



hype

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on Celebrity Worship

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To Never Stop Dreaming... an editorial

Photo by Farand Chen



When I was five, I dreamt of being a zookeeper. After visiting the Singapore Zoo and seeing the amount of animal poo that would be my responsibility, I decided caring for elephants wasn't going to be too fun.

When I was eight,

I dreamt of curtsying gracefully to shouts of "Bravo! Encore, encore!" But I fell flat on my face in ballet class and that was the end of my star-studded dream.

When I was 10, I dreamt of being a doctor and I was quite the doctor, handing out prescriptions for M&Ms and Gobstoppers.

Alas, Dr Tan I could not be because in Secondary three, I failed biology, chemistry and mathematics and my teachers were quite horrified when I revealed my choice for a career.

Now, I have dreams of being a worldly-wise writer (don't worry, I passed my O-Levels just fine). This is what our minds allow us, the ability to never stop dreaming. We are however, often hampered by fear and a tiny failure can derail us from the proverbial road to success.

In this issue, we speak to those who refuse to give in to seemingly insurmountable odds and, in spite of the shouts of caution from a conservative society, made a name for themselves.

We'll be inspired by world record-breaker and paralympian Theresa Goh, entertained by the music of Jon Chan from Plainsunset (who modelled for our fashion spread too!) and dazzled by the flamboyant Dim Sum Dollies who'll show us how they dreamed really big.

There are also those, like playwright Alfian Sa'at and director Tan Pin Pin, who have pushed the boundaries of theatre and film to tell lovely stories of Singapore. But there's nothing more admirable than starting a business from scratch and we'll see how taking a risk pays off with design extraordinaire Marcus Chiang's company, Designed in Singapore;

fashion designer Jo Soh and her label, Hansel; and Karen and Kenny's independent bookstore, BooksActually.

Speaking of role models, it seems many are turning to celebrities and shaping their lives around these stars who are famous for nothing more than being famous. Take a peek at how small doses of entertainment news and harmless admiration can escalate into a full-blown obsession in The Tinseltown Temple.

While we battle the dangerous addiction to celebrity gossip, we might also want to think about what happens when childhood dreams are broken by family violence. We'll need to see who is to offer protection when society forsakes the people they consider "adults".

Don't worry, we haven't forgotten that February's the month for love and we'll bring you to places that you'll never think of taking your date. They're all off the beaten track and infinitely romantic. But if making gourmet chocolate isn't for you and your date, rock it out at the **We Will Rock You** musical or the smashing concerts that'll hit Singapore from February to April.

And it's all happening on our tiny island, so if you're craving for all things Singaporean after singing along to the effervescent **Dim Sum Dollies: The History of Singapore** or reading about our terribly talented citizens, grab a Peranakan dinner at three perfectly Peranakan places or visit Singapore's spectacularly picturesque icons.

But please, don't forget about chasing that lofty aspiration because living the dream is a wonderful feeling.

Editor
Denise Tan



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Event listings

Huayi – Chinese Festival of the Arts 2008

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay celebrates Chinese New Year with its sixth run of **Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts**. From Feb 8 to Feb 17, enjoy contemporary works from outstanding local and foreign talents. This year marks the launch of the first artist residency for the festival and a new music series – *in:music* – featuring independent singer-songwriters.

MOSAIC Music Festival 2008

This renowned music festival is back from Mar 7 to Mar 16 at the Esplanade with another sensational line-up of international acts, including USA jazz superstar and three-time GRAMMY Award-winner, Harry Connick, Jr, Kyoto-based electronic musician Rei Harakami, and Sweden's Reggae master, Desmond Foster. The festival will also feature local acts, Vanessa Fernandez, Daphne Khoo and The Great Spy Experiment.

HSBC Women's Champions

Witness the top women golfers at the inaugural **HSBC Women's Champions** – Asia's most noteworthy women's golf tournament – from Feb 28 to Mar 2 at Tanah Merah Country Club. USA's Natalie Gulbis and Korea's Se Ri Pak are among the top names competing. The tournament boasts a US\$2 million purse – the leading prize money for a women's tournament in Asia.

Visit www.hsbcgolf.com for a list of the various matches and ticket prices for each match.

Singapore International Film Festival

Celebrating the best in Asian and world cinema, the **Singapore International Film Festival**, held in April, is a world-class event with a strong emphasis on regional documentaries and Singapore shorts, with tributes to several key European and Asian filmmakers.

Visit www.filmfest.org.sg for showtimes and screening venues.



The Police Live in Concert

Lushington Entertainments presents a one-night-only experience with The Police in 2007's highest grossing tour. After their 20-year hiatus, the band will perform together classic hits like "Roxanne", "Fall Out" and "Every Breath You Take". The Police will take the stage at the Singapore Indoor Stadium on Feb 4.

Ticket prices: \$98, \$148, \$200, \$400, \$600*

Incubus Live In Singapore

Alternative rock band, Incubus, is back after releasing their sixth album, **Light Grenades**, with a two-hour live performance at Fort Canning Park on Mar 7. Look out for the band's smash hits, "Megalomaniac", "Oil & Water" and their latest number one single, "Anna Molly". Recapture the magic of Californian talent in this one-night-only spectacular.

Ticket price: \$125*

Jeff Chang & Symphony Orchestra 2008

Taiwan's Prince of Love Ballads, Jeff Chang, is set to lift Singaporean fans off their feet with a date on Mar 15 at the Max Pavilion @ Singapore Expo. Jeff will be accompanied by the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Orchestra as he croons to well-loved hits like "Don't Tell Him" (不要对他说), "Forbearance" (宽容) and "Faith" (信仰).

Ticket Prices: \$68, \$98, \$128, \$148*

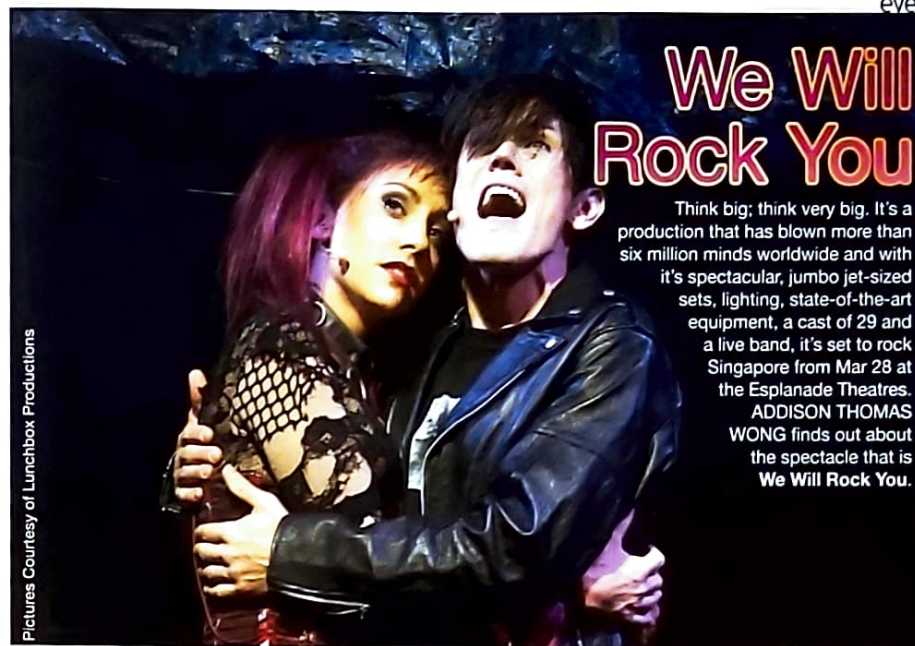
Samsung Presents Maroon 5 Live in Concert

They've sold more than 10 million albums worldwide with their latest, **It Won't Be Soon Before Long**, breaking iTunes' sales records and debuting at number one on the Billboard charts. GRAMMY Award-winning pop/rock band Maroon 5, will deliver their unique soul-influenced tunes like "This Love", "She Will Be Loved" and "Makes Me Wonder" at the Singapore Indoor Stadium on Mar 25.

Ticket Prices: \$75, \$100, \$125, \$150, \$185*

*Tickets at SISTIC (www.sistic.com.sg) or call 6348 5555
Events listed by Addison Thomas Wong

Picture Courtesy of Lushington Entertainments



We Will Rock You

Think big; think very big. It's a production that has blown more than six million minds worldwide and with its spectacular, jumbo jet-sized sets, lighting, state-of-the-art equipment, a cast of 29 and a live band, it's set to rock Singapore from Mar 28 at the Esplanade Theatres. **ADDISON THOMAS WONG** finds out about the spectacle that is **We Will Rock You**.

They were the legendary music sensation that brought you such classic hits as "Bohemian Rhapsody", "We Are The Champions" and "We Will Rock You". Since 1973, they've delivered to fans 15 studio albums, five live albums and numerous compilation

albums, all of which have sold 300 million copies worldwide, making them one of the world's best selling artists of all time and Britain's top albums artist in history, beating even The Beatles.

Queen now brings you their very own musical, **We Will Rock You**, which features 24 of the band's greatest hits and stars **Rock Star**:

INXS finalist, Miguel Ayasa as Galileo Figaro, and New Zealand pop princess, Annie Crummer as the evil Killer Queen. Ben Elton, one of the United Kingdom's most successful comic writers, delivers a cracking script full of witty one-liners.

The production, however, is not a Queen tribute but rather a rock theatre experience featuring the best from the rock icon. **We Will Rock You** is a futurist adventure set in a time when live music is banned on earth, but the kids are in rebellion, fighting against the powerful Globalsoft Corporation which controls their lives and

feeds them a diet of synthesised pop. A hero is needed; someone who can help them rediscover themselves and live music.

"This is a new breed of musical, says James Cundall, co-producer with David Atkins. "It is a unique collaboration between the legends of rock and one of the UK's most phenomenally successful writers, Ben Elton. The show has just celebrated its fifth year in London's biggest theatre, and every night – as it has since its beginning – **We Will Rock You** is getting standing ovations from audiences of all ages."

Now into its sixth year on London's West End, **We Will Rock You** has wowed audiences in Las Vegas, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa, Germany, Spain and Canada.

In Singapore, the 27-member South African company accompanied by the two guest leads and eight band members are ready to take you on a journey into the future. So, it's time to scream, "Are you ready to rock?"

We Will Rock You will be staged at the Esplanade Theatre from Mar 28 to Apr 13. Tickets are sold at SISTIC from \$40 to \$150.

Picture Courtesy of Lunchbox Productions

Event previews

February to April 2008

Fancy some ballet under the clear night sky or perhaps a wild party in front of City Hall? Well, **hype** presents to you more options for entertainment. Check out what else is in store from February to April.

Chingay Parade of Dreams 2008

By Joyce Peh

Asia's grandest street parade is back and it's better than before! This year, expect a more exciting line-up of programmes for the Chingay Parade of Dreams 2008. The parade will be brought to City Hall for the first time ever and according to the Chingay Committee, it'll feature an overture of 36 sleek and electrifying Ferraris that will usher President SR Nathan, who'll be onboard the Chingay Lead Float, down the parade.

As if this impressive entourage isn't enough, there will be a grand launch of fireworks followed by a humongous *Lo-Hei* (tossing of the traditional Chinese raw fish salad).

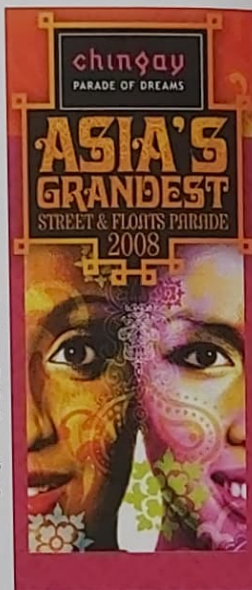
Apart from that, the City Hall building across the grand Padang will be graced by 16 instructors from Outward Bound Singapore who will abseil heroically down the façade of our historical landmark. But here's the best part – Singapore's first All-Night street party!

Jointly organised by St. James Power Station, the coolest bands and performing groups will dance the night away under the open sky, and it's all against the austere backdrop of City Hall.

For a full programme and tickets, log on to www.chingay.org.sg

Date: Feb 15 (Preview), Feb 16 (Parade and All-Night Party)

Venue: City Hall



Picture Courtesy of The Chingay Committee

By Eunice Kow

Santana Live in Singapore

Multi-GRAMMY award winning guitar maestro and one of the world's greatest musical legends of our time will be in Singapore for a one-night only concert performance at the Singapore Indoor Stadium. The legendary artist is none other than Carlos Santana, who, with his band will bring the rhythm in the *Live Your Light* concert tour on Feb 18.

Santana will be performing the greatest hits from his 40-year long career, so you know you'll be listening to melodies – like "Smooth", the popular collaboration with Matchbox Twenty's Rob Thomas and the catchy R&B-influenced "Maria Maria" – that mesh the traditional beats of congas and timbales with Santana's signature guitar riffs.

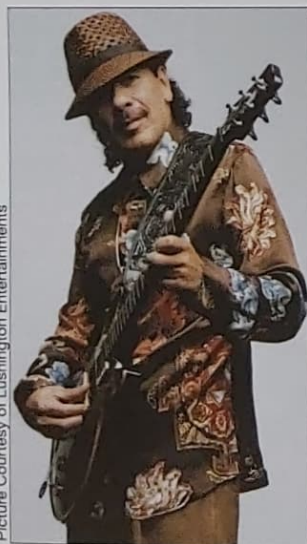
Besides witnessing one of the most sensational musicians in music history live in action, you would also get to do your bit for charity. For every ticket sold, a donation will be made to the Milagro Foundation, set up in 1998 by Santana and his wife Deborah Santana, which supports organisations helping underprivileged children.

Tickets are available at SISTIC from \$90 to \$350*.

Date: Feb 18

Venue: Singapore Indoor Stadium

Time: 8pm



Picture Courtesy of Lushington Entertainments



Picture Courtesy of The Little Company

By Eunice Kow

Giselle in the Park

This March, be whirled into the Singapore Dance Theatre's (SDT) interpretation of a tragic love story. SDT will mark their 20th Anniversary with *Giselle in the Park* at Fort Canning.

The story is of a peasant girl, Giselle, who falls in love with a nobleman disguised as a common folk, Albrecht. He vows his undying love to her but not only does Albrecht hide his true identity from Giselle, he also fails to tell her about his engagement to Bathilde, the Duke's daughter.

His deceit causes Giselle to die from a broken heart and the misery and pain she suffers transforms her into a Wilis – spirits of betrothed maidens who were betrayed by their loved ones the night before their wedding.

This enthralling tale of love, lies and vengeance is one not to be missed. Enjoy the stunning pirouettes against the serenity of Fort Canning Park and make a date with Giselle and Albrecht, a bottle of good wine and perfect company.

Tickets are at \$26 each but it's free for children six years and below*.

Date: Mar 27 to Mar 30

Venue: Fort Canning Park

Time: 5pm

The Emperor's New Clothes

By Eunice Kow

The Little Company has turned another well-known bedtime story – *The Emperor's New Clothes* – into a sell-out play.

Be prepared for hours of fun and laughter as you sing along and help the swindlers to trick the fussy and stuck-up Emperor into paying a fortune to wear the outfits they've "created". If you're thinking about how the Emperor will look like with his imaginary clothes or rather, birthday suit, we're not spilling the beans and spoiling the fun so go on down and find out yourself!

Besides all the action, you might want to bring a hanky or some tissues as they would come in handy when you see how a courageous young boy saves the day.

You'll be laughing till you get stitches in your stomach and then weeping so badly that you'll have to wring your hanky dry, because *The Emperor's New Clothes* is chockfull with easy humour and it will talk of values that everyone can identify with. This is for the inner child in you so give yourself a delightful treat and go have a look at *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

Date: Mar 12 to Apr 19

Venue: DBS Arts Centre, Home of the SRT

Time: Monday to Friday: 10am; Saturday: 11am, 2pm

Tickets: \$18*(Weekdays), \$20*(Weekends) from SISTIC outlets



Picture Courtesy of Singapore Dance Theatre

*Tickets at SISTIC (www.sistic.com.sg) or call 6348 5555

Jonathan Chan:

Life Etched in Pencil Tracings

Ever met someone who's managed to play in three bands, write lyrics, come up with a few valuable art pieces and produce a solo album? TIMOTHY SIM hears the melodic refrains of Jonathan Chan's song.

The lead singer of punk-pop band, Plainsunset, Jonathan Chan, 33, is literally, a jack of all trades. Besides jamming with his band, Jon's also a freelance artist who's sold quite a few art pieces!

Jon, as Jonathan is popularly known, has a musical portfolio that's just as colourful. When only in his 20s, Jon was in three bands – Surreal, the Sonic Edge Band and Plainsunset.

One of the local music scene's most influential bands, Plainsunset is made up of four musicians who have stuck together since 1996. Despite a two-year break in 2004, the band, with Ronny on drums, Sham on guitars, Nizam on bass, and Jon on guitars and vocals, is still wowing fans with their explosive performances and emotive lyrics written by Jon and Sham.

It's All in a Whistle

Jon happily tells **hype** his musical career all started with whistling. "My dad was a choir director and I would piss most of the choir people off by whistling. In fact, I got my dad into trouble one day by whistling when he walked by a bunch of girls, he remembers."

"They weren't convinced until my mother coaxed me into whistling, then they let my dad off!"

The Sound of Music

It wasn't long since then that Jon started drawing inspiration from bands like U2 and The Police for the touch of rock. His eclectic likings include also the musical comedies of composer and songwriter, Cole Porter.

However, the homeboy has his preferences. "Perhaps indie rock, but I'm somewhat drawn to the hypnotic quality of Gamelan music (traditional Indonesian music that involves xylophones, bamboo flutes and gongs)," Jon explains.

And we can hear these influences in the lyrics he writes for his band and in his solo album, *Pencil Tracings*, which will rock the world by end 2008.

Still, Jon believes that making music is not that different from his other passion, art.

Life as a Starving Artist

Jon studied Fine Arts in LASALLE College of the Arts for three years and has a Masters in the subject so it's



Picture Courtesy of John Chiong

no wonder that he's got some high-profile customers who often purchase pieces from him.

While he once received \$2,000 for selling three to four pieces at one go, Jon knows that life as a freelance artist means a life of fluctuating paychecks but he says, "I get by and survive each week."

Besides, Jon's aware that this might not be the most lucrative business, so he's putting together a portfolio to apply for a position as an illustrator at an animation company.

To Juggle Work and Play

Even though he's juggling three bands, a solo career, his freelance artistic ambitions and soon a job as an illustrator, Jon makes time for family by working around his busy schedule.

"Family always comes first and friendships are there to keep you grounded," Jon explains his decision to spend at least one quiet meal with his family and his girlfriend each week.

With accolades aplenty and talent abounding, Jon's set for greater heights but he doesn't leave his family or modesty behind when he rocks it out on stage. After all, Jon says, "Everyone has flaws and I would rather say that I'm living under grace."

For more of Jon and Plainsunset, check out his **MySpace** account at www.myspace.com/penciltracings and Plainsunset's at www.myspace.com/plainsunset

Switchfoot Surfs into Singapore



The GRAMMY-nominated alternative rock band finally made their way to local shores! ELAINE WEE chats with Switchfoot's drummer, Chad Butler, and discovers things about the band that even die-hard fans might not know about.

The band has been making music since 1996 and their latest studio effort, *Oh! Gravity* debuted at number 18 on the Billboard Top 200 album charts. On Jan 31, the band that's always taken a different approach to music, drove their fans crazy during their first concert in Singapore.

The San Diego-based rock band has Jon Foreman, 32, on vocals and guitar, Tim Foreman, 30, on bass and vocals, Chad, 34, on drums, Filipino-American Jerome Fontamillas, 32, on guitar, keyboard and vocals and Drew Shirley, 32, on guitar.

The band shares a passion for surfing and Chad says that they've always been participating in surfing contests in California, that's why it was most apt to name their band Switchfoot, a surfing term for the changing of a foot's position on the surfboard. The band's name is also representative of the different musical direction they take.

Chad Butler Up-close

They've rocked over 30 stages during their three-month concert tour last year but the Dutch drummer didn't always want to take a seat behind the drum set. He'd once aspired to be a doctor and it was only when he received his first drum set in junior high that he decided that this was what he wanted.

But not everyone shared his interest in the percussion instrument, least of all his neighbours and Chad wishes that he had learnt an instrument that didn't bother his neighbours so much.

Now, the complaints must have stopped because he's on tour so much that he constantly misses his family. Nevertheless, Chad bites the bullet and even jokes, "I like my band mates but my wife is a whole lot better looking!"

The Independent Label

In Oct 2007, the band announced the creation of their record label, Lowercase People Records. They also revealed plans to release an album as an indie band, in the second half of this year.

"We're glad to be communicating more directly with our audience by being independent from a major label. We're now able to put out music however and whenever we want."

"As for our new album, we already have 14

songs and it's like nothing we've ever done before," Chad discloses.

The band also prides itself on being able to complete things themselves. From painting T-shirts to mixing their own music, they'll get down and dirty to get it done, but Chad was adamant that no matter what, they'll never drive themselves because, "we really need good drivers!"

The Switchfoot Sound

Their music, referred to by listeners as the "Switchfoot Sound", is described as "a melodic crunch of densely layered sound featuring some electronic experimentation, and often driven by hard-charging guitar riffs".

But Chad puts it more simply, "We're a rock band making honest songs for thinking people."

If you would like to win an exclusive Switchfoot autographed poster and concert pass (worth \$100), \$50 Revoltage voucher and ultra-sleek Manhattan Portage bag (\$150), tell us why you love Switchfoot at hypemagazine@gmail.com. Don't forget to give us your name, IC number and contact details!



Pictures Courtesy of Switchfoot

On to the Paralympics!



Singapore's Paralympians are gearing up for the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing and all of them are medal hopefuls. YE HUIQI talks to Theresa Goh, a stunning swimmer and young athlete who's paralysed from the waist down.

At just 20, Theresa Goh is a world record holder for two swimming events – the Women's 50m Breaststroke and the Women's 200m Breaststroke at the 21st German Open International Championships 2007.

Theresa's got a medal tally of seven golds, seven silvers and one bronze (as of mid-Dec 2007) but they are a small fraction of Theresa's feats because she's an amazing young girl born with spina bifida, a condition that's typified by paralysis in the lower half of the body.

How It All Began and Almost Ended

Since she was five, Theresa's had an affinity for water. "I like the feeling of being in the water. It gives me a sense of freedom that nothing else would," she says.

Competing at the age of 11 also gave her ample opportunities to interact with people from all over the world, and she's built up her confidence.

Fame and glory aside, Theresa confesses that her love for swimming was not innate. Just as she was progressing in her career, Theresa wished she hadn't start swimming as she felt pressured to deliver.

"I didn't have time to hang out with friends. I couldn't live like a normal teenager and felt that I was pushed into swimming too quickly and didn't have a chance to love it," Theresa recalls.

School or Pool?

"My parents urged me to swim, saying that swimming was good for me," Theresa says, explaining how the



support and encouragement from her family propelled her to continue.

Then she faced another hurdle. In 2004, Theresa had to choose between pursuing a Diploma in Moving Images at a Temasek Polytechnic or a star-studded swimming career.

"I wanted to pursue my studies at the polytechnic as I thought life on campus would be interesting. But I had come so far in [competitive] swimming, it would be a waste of time if I quit halfway," Theresa reasons.

But it all worked out as Theresa not only gets to travel for competitions, she's also nurturing a career and diploma in Applied Psychology at PATH Education Group.

With the Programme for Elite Athletes Career (PEAC) by the Singapore Sports Council, Theresa's working in a marketing position for the corporate partner who

sponsored her diploma – Standard Chartered Bank.

At The Paralympics

For now, her sights are set on the Paralympics. "A medal is within reach for the 100m Breast-stroke event. Of course, it will be nice if it's gold," Theresa quips.

She sticks to her usual routine of training nine times a week and isn't letting any excessive pressure deter her from her quest to perform.

And her greatest source of motivation? She declares, "Myself, if I don't believe in myself, then who else will?"

Pictures Courtesy of Singapore Disability Sports Council



Play it Write with Alfian Sa'at

He's met Sir Ian McKellen and written plays that defy Singapore's censorship laws. SELENE YAP sits with "enfant terrible" Alfian Sa'at, WILD RICE's resident playwright, as he muses about the pressures of being controversial and finding his place in Singapore.

Cheekily flamboyant yet down-to-earth, Alfian Sa'at (above right in picture), a lover of traditional *teh-o* (tea without milk), is Uniquely Singapore(an). He's a candidly capable overachiever, having his first play produced at the age of 19, and first book published at 21.

The 30-year-old's illustrious decade-long career started when he was chairman of the Raffles Junior College Drama Society. He's since written notable productions like *sex.violence.blood.gore*, which underwent the scrutiny of censorship laws, and *Homesick*, which, with its theme of biculturalism and family, opened the 2006 Singapore Theatre Festival.

The recipient of the 2001 National Arts Council Young Artist Award for Literature, and the 2005 DBS-Life! Theatre Awards for Best Script, also penned the final installment of the critically-acclaimed *Asian Boys Trilogy*, a series of plays exploring homosexuality and society.

While he's lauded for his distinctly controversial works, Alfian never wanted the title of "enfant terrible" (French for someone who says horribly embarrassing things). "I've tried not to be defined as a political poet, but it's a difficult position because I don't see a lot of other writers in Singapore dealing with social, political, or historical contexts, so I want to be the one to do something," he explains.

The Write Kind of Passion

Alfian possesses an undiminished enthusiasm when talking about his plays, and believes every play holds a precious experience. "I think one thing that's dear to me is the function and value of literature in our lives," he says.

"And that's why the play was an adaption of a book I really liked," Alfian says of *Peculiar Chris*, Singapore's first gay novel, which influenced the conceptualisation of his play, *Happy Endings: Asian Boys Vol. 3*.

He recognises that while inextricably connecting anecdotes from his life, his productions are "not 'salon' kind of events where I invite my closest friends and we get to stage the thing and everyone gets the in-joke and coded references". He adds that his friends and he "have a shared history" but he wants to explore "other larger, more extensive definitions" since he believes "every piece of writing or art has that kind of duality".

Moving Write Along

Happy Endings (see left) will be Alfian's last homosexual-themed play but he says this change doesn't symbolise another "phase" and is only "the end" to his exploration of "these territories" since he's said his part.

He shows disapproval when the authenticity of emotion in his plays is regarded by critics as "progression" because he doesn't periodise his opinions and thoughts, besides "one can be angry even if one is 40, 50 or 60".

Now, he plans to delve into themes such as media and racial relations in Singapore and he's excited about multi-cultism and believes that Singaporeans should see past pre-conceived notions that racial identity discussions can evolve into a siege.

With his interest clearly laid out, he responds with an unmitigated "politics of course!" when asked about plans for other literary forays.

In His Own Write

Alfian's a true playwright who takes pride in retaining the essence of his works. Even when faced with restrictions imposed on the arts and theatrical scene here, he encourages artists to take the path with most resistance wielding their "little machete and hack through the jungle".

He's adamant that although boundaries are meant to be tested, it's "not just for the sake of being sensational or shocking", but once an issue "has to be urgently addressed, you have to push the envelope".



Pictures Courtesy of WILD RICE LTD

Looking through the Pinhole

An 11-film resumé is enough to floor any crowd. But say it's a Tan Pin Pin film and audiences will expect surprises sprinkled with the special Singaporean flavour. CASSANDRA ENG speaks to her and brings her from behind the scenes and into the limelight.

Picture Courtesy of Tan Pin Pin

You can count on Tan Pin Pin to produce an honest film that allows Singaporeans to talk about issues close to their hearts. At 38, the former lawyer and avid photographer is fervently passionate about helping others with their work and she says that's especially so when it comes to those "with something to say and who want their work to be heard".

This filmmaker with a heart for local issues likes to keep her films "simple, small and local". She explains, "Simple in that anyone would be able to do and small is tied to the notion of being simple. Sometimes all you see is a man talking or singing."

And living in Singapore means that she'll draw inspiration in "the small things" she chances upon everyday. Pin Pin will often "wander around Singapore" and her films bear clear traces of the inspiration. She's adamant that "all films be an experiment, whether in content or in style" and says risk is an important consideration when she creates a film.

First Take

Her start in this business was little more than accidental. It begun with **Moving House**, a documentary she made in 1996 as part of her final project for her Master of Fine Arts at Northwestern University.

Aired on the **Discovery Channel**, **Moving House** mirrors the changes in Singapore and follows the relocation of the remains of the Chew family's ancestors from the grave site to a spanking new niche in a columbarium.

Perhaps having had her film selected by the **Discovery Channel** came as a surprise because, "I didn't know I enjoyed images," she says.

The Filmmakers' Community

"It's an exciting period now," Pin Pin exclaims. She believes that there are more opportunities and an example is director, Jason Tan's **Zhou Gang** which disseminated after being posted on blogs. Pin Pin sees that whether through theatrical screening or published web content, Singaporean filmmakers will have ample opportunities to showcase their work.

But not only do filmmakers now have the technological advantage, they're also garnering more support from organisations, like Substation, that dedicate resources to developing homegrown talent.

Future Edit

Pin Pin hopes to see more filmmakers pluck up the "courage to take more risks". She comments, "I think lots of the filmmakers say a lot but don't do anything." So, we'll have to look out for that feisty spirit in her upcoming film that she already starting to plan.

Now then, if you're already inspired to scream and shout a Singaporean identity and put it all to film, Pin Pin advises, "Wear sensible shoes. You'll be on your feet a lot."

Fairer, but Definitely not Weaker!

To many people, triathlons and women just don't seem to click. But a group of women from a local triathlon club are trying to erase the stereotype. CALVIN YANG talks to one of these super-women who'll put most men to shame.



Girl Power!

Sarah's (see picture on the right) a member of Triladies, a club set up to help women fulfil their passion for the sport while juggling their families, careers and studies. Her deep interest in the sport sparked during her junior college years, but became an exhilarating challenge to cater to when she joined the Singapore Management University (SMU).

The former aquathlon (a competition involving swimming and running) club member was already running and swimming competitively when she was introduced to the triathlon by her coach.

In her first triathlon two years ago, she even entered herself in the gruelling Olympic distance category, which consists of a 1.5km swim, 40km bike ride and 10km run. Despite the feat, the active young lady is modest, "The swim and run leg was not much of a challenge for me but I'm not very adept with the bicycle."



But Sarah, who came in eighth in her age category at the competition despite a strong field of participants, was initially apprehensive about making the transition to triathlon.

"I considered making the switch but put it off because I didn't have a bicycle. When my boyfriend picked it up last year, it was convenient for me to tag along and here I am!" she recalls.

And it's a good thing she tagged along because she's since completed numerous triathlons, including



Pictures Courtesy of Triladies

the OSIM Singapore International Triathlon last July, where she finished seventh overall.

The Long and Winding Road

The road for triathletes is often peppered with major sacrifices and much pain. Sarah found it tough balancing training with school when she first started. "To accommodate training, I had to make some minor adjustments to my social life," she explains.

For one, to train for more than 10 hours each week, Sarah has to plan her timetable in advance, which leaves her little time for other activities.

The tough girl's also suffered a couple of injuries in the course of training. Without a hair out of place, Sarah says of the gruelling schedule and bruises, "I find motivation in training with friends and feeling the endorphin (a hormone released by the body that blocks pain and alleviates mood) rush. For me, training helps keep my sanity and maintain that work-life balance."

Dreams and Aspirations

With her eyes set on this year's NUS Biathlon and Singapore Biathlon, Sarah has much to keep her in the game.

Her ultimate wish, she says, is "to complete the Ironman someday, hopefully, within the next five years". The Ironman is a race that consists of a 3.8km swim, 180km bike dash and 42km run.

It seems Sarah is all set to take the most demanding race in her stride.

Way Out

Alternative Activities

Adrenaline junkies should rejoice and brace themselves for an adventure of a lifetime because ALICIA TAN will have you venturing out of your comfort zones onto great walls of ice, Brazilian martial art moves and miniature motorbikes.

Conquering an Ice Wall

Before you head off to mountainous China or Switzerland to attempt hair-raising winter sports, why not check out ice climbing right here on our swelteringly island? Introduced two years ago, ice climbing is a "relatively unknown sport in Singapore but is slowly gaining ground," says SAFRA Adventure Trainer Ernest Quah. SAFRA Adventure Sports Centre now sports the first artificial ice climbing wall in South East Asia.

He adds, "It provides the opportunity for people in hot, sunny Singapore to experience ice climbing without travelling too far and it also serves as a training platform for the more adventurous who want to pursue mountaineering or natural ice climbing."

With gears and equipment like an ice axe, helmet and crampons, the climber would carry more weight, so first-timers are required to have an instructor alongside to help them get a good feel of the artificial ice wall and learn the proper way to use the equipment.

Ernest explains that besides getting a grip on the technicalities, ice climbers have to deal with the cold and altitude too. So, skills, physical endurance and mental grit are some qualities an ice climber needs to have.

The simulated wall requires the same movement and climbing technique as when you're scaling a real ice wall, and it allows you to concentrate on building strength. It also improves a climber's efficiency in a safer environment than the treacherous icy mountains.

Ernest continues to dispel any anxiety, explaining that while "ice climbing has its own inherent risk, when one is equipped with the necessary skills and takes precautions, the sport can definitely be pursued safely".



Zooming Around on a Pocket Bike

Valentino Rossi, the Lance Armstrong of Motor Grand Prix had his first few races on a pocket bike, before hitting his career peak. This lean, mean, tiny machine is making waves among enthusiasts in Singapore and they gather weekly to zoom around on their 20kg, 30cm-high pocket bikes.



Photos by Alicia Tan

It's truly quite hard to fathom grown adults propping themselves awkwardly onto a pint-size motorbike and actually getting an adrenaline rush. But with a petrol-powered top speed of 80km/h and no true suspension or shock absorption except for the tyres, it's quite a thrilling ride.

Andy Soh, one of the pioneer pocket bikers in Singapore, started the **SGPocketBikes** forum for people interested or curious about pocket biking. Every other weekend, Andy, his friends and the growing community of pocket bike devotees will be at Marina Bay or Kallang doing what boys do best – tinkering with their machines.

For a good three to four hours, the band of biker boys will zoom around the deserted carpark on \$500 basic pocket bikes or high-end, Italian-manufactured machines that can cost up to \$2,000.

Terrence, one of the riders who picked up pocket biking about six months ago, is a regular at the weekend bike-capades and for him pocket biking is a way "to relieve stress from work as the heart-pumping rides are really an experience different from driving any other vehicle".

Ride on over to www.sgpocketbikes.com for updates on the pocket bike-capades.

Dancing the Capoeira

It will push you beyond your mental and physical limits and when you take part, your body will channel all its energy to this impactful street game.

Capoeira (say *kap-oo-air-uh*) is a Brazilian martial art and picking up the graceful and physically tough sport requires much passion since a newbie Capoeirista has to work hard to find his or her equilibrium and flow. But perhaps the most challenging thing to master is the swing or *ginga* that comes most naturally to Brazilians.

However, it's also all too rewarding since picking up Capoeira would also include learning a little bit of Portuguese because most moves can only be said in the native Brazilian lingo. You'll also find yourself dancing to the rhythm of traditional Brazilian folkdances like the *samba de roda*, the *forro*, the *maculele* (a stick fight dance), and even mastering several musical instruments.

hype went down to Bantus Capoeira to soak up the atmosphere, and it was a sight to behold. The studio had to be dry-mopped every 10 minutes and the flurry of 20-odd learners showing their moves will inspire onlookers to join in. There was a glint in each learner's eyes and the determination to push themselves beyond their limits was rife.

Magdalen Cheng, an undergraduate, comes for classes at least five times a week during her holidays and she says, "Even though Capoeira is extremely vigorous, it's really exhilarating and addictive in a way, you simply cannot get enough of it."

Want some Brazilian culture in your life? Check out sg.bantus.org for information of fees, location and schedule of dance classes.



Photo by Alicia Tan

Girls Night In

Girls, forget those usual movie-marathon sleepovers if you want a day with your gal-pals because GRACE CHUA makes your day in with your best girlfriends more interesting than ever.

Polished Divas



The men just don't get it when it comes to the world of indulgence. Imagine the countless ways that we women get to pamper ourselves - our calendars are filled with endless shopping sprees, manicure sessions, spa retreats and of course, the must-have ritual of the girly-girl's night. So, imagine a place where we do all of the above without even having to run about.

Enter the world of Polished Divas where lavish, girly parties are their forte! The first local nail lounge definitely gives a whole new perspective to nail indulgence. Forget about spending your girl's night or day out at typical nail parlors, flipping those old magazines that are probably torn and outdated, and getting annoyed that the chairs aren't that comfortable after all.

At Polished Divas, you'll say hello to full-body massage chairs that'll ease the tension in your back. They even come with portable DVD players that play your favourite TV series like *Sex and the City* and *CSI* or the latest blockbusters which are updated every month, while your nails are being done.



Did someone say party?



Yes, they did, and it's a pyjama party at Polished Divas! Don your comfy pyjamas and furry bedroom slippers, and let the fun begin at its quiet location in one of the old shophouses in Bugis Village.

The pyjama party allows you to watch a blockbuster movie of your choice while sipping hot chocolate and eating popcorn in front of the 32" LCD TV. Get your nails treated with the Pampered Diva Manicure & Pedicure, while giggling over that hot Hollywood actor on screen. To complete the experience, you'll even be given a Red Wine hand mask that's scientifically proven to be more than 20 times stronger than Vitamin C! Don't say we didn't warn you, but according to the list or rather, menu of delectable treatments, this treatment is highly addictive.

Of course, that's not all. You can have an extra special party by adding cupcakes (\$3 per cupcake) or viewing a private session of lingerie collection. It's free! Just pay for whatever you buy.

So whether you're in a mood to savour some delicious desserts or looking for something playful or naughty to wear, it's all at this nail lounge.

What are you waiting for? For \$500 for a group of six girls, it includes finger food and a free flow of tea or juice and a 10 percent discount voucher that's valid for the next visit, you're all set to have a whale of a time at 237B Victoria Street (just above Starbucks).

Seek indulgence at www.polished-divas.com.sg.

BOYS NIGHT OUT

Boys, a game of soccer or a round of strong beer with your burly pals is so not happening for a night out. Get ready for some hairpin turns and high-speed chasing when GRACE CHUA takes you racing on a go-kart.

Kart World Singapore

It's a pity that you won't get your chance to compete in the Formula One race that'll start in September this year. But if you're utterly tempted to go from 50km/h to the exhilarating speed of 120km/h and don't want to risk scoring a speeding ticket, read on.



Boys will be boys and it's time for you to say hello to Kart World, Singapore's only permanent karting track. Hidden in Jurong, no one would have known that this motor sport has been relatively active here for the last three decades! With their tyre walls similar to those used on many Formula One tracks around the globe, there's no better way to race with your friends than by having a friendly match here.

Just like in an actual race, start warming up with a few rounds around the track to get all pumped up to compete with your buddies.

Of course, depending on how many heats you want, after several rounds, the winners will get a chance to be on the podium to receive their medals!

If it's your first time trying out, you'll most likely

be given a Fun Kart which allows you to go up to 50km/h, a good enough speed for the tracks. Rest assured that you don't need any practice, you just have to get familiar with the pedals and you're all set to go.

If you're worried about your safety, the bumpers attached to the side of the kart and the low chassis of the kart are sufficient to prevent your kart from skidding.

However, if you and your friends are yawning at the speed, you might want to upgrade your wheels to a Fast Kart.

Get that mean machine when you become a member by signing up with a one-time fee of \$2,500. Imported straight

from Europe, this baby can get you racing from 90km/h all the way to 140km/h on long tracks.

Gear up for this!

Race you to Kart World



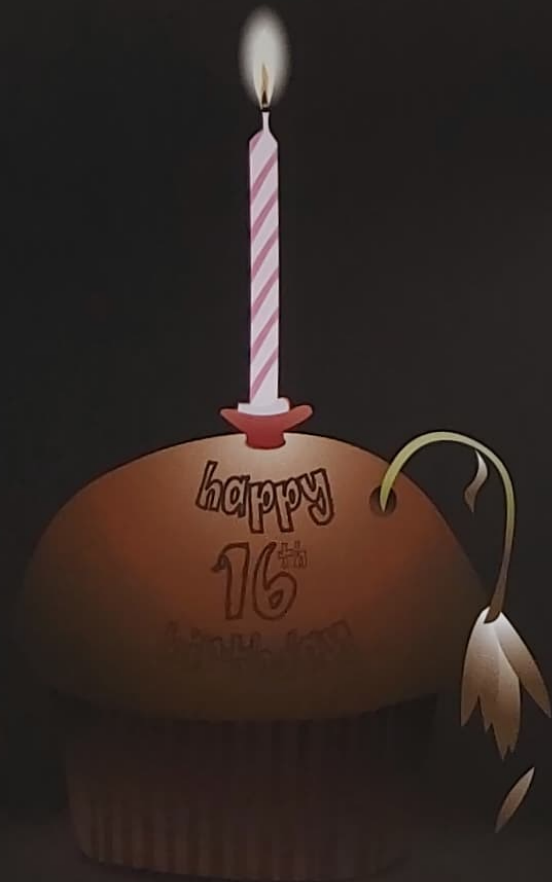
Being solo in this market in Singapore, the prices might look rather steep. The rental rate for a Fun Kart is \$40 for 10 minutes. However, the excitement and thrill of the game might tempt you in heading down for at least one race.

So, instead of boring your bunch of boys in front of the telly, why not have a match of your own at Kart World? Besides, no one said you couldn't be the Michael Schumacher on the racetracks of Go-Karting.

Rev it up at the open field in Yung Ho Road, Jurong or speed on over to their website, www.kartworld.com.sg

Child Abuse:

When The Law Forsakes



Illustrations by Stephanie Goh

We have laws that ban the chewing of gum, spitting of saliva and reckless speeding on the roads. But did our country with its brilliant legal structure, miss out one that protects our young from domestic violence and abuse? CHERYL HOON investigates.

Hiding behind the locked door in her bedroom has become the daily routine for Chloe, 20. On lucky days, she escapes unscathed and unharmed. More often than not, slaps and verbal abuse are bestowed by her inebriated father, furious with the money lost at his latest gambling escapade.

Her life was not always been marked with violence. Growing up, Chloe lived like any other child, showered with care and concern from loving parents. However, it all changed in 2005 when the only child's father lost his nine-to-five job.

"Honestly, I don't know what to do. I don't have the financial capabilities and the guts to leave home," she shares. "I don't think I'm heartless enough to report him to the police. I don't want him locked up. He is still my father and I love him."

Child Abuse

According to the "Love Our Children - Prevent Child Abuse" brochure by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), child abuse is defined as "any act by a parent, guardian or caregiver that endangers or impairs the child's physical or emotional well-being". Physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional and psychological abuse all fall under that category.

The child abuse law, legally known as the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA), protects children aged below 14, or any young person between 14 to 16 years old.

An abused person below 16 can seek help by confiding in a trusted adult who will be able to help. Alternatively, he or she may speak to a counsellor from any Family Service Centre or call Tinkle Friend, a helpline for children run by the Children's Society.

On to the Women's Charter, or not? So what happens to young persons like Chloe who was 17 when the abuse started and to whom the CYPA did not apply?

Ms Goh Soo Cheng, 31, a social worker with the Subordinate Courts of Singapore's Family and Juvenile Justice Centre, explains that people aged 16 and above are protected under a different law called the Women's Charter. This law protects people against violence committed by their own family.

One way the Charter protects families is through the Personal Protection Order (PPO).

A PPO is issued by the court to protect one from further acts of violence and applicants have to be 21 and above. For those below that age, Ms Goh suggests that he or she talk to a trusted relative regarding the situation. The relative can then apply for a PPO on behalf of the abused person.

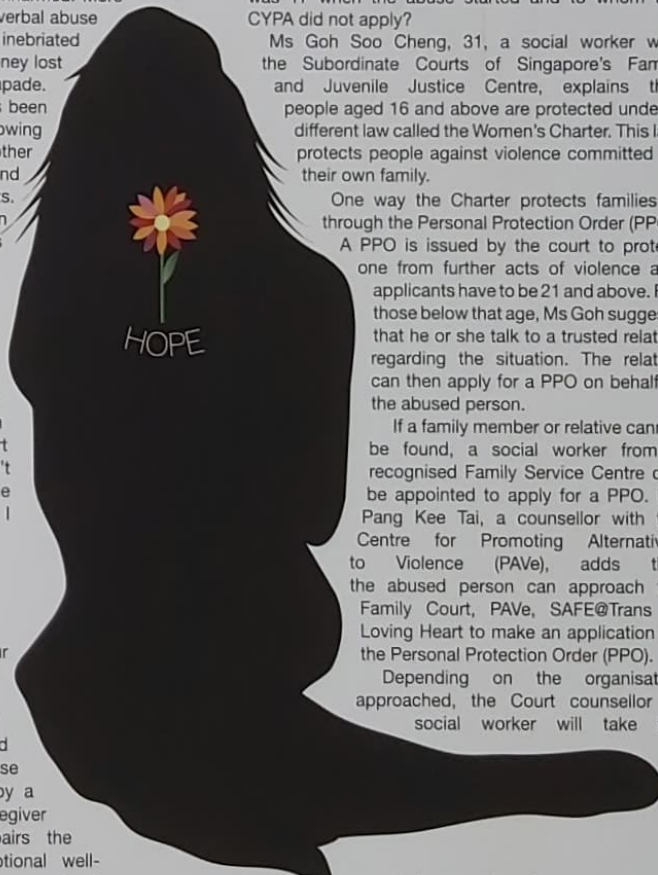
If a family member or relative cannot be found, a social worker from a recognised Family Service Centre can be appointed to apply for a PPO. Ms Pang Kee Tai, a counsellor with the Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVe), adds that the abused person can approach the Family Court, PAVe, SAFE@Trans or Loving Heart to make an application for the Personal Protection Order (PPO).

Depending on the organisation approached, the Court counsellor or social worker will take the

complainant through process of filing in and swearing of the standard Magistrate's Complaint form, affirmation of complaint, date given to return to the Family Court for a mention, and issuance of summons to the abuser.

The drawn out PPO process

A legislation fee varying from \$6 to \$11 is charged depending on the place at which the summons is served. A lawyer is not necessary during the



hearing and interpreters are available, at no charge, for those with a weak command of English.

It usually takes one to two weeks to get the case mentioned in court. The judge will then decide if the case can be resolved on the same day or if affidavits (sworn statements by the parties involved) and another hearing is necessary.

If a person has gathered evidence like pictures or medical certification from a doctor, he can show this to the court. The judge will then see what to take into consideration and make the judgement.

Normally, Ms Goh says, cases do not drag on and can be resolved in as fast as a week, but that depends on the complexity.

"I wasn't aware of any schemes or PPOs, and well, I just wanted to get away."

Effects of Abuse

According to Ms Goh, research on the psychological effects of abuse has shown that abused children may grow up to be aggressive. They might think that abuse is acceptable and turn violent when they're parents. However, effects may vary from person to person.

Abuse from her childhood to teenage days made "Marchieaddict" paranoid and fearful. She reveals in a post on the forum, "Scars such as these can never truly heal. To someone who has lived in terror, fear is very real. Till today, I am afraid of people suddenly standing near behind me because a lot of the attacks were unprovoked and unanticipated."

Courage to protect yourself

Some abused parties still don't have the knowledge or means to protect themselves. **Sgforums.com** user, "Marchieaddict", took no steps to protect herself when she was abused by a parent. "I wasn't aware of any schemes or PPOs, and I just wanted to get away. Besides, all these personal protection order stuff does not really assist in improving the situation right?" she asks **hype**.

However, the abuse gave her the determination and resolution to study hard in order to break free. When she was 19, "Marchieaddict" moved out and took on a job to support herself. It's been close to 10 years since she's cut off all contact with her tormentor and currently in her late twenties, she's doing well in her current occupation.

The Expedited Order

For people who are afraid of further abuse but they have no place to go other than the home they share with the abuser, the court offers a temporary protection order - Expedited Order (EO).

This order offers the complainant protection from the respondent before the PPO is granted. It's similar to the PPO, and in cases of any violence, the complainant can report to the police.

In severe cases, the abused can check with Family Service Centres for alternatives. The

safety plans include staying with relatives or going to a hotel if one can afford the expense. In extreme situations, the abused person will be brought to a crisis shelter.

Another **Sgforums.com** user, "Quinsy", who was severely beaten up in her polytechnic days knew about the PPO but did not file for one due to her relatives' persuasion to "save face".

If one does not take the first step to report their abused cases,

there is not much the Charter and Family Court can do since "these sources do not actively go into outreach, and do not help a person make an application", Ms Goh clarifies.

Where to get help

Family Court
Address: 3 Havelock Square
Telephone: 6435 5110

Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVE)
Address: Ang Mo Kio Ave 3, Blk 211, #01-1446
Telephone: 6555 0390

SAFE@TRANS
Address: Bedok North Ave 2, Blk 410, #01-58
Telephone: 6449 9088

Loving Heart Multi Service Centre
Address: Jurong East St 21, Blk 210, #01-389
Telephone: 6897 4766

The (In)Sensitive New Age Journalist

It seems that everyone - *Ah Bengs*, *Ah Peks* and all - wants to be a journalist. CALVIN YANG investigates citizen journalism that's making the headlines - for all the wrong reasons.

BY CALVIN YANG
REPORTER

The barriers governing freedom of speech look ready to be redefined with the Internet opening doors for ordinary folks to be part-time photographers-videographers-reporters. But the platform to create the most newsworthy content is threatening the cherished and sacred ethics of journalism such as impartiality, accuracy and objectivity.

The Brilliant Idea

Citizen journalism involves the public generating news for the masses and the increasing numbers of online forums and blogs have encouraged many to use the Internet to voice views and raise issues that affect their way of life.

Ephraim Loy, 25, is one Singaporean who's gotten hooked on "reporting". The Singapore Management University (SMU) Bachelor of Social Sciences undergraduate, who shares a blog with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr George Yeo, tells **hype** that "this form of journalism is still quite fresh".

The Young People's Action Party (Young PAP) member, who'd suggested that the Minister tried blogging, says, "It's been effective in encouraging the active participation of a community in a society, especially more so for the younger ones."

The Local STOMP-ing Ground

In tune with the trends, **The Straits Times Online Mobile Print (STOMP)** website is cultivating new forms of reporting for Singaporeans.

According to the website, the portal was set up in 2006 to engage readers in a platform on which they can express themselves. Through the Short-Message-Service (SMS) or Multimedia-Messaging-Service (MMS), Singaporeans post news



Picture Courtesy of STOMP

SEAT FOR TWO: Looks like a place for two isn't enough.

clips, offer tip-offs and upload images or videos of events.

Ephraim is a regular contributor and he explains **STOMP** and its counterparts' popularity. "I feel that although there are many mediums that give voice to the public, it's the immediate impact of photos or videos that grabs attention."

"It is instantaneous without going through the whole gate-keeping process but this can also be harmful."

The Destructive Weapon

It jolly well may be, since a quick look through the portal reveals that what was once a place to provide better news content, has become a stomping ground for Singaporeans to shame their countrymen.

Rachel Chan, a 25-year-old producer with a local news company, says, "Citizen journalism is about snitching. It's become a platform for indirect confrontation with other members of society."

For example, in Jan 2008, **STOMP**-er, LolaLala, posted a picture of a lady taking two seats on the train - one for her

paper bag and one for herself. LolaLala was obviously ticked off by the lady's behaviour but her post garnered a few nasty comments from other **STOMP**-ers who mentioned her lack of concern for the elderly.

The Voice of Truth (or Threat)

Andy Ho, a columnist for **The Straits Times**' Review Desk, reveals that the possibility of misusing citizen journalism is very high.

The 49-year-old, who'd created a buzz in the blogging community with his article in **The Straits Times** on whether citizen journalism's a public shaming tool, says, "It doesn't matter if it isn't the best story because people just like to see their own works in the public eye."

So, with the advent of the Internet, the audacity of the public and their growing desire to be heard, it looks like simple write-ups of inconsiderate commuters blocking the exit of a MRT train and pictures of couples making-out openly in a hospital might not suffice in the land of public snitching.

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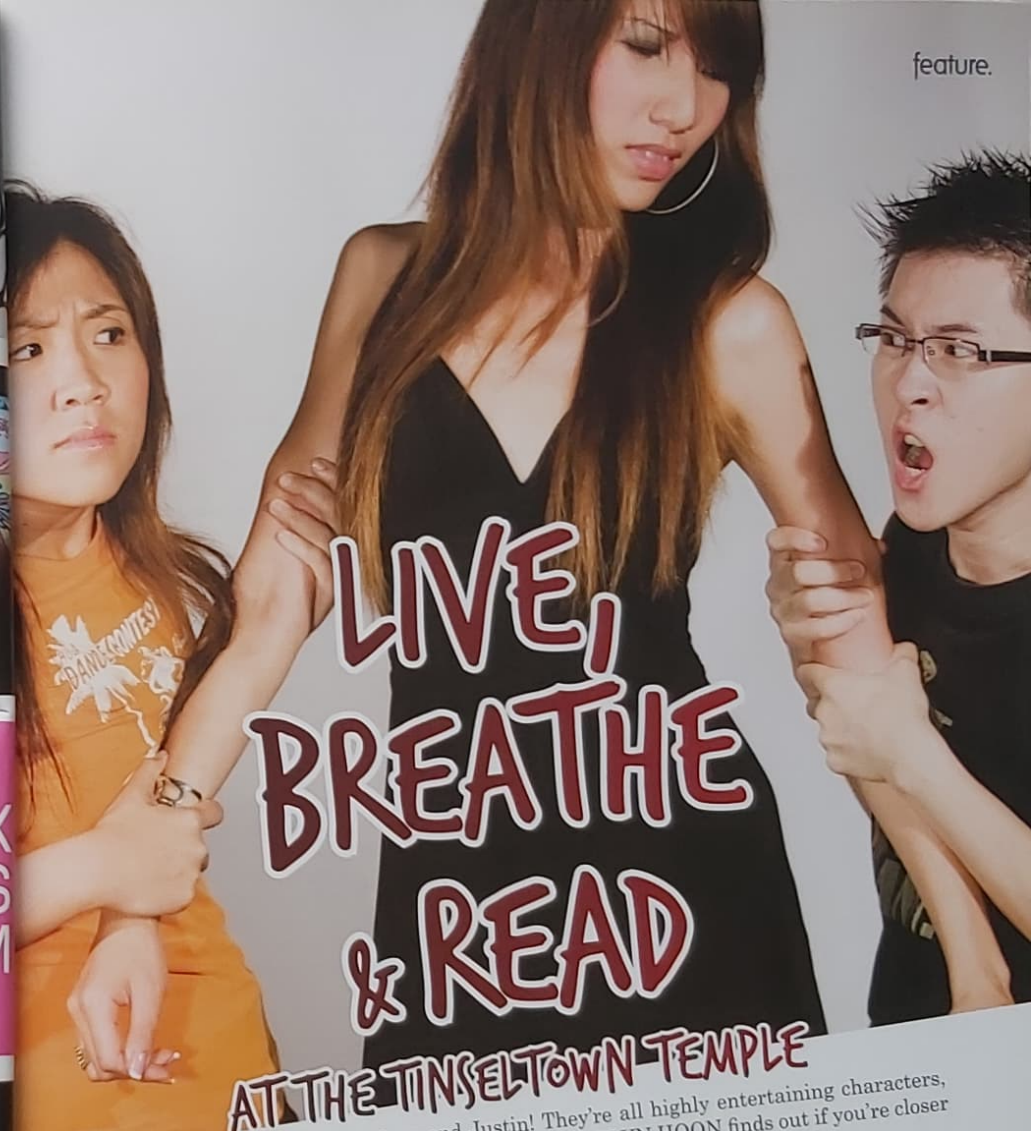
Answer the following question and stand to win attractive Fabrix vouchers.

Q: Name a store in which Fabrix cases can be found in Singapore.

Send your answers in an email with the subject header "**Fabrix + hype Contest**" to hypemagazine@gmail.com

5 lucky winners will each walk away with a \$50 Fabrix voucher!

Send us your answers by 30 April 2008



Read all about it! Britney, Lindsay and Justin! They're all highly entertaining characters, but have you been reading too much about them? PEARLYN HOON finds out if you're closer to the celebrity-crazed crowd than you think.

Photos by Stephanie Goh

Brangelina's toddlers, Lindsay's new party-mate and Paris Hilton's new Guess bag – it sounds ridiculous to let news like this run your life. But for some, no day goes by without them visiting gossip blogs like **Pink Is The New Blog**, **PerezHilton.com** and **Oh No They Didn't (ONTD)** to get the dirt on Hollywood's latest.

With millions of users logging on daily, this seemingly harmless ritual is rapidly invading the lives of many. One of whom is Audrey Khang, a first-year Business Marketing student from Singapore Institute of Management. At 14, Audrey would race home from school to record the scheduled television appearances of her favourite band, A1. Once it ended, she'd replay the tape until she had her daily fill of A1 members, Ben, Paul, Christian and Mark. Once that was over, it was on to the Internet to look for their pictures and latest news.

"I used to get all the pop magazines like **Smash Hits**, **TV Hits** and **Top of the Pops** fortnightly and monthly. I'd save \$30 a month just to get them," says Audrey.



"And I visited **FanFiction.Net** a lot, until they took away the celeb segment," she continues, recalling how she enjoyed reading fan-written fiction about A1 and other bands.

Now, nearly six years later, Audrey's moved on from boy bands to the antics of Hollywood celebrities. She visits **ONTD** everyday to scroll through at least a hundred entries about the stars she fancies.

THE SYNDROME

Habits like Audrey's have prompted psychologists Lynn McCutcheon and James Houran from the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom to conduct studies and understand this phenomenon better.

According to them, Celebrity Worship Syndrome (CWS) is defined as "having an unhealthy fascination with the lives of the rich and the famous". Their findings show that the syndrome has affected more than one-third of the world's population (roughly 2.27 billion people).

International camera phone usage has also hit the roof in 2007, with over a billion users. This means that anyone can snap a picture of their favourite star shaving their heads or drunk in the driver's seat, giving the paparazzo (photographers who fiercely shadow celebrities) a good run for their money.

PAPARAZZO IN TRAINING

Elizabeth Carter is another celebrity-obsessed citizen and a member of the online **LiveJournal (LJ)** community **ONTD**. A self-professed "total celebrity nerd", she's one of the nine moderators of **ONTD**. Her job is to go through every entry and their cited sources to check if they're valid before publishing them, which is no easy job with **ONTD**'s more than 50,000 members.

"On slower news days, there are about 120 posts approved. There are about as many, if not more, rejected daily," Elizabeth tells **hype**.

But she's not complaining. "People feel like it's their site. Without the input from the readers, it would be so boring. The comment section is the most interesting. People get to say what they want and feel like someone will read, care, and agree," she explains.

ONTD: A SITE FOR GOSSIP

The intense nattering of opinions after each gossipy **ONTD** entry comes as no surprise to Dr Adrian Wang, a clinical psychologist at Gleneagles hospital.

Perhaps what urges us to comment, Dr Wang says, is that "when you read about celebrities like Britney and her divorce, or Lindsay Lohan going to rehab, it humanises them. We see them like you and me".

Readers then identify with the celebrities and when they "feel they know them, or want to relate to them", they comment and participate in the drama.

EVERYTHING IN MODERATION

While living and breathing celebrity news may not sound healthy, having a little dose of it once in awhile can do you some good, reveals Dr Wang.

"Even I like watching **E!** channel on cable. There's nothing wrong with having an interest in the lives of celebrities. It adds colour to our lives. As fans, it's normal to read about them," he says.

For someone like Sheryl Lee, a law freshman from Singapore Management University, giving in to the occasional peek at **Pink Is The New Blog** to enjoy blogger or gossip columnist (his designation is disputed by fans and critics), Trent's sharp wit and commentary, is nothing to worry about.

"I feel that CWS is more of a problem in the West, because of the proliferation of the paparazzi culture," says Sheryl, who also thinks that "as long as it's pursued for entertainment, it's fine".

WHEN IT BECOMES OBSESSION

However, Dr Wang indicates that Singaporeans have to watch that this doesn't become an obsession. There's a difference between having a strong need to know more about one's favourite actor and arranging life around a television show featuring that celebrity.

Or perhaps it also includes chasing your idol so wildly that you end up getting caught like the Singaporean couple featured in **The Straits Times** on Jan 16 were. The telemarketers and Jay Chou fans were fined the maximum of \$1,000 each, for entering the departure hall for a chance to meet their idol.

Dr Wang explains that teens are more prone to this syndrome because they're at a crucial stage where they discover things and may seek role models to look up to. This, he adds, might be why some are madly fascinated with their idols.

THE CURE

Pressing as it may be, Dr Wang says that CWS isn't a medical condition so there's no clinical solution. The most that can be done to help someone with CWS is counselling from friends, family or a professional psychologist.

He explains, "Teens tend to listen more to their peers, because they don't take kindly to instructions from parents. If it's affecting their school work because they can't stop looking at a gossip blog, then it's best if friends step in and tell them that there's more to life than this."

HOW ADDICTED ARE YOU?

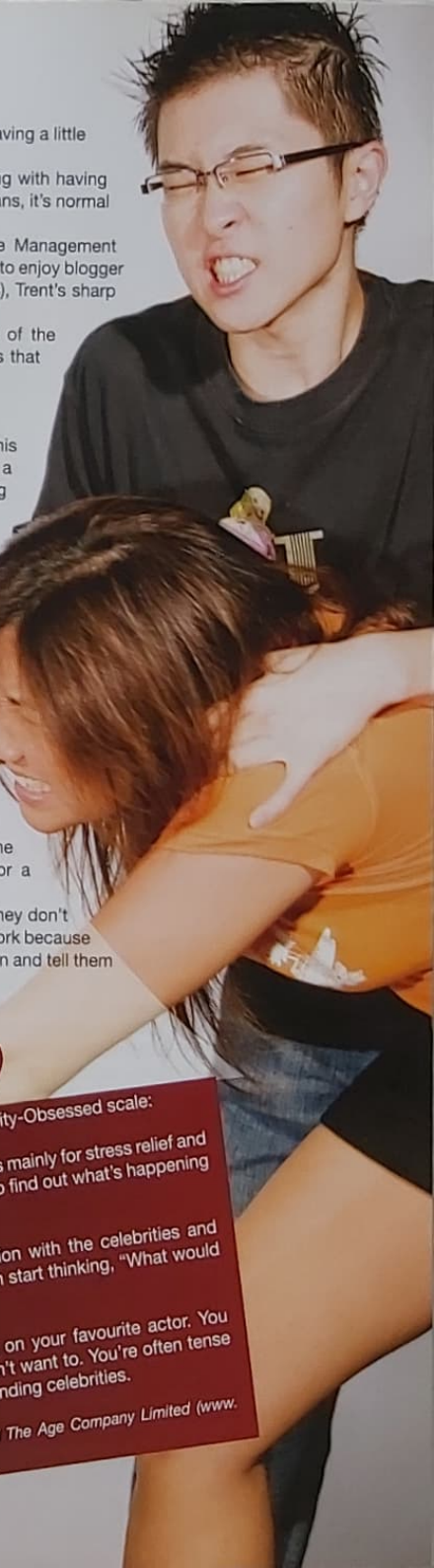
Here are the three levels to see where you stand on a Celebrity-Obsessed scale:

Entertainment-social: You check out a couple of magazines mainly for stress relief and entertainment value. You also visit a gossip blog everyday to find out what's happening to use it as a conversation starter.

Intense-personal: You believe that you have a connection with the celebrities and you're upset when they are involved in mishaps. You often start thinking, "What would Beyoncé do?" when you face a problem.

Borderline-pathological: You frequently hunt for news on your favourite actor. You think about them throughout the day even when you don't want to. You're often tense and moody because you've exhausted your energy defending celebrities.

Information from Answers Corporation (www.answers.com) and The Age Company Limited (www.theage.com.au).





The Dim Sum Dollies Dream

Between the three dazzling Dim Sum Dollies, they've been in over 120 astounding productions. Most impressively, their sell-out **Dim Sum Dollies: The History of Singapore** was so wildly popular it garnered a rerun. ADDISON THOMAS WONG and DENISE TAN see how the Dollies keep audiences and themselves laughing.

Selena Tan, Emma Yong and Pam Oei are the three brilliant theatre actresses who've been behind the Dim Sum Dollies since 2003 and come Feb 21, they'll be strutting their stuff and belting their favourite rhythms in the re-run of **Dim Sum Dollies: The History of Singapore**. Their loud, wonderfully colourful productions all tell the Singaporean story and that's because, Pam says, "The Dim Sum Dollies are 100 percent Singaporean!"

And being Singaporean is what they do excellently. With what Selena calls their local lingo and Singaporean shorthand, they're doing what they love and bringing laughter into the lives of their audiences. For Selena, having the audience find delight in their unique blend of humour is a highlight for her because she's happy "when people are happy".

The Journey for Independence

But their journey was fraught with difficulties. While Pam may be hopping from production to production now, what with **Titoudao**, **The Campaign to Confer the Public Service Star on JBJ** and **O! Sleeping Beauty!**, she knows there's much that cannot be taken for granted. When Pam first ventured into theatre, her biggest challenge was "not knowing when the

next paycheck would be" and Selena completely understands because in the past, when paychecks were far and few in between, she had to battle the urge to say "yes" to every production that came her way.

Emma had a different hurdle to be anxious over. Even though she's been in sell-out performances like 2006's **Cabaret**, opposite international superstar, Fei Xiang, singing on stage didn't happen so easily and she's had to struggle to forget her shyness. Now, she's ready to hop on stage and dance the night away because, "being a Dolly requires you to live fearlessly".

To Be a Dolly

Perhaps Emma's refrain rang truest when Pam and herself almost crashed into each other while suspended high above the Esplanade stage during **Dim Sum Dollies: Singapore's Most Wanted** in 2005. For Emma, that was "unforgettable" but for Pam, who saw Emma's torso hurtling towards her while in the middle of a Kung Fu kick, "my life flashed before my eyes and I've never looked at Emma the same way again".

However, that's all in a day's work for Pam because a Dolly is the "bravest, most honest person out there".

Pictures Courtesy of Dream Academy



Dim Sum Dollies in the History of Singapore will be at the Esplanade Theatre from Feb 21 to Feb 28. Tickets are sold at SISTIC from \$38 to \$98.

When the Dollies First Met

It's been six years since Emma, Selena and Pam first collaborated in **A Single Woman** at the Esplanade Theatre Studio, but the trio can still recall how crazy the experience was working for the first time with each other.

"It was mad!" exclaims Selena. "I didn't really know what form the show was going to take. It was scary, but exciting and definitely fun!"

The girls were thus ecstatic when the piece turned out to be a huge success, garnering rave reviews. But it wasn't until after their second collaboration, **Steaming!**, the following year that the girls adopted the name Dim Sum Dollies.

"[The first time] was tremendous fun, which is why we got together again, calling ourselves the Dim Sum Dollies thereafter, explains Pam. "We also discovered that our voices just happened to blend beautifully, with Emma as soprano, Selena as mezzo and myself as alto."

The Dollies' Walk to Fame

Since then, the Dim Sum Dollies have made their mark in society, critically and socially. The girls staged **The Revenge Of The Dim Sum Dollies** in 2004 and **Dim Sum Dollies: Singapore's Most Wanted** in 2005, and by the time **Dim Sum Dollies: The History of Singapore** came out last year, the Dollies had become such iconic figures in the local theatrical scene and received such overwhelming response, the producers decided on a re-run for the show.

"Our irrepressible sense of fun!" is what Emma attributes the popularity of the Dim Sum Dollies to, as well as "the fact that the Dollies are flamboyantly local

and just out there and proud," says Selena.

Indeed, the Dollies have created for Singapore a refreshing sense of fun in theatre. But just as the three actresses have made an impact on audiences, both local and foreign, through these characters, the Dim Sum Dollies have also helped bring attention to the girls as theatre thespians.

Pam admits, "A Dolly is a very high profile role. We are lucky that the act is such a big success. It has definitely raised my profile more than any other role I've had."

The History of Singapore: The Rerun

It's clear that the actresses have reached the zenith of their careers with the popularity of **The History of Singapore** and the rerun it's garnered.

"We are trying to stick closely to the original script," says Selena, who also created and wrote the piece. "But a couple of scenes will be rewritten to reflect the hot topics in the public arena."

Selena assures, however, that the rerun will still be infused with the same amount of fun, volume and comedy.

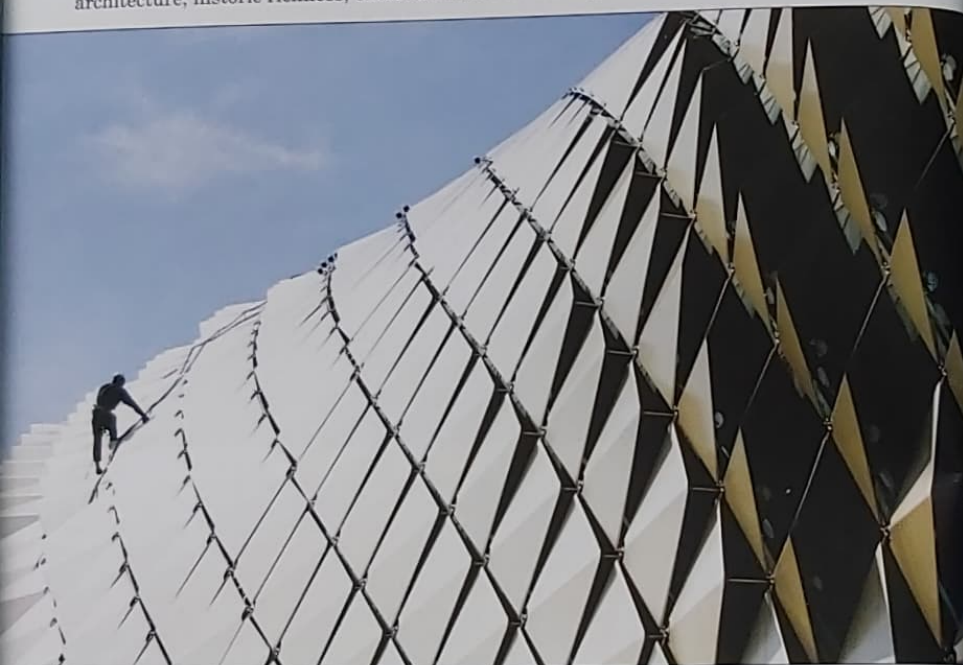
Next in Line for the Dollies

Now that **The History of Singapore** is scheduled for a rerun, can we expect the same for previous Dim Sum Dollies productions for those who missed them?

"There's always the possibility - perhaps a "Best of" soon," says Selena. "But I'm still keen on a brand new show as I feel there's so much more to write about. I'm taking time off in 2008 to work on a brand new script that we'll stage in 2009."

Singapore and its Wonders

Singapore hosts a number of attractive sites that await visitors and locals alike. A. B. RICHARD visits the attractions that will undoubtedly complement the future of Singapore with its unique architecture, historic richness, entertainment value and good fortunes. Photos by A. B. Richard



Unique Architecture

The Esplanade is a hub for performing arts and it hosts a 1,600-seat concert hall and a 2,000-seat theatre for performances. Opened in 2002 and costing \$600 million, the impressive architecture was a collaborated design by a Singaporean architecture company and a London-based architectural firm.

It would have been built out of glass, but the Esplanade would generate too much heat in Singapore's equatorial climate. So, aluminum sunshades were added throughout the exterior of the Esplanade.

Esplanade's interior is just as intriguing. The concert hall features a world-class acoustics design, making it the sixth such theatre in the world. The special four level horse-shoe-shaped theatre was designed to mirror the theatres of old, austere European opera houses.



Historical Richness

The Singapore Merlion is a monument that signifies Singapore's past and future. Back in Sep 15, 1972, when it was first erected, it faced the Singapore River to greet all visitors. However, the Merlion stopped spouting water in 1998 and with the completion of the Esplanade Bridge, the view of the Merlion was blocked from the waterfront. In 2002, the Merlion was moved to its new location, with the Central Business District as its backdrop.



Entertainment Value

The Singapore Flyer will be the tallest observation wheel in the world. Set to be opened in March, the Flyer has 28 capsules which can hold up to 30 passengers each. The breathtaking view is promised to be without any obstruction and you might even have a glimpse of Batam and Bintan when you're up there. A complete rotation of the wheel will take 37 minutes and prices are from \$20. If you're already curious, catch a video of the construction process on www.singaporeflyer.com.sg

Good Fortunes

Singapore's largest shopping centre before the opening of VivoCity, was Suntec City. Launched in 1995 with a retail space of 888,000 square feet, Suntec City was featured three times in the **Amazing Race** series – once in the US season and twice in the **Amazing Race Asia** seasons.

The beauty of Suntec City is not only in its amazing shopping experience, but the fact that it was built on the grounds of revered Chinese geomancy. When viewed from an aerial perspective, the five buildings and the convention centre will look like your left hand. The Fountain of Wealth at the centre of the buildings forms a ring in the palm. The water spouts inwards from the fountain to signify the retention of wealth.



That Special Valentine's

No more insipid dinners at over-priced restaurants or humongous bouquets of wilting flowers. XU LITING shows you how you can go on a date in our bucolic countryside, make your own chocolate with a French chef and savour a home-cooked meal at an intimate little restaurant.

A candlelight dinner and a large bouquet of roses for your beloved on the most romantic day of the year may sound appealing, but it's terribly mundane and in need of a revamp. Besides, nothing would make a Valentine's date more memorable than one that's totally out of the ordinary.

Organically Lovely

Get close to nature with a visit to Bollywood Veggies and let it set for you that perfect intimate atmosphere. The two of you will need to catch a ride on the Kranji Express bus (\$1 for students, \$2 otherwise) at Kranji MRT and after a 15-minute journey, you'll be ready to take a tour of the farm (\$2 per person) and explore the mini plantations by yourselves or enjoy a 20-minute guided tour to learn about herbs, spices and specialty plants.



Getting close to nature is the perfect way to relax and, owner, Mrs Ivy Singh-Lim knows this best. "Your senses become more aware of smells and colours. When you see the butterflies and bees and snakes even, you feel a sense of wonderment for life. Of course, you can also

have a quick roll in the grass or among the bushes," she cheekily quips.

Once you're peckish, head to the Poison Ivy Bistro and sample the organic vegetables fresh from the farm. According to Mrs Singh-Lim, because they're organic, the fruits and vegetables have "a different bite".

Dishes at the bistro range from \$1 to \$6 per dish. Get healthy with the papaya salad, vegetable spring rolls, and be refreshed by the soothing aloe vera drink. If you're not willing to forsake your daily dose of meat, try the delectable chicken curry that will continue to spice up your morning.

Strolling among the pretty flowering herbs, meandering around the ponds covered in lily pads and sitting on the whimsical swing suspended from a thick, sturdy tree branch makes for a lovely start to this date.



Bollywood Veggies is hidden in 100 Neo Tiew Road. Call their farm residence at 6898 5001.

Pictures Courtesy of Laurent's Café & Chocolate Bar

Chocolates with a Personal Touch



After an extremely healthy meal, you and your date are now entitled to some sinful pleasures.

Located at The Pier on Robertson Quay, Laurent's Café & Chocolate Bar is a boutique eatery that offers chocolates in exotic flavours such as Yuzu (a Japanese-grown citrus fruit), Mirabelle (a plum from eastern France), passion fruit, chili, and green tea with raspberry.

Founder and Chef Chocolatier Laurent Bernard, who has near perfected the craft with his passion and years of experiment and practice, shares his expertise by conducting two-hour chocolate-making workshops at the café.

For \$80, you learn from the best and deliver lovingly handmade truffles to sweep your date off his or her feet.

And if you doubt your culinary skills, just visit this unique chocolate boutique for a romantic dessert because having chocolate there is like having a taste of heaven.

Laurent's Café & Chocolate Bar at The Pier on Robertson Quay, #01-11. Call 6235 9007 for reservations.



A Taste of Home

If a home-cooked meal is what you want to share, scoot on over to Karma Kettle and Rhapsody after your hearty dessert. Owners, Priti and Dhiraj, are from India, and they've brought with them Western cuisine with an Asian twist. Every dish on the menu is created by the couple who loves experimenting in the kitchen.

Opened in Aug 2007, Karma Kettle and Rhapsody has since created quite a buzz with their one-of-a-kind dishes. For Valentine's Day, Priti has created a special menu that features interesting variations to the existing specials, with an emphasis on desserts.

Begin the romantic dinner with the Karma Kettle Roast Tea Salad (\$5 or \$8.50). Served hot after being roasted in green and assam tea, it's scrumptiously unique. hype also recommends the flavourful main dish, Across the English Channel (\$14), which has seven types of mushrooms in a rich, creamy and

slightly sweet parsley fricassee (delicate white sauce usually with heavy cream) served with either cumin rice or whipped potato.

For dessert, indulge in Eton Mess (\$6), a classic dessert traditionally served at London's Eton College's annual prize-giving ceremony. The sweet delight, rumoured to have been created when a Labrador dog accidentally sat on a picnic basket at the back of a car, has layers of strawberries, meringue, vanilla sponge, bitter marmalade and cream.

If you still can't get enough, visit the retail store to get specially imported products, like olive oil, vinegar and syrup that can be made into refreshing cordial and cocktails, from Southern France. Also available are premium Darjeeling teas and fine wines; all of which can only be found exclusively at Karma Kettle and Rhapsody.

Karma Kettle and Rhapsody is located at 501 Bukit Timah Road, Cluny Court, #01-01A and #26B Dempsey Road. For reservations, call 6314 3483.

Picture Courtesy of Karma Kettle & Rhapsody

Strut Spring 08' Style:

From Runway to Freeway

It's time to throw those drab cardigans back into the closet and bring out the colours of spring. STEPHANIE GOH talks to prominent local bloggers of **Fashion Nation**, Dottie and Stephie, about this year's spring fashion trends and learns how you can recreate four runway looks.



From Lanvin's (pronounced *lan-vah-n*) Alber Elbaz showing a beautifully simple yet fresh collection of voluminously light pieces to Anna Sui's playful take on girly punk, most of the designers sent a vibrant palette of bright colours down the runway.

Dress in light, breathable materials like chiffon and jersey, clearly to complement the spring and summer weather, and have makeup that's fresh with looks being natural with a beautiful glow.

For most of the *prêt-à-porter* (ready-to-wear) collections this season, we saw styles of hair ranging from the simple yet elegant blowout style to light floaty curls.



Work and Play

D&G, an urban-inspired line from Dolce & Gabbana known for its glamorous style, took a different turn this season with light floral dresses, preppy cuffed shorts, cardigans and blazers, all modelled on strappy flats.

This versatile layered look will bring you smoothly from work to play with ease. A formal denim blazer worn over a smart shirt paired with preppy chic shorts carries that signature D&G glam but as shorts may not be suitable for most offices, Stephie advises that it will "definitely be better to wear pants or a skirt".

Though the outfit from D&G has a blue palette, Dottie feels it's necessary to mix it up with a contrasting colour, such as a dual-toned shirt, to break the monotone, "if you want to add colour, you should add colour in your accessories like your shoes and your bags".



Smart casual in

Even though this is a hot country with unpredictable weather, it doesn't mean board shorts and baggy tees should turn into a uniform. Michael Kors has just the answer.

For a smart, sexy evening look, throw out that monotonous collared shirt and jeans. Michael Kors has a simple yet suave outfit that will definitely impress - green turtleneck, navy blue blazer with gold buttons, dark-wash jeans and a brown belt. This smart casual number is perfect for dinner or more importantly, a date with a special someone. If turtlenecks are just too warm, Stephie suggests, "In terms of a Singaporean context, a V-neck or a round neck would be fine." For an understated look, she recommends that "you wear white, black, grey".

If it's a daytime look you're after, Dottie suggests tailored shorts, which are currently "in" for men, and a shirt or t-shirt. Paired with loafers or sneakers, this is an effortless, sophisticated look that's easy to throw together.



Picture Courtesy of Style.com



The Versatile White Dress

Sonia Rykiel, Karl Lagerfeld, Singapore's own Andrew Gn, Valentino, Versace and Zac Posen all had one thing in common while showing off their spring collections - cotton or chiffon, shift or trapeze, maxi or mini, white or off white, the one must-have piece for this spring is the white dress. Definitely a spring favourite, the white dress ties sophistication and playfulness together for a fabulously fresh look.

"It is a piece that's good to have as it's very versatile," Stephie says. However, both bloggers feel that though the white dress is not a wardrobe essential unlike a white shirt, the piece is like a blank canvas and a lot can be done to spice up the outfit.

But if you are not a dress kind of girl, just cheat and no one would judge you for it. Copying Fendi's fantabulous match of a floaty chiffon skirt and a jersey top with hankie-cut sleeves will do just nicely. Pair this with a wide colourful belt at the waist to complete.

However, Dottie warns, "Not everybody looks good in white. It's not a very forgiving colour."

Sun, Sand and a Kaftan



The sun is shining and that calls for a beach party! Let Stella McCartney help you show up stylish and sexy at the beach.

In her latest collection, she sends a blue floral-patterned kaftan on model Agyness Deyn. The kaftan is a great piece that can be worn to town and the beach.

If you are going for lunch with friends and want to shake off the beach vibe, slip on some shorts under the kaftan, and cinch it with a belt, Dottie and Stephie suggest, and pair the outfit with some sexy heels.

Not all of us can afford to buy the latest tulle outfits from Karl Lagerfeld's eponymous collection. However, being fashionable means adapting and adding a bit of yourselves into the look, not blindly following trends. So embrace your style, love your look and you will be wowing the crowds in no time.



Who are Dottie and Stephie

Dottie and Stephie are two prominent local bloggers who use **Fashion Nation** <http://fashionnation.wordpress.com>, as their platform to express their views on all things fashion. They have been featured in **The Straits Times' URBAN** and are the only local bloggers to get invites for Singapore Fashion Week.

They recommend Soon Lee, a small retail shop in 56 Haji Lane, for their wide clothing collection that's designed by talented Singaporean designers. Soon Lee is run by two Singaporeans, Wei Loong and Sharon, who want to bring some casual dresses, structured suits, and accessories to fashion savvy Singaporeans. That's why we decided that there's no better way to usher in summer than to do it with one of Soon Lee's pretty kaftans or ultra-hip pant suits.

Soh Irresistible!

The Singapore Design Festival in 2005 crowned her one of Singapore's top 20 designers and she's charmed many fans and fashion critics with her label, Hansel. Coiffed hairdo neatly in place and skinny jeans snug on her hips, Jo Soh chats with GRACE CHUA.

the first stitch

It all started out when she part-timed as a pre-school arts teacher at the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, United Kingdom, where she also trained as a fashion designer. Jo produced a range of clothing and artwork for sale at a three-day show at the school's gallery and it turned out to be a huge success with almost all of her maiden collection quickly snapped up. Inspired, she decided that it was time to take a chance and start her own label.

The budding designer painstakingly created a 12-outfit collection called *Me and My Camel* and it was featured in the New Generation show at the Mercedes-Benz Australian Fashion Week in 2003. After the show, her entire collection was ordered and an agent was hired to represent the label in Australia.

Needing a name for her label, Jo decided to name hers after Hansel, her pet Jack Russell Terrier she'd rescued from the streets.

patchwork of accolades

Hansel's got tonnes of fans, of which includes **MTV (Music Television)** VJ hottie Denise Keller, who wore the Award Cami Dress in Ultramarine, on the TV show **The Finer Side**. Jo's bright-coloured pieces have also been worn by all-girl rock band, The Veronicas.

Plus, her collections have been featured across the globe - from Australia's **Harper's Bazaar**, to Britain's prestigious design magazine, **Wallpaper***, to fashion shows in Vietnam and even London.

more than the sewing machine

While her accolades in the fashion industry run for yards, sketching designs is not her only forte. She's taken up photography and participated in LOMO group photography exhibitions. Jo's also co-produced a photo-book of the street style of the elderly in Singapore.

It's an impressive achievement but she's terribly modest about it. "I'm just a hobby photographer. I just use photography to record things that catch my eye."

her muse

Describing herself as "quirky, serious and

unpredictable", Jo has set herself apart from local designers like Nic Wong of Nicholas with his structured style and Baylene with her loud and androgynous collection.

She finds her muse not with designers like Karl Lagerfeld or John Galiano but with people who sell their works and designs on **Etsy**, an online marketplace for anyone who loves buying or selling everything handmade.

And Jo's collection is chockfull with pieces that she deems a reflection of her own eclectic style. That's why she wears everything she designs; especially her favourite, the Hero Short Tiered Dress in Rayon Jersey.

a whiff of captain cheese!

Jo says that since colours, especially black and white, affect her strongly, Hansel's latest collection *Captain Cheese*, consisting of tent dresses (from \$239), and tube dresses (\$279 onwards), has a primary colour palette of the two colours. However, she's not one for a minimalistic and somewhat sombre collection, so she's added splashes of grey and bright yellow to keep *Captain Cheese* fresh and radiant.

This was of utmost importance, Jo explains, because "Captain Cheese is a character who is much needed in our lives now. He is a source of optimism in these times of anxiety, doom and gloom."

ready for more

Even after leaving such a strong impression in several fashion capitals, she's still not ready to rest on her colourful laurels. Jo's set her sights on the US market and also started designing Hansel's first electric bike.

A fireball of energy, she dashes away after assuring us that Hansel the Jack Russell Terrier is doing fine and getting fatter. Ah, indeed, life is looking good for Hansel and Hansel.

Tempted to check out Hansel's collections? Check out www.ilovehansel.com



Photo: Courtesy of Jo Soh

To Be The Next "In" Thing

It's a job that parents frown upon, elders advise against and friends warn about, yet there are some who choose to take the plunge. **CASSANDRA ENG** finds out if a fashion designer can tread the thin line between commercialism and creativity, and succeed in Singapore.

Commercialism Vs Creativity

"Fashion is fickle, and fashion is about the next big thing, next big silhouette, next big length," Lionnel Lim declares. Once a designer, but now a fashion stylist and publicist, Lionnel knows first-hand, the plight of the industry, "The only way is to follow your own ideals and ideas but that requires money as well. You can't do what you want without any consideration of commercialism."

Commercialism seems to have overtaken creativity in Singapore and Lionnel feels that "there is still some way to go before the fashion industry here is as bustling as the ones in Hong Kong, Japan and Korea". And while he's glad that local labels are getting orders from buyers overseas, he thinks that "we need to show more innovation in terms of designs and fabrications".

Lionnel explains that Singapore hasn't shown much creativity since much of it is lost partly because of the demands of the local consumers. "Local designers have been churning out fashionable styles that are currently available everywhere in the planet," he laments.

For the Rich and Famous

But perhaps it is necessary to mimic the style of those big-branded names. Adelyn Cheong, associate merchandising manager for Esprit Holdings Limited, was a graduate from the London College of Fashion, but she ended up pursuing a career in fashion buying. She feels that Singaporeans think local brands are "poorly designed, not branded and too expensive because of low economies of scale". Lionnel concurs and adds that locals think designs made in Singapore means "passable materials, fit and workmanship".

"The avenues available in Singapore are mostly catered to somewhat semi-famous designers" who have "won competitions or awards and the media has given them some form of coverage", Adelyn says, and so, "designers who are not known are left with little or no chance to survive in the industry".

Adelyn adds that with little funding, Singaporean designers will only be relegated to obscure locations to peddle their wares.





Help from Studio Privé, TaFf and IE, Singapore

Christy Chow, the designer famous for the well-constructed, layered designs of the label, Tangle, is one of the designers under the Studio Privé mentorship programme started by internationally-acclaimed Woods & Woods' designer, Jonathan Seow. She agrees with Lionnel that it's hard getting enough capital to start up, but with the mentorship, her financial problems are easing up.

Designer of Utt'er, Josephine Xie, feels the same way. She says that joining Studio Privé gave her label more publicity and that's apart from getting advice from Jonathan. She adds, "It's better to show as a group, so we can get more noticed. Plus, we can support one another."

Timothy Lee, designer of the quirky and blithe label, N'nchal'nt, agrees, "It would have been a lot harder if I was to strike out on my own. I don't have a lot of capital. Most of what I earn goes back into the collection. So what I have left won't be enough to put together a show and publicity efforts. Studio Privé helps with this."

Adelyn agrees and also identifies International Enterprise (IE) Singapore as an organisation that can help young fashion designers. IE Singapore is an agency under the Ministry of Trade and Industry that spearheads the development of Singapore's businesses in international markets.

Besides that, Lionnel emphasises the importance of being prepared and having a focused vision and also suggests that "local designers working on a budget approach the Textile & Fashion Federation, Singapore (TaFf) for assistance in the form of a grant from the Singapore Fashion Fund".

The Next Designer Label

Carving a name in the fashion industry seems like a titanic dream with the lack of funding and government support, but Lionnel's certain that designers can begin, among many other ways, by interning with established designers to learn the ropes. He also recommends that designers look for "the occasional openings in factories that do manufacturing for overseas labels".

And perhaps, like Lionnel, we can all find hope in the success stories of Singaporean designers, Jo Soh, Jonathan Seow, Paris-based Andrew Gn and London-based Ashley Isham, who have had their collections exported overseas. He believes that this is a "small but positive" step in the path to being part of the international fashion scene.

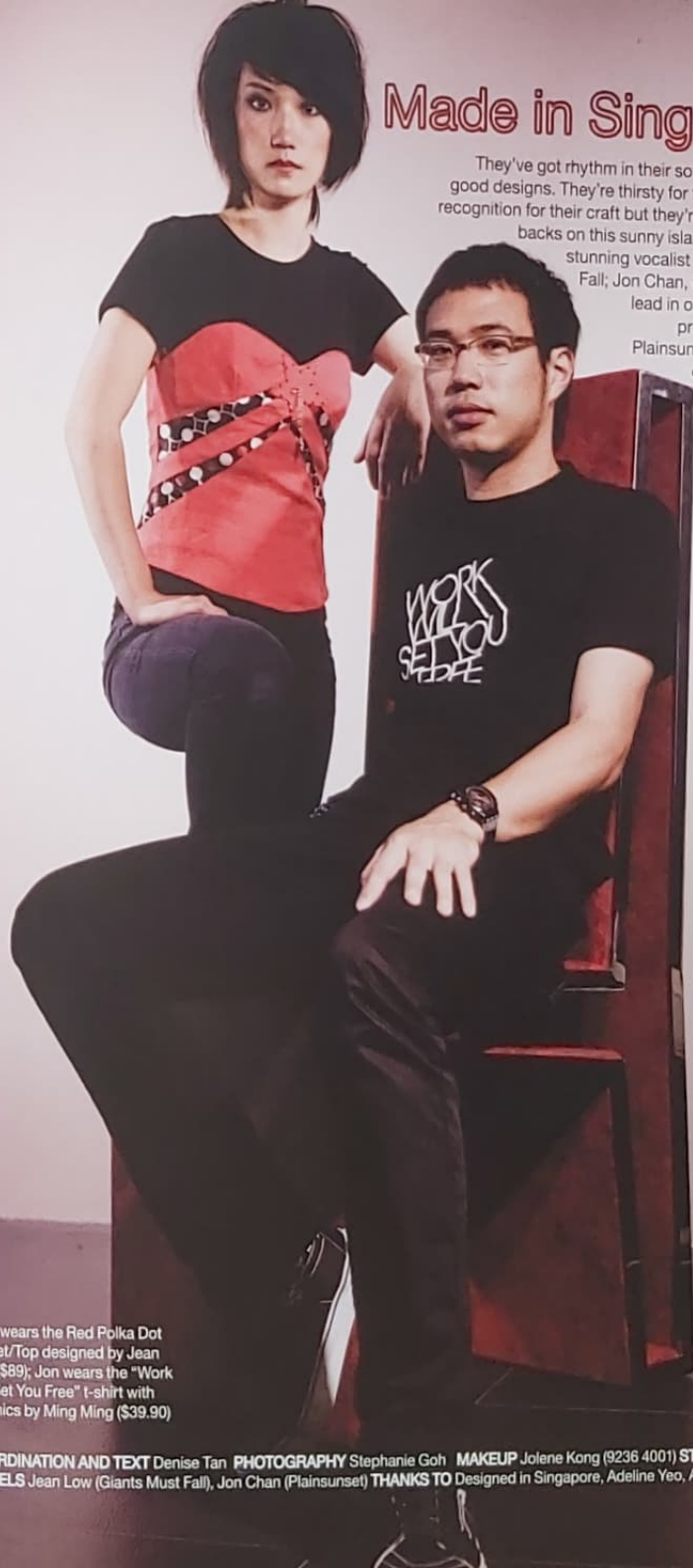
But if a designer would like to start with Singapore's fashion scene, his advice on creating a homegrown label is simple, "Consider more than design. Think of merchandising, press releases and retail price."

"It would have been a lot harder if I was to strike out on my own. I don't have a lot of capital."

Made in Singapore

They've got rhythm in their soul and a knack for good designs. They're thirsty for fame, fortune and recognition for their craft but they're not turning their backs on this sunny island. Jean Low, the stunning vocalist from Giants Must Fall; Jon Chan, the multi-talented lead in one of Singapore's prolific indie bands, Plainsunset; and the flock of designers from

Designed in Singapore are sticking it out in the place they're most comfortable in.



Jean wears the Red Polka Dot Corset/Top designed by Jean Ling (\$89); Jon wears the "Work Will Set You Free" t-shirt with graphics by Ming Ming (\$39.90)

COORDINATION AND TEXT Denise Tan PHOTOGRAPHY Stephanie Goh MAKEUP Jolene Kong (9236 4001) STYLING Chang Qiaolin MODELS Jean Low (Giants Must Fall), Jon Chan (Plainsunset) THANKS TO Designed in Singapore, Adeline Yeo, A. B. Richard, Evon Tay.



On this page - Jean wears the MS Blackie dress (\$189), Red Heart Earrings designed by MeiC (\$39.90) and Fly Me to Paris Charm and Lucite Bracelet (\$55), Jon wears the Maroon T-shirt with Flying Animals print designed by Jean Ling (\$89) and he holds CHAOS sneakers specially designed by Zyane Tan (\$75) for Designed in Singapore.

Facing page - Jean wears the Jockey Dress (\$189), and Tangerine Crush Rose of England necklace by Ong Su Fern. Her shoes (\$129) are specially designed and hand-painted by Adam Wong, Jon wears the Black Sheep Soccer T-shirt designed by Jerald (\$39.90) and Jon's iPod sits in the Black and Red Fabrix iPod pouch designed by Colin Chen (\$29.90)



Jean wears the Gingham Black and White Checkered blouse by MeIC (price unavailable); Jon wears the White Designer T-shirt with a Fainting Icon designed by Kenny Chua (\$58) while he draws.



Designed in Singapore

ABOUT US

DESIGNED IN SINGAPORE" is an initiative by a group of local designers and artists who believe in promoting and retailing local designers' and artists' works. DIS, in short, is supported by SPRING Singapore and was granted the Entrepreneurial Talent Development Fund (ETDF).

This scheme was launched in June 2004 by the Ministry of Trade and Industry through SPRING Singapore.

Three divisions define the retail experience: ourSPACE, ourWARDROBE and ourLIFESTYLE.



ourSPACE



ourWARDROBE

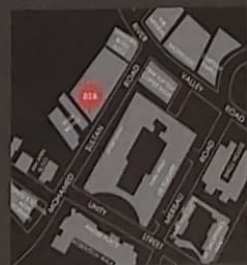


ourLIFESTYLE



ourSPACE hosts a galore of aesthetic ideas for the home.
ourWARDROBE is filled only with limited-edition apparel.
ourLIFESTYLE is where you will be inspired to live in style.

"DESIGNED IN SINGAPORE" is a place where you can find innovative product that are designed locally, in Singapore.



We are at:

24 Mohammed Sultan Road
Singapore 239012
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ours and soon to be urs.

This is "Designed In Singapore" for you.

Love at First Click

Want to be swept away by romance like in the movies and live happily ever after? With the help of **Hitchoo**, **GoMovieDate** and **Cliquewise**, you just might end up living your fantasy. **STEPHANIE GOH** gives the lowdown on three social services which, with its innovative ways of meeting people, could possibly set you on the path to meeting Mr Right or Ms Perfect.

Plot:

Walking to the spa, you're relaxed and calm. You know you're going to have a good time because you love meeting new people. You discover upon your arrival that it's a jelly bath. Cool! You get into your pink jelly tub and everyone starts mingling and talking. That person beside you is terribly funny. After what seems like only minutes of fun, you leave the spa feeling refreshed, relaxed and happy.

People behind the scenes:

Cliquewise, a social events company, helps Singaporean singles meet people who share the same interests as them. In 2006, the company started holding gatherings every weekend and since then, they've held a myriad of unique lifestyle events. **Cliquewise** also runs their online portal, **Wow-her.com.sg**, which provides information on these events, courses on approaching women, an image makeover service and articles on dating etiquette.

Process:

All you have to do is sign up and this is free. Every week you'll receive a newsletter in your email from **Cliquewise**, updating you on the events happening as well as tips on dating. **Cliquewise** doesn't provide the service of one-to-one match-making, though they do encourage participants to exchange contact numbers.

To help members find their match, **Cliquewise** also has a free optional Date Profiling system which will classify anyone who registers and fills in the profiling questionnaire, into 16 different personality classifications. You'll receive your colour code as well as your compatible colour codes after completing the 40-question personality quiz and it's up to you to spot your "colours" at events.

Perks:

Now here comes the fun part. They have events like chocolate fondue speed-dating (the first of its kind), jelly baths and paintball tournaments! They even have a Valentine's Day special held in one of the Singapore Flyer's capsules. Participants will also get to be one of the first to try the Singapore Flyer.

What's more is if you'd like to be more prepared after meeting someone special, **Cliquewise** will gladly give you one-on-one coaching (with a small fee of course).

Ooh!
A Jelly
Tub

Psst!

Lydia Gan, the co-founder of **Cliquewise** and webmaster of **Wow-Her**, has already been to three weddings and has high hopes for more invites.

Pinch:

Membership is free, but you'll need to pay for the event fee which ranges from \$20 to \$80.

To click for love: <http://www.cliquewise.sg/>

People behind the scenes:

GoMovieDate.com believes in a fun and casual date without any pressure. The rather self-explanatory concept, an idea that came from four men out on a Friday night, is fuss-free and almost everything is arranged for you. All you have to do is click.

Process:

Just sign up and fill out a profile. You'll then be given a set of matches to your taste. Pick someone out of your list and send an invitation. Wait for the person's consent and everything will be arranged for you. A movie ticket will be delivered to each person's home and the meeting will happen in the cinema.

Perks:

What makes **GoMovieDate.com** even more exciting is the new On-The-Go feature, which sends and alerts members of invitations right on their mobile phones. Also, if you had a wonderful time, use the i-Touch service that allows you to send chocolates or flowers to your date as a thank-you gift.

Plot:

You show up at the event with sweaty palms, hoping that you will fit in with the other five who signed up. The minute you step into the house, everyone choruses a few greetings that are followed by awkward silence. As everyone starts to loosen up, you take a glance around and suddenly, your eyes meet hers.

People behind the scenes:

Inspired by the romantic comedy **Hitch**, starring Will Smith and Eva Mendes, the company began in May 2007, with hopes of pairing people together and churning out happy couples. **Hitchoo** believes in keeping things casual, fun and without pressure.

I wonder
what he'll
look like?

Plot:

You add the finishing touches to your outfit and while walking out the door, you wonder what your date will look like. Nervously, you approach the theatre. Checking your seat number, you find your row and see the mystery person. You smile and sit down to enjoy the movie. After sneaking glances, you realise that the date's actually quite cute, and guess what? As the credits roll, you're asked to go for a second date.

Psst!

Matthew Tan, the founder of **GoMovieDate.com**, told us that a couple has already gotten married, and they've got a baby on the way!

Pinch:

Profiling comes in two packages. If you're fine with a basic match that only deals with demographics such as age and height, then you'll only have to pay \$69 for six months. If you would like something more detailed that covers psychographics like interests and characteristics, you'll have to pay \$100 more for the same length of membership.

To click for love: <http://www.gomoviedate.com/>

Count me in!

Perks:

The Hit List is an online portal that allows **Hitchoo** members to organise events like movie marathons at someone's place and lets other members sign up for those events. Just organise an event and put the number of males and females that you wish would attend and wait for people to sign up. Once the quota is full, you'll be set to have a rockin' night with some new friends.

Pinch:

A one-month membership is \$37 and a six-month membership will cost \$23 per month.

To click for love: <http://www.hitchoo.com/>

Illustration by Stephanie Goh



Photos Courtesy of Kelvin Yong

Digital Photography: An Expression of Art for Everyone

Gone are the days of film technology that allowed only a select few to call themselves professional photographers. These days another breed of titans walk the streets – everyone. So long as you own a Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera, you're part of a rising trend. But can this trendy new hobby become a profession? A. B. RICHARD learns how.

Kelvin Yong, a 27-year-old professional photographer started his career at 17 and found it quite tough to pick up photography before digital format was introduced.

"It was really a lot of hard work. I mean in the old days, the sheer cost to purchase and process film was out of this world. But with digital, it's not an issue. Everything is much easier to pick up. I think everybody has gotten into the groove so to speak, so shoot, it's free, just shoot," Kelvin says.

And shot they have since, not only has the price of processing film dropped, the cost of cameras are now also very affordable for teenagers. Kelvin continues, "Prices have dropped and there's a larger range of cameras. Anybody who has a bit of savings can pick up a camera and start to shoot like almost instantly out of the box. Just charge your batteries and you are ready to go."

Breaking into the Industry

With that, the million-dollar question on every aspiring young photographer's mind is how to break into the industry successfully.

Mr Siew Kee Leong, a lecturer in Ngee Ann Polytechnic who teaches photography says, "In those days, if you wanted to be a fashion photographer, it was difficult because firstly you have to have a portfolio and then you have to knock on doors. But nowadays,

because of digital, you can have your own portfolio and put it into a website and get people to notice your work and you might get jobs in that manner."

With that, a whole slew of questions follow – Would anyone who wants to be successful in photography need to pursue a degree in that field? Is having a network of contacts important in this line of profession and what are clients really looking for?

Networking with a Degree or No Degree

Mr Siew, who did his Masters in Fine Arts Photography, feels that for anyone who wants to be a fine arts photographer, the holistic programme and principles offered in universities are important fundamentals for any photographer.

"The groundings are important. However, for commercial photography, what you might learn will probably be 80 percent irrelevant. So, if you want to be in the commercial line, a portfolio and good network is important," he advises.

He continues by addressing that with good networking, a photographer can venture and explore other areas of interest.

Get Spotted at Photography Competitions

Sadly, there are many photographers who can deliver great pictures, but have not yet been noticed by the



masses. Ace Kindred, a professional photographer who took an interest in photography at the age of 12 before the advent of digital, recommends the many competitions in which professionals and beginners all reside in one pool.

He notes, "Through this, young talents are given the opportunity to challenge themselves against the professional competition. Also, with such competitions, their work gets noticed and they can make a name for themselves. Lastly, but just as important, amateurs get to rub shoulders and befriend professional photographers and build up a network of people. Especially in photography, having a network of contacts is a plus as opportunities can come very unexpectedly."

Passion

With a network stable on the tripod, you'll now have to be concerned about passion and drive. Ace cautions that while Singapore's arts scene is improving, a

budding photographer without passion will not be able to do it full-time.

Passion also requires blood, sweat and tears. Kelvin advises amateur photographers to look outside their "comfort zone" because they need to "go out there, be bold, try new things, be willing to accept criticism and be willing to go up to people who will give you a whole lot of criticism".

Speaking of criticism, Kelvin explains that clients also "demand more" and "want more". This is especially so with the advent of digital photography. But Kelvin takes it all in his stride and to relax and getaway from it all, Kelvin wanders around and freezes scenes in time with his pictures (seen on these pages).

So take advantage of the current era of when photography is not the insanely expensive hobby or obscure sideline, for there is just so much this art can offer to everyone. Follow the professionals, put in a little hard work and a lot of passion to turn the art of photography into a full-fledged career.





Books Actually

Forget cookie-cutter bookstores because BooksActually, a non-descript bookstore opened by two book-lovers who have created a space of their own and made it a living, is set to break the mould. JASMINE GOH takes a read.

Photos by JASMINE GOH

The Bookworms

Kenny Leck, 29, and Karen Wai, 22, are book-lovers and proud owners of BooksActually, the place for anyone looking for a good read. When you meet the affable pair, who constantly rattle on about the newest classic, contemporary fiction, or romance novella that they've got, you'll know why they chose this unconventional career.

"Being book-lovers, we wanted to have a bookstore of our own," Karen says. The couple, who met through a mutual friend, began making their passion a living by setting up stalls in book fairs. Their clientele grew and the business expanded and in 2005, they got themselves a space in a shophouse along Telok Ayer Street.

Wanting the store to be a reflection of their vocation, they filled their one-of-a-kind store with old Polaroid cameras, antique typewriters and paintings by Maki Squarepatch (two Singaporean sisters who transform discarded items into kitsch clothing and paintings), and named it BooksActually because as they say, they "personally curate" the books they sell so patrons only find books actually worth reading.

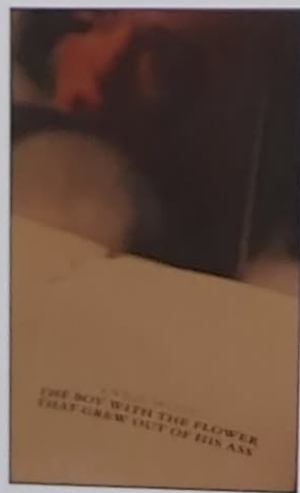


Only at BooksActually

With a huge following of book-lovers and professionals from the creative industries, BooksActually has become the place to go to for books from obscure authors such as French philosopher, Roland Barthes and rare foreign magazines such as London's *Monocle* and fashion magazine *frankie*. "When it comes out, I'll be the first to know," Kenny says confidently.

Kenny and Karen also play host to poetry reading sessions, of which Nicholas Barridge, a Swiss expatriate who became friends with the couple, is a regular attendee. "I love books and I happened to pass by when the store was only a few months old. I like that Kenny and Karen are very dynamic," he says.

They're definitely dynamic as they also publish books under their publishing company, the Math Paper Press. The first project was *The Boy With The Flower That Grew Out of His A*** by Cyril Wong, an internationally-acclaimed local poet and writer. In Mar 2008, the Math Paper Press will release three more works. Like *The Boy With The Flower*, each title is limited to an exclusive 300 copies.



To be a Book-lover



If you have difficulties picking a book that you'll like, Karen suggests that you start by author, her favourite recommendation being Vladimir Nabokov.

"Then, you can progress to essays or biographies. Find a good time, a good book and a good space. You've got to find the right mood and setting," adds Kenny who's always loved George Orwell.

As Nicholas commented, it may be difficult for BooksActually to "fight with the giants", but the couple wishes to expand their place further. "We're hoping not for a chain but something like a few storeys, a building of our own, like the Strand bookstore in New York," says Kenny.

And lured by its unique concept, *hype* eagerly awaits the next, adventure-filled chapter of BooksActually.

BooksActually is located at 125A Telok Ayer Street.

If You're Looking for a Good Read...

Kenny's choices:

George Orwell, Down and Out in Paris and London
Orwell's semi-biography is about how he scraped a living for himself in both cities. Written when Orwell was a struggling writer, it chronicles his adventures in the streets where he mingled with the tramps and the rich.

Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body

Winterson describes a chilling and seductive affair between the narrator and a married woman. An all-consuming love story, it leaves much to readers' interpretation since the narrator has neither name nor gender.

Homer, The Odyssey

Considered one of the greatest literary classics, the epic poem written in 800BC tells the tale of Greek hero, Odysseus, who embarks on a 20-year journey home after winning the Trojan War. Though the book requires much interpretation, Kenny believes that patience exercised will only be rewarded.

Karen's choices:

Cyril Wong, The Boy With the Flower That Grew Out of His A** (Limited Edition)

The book expounds society's views on gay issues and opens with a passage on how Singaporean society has opened up towards homosexuality. It's a hand-stitched book that's a fairy tale without a happy ending and Karen believes it may open your mind.

Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita

This classic features Humbert Humbert, a man who develops a romantic relationship with his stepdaughter, the beautiful Lolita. As she matures, he tries his best to satisfy her every whim and keep this illicit incest under wraps.

James Joyce, Ulysses

Ulysses, which is Latin for Odysseus, is famous for its similarity to Homer's work in the way that the chapters are named and the forming of the personality of the characters. In 18 episodes, this book describes an ordinary day in the life of salesman Leopold Bloom.





New Ways to Read

You've neither time nor money for your favourite paperback but what's a bookworm with a voracious appetite to do? IWAKI MIHO has the perfect (and very legal) answer!

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Registration on the website is free so all you'll pay for is the postage for the books you send out. Posting outside your country may cost more, but that means more points. A copy of **Falling Leaves** by Adeline Yen-Mah, weighs 198g (according to Amazon.com), and would cost only \$2 to mail out to New Zealand.

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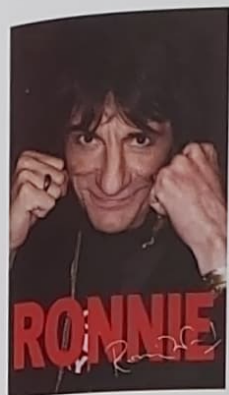
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Ronnie: The Autobiography by Ron Wood

A **New York Times** and **Sunday Times** bestseller, this book chronicles quite candidly, the life of the Rolling Stones' 61-year-old guitarist Ron Wood. His autobiography takes the reader on his encounters with drugs, sex and music.

Wood details events vividly, and in a storytelling fashion, especially the parts where he met his wife of 23 years, former model Jo Wood.

The book not only helps the reader gain an insight into Ron's world, but also into those around him. In fact, if you're into rock and roll, you'd be more than happy to find embarrassing and wildly hilarious anecdotes about rock legends like Jimi Hendrix, Rod Stewart and Eric Clapton.

As it was with rock and roll stars of Ronnie's era, he finds himself embroiled in many sexual escapades with wives, girlfriends or female associates of acquaintances or band members. Among one of the many tales depicted is Wood's relationship with George Harrison's wife Pattie Boyd, before she left with Eric Clapton. He also reveals his affair with former Canadian prime minister, Pierre Trudeau's wife!

Ron Wood's simple writing style makes the book a breeze to read but the icing on the cake has to be the photos of his performances, travels, friends and family. - YEH WEIXUAN

The Solitude of Emperors by David Davidar

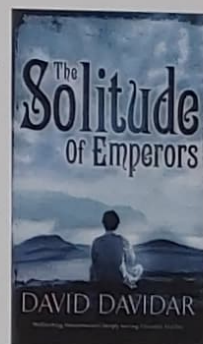
It's a book that refuses to give simple answers for the deceptive simplicity of fundamentalism. **The Solitude of Emperors** juxtaposes outwardly insignificant people and events with the messy Indian political system of the early 90's for a dose of unadulterated poetic irony.

Desperate to escape his childhood town in Tamil Nadu for the bigger cities, Vijay jumps at the chance to write for a small Bombay publication, **The Indian Secularist**. His plan of experiencing real news is thwarted when the brute force of the riots that ripped through the city plays out before him. He retreats to the Nilgiri Mountains, disillusioned; only to find even the tranquil tea town is tainted.

David Davidar's plot is straightforward with little room for surprise, but with the unfolding of every event, Vijay's life is set in order. His struggle with violence, ideology and death of a friend is painfully honest and readers will be riveted by his narration.

Davidar's style of writing is rather flamboyant and though it's contradictory to the simplicity of the plot, it adds depth to the heart of the book.

His appeal for change is sincere. Davidar's ardent plea for tolerance in modern India told through the naïve eyes of an aspiring journalist is a good accompaniment for those lazy afternoons. - ENG YUWEN



A Life in Pieces by Richard K. Baer

A Life in Pieces tells the true story of Karen, a patient whose tormented childhood results in an extreme form of psychological trauma. Karen's story of being plagued with 17 alter-egos is told by author and psychiatrist, Richard Baer.

Realising he was dealing with a severe case of multiple personality disorder, Baer decides he has to find a cure for this seemingly incurable medical condition.

After six years and over 5,000 pages of filed notes and entries, Baer's second offering following **Switching Time** provides a heart-warming documentation of the patience and dedication displayed by one doctor to make his patient whole again.

Baer faces the daunting task of gaining the trust of each one of the 17 personalities over 18 long years, since their destruction is the only solution to Karen's survival.

The pages are littered with shocking revelations of each alternate self, including that of a violent young boy, and you might just find yourself freaking out while reading the journal entries.

The book offers an entertaining read and, unlike other medical journals, provides an insight into not just the patient's pains, but also the psychiatrist's struggles. The accurate and honest accounts show us the true meaning of giving unconditionally. **A Life in Pieces** is really, a medical journal with a heart. - CALVIN YANG

Pictures Courtesy of Pansing Distribution

The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story

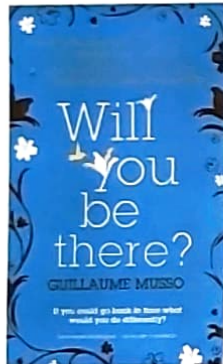
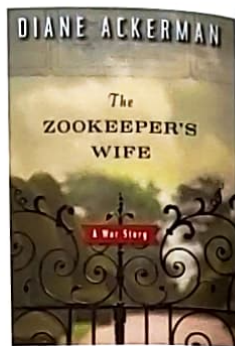
by Diane Ackerman

Set in World War II, **The Zookeeper's Wife** is a poignant true story about two Polish Christian zookeepers, Jan and Antonina Zabinski. During the reign of terror caused by the Nazi invasion, the Zabinskis smuggle Jews into empty cages and nooks and crannies of their villa. To avoid suspicion, the couple creates secret underground passages and codenames for the interesting cast of characters.

While war stories filled with the themes of love, courage and survival are aplenty, **The Zookeeper's Wife** separates itself through its poetic storytelling and vivid descriptions. The author blends beautifully, literary quality and poetry with snippets of history and scientific knowledge of the animal kingdom.

Also, her use of powerful imagery, like when she talks about "blood-red flames", the "cornflower-blue sky" and "threads of tinsel" in the sunlight, is absolutely amazing and the pictures she paints brings you right into the heat of the battlefield and you cannot shrug off the tension thick in the air at the hidden bomb shelters.

With eight pages of photographs and morsels of facts, figures and names spread evenly throughout the book, **The Zookeeper's Wife** constantly reminds the reader that he is indeed reading a documented biography that displays kindness and hope at a time of insanity, and not a dramatic fiction. - CHERYL HOON



Will you be there?

by Guillaume Musso

Those familiar with Guillaume Musso's books will know that this young and rising French author has a way of captivating you, in such a way that you find yourself inevitably seeing your own life in the lives of the characters in his story.

Following his huge success from **Afterwards** and **Because I Love You**, Musso brings us another gripping book. The story centres on Elliot, a successful 60-year-old surgeon who lives in San Francisco. With his daughter Angie around, Elliot's life is almost perfect and the only imperfection lies in his yearning for Ilena, a woman who died 30 years earlier, and whom he was passionately in love with.

By a strange series of circumstances one day, Elliot finds himself returning to 30 years before. There, he meets the young, ambitious doctor that he once was.

Will You Be There? asks many questions and you'll be forced to about think what you would change in your life, what remorse or regret you would forget and if you had a chance to do it all over, what you'd do differently. Thankfully, while it calls for much reflection, the book isn't overly preachy.

If you like Mitch Albom, you'll like Musso, even though he has a lighter and more humorous approach as compared to Albom's more realistic and down-to-earth style. - JOYCE PEH

Junkie Love

by Phil Shoenfelt

England-born singer-songwriter Phil Shoenfelt's delves into the nasty world of substance abuse in a first-person narrative that's glib, vulgar, and honest, fashioned from enough real-life experiences to be considered a semi-biography.

Shoenfelt takes **Junkie Love** to the next level of creative authorship by injecting detailed accounts of shooting up, getting laid, and spiralling into the cataclysmic abyss of consequences, all told by protagonist Phil and his equally damaged, heroin-dependent lover, Cissy. But all good things must end, and it ends early when the high wears off and the money runs dry.

Those expecting the usual raw and gritty portrayal of an addict's world in the late 80's will find the book surprisingly refreshing. Unlike Irvine Welsh and his attempts to court controversy through ugly imagery, Shoenfelt tells it like it is, preferring to focus on "psycho-pathology of addiction". The intimate perspective makes the story authentic and believable, thanks to Phil's witty non-conformist voice that will make you cringe with discomfort, chuckle in amusement, and draw sympathy.

Shoenfelt's wife, Jolana Izbická, provides the abstract sketches of her interpretation of the text that serve as visual intervals. Coupled with his eloquent, heartfelt documentation of the true junkie experience, it's no wonder it was translated from Czech to English and re-released - it's one you can't miss out on. - PEARLYN HOON



The Leap Years

For all the lovers of romance and the lamenters of the lack thereof, is a tale of two lovers who struggle with fate to claim what's theirs. CHARITY GOH and actress, Wong Li Lin get sentimental over Raintree Pictures' **The Leap Years**.

In this charming love story, we reminisce with Chang Li-Ann, played by Joan Chen, as she sits by her comatose husband and recalls the dramatic love story that began 24 years ago. The film darts back and forth in time and stars Wong Li Lin as the young Li-Ann.

The idealistic literature teacher, Li-ann, is always on the lookout for the mystical man of her dreams and she describes him as a "blue blurry man". On her 24th birthday, which falls on a leap day, she meets Jeremy (Ananda Everingham of **Shutter**), who lives in Canada and cannot remain in Singapore.

Jeremy promises to return every leap year but each time, fate holds them apart with a sturdy grip.



hype had an email chat with Li Lin about her role, her ideal of love and the experience of starring in the movie that's adapted seamlessly from Singaporean author, Dr Catherine Lim's novella, **Leap of Love**.

What about Li-ann reminded you about yourself?

"I believe deeply in love. Perhaps in a different way but ultimately, that for love we will and can move mountains."

Was it difficult falling into the role of a whimsical girl who would dash to the middle of a busy junction?

"Not really. There is always a child and romantic in us, mixed up in the funny ways only humans are capable of. All I needed to channel was the impulsive me of not too long ago!"

The film has an utterly romantic storyline. Did you wish that perhaps you had the same experience?

"I'm more a believer of creating your own opportunities and living the lessons of your choices. That said, I'll be the first to point out that my own personal perspectives is probably not the best movie material! Too boring!"

How was working with Ananda like?

"It was a real pleasure. He's young, respectful and very open to learning and he has a lot of fans. He gets very coy about it but you can't help but notice his charms."

What was the hardest thing you did while filming?

"Having those bra things that look like chicken fillets stuck against my chest in a love scene with Ananda was memorable!"

Which would be your favourite moment in the film?

"The 'OK' moment. You'll know what I mean when you watch the movie - which you absolutely must!"



The Leap Years unfolds in cinemas on 2008's leap day, Feb 29.

- Interview conducted by Denise Tan

Screening Room

As Michael Corleone said in *The Godfather*, "I'll make him an offer he can't refuse." Well, the Screening Room at Ann Siang Hill will make you an offer that you can't refuse too. GRACE CHUA screens a place where you can chill out with good films, food and drinks (one of which is the delectable Lychee Martin), all under one roof.



Along the quaint streets of Ann Siang Hill is a paradise for movie buffs and food lovers. The restored heritage building has 13 screens and five floors, each with its own distinctive character. Here, you'll find a classy basement whisky lounge, a bistro restaurant, a multi-purpose studio, a rooftop bar and a swanky film theatre that shows only exclusive films and new indie movies such as *Bride and Prejudice*, *Crash* and *Priceless*.

The restaurant cum theatre is a joint venture between Samia Ahad, who owns well-known Coriander Leaf restaurant at Clarke Quay and Michael Gleissner, who owns the Philippines-based, entertainment-production company, BigFoot Entertainment. With Michael being familiar with the film industry and Samia being no stranger to the restaurant business, it's no wonder they played host to the official launch of the Singapore Sun Film Festival.

Great Expectations at the Bistro

Enter Screening Room and be spoilt for choice with the Bistro's Mediterranean-influenced menu. Be sure to check out several highlights like the cocoa-braised lamb shank with roasted chestnuts (\$33) and chicken *tajine* with green olives (\$26).



Pictures Courtesy of the Screening Room

The Bistro is simple but chic and reminds one of a bygone era. The wallpaper is printed with geometric patterns, the chairs are elegantly designed out of pine wood and the windows have white-slatted shutters that swing out to rows of restored shophouses.

Dining outside is just as alluring. It's quiet and calming so having a meal *al fresco* makes for a romantic dinner and Valentine's Day date.



Food and Film on a Whole New Level

Though some might have reservations about spending \$25 on a movie (Screening Room's standard rate for a movie on weekends), the ambience and the service gets you your money's worth.

After all, Rez Sakhawat, the Managing Director of Screening Room, says it's not just food and film but also the concept of the film influencing food. So, much thought has been given to what dish should be served with each film and chefs sit through every movie before deciding what to whip up to make the whole experience unforgettable.

Imagine having Sicilian food paired with *The Godfather*, or French cuisine as you watch *Paris Je t'aime*.

With cosy sofas, tasty snacks and drinks like *Cosmopolitan* (\$13) & *Caiprinha* (\$13), you'll feel as though you're in your own living room. Of course, it's a living room that possesses a better cinematic ambience, a fine mix of classic movies spanning all genres, excellent cuisine, and fantastic alcoholic beverages with conscientious waiters in attendance.

So, are you ready to meet Audrey Hepburn over a tantalising dinner of Holly Golightly salad and roasted lamb rack?

Too Good to be True

The three-course special menu is \$55, and with another \$20 (rates are \$25 per movie without the three-course special), you can complete the experience by having the movie of your choice accompany you through dinner.

Address: 12 Ann Siang Hill
Tel: 6221 1694



Feast Of Love

Opens Feb 14.

Multiple-Academy Award winning writer and director, Robert Benton (**Kramer vs. Kramer**), brings an intriguing ode to love that is funny, depressing and sexy all at once. **Feast of Love** is the modern-day version of **A Midsummer Night's Dream** where, in a close-knit Oregon town, professor Harry Stevenson (Morgan Freeman) witnesses love stirring mischief among the residents.

Still shaken over the heroin-induced death of their son, Harry and his wife pick themselves up and move on like gracious and compassionate parents, dispensing advice to younger, ignorant and irrational town residents who find themselves lost in love.

Harry's first confidante is friend, Bradley (Greg Kinnear), who boasts of his flawless marriage to Kathryn (Selma Blair). When Kathryn leaves him for a female basketball player Jenny (Stana Katic), Bradley is devastated. He turns to Harry, who had anticipated Kathryn's departure.

Even after his bad experience, Bradley finds himself involved with another attractive female – estate agent Diana (Radha Mitchell) – who again disappoints him. The marital woes of Bradley and his quest for the perfect partner are the centre at which the melodrama evolves.

Boasting a seasoned and talented cast, this romantic fable will sweep you off your feet with its excellent portrayal of true love in its barest and most realistic context. - JOYCE PEH



Persepolis

Opens Feb 21.

In the face of extremism that dominates the Middle-East comes an animated adaptation of Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel-biography, **Persepolis**. The tale of upheaval, directed by Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, is told by an outspoken nine-year-old girl who grew up in a period when Islamic fundamentalists claimed their rights to govern and clamped down on women.

The bright and daring Marjane (voiced by Chiara Mastroianni), despite having to don a veil that conceals her tomboy nature, tries to outsmart the "social guardians". However, when the Iran-Iraq war worsens and fear manifests in Iranian citizens, Marjane's parents decide to send her abroad.

A European education exposes her to seemingly liberal thoughts and behaviours. But homesickness compels her to return home. Marjane must decide if her identity as an Iranian is enough to win the war between the love for her family and her desire to be free from a land riddled with suppression and hypocrisy.

Done in black-and-white 2D animation, **Persepolis** is a simple yet thought-provoking film about a young woman's passionate plea for her homeland. Even with the complaints from the Iranian government, it bagged the Cannes Jury Prize in 2007, and was also nominated for the prestigious Cannes Film Festival's highest honour – the Palme d'Or or Golden Palm. - JASMINE GOH

Charlie Wilson's War

Opens Feb 28.

Charlie Wilson's War, a true story, is set in the booming 1980s. It tells of a patriotic playboy United States (US) Congressman, a hedonistic Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent and an affluent socialite, who brought the fall of the Soviet Union and an end to the cold war.

The barter trading and clandestine negotiations begin when the three friends and makeshift espionages, led by the overly sociable Wilson, find out that the Russians had conquered then-ally of the US, Afghanistan. They travel illegally into unlikely parts of the world and ally themselves with unfriendly Pakistanis, weapon dealers, diplomats and even a wily belly dancer to fund their battle.

The powerful story of determination, patriotism and staunch belief, adapted from a book by George Crile, holds its own so well that the excellent sets and elaborate costumes are merely an added bonus.

So it's no wonder that, coupled with the stellar performance of Academy Award winners, Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts and Philip Seymour Hoffman, the amazingly commanding movie that surrounds so strikingly, the volatile political relations of the United States was recently nominated for five Golden Globe Awards, including Best Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical. - A. B. RICHARD



Spiderwick Chronicles

Opens Mar 6.

From the best-selling children fantasy series by Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi, comes a startling tale of what might be right in your own backyard. Nine-year-old Jared, his twin Simon (both played by Freddie Highmore of **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory**) and their older sister Mallory (Sarah Bolger) moves from bustling New York City into the ancient Spiderwick Estate. Not long after, strange disappearances and accidents happen in the mansion.

Jared's curious wanderings uncover wonderful secrets and, best of all, is a book, written by Mr Spiderwick, played by Academy Award-nominated actor, David Russell Strathairn, is filled with secrets of a world beyond ours.

Jared ignores the ominous warning attached to the book and opens it to discover the invisible world of faeries, sprites, goblins, and all sorts of enchanted creatures who, all this while, have inhabited the same world as us. He also stumbles across Mulgroth, the malevolent ogre, who'll stop at nothing to get the mystical book.

If you read the series of books, you might be disappointed that many of the events and characters will not appear in the film. But it's still a fantastic film to watch, especially when you need a whimsical adventure. - MIHO IWAKI

No Country for Old Men

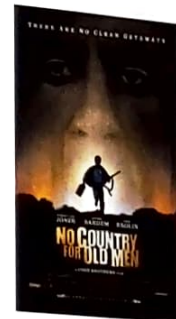
Opens Mar 31.

No Country for Old Men, a stunning West Texan thriller, is set in the 80s with deserts and dilapidated motels as a backdrop. The film is accompanied by almost no soundtrack except for the blast of a shotgun and the sonorous ring of a spinning coin.

The film stars Tommy Lee Jones, Woody Harrelson, Javier Bardem and Josh Brolin. Brolin plays Llewelyn Moss, who stumbles upon a massacre and \$2 million from a drug deal gone awry. But the windfall comes with a price. Anton Chigurh (Bardem), a psychopathic killer, steps in to claim the cash. He stalks Llewelyn to take him out like all his other victims, determining their fates with the flip of a coin.

Written and directed by brothers, Oscar Winners Joel and Ethan Coen, **No Country for Old Men** is a film adaptation of Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Cormac McCarthy's novel of the same title. The film received Best Screenplay and Best Supporting Actor (Bardem) honours at the recent 65th Golden Globe Awards.

There's no need to toss a coin to decide this. The decision is clear; it's an intriguing film that'll throw all misconceptions of a predictable plot out the window and to miss it would be a sacrilege. - TIMOTHY SIM



Funny Games

Opens Apr 10.

Austrian director Michael Haneke is back with an exact, scene-by-scene remake of his notoriously controversial 1997 film. A decade after its German counterpart was released, **Funny Games**, follows a family of three as a holiday in their summer home takes a sadistic twist. A surprise arrival of two psychopaths throws the family into a vicious web of "games". Forced to play along for survival, Naomi Watts, Tim Roth and Devon Gearhart become entertainment for the sadistic duo.

Although the original plot is retained, the film is far from a hackneyed replica. Haneke successfully re-establishes **Funny Games** with a stirring horror that's surprisingly and tastefully reserved. He employs a rather disturbing technique and excludes a music score while one of the young, clean-shaven killers constantly addresses the audience.

The biblically-named killers, Peter (Brady Corbett) and Paul (Michael Pitt), are contrary to their immaculate appearances, convincingly unapologetic with their white blood-stained gloves. Truly reflective of the film's unconventional horror, the two involve the audience in a series of savagely brilliant games.

Funny Games is a change from horror flicks crammed with shallow and inconsequential plots because Haneke delivers a spread of fear and terror subdued with clever commentary, and the result counters the audience's expectations of excessive blood and gore. - SELENE YAP

Pictures Courtesy of Cathay-Keris Films, Festive Films, United International Pictures

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Simple Plan Returns!

music.

Heads up, all you punk rockers! Simple Plan has released their third and most experimental self-titled album that will delight loyal fanatics and draw a whole new crowd. JASMINE GOH takes a much-anticipated listen.



Photo by Adeline Yeo

They've gone a long way from having *No Pads, No Helmets and Just Balls* and Simple Plan may have found their definitive punk rock sound this time round. The Canadian boys have been jet-setting between Montreal and Miami, working with the likes of Nate "Danja" Hills and Max Martin - top-notch producers who helped Timbaland, Justin Timberlake and Avril Lavigne grab the attention of the music world.

It seems like a weird mix you may say - R&B mish-mash with punk rock? Well, let's just say that we are rolling in the off-beat rhythms and melodies, especially with the album's daringly different tracks.

Testament to that is the first release from the album. "When I'm Gone" is completely reminiscent of Simple Plan's signature catchy choruses. The track also embraces some great elements of other musical genres but the most appealing was perhaps the fresh mix of sound effects. The electronic reverberations at the beginning of the track, though usually more typical in modern R&B, hardly stuck out like a sore thumb and the hints of R&B blended in beautifully with the heavy crashing drum sets and guitar solos.

Besides "When I'm Gone", other terrific tracks include the pop-infused "Generation", emotional "Save You" (which expresses lead singer Pierre's feelings about his brother's fight with cancer) and even a sweet ballad, hardly usual of Simple Plan, but still edgily romantic and emotive, "I Can Wait Forever".

It's without a doubt that Simple Plan has matured much in the three years it took to produce this album. Their style and how they share their emotions has clearly changed because gone are the constant angst, restless yelling and here to stay are carefully constructed rhythms and heartfelt lyrics.

But there's no need to worry about the punk rock band forgetting its roots and going all bubblegum pop-like, since underneath it all, the boys, with their electrifying onstage antics, will still return to their roots of rocking guitar riffs and snazzy drum sequences.

Simple Plan hit the stores on Jan 29. Visit their **MySpace** at www.myspace.com/simpleplan for a listen!

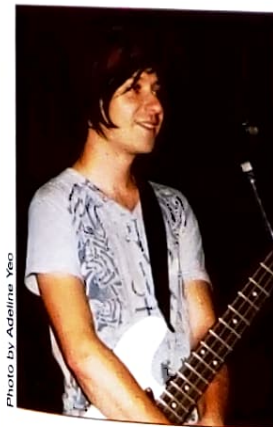


Photo by Adeline Yeo



Pictures Courtesy of Warner Music Singapore



Jay-Z – American Gangster

With his gift for composing songs in minutes without even writing them down, Jay-Z's 10th and latest album, **American Gangster**, was released within a month. As effortless as it may sound, the album is a major hit with the critics.

Inspired by the movie **American Gangster**, starring Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe, the album walks you down the memory lane of Jay-Z's gritty past as a street hustler and is set to be one of his best with a good mix of collaborations with Kanye West, Pharrell and Lil Wayne.

You'll feel this rapper's emotion as he pours his life experiences through his songs. "Pray" is one track that will hit you hard because Jay-Z ruminates about his father and his career. "Roc Boys (The Winner is)" is another strong track with its upbeat tempo. Other tracks like "Blue Magic" and "Success" also proved Jay-Z's place as King in the world of rap.

However, the tracks "I Know" and "Ignorant S**t" seemed to stray a little from the gangster-rap theme of the album.

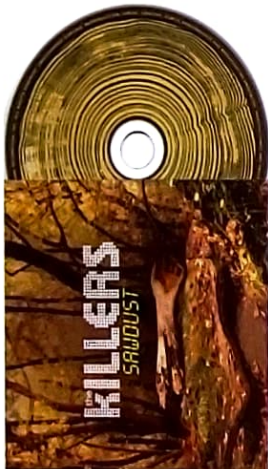
But compared to his previous album, **Kingdom Come**, that was meant as a comeback from his announced retirement (which was just a short stint, by the way), **American Gangster** is still clearly, the real deal. - GRACE CHUA

Timbaland presents Shock Value

Known as the amazing producer behind the energetic and upbeat tunes of Justin Timberlake and Nelly Furtado, Timbaland has finally put together his own collection of beats in his debut album, **Shock Value**.

This R&B-rap album features star-studded singers from Justin Timberlake to Missy Elliot and even the legendary Elton John. Despite providing only back-up vocals in hits, such as "Bounce", featuring Dr Dre, Missy Elliot and Justin Timberlake; and popular radio hit "Give It to Me" with Nelly Furtado, the rhythmic beats of Timbaland is unmistakable and he will have you bopping your head to the mesmerising tunes.

Apart from the more popular singers on this album, Keri Hilson, a fairly unknown vocalist, is alongside Timbaland on his popular club hit "The Way I Are" as well as in two other songs "Miscommunication" and "Hello". Both showcase her outstanding vocals and complementary tones with Timbaland and we won't be surprised if Timbaland's debut album ends up being a springboard for Hilson. - ALICIA TAN



The Killers – Sawdust

Technically speaking, **Sawdust** is not the third studio album from The Killers. More so, it is a collection of B-sides (different versions of tracks on or off the album), rarities and covers. Indeed, **Sawdust** is a celebration of the distinctive sound that The Killers have come to be known for.

Their unique brand of British rock (from an American band, no less) fused with indie sounds, characterised by the use of electronica, is a potent mix that sends a rush to the head and sets feet tapping to the beat.

Frontman Brandon Flowers channels his onstage flamboyance into making anything he sings sound interesting and guitarist Dave Keuning's soothing melodies hark back to the time when synthesisers were the order of the day.

With Mark Stoermer and Ronnie Vannucci Jr. providing the rhythmic canvas on which to paint an aural work of art, **Sawdust** is filled with notable tracks like "Tranquilliser", featuring Lou Reed of The Velvet Underground fame, as well as the cover, "Ruby".

Sawdust also saw The Killers experimenting with country music in "Don't Take Your Love To Town". For those who like to explore the quirky sound that is The Killers, this is a rare gem of an album that shows another side of them, musically. - JARRYL CHIA

The Last Goodnight – Poison Kiss

With diverse influences ranging from Ella Fitzgerald to U2, The Last Goodnight boldly steps out with their debut album, **Poison Kiss**.

The band has it all – falsettos, catchy tunes with rhythmic and soulful guitars. While they might sound a tad similar to Maroon 5, the varied instruments like the 70's and 80's synthesisers, guitars and keyboards give the band a unique sound, which is what sets them apart from Adam Levine's troupe. **Poison Kiss** is extremely well-planned and the order of the songs seems to take you on an emotional journey.

In the first three tracks you'll be running away from a "Poison Kiss". Then, the next track "Back Where We Belong" is where you try to get over the horrible heartbreak and finally, you'll reminiscence about the good times together in "Pictures of You". Impressively, after the fifth track onwards, the mood for the next seven tracks switches from upbeat to soothing.

"Good Love" is a jazzy ballad that transforms into a funk-inspired track. The daring contrast between jazz and funk and brilliant song writing makes **Poison Kiss** a remarkable album of careful craftsmanship. - VALERIE OLIVEIRO

OneRepublic – Dreaming Out Loud

OneRepublic's first album, **Dreaming Out Loud**, is chockfull of surprises. From chart hit "Apologize" to "Stop and Stare" and "Mercy", OneRepublic proves itself to be more than a one-hit wonder.

Its first claim to fame is the Timbaland remix of "Apologize", which took the world by storm, claiming its rightful place on many music charts internationally. Timbaland's involvement undoubtedly helped propel the band forward, but the song's catchy tune and fancy emotional lyrics is undeniably what made it a chart topper. The band is also one of the biggest musical acts in MySpace's history, receiving 23 million song plays.

Give the other songs like "Stop and Stare" and "Goodbye, Apathy" a listen and you would be pleasantly surprised. "Come Home" also gives listeners a refreshing change as compared to the other tracks in the album. If you're in a long distance relationship, pining for your other half, the lyrics might strike a chord.

Dreaming Out Loud is an album with diverse tunes and OneRepublic's latest album might just be the next best thing to rock your musical world. - YEH WEIXUAN



Across the Universe

Across the Universe, a compilation of classic covers, especially that of renowned band, The Beatles.

While a deluxe, two-disc edition is available, the standard version of this soundtrack also delivers a strong and enchanting mix of tracks.

The songs are sung by famous names, all trying to do justice to the originals. You don't have to be a fan of the band or the movie to be drawn into the lyrical mood of poetic lyrics and romantic voices.

Jim Sturgess and Evan Rachel Wood, who star as the male and female lead in the movie, unleash their musical talent with numbers like "All My Loving" and "I Won't Be Long", which showcase their wide vocal range.

Bono Beatles may not have the same ring as Bono U2 but his versions of "I Am The Walrus" and "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" are equally soul-refreshing and electrifying in the true Bono-style.

However, the covers utilise post-production effects a little too enthusiastically and end up bulking up these renditions. But if you are a believer in the evolution of melodies, an **Across the Universe** fanatic or a Beatles addict, this album is for keeps. - ENG YUWEN

Pictures Courtesy of Universal Music & EMI Records



L - Change the WorLd

说到《死亡笔记》，没有人会不晓得是什么。《死亡笔记》在去年已画下句点——夜神月的计划失败，最后死亡；而另一位重要人物L也赌上他的性命，终于让案子有个了结。可是，在L蹲在椅子上，手握着最爱的甜食死去前的23天，他到底在做什么呢？

“L最后的23天”正是L - change the WorLd的关键词。这回的故事情节全是原创的（除了L等人以外），不存在于原来的漫画。而且有趣的是，当这位电影剧本作者决定参与时，提出了不用自己的名字的条件；作者以M自称，象征着“使用死亡笔记的人会去的地方 = 无（无的日语发音为mu）”。

想认识真正的L，绝对不能错过这部电影！



《长江7号》

由周星驰一手制作、执导与演出，耗资三年打造。从选角到开拍，都吊足观众胃口，终于敲定在农历新年期间与观众见面。

故事讲述一名穷困潦倒的街景市民（周星驰饰）和儿子居住在大马路边的破屋里。父亲因为讨要薪水而被人追打，也买不起价值上百元的玩具给儿子，但他在垃圾堆里捡到了一个破玩具。没想到这个玩具竟然是和外星人联系的通讯器……

《长江7号》取名和创意来自中国著名的“神州六号火箭”。而内容以浓浓的父子情为主轴，保有星爷式的搞笑，还添加许多催泪镜头。最大亮点就是新一代“星女郎”张雨绮，还有星爷干女儿徐娇在片中反串男仔头的精彩演绎。



《功夫灌篮》

世杰（周杰伦饰）是一个见义勇为、好打不平的孤儿。他被功夫大学的老校长收养，从小习武，有一身好功夫，也有“中投”的神技。但是，他却和新任校长不对盘，就连四大高手也没出面帮他。新校长爱钱又势利，一直想将世杰驱逐出校门……

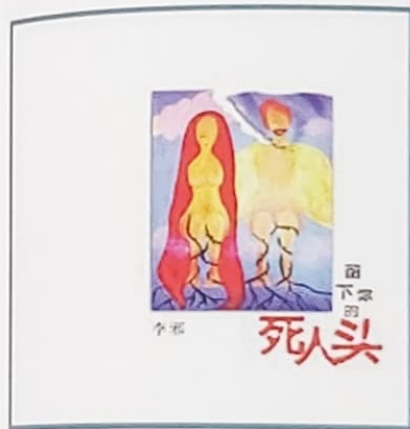
《功夫灌篮》由台湾导演朱延平执导，当红偶像周杰伦、陈柏霖、蔡卓妍和老将曾志伟主演。篮球加上功夫，颇有《少林足球》的影子。不讳言，倒是朱延平少了那么一点信心，因为他惯有的无厘头加低俗。但是许多武打动作都是由周杰伦亲自上阵，还有金牌武指程晓东助阵，马上又对《功夫灌篮》信心十足。

《没有国家的人》A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY

作者：冯内果 Kurt Vonnegut

他是美国一代黑色幽默大师，于07年4月12日在纽约病逝了。

Kurt Vonnegut虽说在数年前突然说停笔不写了，但是爱他的人还是对他这本“毁约”之书爱不释手。而这也成了他真正的“最后之作”。喜欢这本书是因为他并不设任何范围，从女人、战争、创意、环保意识，无所不谈，他甚至大胆地讽刺美国领导人，并且对于美国政府与制度进行嘲讽。他的幽默也许就是一种远离残酷的方式，一种自我保护的作法吧。



《留下你的死人头》

作者：李邪

但是，今年本地出书的人多了！是值得鼓舞！尤其是华文书。我倍感欣慰！依稀记得每次兴致勃勃的我翻开周刊的第一件事，就是翻到最后一页寻找李邪的踪迹。但是现在竟然能拥有“死人头”噢！是整本的李邪。除了有诗和散文诗形式的文字，书中也有作者的绘画。翻了书，也许印象中一个思想偏激、对事情态度有着独特见解的女性，用情真的也会比一般人来得更深。

《仲夏HOUSE》

作者：武琦

又是一位本地作家，不过特别的是，她是个只有20岁的学生。

《仲夏HOUSE》的故事以新加坡为背景，走校园偶像剧路线，没看过华丽的本土偶像剧吧？而且剧中主人公爱情、友情和亲情的纠葛精彩呈现，读了很有共鸣，我们就是这样的咯。也可能年轻作家才真正明白我们的心声吧。

特别的是，书中不乏好玩的网络文字，流行新语还有很多的表情图，有一种在看漫画的感觉。但仔细品味却有一定文字功力。在本地，算是很有新意的时尚华文书，值得期待。



Compiled by OurVoiceBox.sg

Gaming for Dummies

Few are spared from the vice-like grip of gaming but that hardly means everyone knows what each rifle, terrain or role entails. TIMOTHY SIM joins expert gamer of 15 years, Lai Li Ping from Down Under, to break down game speak into perfect chow-down pieces.

① Real-Time Strategy (RTS)

What it is:

A pioneer in the gaming industry, it calls games like **Warcraft** and **Command and Conquer** its own. In RTS games, events unfold as you issue commands.

RTS requires analytical and skillful strategising to overcome the opponent by sheer force, numbers and tactics.

It's often played with a bird's eye view, displaying the terrain, units and building structures but what makes RTS so popular is its online multiplayer system that allows gamers around the globe to play against one another. These games have different missions and intense graphic displays such as ominous nuclear bombs and well-defined paratroopers above the enemy base.

The player controls the game and also oversees the building of structures, production of units and advancement of technology.

Which game:

Starcraft is based on three distinct, galactic species and players engage in intense battles between the different species. It's been in the gaming stratosphere since 1998 and **Starcraft 2** is set to hit the shelves soon.

The Expert says:

Be familiar with the basic opening system and hotkeys because RTS punishes slow reflexes or bad touch-typing. It's important to get a good set-up of your initial buildings and production. Any advantage in the opening phase would be magnified with good play as you continue.



② First-Person Shooter (FPS)

What it is:

A crowd favourite for when there's no time for lengthy matches. With the first-person view, players see what's ahead.

FPS is all about quick reflexes and an illusion of reality. There's the Health Meter that measures vitality and fluctuates as you take damage from enemy fire or when you gain items like armour and shields that protect. The weapons picked have different strengths and weaknesses. In the latest games, the exaggeration of the body's capabilities gives you an unbelievable tolerance for pain.

FPS is a game that involves swiveling your viewing angle and watching for a vicious attack while moving your character.

You've absolutely no idea why your friend is frantically banging away at the computer because you've never gamed in your life and explanations about MMORPG, RTS or FPS leave you more baffled than before. If you're not ready to leave gaming to the cool dudes at LAN shops, what you need is expert advice and guidance.



What game:

CounterStrike, a game based on a strike-force theme. You start with a basic weapon and choose to buy a weapon or equipment to assist your game. There are two sides on the battlefield – the counter-terrorists who protect zones and rescue hostages and the terrorists who plant bombs and capture locations.

The Expert Says:

You'll need an optimal graphic card so you don't have to worry about the gamer's worst enemy – lag. Get a mouse that you're comfortable with and set the right sensitivity before playing. Adjust the hotkeys so you won't waste time shuffling through the menu when purchasing weapons.



③ Role-Playing Game (RPG)

What it is:

RPG's a third-person game in which the player controls a single character to complete objectives, missions and quests within a story. The games tell a story and the players can watch the characters mature. Designed to engage the individual over a period of time, RPGs allow you to save your games so you can continue where you left off.

What game:

The classic **Fallout** series. Before each new game, the player chooses the role (doctor, sniper or happy-go-lucky explorer) and selects different skills and traits that can enhance the role.

Players can select the template provided or change the statistics. The impact varies according to the traits you've picked. If you've picked a character that's armed to steal, you would need as much Stealth as possible.

The Expert says:

You don't have to do anything complicated in playing an RPG. Just enjoy yourself.



Pictures Courtesy of GamePress

Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG)

What it is:

A game where players assume the role of a character and eliminate (kill brutally) to gain experience and get a "level-up", become stronger, create potions or vend a stall selling items to players.

There are specific terms used when talking to others – "Grinding" which means continually killing monsters to level-up without stopping to rest, "nerfing" and "buffing" of a character to make it weaker (nerf) or stronger (buff) through spells.

Traits and skills apply in this game. Main statistical points (Stats) also determine a character's regeneration and self-recovery rate from damage suffered because of poison or frostbite attacks.

MMORPG is not for the competitive since this game is online. While you can log off and continue another time, the game doesn't stop and someone on the other side of the world could be zooming past your level!

What game:

World of Warcraft (WoW), a game in which players move from class to class for new characters. Besides character classes, there are also primary and secondary professions. Primary professions require skills related to the creation and enhancement of weapons and armour while secondary professions need skills that enhance the player's experience.

The Expert says:

Do plenty of research and consider running a few minor test characters to avoid making unalterable changes to your character. Of course, there's no character that will rule the game, but Magicians are usually favoured in most MMORPGs.

Gears of War

The popular Xbox 360 tactical action shooter game, second only to the mighty Halo series, sold three million copies in the first 10 weeks of its release. Now, fans rejoice because after a year of waiting, **Gears of War** is finally on PC. PAUL HO sees how it measures out on a mouse and monitor.

The game starts off in a dystopia-like environment where everything's grey, gloomy and in ruins. An unknown race called the Locust have suddenly sprung out of the ground and taken down cities. It's up to you to execute a plan to destroy them. While it's not exactly the most original plot in the world, credits are due for creating a new type of enemy instead of the usual alien and terrorist mix.

The key success of **Gears of War** is the way it balances multiple game play. Everything about this game is done just about right, not scary with too many innovations and a perfect equilibrium between tactics, shooting and team play can clearly be seen.

tactics

Few titles share the great strategic value **Gears of War** offer and this game is built around the premise of intelligent monsters. So try as you might, you can't play this like your usual **Halo** rush fests. This concept takes some getting used to and first-timers will struggle through the initial stages. But after getting a hang of it, you'll find that it's satisfying to clear each battlefield with a superior strategy instead of blind shooting.

Team play is another vital element here. If you find the game fun on single player, wait till you check it out on multi-player, because there's nothing like pairing up with a friend to sneak up on targets.

weaponry

The **Gears of War** arsenal offers the usual pistols, shotguns and rifles, but there are two very interesting weapons. The first is the Chainsaw. Yes, you get to use a chainsaw but before you go all leather-face on us, hear us out. Unlike **Counterstrike's** pathetic knife or **Half Life's** wimpy crowbar, the Chainsaw is a seriously destructive tool. Attached to your main rifle, it's most useful when you come up behind someone and backsaw.

The other highlight is the Hammer of Dawn. Aside from the cool name, this gun can level whole buildings and it's almost like having a personal cannon.

graphics

Gears of War's graphics are simply to die for. **DailyGame** describes it "photorealistic", a term never before used by them. The game producers have, thankfully, managed to transfer, from the Xbox 360, that sweet quality so PC gamers don't feel left out. The texture, environment, landscape and character details are superbly done. Animation and movement rendering are also fluid, smooth and highly detailed.

Gears of War definitely retains all of its awesomeness in the transfer. Regardless of what gaming genre you prefer, you'll forget all that when you get this game.

Price: \$56.90



Pictures Courtesy of GamePress

Viva Piñata

It's time to let animal-shaped piñatas that frolic around gardens take your gaming life by storm. EUNICE KOW discovers how, while **Viva Piñata** is filled with cute critters, it isn't child's play.



The aim of **Viva Piñata** is to create your own garden from scratch to attract all kinds of piñatas to visit and hopefully become a resident. For that to be done, you'll need to meet requirements such as attracting the animals, turning them into residents and helping them mate. There are quite a few, rather tricky, strategies to get these piñatas and turn a wasteland into a flourishing garden. One good tactic is to feed your own piñatas with specific fruits or flowers so that they'll evolve into another creature. If you succeed, you'll see your piñata evolving and be rewarded with more colourful piñatas so that your gardener rank will go up a notch.

Brains, patience and a wad of tissues to wipe away your tears when your cute piñata friends are sold or bashed by a shovel, are all you need to accompany you through this mind-wrecking game with graphics so vivid and stunning it'll knock your socks off. So, pop the game into your PC and be prepared to spend your time satisfying all the whims and fancies of your precious piñatas.

Price unavailable at press time

Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3

Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3 (UMK3) makes its way to Nintendo DS. First released in 1995, **UMK3** is the fourth release in the **Mortal Kombat** line of renowned, gory fight games. Will it stand up to the legacy left by the previous releases? A. B. RICHARD finds out.

The game is fast-paced and violent with bloody scenes that will catch the attention of gamers of any age. **UMK3** is basically **Mortal Kombat 3** with superb additions. It has two new tournament modes and the 19 characters come with their improved special abilities, stories and excellent reflexes. There are also three characters – Mileena, Ermac and the Classic Sub-Zero – that are blocked, and gamers can unlock them by keying in a code at the Ultimate Kombat Kode screen.

UMK3 surrounds Emperor Shao Kahn, who wants to rule Earth. He exterminates billions of people and the few surviving ones become the characters you use to defeat him. Like in the first **Mortal Kombat**, players must fight against two opponents in order to reach the bosses of the game, an additional stage not found in **Mortal Kombat 3**.

The latest release also comes with another game play, Puzzle Kombat. However, with characters looking like weird Martians, the game is a disappointment, especially considering the fact that it's prized for realistic-looking characters. It's a hard blow.

But at least **UMK3** is on Nintendo DS. The attack and finishing moves are featured on the top screen so you won't need to memorise the key combinations or hit random keys to summon powers.

While **UMK3** might be over a decade old, the consistently quick game play coupled with the easy to use and portable Nintendo DS will leave you calling for more action.

Price: \$55



Pictures Courtesy of GamePress

SILLY inventions

There are state-of-the-art gadgets that have over a million functions, and there are also those weird, frivolous inventions that are not really crucial for survival. CHERYL HOON experiments with three inventions that you can probably live without.

phone fingers

What is it?

Hailing from West Austria are phone fingers that'll prevent unsightly fingerprints and smudges on devices with touch-screens.

The fingers are only available in black now, but fancier colours will be added soon.

How do I use it?

Gently roll the phone fingers on. As they are made out of a very thin latex material, please watch long,

sharp fingernails. Proper handling of the product would guarantee multiple usages. Re-sealable bags are provided so that you can carry the fingers around.

Where can I buy it?

Phone fingers cost EURO6.90 (\$\$14.70) for 25 pieces and are shipped worldwide. Order via www.phonefingers.com and be sure to check your finger size first.

If I don't have the money...

Get balloons from the nearest convenience store. We have never tried it, but we suppose it works the same way. They come in different colours too!

body guard

What is it?

Perfect for the forgetful, the gadget has a sensor that'll start vibrating

while an alarm goes off when your gadget is taken more than 25m away from you. Body guard doesn't give out radiation, cancer-causing or otherwise.

How do I use it?

Tie the smaller unit to your gadget and keep the bigger one with you. The device runs on one AAA battery and one button battery.

Where can I buy it?

Available at \$13.90 from PK International in Midlink Plaza, 122 Middle Road, #02-08/09. You may also order the gadget from <http://gigata.com/pk-int>

If I don't have the money...

Use a length of raffia string and tie yourself to your gadget.

wi-fi detector shirt

What is it?

To complement the government's grand plan to turn Singapore into an IT hub, comes the Wi-Fi detector shirt. Glowing bars on the shirt will flicker according to the Wi-Fi signal strength in the vicinity.

How do I use it?

You put on the shirt. It runs on three AAA batteries.

Where can I buy it?

Get it for USD\$29.99 (\$\$43.40) at www.thinkgeek.com. Although this product does not ship to Singapore directly, it can be delivered via vPost USA, which will consolidate and deliver the items to your address. It'll take longer, but you really need a shirt that can tell the Wi-Fi signal status, right?

If I don't have the money...
Don't buy.

XpressMusic Nokia 5310

Slimmer and sleeker than previous XpressMusic phones, the Nokia 5310 XpressMusic can hold a torch to Sony Ericsson's W880i Walkman phone. CHERYL HOON finds out how.

The Good

Design-wise, Nokia's 5310 XpressMusic screams "Chic!" Measuring a slim 9.9mm thick and weighing a mere 70.2g, this monoblock phone is unbelievably slim and light – but not flimsy. The front is cast in a smooth and greyish-black matt-finished plastic and it's coupled with, according to what colour you choose, a blue or red aluminium trim.

Nokia's attention to design detail is again illustrated in the 5310 that has funky psychedelic dots adorning the back cover.

The keypad buttons are also slightly raised, easing the phone's usability. Three easily accessible multimedia navigation keys – the back, forward and play or stop button – are found on the left side of the aluminium trim, allowing you to access your music application quickly.

The music player also proves its worth as a key feature of the phone, with a crystal-clear audio output and refreshingly simple multimedia keys. Even as you turn the volume to maximum, there is no apparent distortion or detested static.

Replacing the earphones provided in the phone's package for a more specialised set is easy with a standard 3.5mm jack. So now, you can use your favourite Apple iPod, Creative or Sennheiser earphones instead.

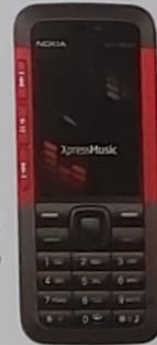
Although the phone comes with only 30MB of built-in memory, which stores roughly 15 songs, an expandable microSD card slot is available.

The Bad

The other functions are not as fabulous as the music player though. With phone cameras going up to five megapixels (essentially, the higher the better), 5310's two megapixel camera with a passable four times digital zoom seems a little weak.

The quality of shots also suffers with each zoom, and the absence of a flash is exasperating. Besides, the phone turns sluggish whenever you take a picture.

In addition to all that, its battery life is disappointing. Within a day of regular text messaging, minimal talktime and music listening, the battery depletes to one quarter of the original. And, the fact that this is not 3G is surprising, considering the increasing number of 3G users.



And The Verdict

In a nutshell, the Nokia 5310 is decent and, as with all Nokia phones, really aesthetically pleasing if you're looking for a music phone that has basic and simple functions.

Price: \$528

LIFE can be so unfair. You shop and spend as much as the next person, but lose out on attractive discounts, just because you don't own a credit card.

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food.

just desserts

Life hits you hard sometimes but you'll get your just desserts when ALICIA TAN takes you on a tantalising trail of Singapore's sweetest.

peaberry & pretzel



Sunset Way is a haven of gastronomic treats, with Thai, Japanese, Italian and Chinese cuisine. But if you're looking for sweet treats, drop by peaberry & pretzel.

Stepping into the café, you'll notice the glass case of delectable muffins and *tiramisu*. But before sampling the scrumptious delights, Melissa Chong, one of the four owners of this quaint café, explains that a peaberry is a coffee bean that grows alone in a single cherry and is highly prized in coffee making. Including it in the café's name reflects the "caviar" standard of coffee they offer to their customers. Similarly, pretzel, a traditional German bread, represents the strong German influence in their food.

The alluring desserts at peaberry & pretzel are handmade daily by Head Chef Faizal and each one is crafted lovingly with the best ingredients and utmost artistry. A must-try is the strawberry *tiramisu* (\$6) because the tart strawberry bits and smooth, rich mascarpone melts in your mouth, leaving you asking for more. Another favourite is the unique and absolutely delectable apple and rhubarb crumble (\$6) that's made with an abundance of fresh autumn fruits of blueberries, strawberries, peaches and a crisp crust.

But perhaps the most indulgent of all the desserts at peaberry & pretzel is the ultimate chocolate pudding (\$12.50). Made only when orders from customers are placed, it's filled with molten Valrhona dark chocolate lava that oozes out of a light, thin chocolate crust. Served with homemade vanilla ice cream, it's definitely a remedy for all heartbreaks.



Pictures Courtesy of peaberry & pretzel

Address: Blk 106 Clementi St 12, #01-52
Tue to Fri 12pm to 10pm, Weekends 9am to 11pm

Nectarie le' Dessert Patisserie

Nectarie exudes an elegance and character and this is evident from far. A new addition to The Cannery at Clarke Quay, it has a delectable selection of cakes, ice cream, crêpes and strudels.

Nectarie, with its warm lighting and lovely ambience is the place you'll go to for a chat over a glass of cold hazelnut chocolate drink (\$7) or gourmet teas such as the pomegranate ruby (\$6.50) and Moroccan mint (\$6.50).

Chefs also bake up a storm of over 12 scrumptious desserts daily. They include the strawberry shortcake (\$6) that comes with a generous serving of fresh strawberries layered with homemade cream and soft sponge and the absolutely sinful chocolate terrine with coconut mousse (\$7) that's accompanied by fragrant ganache (heavy cream with dark chocolate).

Besides cakes, fresh waffles (\$6 with maple syrup or chocolate sauce) that come with a variety of fresh fruit toppings like caramelised bananas, red wine pear and Sarawak pineapples (\$3 each) are available to satisfy. To accompany the fluffy waffles are exotic ice cream flavours like lavender honey, Jack Daniels' and crunchy hazelnut (\$4 per scoop) and they are bound to drive those with a sweet tooth delirious with delight.

Although they have a fanfare of desserts, light meals like salads, quiches and an assortment of sandwiches are prepared too.

Address: Block 3C, The Cannery #01-05, River Valley Road, Clarke Quay
Sun to Thurs from 12pm to 11 pm; Friday & Sat from 12pm to 2am



Picture Courtesy of Nectarie le' Dessert Patisserie

Canelé Pâtisserie Chocolaterie

A lazy Sunday should always include tea at Canelé (say *can-eh-lay*). Maybe it's the pastry chefs piping cream onto a cake in front of the entire café, or the superior chocolates and macarons, but there's something warm and inviting about Canelé.

The *pâtisserie* is helmed by Executive Pastry Chef Pang Kok Keong, an extremely passionate and talented individual who was the Cacao Barry Pastry Chef of the



Photo by Alicia Tan

Year at the prestigious World Gourmet Summit 2007. It's at their first outlet at Robertson Walk that all the baking is done and where pastry chefs painstakingly churn out breads, cakes and chocolates.

Canelé's manager, Alicia Pan, explains that the café's winning concept is that they're able to provide a "luxury and cosy atmosphere for customers yet still capping good quality food prices at an affordable amount". The café's variety of more than 30 cakes, which includes the moist and alcohol-flavoured *tiramisu* (\$6.50), truly offers value for money.

But if you're looking for an explosion of textures and flavours, try the L'amour (\$7.50), a creation of short bread, marzipan (almond and sugar paste), strawberry *coulis* (French sauce made with fruit juice), marshmallows and the famous macarons.

Also impressive is Canelé's *à la carte* dessert menu. Mont Blanc crepes (\$13.50) filled with chestnut ice cream, vanilla crème *chantilly* (flavoured whipped cream), blackcurrant *coulis*, almond crumble; and crème brûlée tea (\$9.50) which is crème brûlée with Earl Grey and Ceylon tea, are desserts *du jour* on the mouth-watering menu.

Address: Robertson Walk, 11 Unity Street, #01-09
Monday to Wednesday: 10 am to 8 pm; Thursday to Saturday: 10 am to 11 pm; Sunday: 10 am to 6 pm

Perfectly Peranakan!

Like the intricately stitched *kebayas* and colourful beaded shoes, the fragrant Peranakan dishes are cooked carefully with recipes that have lived for generations. AW CHENG WEI and DENISE TAN sample the intricate fare that melds the best of Chinese and Malay flavours at three Peranakan places.

Chilli Padi

Address: 11 Joo Chiat Place, #01-03
Lunch: 11.30pm to 2.30pm; Dinner: 5.30pm to 10pm

Eating at Chilli Padi is like eating at a Baba home in the 1950s. That is, a home with fluorescent lights covered in red Batik cloth, antique paintings and teak wood shelves adorned with metal watering cans, cast-iron kettles and old-fashioned fans.

And the food, spiced with the flavours of yesteryear, is just as traditional. The dishes are served in claypots to ensure that the *chap chye* or mixed vegetables (\$6.80) still has that bit of bite and that the fish maw soup (\$8.80) and the curry *assam* fish head (\$18 - 28) remains piping hot as if it's still simmering over a charcoal stove.

The handmade *belacan* (chili with lime and shrimp paste) is to die for and eaten with the fluffy white rice, it's a meal upon itself.

But that would mean you'll be missing out on the tender *babi ponteh* or stewed pig's trotter (\$7.80), *ayam rendang* (\$6.80) and supremely fresh fish head in curry *assam* garnished generously with brinjal and lady's fingers (\$18).

End the meal with the dessert that celebrates the distinct pungent, multi-layered Peranakan taste - *Chempedak* (seasonal fruit similar to jackfruit) *chendol* (\$3.50).

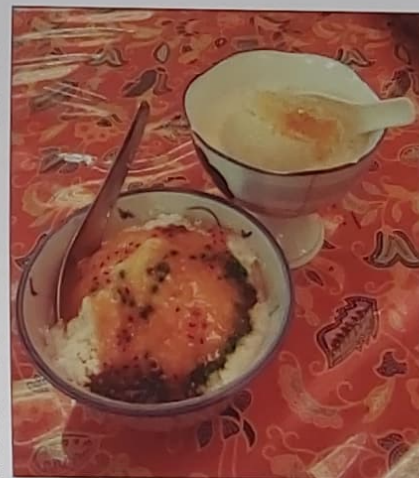


Photo by Denise Tan

Guan Hoe Soon Restaurant

Address: 214 Joo Chiat Road
9.30am to 9.15pm

Established as one of the pioneers in the local Peranakan food scene, Guan Hoe Soon Restaurant which has been around for over half a century, is housed snugly in one of the many rustic shophouses that characterise Joo Chiat Road.

The restaurant is hardly noticeable among the cacophony of faded colours that whisper of a glorious past. Humble in both its appearance and interior design, heritage is obviously highly prized at Guan Hoe Soon and the place is furnished with a wooden



Photos by Aw Cheng Wei



counter and old-school tables and chairs. The bean sprouts fried in *sambal* (\$6) are slightly limp but considered palatable juxtaposed to the *sambal sotong* or squid in *sambal* (\$8). Another dish that went fairly well is the crunchy and flavourful five-spice roll (\$6).

On the other hand, dessert is an unexpected surprise. With the richness of coconut cream with the sweetness of palm sugar atop sago pearls and a ball of ice, the first bite of the traditional *gula melaka* (\$2.80) is smooth and soothing. It's an easy concoction but it's good enough for the revered eatery.

The Arch

Peranakan food is often steeped in tradition and little is done to vary the recipe. The Arch, however, does its very own translation and offers 38 pleasantly surprising concoctions.

On the menu is Straits Cuisine and this includes a mildly spicy and pretty *sotong hitam* (squid in its ink and assam) (\$12), and unique *chap chye* with carrots (\$8).

Hardly typical Peranakan dishes, the *sambal* prawns (\$13.80) and the tangy and deliciously fatty *assam* pork belly (\$12), cater to the adventurous who seek something besides the old.

Wash down the spicy *hay bee hiam* (fried dried spicy shrimp) with the soup of the day (\$5 per person). Boiled for hours, the corn, onions or watercress is soft and the soup amazingly sweet. But the best part is that the soup's free-flow.

Then there's the best result of when the old meets the new. Sago with *gula melaka* (palm sugar) topped with vanilla ice cream (\$2.50). The all too modern vanilla ice cream is divine with the thick, brown *gula melaka* and pristine white chewy sago. The syrup is served separate so you'll never have to stomach overly sweet sago drowning in *gula-gula* or suffer bland sago.

The Arch is not what you expect but nonetheless, it's very good.

Address: 32 Seah Street
Lunch: 11am - 3pm, Dinner: 6pm - 10pm



Photos by Aw Cheng Wei

TALENTSTAR

YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE ISN'T FAR

Blogging. Cam-whoring. Shooting and uploading video clips. Surfing social-networking sites (like Friendster). If these are part of your daily must-dos, this competition is for you!

Say what?

TALENTSTAR - A competition where you can finally let your talents, good looks, brains and personality shine. But yet another talent contest?

Hold your horses! Before you dismiss this as just another part of the Idol series, let us clarify that TALENTSTAR is not a TV show. In fact, it will be a 16-week contest held online (which some may refer to as "home"), in collaboration with the most popular social networking portal in Asia - Friendster.

Held online? So how will this work?

You will be taking on your pals from three other countries in the region - namely Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

But first you gotta beat the 19 other local contestants in challenges like "Glamour", "Talent", "Fitness", "Passion" and "Local", where you have to take pictures and videos of yourself, create interesting blog posts and submitting them online for judging.

The male and female champions representing each country will then come together to compete for the throne as TALENTSTARS.

So what's the big deal?

Ah yes, so what's a talent competition without the drool-worthy prizes? Thankfully, the people at TALENTSTAR are very generous indeed. The male and female TALENTSTAR will each be receiving \$5000 cash, a brand new 8GB Nokia N95 phone, as well as a trip for 2 to exotic destinations. The Champions will also have the honour of becoming the official ambassadors of Friendster (and Animax Youth Ambassador's host).

Sweet. How do I sign up?

Simply log on to www.italentstar.com for more details. Good luck and have fun!

Log on to www.italentstars.com now!

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Prowling the nooks and crannies of Hong Kong, you'll discover pulsating façades, cultures, people and unquestionably succulent food. But this metropolitan beauty still has a horde of surprises up her sleeve. ANISAH AHMAD explores the country with the breath-taking sights and inimitable sounds.



Pictures Courtesy of Hong Kong Tourism Board

A three and a half hour flight will take us to the city of Hong Kong. Infamous for its ghastly pollution and overcrowding, its hardly an ideal holiday location. But once you step onto Central Piers, you'll see a gamut of China. The buildings represent the country's constant growth.

Just like its towering buildings, the standard of living in this financial hub is much like Singapore. Hopping on its high-speed "bullet" Mass Transit Railway or MTR (their version of our MRT) only costs \$1.30 (HKD\$6.90) for a single trip.

Outwardly metropolitan and cold, it might not seem too friendly a city to explore, but poking into the nooks and crannies of these buildings and streets will uncover the tastiest desserts and cheapest bargains.

Lunch the Hong Kong Way

Have a perfect lunch date - the Hong Kong way. The true Cantonese never fails to go for *yum cha* which means "drink tea". It's a tradition to *yum cha* on weekend mornings and spend quality family time while diving into an excellent spread of *dim sum*. Like they say, you've never been to Hong Kong if you've never tried the *dim sum*.

Hong Kong has the sights, the sounds and of course, the Smelly Tofu. It's a notoriously popular, reeking, *dai pai dong* (street-side) delicacy that's a must-try. Muster all the courage you have, before it automatically repels with the pungent odour that critics liken to sewage, hold your breath and gulp it down.

Grave any cuisine and Hong Kong will deliver such that even food connoisseurs will not leave unsatisfied. With German, Italian, Dutch, American, Turkish, Szechuanese, Hainanese, Korean, Indian and of course, *bona fide* Cantonese dishes, only for the brave-hearted, like goose paws (yes, geese have paws in this menu!) and fish maws (the gas bladder of a fish) to choose from, the most courageous eater will be spoilt for choice!

Visit an inconspicuous street-side restaurant on Cochrane Street. Diagonal to the notable Starbucks Café and known for its massive variety of delectable local Cantonese desserts is *Hang Fa Lau*. The stall attracts those in need of real traditional delicacies. The desserts come either hot or cold and with natural ingredients like fruits, seeds, herbs, milk and eggs. Signature dishes are the steamed egg white with sweet milk (HKD\$18) and the sago sweet ball with sesame (HKD\$16). A favourite end to a fulfilling meal would be the coconut milk with black glutinous rice (HKD\$18), which is mildly sweet, adequately rich yet not heavy.

The Shopping Haven

Streets like *Tung Choi Street* (Ladies Market), with its concoction of bustling streets and constant loud haggling, is simply exhilarating and a must-visit.

Also buried in this concrete jungle are outlet shopping areas (shopping centres that spill over onto the streets as small shops) that promise excellent value for money. This internationally fashionable shopping stretch is in the *Wan Chai* District and Joyce warehouse in *Ap Lei Chau*. The nondescript grey buildings house original branded goods like Issey Miyake, Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton, Agnes B. and a host of others.

If insane humidity levels agitate you, island-hop to *Lantau* and cool off at the Citygate Outlets in *Tung Chung*. A massive five-storey mall for tight budgets, it's sprawling with stores that carry faux branded goods and offer discounts of up to 70 percent.

Too Many Sights to See!

Besides mandatory visits to its themed Disneyland and Ocean Park, witness other iconic attractions that awe locals and visitors perennially.

Sail on board *Aqua Luna*, one of Hong Kong's last remaining bat-winged junk boats that grace the Victoria Harbour. The *Aqua Luna* boasts the distinctive red sails spottable from afar. A 45-minute cruise on board this two-storey vessel costs HKD\$180 but comes with a free drink from its bar and cocktail lounge.

At the end of the day, visit the southernmost tip of Kowloon, where museums and cultural centres stand. There you'll find The Avenue of Stars, which is complete with a host of dining options where you can witness, according to Guinness World Records, the "World's Largest Permanent Light and Sound Show".

That's The Symphony of Lights and it's a nightly exhibition that has 43 buildings on both sides of the Victoria Harbour, fancifully illuminated to signify a vibrant and diverse Hong Kong. With a 360-degree display, any corner of this promenade promises a front-row seat.

Fast Facts:

Getting there - Cathay Pacific, United Airlines and Singapore Airlines fly direct to Hong Kong with daily flights. Fares on Jetstar Airways start from \$159 (excluding taxes).

Currency - Hong Kong Dollar (\$1 is approximately HKD\$5 at press time) - XE.com

Visa - No Visa is needed for Singaporeans visiting this Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China for 90 days or less.

Best time to visit - The best time to visit would be during summer (May-August). End of year season is usually cold and dry.

Language - Despite a majority being able to speak in English or Mandarin, Cantonese is the most widely-used dialect in Hong Kong. Start with the popular greeting, "*Lei Hou!*" which means "How do you do?"

To see more sights of Hong Kong, visit www.discoverhongkong.com

last look

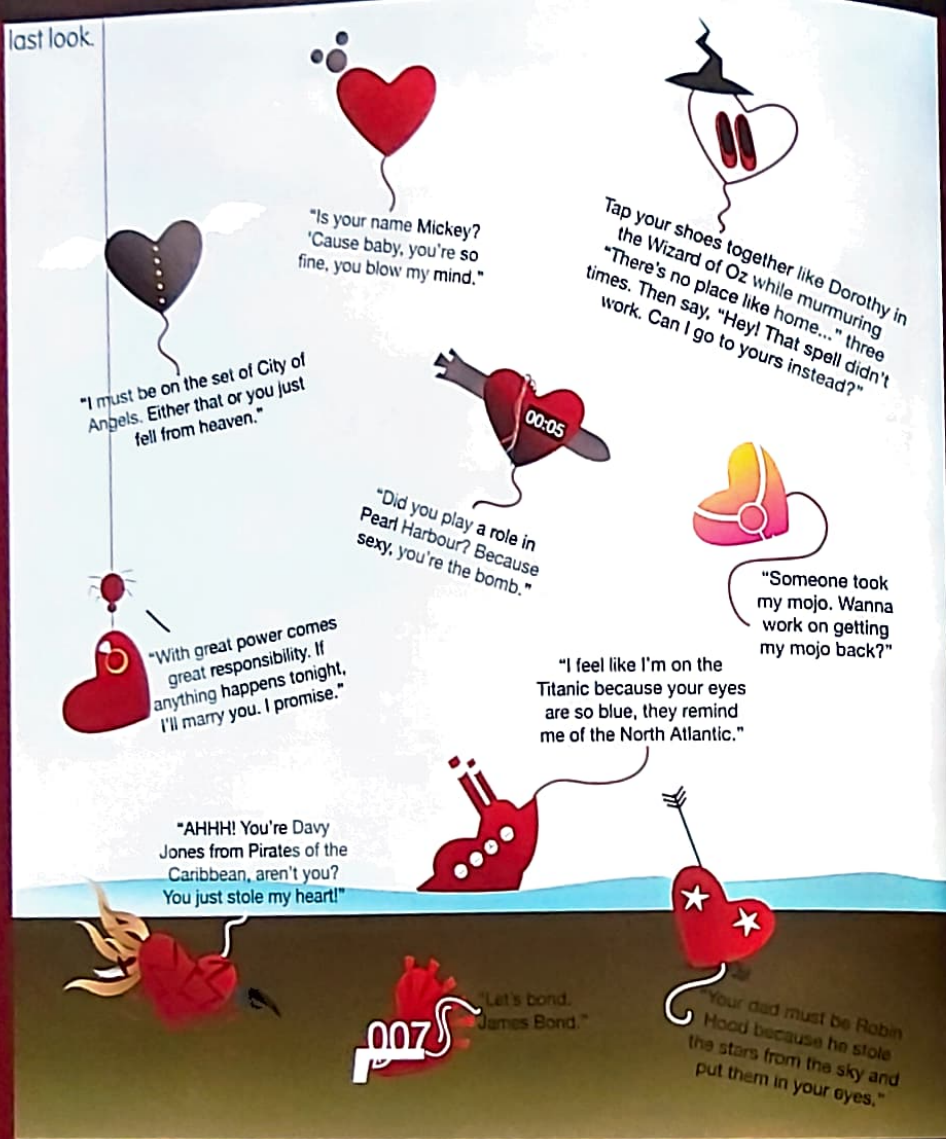


Illustration by Stephanie Goh
Text by Cheryl Hoon

Movie Lines You'll Never Hear

It's the season of love again and the pesky little kid with wings is shooting stinging arrows with that blood red, heart-shaped tip. Before you know it, you start falling for that stranger sitting a few seats down from you in the cinema. You're in the mood for love and decide to make your move once the closing credits start to roll. But hold your horses because you haven't got a stunt double to do your lines. **hype** presents the moves that will never work with this scene.



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