

Singapore

Esquire

05 2020



THE GRATITUDE ISSUE



The smart rebels

fariz jabba & yung raja

*The wordsmiths shed their views on local culture, the finesse of hip-hop
and what not to take for granted*

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ON THE COVER

Fariz Jabba & Yung Raja

Photography
Gabe Chen

On Fariz: polyester jacket, cotton shirt and polyester shorts, all by **Comme des Garçons Homme Plus** at Dover Street Market Singapore; leather shoes, by **Balenciaga**.

On Raja: wool jacket, cotton shirt and wool shorts, all by **Comme des Garçons Homme Plus** at Dover Street Market Singapore; leather shoes, by **Prada**.

Photographs by Lenne Chai/ADB Agency. Styling by Savannah White/The Wall Group.

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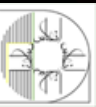
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Mark de Winne

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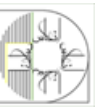
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This way in

Editor's letter

take a breath

NORMAN TAN

Editor-in-chief, *Esquire* Singapore

@musingmutley



The other morning, I woke up with a sore jaw. Was it my pillow? Had I been gas-bagging too much? But then again, I'm always smack-talking my colleagues and, if it was my pillow, surely my neck would be playing up too.

Anyway, as it turns out, I had been clenching my jaw. Not intentionally. It was my body's way of subconsciously dealing with the foreboding malaise surrounding COVID-19. The incessant warnings to stay socially distant had caused my molars to get cosy. The never-ending newsreel of rising infected cases had caused my body to clamp down. The subliminal fear of infection had caused my body to, effectively, stop breathing. I was holding my breath. Such is the power of the media.

With an astute appreciation for the power of words, we wanted to use our voice here at *Esquire* to focus on the positives. There's enough end-of-the-world hysteria floating around as it is, and we didn't want to lump into a narrative that only makes your heart feel heavier or shoulders droop even further. As such, the theme for this issue is 'gratitude'.

When you sit down and let it all go, take pause and collect your thoughts, you realise that we have a *lot* to be thankful for. Especially for those of us who are lucky enough to be living in Singapore. And who better to front this month's cover than the dynamic local duo of Yung Raja and Fariz Jabba? Not only are these two rappers and artists undeniably talented—moving from acting and dancing to writing and spitting their own rhymes—but Raja also nabbed an AACA (Asian Academy Creative Awards) for his hosting prowess on *Yo! MTV Raps* and their music, a bilingual mix of Tamil and English, always pays respect to where they're from with a bold optimism of where they're heading:

*I got a record deal I'm on /
Mad blessing /
Mama said shine on 'em all /
Mad blessing /
Got a team I never feel alone /
Mad blessing /
Girls out here blowing up my phone /
Got me feelin' all! /
Mad bless bless, bless, bless, bless, bless...*

Just like Raja's hit track 'Mad Blessings', we're taking stock of the good.

Neil Humphreys in his 'Neil Before God' column is thankful for how COVID-19 is separating him from what is largely unimportant ("a flashing thingy and longer dingly") and bringing him closer to what really matters ("The home, the family and the simple pleasures that both provide", but namely, "building a fort in the living room"); contributing writer Josh Sims dives deep (literally) to unpack the engineering feat that is required to provide the world with lightning-fast Internet (something we not only take for granted, but expect: check out the feature 'The power of cables' on page 88); photographer Andrew Kung celebrates the intimacy that we have for the most important figure in many of our lives—our mother—in a photo essay profiling four families in New York (flip on over to page 95 and then, for the love of God, give your mother a call); while staff writer Joy Ling dissects what we, as *Homo sapiens*, often forget are unique to our species (read the story on page 102 for a round-up of fun facts that also double as clever conversation starters. On your Zoom calls. Wearing PJ bottoms. As you work from home.).

That I'm healthy and safe.

That we have a government that knows what it's doing.

That I just serviced my air-conditioner, so I'm good for at least six months.

That my fridge is stocked with 10 boxes of KFC because my flatmate thought that fried chicken—not pasta or rice or long-life canned food—was the best food group to hoard in these uncertain times. *Uh-huh.*

That you don't gotta go to work, but you gotta put in work, let my body do the work... hang on, is this a song?

What are you grateful for? Make a list. Read it aloud. And then take a breath. Can you feel your body responding? Your chest will feel lighter, your jaw will loosen and that tension in your shoulders will dissipate—and it's not just because you're rolling out those stubborn knots with your supply of toilet paper.

It's the power of positive thinking—what you focus on, you amplify.

Be smart, be socially responsible, but also stay positive. This too shall pass. Enjoy the issue. 📌



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Neil before God

Each issue, *Esquire Singapore* asks Neil Humphreys to focus on a different emotion.

For May, he explains his gratitude for what he already has and why the damn virus

has forced us to change priorities, hopefully for the better.

A month ago, my mother was grateful if my stepfather made it through the day without moaning about the state of the English Premier League, complaining about the weather or swearing at the TV.

Today, she's grateful if he makes it through the day without dying.

COVID-19 has changed everything.

A month ago, I spent my nights lying in bed wondering which relatives I should invite to the greatest night of my professional life.

My first London book launch was scheduled for June, which meant I had time to plan the seating arrangements and keep my Chelsea-mad stepfather away from West Ham supporters, keep a few uncles away from the bar and keep my mother away from anyone, just in case she pulled out the sepia-tinted photos of me naked.

Every proud mother takes photos of their beautiful baby with no clothes on, just not when he's 18 and off to university.

They certainly don't whip them out for the amusement of VIPs at his UK book launch.

Yes, I made that bit up to bring a little levity to the interminable misery that threatens to swamp us all as we wade through this vicious pandemic.

I'm talking about me being 18 in the photos, of course. There are most definitely naked photos of me as a baby and my mother would most definitely pass them around to publishers and literary agents over tea and cakes.

But she can't. The book launch has been postponed (my second cancelled book launch in 2020, the first being a children's book that was released just before Singapore schools cancelled all author visits and book

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fairs. I'm very much turning into a literary Jonah. If you fancy burying a promising venture, stick my name on it.)

A month ago, the prospect of my first London book launch being postponed would've feasted on my eternal insecurities as I succumbed to that malevolent beast forever whispering in my ear. He's called Impostor Syndrome.

Working-class urchins do not warrant literary launches at prestigious bookstores in London's West End, so of course the event was postponed to spare the great unmasking of the fraudulent author.

But COVID-19 has no time for such artistic neurosis. It's too busy killing people to worry about my pretentious aspirations. The virus wiped off my second book launch without a backward glance, on its way to closing businesses worldwide, pushing millions of people into unemployment lines and turning dry coughs into paralysing fear. Most of all, it's taking lives, too many to count, too many to comprehend, too many to do anything about other than obliterate petty literary concerns and daily trivialities and leave behind a certain sangfroid in all of us.

It's just a book launch. It can be rescheduled.

It's just a squeaky hinge, a flat tyre, a traffic jam, a missed bus, a late appointment, a dodgy haircut, an unsightly pimple, a dog that keeps crapping in the street, an ass-kissing colleague who keeps crapping on others' work, a bad meal, a lost shoe, a long queue or a short fuse.

They are no longer insurmountable problems. They are scarcely problems, just minor irritations compared to the very real and very terrifying prospect of not every elderly relative making his or her next birthday.

Psychological slates are being wiped clean. We are





COVID-19 is separating us from the largely unimportant and bringing us closer to what really matters.

regressing to simpler times, often against our will, but less is becoming more again.

A month ago, Friday nights were an infernal dash involving school pick-ups, aikido lessons at the community club, a rushed meal at the hawker centre, a hurried shopping run around a packed supermarket and then home for late-night prep for an early-morning radio show.

Last Friday night was spent building a fort in the living room.

And if I do say so myself, the medieval fortress was a sturdy, architectural masterpiece, complete with walls, windows, turrets and arrow slits for weaponry.

I enjoyed myself so much I'm thinking of letting my daughter help next time.

But I am not alone in my obsessive fort building. Around the world, different cultures are sending subliminal messages from one country to another. The simple life is a better life.

No, the simple life is keeping us alive.

As we enforce social-distancing measures and self-isolate, we are subconsciously answering those existential questions that we already knew the answers to, but deliberately drowned them out in a cacophony of consumerist crap.

Rather than obsess over what we don't have, be grateful for what we do have. Life itself. Find joy in life itself. Regress to something purer and arguably better. The home, the family and the simple pleasures that both provide.

We can't go out and spend on things we don't need so we embrace the priceless instead. We play daft games. We laugh at silly videos. We sing on balconies. We make love. We do all of the above and so much more, but obviously not all at once (though I'd put nothing past the Italians).

COVID-19 is separating us from the largely unimportant and bringing us closer to what really matters, which may be the only positive to gain from this bastard virus.

Once we emerge from our enforced hibernation, staring, blinking and marvelling at a shiny, happy world without COVID-19, wouldn't it be great if our first instinct wasn't to rush out and buy the latest handphoned with a flashing thingy and a longer dingly, but to express gratitude for what we already have.

I'll always fancy a flashing thingy and a longer dingly. Who wouldn't? But given a choice, I'd rather have my stepfather survive COVID-19 so he can continue to swear at the TV in peace. ☑



This page is lit

Underneath a Sky of Red

Chapter 5: Adam and the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day



WORDS BY **SUFFIAN HAKIM**

Illustration by Penn, Ey Chee

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This page is lit

“The polar ice caps at the Arctic have receded, and this is true, to an area roughly the size of Yishun. Yishun! That’s crazy, man! That said, it’s actually quite fitting. After the CNB crackdown last month, both places are also running out of ice.”

—Raj Subhas

Esplanade Comedy Special, July 2027

UNDERNEATH THE SENTINEL STARS, the lost boy said to the deranged human magpie: “My father used to tell us of the pandemic that struck the world in 2020. The coronavirus, they called it. I wasn’t even born then, but they used to teach it in history class, you know, before the bombs fell. People weren’t allowed to leave their homes, workplaces were closed and the authorities made sure people were kept apart—the whole country was on lockdown. The recovery we made as a nation in the years after that was called the Golden Age of Singapore. Well, I’m sure you know about that. You look old enough to—what I mean to say is you obviously possess the wisdom and knowledge to know about that time...”

Adam trailed off and braced for the wrinkled, sun-scorched, glassy-eyed man to fly into a rage. But all he did was fidget with a pearl necklace that hung at the crook of his elbow.

“It was in that climate of uncertainty and isolation that Papa met Mama. He was a young officer, just signed on with the old-world Army. Mama was a volunteer. They met while packing facial masks for public use. He said it was love at first sight.” Adam laughed softly and condensation blew out of his mouth into the night. “I hate that guy, but he truly loves my mum. Only good thing I can say about him.”

“But... where the shiny thing-things? Sparkle and boom-boom-boom, wah-wah-wooww and shoom-shim-shoom-shim?” He spoke as much with his hands as he did with his mouth.

“But you were asking me what I treasured most? I was going to say it was the memory of the last time Papa told that story. It was the last time I felt any connection with him, you know?”

“No, I meant treasure, you stupid boy!” He opened his cracked, fading, sleeveless leather jacket to reveal a hoarder’s wet dream of stolen jewellery underneath. Gold chains and rings were overflowing from his inside pockets, making them bulge obscenely. Silver and gold necklaces with centrepieces made of various precious stones and metals hung from his thin, sallow neck. “Do you have *treasure* for me?”

“Oh... um, well, no. I was just making, um, conversation. I think I should go now?”

The old man stood up and cast a long shadow that reached Adam’s face. “Nonsense! You can help me find more treasure!” He took a pearl necklace from the back pockets of his slacks and began tossing it from hand to hand. “Floom! Floom! SHHHH-WAAARRR!”

Adam adjusted his weight nervously. It was the third evening since he had left his family where he knew they were safe and fed. He had three days of zero human contact as he avoided the *pelesit* and found himself talking his mouth off to the first stranger he met who wasn’t a crazed raider. The old man was squatting in

the remains of an old shophouse when Adam found him just after sunset. “Sir, what do those sounds mean?”

“Sounds? Ha!” The man barked a derisive laugh for a good half a minute as Adam stood waiting uncomfortably. “My boy, this is the language of the atomic structures of gold and silver. The whooshes within the latticed atoms that allows them to sparkle and shine. An ancient, atomic language. It was the angry vulgarities of this language that was screamed unto the world when those bombs fell.”

“Okay,” was all Adam found himself capable of saying. He paused as the old man made more unintelligible sounds, accompanied by grizzled gesticulations.

And then, the man stopped. What Adam heard next was unmistakable: the kind of mad, unfettered cackling a person could only develop if they did not live in fear of being heard by others more dangerous than themselves.

“We have to hide!” Adam whispered urgently to the old man. “*Pelesit!*”

“Oh, fool,” said the old man with mirth, holding two hands up to their surroundings. “We’re in the remains of Tanjong Katong. That mindless gang of cannibals have no influence here.”

Two figures emerged from behind the rubble.

One introduced herself as Linda-from-HR and eyed him with wanton lust—a look that, coming from someone who was obviously old enough to have witnessed the proliferation and destruction of the Internet, greatly unnerved Adam. “Ooh, I haven’t been with someone with intact hips in a long time!” she swooned.

The other was a middle-aged man who called himself Blind-As-F**k Fawwaz, a name he told Adam while looking directly in his eyes. The boy was puzzled by this and tested the name further. He raised three fingers and asked Blind-As-F**k Fawwaz how many fingers he, Adam, was holding up. The older man looked at Adam’s fingers and replied, without even blinking: “Two.”

They joined their gold-and-silver friend and addressed him as Father Morel.

The three of them stood together before Adam, who could only stare at the trio of unlikely companions.

“We are The Oracle,” said Father Morel, his necklaces rustling metallicly. “And we wish to send you to hell.” ■

Tune in to the next issue for the next chapter of *Underneath a Sky of Red*.

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Still life

1 | 5



Photographs and styling by Sean Ashley and Dianna Lee of Studio Ooze.

Nubuck and leather sneakers,
by **Tod's**.

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How blessed are we?

We're often chasing for the now and next in fashion. And in the process, we tend to take for granted the fashion innovations that have already made life easier, more exciting and definitely more stylish. From the ones most of us probably weren't even born yet to experience a life prior, to the more recent, we highlight 10 fashion innovations that have changed the way we dress.

Thank you, fashion gods.

ZIPS

The humble zipper went through different inventors from as early as the middle of the 19th century. But it was electrical engineer Gideon Sundback who devised the zipper as we know it today. Imagine having to fiddle with buttons on everything from the front of a leather biker jacket to a backpack. What a timesaver.

READY-TO-WEAR

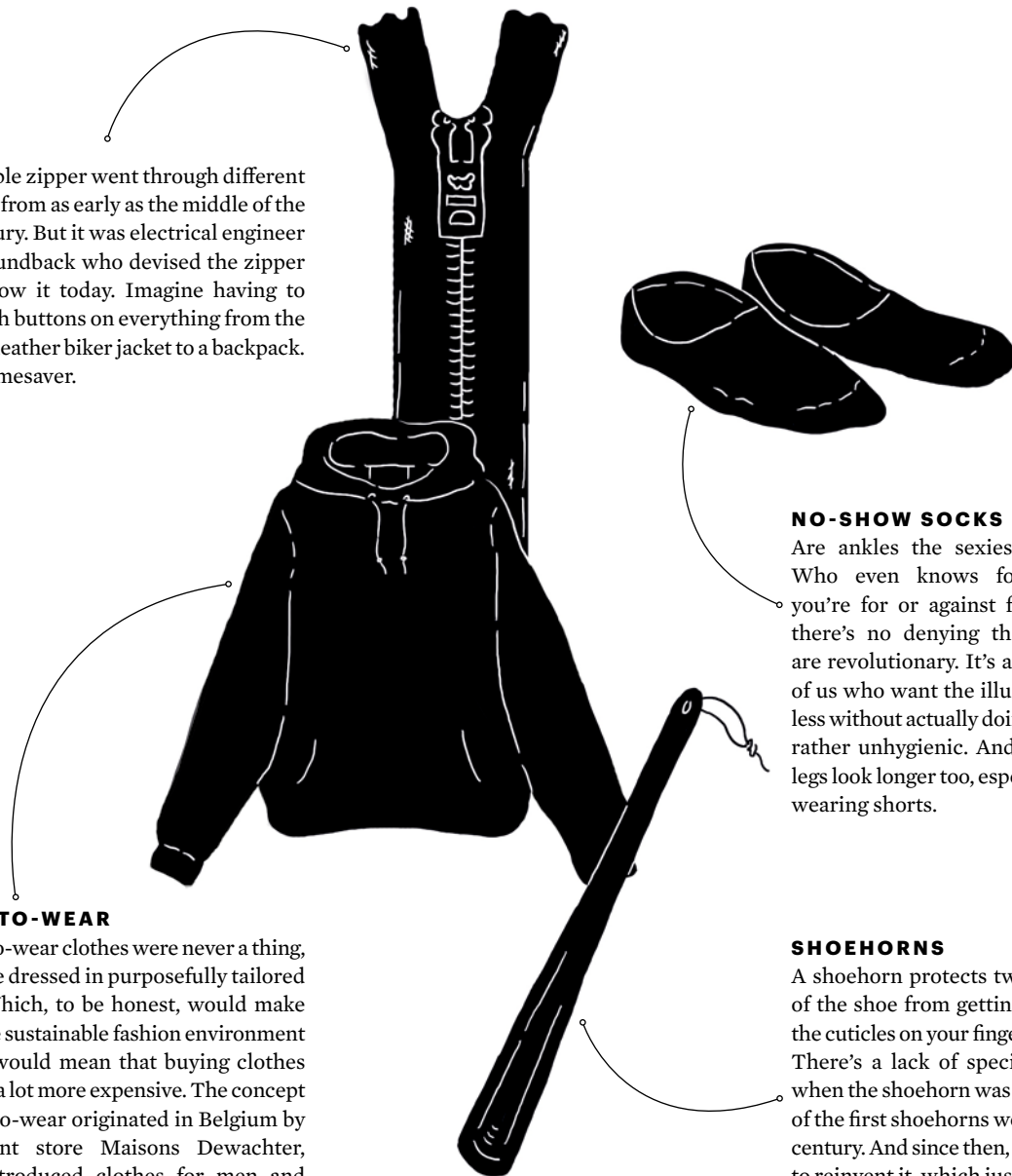
If ready-to-wear clothes were never a thing, we'd all be dressed in purposefully tailored pieces. Which, to be honest, would make for a more sustainable fashion environment but also would mean that buying clothes would be a lot more expensive. The concept of ready-to-wear originated in Belgium by department store Maisons Dewachter, which introduced clothes for men and children in pre-made sizes.

NO-SHOW SOCKS

Are ankles the sexiest part of a man? Who even knows for sure. Whether you're for or against freeing the ankles, there's no denying that no-show socks are revolutionary. It's a godsend for those of us who want the illusion of going sockless without actually doing so because that's rather unhygienic. And it aids in helping legs look longer too, especially when you're wearing shorts.

SHOEHORNS

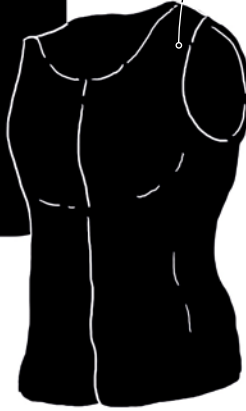
A shoehorn protects two things: the back of the shoe from getting out of shape and the cuticles on your fingers from separating. There's a lack of specific evidence as to when the shoehorn was invented, but some of the first shoehorns were used in the 15th century. And since then, little has been done to reinvent it, which just goes to show how ingenious the invention is.



Essentials of style

**BAND T-SHIRTS**

Who would've thought that wearing a T-shirt with the name of your favourite band (or pop star, if you're so inclined) scrawled over it would become a ubiquitous part of a person's wardrobe? Whether you wear one during concerts or to show allegiance on any given day, the band T-shirt has propelled the expansion of concert merchandise to the business it is today.

**MEN'S SHAPEWEAR**

Actor Jason Biggs proudly showed off his men's shapewear while appearing on a talk show recently. There's no sexist, toxic masculinity-induced shame in wearing one. Hey, if it helps us look better in clothes—and in some cases, wearing shapewear has helped with back pains—we say, thank goodness for that.

**SNEAKERS**

Sneakers are arguably the most comfortable pairs of shoes a person could ever own; at least one that offers full coverage. But more than that, sneakers have become a form of tangible investment with limited-edition and one-off pieces fetching big bucks on the resale market. Fashion is frivolous? Think again.

POCKETS

Interestingly, men were the only ones in the late 17th century with pockets sewn onto clothing. Women carried 'pockets' that were more like purses. There's always the age-old debate of why pockets on womenswear are hardly ever sizeable, but let's come to a consensus here: a pocket should hardly be used for bulky knick knacks.

**SUITS**

Let's face it, we don't wear them enough these days. But thankfully, the always dependable suit is there to make sure that we look our spiffiest. Wearing one is akin to wearing armour—something that's defined and refined. The way the suit looks today is all thanks to Beau Brummell, an arbiter of men's fashion in the 1800s.

JEANS

We all know how jeans came to be—they were first created for miners and other labourers who needed strong and sturdy trousers for work. The fact that jeans are now an integral part of every wardrobe, and available in a multitude of washes, colours, cuts and compositions, goes to show just how indispensable it has become as a fashion innovation. 📌

Style

Essentials of style



Fashion's silver linings playbook

Esquire Singapore speaks to three fashion industry insiders on navigating the fashion landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic, the changes to the industry and the hopeful side to the situation.

The idea of fashion is oxymoronic in that it has legs in both the past and the future; being simultaneously resistant to change as well as constantly seeking newness.

There have been calls for changes and brands answered by taking steps towards sustainability, embracing cultural nuances as well embracing the new digital landscape, but never has one of the world's biggest industries faced a challenge like the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the fashion business suffers from consumers' readjusted list of priorities, the arts side of fashion provides a sense of solace and hope. After all, in our darkest times, we have always looked to the arts for comfort. Perhaps this crisis is the change that the fashion industry needs, a call to move away from antiquated practices and to adapt to the new world.

With that in mind, we speak to three fashion industry leaders—Nick Sullivan, creative director of the US edition of *Esquire*; Edward Crutchley, founder of his eponymous label and director of fabrics and graphics at Dior Men; and Bohan Qiu, founder and director of Boh Project, a digital and content agency based in China.

ON CHANGING HOW WE THINK ABOUT FASHION

NICK SULLIVAN: The COVID-19 situation will make it more essential that companies have a solid digital platform from which to operate. But there were already strong shifts developing in consumers' expectation from men's fashion.

We have seen a clear decline in the past year in overtly branded clothing and accessories, intimations that streetwear

Words by Eugene Lim

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی



Essentials of style

may not continue to drive the conversation in fashion as well as an interest in tailoring, albeit worn in a very modern and comfortable way. I don't think we will go backwards but it will be interesting to see if consumers will look for more authenticity over fast fashion on their clothes. Buy less but buy better.

EDWARD CRUTCHLEY: My hope is that we will all consider what we purchase much more and look at pieces that really make us happy and are more than an impulse purchase.

BOHAN QIU: The fashion industry is being forced to innovate the way we show, design, present and communicate. As economies go into a downturn in most parts of the world, consumers will consume more consciously, thinking twice before they make the purchase, and also looking for more impactful storytelling and long-lasting design.

ON WORKING WITH THE NEW NORMAL

NICK SULLIVAN: It has provided us with immense challenges logistically with many fashion offices on lockdown and the closure of photography studios and model agencies. Writing, interviewing can be done anywhere but making original art is trickier when samples of garments are harder to get. But it has forced us to think laterally about how we deliver and filter fashion for *Esquire* readers. That's a very good thing. I hope we come out of this with a more common sense notion of what a fashion edit should be.

EDWARD CRUTCHLEY: It's been tough. Unfortunately, we may have to cancel our autumn 2020 pre-collection due to our factory closing down and it's difficult to adapt as the situation is so uncertain. But limits provoke creativity and new ways of thinking and the only way to address this change is with openness and innovative thinking. I'm quite excited to find new ways to show what we do.

BOHAN QIU: In February, most of our work was halted. But shortly after, we got even busier with the online fashion week that happened in late March in Shanghai, and also we are working on another virtual fashion presentation that combines computer-generated imagery and 3D technologies.

People are no longer interested in irrelevant inspirational stories at the moment. What they care about is society, economy, human relations, consciousness towards the planet as a whole. So we cannot just communicate a meaningless collection but rather brands need a unique hook, or personal touch, that can resonate with how the world is feeling right now. Whether that is in innovation, unity, environmental consciousness, love, anti-racism, collaboration or just pure beauty or creativity that is uplifting to the world.

ON THE FUTURE OF FASHION

NICK SULLIVAN: In terms of how the industry operates itself, it's too early to say for sure. In many ways, like trends, the idea of fashion weeks and watch fairs were already being questioned before COVID-19 appeared. Fashion has not been based on having two collections for years, but we attend the shows twice a year.

That said having lots of brands showing in one place at one time makes sense because you get the whole picture in just a few days. We need that creatively and actually being there is vital. It won't be business as usual, but it might be more sensible.

Oddly, although we are stuck at home and relying on digital even more than before, I see people are rediscovering the value of non-digital activity too like cooking, making things, reading. Maybe it's just in an effort to distract themselves. I remain a big believer in both print and digital and I see both developing as complementary to each other and equally vital facets, especially of a brand like *Esquire*.

EDWARD CRUTCHLEY: Sustainability and a focus on local manufacturing is something that we have been doing since I started making collections and this is something that is really core to our practice.

I hope that people will now become more mindful of what sustainability actually means, but the focus will still be on things that aren't that effective such as PET recycling and the use of organic fabrics.

If we really want to make a change, especially in the current situation, we need to focus on jobs and skill retention and elevating and explaining how clothes are made.

BOHAN QIU: Brands have to rethink their strategy to adapt to the digital world. With COVID-19, we are forced to change our lifestyles, and with digital being a huge part of it, brands will have to also be present.

[The recent Shanghai Digital Fashion Week, which partnered with Alibaba's Tmall to create an online platform for designers to showcase their wares] was a good learning curve to understand how to balance the artistic expression of a fashion brand with a human touch, while generating sales conversion. For example, conceptual videos to present their collection, having a panel discussion during a hot-pot meal and putting on a mini-theatre programme.

The key to winning is how you engage in real time with the audience to keep them interested. Brands will need to continue innovating the artistic expression of a fashion show aspect, but this method of direct-to-consumer engagement can definitely live on.

When the brands collectively succeed in this new arena, it helps them question the cost of putting together a fashion show, flying hundreds of people around the planet and creating massive sets for a 20-minute show before disposing of them. There is also the notion of sending multiple parcels around the world for a single fashion shoot.

I am sure more brands will go into the digital arena to create or replicate that offline fashion fantasy into the online world.

ON THE POSITIVE ASPECTS

NICK SULLIVAN: I'm an optimist at heart so I like to believe we will come out of this with a slightly clearer vision of what matters in life and be less obsessive about immediate gratification, shallowness and maybe develop a little more refined appreciation for owning things that are genuinely worth the money.

EDWARD CRUTCHLEY: If there is one thing that I hope comes out of this it is an appreciation of the selflessness of the people around us who are working to keep us all safe.

BOHAN QIU: It's a great time to put a pause on things. From blind consumption and environmental destruction to how society uses digital tools. It forces humans to evolve and adapt, and appreciate what really matters in life. ■

Style

Essentials of style

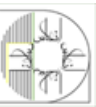


Mandatory is an independent Australian designer menswear brand that specialises in outerwear and tailoring.

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The industry's new wave

Fashion's capability to be a sustainable industry has been part of the wider discussion surrounding climate change and the environment at large.

If there's a community to take reference from, perhaps it's Australia—specifically the state of Victoria—and its eclectic mix of designers, who are all being conscious in their own ways.



Australia can come across as a utopia when it comes to balancing the fragility of nature with a developed civilisation. Its almost draconian restrictions on what travellers and returning citizens can bring into the country only seek to protect its unique natural ecosystem.

It's no wonder then that there seems to be a collective consciousness of living in harmony with nature among Australians. It helps, too, that the pace of life is generally slower in Australia.

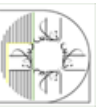
We found these similar qualities among the Melbourne-based designers taking part in the annual Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival (VAMFF). Held in early March (the festival was scheduled to end on 14 March but was cut short due to the Australian government's efforts in curbing the COVID-19 outbreak), VAMFF featured two runway shows presented by Global Victoria, a government initiative to connect the state's businesses with the world. The two shows were a tight edit of fashion designers and brands that embody a consciousness to be sustainable and create fashion in a more considered way.

A NEW WAY OF CREATING

"We're not a sustainable brand," Brian Huynh, founder and creative director of Mndatory, tells us. "But we're consciously always thinking about how we can incorporate that into our business and our design. Hence, why we've introduced Co-Creation as an example of how we can do things better and more innovatively to have less of an impact on the environment."

Mndatory's focus on menswear, specifically tailoring, has brought about different ways that a customer can experience the brand. Apart from a made-to-measure service and ready-to-wear, Mndatory offers a concept Huynh calls Co-Creation. Customers are able to, in a way, co-create by customising existing pieces that are already part of Mndatory's collection according to their liking. Love the silhouette of a trench coat but prefer it in another fabric? Done. Wished the lapel of a textured wool blazer was different? Settled.

"We live in a day and age when people can get what they want—you're not at the mercy of what's already there. We give



customers the option to do that. And from a business perspective, it just makes a lot of sense,” Huynh explains.

The introduction of Co-Creation has meant that Mndatory is able to focus production on what’s needed. Instead of traditionally having multiple ready stocks in a range of sizes, Mndatory is able to scale back by having only sample pieces in different sizes for customers to try. They’re then able to order what they want and receive them to specification in two to three weeks. And for something that’s partly done in one’s vision, the prices are reasonable—around AUD600 for a blazer to about AUD1,300 for a coat.

TAKING IT FROM THE SOURCE

Christian Kimber is no stranger to us. The winner of 2019’s National Designer Award, Kimber started his eponymous brand doing shoes six years ago before branching out into menswear in 2018. Since then, the brand has crafted a signature Christian Kimber look that’s more often layered in an off-kilter manner; not messy but just the right amounts for it to be a sartorial choice.

The Christian Kimber brand is expanding beyond Melbourne—current stockists include Lane Crawford in China and Hong Kong—with clients spanning the globe, including Singapore and Europe. Which is no surprise seeing how the designs and fabrications are geared towards a season-less approach where one won’t be hard-pressed to find something suitable.

More than that, buying into the Christian Kimber brand means always having interchangeable options that are timeless and durable. “There’s this idea that I always want for guys—if they buy a whole look from us and then another look, all of them will work together,” Kimber tells us. “And then if we add new colours, I’d have to pare it back to everything else that we’ve done and see if they work.”

Kimber is conscious of how and where his clothes are made. It’s, as he calls it, a “happy clothing” concept. “I always find it interesting that when people talk about sustainability, they just talk about the product. Happy clothing to me is something



Chris Ran Lin (above) and Christian Kimber.
Facing page: A.BCH (right) and Kerrin.

that is made in a place where people are happy. Like the factory that we work with in Bulgaria; we have lunch with the workers when we visit and it’s like a family business. They have a bus that takes everyone back to their homes. I didn’t coin the term ‘happy clothing’; the factory said it,” explains Kimber.

He stresses that “we’re not trying to be sustainable but we’re constantly thinking about how to improve”. Whether that’s making patchwork versions of old fabrics or using recycled fabrics, it’s something that Kimber refuses to shout out loud as a marketing tool because they are already things that he’s been doing from the start.

USING AUSTRALIA’S REVERED MATERIAL

For Chris Ran Lin, being based in Australia gives him the opportunity to innovate even more with his fashion medium of choice: knits. The designer creates some of the most exciting knit pieces we’ve seen, especially from such a young designer. Constantly experimenting with different techniques and material combinations, Ran Lin approaches knitwear in a unique way.

“I always say that when I’m doing knitwear, it’s like I work in a lab; everything’s by trial-and-error. I have to test everything like how a particular yarn shrinks or if I put metal details onto it, how would that work. And it’s fun! Once I get something I like from small squares of swatches, I photocopy them and work them around in different proportions and scales to get something new and kind of different,” Ran Lin details.

It’s interesting to note that while Ran Lin refers to his brand as a menswear brand, about 80 percent of his customers are women. Even so, he finds that categorising his brand as gender-neutral would limit his creativity and pressure him into creating something that fits only that criteria. But at the same time, he finds pleasure in having women appreciate his creations even though they were designed on a men’s form.

“I tell people that my label is for people who have their own attitudes, know what they like and believe in whatever they believe in. It’s not about telling people what they should wear. I just want everyone to wear the clothes that they like, regardless of what the clothes were originally supposed to be,” expresses Ran Lin.



Essentials of style

As for now, a huge part of the Chris Ran Lin brand is catering to private clients who are eager to purchase his unique knitwear pieces. And at the same time, propelling the use of Australia's renowned age-old material in ways that the world has probably never seen before.

QUALITY ABOVE TRENDS

Kerrin is the youngest brand on this list, in fact it's the youngest brand to show at this year's VAMFF. At just over a year old, Kerrin is the brainchild of designer Kerrin Schuppan, former head of menswear at Country Road (an iconic Australian fashion brand), and wife Miranda. Focused on staple separates with a resort feel, the brand has its clothes designed in Melbourne and then responsibly made in Europe using the highest quality materials possible.

"My first goal was to make pieces that have longevity. For example, the swim shorts that we have, there's a possibility for us to move to a recycled fabric but I don't feel like the quality would be as good as what we're currently using," Schuppan explains. "So it's about working with our suppliers and moving towards getting to that level of quality. I think the longevity of the garment, making something that can last longer, that's an important aspect as well in terms of overall sustainability."

Schuppan tells us about how he worked with his suppliers in finding new ways to create the elements that he wants in the clothes. For example, a rubber-dipped and sealed-end drawcord for Kerrin's board shorts that lends a more seamless finish. Schuppan's energy and enthusiasm about his brand is quite contagious and we reckon he'd be able to convince his suppliers to work on more innovations towards sustainability.

Both founders stressed the importance of knowing where and how their garments are made, travelling from factory to factory to ensure that everything is to their discerning tastes and standards.

Take a quick look through Kerrin's inventory and you'll immediately be struck by the choice of colours. They're easy-to-wear separates in approachable colours but done in a way that the tones are not what you'd usually find anywhere else. Kerrin's signature colour is a chalky yellow that reminds us of a colour achieved through continuously being left out in the sun; an appropriate choice given the brand's embrace of a resort lifestyle.



THE BRAND WITH A 'RADICAL' POINT

"A.BCH was established because I wanted to prove that there could be such a thing as a circular fashion label, that we could be transparent and achieve all these things that everybody said you couldn't. It's our whole purpose. It drives all the decision-making, the design process, and it informs how we educate and communicate," says A.BCH founder Courtney Holm.

Holm is not only passionate about the circularity and sustainability of her brand, she's unwaveringly so. The A.BCH website is more than just mere e-commerce, it's also where she imparts her knowledge about circular fashion and the industry gimmicks that are often used to pass off as the 'sustainable' tag. She lists materials that are sustainable (and those that are not) with reasons, in order to inform.

"I think customer education is incredibly important to us as a brand. It's kind of 50 percent of the business. One aspect is making a product, but the other is how do we make it digestible for people to understand and hopefully take action," Holm expresses.

To prove just how circular every garment is, customers have the option of either returning used pieces to the brand (shipping will be covered) where they can be recycled and resold as second-hand garments or recycled to make new yarns, or composting them at home.

But being essentially a fashion business, there's always that natural want to grow, which is inherently contradictory to what A.BCH is about. Holm recognises this and admits that the limits of the brand as a business is what she asks herself all the time.

"We're never going to make millions of garments—that's not the point of what we do. And I don't know if A.BCH will even always exist the way it exists today. I don't have an answer to your question because maybe we will serve our purpose to be an example and then everybody else will do the right thing and come on board, and then we'll serve a different purpose somewhere else. I don't know what the exact limit is but I know there's a limit for sure," ponders Holm. 📌

After taking a break from acting, former child actor Dylan Sprouse is now ready to do it once again. But at his own pace and terms.

second coming

Words by Astri Jasman Photographs by Lenne Chai/ADB Agency Styling by Savannah White/The Wall Group





Trench coat, by **Bally**; jumper, by **Christian Wijnants**;
shirt, by **Stella McCartney**; trousers, by **Missoni**.



Style

Essentials of style



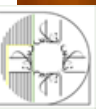
“I was looking for a hobby and a passion that would give me a little long-term commitment.”



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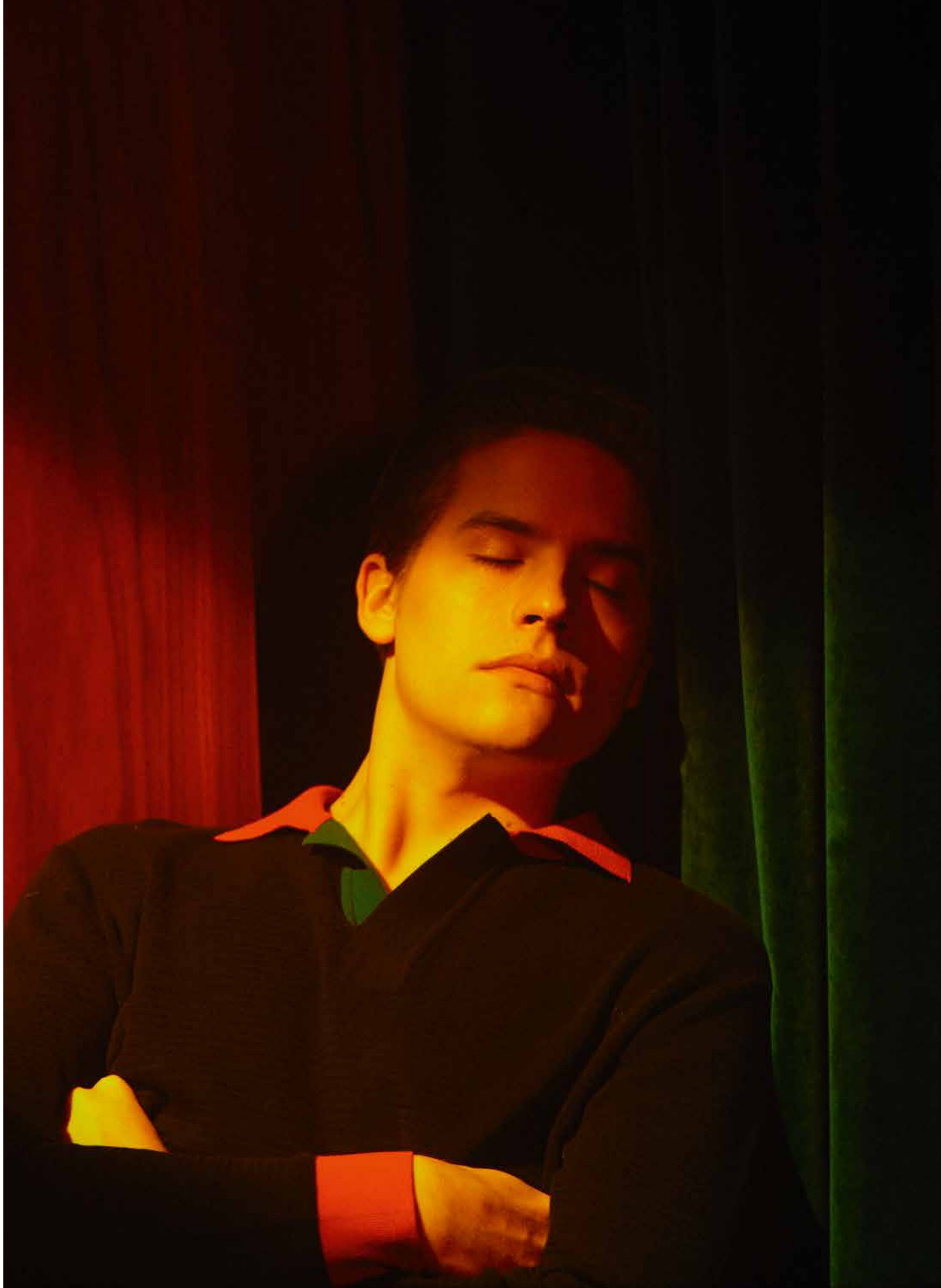




Trench coat, by **Bally**; jumper, by **Christian Wijnants**; shirt, by **Stella McCartney**; trousers, by **Missoni**.

Facing page: jacket and trousers, both by **Valentino**; jumper, by **Christian Wijnants**.





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Transitioning into adulthood is no mean feat, especially when one has spent most of their life in the spotlight. For Dylan Sprouse, it would seem to be even more of a task seeing how his career was packaged as a set with twin brother Cole.

“The truth is, I think that on one hand, as we grew older, we developed very different tastes. And on the other hand, the things that we were comfortable doing in the industry obviously changed,” Sprouse tells us when asked if there was a conscious effort to chart his own identity. “Cole is very much comfortable doing television and network stuff, and I was not. I definitely did not want to do that for a long time and I still don’t really want to.”

You’re not wrong to think then that Sprouse has been relatively quieter compared to his *Riverdale*-star brother. Since taking a break from the entertainment industry to pursue a college degree (he earned one in video game design from New York University’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study), Sprouse has been actively working on another passion that blossomed after graduation: mead.

Sprouse’s introduction to mead came at the age of 16 when his father gifted him with a home brewing kit. “Growing up, I was diagnosed with ADHD. I was a very excited child and I was very temporal, meaning that I would focus on things right there and then, then get distracted and turn away. So I was looking for a hobby and a passion that would

give me a little long-term commitment,” Sprouse explains.

“I was also 16; I wanted to try drinking and had no means of buying it. So I decided to brew it. I ended up giving it a try and realised that I loved it. I didn’t really love the drinking of it because what I was making back then was very bad. But I did like the pace that it gave me. It made me think long-term—I was thinking three months, six months, a year and a half into the future when it would be ready—and trying to make something in the now that would be stable and tasty by the time it was done.”

It was this new-found therapeutic revelation that got him diving deep into brewing mead and drinking in general. In 2017, Sprouse set up All-Wise Meadery in Brooklyn, New York with his college buddy, Matt Kwan. Sprouse is now the youngest master brewer in America and All-Wise Meadery has been receiving nothing but great reviews all around, with distribution to about 47 states in the US.

His passion for mead was also, in a way, a safety net for a career that’s as unstable as acting can get. It has enabled Sprouse to dabble in the sort of independent projects that he loves being part of. “I wanted to do more interesting roles that were diverse. This is a crass thing to say, but usually the first-time directors who are really trying and struggling to make something don’t have money. And I knew I wanted to be a part of that because that’s usually where the artist lives inside any



Style

Essentials of style



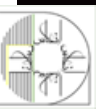
“Seeing people come into the meadery, talk, try the mead and decide to go along on the ride with me, that has made me very, very happy.”



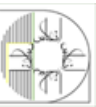
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Linen blazer, wool suit and cotton shirt, all by **Paul Smith**.
Facing page: blazer, jumper, and cotton shirt, all by **Gucci**.



Essentials of style

industry,” Sprouse reasons. “I didn’t want time breathing down my back saying, ‘Hey, look, you have to do a film right now’ or ‘You need to do a television show to support your lifestyle and your family’. So I invested in opening a meadery.”

There’s a sense of familiarity to Sprouse’s story: a celebrity finds a new calling and decides to diversify their brand into something completely different from what they’re known for. But in Sprouse’s case—unlike most celebrity-led businesses—it’s no mere slap of an instantly recognisable name onto an endeavour. Mead is something that he’s worked hard on and has excelled at, perhaps in spite of his famous name.

It’s something he feels that every actor who made their start at a very young age experiences—imposter syndrome. While acting does require skill and talent, there’s also that unavoidable unknown of being at the right place and at the right time.

“There’s so much hard work that goes into acting. But this idea of ‘I got a lucky break’ is permeating through the entire industry. And so a lot of what I have done prove my own insecurity and say, you know, could I have done this without luck? Is there something that I have done that I’m skilled at?” he opines. “For me, seeing people—an audience that was already interested in that subject matter—come into the meadery, talk, try the mead and decide to go along on the ride with me, that has made me very, very happy.”

That sense of personal accomplishment

is by no means a sign for Sprouse to stop pushing himself. One of his biggest upcoming film projects is *Turandot*, an adaptation of the opera of the same name by Giacomo Puccini. The fantasy romance flick is a Chinese production directed by filmmaker Xiaolong Zheng and is entirely in Mandarin. And that only means that we’ll be watching Sprouse acting in a language he’s only learnt for the film. “It’s a very difficult language. I mean, there’s no way that I would be able to get all the lines perfect, right? So they’re going to dub me,” he cautions.

What we can safely expect to watch are scenes of Sprouse swordfighting and getting into battles on horseback. Being part of an action film has been a long-term goal of his and even better that Sprouse is able to do so in a market where he’s not as recognisable.

But perhaps, what’s even bound to be bigger is the return of the Sprouse twins in the same project. While Sprouse says that finding projects that are not “stupid or stereotypical” for twins are always a challenge, they’ve found one that’s unique. He couldn’t reveal details, but assures that “it’s the only kind of project that my brother and I would do together in the future”.

In any case, there is power in nostalgia. And whenever Sprouse chooses to deftly use that to his advantage to brew a historic moment in pop culture history, it would only prove that he still has it; mainstream or not. ■





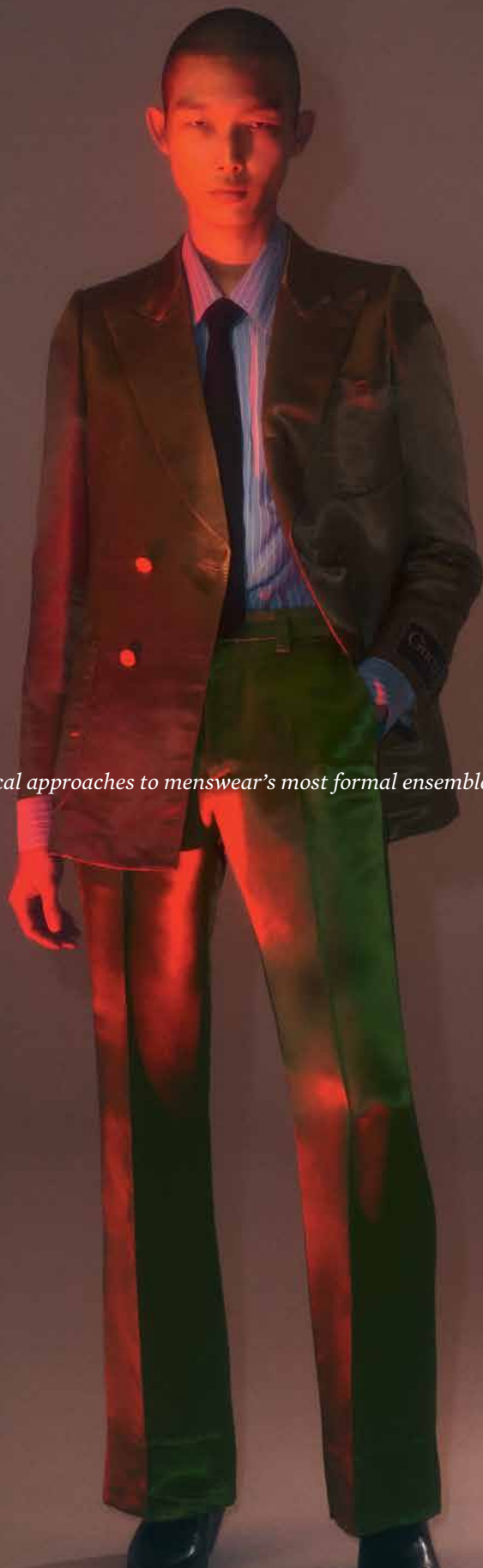
Linen blazer, wool suit, cotton shirt and leather Chelsea boots, all by **Paul Smith**.

Grooming: Melissa Dezarate/The Wall Group; Prop stylist: Lauren Walkup; Production: Savvii; Assistants: Joel Wolter, An Rong Xu & Louisiana Mer Gelpi; Styling assistant: Jye Leong; Location: 701West @ The Times Square Edition Hotel

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This season, designers take radical approaches to menswear's most formal ensemble.

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آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی



Photographs by Jens Langkjaer Styling by Catherine Hayward

Wool-rhinestones jacket,
transparent silk-rhinestones shirt
and wool-rhinestones trousers, all
by **Versace**.

Facing page: viscose-satin jacket,
striped silk shirt, silk-cady tie,
viscose-satin trousers and leather-
horsebit detail boots, all by **Gucci**.

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Striped silk cropped jacket, silk vest and checked stretch-cotton pleated trousers, all by **Dolce&Gabbana**.

Facing page: striped stretch-cotton double-breasted jacket, silk tie and pinstripe cotton pleated trousers, all by **Dolce&Gabbana**.

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Leather trench coat,
cotton-poplin double-breasted
jacket, cotton shirt, cotton-poplin
shorts and leather boots, all by
Louis Vuitton.

Facing page: wool jacket
and cotton shirt, both by
Louis Vuitton.



Style



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Style



Checked wool double-breasted jacket, poplin shirt, checked wool shorts and leather sandals, all by **Prada**.

Facing page: gabardine jacket, cotton Oxford shirt, chino shorts, leather-nylon boots, cotton socks and Saffiano leather brooch, all by **Prada**.

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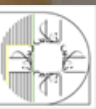
Style

Cotton-twill jacket, by **Lanvin**.

Facing page: gabardine-technical fabric jacket, viscose-poplin shirt and gabardine-technical fabric shorts, all by **Bottega Veneta**.



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Style



Multicoloured patterned mink-nylon cape, silk-cotton jacket, botanic print nylon short-sleeved shirt, silk-cotton shorts and calf leather sandals, all by **Fendi**.

Facing page: cotton suit and silk shirt, both by **Boss**.

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Style

Wool-twill silk-satin technical fabric jacket, striped cotton-technical fabric shirt and wool-twill silk-satin technical fabric trousers, all by **Dior Men**.

Facing page: wool-twill coat, hand-painted motif silk-canvas short-sleeved jumpsuit and rubber boots, all by **Dior Men**.



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Washed linen shawl-collar deconstructed jacket, washed linen double-breasted gilet, linen zip-front shirt, washed linen trousers and nappa leather tasselled moccasins, all by **Giorgio Armani**.

Facing page: suede-goatskin-woven fabric striped jacket and denim-linen-blend trousers, both by **Giorgio Armani**.





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Gingham-mohair-technical fabric-blend parka, gingham-mohair-blend double-breasted blazer, cotton oversized T-shirt, gingham-mohair-blend tailored trousers, gingham appliqué logo hat and leather trainers, all by **Burberry**.

Facing page: wool jacket, cotton shirt, satin tie and wool trousers, all by **Saint Laurent** by **Anthony Vaccarello**.



Style



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Multicoloured patchwork silk shirt-jacket, striped cotton-poplin-flannel trousers and calf leather sandals, all by **Hermès**.

Facing page: gingham jacket and gingham windbreaker, both by **Hermès**.



THE ESKY CLUB

A gathering of Singaporeans who have a head for success and a heart for community.

From business leaders and policymakers peacocking in pinstripes, to consultants and creatives brainstorming in T-shirts, The Esky Club exists to challenge and break down mediocrity (and that carcinogenic notion of 'good enough') in order to stir up and instigate purpose-driven action on social issues—both at home and abroad.

It's iron sharpens iron kind of stuff. Sure, there might be cuts and bruises (to your ego), but they will be soothed with generous lashings of whisky, thought-provoking debates and soul-building conversation on matters that, well, matter.

Want to join? You need an invite.

Best way to secure an invitation?

You do you, and the rest will follow.



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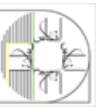




Much appreciated

Give a man a watch today and he'll be on time tomorrow. Probably. But

teach him how to appreciate a watch and he'll be an enthusiast for life.



Watches



You've heard it before but we'll say it again: luxury watches are all about the details. Sure, the movement is mechanical, but was it done in-house? So it's a limited edition, but how many pieces? Scored the latest grand complication with a revolutionary new escapement? Impressive, but what's the average daily rate? Got a stunning hand-painted enamel dial? Great, but was it signed by Anita Porchet? All of this sounds suspiciously like we're splitting hairs in a tiresome game of one-upmanship, but really—or usually—it isn't.

Because in fine watchmaking, details matter. A lot. They tell you so much more about the timepiece and the brand and maybe even a little about the history of watchmaking. For instance, the components of watch movements are typically polished or finished with decorative patterns after they've been machined in order to rid them of the burrs and scratches sustained during the machining. Techniques such as Côtes de Genève, *perlage*, snailing, frosting and many more are now par for the course in all high-end watches.

As time progresses, particularly after the rebirth of the

mechanical watch during the mid-1990s, when mechanical watches transitioned from functional timekeeper to luxury good, connoisseurs have come to admire these manufacturing processes as classical hallmarks of traditional haute horlogerie. And beautiful hand-applied movement finishing is just one of the many *many* details that watch connoisseurs are perpetually thankful for.

It's why every time we see a new watch, one of the first things we'll do is to flip it over to check if it has a sapphire crystal caseback offering a view of the movement. Through that little circular aperture is a tiny bustling metropolis of bridges, plates, wheels, springs and screws that watch lovers call heaven. So grab a loupe and pull up a chair. We're going into the finer points of luxury watchmaking.

WHEN EVERY WATCH IS A WORK OF ART

Patek Philippe certainly believes in the power of timepieces as miniature art pieces created to deliver joy and wonderment. Setting the benchmark for what is fine watchmaking, the

Watches



Genevan manufacture has, since 2009, defined its own standard of excellence with its proprietary Patek Philippe Seal, which represents a confluence of tradition, quality, precision and craftsmanship.

More than a watchmaker, though, Patek Philippe is an institute and a custodian of haute horlogerie. Its commitment to this craft can be seen in every timepiece, from the simple Calatravas to the grand complications.

Each one machined to perfection and hand-finished with love, Patek Philippe lavishes them with all kinds of glorious fine details that are so elegantly discreet and blend together so harmoniously that a non-connoisseur might easily miss them.

Faceted hands and indexes, alternating matte and polished cases and bevelled lugs, double or triple stepped bezels, double or triple stepped lugs, hand-guilloché dials, hand-painted grand feu cloisonné enamel dials and many more. On the subject of enamel dials, Patek Philippe works with some of the best names in the business such as Suzanne Rohr and Porchet, whose artwork can be seen on many of its contemporary models.

Where the movements are concerned, Patek Philippe embellishes all of its calibres with the usual suspects—Côtes de Genève, *perlage*, mirror polishing, chamfering and the like. But when a special occasion calls for something extraordinary, an important anniversary perhaps, the manufacture has been known to pull off truly astonishing feats as seen with the Calibre 240 SQU which celebrates the 40th anniversary of Calibre 240.

And of course with grand complication movements such as Calibre R TO 27, Patek Philippe leaves no stone unturned, or rather, no surface unadorned. Key components such as the hammers and the tourbillon bridge have been mirror-polished by hand.

This technique, also known as black polishing or *spéculaire*, is notoriously difficult to master, so only the most experienced *finisseurs* are allowed to practice it. It differs from other forms

From above left: Calibre MB M16.31; Calibre MB M13.21.
Facing page: Patek Philippe World Time Minute Repeater ref. 5531.

in that the finished surface is so evenly polished and perfectly flat that it only reflects light from one direction. In lieu of any light or reflection, it appears totally black.

GOD IS IN THE DETAILS

Indeed, to the trained eye, there's beauty inside every nook and cranny of a watch, although for Montblanc, one might describe it as the devil in the details. Especially when the watch in question comes with a Minerva movement, not that there could ever be anything damning about its fleet of heritage-rich in-house calibres but because of the manufacture's unique signature touch: an arrow-shaped tip known affectionately as the Devil's Tail.

A little surprise feature that watch connoisseurs look forward to each time Montblanc releases a new Minerva movement, it is a homage to the historical Minerva logo—an arrowhead—and sometimes you'll have to comb the entire movement to find it.

Like a horological Easter egg, maybe it's sitting at the end of the chronograph reset hammer as in Calibre MB M13.21, maybe it's parked on the swan neck regulator as in Calibre MB M62.00, or maybe it's hiding in plain sight, right under the split second

Watches

FOUNDER ABRAHAM-LOUIS BREGUET WAS KNOWN TO HAVE USED A DIFFERENT MOTIF TO MARK OUT EACH PART OF THE DIAL.

wheel brake as in Calibre MB M16.31. Wherever it chooses to reveal itself, that perfectly chamfered Devil's Tail is one of the most unique and memorable watchmaking hallmarks.

But there's more. Minerva has a long history specialising in precision instruments such as chronographs. Back in the day it made 1/100th-of-a-second stopwatches which were the most accurate in the business. Minerva chronographs have a distinctive architecture easily recognised for the V-shaped chronograph bridge, along with the large high-inertia balance wheel surrounded by gold poisoning screws and the aforementioned Devil's Tail.

That V-shaped bridge has been around since 1909 and since 1912 is a patented feature of all Minerva chronographs. Check out those beautiful chamfered edges and glorious sharp internal angles which can only be bevelled by hand because machines use rotating drill bits that smooth over the surfaces. In other words, sharp internal angles on a movement is always a clear indicator of watchmaking finesse.

A TRADITION OF PURE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Essentially a type of engraving done on metallic surfaces, guilloché exists in several styles. Clous de Paris, also known as hobnail, with its straight rows of tiny pyramids is the most archetypal motif, followed by barleycorn or *grain d'orge*, the basketweave or *vieux panier*, the *soleil* or sunburst... These are just some of the most common ones. At the Breguet manufacture, additional styles include *flammé*, *liseré*, *sauté piqué*, *pavé de Paris*, *drapé noir* and many more.

Breguet is exceptionally skilled at hand *guillochage*. It was the first to apply *guillochage* to watchmaking. Almost every Breguet timepiece is decorated with it, usually on the dial but sometimes on the movement. The Classique line, for instance, is most irrevocably tied to this ancient *métier*, said to be an invention of a French engineer named Guillot in the late 18th century.

When describing the craft, the term *guillochage* is used. Guilloché refers to a specific piece of work. Finally, the craftsperson skilled in this *métier* is known as a *guillocheur*.

Today it's regarded as a decorative feature, but *guillochage* started out with very practical roots. Founder Abraham-Louis Breguet was known to have used a different motif to mark out each part of the dial. The dial itself would have for instance Clous de Paris, then the small seconds take a *soleil* pattern, the moonphase might use a *grain d'orge* one and so on. Doing this increases the legibility of the dial as each guilloché pattern clearly marks out the different displays for the owner.

A practice that nearly went extinct during the '60s and '70s, hand *guillochage* is an extremely precise and delicate craft.

The *guillocheur* works on a rose engine lathe roughly the size of a large sewing machine. It's the complete opposite of mass production because the lathe only allows one dial to be worked on at a time.

Completely manual, the lathe requires two hands to operate simultaneously, one pressing a diamond-tipped point onto the dial and the other moving it forward in order to chisel the metal and remove thin shavings of it to create the pattern. Both hands must be consistent in terms of the amount of pressure and speed to yield perfectly shorn hand guilloché.

DETAILED PATTERNS OF A DIAL

Without doubt, one of the most alluring features of a Grand Seiko, the thing that drives countless watch collectors absolutely crazy is its dial. The Japanese manufacture proudly produces all of them in-house at its Shiojiri plant, including the famous snowflake and Mount Iwate dials. Grand Seiko has become so adept at dial manufacturing that it is constantly able to produce new patterns almost every year, several of which are deeply inspired by the beautiful landscapes that surround its manufactures throughout Japan.

Turning 60 this year, Grand Seiko released two special editions dedicated to the city of Shizukuishi, a town in the Iwate prefecture, where its mechanical watch atelier calls home. The first piece, SBGW263, is a poetic tribute to the legend of Shizukuishi. The story goes that about 1,000 years ago, an old man who lived here kept hearing a strange sound coming from deep underneath a huge cedar tree.

Eventually, people traced its source to an underground cave and realised that the sound was made by water drops falling from the ceiling onto rocks, then resonating throughout the cave and beyond. Master engraver Kiyoshi Terui and his small team of engravers sought to tell this story through the watch's white gold dial, offering a small piece of its heritage to the 20 people worldwide lucky enough to own it.

The watch's hands feature a water droplet motif while the hour markers resemble the pattern of water splashing onto rock. Even the minute indexes and brand insignia were engraved by hand.

Likewise, SBGW264 very poetically captures a unique scene from the environment. In rose gold paired with brilliant shimmering green, the dial has a sharp intricate pattern achieved using very precise machine engraving. Here, we travel to the birch tree forests near the Grand Seiko studio which are rich and verdant in the summer. Shimmering green and white, it recalls the dappled forest floor as sunlight filters through the tree leaves. Never mind if you've never been to Shizukuishi because with this pair of watches, you're already there. ■



Style

Watches



From top: Breguet Classique 7137; the Grand Seiko SBGW263 60th Anniversary Limited Edition with hand-engraved dial.

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Elements of Style

With a knack for sparking truly great trends in watchmaking, managing director of Montblanc Watches Davide Cerrato discusses what's good about the industry, what's less so and why he recommends a blindfold test the next time you meet a new watch.

If you're a fan of NATO straps, if salmon pink dials make you weak at the knees and if you're big on watches with a vintage appeal, Davide Cerrato is the guy to thank. Over the past few years, these three key styles have taken the watch world by storm and have collectively helped prise the industry out of the clutches of the global financial crisis of 2008/09.

Cerrato was the first to introduce NATO straps in the watch primary market. He was with the brand Tudor in 2010 and launched the now-famous Heritage Chrono on a beautiful striped fabric strap made by Julien Faure, a French passementerie company.

"Cheap NATO straps had been around forever, mostly in the second-hand or auction market. But official brands offering it in their line-up as the first choice? That was unheard of. Up to that point, NATO straps were just a kind of transition strap people wore until they found something else," he describes.

Indeed, it's been 10 years since NATO made a big comeback to the luxury watch scene, which is very gratifying for Cerrato and proof it's no mere passing trend. "This supports the fact that if you're able to provide a high-quality NATO [with your watch], it is for sure the most comfortable strap anyone can wear," says the dapper gent.

He's been with Montblanc since 2015 and is a man of many passions—cars, men's tailoring, vintage watches—describing himself on his personal Instagram account as a "Creative Alchemist, Car Lover, Bespoke Enthusiast and Vintage Design Jedi" in addition to managing director of Montblanc Watches.

So it was not at all a coincidence that Montblanc has over the last three years released numerous vintage-inspired pieces, particularly in its Heritage and 1858 collections. But Cerrato foresaw the rise of vintage and vintage-inspired timepieces as far back as 2010.

"After the financial crisis of 2008/09, people were returning to more classical and elegant watches, looking back to the '40s and '50s, even the '30s. It's nice to look back to beautiful objects of the past, re-energising them, mixing them with a contemporary size and giving them a second or third spin."

But not everyone was on board then. He recalls: "Many people said 'No, it's a short term thing, two to three years and it's done', and definitely it's not. So I think the link with the past is very important."

Which explains why many pieces in the Heritage collection feature vintage details such as specially designed numerals for three, six and nine inspired by old-school coin-operated telephones. Cerrato also worked heavily on dial colours with a vintage vibe and accented with fine finishing on many of Montblanc's entry-level pieces and complications, setting off what would be the next big trend in contemporary watchmaking.

"We're one of the first to use green and now you see green everywhere. We brought back salmon pink and all of a sudden you see it popping up everywhere. You bring a specific design, shape or case, you find a beautiful shape of hands, even a railway on a dial, then months after you see it everywhere," he shrugs. "It's a pity because brands should go back to what they stand for, their DNA, their real history, to build on their strengths."

Even though Cerrato and Montblanc weren't the first to hit upon salmon pink, they certainly succeeded in popularising the look by casting it to a much wider audience. Until Montblanc, the only niche crazy about this colour were collectors hankering after the half-a-million-dollar Patek Philippe chronographs customised for singer-songwriter Eric Clapton.

That's definitely not the domain for Montblanc, not now at least, but Cerrato cannot be more appreciative of what he's been entrusted with on the job every day. Being the managing director of Montblanc watch division naturally comes with an all-access pass to the heritage-rich Minerva manufacture in Villeret.

"I'm incredibly proud of Minerva and the history of this incredible asset which allows us to play and enrich and shape the face of Montblanc's new watch offer. It's such an incredible history. We have so many signs, so many elements of this history in the manufacture," he describes.

Before COVID-19 descended on Switzerland, Cerrato would find himself drawn to the Minerva archives almost every week. "One out of two visits I would come across an incredible dial nobody knew existed. I was finding watches and cases and colours... it's really a gold mine for creative minds."

The results of his labour can be seen in such one-of-a-kind pieces as the 1858 pocket watch inspired by the timekeeping history of Minerva but updated with a blue dumortierite dial as a tribute to the Swiss Alps. The wealth of details embedded in this timepiece provides much horological fodder to watch collectors.

But to really appreciate a watch, Cerrato thinks, is to ultimately put it on the wrist, although he would suggest two main ways to "experience" a watch.

He explains: "The first is to look at it, stare at it, delve into its details. The other is where you don't look at it, put it on the wrist and discover it by your sense of touch. It's a very interesting discovery and I always do this when I'm trying to see if there are parts of the case, pushers or buckles, which are too aggressive or might be unpleasant for the wearer."

"It is a very powerful method of appreciating your watch," he adds. Coming from a guy who's handled more watches than many of us combined, we should definitely file that under legit advice. ■



Style

Watches



Montblanc received a massive boost in the design department the day superstar managing director Davide Cerrato walked through its doors.

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Style

Watches

Vacheron Constantin
40MM Patrimony Manual



Rolex
36MM Day-Date 36



Cartier
39.8MM Santos De Cartier
Large Automatic

Gilt trip

Gold watches are back on the radar.

Photograph by Dan Macalister

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Style

Watches

Chopard
Alpine Eagle 36mm
Automatic Chronometer



Patek Philippe
38mm 5159J
Perpetual Calendar



Breguet
38mm Classique
5177BA/29/9V6



Omega
39mm Constellation
Co-Axial Master
Chronometer



Style

Watches

Op-ed: Is COVID-19 the big bitter pill we didn't ask for, but needed?

Fairs cancelled, stores shuttered, production lines halted. What good could come out of all this?

Celine Yap, *Esquire Singapore's* editor-at-large for watches and jewellery,
contemplates the possibilities.



Photographs by Michael Ottenwaelter and Volker Renner

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Watches

The Swiss watch industry is often described—or criticised, depending on context—for being slow to adapt and resistant to change. But in recent years it's been nothing but change and constant adaptation across all segments of the market.

First came the global financial crisis of 2008/09 which put an end to the heady days of loud watches and overt consumerism. In response, the industry self-corrected by swinging back to understated watches—classic, elegant, ultra-thin became all the rage.

Then there was the anti-corruption crackdown in China that began in 2012 and all but decimated luxury consumption throughout the mainland. At that time, China was the only market in the world reporting not just positive numbers but double-digit growth, so this was a massive blow.

Fortunately, it wasn't just Chinese officials who were buying up luxury watches but the burgeoning wealthy middle class and new rich. Binge shopping on expensive holidays were de rigeur for these young and trendy jet-setters with enough firepower in their wallets to buy everything in a Louis Vuitton store in one afternoon.

Moving the needle for brands large and small, Chinese buyers also prefer to shop in tax-free Hong Kong, which is regarded as the gateway to China for all foreign companies.

So when the 2019 Hong Kong protests against China descended on the city, forcing shops around the island to close for months, it created a huge dent in sales revenue that nobody knew how to fix.

Meanwhile in Switzerland, trouble was brewing between the organisers of Baselworld and its exhibitors. For a number of years, exhibitors had been dropping out sporadically either to join Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie in Geneva or to stage their own private events, citing high costs among other reasons.

But things began to get serious when the Swatch Group made the shocking announcement that it was taking all of its 18 brands out of the fair and into its own event called Time To Move. Citing pent-up frustration with the exorbitant costs without parity in services rendered, the Swatch Group was Baselworld's biggest exhibitor, reportedly spending in excess of CHF50 million every year.

It was a huge wake-up call for the organiser, the MCH Group, and to its credit, it did try to improve and take exhibitors' and visitors' needs into greater consideration. The 2019 edition took place with some rudimentary changes, which was all the new team could manage within short notice, while promising a slew of great new things for 2020.

Unfortunately, fate continued to deal its cruel hand. After tearing through China for months, COVID-19 descended on Europe, causing numerous countries including Switzerland to go on full lockdown. Key events were cancelled by order of the Swiss government.

Because of COVID-19, the industry has suffered the worst in 50 years. That's all the way back to the 1970s Quartz Crisis when mechanical watches became obsolete. In China, as much as everywhere else, luxury watch shopping had practically stopped cold.

Because of COVID-19, brands have either closed their manufactures or staggered their employees to conform with social distancing rules, resulting in a sharp production slump.

Because of COVID-19, cancelled watch fairs are forced to find alternative solutions to forge ahead with the year's affairs. Admirably, Watches & Wonders Geneva (W&WG) managed to



rustle up a new digital platform while Baselworld landed itself in yet another predicament.

This time, all the remaining key exhibitors—Rolex, Patek Philippe, Chopard, Chanel and Tudor—announced a mass exodus from Baselworld, leaving the show with just small- and medium-sized players in the watch and jewellery world. The intention is to stage the next show in April 2021, coinciding with W&WG, which is organised by Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie.

What lies ahead remains to be seen, although it appears that there aren't many moves left for what was once the world's largest watch and jewellery show.

For the industry at large, it was a long overdue market correction and a welcome decision at that. When all the major brands are presenting their novelties in one location, retailers and visitors worldwide could expect significant costs and logistical savings. It would also create a greater atmosphere where watch enthusiasts and experts from all corners of the world could gather and partake in this shared passion.

And once again the watch industry would have the undivided attention of the world.

More importantly, it gives brands and event organisers a chance to review the role of watch fairs today. To regroup and rethink the format of watch fairs, to consider the needs of the visitors, the digital resources at hand, and ultimately, the true spirit of luxury watchmaking.

As much as Baselworld did get in over its head, it would be hard to see the curtain go down on this grand old dame. Too many of us cut our teeth pounding the carpeted floors and multi-storeyed booths of Messeplatz, and Hall 1.0 will always have a special place in our hearts. 📌



Style

Watches

the simplicities

*Life can be chaotic but what you wear on your wrist
doesn't have to be. No fuss, clean and minimalistic. Let these timepieces
provide you with some moments of Zen.*

Photographs by Shawn Paul Tan
Styling by Asri Jasman



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Style

Watches



Longines Heritage Classic in stainless steel case on a blue leather strap.

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Style

Watches



Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso Tribute Small Seconds in stainless steel case on a burgundy red leather strap.

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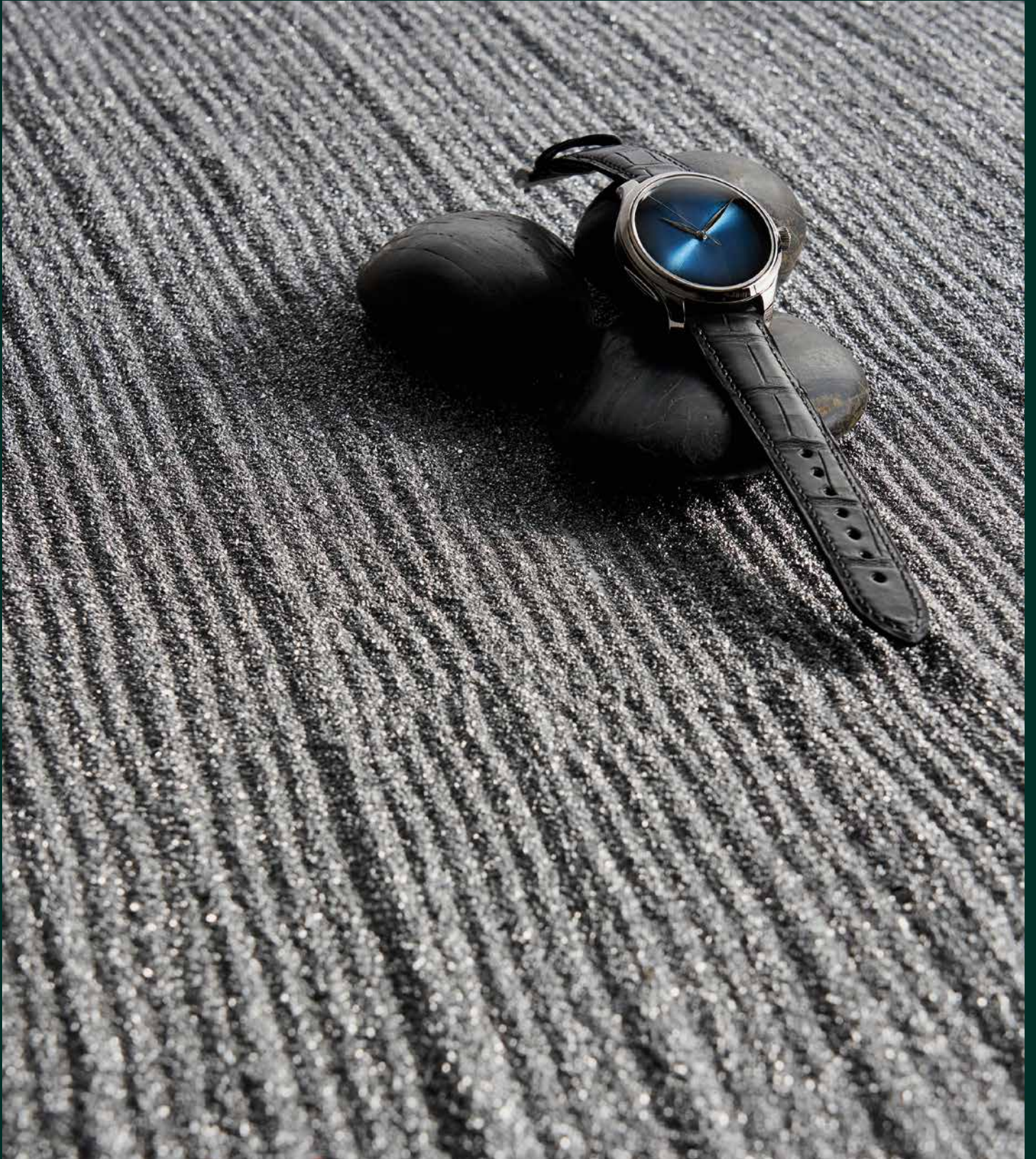
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Style

Watches



Photographer assisted by Kat Midori

H. Moser & Cie Endeavour Centre Seconds Concept Funky Blue 40mm in 18-carat white gold case on a grey alligator leather strap.

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Still life

2 | 5



Leather and canvas bum bag,
by **Givenchy**.





Portfolio

76

Singapore's fresh princes

They're passionate about what they do, and it shows.

88

The tangled web

There's no deception here—we're all connected by cables.

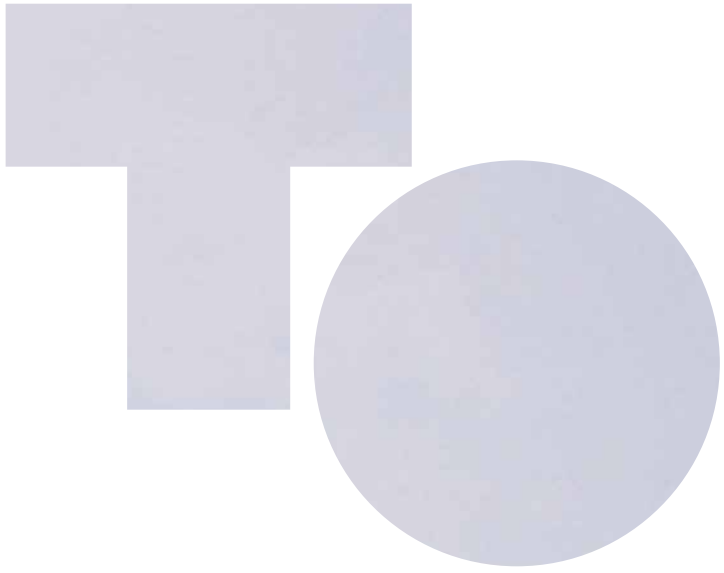
95

Protector, provider

What motherhood means to four families in New York.

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have

hold



and

We may be living in bleak times,
but young rappers Fariz Jabba
and Yung Raja remain in awe of
everything that's still around us.

Words by Joy Ling
Photographs by Gabe Chen
Styling by Eugene Lim



Portfolio

Cover story



On Fariz: polyester pullover, by **Loewe Paula's Ibiza**; cotton trousers, by **Prada**; leather shoes, by **Balenciaga**; acetate sunglasses, by **Raito**.

On Raja: polyester pullover, by **Loewe Paula's Ibiza**; wool trousers, by **Bottega Veneta**; leather boots, by **Prada**.

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On Raja: viscose coat, by **Loewe Paula's Ibiza**; nylon jacket and nylon raincoat, both by **4 Moncler Simone Rocha**; wool trousers, by **Gucci**; leather boots, by **Prada**.

On Fariz: wool and viscose coat, by **Gucci**; cotton and elastine shirt, by **Versace**; cotton ripstop trousers, by **Z Zegna**; leather shoes, by **Balenciaga**.

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Cover story

The apocalyptic anxiety is understandable. Unprecedented bushfires in the outback, return of large-scale earthquakes in Eastern Europe, and Sumatran islands disappearing with rising sea levels; the new decade has not been off to a great start. Add a global pandemic to the equation and quips about the end times start to carry a wry undertone.

We're on the final day before the official closure of entertainment venues islandwide. The new phase of tighter measures Singapore has introduced against COVID-19 towards the end of March inherently filters into the conversation about gratitude.

"Just to see how Singapore is handling it," Yung Raja, 24, says, "is really something to be thankful for right now." Most would agree with the rapper. The worldwide recognition of the local government's efforts to contain the situation has made the nation an exemplar case study for other countries.

The fastidious contact tracing, strict quarantine protocols and straightforward communication meant a significantly low statistic of deaths, with recovery outpacing the infected. Even Barbara Streisand acknowledged this in a tweet.

"My parents had other options like Saudi Arabia and Dubai when they were looking for a place to move to from South India, but they chose here," Raja reveals, much to the surprise of his fellow rapper and friend, Fariz Jabba, 23.

The pair riff on the possibility of his automotive skiing and pet cheetahs before returning to the chat. "Gratitude is the whole theme of his life," Fariz chimes in, "to talk about what we're grateful for, we'll be here the entire day, man."

"If we have to narrow it down, it's really the fact that we get to do what we love and be able to support it," Raja takes over, emphasising that it's a shot at life not freely available to everyone. "There are people who spend half their lives trying to find that one opportunity, only for it not to work out. Being able to feed our passion and have our passion feed us is one of the amazing things I'll never take for granted."

BUILDING A HOUSE

From the mother tongue remixes of 'Gucci Gang'—'Kunci Gang' and 'Pouri Gang'—amongst other rap covers uploaded online to over a million views of their official songs, the pair have made a name for themselves by signing with Universal Music Group's Southeast Asian arm, Def Jam Recordings.

Looking back, there was no definite moment that convinced them making music would enable them to make a viable living, only the decision to properly try. There was no grand plan, only no plan B. "It's like building a house, right?" Fariz throws me the first of many analogies to come. "You don't really know if you can build it until you start laying brick by brick, seeing what you like and removing what you don't that it slowly takes form."

Though seemingly casual, the viral videos were not a one-take wonder. "A lot of thought went into the consumer perspective. Takes were deleted because it felt like we were trying too hard," Raja states unabashedly.

But navigating uncharted waters the first two years was harder. Without a scene to monetise from, the career path was hardly a first option, even if it was what they wanted to do with their lives. More so when this little red dot does not have a community of eminent artists to endorse or introduce you to the masses.

Raja tells me that while there are successes of the genre in the region, there was nobody to show them the ropes locally. "It was being on the ball all the time to learn from mistakes and bounce back quickly. That whole approach and process just put us on a spot to develop the mental and emotional fortitude required for this."

Balancing the spontaneity while remaining level-headed was no easy feat. They watched numerous interviews in lieu, especially Tupac Shakur's, which Fariz is more obsessed with than his songs. "He explains how you should be as an artist, a great leader and owner of your identity so you don't sway with money and fame."

And so they wrote a list of rules to abide by, reminders like 'Never lose respect over familiarity', whether for the industry or the people you admire. Raja recounts the first time he performed in Chennai, where his parents are from, and being blown away not just by the fans who were under the show's age limit and still turned up to see him, but also that the top dog of the South Indian rap industry was in attendance. ("It was a ticketed show so he paid cover charge!")

For Fariz, a career highlight was when he made his live R&B debut with 'Masa'. He recalls with amusement how the crowd was initially confused to see him with back-up dancers at Sundown Festival, but performing his own song and choreography was everything he had envisioned. "It felt like I was atop the face of the Earth. I couldn't see anyone. The cheers I heard were synonymous with the cheers in my head. It was ecstasy"

A PROBABILITY GAME

Yet, we don't see many chasing that high. The nation's majority are undeniably caught in the express lane towards the life of a pen-pusher.

"I think the problem is that people are not creating enough. People need to stop being scared because that's how culture is fostered." Fariz expresses it in colloquial tongue; we *aiyah* too much. Being zealous is perceived to be uncool and enthusiasm is often met with the Malay lingo, "*relax ah, don't fanatic*".

The rapper addresses both sides of the coin. "The audience should stop putting down things that are apart from the norm. And at the same time, the artist should learn to accept criticism. Look at it constructively and not bitterly. It's how you flip it."

"It's deeply embedded in the culture to care what people think about us and to follow the system. Just the thought of going against the grain puts everybody off," adds Raja, pointing out that because outliers are generally frowned upon until they find public success, people are not vocal about their ventures.

"It's not that the crabs in a bucket mentality applies to the whole society, but we just have to be less concerned about what



Portfolio

Cover story

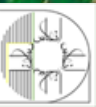


Polyester shirt and
polyester shorts, both by
Versace; leather sneakers,
by **Louis Vuitton**.

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Wool jacket, by **Bottega Veneta**; cotton shirt, polyamide shorts and leather sneakers, all by **Louis Vuitton**; acetate sunglasses, by **Raito**.



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18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

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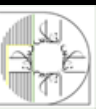
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Cover story

people think when it comes to approaching our passion,” he opines. “People are generally sensitive about their art. They treat it like their baby and don’t want to hear anything negative about it. But even if you’re bad, out of the 20 bad songs you make, one is going to be all right.”

“We don’t feel enough here. More often we gotta go, ‘Look at that, damn!’. Be inspired! Express yourself!” Fariz effuses. “That’s what it means to support local talent. *You* are a local talent. Support *yourself*.”

“I’m nobody. I didn’t even finish school, was a security guard, but somehow by the miracle of god I got famous, and I took that opportunity and held on to it. That’s what people need to realise—it’s a probability game. You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”

Fortunately, in the age of the Internet, more social conversations are happening. People are realising the avenue they now have to create a demand for themselves utilising social media. A free-for-all where calling the shots no longer demands having the most amount of money or merit, but often, the loudest mouth.

Granted, motivations behind selling records isn’t the most altruistic. Talking on beats and having people listen satisfies the ego, but there is a bigger picture involved. A message that, regardless of platform or genre, they’re looking to deliver. A change to effect.

WHY NOT HAVE 100 EGGS?

“Nothing you do is original. Trillions have lived and died before you,” says Raja, maintaining that all output is nothing more than what we’ve been exposed to and loved as we were growing up. “Every ideology is shaped from experience. It’s about making it your own and understanding your identity.”

“Culture can really change if everyone brings out their inner artist,” adds Fariz. Eyes agleam, he shares his theory about how fan culture differs overseas because fans are all artists in their own way. How the hip-hop scene in America thrives with the multitude of rappers across the states. Bringing out the inner artist simply means to find a form of expression of yourself and celebrate it.

“If you want to make real change, you have to ensure you do it tactfully,” Raja adds. “It’s our responsibility as an artist. Talk about what you want but when it’s done right, people listen. If you must be a rebel, be a smart rebel. No dumb rebel will live to see the second day.”

Loopholes do exist. Subliminal messages can be crafted, context is usually understood and audiences are readily rallied with. But in a game of numbers, what fraction of good justifies the bad?

“If we have 10 eggs; five are bad, and out of the remaining decent ones, two are extraordinary, why not have 100 eggs? Why not increase the quantity to filter out the quality? To generate a ripple effect that can be felt, you have to pump up the numbers.

“Then the extraordinary ones can be role models for the bad eggs. Bad eggs are not going to be bad eggs forever,” Fariz continues positively, mentioning some of their fans who are now

in the industry. “We didn’t start it but we found a way to sell it. Our lyrics and the way we relate to our culture and identity.”

“Singapore celebrates our food, our tourism, but art has remained a niche. What can we talk about when we talk about art?” Raja says. “There are grants for EPs where there used to be none, but it has to be much more to motivate people. You’re not going to be so blessed that your parents are like “You know what, son? Here’s SGD50,000. I believe in your trap album”.

“So that’s the ecosystem we’re working towards. If we construct an infrastructure to provide the art with the tools necessary to grow, gives you chances and room to explore and fail, I really feel that there will be an explosion of culture worthy to export overseas.”

“Man, that’s the dream,” Fariz interjects. “Have people from some weird corner of the world love my music. Imagine going to Iceland or Estonia and they start singing ‘Masa’ yooooo. You’ll really remember why you did it in the first place. You’ll say ‘I want to make music forever! For you’.”

For that one dude in Ukraine.

It is possible with the Internet, I remind them, and music is universal. Just look at the sturdy reign of K-pop.

“You understand the ideology that it’s possible, but it’s a whole other thing experiencing it,” Raja reasons. “I don’t think we’ll ever get to the level of K-pop’s impact. They’ve been preparing for it since they were kids and it can get a bit scary how manufactured it is. That’s unique to them.”

What’s unique to Singapore is being multicultural and diverse, an aspect he is confident will appeal to the global market. And what he preaches, he practises. The rapper’s 2019 release ‘Mad Blessings’ garnered international attention when featured on Hypebeast. We can’t claim to understand the Tamil infused in the song, but we nod along to the addictive chorus anyway.

EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING FUNNY TO SAY IN HIP-HOP

So what is the mark of a good rapper? Would it be the ability to freestyle, a skill Fariz and Raja are proficient at?

“That’s a party trick. I know plenty who can freestyle but don’t make a profession of it. There are so many other things that come into play,” Raja replies. “It’s not about thinking of rhymes off the top of your head. It’s how well you write, your cadence, your style.”

“It can come down to the texture of your voice,” Fariz joins in. “Good diction and finding a good voice is half of the work done. Honestly, words don’t matter to me. Snoop Dogg could rap the alphabet and it’s fire. Tupac never used much double entendres; it was pure storytelling. It’s conviction in the delivery.”

“Every individual has certain things that they stand for and they keep these key substances in their brand,” Raja says, offering a contrasting stance with another rapper whose length of career and volume of work he’s thoroughly impressed by. “Drake has been fighting allegations regarding ghostwriters for years now. It’s such a big deal because hip-hop is about your life.”

“Okay, that’s actually the coolest thing about rap,” Fariz adds, sounding like he’s clearly converted about lyrical weight. “I listen



Portfolio

Cover story



Polyester jacket, cotton shirt and polyester shorts, all by **Comme des Garçons Homme Plus** at Dover Street Market Singapore; leather shoes, by **Balenciaga**.

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Portfolio

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On Fariz: cotton and linen jacket, by **Z Zegna**; cotton shirt, polyamide shorts and leather sneakers, all by **Louis Vuitton**; acetate sunglasses, by **Raito**.

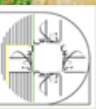
On Raja: wool jacket, by **Bottega Veneta**; polyester shirt and polyester shorts, both by **Versace**; leather sneakers, by **Louis Vuitton**.



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Portfolio

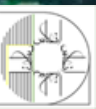
Cover story

Wool jacket, cotton shirt
and wool shorts, all by
Comme des Garçons
Homme Plus at Dover
Street Market Singapore.

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Cover story

to a lot of rock as well and the feelings emoted are quite generic. Whereas rap is so literal and personal. But so creative in how rappers casually slip humour in. Everybody has something funny to say in hip-hop.”

He compares the timeline accuracy of hip-hop discography to a movie, where the listener follows the rapper’s personal journey of accolades and frustrations of that particular year the music is produced. There’s truth in their parley and I wonder how the two have evolved in their own journey. So far, we’ve only been acquainted with a mix of their on-screen swagger and spirited sides.

“We were learning how to separate between the brand and the person,” Raja admits, “We had these strong brand names and got signed so fast, so it took us a while to fill those shoes and figure out who is this person that we created.” Understandably, it’s only human to carry your highs with you and fix your identity there.

“You start acting like a diva and you don’t even realise that you are doing it. We talk about staying humble in interviews and we think it will manifest because we say it so much, but no,” Fariz confesses. “It was emotionally breaking because everyone looked at me like I was a dick and that’s not who I am. No one sets out to be an a-hole.”

“You can never retract what you do. You have to appease the people who are attached to [redacted], while appeasing people attached to Fariz Jabba and Yung Raja.” Raja credits his team that has been there since day one, including producer Flightsch, as the group of accountable people who have kept them grounded through the good, the bad and well, the interventions.

Case in point: when the label requests the complete removal of their real names. In the matter of persona versus privacy, the sentiment to stay behind the moniker is uncompromised. (But there’s always Google if you’re curious.)

“My music circle is my support system,” Fariz attests. “When you have people endeavouring alongside with the same interests, you see humanity at its finest. They don’t have to care about me, but they do. It’s beautiful.”

ALMOST LIKE DOING THIS MARRIED

Naturally, they are getting better at this. Fariz has never considered an alternate vocation. Although there’s his former job selling sneakers, which he got fired from because he was taking too much medical leave to see his then girlfriend.

Raja would have been a graphic designer. Or delved into photography. “And be a money changer on the side, just for family tradition,” he adds, cracking up at the stereotype. “I have uncles who are money changers.”

“Of course you do,” his friend accedes.

One thing is sure. They wouldn’t be where they are without each other. Like yin to yang, the two characters vary on the spectrum of personalities. One would think that the jovial Fariz with rabbit trail responses is not the one inclined to worst-case scenarios. But he calls the reserved Raja, who faithfully circles back to the questions asked, the optimist between them.

Stranger then, when each had a different learning curve growing up despite being the youngest of their respective families. Fariz was coddled from young, with his older brother, comedian Fakkah Fuzz, and older sister holding the fort down. On the other hand, Raja had to face the pressure of the family’s expectations as the only son amongst four children.

It inevitably set the frame for their music. Fariz was cruising the streets, Raja was speeding on the highway. “It’s crazy how driven he was. He would have done *anything* to be successful,” Fariz describes emphatically, “but he showed me how to be motivated because I was too relaxed.

“If I didn’t have him, I’d be an arrogant, talented has-been. I’ll keep thinking I’m the best and don’t work for it, blaming the industry when I don’t know how to handle it. But he was toiling away blindly and I think that without me, he would have been some hardworking guy with loads of money but at the end of the day ask ‘Who am I?’”

“I would be so unhappy because I won’t know what I’m doing,” Raja agrees. “It’s been unintentionally implanted in me to figure this out quick because I had parents to support and can’t afford to mess around. Without him, I would grow old and never know why I put in so much effort.”

Both have seen the Fariz without the Raja or the Raja without the Fariz—shiny products of the industry that have no soul. The dynamic duo, who met at the *Ah Boys to Men 3* audition, found a common love for hip-hop and a teamwork that set the foundation for their career. The mutual help to appropriately slow down and speed up became a symphony of perfect synergy.

“Some friends you have to spend x amount of time to really understand, this one don’t need,” Raja says, affirming the chemistry right off the bat. “And you can’t fake that. To have a buddy beside me to figure it out one step at a time together suddenly changes the whole paradigm. Without a pillar to lean on, a lot of things would be scary, sad and not handled well.

“I have no other friends like that. It’s incredible because we don’t tell each other what to do. Unless it’s something really bad, 95 percent of the time we influence by example. We take turns learning, it’s almost like doing this married.”

“We’re never gonna be apart. Even when we didn’t talk for three months, there’s the connection and you know he’s not cheating on you,” Fariz jokes. “This is the true platonic soulmate love.”

It’s that cliché about the journey over the destination. There’s no need to ask what the next big project is. As they once brilliantly declared, the most exciting thing for them is what is happening now.

“We’re focused on freestyling. What we want is what we want next month. You can plan five years ahead, but things can take a turn. Virus outbreaks can happen,” Fariz remarks. They’re right. We’ve already seen several thwarted plans and rerouted paths this quarter, underscoring that nothing in this world is certain. It may even be ending. But it takes a tilt shift to see the good in terrible times; to stand for the principles we live by, to better the people we love and to appreciate the beauty in chaos. ■



THE POWER OF CABLES

WORDS BY JOSH SIMS

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Portfolio

Feature

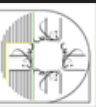
WE ARE ALL CONNECTED BY GLASS FIBRE LINES, NO WIDER THAN A HUMAN HAIR AND RUNNING FOR THOUSANDS OF KILOMETRES UNDER THE OCEANS.



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Feature

It's not often that one thinks of Google as being a heavy engineering firm. But right now it's laying cable. And it's some cable: at 6,437KM long, the Dunant cable, which is set to come online this year, is expected to be able to transmit a record-breaking 250 terabits of data per second, the equivalent of the entire digitised Library of Congress three times a second. But what's striking is that this cable will run under the Atlantic, all the way from Virginia Beach in the US to the French Atlantic coast. Google, in fact, already has some 14 cables running through oceans across the globe, whizzing your emails, updates and cat videos to all and sundry, streaming your box sets, feeding your news.

Indeed, look beyond Google's efforts and the planet is criss-crossed with cables, each not much thicker than a garden hose but carrying multiple pairs of glass fibre lines about the width of a human hair. These fibre optic strands are wrapped in urethane and copper, then again in urethane, and sometimes stainless steel or Kevlar. The cables are laid at a torturously slow pace—around 10KM/HR—by specially commissioned ships using a kind of plough that digs a small trench on the ocean floor before lowering the cable, the trench then being covered over with sand by the sway of the sea. Closer to shore, specially constructed concrete channels might be built on the seabed. And, for all that you might think you live in a seemingly wireless world, it's these fragile, physical arteries that carry 99 percent of *all* international communications.

"The fact that these cables even exist is just so counter-intuitive," says Nicole Starosielski, associate professor at New York University and author of *The Undersea Network*. "When we think of media now we think of the likes of teleportation, of it being this futuristic thing, when in fact it's a long-distance engineering structure. It just doesn't resonate with our notions of the digital revolution, of the Internet as being this ethereal thing. People struggle to grasp that it all goes down a tube."

That seemingly old-fashioned idea of sending our messages through a cable is, for sure, rather old-fashioned. The first

undersea telegraphic cable was laid 170 years ago, across the Channel between England and France. Just eight years later, two battleships met in the middle of the Atlantic, where they spliced together the two ends of a 4,023KM-long, 1.27CM-diameter cable, connecting two continents by telegraph for the first time.

It wasn't the most sophisticated by today's standards, though it did make use of a number of recent technological advances: the development of iron rope, the introduction of gutta-percha—a rubber-like tree sap found only within the British Empire—and the first deep-sea soundings of the Atlantic by the US Navy. It wasn't all that reliable either. The 1858 cable, which took three attempts to lay, failed after just a few weeks. And it certainly wasn't the fastest. Queen Victoria sent the first short message to US President Buchanan by Morse code. It took 17 hours to get there.

But the idea of connecting the world through what were then strands of copper would be revolutionary. It only took one notable success—the British government being able to send a message to its army in Canada countermanding an order to return to England, saving a small fortune in the process—for the commercial benefits of fast communications to become evident, inspiring a boom in cable-laying. Today there are some 400 cables in operation, stretching over 1.2 million kilometres, enabling communication at speeds around 16 million times faster than your typical home Internet connection. And there are many more to come, each more sophisticated than the last.

Indeed, for all that the basic premise remains the same—a pipe on the seafloor—what goes into that pipe is advancing all the time. New types of fibres and more sophisticated modulation have been among developments introduced since the 1980s, as have improved optical amplifiers—undersea cables need these travel trunk-sized devices every 60KM or so to boost the signal.

There are now experiments looking at the development of fibres with multiple cores to allow multiple optical signals; or fibres big enough to allow those signals to follow different paths through the same fibre; or using fibres that work by opening additional wavelengths for transmission, such as the Oregon-to-Japan Faster Cable built by a consortium comprising Google and five Asian telecom companies. Last year even the International Space Station took delivery of hardware, devised to make a kind of optical fibre, massively improved in its transmission quality—the only problem being that it has to be made in low or zero gravity.

But in the medium term it all looks to be about trying to pack more fibre pairs into a cable, though even the very latest



Feature

cable designs can only handle 16 at most. You can't just make the cable thicker because it needs a lot of power to function, which can only be drawn from either end. Improved electronics at the landing stations—where the cables touch terra firma at either end—may boost speeds. And in fact it's improvements here, rather than in the cables, that have driven costs—calculated per gigabit per second transmitted—down.

"After all," says Geoff Bennett, director of solutions and technology for cable manufacturer Infinera, "for some companies ad revenue is being lost for every millisecond you're waiting for your video to load. That's why the longer you can keep a cable operational and competitive, the better. But the glass in fibre optics ages and every repair adds a small loss [to efficiency]. Ultimately any cable will have an economic performance and if the data it carries falls below a certain level, then it's no longer economical given its running costs."

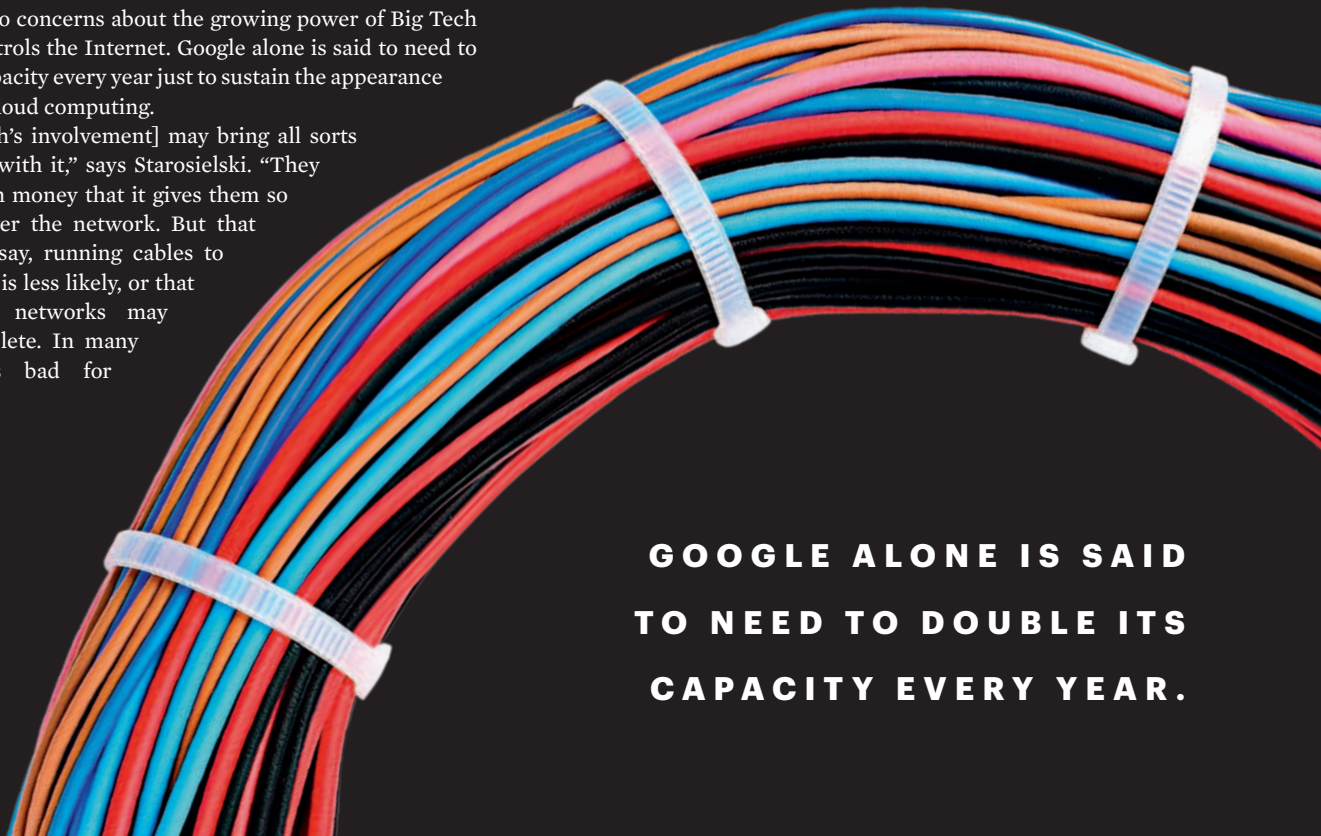
That may not be so much the case if you have bottomless pockets. Until recently most undersea cables were laid by telecommunications companies. They formed consortia—often between companies you'd imagine would be competitors—to share costs and risks. They aimed to use the cables to drive their own businesses. Then came private companies, which saw the opportunity to sell cable capacity to telecom companies and others. Now it's the technology giants that are getting in on the act to connect their data centres around the world. In 2018, Google, Amazon, Facebook and Microsoft together owned or leased over half of all undersea bandwidth, only adding to concerns about the growing power of Big Tech and who controls the Internet. Google alone is said to need to double its capacity every year just to sustain the appearance of seamless cloud computing.

"[Big Tech's involvement] may bring all sorts of questions with it," says Starosielski. "They have so much money that it gives them so much say over the network. But that means that, say, running cables to small islands is less likely, or that other cable networks may become obsolete. In many respects it's bad for

regional sovereignty. There's an argument that we need more diversity of network ownership, not less."

But then building undersea cables is a risky business, not least because it's still hugely expensive: an undersea cable can easily cost between USD350 million and USD500 million, and take three years to actually lay, not counting the years of planning required ahead of that. During the dotcom bubble, phone companies spent some USD20 billion laying undersea cables, only for the expected explosion in Internet traffic not to come, forcing them to offload capacity at bargain prices. Now there's another investment boom—80 percent of it from Big Tech—such that more cable was laid in 2018 than in the previous two decades combined. Facebook, Amazon and China Mobile are, for example, working on an ambitious cable to connect Hong Kong and Singapore to San Francisco. Climate change is, for the first time, even encouraging some to consider laying cable under the newly accessible Arctic, all just to shave off some of those milliseconds.

"It's a tough, challenging business in today's environment, a bit hit and miss," concedes Byron Clatterbuck, CEO of Seacom, a cable builder focused on demand in Africa, where it developed the continent's first private land cable. "None of the investors in our cable had a background in telecoms but they shared the vision we had because 10 years ago there was, effectively, no



**GOOGLE ALONE IS SAID
TO NEED TO DOUBLE ITS
CAPACITY EVERY YEAR.**



AT LEAST ONE OF THE WORLD'S UNDERSEA CABLES IS SAID TO BE DAMAGED EVERY COUPLE OF DAYS.

Internet connection in South Africa. But undoubtedly it was risky for them. There's a huge need for capital upfront, you're not going to see a return soon, there might be delays and over that time the market might change. In Africa there are risks of war or governments being inconsistent with regulations.

"In this business often the real money is made not in the cables but in all the equipment around them," he adds. "It's not surprising that the cable industry has had these massive boom-and-bust cycles that have seen lots of companies go bankrupt. Or that most of the cables being built now are by the likes of Facebook or Google. Building a cable network is just part of their operating costs now, much as in the past a company that needed to move goods around might have built a railway. They just want to move their goods—data—as cheaply as possible."

That riskiness is only exacerbated by the fact that cables, being physical things, have a shelf life of around 25 years and are easily damaged—at least one of the world's undersea cables is said to be damaged every couple of days.

"These cables are wonders of engineering, laid at the bottom of the ocean, under all that pressure and yet proving as reliable as they are—such that if one goes down, as [an Internet user] you'd hardly even know it," says Alan Mauldin, research director for telecom market research company Telegeography. "Yet look at the cable map of the world and in a way it's surprising that there are so few of them. It seems a lot but cables differ in capacity. They get old and need replacing. And, yes, they do get broken."

While tales of sharks biting into cables are apocryphal—though they may well be attracted to the cables because of the magnetic currents they generate—events do conspire to sever these essential communications links. Undersea rock slides, shifts in the tectonic plates, a geologically active seabed—as is the case across Southeast Asia—and storms can all cause

cables to break. An earthquake off the coast of Taiwan in 2006 knocked out eight cables, causing outages across the Far East. Hurricane Sandy, in 2012, knocked out several exchanges where cables linked the US and Europe.

It even brought about a change of thinking: with so many cables running into the New York region, Microsoft and Facebook decided that their jointly funded Marea cable—which came online in 2018—should come in further down the coast, in Virginia. It's a wise move, seeing as so many cables tend to be laid to meet in busy hubs on land, only consolidating risk. Starosielski's research suggests that if, for example, the cables off Egypt were broken it could take down a third of the global Internet.

But most cable faults—around two-thirds of them—are the product of deep-sea trawlers' fishing nets or ships' anchors messing with them. In 2007 fishermen managed to drag up kilometres of cable off the coast of Vietnam, disrupting communications in the region for months. The following year it was an abandoned anchor that damaged a cable and blacked out most of North Africa and the Persian Gulf.

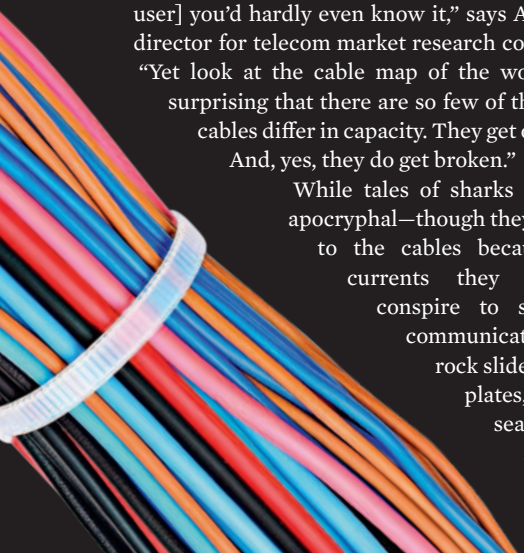
Small wonder then that there's talk too of the potential for these undersea cables to be tampered with maliciously, either tapped for the purposes of espionage or clandestinely cut to prevent communications in a way that would slow an economy. These cables, after all, run for thousands of isolated kilometres, making them especially vulnerable.

Trying to hack cables isn't a new idea either. During World War I the British severed Germany's international telegraphic cables, forcing it to ask the then still neutral US to deliver a transatlantic message via its series of diplomatic cables from Berlin to Mexico. But these cables passed through a relay station on the westernmost tip of England, where all traffic was intercepted by British Intelligence. The relevance of the telegram? It proposed a military alliance between Germany and Mexico, thus helping to bring the US into the war. Likewise during the Cold War US submarines tapped Soviet cables in the Sea of Okhotsk.

But these were pre-fibre optic times and to tap the lines underwater—as opposed to at the point where a cable comes into land—is another matter now. Forgetting for a moment that some 10,000 volts runs through these cables, the precise point of the tap—or the fault as it might appear—would be instantly revealed through a drop in signal power. A ship would be despatched to haul up the cable to effect a repair. Then the sheer amount of seriously encrypted data traffic would make collection and analysis in itself a gargantuan task.

"I'm not saying it can't happen and the NSA [National Security Agency] probably has a fleet of mini-sub that could do it. But it's not as easy as it might be shown in a James Bond movie," laughs Infinera's Bennett.

Not that this stops nations thinking, or worrying, about its feasibility. The US is said to have a submarine, the USS Jimmy Carter, outfitted for the job. And, in 2017, Australia blocked a plan for Huawei to install an undersea cable linking Sydney



Feature

with the Solomon Islands, effectively on the grounds of national defence. Instead Australia funded most of the Coral Sea Cable System itself. Beijing's interest in constructing undersea cables—and the perceived influence that comes with it—is a growing sore point in international relations.

And yet, despite all this, it looks as though cables are here to stay. No technology has yet come along to pose a challenge. When radio was developed in the 1920s, claims were made that cable had become obsolete, yet the lack of security on wireless transmissions helped keep the cable industry going. When communications satellites were first launched, they said the same. Cable traffic did see a dip, but the time delay in round-trip satellite transmission again had most communications going back down the wire. That hasn't stopped the likes of Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos proposing new satellite swarms to beam the Internet around the world. Perhaps Bezos doesn't know that, by one estimate, his proposed low-Earth orbit ring of satellites would together offer less capacity than a single fibre optic pair on the Marea cable.

Speed, of course, isn't everything. Slower cables get laid around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid the bottleneck of the Suez Canal, for example, where there are already a dozen cables. But it's seeking to avoid delay, or latency as they call it in the business, that is likely to keep demand for what has become the virtually instantaneous communications by cable to the fore.

The Internet is said to have a second digital revolution in the offing, as more and more unconnected parts of the world get online for the first time; as more and more technology becomes connected—the so-called Internet of things; as the likes of driverless cars become a reality; as the Internet enables the likes of remote surgery by robot. But the fact is that all of these advances depend not so much on the Internet as on the speed of connection—and, as yet, nothing trumps cable.

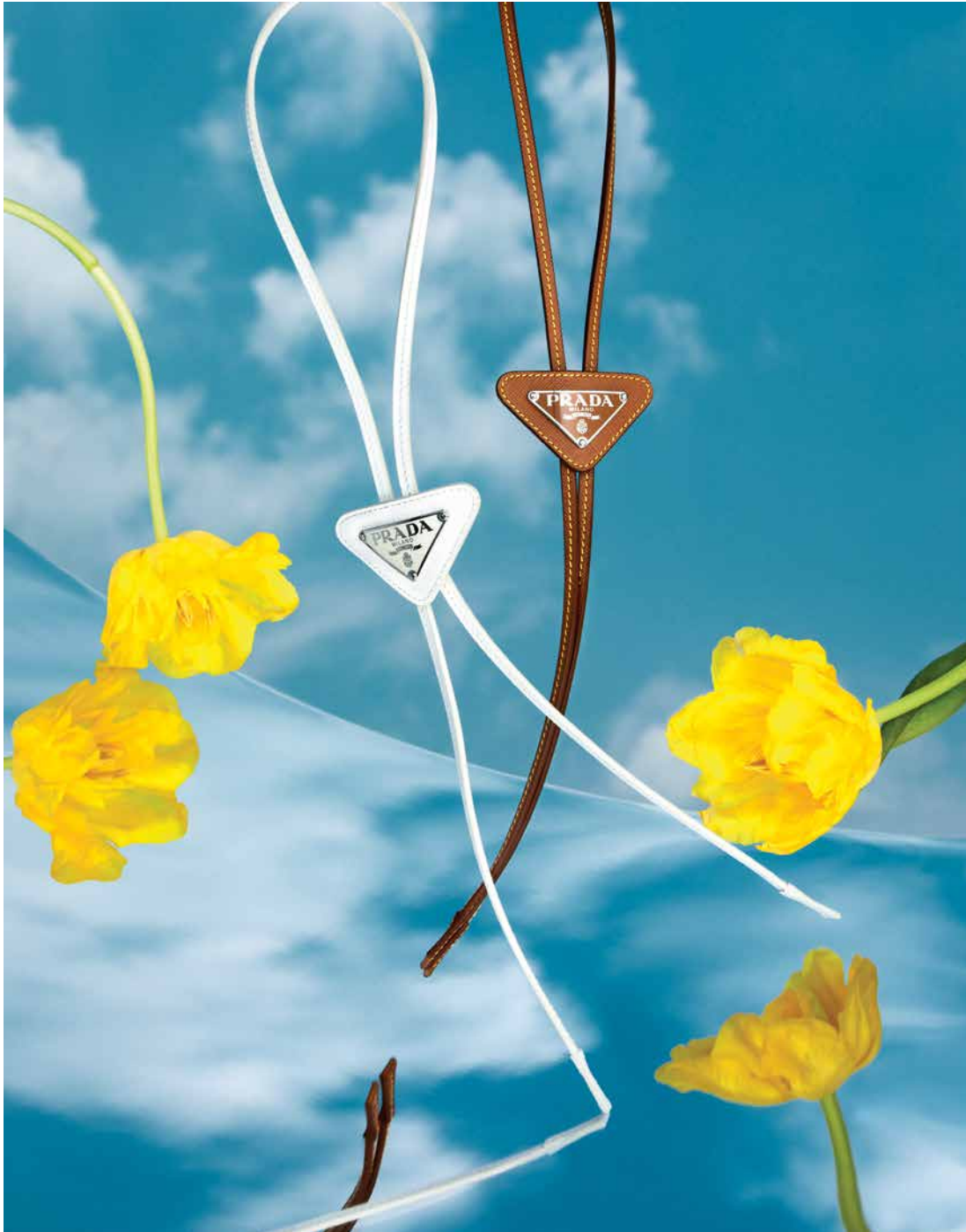
“Data traffic is increasing all the time and while that pressure grows there's a need to maintain the positive experience that consumers have [in using the Internet] to meet that expectation that it will work at a near instantaneous pace. We're already at speeds by which you could download, say, the entirety of *Game of Thrones* in 1/100th of a second, yet there's always demand for faster still,” says Jen Robertson, president of field operations for AT&T.

“We're only going to see a need for more capacity in these cables because I don't see anything coming along to replace them soon,” she adds. “Of course, we'll also increasingly talk about wirelessness and accessing the Internet through the devices we hold in our hands, wherever we may be. Most of us will probably keep thinking that the whole network is wireless. And yet so many of the things the Internet will allow, which we're yet to enjoy, will depend on cables. They may be the unsexy parts. But they make the whole thing work.” ■



Still life

3 | 5



Leather bolo ties,
both by **Prada**.





Lily Cho (with her son, Noah Lee Pollock): "My baby is his own person from the day he was born, so I remember to squeeze in as many cuddles and googly eyes as I can before he realizes he's too cool for mum."

Maternal instincts

Brooklyn-based photographer Andrew Kung asks four families in New York
to reflect on the importance of mothers and motherhood.

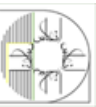


Photo essay

Joanne Kwong (with her sons, Milo and Griffin Hu):
"It took us a long time to become parents. There were some really tough days, filled with tears and prayers. Because of this, every moment as a mum feels like a gift. I've never laughed, loved or lived harder."





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Photo essay

Sang Hee Kim: "I'm grateful that mothers are integral to any family unit and that I'm able to see my kids grow up to pursue their dreams and successes."

Sung Yoon: "I'm grateful that my mum is someone who goes against a lot of Asian American mum norms and has a very open mind with the best intentions always."



Photo essay

Nicole Reksono: "I am grateful that my children grew up to be inherently good humans who are intelligent, compassionate and non-judgemental."

Ivanka Reksono: "My mum continues to guide me in a world that often makes me feel invisible. Mothers have the ability to make us feel seen and loved throughout our lives."

Jonathan Reksono: "I am grateful to have my mum in my life. Her kindness makes every day brighter."

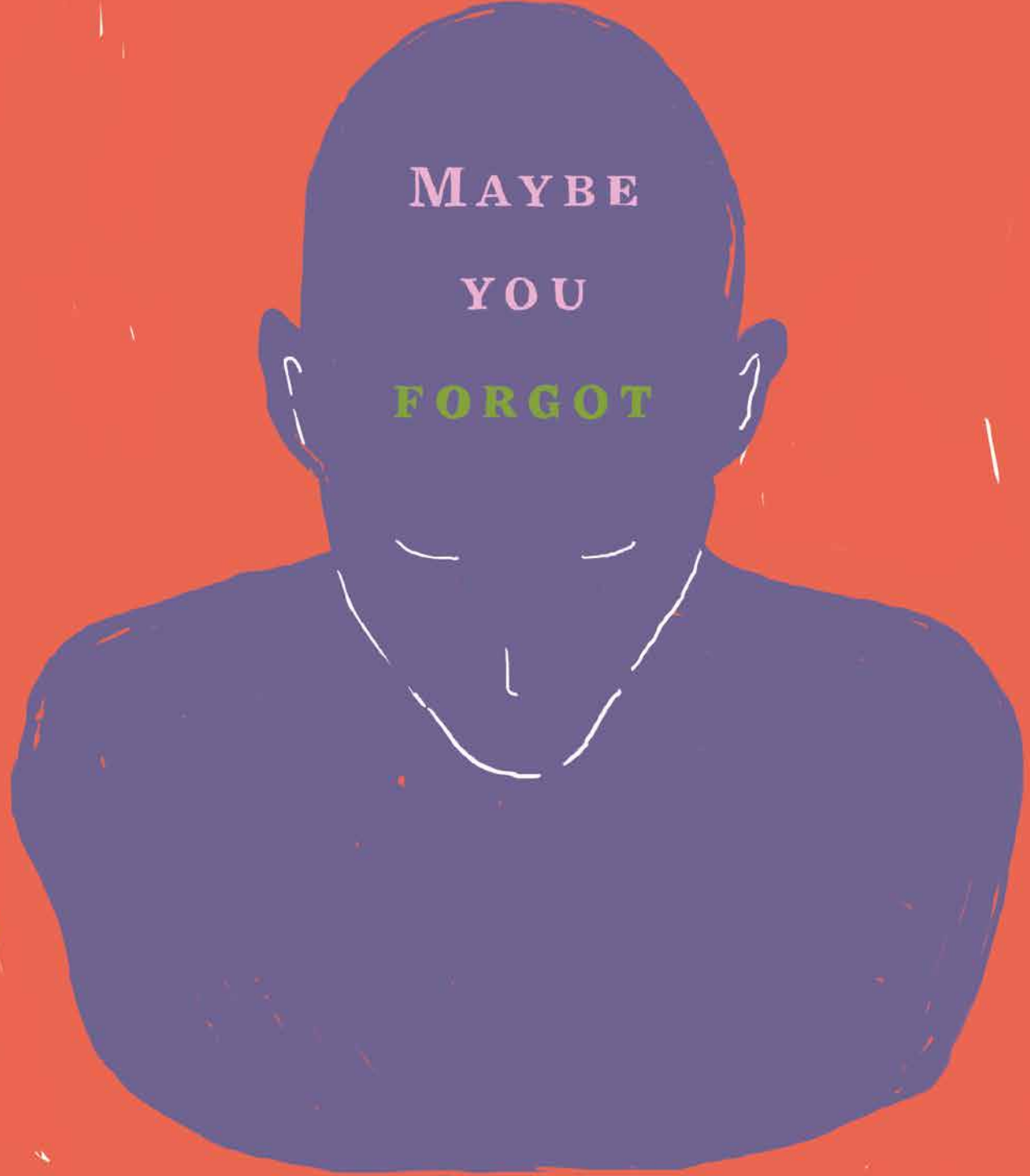




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*It often takes the loss of an ability, whether through illness or injury,
to realise the convenience of our routines and the myriad
of forces behind keeping them possible.*



WORDS BY JOY LING

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Feature

"WHAT A PIECE OF WORK IS A MAN! HOW NOBLE IN REASON!
HOW INFINITE IN FACULTY! IN FORM AND MOVING HOW EXPRESS AND ADMIRABLE!"

—HAMLET

Every day, you execute one of the most complicated operations in a perfect coordination of timing and you do it before anything else in the day. It's a series of multiple actions that involves a selection of muscles including the tractor spine, transverses, quadriceps, *rectus abdominis*, *gluteus maximus* and many more.

Of which, the contraction and relaxation phases of each work in seamless intervals to ensure a smooth transition of you throwing back your blanket, sitting up, bending your knees, swinging your legs over the side of the bed, pushing with your arms and shoulders, leaning your weight forward over your feet, then finally straightening your body. And sometimes we do this with our eyes closed.

Getting, or dragging at most times, yourself out of the bed is not the only fluent set of movements you do daily. As you start making your way to the bathroom, you are likely unconscious of the balancing act you are performing. Six-legged insects move stably at any given time, as with four-legged beasts that can keep a tripod on the ground when one limb is lifted onward. When we walk, as cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker has observed, we repeatedly tip over and break our fall in the nick of time.

This miracle of motion is what allows babies to master bipedal travel at just a little over a year of age, while highly advanced robots still struggle to manoeuvre awkward two-footed steps. As of now, bots capable of such locomotion hardly have the same frame as we do, let alone the gait of a combination of heel strike, roll to the ball of the feet and toe lift. That's just referring to flat terrain and walking in a straight line.

Yet, the operation of your legs does not even come close to the intricacies of your two upper limbs. You pick up and utilise your toothbrush effortlessly. The remarkable stunt requires an exact configuration of grasp shaped with your fingers and pressure holding the toothbrush in place without dropping it. More astonishing then that these same hands can adapt to an unparalleled number of grips specific to the function at hand, pun intended.

"Such mighty instruments are the hands of a man," ancient Greek physician Galen has famously praised, expressing admiration for the tool-like attributes that surpasses the defensive endowments of other animals, "...and also gives you, by the handwriting, the means of conversing with Plato, with Aristotle, with Hippocrates and others of the ancients."

Of course, the means to convey thoughts and ideas is not limited to inscriptions alone. They began with spoken language from thousands or millions of years ago, depending on your chosen narrative. As you open your mouth to utter the first coherent words of the day, you partake in a skill that other primates can only mimic to a finite extent.

Apart from the expanse of vocabulary and their associations registered in your frontal lobe, Broca's area, Wernicke's area and their connecting band of nerve fibres called *arcuate fasciculus* in the brain cooperate to handle the understanding and formation of your speech. Additionally, as demonstrated by recovering stroke patients, your motor cortex is equally vital. By controlling the muscles of your throat, jaw, lips and the extraordinary gymnast that is your tongue, discernible sounds are patterned.

"What?" Your spouse responds. Or perhaps not so discernible after all. As you turn back ready to repeat your morning slur more audibly, there is no doubt that the person before you is your spouse. Without sounding like a plot for a domestic thriller, how do you know if someone is indeed your family member? At the base level, you recognise their face in a matter of microseconds, a detection that programmers have used years of database training and human-input algorithms to replicate in artificial intelligence.

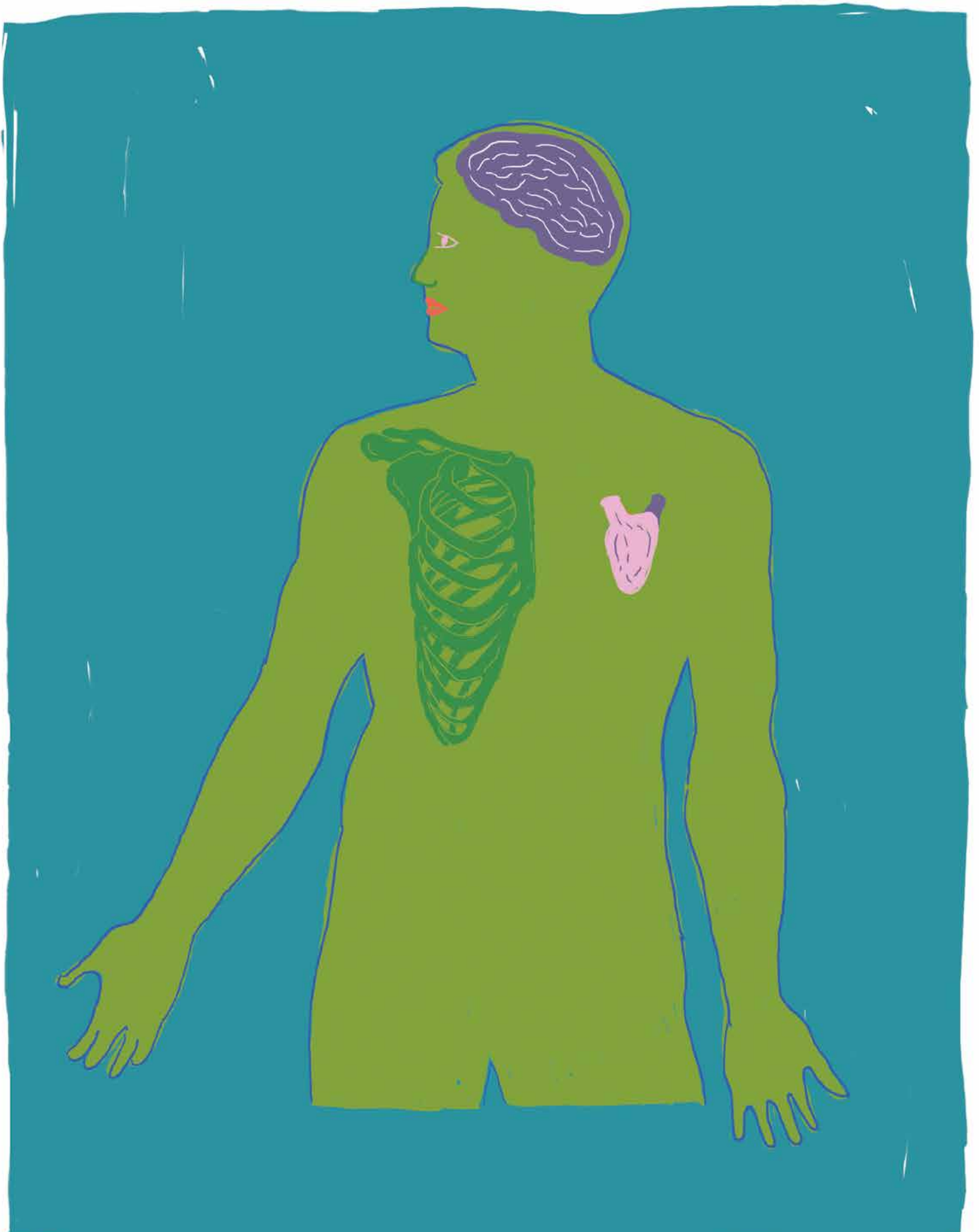
Besides the 205 neurons that biology professor Doris Tsao of California Institute of Technology has uncovered to be responsible for this, your eyes work to piece the features together, which demands not just colour, but depth perception as well. When matched with our own mental record, identification is achievable even when the image is distorted, ie. when sporting extra wrinkles or even just having a different facial expression.

Right now, your spouse looks a little annoyed. You are able to ascertain with relative accuracy almost automatically. Your amygdala fires off, reading into body language, facial cues and tone. Deciphering is only feasible with an unimpaired limbic system, a feat not easily accessible with autism or Asperger's syndrome. As social creatures, the competence to infer and reciprocate intentions beyond diction is incredibly necessary for survival.

Though not as indispensable as your capacity to breathe or keep your heart beating—tasks you are barely conscious of or even able to regulate for the latter. Still, these activities continue to run without hiccup for a greater portion of your life and are even fitted with a built-in software of back-up processes like clotting a cut or raising internal temperatures to kill viruses should things go wrong. Your body is truly a wonderland, without the sensual connotation of John Mayer's hit (or with, it's your body, your choice).

With its vast number of functions, it's no surprise it appears peppered within our language, as *Anatomies: The Human Body, Its Parts and The Stories They Tell* author Hugh Aldersey-Williams points out. We pay through the nose, cut our teeth, wear our heart on our sleeves, lend a helping hand, have two left feet or even act like an... anus.





Feature

As much as Galen was right about our hands, we've surely come some way from his theory of the brain, heart and liver governing the corresponding head, thorax and abdomen. We certainly contain more fluids than Hippocrates' four humours: blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. We possess more than five senses, comprising pain, balance and temperature to name a few, and are still learning how immeasurably complex our physical bodies are.

"I challenge any man to produce, in the joints and pivots of the most complicated or the most flexible machine that was ever contrived, a construction more artificial, or more evidently artificial, than that which is seen in the vertebrae of the human neck," philosopher William Paley states in his argument *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature*, likening the human body to the elaborate pocket watch, impossible to assemble without a maker's intervention.

We have not even fully discovered all the motivations behind our gestures. Science still has no definite answer for why we yawn or why you now feel the urge to do it the more you think about it. While all the marvels this product of evolution or design of deity is equipped with can scarcely be encompassed here, there are some highlights worth being grateful for.

BRAIN

It's not plausible to summarise this behemoth in a couple of sentences, especially when researchers consider its storage capacity to be virtually unlimited. With an estimate of 86 billion neurons adding up to a quadrillion connections, information can travel almost over 400km/h. So, a piece of brain tissue the size of a grain of sand can contain a billion synapses.

EYE

Weighing approximately 28g at 2.5cm in diameter, the visual instrument is composed of two million separate working parts. As the second most complex organ after the brain, it processes 36,000 bits of data an hour with the body's fastest muscles. The extraocular muscles proficiently allow your eyes to focus in the same direction in a single 50ms flick, and doing it persistently will not tire them out as quickly as making you seem like an extremely suspicious person.

You'll be surprised to know they carry out their responsibilities unflinching and it's your tired brain that's guilty of not interpreting their signals faithfully. Our comparably technicolour vision is derived from their 120 million rods in the retina and 6.5 million cones responding to detailed hues, going as far as to detect 500 shades of grey.

NOSE

Key to our retro-nasal olfaction where your chips taste more than just salt on crinkly potato with the added whiff, the nose grants us to taste more than any other animal. Surprisingly we can sniff up to a trillion different scents and ace the recall department at 65 percent precision after an entire year, as opposed to visual recall which declines to 50 percent after three months.

HEART

You've probably learnt in school how it pumps around 4,730 litres of blood 100,000 times a day. Oh, and through close to 10,000km, which gives it a power output of between one and five watts. The daily energy output is equivalent to driving a truck to the moon and back over a lifetime, according to British general practitioner and writer Dr Hilary Jones.

HAND

While we're all aware of our advanced opposable thumbs, the unique flexibility in metatarso-phalangeal joints also contributes to the great torque facility in the fingers. This means that rotating your pinkie to meet your thumb is more impressive than you think.

Its sophistication, paired with wrist deviation, permits another mode of communication—sign language.

With 20 major joints, 27 bones, 34 muscles, 48 nerves and at least 123 ligaments, it makes sense to have nearly an entire quarter of the cerebral cortex devoted to its control. In fact, a hand transplant takes longer than the average heart transplant. And let's not even get started on fingerprints.

SKIN

Ah, our largest organ can be stretched out to an average of 1.95sqm. Consisting of millions of blood vessels and thermoreceptor nerve endings, we're practically wrapped in a thermometer. Aside from temperature, we are also able to indicate heat, pressure and vibration amongst many other sensations.

It appears as both thin, delicate eyelids, but has a durable protein layer called keratin to protect from germs and toxins. We shed a whole layer of epidermis every 24 hours and have this barrier protecting our internal from the exterior renewed completely every 28 days.

BONES

Having heavy bones could never work as an excuse for weight when they take up only generally 15 percent of your body mass. Its dry weight is sometimes even lighter than some plastic replica skeletons used for medical purposes. The roughly 206 bones (because some fuse with age) are comparable with copper and cast iron in strength, typically resisting a 1.5-tonne load per square centimetre before breaking.

Its structure alone is already optimised for endurance. The tubular column of 'holes' constitute a distinctly engineered network of struts situated where they are likely to experience forces upon. Only vulnerable in torsion, the bones in a child's arm is enough to support the weight of, say, a family car. Altogether, the skeleton makes up a highly developed mechanical system. Just picture holding up a shopping bag and all the hinges compressing and stretching where the weight passes through from hand to arm, arm to shoulder, collar bone to shoulder blade, down the spine into the pelvis and distributing through each leg on the ground. What a piece of work is a man! 🦍



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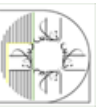
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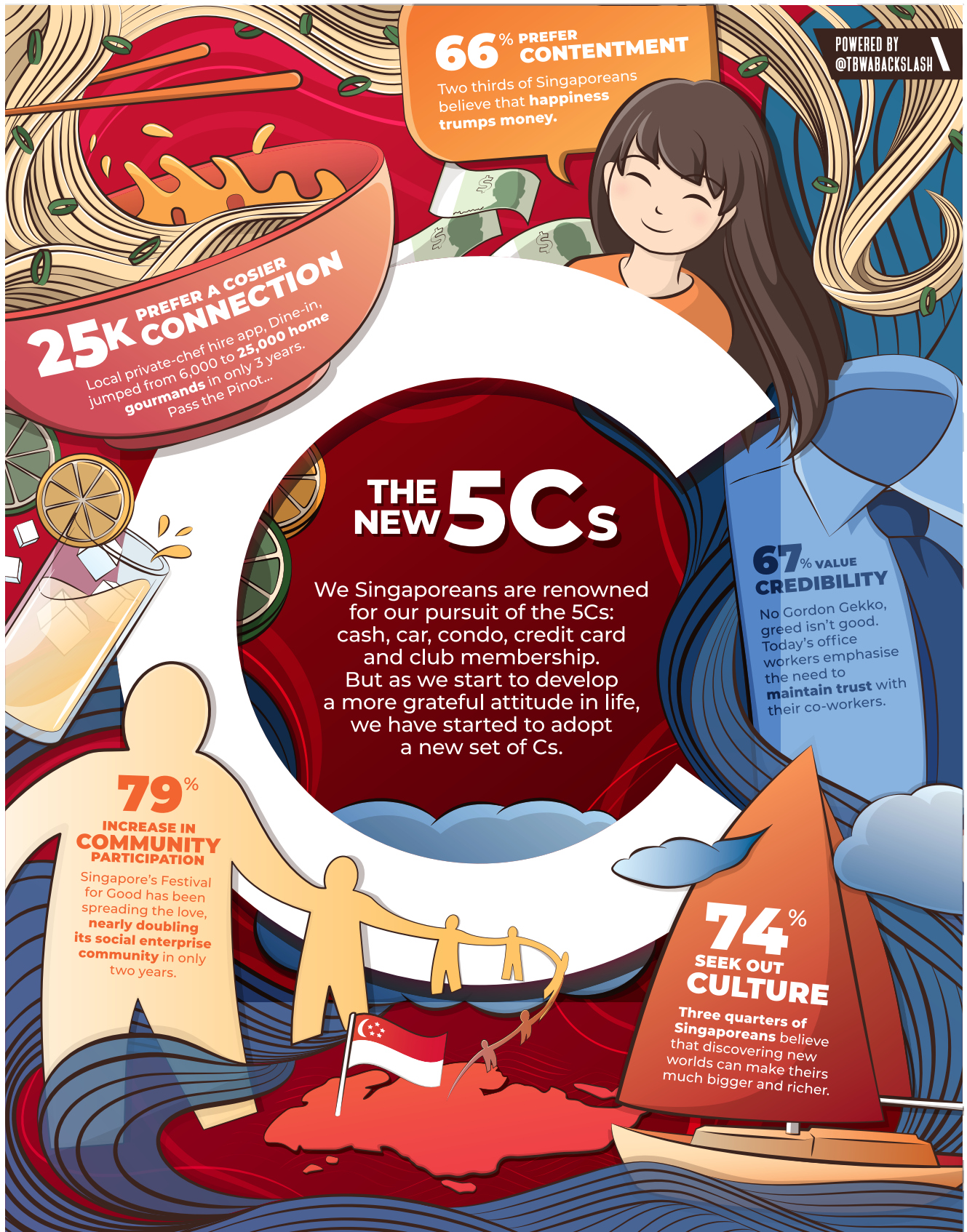
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By the numbers



Portfolio

Feature

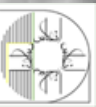
The
story
of
Huey
Lewis
is
not
a
tragedy

Suddenly and without warning, Huey Lewis lost the ability to hear amplified music. Now, from his remote Montana ranch, the beloved pop star is on a search for answers.

WORDS BY DAVE HOLMES

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAYAN ASGHARNIA

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If you lived through the 1980s, you will understand the strange and special thrill of receiving a concerned voice mail from Huey Lewis. "I'm going to see you tomorrow, but I need you to drive real slow," Lewis tells me, his indelible rasp turned fatherly. "There are a couple of three days a year when the roads are really bad, man. And you're in 'em."

It's -15 degrees the next morning when I drive to his ranch, an hour outside Missoula, Montana, on narrow state highways as much ice as road. When I pull in carefully, as instructed—there he is, a solitary figure standing in the snow, an icon in camouflage, surrounded by snowcapped mountains. This is a place where Lewis can do what he likes while he waits to find out whether he'll have another chance to do what he loves.

We're months away from the release of *Weather*, the first album of original Huey Lewis and the News music since 2001, and Lewis doesn't know if he'll be able to perform again. Two years ago, he lost the ability to hear amplified music, to find pitch, to sing live. "When it's really bad, I'm completely deaf almost," he says. The title *Weather* was originally a nod to age and to the band's breakthrough, *Sports*, but there's a newer meaning than what we're used to getting from Lewis. It's possible that with a lot of living still ahead, his last gig is behind him. "We're getting a little weather now," he tells me. "It's not a perfectly clear day."

He shakes it off. "You wanna go on a sortie?"

Lewis sizes me up, grabs some cold-weather gear out of his mudroom, and then I'm bouncing around an expansive ranch near the Idaho border in an ATV wearing Lewis's snow pants. As we bob around the duck blinds, over the irrigation ditches, he points out a bald eagle in a tree, a herd of whitetail deer bounding past. He's content here. This is entertainment for Lewis now that he can't hear television or music.

It's particularly cruel that music sounds like distortion to him because the albums he made with the News were meticulous pop-rock, with the smoothest harmonies this side of the Beach Boys. It's difficult to imagine from today's perspective, but after the release of *Sports* in 1983, Lewis was ubiquitous and well-liked. He had every subset of the 1980s American teenager on his side, like he was Ferris Bueller's cool uncle. To know Huey Lewis and the News was to love them, whatever else you naturally enjoyed. You could, like me, not play sports and play the hell out of *Sports*. Lewis represented a sensibly sexy mainstream masculinity: dimpled chin, haircut that rejected any

recognisable trend, body just Soloflexed enough to pull off a red suit. The coolest guy at your dad's work. He's still craggly handsome as he approaches his 70th birthday, a hero in a Clint Eastwood western.

In his upstairs office is a framed copy of the top 200 albums from *Billboard* magazine's 30 June 1984 issue, the week *Sports* finally hit number one, nine and a half months after its release. Behind *Sports* in the top 10: *Thriller*, *Born in the USA*, the *Footloose* soundtrack. *Purple Rain* was released that week; Madonna would debut 'Like a Virgin' at the first Video Music Awards weeks later. "This is the good stuff," I sigh out loud. Summer 1984 was possibly the greatest summer in pop-music history due to the genre gumbo of MTV and Top 40 radio. It was the height of the monoculture and Lewis sat on top of it, with weapons-grade likability and a sound that didn't quite conform to the trends. Although he gets lumped in with the superstars of the '80s, the songs of *Sports*—"The Heart of Rock & Roll", "Heart and Soul", "I Want a New Drug", "If This Is It"—don't sound dated. They don't even sound like the '60s R&B that inspired them. They're timeless.

For the past three decades, Lewis has been relying on one good ear. His right one went out just before a gig in Boston in the mid-'80s, and a specialist in San Francisco told him to get used to it. "You only need one ear," he says. "Brian Wilson had one ear."

Then came 27 January 2018.

Lewis was backstage at a News gig in Dallas, and all at once the opening act turned into distortion. "They're playing and it sounds like it's warfare... like there's an airplane taking off." He went through with the gig, but even the sound in his in-ear monitors was a jumble. He couldn't find pitch in his own music. "It was the worst night of my life." An ear specialist put him on a steroid regimen for 28 days. No change. He saw a rheumatologist, then an immunologist, then an otolaryngologist at Stanford. The best any of them could do was to diagnose it and barely. "They tell me I have Ménière's disease, but nobody knows what Ménière's is. It's a syndrome based on the symptoms." They also don't know what causes it or how to cure it. His doctors have put him on a low-salt diet, but he's not sure it's helping. The condition might go away as it came on. It also might not.

Two years have passed since Lewis has done a proper gig and the musical energy is all pent-up. In his kitchen, he pulls up music—the Rance Allen Group—then starts

singing along: "Ain't no need of crying when it's raining," Rance and Lewis sing to me, "cuz crying only adds to the rain." Then the harmonica comes out and he plays along, and there is so much pure joy radiating from him I'm almost sorry I'm going to die in his kitchen.

We can have this moment because the track is compressed, hitting our ears with the force of an iPhone speaker. "Doing this with a proper band," he says, "with bottom end and drums roaring away and all that? That's going to be hard." Lewis wears hearing aids that play a series of five tones when he puts them in each morning—"It's an F chord," he tells me—and if he can hear all of them, that's a level six hearing day. Today is his 25th level six hearing day in a row, a new record. If he racks up another week or two of sixes, he'll try to sing along to loud music. "What I got to do is get stabilised for a month, and if this works, then we'll try a little rehearsal experiment. If that works, then we'll try a full-blown rehearsal. If that works, then maybe book a gig. But I'm a ways away from that yet."

What if the music never returns?

"I haven't allowed myself to go there yet," Lewis says. "I keep thinking I could maybe sing again. I get down sometimes, but it's better to remember that life is okay. I've had a great run." He is as upbeat as a man can be when he's beginning to speak about himself in the past tense.

The temptation is to paint Lewis as a tragic figure, out in the middle of nowhere, waiting to see if his music career can come back to him as quickly and mysteriously as it left him. But I don't want to write a tragedy, not about Huey Lewis. A positive outlook is the one thing all the doctors have prescribed, and after all the plays I got out of *Sports* and *Fore!* and *Picture This*, I owe him mine. If you know Lewis, then you love him, and what is love if not belief and support?

When we check in several weeks later, the goalpost has moved again. "I had to cancel rehearsal," he texts me. After nine weeks at a six, three days before his first attempt to sing along to live music in two years, his hearing went to a two. All at once. He doesn't know why and the doctors don't either. The guy is curious and passionate about a million things, but the one mystery he can't solve is the one that keeps him from singing.

So now we wait to find out whether there will ever be another Huey Lewis and the News gig, and as we do, all we know for sure is that there ain't no need of crying when it's raining. In the meantime, Lewis is just being patient, trying his hardest to adjust to the quiet. ■





The pastiche of an artist

Taking the sum of the whole to make sense of the life and times of Mojoko.

WORDS BY WAYNE CHEONG



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"There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of coloured glass that have been in use through all the ages."

—Mark Twain

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“Being raised in various countries has taught me to rely heavily on visual communication because of language barriers. Images transcend words and are a great way of conveying messages and ideas.”

—Harper’s Bazaar Singapore’s ‘Artist Spotlight: Mojoko Shares His Inspiration, Influences and Favourite Galleries’

There are many stories behind the name, Mojoko, and they are all as true as stories can be. Here is one of them.

Before there was the artist, Mojoko; before the collages; before now, he was Steve Lawler. In 2005, he was playing around with the hues for a project when he glanced at the colour picker and noticed that magenta (M), yellow (Y) and black (K) had the value ‘O’. In his mind, this appeared to him as ‘MOYOKO’.

“I like how that sounds,” Mojoko says, “because it reminds me of *A Clockwork Orange*. Y’know the Moloko Plus cocktail. Also, at that time I was also into mojitos.”

He switched out the ‘Y’ for a ‘J’ (“Just like Spanish.”) and it became his art moniker for his entire career. Mojoko. It sounds like it could be from anywhere: Africa, Indonesia, Japan?

If a name does not give up its history, that future is a blank canvas. It’s a sort of freedom, especially for the creative. Anonymity allows for experimentation.

“A lot of people don’t even know that I’m white when they see my art,” Mojoko says. “They think I’m some cool Japanese kid and I don’t mind that at all. It’s a branding exercise. ‘I bought a Mojoko piece’. That is cool as opposed to ‘I bought a Steve Lawler piece. Now that’s weird.”

His moniker possesses far more of a reputation than his real name. A search for ‘Mojoko’ brings results leading to the artist. Google ‘Steve Lawler’ and the top results are about a British house music producer and DJ of the same name.

His biography begins with this, in some form or another: “Born in Iran, raised in Hong Kong and educated in Europe.” His far-travelled origins are an important facet to his work. Mojoko’s father was in aviation, teaching pilots, thus the constant moving. “It paints a picture that I am a product of worldly travels. A hybrid of different cultures...” Pause. “Well, maybe less of the Iran stuff but certainly Hong Kong was very influential.”

Hong Kong is a neon chaos with its lambent signs and city sounds. It is the early ’90s and Mojoko will spend his teenage life in the Pearl of the Orient. He remembers the smoky, half-lit game halls, the *Rambo* poster with Chinese script, the advertisements. While Mojoko was able to pick up bits and pieces of the local dialect, the language settles on him like a weight, as though his head is in a dense fog. “I never had that same inspiration in England, but when I see road signs and public warnings, you become more intrigued that you don’t know what they mean; the modern idea of being confused.”

Armed with a graphic design degree from Brighton University and a two-year Fabrica residency working on *Colors* magazine, Mojoko would further his career at Diesel. He’d move to Singapore, working for OgilvyOne Singapore before launching *Kult* in 2007, *Eyeyah!* in 2017 and *The Unusual* in 2019. Through it all, Mojoko was working on his art.

“It was in 2005 or 2006. I started with screen-printing,” he says. “The first image I did was of a kid spitting on the floor. I got that from an old school book that taught you not to spread diseases. I put ‘Mojoko’ on that and then I was invited to do a group show and I plastered ‘Mojoko’ on my work that was sold.”

From pulpy comic books to B-grade movie posters to advertisements of yore, Mojoko has amassed quite a collection with images going back to the middle of the 20th century. Picture frames pile up in his house. Stacks of magazines and reference books line bookshelves. He has silkscreen frames that he thinks has some value to them. “I think some would want to buy those.” He’s, in no uncertain terms, a hoarder. “But I had to tone it down when I had Babyman. So, I’m just digital hoarding now, just scanning images.”

“Collage allows the opening up of conscious, which is very direct... it’s also a way of looking at what you are consuming all the time.”

—John Stezaker

Leave it to the cubists to come up with an art form involving glue. Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso championed this movement, working with several mediums to create assemblages. Materials are usually made of paper or photographs and it was not uncommon to include three-dimensional forms as well.



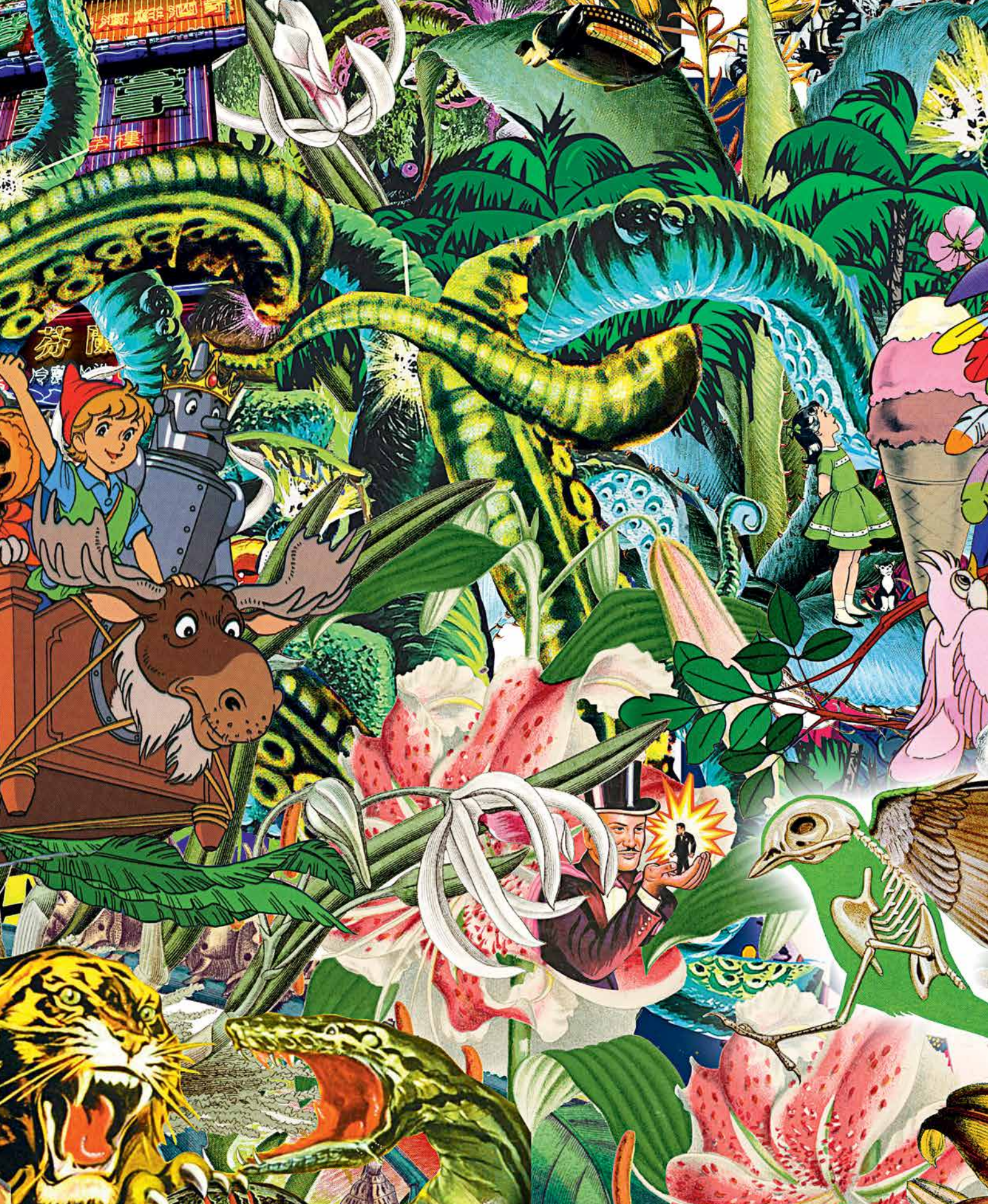
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Feature

While a multidisciplinary in his field, Mojoko is best known for his collages that draw inspiration from trash culture—“artistic or entertainment expressions” that appeal to audiences through its “low-quality and culturally impoverished content”.

“Back then, they had a lot of random ’80s films. Remember *Rentaghost*?” Mojoko asks. “This stupid show was the first thing I watched. I was always attracted to the mysterious, the obscure, the occult elements. I’ve started looking up Peranakan art. The periodical archives section of the Central Library opens up all these resources. All the HDB and home magazines have all these amazing materials.

“Everything you see now is polished. It’s homogeneous. When I see a Bollywood poster or a cheesy cyborg poster from the ’80s, it sings to me. It’s hard to describe it, but they do.”

Mojoko eschews the blockbuster movies. He takes a hard right, swerving away from the mainstream and looking for the underdogs. After a while, it gets challenging, especially when he has mined almost everywhere.

“In my travels, I make it a point to head to the second-hand bookstores, junk stores, flea markets. I’ll look for old-school stuff. I’ve been doing this for 15, 16 years and I’ll still drop into places like Past Times Collectibles or Junkie’s Corner to see if they have anything new in. It’s about constantly finding new stimulus. Who knows, I could luck out and discover a box filled with Mexican cowboy films.”

He does watch the occasional tentpole film from time to time. Thumbing towards his son, a gangly kid who is now sprawled all over a chair as he watches something on YouTube. “I watched *Lego Batman* with him.”

Mojoko affectionally refers to his kid as Babyman, which sounds like the name of an alternative singer from the ’90s. Babyman is of mixed parentage (English and Singaporean Chinese) and it’s clear that Mojoko is willing to make concessions for him if the need should ever arise. Babyman was also the main reason that Mojoko set up *Eyeyah!*, a magazine to teach social issues to children using creativity.

“Inspired by B-movie thrillers and film noir, the artist deconstructs antiques, traditional paintings and objects by infusing them with contemporary culture. The installation will feature over 30 new artworks in varying traditional mediums, such as rosewood furniture, lanterns, ceramics and glass but with a modern twist.”
—from the press release of Sansiri House’s *The Secret Room*

The original idea was to have an opening party at the art space next to Jam at Siri House on the last weekend of March. It will be filled with revellers and potential buyers, with 35 pieces of artwork on display.

“But due to the pandemic, it didn’t feel right to have an opening night,” Mojoko says. “So, now it’s a residency where I’ll come in for the next two months and work on some of the pieces. When someone buys something, I’ll replace it with something else. There might be more government restrictions in the future, I don’t know, but that’s the plan for now.”

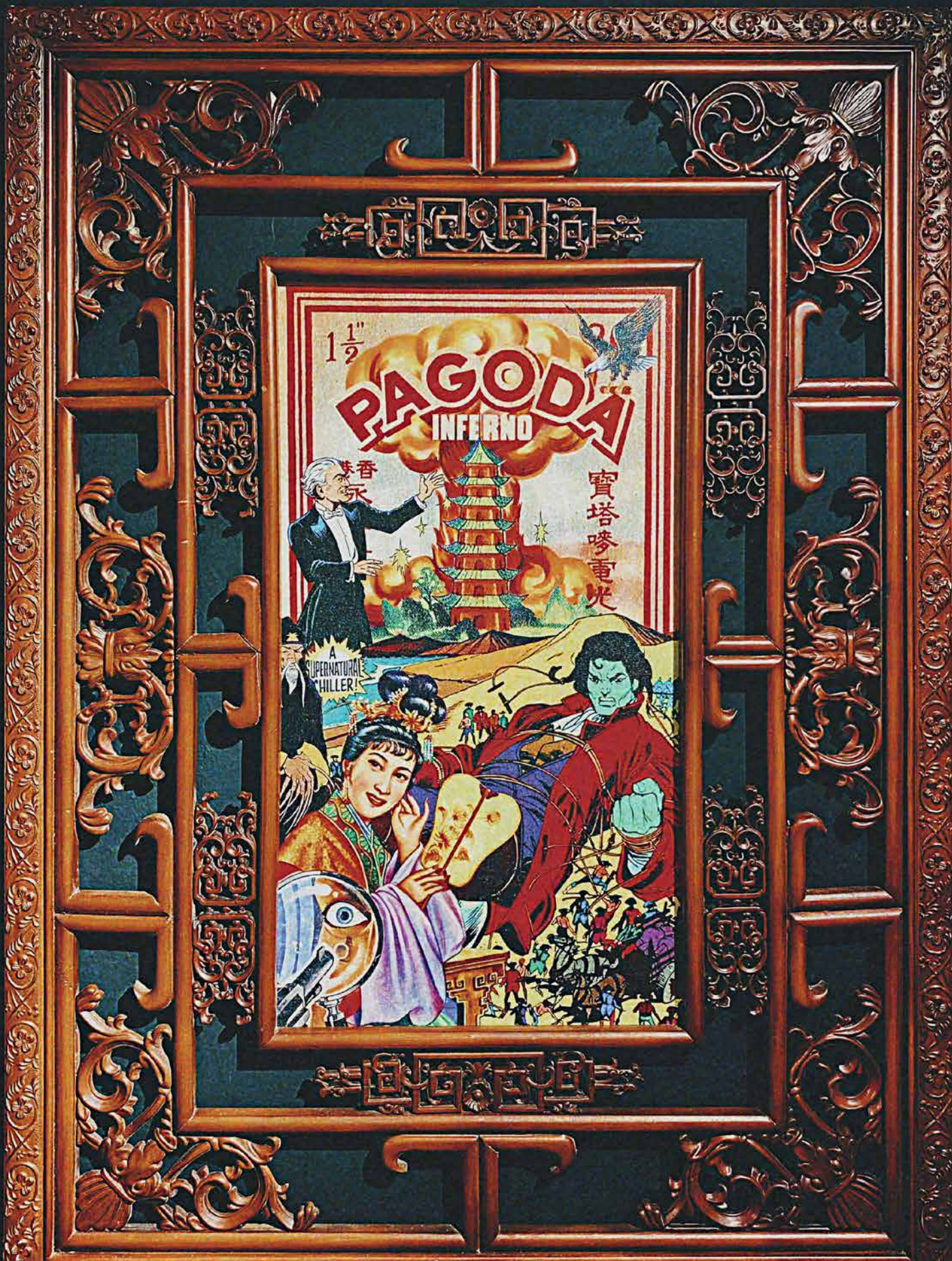
A prevailing theme accompanies each of his exhibitions. Ever since he started on this artistic endeavour, it has mostly been about the mash-up of B-movies and traditional artwork.

Items at the exhibition will be posted online, forming a virtual installation that people from all over can look at. Each artwork will be replete with information about the process, with an inclusion of before and after images of said piece.

On the day of the interview, collage-covered lampshades hang from the ceiling; some of the framed art pieces hang from the walls. The light of the sun flits through a gap between a draped curtain across the display window. An orange Chinese side cabinet sits in the corner of the room. Silkscreened stencils inspired by William S Burroughs’ *Naked Lunch* adorns the exterior. Mojoko puts a hand on the surface. “You see these Chinese cabinets and you’d imagine Burroughs having something like this in his place because he’s so bohemian. If he had one, it would be super-weird, right?” That’s how it got started: popular culture placed into traditional Chinese elements; this corrosion of traditional cultures. Sure, his gold standard for any of his artwork is that it has to be something he’d want to see in his own home, but Mojoko wants the experience of being surprised. If not, why bother?

It’s the details of the everyday. You might have seen a painting a thousand times but on closer look, you’ll uncover the mischief; the devil’s in the details.

Take ‘The Curse of the Golden Skull’. The original glass painting was discovered in an antique store in Singapore. Fairly innocuous, the scene has two women seated at the table playing Go, while two other women stand to the side, looking on as spectators. The background is a river that blends into the horizon and the sky. That’s what we see.



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Feature

*“The only art I’ll ever study is
stuff that I can steal from.”
—David Bowie*

When Mojoko sets his eyes on it, he imagined that the four women were conducting a séance. He added a flaming skull in the middle of the table, added trees with faces in the background and further edited the artwork to look like the cover of a mystery comic book.

Or the piece titled ‘Catch them All’, where an old record album cover has a man chatting with a woman by the river. Working with his son, Mojoko inserted 12 Pokémons into the scenery for viewers to spot.

Mojoko adds to it to create something new. In his words, he likens it to “reframing a piece of work”.

“I definitely appreciate two points of view, if not more,” Mojoko says. “It gives us a new way of looking at things. Language being a good example. *Xiǎo biàn* (小便) and *dà biàn* (大便) means that you’re in the toilet doing either ‘small business’ or ‘big business’. That’s funny to me.

“Or the SOS call, ‘mayday’, which is derived from the French word *m’aider* (‘help me’). You reassess your worldview after seeing a lot of things, about people referencing other pieces of art and that has been going on for several years.”

Given the nature of collages, when does Mojoko know when his work is finished? “You try different things with a piece. I take a photo of the frame and I’ll layer the images over... until it clicks.”

Clicks?

“When there’s a sense of harmony to it,” Mojoko adds.

He can’t rightly articulate how he does it. It just has to feel right. Mojoko gestures towards ‘Pagoda Inferno’, a collage bordered by an intricate antique wood frame. “See this man straining against the ropes that binds him. That’s from *Gulliver’s Travels*. I made his face green because he reminded me of Michael Jackson from ‘Thriller’. I think adding that made the piece more interesting.”

While some pieces are easier than others, one of the harder ones is ‘The Twilight Zone’, a framed vertical landscape painting done in the style of Chinese painting. He wanted the art to feel old or historic and the misty mountains led him to think of the horror or murder mystery genres.

“Young people who don’t like art in general,” says Mojoko, “they tend to like what I do. Old people, not a lot. There will be the occasional aunts who would see my repurposed old Chinese medicine packets and remark, ‘oh so clever’.”

They say that an artist shouldn’t create because the base intention is for selling. Mojoko agrees with that sentiment but adds: “I think when someone buys it, it brings closure to a piece. I feel that it’s finished. If I make something and no one buys it, it feels like the journey isn’t over.”

Given humanity’s brief tenure on Earth, all has been said and done and originality is a distant past. But this is the age of the remix. It’s a glorious time, when a piano riff from The Charmels’ ‘As Long as I’ve Got You’ is used in Wu-Tang Clan’s ‘CREAM’ or that a crowdsourced version of Paul Verhoeven’s *RoboCop* movie exists.

According to Mojoko, all designers think as such: how do I take a common thing that everybody is familiar with and make it look fresh. “Someone might have done what I’ve done, right? What I’m doing isn’t new but I’m using my language to tell my story in my way.”

There are artists who are paralysed by the thought of what their next move would be. For Mojoko, it’s not whether it has been done before but rather, is it worth bringing into the world.

Mojoko tells me that some people would send him images of artwork that they had seen and say that they had spotted something of his. “And I’m, like, *that isn’t mine*.”

Inversely, he’s tickled by people sending photos of his stuff that’s in their friends’ houses. “That’s better. I feel good by that.”

Cataloguing his work will be a challenge. Mojoko has no idea how many pieces he has made over the years. They have been sold, their life cycle concluded. As to where they are, that remains to be seen.

Years later, maybe when you enter a nameless store selling all manner of accretions that have passed through many a hand. In the corner, behind the gaudy clown and the antique cuckoo clock, a piece of collage art might catch your eye. You inquire about its provenance but the shopkeeper has no idea. Maybe you’ll buy it or maybe you won’t.

Or maybe you see this patchwork tapestry filled with Western and Eastern imagery as a tabula rasa, a blank space that you can add to. ■

Siri House at Dempsey presents The Secret Room by Mojoko. Located at 8D Dempsey Road, #01-02, Dempsey Hill, the exhibition will run until the end of July.

THE

DAY

THE

ROCKET

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After Elon Musk announced plans to build a SpaceX launchpad at the southernmost end of Texas, nearby residents grew worried that their remote beach community would be disrupted. Little did they know that it would be dismantled.

WORDS BY RACHEL MONROE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN COOLEY

CAME

TO

BOCA

CHICA

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Feature

"THE SCHEMES AND DREAMS OF DEVELOPERS TO BUILD ON THIS BEAUTIFUL AND DESOLATE AREA DIE HARD, BUT DIE THEY ALWAYS HAVE."

—Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine, 1992

"WE'VE GOT A LOT OF LAND WITH NOBODY AROUND, AND SO IF IT BLOWS UP, IT'S COOL."

—Elon Musk, 2018

AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER, WHEN TENSIONS WERE AT THEIR PEAK, THE residents of Boca Chica Village received a message from SpaceX. The private space company was publicly unveiling its new spacecraft here, at the southeastern tip of Texas, and they were invited. The gesture came as a surprise. Earlier that month, homeowners in this tiny community of independent-minded retirees had received another letter from SpaceX, via FedEx. "Expansion of space flight activities," it read, "will make it increasingly more challenging to minimise disruption." Given the company's ambitions—massive and, as the residents had come to learn, always shifting—SpaceX wanted to buy their homes. As an incentive, it had offered three times the properties' assessed values. As an incentive of a different kind, the letter had declared that the offer, which was final, would expire in two weeks.

That deadline passed three days before the rocket unveiling. Of the residents who planned to attend, not one had accepted SpaceX's offer.

The afternoon of the event, Mary, 61, a wiry, practical woman who was arguably the rocket's biggest fan in Boca Chica, painted her fingernails a sparkling silver and put on star-shaped earrings. Cheryl Stevens, 59, a former legal secretary with expressive hands and frizzled, greying hair, almost turned down the invitation—she'd been battling SpaceX for years—until she heard her neighbours were going. She borrowed a friend's elegant teal dress—then, after spotting a neighbour in shorts, changed into something more casual. About a dozen people gathered at the cosy, cluttered home of Terry and Bonnie Heaton, 70 and 71, the community's longest-tenured residents. Cars were already streaming in from the west, through the Border Patrol checkpoint, past the wildlife preserve and its nesting shorebirds.

At dusk, two SpaceX employees wearing effortful smiles herded the Boca Chicans into a van and drove them to the launch site. It was surreal to see Boca Chica so busy. A few years earlier, it had been a sleepy neighbourhood of a few dozen houses on just two streets, the perfect counterpoint to the spring-break madness of South Padre Island, a few kilometres up the coast. Sometimes during the slow summer season, the Heaton's were the only people around. In the winter, the main source of excitement was the weekly game night at the Avey's' house. Then SpaceX chief Elon Musk took an interest in the area and began building his new rocket prototype here. Now the 2.4km drive to the launch site was lined with SpaceX enthusiasts and Musk hangers-on.

The 50m-tall spaceship, named Starship Mk1, loomed above the site, its stainless-steel hull gleaming in the floodlights. Mary asked if she could hug it. Her friend Gene Gore, a sunbaked surfboard builder from South Padre Island who was invited as a

local SpaceX supporter, peeked inside the bulkhead and felt as though he'd entered the future. Gene and the other SpaceX fans mingled with company executives and local politicians as the Boca Chicans were ushered over to a private, cordoned-off area. Their minders didn't let the residents out of their sight.

Musk took the stage to detail his big plans: how Starship Mk1 was the first full-scale prototype of what would eventually be the biggest, cheapest spacecraft ever built, the rocket that would make humans a multiplanetary species. "This thing is going to take off, fly to 65,000 feet, about 20km, and come back and land, in about one or two months," he assured the crowd. He talked about moon bases, asteroid mining and how fuel could be produced on Mars. It was an expansive, optimistic vision of the future, and, according to Musk, much of it was centred here, in Boca Chica.

As Musk took questions from the audience, the Boca Chicans were hustled back into the van. They assumed they were heading home, but instead their minders said that a "special guest" wanted to meet with them. Musk, they presumed. They were escorted to a nearby building, where they grazed on platters of fudge and fancy chips and mingled uneasily. Another resident, Maria Pointer, received a text from a reporter she'd grown friendly with over the past several months: "Elon is talking about you guys!"

"We are working with the residents of Boca Chica Village because we think over time it's going to be quite disruptive," Musk was telling the crowd. "The actual danger is low to Boca Chica Village, but it's not tiny. So therefore, we want super-tiny risk. So probably over time it's better to buy out the villagers."

An hour passed, then another. One by one, the Boca Chicans began giving up: Bonnie went home to take her medication, Ellie Garcia just got fed up and left. It was after 11PM when Musk finally walked into the room. Here was the man they'd all been talking about for years, sometimes with excitement (Elon retweeted my picture of the rocket!), sometimes with bitterness (Elon thinks he can just have my house?). He wasn't charismatic, but his power felt palpable in the room. Andy Goetsch, who'd moved to Boca Chica to be close to SpaceX, was giddy. But most of the other residents wanted to vent.

Musk crossed his arms, assumed a stiff, wide stance, and listened as they unloaded their grievances and disputed their appraisals. Their houses weren't just brick-and-mortar structures—you had to take into account the wildlife, the proximity to the beach, how special Boca Chica was. He did a lot of nodding.

Before the meeting ended, Cheryl took a selfie with Musk, then handed him a sort of peace offering: a Mars-themed issue of *National Geographic* from 1977, which she'd found in a library's giveaway pile that morning. He seemed taken aback. He reacted that way, she reasoned, because he wasn't used to being given things; usually Musk was the one doing the giving.

The next day, Cheryl received a text from someone she'd just met—a SpaceX superfan who'd flown in from California to attend the event, only to find that he couldn't secure a ticket. So in the morning, he'd hiked over some sand dunes, passed the 'no trespassing' signs he'd claim not to have seen, sidled up to the rocket, took a selfie and posted it on Facebook. The company had seen his photo and considered it proof of trespass. "I'm in handcuffs, please call my mum," the superfan wrote to Cheryl. SpaceX was pressing charges.



Feature

Cheryl Stevens grew up in south Texas, the fourth generation of her family to play on Boca Chica Beach. If anywhere was safe from gentrification, she figured this was it.



WHEN I FIRST VISITED BOCA CHICA, IN OCTOBER, I WAS STARTLED TO SEE the rocket sitting out in the open, by the side of a public highway. When Jeff Bezos decided he wanted to venture into space and founded Blue Origin to do so, he quietly bought up 300,000 acres of remote west Texas ranchland so he could experiment in seclusion. Richard Branson opted to base his private space company, Virgin Galactic, at Spaceport America, a facility owned and operated by the state of New Mexico. But Musk has always done things differently. “Head down, plough through the line. That’s very SpaceX,” the company’s president, Gwynne Shotwell, has said. And in this case, the line ran right through Boca Chica. (Neither Musk nor SpaceX would comment for this story.)

The area isn’t the most obvious place to build a home base for space exploration. Mobile service is spotty. The nearest grocery store is a half-hour drive away. Freshwater is non-existent; it must be trucked in each month. “Everything out here rusts, rots and mildews,” a former resident told *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine in 1992. “And the dust off the flats can blow something awful!”

That hasn’t stopped developers from targeting the area over the years. Musk is only the latest outsider to arrive here with big ambitions. But nothing before has stuck, mostly due to the hurricanes. In 1867, a hospital and barracks built down the road from the site of the Battle of Palmito Ranch, arguably the Civil War’s last land skirmish—which the Confederates won—were washed out to sea.

Between the world wars, tourists frolicked at a seaside resort—the author Sherwood Anderson caught several “gorgeous redfish” there, according to his wife’s diary—until, in 1933, another hurricane, with a four-metre storm surge and 200KM-an-hour winds, wiped it away, too. A Moon Motor Car flipped over on the beach and in time became nearly buried in sand, where it remained for three

decades, until Hurricane Beulah (six-metre surge, 219KM-an-hour winds) uncovered it.

In the ’60s, a schemer named John Caputa began pitching Polish communities in the greater Chicago area on a beautiful retirement village in Boca Chica. He called it Kennedy Shores, in homage to the president, and he promised investors an improbable 12 percent return. Few bought into the dream and Caputa completed only a fraction of the planned development. A few years later, he died, penniless, of a heart attack. In time, the community changed its name first to Kopernik Shores, in homage to Copernicus, then to Boca Chica Village. But most of the houses that now stand are Caputa’s.

The Heaton’s bought one of them in 2001. Fed up with Minnesota winters, they’d decided to retire somewhere warm and quiet and affordable. They’d planned to go to South Padre Island, but a barge accident destroyed a portion of the bridge, rendering it inaccessible. Someone suggested they check out Boca Chica, a dozen kilometres down the coast, and they never left.

Many residents arrived here like the Heaton’s: accidentally, while trying to get someplace else. They felt as though they’d stumbled on a secret shared only with their neighbours and with the day trippers from nearby Brownsville. The community marks the eastern edge of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, a 322KM stretch of federally protected land along the southern border, intended to allow safe passage for animals such as the ocelot, whose US population has dwindled to fewer than 100. For a certain kind of person—one who prizes independence over convenience and who doesn’t mind living among more pelicans than humans—there was no better place on Earth.

Sitting in their living room, Bonnie told me how the seclusion suited her and her husband, and the fishing was world-class. In

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the winters, Bonnie cut her neighbours' hair and Terry helped out with their home repairs. Most of their neighbours were part-timers, returning to their homes in Alaska or Michigan or Wisconsin during the hot months. I asked Bonnie if it got lonely during those quiet summers and the question seemed to make her feel sorry for me. "It was wonderful," she said. "It was wonderful." But that was before SpaceX and its intrusions. "They don't want us here because it's costing them money to have us here. But we were here first," she told me. "This is where we thought we were going to live until we died."

Cheryl, who lives a few doors down from the Heaton's, decorated her house with seashells and left out dishes of water for migratory birds. She paid her mortgage by renting out her house on Airbnb. In the summer, sea turtles lay their eggs on the beach; once, she helped a nest of hatchlings find their way to the sea. Another time, in the eerie calm before a hurricane, she saw a jaguarundi—a rare wild cat that has since gone extinct in Texas. She befriended Wiley, the half-tame coyote who skulked through the village at dusk.

Cheryl grew up in south Texas, the fourth generation of her family to play on Boca Chica Beach. As an adult, she lived in Austin until it got too crowded and expensive; then she moved to Portland and repeated the process. When her grandmother got sick, she returned to Texas and, in 2005, bought one of the Caputa houses; if anywhere was safe from the exhausting logic

of gentrification, she figured Boca Chica was it. So when Musk started sniffing around, she told me, "those of us who lived here hoped [the project] would implode or he'd run out of money".

Cheryl's shell collection is rivalled by that of Rob Avery, 66, a retired pipe fitter with greying copper hair, and his wife, Sarah, 63, who used to work in insurance. On their daily walks along Boca Chica Beach, the couple has found oyster beds, rare shells, bison teeth and even a remnant of a centuries-old shipwreck. They spend six months each year in Boca Chica and recently became Texas residents so they could relocate permanently. When the offer letter from SpaceX arrived at their other home, in Connecticut, "we were floored", Rob told me. "It made you feel that if you didn't accept this offer, eminent domain would be the next step," Sarah said. Rob added: "We felt under duress. We were caught off guard." He paused. "We'd had two deaths in the family," he said. "It couldn't have been a worse time."

Feeling that they had no choice, the Averys signed the paperwork and rushed down to Texas six weeks earlier than usual, prepared to pack up their house and say goodbye to Boca Chica. When they arrived, they saw the partially assembled Starship Mk1 rocket for the first time. Some of their neighbours refused to look at it. Others couldn't look away.

ONE MORNING, BEFORE DAWN, I HEADED TOWARD THE LAUNCH SITE IN search of the burgundy van that always seemed to be in its vicinity, as close as you could get to the rocket without SpaceX security shooing you away. The van belonged to Mary. She and her husband, Gale, 78, retired to Boca Chica 12 years ago. They loved the community, with its neighbourly solicitude—one time, Mary helped Cheryl get TV reception by jerry-rigging an antenna out of scrap lumber and coat hangers. But unlike her NIMBY-minded neighbours, Mary was intrigued by the community's transformation into a space corridor. Her interest spiked in November 2018 when SpaceX began assembling Starhopper, the squat prototype built to test the company's methane-fuelled Raptor engine, which, if all goes to plan, will one day propel the Starship fleet into space. "That's when I fell in love with a rocket," she sang, to the tune of T-Pain's 'I'm in Love with a Stripper'.

Mary spent most days by the side of the road, observing the rocket and its surroundings as if it were her full-time job—never mind the heavy heat of the Texas summer or the dense swarms of mosquitoes that arrive after the rains. She doesn't have an engineering background, but she has a keen observer's eye and she started posting pictures and videos of the project's developments on Twitter, as @bocachicagal. She averaged 20 tweets a day and she had a fondness for the star-eyed emoji.

Space obsessives took notice. She's now a go-to source for on-the-ground updates out of Boca Chica. As of press time, she's amassed nearly 17,000 followers.

Mary was joined that morning by two other rocket enthusiasts, Gene, the surfboard builder, and Andy, the Musk fan who moved here because SpaceX did, too. Andy is a retired IT technician; when he learned that the houses in Boca Chica were cheap, he bought one, rigged it to run on solar panels hooked up to a Tesla battery, and waited for the launches to begin. That was four years ago.

We clambered up the beachfront dunes to get a better view of the rocket. The vibe was celebratory, even though today's



After Mk1's bulkhead shot into the sky during a pressure test in November, SpaceX began dismantling it, while speeding up production of its next prototype.

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Rob and Sarah Avery recently became Texas residents so they could relocate here permanently. When the offer letter from SpaceX arrived, "we were floored", Rob said.



activities were relatively low-stakes: SpaceX was transporting Mkl's 27m cylindrical propellant tank over from the assembly site. The launch area, mostly unpaved and at least one-quarter puddle, had an ad hoc feel, like a haphazard construction site. A stone's throw away sat Starhopper on its three fat legs. A white sign was posted on the chain-link fence: *Notice: sea turtle nesting season in progress*. There was something dizzyingly improbable about this futuristic hardware plopped down amid the seagrass, beside the indifferent storks wading carefully through the mudflats. "It's not made out of some super-high-tech carbon composite," Gene was enthusing about Mkl's hull of stainless steel—a material vastly cheaper than carbon, with a higher melting point. "It's not some super-secretive thing. It's like—you can buy this crap at the hardware store."

"It's just—it makes people stutter, like I'm doing now," Andy said. "These guys come out in the middle of the desert with some plumbers and welders, and they just start building something. Started welding it together out here, in the open."

Mkl was omnipresent, impossible to avoid unless you never looked southward. Still, Mary, Gene and Andy—and the rocket's other local fans—couldn't get enough of it. Seven years after SpaceX began buying up their backyard, there was finally something to see. Since Musk founded SpaceX, in 2002, the company has relied on government-owned sites, Cape Canaveral in Florida and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, to launch its rockets. But doing so chafes against Musk's desire to get things done his own way, at his own pace. In 2005, SpaceX was temporarily booted from its launchpad at Vandenberg at the request of Lockheed Martin, which had raised concerns that the newcomer's rocket would explode and damage nearby infrastructure. Musk was outraged.

"Somebody else builds a house next to you and tells you to get out of your house," he said at the time. "Like, what the hell?... We're going to fight that issue because it is just fundamentally unfair."

Building its very own commercial orbital launch site—the world's first—would free SpaceX from such hassles. In 2011, the company began scouting. The location would need to be close to the equator—better for the launch trajectory—with a low population and a welcoming local government.

SpaceX quickly narrowed down its options to three: Florida, Puerto Rico and Boca Chica.

Musk, it turned out, had a knack for Texas politics. That year, he invited Cameron County officials to SpaceX headquarters, in Hawthorne, California. The following year, the company upped its force of Texas lobbyists from one to five, and Rick Perry, then the governor of Texas, wrote in a letter to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), "Please know that I strongly support the efforts of SpaceX and the Brownsville community to bring this business to Texas. I ask you to favourably approve their application." SpaceX formed a shell company, Dogleg Park, named for the path its rockets would zag to avoid passing over populated areas, and later another called Flats at Mars Crossing, and began scooping up properties at the local sheriff's sale. The land was cheap, in part because it was difficult. Roads washed out all the time; in the spring, sand swirled in the 80KM-per-hour gusts.

Even so, in 2013, at a hearing before the appropriations committee of the Texas state legislature, Musk laid out his vision for "the commercial version of Cape Canaveral". He was there to support two bills intended to lure SpaceX to the state. One would reduce a private space company's liability in the case of a nuisance complaint; the other, written by the congressman from



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Brownsville, would empower county officials to deny access to public beaches when “space flight activities” were on the calendar. In his speech, Musk was by turns encouraging and coy. “Texas is our leading candidate right now,” he told the room. But also, “any support Texas can offer will be helpful”. Perry signed both bills into law.

SpaceX spoke loftily of up to 12 launches each year. Each month, one of the company’s rockets—a Falcon 9, its workhorse, or a Falcon Heavy, the most powerful rocket in operation—would shoot into the sky, destined for the International Space Station (ISS), or perhaps beyond. According to Brownsville’s then mayor, Tony Martinez, Musk told him, “One day, you are going to read that a man left Brownsville and went to Mars.”

Local officials were flattered by the attention, but they also saw an opportunity. Brownsville is the country’s poorest metropolitan area; in recent years, if it makes national news at all, the stories pertain to the crisis at the southern border. “Anything positive, people are hungry for it,” Juan Montoya, a local political blogger and lifelong Brownsville resident, told me. SpaceX was promising nothing short of an economic transformation, estimating it would create 500 local jobs at an average salary of USD55,000.

The Brownsville Economic Development Council (BEDC) claimed the economic impact would be a “game changer for the region” in a PowerPoint presentation used to sell the community on the idea. Sure, the launches might occasionally shut down Boca Chica Beach, one of the state’s few remaining stretches of undeveloped coastline—a place Montoya described to me as “the poor people’s beach” for the role it serves for the residents of Brownsville—but the trade-offs would make the sacrifices worthwhile. The BEDC conservatively estimated that 15,000 people would come watch each launch.

“Nobody really knows very much about Brownsville,” Martinez told me. “But if you talk about SpaceX and Brownsville, now you’ve got a marketing tool. You want to go watch the launch? Well, you gotta go to Brownsville.”

Riding high on his promise of economic expansion, Musk didn’t encounter much resistance. The city, county, state and University of Texas system put together an incentive package worth nearly USD40 million. “Elon says—‘Man, you guys need a new airport.’ Even though he doesn’t fly commercial,” Martinez recalled. “And we’re building a new airport.”

Finally, the deal was done. In 2014, Musk and then-governor Rick Perry posed together, their shovels stuck in a mound of sandy soil, at the groundbreaking. The company renamed streets—Joanna Street was now Rocket Road.

THINGS GOT OFF TRACK ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. CREWS DRILLED IN SEARCH of bedrock on which to build a launchpad but didn’t find any. Instead, they learned that when you dig a hole on the mudflats, murky water soon seeps in. If SpaceX needed solid ground in Boca Chica, it would have to create it. So the company trucked in 237,000 cubic metres of earth, then waited three years for the soil to settle. Musk had agreed to protect 50 acres of wetlands via land transfer to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. When the approval didn’t move forward at the pace SpaceX expected, the company convinced the feds to allow the land to go to the state of Texas instead. Musk had claimed the project would be an operational spaceport by 2016, but that year came and went, with not much to show other than an expensive pile of dirt.

For years, the main sign to Boca Chicans of SpaceX’s presence was the company’s steady accumulation of houses and vacant lots—as of press time, it owns more than 150 properties in the area—as well as the procession of reporters who began knocking on their doors, seeking their take on living next to a spaceport, albeit one that didn’t yet exist. In the press, residents opposed to their new neighbour voiced their distaste. Terry and Bonnie Heaton appeared most often, perhaps because they were the only year-round residents. With a clear-spoken folksiness, the couple explained to one outlet after another—*The Brownsville Herald*, the *Houston Chronicle*, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*,



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the *New York Post*, NPR—how SpaceX was intruding on the golden years of retirement they'd looked forward to for so long.

Boca Chica homeowners were invited to meet with SpaceX in 2015. Musk wasn't there, but his representatives made several reassurances: They'd provide ample advance warning for all launches; they wouldn't close the beach on summer weekends. They wanted, the company told the Boca Chicans, to be a good neighbour.

Meanwhile, SpaceX was struggling with more than just dirt. A Falcon 9 rocket disintegrated on a flight to the ISS in 2015 and another exploded the following year. Musk was also putting out fires of his own making. In 2018, NASA rebuked him for getting stoned with Joe Rogan. This came after his tweets drew the ire of the Securities and Exchange Commission, which fined him USD20 million and forced him off the board of his own electric-car company, Tesla. Then, in the midst of the drama, Musk made headlines when he called a heroic cave diver in Thailand a "pedo guy".

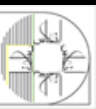
But SpaceX worked hard toward improvement, and it paid off. The company was launching more mostly reusable rockets, sending more successful missions to the ISS. Its Falcon spacecraft were proving reliable enough to earn the company billions of dollars in government contracts. And then Musk decided he needed a new space vehicle—one theoretically capable of interplanetary travel—to set in motion the next ambitious phase. At first, SpaceX referred to this next-generation spacecraft as the BFR—the Big F**king Rocket; eventually, it was rechristened Starship.

Last May, the company quietly filed paperwork with the FAA indicating that its plans for Boca Chica had changed. Instead of being a commercial launch site to send Falcon rockets into orbit, it was now home to SpaceX's "experimental test programme", through which the company would design and build Starship. And because Starship was now central to SpaceX's vision of its future, Boca Chica was, too. The government required the company to up its liability insurance from USD3 million to USD100 million, largely because of the residents' proximity, but otherwise approved

the pivot. None of this was immediately apparent to the people of Boca Chica, however. All they knew was that since autumn 2018, the area had been buzzing with activity. White pickups and heavy machinery clogged the boulevard; SpaceX workers scurried around "like a bunch of ants", as Bonnie put it. The company had opted to build its rockets outside—constructing a building would take too long, Musk said, and floodlights illuminated the rocket-assembly area throughout the night. The generators never stopped humming and employees banged on the prototypes around the clock. Maria and her husband, Ray, whose home is closest to the rocket-assembly site, could see the welders' acetylene torches spark from their bedroom window long after midnight. The couple put a webcam on their roof, which transmitted a round-the-clock YouTube stream of SpaceX activity. Some of Cheryl's Airbnb renters requested refunds; they had expected Boca Chica to be a quiet retreat and instead it was a 24/7 construction site. (In October, when I rented Cheryl's place, I could hear the rumblings of Starship's construction from her backyard.)

This past summer, as Mary documented the construction of Starhopper, activity continued to ramp up. In July, the prototype successfully completed a 'hop'—that is, it lifted 18M in the air, moved laterally and landed back down—then ignited a 100-acre brush fire. The fire was frightening, but what frustrated Cheryl the most was how the county seemed to bend over backward to accommodate the company. A sheriff's deputy was stationed across from the launch site, keeping guard. At SpaceX's request, Boca Chica Beach was closed at least half a dozen times between June, when the temperature in Brownsville was already hitting triple digits, and August, which marked that month's second-hottest average on record in Texas. Every time the company was up to something big—which seemed to be every couple of weeks—the only road to Boca Chica was blocked off, essentially trapping the residents in their homes.

The beach road was shut down again the October day I stood on the dunes with Mary, Gene and Andy, so Mk1 could be moved.



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We watched the Starship prototype slowly roll down the road and inside the gate, where it came to a stop. Up close, I could see dents in its silvery hull. They made the rocket seem friendlier somehow, almost relatable. For a long while, nothing happened. A small crowd had gathered and was growing restive; due to the roadblock, no one could leave until SpaceX was finished and it was already an hour behind schedule.

A red SUV with a 'Hooked on Jesus' bumper sticker pulled up to the sheriff's road barrier. It was Terry, back from his morning fishing expedition. He, too, was told he could not pass. "This is a load of crap," he said, brandishing a printout from the county that said the road should've been reopened an hour and a half ago. He said he was diabetic and needed to go home to get his insulin. "My hand's already shaking," he said. His house was right there, just over a kilometre away. He started to slowly roll forward.

"You can't," the deputy said. "You'll be arrested." Terry's face reddened, but he stopped and waited for the rocket business to finish.

BY MID-AUTUMN, BOCA CHICA VILLAGE BEGAN TO FRACTURE. THE HOMEOWNERS who had accepted the buyout offered in September felt judged by the holdouts; the holdouts felt betrayed by the sellers. Everyone wanted to know how much money their neighbours ended up with. Mary was no longer speaking to Maria, whose coverage of SpaceX's snafus—like when Starhopper's nose cone blew off in a big gust of wind, and when it burst into flames after a static fire test—she found distasteful. She also claimed that

the wall's path to protect five places: a state park, a butterfly sanctuary, a wildlife refuge, a historic church and SpaceX's Boca Chica operation. (A lawyer from the Institute for Justice, a legal-aid non-profit that specialises in eminent-domain cases, is in touch with several Boca Chica homeowners.)

In mid-November, as Mary and her camera watched from down the road, Mk1's bulkhead suddenly shot up into the sky; the rest of the rocket disappeared behind a billowing plume of nitrogen. The boom was so loud that Gene heard it on South Padre Island, 13km away. The rocket the Boca Chicanos had watched from infancy had just blown up during a pressurisation test. SpaceX spun the incident as not "a serious setback", since crews were already working on an updated version, the Mk3.

After the accident, activity at the construction site got even more frantic, as if the company was trying to make up for lost time. The Pointers covered their windows with hurricane shutters to block out the noise and light from the round-the-clock construction, but Ray still wasn't sleeping well. Eventually they decided to make a deal with SpaceX, although Maria didn't feel happy about it. "This tiny little spit of land is so important," she said. "And that I got to live, breathe and experience it? In the last house on Texas [Highway] 4 before you get to the ocean, in a beach villa with gorgeous views and a frickin' rocket shipyard on both sides? You can't pay a person enough for that."

Even Cheryl, with her keen sense of justice, was considering selling to SpaceX. Being in a constant state of outrage exhausted her and she worried about her Airbnb income drying up.

"THE MORE I READ ABOUT SPACEX, THE MORE I REALISED HOW RADICAL ITS VISION OF THE FUTURE ACTUALLY WAS..."

Maria tried to use the @bocachicagal handle as her own. (Maria disputed the accusation.) Mary changed her Twitter bio to read, "My name is NOT Maria."

In October, SpaceX made some concessions to the holdouts, extending the offer deadline by a few weeks and arranging for more-thorough appraisals. The initial valuations had been based on drive-by assessments and hadn't taken into account many of the improvements the homeowners had made. But the revised appraisals weren't much better and the company made it clear they wouldn't extend the deadline again. Once it expired, the three-times offer would be off the table.

The Heatons hosted a meeting with a prominent eminent-domain lawyer in their living room. The good news, the lawyer told the assembled residents, was that they were sympathetic; any jury was likely to feel for them and perhaps rule in their favour. The bad news was that getting to that point meant engaging in an ugly, expensive, protracted legal battle that they may well lose. Take the money, he advised, unless you're really in this for the long fight.

It was hard for residents to believe they'd be formidable opponents. Perhaps the biggest threat to ever face SpaceX's concern in south Texas was Donald Trump's "big beautiful" border wall, with a proposed pathway that would have bisected the launch site. But members of Congress had successfully lobbied to adjust

Then, one morning in November, the Heatons were gone. Word around town was that they had sold to SpaceX. (After our initial conversation, the Heatons didn't reply to further interview requests.) The news stunned Cheryl. Not only had the Heatons been vehement opponents of SpaceX, "they're really the foundation of everything here", Cheryl said. "Not just mowing everybody's lawn, but when things break... They had everyone's keys. And they're like, 'We're out of here.' You can't blame them, but I wish they would've communicated with us." Now who would you call if your pipe sprung a leak?

By then, the Averys had decided to rescind their acceptance of the buyout. The offer had been framed to seem generous, but the appraisal had valued their sunny three-bedroom, two-bathroom home, with broad views of the bay, at only USD47,000.

As they looked at real estate nearby, they were dismayed. For USD141,000—SpaceX's offer—"we couldn't even find a fixer-upper," Rob said. The prospect of leaving behind the home they'd spent 15 years improving to instead spend their retirement somewhere cramped, hemmed in by other houses and far from the beach was disheartening.

They hadn't yet signed over their deed nor accepted SpaceX's money. Rob and Sarah told me that if Musk wanted to sue them for breach of contract, so be it. Even if things devolved into a

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lengthy court battle, at least they would have a few more years in Boca Chica.

In the days after the Mk1 explosion, dead sea turtles began washing up on the beach. On their morning walks, the Averys saw two dozen of them. Sixty-three corpses were found in all, according to a local turtle-protection group. The deaths were determined to be related to illegal fishing, but the incident threw into sharp relief the fragile world in which SpaceX was expanding its empire.

THE MORE I READ ABOUT SPACEX, THE MORE I realised how radical its vision of the future actually was—not so much its hypothetical journeys to Mars but rather its near-term ambitions. The company is seeking approval to launch 40,000 satellites as part of its Starlink programme, a Google- and Fidelity-funded endeavour to bring high-speed Internet to rural areas and expedite international financial transactions. Starlink would allow SpaceX to capture a portion of the trillion-dollar global telecommunications industry. If all goes according to plan, there will be five times as many SpaceX-launched satellites in the sky as visible stars.

Starship—and therefore Boca Chica—is key to making this a reality. A Falcon 9 rocket can hold several dozen satellites, a Starship several hundred. Musk has said that he'd like to see as many as three launches a day from Boca Chica. "I did the calculation—that's more than nine million pounds [four million kilograms] of fuel a year," said Dave Mosher, a reporter for *Business Insider* who covers SpaceX. "I don't think you can get the

fuel there fast enough." Even correcting for Musk's characteristic overstatements, it seems likely that Boca Chica will soon be less a poor people's beach or a community of fixed-income retirees than a busy industrial corridor. Indeed, the beginnings of a liquefied-natural-gas export facility at the Port of Brownsville are already visible on the horizon.

And so when I returned to Boca Chica in late December, I imagined I'd find a depressed, depleted place. Instead, after a tumultuous year, the community seemed infused with a fresh spirit. Residents seemed to have come to terms with SpaceX's presence, for better or worse. The rocket might be intrusive, but it was their neighbour, and unlike them, it was here to stay.

For some, that was an incentive to hash out an agreement with the company. "I jumped ship before it sank," Cheryl told me. We were sitting in her living room, among the thrift-shop décor she'd carefully amassed over her 15 years here. "I'm going to find a cheap home somewhere else, probably in a different state, since I'm disgusted with Texas. And I'm going to try to re-create my life." SpaceX had granted her until March to move out and she was determined to make the most of her final winter by the beach.

Others were resolved to fight. As of press time, a dozen homeowners still refused to sell. Some thought they might get a better offer from SpaceX if they waited—a risky gamble, since the company said the three-times offer was off the table. Others just wanted more time.

The holdouts also included the rocket's biggest fans in Boca Chica. By now, Mary was a micro-influencer to the rabid community of SpaceX fans worldwide.

Andy told me: "People go to Florida and pay USD1,000 to watch a rocket launch there. I can say I turned down USD200,000 to watch a rocket launch." I got the sense that after spending so much time watching Starship get built, neither one wanted to leave it behind.

One moody, misty afternoon, Rob and Sarah Avery took me on a drive along Boca Chica Beach. We cruised down to the mouth of the Rio Grande. Two men with fishing poles waded into the surf; Mexico was just a coin toss away. I tried to picture the fuel-production facilities, the fleet of reusable rockets, the tens of thousands of SpaceX satellites spangling the night sky. As with so many of Musk's visions, it seemed at once difficult to take seriously and dangerous to dismiss.

At the launch site, expansion continued apace. Earlier that month, SpaceX had announced that it was winding down activity at its other rocket facility, in Cocoa, Florida. Components were salvaged and sent on a chartered ship to Texas, where the company installed an enormous white tent to shield its work from the very thing that had rebuffed so many outsiders before them: the weather. The towering, matte-black wedge-shaped windbreak they'd erected wasn't doing the trick. "Our main issue here in Boca," Musk tweeted, "is that it can get very windy."

Back at Boca Chica Village, Mary was by the side of the road again, keeping an eye on things. This week, she was photographing the crews as they assembled the skeleton of an enormous building. It seemed as though the next version of Starship, now called SN1, would be built inside, out of the sight of its critics and fans. Even so, Mary would keep taking pictures as long as she could, even if she was only documenting her own exclusion. ■



Still life

4 | 5



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Steak your claim

Look into The Vault for prized cuts at Butcher's Block.

Treasured possessions are often hidden or kept away from eager eyes. But at Butcher's Block, rare meats can be seen displayed in their glory at its entrance. You can look but not touch though, until they are plated and served for your consumption.

Located at the recently revamped Raffles Arcade, this speciality meat restaurant gathers some of the world's finest cuts and features them in a wood-fire-focused dining experience. Nothing's concealed at this contemporary-designed space in cobalt blue hues, accented with complementary dark wood panelling and bold brass furnishing.

Aside from freely peering into The Vault, a glass cooler that showcases the finest cuts procured by Butcher's Block, diners can also observe chefs work their magic in its open kitchen and marvel at The Library, a well-stocked exposed wine cellar that houses more than 200 bottled labels, including an excellent selection of natural wines.

Western cuisine is an ideal choice to demonstrate meat's best side by default. However, chef de cuisine Remy Lefebvre wants gourmands to indulge in a food-forward bone-in protein efforts that do not conform to any particular cuisine type. This made chef Lefebvre devise a menu that tapped into his professional culinary experiences across his 16 years of cooking in Qatar, Spain and Grand Cayman, among other locales.

Chef Lefebvre favours the time-honoured methods of curing, ageing, fermenting and cooking with wood fire.

"Different types of wood and charcoal can be used in the cooking process to flavour the dish as if they are a condiment," he shares.

Try OAK Table to relish the best of Butcher's Block. Abbreviated from 'One of A Kind', this Friday- and Saturday-only course lets eight diners savour off-the-menu delicacies that are revealed on the evening itself. Chef Lefebvre will deliver tableside interaction while showcasing limited and uncommon cuts. These could be a small batch of prized beef or even a whole fish dry-aged to achieve remarkable umami notes. On my visit, the John Stone dry-aged grass-fed beef on the bone from Ireland and tender Norway wild turbot headlined the menu.

Free-flow wine pairing complements this course. Selected by the Raffles sommelier team, a line-up of one bubbly and three wines will be offered all at once for guests to be able to taste with every dish to discover their own preferences. I found that the exquisite Hermit Ram Skin Fermented Sauvignon Blanc 2018 went perfectly with the red proteins.

Lastly, freshen up with the seasonal apple tart and sorbet before sobriety succumbs to liquor. Because you know you can't resist another glass and you shouldn't. 🍷

Butcher's Block is located at #02-02, Raffles Arcade, 328 North Bridge Road, Singapore 188719. For more details and reservations, dial 6412 1816 or visit www.butchersblock.com.sg



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Mussel up

You haven't had a seafood meal if you haven't eaten at BTM.

Looking back on his culinary past, Olivier Bendel relives his time with the Léon de Bruxelles group, the first restaurant chain in France to focus on *moules-frites* (mussels and fries). His decade with the group yielded over 250 original mussel recipes and strong relations with mussel producers in the region. With these resources in hand, Bendel came up with BTM Mussels and Bar.

('BTM' is short for 'Back to Mussels' so, technically the restaurant's full name is 'Back to Mussels Mussels and Bar'. Uh, okay?)

Mussels are sourced from places like Bittany, France; Ireland and Greece, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, BTM looked to Singapore. Local mussels are used in the signature mains. Served in seven styles like *marinière* (the classic French preparation consisting of white wine, butter, parsley and onion); *Ardennaise* (prepared with mushrooms, fresh cream, white wine, butter, parsley, onion and bacon); or *Thailandaises* (Thai-inspired preparation involving chilli, Kaffir lime leaves, lemongrass, white wine and coconut milk). All the signatures come with a side of fries.

But if mussels aren't your thing, BTM also has dishes from France and the Benelux region. I had *bitterballen*, which looks like bar food (fried balls of thick roux with beef and rich beef stock) but is able to fill one's belly, and *Escargot Tartes Flambées*, which is a pizza-like dish of thin bread dough that's covered with parsley butter, garlic, onions and topped with escargots.

There are also desserts to complete the experience like *Grand Marnier et Oranges Confites Soufflé*—a soufflé with candied orange slices on the top and a bottle of Grand Marnier that you can pour as much as you like, but you're not going to take advantage of the restaurant's generosity, no. Because you're a respectable chap and you also know that too much liqueur will sully the taste of the soufflé. 🍷

BTM Mussels and Bar is located at 5 Duxton Hill. For delivery, go to dhm.com.sg/btm

Origin point

In order to go further, sometimes you have to start from scratch.

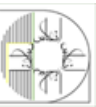
When you've been running a rum distillery as long as Mount Gay has (300 years, natch), we assume that it would be a tad challenging to keep innovating the brand. Thus, the oldest rum distillery is revisiting its core blends.

Mount Gay's first female master blender, Trudiann Branker, dips into the company's heritage to update Mount Gay Black Barrel and an enhanced blend for Mount Gay XO. Mount Gay Black Barrel now uses rums that are three to seven years old before it's finished in charred bourbon casks for six months (previous Black Barrels have a finish of four weeks), resulting in a more robust flavour.

As for Mount Gay XO, expect a more varied palette profile with blends individually aged in three different casks—American whisky, bourbon and cognac—for five to 17 years. The exterior of the bottle will also reflect the updated contents with labels that provide more information of the casks used, style and tasting notes.

With a storied history like Mount Gay, these updated editions are a great way to discover, or rediscover, Barbadian heritage, the land from which it flourished and the people who made it. 📌

Mount Gay's new Black Barrel blend and XO blend are available at selected cocktail bars and retailers.



MaHB
Drinks



Pretty to drink

The sweet potato bubble tea from this Taiwanese brand looks good enough to drink, but do the contents measure up to its exterior?

The thing you notice about a Chun Fun How drink is the beautiful floral cup it comes in. It looks like it's been cut from a Chinese painting—the watercolour of a petal, the wishing trail of a brushstroke. How perfect for the Instagram generation. Unfortunately the cups aren't reusable. (When asked about the possibility of selling the trademarked botanical-themed cups as reusables, the brand said it wasn't ruling it out.)

Straight out of Taichung, Taiwan, Chun Fun How opened its first outlet in Singapore at Esplanade, but only five out of its 19 cup designs will be sold here.

Chun Fun How might not have the same popularity as its other Taiwanese peers like Ji Long Tang and

Chicha San Chen, but it holds its own with its tea selection imported from Taiwan. The Four Seasons Oolong Tea hails from Nan Tou and with its strong fragrance and floral palate, it makes for a good base with other flavours. I tried the Lychee Four Season with Aloe Vera and, against the brand's advice, eschewed the additional sugar. There's a delicate balance of lychee and oolong with nary the tannic bitterness. Other favourites include the brand's Winter Melon Series (best suited for our climate) and the Sweet Potato Bubble Tea (the brand boasts that it was the first to create this); the latter is a creamy concoction of mashed tubers that's topped with tapioca pearls. ☑

Chun Fun How is located at The Esplanade Mall, #02-13 and is available for delivery via Klook.





Above: the MR1 Bluetooth speaker system.
Below: the R7 Mk3 high-fidelity radiogram.

British invasion

UK audio brand, Ruark, brings its signature
sound system to Singapore.

It started with his father.

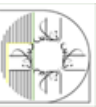
Alan O'Rourke cultivated a yen for sound and music from his father who worked in the audio industry. They would create the audio system company that would become known as Ruark Audio. Thirty-five years later and the company is still family-owned and operated and its audio expertise has led to acclaim for its speakers range. What gives Ruark Audio its X factor is the brand's adherence to the traditional, while providing glimpses of the futuristic.

Its first entry into the Southeast Asian market begins in Singapore. We were introduced to Ruark Audio's impressive range, namely, the MRx, MR1, R5 and, its flagship, the R7.

MRx and MR1 fall into the portable speakers ideal; the former being a wireless version, while the latter has Bluetooth with aptX. The R5 is a cabinet speaker with a Rotodial (think of it as a remote control), Wi-Fi streaming and Bluetooth and a CD player (they still have those)?

The flagship R7 model is a beauty. Evoking the yesteryear style of a radiogram, the calming roundness of its walnut body tapers into skewer-like legs. The control knob is located on the chassis but you can still operate it from a distance with the Rotodial. For something this sleek-looking, the R7 is bloated with a host of features. Attributes like a linear class A-B amplifier, two 140mm duel concentric drivers, a combined active subwoofer... oh, and, let's not forget about the CD player. 📀

Ruark Audio's R7 retails for SGD4,999. This and its range are available at Music Boutique at Ion Orchard and iStudio outlets.



MaHB

Technology



On the right track

Montblanc's luxe MB01 Smart Headphones upholds both
comfort and clear acoustics.

Can you define the relationship between pens and wearable listening devices? Well, German brand Montblanc classifies them together under 'design' using its innovative craftsmanship.

MB01 marks the first headphones produced by the Hamburg-based firm, venturing away from its celebrated writing instruments, leather goods, watches and functional accessories. As with these offerings, the foldable Bluetooth-paired MB01 is undeniably sleek and sophisticated. But what makes it stand out from its competition is Montblanc's successful formula of melding style with substance.

Sound expert and visionary Alex Rosson was enlisted for his acoustic mastery and audio engineering expertise to create a signature Montblanc sound. Audiophiles will certainly be pleased. Tame Impala's *The Slow Rush*

delivered as intended—lush and crisp. Of course, the maison's experienced team of award-winning engineers and designers deserves credit too. This travel companion is not only handsome enough for both business and leisure trips, but also Google Assistant-enabled, allowing a personalised on-the-go experience like voice-activated device control.

Constructed using fine materials and quality craftsmanship for durability, the MB01 supports the ever-important active noise cancelling technology and is ergonomically design for greater comfort.

Those who are not fans of all-black headphones will be pleased with the MB01's three combinations: black leather with chrome metal finishes, brown leather with gold-coloured metal finishes and light grey leather with polished metal finishes. ■

The Montblanc MB01 Smart Headphones are available for SGD925 at Montblanc boutiques worldwide and online.



MaHB

Health



Check your pulse

Pulse Lab founder Jeremy Tan shares his

[#WorkoutAtHome](#) regimen.

Take it from Jeremy Tan, an ex-competitive bodybuilder and currently ranked in the top 15 of the World Rowing Indoor Championships, on a circuit-breaker circuit workout.

#DIRTY30

Core:

- 30 leg raises
- 30 sit-ups
- 30 Russian twists

Rest 1MIN
(no rest in between exercises)
Repeat 3-4 rounds

#ARMAGEDDON

Upper body:

- 25 hand release push-ups
- 25 sofa/chair dips
- 25 pails of water upright rows
- 25 500ML Coke bottle side lateral raises

Rest 3MIN
Repeat 3 rounds

#WHEELSOFSTEEL

Lower body:

- 1MIN body weight squats or jump squats with favourite pet or stuffed animal
- 30SEC rest
- 1MIN alternating lunges with sack of rice
- 30SEC rest
- 1MIN lying glute bridge
- 30SEC rest
- 1MIN wall sit with a child, sibling or partner willing to stand on you

Rest 90SEC
Repeat 3-4 rounds

Pulse Lab is located at 1B Aliwal Street, Chenn Leonn Building, Singapore 199894.



The Lab is here

Finally, Le Labo finds a flagship home for its fine perfumery in Singapore.

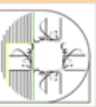
With every thoughtful intention comes undivided attention. So, it's no wonder that New York-based fragrance specialist Le Labo amassed a staunch cult following for its hand-formulated concoctions. Previously in Singapore via a limited pop-up, Le Labo now has a permanent presence here with its flagship store that retails all things related to the perfumery. Ardent fans will instantly recognise the storefront window, which replicates Le Labo's New York boutique on Elizabeth Street. Its interior shares similar aesthetics, with industrial elements such as cool steel, exposed bricks and grained wood, allowing the focus to be on its minimalist creations.

Besides its ever-popular gender-neutral Fine Fragrances, Le Labo's signature scents can also be found

in its soy-based wax candles for the home, bodycare formulas and grooming wares. Furthermore, unclassifiable quirks such as detergent, notebooks and tote bags are also available.

Hold on to your horses if you're hoping for City Exclusive scents (even Singapore) or Oud 27 (dang, its gonna be 17 out of 18 scents for us). There hasn't been any word about them yet, but keep your fingers crossed. You'll never know when they'll appear on Le Labo's shelves here. 📌

Le Labo Singapore is located at #B1-31, Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Road, Singapore 238872.



MaHB
Design



آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی



Destination: home

Thanks to Ikea, you need not travel out of the house to enjoy a resort-like retreat or brainstorm ideas in an inspirational zone.

Details do matter. From colours to materials, these often-overlooked elements have the ability to sway one's mood. But coming home daily to face the same old fixtures and fittings can make a weary soul feel even more tiresome.

Fortunately, it only takes a bit of effort on those pillows that embrace you nightly to send your mind on a vacation it craves. So, what do you need to do to achieve that? April Kwan, activity leader at Ikea Southeast Asia's communication and interior design department, reveals how we can transform an archetypal house into a functional and cosy home.

ESQ: What are some ways to refresh a house without making drastic changes to a familiar space?

APRIL KWAN: You can be adventurous with soft furnishings. You can work a lot with textiles, table lamps, rugs, cushions etc. These are home furnishing items that are easy to change and that can refresh your room instantly. A fresh coat of wall paint will instantly change the look of your room as well.

ESQ: Why do colour and fabric come into play when creating a comfortable space? Tell us some recommended colours to experiment with.

APRIL KWAN: Colour and textiles play a major role when creating a comfortable space as they affect your emotions in the living space. The choice of colour is a major factor when you want to dress up your room. In fact, colours influence your mood and how you feel.

Introducing neutral hues such as light pink, beige, pale mint or pale blues into your space is a safe bet as they go well with wood tones, soften light and make the room look cooler and more comfortable. To avoid ending up with an explosion of bright colours in a small space, you can gradually build colour by introducing extensions of the same colour or different shades and textures of the same colour with your furniture or accessories.

By sticking to strong basics, you get a much longer-lasting style too and you get to switch it up by adding accents or a pop of colour through soft furnishings.

ESQ: Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, how can we create a safe and recuperating area to safeguard our well-being?

APRIL KWAN: Apart from practising good hygiene and keeping your surroundings clean, we believe that sleeping well helps to improve one's well-being. We believe in the five essentials of sleep: comfort, lighting, temperature, air quality and sound.

ESQ: How can Ikea provide a staycation experience at home?

APRIL KWAN: When you think of a staycation experience, you will associate it with soft pillows, silky bed sheets, breakfast in bed, a calming atmosphere and ambient lighting. It's easy to recreate the same atmosphere at home with Ikea products. Make your bed with lots of pillows, layers and textures so you

can mix and match. Choose textiles you think are super comfy for a bed you want to dive into and never leave. Why not treat yourself to a morning in bed too? Chinaware stand steady on our Resgods bed tray so you can read a newspaper or watch TV while enjoying breakfast.

ESQ: What are some tips to encourage one to stay more at home?

APRIL KWAN: Lounging around in your hotel-style bedroom all day doesn't mean you have to stay in bed. A seating area with armchairs and a table feels very hotel-like and creates a cosy reading area for a change of indoor scenery. Create some shade by hanging a pair of thick curtains that you can adjust to let some sun in. They will also keep out the heat. In addition, use an LED lamp that doesn't generate warmth as reading light.

Amp up the ambience and please your senses with fresh flowers and lit candles. For an even more luxurious, getaway feeling, go big with a wall of mirrors.

Also, layered curtains help shut the world out whenever you want. A sheer interior layer lets natural light in but still creates privacy. A thick curtain on top blocks out much more light and dampens noise.

ESQ: Name some essential Ikea products to have for an effective workstation. And what is often overlooked when organising a workspace?

APRIL KWAN: A height-adjustable desk is ideal as it allows you to change position often. Alternating between sitting and standing increases circulation and reduces potentially harmful effects from sitting too long.

When space is limited, choose hard-working essentials with hidden extras. Task lighting is best for focused desk work and the base of the Hektar or Riggad LED work lamps is also a wireless phone charger. It has a USB port too, if you prefer to plug in a charger cable.

Accessories are often overlooked in workspaces. You can improve your sitting posture with a lumbar cushion to relieve the spine and lower back. Or consider a laptop support if you are working on the sofa. The laptop support is stable on your lap or an uneven surface thanks to the formable base.

ESQ: What are some Ikea organisation products you can't live without?

APRIL KWAN: I like my workstation to be as clean as possible. Besides my desktop and a work lamp, I will place a decorative piece on my desk which is changed from time to time according to my mood. It can either be live plants or fresh flowers in a vase. For the rest of the items, I prefer to keep them out of sight in a drawer unit next to me.

Another one of my must-haves is the Skådis pegboard. It's flexible and comes with many accessories which I can change easily to help create the best storage for my needs. 📌



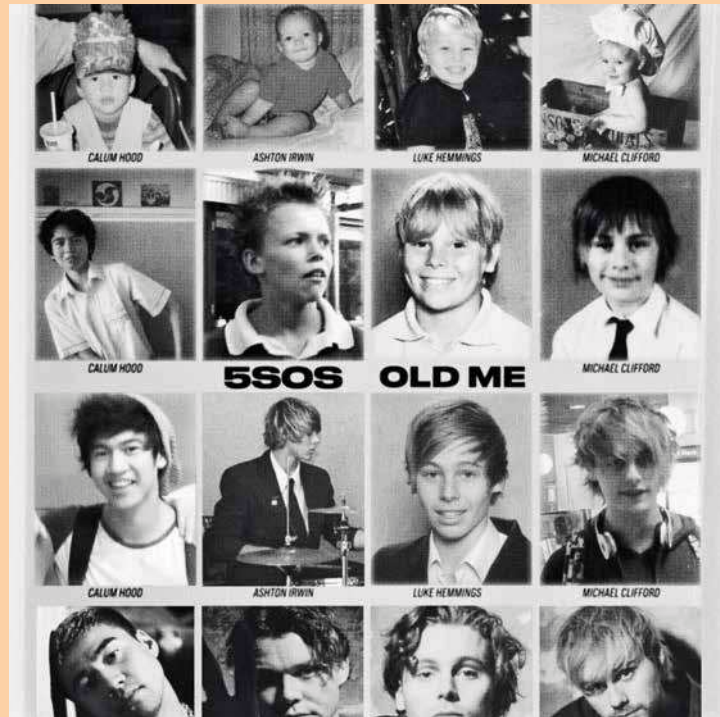
MaHB

Music



آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی





An acronym for our times

The title of 5SOS's latest album, *Calm*, has taken on a serendipitous overtone for the Australian pop rock band, says bassist Calum Hood.

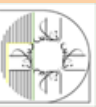
It's taken almost a decade, three studio album releases and relocating to the USA for Sydney boy band 5 Seconds of Summer—or 5SOS as they are better known—to arrive at their fourth album with a new-found perspective.

But in the oddest of timings, the new album titled *Calm* has landed when we're all in need of some introspective stillness given the unprecedented pandemic times.

Bassist Calum Hood, who left high school at 16 with his schoolmates in Sydney to relocate to the UK for a few years before moving to the USA, says the band never thought about changing the release date of *Calm*.

While the title might come across as being quite meditative, it's actually an acronym for their first names, but Hood says it's also a timely reminder why we need to be just that in these crazy times.

"We've built a career that's travelled at full speed," says 25-year-old Hood, who was born in Sydney and now lives in Los Angeles. "The fact we have had to isolate and stay at home and be away from one another has given us the means to learn how to communicate even better with one another. With restaurants, bars and nightclubs closed and venues shut and touring at a standstill, I guess we're all indoors just waiting for it to go back to normal. The



Music

“It’s awesome to see the growth of each member in the band and see how their passion for the band and the music we make has evolved.”

pandemic has forced us to slow down and really reflect on who we are as people, as individuals, and figure the next steps. I think this album will give our fans a chance to listen to the music and see who we are as those people.”

Taking on the task to do media interviews at a time when bands can’t be on the road touring and doing what they love has certainly shifted things mentally for Hood.

“I am always nervous around releasing an album; it’s like a piece of your soul coming out for all to see,” he admits. “But in these quite chaotic times it will play a small role in helping the listeners feel calm or calmer I hope. We’re all in this together and we just have to deal with what comes our way.”

There’s a sense of relief that 5SOS was able to finish their album given that if they were in the process right now, it would have to be shelved due to lockdown requirements.

“We pretty much started working on this soon after releasing our third album *Youngblood* in 2018,” says Hood. “We kind of knew right away we wanted to start the process and have been working on this for a while.”

5SOS teamed up with some of the best in the business from American songwriter Alexandra Tamposi, who has penned hits for Kelly Clarkson and Beyoncé, to New York City-born writer and musician Andrew Wotman, who is known for his most recent production of Ozzy Osbourne’s new album *Ordinary Man* and is collaborating with everyone from Cody Simpson to Lana Del Rey and Shawn Mendes. And there’s American producer Louis Bell, who has worked in the studio with Selena Gomez and Marshmello.

“It’s been such a privilege and honour to work with some of the best in the music industry,” says Hood. “When we started writing *Calm* there was an immediate sense of freedom with our capabilities. We had nailed *Youngblood* and we were itching to do something further. Being with these world-class writers, visionaries and creators really helped us find something unique for the band.”

Life has certainly been at full throttle for the four-piece boy band that formed in 2011. They rose to fame as YouTube

celebrities covering songs of various artists in their early years. It was a support slot with English-Irish boy band One Direction on their Take Me Home tour that saw their profile hit a new peak. Three of the friends—front man Luke Hemmings, Hood and Michael Clifford—met while attending Norwest Christian College, while Ashton Irwin joined the band at the end of 2011—all dropping out of high school and never looking back.

“One of the greatest things in my life is to have experienced this with those I met when I was really young. I met Michael Clifford in Year 3 and now he’s about to get married and owns his own place. It’s awesome to see the growth of each member in the band and see how their passion for the band and the music we make has evolved,” says Hood. “We’re all part of the conversation all the time; from merchandise to making music, we’re all in it for the music. It’s what we all love.”

But the band’s latest single ‘Wildflower’ plants the seed of a new sonic direction for the band—there’s less industrialised pop riffs and more electronic breeziness. It’s all about sunny skies romancing and full of light—a complete U-turn from what you feel on the penetrating beats of ‘Teeth’.

“Wildflower’ is really different to the rest of the album. It’s a total curveball and the one that I am loving the most,” says Hood. “It really bares the brunt and I am glad we took the risk.”

Away from the band, Hood says he is enjoying his time alone at home, spending most of it meditating, writing songs and reading books.

“We were supposed to be in the UK and Europe right now so this wasn’t on the cards,” he says of his new-found restrictions. “But it’s for the health of the band, everyone who works with us and the many fans—that comes first and foremost. It’s a great time to reflect and be kind and gentle to yourself. I have been spending more time outside in my backyard and trying to write as much as I can. It’s about trying to stay as healthy in my mind as much as I can and knowing that it’s okay to not be creating too. You have to be kind to yourself when everything has turned upside down and changed life as you knew it.”

Hood admits he’s been talking to his bandmates on the phone a lot more now too. Texting was the quickest and easiest communication of choice before the pandemic. “This is a new learning curve and exciting for us, it’s all about making the most of what you can and can’t do,” he says. “It’s increased our communication between one another so we’re all on the same page. We are ringing all the time and doing group FaceTime calls, but my Internet isn’t made for it; it keeps crashing every few minutes.”

The plan is to be on the road touring by the end of the year, but that all depends on how the COVID-19 pandemic plays out. For now, Hood is taking it a day at a time and grateful for all he’s achieved in life so far.

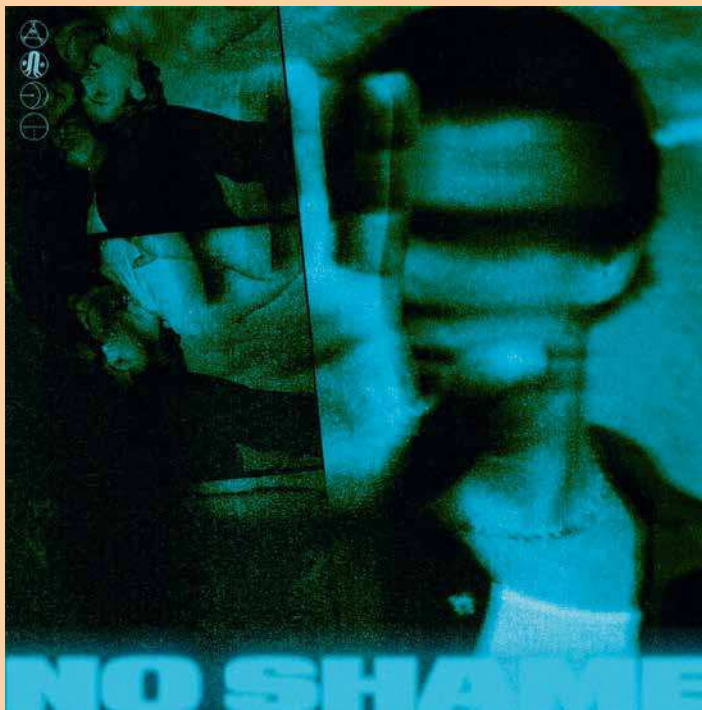
“I’ve always described myself as a man of simplicity,” says Hood. “I like to revel in the simple things in life—so for me that’s family and friends—they’re the most important aspect of my life. I am less focused on the material side and it’s how I approach each day. The core of me remains the same. Obviously when I was a bit younger the success and fame was a total shock to the system. To have people care about what you did and loved you so much certainly was insane, but now I am used to it and don’t take too much notice. Knowing I have those who love this band beside us and my brothers beside me on this journey—that’s all that matters at the end isn’t it.”

Hood, who grew up with his parents Joy and David Hood and sister Mali-Koa in Mount Druitt, an outer western suburb of Sydney, says he’s thankful for their support over the years. “I am very fortunate to know where I come from, know my roots and know my parents worked so hard to put me in a position I could succeed,” he says. “My parents came from a working-class background and did everything to give me and my sister a lot of opportunities. It was a struggle at times and you don’t realise that until you’re grown up yourself. They sacrificed for you to live a good and healthy life and that in turn has motivated me to to create a healthy space for myself where I can be a positive influence to other people.”

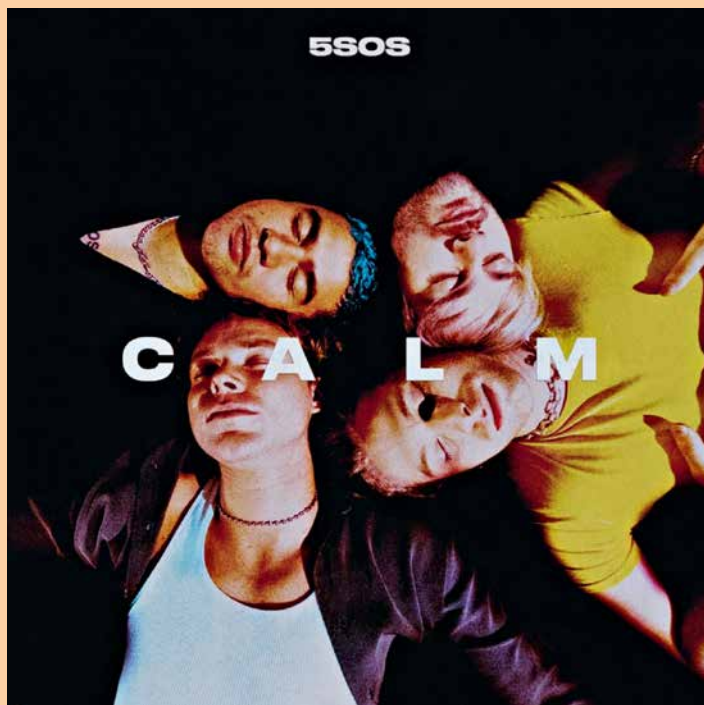


MaHB

Music

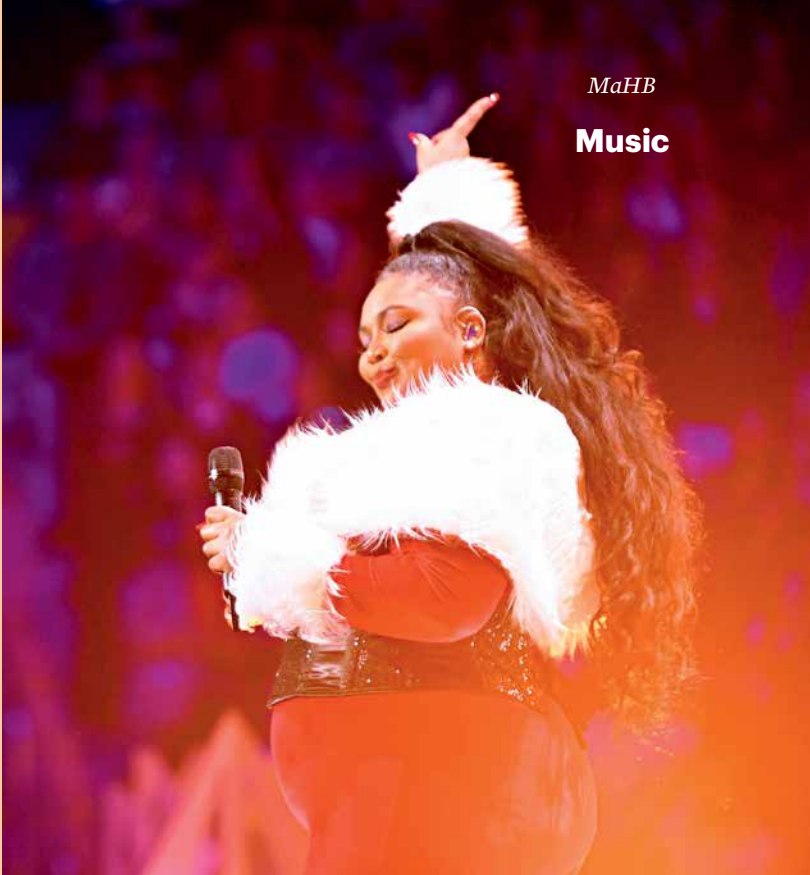


5 Seconds of Summer's first three LPs debuted at number one on the *Billboard* albums chart.



MaHB

Music



Sonic influence

Shaping oneself with every beat and word
within a track's duration.

Liking a tune is not simply just for pleasure. We also respond and gravitate towards productions that resonate with us. Beyoncé's 'Run The World (Girls)' is an anthem promoting female empowerment and encourages women to develop conviction. Not all's rosy and upbeat. When melancholic hits, songs such as Sia's 'I'm In Here' means a world to the listener and subtly conveys a message if you care to read between the lines.

Notice that? It means empathy runs in your blood. According to a 2015 University of Cambridge study, "there's a relationship between song choice and one's sense of empathy. Highly empathetic people tend to like three types of music: music that's lower in energy, music that's sad, and music that has a high degree of cerebral and emotional depth".

"That's a song that had deep and meaningful lyrics or music that has very deep themes attached to it," explained David Greenberg, then a PhD student at the university's psychology department and leader of the team of scientists conducting the study.

Before the end of each year, Spotify engages users with its Wrapped

rundown that reflects their top played songs. If yours contains mostly rap-driven songs with aggressive lyrics attached, take note: in a UK study highlight by CNN Health, such 'drill' music might be linked to attention-seeking crime.

"The content of these songs is about gang rivalry, and unlike other genres, the audience might judge the performer based on whether he will follow through with what he claims in his lyrics," writes the study's author, Craig Pinkney, a criminologist and lecturer at University College Birmingham in the UK.

We can also alter our moods with specific music selections. Say it's Friday night and the feeling's right, how about Daft Punk's 'Get Lucky'? A 2011 study by researchers at the University of Groningen showed in an experiment that listening to sad or happy music can not only put people in a different mood, but also change what people notice. When happy music was played, participants spotted more happy faces and the opposite was true for sad music.

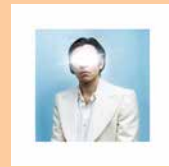
So yes, it's safe to proceed and pull yourself out of despair or maintain a buoyant spirit by upping the 'Tempo' with Lizzo. 📌

FRESH FREQUENCIES



I'm Your Empress Of Empress Of

Many artists have been labelled as queens of pop but only Lorely Rodriguez boldly declared herself an empress. The Los Angeles-born singer's deeply personal third LP was spurred by heartbreak and written in two months between touring. Converting dejection into emotionally charged dance-floor bangers, Rodriguez picked her feet up while being introspective, as heard on the hypnotic 'U Give It Up' and heady 'What's The Point'.



The Performer James Righton

By bidding farewell to his youth and Klaxons' journey, the English musician found grit on his post-band solo debut.

Righton settled fittingly in a retro chill-lounge context driven by dreamy grooves and sophisticated melodies. Pop the collar on your vintage-printed shirt and sway to psychedelic gems like 'Devil Is Loose' and 'See The Monster'. Also notable is 'Edie', which is dedicated to his daughter.



Womb Purity Ring

Canadian electro-pop duo Megan James and Corin Roddick weren't pressurised by the ever-changing music soundscape. Instead, they offer listeners relief and comfort from a world where so much is beyond our control. 'Stardew' glints brightly and establishes that the end is worth looking forward to. The dazzling synthwave allows neon-soaked rhythms like the full-bodied 'rubyinsides' and iridescent 'pink lightning' to pave the way.



MaHB
Culture

Blockbuster Tate Modern at 20

Hits such as 2003's 'The Weather Project', by Olafur Eliasson,
have made Tate Modern the most popular
modern art museum in the world.



MaHB

Culture



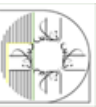
The unique perforated façade of the Tate Modern extension built between August 2014 and February 2016 used 336,000 bricks of 212 different types.

Photographs by Iwan Baan, courtesy of the Tate Gallery

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی

 Enekas.Academy

 Enekas.Academy



Culture

Tate Modern may be an international superstar art museum today, but when it opened in May 2000, the critics hated it. "The triteness of these concepts and the arbitrariness with which they are applied can be irritating, and the juxtapositions are often visually jarring," sniffed an editorial in *The Burlington Magazine*, the revered, long-running arts journal. "The overall lack of continuity is disorienting... [and] we are not reoriented or offered a fresh vision: the themed rooms tend to encourage an aimless wandering through a curatorial playground."

Reviewers didn't like the location (a grotty bit of the Thames' South Bank), criticised the building's design (a converted power station with much of the original interior left intact) and they lost it completely over the first temporary exhibition, *Century City*, which showcased art scenes from different cities of the world ("the section devoted to Lagos is so weak, you feel like a racist, imperialist, colonialist swine for daring to say it," said, er, *The Guardian*). The strongest objections were to the grouping of the art by theme rather than period and to the amount of work from outside Europe and America. In truth, Tate Modern's curators had expected a backlash but believed their way to be fairer and more interesting.

Frances Morris, the current director of Tate Modern, was there at the outset and remembers: "We genuinely thought it would be amazing but we didn't feel at all confident that the press or the public would side with us. And, of course, the press hated it. They eventually came round, but it took them 15 years."

The public, on the other hand, took to it immediately, with 5.25 million visitors in the first year, making Tate Modern the most popular modern art museum in the world. "That," says Ekow Eshun, director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in the noughties and now an independent curator, "then attracted new galleries to London and drove the expansion of the London art market, which was a backwater even into the '90s. You could say the story of Tate Modern is that it took some '70s art theory and turned it into a USD10 billion market."



In May, it will be 20 years since Tate Modern opened its large, glass, admission-free doors. Last year, as if to mark the impending anniversary, it displaced the British Museum as the UK's most popular visitor attraction with almost 5.9 million visitors. It also became the fifth most-visited art museum on the planet, tucked in just behind the Vatican in fourth, and easily the most popular venue dedicated to contemporary art. (The Louvre in Paris is world number one.)

Less quantifiably, it has influence. In the art world, it can be difficult for a museum to attract big numbers while still breaking interesting, influential new ideas. Such ideas are important because the best artists and collectors want to show their work in interesting, influential institutions; as well as satisfying intellectual hunger, being seen in the right places makes art more valuable.

Tate Modern has pulled that off. It is now, says Tania Bruguera, the Cuban artist and academic, "the institution that sets the tone internationally for many discussions and conversations among artists and others".

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tate galleries are closed until at least 1 June. When it reopens, you'll be able to sense a bit of that tone in the low, calm hum of the high, polished-concrete galleries around the famous Turbine Hall. It's also there in the staff offices where preparations are underway for a stereotype-busting Andy Warhol show. In truth, these rooms are fairly ordinary and were it not for the piles of prints, books and magazines lying around, from many angles you could mistake them for the offices of an upmarket leisure centre. The reception area walls are better

presented, though; in the modishly minimalist bar, a white poster bears the following words, stencilled in red ink:

How to work better

1. Do one thing at a time
2. Know the problem
3. Learn to listen
4. Learn to ask questions
5. Distinguish sense from nonsense
6. Accept change as inevitable
7. Admit mistakes
8. Say it simple
9. Be calm
10. Smile

These days, Tate Modern anniversaries are usually accompanied by newspaper think pieces about how it has "changed Britain" since 2000. There's no doubt it has altered things, but to really understand what and how, you need to go back much further than the turn of the millennium.

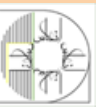
The first Tate Gallery, funded by an GBP80,000 donation from the sugar magnate and art collector Henry Tate, opened in London's Pimlico in 1897. It housed a collection of mostly modern (ie, Victorian) British art, but began collecting foreign artists after 1915, and so developed a sort of dual collection of British and international modern work. By the '70s, it was clear the Tate needed more room to house its growing collection. Extensions were added in 1979 and 1987, and an outpost in Liverpool opened in 1988, followed by another in St Ives, Cornwall, in 1993. They relieved a bit of pressure on space, but the problem was that, by then, the ambitions of the Tate staff and directors were not really about where to put all the old pictures and statues.

Until the '60s, the basic idea of art museums and galleries was that artists made art that represented something—a portrait, say, or a sculpture evoking a bird in flight—and curators stuck it on a wall or a plinth. Middle-aged, middle-class visitors came to look at it, then went away again having been enriched in some way. Come the '60s, some artists and curators began to wonder if there could be a bit more fun in making and looking at art than that; couldn't its appeal stretch beyond the middle-aged middle class? And couldn't they interact with it a bit more? The radical artists and curators began making and showing objects that people could walk around or touch, and began staging performances. Many artists were interested in encouraging people to think about what the art might mean for them personally, rather than a more didactic approach.

True, some of that art was really terrible, but a lot of it wasn't: a generation of young people were inspired by it. They remembered it when they went away to study art, and later take up jobs such as, for example, a curator at the Tate Gallery. Frances Morris, a state-school girl from south London, studied history of art at Cambridge in the '70s and became a curator of the Modern Collection at the Tate in 1987, when "the model of an art institution that has an authoritative view it teaches, and then everybody else challenges it, was just collapsing.

"There was a build-up of pressure to rethink the model of an art museum, with the younger generation of curators who thought something had to happen. At the Tate in the '80s, there was already a notion that there just wasn't enough size for a growing collection, nor for the kind of ambitions we were beginning to develop around learning and the audience experience. There was a masterplan drawn up that reflected the idea you couldn't have everything concentrated in your capital city, and that the audience was more than just a passive receiver of works of art."

Language like "passive receiver of works of art" sounds drier than Morris is in person. The interaction with art she wanted was human and emotional. Sitting in a large,



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Rachel Whiteread's sculpture
'Embankment' in the Turbine Hall, 2005.



book-and-print-filled meeting room, she says she was "incredibly excited" by making a museum that felt open enough to welcome families who would normally dismiss art. "I find it incredibly exciting to think of a family crossing the threshold for the first time because it can be really momentous. That family doesn't necessarily have to engage at that moment in time with an artist's philosophy of engagement."

In this atmosphere, a new, like-minded director joined the Tate in 1988. The slim, austere Nick Serota was another '70s humanities veteran, and a London liberal whose mother served as minister of state for health in Harold Wilson's government. Serota had been successful at London's Whitechapel Gallery, where he pushed avant-garde contemporary art and oversaw an extension. In 1969, in his early 20s, Serota became chairman of the new Young Friends of the Tate organisation with a membership of 750, and ran the group's takeover of a south London building in which they put on lectures, painting classes and their own art shows, until the Tate Trustees intervened and told them to stop.

After lengthy discussions, Serota and the trustees decided that the expansion should be on a different site, where there would be more room and the collections divided into British and international components. He wanted the project to be not just about finding space for the art, but about experimenting with ways of presenting the art that would change how the public thought about it. To do that properly they would need a far bigger building. In separating the international, the trustees sensed an opportunity to express an openness to the world, something that felt quite appealing in a city suffering a hangover from the insular-seeming Britpop years.

Soon after came a stroke of luck: the National Lottery, launched in 1993, was accompanied by a programme of new building for the millennium, with organisations able to apply for funding for landmark public projects. Sensing an opportunity, Serota and his trustees went looking for a site.

They found Bankside Power Station, designed in the '40s by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and left silent and rusting on the south bank of the Thames since its decommission in 1981. Artists, as Serota knew, like putting work in old industrial buildings because the spaces look more interesting and the authenticity is reassuring. ("Artists are workers and artists' work is *work*," says Miroslaw Balka, the Pole who created 'How It Is': deep, pitch-black metal caves in the Turbine Hall in 2009. "People forget that. It was one reason Tate Modern's industrial roots were important.")

The Tate bought Bankside in 1994, using GBP50 million of lottery cash and raising another GBP83 million needed to complete the conversion from private donations. The architects—the then little-known Swiss company Herzog & de Meuron—left much of the industrial interior intact, which was significant. The vision of the Blair government, elected in 1997, was of a new, ideas-based "creative economy" rising from the ashes of the industrial era, which nicely segued the old and new Labour parties.

The Tate Modern team also talk explicitly in those terms. "It had been a power station creating power for people's homes," recalls Donald Hyslop, head of regeneration and community partnerships at Tate. "Now it was going to be a museum creating ideas to drive the city."

"Which was the point," says Eshun, "of that industrial, bare-brick-and-exposed-girder-and-Scandi-furniture-style decor which Tate Modern helped to cross over into the mainstream. It was all about the evolution to a future based on creativity, inventiveness... and really great chairs."



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“If you have a theatre, would you stop showing Shakespeare?”

The trustees recruited a project director (Dawn Austwick from accounting firm KPMG) and three curators (Morris, education specialist Caro Howell, and Iwona Blazwick, who'd recently discovered then staged the first solo show by a young British artist called Damien Hirst), and installed them in an office on John Islip Street behind Tate Britain. In art terms, it was a different city to today's. London was the biggest capital in the world without a modern art museum, and with only a few commercial galleries. Frieze Art Fair hadn't yet happened; the young British artists like Hirst and Tracey Emin had begun to draw attention to London but the idea its art market might compete with Paris or New York was laughable.

“Very parochial really,” recalls the former deputy editor of *Frieze* magazine, Dan Fox. “London's art scene was getting a bit more international prominence, but many of that generation of artists were trading off a certain kind of Britpop-era provincialism, which began to feel tired very quickly.”

Achim Borchardt-Hume, Tate's director of exhibitions, previously curator of modern and contemporary art at Tate Modern from 2005 to 2009, points out it was “a predominantly literary, not a visual culture”, where novelists not artists represented highbrow culture, and “contemporary art” was mostly seen as the outrageous stuff that caused tabloid controversy via the Turner Prize.

The first thing the team did was to begin working with artists in the Bankside area, so they would have genuine links with the location when the museum opened. The second was to figure out the first few temporary exhibitions. The third was how they could best display the Tate's Modern Collection; their solution would ultimately make the museum's reputation and change the way modern art was seen around the world.



Art of all kinds is often discussed as if it were all about timeless meanings and truths, but in reality our opinions tend to be shaped by the way this art is presented to us. In the '30s, public opinion of modern art was shaped by a curator called Alfred H Barr, who was employed by the wealthy socialite and collector Abby Rockefeller as founding director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

At the time, most critics and collectors didn't take modern art by the likes of Pablo Picasso or Vincent Van Gogh very seriously; it looked weird and the style was always changing, so how was one to know what was timeless and what was fashion? Barr changed that with a now-famous diagram showing art evolving from 19th-century realism to modern, abstract art through various schools such as expressionism, cubism and futurism. No matter that artists didn't really think or work like that: suddenly the whole thing made sense and could be summed up in a couple of sentences at a dinner party.

The diagram, printed on the cover of the catalogue for MoMA's 1936 exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*, flattered both the present and America, because it made it look as if the entire history of art had been leading up to that time and place. (Eventually, even the CIA would become fans, channelling money into modernism and abstract art as a propaganda exercise during the Cold War.) It also created value for dealers and collectors because it meant paintings and sculptures could be seen in terms of new, easily understood categories. Picasso's 'Les Femmes d'Alger' might have looked odd when it was painted, but who cared about that once Barr dubbed it “The painting that started cubism”?

By the time he retired in 1967, Barr had made MoMA the most influential modern art museum in the world. He changed

museums from simply being buildings where important art was preserved to places where audiences learned. Art museums around the world followed MoMA's lead, hanging collections to suggest smooth, chronological evolutions of one style to another: for most of us the idea of modern art as a chain of ‘-isms’ became so ingrained it influenced how we thought about other culture, like music and design.

It wasn't ingrained in the office on John Islip Street in the '90s, though. Even if you believed that some art developed like that, you couldn't escape the fact that Barr had told only one story limited to white, Western blokes. Since the end of World War II, there had been a growing recognition that a lot of important, interesting art had been made by people who didn't fit any of those categories, and now, says Morris, “we knew that we were going to open a museum for the 21st century and had an opportunity to rethink the model. We took it as a sort of fundamental principle that at the beginning of the 21st century it was no longer desirable, necessary or possible to tell a single art history. It was very mission-focused.”

The mission was to overturn the Barr model. After a year of blue-sky thinking, they presented Serota with ideas for a new kind of hang, in which works from different eras would be grouped into four themes: Nude/Action/Bodies; Still Life/Object/Real Life; History/Memory/Society; Landscape/Matter/Environment. With a few small tweaks, Serota approved it. The approach may have helped cover chronological gaps in the collection. The building's architecture also naturally dictated four main areas, and as most gallery visitors spend 15 minutes to an hour looking at art before taking a break, four areas take up about a half a day.

It took another year to bring in all the curators and decide which pieces should be with which, but even so, although the opening night was a success—Dan Fox still recalls the amazed *Frieze* team in the office the next day “talking about the Jeremy Deller Acid Brass performance and the size of the Turbine Hall”—there was critical disapproval for the thematic hang and, later, for the diversity of *Century City*. The public, however, took a different view.

“People enjoyed discussing the way things were put together,” says Morris. “They enjoyed the experience of taking it apart then putting it together, and enjoyed being horrified by the juxtaposition of Claude Monet and Richard Long. They liked the feeling of discovering old friends and new things at the same time.”

And so, having hoped for two million visitors in the first year, Tate Modern pulled in more than double that. The entire organisation was taken aback; emergency work had to be done on staircases that were being worn out, while there were issues with supplies. A toilet paper contract had to be renegotiated, a year's supply used up in a few months. The real surprise came in the next two years when the numbers didn't fall away as predicted. “There was a joke here,” says Hyslop. “We used to ask each other when the honeymoon would end, meaning, ‘When will the crowds get smaller?’. They never did.”

“In the beginning, we knew people would come for the building,” Morris says. “There were great views from the roof and it felt as if a new area of London was being opened up. But then it became clear they were spending time in the galleries and we had a very profound realisation that actually, the British public was really interested in contemporary modern art.”



Almost 20 years later in 2019, the hang would enjoy the ultimate vindication when MoMA rehanging its collection thematically,





The 10.2m tall, 3,658kg steel and marble giant spider sculpture 'Maman' by Louise Bourgeois on display at Tate Modern in 1999.

also showing more work by non-white, Western blokes. "When you're dealing with an institution," says Miroslaw Balka, "it is good to know what it's heart is. And the heart of Tate Modern is the Turbine Hall. A space that belongs to the workers."

The Turbine Hall, Tate Modern's huge, cavernous entrance/exhibition space, has become its best-known area, famous for the huge, site-specific commissions installed in it over the years: Balka's steel boxes, Anish Kapoor and Cecil Balmond's trumpet-shaped 'Marsyas' and Carsten Höller's 'Test Site' slides. It wasn't really intended for artwork, more as a roadway allowing people to walk through the building. The museum did begin commissioning artists to create work for it early on, but no one was expecting the moment in 2003 when Olafur Eliasson's 'The Weather Project' became a bona-fide happening and crystallised what Tate Modern would become. That work comprised a mirror on the ceiling and a semi-circular yellow light, attached to said ceiling, creating the effect of a spherical sun. Eliasson added a foggy mist and that was that; on opening night, staff were initially worried it was all rather boring.

Then people began mucking about on the floor, making shapes in the mirror overhead. Eliasson was taken aback by how visitors became very physically explicit. "I pictured them looking up with their eyes but they were lying down, rolling around and waving. One person brought an inflatable canoe. There were yoga classes that came and weird poetry cults doing doomsday events. When US President George Bush visited London, some people arranged themselves on the floor to spell 'Bush Go Home'—to do that in reverse so it read in the mirror is pretty difficult. I liked how the whole thing became about connecting your brain and body. That I did not foresee."

'The Weather Project' became a must-see installation.

People sat and chatted to strangers from all over the world; the BBC set up a studio and did weather forecasts from the building for a week; a Bulgarian couple named their baby girl Tate after visiting. As Lionel Barber, recently retired *Financial Times* editor and chairman of the Tate Trustees, says, after 'The Weather Project', the Turbine Hall created "a new kind of living civic space. I worked in the area on and off for 35 years, because the *FT* is based there, and I saw how it transformed the area. It has been something quite new."

The scale of the Turbine Hall and its popularity with visitors is part of the reason why, Barber says, Tate Modern appealed to business investors; upon entering, it immediately "feels like something adventurous that they want to be involved in". Besides that, modern CEOs are interested in associating with organisations with big ideas about complex issues because CEOs have to deal with complex issues themselves. "Technology is disruptive. The environment has shot up the agenda. They're under pressure to think about diversity, inclusion and inequality. If a museum can open up new vistas and ideas, business will want to be connected to that. Tate Modern manages to be international in outlook but stay very connected to its local area, which is something else they're very interested in."

This might partly explain why the Tate organisation had success with its various memberships and international acquisition committees, set up so the collections could keep growing. Because art prices have been so inflated over the past two decades, it has become increasingly difficult for museums

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to make the sort of purchases they need. The various members' areas, evenings and trips abroad, as well as the gift shops, are all a part of Tate Modern's response. As, of course, are the huge donations from philanthropists like Ukrainian billionaire Leonard Blavatnik, who gave GBP50 million, the largest financial donation to a UK museum, to help fund an extension in 2016.

Other businesses attracted in numbers were big commercial art galleries. It's true they were beginning to arrive in London in the '90s, encouraged also by the success of the Frieze Art Fair launching in 2003, but there is little doubt Tate Modern helped bring to London both collectors and international galleries like Gagosian (2000), Hauser & Wirth (2003) and David Zwirner (2012). That in turn boosted the auction houses, who only began selling living artists' work in earnest in the late '90s.

"As well as prestige, what Tate Modern added from a gallerist and collector's point of view was scholarship," says Eshun. "Commercial galleries want to be in cities where collectors are coming to shop in a sophisticated market, but they also like cities where there's knowledge and scholarship because that increases the potential of someone saying credible, complimentary things about the work you show. That can boost its reputation and value. Tate Modern put down, on behalf of the city, a marker in terms of ambition, ethos and aesthetics. Because it was so international and contemporary, it was seen as open to the world."

After being a negligible player in the early '90s, with a handful of commercial galleries in Mayfair and Shoreditch, London now boasts the world's second-most valuable art market after New York, with annual sales around GBP10 billion. You can't attribute it all to a single institution, but Tate Modern certainly played a part.

"It made London look like a city of open, knowledgeable, wealthy people," says Eshun. "Which happens to be exactly the sort of city collectors and blue-chip galleries want to be seen in. And the effect it had on the art market and its local area is a key reason we've seen the creation of other contemporary art galleries like the Baltic [Centre for Contemporary Art] in Newcastle or the Turner [Contemporary] in Margate."

If the museum had an overlooked challenge, it was getting the big temporary exhibitions right. Large museums tend to need blockbuster shows for their audience figures and profile. But if they want to be seen as creative, agenda-setting places, they need new angles and new ways of displaying works. That way the critics stay happy and the collectors and museums loaning works will remain well disposed on the grounds said works are gaining some desirable exposure.

Having set out to be a new kind of museum, Tate Modern had to be particularly careful to avoid boring retrospectives of big names. Looking back, Borchardt-Hume thinks they cracked a new approach with the hit 2008 to 2009 *Rothko* show, which concentrated on Mark Rothko's late work rather than his more popular earlier paintings. Borchardt-Hume's team hung the pictures in large, stark, white rooms rather than in the dark, intimate spaces some were displayed in at Tate Britain, and it made them look as they may have done in Rothko's own studio. It made visitors see them with fresh eyes and, according to Borchardt-Hume, "established a new way of thinking about exhibitions that wasn't just people looking at the work, but about people being in a space *with* the work. You were there to experience it, not just to learn something".

Tate Modern is occasionally criticised for its reliance on big-name shows, but Borchardt-Hume hasn't much time for such snarks. After all, it's partly the money they generate that keeps the general admission free, through ticket sales. "If you have a theatre," he says, "would you stop showing

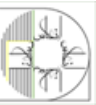


Shakespeare? Or would you interpret and revise his plays for your moment? The point is, great work is multifaceted and can be re-explored and re-represented. When we do Warhol, it will look at him as an outsider and the queer son of a migrant, and at the dark undertow of American consumerism. It will ask what makes him appealing and interesting to people at our particular moment in time."

Tate Modern was also criticised early last decade for being, in the words of one art critic, "Alton Towers for grown-ups". Some people thought the Turbine Hall commissions too spectacular, the hall itself more a place for tourists to come to grab a picture for Instagram than anything else. Some art critics complained that Tate Modern was making it too easy for visitors or, in art-speak, "legitimising an emotional response". Morris was hurt by this because "at the same time we were doing incredibly serious work around building a more international collection and bringing artists to the fore who'd been completely overlooked by history. It was saying you can't be serious and popular."

That school of criticism was negated by the new directions of Tate Modern projects and commissions, particularly the importance it placed on the new wave of performance art last decade. Catherine Wood, senior curator of international performance art, was originally hired in 2001 to develop collaborations between artists and musicians, but began to notice "a young generation of artists, including Mark Leckey, Monster Chetwynd and others turning to a new wave of performance or event as a way of sharing work made in their mediums of video, sound or painting. I felt strongly that we needed space to share this kind of work and that it didn't yet exist in the museum."

Nick Serota and chief curator Sheena Wagstaff supported



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The Seagram Murals, part of the museum's exhibition of the later paintings of Mark Rothko, 2008 to 2009.

She now sees Morris moving Tate Modern towards what is known as “socially engaged” or “relational art”. This, the most talked-about art movement of the moment, is artwork that may have no physical appearance at all, but is based on social interactions organised by the artist. (Part of 2019 Turner Prize-winner Lawrence Abu Hamdan’s work, for example, has been interviewing former detainees of the Syrian regime’s Sednaya military prison.) For her most recent Tate Modern commission, Bruguera put together a group of people who live close to the museum, undertaking various projects with them; she had one of the museum buildings named after Natalie Bell, a local activist and volunteer. The question of how you record and archive work like this is still open and ongoing; it’s one of the things that makes it interesting. (Bruguera now tries to make work that can’t be photographed so it can’t be put on Instagram because she thinks “art should be about gesture, not image”.)



Tate Modern people can be very intellectual and contemporary art very theoretical and complicated, but what’s really striking is how often the curators and artists talk about the local community and the small details of running the museum. Lionel Barber makes mention of Stanhope, the project management company that oversaw the building of the extension: “Have you seen how complicated that brickwork is? Can you imagine the work that went into getting it right?”. Nick Serota talks about the pocket parks and seating areas they installed around the local area. For the opening night in May 2000, they sent invites to 300 London black cab drivers so the cabbies would know where to drop off visitors. Both Balka and Bruguera say the competence of the technical staff is a major reason so many artists want Tate Modern commissions.

“You never have to have a Plan B with them because they always try to make Plan A happen,” Bruguera says. “No matter how crazy your project is they will sit down with you and the lawyers, the producers, the security staff and try to make it work. When I was working on ‘Tatlin’s Whisper #5’ [a 2008 piece that involved mounted ‘police officers’ crowd-controlling visitors] I had the idea of using horses, but I thought it was such a dream that I didn’t dare tell anybody. But then I went to Tate Modern and said, ‘Look, this isn’t going to happen, it’s kind of a dream idea, but...’ They listened and said, ‘OK,’ and disappeared. I assumed they’d eventually say ‘no’. In fact, they came back and said, ‘OK, we solved it. You can have the horses’. It’s always, ‘Let’s find out’ first. They respect the artist. They really care about relationships with people.”

Morris, the daughter of a teacher mum and architect dad, grew up in Greenwich with the National Maritime Museum at the end of her street. The quickest way to get to the shops on Greenwich High Street was to cut through the museum. Using it as a pathway, she began to notice its artefacts and art, and on rainy days would go back and look at them. She became fascinated by an 1807 painting by Arthur William Devis, ‘The Death of Nelson, 21 October 1805’, with no idea it was a famous work. Throughout her childhood, whenever she felt sad, she would go by herself to the museum and look at Devis’s painting, and it would make her cry.

“I hate the idea of any child from the [museum’s] neighbourhood not feeling they can just walk into the building and come to stand in front of something they don’t understand, and enjoy it,” Morris says. “I really believe that art is useful, you see.”

Wood, which led to the 2012 opening of The Tanks—performance spaces using Bankside’s old oil tanks—which made the museum the first in the world to have a gallery permanently dedicated to film and video, interactive and performance art. (If, incidentally, you’re feeling that this new movement has passed you by, remember that last December performance art gave us the biggest mainstream art-news story of the last few months when the New York-based performance artist David Datuna took and ate Maurizio Cattelan’s USD120,000 banana at Art Basel in Miami.)

The Tanks underpinned the programme of performance art which, in 2015, gave us another ‘The Weather Project’ moment. At the outset, it could be hard to make some performances work as she wanted them to, Wood says, but she remembers a sense of transformation when she saw “hundreds of people taking part in a dance workshop in the Turbine Hall and then gathering the same day for a ‘nightclub’ session under a giant disco ball, which transformed the Turbine Hall into a warehouse rave.

“They ended up gathered in circles around a profound piece of choreography titled ‘Manger’—some of them cried—as part of [French choreographer] Boris Charmatz’s *If Tate Modern was Musée de la danse?* It was an extraordinary moment in which I felt that the public, our visitors, became part of the museum,” she says.

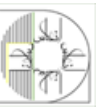
Tania Bruguera thinks that “at some point Tate Modern did generate an ‘art of the spectacle’ because it was coming out of a response to the question: ‘How do we please everybody?’ But they made changes and it became the first big institution that I know of to take performance into its programming, treating it as seriously as painting and sculpture. It changed the art world and it put them in the leading position.”

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Cars



آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی





Words by Daryl Lee.

Light fantastic

If you can live without
most creature comforts,
the flyweight Lotus Exige is
about as engaging and rewarding
a sports car as you can get.

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These are all questions you'll have to ask yourself before plonking down SGD300,000 (base price without COE and optional extras) for one of Hethel's finest. It also helps if you put that figure in context because this is money you could very well spend on a Porsche 718 Boxster/Cayman, which has all of the things mentioned above. Most probably at a cost, but available nevertheless.

It also helps if you can drive a car with a manual transmission because that's the only one on offer.



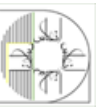
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Cars



Photographs by Stuart Price

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی



The Exige also makes one realise just how much stuff is stuffed into a modern sports car and how user-friendly virtually every aspect of the entire experience is. To say nothing of how heavy any modern sports car is, with kerb weights hovering around the 1.5-tonne mark.

With the Exige, however, everything is pared back. The windows have electric winders, thankfully, but everything else, well. The most advanced thing the Exige has in its cabin is probably the air-conditioning system... and that's an old-school manual one, not the fancy-pants multi-zone climate control systems found on pretty much any other car in 2020.

Even its (optional) luxury features are borderline apologetic. For an extra SGD7,740, you can slather the interior with Alcantara trim that has contrasting stitching. And for SGD2,067, that gets you a stereo with a grand total of two speakers. Even carpeting and floor mats are an optional extra.

However, lack of creature comforts and luxury equipment aside, the Exige is also an indictment of the modern sporting vehicle. In that they're luxury cars first and sports cars second. The most important question the Exige asks is what do you *really* need in a sports car beyond a peppy engine and a chassis blessed by the driving gods themselves.

Said engine is a supercharged 3.5-litre V6 sourced from Toyota. Yes, the Exige shares an engine with some Camrys, but don't let it detract from how, applied in the Lotus, it develops 350HP and will take it from a standstill to 100KM/H in 3.9 seconds.

Certainly brisk, but not searing in the big scheme of things. However, the Exige's ace in the hole is its weight, or lack thereof. It weighs 1,125KG which is, in the modern idiom, next to nothing.

The Exige is so, so much more rapid than its numbers suggest, a sensation amplified by how you're sitting in an extruded aluminium tub barely skimming the ground. Pull up next to just about any other 'regular' car and



you'll realise just how low you sit in the Exige.

The low driving position, along with the unassisted steering rack (that's the reason behind its toy car-sized wheel) grants the Exige a level of intimacy that leaves it essentially in a class of its own. Short of hardwiring yourself directly to the car, or driving a go-kart on the road (highly illegal, please don't try this at home), there's nothing else that comes close to the Exige experience on sale today.

The Exige is also deeply involving, and not just because shifting gears involves you having to work a third pedal and saw that tall lever with its exposed linkage through the rifle-bolt shift gates.

No, with the Exige you always feel that your successes are entirely on you,

with the car merely an extension of you. As it should be.

Of course, this also means should you mess up, there's very little the Exige will do to cover up your mistakes. For all the malleability of its chassis, the Exige is also only as good as you are, requiring a healthy amount of respect. As it should be.

All that is underpinned by a ride quality that I'm not sure I have enough superlatives for. It's not pillowy, to be certain the Exige is a sports car after all, but neither is it spine-shatteringly stiff.

Which is probably a good thing since you sit on fixed-back seats that's essentially a piece of plastic with upholstery stretched over the top. It looks like a medieval torture device, but it somehow is one of the most comfortable seats I've sat on.

Anyway, the Exige's ride—the holy grail of comfort and control. Almost nothing ruffles its composure on the move. You feel just enough of a thump to let you know what's underfoot, but nothing more and it's gone almost as quickly as it happens anyway. It's shocking how well the Exige rides.

Also shocking is the build quality. The signal stalk wobbles in a rather alarming way, the hard black plastic of the instrument cluster cowl belongs more on a child's toy and the chrome-effect interior door handles are more effect than chrome.

So, is the Exige your next sports car? It certainly isn't for everyone... literally. If you're big, tall, not very limber or all of the above, you can safely rule yourself out.

But if you consider yourself one of those keen driver types, you know, the sort that prizes the driving experience to the exclusion of everything else (luxury and practicality, for starters) then you owe it to yourself to at least give it a shot.

I can pretty much guarantee you'll be as smitten with it as I was. If you aren't, this might be grounds to revoke your Keen Driver Club membership. 📧

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

3,456cc, 24 valves,
V6, supercharged

POWER

350HP at 5,800RPM

TORQUE

370Nm at 7,000RPM

0-100KM/H

3.9 seconds

TOP SPEED

273KM/H

TRANSMISSION

Six-speed manual

FUEL CONSUMPTION

10.1 litres/100KM

VES BAND

C2 (SGD20,000 surcharge)

PRICE

SGD300,000
(excluding COE, excluding options)

The little things

What do we think of when we talk about gratitude?

It's always the simplest things we look back to, like reminders of how much we truly possess and experience on a daily basis. Broken down into chapters, these short stories will summon forgotten memories and the courage to take new chances.

These titles are available at Books Kinokuniya.



Calypso
David Sedaris

Funny, poignant and actually meaning those adjectives, these compiled chronicles of Sedaris's worldview are equal parts brutally honest and unexpectedly humorous. The real-life incidents, which range from uncomplicated to outlandish, are subtly narrated, making this highly instinctive read feel like you're following a well-loved sitcom, causing you to reflect on the curiosity that is life.



The Heartsick Diaspora and Other Stories
Elaine Chew

Another acute observation of the Singaporean and Malaysian Chinese diasporas, this debut collection divulges the fragmented sense of self caught between cultures. Not answering the common question of local identity but rather widening its boundaries, characters seem incredibly believable while still carrying the analogy of our place in the nation's evolution.



Fly Already
Etgar Keret

Written in Hebrew and translated by five translators, this haunting anthology is rich in irony and doesn't shy away from politics. It switches between reality and speculative fiction with plenty of witty moments, pulling your emotions in more ways than one, but tackling loneliness in a way that will leave a mark.



Humiliation
Paulina Flores

South American literature is not read enough this side of the world, especially with this gem of storytelling. Flores paints an intimate picture of Chile and human fragility, weaving pockets of time with family and volatile outcomes. You'll hardly know where the story leads and what will unfold until it does, as best depicted in personal favourite 'Talcahuano'.

Still life

5 | 5



Leather sunglasses case and acetate sunglasses,
both by **Ermenegildo Zegna XXX**.

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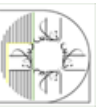


Blank canvas



Otro lado

Isolation during this global health crisis has created space for self-reflection. Restrictions placed on daily life highlight the value of freedom, which we often take for granted. The featured artwork 'Otro Lado' was created during the pandemic to show doors as the barriers between our movements, with original photography from Mexico City. Unified by our efforts to stay inside and flatten the curve of COVID-19, we wait to get on the other side, the English translation of the title.



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