimately felt like a hilarious afternoon daydream.

Whereas stories like “面子” and “multiply, God, their choirs” presented more serious and nostalgic tones like the age-old struggle of defining one’s identity and a star-crossed love affair between a seraphic being and a human set in colonial Singapore.

*this is how you walk on the moon* displayed numerous distinct voices but some fell flat, either by sounding inconsistent or displaying an overkill effort to appear artfully affluent and cynical.

Although a general sense of being unmoored would be expected from anti-realism stories, works such as “A Brief History in the Life of Christopher McClunky”, “Dogs” and “The Anti-Art Puzzle Box Starring Diogenes of Sinope” are so abstract they might leave readers feeling more bored than curious.

This is a book for readers who are looking for more than just a good storyline and are eager to explore the possibilities of what could happen outside the realistic boundaries of traditional fiction. **F**

# Book Review:

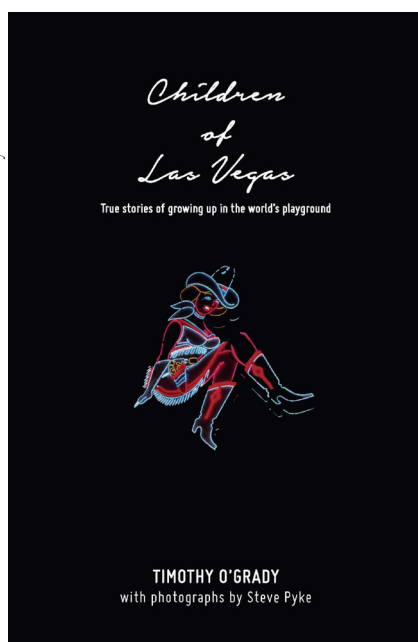
# Innocence Lost



Photo courtesy of Unsplash

BY CHARLENE KOH

Photo courtesy of Ethos Books



## Children of Las Vegas: True stories of growing up on the world's playground

By Timothy O'Grady

Ethos Books

\$18.60 (including GST)

223 pages

Available at major bookstores  
and [ethosbooks.com.sg](http://ethosbooks.com.sg)

Las Vegas, the entertainment capital of the world, where everything is touted as “the biggest, the highest, the fastest, ...”. But are these all real or merely a mirage?

Timothy O'Grady brings readers beyond the neon lights and larger-than-life casinos and into the heart of the city, to tell a tale about Las Vegas beyond its famous landmarks. *Children of Las Vegas* is an anthropology of stories from people who grew up in Las Vegas, accompanied with portraits by highly acclaimed photographer Steve Pyke.

The idea was birthed from O'Grady's time teaching in Las Vegas, where during a class session, stories were shared by his students about how their parents came to the city to seek their fortunes and were instead taken by the city's many vices, some even going through their children's pockets to steal their money to feed gambling or alcohol addictions.

Touching on the vices that the Strip glorifies, it seems like a cautionary tale of sorts. Readers are guided through the sicknesses that plague the Strip in the form of drug, alcohol and gambling addictions.

The transcribed interviews come from a mix of students, business owners, casino workers and even the son of a former casino owner.

They read like confessions at an altar, flowing from one to the next with short essays by O'Grady in between, giving readers a background understanding of the inner workings and history of the city.

Each story tells of the life under the glitz and glamour of the man-made paradise, of the paradoxical relationship between poverty and opulence, dreams and harsh reality. While showcasing the depressing and toxic relationship that Las Vegas has with its residents, O'Grady highlights their tenacity in their pursuit of change. **E**



## STARVING

## LOCAL MUSICIAN:

FACT OR  
FICTION?

While musicians want to hone their craft, many end up working full-time jobs to put food on the table. CONSTANCE GOH speaks to local singer-songwriter JAWN on how he balances his passion and finances

Photo courtesy of Lenne Chai

**M**usicians are often associated with the words ‘starving’ and ‘struggling’ while trying to make a living through pursuing their passion for music. For those who juggle full-time jobs alongside their music career, there is a stigma that they are inferior to those who focus solely on music.

Home-grown singer-songwriter Jonathan Chan, 26, who goes by the alias JAWN, finds this disheartening.

“It’s sad that people have this misconception [that musicians] end up with a regular nine-to-five job because you can’t [make it] in the music industry,” he says. “Holding a full-time job does not mean that you’re not good at your craft and people need to understand that.”

Citing Lewis Carroll’s (*Alice in Wonderland*) profession as a mathematics lecturer at Christ Church College in Oxford, England before publishing the popular children’s book, JAWN tells HYPE: “In the end, it’s all about how you transfer your personal living experience into your art.”

The industry has not seen many breakthrough local artistes in the

past few years, with the exception of Gentle Bones, Linying, Charlie Lim and The Sam Willows.

JAWN himself is an up-and-coming singer-songwriter, having released a self-titled EP in 2015. He was also a finalist in the Noise-Timbre Singer-Songwriter Programme and was mentored by Sara Wee, front woman of local band 53A as part of the National Arts Council’s Noise Music Mentorship programme.

He describes his music as “honest and cathartic”, with influences from Irish folk-pop duo Kings of Convenience, John Mayer and Charlie Lim.

As for performances, he does not do regular gigs as he is “not very good with following routines”.

“Routine performances are not really my calling – I prefer to pursue art at my own pace.”

JAWN is also a freelance designer; he designed the animated logos of acts like The Sam Willows and Inch Chua.

The singer says he makes enough to get by. To him, whether the ‘starving local musician’ stereotype applies to musicians boils down to their lifestyle choices.

“You have to learn to give up certain things to gain others,” he adds. “Personally, it was not so much the money but doing what best helps me grow as a person.”

When asked about the feasibility of pursuing music full-time in Singapore, he replies with a confident “yes”.

“There’s always people doing it so it’s definitely possible. It’s definitely my dream to have that kind of success and stability.”


But for now, JAWN is content with the direction of his own music. “As long as I’m making art, I’m pretty satisfied. Ultimately, whether people like it or hate it, it’s my art and my expression.” 



Photo courtesy of iTunes

JAWN, is now available on iTunes at S\$6.98

# CHASING DREAMS: NEARING NIRVANA

WONG SI JIA dares you to find out more about Chinese dramas – you might just be hooked

A group of investigators sit huddled in an almost claustrophobic meeting room. Photos of suspects and dead victims are pinned onto a whiteboard, peppered with red crosses and detailed observations. At the crime scene, assigned officers circle the lifeless body as their eyes roam for clues. This seems like a scene from *Criminal Minds*, but no – it's a scene from a mainland Chinese drama.

Following the unprecedented success of breakout show *Nirvana in Fire* (2015), the Chinese TV drama industry is set to receive an increasing demand for high-quality serials. Fortunately, the country is fully equipped to deal with the issue.

Chinese dramas – where stories from every genre come alive – have taken centre-stage without many of us realising it. Fewer youths – thoroughly engrossed in K-dramas – know about the variety and quality of Chinese drama.

A recent survey by HYPE showed that 57.9 per cent of the respondents do not watch Chinese dramas, with 51.2 per cent expressing doubt at the notion of

them ever becoming as popular as shows from the US and Korea.

This is in spite of the increased international spotlight on China's film industry and amidst reports of Hollywood directors seeking more Chinese talents such as Fan Bingbing, a prominent figure in the drama industry. On certain online streaming sites such as Viki and mydramalist.com, Chinese dramas are ranked higher than South Korean ones at times.

## Advantage: China

With a population of 1.3 billion people, China has no shortage of talent in the drama industry. This means that the Chinese market can easily find diversity in all film fields, ranging from acting to cinematography. Some examples include award-winning actor Wang Kai and internationally-acclaimed director Zhang Yimou, with some of these prominent figures displaying the versatility to play double roles, such as actress-turned-director Zhao Wei.

Geographically, China boasts many scenic locations that serve as breathtaking backdrops to their films. In fact, places such as The Forbidden City, Jiuzhaigou and Xitang Water

Town are said to be the more popular choices. Considering how several Hollywood blockbusters such as *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation* (2015) and *Now You See Me 2* (2016) have been shot in the country, China is clearly great for choice locations.

Lastly, the storylines are generally well-adapted from their original sources, particularly where history and fantasy tales are concerned. In such classics as *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* and *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, most elements are true to the spirit of the original works. Even when there are changes of emphasis, the overall dramatic effect is not lost.

## Challenge: Youths

According to EntGroup Inc. Beijing, China is the world's biggest producer of TV dramas, with over 15,000 episodes in 2014. This has led to a steady rise in transaction value over the years. In 2008, it stood at RMB50 billion (S\$10.4 billion), before jumping to about RMB250 billion (S\$52 billion) in 2016.

While *Scarlet Heart* (2011) and *Nirvana in Fire* are the most prominent works in the scene, other well-known dramas between the years include *The Legend of Zhen Huan* (2012) and *Battle of Changsha* (2014).

However, Singapore youths generally do not watch Chinese drama as they consider them “boring” and “overly-exaggerated”.

**China is the world's biggest producer of TV dramas, with over 15,000 episodes in 2014.**

– EntGroup Inc. Beijing



HYPE's survey findings indicated that the main reason for the lack of interest in Chinese dramas among respondents is that they are more interested in dramas of other cultures, with Korean dramas being the most popular at a 69.4 per cent viewership.

Taking the example of Korean drama *Missing 9*, Chye Ping Xuan, 20, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic student who is a fan of Korean culture, explains: "It goes beyond the white and black lines to discover the grey area, ...the entire process is thought-provoking and interesting. Ultimately, it makes me feel like I've learnt something, which is what I personally look out for in dramas."

Thankfully, Chinese dramas are also filled with plenty of learning experiences, ranging from traditional values – mainly loyalty and brotherhood – to cultural appreciation. In fact, these two factors came out top and second respectively on the list of takeaways from HYPE's survey.

Avid Chinese drama lover Er Jia Yan, 19, says: "By watching Chinese dramas, youths can get to know more about China's culture and language... and maybe come to see the fun in all these elements that are thought to be boring and dry."

It turns out that impressions do matter as well, according to the poll results. Chinese drama shows are largely viewed to be "draggy", "too dramatic" and "cliche", especially when it involves a historical or *wuxia* (martial arts) aspect.

"I always get the impression that they're all period dramas, [full of] heavy cloaks and stifling formal speech," says Ping Xuan. "I feel that relatability plays a big part in liking anything and it's difficult to connect with period dramas, so people tend to stray."

The sentiment was echoed by Jia Yan, who agrees that the plot development in some areas is much slower, thus requiring time, patience and interest to understand.

However, she also cautioned against stereotyping, stating that while badly-written Chinese dramas do exist, individuals should not totally dismiss them due to their few encounters with less-than-stellar shows or through word-of-mouth.





## Sucess: Beyond China

While the reign of old-fashioned garb and heroic sword-clashing scenes is not over, modern content has garnered new young fans. Apart from the traditional stories about *wuxia*, romance or history, recent genres run the gamut from thriller and game to adaptations of Internet novels, thus providing more viewing options. Considering the overwhelming potential of Chinese dramas, they might even give Western ones a run for their money.

There are certainly some similarities between Western and Chinese dramas. For example, *Love Me, If You Dare* (2015) has a similar setting to its Western counterpart *Criminal Minds* (2005-present), with a slight touch of romance and riveting story twists. Fancy the intense spy action in *Nikita* (2010-2013)? Chinese historical spy war drama *The Disguiser* (2015) is filled with heart-stopping moments as characters play the dangerous game of politics by carrying out intelligence missions and fighting against Japanese control.

Period dramas enjoyed a new lease of life in 2015 when *Nirvana in Fire* became South Korea's most searched daytime show for the month of December, even surpassing several well-known American serials such as *Game of Thrones*. In addition, the show received a lot of attention from its Western counterpart as well – an impressive feat, considering the country's huge market and language gap.

A Korean adaptation of *Scarlet Heart* has also taken off, indicating the impact of Chinese dramason the foreign industry. *Scarlet Heart* was, in a sense, the jewel in the historical drama crown that made many sit up and notice Chinese drama.

Regarding the popularity behind Chinese period shows, drama enthusiast Jessica Lim, 20, reasons: "I like how they use the different historical facts to bring a different perspective to the audience. I think many people are attracted to them because of how they fuse the mystery and unknown culture of 'old' stories with fresh, interesting themes like time travel."

Already the programme line-up for 2017 looks promising. Apart from the much-anticipated sequels *Nirvana in Fire 2* and *Ode to Joy 2*, there's the spy-thriller, *The One Who Escapes*, and metropolitan drama *The Surgeon*, both of which are not of the usual genres. It's too early to predict how the year will go for Chinese dramas, but breaking the traditional stereotype is definitely a step in the right direction.

Local youths may be riding high on the Korean wave, but it may be time to hop on the next wave of Chinese dramas.

Shannon Wong, 17, a student from Catholic Junior College, says: "Initially, I thought they were uninteresting as well, but the recent ones that have come out really changed my perspective about them. I hope that more youths will at least try watching one of the newer shows. Their views might just change." **[E]**

*Additional reporting by  
Jasmine Loke & Lim Yuan Xin*

Initially, I thought they were uninteresting as well, but the recent ones that have come out really changed my perspective about them. I hope that more youths will at least try watching one of the newer shows. Their views might just change.

- Shannon Wong, 17, Catholic JC

# NOT TO BE MISSED

If you want to take a peek at Chinese dramas, but don't know where to start, here's a selection that's guaranteed to keep you glued to your seats.

## 1. SCARLET HEART (2011)

Also known as *Bu Bu Jing Xin*, the drama serial was adapted from a novel written by renowned author Tong Hua and is widely regarded as the show that ushered in the new wave of Chinese dramas.

The drama follows the story of a modern-day woman, Zhang Xiao, who travels back 300 years in time. Stuck in the Qing dynasty, she learns how to manoeuvre her way through a web of palace politics, succession battles and love.

The 35-episode drama's sophisticated storyline, great acting and picturesque cinematography makes it a definite must-watch.

## 2. NIRVANA IN FIRE (2015)

Heralded as a masterpiece, *Nirvana in Fire* or *Lang Ya Bang* – an adaptation of a popular online novel – took the whole of China and international viewers by storm when it was first released.

Painstakingly shot and meticulously paced, it tells a story of insecurity and betrayal that led to the death of 70,000 soldiers, and how the only survivor, the general's son, plots his revenge. With unexpected twists, the drama centres around themes of revenge, politics, camaraderie and loyalty.

Packed with impressive cinematography, dazzling sword

fight and refined acting, this intense drama will appeal to those with a sophisticated palate for Chinese language and culture.

## 3. ODE TO JOY (2016)

Ode to Joy or Huan Le Song follows a novel written by Chinese author A Nai. The story revolves around five young modern women who are navigating through their own paths in life, eventually establishing strong friendship and inter-dependence.

This unusual serial, which puts female leads in the limelight with the male characters playing only supporting roles, will be airing a sequel this

year with the same cast members. It may be set in China but the issues the women face are similar to those faced by women in the US or Singapore.



**Wallace Huo, 37**

After spending several years in Taiwan's drama scene, Wallace Huo decided to move to China in 2004 to hone his acting skills. His repertoire includes *Chinese Paladin 3* (2009), *Glamorous Imperial Concubine* (2011) and *Love Me, If You Dare* (2015).

## UP AND RISING STARS



**Hu Ge (Hugh Hu), 34**

Hu Ge rose to fame after his stint in *Chinese Paladin* (2005) as Li Xiaoyao. However, his showbiz career was abruptly interrupted after suffering serious injuries in a highway accident. Nicknamed by fans as the "prince of period dramas", he came back after a year's hiatus to star in martial arts shows, before dazzling with his performance in the highly successful period drama, *Nirvana In Fire* (2015).



**Wang Kai, 34**

Many know Wang Kai from *Nirvana in Fire* (2015) and *The Disguiser* (2015) that catapulted him to fame, but his road to success wasn't easy. He was only noticed after his numerous acting jobs when he showed perseverance and commitment on the set of *All Quiet in Peking* (2014). Since then, Wang has starred in more dramas such as *Ode to Joy* (2016) and *Love Me, If You Dare* (2015).



# PAINT THE TOWN

# WHITE

Actors in “yellowface” and “blackface” may sound like horrors of a bygone century but ADELENA OH digs deeper into the prevalent issue of whitewashing in Hollywood

My hope is that there will be equal representation in terms of Singapore stars, Hong Kong stars, Asian American stars [and] mainland Chinese stars.

– Kevin Kwan, author of *Crazy Rich Asians*

With the active promotion of racial equality and respect on the Internet,

one would think that Tinseltown’s directors and producers would have learnt the importance of accurately portraying People of Colour (POCs).

But doubts arose when fresh blockbusters like Marvel’s *Doctor Strange* and the upcoming live-action adaptation of *Ghost in the Shell* cast Caucasian actors and actresses depicting characters that were originally of various Asian descent.

“People are more vocal now,” says Eileen Teh, 20, a film student who graduated from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, “The studios are listening and are trying to get more racially diverse casts.”

“There are some television shows, such as *Fresh Off the Boat*, where the main cast are Chinese-American immigrants. It was based off a book of the same name and the author.” The show focuses on a Chinese family who moves to America and has to deal with the challenges of adapting to a new lifestyle.

Such cases have recently hit closer to home than ever, with the bestselling

novel *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan being adapted into a Hollywood film produced by Warner Bros. and directed by Chinese-American director Jon M. Chu.

During early development of the film’s script, there had been talks of whitewashing the main character and making her Caucasian, which had caused an uproar.

“I have faith in the talent pool, not just of existing [American] actors, but also of actors coming out of film schools who are Asian,” said Kwan in a July 2013 interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*.

At the other end of the spectrum lies Disney. A pioneer advocate for proper ethnic representation in films, the studio has shown their stand against whitewashing since their animated works from the 1990s like *Pocahontas* and *Mulan*. Native American actress Irene Bedard and Asian American actress Ming-Na Wen voiced the protagonists of the films respectively.

This has carried through especially in Disney’s latest animated film, *Moana*, which features a Polynesian princess, voiced by 16-year-old Hawaiian actress Auli’i Cravalho. The star spoke of how glad was that the film remained true to her culture.


Taking their stance against whitewashing a step further, the studio has also called for a fully Chinese cast in their upcoming live-action remake of *Mulan*.

“We consulted archaeologists, anthropologists, fishermen, elders, linguists, dancers – so we really involved ourselves with them,” says Osnat Shurer, producer of *Moana*, “We made sure that we really respected the culture that inspired (the film).”

Moreover, Shurer believes that proper ethnic representation in a studio’s films starts from employing people from a wide range of ethnic and racial backgrounds.

She says: “Disney has hundreds of artists in our studio from over 25 countries and that adds to the richness and diversity of everything we do.”

Although there’s much room for improvement in Hollywood, progress has still been made from the days when actors like Mickey Rooney would don makeup that gave him the small eyes, rounder face and darker skin of a Japanese man in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*.

Like Eileen says: “At least it’s still a step.” 



# Ready, Set, #BEASTMODE

Get a fresh dose of *Beauty and the Beast* as NG JING ZHI explores the magic of using the latest animation technology

**T**he tale as old as time receives a massive makeover by top directors and producers in Disney's latest line-up of live-action remakes.

*Beauty and the Beast* will be the studio's fifth live-action remake and it will be helmed by director Bill Condon with David Hoberman and Todd Lieberman as producers.

This much-loved classic revolves around Belle (Emma Watson), a young and feisty book lover whose father Maurice (Kevin Kline) is imprisoned by the Beast (Dan Stevens). As a result of her father's ill health, Belle offers to take her father's place as prisoner in exchange for his freedom and soon discovers that her captor is in fact a human prince who, along with his staff, were cursed. The curse can only be broken by gaining the love of a woman.

Disney certainly did not hold back with casting big names for the upcoming movie. Alongside the main cast are Ewan McGregor (*Moulin Rouge!*), who will be voicing Lumière, the candelabra, Emma Thompson (*Nanny McPhee*), voicing Mrs Potts the teapot, and Ian McKellen (*Lord of the Rings*) voicing Cogsworth, the mantle clock.

Luke Evans, who previously starred as Scott Hipwell in the book-to-movie thriller *The Girl On The Train* (2016), plays the role of Gaston, Belle's arrogant suitor and a hunter intent on killing the Beast.

The studio has been releasing a steady stream of live-action remakes of classics in the past few years.

So far, there has been *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *Maleficent* (2014), *Cinderella* (2015) and *The Jungle Book* (2016) – all of which stuck closely to their original stories except for *Maleficent*, which took the unconventional route by delving into the villain's backstory.

Condon said in a bonus sneak preview clip of *Beauty and the Beast* that the reason behind the remake was simply because “technology has caught up to the ideas that were introduced in [the] movie”.

In other words, animation technology has finally reached a point where it can now bring two-dimensional characters to life – literally. As a result, there are more opportunities to revive age-old favourites.


Watson said in an interview with Entertainment Weekly that the new movie has also allowed more opportunities to add depth to Belle's character so that she will be “more proactive” and “less carried along by the story”. This will be seen through her added hobby as an inventor, which was originally something her father did in the original film.

While the remake attempts to stay true to the 1991 original in terms of how the characters are animated, some fans have taken to social media to express their discontent

with the characters' new looks – specifically, the Beast's appearance.

BuzzFeed compiled a list of tweets from fans over how the new computer-generated Beast looked ugly and unsettling. However, the Beast is meant to look terrifying – a fact that many fans have not been able to comprehend.

Nevertheless, with the hype surrounding the release of the movie, Disney is confident that *Beauty and the Beast* will be “one of their best productions yet”.

Another animated classic set for live-action remake is *Mulan*. The film is set to be another roaring success with an international open casting call for the lead roles of the girl warrior herself and Chen Honghui, a fellow recruit who is as handsome as he is brash. The movie is slated for release in 2018. 

OPENS IN CINEMAS  
**MAR 17**

Dive deep into the Arthurian legend of the man who pulled a sword from a stone with CHERYL TANG, as she explores the first of six King Arthur installments

# THE LEGEND LIVES—AGAIN

**T**he existence of King Arthur has been debated for centuries, but the myth of the sword, named Excalibur, may ring a bell for some – and this legend will come to life once again on the silver screen in fantasy flick *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*.

In this adaptation, Arthur (Charlie Hunnam) is robbed of his throne after his father is murdered. Unaware of his royal lineage, he is left to survive on the streets under the dictatorship of Vortigern (Jude Law). That is until he pulls Excalibur from the stone. The legend goes that that whoever successfully manages to pull Excalibur out is the real king.

Following this feat, Arthur's life is turned upside down as he has no choice but to accept his destiny to unite the broken kingdom and defeat Vortigern, the man who murdered his parents and stole his place as the rightful king.

This Warner Bros. production is directed, written and produced by Guy Ritchie, who has directed several

notable films like *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011).

Hunnam, who has starred in the popular television show *Sons of Anarchy* as well as films such as *Pacific Rim* (2013) and *Crimson Peak* (2015), plays the titular character. Oscar-nominated Law, who worked with Ritchie in the two *Sherlock Holmes* movies, plays the antagonist.

The cast also features Astrid Bergès-Frisbey from *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (2011) as love interest Guinevere, *Star Trek*'s Eric Bana, *Game of Thrones*' Aidan Gillen and includes a cameo by football star David Beckham.

This ambitious six-film series is a re-imagined version of the Arthurian story surrounding legendary King Arthur, who is believed to have defended Britain against invaders in the sixth century.

Today, the legend of King Arthur lives on in adaptations for theatre, film, television, comics and other media. Past film adaptations include Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), the acclaimed *Excalibur* (1981) and the most recent, *King Arthur* (2004), which was unfortunately a box office flop despite its star-studded cast.

Ritchie may just be the next to attempt to breathe new life into this legend, but with the slate of sword fighting, heroes-versus-villains and multi-film movies being released, does it really stand a chance in the box office?

"I think where the pitfall has often been is trying to make King Arthur bland and nice, and nice and bland. The two qualities make rather compatible bed companions. Unfortunately, they're not interesting to watch," Ritchie told Entertainment Weekly in an interview. "Good guys are boring... Our King Arthur is not a good guy from the beginning."

Rachael Yow, 19, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic student, says: "I'm excited to watch the movie – the trailer looks really good! But I'm not sure if it'll be successful if it has six parts, especially with other movies such as *The Hunger Games* and *The Maze Runner*. Maybe the producers can consider branching out to focus on other characters in the legend such as Lancelot, rather than just Arthur."

Regardless, we are excited to see how well this version of King Arthur does against its previous rivals. **F**

OPENS IN CINEMAS  
**MAR 23**





Photo courtesy of The Walt Disney Company

# GUARDIANS MISFITS

## TURN STELLAR HEROES

Prepare to be hooked on a feeling, says JOSHUA ANG of the upcoming Marvel film, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 2*

**M**arvel Studios kicks off 2017 with the long-awaited *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 2*. From what started as an obscure superhero film, the movie had a meteoric rise in popularity and quickly became the most successful superhero film of 2014, raking in more than US\$770 million (S\$1.1 billion) in worldwide box office revenue.

Following that success, the ragtag bunch of misfits: Peter Quill/Star-Lord (Chris Pratt), Gamora (Zoe Saldana), Drax (Dave Bautista), Groot (Vin Diesel) and Rocket Raccoon (Bradley Cooper) will once again band together to take on whatever comes their way.

The Guardians are joined by new teammates: Yondu (Michael Rooker) and newcomer Mantis (Pom Klementieff), a psychic who happens to be Peter Quill's half-sister.

Set two months from where the first film left off, the Guardians will face a new set of foes, including Nebula (Karen Gillan), whose sibling relationship with Gamora will be further explored in *Vol 2*.

But the focus of the story is the personal relationship between Peter Quill and his absentee father.

This topic is all too familiar with Pratt, who had a complicated relationship with his deceased father. Drawing upon his real-life experiences, Pratt channelled his emotions into acting for *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 2*.

"The truth is I ripped open some wounds that had been healing for some time. And I didn't want to. But I knew it was right for the moment as there are wounds that are never going to be totally healed. It would probably make for a better story if it were some emotional thing that I hadn't dealt with... When

we face the death of a parent, you sometimes feel regret that you didn't fully embrace what you had," said Pratt in an interview with GQ.

Pratt also sang praises of director James Gunn. In an interview with Entertainment Weekly, he said: "He's the man behind *Guardians of the Galaxy*, so this is completely his vision. In my opinion, there is no equal in Hollywood. I think he is the best I've worked for, and with. And I owe so much to him... [Gunn] knows these characters so deeply now."

In fact, he even went as far as to say that the director's nous will make the sequel "bigger and better" than the original, while also acknowledging the success of the first film.

It's no surprise that Gunn has once again taken the helm in the making of this space opera, as he had led the original to unexpected success.

According to a poll of 2,000 visitors by ticket site Fandango, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 2* is the second most anticipated film of 2017. Also, its trailer has garnered a staggering 81 million views on the first day of its release.

With all the hype surrounding this film, the pressure will be on the film to live up to expectations and only time will tell how fans will feel as they leave the theatres. ■

OPENS IN CINEMAS  
**APR 27**



# BAYWATCH

is the one

# TO WATCH

OPENS IN CINEMAS  
**MAY 26**

■ The history of the show is to showcase beauty.

— Seth Gordon,  
American film director

Get ready for the scorching hot sun and equally fiery bods in the classic film adaptation of *Baywatch* with ANIKA NALE

**B**aywatch is an American TV series that aired in the early 90s. Its signature opening scene and theme song with Pamela Anderson and David Hasselhoff running along the beach in slow motion is nostalgic to many.

However, this year, American film director Seth Gordon, who is well-known for movies such as *Horrible Bosses* (2011) and *Identity Thief* (2013) is rebooting and modernising the classic series.

“The history of the show is to showcase beauty,” said Gordon.

The reboot film stars Hollywood hunks, Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson and Zac Efron, who take on the roles of lifeguards Mitch Buchannon and Matt Brody who are intent on saving the day just before sunset. They are iconic characters from the original 90s TV series, and were originally played by David Hasselhoff and David Charvet.

Bollywood actress, Priyanka Chopra plays the film’s antagonist, Victoria Leeds. This is Chopra’s debut Hollywood film.

Millennials and young adults will be excited to see both The Rock and Zac Efron running shirtless along the beach. Original TV series fans will also enjoy this movie as David Hasselhoff himself will have a cameo in the adaptation.

“My mom watched the original series back in the day, so when I told her that Baywatch is screening again, she was shocked as the whole cast are her age too! Nonetheless, we are watching it together!” says Thurayya Roslan, 19, student.

When asked if movie-goers should expect to see her in the film, Pamela Anderson, who played CJ

Parker in the original series, declined the role and said that “no one appreciates the remakes”. Nonetheless, newcomer Kelly Rohrbach is ready and set to fill in her role.

Alexandra Daddario, who starred in the 2015 film, *San Andreas*, with Dwayne Johnson is part of the star-studded cast.

Apart from the released film synopsis and trailers, the cast has also shared bits and pieces of the movie through Instagram. The Rock himself has shared countless pictures of himself in iconic skintight, bright red lifeguard costumes with his castmates.

So don’t worry about having a heart attack because both The Rock and Zac Efron actually took first aid courses to prepare for the movie! **F**







# TIME TO TAKE TO THE HIGH SEAS

Set sail with DANIA AMIRIL to explore the return of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* saga with *Dead Men Tell No Tales*

Photo courtesy of The Walt Disney Company

**J**ohnny Depp returns as the witty and lovable Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*.

Sparrow finds himself in yet another mess with old rival, Captain Salazar (Javier Bardem). The Captain, who recently escaped the Devil's Triangle with his ghostly crew, decides to take revenge by killing every pirate that roams the seas, including Captain Jack Sparrow himself.

Sparrow's only way of surviving this dreadful fate is by obtaining the legendary Trident of Poseidon – an artifact that grants its user the power to control the seas. After establishing an unwilling alliance with two unlikely accomplices, astronomer, Carina Smyth (Kaya Scodelario) and a young sailor in the Royal Navy, Henry (Brenton Thwaites), Sparrow sets off on his journey to save his own life.

The multi-billion dollar franchise, originally inspired by a Disneyland

ride with the same name, has already had four wildly successful films out. In fact, predecessor film *On Stranger Tides* (2011) alone drew in about US\$1 billion (\$\$1.4 billion) at the global box office, according to [boxofficemojo.com](http://boxofficemojo.com).

Alongside Depp, we can also expect to see the return of Will Turner (Orlando Bloom) and Captain Hector Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) who were part of the original cast from *The Curse of The Black Pearl* (2005). If you recall, in *At World's End* (2007), we all thought that we had seen the last of the adored couple, Elizabeth (Keira Knightley) and Will. Well, considering that Sparrow's accomplice, Henry, could just be the son of the two lovers, it might just not be the case.

In fact, there is controversy that Elizabeth might just make a cameo in the film. However, unfortunately for fans, the appearance will most likely only be during the rolling credits as Knightley had previously expressed that her time “has definitely passed”

and that “it was an amazing experience but I won't be going back”.

With the possibility of her brief appearance in the credits, there is also the chance of a sixth edition to the franchise – but it isn't for certain. Fans can only cross their fingers that the famous franchise, which started in 2003, continues.

Meryl Woon, 19, fan of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, says: “I've loved the movie ever since it first came out and I really hope to see [Elizabeth and Will] reunite. It would really blow my mind and give me a sense of closure to my favourite pairing.”

All in all, it's safe to say that fans are excited for the new movie to launch and for their beloved Captain Jack Sparrow and the original cast to grace the screens again. **F**

OPENS IN CINEMAS  
**MAY 25**



MEGAN CHEAH delves into the much-anticipated *Wonder Woman* as DC Comics' Amazonian princess comes into her own on the silver screen

**T**he film industry's diverse array of superheroes will soon see a game-changer joining their league – the first superheroine, DC Comics' Wonder Woman, in the lead.

Following an appearance in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016), the iconic Amazonian warrior will step into the limelight for her eponymous movie.

Unlike previous instalments in the Warner Bros. DC movie universe, *Wonder Woman* will be set in the early 20th century. Amazonian princess Diana (Gal Gadot) meets American military pilot Steve Trevor (Chris Pine) after he is washed ashore on her home island of Themyscira. Upon finding out about the ongoing World War I, she leaves home to put an end to it.

When asked about how her character will differ from her first onscreen outing, Gadot told online entertainment site Digital Spy that

Wonder Woman goes back “100 years to when Diana was more naïve”.

“She’s this young idealist, very different from the experienced, super-confident, grown-up woman you’ve seen [in *Batman v Superman: Superman*],” Gadot shared.

Besides being the first movie to revolve around a female superhero, the film’s production also features another novelty. Spearheading Wonder Woman’s charge to theatres is director Patty Jenkins, making her the first woman to direct a superhero film with a female protagonist.

Having a female lead in an action-packed movie is a two-pronged answer to critics of a largely male-dominated Hollywood, something that has been under fire for gender discrimination in recent years. It is no wonder then that Jenkins has made sure that Wonder Woman not only looks fierce and battle-ready, but is also feminine.

“It’s total wish fulfillment,” Jenkins said in an article by Entertainment Weekly: “I, as a woman, want Wonder Woman to be hot as hell, fight badass and look great at the same time”.

*Wonder Woman* will also finally put the DC movie universe ahead of its rival, Marvel, in starring a female protagonist. Despite its huge plethora of supporting superheroines, Marvel’s movie universe will only put out its first lead female superhero flick, *Captain Marvel*, in 2019.

With all that’s going for *Wonder Woman*, it could prove to be a turning point for the struggling DC movie universe, which has so far failed to match up to Marvel’s popular fan appeal. Here’s hoping the Amazonian princess can turn the tide in their favour at last. **F**

OPENS IN CINEMAS  
**JUN 2**



# MARVEL WELCOMES WEB-SLINGER HOM E

Open in cinemas  
**JUL 7**

After making an appearance in the latest instalment of the Avengers, Spider-Man will be taking centrestage with a brand new series as CHOK YEE KWAN finds out

**S**pider-Man (Tom Holland) will finally be able to shine in his rightful place after leaving the show 18 years ago, as Marvel Studios collaborates with Sony Pictures to reboot the character in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*.

The story follows 15-year-old Peter Parker who gained superhuman strength and heightened senses after being bitten by a radioactive spider. Triggered by the death of his Uncle Ben, Parker develops a pair of mechanical web-shooters and takes on the heavy responsibility of saving New York City from the villains that plague it.

However, in a shift from the original story that Sony has presented to us twice now, director Jon Watts and Marvel Studios deliver Parker to us as an awkward teenager in high school.

Thrilled after his adventures with the Avengers, the young superhero struggles to readjust to normal life, while also saving the city and coping with homework, puberty and girls.

However, when a new threat arises, everything that Parker holds dear is put in jeopardy.

Holland, 20, who has been signed on for three more Spider-Man movies,

said that he would be taking inspiration for his portrayal of the character from his predecessors, Tobey Maguire (*Spider-Man*) and Andrew Garfield (*The Amazing Spider-Man*), while delivering a “new and exciting” take on Peter Parker.

Marvel Studios President and Producer Kevin Feige said in an interview with collider.com that many of the Spider-Man scenes in the comics that he liked were of the hero still in high school – an idea the team wanted to explore.

“This also makes him very, very different from any of our other characters in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), which is something else we want to explore: how unique he is when now put against all these other characters,” Feige added.

Marvel unveiled the first official trailer for *Spiderman: Homecoming* on Dec 8 2016, on the Jimmy Kimmel Show. With action-packed and iconic scenes from the comics, coupled with

a smart-mouthed Holland and breath-taking visual effects, the trailer looks very promising, tugging at the strings of true blue Marvel fans.

However the film had its fair share of controversy, especially when it came to casting. When casting details were announced in June, there was an uproar at the possibility of American actress and performer Zendaya Coleman portraying Parker’s love interest Mary Jane Watson, who is usually portrayed as being white and red-haired.

Screenplay writer of Marvel’s *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), James Gunn, took to Facebook to respond to the outcry on colour-blind casting saying: “If we’re going to continue to make movies based on the almost all white heroes and supporting characters from the comics of the last century, we’re going to have to get used to them being more reflective of our diverse present world.”

Laura Harrier was later cast as love interest Liz Allan, who is portrayed as being white and blonde in the comics, while Zendaya was slated to portray a character known only as Michelle.

No matter the setbacks of the previous instalments, fans are eagerly awaiting the day when they can finally welcome Spider-Man home. **F**

Photo courtesy of Unsplash



# HOLLYWOOD REVIVALS: BACK TO THE FUTURE

Glimpse into Hollywood film remakes this year together with ANIKA NALE

**A**dapting old Hollywood film plots and screening them to a different generation is a tried and tested tactic used by many directors and producers. This practice has been often dubbed as 'rebooting' or 'remaking'.

In 2017 alone, more than 20 remakes and adaptations are set to hit the screens including *Wonder Woman* and *Baywatch*. Disney cartoons such as *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin* are also being turned into live-action remakes.

Contrary to popular belief, reboots are not new to the film industry. Reboots started from classics such as the 1983 blockbuster film *Scarface*. Starring Al Pacino, the film was

a remake of a 1932 film of the same name.

The notable difference is the higher quality of the remake. Also making the remake a brand-new experience are the better visual and sound effects, especially with the advanced application of computer-generated imagery (CGI) in Hollywood, the characters and/or those who portray them, and maybe even a few spoken lines here and there.

According to data analysing blog, The Droid You're Looking For, there were 122 remakes released between 2003 and 2012. Collectively, Rotten Tomatoes critics have rated these remakes with an average of 46 per cent. In contrast, the rating for the original films had a median score of 78 per cent. Remakes such as *Ghostbusters* (2016) may have enjoyed low critical prestige but it raked it in at the box office with a staggering total of US\$12 billion.

Over the years, even as remakes have been critiqued by both renowned film critics and the public, they still remain the talk of the town.

The Guardian referred to the term "remake" as a taboo in Hollywood due to the fact that audiences are fed up with this profit-driven approach. The approach continually receives backlash but Hollywood does not show any signs of stopping the traditional profit-making film method. **[F]**

So here are some movie remakes that are screening this year:

## 1. Kong: Skull Island:

This is a reboot of *King Kong* (2005), where director Jordan Vogt-Roberts turns the classic monster into a modern menace.

Stars: Bria Larson, John C. Reilly and Tom Hiddleston  
Release Date: Mar 8

## 2. Beauty and the Beast:

Director Bill Condon is confident of making both children and adults believe in fairy tales once more with this remake of the 1991 Walt Disney classic.

Stars: Emma Watson, Emma Thompson and Sir Ian McKellen  
Release Date: Mar 17  
(Read more on Page 33)

## 3. Spider-Man: Homecoming:

Peter Parker has been played by Tobey Maguire, Andrew Garfield and this year, by Tom Holland. Marvel Studios takes us back in time when Peter Parker aka Spider-Man was in high school!

Stars: Tom Holland and Robert Downey Jr.  
Release Date: Jul 7  
(Read more on Page 39)





Photos courtesy of ABR Holdings & Gudetama Café Singapore

# A Taste of CHARACTER

Sink your teeth into your favourite franchises – literally – as MEGAN CHEAH finds out more about the character-themed cafés that have taken Singapore by storm

**T**ake a grinning Pikachu bun over a block of ice-cream, or sunny-side-up eggs wearing Gudetama's trademark bored face.

Originally from Japan, themed cafés have risen in popularity in Asia, with Taiwan and Hong Kong welcoming their own renditions.

Now, your favourite childhood characters have arrived in Singapore, with character cafés popping up all around the little red dot last year.

2016 saw the arrival of popular mascots Pompompurin, Hello Kitty and Gudetama of Japanese brand Sanrio, as well as the well-loved Pokémon franchise by video game giant Nintendo.

All three Sanrio cafés are here to stay, while the Pokémon café took over the restaurant Everything With Fries at Bugis Junction twice from May 27 to Jul 31 and Nov 24 to Feb 19, the second date stretching into 2017.

Since their openings, fans and lovers of the characters have flocked to the cafés. “On the first day, the first guest arrived at 6:30am and the queue was already forming before we opened at 9am,” says Gudetama Café Singapore director Mr Damien Koh, 35. “The waiting time was about three hours in the first week,” he adds.

Similarly, on Pokémon café's opening day, The Straits Times reported a 200-strong queue half an hour before doors opened at 11am, with a waiting time of five hours.

With the surge in character cafés, how then does each café ensure they stand out from the rest? Each restaurant features official, exclusive merchandise that either comes free with selected dishes or can be bought separately. Some cafés also narrow down their themes in terms of decoration and dish presentation to draw in more customers.

Hello Kitty Orchard Garden took on a local spin with a garden theme and serving up local dishes such as beef *rendang* (spicy Indonesian meat dish) and *nonya* chicken curry. Regarding the restaurant's name, Mr Andrew Khoo, 44, director of group business development ABR Holdings Limited – the food and beverage company that runs both the café and chain restaurant Swensen's – says: “Singapore is a garden city, ... and orchid is, in a way, Singapore's national flower.”

As for the pop-up Pokémon café, while the first run had a more general theme, the second edition in November focused on then recently released video game *Pokémon Sun and Moon*.

Mr Ryosuke Kashiwagi, 32, manager of Parco Singapore, which brought in the pop-up, says the dishes “were developed from scratch and inspired by the game” *Sun and Moon*.

It is inevitable that excitement over such cafés will wear off after some time, so there is a need to introduce new measures to entice customers and keep them coming back.

Both the Pompompurin café and Hello Kitty Orchard Garden revise their menu every few months or during festive seasons, focusing on the appearance of the dishes. “It's important to make dishes that people will want to take photos of – it has to be very ‘instagrammable,’” says Mr Khoo, referring to the social media platform, Instagram.

Although the Gudetama café is the newest of the four, Mr Koh says that plans are already being made to “refresh the experience.” “We are exploring the possibility of holding events and parties in the café in the future,” he says.

Will character cafés last in Singapore? “Sustainability will depend on the popularity of the character as well as constant innovation,” says Mr Koh. **[E]**

Want to win a café-exclusive Hello Kitty Orchard Garden MyStamp folder? Turn to **page 98** to find out how!



# A Chocolate Affair

They say the way to a person's heart is through their stomach. Embrace your chocolate making potential with ADELENA OH and NG JING ZHI

Getting a gift can either be a joy or an utter headache – especially for your significant other. But whether you're looking for a simple yet heartfelt present for someone or just a treat for yourself, there's one thing no one can resist: chocolate.

While you can always buy a box of Ferrero Rochers – or Godiva if you're feeling fancy – for that special someone (or yourself), nothing will melt one's heart faster than something homemade.

Think milk chocolate with a hint of raspberry oozing out of a white chocolate shell – luscious, indulgent and simply addictive, these chocolates are bound to make your significant other fall into your arms asking for more.

While these sound more time-consuming and complicated to make than your regular cake or cookies, you'll be surprised to know that they won't take more than an hour to prepare (excluding chilling time). **F**

## Raspberry Truffles

### Ingredients

(makes approximately 25 pieces):

- 3 tbsp raspberry puree
- 30g dairy cream
- 130g couverture milk chocolate
- 30g soft butter
- 25 white chocolate cups/shells
- 1 pack candy hearts

### Method:

1. Bring the dairy cream to a boil.
2. Add in the raspberry puree and milk chocolate. Stir till everything has dissolved.
3. Add the butter to the mixture. Mix well.
4. Pour the mixture into a piping bag. Pipe the mixture into the white chocolate cups.
5. Decorate with candy hearts.

Recipe courtesy of Creative Culinaire



Photo: Adelenah Oh and Ng Jing Zhi



# CONFECTION CONFESSIONS

Chocolates often serve as common presents, but what makes it a gift worth giving? MEGAN CHEAH and ANTHEA WANG learn about what gives chocolate its rich, indulgent quality

**S**ince ancient times, chocolate has been the go-to gift for various occasions – perhaps because of the multiple symbolisms behind the delectable confection. According to hubpages.com, chocolate represents love, care, passion and friendship. While seemingly frivolous, these aspects are also backed up by scientific facts. The Telegraph reports that chocolate contains phenylalanine, an amino acid that aids in the production of dopamine which helps elevate one's mood

Aside from its cultural representation, there are many other reasons why chocolate makes a suitable gift for any occasion. However, one should choose carefully when giving chocolates as a gift.

According to chef Judy Koh at Creative Culinaire, chocolate falls into two categories: compound and couverture. Couverture chocolates are made with cocoa butter and chocolate liquor. They are tempered at a specific temperature before being left to

set, which ensures the quality of the taste. On the other hand, compound chocolates substitute cocoa butter and chocolate liquor with oil and cocoa powder. The downside of the cheaper production cost is that the chocolates end up tasting waxy and melting at room temperature. Most commercially produced chocolates tend to be compound chocolates.

With this in mind, you should always keep an eye out for the ingredients used in the chocolate you are buying to ensure that your gift is one of quality. **E**

## Chocolate Rochers with Almond Nuts

**Ingredients** (makes approximately 20 pieces):

200g couverture dark chocolate

12g rice puffs

100g baked almond slivers

### Method:

1. Set aside  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the chocolate and chop into small pieces.
2. Fill a pot to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  with water. Bring to a simmer.
3. Put remaining chocolate in a metal bowl and place it on top of the pot. Ensure that the water does not touch the base of the bowl.
4. Melt the chocolate and check that the temperature stays between 30 and 32 degrees Celsius.
5. Once the chocolate has melted completely, take it off the heat and combine with the chopped chocolate.

6. Stir continuously until all the chocolate has melted. Ensure that the temperature of the chocolate stays at about 27 degrees Celsius.
7. Combine melted chocolate with almond slivers and rice puffs. Mix well until all is coated with chocolate.
8. Using a pair of forks, scoop the mixture into little decorative paper cups and allow it to set.

Recipe courtesy of Creative Culinaire





# To Granddaughter From Grandmother

ANTHEA WANG goes into the details of her grandmother's rice cake recipe in hopes of passing it on to her own kin

Photos: Ariel Yeo

**E**ver since I was young, I would help *nai nai* (grandmother) out with menial tasks in the kitchen during family gatherings.

Chinese New Year's Eve would be spent rolling *tang yuan* (Chinese glutinous rice balls) with my siblings and cousins. For the Dragon Boat Festival, we would wrap *zong zi* (rice dumplings) for the rest of the family.

With their packed schedules, just getting all 14 members of my family to be present at the dinner table is no easy feat. While everyone enjoys the delicious food prepared by *nai nai*, she worries that no one will be there to make them in the future due to the lack of time and interest in learning.

Admittedly, I am not a very good cook. But driven by my love for *nai nai's* food, I decided to take on the responsibility of learning her recipes.

Fragrant rice with an abundance of flavourful ingredients encased in a chewy skin, *ping kueh* (Teochew peach-shaped dumplings) made by *nai nai* is simply irresistible.

While not the traditional way of consumption, I prefer to lightly fry mine until it's crispy on both sides. It's best with your favourite chilli or sweet dark soya sauce – or even a combination of both – but it tastes just as good on its own. **F**

## METHODS

### FOR FILLING

1. Boil raw peanuts for one to two hours until soft.
2. Steam glutinous rice for about 25 minutes until cooked.
3. Dice the garlic and shallots.
4. Shell the shrimp and dice.
5. Remove mushroom stalks and slice mushrooms thinly.
6. Add vegetable oil to a frying pan.
7. Stir-fry the garlic and shallots until fragrant.
8. Add the mushrooms and shrimp and sauté until fragrant.
9. Add the rice and peanuts and stir till well-mixed.

### FOR DOUGH

1. Mix the tapioca flour, rice flour and sugar in a large bowl.
2. Add hot water and oil in small portions and mix until fully combined.
3. Add red food colouring and mix till you achieve your desired shade of pink.
4. Divide the dough into palm-sized portions and cool for 10 minutes.
5. Roll out the dough and fill each portion with two tablespoons of filling.
6. Wrap into a ball.
7. Pinch the edges of the ball into a triangle shape.
8. Sprinkle flour over the mould to prevent the dough from sticking.
9. Put the filled dough into mould and press firmly. Remove from mould and place on a metal or bamboo tray.
10. Steam for 15 minutes. Cool and serve with chilli or sweet dark soya sauce.

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR FILLING

- 4 cups glutinous rice (soak overnight)
- 2/3 cup dried shitake mushrooms (soak overnight)
- 1/2 cup small dried shrimps
- 1 cup raw peanuts
- 2 cloves garlic
- 8 shallots
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tsp five-spice powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil

### FOR DOUGH

- 3 cups rice flour
- 1/2 cup tapioca flour
- 4 cups hot water
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp sugar
- Red food colouring



# Experience Dumplings

ISAAC SNG explores the dumpling culture in the city of Tianjin

**A**s you take your first bite, the savoury juice seeps in and the flavour fills your mouth. The outer skin tears effortlessly and the meat filling melts in your mouth.

Dumplings hail from northern China and are served almost everywhere, from street stores to restaurants.

They are so easy to make that most people can make their own dumplings at home.

Mr Geng, 59, says: "It's easy [to make dumplings] and the fillings can be changed as you like. I am a more traditional person but I do sometimes change up the fillings to any kind of seafood because I really like seafood."

According to *The World Of Chinese*, 1800 years ago, Zhang Zhong Jing created them as a remedy for the Chinese during the winter solstice when the villagers were suffering from typhoid due to the cold.

Zhang chopped up boiled mutton and herbal medicine before wrapping it in a flour skin and boiling it again.


Since then, dumplings are eaten every Lunar New Year in northern China. They are said to resemble ingots and bring wealth to a family.

Now, dumpling fillings are straying from traditional to newer fillings such as crab and donkey meat. Mrs Wei Yu, 35, manager at The Fried

Dumpling (*mingguotie*), says: "Our shop sells a variety of dumpling fillings and customers come in every day. Both younger and older people receive our traditional vegetable dumplings and the more modern meat dumplings very well. It really depends on the taste buds of the customers."

According to the Chinese, the various fillings inside the dumplings symbolise different things, which also play a part in the taste and texture of dumplings.

For example, leek, which is one of the most commonly used fillings, is pronounced as *jincui* in Mandarin – similar to another word that means industrious wealth.

Miss Liu Xiao Feng, 22, a student, says: "I like to put pork, cabbage, corn and leek inside my dumplings. I use leek because I grew up eating dumplings with that filling. I use cabbage and corn because they are tasty and gives the dumplings a bit of a crunch." 

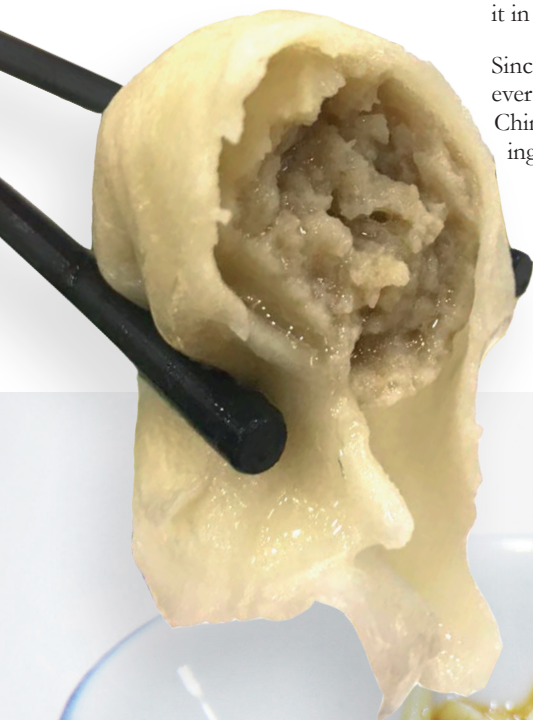


Photo: Isaac Sng

# No Batter Joy than

# Baking

Scroll through your social media feed and you're likely to spot aesthetically pleasing pictures of baked goods by a friend. CHERYL TANG and DANIA AMIRIL explore the trend of baking among youths

**W**ith multitudes of recipes readily available online, baking is becoming a lot easier for tech-savvy youths to pick up today.

When Jessica Loh, 24, the owner of Shiberty Bakes, first started baking at the age of 13, she was inspired by recipes she found online.

"It was not considered 'cool' yet, but I didn't expect it to become so mainstream in a couple of years," she says.

Indeed – one is bound to come across mouthwatering pictures of beautifully decorated cakes or cupcakes with chocolate ganache oozing from the centre while scrolling through their social media feeds.

Jessica's all-day dining café, which offers specialty desserts and bespoke cakes, testifies to this trend. It has its very own Instagram account (@shibertybakes) boasting more than 8,000 followers.

Ms Judy Koh, managing director of Creative Culinaire, a school that offers cooking and baking classes, says that there has been more youths attending her baking classes these days.

She attributes it to "the beautiful pictures of baked goods posted on social media" and the increasing presence of "trendy bakeries".

Mr Randy Chow, 54, section head at Temasek Polytechnic's Diploma in Baking and Culinary Science, agrees with Ms Koh, citing television shows such as MasterChef and Hell's Kitchen as an influence.

He says: "This also over-glamourises and creates misconceptions about this trade, but at least there are shows that show how it's like."

A survey conducted by HYPE among 101 young adults between the ages of 17 and 29 found that 34 per cent of respondents picked up baking as "a new life skill".

"It's a good skill; I can give [baked] goods] out to family and friends as gifts for Christmas and birthdays," says Ardelle Tan, 18, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic student among that group.

## Baking Up a Storm

Like Jessica, Mr Chow discovered his love for all things culinary at a young age when he and his friend role-played as chefs.

He has come a long way since then, having worked as a real chef for hotels, restaurants and even hospitals.

He was also among the few certified judges on the World Association of Chefs Societies' judging panel.

While youths such as Ardelle pick up baking on their own, parents



such as Mr Chow deem it an essential life skill to be imparted to his children at a young age.

Now, his second daughter is currently studying at the Culinary Institute of America, a decision Mr Chow supports heartily.

“It’s a tough profession with a lot of hard work. We stand for eight hours everyday – but it’s fun,” he says.

Perhaps the physical demands that come with the job would explain why only 21 per cent of HYPE’s survey respondents would ever consider a career in the culinary industry.

Nevertheless, for those who want to get a taste of what it’s like working in the field, there are culinary courses, competitions and internships available in Singapore.


Lutfi Teo, 19, a student at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), is one such person. He is currently pursuing a National ITE Certificate in Western Culinary Arts.

He had the opportunity to take part in the WorldSkills Singapore Competition 2016 where he emerged as the first runner-up.

He also has work experience at The White Rabbit and Timbre+ under his belt.

“Even though I started baking at 15, I have picked up a lot from my lecturers and the head chefs at work. Other times, I’ve had to search online or read books,” he says.

Lutfi intends to further his studies at the Institut Paul Bocuse, a French culinary school, and pursue baking as a full-time career.

But if you prefer to take up baking as a way to de-stress and have fun, Ms Koh shares a piece of advice: “Practice makes perfect, equip yourself with knowledge to understand baking before you begin.” 

**It’s a tough profession with a lot of hard work. We stand for eight hours everyday – but it’s fun.**

– Mr Randy Chow, section head at Temasek Polytechnic’s Diploma in Baking and Culinary Science







# HIGH ON TEA

The classic British afternoon tea is a tradition that transcends cultures and tastes, as KIMBERLEY NG and CHERYL LIM find out during a school trip to London

**T**he Britons' indulgence in the classic afternoon tea is undoubtedly one of the nation's most treasured traditions.

## History and Traditions

The afternoon tea ceremony was defined as a fine privilege that only the rich and affluent could afford in the 1600s. Afternoon tea, now a tradition almost synonymous with the word "British", was only established 200 years later by Anna, Duchess of Bedford. She invented the tradition after she experienced a hunger pang one afternoon.

Today, the tradition of afternoon tea continues in homes, prestigious hotels, department stores and even in small, neighbourhood cafes and tea rooms. Be it a short break for a cup of tea or a three tier event of cakes, scones with jam and clotted cream and finger sandwiches, afternoon tea is always a great solace to many.

"Probably about 75 per cent of the British who come into (our store) are always heading for English Breakfast tea," says Alina, an employee at London's Yumchaa. They would request for "normal tea", the synonym for English Breakfast tea.

## Tea Rooms (Postcard Teas, Yumchaa and Whittard)

The streets of London are brimming with small, homey tea rooms. It's the perfect place for a warm homemade treat on a chilly afternoon or hosting an appreciated catch-up with friends.

Postcard Teas, hidden in a small back-alley at Mayfair, features a strong architectural identity, resembling a black mail-box. Inside, Postcard Teas offers unique and colourful fusions of tea, including Master Akiyama's Fuji Sencha (green tea), Lemon Pekoe and New Assam (black tea).

"What's special about us is that we only work with places and gardens

that produce 15 acres and under in size. (Our tea) is always directly from the tea makers," shares Jane, an employee at Postcard Teas.

On the other side of London, tucked away in a quiet corner of the bustling streets of Camden Lock Market, is Yumchaa. In Cantonese *yumcha* means 'drink tea'. In English slang, 'yum' is a reference to the term 'yummy' and 'chaa' means 'tea'. Thus, the tea room's name is a play on words, meaning delicious tea.

For Alina, an employee at Yumchaa, the best thing about working there is not the tea offerings, which tourists love, but the "homey feeling you get from the shop, as everything in the shop is sort of mismatched". True enough, sinking into the mismatched yet comfortable seats of the cafe, one feels as if one is right at home.

**(Our tea) is always directly from the tea makers.**

– Jane, employee at Postcard Teas





With the shop's distinctive blue and its prominent brand name, one is bound to notice iconic tea shop Whittard of Chelsea, along the streets of London. Anne, a Whittard employee, says that they pride themselves on the high quality of their teas as they source their teas from all across the globe. Sticking to their 100-year-old philosophy to "buy the best and blend the brightest", Whittard gets their teas from countries like China and Sri Lanka. "We go for the best quality of each variety," she explains.

Afternoon tea is also served in the flagship store located in the heart of Covent Garden where tea is served in fine bone china as Whittard believes it "makes the tea taste better". With a myriad of teas, including the traditional English breakfast and unconventional Coconut Truffle, it is almost guaranteed that the perfect tea for you is somewhere on the shelves. So if you ever find yourself standing in front of a Whittard store, take a leap of faith and step inside. You never know what you're gonna get!

### Afternoon Tea at The Delaunay

Standing proudly on the corner of historic Drury Lane and The Aldwych, the European café-restaurant is the sister restaurant of The Wolseley, from restaurateurs

Chris Corbin and Jeremy King. It serves Viennese inspired Afternoon Tea daily, which has a five-star rating from Time Out London, for £19.75 (\$\$35.60) a person.

"If you go to Vienna, you'll see similar cups and teapots. We try to keep the traditional design so our choice of crockery is really similar to what the Viennese use," the waiter says.

The food is served on beautiful Viennese silver stands, one per two guests, while the teas are served in a large silver tea pot with a ceremonial strainer.

The waiter shares: "The Delaunay Blend is our special mixture. It's mainly black tea, delivered with rose buds and some white tea. The creator was trying to make something special and it became very popular."

Indeed, it has a unique taste. The tea boasts a subtle bitterness within a fragrant dusky rose flavour and just a hint of bergamot.

Besides the favoured high tea, their interior is eye-catching. Designer David Collins took inspiration from grand European cafés and their strong old-fashion glamour with a mix of green leather banquette setting, antique mirrors and dark wood panelling.

"They tried to use colours of nature. That's why the atmosphere in our restaurant is very calm and lovely. London is a very busy city but if you come into our restaurant, you'll feel as if you are transported to a different universe," the waiter adds.

Indeed, afternoon tea is as much a distinctive tradition as it is an unforgettable experience enjoyed not only by the British. Whatever the setting for afternoon tea, there is always a touch of old-world elegance and extravagance that makes this time a delightful affair. **F**

**London is a very busy city but if you come into our restaurant, you'll feel as if you are transported to a different universe.**

– A waiter at The Delaunay







Photo: Ted Teo

# Oh My Cod

Nothing screams 'Britain' like a plate of fish and chips. TED TEO heads to London to savour the iconic dish – both classic and with a twist

**S**ome believe that the fried fish first met the chip in London's East End, where the first fish and chips store, or chippie, was opened around 1860.

Joseph Malin, 13, whose family sold rugs, started selling chips to help boost his family's income.

He married those chips with fish from a nearby fried fish store, giving birth to the first-ever fish and chips.

However, there are others who think

that John Lees created the first fish and chips in Lancashire and sold it out of a wooden hut in a market.

No matter the founder, this dish has become an English staple and icon, travelling to other parts of the world as well.

"It's like chicken rice to Singaporeans," says Anne-Marie Goh, 19, a Singaporean studying in London.

Traditionally, fish and chips were served wrapped in newspaper to keep prices down.

Accompanying it is a slice of lemon, rich malt vinegar and tartar sauce, the flavours blending to form the truly classic British dish.

Poppie's Fish and Chips is located in the East End of London. In 2014, it received the Independent Fish and Chips Restaurant of the Year Award from the National Fish and Chips Award in the UK.

Patrick 'Pop' Newland, founder of Poppie's, filled the shop with memorabilia from his childhood, having grown up in the East End.



Even the staff's uniforms and songs playing in the background bring you back to the 1950s.

Mr Roman Bukey, 53, the restaurant manager of Poppie's Fish and Chips, says that the fresh haddock and cod are popular choices of fish among customers.

Served alongside are "fresh cut chips [which are] cut every hour," according to Mr Bukey.

It comes with malt vinegar and Pop's very own homemade tartar sauce on the side.

The fish stays moist despite being kept under a heating lamp, pulling apart easily and melting in your mouth after the initial crunch of the crispy skin.

The lemon provides a hint of tanginess, blending perfectly with the malt vinegar that adds a rich nutty flavour to the white meat.

Top it off with the tartar sauce and the stunning combination of flavours leaves you speechless.

London's rich and diverse culture can also be found in its food. There's a new wave of fusion fish and chips that combines Eastern flavours with British tradition.

Located in Camden Town, Hook is a modern chippie that exudes rustic vibes and serves fish and chips with a twist.

Think Indian and Chinese spices used to elevate the flavours to a whole new level, or even Japanese tempura batter used to coat the fish, making it lighter and fluffier. Hook is also experimenting with breadcrumbs to give the humble dish a new texture.

"We try and make it more personal," says Mr Shaun Forsythe, 30, manager of Hook. He adds that they ensure that the fish used comes from sustainable sources

and with a variety of species. This is to make sure there isn't a heavy demand for a specific type of fish.

Hook's menu is constantly changing as they experiment with different recipes for the fish and chips. One such example is the Jamaican jerk panko pollock with chipotle sauce.

Sitting atop a bed of fried chips, the fish comes with seaweed-salted spices that heat up your taste buds while the chipotle sauce with creamy avocado cools you down.

However, in Singapore, fish and chips are typically found at chain seafood restaurants and it's difficult to find places specialising in the dish.

In London, simply walk into any pub along the street and you can have a meal of fish and chips.

The fact that you can find this classic dish anywhere makes it a truly English icon. **F**





# Whisk hizz



DARIENNE SIM finds out what keeps a young baker going

**T**he words “I take very, very long to bake,” are not what you would expect from someone who has been almost independently running her own online-based cupcake business for the past year, but that’s exactly what Amelia Koh, 20, revealed.

A few years ago, Amelia found herself in the middle of what would have been just another class in school, when her lecturer posed the question of what their hobbies were. Amelia realised two things then: that she loved to bake and that she wanted to share that passion with others.

“It made me feel like I should do something that I’m proud of,” she says. That was when Karamel Co. was born.

Since then, Amelia has realised that running Karamel Co. isn’t as smooth an experience as she initially expected. She was occasionally brought to incredibly low points that have tempted her to close her shop.

It’s in the hours, past midnight, when Amelia is all by herself in an empty kitchen, struggling to complete orders for the next day, as she carries the heavy weight of Karamel Co. on her shoulders.

Those are the moments that push her to the brink of giving up.

Last year, Amelia also took her business through a makeover. Initially named Amebakes, Amelia realised that she’d lost her purpose behind the baking, and began striving to reform the entire business and bring herself back to her roots.

In the end, it’s the smile on the faces of her happy customers and the good reviews that make the pain worthwhile.

Jasmine Lim, 20, a customer of Karamel Co., is certainly someone with a positive report for Amelia.

“She has a good range of flavours... because it caters to quite a different group of customers,” she says.


“She’s also really sincere and I think Amelia put in a lot of effort to start small for her business and slowly grew it into what it is now.”

Amelia doesn’t have an actual plan for the future of her business, however, as her main goals are simply to constantly improve her business and satisfy more hungry stomachs.

Since she’s a recent graduate of Singapore Polytechnic, she now has



more time to give to Karamel Co., which means that she’ll be able to come up with more ideas to continue sharing her passion with others.

It’s been over a year since Karamel Co.’s story began and Amelia prays its story will never end. 



# Timeless Treats

Delve into the past with NG WENG YAO, AMIRAH AMRIN and SARAH CHEOK as they bring you on a journey to rediscover old culinary gems from Singapore

Photos: Chia Ying Na

**O**ut with the old and in with the new. As youths welcome and embrace modern food trends, the thinly scattered traditional food stalls are slowly being erased from the memories of Singaporeans.

Go back in time and discover the stalls in Singapore that still sell these traditional goodies.

## Dragon Beard Candy

This once popular snack has been vanishing from the scene. The candy sellers are bowing out due to old age and young Singaporeans are unwilling to take on this tough job.

Situated at the M.A.D. Museum is the last dragon beard candy seller in Singapore. Mdm Lili Ho, 70, holds live demonstrations every day, pulling fine threads from rock-hard malt. Once the peanut bits that symbolise wealth and prosperity are added, the candy is ready to eat.

## Putin Piring

The Malay adaptation of a south Indian dish, *putu piring* is made with steamed rice flour, palm sugar and salted grated coconut.

Traditional Putu Piring at Haig Road was established in 1985 and is one of the last remaining stalls still operating and selling the nostalgic traditional snack. The family business started over 30 years ago, after which it was taken over by the current owner Muhammad Hisham, 66.

Traditionally, the snack was made using raw materials like charcoal, kerosene and bamboo sticks but the stall has adopted high-tech machinery like a steel steamer to speed up the cooking process.


However, the traditional touch isn't lost. Mr Hisham says, "The ingredients in making this snack is unshakable, it will never change but the secret lies in executing the preparation with pride."

## Kacang Puteh

Before Singaporeans gobbled down popcorn at the movies, there was *kacang puteh* – a mix of various nuts, peas and crackers. Although seeing sellers among crowds of moviegoers used to be the norm, that's no longer the case.

Along the pavement at Peace Centre, you might spot an Indian man rolling paper cups and tending a stall packed with flavourful nuts in glass containers and steam machines.

The sole kacang puteh seller left in Singapore Mr Moorthy, 49, took over the family business three years ago. Every Sunday without fail, he painstakingly makes the various kacang puteh components from scratch with his family's recipe.

Customers constantly swarm the stall and some like Mr Suppiah, 66, has been frequenting it since his school days in the 1960s when Mr Moorthy's father had been in-charge of it. 







# London Lovin'

Head off the beaten English path as NG JING ZHI and CHERYL KOH scope out the best places to visit in Smoke City and what to wear there for a truly local experience

**G**rey skies and glittering skyscrapers – that's probably the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of London. But get closer to the ground and you'll find the city saturated in vibrant colours.

## Tower of London

Looming over the River Thames is the Tower of London – the oldest palace, fortress and prison remaining in Europe. Infamous for being the place where numerous kings and queens were tortured and killed, ghosts are rumoured to roam its halls. Dress comfortably

as there's lots of walking inside the Tower's grounds and throw on a scarf in case the weather gets chilly.

Step inside its walls and learn of the gruesome beheadings that took place during the reign of Henry VIII. Besides its bloody history, it also served as a royal mint and treasury, housing the spectacular Crown Jewels and an impressive armoury.

While the ravens inhabiting the Tower may look like entertaining pets, be careful not to wander too near because they peck. Legend tells that should these six ravens leave the Tower, the English empire would fall.







## *Bankside*

There are times when exploring a new city begins to feel a little overwhelming from the sheer number of sights and people. That's when scenic, quiet strolls down the River Thames comes in handy. Throw on a DIY patchwork denim jacket and top it off with a pair of aviators for an effortless yet chic look.

Winding through the very heart of London, look beyond the waters – which may be murky and not the most pleasing of sights – and take in the city's skyline. The juxtaposition of wharfs and squat buildings against glassy towers and the occasional Gothic church is a sight to behold, attesting to the city's rich history and development.



## Brick Lane

You've not seen the true personification of "hipster" till you've visited Brick Lane. Think industrial aesthetics – bare, exposed pipes running along red brick and concrete walls, metal shutters in pops of neon and naked bulbs with bold, black wiring hanging low.

There's no shortage of OOTD spots with splatters of graffiti all around. Stick to a grey palette for your outfit so that you don't clash with the background and throw on a light blue denim jacket to spice up your look.

Bars and cafés take residence in every nook and cranny of this grungy neighbourhood, fantastic for meeting up with friends for dinner to unwind from the week.

On weekends, people pour out onto the streets and revel in the energy of flea markets and food fairs. Grab a lemonade and classic newspaper wrapped fish and chips to-go before diving into the labyrinth of stalls overflowing with knick-knacks and handmade trinkets.







## *Brompton Cemetery*

Nestled between West Kensington and Chelsea, Brompton Cemetery is one of London's most famous graveyards. Spanning almost a kilometre long, you might be surprised to find a walk through the area more serene than eerie. It functions more as a park with the clear paths cutting various routes through the cemetery, and there are plenty of joggers and people who walk their dogs there. For the ladies, pair a black dress

with a bold dark brown or purple lip for a look that's not too loud.

Chart your own historical scavenger hunt among the graves – there are multitudes of famous people buried in Brompton Cemetery, from pioneer of anaesthesia Joseph Thomas Clover to Sir George Goldie, who played a significant role in the founding of Nigeria. Some gravestones date back to the 1800s and might have even served as inspiration for British writer Beatrix Potter.



## Pubs

Take a walk down any street and you're bound to come across a pub; they're literally everywhere. Plus, they're hard to miss with massive signs in black-and-gold lettering spelling out quirky names like 'Bunch of Grapes', 'Bag O' Nails' and 'The World's End'.

Stepping into a pub is akin to chancing upon a mad tea party in Wonderland – full of surprises and mouth-watering dishes. You might be surprised at the attention to detail inside a pub – dark, wooden furniture with gold embellishments, maroon walls and carpeted floors make up the Victorian-style interiors. Wear a mix of rustic colours like burgundy and olive to match the earthy tones of the pubs.

Every pub has its very own house specials, ranging from steak and ale pies to jellied eels and bangers and mash. Be sure to go on an empty stomach to savour these truly English delights. Weekends are when pubs are the busiest, so make a reservation or head down early to snag a spot at the cosy booths or bar counters fitted with a wide selection of brews. ■



**PHOTOGRAPHY** Kenneth Tan

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**STYLING & MAKEUP** by models

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Discover thrifting at UK's leading vintage store, Rokit, with CHERYL KOH during a Ngee Ann Polytechnic study trip to London

It's affordable and the "in thing" to do. Despite the presence of thrift stores in Singapore, this alternative shopping method is not as popular here compared to the UK.

"Thrifting is not just a thing that the cool kids do. It's also another way to decrease your global footprint," says Ms Loranique Pienaar, Head of Rokit Recycled Production, one of the more well-known thrift stores in London.

Make a Google search of thrift stores in London and Rokit will be the first name to pop up.

The brand has four outlets at Camden, Covent Garden and two at Brick Lane, making it the largest thrift store chain in London alone.

Rokit's sub-label, Rokit Recycled, upcycles unwanted or unwearable clothes and textiles into seasonal trendy designs.

The apparel comes from clothing banks in Canada – an effort to contribute to sustainable fashion.

"In contrast to reusing or recycling, upcycling uses existing materials

to improve on the original ones," says Ms Pienaar.

Upcycling reduces clothing and textile waste by reusing dead stock or gently used fabric to create new garments and products.

It also reduces the strain on materials such as cotton, wool and polyester to manufacture clothes, which is what big fast-fashion labels such as H&M and Forever 21 are currently doing.

"Environmental consciousness is something that everyone should be thinking of when shopping at high-street stores," says Ms Pienaar.

Thrift shops are a great place to find timeless pieces and hidden gems – a pair of vintage Levi's shorts can cost as low as £7 (\$\$12.50).

The small team of six designers at Rokit Recycled ensures that all clothes are handmade with a personal touch to fit the brand's purpose of upcycling and timely altering.

This approach differentiates Rokit Recycled from international brands where clothes are made in sweatshop factories.

Rokit is a prime example of how London has made a significant step towards supporting the sustainable fashion movement.

In addition, there is the Green Carpet Challenge (GCC), a platform founded by brand consultancy Eco-age to fuse glamour with ethical clothing production.

GCC has collaborated with the British Academy of Film and Television Arts to organise red-carpet events which are attended by celebrities such as Victoria Beckham, Luke Evans and Pixie Lott, which puts sustainable fashion in the spotlight.

Founder Ms Livia Firth said in an interview with the London Evening Standard that it is not a matter of coincidence that GCC was birthed in London.

This has influenced high street brands to produce garments in a sustainable manner, in a bid to do their part of the environment.

"I personally think it's a step forward but I don't think any fast fashion company could be completely eco-friendly," says Ms Pienaar. **F**



Photo: Charlene Koh

## BARTER IS BETTER

One of the oldest methods of transaction has gained traction in modern Singapore, with people hoping to make a change in the world by using it as a medium, CHARLENE KOH and CHERYL KOH discover

**T**hroughout history, bartering has lost and found popularity along with the rise and fall of wealth in society and global economy. In Singapore, bartering has gained traction with initiatives by people such as Samantha Lo who wants to do away with money at her social experiment slash flea market, The Barter Market.

Founded under her non-profit social enterprise, Indigoism, she started the first market at The Substation on Dec 4, 2015 as a retaliation against present-day society's heavy dependence on money.

"Monetary value is supposed to guide us but it's come to this point where it's too manipulated here and there; our idea of how much we think something is worth is tainted by what people think is credible," she says.

Samantha and her team aim to raise awareness about the local arts scene

by getting people to know the makers and artists behind the products without the constraints of a monetary value placed on their works. "We wanted to bring it back to what's really important – to forge the bond between artist and audience," she says.

The self-explanatory slogan for the market is "Trade 'something' for 'something'". Traded goods are not just limited to material goods but skills or services as well, which Samantha initially planned to allow visitors to form a human connection with the vendors.

Samantha noted a majority of visitors at the earlier markets were uncomfortable with the concept of trading skills and services, as the absence of monetary transaction is uncommon to most.

"Sometimes people feel like they don't want to trade say a Facebook like for a t-shirt because they feel that the artist has put in a lot of effort," she says,

explaining that this allows visitors to reconsider the concept of value as something valuable to them might not be the same as someone else.

Despite the hesitation among some members of the public, the exchanges helped people to form bonds with the artists by forcing people to open up themselves to exchange something for something else that they thought was worth it. Samantha says: "The vulnerability in opening up forms that bond with the artist, who isn't judging them but encouraging them and saying – yeah do it, I would love to see it."

The interactions have benefitted artists such as local ceramics studio, Mudrock Ceramics.

"What was great was that after the market at DECK, my friends (Mudrock Ceramics) had an increase in the number of people from The Barter Market, who went over to the studio to visit them, wanting to learn



more about [the craft of making] ceramics,” Samantha recounts.

In the year since its inception, The Barter Market has collaborated with well-known festivals such as the Neon Lights festival and ArchiFest Singapore, a great leap forward from its humble do-it-yourself (DIY) beginnings. Samantha plans to move forward with her aims of connecting artists to audiences by evolving the market to focus more on workshops in a spin-off of the market titled The Barter Workshop.

“We want to make things educational, to let people learn to make things beautiful out of what people have. To make things sustainable beyond just art,” she says.

Beyond art, bartering has gained traction in the fashion world and is a response to the waste and excess that the industry generates. According to statistics from the National Environment Agency (NEA), Singapore generated 156,700 tonnes of textile and leather waste in 2015. Singapore’s low recycling rate of only 8 per cent also contributes to the global wastage.

For Raye Padit, the idea of bartering through clothes swapping started with wanting to make a positive change in the fashion industry. Initially, his plan was to start his own fashion label. However, he discovered that fashion created a lot of waste. In fact, the fashion industry is the second most polluted industry in the world.

“I wanted to do something good for the industry because I love the industry but I cannot be part of the problem,” says Raye.



So he created a non-profit organisation, Connected Threads Asia, which aims to advance and promote sustainable fashion in Singapore through events and initiatives.

The idea of clothes swapping already exists in developed cities like London and New York City. Clothes swapping is the best alternative to shopping for new clothes or for people who are unsure of what to do with the clothes that they do not wear anymore. Most people buy more clothes than they need and end up not wearing them.

Among friends, some Singaporeans swap clothes. However, there was no outlet for them to do so on a larger scale. Raye brought in clothes swapping to see the reaction of Singaporeans. “If Singaporeans see that the clothes are in good condition and that it is fun, more people will be open to the idea,” he says.

From previous clothes swappings and similar events organised by Connected Threads Asia, Raye noticed that Singaporeans were ready to take the next step, which is a tangible action

for them to be part of the positive change in the fashion industry.

Swagalls, Singapore’s first online fashion swapping platform was launched last year, bringing clothes swapping closer to consumers. Instead of physically going down for the event, which happens quarterly, consumers can swap with others at their convenience. However, physical swaps still serve as a good experience for people to come together and interact. Also, it gives consumers the assurance that the clothes are in good condition.

Swagalls has collaborated with brands like Yoga Seeds to encourage swapping within specific target groups. According to Yoga Seeds, the yoga community seemed open to idea of yoga clothes swapping, which is why he agreed to the collaboration. It is a new market for Raye to explore. In the future, he might include yoga apparel in clothes swapping too.

With Samantha and Raye spearheading the industry in Singapore, fashion is moving towards economic and environmental sustainability. 





# BACK(PACK) to the Basics

The backpack trend sees DANIA AMIRIL and CHRISTY HEAH picking out the best selection for every personality

**B**ackpacks have evolved from a back-to-school basic to a staple in nearly every rung of the fashion industry. According to an article by TIME, they first appeared in the late 1930s, originally intended for hiking activities. Over time, they began to catch on with students who chose to carry their textbooks in leather backpacks fastened with buckles. Nowadays, backpacks are an ubiquitous sight on fashion runways to department stores in every neighbourhood – a modern mix of aesthetics and functionality.

Through a survey conducted by HYPE, readers ranked “stylish” as what they look for most in a backpack. Kelsey Magherra, 19, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic student, says: “I love carrying backpacks as they are sporty and match my style. My bags support the weight of my laptop too, [which is useful] especially on days when I have long lectures.”

More than 70 per cent of survey respondents who carried backpacks indicated “trendy” and “sporty” as their preferred styles.

HYPE brought in a variety of brands, including the more popular ones like Herschel, Outdoor and Parkland. Herschel ranked first as respondents

favourite backpack label, followed closely by Parkland.

While value for money is a factor that many look out for, well-known brands that consistently manufacture innovative and long-lasting backpacks still attract a large following. For example, Herschel claims that it “produces quality products with a fine regard for detail”. On the other hand, American line Parkland promises “design-driven bags and accessories [that] are built to last”. As such, the durability and lasting comfort of quality products are definitely worth the cost.

Thinking of swapping your old backpack out for a new one, or hopping onto the bandwagon? Below are some recommendations from HYPE that suit all needs and

personalities. For those who aren’t too crazy about muted colours, we’ve chosen backpacks that add a pop of colour into your everyday life. Switch your plain bags for one in a deep red or a loud cranberry. These simple and sleek cuts from Herschel and Parkland are sure to make you the life of the party.

For the fashion go-getter:  
**HERSCHEL REID MID-VOLUME BACKPACK (WINE)**

With its design-driven silhouette, this Herschel backpack is a must for those who wish to emulate their favourite models’ off-the-runway look. It comes with an interior zippered pocket, adjustable drawstring closure, magnetic snap closure and the classic Herschel woven label. Apart from being lightweight, it’s also made of durable material. The Herschel backpack qualifies as one of our main picks for those who like both stylish and practical backpacks.

Available for **\$99.00** at Herschel Marina Square







For the stand-out in the crowd:  
**PARKLAND RUSHMORE  
BACKPACK (CRANBERRY)**

The Rushmore backpack brings streamlined style to a classic silhouette. Featuring a durable 600D poly exterior, 33.0cm lined laptop sleeve, rear hidden passport pocket, dual side pockets and a secure magnetic closure, this is one for the sophisticated urban explorer. From travelling abroad to attending lectures, the Rushmore is ideal when it comes to versatility. It comes in a wide variety of colours, but Cranberry is definitely the top choice to stand out from the crowd.

Available for **\$99.00** at *Bratpack, Orchard Cineleisure #02-10*

If you aren't one for bright colours, don't fret – we've still got you covered. Monochrome is always in style, and contrary to popular belief, it doesn't have to be boring. Here are four backpacks from Herschel, Outdoor and Mi-Pac to cater to those with more muted palettes.



For the comfort-lover:  
**HERSCHEL LIL AMERICA  
BACKPACK (MULTI/SHADOW)**

One of Herschel Supply's most popular picks, the Little America backpack pairs mountaineering style with modern functionality. At 38.1cm, it features an adjustable drawstring closure, magnetic strap, front pocket with a hidden zipper and a key clip.

The backpack also comes with air mesh back padding.

Available for **\$169.00** at *Herschel Marina Square*



For the thrifty:  
**MI-PAC ALL POLKA BACKPACK  
(BLACK/WHITE) & MI-PAC  
ALL STARS SOLID BACKPACK  
(CHARCOAL)**

A combination of fashion and function, the Mi-Pac Polka and All Stars Solid backpacks are armed with several features while maintaining a quirky style. Its most notable features come in the form of being water-resistant coupled with the affordable price of \$59. These two backpacks are definitely worth your buck, with unique designs and a complementary colour palette.

Available for **\$59.00** at *Bratpack Changi Terminal 3 #B2-43, Flight 001 Terminal 2 #026-22 & Flight 001 Mandarin Gallery #03-21.*

For the daring trendsetters looking for backpacks with a dash of colour, we've chosen three Poler backpacks that are interesting and vibrant all at

once. These backpacks boast rarely-seen colour combinations, thus spicing up plain outfits even on lazy days.




For the quirky personalities:  
**POLER RAMBLER PACK  
(MUSTARD & NAVY)**

A nice alternative to the classic design, the Poler Rambler Pack comes in rarely-seen colours. This no-frills backpack is perfect for carrying a small load, with a main compartment and smaller front pocket to store accessories.

Available for **\$89.00** at *Bratpack Orchard Cineleisure #02-10 & Bratpack Bugis Junction #03-10G*



For the outdoor enthusiasts:  
**POLER FIELD PACK (NAVY)**

Made from strong and expandable Cordura fabric, the Poler Field Pack is recommended for the outdoor enthusiast. Apart from boasting a 38.1cm padded laptop sleeve and an external pocket for accessories, it can also hold more than the advertised 14.4 litres. The backpack's navy surface cannot be dirtied easily as well, thus increasing its value for money. 

Available for **\$89.00** at *Bratpack Orchard Cineleisure #02-10 & Bratpack Bugis Junction #03-10G*

## GIVEAWAY

Want to win a  
backpack? Flip to  
**page 98** to find out  
more!

# Contain Your Grains

Explore convenient and attractive ways to pack food with ANTHEA WANG – and reduce one's carbon footprint

Singapore is known overseas as the “Garden City” – contrary to an article by The Straits Times, who dubbed her the “Throw-away Nation”. The January 2017 article reported that the amount of waste produced in Singapore amounted to 7.67 million tonnes in 2015, equivalent to the volume of 3,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

It's about time we start taking appropriate measures to reduce the waste generated daily. A good way to start is by bringing a lunch box to work or school.

Bringing your own reusable container is environmentally friendly and saves you an extra 20 cents for the paper, plastic or non-biodegradable box that is likely to end up in the bin. The better alternative is to pack a homemade meal suited to the size of your appetite. To start you off on the road to less wastage, HYPE presents our best lunchbox picks under \$20 to match your takeaway needs.

## Compact Lunch Box

Available at: Daiso

Price: \$2

Colours: orange, blue, green

This lunch box has two sections, with the top one separated into two compartments, which makes for easy organisation of side dishes. Remember to remove the lid before you heat up your meal. We consider it the best value for money.

## Glit & Brillia Lunch Box

Available at: Mijyi at Ang Mo Kio

Price: \$2

Colours: blue, pink, green

This \$2 store at Ang Mo Kio sells both Japanese and Korean products. The lunch box has a compartment to store cutlery, but you should ensure that it remains upright in your bag or bring a binder to hold the two separate layers together – the box does not come with clasps to secure the layers. An additional plus point is that it is microwaveable; just remember to remove the lid!

## Luntus Lunch Box

Available at: Meidi-Ya at Liang Court

Price: \$14.50

Colour: pink

This robust two-tier lunch box comes with removable dividers for each box, handy when it comes to separating your sides and mains. The box is also microwaveable with a lid that has an air hole. The clasps on the lid ensure that the lid is closed tight.

## Happy Jackson Snack Box

Available at: Takashimaya

Price: \$16.90

Colours: pink, red, teal, yellow

The bright colour combination is sure to rouse your appetite during lunchtime. Plus, it looks great in your Instagram posts. It is suitable for storing uncut fruits such as apples or avocados. Use it to store food that does not require heating.

## Te De Mei Two Layers Lunch Box (Large)

Available at: Isetan at Westgate

Price: \$21.90

Colours: green, blue, pink

While this microwaveable lunch box may seem pricey, it is well worth the money. The stainless steel container is suitable for soup and both cold and hot food. Both containers come with silicone air holes, which can be opened easily to let steam out. The handles attached at the top of the lid also make it easy to transport. **F**



COMPACT LUNCH BOX



GLIT & BRILLIA LUNCH BOX

HAPPY JACKSON SNACK BOX



LUNTUS LUNCH BOX



TE DE MEI TWO LAYERS LUNCH BOX

Photos: Isaac Sing and Ariel Yeo



# Tomes of Tomorrow

WARRICK TAN flips through the history and future of pre-owned bookstores in the British capital

A single step in and it hits you – that nostalgic scent of yellow-stained books worn out by the ebb and flow of time – one of the many charms that you can find in a second-hand bookstore in London.

Lining the walls of the store are towering bookshelves of old wood, within which are hardcovers and paperbacks of varying sizes, loosely arranged in some order only the owner is familiar with. Combined with the creaking of the wooden floor at every step, you can't help but feel like you're entering a library of the past.

These stores are dotted all across London. However, along Charing Cross Road is a splendid line-up of various second-hand bookstores with the same rustic appeal. Two worthy of mention are Any Amount of Books and Quinto Bookshop.

"[We have] some things that are completely bizarre and unusual and some things that are completely boring," explains Daniel Burwood, 22, an employee at Any Amount of Books.

Second-hand bookstores work differently from regular ones. Instead of buying books in bulk from publishers, they get their stocks purely from people who are willing to sell to them. The quality of books found in each store can vary greatly on a regular basis.

Like any other shop, second-hand bookstores do have loyal customers. With books priced as cheaply as £2 per copy (\$\$3.55), it's no wonder they attract readers of all ages. But for some locals, these shops hold a special place in their hearts.

For Mr Jack Howard, 44, Any Amount of Books was the bookstore his history teacher used to bring him to when he was a student passionate about the subject. Thirty years down the road he still visits the store to hunt for "treasures".

He also explains that many authors who were "imminent people in their time" created literature that is relevant even today, but had lost their names to the past. Their books, however, can be found in second-hand bookstores, making them "living archives".

Many of these shops also function as antiquarian bookstores where collectors can source valuable and ancient texts to buy and sell.


"It's always nice to see a beautifully-made book, it's almost like a work of art," says Mr Guy Taylor, 67, a military archaeologist and long-time patron of Quinto Bookshop.

There was a time when people could only purchase books from physical

stores. But the advent of the Internet and online shopping has hastened the decline in demand for these stores. This is evident in the past decade, when Borders went bankrupt in 2011 and Barnes & Noble lost millions of dollars, according to Business Insider in October 2013.

To tackle this rising threat, second-hand bookstores have to adapt as well. Many of them, including Any Amount of Books and Quinto Bookshop, have created websites where users can browse, sell, and buy used books.

Daniel says: "Without [going online], there wouldn't be any shops along this road or anywhere here."

Second-hand bookstores in London have an innate characteristic of unpredictability, since the books can change every day and you never know what you may find. So keep an open mind and don't be afraid of books that look old and dusty because great knowledge might come in humble disguises. You could be amazed at how a tome of the past can entertain, educate or enlighten you in the future. 

# FINDING LOVE ONLINE IN LONDON

YSABEL ANNE ALUQUIN goes on an online date during a short visit to the British capital

The Internet is a magical place specially created to feed our laziest tendencies. It is a world

where groceries can be bought and delivered straight to your doorstep without you ever having to leave your house, or your couch except to open the door for the delivery man.

Even finding your significant other is as simple as a swipe to the right on the handphone.

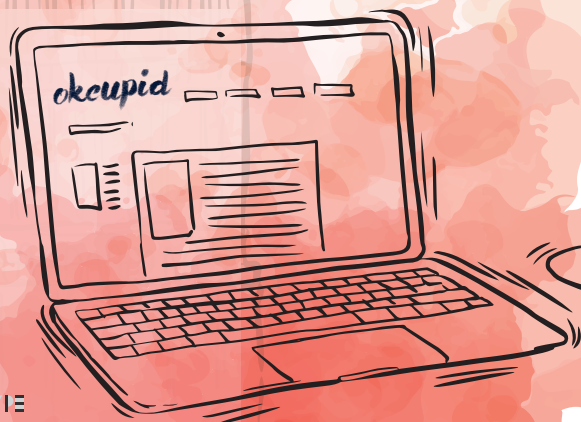
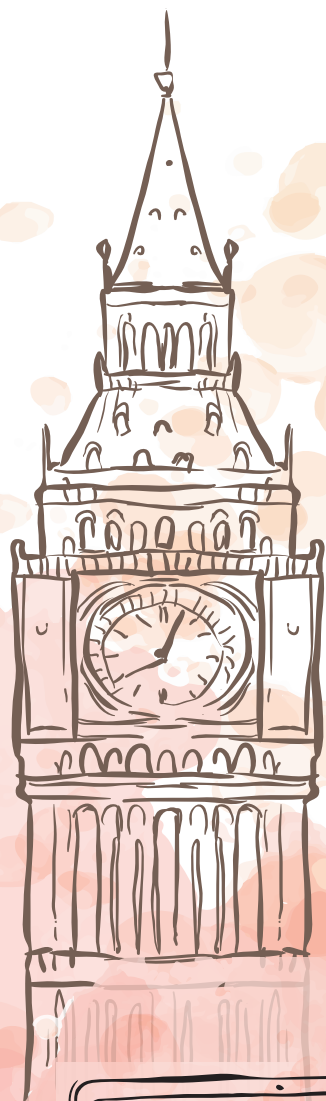
Well, that is the case for Tinder, a popular dating app that had about 50 million users in early 2015. The interface is user-friendly. A potential match pops up on your screen with just his/her photo for reference (though you can tap on it for a bio, if one is written). If you like who you see, you give that person a swipe to the right and if you don't, to the left he/she goes. As of early 2016, about 26 million matches are made daily. That's a lot of people swiping right.

Then, there is OkCupid which is the fourth most-searched for online dating app/service in 2015, according to Google. The app has more than a million downloads every week, with 7.3 million messages being sent every

day. OkCupid differs from Tinder in a way that it doesn't just promote love at first sight – or swipe. Through a series of questions, you are given a match percentage with potential matches which helps determine whether someone is perfect you.

My date that evening had a 64 per cent match with me on OkCupid. It wasn't exactly ideal, but I wasn't complaining. He was a 23-year-old American from Boston in London for a short work trip. The date started off with us exchanging messages on Facebook messenger, trying to figure out where the other was. When I spotted the fairly tall guy staring at his phone and then looking back at me several times, I realised that I had found him (and that he was probably double-checking my profile picture on Facebook). Let's call him Mr Boston.

We walked around in the cool London air as we searched for a place to go. The pubs were filled to the brim, with patrons spilling out





into the busy streets. It didn't take long for us to give up our search for a pub that wasn't too crowded and we just ended up sitting on a bench. As most first dates start, we began with a lot of small talk.

It's all about trying to find out if the person you're with is a potential candidate for your heart. This is the crucial part of first dates, the time when you can fully analyse the other person. I took note of his nervous fingers tapping on his leg, the way he did his best to ignore the people walking by and the way he scooted ever so closely to me with every question.

Mr Boston was nearly 1.83m tall with bright blue eyes and a fit body. He towered over my short frame, but I didn't feel the least bit intimidated. His laughter rang out after all my jokes, he smiled politely at my stories and he nodded along to my political views and sentiments. We exchanged tales about our family, friends and of course, ourselves. However, my favourite story that he told was that of his worst Tinder date.

As great as Tinder may be, there are always downsides to the online dating app. Mr Boston experienced

that when his date was locked out of her house and they had to wait over an hour for the locksmith. To add salt to the wound, as soon as they got in she scurried off the couch and asked him if he could help tidy up her apartment. He highailed it out of there. I would have, too.

Shortly after, we left each other with a quick goodbye and a hug. He messaged me again on Facebook and his last words to me were "nice meeting you" with a smiling emoji. Mr Boston was never seen or heard from again.

To be honest, that wasn't the first time one of my dates went MIA (missing in action) afterwards but that's okay. A first date, especially when arranged online, is meant to get a feel of the other person. It's to find out what they're like in real life and to see if you click with him/her. As fun as that date was, we did not click enough for us to continue talking, especially with him living all the way in America.

Finding love online is a risk that many people take today. But for every horror story, there will be a success story somewhere else. It's a new way for people to find love and we hope they do.

## Do's and Don'ts of Online Dating

### DO

- Share your best photos, first impressions really count.
- Be extremely cautious when it comes to meeting someone for the first time. Always arrange your meeting in a public place.
- Google the person. It may sound stalker-ish, but just to be safe you should know who you're meeting.

### DON'T

- Share anything too personal. People don't need to know your address, unless you plan on taking them home.
- Pick somewhere with little to no people to meet. I know you want your privacy, but it's safer to meet where many people can see you.
- Leave your drink unattended. If you have to go to the bathroom, finish your drink first.



A walk down  
Tianjin's Haihe  
river isn't such  
a stroll in the  
park after all.  
NICOLE FANG  
puts on her  
best sneakers

# HA RIVER

**E**mbodied in the Haihe river is the past, present and future of Tianjin. The third largest city in China, Tianjin bustles with life from day to night all year round. There's too much to explore in a day, but walking along the city's 'Mother River' and taking in the sights and sounds will reveal to you the story of this municipality.

The story begins when the sun rises. Peaceful in the early hours of day, the glistening waters shimmer brilliantly as the rays hit the surface. There's a murmur, an exchange of youthful voices, then a splash! The peace is broken, as is the illusion when the water ripples and a group of old men swim across the river and back.

"We swim at this spot (right beside the Shizilin bridge) everyday, starting from around 6:30 to 7am," says Mr Li Zhu Qi, 65. "If you walk along Haihe, you'll see many other groups swimming in the river like us.

Those people, they're all 60 to 70 years old. You don't see any youths swimming in the rivers anymore because they'd fork out money to swim in the swimming complexes."

With a wistful expression, Mr Li continues: "Back then, when we had no money, we would come to the river to swim. There were no safety precautions then. If you drowned, you drowned, and if you didn't, you learnt."

**There were no safety precautions then. If you drowned, you drowned, and if you didn't, you learned.**

– Li Zhu Qi

Where the river flows is where the people go – for 600 years, Haihe river has provided for the people of Tianjin.







Providing food, water and even entertainment, the river was filled with life while the city was still developing. Spanning over 1050km, the Haihe river is deeply rooted in at Tianjin's history and has seen the growth of this spectacular city.

"Tianjin is huge, and the city is located the heart of the Haihe river. That is, from Ancient Cultural Street to Tianjin Station," says Mr Li Yong Li, an experienced tour guide in his mid-50s based at Ancient Cultural Street.

He says: "The scenery at this section is the prettiest and that's because the development at this central location is flourishing. The surrounding businesses, infrastructure, culture and way of living – they're all flourishing."

However, even as Tianjin develops, echoes of its history still remain deeply etched within the Ancient Cultural Street.

Stores selling traditional folk art such as *Nirenzhang* (clay figures) and *Yangliuqing* (wood cut printings) New Year paintings circle around the Tianhou Temple, the only building in the street that was built during the Ming Dynasty.

Although it was only built in the last few decades, the Ancient Cultural Streets holds buildings

that imitates the architecture of a Chinese street in the 19th century.

Moving past replicas of traditional architecture, a series of cream-coloured, western-styled buildings come into view. These buildings are built on the site of the former Italian concession, making up the current Italian Style Street.

More of a town than anything else, the Italian Style Street is littered with cafés and small shops selling rustic-looking trinkets that make for good souvenirs.

As the road continues on, it expands out into the Haihe Cultural Square. Soft melodious music floats through the air from the St. Regis hotel, with its glimmering exterior standing proudly.

With every step along the river, the hands of the Century Clock ticks. Vehicles rush back and forth on the Liberation Bridge, eager to return home after a long day at work.

Old but filled with knowledge from the past, this bridge witnessed the liberation of Tianjin on Jan 15, 1949.

The sights along the river may have been stunning, but truly, the real attractions here are the river's bridges. They are adorned with lion

statues and light up at night, and are indeed works of art in and of itself.

Lights flank the Haihe river as the sun sets and a river cruise passes. The ethereal beauty of the Haihe River, lighted up from various attractions, takes our breath away.

"In the 60s or 70s, I took a ship to Dalian twice via the Haihe River. But that was before they added the sluice gates," says Mr Bai Wen Long, 64.

Saddened by that fact, he says: "The river is here mainly as an attraction. Big ships used to be able to sail to Tanggu and Qingdao, but after the implementation of the bridges, the river is of no use."

Nonetheless, the river makes for a pretty sight at night. Up we go on the Tianjin Eye, and what we saw at a close range previously, is now spread out before us like a map in motion.

"The Tianjin Eye was built so that we could see the view that we couldn't on the ground," explains Mr Li, our tour guide. "The higher you go, the more you see."

And much like the horizons we see from the Eye, there's no end to this city's story, just a series of blank pages waiting to be filled with an even greater tale of Tianjin.



# MONOCHROME MANIA

Delving into the development process of film rolls and black and white pictures, DANIA AMIRIL goes back to the basics of photography

Film photography is making a comeback, heralded by the numerous photography enthusiasts returning to the craft's roots and shooting with analogue cameras. Some are taking their interest a step further, choosing to develop their films independently.

It's easy to snap a photo but the art of film development is a different experience altogether.

Owner of Analog Film Lab Lo Sheng, 46, says: "There is a lot of craftsmanship that is put into play when developing films and I find a huge sense of enjoyment doing it."

Set up by a small community of photographers who wanted to share their knowledge on film photography and the equipment needed for the activity, Analog Film Lab provides services in developing films and photo printing.

If you're seriously considering developing your own films, there are some things you may want to take note of.

To begin, a developing kit is needed, which can be bought in a set or separately from Ruby Photo at Peninsula Excelsior Shopping Centre or online stores like Ebay, though most don't come with the chemicals, which can easily cost around \$200.


Film, Sound & Video student from Ngee Ann Polytechnic Allycia Chew, 19, says: "The cost of buying a developer, chemicals and the developing kit is too expensive for me as I am not very experienced in the mechanics of developing my own films. I would only consider it if I have a friend who would want to develop the films with me."

There are ways to minimise trial and error while saving cost. Joining a community of analogue photography enthusiasts allows those with more experience to help you start out and advise you on what to buy.

Alternatively, you could split the equipment cost with a group of friends and develop your films together in bulk.

According to Mr Lo, black and white film is the easiest to develop since expensive and bulky equipment are not involved in the production process.

Muhd Mirza, 19, a film student and analogue camera aficionado, says: "Black and white photos also bring out more details in the subject of the photo. It looks good when I shoot photos of people, buildings and architecture."

If you're on a budget and new to developing films, monochrome film may be the easy choice to start with. The absence of colour also allows such photos to easily complement many different types of décor should you choose to frame them up at home. 



Photos courtesy of Muhd Mirza



Photo courtesy of Mark Solarski

# Listen Up

If you prefer to hear stories rather than read them, CAMILLIA DASS might just have the solution for you



In this day and age, new forms of entertainment are popping up like weeds. Many people end up too occupied with Netflix, social media or game apps and you'll be hard pressed to find someone still appreciating the simple pleasure of curling up with a good book.

Despite efforts like National Reading Day, there's still a drastic decline in readers. According to the National Literary Reading and Writing Survey conducted by Singapore's National Arts Council in 2016, over half of the respondents had not read a literary book between March 2014 and 2015.

In a bid to save reading, publishers are starting to turn to audiobooks as a way to keep people interested.

"The use of our eAudiobooks has increased steadily over the years. From 2014 to 2015, there has been a 50 per cent increase in [their use]," says Ms Valerie Cheng, director of Content & Services at the National Library Board (NLB). "Audiobooks present an

alternative mode of reading and cater to those who would like to explore different reading opportunities."

"I like that books come to life in a sense because some narrators are amazing and really make me love the story while I'm listening," says Ms Melissa Veras, 25, a lawyer.

Originally deemed as a lazy way to read, more people are realising it can be a more convenient way to be immersed in a story.

Ms Veras says: "When I'm cleaning or at work, I can do multiple things [while listening to the story] without having to hold a book in one hand."

One of the most pocket-friendly ways to get your hands – or ears – on audiobooks is to borrow them from the library.

Download the free Overdrive app and key in your NLB membership information. It'll then let you borrow eBooks and audiobooks without needing to worry about overdue fines.

The titles will be stored in the app and you can choose to speed up or slow down the track as well as skip to different chapters.

"I like the easy access," says lead setter Tina Medrano, 25. "I can access Overdrive from different devices and [the spot I stopped reading] is always saved."

If Overdrive's selection isn't extensive enough for your tastes, you could try Amazon's Audible – as long as you don't mind the added cost.

For a monthly subscription fee of US\$14.95 (S\$21.09), you get one audiobook a month to listen to offline and 30 per cent off additional titles you purchase. Unlike the Overdrive app, you can keep your book forever or exchange the titles you disliked for something else.

If you find reading a chore that takes away time that could be spent doing other things, give audiobooks a chance. It might delight the multitasker or listener in you. **F**

# GAME OF LOVE



ANTHEA WANG finds out how indie romance visual novel *Mystic Messenger* has gone viral in a market filled with action-heavy games

When the topic of games is brought up, the first few examples that come to mind are of the fighting genre, such as *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare*, *Battlefield 1* and *Tom Clancy's The Division*, the top three on Fortune magazine's list of most popular games in 2016.

While it didn't make top 10 on the popularity list, dating simulation game *Mystic Messenger* by indie Korean game developer Cheritz managed to take the fourth spot on microblogging site Tumblr's list of best games released by indie companies. Despite only having been launched for about three months, it took the Internet by storm, with over 2.5 million downloads as of December 2016.

In the game, the user plays as main character (MC), a girl who finds

herself in a mysterious chat room for a private fundraising group. Through interactions with four dashing bachelors and other side characters, the choices the player makes as MC will eventually lead to either a "good", "normal", or "bad ending".

*Mystic Messenger* falls under a sub-genre of visual novels called *otome* (maiden) games, which are storyline-oriented video games, usually of a romantic nature targeted at a female audience.

Despite the niche genre, various developers have released numerous mobile *otome* games. However, *Mystic Messenger* has set itself apart with its realistic factor. In a survey conducted by HYPE, 76 per cent of 2021 participants picked "realism" as the factor that appealed to them the most in the game.

The real-time gameplay is something that keeps the player on their toes – chats only occur at specific timings and if they are missed, they cannot be played unless one is willing to spend money on hourglasses, an in-game currency.

"One thing about *Mystic Messenger* is that if you want a certain route, you need to follow its timeline. This makes you focus even more and you think, 'I want to make sure this is worth my time,'" says an organiser of the *Mystic Messenger* café in Singapore Mel Ang. "It feels like an actual person is texting you."

Another aspect that attracted fans was the ability to "talk" to in-game characters through chats and "phone calls". Of the survey participants, 68 per cent chose "gameplay" as what drew them to *Mystic Messenger*. Eighty-five per cent of them are also interested in trying games with similar mechanics from different (non-romantic) genres.

One such fan is Netto Tan, 23, a part-time student who plays other visual novel games such as *Ace Attorney* as well. She says: "Visual Novels in my opinion focus more on the story, hence they would usually have a pretty good plot. I've also heard some of my friends comment before that the art of the visual novel affects their overall rating of the game as well."

*Mystic Messenger's* popularity has introduced visual novel games to the mainstream gaming community and by the looks of it, may create opportunities for other similarly engaging story-based games to gain recognition as well. **F**





# GAMER JOCKS

Gone are the days when computer game geeks and sports stars lie on opposite ends of the social spectrum. WONG SI JIA finds out if there are prospects of having an active eSports culture in Singapore

With eyes glued to screens, 43 million viewers around the world held their breath as two opposing teams duked it out in the last seconds of the tiebreaker match. An intense moment of concentration, then a collective whoop of joy from the official champions of the 2016 *League of Legends (LoL)* World Championship.

It had garnered more viewers than the National Basketball Association league finals that same year. There's no denying that eSports – also known as electronic sports or competitive video gaming – has grown in popularity over the past few years, extending its influence to many parts of the globe, including Singapore.

Due to events like Gamestart 2016 and Singapore Media Festival Ignite 2016 alongside a \$20,000 fund from supporting organisation Singapore Cybersports & Online Gaming Association, the local eSports scene is expanding rapidly.

Mr Benjamin Pommeraud, 35, general manager of Riot Games in Singapore and Malaysia, says: “I think the eSports scene is finally moving. It's been a bit stagnant in these last years... but lately, we see much more traction in the community.”

However, he acknowledges that it could be “bigger and more structured” as unlike Malaysia, Singapore doesn't push gamer teams to the world stage on a regular basis – although not for the lack of talent.

In fact, local eSports players have seen a series of small successes, with the Singapore teams representing Asia for the *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO)* World Championships in October 2016 and qualifying for the *Overwatch* World Cup finals a month later.

“I've always believed that Singapore has the talent, it's just that we don't have the opportunity to showcase it nor the time to practise,” says Mr Eugene Tay, 32, founder of No Use Talking, a local-based semi-professional squad. He had once led Singapore's longest-lasting competitive gaming crew to place top 25 globally for *CS:GO*.

Between National Service, school and work, many players find themselves juggling commitments that can be difficult to balance. The negative stigmas associated with video gaming also translate to insufficient support for the eSports community, especially in Singapore where education is held above everything else.

“What's missing [in the local gaming scene] are not the people and fans who are going to watch the events. What's missing are people who are going to support the sector, the industry,” Mr Pommeraud shares.

Both Mr Tay and Mr Pommeraud believe there's much room for the eSports community to thrive, with the latter explaining how homegrown gaming companies Garena and Razer have gained international respect and brought pride to Singapore.

Meanwhile, Mr Tay says that “people [need] to change their stubborn thinking and take the jump to see how far we can go” and he already has plans in mind to further thrust the local eSports scene into the limelight.

Referring to scholarships and structured programmes for eSports offered in Western schools, he enthuses: “I hope to see an academy [for competitive video game players], an academy that I wish to create someday. Something similar to the Singapore Sports School, but with a gaming concept, much like what the colleges in the United States are doing.”

Certainly a grandiose dream, but it might just become reality in time to come. ■

Photo courtesy of GameStart Asia

Photo courtesy of Helena Kristansson (Electronic Sports League)



# STAYCATIONS: HERE TO STAY

It is no longer just a quick getaway without hassle. Staycations targeting younger customers offer virtual playgrounds, as MEGAN CHEAH finds out

**A**s the tech-savvy millennial generation come into their own, youths and young adults are starting to jet off on solo trips or holidays with friends. It's no surprise they are also finding pockets of time over the weekend to book in at hotels locally, taking a break from school and work for a staycation.

So what does it take to be a hotel for millennials? In a survey conducted by HYPE with 103 youths, cost (52.4 per cent) and comfort (41.7 per cent) were listed as the most important factors when booking staycations, with 49.5 per cent willing to spend from \$101 to \$200 per night. Here are some options.

## **At Your Doorstep: Hotel Jen Orchardgateway**

Located along Orchard Road, Hotel Jen Orchardgateway is highly accessible. Its seamless connection to four shopping malls means that guests can stay out all day without getting bored, returning once in a while to unload their shopping.

That is not to say that the hotel itself does not provide ample facilities. According to student Isabel Tay, 19, her stay was "a little expensive, but [was] compensated by the amazing facilities, breakfast choices, spacious rooms and service". Such amenities include its rooftop infinity pool and a rooftop bar that features panoramic views of the city skyline.

There are six categories to pick from the hotel's 499 rooms, the priciest ones being the Club rooms on levels 18 and 20. Boasting floor-to-ceiling windows, the spacious rooms also find favour with the guests, making for a great place for a short getaway.

## **Just The One: M Social**

If there is a hotel catered solely to millennials, it is M Social at Robertson Quay. Named for its large social spaces, the hotel works in a way that allows guests to mingle while maintaining comfort and convenience in its rooms.

Sporting a chic, minimal interior and quirky motifs that point to the work of renowned French designer



Photo courtesy of Hotel Jen Orchardgateway





Photo courtesy of Hotel Jen Orchardgateway

**M Social will be the new and vibrant place in Singapore where elegance, creativity and technology meet to offer a unique experience to our global smart tribe.**

- Philippe Starck,  
Designer of M Social

Philippe Starck, the 293 rooms are snug in nature, packing all necessities into two room sizes.

The social aspect comes in at various locations, such as the hotel restaurant *Beast & Butterflies*. Using a communal table concept, guests can come together, strangers or not, for conversation. While the restaurant is opened to all, hotel guests can also gather in the two meeting rooms or outdoor pavilion.

Mr Starck says: “M Social will be the new and vibrant place in Singapore where elegance, creativity and technology meet to offer a unique experience to our global smart tribe.”

### **Fantasy World: Wanderlust Hotel**

Rocket through the stars or live in origami at Wanderlust Hotel, which showcases four themed levels designed by award-winning local design firms – Asylum, Phunk Studio, Furious and DP Architects.

Situated on Dickson Road, enter the hotel’s industrial-style lobby including a heritage montage. It continues to the Pantone-themed level two where 11 single-coloured rooms are labelled with apt song titles, such as *Yellow Submarine* and *Purple Rain*.

In contrast, level three has a monochrome theme based on paper

art – origami rooms featuring crisp white folds cradling the beds and Pop-Art rooms with decor that resemble stencilled 2D furniture.

The most popular level is the whimsical fourth which has nine lofts over five themes. Highlights include a floor-to-ceiling rocket in “Space” and a large, smiling vintage typewriter in “Typewriter”, welcoming guests to their stay.


“Sometimes, amazing things and original experiences get lost in the fog of our worldliness,” says Mr Loh Lik Peng, founder of the hotel. “With Wanderlust, it is my attempt at making that adult world into a fun playground once again.” 



Photo courtesy of Hotel Jen Orchardgateway





# Freedom

## *at a cost*

Is freefalling into the freelance industry worth the risk? ANTHEA WANG and MEGAN CHEAH uncover the potential risks and benefits of abandoning a nine-to-five desk job

In our competitive society, traditional nine-to-five jobs equate to hectic schedules, leaving people without any spare time to spend with family, on hobbies or other leisurely activities. This has prompted many to go into freelancing – a highly flexible working environment that lets people work at their own pace.

Freelancing refers to jobs done by self-employed individuals, who are hired by companies to do specific assignments. As they are not attached to employers, freelancers are able to take on various projects, while setting aside time for personal ventures. Freelancing suits people of different experience levels who have the necessary skillsets. Full-time freelancers range from fresh graduates to workers with years of experience under their belts.

“The majority of freelancers I’ve worked with are [those with] three to five years of experience,” says Ms Jayce Tham, 37, Chief Businesswoman of CreativesAtWork, a platform created to support the growing creative freelance network in Singapore. She started the company with her sister Fanny, 34, to support freelancers from a business and administrative standpoint.

“I feel the reason for this is due to this group [of freelancers] being unsure or are tired of the corporate structure after two to three years. They are in transition – still trying to figure out what they want to do.”

Singapore’s freelance community has been growing. According to an article by Enterprise Innovation, freelance website Elance-oDesk, Singapore ranks as Asia’s top country when it comes to hiring freelancers online. In 2014, Singapore had 30,000 businesses and 37,000 freelancers of the 3.8 million businesses and 9.7 million freelancers in Elance-oDesk’s community. Enterprise Innovation noted that the numbers “position Singapore as the top Asian market for hiring freelance talent online and a top 10 market globally”, and that “businesses in Singapore spent 46 per cent more on hiring freelancers online versus 2013”.

So why the rise in this field? It stems from the Internet, a platform for people to search for information and make connections – leading to freelance jobs being easier to find. According to a survey by Freelancers Union and Upwork in 2015, 73 per cent of US respondents pointed to independent jobs becoming easier to find online, with 72 per

**[Freelancers with three to five years of experience] are in transition – still trying to figure out what they want to do.**

– Ms Jayce Tham, Chief Businesswoman of CreativesAtWork





cent noting that finding projects online takes less than two weeks.

Money is another reason for people picking freelance over traditional jobs. “[Freelancers’ pay] is significantly higher than if you were to be employed, as freelancers have more control over their pay,” says Mr Yeo Kai Wen, 27, a full-time freelancer. This corresponds with an article by The Next Web in 2016, which found that within a year, 78 per cent of freelancers earned more than they did at a traditional job. Besides freelancers’ control over their pay, the lack of expenses on benefits also allows employers to pay freelancers more.

The two main drivers of freelancing, however, are its flexibility and freedom. The Freelancers Union and Upwork survey noted that two-thirds of respondents believe freelancing provides the opportunity to work from anywhere, and more than one-third have been able to move, thanks to the flexibility their work provides.

There is also more creative freedom in freelance work than in an office job, where the pre-existing policies do not allow for one to stretch the boundaries. Filmmaker Kyle Ong, 23, quit his nine-to-five job in a production house to pursue freelance work for this reason. “Ultimately, I want to create

something with my name on it,” he says: “Freelancing made more sense [than a traditional job] as the projects I work on are for myself.”

But is freelancing really what youth nowadays look for in jobs? In a survey done by HYPE, respondents listed passion (44 per cent) and stability (24 per cent) as the two most important things they look for in a job. While freelancing surely satisfies passion, many might have doubts about job stability as a freelancer.

“What I believe in is to diversify my income sources,” says Mr Yeo, who has long-term projects at Mediacorp and Nanyang Technological University, in addition to ad hoc video shoots and editing.

“Retainer jobs are important because long-term projects will make sure that I have at least this amount of money for this year. So I won’t have to fret if let’s say, for one month, nobody comes looking for me,” he says.

To achieve stability, Ms Tham believes freelancers have to go in with a business mindset. “Once you start freelancing, you are on your own and you are not just a creative person anymore,” she says. “If you see this as a viable career, then you need to take more business approach to it.”

CreativesAtWork, which has 1,200 freelancers on its platform, has

been working to raise awareness of issues surrounding freelancing through its programmes, which include workshops to educate freelancers on managing finances.

Despite the growth of the freelancer community in Singapore, there are still many misconceptions about it. “As all industries are, there’s always a lot of black sheep. The same applies to freelancers,” explains Ms Tham, who says there are a handful of clients who refuse to work with freelancers because of prior mishaps.

However, Ms Tham asserts that irresponsible behaviour is only limited to a small group of freelancers. “Most freelancers are very responsible because they know their name is as good as their last project.”

While many might be tempted to jump on the freelancer bandwagon for the flexible working environment and their love for their specific fields of work, one should be cautioned that freelancing is anything but a bed full of roses.

Mr Ong, who started freelancing in 2011 while still studying at Lasalle College of the Arts, has had his fair share of misfortune regarding legal issues.

“I’ve had bad experiences, as have all freelancers, [but] I’ve learnt a lot.

Ultimately, I want to create something with my name on it.

– Kyle Ong, filmmaker



Photo courtesy of FreePik





You should always have the terms in black and white, at least in email form, although a contract is better,” he warns.

Other than the occasional setbacks, there are several other factors one should consider before deciding on a freelancing career. Freelancers have to set aside money for their own health care, insurance and Central Provident Fund (CPF) account, while full-time employees are usually covered by employee benefits. “Accounts need to be put in place by ourselves; ... it’s not just about going out for shoots, it is also a lot of back-end work. So [for] every shoot that I go to, I need to make sure I keep the receipts, [and] account for all my equipment,” Mr Yeo says.

Most freelancers would have to rely on their own accounting skills to ensure everything is in order. However, as the freelance community in Singapore grows, companies like CreativesAtWork start coming into the picture.

Modelled as sharing platforms for freelancers, they organise workshops and bootcamps to guide freelancers on managing the business aspect themselves. Additionally, they are the middleman between the client and the freelancers who sign up with

them, taking care of administrative matters such as invoicing so that the freelancers can channel all their energy into creative work.

According to Ms Tham, such networks also open opportunities for younger freelancers to pitch to clients. In the event that their idea is chosen, the company helps to “put together a proposal”.

“Because of our credentials, we can lend [the young freelancers] credibility. We can help support them in terms of other things like scheduling,

**Accounts need to be put in place by ourselves; ... it's not just about going out for shoots, it is also a lot of back-end work.**

– Yeo Kai Wen,  
full-time freelancer






producing and budgeting so that they can just focus on working towards their creative vision,” she says.

Mr Ong, who has been with CreativesAtWork since 2015, says: “They sort of manage you, like talent management. What they are doing for this field in freelancing, which is very broadcast-based, is good for the industry.”

Moreover, CreativesAtWork actively recruits fresh graduates from creative courses in Republic Polytechnic and Lasalle into their pool. “We are open to working with schools, but we hand-pick freelancers that are at the benchmark our clients are looking for,” says Ms Tham.

Because of Singapore’s competitive workforce, dropping out to pursue a freelance career may seem daunting and risky. However, our society is still endlessly developing, resulting in diverse opportunities available to the public, supported by services and organisations. One should take care to do research when picking working routes, and not be afraid to experiment for a while – that way, the freelancer would be able to choose the style which best suits him. 

## Services for Freelancers

CreativesAtWork is not the only company that offers support towards freelancers, with the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) playing an active role in backing the community.

The NTUC Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit aims to create better working conditions for freelancers. The unit’s annual Fair For Freelancers offers business solutions, talk panels, and even connects attendees to digital platforms that provide a link between them and potential clients.

They have also launched the initiative *freelanceXchange*, an online hub for the community to stay connected and gain access to various resources such as potential job offers and support services.

[ntuc.org.sg/wps/portal/fse/home](http://ntuc.org.sg/wps/portal/fse/home)



Photo courtesy of FreePik



# APP-solutely Social

In this digital age, socialising is no longer confined to face-to-face interaction. WONG SI JIA explores three social apps that help bring users together

**N**owadays, the number of followers on social media determines many people's social circles. Take it offline and it's highly likely that only a close handful group of friends will remain.

Fortunately for the social butterflies, there are community-building apps, which allow for opportunities to mingle with like-minded strangers and translate digital connections into real-life interaction.

## Lunch Kaki

Inspired by his wife's dislike for eating alone, founder Melvin Tan, 35, invented the app for users to seek out lunch company.

With over 20,000 registered users, there's certainly no lack of *kaki* ("friend" in Malay) for lone diners. The app filters lunch requests by location, interests, industry, gender and age.

"It doesn't only mean that you lunch, it's like a stepping stone, a convenient way to make friends through activities," Mr Tan explains, referring to how like-minded individuals can connect through the app and bond over similar interests.

For future updates, an augmented reality feature may be introduced in mid-2017.

*Available for free on App Store and Google Play Store, US\$6.99 (S\$9.94) for upgrading to Premium user*



## wander

Launched in early-2017, the app seeks to bring like-minded individuals together through over a hundred channels and topic threads that function like a live forum. Users are exposed to a plethora of community-driven subjects, ranging from games to fashion and beauty.

"I like to connect people and I like to build communities," chief executive officer Krystal Choo, 28, shares. "I think people feel better when they have support, so I hope this app can give them the same feeling of community."

Despite being new in the market, Wander has garnered positive feedback even before its official release.

To join the conversation, they'd have create accounts and select areas of interest or choose to set one up if a particular category cannot be found.

*Available for free on the App Store and Google Play Store*




## Rovo

Looking for an equally-matched opponent to test out that forehead slice? Niche app Rovo specifically caters to tennis players in Singapore.

Frustrated by the difficulty of finding players of the same calibre, co-founder Ritesh Angural, 30, and his team, decided to create a simple and accurate ranking system app to for tennis enthusiasts.

Proficiency level in many sporting apps is self-assessed but Rovo requires adding a description for each scale in its aptitude quiz. Players are then matched according to skill, availability and distance after they create a profile.

Currently, the app has approximately 500 users and every player can be matched with five to ten opponents.

Users can look forward to playing doubles, having a new feature to find tennis coaches and participate in tournaments held by clubs or organisations in the near future. 

*Available for free on the App Store and Google Play Store*





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It's my choice.**



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- Psychology and Marketing
- Psychology and Web Communication
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- Tourism & Events and Communication & Media Studies
- Tourism & Events and Hospitality & Tourism Management
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# (PARA)SPORTING A DIFFERENCE

With more attention on Singapore's para-sports scene, WONG SI JIA finds out what lies ahead for this community

**A**n orange blur arcs through the air, seconds before being ensnared in curled fingers. A flick of the wrist and the basketball sails through the hoop, a point scored by a wheelchair-bound athlete.

The last two years have brought about many firsts for the local sporting scene. Between Singapore's debut as the host nation for the 8th ASEAN Para Games in 2015 with two gold medals to boot and her first gold-medal victory in the Rio 2016

Olympics, more focus is being channelled to the sports community, including para-sports.

Recent efforts came to light of recognising disability sports in Singapore, following the positive response garnered from the ASEAN Para Games. This includes the introduction of Centres of Expertise for Disability Sports – where disability sport programmes and inclusive gyms are provided.

“Compared to 10 years ago, it's quite a big improvement, or at least a step in the right direction,” Dis.Is.Able founder Shiam Jerome, 26, says.

“I think since the ASEAN Para Games, there has been a significant jump, which I felt was what the country was calling out for.”

Dis.Is.Able is an organisation that aims to educate people on disability sports and disability as a whole.

While Mr Shiam acknowledged the development of the Singapore para-sports community, he explained that the initiatives are should have already been implemented at an earlier date – a sign that Singapore is hardly “a first-world country in para-sports or the disability scene”.

Mr Baey Yam Keng, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Culture,

Community and Youth, said in an open-discussion seminar: “For the government, of course we hope that as much [money] can go in to recognising the efforts of these athletes, ... but what the government wants to invest in is actually the journey before the win.”


According to Mr Shiam, disability sports are also generally regarded to be lacking in both difficulty and prestige.

In fact, similar views can be found on the comments thread of ‘The Straits Times’ Facebook page, where differences between the two sporting categories are compared.

Mr Shiam notes that the evolution of the disability sports community is “looking to be very interesting”.

“Now that the para-sports scene is in the [lime]light, we get more educated and receptive, and people who have disabilities can now feel that they have a viable career option,” he enthuses.

“I think it's all about being proud of your fellow Singaporeans, your athletes, for daring to take up the challenge.”

As said by Mr Shiam: “Singapore para-sports is certainly moving from the home pitch to the sports pitch – and it isn't going to stop there.” 



Photos courtesy of Dis.Is.Able



# DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

A carefully crafted facade of cosmopolitan lives is slapped all over cities like London and Singapore. Most promising and bright of all are, of course, the youths. After all, they play a key role in shaping the future of these countries.

But scrape off the glamorous surface and one will find some startling truths. Not all of these adolescents receive the same opportunities to fulfil their dreams; some have their growth hindered due to unique situations. Because of that, they're tucked away in the dark crevices of society, deemed to have fallen off the path to success.

According to data.gov.sg, 3,265 youth arrests were reported in 2015 – an increase of 234 cases from 2013. Meanwhile, the number of arrests of youth drug abusers in 2015 has jumped to 283, a 56.4 per cent increase from 2013.

“Really when we interact with these [at-risk] youths, we realise they’re just normal youths. But probably because of some family circumstances, they need more support,” says Ms Elaine

Dive under the shiny, spotless surface of First World cities London and Singapore with ADELENA OH and NG JING ZHI into the world of their neglected and wayward youths

Loo, 45, director of the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) run by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

The stories of disadvantaged and at-risk juveniles do not need to end the way they start – hopeless. With patience, love and guidance from organisations, youth workers and volunteers, their true potential could be unearthed and refined, like diamonds.

## Diamond Miners: Governments & Organisations

The Salmon Youth Centre in Bermondsey, London, emphasises the importance of being part of a community. This is because they believe that young individuals who isolate themselves could potentially fall into bad company.

The youth centre, which is one of the oldest in the UK, opens its

doors to youngsters between the ages of six and 24 regardless of their racial or religious backgrounds. It runs sports, cultural, personal and social development programmes for various age groups, also known as clubs, for the 500 adolescents they receive weekly.

“It has an impact in the Bermondsey area,” says Mr Michael Askwith, 72, a trustee of Salmon Youth Centre. “It’s built up a culture – a tradition of support – and so a lot of people around this area know of Salmon and they have been supporting it with their families and children and grandchildren for a century.”

One such recipient of Salmon’s nurturing culture is Miss Emma Tierney, 25, who had started out as an attendee and is now working as a full-time staff member. “I’ve been in hospital quite a lot because I had depression and I tried to kill myself a few years ago.





The staff supported me through it all and I've overcome it," she says. "Without them, I don't think I would be alive, let alone here today."

While there are success stories of youths overcoming the many obstacles they face in life, director of Salmon Youth Centre Samuel Adofo, 52, believes in taking the upstream approach by tackling issues at the root. He does this by observing trends in the community before engaging in discussions and activities.

"You can observe their behaviour and widen their perspectives on issues like drug abuse and teenage pregnancy. If they've got any problems, you can pick it out and solve it before it happens," he says.

Speaking about the Youth-At-Risk Engagement (YARE) framework in Singapore launched by MSF in June 2016, Ms Loo echoes Mr Adofo's sentiments: "Over many years, we're discovering that if we don't intervene early, those that come into our system will [increase]. Research has shown that if we invest in early intervention, in doing upstream work, we can see better benefits and outcomes will be better for the youths and the nation as a whole."

The YARE framework is one such initiative to do upstream intervention work. The framework seeks to help youth agencies to better identify youths at-risk so that they can be channelled to the evidence informed programmes run by the agencies.

Assistant director of CYGO Margaret Ngoi, 45, says social workers under the framework will run different types of interest based programmes that target at the youth's risks and needs. During these programmes, the youths can learn "life skills" that would be useful even in adulthood.

Some of these skills include imparting communication skills or better decision making skills such as weighing the pros and cons instead of acting on instinct or misinformation.

"[These are] life skills that a lot of people take for granted but can actually be taught to young people who might not have parents or role models to show them these things," explains Miss Ngoi. "Social workers and youth workers can teach them these skills so they can learn to tackle their life issues in more positive manners."

#### **Diamond Cutters: Social & Youth Workers**

With Singapore's government and London's youth organisations taking initiative to develop schemes that help disadvantaged youths in their respective cities, the next step in would be for social workers to passionately carry out these strategies.

**I've been in hospital quite a lot because I had depression and I tried to kill myself a few years ago. The staff supported me through it all and I've overcome it. Without them, I don't think I would be alive, let alone here today.**

- Emma Tierney, full-time staff at Salmon Youth Centre





Photo courtesy of Unsplash

In both cities, it is common for youth workers to have been in the same situation as the young people they are helping.

“I used to be a dropout myself so I didn’t have much education until much later. In the course of my study, I got to meet many significant people in the field of social work. Them being in the field for a number of years, there’s that practice wisdom and their own experiences.

It shed light on where I could fit in like a small puzzle piece in a bigger picture and that gave me some purpose,” says Mr Jonathan Soh, a social worker at Trybe Limited who, like Miss Tierney, wants to help others the way he had been helped.

Founded in 1995, Trybe is a charity organisation with the vision of “Every Youth a Success Story”. The overall work of Trybe involves fulfilling the potential of youths, not just in part. Apart from being the state-appointed managing agent of the Community Rehabilitation Centre and Singapore Boys’ Hostel, it provides youth and family services mainly through prevention and intervention services.

As a teenager, Mr Soh had thought he was “the worst of the lot” but

**[The youths] need to recognise that they are valuable and important to someone else, that’s the key message I want to bring across in my work. You could be the last hope to someone else.”**

– Jonathan Soh, social worker at Trybe

“certain experiences made [him] realise [he] had a value” and he felt the urge to bring others who shared his struggles into the light.

“[The youths] need to recognise that they are valuable and important to someone else, that’s the key message I want to bring across in my work,” he says.

Adam\* (not his real name), 16, a resident at Singapore Boys’ Hostel who has been under the care of Mr Soh for over 10

months feels deeply motivated by the social worker’s guidance.

Despite facing hiccups along his journey when his Trial Home Leave was revoked due to a minor infraction, he chose to take the high road by reining in his temper and making attitude adjustments.

Trial Home Leave is an incentive given to well-behaved youths to stay at home instead of the institution for a period of time, reporting to their caseworker weekly.

“At my lowest point, I cried and he also cried with me. He explained to me and helped me realise where I had made a mistake,” reveals Adam.

“[That] touching moment was when I realised that Mr Jonathan really cares about me.”

Alternatively, Ms Amma Appiah, 23, a full-time staff member at Salmon, ventured into youth work out of her love for working with them.

“I used to go to a youth club and it’s just a great place to be. I had great youth workers that gave up their time after a full day’s work to come work at my youth centre and I wanted to do that as well,” she says.

The relationships Ms Appiah formed with the adolescents have not been compromised by her vastly different background.

“I didn’t go through much as a young person. I had a very easy life, great family and really loving parents. Most of these young people here come from single-parent families and struggle financially. But they don’t see themselves as disadvantaged, they see it as: ‘That’s life, you get over it and work harder’.

“I thought I wouldn’t be able to relate to them, but I have – quite well, actually.”

Ultimately, the goal of youth and social workers is to help young people reach their potential and be a positive influence in the community.

### **Diamond Polishers: Volunteers**

Complementing the work of social and youth workers are young volunteers who help set examples and show acceptance to at-risk youths of similar age.

Ms Loo says “the idea about older youths mentoring younger ones and helping to bring awareness to the issues these youths at-risk face” encourages peer support and reduces the tendency to label the disadvantaged.

In a HYPE survey conducted among 31 young adults, 87.1 per cent of respondents had never volunteered at a youth at-risk organisation or programme before. But among the minority who has volunteered is Jonas Lim, 20, a final-year Business & Social Enterprise student from Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

He had started by playing basketball with some youths from Trybe every week but after two months, he progressed to giving six youths ukulele lessons over the span of 10 weeks, ending with a performance.

Although Jonas found it slightly challenging to relate to the youths at first, he adapted quickly and understood relationships take time to build. By the end of 10 weeks, he had felt deep enough of a connection with the youths to give each of them a ukulele with their respective names carved on it.

“Moments like these are unforgettable – where they would repeatedly say ‘thank you, this is such a nice ukulele,’” he shares. “Deep inside, I was just glad that I had an opportunity to love the [youths] in action and deed.”

Similarly at Salmon, the centre collaborates with local schools and invites students as volunteers to facilitate their various sports, arts and cultural clubs. Student volunteer Emerson Murphy, 16, lauds the facilities available at the centre and looks forward to returning to help.

The HYPE survey revealed 70.4 per cent of respondents who had never volunteered in at-risk youth organisations or programmes did not do so due to time constraints.

In contrast, Mr Soh had juggled volunteer work throughout his time pursuing his diploma and subsequently his degree. He

doesn’t agree with deeming young adults too young to volunteer with youths at-risk either.

He shares: “I was only about 17 or 18 when I was first given an opportunity to [help] with a troubled youth. The father was desperate and ill – he was going to pass on, literally. He had said to me: ‘My son listens to me partially – but I’m passing on – and he doesn’t listen to my wife or his elder siblings, but he seems to listen to you. Could you help me take care of him?’

“That was one of the life-changing moments for me when I started to consider that every youth has value. At that time, I was only a delinquent and I realised even as a delinquent, I was the last hope to another parent.”

No matter what a potential volunteer feels they might lack, as long as he or she has empathy and passion, a good foundation can be created. Mr Soh says: “I believe as you nourish someone’s empathy, they will want to do more and the rest will just fall in place.”

With narcissism deemed trendy and the latest trends in electronics and fashion constantly grappling for attention, volunteering for the benefit of another person may be the last thing on your mind. But it may also be worth considering Mr Soh’s sentiments: “You could be the last hope to someone else.” **[F]**





# Born to be Global Citizens

With globalisation taking root as one keyword of the 21st century, JOSHUA ANG and CHOK YEE KWAN set out to understand its impact on Singaporean youth

Singapore is dubbed as the country where “East meets West”, a term that stems from Western influence on an Asian country. The diversity in Singapore reflects its history – a nation that once flourished through trade and with the help of immigrants. Fast forward into the present, where most Singaporean youth are accustomed to a globalised world that is interconnected and heterogeneous.

In such an environment, Singaporean youth have adopted cultures from around the world – from entertainment to fashion – and made them part of their own. They also have greater access to world news and are able to gain insights and develop a global perspective.

While acknowledging his citizenship status, the global citizen is not hampered by geographical and political borders and identifies with the global community. Due to the rapid development of globalisation, even the government has encouraged Singaporean youths to be more involved in the world community.

## Moving Forward Globally

In a 2007 speech addressing the importance of national education, former Minister for Education

Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam highlighted that globalisation is essential to Singapore’s prosperity, and we should “swim with the tide of globalisation”. However, he also raised the importance of Singaporeans staying united and resilient amidst the challenges that globalisation may bring.

One of the challenges that he focused on was the exposure of alternative views, ideologies and lifestyles that could potentially shake and weaken the foundation of Singapore’s national identity. This national identity is integral in keeping Singaporeans united.

“Crises will happen, but we have to build upon something together if we don’t want our loved ones to suffer,” said Divian Nair, 29, founder of the “We are Majulah” movement and television anchor on Starhub’s Supersports 360.

In an eight-minute video focusing on the fundamental concept of “Majulah” (to move onward, to survive), he talks about his belief that a national identity can be owned and shared to build a society that is inclusive, tolerant and compassionate. Through this campaign, he hopes to “continuously foster the Singaporean identity and strengthen the will to live together”.

**Can Singapore afford not to have Global citizens? I don't think we can.**

– Mr Martin Tan  
Executive Director of  
the Institute for Societal  
Leadership in Singapore  
Management University

## To Be Or Not To Be A Global Citizen

Globalisation is not all doom and gloom, but has the plus point of raising a generation that has access to a global outlook on issues. In the face of globalisation, Singaporean youths have to be global citizens and learn to show unity in the face of adversity through respect for one another’s culture and race. Ultimately, it is this respect for one another that binds us together.

“Through the internet, an aspect of globalisation, I became increasingly aware of the various cultures around the world. I learnt to respect and appreciate the diversity of cultures that the world has to offer. It has broadened my perspectives and widened my horizons,” says Royce

Lim, 19, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) student.

In a forum conducted by the Singapore Institute of Internal Affairs, Executive Director of the Institute for Societal Leadership in Singapore Management University, Mr Martin Tan, 40, explained that Singapore as a country has become extremely interconnected with the world that is around us. He cited the UK's separation from the European Union and the then-possibility of Donald Trump becoming the President of the United States as having the potential to dissolve the fabric of interracial and intercultural harmony if strong ties to those cultures were not well-maintained. Therefore, his answer to the question posed at the forum – “Can Singapore afford not to have Global citizens?” – was a blunt “I don’t think we can.”

In recent times, Singapore has witnessed an influx of foreigners arriving on our shores in hopes of greener pastures. As such, we need to be more open-minded and accepting of the cultures that they

bring in order to avoid conflict. In a 2016 infographic produced by the National Population and Talent Division, foreigners make up 29.8 per cent of Singapore’s total population, compared to 18.7 per cent in 2000. This surge in the number of foreigners is just another by-product of globalisation.

Kenneth Ang, 19, a Jurong Junior College graduate, says, “Singapore in essence is already a global society, we have people from many different countries like China, UK, Philippines, and Malaysia. The fact that they are able to integrate somewhat well is a testament to how Singaporeans already embrace our society as a global one. Sure there will be some friction here and there, as expected. But on the whole we still get along. So it’s even more imperative that we embrace it since our whole societal mindset is based on multiculturalism.”

According to a survey, HYPE found that a staggering 71.2 per cent of respondents, mostly from the ages of 13 - 29, embrace cultures other than their own, such as Japanese and

Korean culture. They cite that these cultures are “relatable to youths” and “interesting and extensive”, comments which show that youths are ready for a globalised landscape.

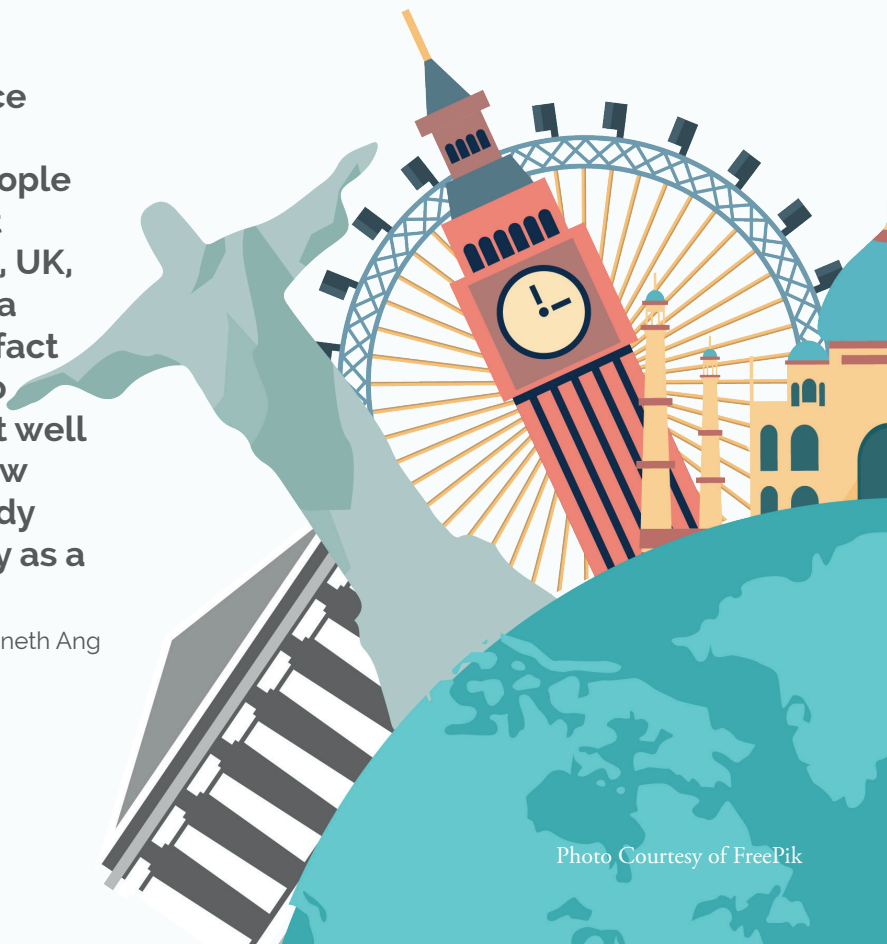
### **Globalisation a sign of progress for Singapore?**

Singapore has always sought to stay competitive and relevant by moving with the times. As a result, we have welcomed globalisation with open arms. In fact, its economy remains the second-most competitive in the world and best in the world for goods market efficiency according to a 2016 report compiled by the World Economic Forum.

However, the country should not progress too rapidly that it leaves Singaporeans behind and widens the inequality gap. As a society that wants to remain cohesive, Singapore needs every citizen to progress together for globalisation to be a complete success. Unfortunately, globalisation tends to favour those who already have the capital to invest, while leaving the impoverished in a cycle of poverty.

**Singapore in essence is already a global society, we have people from many different countries like China, UK, Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. The fact that they are able to integrate somewhat well is a testament to how Singaporeans already embrace our society as a global one.**

– Kenneth Ang





Exacerbated by the stagnation in jobs that low-income workers undertake, the income gap has started to show.

“Members were concerned that if we fail to transform the low wage jobs, our society will become more fragmented as the income disparity widens,” said Speaker of Parliament Halimah Jacob, addressing the issue during Budget 2016.

In Singapore, the income gap is among the largest when compared to other developed countries. The country's income gap in 2014, as measured by the Gini coefficient for income, was 0.478. To narrow this gap, the government has made efforts to raise wages of the low-income and increase taxes on those in the high-income bracket.

Another cursor that points to Singapore's progress is its ability to compete for talent in the workforce. In the 2016 Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI), Singapore is only second to Switzerland in terms of talent competitiveness.

Globalisation is also changing the nature of work through technology and hyper-connectivity.

As a result, there will be a rise in the number of independent and dispersed workforce.

As of June 2016, the number of foreign workers has increased by 0.013% compared to December 2015, an influx projected to aid Singapore in reaching the 6.9 million population mark by 2030.

Instead of seeing this influx in a negative light, we should acknowledge the benefits that it has brought to our economy. Singapore's successes thus far can be attributed to the arrival of foreigners, as they bring with them trade and investments. These multinationals are also the ones who constantly bring in fresh perspectives – new ideas to the table based on their own cultures, an edge that enables them to reach out to a greater mass of consumers. As much as they give, they also receive. Multinationals found a land with a booming economy and prosper as a result.


That being said, while having the need to be open about the ideas that are coming in with the incoming talent pool, Singaporeans must also take the initiative to look outwards for ideas so as to be accommodative to foreigners.

### Global Citizens the Future of Singapore?

As Singaporean youths become more globalised, a society of global citizens is not a far-fetched future for Singapore. The country needs to prepare itself for this future by keeping track on this phenomenon, as there are a number of issues that might arise when it gets a foothold.

Globalisation also threatens national security by shaking the foundations of its social cohesion. Cultural diffusion dilutes the existing culture that the country has and if careless, it could corrode Singapore's national identity and divide the country.

In terms of progress, globalisation improves Singapore's economy by leaps and bounds but at the price of a few social repercussions. Inevitably, more Singaporeans may leave the country in search for work opportunities, as the job landscape gets more competitive. For those who remain, the stress from constant competition may cause them to sacrifice more leisure time with their friends and family.

However, globalisation is a necessary evil that Singapore needs to embrace in order to stay competitive and relevant. If it is managed appropriately, it can boost the country's economy, and widen its citizens' perspectives. 

**... it's even more imperative that we embrace it since our whole societal mindset is based on multiculturalism.**

– Kenneth Ang



## PAPER CHASE OUT OF PLACE

WONG SI JIA

**D**uring a family vacation to New Zealand, I met up with some relatives who have been living there for more than a decade. Halfway into the conversation, one of them asked me what I do for leisure, to which I replied with my list of hobbies. He stared for a bit, then teasingly said while being half-serious: “Oh, I thought students in Singapore just study in their free time!”

I took no offence at the remark, but the comment lingered in my mind, hours after the catch-up session had ended. It's one thing to gather such a statement from compatriots, yet another to hear from foreigners – the sentiment is different, more jarring and shocking; a telling sign of how our education system is perceived outside of Singapore.

Granted, it does hold some truth. Between piles of assignments, tuition sessions, and the expectation to do well academically, hardly any time can be set aside for other interests.

As far as the academic aspect is concerned, this lifestyle is especially reflected through the results of international benchmarking tests.

**With degree holders being a common sight nowadays, what sets your piece of paper apart from countless others?**

According to The Straits Times, Singapore had the highest proportion of top performers among all economies in the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) and also came out top for the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Survey, both of which took place in 2016.

The showings, while impressive, were hardly surprising. In a society where attaining less-than-satisfactory results would warrant a punishment of sorts, a lot of emphasis is placed on grooming high-flyers. In Singapore, that means graduating with at least one university degree, thus boosting the paper chase culture. With degree holders being a common sight nowadays, what sets your piece of paper apart from countless others?

This is an era when skills-based learning is set to gain prominence. Globalisation has brought about the winds of change, causing a constant evolution of the workforce. In an article by The Straits Times, Deputy

Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said that the “paths of advancement” for skills to deal with real-world scenarios should be available to students, since having a degree no longer denotes guaranteed employment in today's age.

Coupled with the introduction of the SkillsFuture initiative, the government's decision to build a skills-oriented society is a welcomed move.

Meanwhile, students can pick up certain essential skills before entering the working world through part-time jobs. For example, if one works in the service sector, learning about people management and problem-solving becomes part of the process, which can prove to be useful in the long run.

The slow shift away from a paper chase society is encouraging, although some companies still list a degree as an employment prerequisite. Nonetheless, it seems like we're en route to a skill-based system – how it will fare, though, only time can tell. **F**





# STOP PICKING ON FOOD

CHOK YEE KWAN

**W**hen I was a child, I was very picky with food. From seafood to poultry, there were a great many things that I refused to eat simply because I had the choice not to. Perhaps that was why my growth was stunted and I became physically weak compared to my peers.

Such a habit continued when I went for an overseas trip with my primary school classmates. My teachers were furious that I was picky about food, giving me a tongue-lashing in the process, forcing food down my throat literally as well.

Since that experience, I ate anything and everything on the table, finding joy in different foods I had previously refused, or swallowed my dislike and the food itself.

In the past, most people did not have much of a choice where food was concerned as affluence was rare, so food had to be cherished.

As such, our elders would scare us into finishing our food. You'll have a husband or wife with plenty of pimples on the face, if you don't eat up every grain of rice, they would say.

*We are perhaps blinded by our wealth and easy access to food and other things that we take for granted.*


We are more fortunate now and our parents can provide us with a wider variety of food, mainly imports from countries across the world. How little we know about the people who still live in the rural farmlands, toiling away to give us our wide array of choices. We are perhaps blinded by our wealth and easy access to food and other things that we take for granted.

It's my observation that the younger generation, still growing up and trying to understand things around them, are picky about their food.

Having just returned from Chinese New Year (CNY) celebrations at my grandparents' home in Malaysia, I saw a stark contrast between the two sides of my extended family.

My more well-off paternal side of the family had filled the trash bin with perfectly edible food, while my maternal relatives had trash that comprised skin and bones from the leftover poultry to fulfil the "*nian nian you yu*" wish for abundance each year.

As CNY approached, local Facebook group Journey to Zero Waste Life in Singapore posted a video titled "4 ways not to waste food during CNY". It detailed how food from the CNY feast could be recycled into the next meal and more. But how effective are such self-help groups when the people who follow them just have to run to the nearest supermarket for their daily needs and wants?

While it is a good initiative for a self-help group focusing on zero food wastage in Singapore, I feel that education is critical from a young age – not on the superstitions that the elders are bound to spout, but of the people that grow the food and how wasting is a form of disrespect to them and nature's gift. Focusing on education, especially from an early age can snowball to the next generations of urban citizens who will most likely not be exposed to the hardship and labour of farm workers. I was lucky to have that experience it in my childhood, but I wasted it. 



# WHY PERSONAL MOBILITY DEVICES SHOULD BE BANNED

CAMILLIA DASS

**O**n Jan 10, a law to regulate the use of Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs) was passed by Parliament. In particular, the law focused on e-bike users and also e-scooters and hover boards.

The law stated seven new rules for PMD users such as the fact that they could no longer be used on footpaths and that they had to make sure that their devices were only capable of going at a maximum speed of 25kmh.

While these rules were set in place to protect road users and PMD users alike, it's my strong belief that these rules only make it even more unsafe for everyone.

Most people use PMDs to get to school or work, rarely does someone purchase a PMD solely for the pleasure of riding around in a park with it. With the new rule that PMDs are not allowed on footpaths, the only other option is for them to ride on the roads – roads that are not equipped to deal with normal cyclists much less people on PMDs.

Numerous accidents on the roads prove that this decision makes it not

By restricting the use of PMDs on footpaths, the government is only pushing more of them on the roads.

only very unsafe for PMD users but also for drivers and motorcyclists.

Many videos have surfaced online of PMD users riding their devices on expressways, of them dangerously cutting in front of buses and of them using the PMDs as if they were a car or motorbike.

By restricting the use of PMDs on footpaths, the government is only pushing more of them onto the roads.


The new law also states that you have to be at least 16 to be allowed on an e-bike. However at 16, youths are not ready for the responsibility of keeping themselves safe on the roads.

In fact, they are the most likely group to do dangerous things on the road that might endanger themselves and other road users.

If we do not allow people to get their driving licence till they are 18, why should we allow 16-year-olds to be in control of a much more risky device on the road?

Furthermore, the rules also state that PMDs are no longer allowed to be modified to go above 25kmh. Going at that speed on any road is guaranteed to cause an accident. As it is, many drivers find themselves having to overtake normal bikers when they travel on the roads. Yet with PMDs, it may be even more difficult for drivers to gauge the speed of a PMD and they may end up getting into an accident.

One of the reasons argued for allowing PMDs on the roads was the fact that as Singapore charges towards a car-lite society, we need to allow people to use these alternative modes of transportations, as we cannot expect everyone to favour public transport.

However, it is no point pushing for the allowance of PMDs for the sake of a car-lite society if it is going to come at the cost of safety of all road users. Rather, the government should continue to encourage the use of public transport and discourage or ban the use of PMDs altogether. 





# STOP LOOKING DOWN ON “UNGLAMOROUS JOBS”

NG JING ZHI

Growing up with strict parents, I was often at the receiving end of the mantra “if you don’t study hard, you’ll end up working as a cleaner”.

It sounds harsh, but I’m sure it’s only because they want the best for me. They don’t want me to have any regrets not doing better in school or end up with a job that I don’t enjoy.

But I find that there’s something fundamentally wrong with that well-intentioned statement.

What’s wrong with being a cleaner?

It seems to me that there are people who harbour the mindset that those who have “unglamorous” jobs are immediately deemed to be in a lower class of society – and thus receive lower class treatment.

Reports from The Straits Times cite cleaners at food courts being verbally abused by unreasonable customers.

One cleaner who had accidentally splashed gravy on a man’s white shirt was berated harshly and had to spend \$50 on a new shirt for the man alongside bringing the dirtied one for dry cleaning.

*This shouldn’t be the way. Everyone should be respected regardless of his or her line of work.*

Disabled cleaners are not spared – another incident saw a woman yelling at a 64-year-old deaf and mute cleaner for clearing her food before she was done with her meal.

In yet another incident, a woman blatantly recited the “if you don’t study hard, you’ll end up working as a cleaner” mantra to her son while a cleaner was clearing her table.

Why do these workers have unkind remarks and harsh insults hurled at them when they are just trying to do their jobs? Plus, everyone makes mistakes and there’s no need to react in such a melodramatic way.

Personally, I think that poor treatment towards cleaners (and service line staff, for that matter) stems from those who think that they are superior only because they’re lucky enough to hold more glamorous jobs that offer much higher pay.

Perhaps they feel entitled to look down on and even mistreat those who have to do “dirty work” for less.

This shouldn’t be the way. Everyone should be respected regardless of his or her line of work. Every job comes with its unique set of challenges, and the cleaners who seemingly have a simple task of ensuring that a place is spick and span are doing so much that we don’t see.

They need to deal with unpleasant situations on a daily basis, from foul smelling washrooms and uninvited pests to cleaning up spills that we make.

They’re literally doing the “dirty work” that nobody else wants to do. And they’re probably even doing a better job than we could.

Perhaps the mantra ought to be encouraging without putting others’ professions down.

Something along the lines of “know where your talent lies and study hard to excel in it” sounds much more positive and doesn’t unknowingly cultivate the idea that one is superior to another based on their job. **F**



# TOO ROUGH FOR YOU?

**ANIKA NALE**

A friend once said to me as she saw the large wound scab on my shin I obtained from a touch football competition: “You should stop playing touch football, it’s a guy’s sport.”

This is not the first time I’ve heard such words. In fact, I hear it frequently from my parents, who have begged me repeatedly to quit touch football. As whenever I come home, all bruised and wounded, they say that the scars will look ugly.

All that was going through my head was “my body, my choice”.

My teammate, Sarah Kong, 20, also shares the same views.

“Whenever I see my relatives, they’ll always comment about my physique and skin colour. Due to playing touch rugby, I’ve become more muscular and tanned than before,” says Sarah.

Before she joined touch rugby, Sarah took up ballet, swimming and track and field, allowing her to maintain a slender physique. But ever since joining the sport, she has become ‘buffer’ than most girls, which has made her the topic of conversation at family gatherings.

■ *It’s time we bury expressions that end with “like a girl”. Playing like a girl should not have a negative connotation.*

“Even if my older relatives think I should discontinue playing it, as it’s not a ‘girl’ sport, my passion for the sport beats their ignorant criticism,” says Sarah, “Plus, knowing that my teammates always have my back on and off the field reassures me that I made the right decision,” she adds.

What constitutes a male sport and a female sport? Shouldn’t a person’s skills and abilities in the sport – and not her gender – determine her future in it?

In fact, more girls are becoming interested in sports commonly and more popularly played by men, due to the adrenaline rush that comes with fast sports such as rugby, touch football and football.

Footballer Amirah, 22, says that women footballers are “less popular, less recognised and less appreciated”.


She adds: “There is even a huge difference in the prize money for a women’s league compared to that of a men’s league!”

According to research done by National University of Singapore, body dissatisfaction among women can also be caused by media’s portrayal and promotion of the “ultra-thin ideal female body image”.

Female athletes tend to feel somewhat insecure. However, power lifter Adele Lau, 18, shares that it gets better.

She expresses: “People called me big, but muscle growth is inevitable and essential in the sport that I am in. My friends and family are proud that I am a powerlifter.”

It takes courage to go against the status quo, and to break through the stereotype that girls can’t or shouldn’t play rough sports. It takes even greater courage and determination to train hard and excel in the passion.

It’s time we bury expressions that end with “like a girl”. Playing like a girl should not have a negative connotation. Always pursue your passion if it’s the thing that makes you want to wake up everyday. 





## YOU'VE GOT MAIL

MEGAN CHEAH

**H**aving grown up in the digital age, there's something about opening the mailbox to handwritten mail that excites me. Whether they be beautifully designed postcards with short snippets detailing the vignettes of the sender's life, or a thick package chockfull of treats and souvenirs from another country's culture, receiving something personally customised and written for you is special in a way quick-fire emails and WhatsApp messages are not. And coming home to a surprise after a long day's work is definitely a plus.

Unfortunately, in the fast-paced society we live in, people have begun to move away from the slow communication of snail mail, as we now simply have a faster way of reaching our intended recipient. People have also blamed the post for being unreliable, even through the registered mail system that comes with a tracking number. According to an article in *The Straits Times*, local mail operator Singpost's registered packages is actually untraceable once sent overseas.

As such, sentiments towards snail mail have been less than favourable.

**...receiving something personally customised and written for you is special in a way quick-fire emails and Whatsapp messages are not.**


Whenever I bring up the idea of sending postcards to close friends and family, they would laugh at me for talking about something utterly archaic and supposedly boring.

While there are these issues brought up by many against snail mail, there are merits that make snail mail a niche hobby for many. It started off with the concept of pen-pals, which used to be the only way for people living in different parts of the world to connect short of whipping out a passport.

As dated as it may seem now with social media as viable platforms, the pen-pal community has evolved in such a way that such social networking sites have become platforms for pen-pals to meet and exchange addresses. It also allows for pen-pals to take note of any wishlist the recipient may have, and receiving an item from said wishlist is even more exciting.

Of course, regular pen-pals are a long-term commitment, so other ventures have been set up for one-time postcard

sending. Instead of having to keep finding someone to send mail to, there is a system that matches people around the world at random. Known as Postcrossing, senders are given an address and postcard identification number to send a postcard. Once the recipient receives it and logs it in his account, somewhere else, another person will send a postcard to the original sender. It keeps mail a surprise and maintains the idea of snail mail being special. As of January 2017, Postcrossing boasts more than 600,000 members from 210 countries, with 339 postcards sent every hour.

Ultimately, the time taken for such mail to travel to its destination makes receiving exciting and strangely fulfilling. And after sending letters for a while, finally meeting up with your pen-pal is something snail mail enthusiasts look forward to, where you can put a face to the tales in letters. So don't discount snail mail yet – it may just open up doors for new ways of communication and bring everyone that bit closer. 



# PRIVACY: A RIGHT OR A PRIVILEGE?

CONSTANCE GOH

**W**ould you like a line-up of 15 cars outside your house, with photographers peering into your apartment with their telescopic lens, trying to report on your daily activities? Or would you like to apologise to your children for not being able to bring them to theme parks because there will be people secretly taking photos of you?

Famous celebrities like Daredevil actress Jennifer Garner, Korean emcee Yoo Jae Suk and Singaporean actress, Fann Wong, experience these issues almost on a daily basis. The distress caused by the loss of privacy can be unpleasant and suffocating.

Additionally, it's not only the nosy press that they have to deal with but also ardent fans who cross the line. In January this year, Channel 8 actress Julie Tan was harassed on Twitter by a fan, who repeatedly pestered her to meet his parents and the chain of tweets lasted a whole day.

Just last year, local YouTuber Jianhao Tan resorted to begging his fans on social media to respect his privacy and refrain from stalking him home or revealing his address publicly.

*As an introvert myself, I recognise the intense need and desire to retreat into my personal bubble and be myself.*

Such episodes got me thinking about privacy for celebrities. As an introvert myself, I recognise the intense need and desire to retreat into my personal bubble and be myself. However, as much as I sympathise with celebrities for having to forgo this, part of me struggles with the fact that I'm also a part of the media industry where the daily happenings of celebrities (or their scandals, for that matter) would be of public interest. If the story is angled well, such news can easily make the prime pages of the newspapers.

Does public interest prevail over their individual privacy right then? According to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, privacy is a fundamental human right. Celebrities, whether introverts or extroverts, are no less human than the rest of us and are entitled to the same right. They need and treasure their time alone.

One might argue that when they stepped into the industry, they should have anticipated that they would be subject to such scrutiny. While I do

agree with that, I am a strong advocate for the privacy of their children to be respected. They shouldn't be subjected to harassment or the need to hide their identities.

Perhaps social media is to be blamed for the lack of privacy for celebrities. Some parents like Channel 8 actress Joanne Peh and Qi Yuwu are more guarded against it and have decided not to reveal the name of their only child (codenamed 'Baby Qi').

Hence, the onus lies on the fans to respect the celebrity's boundaries. The next time you see your favourite celebrity out having dinner with their family members, it might be a better idea to wait till they have finished eating instead of whipping out your phone and interrupting their family meal to ask for a picture. If we call ourselves true fans and genuinely support them, we should know to draw a clear line and respect their personal space. After all, giving them a break is probably the best fan-gift that they can ever receive. **E**





# FEMINISM NOT DEFINED BY GENDER

**CHARLENE KOH**

A classmate proclaimed during a discussion on gender equality: “I’m not a feminist, I don’t hate men, I’m for the equality of everyone.”

Like my classmate, many modern-day women reject the idea of feminism, branding it as a misandry movement founded on the hatred of men.

Feminists fight for the rights of women and men as well. It’s not about angry, bra-burning women or the hatred of men but rather the advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of gender equality.

When I was in kindergarten, my male classmates would often be ridiculed for crying, liking “girly” colours such as pink or things like dolls, or even having hair that was slightly longer than most boys. Growing up, I learnt that society shuns and ridicules men who did not fit into the traditional masculine mould.

Toxic masculinity is defined as “socially constructed attitudes that describe the masculine gender role as violent, unemotional, sexually aggressive, and so forth”. Toxic masculinity is fathers telling their sons not to cry because showing feelings

*While nobody is born a feminist, learning about the invisible acts of discrimination serves to improve society.*

is “weak”. Toxic masculinity also shapes the view that men are inferior caregivers as compared to women.

Society shames men for falling victim to crimes. Contrary to popular belief, men can be victims as well. Statistics by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence in the US show that 25 per cent of men have been victims of domestic violence, a close figure compared with the 30 per cent women who are in the same situation.

In her speech titled “We Should All Be Feminists” for the 2012 TEDx talk, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie said: “We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them... We define masculinity in a very narrow way. Masculinity becomes this hard, small cage and we put boys inside the cage.”

A movement with its roots in ancient Greece, modern-day feminism has evolved from promoting women’s voting rights in the 19th to early 20th century to reproductive rights in the second wave in the 1960s.

It recognises that what defines our individual human experiences is not just gender, but ethnicity, class and ability. Many critics argue that the movement has no place in the modern age where the rights of men and women are almost equal. However, statistics from around the world tell a different story.

Almost 52 per cent of the world’s population comprises females, but women only make up 12 per cent of board seats and 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians worldwide.

UNICEF estimates that in 2016, 200 million women in regions like Indonesia, Iraqi Kurdistan and Yemen have undergone female genital mutilation, a practice believed to curb sexual desires in girls.

While nobody is born a feminist, learning about the invisible acts of discrimination serves to improve society. Maybe one day, little boys can cry without being told they are weak and little girls can look up to more women in positions of power. **F**



We have some goodies in store for you! To enter, simply email your answers to the respective questions to [hypesg.trimedia@gmail.com](mailto:hypesg.trimedia@gmail.com). Include your full name, NRIC and phone number in your entry (Hint: some of the answers are found in the respective articles).

x1



x2

## Backpacks

A backpack is always handy in any situation. Tell us why you want these backpacks.

(Giveaway courtesy of Primer-Uniglobe, ends Apr 30)

## Hello Kitty Stamp Set

What's the name of the Hello Kitty themed restaurant in Singapore?

(Giveaway courtesy of ABR Holdings Ltd, ends Apr 30)



x8

## Beauty and the Beast Bundles

Who plays Belle and the Beast in the 2017 live-action remake of Beauty and the Beast?

(Giveaway courtesy of The Walt Disney Company Singapore, ends Apr 30)




x5

## SingLit Book & \$100 Voucher

What is the name of campaign launched in 2017 by the National Arts Council to encourage the purchase of local books?

(Giveaway courtesy of Ethos Books & National Book Development Council of Singapore, ends Apr 30)





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# "MY DREAM IS TO INVENT NEW TECHNOLOGIES."

Ryan Chai  
Student (2016)

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