

hype

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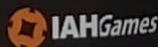


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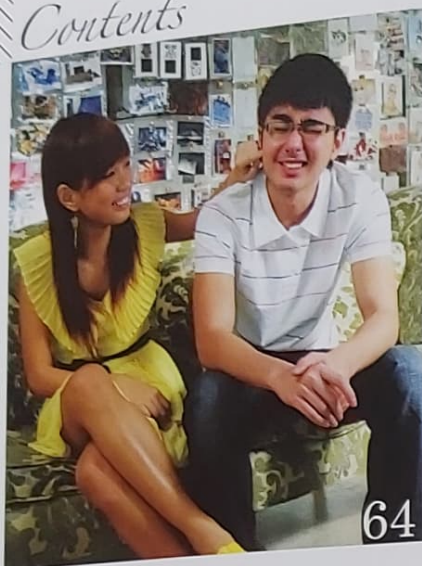
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AMK Hub, #01-19/20

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Plaza Singapura, #B1-28/29

Tampines Mall, #04-11/12

The Heeren Shops,
#03-09

Far East Plaza, #01-33/35

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Marina Square, #03-280

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#04-25a/k2/k3/34

Marina Square, #03-358/359/360/365

Leftfoot

The Cathay, #01-19/20

Orchard Cineleisure,
#02-07A

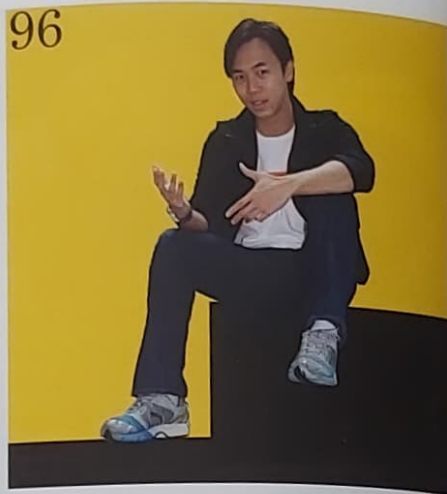
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hype

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Only True Love Will Do

If you had to go through an arranged marriage today, would you?

Not many of us would enjoy being matchmade with someone we barely know. My grandparents were matchmade 50 years ago and they were very loving for two people who knew each other only a month before getting hitched.

I guess the difference between then and now is that people learnt to actually love one another.

And decades later, the mysticism of love and romance doesn't seem to hold value anymore. Many seem to believe love and sex are one and the same. Using love to mask your intention of lusting after another can be dangerous as our story on being faithful in a relationship will tell you (pages 30-31).

Sure it might not sound that bad, but a relationship between any two people is a gem to be nurtured with care. In fact, it's such a treasure that some people would go to lengths to preserve their most intimate memories with tattoos, as

our reporter Candice Lee finds out. What better way is there to say you love your family than to tattoo a visual interpretation of your family as stars onto your skin?

To many, the meaning of love is very subjective. How you handle the experience with your heart is what really counts.

We at **hype** wish you all the best this Valentine's.



Brian Cheong
Editor

1. Ng Yan Hong

With her delicate features and smooth complexion, Yan Hong's personality is as gentle as her beauty. In class, she speaks only when spoken to and with friends; she sometimes tunes out, lost in her own thoughts.

But talk to her about classic novels and she speaks with much fervour, grinning to reveal straight teeth lined with silver braces.

"It's fascinating that although they were written a long time ago, they're still relevant. They also reveal the power of the human mind, which can sometimes be really monstrous."

3. Sujith Kumar

Finally – a guy who has no qualms admitting that he likes Bjork.

While his musical tastes lie in the Icelandic artiste, Sujith's heart belongs to Sydney and its colourful natives – the first colour being green, for the endangered sea turtles he fought to save from port-builders. The other colours are found in the multi-hued flags decking Oxford Street, which he loves for its culture and eye-candy.

With a perpetually languid air surrounding him, Sujith embodies the non-violent values he practiced when he was a Greenpeace volunteer. The only ammunition he uses is the power of the written word.

2. Chrystal Chua

Chrystal Chua is an object of fantasy. The tall, slim, fair-skinned Miss Congeniality with the entire package – looks, smarts, and an arresting smile.

Before writing for *hype*, the 19-year-old worked as a business journalist for *Marketing Magazine*. "It definitely took me out of my comfort zone," she recalls, "especially since I never liked stuffy business news!"

Chrystal aspires to make headlines in human rights journalism because she says, "...the power of the pen is really cool, for it allows you to put certain people and issues in the limelight, for better or worse."

4. Daryll Nanayakara

Don't be fooled by his, to-die-for long lashes and dreamy eyes. Nothing gets the 19-year-old's adrenaline pumping like a rough day on the court in a heated row with an authoritative figure.

Speaking his mind is *de rigueur* for Daryll, even if it means getting slapped with a five-minute penalty in any one of his floorball matches.

An aspiring journalist who has interned at *my paper*, he is on to rebel against conventional packages in *hype's* Valentine's Day Special. For him it's "strictly no teddy bears and couple rings!"

1. Teo Hong Jun

A self-confessed procrastinator, Teo Hong Jun relishes last-minute work, consuming loads of lollipops to stay sane. His favourite is Chupa Chups.

"I need stress. When I'm stressed, I get better ideas," he says in his low voice, adding that without stress, he wouldn't be the creative, talented man he is today.

During his internship with an advertising company, he came up with a pitch-winning idea for the Yellow Ribbon Project which featured a man wearing nothing but a tattoo and a post-it note.

His eventual ambition in life is to sell lingerie to rich *tai tais*.

3. Kenneth Cheong

As a "professional Initial-D arcade gamer since 14", racing has always been Kenneth's way of "stress management" when the going gets tough. And at \$3 a pop, he would spend close to \$450 a month on racing!

The former Meridien JC boy admits that when he couldn't handle his Physics tutor, he jumped ship to Mass Communication, only to discover that memorising the theories of relativity was a walk in the park compared to planning an advertising campaign for La Senza brassieres.

Who knows, maybe one day he'll use his knowledge on bras and relativity to come up with his own theorems on staying perky.

2. Nadia Shah

A fondness for getting inked is hardly a quality one would associate with 19-year-old honour student, Nadia Shah.

With four tattoos and an exotic melée of Iranian, Pakistani, Chinese and Indian ancestry in her family tree, Nadia is really a rebel who aspires to be like Susan Storm Large of *Rockstar: Supernova*.

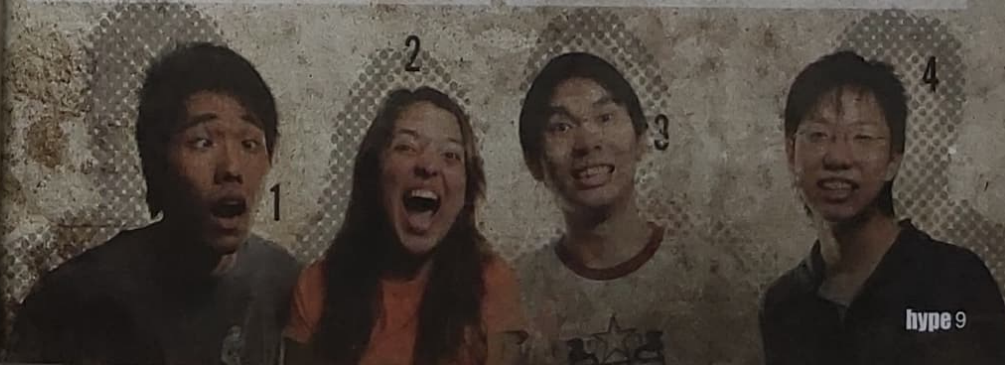
While getting tattoos is more of a fad to many, Nadia's tattoos are mostly "an emotional thing", signifying her tightly built family ties and satisfying her need for self-expression.

4. Ong Chong Ern

Ong Chong Ern once said, "Curiosity killed the cat, but hey, that was one satisfied dead cat."

No, he's no zany cat killer, he's just really curious about pretty much everything. The aspiring journalist, who is a huge fan of the truth, firmly believes in breaking stereotypes. Rather than taking the conventional route, the 19-year-old would much rather spend his life exploring issues of human interest that are often ignored or forgotten.

He prefers to "walk down the path less trodden", always trying to give a voice to the people who need to be heard.



1. Kristie Chiew

First impressions can be very deceiving, as Kristie Chiew will tell you.

The former news intern is bothered when people do not perceive her as intelligent — something she doesn't understand.

"Most people find me dumb on the first meeting, and even more dim on the second meeting. I'm not sure if it's my love of pink, or simply because I tend to speak in the most tense situations," the vivacious 19-year-old explained.

Describing herself as "efficient, impatient, cheery and very chatty", she finds comfort in food and writing, which makes her "feel more intelligent".

3. Boo Jian Wen Jeremy

When you first look at 20-year-old Jeremy Boo and notice his stark "bamboo-like" physique, you might conclude that snacking probably wouldn't qualify as his favourite pastime.

Well, guess again.

Currently serving as writer-editor for the online lifestyle magazine, *The UrbanWire*, Jeremy admits to an unparalleled love for both his stories and his food. He can take up to 10 meals on average.

"Everyone needs to eat to survive. I'm perhaps a magnification; if I don't eat enough, I can't think, and my emotions are a terror," the former school athlete said.

2. Siraj Aziz

A member of Ngee Ann's percussion band, Baracuda Batucada, Muhammad Siraj bin Abdul Aziz lives and breathes music.

Armed with an iPod to get him through the days of his life, Siraj, 19, is simply just "the Man".

He dimples when he speaks about his passion: music, music and more music. Fueled by the 1,300 songs in his iPod, the headphones of which seem to be permanently glued to his ears, Siraj glides through life with a genuinely happy grin on his face. Almost like that of a Darlie advertisement, his smile has become a fixture to his good-humoured personality.

4. Lau Liang Tong

All it takes is a short conversation with her and you will soon begin to realise how animated and chatty Lau Liang Tong is, especially about night shopping in Asia.

For a start, the bubbly 19-year-old Mass Communication student rattles off about her love for shopping in Japan, but before she can get to explaining their appeal, she interjects herself and says, "Actually, I like the night markets in Hong Kong too."

Having travelled to the night markets of Thailand, China and Japan in search of a "great variety of things," She is intrigued that the local *pasar malams* "just keep having the same old things everytime."

1. Nur'Atiqah Bte Ali

Often clad in black, with blonde streaked hair and kohl-rimmed eyes, Atiqah's usually unsmiling demeanor may look intimidating to NP's herds of laptop clutching students.

A free spirit who enjoys the thrill of being different and bending the rules now and then, the 19-year-old believes in doing the things she enjoys to the fullest. Her rebellious streak is also seen in her love for writing. It's either her way or no way.

"If I don't enjoy the topic I'm writing, I'll try to worm out of it. It's hard for me to write about something I don't like," she quipped unabashedly.

3. Candice Lee

Often described by friends as "sarcastic to the point of nasty", Candice Lee, 21, isn't exactly your average girl. She loves goth, enjoys cult classics, and has a taste for tattoos and body modifications. In fact, her tiny frame currently sports a total of three tattoos of varying sizes.

Don't be fooled by her appearance.

Under a cool and aloof facade is an affectionate soul who has a soft spot for all kinds of animals.

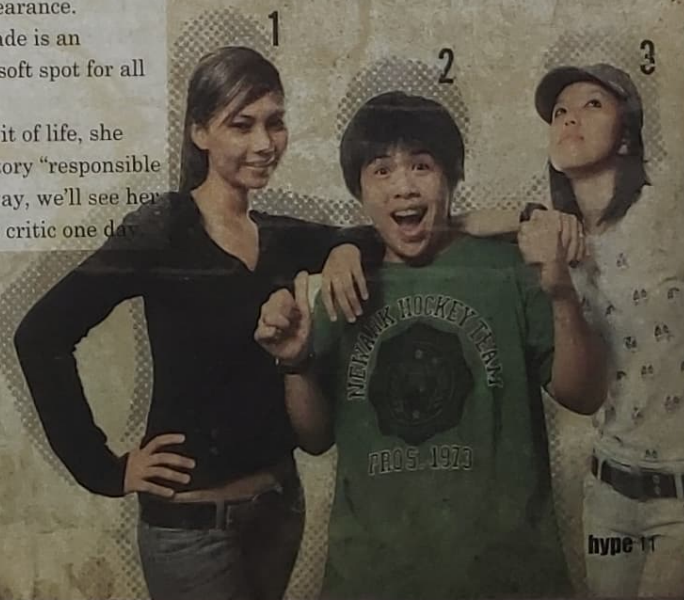
Keen on savouring every bit of life, she dreads becoming the obligatory "responsible adult". If she does get her way, we'll see her as a book reviewer or movie critic one day.

2. Kyle Sim

Despite having no prior experience in writing other than for schoolwork and writing to girls, Kyle Sim is nervous and excited about being a *hype* reporter.

Upon being asked to describe himself in three words, Kyle was quick to state his incapability of doing so. "When I search the thesaurus for the word 'fantastic', 23 other words came out!" Triple that, and you get his I.Q. of 69, which he proudly proclaims on his Facebook profile.

Besides writing for *hype*, Kyle is also in the planning committee of the youth outreach programme for Action for AIDs (AFA) Singapore's World AIDs Day 2009.



BEST MUSIC ACTS OF 2008

By Nadia Shah

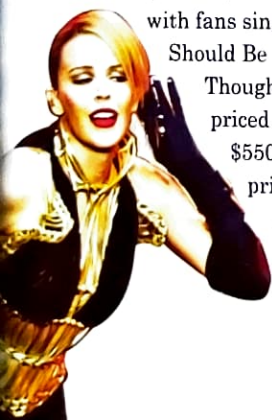
1 Kylie Minogue

There were gripes about over-priced tickets for a massively scaled-down show.

But all was forgiven when Kylie Minogue purred on Nov 25 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium as part of her KylieX2008 World Tour. The 40-year-old drove fans wild when she gave a tribute to Singapore in a rendition of "Your Disco Needs You", crooning "From Soho to Singapore, from the mainland to the shore."

Spotting three men clad in sequined dresses and feathers, Kylie jokingly called them her competition, and closed the show with fans singing along to "I Should Be So Lucky".

Though the tickets, priced from \$100 to \$550, were deemed pricey for a show with few theatrics, Kylie shone brightly like the star we all know she is.



2 Rihanna

It was a nerve-wrecking start for the 20-year-old during her Good Girl Gone Bad concert at the Singapore Indoor Stadium on Nov 13. Rihanna opened the show with "Disturbia", only to discover that her microphone was faulty.

Disappearing offstage to fix the problem, her back-up singers were left on stage to entertain the 8,000 anticipating fans.

However, she soon returned and got the audience grooving to hits like "SOS" and "Shut Up and Drive".

Despite the glitch and a short show lasting just an hour, Rihanna ended the night right with her hit, "Umbrella".

Fans smart enough to sneak their brollies in danced along with them.



3 Avril Lavigne

Only one word is needed to describe Avril Lavigne's The Best Damn Tour concert, which hit the Singapore Indoor Stadium on Sep 7 – Pink.

Six years have passed since the Canadian-born popstar released her first album, *Let Go*. Then, with hits like "Sk8er Boi" and "Complicated", she seemed set to be the next big punk princess.

But Avril, now 23, has become more of a pink princess, with her concert being a phenomenal pink fest.

The whole set looked like it'd been flooded with pink glitter, especially when Avril, wearing a pink earpiece, sang and

accompanied, "When You're Gone", replete with a pink piano.

But with her fun dance moves and tremendously improved singing (Avril has come a long way since her dog-wailing days), the concert was a hit with fans.

The 8,000-size audience, filled mainly with pre-teen Avril-wannabes who were dressed just like their role model (think tank tops, skinny ties, knee-high socks and sneakers), was pumping along happily with their pink glo-sticks.

Looks like the concert was the best damn thing that happened to them.



4 Kanye West

He came from the West and promised to be the best, and he was.

To the 6,000 fans at his Glow in the Dark concert at the Singapore Indoor Stadium on Oct 29, Kanye West lived up to his promise – the 31-year-old rapmeister from Chicago did everything right.

His light show hit a chord with fans, with dazzling red, blue, yellow and pink beams enveloping the stage.

Kanye himself didn't let up from the get-go. He performed non-stop and drove the crowd wild with hits like "American Boy" and "Gold Digger". He closed with a reprise of the 2007 tune that made shutter shades a fashion statement, "Stronger".

Fans also got to see a more down-to-earth side to Kanye when he messed up the introduction of "Heartless". The single is from his fourth and latest album *808s &*

Heartbreak, which, by the way, features a live recording from Singapore in bonus track "Pinocchio Story".

Kanye, who has a reputation for being arrogant, immediately apologised to his band and got them to start the song again.

"Sorry, I f***** up."

Nah, Kanye, you were great.



5 A7X

Die-hard fans were already queuing to get into their concert the night before. So by the time Avenged Sevenfold – or A7X, as they're more affectionately known – took to the stage at Max Pavilion at the Singapore Expo on Oct 25, fans were already geared up for a night of wild music and fun.

When a required bag check was performed before the show, the mob grew impatient and started forcing their way through while chanting "We want in".

This got the attention of vocalist M Shadows, who said during the concert, "I was backstage and could hear you screaming all the way out there. You guys are one of the most passionate, crazy groups of kids we've played for."

Shadows, along with the four other

members in the Californian band, Synyster Gates (lead guitar), Zacky Vengeance (guitar), Johnny Christ (bass) and The Rev (drums), had the crowd of 25,000 on their feet throughout the 75-minute show.

The fans, mostly dressed in skinny jeans with Converse sneakers, rocked to A7X's "Sieze The Day" as their lighted mobile phone screens showed.



6 Motley Crue

They've been around for almost 30 years, with band members on the wrong side of 40. But that didn't stop Motley Crue from rocking Fort Canning Park down on Oct 16 in their first ever concert in Singapore.

In fact, Vince Neil (vocalist), Mick Mars (guitarist), Nikki Sixx (bass) and Tommy Lee (drums) delivered a performance that would put their younger rock-and-roll counterparts to shame.

The saints from Los Angeles played smashing hits from their nine albums, including their latest, *Saints of Los Angeles*, to a crowd of 4,500 wild fans ranging from the young to the old.

The concert lasted a satisfying 80 minutes and by the end of encore power-ballad

"Home Sweet Home", fans were already screaming for the band to return next year. All we can say is, Motley Crue, please make Singapore your second home sweet home.



7 Love Amplified

"This concert was one small step for us but one giant leap in the fight against AIDS in Singapore," proclaimed Lionel Lee, executive director of Action for AIDS (Afa).

The AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) awareness movement has come a long way since the first infected patients were detected in 1985.

Some 3,865 people here have been diagnosed with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) - the virus which causes full-blown AIDS - in the past 20 years, according to a *The Straits Times* article published on Dec 1 last year.

The first-ever World AIDS Day concert here, Love Amplified, was held at Fort Canning Park on Nov 29 with an audience of over 3,600 people.

8 Singfest 08

Loads of big music names in one park. That's what Singfest, which cost US\$5 million to stage, offered its concert-goers at Fort Canning Park on the weekend of August 2 and 3.

Some 17,000 fans were treated to performances by 36 international, regional and local acts. That included alternative rockband Panic at the Disco, sultry girl group Pussycat Dolls, R&B star Alicia Keys, crooner Jason Mraz and even 1980s pop star Rick Astley.

Our only gripe, though, was that local bands like West Grand Boulevard, Vertical Rush and Plainsunset were given a separate stage to perform on, giving them less exposure than they ought to have had.

The concert featured some of the biggest names in the local entertainment scene, such as Electrico, The Dim Sum Dollies, funny man Hossan Leong, Asian Idol Hady Mirza and golden girl Stephanie Sun.

Though marred by a lame joke by Hady on AIDS that bloggers zoomed in on, Stephanie summed it up best when she said of those living with HIV: "A little support would really mean a lot to them."

See page 46 for more on HIV



Still, with ticket prices ranging from \$150 to \$350, we say last year's Singfest was truly worth the bucks.





Tales of high-sea adventures on board the world's oldest passenger ship

By Ong Chong Ern

Photo by Yeo Kai Wen

Floating grandly beside VivoCity's 21st-century façade was one of the oldest operating ships in the world. The 94-year-old *MV Doulos* has weathered two World Wars, countless storms and holds the Guinness World Record for being the oldest active passenger ship.

Having undergone several name changes, the German-owned ship now serves as the world's biggest floating library, with a collection of more than half a million books.

"Rust and paint are probably the only things holding her together," said Miss Phua Siew Kheng, 52, who sailed aboard the *Doulos* when she was in her twenties as a volunteer sailor.

Volunteers spend at least two years in community service at the ship's many ports. Miss Phua had spent more than eight years aboard the ship.

Having sailed the world from Dubai to Oman to Madagascar some experiences aboard were more than plain sailing.

"When the *Doulos* crew were in Zamboanga in 1991 preparing for an event, someone from a radical Muslim group tossed two grenades in. One grenade was a dud, but the other exploded," she recalled.

"As many as 60 people were injured by the flying shrapnel. Two Swedish girls from the crew died," added Mr Ashley McDonald, 45, former captain of the *MV Doulos*.

Rough storms are another challenge.

Miss Phua's fellow shipmate, Miss Doris Goh, 53, remembers the ordeal of a powerful typhoon off Kagoshima, Japan. The *Doulos*, she said, "isn't exactly a new ship.

"You'll emerge as a new person," she added.

If you're looking for high-sea adventures, this may be your last chance to sign up as a volunteer as the ship decommissions in 2010.

The *Doulos* will undoubtedly continue to be firmly etched in the minds and hearts of those it serves.

Visit their website at www.mvdoulos.org



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By Ng Yan Hong

They like the thought of having a glass in their hands, but some youths really hit rock bottom when they drink up

How often do you see a group of young people without a bottle or two? Well, almost never. Not just that, the hardcore ones down alcohol like they haven't had a drop of water in days.

Whatever happened to the good ol' days of sipping martini?

A rep badge

Let's face it. To many teenagers, alcohol consumption is more than just drinking. It has become a social status.

Alcohol is now a natural part of any group gathering, whether it's a birthday celebration, a house party, or even something as simple as a farewell dinner.

"If you don't drink, you get weird looks immediately, even from your friends," said Chang Sherhan, 19, a Temasek Polytechnic student. "It's like you're supposed to drink."

Sherhan was first introduced to alcohol at a class outing two years ago. She was 17 at the time, which meant she was below Singapore's legal age for alcohol consumption of 18 years.

"It didn't bother me. A few of my friends

started drinking at an even earlier age than me," she said.

When asked whether she thought drinking affects her reputation among friends, she agreed, after a short hesitation. She also mentioned that even though her friends meant no harm, she still felt obliged to share similar habits as them.

"It seemed like offering alcohol to a friend [was] as normal as asking someone to procrastinate," joked Sherhan. "Not good, but not really damaging either."

Under the radar

Of course, peer pressure plays a part. It always plays a part. When you were little, your parents might have chosen your friends for you, putting you with other children they knew or liked. Now that you're older, not only do you block out advice from your parents, you shun them and sometimes do exactly what they don't want you to do.

And suddenly, the people you cannot live without are – you guessed it – your friends. Sounds familiar?

Daphne Fong, 20, a regular clubber and

King of Cocktails

Here are the top three drinks sliding off the bar tops.

hype tells you which of the three has the highest alcohol by volume measurement or ABV (%).

Snowball

Consists of: Warninks advocaat, lemonade, lime cordial

A safe, sweet-flavoured drink, Snowball is always a good 'introductory' drink for starters.

ABV: 5.5%

Tipsy Scale:

Jagger Bomb

Consists of: Red Bull energy drink, jagermeister herbal liqueur.

This caffeine-alcohol combo creates a unique "high" which gets you extremely energised.

ABV: 35%

Tipsy Scale:

Graveyard

Consists of: Bourbon whiskey, gin, rum, scotch, tequila, triple sec, vodka, beer, stout

This drink is not for the faint-hearted. If you're not a good drinker, you'll be literally sending yourself to your own grave.

ABV: 60%

Tipsy Scale:

www.webtender.com

Zouk member, revealed, "I feel closer to my buddies when we drink together."

She also admitted that the after effects of alcohol help reduce awkwardness between acquaintances and strangers greatly.

Also, as an air stewardess, she finds that drinking is actually "a useful skill" to have especially when she is overseas.

"Not just us (youths), many people all over the world bond over liquor and it's almost impossible to find myself in a social setting without it."

It is common for youths to want to identify with others and compare themselves to their peers. However, what is more worrying is how young people have a habit of throwing labels around.

Nigel Lim, 19, a Singapore Polytechnic student observed, "They say you're either a goody-two-shoes or you're an alcohol addict. There's no in-between."

Nigel drinks occasionally when he stays out late at pubs or clubs with his friends. He drinks moderately and keeps a lookout for his friends.

"Personally, I think it's all in the name of

good fun as long as we don't misbehave. I don't care about labels," he said.

Risky business

Speaking of misbehaving (and drunk) youths, club owners have stepped up their security. Last October, *The Straits Times* reported that certain popular clubs are considering raising the age limit to 23-years-old for men because the younger ones are "unable to control themselves" when it comes to drinking.

Club owners and their management will probably not hesitate to increase the age limit. After all, older men are generally more experienced and wealthy. This, in turn, attracts the ladies. And when there are ladies, men will naturally surface. Their business will not be affected.

The solution? Drink in moderation and watch yourselves. And yes, this applies to both guys and girls.

So the next time you toast a friend or hit the bottle, think about the hangovers and possible consequences. In the mean time, here's to a great year ahead. Bottoms up!

Bodies of Inscription

By Candice Lee

"My body is a journal in a way. It's like what sailors used to do, where every tattoo meant something, a specific time in your life when you make a mark on yourself, whether you do it yourself with a knife or with a professional tattoo artist."

-Johnny Depp, actor

Six hours of enduring multiple needles scratching onto raw skin, two weeks of healing time, and a whopping total cost of \$500.

That is the price of Mr Darrell Yang's black and white portrait tattoo of his daughter on his forearm.

Mr Yang, 28, a merchandise retailer, found that he was not contented with simply a photograph of his two-year-old daughter, Alexis, in his wallet.

"I needed a way to have her closer to me because I go overseas so often for work," he said to explain his decision of having Alexis' smiling face permanently copied from his favourite photograph of her onto his skin in a beautiful portrait.

He is not alone.

Many Singaporeans believe that engraving memories onto their bodies is the best way of immortalising them. The success of the first Singapore Tattoo Show attests to that.

"There is no 'underground' community, no dark den of drunken sailors initiating themselves into manhood via cheap, ill-conceived exercises in bodily perforation; it's just a group of people who delight in using their bodies as billboards."

- Joanne McCubrey, writer

Photo by Yeo Kai Wen | Model: Looi Moxi

Using your bodies as billboards for immortalising memories is not 21st century idealism. Originating from the Tahitian word, *tatau*, its history dates back centuries ago. What began as symbols of religion gradually evolved to become marks of social identity and then as a means of body art.

During medieval times, tattooing was performed as a rite of passage, indicating status and rank. Tattoos were also signs of religious and spiritual devotion, bravery, fertility, love, punishment and protection. Tattoos were the mark of an outcast, slave and convict. It was used to brand Jews in concentration camps during the Holocaust, bestowing upon them an inferior status in society. Sailors from Europe used to have the picture of the crucifixion of Christ tattooed on their backs for protection and also as a form of identification. Nowadays,

the essence of tattooing is body art, with the body becoming a canvas.

Though slowly straying away from religious and social factors, it is undeniable that tattoos are now done largely for sentimental reasons.

Be it the piety for religion, a sense of belonging or an abstract visual of what represents you, your feelings play a big part in influencing your choice of tattoo.

“Tattoos are like stories; they’re symbolic of the important moments in your life. Sitting down, talking about where you got each tattoo and what it symbolises, is really beautiful.”

-Pamela Anderson, actress



Sean Tan, a 23-year-old design student, has an abstract representation of her family tattooed on her right calf. It depicts the

peace and happiness I hope for my parents. Overall, it represents family bonding,” she said. Blending into this picture of hope, on the other side of her calf, is a huge

“I see a woman with a tattoo, and I’m thinking, okay, here’s a girl who’s capable of making a **decision she’ll regret** in the future.”

Richard Jeni, comedian

flight of a sparrow surrounded by five stars, each symbolising a member of her family, and engulfed by a ring of yellow flames. “The yellow flame holds the stars together while the sparrow beneath it signifies a


lotus. A symbol of faith, it reminds her of the teachings of Buddhism – that which encompasses tranquility and patience, and her loyalty to her creed.

While some tattoos symbolise closeness,



Memories etched on skin:

Sean Tan's tattoos go further than skin deep, preserving intimate memories to last a lifetime.



others express regret. "Think before you ink" – that is the oft-quoted advice from experienced tattoo artists before committing. Some who get tattooed on impulse may end up regretting. As Richard Jeni, an American stand-up comedian, puts it, "I see a woman with a tattoo, and I'm thinking, okay, here's a girl who's capable of making a decision she'll regret in the future."

Miss Eunice Yeo, a 25-year-old marketing executive, recalled, "I tattooed my first boyfriend's name on my lower back when I was 18 and I regretted it after we broke up. But there's nothing I can do about it so I told myself that it was an act of young, foolish love. It reminds me of the days when I was crazy and irrational. Back then, love was the only thing that kept me sane."

"Show me a man with a tattoo and I'll show you a man with an interesting past."

—Jack London, author

A tattoo is a poetic creation: it tells stories. When an artist interprets a narrative and pens it into a visual, the image moves the author. A shade of privacy and intimacy engulfs the picture and translates into a story that cannot be understood by others. If tattoos are unable to tell a story that involves you emotionally, they are merely for decoration. There is no doubt that some body art is meant to complement the body canvas but when there is emotional appeal, they tell people what you are and what you believe in. After all, beauty is skin deep, but tattoos go all the way to the bone.

2 Roads, 1 Choice

By Kenneth Cheong

The road to education city may be rough if you don't make the right call

For the majority of 16-year-olds, life after the O-Levels boils down to two choices: the junior college (JC) or polytechnic route.

Which is the smoother route to university? Many appear confounded by that decision.

Miss Celine Loi, 33, a private tutor, mentioned on her blog that after the O-Levels, a number of her ex-students kept asking her the same question repeatedly.

Which is the better choice? A junior college or a polytechnic?

Why polytechnics are better

While junior colleges are traditionally believed to be favoured because of the better likelihood of entry into a university, the difficulties of studying in one may deter those who do not have an academic bent.

To 20-year-old Evangeline Lim, a second-year Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering undergraduate at Nanyang Technical University (NTU), JC had a "rigorous curriculum" that was a "gruelling uphill struggle" for her.

"My results weren't all that fantastic even with intensive tuition and hard work, which was quite disappointing," the Meridian JC graduate recalled.

"Nothing in JC prepared me for school life

here at NTU! There are no tutors to push us, no fixed tutorial groups, long laboratory sessions and no answers to past year papers. It's like an entirely new ball game," she groused.

Given Evangeline's experience, it's understandable why many students have been opting for the three-year polytechnic alternative in recent years.

According to figures from the Singapore Yearbook of Statistics 2008, 72,379 students were enrolled in polytechnic courses in 2007. That's more than twice the figure of the 31,627 students that enrolled in pre-university courses, which included JCs and the three-year Millennia Institute.

Glenn Ong, 17, a first-year Banking & Finance student at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, scored an aggregate of eight points for his O-Levels.

He had the opportunity to enter a JC, but applied for polytechnic instead.

Glenn wasn't bothered by how hard JC potentially was during his short three-month exposure to the system.

Having gone through the O-Levels system, he was more concerned about the relevance of the science or arts syllabi to him.

He also felt that there was a lack of focus on the soft skills that he felt was necessary

to enter the workforce in the future.

Mr Royston Cheong, 26, a second-year Electrical & Electronic Engineering student at NTU, shared that view.

Having graduated from Catholic JC and Singapore Polytechnic, he felt it was his years in polytechnic (which got him a place at NTU) that had better prepped him for a university education.

"The modules that I took in polytechnic were based closely on those at university. This affiliation makes my current learning curve less steep.

"Comparatively, the things learnt in

a manner similar to secondary school, something that she had grown accustomed to over time.

That aside, Evangeline pointed out that while polytechnic students were more individualistic, her experiences in a JC environment made for closer-knit relationships with her schoolmates.

"Going to school everyday was something to look forward to, as I knew my friends were there to study, talk and laugh together with me. This sense of bonding greatly aided my learning and motivated me whenever times were tough," she said.

Polytechnic students were more individualistic. Her experiences in a JC environment made for closer-knit relationships.

JC are generalised, and doesn't help in a smooth transition, although what I learnt allowed for more freedom of choice in the selection of courses," he noted.

He was perturbed by the "one-track system" he encountered in JC, where the ultimate objective of getting into university made for "a maddening adrenaline rush" during the A-Level examinations.

But he found the laid-back mentality and slower pace of learning at polytechnic more suited to him.

Why junior colleges are better

However, Evangeline insisted that it was wrong to completely rule in favour of polytechnic education. She highlighted that age also factored in her decision – at 16, she was "too young to make decisions that would affect [her] career".

JCs also appeared to be structured in

The past forming the reality as we now see it

Despite heavy criticism, the JC system allows for so much more of its student population into local universities, but things are changing slowly but surely.

For instance, the Ministry of Education promised that "15 percent of the poly cohort will make it to the three local universities by 2010", as reported in *The Straits Times* in 2007.

So why aren't more spaces being allocated for the seemingly larger population of polytechnic students?

The answer lies in the origins of the Cambridge examination system, a framework set in place from as early as 1891, during British colonial rule.

Over the years, it had become the one standard for progression to further studies. Then, the only ticket to university was

through taking the A-Level examinations.

This "superiority" of the JC system was deeply rooted in the minds of teachers teaching at these levels, even up till Mr Cheong's secondary school days, sometime during the 1990s.

It was also only during this time that local universities began to slowly open their doors to polytechnic students.

"Still, back then, our teachers made it clear that students from polytechnics were second-class material.

"Since I was in a SAP (Special Assistance Plan) school, many of us were capable of entering JC, so most ended up blindly following the crowd without really considering whether the system actually fit us appropriately," he explained.

Mr Cheong was adamant that while the JC "wasn't exactly something to avoid", the "brainwashing" and negative sentiments towards a polytechnic education must stop.

"Times have changed. The cream of the crop (in secondary schools) and their teachers ought to have realised that by now," he said.

So, JC or Polytechnic?

Just as Mr Cheong and Miss Loi have mentioned, the solution does not lie in the game of endless comparisons. Rather, it is in making "informed decisions".

The tutor brought up a concept of "finding your calling" in life; that is, uncovering one's likes or dislikes through experiences in the workforce. This, she believes, should aid students in making the right choice as to whether a generalised JC or hands-on polytechnic education really allows for one to excel in his or her passions.

Mr Bernard Phee, a successful entrepreneur who set up his business with only a secondary school education, commented, "It takes hard work for anyone to reach the pinnacles of success.

"Likewise, students shouldn't think that there will be an 'easier way out' of the different routes we all have to choose at points in time."

At the end of the day, there's really no model answer to this conundrum. Working hard is, and will remain the mantra for that ticket to university.

"Nothing in JC prepared me for school life here at NTU!"

—Evangeline Lim,
NTU student

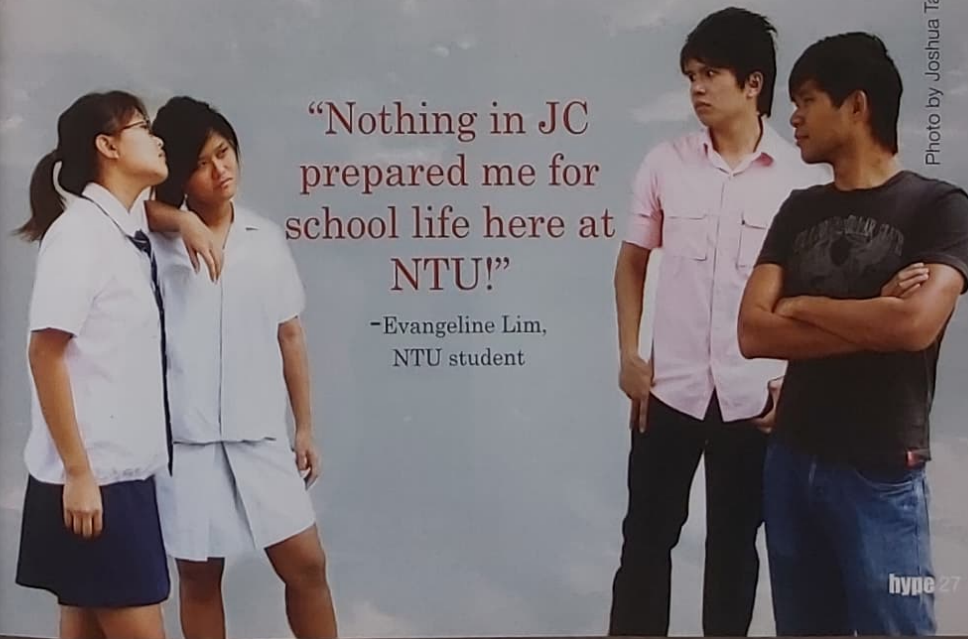


Photo by Joshua Tan

It's a STICKY Business

Yummy, tasty and made just for you

By Kyle Sim

Admit it – a giant lollipop kneaded into the shape of your name is pretty cool. And you can get these custom-made lollies and rock candies at Sticky, The Central at Clarke Quay.

Originating from Australia, Sticky has made a name for itself Down Under with its great tasting candy. No mean feat given that every batch of sweets is made completely by hand.

"Making sweets is an art, but unlike other forms of art, you can actually eat it!" said Mrs Kristin Lim, 29.

A former marketer, Mrs Lim, along with business partner and husband Mr Jamie Lim, came across Sticky while searching for trinkets to give away at their wedding.

As the first ever handmade sweets shop in Singapore, Sticky has sought to infuse more traditional flavours such as mangosteen, soursop and lychee to increase the variety of their offerings.

But there are no plans to make durian or *teh-tarik* flavoured sweets.

Customers have been coming back in droves to get their toothsome kiwi and passion fruit rock candies.



Sweet, sweet success
Mr and Mrs Lim of Sticky

Photo by Yeo Kai Wen



Orange Rock:
One of 71 assorted flavours

Photos courtesy of Sticky

Mrs Lim's niece, 12-year-old Jillisa Koh, who helps out at the shop, gushed, "I love working here! I get to eat all the raspberry lemonade sweets I want!"

Variety sets Sticky apart from regular supermarket sweets. With over 71 different flavours, you are spoilt for choice.

The fact that the sweets are freshly made means that the flavours are more robust and the fruity zing more accented than conventional factory-made sweets. And the cute little messages in the centre of each sweet makes this a great gift for that special someone on Valentine's Day.

Unique and tasty, this is as close to perfect as a gift can get.

Just like how no two people are the same, no two sweets made at Sticky will turn out the same.

Mr Lim, a former IT professional, said, "There is no cookie-cutter method of making sweets here. Every batch is unique to the confectioner who makes it."

To become Sticky's confectioners, the couple had to take leave from their previous jobs to undergo a two-month intensive training course in Australia.

Their final test was to make an entire batch of sweets from start to finish completely blindfolded.

The plucky couple then quit their jobs to follow their dream of being their own bosses, pumping in almost \$200,000 of their savings to open the store.

Though it is hardly the best climate to

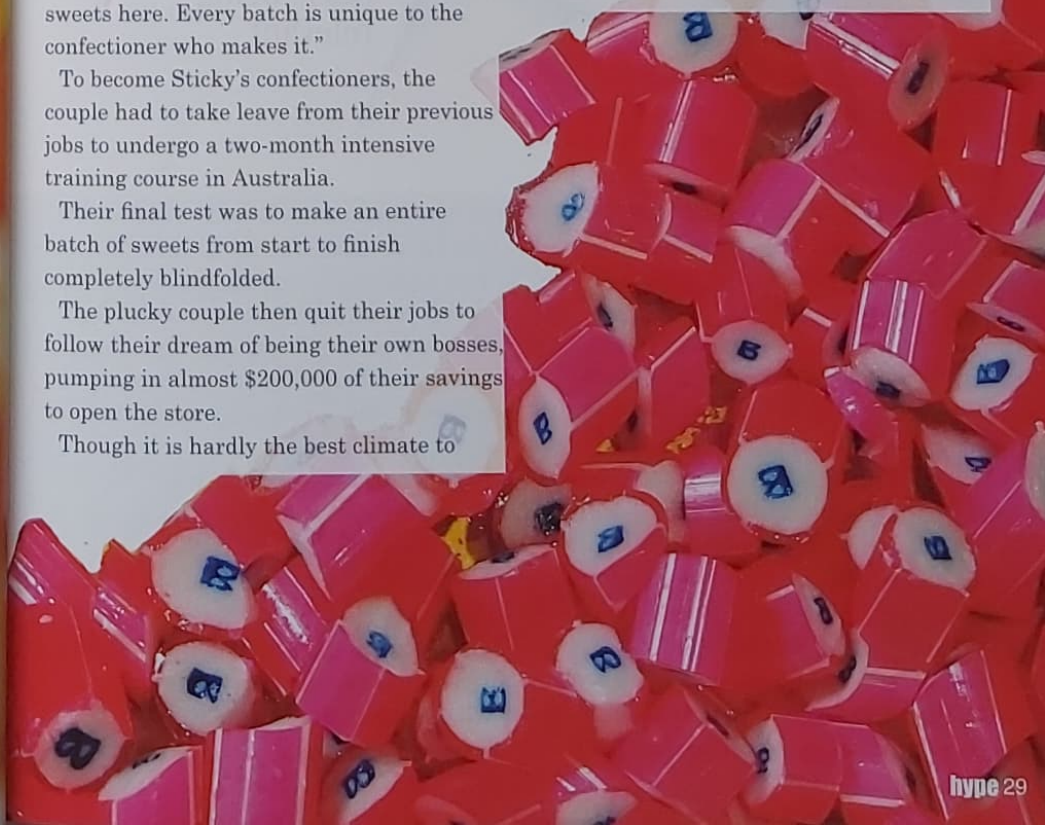
open a candy shop now, it's hard to go wrong with sweets like these.

We recommend their rock candy mix if you simply can't decide what to try. The variety of flavours offered will leave you happily sucking away.

What makes Sticky really special is that they will not charge you an arm or a leg. Instead, their delectable offerings are priced at only \$3.50 per 100 grams.

Although there are currently no plans to make any special Valentine's Day sweets, rock candies bearing messages such as "I love you" are on sale all year round.

If you insist on being a spoilt brat and decide to go for their custom-made rock candy, be warned that it goes for \$42 for a kilogramme with a minimum order of 10 kilos, which will not only give your dentist a heart attack but will give you one heck of a tummy-ache.





Having Faith

By Boo Jian Wen Jeremy

The liberties of a “forward-thinking” society have caused the archaic laws of relationships to cease being relevant

Growing up in a conservative Roman Catholic family, I always believed faithfulness to be a pact of true love between two people.

But I am starting to realise that faithfulness isn't always a black and white photograph immortalising a vow that binds two people till death brings them apart.

Instead, faithfulness is a distracting colour photograph with its hues sometimes washed out and, at other times, oversaturated.

The notion of faithfulness has evolved and will continue to evolve so long as the definition of relationships keeps changing – the open relationship, the *ménage à trois* (French for three-way relationships), the serial monogamists, sex buddies,

cohabitators, and my favourite poison – the Fake Lovers.

I am particularly prone to pseudo-relationships where we date and exchange hugs, without ever admitting we're crazy about each other. It's ridiculous because we slash each other emotionally before sloshing around in bloody heartbreaks.

In this mess of Facebook's “It's Complicated”, we need to re-examine our definitions of love.

Many say that love is subjective.

For instance, 43 out of 50 youths aged 18 to 24 said in a *hype* poll that they think love is defined by the individual.

When Spanish film Vicky Cristina Barcelona portrayed a *ménage à trois*, some

viewers of that film found nothing wrong or dysfunctional about that relationship.

“As long as the relationship works,” they said.

In the film, things only worked out when Cristina joined Maria Elena and Juan Antonio's tempestuous relationship.

“You're the missing ingredient,” Elena tells Cristina, whom she treats as a lover and a disciple in photography.

Some say that I am too conservative where affairs of the heart are concerned, but I see the person I am in love with now as an extension of my life, be it for quiet companionship deep into the night or stirring episodes of laughter and tears.

I feel that when love is used too often as a meaningless excuse for sex, other aspects of the relationship will slowly fade and disappear, leaving a fragile husk of mutual sexual exploitation.

I see the person I am in love with now as **an extension of my life**, be it quiet company deep into the night or stirring episodes of laughter and tears.

Faithfulness isn't always a **black and white photograph** immortalising a vow that binds two people till death brings them apart.

As Brian Kinney puts it in North American television series *Queer As Folk*, “I don't believe in love. I believe in f***ing. Love is something people tell themselves they're in so that they can get laid. And then they end up hurting each other.”

But what I feel does not matter. What matters is how people in the relationship define faithfulness.

“As long as it works,” said viewers of Vicky Cristina Barcelona. I don't disagree with that logic even if “It's Complicated”.

Love has no rules. It happens when we least expect it, often when we don't want it, and many times when we can't handle it.

But a relationship has rules.

People who break the rules they had agreed will pay eventually. They end up clasp those very shards in their hands, cut by its deepening splinters and bloodied with indelible scars.

REAL LIFE DRAMA

Love at Last

Sally Lim thought she had lost it all when her fiancé died of cancer, but love has a way of creeping into your life when you least expect it **By Kristie Chiew**

Photo by Sky Hu | Location: Hokkaido

A Fairytale Wedding

Sally Lim's picture perfect wedding in Hokkaido



Photo by Sky Hu

The Road to Love
may be long but rewarding.

My Cinderella story

Having had a fervent passion for romance novels since she was a teenager, Sally Lim, 31, a Human Resource manager, always yearned for her own happy ending.

At 23, she met Rhrys Sng while working in the same company that Rhrys had owned.

After two years of courtship, he finally popped the question.

But fate was not kind to them – two months into the engagement, Rhrys was diagnosed with liver cancer.

Although Sally had already started having doubts about their relationship due to prevalent arguments, she flew to her fiancée's side upon receiving news of his diagnosis and stuck by him till the end.

"There were many times where he wanted to give up. I did not allow him to let go until the end, where any stronger person would

also have difficulty fighting on. He fought hard," she said.

After the last goodbye

Sally became depressed as Rhrys' death took a toll on her. She felt as if her whole world was crashing down on her.

She had become a "dependant fiancée", having been eight years younger than Rhrys, and believed that a part of her had left with him when he departed.

She revealed, "I had no goals of my own. My dreams then were simply to find a good man, settle down and have kids."

It was only when she sat herself down and thought of what she wanted with her life that she realised her life was hers to live. With the help of her friends, she learnt to open up again.

"I knew that being on my own wasn't the

way to go.

"During my mourning period, I managed to hang out with old friends," Sally said.

However, she soon grew disillusioned. "They clubbed and drank a lot. They generally spent most of their weekends drunk," she recalled.

Sally felt that it wasn't the way she wanted to live. With the encouragement of others, she took self-help courses to pull herself out of her misery.

Knight in shining armour

Three years ago, during a leadership and self-discovery programme called Asiaworks, Sally met her husband-to-be, Eric Chia, through a friend there.

Coincidentally, both of them were from the same secondary school and lived three minutes apart.

Eric, 31, a media entrepreneur, enthused, "It's odd really, how I'd never met her before that trip to Hokkaido."

They soon started hanging out and during a trip to Hokkaido with their friends on December 2006, they declared their feelings for each other.

"We were forced to share a room under unexpected circumstances," Sally said, her eyes looking upwards in recollection.

"There are some things you can't share without becoming better friends, and a room is one of them."

Win my heart, O' Sir Knight!

Almost after a year of dating, Eric proposed to Sally amid the company and laughter of friends.

That gave her a sense of déjà vu – it reminded her of Rhys' proposal.

Although hesitant, Sally accepted.

Now, she believed that that was perhaps the root of the later problems in their relationship – she didn't know enough about

Eric, just as he didn't know much about her.

For a few months, Sally experienced wedding jitters when she realised that Eric was focusing a lot more on his work rather than on her.

Even Sally's family noticed it.

"He didn't cherish her enough. We could all see that he didn't care," said Pearlyn Lim, 30, Sally's younger sister.

An enchanted time

Things were taking a downward turn for them when they finally decided sit down and talk things over.

A knife could cut through the tension in the air, but the both of them, stubborn as mules, persisted with their attempt at conflict management.

After the conversation, Sally was ready to give up her second marriage.

She didn't want to think about the wedding or anything else. She was forced to, however, when the photoshoot dates for the wedding inched closer.

The couple had not sorted out their issues by then, and that made matters all the more awkward.

Nonetheless, they returned for the second time to Hokkaido for their wedding shoot.

It could have been the air in Hokkaido, or the fact that they had both mulled things over, but the trip caused a very big change in Eric.

He became more attentive, sensitive and encouraging towards Sally.

"He became much more attentive, as if I was more than just a person. I was it was going to be his wife and he finally saw that," Sally joyfully shared.

Now, two months after her fairytale wedding, Sally is a happily married woman is and she's looking forward to sharing her life with her new husband.

"It's love at second sight for me now."

Love by the Water

By Nadia Shah

Dry on ideas for what to do with your date this Valentine's Day? Here are four ways to have some water fun. The best part is, you don't even have to get wet at some of these places

1 Wild Wild Wet

If you're up for some wild, wet fun, Wild Wild Wet is just the place for you. The water theme park offers eleven rides and facilities, including the mind-blowing, heart-pumping Slide Up, where you get to slide down a four-storey ramp in an inflatable raft made for two. Southeast Asia's first raft slide, Ular-Lah, is also a must-do. The super flume ride that takes you through rapids will make you feel like you're really white-water rafting. It's guaranteed to make you want to ride it more than once, or 5 million times! Once you're done with the high-speed water chase, work out those kinks in your muscles in the Jacuzzi or simply laze around with your partner in wave pool Tsunami.

You could also hang out in a tube that will drift its way through the 335m-long Shioik River and talk about anything under the sun while floating on the water.

Whether you want to go fast and furious or slow and steady, Wild Wild Wet is a great date option.

And guys, here's your chance to see your dates dripping wet in their bikinis. Need we say more?

Wild, Wild Wet is located at Downtown East 1, Pasir Ris Close, and is open from 1pm to 7pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and 10am to 7pm on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Admission into the park is priced at \$15.50 per person.

NTUC Club

2 Forest Adventure

Play Tarzan and Jane by swinging through the forest on vines, picking fruit from trees and conversing with apes.

Okay, not really, but you get the idea.

At the Forest Adventure's Grand Course, you get to trample through the forest 5m above the ground using ladders, bridges, swings, nets, and trapezes, all while enjoying Bedok Reservoir Park's scenic view.

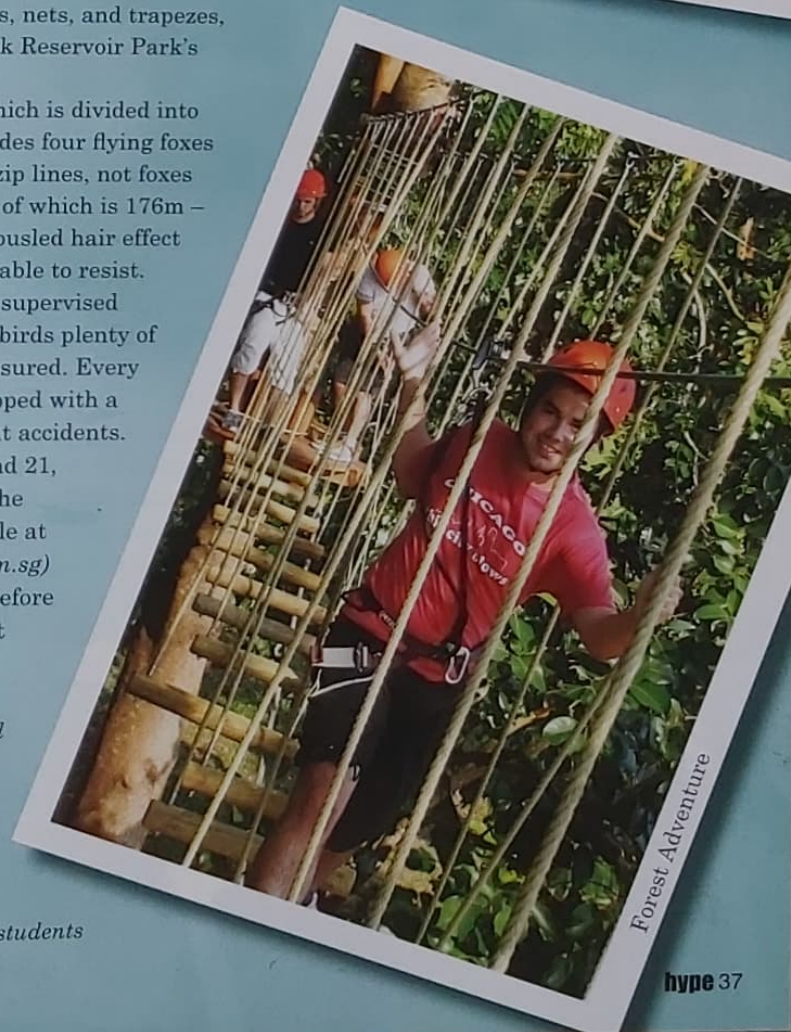
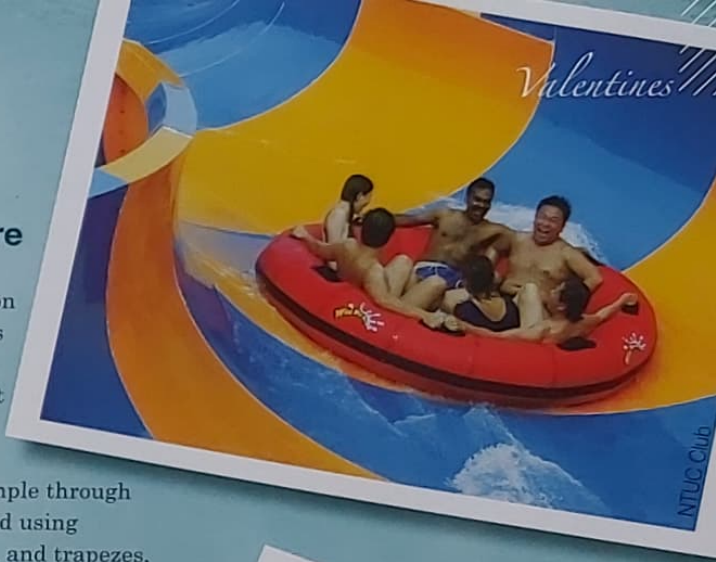
The Grand Course, which is divided into four sections, also includes four flying foxes (and by that, we mean zip lines, not foxes with wings) the longest of which is 176m – perfect for getting the tousled hair effect that your date won't be able to resist.

Although you'll not be supervised (thereby giving you lovebirds plenty of alone time!), safety is assured. Every participant will be equipped with a safety harness to prevent accidents.

If you're between 18 and 21, just make sure you get the disclaimer form (available at www.forestadventure.com.sg) signed by your parents before embarking on your forest adventure date.

Forest Adventure is located at Bedok Reservoir Park, Bedok Reservoir Road, and is open everyday from 10am to 6pm.

Admission into the Grand Course is priced at \$25 for students and \$28 for adults.



Valentine's

3 G-Max

Adrenaline junkies, your prayers have been answered.

If you're bored of the same old dinner-and-movie kind of date, just take a stroll along the Singapore River and you'll find what you've been looking for.

G-Max, "the ultimate bungee experience", offers a date opportunity that will satisfy your need for thrills and will give you something to talk about every time you experience an awkward moment of silence.

And it's simple, really. You don't even have to plan the date. All you have to do is sit in a capsule and get catapulted 60m into the air at the speed of 200km per hour. What's more, the ride has a 100 percent safety record so you don't really have much to worry about.

But in the event that you do get scared, you have the perfect excuse to hold your date's hand.

We say the ride is memorable as it is, but if you want something more to remember it by, simply purchase a DVD recording of your time spent on the ride for \$15.

We guarantee that you'll have lots of fun visiting this experience together again in the future.

G-Max is located along the Singapore River, Clarke Quay, and is open from 1pm to 1am on Mondays to Thursdays, 1pm to 2am on Fridays, 12pm to 2am on Saturdays and 12pm to 1am on Sundays. A single ride costs \$30 for students and \$45 for adults.

4 Marina Barrage

For those who believe that dates should be all fun and no brains, here's where we prove you wrong.

At the Marina Barrage, which opened last November and houses Marina Reservoir, Singapore's first reservoir in the city, you'll learn to appreciate that precious resource we call water.

Show off your learned side to your date by taking him (or her, depending on where you bend) to the Sustainable Singapore Gallery, which aims to educate the public on environmental and water issues.

Once you've used up enough brain juice for the day, surprise your date with a picnic at the Green Roof, which lowers the barrage's indoor temperature, meaning that less energy is needed for air-conditioning.

Or you could take a stroll along the Marina Bridge or chill out at one of eight viewing decks that promise a panoramic view of Marina Reservoir and Singapore's cityscape.

Who knew learning could be so romantic?

The Marina Barrage is located at 260 Marina Way, and is open daily. The Sustainable Singapore Gallery is open on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9am to 6pm, and 10am to 8pm on weekends and public holidays. Admission is free.



• The most popular version of how Valentine's Day started dates back to third century Rome, when St Valentine was executed.

The priest had rebelled against Emperor Claudius II's decree that single men should not get married in order to perform their duty as soldiers, conducting secret marriage ceremonies for young lovebirds.

In other versions of the story, he was simply captured and imprisoned.

• Singapore's Alexandra Hospital was the site of a deadly massacre on Valentine's Day in 1942. Japanese soldiers burst in and killed over 300 patients, doctors and nurses. Even Lt W.E.J. Wetson, who brought out a white flag of surrender, was bayoneted to death. Some patients and staff were taken out, tied, and bound together. Many of them died undignified deaths. To this day, no one knows exactly why the hospital was attacked.

• Penicillin was discovered in the Valentine's of 1929, and the patent for the telephone was filed this day 132 years ago.

• Valentine's Day is banned in Saudi Arabia for being an "un-Islamic" negative Western influence. The country has imposed a ban on all things red on Valentine's Day to prevent locals from engaging with the celebration.

• An Ipsos Insight survey, conducted in 2008 in America, revealed that on Valentine's Day:

– About 8 million sent themselves gifts.

Valentine's around the World

Feb 14 is not always a day of wine and roses
By Sujith Kumar

– About 6 million ended their relationships.

– Although 22 percent of men bought sexy underwear for their partners, only 2 percent of women appreciated the effort made.

– Condom sales peaked by up to 30 percent, according to condom manufacturer Durex.

Illustrations by Ciel



Weaving A Web of Sexcapades

A click on a button and buttons get undone - some blogs are exposing it all
By Boo Jian Wen Jeremy

Photo by Airell Ang | Photo Illustration by Teo Hong Jun | Model: Alexis Lee

After a torrid night of passion, she uploads photographs, types out her feelings and sauciest thoughts, and details every raunchy detail chronologically. She then uploads all of that onto her blog. This blogger goes by her online moniker, The Lover.

"I started blogging to record 'sexcapades' with my boyfriend and to keep our intimacy alive. I also want to talk about sex because

"I also want to talk about sex because
sex is taboo in our Asian
society and is not to be spoken publicly,"

-The Lover, sex blogger

sex is taboo in our Asian society and is not to be spoken publicly," she said.

She is not alone.

Many young adults are turning to sex blogging to satisfy their sexual and exhibitionistic curiosities.

While no comprehensive studies have been done to count the number of Singaporean sex blogs, the 10 sex blogs that *hype* visited have a loyal readership.

"Exhibitionism is a way of seeking gratification," said Mr Anthony Yeo, consultant therapist at the Counselling and Care Centre, a non-governmental organisation.

"There is some sort of pleasure gained from self-exposure that may ease loneliness. Youths may be influenced to do this for instant gratification."

This is made easier by the convenience of blogging and teenagers' changing mindsets towards explicit pictures.

According to a report in *The Sunday Times* last December, a poll of 50 teenagers aged between 13 and 19 revealed that a quarter

had received explicit pictures.

In the same report, counsellors said that today's youths "are not averse to sending or receiving nude or semi-naked pictures through their cellphones or e-mail".

This behaviour is reflective of youths' current attitude towards sex.

In the same edition of the paper, NuLife Care & Counselling Services founder, Sheena Jebal shared how she counselled a

sexually active 10-year-old girl.

Another 15-year-old took a picture of herself dressed only in a bra and skirt in her school restroom, and found nothing wrong even when the picture was distributed among her peers.

"Why look at it as a bra? Why not as a bikini?" she had reportedly asked Miss Jebal.

Earlier, *The Straits Times* reported that a 16-year-old boy was placed on probation for 12 months after he slept with a 11-year-old girl that he had met on social networking website Friendster.

She had told him that she was a 12-year-old Primary Six pupil.

Anonymous exhibitionism

Blogging behind the computer screen also offers the protection of anonymity.

The Lover said, "I keep my site anonymous, so there's room for me to write without censoring or holding back. I have a public image to uphold in real life."

She only agreed to email interviews and

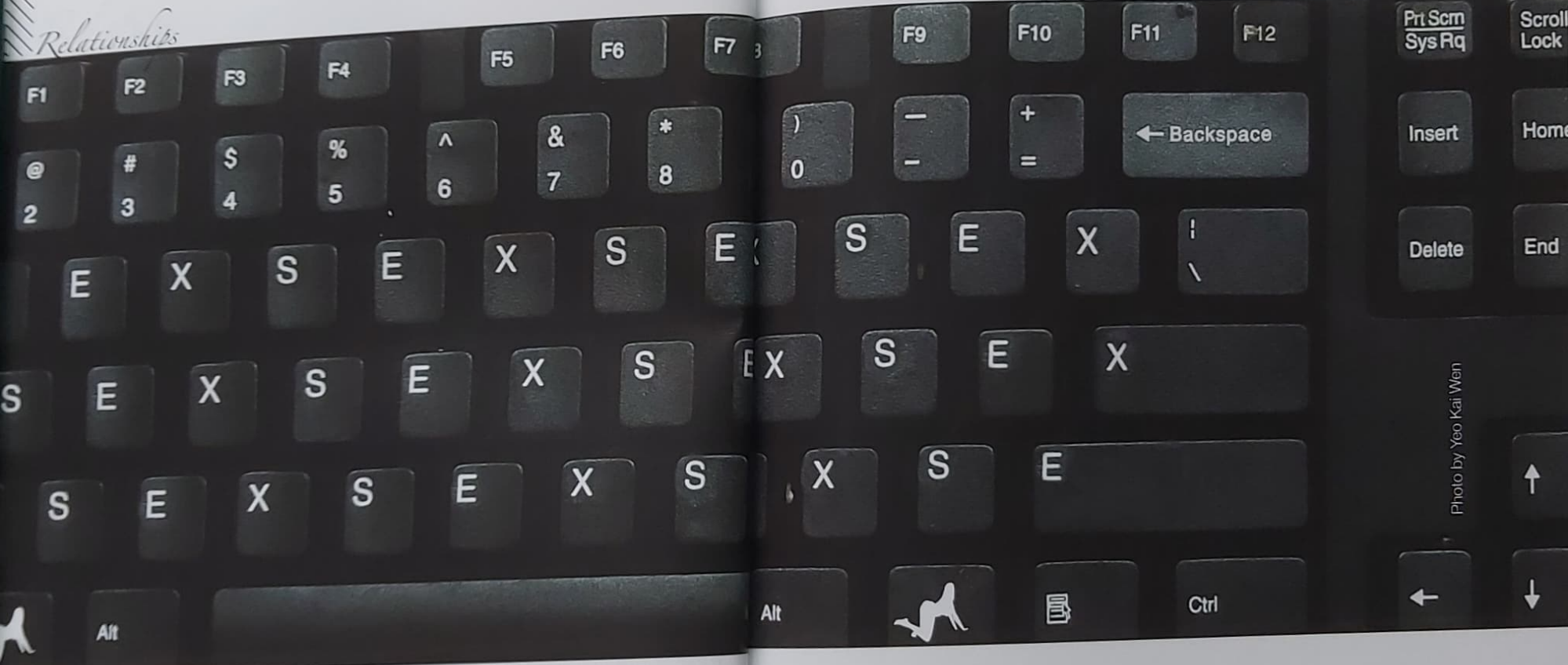


Photo by Yeo Kai Wen

rejected hype's requests for any face-to-face, telephone or instant message interviews.

The sex blogger admitted that the anonymity could also mean that some sex blogs may have been fabricated.

"Some stories I read sound too tall a story but I guess that's what sex is about – it has a little bit of fantasy in it," she said.

Fantasy-turned-nightmare

However, that fantasy may result in a happily-never-after scenario, as Sharon (not her real name) will tell you.

Last year, Sharon started an explicit sex blog called Sextisfy with her ex-boyfriend in the heat of her relationship.

Her then-boyfriend turned it into a

subscription-based porn site. His face was never shown, except once when he had a pair of sunglasses on.

The blog has since been deleted, but other websites have republished her pictures. The sex video they made together was uploaded to a porn video streaming website.

She said, "I didn't know he did it, or why. The blog was supposed to be private."

Sharon has since made a police report.

But, because she violated Penal Code Section 292, which makes the distribution and possession of obscene material punishable with a fine, or a jail term to up to three months, or both, she is unable to do anything about it.

The Films Act also prohibits the making,

distribution, showing, importing, or possession of any obscene recording made by any kind of camera.

A breach constitutes a fine of not less than \$500 for each offending film and a jail term up to six months, or both.

Sharon will just have to wait for the online echoes of her actions to subside and slowly fade away.

Part of the relationship

Even after learning of Sharon's predicament, The Lover says she will still continue posting because her blog is an extension of her relationship.

"Although some people think that physical intimacy in a relationship is superficial, I

prefer to think of intimacy as a fundamental block of a good relationship," she explained.

"This blog strengthens our relationship where intimacy is concerned. It adds spice to our love life and relights the passion when the flame dims."

She said that while blogging is narcissistic, her relationship is not.

"Sex, like food, is merely a basic need. When you eat something you crave, you naturally feel happier and recharged.

"Knowing that people are reading about us is a huge turn on, but my partner and I share much more in life than a sexual relationship. We are normal folks working for a salary and we lead very normal lives," she reasoned.

Your Porn

Addiction to porn
can mess up your life



The porn star of today is not the paid professional, but your neighbour, classmate, or...

Porn has become as simple as recording a video clip while stimulating yourself in a public toilet.

Because watching and creating porn is so easy, teenagers might think of porn as another form of entertainment, especially when it engages their peers as both performers and viewers.

Porn: The New Heroin

"Porn may not be inherently negative depending on the context. If it affects the individual without affecting others or incapacitating the person, then I wonder what is so negative about it," said Mr Anthony Yeo, consultant therapist at the Counselling and Care Centre.

Watching porn becomes an addiction if done habitually over a long period of time. According to a 2007 *TIME* magazine online

infographic, pleasure chemical dopamine is released to the brain whenever a person watches porn.

The more porn he or she watches, the amount of dopamine increases, forcing the person to continually watch more porn.

Mr Yeo said, "Porn becomes dangerous when it affects both the person and his relationship with others, leading to crimes such as molest and paedophilia.

American serial killer Theodore "Ted" Robert Bundy chose to realise those activities with at least 30 women.

Bundy said during a 1989 television interview with James Dobson, the founder of Christian organisation Focus on the Family, that prolonged watching of violent pornography "moulded" his violence into "behaviour too terrible to describe".

If you need to speak to someone about your addiction, you may call the All Addictions Helpline at 6-RECOVER (6-732 6837).

Lust, Caution

Sex education starts from young, but what do we take from it as we get older? **By Lau Liang Tong**

Photos by Yeo Kai Wen

How chaste you are does not determine how respectable you are as a person.

"Being a virgin doesn't mean anything," declared Ng Tze Min, 19, a first-year Communication Studies student from National Technological University.

To her, virginity is no longer valued by youths in Singapore.

"Sex is merely another level up from heavy necking. It's an exchange of flesh (*sic*). Being a virgin simply means that you probably have not levelled up."

Tze Min added, "You can claim to be a virgin but still do everything sexual there is to do, except the actual intercourse itself."

According to a poll conducted by *The Straits Times* in 2007, 43 percent of boys and 23 percent of girls admitted to having sex within a month of knowing their romantic partners.

Also, 17 percent of the boys polled revealed that they had sex with their partners on the first day they met.

Muhammad Asyraf, 19, a final-year Engineering student from Singapore Polytechnic, said, "I will not sleep with a girl within a day or even a month of knowing

her, but maybe about three months after meeting her.

"We should know more about each other and be more emotionally attached first."

Regardless, he still gives premarital sex the green light.

He believes that the act is a way for teenagers to show their love towards each other, and that people now engage in it because it is a trend.

"Everyone seems to be starting young," he said casually.

Mrs Chan Siew Peng, 41, a secondary school teacher who has taught sex education to students, is adamant about who or what is to blame for this.

"The media has a big part to play in this, especially since information about sex and its portrayal is readily available from television programmes and the Internet."

She added, "The family situation also plays a part. If teenagers can't find love at home, they'll go elsewhere to find it."

Mrs Chan firmly believes that teenagers who return to an empty home on a daily basis, with parents who are divorced or appear too busy for them, may be tempted to experiment with sex.

This may in turn lead to an increased promiscuity level.

"Sex education courses in Singapore need to focus more on the consequences of casual sex and on how teenagers should be affirmative in saying 'No' when the pressure to perform sexual acts arises," she stressed.

Echoing concerns of this worrying trend is Miss Irja Wendy Abdul Rahman, 27, a youth worker with Clubilya, a local non-profit organisation that focuses on helping out-of-school and high-risk youths.

She said, "Teenagers engage in sex because there is an element of the unknown. They are also attracted to the thrill of performing sexual activities with no strings attached, making the pursuit more desirable."

Some are oblivious to the fact that the element of the "unknown" can also bring about serious consequences, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies.

The latter may lead to abortions, which in turn may scar the affected teenager for life.

Miss Irja feels that teenagers may misunderstand sex and believe it to be "a way of filling the emotional gap left by their parents".

"They think it will give them a sense of belonging or fulfil their need to love and be loved," she said.

Both Mrs Chan and Miss Irja have faith in the same solution – implementing sex education from young.

Various aspects of sex are taught in schools, including sexual development, reproduction, contraception, STIs and relationships, but Miss Irja identified a weakness that has yet to be dealt with.

"Sex education in schools may also have less impact because the interaction between the teacher and the students make it look like it is a formal lesson."

The challenge is the need to make sex education cooler and more fun for students, and drive messages across in an engaging and creative manner.

"The topic should not be treated as taboo or even swept under the carpet," she said.

"Instead, students should be constantly exposed to it, or even better, to have it included as part of adolescent development, letting them constantly engage in the topic rather than experiment on information they get from unreliable sources like pornographic sites," concluded Miss Irja.

Let's Talk About Sex

hype finds out what teenagers have to say about premarital sex and how sex education plays a part.

Chaw Wei Arng, 18, JC student

"I think it's up to the individual, and sex education does not play too big a role in this."

Rahila Daud, 19, polytechnic student

"I think it's alright to explore sex in your teenage years, but you have to be smart and keep yourself safe. Sex education plays a huge part and it's important that teachers be

open-minded and teach not just abstinence, but also what is safe sex."

Mike Koh, 16, secondary school student

"Premarital sex is dangerous and lacks a sense of morality. Sex education in school can help teach and prevent such 'dangers'."

Benedict Tan, 18, polytechnic student

"Sex education in school is useful to a certain extent, but it doesn't decrease the chances of teens engaging in premarital sex, in fact, the topic arouses more interest and curiosity among the youths."



UNPLANNED READY DERAGE

By Nur'Atiqah Bte Ali

They never asked for it, but motherhood was just one choice they never had

The news that brings tears of joy to many married women took a few minutes to sink in for 19-year-old Nurulhuda. Unlike these women, she was in her final year at the Institute of Technical Education (College West – Clementi).

Questions started filling Nurul's mind, from how to break the news to her strict Muslim parents, to whether the Malay society would accept her as an unwed teenage mother.

She felt so weak-hearted that she asked her cousin of the same age to talk to her parents on her behalf.

Luckily for Nurul, her parents were surprisingly supportive, despite the disappointment they felt of knowing she had fallen victim to a problem especially prevalent among Malay youths her age. Adding insult to injury, the child's father, her ex-boyfriend, refused to take responsibility and acknowledge her child. "He never asked how I was doing with

the pregnancy. He never bothered showing support. Even his parents ignored the fact that the baby is their son's," Nurul recalled.

Currently, Nurul is working as an administrator and is supporting her child alone, with the help of her family.

She earns about \$1,200 monthly and sets aside \$500 of her salary for milk powder, baby food, diapers, medical check-ups and other essentials for her six-month-old son.

A tin of baby milk, which lasts a week, costs \$36, amounting to more than \$100 spent on milk alone per month.

A study conducted by *The Straits Times* last year revealed that there were 833 pregnancies among girls aged 19 and under, and a total of 1,363 teenage abortions in Singapore. Teenage pregnancy has become a pressing concern, with the Malay community making up more than half of all teenage deliveries in 2004.

Various Malay-Muslim bodies have stepped up efforts to help troubled

teenagers, including NUR, an integrated rehabilitative programme that was set up in 2005. NUR consists of five drop-in centres and a helpline, NURteensLINE.

In 2007, the first shelter for pregnant Malay-Muslim teens opened its doors to girls who face emotional abuse and a lack of support from home.

Despite the pervasiveness of this problem, sex is still a taboo subject in Malay-Muslim society. Malay girls who get pregnant out of wedlock are commonly shunned by a community ingrained with strong traditional and cultural social values.

In Nurul's case, she has had to endure malicious remarks on her blog and bear with disapproving stares from middle-aged Malay women on the streets.

"Even now, whenever I take a walk with my son, I still get weird stares from Malay aunties and I see them whispering to their friends," she said with a wry smile.

When asked whether she had considered an abortion, Nurul shook her head firmly, reaffirming that she would never resort to "killing" her own flesh and blood.

According to Mr Muhammad Fareez, a 27-year-old social worker at The Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centres, the most common age range of pregnant teenagers he has counselled is between the ages of 17 and 20. Most of them resolved to keep their children

But are these young mothers ready for the heavy responsibility of raising children?

Typically, families resort to marrying their daughter off to the boyfriend to save face, failing to realise that the young couple may not be emotionally or financially prepared.

This has resulted in a significant number of teenage divorces, which amounts to 30 percent of all Muslim divorces each year, which stood at 492.8 per thousand in 2005, compared with the overall rate of 285.7 per thousand.

To curb these figures, the minimum age for Muslim marriages has been raised from 16 to 18, according to an article in *The Straits Times* in November last year.

"Families need to be aware that marriage



Baby Blues

Nurul hopes her son will not have follow her footsteps when he grows up

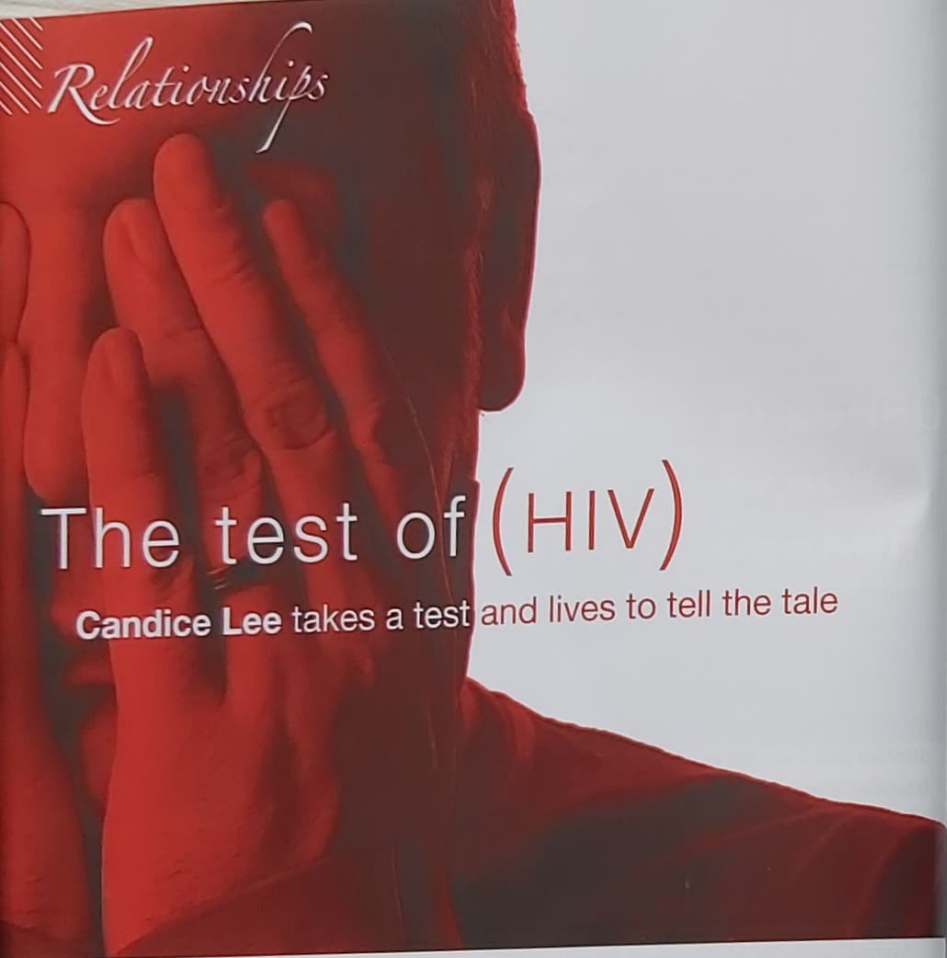
is not the only solution. Further problems may arise if the couple is not emotionally ready to commit," Mr Fareez emphasised.

Knowing that the baby's father wasn't ready to support the child, Nurul decided to bring up the child alone.

"I intend to further my studies right now, but due to financial constraints, I've to hold back and work to support my son," she said.

"The joys that come along with being a mom is great and the difficulties I went through during my pregnancy were well worth it, but I wouldn't want my son to go through what I went through when he grows up."

For help, the NURteensLINE is 9777 7687



The test of (HIV)

Candice Lee takes a test and lives to tell the tale

The agenda for the day was grim: Get myself checked for the Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

The place where I had to get that done was not a pretty sight either. The clinic was situated near Desker Road, known for its sleaze. Cigarette butts littered the pathway leading to the clinic entrance.

The stigma attached to visiting such a clinic comes as no surprise, seeing that the services of the place is specifically tailored for sexual health issues. The DSC Clinic is a public clinic operated by the Department of STI Control (DSC) for the diagnosis, treatment and control of sexually transmitted infections (STI) in Singapore.

Taking my first strides into the clinic and

heading for the registration desk, I realised immediately that I was staggeringly outnumbered by males. The interior, though, was clean and stark, a welcome relief from the streets outside.

I was informed that the average waiting time was two hours to see any one of the doctors on duty. Settling into one of the seats, I prepared myself for a long wait.

The environment was unnerving, being surrounded by a mix of extremely bored-looking middle-aged men, as well as a few well-dressed young ones who tried to stay inconspicuous behind their open copies of *Men's Health*.

I could not help but find myself wondering what exactly each one of them was there

for. Graphic health information posters surround the waiting area, making sure people knew what genital warts looked like.

This certainly did not help in easing me, a first-timer, into the situation.

The increase in undetected cases of HIV in recent years has led to hospitals running routine screening tests for all admitted patients. Besides the DSC Clinic, HIV testing can also be done at polyclinics and selected private clinics (see box).

Anonymous testing is an option available and is carried out by local charity Action for AIDS (AfA) every Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday at the DSC Clinic, after the clinic's normal operating hours.

Along with the traditional HIV antibody blood test, which takes five days to generate accurate results, there is now the option of a HIV rapid test where the wait for results is a much shorter 45 minutes.

It is done without drawing any blood but by sampling oral fluid from the mouth.

The doctor explained the various tests thoroughly, before grilling me gently for details of my sexual lifestyle and history. Her sensitivity in handling the information shone through and dispelled any awkwardness between us.

She also informed me that should the test prove positive, there are certain actions that would have to be taken.

For example, HIV-positive people are required by law to disclose their HIV status to several parties. These include sexual partners before any intercourse takes place, spouses, as well as medical and dental personnel who may perform invasive procedures on them. Offenders can face up to 10 years in prison and a \$50,000 fine.

Early detection, however, results in timely treatment and a longer, improved quality of life. It also helps curb the spread of HIV.

Before sending me off to get my cheek cells

Facts about HIV

Text by Lau Liang Tong

- AIDS statistics for the first 10 months of 2008 recorded an all-time high of 382 new cases.
- Locally, close to 4,000 have been affected by HIV since 1985.
- HIV patients need to take a combination of at least three medicines, which normally cost over \$1,000 per month.
- MOH has decided to subsidise HIV medication, but the amount subsidised is unknown.

Clinic locations with anonymous HIV testing:

- Action for AIDS Anonymous Department. of Sexually Transmitted Infections Control Clinic, 31 Kelantan Lane, #01-16, Tel: 624-0212
- Anteh Dispensary, 369 Geyland Road, Tel: 6744-1809
- Cambridge Clinic, Blk 333, Kreta Ayer Road, #03-27, Tel: 6327-1253

swabbed, she pushed a box full of condoms in my direction and invited me to take a few.

"They're free," she smiled.

After a gruelling 45-minute wait, I was given the all-clear. I paid \$35 and said a quick thank-you. I was out in an instant. The shockingly graphic posters depicting symptoms of STIs became a blur, thankfully.

On the brighter side of things, the clinic's atmosphere could put off people coming here so much that it ironically becomes a good reason to stay infection-free and HIV-safe.

Visit the DSC Clinic's website at www.dsc-sexualhealth.com.sg

Young and Running Strong

By Daryll Nanayakara

Photos by Daryll Nanayakara

Most youths call gaming or shopping their hobbies, but some call running marathons their pastime

In August last year, a sea of red engulfed the area around Marina Bay and Raffles Place as more than 11,000 runners took to the streets in the inaugural Nike+ Human Race 10K.

Of these runners, more than 7,000 were youths aged below 25.

Even more significant, 4,237 of these youths were barely 21 when they ran the 10km race that saw them line the Singapore River.

The numbers reflect a rising new trend – youths today are turning to endurance sports in droves.

Last year alone, more than 80 endurance events were held – an average of one, if not, two per weekend. Already 60 are approved for this year, with more pending.

Youths who get a kick out pushing their bodies to the limit will be more than delighted to know that several new events will be introduced to the calendar of endurance sports, including the Safari Run, a 6.2km run organised by the Singapore Zoo in memory of its late mascot, Ah Meng the

Orang Utan, who passed away last year.

One reason for this trend, according to Ms Linda Fulford, managing director of Fulford Public Relations Consultancy, was the “awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle”.

Her company has handled events such as the Adidas Sundown marathon and the Standard Chartered Marathon, both of which will be held again this year.

A spokesperson from Integrated Marketing Solutions Group (IMSG) added that youths today “tend to participate in events that enable them to have fun with their friends as well”.

IMSG has managed endurance sports events such as the Nike+ Human Race 10K.

So whether it is swimming along the coasts of the island, cycling endlessly for hours on end or running till their lungs and knees threaten to buckle, nothing seems likely to faze our young.

hype speaks to three such athletes, who put themselves through rigorous activities to push their bodies to the limit.



Denise Foo, 20

Her sun-bronzed tan is the first hint that beneath the demure and girly-voiced front, Denise is every bit a sportswoman. Not only is she into marathons, she plays volleyball, goes canoeing and is a dragonboater.

This year alone, the sports junkie completed four races, including the Nike+ Human Race 10K and the SAFRA Army Half Marathon.

Covering more than 30km last year alone, nothing gets her adrenaline more pumped up than having finished a marathon.

“I find joy in being active,” she confessed.

“It is in my blood to want to challenge myself to reach greater heights with each race.”

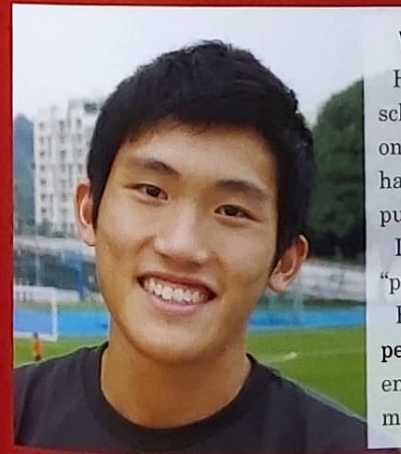


Chen Guan Ting, 18, second-year

He represented his primary and secondary schools at track and field events for almost a decade. So when he entered polytechnic, he decided to give floorball a try.

But running remains Chen Guan Ting’s foremost passion and his decision to venture into at least three marathons last year is a testament to that fact.

“Completing something you have never done before is great. It helps that I run the marathons with my friends and we go through it together, encouraging one another and pushing our bodies to the limit,” he said.

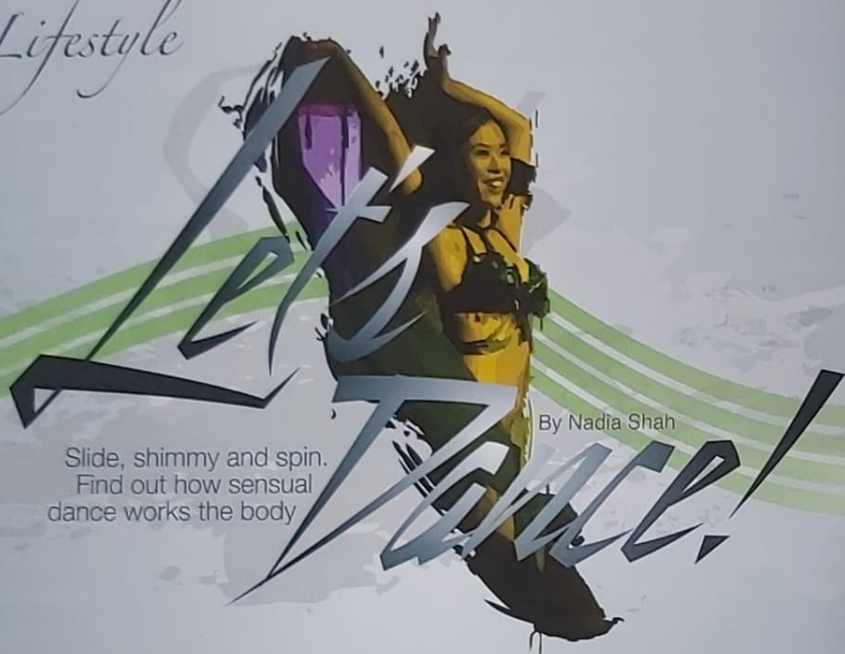


Wayne Kee, 18, second-year

He started out as a part-time lifeguard during his school holidays to earn some extra cash. Two years on, Wayne Kee, 18, is a seasoned endurance athlete, having taken part in almost ten body-and-mind punishing events.

Like Denise and Guan Ting, Wayne says he enjoys “pushing himself to the extreme”.

He explained, “It feels good to be a triathlete because people respect and look up to you. More importantly, I enjoy what I do and that’s the simple reason why I put my body to the test on an almost daily basis.”



Slide, shimmy and spin.
Find out how sensual
dance works the body

By Nadia Shah

Pole Dancing

What do A-listers Teri Hatcher, Angelina Jolie and Kate Moss have in common?

Well, besides being smouldering hot superstars, all three have recently discovered a sexy new pastime.

enthusiasts since it first offered its women-only classes in 2006.

That is, according to their head trainer, who only wanted to be known by her stage name Miss Fi Alsagoff,

She said, "I guess there's a little naughty

"I guess there's a **little naughty** side to every Singaporean girl, and pole dancing offers our students a **safe haven** to show this off."

-Miss Fi Alsagoff

While pole dancing used to be reserved just for not-so-reserved strippers at clubs, it's become a healthy new lifestyle sport that more Singaporeans are turning to.

Local dance studio Groove, which is located at Waterloo Street, has seen a threefold increase in pole dancing

side to every Singaporean girl, and pole dancing offers our students a safe haven to show this off."

But the sport, which involves performing aerial moves on a pole, including twirls, spins and hanging upside down, isn't just for the fairer sex.

According to a report by *The New Paper* last year, more men around the world are starting get a kick out of winding and grinding around and against poles.

In fact, dance studios in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia have started offering men-only classes.

And why not?

Miss Alsagoff said that pole dancing involves carrying one's own body weight in one-hour durations, which results in a great cardiovascular and toning workout for both men and women.

So we say, get on that pole and unleash that sultry kitten in you.

Visit Groove's website at www.groove.com.sg

"I found great enjoyment watching belly dancers **translate the orchestration** of music into dance movements and routines by responding to the accents, trembles and tunes of the orchestra with **their body.**"

-Miss Angelina Tay

Belly Dancing

Say belly dance and the first thing that comes to mind is an image of sensual, voluptuous Arabic women shaking their booties...oops, we mean bellies.

The dance, also known as Raqs Sharqi (Dance from the East), is said to have originated from the Middle East.

There, it was initially taught to young women to strengthen their tummies for future childbirth.

Today, the art of thrusting one's hips is widely practised around the world, though more out of passion than in preparation for future pregnancy.

In Singapore, the craze hit the nation sometime in 2000, according to an article titled "Come On, Let's Do the Belly Dance" that was published in *The Straits Times* in March that year.

Miss Angelina Tay, 28, who conducts belly dance classes at performing arts school Danz People in Orchard Road, fell in love with the dance form over six years ago.

"I found great enjoyment watching belly dancers translate the orchestration of music into dance movements and routines by responding to the accents, trembles and tunes of the orchestra with their body."

"I also loved the sophisticated and intricate costumes worn by belly dancers, so I wanted to be one of them."

Belly dancing, she added, has its dose of health benefits.

By focusing on muscle isolation, it tones the body, increases flexibility and improves body coordination.

Miss Tay also believes that it's a dance for the soul.

"Belly dancing is a great way to increase self-awareness, build self-confidence and let one's creativity run wild."

In short, belly dancing promises a 'belly' good time.

Visit Danz People's website at www.danzpeople.com

Salsa Dancing

Engage in some salsa to spice up your life. No, we're not talking about that hot sauce used in good ol' Mexican food.

"When you take up salsa, you'll be too **busy dancing to have time to smoke**, which of course, is another health benefit."

-Mr Güpson Pierre

The salsa, which stems from Latin-American rhythms, is a spirited street dance that consists of shimmying with and sliding up against your partner.

According to "Salsa Brings Sexy Back", an article that was published in *The Straits Times* in August last year, salsa was first brought to Singapore in 1998 by visiting instructors from Brazil and Mexico.

And it's been gaining popularity ever since. Mr Güpson Pierre, creative director of Attitude Dance Studio at Palmer Road, revealed that each year, the studio sees a 20 percent increase in students taking up salsa dance classes.

It's a hit with those who want a chance to get up close and personal with someone of the opposite gender while staying fit.

According to a *BBC Sport* article published four years ago, spending half

an hour salsa dancing can burn up to 400 calories – the equivalent of swimming the breast stroke for 30 minutes.

It can also result in lower blood pressure, improved cholesterol levels and a reduced heart rate.

As an added bonus, Mr Pierre quipped jokingly, "When you take up salsa, you'll be too busy dancing to have time to smoke, which of course, is another health benefit."

So, whip out your dancing shoes and get grooving to the salsa beat.

Visit Attitude Dance Studio's website at www.asiasalsa.com



The air is buzzing with just that extra bit of electricity today, and some good thumping music is sorely needed.

You're just not in the mood for "safe" today. "Different" definitely feels like the word of the day.

hype introduces three new establishments that are the very epitome of anti-establishment – Rebel, Zirca and NANA.

There's more to life than Zouk or St. James. Check out these new kids on the block.

Rebel

Block 3C The Cannery

River Valley Road

#01-07 - 08

Clarke Quay

Dudes: 18 years & above

Dudettes: 18 years & above

Tue to Sat, 10pm till late

Cover charges:

Weekdays - \$20 men / \$15 ladies - Incl. 1 drink

Weekends - \$25 men / \$20 ladies - Incl. 2 drinks

The rebel is in the house!

Finally, a hip-hop themed club for all you Jay-Z wannabes out there.

Housed in the former Smoove Arena of the now defunct Ministry of Sound (MoS), the theme is strictly street cool with wall-to-wall street art customised by renowned Australian graffiti artist Meggs.

Burn up the dance floor with DJs Tang, Scratch and Rattle as they spin their own brand of magic.

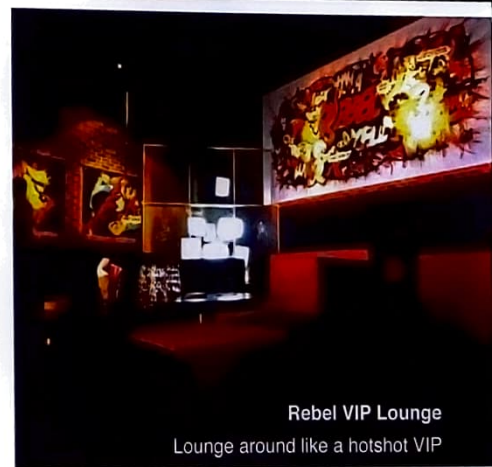
Hip-hop junkies will not be disappointed with the club. It may be a tad small, but this actually works in its favour since it creates a very underground feel. Perfect for breaking, popping and locking.

Emo kids need not apply.

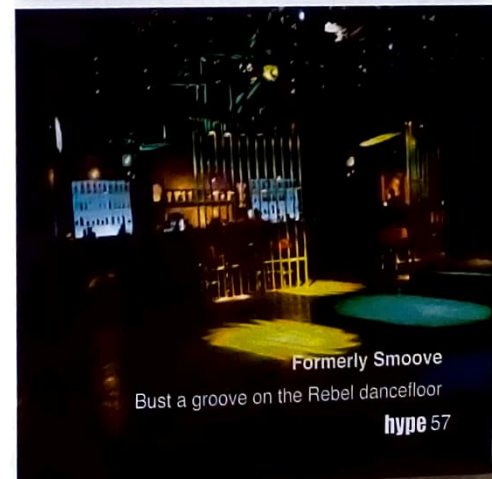
New Kids on the Block

By Kyle Sim and Candice Lee

Put on your dancing shoes because these three nightspots are set to get you moving



Rebel VIP Lounge
Lounge around like a hotshot VIP



Formerly Smoove
Bust a groove on the Rebel dancefloor

Hangouts



The Zirca Bar

Order a glass of Cosmopolitan to sip on amid the glitzy cosmopolitan affair

Zirca

Block 3C The Cannery
 River Valley Road
 #01-02 to 05 & #02-01 to 08
 Clarke Quay
 Dudes: 18 years & above
 Dudettes: 18 years & above
 Wed & Thurs, 10pm till late
 Cover charges:
 \$25 men / \$10 ladies - Incl. 2 drink

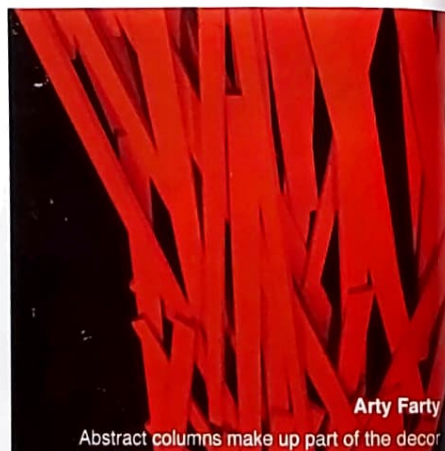
When Ministry of Sound (MoS) shut down on us, the only two mega clubs left in town were Zouk and St James Powerhouse.

Enter Zirca Mega Club.

Boasting European flair and a glitzy cosmopolitan vibe, the outfit has taken over the premises previously vacated by MoS and has brought a whole new dimension to the local nightclub scene.

Combining cabaret, circus and burlesque, Zirca will definitely appeal to everyone – especially with over 20,000 feet of space and with enough room for over 2,000 clubbers.

This promises to be an awesome experience, where clubbers get treated to visual spectacles of performers while grooving on the dance floor.



Arty Farty

Abstract columns make up part of the decor



Zirca Light Show

Get branded on the dancefloor



The Nana Bar

Nana's long bar promises more hotties to sip up next to

NANA

Central Mall
 5 Magazine road,
 #01-02/03
 Mon to Sun, 8.30pm till 5am
 Happy Hours:
 8.30pm till 10.30pm

Step into NANA and you'll find yourself smiling as you're seemingly transported back to the Land of Smiles.

Its luxurious 20,000 sq feet interior, inspired by the sexy glamour of the Moulin Rouge, draws you right in.

You'll find geographical lines blurring as you approach the main stage, where all-Thai resident band "ABSOLUTE" is rocking out.

It is a feast for the senses. The flashing strobe lights prance around the girls, who belt out Thai pop songs with an explosive energy in their high-cut boots and mini-skirts. They are backed by electric guitar-wielding guys who match the girls head-on in the looks department.

Between songs, the singers chat and banter with the audience, many of whom are hip, young locals who love the Thai culture and can speak the language.



It's GOGO time

Watch as NANA's performers take the stage



Resident Crowd Pleasers

The movers and shakers of NANA

hype 59

Hangouts

Get Your Just Desserts

By Chrystal Chua

Photos by 2am:dessertbar & Sam Wu

These two dessert stalls can be a challenge to find, but when you do, the rewards are as sweet as heaven

2am:dessertbar

21A Lorong Liput,
Holland Village
Tel: 6291 9727

Tucked in an inconspicuous corner at Holland Village, 2am:dessertbar is not the easiest place to chance upon.

However, judging from its packed tables and steady flow of diners, the chic dessert bar holds its weight next to ice cream parlours like Haagen Dazs and Cold Rock, and the district's string of bars and restaurants.

The bar is owned by 25-year-old Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef Janice Wong, who gained fame as the runner-up in Channel 8's reality cooking show *Star Chef* two years ago.

It's obvious that the establishment takes pride in presentation and aesthetics.

Decorated into a loft-like space with a monochromatic palette, it gives diners the choice to lounge on sofas or sit near the bar where its too-pretty-to-eat desserts are prepared.

With warm lighting and smooth jazz music filling the bar, the atmosphere is relaxed and lazy – perfect for a late night out with

friends.

Its menu has a twist: desserts are listed as “mains”, while the typical choices for main courses are listed as “sides”.

Its signature Chocolate Tart (\$14) is a decadent crumbly pastry shell topped with dark chocolate lava and is delightfully complemented with the piquant taste of blood orange sorbet. The slight sourness of the sorbet and hints of salty caramel break



Chocolate Tart
One of 2am's best sellers

an otherwise cloyingly sweet chocolate mousse.

Another favourite, Twix (\$13), is a mousse-like impression of its chocolate candy twin. Burnt caramel mousse with peanut crumble accompanied by homemade chocolate ice cream. However, this creation proves less satisfying than the convenience store

competitor.

Overall, service is friendly and personal, with waiters taking the trouble to explain the intricate desserts and suggest pairings of wine along with them. On less crowded evenings, Janice also mingles with the guests.



Twix
A classy version of the popular candy

However, the great aesthetics comes with a hefty price tag.

On weekend nights, diners must make a minimum of one order per person, and with less-than-generous portions charged at an average of \$15, this dining experience is better suited for those with deeper pockets.

Canelé

Raffles City Shopping Centre,
#B1-81/82, 252 North Bridge Road
Tel: (65) 6334-7377

Opening Hours: 11am to 10pm daily

Right in the heart of Raffles City Shopping Centre lies Canelé Pâtisserie Chocolaterie, one of the four Canelé branches helmed by award-winning pastry chef Pang Kok Keong.

Parked in the middle of a bustling basement, the Raffles City branch has its work cut out to grab consumer attention.

Despite its limited space, Canelé boasts a sleek design concept that uses chocolate brown tones and seats placed around a water centerpiece shared with ice cream

parlour, Ben & Jerry's.

Its large array of cakes, tarts, chocolates, and macarons sitting prettily in the shopfront glass display is a show stealer.

One of Canelé's signature treats would undoubtedly be its macarons – round delicate wafer cookies filled with cream ganache. Its range of 12 macarons come in flavours like rose, caramel, and citron, and go at \$2.30 apiece.

Le Royale (\$7) is a dense cake layered with dark chocolate mousse and hazelnut feullitine. Smooth and indulgent, this confection is a sure winner with chocolate addicts.

Aside from its sugary selection, Canelé offers diners a regular menu, including a range of savoury crepes priced at \$12.50.

However, if one is looking for a quieter spot to relax, Canelé's outlet at Raffles City Shopping Center may not be the ideal place. Due to its central location in a busy mall, noise levels are high and one has to mind the passers-by strolling past the tables every other moment.



Le Royale
A sure hit with chocolate addicts

Its small space also makes the area cramped, making it challenging to get to your table without bumping into someone else.

Canelé is a great pit stop to rest your aching feet after an afternoon of shopping, but for a more private and a cozy environment, its Robertson Walk branch may provide a more pleasant experience.

Hangouts



Giant Profiterole
Heavenly vanilla ice cream wedged in pastry puffs

The Sweet Stone Parad-Ice

Golden Mile Food Centre #01-67/76
Opposite Golden Mile Complex
On Monday and Wednesday,
Open from 11.30am to 6pm

Messrs Lau Suhow, James Lee and Sebastian Lhode wanted to do something new and out of the box.

Having had some background in food and beverage operations, they became business partners and created a charming European dessert shop called Sweet Stone Parad-Ice in a heartland hawker centre.

"We wanted to pioneer something fun that involved constant creation," said Mr Lee, 35.

They launched their stall at Golden Mile Food Centre to keep costs low without compromising on quality.

"Cheap is one thing. There are some things that you can't get locally. We wanted the

highest standards," said Mr Lau, 29.

Their famous palm-sized Liège waffles are made fresh from the raw ingredients imported from 28-year-old Mr Lhode's hometown in Belgium.

"The recipe is about 200-years-old," he said with a proud grin.

A plate of golden-brown waffles and a bowl of chocolate fondue arrived at my table. The dark Belgian chocolate was rich, thick, and slightly bitter, complementing the sweet waffles perfectly.

The waffle was firm and crunchy on the outside, yet soft and sweet inside. However, I found it a tad too chewy.

Overall, it was a heavenly experience.

The most expensive dish, the Royal Claypot Fondue (\$14.80), is a monster that feeds a party of four.

It includes two scoops of gelato, a hearty serving of marshmallows and fresh fruit for colour.

Photos by Joshua Tan



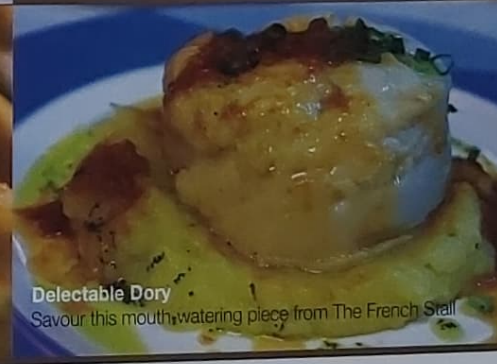
Crème Caramel
A sweet and simple traditional cold dessert



Chewy Waffle
Yummy old secret Belgium Recipe.



Chilling Gelato
Exquisite Italian ice cream cools you in the heat.



Delectable Dory
Savour this mouthwatering piece from The French Stall

The French Stall

544 Serangoon Road
Open 3pm to 6pm (Desserts only)
Open 6pm to 10pm (Dinner)
Closed on Mondays

The French Stall looks deceptively like a hawker centre. Its owner, Mr Xavier Le Henaff, 47, hails from Brittany, France.

Having worked in fine-dining restaurants, he's now in Singapore doing what he does best – being a chef.

When Mr Henaff moved here in June 1997, he wanted to open an authentic yet affordable French restaurant.

"Most Singaporeans think French cuisine is all about high-class restaurants, but we don't eat truffle and caviar everyday like some imagine," he chortled.

"They cost thousands to prepare!"
I tried some of the chef's recommendations:

grilled pork chop with gratinated potato dauphinois, French onion soup, chicken liver pâté, and steam-rolled dory with tomato coulis – my personal favourite.

The sweet taste of the dory went well with the chunky tomato sauce. The fish was so fresh it retained the sweet tang of sea brine.

At the base of the dish was creamy mashed potato, which was light, soft and addictive.

For dessert, I had a giant vanilla profiterole. The hearty scoop of vanilla ice cream wedged between two pastry puffs and draped in hot chocolate was orgasmic.

For the price of just \$7.20 in total, this meal is far cheaper than your average astronomically priced French fare.

And business is brisk. When I was there, over a dozen couples and families were waiting to be seated.

"At least 40 minutes," a waitress hollered. To which one man calmly replied, "That's okay. We'll wait."



Muted is the new Spring

By Kristie Chiew

Be stylish this spring and know all the upcoming trends for 2009 that you must absolutely know

We've seen a fair amount of loose barnyard styles, bohemian dressing, layering and eclectic colours with an overload of gemstone jewelry. This year, it's time to say goodbye to these trends.

This spring the fashion industry delves into more depth.

Textile fabrics such as velvets, satins and suedes are playing a big part on the runway and ready-to-wear collections.

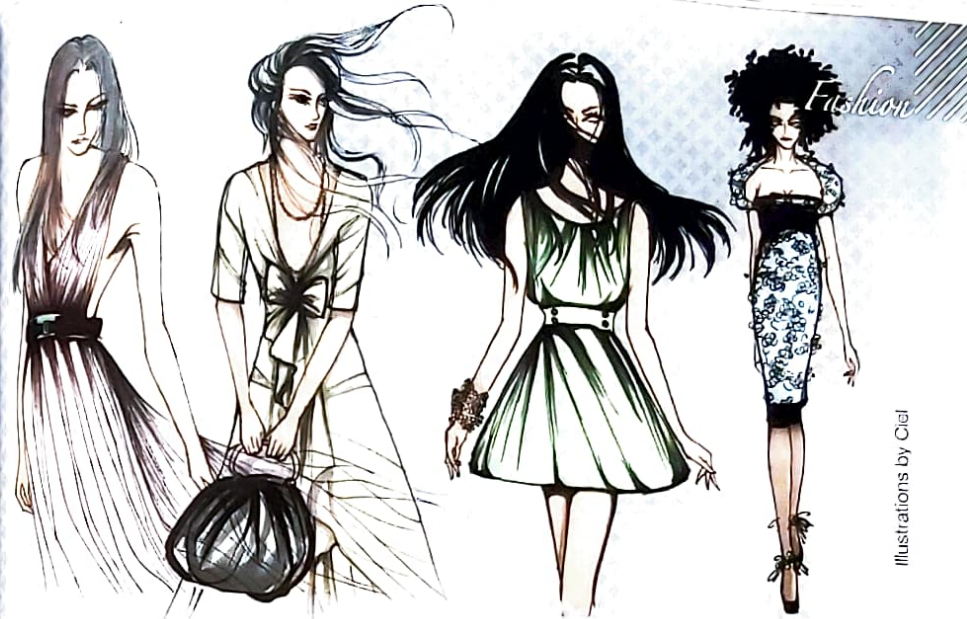
According to American magazine *InStyle*, winter's colourful cardigans are set to make a comeback for the cooler nights of spring.

"The brighter colours are all the rage this spring," said Miss Sherlee Choliluddin, 30, a programme coordinator and self-professed fashionista.

"It's the happy season, with everyone being flirty and fun in the spring."

However, many have gripes that this season's spring is more muted than the last.

"There is a lot more monochrome this year than the last," said local publication *The Straits Times* URBAN's deputy editor, Ms Evelyn Yap.



Illustrations by Ciel

She has observed that the fashion colour palette dropped its usual orange and fuchsia. The colour trend is now shifting towards black and white, an integration of grays, as well as autumn colours such as dark brown, burgundy and beige.

This watering down of colours might be reflective of the recent economic downturn.

But while the sombre tones may seem restrained, they give fashionistas more freedom to be versatile in their dressing.

However, despite the general muting of colours, most collections have at least two to three pieces in electric colours.

Italian fashion label Bottega Veneta, for example, has deviated from its usual splashes of fuchsia and orange by adopting a new favourite – cobalt electric blue.

But some designers have decided to stick to convention and put on their spring designs in full force.

"There has to be some colour to cheer people up," said Miss Sara-Ann Krishnamoorthy, 30, producer-presenter of web television service, *The Straits Times* Razor TV, who has a fetish for bright hues. "I really can't wait for spring," she added.

Designers like New York style star Zac Posen will be bringing on their spring ethereal flair by pairing textile fabrics like chiffon with velvets and satins in mustard yellow and browns.

As shown by homegrown brand Raoul in their new spring 2009 ready-to-wear collection, pastels and neutrals still remain as the classics.

"Translucent peasant tops are still all the rage and are definitely fit for the romantic summer," Ms Krishnamoorthy explained.

While spring is not the season for enigma and mystery, designs from Miu Miu, a brand under Italian luxury label Prada, showcase the beauty of a shapeless gown cinched at the waist with an eclectic embellished belt.

Local designer Ashley Isham's gowns also flaunt the flirty and the romantic.

"It's a very diverse incoming trend," observed Samantha Cheok, 19, an intern under local fashion mogul Daniel Boey.

She added, "I see ethereal maxis in chiffon and heavy jersey. The obi belt is definitely still in fashion."

"I think the cinched waist is going to last for quite a while."



Yellow Dress w/ Black Belt,
\$69.90, Loft
Yellow Heels,
\$89.90, Loft
Butterfly Earrings,
\$18, Under the Tree (Cactus Farm)
White Polo Tee,
\$33, FOX Fashion
Blue Jeans,
\$79, FOX Fashion
Hand-drawn White Canvas Sneakers,
\$29.90, Jaco and Ben (Cactus Farm)

LOVE IS IN THE AIR

All choked up over what to wear to your first date with that special someone? Here are some bright ideas to liven up the experience

[Photography: Yeo Kai Wen | Stylist: Tammy Chua | Models: Justin Tan, Jessica Lim, Marvin Miranda, Tammy Chua
| Location: The House @ Dempsey]

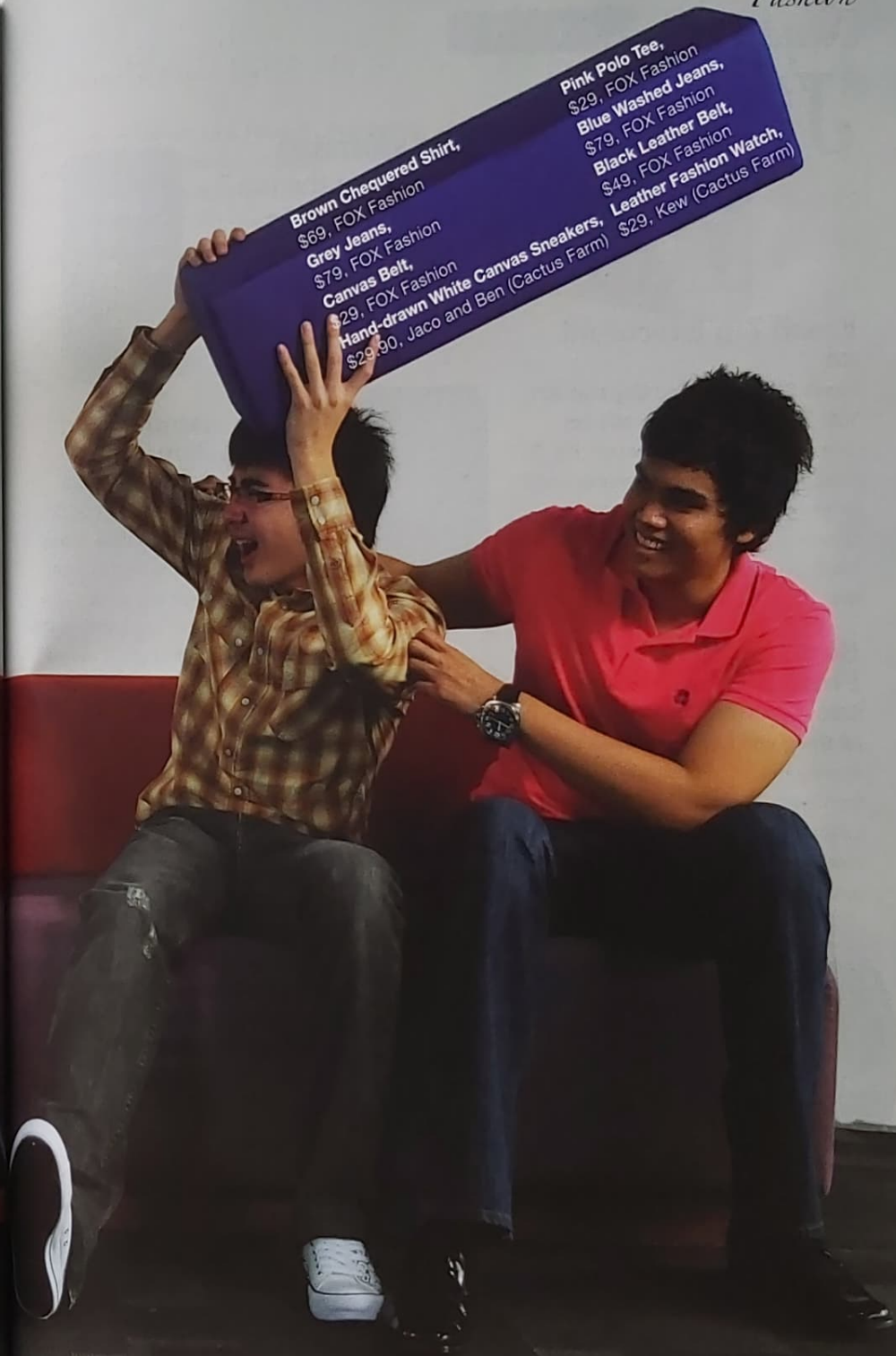
Fashion



Grey Chequered Shirt,
\$59.90, FOX Fashion
Khaki Pants,
\$69, FOX Fashion
Black Leather Belt,
\$49, FOX Fashion
Femme Top Dyed,
\$29, Flesh Imp
Femme Denim Washed Pants,
\$43.00, Flesh Imp
White Fashion Watch,
\$25, Kew (Cactus Farm)
Butterfly Necklace,
\$29.90, Loft
White Sandals,
\$89.90, Loft



White Dress w/ Black Belt,
\$49.90, Loft
White Ear Studs,
\$18, Miss Con (Cactus Farm)
Green & White Spaghetti
Dress, \$29.90, Loft
Inspirations Necklace,
\$8, Kacia (Cactus Farm)
Small Bracelet,
\$9.90, Yoko (Cactus Farm)
Yellow Heels,
\$89.90, Loft (Haji Lane)



Brown Chequered Shirt,
\$69, FOX Fashion
Grey Jeans,
\$79, FOX Fashion
Canvas Belt,
\$29, FOX Fashion
Hand-drawn White Canvas Sneakers,
\$29.90, Jaco and Ben (Cactus Farm)
Pink Polo Tee,
\$29, FOX Fashion
Blue Washed Jeans,
\$79, FOX Fashion
Black Leather Belt,
\$49, FOX Fashion
Leather Fashion Watch,
\$29, Kew (Cactus Farm)

Shopping Just for You

For Him

Daryll Nanayakara
susses out the top
five gifts for this
Valentine's

Fossil Zip Execufold

\$58

Fossil Stores (Suntec City Mall #01-139; The Heeren Shops #01-06)

Simple and yet suave in design, the Zip Execufold makes carrying money stylish for any guy. Its numerous card slots provide more than enough space to carry the stash of cash and many cards he may own.



Bang and Olufsen Form 2 Headphones

\$250

All Bang and Olufsen outlets

Aluminium and carbon meet in design to form the near-perfect pair of headphones for any audiophile. The Form 2's pristine sound quality certainly justifies the burn in your purse for that someone special.



Sony Play Station Portable3000

\$290

Official Sony Stores and retail outlets

The most common handheld game console just got more versatile – it's now waterproof, shockproof and dustproof, thanks to the accompanying silicone case.



Nike Zoom Victory+

\$179

Nike Outlets and major Sporting Outlets

Lightweight and comfortable, these trainers make the ideal gift for a boyfriend.



Apple iPod Touch

\$388 (8GB); \$498 (16GB); \$648 (32GB)

Apple Online Store

For the hidden tech-geek in your guy, the iPod Touch makes the perfect gift. It allows him to surf the Web, as well as download applications and various games to entertain himself while you're out shopping.

Canon Digital IXUS 870 IS

\$599

Available at Canon Link (Vivocity #02-32/33) and all major electronic retailers)

Preserve picture-perfect moments of your hot Valentine's date with this sleek and elegant camera in all its 10-megapixels glory. Oh, and did we mention that the camera comes in easy-to-match soft gold and silver shades?



Swatch White Feelings

\$99

Swatch Watch outlets at Bugis Junction, Raffles City, Plaza Singapura and The Heeren Shops.

The abstract white and floral prints on the strap of this timepiece from the Swiss maestros of watches just whispers, "Back to basics". Perfect for any girl who loves things simple and clean.

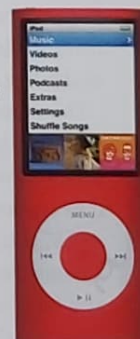


Apple iPod Nano (nano-chromatic)

\$248

Apple Online Store (other colours available at authorised Apple retailers)

If music is the food of love, Apple makes it bite-size. The curvy and stylish nano is available in 8GB or 16GB capacities. We recommend the Apple exclusive red nano.



For Her

Shopping



Nike Windrunner Metallic Collection

\$138

Nike Flagship Store

Wisma Atria #02-21 & #03-23

Finally, a jacket that comes in multiple shades to match her ever-changing tastes. Don't tell her we told you this, but getting this for her means you don't have to sacrifice your own jacket for her in that cold movie theatre.

Fossil Weekender Flap Clutch (Style #SL9744)

\$108

Fossil Stores (Suntec City Mall #01-139; The Heeren Shops #01-06)

This soft-leather clutch can be summed up in two words – naturally chic. Its eco-friendly and compact design is enough to make any girl swoon. Carrying money can be so stylish for Miss Spendalot.



Travel Forget battered suitcases, Go Backpacking

Planning to take a fast, cheap trip around Southeast Asia?
hype shows you how By Teo Hong Jun

Waking up to the bustling streets of Saigon, walking through the ruins of Sukhothai Historical Park, sunbathing on one of Philippine's Hundred Islands, losing your way in Angkor Wat or a full day shopping spree in Kuala Lumpur.

The only way to truly enjoy the essence of these adventurous and exciting Southeast Asian destinations without a tour guide herding you from one location to the next is to backpack.

Before you get all worked up and agonise over where to begin, know that there are many things to do other than just picking the location.

Don't ever go on a backpacking trip with a trolley luggage or a duffel bag as these will hinder your mobility and comfort.

If you do not already have a proper backpack, it's time to get one. Locally, shops like World of Travellers at Paragon Shopping Centre offer a wide range for travelling and everyday use.

The pack

There are two basic types of backpacks in the market: the top and front loader. Their names say it all – the top loader allows you to pack from the top of the bag, while the front loader allows access through the front of the bag.

The downside of carrying a top loader is that the things you need are usually at the bottom. As for the front loader, your stuff may be more accessible but if the zip gets stuck, you're in trouble.

Backpacks are measured in terms of litres and for a trip around the region, 45 to 55 litres would be sufficient.

When buying your backpack, make sure that the height of the pack corresponds to the length of your upper body – from the shoulders to the hips. The most important thing to do is to try it on.

Some main features that you should look out for are zips that allow the use of padlocks, along with comfortable and sturdy straps. You will need waist straps as they

help to bear almost half the weight of the pack on your hips.

Lastly and most importantly: if the backpack is not waterproof, don't buy it.

The clothes

Regardless of how well a good backpack can lighten your load, long hours of lugging it around can be really tiring. So keep to one of the commandments of backpacking: pack and travel light.

Clothes should be light, dark-coloured and easy to dry. Easy-to-dry clothes will eliminate worries of whether your clothes will dry after washing and dark clothes need less washing unless you've got B.O. issues.

Do not bring clothes that might be deemed culturally offensive to the locals and always bring a long pair of jeans or long pants as you never know when you need them.

Remember to also pack a good waterproof jacket that can keep you warm and also double up as a raincoat. Swimming gear is also good for you never know when you will spot a nice waterfall.

There are two rules to pack by. Remind yourself that you are not going for a fashion show. After you have gathered all the clothes that you are going to bring, return half of it to your closet.

How much underwear to bring is up to your discretion. Just make sure you have enough to last the trip and not end up with nasty abrasions.

The nitty-gritty

The Swiss Army Knife is considered a traveller's best friend. A basic knife will have many lifesaving tools such as the can opener (when you're hungry), the bottle opener (when you're thirsty) and well, the knife (when you need to cut something). Remember to check it in with your main luggage and not board the plane carrying it.

Have an updated map of the locale you are in. You can buy one at the local airport.

Nowadays, we've got the luxury of the Global Positioning Systems (GPS) on our phones but the printed map never fails to work (unlike technology). Also remember, if using a map, learn to use a compass.

Wearing boots or shoes to walk around all day is not exactly a good idea. A pair of lightweight slippers will not only let you relax and air your feet but also keep your shoes or boots dry. Sandals are more practical than slippers as they cling to your feet and reduce the chances of slipping.

Lastly, pack in some ziplock bags, spare glasses and/or contact lenses and padlocks for as many zips you have on your backpack.





Plan a Safe Holiday for Maximum Fun

We all need a break from our little island, so here are some tips to traveling on your own **By Siraj Aziz**

Choosing a destination...

Country hunt

Be realistic. If you are looking to save money, Asian destinations, which provide an abundance of exotic locations and cultures to explore, are naturally cheaper to visit.

However, read up on the happenings in the country of interest. The recent shutdown of Thailand's Suvarnabhumi Airport due to the takeover by political protestors resulted in over 300,000 tourists being stranded.

Although we can't predict the future, we can be smart by staying clear of countries with difficult political situations.

Ho-Ho-Holiday seasons

Try to avoid travelling during peak seasons such as the year-end. Hotels and airlines are usually fully booked and often up their prices during these periods.

Price matters

Travelling in rural areas of a country may cost less than a city.

A similar hotel room in Chiang Mai can cost a few hundred baht cheaper in Bangkok. Therefore, weighing the benefits of the location and its attractions early may save you quite a bit of money.

Embassy check

It is always good to know where your embassy is located in a foreign country. In case of emergencies such as losing your passport or getting into an accident, you can approach the embassy for assistance.

Being helpless in a foreign land is a scary experience, so it's always good to know that some local help is around the corner.

Getting there...

DIY deals

Instead of relying on your good ol' travel agency, you can try finding good deals online.

Websites such as Zuji.com.sg help to compile live data instantly, and show flight, accommodation and travel information all in one place. This allows you to compare your options and get a better deal.

Set a budget

Using budget airlines can help shave hundreds of dollars off your trip. Remember to look out for limited-time-only promotions by the airlines.

However, passengers should note that everything other than the ticket will cost them extra. These include baggage fees, airport taxes and food and drinks.

And since most budget airlines don't allow seat reservations, get ready to rush for the less claustrophobic seats.

Go public

If you're heading somewhere nearby such as Kuala Lumpur, Thailand or Indonesia, consider public transport such as the train, bus or ferry.

In contrast to their dingy reputation, these alternatives boast comfortable seats and ample legroom. It might take you a while to reach your destination, but you'll be able to save a bit of cash, stay comfortable and also sample other cultures along the way.

Plan

Create an itinerary of your trip – this will help you keep track of all your transport schedules, especially if you have connecting flights. It will also remind you of the initial aim of your journey.

Missing flights and being stranded in an unknown location is no fun nr safe.

Before you leave...

It ain't heavy, it's my baggage

Packing light might save you from paying the additional baggage charge. One way to do this is to pack the essentials and just a few accessories. Clothes that allow you to mix and match will give you the maximum style with minimal hassle.

Money, money, money

Remember to have the right currency since credit cards are not universally accepted. Try not to keep large amounts of money in one location. Have a reserve stash hidden in case of emergencies.

Be a geek

In the interest of working on a shoestring budget, why buy a travel guidebook when you can borrow it from your library?

We recommend the Lonely Planet and Rough Guides series, due to their excellent pictures, advice, tips and destination information. Just remember to return your book on time.





GO CENTRAL

Central in Hong Kong is a place to marvel at soon-to-vanish wonders and modern developments, where the concept of new meets old is defined by lifestyle and architectural offerings

By Lau Liang Tong

If a way to a man's heart is through his stomach, then every man has to visit Hong Kong for its food and heritage offerings. While the men eat, the women on the other hand can take the time to shop.

With financial buildings lining the Bay Area of Central on Hong Kong Island, the remaining heritage buildings, like the open-air wet markets and various trinket shops, start showing only further inland.

The sight projects an image of Hong Kong as a hub for heritage and development. But this may not be for long due to extensive redevelopment plans, such as the revamp of Hong Kong's Graham Street Market – the country's oldest open-air market.

"Old" Hong Kong, beaten and run-down, is sporadically spread out and "new" Hong Kong is prominent. The towering skyscrapers and nostalgic dilapidated houses give every tourist a reason to visit Central.

Take the MTR (Mass Transit Railway) to Central station; exit at D2, and kick-start the one-day tour.

Breakfast that offers a different vibe

Start your day with a hearty breakfast at the 25-year old Law Fu Kee, which specialises in congee and noodles.

Housed in an old premise, patrons stream in constantly for the eatery's famed congee and wanton noodles. But stick to the tried and tested beef congee, HK\$21 (S\$4) and friend wanton, HK\$25 (S\$5).

Law Fu Kee

Ground Floor, 144 Queen's Road Central
Opening Monday to Sunday, 8am to 8pm

Heritage trail, in an old market

Graham Street Market sees Caucasians and Cantonese-speaking stall vendors co-existing in harmony. The 140-year-old market stretches uphill and while many won't be picking up poultry or fresh vegetables, they come to be amazed by its stores that sell anything from dried goods to vintage accessories.

The area is listed as a redevelopment

project under the Urban Renewal Authority, hoping to inject life into the crumbling architecture while retaining an open-air market atmosphere.

Having spent six years in Hong Kong, Kenny Coyle, 42, editor of regional business magazine *MIX*, said, "It would be a shame for Central to become a monument to big banks rather than portray the everyday lives of ordinary people."

He also expressed his scepticism about the redevelopment saying, "After the revamp, visitors may be disappointed to see just another modern international district with very little attachment to history."

Vintage shopping galore

If you're done exploring the market, exit the lanes and weave through smaller streets for some thrift shopping.

From Queen's Road, delve deeper into Li Yuen Street East and West to find shops that offer value-for-money goods. Jade and Jewellery Co. sells intricate gold, silver and jade jewellery at affordable prices. Jade authenticity certificates are also available upon request.

Another shop, Me & George, specialises in second-hand vintage apparels from Japan. A vintage dress is priced from HK\$10 (S\$2), while vests cost a mere HK\$30 (S\$6).

Jade & Jewellery Co.

Rear Shop, Ground Floor, 55 Queen's Road Central, Li Yuen Street West
Closed on Mondays, 10am to 6.30pm.
Tel: 852 2523 0798

Me & George

9 Li Yuen West Street, Central, Hong Kong (opposite H&M)
Open Monday to Sunday, 10am to 9pm.
Tel: 852 2501 0186

Walk for exercise, history and antiques

Just before lunchtime, take a trip up the Mid-Levels Escalator, which was built since 1994.

The series of 1km-long escalators form the world's longest outdoor glass-covered escalator system and provides covered transport along the steep incline between Central and the Mid-Levels.

The escalators can be seen in the 2008 Batman film, *The Dark Knight*.

Antique junkies can do a stopover at Hollywood Road, the second intersection along the escalator, which many affectionately name "Antique Street".

An innumerable amount of Buddha sculptures and Mao-related memorabilia beam at passers-by.

Have fun haggling for the best bargains and identifying knock-off goods!

Teatime Mecca

Between 2pm and 6pm, Hong Kong transforms into a teatime mecca, where cafes like Café de Coral at Melbourne Plaza offer delectable set meals at affordable prices from HK\$15 (S\$3) onwards.

Many foodies head for the famous Tsui Wah restaurant for a serving of the slightly savoury toasted bun with creamy peanut butter, HK\$15 (S\$3). Top it off with ice-cold Hong Kong style milk tea to complete the experience.

Alternatively, try the condensed milk version or its famous French toast – deep-fried peanut butter sandwiches topped with a slice of butter and a huge dollop of honey.

Amuse yourself by watching the locals eat and leave the restaurant in a matter of minutes in their typical quick-paced style.

Tsui Wah

15-19 Wellington Street, Central
Tel: 852 2525 6338

Dinner is served

Have your dinner at The Frying Pan, Hong Kong's first 24-hour breakfast diner, which whips up delicious and wholesome American breakfasts.

The sheer variety in the menu will leave you spoilt for choice and their side dishes such as the spiced apples and herbed potatoes that accompany the sets are delicacies worth dying for.

The retro-styled furnishings truly brings out vibes of the 50s, with booth seating, cushioned seats, blue-tiled table tops and framed monochrome pictures.

The Frying Pan

Ground Floor,
9 Old Bailey Street, Central
Tel: 852 2140 6333

Boogie Wonderland

Hong Kong is much more image-conscious than Singapore. So dress up if you're going for a night out in town.

Guys should wear a proper shirt while the ladies can deviate from the usual little black dresses and adopt more adventurous dressing styles.

Lan Kwai Fong, a popular part of Central, is synonymous with alcohol and parties.

Head to Fong, a two-storey bar where many come to "see and be seen".

This is where both the locals and expatriates come to mingle and dance to funky music.

Janice Sou, 19, a polytechnic student who visited Fong on a regularly back during her internship days said, "Fong always had a fun-loving crowd."

"I would usually find myself on the second level with my friends as there was always a DJ there and had a more chilled-out vibe."

Alternatively, you can groove the rest of the night away in Club 9, a spacious

club cum balcony bar for another round of drinking and partying.

Two giant 360-inch screens project music videos of the hottest hits, enhancing the visuals and musical vibes of the club. Liquid buffets are available every Friday for HK\$200 (S\$38).

Central is the best spot to soak up Hong Kong's nightlife. What could be more thrilling than dressing up for a big night of pub-crawling? All the expats in the territory seem to descend in Lan Kwai Fong.

Mr Coyle, a Scotsman who enjoys going to pubs, and has watched the development of the city's nightlife intently, said, "Lan Kwai Fong's nightlife has outgrown itself and appears to be expanding."

The area is filled with bars, clubs and restaurants such as ones like the Italian-styled restaurant-bars, Tivo and Divino.

With so much going on, Lan Kwai Fong is the spot to hit before you move on to the Wan Chai area where the party never ends.

Fong

Ground Floor, 34-36 D'Aguilar Street,
Central
Tel: 852 2801 4946

Club 9

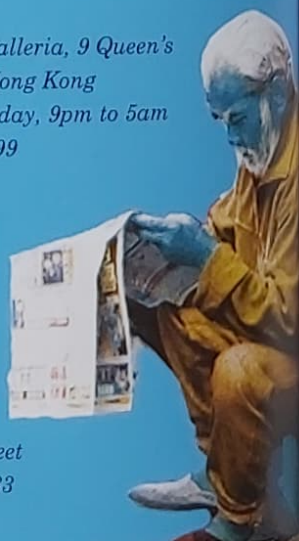
3rd Floor, The Galleria, 9 Queen's
Road, Central, Hong Kong
Monday to Saturday, 9pm to 5am
Tel: 852 2973 6899

Tivo

43-45 Wyndham
Street
Tel: 852 2116
8055

Divino

73 Wyndham Street
Tel: 852 2167 8883

FROM PRINT
TO SCREEN

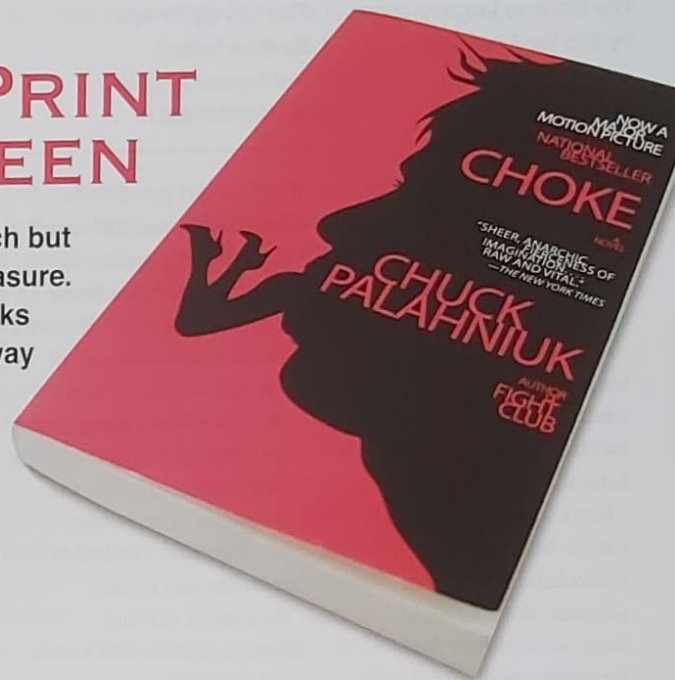
Movies are fun to watch but reading is the real pleasure. **hype** dissects six books that have made their way to the silver screen

CHOKÉ

By Chuck Palahniuk

Text by Candice Lee

ISBN: 0307388921



Chuck Palahniuk loves to leave his readers with a bad taste in their mouths, and that is the reason his satire-loving fans love him. The acclaimed author of *Fight Club*, who is a master of warped subjects, has bagged the awards and movie deals to show for it.

In *Choke*, however, it seems like Palahniuk is choking on new themes with which to unsettle his readers.

Don't be mistaken – the prerequisite disturbing elements in the book are aplenty. Meet Victor Mancini, our antihero who takes us through the crummy existence he calls his life. Victor trawls sexual addiction workshops to meet girls who are not likely to require dinner and flowers before getting down to it. His side job as a con artist requires him to choke on his dinner every other evening at upscale restaurants. He then allows a "hero" to save him, who inadvertently feels obliged to shower him with love and money for years to come.

At the core of this self-inflicted depravity is – surprise! – Victor's monstrously bizarre childhood. In flashbacks, it is revealed how Victor's mum was too busy stealing school buses and abusing zoo animals to love him. All she left him with is a sense of worthlessness, as well as twisted trivia: "If you're ever in the Hard Rock Café... and they announce 'Elvis has left the building,' that means all the servers need to go to the kitchen and find out what dinner special just sold out."

To top it all off, Victor is becoming increasingly convinced that he is a descendent of Jesus Christ, conceived via a dried piece of holy foreskin.

A cult writer who lends an unhinged voice to our deranged times, Palahniuk has delivered again. But for fans who are expecting the unexpected, the formulaic shock approach here is just, well, a little expected.

Books
The Bourne Legacy
By Eric Van Lustbader
Text by Kristie Chiew
ISBN: 0312331759

In this fourth instalment, *The Bourne Legacy* picks up from where Bourne series creator Robert Ludlum supposedly left off.

In an attempt to separate his identity as Bourne from his family, David Webb has taken up a job as a Linguistics professor.

But a sniper's gunshot within the campus reawakens the Bourne persona. Soon enough, Bourne aka Webb finds himself running for his life in a race to save himself and his family.

Apart from the excitement at seeing Bourne outsmart, outwit and outplay his enemies, the book is like a rollercoaster ride that never seems to end. This Bourne legacy should have just left it at the 'Ultimatum'.

The Lovely Bones
By Alice Sebold
Text by Lau Liang Tong
ISBN: 0316168815

What's a girl going to do when she's raped and dead?

Brutally chopped up by her introverted neighbour at the tender age of 14, Susie Salmon lost her chance of maturing into a woman.

With her elbow being the only notable clue in the blood-curling murder, the case seems to have been put on hiatus even before investigations began.

As a spirit drifting between heaven and Earth, Susie can only narrate the changing lives of those around her, while grasping her inability to detach herself from the living.

The Lovely Bones, Sebold's second novel, tackles realistic issues with great intensity and simplicity, spinning a tale of love, loss and isolation.

THE NEW YORK TIMES NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER



Confessions of a Shopaholic
By Sophie Kinsella
Text by Nadia Shah
ISBN: 0385395507

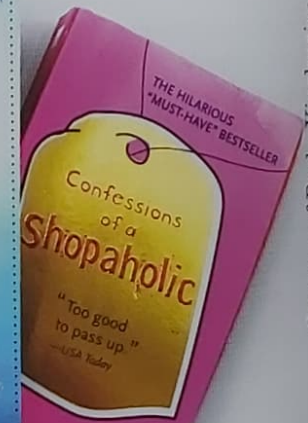
New York Times' Bestselling Author Sophie Kinsella brings a Brit read that has the obvious potential to be just another boring old chick lit.

Thankfully, it touches on serious matters such as obsession and finding a purpose in life, in a humorous manner.

Becky Bloomwood, a shopaholic living in London may be a journalist at *Successful Saving* magazine, but the truth is, Becky's a financial mess.

Her attempts at clearing her debts fail miserably, and that makes the novel even more of a guilty pleasure.

With a hilarious plot and colourful characters to boot, it's no wonder a movie adaptation is to be released sometime this year.



Courtesy of Books Kinokuniya

The No.1 Ladies Detective Agency
By Alexander McCall Smith
Text by Daryll Nanayakara
ISBN: 1400034779

Adulterous husbands who cheat on their wives, the murder of a young boy by village witch doctors, a father who worries about his daughter dating village boys – these are some of the issues most Zimbabweans face on a daily basis.

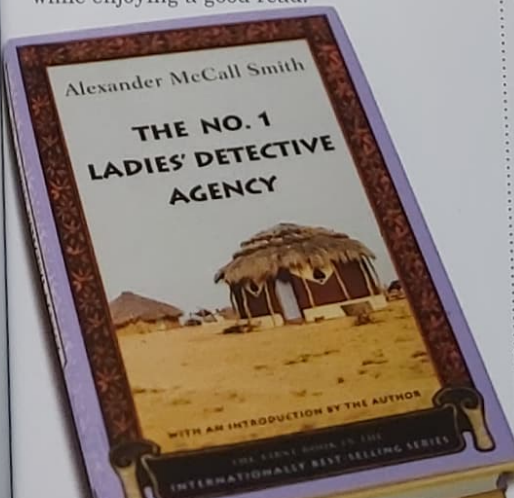
Serious yet light, Zimbabwean-born author Alexander McCall Smith produces a work of art with this first volume from a series of nine books.

This probably explains why the series has been turned into a 13-part television drama in the United Kingdom.

Smith takes you into the life of Mma Precious Ramotswe, a fictional woman from Botswana who sets up her own detective agency in the capital, Gabrone, to tackle the real issues her country faces everyday.

The characters may change but the main detective, Ramotswe, remains ever the wise and intelligent protagonist.

As the author of more than 50 books of different genres, Smith gives us another reason to think about the world's issues while enjoying a good read.



My Sister's Keeper
By Jodi Picoult
Text by Jeremy Boo
ISBN: 0743454537

How much sacrifice would you make your child go through for the life of another?

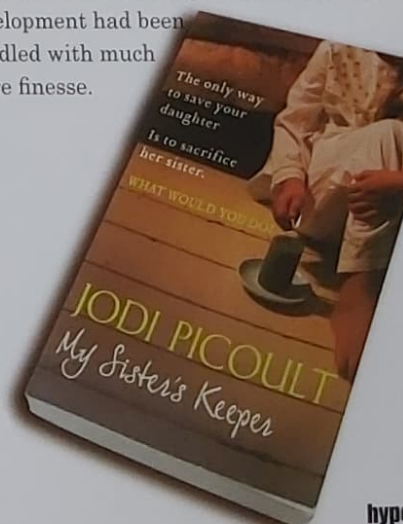
Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper* tosses you firmly into intrigue and plunges you into a deep moral quandary, forcing you to ask questions that you fear to confront.

Like her other novels, Picoult switches between past and present, rapidly creating a heavily layered piece of prose that reveals more than the cursory glance.

But when used too often, it leaves the readers confused and desperately floundering for clues.

While the story has an unconventional structure, Picoult's characters fall into clichéd one-dimensional paper cut-outs — the rebellious and angsty brother, the understanding supportive father, the emotionally torn mother, and the independent young female protagonist.

Jodi Picoult's *The Sister's Keeper* is vivid and visceral, with poignant nuances and sub-plots. It would have made a remarkable read, if its plot and character development had been handled with much more finesse.



hype

BEHIND THE hype COVER

Photoshop is a powerful design tool. See how we 'ink-ed' our cover model

By Teo Hong Jun

1) Getting the model

Before we start, make sure that you have a nice image to work with. You can either take a photo of your subject or go to free stock imaging websites like www.sxc.hu.



2) Getting the tattoo

Look for appropriate images of tattoos for your subject. Using images of real tattoos will give you a better result.

Place the picture of the tattoo on the body using Adobe Photoshop.



3) Masking

Now, create a layer mask and start removing the parts of the tattoo that fall out of the body area that you want to focus on. Are you following so far? Good.



4) Brush settings

To easily mask out the unwanted parts, choose a softer brush by lowering the hardness of your brush settings.

This will soften the edges of your masking, thus making the image look more realistic.

This requires time, depending on how skilled you are. This took 30 minutes for me.



5) Create magic

After you have completely masked out the unwanted parts of the tattoos, duplicate your tattoo layer.

Change the layer-blend option of the first layer to Overlay and the second layer to Multiply or Soft Light.

The blend option used will be dependent on the intensity of your tattoo's colour. Try to experiment with different options to get the best results possible.

Also, adjusting the opacity will get you better effects.



6) Touching up

Now, touch up your tattoo by adjusting the lighting on the model.

Either by using the Dodge or Burn tool, you can lighten or darken certain areas of the tattoo to achieve a good shadow effect.

A brush with zero hardness gives the best result for this step.





Photos by Yeo Kai Wen

SMALL MACHINES BIG SOUNDS

Many musicians these days use laptops to record their music, and often of low, distorted quality. But three guys thought, why compromise quality?

Harnessing the power of mobility of the laptop, Hafiz "Jerangkung" Azhiz, 23, Muhd Shahidir, 25 and Muhd "Rizzo" Farid, 21, founded Gigasonic, a company specialising in mobile recording.

Gigasonic travels around the island to jamming studios, homes, public spaces (basically any place of choice) to record.

"To a person, a drumset may sound like any other drumset, but to some, it's special," said Hafiz, relating to the personality of each place and instrument.

Their choice of transport for roaming the island? It's none other than the humble Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)..

The trio literally drag their equipment around the island. With a laptop, microphones, mixers and stands all jammed into their bags, accompanied by a set of headphones fashionably hung around their necks, they roam around various places recording bands not only in studios, but at outdoor events as well.

The quality and flexibility of their services

reflect their know-how here in the local music industry.

All three members of the team are active musicians and enthusiasts. They have played at well-known events such as Wings, in popular Esplanade bar DXO and have track appearances in dramas Metafora and Graffiti on local Malay channel Suria.

The three of them lead very different lives.

Hafiz is an IT administrator, Shahidir is a salesman while Rizzo is still studying. What unites them is their vigilante spirit in helping local bands move forward.

"It's all about the 'Gotong-royong' (helping one another) spirit," said Hafiz.

Gigasonic does this to help aspiring artistes save cost.

Referring to the high cost that studios charge for the unnecessary use of high-end equipment, Hafiz reasoned, "We, being in Singapore, don't need such expensive equipment. Our country has very high-end equipment but doesn't have high-end marketing (for local bands)."

Giga-Tips

For those laptop musicians out there, Gigasonic has some tips from you.

Hafiz: Maintain your laptop often by defragmenting and clearing old files

Editing software often take up much processing and memory space. Defragmenting your laptop at least once a month will organise the data on your hard disk, making your computer less sluggish.

Shahidir: Researching may be a tedious process, but it comes in handy

According to Shahidir, many musicians invest heavily but use their instruments and gadgets minimally.

For example, they pay a premium for recording studios with high-end equipment in hopes of sounding good, but fail to realise that they've had the capability to sound good all the while. When research into finding the most cost-effective recording

option is proven fruitful, Shahidir assures it's a case of "satisfaction guaranteed".

Rizzo: Original software is very important

This was a point that got the other two members nodding their heads vigorously.

They feel that one can use pirated software, though warning that "it wouldn't work 100 percent well".

Such software would slow down the editing process as well as hamper efforts of taking your music to another level.

"It doesn't have to be very expensive," added Rizzo.

Gigasonic recommends that beginners buy value-for-money software such as Cakewalk Studio which costs US\$49.90 (\$72.30) and Cubase which costs US\$99.90 (\$144.70), due to the affordability and user-friendly interfaces. Check official product websites for local retailers.

To learn more about Gigasonic, visit: www.myspace.com/gigasonirecords



The Giga Team
From Left: "Rizzo", Hafiz and Shahidir

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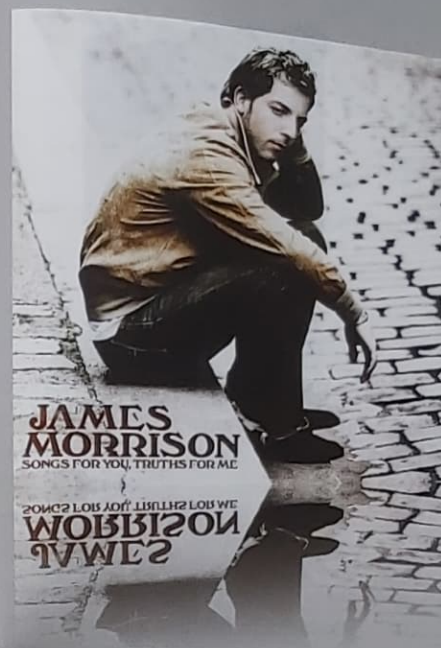
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Music



Songs For You Truths For Me

James Morrison (Universal Music)

Text by Nadia Shah



“And it kicks so hard/ It breaks your bones/ Cuts so deep/ It hits your soul/ Tears your skin and/ Makes your blood flow/ It’s better that you know/ That love is hard” in “Love is Hard”

Pure, honest lyrics that speak from the heart and are all too easy to relate to.

That’s what you get in James Morrison’s eagerly-anticipated Songs for You, Truths for Me.

The 24-year-old British bloke says of his second venture, “I’ve called the album Songs for You, Truths for Me because that’s what I feel it is.

“It’s songs for Gill (his long-term girlfriend) and everyone else. But for me they’re truths. They’re how I feel.”

Fans of his raw voice and mellow tunes will love tracks like single “You Make It Real”, bluesy number “The Only Night”, and “Broken Strings”, a collaboration with

Canadian star Nelly Furtado.

James’ got discovered in the music biz after the release of his 2006 debut album, which was titled, ironically, Undiscovered.

He shot to fame with five hits, including “You Give Me Something” and “The Pieces Don’t Fit Anymore”, both of which were inspired by Gill.

The debut album, which has sold over 2 million copies worldwide, has bagged him titles like biggest selling British male solo artist in 2006 and Best Male for the 2007 Brit Award – great success for someone who was only 21 at that time.

And his musical talent just keeps growing – Songs for You, Truths for Me shows him to be a wiser man than he was three years ago.

Whether you’re looking for soulful tracks for slow dancing with your partner, or backdrop music for moments of self-indulgence, you’ll find them in James’ easy-listening tunes.



A Hundred Million Suns

Snow Patrol (Universal Music)

Text by Teo Hong Jun

★★★★

Who

Snow Patrol is back with a much warmer album aptly named *A Hundred Million Suns*. Compared to their previous two albums, *Final Straw* and *Eyes Open*, where the music's focus was on failing relationships, this album promises to pack in loads of love and hope.

What

There are a number of tracks that are worth more than just a second listen. The opening song, "If There's A Rocket Tie Me to It", is full of excitement and sets the mood for the rest of the album. Another song, "Set Down Your Glass", features an acoustic tune that may not be as catchy as "Chasing Cars", but is bound to be a hot favourite among female listeners.

Bottom Line

A Hundred Million Suns is a great aural treat despite its musical similarities to Coldplay and U2.

But though happy and hopeful might be a good change, once is enough. In the case where you need more trippy, joyful tunes, there's always Mika.



Perfect Symmetry

Keane (Interscope Records)

Text by Siraj Aziz

★★★★

Who

Everybody's changing, and so is Keane. Although the band has had a history of drug abuse and alcoholism on the part of its lead vocalist, Tom Chaplin, they managed to ride the storm out with their last album, *Under the Iron Sea*. It has been two years since their last effort and Keane is back with an album that indicates the healthy and happy state they are in.

What

While tracks such as "The Lovers are Losing" and "Better Than This" will get you smiling with its catchy tunes and lyrics, it's "Spiralling" that leaves a bang on the ears as the song opens with strong percussion beats, and as the guitars accompany the synthesiser into a more groovier pace.

Bottom Line

The heavy use of synthesisers in this album is evident in all the tracks, providing a diverse collection of sounds that adds layers to the music as compared to their previous line-up. They may sound totally different in this album, but it's still the same Keane.



Heavy Rotation

Anastacia (Mercury Records)

Text by Sujith Kumar

★★★★

Who

Anastacia is a curiosity. The US-based human foghorn has enjoyed success internationally but not in her own country. She has battled Crohn's disease, depression, and, more recently, breast cancer, to become a star very much in tune with her emotions.

What

Recently married and newly signed to Mercury Records, Anastacia's fourth outing, *Heavy Rotation*, is lighter than her previous releases. She said the album was called *Heavy Rotation* because "life can be heavy, but it all turns around and goes into something else." The end product is an ambitious effort that aims to please too wide an audience and comes across as undisciplined and messy. "Never Gonna Love Again" and "Heavy Rotation" are stand-outs.

Bottom Line

With clichéd lyrics and sometimes overpowering vocals, the album needs some getting used to, but contains searing moments of brilliance that make it worth the listen.



Year Of The Gentleman

Ne-Yo (Universal Music)

Text by Ng Yan Hong

★★★★

Who

This 29-year-old R&B singer-songwriter has several remarkable hits under his belt. An established producer, he helped create Beyoncé's 10-week number one hit, "Irreplaceable". The Pussycat Dolls also had the pleasure of working with him.

What

Since his successful debut (*In My Own Words*), in 2006 and well-received sophomore effort, (*Because of You*), in 2007, Ne-Yo is back with his highly anticipated third outing, (*Year Of The Gentleman*). His first single, "Closer", is an energetic dance track — a refreshing change from his urban songs that already dominate airwaves and charts. What makes the album shine is that when the man sings about the blues, you just know he means it, especially on tracks like "Mad" and "Part Of The List".

Bottom Line

Despite the promising opening, the album mellows too quickly.

The hits are definitely deserving, but the fillers stick out like sore thumbs.

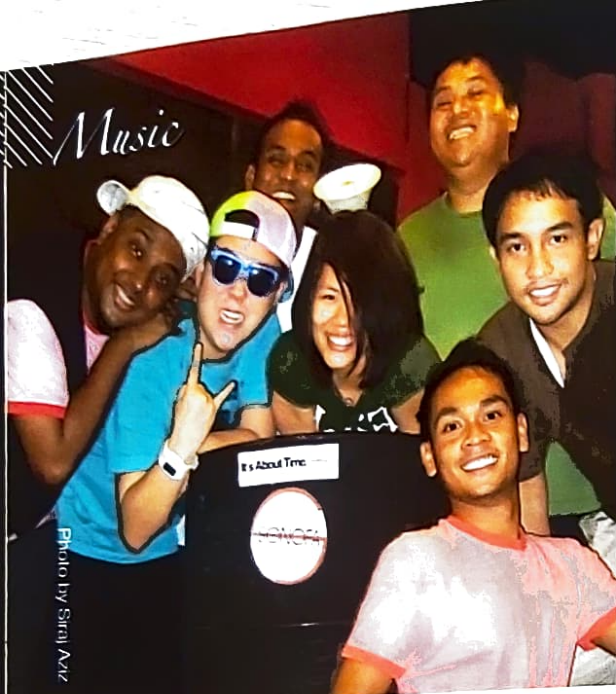


Photo by Siraj Aziz

It's About TIME

By Siraj Aziz

In a time when bands are getting smaller (ting-tings/white stripes/jack & rai) Sonofa refuses to limit themselves to the usual five piece set up but instead pushes the boundaries and it seems to have paid off for them in a big way

In a time when bands are getting smaller (ting-tings/white stripes/jack & rai), Sonofa refuses to limit themselves to the usual five piece set up but instead pushes the boundaries and it seems to have paid off for them in a rather big way.

Son of a £\$%&! That's what you would probably get if you tried Googling Sonofa. The Singapore band, although only five months old, has left an impact on audiences with their unique style of music for this season aptly named, "It's About Time", exploring the concept of time and space in musical terms.

Creating a genre and style of their own, they combine instruments of heritage with sounds of the future.

Their unique instruments include the Australian didgeridoo, Brazilian surdos, and the Indian dhol combined with the use of synthesizers, keyboards and sometimes even oil barrels.

Incorporating genres such as dance, electronic, drum and bass, industrial,

bhangra and many more, their energy gets the crowd on their feet as if it's a rock concert, but their music will get you moving as if you're in a club.

The band which has a total of ten members, consisting of eight musicians, a visual artist and a artist representative, has been making waves in the local music scene ever since their first ever performance at the Flipside festival at the Esplanade this year.

At the same time, the band members, who are mostly students or ex-students from LaSalle College of the Arts, are members of prominent bands and solo artistes in the Singapore music and arts scene.

"He (Riduan) got our first gig even before the band was formed," said bassist Muhd Yazzit, 28, also a member of the band "By Definition," who won the local talent reality show, "Live the dream".

He was referring to the leader of the band Riduan Zalani, 23, or affectionately known as "Uan Abang", Malay for "elder brother Uan" by the band.

"Sonofa was my brainchild and I knew somehow it would work out," said Riduan, who is also a member of prominent local band, Wicked Aura Batucada.

Sonofa has had some impressive achievements thus far.

This includes winning the MTV Asia Cutting Edge Award and first runner up at the Singapore Band Challenge, in 2008.

And while this interview was being

"Something Original. Nothing Ordinary. Freaking Awesome. SONOFA."

conducted, they were in the midst of packing for their trip to Solo, Indonesia, to performed for the Solo Ethnic music festival – a gig that they had secured when the band was just two months old.

However, a band of such size and sound is bound to have some problems.

"Accessibility (to organisers) has been a problem for us," said Licia Sucipto, 25, artist representative of Sonofa. Taking into consideration, their genre and that they are mostly a drums and electronic band, the use of hardware is essential to their music, as each instrument and gadget plays a part in adding to the whole experience of the song and show.

In fact, the band had to reject a show once, due to the lack of channels on the mixers at the venue.

Commitment within the band is also an issue. We often see on television, bands breaking up and having internal squabbles. So how does Sonofa cope with this?

"We all sacrifice one day a week to be here, rain or shine. That's our commitment, no matter where we are," said Riduan, referring to their "headquarters" located at the top an industrial building near Macpherson.

The band is rather diverse with

its members such as Sarah Tan, 18, keyboardist, who studies in Nanyang Polytechnic, and Tengku Adil, 23, a fellow keyboardist, who had just released his first solo album as a singer.

The advantages are aplenty as well.

"Sonofa is visually stimulating. You see eight musicians running around on stage, so it brings the music experience to another level," said Licia.

"When we perform, its not just musicians on stage, but eight entertainers," said Abu Sufian, 23, who does live samples and emceeing.

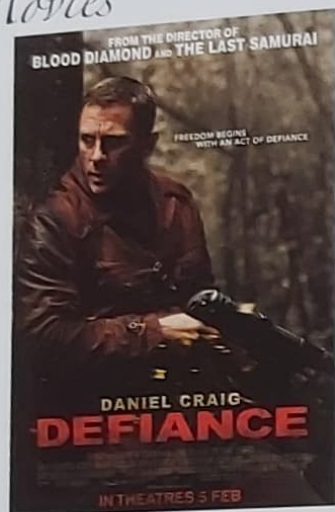
In the planning now for Sonofa, is a black box tour. Described as a "hit and run project" the band would invade different black boxes around Singapore, bringing together with them various artistes each time to perform.

Big plans, for a big band, the guys ended the interview in a big way. "Something Original. Nothing Ordinary. Freaking Awesome. SONOFA."

Bottom line

Sonofa is indeed something new and fresh for the local music scene.

Although they may not get you rushing and longing for their albums just yet, their live performances, which incorporate visual as well as audio aspects, really entertain the crowds, enhancing and doubling the communication and retention of music. With the emergence of such new and diverse bands, maybe it'll get more local bands more to start thinking what is wrong with their own music rather than what is wrong with the local music scene itself.



Defiance

Cast: Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber, Jamie Bell, Alexa Davalos

Release date: Jan 19

Text by Chrystal Chua

With past films like *The Last Samurai* and *Blood Diamond* under his belt, director Edward Zwick brings history to life with *Defiance*, a war film based on the true story of the Bielski Partisans – a Nazi resistance group.

Starring Daniel Craig, the new Bond ditches his English accent and tuxedos for grubby wear and Polish undertones for the role of Tuvia Bielski – the eldest of the three famed Jewish brothers responsible for the formation of the Bielski Partisans.

Initially seeking refuge in the forest after escaping a death sentence from the Nazis, the three brothers begin their road to vengeance – not by armed combat, but by saving the lives of more than 10,000 Jews.

A gripping film about the strength of courage, brotherhood and love in the midst of bloodshed, man's determined quest for survival poignantly shines through to inspire even the most jaded movie critic.



Knowing

Cast: Nicholas Cage, Rose Byrne, Ben Mendelsohn, Chandler Canterbury

Release date: Mar 20

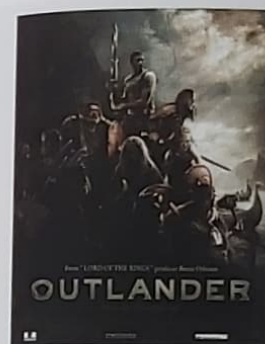
Text by Atiqah Ali

From Alex Proyas (*I, Robot*), *Knowing* promises a movie treat that keeps you glued to your seats. Starring Nicholas Cage (*National Treasure*) as Ted Myles, *Knowing* traces back to 1958 when a group of elementary school students drew pictures to be stored in a time capsule.

When unearthed as a present at a dedication ceremony, a mysterious girl's cryptic message stands out and lands in the hand of Ted's son, Caleb Myles, played by child actor Chandler Canterbury (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*).

Ted then begins to unravel a series of disturbing dates, death tolls and coordinates of every major disaster that occurred within the past 50 years.

Set to hit the screens this March, the action-thriller follows Ted in a heart-pounding race against time to prevent three looming global destructions before it's all too late.



Outlander

Cast: James Caviezel, Sophia Myles, John Hurt, Ron Perlman

Release date: Jan 8

Text by Candice Lee

Outlander is a big melting pot of absurdly mismatched themes– sci-fi, adventure, and medieval history.

It is the year 709 A.D. Kainan, played by James Caviezel (*The Passion of the Christ*), a humanoid alien, crashlands on Earth and into ancient Norway, bringing with him a monster known as the Moorwen.

Both man and monster are seeking revenge for violence directed at them in the past, but the Moorwen – a bloodthirsty predator – starts terrorising and ravaging the Viking tribes.

Kainan soon forms an alliance with the Vikings to kill the monster by fusing his highly advanced technology with their Iron Age weaponry.

It's Predator-meets-Beowulf-meets-Braveheart.



Last Chance Harvey

Cast: Dustin Hoffman, Emma Thompson, James Brolin

Release date: Feb 12

Text by Kristie Chiew

A genuine and refreshing take on the clichéd romantic comedy genre, *Last Chance Harvey* tells the story of New Yorker Harvey, played by Dustin Hoffman (*The Holiday*) after his divorce and when his jingle-writing job is in jeopardy.

His life falls apart when his daughter Susan, played by Liane Balaban (*Definitely, Maybe*), would rather her stepfather – not Harvey – give her away at her wedding.

To drown his sorrows, he heads down to a local pub, where he meets Kate, played by Emma Thompson (*Nanny McPhee*), a woman who's more than happy to be single.

With his flair, Harvey charms Kate and makes her think twice about who she is.



My Bloody Valentine 3D

Cast: Andrew Larson, Jensen Ackles, Jaime King

Release date: Feb 26

Text by Nadia Shah

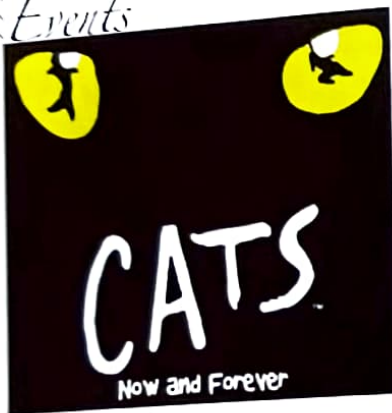
Fans of the 1981 slasher film *My Bloody Valentine* can revel. This year, Lionsgate brings you *My Bloody Valentine 3D*.

Tom Hanniger (*Supernatural* hottie Jensen Ackles), returns to his hometown of Harmony, where he is blamed by the townspeople for the mass murders of 22 people on Valentine's Day in the past.

The only one who believes that he's innocent is his old sweetheart Sarah Palmer (Jaime King).

With an over-familiar plotline, this gore fest seems set to be on its way to box office hell.

Just like *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* – *My Bloody Valentine 3D* promises uber cool visual effects like fire, blood and axes flying right at you.

**Cats**

Apr 10 - May 3
 Venue: Esplanade Theatre
 Text by Kristie Chiew

Finally, another amazing production composed by the legendary Andrew Lloyd Webber.

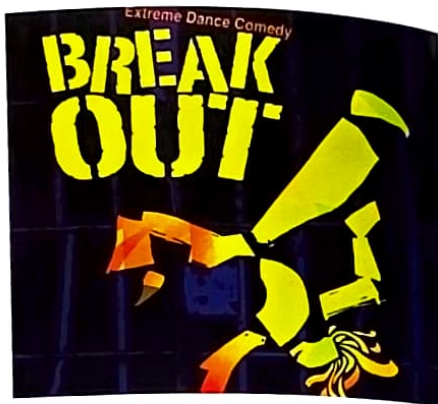
Just as poignant as *The Phantom of the Opera*, *CATS Now and Forever* returns to spice up our local theatre scene for the second time at the Esplanade Theatre.

Starring 48-year-old New Zealander Delia Hannah, one of musical theatre's biggest stars, this Australian production of *CATS* promises to be upbeat, spectacular and an all-round worthwhile trip.

Currently the longest-running musical in London's West End, *CATS* has been performed for 21 years in over 26 countries and in approximately 300 cities. It has been translated into 10 languages.

With magnificent music, seamless choreography and an out-of-this-world set, *CATS* is definitely one musical not to be missed.

Bring down the whole family to watch as you'll never know when this musical will hit the town again.

**Break Out**

Feb 13 - Feb 15
 Venue: Esplanade Theatre
 Text by Nadia Shah

If you're into popping, locking and the theatre, extreme dance comedy *Break Out* may be just the dance-play for you.

From the Koreans who brought you martial arts comedy *Jump* to Singapore last year, comes another delight just waiting to be savoured.

Break Out, directed by Jun-Beom Juen, tells the tale of five prisoners breaking out of prison to seek solace in a convent.

The play, which incorporates breakdancing, gymnastics, yoga and slapstick humour, was a smash hit at its West End world premier last year and was later a sold-out frenzy at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2007.

And with a motley crew of characters from prisoners, to nurses and nuns, it promises a fun time for the entire family.

Polytechnic student Jeevithan Muralitharan, 19, says, "I watched *Jump* last year and loved it so I'm definitely going to watch this. Plus, it incorporates breakdancing, which I think is interesting."

**The Winter's Tale**

Mar 26 - Mar 31
 Venue: Esplanade Theatre
 Text by Chrystal Chua

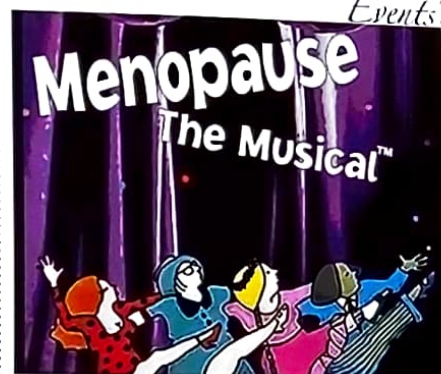
After unsuccessful attempts to persuade his childhood friend, King Polixenes, to stay longer in his kingdom, Leontes sends his queen, Hermione, to convince him otherwise.

Shocked to discover she has easily persuaded him with just three sentences, Leontes suspects his pregnant wife of adultery with Polixenes.

In events that lead to confusion, betrayal and death, the Shakespearean play is a magical testament to the follies of hasty judgment, cleverly showcasing the force of love as a means of reconciliation.

The production is part of an initiative known as The Bridge Project, which is a partnership between the Brooklyn Academy of Music, London's Old Vic Theatre, and Academy Award winning director Sam Mendes.

Sam leads a stellar cast, which includes American heartthrob Ethan Hawke (*Fast Food Nation*), for eight performances in Singapore - the only Asian stop in the company's 2009 world tour.

**Menopause the Musical**

Feb 6 - Feb 21
 Venue: DBS Arts Centre - Home of SRT
 Text by Lau Liang Tong

Women, Women, Women, they rule the show.

Do not under estimate the allure of a black lace bra.

Whilst fighting for the same bra in a store, four women from different walks of life, a Professional, a Housewife, a Hippie Earth Mother and a Soap Star, manage to engage in a conversation-turned-musical revolving around menopause.

It becomes a session filled with wild womanly fun, as they tackle issues like hot flashes, night sweats, memory loss, chocolate binges, sex and performs a series of parody of top hits from memory lane. Think "Stayin' Awake! Stayin' Awake!" inspired by the disco-favourite, "Stayin' Alive".

The concept the musical hopes to bring across is, 'celebrating the change', which writer and producer Jeanie C. Linders created after being inspired by a hot flash and a glass of wine.

Ladies, walk out of the theatre feeling energised and ready to rock your life, with or without menopause.

The McGriddles Conversations

By Nadia Shah

The star of the recently released local film, *The Carrot Cake Conversations*, talks about his life and his love for acting

He grew up with the same hopes and dreams as many of the other boys around him – Alaric Tay wanted to be anything from a policeman to a fireman.

In the end, the 29-year-old Fly Entertainment artiste settled on being an actor, because “I realised that as an actor, I could be anything I wanted to be”.

He shared this with *hype* over McGriddles at a McDonald’s near his Clementi home where he lives with his parents.

With an average height – he stands at 175cm – and an average face that may not leave an impression at first glance, you probably wouldn’t guess that Alaric has starred in at least 10 films and 25 television shows if you see him walking down the street.

In fact, Alaric believes acting is his “calling”.

“It’s an interesting craft, where you get to reflect life, understand human behaviour and construct characters based on a collaboration between yourself, the director and others involved in the project.

“It’s so complex and I enjoy breaking down its complexities.”

Last year, he showed off his versatility as an actor when he starred in director Michael Wang’s *The Carrot Cake Conversations*, a movie about four strangers who get to know each other over a plate of carrot cake.

There, he played Daniel, a businessman who had caught his wife cheating on him.

“I usually get comic roles while Daniel was more of a naturalistic character. It was a good break from the norm.”

To him, the film is just like carrot cake – it may or may not be to your taste.

“It’s a very niche and experimental kind of film, where the information is revealed through talking. I think people who enjoy being immersed in conversation will appreciate it.”

Chopsticks and carrot cake aside, Alaric also has a passion for filmmaking.

At the moment, he’s working on his own film, *Thunder Boys* (working title), which is about “a group of fallen athletes looking to redeem themselves as sportsmen”. The movie is expected to be released in June.

Alaric’s love for film inspired him to join the Film, Sound & Video course at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

There, he honed his filmmaking skills during an internship under lecturer Miss Jacqueline Tan, where he was involved in the production of a documentary about parenting, *The Joy of Parenting*.

He still keeps in contact with Miss Tan, 43, who says, “I’m very happy for Alaric and I admire the fact that he believes in himself and wants to act and direct. I was very proud of his film *When We Were Bengs*.”

When We Were Bengs (2006), written and directed by Alaric, received three awards at the ReelHeART International Film Festival 2007 for Best Experimental Film, Best Sound and Best Editing.

Alaric, who holds a degree in Film & Television from Griffith University, got his first acting gig at the age of 16 as the posterior of a lion in Channel 8’s *Kung Fu Master*.

Last December, he became the first Singaporean to be appointed to the board of directors of non-profit organisation Breaking Into Hollywood. Based in Los Angeles, it aims to help aspiring stars achieve their goals.

Today, he believes, “I’ll probably die acting and making films. I don’t ever want to stop telling stories.”

Alaric Tay shows *hype* the three items that best represent him in his life.

Sanyo Xacti camcorder

This camcorder allows me to take pictures and shoot videos because as an actor, I have to observe life and the people around me, and this helps me in doing so.



Cross pen

This pen was a 21st birthday present from a friend, with my name engraved on it. I sometimes get sudden flashes of inspiration and use it immediately to jot down my thoughts.



Bible

I’ve always believed that how someone lives their life is dependent on their relationship with God and I feel I have a close relationship with him.



Zesty Apps By Siraj Aziz

hype looks at some iPhone applications, or "apps", that have taken the world by storm with their unique uses and features

iBeer

Who said you can't drink and drive? Well, you can, if it's iBeer! This app simulates the drinking of beer from your iPhone mug. The motion sensor allows you tilt your "drink" and shows the beer slowly flowing out of the cup. If you shake your phone, you can see the foam forming.

For our Muslim friends who can't drink, there's also iMilk. Same functions as iBeer except it's non-alcoholic. Thoughtful, eh?

iFart

This device is as smart as it is stinky. iFart does what it says exactly. It emits various farts such as "the wipe out", "honk" and "splatter", and even vibrates for good effect. But the best part is iFart allows you to embarrass your friends with the "sneak attack" function. Set the timer, plant the phone near your friend and let the magic happen.

Sonic Lighter

We might see a new trend in concert-goers with this app, which simulates the visual of a moving flame.

Ignite the "Sonic Lighter" on your iPhone and play with the flame on your display by pinching it to adjust its size, and tilt your iPhone and watch the flame sway.

Now that's hot.



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