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EDITORIAL

GABRIEL: Fears are pretty scary, aren't they? They scare and suck the life out of you like some giant mosquito (another scary thing in Singapore). While some people have fears that are rather unheard of (lion dances scare me stiff, which is why I'll be spending this CNY with earplugs on), most people have common ones.

You might have had, or have at least heard of, the rather irrational fear (and subsequent nightmare) of finding oneself in public in various states of undress. I've had dreams where I would turn up for class in pyjamas, much to the amusement of my classmates.

While fears of such unintentional exhibitions are usually unwarranted, there are people who enjoy intentionally 'parading' their naked selves (and, of course, there are people who want to look). In this issue, **hype** takes a look at voyeurism and exhibitionism, giving you a sneak peek (excuse the pun) into the world of flashers and "peeping Toms" and how technology has or hasn't made life easier for them.. While we've tackled all the naughty bits for you, we've also thickened our skins and trudged through the Internet to bring you the goss on pornographic games. Risqué? Nah, just spicy.

AGNES: Spicy? Nothing will spice up your Valentine's Day date better than a meal at restaurants with great ambience and exotic cuisines. **hype** dishes out three restaurants to satiate your date on Feb 14. Enjoy!

On Valentine's Day, I'd love to satiate my own much-repressed lust – wanderlust, that is. My camera and I will find romance in Shaoxing, Venice of the East. As I embrace the SLR and his three lenses, we'll relish in the delights of smelly tofu, sail through the waterways of the quaint old town and bask in its charm.

FIONA: Such quaint charm exists this side of the South-East too, as proven by the groovy world of vintage fashion. While some may dismiss fashion and/or a good round of shopping as a cheap thrill, I'm glad that for once, they'd be partially right! Online shopping, sprees and concierge services converge to present you, the consumer, with your own little delicious slice of shopaholic heaven (that doesn't cost an arm and leg in shipping).

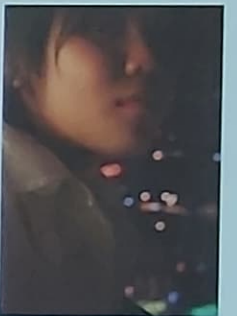
So strike up the band for change as **hype** demonstrates various other ways to ascend style Olympus. From little gems of shops in Ann Siang Hill to quirky spectacles – we've sourced them all.

Myriad flavours await you in this issue, so dive in and experience them all.

GABRIEL WONG

AGNES KOH

FIONA JACOB



Photos by Agnes Koh

hype

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44

VOYEURISM & EXHIBITIONISM

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Attention theatrical, musical and sports junkies, 2007 looks set to blow you away, as **ARMAN SHAH** discovers.



NBL Philips Championship

Singaporeans who live and breathe basketball can now channel their patriotism and support to our first professional team, The Singapore Slingers.

Coach Gordon McLeod, who represented the Australian basketball team at the 1980 Olympic Games and who raised the standard of several Australian teams to international levels, has been entrusted with creating legends out of The Singapore Slingers, an international line-up of 12 players from Singapore, Australia and America.

Sep 20, 2006 marked The Singapore Slingers' debut in a home game. Since their debut in Sep 2006, the team has done Singapore proud by winning seven of 10 games in the NBL (National Basketball League) Philips Championship 2006/2007. The prestigious basketball tournament since 1979 features teams from Australia, New Zealand, and now Singapore.

Their wins mean they are now in the top eight of the competition after beating the Cairns team with a score of 113-101.

Hardcore basketball fans should catch The Singapore Slingers during the last regular-season home game at the Singapore Indoor Stadium on Feb 7. It's a refreshing change from watching repeat telecasts of the National Basketball Association (NBA) League on cable television - you'll be in the thick of all the live action.

Dec 13, 2006 - Feb 7, 2007, Singapore Indoor Stadium. General admission, Season and Group tickets are sold at \$11 - \$50, \$225 - \$285 and \$8 - \$12 respectively, depending on seat category and adult/child classification, at all SISTIC outlets. More details at <http://www.singaporeslingers.com/v2/>



Good Vibrations Festival 2007

This February, party animals can have a taste of the summer party experience and quench their thirst for musical gratification, in Down Under style.

Extending our list of musical extravaganzas is the annual **Good Vibrations Festival (GVF)**, which has established itself as "one of Australia's leading outdoor music festivals" since its successful inception in February 2004.

Through this inaugural Australia-Singapore collaboration, music-loving islanders can experience this festival at Fort Canning Park on the second day of the Lunar New Year.

GVF 2007 plans to uphold its reputation of bringing in music industry's freshest and most critically-acclaimed acts. Hip-hop enthusiasts can swing their hands in the air in euphoric unison as the legendary rap group from New York City, Beastie Boys, are scheduled to headline the event.

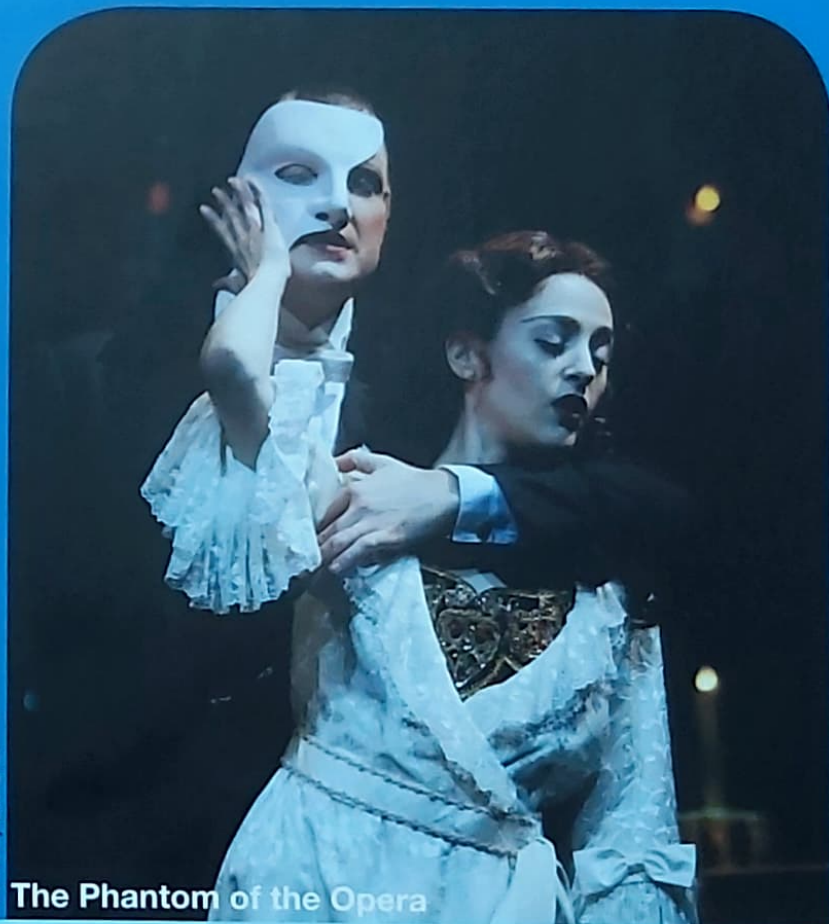
The stellar line-up of performers also includes music producer, Money Mark, turn-table prodigy, Mix

Master Mike, and multi-talented urban act, Jurassic 5.

Representing the cream of home-grown talents are alternative rock band, Electrico, and the explosive percussion outfit, Wicked Aura Batucada.

This groundbreaking festival also advocates art appreciation with a unique approach, complementing the live performances with cutting-edge visual art by local graphic designers such as Phunk Studio, CAPT and Telephasic Images.

Feb 19, Fort Canning Park. If you missed the 500 'early bird' tickets sold at \$40 at HMV since Dec 15, you can pick up pre-event tickets at \$60 at all SISTIC outlets or get them at the door for \$80 each. More details at www.goodvibrationsfestival.com.sg



The Phantom of the Opera

Sir Andrew Lloyd-Webber's phenomenal musical, **The Phantom of the Opera**, returns to our stage a dozen years after its triumphant debut in Singapore.

This Beauty and the Beast-style masterpiece tells the tale of a deformed man who unleashes terror at the Paris Opera House and transforms the woman he loves into a singing sensation. This musical has captivated an international audience of over 80 million people since it opened in London 20 years ago.

Following its debut at Her Majesty's Theatre, the musical has been performed over 65,000 times in 20 countries. A new generation of Singaporeans can now witness this theatrical magic at the Esplanade Theatre in this month-long run.

James Cundall, the Chief Executive of Lunchbox Theatrical Productions, said in a press release, "To present the world's most popular musical in

Singapore has been a long-term dream. It's a superb show which epitomises all that's great about musical theatre - unbelievable music, a moving story, lavish sets and costumes, and most importantly, unrivalled audience entertainment."

The Phantom is performed by a surprisingly good-looking Brad Little, who fills the mask well, having played the role in more than 2,000 performances on Broadway and across Asia.

The robes and the costumes in this musical have been handsewn and have been worn for the past 20 years, and not a stitch is out of place. Materials for the costumes are very expensive, and such items like capes are very heavy!

Mar 23 - Apr 29. Tickets are sold at \$40 - \$180 at all SISTIC outlets. More details at www.lunchbox-productions.com

KESHIA LEE shows you how to fill your calendar up with these must-see events.

M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2007

The annual event showcasing performing arts, visual arts, music and workshops by Singaporean and foreign artists is back. With the theme of 'Art and Disability', the core issue of this year addresses physical and emotional disability. An insightful, informative and exciting mix of shows awaits you - featuring art pieces from Julia Cassim (United Kingdom) and Shoufay Derz (Australia); music by Charles Atlas (USA); live shows by Teater Ekamatra (Singapore) and Joji Inc. (Belgium), just to name a few.

Jan 30 - Feb 11

Various venues and timings

Visit <http://www.singaporefringe.com/> for details

Multiple Personalities Disorder

Get your money's worth with this year's craziest stand-up comedy by one Singapore's most acclaimed comedians, Hossan Leong. As an employee of the newest Ministry in Singapore, Hossan's character has the duty of attracting foreign talent to our shores. However, time is running out and he finds himself failing at his task, resulting in schizophrenia! Be prepared as he takes you on a wild ride with some of entertainment's most popular icons as he morphs from one to another. You'll never know who you'll be seeing next!

Jan 31 - Feb 4, 8pm, Sat - Sun, 3pm & 8pm

Drama Centre Theatre

Tickets at Sistic: \$20, \$35, \$50

The Pickle King

After two successful runs in May 2006, New Zealand's Indian Ink Theatre Company returns with **The Pickle King**, winner of the Edinburgh Fringe First Award (2003) and "Production of the Year" in the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards (2002). Set in Empire, a once-famous hotel past its prime, a present-day love story blossoms between a receptionist and a night porter. However, the emergence of a mysterious figure, **The Pickle King** threatens the romance. While it may contain a smorgasbord of wacky and entertaining characters, the show is also an enchanting tale of hope and finding courage within ourselves to love.

Jan 31 - Feb 16

DBS Arts Centre

Tickets at Sistic vary from \$35 - \$50

Mosaic Music Festival 2007

Following the success of two festivals, the third instalment of the Mosaic Music Festival continues to showcase both local and international top music acts. With some free performances at the concourse, outdoor theatre and Stage@powerhouse over 10 days, the stellar musical line-up is set to delight all music lovers. Take in good tunes and chill to some of music's best such as jazz pianist Chick Corea, Grammy-Award winning acapella group Take 6, Korean jazz singer Youn Sun Nah and many more.

Mar 9 - 17, various timings

The Esplanade

Tickets at Sistic vary from: \$38 - \$148

Standard Chartered Sevens Singapore

Back in the Lion City this year for an even bigger and better event, the Standard Chartered Sevens Singapore will feature the best in rugby. Watch the teams from New Zealand, Fiji, Australia, England and South Africa battle it out in this intense two-day tournament. If you're not a follower, this is the time to brush up on your rugby knowledge so you can enjoy the artistic value of the game. Following that, join 20,000 others to cheer the rugby teams on with banners and whistles.

Apr 8 - 9, 1pm - 10pm

National Stadium

Tickets at Sistic: \$15-\$135

www.singaporesevens.com

Singapore International Film Festival

Let the regular Hollywood flicks take a backseat this April, because the Singapore International Film Festival is back to hold its fort for the 20th year running. Founded in 1987, this festival highlights independent and non-commercial films, especially works from the Asian region. This year, it takes us into Arabian film by indulging us with cinematic views of the country. Primarily known for its rich oil industry, this programme will show that there is much more to Arabia than meets the eye. With screening of more than 300 films, this motion picture buffet will delight all movie buffs, art lovers and future film-makers.

Apr 18 - 30

Various venues

Visit <http://www.filmfest.org.sg> for details.

Tickets available through SISTIC at 6348 5555 or www.sistic.com.sg

10 Tips to a Smoke-Free You!

Alter your habits

Smoking isn't only an addiction but a bad habit established over time. However, with effort and determination, you can adopt new and healthier habits to lead a smoke-free lifestyle!

Be resolute

There will be many hurdles to overcome during your quit journey like cravings and withdrawal symptoms but if you put your heart and soul into it, you can succeed. Don't give up!

Connect with your loved ones

Set up a support group of friends and family members to help you through what may be an agonising quit journey. They can provide you with the physical (distracting you from your urge to grab a cigarette!) and mental (motivation and encouragement) support.

Educate yourself with facts

If stress is one of your reasons for smoking, get this - smoking doesn't relieve stress! Fact is, it's the addictive chemical called nicotine that enhances your desire for a cigarette. In between cigarettes, the nicotine level in the body drops, leading to increased sensations of stress and irritability.

Feel Great!

After you quit smoking, you'll be able to perform better in many physical activities. You will also find yourself refreshed as energy levels continue to rise. So don't cave in to temptations!

Get your beauty sleep

If you experience fatigue because of lack of sleep, you may resort to cigarettes to stay up the following day. So make sure you have sufficient beauty sleep to avoid lighting up.

Hit the gym

Besides being an effective way of keeping weight gain at bay, regular exercise is also a healthier alternative to smoking.

Identify your triggers

Throw your old smoking lifestyle out the window by avoiding situations, people and places which tempt you to smoke.

Join the fight to beat the cravings

Quitting smoking doesn't happen overnight so don't expect results immediately. Be patient with yourself. Remembering your own reasons for quitting can make it easier on you.

Learn from setbacks

Don't be discouraged if you fail to quit on your first, second or even third attempt. Many smokers would have tried several times and various methods before they were able to successfully quit smoking. So don't give up!



CONTEST GIVEAWAY

Have an inspiring quit story to share? Email us at hype24@modulabuzz.com (subject: hype24 Anti-Smoking) with your name and contact details and the 5 best entries will stand a chance to win shopping vouchers valued at \$100 each! Closing date: March 31, 2007. Winners will be notified by email.

Where to Get Help

Guardian Quit Centre

Guardian's Shop and Step In Programme is a user-friendly service that offers free quit smoking advice and guidance by a Guardian pharmacist who will help you customise a quit plan tailored to your needs.

Guardian Quit Centres are located at 18 outlets in major shopping malls and residential estates. Open from Mondays to Sundays, 10am - 10pm.

For a list of Guardian Quit Centres, go to www.getfresh.com.sg/shop_and_step_in.html.

Get Fresh!

For more support and motivation, log on to www.getfresh.com.sg to join the Fresh Air for Women (FAFW) network of friends. You will also find many helpful quit smoking tips.

Youth Advolition for Health (YAH)

Run by youths for their peers, YAH aims to encourage youths to lead a healthy lifestyle. Log on to www.yah.sg to share or pick up tips on quitting smoking.

Quit 4 Life!

If you ever feel like you need more help, feel free to check out the website www.hpb.gov.sg/hpb/default.asp?pg_id=1818 for information on quit techniques.



Dreamgirls

All that glitters is not gold, as three African-American girls find out when they sing their way to superstardom in the 1960s' white-biased music business.

Adapted from the lives of the Supremes, **Dreamgirls** has won two Golden Globe and is generating Oscar buzz.

The movie dazzles with its all-star line-up led by Grammy-winner Beyonce Knowles (**Austin Powers In Goldmember**) and Oscar-winning actor Jamie Foxx (**Ray**).

In the movie, the trio is made up of Effie (**American Idol 3** finalist Jennifer Hudson in an award winning role), the frontgirl with big vocals, and back-up singers Lorrell (Broadway actress Anika Noni Rose) and Deena (Knowles).

Their journey to stardom begins after being discovered at a talent competition by music manager Curtis Taylor, Jr. (Foxx), who asks them to sing back-up vocals for R&B singer James 'Thunder' Early (Eddie Murphy).

Things begin to sour when Curtis falls for Deena, which leads to Effie being thrown out of the spotlight.

With a heartfelt plot, great acting and fantastic singing, **Dreamgirls** is a classic in the making. - IYLIA SUHAINA

Photo By Golden Village



Music and Lyrics

The mainstays of romantic comedies, Hugh Grant (**Love Actually**) and Drew Barrymore (**50 First Dates**), come together to further cement their reputations as charming sweethearts in this feel-good movie about finding love and musical success.

The rollercoaster adventure begins when Alex Fletcher (Grant) is presented with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to salvage his flagging pop star career in the form of a musical collaboration request from popular singer, Cora Corman (Haley Bennett, in her acting debut).

As the pressures of recording a comeback hit begin to daunt him, along comes Sophie Fisher (Barrymore), who has a talent for songwriting. The rest of the movie sees them overcoming their fears by opening up to each other professionally (and romantically) in pursuit of true happiness and success.

With a colourful plot helmed by a promising line-up of comedic heavyweights, **Music and Lyrics** is a refreshing change from movies of this genre and looks set to give audiences a rolling good time. - ARMAN SHAH



Hannibal Rising

Adapted from Thomas Harris's novel of the same name, **Hannibal Rising** is the fifth film about the fictional cannibal Dr Hannibal Lecter. Directed by Peter Webber (**Girl with a Pearl Earring**) and starring Gaspard Ulliel (**Alias**) as a young Lecter, this movie is a prequel to the previous movies.

Hannibal Rising chronicles Lecter's life from his childhood to his development into a cannibalistic psychiatrist to his eventual arrest by the FBI.

The story brings viewers back to World War II, where Lecter and his sister Mischa (Helena Lia Tachovka) are orphaned and kidnapped by German deserters. The loss of his sister (who is killed and eaten) destroys his faith in God and leads Hannibal to become the infamous killer depicted in previous outings.

Escaping from his captors, Lecter finds solace in the beautiful Lady Shikibu (Gong Li), who helps him recover from his traumatic experiences of war.

Haunting and action-packed, **Hannibal Rising** is an emotional rollercoaster ride which will keep viewers on the edge of their seats. - FELICIA TAN

Photo By Sony Pictures



Ghost Rider

Based on the Marvel comic **Ghost Rider**, the movie sees Nicholas Cage (**World Trade Center**) play Johnny Blaze – a stunt motorcyclist by day and vengeful vigilante by night.

Years ago, Blaze sold his soul to demon Mephisto to save his dying father. Now, Mephisto offers to return Blaze's soul on condition that the latter be transformed into his supernatural agent. His task is to take on Blackheart (Wes Bentley; **American Beauty**), Mephisto's son, who is bent on displacing his father and creating a more dire hell on Earth.

On his Hellcycle – a motorcycle so stylish it would put Jesse James to shame – and brandishing a flaming bike chain, **Ghost Rider** must now bring both Blackheart and Mephisto down in a classic good-versus-evil storyline.

Costing US\$120 million (S\$186 million), **Ghost Rider** offers heart-stopping action and special effects. An avid fan himself, Cage has every copy of the comic framed up at home and even has a tattoo of **Ghost Rider's** flaming skull on his arm, which, ironically, had to be covered up on set. Cage also did some of his stunts, including setting his feet ablaze, so watch out for that. - LILYNNE SEAH



Lucky You

Eric Bana abandons Hulk-dom and **Troy** to play Huck Cheever, an unemployed and compulsive gambler, who relies on his seemingly infallible luck.

At a poker game in a casino, he meets Billy Offer, a lounge singer played by Drew Barrymore (**50 First Dates**), who is clueless about gambling. Despite their opposing personalities, the sparks soon fly.

Huck, who has always shied away from women, soon finds himself grappling with his newfound relationship with Billy. To add to his troubles, he is competing in a major poker competition – and pitting himself against his estranged father (Robert Duvall, **The Godfather**), another poker hotshot.

He learns important and heartfelt lessons about life and love from Billy. This is a compelling movie about a man trying to find himself and searching for his place in his relationships with the people he loves.

Paying close attention to detail, Academy Award-winning director Curtis Hanson (**8 Mile**) cast professional poker players to make the poker scenes as realistic as possible. - MARIA ELENA A. DE JESUS

Photo By Warner Bros



Martian Child

What do you do when your adopted child is more than you can handle? This is the dilemma John Cusack (**Serendipity**) faces when his peculiar six-year-old, Bobby Coleman (**Friends With Money**), insists that he comes from Mars.

Cusack is a bereaved science-fiction writer who adopts Bobby to get over the death of his fiancé, despite his sister's warnings about Bobby's abusive family background and anti-social behaviour that make him unsuitable for adoption.

One can't help but marvel at – while feeling a tinge of sympathy for Cusack – the hilarious mishaps Bobby gets his first-time dad into. A string of strange events lead Cusack to believe his child's claim to be a Martian.

The movie has a unique human touch as father and son embark on an out-of-this-world journey of discovery. This is a searing depiction of family ties in which Cusack ultimately realises that single fatherhood is bittersweet.

Taken from an award-winning novel by science fiction author David Gerrold, **The Martian Child** is a heart-warming adaptation of Gerrold's semi-autobiography of his own son's adoption. - CHOW LI JUN



《我在政府部门的日子》

文: Suriyani

这部光是听到片名就会觉得很“敏感”的电影，是由本地最卖座导演梁智强所执导。擅长以幽默的方式讥讽和反映社会和政策课题的他，这次将把“战场”搬到“政府部门”里。

故事讲述林定水（葛米星饰）和周弹雅（范文芳饰）是上司和下属的关系，周弹雅身为政府部门的主管，不理睬人际关系。而水火不容的两人在阴差阳错下竟然对调了灵魂！

灵魂对调后，彼此都无所适应，并想尽办法要恢复但都徒劳无功，在搞了很多乌龙和笑话后，最终宣告放弃。但也因为在对方的身体里，让彼此看到了过去自己看不到的事物，也了解到下属和上司其实都各有难为之处，并不是想象中的那么容易当。

电影反映了很多嘲笑政府部门的老土规矩，也是那些只晓得跟着条规走不想有变化的公务员生存状况以及心态写照。精彩的台词，一针见血的讽刺，大快人心。

范文芳不顾形象的演出+葛米星的滑稽演绎+梁智强的幽默写实风格，这将会是一部值得捧场的电影。



《门徒》

文: Suriyani

影片讲述刘德华所饰演的昆哥表面上做小生意，其实幕后却是一名经营庞大贩毒生意的毒枭，身怀六甲的妻子袁咏仪对丈夫的背景却毫不知情。而跟随刘德华多年的“徒弟”吴彦祖，其实是一名警方的卧底。虽然得到刘德华的信任却始终掌握不到详细资料。古天乐和张静初是一对吸毒者夫妇，丧尽天良的古天乐甚至让自己三岁的亲生女儿替自己贩毒。而张静初在渴望戒毒的同时，也与刘德华和吴彦祖分别发生了情感纠葛。...

初看故事情节，你也许会觉得有点《无间道》的影子，但故事却着重于表现有关贩毒者和吸毒者的内心世界，因此带有强烈的纪实风格。毒品如何毁掉一个人的意志、尊严，而贩毒者虽富有却终日过着提心吊胆的生活。这些都非常考验演员的功力，他们一改以往偶像的形象，因此监制陈可辛就表示“在这部电影里没有明星，只有演员。”

这部由尔冬升执导的《门徒》，是2007年初继《伤城》之后另一部备受关注的港片。



《谜》

许慧欣eVonne

文: 叶家盛

已有两年没出个人专辑的许慧欣eVonne，10月6日终于推出了第6张全新专辑——《谜》。

收录许多不同曲风的歌，是这个专辑的最大特色。其中，既有带着古老神秘又梦幻诗意的异国风，如《谜》、《诗 水蛇 山神庙》，有浪漫又唯美的欧式情歌，如《转圈圈》、《威尼斯迷路》，也有大家所熟悉的“欣式情歌”：如《stereo的爱情故事》、《什么》、《不哭了》。

其中的第二波主打《诗 水蛇 山神庙》带给人颇为奇特的感受。歌曲请来了音乐才子周杰伦和方文山联手为eVonne量身定制。在编曲和作词方面都和以往不同，突破了大家所熟悉的许慧欣。我特别欣赏的是它中东风情的曲调，对eVonne来说可是一个全新的尝试，令人耳目一新。

整张专辑最值得一听的是充满欧式风格的《转圈圈》，这首由许哲珉作词和作曲的欧式情歌，最适合在懒洋洋的下午听，且让浪漫情怀随时光流逝，别有一番韵味，可说是百听不厌。和之前的专辑相比，《谜》的特色在于引入了许多不同的曲风，让听众对eVonne有焕然一新之感。但可惜的是，歌手本身的唱腔似乎未能有什么突破，有点弄巧反拙，听来感觉有些单调。



《亲亲》

梁静茹

文: 郭镇源

K歌之后梁静茹再次出击，少了上一张专辑的大气和磅礴，走向纯朴路线，做回真正的梁静茹。

以亲亲为主题，专辑里的每首歌曲都非常亲近我们的心声。编曲都是静茹一贯演唱的抒情民谣和可爱的曲风。歌词简单而旋律也都朗朗上口。连续三年入围金曲奖“最佳女演唱人”，静茹的歌唱技巧是毋庸置疑的，但无懈可击的实力派歌声却让她无法多元化，每首歌都唱得很梁静茹。

专辑中《暖暖》这首歌颇有《宁夏》的影子，但是却比它来的更加有味道，更加温馨。一开始的火车音效，马上就听者仿佛出了隧道，仿佛进入一个遗忘已久的美丽世界。另一首值得一听的歌曲是由气质才女陈绮贞所创作的《小情歌》，两位知心好友首度合唱是这张专辑里最有音乐趣味的一首歌。Waltz般跳跃的旋律，嘉年华会烟火绚丽夺目，加上游乐园般的迷离情景，让我们看到女生为了感情勇敢不服输的态度。

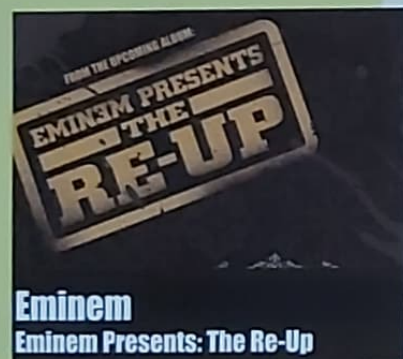
人缘极佳的静茹这次也请来了许多大牌如：周杰伦、陈珊妮、蔡健雅、五月天阿信等跨刀帮忙。有多名顶尖音乐人制作，加上静茹的演绎，《亲亲》在流行品质上已得到了良好的保证。



Seriously, one wonders how Gwen Stefani multi-tasks. Since the release of her multi-platinum selling debut solo album **Love. Angel. Music. Baby** in 2004, Stefani has been on concert tours, launched her clothing line L.A.M.B. and delivered her first son, Kingston James. So who would have figured that she'd be back with a second album **The Sweet Escape** this quick?

The first single "Wind It Up", features Stefani's yodelling, inspired by the musical **The Sound Of Music**. "Yummy" has hints of "Hollaback Girl" and its extremely addictive beat will get you playing the song on repeat mode. Stefani and No Doubt guitarist Tony Kanal revisit the band's original rock style with "Fluorescent". Another standout is "Early Winter", a collaboration with British rock band Keane's Tim Rice-Oxley, which sounds like a Madonna song. "The Sweet Revenge" is a hip-hop track that sees her dueting with rising star Akon.

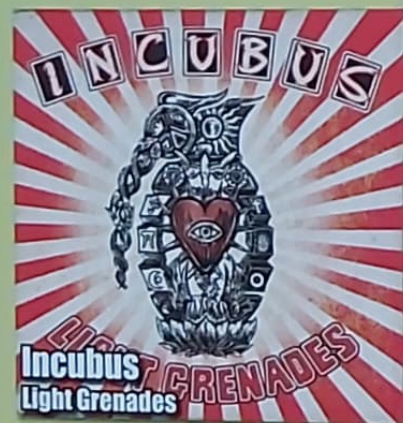
No doubt, this is one fantastic sophomore effort by Gwen Stefani, and definitely worth every cent. - IYLIA SUHAINA



Following a divorce, drugs and the death of a best friend, Eminem would be expected to take a backseat, but he shows us again that Shady's back. Unlike his previous solo releases, **Eminem Presents: The Re-Up** is a modern-day mix tape featuring Shady Records artists. Initially planned for a street project to introduce new members of the Shady family, Stat Quo, Ca\$his and Bobby Creekwater, this album became a commercial release instead.

Next to a variety of hip-hop's biggest names, like 50 Cent, Obie Trice and D12, Eminem still dominates with his deft rhymes. A notable track would be "No Apologies", an intense monologue that's laid on a smooth keyboard track with a surprising accompaniment of bells and violins. While the new members don't sound bad on the collaborated tracks, they seem to shine less brightly on their own.

Although **Eminem Presents: The Re-Up** may not be the usual mainstream hip-hop we're used to, it does precisely what it sets out to do - prove that Eminem's not leaving the music scene. - KESHIA LEE



The 16-year-old American alternative rock band, Incubus, has endured revolutionary changes in musical trends and the unstoppable domination of Brit rock, to release their sixth studio album, **Light Grenades**.

To add fire power to this grenade, the band tapped on the skills of Brendan O'Brien, a music producer boasting collaborations with rock acts like Pearl Jam and Korn.

In the collection of 13 tracks, the first single, "Anna Molly", bears the closest resemblance to their old hits like "Megalomaniac", the debut single off their last album, **Crow Left of the Murder**. Its electrifying guitar riffs and angst-filled vocal delivery get you hooked. Things then take a slow turn on "Love Hurts", an emotional and melodious cry about needing love to feel alive.

The album suffers from a lack of creative direction, which probably explains the disjointed sounds and the lack of cohesion. This minor flaw fails to stop diehard fans from buying this album which debuted at number one on the American Billboard Top 200 music chart. - ARMAN SHAH



Photo by Universal Music

Three years ago, following the success of his triple platinum record, **The Black Album**, Jay-Z adopted the 'quit while you're ahead' mantra and announced his retirement from the music industry. His departure was short-lived, and the rapper returns to the mainstream hip-hop scene with his 10th studio album, **Kingdom Come**.

To ensure a comeback fit for the self-proclaimed 'King of New York', Jay-Z worked with a multitude of A-list producers and singers, a rare move from a musician with a preference for working solo.

For **Kingdom Come**, the rapper surprised the world by joining forces with Chris Martin of British alternative rock band Coldplay, laying ambient, organ-produced sounds over a thumping hip-hop bass for the track, "Beach Chairs". The rest of the album articulates Jay-Z's talents for thought-provoking rhymes with his signature gangsta-rap beats.

That said, the album fails to match its high expectations, but is worth to listen to feel the chemistry between the big-wigs of hip-hop. - ARMAN SHAH



Photo by Universal Music

After nearly 11 years of mourning over the break-up of one of the world's biggest bands, fans can now welcome Take That (sans Robbie Williams) with open arms as the foursome release their comeback album, **Beautiful World**.

Having acknowledged the fact that their then screaming teenage fans are now a decade older, the band has discarded the cheesiness normally associated with the pop genre. Take That has emerged from the studios with a soulful, stirring album that will capture the hearts of young and old.

While enjoying Gary Barlow's radio-friendly "Patience", the album's first single, take note of the tracks led by the other members, such as Mark Owen's funky pop track "Shine" and Jason Orange's "Wooden Boat", closing the album on a mellow and relaxed note.

Although the album might seem dull upon first listen, you'll discover the beauty of **Beautiful World**. With its sincere lyrics and soft tunes, Take That has once again struck gold. - JULIANA LAU



Photo by Warner Music

The American pop-rock band, My Chemical Romance, is back with their third studio album, **The Black Parade**, with their tried and tested formula of strong, introspective and crude lyrics.

My Chemical Romance, known for their dark lyrics and horror-inspired visuals, ensures this album will not disappoint fans with its catchy, fast yet melancholic songs that deal with their favourite issues of gloom and doom.

Their hit single, "Welcome to the Black Parade" - which secured their first number one on the US and UK charts - is an energetic punk rock number cleverly enhanced by the familiar rhythmic beating of symphony band drums, customary of parades. Other notable tracks such as "House of Wolves" and "Sleep" will leave you jumping up and down. However, several of the songs sound pretty repetitive and will get boring after some time.

In a nutshell, **The Black Parade**, with its passionate and driven music, is fairly enjoyable. Punk rock music lovers will not want to miss this out. - CHOW LI JON



THE BEATLES DOMINATE

Beatlemania – an obsession with The Beatles that made the guys want to be them and the girls want to be with them back in the 1960s. Celebrate the 43rd anniversary of Beatlemania this Feb 7 as **IYIA SUHAINA** unearths how the band invaded the world.

While there may be more popular British bands like Queen, which was recently declared 'Top British Band' according to **BBC Radio 2**, there's never one that's as influential as The Beatles.

Queen may come up tops in terms of music originality and experimentation – obvious as seen on their biggest single 'Bohemian Rhapsody' – but there's something about The Beatles that puts them in a different league.

In the 1960s, not only were The Beatles the reigning kings of music, their influence affected society. Teenagers then began to see the band as an outlet to voice themselves out as one generation,

which was one of the main reasons why The Beatles were so influential at that time.

What's harder to figure out is why their music even resonates with the present generation.

Media entrepreneur Alec McSimpson, 24, figures that, "The Beatles may not be around any longer, but their CD and merchandise sales are still running. People still know, appreciate and ... are obsessed with them. Now only a truly great band can manage to do that."

Local musicians such as Juan Chan, 19, also readily point to The Beatles as one of their strongest music influences.

The bassist of local band Rafe said, "The Beatles defined pop melodies as well as the beauty of vocal harmony."

Echoing his thoughts, Adam Shah, 19, former drummer of local band The Observatory said, "The band brought music into the world, which, in turn, inspired millions to become musicians."

Comments like these underline the fact that now, as it was then, The Beatles were not only a major influence in the United Kingdom (UK), they were also iconic figures to fans outside the country.

The four mop-headed British lads made such a huge impact on the British music scene, that some

might say that the British Invasion, an obsession with all things British, can be traced back to them.

It all started on Feb 7, 1964 at the John F. Kennedy International Airport. Four regular British chaps – Paul



McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr and George Harrison emerged from a plane and mass hysteria ensued as 3,000 girls who had been waiting for hours started screaming their names out.

This marked the start of Beatlemania – a term to describe the obsessive adoration fans had towards The Beatles. It was a matter of time before the rage infected the world.

The blokes were in for a bigger shock just two days later when the band made their first appearance on the **Ed Sullivan Show** in the United States. Over 50,000 requests for tickets were made for a show that seated only 703. Then, more than 73 million Americans tuned in to the show, just to catch the fab four perform five of their big hits, "All My Loving", "Till There Was You", "She Loves You", "I Saw Her Standing There" and "I Want To Hold Your Hand".

It was evidence of how big they were that they could even utter blasphemy without denting the band's popularity. One of the biggest controversies arose from John Lennon's arrogant comment in an interview with the **London Evening Standard** two years later. In the printed article, John Lennon was quoted as saying, "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink... We're more popular than Jesus now. Jesus was all right, but his disciples were thick and ordinary."

The Beatles garnered their own "disciples", being the object of other musicians' admiration and mimicry. Bands like The Zombies, The Yardbirds, The Who and, more recognisably, The Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd sprouted out after their chart-topping successes.

Today, 43 years since, their influence seems not to have waned although the group is no more.

Freelance music teacher Rina Rahim, 25, says their music has left its mark as much of the singing and rhythmic styles of many modern pop songs are common with the tunes that The Beatles played.

The Beatles' Timeline

Here's a look at the important dates in The Beatles' music history – from their beginning, right up to their disbandment.

- **July 1957** – John Lennon invited Paul McCartney to join the band, then called The Quarrymen.
- **January 1960** – The name The Beatles stuck after previous name changes like Johnny and The Moondogs and Silver Beetles.
- **June 1962** – Producer George Martin from EMI Music officially signed The Beatles for a recording contract.
- **March 1963** – Debut album **Please Please Me** hit the Number One spot in the United Kingdom, staying there for 29 weeks.
- **November 1963** – Sophomore album, **With The Beatles**, bettered the first one, remaining on top for 51 weeks.
- **February 1964** – Beginning of Beatlemania. Landed in the United States for the first time, with over 3,000 fans heralding their arrival.
- **February 1964** – Over 73 million in the United States tuned in to watch The Beatles' first performance on **The Ed Sullivan Show**.
- **March 1964** – Held a record-breaking top five songs on the American Billboard Chart, with "Can't Buy Me Love" at Number One.
- **June 1965** – Presented with "Members Of The British Empire" titles by the Queen.
- **June 1965** – "Our World" concert, the first live satellite event to be aired worldwide, was televised throughout 24 countries.
- **January 1969** – The last live performance by The Beatles in London.
- **April 1970** – Paul McCartney announced that he was no longer a member of The Beatles, which led to the band's disbandment.



The **Peacock Throne** is based in the Indian capital, Delhi, and revolves around tea-seller Gopal Pandey, who leads a vanilla life until news of Indian Prime Minister Indra Gandhi's assassination breaks out.

The entire city is thrown into chaos. In a matter of hours, streets are deserted and riots between different communities ensue. Amid the disorder, protests and the demolition of a mosque that turn the local Muslim community against all other religions, one man steps up to lead the people into a new era.

Gopal's loss of his son and experience with death, gains in empathy among the poor people. When he stands for election, the votes of the common people make him an important political power overnight.

The **Peacock Throne**, written by California-based filmmaker and playwright Ashok Saraf, is sure to bring amazement and disbelief as it unveils the reality of a political system that is quite unlike anything anywhere else in the world. — AMRUTA JOSHI



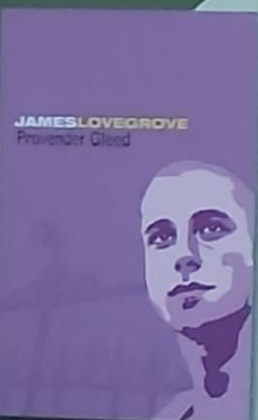
Lachlan Fox, a retiring shore assault specialist from the Australian Navy Clearance Diver Team, finds himself taking action when a lost military weapon resurfaces, threatening destruction of catastrophic proportions.

The action-packed thriller kick-starts when Fox's peaceful life of rehabilitation, needed after escaping Timorese military, comes to a dramatic halt.

While exploring the depths of the Indian Ocean on a diving trip with his best friend, Alister Gammaldi, the pair chance upon a strange military pod on the seabed. Unbeknownst to them, Chechen renegades, who are celebrating their country's newly found independence, also seek this military prize.

The discovery throws Fox into a hectic race across continents to save the world from impending doom.

Author James Phelan debuts impressively with **Fox Hunt**, a book which engagingly tells the story of the extent a die-hard masculine hero would go to in the name of loyalty and friendship. — ARMAN SHAH



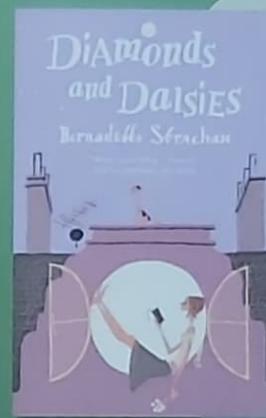
James Lovegrove's delightful charm and wit spin a wonderfully enchanting tale of romance and espionage.

The story begins with this note – "Your invitation to the Glead Summer Ball, had you one, would have arrived by courier six weeks in advance of the occasion."

An invitation to the Glead's Summer Ball is a coveted prize indeed – the Gleads form one of the most affluent families in Britain. Young Provender, the Glead heir, is instructed by his mother to find himself a wife at the ball when he is unfortunately abducted. It is up to two Anagrammatic detectives to find him. In the meantime, Provender embarks on a romantic whirlwind with a girl called Is.

Provender Glead, guaranteed to keep you eagerly flipping the pages till the end, is a literary delight full of unexpected twists and turns.

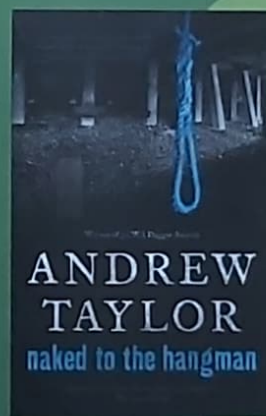
James Lovegrove, author of numerous acclaimed novels such as **Days**, which was shortlisted for the prestigious Arthur C. Clarke Award, is back to wow readers again with **Provender Glead**. — FELICIA TAN



Author of previous bestseller **Handbags and Halos**, Bernadette Strachan has struck gold again with her latest novel. **Diamonds and Daisies** is chick-lit at its finest.

While romance novelist Sunny Parkinson is used to churning out pages and pages of fictional women meeting exotic, charming strangers, her own love life has been littered with men who are far from perfect. She certainly never expected an Italian Count to appear out of nowhere to whisk her away in a whirlwind of passion. Caught unawares in an unexpected situation, she is left to juggle a very real situation right out of a fiction novel, while having to deal with an ex-beau who, she soon realises, may matter more to her than she envisages...

Diamonds and Daisies is a delightful read that calls out to any girl who ever dreamt of the unattainable. This book is highly recommended to all romance chick-lit lovers. You'll find yourself hooked on Sunny's story the moment you start reading, and cheer her on till the the last page is flipped. — KESHA LEE

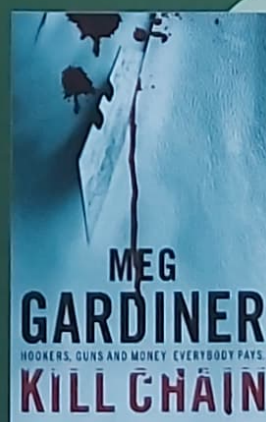


Dangerous secrets buried at the height of Middle-Eastern terrorism in the late 1940s resurface with the shocking murder of a retired police officer in the decrepit ruins of Lydmouth castle.

Detective Richard Thornhill is a man with a dark past. In a brief stint as a young rookie police officer in post-World War II Palestine, Detective Thornhill was involved in a tragedy, and now bears a chilling secret which still holds him in its grasp. Now, Thornhill is forced to face his dark past once again when he finds himself the prime suspect in a murder case.

Naked to the Hangman is the eighth instalment in the successful Lydmouth series by award-winning crime novelist Andrew Taylor.

Taylor's mastery will take you through the mystery and intrigues of England in the 1950s, and will have you hooked with unexpected twists in the chain of complicated, scandalous events that race along, keeping you at the edge of your seat. — CHOW LI JUN



Ignorance can be bliss; living in a perfect illusion may be preferable to the truth, but what happens when the truth emerges 33 years later?

Evan, daughter of Phil Delaney, has her 'perfect' life swept away in a single day with the revelation that her father is a spy for an intelligence agency. If it hadn't been for a mission gone wrong, Phil would have continued living a double life, and Evan would have continued living in ignorant bliss.

Refusing to believe her father died in a fatal car accident, Evan holds on to the possibility of his being alive. Driven by this belief, she sets out to find her missing father. With him being a wanted man, her pursuit proves to be a challenge, to the point of driving her to murder.

Meg Gardiner's praiseworthy thrillers have been known to mesmerise and intrigue. The rollercoaster twists and turns of **Kill Chain**, along with its numerous characters, might get you confused, but you'll definitely want to finish the book in one sitting. — MARIA ELENA A. DE JESUS

星声袋

“那些哈日哈韩的真是白痴。”

— 周杰伦支持中华文化

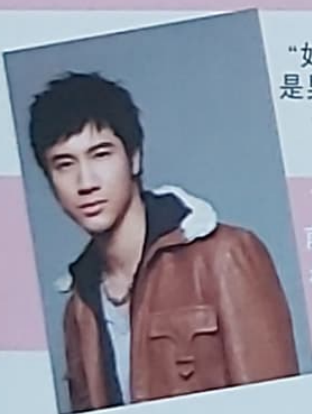


“恋爱经历就像打游戏机，当你熟悉了，就可以征服、打爆机。”

— 首度开口谈女友乐基儿，黎明形容就像打游戏机。

“我最讨厌他唱歌时候的表情，他笑容灿烂到我想爱死他。”

— 黄子佼真心话大冒险：“最讨厌任贤齐哪个方面？”



“如果要世界和平，你必须选三个人接吻，其中两个是男人，另一个是蔡依林，你会选谁？”

— 王力宏被传同性恋 蔡康永巧妙逼问

“我的将来是没有前途的。十八岁、二十岁时你告诉我有前途，我信。我现在四十多岁还谈什么前途，前途就是棺材。”

— 黄秋生

“当我第一次牵着巩俐的手，就感觉到她的细腻和情欲；而张曼玉有自然的身体语言；章子怡则有很强的精神力量，会以不同的方式告诉人‘我是可以的’。”

— 王家卫日前对巩俐、章子怡、张曼玉逐一品评。

Photos by Sony BMG

A teaspoon of talent, large pinches of naivety and a bag full of misguided courage may be what the typical music artiste in Singapore has. Vanessa Fernandez, on the contrary, is determined to break boundaries and prove, with the release of her debut solo album, that local acts can stand with the best of them.

The spunky lady tasted success as a teen in local hip-hop band, Urban Xchange. The single, “I Wanna Be Like Jackie Chan”, off their debut album, *How Did We Get Here*, earned a place on the *Rush Hour 2* movie soundtrack. In 2004, they performed alongside American pop sensation, Stacie Orrico, at the MTV Asia Awards. A year later, the group rebranded as *Parking Lot Pimp*, a hip-rock act that spawned the genre-blending album, *Welcome To Our Frequency*. Early last year, the group split.

That's when the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Mass Communication graduate went solo. She told *hype* that she signed to Chynahouse Recording, the record label of former band mate Terry Lee. He approached her to be a solo artiste.

The band isn't the only thing that she's left. Giving up the sounds of rhythm, blues and hip-hop, Vanessa now experiments with folk soul; an acoustic guitar-based sound that she feels “isn't too abstract, [nor] too formulated”.

“The thing about being in the band was that the sound that you got was a result of group dynamics. Everybody puts in a bit of their individual style and that forms the group's style,” she explained, adding, “This album will be completely different from anything, anybody's ever heard me do. This time, it's about expressing myself musically and getting the style and sound that I want.”

She identified “globally-competitive music production” as crucial in cutting a great album. “I think the key is working with good musicians and good sound engineers. I co-wrote and co-produced the album with Adrian Yuen, who used to play [the guitar] with *Parking Lot Pimp*,” Lee also gave her guidance in production matters.

At 24, the radio 997FM DJ has a mental library of experiences which she hopes to express in the album.

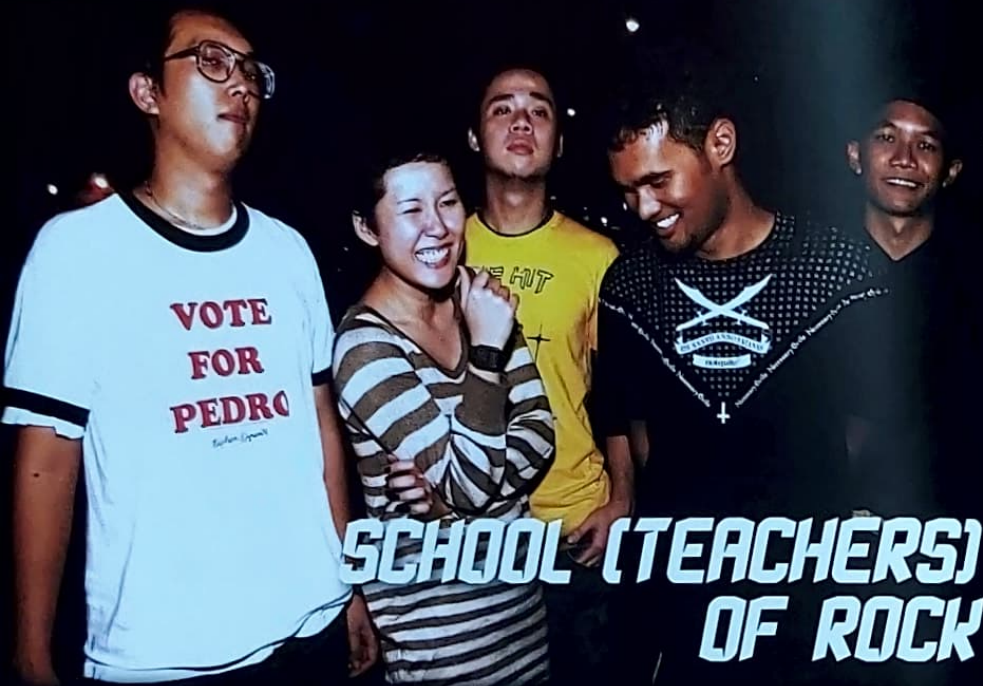
“One of my favourite songs [in the album] is called ‘Head Above Water’. It's about being in love with someone whom you're not supposed to be in love with and that feeling of drowning...”

She knows that a soulful voice doesn't guarantee success. “But the very great thing is ... every person who I've told that I'm doing a solo album, they all say ... ‘It's about time’. That's very encouraging.”

Humming to a Solo Tune

Is homegrown talent Vanessa Fernandez set to follow a similar trail to success as female icons à la Gwen Stefani after departing from her all-male band? ARMAN SHAH speaks to the ex-vocalist of local band *Parking Lot Pimp*.

Photo by Chynahouse Recording



KESHIA LEE signs up for a lesson with The Great Spy Experiment before these teacher-musicians head off to Texas to spread the word on Singapore music.

At first glance, you'd never guess that The Great Spy Experiment (TGSE) is made up of four primary and secondary school teachers and a web designer. Decked in funky casual wear, they look like any other group of friends just having a good time. But once they pick up their instruments, the group churns out bursts of energetic beats that have trembled stages ever since their first gig in March 2005.

Last February, the band topped the local music charts on Power98, 987FM and News Radio 93.8 with their indie rock single, "Captain Funkycurls/Class 'A' Love Affair".

This March, they're set to make waves again with their debut album and a performance at the South by Southwest (SXSW) Conference and Festival in Austin, Texas. The festival is an acclaimed event featuring international music and media acts, acknowledging both recognised and up-and-coming talents. TGSE decided to apply to SXSW along with one of Singapore's top local bands, Electrico. Both were invited to showcase their music at the festival, making it a first appearance for Singapore's music at SXSW.

Although it's only been two years since they came together as a band, vocalist/guitarist Saiful Idris and

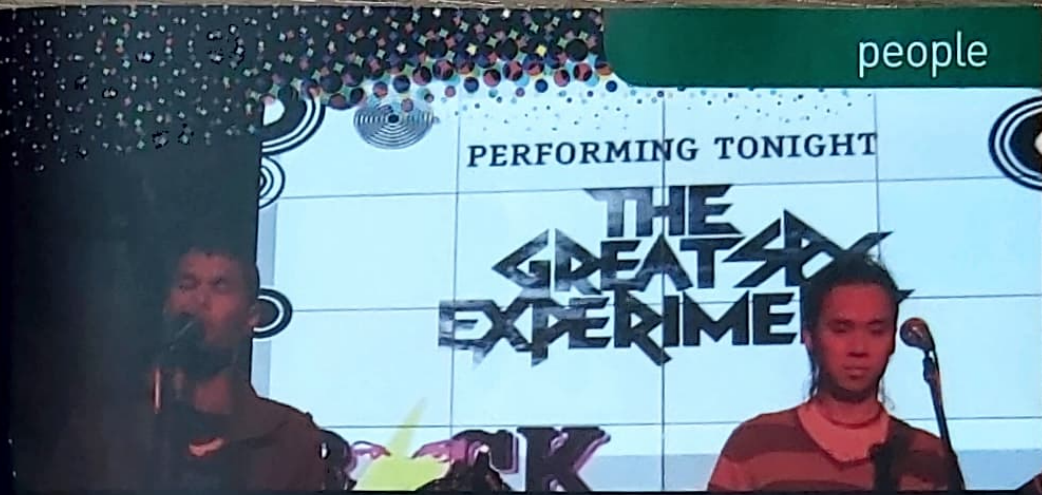
drummer Fandy Razak have known each other since their teens. They then met bassist Khairyl Hashim and keyboardist Magdelene Han in one of the most unlikely places – the National Institute of Education, where they were trainee teachers. Tan 'Song' Sin, who had become friends with some of TGSE's members, was brought in as another guitarist.

"We needed each other at that time," said Fandy, 28. A musical connection is hard to find, so their meeting came at a significant moment. Their friendship has since developed into something much deeper as the band has become like family.

From initial crazy name suggestions such as "Fat Boys on Waffles" and "Play Hard with a Vengeance", the TGSE has come a long way. The inspiration for their name came from "Superspy" by Save Ferris, and it later developed into The Great Spy Experiment since coming together as a band was an experiment for them.

Naming bands like Radiohead, Suede, Ladytron, Peaches and even 90s Malay rock music as their influences, the TGSE describes its sound as sexy, indie and "dance-y".

Singapore has seen a lot of local bands recently



and Saiful, 28, commented, "It's good, but I think we also have a lot of young bands coming up who are very impatient. They form a band and quickly want to get success."

Fandy reminisced, "Getting out there was difficult. We were lucky but we also put in a lot of effort. We had organisers underpaying us with the promise of free publicity and free drinks. We even had to pay for food once, and the food was stale."

While live performances are still their passion, TGSE wouldn't mind the MTV exposure when asked if MTV is a future goal. They unanimously exclaimed, "Yes!" before Fandy added with enthusiasm, "MTV Asia, MTV Japan, MTV World ... [we want] everything!"

So what else do they want to achieve within the next few years? "A couple of albums that we can be proud of, and when people mention local music, we'd be one of the first bands that they'd think of," said a passionate Saiful.

Success has been bittersweet as the members find themselves with less free time to spend with loved ones. However, they all agreed that it has been time well spent. Saiful explained, "What's really meaningful for all of us is that we're part of this local scene and in a way, we're actually contributing to the history of Singapore's local music."

Undoubtedly, TGSE has some loyal fans, but they agreed that they would like to get to know their fans on a personal level.

"At events, there are people shouting for [us], but once we get off the stage, no one talks to us. It'd also be great to have fans that turn out to be friends," Fandy said.

And in Song's own words, "Come hang out [with us] at our *kopitiam*!" So there you have it fans, don't be afraid to approach this band – they're more than willing to speak to you over a nice cup of coffee and a plate of kaya toast on a personal level.



In Love With HADY MIRZA

The man's in love (it's all over the net) but Hady Mirza is tight-lipped about the so-called romance. The Singapore Idol Season 2 winner however, willingly shares his idea of what a perfect Valentine's date is. JENNY YEAP sits the busy man down for a chat.



Photos by Universal Music

They've been seen together at several nightspots, but Hady Mirza is not about to reveal anything about his relationship with MTV VJ Fazura.

The winner of the Singapore Idol (SI) Season 2, who turned 27 on Jan 28, is also keeping his options open in relationships. "When it comes, it comes. I believe everything happens for a reason."

The soulful bachelor insisted he is not seeing anyone in particular at the moment. So for those of you who thought Hady had a significant other, as suggested by the net and a popular female magazine cover, you can sleep well tonight.

Dressed in a simple grey tee, jeans, and a brown beanie, Hady exudes friendliness and charm. While the media has constantly portrayed him as shy, quiet, and guarded, he begs to differ.

"Me? Shy? Quiet? That's what they think," he said with a slight hint of rebellion in his voice. "I love doing interviews and talking to people. My family and friends are very important to me. Yes, you can say I'm a people's man."

We can also say he's a lady's man with loads of female fans. Has he seen anyone he fancied? "Yeah... I have seen a couple..." Hady paused, then broke into laughter and asked, "But I can't go out with them! Can I?" On a more practical note, he added that if the personalities of both people don't click, looks will not save a failing relationship.

But if you are trying to get Hady's attention, he suggests not pretending to be a hardcore music fan if you're not one. Just be yourself and, according to Hady, be 'normal' and like "pink stuff and make-up".

IDOL DAYS

Since winning 70 percent of the votes cast by Singaporeans, Hady's been one busy bee who can easily be mistaken for a workaholic - he fell unconscious at the studio due to his immense workload.

Despite the punishing pace, he claims it has been worthwhile. His self-titled debut album, produced in just a month, achieved platinum status within four days of release. Slumping onto a comfy chair, Hady said that his wish for this year is to "get a real break... something like a two-week break will be great".

Not bad for someone who joined the competition without any plans, and refused to do things he wasn't comfortable with. "I just stuck to my strength, which is my voice. After singing 'Lagenda' (a popular Malay song), I felt for the first time I could connect with the audience. I also realised I had a shot at winning the title, just by being sincere," he said on that much talked-about performance.

Given the similarities between the two seasons of SI, one cannot help but compare him to the first season's winner Taufik Batisah. Both are soulful R&B singers who started out with bands, entered SI as underdogs and emerged winners.

While Hady took only four days to achieve platinum status for his album (Taufik took "less than 10 days"), Taufik is the first Singaporean to achieve the double platinum status in less than three weeks - an unprecedented feat in the local music industry.

"I'm cool with the comparisons. We are good friends and we are not affected. The media always like to compare us. We just read the reports and laugh it off," said Hady.

He added, "It's a good thing to be constantly compared to Taufik. I idolise him because of his drive and will to succeed. Everyone should admire that. We should keep on trying to achieve what we want. People shouldn't do things and give up halfway."

KEEPING IT REAL

For a guy next door to transform into a household name overnight, it all seems like a dream. While some young celebrities get complacent, Hady intends to keep himself grounded, just like his pre-Idol days. He talks to his friends and mother a lot to keep a reality check on himself.

"I think about this very often, and it's actually very scary to get complacent. I play soccer with my friends a lot around Tampines. Simple things like these remind me of who I am," says the former club singer who dreamt of being talent-scouted while performing.

"It has never happened though. Never!" he laughed. So now that he is the new Idol, does he want to endorse labels, like many other stars?

In a rare display of boyish glee, Hady sat up and flung his arms into the air and said, "I want to endorse a car, man! A Hyundai will be great! I love driving and I have always liked the brand for their nice shapes."

As for the future, Hady is reaching for the skies. "I want to achieve as much as I can. I hope people will remember Hady for his voice 10 years down the road. And you should buy my album because there's definitely one song for all of you out there."

Romancing Hady

His undeniably infectious laughter, sunshine smile, and boyish good looks are probably reasons why he has so many girls swooning over him. **hype** finds out what Hady will do on a Valentine's date!

The approach: "I'll smile a lot when I'm trying to get a girl. I think that's my best feature. I tried acting cool once and I ended up looking like a complete idiot."

The dinner: "A romantic dinner at Boat Quay will be perfect. I'll reserve a table by the Singapore River and it'll be a perfect date between just the two of us. Hmm, I'm really bad at this."

If something goes wrong: "I'll just buy a really big bouquet of flowers to please the girl. I think it works."

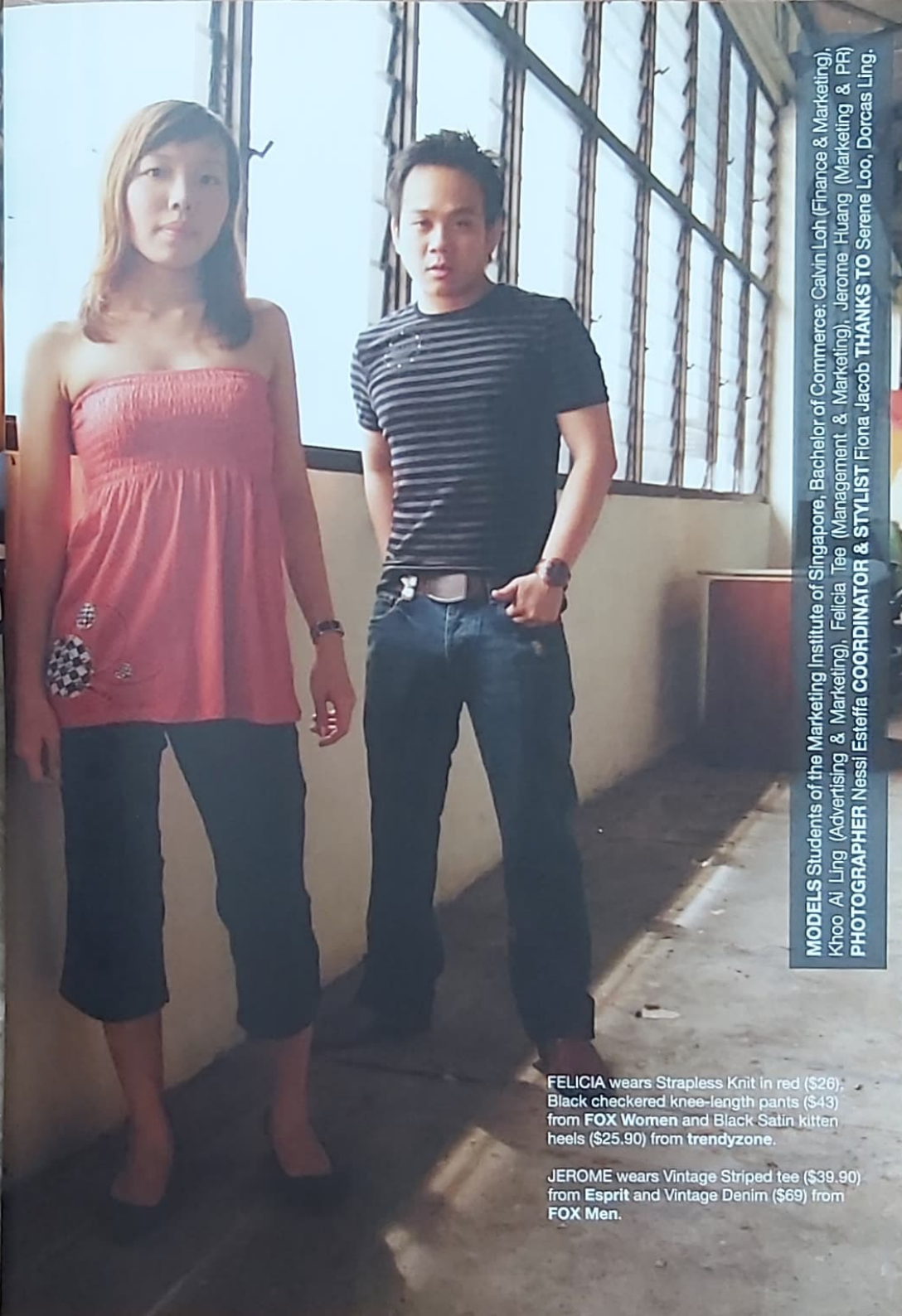
The most romantic thing he has ever done for a girl: "I sang Maroon 5's 'She Will Be Loved'; I think singing works too!"

CALVIN wears Vintage-Washed cotton shirt in white & wine (\$49) from FOX Men and Black pants (\$129.90) from Esprit.

AI LING wears Denim dress (\$129.90) from Esprit and Red Patent Eyelet pumps (\$49.90) from trendyzone.



INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH



FELICIA wears Strapless Knit in red (\$26), Black checkered knee-length pants (\$43) from FOX Women and Black Satin kitten heels (\$25.90) from trendyzone.

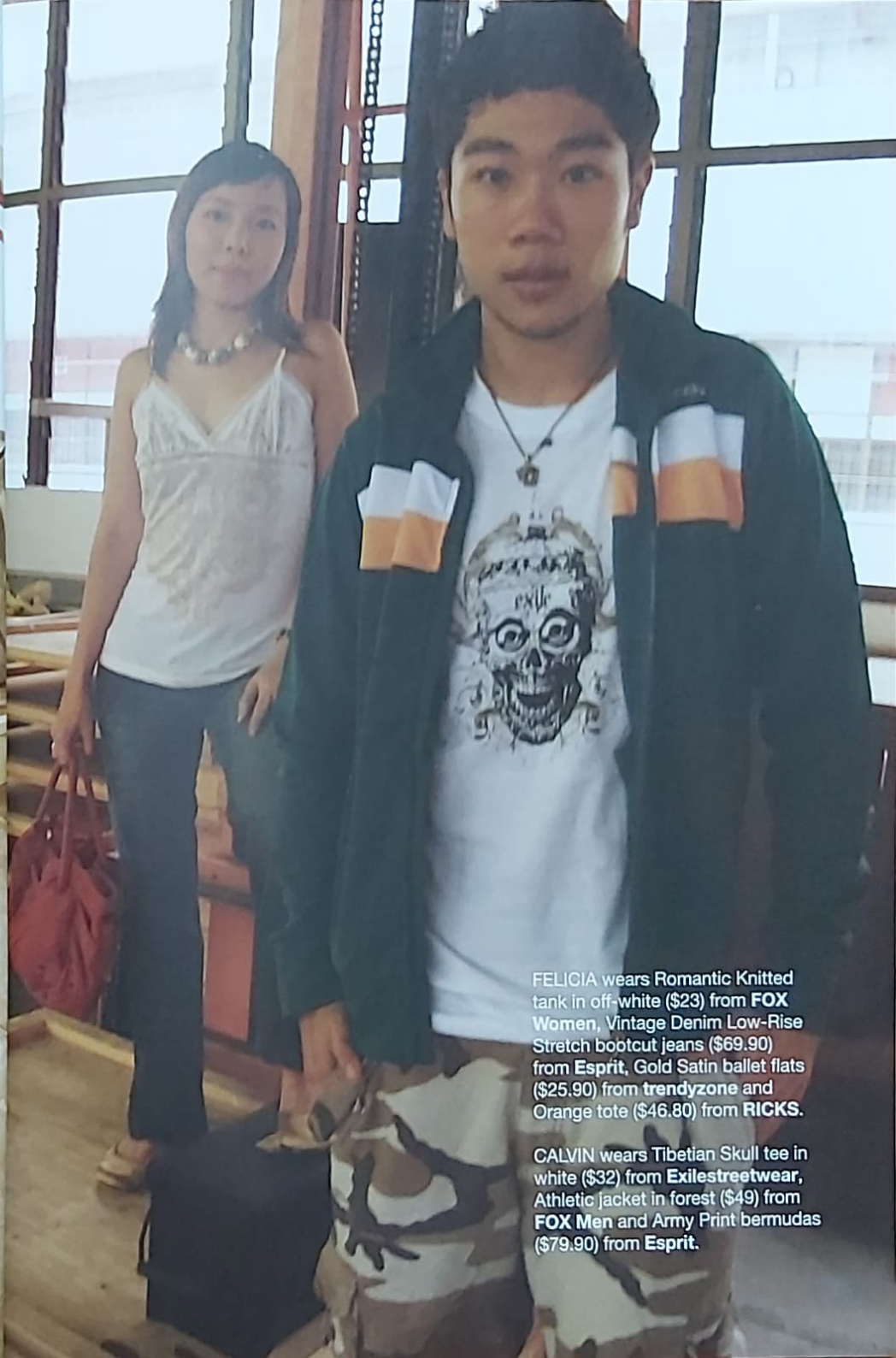
JEROME wears Vintage Striped tee (\$39.90) from Esprit and Vintage Denim (\$69) from FOX Men.

MODELS Students of the Marketing Institute of Singapore, Bachelor of Commerce: Calvin Loh (Finance & Marketing), Khoo Ai Ling (Advertising & Marketing), Felicia Tee (Management & Marketing), Jerome Huang (Marketing & PR)
PHOTOGRAPHER Nessi Estefia COORDINATOR & STYLIST Fiona Jacob THANKS TO Serene Loo, Dorcas Ling.



AI LING wears Tank knit in nugat (\$26) from **FOX Women**, Denim miniskirt (\$69.90) from **Esprit**, Gold Satin ballet flats (\$25.90) from **trendyzone** and Black Vintage quilted bag (\$49.90) from **RICKS**.

JEROME wears Premium Classic tee in banana (\$26) and 100% Cotton Vintage jeans (\$79) from **FOX Men**.



FELICIA wears Romantic Knitted tank in off-white (\$23) from **FOX Women**, Vintage Denim Low-Rise Stretch bootcut jeans (\$69.90) from **Esprit**, Gold Satin ballet flats (\$25.90) from **trendyzone** and Orange tote (\$46.80) from **RICKS**.

CALVIN wears Tibetan Skull tee in white (\$32) from **Exilestreetwear**, Athletic jacket in forest (\$49) from **FOX Men** and Army Print bermudas (\$79.90) from **Esprit**.

OPTICAL ILLUSION

Contact lenses might free you from plastering visual aids onto your face, but spectacles do give you a certain degree of style and edge. **ARMAN SHAH** shows how you can look chic with four eyes.



GIRLS Jazz up a pretty dress with simple black framed glasses in the classic cats-eye shape. Just remember not to go vintage from head to toe!

GUYS Throw on a pair of grandfather-esque glasses but give your overall look a twist with a long-sleeved striped tee and skinny jeans. Your style role-models should be electronic-rock band Franz Ferdinand.

GIRLS Think sexy librarian – a well-cut pencil skirt teamed with a fitted blouse and killer heels will be enhanced by the minimalistic glasses.

GUYS Play the dashing bookworm. Plain black rectangular-framed glasses, jeans, a long-sleeved collared shirt and a pair of dandy sneakers will complete your look.

GIRLS When it comes to casual chic, wear something formal enough for the office but cool enough for drinks after. Put on a pair of tortoiseshell glasses and match it with a pair of ever-versatile pin-striped pants.

GUYS You can't go wrong with a pair of dark jeans and a well-cut shirt. The tortoiseshell spectacles will smarten up the outfit subtly yet effectively.

GIRLS Plastic-framed glasses with details on the sides or in striking colours impart an edgy look. Wear them with clashing colours or contrasting patterns.

GUYS Enhance your devil-may-care look with streamlined plastic glasses given a simple yet creative twist with decals or engravings.

After taking a gander at these styles, you'll know that matching your personality to your spectacles is essential. Spectacles have been around for ages but we've only recently sat up and taken notice of the opportunities for style they offer. So, say farewell to those boring, metal-framed spectacles we grew up with and experiment with the various styles available. All in all, wear whatever's most comfortable for you and best-fitted to your personal style.

MODELS FOR VINTAGE Shila Naidu **GEEK CHIC** Amienuddin **CASUAL CHIC** Sandee Goh **PUNK** Ken Hans
Spectacles for VINTAGE, CASUAL CHIC and PUNK provided by TopVision, #02-17, Far East Plaza.



Subtly Vintage

You'll never go out of fashion with vintage, reports MARIA ELENA A. DE JESUS who speaks to a professional image consultant on how you can wear the look without looking like part of an old photograph.

Seasons come and go, but vintage remains evergreen. So if you're thinking of 'investing' in a piece of accessory, go vintage.

Audrey Quek, from Audrey Quek Image Consultancy, clears up the issue and explains, "vintage basically is a rare piece of period clothing, or clothing (usually from the 60s to mid-80s) which still has monetary value in our modern context."

True vintage finds can be sourced at thrift shops, vintage apparel boutiques and even garage sales. However, for those who fancy going vintage without burning a hole in your pocket, get replicas!

You can easily acquire 'faux' vintage, in the form of clothes, shoes and accessories, from almost any trendy store at affordable prices to look dressed to the nines (or 90s - you pick the era!)

Accessories are also an ingenious way to accentuate your plain ensemble on days when you've no idea what to wear.

Audrey says, "The most basic clothes can be transformed by using the right accessories. A plain outfit can be taken upmarket with good quality accessories."

Here're some great tips she offers on how to pick the right vintage accessories:

- Choose accessories that complement your frame in terms of shape, size, balance in weight, texture, colour and body proportions. If you're petite, go for slightly bigger and heavier pieces, without

overwhelming your face or body.

- Curved shapes are ideal for oval, round, heart and triangular faces but it would be advisable to select an oblong shape, instead of a circle, for the round face. Similarly, a round shape would create balance for the oblong face.

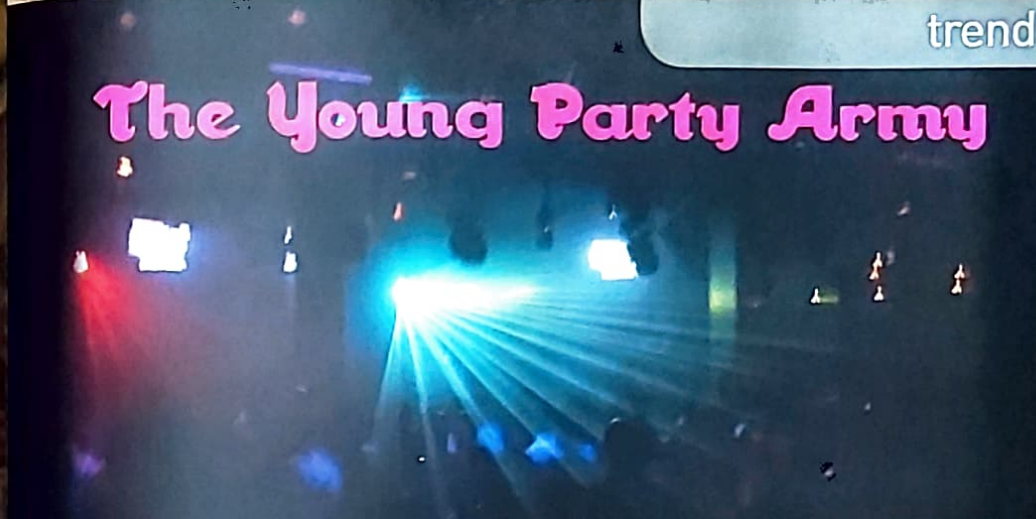
- But if you're not the adventurous kind, choose accessories that are similar to the shape of your face so that they will enhance it. This creates balance and harmony in your overall appearance.

- A balance in weight/texture is important. For example, silky, thin fabrics are complemented by shiny metals, diamantes (or rhinestones) and fussy details. Textured fabrics, a common element in vintage apparel replicas, need dull-finished jewellery pieces and belts in heavy leather. Classic and simple lines in clothes need simple, quality accessories.

Accessories are a great way to look stylish and when used well, will help you to turn heads for all the right reasons.

Audrey says, "The accessories that you wear reflect your personality. They add that extra something. Choosing the right accessory is as important as choosing your clothes. Imagine your accessories as the frosting on the cake - they are the finishing touches that complete the look".

Audrey Quek Image Consultancy: 9672 1088
Jewellery courtesy of Cherries Vintage, 370 Alexandra Rd #01-13A The Anchorage Singapore 159953



The Young Party Army

The clubbing scene is seeing more young people injecting ideas and revolutionising it with themed parties. KESHIA LEE weighs the risks and appeal of the party organisation business.

Armed with fresh ideas and hungry for profit, youths are taking frontline positions in drawing throngs of party-goers to local nightspots.

This is a far cry from the days when clubs relied on their own marketing teams to organise events. These daring young entrepreneurs inject dynamism to the tired weekly events and revitalise the clubbing scene with themed parties and band performances, and it's paying off for them too.

Already an experienced party organiser at 21, Alex Huang, said, "The main organiser can get about \$1,500 and up for one party, but that's after paying his runners and the club. The actual amount depends on the number of tickets sold and the number of runners there are."

These "runners" are youths that party organisers rely on to sell tickets in return for commission. This supporting arm has also proved to be a profitable business, as a runner can earn about \$8 per ticket for sales of 100 or more tickets.

While some party organisers work in smaller groups, others who have developed a loyal following, selling out every single party they organise, have expanded into organisations, assembling regular parties, such as Lifestyle Bash, Play Projekts and Youth Empire in clubs along Clarke Quay.

Vincent Chai, 31, managing director of club and bar, Cocco Latte, said, "When it started, it was a cool thing to do and organisers of such parties gained instant fame. Money-making was never on the agenda, but recognition was vital. Runners were willing to sell tickets at no profit just to be seen as cool and in the 'in' crowd."

With increasing demand for such parties, however, profit became a strong incentive to churn out even more parties.

Over 2006, several parties explored a poorly tapped market, targeting teenagers who aren't of legal clubbing age yet. This is extremely appealing to teenagers who have dreamt of savouring the nightlife despite being under-aged.

With the boom of non-alcoholic parties for those below 16, as Huang pointed out, the competition is stiffer as compared to when he first started out about three years ago. He said, "Now, organisers have to come up with better promotions or attractions instead of merely throwing a party."

Some others are more upbeat about the ease with which money can still be made. Runner Farah Chew, 18, said, "I honestly think the business is so lucrative because youngsters... are blessed with more pocket money and more willing to spend on clubbing."

Youths are drawn to this business, but many don't think of the risks involved. Chai said, "Many of these teens who organise such parties do not take into account the legal risk involved when they sign on a contract with an establishment." Similarly, party runners are at risk if they fail to sell their required quota and the over-zealous may find themselves in debt.

Student Yong Shan Ning, 18, recounted, "I was asked to sell tickets for a clubbing event, with promise of a good commission. But the response wasn't as good as expected, so I was told that I had to buy the remaining tickets which I couldn't sell, which amounted to several hundred dollars."

Even those burnt may still take some risk. Beatrice Teo, 19, who lost about \$2,000 as the main organiser, has turned into an active runner, comfortable that she now shoulders a responsibility that is not as heavy.

She said, "It didn't stop me from participating in the events organisation. Now, I just help my friend sell tickets, instead of being one of the main organisers."

Your 101 to Online Shopping

New malls have opened but they're not all that intriguing, considering they largely carry the same brands. If you're yearning for something unique, MARIA ELENA A. DE JESUS finds that almost anyone can do serious shopping online.

The major complaints about online shopping, besides security issues, are that though there are thousands of online stores, not all of them ship internationally. Additionally, many don't accept Singaporean credit cards. Youths with easy access to credit or debit cards may have already been overworking the online shopping network and are dying for relief from stiff shipping charges. For them and even those without a charge card, salvation comes in 3 Ss- Shopping services, Shipping services and Sprees.

This may account for why vPOST, an online shopping and shipping service by Singapore Post, has close to 300,000 registered users, according to Channel NewsAsia.

vPOST helps customers buy products in four countries (USA, China, Korea and New Zealand) from online stores which don't ship to Singapore directly. Its other popular and secure competitors include comGateway and Shop Without Borders.

Online shopper Dora Gan, 26, uses shopping and shipping services because, apart from being able to buy items from online shops that don't deliver to Singapore, delivery through the services is faster and slightly cheaper than direct international shipping.

These services provide you with a unique U.S. address. You indicate this as the mailing address

during checkout after adding your desired items to virtual shopping cart. After the goods are delivered to the designated address, they are re-routed to Singapore, right to your doorstep.

As for online stores that don't accept Singaporean credit cards, concierge services, where orders are placed to the online store on behalf of the buyers, are the solution.

All the companies mentioned above also provide concierge services.

Ms Betsy Lowther, Chief Marketing Officer of comGateway explained to **hype** in an e-mail interview, "The customer submits their order directly to us through our system, and we make the purchase on their behalf. The packages are still shipped through the customer's unique U.S. address and on to their home address in Singapore. It provides customers with a way to shop with sites that would not accept their credit cards otherwise."

To save yourself some money, it's useful to know that if your designated mailing address is in Oregon (comGateway and vPOST), you won't have to pay any American sales tax, as it is a tax-free state. The standard GST (Goods & Services Tax) on the total cost of the items and freight will be charged for goods entering Singapore that cost more than S\$400.

Even if you don't own a credit or debit card, you can still shop online.

To cut their own shipping costs, some people willingly set up their credit cards for damage and host 'sprees' for others on the Internet to consolidate orders.

What are Sprees?

They are group purchases made online through the help of a spree organiser. The process is like dealing straight with a concierge service, except spree organisers are the ones who collect orders from spree participants. The organiser orders directly from the website or via a shipping service. So far, these sprees are mostly popular among females and so are commonly for female-centric stores like Victoria's Secret, GoJane, and dELIA's. Popular unisex online stores include Threadless (for cool graphic T-shirts) and American Eagle Outfitters.

How do they work?

Unlike shopping at your own time via the mentioned shopping services, sprees are held at the organisers' whim. You can request for sprees, but you won't necessarily get your choice.

When a spree starts, you only have a limited amount of time to browse through the pages online as spree organisers usually place a cap on either the total cost of the items or number of items to be purchased in a single spree. This is to avoid high shipping costs or paying for tax.

Payment?

Payment to the spree organiser is made before he or she places the order with the shopping service or the online store. Spree participants pay the organiser as soon as they place their order, either through Internet banking or ATM transfers. DBS/POSB is the most commonly-used bank among spree organisers. Therefore, instead of paying solely for the items you've purchased, you're required to pay for taxes and delivery charges, depending on the shopping service the spree organiser is using.

Benefits?

You save a bomb on shipping charges! Nordin Razali, a self-professed shopaholic who has organised around 25 sprees, exclaimed, "If I were to shop for myself, then I'm gonna go bankrupt! Shipping [prices are] hefty! It's so much more worth it to buy in bulk."

Undergraduate Lance John, 22, one of the few male online spree participants, agrees, saying, "I wouldn't even buy from most places if not for sprees as the shipping is so expensive. So actually I wouldn't even online shop much if not for sprees."

Popular spreeing websites:

1. <http://www.sgspree.livejournal.com>
2. <http://forums.cozycot.com> (click on CozySpree)



If you're interested in participating in sprees, Razali has some tips for you:-

1. Post your orders in the right format, and always pay promptly without hassling the spree organiser.
2. Organisers appreciate patience, so don't expect incessant updates.
3. Do remember that you benefit from participating in sprees, and that you choose to participate in them. Remember, they don't owe you anything. Organisers are not doing this full-time and they're not making any profits from you.

Shopping pointers:

1. If you're making purchases via credit card, you know you'll have to pay for them at the end of the month. Self-control is key.
2. Exchanging purchases bought overseas can be troublesome and expensive as you'll need to pay to send the item back to the store. So, double-check each detail of every order, from the size to colour to finish, that you place.
3. If you're new to sprees or online shopping, always ask the spree organiser or the other spree participants for assistance. They're usually very polite and always willing to help a newbie out.
4. Make sure you keep your receipt as proof of payment for your item/s. If you're paying via Internet banking, take a screenshot of the confirmed transaction as proof that you've made the transaction already. You may need to show these as proof to your spree organiser. If you're purchasing directly from the website, print out a copy of the order transaction.

5. If you're interested in buying items from a shop that you've never heard of, make sure the address and contact details of the store are on the website and take note of them. Before you make any transaction, send an email to the store to make sure that it's still in operation.

Here's a quick look at two of the most popular services in Singapore.

	comGateway (www.comgateway.com)	vPOST (https://www.vpost.com.sg/login.html)
Base	Local	Local
Countries the service caters to	USA only	vPOST currently operates for stores located in USA, Japan, Korea, New Zealand
Common payment methods	DBS and POSB MasterCard and all American Express cards	eNETS Debit or VISA/ MasterCard Credit Card
Charges	Standard charge: S\$18.40 (base charge) + S\$5.40 (per package) + S\$4.20 (per kg) + 5% service fee depending on the tax paid to relevant Customs organisations. International freight charges will be the greater of either the actual weight of the package or the volumetric weight.	Charges vary according to the category of items. For items from the US, base charges range from S\$7.99 for books to S\$12.99 for apparel Shipping rates start at S\$4.99. For items like apparel, shipping rates start from S\$8.99. The greater between volumetric weight and actual weight is chosen.
Are there concierge services available?	A service charge of 5% of the total bill including the cost of domestic delivery to the US mailing address is applicable.	vConcierge. A handling fee of S\$20 for each store + 5% of the value stated on the invoice is applicable.
For Example, You buy a Threadless tee that costs S\$34.25 (including domestic shipping charges). Before domestic shipping charges: S\$26.20	Concierge Service S\$34.25 (amount paid to merchant) X 5% (concierge service charge) = S\$1.71 Delivery to Singapore S\$34.25 + S\$18.50 (US\$12 base charge delivery to Singapore home address) + S\$5.40 (US\$3.50 one package) + S\$4.20 (US\$2.75 weight charge/ kg) = S\$62.35 + 5% (administrative fee) = S\$65.47	Concierge Service S\$34.25 (amount paid to merchant) X 5% (concierge service charge) + S\$20 = S\$21.71 vPOST Service S\$34.25 + S\$8.99 (weight charge per kg) + S\$12.99 (base charge) = S\$56.23
<i>There is no GST charged unless the purchase exceeds S\$400.</i>	Concierge Service: S\$1.71 Delivery: S\$65.47 Total: S\$ 67.18	Concierge Service: S\$21.71 Delivery: S\$56.23 Total: S\$76.94

(All prices converted to SGD and calculated to the nearest cent)

Managing your \$\$ with Sense

Trapped in a financial rut? **CHOW LIJUN** shows you ways to gain back your financial freedom.

The undergraduate

Khoo Ee Wei, 19, a first-year undergraduate, remembers worrying about her \$20,000 fee when she started university. "My father is the sole breadwinner and my family isn't very well-to-do," says Khoo, who settled for an education loan from a local bank.

SOLUTIONS

Education Loan Tip

Students with at least \$20,000 can consider investing the money in a bank's fixed deposit account. As investments bear fruit over time, they may consider getting a bank loan for their university education. After three to four years, the burgeoned investment money could be reclaimed to comfortably pay back the loan.

One thing to note, financial planner Ann Tan says, is that "though this investment method will usually reap back profits, the profit made is typically not very high... about two to three percent." She is also quick to caution that investments are to be made according to each individual's risk appetite as some people might be unable to take the risk involved in investments.

Students taking up the burden of their education bank loans themselves are to be aware of falling into a long-term struggle with their education loan repayment. Based on a channelnewsasia.com finance-related forum, students who intend to pay off their education loan are advised that their monthly loan repayment shouldn't exceed 35% of their monthly pay.

The Impulsive Spender

Ideally, student Timothy Chan, 19, should get by comfortably with a monthly allowance of \$300. But his habitual overspending reduced his savings of \$2,000 to a mere \$20 in four months. He recalls sheepishly, "I thought \$2,000 was money that wouldn't run out, so I started splurging on shopping, frequent cab-taking and dining in restaurants."

Desperate, he sought loans from his friends but insisted that each loan was capped at \$50.

SOLUTIONS

Save up for a rainy day

An emergency fund six times one's monthly expenditure is encouraged. Ann suggests working youths save at least 10% of their money, while non-working youths save 30% of their allowance (20% into investments and the remaining 10% in their bank account).

Useful schemes offered by banks include the POSB's Save-As-You-Earn, which sets aside a fixed amount of money monthly as your savings. Insurance companies offer savings plans with a higher average interest rate of 4%, topped off with attractive bonuses. These plans give annual non-fixed interest based on the economy. Saving plans are generally cheaper and more worthwhile when bought at a younger age. "Many youths do not know the power of insurance can make them rich [over time] for a low yearly premium," says financial planner Caroline Tham.

Investments are not meant for debt-clearing

While some people mistakenly see investing as a quick way out of debt, Ann is quick to dispel this dangerous notion. She says, "Always clear your debts before investing as the interest of bank's debts rises faster than usual investment's returns. Investment returns are never guaranteed."

Money doesn't "grow" in a bank

Though it is important to own a bank account, it's not a smart way to make your money grow, says Caroline, adding, "The smartest way to get rich is to make your money work for you. So while you're sleeping, your till is cashing."

After calculations, it will take you 72 years to double your money with a typical interest rate of 1 percent!

Investments tip for youths

Ann says, "A good place to start, therefore, is an investment-based insurance that provides both investment opportunities and benefits of insurance coverage without burning a hole in the pocket. Premiums can be as low as \$100 per month."

Food Healing

Much has been made of TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine), but another ancient healing system, Ayurvedic medicine, is what many others swear by. The best thing about it is that cures for common ailments are available in most Asian homes, by **AMRUTA JOSHI**.

Forget bitter syrups and capsules, herbs and spices are the answers to your health, according to Ayurvedic medicine (also known as Ayurveda, meaning "knowledge of life"). It heals and promotes wellness through the balance of body, mind and soul. The 3,000-year-old practice, which uses herbs, spices, massage and yoga to balance the body, originated from India. Although relatively new in Singapore, it is gaining prominence in wellness centres.

"I started going for Ayurvedic massages recently, so I don't see a difference yet, but that could be because I am a new user," said Chng Yee Ping, 21, an Accountancy student from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, who was introduced to Ayurveda by a friend.

"In Singapore, public awareness of Ayurvedic medicines is minimal. They associate Ayurveda [with] a beauty treatment and not as a form of medicine. That means people are unable to exploit the true benefits of Ayurveda," said Dr Rashmi Pande, 35, a homeopathic doctor, referring to the appearance of Ayurvedic treatments in spas.

"My first encounter with Ayurvedic medicine was when I was touring India. Ever since then, [I've made] it a point to go to a beauty parlour in Serangoon for an Ayurvedic massage," says Payal Karnik, a Hotel Management student from Shatec who uses Ayurveda for facial treatments.

In reality, Ayurveda is a much more complicated form of medication than just massages or beauty treatments. It uses *prakriti*, the relationship between a person's physical and psychological being, to treat a patient.

According to www.ayushakti-usa.com, a person's *prakriti* is based on *doshas*, which control the mind-body activities. Each person has a unique balance of three *doshas*. Illnesses such as insomnia, cramps, anger, ulcers, rashes and allergy resulting from an imbalance. The three *doshas* are made of one or two of the five elements: air, fire, space, water, and earth.

The Ayurvedic doctor determines a patient's *dosha* based on the person's lifestyle, diet, eyes, skin, weight and pulse. After the cause of the imbalance is

diagnosed, medicine will be prescribed in the form of a blend of spices, medicinal oil, yoga activity, exercise, massage or other techniques.

Since a lot of people are unaware of these Ayurvedic practices, they may be misled by spas claiming to offer this specialised type of treatment.

"Most of the time, they don't even follow the Ayurvedic practices. They just write it there as people think of herbal treatments as safer," said Dr Manisha Thackare, 36, a certified Ayurvedic doctor from Bombay University, India.

So, if you ever seek Ayurvedic treatment, do ask for the university certificate of the doctor which entitles them to practice Ayurveda, just to make sure.

Despite its benefits, Ayurveda, like its Western medicinal counterpart, can have negative side effects if used unwisely.

"Although Ayurveda is mostly [about] the use of herbs, it can cause side-effects when taken in excess. Even a mild thing like honey, if taken in excess, can cause dryness, which is not good for skin," warned Dr Manisha.

However, Ayurvedic medicines can generally be taken over a long period of time as long as they're prescribed, unlike Western medication. Ayurveda helps you find out which foods and exercises are best for keeping your body balanced. You'll also understand your moods better and learn to deal with them. The cost of Ayurvedic treatment varies depending on the kind of medication required.



Although complex illnesses should be left to professional Ayurveda practitioners to treat, minor complaints can be self-treated. Most Ayurvedic remedies use ingredients found at home. Follow these remedies from <http://www.ayurveda-herbal-remedy.com/home-remedies> and take that step towards becoming your own doctor!

Common cold: Add one tablespoon of cumin seeds to two cups of boiling water. Drink a glass of the tea once it has cooled down. For a fast recovery, drink the tea at least twice a day until the cold recedes.

Sore throat: To soothe your throat, gargle a mixture of warm water and salt at least three times a day. Alternatively, Dr Manisha advises adding crushed ginger to a warm glass of milk and downing it instead for the same effect.

If you're in a hurry, simply grab a few cloves, raisins or cardamoms and chew on them when you leave home and you'll be set.

Headache: To get rid of that throbbing headache, take a teaspoon each of almonds, cloves, and cinnamon ground with two tablespoons of water and combine them to make a paste. Apply the paste on your forehead and leave it overnight.

Constipation: Add a teaspoon of honey to a glass of fresh lime juice and drink it. To ease bowel movements in the morning, drink a glass of warm milk every night before sleeping.

Stomach ache: Add a teaspoon of crushed ginger to a boiling cup of water and drink it while it's warm. Be careful not to scald yourself though!

Toothache: Get a few cloves and chew on them one at a time. Alternatively, you can dip cotton wool in clove oil and place it on the aching tooth until the pain eases. Be careful not to dip the whole cotton wool into the oil or you'll end up with a mouth on fire!

Hiccups: Sprinkle a pinch of salt, black pepper and sugar on a slice of lemon or ginger and suck on it until the hiccups come to a halt.

Diarrhoea: Boil a banana and mash it. Add a pinch of salt and butter before consuming the paste.

Fever: Crush one tablespoon of raisins and one tablespoon of fresh ginger and put the mixture in 800 ml of boiling water. Continue boiling the mixture until the water reduces to 400 ml and then strain it for drinking for maximum effect.

Arthritis: Eat a clove of raw garlic every day for three months. If that doesn't sound too palatable, you can try frying it in butter.

Alternatively, if you are afraid of scaring your friends and family away with your garlic breath, you can drink lemon juice with honey (a teaspoon of honey added to a cup of warm lemon juice) twice a day to achieve similar effects.

水果健康系列之：香蕉

你对香蕉的理解有多少呢？它对你来说是否只是一个内外黄色，并且能够帮忙通便的水果呢？其实，香蕉还有很多营养价值，就让我来为你揭开香蕉很多不为人知的“小秘密”！保证你对香蕉另眼相看！整理：潘雪薇

忧郁症

香蕉含有一种名为色氨酸的蛋白质，食用后我们的身体能够把它转换成血管收缩素（Serotonin），能够让身心灵都放松，让你感觉快乐一些。

贫血症

香蕉含有高量的铁质，铁质能够促进血红蛋白（Haemoglobin）的产生以至帮助提高血压，减低贫血的可能。

胃灼热（Heartburn）

香蕉能够对身体产生一种自然的抗酸作用（Natural Antacid effect）。因此，如果你被胃灼热或是胃病困扰，可尝试吃香蕉来纾缓病痛。

中风

根据“The New England Journal of Medicine”，如果你每天都吃一条香蕉，能够减少多达四成中风的机率。这是因为香蕉含有非常多的钾（Potassium），而含有非常少量的盐分，非常有利于降低血压。

压力

钾是非常重要的矿物，有助于调整心跳，输送氧气到大脑并且协调体内的水分。当我们感到很有压力时，新陈代谢的功能会提高，而且会减低钾的成分。所以，吃香蕉可以补充体内的钾，也可以让你纾缓你的情绪。

编按：据新闻报道，英国首相布莱尔在执政期间就是以吃香蕉来减压的！近年在外国音乐界也兴起一股吃香蕉风，表演者在演出前会吃香蕉，据说有镇静作用，避免演出时怯场。

溃疡（Ulcers）

由于香蕉的柔软，它对肠胃不会造成任何的不适。香蕉也可以缓解某些食物对胃黏膜的刺激。因此，它对胃溃疡有预防效果。

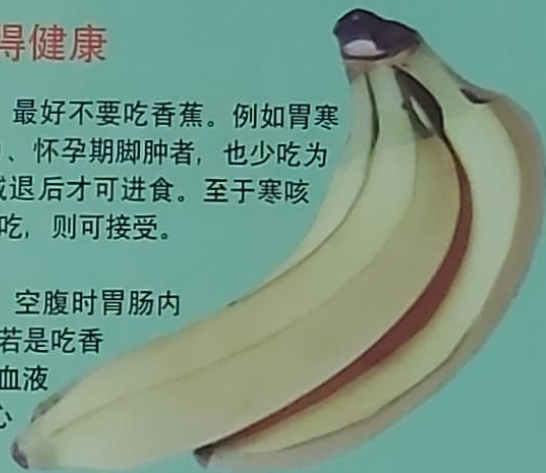
另外，与苹果相比，香蕉有多四倍的蛋白质、多两倍的碳水化合物（Carbohydrate）、多三倍的磷（Phosphorus）还有多五倍的维生素A及铁质，可以算是水果中最健康的其中一种。

现在，知道了香蕉这么多的好处，不如去亲身见识它的厉害吧！

香蕉好吃，但也要吃得健康

香蕉性多偏寒，体质偏虚寒者，最好不要吃香蕉。例如胃寒（口淡胃胀）、虚寒（泄泻、易晕）、怀孕期脚肿者，也少吃为妙。除非蕉肉经过蒸煮，寒性减退后才可进食。至于寒咳本不应吃香蕉，但将香蕉蒸熟再吃，则可接受。

另外，空腹吃香蕉不利于健康。空腹时胃肠内几乎没有可供消化的食物，此时若是吃香蕉，将会加快肠胃的运动，促进血液循环，增加心脏负荷，易导致心肌梗塞。



“蕉”外趣闻

“美容大王”大S（徐熙媛）曾经因一度发福而被媒体猜测怀有前男友蓝正龙的骨肉。一向爱美如命的她为了打破流言，积极减肥。每天只靠吃一根香蕉的她，持续了三个星期后，成功瘦了三公斤。不过这种极端的减肥方式，实在不是减肥的最佳典范。就连大S自己后来都表示受不了，而恢复正常饮食。



Not So Chinese New Year!

Despite the "Closed" signs on most shops, the shortage of cabs, the overdose of red, and the fact that you may not be ethnically Chinese, Chinese New Year (CNY) doesn't have to be a boring holiday. AMRUTA JOSHI tells you how to soak in the celebration and not be left out.

1

It's a good time to visit your Chinese friends and rekindle ties. Chances are you may find yourself 'rewarded' with *hong baos* (red packets with money). The illustrations on the front of a *hong bao* usually convey blessings, longevity, prosperity and health.



2

Tasty morsels are a big part of the celebrations. Get yourself invited to a Chinese friend's house and take an exciting culinary journey as your hosts ply you with an excess of food to signify a year of abundance. A word of caution, CNY goodies like *gua zi* (melon seeds) and *nian gao* (sweet rice cake) are highly addictive and might give you the girth of those laughing Buddhas.

3

Discover why the Chinese gather around to toss a colourful salad better known as *yu sheng*. Made of ingredients like raw fish slices and vegetables, this traditional dish completes the reunion dinner. Chinese across the world return home to gather with close ones to toss the salad, which was invented in Singapore, while exclaiming auspicious wishes. Delicious, meaningful and healthy.

4

Don't know how to use chopsticks? Pick up this useful skill and practice it at a traditional Chinese restaurant. If you're feeling adventurous, just ask for the chef's recommendations and let them know of any dietary restrictions beforehand.

5

Civil engineer Abdul Mutalif, 50, makes it a point to get into the spirit of CNY every year. "Reunion dinner means getting together and eating. Just get your friends and family together and go for a steam boat or barbecue". Either way, you get to catch up on each other's life while feasting. **hype** recommends reserving at least a week in advance, especially at popular restaurants, to avoid the crowds.

6

It'll be too late to wander into Chinatown during the first couple of days of the New Year, but check it out before the festivities, and you'll find crushing crowds, blaring music, the smell of *la chang* (pork sausages) and *bak kwa* (barbequed pork), and lots of haggling. Prices plummet just before everyone has to rush home on the eve, which is a great time to pick up a bargain. Ella Raja Singhan, 22, a Marine Engineering student from Singapore Polytechnic, says, "Just like Orchard during Christmas, Chinatown is our favourite hang-out during CNY, especially at night."

7

Mandarin oranges, symbolising wealth, are exchanged during CNY, so why not treat your body to some extra Vitamin C? Pick a few for your friends and bless them with health! Besides, they're almost a pre-requisite for getting *hong baos*.

8

Always wanted to learn Mandarin, but never got round to doing it? Pick up a few CNY greeting phrases, like *Gong Xi Fa Cai* (Wishing you prosperity) or *Wan Shi Ru Yi* (May all things go your way), and surprise your friends.

9

Gather a few friends who know how to play mahjong and engage in some serious fun. Kimberly Campbell, 21, a Media and Communication student from Singapore Polytechnic, says, "I learnt to play mahjong during CNY last year. My Chinese neighbours are experts at it and we're very close to them, so they taught me and my brother." According to Chinese belief, you'll add years to your parents' lives by staying up all night. We now finally have a legitimate reason to stay up late and play the night away!

10

Lastly, it's the time of the year to make some noise! Since loud crackers are banned in Singapore, buy small ones at party shops or in Chinatown and head down to East Coast or Marina Bay where you're bound to find the whole place lit with glittering sparkles. Join in the fun and have a blast. Housewife Anagha Milind Rane, 37, an Indian national, said, "I miss the noise and excitement that we have during Diwali (Deepavali) in India. Although the crackers aren't as loud (as during Diwali), the festive mood makes up for it."



Illustration by Izzat Ibrahim

Resolutions Reality Check

resolutions '07

1. LOSE 10kg by May

2. eat less fast food

3. finish TEN books

4. GET OVER EX!!

5. Quit smoking

6. STOP cabbaging

7. find a job



Resolutions are as much a part of the New Year as presents are associated with Christmas Day. But if made in haste, what you've agreed to do is likely to fall by the wayside round about this time.

MARIA ELENA A. DE JESUS finds out that this doesn't have to be the case.

New Year's resolutions are promises we make to ourselves to welcome in the New Year. Unlike promises like getting yourself two Gucci bags by year end, resolutions usually revolve around a change in behaviour and attitudes.

Your take on resolutions determines how likely you are to keep them. Those who jump on the bandwagon because everyone else makes them, are likely to conveniently forget their resolutions the moment the "fever" dies down around late January.

Some youths are cynical and don't bother making them at all. Royce Koh, 19, an Aeronautical Engineering student in Singapore Polytechnic gave up on them as he feels they don't motivate him to achieve anything. "New Year's resolutions are just goals people make a big deal of at the beginning of the year. By the time March comes around, most of them would have forgotten their resolutions already. I tried making resolutions, but I realised that they don't stay the same throughout the year," Royce explained.

Ngee Ann Polytechnic Film, Sound & Video student Leslie Tan, 19, shares similar sentiments. "Resolutions can be made but without the actual [resolve] to do it, what's the point? It's like making empty promises." Then there are others who are more purposeful. For them, resolutions are "a ritualised way of reviewing the past year and looking toward the future," writes Nancy Buckles, director of counselling and psychological services at the University Health Centre at Indiana University Bloomington, in the school's online newsletter.

Amien Lee, 19, Biomedical student from Republic Polytechnic, makes resolutions yearly precisely to become a better person. "I don't get any better by sticking to bad habits, I decided to improve mine."

Resolution Solutions

The trick to keeping your promise is setting long-term, realistic and achievable goals, not ones like "I will not spit in the neighbour's shoes when their dog barks through the night".

You must also make resolutions that you can commit to throughout the year.

Buckles explains, "The problem for most people is that resolutions may not be thought out or realistic, so they may be difficult, even impossible, to [actualise]. A person should make just one or two resolutions and [realise] unwanted behaviour isn't likely to change

overnight. And they need a plan."

To make achievable resolutions, you must consider the things you want to achieve. You may want to restrict yourself to two goals without overwhelming yourself. Aside from setting realistic resolutions, don't make your first step a leap. Take baby steps first if you want to succeed. Other tips include:

1. List your resolutions and display them in a prominent place, either on your desk, or in your planner. This will serve as a daily reminder of the goals that you need to achieve.
2. Be precise. Write down exactly what you want to achieve, not a vague statement like: "I want to lose weight this year". Quantify the weight you wish to lose and the period of time you're giving yourself to do it.
3. Define the ways to achieve your resolutions. For example, if your goal is to wake up on time for class or work, write down something like "press the snooze button only once in the morning".
4. Stop procrastinating, otherwise by the time you start on your healthy diet, the only thing that can save you is liposuction.

Going the Distance

Alan Marlatt, director of Washington University's Addictive Behaviors Research Center, in the University's online newsletter, suggests you "take credit for success when you achieve a resolution".

However, when you succumb to your old habits, Marlatt says that "it is a mistake to blame yourself [for failing]", and when you encounter moments like these, you should "see how you can do better the next time and figure out a better plan to succeed".

It will also help to have a personal support group whom you can trust and depend on to encourage you through the process of fulfilling your resolutions. Get rid of obstacles, including people, that hinder you from fulfilling your resolutions.

It's vital to remember that sticking to your resolutions requires great commitment and persistence. In fact, most of the about 30 people that **hype** approached admitted to have given up on making New Year's resolutions because they don't have the discipline to keep them.

When you do succeed at achieving your resolutions when 2007 ends, you can turn them into habits, which you can try to improve over the years.

NEW PLAYGROUND FOR PERVERTS?

Are voyeurs and exhibitionists going to leave us alone now that they can easily and anonymously flash and peep at others online? **MARIA ELENA A. DE JESUS** checks in with the experts.

Stickam, a new website that allows users to stream live videos of themselves, or hold face-to-face live chats, has caused a furore online because it hosts real-time content that's unregulated, unlike video-sharing predecessors like Youtube that have measures to avoid the risk of abuse by users and to protect children who visit the site. Concerned netizens and even journalists have thus raised the alarm of Stickam's service being an open, uncensored invitation to exhibitionists and voyeurs to find their kicks.

hype discovers, however, that this may not be the case. According to Dr Ko Soo Meng, Consultant Psychiatrist from Raffles Hospital, "Exhibitionism is the recurrent intense desire to obtain sexual satisfaction by exposing one's genitals to a stranger, while voyeurism is the recurrent intense desire to obtain sexual gratification by watching one in a state of undress or having sexual relations."

Given these definitions above, Dr Ko clarifies that even though the images might be moving, "exhibitionists and voyeurs do not find videos as exciting as face-to-face experiences".

The ones who see these supposedly exhibitionistic 'live' videos on the Internet aren't taken by surprise, as they often seek them out intentionally. So for exhibitionists, the arousal level would be lower than face-to-face instances, where the viewers are "unwilling people".

As for voyeurs, recorded videos or 'live' streaming do not give them the 'high' that they obtain from watching real people. Videos found online not 'professionally' made would be considered pornography since people who find these have specifically looked for them. Voyeurs aren't aroused by pornography, especially because they don't get the 'high' when they know that someone is actually performing for them.

While the main motivation of exhibitionists and voyeurs is to obtain sexual arousal, Dr Ko said that the other is "the element of risk". In case you didn't know, exhibitionists and voyeurs are aware that what they're doing is not normal, though they claim that they can't control their urges, and proceed to do the deeds.

Because of the risk element, Dr Ko said that exhibitionists and voyeurs may go to places where the chance of getting caught is high. "Voyeurs may even go to the same place more than once to watch people." This need for the element of risk, also makes online videos unappealing because really, how much risk are people at when they're hiding behind a computer screen?

Dr Ko also said that people who make videos that appear exhibitionistic usually have other motivations for doing so, like money, instead of sexual arousal or gratification.

Thus, Stickam is probably more a haven for pornographers or those seeking pornographic material when the subject of the video is sexual in nature.

While such online services may not help the cause of exhibitionists and voyeurs, other technology, however, does appear to feature more and more in these cases.

The most recent case of voyeurism reported on **The Straits Times** was last December. 20-year-old Gerald Foong Jiale was arrested for filming under a teenager's skirt secretly while on an escalator with a digital camera and a camera phone. His sentence of 40 hours of community service and a strict curfew is lenient, considering that he was the only one out of the nine men arrested last year for a similar offence who wasn't jailed.

Many probably remember the case of a student from Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) who recorded a phone video featuring her in some sexual exploits with her boyfriend almost exactly a year ago. When the video leaked into the Internet, it caused an uproar across Singapore and even overseas, generating a ton of

media coverage and making an instant star (and punch line) of the unwitting girl. In this case, it may be too hasty to brand the girl as an exhibitionist. Emphasising on the keyword "recurrent", Dr Ko said that committing an exhibitionistic or voyeuristic act once or twice doesn't make one a flasher or a "Peeping Tom". Unless the girl actually has a collection of questionable homemade videos starring herself, you might want to discount her as a run-of-the-mill exhibitionist.

THE NAKED TRUTH

Exhibitionism and voyeurism come under the term "paraphilia", referring to sexual deviations and disorders. Other examples of paraphilia are sexual masochism (obtaining sexual arousal from being beaten, humiliated or experiencing any form of suffering), frotteurism (having sexual urges to touch or rub one's own genitals on a non-consenting person), and paedophilia (deriving sexual arousal through sexual activities with a child).

Behavioural psychologist at The Counselling Place, Ms Vanessa von Auer, explained that "paraphilia are unusual sexual urges and behaviours". To illustrate, she gives the fetishistic example of a man getting aroused simply by observing women walking around in black shoes.

Dr Ko said that paraphiliacs, including exhibitionists and voyeurs, are "usually males", with symptoms occurring from adolescents aged 16 and up. Unlike many other disorders, you can't distinguish immediately the exhibitionists and voyeurs from those who aren't. "They can be professionals, and can fit well into society."

NO HARM DONE?

Exhibitionism and voyeurism aren't called disorders for no rhyme or reason.

Dr Ko said that exhibitionists tend to victimise young girls "because they know that they are powerless, unlike adults". He also said that children are less likely to report them to the police.

Long-term trauma is a very real consequence for children, especially young girls who have been victimised by exhibitionists. However, exhibitionists tend to be oblivious to the consequences of their crime. Dr Ko added that exhibitionists often use the excuse of not having done any actual harm to their victims.

Dr Ko said that, despite the absence of actual physical contact, psychological trauma inflicted on the victim can be very serious. Some people may grow up to have misconceptions of men and have problems with sexual intimacy.

According to psychologist Daniel Koh, from Insights-Tse Pte Ltd, said that because there is no direct contact with their victims, exhibitionists and voyeurs usually complete the act by masturbation, though voyeurs do it more often. Voyeurs do it in view of his or her victim, if the victim is still unaware that he or she is being watched.



SEEKING HELP

Dr Ko said that the number of people who seek treatment for paraphilia, including exhibitionism and voyeurism, in Singapore is very low because many feel "ashamed to seek help from a counsellor or a psychologist". He explained that this is because of the undeniable social stigma of paraphiliacs.

However, psychological help is necessary because of the issues that come with the sexual deviances. Normal sexual function could be impaired in paraphiliacs, and not only in their victims. He cited a real life example in Taiwan where the exhibitionistic husband actually jumped to his death, as the wife had humiliated him for being unable to perform sexual intercourse normally.

Low self-esteem is one of the problems that exhibitionists and voyeurs face, and while some paraphiliacs suffer from the disorder for a short while, others aren't so lucky.

Dr Ko said that the best treatment for exhibitionists and voyeurs is to speak to a counsellor or a psychologist, and treatment must be consistent. While there is no specific time frame that will guarantee the cure of paraphiliacs, he said that some may be cured after six months of therapy. It also depends on the gravity of the case.

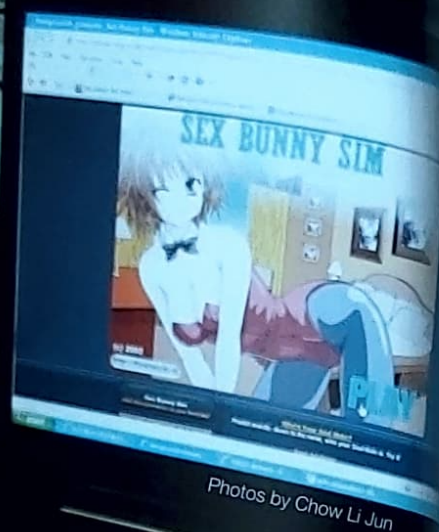
Medication may be administered, but on a case-by-case basis.

THE LAW

Under the Penal Code, whoever who says anything, makes any gesture or exhibits anything meant to insult the modesty or invade upon the privacy of a woman can be sentenced to imprisonment for a term which may extend up to one year, or be fined, or both.

A police spokesperson advised that if you should become an unfortunate victim of indecent exposure, you should make a mental note of the flasher's appearance. Remember the colour of his clothes, his hair, and maybe even a unique mark like a tattoo. Call the police immediately to increase the chance of the flasher being caught. Even if you're unlikely to be a victim again, your timely information could prevent someone else from getting a rude shock.

Insights-Tse Pte Ltd: 6222 5850
Raffles Hospital (General Enquiries): 6311 1111
The Counselling Place Llp : 6887 3695



Photos by Chow Li Jun

Game for Sex?

Steel yourself for a shocking peek into the virtual sex playground where youths are hooked on lewd sexual acts and secret fetishes that thrive in the Internet's alleys. CHOW LI JUN reports.

His parents don't know it, but John, 19, has raped over 20 women, and has taken part in threesomes, sometimes engaging in sadomasochistic sexual acts with minors who are below the legal age of 18 years.

Of course, John (not his real name), hasn't done any of these things in the real world, but in the more than eight hours a week he spends playing free online *hentai* games, the ex-junior college student, ventures into a virtual world where he gets to pretend to be anything from a sexy stud, to an attractive flamboyant student, to even a serial rapist.

Hentai literally means "pervert" in Japanese while *hentai* games refer to online Japanese erotic animated games. Their user-interactive features and erotic and busty animated females have proven to be particularly popular among young local males.

"These free online [*hentai*] games are usually based on either science fiction, fantasy or in a setting of a school," explained John, who is in National Service.

John fits the profile of an avid porn gamer, as, according to the findings of Singaporeans' Internet surfing habits from Internet statistics website, NetValue, "visitors to the ...[adults sites] are generally young male adults below the age of 25," with students making up a third of the numbers.

Hentai games often belong to the role-playing game (RPG) genre, and often contain romantic elements. While most *hentai* games are about heterosexual relationships, an array of them on the Internet, as supported by John's experience with these sexually explicit games, belong to subgenres; namely, *yaoi* (male homosexual relationship), *yuri* or *shoujo-ai* (lesbianism) and even sex with imaginary tentacled monsters or creatures, otherwise known as "tentacle sex".

However, with many also promoting taboo themes of masochism, bestiality and violence, it isn't hard to see why the easy accessibility to free *hentai* games is a worrisome, disturbing issue among several parents with whom **hype** spoke to in phone interviews.

"Those [gamers] are sick," said Agnes Low, 55, in an angry outburst in response to the popularity of *hentai* games. The housewife is a mother of three girls, two of whom are in their late teens. Though she is very concerned with the danger of impressionable youths playing such games, she admitted that she has been unable to keep track of her tech-savvy daughters' Internet activities as she doesn't know how to use the Internet.

Some of the popular foreign websites with pornographic games that John frequents are Newgrounds and *Hentai XXX Games*, which host free and highly accessible mini clips and flash games.

The Internet is a hotbed for free downloadable pornographic games. An article on the Centre for Internet Addiction Recovery website states that

findings from Internet filtering company, N2H2, have shown "the number of commercial pornography web pages on the Internet has increased by nearly 1,800 percent compared with five years ago", with 260 million pages classified as pornography by N2H2.

A startling "over 28 million new pornographic web pages" were uploaded in that mere one month of July in 2003, while a search on Google for the term "*hentai* games" revealed a whopping return of over 2.4 million web pages. Already, 53 pornographic games websites have been issued a warning in November 2005 by China's General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) for providing downloads of online raunchy sex games.

Having played *hentai* games for more than two years, John finds such pornographic games an outlet to express his sexual needs. "These games help me to escape my reality... [and] help to fulfill every man's sexual fantasy," said John. He continued by mentioning an example of a common theme in *hentai* games – *harem*, which features a single male character surrounded by several adoring females.

He defended the notion that these games are a source for information about sex. He said, "these

"These games help me to escape my reality... [and] help to fulfill every man's sexual fantasy"

- John, 19, avid gamer

games [allow] me to know more about sex", and he is not alone in this dangerous thinking. According to an article in *The Straits Times* (February 20, 2000), a survey conducted by the Singapore Planned Parenthood Association on 2,369 teenagers between 12 to 21 years of age revealed that

"four out of five teenage boys" refer to pornographic materials to learn about sex.

John said the biggest draws to these games are the players' burning curiosity about sex and the games' fine graphics. He prefers *hentai* games to conventional pornography due to the alluring aesthetics of the games. He said, "The bodies [in the games] are 'perfect'... it's more sculpted compared to the real thing. [The virtual world] has an element of fantasy in it compared to reality which can be quite boring". He also added that these sexually-themed games' interesting storylines and interactivity are appealing to players.

Another player of such erotic animated video games, Andy (not his real name), a 25-year-old polytechnic student, feels that, "Pornography and *hentai* games are about the same." Andy has been hooked onto *hentai* games since he first stumbled upon it on a video pornography website a few years ago. He's also drawn to play because of the plots.

Guy Robbins, a psychologist of IPS Worldwide (Innovating People Solutions) at Raffles Place, tells **hype** that the evident fantasy element in pornographic games isn't only an agent of escapism for the player, but that it also entralls the player by placing him or her "in a powerful position".

He cited an example of a guy's common erotic fantasy – sexually attacking an unsuspecting female, which, like most sexual fantasies of pornographic games, gives its player a "sense of control" over his circumstances. He added that players tend to find it difficult to disassociate fantasy with real life due to the body's physical reactions that they experience – such as ejaculation – as they immerse themselves in their game's fantasies.

Viewing these games as "corruption to the innocent mind", Mrs Chew, 48, a mother of two sons in their late teens, added, "[As the youths] are playing such games, they tend to get sexually excited – which isn't good". She fears that the habitual playing of erotic online games may lead young people to commit crimes of rape.

Mr Robbins warns that while there's no direct correlation between deviant sexual behaviour and playing online pornographic games, "it becomes a problem when players start acting out in real life what they had seen in the video games".

"Viewing pornography either online or in other ways such as in VCD format or on TV, for most people, doesn't present too many problems. But there are those who are vulnerable to serious psychological problems from pornography," said psychologist Brian Scott of Scott Psychological Services. While this isn't a valid excuse, Mr Scott also explained that youths can be more prone to succumb to the allure of pornographic games if they come from a dysfunctional family, have a parent who has kept their own pornography secret, or were isolated as a child.

Another parent, Paul Arnold Low, 59, a businessman and father of three daughters (the youngest child being 17), thinks that these pornographic games "only [attract] the curious and naive audience or those who are actually looking for it... Nothing happens if you choose to ignore [the links to websites with sexually-themed games]". He acknowledged that being a parent, he had warned his children of such "inappropriate games and websites", but he finds it difficult to shield them from all of the Internet's prevalent online pornographic materials. "I trust that they will exercise caution when surfing the Internet," he said, "[but] it's [ultimately] up to their personal discipline and desire to be righteous."

Offering forbidden fruit certainly adds an edge to the games. Players can perform illegal sexual acts, such as having sex with a minor, or realise impossible dreams, like having sexual intercourse in outer space or being intimate with a movie star. No wonder young players get hooked.

Some of the gamers **hype** spoke to admitted to spending over an hour at a time playing *hentai* games, and research cited in an article on NetValue has shown

that local visitors to pornographic sites spent an average of "63.7 minutes" on the sites.

Mr Robbins noted that avid players tend to be desensitised to the crude pornographic content they are exposed to after a period of time, resulting in an unquenchable desire to acquire more pornographic materials that are of higher stimulation.

Lilian Tan, who is a counsellor at Touchline Community Service, said that online pornographic gamers are likely to read pornographic magazines, too, as they usually feel that "they [can't] get enough of [pornographic materials]".

This view is supported by the National University of Singapore (NUS) Psychological Studies undergraduate, Chang Yi Jin, who feels that there's a high chance these players "started off with pornographic magazines before graduating into pornographic games".

Some of the possible adverse effects of frequent playing of online pornographic games that Mr Scott pointed out were "premature sexual interest, development of unusual sexual objects of desire, possible sadistic or masochistic tendencies – if these are the themes of the pornography [which the player uses] – and a preference for online virtual sex over real sex and intimacy".

He also warned that playing pornographic online games "can become a serious addiction with the same negative consequences as any other addiction".

However, fellow psychologist Mr Robbins pointed out that it's the feeling of excitement and pleasure associated with the exposure to the pornographic materials in the games which lead to habitual play of online pornographic games.

The dark effects of habitual play of erotic games may be serious, but don't expect a major clamp down on all students' personal Internet activities in school any time soon.

"So far, I haven't heard of students being caught in school for downloading pornographic games," said Mr Brian Lee, a lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. But he's aware that the playing of such games isn't uncommon among Singapore youths based on the popularity and high accessibility of such games on the web. Viewing the content of such games as "potentially harmful", he emphasized that the onus is on the students to be aware of sexually-lewd games on the Internet. "One of the ways to stop [the popularity of online pornographic games] is to rely on parental control... and by introducing [Internet content filter software] such as NetNanny", he suggested.

Perhaps some parents may want to take the lead of Mrs Chew. To stay an influx of pornography in her children's Internet intake, she said that in her home, "the computer is placed in a place where I monitor my children's Internet activities. Hence, there's no privacy

Players can perform illegal sexual acts, such as having sex with a minor, or realise impossible dreams, like having sexual intercourse in outer space or being intimate with a movie star.



to download online sexually-explicit materials".

An interesting point to note is that online pornographic games appeal mostly to men, while women usually form only a small minority of players. Mr Robbins believes this is because sex is often viewed by males as more of a physical act while it's more of an emotional act to women.

In seeking treatment to break free from the addiction of sexual online games, Mr Scott suggested seeking professional help from psychiatrists and counselors and attending a support group.

One such support group that deals with pornography-related problems locally is the Sex &

Love Addiction Anonymous of the Centre For Addiction Recovery & Education. More information can be found at their website, <http://www.wefoundation.org.sg>.

This drop-in centre also provides counselling to pornography addicts by those who had successfully overcome similar sexual addictions.

"Peers at this age are very important," stresses Ms Tan, who has experiences with such youths, "hence those who want to break the habit of playing online pornographic games should hang out with friends who don't participate in online sex games."

"This will discourage the addicted person from falling back to his old addiction."

Feed My Valentine

Weeding out nauseating food, slow service, and unromantic atmosphere is simple. IYLIA SUHAINA finds the restaurants with the right elements to send sparks flying between you and your date this Valentine's.

What's worse than eating alone on Valentine's Day is being with a date at a restaurant she hates. Depending on the mood you want to set, here are some suggestions of where you can take your date. And hey, nobody said anything about paying big bucks, dinner for two won't cost you more than \$100.



Kazbar (Land Of 1001 Nights) Price: \$79

25 Church Street #01-03, Capital Square
Three (facing Far East Square)
Tel: 6438 2975

Escape from the hustle and bustle of city life at The Turquoise Room. Chill in the relaxing green atmosphere while enjoying the old-school interiors – folding doors which are always left open, old-fashioned wooden chairs, ceiling fans spinning from white-washed ceilings, and Bossa Nova music playing all around.

We recommend the Grilled Portobello Mushroom with Bocconcini (\$14), made from melted Italian cheese and juicy mushroom. The Aubergine Parmigiana (\$9) may not look as appealing, but after a mouthful, you'll be seduced by this concoction of eggplant laced by stringy mozzarella cheese.

The Prawn & Arugula Pasta (\$18) is heaven for prawn lovers, while the Mushroom & Eggplant Pizza (\$17), served on a thin crisp pizza crust is even better with the garlic mascarpone cheese topping.

Round off your meal with the Apple Cinnamon Crumble (\$8.80), and feel the vanilla gelato slide down your throat. The Chocolate Brownie with Gelato (\$6.50) is another piece worth trying. The brownie is sinfully delicious with the oozing chocolate.

You can't help but notice the lingering scents of exotic Middle-Eastern spices and the sweet cherry tobacco aroma of the Shisha pipes as you enter Kazbar. The flowing red curtains, white tents, earthy rustic tones of the walls and belly dancers shaking their hips to Arabian music will fly you to the land of 1001 nights.

Kazbar boasts a kitchen headed by reputable Middle Eastern chefs, so begin the evening by sharing a Mix Mezze Platter (\$18), a combination of hummus, moutabel, babaganoush, cheese borek and falafel appetizers. The borek and fried falafel nuggets go well with the chickpea hummus and moutabel (spicy eggplant) dip. Fresh oven-baked pita bread also complements the dish.

Other must-tries include Kazbar's signature Lamb Chops (\$19.50) and Dory Fish With Bell Pepper Sauce (\$20), which will definitely satisfy your taste buds.

For dessert, try the Baklava (\$1.50 for 3 pieces). The delicacy is layered with assorted nuts and honey syrup that drench you in sweetness.

End the night on a high note, toasting each other with Kazbar's speciality Ginger Martini (\$10) and Pineapple Cardamom Martini (\$10).



The Turquoise Room (Old Rustic Charm) Price: \$73.30

7 Lock Road (Ground floor)
Tel: 6473 3655

All photos provided by restaurants listed



Vansh (Modern Indian) Price: \$77

#01-04 Singapore Indoor Stadium,
2 Stadium Walk
Tel: 6345 4466

Listed here are also other restaurants worthy of your Valentine's Day date.

Garibaldi Italian Restaurant & Bar
36 Purvis Street, #01-02
Tel: 6837 1468

Noted as one of Singapore's most popular Italian restaurants, Garibaldi's menu includes the best ingredients specially imported from Italy.

Giraffe Restaurant and Bar (right)
Istana Park opposite Plaza Singapura
Tel: 6334 4653

The cosmopolitan split-level restaurant is a sight to behold with full-height window panels giving the restaurant a chic touch and sophistication. Bask in the immense greenery and serenity of the Istana Park while pleasing your taste buds.

Vansh is the epitome of chic modern Indian dining. The interior is a bold shade of sensual red and royal purple, while the lighting gives an intimate and sensual vibe throughout the entire restaurant. Enjoy the outdoors from inside, as the glass ceilings allow both of you to savour your meals under the stars.

Every meal starts with rolled papadams (fried lentil crackers). Follow these with the flavourful Tandoori Mushroom (\$8), or Mumbai's popular dish Bombay Puri Puri (\$9) which is a crispy wheat shell filled with sprout and herb.

Vansh's famed Tandoori Lamb Chops (\$18) is drizzled with spicy yogurt, making the dish simply exotic and irresistible. Tuck into delicious Seafood Biryani (\$16) for fresh prawns and mussels.

Wash it all down with Vansh's specialty drinks like the Tulsi Sherbet (\$9), an intriguing mix of lemon, ginger, basil and spices. For a visual treat, The Rose Petal Sherbet (\$9) is a pretty sight, with a rose sherbet and soda suspension.

Finally, share the creamy Lychee Kulfi (\$8), an ice cream treat that is a delicious mix of lychee chunks blended with rich coconut milk.



Whether it is a quiet, romantic corner for two, or an Arabian vibe that you're after this Valentine's Day, with this exotic variety of restaurants to choose from, your date is sure to be pleased. Prices are calculated according to the a la carte recommendations in the article.

Go Green and Organic

If you are finding it hard to keep to your New Year's resolution of eating healthily, let FELICIA TAN lead you to some of these vegetarian and organic eateries to discover that healthy food can be enjoyable and palatable.

The Whole Earth Vegetarian Restaurant

593 Geylang Road

Tel: 6841 3319

Mon to Sun: 11 am to 10 pm

With dark mahogany tables polished to a glossy sheen and exquisite paintings on the walls, this restaurant looks as inviting as its first signature dish – the Peranakan Sambal Ikan.

At \$16 a serving, the dish is actually Nonya Vegetarian fish made of yellow beans and seaweed, garnished with lime and tomato. It has a lovely texture and aftertaste, concealing its vegetarian origins.

The "fish" tastes very smooth and its sambal paste is extremely fragrant despite the absence of the usual prawn paste. It is surprisingly very rich in flavour.

Broccoli with Monkey-head Mushroom (\$18) is a pretty sight that tastes equally good. In a sea of mushrooms lay the fresh broccoli and juicy wolfberries, which are believed to have medicinal properties. The mushroom is chewy and the broccoli burst with

Genesis Vegetarian Health Food

1 Lorong Telok

Tel: 6438 7118

Mon to Thurs: 8 am to 6.30 pm, Fri: 8 am to 3 pm,

Sun: 9 am to 3 pm

(Closed on Sat & Public Holidays)

It's hard not to feel at home sitting on the restaurant's wooden chairs with your eyes fixed on the red and white checkered tablecloth as the friendly waitresses serve you their best seller – Olive Rice (\$5.90).

A combination of olives, olive leaf and garlic served with soy, cashews and onion, this rice dish is superb. The olives breathe new flavour into the rice, giving it a light, buttery and deliciously refreshing taste.

Claypot Rice (\$5.90), another popular dish, is fragrant dark soy sauce-flavoured rice served with mushrooms. The obvious lack of charred rice increases the health factor of the dish, while the inclusion of the delicious black mushrooms and mock meat tasting exactly like the real thing, help this dish debunk all stereotypes of unsavoury vegetarian food.

The Seaweed Roll (\$5.90), another splendid creation toasted with sesame seeds is served with cashew cream. Biting into the roll, one can taste the peppermint leaf hidden within, that gives the dish zest,

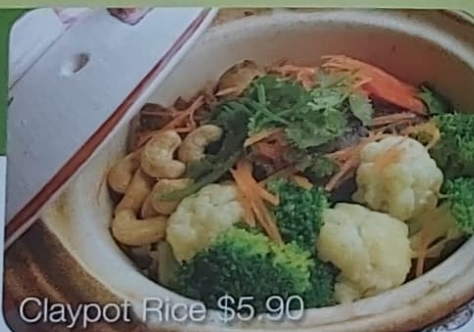


Summer Shitake \$15

flavours of nature – making it one irresistible dish.

The Summer Shitake (\$15) is a delicious Thai dish. The succulent mushrooms garnished with red, green and yellow bell peppers are cooked to perfection with Thai spices, making this dish very piquant.

The chef also whips up fusion dishes besides those prepared in the Peranakan, Chinese and Thai styles.



Claypot Rice \$5.90

like nothing you've ever tried.

The food is generally very light, employing the right blend of spices to bring out the oomph in each of the dishes. The food, which the owner claims to be free from cholesterol, has increased fibre and nutrient content, as well as less oil and fat.

And if you're planning to pursue your organic food spree even after you've finished your meal there, a section selling organic products like granola, rice seasoning and their own homemade peanut butter and cashew butter makes it convenient for you.

Poison Ivy

100 Neo Tiew Road

Tel: 6898 5001

Wed to Sun: 9 am to 6 pm (including Public Holidays)

Nestled in the countryside, away from the hustle and bustle of the urban areas lies Poison Ivy, an organic restaurant which houses a farm within its premises. The crops that go into the dishes, are free from fertilisers, pesticides, growth hormones or preservatives.

Started by Mrs Ivy Singh-Lim, Poison Ivy serves delectable local delights like chicken curry, fish otah omelette, and prata. Prices are a big draw, with nothing costing more than \$5, except for their Sweet and Sour fish (\$10).

The banana curry (\$5), sounds intriguing and tastes even more so. It's one of their signature dishes, as their farm is the largest producer of organic bananas in Singapore. The juicy bananas are simply divine and the curry is one of a kind! It has a sweet and creamy taste, unlike your usual curry. It's not spicy at all with just the right richness and thickness.

Their organic carrot cake (\$5), also came out tops. This one doesn't leave your mouth greasy, neither does it leave you wishing for a thirst quencher after that. It's a perfect combination of all its simple ingredients, and is crispy, spicy and very mouth-watering. The fried onions sprinkled on top also gives it a splendid aroma. Guaranteed to make you crave for more!



Organic Carrot Cake \$5

To have chicken curry (\$5) without coconut would be a no-go to some, but Mrs Singh-Lim's recipe proves coconut-in-curry advocates wrong. The curry tastes almost like the ones you're used to. What's better, you don't feel guilty eating it. Huge chunks of tender chicken with generous portions of potato go into this delectable dish. Tuck in and enjoy.

While you're there, don't forget to savour Papaya Soup, 4 angle beans, Pineapple Salad and Crispy Fried Quail. And after the meal, you might want to visit the farm for just \$2.

This is really a very good dining experience, a change from the usual. With its lovely rustic atmosphere and colourful decorations, Poison Ivy is definitely worth a visit.

Acacia Restaurant

1380 Ang Mo Kio Ave 1, Bishan Park II

Tel: 6452 4520

Mon: 5 pm to 11 pm, Tues to Fri: 11 am to 11 pm,

Weekends & Public Holidays: 8.30 am to 11 pm

This restaurant sits in Bishan Park amid all the flora and fauna, oozing serenity, spelling the perfect place for a lazy, quiet afternoon.

The meal started off with Mushroom Soup with whipping cream (\$7.50). This homemade creamy wild mushroom soup is simply divine, especially with the accompanying freshly-baked herb bread. This soup is a chock-full of mushrooms as every spoonful brings bliss for mushroom lovers.

The Mango Salad appetizer (\$7.50) mixes fresh, crisp garden greens with steamed fish. Tangy and flavourful dressing is drizzled over the soft and succulent fish laced with mango and papaya.

Balsamico Chicken (\$18), a boneless chicken marinated with fresh mixed herbs, enhanced with aged balsamico and garnished with julienne vegetables



Mango Salad \$7.50

is the most exotic tasting chicken this reporter has tasted. The dash of balsamic vinegar offers an otherwise a normal chicken chop a new sweet and sour twist.

For a meal that doesn't hold back on exotic flavours, Acacia Restaurant offers that and more – a totally restful ambience, great food and affordable prices; you'll leave this restaurant satisfied.

A Wine Affair

Vineyards are a dime a dozen in wine-producing countries like France or Australia, but how can you find one in the cosmopolitan city of Singapore? TAN WAN JUN discovers a vineyard-like restaurant offering not just fine wine, but also some value-for-money fare.

Grapes. Bunches of them hang from the ceiling, giving you the momentary illusion that you're walking into a vineyard, but along Mohd Sultan Road?

That's the first surprise you get at VINO VINO, a three-month-old restaurant. Other things you don't expect are extremely affordable main courses at a restaurant with a proper wine cellar.

VINO VINO offers main courses at prices ranging from \$9.80 to \$22. The wine-marinated Sirloin Steak (priced very competitively at \$12.90), one of the restaurant specialties, is smothered in one of three sauces- black pepper, mushroom cream or brown. The tender and juicy cut is accompanied by broccoli and potato wedges.

Or try the Lobster Pasta in cream sauce (\$18.90) for a taste of authentic Italian food. Marinated with minced garlic and freshly baked with mozzarella cheese, the lobster, sliced into halves, is succulent and juicy leaving one craving for more.

If you're not a wine connoisseur, you'll appreciate the fact that the menu suggests two to three suitable wines to go with every single main course.

For example, VINO VINO suggests you pair the VINO burger with Australian Goldleaf Classic Red Cabernet-Shiraz-Merlot, Stone Circle Merlot or the Chilean Altus Cabernet Sauvignon.

Though "VINO" is an Italian word for "wine", you'll also be able to find Australian, German, Chilean, South African, French and Spanish wines in the restaurant's well-stocked wine cellar.

Wine-lovers can select red or white wine and champagne straight from the cellar, paying between \$38 and \$88 per bottle.

Inside the restaurant, the strikingly red walls are adorned with paintings of countrysides, making for a restful respite from the hectic city. Soft American Jazz from the 60s to 90s put you in the right mood for chilling out over a glass of Chianti.



Rating: 3.5 stars of 5

All Daily Specials come with a glass of complimentary red or white wine. On sundays you get a one-for-one deal. For the menu, log on to <http://www.winebos.com/Vinomenu.htm>

207 River Valley Road UE Square

#01-56

(Along Mohd Sultan Road, Opposite Day Bed Bar)

Tel: 6737 7220

Hasta la Vista, Leopard?

2007 looks set for a battle of new operating systems, with Microsoft's newly launched Windows Vista prepping itself up to combat Apple's new Mac OS X Leopard. FELICIA TAN finds out how they stack up.

For all its marketing hype, the new Windows Vista, coming five long years after the launch of predecessor XP, looks and feels suspiciously like competitor Apple's soon-to-be-retired Mac OS X Tiger.

While you can't quite place your finger on what exactly is copied, the new aesthetics have the stamp of Apple's sleek, designer brand image.

For example the Vista's most trumpeted and alluring new features like Aero (a glass-like interface), Windows Flip (thumbnails of all applications open) and Windows Superfetch (which allows for fast loading of commonly used applications) are all fairly familiar to Mac users.

The change isn't necessarily a bad thing for PC users who've been on the wrong side of cool.

More important than aesthetics for Microsoft loyalists, and one of the main reasons for Vista's design, is to combat piracy and to address security concerns from malware, Trojans and similar dangers.

To that end, Vista has provided users with software firewalls and full-disk encryptions to prevent accidental access of data, even introducing voice recognition in eight different languages for higher levels of security.

No more accidental airing of dirty secrets!

While prices for the OS upgrade are not available at press time, to install the Vista OS, you'll need:

1. A processor of 800MHz
2. 512 MB of system memory
3. A DirectX 9 capable graphics card

Not one to rest on its laurels, Apple is also planning for a Spring 2007 release for their new OS, Mac OS X Leopard. Successor to the Mac OS X Tiger, the Leopard's features are still mostly shrouded in mystery, but those few made public are listed below.

Perhaps this is done to safeguard their competitive advantage. Already, the uncanny similarities between several of the new features (like the calendar systems, mail systems and the classy glassy logo) and their own have sparked off furious mudslinging from Apple, labelling Windows a copycat.

Haven't we heard that before?

hype takes a look at whether the competitive field has been levelled.

Leopard	Vista
Time Machine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • backs up all files on the system and provides snapshots • but might not appeal to every user <p>In short: easy to use, quirky (space interface) 3 out of 5 stars</p>	Windows Backup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses easily recognisable system restore points and saves automatically daily • similar function to Time Machine <p>In short: easy navigation 4 out of 5 stars</p>
Mail 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comes with over 30 templates including layouts, fonts and colours • drag and drop photos to your email • comes with anti-phishing protection <p>In short: Personalisable, easy to use. Eye-catching! 4 out of 5 stars</p>	Windows Mail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • built-in Instant Search box allows you to search all your mail with ease • junk mail filter detects spam from the first time without need to report it first • comes with anti-phishing protection <p>In short: similar to Outlook Express 3 out of 5 stars</p>
Spotlight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows searching for files, including other Macs on the same network • more specific search with Boolean logic operators such as "AND," "OR," and "NOT" <p>In short: speedy 3.5 stars out of 5</p>	Instant Search <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better search capabilities; you can find documents without browsing for the files, using keywords or data related to the files <p>In short: a familiar, integrated and convenient search experience for users 4 out of 5 stars</p>

Mighty Mice To Save The Day

You're playing a game and at the most crucial and exciting part, your insensitive mouse fails to track properly, causing you to lose. Why? You chose the wrong mouse. **FELICIA TAN** helps you find the right mouse for the occasion.

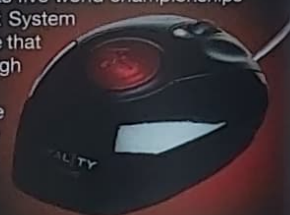


Razer's DeathAdder, a high precision gaming mouse, works like a dream. Accurate despite its lightning speed, it's responsive to the slightest touch. The rubber-coated buttons not only allow for a slip-resistant grip (no more sudden slips!), they add to the general sleekness of the mouse. The DeathAdder also comes with a 1800 dots per inch (DPI) 3rd Generation (3G) infrared sensor, which stops the cursor from flying all over the screen and reduces mouse surface tracking issues. This mouse also comes with Razer's 1000 Ultrapolling technology, guaranteeing an almost instantaneous response. It's tough luck for southpaws (left-handers), though, as the mouse is only designed for right-handers. Razer's pedigree is unquestioned, having won two red dot design awards for distinction in high quality product design in 2006. Dudley Duclos, a gamer and supporter of Razer's products says that the DeathAdder will probably "turn out even more impressive and outdo their Copperhead and Diamondback", which already sell very well.

Price: \$92.15

Creative's Fatal1ty 1010 Mouse is developed with Johnathan Wendel, the world's top First Person Shooter (FPS) gamer. This probably explains why it's as impressive as Wendel, who has five world championships titles under his belt. Indeed, its G-Weight™ Interchangeable Modular Weight System allows gamers to customise their gaming experience on the fly. Gamers will like that it's designed to provide an optimised centre of gravity for easy control. The high definition HD-Optix™ optical engine also gives it deadly precision. On the battlefield where every second counts, the Fatal1ty's RapidRes™ One Click Resolution enables gamers to switch between resolutions of 400, 800 and 1600 Counts Per Inch (CPI) quickly, one of its plus points. Competitors won't stand a chance!

Price: \$89



Logitech's G7 is the first cordless mouse designed for gaming, the lack of precedents stemming from problems such as latency and accuracy. Unbelievable! The G7 not only addresses these problems, but has also reduced lag substantially.

Also, its in-game sensitivity switching ability (400, 800 and 2000 DPI) makes it a must-have for gamers who want to select sensitivity levels without pausing.

The G7's 2000 DPI laser engine is superb, churning out images at 6.4 megapixels per second, allowing it to deliver great performance and tracking. If there's any quest for supremacy, this will be the ONE mouse to rule them all! Despite the high price tag for this, Logitech has been impressing both critics and gamers since its arrival and consistently wows the industry with its innovation and product design.

Price: \$153.60

Samsung E890

By MARIA ELENA A. DE JESUS

If you're not the sort who can wait for Apple's touted iPhone to arrive in our stores next year, the sleek silver Samsung E890 might be a decent transition gadget to tide you over for the time being.

At first glance, it might look like a new addition to its Ultra Slim collection. At 14.6mm in thickness, weighing a feather-light 82g and touting a touch-screen interface, this multimedia powerhouse is a must-have for those who dig entertainment in a compact, portable form.

What's hot

The new touchscreen and extendable stylus allow for quick and intuitive menu navigation.

To set your alarm clock and switch between silent and sound mode, there's no need to go through the menu option. Simply tap on the icons during the standby mode and they'll activate accordingly.

Equipped with a video recorder, mp3 player, expandable micro-SD slot, a large, clear 2.3-inch screen and a doodle board which you can scribble or draw on for quick memos, the sleek gadget should keep media buffs happy.

Those who want to admire the video clips they shot using the phone can simply connect the phone to any television set. How's that for an all-in-one entertainment system?

Battery life is also decent (about three days without charging) if you use the phone mostly for voice calls and text-messaging. But, as with all other phones, the Bluetooth function and other media tools will definitely drain the battery much faster than usual.

What's not

For frequent text-messengers, this is certainly not the choice model, because scrawling letters with the stylus can't beat the speed of tapping thumbs. As with many touch-screen phones, a keyboard option is available, though not in the usual 'QWERTY' format. If you're somehow comfortable with typing on a keyboard with keys in alphabetical order, you might be better off using the keyboard function.

The E890 is also the first of its kind in terms of stylus design. Most touch-screen gadgets store the stylus in the casing itself, while this one hangs off the phone with a strap. Sadly, this might lead to the need to constantly ensure that the stylus is still there.

The 1.3 mega pixel camera is a disappointment since it's a pretty recent release although the pictures are still okay for the occasional snapshot.



The Verdict

With the black and white themes of the Samsung E890, the stylish phone is suited for both genders, and will make a great Valentine's Day gift for your music-loving, video-watching other half. But not if he or she is a hardcore text-messenger.

Retail price: \$568, without contract

Neverwinter Nights 2

Five years ago, **Neverwinter Nights**, a deeply engaging role-playing game (RPG) burst onto the gaming scene, enrapturing the audience and earning critical raves. **CHONG YI HAN** delves into the realm of this fantasy world, to find out if this sequel is worth losing sleep over.



After the phenomenal success of BioWare's **Neverwinter Nights** five years ago, the much-awaited sequel to the critically acclaimed RPG has finally been released. The sequel, simply titled **Neverwinter Nights 2**, or **NWN2**, is developed by Obsidian Entertainment and promises an exciting, new story, complete with twists and turns to keep you at the edge of your seats, and keep your eyes glued to the screen for hours.

Bearing more than a striking resemblance to the **Icewind Dale** series, created by the same team behind this game, **NWN2** starts off like most other fantasy RPGs, whereby you go through an arduous customisation process to determine your character's race, abilities etc.

You begin as an orphan raised by your peasant foster father. The game becomes intense when your village is attacked by skeletal creatures called Githyanki and you have to fend not only yourself but also your home village. At this point, your foster father reveals the existence of a silver shard that was discovered when the King of Shadows was defeated. The shard must not land in the hands of the Githyanki.

With the important quest in your hands, you journey to the city of Neverwinter, where the secret to the importance of the shards will be revealed. Along the way, you will meet different characters, some of whom will join your party to aid you on your journey. You can also take on several side-quests, ensuring more hours of gameplay.

Unlike most RPGs, which offer linear paths, one of the beauties of **NWN2** is the ability of choice! Throughout the game, you can watch the story unfold with the choice of your words. Every time you interact with a character, you will be given choices of different things you can say or do. Your decisions play a huge part in the development of the game, as different

choices set the game down different scenario paths.

While this free-ranging gameplay is to be applauded, the game's Artificial Intelligence (AI) might leave you wanting for more. The supporting characters you meet, in particular, tend to get lost in narrow areas (like the labyrinths) and cause the game to freeze up, rendering them more of a nuisance despite their different abilities and skills that might be of help.

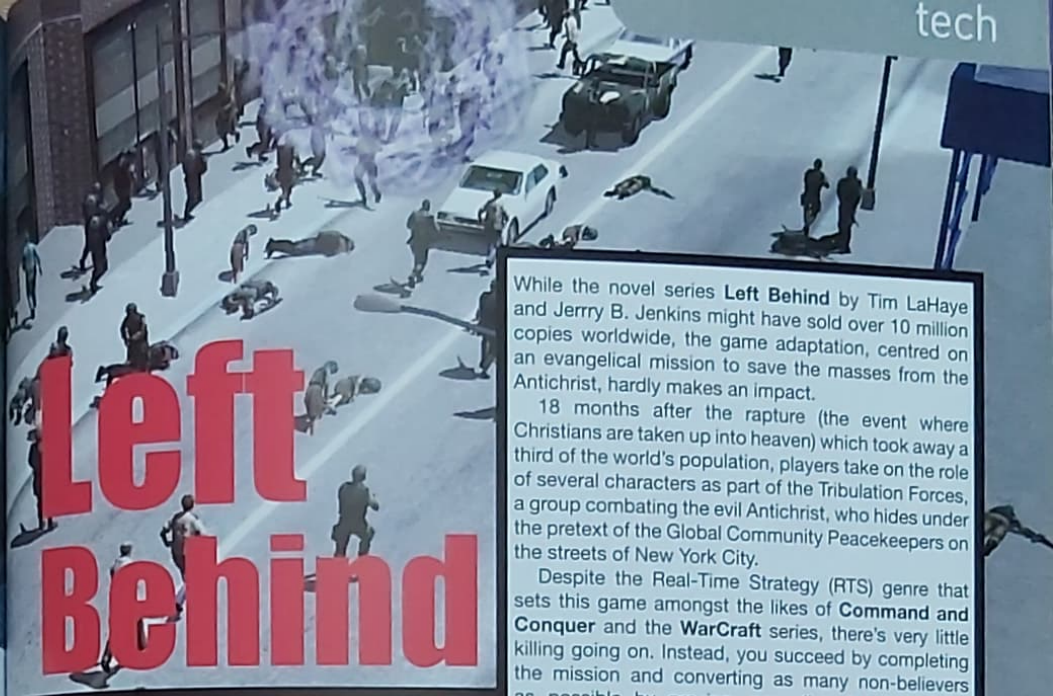
Graphically, the game is definitely above average with beautiful landscapes and fantastic special effects. The movie scenes, particularly, are well-done and overwhelming. There are some minor glitches though, such as your character walking out of the frame through a wall during a conversation. The textures also appear low-res and pixelated if you zoom in your perspective too much.

The orchestrated score, composed by Heavy Melody Music (responsible for the score to **A Tale In The Desert 2**), fits every scene perfectly, creating just the right mood for a true gaming experience. The voice-acting, too, lends an air of realism and personality to the characters.

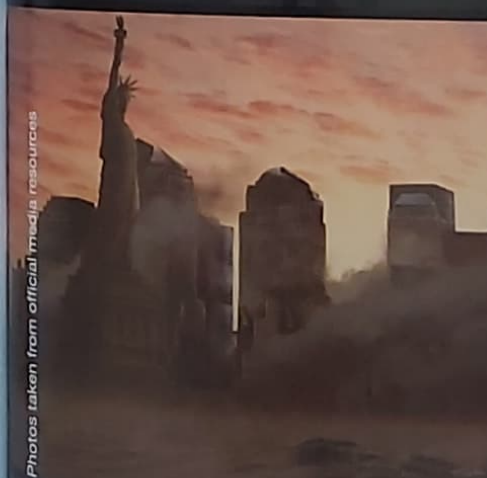
My main issue with **NWN2** is how it is based on the rule set of the popular board game, **Dungeons & Dragons**, which indulges fantasy fans but alienates beginners to the genre.

Someone who is not well-versed in terminologies such as d10 (meaning a 10-sided die) and how to calculate damage dealt through it, for example, might feel lost at the beginning of the game. Still, after some practice and research, players will get a hang of the game in no time.

So, for those who want a game full of intrigue and adventure, plus a story that unfolds slowly but excitingly and can handle all the minor glitches, **NWN2** is worth giving up some shut-eye.



Games based on religion are few and far between, with most coming under fire for treading on sensitive lines. **SYED ARAFAT** finds out that, if there's going to be a rapture for games, **Left Behind: Eternal Forces** will be one of the few titles stuck on Earth, although not for any controversial content.



Photos taken from official media resources

While the novel series **Left Behind** by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins might have sold over 10 million copies worldwide, the game adaptation, centred on an evangelical mission to save the masses from the Antichrist, hardly makes an impact.

18 months after the rapture (the event where Christians are taken up into heaven) which took away a third of the world's population, players take on the role of several characters as part of the Tribulation Forces, a group combating the evil Antichrist, who hides under the pretext of the Global Community Peacekeepers on the streets of New York City.

Despite the Real-Time Strategy (RTS) genre that sets this game amongst the likes of **Command and Conquer** and the **WarCraft** series, there's very little killing going on. Instead, you succeed by completing the mission and converting as many non-believers as possible by praying, spreading the Word and consistently clicking on the 'pray' option to retain their spiritual level.

Although the basis of the game makes it sound like an evangelical tool to educate the gamer about Christianity, the game does not push or hard-sell the religion in any way. Rather, it serves as a lesson in discrimination and stereotype instead.

A quick analysis of the characters reveals startling results: all the main characters are male, the good ones are married and the bad ones single. Women are relegated to roles like "Medic Woman" or "Friend Woman" (complete with their genders in the names). Most of the evil doers on the streets look either of African or Arab descent and have suspiciously similar Middle-Eastern names. The game stereotypes punks who listen to rock music as evil, lowering your spiritual level and converting you into a rock punk yourself if you get too close.

Even if we were to look past all the preachy messages the game dishes out, it would be hard to give **Left Behind: Eternal Forces** a decent rating. For a game that demands pretty high specifications to play, it looks like a visit back to RTS games in the 90s, with blocky graphics, poor audio, appalling narration and a lack of special effects. Almost all the buildings that you end up erecting look the same, and all your fellow New Yorkers look like clones in similar sweatshirts or jackets.

Additionally, the game play isn't anywhere near scintillating, and the objectives get completely boring eventually, ensuring a pretty short play time. So, despite **Left Behind: Eternal Forces's** theme of salvation and help, it's pretty obvious that the only thing that needs saving is the game itself.

Ann Siang Hill

revisited

If all Chinatown is to you is a sea of red lanterns, blaring Cantonese music and zealous salesmen preying on tourists, then you obviously haven't been to the chic side of the place – Ann Siang Hill. **LILYNNE SEAH** takes you on a tour of some prominent shops in the area.

Despite being located at a postal code not generally associated with glamour and swank, Ann Siang Hill has its share of both with concept retail stores and boutiques that stock labels you can't find anywhere else. Once an area for growing nutmegs and cloves, Ann Siang Hill has transformed into a burgeoning hub for alternative fashion and design stores.

With its rustic façade still intact, Ann Siang Hill has its own quaint allure, contributed in part by its unique mix of shops tucked in conservation shophouses.

Owner of boutique Asylum, Mr Chris Lee, 36, said, "[It] is a charming neighbourhood... laid back with enough energy when it needs to have and the old associations add a lot of charm too."

"If we were to open in [...] Orchard Road, we would have more walk-in traffic but we would lose our soul of being quirky and inspirational."

hype takes a look at three stores lining the area.

ASYLUM

Starting out as a design company, Asylum opened as a retail store in May 2005, offering contemporary art knick-knacks, limited edition merchandise, books and magazines on culture and design as well as experimental music from lesser-known labels. Expect to find interesting and bizarre creations like Dynamo bottles fashioned into lamps and unconventional in-store art installations where the walls are lined with cellotape balls.

Asylum Notebooks

If what they say about designers not reading enough is true, then kudos to the Asylum creative team for coming up with this range of clever little notebooks

with titles like 'Advanced Quantum Physics' and 'The Essays of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle'. Only for the intellectual wannabes. Available in five titles in red, blue, green, black and cream at \$22 each.

Fred Perry Merchandise

Starting out as a tennis clothing line by three-time Wimbledon champion Frederick John Perry, Fred Perry was the first sportswear brand to cross over to street wear, according to its official website (www.fredperry.com). Popularised by British Mod movement members, the classic polo tees can be worn for most occasions. Fred Perry Classic Polo Tee retails at \$163. Fred Perry Lady Pumps, available in powder pink and black, retails at \$95.



Asylum, 22 Ann Siang Road

Opening hours: noon to 9 pm (weekdays) and noon to 7 pm (weekends)

Website: www.asylum.com.sg

FRONT ROW

Front Row opened in 2005, a chi-chi three-storey shophouse with a tea salon that frowns upon GST and service charge. Level 1 is a boutique that boasts of cult brands like A.P.C. and Woods & Woods while Level 2 showcases an avant-garde art exhibition that changes every four to six weeks. At Level 3, you will find a rooftop overlooking Chinatown, ideal for private functions and gatherings.

The Terri

Named after Terry Ong, Creative Director of IS Magazine and a regular patron of Front Row, The Terri is a healthy mix of butter lettuce, shredded chicken, cherry tomatoes and green apple tossed in a special creamy teriyaki dressing created in-house. Priced at \$10.50, serves one.

Candies

Shaped like Legos, Candy Blox, a taste treat from Canada, are stackable and make for a strong sugar rush. Also available are New York Jellybeans and German Berries. A lovely set of four, adorned with a big red bow, will make an ideal Valentine's Day gift. Priced at \$10 per box, \$44 for a set of four.

Photos By Lilyne Seah



Front Row, 5 Ann Siang Road

Opening hours: noon to 8 pm daily

THE PATISSIER

Other than sweets and notebooks, you can also find Singapore's answer to Samsong – the popular patissier (pastry chef) in the hit Korean drama, *My Lovely Samsong*. Tan Siang Yee, 33, a patissier with a Le Cordon Bleu (renowned international culinary school) certificate, set up The Patissier with older sister Siang Oon in June 2000, selling confectionery made by traditional French techniques.

Rock

Made of Tiger beer mousse topped with *crème brulée* and *meringue*, Rock is served in a darling little beer mug. Shop assistant Pauline says that most customers have the misconception that it's bitter (one whole can of beer is used) but it's actually sweet with an adequate beer aftertaste. Priced at \$6 each.

Tropical Cheesecake

Inspired by a love of pineapple tarts, Siang Yee created this pineapple cheesecake on a bed of milk chocolate digestive biscuit base.

Great to serve to guests during Chinese New Year house visits. Priced at \$5.30 per slice, \$40 (500gm), \$73 (1kg).



The Patissier, 18 Ann Siang Road

Opening hours: 10.30 am to 7 pm
Closed on weekends

Website: www.thepatisier.com

The Orchard Road shopping and people-watching crowds have no lack of entertainment from buskers, from a seven-year-old drummer to blind singers to circus acrobatic troupes from China, but still they stop and stare at Roy Payamal.

The 42-year-old is covered in gold dust, wearing nothing but a cotton loincloth and long curly hair. Oblivious to his surroundings, he stands there in the same pose you saw him standing in, an hour ago. No, he's not so transfixed by the scenery that he can't move. Despite his apparent inactivity, the man is actually working.

You might think that a few coins here and there don't amount to a salary, but if done well, busking can actually put food on the table. In fact this has been Payamal's sole source of income for more than 20 years and he is quite pleased with his earnings.

"I support my mother, (even) manage the bills, I think I have a small business actually," he says.

Though some people perceive busking as begging, Payamal believes his is a demonstration of skills. Passers-by are not obliged to give money, though a token of appreciation is always welcome.

Payamal said, "In a theatre or movie, you have to pay regardless of whether the play or movie is good or bad. A busker doesn't ask for that. You are free to watch my performance if you like it and there is no fee needed."

Geraldine Schubert, 39, who joins Roy in his miming, added, "Criticisms are a part of busking. Treat it as feedback. What's more important to realise is that busking is a leisure activity whereby you can showcase your talent to the world."

To prevent beggars from turning into buskers, one has to obtain a busking licence and must donate a cut of their earnings to art societies or charity.

Young part-time buskers are happy to oblige as they often use busking to hone their skills, the extra pocket money is a nice bonus.

Geossery Tay, 20 is one such example. The engineering student from Singapore Polytechnic attends school on weekdays and does busking on weekends. Like Roy, he is a mime artist.

"In Singapore, people think street performers are in need of money. (But) busking is not easy money. I do it out of passion as I want to bring art into the city."

The art of busking is not as easy as it seems; it requires nerves of steel to stand in front of a sometimes jaded audience and perform.

A vital skill for a busker's survival is the ability to handle the crowd well. Said Payamal, "At times, there are people who will jeer and make funny faces to distract you. But at the end of the day, these reasons are not sufficient to deter anyone from busking."

Geossery takes it in his stride, saying, "Every job has its own difficulties, busking is likewise."

A licence to busk is issued by the National Arts Council (NAC). Auditions are held every first Friday of the month, before noon. If your act makes it, you'll get a busking permit for a year. Be mindful that the licence can be confiscated if used inappropriately.

Busking In The Limelight

The road is their office, the passers-by their clients and the place where they stand, their desk. Welcome to the world of busking as **AMRUTA JOSHI** discovers a group of people who are driven by passion to become buskers.

Wanna make money with your talent? Roy Payamal, a mime artiste who has made busking his living for two decades, offers these tips:

- 1) Watch plenty of live performances and get exposed to live theatre. Shows @ Esplanade are good examples, and even if you're on a tight budget, you can watch free shows at the outdoor theatre outside Esplanade or along Orchard Road.
- 2) Novelty is the key; audiences dig acts that defy social norms, so don't be afraid if you have an unusual talent to showcase.
- 3) Listen to CDs or watch Arts Central programmes as they also offer a variety of suggestions. Bear in mind, a busker has to do things that the minority, not the majority, does.
- 4) Be prepared for rejection. While some may stay and clap, others will just walk away without giving you a second glance. Don't think that people are out there to ridicule you. Even if they jeer, take it positively and improve yourself.

Photo By Amruta Joshi

Spin, "Ching!", Score!

Tiger Woods might never pick it up, but disc golf, the exciting new spin to the conventional Frisbee, will see no lack of players given how addictive it is. By **CHOW LI JUN**.

If you see someone throwing a disc towards a strange object with chains hanging from steel rims, don't be alarmed, it's not a Frisbee game gone wrong. **hype** assures you that the loud "Ching" is nothing to fear.

First seen in Singapore two years ago, disc golf is attracting a growing number of players. According to Clarence Zeng, 22, a member of Ultimate Players Association (Singapore) – a local association that organises disc golf games – there has been a steady rise in the number of regular players, and companies have also starting playing it at company events.

"If you think you can throw [a disc] well, wait till you have tried disc golf," challenged Clarence, one of the first players in Singapore. He explained, "It's very challenging to throw accurately. [Your target] is not human, but an object that doesn't move."

While disc golf in Singapore uses the ordinary Frisbee, a specially-made light-weight disc with a sharper edge is used in the official disc golf competition. The special disc can travel up to more than 120 m in the air.

As with golf, the lingo in disc golf for the number of throws before the target is hit are "par 3", for three throws, "birdie", for two, and "bogey", for four.

"[In disc golf], you need the skills to throw [the disc] far and accurately," said Lance Dubos, 44, a regular disc golfer. A lecturer of Center For American Education, the American added, "There's a variety of technique shots to be learnt in the art of disc-throwing that achieve different purposes in the game."

Disc golf involves a player navigating a course that consists of a series of targets. Above-ground targets

are strategically placed on challenging terrains to "catch" the discs. Disc golf courses mostly consist of 18 or 24 holes, and in some cases, nine holes. For each target hit, the player scores a hole.

To play, begin by throwing the disc from a chosen tee area towards the target before throwing each successive shot from where the previous throw came to rest. The triumphant ring of the disc hitting the target's chains tell you that you've made the throw.

When you finish the course, your score is determined by the number of throws and penalty throws. The player who has the lowest score is declared the winner.

Instead of an umpire, this game has a group of appointed officials who "interfere" only when necessary. This gentlemen's game promotes high standards of courtesy and etiquette among its players. Even littering could result in penalty!

Disc golf is often set in a free amenity, like a park. While a professional target costs between \$100 and \$300, Singapore Frisbee Sports and Ultimate Players Association (Singapore) offer free use of its targets at its monthly try-outs, you just need your own disc.

The game is easy to pick up, and can also be played in a group of between two and 10, or alone.

With no green or caddy fees and no need for spiky shoes, this sport could easily fly to the fore.

For more information on disc golf, visit <http://www.sgfrisbeesports.com> or <http://www.singaporeultimate.com>



CHINGAY GALORE

This year's Chingay Parade promises not only a showcase of different cultures but also of contemporary music and dance. **AMRUTA JOSHI** brings you up close to two nights of endless fun in local style.

Does Teo Ser Luck have two left feet or will he win even more female fans when he starts to show off his dance moves?

That question will be answered when he and 11 other Post-65 Members of Parliament (P65 MPs) put on a hip-hop dance at the Chingay Parade of Dreams 2007 with 300 hip-hop artists.

Adding to the novelty factor this year are six dancers in flaming red wigs who will perform within 3-metre-wide clear balloons. Besides dancing, they will be rolling down Orchard Road, our famed shopping street from Feb 23 to 24.

However, the biggest enticement this year is probably going to be the inaugural after-parade street party for which tickets have to be purchased. The entire parade route will be transformed into a party hub and divided into three zones: Wow! zone, Hip-hop zone, Play & Float Display zone.

The Wow! Zone is the stretch between Paragon and Ngee Ann City. Here is where wannabe dancers can pick up lessons by mimicking the belly dancers as they flaunt their choreography.

Not too far off stand the samba dancers dressed in their colourful costumes, swaying with macho hunk to the catchy percussion.

Hip-hop zone between The Heeren and Meritus Mandarin is a must-go for hip-hop lovers. Dance your night away to the latest and best-loved hip-hop music spun by the disc jockey.

Finally at the Play & Float Display zone, between Somerset MRT to Orchard Plaza, family fun takes precedence. Designed like a carnival, the is where you can take photos of elaborately decorated floats and costumed performers.


The parade also offers a great platform for local community art groups. Youthful Malay, Indian and Chinese dancers from the People's Association Talents sashay to the local traditional beat while a hip-hop dance makes Chingay a cosmopolitan event.

Overseas performers like the Russian Belarus Circus dancers will be seen alongside local dancers from the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Music and Drama Company.

To bring the festivities to a new high, the Fujian Cultural Association Pole Act Group, listed in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1996 as the first "in the world", will showcase their deftness in handling poles 8 metres tall.

According to Ms Eileen Tan, spokesperson of the Chingay Parade, the street party is one where "you can expect to see young people blending in well with the older crowd".

The after-parade street party is from 9 pm to 11 pm Saturday. Tickets can be purchased from SISTIC for \$45 each. PASSION cardholders enjoy a 20% discount.



Runway Returns To Orchard

Feast your eyes on a parade of beautiful people and fab clothes as the Singapore Fashion Festival sashays its way back for the sixth year running. **IYLIA SUHAINA** fills you in on what to expect this year.

It's time for the ladies to squeeze into their little black dresses and killer stilettos as the **Singapore Fashion Festival (SFF)** is set to turn Orchard Road into a very long fashion runway, bringing the biggest label powerhouses and the hottest models under one roof at the Ngee Ann City Civic Square Tent from Mar 23 to Apr 1.

Mr Trevor Soh, a representative at the festival's participating partner IMG Fashion-PICO, said, "Last time around, we featured just one face - Lily Cole. This year, expect more models to front the festival, including top Asian ones from the region."

The bevy of beauties will be showcasing the Spring-Summer 2007 collections from over 30 brands from all over the world. They include high-end names like last year's Missoni and Fendi, to high-street labels G-Star and Topshop, as well as local brands like Baylene and Nicholas throughout the 10-day affair.

Known for being fashion forward, the festival will also give a sneak peak of what's to come in some of the collections' Autumn-Winter range.

The Singapore Fashion Festival has always been a springboard for new local and international labels to launch into the highly competitive fashion scene.

This is because in the audience in attendance will include some of the most influential movers and shakers in the fashion world. We're talking about local and international fashion designers, to fashion editors and journalists from magazines like **Style**, to the hottest names in the entertainment industry.

The 2006 fashion festival was attended by fashion label Salvatore Ferragamo's Mrs Fulvia Visconti-Ferragamo and Mr Salvatore Ferragamo Jr, as well as international fashion designers like Jessica Noy and Robert Cary-Williams from the United Kingdom. Each event averaged audiences of about 1,000.

You can rub shoulders with these luminaries of the fashion world and attend the festival in true fashion - and there's no need to worry about the price to pay for the event, as the festival is practically free, thanks to first-time SFF sponsor MasterCard.

According to Mr Soh, while "some of the shows are by invitation-only", the others are mostly free and you can obtain tickets through the Singapore Fashion Festival website.

For more information, log on to www.singaporefashionfestival.com.sg

Photos Courtesy of PICO

Venice of the East

If you've always dreamed of visiting the romantic city of Venice, why not head to Shaoxing in Zhejiang, China. LILYNNE SEAH soaks in the sights and sounds of the land dubbed the Venice of the East.

Located in the East of China, Shaoxing is a mere three-hour bus ride from Shanghai in the North. With a population of 4.34 million (close to Singapore), it however occupies an area 10 times larger than this island.

Shaoxing, ranked ninth on the 2004 China's Top 100 Counties chart and famous for its quaint, old-world charm, attracts an average of 12 million domestic and foreign visitors annually.

On what Singaporean visitors liked about the place, Shi Wen, 26, a Shaoxing tour guide, replied in Mandarin, "I have about 10 groups of 40 Singapore visitors a year and they all come to Shaoxing with one aim in mind - to see its beautiful sceneries. Shaoxing is unlike Shanghai or Hong Kong where it's very much an urban destination."

Like Venice, it is Shaoxing's beautiful waterways, ancient arched bridges and lovely cobble-stoned narrow streets that add to its quiet allure.

Liu Dong, 20, a Shaoxing local who studies at Zhejiang University City College in Hangzhou commented in Mandarin, "I love it when I come home which is only about once or twice a year. It is always so relaxing and quiet here in Shaoxing. I can easily unwind here after a hectic school term. Though you earn less than you will in bigger cities, there is less stress and competition."

The best time to visit Shaoxing is in spring, which is from mid-March to mid-June, when the temperature ranges between 10°C and 22°C (according to Alexstate Commerce & Tourism website <http://www.d0086.com/film/zhejiang/slm/shaoxing>).

Lu Xun Museum

An extremely diverse city, Shaoxing is vibrant with a rich cultural heritage that harks back thousands of years. Just like Venice is famous for its artistic talents such as legendary composer Antonio Vivaldi and Renaissance globetrotter Marco Polo, Shaoxing has Lu Xun, the most hailed historical figure. A museum named after him is one of the top tourist attractions in Shaoxing. A contemporary Chinese writer, he was one of the most influential people behind the Cultural Revolution in China. Slamming the social problems and degradation in China, he was proof of the famous saying 'The pen is mightier than the sword' when a ban was called on his literary works by the Government of that time.

A visit to the Lu Xun museum promises a lesson in history. But if you're not into the subject, you can have much fun checking out his extremely well-preserved ancestral home. As Lu Xun was born into a rich family, expect to gasp over the exquisite old-fashioned rooms with the original furnishings from that era still intact.

Lu Xun Museum, 393 Lu Xun Zhong Lu
Opening hours: 8 am to 5:30 pm.
Entrance fee: RMB80 (S\$16).

Things to note

An efficient grasp of Mandarin may not always guarantee you the right route when asking for directions. There are more than 10 different dialects in Shaoxing and the older generation may not necessarily speak Mandarin even if they understand it.

Be prepared to bring plenty of tissue paper as not all public washrooms are stocked with toilet paper.

How much to bring

For a five-day stay, S\$450 should see you

through comfortably for accommodation, food, transport and light shopping.
Exchange rate: S\$1 ~ RMB5

How to get there

China Eastern, Garuda and Singapore Airlines fly to Pu Dong Airport, Shanghai. From there, purchase a RMB63 (S\$12.60) bus ticket for a three-hour long ride to Shaoxing. Alternatively, a train which will cost you RMB42 (S\$8.40).

Accommodation

Jin Jiang Inn - RMB\$140 (S\$28) per night

Photos by Lilyanne Seah

Shopping

Another uncanny similarity between Shaoxing and Venice is the watercraft. While Venice has gondolas, Shaoxing has *wu peng chuans*, or black canopy boats. Made of bamboo and wood, *wu peng chuans* are like little sampans with a distinctive ebony awning.

Wu peng chuans were the main mode of transport in the past as the city was connected by numerous waterways. Due to modernisation, these little sampans now mainly ferry tourists and can be found in scenic areas like the East Lake.

Lean back on a *wu peng chuan* as it gently glides along the waterway, and bask in the picturesque scenery. A little chat with the *chuan fu* (Chinese boatman) who wears a felt hat, will reveal interesting nuggets of information about the East Lake.

If you just can't get enough of *wu peng chuan* rides, try the one at *ba zi qiao* ('8' Bridge). The most famous bridge out of the 4,000 bridges in Shaoxing, the 800-year-old *ba zi qiao* is shaped like the Chinese number eight (hence the name).

East Lake, Jie Fang Bei Lu

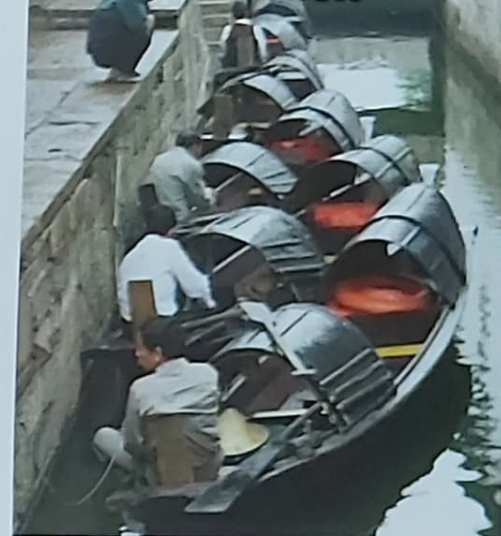
Opening hours: 9 am to 4 pm.

Entrance fee: RMB25 (S\$5).

Ba Zi Qiao, Ba Zi Qiao Zhi Jie.

A single *wu peng chuan* ride costs RMB30 (S\$6)

Transportation



Food



Be sure to try *huang jiu* (yellow wine). It's a common practice for the locals to have wine with meals. Make a trip down to the popular Xian Heng Restaurant where they brew eight types of yellow wine in-house.

Feast on *zui ji* or chicken marinated in yellow wine before it is cooked. Shaoxing is also famous for its *chou tofu* (fermented beancurd). Well-prepared *chou tofu* is less odorous than most, with a creamy taste that just melts in your mouth. *Chou tofu* prepared in little pushcarts flanking the streets somehow doesn't taste as good as those in restaurants.

Shaoxing dishes are generally oilier, saltier and have a stronger taste than Singapore's. You might like to request the chef to go easy on the salt and oil while preparing your food.

Xian Heng Restaurant, Beisanhuan Dong Lu

Opening hours: 11 am to 9:30 pm.

Huang Jiu (Yellow Wine): RMB25 (S\$5) per bowl

Zui Ji (Drunken Chicken): RMB15 (S\$3)

Chou tofu (Femented Beancurd): RMB5 (S\$1)

Don't. Even. Start.

Desperate people trying to score a Valentine's date with you using the usual overdone pick-up lines? **LILYNNE SEAH** shows you how to rebut the 10 worst ones with style.



- 1 "Hey gorgeous. Can I buy you a drink?"
"Get me a large bottle of Chivas. For takeaway."
- 2 "Is this seat empty?"
"I'm saving it for someone who needs it more than you do."
- 3 "Haven't we met before?"
"It must have been my unlucky day."
- 4 "What do you do for a living?"
(gives The Finger) "I'm a mime artist."
- 5 "Wanna leave?"
"Of course, be my guest."
- 6 "Do you come here often?"
"I won't anymore."
- 7 "Can I have your number?"
"It's in the phone directory."
- 8 "You look familiar."
"I'm a drag queen by night."
- 9 "I love the colour of your hair."
"Mahogany brown #103."
- 10 "Care for a dance?"
"I'm being treated for B.O."

Illustration by Izzat Ibrahim



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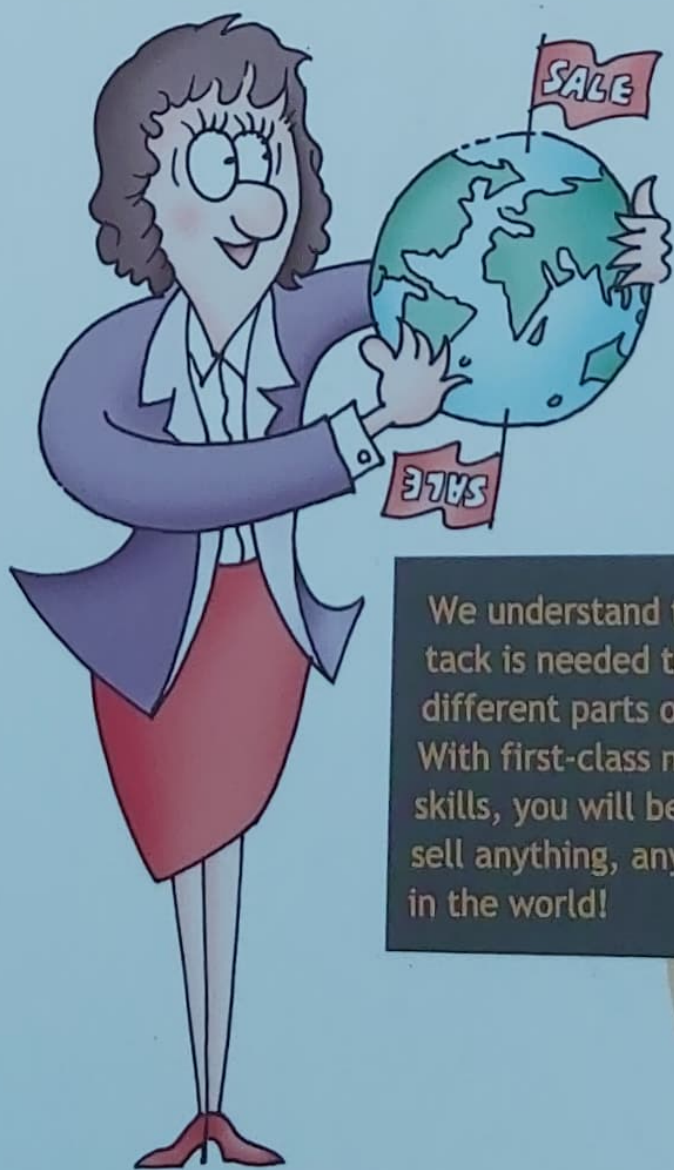
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